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QUEST FOR THE HISTORICAL JESUS

The phrase "quest for the historical Jesus" normally refers to a movement of scholarship that emerged with Reimarus in the 18th century and continues in various forms into the late 20th century. It is sometimes used in a broad sense to denote all historical research into the life and times of Jesus; sometimes it is used in a more narrow sense to denote only one branch of this, namely, revisionist theories linked to particular theological or political agendas. In this connection the term "the historical Jesus" is sometimes used to refer to Jesus as he actually was (whether or not we can know about him thus), and sometimes to refer to Jesus as he can be reconstructed by historians working within a particular frame of reference (whether or not this does justice to how Jesus actually was). The latter sense will be referred to below as "the historical Jesus."

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A. Problems

There are six commonly held but erroneous views about the quest. (1) Reimarus began it. In fact, Reimarus drew on the work of earlier writers, particularly English Deists (Brown 1985: 1-55). (2) All writers about Jesus have been trying to do the same thing, namely, to reconstruct his actual life and teaching. In fact, there have been several very different agendas informing writers, even within the same period. (3) Research into Jesus aims at an "objective" account. In fact, objectivity is now perceived to be a positivist myth, and historians need to take into account both the reality of external events and the point of view of all perceivers, themselves included (Meyer 1979: 76-110). (4) Twentieth century methods of gospel study—source, form, and redaction criticism—are part of the quest. They are not, or not particularly: They focus on the gospels and the communities behind them, and only tangentially on Jesus. (5) The quest has produced no useful results and should now be abandoned. Section E demonstrates the contrary. (6) The quest can be divided into discrete chronological sections. Though we follow this traditional outline, it is potentially misleading, since there is far more overlap and interplay between sections than can thus be indicated (e.g., the close links between Strauss and Bultmann, or between Schweitzer and Sanders).

B. Reimarus to Schweitzer

Schweitzer himself is responsible for the usual perception of the quest to that date and for drawing attention to it as a major theological phenomenon. His outline and angle of vision need to be supplemented by others (e.g., Meyer 1979: 25-59, Brown 1985) if a fair picture is to result. The first phase of the quest fell historically within a wider movement in which orthodox Christianity came under attack from rationalism, and he attempted to respond in various ways; the writers listed below belong on both sides of this divide and in various mediating positions. The rationale often given for the quest at this stage was that, since the Gospels disagreed about so many things, the historian had to enquire as to what exactly happened; in fact this was only one of many motivations, including the desire to discredit orthodox Christianity as a whole. A feature of this stage of the quest was the gradual concentration on the Synoptic Gospels, as the Gospel of John

came to be seen as a secondary theological and nonhistorical account.

1. **Reimarus.** H.S. Reimarus (1694–1768) wrote a long criticism of Christianity which was published after his death by the philosopher G. Lessing. One section dealt with the aims of Jesus, arguing that he was a Jewish revolutionary whose disciples, after his failure and death, conceived the idea that he was divine. They stole his body and rewrote the story of his life in the light of an alternative Jewish expectation, not utilized by Jesus himself, according to which a divine being would appear on the clouds to end the world. The failure of this to happen discredits them, as Jesus' failure to bring about successful revolution had discredited him; Christianity as known subsequently is based therefore on a series of mistakes. Schweitzer praises Reimarus too much, but deserves credit for the bold and clear outlines of a historical hypothesis which continues to have successors (Brandon 1967; and see Bammel and Moule 1984).

2. **Strauss.** Reimarus' emphasis on the non-miraculous nature of Jesus' life was picked up by David Friedrich Strauss (1808–74), but whereas, for Reimarus, Jesus could be described thus in order to be dismissed, for Strauss the required rereading of the gospels meant that the truth of Jesus could be rescued in an ahistorical fashion. His massive book focused attention on the nature of the gospels (a question that has dominated much of 20th century research), arguing that they were mythical rather than historical. Neither the older orthodoxy nor the newer rationalism would do: On the one hand, supernatural and miraculous events do not and did not occur, while on the other hand, what seemed to be accounts of such happenings were in reality nonhistorical projections of early faith. Strauss' manifest unorthodoxy cost him his career, but arguably his questions still remain outstanding.

