

2 ~ IDENTIFYING A RESEARCH GAP

From Doubt to Inquiry

The first chapter started with an encounter with Albert Schweitzer and ended with the suspicion that Christianity has switched from fellowship with Jesus into a book religion. The aim of the second chapter is to display the landscape where scholars have trotted. And again, this itinerary starts with Albert Schweitzer. This road will take us to a sketch of a profile of the historical Jesus constructed from the contents of scholarly intercourse. Within the boundaries of this contour I will explore my notion of fatherlessness in the Second Temple period and elucidate some aspects of Jesus' words and deeds in terms of the stigma of being fatherless in Herodian Galilee. The route passed two important mileposts. Actually, the beginning of the journey which we are nowadays traveling along was indeed described as a "paradigm shift."¹ Hitherto, it was almost as if the voyage could not proceed because of Schweitzer's alarm against the unsophisticated and uncritical historical approach of scholars, not only in their choices but also in their use of New Testament writings and its sources.² Rudolf Bultmann's students, specifically, have continued the voyage despite all of the obstacles.

Labeling historical Jesus research as the "New Quest" in distinction to the "Old Quest," was triggered by one of Bultmann's students, James Robinson, in 1959.³ Robinson was the person who referred to the traverse into the newest phase of the itinerary as a "paradigm shift." Bultmann is often described as a proponent of the "No

Quest.” However, the fact that Bultmann’s students embarked on a journey they referred to as the “New Quest” demonstrates my opinion that a denial of the necessity of the search for Jesus could bring about doubt with regard to the quest for God. If inquiry is denied at the doorstep, doubt will come through the window.

Many articles, which intend to give an overview of historical Jesus research, have been published.⁴ It seems that many reviewers find their point of departure in the pattern of Albert Schweitzer’s *The Quest of the Historical Jesus: A Critical Study of its Progress from Reimarus to Wrede* (English translation published in 1910 from the German original, *Von Reimarus zu Wrede*), originally written in 1906. Three distinctive periods are classified: the precritical phase (150-1778), the first period of the “critical quest” for Jesus (1778-1953), and finally, since 1954, the second phase of the “critical quest” for Jesus. The process of harmonization of the Jesus tradition found in the canonical gospels constitutes the first period. More than forty examples of such a harmonization appeared in the sixteenth century within both Roman Catholic and Protestant circles.⁵ The second period is characterized by its radical historical skepticism and rationalism. The third period was introduced by the students of Rudolf Bultmann.⁶

In South Africa the first consideration of the importance of the quest for the historical Jesus came in the late seventies from Andrie du Toit,⁷ emeritus professor of New Testament at the University of Pretoria. Du Toit appraised the representatives of the “New Quest” positively. It appears to be the same within the academic circles in North America. Within the contour of Käsemann’s (1954) reconsideration of Bultmann’s stance, the quest for the “original” Jesus was regarded as not only desirable but also essential.⁸ The need for the quest rests, according to these scholars, upon what one can

call a theological accountability toward intra-ecclesiastical as well as extra-ecclesiastical “truth” claims.

Concerning the first, an “authentic continuity” between the “life and proclamation of Jesus of Nazareth” and the “kerygmatic Christ” proclaimed in the early church is essential, otherwise one can argue that the “message of the gospel about the Jesus of history” rests on “myths and ideas.”⁹ More specifically, it was argued that the shocks Bultmann’s influence caused for many believers in terms of the reliability of the gospel tradition of Jesus should be thwarted. The skeptical historians (influenced by Bultmann and Schweitzer) were challenged to overcome the “scandal of the New Testament,” namely to “accept God’s singular revelation that was granted once and for all” in the Jesus of history. Furthermore, the “accountability toward extra-ecclesiastical truth claims” also has relevance for the interreligious dialogue and the demonstration of the rational basis of theology and the gospel embedded in the New Testament.

But the quest for the “original” Jesus is also desirable because it helps the exegete to clarify in a responsible way the process by means of which the New Testament was handed down. We can therefore say that the historical quest for who Jesus was, what his vision was, what he said and did, has an “expository power” in guiding an analysis and an understanding of the varied traditions as vehicles of theological developments within the New Testament and the early church.¹⁰ Scholarship has demonstrated that the Jesus tradition had been “reduced” not only because of the editing process of the gospel writers themselves, but also because of the shift from orality to literacy, the process of translation from Aramaic into Greek and, especially, by means of the selecting, transforming and remaking of the pre-Easter Jesus tradition in the light of post- Easter beliefs. This very

process of “reduction” underlines the futility of a quest for an “objective” Jesus without and before any interpretation.

Therefore, according to some scholars,¹¹ one can ultimately seek to establish the “original” Jesus’ understanding of himself and the relation of this understanding to the understanding of Jesus by the early church. One of the assumptions in this regard is that the Jesus tradition, as reflected in the canonical gospels, can be regarded as authentic until one proves the opposite. The burden of proof lies with those scholars who argue for non-authenticity.¹² Methodologically, however, it can be helpful to argue for absolute accuracy in a complementary fashion: authenticity is only accepted when it is really proved. Therefore, “criteria for authenticity are needed,” like the criterion of dissimilarity or the criterion of coherence.¹³ New Testament professors like Norman Perrin, Günther Bornkamm, Ernst Käsemann, and Joachim Jeremias¹⁴ were advocates of the “criterion of dissimilarity” .

According to this yardstick, words of Jesus would be considered his own if they did not oppose, to a degree, the faith assertions found among the followers of Jesus in the period of earliest Christianity or among the Israelites after the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem by the Romans in 70 C.E. Criticism against this criterion, and rightly so, is that it is difficult to imagine that the mind-sets of the historical Jesus and that of formative Judaism and formative Christianity would be so very much unrelated to one another. Yet this criterion may help to identify a “distinctive” Jesus, but not Jesus’ own “characteristics.” Similarly, one cannot have outright peace with the “criterion of coherence.” Günther Bornkamm used this guideline together with the notion of dissimilarity. According to this criterion, Jesus’ sayings would be regarded as authentic

if they make sense coherently within a framework of other sayings that have been established by scholarly investigation as probably part of Jesus' own thinking. The notion of coherency is today very much the constituent of the work of Jesus researchers, including myself, providing that the criterion is applied on a secondary level after one establishes a historical database of possible authentic words and deeds of Jesus by means of historical-critical exegesis. However, by using an expression from the title of the British exegete Morna Hooker's famous article, "On Using the Wrong Tool," many scholars remain skeptical about the appropriateness of the different criteria because, among other reproaches, they cover only Jesus' words and not his deeds as well. The latter refer in particular to Jesus' miracles.¹⁵

Regardless of so much doubt and uneasiness about the perplexity of the search for the historical Jesus, the feeling among historically minded exegetes seems at this stage yields to the verdict: "historical Jesus research does have a future."¹⁶ However, the remaining restraints brought about a plea for a reconsideration of some of the dispositions of the research. One of these tendencies pertains to the question of where the burden of proof should lie. Should a Jesus researcher accept the historical accuracy of a Jesus saying in the gospels at face value until it is proved to be an interpreted faith assertion of a follower of Jesus in terms of a post-Easter believing community? Or, should one depart from a more skeptical vantage point by assuming that the burden of prove lies with the scholar who argues for face value authenticity? There are many colleagues in the field of the study of the origins of Christianity who are not suspicious at all of the reliability of the New Testament writings, especially, so it seems to me, scholars who are at present working in the United Kingdom.¹⁷ Some of these scholars are in constant debate with

Jesus scholars who are inclined not to accept so easily the historical trustworthiness of the documents without critical scrutiny because of the faith biases of these writings.¹⁸

Other controversies which have brought about intense reconsiderations among Jesus scholars are the issues of the dissimilarity between Jesus and formative Judaism, the Gospel of John as source for the historical Jesus, and the historical-critical (and antimetaphysical) principle of “analogy,” which in the past has ruled out the possibility that the resurrection narratives and those about Jesus’ miracles would be seen as part of the historical Jesus tradition.¹⁹

In the South African context (and seemingly in the North American context), these first attempts to explain the dynamics of historical Jesus research serve as a breakthrough in many ways. For several years, the presence of orthodoxy and the evangelical approach in church and theology inhibited biblical scholars from operating freely within the historical-critical paradigm, sometimes to a greater and sometimes to a lesser extent. However, in all fairness to many colleagues working within the network of evangelical collaboration, it seems they at least explicitly rejected a fundamentalistic and “precritical” presumption that all aspects of the Jesus tradition were to be simply identified with the “very own deeds and words” (*ipssisima facta et verba*) of Jesus’ life. Hence, in the same vein, the “conservative” New Testament scholar in Germany, Peter Stuhlmacher,²⁰ tried to break through the “antimetaphysical” historical research. In accordance with what Ernst Troeltsch called “the principle of analogy in historiography,” the historian sees his or her own modern experience of reality as the norm by which to judge what could be historically authentic in the past and what could not. Stuhlmacher aimed at creating an atmosphere in which scholars, as members of the Christian believing

community, would regard aspects of the Jesus tradition in the canonical gospels that do not have other analogies in a historiographical sense as authentic. In particular, he had the resurrection narratives and the miracles of Jesus in mind.

