

3 ~ HISTORICIZATION OF MYTH

Myths as Emptied Realities

John Dominic Crossan¹ mentions in his “The Infancy and Youth of the Messiah” Celsus’ rebuttal of Jesus’ divine generation. In the second century C.E., Celsus, a Greek philosopher, attacked Christianity’s belief that “a member of the lower classes, a Jewish peasant nobody like Jesus,” is the child of God, and therefore, divine. Crossan quotes from Celsus’ *On the True Doctrine*²:

First, however, I must deal with the matter of Jesus, the so-called savior, who not long ago taught new doctrines and was thought to be a [child] of God....This savior, I shall attempt to show, deceived many and caused them to accept a form of belief harmful to the well-being of [hu]mankind. Taking its root in the lower classes, the religion continues to spread among the vulgar: Nay one can even say it spread because of its vulgarity and the illiteracy of its adherents. And while there are a few moderate, reasonable and intelligent people who are inclined to interpret its belief allegorically, yet it thrives in its purer form among the ignorant....What absurdity! Clearly the Christians have used the myths of the Danae and the Melanippe, or of the Auge and the Antiope, in fabricating the story of Jesus’ virgin birth....After all, the old myths of the Greeks that attribute divine to Perseus, Amphion, Aeneas and Minos are equally good evidence of their wondrous works on behalf of [hu]mankind and are certainly no less lacking in plausibility than the stories of your [Celsus refers to Origen and other Christians] followers. What have you done by word or deed that is quite so wonderful as those heroes of old?

From this citation it is clear that Christianity was defamed from the earliest times. According to Celsus, Christians dared to compare the saving acts by an illegitimate peasant child Jesus, believed to be divinely generated, with the myths of the Greeks.

Theologians and exegetes know that historical-critical scholars do not hesitate to admit that the nativity traditions about Jesus should be considered as legendary and mythical in nature and, therefore, not subject to historical research.³ However, contrary to both Celsus and Origen, the parallels between Jesus and the Greek heroes do not need to be regarded as something that discredits either Jesus or Christianity. Interpreting mythology in a cultural fashion,⁴ from the perspective of the sociology of knowledge, could be worthwhile.

Sociology of knowledge is a modern theory according to which the interrelatedness between the social world and the symbolic world can be elucidated. Seen from a modern Western perspective, this association is about the relationship between the “natural world” and “supernatural world.” For the people living in a “pre-scientific” Mediterranean context, these “worlds” were, as indicated in chapter 1, not really separated. This context has often been described as a “mythological” mind-set, distinct from the “scientific” mind-set. However, it does not mean that modern people do not existentially live by myths as well. Yet, with the peculiar first-century Mediterranean worldview in mind, we need to determine how myths work. The writer-philosopher-anthropologist Roland Barthes⁵ describes the function of myth as “to empty reality” and fill the “emptied history” with “nature.” What does it mean? It renders to the same thing to which we referred earlier: “apocalyptic eschatology.”

Everyday experiences are projected into an imaginary world; in other words, “reality” is “emptied.” The imaginary world consists of imageries by analogy of the everyday experiences, in other words the “emptied history” is filled with “nature.” Crises in life are often made bearable by living in such an “altered state of consciousness.” Bruce Malina says: “While [first-century Mediterranean] people are defined by others and because of others, they are in fact unable to change undesirable situations. Hence the need for divine intervention.”⁶ Or as another scholar, with regard to a totally different context, notes: “(Barthes) shows that myth transforms history into nature by stealing language from one context then restoring it in another so that it appears like something ‘wrested from the gods’ when in fact it is simply recycled language.”⁷ Stephen of Byzantium, a sixth century philosopher, said: “Mythology is what never was but always is.” According to Philip Wheelwright “(m)yth is to be defined as a complex of stories—some no doubt fact, and some fantasy.”⁸

As “emptied realities,” myths are not absolute taboos with regard to historiography. Historically, they should be treated in a different way than those discourses that refer “directly” to psychological data. Mircea Eliade, a renowned scholar in the field of anthropology and religion, begins his book, *Myth and Reality*, with these words:

For the past fifty years at least, Western scholars have approached the study of myth from a viewpoint markedly different from, let us say, that of the nineteenth century. Understanding their predecessors, who treated myth in the usual meaning of the word, that is as “fable,” “invention,” “fiction,” they have accepted it as it was understood in the archaic societies, where, on the

contrary, “myth” means a “true story” and, beyond that, a story that is a most precious possession because it is sacred, exemplary, significant.⁹

For Gustav Jung¹⁰ the human mind tends to express symbolically that which is poorly understood intellectually. He argues that potential for formulating archetypal meanings is present in all humans before language is acquired. It seems that the archetypes are like templates for organizing the universal themes that recur in human experience, such as a fatherless child who becomes a heroic figure. In different cultures and at different times an archetypal content, according to Jung, will be symbolically expressed in somewhat different ways, but will still reflect the basic human experience underlying it. Eliade’s formulation is “almost identical psychologically.” For him myths give sacredness, or religious meaning, to physical objects and human acts. “They are thus exemplary models, human acts through which one relives the myths that give meaning to religious life. Reliving the myth abolishes time and puts one in touch with the real.”¹¹

What I am aiming at is bringing into historical Jesus research the association of the historical-critically established “fact” of Jesus’ baptismal initiation ritual and the social-historical notion of an ideal type, introduced by the sociologist Max Weber.¹² The textual and social-historical evidence is read as if it says that Jesus came as someone who had been fatherless since infancy to be baptized by John the Baptist. It is my intention to “revive” the myth of the absent father within the conceptualized framework of the assumption that Jesus’ fatherlessness was canceled by his trust in God as his Heavenly Father. Destroying conventional patriarchal values he, at the same time, cared for women and children who were marginalized because of patriarchy. His life experiences should

be seen as embedded within the macro-sociological framework of the “physical data” of family distortion and divine alienation in the time of Herodian Palestine.

Jesus’ Baptism as Condensed History

Thus, historically seen, my quest for Jesus, child of God begins with the traditions regarding his birth record and his relationship to his family. This starting point originated in my reading of Crossan’s book, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant*. As Crossan¹³ in a particular sense commences with the Pauline vision of the “crucified Jesus” as a death through which “sin was buried,” I begin with Jesus’ baptism as a ritual event through which “sinful sickness” was addressed and healed.

Crossan understands the Pauline vision as “condensed history,” a plotted event that was preceded by a sequential series of other historical events prior to the crucifixion. He puts it as follows in writing: “For Paul, the historical Jesus, particularly and precisely in the terrible and servile form of his execution, is part of Christian faith. It is to the historical Jesus so executed that he responds in faith.”¹⁴ Crossan refers to Paul’s perspective on death through which sin is buried (1 Cor 15:3) as “historicization of prophecy.”¹⁵ He distinguishes this concept with “history remembered”¹⁶ which, in his article “The historical Jesus in Earliest Christianity,” is seemingly built upon Paul’s reference to the “folly of the cross” in 1 Corinthians 1:18. In his work *Who killed Jesus?*, Crossan¹⁷ commences his argumentation with this concept of “prophecy historized” and focuses the “continuity” between the Jesus of history and the Jesus of faith again on

Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 15:3ff. in particular (New International Version):¹⁸ "For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to...."

Moving from 1 Corinthians 15:3ff., one can also focus on Paul's words in 2 Corinthians 5:14, 19 and 21, specifically those in verse 21: "*God made him for our sake sin, he who knew no sin.*" According to Rudolf Bultmann,¹⁹ in these words of Paul about "reconciliation" (*kataallagh/*), we have the resemblance of the "Jewish way of thinking." However, it was put in terms of a "new order," a "change or purification of human notions about God." Death was viewed as a means of expiation, just as in most of the vicarious passages (*u (p)e/r* passages) such as 1 Corinthians 15:3. In these passages the death of Christ was understood as something performed for the benefit of the believers.²⁰ Bultmann points out that the typical Pauline formula "to be (one) in Christ" [*e0n Xristw~ |*] marks the "believers' new life," received by baptism (cf. Gl 3:26-28; 1 Cor 12:13), used as a "term for a new epoch" and "applied to the individual in the sense of external healing or rescue, especially of the forgiveness of sin."²¹

Whether Paul knew the tradition with regard to Jesus' baptism by John the Baptist and the embarrassment it caused for Christians that Jesus needed to be purified from "sins," cannot be ascertained. Bultmann reckons the phrase "he who knew no sin" refers to the same phenomenon found in contemporary (Hermetic, Mandaic, and Rabbinic) literature that "innocent babes" and "children" do not know "what wickedness is."²² Children are simply ignorant with regard to systemic evil and in Paul's thinking, Christ could be compared with an "innocent babe" caught within the web of sinful existence.

For Paul, Christ is “treated as sinner by the fact that God allows him to die like a sinner on the cross (Gal. 3:13).”²³ This “Christ who knew no sin” refers, according to Bultmann, to “Christ according to the flesh”—that is, Christ in his plainness [in German: *Unscheinbarkeit*].²⁴ As with the authors of Hebrews (4:15) and the Johannine literature (Jn 7:18; 8:46; 1 Jn 3:5) who tried to get rid of the embarrassment of Jesus’ baptism, Bultmann²⁵ interprets Paul as agreeing that “(n)aturally, there is no reference to the earthly Jesus as having sinful qualities, at least to the extent he could be tempted.” Bultmann is correct in his understanding of the “resurrected Christ” (cf. Rm 1:4) as the Jesus of faith, that is, the “Christ according to the spirit and not to the flesh.”²⁶ This does not, in my mind, alter the statement in 2 Corinthians 5:21 that Jesus, innocent as a child—whether metaphorically intended or not—did not know what sin was and, nevertheless, died as a “sinner!” Here Paul helps one to track a pathway that goes beyond Jesus’ remission of sin, that is a road that leads to his sinful, though innocent, childhood. Therefore, in addition to Crossan’s perception that Jesus’ death can be seen as condensed history, Jesus’ baptism can, in my mind, likewise be perceived as condensed history.

Why would Jesus want to be baptized? Is it because of “sinful sickness?” As I have mentioned, Jesus’ unfortunate relationship with his family could provide a probable clue. Moreover, what does Jesus’ birth record tell us about his relationship with his family and his kin in Nazareth? What does his birth record reveal about his ministry among, especially, children and other nobodies in his society? To me, the answers to these questions rely on a construct of an *ideal type*. Such an ideal type concerns someone in first-century Herodian Palestine who was healed from “sinful sickness,” for example,

the stigma of being a “fatherless son.” He subsequently started a ministry of healing/forgiving “sinners” with the help of followers who were called to act likewise as “healed healers,” to use an expression from Dominic Crossan’s insights. Jane Schaberg,²⁷ the author of the noteworthy scholarly work *The Illegitimacy of Jesus*, considers this approach of mine “a promising direction for research.”

However, the immediate goal is to demonstrate in this chapter the reasons for my preference to start the quest for Jesus, child of God, at the nativity traditions. Within the parameters of both the “New Quest” and the “Renewed Quest”, the point of departure for the quest is “Jesus at thirty.” Yet I am convinced that we need to move backwards, from the river Jordan in Judea to the Galilee of the Gentiles, from Jesus’ baptism to his birth. We have to go beyond the “New Quest” and the “Renewed Quest.”

There are two possible reasons why we have almost no references to Jesus’ childhood by his followers, besides the apologetic-confessional and legendary material in the infancy narratives inside and outside the New Testament.²⁸ The first reason could be that the pre-adult traditions about Jesus were simply unknown. Or it could be that Mediterranean people attached legitimate authority only to men who went through an initiation rite that is regarded as transferring from childhood to adulthood.²⁹ Although it might be the case for Mark as well, the priority of the Markan text causes proponents of both the “New Quest” and the “Renewed Quest” to start their quest for the historical Jesus with his baptism by John the Baptist.³⁰ Jesus’ “call story” starts with his relationship to John the Baptist. Joachim Jeremias links this “call story” with Jesus’ announcement of the reign of God in Mark 1:15. However, he asks:

But have we found the right starting-point if we begin with Jesus' announcement of the reign of God? Does that really take us to the beginning? Does this starting-point not forget something, the question of how Jesus came to make an appearance and to proclaim the good news? There can be no doubt that something preceded the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus. The only question is whether we can come to any historical understanding of this first and most profound stage. Are we not up against that which cannot be described? At least, we can put our questions here only with the utmost caution and the utmost restraint. Nevertheless, we can make some very definite and clear statements, which give us a clue to what comes before Jesus' appearance, to his mission.³¹

What comes *before*, to Jeremias,³² was Jesus' relationship to the Baptizer! To depart from Jesus' relationship to the Baptizer in the quest for the historical Jesus, (irrespective of whether it is the "New Quest" or "Renewed Quest"), is such an overwhelming fact that mentioning only one or two prominent scholars representing these two paradigms will suffice.