3. **Renan.** E. Renan (1823–92) typified a certain style of Jesus-research (see Schweitzer 1954: 180–92; Brown 1985: 233–38). Like Strauss, he achieved great notoriety from his book (1863), though his passage to skepticism had a different origin (French Roman Catholicism). With his treatment there came to prominence a theme that still dominates some accounts: the distinction between the early period of the ministry, in which Jesus won the hearts of all, and the later, when the high demands he made caused most to reject him. It is essentially a work of romantic fantasy, charming but cloying, and the great influence it has had on popular impressions of Jesus is in inverse proportion to its true worth as history.

4. **Holtzmann.** The second half of the 19th century saw the production, particularly in Germany, of a steady stream of lives of Jesus, of which probably the best known is that of H. J. Holtzmann (1832–1910). His book (1863) focused attention on the Synoptic Gospels, working on the assumption that to solve the problems they posed—their order of composition and mutual dependence—was to solve in principle the problem of Jesus. The earliest sources would give genuine access to history. The priority of Mark was a hypothesis designed to provide a straightforward (and essentially liberal) portrait of Jesus as the teacher of timeless ethical truths, whose ministry developed in clear-cut and comprehensible stages, with the decisive turning point at Caesarea Philippi (Mark 8:27–

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9:1). The two main aspects of Holtzmann's work—his portrait of the ministry, and his belief in source criticism as a means to historiography—have continued to exercise considerable influence.

5. **Weiss.** A decisive step towards a more accurate historical picture, and at the same time towards a continuing theological problem, was taken by Johannes Weiss (1863–1914). In focusing on the meaning of the "kingdom of God" in the teaching of Jesus, his book (1892; ET 1971) set its face against the liberalism of Ritschl (Weiss' father-in-law), and proposed instead a meaning based on a new awareness of Jewish apocalyptic: Jesus announced the imminent end of the world. Weiss still drew a psychologizing portrait of Jesus, but the emphasis now lay elsewhere, on a historical reconstruction which posed the same question as Reimarus, with the difference that it concerned Jesus and not merely his followers: The predicted end of the world did not materialize. Weiss was answered by various writers (Schweitzer 1954: 241–68), but he had set the question in the terms that would dominate Schweitzer's own work and, as a result, haunt the 20th century quest.

6. **Schweitzer.** The work of Albert Schweitzer (1875–1965) stands at the head of the present century like a colossus. To him belongs the credit for seeing the quite disparate "lives of Jesus" as, in a sense, a single movement, which in his own work he drew together and attempted to round off. In his thorough survey he built particularly on the work of Weiss; answering the thoroughgoing skepticism of William Wrede (whose work on Mark aimed to show that the apparently straightforward account of Jesus' ministry in that gospel was in fact a theological construct), he summarized the work of his predecessors in pithy prose, weighed them in the balance of his own rigorous analysis, found most of them sadly wanting, and offered his own fresh synthesis. In his "Sketch" (1901), and in the conclusion to the larger work (1954: 328–401), he argued that Jesus deliberately kept his Messiahship a secret, revealing it to the disciples in the Transfiguration and then commanding them to tell nobody, and that Judas betrayed this secret to the chief priests. He then goes on to argue that Jesus, who had begun by expecting the Son of man to appear during the course of his ministry, was disappointed, and went to his death in order to bring down the "Messianic woes" upon himself, so that his people might be delivered (1954: 368–69, 385–95; 1925: 234–36). The result is in one way purely negative: "The Jesus of Nazareth who . . . preached the ethic of the Kingdom of God, who founded the Kingdom of Heaven upon earth"—that is, "the historical Jesus" of most 19th century liberal "lives"—"never had any existence" (1954: 396). However, all is not lost for subsequent hermeneutics and theology: "Jesus means something to our world because a mighty spiritual force streams forth from Him and flows through our time also"; "not the historical Jesus, but the spirit which goes forth from Him and in the spirits of men strives for new influence and rule, is that which overcomes the world." The eschatological sayings, in their very oddity for modern humans, "raise the man who dares to meet their challenge . . . above his world and his time, making him inwardly free" (1954: 397, 399, 400). Schweitzer thus stands as the bridge between the centuries: summing up the 19th cen-

ture, and pronouncing it a failure, he anticipates some of the major emphases of the 20th.

