

The Present State of the 'Third Quest' for the Historical Jesus: Loss and Gain¹

The so-called third quest for the historical Jesus, which traces its origins from work done by scholars like E.P. Sanders in the mid-1980s, has been a source of controversy since its inception. The most controversial of all its manifestations has been the group known as the Jesus Seminar, based in Sonoma, California², and co-chaired by Dr. John Dominic Crossan and Dr. Robert W. Funk³. The Seminar in general and Crossan in particular have championed a picture of Jesus as a Jewish-peasant equivalent of a wandering Cynic

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philosopher⁴. Jesus is depicted by Crossan as a social revolutionary opposed to the powers that be, be those powers the priestly hierarchy in the Jerusalem temple or the larger patron-client network in the Roman Empire. An egalitarian feminist, Jesus sought to subvert the hierarchical structures of his day by welcoming one and all to table fellowship and by practicing magic as an alternative to the temple cult. The Seminar tends to deny any future-eschatological element in Jesus' preaching of the kingdom. With future eschatology excluded, Jesus is seen to be calling his audience to open their eyes to the ever-present kingdom of God available to all in their human experience. The vaguely gnostic tone of this kerygma is not unrelated to the Seminar's interest in the Coptic *Gospel of Thomas*.

In fairness, it should be noted that not all members of the Jesus Seminar share these views, and that some members are guided in their research by intense pastoral concerns. For instance, Dr. Marcus Borg, a distinguished member of the Seminar, seeks by his work to help lapsed Christians rediscover Jesus as a meaningful religious figure — a desire reflected in the title of his book *Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time*⁵. Still, the Jesus Seminar as a whole has faced severe criticism for its methods and conclusions. Both the Cynic and the gnostic coloration of its portrait of Jesus are questionable on the grounds of dating of sources and historical context, and the wholesale elimination of future eschatology from Jesus' message flies in the face of its widespread attestation in many different gospel sources and literary forms. Despite the Seminar's protestations to the contrary, it has not avoided the temptation of projecting a modern American agenda onto a first-century Palestinian Jew⁶. It is no wonder, then, that some Catholic scholars in the

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United States, such as Luke Timothy Johnson, have questioned the thrust not only of the Jesus Seminar but also of the third quest in general⁷. The paradox here is that some Catholic critics have adopted a new version of the once-scandalously skeptical position of Rudolf Bultmann: the quest for the historical Jesus is both historically impossible and theologically illegitimate⁸.

Amid the thrust and parry of mutually exclusive positions, often presented in sensationalistic fashion in the American media, one might well ask: has anything positive emerged from the third quest, or has the whole movement of the last decade been a total fiasco and loss, as some conservative Catholics have claimed? It is the contention of this article that, despite the questionable use of the media to popularize

highly dubious theses, and despite the consequent loss of academic credibility on the part of some scholars, seven notable gains for serious research have been achieved by the third quest.

I. The Ecumenical and International Dimension

A first gain has been the truly ecumenical and inter-faith nature of the present scholarly dialogue on the historical Jesus. To a large degree, the first two quests were the work of German Protestants. This is not said to denigrate the contributions of great scholars of the past, but inevitably these two quests were colored by and mostly restricted to the theological concerns of Protestant Germany in the late 19th and early-to-mid-20th centuries. The wide spectrum of scholars, Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, and agnostic, who have participated in the third quest not only in the United States but also in Canada, Britain, Germany, and elsewhere has given an

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international and inter-confessional breadth to the third quest that the former two lacked. To take but a few examples, Ben Witherington, who has stressed the role of Jesus as wisdom teacher, is a conservative Methodist⁹; E.P. Sanders, in a sense the person who launched the third quest, comes from a Methodist background and might best be described as a post-liberal Protestant (though a Texan, he taught for many years in Canada and England)¹⁰; Robert Funk, the founder of the Jesus Seminar, comes out of the Disciples of Christ tradition; N.T. Wright, a perennial opponent of the Jesus Seminar, is an Anglican and the Dean of Lichfield cathedral¹¹; and writers of such diverse views as John Dominic Crossan, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza¹², and myself come from Roman Catholic backgrounds. To this can be added the valuable contributions — indeed, the decades-old impetus — of Jewish scholars such as Geza Vermes of Oxford and more recently Paula Fredriksen of Boston University¹³.

At the beginning of Volume One of my multi-volume study, *A Marginal Jew*, I conjured up the fantasy of an "unpapal conclave", a committee made up of a Catholic, a Protestant, a Jew, and an agnostic, sober historians all, who were locked up in the bowels of the Harvard Divinity School library, put on a spartan diet, and not allowed to emerge until they had hammered out a consensus document on who Jesus of Nazareth was and what he intended in his own time and place¹⁴. While not intended literally — though some unfortunately took it that way — this unpapal conclave was meant to symbolize in graphic fashion the kind of international and inter-faith cooperation on a central and sensitive religious topic that would have been inconceivable not too many decades ago.

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Indeed, in the face of regularly recurring announcements of the demise of the historical-critical method, it should be pointed out that it is precisely historical criticism that has made this dialogue possible across confessional borders by creating a level playing field of research with agreed-upon rules for the procedures of historical inquiry that all can share. It is, after all, historical-critical research that enables scholars of vastly different backgrounds and commitments to propose, test, and adjudicate claims in the public arena by commonly accepted criteria. In fact, it is this maturing, rather than waning, of historical-critical research that has enabled scholars like Sanders to be much more careful than their predecessors about distinguishing strictly historical claims, verifiable by any disinterested practitioner of the academic discipline of history, from theological claims that may be perfectly true but that are known and held by faith.

It is only in the light of this rigorous application of historical standards that one comes to see what was wrong with so much of the first and second quests. All too often, the first and second quests were

theological projects masquerading as historical projects. Now, there is nothing wrong with a historically informed theology or christology; indeed, they are to be welcomed and fostered. But a christology that seeks to profit from historical research into Jesus is not the same thing and must be carefully distinguished from a purely empirical, historical quest for Jesus that prescind from or brackets what is known by faith. This is not to betray faith. It is only to recognize and honor the proper academic distinctions that have created separate departments of theology and history at major universities, each with its own proper scope, sources, methods, and criteria of validation. It is this clarification of distinct methods and goals that has made the present-day inter-faith collaboration possible. Just as the historical Jesus should not have been used as a stalking-horse for nineteenth-century liberal Protestant theology in Germany, so it should not be used today as a stalking-horse for a particular philosophy of language, a particular brand of liberation or feminist theology, or indeed one particular school of late twentieth-century Catholic theology or practice. Let the *historical* Jesus be a truly and solely *historical* reconstruction, with all the lacunae and truncations of the total reality that a purely historical inquiry into a marginal figure of ancient history will inevitably involve. After the purely historical project is finished, there will be more than enough time

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to ask about correlations with Christian faith and academic christology¹⁵.

II. Clarification of the Question of Reliable Sources

A second gain has been a critical rethinking and reexamination of the various texts proposed as reliable sources for the quest¹⁶. In the last few decades, practically every source imaginable has been exploited by one or another scholar. The Jesus Seminar has elevated the Coptic *Gospel of Thomas* to a coequal status with the four canonical gospels in a book appropriately entitled *The Five Gospels*. Actually, when one considers how John's gospel is largely dismissed by the Seminar, the book should have received the more pedestrian title of *The Four Gospels: the Synoptics plus Thomas*. In addition to *Thomas*, Crossan has highlighted the 2d-century apocryphal *Gospel of Peter*¹⁷. Within *Peter*, Crossan detects a primitive *Cross Gospel* that he claims is the key source of the Passion Narratives of all four canonical gospels. Pushing this romance with apocryphal gospels to the extreme, Richard Bauckham has appealed not only to the *Gospel of Peter* but also to the *Protevangelium Jacobi* and the Greek *Infancy Gospel of Thomas* to help resolve the question of the brothers and sisters of Jesus¹⁸. In my view, if we can use the *Infancy Gospel of Thomas*, we can use *Alice in Wonderland* just as well. As for the Coptic *Gospel of Thomas*, the careful saying-by-saying analysis of Michael Fieger persuades me that this gnostic gospel did know at least some of the canonical gospels¹⁹. In the Synoptic-like sayings, it often presents a conflation of Matthew and Luke, rewritten from a gnostic perspective. Hence it cannot serve as an independent source.