What are the facts in present-day Jesus research concerning miracles and resurrection appearances? With regard to the miracle stories, we are now aware of the fact that they have indeed become part of the quest for the historical Jesus. However, they have not been studied exactly according to what the conservatives previewed. As in North America, for example in the Jesus Seminar of the Westar Institute, and in particular the work of Gerd Theissen²¹ in Germany, the miracles of Jesus have begun to be investigated along sociological and cultural-anthropological lines. At the same time, the New Testament canon does not constitute the boundaries within which independent attestations are critically scrutinized for possible analogies. At the very beginning when the Jesus Seminar started to compile a database of authentic deeds of the historical Jesus after completing the study of the Jesus sayings, Robert Funk, addressing the controversy with regard to the historicity of Jesus' miracles, made use of Peter Berger's and Thomas Luckmann's treatise on the sociology of knowledge. In their study *Social Construction of Reality*, Berger and Luckmann note: "Theories about identity are always embedded in a more general interpretation of reality; they are 'built into' the symbolic universe and its theoretical legitimations."²² From this perspective of a "psychology of identity," Funk²³ comments:

The overarching issue for Fellows of the Seminar is thus whether to interpret stories of exorcism from late antiquity in terms of the then prevailing cosmology, or whether to put them to the test of the modern scientific world-

view. The answer to the question whether such stories are historically plausible would depend on the universe [being] invoked as the test of plausibility. This issue goes together but is not identical with the question of whether biblical scholars belong to the community of faith or to the scientific community....If the issue in this form is transposed back into the New Testament, it has to be asked: Did people really suffer from demon possession? Did Jesus then really heal them? This question can be stated in different terms: Were demons real because people believed in them? The Fellows of the Seminar will have to face this dilemma.

However, it is a false dilemma to require an “either...or” case regarding the cosmology of people believing within the framework of a mythological symbolic world and modern scientific historiography based on the principle of analogy. To decide whether something is historically plausible demands according to our insights today, independent multiple attestation. These witnesses should be attested to in documents that are chronologically stratified. It should also make sense coherently in terms of a social stratification of the period involved.²⁴ Attestation, however, does not apply only to the very words of Jesus. We do not have direct access to the Jesus tradition. As in the case of his deeds, which are attested only by reference to them, we have access to Jesus’ words, but solely by means of reference to them. Furthermore, these “references” came to us in many modes. Myths and metaphors are such modes.

Thus, metaphorical and mythological language is part of our assessment of the “beliefs” of Jesus’ contemporaries about his “identity,” either as an acclamation or defamation, like any other of their references to his sayings or deeds. From the perspective of the sociology of knowledge these “beliefs,” expressed in language of analogy through myths and other metaphors, were built upon or arose from the social

world in which Jesus and his contemporaries lived. In other words, myths and metaphors represent an interpreted reflection on the “identity” of Jesus, just as any other attestation to his words and deeds does. Therefore, myths and other metaphors in relevant documents, relating to Jesus in one way or another, should also be submitted to a “chronological stratification” by which their “historical reliability,” in terms of their closeness to the historical Jesus, can be judged. Closeness, however, does not mean mere chronological nearness, but also accuracy in terms of nearness in cosmology and ideology. If an attestation in this regard does not have any analogy elsewhere, it should also be regarded with circumspection, like any similar attestation. Still, it does not mean that such a singular attestation is self-evidently “untrue” in the historical sense. A single attestation that is chronologically not far removed from the beginning of the common era can still be considered useful if it has explanatory power in an intelligible and internally coherent context. In short, such a context in which references to Jesus’ identity make coherent sense should correspond with the social stratification of first-century Herodian Palestine.

This social stratification is a construct in terms of the social reality of first-century Palestine, consisting of the contemporary social world dialectically built upon or arisen from a mythological symbolic universe. The chronological stratification of textual evidence is a construct on the basis of modern, painstaking historical and literary research. Where such attestation is lacking, as in the case of the empty tomb tradition, historical research is still possible but then the relevant witnesses will be subjected to the question: why and with which results did the particular tradition develop or was it enhanced at that particular point in time?²⁵ The older criterion of coherence has thus been

adapted so that sociological and cultural anthropological models²⁶ are used in a heuristic and expository fashion to “contextualize” the historical Jesus within the Herodian Palestine of his day.

Both of the aspects raised above, namely the criterion of dissimilarity and John’s gospel as source for the historical Jesus, have also begun to receive attention. With regard to the first, Robert Funk²⁷ puts it as follows:

Scholars now by and large reject the older criterion of dissimilarity, by which Rudolf Bultmann meant: different from his Jewish context and different from the alleged hellenistic context of the early church. Scholars are now inclined to the view that Judea and Galilee were under powerful hellenistic influence, and that the early church retained more of its Jewish heritage than earlier interpreters allowed. Accordingly, the quest for the distinctive, or the peculiar, is understood as something different from the old criterion of dissimilarity.

Within the Westar Institute’s Jesus Seminar, the following five criteria were distilled by the fellows of the Seminar for determining those logia that possibly go back to Jesus: Jesus said things that were short, pithy, and memorable; Jesus spoke in aphorisms (short, pithy, memorable sayings) and in parables (short, short stories about some unspecified subject matter); Jesus’ language was distinct from the language characteristically used in the proclamation of the primitive church, and from that characteristic of the common lore and cliches of the time; Jesus’ sayings and parables have an edge and were subversive in terms of the mainstream of social life; Jesus’ sayings and parables characteristically call for a reversal of roles or frustrate ordinary everyday expectations: they surprise and shock!²⁸

Significant developments have recently taken place also with relation to John's gospel as a source for determining the historical Jesus. For example, in an appendix to his book on the historical Jesus, Crossan²⁹ includes the Fourth Gospel in his "inventory of the historical Jesus tradition by chronological stratification and independent attestation." The first stratum covers the earliest Christian texts which originated in the period 30-60 C.E. Among these texts Crossan considers a hypothetical document, a Miracles Collection, which is embedded within the gospels of Mark and John. Among the documents that were seen as belonging to the second stratum (originating in the period 60-80 CE) Crossan includes another hypothetical document that Johannine scholars Fortna and Von Whalde,³⁰ independently of each other, identified with a high degree of probability. It contains a combination of miracles and discourse wherein the earlier "Miracles Collection" of the first stratum is integrated with an independent collection of the sayings of Jesus, and it is probably independent of the synoptic gospels.³¹ The relationship between the Gospel of Signs, the Sayings Gospel Q, and the Gospel of Thomas seems to require future investigation so that more clarity can be gained with regard to the use of the Fourth Gospel as source for the historical Jesus.

The notion that has been bracketed so far is the concern for the rational base of historical Jesus research. As I have shown, what is at issue is the question of where the burden of proof should lie: with those who argue for non-authenticity or with those who argue for authenticity? This kind inquiry has not, as far as I can discern, become a main issue in present-day historical Jesus research. This does not, however, mean that reflection on theories of knowledge is not important for historical Jesus research. According to scholars, such as Thomas Wright and the late Ben Meyer,³² the quest for the

historical Jesus definitely needs more reflection in this regard. By using the “historiographical” theory of the German sociologist Max Weber³³ in the construction of typical situations in the past (rather than being too positivistic about the possibility of accurately reconstructing the past), I deliberately tried in my own understanding of the historical Jesus to be critical-realistic. This is a choice that requires putting on a different thinking cap. At large, we have moved from doubt to inquiry—and that is already a giant step!

Putting on a Different Thinking Cap

Marcus Borg³⁴ convincingly showed that the students of Rudolf Bultmann did not really change the scene with their “New Quest.” As said, labeling historical Jesus research as the “New Quest” in distinction to the “Old Quest,” was triggered by James Robinson in 1959. The term “Old Quest” refers to the constructs of Jesus, which are commonly reckoned to have been brought to an end by Albert Schweitzer in 1906. However, the South African scholar, Willem Vorster (who died unexpectedly in 1993), was correct when he said that it was not “the book of Schweitzer which ended the Old Quest, but the status of the problem which became apparent by its publication.”³⁵ Not only had a set of positivistic presuppositions about the nature of history formed the basis of the “Old Quest,” but also “assumptions about the sources for the life of Jesus which could hardly stand the test of critical scrutiny.” Nevertheless, the central elements of the “Old Quest” not only survived Schweitzer’s work, but also remained important in the

“New Quest.”³⁶ As already mentioned, proponents of the “New Quest” became the pioneers who moved beyond Rudolf Bultmann’s “No Quest.” The term “No Quest” referred to the upshot of skepticism after Schweitzer, Kähler, and Bultmann. I demonstrated earlier that both Schweitzer and Bultmann would be misunderstood if they are viewed as scholars who did not search for the Jesus of history. The term “No Quest” is actually a misnomer if it is used to refer to Bultmann’s study of Jesus. In fact, the questions and methods (that is, criteria for authenticity) remained more or less the same during the “No Quest” and “New Quest” periods. What was “new” is that historical skepticism was replaced by a gradual scale of “continuity”/“discontinuity” between the historical Jesus and the Jesus of faith. What was common to the image of Jesus during the periods of the “Old Quest,” the “No Quest,” and the “New Quest” is twofold: a consensus about a minimal knowledge of Jesus as an “eschatological prophet/teacher” and a Jesus stripped of all dogmatic drapery.