7. The "Old Quest": Conclusion. If there is a theme which unites the highly disparate writers between Reimarus and Schweitzer, it is their conviction that when a truly historical account of Jesus is arrived at it will be of vital importance for the Christian faith. For some, the importance was positive and immediate. Jesus, reconstructed in pious historiography, became the wise and gentle teacher of 19th century liberalism; Mark became the earliest gospel, a simple record of the Master's ministry. For others, the importance was largely negative. Reimarus, Strauss, and Schweitzer himself, in their different ways, undertook historical description in order to show that the traditional picture of Jesus could not be trusted. Reimarus went on to argue that Christianity as a whole was mistaken; Strauss, that its reality lay in the realm of timeless truth divorced from history; Schweitzer, that the new historical picture carried with it its own timeless imperatives ("He . . . sets us to the tasks which He has to fulfill for our time"; 1954: 401). The quest for "the historical Jesus", which had marginalized Jesus' eschatology in particular, had had its bluff called, and could not reply. There could be no doubt which of the two roads subsequent scholarship would have to take, and the subsequent story of the quest is not least the story of how the consequent hermeneutical challenge—how such a strange and remote Jesus could be relevant in a different culture and time—was variously met.

C. Schweitzer to Käsemann

Between Schweitzer's demolition of the 19th century quest in 1906 and Ernst Käsemann's lecture in 1953, new theological movements dominated European theology, most of which had only a small place for Jesus. This may be partly attributed to a failure of nerve after Schweitzer (How could a Jewish apocalyptic prophet be of use to theology today? How could one be sure of avoiding anachronism if one found an answer to the question?) and partly to the protest he himself mounted against the historical Jesus—though actually he was not the first to do so. One of the oddities of Schweitzer's book is his failure to mention M. Kähler, whose work gained in importance in the hands of Barth and Bultmann; and partly to the new agendas set for the Church by the convulsions through which the world passed during the period, to which the task of reconstructing the biography of Jesus seemed of comparatively little relevance. One of the significant trends during this period came in the reversal of an argument implicit in much of 19th century work: Instead of conceiving of Jesus as relevant, and therefore not particularly Jewish, scholarship after Schweitzer saw him as Jewish, and therefore not particularly relevant. The main reason for the new move, however, was profoundly theological, and found initial expression in Barth.

1. Barth. The second and subsequent editions of Karl Barth's *Commentary on Romans* includes a good deal of explicit criticism of the liberal "historical Jesus." The earthly Jesus, and all he represents in the way of religiousness and piety, ends on the cross, which thus stands as the judgment of God against all human piety. The meaning of Jesus, including the meaning of his life, is found in his

death and there alone (Barth 1933: 160). His earthly life is necessarily irrelevant, and must for theological reasons be a stumbling block and not an open mirror to his theological significance (280). The early Barth thus anticipates a good deal of what subsequently came to be associated with Bultmann. Theology positively called for the collapse of the quest (Meyer 1979: 49).

2. Bultmann. Rudolf Bultmann (1884–1976), whose work dominates 20th century NT studies, is perhaps best known for two emphases (in some ways they go back to Strauss), both of which played an important negative role in Jesus-research. (a) He provided a detailed analysis of the literary forms of Synoptic material, arguing that in most cases these indicate an origin, not in the life of Jesus, but in the life of the early Church. (b) He argued that the gospels as they stand are mythical in various senses (not fully distinguished by Bultmann: see Thiselton 1980: 252–63), in particular in that they presuppose a prescientific worldview with which they clothe—and with which Jesus himself clothed—his essentially timeless message. The significance of Jesus could therefore be recaptured by translating-out the mythical language into that of existential decision (Bultmann 1958). Form criticism and demythologization were thus joint means towards a reading of the gospels which aimed *not* to find Jesus—lest, as has often been said within the Bultmann school, one should base one's faith on history and so turn it into a "work." Bultmann's own book on Jesus (1934) focuses principally on his teaching, interpreted as existentialist challenge to contemporary decision; the sayings are all that is left, and then only certain ones; it is both impossible and undesirable to try and discover the personality of Jesus himself. All that is needed is the bare fact that he died on a cross. In Bultmann's history-of-religious program, the main features of early Christianity were derived not from Jewish sources but from Hellenistic ones. The life and ministry of Jesus, firmly anchored in Judaism, were therefore only of tangential interest for Christian theology.