In the face of this uncritical romping through the apocrypha, I would urge a return to sobriety. It is a reasonable conclusion of historical-critical research — and not a ploy of apologetics — that

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the four canonical gospels are the only lengthy continuous sources for the historical Jesus that have come down to us. To be sure, the canonical gospels are permeated with the Easter-faith of the early church and must be carefully sifted with the criteria of historicity — of which more anon. But when so sifted, they remain our main sources, if also our main problem. Moreover, I readily grant that John's Gospel, the supreme example of systematic theology and high christology among the four gospels, presents special difficulties. Yet, in my opinion, nuggets of important factual information are preserved in John rather than the Synoptics. These nuggets include Jesus' close connection with the circle of John the Baptist's disciples before his own ministry began, his practice of baptizing followers during his ministry, his frequent trips to

Jerusalem, the duration of his ministry over a number of years, the correct chronology of the Passion, and the non-Passover nature of the Last Supper. Certainly, the discourses in the Fourth Gospel are, in their present form, largely the product of the theology and perhaps the homilies of the Johannine community. But even here, individual logia can provide independent attestation of sayings also found in the Synoptics. John 12,25 on losing and keeping one's life (cf. Mark 8,35 par.; Matt 10,39; Luke 9,24; 14,26) is a striking case in point.

As for the rest of the NT, the debate over the extent to which Jesus' sayings (and a few facts about him) have been preserved in the Epistles, Acts, or Book of Revelation has been extensive and lively, though I tend toward a minimalistic view, feeling sure of only a few clear examples, mainly in Paul (1 Cor 7,10-11; 9,14; 11,23-26; see also Rom 1,3; 15,8; 1 Cor 15,3-5; also James 5,12; Heb 7,14; 5,7-8; Rev 3,3; 16,15). Outside the NT, while one may argue for the authenticity and independence of a few *agrapha*, the only significant independent source is Josephus' *Testimonium Flavianum* in Book 18 of his *Jewish Antiquities* (18.3.3 §63-64). While debate continues over this passage, I am heartened by the fact that a number of recent scholars have basically accepted something like my suggested reconstruction of the authentic core text²⁰.

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But with Josephus, I tend to think that we have exhausted our independent extracanonical sources. Tacitus and Pliny the Younger reflect instead what they have heard Christians of their own day say. Despite various claims, no early rabbinic text (the earliest being the Mishna, composed ca. A.D. 200) contains information about Jesus, and later rabbinic texts simply reflect knowledge of, and mocking midrash on, Christian texts and preaching.

In brief, the real gain here has been a more careful evaluation and critical use of our main sources in the NT along with a more confident acceptance of the core text of Josephus' *Testimonium*, a small but precious piece of independent attestation to Jesus' existence, ministry, and fate. Even if we wind up rejecting most of the other sources proposed by various recent scholars, the critical self-awareness of *why* we reject them is itself a gain.

III. A More Accurate Picture of Palestinian Judaism

A third gain of the present quest is a much more nuanced and variegated picture of Judaism at the time of Jesus. Without too much exaggeration, I think it could be said that many portraits of Jesus drawn by the first and second quests are automatically vitiated by the hopelessly outdated and at times viciously distorted descriptions of first-century Judaism that shape or warp these portraits. If the study of Jesus the Jew is to be taken seriously as a historical project, then the Judaism of the first century must be taken seriously in all its complexity and richness. It cannot be exploited simply as a negative backdrop, for instance as the religion of a fearsome, distant God who demands works-righteousness, against which the merciful Jesus, preaching the gospel of love, is then made to stand out and shine. Whether one looks at the Jesus of Rudolf Bultmann or the Jesus of Günther Bornkamm or the Jesus of Joachim Jeremias, one cannot help but feel that a 1st-century Jew is being stretched out on the procrustean bed of a German-Evangelical understanding of the theology of St. Paul²¹.

Perhaps, then, the single greatest justification of the third quest is its attempt to undo the caricatures of Judaism perpetrated consciously or unconsciously by the first two quests. Of course, this

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via negativa of rejecting the distortions of Judaism in the first two quests does not guarantee a clear and uncontested picture of Judaism in contemporary research. One need only survey the competing portraits of the Pharisees drawn by Morton Smith, Jacob Neusner, E. P. Sanders, Anthony Saldarini, Shaye Cohen, Steve Mason, Günter Stemberger, and Roland Deines to appreciate the witty remark of Prof. Joseph Sievers: we know considerably less about the Pharisees than an earlier generation "knew"²². Nevertheless, there is a positive gain here. One cannot read such works as Sanders's *Judaism: Practice and Belief* or Vermes's *Jesus the Jew* and proceed to repeat the caricatures of Judaism that used to make it the perfect foil of Jesus or Christianity. One is instead challenged to explain where on the complex and confusing map of first-century Judaism one intends to locate Jesus. In my opinion, the phrase "Jesus the Jew" has become an academic cliché. The real challenge is to unpack that phrase and specify *what sort of* 1st-century Jew Jesus was²³.

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It was precisely to underline and pose that question as sharply as possible that I chose the provocative title of my series, *A Marginal Jew*²⁴. "Marginal" was my way of trying to pose the problem of Jesus' precise place on the map of Judaism without resorting to the strategy of speaking about "Judaisms" in the plural, a popular locution in the United States today²⁵. While understandable as a way of overcoming a naïve idea of some sort of monolithic Judaism in the 1st century, "Judaisms" strikes me as a questionable usage. After all, Christianity and indeed Catholicism display today remarkable varieties of expression and practice, yet few if any would want to condemn academics to speak constantly of "Christianities" and "Catholicisms," however much the use of those phrases now and then might help highlight all the diversity hiding under the singular noun. Similarly, in the face of Orthodox, Conservative, Reform, and Reconstructionist Judaism, we still tend to speak in the singular of "modern Judaism". So too, in my opinion, there is a justification for speaking of "ancient Judaism". Most 1st-century Palestinian Jews, for all their differences, agreed upon such basics as Yahweh, the one true God who had chosen his people Israel, as well as on the importance of circumcision, the food laws, the Jerusalem temple, and the Mosaic Torah. Hence, despite the endless quarrels over various practices, there was a "mainstream" Judaism to which Jesus both belonged and yet over against which he consciously made himself marginal in various respects²⁶. It is that paradox in the Jewishness of Jesus that needs to be taken seriously and explored in the context of present-day reconstructions of Palestinian Judaism at the turn of the era. To return, though, to my main point: the third quest deserves credit for its earnest attempt to sketch a historically accurate portrait of 1st-century Judaism in all

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its diversity and vitality and to situate Jesus the Jew firmly within that portrait.

IV. New Insights from Archaeology, Philology, and Sociology

Connected with a better understanding of Judaism at the turn of the era is the fourth gain of the present quest: the intense use of new insights garnered from archaeology, philology, and sociology to locate Jesus more concretely in his time and place. While one can only be amused by the outlandish claims of some scholars about Jesus' connection with Qumran²⁷, Qumran studies have indeed shed light, not so much on Jesus himself as on the religious milieu in which he operated²⁸. Still, some surprising parallels between Qumran and the gospels tempt one to speculation. For instance, in its listing of the various miracles that God will work in the days of the Messiah, 4Q521 displays a tantalizing similarity to Jesus' reply to the disciples of John the Baptist in Matt 11,2-5 par., complete with echoes of the prophet Isaiah and references to restoring sight to the blind and raising the dead. Especially striking is how both texts, right after the wonder of raising the dead, mention the further wonder of bringing good news to the poor (or: meek)²⁹. In a

different vein, documents like 4QMMT, the Temple Scroll, and the Damascus Document have underlined the importance of *hašla4ka*= for pre-70 Judaism in general and the Essenes in particular³⁰. In some

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cases, they shed important light on the various *Streitgespräche* in the gospels that involve legal problems, the hotly contested questions of divorce and Sabbath observance being prime examples³¹.

Qumran has also been of great importance for a better understanding of Palestinian Aramaic. To take but one example: the occurrence of *ma4re4* ("Lord") in the absolute, unmodified state in the Targum of Job (11QtgJob 24,6-7) as a title for God gives the lie to the old claim of Bultmann that such a usage was unthinkable as a title for Yahweh in Palestinian Judaism³². It also raises the intriguing possibility that the one and the same Aramaic word was used as a title of respect for, and even faith in, Jesus during his public ministry, that it was then used as a transcendent title for the risen Jesus in the cultic cry *Maranatha* from the very first days of Jewish-Christian belief and worship, and that it stands behind and helps explain the widespread use of *kyrios* for Jesus in the New Testament writings. Quite probably, Palestinian Jews for Jesus called him *ma4re4* during his public ministry just as the same Jews, now Jews for the risen Lord Jesus, invoked him as *ma4re4* after Easter.

