

In 1985, there appeared E. P. Sanders' volume *Jesus and Judaism*. Sanders' academic career had carried him from McMaster University in Canada to Oxford University in England and, eventually, back to Duke University in America. Having published significant volumes on Paul's relation to Judaism, Sanders turned his attention to Jesus. In the introduction to this Jesus book, Sanders lists a number of works on the historical Jesus that had appeared in the years immediately prior to his own. Sanders suggests that these scholarly works shared a feature with his own presentation:

In these and other works it is assumed or argued (usually assumed) that it is worthwhile to know and to state clearly whatever can be known about Jesus, and great effort is expended in establishing what can be known. The present work is written in the latter vein. To speak personally for a moment, I am interested in the debate about the significance of the historical Jesus for theology in the way that one is interested in something that he once found fascinating. The present work is written without that question in mind, however, and those who wish an essay on that topic may put this book down and proceed farther along the shelf.²¹

Here Sanders recognizes that the renewed interest in the historical Jesus, unlike the "old quest," the "no quest," and the "new quest," was neither driven nor dominated by the traditional question of the relationship between the Christ of faith and the Jesus of history. Just as philosophy had earlier declared its independence from theology as a result of the Enlightenment, so Sanders suggests that historical inquiry into the life of Jesus is now being pursued independent of christology. The question of the historical Jesus is interesting in itself without any necessary linkage to the church's traditional confession of Jesus as the Christ. *The focus now rests on Jesus as a historical figure.*

In March of 1985, the same year that Sanders published his Jesus book, there convened in Berkeley, California, the first meeting of the Jesus Seminar—initially a group of thirty or so scholars who had gathered at the invitation of Robert W. Funk. After many years as a scholar and teacher at such institutions as Vanderbilt University and the University of Montana, Funk had begun to think that it was time for him to set forth his own historical reconstruction of the ministry of Jesus. In order to facilitate his task, he had sought two scholarly aids. He tried to locate a "raw list" of all the sayings by, and stories about, Jesus as reported in ancient literature—within and without the New Testament. He also looked for a "critical list" of words and deeds generally considered by scholars, after two hundred years of critical sifting, to have been actually said and done by Jesus. He failed to find an exhaustive list of either kind.

Therefore Funk invited a group of scholarly colleagues to participate in an ongoing Seminar that eventually met twice annually in four day sessions. He later described their common purpose in these words:

Period 5: Third Quest / Renewed Quest / Post-Quest (Since 1985)

During the 1960s and 1970s, interest in the historical Jesus began to extend well beyond "new quest" scholars and their sympathizers. That Jesus research has entered another stage, or period, in recent decades has received general recognition among scholars working in the field. To distinguish this preoccupation with the historical Jesus from the nineteenth-century "old" or "first quest" and the mid-twentieth-century "new" or "second quest," scholars have variously used the phrases "third quest" and "renewed quest" to describe the widespread interest in the historical Jesus that erupted both in scholarly and popular circles toward the end of the twentieth century.²⁰

However, we propose the phrase "post-quest" to identify the most recent period of the quest. This phrase points to something distinctive about what has happened in our time. We have also used the year 1985 as a convenient date to mark the transition from the "new quest" period to the "post-quest" period. In that year two events occurred that signaled a transition in the history of Jesus research, each of which gives meaning to the phrase *post-quest*.

The aims of the Seminar were two: (1) We were to compile a raw list of all the words attributed to Jesus in the first three centuries (down to 300 C.E.). These sayings and parables were to be arranged as parallels, so that all versions of the same item would appear side by side on the page for close comparison and study. We decided to defer listing the deeds of Jesus until a second phase of the Seminar. (2) We were then to sort through this list and determine, on the basis of scholarly consensus, which items probably echoed or mirrored the voice of Jesus, and which items belong to subsequent stages of the Jesus tradition.²²

John Dominic Crossan, who served as cochair of the Jesus Seminar, designed and edited the raw list of Jesus' words: *Sayings Parallels: A Workbook for the Jesus Tradition* (1986).²³ Funk himself edited those subsequent volumes that represented the critical lists of Jesus' words and deeds respectively: *The Five Gospels* (1993) and *The Acts of Jesus* (1997).²⁴ The Jesus Seminar became known in academic and popular circles for such procedures as face-to-face discussion of position papers, voting by dropping colored beads in a box on the authenticity of individual sayings and specific deeds, and color-coding the voting results, with only around 20 percent of Jesus' reported words and deeds being judged historically probable (red/highly probable; pink/probable; gray/possible, or black/improbable).

Sharp differences have distinguished the work of E. P. Sanders from that of the Jesus Seminar. Nonetheless, in 1985, both Sanders and the Jesus Seminar, without conscious reference to each other, seemingly agreed that their interest in Jesus was historical, not theological.

Other biblical scholars, along the way, have also noticed how the current phase of Jesus research exhibits a general disinterest in theological matters. Walter P. Weaver, for example, observed: "What seems characteristic of this new movement is a lack of interest in the theological significance of its subject."²⁵ M. Eugene Boring has also observed that this phase of Jesus scholarship "proclaims its separation from the theological enterprise—although it does this in strikingly different ways."²⁶ Dennis C. Duling describes this period of Jesus research as "theologically neutral."²⁷

Thus an assumption for this phase of the quest for the historical Jesus can be described in terms of *methodological possibility* but *theological neutrality*. Since the historical quest for Jesus has traditionally been driven by theological concerns, the current period of Jesus research can appropriately, but somewhat ironically, be called "post-quest." The phrase *post-quest*, however, is intended to identify a distinctive dimension of what has been going on in recent Jesus studies and not to suggest that all involved are uninterested in what has traditionally been described as the relationship between the Christ of faith and the Jesus of history.

John P. Meier provides further confirmation of the concern by contemporary Jesus scholars to bracket out their own faith commitments as they pursue their work as historians. On the opening pages of what have become more

than a thousand pages of his own judicious rethinking of the historical Jesus, Meier—a Catholic priest who teaches at Catholic University in Washington, D.C.—confesses that he writes out of "a Catholic context." However, as a way of not allowing his Christian commitments to get in the way of his historical investigations, he imagines what he calls an "unpapal enclave." He says:

Suppose that a Catholic, a Protestant, a Jew, and an agnostic—all honest historians cognizant of 1st-century religious movements—were locked up in the bowels of the Harvard Divinity School library, put on a spartan diet, and not allowed to emerge until they had hammered out a consensus document on who Jesus of Nazareth was and what he intended in his own time and place. An essential requirement of this document would be that it be based on purely historical sources and arguments.²⁸

Perhaps this bracketing of interest in the theological implications of Jesus research relates to another distinctive dimension of recent Jesus scholarship—a strong emphasis upon Jesus as a Jew who was continuous with the Judaism of his own time, however that continuity might be understood. Meier's own multivolume work on the historical Jesus carries the title *A Marginal Jew* (2 vols., 1991, 1994). The titles of other major works also testify to Jesus' Jewishness: E. P. Sanders's *Jesus and Judaism* (1985); James H. Charlesworth's *Jesus Within Judaism* (1988); John Dominic Crossan's *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (1991). These writings were anticipated by the pioneering work of Geza Vermes that over a twenty-year period has become, as projected, a trilogy: *Jesus the Jew* (1973); *Jesus and the World of Judaism* (1983); and *The Religion of Jesus the Jew* (1993).²⁹

