

## THE LIFE OF JESUS

CRAIG A. EVANS

My task is to treat the practice of exegesis as it concerns the life of Jesus. In a certain sense, one cannot really exegete the historical Jesus. One exegetes written texts; and Jesus himself wrote nothing. Hence, it is conventional to speak of exegeting the Gospels, which tell us many important things about the life and teaching of Jesus of Nazareth. What then does exegeting the life of Jesus entail? It entails the exegesis of the (historical) story behind the (literary) story. Thus, it is necessary to engage in historical criticism of the Gospels, if we are to make a serious attempt to exegete the life and teaching of Jesus.

Because of the complicated nature of Jesus research, it will be necessary to develop a 'theory of exegesis'; and in doing this, some overlap with the above Chapter on Form, Source, and Redaction Criticism in Part One (on 'Method') of the present volume is unavoidable. My focus, however, has more to do with the historical Jesus, as opposed to the respective theologies and tendencies of the evangelists (as is properly pursued in the above chapter).

### A THEORY OF EXEGESIS

We are after the theology of Jesus; to understand it is in fact to engage in exegesis. We have the respective theologies of the four evangelists, to the extent that we are able accurately to infer these theologies from the Gospels. We have the theologies of Paul and the other New Testament writers. Why not attempt to unpack the theology of Jesus? To ask this question, of course, seems to imply that the evangelists have not faithfully preserved the theology of Jesus. I do not mean to imply that. If that were the case, that is, that the evangelists did not preserve the theology of Jesus, then there would be no hope of recovering and interpreting the message of Jesus. I believe that the evangelists, as well as the tradents who went before them, were conservative caretakers, and that the message of Jesus is in fact preserved in the Gospels. However, the message of

Jesus is not the only thing preserved in the Gospels. This is why Jesus research cannot proceed without carefully taking into account the results of source, form, and redaction criticism.

The message of Jesus has been overlaid with later interpretations and applications. The historical Jesus is much like an old painting, which has become overlaid with a patina. We are accustomed to the patina, and without it, the painting may not look familiar to us. Often times art critics do not want to remove the patina. In a certain sense, it has become part of the painting, part of the art itself. Many Christians feel this way about the Gospels and the historical Jesus. They are not too comfortable with the idea of trying to peak behind the Gospels, of trying to catch a glimpse of Jesus in his original setting. If we are willing to undertake this work, we must be prepared to discover a Jesus whose activities and teachings are in places unexpected, perhaps even strange.

There are three critical methods, mentioned above, that impinge directly on Jesus research: (1) source criticism, (2) form criticism, and (3) redaction criticism. The application of these critical methods has had profound implications for Jesus research. For example, at one time form criticism was thought to make the quest of the historical Jesus 'impossible'.<sup>1</sup> Redaction criticism, in its more ambitious and subjective forms, apparently corroborated this judgment. Source criticism, the saviour of the nineteenth-century quest, has today become a hotbed of disagreement and has generated such a diversity of portraits of Jesus, that, in the opinion of some, current Jesus research has been seriously discredited.<sup>2</sup> In use of these

<sup>1</sup> For the classic assessment of the 'old quest', including the important insight that most participants read their theology and personality into their respective portraits of Jesus, see A. Schweitzer, *Von Reimarus zu Wrede: Eine Geschichte der Leben-Jesu-Forschung* (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1906; 2nd edn, 1913); ET *The Quest of the Historical Jesus: A Critical Study of its Progress from Reimarus to Wrede* (London: A. & C. Black, 1910; with 'Introduction' by J.M. Robinson; New York: Macmillan, 1968). In the aftermath of Schweitzer's work, a pessimistic mood prevailed in Germany, with many regarding the quest historically 'impossible' and theologically 'illegitimate'. For assessment of this aspect of the quest and of the post-Bultmannian response to it, see J.M. Robinson, *A New Quest of the Historical Jesus* (SBT, 25; London: SCM Press; repr. Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1979); repr. *A New Quest of the Historical Jesus and Other Essays* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983).

<sup>2</sup> For a colorful statement of this opinion, see J. Neusner, 'Who Needs "The Historical Jesus"?' *BBR* 4 (1994), pp. 113-26.

three methods, various criteria have been invoked to discuss the authenticity of the Jesus tradition. With these issues in mind, let us briefly review the critical methods and then turn to the criteria of authenticity.

#### A. Source Criticism

For New Testament critics, the major source-critical issue concerns the solution of the Synoptic problem. The high degree of verbal and structural agreement among Matthew, Mark, and Luke has convinced virtually everyone that the solution must be in terms of literary dependence. Two hypotheses have been championed in the last two centuries. The oldest of the two is called the Griesbach-Farmer Hypothesis, or, as its advocates prefer to call it, the Two Gospels Hypothesis. The other is called the Two Document Hypothesis (or Two Source Hypothesis, as its advocates nowadays prefer). The first hypothesis proposes that Matthew was written first, that Luke was written second and made use of Matthew, and that Mark was written last of all and made use of both Matthew and Luke. The second hypothesis proposes that Mark was written first and that Matthew and Luke, independently of one another, made use of Mark and another collection of Jesus' sayings (known as 'Q'). The latter hypothesis today remains the majority view, despite William Farmer's unending efforts to unseat it and return the Griesbach Hypothesis to a position of dominance.

The Two Source Hypothesis still claims the support of the majority of New Testament scholars for the following six reasons.<sup>3</sup>

(1) Mark's *literary style* lacks the polish and sophistication that one regularly encounters in Matthew and Luke. Indeed, Markan style is Semitic and non-literary, and sometimes may even be described as primitive. One must wonder, if Farmer is right, why the Markan evangelist would have chosen time after time to rewrite Matthew and Luke in a cruder and less polished form. Why not simply reproduce one version or the other? Why introduce Semitic words (which are often not found in the Matthean and Lukan parallels) only to have to translate them? It is more probable that Matthew and Luke represent improvements upon Mark. Mark's writing style, when compared to

<sup>3</sup> In the paragraphs that follow, I summarize my arguments found in C.A. Evans, 'Source, Form and Redaction Criticism: The "Traditional" Methods of Synoptic Interpretation', in S.E. Porter and D. Tombs (eds.), *Approaches to New Testament Study* (JSNTSup, 120; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1995), pp. 17-45.

that of Matthew and Luke, supports Markan priority, not posteriority.

(2) In comparing the Synoptics, one observes that Mark's version of a story is sometimes *potentially embarrassing*. Jesus and the disciples are sometimes portrayed in a manner that appears either undignified or possibly at variance with Christian beliefs. One should compare the three accounts of the notice that Jesus was driven/led by the Spirit into the wilderness (Matt. 4:1 = Mark 1:12 = Luke 4:1), the stilling of the storm (Matt. 8:23-27 = Mark 4:35-41 = Luke 8:22-25), and Jesus' treatment by family and acquaintances (Matt. 12:46-50 = Mark 3:31-35 = Luke 8:19-21). In these parallel accounts, we can observe what appear to be Matthean and Lukan efforts to mitigate or remove altogether Mark's embarrassing way of telling the story.

(3) Where there is no Markan parallel, *Matthean and Lukan divergence* is greatest. This phenomenon is explained best with reference to Markan priority, rather than Matthean. There is significant divergence in two areas involving material not found in Mark. We see this in the distribution of the double tradition (i.e. Q) throughout Matthew and Luke. With a few easily explainable exceptions (such as placing at the same point in the narrative John the Baptist's 'brood of vipers' speech and the story of the three temptations), the double tradition is found in different contexts. This has not been convincingly explained by advocates of the Griesbach hypothesis. Why would Luke follow Matthew's narrative sequence, but break up his collections of Jesus' sayings (such as the Sermon on the Mount) and scatter them throughout his Gospel? We also see such divergence in the material special to Matthew (M) and Luke (L). Although a small and important common core of material can be detected in the Matthean and Lukan versions of Jesus' birth and resurrection, we have here a remarkable amount of divergence. In short, what we observe is that, where there is no Mark to follow, this is where Matthew and Luke go their separate ways. This observation is very difficult to explain assuming Matthean priority, but it is exactly what one should expect assuming Markan priority.

(4) Another indication of Markan priority lies in the observation that in some instances, due to omission of Markan details, *Matthew and Luke have created difficulties*. Stein has provided several

examples that illustrate this feature well.<sup>4</sup> Instructive examples include the healing of the paralytic (Matt. 9:1-8 = Mark 2:1-12 = Luke 5:17-26), Jesus' dialogue with the rich young man (Matt. 19:16-22 = Mark 10:17-22 = Luke 18:18-23), the request of James and John (Matt. 20:20-23 = Mark 10:35-40; Luke omits the episode), and Pilate's Passover pardon (Mark 15:6-14 = Luke 23:17-23, where, because Luke has omitted Mark's explanation of the Passover pardon, the reader has no way of knowing why the crowd shouts for the release of Barabbas).

(5) The small amount of material that is *unique* to the Gospel of Mark also supports Markan priority. This material consists of 1:1; 2:27; 3:20-21; 4:26-29; 7:2-4, 32-37; 8:22-26; 9:29, 48-49; 13:33-37; 14:51-52. In reviewing this material, one should ask which explanation seems the more probable, that Mark added it, or that Matthew and Luke found it in Mark and chose to omit it. The nature of the material supports the latter alternative, for it seems more likely that Matthew and Luke chose to omit the flight of the naked youth (14:51-52), the odd saying about being 'salted with fire' (9:48-49), the strange miracle where Jesus effects healing in two stages (8:22-26), the even stranger miracle where Jesus puts his fingers in a man's ears, spits, and touches his tongue (7:32-37), and the episode where Jesus is regarded as mad and his family attempts to restrain him (3:20-22). If we accept the Griesbach-Farmer Hypothesis, we would then have to explain why Mark would choose to add these odd, potentially embarrassing materials, only to omit the Sermon on the Mount/Plain, the Lord's Prayer, and numerous other teachings and parables found in the larger Gospels. It seems much more likely that Matthew and Luke represent *improvements* upon Mark; in this case, improvements through deletion.

(6) The final consideration that adds weight to the probability of Markan priority has to do with the *results* of the respective hypotheses. The true test of any hypothesis is its effectiveness. In biblical studies, a theory should aid the exegetical task. The theory of Markan priority has provided just this kind of aid. Not only has Synoptic interpretation been materially advanced because of the conclusion, and now widespread assumption, of Markan priority, but the development of critical methods oriented to Gospels research,

<sup>4</sup> R.H. Stein, *The Synoptic Problem: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987), pp. 70-76.

such as form criticism and redaction criticism, which have enjoyed success, has also presupposed Markan priority. In countless studies, whether dealing with a particular pericope, or treating one of the Synoptic Gospels in its entirety, it has been recognized over and over again that Matthew and Luke make the greatest sense as *interpretations of Mark*.<sup>5</sup> If the Griesbach-Farmer Hypothesis was correct, one should expect major breakthroughs in Markan research. After all, we would now know what Mark's sources were. But Farmer's followers have not cast significant light on Mark.

For these reasons (and other lines of argument have not been considered) the Two Source Hypothesis remains the most compelling solution to the Synoptic problem.<sup>6</sup> Of the three Synoptic Gospels, it would appear that Mark is the most primitive. The date of Mark is debated, though most appear willing to assign this Gospel to the late sixties or early seventies. I incline to the former, for I think the Temple of Jerusalem is still standing at the time that the evangelist writes. Either the war with Rome has just gotten under way (66 CE) or the danger of war is sensed to be imminent.

However, even if we agree that the Two Source Hypothesis has solved the Synoptic problem, so that we now know that Mark is the oldest Gospel, the priority of the Synoptic tradition itself has become an uncertainty. Much controversy has been recently generated by the claim, made mostly by members of the Jesus Seminar, a North American phenomenon, that the canonical Gospels are not in fact the oldest and most reliable sources for Jesus research. Jesus Seminar members, particularly John Dominic Crossan, have argued that several extra-canonical (or apocryphal) Gospels contain traditions that predate some of the traditions preserved in the canonical Gospels.<sup>7</sup> The most notable of these extra-canonicals are the *Gospel of Thomas*, the Egerton Papyrus 2, the *Gospel of Peter*, and the *Secret Gospel of Mark*.<sup>8</sup> But critical study of these documents has

<sup>5</sup> See C.M. Tuckett, *The Revival of the Griesbach Hypothesis* (SNTSMS, 44; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 186-87.

<sup>6</sup> See Tuckett, *Revival of the Griesbach Hypothesis*; S.F. Johnson, *The Griesbach Hypothesis and Redaction Criticism* (SBLMS, 41; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1991).

<sup>7</sup> For a major example of the extent to which Crossan is dependent on the extra-canonical Gospels for his research, see his *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1991).

<sup>8</sup> For studies of these Gospels, from the perspective of the Jesus Seminar,

persuaded few scholars that they contain anything of genuine value.<sup>9</sup> Jesus research will not make progress if it relies on these dubious sources.<sup>10</sup>

### B. Form Criticism

Form criticism attempts to identify specific literary or sub-literary forms and infer from these forms their function or setting in the life of the early Christian community (i.e. *Sitz im Leben*).<sup>11</sup> It is assumed

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see R. Cameron, *The Other Gospels: Non-Canonical Gospel Texts* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1982); J.D. Crossan, *Four Other Gospels: Shadows on the Contours of Canon* (New York: Harper & Row, 1985; repr. Sonoma, CA: Polebridge, 1992); and R.J. Miller (ed.), *The Complete Gospels* (Sonoma, CA: Polebridge, 1992).

<sup>9</sup> The best statement in defense of the antiquity and independence of the extra-canonical Gospels comes from H. Koester, *Ancient Christian Gospels: Their History and Development* (London: SCM; Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1990). But Koester's work still remains problematic at many points. See J.H. Charlesworth and C.A. Evans, 'Jesus in the Agrapha and Apocryphal Gospels', in B.D. Chilton and C.A. Evans (eds.), *Studying the Historical Jesus: Evaluations of the State of Current Research* (NTTS, 19; Leiden: Brill, 1994), pp. 479-533.

<sup>10</sup> In my judgment, Crossan's portrait of the historical Jesus is badly flawed because of his heavy reliance on several of the extra-canonical Gospels and fragments.