Beyond the Lack of Textual Evidence

The "New Quest," to oversimplify it, mainly adopts a historical-critical perspective and the "Renewed Quest," a social-historical one as well. As regards the first, Bultmann (the scholar who has actually been imputed as the one who introduced the "No Quest") cautiously mentions a few characteristics of the deeds of the historical Jesus that could be deciphered. Hence, with a bit of caution we can say the following concerning Jesus' activity:

Characteristic for him are exorcisms, the breach of the Sabbath commandment, the abandonment of ritual purifications, polemic against Jewish legalism, fellowship with outcasts [*deklassierten Personen*] such as publicans and harlots, sympathy for women and children; it can also be seen that Jesus was not an ascetic like John the Baptist, but gladly ate and drank a glass of wine. Perhaps we may add that he called disciples and assembled about himself a small company of followers—men and women.³³

In a footnote to this summary, Bultmann refers to his student Hans Conzelmann's classic article on *Jesus*³⁴ for a similar viewpoint. Therefore, one could say that the students of Bultmann who moved beyond their mentor's alleged "No Quest" with their "New Quest," have not really come forward with new results.³⁵ To my knowledge, there is no other place in Bultmann's writings where we find such a concentrated glimpse of his historical reconstruction of Jesus. In this very short sketch we have the core of Jesus' life. As far as his deeds are concerned, these few non-chronological, organized pen strokes concur more or less with the "red choices" of the fellows of the Jesus Seminar with regard to the work done on the deeds of Jesus. They also concur with the content of the red printed sayings in the Jesus Seminar's *Five Gospels*.³⁶ However, in his work on Bultmann's interpretation of the history of Jesus, John Painter says that Bultmann was convinced that much more could be said on the teaching of Jesus.³⁷ He refers to Bultmann's own words in his Jesus book: "we know enough of his [Jesus'] message to paint a consistent picture for ourselves."³⁸ In his *Nachwort* to Bultmann's *Jesus* book, Walter Schmithals³⁹ emphasizes the same.

With regard to Jesus' baptism, Bultmann says: "The account of Jesus' baptism (Mk. 1:9-11) is legend, certain though it is that the legend started from the *historical fact*

of Jesus' baptism by John."⁴⁰ According to Bultmann, it is "told in the interest not of biography but of faith."⁴¹ And in his reconstruction of the history of the Jesus traditions in Mark, Matthew, and Luke (the *Synoptischen Tradition*), Bultmann formulated in the same vein (my emphasis): "Without disputing the *historicity of Jesus' baptism by John*, the story as we have it must be classified as legend. The miraculous moment is essential to it and its edifying purpose is clear. And indeed one may be at first inclined to regard it as a biographical legend; it tells a story of Jesus."⁴² These words remind one of Norman Perrin's reference to Philip Wheelwright's dictum, to which I referred to earlier when I related a myth to an "emptied reality": "Myth is to be defined as a complex of stories some no doubt fact, and some fantasy...."⁴³

Bultmann does not want to refer to the account of Jesus' baptism in Mark 1:9-11 as a "call story" (in German: *Berufungsgeschichte*) in order to avoid a "psychological fallacy." He agrees (with Ed Meyer) that "Acts 10:37f., 13:24f. show that the historical fact of Jesus' baptism is not necessary for linking the ministry of Jesus to John's."⁴⁴ Bultmann does mention the embarrassment⁴⁵ experienced by Christians with regard to the problem of how "Jesus (could) undergo a baptism for the remission of sin. He does not, as far as I can see (including his *Jesus* book⁴⁶), elaborate either on what the Markan scholar R. Pesch refers to as a pre-Markan baptismal tradition (in German: "vormarkinischtauferischen Tradition")⁴⁷ or the historical background of Jesus being a "sinner" who needed remission and, therefore, became linked to the Baptizer's circle. In his reconstruction of the gospel tradition he is only interested in the reediting of this tradition by a (Hellenistic) Christian redactor."⁴⁸

However, in his commentary on the Gospel of John, it seems that Bultmann argues that the baptism of Jesus, though a historical fact, should be seen as irrelevant for John. It is because the account of Jesus' baptism is not mentioned in the Gospel of John or, at most, John's gospel (knowing the Q tradition in its final redactional phase-see chapter 8) only alludes to what is reported in Mark, Matthew, and Luke.⁴⁹ On the other hand, in the Gospel of John the ministries of the Baptizer and Jesus are remarkably related to each other. Here we also have a sharp emphasis on "specific social and religious categories of people depicted interacting with John the Baptist. These include priests, Levites, and Pharisees (1:19, 24; also 4:1)."⁵⁰ Bultmann (1968: 65) comments as follows on the inattentiveness of the Johannine evangelist with regard to Jesus' baptism by John the Baptist:

Yet it would be wrong to conclude from this that Jesus' baptism was embarrassment for the Evangelist, so that he [John] passes over it as quickly as possible. On the contrary he clearly refers to it without misgivings. Yet he does not give an account of it, firstly because he can assume that his readers are acquainted with the story, and secondly, because for him the mere historical fact is of no significance by comparison with the witness of the Baptist which is based on it.⁵¹

In a separate publication on the traditions in Mark, Matthew, and Luke, Bultmann admits that Jesus underwent a "baptism of penitence" (in German: *Bußtaufe*)⁵² and says that Jesus did not need to do so. However, the historical grounds, if any, on which Bultmann bases this opinion are unclear. I could not find the answer in Bultmann's writings, other than the implicit reference in his interpretation of 2 Corinthians 5:21 which was discussed earlier. As we have seen, Paul said that Christ "who knew no sin"

was nevertheless made a “sinner” by God. Could one infer that the historicity of Jesus’ baptism is irrelevant (*unwesentlich*) in Bultmann’s opinion as well? Is that then the reason why Bultmann does not bother with the question of why Jesus’ sinfulness was experienced as an embarrassment by earliest Christians? Clearly, seen at least from the perspective in the Gospel of the Nazoreans and the Gospel of the Ebionites,⁵³ this embarrassment presumes the question: “why would Jesus want to be baptized?”

Walter Schmithals’ understanding of the baptismal account, like Bultmann’s exegesis of 2 Corinthians 5:21, also does not take the social-historical dimension of the account and its apology into consideration. Schmithals describes the “preaching about penitence” and the “baptism of penitence” (in German: *Bußpredigt und die Bußtaufe*) of John the Baptist in light of the “apocalyptic expectation of the imminent shift of aeons.” He then links the historical baptismal event with the already developed faith assertions in early Christianity about Christ’s vicarious death that takes away the sin of the world.⁵⁴ This is precisely what Bultmann did with 2 Corinthians 5:21. Historically seen, however, Josef Ernst rightly emphasizes that we do have a reference to a decisive, discernible, historical notation that Jesus “in those days” came from Nazareth in Galilee to let him be baptized in the river Jordan by John in Mark 1:9. Josef Ernst continues by saying that no Christian theologian has given any thought to what lies beyond the clearly edited apologetics by the church. Christendom has disputed the possibility that Jesus, the child of God, could be connected with conversion and the forgiveness of sins.⁵⁵

The problem, however, is that we do not have the “texts” to settle the vital question of why Jesus would want to undergo baptism for the remission of sin. Nevertheless, as social-historians, we ought not to shrink back from the problem of no-evidence. This would be the case if the historical inquiry is understood as “a limited endeavour of probabilities and hypotheses linking its evidence together in intelligible patterns.”⁵⁶

Beyond the Lack of Social-Historical Evidence

According to E.P. Sanders, some “statements about Jesus” are “almost beyond dispute.”⁵⁷

- [1] Jesus was born circa 4 B.C.E., near the time of the death of Herod the Great.
- [2] He spent his childhood and early adult years in Nazareth, a Galilean village.
- [3] He was baptized by John the Baptist.
- [4] He called disciples.
- [5] He taught in the towns, villages, and countryside of Galilee (apparently not the cities).
- [6] He preached “the Kingdom of God.”
- [7] About the year 30 he went to Jerusalem for Passover.
- [8] He created a disturbance in the Temple area.
- [9] He had a final meal with the disciples.
- [10] He was arrested and interrogated by Jewish authorities, specifically the high priest.
- [11] He was executed on the orders of the Roman prefect, Pontius Pilate.

Sanders continues by adding a short list of equally secure facts about the aftermath of Jesus’ life:

- [12] His disciples at first fled.
- [13] They saw him (in what sense is not certain) after his death.
- [14] As a consequence, they believed that he would return to found the kingdom.
- [15] They formed a community to await his return and sought to win others to faith in him as God's Messiah.

Sanders quite rightly says that a “list of everything that we know about Jesus would be appreciably longer”⁵⁸ than the above-mentioned list. In his book *The Historical Figure of Jesus*, he indeed abstracts many more details from the available sources and most of them are very convincing.⁵⁹ In the (above-mentioned) list he refers to two episodes in Jesus' life prior to his baptism by John: Jesus' birth during the Herodian regime and Jesus' childhood in Nazareth. Sanders mentions only two “facts” with regard to these two episodes in Jesus' life: “Jesus lived with his parents in Nazareth, a Galilean village....When Jesus was a young man, probably in his late twenties, John the Baptist began preaching in or near Galilee. *He proclaimed the urgent need to repent in view of the coming judgement. Jesus heard John and felt called to accept his baptism. All four gospels point to this event that transformed Jesus' life (my emphasis).*”⁶⁰

With regard to Jesus' birth and the role of his parents in these accounts, Sanders correctly says that so many “novelistic interests” pervaded the gospel narratives. The consequence of this is that we “cannot write ‘the life of Jesus’ in the modern sense, describing his education, tracing his development, analyzing the influence of his parents, showin5g his response to specific events and so on.”⁶¹ Elsewhere in his book he points

out that the Matthean and Lukan birth narratives “constitute an extreme case” because their uses were solely “to place Jesus in salvation history”: “It seems that they had very little historical information about Jesus’ birth (historical in our sense)....”⁶²

This insight concurs with that of Bultmann, Crossan, and Borg, to mention only three scholars. In the whole section of Bultmann’s treatment of the infancy narratives, he never paid the slightest attention to the possibility that implicit individual apologetic features or conditions in these narratives could have a historical base in the life of Jesus. It is simply *legendary material*.⁶³ He is also skeptical about the possibility that the defamations about Jesus’ alleged incestuous birth were already present in the Matthean story about Jesus’ birth. According to Bultmann these defamations are evidence of the second-century polemics by Origen against the Greek philosopher Celsus. A similar slur can be found in the Talmud.⁶⁴

Crossan interprets the tradition of the illegitimate Jesus as the “instant and obvious rebuttal” by the “opponents of Christianity” of the “claims of virginal conception and divine generation for Jesus.”⁶⁵ In other words, according to Crossan, these “claims” were not invented for the purpose of rejecting the reproach from the “synagogue” (and later from Celsus and rabbinic Judaism) that Jesus is a premarital or an illegitimate child. Such an interpretation is found, and rightly so, in the writings of, among others, Bultmann’s student, Walter Schmithals and, specifically, Jane Schaberg.⁶⁶ According to Crossan, the stories in Matthew and Luke about the “virginal birth” and “David’s lineage” were invented as “historized prophecy.” Such an opinion, seen from a historical point of view, presumes that these accounts originated within the “Christian cult,” to use

Bultmann's term. This happened prior to the actual defamations by the "opponents of Christians" of Jesus' divine generation—thus, "mythology rather history."⁶⁷

In his book *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, J.P. Meier argues that the precise "origins of the virginal conception tradition remain obscure from a historical point of view."⁶⁸ Meier argues in the same vein as Bultmann by regarding the rebuttal of Jesus' divine generation as a reaction to the infancy narratives. He thinks that there is no clear attestation of a "polemic tradition of Jesus' illegitimacy until the middle of the second century."⁶⁹ However, I beg to differ.

