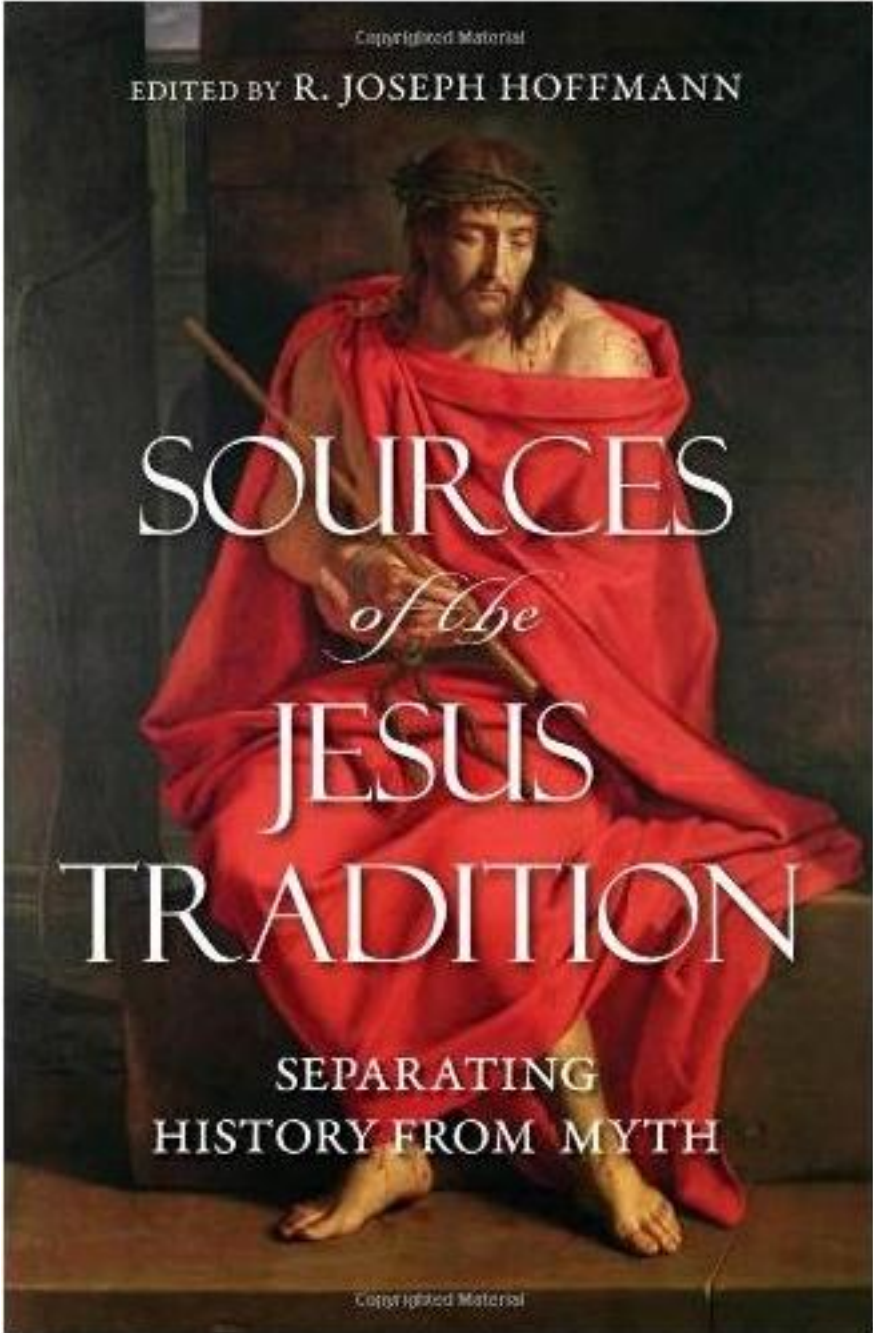


Copyrighted Material

EDITED BY R. JOSEPH HOFFMANN



SOURCES
of the
JESUS
TRADITION

SEPARATING
HISTORY FROM MYTH

Copyrighted Material

JESUS
TRADITION

EDITED BY R. JOSEPH HOFFMANN

SOURCES
of the
JESUS
TRADITION

SEPARATING
HISTORY FROM MYTH

Prometheus Books

59 John Glenn Drive
Amherst, New York 14228-2119

Published 2010 by Prometheus Books

Sources of the Jesus Tradition Separating History from Myth. Copyright ©) 2010 by R. Joseph Hoffmann. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, digital, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, or conveyed via the Internet or a Web site without prior written permission of the publisher, except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical articles and reviews.

Inquiries should be addressed to

Prometheus Books

59 John Glenn Drive

Amherst, New York 14228-21 19

VOICE: 716-691-0133

FAX: 716-691-0137

WWW.PROMETHEUSBOOKS.COM

14 13 12 11 10 5 4 3 2 1

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Sources of the Jesus tradition: separating history from myth / edited by R. Joseph Hoffmann,
p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN 978-1-61614-189-9 (cloth : alk. paper)

1. Jesus Christ—Historicity I. Hoffmann, R. Joseph.

BT303.2.S66 2010

232.9—dc22

2010016614

Printed in the United States of America on acid-free paper

CONTRIBUTORS

R. Joseph Hoffmann (DPhil, Oxford), author of *Marcion on the Restitution of Christianity*, translator of *Celsus on the True Doctrine*, and distinguished scholar in residence at Goddard College, teaches history at Geneseo College.

Dennis R. MacDonald (PhD, Harvard) is Professor of Religion at Claremont Graduate School, an expert in Christian origins, and the author of *Does the New Testament Imitate Homer?*

Justin Meggitt (PhD, Cambridge) is University Senior Lecturer in the Study of Religion and the Origins of Christianity at Cambridge University, Fellow and Tutor at Wolfson College, and the author

of *The Madness of King Jesus*.

Richard C. Carrier (PhD, Columbia) is a classical historian and the author of *Not the Impossible Faith*. He contributes regularly to professional and popular journals on the subject of historiography and the philosophy of religion.

Robert M. Price (PhD, Drew), a member of Jesus Seminar, has published extensively in the field of New Testament Studies, including *The Incredible Shrinking Son of Man* and *Jesus Christ Superstar: The Making of a Modern Gospel*.

Bruce Chilton (PhD, Cambridge) is Bell Professor of Religion at Bard College and was Claus Professor of New Testament at Yale University. His many works include *A Galilean Rabbi and His Bible* and *The Temple*

of Jesus. He is the editor of the *Cambridge Companion to the Bible.*

David Trobisch (DrPhil, Heidelberg), Throckmorton-Hayes Professor of New Testament Language and Literature at Bangor Theological Seminary, is the author of several important studies of the origins of the New Testament including *The First Edition of the New Testament.*

Frank R. Zindler is a former professor of geology and neurobiology (SUNY) and is the managing editor of American Atheist Press. He is the author of over one hundred technical and popular articles relating to science and religion. He is the author of *The Jesus the Jews Never Knew: Sepher Toldoth Yeshu and the Quest of the Historical Jesus in Jewish Sources.*

Robert Eisenman (PhD, Columbia) is an American archaeologist and biblical scholar. He has been Senior Visiting Member at Linacre College Oxford and the director of the Institute for the Study of Judeo-Christian Origins at CSU Long Beach. Among his many works on Christian origins is *James: The Brother of Jesus*.

Ronald A. Lindsay (PhD, Georgetown; JD, University of Virginia) is a philosopher, practicing attorney, and the author of *Future Bioethics Overcoming Taboos.; Myths; and Dogma*. He is the president of the Center for Inquiry in Buffalo, New York.

Gerd Liidemann (Dr Theol, Goettingen) is the director of the Institute for Early Christian studies and a professor at the University of Goettingen.

His most recent book is *The First Three Years of Christianity*.

J. Harold Ellens, a licensed psychologist, is a retired university professor of philosophy and psychology, a US Army colonel, Presbyterian pastor, and theologian. His books include *Sex in the Bible* and *The Destructive Power of Religion*.

CONTENTS

Preface: Of Rocks, Hard Places, and Jesus
Fatigue R. "Joseph Hoffmann

An Alternative Q and the Quest of the Earthly
Jesus Dennis R. MacDonald

Jesus and the Brothers: The Theology of the
Imperfect Union R. Joseph Hoffmann

Popular Mythology in the Early Empire and
the Multiplicity of Jesus Traditions Justin
Memtt

Baves's Theorem for Beginners: Formal Logic

and Its Relevance to Historical Method *Richard C. Carrier*

The Abhorrent Void: The Rapid Attribution of Fictive Sayings and Stories to a Mythic Jesus
Robert M. Price

Jesus' Dispute in the Temple and the Origin of the Eucharist *Bruce Chilton*

The Authorized Version of His Birth and Death
David Trobisch

Prolegomenon to a Science of Christian Origins
Frank R. Zindler

"Every Plant Which My Heavenly Father Has Not Planted Shall Be Uprooted" *Robert Eisenman*

with Noelle Mcmma

On Not Finding the Historical Jesus R. Joseph
Hoffmann

Assessing the Evidence: Philosophical and Legal
Perspectives Ronald A. Lindsay

Paul as a Witness to the Historical Jesus Gerd
Liidemann

Jesus' Apocalyptic Vision and the Psychodvnamics of
Delusion 7. Harold Ellens

Epilogue: The Canonical-Historical Jesus R.
Joseph Hoffmann

Notes

PREFACE

OF ROCKS, HARD PLACES, AND JESUS FATIGUE

R. Joseph Hoffmann

Crouching somewhere between esthetic sound byte and historical detail is Michelangelo's famous statement about sculpture. "The job of the sculptor," Vasari attributes to *il Divino*, "is to set free the forms that are within the stone." It's a lovely thought—poetic, in fact. If you accept the theory of Renaissance Platonism, as Michelangelo embodies it,

you also have to believe that Moses and David were encased in stone, yearning to be released—as the soul yearns to be set free from the flesh in the theology of salvation.

You will, however, be left wondering why such a theory required human models with strong arms and firm thighs, and why the finished product bears no more resemblance to real or imagined historical figures than a drawing that any one of us could produce. We may lack Michelangelo's skill and his deft way with a rasp and chisel, but we can easily imagine more probable first millennium BCE heroes—in form, stature, skin tone, and body type—than the Italian beauties he released from their marble prisons. In fact, the more we know about the first millennium BCE, the more likely we are to be right. And alas, Michelangelo didn't know very much about history at all. And what's more, it made no difference to his art, his success, or to his reputation. That is why idealism and imagination are sometimes

at odds with history, or put bluntly, why history acts as a control on our ability to imagine or idealize anything, often profoundly wrong things.

If we apply the same logic to the New Testament, we stumble over what I have once or twice called the Platonic Fallacy in Jesus research. Like it or not, the New Testament is still the primary artifact of the literature that permits us to understand the origins of Christianity. It's the stone, if not the only stone. If we possessed only Gnostic and apocryphal sources as documentary curiosities and no movement that preserved them, we would be hard pressed to say anything other than that at some time in the first and second century a short-lived and highly incoherent religious movement fluoresced and faded (many did) in the night sky of Hellenistic antiquity. The Jesus we would know from these sources would be an odd co-mixture of insufferable infant *a la* the *Infancy Gospel of Thomas*, a hell-robber, like the liberator of the *Gospel of Nicodemus*; a mysterious cipher, like the

unnamed hero of the *Hymn of the Pearl* or an impenetrable guru, like the Jesus of the gnostic *Gospel of Thomas*. Despite the now-yellowed axiom we all learned as first-year divinity students (of a certain generation) and later in graduate school (the one where we are taught that "no picture of early Christianity is complete without availing ourselves of *all* the sources"), I will climb out on a limb to say that these sources are not so much integral to a coherent picture of early Christianity as they are pebbles in orbit around the gravitational center we call the canon. They are interesting—fascinating even—in showing us how uniformity of opinion and belief can wriggle out of a chaos of alternative visions, but they are not the stone that the most familiar form of Christianity was made from. That recognition is as important as it is increasingly irrelevant to modern New Testament discussion.

So, how do we approach the New Testament? What kind of rock is it? We know (to stay with the

analogy) that it's "metamorphic"—made of bits and pieces formed under pressure—in the case of the New Testament, doctrinal and political pressure to define the difference between majority and minority views and impressions, once but now unfashionably called "orthodoxy" and "heresy."

Whatever the root causes of canon formation, canon we have. The Platonic Fallacy comes into play when New Testament scholarship labors under assumptions that emanated from the literary praxis of Renaissance humanists and then (in methodized form) fueled the theological faculties of Germany well into the twentieth century (before a staggering retreat from "higher criticism" by neo-orthodox, and then existentialist, postmodern, and correctness theologians). The sequence of Jesus-quests that began before Schweitzer (who thought he was writing a retrospective!) and the succession of theories they produced were honest in their understanding of the metamorphic nature of the canon and the textual

complexity of the individual books that composed it. The legacy, at least a legacy of method, of the early quests was a healthy skepticism that sometimes spilled over into Hegelianism, as with F. C. Baur, or mischievous ingenuity, as with Bruno Bauer. But what Left: and Right Hegelians and their successors—from Harnack to Bultmann to the most radical of their pupils—had in common was a strong disposition to approach the canon with a chisel, assuming that if the historical accretions, misrepresentations, and conscious embellishment could be stripped away, beneath it all lay the figure of a comprehensible Galilean prophet whose life and message could be used to understand the "essence" (the nineteenth-century buzzword) of Christianity.

Whether the program was demythologizing, politico-liberationist, or poststructuralist, the methods seemed to chase forgone conclusions about what the Gospels were and what the protagonist must "really" have been like. Judged by the standards of the chisel

bearers of the Tübingen school, Schweitzer's caution that the Jesus of history would remain a mystery ("He comes to us as one unknown") was both prophetic and merely an interlude in the effort to excavate the historical Jesus. If it was meant to be dissuasive, it was instead a battle cry for better chisels and more theorists. In the latter part of the twentieth century, it has involved a demand for more sources as well—not to mention cycles of translations, each purporting to be "definitive" and thus able to shed light on a historical puzzle that the previous translation did not touch or failed to express. Judas, Philip, and Mary Magdalene have achieved a star status far out of proportion to anything they can tell us about the historical Jesus, let alone considerations of literary merit or influence on tradition. When I say this, I am not asking modern scholarship to embrace the opinions of "dead orthodox bishops" or "winners," but to acknowledge and investigate the choices the church's first intellectuals made and their reasons for

making them. The politicization of sources, the uninformative vivisection of historically important theological disputes into a discussion of outcomes (winners, losers) may make great stuff for the Discovery channel or the Easter edition of *Time*, but it is shamelessly Hollywood and depends on a culture of likeminded footnotes and a troubling disingenuousness with regard to what scholars know to be true and what they claim to be true.

Moreover, it is one of the reasons why a hundred years after the heyday of the Radical School of New Testament scholarship—which certainly had its warts—the questions of "total spuriousness" (as of Paul's letters) and the "nonhistoricity of Jesus" are still considered risible or taboo. They are taboo because of the working postulate that has dominated New Testament scholarship for two centuries and more: that conclusions depend on the uncovering of a kernel of truth at the center of a religious movement, a historical center, and, desirably, a historical person

resembling, if not in every detail, the protagonist described in the Gospels. This working postulate is formed by scholars perfectly aware that no similar imperative exists to corroborate the existence (or sayings) of die "historical" Adam, die historical Abraham, or Moses, or David—or indeed die prophets—or any equivalent effort to explain the evolution of Judaism on the basis of such inquiry. We are prone to think that the Jesus we excavate with literary tools is more historical than die religious icons Michelangelo released through his sculpting. But why?

The Platonic Fallacy depends on the "true story" being revealed through the disaggregation of traditions: dismantle the canon, factor and multiply the sources of the Gospels, marginalize the orthodox settlement as one among dozens of possible outcomes affecting the growth of the church, incorporate all the materials the church fathers sent to the bin or caused to be hidden away Now we're getting somewhere. It shuns the possibility that the aggregation of traditions

begins with something historical, but not with a historical individual—which even if it turns out to be false, is a real possibility. Even the most ardent historicists of the twentieth century anticipated a "revelation" available through historical research. Thus Harnack could dismiss most of the miracles of the Gospels, argue for absolute freedom of inquiry in Gospels research (a theme Bultmann would take up), and insist that "historical knowledge is necessary for every Christian and not just for the historian"—all, however, in order to winnow "the timeless nucleus of Christianity from its various time bound trappings."¹

The so-called Jesus Seminar of the last century was perhaps the last gasp of the Platonic Fallacy in action. Formed to "get at" the authentic sayings of Jesus, it suffered from the conventional hammer and chisel approach to the sources that has characterized every similar venture since the nineteenth century, missing only the idealistic and theological motives for sweeping up afterward. It will remain famous

primarily for its eccentricity, its claim to be a kind of Jesus-vetting jury and to establish through a consensus (never reached) what has evaded lonelier scholarship for centuries.

The Seminar was happy with a miracle-free Jesus, a fictional resurrection, a Jesus whose sayings were as remarkable as "And how are you today, Mrs. Jones?" It used and disused standard forms of biblical criticism selectively and often inexplicably to offer readers a "Jesus they never knew": a Galilean peasant, a cynic, a de-eschatologized prophet, a craftsman whose dad was a day laborer in nearby Sepphoris (never mind the Nazareth issue, or the Joseph issue). These purportedly "historical" Jesuses were meant to be more plausible than the Jesus whose DNA lived on in the fantasies of Dan Brown and Nikos Kazantzakis. But, in fact, they began to blur. It betimes took sources too literally and not literally enough, and when it became clear that the star system it evoked was resulting in something like a Catherine wheel

rather than a conclusion, it changed the subject.

As long ago as 1993, it became clear that the Jesus Seminar was yet another attempt to break open the tomb where once Jesus lay. It was then that I commented in a popular journal, "The Jesus of the Westar Project is a talking doll with a questionable repertoire of thirty-one sayings. Pull a string and he blesses the poor." I was anticipated in this by none other than John Dominic Crossan (a Seminar founder) who wrote in 1991, having produced his own minority opinion concerning Jesus, "It seems we can have as many Jesuses as there are exegetes ... exhibiting a stunning diversity that is an academic embarrassment." And Crossan's caveat had been expressed more trenchantly a hundred years before by the German scholar Martin Kaehler: "The entire life of the Jesus movement," he argued, was based on misperceptions "and is bound to end in a blind alley.... Christian faith and the history of Jesus repel each other like oil and water." ²

If we add to the work of the Jesus Seminar the "extra-Seminar Jesuses," magicians, insurgents, and bandits, we end up with a multiplicity that "makes the prospect that Jesus never existed a welcome relief."³

Some contributors to this volume are chastened expatriates from that experience, wary of further projects and either "minimally" hopeful of further results, or at least realistic in making claims for what can be known for sure about Jesus. Others are quite openly skeptical of the sources and the story they tell, and alert us to the contextual possibility that the Gospels are the products of the Christian imagination. All, I believe, think that the era of breaking rocks and piecing them back together to create plausible Jesuses, as Michelangelo created a plausible Moses for the Italians of the sixteenth century, is over. In fact, one of the benefits we inherit from the Jesus Seminar is a record of success and failure. It raised the question of methodology in a

way that can no longer be ignored, without, however, providing a map for further study. Its legacy is primarily a cautionary tale concerning the limits of "doing" history collectively, and sometimes theologically—a caution that must be taken seriously. For that reason, the reader of this volume will find no consensus but an anthology of ideas, no finality but an interesting batch of possibilities.

Jesus research—biblical research in general—through the end of the twentieth century was exciting stuff. The death of one of the great Albright students in 2008, and a former boss of mine at the University of Michigan, David Noel Freedman, reminds us that we may be at the end of the road. Albright's scholarship and research, and his general refusal to shy away from the "results" of archaeology, were accompanied by optimism in terms of how archaeology could be used to "prove" the Bible. In its general outline, he felt, the Bible was true; there was no reason (for example) to doubt the essential

biographical details of the story of Abraham in Genesis. A "biblical archaeologist's" job was not to test the Bible against the evidence but to test the evidence against the Bible.

Albright's pupils were less confident of the biblical record, and as William Dever observed in a 1995 article in *The Biblical Archaeologist*, "His central theses have all been overturned, partly by further advances in Biblical criticism, but mostly by the continuing archaeological research of younger Americans and Israelis to whom he himself gave encouragement and momentum.... The irony is that, in the long run, it will have been the newer 'secular' archaeology that contributed the most to Biblical studies, not 'Biblical archaeology.'⁴

New Testament archaeology is a different house, built with different stones. It is even more susceptible to the hazards, however, than the house of Albright. Every story about lost tombs and the discovery of the

house of next door to the house of the Holy Family in Nazareth is a sad reminder of how piety fogs the brain and muddies conclusions. To be perfectly fair, the biblical appendix—the New Testament—lacks the geographical markers and vivid information that suffuse the Hebrew Bible. If the Old Testament landscape is real geography populated by mythical heroes, the New Testament trends in the opposite direction. For that reason, New Testament scholars in my opinion have tried to develop an ersatz "archaeology of sources" to match the more impressive gains in Old Testament studies. We learn more with each passing decade about the contexts of the so-called New Testament period. We have not learned correspondingly more about the inhabitants of the story.

The reasons for the "new sources" trend in New Testament research are multiple, but the one I fear the most is Jesus fatigue. There is a sense that prior to 1980, New Testament scholarship was stuck in the

mire of post-Bultmannian ennui. Jesus Seminars and Jesus Projects have been in part a response to a particular historical situation. Five Gospels are better than four. The more sources we have, the more we know about Jesus. Qja) did exist, (b) did not exist, or (c) is far more layered and interesting than used to be thought. Judas was actually the primary apostle. No, it was Mary Magdalene. The scholarship of whimsy, of course, is not unique to the study of this ancient source, but in the study of no other ancient material are scholars able to get by with more that is plainly absurd.

As a Christian origins scholar by training, I am not even sure how one would go about the task, if it is a necessary task, of "proving" that Jesus existed. The fact that the majority of sayings attributed to him were not his is not an encouraging beginning to determining the status of a man who is otherwise known chiefly for his miraculous deeds. I am not certain that such a task can be taken seriously, even

if it were worth performing, because the evidence continually recedes in front of us. We have established an enviable science of sourceology, but without visible improvement in our knowledge of its purposes.

Yet the possibility that Christianity arose from causes that have little to do with a historical founder is one among many other questions investigators should take seriously. The demon crouching at the door is not criticism of its intent nor skepticism about its outcome, but the sense that biblical scholarship in the twentieth century will not be greeted with the same excitement as it was in Albright's day. Outside America, where the landscape is also changing, fewer people have any interest in the outcomes of biblical research, whether it involves Jericho or Jesus. Most of us were trained in a generation that believed certain questions were inherently interesting. But fewer and fewer people do. Jesus fatigue—the sort of despair that can only be compared to a police

investigation gone cold—is the result of a certain resignation to the unimportance of historical conclusions.

Gazing at the stars and looking back into history have in common the fact that their objects are distant and sometimes unimaginably hard to see. As an offering to current scholarship, the aggregate effect of these essays I hope is to discourage rock breaking, and model making and learning to train our lens in the right direction. Part of that process is to respond to the challenge: Why is this important? And I have the sense that in trying to answer that question, we will be answering bigger questions as well.

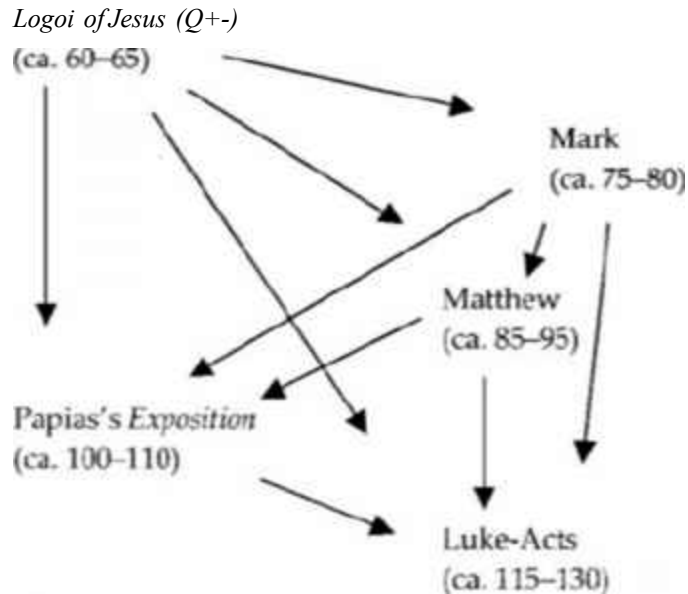
AN ALTERNATIVE Q AND THE QUEST OF THE EARTHLY JESUS

Dennis R. MacDonald

T

he quest for the historical Jesus to a large extent is a literary enterprise, at the heart of which is the so-called Synoptic Problem and cognate intertextual considerations, such as the relationship of the Gospels of John, Thomas, and Peter to the Synoptics. I hold to an alternative solution to the Synoptic Problem, namely, the Q+/Papias Hypothesis. In the following diagram you will note

that I refer to Q⁺ by its likely original title, the *Logoi of Jesus*.



The QVPapias Hypothesis
(The Gospel of John was written sometime after Luke-Acts)

Here I should also confess that, in my view, the

author of the Gospel of Mark, in addition to redacting *Logoi*, heavily imitated the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* for characterizations, plot devices, and type-scenes, as I have argued in *The Homeric Epics and the Gospel of Mark*¹ Matthew composed a hybrid Gospel from *Logoi* and Mark without the benefit of much additional information about Jesus; Papias, for his part, tried to make sense of the sequential differences between Mark, on the one hand, and *Logoi* and Matthew on the other, both of which he thought were flawed translations of a Hebrew Gospel of Matthew Luke, who, like Mark, frequently imitated classical Greek poetry, sought to improve on the hybrids that he found in Matthew and Papias's *Exegesis of Dominical Logia*, in part by extending his combination of *Logoi* and Mark to Paul's Roman imprisonment.

For the purposes of this article, I restrict my comments to the implications of this model and reconstruction of the *Logoi of Jesus* for

understanding the historical Jesus. Let me lead off with my conclusions. I see no compelling reason to doubt the existence of Jesus of Nazareth, but I also see no compelling reason to attribute any individual saying to him, including the Golden Rule or the Lord's Prayer. At stake is not the recovery of Jesus' words but of his distinctive voice. This conclusion, of course, is not new; what is new is my description of that voice.

THE *LOGOI OF JESUS* (Q+)

Here is an overview of my reconstruction of the lost Synoptic source. (The first numbers for each pericope indicate the sequential chapter-verse order in my reconstruction. The numbers that follow in parentheses are the Luke-based chapter-verse numbers. These verses appear in *The Critical Edition of*

[Robinson, Hoffmann, and Kloppenborg; Those that did not are preceded with a plus sign [+]. After the rubric one often will find an indented line indicating the influences of a text from the Jewish Bible.

1. John the Prophet

1:1-5 (+3:2-4, [M] 3:4-5). The Introduction of John

The logoi of Moses in the wilderness (Deut 1:1)

1:6-8 (3:7-9). John's Denunciations of Abraham's Children

Trees that do not produce fruit (Deut 20:20)

The day of God's vengeance (Deut 32:32-33 and 35)

1:9-10 (3:16-17). John and the One to Come

The promised prophet like Moses (Deut 34:10-12)

2. Jesus' Empowerment and Testing

2:1-2 (3:21-22). Baptism

2:3-15 (4:1-4, 9-12, 5-8, 13). Temptations in the Wilderness

Israel's temptations in the wilderness (Deut 8:2-5)

Moses does not eat for forty days (Deut 9:9)

Moses sees the Promised Land (Deut 34:1-4)

3. Jesus Acquires Disciples and Alienates Pharisees

3:1 (4:16). Return to Nazara

3:2-7 (9:57-60, +61-62). Acquiring Disciples

The calling of Elisha (1 Kgs 19:19-21)

3:8-13 (+5:27-32). Eating with Tax Collectors and Sinners

3:14-19 (+5:33-38). Not Fasting

3:20-24 (+6:1-5). Gleaning on the Sabbath

Death to the one who violates the Sabbath (Ex 31:12-15)

3:25-28 (+6:6-7, 9-10). Healing on the Sabbath

The healing of King Jeroboam (1 Kgs 13:3-6)

3:29-33 (+6:12-16). The List of the Twelve

Moses' ascent of Horeb with one man from each tribe (Deut 1:23-24 and 10:3)

4. The Inaugural Sermon

4:1-4 (6:20-23). Beatitudes

Moses' final beatitude on Israel (Deut 33:29)

4:5-7 (+6:24-26). Woes

4:8-9 (14:34—35). Insipid Salt

4:10-11 (16:16-17). Since John the Kingdom of God

4:12 (+[M] 5:19). Observing the Commandments

4:13 (16:18). Divorce Leading to Adultery

Moses' permission of divorce (Deut 24:1-4)

4:14-16 (+[M] 5:22-24). Reconciling before Sacrificing

Bringing one's gift to the altar (Lv 4:22-35)

4:17-18 (12:58-59). Settling out of Court

4:19-21 (+[M] 5:34-35, 37). Against Swearing Oaths

On oaths (Lv 19:12)

4:22-24 (6:29, [M] 5:41, 6:30). Renouncing One's Own Rights

On lending (Deut 23:14-15)

4:25-27 (6:27-28, 35). Love Your Enemies

On loving God, who will curse one's enemies
(Deut 30:6-7)

4:28-29 (6:32, 34). Impartial Love

On lending (Lv 25:37)

4:30 (6:36). Being Full of Compassion Like Your
Father

On being holy as God is holy (Lv 19:2)

4:31-32 (6:37-38). Not Judging

On just weights and measures (Lv 19:35)

4:33 (6:3 1). The Golden Rule

An eye for an eye (Lv 24:19-20)

4:34 (6:39). The Blind Leading die Blind

4:35 (6:40). The Disciple and die Teacher

4:36-37 (6:41-42). The Speck and die Beam

4:38-40 (6:43-45). The Tree Is Known by Its Fruit

4:41 (6:46). Not Just Saying Lord, Lord

4:42-44 (6:47-49). Houses Built on Rock or Sand

Moses' blessings and curses (Deut 30:15-18)

5. The Centurion's Faith

5:1-7 (7:1, 3, 6-9, +10). The Centurion's Faith

Moses slays the children of Gentile kings (Deut 2:31-34, 3:3-6, and 31:1-4)

6. Jesus' Praise of John

6:1-4 (7:18-19, 22-23). Signs That Jesus Is the One to Come

The promise of a prophet like Moses (Deut 34:10-12)

6:5-9 (7:24-28). John—More Than a Prophet

6:10-11 (7:29-30). For and Against John

6:12-16 (7:31-35). This Generation and Wisdom's Children

Moses' wicked generation (Deut 32:5)

6:17-23 (+7:37-41, 49-50). The Woman Caught in Adultery

God's finger writes on stone (Deut 9:10)

7. The Mysteries of the Kingdom of God

7:1-6 (+8:5-10). The Sower and the Reason for Parables

8. More Controversies

8:1-5 (4-20:21-25). Tribute to Caesar

8:6-17 (+20:29-38). Marriage and the Resurrection

Levirate marriage (Deut 25:5-6)

8:18-21 (+10:25-28). The Great Commandment

On loving God (Deut 6:5)

On loving one's neighbor (Lv 19:18)

Keeping the commandments (Lv 18:5)

"I am the God of your father" (Ex 3:6)

8:22-29 (11:14-15, 17-22). The Beelzebul Accusation

Death to the false prophet who produces signs
(Deut 13:2-4 and 6)

8:30-33 (11:23-26). The Return of the Unclean Spirit

8:34-35 (+11:27-28). Blessed Are Those Who Keep
God's Word

Moses' blessing of the womb (Deut 28:1-2 and 4)

8:36-40 (11:16, 29-32). The Sign of Jonah for This
Generation

Pharaoh's demand for a sign (Ex 7:9)

The miracle-working finger of God (Ex 8:15)

8:41-51 (+[M] 15:1-11). Unwashed Hands

Honoring father and mother (Ex 20:12 and 21:16)

8:52 (11:33). The Light on the Lampstand

8:53-54 (11:34-35). The Evil Eye

9. Woes Against Religious Leaders

9:1-3 (11:46, 43, 52). Woes Against Religious Leaders
I: On Exploitation

9:4-10 (+[M] 23:16-22). Woes Against Religious
Leaders II: On Oaths

9:11-16 (11:42, 39, 41, 44, 47-48). Woes Against
Religious Leaders III: On Purity

9:17-19 (11:49-51). Wisdom's Judgment on this Generation

9:20-21 (13:34—35). Judgment over Jerusalem

As an eagle protects his brood (Deut 32:11)

9:22 (+[Mk] 14:58). Jesus Will Destroy the Sanctuary

10. The Discipleship Discourse

10:1 (+12:1). Keep Yourselves from the Leaven of the Pharisees

10:2-3 (12:2-3). What Was Whispered Will Be Known

10:4-7 (12:4—7). Not Fearing the Body's Death

10:8-9 (12:8-9). Confessing or Denying

10:10 (12:10). Speaking Against the Holy Spirit

10:11-12 (12:11-12). Hearings before Synagogues

10:13-16 (+12:35-38). Preparing for the Return of
the Master

"Tie up your loose clothing" (Ex 12:11)

10:17-23 (12:39—40, 42-46). The Faithful or Unfaithful
Slave

10:24-27 (12:49, 51, 53, +52). Children Against Parents

The coming wrath of God (Deut 32:20-25)

11. The Coming of the Kingdom of God

11:1-3 (12:54-56). Judging the Time

11:4-5 (13:18-19). The Mustard Seed

11:6-7 (13:20-21). The Yeast

11:8-11 (13:24—27). I Do Not Know You

11:12-13 (13:29-28). Many Shall Come from Sunrise
and Sunset

11:14 (13:30). The Reversal of the Last and the First

11:15 (14:11). The Exalted Humbled and the Humble Exalted

11:16-22 (14:16-18, +19-20, 21, 23). The Great Supper

11:23-25 (14:26-27, 17:33). Hating One's Family and Taking One's Cross

Obedience to God above family (Deut 33:9)

12. On Entering the Kingdom of God

12:1-2 (17:1-2). Against Enticing Little Ones

12:3-5 (+[M] 5:30, 29). Cutting Off Offending Limbs

12:6 (+18:24—25). The Camel and the Eye of the Needle

12:7-9 (15:4—5, 7). The Lost Sheep

12:10-12 (15:8-10). The Lost Coin

12:13-16 (+[M] 21:28-31). The Two Sons

12:17-18 (17:3-4). Forgiving a Sinning Brother Repeatedly

On reproving a brother (Lv 19:17)

12:19-30 (+16:1-12). The Unjust Manager

12:31 (16:13). God or Mammon

13. The Eschatological Discourse

13:1-2 (17:23-24). The Son of Man Like
Lightning

13:3-8 (17:37, 26-27, +28-29, 30). As in the Days
of Noah

Coming punishment like that inflicted on
Sodom (Deut 29:21-22 [MT 29:22-23])

13:9-10 (17:34-35). One Taken, One Left

13:11-24 (19:12-13, 15-24, 26). The Entrusted Money

Gathering where one did not sow (Deut 6:10-12)

14. The Mission Speech

14:1-6 (+8:1, 9:1-2, [M] 10:5-6, 23). Do Not Go to the Gentiles

Convening the twelve tribes for final instructions (Deut 29:1)

14:7-8 (10:2, 3). Workers for the Harvest

14:9-14 (10:4-9). Instructions for the Mission

14:15-17 (10:10-12). Response to a Town's Rejection

14:18-20 (10:13-15). Woes Against Galilean Towns

14:21 (10:16). Whoever Takes You in Takes Me
in Response to a town's rejection (Deut
20:10-14)

14:22-23 (+10:18-19). The Fall of Satan

14:24-27 (10:21-24). Jesus' Prayer

14:28-30 (11:2-4). The Disciples' Prayer

14:31-34 (+11:5-8). The Generous Friend

14:35 (17:6). Faith like a Mustard Seed

14:36-40 (11:9-13). The Certainty of the
Answer to Prayer

14:41-42 (12:33-34). Storing up Treasures in Heaven

14:43-48 (+12:16-21). The Rich Fool

14:49-58 (12:22-31). Free from Anxiety like Ravens
and Lilies

God's provisions in the wilderness (Deut 8)

14:59-61 (22:28, +29, 30). Judging die Twelve Tribes of Israel

Moses' blessing of the twelve tribes of Israel (Deut 33)

THE APPLICATION OF HISTORICAL CRITERIA

Because my model places the *Logoi of Jesus* at the beginning of the Synoptic literary tradition and proposes that the bulk of didactic content in later Gospels ultimately derived from it, I would maintain that the most important task for scholars interested in recovering the teachings of Jesus is to apply historical criteria to this document. I will adopt those criteria favored by John P. Meier in *A Marginal Jew*,

and show how they apply to the text that I propose.²

Meier rightly disregards several potential criteria, such as "traces of Aramaic," "Palestinian environment," "vividness of narration," "tendencies of the developing Synoptic tradition," and "historical pre- sumption." In other words, to say that a pericope contains Aramaic words or syntax or that it issues from a Palestinian environment says nothing necessarily about Jesus, who was but one of many in the movement he founded who spoke Aramaic and lived in Palestine. "Vividness of narration" could suggest an eyewitness account, but it more likely suggests literary art. The criterion of "tendencies of the developing Synoptic tradition," once favored by form critics who wanted to write histories of various pericopae (as implied by the word *Formgeschichte*), has run afoul of the plasticity and unpredictability of the transmission of oral traditions. By "historical presumption," Meier refers to the challenge often made by Christian apologists that anyone who would

doubt the authenticity of information in the Gospels must prove it to be false, but as he sagely notes, "the burden of proof is simply on anyone who tries to prove anything."³

These caveats about dubious criteria pertain as well to my reconstruction of the *Logoi of Jesus*. Even though one finds many transliterated Aramaic words and evidence of a Palestinian provenance in this reconstruction, these data need not point to Jesus. Claims about vividness and tendencies in the tradition must be put to the side, and there is no special burden of proof for doubting its historical unreliability. In fact, because one must deal first and foremost with a work of literature, if there is a burden of proof, it lies heavier on those who would push the content back to an oral-traditional stage, not to mention the historical Jesus.

Meier's five preferred criteria are "multiple attestation," "embarrassment," "discontinuity,"

"coherence," and "rejection and execution"; each of these is relevant to my reconstruction. The criterion of *multiple attestation* "focuses on those sayings or deeds of Jesus that are attested in more than one independent literary source (e.g., Mark, (X, Paul, John)."⁴ According to the Q+/Papias Hypothesis, Mark and the Synoptic source are not independent; they are intimately connected. Furthermore, I am convinced that the author of the Gospel of John knew at least two of the Synoptics.

Here are the parallels between my reconstruction of *Logoi* and Mark. (Numbers appearing in the *Logoi* column in parenthesis seem to have inspired free redactions by Mark.)

<i>Logoi</i>	Mark	Pericope Title	
Luke-based	sequential		
7-27	6:8	1:2	Citation of Ex 23:20 and Mai 3:1
+3:2-4, (M) 3:4-5	1:1-5	1:3-6	The introduction of John
3:16	1:9	1:7-8	John and the one to come
3:21-22	2:1-2	1:9-11	Baptism
4:1-2, 10-11	2:3-4, 8-9	1:12-13	Temptations in the wilderness
"John arrested."		cf. 1:14a	John arrested
4:16	3:1	1:14-15	Jesus returns to Galilee
'Jesus performs miracles.'		cf. 1:23-2:12	Jesus performs miracles
(9:57-60)	(3:2-5)	1:16-20	Jesus calls fishermen

For the next pericope Mark transformed a healing story from *Logoi* into a controversy and relocated it to introduce four other controversies, where Mark follows the sequence of his source

precisely.

(7:1,3, 6-9, +10)	(5:1-7)	2:1-12	The sinful paralytic
+ 5:27-32	3:8-13	2:13-17	Eating with tax collectors and sinners
+5:33-38	3:14-19	2:18-22	Not fasting
+6:1-5	3:20-24	2:23-28	Gleaning on the Sabbath
+6-7,9-10	3:25-28	3:1-6	Healing on the Sabbath
+6:12-16	3:29-33	3:13-19	The list of the Twelve

Mark relocated the Bezebul controversy and *Logoi* 3:31-35 to augment these controversies, and thus emphasized Jewish hostility to Jesus earlier in the Gospel. Between these two units he inserted another saying from the Synoptic source to recruit it for a battle with Pharisees.

11:14-15, 17-18,21-22	8:22-25, 28-29	3:20-27	The Beelzebul controversy
(12:10)	(10:10)	3:28-29	Speaking against the Holy Spirit
(+1 1:27-28)	(8:34—35)	3:31-35	Jesus'true family

He created the parable speech in chapter 4 as an alternative to *Logois* Inaugural Sermon by collecting and redacting parables that were scattered throughout his source.

+8:5-10	7:1-6	4:1-12	The sower and the reason for parables
11:33	8:52	4:21	The light on the lampstand
12:2,3	10:2-3	4:22-23	What is hidden will be known
6:38	4:32	4:24	Measure for measure
19:26	13:23	4:25	Whoever has, it will be given to him
(13:20-21)	(11:6-7)	4:26-29	The seed growing secretly
13:18-19	11:4-5	4:30-34	The mustard seed
(7:1,3,6-9, +10)	(5:1-7)	5:21-43	Jairus's daughter and the hemorrhaging woman

The Mission Speech apparently came at the end of *Logoi*. Mark mined it for content in three sections earlier in his Gospel: chapters 9-10 for teachings on discipleship, chapter 11 for teachings on prayer, and here in chapter 6 for his own version of the Mission Speech. By relocating the discourse here, he provided reason for Herod Antipas's awareness of Jesus'

activities.

+8:1, 9:1-2, (M) 10:5	14:1-4	6:6b-8b	Calling the disciples for their mission
10:4-9	14:9-14	6:8-10	Instructions for the mission
10:10-12	14:15-17	6:11-13	Response to a town's rejection
+(M) 15:1-11	8:41-51	7:1-17	Unwashed hands
(11:39,41)	(9:12-13)	7:18-23	Nothing outside a person can defile
(7:1,3,6-9,+10)	(5:1-7)	7:24-30	The Syrophoenician woman
(11:16,29-30)	(8:36-38)	8:10-12	No sign for this generation (narrativized)
(+12:1)	(10:1)	8:13-21	Keep yourselves from the leaven of the Pharisees (narrativized)

He constructed the subsequent discourse on discipleship from various chapters of *Logoi*, but especially 10-12.

(14:26-27, 17:33)	(1 1:23-25)	8:34-37
12:8-9	10:8-9	8:38
(+[M] 10:23)	(14:6)	9:1
(10:16)	(14:21)	9:33-37
(11:23)	(8:30)	9:40-41
17:1-2	12:1-2	9:42
+(M) 5:29-30	12:3-4	9:43-48
14:34-35	4:8-9	9:49-50
(16:18)	(4:13)	10:1-12
(12:33-34)	(14:41—42)	10:21-22
+ 18:24-25	12:5-6	10:23-28
(14:26-27, 17:33)	(1 1:23-25)	10:29-30
(13:30)	(11:14)	10:31
(14:11)	(11:15)	10:41-45
13:35	9:21	11:9-11

The cost of discipleship

Confessing or denying

Some standing here will not taste
death

Taking in children (narrativized)

Whoever is not against us is for us

Against enticing little ones

Cutting off offending limbs

Inspid salt

Divorce leading to adultery
(narrativized)

Storing up treasures in heaven

The camel and the eye of the
needle

The rewards of discipleship

The reversal of the first and the last

The greatest is the slave

Blessed is the one who comes in the
name of the Lord (narrativized)

The evangelist next relocated pericopae from the Mission Speech into instructions on prayer after his destruction of the fig tree.

17:6	14:35	11:22b—23	Faith like a mustard seed
11:9-10	14:36-37	11:24b	Certainty of the answer to prayer
(+[M] 5:23-24a)	(4:12—13a)	11:25	Forgiving before praying
(11:2—4)	(14:28-30)	11:25	Forgiving before praying
(14:16-18, + 19-21,23)	(11:16-22)	12:1-12	The murderous vinedressers

Mark apparently relocated the following controversies to intensify the hostilities between Jesus and the Jewish authorities before his prediction of the destruction of Jerusalem. Once again, he seems to follow *Logoi's* order.

+20:21-25	8:1-5	12:13-17	Tribute to Caesar
+20:27-38	8:6-17	12:18-27	Marriage and the resurrection
+ 10:25-28	8:18-21	12:28-34	The great commandment
11:43	9:2	12:38-40	Front seats in synagogues
(+[M] 23:16-20)	(9:4-10)	12:41-44	The widow's penny (narrativized)
(+[Mk] 14:58)	(9:22)	13:1-2	Not one stone left on another (narrativized)

The evangelist created chapter 13 in part by collecting *Logoi's* predictions of the future.

(12:11,12)	(10:11-12)	13:9-11	Hearings before authorities
12:49,51,53 +52	10:24-27	13:12-13	Children against parents
(+11:27)	(8:34)	13:14-20	The War: woe to those who nurse
17:23-24	13:1-2	13:21-23	The Son of Man like lightning
(17:23-24)	(13:1-2)	13:24-27	"The stars will fall from the sky"
(+[M] 10:23)	(14:6)	13:30	This generation will not pass away
(16:17)	(12:33)	13:31-32	Jesus' words will not pass away
(12:39-40)	(10:17-18)	13:33-37	The uncertainty of the hour

From this point to the end of the Gospel one will find no primary redactions of *Logoi*, though Mark seems to have narrativized several sayings from it.

(17:1-2)	(12:1-2)	14:21	Woe to the betrayer
(4:1-4, 9-12, 5-8)	(2:3-14)	14:32-42	Gethsemane
(11:2-4)	(14:28-30)	14:35-42	Jesus' prayer at Gethsemane (narrativized)
(+[Mk] 14:58)	(9:22)	14:58-64	We heard him say, "I will destroy this sanctuary" (narrativized)
(6:29)	(4:22)	14:65	Jesus' slapped on the face
«M] 5:41)	(4:23)	15:21	Simon of Gyrene carries Jesus' cross (narrativized)
(+[Mk] 14:58)	(9:22)	15:28-32	"Destroyer of the sanctuary,... rescue yourself" (narrativized)

I am aware that knowledgeable readers most likely hold to some version of the two dominant Synoptic solutions: the Two-Document Hypothesis (2DH) or the Marcan-Priority-without-Q[^] Hypothesis (Mw/oQH). Both camps may well view this list as outrageous. Advocates of 2DH generally insist that Mark knew nothing of Q^j advocates of Mw/oQH

deny the existence of a lost source altogether.

Furthermore, advocates of both positions will recognize in my assessment the loss of independent testimony to the historical Jesus. Partisans of the 2DH insist that Mark and (X represent independent channels of tradition, and advocates of the Mw/oQH similarly assume that Matthew had access to traditions about Jesus independent of Mark, even without Q. But I would argue that similarities between (X (or Matthew's tradition) and Mark usually issue from Mark's redaction of the *Logoi of Jesus*. Thus, the only significant textual deposit of teachings ascribed to Jesus is the lost Synoptic source. If the Gospels are indeed so literarily related, the number of possible multiple attestations shrivels.

But it does not shrivel to nothing Three passages in Josephus largely square with the depictions of John the Baptist and Jesus in the Synoptic source and thus independently attest to them:

To some of the Jews the destruction of Herod's army seemed to be divine vengeance, and certainly a just vengeance, for his treatment of John, surnamed the Baptist. For Herod had put him to death, though he was a good man and had exhorted the Jews to lead righteous lives, to practice justice towards their fellows and piety towards God, and so doing to join in baptism. In his view this was a necessary preliminary if baptism was to be acceptable to God_____When others too joined the crowds about him, because they were aroused to the highest degree by his sermons, Herod became alarmed. Eloquence that had so great an effect on mankind might lead to some form of sedition, for it looked as if they would be guided by John in everything that they did. Herod decided therefore that it would be much better to strike first and be rid of him before his work led to an uprising, than to wait for an upheaval, get involved in a difficult situation, and see his mistake. Though John, because

of Herod's suspicions, was brought in chains to Machaerus ... and there put to death. {A.J. 18.118-19 [LCL]}⁵

The opening pericopae of the *Logoi of Jesus* present John in a similar light: he was a popular and controversial preacher of moral exhortation to crowds who thronged to be baptized in the Jordan River. I also propose that John had been imprisoned early in the document, which would explain why he had to send his disciples to ask if Jesus were the one to come (6:1-2 [7:18-19]). Josephus does not say what in John's message Antipas found seditious, but the Baptist's preaching of impending wrath and apocalyptic intervention, as in *Logoi*, may well have been part of the story.

The second passage in Josephus is the most controversial of the three, because it was heavily interpolated by a Christian hand. Fortunately, one can

rather confidently excise these clumsy interpolations while leaving some of the original elements intact. The following is Meier's translation of the truncated Greek text, but one must use it with caution: it is a reasonable but nonetheless hypothetical reconstruction: At this time there appeared Jesus, a wise man.... He gained a following both among many Jews and among many of Greek origin. And when Pilate, because of an accusation made by the leading men among us, condemned him to the cross, those who had loved him previously did not cease to do so. And up until this very day the tribe of Christians (named after him) has not died out. (reconstructed from *A.J.* . 18.63-64)⁶

Much of this summary applies to the Jesus of *Logoi*, where he is admired by Gentiles as well as Jews. Religious authorities considered him guilty of a capital crime, but it was Romans who crucified him. After his death his followers continued their devotion to him.⁷

The third and final citation in Josephus concerns Jesus obliquely. *A.J.* 20 narrates the death of his brother James at the hands of Ananus the high priest, a Sadducee, who illegally

convened the judges of the Sanhedrin and brought before them a man named James, the brother of Jesus who was called the Christ [another Christian interpolation?], and certain others. He accused them of having transgressed the law and delivered them up to be stoned. Those of the inhabitants of the city who were considered the most fair-minded and who were strict in observance of the law were offended at this. They therefore secretly sent to King Agrippa urging him ... to order Ananus to desist from any further such actions. (*A.J.* 20.200-201 [LCL])

This fascinating passage suggests that

Torah-observant Jews in Jerusalem not long before the Jewish War were divided about whether apparent violations of Torah by James and "certain others"—almost certainly other followers of Jesus—merited stoning. Only the intervention of those "who were strict in observance of the law" prevented the Sanhedrin from executing others who had similarly transgressed.⁸

The depiction of Jesus throughout *Logoi* as challenging Mosaic laws and establishing alternative rules of conduct squares with Josephus's statement that the Jerusalem Sanhedrin condemned James and other followers of Jesus as scorning sacred norms. It also is worth noting that, according to the Synoptic source, Jesus, though critical of aspects of the law and the management of the temple, reaffirmed traditional customs, including the offering of gifts and sacrifices at the temple. In other words, Josephus's depiction of polarized attitudes toward James among the Jerusalem religious elite is consistent with Jesus'

complex relationship to Torah in the *Logoi of Jesus*.

Other promising examples of multiple attestation are overlaps between the Synoptic source and the authentic epistles of Paul, the majority of which are unmarked, that is, not directly attributed to Jesus.

	Paul	<i>Logoi of Jesus</i>
Bless those who persecute	Rom 12:14, 1 Cor 4:12	4:25-26 (6:27-28)
Do not return evil for evil	Rom 12:17,21 1 Thes 5:5	4:33 (6:31)
Be kind to one's enemies	Rom 12:19	4:25 (6:27)
Give tribute to Caesar	Rom 13:6-7	8:5 (+20:25)
The love command	Rom 13:8-10	8:18-21 (+10:25-28)
Do not judge others	Rom 14:10, 13	4:31 (6:37)
Do not entice others to sin	Rom 14:13	12:2(7:2)
Nothing is unclean in itself	Rom 14:14	8:51 (+[M] 15:11)
Faith can move mountains	1 Cor 13:2	14:35(7:6)
Give away one's possessions	1 Cor 13:3	14:41 (12:33)
Jesus will return as a thief	1 Thes 5:2	10:17 (12:39)
When people say peace, then destruction	1 Thes 5:3	13:5(17:27)

In four invaluable cases, Paul attributes to Jesus teachings similar to those found in the Synoptic source. The first appears in 1 Thessalonians: For we tell you this by a word of the Lord, that those of us who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who slept [viz. died]; the Lord himself, with a command, with the sound of an archangel, and with a trumpet of God, will descend from heaven, and the dead in Christ will arise first. Then we, the living and the remaining, together with them, will be snatched up in clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we will always be with the Lord. (1 Thes 4:15-17)

The *Logoi of Jesus* often speaks of the return of Jesus as the Son of Man to rescue the faithful, but no passage precisely matches this passage in Paul.⁹ Its value lies in its witness to traditions attributed to Jesus in which he predicts his return, but there remains a long leap between such traditions and the

historical Jesus.

Romans 14:9 provides the second example: "I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is defiling in itself." I take the reference to "the Lord Jesus" to imply that Paul knew a tradition that attributed this claim to the historical Jesus. *Logoi* 8:51 (+[M] 15:11) reads: "What goes into a person does not defile him, but what comes out of a person defiles him."

The third example of Paul's attribution of a tradition to Jesus is his prohibition of divorce: "I command those who are married—not I but the Lord—that a woman not separate from her husband (but if she does separate, let her stay unmarried or let her be reconciled to her husband), and that a man not leave his wife" (1 Cor 7:10-11). Unlike a similar command in *Logoi* 4:13 (16:18), Paul applies the dominical prohibition first and primarily to a woman's separation from her husband, whereas *Logoi*

addresses only the husband's divorce of his wife. What makes this Pauline reference most significant for understanding the historical Jesus is the attribution to Jesus of legislation that contradicts Deuteronomy 24:1-4, apparently to protect a woman from arbitrary dismissal by her husband.

No less important is the final example, also from 1 Corinthians, in which Paul says that he chose not to abide by a command of "the Lord," namely, that "those who proclaim the gospel should live by the gospel" (9:14); earlier in the chapter he stated that he, like "the other apostles and brothers of the Lord and Cephas," had "the right to eat and drink" at the expense of others and be exempt from other labor (9:4—6). One recalls Jesus' command to the Twelve in *Logoi* 14:12 (10:7): "And at that house remain, eating and drinking whatever they provide, for the worker is worthy of one's reward." This parallel is significant not simply because of similar wording; Paul knows that Jesus demanded a pattern of apostolic support

that other missionaries followed; he also was aware that the Corinthians faulted Paul for violating the demand by working with his own hands. The author of *Logoi* knew this same institution; in other words, this overlap between Paul and the Synoptic source beautifully satisfies the criterion of "multiple attestation," but one cannot immediately assume that Paul or the author of *Logoi* was correct in attributing to Jesus either the command to live by the gospel or the command against divorce.

It also is important to note that both Paul and the *Logoi of Jesus* use of the metaphor βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ, "the kingdom of God." This expression is surprisingly rare in writings demonstrably earlier than the New Testament, but it appears seven times in authentic Pauline epistles (Rom 14:17; 1 Cor 4:20, 6:9 and 10, and 15:24 and 50; Gal 5:21), and nineteen times in my reconstruction of *Logoi*. These points of contact between Paul and *Logoi* are important, but one must recognize that multiple attestation can only prove that

the two authors, neither of whom knew the other's work, received such material as traditions. To determine if Jesus himself was the origin of these traditions, one must apply other criteria.

Meier describes his criterion of *embarrassment* like this: "The early Church would hardly have gone out of its way to create material that only embarrassed its creator or weakened its position in arguments with opponents."¹⁰ The author of *Logoi* probably did not create Jesus' submission to John's "baptism of repentance"; surely he did not create the fasting of the followers of John the Baptist and the absence of the practice among the Twelve, for the text acknowledges that after Jesus' death, the Twelve regularly did fast; presumably he did not create the objection that some of Jesus' opponents accused him of being "a glutton and drunkard, a chum of tax collectors and sinners!" (6:15 [7:34]).¹¹

"Closely allied to the criterion of embarrassment,

the criterion of discontinuity ... focuses on words or deeds of Jesus that cannot be derived from Judaism at the time of Jesus or from the early Church after him." ¹² I would modestly adjust Meier here by replacing the words "cannot be derived" with "most likely were not derived." The Synoptic source contains neutral or apparently unfreighted details, adiaphora, that seem not to have been generated either from Judaism or the Christian movement. I see no reason to suspect the accuracy of the following information: Jesus' home was in Nazareth of Galilee; he traveled to Judea, was baptized by John (an apocalyptic and ascetic preacher of repentance who was scorned by the religious establishment), returned to Galilee, conducted a ministry in towns and villages there (e.g., Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum), and traveled with several male disciples; he was considered a teacher, exorcist, and wonder worker (regardless of what we now might believe about demons or miracles), met hostility from Torah-observant Jews,

and was crucified by the Romans with the encouragement of the Jewish authorities in Jerusalem. Although the number of the disciples, twelve, surely is significant, their names are not, and at least the names John and Peter (Cephas) are attested independently in Pauline Epistles. This summary of adiaphora in *Logoi* says little about Jesus' proclamation, and for that very reason, because it is not religiously weighted, it probably reflects reliable traditions about him.

This summary, however, says virtually nothing about Jesus' teachings. Meier gives several examples of teachings that he would qualify on the basis of discontinuity, including Jesus' "sweeping prohibition of all oaths" (4:19-21 [+ (M) 5:34-35, 37]) and his "total prohibition of divorce" (4:13 [16:18]).¹³ Both of these appear in my reconstruction.

I would argue, however, that the literary concerns of the author of the *Logoi of Jesus* render this criterion of discontinuity somewhat less compelling

than Meier might have one believe. The author of the lost Synoptic source apparently composed it as an imitation of the book of Deuteronomy to depict Jesus as the prophet like Moses promised in Deut 18:18-19 and 34:10-12. Here I will include only the beginnings of the two works.

Deut 1:1

Logoi title, 1:1 and 5 (+3:2 and +[M] 3:5)

These are the *logoi* that Moses

The *Logoi* of Jesus

spoke to all of Israel beyond the Jordan

1:1 It happened that John the Baptist was

in the wilderness

in the wilderness

preaching a baptism of repentance....

5 And all the region of the Jordan went out to him, and were baptized in the Jordan river].

Jesus' temptations in the wilderness after his baptism both imitate and quote Deuteronomy 8; he clearly plays a role similar to Moses when he takes twelve chosen disciples up a mountain where he presents his Inaugural Sermon; and the book ends with blessings on Jesus' disciples if they remain faithful to him after his departure, much as Moses blessed the twelve tribes before his death at the end of Deuteronomy. The author sustains this presentation of Jesus as the prophet like Moses throughout much of the book.

Not only is Jesus a prophet *like* Moses, he is the Son of God and therefore *superior* to him. In other words, Jesus' teachings in *Logoi* are discontinuous with Judaism because the author wanted to display Jesus in competition with Moses. The criterion of discontinuity, therefore, is most compelling when Jesus' teachings are discontinuous not only from Judaism but also from the perspectives of the Jesus

movement represented by *Logoi*. I would suggest at least two examples that satisfy this more rigorous test. The author knew that after Jesus' death his disciples fasted, but he retained information that they did not fast during Jesus' lifetime, unlike the disciples of John and the Pharisees (3:14-19 [+5:33-38]). Jesus in the Synoptic source claims that God had forsaken the Jerusalem temple, yet the author seems to retain Jesus' commands to his followers about how to give proper sacrifices there (4:15-16 [+ (M) 5:23-24]).

As we have seen, both Paul and *Logoi* speak of "the kingdom of God," a rather rare expression in ancient Judaism. The author of *Logoi* distinguishes between God's kingdom, "the kingdoms of the world" (2:11 [4:5]), and the kingdom of Satan (8:25 [11:18]). John the Baptist was the last prophet before the advent of the kingdom. "The law and the prophets were in force until John. From then on the kingdom of God is in force" (4:10 [16:16]). "The least significant in God's kingdom is more than" John the

Baptist (6:9 [7:28]). Jesus' exorcisms witness to the advent of the kingdom. "If it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then there has come upon you the kingdom of God" (8:27 [11:20]).¹⁴

Empowered by the Spirit, aware that he is the Son of God, and unsuccessfully tempted by the devil, Jesus returns to Galilee and preaches "Repent! The kingdom of God has arrived" (3:1 [4:16]; cf. 14:1 [+8:1]). This was also to be the message of Jesus' disciples after his death: "And cure the sick there, and say to them, The kingdom of God has reached unto you" (14:14 [10:9]). To be "fit for the kingdom of God" requires one not to look back to one's birth family (3:7 [+9:62]). God prepared it for Jesus' poor disciples (4:1 [6:20]), where those who hunger will eat, and those who mourn will be consoled (4:2 [6:21]). "How difficult it is for those who have wealth to enter into the kingdom of God. It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a

rich person to enter the kingdom of God" (12:5-6 [+18:24—25]).