<sup>11</sup> For basic bibliography, see W.G. Doty, 'The Discipline and Literature of New Testament Form Criticism', *ATR* 51 (1969), pp. 257-321; E.V. McKnight, *What is Form Criticism?* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1969); E.E. Ellis, 'New Directions in Form Criticism', in G. Strecker (ed.), *Jesus Christus in Historie und Theologie* (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1975), pp. 299-315; S.H. Travis, 'Form Criticism', in I.H. Marshall (ed.), *New Testament Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), pp. 153-64; W. Kelber, *The Oral and Written Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983); K. Berger, *Formgeschichte des Neuen Testaments* (Heidelberg: Quelle & Meyer, 1984); *idem*, *Einführung in die Formgeschichte* (Tübingen: Franke, 1987); Stein, *Synoptic Problem*, pp. 161-228; S. McKnight, *Interpreting the Synoptic Gospels* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988), pp. 71-82; E.P. Sanders and M. Davies, *Studying the Synoptic Gospels* (London: SCM Press; Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1989), pp. 123-97; D.L. Bock, 'Form Criticism', in D.A. Black and D.S. Dockery (eds.), *New Testament Criticism and Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), pp. 175-96; C.L. Blomberg, 'Form Criticism', in J.B. Green *et al.* (eds.), *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1992), pp. 243-50; G. Strecker, 'Schriftlichkeit oder Mündlichkeit der synoptischen Tradition? Anmerkungen zur formgeschichtlichen Problematik', in F. Van Segbroeck *et al.* (eds.), *The Four Gospels 1992* (3 vols.; BETL, 100; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1992), I, pp. 159-72.

that the tradition of the life of Jesus was 'minted by the faith of the primitive Christian community in its various stages'.<sup>12</sup> Of the three traditional criticisms, form criticism is the most problematic. It is problematic because, by its very nature, a great deal of subjectivity comes into play. We really do not know what the practices were of first-century Christians who told and retold the sayings of and stories about Jesus.<sup>13</sup> Therefore, we can never be sure of precisely what setting a piece of tradition may reflect.

The German scholars who applied form criticism to the Gospels assigned a great many of the traditions to the early Church, rather than to Jesus himself.<sup>14</sup> English form critics were less skeptical.<sup>15</sup> Recent discussion has been quite diverse. Harald Riesenfeld and Birger Gerhardsson, taking a different tack, have argued that the tradition is reliable, since Jesus, like the rabbis of old, taught his disciples to memorize his teachings.<sup>16</sup> Rainer Riesner has argued for

<sup>12</sup> E. Käsemann, *Essays on New Testament Themes* (SBT, 41; London: SCM Press; Naperville, IL: Allenson, 1964), p. 15.

<sup>13</sup> This point has been convincingly made by E.P. Sanders, *The Tendencies of the Synoptic Tradition* (SNTSMS, 9; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969).

<sup>14</sup> K.L. Schmidt, *Der Rahmen der Geschichte Jesu: Literarkritische Untersuchungen zur ältesten Jesusüberlieferung* (Berlin: Trowitzsch & Sohn, 1919); M. Dibelius, *Die Formgeschichte des Evangeliums* (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1919; 3rd edn, 1959); ET *From Tradition to Gospel* (Cambridge: James Clarke; New York: Scribners, 1934); R. Bultmann, *Die Geschichte der synoptischen Tradition* (FRLANT, 12; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1921; 3rd edn, 1957 [= FRLANT, 29]); ET *The History of the Synoptic Tradition* (Oxford: Blackwell; New York: Harper & Row, 1963); *idem*, *Die Erforschung der synoptischen Tradition* (Giessen: Töpelmann, 1925; 2nd edn, 1930); ET 'The Study of the Synoptic Gospels', in R. Bultmann and K. Kundsin, *Form Criticism: Two Essays on New Testament Research* (New York: Willett, Clark, 1934), pp. 11-76.

<sup>15</sup> V. Taylor, *The Formation of the Gospel Tradition* (London: Macmillan, 1933; 2nd edn, 1935); C.H. Dodd, *The Parables of the Kingdom* (London: Nisbet, 1935); *idem*, 'The Appearances of the Risen Christ: A Study in Form-Criticism of the Gospels', in D.E. Nineham (ed.), *Studies in the Gospels: Essays in Memory of R.H. Lightfoot* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1955), pp. 9-35.

<sup>16</sup> H. Riesenfeld, *The Gospel Tradition and its Beginnings: A Study in the Limits of 'Formgeschichte'* (London: Mowbray, 1957); B. Gerhardsson, *Memory and Manuscript: Oral Tradition and Written Transmission in Rabbinic Judaism and Early Christianity* (Lund: Gleerup, 1961). Gerhardsson supposes that the words of Jesus may have been carefully preserved as rabbis carefully preserved the words of Scripture.

even greater confidence in the general reliability of the Synoptic Gospels.<sup>17</sup> But their work has been criticized for importing later rabbinic principles of discipleship into the earlier context of the New Testament Gospels.<sup>18</sup> It is argued that we cannot assume that Jesus' followers and the generation that followed them emphasized memorization to the degree that it would appear that many rabbis of later generations did. In any event, comparison of the Synoptic Gospels reveals to what extent the sayings of Jesus have been edited, paraphrased, and diversely contextualized. The very phenomena of the Gospels tell against Gerhardsson and company. Accordingly, the difficult question of how extensive were early Christian editing and expansion of the dominical tradition still remains open.

In general, we can agree with the classic form critics that the sayings and stories of Jesus functioned in various ways in the life of the early Church. Certain traditions served liturgical functions, others served evangelistic and apologetic purposes. But this should remain a general observation. The greater the specificity, the greater the subjectivity.<sup>19</sup>

Some form critics have emphasized the role of prophecy in early Christianity in shaping dominical tradition and in generating it altogether. In my judgment, Eugene Boring's thesis, to the effect that much of dominical tradition arose through early Christian prophecy, is no longer persuasive or widely held.<sup>20</sup> Boring is certainly right in finding that much of the dominical tradition has been reinterpreted, largely through recontextualization, but there is little objective

<sup>17</sup>R. Riesner, *Jesus als Lehrer: Eine Untersuchung zum Ursprung der Evangelien-Überlieferung* (WUNT, 2.7; Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1981; 4th edn, 1994).

<sup>18</sup> See M. Smith, 'A Comparison of Early Christianity and Early Rabbinic Traditions', *JBL* 82 (1963), pp. 169-76; Sanders, *Tendencies of the Synoptic Tradition*, pp. 294-96.

<sup>19</sup> E.P. Sanders (*Jesus and Judaism* [London: SCM Press; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985], p. 16) appropriately comments: 'The form critics were right in thinking that the material changed; they were wrong in thinking that they knew how it changed'. The early Christian community sometimes left behind obvious traces, as seen for example in the parenthetical comment, 'Thus he declared all foods clean' (Mark 7:19). But rarely are such traces this obvious.

<sup>20</sup> M.E. Boring, *Sayings of the Risen Jesus: Christian Prophecy in the Synoptic Tradition* (SNTSMS, 46; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982); *idem*, *The Continuing Voice of Jesus* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991).

evidence of wholesale creation through prophetic utterance or otherwise.<sup>21</sup>

In my judgment, the most prudent position to take is that, on principle, most material ultimately derives from Jesus, but that most material has been edited and recontextualized. Here the assumptions and conclusions of the Jesus Seminar are particularly problematic. The Seminar's color scheme ('red'—Jesus said it; 'pink'—something close to what Jesus said; 'gray'—doubtful that Jesus said it; and 'black'—Jesus definitely did not say it) is unrealistic and misleading.<sup>22</sup>

In a certain sense, most of the material should be rated pink, if we are speaking of the sayings as approximating the utterances of Jesus. But in another sense, most of the material should be gray, or even black, if we are speaking of what the material precisely meant and in what setting(s) it was spoken. It is this latter dimension that vexes Jesus research. But in the case of the historical Jesus, we at least have a pretty good idea of the environment, situation, and principal events of Jesus' life during and at the end of his ministry. In contrast, we know comparatively little about the early Palestinian Church, and not a great deal more about the Church of Asia Minor and Greece. Yet Bultmann and Dibelius (and now the Jesus Seminar) exhibit a remarkable degree of confidence about what early Christians were saying and thinking. In many places these scholars are able, so they tell us, to penetrate behind obscure utterances and find out with what

<sup>21</sup> For criticisms of Boring's conclusions, see D.E. Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity and the Ancient Mediterranean World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), pp. 240-42 (on Jesus tradition, see pp. 153-88); D. Hill, *New Testament Prophecy* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1979), pp. 5-9 (on Jesus tradition, pp. 48-69). Aune and Hill are responding to Boring's dissertation and to earlier studies presented in the *Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers* (1973, 1974, 1976, 1977) and *JBL* (1972). For an earlier statement that is compatible with Boring's conclusions, see F.W. Beare, 'Sayings of the Risen Jesus in the Synoptic Tradition', in W.R. Farmer *et al.* (eds.), *Christian History and Interpretation* (Festschrift J. Knox; London: Cambridge University Press, 1967), pp. 161-81.

<sup>22</sup> See now R.W. Funk and R.W. Hoover (eds.), *The Five Gospels: The Search for the Authentic Words of Jesus* (New York: Macmillan, 1993). This pretentious book is dedicated to Galileo, Thomas Jefferson, and David Strauss. One reviewer thinks it would have been better to have dedicated it to P.T. Barnum, the great American showman; cf. R.B. Hays, 'The Corrected Jesus', *First Things* (May, 1994), pp. 43-48. See also N.T. Wright, 'Taking the Text with Her Pleasure', *Theol* 96 (1993), pp. 303-10; H.C. Kee, *TTod* 52 (1995), pp. 17-28.

the Church of the mid-first century was dealing. There is a disturbing tendency to ignore the literary context of pericopes and their meaning in these contexts (the only real contexts we have) in preference for the highly subjective contexts, or *Sitze im Leben*, in the early Church, in which these pericopes allegedly originated.

The difficulties that form criticism faces should not deter us from engaging in its task. Proper identification of the form of a given pericope plays an important role in exegesis. Ascertaining how a given pericope may have been edited and contextualized by early Christians is appropriate. Understanding the nature of a form that commonly occurs in the Gospels (such as parables) is also very helpful in exegesis and in the complicated task of distinguishing (where it in fact needs to be distinguished) the meaning in the life of Jesus from later meanings invested in the tradition as it was passed on and put to use in Christian circles.

### C. Redaction Criticism

Redaction criticism is concerned with the manner in which the respective evangelists and their communities edited the written traditions. It is assumed that much can be learned about the evangelists and their communities by carefully observing what traditions were retained, how they were supplemented, how they were reworded, and how they were recontextualized. The evangelists' literary work was assumed to provide important insights into their respective theologies.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>23</sup> J. Rohde, *Die redaktionsgeschichtliche Methode: Einführung und Sichtung des Forschungsstandes* (Hamburg: Furche, 1966); R.H. Stein, 'What is Redaktionsgeschichte?', *JBL* 88 (1969), pp. 45-56; *idem*, *Synoptic Problem*, pp. 231-72; N. Perrin, *What is Redaction Criticism?* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974); R.T. Fortna, 'Redaction Criticism, NT', *IDBSup*, pp. 733-35; S.S. Smalley, 'Redaction Criticism', in Marshall (ed.), *New Testament Interpretation*, pp. 181-95; W. Kelber, 'Redaction Criticism: On the Nature and Exposition of the Gospels', *PRS* 6 (1979), pp. 4-16; McKnight, *Interpreting the Synoptic Gospels*, pp. 83-95; E.V. McKnight, 'Form and Redaction Criticism', in E.J. Epp and G.W. MacRae (eds.), *The New Testament and its Modern Interpreters* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989), pp. 149-74; Sanders and Davies, *Studying the Synoptic Gospels*, pp. 201-98; Johnson, *Griesbach Hypothesis and Redaction Criticism*; G.R. Osborne, 'Redaction Criticism', in Black and Dockery (eds.), *New Testament Criticism*, pp. 199-224; *idem*, 'Redaction Criticism', in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, pp. 662-69; J.R. Donahue, 'Redaction Criticism: Has the Hauptstrasse Become a Sackgasse?', in E.S. Malbon and E.V. McKnight (eds.), *The New Literary Criticism and the New Testament* (JSNTSup, 109; Sheffield: JSOT Press,

In its earliest presentation, redaction criticism presupposed the results of source criticism (i.e. the Two Source Hypothesis) and of form criticism (i.e. that the early Church freely shaped, even created, the dominical tradition to serve its needs). Willi Marxsen's pioneering work on the earliest Gospel, the Gospel of Mark, ran into difficulties, because the distinction between tradition and redaction was not always clear.<sup>24</sup> His objectives more than his conclusions

1994), pp. 27-57. Donahue's essay traces the development of redaction criticism and explores the ways the method has contributed to the newer forms of literary criticism and sociological readings of the Gospels. He concludes that redaction criticism has not reached a dead end (*Sackgasse*) but a crossroad (*Querstrasse*), 'where different methods continue to intersect' (p. 48).

<sup>24</sup> W. Marxsen, 'Redaktionsgeschichtliche Erklärung der sogenannten Parabeltheorie des Markus', *ZTK* 52 (1955), pp. 255-71; repr. in *idem, Der Exeget als Theologe: Vorträge zum Neuen Testament* (Gütersloh: Mohn, 1968), pp. 13-28; *idem, Der Evangelist Markus: Studien zur Redaktionsgeschichte des Evangeliums* (FRLANT, 67; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1956; 2nd edn, 1959); ET *Mark the Evangelist: Studies on the Redaction History of the Gospel* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1969). For criticism of the subjectivity in scholarly attempts to distinguish source and redaction in Mark, see reviews by R. Pesch in *TRev* 72 (1976), pp. 101-102; 73 (1977), pp. 459-60.

For attempts to distinguish Mark's sources from his redaction and to establish criteria for doing so, see R. Pesch, *Naherwartungen: Tradition und Redaktion in Mk 13* (Düsseldorf: Patmos, 1968); J.D. Kingsbury, *The Parables of Jesus in Matthew 13* (Richmond: John Knox, 1969); P.J. Achtemeier, 'Toward the Isolation of Pre-Markan Miracle Catenae', *JBL* 89 (1970), pp. 265-91; *idem*, 'The Origin and Function of Pre-Markan Miracle Catenae', *JBL* 91 (1972), pp. 198-221; K. Kertelge, *Die Wunder Jesu im Markusevangelium: Eine redaktionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung* (SANT, 23; Munich: Kösel, 1970); R.H. Stein, 'The Proper Methodology for Ascertaining a Markan Redaction History', *NovT* 13 (1971), pp. 181-98; T.J. Weeden, *Mark—Traditions in Conflict* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971); J.R. Donahue, *Are You the Christ? The Trial Narrative in the Gospel of Mark* (SBLDS, 10; Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1973); F. Neirynck, *Duality in Mark: Contributions to the Study of Markan Redaction* (BETL, 31; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1973; 2nd edn, 1988); E. Best, 'Mark's Preservation of the Tradition', in M. Sabbe (ed.), *L'évangile selon Marc* (BETL, 34; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1974), pp. 21-34; W. Schenk, *Der Passionsbericht nach Markus: Untersuchungen zur Überlieferungsgeschichte der Passionstraditionen* (Gütersloh: Mohn, 1974); D. Jucl, *Messiah and Temple: The Trial of Jesus in the Gospel of Mark* (SBLDS, 31; Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1977); F.J. Pryke, *Redactional Style in the Marcan Gospel: A Study of Syntax and Vocabulary as Guides to Redaction in Mark* (SNTSMS, 33; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978); U. Luz, 'Markusforschung in der Sackgasse?', *TLZ* 105 (1980), pp. 653-54; F. Neirynck, 'The Redactional Text of Mark', *ETL* 57 (1981),

proved to be of enduring worth. Günther Bornkamm and Hans Conzelmann, who practiced the new method on Matthew and Luke, were able to achieve more convincing and longer lasting results.<sup>25</sup>

In the case of Matthew, we observe a tendency to group Jesus' teachings into five major discourses (chs. 5-7, 10, 13, 18, 24-25), often placing Jesus on a mountain. There is interest in citing Scripture as 'fulfilled'. The word 'righteous' appears to be part of a theme revolving around what it means to believe in Jesus and be a Torah-observant Jew. The infancy story is told in such a way as to be reminiscent of Moses' brush with death as an infant. The Pharisees are singled out for especially harsh criticism (chs. 15, 23). All of this led Bornkamm and his many successors to the various conclusions that the author was in all probability Jewish, that he was fending off charges that Christians did not keep the Law, and that Jesus lacked the necessary credentials to be Israel's awaited Messiah.<sup>26</sup>

pp. 144-62; C.C. Black, 'The Quest of Mark the Redactor: Why Has it Been Pursued, and What Has it Taught Us?', *JSNT* 33 (1988), pp. 19-39; *idem, The Disciples according to Mark: Markan Redaction in Current Debate* (JSNTSup, 27; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989); Donahue, 'Redaction Criticism', pp. 29-34.