Jane Schaberg also reads the infancy narratives in Luke and particularly in Matthew "as a response to the truth of the illegitimacy charge."⁷⁰ With regard to these narratives she (while exposing Raymond Brown's unsubtle reading of her argumentation), quite rightly asks: "But why could Jesus not be Son of God and son of an unknown or even son of a nobody?"⁷¹ Schaberg argues that "Joseph's paternity is denied in Matthew and Luke because it was known in some circles that he was not the biological father of Jesus." The Gospel of John (1:45; 6:42) refers apologetically to Jesus as Joseph's physical son⁷² because, for John, "illegitimacy discredits Jesus."⁷³ However, Matthew knew Joseph was not Jesus' biological father. Luke (4:22) also referred to Jesus as Joseph's (adopted) son.

The infancy narratives in Proto-James and in Pseudo-Matthew⁷⁴ stretch this notion to such an extent that they radically transform the "plainness" (for Bultmann, die *Unscheinbarkeit*)⁷⁵ of the historical Jesus into symbols of power and hierarchy. In these narratives Joseph is "exalted" to a wealthy benefactor and Jesus almost to a "royal prince!" Subsequently, this kind of faith assertions in Proto-James and Pseudo-Matthew

skipped the “scandal” (In German: *Anstoß*) of Jesus’ plainness and tragically missed what God’s love is about! Therefore, Schaberg correctly disagrees that a disgraced Jesus should necessarily discredit Christian faith. Nevertheless, it is understandable that such a fact could be used “to smear Jesus and his movement, to weaken his credibility as a religious leader. The infancy narratives wanted to dispute this notion.” In other words, to me, historical information can be inferred from these narratives.

On the other hand, like Bultmann, Crossan is of the opinion that there is no “biographical information” about the historical Jesus in either the complex “Jesus Virginally Conceived” or “Of David’s Lineage.”⁷⁶ Marcus Borg also considers these accounts as “symbolic narratives and not historical reports.”⁷⁷ Crossan calls the two above-mentioned complexes a “historicization of prophecy,” a process in which a “historical narrative” is written from prophetic allusions; that is, “hide the prophecy, tell the narrative, and invent the history.”⁷⁸ However, he seemingly takes the “names of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph” (the “only common features” in the “long narrative accounts of Jesus’ birth in Matthew 1-2 and Luke 1-2”) historically for granted. This specifically pertains to the references to Jesus as a “child of the carpenter Joseph and Mary” in Matthew 13:55-56, Luke 4:22 and John 6:42.⁷⁹

This consideration seems to be similar to Marcus Borg’s,⁸⁰ although he, in his article “The First Christmas,” writes: “[A]ccording to Mark, the family of Jesus seems not to have known about the virginal conception and his being the ‘Son of God’ from birth.”⁸¹ In this article Borg also refers to J.P. Meier who said, with regard to a reference to Jesus’ family in Mark 3:21-35: “Jesus’ brothers did not believe in him during the public ministry which hardly seems likely if they had known about his virginal

conception.”⁸² Borg adds: “It should be noted that the passage in Mark also includes his [Jesus’] mother.”

Crossan reads Matthew’s citation of Isaiah 7:14 as though the evangelist had a woman in mind who “will conceive and remain a virgin.” In other words, Matthew, according to Crossan, “takes it [the word virgin, in Greek: *parqe/noj*] literally and applies it to the virginal conception of Jesus.”⁸³ However, according to Crossan, Matthew is not the source of the idea of the “virginal conception of Jesus.” Crossan’s opinion is that “the source is the competition with Rome: the desire of the evangelists to show that God is manifested in Jesus born of a virgin and not in Augustus who claimed to be descended from Venus.” Consequently, the virginal conception is for Crossan “not a literal statement about the biology of Mary.” It “should be taken metaphorically....It is a credal statement about the status of Jesus.”⁸⁴

Robert Funk, in his book *Honest to Jesus*, shows that “(w)hat can (be) extract(ed) from the infancy narratives that may be grounded in history is limited to four items”:⁸⁵

[1] Jesus may have been born during the reign of Herod the Great, although that is not certain. Scholars can find no basis for the claim that Herod murdered babies wholesale in the hope of eliminating Jesus as a rival king. Jesus’ home was almost certainly Nazareth, and he was quite possibly born there as well. [2] His mother’s name may well have been Mary. [3] And we have no reason to doubt that the child was named Jesus. These constitute the meager traces of history in the birth stories. Everything else is fiction. [4] We can be certain that Mary did not conceive Jesus without the assistance of human male sperm. It is unclear whether Joseph or some unnamed male was the biological father of Jesus. It is possible that Jesus was illegitimate.

What we do have in common between the two infancy narratives in Matthew and Luke are, according to Funk:⁸⁶

- that Jesus' "home was Nazareth;"
- "that Joseph was Jesus' alleged father;"
- that "Mary and Joseph [were] engaged but not married;"
- that "Joseph was not involved in the conception of Jesus;"
- and that "Jesus was born after Joseph and Mary began to live together."

Matthew's story clearly presupposes that Joseph thought she was guilty of unchastity.⁸⁷ In a footnote, Thomas Wright rightly reproaches positivists who anachronistically rationalize the miraculous events in the life of Jesus. He comments:

It is naive to suppose that first-century Galilean villagers were ready to believe in "miracles" because they did not understand the laws of nature, or did not realize that the space-time universe was a closed continuum....As has often been pointed out, in Mt. 1.18f. Joseph was worried about Mary's unexpected pregnancy not because he did not know where babies came from but because he did.⁸⁸

Besides, as I will demonstrate in more detail in the next chapter, the figure of Joseph does not occur in the early sources: not in Paul, the Gospel of Mark, the Sayings Gospel Q, or the Gospel of Thomas. It is undoubtedly clear that we meet Joseph for the first time in those documents that dispute the defamatory claims of the opponents of the Jesus movement: Matthew, John, and Luke, and eventually the dependent Proto-James

and Pseudo-Matthew. In the Christian tradition, the role of Joseph is part and parcel of either the polemics against Jesus' alleged scandalous birth or the underpinning of Mary's (perpetual) virginity and Jesus' two "natures" being God and human.

It remains a dilemma that Jesus' father is altogether absent in the gospel accounts with regard to Jesus public ministry while other members of his family are specified. This is even more remarkable when one takes the central role of a father figure in the first-century Mediterranean culture into consideration. It is highly problematic from a scholarly perspective that J.P Meier⁸⁹ judges that the "traditional solution" for Joseph's absence is still "the most likely" one because it is also found in the patristic period. This "traditional" solution is that Joseph died before Jesus began his public activities. Historically seen, however, this explanation, functions on the same level as other "Christian solutions" which originated because of embarrassment. The "sinless" Jesus being baptized by John is an example of such an embarrassment.

Strangely enough, Crossan does not insist on a painstaking historical analysis with respect to the quite different Joseph traditions in at least Matthew, Luke, John, Proto-James, Pseudo-Matthew, and the Life of Joseph the Carpenter. To me, as I will argue in the next chapter, an analysis of a "unit" of texts about Joseph reveals a clear picture of a trajectory. Could it not be possible that the references to Joseph in the gospel tradition be considered what Crossan calls "confessional statements?"⁹⁰ According to Crossan, these particular "confessional statements" served as a "reply" to the "obvious rebuttal" by the "opponents of Christianity." Is it not also the case with the Joseph tradition? Is Crossan not too indifferent with regard to the difference between Mark 6:3: "Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of...." and Matthew 13:55-56: "Is not this the

carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary? And are not his brothers...?"⁹¹ Why could Mark 6:3 also not be interpreted like Mark 1:9 as "without any defensive commentary?"⁹² I understand the gospel stories about Jesus' genesis and birth record as "confessional" commentaries which, as I will argue in chapter 6, historically reveal much about Jesus' compassion towards women and children—perhaps the most distinctive aspect in the life of the historical Jesus.⁹³

Being "fatherless," as our earliest sources depict Jesus, he could fit into the "Pauline" description implicitly found in 1 Corinthians 5:21. With regard to Mediterranean culture, I have already indicated that institutionalization made a fatherless child unaware of systemic "sin" or "wickedness;" a fatherless child was someone who knew no sin, yet who was made in the eyes of God and the people to be a nobody in society. Such a person was doomed. He or she could never enter the congregation of the Lord. The reason for this, as I will argue, is that fatherless children, within the Israelite society not embedded in the context of a biological or surrogate father, were not respected as "children of Abraham," that is "children of God."

Nevertheless, in Mark 10 we find a very early account of the sympathy Jesus had for degraded women and children. This would be a typical act of a man who himself was fatherless according to his birth record, though differently reported in Matthew and Luke. In the "ancient Roman world," infancy and childhood narratives "regularly prepared their readers for the later adult status and roles maintained by their protagonists."⁹⁴ Being ostracized, according to the ideology of the temple and its idea of systemic sin, Jesus would be refused the status of being God's child. How and where would he find

“remission for his sin” if it could not occur, according to the priestly code, in the Temple itself?

Departing from two remarks in Mark (1:9, 11), the one about the *Jesus of history* and the other about the *Jesus of faith*, my understanding of the historical Jesus, accessed by experiences of faith, is formulated by Jane Schaberg as follows: “[T]he paternity is canceled or erased by the theological metaphor of the paternity of God.”⁹⁵ This quest goes clearly beyond Jesus’ relationship to the Baptizer. According to the *Scholars Version*, the particular remark about the Jesus of history reads: “During that same period Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized in the river Jordan by John....” The remark about the Jesus of faith reads: “There was also a voice from the skies: ‘You are my favored son—I fully approve of you.’”

As we have seen with both Bultmann and Sanders, Crossan regards Jesus’ baptism as “historically certain as anything about either of them ever can be.”⁹⁶ As a historian, Crossan, like Sanders, doubts “things that agree too much with the gospel’s bias” and “credits things that are against their preference.” However, this “rule cannot be applied mechanically, since some things that actually happened suited the authors [the evangelists] very well...”⁹⁷

In view of this, it is most unlikely that the gospels or earlier Christians invented the fact that Jesus started out under John. Since they wanted Jesus to stand out as superior to the Baptist, they would not have come up with the story that Jesus had been his follower. Therefore, we conclude, John really did baptize Jesus. This, in turn, implies that Jesus agreed with John’s message: *it was time to repent in view of the coming wrath and redemption.*

Sanders emphasizes the last phrase in this citation because of his conviction (similar to that of Bultmann and the other “Renewed Questers”) that Jesus constantly held onto the Baptizer’s apocalyptic vision. I mentioned earlier that the “Renewed Questers” have a more subtle view on Jesus’ “eschatological” viewpoint. Richard Horsley and Neil Silberman note: “Jesus did not believe that the Kingdom of God would arrive with fire and brimstone.”⁹⁸ According to Robert Funk, Jesus “can hardly have shared the apocalyptic outlook of John the Baptist, Paul,, and other members of the early Christian community.”⁹⁹ Conversely, and parallel to Sanders, for Thomas Wright, “it should be clear that Jesus regarded his ministry as in continuity with, and bringing to a climax, the work of the great prophets of the Old Testament, culminating in John the Baptist, whose initiative he had used as his launching-pad.”¹⁰⁰ Of course, much was shared between Jesus and John. Why else would Jesus come to him to be baptized? However, to handcuff these two, as if in a chained succession, does not fit historical reconstruction. Rather it represents a description of the theology of Mark, elaborated upon by Matthew.

At this point we have an example par excellence concerning the difference in “method” between Thomas Wright and the Jesus Seminar with regard to the search for the historical Jesus in contradistinction to gospel overlays. Apparently Wright does not assess adequately the peculiar “theology” or “ideology” of each gospel writer, as well as the traditions upon which the interpretations of the respective gospel writers were built. To have the excuse that traveling on the *Schweitzerbahn* does not require such a historical differentiation will not alleviate the embarrassment. Schweitzer did differentiate sharply, at least, between Mark, Matthew, and Luke. Wright’s “method,” not to be guided by

hypothetical source traditions, tempts him to confuse a synchronic description of gospel evidence with the traditions of the Jesus of history with which this evidence is interrelated. Certainly, the fellows of the Jesus Seminar do not share the opinion that the program of Jesus is only to bring the Baptizer's vision to a climax. They interpret the sources in such a way that "Jesus changed his view of John's mission and message."¹⁰¹ But considering "method" is not my concern now. My aim is to argue that one should move beyond Jesus' relationship with the Baptizer in order to construct his "whole" life.