These volumes also contain among themselves three of the principal historical models that have emerged in recent years for understanding Jesus the first-century Jew. Sanders portrays Jesus as the eschatological prophet who announces the restoration of Israel. Crossan portrays Jesus as a Galilean peasant sage whose unconventional teaching and itinerant behavior resembles that of Cynic philosophers. Vermes portrays Jesus as a *Havd*, or holy man, a rabbi in the charismatic tradition of Galilee, who teaches the law and heals the sick. By contrast, the marginal Jew emerging from the pages of Meier's work does not easily fit into one category. Furthermore, to varying degrees, these volumes also use the insights of such social sciences as cultural anthropology and archaeology. The differences among these and the many other historical portrayals of Jesus, past and present, are based on a variety of factors.

One factor involves the literature the historian admits as evidence and how the interrelationship of this literature is understood. All four canonical Gospels? Only the synoptic Gospels? Or, also—and even primarily—traditions represented by Q and the *Gospel of Thomas*? What about the *Gospel of Peter*? Certainly a reassessment of Gospel literature has been a major factor in the renewed interest in the historical Jesus.

Another factor involves the kind of Judaism—the specific Jewish context—within which to place Jesus. Do the eschatological traditions expressed by ancient Israel's prophets and their successors provide the context within which to understand Jesus? Whereas apocalyptic has been understood by some to be a kind of eschatology that projected a coming *end* of the world, other scholars view apocalyptic to be a dramatic way of talking about the end of the present evil age and the inauguration of a new age *within* history when God would somehow intervene and restore Israel.

Or do wisdom traditions compiled by Israel's sages in such books as Proverbs, with their focus on how to live now, provide the context within which to understand Jesus? In recent years, some scholars have rediscovered Jesus' parables and aphorisms as expressions of wisdom that do not reinforce but challenge traditional ways of viewing God and the world. Without denying Jesus' Jewishness, but observing how Galilee generally represented a much Hellenized territory, others have established similarities between Jesus' teaching and the countercultural wisdom of those wandering philosophers known as Cynics.

Or do the legal traditions grounded in the five books of Moses and later codified by the rabbis in the Mishnah provide the context within which to understand Jesus? Scholars generally have come to view Jesus' antagonism toward the Pharisees, as displayed in the Gospels, to be more of a reflection of conflict between the post-Jesus church and the synagogue than a recollection of conflict between Jesus and his Pharisaic contemporaries.

Still another factor that determines a historical reconstruction of Jesus' career involves the way the interpreter uses specific principles, or criteria, for determining whether or not Jesus spoke this word or performed that act. Here are *five* criteria of the many that have been developed and invoked during the long search for the historical Jesus.⁵⁰

First, the *criterion of dissimilarity* states that sayings or emphases of Jesus in the Gospels may be considered authentic if they are dissimilar from sayings or emphases of the early church, on the one hand, and of ancient Judaism, on the other. This criterion assumes knowledge of both the early church and ancient Judaism with which comparison is made. Its limitation is that it confirms only those aspects of Jesus' teaching that are peculiar to him and excludes those aspects that he may have shared with the early church or Judaism. Because this criterion tends to separate Jesus from Judaism, it no longer has the prominence it did among "new quest" scholars. Among the sayings and emphases often said to have been authenticated by this criterion are: Jesus' proclamation of the "kingdom of God" as not only future but also present; Jesus' interpretation of the Torah without appeal to precedent; Jesus' address of God by the intimate name *Abba* ("Father"); and, generally, Jesus' parables.

Second, the *criterion of multiple attestation* states that sayings, themes, or kinds of behavior by Jesus may be considered authentic if they are attested in mul-

iple Gospel sources—traditionally Mark, Q, M, L, and John. Most, if not all, of these sources depict Jesus as one who preached in parables, associated with social outcasts, debated with religious authorities, and performed healings and exorcisms. This principle obviously grew out of the source analysis of the Gospels so characteristic of the "old quest" period. But, as we have seen, the *Gospel of Thomas* and the *Gospel of Peter* have come to be viewed by some scholars in recent years as sources independent of the Synoptics and John. The Q document itself has been elevated by some to the status of Sayings Gospel Q, which antedates the canonical narrative Gospels.

Third, the *criterion of embarrassment* states that information about Jesus that would have been viewed by the early church as an embarrassment may be considered authentic since it is unlikely that the church would have made up such activities or sayings. Among details said to meet this criterion are: Jesus' baptism by John, since it was a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins; Jesus' conflict with his immediate family, since his mother Mary and his brother James later become prominent in the church; and Jesus' denial by Peter and his betrayal by Judas, since they were among his chosen disciples.

Fourth, the *criterion of language and environment*, more negative than positive, states that material about Jesus in the Gospels may not be considered authentic unless it is compatible with the language and culture of Palestine and Palestinian Judaism. This principle also emerged out of the "old quest." Participants in the nineteenth-century search took seriously the study of Jesus within the first-century setting in which he lived and died. No scholar in this century used this criterion with any more rigor than Joachim Jeremias. Although a German contemporary of Rudolf Bultmann, he never accepted the "no quest" outlook and continued to work his way back through the Gospel tradition to the historical Jesus. He even tried his hand at translating from Greek back into the Aramaic such portions of the Gospel tradition as Jesus' parables, the Lord's Prayer, and the words over the bread and wine at the Last Supper.⁵¹

Five, the *criterion of coherence* states that sayings or emphases of Jesus in the Gospels may be considered authentic if they cohere, or agree, with material established as authentic by other criteria. This criterion allows for the enlargement of the amount of authentic material. There is considerable debate about the different kinds of "Son of Man" sayings preserved in the Gospels. But the apocalyptic "Son of Man" sayings could be accepted as authentic insofar as they cohere with the futuristic dimension of Jesus' kingdom proclamation.

Retrospective: A Continuing Quest

Retrospectively, the quest can be viewed from two vantage points. First, the quest can be viewed as a succession of historical periods in the ongoing history of Jesus research. We have identified Albert Schweitzer's survey of the

nineteenth-century quest, published in 1906, as marking the transition from the "old quest" period to the period of "no quest." We should reemphasize, however, that not all scholars suspended the effort to rediscover the Jesus of history.

An interest in Jesus as a historical figure continued without interruption, especially within British and American scholarship. An important difference between the scholars who continued the quest and those representatives of the "new quest" lay in their fundamental attitude about the historical value of the four Gospels. Many British and American scholars rejected in principle the possibility of writing a biography about Jesus. But they tended to accept the material in the four Gospels as authentic unless there were reasons for denying authenticity. But "new quest" scholars, to the contrary, questioned the authenticity of the material unless they could establish it as authentic. These differences about burden of proof among scholars of varying backgrounds have continued into what we have called the "post-quest" period.

