

**HISTORICIZATION OF MYTH:  
THE METAPHOR “JESUS – CHILD OF GOD”  
AND ITS HELLENISTIC-SEMITIC AND  
GRECO-ROMAN BACKGROUND**

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**To Grobbie,**

**for her contribution back at home while I was abroad to complete this  
dissertation.**

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## 1 ~ PRESUPPOSITIONS AND METHODOLOGY

### The Jesus Enigma

At the beginning of the twentieth century Albert Schweitzer observed that portrayals of Jesus by people in the century prior to his own mirrored in some way or another the lives and settings of those who had depicted it. In the last paragraph of his famed book *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, Schweitzer<sup>1</sup> spoke of Jesus as the “one unknown” to those, “wise or simple,” who had obeyed his command to follow him but to whom he would “reveal himself in the toils, the conflicts, the sufferings which they shall pass through in his fellowship,” and, then, as an unspeakable puzzle (in Schweitzer’s words, “unaussprechliches Geheimnis”), “they shall learn in their own experience who he is.”

By carefully analyzing the Bible historically in the light of the knowledge available to him at that time, Schweitzer emphasized the strange difference between the first-century Mediterranean and twentieth-century European worldviews and mind-sets. Those images of Jesus by Bible readers who do not have an educated historic consciousness and, therefore, do not take the dissimilarity regarding these worldviews and mind-sets seriously, are merely pictures featuring their own worlds. It requires only a cursory view of the paintings of artists like El Greco (painter, born circa 1541 in Crete, worked in Italy and Spain, and died circa 1614) and Rembrandt (a Dutch painter and etcher, born in 1606 and died 1669), to underscore Schweitzer’s observation.

Well-founded research is also available in the field of the psychology of religion<sup>2</sup> that demonstrates a clear relationship between images people have of God and images of parental figures. Building upon this research, another study shows that the Christian believer (either exegetically trained or not) tends to “shape a *self-concept* that corresponds...to some extent and in some sense to his or her image of Jesus.”<sup>3</sup> From these studies the psychology of religion draws the plausible hypothesis that those “deep questions” about what human beings value, “underlie all ‘readings of Jesus’.”<sup>4</sup> The discord among scholars about the nature of either the historical Jesus or the risen Christ is “in part a function of disagreements about...values.”

Nobody’s portrayal of someone’s life or of some event is an intact, objective reconstruction. This dictum also applies to the constructs of scholars with a well-trained historic consciousness, like Schweitzer himself.<sup>5</sup> It is Schweitzer himself, as we have seen, who notes that the follower of Jesus shall learn in her or his own experience who Jesus *is*. Schweitzer’s truism, therefore, certainly applies to the portrayals by the first witnesses of Jesus’ life which are found in the known and, for many, unknown Christian writings of the earliest centuries of the common era. This includes all of the precursors to Schweitzer, and both his concurrent and subsequent companions who have interpreted these “paper” characters in the Bible and constructed their images of Jesus from reconstructed artifacts. It is no weakness to admit to it. However, there are certain constraints because not “anything goes.” An image of Jesus can be either an alienation or an affirmation of the model, even if the portrayal is only a shadowy etching. Reflecting on the boundaries of interpretation and how far one is allowed to spread one’s wings requires one to seriously consider one’s presuppositions. Answers should be given to

questions such as: What is at stake when one says that the study of the life of Jesus is important? How much can we know about him? Are our earliest Christian writings, including those in the New Testament and other apocryphal and pseudepigraphical literature, in continuation or discontinuation of the Jesus of history? Why do scholars distinguish between a pre-Easter Jesus and a post-Easter Jesus? What does it mean to refer to the first as the “historical Jesus” and to the latter as the “kerygmatic Christ”? Did Jesus regard himself to be Christ, or for that matter, Son of God? Why is it necessary to reflect once more on the continued importance of Jesus and on the interrelationship between the quest for the historical Jesus and the origins of the church? It could therefore be of help to take the request of Sean Freyne,<sup>6</sup> to heart:

Yet I am convinced that the present “third wave” quest for the historical Jesus is no more free of presuppositions than any of the other quests that went before it. Nor could it be otherwise, no matter how refined our methodologies. If we are all prepared to say at the outset what is at stake for us in our search for Jesus—ideologically, academically, personally—then there is some possibility that we can reach an approximation to the truth of things, at least for now. Even that would be adequate.