Since the eighties of the twentieth century, scholars have increasingly become occupied with a kind of historical Jesus research that, as we have seen, has been described as a “paradigm shift.” Some systematic theologians will refer to it as the *postmodern* quest of the historical Jesus.³⁷ Studies that are intentionally “post-historical” in nature have also proliferated.³⁸ The latter are however not the products of historical Jesus research, which is by definition historically bound. According to Marcus Borg, Jesus is now, from the perspective of the newest historical Jesus studies, regarded as a “teacher of a world-subverting wisdom”³⁹ and no longer as an “eschatological prophet” per se who “proclaimed the imminent end of the world.”⁴⁰ John Dominic Crossan, “the leading Historical Jesus scholar,” according to Richard Horsley and Neil Silberman⁴¹

(two distinguished scholars of the archaeology of first-century Israel, the Greco-Roman world, and origins of Christianity), puts it more subtly.

For Crossan Jesus was not “non-eschatological.”⁴² Crossan sees “apocalypticism” as one of the various “eschatologies” in the first-century Eastern Mediterranean world. According to Crossan, the notion “eschatology” denotes a “perfect world,” a “divine utopia.” He sees in the Sayings Gospel Q and in the Gospel of Thomas two different “eschatologies” operating. These two “sayings gospels” are, for Crossan, the earliest material one can find with regard to the historical Jesus. Crossan endorses the findings of Stephen Patterson⁴³ that one-third of the sayings in these two gospels are common material. Editorial recension transformed this material in the Sayings Gospel Q into “apocalyptic eschatology” in contradistinction to what happened in the Gospel of Thomas where redactional activity changed it into “ascetic eschatology.” Both eschatologies, “asceticism” and “apocalypticism,” advocate that God’s perfect world would be brought about by a termination of the created world which is domesticated by systemic evil. An apocalyptic perspective on the end of the world consists of a cosmic cataclysm and asceticism bringing the world to its end by means of celibacy. The “eschatology” in these two “sayings gospels,” which lies in the common material before it, underwent redactional changes and takes us, according to Crossan, to the mind-set of the historical Jesus. One can call it an “ethical eschatology” or “social apocalypticism.” Through his “ethical” behavior, Jesus tried to subvert the systemic violence that was forced upon the marginalized peasants in Israel by the powers to be in Rome, Sepphoris, Tiberias, and Jerusalem—the centers of the emperor, the Herodian family, and the priestly (Sadokite) elite respectively. Marcus Borg construes more or less in the same vein a Jesus within a

context of a cross-cultural conventional wisdom and the subversion of “holy men” with revitalizing aims.⁴⁴ In 1984, Bernard Brandon Scott⁴⁵ referred to this development as follows: “the historical quest for the historical Jesus has ended; the interdisciplinary quest for the historical Jesus has just begun.” The interdisciplinary aspect in this new development relates to the above-mentioned archaeological, sociohistorical, and cultural-anthropological studies. But it does not mean that historical research as such is now dismissed. According to Thomas Wright it only gives a “less artificial, historical flavour to the whole enterprise.”⁴⁶ Wright labeled this undertaking the “Third Quest.”⁴⁷ In his 1992 book, *Who was Jesus?*, he referred again to this label:

Schweitzer brought down the curtain on the “Old Quest.” The “New Quest” has rumbled on for nearly thirty years without producing much in the way of solid results. Now, in the last twenty years or so, we have had a quite different movement, which has emerged without anyone co-ordinating it and without any particular theological agenda, but with a definite shape none the less. I have called this the “Third Quest”.⁴⁸

Wright also has his ideas about the appearance of this “shape.” He describes its main features this way:

One of the most obvious features of this “Third Quest” has been the bold attempt to set Jesus firmly into his Jewish context. Another feature has been that unlike the “New Quest,” the [proponents] have largely ignored the artificial pseudo-historical “criteria” for different sayings in the gospels. Instead, they have offered complete hypotheses about Jesus’ whole life and work, including not only sayings but also deeds. This has made for a more complete, and less artificial, historical flavour to the whole enterprise.⁴⁹

These remarks were written in 1992, four years before he wrote in 1996 his *magnum opus*, *Jesus and the Victory of God*. In 1992, Wright thought that the period of the “New Quest” was over. Four years later he admitted that a “renewed New Quest” is still alive and well, and represents a survival of “the Bultmannian picture, with variations.” According to Wright, the image of Jesus, which has evolved out of this approach, is still preoccupied with the sayings of Jesus and not with his deeds—and this figure is a “deJudaized Jesus.”

The “method” by which the sayings are assessed operates according to Wright with “criteria” by means of which the historical authenticity of the sayings are tested in terms of its date and multiple, independent attestations. The assumption behind this method is that “smaller-scale decisions” with regard to prejudiced sayings in the gospels are selectively fitted into a “large hypothesis” of a particular “demythologized” picture of Jesus. In other words, such a Jesus preaches a message in which “a vertical eschatology” is re-interpreted as “horizontal” subversiveness, a socially and politically minded Jesus. Within this frame of reference, the crucifixion of Jesus was not a “theological” event prior to the “resurrection.” The latter represents a “coming to faith, some time later, of a particular group of Christians.” Another “early” group of Christians was sapiental/gnostic oriented. They were only interested in the retelling of aphorisms of Jesus but were “uninterested in his life story.” The gospels, in an evolutionary fashion, developed gradually as these sayings of Jesus solidified and “gathered the moss of narrative structure about themselves,” whilst the “initial force of Jesus’ challenge was muted or lost altogether within a fictitious pseudo-historical framework.”⁵⁰

For Thomas Wright, the Jesus Seminar and a scholar like Burton Mack⁵¹ are examples par excellence of this “Renewed Quest.” People like Marcus Borg and, to some extent and in some sense, John Dominic Crossan, Geza Vermes, and Richard Horsley (who has “considerable affinity” to Crossan), are “straddling,” in that they are walking with the legs wide apart, seemingly favoring two opposite sides. The two sides are respectively represented by the “Third Quest” and the “Renewed Quest.” Wright⁵² describes the latter as the *Wredebahn* and the first as the *Schweitzer-stream*, referring to the two opposite roads that the two giants, Albert Schweitzer (1875-1965) and William Wrede (1859-1906), working in the beginning of the twentieth century, had taken with regard to the “historical status” of the Gospel of Mark. Wrede considered Mark’s gospel a theological treatise that already presents an apocalyptic interpretation of the historical Jesus, while Schweitzer’s basic position was that the “Jewish eschatology” found in Mark’s gospel represents also the context for Jesus. The *Wredebahn* leads to the search for Jesus hidden in the sources behind Mark and in other early documents like the Sayings Gospel Q and the Gospel of Thomas. Wright quotes Schweitzer from his *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, saying that there is no third option, “*tertium non datur*,”⁵³ and suggests that the time when the *Wredebahn* was a “helpful fiction” has now “come to an end.”

Yet, for me there is a third option! It is not a middle-of-the-road stance but an uncommitted journey where both Jesus’ “non-apocalyptic” response to “Jewish eschatology” and Mark’s “apocalyptic” interpretation are not anachronistically understood. Moreover, the “cause of Jesus” challenges us to also reconsider the faith assertions that are found in the Gospel of Mark. Does it mean that I, by putting on a

different thinking cap,⁵⁴ belong neither to the “Renewed Quest” nor the “Third Quest?” Perhaps, but anyway, what is in the name! I shall learn from whatever is proffered from whatever direction, consider the insights, which scholars are proposing, make my choice, and proceed. For example, when one reads Robert Funk’s description of what the “Third Quest” is about, a set of other things ignites one’s thinking.⁵⁵ “Third questers,” referring to Thomas Wright’s designation, are according to Funk only out of “historical curiosity” interested in the Jesus of history.

The Christian faith was born, for them, with Peter’s confession, or at Easter, or at Pentecost, or at Nicea....For third questers there can be no picking and choosing among sayings and acts as a way to determine who Jesus was. Instead, one must present a theory of the whole, set Jesus firmly within first-century Judaism, state what his real aims were, discover why he died, when the church began, and what kind of documents the canonical gospels are....The third questers...take critical scholarship about as far as it can go without impinging on the fundamentals of the creed or challenging the hegemony of the ecclesiastical bureaucracy. In their hands, orthodoxy is safe, but critical scholarship is at risk. Faith seems to make them immune to the facts. Third questers are really conducting a search primarily for historical evidence to support claims made on behalf of creedal Christianity and the canonical gospels. In other words, the third quest is an apologetic ploy.⁵⁶

However, my interest in historical Jesus research is neither born from neoorthodoxy nor from neoliberalism. For me, it is a matter of urgency, if one would like to travel on the *Schweitzerstraße*, according to the designations of Albert Schweitzer himself, to prioritize and contextualize the sources that could lead to Jesus. Furthermore, it is in the “subversive and dangerous memory of Jesus,” as David Tracy⁵⁷ called it, that this road should be simultaneously, though paradoxically, also named the *Wredebahn*.