Beyond such individual philological points is the larger question of ideas about the Messiah or Messiahs (here the plural is quite appropriate) circulating among Palestinian Jews around the time of Jesus. The documents found at Qumran have reinforced what was already evident from the OT pseudepigrapha in general: there was no one normative view of a Messiah at the turn of the era. Rather, various views about the Messiah or Messiahs competed or meshed in the minds of those Jews interested in the question. Not every Jew

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was. Indeed, scholars today debate to what extent expectation of some sort of messiah or eschatological savior figure was a widespread or a relatively isolated phenomenon in Palestinian Judaism in the first centuries B.C. and A.D. Especially intriguing is the typology hammered out by John J. Collins in his *The Scepter and the Star*³³. Among the various messianic types scattered in the intertestamental literature, he discerns the figures of a royal Davidic Messiah, a dyarchy of a priestly Messiah and a royal Messiah, the combination of the roles of teacher, priest, and prophet in one figure, and an angelic or heavenly savior figure who bears designations like "Son of Man" or "Son of God". This multiplicity of at times overlapping or meshing messianic types is enlightening for those who see in Jesus' implicit or explicit claims more than one messianic pattern. It seems to me that most of the material that we can trace back to the public ministry of Jesus reflects the pattern of a miracle-working eschatological prophet wearing the mantle of Elijah. Yet in the triumphal entry into Jerusalem and the cleansing of the temple there seems implied a certain royal Davidic claim. It may be that Jesus reflects the syncretistic tendencies of his time in meshing more than one messianic role in his own claim and conduct. The material from Qumran certainly could lend support to this view.

Likewise helpful has been the application of the insights of sociology and cross-cultural anthropology to the third quest³⁴. All too often in the past, the historical Jesus reconstructed by scholars

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betrayed its origins in a university seminar room where abstract topics from Christian theology were readily placed on the lips of a supposedly 1st-century Jew. The insistence by present-day practitioners of the sociology of the New Testament that the historical Jesus be rooted in the soil, customs, and worldview of

first-century Jewish Palestine with its values of honor and shame, its perception of limited goods, its ideas about kinship and marriage, its concern about purity rules, and its complicated political and economic systems is all to the good. One particular aspect of the sociological approach that has had great impact on academic studies in the United States is the question of the women who followed the historical Jesus during his public ministry. The great name here is Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, whose controversial book *In Memory of Her* has had incalculable influence on American academics, both male and female. In the last decade or two, a veritable flood of articles and books on the subject has flowed from American universities and colleges³⁵. While a good deal of the material is obviously written with an eye to present-day problems in both church and society, scholars have

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come to appreciate both the danger of overlooking what is said or implied about women in the gospels and the enrichment of the portrait of the historical Jesus that results from taking the presence and actions of his female followers seriously.

V. Clarification of the Criteria of Historicity

A fifth gain of the third quest is the improvement in the articulation and use of criteria of historicity. When one looks back to the work of Bultmann, one is surprised at how intuitive many of his judgments about historicity were. For instance, one is almost embarrassed to read in his *Geschichte* his argument in favor of the authenticity of Luke 11,20 par., a logion that asserts that Jesus' exorcisms make present the kingdom of God. Bultmann says that this saying can claim "the highest degree of authenticity that we are in a position to accept for a saying of Jesus" because "it is filled with the feeling of eschatological power that the appearance of Jesus must have conveyed"³⁶. The master skeptic of form criticism can be oddly subjective, not to say romantic, when evaluating the historicity of individual sayings. It is relatively rare that Bultmann argues the pros and cons of historicity at great length; usually a short pronouncement suffices. In the very act of studying Jesus' authoritative pronouncements, he creates his own.

The post-Bultmannians were usually more careful. In Ernst Käsemann, Günther Bornkamm, and their colleagues, we begin to see the more explicit articulation of individual criteria of historicity. A somewhat different approach, emphasizing more the arguments that could be fashioned from the supposed Aramaic substratum and poetic rhythm of Jesus' sayings, was championed by Joachim Jeremias and his followers. Yet it is only in the last few decades that the definition and proper application of criteria have been debated at length and refined³⁷. Some criteria that were once widely appealed to have fallen out of favor, while others have been more carefully formulated. For example, an appeal to the presence of Aramaic vocabulary, grammar, and syntax in reconstructed forms

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of the sayings of Jesus seems much less probative of authenticity today than it did perhaps fifty years ago. After all, a good number of the earliest Christians were Palestinian Jews whose native tongue was the same Aramaic Jesus spoke. How do we know that the supposed Aramaic substratum beneath a particular gospel saying goes back to Jesus teaching in A.D. 29 rather than to one of his Palestinian Jewish-Christian disciples teaching in A.D. 35? Likewise, the ease or difficulty with which a gospel saying can be retroverted into Aramaic supplies no sure criterion. Ease of retroversion might depend on the degree to which an Aramaic saying — be it from Jesus or from early Christians — was translated into Greek in a literal, wooden way or in an elegant, creative way sensitive to Greek modes of expression.

In a similar vein, Joachim Jeremias sought to use the distinctive rhythm and rhetorical structures he discerned in the sayings of Jesus as a criterion of authenticity. The problem here is the danger of circular logic. One must first have a fund of sayings that most probably come from Jesus before one can abstract from them particular rhythms and rhetoric distinctive of Jesus. And what if early disciples of Jesus, not as obtuse as those depicted in Mark's Gospel, imitated the rhetorical style of the Master they had listened to for a number of years? Presumably Jesus did not have a monopoly on rhythmic Aramaic and antithetical parallelism in first-century Palestinian Judaism. Similar objections could be raised against criteria that appeal to the Palestinian environment reflected in Gospel sayings, since some of Jesus' Jewish disciples obviously continued to live in Palestine for decades after his crucifixion.

But not all criteria have been found wanting when tested in the fires of debate. Thanks to scholarly dialogue and gradual corrections, critics are able to use some criteria today with a better sense of their proper purpose and limitations. For example, early on the precise distinction between the criterion of embarrassment (or contradiction) on the one hand and the criterion of discontinuity (or dissimilarity) on the other was hazy at best. Ongoing dialogue has helped refine these tools. To take one instance: the historicity of the baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist is based largely on the criterion of embarrassment, not discontinuity³⁸. Both the Baptist and the early

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church practiced a rite of baptism, as apparently did Jesus during his public ministry (John 3,22-4,1; cf. the negation of this embarrassing tradition by the Final Redactor of the gospel in 4,2). Hence the criterion of discontinuity does not apply.

However, the gospel sources betray an increasing uneasiness or embarrassment with the superior, sinless Jesus being baptized with a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins by his supposed inferior, John the Baptist. Thus, Matthew places an explanatory dialogue before the baptism to stress Jesus' superiority to the Baptist (Matt 3,14-15). Luke removes the Baptist from the event by noting his imprisonment by Herod Antipas (3,19-20) before mentioning ever so briefly Jesus' baptism (3,21); no administrator of the rite is explicitly indicated. The Fourth Evangelist suppresses the entire event of Jesus' baptism by John, while retaining the christological theophany, now narrated after the fact by the Baptist and completely detached from the original context of Jesus' baptism (John 1,32-34). Indeed, one might see the theophany itself as the earliest example of a Christian attempt to resolve the inherent embarrassment of Jesus' being baptized by John: no less an authority than God himself declares to Jesus that "*you* [and *not* the Baptist] are my beloved Son" (Mark 1,11 parr.).

While embarrassment, as a distinct criterion, has its own force and value, it also has, like the other criteria, its built-in limitations. First, relatively little material in the gospels falls under this criterion. Second, there is the hermeneutical problem that what *we* might judge embarrassing today might not seem embarrassing for the first Christian Jews. To take a famous instance: a prime example of the criterion of embarrassment has traditionally been the cry of dereliction from the cross (Mark 15,34 par.): "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" Yet the more one appreciates that the Psalms of the suffering just man form an important underlying grid for the theology of the primitive Passion Narrative, and the more one appreciates that allusions to such psalms are scattered throughout the Passion Narratives of the four gospels, and the more one appreciates that Psalm 22 has already been alluded to earlier in the Marcan and Matthean narratives of the dividing of Jesus' garments (Mark 15,24 par.), and the more one appreciates that the opening words of Psalm 22 would be immediately identifiable to Christian Jews as a venerable prayer of lamentation, then the more one must question whether the criterion of embarrassment really applies here.