Leif E. Vaage,<sup>7</sup> in a contribution entitled “The Scholar as *Engagé*,” adheres to this position. According to him, the fact that there are as many faces of Jesus as there are Jesus researchers is not a matter of different modes of knowing or various angles of seeing different dimensions of one and the same object:

What captivates, rather, is the social fact of situated discourses and their specific subjects. The oft-touted “subjectivity” of historical-Jesus research is

simply a function of the fact that, unlike certain other forms of New Testament scholarship, the link here is still patent between who the particular scholar is, including the social grouping(s) to which she or he belongs, and the preferred form(s) into which the Jesus data have been made to fit. Thus, the more honest and precise we can be about exactly what makes “the historical Jesus” worth discussing and what we hope to gain from our “Jesus,” the better the chance there is that our conversation about the historical Jesus will produce not just scholarly smoke but intellectual fire and human warmth.

## **Research Outline**

The “situated discourse” of this study is not only a matter of ideological and academic concern, but most definitely one of personal engagement. Identifying a research gap with regard to existing Jesus research in chapter two will therefore consist of explaining two phases. One pertains to the growing realization among scholars that, if one denies at the doorstep the quest for the historical Jesus, doubt concerning God comes in through the window. The second facet aims at showing that, to some extent, a new frame of reference is established among scholars today within which historical Jesus research is being done. It is as if we have put on a different thinking cap. In chapter three I shall argue that the starting point of the quest for the historical Jesus could be moved beyond Jesus’ relationship to John the Baptist. Thus far, Jesus’ baptism has been seen by historical-critical exegetes as the point of departure for the quest. However, one can move backward from the Jordan to the cradle, in spite of all the legendary elements that cloud the nativity stories. Yet, in taking such a step, one should be aware of historiographical pitfalls when one studies the process of the “historization” of myth.



In chapter four, entitled “the Joseph trajectory,” I demonstrate that Joseph, the father of Jesus, should probably be seen as a legendary figure. Such an argument will lead me to conclude that Jesus should be seen as someone who grew up fatherless. In antiquity, especially in first-century Galilee, fatherlessness meant trouble. Against the background of the marriage arrangements within the patriarchal mind-set of Israelites in the Second Temple period, the “fatherless” Jesus would have been without social identity. He would have been debarred from being called a child of Abraham, that is, a child of God. Access to the court of the Israelites in the temple, where mediators could facilitate forgiveness for sin, would have been denied to him. He would have been debarred from the privilege of being given a daughter in marriage. With the help of cross-cultural anthropology and cultural psychology, I shall explain in chapter five in social-scientific terms an ideal-typical situation of someone who bore the stigma of being fatherless but who trusted God as Father. In chapter six I shall demonstrate that the “myth of the absent father” was very well known in antiquity, whether in Sepphoris, Galilee or in Pompeii, Italy, where it can be seen in mosaic or mural paintings. The story of an abandoned child who matures into an adult anti-patriarchal in temper, and who comes to the rescue of women and children, is almost recycled language. I shall argue that the Hansel and Gretel motif of abandoned children who subsequently become adopted by God, underlies the story of Jesus, son of Mary. The same motif is replicated in the story of Jesus’ blessing of “street children.”