The kingdom also has a mysterious quality. The Twelve were "given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but to the rest it is given in parables" (7:6 [+8:10]).

11:4 *And he said, "What is the kingdom of God like; and with what am I to compare it?"* 13:18

11:5 *It is like a seed of mustard which a person took and threw onto the earth. And it grew and became a tree."* 13:19

11:6 *And again, "With what am I to compare the kingdom of God?"* 13:20

11:7 *It is like yeast, which a woman took and hid in three measures of flour until it was fully fermented."* 13:21

Although the kingdom already is present in the world, it will not come to fruition until the end of history, as is implied in the Lord's Prayer.

14:28 " *When you pray, say*
Father may your name be kept holy'-
let your kingdom come."

11:2

God will reward with bounty those who suffer hardships in following Jesus.

14:58 *"Hut seek his kingdom,*
and all these shall be granted to you"

12:31

The kingdom of God was for the children of Abraham, "the sons of the kingdom," but it will be Gentiles who will dine in the future kingdom.

11:12 *"And many shall come from sunrise and sunset and recline* 13:29
11:13 *with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of God* 13:28
*but the sons of the kingdom will be thrown out into the outer
darkness, where there will be wailing and grinding of teeth"*

The parable of the great supper illustrates this insofar as those who were invited to the dinner ultimately do not attend, because of their attachments to family or possessions. The house is filled instead with those who had not originally been invited (11:16-22 [14:16-17, 18, +19-20, 21, 23]).

The "exegetes of the law" neither go into "the kingdom of God" nor let others enter it (9:3 [11:52]). "Truly I tell you that tax collectors and prostitutes will precede the Pharisees into the kingdom of God" (12:16 [+ (M) 21:31]). "The last will be first, and the first last" (11:14 [13:30]).¹⁵

14:59 *"7 ruly I tell you that you are the ones who followed me;* 22:28
14:60 *my Father will give you the kingdom,* +22:29
and when the Sou of Man sits on the throne of his glory,
14:61 *you too will sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel."* 22:30

Furthermore, the *Logoi of Jesus* presents him, the announcer of God's kingdom, violating traditional Jewish law with respect to Sabbath observance, table purity, divorce, association with sinners, and the stoning of adulterers. In other words, his disputes with Pharisees and his actions match his view that God's kingdom introduces a new regime that replaces "the law and the prophets," which culminated in John the Baptist.

The kingdom of God is a profound, coherent, and alternative moral vision that attempts to redefine fidelity to the God of Israel. This understanding of God's rule probably reflects the historical Jesus and

not merely the commitments of the author of the lost Synoptic source or his tradition. I would suggest that the metaphor of the kingdom of God implies an alternative to traditional Judaism, which might explain Jesus' selection of twelve men to be his most inornate disciples (a tradition known also to Paul). For the author of *Logoi*, Jesus was a prophet like Moses.

I am unwilling to defend the authenticity of any of these sayings; indeed, I am confident that most of them cannot have come from the historical Jesus. On the other hand, many of the elements of this portrayal of the kingdom of God are coherent with another of Meier's criteria.

"The criterion of coherence holds that other sayings and deeds of Jesus that fit well with the preliminary data base established by using our first three criteria have a good chance of being historical (e.g., sayings concerning the coming of the kingdom of God or disputes with adversaries over legal

observance)." ¹⁶ Here it will be useful to review the data base about Jesus' teaching that I have argued for from the first three criteria.

Criterion 1: Multiple Attestation to Content in *Logoi*

Antipas arrested John the Baptist, a popular moral preacher (Josephus).

Jesus apparently had twelve male followers, two of whom were named John and Peter or Cephas (Paul).

His followers claimed that he prohibited divorce (Paul).

His followers believed that he said that food of itself did not render one defiled (Paul).

His followers used the Utopian metaphor "the kingdom of God" (Paul).

He had followers among both Jews and Gentiles (Josephus).

His followers claimed that he had issued a command that "those who proclaim the gospel should live by the gospel" (Paul).

Pilate crucified him, but his cause did not die out (Josephus; cf. Paul).

Torah-observant Jews disagreed among themselves about the righteousness of his followers (Josephus).

His followers claimed that he predicted (before or perhaps after his death) that he would descend from heaven and rescue his followers (Paul).

Criterion 2: Embarrassing Features in *Logoi*

He was baptized by John.

He rejected fasting.

Criterion 3: Content in *Logoi* Discontinuous with the Jesus Tradition

He did not fast.

He instructed his followers about how to offer
sacrifices at the temple.

Armed with such information, one could comb through the reconstructed Synoptic source and argue for the authenticity of related passages, including many directly related to the kingdom of God. The result would also satisfy Meier's final criterion.

"The criterion of Jesus' rejection and execution ... does not directly indicate whether an individual saying or deed of Jesus is authentic. Rather, it directs attention to the historical fact that Jesus met a violent end at the hands of Jewish and Roman

officials and then asks us what historical words and deeds of Jesus can explain his trial and crucifixion."

¹⁷ Surely Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom of God whose ethics ran counter to prevailing Judaism and with political implications for Rome would have been sufficient to get him into enough hot water to get him crucified.

CONCLUSION

This essay has argued that the most pressing issue facing scholars invested in understanding the earthly Jesus is not historical but literary, namely, the proper assessment of the intertextual connections among the Gospels. Advocates of the Two-Document Hypothesis are correct in insisting that Matthew-Luke overlaps against Mark point to a missing source, namely, (X), but they are wrong in concluding that Mark was

ignorant of this document. Advocates of Marcan-Priority-without-Q⁺ are correct in insisting that Luke knew Matthew, but this need not compromise the existence of Q. I have attempted to reconstruct the missing Synoptic source by taking Mark seriously as a third witness to it, and the resulting text is about twice the size of other reconstructions (Q⁺, which I prefer to call the *Logoi of Jesus*).

Furthermore, I would insist that QJs not the only Synoptic source that has disappeared, for Luke seems to have known Papias's five-volume *Exegesis of Dominical Logia*, which has survived only in a score of fragments. I thus hold to the Q⁺/Papias solution to the Synoptic Problem.

Armed with this new model for Synoptic intertextuality and a new reconstruction of the *Logoi of Jesus*, I have attempted to apply historical criteria to my reconstruction with the following results. Even

though the lost Synoptic source is a sophisticated Greek rewriting of the book of Deuteronomy to portray Jesus as the promised eschatological prophet like Moses, the author had access to much traditional information about Jesus. Not only did an earthly Jesus exist, he provided his followers a coherent moral vision in his teaching on the kingdom of God, a moral vision that apparently shaped his conduct and that of his first followers.

JESUS AND THE BROTHERS

The Theology of the Imperfect Union

R. Joseph Hoffmann

In a book written in 1994, New Testament scholar Marcus Borg suggests that the Jesus of the Gospels, a shadowy figure if ever there was one, can be seen as a social reformer who stretched the interpretation of the Jewish purity code to its limits.¹ "Purity code" is shorthand for a section of the book of Leviticus (18-27) that lists various prohibitions against certain kinds of social and sexual behavior.

The code forbids fathers to sleep with daughters, donkeys to be used as surrogates for males, men to sleep with menstruating women, and men to "sleep with a man as with a woman" under pain of death (Lv 20:13). The code is too early to envisage "a man sleeping with a man as with a man," and says nothing, given the androcentric naaie of the advice, to prohibit the unthinkable crime of a "woman sleeping with a woman as with a woman."

Whether or not Jesus himself said anything about specific sexual taboos listed in the code is unknown: he certainly is reported as saying a few things about purity and clean thoughts in the so-called Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5-7)—but whatever the case, it is beside the point. As a Jew living in the Mediterranean world, he was a social outcast and a religious pariah for failing to find a suitable *kallah*, settle down, and raise a family. It is only when this historical reality is laid aside—for example, in the belief that as the son of God it is unthinkable for him to have had

children (after the manner of Zeus?)—that the question of his specialized and unusual sexual existence becomes insignificant. And so it was until the last century—insignificant.

In Jesus' day, he was pricking at the goads of a system that equated homosexuality with the sacrifice of children to Molech (an "abomination, against nature," Lv 18:21), and in his longest disquisition on an aspect of the purity code (adultery: Mt 5:27-30; cf. Lv 20:9), he has no word to say on the subject of "healthy" sexual relationships.

This is more amazing when one considers that, in the same discourse, Jesus is given to define anger, murder, lust, and adultery (equating lust with adultery [5:28] in a notoriously austere fashion that probably reflects the thinking of a married but sexually austere second-century bishop) but has nothing to say about *7topVfia*, a word that can mean simply "fornication" but more often means homosexuality. A majority of

biblical scholars would meet this silence with a shrug, as if to say, "Why should he talk about something that didn't come up?" I have a different question: Why doesn't he?

The answer should embarrass the knowledgeable as much as it stuns the unaware: Jesus doesn't think of marriage as Christian. Nor does he think of it as "normative," as his own preference for all-male companionship proves. "Marriage" is an immeasurably old social institution by his time, mythically ordained in the Garden of Eden as part of a fertility agreement, and he does nothing to challenge it.

* *

Because Jesus, as far as we know, never married, one can wonder why his expert advice is sought on a subject on which he cannot have been an expert. But

the common view of New Testament scholarship is that the subject of "defining" marriage does not arise in Jesus' own lifetime and that the various contradictory pronouncements on marriage (Mt 19:9; Mt 5:31-32; Mk 10:11-12; Lk 16:18) we find in the Gospels come from a later period, a time when divorce was the burning issue for Christians looking for a way out of "mixed" marriages, Christian-to-jew and pagan-to-Christian. The early Christians could ill afford divorces: their numbers were too few and increasing at rates that varied widely from region to region and, with persecution always a threat, from decade to decade. Procreation within the sect, a form of endogamy, was a surer way to expand than conversion—though both options were tried. Ultimately, the Jewish strategy of cultic endogamy as a mode of increase guaranteed the survival of the struggling sect.

This perception—the idea of the "utility" of

marriage—took a while to take hold. It cannot be projected into the time of Jesus and his followers. The earliest Christians didn't like marriage at all and tried to avoid it, probably in memory or imitation of Jesus and his ostensibly celibate community. The earliest literature is a tale of wandering charismatics and neglected widows, with the only prominent married couple—Ananias and Sapphira—being slain by God for their selfishness (Acts 5:1-12), in contrast to the generosity of the all-male apostles. That community was, we assume, celibate, or at least single-sex, for a reason: the world was ending—if not immediately, then pretty soon—and, if soon, why bother to cooperate in the thankless task of propagating sinners?

The "Essene" Jews of Qumran (the "Dead Sea community"), to the extent they can be identified, held equivalent sentiments, and despite theories being disseminated by the revisers of apocalyptic theory, the best way to see Jesus is still, in my opinion, as an

end-time preacher with resemblances if not connections to other world-denying apocalyptic sects.

In such a community, any form of marriage—Jewish, pagan, and mixed—becomes an issue, an encumbrance, and a distraction. Why buy land (or hold back part of the sale-price of it, as Ananias did) when the land will burn? "Console each other with these words," Paul advises the Christians at Thessaloniki in our earliest bit of Christian literature: "The day of the Lord is coming like a thief in the night" (1 Thes 5:2). And simply to amplify Paul's encouraging words, the unknown author of 2 Peter, early in the second century, writes, "On that day the heavens will disappear in flames and the earth will be laid bare ... and the heavens will blaze until they fall apart, and will melt the elements in flames" (2 Pt 3:10-13). Since Jewish marriage custom comes under the guidelines of property law, and since acquisition of property is to be discouraged in all apocalyptic systems, taking ("acquiring") a wife was contrary to

the faith of the Christian community at least to the extent the eschatological framework is taken seriously by converts. To the extent the church developed a stratified system of ministers and laity, with slightly different disciplines for each, a theology of marriage could begin to develop.

But prior to this delineation we cannot assume the popularity of marriage. Even normal human companionship becomes "lust" in this context, "carousal [with the opposite sex] in broad daylight, seeking pleasure, sitting at table, chatting away, reveling in their own ignorance and wantonness" (2 Pt 2:12-13).

* # #

The Talmud specifies that a woman is "acquired" (i.e.,

becomes a wife) in three ways: through money, through contract, and through sexual intercourse (Mishnah Kiddushin 1:1). Ordinarily, all three of these conditions are satisfied in rapid and predictable succession, although only one is necessary to enter into a binding marriage. In all cases, the Talmud specifies that a woman can be acquired only with her consent and not without it (Kiddushin 2a-b). For the early Christians, the terms of the contract were problematical: though divorce was possible, contracts were not made to be broken. Though bride price could be small or great (usually small—a *perutah* or copper coin sufficed) according to circumstances, Christians were poor. And while sexual intercourse was considered (eventually) the "binder" rather than the modus of the contract, in the Hellenistic world, as much later in the history of sexual relationships, having sex often led to marriage as a consequence. Christians were hemmed in by apocalyptic logic, poverty, and the strong urge to chastity that emerges

from the models of Jesus and his male and female followers—whether Jesus was the source of this discipline or not. Marriage, in short, was a source of some conceptual and doubtless also social stress.

A "Christian" as opposed to a Jewish conception of marriage develops against an essentially world-negating background, Jewish marriage being understood as an arrangement designed to fulfill the mandate of Genesis 1:22, "Be fruitful, multiply"—a creation-friendly rather than destruction-friendly view of conjugal life. As John Crossan has said, we can notionally separate the "ethical eschatology" of Jesus, replete with its sexual corollaries, from the apocalyptic eschatology of his followers and interpreters, with its images of violent destruction.² Yet in the social life of the community, and especially in the case of marriage and divorce, these two strains are combined.

Bluntly put, there is no such thing as "normative"

marriage—or indeed "normal" sexual behavior—in times thought to be extraordinary and final. The strange, disapproving tones of 2 Peter suggest that even adolescent conversation has become "lewdness." The early Christian conception can only look weird by modern standards: Paul advises that marriage is permissible because the end time has not yet arrived, and temptations to sexual lust must be controlled in the meantime: "So, in a time of stress like the present, this is the best way for a man to live: it is best for a man to be as he is. I mean, are you in a marriage? Don't seek to be divorced. Have you been divorced? Don't seek another wife. If you do marry, you have done no wrong ... except those who marry will have pain and grief in this bodily life and I would spare you that____But the time we live in will not last long; and while it lasts, married men should act as though they had no wives" (1 Cor 7:26-30).

It seems fairly clear that this text does not form the background for the sacramental understanding of

Christian marriage that develops in the Middle Ages, and not formally (ecclesiastically) until the twelfth century. The view is pessimistic, eschatological, and expedient—marriage is good because it gives people a place to release their passions (1 Cor 7:2-6). If it did not exist "in these times of stress," heaven knows what people might do.

Although Jesus never said a word about marriage, as distinct from divorce, the early community did, or rather gave him the words to say. By the time the Gospels were written, circumstances had changed. Paul was dead; so too, we think, was Peter. Christianity was no longer primarily a Jewish religious sect, and its marriage laws, though based on Jewish rather than Greek precedent, had already gone through the period of eschatological refashioning. The Temple had been destroyed, rabbinical Judaism was a welter of nitpicking debates over every aspect of the Torah (codified in the Talmud), and, to make matters worse, neither Jews nor pagans saw the Christians as a

legitimate religious sect. More important, a generation of Christians had grown up and old waiting for the second coming—a long time of abstinence for a sect that did not find its model of sexual purity among the hive-dwelling Jews of the Dead Sea.

What could be done? The mythical encounter between some Pharisees and Jesus in Mark 10:1-12 is transparently an attempt to fix a problem. It casts Jesus in the role of Moses, the ancient lawgiver whose authority exceeds the opinion of the rabbis, in a controversy centering on the permissibility of divorce and not the sanctity of marriage. Given the parlous state of the community in the year 70 (?) CE, the Jesuine toughening of Paul's advice ("If you are married, stay that way: it won't be for long") is predictable.

To the Pharisees' question, Jesus says, "If a man divorces his wife and marries another, he commits adultery against her; if she divorces her husband and

marries another, she commits adultery" (Mk 10:10). The statement is curious, because in Jewish law (the context where the controversy is supposed to occur) a woman cannot divorce her husband. Moreover, the Christian cult's view of divorce as adultery is unsupported in Jewish tradition, excepting cases where a valid *get* or certificate of divorce has not been delivered by the male. The rabbinical opinion of first-century Jerusalem was fully centered on Deuteronomy 24:1—a man who has married "a woman who fails to please him" can break the contract unilaterally, that is to say, "free her" to marry another man. If the second husband also rejects her, she is not free to return to her first husband "as she has become to him unclean." The penalty for adultery was clearly spelled out in the purity code and elsewhere. If a man "commits adultery," both the man and the woman shall be put to death (Lv 20:10). By simple inference then, Jesus' words concerning the indissolubility of marriage should entail that all

divorced Christians, as adulterers, should be subjected to the penalty provided by the code: stoning. But this situation does not seem to be the object of the discourse.

It is no accident that the medieval way around the immediate biblical context was to insist on the sanctity of marriage as an indissoluble contract of a man and a woman—a prescription that arises from the propagative and missionary needs of the early church. Furthermore, in arriving at the idea of the "sanctity" (later the sacrament) of marriage, there is the added element that adultery is no longer defined as an act against marriage (sleeping with the neighbor's wife); it is now defined as the act of divorcing a partner for any reason except adultery.

The Lord (as Moses) had spoken. The bishops spoke later, but loudly. Jesus' editors' defense of the marriage act, however, doesn't make marriage Christian: it specifically leaves it *Jewish* (and in Hel-

lenistic context, conventual) in a contractual sense but now an all-but-unbreakable contract between "a man and a woman." The possibility of any divorce, as the Catholic Church would stubbornly insist later, is excluded if the saying of Jesus is applied as a rule. But the existence of marriage as a Christian sacrament, as Luther and the Protestants rightly recognized, is also excluded as marriage is pre-Christian and Jesus does not reinvent it. And as the English Church (but the Spanish Catholics first) recognized, there is that bit about "except for adultery." That may not apply to peasants, but surely kings must have both rules and exceptions. Jesus does not reinvent marriage. Me describes divorce within a strange socioreligious environment. He does not suggest that marriage is a "sacrament," whatever that might have meant, only that the "union" of a man and a woman—which can only mean sexual union in his day—represents an agreement to reproduce, one that (according to the rather

unrabbinical gloss of Genesis 2:24) should not be broken.

In one sense, it does not get less Jewish or more incoherent than this gloss, since an "adulterating wife" brings shame on a husband and under the purity code must be punished to save the household from disgrace. Knowing this—that indissolubility could not be absolute—the Jewish writer known as Matthew inserts "except for unchastity" after the prohibition in 5:32 and 19:9, probably finding Mark's simple equation of divorce and adultery intriguing but incomprehensible.

* # #

How can we make sense of this tangle of witnesses? What was Jesus doing with the purity code, marriage, divorce—or, more precisely, what was the

early church doing with Jesus?

Answering that question is difficult: Once you start fiddling with purity codes and marriage law, as Jesus seems to have been doing, according to Borg, can you end it? In little more than thirty years, marriage went from being the lesser of lifestyle evils (celibacy and virginity remaining the higher lifestyle choice in the Gnostic, Marcionite, Augustinian, and early monastic traditions, surviving anomalously in the discipline of priestly celibacy) to being an indissoluble union of opposites dictated by the celibate Lord.

On the one hand, this tells us something about the progress of "thinking about" marriage and the competing motives involved in giving it first grudging and then canonical approval. At the same time, it tells us something about how divorce and nonmarriage were initially endorsed: the former made taboo and the latter only rarely available except to a religious

elite. There is no inkling in any of this that Jesus was promarriage (as opposed to antiodivorce) or interested in the concept of "family." Living so long after the canonization of marriage and pious interpretations of the birth narratives and Jesus' empathy with "little children" (Mt 19.14, doubtless a moralia built on a lost parable), we find it difficult to accept that Jesus shows absolutely no interest or concern for families in any gospel. But that is the case.

In its long history, the church has had repeatedly to invent stratagems around the assertion—a very early part of the Jesus tradition—that his message is designed intentionally to create divisions in families (Mt 10:37) and that he rejected his biological family for its rejection of him (Mk 3:31 ff.), with later pious amendments made in the interest of covering over his contempt for the value of marriage and family life. But the question must be asked: What would Jesus do? What did he do?

The answer is obscure, but a hint of it may be found in one of the most puzzling passages of the New Testament, coming in Matthew's Gospel just after the question of the Pharisees to Jesus about divorce (Mt 19:10-12). Mark does not record this little drama; it does not (seem to) belong to Qj—the hypothetical sayings source, if it existed—and Luke is mysteriously silent on the issue. Here is a literal rendering of the passage:

His disciples then say to him, "If this [marriage] is the way it is for a man and woman, then [surely] it is best not to marry [at all]." And Jesus said to them, *"But not all men can understand this teaching only those who have been prepared [to receive it]. For there are eunuchs who are that way from their mothers womb; and there are ¹eunuchs' who are made this way because of men, and men who become 'eunuchs' by their own hand\ for the [sake of the] kingdom of God"*

It does not matter whether Jesus is equating "sexless" (*eunochos*) with celibacy, castration, or (as I think) male bonding—an exclusive brotherhood—in this passage. The meaning is clear in any event: following a discourse on marriage, the celibate teacher is asked directly about the "case" of the all-male community. The apostles reckon that, given the complexity of heterosexual contracts, not marrying at all would be the best solution. Jesus agrees. His advice is for *hoi polloi*, the "average." The dialogue is presented in a style more familiar from Mark's salon-style conversations between Jesus and his closest followers, always in a venue beyond earshot of the uncomprehending and slightly dimwitted multitudes (cf. Mk 4:10-12; Mt 13:10-15).

This gospel-within-the-Gospel tradition includes other mysteries with decided same-sex overtones, notably the famous encounter with the "rich young

man" (Mk 10:17-22), the youth's later and puzzling reemergence as a naked runaway in Mark 14:51, and, most suggestive of all, the youth's presence in the tomb of Jesus (having regained his white robe) on Easter morning (Mk 16:16). The tradition fits broadly into the pattern of the "secret gospel of Mark," the controversial fragment that seems to include a more elaborate tradition concerning Jesus' encounters with the young man, possibly a homosexual baptismal or marriage rite undergone by early ministers of the tradition.

It seems entirely possible that Matthew's continuation of the marriage discourse with the Pharisees belonged to Mark, his source, but was eliminated from Mark along with other elements of the "private" tradition because of its same-sex motif. In any case, the tradition is there; Jesus agrees—in language reminiscent of Paul's dissuasion: "Yes, it would be better to be the way we are—but not

everyone is, or can be. Some know from birth the way we are, some know from experience, some choose to live the way we do. Try to understand that everyone is not like us." Jesus did not define marriage as the "union" of "a man and a woman" but defines the man-woman union as the (optional) form of contract that has child rearing as its purpose. It is a lesser estate, a ritual that seems to be associated with "the crowd."

The cult would not be spread by the priestly elite with their secret oaths to eunuchy or celibacy or same-sex partnering. It would be spread by the lesser union: the union of opposites, symbolically expressed by slurring reference to "the sons of this age [who] marry and are given in marriage" (Lk 20:34) that results not in spiritual perfection but in the seed of the church. This recognition will dominate the canonical thinking about marriage from 1208 (when it is defined by Pope Innocent IV) onward. But the "sons of the resurrection," also called

by Luke "the sons of God," do not marry. Jesus the Lord, the teacher of eunuchs, like Paul the apostle, seems to have seen marriage differently: with his band of spiritual brothers, he sees the homosexual union (whether also homoerotic we cannot know) as less strenuous, more perfect, and more in keeping with the times. Bluntly put: the Jesus community did not engage in marriage. They did not regard it as a sacrament, as later Christian piety would make it. Like the Gnostics—or perhaps because of them—they regarded it as a moral expedient for the spiritually weak.

POPULAR MYTHOLOGY IN THE EARLY EMPIRE AND THE MULTIPLICITY OF JESUS TRADITIONS

Justin Meggitt

T

he purpose of this essay is to examine the implications for our evaluation of traditions about Jesus of the dynamics of mythmaking (or *mythopoesis*) in the early Roman Empire. When the popular cultural contexts within which stories about Jesus were first told or retold are taken into account, it becomes apparent that they are likely to be characterized by far more creativity, improvisation, idiosyncrasy, and inconsistency than has hitherto been

assumed by most New Testament scholars. Far from being careful and cautious in their handling of such traditions, the earliest Christians appear to have been largely indiscriminate or partisan in their judgments and, for the most part, show little concern about questions of historicity that so preoccupy current scholarship. This does not render any attempt to study the historical Jesus impossible, but it does demand a high level of historical agnosticism on many matters that is rarely conceded by current authors.

The period between the origins of traditions about Jesus and the composition of written texts referring to him has been poorly conceived in much New Testament scholarship. Most scholars have tended to underestimate or pass over the potential for mythmaking in the initial years of movements that made claims, of one kind or another, about the figure of Jesus. It is usually argued that such activity is only evident in later traditions about Jesus, and largely

restricted to noncanonical sources, visible in such details as, for example, the speaking cross of the *Gospel of Peter* or the petulant miracles of the child Jesus in the *Infancy Gospel of Thomas*. Where present in the canonical accounts, it is usually thought to be largely confined to either the beginning or the end of narratives about Jesus' life—the points at which, for example, the synoptic Gospels most obviously and significantly diverge and conflict (one needs only compare the birth narratives of Luke and Matthew).¹ Invention within the main body of traditions about Jesus is often presumed to be limited to imaginative embellishments of a discernible historical tradition transmitted by his first followers—accretions that can be removed through the application of appropriate criteria (though there is, of course, much dispute as to what these criteria might be).² There are two common assumptions that lead most scholars to have faith in the notion of a recoverable, underlying core that contains authentic data about the historical Jesus

that is not fundamentally indistinguishable and inseparable from myth:

- (i) First, it is assumed that the central traditions about Jesus originated with, and were somehow determined by, the teachings and actions of the historical Jesus himself.

- (ii) Second, it is assumed that core traditions were transmitted and controlled by communities of believers in Jesus that either corporately or through the ongoing authority given to eyewitnesses guarded against significant innovation.

As we shall see, both these assumptions are questionable. In fact, the license and creativity of those who relayed stories about Jesus is likely to have

been so great that the association between many traditions and specific historical events that may have been their original genesis is largely unrecoverable.

POPULAR MYTHOLOGY AND THE EARLY ROMAN EMPIRE

Definition of "Popular"

It is important to begin with some brief remarks about the use of the term *popular* in the context of this essay. By using this term I want to draw attention to the understandings and experiences of myth that were prevalent in the early empire and to note that these do not necessarily equate with ideas and concerns of the literary elite that tend to dominate our interpretations. I use the term *popular* here, as I have elsewhere in studies of method in the analysis

of the church at Corinth,³ early Christian attitudes towards magic and healing,⁴ illness,⁵ the imperial cult,⁶ and economics,⁷ to draw attention to practices and beliefs that appear to be widespread and common in the empire but are generally neglected by those whom I believe do not take time to establish a plausible context of interpretation; those who eschew the difficult questions about not just the *presence* but also the *prevalence* of practices and beliefs when establishing the "background" of early Christianity. In short, I am keen that we recognize what E. P. Thompson has called (albeit in a different context) "the enormous condescension of posterity"⁸ that has left most people in history without a history, something that has adversely affected our understanding of the context with which the earliest Christians lived. I am not alone in this desire to take the popular cultures of the early empire seriously,⁹ but it still remains an underdeveloped perspective.

I must emphasize that in using the word *popular* I do not necessarily assume a homogeneity amongst the non-elite of the early empire (as though the non-elite of the empire were a lumpen, undifferentiated mass without ethnic, religious, gendered, economic, or other differences, many of which were important to them and should be to us). Nor do I rule out the possibility that there are areas where popular cultures and elite cultures intersect and overlap. For example, Aesop's *Fables* are often taken as evidence, par excellence, of popular culture in the Roman empire,¹⁰ but we know that they were also the subject of expensive art in the empire too (Philostratus the Elder, *Imagines*; 1.3) and attracted the attention of the highly educated—indeed, according to one tradition Socrates spent the last night of his life versifying some of these fables (Plato, *Phaedo*, 61b).

Indeed, in the area of mythology, traditions could

be in some sense shared across most population groups. This is perhaps most obvious with literary traditions. Homer's poems were, for example, the formative and most widely known texts in the empire. Their cultural significance is visible in numerous ways. For example, the Borysthenees on the Black Sea, originally Greek colonists,¹¹ allegedly continued to know them by heart although they lost the ability to speak Greek (Dio Chrysostom, *Orationes*, 36.9). They were sufficiently prominent that the poems were even the subject of discussion in rabbinic literature.¹² Heraclitus, a first-century commentator on Homer, could say:

From the earliest age, children beginning their studies are nursed on Homer's teaching. One might say that while we were still in swathing bands we sucked from his epics as from fresh milk. He assists the beginner and later the adult in his print. In no stage of life, from boyhood to old age, do we ever

cease to drink from him. (*Quaestiones Homericae*;
1.5-6)¹³

Such a picture was not limited to the educated and wealthy but is confirmed in a wide range of literary and material remains that tell us of the enduring and popular reception of Homer amongst all classes within the empire.¹⁴ Knowledge of his work is evident everywhere, including in material of a peculiarly popular provenance, such as amulets¹⁵ and do-it-yourself oracles.¹⁶ There is also evidence that literary mythologies or recastings of traditional myth that were of a more recent origin, by the likes of Ovid and Virgil, could similarly be rapidly and enthusiastically embraced by the wider populace.¹⁷

Nonetheless, the term *popular* should remind us that our concern does not begin and end with literature of this kind if we want to understand myth and mythopoesis in the early empire. We need to

cast our net rather more widely. It is important to examine literary remains that tell us both directly and indirectly about popular conceptions of myth. The works of Strabo, Pausanias, or Julius Hyginus should attract most attention, as they give us our most detailed knowledge about local myths, but there is much also to learn from ideas about gods and heroes implicit, for example, in other forms of writing, such as the popular slave biography, the *Vita Aesopi*\ the book of dream interpretations produced by Artemidorus; or paradoxographical literature (a popular genre that recounted marvels, see Aulus Gellius, *Noctae Atticae*, 9.4.9ff) .¹¹⁵ Even graffiti can, on occasion, tell us something.¹⁹ It is also vital to take account of the material culture of the empire. The archaeological record of the eastern Mediterranean should remind us that people inhabited a world full of myths. As Riipke, for example, has noted, this is visible in the decorations of temples—from the cult statues or their miniatures, figure ensembles on

temple pediments, the contents of the friezes that decorated the entablature that ran along the outside of a temple, the acroteria (terracotta decorations on the four corners of the roof of a temple, and on the gable ends) that often depicted mythological scenes or the attributes of gods, and the antefixes, often decorated with the faces of gods.²⁰ In addition we should add formal paintings that depicted scenes from myths also adorned temples and other public spaces and were regularly commented upon, for example, by Pausanias (e.g., *Periegesis*, 1.3; 1.15) but have left little trace today, although the wall paintings of houses in Pompeii, especially the House of the Tragic Poet, may give us some intimations of their character.²¹ Such visual representations were clearly very influential on the ways that stories were known and interpreted ("poets and painters make equal contribution to our knowledge of the deeds and the looks of heroes," Philostratus the Elder, *Imagines*, 1.1). Indeed, we should also not overlook private or semipublic

material culture too, from paintings (on plaster, boards, or canvas), to the plethora of domestic artifacts, the precious "small things" that Deetz has reminded us are so central to the ways that past people constructed their lives and allow us to get an insight into the character and content of ideas that were significant and widespread: we can learn much, for example, from the mythical iconography evident or evoked in such things as cooking utensils, brick stamps, oil lamps, figurines, vase paintings, coins, bath tokens, jewelry, amulets, and grave markers.²²

Of course, it is not always easy to make sense of some of this data and to gauge how typical or representative it might be. The renderings of myth are also sometimes perplexing. For example, what should we make of the scrap of a second-century CE Homer hypothesis found at Oxyrhynchus that omits any reference to the activity of the gods?²³ Many of the visual representations of myths or artifacts associated with them are not just hard for us to

interpret but appear to have left the ancient viewer confused or undecided too (e.g., Pausanias, *Periegesis*, 5.18.6-7; see also *Periegesis*, 1.35.7-8).²⁴

A number of key modes of transmission of popular mythology are also now largely unrecoverable. Songs and oral traditions about the gods and heroes, which were probably the main ways that myths were transmitted, are largely lost to us, with occasional exceptions recoverable from the pages of Strabo or Pausanias.²⁵ We hear only indirectly about the visual representations of myths that accompanied festivals (e.g., Apuleius, *Metamorphoses*, 11) or public games (what Coleman refers to as the "fatal charades" that are familiar from some martyrdom accounts where Christians and others were dressed up as gods and made to enact famous mythical scenes).²⁶ We know virtually nothing about the most popular form of theatrical entertainment in the first-century Roman Empire, the mime (see Cicero, *Pro Rabirio Postumo*, 35; Athenaeus

Deipnosophistai, 1.20d; Philo, *In Flaccum*, 34, 38, 72; 75),²⁷ even though these functioned to give popular form to myth, both ancient and modern (the mimes were not silent but accompanied by songs and dialogue; see Lucian, *De Saltatione* 29-30, 63, 68). Mime artists were capable of rapidly forging new myths, when events required it, that could provoke powerful, even violent, reactions in their audience (not least through their roles at funerals; see *Cassius Dio*, 56.29.1).²⁸

However, problems of evidence and interpretation aside, the attempt to focus upon popular mythology is one worth undertaking. Nonetheless, we should note that negative judgments on the value of the cognate, though distinct, business of studying popular religion in the empire might make our subject matter somewhat contentious. Peter Brown dismissed the notion of popular religion in his influential *The Cult of the Saints*, describing it as a two-tier approach derived from the prejudices of commentators.²⁹

Eisner is quite right to note that

there is much that was right about Brown's position, especially his criticism of the lazy thinking that blamed anything a scholar disapproved of on the vulgar habits of the masses. But one of the problems of the abandonment of two tiers is that the whole of popular religion becomes merely that which is sanctioned and tolerated by the elite, liable to change through a "slow but sure pressure from on

The revisiting of popular religion in the early Roman Empire is long overdue, although important work, such as Frankfurter's seminal study of religion in Roman Egypt,³¹ is indicative of what can be gained by such a focus, alerting us to the ways in which worshipers sustained, innovated, and appropriated meanings through their own rituals and interpretations unsanctioned by elite and priestly classes intent on

trying to control the forms of practice and tradition that should predominate.

Definitions of Myth

It is also important, at this stage, to define what is meant in this essay by *myth*. Definitions of myth are numerous³² but few bear much resemblance to the meaning of the Greek term *mythos* that will be the focus of this essay. Although the meaning of this word changed over time, it can be usefully thought of as referring to a story, or more precisely, a popular story of a god or hero.³³ As Dowden notes, by the first century BCE it seems to have been common to think of myths as including matters that were neither true nor probable (*Rhetorica ad Herennium*, 1.13).³⁴ Wiseman remarks, "Such a story may be (in our terms) historical, pseudo-historical or totally fictitious, but if it matters enough to be retold, it can count as

a myth."³⁵

This conception of myth might, to some, seem rather anemic. As Fritz Graf has noted, an enormous semantic gap has arisen between what was meant by *mythos* (or the Latin *fabula*) and modern meanings of myth as a consequence of processes begun in the eighteenth century.³⁶ Most definitions today assume that myth can be described rather more precisely and are predicated on the notion that the term should be limited to hoary old tales about a time long before or apart from the world of the teller, involving nonhuman beings and extraordinary events. Myths are assumed to be bearers or generators of significant meanings about, for example, society, morality, psychology, ontology, cosmology, history, or ritual life. "They are more than stories that lack empirical validation; they serve as symbolic statements about the meaning and purpose of life in this world."³⁷

The question of the definition of myth has been

even more confused by die unhelpful distinction between *myth* and *legend* so ingrained in the thinking of New Testament scholars (largely, as a result of the ongoing legacy of form criticism, and notably Martin Dibelius and Rudolph Bultmann).³⁸ As Graf says, such attempts at categorization are "irrelevant at best, misleading at worst: it is a matter of our own categories and there is no scholarly consensus as to what these categories mean."³⁹ It has also been complicated by fact that many of those studying the historical Jesus have preferred, in the last few decades, to use the terms *narrative* or *story* in preference to *myth*, because these words are less emotionally charged and allow critics to sidestep questions of historicity implicit in the latter.⁴⁰

Although I think that Mack is quite right to complain that contemporary scholarship concerned with Christian origins has suffered as a consequence of its failure to engage with what he terms "modern myth theory,"⁴¹ and outputs of the Society of Biblical

Literature's Seminar on Ancient Myths and Modern Theories of Christian Origins demonstrate what can be gained by attending to just such approaches,⁴² for the purposes of this essay, a narrower, rather more prosaic understanding of myth as *a story about a popular figure that includes material that is neither true nor probable* will be used without any theoretical assumptions about the function or meaning of such material.

THE CHARACTER OF MYTH IN THE EARLY ROMAN EMPIRE

So, having explored what we mean by popular mythology in the early empire, we need now to say something of its fundamental character before briefly elucidating some of its central features. Gould's remarks are particularly apposite:

The... absence of finality is characteristic of Greek myth. Greek myth is open-ended; a traditional story can be re-told, told with new meanings, new incidents, new persons, even with a formal reversal of old meaning.... The improvisatory character of Greek myths is not just a literary fact.... It is not bound to forms hardened and stiffened by canonical authority, but mobile, fluent and free to respond to a changing experience of the world.⁴³

Of course, what Gould says here refers predominately to Greek myth, and some might feel that it is therefore of little consequence for understanding the way myth could be conceived in other cultural contexts, primarily in the eastern Mediterranean, in which we know the earliest Christians lived. However, a tendency towards mythmaking was an inextricable characteristic of popular Hellenism (still a valid concept, though one

requiring substantial critical reflection),⁴⁴ and Hellenism was a dynamic, component part, in some manner, of all cultures within the eastern empire (indeed, in many ways, it was constituted by these cultures, taking different forms in different locations, through processes of fusion and hybridization). While in no way wishing to downplay the differences between, for example, Roman and Greek cultures and religion, differences that preoccupied writers such as Plutarch in his *Questiones Romanae* and *Questiones Graecae*, we should not assume, for example, that Romans and those influenced by Roman culture did not approach myth in the same way and have the same capacity for mythmaking. As Wiseman has shown, the notion that the Romans did not have their own myths is really a legacy of Romanticism and does not reflect the evidence: "The Romans were not a people without myths. They too had stories to tell about their gods, their forefathers and the achievements of their city."⁴⁵ We need to rid

ourselves of some age-old prejudices about Roman culture that continue to shape interpretations today; Kurt Latte's description of the Romans as "an unspeculative and unimaginative people" who simply borrowed and left undeveloped the myths of the Greeks is not accurate as we can see from a cursory examination of, for example, Ovid's *Fasti*, the poem about the Roman sacred calendar.⁴⁶ Elsewhere in the empire, Frankfurter's work on Roman Egypt shows just such mythic dynamism as characteristic of religion there,⁴⁷ and we can see something similar in the cult of Magna Mater (Cybele) that continued to develop in Phrygia and throughout the empire, amongst the Anatolian diaspora and others in Greece and Rome long after the formal importation of the Goddess into Rome in 204 BCE ⁴⁸

Nor should it be thought that Jews were somehow exceptions, uninfluenced by the prevailing cultural forces that shaped the lives of others in the

region, and with which they had lived for centuries.⁴⁹ As has been recently argued, we need a revised analytical paradigm for understanding the relationship between Hellenism and Judaism, and Alexander might well be right that this should now be "always in favour of similarity rather than dissimilarity."⁵⁰ One only needs to look at the tendencies in traditions about such key first-century figures as Yohanan ben Zakkai⁵¹ or the unhistorical and fantastical narratives that found their way into the Talmud⁵² or Philo's *De Vita Mosis* to see that mythmaking was as common among Jews as anyone else in the early empire (and such an attitude to myth is not in any way dependent upon syncretism or Jewish involvement in religious practices of Hellenism).

So, having established the open-ended nature of mythmaking in the early empire, let us now make a few further remarks about its character before returning to the question of the early Christian

traditions about Jesus.

The Fecundity of Myth

Myth in the early empire was *not* conservative. Pausanias at times despaired because of its constant mutations. He complained, "Those who like to listen to the miraculous are themselves apt to add to the marvel, and so they ruin truth by mixing it with falsehood." He did not restrict this practice to those who recounted tales about the past, noting that even events in his own day "have been generally discredited because of the lies built up on a foundation of fact" (*Periegesis*, 8.2.6-7).

Even when knowledge of written, canonical versions of a myth became widespread, as was the case with Virgil and Homer, further mythmaking could continue apace, often involving the deliberate rewriting and reordering of the written accounts.

Tertullian's complaints about how heretics used Christian scripture contain a passing reference to just such widespread practices:

In profane writings also an example comes ready to hand of a similar facility. You see in our own day, composed out of Virgil, a story of a wholly different character, the subject-matter being arranged according to the verse, and the verse according to the subject-matter. In short, Hosidius Geta has most completely pilfered his tragedy of Medea from Virgil. A near relative of my own, among some leisure productions of his pen, has composed out of the same poet The Table of Cebes. On the same principle, those poetasters are commonly called Homerocentones, "collectors of Homeric odds and ends," who stitch into one piece, patchwork fashion, works of their own from the lines of Homer, out of many scraps put together from this passage and from that (in miscellaneous confusion). Now, unquestionably, the Divine

Scriptures are more fruitful in resources of all kinds for this sort of facility. Nor do I risk contradiction in saying that the very Scriptures were even arranged by the will of God in such a manner as to furnish materials for heretics, inasmuch as I read that "there must be heresies," [1 Corinthians 11:19] which there cannot be without the Scriptures. [*De Praescptione*, 39.)

Written material and the oral traditions could be combined in a myriad of new configurations to create yet further myths. This, for example, is evident from the remarks of Philo, who begins his *De Vita Mosis* with the following words:

I shall proceed to narrate the events which befell him, having learnt them both from those sacred scriptures which he has left as marvellous memorials of his wisdom, and having also heard many things from the elders of my nation, for I have

continually connected together what I have heard with what I have read, and in this way I look upon it that I am acquainted with the history of his life more accurately than other people. (*De Vita Mosis*, 1.1.4)

From what we can tell, specifically oral renderings of myth within the empire appear to have been a particularly creative undertaking, characterized by improvisation. With the possible exception of some distinctive groups, such as the Pythagoreans, "verbatim transmission of memorized traditions does not appear to apply to the vast majority of oral traditions in the Greco-Roman world."⁵³

The Pluriform Nature of Myth

It is perhaps unsurprising that mythmaking does not appear to have been overburdened with a concern for

coherence and consistency. For most people there were no significant problems caused by the persistence of multiple versions of the same myth, even when they flatly contradicted one another, and no particular reason to chose between them.

Even Pausanias, for example, is often content merely to recount different versions of a story without indicating which he considers the more plausible (e.g., Oedipus in *Periegesis* 1.28.6). Artemidorus similarly advises that one should not seek to distinguish between contradictory versions of a tradition (although he considers nonmiraculous accounts are more likely to be accurate; *Oneirocritica* 4.47; see also Plutarch, *Vitae parallelae*, 2.3-6). Even the existence of the tomb of Zeus in Crete and the local tradition that the king of the gods was in fact dead, does not seem to have bothered most people in the empire until it became part of the arsenal of arguments used by Christian apologists against paganism (see Athenagoras, *Apologia*, 30; Origen, *Contra*

Celsus, 3.43; *Pseudo-Clementine Homilies*, 5.23, 6.21).

As Pausanias complained, for most of those who lived within the Roman Empire, the kinds of myths they believed did not need to be coherent or require rational scrutiny: "Most people tell and believe untruths, including whatever they picked up as children from tragedies and oratorios" (*Periegesis*; 1.3.3). Although there were educated students of myth, such as Plutarch, who tried "to purify the mythic, making it yield to reason" (*Vita Thesei*, 1.5), to remove the wheat from the chaff, standing in a rational tradition of criticism of classical myth that went back at least as far as Hecataeus of Miletus in the sixth century BCE (Pausanias, *Periegesis*, 3.25.5), they were conscious that neither they nor those who tried to overcome such problems through the alternative strategy of allegorization⁵⁴ represented the prevailing attitude within the popular cultures of the empire. Others were content to allow a profusion of alternative versions of myths to stand, without judging between them.

The inconsistencies in myth were, of course, something of which nonpagan critics could make much. Josephus, for example, ridiculed the claims of Greeks about the accuracy of their knowledge of their past history, noting the incongruities in their myths—something that he ascribed, in part, to the oral nature of the earliest accounts (notably in relation to Homer; *Contra Apionem*, 1.2-3). He contrasted them unfavorably with the antiquity and accuracy of the Jewish written canon (*Contra Apionem*, 1.37-43), although we also know from adverse comments of Philo that other educated Jews saw similar problems with the biblical texts that they too treated as myths ripe for criticism (*De Abrahamo*, 33.178-34; see also *De Confusione linguarum*, 2.2-4, 9).⁵⁵

The Limited Knowledge of Myth

This incoherence came about, in part, because most

people were not expected to know the myths in any particular detail. With some exceptions, paganism of the early empire was not a textual religion, and what texts did possess some kind of authority—notably the Sibylline Oracles (or rather, what could be reconstructed of them after a devastating fire of 83 BCE)—do not seem to have contained much in the way of myth and could only be consulted by a few specialists. Although the contents of myth did form part of most people's education, both formal and informal, at an early age, "only those who had attended school knew the fine points.... The essence of a myth is not that everyone knows it but that it is supposed to be known and is worthy of being known by all."⁵⁶ Literary evidence indicates just such partial and somewhat confused knowledge on the part of many in the early empire. Petronius, for example, portrays the freedman Trimalchio self-consciously and inaccurately referencing Homer (*Satyricon*, 39.3—4, 48.7, 52.1-2). Interestingly, as Noy has suggested, those who

were enslaved were often prevented from having anything but the most limited knowledge of the cults of their homeland, something that may well have hastened the creation of alternative renderings of myth and tolerance of diversity of myth in the empire.⁵⁷

Various Modalities of Belief and Myth

The nature of belief in myths varied. As Veyne notes "modalities of belief are related to the ways in which truth is possessed"⁵⁸ and there was no formal expectation of belief in the literal "truth" of myth as the religions of the Greeks and Romans were, within limits, religions of orthopraxy rather than orthodoxy. However, when we ask:

Did the Greeks believe in their mythology? The answer is difficult, for "believe" means so many things. Not everyone believed that Minor, after his

death, continued being a judge in Hell, or that Theseus fought the Minotaur, and they knew that poets "lie." However, their way of not believing the things is disturbing to us. For in the minds of the Greeks, Theseus had, nonetheless, existed. It was necessary only to "purify Myth by Reason" and refine the biography of Heracles' companion to its historic nugget.⁵⁹

One of the perhaps surprising cultural assumptions that seems to emerge from examining mythology in antiquity is the paradox that "there were people who did not believe in the existence of the gods, but never did anyone doubt the existence of the heroes."⁶⁰ Indeed,

during the period ... from the fifth century B.C. to the fourth century A.D., absolutely no one, Christians included, ever expressed the slightest doubt concerning the historicity of Aeneas,

Romulus, Theseus, Heracles, Achilles, or even Dionysus; rather, everyone asserted this historicity.⁶¹

Euhemerism, the belief that the gods were really humans about whom legends had grown, did not function to undermine the subjects of myth, but rather to give people a reason to believe in them.

The Informal Transmission of Myth and the Process of Mytlimaking

There were a number of ways in which myth could be learned and relearned throughout a person's life in the empire. Although it is hard to know, as Aune has noted,⁶² exactly what narratives accompanied many festivals or were expressed in hymns as we have so little information about the liturgical life of paganism in the early empire, nonetheless *are- talogoi*, professional tellers of the activities of gods and heroes,

seem to have functioned around temples⁶³ and were possibly employed in richer households (e.g., Suetonius, *Octavius*, 78.2). Freelance, professional recounters of myths seem to have been common and plied their wares, alongside jugglers and musicians, in crowds (Dio Chrysostom, *Oratimes*, 20.9-10). Those visiting famous religious sites seem to have been plagued by guides keen to interpret the stories evidenced in the paintings, sculp aires, or inscriptions, or to provide local traditions, for a small fee, even if, much as today, such information was not easy to believe—as we can see in remarks by Lucian (*Amores*, 8), Pausanias (*Periegesis*, 1.19.2; 1.31.5; 2.9.7), and Plutarch (*De Pythiae oraculis*, 395a).⁶⁴ As Horsfall has reminded us in his recent study of the culture of the Roman plebs, most of the inhabitants of the empire acquired their culture without formal schooling, through the theater, or buskers or other leisure pursuits.⁶⁵

Although education in the content and criticism of myth, particularly as found in Homer, would form part of any formal education⁶⁶— indeed, Homer was at the core of primary education throughout the empire⁶⁷—one recurring feature of descriptions of myth in antiquity is that most initially learned myths in a domestic context, from the women directly involved in their early upbringing. Women in antiquity were, perhaps unsurprisingly, "a fundamental instrument of the transmission of a culture."⁶⁸ As Philostratus the Elder remarked to an inquisitive ten-year-old:

That Theseus treated Ariadne unjustly ... when he abandoned her while asleep on the island of Dia, you must have heard from your nurse; for these women are skilled in telling such tales and they weep over them whenever they will. (*Imagines*, 1.14)

The extent of information transmitted in this manner clearly varied. Veyne, for example, questions whether children were taught the great mythic cycles early in their lives, querying whether they had to wait until they were "under the grammarian's authority to learn the great legends?"⁶⁹—assuming they were sufficiently privileged to gain a formal education of that kind. However, from what we can determine, the telling of myths, or parts of them, by these women, educating and entertaining their charges, involved improvisation and innovation. Philostratus the Younger, for example, recalls how his nurse "entertained me with these tales, which she accompanied with a pretty song; some of them even used to make her cry" (*Heroicus*, 136-37).

There were no particular controls on how a myth was presented within this context and our data emphasizes that the retellings often focused upon

events of a miraculous nature (indeed, for some elite males, reflecting their own notions about rationality and gender, belief in the miraculous was a peculiarly female characteristic—Polybius, *Historiae*, 12. 24. 5). In the words of Tacitus, young children were exposed to "idle tales and gross absurdities" (*Dialogus de oratoribus*, 29)—though most treated these "absurdities" as fact, as Sextus Empiricus complained (*Pyrrhonean Outlines*, 1.147; see also Aetmidorus, *Oneirocritica*, 4.47).

Despite the evidence of the prominence of women as transmitters of myth within a domestic context, this has largely been ignored in studies of oral tradition in the Roman Empire.⁷⁰ Although this has merited mention by some,⁷¹ it has also been passed over in major contributions of New Testament scholars on the role of the oral tradition in the origins of Christianity, and is not discussed in works such as those by Gerhardsson, Kelber, Dunn, and Bauckham.⁷² This neglect is perhaps all the more surprising given a possible clue of the importance of

this process within the churches in the words addressed to "Timothy" by "Paul": "I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that lived first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, lives in you" (2 Tim 1:5).

Evidence of Concern about Myth in the New Testament

Having now sketched something of the place and character of popular myth within the early empire, let us now turn to its significance for our evaluation of the early traditions about Jesus.

First, it is clear that the production of myth, the spinning of stories about Jesus, was a concern in some early communities. In a number of places in the New Testament, the authors are keen to distinguish themselves from those whom they complained purveyed myths about Jesus. For example,

in 2 Peter: "For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we had been eyewitnesses of his majesty" (2 Pt 1:16). Although this passage probably implies that the author believed that the "cleverly devised myths" were being proclaimed by others, as for example, Kelly maintains,⁷³ it is also possible, as Neyrey has argued, that the author is actually defending himself from others who judged that the traditions that the author himself proclaimed were myths.⁷⁴

In 1 Timothy we find a clear warning that members of the church should avoid myths (with the obvious implication that myths were, in fact, something that appealed to many early believers):

I urge you, as I did when I was on my way to Macedonia, to remain in Ephesus so that you may instruct certain people not to teach any different

doctrine, and not to occupy themselves with myths and endless genealogies that promote speculations. (1 Tim 1:3-4)

And, perhaps unsurprisingly, given our previous discussion, the author of this epistle makes a direct association of dangerous myths with women: "Have nothing to do with profane myths and old wives' tales" (1 Tim 4:7).

Indeed, the process of mythmaking in Christian churches seemed, to the author of 2 Timothy, unavoidable:

For the time is coming when people will not put up with sound doctrine, but having itching ears, they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own desires, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander away to myths. (2 Tim 4:3-4)

It is important to note here that the myths in question need not be, as is often assumed, the complex, cosmological and etiological myths associated with most forms of Gnosticism—if we accept, for a moment, the analytical value of the term *Gnosticism*, first coined in the seventeenth century.⁷⁵ Myths of this kind are classically represented by the myth found in the *Apocryphon of John* and Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses*, 1.29 (and which seems to be present in rudimentary form in traditions about such early Gnostic groups as the Simonians; Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses*, 1.23). Such an interpretation of the meaning of *mythos* in the Pastoral epistles owes itself, to a great extent, to the use of the word *gnosis* by the author of 1 Timothy when describing the content of the "profane chatter" of which he so strongly disapproved (1Tim 6:20). But *gnosis* is a common, nontechnical Greek term, and it seems far more likely that the

knowledge consisted of myths about Jesus and others, probably biblical characters (indeed, this would better explain the association of such myths specifically with Jews in Titus 1:14).

It is also important to note that the term *myth* here is clearly pejoratively contrasted with the "truth" of the traditions that the respective authors claim to have received (2 Tim 4:4; Titus 1:14; 2 Pt 3:16) and to pass on (1 Tim 6:20, 2 Tim 1:12, 14). However, the traditions about Jesus that were sanctioned and promoted by the author of an epistle such as 1 Timothy would have looked suspiciously like myth to most inhabitants of the empire. No specific dominical traditions about Jesus are appealed to in the letter, and the kerygmatic summary of his life by the author sounds suspiciously mythic according to our initial definition:

Without any doubt, the mystery of our religion is

great: He was revealed in flesh, vindicated in spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among Gentiles, believed in throughout the world, taken up in glory (1 Tim 3:16)

So, it appears from the evidence of the Pastoral and Petrine epistles, the early Christians were indeed concerned with mythmaking, both sanctioned and unsanctioned, within their communities.

From Monogenesis to Polygenesis, from Arboriforms to Rhizomes

However, the significance of mythmaking for evaluating the earliest traditions about Jesus is particularly apparent when it is married to a more plausible model of the origins of Christianity than that which currently is in the ascendant. The dominant model remains a rather conservative one

that reflects, more or less, the pattern presented in the two earliest histories of the church—Luke-Acts and Eusebius's *Historia Ecclesiae*—in which the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus are taken as the originating and determinative events that explain what follows. Such a model allows little room for the creation and proliferation of different traditions about Jesus and their consequences, as it assumes an ongoing coherence and consistency in the development of the faith, with the Jerusalem church functioning, in the early years, as arbiters of tradition and authority among all those who propagated a message about Jesus. Such a model presupposes monogenesis.

This model has, of course, had its critics. Although there have been dissenting voices for centuries, some of whom, such as the seventeenth-century deist Henry Stubbe, deserve to be somewhat better known, following Walter Bauer's *Orthodoxy and*

Heresy in Earliest Christianity (first published in 1934) scholars have been especially aware of the diversity of forms of earliest Christianity, and alternative versions of the faith that subsequently lost out to "orthodoxy" may well have been the first, dominant, and indeed the only form of Christianity in many areas. Particularly since Helmut Koester pushed Bauer's historical schema back into the apostolic age,⁷⁶ it has been common to talk, even in quite conservative circles, about the diversity of theological perspectives in the New Testament, as evidenced by, for example, James Dunn's *Unity and Diversity in the New Testament?*¹

However, in recent years, the argument for diversity has been pushed yet further. Some, such as Crossan and Mack,⁷⁸ have suggested multiple, distinct forms of the Christian movement from the earliest period, which had little or no common ground other than a reverence for Jesus, which only gradually merged and assimilated with one another.⁷⁹ For

example, it is often noted that Q^{and} the *Gospel of Thomas* seem to have little interest in the death of Jesus, mentioning it at best only obliquely (Q_14:27; GThom 55),⁸⁰ and preferring, instead, to focus upon Jesus as a teacher of wisdom. Yet the death of Jesus is a key datum in other forms of early Christianity (e.g., Rom 10:9, 1 Cor 2:1-2, etc.), some of which, such as that propagated by Paul, conversely show a similar level of indifference to the sayings traditions of Jesus that Q^{so} cherishes. It is hard to see how the life and death of one particular historical figure could account for such diversity of both tradition and interpretation, and so Price can even say, with some justification, having surveyed the variety of Jesuses evident in the earliest forms of Christianity, that "it is an open question whether a historical Jesus had anything to do with any of these Jesuses, much less the Jesuses of the Gospels."⁸¹

There are, however, good reasons to have reservations about the grounds on which such radical

diversity is argued by some. It is unwise, for example, to assume that each text making mention of Jesus was written by and for a community with a distinct understanding of the figure of Jesus. Such texts may be indicative of separate communities but are hardly conclusive proof of them. They often assume knowledge of traditions external to the text that may well be shared with other forms of the faith (for example, the brief reference to John the Baptist in logion 46 and James the Just in logion 12 of the *Gospel of Thomas* assumes the readership knows much more about these figures than is evident from the text). The existence of some of the texts on which models of radical diversity are dependent is also far from as assured as some scholars presume. For example, it is often forgotten that QJ is a *hypothetical* construct and there are good grounds for doubting its validity⁸² and serious questions are now raised other than the authenticity of *Secret Gospel of Marl'*.⁸³

Nonetheless, it seems far more reasonable to

envisage the origins of Christianity as polygenic rather than monogenic. Indeed, the canonical New Testament itself, on closer inspection, seems to indicate as much. For example, Apollos, a key figure in the early propagation of faith in Christ in the eastern Mediterranean, who was equal to both Paul and Peter in the eyes of the Corinthian congregation (1 Cor 1:12; 3:4-6, 22; 4:6) and who operated independently of both (1 Cor 16:12), appears to have become a committed advocate of Jesus in Alexandria (Acts 18:24). Whatever version of the new religion he obtained there, and we have absolutely no idea who first took ideas about Jesus to Alexandria, it is clear that for the author of Acts of the Apostles it was inadequate ("he only knew the baptism of John"; Acts 18:25) and it was necessary for him to have the "Way of God" (a shorthand for the particular understanding of Christianity approved by the author) explained to him more accurately by Priscilla and Aquila (Acts 18:26). Although we know little about

Apollos, he is representative of this fundamental diversity present at the outset and his story illustrates the mutual ignorance of different forms of Christianity. Similarly, Acts also tells us of a group of "disciples" in Ephesus who again seem to know only about John's baptism (Acts 19:1-7) and to be ignorant of the role of the holy spirit in the new faith—something so aberrant in the eyes of the author of Luke-Acts that, unlike Apollos, it required their rebaptism.

The notion that earliest Christianity, from the outset, took numerous forms is something that seems not to have caused any particular concern among the orthodox apologists themselves. Origen, for example, refuted Celsus's accusation that as Christianity had attracted more and more followers, the self-interest of its leaders led to divisions, by saying that even when the apostles were preaching and eyewitnesses were alive "from the very beginning, when, as Celsus imagines, believers were few in number, there were

certain doctrines interpreted in different ways" (Origen, *Contra Celsus*, 3.1 Off).

Indeed, unlike many modern scholars, who are reluctant to posit really significant theological diversity in the earliest period and as a consequence deny the influence of Gnosticism in understanding the development of Christianity until the second century, early Christian writers had no difficulty in seeing it present in the initial decades of the religion's existence, as we can see in what they tell us of, for example, the formative roles of Simon Magus (Justin, *Apologia*, 1.26; Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses*, 1.23.1-4; *Pseudo-Clementine Homilies*, 2.22-26; Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 21.2.5; *Acts of Peter*; 31-32; Hippolytus, *Refutations*, 6.9.4—18.7; see Acts 8:9-24) and Cerinthus (Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses*, 3.3.4).