Second, the quest can be viewed as providing representative assumptions and attitudes about Jesus as a historical figure. The assumptions and attitudes dominant in each period of the quest also continue as options in our day among professional scholars and nonprofessional scholars, among clergy and laity. The attitudes and assumptions, as well as the critical viewpoints, dominant in one period may also be present in another.

There are those, primarily in the nonacademic sector, who are simply unaware of the problem of the historical Jesus—although the attention paid to Jesus in the popular media in recent years must surely have raised public awareness. There are even biblical scholars aware of the problem of the historical Jesus who find various ways to deny it by ingeniously defending the basic historicity of the four Gospels. They rail against much that goes on in the historical search for Jesus. Such persons live with a "pre-quest" mentality.

Then there are those with the perspective of the "old quest." They approach Jesus and his story with a strong biographical interest and, if Christian, view him as the basis of faith. They may, in some sense, follow and not worship him.

There are others with the orientation of the "no quest" who stress Christ as proclaimed through preaching and liturgy, through creed and Scripture. They may consider historical scholarship to be irrelevant to their own lives of faith.

Still others have the outlook of the "new quest." They believe it important, in spite of the historical difficulties, to establish some kind of continuity between the Christ of faith and the Jesus of history in order to undergird their faith.

If a distinguishing characteristic of what we call the "post-quest" is an interest in the historical Jesus without a stated theological agenda, this may—in part—explain the commercial media and publishing success of Jesus over the last decade. Disillusioned with overly simplistic answers, or no answers, from the church to their most basic questions about life, many have turned to the varied world of Jesus scholarship to see what all the fuss is about.

QUEST OF THE HISTORICAL JESUS

Period 1: Pre-Quest (before 1778)	Period 2: Old Quest (1778-1906)	Period 3: No Quest (1906-1953)	Period 4: New Quest (1953-1985)	Period 5: Post-Quest (since 1985)
Period of Pre-Criticism	Period of Source Criticism	Period of Form Criticism	Period of Redaction and Narrative Criticisms	Period of Social-Scientific Criticism
Correspondence between Jesus of History = Christ of Faith	Discontinuity between <i>Jesus of History</i> // Christ of Faith	Discontinuity between <i>Jesus of History</i> // <i>Christ of Faith</i>	Continuity between <i>Jesus of History</i> < <i>Christ of Faith</i>	Focus on <i>Jesus of History</i> [Christ of Faith]
No Problem and No Quest	Methodologically Possible and Theologically Necessary	Methodologically Impossible and Theologically Unnecessary	Methodologically Possible and Theologically Necessary	Methodologically Possible and Theologically Neutral

The Neobiographical Portrayal

We have used the date 1985 to identify the transition from the "new quest" to the current phase of Jesus research that has variously been labeled "third quest," "renewed quest," and now "post-quest." In spite of the variety that marks Jesus research at the close of the twentieth century, most participants have learned much from their predecessors.

Scholarly "lives" of Jesus have once again appeared but, virtually without exception, they do not reflect the detailed chronologizing nor the presumptuous psychologizing of the nineteenth century. Moreover, scholars of various inclinations appeal to the criteria of authenticity that were honed by such representatives of the "new quest" as Günther Bornkamm. Furthermore, whether consciously or unconsciously, scholars have variously followed Bornkamm's precedent by beginning their lives of Jesus with brief sketches about what can be known about their subject with some certainty. However, scholars today are not writing over against the nineteenth-century-style biography of Jesus, as did Bornkamm. Furthermore, they tend to develop their historical portrayals out of a careful exegesis of the texts and defend their analyses as they reconstruct their lives of Jesus. The phrase *neobiographical portrayal* has been

adopted as a broad category to embrace the varied historical portrayals that have appeared in recent years.

S. G. F. BRANDON, *Jesus and the Zealots: A Study of the Political Factor in Primitive Christianity* (1967).¹⁹

GEZA VERMES, *Jesus the Jew: A Historian's Reading of the Gospels* (1973).

MORTON SMITH, *Jesus the Magician* (1978).²⁰

The works of these three scholars, in all their diversity, are harbingers of the "post-quest" period which would follow them. S. G. F. Brandon was at the time of writing a professor of comparative religion at the University of Manchester, Morton Smith a history professor at Columbia University, and Geza Vermes a lecturer in Jewish studies at Oxford University. It was Morton Smith who discovered the *Secret Gospel of Mark* at the Mar Saba monastery in 1958. Each of these historians pursues a different line of inquiry. Not one of the volumes constitutes a comprehensive, detailed reconstruction of Jesus' life or teaching. The work of Vermes, however, represents the first book of the trilogy that he completed during his long tenure as professor of Jewish studies at Oxford.

Mark and Parallel Sources. There is some similarity of approach to the Jesus story by these writers. All three examine the Gospels and Jesus in relation to special dimensions of first-century life and thought. Brandon explores the zealot movement that scholarship at the time believed was a well-defined movement of Jewish revolutionaries committed to opposing Roman rule with arms. Smith focuses on the way Jesus was portrayed by his opponents in the ancient world and on the ancient belief in magic. Vermes highlights the peculiar character of Judaism in Galilee, its charismatic quality. All three scholars also accept Mark as the first Gospel and use Mark in a pivotal way in their own historical reflections about Jesus. Each historical portrayal that results from their labors stands over against, to a greater or lesser degree, the other historical portrayals we have surveyed thus far.

Jesus—Zealot? Magician? Galilean Hasid (Holy Man)? These are the questions raised and to which answers are given by S. G. F. Brandon, Morton Smith, and Geza Vermes.

The point of departure for Brandon's study is the cross of Jesus and the "fact" for which it stands: Jesus was executed by the Romans as a political rebel. Was Jesus, therefore, a revolutionary, a zealot? Brandon concludes that Jesus was not a zealot. Rather Jesus proclaimed the apocalyptic message of the coming "kingdom of God" and called his fellow Jews to repentance in preparation for its arrival. The arrival of the kingdom would involve, of course, Israel's fulfillment of her destiny as God's people. According to Brandon two obstacles stood between Jesus and the accomplishment of his mission of preparation: the Jewish priestly hierarchy and the Roman occupa-

tional government. Jesus' direct challenge to these obstacles was made not against the Roman rulers but the Jewish authorities. That challenge expressed itself by his entry into the city of Jerusalem and his disruption of the Temple. The entry of Jesus may even have been "designed to demonstrate his Messianic role."²¹ But whatever Jesus' intentions, the Jewish authorities saw in these bold acts a political threat. They took measures that led to Jesus' arrest, interrogation, and delivery to Pilate as a person guilty of subversion. As a consequence, Jesus died on the Roman cross as a political rebel. For Brandon, therefore, although Jesus was not a zealot, there were political dimensions to his ministry. The church, however, tried to cover up these political dimensions. The author of the Gospel of Mark was a chief culprit in this political cover-up. Mark, according to Brandon, was written in Rome in 71 C.E. in the aftermath of the Roman conquest of Jerusalem. In fact, Mark was written shortly after the booty from the fallen Temple was carried through the streets of Rome in the victory procession of Titus. The author of the Gospel found it necessary to defend the political innocence of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. In a redaction analysis of the Markan passion account, Brandon shows how the pre-Markan tradition was edited to shift the responsibility for the death of Jesus from Pilate to the Jewish authorities. The Markan portrayal of the apolitical Jesus was expanded in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke into what Brandon calls "the concept of the pacific Christ."²²