As often pointed out,¹⁰² the first-century historian Josephus did have a biased interest in the baptismal activity of John the Baptist. According to Crossan, by deciphering Josephus' pre-judiced account of the Baptizer's conduct as "not a magical or ritual act that removed sin,"¹⁰³ one can establish as historical "fact" that John's baptism was about the remission of sin. It was an alternative to "the actions of the priests in Jerusalem's temple." Crossan takes seriously in a post-modern fashion Sanders' understanding of what the "reconstruction of history" is all about: "In the reconstruction of history, we must always consider *context* and *content*."¹⁰⁴ The better we can correlate the two, the more we shall understand."¹⁰⁵ But we have to be careful of "extravagant claims not undergirded by carefully screened evidence," Robert Funk alerts us.¹⁰⁶ He says that our "new constructions will not of course be the real Jesus, now set out for the final time." Funk emphasizes that it "will be a reconstruction based on the best evidence currently available, submitted to the most rigorous collective and cumulative analyses, and shaped into a relatively consistent whole." According to Funk, it is "the best we or anyone can do." He says: "It is all we can do."

According to Richard Horsley and Neil Silberman the picture we get of what happened at the river Jordan is that “John the Baptist was offering crowds of people who lived under the shadow of Rome and under the burden of Herodian control and taxation a new way to end the pain and uncertainty that plagued their daily lives.”¹⁰⁷ They continue:

Theology aside, we can say that the baptism of Jesus took place within the context of a popular revival movement that was spreading among a pre-dominantly rural population that was being taxed, exploited, and regimented in new—and to their eyes—extremely threatening ways....A journey out to see John the Baptist in the wilderness would have taken Jesus—presumably in the company of other people from Nazareth—out across the fringe of the Jezreel Valley where they would have passed through other rural villages, meeting tenant farmers and migrant workers, and seeing, at least from the distance, the houses of the overseers and the great villas of the wealthy lords....That is the most we can say of the immediate circumstances of Jesus’ baptism. And of the ceremony itself, little can be said except that he presumably joined the assembled throngs...making the public commitment—as Josephus described it—“to live righteous lives, to practice justice towards their fellows and piety towards God.”¹⁰⁸

But is this really all that can be said if we screen Josephus’ words as historical-critical scholars like Crossan and others did? Firstly, the gospel tradition shows that, besides the background of Roman and Herodian royalties maltreating and impoverishing the peasants, John’s baptismal practice should also be understood in terms of the ideology of the Jerusalem Temple authorities. According to this ideology, they decided where, when, how, and who could be redeemed from “sin” and find access to God. Secondly,

the gospel tradition illustrates that when Jesus returned to Galilee, he did not continue baptizing but started a ministry of healing “sinners” and teaching God’s unmediated presence among them.

When, and under what circumstances Jesus returned, we do not know, except that the textual evidence directs us to John’s imprisonment and eventual decapitation by Herod Antipas as the turning point. Clearly, “Jesus changed his view of John’s mission and message.” Crossan points out that “John’s vision of awaiting the apocalyptic God, the Coming One, as a *repentant sinner, which Jesus had originally accepted and even defended in the crisis of John’s death*, was no longer deemed adequate.”¹⁰⁹ He reaches this conclusion because of his analysis of the relevant references in Josephus as well as in the “intracanonical” traditions in the Gospel of Thomas and the Sayings Gospel Q.

The consistent element in the life of the historical Jesus, prior to and after his baptism and breach with the Baptizer, seems to be *his being among and his continued friendship with sinners*¹¹⁰ (see the Sayings Gospel Q [Lk] 7:3-35). This is tantamount to identifying “himself with those he was addressing, to emphasize that he shared with them a common destiny as we poor or destitute human beings.”¹¹¹ Sanders, in answering the question of who the sinners were, says: “The most reliable passages about the sinners are those in which Jesus discusses the Baptist and contrasts himself to him.”¹¹² The “sinners” were those people who were “outside the law in some fundamental way.” They were the people who, unlike the chief priest and elders (remember my remark above about the offense against the temple authorities and their ideology), “believed John the Baptist and repented” (cf. Mt 21:32 and Lk 3:3, 8), *people who “lived as if there were no God.”* Against this background Sanders asks: “What did he [Jesus] think he was up to?”

According to Sanders, Jesus was not primarily a “repentance-minded reformer.” He rightly comments, “That is, Luke’s Jesus...”¹¹³ and then continues:

In the New Testament that title [“a repentance-minded reformer”] clearly belongs to the Baptist....The prostitutes repented when John preached—not when Jesus preached....And Jesus was a friend of tax collectors and sinners—not of former tax collectors and sinners [against Josephus’s biased perception of John the Baptist]....Jesus, I think, was a good deal more radical than John. Jesus thought that John’s call to repent should have been effective, but in fact it was only partially successful. His own style was in any case different; he did not repeat the Baptist’s tactics. On the contrary, he ate and drank with the wicked and told them that God especially loved them, and that the kingdom was at hand. Did he hope that they would change their ways? Probably he did. But “change now or be destroyed” was not his message, it was John’s. *Jesus’ was, “God loves you.”*

There is good reason to relate these insights of Sanders with those he mentioned earlier in his book about *repentance, punishment, and forgiveness*,¹¹⁴ though he did not do so himself. Explaining “Judaism as religion,” that is, the temple ideology to which both John the Baptist and Jesus took offense, Sanders says, “God will always forgive the repentant sinner. Those who did not repent were subject to divine punishment, which was manifested, for example, in sickness. If they accepted this as God’s chastisement for their misdeeds, they were still worthy members of the covenant.”

Jesus shares John’s vision that remission of sin could be granted by God outside of the structures of the Temple, in other words, “not through the usual channels.”¹¹⁵ The consequence of his indifference about repentance is that both he and his company of “sinners” would be regarded by the chief priests and the other Jerusalem elite and their

retainers as people who lived as if there were no God.¹¹⁶ Likewise, a “sinner” belonging to this category, would not be respected as a “child of Abraham” that is, according to this ideology, “child of God.” However, the historical Jesus’ trust in God as his Father is just as certain as his baptism by John!

Yet Sanders, like both Bultmann and Crossan, never asks why Jesus was seen as or saw himself as a “sinner” who “heard John and felt called to accept his baptism.”¹¹⁷ Sanders, nevertheless, says that the context that “should immediately attract the attention of the modern historian” is “the events that immediately preceded and followed Jesus’ own ministry and that were closely connected to it...[in other words] the preaching of John the Baptist” and the fact that the authors of the “gospels and Acts” (“reveal[ing] that John had a sizeable following”) were a little embarrassed at having to admit that their hero, Jesus, had been at first a follower of the Baptist.”¹¹⁸

Neither did the Jesus Seminar ask the question why Jesus would want to be baptized.¹¹⁹ Even Robert Webb, himself a fellow of the Jesus Seminar, did not ask or even refer to this question. Webb wrote extensively in his dissertation on John the Baptist from a “social-historical” perspective. In his *Forschungsbericht*, published in the work on current research with regard to aspects of historical Jesus studies entitled “John the Baptist and his Relationship to Jesus,”¹²⁰ he does not touch on the issue.

To my knowledge, the only scholar in the field of historical Jesus studies who has come forward with an “educated guess” is Paul Hollenbach.¹²¹ In two different contributions he investigates the social world of “John the Baptizer’s preaching mission” and the “conversion of Jesus.” In the latter, he is in particular interested in “what Jesus was like before his conversion.”¹²² Hollenbach assumes that Jesus “went to John in order

to repent of his sin” but, as to what Jesus repented of, he admits that “we are really in the dark because of lack of evidence.” The only allusions in the sources are those texts that express the embarrassment of Christians (among others, cf. Heb 4:15).

Hollenbach finds his point of departure for inquiry in the Markan reference that Jesus was a carpenter (Mk 6:3).¹²³ As Jesus was a craftsman (τεκτων/n) “in the sense of ‘contractor’ or ‘builder’,” Hollenbach sets Jesus in a social class that “enjoyed considerable standing in society”.¹²⁴ according to this view, carpenters “in particular offered a large number of varied services on which especially poorer members of society would depend as they attempted to eke out a living....It is likely then that Jesus, as a substantial member of society, came to feel at least a general concern for the injustices that he could observe daily from this vantage point.”

Such a picture, however, is misleading. Only two crushing arguments against it will be sufficient to prove this judgment. One is taken from Sanders’ insights and the other from Crossan’s. Why would Jesus seek repentance outside the structures of the temple? The temple ideology stipulated that people “who transgressed the law should make reparations if their misdeeds harmed other people, repent and bring a sacrifice. God will always forgive the repentant sinner.”¹²⁵ As far as Crossan’s reception of Hollenbach’s hypothesis is concerned, we have an explicit acknowledgement of the insight of Hollenbach that “Jesus developed very soon his own distinctive message and movement which was very different from John’s.”¹²⁶ However, with regard to Jesus’ artisanship, he implicitly, and rightly so, repudiates Hollenbach: “If Jesus was a carpenter, he belonged to the Artisan class, that group pushed into the dangerous space between Peasants and Degradeds or Expendables.”¹²⁷

Although one could expect Crossan to be aware of the aim of Hollenbach's article, namely to ask "why Jesus went to John for baptism,"¹²⁸ he nevertheless does not ask the same important question. Crossan also never says that "no-evidence" would be the reason why this gap in the existing historical Jesus research is beyond investigation. Even in the "Third Quest," if one would like to differentiate between the "Renewed Quest" and the "Third Quest," the whole life and work of Jesus of Nazareth is clearly not really at stake yet, as Thomas Wright¹²⁹ thinks it is. What I have in mind is certainly not what Sanders put so indelicately in an academic paper, as Thomas Wright recalls: "the current flurry of interest in Mary's hymen (and Jesus' corpse)".¹³⁰

What I have in mind is to *reconstruct* history with the emphasis on the "con" because I am aware of my peculiar engagement in the process of *my* correlation of *context* and *content* (see again chapter 1). My journey with Jesus leads me to travel first from the South to the North. From where the river Jordan flows through the Judean Desert into the Dead Sea, the journey goes to the North, through Samaria and the agricultural estates of the Jezreel Valley (farmed by peasants, some of them previously landowners but now landless tenant farmers), then to Nazareth in Galilee (a simple village of peasants which is only a few miles from the Greco-Roman city of Sepphoris, once the capital), and then to the East, to the lake where the river Jordan starts its southern flow, to Herod Antipas' building operations of Tiberias, the new capital of Galilee ("a heavily mixed-race area," a place where Israelites would "cling fiercely to their ancestral traditions, and to maintain as best they could the symbols of their distinctiveness")¹³¹, to the plains and villages surrounding the "lake of Tiberias."

I shall return to these “symbols” and “traditions” and their peculiar relevance for the Israelites in “Galilee of the Gentiles” (cf. Mt 4:14), especially to their marriage arrangements in light of the purity system of Jerusalem’s Temple ideology. For now, it should be clear enough that I am convinced that the story of Jesus of Nazareth begins prior to the “cleansing of his sins.” He, and others, like “innocent infants,” could hardly be blamed for this epistemic sin because people who were labeled as “sinners” were often only those miserales who were trapped in institutionalized evil. Therefore, for me, the point of departure is the tradition behind the polemical faith assertions made by Paul, Matthew, Luke, John, and others after them. These assertions were about the origins of the peasant boy who probably became a carpenter and then, definitely, a revolutionary teacher and compassionate healer.

We know that, in all probability, after his baptism in the river Jordan, Jesus went back to the region where he came from, to the “Galilee of the Gentiles,” as Matthew described this region in light of Isaiah 8:23-9:1. The historical Jesus went back to his native land to live up to the Baptizer’s prophetic message. In other words, apart from a difference with regard to their respective “eschatological” views that seems to widen after John’s imprisonment, no disagreeing notions on the fundamental distinction between God’s kingdom and the kingdoms of this world emerged. Both John and Jesus repeated the message of the prophets in this regard. The prophetic message was about a light shining for people living in darkness. Isaiah spoke of God’s people living among the Gentiles in the northern regions of Israel (cf. Joshua 16:10; 17:12; 19:10-16; 19:32-39). Over the years, these people (the descendents of, among others, Joseph, Sebulon, and Naftali) became despised by Jerusalemites. Living in the “shadow of death” (cf. Mt 4:15-

16), they were victimized by Judean and foreign landlords who dispossessed their land and estranged them from their cultic practices. The Baptizer's message exposed the monarchs of Galilee, Judea, and Rome as well as all people who cared nothing about what the prophet (Is 1:16-17) said: "Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your doings from my eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; *defend the fatherless*, plead for the widow."