There is a great deal that we do not know about the emergence of Christianity in this early period, and which we shall never know. However, it seems

that the polygenic character of early Christianity allowed individuals and groups to innovate quite dramatically with little recourse to anyone else. Acts, for example, tells of some followers from Cyprus and Cyrene making the crucial step of converting Gentiles in Antioch to what had previously been a Jewish sect. They did this, apparently, without consulting followers of Jesus elsewhere (11:20) nor even informing them (11:22), something that indicates that the Jerusalem church did not function as arbiters of tradition and authority among all those who propagated faith in Jesus in the empire, despite its ideological significance in early Christian historiography.⁸⁴ Such developments are unsurprising given the preeminence of direct religious experience that not only legitimated but also provided the content of the faith of many early Christians. Paul, for example, could famously claim that his Gospel was not of human origin "for I did not receive it from a human source, nor was I taught it, but I

received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ" (Gal 1:12). However, it is clear that he was not alone in claiming direct revelations from Jesus about the true character of the faith that was to be proclaimed. John of Patmos, for example, could publish letters to the seven churches in Asia purporting to be from the exalted Jesus decades after the latter's death (Rev 2-3) and that castigated other Christian leaders and groups (Rev 2:14-15, 20-25).

The inability of much scholarship to conceptualize the multiplicity, fluidity, and heterogeneity of forms of earliest Christianity is partly accounted for by the influence of predominant metaphors that have been used to describe the movement. Too often accounts speak in terms of roots, trunks, and branches, yet, as Wright puts it: "Arborescent metaphors go hand-in-hand with hierarchical structure, extreme stratification, and linear thinking"⁸⁵—notions that seem to do violence to the data that we possess. It might be more helpful to

utilize a metaphor made popular by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari and to think of early Christianity as fundamentally rhizomorphous (a rhizome is a horizontal stem of a plant, normally subterranean, that often sends out roots and shoots from nodes, which can themselves break off and survive independently, beginning yet further networks).⁸⁶ Although it is pushing the evidence too far to say that early Christian groups "at first had nothing to do with each other,"⁸⁷ such a metaphor allows for the possibility of only distant or tenuous relationships between some of the groups that emerged and the coexistence of complementary and competing conceptualizations of their origins. When such a polygenic model of the origins of Christianity is taken seriously, the likelihood of endemic mythmaking amongst the first believers becomes all the more plausible.

The Myth of Control in the Creation and

Preservation of Oral Traditions about Jesus

It could be objected that my analysis does not take seriously the evidence that Christian communities, collectively or as a consequence of the ongoing presence of credible eyewitnesses, controlled and delimited the traditions so that innovations of a fundamental kind were impossible. In models presented by, for example, Bailey, Bauckham, Boman, Byrskog, Dunn, Gerhardsson, and Kelber,⁸⁸ Christian communities, or individuals of standing within communities, exerted some authority over the transmission of oral material. Such scholars argue that we should speak of "preservation" or "survival" of the Jesus tradition, albeit in rather different ways.

So, for example, Gerhardsson thinks in terms of the handing on of a tradition that was formally memorized, and was initially explicitly taught by a teacher to his disciples before finding its way into the

Gospels, whereas Bauckham argues that

the period between the "historical" Jesus and the Gospels was actually spanned, not by anonymous community transmission, but by the continuing presence and testimony of the eyewitnesses, who remained the authoritative sources of their traditions until their deaths.⁸⁹

Dunn speaks of "oral traditioning," imagining, for example, that when a Christian wished to hear again a particular story in the life of Jesus,

a senior disciple would tell again the appropriate story or teaching in whatever variant words and detail he or she judged appropriate for the occasion, with sufficient corporate memory ready to protest if one of the key elements was missed out or varied too much.⁹⁰

However, such models seem improbable. Nowhere can we find any explicit statements about communities or representatives of communities making collective judgments on oral traditions in this or any other manner in early Christian sources. From what we know about how early Christians went about sifting the wheat from the chaff when judging the traditions about Jesus, it seems that this was not a collective activity nor one that particularly concerned communities, but rather an initiative of particular individuals within the churches. This is evident from the preface to Luke's Gospel (Lk 1:3) and in what we know of Papias's collection of the traditions that went into the now lost *Expositions of Oracles of the Lord* (Eusebius, *Historia Ecclesiae*, 3.39). Indeed, Papias's account is all the more telling as he contrasts his attempts to discover authentic traditions with the undiscerning "multitude" who "take pleasure in those that speak much" (Eusebius, *Historia Ecclesiae*, 3.39.3)

and yet Papias himself not only seems extremely haphazard in his approach, questioning those who just happened to be visiting to his church (Eusebius, *Historia Ecclesiae*, 3.39.4) but, for all his protestations, he appears to have been as drawn to sensational *paradoxa* (marvelous tales; 3.39.8f) as anyone else, and his judgments about the veracity of traditions were disturbing to later Christians. Eusebius complains that the collection of oral traditions that Papias compiled in the five books of *Expositions of Oracles of the Lord* contained "strange parables and teachings of the Savior, and some other more mythical things" (*Historia Ecclesiae*, 3.39.11). Indeed, it is clear from the Gospel of John that traditions about Jesus were legion and most early Christians had no difficulty with this: "But there are also many other things that Jesus did; if every one of them were written down, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written" (John 21:25). The author makes it clear that he has selected only a few traditions for

inclusion in his Gospel, but the criteria for selection are expressly theological. He does not show any concern about the authenticity of the much larger body of traditions he does not include:

Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name (John 20:30-31).

John nowhere shows any evidence of either doubting other traditions nor some collective process in authenticating the material he includes. Indeed, John's apparent indiscriminate attitude towards traditions about Jesus appears to share much with the popular genre of para-doxography, which was characterized by "acceptance without question of any available information; the problem of the truth or

credibility of the phenomena or facts, which were presented, was simply not raised."⁹¹

Nor can it be contended that our knowledge of the apparently conservative manner in which the early Christians handled written sources about Jesus, evident from examining the relationships between the synoptic Gospels, should lead us to question such widespread credulity on the part of most early Christians when faced with traditions about Jesus (approximately 89 percent of Mark is preserved verbatim or near verbatim in Matthew, and 72 percent in Luke).⁹² Whatever tendencies may be evident in the handling of *written* sources by early Christian authors is irrelevant for assessing the oral traditions that may lie behind them with which this paper is concerned. Indeed, there is nothing particularly conservative about the way in which early Christian writers made use of textual sources. Matthew's use of Mark is, for example, characterized by the widespread abbreviation, addition, omission, conflation, elaboration,

and reordering of material, and displays a degree of license indistinguishable from that apparent in the way that Greek, Roman, and Jewish writers of the time made use of their written sources ⁹³

CONCLUSION

When properly conceived, it is apparent that myth and mythmaking were dynamic components of popular cultures of the early Roman Empire and, as we can see from the complaints of the Pastoral and Petrine epistles, were a characteristic of early Christian communities. In the light of this, any evaluation of traditions about Jesus must take seriously the likelihood that they could have had little or no direct connection with the historical Jesus himself. Leaving aside the birth and resurrection narratives, all traditions about the earthly Jesus, not just those that might strike the modern reader as

overtly *mythic*, such as the baptismal miracle (Mt 3:13-17; Mk 1:9-11; Lk 3:21-22), the temptations (Mt 4:1-11; Mk 1:13; Lk 4:1-13), and the transfiguration (Mt 17:1-8; Mk 9:2-8; Lk 9:28-36), were potentially the product of or affected by mythmaking, and should be treated with caution.

Indeed, this mythmaking need not have even originated solely with followers of Jesus. For example, the healing narratives, which are present in the earliest Jesus traditions⁹⁴ are likely to have been attractive to those who were not part of any particular Jesus movement but sought out healing and may well have originated with them⁹⁵ Figures such as the seven sons of Sceva (Acts 19:13-20) or the unnamed exorcist (Mk 9:38), who exorcised in the name of Jesus, are evidence of the circulation of traditions about Jesus among those unconnected with any followers of Jesus and such people might also have developed further traditions.

In the earliest period it is also quite possible that some myths about the figure of Jesus continued to be preserved and developed by those who had left the churches, or perhaps believed that the churches had left them. For example, on seeing the risen Jesus, Matthew's Gospel notes that some of his followers worshipped him but it also adds "but some doubted" (Mt 28:17). Elsewhere in the Gospels *doubt* seems to be mentioned in order to be resolved, whether in the famous example of Thomas in John (20:24-29), the appearance of the risen Jesus on the road to Emmaus (Lk 24:13-27) or to the disciples in Jerusalem (Lk 24:36-49). However, in this incident there is no such resolution and the implication is that among those Jews who did not believe in the resurrection of Jesus (Mt 28: 15) were followers of Jesus.

I would like to conclude by noting that I do believe that it is historically probable that some material within canonical and noncanonical sources

might well bear some relation to the sayings and parables taught by a first-century Jew, and reflect the reputation he acquired in his lifetime as an effective healer and exorcist.⁹⁶ I have elsewhere argued that it is likely that this figure met his death on a Roman cross.⁹⁷ However, if anything much can be determined with relative certainty about the historical Jesus from the records we possess, it can only be data of a very general kind, akin to the most abbreviated of the skeletal lists of Sanders.⁹⁸ The capacity for, and character of, popular mythopoesis within the early empire, and the concomitant lack of concern and mechanisms for the control and transmission of traditions about Jesus among his multifarious followers in the decades following his death, despite the optimistic claims of the likes of Gerhardsson, Dunn, and Bauckham, makes such a conclusion unavoidable.

BAYES'S THEOREM FOR BEGINNERS

Formal Logic and Its Relevance to Historical Method

Richard C. Carrier

in the latest quest for the historical Jesus, many attempts were made to develop a method for determining what could be known about the historical Jesus. The only popular procedure was to try to develop criteria by which genuine historical facts could be sorted from mythical or other accretions. The basic idea was that the more criteria any particular detail met, the more likely it was to be

historical, although some criteria were asserted as decisive in themselves (anything that met even one of them was considered historical). Or so it was proposed.¹ As with every prior quest, initial hopes were dashed in the end, as analysis led to serious doubts about the utility or even validity of any of the criteria proposed.

Stanley Porter demonstrated this in his complete survey of all the "historicity criteria" anyone had so far developed.² He then attempted to solve the problem by developing three new criteria of his own, but they, too, are fatally flawed,³ only establishing a certain plausibility, incapable even by his own admission of determining whether any particular conclusion about Jesus was probably true.⁴ The growing consensus in the field is that this entire quest for criteria has failed.⁵ In their final analysis of the problem, Gerd Theissen and Dagmar Winter all but threw up their hands in despair, concluding that some sort of holistic methodology is needed.⁶ They confess

to not knowing what exactly it could be, but what they call for as the road to a solution sounds exactly like Bayes's Theorem. Theissen and Winter were evidently unaware of this, but that's no surprise, as historians tend to shun formal logics and mathematical reasoning, and thus aren't generally informed about them. Consequently, very little has been done to promote and adapt Bayes's Theorem to what historians do—even in general,⁷ much less in the specific field of Jesus studies.

HISTORICITY CRITERIA

The number of historicity criteria developed so far is hard to pin down, as they often overlap or appear under different names. By some counts, there have been two or three dozen. Some are positive (what fulfills the criterion is more likely true), and some are negative (what fails to fulfill the criterion is more

likely false, i.e., a detail must meet that criterion to be true, but is not thereby true). The following seventeen are representative:

- Dissimilarity: If dissimilar to Judaism or the early church, it is probably true.
- Embarrassment: If it was embarrassing, it must be true.
- Coherence: If it coheres with other confirmed data, it is likely true.
- Multiple Attestation: If attested in more than one source, it is more likely true.
- Explanatory Credibility: If its being true better explains later traditions, it is true.
- Contextual Plausibility: It must be plausible in Judeo-Greco- Roman context.
- Historical Plausibility: It must cohere with a

plausible historical reconstruction.

- Natural Probability: It must cohere with natural science (etc.).
- Oral Preservability: It must be capable of surviving oral transmission.
- Crucifixion: It must explain (or make sense of) why Jesus was crucified.
- Fabricatory Trend: It must not match trends in fabrication or embellishment.
- Least Distinctiveness: The simpler version is the more historical.
- Vividness of Narration: The more vivid, the more historical.
- Textual Variance: The more invariable a tradition, the more historical.
- Greek Context: Credible if context suggests

parties speaking Greek.

- Aramaic Context: Credible if context suggests parties speaking Aramaic.
- Discourse Features: Credible if Jesus' speeches cohere in a unique style.

Analyzing the failure of these criteria, Porter and others have found that either a given criterion is invalidly applied (e.g., the text actually fails to fulfill the criterion, contrary to a scholar's assertion or misapprehension) or the criterion itself is invalid (e.g., the criterion depends upon a rule of inference that is inherently fallacious, contrary to a scholar's intuition), or both. The only solution is twofold: scholars are obligated to establish with clear certainty that a particular item actually fulfills any stated criterion (which requires establishing what exactly that criterion is), and scholars are obligated to establish the formal logical validity of any stated criterion

(especially if establishing its validity requires adopting for it a set of qualifications or conditions previously overlooked). But meeting the latter requirement always produces such restrictions on meeting the former requirement as to make any criterion largely useless in practice, especially in the study of Jesus, where the evidence is very scarce and problematic. Hence the growing consensus is, "There are no reliable criteria for separating authentic from inauthentic Jesus tradition."⁸

Yet even solving those problems won't be enough. As Theissen and Winter conclusively demonstrate, all criteria-based methods suffer the same fatal flaw, which I call the *Threshold Problem*: at what point does meeting any number of criteria warrant the conclusion that some detail is probably historical? Is meeting one enough? Or two? Or three? Do all the criteria carry the same weight? Does every instance of meeting the same criterion carry the same weight? And what do we do when there is evidence both for

and against the same conclusion? In other words, insofar as meeting certain criteria increases the likelihood of some detail being true, when does that likelihood increase to the point of being effectively certain or at least highly probable? No discussions of historicity criteria have made any headway in answering this question.

Another problem, largely overlooked, is the *Fallacy of Diminishing Probabilities*. The probability of a conclusion being true is the product of the probabilities of all its premises being true. But since you need a separate premise to establish each item of evidence, and the products of probabilities always diminish, the more evidence you have, the less probable the conclusion is. Clearly that's wrong. But how is this fallacy avoided? This problem is typically overlooked because a proper logical analysis of historical arguments is rarely attempted, but when it is, the issue arises (as will be demonstrated below). Both the Threshold Problem and the Fallacy of

Diminishing Probabilities belie something fundamentally wrong with the usual assumptions of historical reasoning. As I will argue, it's no accident that Bayes's Theorem simultaneously solves both. In fact, as far as I know, it's the only form of logical-empirical argument that does.

MAKING PROGRESS WITH LOGICAL ANALYSIS

Formal logical analysis of historical reasoning is the key to flushing out fallacies and unwarranted assumptions. We can then revise our assertions and rules of inference to achieve logical validity. Usually we learn a great deal in the process. Logic is a rich and diverse field from which a lot can be learned and which historians should study more than they do. Here, I will only offer the simplest of examples to

illustrate the utility of formal logical analysis and why it is important for us to perform this analysis on our own reasoning in order to understand our methods and assumptions, check them for error, and correct them if needed.

The most basic syllogism of interest to historians has the following general form:

Major Premise: [Some general rule.]

Minor Premise: [Some specific fact satisfying the general rule.]

Conclusion: [That which follows necessarily from the major and minor premise.]

For example:

Major Premise: All working wagons had wheels.

Minor Premise: Jacob owned a working wagon.

Conclusion: Therefore, Jacob owned a wheel.

This is true by virtue of the definition of "working wagon," which renders the conclusion rather trivial. But now consider a less trivial example:

Major Premise: All major cities in antiquity had sewers.

Minor Premise: Jerusalem was a major city in antiquity.

Conclusion: Therefore, Jerusalem had sewers.

This will be true to a very high degree of probability if there is abundant background evidence,

including archaeological and textual, that is uncontestable for its scope and degree—even without direct archaeological evidence of Jerusalem's sewers (unless, of course, archaeology confirms there were none). But the above argument conceals a key assumption: that probabilities can be assumed to be certainties. For though the above argument is valid as written (the conclusion does follow from the premises), it is not sound, since neither premise is literally true. Even assuming that abundant evidence supports both premises, they will still only be true to some degree of probability. So:

Major Premise: [Very probably] all major cities in antiquity had sewers.

Minor Premise: [Very probably] Jerusalem was a major city in antiquity.

Conclusion: Therefore, [very probably] Jerusalem had sewers.

In other words, there may yet be some major cities without sewers. Even if we have ample evidence that every excavated example did, we can't excavate every ancient city. Likewise, though we're almost certainly right to classify Jerusalem as a major city (assuming we define "major city" in an explicit way, such as housing a population of a certain size—whatever size would render the major premise true), there is always some probability, however small, that we are wrong about that. In most cases, these probabilities are so securely on one side that we don't trouble ourselves over them. But when we start dealing with increasingly uncertain facts and generalizations, we can no longer pretend probability equals certainty. Then problems arise. (We will revisit this fact later.)

When a historical argument is formulated as a simple syllogism or system of syllogisms, it is easy to determine if the argument is valid: just observe if the conclusion strictly follows from the premises (as we will eventually see, this still generates the fallacy of diminishing probabilities, but we will address that problem later). It is harder to determine if the argument is also sound, however, and in logic a conclusion must be both sound and valid in order to be true. A sound conclusion requires all the requisite premises to be true (as a conclusion cannot be truer than its weakest premise). Formal analysis must be used to ascertain the merits of our premises by ascertaining what assumptions and evidence they are based on and whether this foundation is sufficient to formally entail the truth of a premise (however stated). To accomplish this, just build out the required syllogisms supporting each premise, nesting one set of syllogisms within the other. For example:

Major Premise Ia: All major cities in antiquity had public libraries.

Minor Premise Ib: Jerusalem was a major city in antiquity.

Conclusion: Therefore, Jerusalem had a public library.

This argument is formally valid. But is it sound? Few would likely contest the minor premise. Though that is not a good excuse to assume that it is true (we should always question anyone's assumptions and examine on what evidence and inferences they are based), for brevity we will test the major premise instead (which some may find more dubious). A sound premise must be the conclusion of another (at least conceivable) syllogism that is itself both sound and valid. For example:

Major Premise 2a: If archaeologists and historians (a) find that a large number of major cities in antiquity had public libraries and (b) have insufficient data to confirm there was any major city that lacked a public library, then (c) all major cities in antiquity had public libraries.

Minor Premise 2b: Archaeologists and historians have found that a large number of major cities in antiquity had public libraries and have insufficient data to confirm any major city lacked a public library.

Conclusion: Therefore, **Major Premise 1a:** all major cities in antiquity had public libraries.

The conclusion validly follows. But is it sound? Again, assume here that the new minor premise is uncontested. What then of the new major premise? That, too must be the conclusion of a sound and

valid syllogism. For example:

Major Premise 3a: Tf {Minor Premise 3b} is true, then {Major Premise 2a} is true.

Minor Premise 3b: If a large number of representatives of a class have property/), and there is insufficient data to confirm any members of that class lack p, then all members of that class have p.

Conclusion: Therefore, **Major Premise 2a:** if archaeologists and historians find that a large number of major cities in antiquity had public libraries and have insufficient data to confirm there was any major city that lacked a public library, then all major cities in antiquity had public libraries.

This time, the major premise is less contestable than the minor premise (here both are general rules of inference, but Major Premise 3a is more general

than Minor Premise 3b and is therefore the Major Premise in this case). Assume we continue the analysis for Major Premise 3a and find it to be sound. Minor Premise 3b may still be dubious. So we go one level further:

Major Premise 4a: If there can be no exceptions to a rule {if A , then B } then it is always the case that {if A , then B }.

Minor Premise 4b: There can be no exceptions to the rule {if a large number of representatives of a class have property p , and there is insufficient data to confirm any members of that class lack p , then all members of that class have/; }.

Conclusion: Therefore, **Minor Premise 3b:** if a large number of representatives of a class have property p , and there is insufficient data to confirm any members of that class lack /;, then all members of that class have p .

Now we've gotten to the bottom of our general rules of inference, as Major Premise 4a is necessarily true (and therefore needs no farther analysis to confirm it is sound). But we've also gotten to the root of our assumptions and exposed a flaw in our reasoning: contrary to Minor Premise 4b, there can be exceptions to the rule {if a large number of representatives of a class have property p , and there is insufficient data to confirm any members of that class lack p , then all members of that class have p }. Therefore, Minor Premise 4b is false. Therefore, Minor Premise 3b is unsound. Therefore, Major Premise 2a is unsound. Therefore, Major Premise 1 a is unsound. Therefore, our original Conclusion is unsound.

We can fix this collapsing house of cards by revising Minor Premise 4b so that it is true, and then our original Conclusion will also be true (once suitably modified). For example:

Minor Premise 4_{TRUE}: There can be no exceptions to the rule {if a large number of representatives of a class have property p , and those members were effectively selected at random from among all members of that class, and there is insufficient data to confirm any member of that class lacks p (and it is probable we would have such data in at least one instance if many members of that class lacked p then it is at least somewhat probable that any given member of that class has/)}.

This version of Minor Premise 4b is necessarily true. But this entails modifications of the nested syllogisms all the way back up the line. So we have located the underlying rule, discovered its flaw, and when we correct that flaw, we discover the necessary qualifications and analyses that we overlooked before.

In this case: (a) we now know we should qualify our premises (and thus our conclusion) as a matter of probability, and a probability less than what we would consider a historical certainty; (b) we now know to ask whether we should even expect evidence of major cities lacking public libraries, if any did in fact lack them; and (c) we now know to ask whether the sample of major cities for which we have confirmed public libraries is effectively a random sample of all major cities—and if not, will the known bias in sampling affect our generalization about libraries? As to (a), instead of "all major cities in antiquity had public libraries," we should say "most major cities in antiquity had public libraries" (which entails "somewhat probably a major city in antiquity had a public library"). As to (b), we might be able to say that if there were many such deprived cities, we should have evidence of at least one case by now, whereas if there were only a few, we might not have evidence of that (so we must allow there could have

been at least a few). As to (c), we might observe that the bias now is in fact against having evidence for the largest of cities (since modern cities often stand on top of the most successful ancient cities, making archaeological surveys spotty at best), and since it is highly improbable that numerous lesser cities would have public libraries while yet greater cities lacked them, the bias is actually in favor of our conclusion that all major cities had public libraries.

Therefore, logical analysis like this can be a useful tool in history: to identify or check against possible errors by identifying underlying assumptions regarding rules of inference and trends and generalizations in the evidence, and to discover new avenues of analysis, qualification, and inquiry that could improve our methods, our results, and our understanding.

LOGICAL ANALYSIS OF HISTORICITY

CRITERIA

Now apply this general lesson to the specific case of arguing from historicity criteria. For example:

The Criterion of Dissimilarity: "If a saying attributed to Jesus is dissimilar to the views of Judaism and to the views of the early church, then it can confidently be ascribed to the historical Jesus."

This analyzes to:

Major Premise 1c: If any saying *s* attributed to Jesus is dissimilar to the views of Judaism and to the views of the early church, then Jesus said *s*.

Minor Premise Id: Saying *s* [= Jesus directly addressed God as his Father] is dissimilar to the views of Judaism and to the views of the early church.

Conclusion: Therefore, Jesus said *s* [= Jesus directly addressed God as his Father].

The minor premise analyzes to:

Major Premise 2c: If we have no evidence of saying *s* [directly addressing God as one's Father] from Jews (prior to or contemporary with Jesus) or the early church (without attribution to Jesus), then saying *s* [Jesus directly addressing God as his Father] is dissimilar to the views of Judaism and to the views of the early church.

Minor Premise 2d: We have no evidence of saying *s* [directly addressing God as one's Father] from Jews (prior to or contemporary with Jesus) or the early church (without attribution to Jesus).

Conclusion: Therefore, **Minor Premise Id:** Saying *s* [Jesus directly addressing God as his Father] is dissimilar to the views of Judaism and to the views of the early church.

If we continued this nesting analysis, we would find both Major Premise 2c and Minor Premise 2d insupportable, because we do have evidence of early Jews directly addressing God as one's Father,⁹ and it is not the case that if we have no evidence of a practice that it did not exist. The Criterion of Dissimilarity thus reduces to an *Argumentum ad Ignorantiam*, a textbook fallacy. Applying the criterion to produce a conclusion of any confidence requires just as much confidence that the practice did not

exist, which is very difficult to establish. One must thoroughly survey all relevant evidence and scholarship, no simple task (e.g., D'Angelo's paper is not easy to find and publishes research you are unlikely to have completed yourself). In fact, it is often impossible to establish, since we know for a fact there was a great deal more diversity in Jewish beliefs and practice than we presently know any specifics of;¹⁰ there was a great deal going on in the early church that we know nothing about (e.g., how and when did Apollos become an Apostle, and exactly what Gospel was he preaching?); and since the survival of sources is so spotty, no valid conclusion can be reached about what no Jews or early Christians ever thought, said, or did.

That invalidates the Minor Premise on which the Criterion of Dissimilarity relies. But even the Major Premise here will be found indefensible on a thorough nesting analysis. "If any saying *s* attributed to Jesus is dissimilar to the views of Judaism and to

the views of the early church, then Jesus said / assumes an invalid rule of inference: that only Jesus could innovate. But if Jesus could innovate a saying, then so could anyone, including an actual Gospel author (or other intermediary source). Paul, for example, innovated a law-free Gentile mission, and if Paul could do that, so could anyone innovate anything. We know too little about the many Christians and Jews who lived prior to the Gospels to rule any of them out as originators of any seemingly unique saying, yet we would have to rule them all out in order to isolate Jesus as the only available innovator we can credit for the innovation.

For instance, any saying s_x we think we can isolate as being unique to Jesus may in fact be unique to Peter instead (or Paul or anyone else who uniquely imagined, hallucinated, dreamed, or invented Jesus saying s_x). There is no more reason to assume the innovation was of Jesus' own making than of Peter's (or Paul's or anyone else's)—whether

consciously, for a specific innovative purpose, or unconsciously, as a construct of what Peter (etc.) took to be visions or revelations but were actually the product of his subconscious mind creatively responding to the problems and ambitions of his time. So how are we to tell the difference? The Criterion of Dissimilarity cannot. Therefore, it is methodologically invalid.

The same procedure will similarly invalidate every historicity criterion. The Criterion of Multiple Attestation, for example, runs into the problem of establishing whether we even have independent sources of a tradition (or whether they are all dependent on each other), as well as the problem of determining a valid rule of inference. For even a false claim can be multiply attested to in independent sources (e.g., multiple independent sources attest to the labors of Hercules), and folklorists have documented that this can occur very rapidly (there is no relevant limit to how rapidly

multiple sources can transform and transmit the same story). So mere multiple attestation is not enough. This criterion also runs into the Threshold Problem: When do we have enough independent witnesses to believe what they say? Similarly, the Criterion of Embarrassment requires establishing that some detail was in fact embarrassing to the author who records it (this cannot merely be assumed, especially for a sect that was so internally diverse and rooted in open rejection of elite norms) and that this author did not have an overriding reason to include such a detail anyway (such as to convey a lesson or shame his audience into action). This criterion also assumes a rule of inference that is demonstrably invalid unless somehow plausibly qualified. For instance, the castration of Attis and his priests was widely regarded by the literary elite as disgusting and shameful and thus was a definite cause of embarrassment for the cult, though the claim and the practice continued unabated. Yet no one would now

argue that the god Attis must therefore have actually been castrated.

In all these cases, there is a common lesson: we must always ask what other reasons there might have been to invent or tell an "embarrassing" story (or for "independent" witnesses to repeat a false story, or for something "innovative" to appear in the record, etc.). Criteria-based methods ignore the crucial importance of alternative theories of the evidence and their relative merits. The importance of avoiding invalid rules of inference, overcoming the Threshold Problem, and comparing our theory with alternatives all point toward Bayes's Theorem as the correct model of proper method. For Bayes's Theorem is specifically constructed from valid rules of inference and solves the Threshold Problem by taking alternative theories into account. In the same way, it also solves another problem.

THE FALLACY OF DIMINISHING PROBABILITIES

Earlier, I mentioned that the premises in a historical argument are only true to some degree of probability, and I said that when these probabilities are not so high as to be practically 100 percent, problems arise. For example:

Major Premise: All major cities in antiquity had public libraries.

Minor Premise: Jerusalem was a major city in antiquity.

Conclusion: Therefore, Jerusalem had a public library.

Which earlier I demonstrated should be revised to:

Major Premise: [Somewhat probably] a major city in antiquity had a public library.

Minor Premise: [Very probably] Jerusalem was a major city in antiquity.

Conclusion: Therefore, [somewhat probably] Jerusalem had a public library.

The major premise here is entailed by the more accurate statement, "Most major cities in antiquity had public libraries" (since we cannot confirm they all did), and the strength of the conclusion cannot exceed the strength of the weakest premise. But even this version is not formally accurate, since the language of probability here is misleadingly vague. Due to the

Law of Conditional Probability, the probability of the conclusion (OR PLIBRARY) cannot equal the probability of the weakest premise but must equal the probability of both premises being true, which is the product of their probabilities ($P_{\text{MAJOR}} \times P_{\text{MINOR}}$)- SO although the conclusion here says "somewhat probably Jerusalem had a public library," this "somewhat probably" must be slightly less than the "somewhat probably" in the major premise. For instance, if the major premise has a probability of 60 percent (i.e., we are confident at least 60 percent of major cities had public libraries) and the minor premise a probability of 90 percent (i.e., we are at least 90 percent certain Jerusalem was a "major city" in the same sense employed in the major premise), then $P_{\text{LIBRARY}} \sim 0.60 \times 0.90 = 0.54$, which is 54 percent, not 60 percent.

Now consider what happens when we add more evidence (the following probabilities are again invented here solely for the sake of argument):

Major Premise 1: 60 percent of all major cities in antiquity had public libraries.

Major Premise 2: 80 percent of the time, when the surviving text of something written by an ancient author mentions consulting books in a city's public library, then that city had a public library.

Minor Premise 1: We are 90 percent certain that Jerusalem was a major city in antiquity

Minor Premise 2: We are 95 percent certain that the author of an ancient papyrus mentions consulting a public library in Jerusalem.

Conclusion: Therefore, Jerusalem [probably] had a public library.

The probability that Jerusalem had a public

library should be increased by our having two kinds of evidence mutually supporting the same conclusion—and if more evidence were added, it should raise the probability of the conclusion even more. But the Law of Conditional Probability produces the opposite result. Since P_{library} must equal the product of the probabilities of all the premises being true, with the given probabilities we would get a result of $P_{\text{LIBRARY}} = P_{\text{MAJOR-1}} \times P_{\text{MAJOR-2}} \times P_{\text{MINOR-L}} \times P_{\text{MLNOR-2}} = 80\% \times 90\% \times 95\% = 0.60 \times 0.80 \times 0.90 \times 0.95 = 0.41$ (rounding off) = 41 percent. We have added evidence and yet dropped from 54 percent to 41 percent, from "probably" to "probably not." Adding more evidence would clearly lower this result even farther. Thus the conclusion appears to be less probable when we get more evidence, which cannot be correct.

There is no obvious way around this, which means historical reasoning cannot be validly represented by

simple syllogistic logic. Though syllogistic analysis can still be useful to identify flaws in our reasoning and correct them, it does not accurately model historical reasoning. So what does? What logical formula allows the accumulation of evidence without diminishing the probability of the conclusion or violating the Law of Conditional Probability? The answer is Bayes's Theorem.

GETTING STARTED WITH BAYES'S THEOREM

The literature on Bayes's Theorem is vast and usually technical to the point of unintelligibility for historians. But Yudkowsky provides a very good introduction to the theorem, how to use it, and why it is so important,¹¹ and Hunter provides an extended example of how to employ Bayesian reasoning to

history.¹² Yudkowsky's focus is the sciences, but he covers all the basics and is a good place to start. Likewise, though Hunter was a Central Intelligence Agency analyst and writes about using Bayes's Theorem to assess political situations, the similarities with historical problems are strong, and his presentation is intelligible to beginners. Wikipedia also provides an excellent article on Bayes's Theorem (though often untrustworthy in other areas, Wikipedia's content in math and science tends to surpass even print encyclopedias). If you want to advance to more technical issues of the application and importance of Bayes's Theorem, see Jaynes and Bretthorst, Bovens and Hartmann, and Swinburne, while McGrew provides a more extensive bibliography on Bayesian reasoning specifically directed at beginners.¹³

These sources will help with many details. Here I can only cover the rudiments. Bayes's Theorem is

represented in a mathematical equation, which has a longer and a shorter form. Its longer (complete) form

$$\begin{aligned} P(\mathbf{h}|\mathbf{e}.\mathbf{b}) = & P(\mathbf{h}|\mathbf{b}) \times P(\mathbf{e}|\mathbf{h}.\mathbf{b}) \\ & [P(\mathbf{h}|\mathbf{b}) \times P(\mathbf{c}|\mathbf{h}.\mathbf{b})] + [P(\sim\mathbf{h}|\mathbf{b}) \times P(\mathbf{e}|\sim\mathbf{h}.\mathbf{b})] \end{aligned}$$

Its shorter form is:

$$\begin{aligned} P(\mathbf{h}|\mathbf{e}.\mathbf{b}) = & P(\mathbf{h}|\mathbf{b}) \times P(\mathbf{c}|\mathbf{h}.\mathbf{b}) \\ & P(\mathbf{e}|\mathbf{b}) \end{aligned}$$

The shorter form is simply abbreviated from the longer, and as the long form is more useful to historians, I recommend it. The first thing to recognize about this theorem is that its form is:

$$P = \frac{A}{A + B}$$

In other words, the complete value of the numerator appears again in the denominator, which means there are really only four distinct numbers involved, $P(h | b)$, $P(\sim h | b)$, $P(e | h.b)$, and $P(e | \sim h.b)$, two of which are simply repeated. And since $P(\sim h | b)$ is always the converse of $P(h | b)$, i.e., $P(\sim h | b) = 1 - P(h | b)$, there are really only three values to determine, each of which is the formal equivalent of a premise in an argument, representing a particular estimate of likelihood.

Though in science there are usually precise data from which to derive these values, this is not required by the logic of the argument. Though the equation looks scary, even "too mathematical" for use in solving historical problems, the math merely

represents a logic. Though the equation looks complicated, the logic of historical reasoning is that complicated. In fact, this equation models all correct historical reasoning. Whenever we reason correctly about empirical matters (whether in science, history, or everyday life), we are adhering to Bayes's Theorem—and if we're not, we are not reasoning correctly. It is therefore the key to understanding and analyzing all historical thinking and checking and correcting it. As historians, we should all understand the underlying logic of our own methods. And this is

The complete Bayesian equation has four basic components. The term to the far left is the probability that some theory we have (or some claim we are making) is true. This is our conclusion. Everything then to the right is what we must solve to produce our conclusion. The equation in the numerator measures how likely our hypothesis is. Then there are two equations in the denominator,

connected by a plus sign. As noted, the first of these equations is identical to the equation in the numerator (so you just repeat the same numbers in both places). That leaves the second equation in the denominator, which measures how likely the alternative hypotheses are. Put all this together and you have an exact representation of sound historical reasoning. And that means historical reasoning is only sound when it fully takes into account alternative explanations of the evidence and takes seriously our intuited estimates of likelihood (which we also call plausibility, probability, credibility, believability, etc.).

Since this is (as advertised) "Bayes's Theorem for Beginners," I'll explain every symbol in the equation (other than common mathematical symbols, which I hope all educated readers are familiar with):

P = Probability (which means epistemic probability = the probability that something stated is true)

h = the hypothesis being tested

$\sim h$ = "not-// = all other hypotheses that could explain the same evidence if h is false

e = all the evidence directly relevant to the truth of h (e includes both what is observed and what is not observed despite adequate looking)

b = total background knowledge (all available personal and human knowledge about anything and everything, from physics to history—in other words, everything else we know, about the world, people, time, and place in question, etc.)

The upright bars separating the terms inside the parentheses indicate conditional probability, that is, the probability that the term on the left of a bar would be true, if all the terms on the right of that bar are true. Put all these together and we get all the

combined terms in the equation, now starting to the left of the equals sign:

$P(h | e, b)$ = die probability that a hypothesis (*h*) is true given all the available evidence (*e*) and all our background knowledge {*b*}

This is our conclusion: How likely is it that what we are saying is actually what happened or how things actually were? To reach this result, we need to decide how likely the other terms to the right of the equals sign are:

$P(h | b)$ = **the prior probability that *h* is true** = the probability that our hypothesis would be true given only our background knowledge (i.e., if we knew nothing about *e*)\ this is a measure of what was typical in that time and place, or in the universe generally, representing what we would usually expect to happen.

$P(e | h.b)$ = the posterior probability of the evidence (given h and b) = the probability that all the evidence we have would exist (or something comparable to it would exist) if the hypothesis A (and background knowledge b) is true.

$P(\sim h | b) = 1 - P(h | b)$ = the prior probability that h is false = the sum of the prior probabilities of all alternative explanations of the same evidence, which is always the mathematical converse of the prior probability that h is true (so $P(\sim h | b)$ and $P(h | b)$ must always sum to 1).

There are different ways to deal with more than two competing theories at the same time. One way or another, all possible explanations of the evidence must be represented in the equation (which means prior probability is always a relative probability, i.e., relative to all other possible explanations of the evidence). If there is only one viable alternative, this would mean the prior probability of all other possible theories is

vanishingly small (i.e., substantially less than 1 percent), in which case $P(\sim h | b)$ is the prior probability of the one viable competing hypothesis. If there are many viable competing hypotheses, they can be subsumed under this as a group category $\{\sim h\}$ or treated independently by expanding the equation, for example, for three competing hypotheses the denominator expands from:

$$[P(h|b) \times P(c|h.b)] + [P(\sim h|b) \times P(c|\sim h.b)]$$

to the more elaborate:

$$[P(h_1|b) \times P(e|h_1.b)] + [P(h_2|b) \times P(e|h_2.b)] + [P(h_3|b) \times P(e|h_3.b)]$$

in which all three priors must sum to 1, that is, $P(h_1 | b) + P(h_2 | b) + P(h_3 | b) = 1$.

$P(e | \sim h.b)$ = **the posterior probability of the evidence if b is true but h is false** = the probability that all the evidence we have would exist (or something comparable to it would exist) if the hypothesis we are testing is false, but all our background knowledge is still true. In other words, this is the posterior probability of the evidence if some hypothesis other than h is true (and if there is more than one viable contender, you can represent this fact in either fashion noted previously).

Here's the gist: prior probability is a measure of how typical what we are proposing is or how typical it was in that time and place (or how atypical it was, as the case may be), while posterior probability is a measure of how well the evidence fits with what we would expect if our hypothesis were true, and how well the evidence fits with what we would expect if our hypothesis were false.

Even allowing for a large margin of error, we all have some idea of what was typical or atypical, and

we can make a case for either from the available evidence. If we cannot, then we must admit that we don't know what was typical, in which case we cannot say one theory is initially more likely than another (their prior probabilities are then equal). Either way, we can represent the relative likelihood of the options with rough figures. Since we already do this anyway, only with vague language about relative likelihoods, Bayes's Theorem forces us to put numbers to our estimates, which forces us to examine how sound or defensible our judgments really are. If we cannot defend our number assignments, then we need to lower or raise them until we can defend them. And if we cannot defend any value, then we cannot claim to know whether the evidence supports or weakens our hypothesis (or any other). All this goes for both the prior and the posterior probabilities.

Since we already make these probability judgments in every argument that we make as historians (only in vaguer language or with unstated

assumptions), Bayes's Theorem does not ask us to do anything we shouldn't already be doing. Hence, the theorem simply represents the reasoning we are already engaging in and relying upon. But it does so in a formally valid structure that allows us to check whether we are reasoning correctly or not, and it helps us discover what we need to be looking for or thinking about in order to justify our arguments and assumptions. It thus helps us do what syllogistic analysis does, with the singular difference that it correctly models historical reasoning.

In an adjunct document online,¹⁴ I provide more discussion and examples of both logical and Bayesian analysis, along with summaries, applications, and a tutorial in using Bayes's Theorem. I further discuss historical methods (in general), including references to other books on the subject, in my *Sense and Goodness without God*,¹⁵ with supporting examples and remarks in my "The Spiritual Body of Christ and the Legend of the Empty Tomb."¹⁶ But I will provide a

much more detailed example of a real-world application of Bayes's Theorem, with extensive methodological discussion, in my forthcoming book, *On the Historicity of Jesus Christ* (especially in chapters 2 and 6).

WHY BAYES'S THEOREM?

There are six reasons we should learn Bayes's Theorem well enough to understand its logic and apply it, especially if we want to test possible claims regarding what is and is not historical about Jesus (or anything else in history).

First, Bayes's Theorem solves the Threshold Problem. In other words, it provides the means to tell if your theory is probably true rather than merely possibly true. It achieves this, first, by forcing you to compare the relative likelihood of different theories

of the same evidence (so you must think of other reasons the evidence we have might exist, besides the reason you intuitively think is most likely), and, second, by forcing you to examine what exactly you mean when you say something is "likely" or "unlikely," "more likely" or "less likely," "plausible" or "implausible," "somewhat implausible" or "very plausible," and so on. It also forces you to examine why you think such terms are justified and how you intend to justify them. As long as historians go on ignoring these questions, no progress can be made, and we will end up with a different historical Jesus (and a different mythical Jesus) for every scholar who looks and no way to assess whose conclusions are the more probable. Though Bayesian analysis does not make this assessment easy, it is the only known method that makes it possible.

Second, Bayes's Theorem will inspire a closer examination of your background knowledge and of the corresponding objectivity of your estimates of

initial likelihood. Whether you are aware of it or not, all your thinking relies on estimations of prior probability. So making these estimations explicit will expose them to closer examination and testing. For example, whenever you say some claim is implausible or unlikely because "that's not how things were done then" or "that's not how people would likely behave" or "that wasn't typical" or "other things happened more often instead," you are making estimates of the prior probability of what is being claimed. And when you make this reasoning explicit, unexpected discoveries can be made. For example, as Porter as well as Theissen and Winter observed, it is inherently unlikely that any Christian author would include anything embarrassing in his Gospel account, since he could choose to include or omit whatever he wanted (and as we can plainly see, all the Gospel authors picked and chose and altered whatever suited them). In contrast, it is inherently likely that anything a Christian author included in his account was done for

a deliberate reason—to accomplish something he wanted to accomplish, since that is how all authors behave, especially those with a specific aim of persuasion. Therefore, already the prior probability that a seemingly embarrassing detail in a Christian text is in there because it is true is low, whereas the prior probability that it is in there for a specific reason regardless of its truth is high—the exact opposite of what is assumed by the Criterion of Embarrassment.

Third, as already noted, Bayes's Theorem will force you to examine the likelihood of the evidence on competing theories, rather than only your own. So you have to take alternative theories seriously before dismissing them. This is one of the most common errors in historical reasoning: defending your own pet theory in isolation and ignoring or downplaying all the alternatives. If you start with a theory and then try to solve how the evidence supports it, you may be able to make the evidence fit almost any theory. But if you take seriously all other attempts to do the same thing,

you will be forced to ask why your theory's fit-to-evidence is more credible than any other, and the answer will always lead you back to the logic of Bayes's Theorem, whether you are aware of it or not.

Fourth, Bayes's Theorem eliminates the Fallacy of Diminishing Probabilities. It is therefore the only correct way to weigh a combined array of evidence. That means it is the only correct description of sound empirical reasoning. So its underlying logic ought to be well understood by anyone making empirical arguments (as historians do).

Fifth, Bayes's Theorem has been proven to be formally valid. Any argument that violates a valid form of argument is itself invalid. Therefore, any argument that violates Bayes's Theorem is invalid. All valid historical arguments are described by Bayes's Theorem. Therefore, any historical argument that cannot be described by a correct application of Bayes's Theorem is invalid. That means Bayes's

Theorem provides a useful method for testing any historical argument for validity.

Sixth, you can use Bayesian reasoning without attempting any math, but I recommend the math. Doing the math keeps you honest. It forces you to ask the right questions, to test your assumptions and intuitions, and to actually give relative weights to hypotheses and evidence that are not all equally likely. But either way, using Bayes's Theorem exposes all our assumptions to examination and criticism and thus allows progress to be made. For, once all our assumptions are exposed in this way, we will be able to continually revise our arguments in light of the flaws detected in our reasoning, as well as our mistakes (as there will inevitably be) in attempting to apply Bayes's Theorem to any given problem.

THREE COMMON ERRORS

There are many mistakes one can make in employing Bayes's Theorem. I will describe three of the most common before concluding.

The first is the Fallacy of False Precision: mistaking the fact that we are using numbers and math as somehow indicating we are generating mathematically precise conclusions. Since we do not have scientifically precise or abundant data as historians, any numbers we plug into a Bayesian equation will only be rough estimates—and, therefore, so will our conclusions. But this is already true of historical reasoning generally. Hence this fallacy will be avoided if we recognize that the numbers we use represent the limits of wide margins of error and then aim to generate conclusions a fortiori or with significant levels of uncertainty. In probability theory (as reflected in scientific polls, drug efficacy studies, etc.), the wider the margin of error, the higher the

confidence level (and vice versa). So if you widen your margin of error as far as you can reasonably believe it possible for that margin to be (given the evidence available to you and all other expert observers at the time), then your confidence level will be such that you cannot reasonably believe the conclusion is false. That is the highest state of objective certainty possible in historical inquiry.

For instance, you may see a poll result that says 20 percent of teens smoke, but in a footnote you see "97% at +/-3%." This means the data entail there is a 97 percent chance that the percentage of teens who smoke falls between 17 and 23 percent (and therefore a 3 percent chance it is either less or more than that). The first number (97%) is the confidence level, the second (+/-3%) is the margin of error. Given any set of data, raising the confidence level widens the margin of error (and vice versa) according to a strict mathematical formula. So if you lack scientifically precise data, you can compensate by setting your

margins of error as wide as you can reasonably believe them to be. For instance, if you lacked scientific data on teen smoking and had to estimate without it, you may think it unreasonable from your own personal knowledge and consultation with others that the percentage of teen smokers could be anything above 33 percent, which is in effect saying you are highly confident, at least 99 percent certain, that the percentage can be no more than 33 but could easily be much less than that. You can similarly derive a lowest rate of teen smoking that you can reasonably believe exists and then run the math for both numbers, which will in turn generate a conclusion that is also a range between a lowest and highest number. Following that procedure, you cannot reasonably believe the conclusion falls outside that range (you will be highly confident that it does not), but you might not be sure exactly where it falls within that range (unless you lower your confidence in the conclusion).

An a fortiori argument thus results if your theory is still confirmed as probable even when using the most unfavorable probability estimates you can reasonably believe. And an argument of uncertainty results if your theory ends up with a Bayesian probability like 40 to 70 percent, a range of values that actually crosses into improbability, thus leaving you only somewhat confident that your conclusion is true. Accordingly, if you recognize the relationship between margins of error and confidence level, the fallacy of false precision can be avoided, and Bayes's Theorem can still be used effectively without scientific data. Used thus, it will always generate conclusions that correctly match what you can honestly have confidence in.

The second common mistake is the Fallacy of Confusing Evidence with Theories. For example, Christian apologists will often insist we have to explain the "fact" of the empty tomb. But in a

Bayesian equation, the evidence is not the discovery of an empty tomb but the existence of a story about the discovery of an empty tomb. That there was an actual empty tomb is only a theory (a hypothesis, h) to explain the production of the story (which is an element of e). But this theory must be compared with other possible explanations of how and why that story came to exist (or h_2 , h_3 , etc.), and these must be compared on a total examination of the evidence (all elements of e_y in conjunction with b and the resulting prior probabilities). Hence, a common mistake is to confuse hypotheses about the evidence with the actual evidence itself. This mistake can be avoided by limiting "evidence" (e) to tangible physical facts (i.e., actual surviving artifacts, documents, etc., and straightforward generalizations therefrom). Though hypotheses can in fact be included in e (as well as b), this is mathematically problematic unless those hypotheses are so well confirmed as to be nearly as certain as the existence of the evidence that

confirms them (in fact, almost all "facts" are ultimately hypotheses of just such a sort).¹⁷ Otherwise, without mathematically accounting for a hypothesis's level of uncertainty, the fallacy results of wrongly assuming it is as certain as any other facts. It is easier to just leave everything out of e and b that is not effectively certain and treat the rest as elements of h and

The third common mistake is the Fallacy of Confusing Assumptions with Knowledge. Assumptions in, assumptions out, so mere "assumptions" should have no place in Bayesian argument, as its conclusions will only be as strong as their weakest premise, and an assumption is a very weak premise indeed. In Bayes's Theorem, the term b establishes that all the probabilities in the equation are conditional probabilities—conditional on the truth of our background knowledge. Therefore, only background knowledge should be included in b and thus considered in assigning probabilities, not

background assumptions or mere beliefs. Indeed, the very difference between professional and unprofessional history is the acceptance in *b* of only what has been accepted by peer review as an established fact (or an established uncertainty of some degree, as the case may be). So the contents of *b* should be limited to the confirmed consensus of expert knowledge.

Committing this fallacy leads to a common misapprehension that, for example, prior probabilities in Bayes's Theorem are worldview dependent. They are not. For example, it doesn't matter whether you are a naturalist and believe no miracles exist or a Christian and believe that they do. Either way, if you are behaving professionally, you both must agree that so far as is objectively known, most miracle claims in history have turned out to be bogus, and none so far have been confirmed to be genuine. Therefore, the prior probability that a miracle claim is genuine must reflect the fact that most miracle claims are not—and

that is a fact even if genuine miracles exist. In other words, the naturalist must allow that he could be wrong (so he must grant some probability that there might still be a genuine miracle somewhere, whatever that probability must be), and the Christian must allow that most miracle claims are false (not only because investigated claims overwhelmingly trend that way, and even Christians admit that most of the miracle claims even within their own tradition are not credible, but also because the Christian must grant that most miracle claims validate other religious traditions and therefore must be false if Christianity is true). If most miracle claims are false, then the prior probability that any particular miracle claim is false is therefore high regardless of whether miracles exist or whether Christianity is true.

Therefore, although worldview considerations can be allowed into b, Bayes's Theorem does not require this. When such considerations are brought into b, that only produces conditional probabilities that

follow when the adopted worldview is true. But if a certain worldview is already assumed to be true, most arguments do not even have to be made, as the conclusion is already foregone. Therefore, *b* should only include objectively agreed knowledge (and probabilities then assessed accordingly), unless arguing solely to audiences within a single worldview community.

CONCLUSION

If you avoid these and other mistakes, and treat each probability you assign in the Bayesian equation as if it were a premise in an argument and defend each such premise as sound (as you would for any ordinary syllogism), Bayes's Theorem will solve all the problems that have left Theissen and others confounded when trying to assess questions of his-

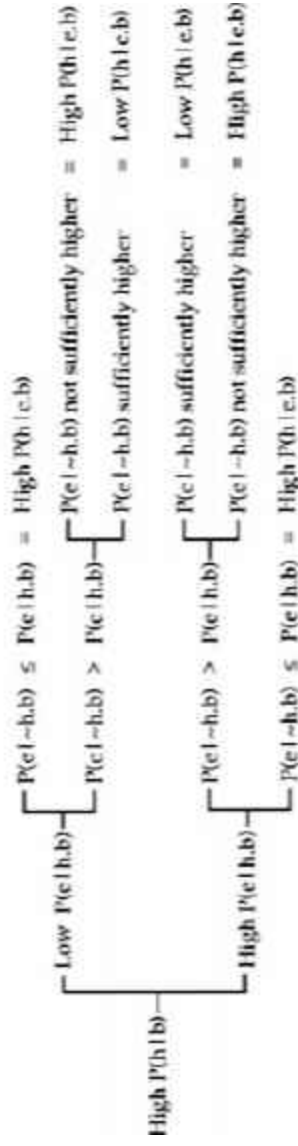
toricity. There really is no other method on the table, since all the historicity criteria so far proposed have been shown to be flawed to the point of being in effect (or in fact) entirely useless. The task now falls on historians to practice and develop procedures for adapting Bayes's Theorem to solve specific problems in the quest for the historical Jesus, as I will soon in *On the Historicity of Jesus Christ*.

* * *

The chart on the following page represents the complete logic of Bayes's Theorem (for two competing hypotheses), which can be used with nonnumerical declarations of relative likelihood at each step. To use the chart, the term "Low" means lower than 50 percent (< 0.50), and "High" higher than 50 percent (> 0.50), although when $P(e | h.b) = 50$ percent, then

treat it as "High" if $P(h | b)$ is "High," and "Low" if $P(\sim h | b)$ is "Low," accordingly. "Sufficiently lower" (or "Sufficiently higher") means $P(e | \sim h.b)$ is lower (or higher) than $P(e | h.b)$ by enough to overcome the prior probability (and thus produce a conclusion contrary to what the prior probability alone would predict), though there is hardly any principled way to determine this without returning to the math. To read the results, a high $P(h | e.b)$ means your hypothesis is more likely true; a low $P(h | e.b)$, more likely false (and the higher or lower, the more likely either way). When $P(h | b) = 50$ percent (and therefore is neither "High" nor "Low"), then the hypothesis with the higher $P(e | b)$ is more likely true.

Bayesian Flowchart



THE ABHORRENT VOID

The Rapid Attribution of Fictive Sayings
and Stories to a Mythic Jesus

Robert M. Price

Nature abhors a vacuum.

—Jesus Christ (You can't prove
that he *didn't* say it!)

**OUT OF NOTHING SOMETHING
COMES**

It seems to conservative scholars, apologists, and rank-and-file Gospel readers quite implausible, indeed outlandish, when critics write off the majority of sayings and stories of Jesus in the Gospels as secondary and inauthentic. Even if one grants the likelihood that false attribution and secondary embellishments may occasionally have occurred, does it not seem like skeptical ax grinding for scholars to dismiss most of the tradition as spurious? C. H. Dodd, no fundamentalist, sought to rein in such skepticism.

When Mark was writing, there must have been many people about who were in their prime under Pontius Pilate, and they must have remembered the stirring and tragic events of that time at least as vividly as

we [in 1949] remember 1914. If anyone had tried to put over an entirely imaginary or fictitious account of them, there would have been middle-aged or elderly people who would have said (as you or I might say) "You are wasting your breath: I remember it as if it were yesterday!" ¹

Is it my imagination, or is this argument not hopelessly circular? It makes a lot of sense if we know in advance that the events involving Jesus and Pilate were indeed as the grumpy old-timers claimed to remember them. Otherwise, we cannot know whose version of the story is imaginary and fictitious. Dodd already sides with the old hecklers and assumes we do, too. It behooves us to observe, too, that Dodd's appeal to a solid historical bottom against which traditions may be sounded is gratuitous if we do not take for granted that a historical Jesus was born when the Gospels imply, between 4 and 6 BCE. If, as some of us think, such dating is insecure, as is the

very existence of a single historical founder of Christianity, then spurious traditions (myths, legends, rumors) will have had all the time in the world to grow and evolve.

Everett F. Harrison, more of a conservative than Dodd, still seems to utter only common sense when he voices his skepticism about skepticism:

All will agree that, according to the gospels, teaching was one of the major activities of the Master and that His teaching made a profound impression on those who heard it (Mark 1:22; cf. John 7:46). To have a tradition *that* Jesus taught, without a tradition of *what* he taught, would be strange indeed and quite incomprehensible, since the tradition *that* he taught includes the report of the impact of his words. It would be strange also, on the assumption that the Church rather than Jesus had authored or doctored the greater part of the corpus of instruction in the Gospels, that the

statement of his uniqueness in this area should be retained, "You are not to be called rabbi, for you have one teacher" (Matt. 23:8, RSV; cf. Mark 1:27).²

Harrison had not yet grasped the foil extent of the insidious character of the critical mind. Should it not be obvious that, if there had been no teacher, no Rabbi Jesus (Paul knows of no such character, nor of a thaumaturgic Jesus), the subsequent attempt to claim his divine authority for one's own teachings would make it advisable to posit that Jesus had been a great teacher? One is thus feathering one's own nest, providing increased clout for whatever one intends to ascribe to Jesus. It is not strange at all. It would be like claiming Jesus had been a carpenter so one could sell off one's own bedroom and dining-room sets as Jesus' work!³

We have three models, proposed analogies, to help us understand the plausibility of positing a

wholesale and rapid growth of a vast body of inauthentic Jesus traditions and even that it might have been expected. This will be the case whether we believe in a Jesus who was, like fellow messiah Sabbatai Sevi, not much of a teacher or whether we think there was no Jesus Christ at all. In other words, such things as "skeptical" critics posit in the case of the Gospel traditions have famously happened in other historically analogous cases.

KID STUFF

First, we may recall that many or most early Christians came to believe that Jesus had initially appeared (or been adopted) as a deity in adult form. Picture it either way you prefer. The historical Jesus grew up in obscurity, entering public life only once he received John's baptism. When this happened,

many early Christians, presumably including Mark the evangelist, believed Jesus had been divinely anointed as God's son. He could not have laid claim to that honor at any previous time. Others held, as Marcion did, that this Jesus deity appeared out of thin air upon our earth one day, but in adult form, like Adam created as an adult—with a belly button he had never needed. In either case, stories of Jesus would have depicted him as an adult gifted with divine power. Later on, Christians came to believe that Jesus, having been born from a miraculous conception, was the son of God from day one. Christian curiosity rapidly went to work filling the newly apparent gap. What would an infant or a child god have been doing in the years before tradition made him appear on the public scene? There was an immediate flood of stories. The ample results are contained in the Infancy Gospels of Thomas, Matthew, and James and the Arabic Infancy Gospel. The canonical Gospels of Luke and John each

contain one example of such stories: Lk 2:41-51 and Jn 2:1-10. As Raymond E. Brown⁴ argued, the Cana story must have had a prehistory as a story of Jesus the divine prodigy. As in practically all such stories, Jesus' miracles and precocious insights are magnified against the stupidity and incompetence of adults. Same here: they have run out of wine. And, contra the redactional frame, where the water-into-wine miracle is explicitly said to be his first, mother Mary knows Jesus will give in and bail out the adults with a handy miracle as he always does. ("Do whatever he tells you.")

In precisely the same way, the Christ-myth theory reasons that, once an adult, mortal-seeming Jesus was said to have come to earth in recent history, Christian imagination went to work supplying what he must have been doing and saying. These stories and sayings now fill the familiar Gospels. It does not sound so odd that, e.g., the Jesus Seminar

was able to authenticate only 18 percent of the material. I consider that figure way too optimistic.

Some might dispute the aptness of the analogy, pointing out that the Infancy Gospel stories are comical compared to the stories of the adult Jesus, which, despite their miraculous extravagance, do not seem ridiculous. But I would suggest the reason for the difference is simply the comedy inherent in stories of a child prodigy with miraculous powers. Jesus the Menace. I am not saying the idea is not silly; indeed it is. But can one take all the canonical stories completely seriously? Cursing the fig tree? Sending demoniac pigs into a lake? Healing Peter's mother-in-law so she can cook dinner for Jesus? My point is simply that fictions featuring Jesus the god-man as an adult might be equally extravagant as stories featuring him as a child but less comical since they would not involve the inevitably comedic element of a child displaying adult behavior.

THE (GROWING) BEARD OF THE PROPHET

The second analogy/model for a rapid accretion of spurious Jesus traditions lies at hand in the explosion of (universally spurious) hadith, traditions of what the Prophet Muhammad said and did, providing precedents and teachings for devout Muslims, thus supplementing the Qur'an. Just as some Muslim hadith reflect rabbinical and New Testament sources,⁵ it is no surprise that the Gospels should be filled to the brim with echoes of rabbinical, Cynic, and Stoic materials, as well as maxims first offered in the Epistles with no claim that they originated with a historical Jesus.⁶

Consider how the reasons for the fabrication of

"traditional" stories and sayings of Muhammad correspond precisely to those suggested for Gospel traditions by the form critics:

The Prophet's authority was invoked by every group for every idea it evolved: for legal precepts couched in the form of tradition, as well as for maxims and teachings of an ethical or simply edificatory nature. Through solid chains of tradition, all such matters acquired an unbroken tie to the "Companions" who had heard these pronouncements and statutes from the Prophet or had seen him act in pertinent ways. It took no extraordinary discernment on the part of Muslim critics to suspect the authenticity of much of this material: some reports were betrayed by anachronisms or other dubious features, some contradicted others. Moreover, certain people are named outright who fabricated and spread abroad traditions to support one trend or another. Not a few pious persons admitted, as the end of life neared, how great their contribution to the body of

fictive hadiths had been. To fabricate hadith was hardly considered dishonorable if the resulting fictions served the cause of the good. A man honorable in all other respects could be discredited as a traditionist without having his religious reputation tarnished or his honor as a member of society called into question. It was, of course, possible to assert, on the Prophet's authority, that the bottomless pit awaited those who fraudulently ascribed to Muhammad utterances that he never made. But one could also try to save the situation by vindictory maxims, in which the Prophet had supposedly recognized such fictions in advance as his own spiritual property: "After my death more and more sayings will be ascribed to me, just as many sayings have been ascribed to previous prophets (without their having really said them). When a saying is reported and attributed to me, compare it with God's book. Whatever is in accordance with that book is from me, whether I really said it or no."⁷ Further: "Whatever is rightly spoken was

spoken by me."⁸

The fabricators of tradition, as we see, laid their cards on the table. "Muhammad said" in such cases merely means "it is right, it is religiously unassailable, it is even desirable, and the Prophet himself would applaud it."⁹

Even if one prefers to reckon according to a historical Jesus who was born in Herod the Great's reign and perished in that of Pontius Pilate,¹⁰ there is plenty of time available in which to picture the eruption of false Jesus hadith. It certainly seems not to have taken very long in the case of Islam.