Morton Smith begins his carefully documented study with the observation that two main views of Jesus prevailed in the ancient world. The church, as seen in the Gospels, confessed him to be "Jesus the Son of God." The church's opponents, whose writings were eventually suppressed by the church, dismissed him as "Jesus the magician." Smith sets for himself the task of seeking the "real Jesus" whose activity gave rise to both viewpoints. He seeks Jesus within what he considers to be the indisputable "historical framework" of Jesus' ministry. First, Jesus as a miracle worker attracted large crowds and aroused messianic speculation. Second, the Jewish authorities, bothered by the crowds and the messianic speculation, arrested Jesus and turned him over to Pilate for execution as a messianic pretender, "King of the Jews." Unlike Brandon, therefore, Smith focuses on Jesus' miracle-working activity as a central aspect of his life and death. Was Jesus, therefore, really a "magician" more in keeping with the way he was presented by the church's opponents than with the way he was characterized by the church itself? Smith concludes that Jesus did fit the category of "magician" more suitably than any other categories such as "apocalyptic seer," "prophet," "rabbi," or even "miracle worker." To support this claim, Smith undertakes a detailed examination of the Gospel of Mark. The author of Mark, like the church generally, suppressed the evidence of magical activity by Jesus. But indications of magical practices continue to shine through the text of Mark. There are, according to Smith, numerous ver-

bal parallels between the material in Mark and material in ancient magical texts. But on a larger scale, the overall presentation of Jesus in Mark accords with the shape of a magician's career. Jesus receives the Spirit of God from on high and the Spirit drives him into the wilderness where he has "visionary" experiences. Subsequently, he pursued a wandering ministry characterized by exorcisms and healings (often by physical means such as touch and saliva). Jesus was accompanied by an inner circle of enchanted followers whom he taught secretly (probably certain magical rites). To Smith, Jesus was a magician to the very end. The Last Supper itself was evidently a magical rite involving the idea of union between Jesus and his followers. This rite was carried over into the church as the eucharist.

Geza Vermes opens the initial volume of his trilogy with an overview of the way Jesus is portrayed in the synoptic Gospels, especially Mark. The Synoptics characterize Jesus as a Galilean Jew who was "exorcist," "healer," and "teacher." According to Vermes, a true historical understanding of Jesus requires considering him within the context of first-century Palestine, particularly Galilee and, more specifically, Galilean Judaism. By contrast to the Judaism of the South, Judaism in Galilee was more charismatic with greater emphasis on miracle working. Representatives of this charismatic tradition were such *Havdim* (Holy Men) as Honi the Circle-Drawer and Hanina ben Dosa. Was Jesus, whose own mission was to bring physical and spiritual healing, also a Galilean *Havid* (Holy Man)? Vermes argues that he was indeed! Vermes notes half a dozen similarities between the ancient depictions of Hanina ben Dosa and Jesus. Both men were of intense devotion and prayer. Both possessed the power of healing and could heal from a distance. Both stood in opposition to demons and evil spirits. Both advocated detachment from worldly goods by precept and example. Both concentrated on moral issues with a corresponding lack of interest in ritualistic matters. Both aroused the distrust of the religious establishment. Like Hanina ben Dosa, therefore, Jesus was a Galilean *Havid*. Vermes postpones to a later volume a detailed discussion of Jesus' teaching. But he does review how the traditional titles bestowed on Jesus by the church may have been used within Aramaic-speaking Galilean Judaism. Vermes believes that Jesus probably thought of himself as a prophet following in the miracle-working tradition of Elijah and Elisha. Thus Jesus would have preferred this name over all others. But Jesus could have spoken of himself as Son of God and been addressed as Lord since both names of respect were used within the charismatic tradition. Vermes thinks, however, that it is unlikely that Jesus thought of himself as messiah. Furthermore, Vermes denies that Jesus would have used the phrase *Son of Man* in those apocalyptic sayings reminiscent of Daniel 7:13. If Jesus used the expression *Son of Man*, he used it as a circumlocution, as another way of saying "I" when he was talking about himself and his earthly ministry.

Like S. G. F. Brandon, Geza Vermes takes seriously the Galilean setting of Jesus' life and ministry. Like Morton Smith, he focuses his attention on Jesus' activity as a miracle worker. But Vermes is not interested in pursuing the possible connections between Jesus and the zealots. Nor is he willing to describe Jesus as a magician. For Vermes, Jesus was one of a company of Galilean charismatics, or *Havdim*. All three scholars agree, however, in their delineation of discontinuity between the Christ of faith and the Jesus of history. The scholarship of each continues to reverberate in the writings of those who have come after them.

E. P. SANDERS, *Jesus and Judaism* (1985)

———. *The Historical Figure of Jesus* (1993)²³

We have already noted how the date of Sanders' 1985 volume on Jesus serves as a convenient chronological marker for the transition from the new quest to the post-quest period. His 1993 book represents an appeal to a broader audience attracted to what had become a public discussion over the historical Jesus.

"Facts," the Synoptic Gospels, and Jewish Restoration Eschatology. In conscious opposition to those who begin their historical reconstructions of Jesus' life and career based on Jesus' words, such as the parables, Sanders takes as his point of departure a list of "almost indisputable facts" about Jesus' career and an outline of his life about which there are "no substantial doubts."²⁴ This outline includes: Jesus' birth ca. 4 B.C.E.; his childhood and early adult years in the Galilean village of Nazareth; his baptism by John; his calling of disciples; his teaching in the villages and countryside of Galilee; his preaching of "the kingdom of God"; and his journey to Jerusalem ca. 30 C.E. During Jesus' visit to Jerusalem, he created a disturbance in the Temple area, shared a final meal with his disciples, was arrested and questioned by Jewish authorities, and was executed on the orders of Pontius Pilate, the Roman prefect.

This outline of events suggests that Sanders looks to the Synoptics as more historically reliable than John. Indeed, he concludes: "The synoptic gospels are to be preferred as our basic source of information about Jesus." However, it is the context—or contexts—within which Sanders places Jesus that provides the key to understanding "who he was and what he did."²⁵

Jesus as Eschatological Prophet. Sanders first considers Jesus within the Jewish theological context in which the Gospels themselves place him: the history of salvation and the eschatological expectation that God would someday restore Israel. Sanders also considers Jesus within the context of Jesus' own career: between the time of his predecessor John, whose baptism he accepted, and the time of his successors, including Paul. In their own distinctive ways, both John and Paul proclaimed the eschatological message that the climax of history was at hand.