Without a critical attitude of challenging the tradition, in other words treading along the *Wredebahn*, Schweitzer himself would never be guided by the “cause of Jesus” to walk over from Strassbourg in Europe to Lambarene in Africa. He crossed over when he decided to become a physician in Africa. There is a third option, *tertium datur!*

In South Africa three aspects mentioned by Thomas Wright have recently received attention in historical Jesus studies that also have had an impact on me. These are the epistemology of “post-critical” historical research, the presuppositions regarding the “Jewishness” of Jesus, and the issue of whether the historical Jesus should be seen as either an eschatological prophet or a wisdom teacher.⁵⁸

Epistemology has to do with one’s “theory of the nature and grounds of knowledge, especially with reference to its limits and validity.”⁵⁹ The outcome of the reactions against positivism and historicism has shown that the “relationship between a subject (historian) and the object of investigation in the past (past phenomena such as persons, actions, and people’s words)” represents a “dynamic interaction.”⁶⁰ It is therefore “no longer possible to think that the task of the historian is to reconstruct the past objectively in terms of causes and effects.”

No historical interpretation can claim to be a reflection of what really happened in the past. Historians make constructions of the past according to their theories and hypotheses. These constructions are guided by the criteria of probability and plausibility. By their very nature historical judgements are not objective descriptions of what really happened. They are socially conditioned constructions of the past....They are products of the mind, built on a great variety of presuppositions and perceptions.⁶¹

Hence, the search for the historical Jesus “concerns the identity of the man of flesh and blood, Jesus the Galilean, as historians understand” it. These presuppositions are “related to domain, data, history, philosophy of history, historiography, methods and models, epistemology, and the contexts of research(ers).” In the *Gospel of Mark: Red Letter Edition*, by Robert Funk (and Mahlon Smith), a useful list of all thinkable assumptions that have played a role in previous and in renewed historical Jesus studies can be found. When one compares the presuppositions that underlies the “New Quest” with those currently present in the “Renewed Quest” it becomes undoubtedly clear that scholars have put on a different thinking cap. The following assumptions describe the position of the “New Quest.”⁶²

- The historical Jesus is to be distinguished from the gospel portraits of him.
- Jesus taught his disciples orally.
- Traditions about Jesus were circulated by word of mouth for many years after Jesus’ death.
- Oral tradition is fluid.
- Jesus’ mother tongue was Aramaic; the gospels were written in Greek.
- Oral tradition exhibits little interest in biographical data about Jesus.
- Forty years elapsed after the death of Jesus before the first canonical gospel was composed.
- Mark was the first of the canonical gospels to be written.
- Mark was not an eyewitness to the events he reports.

- Between them, Matthew and Luke incorporate nearly all of Mark into their gospels, often almost word-for-word.
- Matthew and Luke each make use of a Sayings Gospel, known as Q, often almost word-for-word.
- Matthew and Luke each make use of additional material unknown to Mark, Q, and each other.
- Mark has arranged the order of events in the story of Jesus arbitrarily.
- Q is a collection of sayings without a narrative framework.
- The portrait of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel differs markedly from that drawn by the synoptics.
- John is a less reliable source than the other gospels for the sayings of Jesus.
- The gospels are made up of layers or strata of tradition.
- The original manuscripts of the gospels have disappeared.
- The earliest small surviving fragments of any gospels date from about 125 C.E.
- The earliest major surviving fragments of the gospels date from about 200 C.E.
- The earliest complete copy of the gospels dates from about 300 C.E.
- No two surviving copies of the same gospel, prior to 1454 C.E., are exactly alike.
- In the copying process, copies of the gospels were both “improved” and “corrupted.”
- Scholars cannot assume that the Greek text they have in modern critical editions is exactly the text penned by the evangelists.
- Jesus was not a Christian; he was a Jew.
- The same methods of study that are used in the study of other ancient texts should be applied to the Bible.

- The Bible should be studied without being bound to theological claims made by the church.
- Copies of the Bible suffered from textual corruption, loss of leaves, and devastation by insects and moisture.
- Jesus should be studied like other historical persons.
- Historians can approach but never achieve certainty in historical judgments on the probability principle.
- Historians measure the unknown by the known on the principle of analogy.
- Historians assume that biblical events occurred within a continuum of historical happenings but that each event or person is historically unique.
- The canonical gospels are more reliable than the extra-canonical gospels, with regard to Jesus.
- Sources other than those found in the New Testament are not of any help in the historical study of Jesus.
- Jesus was a unique person and differed considerably from his contemporaries.
- The Kingdom of God was a central theme in the teachings of Jesus.
- The teachings of Jesus are embedded in eschatology.
- There is a historical and material continuity between Jesus of Nazareth and the kerygmatic Christ.
- The quest for the historical Jesus entails a historical as well as a theological problem.

The following assumptions describe the position of the “Renewed Quest”:

- The canonical gospels are not necessarily more reliable than the extra-canonical gospels with regard to the historical Jesus.
- Sources other than those found in the New Testament are important for the historical study of Jesus.
- The Gospel of Thomas has provided a new and important source for the Jesus tradition.
- Thomas represents an earlier stage of tradition than that in the canonical gospels.⁶²
- Thomas represents an independent witness to the Jesus tradition.
- Jesus was not a totally unique person. He was a first-century Israelite from Galilee.
- The Kingdom of God was (according to some, but not to all) probably a central theme in the teachings of Jesus. If it was, it was not necessarily an eschatological concept.
- The teachings of Jesus are (according to some, but not to all) embedded in eschatology.
- There need not be a historical and material continuity between Jesus of Nazareth and the kerygmatic Christ.
- The quest for the historical Jesus first entails a historical problem. The results have consequences for the theological interpretation of Jesus the Christ.
- The difference between modern societies and first-century Judaisms in the eastern-Mediterranean world should be studied by applying social-scientific methods to the sociohistorical phenomena of that period.

- Historical research entails more than the application of the traditional historical-critical methods to the Jesus tradition. It also implies the study of the social world with the help of social-scientific methods and models.
- The social world of Jesus is not studied for the sake of supplying background material, but in order to supply contexts of interpretation of texts of a different nature.
- Judaism has to be studied from the perspective of a social system and not only from the perspective of ideas, persons, and events.
- Palestine was fully hellenized in the first century and it is necessary to work out the implication of this for the study of Jesus of Nazareth.
- The criterion of dissimilarity should be used with circumspection with regard to Jesus material.
- Jesus, like many other Jews of his time, was probably bilingual and spoke Greek as a second language.
- The stratification of the layers in the Jesus tradition is of great importance for the construction of the historical Jesus.
- The hypothetical Sayings Gospel Q and independent logia in the Gospel of Thomas make it possible to conceive of Jesus as a wisdom teacher and social prophet and not as an apocalyptic impostor of a cataclysmic end of the world.
- Most written sources about the first-century eastern-Mediterranean world have been written from above, that is, from the perspective of the authorities and important people. In order to understand Jesus and his intentions, it is necessary to construct views from below and from the side.

- In judging the historical value of Jesus material with regard to separate witnesses, it is necessary to take into account genetic relationships and attestation.
- It is impossible to reconstruct past events, persons, contexts, and so on. These phenomena are constructed by scholars, using whatever material is available, and by applicable methods and models.
- Only a few of the sayings of Jesus in the gospels were actually spoken by Jesus himself.
- A larger portion of the parables or the metaphoric gist in it goes back to Jesus because the parables were harder to imitate than other material.
- The greater part of the sayings tradition was created or borrowed from common lore by the transmitters of the oral tradition and the authors of the gospels.
- Modern critical scholarship is based on cooperation among specialists.

The similarities and differences between the assumptions listed above indicate a clear-cut shift between the “New Quest” and the “Renewed Quest.” It involves specifically the emphasis on sociohistorical aspects, the fact that prejudices and biases about the value of extra-canonical material have been put aside, and the conviction that Jesus did not understand the notion “Kingdom of God” apocalyptically. Though Mark’s apocalyptic interpretation of the “Kingdom of God” and his apocalyptic framework of the teachings of Jesus were taken over from tradition, apocalypticism was therefore not part of Jesus’ mind-set. Subsequently, the “futuristic” Child of Humanity sayings (with a “titular” connotation) are seen as later developments in the Jesus tradition.