All the Islamic authorities agree that an enormous amount of forgery was committed in the *hadith* literature. The Victorian writer William Muir thought that it began during the caliphate of

Uthman. It is more likely, however, that it originated during the lifetime of the Prophet himself. His opponents would not have missed the opportunity to forge and attribute words and deeds to him for which he was not responsible, in order to rouse the Arab tribes against his teaching.¹¹ During the caliphate of Abu Bakr, too, when apostasy had raised its head, it is not unlikely that some of the apostates should have forged such traditions as suited their purpose. During the caliphate of Uthman, this kind of dishonesty became more common. Some members of the factions into which the community was then divided forged traditions in order to advance their faction's interests.¹² During the first century of Islam, and also thereafter, the various political parties, the heretics, the professional preachers, and even a number of sincere Muslims, all made their contributions to the growing rubbish-heap of false traditions.¹³

Sectarian leaders as well as popular edifying

story-tellers forged plenty as they addressed the people following morning and evening prayers.¹⁴ Compared to the volume of hadith generated in the name of Muhammad by interested and imaginative parties, the scope of invention when it comes to Jesus is quite modest.

Spurious traditions were coming into being, drowning the genuine ones. There were motives at play behind this development. Some of these new traditions were merely pious frauds, worked up in order to promote what the fabricators thought were elements of a pious life,¹⁵ or what they thought were the right theological views.¹⁶ Spurious traditions also arose in order to promote factional interests. Soon after Muhammad's death, there were cutthroat struggles for power between several factions, particularly the Alids, the Ummayyads, and later on the Abassides. In this struggle, great passions were generated, and under their influence,

new traditions were concocted, and old ones usefully edited. The pious and hero-worshipping mind also added many miracles around the life of Muhammad, so that the man tended to be lost in the myth.

Under these circumstances, a serious effort was made to collect and sift all the current traditions, rejecting the spurious ones and committing the correct ones to writing. [The need for this work was recognized about a century after the Prophet's death, but it took another century for the process to get started.]

[Muhammad Ismail al-]Bukhari [810-870 CE] laid down elaborate canons of authenticity and applied them with a ruthless hand. It is said that he collected 600,000 traditions but accepted only 7,000 of them as authentic.¹⁷

But even the remainder of Muhammadan hadith seems excessive. Apparently, what Bukhari and the others did was merely to catalogue those hadith that

were not debunked by their criteria, not that this vindicated them. The same error attaches to the decisions of New Testament critics who nominate as authentically dominical the sayings that are not obviously disqualified by their criteria of dissimilarity, multiple attestation, coherence, etc. Any or all of them still might be spurious; they just haven't been "caught in the act." ("I know of nothing against myself, but I am not thereby acquitted" [1 Cor 4:4].) Just so, there is no particular reason to regard any of the hadith of Muhammad as definitely authentic.

We must abandon the gratuitous assumptions that there existed originally an authentic core of information going back to the time of the Prophet, that spurious and tendentious additions were made to it in every generation, that many of these were eliminated by the criticism of *isnads* (chains of attestors) as practiced by the Muhammadan scholars, that other spurious traditions escaped rejection, but

that the genuine core was not completely overlaid by later accretions. If we shed these prejudices, we become free to consider the Islamic traditions objectively in their historical context, within the framework of the development of the problems to which they refer, and this enables us to find a number of criteria for establishing the relative and even the absolute chronology of a great many traditions.¹⁸

Indeed, why not consider the Qur'an itself as hadith? It appears to be a collection of contradictory and redundant materials on various topics, all ascribed to Muhammad (and thence to Gabriel) in order to secure prophetic authority.

When I see how conservatives¹⁹ flock to the suggestion of Harald Riesenfeld and Birger Gerhardsson²⁰ (admittedly very great scholars) that the canonical Gospel traditions be read on analogy with strictly memorized, authorized Rabbinical

traditions simply because conceivably the early disciples *might possibly* have followed such practices, it becomes clear to me we are dealing again with apologetics. Why not consider the analogy of the Muhammadan hadith? The diversity, anachronism, and tendentiousness of the Gospel material would seem to me to make the hadith analogy the better fit. (However, we ought to keep in mind Jacob Neusner's demonstration²¹ that rabbinical sayings-ascriptions are no likelier to be authentic anyway!)

FROM MUHAMMAD TO NAG HAMMADI

In her fascinating treatise *Jesus in the Nag Hammadi Writings*,²² Majella Franzmann points out the theological agenda that has excluded the Egyptian Gnostic texts from serious consideration as possible

sources for the historical Jesus and for early Christology. She does not argue, as does Margaret Barker,²³ that the Nag Hammadi texts provide substantial material for a reconstruction of the Jesus of history. No, her point is rather that few bother even to look—outside the canon. The same blind spot occurs among the apologists.

Indeed, the evidence is that the early Christians were careful to distinguish between sayings of Jesus and their own inferences and judgments. Paul, for example, when discussing the vexed questions of marriage and divorce in 1 Corinthians 7, is careful to make this distinction between his own advice on the subject and the Lord's decisive ruling: "I, not the Lord," and again, "Not I, but the Lord" (F. F. Bruce).²⁴

On the one hand, it is far from clear that, in these instances, Paul means to say he has on record a

quoted statement from Jesus of Nazareth. In light of 1 Corinthians 14:37, it seems much more likely that he merely distinguishes between his own sage advice and revelations he has received in a mantic state ("prophesying"). On the other, it is obvious to us, as it was not to the orthodox Bruce, great scholar though he was, that "the evidence" is not to be found only in the canon. (He doesn't even seem to consider the letters to the seven churches in Revelation 1-3.) I should say the evidence as to whether "the early Christians were careful to distinguish between sayings of Jesus and their own inferences and judgments" must include the voluminous, if deadly boring, Gnostic texts (Nag Hammadi and Berlin Codices) and the Epistle of the Apostles. Granted, Ron Cameron and others have sought to dredge up some authentic words of Jesus from the Dialogue of the Savior and the Apocryphon of James, and Thomas's gospel is a special case. But most of these attempts to find a needle in a haystack are exceptions that amply

prove the rule: the early Christians who composed these texts had no thought of segregating their own words from those of a historical Jesus Christ. Indeed, they did not even think it was a good idea. The very existence of works like Pistis Sophia, the Books of Jeu, the Dialogue of the Savior, the Gospel of Mary, the Sophia of Jesus Christ, and so on makes it simply ridiculous to urge that early Christians would never have dared put Jesus' name on their own fabrications, just as Elizabeth Claire Prophet²⁵ and Helen Schucman²⁶ do today. Why does anyone fail to see this? Because, for most, the "real" early Christians are New Testament characters. Whoever wrote Pistis Sophia was one of those Gnostic heretics, in short, spurious "early Christians" who weren't really Christians at all, any more than today's Protestant fundamentalist is willing to admit that Roman Catholics are genuine Christians. But this is not a judgment fit for historians. It is no judgment at all, but only a prejudice. And the same prejudice makes it

falsely obvious to conservatives that the canonical Gospels could not be the result of wholesale fabrication by well-meaning Christians. There is just no reason Christian writers could not have composed the Sermon on the Mount if they created the Dialogue of the Savior. If they could have fabricated Pistis Sophia, they could much more easily have fabricated the Gospel of John. Whether they did is another matter, the discussion of which starts here, not stops.

JESUS' DISPUTE IN THE TEMPLE AND THE ORIGIN OF THE EUCHARIST

Bruce Chilton

Critical discussion of Jesus throughout the modern period has been thwarted by a single, crucial question. Anyone who has read the Gospels knows that Jesus was a skilled teacher, a rabbi in the language of early Judaism.¹ He composed a portrait of God as divine ruler ("the kingdom of God," in his words) and wove it together with an appeal to people to behave as God's children (by loving both their divine father and their neighbor).² At the same time, it is plain that Jesus appeared to be a threat

both to the Jewish and to the Roman authorities in Jerusalem. He would not have been crucified otherwise. The question that has nagged critical discussion concerns the relationship between Jesus the rabbi and Jesus the criminal: how does a teacher of God's ways and God's love find himself on a cross?

Scholarly pictures of Jesus that have been developed during the past two hundred years typically portray him as either an appealing, gifted teacher or as a vehement, political revolutionary. Both kinds of portrait are wanting. If Jesus' teaching was purely abstract, a matter of defining God's nature and the appropriate human response to God, it is hard to see why he would have risked his life in Jerusalem and why the local aristocracy there turned against him. On the other hand, if Jesus' purpose was to encourage some sort of terrorist rebellion against Rome, why should he have devoted so much of his

ministry to telling memorable parables in Galilee? It is easy enough to imagine Jesus the rabbi or Jesus the revolutionary. But how can we do justice to both aspects and discover Jesus, the revolutionary rabbi of the first century?

Although appeals to the portrait of Jesus as a terrorist are still found today, current fashion is much more inclined to view him as a philosophical figure, even as a Jewish version of the peripatetic teachers of the Hellenistic world. But the more abstract Jesus' teaching is held to be—and the more we conceive of him simply as uttering timeless maxims and communing with God—the more difficulty there is in understanding the resistance to him. For that reason, a degree of anti-Semitism is the logical result of trying to imagine Jesus as a purely nonviolent and speculative teacher. A surprising number of scholars (no doubt inadvertently) have aided and abetted the caricature of a philosophical Jesus persecuted by irrationally violent Jews.

The Gospels all relate an incident that, critically analyzed, resolves the problem of what we might call the two historical natures of Jesus. The passage is traditionally called "The Cleansing of the Temple" (see Mt 21:12-16; Mk 11:15-18; Jn 2:14-22; Lk 19:45-48). Jesus boldly enters the holy place where sacrifice was conducted and throws out the people who were converting the currency of Rome into money that was acceptable to the priestly authorities. He even expels vendors and their animals from the Temple, bringing the routine of sacrifice to a halt.

Such an action would indeed have aroused opposition from both the Roman authorities and the priests. The priests would be threatened because an important source of revenue was jeopardized, as well as the arrangements they themselves had condoned. The Romans would be concerned because they wished for political reasons to protect the operation of the Temple. They saw sacrifice there as a symbol

of their tolerant acceptance of Jews as loyal subjects, and they even arranged to pay for some of the offerings.³ The same Temple that was for the priestly class a divine privilege was for the Romans the seal of imperial hegemony.

The conventional picture of Jesus as preventing commercial activity in God's house is appealing but oversimplified. It enables us to conceive of Jesus as opposing worship in the Temple, and that is the intention of the Gospels. They are all written with hindsight, in the period after the Temple was destroyed (in 70 CE), when Christianity was emerging as a largely non-Jewish movement. From the early Fathers of Christianity to the most modern commentaries, the alluring simplicity of the righteous, philosophical Jesus casting out the "money-changers" has proven itself attractive again and again.

As is often the case, the conventional picture of Jesus may be sustained only by ignoring the social

realities of early Judaism. Jesus in fact worshiped in the Temple and encouraged others to do so (see, for example, his instructions to the "leper" in Mt 8:4, Mk 1:44, Lk 5:14). In addition, the picture of Jesus simply throwing the money-changers out of the Temple seems implausible. There were indeed "money-changers" associated with the Temple, whose activities are set down in the Mishnah and recorded by Josephus. Every year, the changing of money—in order to collect the tax of a half-shekel for every adult male—went on publicly throughout Israel. The process commenced a full month before Passover with a proclamation concerning the tax,⁴ and exchanges were set up outside Jerusalem ten days before they were set up in the Temple. The tax was not limited to those resident in the land of Israel, but was collected from Jews far and wide. An awareness of those simple facts brings us to an equally simple conclusion: the Gospels' picture of Jesus is distorted. It is clear that he could not have stopped the

collection of the half-shekel by overturning some tables in the Temple.

A generation after Jesus' death, by the time the Gospels were written, the Temple in Jerusalem had been destroyed, and the most influential centers of Christianity were cities of the Mediterranean world such as Alexandria, Antioch, Corinth, Damascus, Ephesus, and Rome. There were still large numbers of Jews who were also followers of Jesus, but non-Jews came to predominate in the early church. They had control over how the Gospels were written after 70 CE and how the texts were interpreted. The Gospels were composed by one group of teachers after another by a process of oral and written transmission during the period between Jesus' death and 100 CE. There is a reasonable degree of consensus that Mark was the first of the Gospels to be written, around 73 CE in the environs of Rome. As convention has it, Matthew was subsequently

composed, near 80 CE, perhaps in Damascus (or elsewhere in Syria), while Luke came later, say in 90 CE, perhaps in Antioch. Some of the earliest teachers who shaped the Gospels shared the cultural milieu of Jesus, but others had never seen him; they lived far from his land at a later period and were not practicing Jews. John's Gospel was composed in Ephesus around 100 CE and is a reflection upon the significance of Jesus for Christians who had the benefit of the sort of teaching that the synoptic Gospels represent.

The growth of Christianity involved a rapid transition from culture to culture and, within each culture, from subculture to subculture. A basic prerequisite for understanding any text of the Gospels, therefore, is to define the cultural context of a given statement. The cultural context of the picture of Jesus throwing money-changers out of the Temple is that of the predominantly non-Jewish audience of the Gospels, who regarded Judaism as a

thing of the past and its worship as corrupt. The attempt to imagine Jesus behaving in that fashion only distorts our understanding of his purposes and encourages the anti-Semitism of Christians. Insensitivity to the cultural milieus of the Gospels goes hand in hand with a prejudicial treatment of cultures other than our own.

Jesus probably did object to the tax of a half-shekel, as Mt 17:24-27 indicates.⁵ For him, being a child of God (a "son," as he put it) implied that one was free of any imposed payment for worship in the Temple. But a single onslaught of the sort described in the Gospels would not have amounted to an effective protest against the payment. To stop the collection would have required an assault involving the central treasuries of the Temple, as well as local treasuries in Israel and beyond. There is no indication that Jesus and his followers did anything of the kind, and an action approaching such dimensions would have invited immediate and

forceful repression by both Jewish and Roman authorities. There is no evidence that they reacted in that manner to Jesus and his followers.

But Jesus' action in the Temple as attested in the Gospels is not simply a matter of preventing the collection of the half-shekel. In fact, Lk 19:45-46 says nothing whatever about "money-changers"; because Luke's Gospel is in some ways the most sensitive of all the Gospels to historical concerns, the omission seems significant. Luke joins the other Gospels in portraying Jesus' act in the Temple as an occupation designed to prevent the sacrifice of animals that were acquired on the site. The trading involved commerce within the Temple, and the Jesus of the canonical Gospels, like the Jesus of the Gospel according to Thomas, held that "traders and merchants shall not enter the places of my father" (Thomas saying 64), a stance that coincides with the book of Zechariah (chapter 14).

Jesus' action in the Temple, understood as a means of protecting the sanctity of the Temple, is comparable to the actions of other Jewish teachers of his period. Josephus reports that the Pharisees made known their displeasure at a high priest (and a king at that, Alexander Jan- naeus) by inciting a crowd to pelt him with lemons (at hand for a festal procession) at the time he should have been offering sacrifice.⁶ Josephus also recounts the execution of the rabbis who were implicated in a plot to dismantle the eagle Herod had erected over a gate of the Temple.⁷ By comparison, Jesus' action seems almost tame; after all, what he did was expel some vendors, an act less directly threatening to priestly and secular authorities than what some earlier Pharisees had done.

Once it is appreciated that Jesus' maneuver in the Temple was in the nature of a claim upon territory in order to eject those performing an activity he obviously disapproved of, it seems more

straightforward to characterize it as an occupation or a raid; the traditional "cleansing" is obviously an apologetic designation. The purpose of Jesus' activity makes good sense within the context of what we know of the activities of other early rabbinic teachers.

Hillel was an older contemporary of Jesus who taught (according to the Babylonian Talmud, Shabbath 31) a form of what is known in Christian circles as the Golden Rule taught by Jesus, that we should do to others as we would have them do to us. Hillel is also reported to have taught that offerings brought to the Temple should have hands laid on them by their owners and then be given over to priests for slaughter. Recent studies of the anthropology of sacrifice show why such stipulations were held to be important.⁸ Hillel was insisting that, when the people of Israel came to worship, they should offer of their own property. Putting one's hands on the animal that was about to be sacrificed

was a statement of ownership.

The followers of a rabbi named Shammai are typically depicted in rabbinic literature as resisting the teachings of Hillel. Here, too, they take the part of the opposition. They insist that animals for sacrifice might be given directly to priests for slaughter; Hillel's requirement of laying hands on the sacrifice is considered dispensable. But one of Shammai's followers was so struck by the rectitude of Hillel's position, he had some three thousand animals brought into the Temple and gave them to those who were willing to lay hands on them in advance of sacrifice .⁹

In one sense, the tradition concerning Hillel envisages the opposite movement from what is represented in the tradition concerning Jesus: animals are driven into the Temple rather than their traders expelled. Yet the purpose of the action by Hillel's partisan is to enforce a certain understanding of

correct offering, one that accords with a standard feature of sacrifice in the anthropological literature. Hillel's teaching, in effect, insists upon the participation of the offerer by virtue of his ownership of what is offered, while most of the followers of Shammai are portrayed as sanctioning sacrifice more as a self-contained, priestly action.

Jesus' occupation of the Temple is best seen—along lines similar to those involved in the provision of animals to support Hillel's position—as an attempt to insist that the offerer's actual ownership of what is offered is a vital aspect of sacrifice. Jesus, as we will see, did not oppose sacrifice as such by what he did. His concern was with how Israelites acquired and then offered their own sacrifices.

Jesus' occupation of the Temple took place within the context of a particular dispute in which the Pharisees took part, a controversy over where the act of acquiring animals for sacrifice was to occur. In

that the dispute was intimately involved with the issue of how animals were to be procured, it manifests a focus upon purity that is akin to that attributed to Hillel.

The nature and intensity of the dispute are only comprehensible when the significance of the Temple, as well as its sacrificial functioning, is kept in mind. Within the holy of holies, enclosed in a house and beyond a veil, the God of Israel was held to be enthroned in a virtually empty room. Only the high priest could enter that space and then only once a year, on the Day of Atonement; at the autumnal equinox the rays of the sun could enter the earthly chamber whence the sun's ruler exercised dominion, because the whole of the edifice faced east. Outside the inner veil (still within the house) the table of the bread of the presence, the menorah, and the altar for incense were arranged. The house of God was just that: the place where he dwelled and where he might meet his people.

Immediately outside the house and down some steps, the altar itself, of unhewn stones and accessible by ramps and steps, was arranged. Priests regularly tended to the sacrifices, and male Israelites were also admitted into the court structure that surrounded the altar. Various specialized structures accommodated the needs of the priests, and chambers were built into the interior of the court (and, indeed, within the house) to serve as stores, treasuries, and the like. The bronze gate of Nicanor led eastward again, down steps to the court of the women, where female Israelites in a state of purity were admitted. Priests and Israelites might enter the complex of house and courts by means of gates along the north and south walls; priests and Levites who were actively engaged in the service of the sanctuary regularly used the north side.

The complex we have so far described, which is commonly known as the sanctuary proper, circumscribed the God, the people, and the offerings

of Israel. Within the boundaries of the sanctuary, what was known to be pure was offered by personnel chosen for the purpose, in the presence of the people of God and of God himself. Nothing foreign, no one with a serious defect or impurity, nothing unclean was permitted. Here God's presence was marked as much by order as by the pillar of cloud that was the flag of the Temple by day and the embers that glowed at night. God was present to the people with the things he had made and chosen for his own, and the people's presence brought them into the benefits of the covenantal compact with God. The practice of the Temple and its sacrificial worship was centered upon the demarcation and the consumption of purity in its place, with the result that God's holiness could be safely enjoyed within his four walls and the walls of male and female Israel. In no other place on earth was Israel more Israel or God more God than in the sanctuary. A balustrade surrounded the sanctuary, and steps led

down to the exterior court: non-Israelites who entered were threatened with death. Physically and socially, the sanctuary belonged to no one but God and what and whom God chose (and then, only in their places).

The sanctuary was enclosed by a larger court, and the edifice as a whole is referred to as the Temple. On the north side, the pure, sacrificial animals were slain and butchered, and stone pillars and tables, chains and rings and ropes, and vessels and bushels were arranged to enable the process to go on smoothly and with visible, deliberate rectitude. The north side of the sanctuary, then, was essentially devoted to the preparation of what could be offered, under the ministrations of those who were charged with the offering itself. The south side was the most readily accessible area in the Temple. Although Israelites outnumbered any other group of people there, and pious Jews entered only unshod, without staff or purse (cf. Berakhoth 9:5 in the Mishnah),

others might enter through monumental gates on the south wall of the mount of the Temple. The elaborate system of pools, cisterns, and conduits to the south of the mount, visible today, is evidence of the practice of ritual purity, probably by all entrants into the Temple, whether Jewish or Gentile.

Basically, then, the south side of the outer court was devoted to people, and the north side to animals; together, the entire area of the outer court might be described as potentially chosen, while the sanctuary defined what actually had been chosen. The outer court was itself held in the highest regard, as is attested architecturally by the elaborate gates around the mount.

The Gospels describe the southern side of the outer court as the place where Jesus expelled the traders, and that is what brings us to the question of a dispute in which Pharisees were involved. The exterior court was unquestionably well suited for

trade since it was surrounded by porticoes on the inside, in conformity to Herod's architectural preferences. But the assumption of Rabbinic literature and Josephus is that the market for the sale of sacrificial beasts was not located in the Temple at all but in a place called Chanuth (meaning "market" in Aramaic) on the Mount of Olives, across the Kidron Valley. According to the Babylonian Talmud,¹⁰ some forty years before the destruction of the Temple, the principal council of Jerusalem was removed from the place in the Temple called the Chamber of Hewn Stone to Chanuth. Caiaphas both expelled the Sanhedrin and introduced the traders into the Temple, in both ways centralizing power in his own hands.

From the point of view of Pharisaism generally, trade in the southern side of the outer court was anathema. Purses were not permitted in the Temple according to the Pharisees' teaching, and the introduction of trade into the Temple rendered

impracticable the ideal of not bringing into the Temple more than would be consumed there. Incidentally, the installation of traders in the porticoes would also involve the removal of those teachers, Pharisaic and otherwise, who taught and observed in the Temple itself.

From the point of view of the smooth conduct of sacrifice, of course, Caiaphas's innovation was sensible. One could know at the moment of purchase that one's sacrifice was acceptable and not run the risk of harm befalling the animal on its way to be slaughtered. But when we look at the installation of the traders from the point of view of Hillel's teaching, Jesus' objection becomes understandable. Hillel had taught that one's sacrifice had to be shown to be one's own by the imposition of hands; part of the necessary preparation was not just of people to the south and beasts to the north but the connection between the two by appropriation. Caiaphas's

innovation was sensible on the understanding that sacrifice was simply a matter of offering pure, unblemished animals. But it failed in Pharisaic terms, not only in its introduction of the necessity for commerce into the Temple but in its breach of the link between worshiper and offering in the sacrificial action.

The animals were correct in Caiaphas's system, and the priests were regular, but the understanding of the offering as by the chosen people appeared—to some at least—profoundly defective. The essential component of Jesus' occupation of the Temple is perfectly explicable within the context of contemporary Pharisaism, in which purity was more than a question of animals for sacrifice being intact. For Jesus, the issue of sacrifice also—crucially—concerned the action of Israel, as in the teaching of Hillel. Jesus' action, of course, upset financial arrangements for the sale of such animals, and it is interesting that John 2:15 speaks of his

sweeping away the "coins" (in Greek, *kermatd*) involved in the trade. But such incidental disturbance is to be distinguished from a deliberate attempt to prevent the collection of the half-shekel, which would have required coordinated activity throughout Israel (and beyond) and which typically involved larger units of currency than the term *coins* would suggest.

Jesus shared Hillel's concern that what was offered by Israel in the Temple should truly belong to Israel. His vehemence in opposition to Caiaphas's reform was a function of his deep commitment to the notion that Israel was pure and should offer of its own, even if others thought one unclean (see Mt 8:2-4; Mk 1:40-44; Lk 5:12-14), on the grounds that it is not what goes into a person that defiles but what comes out (see Mt 15:11; Mk 7:15). Israelites are properly understood as pure, so that what extends from a person, what one is and does and has, manifests that purity. According to the book of

Zechariah, evidently the prophetic inspiration of Jesus' act, once sacrifice was offered without commercial mediation in the Temple, God would reorder all the powers of the earth and open worship to non-Israelites. That focused, generative vision was the force behind Jesus' occupation of the Temple; only those after 70 CE who no longer treasured the Temple in Jerusalem as God's house could (mis)take Jesus' position to be a prophecy of doom or an objection to sacrifice.

Neither Hillel nor Jesus needs to be understood as acting upon any symbolic agenda other than his conception of acceptable sacrifice or as appearing to his contemporaries to be anything other than a typical Pharisee, impassioned with purity in the Temple to the point of forceful intervention, although Jesus' prophetic motivation eventually became transparent. Neither of their positions may be understood as a concern with the physical acceptability of the animals at issue. In each case, the

question of purity is: what is to be done with what is taken to be clean?

Jesus' interference in the ordinary worship of the Temple might have been sufficient by itself to bring about his execution. After all, the Temple was the center of Judaism for as long as it stood. Roman officials were so interested in its smooth functioning at the hands of the priests they appointed that they were known to sanction the penalty of death for gross sacrilege.^{1 1} Yet there is no indication that Jesus was immediately arrested. Instead, he remained at liberty for some time and was finally taken into custody just after one of his meals, the Last Supper (Mt 26:47-56; Mk 14:43-52; Lk 22:47-53; Jn 18:3-11). The decision of the authorities of the Temple to move against Jesus when they did is what made it the final supper.

Why did the authorities wait, and why did they act when they did? The Gospels portray them as

fearful of the popular backing that Jesus enjoyed (Mt 26:5; Mk 14:2; Lk 22:2; Jn 11:47-48), and his inclusive teaching of purity probably did bring enthusiastic followers into the Temple with him. But there was another factor: Jesus could not simply be dispatched as a cultic criminal. He was not attempting an onslaught upon the Temple as such; his dispute with the authorities concerned purity within the Temple. Other rabbis of his period also engaged in physical demonstrations of the purity they required in the conduct of worship, as we have seen. Jesus' action was extreme but not totally without precedent, even in the use of force. Most crucially, Jesus could claim the support of tradition in objecting to siting vendors within the Temple, and Caiaphas's innovation in fact did not stand. That is the reason for which rabbinic sources assume that Chanuth was the site of the vendors.

The delay of the authorities, then, was understandable. We could also say it was

commendable, reflecting continued controversy over the merits of Jesus' teaching and whether his occupation of the great court should be condemned out of hand. But why did they finally arrest Jesus? The Last Supper provides the key: something about Jesus' meals after his occupation of the Temple caused Judas to inform on Jesus. Of course, "Judas" is the only name that the traditions of the New Testament have left us. We cannot say who or how many of the disciples became disaffected by Jesus' behavior after his occupation of the Temple.

However they learned of Jesus' new interpretation of his meals of fellowship, the authorities arrested him just after the Last Supper. Jesus continued to celebrate fellowship at table as a foretaste of the kingdom, just as he had before. As before, the promise of drinking new wine in the kingdom of God joined his followers in an anticipatory celebration of that kingdom (see Mt 26:29; Mk 14:25; Lk 22:18). But he also added a new

and scandalous dimension of meaning. His occupation of the Temple having failed, Jesus said over the wine, "This is my blood," and over the bread, "This is my flesh" (Mt 26:26, 28; Mk 14:22, 24; Lk 22:19-20; 1 Cor 11:24-25; Justin, *Apology* 1.66.3).

In Jesus' context, the context of his confrontation with the authorities of the Temple, his words can have had only one meaning. He cannot have meant, "Here are my personal body and blood"; that is an interpretation that only makes sense at a later stage in the development of Christianity.¹² Jesus' point was rather that, in the absence of a Temple that permitted his view of purity to be practiced, wine was his blood of sacrifice and bread was his flesh of sacrifice. In Aramaic, blood (*dema*) and flesh (*bisra*, which may also be rendered as "body") can carry such a sacrificial meaning, and in Jesus' context, that is the most natural meaning.

The meaning of "the Last Supper," then, actually

evolved over a series of meals after Jesus' occupation of the Temple. During that period, Jesus claimed that wine and bread were a better sacrifice than what was offered in the Temple, a foretaste of new wine in the kingdom of God. At least wine and bread were Israel's own, not tokens of priestly dominance. No wonder the opposition to him, even among the twelve (in the shape of Judas, according to the Gospels), became deadly. In essence, Jesus made his meals into a rival altar.

That final gesture of protest gave Caiaphas what he needed. Jesus could be charged with blasphemy before those with an interest in the Temple. The issue now was not simply Jesus' opposition to the siting of vendors of animals but his creation of an alternative sacrifice. He blasphemed the Law of Moses. The accusation concerned the Temple, in which Rome also had a vested interest.

Pilate had no regard for issues of purity; Acts

18:14-16 reflects the attitude of an official in a similar position, and Josephus shows that Pilate was without sympathy for Judaism. But the Temple in Jerusalem had come to symbolize Roman power as well as the devotion of Israel. Rome guarded jealously the sacrifices that the emperor financed in Jerusalem; when they were spurned in the year 66, the act was seen as a declaration of war.¹³ Jesus stood accused of creating a disturbance in that Temple (during his occupation) and of fomenting disloyalty to it and therefore to Caesar. Pilate did what he had to do. Jesus' persistent reference to a "kingdom" that Caesar did not rule and his repute among some as Messiah or prophet only made Pilate's order more likely. It all was probably done without a hearing; Jesus was not a Roman citizen. He was a nuisance dispensed with under a military jurisdiction.¹⁴

At last, then, at the end of his life, Jesus discovered the public center of the kingdom: the point from which the light of God's rule would

radiate and triumph. His initial intention was that the Temple would conform to his vision of the purity of the kingdom, that all Israel would be invited there, forgiven and forgiving, to offer of their own in divine fellowship in the confidence that what they produced was pure (see Mt 15:11; Mk 7:15). The innovation of Caiaphas prevented that by erecting what Jesus (as well as other rabbis) saw as an unacceptable barrier between Israel and what Israel offered.

The last public act of Jesus before his crucifixion was to declare that his meals were the center of the kingdom. God's rule, near and immanent and final and pure, was now understood to radiate from a public place, an open manifestation of the divine kingdom in human fellowship. The authorities in the Temple rejected Jesus much as Herod Antipas in Galilee already had done, but the power and influence of those in Jerusalem made their opposition deadly. Just as those in the north could be

condemned as a new Sodom (see Lk 10:12), so Jesus could deny that offerings co-opted by priests were acceptable sacrifices. His meals replaced the Temple; those in the Temple sought to displace him. It is no coincidence that the typical setting of appearances of the risen Jesus is while disciples were taking meals together. The conviction that the light of the kingdom radiated from that practice went hand in hand with the conviction that the true master of the table, the rabbi who began it all, remained within their fellowship.

THE AUTHORIZED VERSION OF HIS BIRTH AND DEATH

David Trobisch

T

he term *New Testament* is used today to specify a closed collection of twenty-seven specific writings. The manuscript tradition demonstrates that this collection was transmitted in four volumes: The Four-Gospel-Book, Acts and General Letters, Letters of Paul, and Revelation of John. The dates of the oldest manuscripts and the evidence from the first documented readers of the New Testament (Irenaeus, Tatian, Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, Origen)

further indicate that the first edition was in existence by the second half of the second century.¹ What would a second-century person, reading the New Testament at face value and without the benefit of scholarly historical research, have gleaned from this collection of writings about the birth and the Resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth? The following passages are quoted from the New Revised Standard Version.

The first sentence of the Letters of Paul offers a definition of the contents of the "Gospel" (soayysAaov, *eu-angelion*, good news), God's central message:

Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, set apart for the Gospel of God, which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy scriptures, the Gospel concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh

and was declared to be Son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness by resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord, through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for the sake of his name, including yourselves who are called to belong to Jesus Christ.
(Rom 1:1-6)

According to Paul, the Gospel as it was foretold by the prophets of the Holy Scriptures identifies Jesus as the Christ for two reasons. The first reason is that Jesus was a descendant of the royal house of David, and the second reason is that Jesus' Resurrection clearly demonstrates that he was Son of God with exceptional spiritual powers. Paul finishes by stating that his apostleship is dedicated to promoting the obedience of faith in Jesus Christ among the nations, i.e., among people living outside of Judea.

Although the very first information readers of Romans receive about Jesus is that Jesus is from the royal family of David, Paul, the implied author of all fourteen canonical letters of Paul, does not elaborate much on this point. In 1 Timothy, literary Paul orders Timothy, a pastor in training, to charge "certain people" not to "occupy themselves with myths and endless genealogies that promote speculations rather than the divine training that is known by faith" (1 Tm 1:4). A reader of the New Testament will quickly discover that the Gospels offer two contradicting genealogies of Jesus (Mt 1:1-17 and Lk 3:23-38) and may rightly assume that Paul in 1 Timothy warns his followers not to waste their time with useless speculations on how to reconcile them. Other than that, canonical Paul is silent about Jesus' relation to the royal house of David. When it comes to Jesus' Resurrection, however, Paul is more eloquent:

For I handed on to you as of first importance what I in turn had received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures. (1 Cor 15:3-4)

Paul gives an outline of the events following Jesus' death as they had been passed on to him. The context suggests that Paul is defending himself against accusations of being uninformed about the historical Jesus, and therefore takes the utmost care to represent the tradition he had received accurately (1 Cor 15:1-3).

Paul was told that Christ died, was buried, and raised the third day according to the scriptures. The reference to the scriptures provides the readers with a link to Paul's statement in Romans 1:1 that the Gospel was promised beforehand in the writings of

the prophets. To this point Paul's statements conform nicely with the traditions of the canonical Gospels. But the text continues with a series of six events, all of which are unparalleled:

and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers and sisters at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have died. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me. (1 Cor 15:3-8)

Paul states that Christ first appeared to Cephas (Peter). One of the few traditions all four Gospels share is that women were the first to discover the empty tomb (Mt 28:1-8; Mk 16:1-8; Lk 24:1-11; Jn 20:1). This tradition is curiously absent in Paul. Except for an obscure note in Luke 24:34, there is no hint that Jesus appeared to Peter separately.

Paul continues that Christ then appeared to the twelve. But according to Matthew and Luke (Mt 27:3-10; cf. Acts 1:18-19), Judas committed suicide even before Jesus died on the cross and therefore Jesus could only have appeared to the eleven (Mt 28:16; Lk 24:9.33; cf. Mk 16:14), not the twelve. Paul seems unfamiliar with the tradition of Judas's suicide. Then Christ appeared to more than five hundred. There is no such story in the Gospels, and the statement is even more surprising as Paul gives living proof: some witnesses are still alive and ready to testify.

The differences continue. Christ, Paul insists, then appeared to his brother James. This story, sorely missing from the Gospel accounts, nicely explains why the Lord's brother received the high recognition among the Early Christian community, which Paul attests to him in Galatians (Gal 1:19; 2:9.12).

Paul insists that Christ then appeared to "all the

apostles." This statement is confusing. What exactly is an "apostle" in this context? Are the twelve not "all" the apostles? Is Cephas who is mentioned separate from the twelve not an apostle (cf. 1 Cor 9:5)? And isn't Paul an apostle as well? Or is the term *apostle* defined as someone who "sees" the resurrected Christ (cf. 1 Cor 9:1)? However Paul's language is explained, this statement is difficult to reconcile with the Gospel accounts. Paul's last remark is more compromising than all the others put together. Paul writes: "Last of all he appeared also to me" (1 Cor 15:8).

When Paul talks about his experiences of Christ, he calls them revelations (Gal 1:12) or visions (12:1). Like dreams, these visions are subjective and irrelevant to any other person than the one who experiences them. Paul describes his revelations as an out-of-body experience in 2 Cor 12:1-10: "whether in the body or out of the body I do not know; God knows" (12:3.4).

For Paul, all Resurrection accounts of 1 Corinthians 15 are "appearance" stories. The term *ocp9r|* (he appeared) is used for each of the six events. Revelation is a spiritual experience, a vision, a dream. For Paul, Christ is not a "real" person. The notion that the resurrected Jesus existed physically, that he would eat (Lk 24:43), that his wounds could be touched (Jn 20:27), is not what Paul had been taught.

Paul's statements sharply contrast what the Gospel According to Mark has to offer to its readers:

They came to Jericho. As he and his disciples and a large crowd were leaving Jericho, Bartimaeus son of Timaeus, a blind beggar, was sitting by the roadside.

When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout out and say, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" Many sternly ordered him to be quiet, but he cried out even more loudly, "Son

of David, have mercy on me!" (Mk 10:46-52)

The only time Mark makes an allusion to Jesus being from the royal family of David is in the story of blind beggar Bartimaeus, who cries out "Son of David" (Mark 10:46f). His shouting is a public embarrassment, and he is ordered to be quiet. Readers will hardly see the scene as an endorsement of Jesus' ancestry.

And when it comes to providing an account of Jesus' Resurrection, Mark is silent:

As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man, dressed in a white robe, sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed.

But he said to them, "Do not be alarmed; you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; he is not here. Look, there is the place they laid him. But go, tell his

disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you." (Mk 16:5-7)

The women encounter a nameless young man in a white gown at the empty tomb who tells them that Jesus was raised from the dead and that they should tell the disciples and Peter to go ahead to Galilee, where he will meet them. But what do the women do?

So they went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid. (Mk 16:8)

They said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid (s (popouvxo yap). This is the last sentence of Mark's Gospel. The resurrected Christ has not appeared and the first witnesses "say nothing to anyone." This is

the worst imaginable ending for a Gospel.

Measured against Paul's definition of what the Gospel of God is about, Mark fails on both accounts. Jesus is not portrayed as a son of David, and there is no Resurrection story of Jesus. The readers are left with allusions to Jesus' Resurrection provided by an unidentified young man in a white robe.

But only the oldest manuscripts of Mark end with verse 8. The vast majority of manuscripts provide the so-called long ending. The long ending of Mark gives us a rare window into the struggles of early editors of the New Testament as they attempt to provide an authoritative version of the Resurrection accounts:

Now after he rose early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, from whom he had cast out seven demons. She went out and told those who had been with him, while they were mourning and weeping. But when they heard

that he was alive and had been seen by her, they would not believe it. (Mk 16:9-11)

The appearance of the resurrected Christ to Mary is taken from John 20:

After this he appeared in another form to two of them, as they were walking into the country. And they went back and told the rest, but they did not believe them.

Later he appeared to the eleven themselves as they were sitting at the table; and he upbraided them for their lack of faith and stubbornness, because they had not believed those who saw him after he had risen.

And he said to them, *"Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation. The one who believes and is baptized will be saved• but the one who does not believe will be condemned,"*^r." (Mk 16:12-16)

The story of the two disciples walking into the country is taken from Luke 24. The dinner of the disciples on Easter Sunday is told in Luke 24 and John 20. Both stories mention a lack of faith (Lk 24:38; Jn 20:24—28). And finally, which reader of the New Testament would not immediately relate Jesus' commission "To go into the world" and "baptize" to the last scene of Matthew's Gospel, the so-called Great Commission (Mt 28:16-20)?

So the long ending in Mark compensates for the unsatisfying and abrupt end of Mark by combining the accounts of Matthew, Luke, and John. There is more to come:

"And these signs will accompany those who believe: by using my name they will cast out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up snakes in their hands.; and if they drink any deadly thing, it will not hurt

them; they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover

So then the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken to them, was taken up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God.

And they went out and proclaimed the good news everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the message by the signs that accompanied it. (Mk 16:17-20)

Narratives about speaking in foreign languages (Acts 2:6-8), about surviving snakebites (Acts 28:5), and about the ascension of Jesus (Acts 1:9) are found in Acts. The last sentence of the long ending: "And they went out and proclaimed the good news everywhere," reads like a summary of the plot of Acts.

The long ending of Mark combines all four Gospels and adds the testimony of Acts. It can be

read as an early attempt to harmonize the accounts of the events following Jesus' Resurrection. But—and this needs to be stated clearly—the New Testament is not a harmony. It provides four distinct Gospels with four distinct accounts.

The Gospel According to Matthew, as title of this book is transmitted in the manuscripts of the Four-Gospel-Book, begins with a genealogy of Jesus:

Jesse was the father of King David. And David was the father of Solomon by the wife of Uriah, and Solomon the father of Rehoboam, and Rehoboam the father of Abijah, [the line is continued from here to Joseph, father of Jesus]. (Mt 1:6-7)

The implied author, Matthew the tax-collector (Mt 9:9), is perceived by readers as someone who professionally deals with official records. He states that Jesus is related to King David through David's

son Solomon. Furthermore, Matthew insists that Joseph and Mary have been living all their lives, like their ancestors, in Bethlehem (cf. Mt 2:1).

The difficulty Matthew and any other Gospel writer face, is to explain how someone called Jesus of Nazareth could be linked to David. By making Jesus' parents citizens of Bethlehem the narrative solves part of the problem. But why did Jesus move to Nazareth? Why did he not stay in Bethlehem?

There he made his home in a town called Nazareth, so that what had been spoken through the prophets might be fulfilled, "He will be called a Nazorean" [on Na^copaiog KXr)0r)crfTai] (Mt 2:23)

The narrator solves the mystery by insisting that the scriptures predicted the Messiah to be called a "NaCcopouog." The narrative context (cf. Mt 4:13; 21:11; 26:71) suggests beyond reasonable doubt that

the term is used to designate a "Nazarene," a citizen of Nazareth. But no such scripture exists. Nazareth is not mentioned in the Jewish Bible.

In the Gospel According to Luke, the readers are presented with a genealogy of Jesus that differs from Matthew's records. Instead of relating Jesus through Solomon to David as Matthew does, the implied author, the physician Luke, relates Jesus to David through another son, Nathan. The discrepancy could not be bolder.

[Jesus ...] son of Melea, son of Menna, son of Mattatha, son of Nathan, son of David, son of Jesse, son of Obed, son of Boaz, son of Sala, son of Nahshon, [... son of Adam, the son of God.] (Lk 3:31-32)

And when it comes to the Gospel According to John, the readers are confronted with the notion that

Jesus was present at the creation of the world, long before King David was born. The question whether Jesus was actually related by blood to the royal family suddenly seems irrelevant:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people____And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth. (John 1:1-4:14)

"What good can come from Nazareth?" Nathanael asks a few lines down in this Gospel (Jn 1:46), and Philip gives him an answer that feels true for many evangelicals, mysticists, Pentecostals, Mormons, Isa Muslims, and anyone who bases

religious convictions on the spiritual experience of Christ: "Come and see!" They may not have a solution that is intellectually satisfying, but they promise that anyone who joins their group will make spiritual experiences that back up the claim that Jesus is the Christ.

A second-century reader of the New Testament, who followed Paul's outline of what the Gospel is about, would have been confronted with the following information.

Concerning Jesus as the Son of David, Matthew and Luke provide different genealogies of Jesus—something that is biologically impossible. Mark makes no statement about it, and John insists that the question is irrelevant.

When it comes to the Resurrection events, Matthew and Luke do not agree where Christ appeared to his disciples. Matthew places the event on a mountain in Galilee, Luke in Jerusalem. Mark

suggests Galilee but lacks a story, and John combines both traditions, providing stories in Jerusalem and Galilee. And Paul, the maverick apostle, disagrees with each of these accounts.

What is the version of Jesus' ancestry and Resurrection promoted in the New Testament and regarded as authoritative by the Christian movement for almost two millennia? The answer is rather simple. The New Testament does not provide an authorized version of the birth and Resurrection accounts of Jesus of Nazareth.

Editors, translators, and commentators of the New Testament have struggled and will always struggle with the apparent diversity of voices. The title of the first volume of the New Testament that contains the four canonical Gospels is preserved in many manuscripts as Τῶν τε εὐαγγελίων (tetra-euangelion), and the uniform transmission and lack of variants for this title suggest that it was part

of the archetype from which all manuscripts of the New Testament derive. *Tetra* signifies the number four, but *euangelion* (Gospel) is used in the singular. The title is impossible to translate into English but its intention is easy to grasp: as far back as the earliest edition of the New Testament, editors were aware of the significant discrepancies in the accounts of the four Gospels, and yet they insist that in this choir of witnesses there is a shared message.

And Paul, as was demonstrated above, follows a completely different narrative tradition.

PROLEGOMENON TO A SCIENCE OF CHRISTIAN ORIGINS

Frank R. Zindler

We are all aware of the fact that this meeting of the Jesus Project [in 2008] is being sponsored by the Committee for the Scientific Examination of Religion. By my reckoning, that means that it not only behooves us to be as scientific as possible in our inquiry into the historicity of Jesus of Nazareth, it absolutely *requires* us to create a science of Christian origins.

Fortunately, the science of religion and religiosity is already a burgeoning field of research.

Anthropology has always investigated religions and examined them under its microscope. The sociology of religions is also a developed science, and many important insights into the nature of religiosity have been attained in psychology and psychiatry. In recent years, neuroscience (one of my own areas of expertise) has contributed astonishing understanding of the physiological basis for prayer, meditation, and so-called transcendent experiences. Archaeology, as long as it has been studying "other" religions, has been invaluable for gaining objective knowledge of Amerindian religions in particular. Unfortunately, so-called biblical archaeology until quite recently was really not a science. Rather, it has largely been a special branch of Christian apologetics. That no longer can be tolerated. *All* archaeological investigations, of *all* religions, must be fitted to the Procrustean requirements of genuine science.

What has not yet developed to a satisfactory degree is a science dedicated to the investigation of

the historical dimensions of religions in general and of Christianity in particular. It is often supposed that history is not amenable to scientific methods because, it is alleged, science can only deal with the spatial dimensions in the here and now. Of course this is not true. Astronomy has long trained its instruments upon the history of our entire universe. Archaeology, geology, and paleontology all are scientific enterprises that study the past. In my lifetime, molecular and evolutionary genetics (another one of my areas of expertise) has created a panoramic picture of the history of *Homo sapiens* itself. The human genome is being read today like a lengthy and frequently interpolated biblical palimpsest.

RULES OF SCIENCE

As we resolve to develop a truly scientific approach to

the study of Christian origins, we must remind ourselves of some of the logical and philosophical rules of science that have so often been stumbling blocks for students of religion—especially for those who are themselves religious.

First of all: science can only deal with propositions that are *meaningful*, in the sense that they must in principle be *falsifiable*. That is, one must be able at least in the imagination to think of possible tests that could conceivably prove the proposition wrong. A proposition that cannot be tested even theoretically is not wrong: it is *scientifically meaningless*. It cannot even be wrong.

It is helpful to distinguish between *theoretical falsifiability* (testability) from *practical falsifiability*. To understand the distinction, let us suppose that in the year 1611 someone made the claim, "The moon is made of green cheese." At that time it would have been impossible in practice to test the proposition, as

neither space-flight nor spectroscopic analysis were yet available. Even so, anyone living at that time could imagine being transported to the moon and proceeding to check whether or not the "soil" worked well in salad dressing. Thus, the green-cheese proposition—although now known to be false—was still scientifically meaningful even though not being *practically* testable at the time.

What if, however, in the year 1611 or 2010, someone claims, "Undetectable gremlins inhabit the rings of Saturn"? We cannot even imagine a way to test for undetectable entities. Such a claim could not even be false. It would be scientifically meaningless.

Often, when I point out the significance of the fact that there are no eyewitness reports or accounts of Jesus of Nazareth, it is argued that Jesus was too ordinary and obscure a person to attract attention. He didn't *really* walk on the water, turn water to wine, or rise from the dead after hundreds of zombies came

out of their graves and marched on Jerusalem. Nevertheless, of course, he was the most powerful personality who ever lived, grabbed the attention and devotion of twelve disciples, and changed the history of the world forever.

Ignoring for the nonce the contradictoriness of the entire argument, let us focus on the beginning claim: *Jesus existed but was too ordinary and obscure a person to attract attention.* How could one ever test such a claim? If you went back in your time machine to check on him, *ex hypothesi* you would not find him because he would not attract your attention! Moreover, most arguments alleging that "absence of evidence is not evidence of absence" actually involve an untestable presupposition such as this one.

Second: true science must eschew the informal fallacy of logic known as *ignotum per ignotius*—trying to explain the unknown in terms of the more unknown. True science must seek to explain the

unknown in terms of the known—or at least the better known. Another way to put this is to say that science is *reductionistic*, seeking to reduce the unknown to terms of what is known.

Thus, Benjamin Franklin explained lightning in terms of electricity—something he had experimented with in the laboratory and field, something of which he had practical knowledge. The theologians of his day, however, explained lightning in terms of the wrath of Jehovah or punishment for sin—things of which no man or woman has ever had any knowledge, practical or otherwise.

Franklin's scientific method led to the salvation of every church steeple in the modern world, but no amount of theological reasoning has ever convincingly been shown to have saved a church from lightning. Nearly every church steeple in the world is protected by what the theologians used to call "Franklin's wicked iron points." This is reduc-

tionistic science at its finest.

Third: in science the *onusprobandi* is crucially different from that governing jurisprudence or some other fields of human endeavor. In law, it is a general rule that the party who alleges the affirmative of any proposition shall prove it. The case becomes complicated, however, by the fact that there are many situations in which the law itself presumes the affirmative, and then the *onusprobandi* lies with the party denying the fact. For example, the legitimacy of a child born in wedlock is presumed and the burden of proof falls upon those who argue against legitimacy.

In science, however, the burden of proof lies not so much with anyone alleging the affirmative of any proposition, but rather with those alleging the veridical existence of a physical entity, process, or event. The crucially important difference for us to note today is that for all claims of existence, science

presumes the negative. It will ignore all affirmative arguments if they are not supported by evidence and facts.

Let me repeat: *for all claims of existence, science presumes the negative.* For us that means that the burden of proof lies not with those who deny the historicity of "Jesus of Nazareth," but rather with those who hold the traditional view that even if he might not have been a god, he was at the very least a man.

MY ARGUMENT

I shall argue that there is no compelling or convincing evidence to support the proposition that a man—carrying out all the bodily functions common to human beings generally—identifiable as Jesus of Nazareth was living in Palestine at the turn of the

era. Moreover, I will maintain that there is irrefutable evidence against the proposition—even though it is not beholden upon me to prove the negative.

I shall argue that the historical existence of Jesus of Nazareth and his equally unknown and unattested disciples has always been merely assumed or loosely inferred from the writings of a handful of ancient authors. Only in the last few centuries have any scholars asked for genuine evidence of his historicity, and only in my own lifetime has anyone had the temerity to rest the burden of proof on those holding the traditional opinion—and to demand that evidence sufficient for proof be brought forward.

Having studied for nearly thirty years the evidence adduced to prove the historical reality of Jesus of Nazareth, I must tell you that I find absolutely no good reason to suppose he was any more historical than Mithra, Dionysus, Zeus, or Thor. Interestingly, the American founding father Thomas

Paine (1737-1809) came to the same conclusion shortly before his death.

Euhemerus, I think, was wrong more often than he was right! Not only is there no evidence supporting Jesus' existence, there is compelling archaeological evidence weighing against it.

EVIDENCE OF ABSENCE

Earlier this year [2008], American Atheist Press published what I think is an extremely important book by an author named Rene Salm. Its title is *The Myth of Nazareth: The Invented Town of Jesus*. It shows conclusively, I think, that the city now called Nazareth in the Galilee was not inhabited at the turn of the era when Jesus and his family should have been living there. Salm's reanalysis of the sparse

archaeological evidence seems to me to be absolutely irrefutable and demonstrates that Jesus, if he existed, could not have come from Nazareth.

In 2003, my own book, *The Jesus the Jews Never Knew. Sepher Toldoth Yeshu and the Quest of the Historical Jesus in Jewish Sources*,² showed that the ancient Jews had never heard of "Jesus of Nazareth." Moreover, they had never heard of Nazareth either!

But Nazareth is not the only Active place that figures in the Gospels' geographical setting. My essay in the *Journal of Higher Criticism*, "Capernaum—A Literary Invention,"³ makes a strong case for the claim that the archaeological site K'far Nahum cannot be the biblical Capernaum and cannot be the place mentioned by Josephus—the only extrabiblical author alleged to have mentioned Capernaum.

A popular article of mine, "Where Jesus Never Walked" (available on the American Atheists' Web site, <http://www.atheists.org>), argues that Bethany,

Bethpage, and Aenon are also fictional places. Even more startling was the report in 2006 by Israeli archaeologist Aviram Oshri that he could find no archaeological evidence to indicate that Bethlehem in Judaea was inhabited at the turn of the era!⁴

Now if even just one of the above geographic claims is able to withstand the fierce criticism that is just now beginning, it will have to be concluded that the character "Jesus of Nazareth" was a literary invention.

QUESTIONS TO BE ANSWERED

Since science requires us to explain unknowns in terms of what is known, let us consider some astonishing unknowns, some questions that we must answer before we can answer questions of the historicity of Jesus.

(A) *When, exactly, did Christianity begin? Did Christianity, in fact, have a beginning? Can we visualize the origin and early evolution of Christianity better as a tree, with a single trunk producing many branches, or as a multifilamentous braid, with the oldest threads appearing out of the mists of religious and philosophical antiquity?*

Did these strands of tradition then twine together, pick up new threads and incorporate them as time went by? Did other threads then fray, branch, or break off the main braid from time to time? Did Christianity—like Mormonism—have a discrete, clearly defined beginning that we might trace to a single historical figure, or was it rootless like Hinduism or the ancient religions of Egypt and Mesopotamia?

If we cannot find compelling evidence that Christianity began, say, within the space of a specific decade in known history, should we not conclude that

it did not have a discrete beginning but was, rather, a confluence of social movements that at some point in its evolution came to be tagged with the Christian label?

(B) *Where*, exactly, did Christianity begin? *Did* Christianity, in fact, start in a single place? Can we show, conclusively, that it began in Jerusalem or Galilee—as tradition would claim—or in Rome, or Alexandria, or Antioch, or Tarsus, or elsewhere in Asia Minor as some revisionists have claimed? Or did Christian-like movements coalesce out of the mythic milieu in all those places as well as in North Africa, Gaul, and the Greek mainland?

Did the Great Church form from the confluence of tributary streams flowing off a large cultural watershed, or did it, like the Nile in the Delta, form by reuniting some of its distributary streams into a smaller number of channels, finally to debouche into the sea of history?

(C) *How*, did Christianity begin? Did it begin as an open, exoteric movement with a kerygma broadcast publicly, or did it begin as an esoteric mystery cult? The Pauline Epistles—and various hints in the canonical Gospels—would indicate an esoteric origin, yet tradition would have us believe that that was not the case. At some point might Christianity have been both an esoteric cult and an exoteric church?

There are many other questions of importance that cannot be answered substantively enough to satisfy an unbelieving scientist. To list just a few:

- (1) Was St. Paul historical?
- (2) Did the "Crucifixion" take place on a hill near Jerusalem or at the celestial vernal equinox, the point where the ecliptic path of the sun *crosses* the celestial equator?
- (3) Why were *two* fishes, the astrological symbol

for Pisces, among the earliest symbols of Christianity?

(4) Was Euhemerus ever correct?

(5) What was the role of martyrs in the earliest church?

(6) Were the first Christians Jews or Gentiles?

(7) Did the New Testament authors borrow the word *Gospel* (suayysXiov, euangelion) from Augustus Caesar's use of the plural form, or did they reinvent the word later?

(8) Why was the New Testament originally written in Greek?

(9) What were the mysteries to which Paul alludes?

(10) *Wiry* were there mysteries?

(11) Were the Twelve Apostles/Disciples

historical? The Virgin Mary? Joseph? The Twelve Pillars? St. Stephen?

(12) Why isn't Sepphoris mentioned in the New Testament?

(13) Why can we not identify convincingly the sites of Capernaum, Nazareth, Bethany, Bethpage, Aenon, etc.?

(14) Do we know who the authors of *any* New Testament books were?

(15) Why did Latin Christianity begin in North Africa instead of Rome?

(16) Do we know any document of the New Testament that is the product of a single author?

(17) Is a "high Christology" evolved or primitive: did Jesus become Christ, or did Christ become Jesus of Nazareth?

- (18) Since the oldest attested use of the *chi-rho* cross was an abbreviation for Chronos/Kronos in a manuscript at Pompeii/Herculaneum of Aristototele's *Constitution of the City of Athens*,⁵ how can we know if other early occurrences of this symbol were Christian or Chronian?
- (19) When and where did the Christian liturgy begin? Did it resemble that of the Caesar cults?
- (20) Is the Passion narrative history or a transcript of a passion play for a mystery cult?
- (21) Why and how did the belief in a "Second Coming" come about? Was it in any way related to the Sibylline Oracle lines concerning the Second Coming of Nero?
- (22) Why is Easter at the vernal equinox?

THE LESSON OF ISAAC NEWTON

As a scientist, I find it shocking that *not one* of these fundamental questions can yet be answered conclusively—despite centuries of scholarly toil, study, and publication. As a scientist, I not only want to know the answers to the questions just raised; I want to understand why so little progress has been made in trying to answer them since 1727, the year in which Sir Isaac Newton died.

As you know, Isaac Newton was an immensely brilliant mathematician and physicist who created the first unified, modern science. But you may not be aware that Newton was also a theologian and biblical scholar of immense—although peculiar—erudition. In fact, Newton published more pages on biblical

"research" than on physical research. It is likely that he devoted more time and pages to elucidating biblical numerology and prophecy than to developing the calculus.

As I have just noted, Newton died in the year 1727. Since that time, the seed he planted in his great treatise *Philosophiae naturalis principia mathematica* has sprouted and grown into the magnificent tree of modern physics, a science that seems close to achieving a "Theory of Everything"—a theory comprehending everything from the quantum reality of virtual and subatomic particles to the structure of the entire universe.

Every generation of physicists that has followed Newton has been able to stand upon his shoulders—and on the shoulders of succeeding generations leading up to it—in order to see farther into the unknown.

But what of his writings on biblical numerology

and prophecy? What modern knowledge has been gained by adding to his writings in this area? Can we name any modern biblical scholar who has been able to build upon a foundation of Newton's religious writings to erect an edifice of greater understanding of the New Testament?

Why did Newton's physical science lead progressively to greater and greater understanding of our world? Why did his religious studies lead nowhere?⁶ Why has there been steady progress in all of the sciences, but almost no progress at all in religious studies?

Why did science need to invent the wheel only once? Why does nearly every generation of religion scholars seem to have to reinvent their wheel? Why do scientists march steadily forward, when those in the humanities typically have to wander forty years in the wilderness before achieving any breakthrough in understanding—and that almost by accident in

most cases? How, exactly, do you measure progress in the humanities any way?

I suggest the problem is that we have not even been trying to use the scientific method in the field of religion studies. Only since the time of Charles Darwin have religion in general and Christianity in particular become proper subjects for scientific study. Only rarely have studies of Christian origins attempted to be completely reductionist, to explain the unknown in terms of the known or the relatively certain.

After all, how does one find out what is already known in a particular area of the humanities—short of reading everything that has ever been written on the subject and evaluating it all? There has never been a database to which one could turn to discover what already is known, so that one might embark on a particular new investigation in order to discover new truth, say, in New Testament studies.

In fact, to speak of discovering "truth" in New Testament studies might possibly strike some veteran scholars as amusing. Why should that be? Why shouldn't it be as possible to discover truth in New Testament studies as in biochemistry?

BIOCHEMISTRY VERSUS NEW TESTAMENT STUDIES

There are at least three reasons why it sounds odd or amusing to speak of discovering truth in New Testament studies.

First, it is a sad fact that too often New Testament studies have simply been exercises in Christian apologetics. No one expects truth to be discovered when our conclusions have been drawn before we have set to work! Second, there is the

problem of tying a putative new truth with unassailable logic and evidence to reference points of demonstrated verity. What is there in New Testament studies that has been demonstrated so thoroughly that even an unbelieving scientist would agree that it is a fact or is "true"?

Third, there is the problem of knowing if one's discovery is in fact new. In less than a scholar's lifetime, how does one discover what has been discovered and reported—in all the languages used in scholarly discourse?