Therefore, Sanders carefully reviews the varied uses of the phrase *kingdom*

of God and finally declares that "we can be quite confident that Jesus had an eschatological message." But Sanders denies that Jesus' eschatological message was apocalyptic in the sense of declaring a cataclysmic end of history. Instead, Jesus expected God's coming intervention to occur *within* history through "a divine, transforming miracle."²⁶

That miracle would involve the inauguration of God's new age with the gathering of Israel's twelve tribes, the building of a new Temple by God, the establishing of peace and justice under God, and the turning of at least some Gentiles to worship Israel's God. Jesus' own calling of disciples and his symbolic use of the number twelve anticipated the restoration of Israel. And Jesus declared that his own disciples would judge the twelve tribes of Israel (Matt. 19:28 = Luke 22:28-30).

Sanders considers the miracles at length within their ancient setting. He acknowledges that Jesus performed healings and exorcisms, but concludes that such deeds did not demonstrate to the general populace that Jesus was "the end-time prophet," although Jesus himself evidently viewed them as "signs of the beginning of God's final victory over evil."²⁷

Sanders also treats much of Jesus' teaching as a message given in anticipation of the coming kingdom. Jesus called for a "reversal of values" and a kind of "perfectionism"—expressed through parables and radical sayings, but based upon his understanding of God as loving and merciful.²⁸

According to Sanders, Jesus himself gave expression to his view of God as loving and merciful in one rather remarkable way. The repeated accusation in the Synoptics that Jesus associates with "tax collectors and sinners" presupposes that Jesus actually consorted with truly wicked people, people living beyond the law in some blatant way. Furthermore, the general absence in Mark and Matthew of Jesus' use of the language of "repentance" suggests that Jesus was not a preacher of repentance. Therefore, Jesus simply told the wicked that God loved them and that God would receive them into the kingdom because of their acceptance of Jesus and his message.

Sanders says that Jesus would have thereby offended his fellow Jews by not enforcing the law's requirements for the repentant and by presenting himself as having the authority to say who would enter the kingdom. But elsewhere Sanders denies that Jesus taught his followers to violate Sabbath or dietary laws and claims that the conflict stories in Mark 2:1–3:6 reflect disputes in the later church.²⁹

It is precisely Jesus' conviction that he had the authority to speak and act on God's behalf that discloses how he viewed his role in God's plan, not his use of any titles, although Sanders acknowledges that Jesus may have used the phrase "son of man." Thus Sanders claims that Jesus, in terms of first-century religious types, was "an eschatological prophet"; but Sanders prefers the term "viceroys" to describe how Jesus thought of himself.³⁰

This Jesus and his followers went up to Jerusalem for Passover. There Jesus performed three symbolic acts anticipating God's eschatological restoration of Israel: entry on an ass, action in the Temple, and his final meal. The action in the Temple led Caiaphas to have him arrested and executed as a troublemaker. In response to Caiaphas' recommendation, Pilate ordered Jesus' crucifixion. The execution was carried out on Friday, Nisan 15, Passover day. Sanders puts forth a "guess" that the words of despair from Psalm 22:1 that appear on Jesus' lips in Mark 15:34 and Matthew 27:46 represent Jesus' own reminiscence of that Psalm.³¹

Sanders does not reflect on the theological implications of Jesus' having been wrong about his eschatological expectation that God was about to restore Israel. In an epilogue on the resurrection, however, he does accept as "a fact" that Jesus' followers and later Paul had resurrection experiences. He disclaims knowledge of the reality that prompted them.³²

JOHN DOMINIC CROSSAN, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (1991).

———. *Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography* (1994).³³

No one has contributed more to a rethinking of the complete Gospel evidence available for reconstructing the career of Jesus than John Dominic Crossan. No one has approached that evidence with greater methodological rigor than he. Born and reared in Ireland, Crossan served for many years on the religious studies faculty at DePaul University in Chicago.

"Words" and a Threefold Methodology. Crossan prefaces his daunting 1991 volume with a list of a hundred or so of Jesus' sayings. These sayings, primarily parables and aphorisms drawn from Sayings Gospel Q and the *Gospel of Thomas*, represent "a reconstructed inventory"³⁴ of words that probably go back to the historical Jesus. As we will see, for Crossan these two documents—not the Gospel of Mark—preserve the earliest sources, and the criterion of multiple attestation constitutes the main principle for establishing which sayings represent the voice of Jesus.

Crossan's overall methodology for Jesus research involves what he calls "a triple triadic process."³⁵ The first triad involves his use of social *anthropology* (Mediterranean social world), Graeco-Roman *history* (events in that world), and the *literature* about Jesus (containing specific stories and sayings). The second triad focuses on the literature about Jesus by establishing a complete *inventory* of all major documents (non-canonical and canonical), the *stratification* of documents in their chronological sequence (30–60 C.E., 60–80 C.E., 80–120 C.E., 120–150 C.E.), and the *attestation* of independent sources within each of the 522 complexes of material in his inventory of Jesus tradition (single, double, or multiple attestation). The final triad involves the manipulation of the inventory already established in terms of the *sequence of strata*, the

bierarchy of attestation, and—finally—the *bracketing of singularity* (exclusion of singly attested items).

For example, four independent sources claim that Jesus drew some correlation between the kingdom and children (Thomas, Mark, M, and John), with one of these sources considered by Crossan to date from the earliest stratum of tradition (Thomas).

Crossan quantifies this complex as 1 / 4, which means, first stratum / four independent sources. According to Crossan's calculus, the lower the number on the left, and the higher the number on the right, the greater the probability that Jesus said something like that. Crossan uses the complex of Jesus' sayings about children to support his historical conclusion that the kingdom announced by Jesus was a "kingdom of nobodies."³⁶

Jesus as a Peasant Jewish Cynic. Crossan develops his characterization of Jesus along more traditional biographical lines in his 1994 book and toward its conclusion says: "The historical Jesus was a *peasant Jewish Cynic*" (his italics).³⁷ But in this volume too, Crossan is most reticent about detailed chronologizing or in-depth psychologizing.

Like many other biblical scholars, Crossan understands the infancy narratives by Matthew and Luke to be compositions intended to demonstrate how the history of Israel, Israel's Scripture, and even particular Scriptural texts found their fulfillment in the coming of Jesus. But Jesus himself was *not* born of a virgin, *not* born of Davidic lineage, *not* born in Bethlehem. Instead, he was probably born in Nazareth, with parents named Mary and Joseph, when Herod was king, before 4 B.C.E. He died when Pontius Pilate was the Roman prefect, between 26 and 36 C.E.

Crossan carefully considers the implications of Jesus' coming of age when and where he did. In an agrarian society with a sharp division between the upper and the lower classes, the vast majority of the populace would have been peasants—most of whose crops went to support the upper classes. If Jesus were a carpenter, then this would identify him as a member of the even lower artisan class whose members—without land—lived on the margin between the peasants and the expendables. Jesus like most of his contemporaries would have been illiterate.