3. Gospel Study. Throughout this period the attention of Synoptic studies was focused more on the gospels themselves than on Jesus. Source criticism reached its peak in the work of Streeter (1924), with many still believing (like Holtzmann) that they would thus find secure historical grounding in the earliest sources, Mark and Q; this belief is still held by some who are trying to revive the Q hypothesis today (see Kloppenborg 1987). Some attempted to use form criticism in a similar fashion, not realizing that it was a tool designed to find the early Church, not Jesus. By the end of the period there had begun the serious study (sometimes called redaction criticism) of the gospels as wholes; again, this method was neither designed, nor particularly appropriate, for the task of discovering Jesus within his historical context. Some writers, including some Anglo-Saxons (e.g. Manson 1931, 1949) defied the moratorium, but in general attention was focused away from Jesus.

D. The "New Quest"

On 20 October 1953, Ernst Käsemann, then a professor in Göttingen and subsequently in Tübingen, delivered a lecture arguing that, though it is true that a "life of Jesus" cannot be written, one must be careful not to divorce

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Christian faith altogether from its historical roots, lest it turn into a sort of docetism in which "Jesus" is simply a cipher, and the cross is robbed of its significance. If the earthly Jesus can only be understood in terms of Easter, Easter can only be understood in relation to Jesus (Käsemann 1964: 25). A "new quest," complete with careful theological rationale and motivation, was thus launched, which in certain respects still continues (see Robinson 1959; Meyer 1979: 51-54; Sanders 1985: 29-47). Within this movement there have developed certain criteria for assessing the probable historicity of individual sayings of Jesus: dissimilarity (if a saying is unlike both the Jewish background and the early Church; see Sanders 1985: 16-17; Hooker 1972); consistency (with other material known to be authentic); multiple attestation (if a saying appears in different layers of tradition); and linguistic or cultural tests (if the saying appears to fit with Palestinian Judaism of the time, not least in allowing a possible Aramaic basis). Mutual tension between these tests is quickly apparent, and it is not surprising that the results achieved on such a basis have not been particularly solid (see Barbour 1972).

1. **Bornkamm.** The first work to appear under this new look was that of G. Bornkamm. In many ways Bornkamm kept to the Bultmannian agenda: the miraculous was kept out of the picture, Jesus had no special foreknowledge of events to come, and he used no Messianic titles of himself. Nevertheless, some important changes were made. Bornkamm's Jesus speaks of an eschatological fulfillment in the present, as opposed to one located in the future. In several respects the gospels provide us with access to genuine historical happenings; the call of the twelve, for instance, need not (as with Bultmann) be attributed to the retrojecting tendency of the early Church. But still it is the message of Jesus, not the events in which he participated, that remains the focus of attention, and that, in the end, results in a summons to faith in the present as much as in the past (Bornkamm 1960: 188-91; see also Kümmel 1957, 1974, and Goppelt 1981).

2. **Jeremias.** The work of J. Jeremias, though recognizably Lutheran and thus falling within the post-Bultmannian mainstream, stands a little outside "new quest" research, looking from one point of view more like the Schweitzer quest (in that Jeremias is clearly committed to finding in the gospels the Jesus who can be the basis for the Church's faith) and from another like the Third Quest (in that he insists on understanding Jesus within the matrix of his native Judaism, emphasizing especially the Aramaic base of several sayings). In various monographs (1958, 1963, and others), and above all in the first volume of his uncompleted *New Testament Theology* (1971), he presented a sustained account of Jesus' ministry and mission. Believing that the concrete historical setting of Jesus' work was vital for genuine Christian theology, and that the Jesus one discovered in that setting offered himself as the incarnation of the call of God to every generation, Jeremias painstakingly reconstructed an impressive collection of *ipsissima verba* (words most likely to be attributed to the historical Jesus) by means of linguistic and form-critical analysis. He argued in particular for a middle way between the imminent eschatology of Schweitzer (the end is near, but not yet) and the realized eschatology of C. H. Dodd (the kingdom is actually present in the ministry of Jesus;