Beyond the Age Thirty Transition

The gospel stories of the birth of Jesus precede the accounts of his resurrection in both Scripture and the Christian creeds. Yet, according to Willi Marxsen, they should be understood "only on the basis of the faith of Easter, rather than the other way around."¹³² These powerful narratives are classic in their own right. Over so many centuries, they have articulated a confession of faith so story-like, so aesthetically beautiful. However, the majority of the fellows of the Jesus Seminar reached the historic conclusion¹³³ that they do not know whether Jesus of Nazareth was conceived while his mother, Mary, was engaged to Joseph. Viewed historically, 96 percent of the seminar members are certain that Mary did not become pregnant without having had sexual intercourse with a man. Fifty percent judge Joseph to have been, possibly, the biological father of Jesus and 97 percent that Mary was his biological mother. In a separate vote on the particulars of the genealogical record of Jesus in Matthew, the majority of the Jesus Seminar is uncertain whether Jacob was the father of Joseph, and therefore whether Jesus was indirectly of

Davidic descent. It must also be remembered that the expression “son of David” in Romans 1:3-4 and 2 Timothy 2:8 is not related to the figure “Joseph, son of Jacob.” Both references bear witness to the fact that the post-Easter “Christian” community honored Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah. Eighty-five percent of the Jesus Seminar believes that Joseph was the name of the man who adopted Jesus as his child. Four percent are convinced that Mary gave birth to Jesus as a result of either having been raped or seduced by an unknown man.

Despite the absence of clear historical proof, 29 percent judge it possible that Mary’s pregnancy might have been the result of either rape or seduction. Almost all of the members (99 percent) are convinced that the reports in Matthew and Luke that Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit constitute not a “historical statement” but a “theological” one. The majority is also uncertain whether Mary was a virgin at the time of conception. They believe that she probably became pregnant when Herod the Great was the “king of the Jews.” Luke’s reference to a worldwide Roman census, to Jesus being laid in a crib, to shepherds being the first to acknowledge his birth, or Matthew’s reference that they were “astronomers,” must be declared unhistorical. This also applies to the reports in both Matthew and Luke that the birth took place in Bethlehem, the reference in Matthew that children were murdered by Herod the Great as a result of Jesus’ birth, and that Jesus was taken to Egypt by his parents after his birth, the reference in Luke that John the Baptist was of priestly descent, that he was the cousin of Jesus, and that Jesus was taken to the temple as a child where Simeon and Anna saw him. Undoubtedly, all of these references are unhistorical.

In this case, the question of “illegitimacy” arises with regard to the birth of Jesus. What could the consequences of “illegitimacy” in the social world of Jesus have been? It is clear that the majority (62 percent) of the members of the Jesus Seminar are uncertain whether the birth of Jesus was the consequence of rape or seduction. This is related to the fact that there is no evidence to this effect in the documents. In the second century C.E. Justin, however, responded to accusations of rape.¹³⁴ Yet the credibility of these accusations cannot be founded on the principle of multiple, independent evidence. It is only based on the “Yeshua ben Pantera” traditions in the Talmud and the Medieval Toledot traditions, which are interdependent and extremely tendentious.

However, even if rape can be ruled out, in chapter 5 I will demonstrate that illegitimacy is a historical probability in light of the second temple ideology. Yet I will argue that “illegitimacy” need not necessarily mean that one’s mother was a “bad woman.” Within the familial structure of the Mediterranean world (against the background of the contemporaneous marriage arrangements), a pregnant woman who was abandoned by her husband (without the protection of a substitute) was often given the label “whore.” The child of such a woman (usually the firstborn) was deemed “born as a result of adultery.” This expression often pertained to “mixed marriages,” that is, a marriage between a “son/daughter of Abraham” and someone “outside the covenant.” Since the post-exilic marriage reform measures (see Neh 9-10; Ezra 9-10), and certainly also during the first century, there was an insistence on the basis of “priestly” purity codes that male Israelites divorce “foreign” women. The result was “fatherlessness,” or, in other words, “illegitimacy.” “Fatherless” men (boys older than twenty) were not allowed to enter the Temple (see Deut 23:3), nor to marry a fellow “true” (full-blooded)

Israelite (see [Bab] Yebamot 78b) because of their “sinfulness.” Illegitimacy may, of course, also refer to a birth that resulted from immorality, ravishment, incest or seduction. A proverb of Jesus found in the Gospel of Thomas (105) may indicate that if a person did not know who his or her father (or mother) was—that is, if someone had no identity because he or she was not a child of Abraham—then he or she would be called a “child of a whore” and would carry sin (see GThom 104).

Three other references to this theme are found in independent documents, which confirm that the tradition with regard to the “illegitimacy” of Jesus must be taken seriously. This tradition is independently attested to in the earliest stratum of intra-canonical New Testament documents (sayings in the Gospel of Thomas that go back to probably 50 C.E.). This is also the case in the second (the Gospel of Mark, written around 70 C.E.), in the third (in Luke and Matthew, written around 80-90 C.E. in traditions independent of Mark) as well as in the latest stratum (the Gospel of John, written around the end of the first century).

Mark 6:3 (against the background of the rejection of Jesus by his family in Nazareth) refers to Jesus not as the “son of Joseph,” but as “the son of Mary.” This latter expression is an indication that Jesus is without identity, an illegitimate person without a father who could have given him credibility. The second reference is found in Matthew 27:64. The phrase “in which case, the last deception will be worse than the first” may be interpreted as a reference to the defamatory campaign by the opponents of Matthew’s community. According to this defamatory campaign, the legend of the resurrection of Jesus is the “last deception” that is “worse” than the “first.” The latter may possibly refer to the legend of divine conception and the conviction that God legitimated Jesus, despite

his “fatherlessness,” as a child of Abraham, that is, a child of God. God’s legitimization is expressed within the framework of the Joseph tradition. An angel ordered Joseph in a dream to marry Mary, whose pregnant condition had been the doing of the Holy Spirit. The third reference occurs in John 19:9. In this passage (against the background of the accusation that Jesus was supposedly “King of the Jews”), Pilate asks Jesus: “Where are you from?” Jesus, however, remains silent. According to Rabbinic literature (see Qiddusin 4:2), a person must remain silent when confronted with his or her descent if he or she does not know who his or her father is. The reference in Qiddusin 4:2 is related to “street children” whose parents are unknown.

This information calls attention to the social dynamics of marriage arrangements in the Mediterranean world during the time of Jesus. Studying marriage arrangements enables one to form a good idea of how a society was organized. Marriage, in a sense, forms a microcosm of the macrocosm. The world of the Bible can be understood better by focusing on marriage and family. The sketch of the historical Jesus, given in the previous chapter, leads to the insight that Jesus’ life and work centered in his trust in God as his Father. By doing so, he redefined the Kingdom of God in terms of a fictive household in which everyone, including the “sinners,” has a direct and unmediated access to God. This does not mean, however, that all of our historical knowledge about Jesus must be reduced to the single aspect of kinship imagery.

Jesus escapes simplifying definitions. He was a child of Galilee. Galilee was a land known for its diversity with regard to both its topography and population. Galilee had a lake with simple farmers who fished for a daily catch on age-old boats and lords who ran a fish-salting and pottery industries. There were cities along the lakeshore or a

few miles away. In these cities there were temples devoted to deities and emperors, a royal palace, military fortifications, mansions with mosaics floors that depicted Greco-Roman deities around whom aristocrats reclined to enjoy festive meals served by servant-slaves who could be from nearby peasant farming communities that were transformed into estates. Galilee was multilingual, inhabited by pagans and Israelites, many of mixed marriage heritages upon whom Judeans looked down. Though not necessarily living in Samaria, Israelite Galileans were sometimes even stereotyped as “Samaritans” because of either their real or alleged mixed parentage or simply their living for centuries among the Gentiles in the northern part of the country. Visiting Judean Pharisees came to teach, threaten and enforce the purity laws of the sacred writings. Jerusalem Temple authorities appeared in time to collect the temple taxes (said to be the will of God) from impoverished people who tried to live according to ancestral traditions. In the peasant villages, family courtyards served as places for communal gatherings or sometimes as “synagogical” space for reciting and listening to the Torah. Farmers survived on small pieces of agricultural land. Landless tenant farmers worked for absentee lords in the cities, incurring huge debts. Records of these debts were kept in mansions and in “sacred places” far away—even in the Jerusalem temple. Sons of broken, distorted families sometimes tried to survive elsewhere. Pottery and fishing industries provided labor opportunities. For some peasants who were forced from their lands, carpentry was a profession necessary to survive economically. Bandits, outcasts, and rebels escaped to the mountains and found shelter in caves. This is “the Galilee of the Gentiles” where people lived in darkness. Somewhere there, Jesus is to be found. He was not with his

family and he did not practice his career (if he was a woodworker at all). He was a revolutionary and healer, teacher and helper.

Many features identified by Jesus scholars are not at odds with this profile. Actually, I am indebted to their discernment. Of course, there are aspects of some scholarly insights that I will not endorse. For example, I am not convinced that the subversive sayings and deeds of a Galilean peasant¹³⁵ would originate in a highly sophisticated Greek philosophical school. Yes, the “revolutionary biography” of an itinerant philosopher belonging to such a school can be compared with the life of a “homeless traveler.” Jesus as such a traveler would sometimes find housing in the fishing village Capernaum where the extended family of a fisher-friend lived (see Mk 1:29) and sometimes did not have a “nest” or a “hole,” like creatures of nature (see the Sayings Gospel Q 9:58). Yet we cannot do more than compare. The philosophical sophistication and domestication of “subversive itinerancy” originated after Jesus’ lifetime. Subversive itinerancy occurred when some “Christian” faction or other tried to find its own identity among synagogical and philosophical activities. They probably accomplished this by passing on and writing down “the Galilean’s” prophetic wisdom and healing performance. It can be called “revolution historized” or “subversion memorized” or even “historicization of myth.”

Likewise, it is unconvincing that Jesus’ initial “prophetic” association with the Baptizer led to a self-consciousness of being a Joshua of old, leading God’s “covenanted people” over the river Jordan into the “new promised” land. It does not seem that he had a perception of himself as the agent of God who forgave the sins of the people. The allusion by the historian Josephus (Vita 2) to the “baptizer” Banus (who lived and acted

in the desert similarly to John the Baptist) may be interpreted as a reference to someone who acted like John with a political motive in Joshua-style as the “revived” prophet Elijah (Mk 6:15). It therefore does not come as a surprise, as history indeed teaches us (JosAnt 17.5.2; Mk 6:17), that John was imprisoned and eliminated by the powers that be. It is also possible that the gospel tradition was correct in saying that these authorities and some others were ignited by Jesus and thought him to be “the Baptizer resurrected” (see Mk 6:14). This same gospel tradition, however, tried to rectify this image of Jesus that people might have had.

Discerning the respective “prophecies memorized” and “prophecies historicized” in the messages of gospel writers like Mark and Matthew (although not fully in concordance with each other) from the historical facts, we see an altogether different portrait of Jesus emerging than that of a typical prophet. It is a picture of a “sinner,” away from his home village, trapped in a strained relationship with relatives, but experiencing a fantasy homecoming in God’s kingdom. It is probably within such circumstances that an “imaginary reality” (which the Spirit of God created) brought about Jesus’ altered consciousness of encountering the care of a Heavenly Father. He both attested to and lived this reality. Through the stories and letters of associates who were likewise empowered, either by Jesus’ personal healing or by the tradition of his “memorized” healing, Jesus became the icon of God’s mercy and love.

In the next chapter, I will argue that the “ethical example” that the First-Testament Joseph figure fulfilled in Hellenistic-Semitic literature served as a model for the transmitters of the early Christian tradition. The Joseph tradition was also known to the authors of the Gospels of Matthew, Luke, and John. They found themselves (likes

others during the period 70 C.E. to 135 C.E.) in synogogical controversies about inter alia Jesus' "illegitimacy." They counteracted by positioning Jesus as the "son of Joseph, the son of Jacob." I will show that in Hellenistic-Semitic literature (like the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs) the "righteous" Joseph, despite defamation, became the ancestor of children whose sin were forgiven, who were given their daily bread, who were instructed to forgive others their trespasses, and gave them their share of God's daily bread and requested God that they not be tempted to disobey their Father's will. Against this background, Greek-speaking Israelites who became Christians retold the life of the Jesus of history. For some of them, Jesus, despite slander, became the image of God's forgiveness of sin and daily care, thanks to the God of his father (see also Gen 49:25), Joseph, son of Israel.