<sup>25</sup> G. Bornkamm, 'Enderwartung und Kirche im Matthäusevangelium', in Bornkamm, G. Barth, and H.-J. Held, *Überlieferung und Auslegung im Matthäusevangelium* (WMANT, 1; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1960), pp. 13-53; ET 'End-Expectation and Church in Matthew', in Bornkamm *et al.*, *Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew* (NTL; London: SCM Press; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1963), pp. 15-51; H. Conzelmann, *Die Mitte der Zeit: Studien zur Theologie des Lukas* (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1954); ET *The Theology of St Luke* (New York: Harper & Row, 1960).

<sup>26</sup> Besides the work of Bornkamm and his pupils, see R.H. Gundry, *The Use of the Old Testament in St Matthew's Gospel* (NovTSup, 18; Leiden: Brill, 1967); D.R.A. Hare, *The Theme of Jewish Persecution of Christians in the Gospel according to St Matthew* (SNTSMS, 6; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967); M.J. Suggs, *Wisdom, Law and Christology in Matthew's Gospel* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970); W.G. Thompson, *Matthew's Advice to a Divided Community: Mt. 17,22-18,35* (AnBib, 44; Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1970); O.L. Cope, *Matthew: A Scribe Trained for the Kingdom of Heaven* (CBQMS, 5; Washington: Catholic Biblical Association, 1976); J.P. Meier, *Law and History in Matthew's Gospel* (AnBib, 71; Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1976); B. Przybylski, *Righteousness in Matthew and his World of Thought* (SNTSMS, 41; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980); T.L. Donaldson, *Jesus on the Mountain: A Study in Matthean Theology* (JSNTSup, 8; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1985); S.H. Brooks, *Matthew's Community: The Evidence of his Special Sayings Material* (JSNTSup, 16; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1987); D.E. Orton, *The Understanding Scribe: Matthew and the Apocalyptic Ideal* (JSNTSup,

We encounter a dramatically different treatment of traditional materials and distinctive features in the material found only in Luke. Luke does not often cite Scripture as fulfilled, but he does weave the language and themes of Scripture into the narratives and speeches of his characters. His version of the infancy narrative is particularly instructive in this regard. Whereas five times Matthew claims that this or that event related to Jesus' birth was in fulfillment of something one prophet or another said, Luke claims no fulfillment, but rather records several canticles (such as the *Magnificat* and the *Nunc Dimittis*) which are laced throughout with important scriptural traditions. Luke's interesting and much disputed Central Section (chs. 10–18 or 19) challenges assumptions held about election, that is, who is saved and who is not, and why. When we take Luke's second volume, Acts, into account, we find a pronounced interest in stewardship and the early Church's success in breaking down the barriers between Jews and Gentiles. All of this has led Lukan interpreters to conclude that this evangelist was probably a Gentile with some personal knowledge of the synagogue, who knew portions of the Greek Old Testament, and who was interested in showing how the Gentile mission stood in continuity with biblical history.<sup>27</sup>

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25; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989); G.N. Stanton, *A Gospel for a New People: Studies in Matthew* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1992); M.P. Knowles, *Jeremiah in Matthew's Gospel: The Rejected-Prophet Motif in Matthaean Redaction* (JSNTSup, 68; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993). For commentaries on Matthew that blend traditional redaction criticism with the more recent wholistic approach of literary criticism, see R.H. Gundry, *Matthew—A Commentary on his Literary and Theological Art* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982; 2nd edn, 1994); D.A. Hagner, *Matthew* (WBC, 33AB; Dallas: Word, 1993, 1994).

<sup>27</sup> Besides the work of Conzelmann, see H.-W. Bartsch, *Wachet aber zu jeder Zeit! Entwurf einer Auslegung des Lukas-Evangeliums* (Hamburg: Reich Evangelischer Verlag, 1963); H. Flender, *St Luke: Theologian of Redemptive History* (London: SPCK; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967); T. Holtz, *Untersuchungen über die alttestamentlichen Zitate bei Lukas* (TU, 104; Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1968); S. Brown, *Apostasy and Perseverance in the Theology of Luke* (AnBib, 36; Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1969); T. Schramm, *Der Markus-Stoff bei Lukas: Eine literarkritische und redaktionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung* (SNTSMS, 14; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971); S.G. Wilson, *The Gentiles and the Gentile Mission in Luke-Acts* (SNTSMS, 23; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973); G. Braumann, *Das Lukas-Evangelium: Die redaktions- und kompositionsgeschichtliche Forschung* (WF, 280; Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1974); P. Zingg, *Das Wachsen der Kirche: Beiträge zur Frage der lukanischen Redaktion und Theologie* (OBO, 3; Fribourg:

Redaction criticism's single greatest vulnerability lies, of course, in whether or not source critics have found the solution to the Synoptic Problem. I have argued above that Markan priority, which is held by most New Testament scholars today, is the most probable solution. If I am wrong, then my redaction-critical judgments are inaccurate and misleading. However, it is redaction criticism itself that lends support to Markan priority, in that, time after time, Matthew and Luke make better sense as revisions and interpretations of Mark, rather than Mark as conflation and interpretation of Matthew and Luke.<sup>28</sup>

#### D. Criteria of Authenticity

Because our interest here is with the life of Jesus, with his words and activities, it is necessary to ascertain what parts of the material have reasonable claim to authenticity. This must be done if we are to avoid confusing the theology of the early Church with the theology of Jesus, at least in those places where their respective theologies do not completely overlap. This is not the place to indulge in a full-scale treatment of the criteria of authenticity, but a brief review of them would be helpful.

Recently Meier has grouped these criteria into two categories. To the first category he assigns the useful, or valid, criteria and to the

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Universitätsverlag; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1974); L.T. Johnson, *The Literary Function of Possessions in Luke-Acts* (SBLDS, 39; Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1977); J. Ernst, *Herr der Geschichte: Perspektiven der lukanischen Eschatologie* (SBS, 88; Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1978); J. Jeremias, *Die Sprache des Lukasevangeliums: Redaktion und Tradition im Nicht-Markusstoff des dritten Evangeliums* (KEK, Sonderband; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1980); C.H. Gibling, *The Destruction of Jerusalem according to Luke's Gospel: A Historical-Typological Moral* (AnBib, 107; Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1985); D.L. Bock, *Proclamation from Prophecy and Pattern: Lucan Old Testament Christology* (JSNTSup, 12; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1987); R.L. Brawley, *Luke-Acts and the Jews: Conflict, Apology, and Conciliation* (SBLMS, 33; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987); P.F. Esler, *Community and Gospel in Luke-Acts: The Social and Political Motivations in Lucan Theology* (SNTSMS, 57; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987). For commentaries on Luke that blend traditional redaction criticism with the more recent wholistic approach of composition criticism, see J.A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel according to Luke* (AB, 28, 28A; Garden City: Doubleday, 1981–85); J. Nolland, *Luke* (WBC, 35ABC; Dallas: Word, 1989–93).

<sup>28</sup> Indeed, I am not sure of any instance where Mark makes sense as a revision of either Matthew or Luke.



second he assigns the dubious criteria.<sup>29</sup> His assessment of these criteria is practical and judicious. Following Meier's lead, though with some modification, I regard the following six criteria as valid.

1. *Historical Coherence.* Material that coheres with what we know of Jesus' historical circumstances and the principal features of his life should be given priority. This is a point that Sanders has made, and I think it has merit. We may expect authentic material to help explain 'why [Jesus] attracted attention, why he was executed, and why he was subsequently deified'.<sup>30</sup> Material that does not clarify these questions is not automatically excluded, of course, but priority must be given to material that does clarify them.

2. *Multiple Attestation.* Multiple attestation refers to material that appears in two or more independent sources.<sup>31</sup> This material may be regarded as primitive, though not necessarily authentic. Multiple attestation confirms that material was not generated by one evangelist or another (or their respective communities), but must have been in circulation some years before the Gospels and their sources were composed.<sup>32</sup> Therefore, multiple attestation does not guarantee

<sup>29</sup> J.P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus* (ABRL; New York: Doubleday, 1991), I, pp. 167-95. For further discussion, with more detail and more examples, see R. Latourelle, 'Critères d'authenticité des Évangiles', *Greg* 55 (1974), pp. 609-38; F. Lentzen-Deis, 'Kriterien für die historische Beurteilung der Jesusüberlieferung in den Evangelien', in K. Kertelge (ed.), *Rückfrage nach Jesus: Zur Methodik und Bedeutung der Frage nach dem historischen Jesus* (QD, 63; Freiburg: Herder, 1974), pp. 78-117; R.H. Stein, 'The "Criteria" for Authenticity', in R.T. France and D. Wenham (eds.), *Studies of History and Tradition in the Four Gospels* (Gospel Perspectives, 2; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1980), pp. 225-63; D. Polkow, 'Method and Criteria for Historical Jesus Research', in K.H. Richards (ed.), *Society of Biblical Literature 1987 Seminar Papers* (SBLSP, 26; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987), pp. 336-56; C.A. Evans, 'Authenticity Criteria in Life of Jesus Research', *CSR* 19 (1989), pp. 6-31; *idem*, *Jesus and his Contemporaries: Comparative Studies* (AGJU, 25; Leiden: Brill, 1995), pp. 13-26.

<sup>30</sup> Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, p. 7.

<sup>31</sup> F.C. Burkitt (*The Gospel History and its Transmission* [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 3rd edn, 1911], pp. 148-66) identified thirty-one multiply attested sayings. See also the recently published H.T. Fleddermann, *Mark and Q: A Study of the Overlap Texts* (BETL, 122; Leuven: Peeters/Leuven University Press, 1995). Fleddermann identifies twenty-nine overlaps.

<sup>32</sup> The criterion of multiple forms demonstrates the same thing; cf. C.H. Dodd, *History and the Gospel* (New York: Scribners, 1937), pp. 91-101. Ideas

authenticity; it only guarantees antiquity.<sup>33</sup>

3. *Embarrassment.* By 'embarrassing', I mean material that is perceived by the evangelists as awkward, as in need of qualification, and perhaps even deletion. It may also be material that is contrary to the editorial tendency of the evangelist himself. Nevertheless, despite the awkwardness and the potential embarrassment, the material is preserved. It is reasoned, and I think cogently, that this material is preserved because it is ancient and widespread.<sup>34</sup> As Meier has put it, 'It is highly unlikely that the Church went out of its way to create the cause of its own embarrassment'.<sup>35</sup> John's baptism of Jesus (Mark 1:9-11) and his later question about whether or not Jesus is 'one who is coming' (Matt. 11:2-6 = Luke 7:18-23) are excellent examples of potentially awkward or embarrassing material that is surely authentic.

4. *Dissimilarity.* Defined and put into practice as it was during the heyday of redaction criticism, the criterion of dissimilarity (or discontinuity, as it was sometimes called) is problematic. Norman Perrin gave this criterion its classic definition: '[T]he earliest form of a saying we can reach may be regarded as authentic if it can be shown to be dissimilar to characteristic emphases both of ancient Judaism and of the early Church'.<sup>36</sup> In recent years, it has been

that appear in two or more forms of tradition (e.g. sayings, parables, stories) may be regarded as ancient and widespread. Examples would include the kingdom of God, association with sinners, and certain halakic disputes.

<sup>33</sup> It has also been argued, and I think rightly in most cases, that the burden of proof shifts in favor of *authenticity* when material is multiply attested; cf. H.K. McArthur, 'The Burden of Proof in Historical Jesus Research', *ExpTim* 82 (1970-71), pp. 116-19.

<sup>34</sup> See D.G.A. Calvert, 'An Examination of the Criteria for Distinguishing the Authentic Words of Jesus', *NTS* 18 (1972), pp. 209-19. Calvert comments: 'The inclusion of material which does not especially serve his purpose may well be taken as a testimony to the authenticity of that material, or at least to the inclusion of it in the tradition of the Church in such a clear and consistent way that the evangelist was loath to omit it' (p. 219). This criterion is not precisely the same as that of the criterion of embarrassment, but it is cognate. In the case of the latter, authenticity is supported when the tradition cannot easily be explained as the creation of the Church in general; in the case of the former, authenticity is supported when the tradition cannot easily be explained as the creation of a given evangelist or his community.

<sup>35</sup> Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, I, p. 169.

<sup>36</sup> N. Perrin, *Rediscovering the Teaching of Jesus* (London: SCM Press; New

soundly criticized.<sup>37</sup> There are at least two problems with this understanding of the criterion: (1) Jesus was a Jew; we should expect his teachings and actions to reflect Jewish ideas and customs. Why must authentic materials be dissimilar to 'characteristic emphases...of ancient Judaism'? This thinking, which is clearly rooted in Bultmann's *History of the Synoptic Tradition* and presupposed in his *Jesus*,<sup>38</sup> in my opinion grows out of a theology that places great emphasis on how Jesus was different from (i.e. 'superior to') Judaism. In essence, what we have in Bultmann and his pupils is apologetics, not history. So far as the requirements of logic are concerned, there are no legitimate grounds for skepticism simply because dominical tradition sometimes reflects characteristic emphases of first-century Judaism.<sup>39</sup> Jesus was, moreover, the

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York: Harper & Row, 1967), p. 39. For a similar statement of the principle, see Käsemann, *Essays on New Testament Themes*, p. 37.