This is not the road someone like Thomas Wright would take.⁶³ But, on the other hand, to accept Wright's invitation to busy oneself with a historical construct of Jesus' "whole life" (in terms of the context of first-century Herodian Palestine), would (in the words of Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza) hold "out the offer of untold possibilities for (a) different christology and theology."⁶⁴ What I have in mind, is a "christology from the side."⁶⁵ A "Jesus from above" describes the conciliar debates about Jesus as a figure who had descended from heaven and been incarnated on earth—a Jesus who has been confessed as "true God" and "true man." A "Jesus from below" refers to modern biblical scholarship where the focus is squarely on the humanity of Jesus. And because both "christologies" represent a dialectic of vertical classification, this perspective on the person of Jesus is chiefly, if not exclusively, concerned with symbols of power or force. "Jesus from above" reflects Christian tradition only after the time of Constantine, when hierarchy became the expressive social structure, with power or force the primary concern. "Jesus from below" expresses twentieth-century concerns with the relationship between natural and supernatural, and the possibility of transcendence in a secular world. Both these views would be rather anachronistic for an adequate understanding of New Testament views on Jesus. Yet, within Christian groups before Constantine, the chief expressive social dimension for non-Roman and Roman non-elite Christians was not vertical, but horizontal—"from the side." Jesus as a first-century Israelite from Galilee should be studied like other historical persons and should not be regarded as absolutely unique, using whatever material is available and by applicable methods and models.

A Profile of the Historical Jesus

I have already referred to Thomas Wright's evaluation of previous historical Jesus research as "artificial" with regard to historiography. In his book *Who was Jesus?*, Wright seems to simply be concerned about the monopoly of Jesus' sayings over his deeds in previous research. This issue, however, is epistemologically much more complicated and Wright has discussed it at length in his book *The New Testament and the People of God, Volume One: Christian Origins and the Questions of God*.⁶⁶ The application of different criteria in the process of distinguishing authenticity is another issue that needs reflection with regard to real historiography, specifically, when such a historical-critical approach ignores the social contexts in which the analytically analyzed literary units are embedded. Even the criterion of coherency needs to be adapted to our insights today concerning a responsible identification of a stratification of texts and the social world of the eastern Mediterranean. Content and context should fit together. Social history is therefore the "buzz word" with respect to the "Renewed Quest" for the historical Jesus.

Biblical scholarship today, like any other post-modern scientific reflection, is featured among other things by its multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary character. The use of narratological and sociological theories and models in exegesis is a demonstration of the issues that nowadays constitute the agenda of biblical scholarship. It is within this paradigm that social-scientific criticism is worth mentioning. This approach in biblical interpretation has brought several unexplored aspects of the cultural background of the New Testament to the fore. Impasses in current research are being studied anew. Earlier

debates have been reopened in the hope that they can solve present-day societal issues or at least provide an intelligible, credible explanation of the problems of our day. A growing awareness of ethnocentrism is perhaps one of the many important advantages that has occurred as a result of social-scientific criticism.⁶⁷ Ethnocentrism occurs where the cultural distance between ancient and modern societies, and among particular cultures in a given period is not reckoned with. Ethnocentrism yields to an adherence of irreconcilable cultural phenomena that cannot stand the test of a responsible cross-cultural enterprise. Reductionism, on the other hand, is also a form of misplaced concreteness. It occurs, for example, when someone tries to explain a broad spectrum of intertwined socio-religious phenomena from a perspective framed by the dynamics of either one or two social institutions. Proponents of such an approach are often found among historical-materialistic interpreters of the Bible. In this regard, references within the (preindustrial) Bible to alienation from resources and to ostracism (in other words, exclusion from common privileges and social acceptance by general consent) are ascribed to the kind of economic and political ideologies that Karl Marx identified in the modern industrial society. Social-scientific criticism, however, makes us aware not only of cross-cultural similarities, but also of differences in cosmology, ideology, and mythology.

The one thing that we are pretty sure about is the historical Jesus' compassionate care for the social outcasts of his day. The thrust of my argument is that Jesus himself grew up as a fatherless figure and that his compassion towards ill-fated people came from his own experience of being ostracized. The social-scientific model that serves as the frame of reference within which I substantiate my understanding of Jesus as "fatherless"

and his defense of the “fatherless” (according to Isaiah 1:17) came at the beginning of my historical Jesus research and was largely triggered by the work of Bruce Malina and Paul Hollenbach.⁶⁸ According to this model, social interactions should be understood against the background of the hierarchical structures of a “total society.” Ostracism corresponds to these hierarchical structures or the institutional order found in a particular society.

The expression “institutional order” implies that a balanced society consists of particular social institutions, one of which is the overarching one, while the others are integrated with it in subordinate fashion. At least four basic social institutions or structures can be discerned within any society: economy, politics, family life, and religion. In certain societies today, the economy forms the basis of social relations. One may also find that politicians exercise control over economic and religious institutions. There are, however, societies in which families and the heads of families exercise the control. The Mediterranean world of the first century is an example. In such societies religion, politics, and economy were embedded in an institutional order of family life which was primarily determined through birth and nationality. Applying this insight to the world of the New Testament, Malina convincingly demonstrates that

the Mediterranean world treats this institution [kinship] as primary and focal....In fact in the whole Mediterranean world, the centrally located institution maintaining societal existence is kinship and its sets of interlocking rules. The result is the central value of familism. The family or kinship group is central in social organization; it is the primary focus of personal loyalty and it holds supreme sway over individual life.⁶⁹

This is therefore tantamount to anachronism, misplaced concreteness, as well as reductionism, if the phenomenon of social injustice in the world of Jesus is to be understood only, or even primarily, in terms of modern economic and political concerns. Economic and political steps taken in the first century that led to ostracism, for example, should be interpreted in terms of the above social-scientific model and perspective in light of the primary familial structures of the period and the social, mythological, and religious symbols representing these structures. Several aspects of my portrayal of the historical Jesus have become to me more and more intelligible as my application of social-scientific criticism has increased over the years. To name the basic elements of my profile of the historical Jesus:

Jesus, the son of Mary, the peasant who came from the Galilean village, Nazareth, grew up fatherless; he was unmarried, probably a carpenter. He was someone who lived in a strained relationship with his kin, and who sought and found company among the followers of John the Baptist, only subsequently to separate himself from them, having his own core group of followers. He came to the Baptizer to, in light of Isaiah 1:16-17, “wash himself” from (systemic) “evil” in order to give meaning to the life of people—among them were women and children living on the fringe of society because they were the nobodies (the divorced and the fatherless, the widows and the orphans) to whom patriarchy gave no place amidst the honorable. After he left the circle of the Baptizer, his life began to be characterized by an absolute trust in God as his Father, while the insignificant, the nobodies of the Galilean society, formed his audience when he spoke about his “Father’s rule.” To them, he was a pneumatic sage and healer,⁷⁰ a “popular king” threatening the ambitions of Herod Antipas⁷¹—very much like

those prophets who spoke out against the elite.⁷² His sayings had an edge, they were short, pithy and memorable.⁷³ His stories were symbolic in nature, open-ended and shocking.⁷⁴ His acts, particularly those of healing, were of the same nature and can be considered as metaphors in themselves pointing to the idea of resocializing.⁷⁵ Both his words and his deeds were unconventional in a radical sense, and always crossed the boundaries of his culture.⁷⁶ He did not envisage the Kingdom of God as primarily cataclysmic in nature, that is, as something at the end of time that would bring about the vindication of martyrs or as comparable to earthly kingdoms where humaneness vanishes behind various symbols of power and hierarchy, but as something which is comparable to a household in which distorted relationships are healed by means of the “ethos of compassion”⁷⁷ and God’s unmediated presence.⁷⁸ His “alternative wisdom”⁷⁹ took offense at “conventional wisdom” embedded in the temple ideology of his day⁸⁰—an attitude that was not fully understood by some of his prominent followers. He came into conflict with village leaders and Pharisees, was regarded as a threat by the Sadducees and priestly elite in Jerusalem, and was eventually crucified by Roman soldiers like a criminal. No family or fictive family took care of his body.⁸¹ And if he was buried,⁸² “certainly not in a respectable family tomb.”⁸³ Jesus of Nazareth died as he was born: a nobody among nobodies.

From this picture, Jesus’ use of the metaphor “Kingdom of God” is remarkable. The hot debate among scholars as to whether Jesus was eschatological or non-eschatological in outlook could really cool down. Jesus was a child of his day. Culturally, people of the first-century Mediterranean world did have a strong, altered, religious consciousness according to their social and symbolic worlds. The social world

maintained a mind-set not separated from the symbolic universe where gods, angels, and demons came. God's "kingdom" was the perfect domain. The social world was elongated into the symbolic universe so that even the dead were "living dead" and the longing for being in the bosom of these "forefathers" was a utopia, something that would happen at the general resurrection of the dead. Crises within the social world were attributed to the influences of the demonic world. Often, when the crisis became almost unbearable, a group of people and the individuals therein experienced ostracism and tended to be aware of only two sides: the right and the wrong, the divine and the satanic, a world here and now and a world beyond.

This outlook became marked on the one hand by pessimism and determinism, and on the other by hope. The present was miserable, while the transcendent beyond was joyful. Such pessimism and determinism were eased by the conviction that the course of history might be changed, for the sake of the self and others, by means of the prayers and martyrdom of the righteous. Unbearable experiences caused the unfortunates—as a result of the embarrassment of being trapped in a cul de sac—to project their longing into an imaginary world where God exercises control. What was imagined was expressed in symbolic language by analogy with experience in every day life. A corrupted temple was imagined as a heavenly temple; a brutal kingdom was imaginatively replaced by God's kingdom; a fatherless life became a life of being a child of the heavenly Father. Even by means of martyrdom, one could desperately try to break vehemently into the world of God. By whatever means, praying or dying, the purpose was to make a plea to God to intervene. One "miserable" figure would focus on the future of God's recreation and judgment in order to abide in the present. Scholarship has become accustomed to call

these figures *apocalyptic prophets* because they were revealing God's future. Another "miserable" figure would, almost paradoxically, live in the midst of stress as if God's imagined presence was already a reality. Such a "prophet" is not less "eschatological" in outlook.