In chapter seven I shall retell Ovid’s story of Perseus who was conceived virginally. My intention is to show why the second-century philosopher Celsus thought that the Christians unjustifiably mirrored this Greek hero, child of Zeus, in their depiction

of Jesus. Other examples within Greek-Roman literature are the myths surrounding Herakles, a Greek hero who also had a divine conception. In explaining his adoption as child of Zeus (which means deification), the Greek writer Diodorus Siculus tells the story of an empty tomb and an ascension to heaven. The same theme is to be found in the Lukan story of Jesus. The Roman writer Seneca also tells the story of Hercules' divine conception and his adoption as child of Zeus. In the New Testament Paul (Seneca's contemporary) is particularly known for the notion "adoption to become God's child" and for his use of the metaphor "Son of God" which he attributed to Jesus. This demonstrates that Jesus was revered as "child of God" by his followers. Here the focus is no longer on the *Jesus of history* but rather on the *Jesus of faith*. In chapter seven this notion will be explained as a parallel to Paul's contemporary, Seneca's portrayal of Herakles and the references by Diodorus Siculus and in the *Carmen Priapea* to the notion of "adoption" and miraculous conceptions of god-like human figures. Like Paul, John also attests to the idea that the believer, in some sense, shares Jesus' sonship. In John's gospel Jesus' "fatherlessness" is contextualized within a defamatory campaign that focuses on alleged illegitimacy. This offense is disputed by an argument that Jesus actually came from the heavenly region into the fullness of human condition and that Joseph is his biological father. Nonetheless, the Judean opponents of Johannine Christianity opposed this claim by showing that the children of Joseph are believed to be the ancestors of the Samaritans and that "true" Israelites do not mix with the Samaritans.

Chapter eight focuses on the origins of the church and the developing of a dogmatics of a "Christology from above." Towards the end of the book, the subversiveness of Jesus' cause is underlined. This is an important facet in answering the

question concerning the continued importance of the historical Jesus. Therefore, in the last chapter I shall demonstrate why the quest for the historical Jesus could be called *engaged hermeneutics*. One of the most urgent social problems of our time is that millions of children are growing up fatherless—this is not only a concern in the Third World but also elsewhere, as can be seen in the title of David Blankenhorn’s book *Fatherless America: Confronting our Most Urgent Social Problem* (1995). On the dust jacket of this book, Don Browning, Professor of Ethics and the Social Sciences at the Divinity School of the University of Chicago, writes: “*Fatherless America* is the strongest possible refutation to a thesis widely held in our society—that fathers are not really important. David Blankenhorn exposes the multiple ways our culture has convinced itself of this falsehood and shows how to reconstitute fatherhood for the future.”

This study is about the historical Jesus who filled the emptiness, caused by his fatherlessness, with his trust in God as his Father. Among the earliest faith assertions of Christians, which gave them authentic existence, was their belief in Jesus as child of God. Searching for Jesus, child of God, could also restore authenticity in the lives of many people today.

### **The Dialectic between the Jesus of History and the Jesus of Faith**

To call *Jesus* the *Christ*, on the basis of the New Testament, is not altogether obvious. It is a matter of a Messiah who did not want to be a Messiah!<sup>8</sup> In the New

Testament we do not have any statement by Jesus that he is the Christ, except in a very qualified and indirect sense in Mark 14:61. Historical-critical analysis illustrates the many layers with regard to the traditions about the origins of Christianity. Accordingly, an understanding that there is a difference between the *Jesus of history* and the *Jesus of faith* developed among critical scholars. The word “faith” belongs to the realm of the church, the believing community of Christians. For now, it is sufficient to postulate that faith is experienced, lived, confessed, and proclaimed in the church.