<sup>37</sup> See the studies by M.D. Hooker, 'On Using the Wrong Tool', *Theol* 75 (1972), pp. 570-81, esp. pp. 574-75; D.L. Mealand, 'The Dissimilarity Test', *SJT* 31 (1978), pp. 41-50; Stein, 'The "Criteria" for Authenticity', pp. 240-45; B.D. Chilton, *A Galilean Rabbi and his Bible: Jesus' Own Interpretation of Isaiah* (London: SPCK, 1984), pp. 86-87; Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, pp. 16-17, 252-55; Evans, 'Authenticity Criteria', pp. 15-16; Sanders and Davies, *Studying the Synoptic Gospels*, pp. 301-33.

<sup>38</sup> For example, see Bultmann, *History of the Synoptic Tradition*, pp. 102-108; esp. *idem*, *Jesus* (Berlin: Deutsche Bibliothek, 1926), esp. pp. 15-18; ET *Jesus and the Word* (New York: Scribners, 1934), esp. pp. 12-15. I refer to these pages in *Synoptic Tradition* because they illustrate Bultmann's skepticism with regard to various proverbial sayings attributed to Jesus *because of their similarities with rabbinic proverbial sayings*. There is simply no good reason for doubting the authenticity of dominical tradition simply because it parallels genres and styles of first-century Palestine. Skepticism must be justified on other grounds.

<sup>39</sup> In sharp contrast to Bultmann and his pupils, Geza Vermes has emphasized the Jewish parallels, not only as authentic in most cases, but as essential for understanding Jesus; cf. G. Vermes, *Jesus the Jew* (London: Collins; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1973); *idem*, *Jesus and the World of Judaism* (London: SCM Press; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983); *idem*, *The Religion of Jesus the Jew* (London: SCM Press; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993). Other Jewish scholars have emphasized the importance of Jesus' Jewishness; cf. D. Flusser, *Jesus in Selbstzeugnissen und Bilddokumenten* (Rowohlt's Monographien, 140; Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1968); ET *Jesus* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1969); P. Lapede, *Der Rabbi von Nazaret: Wandlungen des jüdischen Jesusbildes* (Trier: Spee, 1974). The Jewish interest in Jesus has been recently discussed by D.A. Hagner, *The Jewish Reclamation of Jesus: An Analysis and Critique of Modern Jewish Study of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984).

founder of a movement that was devoted to him and to his teaching. Should we not then expect many of Jesus' emphases to carry over into the movement? It is reasoned that, since much of the Church's teaching is indebted to the teaching of Jesus, it is probable that some of the early Church's emphases likewise grew out of those of Jesus' teaching. Sayings that cohere with early Christian emphases but are in various ways inconsistent with other sayings are appropriate candidates for exclusion. (2) Employment of the criterion of dissimilarity has also been criticized for its tendency to exclude material too readily. Instead, the criterion should be used to ascertain a core of reasonably certain material. In other words, the criterion is valid in a *positive*, not *negative* application.

5. *Semiticisms and Palestinian Background*. Meier subdivides this criterion into two related criteria: 'Traces of Aramaic' and 'Palestinian Environment'. He admits that they have some value in making negative assessments (i.e. linguistic and environmental elements foreign to first-century Palestine probably do not derive from Jesus, but from later, non-Palestinian segments of the early Church), but he doubts that these criteria have much value for making positive judgments.<sup>40</sup> All that Semiticisms and Palestinian features prove is that a given saying originated in an Aramaic-speaking Palestinian community, not that it necessarily originated with Jesus. To an extent, Meier is right. There is no question that Joachim Jeremias and others sometimes claimed too much on the basis of Aramaic and Palestinian elements.<sup>41</sup> Nevertheless, I think these criteria do make an important contribution, perhaps mostly in a general way.

The Gospels are written in Greek, and yet they purport to record the sayings of Jesus who in all probability spoke primarily in Aramaic. If these Greek sayings in reality represent the utterances of the Aramaic-speaking Jesus,<sup>42</sup> we should expect to find traces of the

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<sup>40</sup> Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, I, pp. 178-80. A similar negative evaluation is offered by Sanders and Davies, *Studying the Synoptic Gospels*, pp. 333-34.

<sup>41</sup> For illustrations, see J. Jeremias, *Neutestamentliche Theologie*. I. *Die Verkündigung Jesu* (Gütersloh: Mohn, 1971), pp. 14-45; ET *New Testament Theology: The Proclamation of Jesus* (London: SCM Press; New York: Scribners, 1971), pp. 3-37. See also the older work by G. Dalman, *Die Worte Jesu mit Berücksichtigung des nach kanonischen jüdischen Schrifttums und der aramäischen Sprache erörtert* (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1898), pp. 13-34; ET *The Words of Jesus* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1902), pp. 17-42.

<sup>42</sup> On the question of the language(s) spoken by Jesus, see J.A. Fitzmyer,

Aramaic language. And indeed we do. We find Aramaic words and idioms that are foreign to Greek but at home in Aramaic.<sup>43</sup> Aramaic language and Palestinian elements do not of course prove the authenticity of any given saying, though they add a measure of support and, in general, they instill in the historian the confidence that the tradition is ancient and bears the characteristics one should expect of authentic dominical tradition. I believe that it is therefore appropriate to regard the criterion of Semiticisms and Palestinian background as playing an important supporting role with respect to the other criteria.<sup>44</sup>

6. *Coherence*. Finally, the criterion of coherence (or consistency) should also be considered as a valid canon of authenticity. It justifies the broadening of the core of material established as authentic through appeal to the criteria described above. Accordingly, material that coheres or is consistent with material judged authentic may also be regarded as authentic.<sup>45</sup> However, Meier rightly warns that this criterion should not be applied too rigorously, especially negatively, to exclude material as inauthentic.<sup>46</sup>

#### PRACTICE OF EXEGESIS

The interpretation of the words and activities of Jesus necessarily involves several aspects of philological, cultural, and historical study. Exegetes of the Jesus tradition must consider (a) linguistic features,

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'The Languages of Palestine in the First Century A.D.', *CBQ* 32 (1970), pp. 501-31, p. 21, rev. and repr. in S.E. Porter (ed.), *The Language of the New Testament: Classic Essays* (JSNTSup, 60; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991), pp. 126-62; J.A. Fitzmyer, 'Methodology in the Study of the Aramaic Substratum of Jesus' Sayings in the New Testament', in J. Dupont (ed.), *Jésus aux origines de la christologie* (BETL, 40; Gembloux: Duculot, 1975), pp. 73-102 rev. and repr. in Fitzmyer, *A Wandering Aramean: Collected Aramaic Essays* (SBLMS, 25; Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1979), pp. 1-56; and S.E. Porter, 'Jesus and the Use of Greek in Galilee', in Chilton and Evans (eds.), *Studying the Historical Jesus*, pp. 123-54.

<sup>43</sup> For a recent study reassessing the criteria used in identifying the presence of Semiticisms, see E.C. Maloney, *Semitic Interference in Marcan Syntax* (SBLDS, 51; Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1981).

<sup>44</sup> For a lucid and compelling demonstration of the value of targumic tradition for the identification and clarification of potentially authentic dominical tradition, see Chilton, *Galilean Rabbi*; *idem*, 'Targumic Transmission and Dominical Tradition', in France and Wenham (eds.), *Studies of History and Tradition*, pp. 21-45.

<sup>45</sup> See Perrin, *Rediscovering the Teaching of Jesus*, p. 43.

<sup>46</sup> Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, I, pp. 176-77.

(b) teaching conventions, (c) the Scriptures of Israel and the ways in which they were interpreted, and (d) the social, political, and economic context of first-century Palestine. The following examples should illustrate the importance of these aspects of our work.

#### A. Linguistic Aspects

Linguistic study is closely tied to several, and perhaps in some cases all, of the dimensions of Jesus research. This field proves to be difficult and contentious, for no fewer than four languages were alive and well in first-century Palestine: Aramaic, Greek, Hebrew, and Latin (in their probable order of usage among Jews).<sup>47</sup> How many of these languages Jesus himself made use of, and to what extent, continues to be debated.<sup>48</sup> In my judgment, the majority view that Jesus' mother tongue was Aramaic and that he could converse in Greek, but normally did not teach in it, is compelling. That Jesus knew some Latin and Hebrew is probable, but it is impossible to determine how much of these languages he might have known.<sup>49</sup>

The following examples largely reflect the Aramaic language, though in some instances other languages may also be relevant. These examples are intended only to expose the novice to linguistic study and to various ways in which it can sometimes aid the exegetical task.

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<sup>47</sup> On the languages of first-century Palestine, see J.M. Grintz, 'Hebrew as the Spoken and Written Language in the Last Days of the Second Temple', *JBL* 79 (1960), pp. 32-47; Fitzmyer, 'Languages of Palestine', pp. 501-31; A.W. Argyle, 'Greek among the Jews of Palestine in New Testament Times', *NTS* 20 (1973-74), pp. 87-89; C. Rabin, 'Hebrew and Aramaic in the First Century', in S. Safrai and M. Stern (eds.), *The Jewish People in the First Century* (2 vols.; CRINT, 1.2; Assen: Van Gorcum; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974, 1976), II, pp. 1007-39.

<sup>48</sup> On the language of Jesus, see A.W. Argyle, 'Did Jesus Speak Greek?', *ExpTim* 67 (1955-56), pp. 92-93, 383; J.A. Emerton, 'Did Jesus Speak Hebrew?', *JTS* 12 (1961), pp. 189-202; H. Ott, 'Um die Muttersprache Jesu: Forschungen seit G. Dalman', *NovT* 9 (1967), pp. 1-25; J. Barr, 'Which Language Did Jesus Speak?—Some Remarks of a Semitist', *BJRL* 53 (1970), pp. 9-29; G.R. Selby, *Jesus, Aramaic and Greek* (Gingley-on-the-Hill: Brynmill, 1989); J.M. Ross, 'Jesus's Knowledge of Greek', *IBS* 12 (1990), pp. 41-47; Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, I, pp. 255-68; Porter, 'Jesus and the Use of Greek in Galilee', pp. 123-54.

<sup>49</sup> A large part of this problem has to do with the fact that we simply do not know what the extent of Jesus' education was. It seems probable that Jesus had some education, because (1) he was a devout Jewish man and (2) he was called 'rabbi' or 'teacher'. On Jesus' education, see Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, I, pp. 268-78.

(1) 'Qorban'. In the context of debate with some Pharisees and scribes Jesus refers to the practice of qorban: 'You say, "If a person should say to his father or mother, 'Whatever from me you might be owed is "Qorban" (which is "Gift")', you no longer permit him to do anything for his father or mother"' (Mark 7:11-12). Mark's κορβᾶν renders קָרְבָּן (or קָרְבָּן), and is appropriately translated by δῶρον, 'gift' (cf. LXX Leviticus and Numbers).

Commentators in the past have frequently referred to passages in Josephus and in the Mishnah. Passages in the latter may be somewhat misleading, however, in that an imprecatory element often seems to be present (cf. *m. Ned.* 1:2, 4; קָרְבָּן seems to be used as a synonym of קִוְיָם, which means 'forbidden'), while passages in the former are vague and so are not too helpful (cf. Josephus, *Ant.* 4:4:4 §§72-73; *Apion* 1:22 §§166-167: 'Qorban...means God's gift').

Fitzmyer has rightly directed our attention to an ossuary inscription, which provides us with a close parallel to the language found in Mark 7.<sup>50</sup> The late first-century inscription reads:

כל די אנש מזהנה בחלחה דה  
קרבן אלה מן דבגדה

Everything that a man will find to his profit in this ossuary  
(is) an offering to God from the one within it.

This inscription carries with it no imprecation. It is simply an affirmation that all that is profitable within the ossuary has been given to God as a gift. To take anything from it would be to steal from God. The parallel with the words of Jesus seems apposite. Jesus complains that the Pharisees make a gift to God (which to take back would be stealing from God) of what might have been used in support of their parents. In adhering to this oral tradition, the written command to honor one's parents could often be nullified.<sup>51</sup>

(2) 'Mammon'. Jesus is remembered to have told his disciples, 'You cannot serve God and mammon' (Matt. 6:24 = Luke 16:13).

<sup>50</sup> J.A. Fitzmyer, *Essays on the Semitic Background of the New Testament* (London: Chapman, 1971; repr. SBLSPS, 5; Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1974), pp. 93-100; *idem*, *A Wandering Aramean*, pp. 11, 24 n. 56; *idem* and D.J. Harrington, *A Manual of Palestinian Aramaic Texts* (BibOr, 34; Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1978), pp. 168, 222-23. Also see the discussion in R.A. Guelich, *Mark 1-8:26* (WBC, 34A; Dallas: Word, 1989), pp. 368-71.

<sup>51</sup> The command to honor one's parents (Exod. 20:12 = Deut. 5:16) came to be understood as a command to provide for their physical necessities (cf. Prov. 28:24; 1 Tim. 5:4).

The Lukan evangelist clusters two other mammon sayings around the one he shares with Matthew: 'Make for yourselves friends from the mammon of unrighteousness' (Luke 16:9); 'If then you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will entrust to you true (wealth)?' (Luke 16:11). Jesus' use of the word in reference to money or wealth is not remarkable, but his association of it in two of the sayings with unrighteousness calls for comment.

'Mammon' is a transliteration of μαμωνᾶς, which in turn is a transliteration of either the Hebrew קָמוֹן or the Aramaic קָמוֹן (or קָמוֹןָ in the emphatic state), which means 'wealth', 'riches', or 'property' in both languages. There are at least four occurrences of the word in the Dead Sea Scrolls. The first three are found in Hebrew texts. The first is fragmentary and reads: 'He will have no success in anything. Thus, all the good his wealth (קָמוֹןָ)...' (1Q27 1 ii 5). It seems to be part of a polemic directed against those who put their faith in wealth. The second example also finds itself in a fragmentary context: '...in property (קָמוֹןָ) and he knows...' (CD 14:20). In this instance, it is impossible to ascertain the point that is being made, although it is probably a critical one. The third Hebrew occurrence is found in IQS 6:2: 'And the lesser shall obey the greater in matters of work or property (קָמוֹןָ)'. The fourth occurrence, which is Aramaic and must be restored in part, is found in 11QtgJob 11:8 (= Job 27:17): 'and the true one will divide his money (מַמּוֹןָ)'. Here 'mammon' has replaced 'silver'.

Perhaps the earliest attested Hebrew usage of קָמוֹן is found in the Hebrew version of Sirach (at 31:8). This part of Hebrew Sirach is not preserved in the fragments found at Masada or in caves 2 and 11 of Qumran, but there is a good chance that it was part of the original Hebrew Sirach (which dates to the early part of the second century BCE). The Hebrew version reads: 'Blessed is the man who is found blameless and after wealth (קָמוֹןָ) does not turn aside'.