Historical studies have demonstrated that Jesus did not escape his experiences by moving "futuristically" into "imaginary time" as some authors of "apocalyptic" writings often suggested. Jesus experienced God's presence in the midst of and despite depressing circumstances. His "symbolic" conception of God was often expressed, though not exclusively, in terms of a familial relationship between a father and a son. His temple critique led to his death as the result of a falsely assumed political program. He probably did not think of himself as a martyr. Jesus was a social outcast and not a kind of Robin Hood figure born within an imperial kingdom who only docetically fulfilled the role of being one of the poor in his act of being the hero of the helpless in society. As to politics in the vision of Jesus, my position is very well put by Marcus Borg: "We are not accustomed to thinking of Jesus as a political figure. In a narrow sense, he was not. He neither held nor sought political office, was neither a military leader nor a political reformer with a detailed political-economic platform. But he was political in the more comprehensive and important sense of the word: politics as the shaping of a community living in history."⁸⁴

To catch a glimpse of the worldview and mind-set of the people with whom the historical Jesus interacted to better understand his own vision, I consider it as important to gain clarity on the social stratification of the first-century Mediterranean world and, specifically, the "advanced agrarian society" of Herodian Palestine in which the historical

Jesus lived. I made specific use of the insights of the macro-sociologist, Gerhard Lenski and the publications of David Fiensy and Dennis Duling who structured their work upon Lenski's macrosociology.⁸⁵ The specific originality of my own contribution rests upon the assumption that the "ideological" function of kinship as a social institution shifted in an evolutionary fashion when horticultural societies changed into simple agrarian and then into advanced agrarian societies.

Initially, kinship, and especially the "extended family" as social unit, had been the primary and focal institution in society. According to cultural anthropologists, such as Lenski, it was clearly observable at the surface level of horticultural and simple agrarian societies as well. However, the shift from a horticultural (7000-3000 B.C.E.) to an agrarian society (3000 B.C.E.-1800 C.E.) changed this dominant role of the extended family with regard to the dynamics of social life. Instead, political economy had become the most dominant factor at the surface of society. This process reached its zenith during the advanced agrarian society that commenced around 500 B.C.E. The last phase shifted again during the Industrial Revolution which, during the latter part of the eighteenth century, was well under way. Political economy has since become an ideology in the sense of what Karl Marx referred to as "false consciousness."

Although kinship had been put under tremendous stress during the time of the advanced agrarian society because of political and economical dichotomies so that the extended family almost ceased to be seen on the surface level of Herodian Palestine, family interests moved to the deep structure of society and developed into an ideology comparable with the notion of false consciousness. In other words, family interests in the world of the historical Jesus were as ideologically conditioned as materialism in

industrial societies. Against this macro-sociological background and especially in light of the advanced agrarian society of Herodian Palestine, Jesus' critique of the patriarchal family and, paradoxically, his experience of God's kingdom as a brokerless household, amidst depressing circumstances, grew more intelligible to me and became an explanatory power.

As mentioned earlier, Thomas Wright rightly identifies present-day historical Jesus research as the attempt first to set the historical Jesus firmly into his first-century Israelite context and, second, to offer complete historical constructs about Jesus' whole life and work. My own "historical method" in this regard comprises a construct of an ideal type of Jesus of Nazareth. It is an attempt to construct a "whole" life of Jesus the Galilean within the context of first-century Herodian Palestine, encompassing his life from birth to death. Actually, I aim at focusing on Jesus' trust in God as Father and how his defense of the fatherless makes sense within such a construct. Proceeding from this construct, I shall demonstrate that some of the faith assertions of the earliest Christians who witnessed the value of believers as "children of God" form a material link to the historical Jesus and others do not. Here, on this point, the *Schweitzerstraße* has become the *Wredebahn*.

In constructing an ideal-type of Jesus of Nazareth, I am not attempting to devise a record of concrete historical situations based on empirical data. According to Max Weber,⁸⁶ an ideal-type is a theoretical construct in which possible occurrences are brought into a meaningful relationship with one another so that a coherent image may be formed of data from the past. In other words, as a theoretical construct, an ideal-type is a conceptualization that will not necessarily correspond with empirical reality. As a

construct displaying a coherent image, the ideal-type does influence the conditions of investigations into what could have happened historically, in that the purpose of establishing an ideal-type is to account for the interrelationships between discrete historical events in an intelligible manner. Such a coherent construct is not formed by or based upon a selection from what is regarded as universally valid, in other words that which is common to all relevant cases of similar concrete situations of what could in reality have happened. It is therefore no logical-positivist choice based on either inductive or deductive reasoning.

The contribution to historical Jesus research I wish to make is the development of a construct of Jesus as a “fatherless” figure who called God his Father. In consciously using the social-scientific model of an ideal-type as the point of departure for my historical investigation, I am not, therefore, claiming that my historical Jesus construct is based on what is common to all “fatherless” people in the first-century Galilean situation. That would amount to inductive historical reasoning. Neither is it based on what is common to most types of cases of “fatherless” people in the Galilean situation. That again would amount to deductive historical reasoning. The ideal-type model enables one to concentrate on the most favorable cases. What is meant by this is that, in my investigation into the Jesus of history, I am focusing on the data that can lead to a better understanding and explanation of the total picture and of particular aspects of the total picture. I am specifically interested in the question of why the historical Jesus linked up with John the Baptist and submitted to the “baptism for the remission of sins” and also why, once his road deviated from the Baptist’s, Jesus, so unconventionally for his time, became involved with the fate of social outcasts, especially women and children. My

construct of Jesus as the “fatherless son of God” can provide an elucidation of these questions. The aim is to provide an explanation of the historical figure of Jesus, trusting God as his Father, destroying conventional patriarchal values and, at the same time, caring for fatherless children and women without men in their lives, within the macro-sociological framework of the “psychic data” of family distortion and divine alienation in the time of Herodian Palestine.

This ideal-type should be historically intelligible and explanatory. It should rely on contemporary canonical and non-canonical texts (including artifacts) that have to be interpreted in terms of a chronological stratification of relevant documents. It should also make sense within a social stratification of first-century Herodian Palestine. In other words, my construct of the life of Jesus, historically seen and as I shall demonstrate in the next chapter of the book, does not start with Jesus’ relationship with John the Baptist, as usually portrayed. Historically, it begins with the traditions regarding Jesus’ birth record and his relationship with his family.

My understanding of Jesus’ baptism is that it was a “ceremonial” or “ritual” event through which “sinful sickness” was addressed and healed. Why would Jesus have wanted to be baptized? I argue that the unfortunate relationship with his family and his critique against the patriarchal family as such provide the probable clue. Moreover, what does Jesus’ birth record tell us about his relationship with his family and his townsfolk in Nazareth? What does his birth record reveal about his vision with regard to, especially, children and other “nobodies” in his society? To me, the answers to these questions rely on a construct of an ideal-type regarding someone in first-century Herodian Palestine who was healed from “sinful sickness” (for example, the stigma of being a “fatherless

son”) and started a ministry of healing/forgiving “sinners” with the help of disciples who were also called upon to act as “healed healers.” Jesus died because of the “subversiveness” of this “ethos of compassion,” to use an expression from Marcus Borg’s insights.⁸⁷ It all happened against the background of the ideology of the Second Temple and Roman imperialism, very well explained by Richard Horsley and Neil Silberman.⁸⁸ His followers were likewise threatened and some died in the same manner as their forerunner had. It is my intention to demonstrate theologically, historically, and in a literary fashion how this construct is built upon available Jesus traditions in terms of chronological as well as social stratification.

But first, there is still an unsettled matter waiting for elaboration and that is the issue of where one should begin the search for Jesus, child of God: at the river Jordan where Jesus was baptized and declared to be the child of God or at the cradle where God let him be adopted as Joseph’s son and, hence, Abraham’ son and, hence, according to the covenantal ideology among Israelites, child of God.