In biblical times, the name “Jesus” was fairly common.<sup>9</sup> Influenced by Greek idiom, this name occurred frequently among Israelites around the beginning of the common era. In Mediterranean countries many people are called by the name “Jesus.” Apart from the Jesus “who is called the Christ” and Joshua, the “son of Nun,” mentioned in the Hebrew Scriptures, the first-century Galilean historian Josephus mentions at least twelve others called “Jesus.” They played a part in the history of Israel during the period of Greco-Roman geopolitical domination. The vast majority of these persons belonged to priestly and governing families.<sup>10</sup> However, when people today hear the word “Jesus,” or use it themselves, they probably have in mind *the* Jesus to whom Christians pray, as if they are praying to God. For many people today there is no difference between the names “Jesus” and “Christ.” In other words, when Christians use the name “Jesus” or “Christ” they are referring to God. This equation already appears at the end of the second century of the common era, as used by Clement, the church father of Alexandria in North Africa.<sup>11</sup> Similarly, the second-century Syrian church father of Antioch, Ignatius, refers to Christ as God as though such a statement were quite self-evident.<sup>12</sup> However, such a relatedness is not to be found among Jesus’ own sayings. Ignatius<sup>13</sup> often used the

expression: “(Jesus Christ) our Lord.” In most instances, the New Testament itself, however, has reservations about calling Christ “God.”<sup>14</sup>

All of these events indicate that, to the Christian believing community, Jesus is *more than* merely a historical figure. Jesus is, in a sense, elevated above history when he is seen as someone special. Since the second half of the first century and for two thousand years, Jesus has been proclaimed and confessed by Christians in the church *as* the Messiah of Israel, *as* Lord of the world, *as* the Child of God, *as* God—essentially equal to the Father (since the fourth century) and to the Spirit (since the eighth century, and formulated in a specific way in the Western church since the beginning of the eleventh century). This Jesus is the *Jesus of faith* in contradistinction to, yet irrevocably bound with, the *Jesus of history*.

Different expressions are used to refer respectively to the one or the other. The *Jesus of history* has often been called the *historical Jesus* while, on the other hand, the *Jesus of faith* is known as the *kerygmatic Christ*.<sup>15</sup> The word “kerygmatic” is derived from the Greek word that means “proclaimed.” The distinction *pre-Easter Jesus* and *post-Easter Jesus*, respectively, is also used for this purpose. Considering the reasons for the use of these various terms may help us to get some grip on a very profound matter. It can help us to understand what the quest for the historical Jesus involves. It also illuminates why, even in secular society, the question as to the continued importance of Jesus is still being asked. If Jesus was seen as merely a historical figure, the significance of his life would be no different from that of people like Aristotle, Plato or Alexander the Great. Nobody who knows anything about world history would deny the value of the historical investigation of these figures. Jesus, like others from the ancient or more recent

past, may be added to such a “who’s who in world history” list. From a historical perspective, Jesus is important because he was influential in the course of world history.

For instance, in a note on the stoning of James, the brother of Jesus, the first-century historian Josephus<sup>16</sup> found it worth mentioning that James is “the brother of Jesus, who was called Christ.” Here, in this report intended to be the product of historiography, we are not dealing with a honorific, as is the case with the same words (“Jesus, who is called ‘Christ’”) in the Gospel of Matthew (1:16, see also Mt 27:17, 22). This is also the case with the Roman historian Tacitus,<sup>17</sup> (circa 110 C.E.), and with other “non-Christians”<sup>18</sup> who, subsequent to Josephus, made pejorative remarks about “Christ” or “Christians.”

Clearly, the reasons for the importance of Jesus to people outside the Christian believing community are different from the reasons of those who began believing in him and like him. In the concluding chapter of this study, I shall indicate briefly why the quest for the historical Jesus, seen from the vantage point of both the church and the broader community, should be undertaken. For now, it is sufficient to emphasize that the question of the importance of Jesus is *today* irrevocably bound to the fact that the *historical Jesus* is also taken to be dialectically linked to the *kerygmatic Christ*.

The terms “kerygma” and “dialectical thinking” are theological jargon. After orthodoxy and liberalism, dialectical thinking represents a third option of doing theology. In doing theology and interpreting the Bible, liberal theologians do not consider themselves bound by any ecclesiastical constraints such as canon or creeds. In orthodoxy these will function as filters for doing theology, as though dogmas generate justifying and saving faith. Dialectic theology offers a third option. With regard to critical and

historical exegesis of the Bible it is like a loose horse running in a field without fences. But when it comes to applying the results of critical thinking, the church and its dogmatic codes are neither seen as having patent rights for correct interpretation, nor considered to be irrelevant.