The word is also used in rabbinic literature, usually without any negative associations. 'Rabbi Yose said: "Let the property (קָמוֹןָ) of your fellow be as dear to you as your own"' (*ʿAbot* 2:12). More examples could be found in the Talmuds (cf. *b. Ber.* 61b ['a man who values his life more than his money']; *y. Nazir* 5:4; *y. Sanh.* 8:8) and the Midrashim (cf. *Gen. Rab.* 39:11 [on Gen. 12:2]; *Exod. Rab.* 31:3 [on Exod. 22:24]; *Exod. Rab.* 31:11 [on Exod. 22:24]). The later Targums also use the word: 'What profit (קָמוֹןָ) will we have?' (*Targ. Neof. Gen.* 37:26; cf. 36:6; *Targ. Onq. Exod.* 21:30).

Fitzmyer is critical of Matthew Black's preference for the Aramaic background of the word.<sup>52</sup> Because there are some early examples of *מָמוֹן* in Hebrew (as reviewed above), Fitzmyer sees no need to have recourse to later Aramaic examples.<sup>53</sup> (The Job Targum from cave 11 of Qumran provides the only indisputably early Aramaic example.) Fitzmyer's criticisms are justified, so far as the evidence adduced by Black goes.

Recently, Bruce Chilton has called our attention to examples in the Isaiah Targum that may force us once again to look to Aramaic as the background against which Jesus' understanding of the word ought to be understood.<sup>54</sup> Chilton has observed that, in the Isaiah Targum, mammon is consistently used in a negative sense (*Targ. Isa.* 5:23; 33:15; 45:13; 55:1; 56:11; 57:17). Two of these examples are potentially quite significant. In 5:23, the Hebrew's 'bribe' becomes in the Aramaic 'mammon of deceit' (*מָמוֹן דְּשִׁקְרָא*),<sup>55</sup> while in 57:17 the Hebrew's 'iniquity of his covetousness' becomes in the Aramaic 'sins of their mammon' (*חֻבֵי מָמוֹנְהוֹן*). Chilton rightly observes how closely this language approximates the expressions attributed to Jesus: 'from the mammon of unrighteousness (*ἐκ τοῦ μαμωνᾶ τῆς ἀδικίας*)' (Luke 16:9) and 'with unrighteous mammon (*ἐν τῷ ἀδίκῳ μαμωνᾷ*)' (Luke 16:11). Chilton does not think that in this instance Jesus has alluded to targumic tradition. He believes rather that the Isaiah Targum 'employs language which corresponds to that of Jesus'.<sup>56</sup>

Given the strong probability that Jesus regularly taught in Aramaic (not Hebrew) and that the use of *מָמוֹן* in the Isaiah Targum parallels Jesus' language more closely than other sources currently available,

<sup>52</sup> As seen in M. Black, *An Aramaic Approach to the Gospels and Acts* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 3rd edn, 1967), pp. 139-40.

<sup>53</sup> Fitzmyer, *A Wandering Aramean*, pp. 11-12.

<sup>54</sup> Chilton, *Galilean Rabbi*, pp. 117-23.

<sup>55</sup> This is how Chilton translates it; but see J.F. Stenning (*The Targum of Isaiah* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1949], p. 18) who translates 'unjust gain'. The LXX sometimes translates *שִׁקְרָא* with *ἀδικος* (Exod. 23:7; 1 Kgs 25:21; Pss. 118:118; 119:2), *ἀδικία* (Pss. 7:14 [B]; 118:104, 163; 143:34), and *ἀδικως* (Lev. 6:3-4; Job 36:4; Pss. 34:19; 37:19; 68:4; 118:78, 86; Ezek. 13:22). The frequent association of *ἀδικος* with the tongue (Prov. 6:17; 12:19) or with speech (Exod. 23:7; Lev. 19:12; Deut. 19:18; Job 36:4; Pss. 26:12; 62:11; 100:7; Prov. 14:5; 29:12; Isa. 32:7; 59:13; Jer. 5:31; 7:9) suggests that 'deceit' was not an unusual meaning for this word.

<sup>56</sup> Chilton, *Galilean Rabbi*, p. 123.

it seems prudent, *pace* Fitzmyer, to refer to Aramaic after all.<sup>57</sup>

(3) 'The Lord said to my lord'. Jesus' citation and interpretation of Ps. 110:1 has occasioned a great deal of scholarly discussion. The passage (Mark 12:35-37; cf. Matt. 12:41-46; Luke 20:41-44) reads:

How do the scribes say that the Christ is the son of David? David himself said in the Holy Spirit, 'The Lord said to my lord, "Sit at my right hand, until I place your enemies beneath your feet"'. David himself calls him 'lord', how is he then his son?

Scholars have asserted that Jesus' exegesis seems to presuppose that the words translated 'Lord/lord' are the same. This is true in the LXX, where *κύριος* is found (*εἶπεν κύριος τῷ κυρίῳ μου*), but not in the Hebrew (*יְהוָה לַאֲדֹנָי*), where it is 'Yahweh' who speaks to David's 'adonai'. Because of this, some scholars question the authenticity of the saying (because, it is assumed, Jesus would not appeal to the Greek version of the Jewish Scriptures). But Fitzmyer has pointed out that, by the time of Jesus, 'adonai' had become a substitute for the divine name, and that the Aramaic *מָרָא* was used to translate both *יְהוָה* and *אֲדֹנָי*. Jesus' Aramaic form of the citation of Ps. 110:1 might have gone something like: *אָמַר מָרָא לְמָרָאִי*.<sup>58</sup> Fitzmyer thinks that Jesus meant to imply that the Messiah was greater than the epithet 'son of David' implied. Whereas it may be true that the Messiah would be David's son, it is also true that he would be David's lord.<sup>59</sup>

(4) 'Son of God'. It has been observed that there is no Jewish, Palestinian text in which the Messiah is called the 'son of God'. Thus, Bultmann and others have claimed that calling Jesus 'son of God', as

<sup>57</sup> Throughout his work (esp. *Galilean Rabbi*), Chilton has shown how, at many points, Jesus' language and understanding of Scripture reflect traditions preserved in the Isaiah Targum.

<sup>58</sup> In the Targum, Ps. 110:1 is understood to refer to David, and not to an eschatological Messiah: 'A Psalm by the hand of David. The Lord (*יְהוָה*) said by his memra that he will make me the master of all Israel. However, he said to me: "Sit and wait until Saul, who is of the tribe of Benjamin, does, so that one kingdom may not crowd out the other. After that I will make your enemies your footstool."'

<sup>59</sup> See Fitzmyer, *Essays on the Semitic Background of the New Testament*, pp. 113-26; *idem*, *A Wandering Aramean*, p. 90; D. Daube, *The New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism* (London: Athlone, 1956), pp. 158-63; B.D. Chilton, 'Jesus ben David: Reflections on the Davidsohnfrage', *JSNT* 14 (1982), pp. 88-112; repr. in C.A. Evans and S.E. Porter (eds.), *The Historical Jesus: A Sheffield Reader* (BibSem, 33; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1995), pp. 192-215.

though it were a messianic title, arose in the Greek-speaking Church, under the influence of Hellenism and the Roman emperor cult (in which the emperor was routinely called 'son of god').<sup>60</sup> The discovery of 4Q246, the so-called 'Son of God' text, has forced scholars to reconsider this thinking. This fragmentary text anticipates the coming of one who

will be called [son of] the [gr]eat [God], and by his name shall he be named. He shall be hailed 'Son of God' (ברוך די אל), and they shall call him 'Son of the Most High' (בר עליין)...his kingdom (shall be) an everlasting kingdom, and all his ways (shall be) in truth (4Q246 1:9-2:1, 5-6).

The appearance of this epithet in Luke 1:32-35 (Gabriel's announcement to Mary) significantly suggests that it was understood not only to apply to Davidic tradition, but in a messianic sense as well. The angelic annunciation, moreover, contains unmistakable allusions to the Davidic covenant (cf. 2 Sam. 7:12-16). The relevant parts of the Lukan passage read:

He shall be great and he shall be called Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give to him the throne of David his father. And he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; and his kingdom will have no end... The power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore that which has been conceived will be called holy, Son of God.

The parallels between 4Q246 and the angelic annunciation are stunning, and lend support to the messianic interpretation of this important Aramaic text from Qumran.<sup>61</sup>

<sup>60</sup> R. Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament* (2 vols.; New York: Scribners, 1951, 1955), I, pp. 130-31; F. Hahn, *The Titles of Jesus in Christology* (London: Lutterworth; Cleveland: World, 1969), pp. 291, 293.

<sup>61</sup> For critical discussion of 4Q246 and its relevance for Luke 1:32-35, see Fitzmyer, *Essays on the Semitic Background of the New Testament*, pp. 127-60; *idem*, *A Wandering Aramean*, pp. 90-94, 102-107; *idem*, '4Q246: The "Son of God" Document from Qumran', *Bib* 74 (1993), pp. 153-74 (+ pl.). Fitzmyer is not yet persuaded that the 'son of God' in 4Q246 is a messianic personage. Others are convinced that he is such a figure; cf. J.J. Collins, 'The *Son of God* Text from Qumran', in M.C. De Boer (ed.), *From John to Jesus: Essays on Jesus and the New Testament in Honour of Marinus de Jonge* (JSNTSup, 84; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), pp. 65-82; rev. and repr. in Collins, *The Scepter and the Star: The Messiahs of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Other Ancient Literature* (ABRL; New York: Doubleday, 1995), pp. 154-72; Evans, *Jesus and his Contemporaries*, pp. 107-11. Davidic traditions in which God promises to be 'Father' to David's heir and he as 'son' to God (2 Sam. 7:14; 1 Chron. 17:13; Ps. 2:7) are what ultimately lie behind

Moreover, we now see that the Gerasene demoniac's address to Jesus as 'son of the Most High God' (Mark 5:7) is right at home in first-century Palestine. That both epithets, 'son of God' and 'son of the Most High,' occur in a Dead Sea Scroll tells against the suggestion that this language derives from non-Palestinian Hellenistic sources.

(5) There are other dominical words and phrases that find parallels in Aramaic sources from the time of Jesus. Some of these include the following:

'Lord of heaven and earth'. This phrase appears in a prayer attributed to Jesus (κύριε τοῦ οὐρανοῦ καὶ τῆς γῆς; Matt. 11:25 = Luke 10:21) and in Melchizedek's prayer, according to the Aramaic Genesis Apocryphon (מרך שמיא וארעה; 1QapGen 22:16).<sup>62</sup> The use of this epithet in prayer may have further significance, when we remember that, in the Lord's Prayer, Jesus asks that God's will be done 'on earth, as it is in heaven' (Matt. 6:10).

'with desire I desired'. In the words of institution that are found only in Luke, Jesus tells his disciples that 'with desire have I desired (ἐπιθυμία ἐπεθύμησα) to eat this Passover (meal)' (Luke 22:15). A century ago, Gustaf Dalman thought that Hebrew must underlie this manner of speaking, because the 'Hebrew mode of emphasizing the finite verb by adding its infinitive or cognate substantive<sup>63</sup>...is in the Palestinian Aramaic of the Jews—apart from the Targums—quite unknown'. This opinion was later repeated by Black,<sup>64</sup> but we now have an Aramaic parallel from the approximate time of Jesus: 'and weeping (ובכיח) I Abram wept (בכי)' (1QapGen 20:10-11).<sup>65</sup>

'debtors'. Jesus' understanding of 'debtors' as 'sinners', and vice versa, reflects Aramaic usage, and sheds light on an important aspect of his teaching. The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant (Matt. 18:23-35) and the Parable of the Two Debtors (Luke 7:41-43) presuppose the equation of sins and debts. This equivalency is also seen in the Lord's Prayer (Matt. 6:9-13 = Luke 11:2-4). Matthew's 'forgive us our debts' (τὰ ὀφειλήματα) in Luke becomes 'forgive us our sins'

the 'son of God' epithet.

<sup>62</sup> See Fitzmyer, *A Wandering Aramean*, pp. 98-99; *idem*, *Luke*, II, p. 872.

<sup>63</sup> For example, see Isa. 6:9 ('hearing hear...seeing see').

<sup>64</sup> Dalman, *The Words of Jesus*, p. 34; Black, *An Aramaic Approach*, p. 238.

<sup>65</sup> As noted by Fitzmyer, *A Wandering Aramean*, p. 112 n. 58. On the Aramaic substratum underlying the words of institution (Mark 14:22-23 = Luke 22:19b-20), see Fitzmyer, *Luke*, II, pp. 1394-95.

(τὰς ἀμαρτίας).<sup>66</sup> Jesus' rhetorical question in Luke 13:4 ('were they worse debtors (ὀφειλέται) than all those who dwell in Jerusalem?') refers, of course, to sinners, not to persons who were in financial difficulties.

The Greek phenomena reflect the Aramaic ܗܘܒܗ, which means 'sin' or 'debt'. There are several examples in the Targums, where the Hebrew ִחַטָּה ('sin') or ִחַטָּה ('to sin') is translated with ܗܘܒܗ (cf. MT and *Targ. Neof.* Gen. 18:20-24; Exod. 32:30-33; Num. 12:11; Deut. 15:9; 19:15; 23:23; *Targ. Isa.* 1:18; 31:7; 53:12). The cognates ܗܘܒܗ/ܗܘܒܗ also translate ִחַטָּה/ִחַטָּה (cf. *Targ. Isa.* 1:28; 13:9; 33:14), as well as various synonyms of 'sinner'. For examples of the latter, see *Targ. Onq.* Gen. 18:23 and *Targ. Job* 38:13 where ܗܘܒܗ translates רָשָׁע ('wicked'). One should note also how the Hebrew 'Will you condemn me that you may be justified?' (Job 40:8) becomes in the targum from Qumran 'Will you again set judgment aside and condemn me as a debtor [or sinner: וְתַחֲיִבֵנִי] that you may be clean?' (11QtgJob 34:4).<sup>67</sup>

'amen' and 'in truth'. Jesus' habit of introducing many of his pronouncements with 'amen' or 'in truth' is a distinctive feature of his teaching style. Sayings with good claim to authenticity include Mark 8:12 ('Amen, I say to you, no sign shall be given to this generation') and 9:1 ('Amen, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see that the kingdom of God has come in power').<sup>68</sup> What is noteworthy here is that Jesus

<sup>66</sup> It is interesting to observe that in the *Even Boḥan* (a medieval work that contains a Hebrew translation of the Gospel of Matthew) 'debts' is translated 'sins' (חַטָּה). For text, translation, and arguments for the antiquity of this Hebrew version of Matthew, see G. Howard, *The Gospel of Matthew according to a Primitive Hebrew Text* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1987).

<sup>67</sup> For discussion, see Black, *An Aramaic Approach*, p. 140; Fitzmyer, *Luke*, II, pp. 1007-1008; M. McNamara, *Targum and Testament: Aramaic Paraphrases of the Hebrew Bible* (Shannon: Irish University Press; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), pp. 120-21; J.A. Sanders, 'Sins, Debts, and Jubilee Release', in C.A. Evans and J.A. Sanders, *Luke and Scripture: The Function of Sacred Tradition in Luke-Acts* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), pp. 84-92.