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Obviously, embarrassment may have been a factor when Luke (23,46), toward the end of the first century, rewrote the Marcan Passion Narrative for a Gentile audience and substituted the much more comforting Ps 31,5 ("Into your hands I commend my spirit") for Psalm 22. But this tells us nothing about the original event. If anything, it highlights the importance of placing the criterion of embarrassment within the context of Jewish sensitivities. The criterion of embarrassment therefore has both distinct limitations as well as distinct advantages.

Needless to say, the same holds true of the criterion of discontinuity. Discontinuity was a favorite criterion first of Bultmann, then of Käsemann, and still later of Norman Perrin. Perrin, in particular, exalted it as the fundamental criterion that allows us to distill an assured minimum of material coming from the historical Jesus³⁹. However, as many critics have pointed out since, discontinuity carries with it a number of problems. We are not so well informed about either Judaism or Christianity in the 1st century A.D. that we can always affirm with certainty that a particular action or teaching of Jesus is unique to him. Moreover, even when we can apply discontinuity, the obsession with what is unique to Jesus can result in a caricature cut off from the Judaism that formed him and the faith of the disciples that he formed. Jesus makes sense as a historical phenomenon and could function as an effective teacher in 1st-century Palestine only if he was very much connected with his past, present, and immediate future. Then, too, what is unique to Jesus is not always identical with what is central to his message. Discontinuity argues, for instance, that Jesus, unlike contemporary Judaism and later Christianity, forbade fasting by his followers. Now, this is a precious nugget of information; it confirms Jesus' sense that the kingdom of God was somehow already present, at least partially, in his ministry. Yet no one would want to make the prohibition of fasting the central or defining characteristic of Jesus' message and mission.

I would suggest that, if we are to continue to use the problematic category of "unique" in describing the historical Jesus, perhaps it is best to use it not so much of individual sayings or deeds of Jesus as of the total *Gestalt*, the total configuration or pattern of this Jew

who proclaimed the present yet future kingdom, who was also an itinerant prophet and miracle worker in the guise of Elijah, who was also a teacher and interpreter of the Mosaic Law, who was also a charismatic leader who called disciples to follow him at great price, who was also a religious personage whose perceived messianic claims wound up getting him crucified by the Roman prefect, in the end, a crucified religious figure who was soon proclaimed by his followers as risen from the dead and Lord of all. It is this total and astounding configuration of traits and claims that makes for the uniqueness of Jesus as a historical figure within 1st-century Judaism.

Another criterion that has been refined in recent decades is the criterion of multiple attestation of sources and forms. Much more than in the past, scholars are aware that multiple attestation means something more than simply counting up the number of occurrences of a particular saying or story. One must be attentive to the intersecting of different sources with different literary forms, all attesting to the same basic idea or tradition. At times, it is perhaps a basic motif of Jesus' preaching rather than a particular saying that enjoys such multiple attestation. Then, too, what is multiply attested may be the *absence* of a particular motif in Jesus' preaching and deeds. For example, the absence of the motif of misogyny is multiply attested in the various wisdom sayings of Jesus (as contrasted with Jewish wisdom and some later Christian views), and this in turn is confirmed by his practice of permitting women to follow him, hear his teaching, and minister to him. But to appreciate fully the importance of a clearly defined criterion of multiple attestation, we should move on to the sixth gain.

VI. Adequate Treatment of the Miracle Tradition

Indirectly connected with the clearer definition and more rigorous use of criteria is a sixth gain of the third quest: a more positive treatment of the miracle tradition in the gospels. Symptomatic of the disdain for the topic among the practitioners of *Religionsgeschichte* at the beginning of the 20th century is the remark of Wilhelm Bousset in his *Kyrios Christos*: "We are still able to see clearly how the earliest tradition of Jesus' life was still relatively free from the miraculous"⁴⁰. Actually, this stance simply

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reflects the intellectual inheritance of the Enlightenment. A famous popular expression of the same mindset in the United States in the early 19th century was an edition of the gospels published by Thomas Jefferson, who conveniently omitted all the miracles⁴¹. Bultmann, of course, was not so uncritical, though little more than a page of his *Jesus and the Word* focuses directly on Jesus' performance of miracles. If anything, the treatment of Jesus' miracles is even more jejune in Bultmann's *Theology of the New Testament*⁴². The post-Bultmannians were hardly more sanguine about the subject. Hans Conzelmann devotes a single paragraph to Jesus' miracles in his article on Jesus in the 3d edition of the *RGG*; Günther Bornkamm gives the subject some three pages out of 231 pages (counting according to the pagination in the English translation) in his book *Jesus of Nazareth*⁴³. In contrast, Martin Dibelius dedicated a short chapter to miracles in his *Jesus* book⁴⁴, but one must admit that, until recently, the post-Bultmannian refusal to give Jesus' miracles extensive treatment has prevailed in many reconstructions of the historical Jesus.

It is in this neglected area that various participants in the third quest have made solid contributions, though at times in a back-handed way. The great example of the back-handed contribution early on was the book by Morton Smith, *Jesus the Magician*⁴⁵. Despite the sensationalistic portrayal of Jesus as a magician secretly practicing libertine rituals, Smith was right to criticize the unbalanced Bultmannian picture focusing on Jesus as a teacher and preacher of the word. Such a truncated picture, claimed Smith,

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largely ignored the massive presence of the miracle tradition in the sources, a tradition that went back to the historical Jesus and helped explain his immense — if ultimately fatal — popularity with the Palestinian crowds. Crossan took up and popularized Smith's insight, including (unfortunately, in my view) the identification of Jesus' miracles with Hellenistic magic⁴⁶. Other scholars, such as E.P. Sanders and David Aune, confirmed Smith's positive insight about the importance of the miracles for understanding the historical Jesus, although they remained chary of Smith's enthusiastic championing of the label "magician" as an overall description of Jesus⁴⁷. Individual monographs, such as Graham Twelftree's *Jesus the Exorcist* and Stevan Davies's *Jesus the Healer*, have continued to bolster the miracle tradition's claim to basic historicity⁴⁸.

Still, as I came to treat the subject in Volume Two of *A Marginal Jew*, I felt that the entire question needed a fresh and full airing, beginning with basic methodological problems⁴⁹. As one approaches this contentious subject, one must be clear from the start about what exactly a historian *qua* historian can say about Jesus' miracles. In my view, the claim that a particular event is an instance of God directly working a miracle in human affairs is, of its nature, a philosophical or theological claim that a historian may indeed record and study but cannot, given the nature of his or her discipline, verify. The assertion that God has acted directly in a given situation to perform a miracle is an assertion that can be affirmed and known as true only in the realm of faith.

Therefore, in the quest for the historical Jesus, what a historian

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acting within the restrictions of his or her academic discipline can do is ask a more modest question: whether the *claim* or *belief* that Jesus performed miracles during his public ministry goes back to the historical Jesus and his actions or whether instead it is an example of the faith and missionary propaganda of the early church retrojected onto the historical Jesus. As we have seen, Bousset claimed that the latter was the case, and many in the Bultmannian tradition have tended partly or wholly to agree. It is this older *religionsgeschichtlich* consensus that the many participants in the third quest have questioned. Many scholars today would emphasize that miracle working, faith healing, or exorcism formed a major part of Jesus' public ministry and contributed in no small degree to the favorable attention of the crowds and the unhealthy attention of the authorities.

In support of this emerging trend in the third quest, I maintain that a number of the criteria argue forcefully in favor of the global assertion that, during his public ministry, Jesus claimed to work what we would call miracles and that his followers — and at times even his enemies — thought he did so.

(a) The single most important criterion in this question is the multiple attestation of sources and forms. Every gospel source (Mark, Q, the special Matthean source, the special Lucan source, and John) as well as Josephus in Book 18 of his *Jewish Antiquities* (*Ant.* 18.3.3 §63-64) affirms that Jesus performed a number of miracles. This multiple attestation of sources is complemented by the multiple attestation of literary forms. For example, in Mark, Q, and John, both *narratives about* Jesus and *sayings of* Jesus (in addition, at times, to statements by other people) affirm Jesus' miracle-working activity.