Sometimes the term “kerygma” is used to refer to the *proclaiming* Jesus and the *proclaimed* Christ. The terms “proclaiming” and “proclaimed” here constitute a dialectical conceptual pair. This means that they are two different grammatical constructs and therefore have semantically different connotations. However, they function as a unit. Their interrelatedness contributes toward establishing meaning. *Proclaiming* refers to Jesus himself acting and speaking. *Proclaimed* refers to the interpreted Jesus whose words and deeds are retold by others. This constitutes the *Jesus-kerygma*—Jesus manifests as a becoming event through the retelling of his cause. It is a matter of *telling* and *showing*.

In the *The Acts of Jesus: The Search for the Authentic Deeds of Jesus*<sup>19</sup> these terms are used somewhat differently by the Jesus Seminar. For the Jesus Seminar, “showing” comes first and it refers to “enactment,” while “telling” is the same as “recounting.” Here, in this study, the expression “telling” is used to refer to a probable act of the historical Jesus while “showing” refers to an act of faith by believers of later faith communities “retelling” Jesus. *Telling* refers to both authentic sayings and deeds, because sayings and deeds go hand in hand, even if one or the other is not reported. *Showing* is that “enactment” or “recounting” which could be based on either something authentic or unauthentic. Irrespective of the historicity of the case, the faith assertion expressed by the enactment or retelling is so overwhelming that authenticity is

overshadowed and difficult to discern. *Telling* is thus not without *showing* and vice versa. Yet telling and showing must never be confused, although in principle they should be distinguished from each other, regardless of the fact that they are dialectically intertwined.

The concepts “historic-kerygmatic” and “proclaimer-proclaimed” first appeared in the title of a book written in 1896 by the dogmatician of Jena in the old Prussian Empire, Martin Kähler<sup>20</sup> (1835-1912). There he distinguished between the “historical Jesus,” “real Christ” (“*der historische Jesus,*” “*der wirkliche Christus*”) and the “*geschichtliche,*” “*biblical,*” in other words, “proclaimed Christ” (“*der biblische Christus,*” “*der gepredigte Christus*”). These concepts not only disclose a distinction in German between the “*historisch-geschichtlich*” and “*wirklich-biblich*”/“*gepredigt,*” but also between the names “Jesus” and “Christ.” This distinction is related to the dialectic “pre-Easter Jesus”-“post-Easter Jesus.”

Why do scholars draw these distinctions? The answer lies in the fact that historical-critical exegesis of the New Testament brought forth the historic insight that Jesus did not regard himself *as* the Christ, *as* the Child of Humanity, *as* the Child of God, *as* God.<sup>21</sup> Nor was he recognized as, for instance, the Child of God by the people around him. The New Testament, not Jesus himself, the church fathers, as well as the drafters of the fourth-century creeds, proclaimed and confessed him in these terms.<sup>22</sup> It is, furthermore, not the case that all these names (Christ, Child of Humanity, Lord, Child of God, God) were used immediately by *all* followers of Jesus. An investigation into the development of the origins of Christianity and the handing down of traditions relating to Jesus, brings to light trajectories that indicate the succession of different historic phases



in the development of the use of these terms. The results from the past two hundred or three hundred years of New Testament scholarship illustrates:

- the complicated transitions from oral to written traditions;
- the influence on oral and written traditions of, first, the eastern Mediterranean and, later, the Greco-Roman cultural contexts;
- source interdependence, for instance, the fact that Matthew and Luke used, among others, Mark as a framework and source of information, but that each of them, nevertheless, freely diverged from it in constructing a specific, unique message;
- the consequences of the fact that documents originated at different dates—for instance, that Paul wrote his letters before the final editing of the Gospel of Mark and that although John was written after Matthew and Luke, it was to a significant degree an independent enterprise.