Consider, now, how different the situation is for a biochemist working for a pharmaceutical company and wanting to see if an interesting compound unexpectedly just discovered is really novel or might perhaps have been discovered long ago.

First, there is no such thing as biochemical apologetics.⁷ So, our biochemist can assume that although the information that might be found in the

biochemical literature might be wrong in the sense of faulty or mistaken, it is not at all likely to be a willful fabrication.

Second, in seeking new truth, a biochemist has at his or her disposal tools that make it possible in less than a week to find out *everything* that has ever been discovered and reported on any particular topic of biochemistry. Consider, for example, *Chemical Abstracts*—a huge journal that has been published since the year 1907.

Since at least 1967, nearly every chemical journal in the world—in all languages from Afrikaans to Azerbaijani and to Ukrainian and beyond—has been sent to Columbus, Ohio, where a scientifically professional editorial staff has read it, summarized it in English, and indexed all the chemical substances and concepts for the use of chemists throughout the world. Moreover, for many years now *Chemical Abstracts* has been available for searching online, and

nearly everything known about chemistry is retrievable at close to the speed of light. Exhaustive searching is a routine procedure. Has any one of you ever been able to do an *exhaustive* search of the entire world literature in your field?

Third, a biochemist can find help in weighing the relative importance of the various pieces of information that an online search will produce. It is possible to discover how many other scholars have cited a particular paper—both approvingly and critically in the refereed literature. The wheel of criticism need be reinvented no more than the wheel of discovery.

NEED FOR A DATABASE OF FACTS

It seems clear that the scientific study of religion will not move very far into the humanities side of the

research field until there exists an information system analogous to *Chemical Abstracts*, a system wherein everything known about religion has been identified, indexed, summarized, referenced, and made available in a single *lingua franca*. For any topic, it should be possible to learn what the primary sources are, where they are located, and how to access them. Archaeology, history, chronology, neurophysiology of religious experience, sociology of religion, psychology of religion, linguistics, anthropology, comparative religious studies, bibliography—all the areas relating to the scientific study of religion need to be included. Perhaps it could be compiled as a cooperative, public effort—a *Wikireligia*\

It will be necessary to have instant access to all relevant primary-source manuscripts, texts, and documents, both in the form of facsimile, high-resolution images, and in the form of word-searchable text files. The *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae* (TLG) and the *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae*

(TLL) are a step in this direction. However, although they contain the texts of an enormous number of writings of importance to scholars of religion, they do not contain specific files of important individual manuscripts, so it is not possible yet to study the all-important variant readings so necessary for purposes of text criticism.

Moreover, they only cover Greek and Latin materials. As far as I am aware, there is no equivalent database for Hebrew, Coptic, or Aramaic/Syriac, still less for Arabic, Ethiopic, Old Armenian, Old Georgian, Egyptian, Akkadian, Ugaritic, and Eblaite. These are minimum requirements for a science seeking to investigate the origins of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

Of course, having access to all the relevant primary documents is a necessary but insufficient condition for producing a database from which a scientific theory of religion could be derived.

No single person could comprehend so large a database of primary sources, let alone evaluate it. It is imperative that one have access to the critical secondary literature as well. It is important to be able to see how other scholars have "digested" the various primary materials, and abstracts of secondary sources are invaluable for this purpose.

Making available all the relevant secondary books and articles will be a daunting project. However, we are living in the age of computers. Google is beginning to scan and digitize several of the great libraries of the world, and it would seem that a great amount of this secondary literature will eventually be accessible on our laptops at the local coffeehouse.

But of course, all that material will need to be abstracted and made available. For half a century or so we have had *New Testament Abstracts* and *Old Testament Abstracts*, both of which are now accessible online. If somehow they could be linked to TLG and

TLL, they would provide a solid core for our necessary database. But of course their scope and coverage would have to be greatly enlarged.

From a database such as this we could begin to assemble a database of facts—not just tendentious opinions—from which to create and test theories of Christian origins and other problems in the scientific study of religion.

Remember, science must explain the unknown in terms of what is known.

Remember also that in science the burden of proof rests with the person claiming the existence of a thing, a person, or a process. Proof requires evidence. Evidence requires facts. A database of religious facts is *sine qua non* for those seeking to understand and explain the origins of the Abrahamic religions.

But what, in our present state of confusion and

controversy, can we all agree upon to use as the core of our database of facts? I think the answer is easy: chronology. Much of the needed chronology has already long ago been established: the dates of the Roman emperors, the dates of most of the Greek philosophers, the dates of important battles, numismatic sequences, etc. In addition to such "absolute" chronologies, however, we need to also include relative chronologies such as Greek, Hebrew, Latin, and Coptic paleographic sequences, ceramic sequences, architectural sequences, burial practice sequences, etc.

Onto a skeleton of such chronologies we must then affix another type of fact that we can all agree upon: the date of first- or last-known attestation of persons, places, or things of interest. When was Nazareth first mentioned outside the New Testament? By whom? How secure is our dating of the attestation? When are any of the Pauline Epistles first attested? When and where was Mithraism first

commented on by a Christian? When did the Romans first notice the Christians? With such information we will be able to reconstruct credible trajectories in the evolution of religions.

As in science, it will be necessary to provide references (primary sources whenever possible) to support each fact, so that if studies begin to call into question the accuracy or correctness of particular facts, it will be possible to reevaluate the sources from which newly contested facts were derived. Like all sciences, our science of Christian origins must be self-correcting and progressively must become more and more reliable.

The addition of first-attestation information to our database of facts will enormously expand its size. It will reach daunting proportions within a year of serious teamwork by scholars. However, the overall size of the database will be invisible to scholars wishing to search it.

Simple computer word searches with elementary Boolean capability would allow one to discover—almost instantly—the first-known attestation of Marcion's existence, the first attestation of the *Testimonium Flavianum*, a canon first including the Apocalypse of John, the first use of the word "gospel" (*suayysAAOV*, *euangelion*), the first use of the name "Jesus" as a word of power, all Greek manuscripts dated to the period 275-300 CE, and so forth.

More importantly, however, it will be possible quickly to update the entries retrieved as new discoveries make revision necessary. Such a database not only will rapidly increase in size; it will also quickly increase in reliability and utility.

RESOLVING DISPUTES

In the past, the disputes of biblical scholars almost never have come to resolution. I submit that this is largely because the various disputants rarely align their data and arguments to the same point of reference. Rarely do they engage each other on a common ground.

It is often claimed, for example, that the work of Arthur Drews was largely refuted and discredited. I do not, however, agree. I would argue instead that the few polemics published against him did not fully engage his database but rather used separate databases that were never tied in to the one used by Drews. After Drews died, mainline scholars agreed he had been refuted and quickly he was forgotten. Such has been the fate of most Christ-myth theorists for the last two centuries. I would argue that in almost all cases, Christ-myth disputes have been the equivalent of shadow boxing. The disputants rarely become

objectively engaged with each other. Rather, they tilt against each other's shadows.

Such exercises in futility do not need to continue, however. We cannot expect apologists to agree to relate their hypotheses and theories to our database, but all genuine scholars should be willing and happy to do so. It is truth, after all, that we all seek. None of us wants to go through life believing things that are wrong or not understanding things we could have figured out had we allowed ourselves to be corrected by the facts. True scientists, such as Charles Darwin, *try to prove themselves wrong* as rigorously as possible—to the end that they may have the greatest possible confidence in their theories.

For a last time I shall remind you that we must always remember that in science it is not necessary to prove a negative. Science *assumes* the negative. If no one can provide convincing *positive* evidence that Jesus of Nazareth—or Jesus of Anyplace—once lived,

we must then resort to the tried-and-tested, successful methodology of science to account for the origins of Christianity.

We must examine all the facts that are relevant to the question of how the various Christianities began, formulate a testable hypothesis to answer the question, and then do everything possible to disprove the hypothesis. Any hypotheses that survive rigorous tests can then be elevated to the rank of theory. In time, one of the rival theories—probably after many amendments and reformulations—will predominate and gain the scientific consensus.

Although the hypothesis that Jesus once walked the earth should be among the hypotheses advanced for testing, I am confident that no one will ever be able to present convincing, positive evidence for the historicity of Jesus of Nazareth. Consequently, I have given a lot of thought to alternative explanations that are compatible with a mythical or literary Jesus.

In answering the question, "How did Christianity begin?" I am confident that we will not need to assume the existence of Jesus. Like the mathematician Pierre-Simon de Laplace (1749-1827), when Napoleon asked him why he had not mentioned "*le bon Dieu*" in his *Traite de Mecanique Celeste* (1799-1825), we shall be able to reply, "*?e n 'avals pas besoin de cette hypothese-la*—"I have had no need of that hypothesis."

METHODOLOGICAL MINIMALISM

It will justly be claimed that the methodology I am proposing is "minimalism." Indeed, it is. But that is because science itself is minimalistic in the sense that it must employ Occam's Razor at all times. "*Entia non sunt multiplicanda prater necessitatem*"—basic assumptions should not be multiplied beyond

necessity. If we can explain adequately the origins of Christianity without postulating the quondam existence of a historical Jesus, we must be satisfied with such an explanation.

It may very well be the case that my own astral theory for the origins of Christianity—a theory hinging upon the precessional movement of the vernal equinox from Aries into Pisces at the turn of the era—may prove to be incorrect or require radical revision. But, like all scientific theories, my theory must be tested against a database of all that is known that is pertinent to our problem. It must be tested in a number of ways:

- (0) Most importantly, *is my theory falsifiable* (testable)? Can one at least imagine a way it could be proven wrong? This is the zeroeth commandment of all science. Only propositions that can be tested—at least in

the imagination—fall within the realm of science.

- (1) Are any facts already known that are incompatible with my theory? If so, do they completely rule out my theory or merely require a minor revision of details?
- (2) Are there any facts that clearly indicate my theory is probably true?
- (3) How well does my theory fit available facts? Does it fit the facts better than other theories do?
- (4) Does the theory have heuristic value? Does it help us discover new facts? Does it allow us to make useful predictions? Does it allow us to explain things hitherto inexplicable or mysterious?

We must resolve to make the study of religions a

science. No longer can we afford to allow magical thinking to intrude into our investigations. No longer can we allow traditional modes of thinking to compromise our objectivity. No longer can we let ourselves substitute the world of wishes for the world of reality.

Religion is arguably the most powerful force on earth. We must understand it in order to guide it out of the valley of the shadow of death, that it might lead us into the green pastures of a sustainable life for our species.

Martin Luther once said, "Gott macht Kinder, der wird sie auch ernahren" (God makes children, and he feeds them too). But, like many popes who have agreed with him, he was wrong. He was not thinking scientifically. Children everywhere are starving. No illusion is going to feed them. Only science and a calm and unemotional objectivity will show us how to feed them or prevent the problem.

Illusions about the nature and origins of religion—like delusions concerning the place of humankind in a vast universe of galaxies—must be dissolved and sharper images must come into focus if our kind is to avoid the extinction that has been the fate of more than 99 percent of all the species that have ever traveled on this spaceship we call Earth.

The creation of a science of religion could start right here. Most of the facts we need for the database that I think we need are already available to us. It could—indeed, should—be here, instead of Tübingen, Oxford, or Harvard, that the foundation could be laid on which to build a genuine science of religious studies. The discovery of objective truths in the field of religion will be more lifesaving than the discovery of vaccination or penicillin in the field of medicine.

As we face the dangers and problems that threaten our survival, we must let the light of science

shine into every pit of darkness. Time is running out. As the Persian poet Omar Khayyam once wrote: "The bird of time has but a little way to flutter—And the bird is on the wing." So, we must hurry. The development of a truly scientific study of religion can be delayed only at our peril.

"EVERY PLANT WHICH MY HEAVENLY FATHER HAS NOT PLANTED SHALL BE UPROOTED"

Ch Noelle Mag

W

hat I would like to do in this essay is to show that the famous aphorism, "Every plant which my Heavenly Father has not planted shall be uprooted," attributed to Jesus in the Synoptics, which comes following a long diatribe condemning the Pharisees (to my mind a euphemism for the anti-Pauline "Party of the Circumcision") and famously referring to them as "Blind Guides," followed up by the equally famous "And the Blind

shall lead die Blind and both shall fall into the Pit," was written by people who were aware of the Dead Sea Scrolls—in fact, more specifically, the First Column of the Cairo Damascus Document (CD), where the same metaphors or, shall we say, similes or allusions are used, albeit to 180-degree opposite effect.

Of course, everyone knows what the Damascus Document does later with the idea of the Pit. From my perspective, I do not believe all these correspondences are simply accidental and, in fact, right after CD talks about how "He [God] caused a Root of Planting to grow ... and inherit the good things of this Earth," it goes on to talk about how "they were as blind men groping for the Way" when "He [God] raised up a Teacher of Righteousness to guide them in the Way of His heart." I do not think I need to say more but there is, of course, more to say as there always is.

As the Synoptics then unfold, the Jesus they are

presenting then goes on with his "toilet bowl parable," which talks about how "a man is known not by what goes into his mouth but by that which goes forth from it." (I have shown in my recent New Testament Code, as might be known, that this is just a variation of what R. Yohanan b. Zacchai says about R. Eliezer b. Hyrcanus after the latter put cow dung in his mouth to give himself bad breath!—a neat little bit of refurbishment but, clearly, to reverse ideological effect. Again the keynote is always reversal. What once was a pro-Torah pronouncement is inverted a la Paulinism into an anti-Torah one.)

The final point is that Jesus is then made to conclude (or at least the narrator does) in all these Synoptic Parables that "He said this declaring all foods clean" (something Peter forgot when he had his "Tablecloth" vision in Acts). But never mind, the point is always the same—a neat 180-degree reversal from the position of Qumran. This is what I would like to show—that the authors of these materials not

only knew the Qumran documents or at least some of them (most notably, the Damascus Document), but were reversing them in a systematically consistent manner.

The linguistic interdependence of the "Root of Planting" allusion of Matthew 15:1-20 and Mark 7:1-23 and much else in the depiction of Jesus' arguments with the "scribes and Pharisees from Jerusalem" should be clear. This is the case in Matthew 15:1. In Mark 7:1, this changes into the even more pregnant "the Pharisees" and the telltale "some of the scribes who had come from Jerusalem" (thus—note both the "coming" and the "some") and a euphemism, it would appear, evocative of Paul's interlocutors from "James," "Church," or "Assembly" in Jerusalem. In Matthew, Jesus rebukes the Pharisees as Blind Guides—in this instance, in a polemical exchange with his own disciples, following this up with the passage which is the title and subject

of this essay:

Every plant which my Heavenly Father has not
planted shall be rooted up.

(Mt

15:13)

It should be obvious that these are anti-"Jerusalem Church" aspersions, since they are usually followed by and tied to equally proverbial statements like "the First shall be Last and the Last shall be First" (Mt 19:30, 20:16 and pars.)—"the Last" having, patently, to do with Paul's new "Gentile Christian" communities and those, like him, making no insistence on seemingly picayune legal requirements for salvation. The inverse parallel to this—which as at Qumran, as we shall show further below, will also involve a "Guide" or "Maschil"¹—will be present in the Damascus Document's

dramatic opening imprecation about how God caused

a Root of Planting to grow [the parallel is here] from Israel and from Aaron to inherit His land and to prosper on the good things of His Earth.

I say "patently," because Paul first made the allusion to being "last" in his 1 Corinthians 15:8 Jesus-sighting-order determinations—also, importantly enough, citing James, even albeit if defectively.³

And last of all he appeared, as if to one born out of term [or "to an abortion"], also to me.

But "the First" is an extremely important expression at Qumran— especially meaningful in the Damascus Document—carrying with it the signification of "the Forefathers" or "the Ancestors."

The sense is always "those who observed" or "gave the Torah," while "the Last"—aside from Paul's evocation of it regarding his own post-Resurrection appearance experience—usually has to do with "the Last Times" or "the Last Days" denoting the "present" or "Last Generation" as opposed to "the First."⁴

On the other hand in the Gospels, once again absolutely turning Qimran ideology on its head, "the Last" are "the simple" or "these little children"—completely representative of Paul's new "Gentile Christian Community" knowing or required to know little or nothing about such onerous legal requirements, yet still in a state of salvation, or, as it were, "in Jesus." The simile, symbolism, parable, or allegory—as the case may be—in all these allusions is not hard to figure out despite endless academic attempts at evasion or posturing to the contrary.

Furthermore, and even perhaps more germane,

these polemics in Mark 7:1-23 and Matthew 15:1-20 actually evoke the famous Talmudic tractate, Pirke Abbot (The Traditions of the Fathers, which has a variation in the ARN—The Fathers According to Rabbi Nathan, here in Mark 7:3-5 and Matthew 15:2, "The Traditions of the Elders"). This designation "Elders" or "*Presbyteron*" is used at various junctures in the Gospels and the book of Acts and is the actual designation for James's "Jerusalem Community" in both Acts 21:18 and the Pseudoclementine Homilies.⁵

In some of the most convoluted reasoning imaginable, these polemics invoke the Mosaic commandment, "Honor your father and your mother" (Mk 7:10/Mt 15:4) and, in doing so, leave no doubt that we are dealing with "the Fathers." Just as importantly in Mark 7:1-5 (and to some degree paralleled in Matthew 15:1-4 and 12), the Pharisees are invoked as well—three times in five lines. As just suggested above, this is an expression that often acts as

a blind for those of the Jamesian persuasion within the early Church—as, for example, in Acts 15:5 at the renowned "Jerusalem Council" and the elusive "some who believed" of "the sect of the Pharisees" who provoked the council by their insistence on circumcision and "keeping the law of Moses" (thus).

The evocation of these same Pharisees is being used to attack those of the James school over the issue of "table fellowship with Gentiles" in these passages about Blind Guides from Mark and Matthew (an issue clearly being raised by Paul in Galatians 2:11-14). Moreover, there is the additional derivative attack, which now seems to us, if not bizarre, at least rather specious, on the Jewish people as a whole—in this case, plainly meant to include the Jerusalem Community of James, and others of similar mindset—that "eating with unwashed hands does not defile the man" (Mt 15:20/Mk 7:2-3). This attack derogates "washing one's hands before eating" to the level only of what is being called "a Tradition of

Men" and "breaking die [obviously higher] Commandment of God." In the ad hominem logic being displayed in this patently pro-Pauline exposition, the meaning of this last would appear to be the Mosaic commandment and that of humanity generally "to honor your father and your mother" (Mk 7:8-9/Mt 15:3 and 15:19).

The argument appears to turn on the point that, since one's parents might have "eaten with unwashed hands," the commandment not to do so—which the Gospel Jesus is pictured as dismissing here merely as "a Tradition of the Elders" (meaning the allusion to "a Tradition of Men" above)—would be contradicting the higher commandment (the one he is terming "a Commandment of God") not to dishonor them! This appears to be the gist of an extremely tortured and, indeed, highly polemicized argument but, to judge by the time spent on it in Mark as well as Matthew, a clearly pivotal one as well. The writer sees it as a striking example of retrospective pro-Pauline polemics

or "Paulinization" and, consequently, feels it to be a service to rescue "the historical Jesus" from this particular bit of tendentious and not very sophisticated, medically speaking, sophistry

Both Mark 7:6-7 and Matthew 15:7-9 picture Jesus as using this passage to attack the "vanity" of those who "teach as their doctrines the Commandments of Men," meaning, "the Traditions of the Elders" just mentioned in Mark 7:5 and Matthew 15:2 above. Not only is this clearly an attack on what in Rabbinic parlance is called "oral tradition," but it turns around the parameters of Paul's debates with those of the Jamesian school or, if one prefers, inverts their arguments turning them back against themselves.⁶ Again, the meaning both the Gospels of Mark and Matthew are clearly ascribing to their Jesus from the start here is that "hypocrites" of this kind, following "the Tradition of the Elders," are forcing people to wash their hands before eating, something that most people nowadays would consider

as nor only normal but hygienic; however, in Paul's inverted invective, something Paul (to say nothing about his alter ego, Jesus) would obviously consider quite reprehensible.

As in all of the previous episodes above, the denouement of this abolishing purity requirements/table fellowship episode in Mark 7 and Matthew 15, which further legitimatizes the Pauline Gentile Mission, once more has Jesus in 7:17 entering a "house" (as he does yet again in Mark 7:24). In Mark 7:17, this is typically "away from the multitude" to rebuke the disciples. In Matthew 15:15 there is no house⁷ and the rebuke of "being yet without understanding" is as per usual—because of Galatians 2:11-14—only to Peter. Still, "the multitude" from Mark 7:17 (which probably should be read "the many" or "the *Rabim*"; the term—unlike "the Sons of Zadok"—usually applied to the rank and file at Qumran) are the ones already portrayed earlier in Mark 7:14 and Matthew 15:10 as the ones being

addressed by Jesus on the subject of "pure foods," "unwashed hands," "Blind Guides," and "Uprooted Plants."

In both Gospels, Jesus' discourse begins with the words, "Hear and understand," which has direct links to and appears to play off the opening exhortations of the Damascus Document that read—and this very familiarly and, for that matter, not insignificantly—"Hear, all you who know Righteousness, and understand" (i.1) ...

and now listen to me all who enter the Covenant ["the New Covenant in the Land of Damascus" demanding both "purity" and "separating the Holy from the profane"] and I will unstop your ears. (ii.2)8

But in Mark 7:16 in the midst of Jesus' attack on "the Tradition of the Elders" and "purifying all food"

preceding this, the same ears metaphor from column 2 of the Damascus Document, just reproduced above, actually appears, to wit, "If anyone has ears, let him hear."

To go back to Matthew 15:16, there the rebuke about "being yet without understanding" is, as already remarked, directed at Peter alone and not at the disciples. Notwithstanding, prior to this, after "calling the Multitude" or "the Many to him" (15:10, reprised in Mark 7:14), Jesus does actually address the disciples in Matthew 15:12 as well. There the reproof he gives the disciples concerning staying away from the Pharisees and "leaving them alone" (in 16:6-12 later, "the leaven of the Pharisees" repeated multiple times)—which includes the "Blind Guides," "planting," and "uprooting" allusions we have just been calling attention to above—comes in the wake of his enunciation of the following famous doctrine:

Not that which enters the mouth defiles the man, but that which proceeds out of the mouth, this defiles the man. [15:11—in Mark 7:15, this changes into the more prolix and obviously derivative, "There is nothing from without the man that going into him can defile him. Rather the things that proceed out of the man are those that defile him."]

This allusion to the Pharisees, the evocation of whom initiated the whole series of encounters right from the beginning in Mark 7:1 and Matthew 15:1 above, comes—as Matthew 15:12 now phrases it—because the disciples reported to Jesus that "the Pharisees were offended by what they heard him saying."⁹ It must be reiterated that expressions like "the Pharisees," regardless of their overt meaning in any other context here or historically, have a covert meaning in these contexts as well. As we have been at pains to point out, they—like "the Scribes" ("some

of the Scribes who came down from Jerusalem") coupled with them in Matthew 15:1 and Mark 7:1 above—are, in this context in the Gospels, stand-ins for "the James Community" in Jerusalem that not only insisted upon circumcision but (as it would appear) its legal consequences as well, such as purity regulations that, by implication, would have included measures of bodily hygiene like "washing their hands" that seem, in the picture Mark and Matthew are presenting, to so upset their Jesus here.¹⁰

It is also perhaps not without relevance that an expression like "Pharisees"—*Perushim* in Hebrew—carries with it, as well, the meaning of "splitting away" or "separating themselves from"—the implication being that, in some contexts, it can even be understood as "heretics," which, in fact, is one of the appositions Acts 15:5 applies to it. Nor should the reader overlook the fact that Matthew's picture of Jesus at this point, reproving the Pharisees, follows

his exhortation to the Many/the *Rabim* in 15:10 to "hear and understand" (in Mark 7:14, "hear me all of you and understand")—a phrase, as we just saw, that has to be seen as comparable to CD i.1's "Now hear, all you who know Righteousness and understand the works of God."

Matthew 15:14 also pictures Jesus as calling these Pharisees "Blind Guides" (an allusion we shall presently show to be charged with significance) because of their complaints against his teaching that "eating with unclean hands does not defile the man" (15:20), as well as related matters concerning purity and dietary regulations, themselves having a bearing on the key issue in Galatians 2:11-14 above of "table fellowship with Gentiles."¹ ¹ It is at this point, in Matthew 15:14 too, that Jesus then cautions his disciples (none of this paralleled now in Mark or, for that matter, any other Gospel) to "leave them alone." It would be well to point out that even the line in Matthew 15:19, preceding 15:20 on "eating with

unclean hands not defiling the man" just cited and echoed in Mark 7:21-23, enumerates "the things that proceed out of the mouth" (thereby, according to the discourse being attributed here to Jesus, "coming forth out of the heart" and, most famously, therefore "defiling the man") as: "Evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, lies, blasphemies—these are the things that defile the man" (Mark 7:22 adds "greedy desires, wickednesses, deceit, lustful desires, an evil eye, pride, and foolishness").

But this catalogue of "evil" inclinations almost precisely reprises one of the most famous passages in the Community Rule from Qumran as well, the "Two Ways": the "Ways of Darkness" and the "Ways of Light." In this document, the "Spirit of Evil"/"Ungodliness" or "of Darkness" is depicted even more lengthily as

greediness of soul, stumbling hands in the Service

of Righteousness, Wickedness and Lying, pride and proudness of heart, duplicitousness and deceitfulness, cruelty, Evil temper [there is a lot of Paul in this—to say nothing of Mark 7:21-23 above], impatience, foolishness, and zeal for lustfulness [the opposite, of course, of proper zeal—"zeal for the Law" or "zeal for the Judgments of Righteousness," as it is expressed in the Hymns from Qumran],¹² works of Abomination in a spirit of fornication, and ways of uncleanness in the Service of pollution [now we are getting into it—as opposed to the proper "Service of Righteousness" of "true" Apostles above—all issues of "table service," for instance, aside), a Tongue full of blasphemies [the "Tongue" imagery of the Letter of James],¹³ blindness of eye and dullness of ear [this, too, momentarily reappearing in the Gospel episode we shall now describe], stiffness of neck and hardness of heart [as will this] in order to walk in all the Ways of Darkness and Evil inclination.¹⁴

This is quite a catalogue, but the parallels with Matthew and Mark do not stop here. Even the allusion to "Blind Guides," to say nothing of "leave them alone," which Matthew depicts Jesus as advising vis-a-vis the Pharisees, actually seems to parody the pivotal character evoked at Qumran (in particular, in the Community Rule again, but also in the Hymns), the Maschil or Guide. He is defined, just like "the Teacher of Righteousness," as instructing the Many in the Ways of Righteousness.¹⁵

In the Community Rule this Maschil or Guide is pictured, inter alia, as "doing the will of God" (that is, "being a Doer," not "a Breaker," in the manner of the recommendations in James 1:22-25—nor should one forget, in this regard as well, all the "signs" or "miracles," Jesus is depicted as doing, in John 2:11, 2:23, 6:2, 6:14, etc.) and

studying all the Wisdom that has been discovered from age to age, to separate [the language of "separation" again, just evoked above in the "leave them alone" allusion] and evaluate the Sons of the Righteous One [here, the usage really is "the Sons of the Righteous One" or "the Zaddik," not the more usual Qumran and New Testament "Sons of Righteousness"—in Hebrew, *Zedek*, without the definite article] according to their spirit and fortify the Elect of the Age according to His will as He commanded and, thereby, to do His Judgment [once more the Jamesian emphasis on "doing"] on every man according to His spirit.¹⁶

This does begin to seem New Testament- like. Not only does it hark back to several New Testament themes, such as the "Two Spirits" and Paul's "knowing the things of man according to the spirit of man which is in him" of 1 Corinthians 2:11-15, but the

Community Rule's description of the Guide then goes on to actually evoke two allusions, "clean hands" and "not arguing with the Sons of the Pit"—in other words, the "leave them alone" theme just encountered in passages from Matthew 15:14 and to a certain extent in Mark 7:8 above (the latter to be sure not quite in the same context). Perhaps even more strikingly, yet another allusion is evoked—the third, "the Pit," just remarked as well and an allusion known throughout the Dead Sea Scrolls, which we shall encounter in Jesus, further disparagement of these "Blind Guides" as we proceed:

[The Maschil shall allow] each man to draw near according to the cleanness of his hands [here, yet another allusion to "clean hands," should one choose to regard it] and his wisdom and, thus, shall be his love together with his hate. Nor should he admonish or argue with the Sons of the Pit [here again, yet another allusion to Jesus' directive to the

disciples a propos of die Pharisees in Matthew 15:12-14, just highlighted above, to "leave them alone"].

Moreover, the Guide or Maschil is commanded this pregnant, concluding exhortation from t Community Rule to rather

conceal the counsel of the Torah [that is, "the Law"] from the Men of Evil ["the Men of the Pit" or "Ungodly" above], confirming the Knowledge of the Truth and Righteous Judgment to the Elect of the Way ["the Elect" is, of course, a very widespread and important terminology at Qumran, as is "the Way"] ... comforting them with Knowledge, thereby guiding them in the Mysteries of the Marvelous Truth..., that is, to walk in Perfection each with his neighbor. [This being, of course, nothing less than James's "Royal Law according to the Scripture"—"to love each man his

neighbor as himself." It is often found in the Scrolls.]

Of perhaps even more significance, this leads directly into the Community Rule's second citation of Isaiah 40:3's "preparing a Straight Way in the wilderness" in as many columns:

For this is the time of the preparation of the Way in the wilderness. Therefore he [the "Maschil"—in Matthew above, Jesus' Blind Guide] should guide them in all that has been revealed that they should do in this Time [n.b., again, the pivotal emphasis on "doing"] to separate [here again too, the Nazirite-like directive to "come out from among them and be separate," just enunciated by Paul in 2 Corinthians 6:17 as well] from any man who has not turned aside his Way from all Evil [including, of course, from these "Sons of the Pit," just alluded to above as well].

To farther demonstrate the interconnectedness of these kinds of usages, the denotation "the Sons of the Pit" is immediately reprised in these climactic passages from the Community Rule:

These are the rules of the Way for the Guide in these Times [presumably "the Last Times" of other Qumran documents and the Gospels]: Everlasting hatred for the Sons of the Pit in a spirit of secrecy, to leave them to their Riches [here the language of "the Pit" coupled with express allusions both to "Riches" and "leaving them alone"] and the suffering [ʿamal] of their hands, like the slave to his Ruler and the Meek before his Lord.

Not only do we have the "master" and "lord" vocabulary here but also, yet again, that of hands—this time in the sense of "that which their

own hands have wrought"—the same hands presumably that were to remain unwashed when eating in Jesus' crucial "toilet bowl" homily in both Matthew and Mark above.¹⁷ The conclusion of all this is quite extraordinary:

And he [both the Maschil and the rank and file] shall be as a man zealous for the Law, whose Time will be the Day of Vengeance [meaning, in this context, "the Last Judgment" but, as usual, without a touch of nonviolence], to do all His will in all the work of his hands ["hands" again] ... delighting in all the words of His mouth [the "mouth" vocabulary of Jesus' "what comes into the mouth" or "goes forth from the mouth" above] and in all His Kingdom as He commanded.

The reader should pay particular attention to all these usages, but especially: "doing the will of God"; "separating the Sons of the Righteous One" and "not

disputing with the Sons of the Pit," but "leaving them to their Riches" and "the works of their hands"; and "doing all His will in all the work of his (the Maschil's or the adept's) hands" and finally "delighting in all the words of His mouth."

It is now possible to return to Jesus' allusion to the Pharisees as Blind Guides in Matthew 15:14 with a little more insight. This is where we began and, it will be recalled, that it was in the run-up to this allusion that Jesus was pictured as evoking the "plant" or "planting" vocabulary in which we are so interested in this essay. It should also be observed that Paul uses this vocabulary, too, when he speaks of "God's plantation" or "growing place" and "God's building" in 1 Corinthians 3, concluding in 3:6: "I planted, Apollos watered, but God caused to grow." It should be clear that this is also playing off a similar vocabulary, i.e., the Messianic "plant" and "planting" imagery that permeates the literature of Qumran in general¹⁸—in particular, "the Root of Planting," with

which the Damascus Document follows up its opening imprecation to "hear and understand" and the focus of our excursus here.

This reads, as we have partially seen above, as follows:

And in the Age of Wrath ... He [God] visited them and caused a Root of Planting to grow [these are some of the same words that Paul used in 1 Corinthians 3:6-8 above] from Israel and Aaron to inherit His Land [Paul's "field" or "growing place" imagery in 1 Corinthians 3:9] and to prosper on the good things of His Earth.¹⁹

In Matthew 15:13-14, the preliminary characterization introducing Jesus' "Leave them alone, they are Blind Guides" reproof, alluding to the Pharisees, reads:

But he answered, saying, "Every plant which My Heavenly Father has not planted shall be uprooted."

Of course, we are QED here, the "uprooting" or "rooting up" language being exactly the same as "the Root of Planting" just encountered in the opening exhortation of this First Column of the Cairo Damascus Document—the "uprooting" playing off the "Root of Planting" that God "caused to grow"; and the "Planting" part of the "Root" imagery. Nor is this to say anything about Paul's parallel "Apollos planted, I watered, and God caused to grow," we just highlighted, which not only plays off but is an actual verbatim quotation of the remainder of this all-important preliminary metaphor in the Damascus Document. One cannot get a much closer fit than this and the Damascus Document's "the Root of Planting" to Matthew's "every plant which my Heavenly Father

has not planted shall be uprooted."

Even so, the very next line in Matthew 15:14 continues the borrowing:

They are Blind Guides leading the Blind and, if the Blind lead the Blind, both will fall into the Pit.

First of all, one has in both subject and predicate here the image of the Maschil, just as in several of the passages quoted from the Community Rule above. Combined with this is the language and imagery of the Pit—in particular, "the Sons of the Pit" just underscored as well and used to attack all the enemies of the Community including, presumably, persons of the mindset of Paul.²⁰ One should also note that in Matthew 15:14, it is both "the Blind Guides" and "the Blind" they lead who will, metaphorically, fall into "the Pit"!

This is an extremely telling example of another process detectable in comparing these documents—one reverses the other, that is, someone using the very language of another person and turning it back on that other person to undermine him. Indeed at this point in Matthew, this whole allusion that on the surface seems innocuous enough actually plays off yet another, seemingly unrelated passage concerning regulations governing the Sabbath in the Damascus Document, most of which are counterindicated in the Gospels. In the process, Matthew 15:12-14 makes fun of and pictures its Jesus as having contempt for these too, i.e., if a man's "beast falls into a pit on the Sabbath, he shall not lift it out."²¹

More importantly, however, the borrowing does not stop even here, and this is nothing in comparison to the importance of the allusion to "being blind," which will now follow this pivotal passage about "God visiting them" and "causing a Root of Planting to grow"

in the Damascus Document and link up directly with the allusion to the Pharisees as Blind Guides in the Gospel of Matthew. This occurs as follows and in the very next lines in this First Column of the Cairo Damascus Document. There, one comes upon, as we have already to some extent seen and parts of which we have already quoted above, the final linchpin of all this borrowing, ending with the very first introduction of the renowned "Righteous Teacher" himself—"the Guide of all Guides" as it were. It reads in its entirety, following right after the allusion to "God having visited them and caused a Root of Planting to grow" and the words "to inherit His Land and to prosper on the good things of His Earth":

And they were like blind men groping for the Way ["the Way in the wilderness" and the name for early Christianity in Palestine as recorded in Acts on three different occasions] for twenty years [the time elapsed, perhaps, between the death of

whomever "the Messiah Jesus" is supposed to represent and the revelation of James] ²² And God considered their works, because they sought him with a whole heart [this language of "works" and "heart" that is pivotal throughout the Qumran corpus] and He raised up for them a Teacher of Righteousness to guide them in the Way of His heart [the "guiding" language here is a variation of that of "the Way," again combined with that of the "heart"].²³

Of course, nothing could better illustrate the interconnectedness of all these imageries than the appearance of this allusion to "being like blind men" and how they were to be "guided by the Teacher of Righteousness" in "the Way" of God's "heart," following directly upon the one to "planting" the all-important Messianic "Root," which God then "caused to grow" (the "caused to grow" here using the exact same language of the Messianic "Branch of

David" in other documents and contexts, one of which I had the privilege of helping to bring to light)²⁴ and preceding the equally pivotal introduction of the proverbial "Teacher of Righteousness." One could not get a tighter construction of the inter-relatedness of all these documents than this.

One final point that, perhaps, should be made: the reason for all this borrowing, parody, and sometimes even derogation has to have been that so original and impressive were these new ideas and usages, we now know from the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, and so well versed were some of the original creators of some of this material from the Gospels (in this instance, particularly Matthew), to say nothing of the material in Paul, that they were unable to resist continually playing off them and reversing or inverting the actual original sense or meaning.

ON NOT FINDING THE HISTORICAL JESUS

And he asked them, "*Who do you say that I am?*" (Mk 8:28)

And the scholars began to write.

T

he following comments are designed to reorient the question that has perplexed historians, theologians, and philosophers for centuries, but for quite different reasons. It seems self-evident to many

people that it is "important" for there to have been a historical Jesus, and yet the reasons for his importance are not altogether clear from the sources available to reconstruct his life and thought.

Among the early Christians, a majority took his historicity for granted, either on the basis of hearsay and preaching by people who had claimed to know others who had known him (a process that leads to the formulation of "apostolic succession" in the second century), or from the Gospel accounts presumed to be written by eyewitnesses or associates of eyewitnesses from the earliest days of the Christian church. A significant minority of Christians—labeled docetists and Gnostics by the majority—had less interest in the historical Jesus, or none at all, preferring instead to focus on his "revelation" as an expression of the True God's nature and being. That there was no Jesus in the historical sense is implicit in Gnostic teaching, but submerged in the Gnostics' exaggerated claims of his

supernality, while for the orthodox, Jesus' significance is determined precisely in the core belief that he had lived, died, and was raised from the dead at a particular point in history, "under Pontius Pilate." That there was neither a supernal, nonphysical Jesus nor a historical Jesus was not a question broached even by the pagan critics of the church, most of whom assumed that Jesus was a man of no significance to whom the unoriginal fables of Hellenistic mythology had been selectively attached.

In what follows, I want to consider the way in which the theological discussion of Jesus' importance, that is to say, the way in which his "reality" was apprehended, affects the consideration of his historical existence. It is my claim here that neither the sources we possess nor approaches to them developed over the last two centuries yield any resolution of the question of his actual existence and that the church's description of his reality has never depended primarily on the status of such a question.

To believe that something is real is to take a position towards its existence. To say that a chair is real is to say it occupies space, i.e., that it is physical and is accessible to the senses. Almost everybody will be happy with some form of that definition, with its focus on sensory apprehension. On the other hand, to say that love is real may be merely the expression of a feeling towards an object or person raised to the level of a category: The lover is certain his feeling is precipitated by the existence of something unseen, but nonetheless real, without the reality of which his feeling is inexplicable. While he may never have read Plato, he will point to the effects of love on his behavior, on creating a sense of well-being—and confusion—and on other results, such as marriage,

family, harmony, even that most important of Greek ideals, happiness. Given the overriding evidence of these results, it may be hard to maintain the position that love is not "real." Plato's "ideas" (goodness, truth, beauty, justice, etc.) are categories presumed to exist quite independently of their very imperfect expressions in language, art, government, philosophy, poetry, and human conduct. But to complete the circle, even these imperfect expressions would not exist without the reality of the ideas. They are shadows, Porphyry argued, for example, of the unseen supernal realm that our mind longs to reach but can only attain in moments of philosophical ecstasy.

Hardheaded opponents of Plato's metaphysics, beginning with Aristotle—a long and distinguished train of experientialists—would limit the reality of things to those that cannot be doubted by the senses. Love is the reality of the heart in crisis. To the

extent it has anything to do with sense, biology is its sufficient explanation.

What do we do with the reality of things that are not real in the sense a chair is real and not real in the sense some people believe love is real—things that possess a reality that is neither physical nor, in the strict sense metaphysical? To pose the question this way is slightly misleading because I am not asking about the existence of gnomes or paradise islands or lost plays of Shakespeare. Historical inquiry has its own ways of dealing with such questions, and each question will be answered using a slightly different technique. Archaeology and the context of reports concerning gnomes will come into play if anyone is interested in pursuing the habits of the denizen tinkers of Gnomeregan. Paradise islands may exist, but one, invented by Anselm's friend Guanilo, seems to have surpassed all others in beauty and splendor, such that its reality was only to be imagined and never experienced.

The idea of a perfect island that can never be visited on a yacht is a rich man's nightmare, of course, but it is also (merely) a semantic trick. No reality is at stake in postulating the imaginable. And in the case of a lost Shakespeare play—well, there is nothing mysterious about reports of lost works of literature, art, cities, animals, races, kingdoms. Some, like reports of the kingdom of Prester John, are probably unreliable. Some, like the existence of Troy, are probably partly reliable, and some, like reports of the Hanging Gardens of Babylon, are almost certainly reliable (to a point) though the most famous of Greek historians, Herodotus, does not mention their existence. The fact that an object, event, or person is "historical" does not mean its reality is untestable, but that its reality "behaves" differently and must be approached differently from the way we approach chairs and love. Like the chair, the historical reality once occupied space. But like love, or black holes (if not the same phenomenon) it can sometimes only be

known from the objects and conditions that surround

Belief in God and belief in Jesus, thanks to the proclivities of Christian theology, seem to be the same sort of belief. A Christian who believes ardently in the Trinity might want to argue that the belief is a package deal: to believe in God is to believe in a particular orthodox formulation of God's being and essence, and in "orthodox" Christianity (however unfashionable the term) that formulation is the Nicene Creed. In the creed, Jesus Christ and God the Father (note the phrase) are "one in being" but different in person: not to believe in Jesus as the only begotten son of God is not to believe something vitally important about God himself. Indeed, you may as well be talking about Allah or Mazdayasna since you will not be talking about what Christians historically have believed to be the primary characteristic of God: fatherhood, and the eternal generation ("begetting," a process rather than a birth)

of his son, Jesus Christ.

But in fact, the two beliefs are different. The existence of God can be argued theologically or philosophically. If theologically (using traditional language) the proofs are usually called "demonstrations" and include some of the classical arguments of the theistic tradition—such as Anselm's ontological argument or Thomas Aquinas's five "ways." It is convenient for philosophers to have these arguments because they don't have to go about inventing their own. They have normally simply taken aim at these rather good ones and subjected them to tests of their own devising, ranging from ethical tests to those that spring from schools of thought, such as philosophical naturalism. The existence of God is not a question for history, though the emergence and shape of particular beliefs about him are of considerable historical importance.

"Believing" in Jesus can be argued historically or

theologically, but not philosophically. Historically, the existence of Jesus to be indubitable would need to be demonstrated in the same way the existence of any other human being can be shown. The standard of proof is fairly high, making allowance for the age in which the person lived or is thought to have lived. Normally we would expect records, reports, artifacts (bones are best), or the writings of people who mention Jesus in their reports of other events. For example, a chronicle of the Roman administration of Pontius Pilate in Palestine with a mention of the crucifixion of an outlaw named Yeshu, a Galilean, would be very helpful. But we do not possess such a record. Instead, we possess reports written by members of a religious group that had very specific and self-interested reasons for retelling his story. And the way in which it is told differs so markedly from the sorts of histories the Romans were writing in the second and third century CE that scholars have acknowledged for a long time the "problem" of

deriving the historical Jesus from the Gospels—and even more the problem of deriving his existence from the letters of Paul or any other New Testament writings.

Having said this, I don't mean to suggest that the Gospels are "made up," that they are like Greek myths (though bits are) or that they possess no historical value. *The Iliad* is Greek myth, mainly made up, perhaps seven hundred years older than the earliest Gospel, and yet seems to point (however obscurely) to actual events that transpired six centuries before Homer immortalized them. Herodotus, who lived more than five centuries before the Gospels, is known to us primarily as a purveyor of history, but freely uses mythology and the supernatural without totally discrediting the stories he has to tell. The line between history and myth is not always clearly drawn in ancient accounts, even those that purport to be historical.

Why then, it can plausibly be asked, can we not assume the Gospels point to events that transpired within (say) a generation of their tellers' lifetimes, as many perfectly reputable scholars continue to think? And even given doubts about their historical particulars, a discussion that will occupy scholars for many years to come and probably without resolution, would it not be more unusual not to find the mythical and supernatural as part of their fabric than to find precisely the kind of documents we possess—especially coming from a class of writers who were not historians or literary craftsmen? What would a disinterested, journalistic appraisal—a "report"—of the life and teachings of Jesus look like given the literary genres available to such amateurs? Those who argue the case for the basic reliability of the Gospels usually make this minimalist case: that there is more reason to assume the Gospels reflect actual events transformed in the light of religious experience than to believe that they are the products

of religious experience alone. From this minimal position, certain scholars—the indefatigable N. T. Wright is perhaps the most popular modern example—then go on to claim much more in terms of historical reliability.

* # #

The existence of Jesus can also be argued theologically. Paul does it this way by quoting (we assume) a hymn in Philippians 2:5-11. It locates Jesus in a cosmic timeframe that might be Gnostic except for the emphasis on his death and exaltation. The Eucharistic narratives and the sequence, the Passion story in the synoptic Gospels, create Jesus' historicity this way as well, by making him the centerpiece in an unfolding drama of betrayal and martyrdom. The Crucifixion story is as much a theological memoir as

a historical one—or rather a peculiar blending of two interests, a kind of intersection between historical expectation and superhistorical completion. The earliest church writers, especially Ignatius of Antioch, saw Jesus not just as the fulfillment of prophecy but as the way in which prophecy acquires its meaning through the church. The increasingly elaborate theological framing of Jesus may distract from the fading image on the canvas, but it is the enthusiasm for ever-more detailed frames that kept the historical figure from disappearing entirely.

These theological arguments are better described as constructions of the "reality" or necessity of the human Jesus and lead to various controversies that historians have left it to the theologians to sort through. In effect, this has created a kind of scholarly apartheid in which secular historians have treated the theological debates of the fourth and fifth century as the weird preoccupations of a bygone era,

while (except among scholars who represent Anglican and Roman Catholic orthodoxy) many contemporary theologians regard the debates in just the same way. The most liberal theology since the nineteenth century has found its justification in translating the idioms of patristic Christianity into more modern categories of thought, while since the late twentieth century it has been typical to construct challenges to the patristic system—theologies that regard the categories of the church fathers provisional, "sexist," outmoded, or irrelevant to contemporary discourse. The theologian Daphne Hampson is one of a dozen theologians who have used the term *post-Christian* to describe the radical break with the past that the newer theologies purvey. Their interest in the historical Jesus is (by far) secondary to the promotion of a critique of the church—which in many ways replaces Jesus as the fundamental historical datum of their theology.

Yet these early debates that seem so distant from

our concern and interest irreversibly colored the picture of the historical Jesus and created in his place the Byzantine cosmocrator who ruled the aeons, a king enthroned on high who would come again to judge the living and the dead. The doctrines of the one-personed, two-natured Christ, the hypostatic union (the doctrine that Jesus is both God and Man without confusion or separation of natures), would probably count as myth if they told a better story. But at all events the fully divine and human Jesus had become a theological necessity before the end of the second century and a confessional statement in the fourth. The historical presupposition, the man named Jesus, was buried in this controversy, if it had ever existed independently.

To accept the "reality" of Jesus after the fourth century is to accept the rather bizarre figure immortalized in the icons, the Jesus of the fertile Christian imagination. This Jesus is a myth cobbled together from other myths—imperial, soteriological,

apocalyptic and messianic, priestly, Gnostic, Stoic with a healthy dash of Byzantine splendor tossed into the mix. To the extent that every Jesus is a composite of culture and theology, the Jesus of Nicaeo-Chalcedonian orthodoxy would have been quite impossible in a first- or second-century context, and for the same reasons—though his image is emblazoned on cathedral walls from London to St. Louis in tribute to the famous "original" in the Hagia Sophia in Constantinople—impossibly exotic to later generations. The rate of change in reframing the reality of Jesus between the Middle Ages, the Reformation, and since the Reformation is enough to suggest that theological definitions of reality relate more to love than to chairs; that is to say, they are impressions of interpretation rather than interpretations of fact.

Historically, then, the reality of Jesus cannot be indubitable because his existence does not meet the high standard of proof we set for other historical figures. That statement may seem naive to New Testament scholars who have staked their scholarly careers on tomes promising to uncover what Jesus really said or who Jesus really was. But in fact, their work, to a book, suffers from confusing love and chairs, feelings and facts.

I have no particular case in view: whether Jesus was a peasant farmer or a Galilean bandit, a magician or a preacher of wisdom is unknown and cannot be known. It cannot be known for the same reason that there can be no compromise between the Jesus of Byzantine orthodoxy and the Jesus of the Brethren of the Common Life, between the good shepherd and the King of Glory, a failed messiah and the Son of Man: images do not establish historicity but create

scenarios of how a reality might have been, given certain conditions and ignoring or omitting others. Scholars who find it inconvenient for Jesus to have been an apocalyptic preacher, for example, will now argue that this is an insignificant part of his message. Scholars who find limited support for political agendas or social positions in the Gospels will turn to the "possibility" that the radical sayings of Jesus were buried by a power-hungry church, using the concealment of Gnostic sources as "proof" of such an enterprise. Defenders of older images will argue that theirs is the one provided in sources of irrefragable orthodoxy, without acknowledging that antiquity, far from establishing historicity, finds myth more compelling than fact. The most cynical approaches of all are those reductivist ones that purport to be recovering the historical Jesus from sayings, contexts, or scenarios argued to be more (or less) historical than the others associated with the tradition, thus permitting scholars to shape their reality on demand,

constrained only by publishing schedules. Theology thus facilitates the re-creation in every generation of a Jesus who never existed for the benefit of women and men who find the Jesus who might have existed an embarrassment. That Jesus, like the Inquisitor's guest in *The Brothers Karamazov*, "We will not allow ... to come to us again."

JESUS TO CHRIST?

Many books on the subject of the historical Jesus employ what some have called the Jesus-to-Christ model of development. The assumption behind such approaches is that Christianity began with an event roughly equivalent to the birth and ministry of Jesus and following his death (whether expected or unanticipated), the development of a community that believed him risen from the dead. The added details

need not be elaborate, but the basic model requires us to accept that as the community developed its confession during Paul's time—1 Corinthians 5:6 seems a good minimum—the things believed about Jesus also intensified, so that by the end of the first "generation" (a meaningless term invented by early twentieth-century New Testament scholars), Jesus had become a magnet for a hodgepodge of beliefs, ranging from the idea that he was a prophet to the belief that he was the messiah and God incarnate. The model appears to be commonsensical, on the analogy of Descartes' famous example of how a city develops *pari passu* from a village or how organic systems move from the simple to the complex.

But the model does not work well if the question in point is the reality of Jesus rather than how the church becomes more complex. The phenomena are not identical, and the use of a historically "minimal"

Jesus as a *point d'appui* for the process through which Christian theology and structure evolves into a complex system would not bear comparison to developments in other religions, especially those—the majority—that do not depend on a historical "founder" or progenitor who is also its deity. Indeed, Christianity is almost unique and uniquely problematical in its assertion of a founder who is also its god.

In short, the "from Jesus to Christ" model is conceptually flawed because it sees ecclesiastical developments as representing a stratum in the aggregation of the Jesus tradition that is unavailable apart from the developments themselves—a recognition clear enough from the disregarded slogan of nineteenth-century radicals who professed that the search for the historical Jesus "leads to the door of the church."

In the case of the "Jesus question," there is no

point at which the theological imagination does not shape the subject matter. Love comes before the chair, feelings and impressions before the "facts" have been put into place, and interpretation before detail. No matter what element of the Jesus tradition comes first, that element—as scholars for the most part today are willing to acknowledge—comes to us as an act in a religious drama, not as a scene in an ordinary life. Indeed, nothing is more unsupported by the sources than the standard liberal critical perspective that Jesus' death was unexpected, the Gospels an attempt to theologize away the embarrassment of the early church, and the residual parts of the tradition developed "backward" from the seminal moment—the catastrophe—of his mission. This "trauma theory" of Christian origins presumes a real death and the reactions of real persons who would have had religious and perhaps psychological or political reasons to conceal the failure of their leader or the disappointment of their hopes. But there is nothing in

the tradition that requires a real death and very little apart from a few literary flourishes in Luke 24:21 that convey disappointment. Is it not just as plausible that the Passion narrative is a drama based on the binding of Isaac, whose death was equally "unexpected," but not in any historical sense? The need—the love—for this historical Jesus as a cipher or a principle of explanation is seductive, but in fact it is a very poor way of doing history. It does not give us a chair.

Flatly put, the Jesus tradition was ab origine either the story of the death and resurrection of a historical individual called Jesus, or it was belief in the story of a dying and rising god that caused a story to emerge, fleshed out in historical detail in the sources we call Gospels. Either way, it was belief in his extraordinary triumph over death and not the facts of his life that saved Jesus from obscurity. Either way, the movement from the "ordinary" to the "extraordinary" upon which the Jesus-to-Christ model depends is implausible.

There is simply no evidence that the early Christians were concerned about "whether" Jesus had really lived and died. They became Christians because of the Gospel, and the Gospel was a summary of "things believed" by the brethren. If there is one cold, hard, unavoidable historical datum that virtually everyone who studies the New Testament can agree on, it is that the early Christian community came into existence because of the preaching of the Gospel. The pluralized form of that datum in the form of written Gospels is the literary artifact of what they believed, not a factual record of events that transpired prior to the framing of the oral message. It may well be true that the beliefs of these communities were as varied as colored buttons for more than a century. But the Jesus they "proclaimed" (a good first-century verb) was part of a story, not a doctrine—a story they believed to be true. You can't go very far into the second century without seeing the story becoming clouded with doctrine and

definition, however.

The church fathers and the Gnostics were really two sides of the same obscurantist process: the Gnostics needed a Jesus whose humanity was transparent or unreal, the church fathers needed a Jesus whose humanity was real but disposable. It is not surprising that the disposable won out over the unreal.

The Resurrection stories, as they lengthened, seemed to suggest that a kind of transformation took place in the hiatus between death and being raised from the dead. In other words, the historical (human) Jesus who rose from the dead won out over the Gnostic Jesus who does not, not because the Gnostic story is fabulous but because the familiar story was human—grounded in history. Paul seems to have caught on to the market value of this fact very early (1 Cor 15:4-8).

At any rate, if the question is asked why the story

of Jesus needed to be historicized at all, the answer lay in the appeal of Paul's suggestion that Jesus Christ was crucified and died and was raised from the dead. That is enough to form the core of the tradition to which all other "historical" data are attached. It also to a large extent explains the democratic success of the Christian missionary preaching: Jesus and his followers were "ordinary"—the "yokels, slaves, and fishermen" of society, as they continued to be known from the time of Celsus down to the time of Julian the "apostate." They were not the elite (spiritual or moral) of Gnostic concern. What would become the orthodox Jesus, for all the shortcomings Christian belief would eventually embed in the church they attributed to his actions, was real, imitable, attractive. The Gnostic Jesus was austere and obscure: he spoke sentences that did not parse to followers whose teachings were barely comprehensible about rewards that were completely uncertain. The reality of Jesus is the

reality of a historicized, rather than a historical Jesus, but one whose attraction was fundamentally linked to his this-worldly interests and existence as it was preached by his followers in language many seem to have found appealing.

HUMANITY AND HISTORICITY

The reality of Jesus is not important in the same way that a Roman emperor's existence is important—that is, as a simple *causa prius* to his being declared divine, or (for example) as a way of averaging human and divine qualities, as the ancient world was fond of doing with demigods and heroes. We tend to forget that men of the fourth century, confronted with defining the humanity of Jesus, still had the images and stories of Achilles, Dionysus, and Heracles in view. It was not, in any sense, a thoroughly Christian world, but a world still infused

with the seductive images of demigods and their courtesans—the same world whose attractions Clement had anguished over a hundred years before Nicaea. Saving the savior from that kind of emulsion prompted some of the more intricate doctrines of the early period. The Jesus whose historicization had been a necessity in the missionary period had become a liability before the end of the second century, as the church grew more confident and demographically more stable: the image of a simple founder (or even as in the fourth Gospel a partly degnosticized one) was simply inconvenient. It was imperative for Jesus to be human, in the strict sense; but his historical portrait in the Gospels needed theology to help it along.

The preservation of the humanity of Jesus came at the expense of his historicity. In making sure he would not be confused with Caesar, Apollo, or Mithras, theologians focused on the *way* in which he

was God and *how* God became man. At the end of the makeover, however, no first-century Jew remained to be seen. Even a spirit-struck Pentecostal preacher who has only the dimmest idea of what Chalcedon was all about calls on a "Jesus" who was born there—a man-god who can walk on water, heal the blind, and save from sin not because he is a healer or magician but because he is divine, God in the flesh.

The historical Jesus is important because he is a presupposition for the faith that millions of people have placed in nonhistorical consequences, and not only Christians. His status, if primarily significant to Christians, is also important, in different ways, to Jews, Muslims, and even unbelievers. Whether or not he really lived may not make much difference to believers, and may not be much good to nonbelievers whose interest in the question may be malignant or trivial. But in any case, I do not believe it is a question that will ever be answered.

The reality of Jesus comprises a range of questions that can no longer be resolved on the basis of the sources we possess, and anyone who thinks differently is either looking at other sources or is not especially good at reading the ones we have. Pending the discovery of authentically new sources—the "real" Nazareth, the "authentic" tomb of Jesus, a Roman report of his death—the recovery of Jesus after two thousand years of theological repair is impossible.

John Henry Newman died in 1890. He was buried in a wooden coffin in a damp site just outside Birmingham. To the disappointment of many, when he was exhumed as part of the normal process for canonization in October 2008, no human remains were to be found—only artifacts of wood, brass, and cloth. He was not reported missing. Despite a certain personal charm and a sizeable following, he was not pronounced risen from the grave. Had several of these followers pronounced him risen, others would

have thought them mad. He had celebrated Mass on Christmas Day in 1899. He had died at the Birmingham Oratory, of pneumonia. He was buried in the grave of his lifelong friend, Ambrose St. John. Previously, they had shared a house. The pall over the coffin bore his cardinal's motto *Cor ad cor loquitur* (Heart speaks to heart). Inseparable in death as in life, a joint memorial stone was erected for the two men; the inscription bore words Newman had chosen: *Ex umbris et imaginibus in veritatem* (Out of shadows and phantasms into the truth).

Interpret his exit as you will, his disappearance was not miraculous.

We are considerably better off, of course, in the case of Newman. The grave site was known, and we have letters, diaries, treatises, biographies, the memories of friends and relatives—even his own instructions for burial. But that is because he was a man living in an age of documentation and moreover

a man of some prominence and means. We have photographs, and well into the twentieth century, the recollections of people who had known him, corresponded with him, or heard him preach.

Everything we think we know historically about Jesus points in a more depressing direction: a man of no prominence, living in a widely illiterate age in a backward province even by Roman standards, with few friends who could have told his story. Yet the story is oddly similar—a remembrance of a life, wisdom, preaching, struggle, and death. One of the priests of the Birmingham Oratory, on being told that Newman was not to be found in his grave, replied calmly, "It's enough that he was here."

In the case of Jesus of Nazareth, we cannot say even that much.

ASSESSING THE EVIDENCE

Philosophical and Legal Perspectives

Ronald A. Lindsay

A general observation: before beginning any undertaking, it is usually useful to have not only a goal in mind, but at least a rough idea of the means of reaching that goal. It is reassuring to know that the first formal meeting of the Jesus Project is devoted to the critical issue of methodology, and in particular an evaluation of what constitutes evidence relevant to the Jesus tradition.

One may think it is presumptuous, if not arrogant, for someone who is a lawyer and philosopher to be discussing issues of evidence with specialists in religious studies. But precisely because I am a lawyer and philosopher, presumption and arrogance are expected of me and I do not want to disappoint.

In any event, law and philosophy do have something to contribute to the evidentiary questions being considered. Let us begin with the law. The law reminds us that evidence should not be confused with fact. There are many facts that would not be considered by the decision maker in a trial, whether a judge or jury, because the law deems them irrelevant. The fact that someone is wearing a yellow shirt at the time an agreement is executed may suggest that person has an underdeveloped aesthetic sensibility, but it is not germane to the question of whether the person has entered into a binding contract. Evidence

represents facts that the law has determined are probative of whether an event with legal implications has occurred.

Here we immediately see one difference between the law and studies focusing on the historicity of Jesus. There are no generally accepted authoritative standards on what constitutes material evidence on the question of whether Jesus of Nazareth existed. (And, as religious scholars are aware, some would even dispute the existence of Nazareth itself.) Of course, scholars associated with the Jesus Project may attempt to develop standards that will help determine what constitutes such evidence. To say this represents a daunting challenge would be an understatement—one is tempted to say an understatement of biblical proportions.