END NOTES

1. James Robinson, cited by Borg, M.J. 1991, "Portraits of Jesus in Contemporary North American Scholarship," p. 2.
2. Schweitzer, A. [1906] 1968, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus: A Critical Study of Its Progress From Reimarus to Wrede*, pp. 44-45, 47.
3. Robinson, J.M. [1959] 1983, *A New Quest of the Historical Jesus and Other Essays*.
4. See chapter 1, "My Journey," End Note 35.
5. Du Toit, A.B. 1988, "Die Historiese Jesus en die Verkondigde Christus van die Evangelies," p. 268. [English translation: "The Historical Jesus and the Proclaimed Christ of the Gospels," by D.R. Briggs 1983, in *The Synoptic Gospels and Acts: Introduction and theology*.] This was the very first article published in South Africa on the quest for the historical Jesus. It forms the seventh chapter of the series *Guide to the New Testament, Volume 4 – The Synoptic Gospels and Acts: Introduction and Theology*, edited by Andrie du Toit, and published in 1980 and reprinted in 1988. This *Guide to the New Testament* series aims to provide textbooks for graduate theological students. Their main purpose is to provide background material on the New Testament documents, specifically in terms of introductory and theological issues. The very fact that the particular volume on the synoptic gospels (including Acts) ends with a treatise on the historical Jesus expresses the viewpoint of the editor of the series (who is also the writer of the specific treatise) that Jesus is indeed part and parcel of the "theologies" of the New Testament and not only its presupposition (cf. Du Toit 1988, p. 267).
6. Käsemann, E. 1954, "Das Problem des historischen Jesus," pp. 125-153; Bornamm, G. [1956] 1975, *Jesus of Nazareth*; Fuchs, E. 1960, *Zur Frage nach dem historischen Jesus*; Robinson, J.M. [1959] 1983, "A New Quest of the Historical Jesus"; Conzelmann, H. [1959] 1973, *Jesus*; Schmithals, W. 1972, *Jesus von Nazareth in der Verkündigung der Kirche: Aktuelle Beiträge zum notwendige Streit um Jesus* (cf. Boshoff, P.B. 1997, "The Proclaimer Became the Proclaimed: Walter Schmithals' Point of View," pp. 89-119).
7. Du Toit, A.B. 1988, "Die Historiese Jesus en die Verkondigde Christus van die Evangelies."
8. Du Toit, A.B. 1988, pp. 272-274. Du Toit prefers to use Joachim Jeremias' notion of the "original Jesus" rather than the "historical Jesus" (Cf. Jeremias, J. 1964, *The Problem of the Historical Jesus*).

9. Apart from the “Radical Dutch Criticism,” led by the New Testament scholar Wim van Manen in the nineteenth century, Earl Doherty, *The Jesus Puzzle: Did Christianity begin with a Mythical Christ?* (1999) recently challenged again the existence of an historical Jesus. He builds his opinion on four arguments: Why are the events of the Gospel story, and its central character Jesus of Nazareth, not found in the New Testament epistles? Why does Paul’s divine Christ seem to have no connection to the Gospel Jesus, but closely resembles the many pagan savior gods of the time who only lived in myth? Why, given the spread of Christianity across the Roman Empire in the first century, did only one Christian community compose a story of Jesus’ life and death – the Gospel of Mark – while every other Gospel simply copied and reworked the first one? Why is every detail in the Gospel story of Jesus’ trial and crucifixion drawn from passages in the First Testament?
10. In this regard Du Toit, pp. 275-279, elaborated especially (but not exclusively) on Ferdinand Hahn’s “Methodologische Überlegungen zur Rückfrage nach Jesus” (1974).
11. See Du Toit, A.B. 1988, p. 279.
12. Cf. Du Toit, A.B. 1988, p. 280.
13. Du Toit, A.B. 1988, pp. 282-286.
14. Perrin, N. 1967, *Rediscovering the Teaching of Jesus*; Bornkamm, G. 1975, *Jesus of Nazareth*; Käsemann, E. 1954, “Das Problem des historischen Jesus”; Jeremias, J. 1964, *The Problem of the Historical Jesus*.
15. Hooker, M. 1972, “On Using the Wrong Tool”; see also Du Toit, A.B. 1988, pp. 286-287.
16. Keck, L.E. [1971] 1981, *A Future For the Historical Jesus: The Place of Jesus in Preaching and Theology*.
17. Cf. Wright, N.T. 1999, “Knowing Jesus: Faith and History,” pp. 15-27; Stanton, G.N. 1989, *The Gospels and Jesus*; Stanton, G.N. 1994, “Jesus of Nazareth: A Magician and a False Prophet Who Deceived God’s People?,” pp. 164-180.
18. See, e.g., the conversation between Marcus Borg and Thomas Wright. Cf. Borg, M.J. 1999, “Seeing Jesus: Sources, Lenses, and Method,” pp. 3-14.
19. Cf. Du Toit, A.B. 1988, p. 288.
20. Stuhlmacher, P. 1975, *Schriftauslegung auf dem Wege zur biblischen Theologie*, pp. 14ff.
21. Theissen, G. 1974, *Urchristliche Wundergeschichte: Ein Beitrag zur formgeschichtliche Erforschung der synoptischen Evangelien*, pp. 38-41.

22. Berger, P.L. & Luckmann, T. 1967, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*, pp. 174-180.
23. Funk, R.W. 1992, "Demons, Identity and Worldview," p. 15.
24. Cf. Crossan, J.D. 1991, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant*.
25. Cf. Van Aarde, A.G. 1989, "'He has Risen from the Dead' (Mt 28:7): A Textual Evidence on the Separation of Judaism and Christianity," p. 220.
26. E.g. Lenski, G., Lenski, J. & Nolan, P. [1970] 1991, *Human Societies: An Introduction to Macrosociology*, pp. 195-196.
27. Funk, R.W. 1990, "Criteria For Determining the Authentic Sayings of Jesus," p. 10.
28. Funk, R.W. 1990, "Criteria For Determining the Authentic Sayings of Jesus," pp. 8-10.
29. Cf. Crossan, J.D. 1991, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant*, pp. 429, 430.
30. Fortna, R.T. 1988, *The Fourth Gospel and Its Predecessor: From Narrative Source to Present Gospel*; Von Wahlde, U.C. 1989, *The Earliest Version of John's Gospel: Recovering the Gospel of Signs*.
31. Cf. Crossan, J.D. 1991, *The Historical Jesus*, p. 431.
32. Wright, N.T. 1992, *The New Testament and the People of God, Volume One: Christian Origins and the Question of God*, pp. 10, 11, 18, 27, 32-46, 60, 61-64, 88-98, 101-102, 468; Wright, N.T. 1992, *Who was Jesus?*, p. 13; Meyer, B. 1979, *The aims of Jesus*; Meyer, B. 1992, "Jesus Christ," in *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, Vol. 3, pp. 773-796.
33. Weber, M. 1949, *Max Weber on the Methodology of the Social Sciences*.
34. Borg, M.J. 1988, "A Renaissance in Jesus Studies," p. 281.
35. Vorster, W.S. (with Botha, P.J.J.) 1992, "The Jewishness of Jesus: Presuppositions and the Historical Study of the New Testament," p. 22.
36. Cf. Wright, N.T. 1992, *Who was Jesus?*, p. 6.
37. Cf. Breech, J. 1989, *Jesus and Postmodernism*; Breech, J. 1983, *The Silence of Jesus: The Authentic Voice of the Historical Man*.
38. Cf. Hamilton, W. 1994, *A Quest for the Post-Historical Jesus*.
39. Borg, M.J. 1991, "Portraits of Jesus in Contemporary North American Scholarship," p. 15.
40. Borg, M.J. 1988, "A Renaissance in Jesus Studies," p. 285.
41. Horsley, R.A. & Silberman, N.A. 1997, *The Message and the Kingdom: How Jesus and Paul Ignited a Revolution and Transformed the Ancient World*, p. 70.

42. During the Annual Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature in San Francisco on Saturday, November 22, 1997, John Dominic Crossan explained at a panel discussion of the Historical Jesus Section, together with Dale C. Allison and Gerd Lüdemann, presided by Amy-Jill Levine, his understanding of Jesus in relation to eschatology. I made notes of this discussion. See also Crossan, J.D. 1997, "Jesus and the Kingdom: Itinerants and Householders in Earliest Christianity," pp. 33-35.
43. Patterson, S.J. 1993, *The Gospel of Thomas and Jesus*.
44. Borg, M.J. 1984, *Conflict, Holiness and Politics in the Teaching of Jesus*; Borg, M.J. 1987, *Jesus: A New Vision – Spirit, Culture, and the Life of Discipleship*; Borg, M.J. 1994, *Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time*; Borg, M.J. 1997, "From Galilean Jew to the Face of God: The Pre-Easter and Post-Easter Jesus," p. 11.
45. Bernard Brandon Scott, cited by Borg, M.J. 1988, "A Renaissance in Jesus Studies," p. 284.
46. Wright, N.T. 1992, *Who was Jesus?*, p. 13.
47. Thomas Wright (in Wright, N.T. & Neill, S. 1988, *The Interpretation of the New Testament 1861-1986*), pp. 379-403.
48. Wright, N.T. 1992, *Who was Jesus?*, p. 12.
49. Wright, N.T. 1992, *Who was Jesus?*, p. 13.
50. Wright, N.T. 1996, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, pp. 78-82.
51. See Mack, B.L. 1988, *A Myth of Innocence: Mark and Christian Origins*; Mack, B.L. 1993, *The Lost Gospel: The Book of Q & Christian Origins*; Mack, B.L. 1995, *Who Wrote the New Testament? The Making of the Christian Myth*.
52. Wright, N.T. 1996, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, p. 80.
53. Wright, N.T. 1996, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, p. 80.
54. Based on two respective citations from Herbert Butterfield's *The Origins of Modern Science: 1300-1800*, and Thomas Kuhn's *The Copernican Revolution*, T.R. Kopfensteiner 1992, "Historical Epistemology and Moral Progress," p. 47, rightly argued: "A shift of paradigm will result in 'handling the same bundle of data as before, but placing them in a new system of relations with one another by giving them a different framework, all of which virtually means *putting on a different kind of thinking cap*.' A scientific revolution has a dual nature; it is 'at once ancient and modern, conservative and radical.' To some practitioners the new paradigm will be the point of departure for previously unanticipated scientific activity; to others, however, the new paradigm will seem curiously akin to its predecessors...Hence, each evolutionary niche of development