see, e.g., Dodd 1961), suggesting the cumbersome but more historically likely "eschatology in the process of being realized," or, as in the work of Ladd (1966), "inaugurated eschatology." There is a sense in which the kingdom is present, and another in which it is yet to come. Though in some ways this merely restates the problem, it avoids the false clarity of the alternatives.

3. **Schillebeeckx.** The Dutch Dominican Edward Schillebeeckx has produced one of the longest books (1979) on Jesus in this century, though the length owes a good deal to the protracted employment of detailed tradition criticism, resulting in portraits of various groups within early Christianity; through the gaps between them Jesus himself eventually appears. Schillebeeckx takes a position which is the mirror image of Bultmann in that he regards the resurrection appearances as stories from Jesus' lifetime read forward into the post-Easter appearances. His eventual leap from a purely historical Jesus to the incarnate Son of God is based on little or nothing within the body of the book. At the same time he has a wealth of insights into the philosophical context of scholarship on Jesus, and many of his sections—no least his discussion of Jesus' awareness of his own approaching death—are pregnant and fruitfully suggestive.

4. **The "Jesus Seminar."** In the last decade the post-Bultmannian movement has had a new focal point: the so-called "Jesus Seminar," an American group with its own journal (*Foundations and Facets Forum*) and regular meetings at which individual sayings are discussed, debated, and voted on according to a scale of probability. At one level these scholars (who include some of the best-known names in North American NT scholarship) are attempting to perform for their generation what Bultmann did for his: They hope to produce a more-thoroughgoing history of the Synoptic tradition, including extracanonical material. At another level, they are clearly convinced that such study, particularly if it demolishes the heroic Jesus beloved of some modern American Christianity, will be of great benefit to the world; so the seminar's results are announced in press conferences, and there is talk of a movie. At the same time, the seminar includes several scholars whose thought is running in a different direction, i.e., the Third Quest. This represents one of the major tensions within Jesus-research today.

5. **Jesus the Cynic?** It has commonly been assumed, at least since Schweitzer, that the more we put Jesus into his historical context the more he will turn out to be Jewish. This has been sharply challenged by two recent writers, who have suggested that the Jewish strands in the gospels are the accretions, and that the earlier we look the more we find Jesus to be much like the wandering Cynic preachers who were a familiar sight in the ancient Mediterranean world. First, there is B. H. Mack (1988), who argues that Jesus was not an apocalyptic prophet, but a popular sage, a wordsmith purveying aphoristic wisdom, one who shocked people into fresh thought for themselves about their social and personal situations, rather than teaching any particular doctrine. This bold line is backed up by a new history of gospel traditions in which what used to be thought the older layers—the more Jewish and apocalyptic strands—are argued to be later accretions, which culminated in a myth of Mark's making, a myth which has had

(Mack suggests) devastating effects on Western, particularly American, self-consciousness. Neither Mark's fiction of the first appearance of the man of power, nor his fantasy of the final appearance of the man of glory, fit the wisdom now required (Mack 1988: 376). In thus reversing what has been normal practice (going back behind the Hellenistic layers to find the original Jewish stratum), Mack is nevertheless very close to Bultmann and Wrede in his basic historical hypothesis and to many 19th century writers in his hermeneutical program: The original Jesus—Jesus as he really was, which turns out to be fairly un-Jewish—is what contemporary culture needs. The other writer is F. Gerald Downing, who has undertaken (1988) a large-scale collection of parallel sayings from the gospels and the Cynics. Despite the initial impression of parallelism, however, and the bracing hermeneutic wherein Downing challenges comfortable Western Christianity (1987), the case for a close link is weakened by the lack of evidence for any Cynic presence in Palestine, and by the fact that the sayings adduced as parallels come from a very wide geographical and chronological range. This movement of scholarship has, however, alerted Jesus-research to the dangers of assuming that Jesus' Jewishness—or anyone else's in the 1st century, for that matter—can be isolated from wider cultural influences and resonances.