Within the broader framework of the Jewish homeland, there appeared an "apocalyptic prophet" named John. Crossan can speak about John's baptism of Jesus as "historically certain."³⁸ He is just as certain that Jesus later broke with John. Whereas John fasted, Jesus feasted. Whereas John had proclaimed a future apocalyptic kingdom, Jesus developed an understanding of the kingdom as a present one. Central to Crossan's reconstruction is the repeated affirmation that Jesus had both a "vision" and a "program."

Jesus' "vision" was that of a "radical egalitarianism" under God that expressed itself most dramatically in Jesus' practice of "open commensality." That is, Jesus would eat with anybody. His open table fellowship represented

an inclusive community and contradicted the practices and values of a hierarchically ordered society. Thus Crossan can say: "For Jesus, the Kingdom of God is a community of radical or unbrokered equality in which individuals are in direct contact with one another and with God, unmediated by established brokers or fixed locations."³⁹

Jesus' "program" involved a "radical itinerancy" as he and those empowered by him moved in "mission" from house to house. Crossan understands Jesus to be a healer and an exorcist, and he draws on medical and cross-cultural anthropology to understand the physical and social dynamics involved in such acts. Jesus' mission involved reciprocity: healing for food. Thus: "Here is the heart of the original Jesus movement, a shared egalitarianism of spiritual (healing) and material (eating) resources."⁴⁰

It is in relation to Jesus' itinerancy that Crossan makes an intriguing suggestion. He claims that Jesus' family recognized his healing power and social importance, but wanted to benefit from it through his establishing Nazareth as a healing center. He refused and became estranged from them.

As others have done in recent scholarship, Crossan notes similarities in the attire and behavior between wandering Cynics and the Jesus missionaries. But he emphasizes a crucial difference. Whereas Cynics carried a staff and a knapsack to symbolize their self-sufficiency, the Jesus people were enjoined to carry neither staff nor knapsack. They were dependent on others as they moved about the rural countryside rebuilding peasant society from the ground up.

Crossan disclaims much reliable information about the end of Jesus' life other than "the fact of the crucifixion," which probably did occur at Passover time, possibly on the one occasion that Jesus and his fellow Galilean peasants went up to Jerusalem.⁴¹ Jesus' followers would have known virtually nothing about the details related to his crucifixion, death, and burial. And the passion narratives represent compositions based not on memory but on Scripture. Based on multiple attestation, however, Crossan concludes that an action and a saying related to the Temple's destruction must go back to the historical Jesus and that such behavior resulted in his arrest.

After surveying the variety of resurrection texts, Crossan says: "Those who had originally experienced divine power through his vision and his example continued to do so after his death. In fact, even more so, because now this power was no longer confined by time or place."⁴²

MARCUS J. BORG, *Jesus: A New Vision* (1987).⁴³

———. *Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time* (1994).⁴⁴

Marcus J. Borg has become a highly visible advocate of historical investigation into the life of Jesus. However, unlike some of his scholarly contemporaries, Borg repeatedly underscores the relevance of the historical Jesus for the contemporary life of faith and church. In 1996, at Oregon State University,

he convened an interactive teleconference called "Jesus at 2000," which featured scholars of varying scholarly and religious viewpoints. Borg's volume teasingly entitled *Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time* represents a more autobiographical restatement of his earlier "vision" of what Jesus' historical ministry was all about.

"Two Images," the Synoptic Gospels, and Charismatic Jewish Tradition. In developing his own historical presentation, Borg moves beyond what he calls "the popular image of Jesus," on the one hand, and the "dominant scholarly image," on the other.⁴⁵ The former, based primarily on the Gospel of John, projects Jesus as a divine savior who has come into the world to die for the sins of humankind and to offer believers the possibility of eternal life. The latter, with an indebtedness to Albert Schweitzer, considers Jesus to have been an eschatological prophet who expected the end of the world in his own day.

Therefore, Borg rejects John and draws on the Synoptics for his delineation of what Jesus was like; and within the Synoptics, he considers as nonhistorical—or "inauthentic"—those eschatological sayings where Jesus seemingly says that the world will soon end. (Borg often uses the word "eschatological" to designate a viewpoint more often identified by the word "apocalyptic.")

Generally considered, the words and deeds of Jesus attested in the Synoptics make sense within the context of Jewish charismatic tradition. Like Moses, the later prophets, and such rabbis as Honi the Circle-Drawer and Hanina ben Dosa, Jesus lived a life open to the transcendent and became a mediator between the realm of the spirit and the world of culture.

Jesus as a Spirit-Filled Person. In his depiction of Jesus as a charismatic holy man, Borg acknowledges an indebtedness to Geza Vermes, who some years ago identified Jesus as such a figure. According to Borg, Jesus' first public appearance as an adult clearly places him in the stream of charismatic Judaism: Jesus' baptism by John. Borg speaks of the "historicity" of this event and considers Jesus' experience on this occasion to have been "a vision."⁴⁶

However, Borg does not reduce Jesus to one social category but instead sees four dimensions reflected in his life and activity. Jesus was a miracle worker—a healer and exorcist. Jesus was a sage—using parables and proverbs to teach a subversive wisdom on such conventional topics as family, wealth, status, and religion. Jesus was also the founder of a movement centered in twelve followers—with their objective being the revitalization of Israel and their behavior serving to challenge the reigning "politics of holiness" with a "politics of compassion" as they dined with outcasts and associated with women.⁴⁷ And Jesus was a prophet—going to Jerusalem not to die but to call upon Israel to change in order to avert the social catastrophe that was surely coming.

Thus Jesus' ministry that began with baptism by John ends with crucifixion by the authorities in Jerusalem. Borg considers Jesus' entry into Jerusalem and his action in the Temple to be "prophetic acts" that sealed his

doom; and Borg claims that "the most certain fact about the historical Jesus is his execution as a political rebel."⁴⁸ He also thinks that Jesus' execution involved collaboration between the Romans under Pilate and Jewish leaders associated with the high priest.

Having said that the length of Jesus' ministry cannot be known, but that it was "brief," Borg dates Jesus' death as having occurred "on a Friday in A.D. 30." Easter and resurrection involve Jesus' followers continuing "to experience him as a living reality, and in a new way, namely as having the qualities of God." Or, to state it differently, the historical Jesus became "an epiphany of God."⁴⁹

One of the intriguing aspects of Borg's work is his reconstruction of Jesus' message and ministry without using the common Synoptic phrase *the kingdom of God*.⁵⁰ He avoids the phrase for two reasons. First, this expression has been interpreted in so many different ways. Second, its centrality for understanding what Jesus was like may have been overemphasized. Borg wants the phrase to be defined by the *gestalt* of Jesus as a Spirit-filled person, instead of the other way around. Borg also downplays the importance of traditional titles for understanding Jesus. The title that may have been appropriate during Jesus' lifetime, and possibly consistent with his self-understanding, was that of "son of God"—not in the unique sense as later defined by the church, but as an honored name for a holy person within charismatic Judaism.⁵¹

N. T. WRIGHT, *The New Testament and the People of God* (1992)⁵²

———. *Jesus and the Victory of God* (1996)⁵³

N. T. Wright has emerged as the most visible and vigorous representative of British scholarship in the recent debate about the historical figure of Jesus. After teaching New Testament for twenty years at Cambridge University, McGill University, and Oxford University, Wright became—in 1994—the Dean of Lichfield Cathedral in his native England.