In addition to this fundamental problem of the lack of generally accepted standards for what constitutes material evidence on the Jesus question,

there is the not insignificant problem that arguably none of the assertions about Jesus that some regard as embodying factual claims would constitute legal evidence of his existence, even under the most expansive definitions of relevance. We need to consider where these factual claims are to be found. They are found in various documents, and none of the documents usually mined for information about Jesus, such as the various Gospels and Epistles and the works of Josephus, would be readily accepted as evidence in a court of law. Insofar as they attest to the existence of some sort of religious, cultural, or political leader called Jesus, they are all hearsay. The authors of the documents are not available for questioning, and, for the most part, we cannot look outside the documents themselves to determine the factual foundation, if any, for their assertions.

Some who have knowledge of the rules of evidence may protest that there is an "ancient documents" exception to the rule against hearsay.

Indeed, there is a whole school of so-called juridical apologists going back to Simon Greenleaf (1874),¹ one of the founders of Harvard Law School, who have argued that the Gospels and other ancient documents referencing Jesus constitute admissible evidence concerning not only the existence of Jesus but of the events that transpired during Jesus' life—and death.² Ancient documents—which under the law in most Anglo-American jurisdictions are simply any documents more than thirty years old—are sometimes admitted into evidence. Typically, such documents are newspapers, deeds, or other contemporaneous records of the events they report. But a necessary precondition for their admission into evidence is that there is no suspicion concerning their authenticity. In other words, if a document purports to be the identification card of a member of the Ukrainian Police circa 1943, then before it is admitted into evidence, that document has to be established conclusively as authentic.³

To put it mildly, the authenticity of the documents that refer to Jesus is open to question. Among other problems, none of them qualify as contemporaneous records created by a person or persons with direct knowledge of the reported facts, and no proper chain of custody has been established for these documents. Indeed, there is no dispute that in most cases we do not have access to the original documents. What we have instead are copies of copies.

Furthermore, authenticity is one thing and reliability is another. You may possess a document that appears to be authentic that, nonetheless, is rejected as evidence that certain events took place because the document was not created by a disinterested person or is otherwise clouded with uncertainty or improbability. We may have an authentic document that is the original of a writing by Joseph Smith (the founder of Mormonism) in

which Smith declares he was visited by Jesus, but this document would not be accepted by a court as proof that Jesus visited Smith. Authentic ancient documents are accepted as evidence only when they have indicia of reliability. Among those indicia is the fact that they were *not* created principally to help establish the truth of the claim currently being contested. An ID card for a Ukrainian policeman was created to show he was a Ukrainian policeman, not to show that the person who was a Ukrainian policeman in 1943 subsequently lied about that fact in order to gain illegal entry to the United States, and therefore, as the court of appeals ruled in *United States v. Koziy*, 728 F.2d 1314 (11th Cir. 1984), if established as authentic, the ID card should be admitted into evidence in the context of a deportation proceeding. Similarly, as the trial court found in *Fulmer v. Connors*, 665 F.Supp. 1472 (N.D. Ala. 1987), a payroll record from 1940 that indicates that Mr. X worked for a coal company should be

admitted into evidence in a lawsuit by his widow, Ms. X, seeking retirement benefits in 1990 because the payroll record was not created with the intent of influencing the outcome of litigation over a pension that takes place more than fifty years in the future.

The only document referencing Jesus written anywhere near the time that Jesus allegedly lived that arguably was written for a purpose other than advocacy on behalf of Jesus are the histories of Josephus, but most scholars contend that the key passage in Josephus that refers to Jesus is, in large part, an interpolation .⁴ Accordingly, its reliability is in serious doubt.

Of course, there are numerous Gospels and Epistles referencing Jesus, but these documents are quite clearly not designed to be dispassionate biographies of Jesus, reporting to us the various details of his life. To the extent they serve any purpose other than telling an interesting story, they

advocate—they attempt to persuade. Is there an analogue for such documents in the courtroom? Yes, as a matter of fact there is, but it is an analogue that suggests the Gospels and Epistles should not be regarded as evidence. The Gospels and Epistles are analogous to lawyers' arguments, and anyone who has ever been a juror—and actually paid attention to the instructions given by the court—will recall that the judge instructed the jurors that the lawyers' arguments are not evidence. They are attempts to characterize the evidence to their clients' advantage.

So what we have, at best, in the Gospels and Epistles might be characterized as the equivalent of lawyers' arguments. But in reality we do not even have that limited degree of reliability. First, it is doubtful that the Gospels represent the work of one author or even a committee of advocates. Instead, they represent a compilation of orally transmitted advocacy that likely had many contributors over extended periods of time. Moreover, the constraints

that one normally finds placed on a lawyer's argument—namely, the fact that a lawyer cannot stretch or obscure the evidence too much, because the jury has just listened to the evidence, opposing counsel will point out any inconsistencies or fabrications, and the court may sanction counsel for remarks that are too tendentious or inflammatory—are entirely absent in the context of the Gospels. There was no penalty that we know of—at least initially—for those who contributed to the Gospels if they stretched the facts to persuade their audience of their story.

And what was their story? What were they trying to establish? This is yet another significant way in which the various Gospels differ from a lawyer's argument. When parties go to court, there is agreement at least on this much: there is a certain critical set of facts that need to be proved. For example, was there an offer and acceptance sufficient to create a contract? Did the employer's agent engage

in sexually harassing conduct that was so pervasive and offensive that a reasonable person would conclude that a hostile work environment was created? Lawyers' arguments focus on a limited, circumscribed, judicially defined set of transactions and occurrences. But with the three dozen or so Gospels relating to Jesus, there is no consensus regarding what facts the Gospels are designed to establish. We have known now for some time that even the limited consensus exemplified by the synoptic Gospels is illusory—an illusion created by the suppression, ignorance of, or disappearance of other Gospels, such as the Gospel of Thomas or the Gospel of Judas, which advocate for quite a different Jesus than one finds portrayed in the synoptic Gospels. Effectively, we are presented with something resembling a collection of attorney's arguments from different and distinct cases that share a reference to a character named Jesus.

Is this shared reference to a character named

Jesus at least sufficient to establish that there was a person who existed in what is now known as Israel or Palestine in the early years of the Common Era who was a leader and had a following of some sort? Before answering that question, we need to turn to philosophy.

In his *Philosophical Investigations*, Ludwig Wittgenstein offered some observations about the historicity of Moses. He remarked:

Consider this example. If one says "Moses did not exist," this may mean several things. It may mean the Israelites did not have a *single* leader when they withdrew from Egypt—or: that their leader was not called Moses—or: there cannot have been anyone who accomplished all that the Bible relates of Moses—or: etc. etc. We may say, following Russell, the name Moses can be defined by means of various descriptions. For example, as "the man who led the Israelites through the wilderness," "the man who

lived at that time and place and was called 'Moses,'" "the man who as a child was taken out of the Nile by the Pharaoh's daughter" and so on.

But when I make a statement about Moses—am I always ready to substitute some *one* of these descriptions for "Moses"? I shall perhaps say: By "Moses" I understand the man who did what the Bible relates of Moses, or at any rate a good deal of it. But how much? Have I decided how much must be proved false for me to give up my proposition as false? Has the name "Moses" got a fixed and unequivocal use for me in all possible cases?⁵

We need to ask the same questions about Jesus that Wittgenstein posed about Moses. Wittgenstein's observations about Moses are, I submit, a little-appreciated reminder of the daunting difficulties facing any project that seeks to resolve the question whether a person with the legendary dimensions of someone such as Jesus actually existed. Wittgenstein's comments persuasively suggest that before we even

arrive at the stage of trying to evaluate the evidence that might be relevant to the historicity of Jesus, we must first try to answer the question: what does it mean to say Jesus existed?

To help illustrate just one aspect of these difficulties, please consider the following statements:

1. The Gospel of Matthew says mostly false things about Jesus.
2. Many of the events related in the Gospel of Matthew did happen, but the deeds attributed to Jesus were actually performed by someone named Irving; the stories in the Gospel of Matthew simply accreted around Jesus through a mistake in transmission of the oral history.
3. Jesus never existed.

What is the difference in meaning among these

statements? One might contend that there is a significant difference between Statement 1 and Statement 2 because Statement 2 indicates that the events most Christians care about did occur; they were "just" mistakenly attributed to Jesus instead of Irving. Discovery of such a fact would unsettle many, and necessitate a less than felicitous rewriting of our hymn books ("What a friend we have in Irving" simply does not seem as euphonious), but the critical transactions and occurrences related in the Gospels and Epistles would still be understood to be referring to *someone*.

But what about Statement 1 and Statement 3? Any difference? If 98 percent of the assertions about Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew are not accurate, is a statement to that effect substantively any different in meaning than a statement that Jesus never existed? For example, let us assume that the accurate statements in Matthew are that there was a person known as Jesus who was born in Galilee during the

reign of Herod; that when he was an adult, this Jesus traveled about and had some unkind words to say about the Pharisees and Sadducees; that some persons liked what this fellow Jesus said; and that this Jesus suggested using a prayer such as the "Our Father" Everything else in Matthew is false. What is the difference then between making that assertion and saying that Jesus never existed?

Before answering this question, let us consider another figure of legendary dimensions, but someone in whom not as much emotion or metaphysical significance is invested. Let us consider Agamemnon. Specifically, let us consider these statements about Agamemnon:

1. The *Iliad* says mostly false things about Agamemnon.
2. Many of the events related in the *Iliad* did happen, but the deeds attributed to Agamemnon

were actually performed by someone named Irving; the stories in the *Iliad* simply accreted around Agamemnon through a mistake in the transmission of the oral history.

3. Agamemnon never existed.

How much of what is set forth in the *Iliad* must be false before we are willing to assent to Statement 3? Does it matter if most of the events happened, but we have "Agamemnon's" name wrong? As indicated above, presumably not. But does it matter if there was no Achilles or no dispute over Briseis? Does it matter if there was no Menelaus or Helen? No Odysseus, Paris, Priam, or Hector? What is the essential core set of facts associated with Agamemnon? Is there such an essential core set of facts? If a coalition of armed forces from what we now call the Peloponnesus was led by a ruler of Mycenae and attacked a city or cities in northwest Asia Minor in the period

somewhere between 1400 and 1200 BCE, is that sufficient to warrant the assertion that Agamemnon existed, but most of what the *Iliad* says about him and the Trojan War is false?

There is, of course, one major difference between questions regarding the existence of Agamemnon and questions regarding the existence of Jesus, and that is, despite the interest in and curiosity about the Trojan War and other possibly historical events alluded to in the *Iliad*, the *Aeneid* and other works of classical literature, it ultimately matters little to us today whether there was an Agamemnon similar to the figure portrayed in the *Iliad*. Granted, investigations into the historical accuracy of the *Iliad* make for interesting archeological expeditions and related television specials on the Discovery Channel, but nothing much turns on the findings of those investigations. One's worldview, one's religious and ethical beliefs, are not dependent on whether someone similar to the Agamemnon of the *Iliad* existed.

However, given the influence that Christianity has exerted throughout the course of history and continues to exert today, the question whether Jesus existed is of profound significance.

This critical difference between the significance of the historicity of Jesus and the significance of the historicity of Agamemnon suggests one way to specify more precisely what we mean to say when we claim "Jesus existed" or "Jesus did not exist" At this juncture, I must perform a necessary philosophical task and discuss briefly Saul Kripke's theory of rigid designation, also known as the theory of direct reference. Implicit in the foregoing discussion of the meaning of "Jesus" or "Agamemnon" is the thesis that there are certain descriptions associated with a particular individual. In other words, by "Agamemnon" we may mean to refer to the ruler who led a coalition of forces against a city-state in northwest Asia Minor circa 1300 BCE. Saul Kripke rejects the notion that there is descriptive content

conveyed by a name, or to be more precise, a directly referring expression.⁶ The intuition behind Kripke's position is that it is always possible that some event we associate with a person may not have happened. For example, Richard Nixon might not have won the 1968 presidential election; he might not have authorized the Watergate break-in; he might not have resigned the presidency. Our world is composed of contingencies. It is always possible that a certain event might not happen. Furthermore, and more important, whether a particular event happened does not affect the identity of individuals. Although it is true that Richard Nixon won the 1968 presidential election, Richard Nixon still would have been Richard Nixon had he lost the election. It is possible that those in attendance at the inaugural meeting of the Jesus Project might have decided not to attend—they would have missed a great program, but that decision would not have affected their personal identity.

For Kripke, the semantic content of the name

that designates an individual is nothing more than the referent himself or herself. The name of an individual is a so-called rigid designator and it refers to that individual in all possible worlds—worlds, for example, in which Hubert Humphrey and not Richard Nixon won the 1968 election.

Evaluating Kripke's theory properly would require much discussion of transworld semantics, modal logic, and other abstruse metaphysical matters. Fortunately, for my purposes, we can be spared that discussion. I have referenced Kripke's theory only for the sake of philosophical completeness and to reassure the philosophically minded that in my discussions of the meaning of "Jesus" I am not overlooking an alternative way to understand the referents of names.

Whatever the validity of Kripke's theory in general, for figures with such critical significance as Jesus, there are certain essential descriptions that

must be associated with that individual—if that individual is to retain his or her critical significance. For most individuals, it may be a metaphysical truth that no set of descriptions is necessarily associated with that individual, but for Jesus and some other extraordinary personages, either some descriptions must be associated with that individual or, for all intents and purposes, we might as well say this particular person never existed.

What set of facts must be true before we are prepared to give assent to the claim "Jesus never existed," or give assent to the claim "Jesus existed"? Permit me to suggest that arriving at a consensus on the key set of facts relevant to such claims is an indispensable part of any investigation of the historicity of Jesus. Concluding that some isolated assertions in the Gospels or Epistles are likely true, or likely false, will not help us in addressing the fundamental question. Do not confuse the trees with the forest. Moreover, arriving at this consensus fairly

early in the process is important if an investigation is to achieve any credibility. Determining at the end of my inquiry into the historical evidence that certain facts are required to support the claim that Jesus existed risks branding the investigation as disingenuous, one designed to arrive at a predetermined conclusion.

To illustrate my point, let us assume that we have fairly firm evidence that there were no synagogues in Galilee during the time Jesus supposedly lived and, therefore, the statements in Matthew that Jesus taught in the synagogues of Galilee is false (Mt 4:23). Can we then conclude that Jesus did not exist? Why? Why is the assertion that Jesus taught in the synagogues of Galilee essential to the fundamental question of Jesus' existence? Obviously, it will not withstand intellectual scrutiny to argue that if some of the assertions in the canonical Gospels are false, they must all be false. Those who believe in biblical inerrancy may be disturbed by evidence that some of

the assertions in those Gospels cannot be true, but an objective investigation of the Jesus question does not establish its credibility or importance by undercutting Christian fundamentalists. Proof that there were no synagogues in Galilee at the time Jesus is said to have lived is significant to the question whether Jesus existed *only* if we have previously established the critical importance of this fact—but the task of sorting out essential from nonessential descriptive statements is a task that remains to be performed.

The importance of establishing what descriptions are essential to Jesus may be shown by considering another figure of historical importance, but someone who, unlike Agamemnon, most believe actually existed, namely, Socrates. Consider that no one regards Plato's dialogues as providing us with a verbatim transcript of the exchanges between Socrates and his various interlocutors. Moreover, it is doubtful whether Socrates actually had exchanges with some of the historical figures around which Plato

structured several of his works, such as *Protagoras*. In addition, the extant sources of information we have for Socrates are relatively few in number, being effectively four, that is, Plato, Aristophanes, Xenophon, and Aristotle.⁷ One of these, Aristophanes, is explicitly fictional in nature. Indeed, given the paucity of information about Socrates, some who have been fairly rigorous in their assessment of the evidence for Jesus have speculated that we have better historical support for Jesus than we do for Socrates.⁸ Finally, the character and interests of Socrates as found in Xenophon differ in various ways from the character and interests of Socrates as found in Plato.

Nonetheless, few, if any, doubt that Socrates actually existed, that he was a person interested in moral questions, that he was a gadfly or a crank (depending on one's perspective) and that he was condemned to death. Moreover, we accept this even though, as indicated, the contemporary documents

referring to Socrates are very few in number. One reason we accept the historical existence of Socrates is that there is some consensus about what the statement "Socrates existed" implies. It is, I submit, an essential part of the meaning of "Socrates" that this name is understood as referring to a person who lived in Athens in the fifth century BCE who had an interest in discussing ethical issues with others and who was condemned to death as a result of what he was accused of saying. And, with the exception of Aristophanes, what sources we do have seem reliable, in part, because they are in agreement on these core assertions. (It also helps, of course, that there is some record of the indictment against Socrates apart from the usual sources for his life—although the reliability of this evidence is not immune from dispute.)⁹

Is there a similar set of descriptive statements that constitute an essential part of the meaning of "Jesus"? I hope so, because otherwise it is difficult to understand how an inquiry into the historicity of

Jesus will result in an intellectually defensible conclusion.

But don't look to me to provide you with the definitive set of descriptions essential to Jesus. My obligation as a philosopher was to present questions and difficulties, not to resolve them. And I have discharged that duty.

PAUL AS A WITNESS TO THE HISTORICAL JESUS

Gerd Lüdemann

INTRODUCTION

p

Paul of Tarsus is often hailed as one of the foremost disciples of Jesus of Nazareth, but such a claim is beset with historical difficulties. For one thing, Paul did not know Jesus personally; for another, Paul never calls himself a disciple of Jesus. Furthermore, Paul's theology, together with its theological, anthropological, and soteriological ideas, in

noway represents a recapitulation of Jesus' preaching nor even a further development of it. It is especially significant that the apostle never adduces any of Jesus' citations of the Torah in support of his own teaching about it. In addition, the "Reign of God," a concept central to Jesus' message, is at best marginal for Paul. Conversely, Paul's repeated emphasis on "the righteousness of God" as a main thing of salvation has no parallel in Jesus' teaching. For Paul, God's righteousness is revealed in the Gospel "through faith for faith" (Rom 1:17).

It comes, therefore, as no surprise that according to some, Paul founded a new religion centered on the cult of Christ, one that has little in common with the religion of Jesus' disciples in Jerusalem and Galilee. This view, however, minimizes the fact that Paul considered the Christ who appeared to him near Damascus to be the same person as the Jesus who had appeared to Cephas and the Twelve and

other members of the Jerusalem community. No doubt it was for this reason that three years after his conversion, Paul went to Jerusalem to visit Cephas. The reason was not to talk about the weather, as C. H. Dodd once quipped, but to seek assurance that "his" Christ could be identified with "their" Jesus.

Be that as it may, we find a clear disparity between the Jesus revealed by historical saidy and the Christ proclaimed by faith. A troublesome question therefore arises: Can Paul, whose seven genuine letters are likely the oldest Christian documents, serve as a reliable witness to the historical Jesus? Before we address that question, two definitions are overdue and a few ancillary questions need to be answered.

As for the definitions, a distinction has to be made between the historical Jesus and the earthly Jesus. The phrase "historical Jesus" is to be understood as the result of scholarly study of the Jesus texts, whereas the phrase "earthly Jesus" is to

be understood as the birth, life, and death of Jesus. In light of these definitions, it makes no sense to speak of Paul's, Matthew's, Mark's, Luke's, or John's view of the historical Jesus. Rather, we should speak of their view of the earthly Jesus.

As for the ancillary questions, we first need to determine in what way Paul was concerned with the earthly Jesus. Of course, in order to answer this question, we must ask another: what did Paul mean when he identified Jesus as "Christ"? Furthermore, yet another question necessarily follows: what traditions about Jesus, if any, did Paul use in his letters and during his missionary activity?

After dealing with those questions we will have to present a systematic evaluation of Paul's relation to Jesus. Last but not least, we shall turn to our main question: does the evidence in Paul's letters show him to have been a reliable witness to the historical Jesus?

THE RISEN JESUS IS THE EARTHLY JESUS

For Paul, the "Risen Christ" was of primary, indeed overwhelming, importance. Paul was convinced that Christ had appeared to him near Damascus and called him to be an apostle. Moreover, Christ was present in the community of the saints who confessed him to be Lord, and would one day return on the clouds of heaven to establish his rule. Though when confessing Christ as the Lord, Paul is thinking in the first place of the Resurrected One, nevertheless he repeatedly uses this same title when speaking of Jesus between his birth and death. The following passages will serve to illustrate this:

To the married I give this ruling, not I but the Lord, that the wife must not separate from her husband ... and that the husband must not divorce his wife. (1 Cor 7:10-11)

The Lord gave charge for those who proclaim the gospel, that they should live by the gospel. (1 Cor 9:14)

The Lord Jesus on the night he was handed over took bread.... (1 Cor 11:23)

[The Jews] who killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets ... (1 Thes 2:15)

God has raised the Lord and will also raise us. (1 Cor 6:14)

The cross of our Lord Jesus. (Gal 6:14)

die brodiars of the Lord /...James, die Lord's
brother. (1 Cor 9:5 Gal 1:19)

For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
that he, being rich, yet for your sakes became poor.
(2 Cor 8:9)

Therefore one must conclude that in speaking of "God's Son, Christ Jesus whom we proclaimed among you" (2 Cor 1:19), Paul refers to both the man Jesus *and* the Risen Lord. One might go so far as to say that he repeatedly conflates the two. Clearly, the Jesus of Paul's proclamation included his human existence, his work, and his message. This is beyond any doubt when we consider Paul's emphasis on the birth of God's son (cf. Gal 4:4: "But when the time

had fully come, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law") and the heavenly preexistence of the divine son who was born of woman (see the below text from Philippians). Incidentally, it is worth noting that Gal 4:4 seems to exclude Paul's knowledge of the virgin birth tradition.

In referring to Jesus as "Lord," Paul has taken a title belonging to the Resurrected One and assigned it retroactively to the earthly Jesus, and then to the Preexistent One. And yet it was important to Paul that Jesus was born a Jew (Rom 1:3, 15:8) and lived under the Law (Gal 3:1). This characteristic Pauline merger of personae is indisputable evidence that when Paul speaks of the Resurrected Lord, the man Jesus is at the same time in his mind, and that for Paul, the man Jesus and the preexistent and risen Lord are one and the same.

When the apostle uses Jesus as an example or

refers to him as someone to emulate, he thinks of both the preexistent *and* the earthly Jesus (cf Rom 15:2-3; 1 Cor 11:1; 2 Cor 8:9, 10:1; 1 Thes 1:6) who serves as the main figure in a cosmic drama. His sonship is to be seen in his obedient fulfillment of God's will. Jesus' obedience is the key quality adduced in the early hymn Paul records in Philippians 2:6-11, specifically in verses 7-8:

[He] emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even unto death on the cross.

Even more striking, the apostle contrasts Jesus' obedience with Adam's disobedience:

As through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so through obedience of

the one the many will be made righteous. (Rom 5:19)

THE PROBLEM OF 2 CORINTHIANS 5:16

In view of these facts, it is strange that some have drawn the conclusion that the earthly Jesus was of no significance for Paul. They have amplified this by citing the statement in 2 Corinthians 5:16:

Henceforth we know no one according to the flesh; if indeed we had known Christ according to the flesh, we no longer know him thus.

But this is clearly a misconstrual and a misapplication of 2 Cor 5:16, for here Paul is not denying interest in the earthly Jesus. He is not

talking about "Christ in the flesh," but about knowing Christ "from a human point of view" (RSV). What Paul rejects is a this-worldly relation to Jesus. In short, while Paul is far from a systematic biographer, it is incorrect to say that the earthly Jesus did not matter to him.

As noted above, Paul seldom cites Jesus; but he occasionally alludes to sayings of Jesus or so attributes injunctions to him. This is eminently understandable when we recognize that while he presents Jesus as the authority (cf. 1 Cor 7:10), Paul can always claim for himself, as one commissioned by Christ, the mantle of present authority. Note, for example, 1 Cor 7:40: "But I think that I have the spirit of God."

DEATH AND RESURRECTION OF JESUS AS THE MAIN FOCUS IN

PAUL

In short, Paul appeals to Jesus' life and teachings when doing so suits his agenda, but the unchanging focus of his proclamation is Jesus' death and Resurrection. For it is only through these that sin and death have been conquered, and God's plan of salvation at last actualized (Rom 8:3; cf. Col 1:22; 2:14—15). Herein rests the dynamic appeal of Paul's message, and hence he can unequivocally pronounce the crucified Christ as the essence of his Gospel: "But we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles" (1 Cor 1:23); "You foolish Galatians ... before whose eyes Jesus Christ has been proclaimed as crucified" (Gal 3:1). Since this now exalted man is of central importance to the apostle's proclamation, it seems strange indeed that the Epistles so seldom make reference to his life and teachings.

THE EXTENT AND THE ROLE OF JESUS⁵ SAYINGS IN PAUL

Having concluded that Jesus' earthly ministry did figure into Paul's formulation of Christianity, we must, in keeping with our task description, determine the extent and the role of Jesus' teachings in Paul's thinking. I want to propose that the *first* step should be to analyze and evaluate those passages in which Paul explicitly refers to sayings of Jesus. In these, at any rate, there is a reasonable likelihood that Paul is quoting a saying that came down to him in the tradition as a word of the Lord. But then in a *second* step we should examine the possibility that the letters might contain allusions to or echoes of Jesus' sayings.

References to Sayings of Jesus

To the married I give this ruling, not I but the Lord, that the wife must not separate from her husband, but if she does, let her remain single or else be reconciled to her husband, and that the husband must not divorce his wife. (1 Cor 7:10-11)

The prohibition of divorce has parallels in Mark 10:1-12 and <X(Mt 5:32/Lk 16:18). Note, however, that the earliest stratum of the tradition is reflected by (X, where only the husband's right to divorce his wife is presupposed. In both Mark and Paul, the wife has the right to initiate a divorce, a provision clearly derived from Greco-Roman law. And not only that, but Paul's is the earlier mention of this case; obviously, he has met women in his communities who availed themselves of a right familiar to their

culture. In other words, although Paul quotes the Lord, the historical Jesus cannot possibly have spoken the words attributed to him because he had said nothing about women initiating a separation. Either Paul's prescription is a developed form of the saying or he has applied an earlier, less-developed saying to the situation in Corinth. The same can be said for the first evangelist, who in Matthew 5:32 (cf. Mt 19:9) uses the Q^saying on divorce but, no doubt because of cases of fornication in his community, has Jesus allow divorce in such instances.

The Lord ordered that those who proclaim the gospel earn their living by the gospel. (1 Cor 9:14)

Paul refers to the Lord here because he wants to build up a strong case for the support of missionaries even though it is a perquisite he personally renounces. So far is he from adopting these "words

of the Lord" as a new tradition applying to himself that he had on purpose not accepted any support from the Corinthians. In 1 Corinthians 9 he adduces the following points in asserting the missionary's right to support: reason and common experience (verse 7), the Old Testament (verse 9), universal religious practice (verse 13), and the teaching of Jesus himself (verse 14). All these support the custom by which apostles and other ministers are maintained at the expense of the church built up by their ministry.

The saying suggests that Paul has in mind the one contained in Q: "the laborer deserves his food/his wages" (Mt 10:10/Lk 10:7). It presupposes a fully developed missionary movement and seems to be a group invention.

For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was handed over took bread, and when he had

given thanks, he broke it, and said, "*This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.*" In the same way he also took the cup, after supper, saying, "*This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this; as often as you drink it; in remembrance of me*(1 Cor 11:2 3-2 5)

One feature of worship service in the Greek-speaking community persecuted by Paul is certain: its focal point was the Lord's Supper, which was an integral part of the church's common meal. This was one reason for the severity of the crisis at Antioch, for when Jewish Christians withdrew from the common table, they left the communion table as well (Gal 2:11-13).

The name *Lord's Supper* has its single explicit New Testament attestation in Paul (1 Cor 11:20: *kyriakon deipnon*), a text probably written in the year 51. The name is clearly pre-Pauline, and like the later attested

name *Lord's Day* (Rev 1:10) reflects a Christian communal concern, the cult of Christ.

The communion ritual that Paul originally taught the Corinthians—which he himself had received—appears in the tradition he passed on in 1 Corinthians 11:23-25. Note, however, that he claims to have received it from the Lord (verse 23). Yet, this can hardly mean that we are dealing here with a word of Jesus taken from a narrative nor that Paul heard these sentences spoken to him directly by the heavenly Jesus, for the apostle here employs the same terms that he uses in 1 Corinthians 15:3 (received-delivered). These were the same words Jewish scribes used to designate the reception and transmission of traditions. The phrase "from the Lord" thus indicates the ultimate source of the communion ritual in which the Lord is present. He himself has established the holy rite of eating and drinking.

The institution of the Lord's Supper as a cult observance occurs not only in 1 Corinthians 11:23-25 but also in Mark 14:22-25, Matthew 26:26-29, and Luke 22:15-20. The Synoptics, though, present the Lord's Supper as a Passover meal. This is an important departure from Paul, who in 1 Corinthians 5:7 accepts the interpretation of Jesus' death as a Passover sacrifice, but excludes that concept from the tradition of the Last Supper. Matthew has essentially taken over Mark's text, and Luke is dependent on Mark and the tradition found in Paul. That means that in order to get to the earliest texts about the Lord's Supper, we must start with Paul.

Paul reiterates the injunction (underlined in the above text) that this rite be performed on a regular basis. A liturgical origin is thus attested, and something more than remembering is indicated: this is a commemoration, an act in which the significance of a vital event of the past becomes a present reality.

Indeed, we are dealing here with a foundational account of a sacred rite that derives from the events of the night in which Jesus was handed over, and this etiological legend explains the origin and meaning of a current practice in a community. That it contains or even reflects actual words of Jesus is highly doubtful. Can one seriously imagine a pious Jewish teacher of righteousness inviting his followers to partake, even symbolically, of his flesh and blood?

If any one thinks himself to be a prophet or spiritual person, let him recognize that what I am writing to you is the command of the Lord [in some manuscripts, "comes from the Lord"]. (1 Cor 14:37)

There can be no doubt that some in Corinth thought themselves to be prophets or spiritual persons. Against their authority Paul insists that he

has the mind of Christ and therefore the authority of Christ (cf. 1 Cor 7:25, 40). Thus the injunctions referred to in the above text cannot be taken to represent actual words of Jesus.

"My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made sufficient in weakness" (2 Cor 12:9)

Paul claims to have received these words directly from the Risen One in the course of an ecstatic experience.

For not only has the word of the Lord sounded forth from you in Macedonia and Achaia, but your faith in God has gone forth everywhere, so that we need not say anything. (1 Thes 1:8)

Here, of course, the "word of the Lord" does not refer to a saying of Jesus but to the success of Paul's missionary efforts in Thessalonica.

Jesus said, *"It is more blessed to give than to receive."*
(Acts 20:35)

This purported saying of Jesus is part of Luke's report of Paul's speech at Miletus to the church elders of Ephesus. It has a certain affinity to a Persian maxim reconstructed from Thucydides II, 97,4: "to give rather than receive." Another parallel appears in 1 Clement 2:1, but not as a saying of Jesus.

ALLUSIONS TO SAYINGS OF JESUS

Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. (Rom 12:14)

This is a likely echo of Jesus' command in Matthew 5:44: "Love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you." But Luke 6:27, the (X parallel to Matthew 5:44, shows that Romans 12:14 constitutes a more developed form of Jesus' command. In Luke 6:27 we read simply, "Love your enemies." It appears that Paul must have known a later version of Jesus' command to love one's enemies, a recension that included the reference to persecution like the Matthew version of Q.

Never pay back evil for evil. (Rom 12:17)

This verse recalls Matthew 5:39: "Do not set yourself against the man who wrongs you." A common Jewish background for both sayings is the most likely explanation.

Conquer evil with good. (Rom 12:2 1)

While finding no precise parallel in the synoptic Gospels, we naturally think of Jesus' advocacy of nonresistance (see Mt 5:39-42). Still, the fact of Paul's affinity for this repeated theme hardly justifies seeing this verse as an allusion to Jesus' words. The advice to conquer evil by doing good was a maxim in Judaism.

Pay all of them their due—taxes to whom taxes are due, revenue to whom revenue is due, respect to whom respect is due, honor to whom honor is due.
(Rom 13:7)

This verse bears some resemblance to Mark 12:17: "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's." Since the second half is absent from Paul, however, a direct relation cannot be claimed.

Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves another has fulfilled the law. The commandments—You shall not commit adultery, You shall not kill, You shall not steal, You shall not covet, or any other commandment—are summed up in this one: You must love your neighbor as yourself. Love does no wrong to a neighbor; that is why love is the essence of the law. (Rom 13:8-10)

This statement of the central importance of love might be taken as a reprise of Jesus' teaching as reported in the Synoptics (Mk 12:28-34; Mt 22:34-40; Lk 10:25-28). But their two-part commandment is apocopated in Romans 13 (cf. Gal 5:14) to the single injunction to love one's neighbor. To be sure, this does not involve a contradiction, but the difference in form argues against direct derivation from Jesus. Besides, parallels in the rabbinic literature indicate that Romans 13:8-10 is not a demonstrable case of

Paul quoting Jesus.

Why do you judge your brother? (Rom 14:10)

Naturally we hear in this verse an echo of "Do not judge lest you be judged" (Mt 7:1). But here again one can cite a number of parallels from the rabbinic literature. There is, for example, the famous saying of Hillel (early first century CE): "Do not judge your neighbor until you have gotten into his condition." When we note that the same injunction appears in Romans 2:1 and James 4:11, we recognize that it would be much safer to assume that all these passages are variations on a common Jewish theme.

Let us no longer judge one another, but rather decide never to put a stumbling block or an obstacle in a brother's way (Rom 14:13)

First of all, note that verse 13 is a clear echo of verse 10 ("Why do you judge your brother?"). Besides, the mere use of the "stumbling block" (*.skandalon*), an image or motif that is similarly employed in synoptic sayings (Mk 9:42; Mt 18:7; Lk 17:1-2), is insufficient evidence that Paul here reflects these or similar Jesus traditions. More important, perhaps, the appearance of the symbolic stumbling block in Leviticus 19:14, Isaiah 57:14, and five times in Ezekiel (3:20, 7:19, 14:3, 4, 7) suggests that Paul may be using a much older tradition.

As one who is in the Lord Jesus, I know and am convinced that nothing is unclean in itself; but it is unclean for any one who considers it unclean. (Rom 14:14)

This, of course, has a familiar ring: "There is

nothing outside of a man that can defile him; but the things that come out of a man are what defile him" (Mk 7:15; cf. Mt 15:11). In this passage, however, Paul is dealing with a particular issue involving the Roman community, and the phrase "in the Lord Jesus" is not in any way an attribution, but simply a formula by which he avows his association with the risen Lord as a basis for the correctness of his opinion. The reason for the agreement of Romans 14:14 with Mark 7:15 is uncertain; at any rate, whether this pronouncement of Paul comes from Jesus remains an open question. (See also 1 Cor 8:4 as a possible background of Rom 14:14.)

Therefore, who ever rejects this (God's call to holiness) rejects not human authority but God. (1 Thes 4:8)

Some try to read into this verse a reference to

Luke 10:16: "Whoever hears you hears me, and who ever rejects me rejects the one who has sent me." Unfortunately, their primary evidence, namely, that the two passages contain the same verb, "reject" (*athetein*), is rather shaky support for the notion that Paul, who again and again asserts divinely ordained authority, may have derived the saying from Jesus.

You are yourselves taught by God to love one another (1 Thes 4:9)

This has no direct synoptic parallel, but some have suggested that it shows a clear though unspecific affinity with the spirit of Jesus that, it is purported, Paul's thinking amply and consistently reflects. This lovely and indeed pious sentiment, however, falls far short of being evidence of derivation from a saying of Jesus.

But we do not want you to be ignorant, brothers, concerning those who have fallen asleep, that you may not grieve as others who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep.

This we say to you in a word of the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the Lord's coming, shall by no means precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the archangel's call, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first; then we who are alive, who are left, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and so we shall always be with the Lord.
(1 Thes 4:13-17)

The view that a saying of the Lord is contained

in this section is supported primarily by verse 15 ("For this we say to you in a word of the Lord") which stands as an introduction to verses 15-17. This conclusion is not undisputed. Some contend that verse 15 is not the introduction of a direct quotation, but a reference to Jesus using prophetic modes of discourse (cf. Sir 48:3: "By the word of the Lord he [Elijah] shut up the sky and three times called down fire"). Moreover, it is not clear whether the postulated quotation is to be found in verse 15 or in verses 16-17. Linguistic analysis indicates that phrases untypical of Paul appear specifically in verses 16-17. Moreover, an awkward fit between the terminology and the redactional context supports the assumption of an independent tradition in verses 16-17. And whereas Paul uses "those who have fallen asleep," for the dead in verse 13, verse 16 speaks of "the dead." Originally the saying in verses 16-17 may have referred to the descent of the "Son of Man," which Paul has replaced by "the Lord himself," in view of

the understanding of the community in Thessalonica. The Pauline "in Christ" may also be an addition, as may also be verse 17 as a whole (cf. the we-style as in verse 15).

Some regard verses 16-17 as an authentic Jesus tradition, which was perhaps spoken by Jesus forecasting the persecution of his disciples (Mt 10:16-23). Their death will not put them at a disadvantage at the return of Jesus on the clouds of heaven. In terms of content, scholars have also discovered in verses 16-17 analogies to such sayings of Jesus as Matthew 10:39; 16:25, 28; 24:31, 34; 25:6; 26:64; Luke 13:30. However, none of these instances, including 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17, is really convincing. Since what are generally accepted as the authentic words of Jesus do not include the raising of the dead or his return on the clouds of heaven, to discover in these verses an oblique reference to Jesus' teachings requires a vivid imagination indeed.

Rather, in 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 we seem to have a Jewish "miniature apocalypse" that has been put into the mouth of Jesus—like the Synoptic apocalypse in Mark 13. The imagery used in verses 16-17 recalls the ancient Near Eastern ceremonial reception of the king and works with similar motifs and ideas, many of which are to be found in Jewish apocalyptic. Along with the report of the Son of Man (4 Ezra 13:13), reference can be made to the notion, also attested elsewhere, that the dead take part in the eschatological salvation (4 Ezra 7).

Paul inserts this Jewish miniature apocalypse—which, however, he presents as a saying of the exalted Lord—into a wider appeal (1 Thes 4:13-18) that he develops in view of the critical situation in Thessalonica. There the fate of members of the community who have already died is becoming a divisive issue. The death of some members of the community obviously led to hopelessness and

mourning in the community—either because the notion of the resurrection of Christians was unknown in Thessalonica or because Paul's promise of salvation had been chronologically inaccurate or misunderstood. How can they attain the eschatological salvation at the return of Jesus if they have already died?

Paul attempts to combine the notion of the return of Jesus with faith in the Resurrection. After an exposition in verse 13, he makes use of the traditional creed of the death and Resurrection of Christ, through which he confirms that the dead Christians will also have future communion with Christ (verse 14). Since Jesus died and rose again, the dead, too, will have a share in paradise. This statement, which would seem to be new to the Christians in Thessalonica, is further explained by what we earlier argued was a Jewish miniature apocalypse avowed by Paul to be a saying of the Lord (verses 16-17). Verse 15 applies this in advance

to those to whom Paul is writing and sums it up for them. The dead will not be at a disadvantage upon Christ's return, because through their resurrection they will be put in the same situation as the living, and in fact will lead the way to heaven. Both will experience communion with Christ as they meet the Lord in the air (verse 17). Verse 18 ("Therefore comfort one another with these words") serves as a concluding admonition.

The day of the Lord comes like a thief in the night.
(1 Thes 5:2)

This uses the same image as the (^parallel in Matthew 24:43/Luke 12:39. (Cf. also Thomas 21:5; 2 Pt 3:10; Rv 3:3.) The images used reflect common Jewish tradition (cf. Jb 24:14; Hos 7:1) and cannot be used as an instance of Paul's dependency on a saying of Jesus.

When people say, "There is peace and security" then sudden destruction will come on them as the pangs that come on a woman with a child, and there will be no escape. (1 Thes 5:3)

The suddenness of God's coming in judgment at the end of the world is, to be sure, also an element in the traditions of Jesus' sayings (cf. Lk 12:39; 21:34), but there are also many similar passages in Jewish literature. Nothing in the present text justifies a reference to synoptic traditions.

So we must not sleep, as others do, but keep awake and sober. (1 Thes 5:6)

To be sure, we find in Matthew 24:42 an injunction purported to quote Jesus: "Therefore be awake, because you do not know on what day your Lord is coming" (cf. Mk 13:37; Lk 21:36). However,

the attribution is highly dubious, especially inasmuch as admonitions to watchfulness and sobriety are frequent in Jewish literature.

You must live at peace among yourselves. (1 Thes 5:13)

This is very close to Mark 9:50: "Be at peace with one another." However, the phrase in Mark reflects the editorial work of the second evangelist and, apart from that, is simply too general to serve as evidence for Paul's dependency on a saying of Jesus.

See that none of you pays back evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to all. (1 Thes 5:15)

See above on Rom. 12:17.

Rejoice always. (1 Thes 5:16)

This admonition is sometimes regarded as an echo of Luke 6:23 ("Rejoice in that day.... your reward is great in heaven") and Luke 10:20 ("Rejoice that your names are written in heaven"). Since both passages are of dubious authenticity, however, one must certainly exercise great imagination to see an allusion to Jesus' teachings here.

PRELIMINARY RESULT

First,; two specific references to what Jesus has said make it certain that Paul was familiar with traditions about Jesus' teaching and knew certain specific elements of that teaching. However, it goes without

saying that Jesus' ethic was ill suited to serve as a moral guide for the church in a Hellenistic society. This point receives unambiguous support in 1 Corinthians 7:25, where Paul expresses disappointment that "concerning those who are not married," no word of the Lord is available to him. Not only that observation, but also the apostle's care to distinguish his own opinion from the charge of the Lord (1 Cor 7:12), demonstrate both the value and importance Paul could ascribe to sayings of Jesus and his readiness to issue advice and commands on his own authority. But of Paul's familiarity with *some* traditions of Jesus' sayings in *some* form, there should be no doubt.

Second, one must nevertheless concede the infrequency of either explicit or implicit references to Jesus' teachings to be found in the Pauline letters. The argument that he could assume his readers' familiarity with these because he had already passed

them on in his missionary preaching is not convincing. He could and does presume some familiarity with the Greek translation of the Scripture, the Septuagint, which was mediated to his converts either by himself or earlier by the local Jewish community. For this reason he repeatedly and specifically cites it in the course of his ethical teaching. Moreover, when Paul himself summarizes the content of his missionary preaching in Corinth (1 Cor 2:1-2; 15:3-5), there is no hint that a narration of Jesus' earthly life or a report of his earthly teachings was an essential part of it. The tradition about the Last Supper (1 Cor 11:23-25) is no exception, for it is an etiological legend that serves to endorse a liturgical practice in the various churches.

In the letter to the Romans, which cannot presuppose the apostle's missionary preaching and in which he attempts to summarize its main points, we find not a single direct citation of Jesus' teaching. One must record with some surprise the fact that

Jesus' teachings seem to play a less vital role in Paul's religious and ethical instruction than does the Old Testament.

Third\ not once does Paul refer to Jesus as a teacher, to his words as teaching, or to Christians as disciples. In this regard it is of the greatest significance that when Paul cites "sayings of Jesus," they are never so designated; rather, without a single exception, he attributes such sayings to "the Lord."

Fourth, the term *Law of Christ* should not be taken to mean a summary of Jesus' teaching; rather it designates the law of love. In other words, the phrases "under the law of Christ" (*ennomos Christou*) in 1 Corinthians 9:21 and "the law of Christ" in Galatians 6:2 cannot be used to support the hypothesis that Paul conceived of the traditional words of Jesus as constituting a new Torah or a Christian Halakah.

**PAUL AS A WITNESS TO THE
HISTORICAL JESUS?**

Paul thought that a person named Jesus had lived and that he now sat at the right hand of God in heaven. Yet he shows only a passing acquaintance with traditions related to his life and nowhere an independent acquaintance with them. In short, Paul cannot be considered a reliable witness to either the teachings, the life, or the historical existence of Jesus.

JESUS' APOCALYPTIC VISION AND THE PSYCHODYNAMICS OF DELUSION

J. Harold Ellens

INTRODUCTION

Albert Schweitzer seems to have been quite concerned about the question of whether Jesus was delusional.¹ He faced honestly the fact that the report on Jesus in the Gospels contends that he lived with a vivid concept of reality that would call his sanity into question.² This Jesus is not a historical

person but a literary character in a story, though there may or may not be a real person behind that story. In the story, Jesus is depicted as believing that he heard otherworldly voices that the sane humans around him did not hear (Jn 12:28-29). He was sure those experiences were God speaking directly to him from a transcendent world. He became progressively certain that God was calling him to a tragic journey that would result in an apotheosis of exaltation to heavenly status (Mk 8:31ff). He envisioned that soon after this honorific exaltation, he would return as the unique agent of God to end history (Mk 13:26; Mt 10:23, 16:28). At that occasion, he claimed, he would give history its ultimate meaning by paying off the unrighteous with the extermination of evil; while his angelic agents would gather the righteous into a divine domain (Mt 13:41).

Schweitzer, and most biblical scholars a century ago, thought that this sounded a lot like psychosis.

They were correct, of course. Few of them, however, were willing to leave the matter at that. There was another, admirable side to the person and work of Jesus of Nazareth, as depicted in the Gospels, which prompted them, as well as most thoughtful persons for the last twenty centuries, to examine carefully how one might understand this apparent psychosis while salvaging the admirable Jesus of the story. Schweitzer solved this problem to his own satisfaction by opting for what he called a "thoroughgoing eschatology," with at least a sidelong glance to Jesus' apparent apocalyptic view of history. Nonetheless, Schweitzer left us with a most enigmatic and ambiguous conclusion:

In the knowledge that he is the coming son of man, Jesus lays hold of the wheel of the world to set it moving on that last revolution which is to bring all ordinary history to a close. It refuses to turn, and he throws himself upon it. Then it does turn and

crushes him. Instead of bringing in the eschatological conditions, he has destroyed them. The wheel rolls onward, and the mangled body of the one immeasurably great man who was strong enough to think of himself as the spiritual ruler of mankind and to bend history to his purpose, is hanging upon it still. That is his victory and his reign.³

He might have done better leaving off his last seven words, unless he means them in bitter irony! Actually, by a "thoroughgoing eschatology" Schweitzer meant that he believed Jesus was sane but lived out his life and ministry with a sense that history is under a divine imperative, standing every moment before the face of God, under the pressure of eternity. Moreover, though hesitant to call Jesus and the New Testament narratives apocalyptic, Schweitzer saw that Jesus expected that his eschatological worldview implied a final consummation in a history-

ending divine act, one in which the exalted Jesus would definitively participate. Karl Barth confirmed this vision of Jesus and the New Testament in the second edition of his commentary on Romans when he made his now classic assertion, "Christianity that is not wholly and without exception eschatology has wholly and without exception nothing to do with Christ."⁴

However, we must ask whether this resolution of the problem can be trusted. Has Schweitzer done anything more than paste over Jesus' psychosis with an ancient, mythic ideology? What is the real state of affairs with Jesus of Nazareth? This is not a question about the Jesus of history but about the Jesus of the literary narrative. How are we to take the troubling biblical narratives on the one hand, and the incredible impact of this figure upon the last twenty centuries, on the other? The three or four quests for the historical Jesus that characterized nineteenth- and twentieth-century New Testament studies tried to

entice that historic figure out of the underbrush, only to find themselves invariably mired in a rather large swamp. The difficulty with these quests lay in their attempt to pare away from the biblical figure anything that looked or smelled mythic, hoping thus to expose the historic. However, the further that quest progressed, the less of a believable or recognizable Jesus we had left.

One might argue, and even be forced to conclude, that the historical investigation has reduced Jesus so severely because he really was a historic person no greater or more significant than the quests for the historical Jesus have come to see him. If there were some way to confirm that as fact, the manner in which the quest has peeled away the dogma and myth from the character of the Jesus of scripture would clearly be of great service to us and to the truth. The difficulty arises, however, in the fact that each researcher in the quest for the historical Jesus has come away from the scholarly task with a different

image of Jesus than that held by any of his or her colleagues. The quests have produced no consensus, and no Jesus that rings true to his story.

Many of the more noted scholars of the various quests of the historical Jesus have now written their stories in an attempt to reconstruct what they have discovered that supposed historical person to be like. Each of those books is remarkable and dishearteningly different from all the others. Each of those scholars has looked down the deep well of history and has seen what everyone sees in looking down any deep well—a reflection of their own faces. That has not helped us much in discerning whether Jesus ever existed and if he did, who he was or what he was really like. The same outcome will eventuate from our new Jesus Project if we are not at great pains to prevent that. In the end, the conclusions each of us draw and for which each of us argue will be shaped after the picture in our own inner selves and the assumptions about Jesus that we make from

the outset. If we take an atheistic assumption, that faith position will determine what we see in our research. If we take an orthodox assumption, our outcome will be shaped by that faith perspective. It is going to be difficult to be objective and to avoid a radical reductionism regarding this figure, real or mythic, who has shaped the world for the last twenty centuries.

The figure that has become the end product of the various quests for Jesus is sufficiently diminished that he cannot carry the weight of the story developed about him. That is a fatal flaw in any historical quest. If one is to find out who the real historic person, Jesus of Nazareth, was, it is crucial to ask the question through the lens of what the story says, not through a lens that has pared away as much of the story as possible. That is, the story about Jesus, in which he is a leading character, is a story told by people who claimed they knew him, and for whom the story served a significant purpose. Assuming that

those people were not psychotic, it must be understood at the outset that they told the story about Jesus in a fashion that seemed to them to ring true to what they thought they knew about him, and what they felt compelled to say about him.

That does not mean that the story they told was literally his story, but they could not have gotten away with telling a story that did not make some kind of sense in terms of the kind of person they believed they knew him to be or to have been. The story had to be the sort of story that could be carried by the character of the person whom they made the main character in the story. The residual Jesus of the historical quest cannot carry the weight of the story those early narrators claimed was his story. The Jesus of the quests is too diminished, too emasculated. The results of the historical quests are consequently not believable as a description of the man from Nazareth who actually existed at a specific point in time, and who has produced such a world-shaping force in his-

tory as did he. Nor is it believable as a description of the literary character in the story, if that is all he was or all we have to work with.

That is to say, while we know that stories serve ulterior purposes and are fashioned in the image and need of the persons telling them, there are certain things you simply cannot get away with in telling a story. For example, if you expected people to believe your story about the Wright brothers and their primitive flying machine, then, however romantically or heroically you told it, you could not say that they invented a space and time travel machine that they flew to Andromeda and back, writing a secret report of their escapade that the CIA has kept from us for nefarious reasons, and that this whole thing was really the basis for the story of Jules Verne about a trip to the moon. You could not get away with that for many reasons: Verne's story was written before the Wright brothers were born, the CIA did not exist until fifty years after the Wright brothers' flights, the

technology available at the beginning of the twentieth century would not support space travel, and we still do not have time travel machines. However mythic the story, it must have certain plausible groundings in the characters and times it represents.

WHO IS THIS FELLOW?

As noted already, the Jesus with whom we have to deal on the pages of the New Testament is only a literary character in a story, not a person we can identify in history. Jesus as we know him is a character in a story narrated in the Gospels four decades after his death. In his story this character posits a worldview that is 1) radically visionary, 2) apocalyptic, and 3) eschatologically idealized. It is rooted in identifiable Second Temple Judaism sources and traditions, particularly regarding the Son of Man.

As the ardors of his life ordeal intensify in the narrative, this character in the story raises the ante on his apocalyptic vision, so to speak. At first we encounter him proclaiming the impending arrival of a divine order in the world, as the Son of Man does in the biblical book of Ezekiel. From Mark 8 forward, he predicts a season of suffering for the cause, as do the Messianic figures at Qumran (War Scroll and Hodayot—Thanksgiving Hymns), connecting for the first time in Judaic tradition the messianic notions of Isaiah 53 with Isaiah 61.

As it becomes clear that he is irretrievably on a catastrophic collision course with the religious authorities, he envisions that he will be delivered from suffering and death by God, and become the exalted Son of Man as in Daniel 7:13ff. Under these circumstances his field forces on earth, Daniel's people of the holy ones of the Most High, will carry forward his mission of destroying the powers of this

world and installing the reign of God.

Finally, in the courtroom of Caiaphas and Pilate, when all is obviously lost, he envisions himself as the Son of Man, who will reign in his own heavenly kingdom, and who will be seen again as the eschatological judge. As judge, he will return from heaven with "power and great glory," as the Son of Man in 1 Enoch 37-71. As this story progresses in the mind of the Jesus character, he progressively loses his poetic distance from the story and slips into the *dramatis persona* of the main character in the story. Thus, he finally achieves the delusional state in which he foresees his tragically painful demise as a triumph, until, of course, those bitter words of reality from the cross, "My God ... why have you forsaken me?" Then "Jesus declared himself to have been finished off, and the head dropping, he gave up the spirit." ⁵

It is important to unpack and illustrate the role of psychological process unfolding in the development

of Jesus' Master Story, in the context of the Master Stories of Judaism and Christianity. This formative process is shaped by the memory and interpretation of key historical events that answer the main question driving the development of the faith, theology, and religion of Judaic and Christian tradition. The question driving the historic Israelite quest, and consequently the quest in which Jesus' story unfolded, was: how is God in history, and what does our history and experience, therefore, mean?

The biblical report on Jesus' answer to that question, in the context of the Israelite vision of history, became the story of the Jesus Movement and of early Christianity. The trajectory of development of rabbinic Judaism seems to have derived from the rational humanism of the Pharisees, while Christianity arose from the other Judaism, namely, the apocalyptic stream and the apocalyptic Jesus Movement that flowed from it. The consequence of these two different sources is the rise of twin

religions, born from the same womb but having radically different psychological tones, styles, objectives, and rationales.⁶

Such narrative constructs, theological formulations, ritual processes, liturgies, and transcendental visions of reality as are fashioned in the Jesus story, are fixed upon by such a charismatic leader as Jesus or by a culture or community in large part because of the psychological need that these formulations and processes fill. They fill these needs by giving meaning, identity, and consolation to that person, community, and culture. These formulations and community visions derive their warrant from the degree to which they meet those individual and communal psychological needs.

This does not preclude the presence of genuine spiritual, transcendental, or transpersonal factors at work in these formulations. Indeed, quite the opposite! The theology and religion of any given

community reflects the key formative psychological factors at work in the initial experience that gave rise to that particular theology and religion, such as the experience and memory of suffering, disempowerment, exile, massive loss, intuitive insight, theophony, theophany, or other real paranormal spiritual experiences. They also reflect the central psychological factors at work in the habitual ways in which the human psyche gives voice to such experiences, such as in the metaphors and myths, or Master Story, in which the memories of the founding experience and person are preserved.

Of the numerous kinds of religious perspectives that have been shaped in important ways by psychological dynamics, one of the more interesting and pervasive in biblical and apocryphal literature is the apocalyptic tradition of postexilic Judaism. This apocalyptic tradition developed innovative ways of envisioning human encounters with the transcendent world and of conceptualizing the nature and presence

of transcendental forces in the history and experience of human communities. These visionary perspectives are evident throughout the Bible. They are rooted mainly in the memory of the perceived divine interventions in the history of the believing community that George Ernest Wright called "The Mighty Acts of God;" particularly as those interventions are reflected in the theology of the Exodus tradition. It is this tradition that shapes much of the religious mainstream in the Hebrew Bible.⁷ I believe that this Exodus tradition is essentially a psychological perspective and that it seeded the eschatological and apocalyptic formulations of postexilic Judaism, including that form of it which became Christianity.

THE CULTURAL, RELIGIOUS, AND PSYCHOLOGICAL CONTEXT OF JESUS⁵ DELUSION

Judaism

As noted above, apocalypticism represents one of two trajectories of postexilic Judaism. The other one is the mainstream tradition of Judaism that matured into the Pharisee-Sadducee and Talmudic traditions. This latter movement produced what we now know as rabbinic Judaism. Of course, it seems that there was a streak of apocalypticism in the thought of the Pharisees, but this seems to have been largely eliminated during the formulation of the Mishnah and the Talmudim.

On the other hand, the apocalyptic tradition led to cloistered and urban Essenism, as well as to the imagery of the preexistent and eschatologically exalted Son of Man tradition in Ezekiel, some of the Psalms, Daniel, and 1 Enoch. This tradition was

adopted by Jesus and the Jesus Movement.⁸ The psychodynamics of this apocalyptic Judaism trajectory reflect the way in which that community processed the loss experiences of the Babylonian exile, in a drive toward a persistence of hope. The achievement of such a hope was necessary for vindicating the transcendental (heavenly) integrity of the faith community in the face of its temporal mundane (earthly) devastation. It accomplished this through use of psychologically significant metaphors and models, and eschatological and apocalyptic figures and trajectories. These thus also came to inform later Christian theology. The main such apocalyptic figure was the Son of Man.

The Exodus tradition dominates the theology and psychology of the Hebrew Bible and became the primary grounding metaphor for both Jewish and Christian scriptures and worldviews. As a result, proto-apocalyptic ways of thinking about the God-human interface are evident throughout the

Hebrew Bible and are rampant in the New Testament. Crucial psychological dynamics can be discerned as gathering continually increasing momentum throughout this long tradition of proto-apocalypticism from the Exodus to the Exile, and from the Exile to the Bar-Kochba collapse of Second Temple Judaism. By *psychological factors* I mean the full range of factors that have to do with the function of the human psyche: all of that which we normally describe as *psychology* and *spirituality*.

In my model, these two words are interchangeable, in the sense that both deal with the full range of the dynamics of the inner person, the self. So for something to be psychological does not reduce it from spiritual or transcendental or transpersonal, but merely means that the event or experience is processed and formulated in terms of how the psyche needs to experience it and how psychology needs to describe that experience. The psychological dimension of that process includes, of

course, all the person-formative psychospiritual defensive dynamics and growth dynamics set in motion by any event or experience.

Such psychological factors in both the cultural setting and in the faith tradition of the biblical and postexilic communities of Judaism are strongly evident. They can be seen, for example, in the metaphors of transcendental deliverance that form the mainstream of the Exodus narrative and its pervasive tradition. We note them as clearly in the theology of the remnant and its suffering servant. These constitute the backdrop for the community's longing for an ultimate eschatological consummation, in which the cosmic conflict, in which God and the believing community are thought to be engaged, will be brought to resolution. Those psychological factors also become the warrant for the persistence or survival of both the hope and the existence of the ancient faith community itself.

Faced with the ultimate depression and confusion attendant upon the destruction of Israel and its exile in the era between 722 and 500 BCE, the persistence of hope and meaning and the psychological survival of the community and its members required a massive re-rationalization of the perceived role of the transcendental forces operating in the daily life and eschatological destiny of the faith community. Their memory and metaphors of the Exodus provided them with the ready-made storehouse of resources for that re-rationalization, and for the persistence of hope and meaning.

In this trajectory of Judaism that produced the Pharisee-Sadducee and rabbinic worldview, transcendental presence or intervention in this world was understood to come through the ministry of divine wisdom (*Hokma*). This personified divine wisdom was initially represented as the source of Israel's deliverance from bondage and the source of

the Torah given on Mt. Sinai. However, by the time of the Talmudim (300-600 CE), the Torah itself was seen as the preexistent divine agent and the transcendent source of divine and human wisdom (*Hokma*). In this model, life and destiny are, therefore, a mundane quest for wisdom: rational and responsible godly living on earth in the here and now.

However, the apocalyptic tradition that developed from the eschatological worldviews of Ezekiel, Daniel, and 1 Enoch produced the Enochic tradition, celebrated especially by the urban and cloistered (Qumran) Essene Sects, Gnostics, and the Jesus Movement. In these models also, transcendental and divine presence manifested itself in history through the presence of divine wisdom (*Hokma* and *Sophia*). In these innovative traditions, however, divine wisdom was manifested in the Son of Man; the Torah being less central and eventually irrelevant. The Gospels have Jesus declaring that in the Son of Man, one superior to Abraham, Moses, Solomon, and even the Torah and

Temple is present in history.

It is interesting that in this apocalyptic tradition, also, divine Wisdom starts out as preexistent and transcendent, manifesting itself on earth in the Son of Man, rather than in Torah. However, as in rabbinic perspective, Torah became preexistent and heavenly, and thus the source of divine and human wisdom; so also in the end the Son of Man became transcendent and preexistent in the apocalyptic Christian tradition, especially in the Gospel of John. In both traditions the world was turned upside down and the product of wisdom became the divine source of wisdom. The Son of Man became the preexistent and divine source of the wisdom of both God and mankind.