(b) Closely intertwined with the criterion of multiple attestation of sources and forms is the criterion of coherence. The various narratives *about* Jesus and *sayings of* Jesus from many different sources do not simply lie side by side like discrete and hermetically sealed units. In a remarkable, unforced way they converge, mesh, and mutually support one another. For example, the various narratives of exorcisms in Mark, such as the Gerasene demoniac in Mark 5,1-20 or the possessed boy in Mark 9,14-29, cry out for some deeper explanation. What is the meaning of these exorcisms? How do they fit into Jesus' overall proclamation and ministry? The Marcan narratives, taken by themselves, do not say. But the various

sayings about exorcism in both Mark and Q give the answer in terms of God's powerful reign already present and vanquishing the power of Satan over the lives of individual members of God's chosen people. Likewise, many individual healing narratives in Mark lack any wider explanation, which instead is given by the Q logion of Jesus in Matt 11,5-6 par.: the hoped-for healing of God's people in the end-time, prophesied by Isaiah, is now coming to pass. What is noteworthy here is how deeds and sayings cut across different sources and form-critical categories to create a meaningful whole. This neat, elegant, and unforced "fit" argues strongly for the basic historicity of the miracle tradition in the gospels.

One could add secondary arguments from the other criteria, though their probative value in this case is debatable. For example, discontinuity does point out that accounts of Jesus' miracles were written down by Mark and Q some forty years after the events narrated. By comparison, written versions of the miracle traditions of Apollonius of Tyana, H9oni the Circle Drawer, and Hanina ben-Dosa were composed only centuries after the events recorded. Then, too, in the early rabbinic sources, H9oni and H9anina are represented as holy men whose powerful prayers were answered with needed rainfall or the healing of illness. They themselves, though, in the earliest traditions, are not represented as *miracle-workers* in the strict sense of that term — the sense in which Jesus was considered a *miracle-worker* during his public ministry.

Minor support might also be sought from the striking fact that, far from engaging in wild legendary creations of names of petitioners, beneficiaries, and places, most miracle stories are bereft of such concrete information. Indeed, a later gospel such as Matthew sometimes drops these traits when they exist in Mark. All the more noteworthy, then, are the very rare cases where such names do occur: namely, the raising of

the daughter of Jairus, the healing of the blind Bartimaeus near Jericho, and the raising of Lazarus at Bethany. I hasten to add that these minor considerations are just that, minor. But they may have a certain confirmatory force when added to the arguments from the major criteria of multiple attestation and coherence.

Nevertheless, there is a logical Achilles' heel in this global argument, especially in regard to the criterion of multiple attestation. At first glance, the multiple attestation is massive and impressive. But what if we examined the various miracle stories in the different

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sources one by one and found out that each one turned out to be a creation of the early church? The initially impressive argument from multiple attestation would collapse. Hence, after my chapter on the global argument for historicity, I felt that intellectual honesty demanded that I proceed to probe every single miracle story in the four gospels to see whether this objection held. After some four hundred pages of testing, I came to the conclusion that at least some of the miracle stories and sayings went back to the historical Jesus. The tally includes two or three exorcisms, various healings of blind, deaf, and generally sick people, and sayings of Jesus that affirm that he performed exorcisms and healings, material spread over the Marcan, Q, special Lucan, and Johannine traditions. Indeed, the stories of raising the dead found in Mark, the special Lucan tradition, and John, plus an assertion about raising the dead in a Q saying (Matt 11,5-6 par.) make it likely that, during his public ministry, Jesus claimed to have raised the dead. So much for an Enlightenment Jesus. As for the so-called "nature miracles" (a very inadequate category for various types of miracles), they did not fare as well in my testing. In my opinion, only the feeding of the multitude has a fair claim to go back to some remarkable event in Jesus' lifetime.

Still, the upshot of this lengthy inventory is basically positive. Not only the global argument but also the probing of all the individual miracle stories and sayings point to a historical Jesus who claimed and was believed by his disciples to have worked miracles during his public ministry. This conclusion, in turn, has great significance for an overall picture of the historical Jesus. Apart from the Jesus Seminar, most participants in the third quest would agree that Jesus was, at the very least, an eschatological prophet proclaiming the imminent coming of God's definitive rule and kingdom, a rule and kingdom made present even now in Jesus' authoritative teaching and mighty deeds of healing. As a number of sayings from different sources (like Mark 3,24-27; Matt 11,5-6 par.; Luke 11,20 par.) make clear, Jesus' exorcisms and healings are not just kind deeds to distressed individuals but signs and partial realizations of God's final victory over sin, illness, death, and Satan as he liberates and rules his people Israel "in the last days".

But this insight brings us to a further point. If Jesus presented himself as an eschatological prophet who performed a whole series of miracles, what Old Testament figure or model would naturally be conjured up in the minds of 1st-century Palestinian Jews? In the

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Jewish Scriptures, only three great prophetic figures perform a whole series of miracles: Moses, Elijah, and Elisha. Of these three, Moses never raises an individual dead person to life. And if we ask which of these three is expected to return to Israel in the end-time to prepare it for God's definitive reign, the answer from Malachi and Ben Sira through the intertestamental writings to the rabbinic literature is: Elijah. I would therefore contend that it is not the early Marcan, Q, or Johannine traditions that first thought of Jesus in terms of the miracle-working, eschatological prophet wearing the mantle of Elijah, though they certainly may have developed this idea. The traditions coming from the historical Jesus strongly suggest that he consciously chose to present himself to his fellow Israelites in this light. How this coheres — or whether it coheres — with the gospel traditions that portray Jesus as the awaited Davidic Messiah or present him speaking of himself as the Son of Man is a problem with which I must still grapple. However one views the

relationship among these competing traditions and titles, I think that the critically sifted data of the gospels demand that the depiction of Jesus as the eschatological prophet working miracles à la Elijah must be a key element in the reconstruction of the historical Jesus — which is to say, in effect, that the miracle tradition is likewise a key element. The validation of this insight is a major contribution of the third quest.

VII. Taking the Jewishness of Jesus Seriously

Finally, many aspects of the six gains already mentioned in this article contribute to a seventh gain: an emphasis that was theoretically affirmed in the past but hardly ever exploited to its full potential — namely, the Jewishness of Jesus. As we look at the proliferation of titles and subtitles of books like *Jesus the Jew*, *The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant*, or *A Marginal Jew*, we can sense a shift in the very way scholars of any stripe feel they must approach the question today. And yet this new — or revitalized — orientation creates a new set of problems for scholars. For example, what writings are considered most relevant in defining the Palestinian Judaism that formed Jesus and his earliest followers? Needless to say, one must first look to the Jewish Scriptures. Yet nothing like a closed canon existed at the time, and one must wonder what an open and fluctuating canon would have meant to Galilean peasants as distinct from learned élites in Jerusalem. Moreover,

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within the corpus of Jewish Scriptures, one must ask what books seem to have shaped Jesus' message the most. Certainly, Isaiah and the Psalms appear to be better candidates than Leviticus and Chronicles.

At the same time, we cannot think of Jesus endlessly poring over scrolls like some scribe housed at Qumran or in Jerusalem. Much of the Jewish Scriptures probably entered his memory and imagination through public reading and preaching. In turn, we must ask what interpretive, homiletic, or midrashic traditions mediated the Scriptures to Jesus. Are we to look primarily at what we call the Old Testament pseudepigrapha of an early date, or at some of the writings from Qumran that do not seem to be distinctive of that community but rather reflect widely disseminated ideas at the time, or should we look into the future, to the classical Targums or the early rabbinic literature, with all the massive problems of dating that involves⁵⁰?

On the other hand, to what extent should we presuppose that Jesus had contact with the hellenized cities of Galilee like Sepphoris, the subject of much recent archaeological work, publication, and speculation⁵¹? Are we to imagine that he imbibed Greek culture at the Sepphoris theater? Or should we take seriously the gospel picture, in which Jesus frequents Jewish towns and villages in Galilee but is never active in any large hellenized city in Palestine with the obvious exception of Jerusalem⁵²? This in turn raises the question of the validity of the whole approach of some members of the Jesus Seminar, who have so emphasized the pagan Greco-Roman background of Jesus' life and preaching and his similarity to a wandering Cynic philosopher that some of the Seminar's opponents have accused them of engaging in a new de-Judification of Jesus⁵³.