His substantial 1992 and 1996 volumes represent the first two volumes of a multivolume work on "Christian Origins and the Question of God." His first volume explores issues presupposed by the second: a theory of interpretation, an overview of first-century Judaism, and a study of the early church. The second volume focuses specifically on Jesus. Wright places himself in the eschatological interpretative tradition of Jesus research asserted by Albert Schweitzer and resumed by E. P. Sanders.

"Story," the Synoptics, Double Similarity and Double Dissimilarity. Wright takes the task of a "serious" historian to be the advancement of "serious historical hypotheses" about Jesus by constructing "large-scale narratives"—or stories—and examining the relevant data to see how they fit.⁵⁴ Wright bases his own story of Jesus primarily on the synoptic Gospels, which he claims provide reliable information. He turns to John only when considering Jesus' final visit to Jerusalem; and he dismisses any notion that the hypo-

thetical Q document and the *Gospel of Thomas* represent an early form of Christianity.

Wright articulates what he calls the criterion of double similarity and double dissimilarity: "when something can be seen to be credible (though perhaps deeply subversive) within first-century Judaism, and credible as the implied starting point (though not the exact replica) of something in later Christianity, there is a strong possibility of our being in touch with the genuine history of Jesus." Wright invokes this criterion in support of the historical probability of particular acts and sayings of Jesus; for example, his practice of table fellowship and his biting anti-family statements.⁵⁵

But more broadly, Wright uses this approach to support the historical plausibility of his overall story of Jesus when viewed in relation to Judaism, on the one hand, and the early church, on the other. By the conclusion of Wright's story, he has seemingly included everything from the Synoptics in it, although he ignores the infancy accounts in Matthew and Luke. And he has offered extended answers to the basic historical questions underlying his presentation: How does Jesus fit into Judaism? What were his aims? Why did he die?

Jesus as Eschatological Prophet/Messiah. What provides the framework for Wright's response to these three questions is what he calls "the story of Israel" or "the basic Jewish story."⁵⁶ This story—as expressed in the Scriptures and other literature—includes the expectation of Israel's return from exile, YHWH's return to Zion, and the defeat of Israel's enemies.

Jesus fits into Judaism as "a prophet"—"a prophet bearing an urgent eschatological, and indeed apocalyptic, message for Israel." Wright makes it quite clear how he understands and uses "eschatology" and "apocalyptic." *Eschatology* refers to the climax of Israel's history involving events that would inaugurate a new phase *within* space-time history. *Apocalyptic* refers to end-of-the-world *talk* that speaks about eschatological events as though the space-time history itself were going to end.⁵⁷

Wright supports the use of the prophet model for Jesus by briefly outlining the main dimensions of Jesus' career and by looking at Jesus in relation to popular movements of his day and to John the Baptist. Like John, Jesus seems to have combined the styles of "oracular" prophets and "leadership" prophets. But unlike John, Jesus is itinerant, gives more extensive teaching, and engages in healing. Thus Jesus the prophet is both similar and dissimilar to the Judaism of his day.

Jesus is a prophet, but more than a prophet. He is one through whom the "kingdom of God" is being inaugurated. His announcement of "the kingdom of God" evokes the story of Israel and her destiny; but he retells the story in unexpected ways and places himself at its center.

Wright examines in detail Jesus' teaching within the context of Jesus' own unfolding kingdom story.⁵⁸ Jesus' call to repentance (Mark 1:15 and Matt. 4:17)

indicates what Israel must do to be restored. His corresponding call to faith entails believing that the God of Israel is indeed acting through him and reconstituting the new Israel around him. His forgiveness of sins becomes a way of talking about return from exile. Allegiance to Temple and Torah are being replaced by allegiance to Jesus.

Wright envisions Jesus' establishment of "cells of followers" in towns and villagers whose members were committed to living as "new covenant people," resulting in the formation of another sect alongside Essenes and Pharisees.⁵⁹ The sayings in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5–7), including the Lord's Prayer, would have had their setting within cell gatherings; and these sayings represent a call for Israel to be Israel. Other followers, such as the twelve, would have been called to join Jesus in his itinerant kingdom activity.

Jesus' apocalyptic discourse (Mark 13 par.), which Wright reads as a conversation between Jesus and his disciples, becomes both a warning and prediction by Jesus. National disaster—the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple—is imminent; but Jesus and his people will be vindicated. Wright understands the phrase "coming of the son of man" (from Dan. 7:13) to be Jesus' way of talking about the defeat of the enemies of the people of God and their own vindication. The discourse is not about the end of the world nor the second coming of Jesus. It is a declaration that the long-expected exile is over.⁶⁰

According to Wright, it is Jesus' eschatological program that results in Jesus' conflict with the Pharisees. That program involves a reinterpretation of those traditional symbols of Jewish identity: Sabbath, food, nation, land, and Temple. Wright's examination of Jesus' teaching, including the parables, within the context of his own unfolding kingdom story not only demonstrates how Jesus the eschatological prophet relates to Judaism but also discloses an overriding aim: "to bring the story of Israel to its god-ordained climax, in and through his own work."⁶¹

So Jesus the prophet—the eschatological prophet—is also the Messiah. But, of course, just as Jesus revises Israel's story, so he redefines what messiahship means. As the Messiah, Jesus goes to Jerusalem to die. He sees his own journey as YHWH's return to Zion. In Jerusalem, his symbolic action in the Temple is an act of judgment against the traditional system by the one through whom YHWH will save Israel and the world. In Jerusalem, his symbolic action at the Passover meal with his followers is a declaration of how the true exodus would come about through him, how evil would be defeated, and how sins would be forgiven. In Jerusalem too, his cross becomes the means and the symbol of "the victory of God."⁶² Jesus has taken the story of Israel upon himself!

In straightforward fashion, Wright declares that "Jesus was executed as a Rebel against Rome."⁶³ But he also explores more fully what might have

occurred at the "Jewish hearing(s)" by appealing not only to the scenes of Jesus before the high priest in Mark and Matthew but also to John 11 and 18, Deuteronomy 13, Daniel 7, and a reference to Jesus in the Talmud. Wright suggests that the Jewish authorities want not only to develop a case that would stick before Pilate but to find Jesus guilty of a crime under *Jewish* law in order to protect themselves from the general populace. They succeed; and Jesus, by his own words, convicts himself of being a false prophet and a blasphemer. In his brief conclusion, Wright affirms that both the success and the relevance of Jesus the eschatological prophet/Messiah depends on whether one accepts or rejects the claim of the early church that God raised him from the dead.⁶⁴

ELISABETH SCHÜSSLER FIORENZA, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (1983).⁶⁵

———. *Jesus: Miriam's Child, Sophia's Prophet: Critical Issues in Feminist Christology* (1994).⁶⁶

Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, on the faculty at the University of Notre Dame before moving to the Harvard Divinity School, makes her contribution to the current debate over the historical Jesus out of her own commitment to a critical feminist theology of liberation. The response to her chapter on Jesus and the Jesus movement in her 1983 work prompted her to expand on those issues in her 1994 monograph. The latter volume contains her reflections on Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection.