The much-discussed character of this Son of Man had at least the following qualities. He was a prophetic figure with a divine call to an earthly ministry. He anticipated a transcendental exaltation, and a cataclysmic eschatological return. In that final

parousia, the world would be judged, history ended, and a new age of the divine reign once and for all introduced. This would constitute and usher in the consummation of the transcendental and transpersonal destiny of humans. This was a re-rationalization of the devastating psychospiritual loss sustained by the community because of Jesus' unanticipated and premature death. That reframing produced a persistent Christian hope and an ultimate vindication of the apocalyptic faith community. Its heavenly destiny was guaranteed, even if its earthly existence was precarious or even terminal.

The psychodynamics of this kind of process involve the special experiences through which any given community and its individual members process and rationalize into an operational model the following kinds of typical experiences: (1) massive loss such as bondage in Egypt, exile in Babylon, or the death of "him whom we thought would be the one to deliver Israel"; (2) meaninglessness resulting from a

lack of a clear sense of God; (3) lack of a clear and consistent life of righteousness and prosperity in the community; (4) depression resulting from diaspora and exile, despair of trying "to sing the Lord's songs in an alien land"; (5) anxiety, fear, guilt, and shame resulting from internalizing the pain of these losses as humans typically do; and (6) efforts toward a persistence of hope against all hope, resulting, for example, in the Jesus Movement in the Easter Faith. To process these driving psychological needs, master them in an operational model, and vindicate the transcendental faith and the integrity of the faith community, these believers formulated apocalyptic metaphors, models, visions, and mythic ideations of a hopeful destiny. They created eschatological apocalyptic figures, trajectories, and consummations that became their faith visions and operational expectations.

Christianity

The enigma of Jesus, in this question of the psychodynamics of apocalyptic faith tradition, is focused by the tension we see between the Low Christology of the Synoptic Gospels, the Jesus story, and the High Christology of the (1) doxological hymns in Colossians 1:15-20 and Philippians 2:5-11, (2) Johannine transcendental theology, and (3) the second- and third-century Eucharistic theology of the church. The problem unfolds in the following picture.

The Son of Man sayings in the Gospels are generally understood to fall into four categories: Son of Man as earthly teacher and healer, Son of Man as suffering servant who dies, Son of Man who is exalted, and Son of Man returning on the clouds in judgment at the end of history as eschatological judge. All of these sayings in the Gospels are always placed in the mouth and only in the mouth of Jesus, and he seldom uses or tolerates any other designation

of himself. All four categories are in Qo except exaltation, provided you grant that the "Son of Man hath not where to lay his head" is in the second category, that is, *logia* about the suffering Son of Man.

The *Sitz im Leben* for all the *logia* in the Gospels, except those that are obvious anachronisms, can be found comfortably and authentically in the literary narrative of the life and work of Jesus as depicted by the Synoptic Gospels. This is a vulnerable point in the argument because the same community that gives us the report of Jesus' Son of Man *logia* is the community that gives us the narrative presenting the *Sitz im Leben*. Therefore, the argument is persuasive only if the evidence for this model is internally consistent, in the end overwhelming, and verifiable on the basis of external evidence.

The second-century and later church did away completely with the biblical meanings of the Son of Man title or phrase, never hung any doctrine or

celebrated truth on it, and never identified with it in any way in its celebration of Jesus. Therefore, it is hard to believe that they would have claimed that this was his self-designation, unless they could not avoid it because it really was his phrase and self-identity in the core story, wherever that came from. It is internally consistent to assume or acknowledge that this really is the self-designation of the original Jesus in that core story, and that it represents a definitional notion he is described as having about his person and role.

It seems likely, given the above, that the concept of the Son of Man progressed and developed in the unfolding of the narrative of his self-consciousness over time so that it came to include all four categories of *logia*. The first phase was that of a man with a ministry of teaching and healing on earth proclaiming the kingdom of God, as did Ezekiel in his role as Son of Man. The second was that of a man in this ministry suffering and dying as Isaiah's Suffering

Servant. The third was that of a man being exalted by God to transcendent status, as Daniel's Son of Man. The fourth was that of a man accorded an apocalyptic and eschatological role as heavenly judge, who descends at the end of history in a *parousia* of a new age, as promised by and for the Son of Man in 1 Enoch.

The first phase could have been the psychological result of Jesus' spiritual consciousness from his early years, focused by the drama of his Baptism. He obviously had a special sense of vocation to proclaim the kingdom of God. This sense of urgency and his consistent antinomianism throughout the narrative of his life and work may be explained, as does Donald Capps, by his having been treated from childhood as an illegitimate child. This would have involved living with the denigration of his mother by the community, and may explain why the story is crafted with the absence of his father.

The narrative in the Gospels suggests that Jesus achieved significant clarity during his retreat in the wilderness immediately after his Baptism. During the temptations in the wilderness, as the story goes, he dissociated himself from the Son of David messianism of the Jerusalem religious authorities, expanding (or reducing) his messianic identity to that of the Son of Man traditions. It is clear from the narrative of the temptations that he struggled with messianic ideas of nearly megalomaniacal proportions: solving the world's problems by feeding the poor with stones turned to bread, captivating humankind with the spectacular psychological manipulation of miraculously jumping harmlessly from the temple parapet, and bowing down to the secular powers so as to become the new Alexander the Great.

The story has him apparently moving psychologically to the second phase, the suffering,

dying, and exalted Son of Man, after the failure of the first mission of the disciples and the abandonment by the multitudes. Then he is depicted as becoming aware of the fact that he was on a collision course with the authorities in Jerusalem. This seems to be a scenario lurking behind the language of Mark 8:27-33.

Assuming this model to be warranted, he can be seen to have moved psychologically to an apocalyptic and eschatological notion of his role and destiny when he realized that his cause was destined to fail. The only way to save himself and his cause, ideologically, would have been to envision himself drawn up into the transcendent status of divine vindication, from which he would descend to bring in the kingdom after all, end history, initiate a new divine era, and demonstrate that he was right and all his detractors were wrong after all.

This description of the Jesus story is vulnerable

to criticism, of course, because it is impossible to sequence chronologically with any precision the four categories of *logia* in the story of Jesus' development. It is difficult to create a narrative sequence that is consistent and has an inherent logical and structural coherence.

If this model is taken as our hypothesis, for the sake of testing it against the data, it must be said at least that neither the Son of Man *logia* nor the exalted eschatology in the Pauline and Deutero-Pauline literature in Colossians and Philippians are merely products of liturgical enthusiasm but reflect a thoughtfully crafted theological worldview present in the Jesus Movement and in the very early church.

If this was the authors' design for Jesus' psychological and theological worldview, and therefore for his self-concept as the main character in the story, progressively developing through all the four

categories, where would he have gotten such a worldview? Why did it produce such a Low Christology in the Synoptic Son of Man sayings and such a High Christology in the Pauline and Johannine literature, as well as in the theology of the second- and third-century church?

According to Boccaccini's *Beyond the Essene Hypothesis*, just such a worldview was available in Enochic Essene Judaism in its various forms. A review of his entire argument is genuinely worthwhile to the student or scholar with special interest in this issue.⁹

According to the rubrics of Occam's Razor, this model hypothesis manages the data better than any of the others available and, therefore, it is imperative to take it seriously. This would imply that inherent to the developing self-concept of the literary character Jesus, conceived in the context of Ezekiel, Daniel 7:13, the Dead Sea Scrolls, and 1 Enoch 37-71, there

were seeds and warrants for the church's subsequent High Christology.

THE HISTORICAL QUEST

Much scholarly energy, time, and money has been invested over the last fifty years to distill from history enough evidence regarding Jesus of Nazareth to discern to what extent this suggested model is historically accurate. A great deal of good has come of this passionate pursuit. However, in the end, the result seems to have produced a much diminished Jesus, literary or historical.

Relevant Judaic Traditions

The Son of Man was well known in Judaic tradition

by the first century CE and thus could be used as a stock-in-trade concept available to Mark and the other crafters of the story in which Jesus is the main character. It had identifiable roots and meanings in that tradition. As indicated above, the first prominent appearance of the title is in the prophecy of Ezekiel, where it is used ninety-three times. Each time, the expression is a formula with which God addressed Ezekiel as a mortal ("So it was that the word of Yahweh came to me, 'Son of Man'" [6:1-2]). Each of the ninety-three times, God called him to prophesy the impending arrival of divine intervention in history and proclaim the advent of God's kingdom on earth.

The second prominent appearance is in Daniel 7-9 in which "one like a Son of Man" (7:13) is exalted to heavenly status, with power and dominion over the earth. This power and dominion is delegated to and exercised by the Son of Man's proxies on

earth, who are called the "people of the holy ones of the Most High" (7:27).

The third significant occurrence of the title Son of Man is in Enoch, in an apocalyptic and eschatological section of that prophecy in which is promised the dramatic advent of the exalted Son of Man as the judge of the earth at the end of time. In 1 Enoch a human being, namely, Enoch himself, is designated as the Son of Man (71:14), exalted to heavenly status, and given his eschatological role. The fourth prominent appearance of a figure with the characteristics Jesus associates with the title Son of Man is in the Thanksgiving Hymns and the War Scroll from Qumran. In those Dead Sea Scrolls, the royal messiah is described as suffering and dying. An argument may also be made for the presence of a virtual Son of Man in 11Q13 Melchizedek, in which the messianic figure expends himself for the salvation of the people of God but does not die.

In the Jesus story of the Synoptic Gospels, these images of the Son of Man-Messiah appear as progressive stages in Jesus' self-concept development. This is also true in the Gospel of John, except that the end of the story as John tells it has Jesus adding a fifth prominent use or construct for the title and for Jesus' identity and vocation. In John's second-century narrative, Jesus is depicted as dissociating himself as Son of Man from the role of eschatological judge and prosecutor. In John's Gospel, the meaning of the term *Son of Man* moves from heavenly messiah and eschatological judge to divine savior. It is in the context of the relevant Judaic pre-Gospel traditions of a progression of Son of Man images that the meaning and use of the term *Son of Man*, as it is placed in the mouth of Jesus, the Jew, must be sought. Only then can we discern what the self-concept of this literary character is intended by his story to be.¹⁰

THE PROGRESSION OF IMAGES IN EZEKIEL *REDIVIVUS*

Marvin A. Sweeney, and before him, Margaret S. Odell¹¹ gave us real assistance here. Odell argued persuasively that the key figure in the drama of the biblical book of Ezekiel is both priest and prophet; and that the story of his call to be a prophet is developed on the framework of the ritual for the ordination of priests in Leviticus 8-9 as well as in Numbers 4 and 8. This fact illustrates that in Ezekiel's life and vocation, his call represents a transition in his identity from the primary vocation of priest to the primary vocation of prophet, though in gaining the latter he does not lose the former. His prophetic role is a new type of unfolding of his priesthood in a setting in which the temple, the holy

city, the holy land, and the holy people are defiled; and thus the authentic priestly rituals can no longer be carried out there.

In *Ezekiel: Zadokite Priest and Visionary Prophet of the Exile*, Sweeney builds upon Odell's argument. He outlines the correspondence in categories of ritual elements in the Levitical ordination of priests and in the story of Ezekiel's prophetic call. Sweeney points out that the entire book of Ezekiel is a progression of the ritual elements of Levitical ordination (Lv 8-9). Careful comparison demonstrates that the Jesus story contains these same ordination-ritual elements, giving strong indication that, at one level, those telling the story in which Jesus is the main character consciously crafted the story in terms of Jesus' Ezekiel-like priestly ordination. In the biblical book of Ezekiel, this ordination process leads to the priest, addressed by God as the Son of Man, being called and ordained as a prophet of the coming reign of God. The ritual factors in Levitical ordination of

priests, the progressive phases in Ezekiel's development as prophet, and their counterparts in the Jesus story are as follows.

Factor One: Ordination at Age Thirty

Levitical priestly ordinands were initiated into the vocation at age thirty and continued for a career, retiring at age fifty (Num 4:3, 23, 30); Ezekiel began his career at age thirty, and his book closes the odyssey when he is age fifty [Ez 1:1). Jesus' ministry began at approximately age thirty, in keeping with the prescription for Levitical priests and the precedent in Ezekiel. This aligns the Jesus of the Gospel narratives with the first notable Son of Man in Judaic tradition.

Factor Two: Ingesting the Divine Gift

Levitical priest ordinands ate the ram of ordination (Lv 8:31). Ezekiel ate the scroll given him by Yahweh (Ez 2:8-3:3), that is, both the Levitical ordinands and Ezekiel digested the sacred gift from God, thereby presumably being equipped for service and thereby receiving the required divine illumination. It is not obvious that Jesus' official call status began with ingesting and digesting a sacred gift from God that equipped him for service. However, two aspects of the biblical record are suggestive and noteworthy here.

First, Mark says that immediately after his Baptism, Jesus was driven by the divine spirit into the wilderness where, for forty days, he was deprived of sustenance except for that which "the angels ministered to him." The forty days of consuming angelic food were the transforming experience that led to Jesus' illumination regarding his call, as was the

digestion of the scroll for Ezekiel and the consecrated ram for the Levitical priest candidates. The sustenance provided by angelic ministrations to Jesus in the wilderness was the counterpart of the eating of the sacred gift by the priestly ordinands and by Ezekiel.

Second, the author of the Apocalypse of John noticed this paradigmatic correspondence between Jesus as the Son of Man and Ezekiel as the Son of Man of Levitical certification. That author noticed the key role of ingesting the divine gift of illumination, the ram or scroll, for in the Johannine Apocalypse, John, the surrogate (1:19) of the one like the Son of Man (1:13) is instructed to eat the scroll proffered by the angel (10:8-11), and the eating and its aftertaste are described in language that is exactly like that in Ezekiel. Moreover, that same surrogate for the Son of Man in the Apocalypse is then instructed to measure the holy city and temple (Rv 11), as Ezekiel is instructed in preparation for the renewed

creation (new heaven and earth—Rv 21:1), a new holy city (the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God—Rv 21:2), and a new temple ("Its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb"—Rv 21:22). Clearly the allusion to Ezekiel and the Levitical paradigm is too striking to ignore regarding Jesus as Son of Man in the Gospel narratives.

Factor Three: Spiritual Retreat

Levitical priest ordinands sat in seclusion for seven days (Lv 8:33). Ezekiel sat in silence among his people for seven days (Ez 3:15). Seven is the first symbolic number to appear in the Hebrew Bible, being the timeframe of creation. The primary symbolic timeframe in the Jesus story is the forty days of silence or seclusion in the wilderness, which initiated Jesus' career as the Son of Man. Jesus'

symbolic time is not seven days but corresponds, instead, to the second most prominent paradigmatic time symbol in the Hebrew Bible, namely, the number forty. There is undoubtedly a conscious relationship between Jesus' forty days in the wilderness receiving the heavenly illumination, and Moses' forty days on Sinai in the wilderness receiving the Torah. The Son of Man in Christian tradition corresponds exactly to the Torah in Rabbinic tradition.

This cannot be unrelated to the forty years of Moses' preparation in the wilderness before his commission to lead the Exodus, and the forty years of the Israelite preparation for their vocation. During this period of sacred time, they were called to the vocation of being the unique and paradigmatic people of the covenant, who were to inherit the divine domain of the Promised Land. The shift from seven to forty cannot be accidental or insignificant, within

the structure of the paradigm, in view of the impending declaration by Jesus that, as Son of Man, he is greater than the Torah, Jonah, Abraham, Moses, and Solomon (Mt 12). Nor does it violate the Levitical model since the outcome is a corresponding symbolic sacred time of preparation for vocation.

Factor Four: Atoning for the Sins of the Multitude

Levitical priest ordinands make atonement for the guilt of the people (Ezekiel bears the guilt of the people although he does not make a formal sacrifice of atonement). Both Ezekiel and Levitical priest candidates symbolically bear the guilt of the people and make symbolic sacrificial atonement in order to purify the temple, city, people, land, and all creation, anticipating God's renewal of all these sacred aspects of the believing community's life. So Jesus, as Son of Man, is represented in the Gospels as destined to

proclaim the impending reign of God, and be sacrificed "for the sins of many." Frequent references are made in the Gospels to the suffering, death, and exaltation of the Son of Man. This is particularly evident in the references to Jesus, as Son of Man, being lifted up, "as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness." Paul speaks of this as the act that will redeem all creation (Rom 8:22 and 1 Cor 15).

These references are clearly not intended merely as references to Jesus' crucifixion but rather to the fact that he is depicted, as Son of Man, to be the symbolic agent of the healing of the people. He will be brought to the attention of the world of needy humans, as was Moses' brass serpent, and as was Ezekiel. Only in the later reflections of the post-Easter church's theology was this notion associated with the crucifixion. Sweeney tells us that Ezekiel is the agent of both the guilt and the atonement of Israel, as he "portrays the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple as a sacrifice that is

designed to purify Jerusalem, the nation of Israel, and creation at large." This same symbolic purification is undoubtedly what Jesus intended in the "cleansing of the temple" (Mt 21). Donald Capps, Paula Fredriksen, and others refer to Jesus' aggression in the temple as a symbolic destruction of the temple, as a mode of its purification, and as a purification of the world.¹²

Factor Five: The Theophany

Levitical priest ordinands were admitted to the sanctuary to see the glory of Yahweh (Lv 9:23). Ezekiel saw the glory of Yahweh as God prepared the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple (Ez 8-11). Ezekiel and the priest candidates experienced a theophany when they were admitted to the sanctuary of the temple. They saw the *Kabod*. Jesus' call to ministry started with such a theophany: "In those days

Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. Immediately coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opened and the Spirit descending upon him like a dove; and a voice came from heaven, saying, *'Thou art my beloved Son; with thee I am well pleased'* " (Mk 1:9-11).

Factor Six: Proclaiming the Kingdom of God

In Ezekiel's time, with temple, holy city, and holy land defiled by foreign invasion and the consequent violation of the sacred places, Ezekiel lived in a foreign place without access to the site of priestly service. He was reduced to living his life in the kind of work and rituals that made *him* impure as well. He ate ordinary food, dressed in ordinary ways, carried out ordinary forms of hygiene, and so was called Son of Man each time God addressed him. In this context the term must have meant "ordinary mortal."

According to the story, God called him as an ordinary mortal, despite his priestly identity and heritage, and commissioned him as a prophet to proclaim the advent of God's reign, his kingdom. Ezekiel, as son of Adam (human being), has to live in an ordinary way in the ordinary world, defiled and impure, waiting for the renewal of the temple, city, land, and people, when God arrives, intervenes, and brings in his reign.

Ezekiel's prophetic role, calling for the renewal of God's domain, people, and reign, fulfills his priestly role as the agent of atonement and redemption. Jesus, likewise, as Son of Adam/Man, perceives himself called to the prophetic role of proclaiming the advent of the kingdom of God. The story places Jesus in the same role and mode as Ezekiel, commissioned to bring in God's reign, and fulfilling his task as agent of the world's renewal and redemption.

Factor Seven: Predicting Destruction of the Holy Places

In reference to factor four above, although Ezekiel did not offer a sacrifice of atonement for the people, despite the fact that this is an important requirement in the ritual of the priest ordinands, Sweeney points out that Ezekiel does, indeed, offer a sacrifice as atonement insofar as he portrays the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple as a sacrifice that is designed to purify Jerusalem, the nation of Israel, and creation at large. This results not only in a transformation of Ezekiel's role as both priest and prophet but in a transformation of all creation as the Jerusalem Temple, the holy center of creation, is destroyed and replaced with a new temple that signals the beginning of a new creation in the aftermath of the Babylonian exile.¹³

While Ezekiel predicts the destruction of the city and temple when God intervenes for the purification of the temple, city, land, and people, Jesus predicts the destruction of the city and temple and then carries out a symbolic purifying destruction of the temple and its ritual. Moreover, he does this with the conscious awareness that he is thereby precipitating the final conflict with the religious authorities who will fulfill his apocalyptic vision of the suffering, dying, and exalted Son of Man. Capps teased out the details of this psychodynamic action of cleansing the temple.¹⁴ Jesus claimed symbolically that his exaltation was the effectual purification of all the sacred aspects of the believing community: "*Destroy this temple and I will rebuild it in three days*" (Jn 2:19). The story has Jesus clearly envisioning that this symbolic act of cleansing the temple, thus precipitating his own death, would lead to the advent of the divine rule on earth. He promised that it would come in the first generation and that it would

be attended by the appearance of the Son of Man reentering the drama on earth by appearing on the clouds of heaven with all the holy angels in the glory of his father, as eschatological judge (Synoptic Gospels) or as savior John's Gospel. This is to be the denouement of the dramatic Jesus story.

So we have here the depiction of a priestly prophet, whose career can be described in terms of these seven ritual factors. This figure is known as and answers to the title Son of Man. It cannot be accidental that the key aiming points in Jesus' career correspond precisely to the Levitical paradigm of ordination that shaped Ezekiel's call to the identity and role of Son of Man. The authors of the Jesus story clearly had Ezekiel and the Levitical paradigm in mind. Therefore, it is obvious that one clear Judaic tradition, written into the Jesus story, is that of the Son of Man image in Ezekiel, a human prophet proclaiming that God's kingdom is in the process of breaking in upon this mundane world.

It is surprising that no one has developed this clear correlation between the Son of Man model in the Gospel narratives, the model in Ezekiel, and the Levitical ordination ritual. Obviously, the first identifiable meaning of *Son of Man* that the Jesus story intends to associate with the literary character of Jesus is that of a human priest/prophet like Ezekiel, who is called to proclaim the impending advent of the reign of God.

However, we have a problem here. Where did the notion come from that having been called as an Ezekiel-type human prophet to proclaim the reign of God on earth, Jesus, as the Son of Man, would move on to envision himself as the suffering and dying Messiah who would eventually find his deliverance and triumphal destiny as an exalted heavenly figure? How could the authors write that into the story and get away with it? Where did they acquire the notion that he would actually *become* the redeeming sacrifice

(Mk 8:31) rather than, as Ezekiel had done, symbolically narrate the purifying atonement in the form of the story of the impending destruction and renewal of the temple and the city? Why do they portray him as going further and talking about a second, third, and fourth phase of the Son of Man odyssey, namely, suffering, dying at the hands of the gentiles, being exalted of God, and returning as the eschatological judge? That is certainly not the Son of Man in Ezekiel. It is the Messiah of a later Judaic tradition, namely, that of the suffering Messiah of Qumran, combined with the Son of Man of Daniel.

THE PROGRESSION OF IMAGES II: THE SUFFERING MESSIAH OF QUMRAN

To the great astonishment of some scholars, there is

no Son of Man at Qumran. That is, the title *Son of Man* is not employed in the rich literature of the Qumran Essene sect. However, some references in the Dead Sea Scrolls seem to offer evidence of a figure and a messianic concept notably similar to Son of Man sayings in the Gospels. This suggests that those Dead Sea Scrolls, which are dated between 400 BCE and 50 BCE, may well have been the sources of the messianic images in the minds of the Gospel writers. They imported those messianic images into the concept of the Son of Man with which Jesus, the literary character, was identified in the literary drama of those Gospels.

The Rule of the Qumran Community and the Synoptic Son of Man

Heinz E. Todt found, in the *Rule of the Community (Serekh ha-Yahad)*} ⁵ IV 25 and IX 11, references to

the actions of a messianic figure like the one in the Son of Man sayings of Matthew 19:28 and as Todt simply noted that the only setting in the Gospels, in which the Qumran notion of a messianic human who moves toward an apotheosis as eschatological judge arises, is in the Son of Man *logia*. Todt points out that in the Markan passage, Son of Man and Messiah are joined. Caiaphas asked Jesus, "Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed?" Jesus' reply was direct: "Again the high priest asked him and said to him, 'Are you the Christ, the son of the Blessed?' Jesus said, *I am; and you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of power, and coming with the clouds of heaven*TM At Qumran and in the Synoptic Gospels, the messianic man is divinely appointed to function as judge, in the sense of separating the righteous from the condemned unrighteous in the eschaton.

The Qumran reference with which Todt joins

this Markan pericope concerns the hope for the endurance of the righteous, "until the prophet comes, and the Messiahs of Aaron and Israel." ¹⁶ Todt claims that this hope for multiple messiahs is refined into a unified messianic hope by the time of the Gospel writers. In the form of the Enochic Essenism that became the Jesus Movement, this unified hope centered in the messianic Son of Man, as it had in the Royal Messiah at Qumran. In the literary drama of the Gospels, Jesus announces that this Son of Man is the figure who is to suffer at the hands of evil men and die, in direct correspondence with the Qumran expectation regarding the Messiah. Thus Todt sees a relationship of concepts between the Royal Messiah of Qumran and the Jesus character of the narratives; a virtual Son of Man of Qumran and a literal Son of Man in the Gospels. Both are suffering and dying messiahs. The Qumran Community does not refer to this figure as the Son of Man but clearly has in mind the same messianic figure as the one for which the

Jesus Movement employed that title, Son of Man, and claimed that it was Jesus' own self-concept.

The War Scroll and the Synoptic Son of Man

George W. E. Nickelsburg developed at length the relationship between Daniel 7 and the Parables of Enoch, with particular emphasis upon the judicial role of the messianic figure.¹⁷ While he distinguished between the judicial role of Michael in Daniel 10 and 12 and the nonjudicial role of the one like a Son of Man in Daniel 7, he nonetheless points out that heavenly enthronement of the one like a Son of Man will involve Israel's earthly supremacy over all the nations. This supremacy is reminiscent of the messianic destiny of Israel in Isaiah 61. While Nickelsburg is in error in supposing that the Son of Man in Daniel is enthroned at any point, he is correct in pointing out that it is this supremacy of

the messianic figure or people that one finds in 1QM XVII:8. Here we read that God will exalt "the dominion of Israel over all flesh "

In Daniel 7, the one like the Son of Man is exalted to heavenly status while both he and his minions on earth, the people of the holy ones of the Most High, are exalted over all mundane kingdoms and powers. Thus the one like the Son of Man becomes the heavenly epitome of the people of the holy ones of the Most High who are on earth, and they become the earthly epitome of the exalted and heavenly Son of Man. In 1 Enoch 69:26-29, however, the Son of Man combines the role of enthronement and judgment, as does the Son of Man in the Synoptic Gospels. The Enochic scene is straightforward. The hosts of heaven witness the exaltation and judgment carried out by the Son of Man. Nickelsburg invites us to hear clearly the strains of the overture played in the Parables of Enoch, which will become the theme of the sonata developed

in the Gospels:

And there was great joy amongst them,
And they blessed and glorified and extolled,
Because the name of that Son of Man had been revealed to them
And he sat on the throne of his glory,
And the command of the judgment was given unto the Son of Man
And he caused the sinners to pass away

And be destroyed from off the face of the earth,
(*or, he shall never pass away or perish from the face of the earth*)

And those who have led the world astray
Shall be bound with chains,
And their ruinous assembly shall be imprisoned
And their works shall vanish from the face of the earth.
And from henceforth there shall be nothing corruptible
For that Son of Man has appeared,
And has seated himself on the throne of his glory,
And all evil shall pass away from before his face,
And the word of that Son of Man shall go forth
And be strong before the Lord of Spirits.

Nickelsburg clearly intimates in his superb article the mutuality of language and concept of this great variety of literatures of Second Temple Judaism associated with the Son of Man as exalted heavenly figure and eschatological judge. One can hardly miss the correlative, if not the literarily genealogical, relationship between these Qumran documents and the Synoptic Gospels. The implication of Nickelsburg's work is that Todt's references to the

messianic expectation and eschatological judgment at Qumran in the *Rule of the Community* is a correlate of the Son of Man ideology in the Parables of Enoch. Thus, while the Dead Sea Scrolls do not name or title a Son of Man, they present the same messianic theology of eschatological judgment that is presented more concretely in 1 Enoch 37-71 (not present at Qumran) where it is given the name, title, and messianic character of the Son of Man. Moreover, it is precisely this Son of Man in 1 Enoch 37-71 and the messianic Suffering Servant-Son of Man in the Jesus story that is the Suffering Servant-Royal Messiah at Qumran.

The Son of Man and the Suffering Servant at Qumran

Israel Knohl¹⁸ has described, at considerably greater length than Todt and Nickelsburg, his argument for a

significant messianic figure(s) in the Dead Sea Scrolls associated in nature and role with the Suffering Servant motif and with eschatological judgment. Knohl is at pains to draw out the implication of his citations from the scrolls even further in relationship to the nature and role of the Son of Man in the Gospel. Knohl finds a surprising Suffering Servant-Messiah who appears in the text of two or three Dead Sea Scrolls and is attested by four or five separate copies.¹⁹

Knohl cites 4QH^C (4Q427) fragment 7, 1QHⁿ column XXVI; and 4Q491 fragment 11, column I. As the H indicates in the first three references these are all from the Hodayot. They are hymns from the Thanksgiving Scroll series. These all belong to the first version of the hymns. The fourth citation is 4Q491 from the *War Scroll* and is a second version of the hymns.²⁰ The main evidence for the first version is found in two rather substantial fragments of 4QH^e.

The relevant text in the first fragment speaks of the messianic figure as beloved of the king who, from the context, seems clearly to be God. This messianic figure, whom God loves, is described as dwelling among the holy ones, though rejected by humanity. The first term, regarding his exaltation by the king, certainly rings with the sounds of Psalms 2, 8, and 110; the second, depicting heavenly transcendence, echoes the strains of Daniel 7-9; and the third, introducing suffering and rejection, seems reminiscent of Isaiah 53. If these references seem a bit tenuous, they are confirmed by the second fragment, which speaks of the messianic figure being despised and enduring evil.

The fragmentary nature of 4QH^e is, of course, troublesome. However, we are fortunate to be able to flesh out virtually the entire document by comparative analysis of all other texts in version one, where "parallel expressions are sometimes preserved in a more complete form."²¹ Moreover, parallels also

exist in version two for most of the relevant citations. For example, 1QH^a speaks of the messianic figure expressing "gentleness to the poor" but being "oppressed" (fragment 16, column III). Similar confirmation is evident for the expressions of divine exaltation of the messianic figure, his assignment to dwell with the angels and the holy ones, his glory, and his role as judge. Knohl reconstructs this section of the first version of the first hymn as follows:

I shall be reckoned with the angels,
My dwelling is in the holy council.
Who... has been despised like me.

And who has been rejected of men like me?
And who compares to me in enduring evil?
No teaching compares to my teaching
For I sit... in heaven.
Who is like me among the angels?
Who would cut off my words?
Who could measure the flow of my lips?
Who can associate with me,
Thus compare with my judgment?
I am the beloved of the king,
A companion of the holy ones...
And to my glory none can compare.

The second version of Hymn 1 has very similar language, as one would expect. Here again we have the messianic figure on an eternal heavenly throne of power. Three times over he is declared to be assigned to the angelic council. None can compare with his glory except the sons of the king. No one has been so exalted. He sits in heaven and none can

accompany him to this unique majestic place. The holy council is his dwelling place. He has been despised, has borne incomparable afflictions, has endured incomparable evil—and he has been glorified. No one is like him, no teaching like his teaching. No one can associate with him or compare with his exercise of judgment.

Hymn 2, version 1, is preserved in 4QIT 7 columns I and II, but this hymn is an exaltation of God and a celebration of his redemptive exaltation of redeemed humans. "Proclaim and say: Great is God who acts wonderfully, for he casts down the haughty spirit so that there is no remnant and lifts up the poor from the dust to the eternal height and to the clouds he magnifies him in stature, and he is with the heavenly beings in the assembly of the community." The second version of Hymn 2 is preserved in a mere fragment (11, column I of 4Q491) but refers to the exaltation of God's Messiah to the heavenly realm with the angels, and to his

being accorded heavenly power.

Of course, as suggested above, it is difficult to miss the specific correspondence between the language of suffering, exaltation, and judgment associated with the Messiah in these messianic hymns and the language of the Son of Man *logia* of the Synoptic Gospels. Indeed, references to this messianic figure fit all three of Bultmann's categories of Son of Man *logia*, as discussed below, but Knohl is particularly interested in category two, the suffering Messiah. It is also obvious how dependent both literary sources, Knohl's Qumran references and the *logia*, are upon Psalms 8:4-6 and 110:1, Isaiah 53:1-12, Daniel 7:13-14 and 26-27, and 1 Enoch 37-71 (particularly 69). The latter is surprising, since 1 Enoch 37-71, as an identifiable text, seems to be totally absent from the Qumran library, as noted above.

What is very suggestive about the associations

made in this discussion thus far is the degree to which the messianic figure referred to in Daniel, in the Similitudes (Parables) of Enoch, and in the gospels of the New Testament, is like the Messiah of Qumran (the Hodayot, War Scroll, and Rule of the Community). Thus the important point here lies in that evidence which strongly relates the suffering messianic figure at Qumran with the similar suffering messianic figure of the Synoptic Gospels known as the Son of Man, though the community of Qumran did not employ that title. So there is a remarkable correspondence of language, concept, and content between the Suffering Servant at Qumran and the suffering and dying Messiah Son of Man in the Synoptic Gospels; and between the ultimate heavenly exaltation and enthronement as judge of the Suffering Servant in both traditions.²²

Who Is the Suffering Messiah at Qumran?

John J. Collins argues that the identity of the speaker in the Qumran hymn is not the Teacher of Righteousness nor a composite figure representing die righteous community, Daniel's people of the holy ones of the Most High; but rather an individual author whose identity is a mystery.²³ Knohl argues on the basis of a conjunction of references in the *Oracle of Hystaspes*; die biblical book of Revelation, the *Assumption of Moses*, and Roman history that the two messianic leaders killed in the streets of Jerusalem in 4 BCE by the Romans under Caesar Augustus were the Royal and the Priestly Messiahs for whom the Qumran Community had been looking; and that one of these was the speaker in the messianic Hymns of Thanksgiving. Since the speaker refers to being exalted to a throne, Knohl concludes it was die Royal Messiah who gave us the hymns:

As the two messianic leaders were killed in 4 BCE they surely were active in the period previous to that year, that is, during the reign of King Herod (37-4 BCE).... All four copies of the messianic hymns were written precisely at that period. One can, therefore, assume that one of the two Messiahs killed in 4 BCE was the hero of the messianic hymns from Qumran. The hero of the hymns did not have any priestly attributes; on the other hand, he spoke of sitting on a "throne of power" and mentioned a crown. From this we may deduce he was the royal Messiah.²⁴

By order of the authorities, the two slain religious figures were left unburied in the city streets for three days, after which they disappeared, leading their disciples to believe that they had risen to life and ascended to heaven, as the Royal Messiah in the hymns promised. As the messianic figure in the

hymns had appropriated to himself the character and role of the Suffering Servant of Isaiah, so also had he appropriated to himself the exaltation of Isaiah 52:13, "Behold, my servant shall prosper, he shall be exalted and lifted up, and shall be very high." At the time of the murder of the messianic figures, his disciples took the abusive neglect of his body in the streets as a reason to appropriate to him also Isaiah 53:9 and 12:

They made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth. Therefore I will divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he poured out his soul to death, and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

It was a short leap, in the minds of the disciples of the Qumran Messiahs, from this Isaianic notion,

to fashioning an association between the disappearance of the corpse and resurrection and ascension to the heavenly enthronement, which the author of the Thanksgiving Hymns had anticipated and promised.

Knohl sees the outcome of this historic event in Roman history to have been of great significance and relevance to the Qumran Community and its literature.

Thus after the Messiah's death his believers created a "catastrophic" ideology. The rejection of the Messiah, his humiliation, and his death were thought to have been foretold in the Scriptures and to be necessary stages in the process of redemption. The disciples [of the Qumran Messiahs] believed that the humiliated and pierced Messiah had been resurrected after three days and that he was due to reappear on earth as redeemer, victor, and judge.

Daniel prophesied that the fourth beast would be destroyed and the kingdom would be given to the "Son of Man," whom Daniel described as sitting on a heavenly throne and as coming in the clouds of heaven. The disciples and followers of the Qumranic Messiah believed that he had been resurrected after three days and had risen to heaven in a cloud. He now sat in heaven as he had described himself in his vision—on a "throne of power in the angelic council." Eventually he would return, descending from above with the clouds of heaven, surrounded by angels. The time would then have come for the overthrow of the fourth beast—Rome—and the Messiah would thus fulfill Daniel's vision of the "son of man." ²⁵

Knohl points out that this is the first time in Israelite history that the notion of catastrophic messianism is introduced, in which "the humiliation, rejection, and death of the Messiah were regarded as

an inseparable part of the redemptive process" and of his exaltation, enthronement, and ultimate apotheosis as divine judge.²⁶

Why the Suffering Servant and Messianic Judge,
Not the Son of Man at Qumran?

The enigma in all of this lies in one question: why do the Qumran texts not employ the Enochic term *Son of Man* to refer to their messianic eschatological judge, or to their suffering, dying, exalted, and enthroned Messiah, in the manner in which the Synoptic Gospels refer to him? The Qumran Community's model of the suffering and dying Messiah who was to become the Eschatological Judge lay close in time, concept, geography, and sociopolitical setting, to the Son of Man *logia* of the Synoptic Gospels. Both communities depended heavily upon the Enochic tradition. The Son of Man

figure was prominent under that title in that Enochic tradition. The Daniel narrative about heavenly exaltation of the Son of Man similarly shaped both the Qumranic and Jesus Movement expectations. Why is the suffering messianic eschatological judge of Qumran not called by the standard title? It seems likely that the writers saw the connection between Jesus and the Qumran model of the suffering, dying, and exalted Messiah, and had good reason to integrate those characteristics into their model of Jesus' self-concept as Son of Man. Why the difference between the two apocalyptic communities?

In his erudite and incisive chapter on the "The Schism between Qumran and Enochic Judaism," Gabriele Boccaccini emphasizes that there are two types of documents in the Dead Sea Scrolls: those common to Essenes both within and outside of Qumran and those unique to Qumran.²⁷ The former are pre-sectarian or extra-sectarian and remained normative for the urban Essenes, while the latter are

sectarian in character and chronology, and exclusive to Qumran. Thus, prior to the cloistering of the Qumran Essenes, the Halakhic Letter, Dream Visions, Jubilees, the Temple Scroll, the Proto-Epistle of Enoch, and the Damascus Document (CD) were theologically determinative in the thought systems and practice of all Essene communities. CD states that God calls his righteous people to separate themselves from the world and declares, surprisingly, that God has not elected all of Israel, but only a remnant, to salvation.

However, like the other documents listed, CD provides for a certain degree of free will exercised by humans and sub-divine heavenly beings. Thus the strict supralapsarian determinism of the sectarian documents at Qumran was not standard in Essenism before and outside of Qumran. That Qumranic doctrine of determinism, Boccaccini argues, made no room for any freedom of will on the part of humans, or of the "fallen angels" who were seen as the source

of evil in the world. Moreover, the Parables of Enoch, which elaborate the Danielic tradition of the exalted Son of Man, since they were not present at Qumran, must have been an addition to the Essene literature outside of Qumran among the urban Essenes. They must have been produced after the cloistering of the sectarian community. This is a critical fact in the argument because the Parables (Similitudes) clearly speak against the Qumranic notion of supralapsarian determinism, as do other facets of 1 Enoch:

The Epistle of Enoch does not simply lack specific Qumranic elements, it has specific anti-Qumranic elements. The most obvious is 1 En 98:4. The passage explicitly condemns those who state that since human beings are victims of a corrupted universe, they are not responsible for the sins they commit, and they blame others (God or the evil angels) for having exported "sin" into the world. "I have sworn unto you, sinners: In the same manner

that a mountain has never turned into a servant, nor shall a hill (ever) become a maidservant or a woman; likewise, neither has sin been exported into the world. It is the people who have themselves invented it. And those who commit it shall come under a great curse" (98:4).²⁸

In the sectarian documents unique to Qumran, evil is transcendent and supralapsarian in both source and remedy: a state of affairs preset by God from the beginning by election of some to righteousness and others to damnation. In the urban Essene movement, salvation from evil is accomplished by a divine salvific intervention, for which a Son of Man, like the one in Daniel, would be an adequate resource, when he descends as judge to separate the righteous from the unrighteous. Boccaccini points out that the cosmic tragedy, induced by fallen angels (Sons of God who cavorted with the daughters of men, Gn 6), requires more than a human or angelic savior since in order to

subdue the evil powers, such a judge or redeemer must have power superior to that of those angels who brought evil into the world. The exaltation of the Son of Man to the heavenly enthronement, in the Enochic tradition outside Qumran, places the Son of Man above the angels in power and glory. Thus, in Enochic literature outside Qumran, the Son of Man is empowered by God to bring the ultimate resolution to life, history, and evil, at his advent as eschatological judge. The Parables of Enoch were part of the urban Essene theological tradition, not the tradition of Qumran.

Among the Essenes outside Qumran, one can willfully choose a righteous life: "The boundaries between the chosen and the wicked remain permeable. The door to salvation, which the Damascus Document kept open only for a limited period of time and which the sectarian documents [at Qumran] barred from the beginning for those who have not been chosen by God, will be open until the very last

moment."²⁹

The most distinctive quality of this extra-Qumranic Essene model lies in the fact that humans can contribute to their legitimate inclusion in the community of the elect by willfully conducting their lives as the righteous ones, the people of the holy ones of the Most High. There is no possibility of such human action in will or deed at Qumran. There, all is preset from eternity. God has preset the destiny of the elect and the reprobate. There is no room for one's volitional choice to live in complicity with evil or in identification with the righteousness of God, as one of the people of the holy ones of the Most High. One has only one's preset destiny. So at Qumran there is no place for a Son of Man, as redemptive messianic figure or as messianic eschatological judge. God is the only judge, and he made the final judgment by a supralapsarian act at the time that he decided to create the world and humanity in it. Both salvation and judgment,

therefore, are already past. They will not come at the end of time. There is no role for the Son of Man:

The Qumran community did not become less apocalyptic, if we consider its roots and worldview; but it certainly became less Enochic the further it parted from the parallel development of mainstream Enochic Judaism since the first century BCE. Therefore, the decreasing influence of Enochic literature on the sectarian texts is by no means surprising; it is the logical consequence of the schism between Qumran and Enochic Judaism.³⁰

Why the Suffering Messiah at Qumran?

Knohl offers an intriguing rationale in his "Sherlock Holmes" narrative. He asserts that the Royal Messiah who produced the messianic hymns at Qumran was promoting a notion that ran counter to the orthodox

doctrine of the community. His idea of a suffering Messiah, who would redeem and preserve the community of the righteous, was an attempt to recover a pre-sectarian biblical doctrine. He associated the suffering Messiah as exalted judge with Psalms 2, 8, and 110; Daniel 7; and Isaiah 52:13 and 53.

His doctrine was heretical at Qumran. This caused the unusual condition of the manuscripts of the hymns as we have them. Knohl suggests that normal aging, decay, or environmental conditions were not the cause of these manuscripts' being in fragments. Other manuscripts were discovered in fragments in the caves at Qumran because their clay containers had been menaced, damaged, or destroyed. The main manuscript of this edition of the hymns was found in its jar, undisturbed, but carefully and intentionally torn into rather large pieces and then stored.³¹

Knohl judges that this tells us an important story. This edition of the manuscripts was suppressed at

Qumran. It was torn into pieces with careful intentionality. The pieces were preserved by one of the heretical messiah's devotees, who carefully and surreptitiously placed these pieces in the clay jars in the caves, along with the rest of the library. It would have been impossible to employ the term *Son of Man* at Qumran. It had neither credence nor currency and would have made the heresy extremely obvious and unnecessarily offensive, "sticking it into the face of the authorities" of the esoteric supralapsarian community. This scenario, despite its speculative quality, is possible. Whether one can declare that it is probable requires further evidence confirming that there was the type of heretical movement at Qumran that Knohl proposes as the key to his argument.

If this speculative theory is true, in a suppressed text of the Dead Sea Scrolls library three key factors conspire to form a single historical datum that is eminently relevant to Jesus as he was fashioned into the Son of Man character in the Gospels. First, we

have at Qumran a messianic figure who speaks of his role as that of proclaiming the kingdom of God, Bultmann's first category of Son of Man *logia* in the Gospels. Second, Qumran presents a messianic figure who is suffering, dying, and then exalted by God to the status of a heavenly figure, Bultmann's second category. Finally, the Hodayot and the War Scroll present a Messiah who takes up the role of eschatological judge, Bultmann's third category. Thus we have at Qumran a *virtual* Son of Man, like the *literal* Son of Man in the Jesus Movement, and its gospel narratives.

If Knohl's argument holds water, Jesus, the literary character who traverses the pages of the canonical Gospels, internalized as the second phase of his personal identity development an Essene concept of a suffering and dying Messiah (Mt 12:40, 17:12, 17:22) that had already existed for some time in a heretical form of Qumran Essenism; and Jesus, as literary character, is depicted as having identified with

the Son of Man of 1 Enoch, Daniel, and Ezekiel.

THE PROGRESSION OF IMAGES III: DANIEL'S VISION

The Exalted Son of Man in Daniel is remarkable in many ways. Daniel reports a vision in which "one like a Son of Man was introduced to the Ancient of Days in heaven." Scholars generally agree that the term *Son of Man* in 7:13 means a human being or mortal, as in Ezekiel. He is called and presented before God.³² Contrary to events in Ezekiel, this man is accorded a place of high honor next to God himself. He is given power, dominion, judgment, and responsibility to bring down the evil kingdoms and empires operating on earth. The Son of Man in this model functions as a political and military chief of staff to the Most High, hence his permanent status in heaven at the throne of God. However, through his mundane field forces, he carries out operations on

earth to accomplish the objectives of his mandate. His power, dominion, judgment, and responsibility are delegated to the people of the holy ones of the Most High, his action agents or field forces who subdue evil and bring in the divine reign on earth.

It seems quite clear that Jesus had just this picture in the back of his mind when he spoke to Nathanael in John 1:51, declaring that Nathanael and the multitude would see heaven opened and the angels ascending and descending upon the Son of Man. With assiduous intentionality, Jesus is identified here as the Son of Man Messiah and not the Son of David Messiah, making clear and certain that he is the Son of Man of heavenly status. Obviously Jesus' third stage of self-image development as Son of Man depends upon Daniel. In the Gospel stories he is of the human and mortal. He is also a heavenly being whose divinity and transcendent destiny has already been described (Jn 1:1-3). His presence on earth belies his heavenly

status and proper locus.³³

At this point Jesus is described as the exalted Son of Man, despite the impending season of suffering on earth. He has come to believe that Daniel prophesied of him. Though the mission of the disciples to proclaim the advent of the kingdom of God has failed, and the multitudes have left in despair and disinterest, from his impending heavenly status, after suffering and exaltation, he will direct the field operations on earth that will bring in the reign of God. He has failed to do it on earth because he has been opposed by the religious and political authorities, but he will triumph and those who opposed him and killed him will be surprised in the end to see the tables turned.

Obviously the Jesus in the story is moving to an increasingly apocalyptic perspective of himself and his understanding of what it means for him to be the Son of Man. He began as a human being like Ezekiel, proclaiming the coming of God's reign on

earth. By Mark 8, and the failure of the first naive mission of kingdom proclamation, he moved the apocalyptic metaphor up a few notches, announcing his impending suffering and death at the hands of wicked men. This is a move from Ezekiel to the Qumran Essenes' suffering Messiah of the Hodayot, the Serekh ha-Yahad, and the War Scroll.

Almost within the same breath, the horizon is raised again. We hear the promise that the Son of Man will be mightily exalted as the Son of Man of Daniel. The apocalyptic vision has enlarged and become both cosmic and transcendental. The mundane and heavenly worlds of the apocalyptic vision are coalescing in the exaltation of the messianic Son of Man to his status as divinely ordained chief of staff of kingdom operations. In this exalted role, he will join earth and heaven in the endeavor to bring in God's kingdom. He will recruit the hosts of heaven and the people of the holy ones of the Most High on earth for this grand and

inevitably victorious offensive. They will see heaven open and the angels ascending and descending upon the Son of Man (Jn 1:5 1).

THE PROGRESSION OF IMAGES

IV: 1 ENOCH 37-71

Scholars of the Son of Man issue have long associated this title, given to Jesus by the gospel writers, with the passage in Daniel just discussed. Recently, however, more attention has been given to the relationship between the Son of Man in the Parables of Enoch and Jesus as Son of Man in the Synoptic Gospels. The Parables, with their articulate, apocalyptic Essene perspective, offer an essential component for interpreting the distinctive way the Synoptic Gospels elaborate the fourth stage in the development of the Jesus Son of Man motif.

Clearly Jesus, as a literary character, came on the scene as an Ezekiel-like prophet, proclaiming the advent of God's reign on earth. The narrative soon thereafter presents Jesus as the Suffering Servant of Qumran, as establishing the divine reign on earth. Relatively quickly in the Gospel story, we see Jesus emphasizing, as his vision of himself, the exalted Son of Man of Daniel. The second and third phases of Jesus' self-image development arise as a result of the failure of the mission to bring in the divine reign. Obviously, the Gospel narratives present Jesus' as (1) sensing his mission running into trouble, as (2) becoming increasingly aware of a collision course with the authorities, and as (3) perceiving that a catastrophic impasse is more and more inevitable. His response at each point was to move his self-concept increasingly toward a mythic and magical destiny. The self-image of the confident man proclaiming the divine reign shifted to that of the suffering Messiah, who then became the divinely exalted and vindicated

Son of Man in this Gospel scenario.

The fourth phase seems to have become full-blown when he finally found himself standing before Caiaphas and Pilate. There he raises the mythic imagination of the apocalyptic vision one step higher. Before Caiaphas, he envisions himself as the Son of Man of 1 Enoch who leaves his transcendent "enthronement" and returns to earth on the clouds of heaven as the Eschatological Judge. Before Pilate, he declares that the kingdom he was trying to establish on earth is a kingdom that he at long-last realizes is not of this world: "Jesus answered, *My kingdom is not of this world; if my kingship were of this world, my servants would fight so that I might not be handed over to the Jews; but my kingdom is not of the world*" (Jn 18:36). It is transcendental and has a spiritual component that resides in the inner selves of those with allegiance to him ("*The kingdom of God is within and among you*" [Lk 17:21]).

As Jesus moved further toward the impasse with the authorities, it dawned on him that he had set himself on a totally destructive trajectory of hopeless defeat. The only hope for salvaging himself, his reputation, and his project was to move it to a divine, magical, transcendent, and spiritualized plane. The model of the Son of Man in Daniel gave him such a transcendental Son of Man. God had exalted and commissioned that one to bring in the divine reign on earth, and to do it from his remote heavenly locus. The Son of Man in 1 Enoch reinforced that model. So the Jesus of the story perceived that he could not lose, even if defeated and killed on earth, so long as it was certain that God's purposes guaranteed his ultimate exaltation; particularly when it meant that all those who opposed the Son of Man on earth would be shown up for the ultimately defeated scoundrels that they really were.

So it should not be a surprise to us that this

fourth phase of the progression of images should be the apocalyptic eschatological picture from 1 Enoch. The Son of Man of the Parables of Enoch offered a model of the Son of Man being manifested in his heavenly status, and setting things right in God's domain, as the Judge at the eschaton. Enoch 38:3ff uses the term *the Righteous One* as a designation of the Son of Man and prophesies that when "the secrets of the Righteous One are revealed, he shall judge the sinners." In 1 Enoch 61:8ff, the Son of Man is referred to as the Elect One, a frequently recurring title for him in the Parables of Enoch. God, the Lord of the Spirits,

placed the Elect One on the throne of glory; and he shall judge all the works of the holy ones in heaven above, weighing in the balance their deeds. And when he shall lift up his countenance in order to judge the secret ways of theirs, by the word of the name of the Lord of the Spirits, and their

conduct, by the method of the righteous judgment of the Lord of the Spirits, then they shall all speak with one voice, blessing, glorifying, extolling, sanctifying the name of the Lord of the Spirits.

The consequences of this judgment by the Son of Man are explicated where we read, "Open your eyes and lift up your eyebrows, if you are able to recognize the Elect One!" The narrative continues, describing the day of judgment for the kings, governors, high officials, and landlords:

One half portion of them shall glance at the other half; they shall be terrified and dejected; and pain shall seize them when they see that Son of Man sitting on the throne of his glory On that day, all the kings, the governors, the high officials, and those who rule the earth shall fall down before him on their faces, and worship and raise their hopes in that Son of Man; they shall beg and plead for

mercy at his feet. But the Lord of the Spirits himself will cause them to be frantic, so that they shall rush and depart from his presence. So he will deliver them to the angels for punishments in order that vengeance shall be executed on them, oppressors of his children and his elect ones.

The consummation of the judgment by the Son of Man is going to be joy in heaven. In 69:27ff, Enoch tells us of the Son of Man who executes the judgment of God upon the earth at the end of time, exterminating all evil and evil ones, gathering the righteous of God into the community of God's reign, and causing blessing, glorifying, and extolling to be offered the Lord of the Spirits. This is "on account of the fact that the name of that (Son of) Man was revealed to them. Thenceforth nothing that is corruptible shall be found; for that Son of Man has appeared and has seated himself upon the throne of his glory; and all evil shall disappear from before his face."

One can imagine the enormous renewal of hope and meaning the literary character, Jesus, is represented as experiencing in his own sense of self, as he stood condemned before Caiaphas, and yet was able to internalize this triumphal vision of 1 Enoch and of his own destiny as the Son of Man and Eschatological Judge. He would return on the clouds of heaven, with all the holy angels, in the power and great glory of God, finally vindicated and prepared to exterminate his adversaries. This triumphalist vision holds up for him all the way to the very last minutes on the cross. At that last moment he loses his grip on his delusional drama and is thrust painfully into reality—the reality of his death.

So the Jesus of the dramatic Gospel narrative is characterized by the Synoptic Gospel authors as building his own role and self-image, as he progressed along the explorative pilgrimage of his life. He was doing life, and fashioning its shape, right in the middle

of the action of living. This was the journey of living out what he increasingly perceived to be his divinely ordered destiny. So Jesus, the Jew, identified himself as the Son of Man of Judaic tradition. He began his ministry believing he was, like Ezekiel, a human Son of Man called to a prophetic role of proclaiming the impending advent of the reign of God on earth. When his mission failed, he ratcheted up his self-image as Son of Man a number of notches to the role of the Suffering Servant-Messiah from the Qumran heresy of the Hodayot and the War Scroll, foreseeing the impasse with the Jewish religious authorities for which he seemed to be headed.

As the trajectory of his conflict with the power people in Jerusalem and with the audiences in Galilee progressed toward open opposition, Jesus realized this collision course would lead to his death. Nonetheless, he developed the transcendental vision that God would vindicate him by exaltation to a

heavenly status similar to that of the Son of Man in Daniel. In the final moments of his life, when he was inescapably a prisoner of the Jewish and Roman authorities, he escalated his vision of what it meant to be the Son of Man to the point of seeing himself in the role of Eschatological Judge who would return on the clouds of heaven on the last day and gather the righteous, exterminating the wicked. As this progress became increasingly lethal, Jesus, as literary character in this drama, moved along in a composite Son of Man mythology, until he was captivated and captured by it.

There is great psychological strength and empowerment in such a mythic vision of one's destiny, in the face of the vicissitudes, failures, and irresolvable impasses of life. The psychology of projection makes it possible for a person in a difficult moment in life's travail to identify with an idealized figure or mentor to such a degree as to internalize the

person and identity of that heroic figure. Capps refers to this as the process in which a person like Jesus develops into a Active character through fashioning his Master Story by identification with a heroic and somewhat mythic figure.³⁴ Surely it is the inebriating power of this transcendent vision of self as the Son of Man that empowered Jesus in his dramatic role.

It gave him the strength and narcissistic confidence to violate the temple and disrupt the legal enterprise of the money changers, a perfectly innocent business of great help to pilgrims from the provinces. He is depicted as carrying out this violation of the temple, consciously and intentionally, in the face of his inevitable defeat by the authorities in Jerusalem. He did it boldly in the face of the fact that he was throwing down the gauntlet in a final form of provocation that he knew would precipitate his death.

Earlier in Galilee his brothers tried to provoke him to go up to the feast in Jerusalem. He insisted that he would not go to the Passover that year because of the hostility of the authorities (Jn 7:1-9; Mt 20:17-19). After a few days of reflection, the brothers having gone on ahead, he suddenly changed his mind. With determination, he "steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem" (Lk 9:5; Jn 7:10). Arriving there, he apparently decided that what he was to do he would do quickly, moving toward his heavenly exaltation as a Danielic Son of Man. So he precipitated his death by violating the holy places.

This gives meaning to his remark to Judas at the Last Supper, "*What you must do, do quickly.*" It also affords some credence to the notion in the Gospel of Judas that he and Jesus had a private scheme to quickly effect Jesus' exaltation by provoking the authorities to take him. Apparently Judas thought this would provoke the rise of a popular revolution, while

Jesus had already moved to the vision of a heavenly exaltation. Judas was surprised and lethally disappointed by Jesus' nonresistance in Gethsemane and by his passive complicity in the legal actions against him.

CONCLUSION

Jesus progressively identified himself with the lead character in his own apocalyptic drama and then lost his footing; lost all poetic distance from his role. He internalized that lead figure as his own real self, completing in his own person the development of the character in the story. By this point in the drama, Jesus had moved sure-footedly into the delusion of his mythic Son of Man drama. How pathetic and heart wrenching, therefore, the words of graphic reality bursting upon him finally, at the end: "*My*

God\ my God\ why have you forsaken me?" It is no wonder that by the beginning of the second century, this tragic vision of the Son of Man had been revised by the Fourth Gospel to eliminate the notion of the triumphalistic Eschatological Judge. John turned Jesus, as Son of Man, into the Suffering Servant-Redeemer. John's Heavenly Messiah became the Divine Savior?

After rehearsing in detail how the sources developed the Jesus character in their dramatic narratives, it is necessary to ask what it might have been about the historical Jesus, if there was one at all, that made it possible to generate such a remarkable literary work around him as the main character. The thing that has functioned throughout history as the source of consolation and hope for perplexed humanity is not the historical Jesus, but the literary character of Jesus that we have in the Gospels. This literary character is sufficiently

developed to carry the enormous symbolic drama of transcendent idealism, personal endurance, consummate faith, religious certitude, vibrant human spirituality, and triumphal hope, with which we have loaded him. The myth is both the medium and message.

By those meanings he has carried the human community through prosperity and adversity, triumph and tragedy, pleasure and pain, through life and death. This notion of him has sustained an innumerable multitude of believers in the Christian gospel of divine grace. What was it about him that could generate such a resilient force for good, despite his obviously delusional sense of reality and his endgame of triumphalistic tragedy?

Schweitzer's resort to a thoroughgoing eschatology was an escape from the bite of that delusional reality. He effected that slight of hand by shifting Jesus' delusional vision from his reality regarding this mun-

dane world to a supernatiiralized world of reality in some transcendental world to come. Charles R. Joy informs lis that the insights that constituted the core of Schweitzer's conclusions came to him during military maneuvers in Germany and "changed the whole course of Schweitzer's thinking, and in so doing changed the whole course of modern theology."³⁵ He reported Schweitzer as declaring, "When I reached home after the maneuvers, entirely new horizons had opened themselves to me. Of this I was certain: that Jesus had announced no kingdom that was to be founded and realized in the natural world by himself and the believers, but one that was to be expected as coming with the almost immediate dawn of a supernatural age."³⁶

Joy continues his observation regarding Schweitzer's new-found convictions and Christological perspective: "He himself was sure that Jesus was completely sane. That Jesus existed, that he shared the Messianic ideas of late Judaism, that he who was

really a descendant of David had come to believe that in the world to come he was destined to be the Messiah, are in no rational sense evidences of mental disease."³⁷

The authentic warrant for any religion is: "Will it bury your child?" For twenty centuries the mythic drama of Jesus of Nazareth empowered tragically grieving parents to stand at the brink of an empty grave and gently lower their lost child into it—and have some meaning left in life. It empowered them to survive, go on, love again, live again, and hope again. That mythic drama also empowered civilizations, generating the grandest idealism and the most majestic creations of beauty. It was not the historical Jesus who did that. It was the literary character of Jesus, from the narrative drama of the Gospels and from the confessional myths and transcendental vision made of it.

What did the man, if there was a man, behind

that story have that made that drama and its myth so vitalizing? That the myth is powerful and empowering is no mystery We see and know it in operational practicality every day. But what was it about that historic Son of Man (*bar enosh, ben Adam*), real or imagined, behind the literary character that made it possible for him to generate and carry the transcendental weight and power of that myth? That will forever be the most intriguing question and the most unsolvable mystery.

EPILOGUE

THE CANONICAL-HISTORICAL JESUS

R. Joseph Hoffmann

With the thunderous exception of the canonical version of Luke's Gospel, the historicity of Jesus is not a question for the New Testament writers. I suggest that his historical existence cannot be established and cannot be confuted on the basis of the literary remains we possess from the late first and early second century. The radical myth school of the nineteenth century that advocated non-historicity and the view that serious scholarship is no longer

interested in the question mark the extremes. However, the question that dominates early Christian discussion, the question through which the question of the historicity of Jesus emerges in later discussion, is fundamentally theological: the question of his humanity.