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While I would not go that far, I think that the heavy emphasis by some scholars on larger pagan Greco-Roman cultural forces has obscured the specific Palestinian-Jewish coloration of this man from Nazareth. To be sure, Hellenistic culture had long since penetrated Palestine⁵⁴. But the degree and nature of such penetration probably varied a great deal from city to town or from town to village, and various Jews responded variously to the cultural incursion, some consciously embracing it, others consciously seeking to avoid or exclude it, and others unconsciously imbibing it while remaining in their own eyes faithful Jews⁵⁵.

The exact extent of Hellenistic influence on Jesus himself is certainly debatable, and I do not favor an apologetic stance that would seek to exclude it entirely. Various aspects of Jesus' ministry, such as the model of the itinerant religious figure recruiting disciples who travel with him, may reflect wider Greco-Roman cultural currents. Nevertheless, I think that the sources we possess argue strongly that the preponderance of religious and cultural influences molding his life and message were native Palestinian-Jewish, however this category is more precisely defined. In brief, apart from the Jesus Seminar, most participants in the third quest, be they E.P. Sanders, James Charlesworth, or Craig Evans, have helped make "Jesus the Jew" more than just a fashionable academic slogan.

After having been militantly historical and non-theological throughout this article, I would like, paradoxically, to conclude with a theological postscript on the Jewishness of Jesus. In my opinion, the third quest's emphasis on the Jewishness of Jesus has willy-nilly made a lasting contribution to christology. No one could be stronger than myself when it comes to insisting on the distinction between the area of academic history called the quest for the historical Jesus and the branch of theology (i.e., faith seeking understanding) called christology. Yet theology, unlike basic Christian faith, is a cultural artifact reflecting the dominant intellectual tendencies of a given

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time and place. Given the rise of history as a critical, academic discipline in the West in the 19th century, any christology that seeks to be intellectually and academically respectable in a European-North American context must ask how it should incorporate insights from the third quest into its theological project.

I would suggest that one definite gain that must be incorporated is the last one I have listed, the true and thorough Jewishness of Jesus. From the Council of Chalcedon onwards, the touchstone of genuine Christian faith in Christ has been the formula "truly divine and truly human"⁵⁶. Yet it is not too much of an exaggeration to say that, in defense of the "truly divine," the "truly human" has sometimes been obscured or swallowed up in a sort of crypto-monophysitism. What the third quest can supply as an aid to regaining the Chalcedonian balance is the firm *basso continuo* of "truly Jewish" as the concrete, historical expression and underpinning of the theological "truly human". To speak in Johannine terms: when the Word became flesh, the Word did not simply take on an all-purpose, generic, one-size-fits-all human nature. Such a view would not take seriously the radical historicity of both human existence and divine revelation. The Word became truly flesh insofar as the Word became truly Jewish. No true Jewishness, no true humanity. Hence, contrary to the charge that the high christology of orthodox Christianity necessarily leads to a covert theological anti-Semitism, I think that a proper understanding of the Chalcedonian formula, illuminated by the third quest, necessarily leads to a ringing affirmation of the Jewishness of the flesh the Word assumed. Even if the third quest has no other impact on contemporary christology, the emphatic reaffirmation of the Jewishness of Jesus will make the whole enterprise worthwhile. Something lasting will have been gained.

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722 Flanner Hall
University of Notre Dame
Notre Dame, IN 46556

John P. MEIER

SUMMARY

Despite the questionable method and positions of the Jesus Seminar, the third quest for the historical Jesus has resulted in seven notable gains as compared with the old quests. (1) The third quest has an ecumenical and international character. (2) It clarifies the question of reliable sources. (3) It presents a more accurate picture of first-century Judaism. (4) It employs new insights from archaeology, philology, and sociology. (5) It clarifies the application of criteria of historicity. (6) It gives proper attention to the miracle tradition. (7) It takes the Jewishness of Jesus with utter seriousness.

Notes:

¹ As part of the celebration of the ninetieth anniversary of the founding of the Pontifical Biblical Institute (May 6-8, 1999), I was invited to address the assembled scholars and students on the present state of the so-called third quest for the historical Jesus, particularly in the English-speaking world, and most particularly in the United States. Consequently, I have restricted discussion of the literature largely to works written recently by English-speaking scholars. This decision arose from the purely utilitarian goal of giving this essay a necessary focus and delimitation. No slight is intended toward the many important scholars writing in other languages. For recent full-length German contributions that are now happily available in English, see J. GNILKA, *Jesus of Nazareth. Message and History* (Peabody, MA 1997; German original 1993); J. BECKER, *Jesus of Nazareth* (New York – Berlin, 1998; German original 1996); G. THEISSEN – A. MERZ, *The Historical Jesus* (Minneapolis 1998; German original 1996).

I wish to dedicate this article to all the Jesuit professors, living or deceased, whose lectures, notes, and books at the Gregorian University and the Biblical Institute guided me from my first steps in theological studies up to my doctoral thesis in Matthew's Gospel. Their devoted lives of scholarship were and are a shining example to their students of how a scholar should live as a believer and a believer should work as a scholar.

² Publications reflecting the work of the Jesus Seminar include R.W. FUNK – B. SCOTT – J.R. BUTTS, *The Parables of Jesus. Red Letter Edition* (Sonoma CA, 1988); R.W. FUNK – R.W. HOOVER, *The Five Gospels* (New York 1993); R.W. FUNK and the Jesus Seminar, *The Acts of Jesus* (San Francisco 1998).

³ Examples of book-length expositions by the prolific Crossan include *The Historical Jesus. The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (San Francisco 1991); *Jesus. A Revolutionary Biography* (San Francisco 1994); *Who Killed Jesus?* (San Francisco 1995); *The Birth of Christianity* (San Francisco 1998). Funk's work is summarized in *Honest to Jesus* (San Francisco 1996).

⁴ A major source of such an approach is the work of F.G. DOWNING, *Christ and the Cynics* (JSOT Manuals 4; Sheffield 1988); id., *Cynics and Christian Origins* (Edinburgh 1992). For a critique of the approach, see H.D. BETZ, "Jesus and the Cynics: Survey and Analysis of a Hypothesis", *JR* 74 (1994) 453-475; P.R. EDDY, "Jesus as Diogenes? Reflections on the Cynic Jesus Thesis", *JBL* 115 (1996) 449-469; for replies, see D. SEELEY, "Jesus and the Cynics Revisited", *JBL* 116 (1997) 704-712; F.G. DOWNING, "Deeper Reflections on the Jewish Cynic Jesus", *JBL* 117 (1998) 97-104. Besides Crossan, scholars associated with the "Cynic thesis" include B. Mack and L. Vaage.

⁵ See, e.g., M.J. BORG, *Jesus. A New Vision* (San Francisco 1987); id., *Jesus in Contemporary Scholarship* (Valley Forge, PA 1994); id., *Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time* (San Francisco 1994).

⁶ For a detailed survey of the work of Funk, Crossan, Borg, the Jesus Seminar in general, and other participants in the third quest (including the present writer) that seeks to be eminently fair to all parties, see M.A. POWELL, *Jesus as a Figure in History* (Louisville 1998).

⁷ L.T. JOHNSON, *The Real Jesus* (San Francisco 1996); id., *Living Jesus* (San Francisco 1999); cf. R. BULTMANN, *Das Verhältnis der urchristlichen Christusbotschaft zum historischen Jesus* (Heidelberg 1962).

⁸ Interestingly, seeking refuge in Bultmann's approach has not been the usual solution employed recently by most conservative and middle-of-the-road Protestant scholars; see, e.g., G.R. BEASLEY-MURRAY, *Jesus and the Kingdom of God* (Grand Rapids 1986); B. WITHERINGTON, III, *Jesus the Sage* (Minneapolis 1994); C.A. EVANS, *Jesus and His Contemporaries* (AGJU 25; Leiden 1995); C. L. BLOMBERG, *Jesus and the Gospels* (Nashville 1997); D.C. ALLISON, *Jesus of Nazareth. Millenarian Prophet* (Minneapolis 1998).

⁹ B. WITHERINGTON, III, *The Christology of Jesus* (Minneapolis 1990); id., *Jesus the Sage* (Minneapolis 1994); id., *The Jesus Quest* (Downers Grove, IL 1995).

¹⁰ E.P. SANDERS, *Jesus and Judaism* (Philadelphia 1985); *The Historical Figure of Jesus* (London 1993).

¹¹ N.T. WRIGHT, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (Minneapolis 1996).