55. Funk, R.W. 1996, *Honest to Jesus*, pp. 62-66.
56. Funk, R.W. 1996, *Honest to Jesus*, p. 65.
57. For David Tracy 1981, *The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism*, pp. 233-247, the only adequate norm is the tradition-as-actualized-anew in its constitutive role of “constituting” the Christian community (see discussions by William Thompson 1985, *The Jesus Debate: A Survey and Synthesis*, pp. 106-107; Brennan Hill 1991, *Jesus the Christ: Contemporary Perspectives*, pp. 44-46. According to Tracy a reconstructed historical Jesus, on the tradition’s own terms, cannot be our norm. However, Brennan Hill 1991, p. 45, rightly showed that “Tracy does recognize...that *the Jesus of history* is a secondary norm that preserves that which is ‘subversive’ and ‘dangerous’ in the memory of Jesus” (my emphasis). To me, *seeking the cause of Jesus* is the norm. Previously I used the expression “Jesus of history” interchangeable with the “cause of Jesus.” I realize now that a more subtle formulation is necessary. The *quest for this cause* keeps us in touch with the radical dimension of Jesus’ message, a dimension that can easily be lost as the tradition develops inside the canon or outside the canon. “The development of the traditions needs always to be measured against the historical word and deeds of Jesus” (Brennan Hill 1991, p. 45, reflecting on the insights of David Tracy).
58. Cf. Vorster, W.S. 1991, “Jesus the Galilean”; Vorster, W.S. 1991, “Jesus: Eschatological Prophet and/or Wisdom Teacher.”
59. Mish, F.C. (editor in chief) 1993, *Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary*, p. 390.
60. See Van Aarde, A.G. 1994, “Tracking the Pathways Opened by Willem Vorster in Historical Jesus Research,” pp. 235- 251.
61. Willem Vorster, in Van Aarde, A.G. 1994, “Tracking the Pathways Opened by Willem Vorster in Historical Jesus Research.” Vorster demonstrates how the variety of portrayals of Jesus the Jew by John Riches, E.P. Sanders, and John Dominic Crossan are related to their “presuppositions” respectively. The core of these lists is taken from Funk, R.W. (& Smith, M.) 1991, *The Gospel of Mark: Red Letter Edition*. Although Willem Vorster added to the lists, neither the compilation nor the completion of the lists was his intention. The purpose of the lists is to “compile a profile of presuppositions which determined the outcome of the historical study of Jesus” (see Van Aarde, A.G. 1994,

62. My position with regard to the authenticity of Jesus traditions in the Gospel Thomas is that Thomas is a second-century document, extensively dependent on the synoptic traditions but some logia independent and earlier than the synoptic gospels (see Riley, G.J. 1994, “The Gospel of Thomas in Recent Scholarship,” pp. 235-236). The logia should historic-critically be scrutinized one by one in order to decide in favor of its independency or dependency (cf. Tjitze Baarda 1997, “Concerning the Date of the Gospel of Thomas,” unpublished presentation at the Annual SBL Meeting, San Francisco, November 1997).
63. Wright, N.T. 1999, “The Mission and Message of Jesus,” pp. 41-42, sees Jesus’ crucifixion and resurrection resemble the Son of Man saying borrowed from Daniel 7. So am I (see Van Aarde, A.G. 1998, “Matthew 27:45-53 and the Turning of the Tide in Israel’s History,” pp. 16-26). However, contra Wright, I do not regard the use of the Son of Man title as part of the authentic Jesus tradition.
64. Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza 1995, *Jesus – Miriam’s Child and Sophia’s Prophet*, p. 187, has the reconstruction of the “historical” Mary (in contradistinction with ecclesiastical traditions) in mind: “The ‘dangerous memory’ of the young woman and teenage mother Miriam of Nazareth, probably not more than twelve or thirteen years old, pregnant, frightened, and single...can subvert the tales of mariological fantasy and cultural femininity. In the center of the Christian story stands not the lovely ‘white lady’ of artistic and popular imagination, kneeling in adoration before her son. Rather it is the young pregnant woman, living in occupied territory and struggling against victimization and for survival and dignity. It is she who holds out the offer of untold possibilities for different christology and theology.”
65. See Malina, B.J. & Neyrey, J.H. 1988, *Calling Jesus Names: The Social Value of Labels in Matthew*, p. xi.
66. Wright, N.T. 1992, *Who was Jesus?*; Wright, N.T. 1992, *The New Testament and the People of God, Volume One: Christian Origins and the Questions of God*, pp. 10, 11, 18, 27, 32-46, 60, 61-64, 88-98, 101-102.
67. This awareness has significant ethical implications for Christian practice inferred from biblical scholarship. With regard to ethics, the New Testament has often been interpreted without a sensibility of the historical distance between the first century and the twentieth century. Economical and political forces behind modern social dichotomies are often

68. Malina, B.J. 1986, *Christian Origins and Cultural Anthropology: Practical Models for Biblical Interpretation*; Malina, B.J. 1986, "Interpreting the Bible with Anthropology: The Case of the Poor and the Rich," pp. 148-159; Hollenbach, P. 1987, "Defining Rich and Poor: Using Social Sciences," pp. 50-63.
69. Malina, B.J. 1989, "Dealing with Biblical (Mediterranean) Characters," p. 131.
70. Cf. Borg, M.J. [1987] 1991, *Jesus – A New Vision: Spirit, Culture and the Life of Discipleship*; Borg, M.J. 1994, *Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time: The Historical Jesus & the Heart of Contemporary Faith*.
71. Cf. Horsley, R.A. 1987, *Jesus and the Spiral of Violence: Popular Jewish Resistance in Roman Palestine*; Horsley, R.A. & Silberman, N.A. 1997, *The Message and the Kingdom*, pp.71-72; Sanders, E.P. 1993, *The Historical Figure of Jesus*, p. 248.
72. Cf. Crossan, J.D. 1994, *The Historical Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography*, p. 43.
73. Cf. Funk, R.W. 1990, "Criteria for Determining the Authentic Sayings of Jesus," pp. 8-10; Crossan, J.D. 1994, *The Essential Jesus: Original Sayings and Earliest Images*, p. 21.
74. Cf. Scott, Bernard B. [1989] 1990, *Hear Then the Parable: A Commentary on the Parables of Jesus*, pp. 54- 62.
75. Cf. Pilch, J.J. 1995, "Insights and Models from Medical Anthropology for Understanding the Healing Activity of the Historical Jesus," pp. 314-337; Crossan, J.D. (with R.G. Watts) 1996, *Who is Jesus? Answers to Your Questions about the Historical Jesus*, pp. 76-102.
76. Borg, M.J. [1987] 1991, *Jesus – A New Vision: Spirit*, pp. 79-96; Borg, M.J. 1994, *Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time*, pp. 69-95.
77. Cf. Borg, M.J. 1994, *Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time*, pp. 46-68.
78. Cf. Crossan, J.D. 1988, "Divine Immediacy and Human Immediacy: Towards a New First Principle in Historical Jesus Research"; Crossan, J.D. 1991, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant*, p. 423.
79. Cf. Borg, M.J. 1994, *Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time*, pp. 69-95.
80. Cf. Crossan, J.D. 1991, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant*, p. 355.

81. Cf. Crossan , J.D. 1991, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant*, pp. 354-394; Crossan , J.D. 1994, *The Historical Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography*, pp. 123-158; Horsley, R.A. & Silberman, N.A 1997, *The Message and the Kingdom*, pp. 84-87, 89-91.
82. Sanders, E.P. 1993, *The Historical Figure of Jesus*, p. 275.
83. Horsley, R.A. & Silberman, N.A 1997, *The Message and the Kingdom*, p. 89.
84. Borg, M.J. [1987] 1991, *Jesus –A New Vision*, p. 125.
85. Lenski, G., Lenski, J. & Nolan, P. [1970] 1991, *Human Societies: An Introduction to Macrosociology*; Fiensy, D. 1991, *The Social History of Palestine in the Herodian Period: The Land is Mine*; Duling, D.C. 1991. “Matthew’s Infancy in Social Scientific Perspective: Conflict and Legitimation.” Fiensy and Duling structure their work upon Lenski’s macrosociology.
86. Weber, M. 1949, *Max Weber on the Methodology of the Social Sciences*, pp. 89-112.
87. Borg, M.J. 1987, *Jesus –A New Vision*, p. 131.
88. Horsley, R.A. & Silberman, N.A. 1997, *The Message and the Kingdom*, pp. 65-87.