My argument in this modest essay is that while we cannot know for certain very much about a historical Jesus, not even for certain whether he existed, we can reconstruct fairly exactly the theological conditions under which his historical existence became indispensable for Christian theology. This being so, the question of the selection of books that were useful in the pitched battles between two views of Jesus—call them spiritual and earthly—is central, not anterior, to the question we call historicity.

When we think of the chronology of events that led to the development of the New Testament, we

usually think of the canon in its final position. The making of the church's book is regarded as the last act, so to speak, in the compilation of letters, short stories, an apocalypse, and Gospels that make up the collection. The way scholars and theologians have traditionally spoken about the canon suggests that it has almost nothing to do with the subject matter of the whole, but that its wholeness determines the permissible limits of the subject matter. That it is, in some sense, an executive decision imposed on unruly members. If Jesus is the protagonist of the Gospels, the saving presence that inspires Paul's letters, the heavenly king of Revelation, he is, in some strange way, missing from the concept of a canon. That is because a canon is a selection of books thought to be authoritative and complete. In Greek the word implies a hard and inflexible instrument used for writing, and its closest Latin equivalent is *regula*, from which we get words like ruler and rule—a standard against which other things must be judged. The canon

as it is traditionally understood regulates what can be regarded as trustworthy, or to use a term manufactured by the church fathers, apostolic.

* * #

The theory that has dominated New Testament scholarship until relatively recently has run something like this. The historical Jesus was enshrined in memories about his life, words, and work. This would have happened before his death and the process would have accelerated following his death, especially if his death was interpreted as a martyrdom, or otherwise thought to have significant consequences.

Of these memories (without prejudice to their historicity), the event of his Resurrection was the

most prominent, for obvious reasons. The memory, embedded in oral traditions about Jesus, was not fixed and final; it moved from mouth to ear, community to community. It became affixed to local traditions—the Jesus of Rome was not in every detail the Jesus of Antioch or Anatolia. The Jesus of Mark is not the Jesus of the Fourth Gospel. Scholars for the last century have described the variance in these memories as trajectories or lines of tradition rather than as a single tradition arising from a single source. Various Jesus quests and other Jesus projects have made it their business to bring the trajectories as close as possible to a defining event, and this defining event is assumed to be historical.

In time, recorders of the traditions arose. We think they worked in the service of a movement (communities of believers), not as simple biographers, and that their work was closely attached to preaching and propaganda. They recorded things Jesus was said to have said, and said to have done. Their words were

not coherent biographies, but more of the order of *aides memoires* or collections of sayings, reminiscences. They were not, as far as we can determine, transcriptional—that is, based on direct knowledge, though later, for apologetic reasons, the concept of witness and successions of witnesses becomes prominent. The assured authority these writings lacked at the point of their composition is imposed by later writers in debates about what constitutes right belief or orthodoxy.

Some early communities seem to have possessed a class of prophets—women and men believed to be able to recall the words of Jesus on a number of topics, ranging from divorce to paying taxes to the unimportance of worldly goods and duties towards neighbors and enemies. Other strands envisioned Jesus pronouncing on the end of days and God's judgment. Others envisioned him as a teacher of aphoristic wisdom and a revealer sent by God to preach,

essentially, a message about his heavenly origins. This last strand tended to portray Jesus as a relatively obscure figure whose sayings were mysterious and limited to a kind of spiritual elite, as in the Fourth Gospel. But even in the so-called Synoptic Gospels, this strand is present with the role of the elite being played by apostles whose minds have been clouded by earthly concerns. Since the mid-twentieth century it has been convenient if not exact to call this strand "Gnostic." Gnosticism was not one thing, however, but many things; even Irenaeus, who made bashing Gnostics a fine art, compares them to weeds.

To be brief, however: at some point at the end of the first century and continuing well into the second, Gospels appear, as do letters from missionaries, apocalypses both Christian and adopted, books of oracles, stories of the apostles and their miraculous feats. (One of the remarkable things about this development is the sheer increase of letters ascribed

to "the apostles" and women followers of Jesus' day, some seventy-five years and more after the death of Jesus.) As in the study of secular literature, scholars recognize these variant literary forms as genres or types, each type serving a slightly different confessional purpose but all tending to support the interests of Christian communities in knowing who Jesus was, what he said, what he had come to do.

Different communities said different things, however. The most heavily Gnosticized of them, while not denying the historical Jesus, possessed a theology of such Pythagorean complexity that it sometimes verges on what Joseph Fitzmyer once described as "crazy." The ones we recognize as "orthodox" or canonical, for the most part, are familiar if unresolved blends of the historical and supernatural, the pedagogical and the mysterious: words about the poor, or advice about adultery, stand next to stories about raising a widow's son from the dead, and being transfigured alongside Moses and

Elijah. The effect of this blending was to create a god-man of uncertain proportions. How human was he? How divine? The literature itself did not provide the percentages, the definitions, but the questions nagged and would finally result in official decisions about the divinity and humanity of Jesus in the fourth and fifth century.

Between the second and the fourth century, however, is the making of the New Testament. And this is where the canon—the process of winnowing and selection—comes in. It is important to remember, as we look at the canon, that no one who wove the web of sayings and deeds into the form we call Gospel wrote with the intention of having his work anthologized. Think back to those literature survey

courses you may have taken in college—Shakespeare wrote what he wrote; he did not design it to be included as a unit in the section before the Metaphysical poets and Restoration Drama. "Mark" likewise wrote what he wrote; his editors edited what they edited, and the canon makers chose what they chose.

The canon gives an *impression* of consensus, evangelical uniformity, as if a vote had been taken, with all members present, to certify that what is written is their contribution to the "authorized version" of Jesus. This is of course the impression the proponents of canonicity (though not with one voice or at one time) wished to convey when they linked the canon to the defense of a growing body of doctrine, or teaching about Jesus, and the origins of that doctrine to another idea, belief in apostolicity.

To oversimplify this process: certain beliefs about Jesus, including above all the matter of his humanity

and divinity, were at the center of second- and third-century discussion. This discussion does not take the form of theological point and counterpoint in its earliest phases. In its earliest phases, it must go back to the way the Jesus story spread, or was understood, in places like Antioch, Ephesus, Rome, and Sinope, or was communicated by missionaries like Paul, whose references to the historical Jesus, if there are any, are not prominent.

What we possess are documentary traces of the discussion before it becomes an official debate by early church leaders, who will make each other orthodox and heretical in the course of the argument. In its formative stages, including the composition of the individual New Testament books, Christianity did not seek uniformity of doctrine because the shapers of the Jesus tradition did not imagine their works would be forced into alignment.

The idea of a fourfold or tetramorph Gospel goes

back to ancient harmonies like Tatian's and are still being produced for use in Sunday schools, like McGarvey's 1914 *Fourfold Gospel*. "Resulting in a complete chronological life of Christ, divided into titled sections and sub-divisions, with comments injected in the text." It is too much to say that individual writers thought they had a monopoly on the whole story—an author of John's Gospel, for example, expressly puts his story forward as a collection, a partial one—or that individual writers wrote in order to produce a final version, though an editor of the Gospel called Luke writes with an intention to sequentialize versions of the sources he knows. In terms of other kinds of New Testament literature, Paul may have had a canonical intention, but the collecting and canonizing of his letters and the creation of new ones is an event of the early second century, of a Paul devotee known to history as a heretic—Marcion—not of his lifetime.

The canon does not arise as a spontaneous

development, any more than Christian orthodoxy emerges as a single deposit in a bank account—to use an image from the second century. The canon is the regulation of sources that supported a growing consensus about who Jesus was, or rather, what was to be believed about him. If not a majority, then a significant, well-organized, and powerful minority of voices found his complete and total humanity a nonnegotiable criterion for believing the right thing about him. They found their support for this view in a fairly small number of sources that they believed dated from apostolic times.

My argument here is that it is impossible to discuss the historicity of Jesus simply on the basis of the individual sources available in the church's selection of books, or by parsing their contents, and equally difficult to advance the argument much further on the basis of Gnostic and apocryphal sources that did not make the final cut. I am certainly not saying that research into the sayings of Jesus and

attempts to construct a prototype Gospel are useless. But the endeavor is bound to be incomplete unless the theological motives for defending a fully historical Jesus are brought into the picture. The early church, the framers of the canon especially, were not interested in a historical Jesus per se but in a fully human Jesus. Indeed, it is partly their concern and stress on this overt humanness with no accompanying mitigation of other claims—e.g., that he ascended into heaven, calmed seas, rose from the dead—that fuels speculation about whether such a man can have existed historically at all. The canon is not the proof of his historicity therefore, but the earliest theological matrix out of which suspicions about it arise. In any consideration of the historical Jesus therefore, the following propositions about the canonical and human Jesus need to be weighed.

1. The Gospels make no explicit argument for the historicity of Jesus. In the Gospels, his historical existence is assumed. In the letters of Paul—while I

agree that Paul is profoundly silent on many of the historical markers—it is in the background. In late letters, such as 1 John, acknowledgement that Jesus has come in the flesh is made decisive—those who deny it are antichrist (4:3). I regard Galatians 4:4-5 as completely unhelpful as a "proof" of Paul's conviction as to the existence of an earthly, flesh and blood, Jesus: "But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons. (Ox̄s 5E ify9sv TiX^pco \xa xou Xpovou E^a7T8GTSiA.sv o Qeoc, tOV DLOV aUTOU, ysvojisvov EK yuvaiKoq, ysvop.evov bno vojiov, tva xobq l)7tO vo[iov E^ayopdar] Lva xr\v v LoOsai 'av anoX a(3co (isv.)"

2. If there is a litmus test for the "physical historical" Jesus in the Gospels, it is the Crucifixion. Secondarily it is his bodily Resurrection—which may sound odd, but in a significant way qualifies the *kind* of human existence his believers thought he

possessed. In time, stories of virgin birth, fabulous details, and genealogy are appended to complete the story. The birth stories, however, are designed to illustrate Jesus' exceptionalism, even to correct the impressions of his human ordinariness. Any indifferent reading of the nativity accounts of Matthew and Luke sees them as epiphany stories whose closest analogies are accounts of the birth of Hermes in the Homeric "hymn," or of Augustus' in the account of Ada's pregnancy. That miraculous components from biblical sources are intertwined with these allusions is equally plain.

3. I believe that by the early second century, a certain comfort level concerning the humanity of Jesus was being achieved among significant teachers—the names we now group under designations such as apostolic fathers, the apologists, heresiologists—men like Polycarp, Ignatius, Justin, Irenaeus, and Tertullian. At the risk of being outrageous, I would add Marcion to the list even

though he was not destined to become a church father but rather an arch-heretic. They had settled on the idea that Jesus was "truly" or "wholly" human. In the Nicene Creed it would run, "was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary, and was made man; and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate; He suffered and was buried, (SK Ilvsuiiaxoq 'Aylou KCU Mapiac; XFJ q IlapGsvou KCU svav0pco7ri aaavxa. LxaupcoBsvxa xs vnep r\|i(bv eni Iiovxioi) IliXaxoo Kai 7ra0ovxa Kai xa(psvxa.)"

4. Beginning with Polycarp—that is, prior to 155 or so—the practice of proof-texting or citing scriptural passages to teach doctrine and win arguments becomes a standard method in Christian theology. This presupposes a process of selection of sources useful to root out teaching thought to be false or, to use the word that becomes fashionable by the end of the century, heretical. The canon therefore arises in the process of these debates with false teachers.

5. The key element in this process—which is not always explicit, that is, not a simple list of books decreed to be canonical such as the so-called Muratorian fragment or the decree of Pope Gelasius in the fifth century—is to affirm against the teachings of docetists and assorted Gnostic groups that Jesus of Nazareth has come in the flesh (truly born and truly died). This is the doctrinal motive of canon formation. It also establishes once and for all the conjunction between canonicity, historicity, and humanity—three ideas now so closely interwoven theologically that they cannot easily be separated phenomenologically.

6. But there is a second motive: with the exception of Luke's belated construction of an apostolic college in the book of Acts, the apostles do not fare well in the Gospels. To be kind, they are slow-witted students. Without exploring the many interesting guesses about this characterization, early

Christian writers like Irenaeus and Tertullian were obsessed with their rehabilitation—especially since teachers like Marcion preferred to leave them in the mud or at the bottom of their class. The true reasons for this characterization had been lost by the second century, indeed even by Luke's day, though there is ample reason to believe it was not historical accuracy but pedagogical necessity that sealed their reputation in Mark's Gospel. By the time Irenaeus writes his treatise against the heresies at the end of the second century, the idea of a continuous tradition of truth, transmitted by faithful, inerrant followers, and a faithful passing down of teaching from apostle to later teachers (John to Polycarp and Anicetus, for example) has become standard. Canonicity has been tied to apostolicity.

7. Irenaeus is really the first to make this motive explicit around the year 180, though an earlier church leader (how much earlier is hard to decide) named Papias hints at something of the same logic. Actually

Papias is remembered by the historian Eusebius as a man with limited intellectual powers (3.39.13), but the germ of an idea of unbroken tradition extending from Jesus to the apostles to the presbyters is present in his journalistic approach to sources. His criterion is oral tradition handed down to presbyters; in fact, he says he doesn't put much stock in "books" and rejects the voluminous falsehoods they contain—whatever that may mean—but prizes the living "voice of truth." Papias's reference to "books" is odd, and even what he says about what he *says* he knows, for example, about Gospels like Mark and Matthew, is improbable.

However that may be, Irenaeus exploits the idea of unbroken male succession to offer a fourfold attestation of truth, corresponding he says (3.11.8) to the four principal churches, the four winds, and the four corners of the earth. "It is impossible that the Gospels should be greater or fewer in number than four."

Irenaeus argues tradition as a *natural* principle: using his predecessors' assumptions, he finds denial of the humanity of Jesus the benchmark of false teaching and in a famous scene depicts his own teacher Polycarp as rejecting Marcion in a bathhouse in Ephesus, calling him the first born of Satan (AH 3.3.4). The key to overcoming the spiritualized Jesus of Gnosticism was to insist on an unbroken tradition that required his material, physical existence. An earthly, fully historical savior is the presupposition of the historical process he uses as the basis of his argument.

The *historicalis* therefore not inherent in any Gospel, nor even in the canon, but in a process. That process was slow to develop and developed in response to specific threats, the teachings of men and women who rejected a mundane understanding of salvation and the role of Jesus in the process. The historical Jesus was not necessitated by the Gospel,

but by the need for an authoritative teacher who selects and commissions other teachers, and in a self-referential way, who are able to select those books where the approved story is told.

NOTES

PREFACE: OF ROCKS, HARD PLACES, AND JESUS FATIGUE

1. Adolf von Harnack, *What Is Christianity?* trans. Thomas Bailey Sanders (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), p. 191.

[http://www.secularhumanism.org/index.php?section=library&page=hoffmann 27 3.](http://www.secularhumanism.org/index.php?section=library&page=hoffmann%203)

3. R. Joseph Hoffmann, introduction, G. A. Wells, *The Jesus Legend* (Chicago: Open Court, 1996), p. xi.

4. William Dever, "What Remains of the House That Albright Built?" *Biblical Archaeologist* 56, no. 1 (March 1993): 464.

AN ALTERNATIVE Q AND THE QUEST OF THE EARTHLY JESUS

1. Dennis R. MacDonald, *The Homeric Epics and the Gospel of Mark* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000).

2. John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus* (New York: Doubleday, 1991), 1.167-95.

3. Ibid., 1.183.

4. Ibid., 1.174.

5. See Meier's sage and detailed treatment of this passage in *Marginal Jew*, 2.56-62.

6. Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 1.61. The ellipses are mine; I omit some content from Meier's reconstruction that also reeks of a Christian scribe.

7. I suspect that Josephus's treatment was much longer, in keeping with his more expansive treatments of religious turmoil during Pilate's administration of Judea according to the larger context (*A.J.* 18.55-89).

8. It is tempting to link the oracle against Jerusalem in *Logoi* 9 with such an event, even though there is no mention of James, and even though it was considered an oracle of Jesus presented decades earlier.

9:20 *"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets* 13:34
and stones those sent to her!

How often I wanted to gather your children together,
as a hen gathers her nestlings under «her» wings,
and you were not willing!

9:21 *Look, your house is forsaken* *P* 13:35

9. The closest verses probably are 13:2 and 9-10 (17:24 and 17:34-35).

10. Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 1.168.

11. Some scholars would propose that embarrassing too would have been the charge that Jesus cast out demons by Beelzebul (8:23 [11:15]), but one can easily imagine that the author created it in a polemic against "this evil generation."

12. Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 1.171.

13. *Ibid.*, 1.172.

14. According to Paul, "the kingdom of God [is present] not in word but in power" (1 Cor 4:20).

15. In Gal 5:19-21, Paul lists vices and ends the list with the statement, "those who commit such acts will not inherit the kingdom of God." See also 1 Cor 6:9-10 and 15:50.

16. Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 1.176.

17. *Ibid.*, 1.177.

JESUS AND THE BROTHERS: THE THEOLOGY OF THE IMPERFECT UNION

1. Marcus Borg, *Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time. The Historical Jesus and the Heart of Contemporary Faith* (New York: HarperCollins, 1994), p. 59.

2. John Crossan, *Birth of Christianity* (New York: HarperCollins, 1999), p. 212.

POPULAR MYTHOLOGY IN THE EARLY EMPIRE AND THE MULTIPLICITY OF JESUS TRADITIONS

1. Raymond E. Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah* (New

York: Doubleday, 1993); Edwin D. Freed, *The Stories of Jesus' Birth. A Critical Introduction* (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001); Gerd Ltidemann, *Virgin Birth? The Real Story of Mary and Her Son Jesus* (London: SCM, 1997).

2. Stanley E. Porter, *The Criteria for Authenticity in Historical-Jesus Research: Previous Discussion and New Proposals* (London: T&T Clark, 2000); Bernard Brandon Scott, ed., *Finding the Historical Jesus: Rules of Evidence* (Santa Rosa, CA: Polebridge, 2008); Gerd Theissen and Dagmar Winter, *The Quest for the Plausible Jesus: The Question of Criteria* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2002).

3. Justin J. Meggitt, "Sources: Use, Abuse and Neglect," in *Christianity at Corinth: 'The Scholarly Quest for the Corinthian Church*, ed. D. Horrell and E. Adams, pp. 241-53 (London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004).

4. Justin J. Meggitt, "Magic and Early Christianity: Consumption and Competition," in *The Meanings of*

Magic From the Bible to Buffalo Bill, ed. A. Wygrant, pp. 89-116 (New York: Berghahn Books, 2006).

5. Justin J. Meggitt, "The Madness of King Jesus: Why Was Jesus Put to Death, but His Followers Were Not?" *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 29, no. 4 (2007): 379-413.

6. Justin J. Meggitt, "Taking the Emperor's Clothes Seriously: The New Testament and the Roman Emperor," in *The Quest for Wisdom: Essays in Honour of Philip Budd* ed. C. Joynes, pp. 143-70 (Cambridge: Orchard Academic, 2002).

7. Justin J. Meggitt, *Paul\ Poverty and Survival* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998).

8. E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London: Victor Gollanz, 1963), p. 12.

9. See, for example, John R. Clarke, *Art in the Lives of Ordinary Romans: Visual Representation and Non-elite Viewers in Italy 100 B.C. -A.D. 315* (Berkeley: University of

California Press, 2003); W. Hansen, *Anthology of Greek Popular Literature* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998); Nicholas Horsfall, *The Culture of the Roman Plebs* (London: Duckworth, 2003); Ardle Mac Mahon and Jennifer Price, eds., *Roman Working Lives and Urban Living* (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2005); Teresa Morgan, *Popular Morality in the Early Roman Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

10. K. R. Bradley, *Slaves and Masters in the Roman Empire: A Study in Social Control* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), pp. 150-53; see also Niklas Holzberg, "The Fabulist, the Scholars, and the Discourse: Aesop Studies Today," *International Journal of the Classical Tradition* 6 (1999): 236-42; Leslie Kurke, "Aesop and the Contestation of Delphic Authority," in *The Cultures within Ancient Greek Culture: Contact, Conflict; Collaboration*, ed. C. Dougherty and L. Kurke, pp. 77-100 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Lawrence M. Wills, "The Aesop Tradition," in *The Historical Jesus in Context*; ed. Amy -Jill Levine, Dale C. Allison, John Dominic

Crossan, pp. 222-37 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006).

11. David Braund and S. D. Kryzhitskiy, eds., *Classical Olbia and the Scythian World: From the Sixth Century BC to the Second Century AD*, Proceedings of the British Academy, 142 (Oxford: Oxford University Press/British Academy, 2007).

12. Catherine Hezser, *Jewish Literacy in Roman Palestine: Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism* (Tubingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 2001), p. 71.

13. D. R. MacDonald, *Christianizing Homer The Odyssey, Plato and the Acts of Andrew* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 17.

14. Joseph Farrell, "Roman Homer," in *The Cambridge Companion to Homer*; ed. Robert Fowler, pp. 254-71 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

15. Papyri Graecae Magicae (PGM) IV.2145-2240; Daniel Ogden, *Magic, Witchcraft and Ghosts in the Greek*

and Roman Worlds: A Sourcebook (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 270-72.

16. P. Lond. 121 (PGM VII); Peter Parsons, *City of the Sharp-Nosed Fish: Greek Lives in Roman Egypt* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2007), p. 190.

17. Horsfall, *Culture of the Roman Plebs*, p. 56.

18. See Guido Schepens and Kris Delcroix, "Ancient Paradoxography: Origins, Evolution, Production and Consumption," in *La letteratura di consumo nel mondo greco-latino*, ed. Oronzo Pecere and Antonio Stramaglia, pp. 343-460 (Cassino, Italy: Universite degli Studi di Cassino, 1996); Hansen, *Anthology of Greek Popular Literature*.

19. Anna Clark, "Gods in Pompeian Graffiti," in *Ancient Graffiti in Context*, ed. Jennifer Baird and Claire Taylor (New York: Routledge, forthcoming).

20. Jorg Rupke, *Religion of the Romans* (Cambridge: Polity, 2007), p. 126.

21. Bettina Bergmann, "The Roman House as Memory Theater: The House of the Tragic Poet in Pompeii," *Art Bulletin* 76, no. 2 (1994): 225-56; Bettina Bergmann, "Greek Masterpieces and Roman Recreative Fictions," *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 97 (1995): 79-120.

22. James Deetz, *In Small Things Forgotten: An Archaeology of Early American Life*, 2nd ed. (New York: Doubleday, 1996).

23. J. J. O'Hara, "Fragment of a Homer-Hypothesis with No Gods," *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 56 (1984): 1-9.

24. David Castriota, *Myth, Ethos,; and Actuality* (Madison: Wisconsin University Press, 1992), p. 78; see Maria Pretzler, "Pausanias and Oral Tradition," *Classical Quarterly* 55, no. 1 (2005): 241.

25. G. Comotti, *Music in Greek and Roman Culture* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989); J. G. Landels, *Music in Ancient Greece and Rome* (London:

Routledge, 1999); Paul Veyne, *Did the Greeks Believe in Their Myths? An Essay on the Constitutive Imagination* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1983), pp. 139-40.

26. Kathleen M. Coleman, "Fatal Charades: Roman Executions Staged as Mythological Enactments," *Journal of Roman Studies* 80 (1990): 44-73.

27. M. Bonaria, ed., *Mimorum Romanorum Fragmenta* (Geneva: Institutio di Filologia Classica, 1955).

28. Geoffrey S. Sumi, "Impersonating the Dead: Mimes at Roman Funerals," *American Journal of Philology* 123 (2002): 559-85.

29. Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1981), pp. 12-22; see also A. Momigliano, "Popular Religious Beliefs and the Late Roman Historians," *Studies in Church History* 8 (1971): 1-18.

30. Jas Eisner, Review of *Religion in Roman Egypt: Assimilation and Resistance* by David Frankfurter, *Classical*

Philology 95, no. 1 (2000): 104.

31. David Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt: Assimilation and Resistance* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998).

32. William G. Doty, *Mythography: The Study of Myths and Rituals* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1986).

33. Riipe, *Religion of the Romans*, p. 127.

34. Kenneth Dowden, *On the Uses of Greek Myth* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 7.

35. T. P. Wiseman, *The Myths of Rome* (Exeter, UK: University of Exeter Press, 2004), pp. 10-11.

36. Fritz Graf, "Myth," in *Religions of the Ancient World*, ed. Sarah Illesjohnston, pp. 45-58 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), p. 45.

37. Keith Roberts, *Religion in Sociological Perspective* (London: Wadsworth, 1995), p. 91.

38. See Stephen H. Travis, "Form Criticism," in *New Testament Interpretation: Essays on Principles and Methods*, ed. I. Howard Marshall, pp. 153-64 (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster Press, 1977).

39. Graf, "Myth," p. 54.

40. James F. Kay, "Myth or Narrative? Bultmann's 'New Testament and Mythology' Turns Fifty," *Theology Today* 48 (1991): 328.

41. Burton L. Mack, *The Christian Myth: Origins, Logic and Legacy* (London: Continuum, 2003), p. 17.

42. E.g., Ron Cameron and Merrill P. Miller, ed., *Redescribing Christian Origins* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2004).

43. John Gould, "On Making Sense of Greek Religion," in *Greek Religion and Society*, ed. P. E. Easterling and J. V. Muir, pp. 1-33 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 8.

44. Phiroze Vasunia, "Hellenism and Empire: Reading Edward Said," *Parallax* 9, no. 4 (2003): 88-97.

45. Wiseman, *Myths of Rome*, p. 11.

46. Ibid.

47. Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt*.

48. See Lynn E. Roller, *In Search of God the Mother: The Cult of Anatolian Cybele* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

49. See James Aitken, "Hengel's *Judentum unci Hellenismus*," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 123, no. 2 (2004): 331-41.

50. Philip Alexander, "Hellenism and Hellenization as Problematic Historical Categories," in *Paul Beyond the Judaism/Hellenism Divide*, ed. Troels Engberg-Pedersen, pp. 63-80 (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2001), p. 79.

51. Jacob Neusner, *Development of a Legend: Studies on the Traditions Concerning Yohanan ben Zakkai* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1970).

52. E.g., Baba Metzia 59b, Menahot 29b; Eliezer Segal, "'The Few Contained the Many': Rabbinic Perspectives on the Miraculous and the Impossible," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 54 (2003): 273-82.

53. David E. Aune, "Prolegomena to the Study of Oral Tradition in the Hellenistic World," in *Jesus and the Oral Gospel Tradition*, ed. H. Wansbrough, (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991), p. 98.

54. Luc Brisson, *How Philosopher's Saved Myths: Allegorical Interpretation and Classical Mythology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press: 2004).

55. J. Pepin, "Euhemerism of the Christian Authors," in *Mythologies*, ed. Yves Bonnefoy, pp. 666-71 (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1991).

56. Veyne, *Did the Greeks Believe in Their Myths?* p. 45.

57. David Noy, *Foreigners at Rome: Citizens and Strangers* (London: Duck-worth, 2000), p. 185.

58. Veyne, *Did the Greeks Believe in Their Myths?*p. 27.

59. Ibid., p. 1.

60. Ibid., p. 42.

61. Ibid.

62. Aune, "Prolegomena," p. 83.

6 3. John J. Winkler, *Auctor and Actor: A Narratological Reading of Apuleius' The Golden Ass* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), p. 237; Alex Scobie, "Storytellers, Storytelling, and the Novel in Graeco-Roman Society," *RhenischesMuseum furPhilologie* 122 (1979): 229-59.

64. See Aune, "Prolegomena," pp. 69-71.

65. Horsfall, *Culture of the Roman Plebs*, pp. 48-63.

66. S. F. Bonner, *Education in Ancient Rome* (London: Routledge, 1977), p. 212.

67. Theresa Morgan, *Literate Education in the Hellenistic and Roman Worlds* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

68. Eva Canterella, *Pandora's Daughters: The Role and Status of Women in Greek and Roman Antiquity* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), p. 134.

69. Veyne, *Did the Greeks Believe in Their Myths?* p. 43.

70. Notably in the otherwise exemplary work of Aune, "Prolegomena"; though see Scobie, "Storytellers."

71. Joanna Dewey, "The Survival of Mark's Gospel: A Good Story?" *Journal of Biblical Literature* 123 (2004): 495-507; Holly E. Hearon, *The Mary Magdalene Tradition: Witness and Counter-Witness in Early Christian Communities* (Collegeville, MN: Michael Glazier, 2004), pp. 37-73,

72. Birger Gerhardsson, *Tradition and Transmission in Early Christianity* (Lund: Gleerup, 1964); Birger Gerhardsson, *The Reliability of the Gospel Tradition* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2001); Werner H. Kelber, *The Oral and the Written Gospel: The Hermeneutics of Speaking and Writing in the Synoptic Tradition; Mark, Paul and* ^ (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987); James D. G. Dunn, *Christianity in the Making: Vol. 1, Jesus Remembered* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003); James D. G. Dunn, *Unity and Diversity in the New Testament An Inquiry into the Character of Earliest Christianity.*, 2nd ed. (London: SCM, 1990).

73. J. N. D. Kelly, *A Commentary on the Epistles of Peter and Jude* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1969), p. 316.

74. Jerome H. Neyrey, "The Form and Background of the Polemic in 2 Peter," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 99 (1980): 409-12.

75. Alistair Logan, *The Gnostics: Identifying an Ancient Christian Cult* (London: Continuum, 2005), p. 2.

76. Helmut Koester, "GNOMAI DIAPHOROI: The Origin and Nature of Diversification in the History of Early Christianity," *Harvard Theological Review* 58 (1965): 279-318.

77. Daniel J. Harrington, "The Reception of Walter Bauer's 'Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity' during the Last Decade," *Harvard Theological Review* 73, no. 1, (1980): 296.

78. John Dominic Crossan, *The Birth of Christianity: Discovering What Happened in the Years Immediately After the Execution of Jesus* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998); Mack, *The Christian Myth*.

79. Robert M. Price, *Deconstructing Jesus* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2000), p. 149.

80. David Seeley, "Jesus' Death in Q/ *New Testamnt*

Studies 38 (1992): 222-34.

81. Price, *Deconstructing Jesus*, p. 266.

82. See Austin Farrer, "On Dispensing with Q[^]," in *Studies in the Gospels*, ed. D. Nineham, pp. 55-86 (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1955); Mark Goodacre, *Goulder and the Gospels* (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996); Mark Goodacre, *The Case Against Studies in Markan Priority and the Synoptic Problem* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2002); Mark Goodacre and Nicholas Perrin, eds., *Questioning* [^](London: SPCK, 2004); M. Goulder, *Luke. A New Paradigm*, 2 vols. (Sheffield, UK: JSOT Press, 1989); M. Goulder, "Is Q[^]a Juggernaut?" *Journal of Biblical Literature* 115 (1996): 667-81.

83. Stephen Carlson, *The Gospel Hoax: Morton Smith's Invention of Secret Mark* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2005); Peter Jeffery, *The Secret Gospel of Mark Unveiled: Imagined Rituals of Sex, Death, and Madness in a Biblical Forgery* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006); cf. Scott G. Brown, *Mark's Other Gospel: Rethinking*

Morton Smith's Controversial Discovery (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2005).

84. See Dennis E. Smith, "What Do We Really Know about the Jerusalem Church? Christian Origins in Jerusalem According to Acts and Paul," in *Redescribing Christian Origins*, ed. Ron Cameron and Merrill P. Miller, pp. 237-52 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2004); Merrill P. Miller, "Beginning from Jerusalem...': Re-examining Canon and Consensus," *Journal of Higher Criticism* 2, no. 1 (1995): 3-30; Merrill P. Miller, "Antioch, Paul, and Jerusalem: Diaspora Myths of Origins in the Homeland," in *Redescribing Christian Origins*, ed. Ron Cameron and Merrill P. Miller, pp. 177-235 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2004).

85. Melanie J. Wright, "Re-viewing My Son the Fanatic after 7/7; or Roots, Routes, and Rhizomes," in *The Religious Roots of Contemporary European Identity*, ed. Lucia Faltin and Melanie J. Wright, pp. 29-39 (London: Continuum, 2007), p. 38.

86. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987).

87. Price, *Deconstructing Jesus*, p. 149.

88. Kenneth E. Bailey, "Informal Controlled Oral Tradition and the Synoptic Gospels," *Asia Journal of Theology* 5, no. 1, (1991): 34-54; Kenneth E. Bailey, "Middle Eastern Oral Tradition and the Synoptic Gospels," *Expository Times* 106, no. 12 (1995): 363-67; Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses: The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony* (Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2006); Thorleif Boman, *Die Jesus-Uberlieferung im Lichte der neueren Volkskunde* (Gottingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1967); Samuel Byrskog, *Story as History History as Story: The Gospel Tradition in the Context of Ancient Oral History* (Leiden: Brill, 2002); Dunn, *Christianity in the Making*; Gerhardsson, *'Tradition and 'Transmission*; Gerhardsson, *Reliability of the Gospel Tradition*; Kelber, *The Oral and the Written Gospel*.

89. Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, p. 8.

90. Dunn, *Christianity in the Making*, p. 240.

91. Emilio Gabba, "True History and False History in Classical Antiquity," *Journal of Roman Studies* 71 (1981): 53. This reference was not included in the bibliographical listings.

92. A. M. Honore, "A Statistical Study of the Synoptic Problem," *Novum Testamentum* 10 (1968): 95-147.

93. Anne M. O'Leary, *Matthews Judaization of Mark Examined in the Context of the Use of Sources in Graeco-Roman Antiquity* (London: Continuum, 2006).

94. Justin J. Meggitt, "The Psycho-Social Context of Jesus' Miracles," in *Jesus and Healing* ed. Fraser Watts (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming); Meggitt, "Magic and Early Christianity."

95. Meggitt, "Magic and Early Christianity" p. 114; Gerd Theissen, *The Gospels in Context: Social and Political*

History in the Synoptic Tradition (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), p. 103.

96. Meggitt, "The Psycho-Social Context of Jesus' Miracles"; Meggitt, "Magic and Early Christianity."

97. Meggitt, "The Madness of King Jesus."

98. E. P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (London: SCM, 1985), p. 11.

BAYES'S THEOREM FOR BEGINNERS: FORMAL LOGIC AND ITS RELEVANCE TO HISTORICAL METHOD

1. For examples, criticisms, and bibliography, see Christopher Tuckett, "Sources and Methods," in *The Cambridge Companion to Jesus*, ed. Markus Bockmuehl, pp. 121-37 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

2. Stanley Porter, *The Criteria for Authenticity in Historical -Jesus Research: Previous Discussion and New Proposals* (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000).

3. Hector Avalos, *The End of Biblical Studies* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2007), pp. 203-209.

4. Cf. e.g., Stanley Porter, "The Criterion of Greek Language and Its Context: A Further Response," *Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus* 4, no. 1 (2006): 69-74, in response to Michael F. Bird, "The Criterion of Greek Language and Context: A Response to Stanley E. Porter," *Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus* 4, no. 1 (2006): 55-67.

5. E.g., Dale Allison, "The Historians' Jesus and the Church," in *Seeking the Identity of Jesus: A Pilgrimage*, ed. Beverly Roberts Gaventa and Richard B. Hays, pp. 79-95 (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2008).

6. Gerd Theissen and Dagmar Winter, *The Quest for the Plausible Jesus: The Question of Criteria* (Louisville,

ICY:John Knox Press, 2002).

7. Though see C. Behan McCullagh, *Justifying Historical Descriptions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), pp. 45-73.

8. Porter, *Criteria for Authenticity*, p. 115, quoting remarks by Theissen.

9. Mary Rose D'Angelo, "Abba and Father: Imperial Theology in the Contexts of Jesus and the Gospels," in *The Historical Jesus in Context*, ed. Amy -Jill Levine, Dale C. Allison Jr., and John Dominic Crossan, pp. 64-78 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006).

10. E.g., Richard Carrier, "The Spiritual Body of Christ and the Legend of the Empty Tomb," in *The Empty Tomb: Jesus Beyond the Grave*, ed. Robert Price and Jeffery Jay Lowder, pp. 105-231 (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2005), pp. 107-10.

11. Eliezer Yudkowsky, "An Intuitive Explanation of Bayesian Reasoning (Bayes's Theorem for the Curious

and Bewildered: An Excruciatingly Gentle Introduction)," <http://yudkowsky.net/rational/bayes> (accessed December 3, 2005).

12. Douglas Hunter, *Political [and] Military Applications of Bayesian Analysis: Methodological Issues* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1984).

13. E.T. Jaynes and G. Larry Bretthorst, *Probability Theory: The Logic of Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Luc Bovens and Stephan Hartmann, *Bayesian Epistemology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); Richard Swinburne, ed., *Bayes's Theorem* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); Timothy McGrew, "Bayesian Reasoning: An Annotated Bibliography," <http://homepages.wmich.edu/~mcgrew/bayes.htm> (accessed December 3, 2005).

14. Richard Carrier, "Bayes's Theorem for Beginners: Formal Logic and Its Relevance to Historical Method—Adjunct Materials and Tutorial." Archived December 10, 2008,

[http://www.richardcarrier.info/Carrier Dec08.pdf](http://www.richardcarrier.info/Carrier_Dec08.pdf).

15. Richard Carrier, *Sense and Goodness without God: A Defense of Metaphysical Naturalism* (Bloomington, IN: AuthorHouse, 2005), pp. 57, 227-52.

16. Carrier, "The Spiritual Body of Christ," pp. 168-82.

17. Per Carrier, *Sense and Goodness without God* pp. 40-42, 219-20.

THE ABHORRENT VOID: THE RAPID ATTRIBUTION OF FICTIVE SAYINGS AND STORIES TO A MYTHIC JESUS

1. C. H. Dodd, "About the Gospels," radio broadcast, 1949, quoted in F. F. Bruce, *Tradition: Old and New* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1970), p. 41.

2. Everett F. Harrison, "Tradition of the Sayings of

Jesus: A Crux Interpretum," in *Towards a Theology for the Future*, ed. Clark H. Pinnock and David F. Wells, p. 44 (Carol Stream: Creation House, 1971).

3. As Don Imus's character, the Reverend Billy Saul Hargis, once tried to do!

4. Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel of John: Introduction, Translation, and Notes*, Anchor Bible 29 (Garden City: Doubleday, 1966), vol. 1, comments on Jn 2:1-11.

5. Ignaz Goldziher, *Hadith and the New Testament* (London: SPCK, 1902).

6. Paul-Louis Couchoud, *The Creation of Christ: An Outline of the Beginnings of Christianity*, trans. C. Bradlaugh Bonner (London: Watts, 1939), p. 182. Of course, many nonmythicist Gospel critics recognize the same thing, but they do not seem to notice the oddity that the Christ-mythicist Couchoud noticed: why would such a wholesale borrowing be necessary if there really had been a great teacher at the start of the thing?

7. Cf. Jn 14:26; 16:12-15.

8. Cf. Lk 10:16; 21:14-15.

9. Ignaz Goldziher, *Introduction to Islamic Theology and Law*, Modern Classics in Near Eastern Studies, trans. Andras and Ruth Hamori (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981), pp. 43-44.

10. The Herod story, that of the Slaughter of the Innocents, is most easily explained as copied from Josephus's account of Moses' nativity, while the link with the historical Pilate is ruined by the gross improbability of the ruthless Roman bending over backwards to free Jesus, even letting a known killer of Romans go free in his place. It is just not believable as history. See S. G. F. Brandon, *Jesus and the Zealots: A Study of the Political Factor in Primitive Christianity* (New York: Scribner's, 1967), pp. 3-5.

11. Cf. Rom 3:8.

12. See the stories in which Jesus repudiates his relatives, a polemic against the leadership of the heirs, e.g., Mk 3:20-21, 31-35; John 7:5; or endorses them, Mk 6:3's official list of his caliph-successors; cf. Thomas saying 12. Pro-Paul in Mk 9:38-40; anti-Paul in Mt 5:17-19; 7:21-23.

13. Muhammad Zubayr Siddiqi, *Hadith Literature: Its Origin, Development and Special Features* (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society 1993), p. 32.

14. Ibid, pp. 33-34.

15. E.g., pro-fasting in Mt 6:16-17, Mk 2:20, Thomas saying 27; anti-fasting in Mk 2:21-22, Thomas saying 14.

16. E.g., mission only to Jews in Mt 10:5, or to all nations in Mt 28:19.

17. Ram Swarup, *Understanding the Hadith: The Sacred Traditions of Islam* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2002), pp. 6-7.

18. Joseph Schacht, "A Reevaluation of Islamic Traditions," in *The Quest for the Historical Muhammad* ed. and trans. Ibn Warraq, p. 361 (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2000).

19. E.g., I. Howard Marshall, *I Believe in the Historical Jesus*, I Believe Series no. 5 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1977), pp. 195-96.

20. Harald Riesenfeld, *The Gospel Tradition*, trans. Margaret Rowley and Robert Kraft (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1970); Birger Gerhardsson, *Memory and Manuscript: Oral Tradition and Written Transmission in Rabbinic Judaism and Early Christianity*, Acta Seminarii Neotestamentici Upsaliensis XXII, trans. Eric J. Sharpe (Lund: C. W. K. Gleerup and Ejnar Munksgaard, 1961); Birger Gerhardsson, *The Reliability of the Gospel Tradition* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2001).

21. Jacob Neusner, *The Peripatetic Saying: The Problem of the Thrice-Told Tale in Talmudic Literature*, Brown

Judaic Studies 89 (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1985).

22. Majella Franzmann, *Jesus in the Nag Hammadi Writings* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1996), pp. 1-18.

23. Margaret Barker, *The Risen Lord: The Jesus of History as the Christ of Faith* (Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1996), pp. 98-110.

24. F. F. Bruce, *The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable?* 5th ed. (London: Inter-Varsity Fellowship, 1960), p. 33, quoted in John Warwick Montgomery, *History e? ' Christianity* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1974), p. 39.

25. Elizabeth Claire Prophet (as Jesus Christ), *Watch with Me* (Gardiner, MT: Summit Lighthouse, 1965).

26. Helen Schucman, *A Course in Miracles* (Glen Ellen, CA: Foundation for Inner Peace, 1975).

JESUS' DISPUTE IN THE TEMPLE

AND THE ORIGIN OF THE EUCHARIST

1. As I have shown at length, Jesus is called "rabbi" more than any other title in the Gospels, and his characteristic activities correspond well to those of other rabbis of his period: Bruce Chilton, *Rabbi Jesus: An Intimate Biography* (New York: Doubleday, 2000).

2. See Bruce Chilton, *Pure Kingdom: Jesus' Vision of God* \ Studying the Historical Jesus 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996).

3. Josephus, *Jewish War* 2.197, 409; *Against Apion* 2.77; Philo, *Embassy to Gains*, 157, 317.

4. Mishnah tractate Shekalim 1:1, 3; Josephus, *Jewish War* 7.218; *Antiquities of the Jews* 18.312.

5. See Bruce Chilton, "A Coin of Three Realms: Matthew 17:24-27," in *The Bible in Three Dimensions: Essays in Celebration of Forty Years of Biblical Studies in the*

University of Sheffield Journal for the Study of the Old Testament, Supplement 87, ed. D. J. A. Clines, S. E. Fowl, and S. E. Porter, pp. 269-82 (Sheffield: JSOT, 1990).

6. *Antiquities* 13.372-73.

7. *Antiquities* 17.149-67.

8. See Bruce Chilton, *The Temple of Jesus: His Sacrificial Program Within a Cultural History of Sacrifice* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992).

9. Babylonian Talmud tractate Beza 20a, b; Tosephta Chagigah 2:11; Jerusalem Talmud tractate Chagigah 2:3 and Beza 2:4.

10. Shabbat 15a; Sanhedrin 41 a; Avodah Zarah 8b.

11. Josephus, *Antiquities* 15.417.

12. For a full exegetical discussion, see Bruce Chilton, *A Feast of Meanings: Eucharistic Theologies from Jesus through Johannine Circles*, Supplements to Novum

Testamentum 72 (Leiden: Brill, 1994).

13. Josephus, *Jewish War* 2.409.

14. See Bruce Chilton, "The So-Called Trial Before the Sanhedrin," *Forum* 1.1 [new series] (1998): 163-80.

THE AUTHORIZED VERSION OF HIS BIRTH AND DEATH

1. David Trobisch, *The First Edition of the New Testament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

PROLEGOMENON TO A SCIENCE OF CHRISTIAN ORIGINS

1. Rene Salm, *The Myth of Nazareth: The Invented Town of Jesus* (Cranford, NJ: American Atheist Press, 2008), pp. xvi, 375.

2. Frank R. Zindler, *The Jesus the Jews Never Knew: Sepher To1doth Yeshu and the Quest of the Historical Jesus in Jewish Sources* (Cranford, NJ: American Atheist Press, 2003), pp. xvii, 524.

3. Frank R. Zindler, "Capernaum—A Literary Invention," *Journal of Higher Criticism* 12, no. 2 (Fall 2006): 1-27.

4. Aviram Oshri, "Where Was Jesus Born?" *Archaeology* (November/ December 2005): 42-45.

5. Edward Maunde Thompson, *An Introduction to Greek and Latin Palaeography* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1912), pp. 78, 79, 81.

6. It is true that Newton did show in *An Historical Account of Two Notable Corruptions of Scripture* (1754) that the *CommaJohanneum* in 1 John 5:7 was a corruption originally lacking "the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost," and that 1 Timothy 3:16 had been altered by substituting "God" for "he." However, these discoveries

involved a completely different type of investigation than did most of his religious writings.

1 Jn 5:7—For there are three that bear record in heaven, *the Father the Word\ and the Holy Ghost:* and these three are one.

1 Timothy 3:16—And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: *God* was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.

7. It may be admitted that in rare cases the safety of a product may be overestimated due to pressure from company executives who are more worried about the fiscal bottom line than about medical truth. Even so, such apologetics is never successful for very long because in its very nature science is a self-correcting system, and

apologetically fraudulent findings almost always are exposed by research in other laboratories.

"EVERY PLANT WHICH MY HEAVENLY FATHER HAS NOT PLANTED SHALL BE UPROOTED"

1. See below or *New Testament Code* (London: Watkins, 2006), pp. 289-97 and, for example, CDI.10-12, XII.20-1, XIII.22, 1QSIII.13, IX.12, IX. 21, etc.

2. CDI.7-8. This is followed by the note about "being like Blind Men," "seeking Him with a whole heart," and God "raising up for them a Teacher of Righteousness to guide them in the Way of His heart," i.e., "the Guide." There is also the first note here about God "visiting them"—see *New Testament Code*, PP" 601-29.

3. The defect here, which was first recognized by A.

Von Harnack in "Die Verklärungsgeschichte Jesu, der Gericht des Paulus (I. Kor. 15.3ff.) under die Beiden Christusvisionen des Petrus," *Sitzungsberichte der Preussischen Akademie* 1922: 62-80, has to do with two versions of the sighting order in 1 Corinthians 15:6-7: "first to the Twelve" (there were only supposed to be "Eleven" at the time) and "then to James, then all the Apostles" (a redundancy)—the latter obviously being the authentic tradition.

4. For "the First" at Qumran, which usually represents "the Forefathers who received the Torah," see CDI.16 "the Last" or "Last Generation"/"Last Times" is already making its appearance here in 1.11-12, but see also 1.4, III.10, IV.6-9, VI.2, VIII.16-17, 1QpHabI1.7, VII.2-12, IX.4-5, etc.

5. See, for instance, the Epistle of Peter to James 5.1 introducing the Homilies.

6. Cf. how Paul does this allegorically in Galatians 4:21-31 or in 1 Corinthians 6:12 (also about "food" and

"the belly")—10:29: "All things are for me lawful"; and my conclusion on p. 997 of *New Testament Code*.

7. It should be appreciated, however, that in Matthew 15:24 the "house" does reappear, but now it becomes "not being sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. "One should also note that in Matthew 15:13-14 the language of falling into a pit" also occurs, as does "uprooting plants," both of which will also recur, as we shall see, in CDI.7 and XI.13.

8. This is recapitulated in CDII.14-15, but now the exhortation includes "uncovering your eyes that you may see and understand the works of God ... in order that you may walk in Perfection in all His ways and not follow after the thoughts of a sinful imagination or fornicating eyes."

9. The reader should appreciate, it would be easy to read here, "what they heard Paul saying"—as, for example, "John Mark" evidently was in Acts 13:13 and 15:38 when he "withdrew from them in Pamphylia." In

these allusions in Acts, it becomes clear that "Mark's desertion" of the team (as Paul would have it) to report what was transpiring back to Jerusalem was not an amicable one; but clearly involved a good deal of ill will—and this in the usually more accurate "We document" Here, since Mark 7:1 had already used the verb "come" to describe the usual "coming down from Jerusalem, while Matthew 15:1 had rather expressed this as: "then come to Jesus from Jerusalem Pharisees and Scribes" (forgetting both the "some" and the "down"); to avoid redundancy Mark must now use the basically meaningless phraseology "there gathered unto him the Pharisees and some of the scribes"—n.b., how Mark has added here the usual "some" to complete the implication of the "some from James coming" down from Jerusalem of Paul in Galatians 2:12 and elsewhere in the Gospels as earlier in Mark 14:4 or Luke 19:39 or John 9:40.

10. Even the allusion in Mark 7:21-23 (in this instance, the most prolix Gospel) to the heart's "evil thoughts, murder, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false

witness, railings" as "defiling the man" recalls the Community Rule's depiction of "the Spirit of Unrighteousness" or "of Evil" as: "greediness of soul, stumbling hands in the service of Righteousness (cf. Paul in 2 Corinthians 11:15), Wickedness and Lying, pride and proudness of heart, duplicitousness and deceitfulness, cruelty, ill-temper, impatience, much folly, and zeal for lustfulness, works of abomination in a spirit of fornication, and Ways of Uncleanness in the service of pollution, a Tongue full of blasphemies, blindness of eye and dullness of ear, stiffness of neck and hardness of heart in order to walk in all the Ways of Darkness and Evil inclination" in 1QSIV.9-11; cf. Matthew 15:19 and below.

11. That the issue is "table fellowship with Gentiles" is just strengthened by all these allusions to "blindness" (as in John 9:13-41 above), "Blind Guides," and "hypocrites" /"hypocrisy." At Qumran, as reiterated variously in the Damascus Document, the position is "doing according to the precise letter of the Torah" and

"setting up the Holy Things according to their precise specifications" (IV.8, VI.20, XX.6, etc.), whereas in Paul and the New Testament following him, it is "not to separate Holy from profane" (Acts 10:14-5) and "all things are for me lawful ... eat everything sold in the butcher shop, in no way inquiring because of conscience" (Paul's favorite euphemism for "the Law"—1 Corinthians 10:23-25).

12. The reference is to 1QSIV.4 on "the Two Spirits." The parallel kind of expressions in Hymns are to be found in 11.15, V.24, IX.3 and 23, XIV.13-14, etc.

13. See James 3:4-8.

14. This is the second part of "the Two Spirits" in the Community Rule—"the Spirit of Righteousness" or "Cleanliness"—1 QSIV.9-11.

15. Cf. CDI.11-12, XII.20-21, XIII.22-3, 1QHIII.13, IX.12-26, 1QHXII.11, etc.

16. 1QSIX.12-14.

17. Furthermore, the implication of the whole simile embodied in this passage, would appear to involve "the Judgment Day," since the Hebrew *carnal* —as in the all-important Isaiah 53:11 proof-text and the Qumran Habakkuk Peshar, seemingly like the Gospels dependent upon it—is eschatological and also part of the vocabulary here. One can see this *carnal* in 1QpHabVIII.2-3's interpretation of Habakkuk 2:4: "the Righteous shall live by his Faith."

18. In the incredible hymn at the end of the Community Rule in 1QsX-XI, the Council is even pictured as "joined to the Sons of Heaven" and described as "an Eternal Planting" or "Plantation" (XI.8-9, but also see VIII.4-9: "With the existence of these in Israel, the Council of the Community will be established upon Truth like an Eternal Plantation, a House of Holiness for Israel ... a Tested Rampart, a Precious Cornerstone, the foundation of which will not shake or sway in their place ... a House of Perfection and Truth in Israel"). This is

not to mention the "God causing a Root of Planting to grow" itself of the Damascus Document, which will also be directly parodied not only in Paul, but here in the Synoptics as well.

19. CDI.5-8.

20. This "Pit" language is very important and, as we shall see, is duplicated in Matthew 15:14, however tendentiously. Probably the best example of it is to be found in CDVI. 12-14, including the "Nazirite" language of "keeping away from" and "separation," as well as Acts 21:30's "barring the door," introducing the definition of "the New Covenant in the Land of Damascus" in VI. 16—18; but also see XIII.14 and XIV.2 and 1 QSIX.16-21 above.

21. CDXI.13-14.

22. There is some evidence that "Jesus" (whoever he may have been) came in 19-21 CE. This comes in Eusebius's citation from what he considers to be the

fraudulent *Acti Pilati*, which places the crucifixion in that year (E.H. 1.9.3-4); but Tacitus, too (*Annals* 2.85), places the expulsion of the Jews from Rome under Tiberius in most peculiar and suspicious circumstances in this period as well, not later as in Josephus's version of similar events—see James the Brother of Jesus, pp. 66 and 863-64. In this manner, the mysterious "twenty years" in GDI.10 evaporates. Furthermore, this would explain why Paul, who is supposed to be functioning ca. 37 CE onwards, knows so little about the "Christ Jesus" (the eyewitness testimony of whom is almost nil) he is talking about. If there is a "Historical Jesus"—aside from the Samaritan one—this is probably the best way of understanding him.

23. CDII.9-11.

24. See, for instance, the document Prof. Wise and myself discovered (4Q285—we called it "The Messianic Leader"), which identifies "the Root of Jesse" with "the Branch of David" and, in turn, "the Nasi ha-cEdah"/"the

Leader of die Assembly" or "Church." This Messianic Leader, of course, then reappears in documents like 4QFlorI.11-13 and CDVII.16-20, above, not to mention the interpretation of "the Shiloh Prophecy" of Genesis 49:10 in 4Q252 or so-called "Genesis Peshar"—see Robert Eisenman and Michael Wise, *Dead Sea Scrolls Uncovered* (New York: Penguin Books, 1992), pp. 24-29 and 77-89, and *New Testament Code*, pp. 349-55, 638-56, and 674-75.

ASSESSING THE EVIDENCE: PHILOSOPHICAL AND LEGAL PERSPECTIVES

1. Simon Greenleaf, *The Testimony of the Evangelists Examined by the Rules of Evidence Administered in Courts of Justice* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1984 [1874]).

2. R. Clifford, *Leading Lawyers' Case for the*

Resurrection (Edmonton: Canadian Institute for Law, Theology and Public Policy, 1996).

3. A discussion of the relevant federal rules of evidence, 803(16) and 901(b)(8), may be found in S. Saltzburg and K. R. Redden, *Federal Rules of Evidence Manual*, 4th ed. (Charlottesville, VA: Michie Company, 1986).

4. J. D. Crossan, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (San Francisco: Harper, 1991).

5. L. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 3rd ed., trans. G. E. M. Anscombe (New York: Macmillan, 1968), § 79.

6. S. Kripke, *Naming and Necessity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980).

7. W. K. C. Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy: The Fifth-Century Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969).

8. A. Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus: A Critical Study of Its Progress from Reimarus to Wrede*; 3rd ed., trans. W. Montgomery (London: A. & C. Black, 1956), p. 6.

9. See Guthrie, *History of Greek Philosophy*, p. 382.

JESUS' APOCALYPTIC VISION AND THE PSYCHODYNAMICS OF DELUSION

1. Albert Schweitzer, *The Psychiatric Study of Jesus: Exposition and Critique*; trans C. R. Joy (Boston: Beacon, 1948 [1913]).

2. Albert Schweitzer, *The Quest for the Historical Jesus: A Critical Study of Its Progress from Reimarus to Wrede*, trans. W. Montgomery (New York: Macmillan, 1968 [1907]).

3. Schweitzer, *Psychiatric Study of Jesus*, flyleaf preceding the Prefatory Note.

4. Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans* (London: Oxford University Press, 1933), p. 314.

5. Throughout this paper, translations of biblical texts are my own.

6. Alan Segal, *Rebecca 's Children: Judaism and Christianity in the Roman World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986).

7. G. Ernest Wright and Reginald H. Fuller, *The Book of the Acts of God: Christian Scholarship Interprets the Bible* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1957).

8. Gabriele Boccaccini, *Beyond the Essene Hypothesis: The Parting of the Ways between Qumran and Enochic Judaism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998).

9. Ibid.

10. The following paradigm of die Progression of Images was previously published in a somewhat different and less developed form in J. Harold Ellens, *Jesus as the Son of Man, the Literary Character. A Progression of Images, Occasional Papers* 45 (Claremont, CA: Institute for Antiquity and Christianity of the Claremont Graduate University, 2003).

11. Margaret S. Odell, "You Are What You Eat: Ezekiel and the Scroll," *JBL* 117 (1998): 229-48.

12. Donald Capps, *Jesus: A Psychological Biography* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2000). See also Paula Fredriksen, *From Jesus to Christ: The Origins of the New Testament Images of Jesus*, 2nd ed. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000).

13. Marvin A. Sweeney, *Ezekiel: Zadokite Priest and Visionary Prophet of the Exile, Occasional Papers* 41 (Claremont, CA: Institute for Antiquity and Christianity of the Claremont Graduate University, 2001), pp. 5-6.

14. Capps, *Jesus: A Psychological Biography*.

15. Florentine* Garcia Martinez, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated: The Qumran Texts in English*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996), pp. 7 and 13-14.

16. *Ibid.*, pp. 13-14. This same description of the redemptive messianic figure is expressed in 11Q13(Me1).

17. George W. E. Nickelsburg, "Son of Man," in *Anchor Bible Dictionary (ABD)*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 6:138.

18. Israel Knohl, *The Messiah before Jesus: The Suffering Servant of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, trans. D. Maisel (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).

19. *Ibid.*

20. *Ibid.*, pp. 75ff.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 76.

22. Boccaccini, *Beyond the Essene Hypothesis*, pp. 137-38

and 147-48.

23. John J. Collins, *Apocalypticism in the Dead Sea Scrolls* (New York: Routledge, 1997), p. 147.

24. Knohl, *Messiah before Jesus*, p. 42.

25. Ibid., pp. 45-46.

26. Ibid., p. 3.

27. Boccaccini, *Beyond the Essene Hypothesis*, pp. 119-62.

28. Ibid., p. 134.

29. Ibid., pp. 137-38 and 147-48.

30. Ibid., p. 149.

31. Unfortunately, it has not been possible for me to examine the manuscripts and fragments themselves, but only the available photographs. On the face of it there seems to be some cogency to Knohl's claim regarding the state of the manuscripts as a result of their being intentionally torn—as well as intentionally preserved.

However, in a personal conversation with James C. Charlesworth over a superb Italian dinner at the Villa Villoresi in Florence during the first Enoch Seminar at the International Conference on Second Temple Judaism (19-23 June 2001), that notable Dead Sea Scrolls scholar stated that he believes it is likely that the fragmentary character of the remains of these hymnic manuscripts is a result of the same process of deterioration from age, exposure, and vermin that caused the fragmentation of other Dead Sea scrolls. Moreover, he does not think highly of Israel Knohl's argument.

32. Philip B. Munoa III, in a lecture delivered in 1995 at the University of Michigan, Department of Near Eastern Studies, argued on the basis of the *Testament of Abraham* that the Ancient of Days in Daniel 7 is Adam in a transcendent state. This thesis was published in more elaborated form in *Four Powers in Heaven: The Interpretation of Daniel 1 in the Testament of Abraham*, JSP Sup 28 (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998).

33. Notice the shift to the plural verb in John 1:51, in contrast with the singular verb in 1:48 and 1:50.

34. Donald Capps (2004), "Beyond Schweitzer and the Psychiatrists: Jesus as Fictive Personality," in *Psychology and the Bible; A New Way to Read the Scriptures*, ed. J. Harold Ellens and Wayne G. Rollins (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2004), pp. 89-124. See also Donald Capps (2004), "Jay Haley's Psychological Portrait of Jesus: A Power Tactician," in Ellens and Rollins, *Psychology and the Bible*, pp. 125-62; Donald Capps (2004), "Erik Erikson's Psychological Portrait of Jesus: Jesus as Numinous Presence," in Ellens and Rollins, *Psychology and the Bible*, pp. 163-208; Donald Capps, *Jesus: A Psychological Biography* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2000); and Donald Capps (2004), "A Psychobiography of Jesus," in Ellens and Rollins, *Psychology and the Bible*, pp. 59-70.

35. Charles R. Joy, Introduction, "Schweitzer's Conception of Jesus," in Schweitzer, *Psychiatric Study of Jesus*, p. 21.

36. Ibid.

37. Ibid., **p.** 25.