Drawing an accurate picture of Jesus from these complicated particulars is certainly no easy task. The question regarding the historical Jesus is prodigiously complicated. Who is the “real Jesus?” We must remember that we do not have immediate access to what Jesus thought of himself and of God. However, for the Christian believer he is *the* manifestation of God, although he, as in the case of Socrates, did not himself put to pen either the message of his words and deeds or the interpretation of his birth and death. It would have been very strange for a carpenter who made yokes and doorframes (someone like Jesus, who was probably part of the peasant farming

community of first-century Galilee) to read or write! This is said in spite of the tendentious report in Luke 4:16 that Jesus, in a synagogue, read from Isaiah 61 and applied it to himself. This passage is typical of the evangelist's post-Easter conviction that Jesus was the Messiah of Israel and a fulfillment of Jubilee. The different aspects of the influential nature of Jesus' life were handed down mainly after his death by those who met God on the basis of the traditions concerning Jesus. Jesus is therefore "God's becoming event"<sup>23</sup> for Christian believers.

At first, the handing down of traditions occurred orally. The first written record to be found today in the New Testament only appeared twenty-five years after Jesus' death, and was written by someone who had never met him personally: Paul (according to Acts 9:11 [cf. Acts 11:25] from the town Tarsus in the region of Cilicia in Asia Minor, today's Turkey). The Gospel according to Mark, which was written circa 70 C.E., only came afterwards. Mark served as a source for the authors of the Gospel of Luke (written circa 85 C.E.) and of the Gospel of Matthew (written circa 85-95 C.E.). The Gospel of John originated independently of the three synoptic gospels, Mark, Luke and Matthew, towards the end of the first century. During the second century, (Gnostic) writings with a so-called "hidden" way of talking about Jesus, although very diverse in nature, content, and "God-talk," became prolific. Though outnumbering the writings commonly used by the Roman-based church, these "hidden scriptures" were not regarded as being in accordance "to the rule of faith" by the dominating church. However, today a number of influential historians and exegetes argue that some of these documents contain authentic sayings of Jesus or, at least, present trajectories of Jesus traditions that lie beneath behind

the New Testament gospel material. A large number of these (Gnostic) writings are part of the Nag Hammadi Library.

The way in which the documents of the New Testament were produced and reproduced should also be taken into account. Before the improvement of book printing by Johann Gutenberg (circa 1450 C.E.), books were written, copied, and translated by hand.<sup>24</sup> These manuscripts only appeared in book form around 300 C.E. The original manuscripts (the first foundational texts) of the New Testament are no longer extant. The earliest surviving small fragments of manuscripts date from the period after 125 C.E. and the larger fragments from circa 200 C.E. The earliest surviving complete manuscript of a New Testament book dates from circa 300 C.E. No two manuscripts of a specific New Testament book dating from before circa 1454 C.E. agree in all respects. Numerous “mistakes” crept in during the process of copying and translating the manuscripts. A *historical-comparative* investigation is required in order to determine a reliable New Testament text. *Text-historical* research should not be limited to those manuscripts that form part of the New Testament. All relevant evidence should be taken into account. Under the auspices of the United Bible Societies, a team of historians engaging in research into the origins of the New Testament, exercised certain choices by way of voting. Their results were arranged in four categories of greater or lesser probability and published. The final product is the New Testament that is still read today.