<sup>68</sup> A major factor in favor of the authenticity of these lies in the difficulties they created for the early Church. In the case of the first saying, early Christians wanted to claim that Jesus in fact did provide his generation with a sign, namely, the 'sign of Jonah'—the resurrection of Jesus (cf. Matt. 12:38-41). Indeed, in the fourth Gospel, Jesus' entire ministry is described in terms of 'signs'. In the case of the second saying, early Christians struggled to explain in what sense the kingdom of

introduces sayings with 'amen' or 'in truth', while the norm was to conclude a saying or prayer with this word (from the Bible, see Num. 5:22; Deut. 27:15; Neh. 8:6; Ps. 41:13; from sources that date approximately to the time of Jesus, see 1QS 1:20; 2:10; 4QBerakot 10 ii 1, 5, 10; 4Q504 3 ii 3; *passim*).

The word ἀμήν is a transliteration of ܐܡܝܢ. The Lukan evangelist, or the tradition that he inherited, sometimes translates with either a prepositional phrase or the adverbial equivalent: 'In truth [ἐπ' ἀληθείας] I say to you, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah...' (4:25; cf. 9:27 [ἀληθῶς]; 12:44; 21:3; 22:59). Greek equivalents are also found elsewhere (cf. Mark 12:14, 32; Dan. 2:47 [translates ܘܫܦܪ]; *T. Dan.* 2:1). A parallel of this last example is found in 1QapGen. 2:5: '...in truth (ܐܡܝܢ) you make everything known to me' (cf. 2:6, 7, 10, 18, 22). Examples of the asseverative usage of ܐܡܝܢ can be found in the targums (cf. *Targ. Onq.* Gen. 3:1; 17:19; *Targ. Isa.* 37:18; 45:14, 15). The Hebrew ܐܡܝܢ is itself carried over into the targums, including two relatively rare instances of the asseverative usage (1 Kgs 1:36; Jer. 28:6).<sup>69</sup> Chilton wonders if Jesus' distinctive habit of introducing pronouncements with the asseverative 'amen'/'in truth' is yet again another parallel with targumic diction.<sup>70</sup>

### B. Teaching Conventions

Jesus' parables, proverbs, and prayers parallel the teaching conventions attested in rabbinic sources (which admittedly derive from sources that postdate the New Testament) and, in some instances, in sources from the time of Jesus. Although the rabbinic materials are from a later time, certain formal and thematic features that closely parallel features found in Jesus' parables may be relevant and may be helpful.<sup>71</sup>

God actually came, before the death of Jesus' contemporaries.

<sup>69</sup> See K. Berger, 'Zur Geschichte der Einleitungsformel "Amen ich sage euch"', *ZNW* 63 (1972), pp. 45-75; B.D. Chilton, "'Amen': An Approach through Syriac Gospels", *ZNW* 69 (1978), pp. 203-11; *idem*, 'Amen', *ABD* 1 (1992), pp. 184-86; J. Strugnell, "'Amen, I say Unto You" in the Sayings of Jesus', *HTR* 67 (1974), pp. 177-82; J.A. Fitzmyer, *The Genesis Apocryphon of Qumran Cave I: A Commentary* (BibOr, 18A; Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1971), pp. 84-85; *idem*, *Luke*, I, p. 537.

<sup>70</sup> Chilton, *Galilean Rabbi*, p. 202.

<sup>71</sup> For proposed critical guidelines for making use of rabbinic literature in Jesus research, see C.A. Evans, 'Early Rabbinic Sources and Jesus Research', in

1. *Parables*. Thematically, the parables of Jesus and the later parables of the rabbis have many things in common. Half of Jesus' parables deal with the 'kingdom of God'; half of the rabbinic parables speak of a 'king' (who is usually understood to be God). In the rabbinic parables, 'kingdom' is sometimes defined as God's dominion or sphere of rule (cf. *Mek.* on Exod. 20:2 [*Baḥodeš* §5]; *Sipra Lev.* §194 [on Lev. 18:1-30]). In Jesus' parables, the kingdom of God seems best understood as 'realm' or 'dominion' (cf. Luke 11:20). The characters of the parables of Jesus and the rabbis often behave in illogical and extreme ways. Finally, the rabbinic parables employ formal terminology and imagery often found in parables attributed to Jesus.

For examples of this last point, consider the following parallels in formal terminology:

אֲמַשׁוּל לְךָ מִשָּׁל: לְמַה הִדְבַּר דּוֹמָה: לְאָדָם שֶׁנִּשְׁוָה בְּחֵבֵירוֹ מִנָּה—'I will give you a parable. To what does this matter compare? To a man who lent his neighbor a mina...' (*b. Roš Haš.* 17b).

מִשָּׁל לְמֶלֶךְ שֶׁזָּיַמן אֶת עַבְדָּיו לְסַעֲוָה—'It compares to a king who summoned his servants to a banquet...' (*b. Šabb.* 153a).

ἄλλην παραβολὴν παρέθηκεν αὐτοῖς λέγων, ὡμοιώθη ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν ἀνθρώπῳ σπείραντι καλὸν σπέρμα...—'He set before them another parable, saying, "The kingdom of Heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed..." (Matt. 13:24).

τίμι ὁμοία ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τίμι ὁμοιώσω αὐτήν ὁμοία ἐστίν κόκκῳ σινάπεως...—'What is the kingdom of God like and to what shall I compare it? It is like a mustard seed...' (Luke 13:18).

כֵּן נִעְשָׂה לְמִצְרַיִם—'Thus it happened to the Egyptians...' (*Mek.* on Exod. 14:5 [*Bešallah* §2]).

כֵּן אָמַר לְיִשְׂרָאֵל מֹשֶׁה מִשָּׁה לְיִשְׂרָאֵל—'Thus did Moses speak to Israel...' (*Sipra Deut.* §53 [on Deut. 11:26]).

οὕτως ἐστίν ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ—'Thus is the kingdom of God' (Mark 4:26).

οὕτως ἔσται καὶ τῇ γενεᾷ ταύτῃ τῇ πονηρᾷ—'Thus it will be also with this evil generation' (Matt. 12:45).

The parables of the rabbis often portray characters behaving in irrational and illogical ways. Consider the following parable,

E.H. Lovering (ed.), *Society of Biblical Literature 1995 Seminar Papers* (SBLSP, 34; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995), pp. 53-76.

attributed to Rabbi Yose the Galilean (second century CE):

The parable, as told by Rabbi Yose the Galilean, concerned a mortal king who had set out for a city far across the sea. As he was about to entrust his son to the care of a wicked guardian, his friends and servants said to him: 'My lord king, do not entrust your son to this wicked guardian'. Nevertheless the king, ignoring the counsel of his friends and servants, entrusted his son to the wicked guardian. What did the guardian do? He proceeded to destroy the king's city, have his house consumed by fire, and slay his son with the sword. After a while the king returned. When he saw his city destroyed and desolate, his house consumed by fire, his son slain with the sword, he pulled out the hair of his head and his beard and broke out into wild weeping, saying: 'Woe is me! How <foolish> I have been, how senselessly I acted in this kingdom of mine in entrusting my son to a wicked guardian!'<sup>72</sup>

In Yose's parable, we have a man who appears utterly to lack common sense. Against the advice of friends and counselors, he entrusts his son to a man known to be a 'wicked guardian'. However, the actions of the guardian are just as difficult to comprehend. We are not told that he stole anything or profited in any way by his actions. He destroys the king's city, burns down his house, and murders his son. What could he possibly have hoped to gain? Did he imagine that he could get away with these crimes? Would not every hearer of this parable suppose that the king would send troops after the guardian and have him executed?

These are the same kinds of questions some critics have from time to time raised in reference to the Parable of the Vineyard Tenants, as well as other parables. How could the owner of the vineyard be so foolish and so reckless with the lives of his servants and especially with the life of his son? What could the tenants realistically have hoped to gain? Did they not know that the owner had the power to come and destroy them? Did they really imagine that they could inherit the vineyard? One may ask similar questions with respect to the rude behavior of the invited guests of the Parable of the Great Banquet (Luke 14:15-24) or the eccentric behavior of the vineyard owner in the Parable of the Laborers (Matt. 20:1-15).

It is significant to observe that Yose applies his parable to God's trusting his exiled people to Nebuchadnezzar! How could God have

<sup>72</sup> Trans. by W.G. Braude and I. Kapstein, *Tanna Dēbe Eliyyahu: The Lore of the School of Elijah* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1981), p. 369. The translation has been slightly modified.



been so incautious as to entrust his people to the care of such a villain? We should understand the folly of the vineyard owner and the vineyard tenants in a similar light. Their actions are inexplicable. But the shocking details and the questions these parables raise are supposed to lead the hearers to grasp and apply the intended lesson.

2. *Proverbs*. There are at least forty proverbial sayings attributed to Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels that closely parallel proverbial sayings found in the rabbinic literature.<sup>73</sup> For example, Jesus asks, 'If the salt has lost its flavor, with what is it to be salted?' (Mark 9:50). The proverb is found verbatim in *b. Ber.* 8b. Again, Jesus admonishes his disciples: 'With what measure you measure, it shall be measured to you again' (Matt. 7:2 = Luke 6:38; Mark 4:24). This proverb appears in the Mishnah, the Tosefta, the Talmud, some of the Midrashim, and in some of the targumic tradition. Jesus' humorous proverbial admonition, 'First remove the beam from your own eye; and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye' (Matt. 7:5), finds a close parallel in the Talmud: 'If one say to him, "Remove the speck from between your eyes", he would answer, "Remove the beam from between your eyes!"' (*b. Arak.* 16b).

These parallels are interesting and, in a general sense, help us appreciate the various usages of proverbs in the Jewish world of late antiquity, but sometimes a parallel proverb might actually offer some specific help in the task of interpreting the words of Jesus. One thinks of the episode where Jesus observes the poor widow drop her last penny into one of the offering receptacles in the Temple precincts (Mark 12:41-44). Jesus declares: 'Out of her poverty she put in all that she had, even her own life (βλος)' (v. 44). Christian interpretation has traditionally understood his statement as a word of praise, as though Jesus viewed the widow's sacrificial gift as a good thing, worthy of emulation.<sup>74</sup>

Recently, however, a few interpreters have challenged this position. It has been suggested that Jesus uttered a word of lament, not praise.<sup>75</sup> According to this view, Jesus lamented the failure of the

<sup>73</sup> For a listing of these parallels, see G. Dalman, *Jesus-Jeshua: Studies in the Gospels* (London: SPCK, 1929; repr. New York: Ktav, 1971), pp. 225-32; Evans, *Jesus and his Contemporaries*, pp. 269-76.

<sup>74</sup> For example, see W.L. Lane, *The Gospel of Mark* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), p. 443.

<sup>75</sup> See A.G. Wright, 'The Widow's Mites: Praise or Lament?—A Matter of

Temple establishment to act as guardian and caretaker of the poor (particularly widows and orphans), as the laws of Moses commanded (cf. Exod. 22:22; Deut. 14:28-29). Rather, the Temple had become a burden for the poor, drawing off their last penny, seemingly sucking the life out of them. When the same proverb appears in a later rabbinic text—and in this context also the priesthood is criticized—one suspects that this new interpretation of the dominical tradition may very well be on target. The rabbinic story reads: 'Once a woman brought a handful of fine flour, and the priest despised her, saying, "See what she offers! What is there in this to offer up?" It was shown to him in a dream: "Do not despise her! It is regarded as if she had sacrificed her own life (שנפח)"' (*Lev. Rab.* 3:5 [on Lev. 1:17]). The context of Jesus' pronouncement, where he warns of scribes who 'devour the houses of widows' (Mark 12:38-40), supports a critical interpretation, at least as it is contextualized in the Synoptic Gospels. But the function of the parallel pronouncement in the rabbinic passage supports a critical interpretation in a setting similar to that of the Synoptic Gospels, perhaps deriving from Jesus himself.

3. *Prayers*. The prayers of Jesus are eschatological.<sup>76</sup> In his Prayer of Thanksgiving (Matt. 11:25b-26 = Luke 10:21b), Jesus thanks God because he has 'hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to infants'. What God has hidden from the wise is the presence and nature of the kingdom, or reign, of God. This language alludes to Dan. 2:21-23, in which Daniel thanks God for revealing the meaning of Nebuchadnezzar's dream.<sup>77</sup> Daniel has learned that the kingdom of God will appear and will crush all opposing kingdoms (Dan. 2:44). Likewise, what has been revealed to Jesus and his followers is the appearance of the promised kingdom.

The Lord's Prayer coheres with this eschatological perspective: 'Father, sanctify your name; may your kingdom come' (Luke 11:2).

Context', *CBQ* 44 (1982), pp. 256-65; Fitzmyer, *Luke*, II, pp. 1320-21.

<sup>76</sup> For defense of this claim, see R.E. Brown, 'The Pater Noster as an Eschatological Prayer', *TS* 22 (1961), pp. 175-208; repr. in Brown, *New Testament Essays* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1967), pp. 217-53; Evans, *Jesus and his Contemporaries*, pp. 286-97.

<sup>77</sup> Thanking God for revelation, in language reminiscent of Daniel, is also found in the Dead Sea Scrolls; for example: 'I thank you, O Lord, because you gave me your truth, you have made me know your wonderful mysteries' (1QH 7:26-27).

These opening petitions parallel closely the ancient Jewish prayer known as the Qaddish (the 'holy'): 'May his great name be glorified and sanctified... May he establish his kingdom...speedily and soon.'<sup>78</sup> The Amida ('standing'), also known as the Shemone Esra ('eighteen'), contains petitions that probably reach back to the time of Jesus (though it is not always easy to identify early material). Many of these petitions are also eschatological. Petition §7 pleads for redemption, §8 pleads for healing, §10 pleads for the sounding of the shofar and the gathering of the exiles of Israel, §11 pleads for the restoration of good government in Israel, §12 pleads for the destruction of Rome, and §14 pleads for mercy on Jerusalem and on David, God's 'righteous Messiah'. The Hebrew version of Sirach, at 51:12 (according to the Greek versification), offers thanks to God, who is described as Israel's redeemer, gatherer of the dispersed, and the one who 'makes a horn sprout for the house of David'.

Jesus' eschatological prayers cohere with these Jewish prayers. We find that there is little in Jesus' prayers that is distinctive. They are marked by simplicity and directness. But their eschatological orientation, the hope expressed in them for Israel's redemption, places them squarely within Jewish piety of late antiquity.

### C. Scripture and Interpretative Traditions

Another fruitful area of Jesus research involves study of the way the Scripture of Israel was interpreted in late antiquity. Careful, comparative study enables us to see better to what extent Scripture and interpretive traditions informed Jesus' teaching and activities. We must ask several important questions: To what extent did Scripture lie behind Jesus' proclamation and definition of the kingdom of God? What was Jesus' hermeneutic? Did he view Scripture as fulfilled in his ministry? How did his understanding of Scripture differ from that of his contemporaries?