¹² E. SCHÜSSLER FIORENZA, *In Memory of Her* (New York 1987); id., *Jesus. Miriam's Child and Sophia's Prophet* (New York 1994).

¹³ G. VERMES, *Jesus the Jew* (Philadelphia 1973); id., *Jesus and the World of Judaism* (Philadelphia 1983); id., *The Religion of Jesus the Jew* (Minneapolis 1993); P. FREDRIKSEN, *From Jesus to Christ* (New Haven – London 1988).

¹⁴ J.P. MEIER, *A Marginal Jew. Rethinking the Historical Jesus* (Anchor Bible Reference Library; 2 vols.; New York 1991, 1994) I, 1-2.

¹⁵ On this whole question, see MEIER, *A Marginal Jew*, I, 196-201.

¹⁶ To avoid multiplying notes, I refer the reader to the references listed in my treatment of the source question in *A Marginal Jew*, I, 41-166.

¹⁷ J.D. CROSSAN, *The Cross That Spoke* (San Francisco 1988).

¹⁸ R. BAUCKHAM, "The Brothers and Sisters of Jesus: An Epiphanian Response to John P. Meier", *CBQ* 56 (1994) 686-700. See my response in "On Retrojecting Later Questions from Later Texts: A Reply to Richard Bauckham", *CBQ* 59 (1997) 511-527.

¹⁹ M. FIEGER, *Das Thomasevangelium* (NTAbh 22; Münster 1991).

²⁰ See, e.g., WITHERINGTON, *The Jesus Quest*, 162-163, 276 n. 1; B.D. EHRMAN, *The New Testament. A Historical Introduction to the Early Christian Writings* (New York – Oxford 1997) 189. While admitting that my approach has simplicity in its favor, THEISSEN – MERZ, *The Historical Jesus*, 65-74, prefer a hypothetical reconstruction that would have been neutral or even positive toward Jesus; however, they do not offer the precise wording of such a text for consideration.

²¹ See, e.g., R. BULTMANN, *Jesus and the Word* (London 1934); G. BORNKAMM, *Jesus of Nazareth* (New York 1960); J. JEREMIAS, *New Testament Theology. Volume One: The Proclamation of Jesus* (London 1971).

²² For a few examples of the huge literature on the subject, see, e.g., M. SMITH, "Palestinian Judaism in the First Century", *Israel: Its Role in Civilization* (ed. M. DAVIS) (New York 1956) 67-81; S.J.D. COHEN, "The Significance of Yavneh: Pharisees, Rabbis and the End of Jewish Sectarianism", *HUCA* 55 (1984) 27-53; id., *From the Maccabees to the Mishnah* (Philadelphia 1987) 124-164; A.J. SALDARINI, *Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees in Palestinian Society* (Wilmington, DE 1988); E.P. SANDERS, *Jewish Law from Jesus to the Mishna* (London 1990) 97-254; id., *Judaism. Practice & Belief 63 BCE–66CE*

(London 1992) 380-451; J. NEUSNER, *The Rabbinic Traditions about the Pharisees before 70* (3 vols.; Leiden 1971); id., "Mr. Sanders' Pharisees and Mine", *SJT* 44 (1991) 73-95; id., "The Mishna in Philosophical Context and Out of Canonical Bounds", *JBL* 112 (1993) 291-304; S. MASON, *Flavius Josephus on the Pharisees* (SPB 39; Leiden 1991); C.A. EVANS, "Mishna and Messiah 'In Context': Some Comments on Jacob Neusner's Proposals", *JBL* 112 (1993) 267-289; G. STEMBERGER, *Jewish Contemporaries of Jesus. Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes* (Minneapolis 1995). For a *Forschungsgeschichte* on the Pharisees up to the 1950s, see R. DEINES, *Die Pharisäer* (WUNT 101; Tübingen 1997). A sober counterbalance to Deines' relative optimism about identifying the Pharisees and Pharisaic teaching is found in J. Sievers's fine essay, "Who Were the Pharisees?" *Hillel and Jesus* (ed. J.H. CHARLESWORTH – L.L. JOHNS) (Minneapolis 1997) 137-155. On p. 138 he remarks: "After over two decades of research [from Jacob Neusner to Steve Mason], there is at least one assured result: we know considerably less about the Pharisees than an earlier generation 'knew'".

²³ On the vexed problem of Jewish identity in the first centuries B.C. and A.D., see S.J.D. COHEN, *The Beginnings of Jewishness: Boundaries, Varieties, Uncertainties* (Hellenistic Culture and Society 31; Berkeley – Los Angeles – London 1999).

²⁴ I use "marginal Jew" not as an answer to the question but a way of posing the question. What I definitely do not intend by the phrase is any attenuation or elimination of the true Jewishness of Jesus. After all, from a sociological point of view, the sectarians at Qumran can be labeled "marginal" Jews, yet no one would question the intensity and commitment of their form of Judaism.

²⁵ See, e.g., J. NEUSNER – W. S. GREEN – E. FRERICHS (eds.), *Judaisms and Their Messiahs at the Turn of the Christian Era* (Cambridge 1987); Neusner gives a spirited and nuanced defense of the locution "Judaisms" in his preface, pp. ix-xiv.

²⁶ Somewhat similarly, Sanders argues for a "common Judaism" in *Judaism. Practice & Belief*, 45-303.

²⁷ See, e.g. B.E. THIERING, *Jesus and the Riddle of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (San Francisco 1992); R.H. EISENMAN, *James, the Brother of Jesus* (New York 1996).

²⁸ From the vast literature on the subject, see, e.g., J. MURPHY-O'CONNOR, "Qumran and the New Testament", *The New Testament and Its Modern Interpreters* (ed. E.J. EPP – G.W. MACRAE) (Atlanta 1989) 55-71; J. A. FITZMYER, *Responses to 101 Questions on the Dead Sea Scrolls* (New York – Mahwah, NJ 1992); J.J. COLLINS, *The Scepter and the Star* (Anchor Bible Reference Library; New York 1995); id., "Ideas of Messianism in the Dead Sea Scrolls", *The Dead Sea Scrolls and Christian Faith* (ed. J.H. CHARLESWORTH – W.P. WEAVER) (Harrisburg, PA 1998) 20-41; H. STEGEMANN, *The Library of Qumran* (Grand Rapids 1998).

²⁹ Amid all the similarities, one must also honestly note the differences. In the Matthean text, proclaiming good news to the poor is the climax and conclusion of the list. 4Q521 breaks off soon after mentioning the proclamation of good news to the poor, but apparently other saving acts of God were listed.

³⁰ On 4Q521, see E. PUECH, "Une apocalypse messianique (4Q521)", *RevQ* 15, no. 60 (1992) 475-522; J.D. TABOR – M.O. WISE, "4Q521 'On Resurrection' and the Synoptic Gospel Tradition. A Preliminary Study", *Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha* 10 (1992) 149-162; COLLINS, *The Scepter and the Star*, 117-122; C.A. EVANS, "Jesus and the Dead Sea Scrolls from Qumran Cave 4", *Eschatology, Messianism, and the Dead Sea Scrolls* (ed. C.A. EVANS – P.W. FLINT) (Grand Rapids 1997) 91-100, esp. 95-97.

³¹ On the question of the similarity of the prohibition of divorce by Jesus (Mark 10,2-12; Matt 5,32 || Luke 16,18; cf. 1 Cor 7,10-11) to prohibitions present in some of the documents found at Qumran (11QTemple 57,17-19; CD 4,20-5,10), see J.A. FITZMYER, "The Matthean Divorce Texts and Some New Palestinian

Evidence", *To Advance the Gospel* (Grand Rapids 21998) 79-111. On Sabbath observance in the teaching of Jesus and the Essenes, see MEIER, *A Marginal Jew*, II, 756-757 n. 146.

³² See J.A. FITZMYER, "The Contribution of Qumran Aramaic to the Study of the New Testament", *A Wandering Aramean* (SBLMS 25; Missoula 1979) 85-113; id., "The Semitic Background of the New Testament Kyrrios-Title", *ibid.*, 115-142. The now outdated claim of Bultmann is found in his *Theology of the New Testament* (2 vols.; London 1952, 1955) I, 51.

³³ COLLINS, *The Scepter and the Star*; id., "Ideas of Messianism in the Dead Sea Scrolls", 20-41; see also NEUSNER et al. (eds.), *Judaisms and Their Messiahs*; J.H. CHARLESWORTH (ed.), *The Messiah* (Minneapolis 1992).