The *historical-comparative* methodology, with the same *modus operandi* of committee work and voting used in the above-mentioned compilation of a text of the New Testament, was being used by the Jesus Seminar<sup>25</sup> in the United States in its investigation into the historical Jesus. A certain amount of gentle mockery of the Jesus

Seminar was “the custom among scholars not directly involved.”<sup>26</sup> It was also said that “in most instances the Jesus Seminar is not voting on anything half so tangible” as the editors of the Greek New Testament who were “weighing the evidence of actual manuscripts.” However, such a remark is debatable. Is there really a difference between the United Bible Societies’ detection of plausible historicity and the uncovering of authenticity by the Jesus Seminar? In its search for historicity, the United Bible Society searched for the origins of both the *copied* (referred to as “actual” by Thomas Wright) manuscripts dated from the end of the third century C.E. onwards, and the early *translations of the copied* manuscripts dated much later. With regard to historical Jesus research, the quest for the authentic sayings and deeds of Jesus investigates the plausible layers behind the (referred to as “tangible” by Thomas Wright) Greek texts. These so-called “tangible” texts were the product of a similar process, namely the detection of the origins of the available manuscripts. The New Testament as a collection of edited manuscripts is, therefore, not an objective data base for research. Historically, how could the one enterprise claim more credibility than the other?

Within the Jesus Seminar, historical decisions are being guided in particular by the criterion known as “multiple independent attestation.” This means that multiple independent written evidence has greater historical probability than either singular evidence or a plurality of interdependent literary evidence. In other words, evidence in independent documents such as Paul and Mark should be historically more seriously considered than evidence in Matthew and Luke, which was taken over from Mark. Evidence independently reported in Matthew and John is also probably more historical than that of a single witness in Luke, for example. However, this does not mean that a

single witness should be regarded as unauthentic. Yet, an argument for authenticity in such a case lacks historical proof. The Jesus Seminar further takes into account that writers often amended material to suit their intentions and narrative structures. Such material and statements which clearly exhibit the literary preference of a particular writer and the characteristics of a post-Easter ecclesiastical life situation (*Sitz im Leben*) often serve as directives toward those Jesus traditions that cannot historically be traced back to the oral period of 30-50 C.E. Such editorial material can hardly be deemed authentic sayings or deeds of the historical Jesus.

However, the issue is much more complicated than meets the eye. Take as an example the well-known Jesus saying reported in the Gospel of Matthew (16:20) that the “church” is built upon “Peter.” From a historical-critical perspective, virtually no New Testament scholar would regard this saying as words of the historical Jesus. Yet, *telling* and *showing* are so closely intertwined in this saying that it is almost impossible to differentiate between Jesus’ telling and Matthew’s showing. However, the reference to Peter’s primacy among the core group of Jesus’ followers is historically very well attested in independent documents. This element in the particular saying could therefore, in all probability, be regarded as historical. However, historical-critical research indicates that the reference to an assembled faith community (analogous, for example, to an assembled religio-political community in either the context of Israel or the Greco-Roman world) as “church” (in Greek: ἐκκλησία/a) is not from the life situation of the historical Jesus or the pre-Easter disciples, but rather from the post-Easter faith community.<sup>27</sup>

Concerning the “search for Jesus” (*Rückfrage nach Jesus*), the German New Testament scholar Ferdinand Hahn prefers to focus on “individual features” (*Einzelheiten*) rather than on complete sayings: “It is a matter of establishing an concise description of the interrelatedness between post-Easter and pre-Easter elements in the individual pieces of Jesus traditions.”<sup>28</sup> This kind of historical research, applied to a search for Jesus, assumes that the followers of Jesus attributed or applied general “wisdom” derived from their experience of life and the world to him. It is similar to what writers did with regard to legendary sages such as Solomon, Socrates, and Krishna. Thus, for example, Matthew represented Jesus in a way that conformed with the Greek translation of the Old Testament (the Septuagint). In doing so, he made use of apocalyptic-messianic themes derived from a shared late first-century Hellenistic-Israelite context. In this regard, I have certain First-Testament pseudepigrapha<sup>29</sup> (originally written in Greek or Aramaic, although today some of these documents are only found in translations) in mind. In these writings, Israel’s messiah was depicted among other images as the coming Son of Man, a figure who would inaugurate God’s perfect kingdom when the despondent believers (seeing this human-like figure come from above) will be justified and rescued.