These are difficult questions, but all of them can be answered, at least in part. Our most important source is the dominical tradition itself. We must look at what Scriptures are cited and alluded to, and how they were interpreted. We must look at the Scriptures themselves, as they existed in the time of Jesus. Here the Dead Sea Scrolls are of immense value. Not only do we have portions of 38 of the 39 books that make up what eventually becomes the Hebrew Bible (and the fullest preserved books—Isaiah, Psalms, and

<sup>78</sup> See the analysis in Fitzmyer, *Luke*, II, pp. 900-901.

Deuteronomy—are the very ones that were the most influential in the teaching of Jesus and the early Church), but we have a host of writings that interpret various Scriptures. The Septuagint is also important, not only because one half of all New Testament quotations of the Old Testament are taken from this Greek translation, but also because it preserves interpretive traditions that give us some indications of how Jews of late antiquity understood their Scriptures. The Aramaic paraphrases are also important, though these targums must be used with care, given their relative late dates of composition. The writings of Josephus and Philo, as well as many of the writings that make up the Old Testament Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha, are also of great value in our attempts to ascertain what Scriptures were important to Jews of late antiquity and how they were interpreted.

The following three examples will illustrate what is involved in this aspect of the exegetical task. We shall see how the Dead Sea Scrolls and the targums are especially useful. The first example treats the potentially embarrassing question raised by the imprisoned John the Baptist, who wonders if Jesus really is the 'coming one'. The second example shows how the Scrolls and targumic tradition sometimes fill in gaps in some of the debates that Jesus had with his contemporaries. The third example illustrates how important Scripture and its popular interpretation in late antiquity are for understanding certain aspects of Jesus' criticism of the religious authorities of his day.

(1) 'Go and tell John what you have seen and heard.' The exchange between John the Baptist (via his messengers) and Jesus (Matt. 11:2-6 = Luke 7:18-23) is so potentially embarrassing to the early Church that its authenticity is virtually guaranteed. It is impossible to imagine why early Christians would invent a story in which John, a major witness and validator of Jesus, his 'successor', would question Jesus' identity and mission. John asked Jesus, 'Are you the one who is coming, or shall we look for another?' Was this a 'messianic' question; and, more importantly, was Jesus' reply messianic? For years, scholars have debated these questions. But the publication of 4Q521, a fragmentary scroll that speaks of God's 'messiah', may have finally resolved the dispute.

The relevant part of the scroll reads (1 ii 1-14):

<sup>1</sup>[...the hea]vens and the earth will obey His Messiah, <sup>2</sup>[...and all th]at is in them. He will not turn aside from the commandments of the holy ones.

<sup>3</sup>Take strength in His service, (you) who seek the Lord. <sup>4</sup>Will you not find

the Lord in this, all you who wait patiently in your hearts? <sup>5</sup>For the Lord will visit the pious ones, and the righteous ones He will call by name. <sup>6</sup>Over the meek His Spirit will hover, and the faithful He will restore by His power. <sup>7</sup>He will glorify the pious ones on the throne of the eternal kingdom. <sup>8</sup>*He will release the captives, make the blind see, raise up the do[wntrodden].* <sup>9</sup>For[ev]er I shall cling [to Him...], and [I shall trust] in His lovingkindness, <sup>10</sup>and [His] goo[dness...] of holiness will not delay [...] <sup>11</sup>And as for the wonders that are not the work of the Lord, when He [...] <sup>12</sup>then he will heal the slain, resurrect the dead, and *announce glad tidings to the poor.* <sup>13</sup>[...] He will lead the [hol]y ones; he will shepherd [th]em; he will do [...] <sup>14</sup>and all of it ...

This text contains several important allusions to Isaiah and Psalms. We find words and phrases from Ps. 146:6, 8 ('heaven and earth...and all that is in them...the Lord opens the eyes of the blind. The Lord lifts up those who are downtrodden'), and Isa. 61:1-2 ('the Lord has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor...to proclaim liberty to the captives'). The reference to 'anoint' in the latter passage may tie in the opening statement that the 'heavens and earth obey his anointed (or Messiah)'.

Shortly after the publication of this text, a remarkable parallel with a saying of Jesus was observed. In reply to the Baptist's question Jesus says: 'Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them'. Jesus' reply alludes to Isa. 61:1-2 ('the Lord has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor...to proclaim liberty to the captives') and Isa. 35:5-6 ('the eyes of the blind shall be opened'), or Ps. 146:6 ('the Lord opens the eyes of the blind'). None of the passages to which Jesus alludes say anything about the dead being raised up. This element is, however, present in 4Q521. The principal elements may be compared as follows:

<i>Q (Matt. 11:5 = Luke 7:22)</i>	<i>Isaiah 35 + 61</i>	<i>4Q521</i>
he cured many of diseases		he will heal the slain
blind receive sight	blind receive sight	make blind see
lame walk	lame walk	
lepers are cleansed		
deaf hear	deaf hear	
<i>dead are raised up</i>		<i>resurrect the dead</i>
poor have good news preached	poor have good news preached	poor have good news preached

John Collins has suggested that 4Q521 describes the expected

activity of a prophetic Messiah.<sup>79</sup> This seems likely, because Isaiah 61 concerns someone anointed to 'bring good news' and to 'proclaim liberty' and 'the year of the Lord's favor'. These are the responsibilities of the eschatological prophet. Indeed, the Aramaic paraphrase renders Isa. 61:1: 'The Prophet said, "A spirit of prophecy...is upon me...to announce good news..."'

4Q521 is apparently describing the works of God's anointed. In all probability, the text is eschatological. These deeds of healing, including raising the dead, will take place when the anointed one appears. Jesus' answer to the Baptist, in that it parallels some of the same Scripture exploited by 4Q521, seems to be an affirmation of his anointed status. Is Jesus the 'one who is coming'? Yes, he is; and this claim is demonstrated by the fact that he is doing the deeds of the anointed one.

(2) 'Do this and you will live.' On one occasion, an expert in the Mosaic Law asked Jesus, 'What must I do to inherit eternal life?' (Luke 10:25). We are told that Jesus in turn asked him what was written in the Law and how did he understand it? The legal expert summarized the Law with the two great commandments, to love God and to love one's neighbor (Luke 10:26-27; cf. Mark 12:28-34, where it is Jesus who affirms the great commandments). To this affirmation Jesus responded: 'You have answered rightly. Do this and you will live' (Luke 10:28).

Most commentators agree that, in saying this, Jesus has alluded to Lev. 18:5, which, according to the Hebrew, reads: 'You shall keep my statutes and my ordinances; a human will do them and will live by them'. The Septuagint reads: 'And you shall keep all my ordinances and my judgments and you shall do them, which having done, a human will live by them'. Neither version says anything about 'eternal life', which was the point of the legal expert's question. Leviticus 18 is concerned with life in this world: If Israelites obey God's Law, they will enjoy life and well-being in the land that God will give them. Why then did Jesus allude to Lev. 18:5,

<sup>79</sup> J.J. Collins, 'The Works of the Messiah', *DSD* 1 (1994), pp. 98-112; *idem*, *The Scepter and the Star*, pp. 117-22, 205-206. The association with Isaiah 61 lends support to the eschatological prophet interpretation, but the later reference to 'his scepter' (שֵׁבֶט) leaves open the possibility that the messianic figure of 4Q521 is a royal figure after all. The relevant, but fragmentary text reads: 'May the earth rejoice in all the places [...] for all Israel in the rejoicing of [...] and his scepter [...]' (2 iii 4-6).

as though, in applying it to the legal expert, his question regarding eternal life had been answered? After all, the legal expert did not ask Jesus what he must do to continue living in the land of Israel.

The Damascus Document and the *Psalms of Solomon* may aid us in answering this question. According to the latter (first century BCE) the commandments are 'for our life' and the 'Lord's devout shall live by (the Law) forever' (*Pss. Sol.* 14:1-5). It is not certain that this text alludes specifically to Lev. 18:5, but the idea that obeying the Law will lead to eternal life seems clear enough. The former writing (second century BCE), which was found in the Cairo synagogue genizah and in fragments at Qumran, refers to God's Law, "which a man should do and live by"... Those who adhere to it will live forever' (CD 3:12-16, 20). This text appears to have alluded to Lev. 18:5, and understands the promise to 'live' in terms of eternal life, and not simply temporal life.

This understanding of Lev 18:5 is made explicit in the targumic tradition. Onqelos expands the key part of the verse to read: 'he will live by them in eternal life (בחי עלמא)' (*Targ. Onq. Lev.* 18:5). Pseudo-Jonathan expands the verse with greater elaboration: 'he will live by them in eternal life (בחי עלמא) and will be assigned a portion with the righteous' (*Targ. Ps.-J. Lev.* 18:5). The equation of obedience to the Law to inheriting eternal life appears elsewhere in the targums (*Targ. Isa.* 4:3; 58:11; *Targ. Ezek.* 20:11, 13, 21).

From this, we probably should assume that, when Jesus alluded to Lev. 18:5 ('You have answered rightly. Do this and you will live'), he and the legal expert understood it in reference to eternal life. What must he do to inherit eternal life? He must keep the great commandments. If he does them, he will live forever.

(3) 'A man planted a vineyard.' The Parable of the Wicked Vineyard Tenants (Mark 12:1-11) affords us another opportunity to observe how the targum and the Dead Sea Scrolls shed important light on the teaching of Jesus. The parable begins with several words taken from Isaiah's Song of the Vineyard (Isa. 5:1-7): 'A man "planted a vineyard, placed a hedge around it, dug out a wine vat, and built a tower". Then he leased it to farmers and went abroad' (Mark 12:1). The well known parable goes on to describe the farmers' refusal to surrender the fruit of the vineyard to the owner. They abuse the owner's servants, even killing some. Finally, in desperation, the owner sends his beloved son, but he too is murdered and cast out of the vineyard. 'What will the owner of the vineyard

do?'. Jesus asks his hearers. 'He will come and destroy the farmers, and give the vineyard to others' (Mark 12:9).

Among Jesus' hearers are ruling priests, scribes, and elders (cf. Mark 11:27). When they heard the parable, they 'perceived that he had told the parable against them' (Mark 12:12). Why did they assume that the parable was directed against them? Isaiah 5, the passage on which the details of the Parable of the Wicked Vineyard Tenants is based, is directed against the *whole* of the nation (against the 'inhabitants of Jerusalem', 'the men of Judah', and 'the house of Israel'; Isa. 5:3, 7). Nothing in Isaiah's song suggests that it was directed against the ruling priests or other religious authorities. Besides, would not ruling priests, given their wealth and social status, have more readily identified with the vineyard owner, not the farmers who lease the vineyard?

The Aramaic paraphrase found in the Isaiah Targum provides an important clue in finding an answer to these questions. According to *Targ. Isa.* 5:2: 'I established them as the plant of a choice vine; and I built my sanctuary in their midst, and I even gave my altar to atone for their sins'. 'Sanctuary' and 'altar' have taken the place of 'tower' and 'wine vat'. Such an identification is made explicit in the Tosefta (*t. Me'il.* 1:16; *t. Sukk.* 3:15). Because of the nation's sin, the Lord says: 'I will take up my Shekhinah from them, and they shall be for plundering; I will break down my sanctuaries, and they will be for trampling' (*Targ. Isa.* 5:5).<sup>80</sup> The prophetic word of judgment, according to the Aramaic tradition, is directed against the Temple establishment. Indeed, the reference to farmers' hopes of gaining the 'inheritance' (Mark 12:7) seems to cohere exegetically with the Targum's description of the 'inheritance on a high hill' (*Targ. Isa.* 5:1).

Jesus' direction of Isaiah 5 against the Temple establishment of his day coheres with what we find in the Isaiah Targum. But was this targumic tradition in circulation in Jesus' day, or is this no more than a coincidence? Referring to the Temple as a 'tower' is attested in *1 Enoch* (89:56, 66-67, 73), and the cultic association of Isaiah 5 itself is documented in 4Q500, whose fragmentary text reads: 'a wine vat built among stones [...] before the gate of the holy height [...] your planting and the streams of your glory [...] your vine[yard]...'.

<sup>80</sup> I am following the translation of B.D. Chilton, *The Isaiah Targum* (ArBib, 11; Wilmington: Glazier, 1987), pp. 10-11.

(lines 3-7). The words 'wine vat', 'built', 'stones', and 'planting' make it evident that the vineyard of Isaiah 5 is in view. The 'gate of the holy height' and the 'streams of your glory' are unmistakable references to the Temple.<sup>81</sup>

Jesus' usage of Isaiah 5 in the telling of his parable seems to have presupposed the exegetical tradition now preserved in the Isaiah Targum. Even the quotation of Ps. 118:22-23, with which the parable concludes (Mark 12:10-11) and which many interpreters assume is a later Christian addition, in order to heighten the christological potential of the parable, takes on added significance when we consider the Aramaic paraphrase preserved in the Psalms Targum: 'The boy which the builders abandoned was among the sons of Jesse, and he is worthy to be appointed king and ruler' (*Targ. Ps.* 118:22). The Aramaic evidently has exploited the potential for a play on words in the Hebrew involving *הַאֲבֵן* ('the stone') and *הַבֵּן* ('the son'). Such a wordplay in Hebrew, reflected in the targumic tradition, but not preserved in the LXX (which is what is actually quoted in Mark), suggests that the quotation derives from Jesus and not from the Greek-speaking Church (as many interpreters suppose). The linkage between the quotation and the parable, which tells of a rejected son, becomes much closer. Not only does the Aramaic tradition shed important meaning on the parable itself, but it provides a plausible frame of reference for understanding Mark 12:1-9 + 12:10-11 as a coherent, and original, unity.

#### D. Historical, Political, and Economic Context

In recent years a great deal of research has focused on the world of first-century Jewish Palestine. Archaeology, historical criticism, and studies in the politics, economics, and cultures of the Mediterranean world of late antiquity have shed light on various aspects of the activities, teachings, and general context of Jesus.<sup>82</sup>

<sup>81</sup> See the discussion in J.M. Baumgarten, '4Q500 and the Ancient Conception of the Lord's Vineyard', *JJS* 40 (1989), pp. 1-6.

<sup>82</sup> Representative studies include E. Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ* (3 vols.; rev. and ed. by G. Vermes, F. Millar, and M. Black; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1973-87); M. Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism* (2 vols.; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974); Safrai and Stern (eds.), *The Jewish People in the First Century*; E.M. Smallwood, *The Jews under Roman Rule: From Pompey to Diocletian* (*SJLA*, 20; Leiden: Brill, 2nd edn, 1981); H. Koester, *Introduction to the New Testament. I. History, Culture and Religion of the Hellenistic Age* (Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 1982); M. Goodman, *State*

New study in Josephus has been especially helpful.<sup>83</sup> From this first-century apologist, interpreter, and historian we learn much about the events surrounding Jesus and his followers. Three important aspects of Jesus' message and activities will be considered: (1) Jesus' announcement of the kingdom of God, (2) the Pharisees' demand for a confirming sign, and (3) Jesus' debate with the Temple establishment.