³⁴ Not surprisingly, the sociology of the New Testament has been used more successfully in treating Paul in particular and early Christianity in general (including the final form of individual gospels), where basic data are more abundant and less contested; see, e.g., A.J. MALHERBE, *Social Aspects of Early Christianity* (Baton Rouge, LA – London 1977); G. THEISSEN, *Sociology of Early Palestinian Christianity* (Philadelphia 1978); id., *The Gospels in Context* (Minneapolis 1991); B. HOLMBERG, *Paul and Power* (Philadelphia 1978); id., *Sociology and the New Testament* (Minneapolis 1990); H.C. KEE, *Christian Origins in Sociological Perspective* (Philadelphia 1980); B.J. MALINA, *The New Testament World. Insights from Cultural Anthropology* (Atlanta 1981); id., *Christian Origins and Cultural Anthropology* (Atlanta 1986); W.A. MEEKS, *The First Urban Christians* (New Haven – London 1983); C. OSIEK, *What Are They Saying about the Social Setting of the New Testament?* (New York – Ramsey, NJ 1984); R.A. HORSLEY – J.S. HANSON, *Bandits, Prophets, and Messiahs* (Minneapolis 1985); J.H. ELLIOTT (ed.), *Social-Scientific Criticism of the New Testament and Its Social World* (Semeia 35; Decatur, GA 1986); B.J. MALINA – J.H. NEYREY, *Calling Jesus Names* (Sonoma, CA 1988); J.H. NEYREY, *An Ideology of Revolt* (Philadelphia 1988); id., *Honor and Shame in the Gospel of Matthew* (Louisville 1998); R.A. HORSLEY, *The Liberation of Christmas* (New York 1989); id., *Sociology and the Jesus Movement* (New York 1989); J. PILCH – B. MALINA (eds.), *Handbook of Biblical Social Values* (updated edition; Peabody, MA 1998). Reliable application to the historical Jesus is more difficult to come by, though scholars like Theissen and Crossan attempt it in their reconstructions.

³⁵ Only a few examples of treatments of women in the Gospels (some translated from German or Italian) can be mentioned here: E.M. TETLOW, *Women and Ministry in the New Testament* (New York – Ramsey, NJ 1980); E. MOLTMANN-WENDEL, *The Women Around Jesus* (New York 1982); B. WITHERINGTON, III, *Women in the Ministry of Jesus* (SNTSMS 51; Cambridge 1984); M.R. D'ANGELO, "Abba and 'Father': Imperial Theology and the Jesus Traditions", *JBL* 111 (1992) 611-630; K.E. CORLEY, *Private Women, Public Meals. Social Conflict in the Synoptic Tradition* (Peabody, MA 1993); C. RICCI, *Mary Magdalene and Many Others. Women Who Followed Jesus* (Minneapolis 1994); SCHÜSSLER FIORENZA, *Jesus. Miriam's Child, Sophia's Prophet*; I.R. KITZBERGER, "Mary of Bethany and Mary of Magdala – Two Female Characters in the Johannine Passion Narrative: A Feminist, Narrative-Critical Reader-Response", *NTS* 41 (1995) 564-586; W. CARTER, "Getting Martha out of the Kitchen: Luke 10:38-42 Again", *CBQ* 58 (1996) 264-280; B.E. REID, *Choosing the Better Part? Women in the Gospel of Luke* (Collegeville, MN 1996); E.G. WATSON, *Wisdom's Daughters: Stories of Women around Jesus* (Cleveland 1997).

³⁶ R. BULTMANN, *Die Geschichte der synoptischen Tradition* (FRLANT 29; Göttingen 81970) 174.

³⁷ For a discussion of the criteria, see MEIER, *A Marginal Jew*, I, 167-195; an introductory bibliography on the question can be found in the notes on pp. 185-187.

³⁸ On the historicity of Jesus' baptism by John, see Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, II, 100-105. On Jesus' practice of baptizing during his public ministry, see *ibid.*, 120-130.

³⁹ See, e.g., N. PERRIN, *Rediscovering the Teaching of Jesus* (London 1967) 39-43.

⁴⁰ W. BOUSSET, *Kyrios Christos* (Nashville 1970; German original 1913) 98.

⁴¹ T. JEFFERSON, *The Life and Morals of Jesus of Nazareth* (Washington, DC 1904, originally 1819-1820); cf. D.W. ADAMS (ed.), *Jefferson's Extracts from the Gospels* (Princeton 1983).

⁴² In *Jesus and the Word*, some five pages (123-128) out of 154 pages (in the English translation) deal with belief in miracles in general, and little more than a page is devoted to Jesus' performance of miracles. In Bultmann's introductory sketch of the historical Jesus in his *Theology of the New Testament* (1. 3-32), there is not even a separate section on the question of Jesus' miracles.

⁴³ In J. Reumann's English translation (96 pages) of Conzelmann's RGG3 article (*Jesus* [Philadelphia 1973]), the single paragraph on miracles is found on p. 55. Bornkamm's *Jesus of Nazareth* has no separate section on miracles; out of a text of 231 pages (in the English translation), only some three pages (130-133) treat directly of Jesus' miracles.

⁴⁴ M. DIBELIUS, *Jesus* (Sammlung Götschen 1130; ed. W.G. Kümmel; Berlin ⁴1966, originally 1939).

⁴⁵ *Jesus the Magician* (San Francisco 1978).

⁴⁶ CROSSAN, *The Historical Jesus*, 303-353.

⁴⁷ SANDERS, *Jesus and Judaism*, 157-173; D.E. AUNE, "Magic in Early Christianity", *ANRW* II/23.2, 1507-1557.

⁴⁸ G.H. TWELFTREE, *Jesus the Exorcist* (WUNT 2/54; Tübingen 1993); S.L. DAVIES, *Jesus the Healer* (New York 1995). On the wider question, see G. THEISSEN, *The Miracle Stories of the Early Christian Tradition* (Philadelphia 1983; German original 1974); H.C. KEE, *Miracle in the Early Christian World* (New Haven – London 1983); W. KAHL, *New Testament Miracle Stories in their Religious-Historical Setting* (FRLANT 163; Göttingen 1994).

⁴⁹ MEIER, *A Marginal Jew*, II, 509-1038. In these pages I attempt to treat the question in its many dimensions: modern philosophical problems, ancient conceptions and parallels, the ways of categorizing the Gospel miracles, as well as the individual narratives and sayings of Jesus on the subject. To avoid multiplying notes, I simply refer the interested reader to the relevant sections and subsections of vol. 2 that treat the issues that will be mentioned briefly in what follows.

⁵⁰ See, e.g., B. CHILTON, *God in Strength. Jesus' Announcement of the Kingdom* (Sheffield 1987).

⁵¹ See, e.g., E.M. MEYERS et al., *Sepphoris* (Winona Lake, IN 1992); R. M. NAGY et al. (eds.), *Sepphoris in Galilee. Crosscurrents of Culture* (Raleigh, NC 1996).

⁵² The precise nature of Judaism in Galilee at the turn of the era remains a subject of lively debate; see, e.g., S. FREYNE, *Galilee from Alexander the Great to Hadrian – 323 B.C.E. to 135 C.E.* (Wilmington, DE 1980); id., *Galilee, Jesus and the Gospels* (Philadelphia 1988); L.L. LEVINE (ed.), *The Galilee in Late Antiquity* (New York – Jerusalem 1992); R.A. HORSELY, *Archaeology, History, and Society in Galilee* (Valley Forge, PA 1996).

⁵³ On this, see POWELL, *Jesus as a Figure in History*, 16.

⁵⁴ The classic work here, of course, is M. HENGEL, *Judaism and Hellenism* (Minneapolis 1981; German original 21973). It should be noted, however, that the precise degree of Hellenization in Palestine remains debated; see, e.g., L.H. FELDMAN, *Jew and Gentile in the Ancient World* (Princeton 1993).

⁵⁵ The need to distinguish degrees of Hellenization in Palestine according to region and time period was stressed in a lecture delivered by Dr. S. Freyne at the University of Notre Dame, IN, on April 20, 1999, as part of an international conference on "Hellenism in the Land of Israel".

⁵⁶ The definition of Chalcedon (A.D. 451) can be conveniently found in DENZIGER-SCHÖNMETZER, *Enchiridion Symbolorum* (Freiburg ³²1963) 108 at #301: *Theon ale4tho4s kai anthro4pon ale4tho4s*.