However, no Christian writing that originated between the years 30 C.E. and 70 C.E. recorded any knowledge about Joseph's connection with the Jesus of history. From this assumption, I believe a historical construct of Jesus' "whole life" within first-century Herodian Palestine can be built according to an ideal type of a fatherless figure living in Galilee. It is not an inflation of historical probabilities to say that the following features of Jesus' life go together:

- records show he was born out of wedlock;
- a father figure was absent in his life;
- he was an unmarried bachelor;
- he had a tense relationship with mother and other siblings;
- he was probably forced from farming to carpentry;

- he carried sinfulness that led to an association with a revolutionary baptizer;
- he experienced an altered state of consciousness in which God was present and acted like a Father;
- he abandoned craftsmanship, if he ever was a woodworker;
- he was “homeless” and led an itinerant lifestyle along the lakeshore;
- his journey seemed never to take him inside the cities Sepphoris and Tiberias, but was restricted to the plains, valleys, and hills of Galilee;
- he assembled a core of close friends;
- he defended fatherless children, patriarchless women, and other outcasts;
- he called them a “family” by resocializing them into God’s household by empowering healing as an agent of the Spirit of God;
- he offended village elders by subversive teaching and actions;
- he outraged Pharisees, Herodians, chief priests, and elders in Jerusalem by criticizing the manipulative ploys and misuse of hierarchical power by the temple authorities;
- he was crucified by the Romans after an outburst of emotion at the outer temple square;
- he died under uncertain circumstances while his body was not laid down in a family tomb;
- he was believed to be taken up to the bosom of father Abraham to be among the “living dead” as Scriptures foretold;
- but more than that, he was believed to be God’s beloved child who was already with God before creation and who is now preparing housing that is actually already present for those who still live by his cause.

In other words, what comes before and after “Jesus at thirty” seems to be his fatherlessness. This constructed portrait is my understanding of the Jesus of history and the Jesus of faith. It cannot be proved that this image is a representation of the “real” Jesus. However, this ideal type should be historically intelligible and explanatory with regard to textual evidence and archaeological findings. Vice versa, it should rely on contemporary canonical and non-canonical texts, including archaeological artifacts, which have to be interpreted in terms of a chronological stratification of relevant documents. It also would also have to be congruent with the social stratification of first-century Herodian Palestine.

In light of all of these prerequisites, I therefore have profound uneasiness with John W. Miller’s recent book *Jesus at Thirty: A Psychological and Historical Portrait*. Miller believes that he can explain Jesus’ unmarried status from the traditional viewpoint that Joseph died early in his lifetime. Jesus have been the firstborn and, according to the custom, would “[become] the breadwinner and family head at an early age.”¹³⁶ Miller refers to the New Testament scholar Robert H. Stein who wrote: “(O)nly one thing we really know is that with the death of Joseph the responsibilities of caring for the mother and family fell on the oldest son Jesus....Thus for the period after Joseph’s death to the time of his ministry, Jesus was the active breadwinner and responsible head of the family.”¹³⁷ Jesus would not have had the opportunity to be given by Joseph in marriage since Joseph was already dead. Therefore he did not marry. His relationship with his mother was special, tender, and compassionate. But it was the “father’s memory” that was “more precious to him than his living mother, who did not understand him and whom he turned away when she and his brothers came to take possession of him.”¹³⁸

As a “psychohistorian” Miller works “backward to childhood from analogous experiences in the life of the adult.”¹³⁹ This is the “developmental point of view” in psychology.¹⁴⁰ This school of psychology “profess(es) to tell us in any detail how human personality in all its complexity develops from childhood onward.” According to Miller, the Freudian model “elaborated by neo-Freudians” is the only recognized developmental model in this regard that “thus far not only survived empirical testing but demonstrated a remarkable capacity for interacting with historical disciplines in fruitful ways.” Specifically, the research of Erik Erikson on “life-stage developments during early adulthood” and that of Daniel Levinson on the “Age Thirty Transition” direct Miller to ask about why Jesus’ “vocational achievements” occurred at the age of thirty.¹⁴¹

The research of Erikson and Levinson demonstrates that “the desire for ‘intimacy’ and marriage, and then having children and caring for them” is “typical” for men at the age of thirty. On the presumption of Erikson’s “in-depth interviews with a cross section of forty American men” and of Levinson’s enhancement with the help of “typical experience resulting from cross-cultural factors inherent to the complex task of becoming an adult,” Miller applies the “Age Thirty Transition” complex to his understanding of Jesus’ “mission” of the “salvation of the sinners” and Jesus’ concern about the “fate of his people and the world” in light of the “mounting tensions with Rome.”¹⁴² The portrait of Jesus that emerges is that of “a father now himself with a ‘family’ of his own, one ‘born not of blood nor the will of the flesh nor the will of man, but of God,’” someone with “extraordinary faith and intuitively wise ‘father-like’ talent for relating helpfully to all types of people and situations.”¹⁴³ According to Miller, this behavior is “the fruit in part, no doubt, of an emotionally secure childhood and his [Jesus’] years of leadership in

his deceased father's family." Miller wishes to see "Jesus' baptism and temptations as a turning point during which he terminated an increasingly sterile role as surrogate 'father'....By means of this awakening and struggle he came to experience himself as 'son' of a gracious heavenly father."¹⁴⁴

My uneasiness with Miller's "psychohistorical" analysis of Jesus concerns not his use of psychology as such. The bottom line of Albert Schweitzer's protest against the "psycho-pathological" studies of Jesus was not whether their psychoanalytical theories were correct. Of course, these psychoanalytical theories should be tested as Schweitzer, the medically trained psychiatrist did. As biblical scholar, he was concerned about their unsophisticated historical analyses of the textual evidence in the New Testament. It is Miller's academic prerogative to differ from other psychoanalyses of Jesus, like those of Georges Berguer and Jane Darroch who both base their respective analysis of "Jesus' truly remarkable rapport with 'the father'" on the single textual evidence in the Gospel of Luke (2:49) where one finds the story of the twelve-year-old Jesus in the temple.¹⁴⁵ Miller's complaint centers on their application of the Freudian "Oedipal Complex." Someone with effective training in the field of psychology might find his correction to be sound.

However, from the perspective of biblical scholarship, the question should arise as to whether both the psychohistorical and cross-cultural analyses are based on evidence that will pass the test of both historical-critical exegesis and social-scientific criticism. It applies not only to the work of both Berguer and Darroch, but also to that Miller. For instance, the Lukan episode of the child Jesus in the temple would not be found even in the historical Jesus database of "conservative" researchers and would be explained by

social-scientific critics in light of child rearing practices in the first-century Mediterranean context.¹⁴⁶ The cross-cultural support from the “talmudic ‘Sayings of the Fathers’” (Avoth 5, 24) (which Daniel Levinson gives to Erik Erikson’s study of twentieth-century North-American individualistic-minded men) that age thirty is the “time in life when ‘full strength’ is attained,”¹⁴⁷ would not really pass a cultural-anthropological test either. It does not mean that the “Age Thirty Transition” could by no means be a factor in the life of first-century Mediterranean men. For example, in Genesis 41:46, we find a reference to Joseph the patriarch, who was betrayed by his brothers but, at the age of thirty, was exalted over all the Egyptians. The trustworthiness of such a theory should, however, be tested to a larger extent as it has been done thus far and, then, its characteristics should be explained against the background of first-century Mediterranean personality types.¹⁴⁸ The genuine problem with regard to Miller’s image of Jesus is:

- his uncritical acceptance of the historicity of the patristic tradition (like John P. Meier¹⁴⁹ and Marvin Cain¹⁵⁰) that Joseph died early in Jesus’ life;
- his presupposition that Jesus must be the firstborn among the siblings of Mary (built upon the legend of the birth story);
- his deductionistic inference that Jesus performed duties as a “surrogate father”;
- and finally, his conclusion that Jesus had an “emotionally secured childhood” because of “Jesus’ love of the word *Abba* as a term for addressing God,” his positive sayings about children and the “father-son” relationship imagery in his parables.

Almost none of the examples that Miller presents¹⁵¹ with regard to the father-son imagery is exegetically convincing. In the next three chapters I will argue respectively that a trajectory of traditions about Joseph historically illustrates the probable legendary nature of Joseph as a surrogate father figure, that fatherlessness socially explains Jesus' trust in God as Father, and that Jesus' blessing of children fits into the social context of defending the fatherless.

END NOTES

1. Crossan, J.D. 1994, "The Infancy and Youth of the Messiah," pp. 74-75.
2. Celsus, from *On the True Doctrine*, translated by R.J. Hoffman 1987.
3. See, among others, Meier, J.P. 1991, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, pp. 229-230; Borg, M.J. 1992, "The First Christmas," p. 4.
4. With regard to Gustav Jung and Mircea Eliade respective analyses of archetypes/myths concerning patriarchy, see Mary Jo Meadow 1992, "Archetypes and Patriarchy: Eliade and Jung," pp. 187-195.
5. Barthes, R. 1957, *Mythologies*, pp. 142-143.
6. Malina, B.J. 1991, "Is There a Circum-Mediterranean Person: Looking for Stereotypes," p. 71.
7. Salyer, G. 1995, "Myth, Magic and Dread: Reading Culture Religiously," p. 267.
8. Philip Wheelwright, in Perrin, N. 1976, *Jesus and the Language of the Kingdom: Symbol and Metaphor in New Testament Interpretation*, p. 22.
9. Eliade, M. 1963, *Myth and Reality*, p. 1.
10. Jung, C.G. 1956, "Symbols of Transformation," in Read, H., Fordham, M. & Adler, G. (eds.), *The Collected Works of C.G. Jung, Volume V*, p. 181. Cf. Meadow, M.J. 1992, "Archetypes and Patriarchy: Eliade and Jung," p. 188.
11. Meadow, M.J. 1992, "Archetypes and Patriarchy," pp. 188, 189.
12. Weber, M. 1949, *Max Weber on the Methodology of the Social Sciences*, pp. 89-112.
13. John Dominic Crossan in an elaboration orally presented during a conversation on his work at the Jesus and Faith Conference, DePaul University, Chicago, February 4-5, 1993.
14. Crossan, J.D. 1994, "The Historical Jesus in Earliest Christianity," in Carlson, J. & Ludwig, R.A. (eds.), *Jesus and Faith: A Conversation on the Work of John Dominic Crossan*, p. 10.
15. Crossan, J.D. 1991, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant*, p. 375.
16. Crossan, J.D. 1995, *Who Killed Jesus? Exposing the Roots of Anti-Semitism in the Gospel Story of the Death of Jesus*, p. 1.
17. Crossan, J.D. 1995, *Who Killed Jesus?*, crosses swords with mainly Brown, R.E. 1994, *The Death of the Messiah: From Gethsemane to the Grave*.
18. Crossan, J.D. 1995, *Who Killed Jesus?*, pp. 191, 203, 204.