6. Conclusion. The closer we get to our own day, the harder it is to plot patterns and movements. Yet it is undeniable that the so-called "new quest" has continued in various forms, without producing any solid results that have won wide scholarly approval (see Bowden 1988; and, for a recent exploration within the paradigm, Fredriksen 1988). In several ways it has been overtaken by a different movement, owing no allegiance to Bultmann, and producing quite different results. Although the debate between these two contemporary movements is often conducted in terms of method and historical analysis, it should be clear that differing implicit hermeneutical analyses and agendas are also playing a not-inconsiderable part.

E. The "Third Quest"

The current wave of books about Jesus offers a bewildering range of competing hypotheses. There is no unifying theological agenda; no final agreement about method; certainly no common set of results. But there are certain features which justify a unifying label. (On the distinction between this "third quest" and the previous "new quest," see Meyer 1979: 16–20; Charlesworth 1988: 26–28; and Neill and Wright 1988: 397–98.)

1. Introduction. The most obvious feature is that the massive recent researches into second Temple Judaism have forced scholars to rethink what might be involved in understanding Jesus within this background (as it is agreed, in this movement, that one must do: i.e., agreeing to that extent with Reimarus and Schweitzer against much of 19th century scholarship and the Bultmann school). First-century sources, particularly Josephus, are being studied seriously after generations of neglect by NT scholars. Serious, and in principle answerable, questions are being formulated, as for instance by Sanders (1985: 1): What was Jesus' intention, what was his relationship to his Jewish contemporaries, why did he die, and why did Christianity begin? The methods employed owe less to theolog-

ical *a priori*s and more to the normal canons of historiography: hypothesis and verification, and testing of sources as part of that process (see Meyer 1979: 76–110; Sanders 1985: 3–22). The problem of the nature of the sources, particularly the Synoptic Gospels, has not been ignored, but neither is it now regarded as so difficult, even when modern literary approaches are taken seriously, as to forbid all serious historical research (see Freyne 1988; Sanders and Davies 1989: 335–44). Early "third quest" works include Brandon (1967) and Vermes (1973), portraying Jesus as revolutionary and a Galilean holy man respectively. The first option is now normally rejected (see Bammel and Moule 1984; though see Buchanan 1984 for a variant of the revolutionary theme). The second is taken up by Borg (1984: 229–63), though set in a different context. There are four outstanding works in the current literature.

2. Meyer. B. F. Meyer's book (1979) is the most learned and methodologically rigorous of the modern works. Basing his historical method on Lonergan's epistemology, he analyzes Jesus' aims, highlighting the restoration of Israel as the theme underlying the proclamation of the kingdom. He argues for the accuracy of the gospels' distinction between the public and private message of Jesus, such that the public actions (particularly table-fellowship with sinners) gained a depth of meaning through allowing the question of his identity to emerge. Jesus envisaged a new, reborn community, in which the covenant would be renewed and whose sins would be forgiven. The tradition generated by his life gives powerful clues to understanding why he did what he did (this, in opposition to some schemes [Vermes 1973, and most of the Bultmann school] which postulate a radical disjunction between Jesus and subsequent tradition).

3. Harvey. A. E. Harvey's Bampton Lectures (1982) are similarly adventurous in terms of method. Employing the notion of "historical constraint," Harvey argues that Jesus can and must be understood in terms of the constraints operating on anyone within the particular culture of the time. He begins with the crucifixion: What we know of Roman and Jewish practice indicates that the gospels are substantially correct in tracing the basic outline of events that led to Jesus' death. The constraint of Law enables us to plot Jesus' insistence that the urgency of the moment should override some legal provisions; that of Time, to understand the eschatological nature of his proclamation. What we know of Miracle in the ANE suggests that Jesus refused to work within normal categories. He was known as Messiah (though without "divine" overtones) during his lifetime: and, since the constraint of monotheism meant that no Jew could have thought of himself (or anyone else) as God Incarnate, we must think instead in terms of unique *agency* (on all this, see Neill and Wright 1988: 385–87, and Wright 1986).