1. *The Announcement of the Kingdom of God.* The Markan evangelist summarizes Jesus' message with the words: 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has arrived! Repent, and believe in the Good News' (Mark 1:15).<sup>84</sup> The first part of this statement in all

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*and Society in Roman Galilee, A.D. 132-212* (Oxford Centre for Postgraduate Hebrew Studies; Totowa: Rowman & Allanheld, 1983); E. Bammel and C.F.D. Moule (eds.), *Jesus and the Politics of his Day* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984); D.E. Oakman, *Jesus and the Economic Questions of his Day* (*SBEC*, 8; Lewiston & Queenston: Mellen, 1986); R.A. Horsley, *Jesus and the Spiral of Violence: Popular Jewish Resistance in Roman Palestine* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987); J. Neusner et al. (eds.), *Judaisms and their Messiahs at the Turn of the Christian Era* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); S. Freyne, *Galilee, Jesus and the Gospels: Literary Approaches and Historical Investigations* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988); M. Hengel, *The Zealots: Investigations into the Jewish Freedom Movement in the Period from Herod I until 70 A.D.* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1989); J.H. Charlesworth (ed.), *The Messiah: Developments in Earliest Judaism and Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992); L.I. Levine (ed.), *The Galilee in Late Antiquity* (Jerusalem and New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1992); Evans, *Jesus and his Contemporaries*, pp. 53-297.

<sup>83</sup> R.J.H. Shutt, *Studies in Josephus* (London: SPCK, 1961); O. Betz et al. (eds.), *Josephus-Studien: Untersuchungen zu Josephus, dem antiken Judentum und dem Neuen Testament* (Festschrift O. Michel; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1974); S.J.D. Cohen, *Josephus in Galilee and Rome: His Vita and Development as a Historian* (*SCT*, 8; Leiden: Brill, 1979); T. Rajak, *Josephus: The Historian and his Society* (London: Duckworth; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983); R.A. Horsley and J.S. Hanson, *Bandits, Prophets, and Messiahs: Popular Movements at the Time of Jesus* (Minneapolis: Winston, 1985; repr. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988); L.H. Feldman and G. Hata (eds.), *Josephus, the Bible, and History* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1987); *idem* (eds.), *Josephus, Judaism, and Christianity* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1987).

<sup>84</sup> Some scholars suspect that these are not the actual words of Jesus, especially the final words, 'Repent, and believe in the Good News' (e.g. Bultmann, *History of the Synoptic Tradition*, pp. 118, 127); but many suspect that they do summarize the principal components of his message, and, in part, may actually derive from Jesus; cf. Guclich, *Mark*, pp. 41-43; R.H. Gundry, *Mark: A*

probability approximates Jesus' message, for elsewhere he is said to have announced: 'The kingdom of God has come in power!' (Mark 9:1).<sup>85</sup> Even the latter part, which many scholars view as the evangelist's summary of the Christian message, may also derive from Jesus.<sup>86</sup>

Jesus' announcement of the kingdom was evidently echoed by enthusiastic members of his following. When he entered Jerusalem, he was met with the shout: 'Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David' (Mark 11:10). The political implications of Jesus' ride on the donkey could scarcely have been missed. One immediately thinks of Solomon, who rode the donkey of his father King David down to the Gihon spring in Jerusalem, where he was met by the High Priest and was proclaimed king (1 Kgs 1:32-40). This historical picture would also have received important prophetic impetus as well, when we remember Zechariah's prophecy: 'Your king comes to you...humble and riding on a donkey' (Zech. 9:9). When the people spread their garments on the road before the approaching Jesus (Mark 11:8), we are reminded of the reception given to Jehu, when the Israelites placed their garments on the steps before their new monarch and cried out, 'Jehu is king' (2 Kgs 9:13). Also, the waving of the palm branches is reminiscent of the greeting extended to the victorious Judas Maccabeus (2 Macc. 10:7).

Judging by the biblical precedents, it is evident that Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem carried with it political connotations, connotations his contemporaries could scarcely have missed. But were there other men from this period of time who made claims or were recognized by their respective followings as royal figures, perhaps even messianic claimants? According to Josephus, there were.<sup>87</sup> Following the death of Herod the Great, several men attempted to gain the

*Commentary on his Apology for the Cross* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), pp. 69-71; and esp. B.D. Chilton, *God in Strength: Jesus' Announcement of the Kingdom* (SNTU, 1; Freistadt: Plöchl, 1979; repr. BibSem, 8; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1987), pp. 27-95.

<sup>85</sup> Chilton, *God in Strength*, pp. 251-74; *idem*, 'The Transfiguration: Dominical Assurance and Apostolic Vision', *NTS* 27 (1980-81), pp. 115-24.

<sup>86</sup> Gundry, *Mark*, pp. 466-69.

<sup>87</sup> For critical discussion, see R.A. Horsley, 'Popular Messianic Movements around the Time of Jesus', *CBQ* 46 (1984), pp. 471-95; *idem* and Hanson, *Bandits, Prophets, and Messiahs: Popular Movements at the Time of Jesus*, pp. 88-134; Hengel, *The Zealots*, pp. 290-302; Evans, *Jesus and his Contemporaries*, pp. 53-81.

throne. Josephus tells us of the Galilean Judas, son of Hezekiah the brigand chief, who plundered the royal arsenals, attacked other kingly aspirants, and had 'ambition for royal honor' (*Ant.* 17:10:5 §§271-272; *War* 2:4:1 §56). Next we are told of Simon of Perea, a former royal servant, who 'was bold enough to place the diadem on his head, and having got together a body of men, he was himself also proclaimed king by them' (*Ant.* 17:10:6 §§273-276; *War* 2:4:2 §§57-59; cf. Tacitus, *Hist.* 5:9). Josephus also tells us of one Athronges the shepherd of Judea, a man who, acting like a king, 'dared to gain a kingdom' and 'put on the diadem' (*Ant.* 17:10:7 §§278-284; *War* 2:4:3 §§60-65).

Josephus also describes what appear to have been messianic claimants who took action during the great revolt against Rome (66-70 CE). He tells us of the son (or grandson) of Judas the Galilean, Menahem, a man who entered Jerusalem 'like a king' and arrayed himself 'in royal apparel' (*War* 2:17:8-9 §§433-448). Next we are told of John of Gischala, son of Levi, who behaved like a despot and monarch (*War* 4:7:1 §§389-394; 4:9:11 §566), language normally used in reference to kings and emperors. Finally, Josephus describes to us, almost with a hint of admiration, Simon bar Giora of Gerasa, the leader of an army which was 'subservient to his command as to a king' (*War* 4:9:4 §510; 4:9:11 §§570-576; 5:7:3 §309), but the city was captured and the Temple was destroyed. Defeated and for a time in hiding, Simon, dressed in white tunics and a purple mantle, made a dramatic appearance before the Romans on the very spot where the Temple had stood (*War* 7:1:2 §29).

Given the biblical precedents and the parallel, though not identical, actions of some of his contemporaries, it is not surprising that Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem and his subsequent actions in the Temple precincts prompted such questions as, 'By what authority are you doing these things?' (Mark 11:28), and, 'Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar?' (Mark 12:14; cf. Luke 23:2, where Jesus is accused of teaching the people not to pay taxes to Caesar). The payment of taxes was a particularly sore spot for Jewish nationalists. According to Josephus, it was the initiation of direct Roman taxation, following the banishment of Archelaus (6 CE), that led to a rebellion inspired by one Judas of Galilee (*War* 2:8:1 §§117-118; *Ant.* 18:1:6 §23).

Other details from the Gospels parallel certain aspects of Jewish messianic actions. The anointing of Jesus (Mark 14:3-9) was in all probability a messianic anointing. Jesus may or may not have spoken

of his death and burial, but it does seem probable that, by anointing him, the unnamed woman had in fact recognized Jesus as Israel's true king. Such recognition coheres with Jesus' fate, crucified as 'king of the Jews' (Mark 15:26), 'between two rebels' (Mark 15:27). That λησται should be understood as 'rebels' or 'insurrectionists', instead of 'robbers' or (wrongly, as in the KJV) 'thieves', seems quite clear once again thanks to Josephus, who regularly speaks of the Jewish kingly claimants as λησται (e.g. *War* 2:3:2 §57; cf. Mark 14:48).

2. *The Demand for a Sign.* The narratives of Josephus provide us with insight into the odd exchange between Jesus and skeptics who demand 'a sign (σημεῖον) from heaven' (Mark 8:11 = Matt. 16:1 = Luke 11:16; cf. John 2:18; 6:30). Jesus' reply is categorical: 'Why does this generation seek a sign? Truly, I say to you, no sign shall be given to this generation!' (Mark 8:12 = Matt. 16:4 = Luke 11:29; cf. John 4:48). That Jews demanded signs seems clear enough from Paul's comment (1 Cor. 1:22: 'Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom') and from the fourth evangelist's deliberate presentation of Jesus' miracles—somewhat in tension with the stance taken by the historical Jesus—as 'signs' (e.g. John 2:11; 4:54; 9:16; 11:47; 20:30).

The demand for signs, together with the later Synoptic warnings concerning those who promise them (Mark 13:22 = Matt. 24:24), is meaningfully illustrated by Josephus. One should consider the attempts at restoration brought on by persons such as Theudas (*Ant.* 20:5:1 §§97-98) and the anonymous Egyptian Jew (*Ant.* 20:8:6 §§169-170). Evidently these men, and probably others as well who saw themselves as Joshua-like figures and successors to Moses (Deut. 18:15-18), anticipated a new conquest of the promised land. In reference to these men and others, Josephus says that they promised the gullible 'signs' (σημεῖα) of salvation (*War* 2:13:4 §260; 6:5:4 §315; *Ant.* 20:8:6 §168). Their promises of signs were taken very seriously by the Romans, who viewed such talk as politically dangerous and responded with violence. Jesus' refusal to offer signs may have been prompted by a desire to distance himself from such persons.

3. *Debate with the Temple Establishment.* Several aspects of Jesus' criticism of the Temple establishment cohere with details that can be gleaned from Josephus, although this historian and apologist had little sympathy for its critics. In disagreement with the Temple's ruling that the half-shekel tax was to be paid annually, Jesus declared that the 'sons are free' (Matt. 17:24-26). On the occasion that Jesus

demonstrated within the Temple precincts, he is remembered to have alluded to two prophetic passages: 'My house shall be called a house of prayer, but you have made it a cave of robbers' (Mark 11:17; cf. Isa. 56:7; Jer. 7:11). Such a demonstration coheres with episodes reported by Josephus (*Ant.* 13:13:5 §§372-373; 17:6:1-4 §§149-167 = *War* 1:33:2-4 §§648-655) and faintly (but imaginatively) recalled in rabbinic sources (*m. Ker.* 1:7; *b. Beṣa* 20a-b).<sup>88</sup>

Of special interest is Jesus' allusion to Jeremiah 7, a harsh and doleful passage that warned the seventh-century BCE priesthood that their Temple would be destroyed. It is this passage that another Jesus, one son of Ananias, who made his public appearance some thirty years after the execution of Jesus of Nazareth, would draw on, making his fateful pronouncements of doom upon Jerusalem and her Temple. Josephus tells us that leading citizens (among whom he surely included the ruling priests) seized this man, beat him, and handed him over to the Roman governor, with demands that he be put to death (*War* 6:5:3 §§300-309).

Jesus' threatening prediction that the administration of God's 'vineyard' (i.e. Israel) would be given 'to others', by which he implied that the ruling priests would lose their position of power and privilege, only exacerbated the already tense situation (Mark 12:1-11). The warning to 'Beware the scribes!' (Mark 12:38-40) and the lament over the poor widow's meager gift (Mark 12:41-44) represent fragments of a deadly controversy between Jesus and the Temple establishment. The resentment and hatred with which many peasants regarded the ruling priesthood are plainly evident in Josephus's account of the burning of the High Priest's house, the murder of the High Priest, the flight of the ruling priests, and the burning of the records of debt on file within the Temple precincts (*War* 2:17:6 §§426-429; 2:17:9 §§441-442).

#### CONCLUSION

From the foregoing it is apparent that 'exegesis' of the historical Jesus is difficult but rewarding. Perhaps the single most important aspect of Jesus research involves context. Much of the recent popular and sensational work is flawed by a failure to situate Jesus in his

<sup>88</sup> For critical discussion of these examples, see B. Chilton, *The Temple of Jesus: His Sacrificial Program within a Cultural History of Sacrifice* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992), pp. 100-107, 181-88.

cultural and historical context. We have been treated to Jesuses who champion various (contemporary) causes and who frequently look a lot like late twentieth-century scholars. But the Jesus of history was very much a part of his world, and was very much in tune with the concerns and ambitions of his people.<sup>89</sup>

Jesus prayed and taught in the manner of the popular preachers and teachers of his time. He interpreted Scripture much as did other teachers. In places, Jesus' use of the Old Testament reveals familiarity with the Aramaic paraphrases, suggesting that his understanding of Scripture in large measure took shape in the context of the synagogue. Jesus proclaimed the appearance of the kingdom of God, something longed for by many of his contemporaries, though strongly opposed by many who were secure in positions of power and wealth.

Jesus was a successful exorcist and healer. These healings were understood as indications of the presence of God, which was evidence of the inbreaking of the kingdom of God. Jesus demanded repentance and a return to the ethical laws of the Pentateuch and their applications found in the prophets. These demands carried with them serious implications for the ruling elite. Not surprisingly, Jesus was opposed by the ruling elite; his message and authority were rejected.

This opposition and rejection probably led to an intensification of Jesus' criticism of the ruling elite. He condemned it and predicted dire consequences for the city and the Temple establishment. Jesus' words and actions provoked the religious leaders, and eventually led them to seek his destruction. Following his arrest, Jesus affirmed his messianic identity as he understood it, and in so doing provided the grounds for a Roman execution as 'king of the Jews'.

Some time later the apostles, fully persuaded that Jesus had been resurrected, proclaimed him Israel's Messiah. To be sure, the proclamation itself was the result of Easter, but the *messianic identification* arose from Jesus' teaching and activities. A non-messianic teacher or prophet would not have been proclaimed 'Messiah', even if his followers believed him to have been resurrected. It was Jesus' promise of kingdom and salvation, the essential elements of the

<sup>89</sup> To illustrate in what ways this is true is the principal concern of Evans, *Jesus and his Contemporaries*.

messianic task, that resulted in the emergence of a *Christology*, not the Easter discovery alone.

To unpack the nuances of these elements of Jesus' life and message is the task of Jesus research. This unpacking can only be done by taking into account the historical, linguistic, social, and cultural dimensions of the world in which Jesus lived.

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