19. Bultmann, R. [1976] 1985, *The Second Letter to the Corinthians*, pp. 159-160. Bultmann concurs with E. Vischer in this regard.
20. Bultmann, R. 1985, *The Second Letter to the Corinthians*, p. 160: The death of Christ is a demonstration of God's grace, and "this grace is available to the one who opens himself [or herself] to it...so that 'katallage' [redemption]...occurred apart from people, independent of their conversion; it is the surrender of Christ into death."
21. Bultmann, R. 1985, *The Second Letter to the Corinthians*, p. 157.
22. Whatever it may be, the "sinlessness" of Christ is, according to Bultmann, R. 1985, *The Second Letter to the Corinthians*, p. 165, maintained by Paul: "he had not sinned...whether at his incarnation or his death."
23. Cf. Rm 8:3. See Bultmann, R. 1985, *The Second Letter to the Corinthians*, pp. 164-165.
24. Bultmann, R. 1985, *The Second Letter to the Corinthians*, p. 155, relates the expression "Christ according to the flesh" to the other Pauline expressions in Phil. 3:21
25. Bultmann, R. 1985, *The Second Letter to the Corinthians*, p. 165.
26. Bultmann R. 1985, *The Second Letter to the Corinthians*, p. 155 note 154, quite rightly sees the reference to the transformation of ο9 Xristo\j to\ kata\ sa/rka into ui(o/j Qeou~ e)n duna/mei kata\ pneu~ma a9giwsu/nhj e)c a)nasta/sewj nekrw~n (Rm 1:4) as belonging to the same referential sphere than the expressions sw~ma th~j do&chj au)tou~ in Phil 3:21 and ο3j e)stin e)n decia~| tou~ Qeou~ in Rm 8:34.
27. Schaberg, J. 1994, "The Cancelled Father: Historicity and the NT Infancy Narratives," p. 32. See also Schaberg, J. 1987, *The Illegitimacy of Jesus: A Feminist Theological Interpretation of the Infancy Narratives*.
28. Cf. Schaberg, J. 1993, "The Infancy of Mary of Nazareth (Proto-James and Pseudo-Matthew)," in Schlüssler Fiorenza, E. (ed.), *For Searching the Scriptures*; Schaberg, J. 1993, "Feminist Interpretation of the Infancy Narrative of Matthew; Schaberg, J. 1994, "The Cancelled Father: Historicity and the NT Infancy Narratives."
29. From a cultural-anthropological perspective it is, therefore, worthwhile to take note of the interpretations of Jesus' baptism by African theologians. Maturity is very highly estimated in traditional African culture. Authority and legitimization depend greatly on adulthood. Jesus' baptism (as well as his resurrection, understood as an exaltation to become the authoritative elder brother among the living dead - see also LeMarquand, G. 1994, "The Historical Jesus and African New Testament Scholarship," p. 11) is indeed seen as an initiation rite (cf. Nyamiti, C. 1991, "African Christologies Today" p. 8), just

30. Ernst, J. 1989, *Johannes der Tauffer: Interpretation – Geschichte – Wirkungsgeschichte*, p. 337, expresses this consensus in research as follows (my emphasis): “An der Tatsächlichkeit der Taufe Jesu durch Johannes besteht...kein begründeter Zweifel. Mölicherweise kann man noch ein Stück weitergehen und sagen, *Jesus habe bei dieser Gelegenheit seines großes Berufungserlebnis gehabt.*”
31. Jeremias, J. 1971, *New Testament Theology, Vol I: The Proclamation of Jesus*, p. 42.
32. Jeremias, J. 1971, *New Testament Theology*, pp. 42-56.
33. Rudolf Bultmann, in Painter, J. 1987, *Theology as Hermeneutics: Rudolf Bultmann’s Interpretation of the History of Jesus*, p. 102. The originally German is to be found in Bultmann, R. [1960] 1965, *Das Verhältnis der urchristlichen Christusbotschaft zum historischen Jesus*, p. 11: “Mit einiger Vorsicht also wird man über as Wirken Jesu Folgendes sagen können. Charakteristisch für ihn sind Exorzismen, der Bruch des Sabbatgebotes, die Verletzung von Reinheitsvorschriften, die Polemik gegen die jüdische Gesetzlichkeit, die Gemeinschaft mit deklassierten Personen wie Zöllnern und Dirnen, die Zuneigung zu Frauen und Kindern; auch ist zu erkennen, daß Jesus nicht wie Johannes der Täufer ein Asket war, sondern gerne aß und ein Glas Wein trank. Vielleicht darf man noch hinzufügen, daß er zur Nachfolge aufrief und eine kleine Schar von Anhängern—Männern und Frauen um sich sammelte.”
34. Bultmann, R. 1965, *Das Verhältnis der urchristlichen Christusbotschaft zum historischen Jesus*, p. 11 note 17; Conzelmann, H. 1973, “Jesus,” in *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart* (expanded and updated in 1973).
35. See Keck, L.E. 1971, *A Future for the Historical Jesus: The Place of Jesus in Preaching and Theology*, pp. 41-42 note 12; Borg M.J. [1988] 1994, *Jesus in Contemporary Scholarship*, p. 4; Scott, B.B. 1994, “From Reimarus to Crossan: Stages in a Quest,” p. 256.
36. See Funk, R.W. (and The Jesus Seminar) 1998, *The Acts of Jesus: What Did Jesus really Do?*; Funk, R.W. (with Hoover, R.W.) 1993, *The Five Gospels: The Search for the Authentic Words of Jesus*.

37. Painter, J. 1987, *Theology as Hermeneutics: Rudolf Bultmann's Interpretation of the History of Jesus*, p. 102.
38. My translation of Bultmann, R. [1926] 1988, *Jesus* (Neuausgabe), p. 13: "von seiner Verkündigung wissen wir so viel, daß wir uns ein zusammenhängendes Bild machen können."
39. Schmithals, W. 1988, "Nachwort," in Bultmann, R. 1988, *Jesus* (Neuausgabe), p. 149: "Als Bultmann nach dem ersten Weltkrieg sein Jesusbuch schrieb, stand darum für ihn fest, 'daß wir vom Leben und von der Persönlichkeit Jesu so gut wie nichts mehr wissen können' [Bultmann 1988, p. 10]. Es ist ein groteskes Mißverständnis, wenn man diesen Satz gelegentlich in dem Sinne zitiert findet, nach Bultmanns Meinung könne man von Jesus nichts mehr wissen. Bultmann hat nie daran gezweifelt, daß wir uns ein hinreichend deutliches Bild von der Lehre und also von den Absichten und dem Werk Jesu verschaffen können." Referring to Bultmann's writing in the period after the First World War Schmithals he has probably in mind the "so genannte liberale Leben-Jesu-Theologie," that is, in Albert Schweitzer's words, the "old quest of the historical Jesus." Over against Thomas Wright's opinion that the "new questers" did not take the first-century "Jewish" context seriously it should however be acknowledged that the historical Jesus is treated by Bultmann "as a Jew in the context of the diversity of Judaism" (Painter, J. 1987, *Theology as Hermeneutics: Rudolf Bultmann's Interpretation of the History of Jesus*, p. 101).
40. Bultmann, R. [1951] 1974, *Theology of the New Testament*, Vol. One, pp. 2627. In German: "... an das historische Faktum der Taufe Jesu durch Johannes angeknüpft hat."
41. Bultmann, R. 1974, *Theology of the New Testament*, Vol. One, p. 27.
42. Bultmann, R. [1921] 1967, *Die Geschichte der synoptischen Tradition*, p. 263 note 1, uses the expression "Wirksamkeit Jesu" for "ministry." Bultmann, R. 1972, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition*, p. 247 note 2, adds: "yet not that this linking must be made by the story of a baptism, or that it could only be made if the baptism of Jesus were not an actual historical fact."
43. Philip Wheelwright, in Perrin, N. 1976, *Jesus and the Language of the Kingdom: Symbol and Metaphor in New Testament Interpretation*, p. 22.
44. Bultmann, R. 1972, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition*, p. 253.
45. This embarrassment is expressed in Mt 3:14f. and by Jerome (Against Pelagius, 3.2) who derived it from the Gospel of the Nazoreans. Bultmann refers to this document as the "Gospel of the Hebrews," since Jerome "assigned all known quotations of Jewish-

46. Bultmann, R. 1988, *Jesus* (Neuausgabe), pp. 20-22.
47. Pesch, R. 1977, *Das Markusevangelium, I.Teil: Einleitung und Kommentar zu Kap. 1,1-8,26*, p. 80.
48. See Reumann, J. 1972, "The Quest for the Historical Baptist," pp. 181-199.
49. See Tatum, W.B. 1994, *John the Baptist and Jesus*, pp. 79-80.
50. See Tatum, W.B. 1994, *John the Baptist and Jesus*, p. 80.
51. Bultmann, R. [1964] 1971, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, p. 94. In German, see Bultmann, R. 1968, *Das Evangelium des Johannes*, p. 65 (my emphasis): "Man darf das freilich nicht so deuten, als sei die Tatsache der Taufe Jesu für den Evglisten eine Verlegenheit gewesen, sodaß er sie möglichst verschweigt. Vielmehr nimmt er auf sie sichtlich unbefangen Bezug; aber er erzählt sie nicht, weil er sie als bekannt voraussetzen kann, und weil ihm das bloße historische Faktum unwesentlich ist gegenüber den in ihm begründeten Täufererzeugnis."
52. Bultmann, R. 1965, "Die Erforschung der synoptischen Evangelien," in *Glauben und Verstehen*, IV, p. 34.
53. The Gospel of the Nazoreans is referred to by Jerome in his *Against Pelagius* (3.2) and the Gospel of the Ebionites is referred to by Epiphanius in his *Heresies* (30.13.7-8), see Tatum, W.B. 1994, *John the Baptist and Jesus*, pp. 89, 90.
54. This interpretation can be regarded as one-sided because of its individualistic existentialism without social awareness. Clive Marsh, "Quests of the Historical Jesus in New Historicist Perspective" (1997, p. 415), put it as follows: "Bultmann's individualism...is well known. The apparent lack of explicit social and political awareness, either in Bultmann's New Testament work or in that of the post-Bultmannians [including Schmithals] who sought Jesus by an existential route, has proved costly." With regard to Jesus' baptism Schmithals, W. 1994, *Theologiegeschichte des*

55. Ernst, J. 1989, *Johannes der Täufer: Interpretation – Geschichte – Wirkungsgeschichte*, p. 337: “Kein christlicher Theologe wäre von sich aus auf den Gedanken gekommen, den Sohn Gottes mit Umkehr und Sündenvergebung in Verbindung zu bringen. Die biblische Überlieferung der Täuferzählung gibt in ihrer zunehmenden apologetischen Überarbeitung noch deutlich erkennen, wie schwer man sich mit der offenkundigen Subordination getan hat.”
56. Perkins, P. 1983, “The Historical Jesus and Christology” , p. 23. However, it is important to realize that current historical Jesus does not necessarily presents less emphasis on serious historical-critical analysis of textual and social evidence. Besides of its ideological-critical awareness and acknowledgement of “autobiographical” projection, post-modern historiography tries to avoid any positivism. Clive Marsh, “Quests of the Historical Jesus in New Historicist Perspective” (1997, p. 406), illustrates this “new historicist” perspective by referring particularly to Crossan’s *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (1991): “Crossan has responded recently to those who criticize him for such autobiographical elements, noting the inevitability of being influenced by one’s life experience as a historical interpreter” (Marsh , C. 1997, p. 406 note 5). “Not surprisingly, noting the wide range of pictures of Jesus on offer in the late 1980s/early 1990s, Crossan can remark: ‘It is impossible to avoid the suspicion that historical research is a very safe place to do theology and call it history, to do autobiography and call it biography.’ ...Crossan seems fully aware that he will inevitably be

57. Sanders, E.P. 1993, *The Historical Figure of Jesus*, pp. 1011. Cf. Sanders, E.P. 1985, *Jesus and Judaism*.
58. Sanders, E.P. 1993, *The Historical Figure of Jesus*, p. 10.
59. There are a few exceptions, such as his constant, though more subtle now, peculiar idea of Jesus as an eschatological proclaimer of the kingdom.
60. Sanders, E.P. 1993, *The Historical Figure of Jesus*, pp. 1213.
61. Sanders, E.P. 1993, *The Historical Figure of Jesus*, p. 75.
62. Sanders, E.P. 1993, *The Historical Figure of Jesus*, p. 88.
63. See Bultmann, R. 1972, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition*, pp. 292, 295, 298, 302, 304, 306.
64. Origen, *Against Celsus* I, 28; Talmud, e.g. Sab 104b. See Bultmann, R. 1972, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition*, pp. 293-294. Kee, H.C. 1990, *What Can We Know about Jesus?*, pp. 12-13, refers as follows to the reference in the Talmud: "Allusions to [Jesus] in the rabbinic writings are of uncertain date, since the basic documents of rabbinic Judaism were not produced until the period from the second to the sixth centuries. It is impossible to date with certainty those traditions included in this material known in its final form as the Mishna and the Talmud which claim that they are quoting rabbis who were (allegedly) active in the first century. Jesus is referred to as 'certain person,' on the assumption that even to mention his name would be to give him undue honor. The specific details about this unnamed character and his followers point unmistakably to Jesus. In some passages of this Jewish material, he is called Ben Stadia or Ben Panthera, implying that he is the illegitimate son (Ben, in Hebrew) of a soldier or some other unworthy person. Similarly, his mother is pictured as disreputable. In a

65. Crossan, J.D. 1994, *The Historical Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography*, p. 18; Crossan, J.D. 1994, “The Infancy and Youth of the Messiah,” p. 68.
66. Schmithals, W. 1985, *Einleitung in die drei ersten Evangelien*, p. 337; Schaberg, J. 1987, *The Illegitimacy of Jesus*; Schaberg, J. 1993, “The Infancy of Mary of Nazareth (Proto-James and Pseudo-Matthew)”; Schaberg, J. 1993, “Feminist Interpretation of the Infancy Narrative of Matthew”; Schaberg, J. 1994, “The Cancelled Father: Historicity and the NT Infancy Narratives.”
67. Crossan, J.D. 1994, *The Historical Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography*, p. 18.
68. Meier, J.P. 1991, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, pp. 229-230. According to Meier the “seedbed” for this idea should be sought in Jewish apocalyptic
69. Meier, J.P. 1991, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, p. 22.