4. Borg. M. J. Borg (1984) argues cogently that Jesus is to be seen as political, not in the sense that he was a revolutionary, but because he was actually perceived as a traitor to the nationalist cause. Into a situation of intense conflict, Jesus brought a summons to costly mercy and love, which cut across Israel's current expectations and badges of national identity. He warned Israel that resistance would lead to social and military disaster, which

would have to be seen as divine judgment. The eschatological passages thus refer, not to a coming supernatural event, but to imminent national catastrophe (Borg 1987b). In this ministry, Jesus functioned as a sage or holy man, announcing the breaking in of the numinous into everyday reality (Borg 1987a). Many otherwise puzzling passages in the gospels come into fresh light within this context.

5. Sanders. E. P. Sanders (1985) gives a clear account of a Jesus seen without the spectacles of contemporary piety. He refuses to begin with the sayings, and starts instead his action against the Temple, understood within the framework of Jewish restoration eschatology, the hope that a new Temple would be built in the coming new age. Passages which speak of his conflict with Pharisees are mostly retrojections of later church-and-synagogue controversies; Jesus did challenge received wisdom in some ways, when his vision of a new age overrode Jewish custom ("leave the dead to bury their dead"; see Sanders 1985: 252-55). His attack on the Temple provoked reaction from the Jewish hierarchy, who handed him over to the Romans. He was not political in the sense of revolutionary, as witnessed by the fact that after his death his disciples were not also arrested. Sanders is arguably the clearest of the current writers on Jesus, and is candid about the issues (e.g., the "Son of man" question) which he leaves unsettled.

6. Others. Other works have appeared in the same vein, notably those of Caird (1965), Dodd (1971), France (1971), Yoder (1972), Riches (1980), Farmer (1982), Buchanan (1984), Lohfink (1984), Rivkin (1984), Segundo (1985), Lievestad (1987), Theissen (1987), Horsley (1987) and Freyne (1988). (See the survey in Charlesworth 1988: 9-29, 223-43.) Related studies include Derrett (1973), Bowker (1973), Chilton (1979; 1984), Lievestad (1987), Charlesworth (1988) and de Jonge (1988). All are exploring more or less the same issues, though with the same diversity of background and point of view.

7. Unfinished Agendas. Perhaps the most-striking feature of the third quest is its current open-endedness. There is some convergence on the question of appropriate method (see Meyer, Sanders), but further work needs to be done, not least in integrating the newer literary approaches to the gospels into the historical task (see now particularly Freyne 1988). The exact interrelation between Jesus and Judaism is extremely difficult to plot, and continual readjustments are to be expected for some time. So, too, the question of continuity and discontinuity between Jesus and the early Church is raised in new and acute forms by the current study, which so far has not taken on board the difficult, though clearly closely related, question of the resurrection. Theological questions, although quite properly bracketed off in many third quest writings, are never in fact far away, and the questions of the meaning of the cross, and the identity of Jesus (atonement and christology), are only two of many that could be explored. Many writers (not least those in the Third World., e.g., Segundo) imply a hermeneutic in which the Jesus (or the entire historical scenario) they rediscover can somehow be translated into contemporary relevance, but none so far has addressed the question head on, or in the necessary depth (though see Yoder 1972, and Hebblethwaite 1989).

F. Conclusion

The quest as normally conceived was born in an atmosphere of anti-Christian polemic (Reimarus) and has often

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continued to be seen in that light, whether by those who rejected the idea of "the historical Jesus" (Kähler etc.) or by those suspicious of the third quest for its sitting loose to theology. But any critique based on a theological a priori must take account of the fact that among orthodox theology's regular assertions is that of the full humanness of Jesus. Granted the contemporary puzzles over the meaning of the word "God" itself, it may seem on reflection quite proper for theology to give historical research its head. Not that historical research will wait for such permission. It deals, ultimately, with issues that lie in the public domain, not with matters that can only be discussed within the household of faith. The contemporary movements offer plenty of evidence that the quest for the historical Jesus is both as alive and as important now as it has ever been.

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