Feminist Readings and a Feminist Model of Historical Reconstruction. Schüssler Fiorenza presupposes and variously uses the specialized methods and conclusions of Gospel criticism that have developed over the past century. But she applauds the more recent appropriation of social-scientific models to understand the social context of early Christian sources and traditions.⁶⁷ At the same time, however, a feminist reading of these texts recognizes their androcentric and patriarchal character. That is, they are written from a male point of view and reflect a hierarchically ordered social world dominated by males.

Schüssler Fiorenza also applauds the current phase of Jesus research, which she refers to as "the Newest Quest," because scholars now seek to understand Jesus within the social setting of first-century Judaism.⁶⁸ Correspondingly, she is critical of the preceding "New Quest" which, by its use of the criterion of dissimilarity, highlighted Jesus' difference from Judaism.

With appreciation for developments in Gospel criticism and Jesus research, Schüssler Fiorenza has defined her task and the task of other feminist scholars in these terms: "critical feminist scholarship must conceptualize early Christianity and early Judaism in such a way that it can make women and marginalized men visible as central agents who shaped Christian and Jewish beginnings."⁶⁹ In her earlier work, Schüssler Fiorenza was especially mindful of criticisms by Jewish feminists who saw Christian attempts to claim Jesus as a

feminist over against patriarchal Jewish society as a way of reinforcing Christian anti-Judaic notions. Thus, in order to avoid playing Jesus over against patriarchal Judaism, Schüssler Fiorenza sought to discover for herself "the feminist impulse within Judaism."⁷⁰ She found evidence of that impulse in pre-70 C.E. Judaism, especially in the book of Judith. This book—from the first century B.C.E.—portrays its namesake as a strong, independent leader modeled on the figure of Moses and embodying Pharisaic piety.

Schüssler Fiorenza also delineated what she considered to be the "dominant ethos" of first-century Judaism and identified the central question asked by every Jew and answered, albeit differently, by every Jewish group. The ethos: Israel as "kingdom of priests and holy nation" (cf. Exod. 19:6). The question: "What must I do to enter the kingdom of heaven?" The Jesus movement originated as an extension of the impulse, or impulses, represented by the book of Judith.⁷¹

Jesus as Prophet and Child of Sophia. Schüssler Fiorenza is acutely conscious of the difficulty in moving from the earliest memories of the Jesus movement, preserved in such texts as Sayings Source Q and the Gospel of Mark, to the historical figure of Jesus. But she exhibits no hesitation in identifying the Jesus movement itself as "a renewal movement within Judaism" or as "a Jewish emancipatory movement of wo/men."⁷² Or, to use the phrase that recurs in her writings, the Jesus movement involved a "discipleship of equals."

John the Baptist provides the foil for understanding what Jesus and his movement were all about.⁷³ John is a prophet who announces that God's judgment and wrath precede the coming *basileia* and the restitution of Israel. Jesus, however, emphasizes that in his ministry and movement God's *basileia* is already present. John's ascetic lifestyle is that of an apocalyptic preparing for the future. But Jesus' lifestyle is that of joyous celebration (Mark 2:18-20; Matt. 11:18-19 = 7:33-35). Both his table fellowship with sinners, tax collectors, and prostitutes and his casting out of demons give experiential confirmation of the *basileia's* presence. (Schüssler Fiorenza often leaves untranslated the Greek word *basileia*, which is feminine, but traditionally translated into English by the masculine "kingdom.")

Schüssler Fiorenza documents, in detail, women who figure prominently in the Jesus movement: Mary of Magdala (Luke 8:2); the woman with a flow of blood for twelve years (Mark 5:25-34 par.); the woman crippled for eighteen years (Luke 13:10-17). And then there is the woman who washed Jesus' feet (Luke 7:36-50 and John 12:1-8). According to Mark's Gospel she anointed Jesus' head, and this act, Jesus said, would be told wherever the good news is preached, "in memory of her" (Mark 14:3-9).

The praxis, or practice, of the Jesus movement was grounded in an understanding and experience of God as "all-inclusive love." The parables of Jesus give expression to the goodness and mercy of God, again and again. But for Schüssler Fiorenza there is much more to Jesus' understanding of God than this. She cites

the very old Q saying in its Lukan wording: "sophia is justified [or vindicated] by all her children" (Luke 7:35). She concludes: "The earliest Jesus traditions perceive this God of gracious goodness in a woman's *Gestalt* as divine *Sophia* (wisdom)." This perception of God has its home in Israel's wisdom traditions, not in apocalyptic traditions, and also says something about Jesus himself. Schüssler Fiorenza continues: "The earliest Christian theology is sophiology. It was possible to understand Jesus' ministry and death in terms of God-Sophia, because Jesus probably understood himself as the prophet and child of Sophia."⁷⁴

Schüssler Fiorenza's claims about God as Sophia and Jesus as messenger of Sophia lead to many interesting readings of familiar texts. Jesus says: "And call no one your father on earth, for you have one Father—the one in heaven" (Matt. 23:9). She understands this saying to be a repudiation of all earthly fathers, and thereby a rejection of patriarchal authority, in the name of the "Father" God and in the interest of the discipleship of equals. Now, God as "Father" no longer legitimates a domination system. God can be addressed as "Father" in the Lord's Prayer (Matt. 6:9-13 = Luke 11:2-4) because the masculine "Father" no longer functions contrary to the discipleship of equals but supports the discipleship of equals. That discipleship itself constitutes a new family based on equality and not natural family bonds (Mark 10:29-30 par.).

Schüssler Fiorenza disclaims knowledge of how Jesus understood his death; but his execution as "King of the Jews" became the originating event for how his death was understood by his followers.⁷⁵ Based not on the Gospels but on traditions preserved in Paul's letters, she surveys several early Christian interpretations of that death and identifies as the earliest interpretation a confession such as "God raised Jesus from the dead" (cf. 1 Cor. 6:14; Rom. 8:11; et al.). Resurrection faith, therefore, has its fundamental basis in the Jewish belief that God vindicates the righteous who die as martyrs. Whereas Paul excludes women from the list of those to whom Jesus appeared after the resurrection, a list intended to legitimate male authority (1 Cor. 15:3-8), the Gospels associate women—particularly Mary of Magdala—with the discovery of the empty tomb and the message that Jesus the Living One will be encountered in Galilee (Mark 16:1-8 par.).⁷⁶ Schüssler Fiorenza concludes: "A critical feminist discourse of liberation that positions itself within the space of the empty tomb is able to insist that G^od and the Resurrected One can be found only among the Living Ones."⁷⁷

We have completed the initial two stages of our quest for Jesus. We have examined the literary sources both canonical and extracanonical. We have reviewed several historical reconstructions of the life of Jesus in its first-century Palestinian setting. Now we move to the third stage and consider continuing issues in the study of his life. Much of our study thus far can be diagrammed as follows.