70. Schaberg, J. 1993, “The Infancy of Mary of Nazareth (Proto-James and Pseudo-Matthew),” p. 20.
71. Schaberg, J. 1994, “The Cancelled Father: Historicity and the NT Infancy Narratives’, p. 20.
72. The references in Rm 1:3-4 and 2 Tm 2:8 to Jesus being born of the “seed” of David should not be understood as allusions to the paternity of a historical Joseph (contra Schaberg, J. 1994, “The Cancelled Father: Historicity and the NT Infancy Narratives,” p. 19 note 35). People misunderstood Bultmann’s (1985, *The Second Letter to the Corinthians*, p. 155 note 154) interpretation of Rm 1:3-4 by deducing from his insight into Paul’s important distinction between the ο) Χριστο\j το\ kata\ sa/rka (“Christ in his plainness”) and the ο) Χριστο\j το\ kata\ pneu~ma (“the resurrected Christ”) an absolute discontinuity between the historical Jesus and the kerygmatic Christ, so that the historical Jesus is not considered as part of Christian faith. In chapter II demonstrated why I do not interpret Bultmann in this way (see again Bultmann, R. 1965, *Das Verhaltnis der urchrislichen Christusbotschaft zum historischen Jesus*).
73. Schaberg, J. 1994, “The Cancelled Father: Historicity and the NT Infancy Narratives,” p. 19.
74. See Schaberg, J. 1994, “The Infancy of Mary of Nazareth (Proto-James and Pseudo-Matthew),” pp. 708-727.
75. Bultmann, R. 1976, *Der zweite Brief an die Korinther*, p. 157.
76. Crossan, J.D. 1991, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant*, pp. 371-372.
77. Borg, M.J. 1992, “The First Christmas,” p. 4.
78. Crossan uses the expression “historicization of prophecy” also with regard to his understanding of Paul’s perspective on “death through which sin is buried” (see Crossan, J.D. 1995, *Who Killed Jesus: Exposing the Roots of Anti-Semitism in the Gospel Story of the Death of Jesus*, pp. 195-197) and the “historical narrative” in the Gospel of Peter about the “resurrected, escorted cross that spoke” (see esp. Crossan, J.D. 1988, *The Cross That Spoke: The Origins of the Passion Narrative*).
79. Crossan, J.D. 1994, *The Historical Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography*, pp. 23-24.
80. Borg, M.J. 1994, *Meeting Jesus AGAIN for the First Time*, p. 25. Cf. Borg, M.J. 1999, “The Meaning of the Birth Stories,” pp. 179-188.
81. Borg, M.J. 1992, “The First Christmas,” p. 10 note 3.

82. Meier, J.P. 1991, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, p. 221.
83. Crossan, J.D. 1994, "The Infancy and Youth of the Messiah," p. 67.
84. Crossan, J.D. 1994, "The Infancy and Youth of the Messiah," p. 72.
85. Funk, R.W. 1996, *Honest to Jesus: Jesus for a New Millennium*, p. 294.
86. Funk, R.W. 1996, *Honest to Jesus*, p. 293.
87. Cf. Beare, F.W. 1981, *The Gospel According to Matthew: A Commentary*, p. 68; Brown, R.E. 1979, *The Birth of the Messiah: A Commentary on the Infancy Narratives of Matthew and Luke*, pp. 125-128.
88. Wright, N.T. 1996, *Christian Origins and the Question of God, Vol. 2: Jesus and the Victory of God*, pp. 186-187 note 160.
89. Meier, J.P. 1991, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, p. 317.
90. Crossan, J.D. 1994, *The Historical Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography*, p. 23.
91. Crossan, J.D. 1994, *The Historical Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography*, p. 24.
92. Crossan, J.D. 1994, *The Historical Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography*, p. 44.
93. Cf. Bultmann, R. [1960] 1965, *Das Verhältnis der urchristlichen Christusbotschaft zum historischen Jesus*, p. 11.
94. Wiedemann, T. 1989, *Adults and Children in the Roman Empire*, pp. 49-83.
95. Schaberg, J. 1994, "The Cancelled Father: Historicity and the NT Infancy Narratives," p. 14.
96. Crossan, J.D. 1994, *The Historical Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography*, p. 44.
97. Sanders, E.P. 1993, *The Historical Figure of Jesus*, p. 94.
98. 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. 42. Cf. Crossan, J.D. 1991, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant*, pp. 227-264; Crossan, J.D. 1994, *The Historical Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography*, pp. 29-53; Borg, M.J. 1994, *Jesus in Contemporary Scholarship*, p. 77; Hollenbach, P. 1982, "The Conversion of Jesus: From the Baptizer to Jesus the Healer."
99. Funk, R.W. 1996, *Honest to Jesus*, pp. 167-168.
100. Wright, N.T. 1996, *Christian Origins and the Question of God, Vol. 2: Jesus and the Victory of God*, p. 167.
101. Crossan, J.D. 1994, *The Historical Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography*, p. 47.
102. See, among others, Crossan, J.D. 1994, *The Historical Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography*, p. 34.
103. Crossan, J.D. 1994, *The Historical Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography*, p. 34.

104. In Crossan, J.D. 1994, *The Essential Jesus: Original Sayings and Earliest Images*, pp. 9-13, he explores this kind of combinational notion when he creatively and ingeniously links texts and pre-Constantine images in order to understand the “essential,” the “historical,” Jesus better.
105. Sanders, E.P. 1993, *The Historical Figure of Jesus*, p. 76.
106. Funk, R.W. 1996, *Honest to Jesus*, pp. 59-60.
107. Horsley, R.A. & Silberman, N.A. 1997, *The Message and the Kingdom*, pp. 34, 40.
108. Horsley, R.A. & Silberman, N.A. 1997, *The Message and the Kingdom*, pp. 40-41.
109. Crossan, J.D. 1994, *The Historical Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography*, pp. 47-48 (my emphasis).
110. Cf. Crossan, J.D. 1991, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant*, p. 260.
111. Crossan, J.D. 1994, *The Historical Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography*, p. 51
112. Sanders, E.P. 1993, *The Historical Figure of Jesus*, p. 227, 229, 231-133 (emphasis by Sanders).
113. Sanders, E.P. 1993, p. 233.
114. Sanders, E.P. 1993, p. 34.
115. Wright, N.T. 1996, *Christian Origins and the Question of God, Vol. 2: Jesus and the Victory of God*, p. 274. Although Wright disagrees with Sanders to some extent with regard to who the “sinners” in the social world of Jesus could be and what it meant that Jesus offered people “forgiveness of sin,” he concurs that “Jesus was replacing adherence or allegiance to Temple and Torah with allegiance to himself.”
116. Sanders, E.P. 1993, p. 229.
117. Sanders, E.P. 1993, pp. 12-13.
118. Sanders, E.P. 1993, pp. 92, 93-94.
119. Tatum, W.B. 1994, *John the Baptist and Jesus: A Report of the Jesus Seminar*.
120. Webb, R.L. 1991, *John the Baptizer: A Socio-Historical Study*; Webb, R.L. 1994, “John the Baptist and his Relationship to Jesus,” pp. 179-230.
121. Hollenbach, P. 1979, “Social Aspects of John the Baptizer’s Preaching Mission in the Context of Palestinian Judaism,” pp. 850-857; Hollenbach, P. 1982, “The Conversion of Jesus: From the Baptizer to Jesus the Healer,” pp. 196-219.
122. Hollenbach, P. 1982, “The Conversion of Jesus: From the Baptizer to Jesus the Healer,” p. 198.
123. Hollenbach, P. 1982, “The Conversion of Jesus,” p. 200.

124. Hollenbach, P. 1982, "The Conversion of Jesus," p. 200 note 9.
125. Sanders, E.P. 1993, *The Historical Figure of Jesus*, p. 34.
126. Crossan, J.D. 1991, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant*, p. 238.
127. Crossan, J.D. 1994, *The Historical Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography*, p. 25. Cf. Fiensy, D.A. 1991, *The Social History of Palestine in the Herodian Period: The Land is Mine*, p. 164; Lenski, G., Nolan, P. & Lenski, J. [1970] 1995, *Human Societies: An Introduction to Macrosociology*, pp. 216-218.
128. Hollenbach, P. 1982, "The Conversion of Jesus," p. 199.
129. Wright, N.T. 1992, *Who was Jesus?*, p. 13. In his 1996 magisterial work *Christian Origins and the Question of God, Vol. 2: Jesus and the Victory of God*, pp. 160-161, Wright refers affirmatively to Hollenbach's work on John the Baptist published in 1992 in the *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, but not to the above-mentioned two articles by Hollenbach, published respectively in 1979 and 1982 in the *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt*.
130. Wright, N.T. 1992, *Who was Jesus?*, p. 76.
131. See also Horsley, R.A. & Silberman, N.A. 1997, *The Message and the Kingdom: How Jesus and Paul Ignited a Revolution and Transformed the Ancient World*, pp. 31, 76.
132. Marxsen, W. 1969, *Der Exeget als Theologe*, pp. 169-170; see Ogden, S.M. 1996, *Doing Theology Today*, p. 249.
133. Funk, R.W. (& The Jesus Seminar) 1998, *The Acts of Jesus*, pp. 497-526.
134. Shabbath (104). See discussion by Kee, H.C. 1990, *What Can We Know about Jesus?*, pp. 12-13; Schaberg, J. 1987, *The Illegitimacy of Jesus*, p. 167; Lüdemann, G. 1998, *Virgin Birth? The Real Story of Mary and Her Son Jesus*, p. 59.
135. See Horsley, R.A. & Silberman, N.A. 1997, *The Message and the Kingdom*, p. 3, 25, 47.
136. Miller, J.W. 1997, *Jesus at Thirty: A Psychological and Historical Portrait*, p. 36. See also Connick, C.M. 1974, *Jesus, the Man, the Mission, and the Message*, p. 131.
137. Stein, R. H. 1966, *Jesus the Messiah: A Survey of the Life of Christ*, p. 85, in Miller, J.W. 1997, *Jesus at Thirty*, p. 130 note 20.
138. Miller, J.W. 1997, *Jesus at Thirty*, p. 47.
139. Miller, J.W. 1997, p. 36.
140. Miller, J.W. 1997, p. 10.

141. Miller, J.W. 1997, pp. 77-95. Cf., among other publications, Erikson, E. 1982, “The Galilee Sayings and the Sense of ‘I,’” pp. 321-262; Erikson, E. 1958, *Young Man Luther: A Study in Psychoanalysis and History*; Levinson, D. 1978, *The Seasons of a Man’s Life*.
142. Miller, J.W. 1997, p. 89.
143. Miller, J.W. 1997, p. 99.
144. Miller, J.W. 1997, p. 81.
145. Miller, J.W. 1997, pp. 112-114. Cf. Berguer, G. 1923, *Some Aspects of the Life of Jesus from the Psychological and Psycho-analytical Point of View*; Darroch, J. 1947, “An Interpretation of the Personality of Jesus,” pp. 75-79.
146. See Pilch, J.J. 1991, “‘Beat his Ribs while he is Young’ (Sir 30:12): Cultural Insights on the Suffering of Jesus.”
147. Miller, J.W. 1997, p. 80.
148. See Malina, B.J. 1989, “Dealing with Biblical (Mediterranean) Characters: A Guide for US Consumers,” pp. 127-141.
149. Meier, J.P. 1991, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus, Volume One: The Roots of the Problem and the Person*, p. 317.
150. Cain, M. 1999, *Jesus the Man: An Introduction for People at Home in the Modern World*, p. 30.
151. See, esp. Miller, J.W. 1997, pp. 39-40. The *qorban* text in Mk 7:9-13 is, in my opinion, the only evidence where we have an indication that Jesus cared for parents. If this episode goes historically back to Jesus, the detail of almost haggadic elements that feature in the whole episode and which are typical Markan features underline the possibility that we could call this “controversy story” rather “true fiction” than history. Nevertheless, the moral of this story is about Temple critique in light of an anti-hierarchical protest against economical exploitation. It presumes a defending of “childlesses” similar to “fatherlesses” and not a devotion to patriarchs. If this story is about devotion to parents it does not compromises with the overall picture of the historical Jesus’ attitude towards “family values” (cf. Osiek, C. 1997, “Jesus and Cultural Values: Family Life as an Example,” pp. 800-814).