In his representation of Jesus, Luke, in turn, used propaganda motifs that appeared in Greco-Roman stories about deities and in the emperor cult. It was presented in this way in spite of the fact that many of the traditions in the sources of this gospel originated in Israel and Roman Palestine. The Gnostic literature, on the other hand, located Jesus firmly within a heavenly realm entering into the earthly context only apparently human.<sup>30</sup> All these examples are related to what may be called the “Christianizing” (in German:

*Christianisierung*) of Jesus. A more inclusive way of referring to this process would be to call it a technique of exalting Jesus by using honorific titles (in German: *Würdeprädikationen*). Clear traces of such exaltation are already present in the New Testament and trajectories can be followed deep into the second century and even afterwards.

Suffice it to say that certain statements by Jesus clearly exhibit convictions characteristic of Christians after Easter. This is related to the phenomenon that the Christian community designed certain apologetic statements, which they attributed to Jesus, in order to oppose defamatory campaigns by opponents. This information assists us in constructing a particular image of the historical Jesus that can be clearly distinguished from the images of Jesus found in the canonical and non-canonical gospels. In this investigation, historical decisions are not made depending on what modern people, within the context of the Western tradition, deem rationally possible or acceptable.

Because of the natural sciences of the period before Albert Einstein many unwittingly became “positivists.” Even in the twentieth century it still remains the predominant mind-set. Positivism was prevalent in the philosophy of science during the nineteenth century.<sup>31</sup> It is indicative of the grip that the natural sciences had on the spirit of the day. According to positivism, *knowing* can only result from *empirical* observation. “True knowledge” is, therefore, the product of so-called objective, controllable, experienced exactness. In other words, positivism boils down to the conviction that the concepts *knowledge* and *truth* are synonyms and the upshots of both experience and reason.

However, at the time when the Bible was written (also when the classical ecclesiastical creeds were established) empiricism was not the prevalent theory of knowing or truth. Contrary to biblical thought, to distinguish between a “super-natural” occurrence (for example when the “spirit of God” reportedly comes upon someone cf. Jdg 14:6; 1 Sm 10:1; Mt 1:18, 20; Lk 1:35; Mk 1:9-11) and a “natural” happening is a modern-day fabrication. Such a distinction is not valid in first-century Mediterranean culture.<sup>32</sup> In the cultural context of first-century people in the area of the Mediterranean Sea, the primary distinction in this regard was between “creator” and “creation.” The latter included not only the so-called “natural” things concerning humanity and its constituents, but also the so-called “spiritual” things concerning the world of God, angels, miracles, diviners, and magic, expressed by rituals and spells.<sup>33</sup> These “spiritual” experiences led to a condition that may be called an *altered state of consciousness*.<sup>34</sup> The particular nature of this condition is influenced by cultural associations and personality types. Without this insight from cultural psychology, rationally oriented people in the Western world today would be inclined toward an anachronistic understanding of the context of Jesus and of its peculiar consciousness which involved, among others, faith healing and resurrection experiences.

Knowing the dynamics of an altered state of consciousness is particularly relevant for understanding the apocalyptic mind-set of Jesus and his contemporaries. Apocalypticism involves the view that God’s new age will come imminently and that it will be introduced by catastrophes of cosmic dimensions.<sup>35</sup> Scholars believe that Jesus (or at least John the Baptist, if not Jesus himself) expected God to let the heavenly kingdom become an earthly reality soon.<sup>36</sup> Therefore, the writers of the New Testament



announced this expectation in varying degrees. It has become clear to me that one needs to be very concise concerning the meaning of both the terms *apocalypticism* and *eschatology* when writing on the historical Jesus. These terms pertain to particular concepts of time.

Cross-cultural anthropology helps us to discern between modern Western and ancient Mediterranean concepts. I have come to realize that so-called “eschatologies” are constructs that do not take into account the difference between the pre-modern Mediterranean and the modern Western notions of time. Of course, Jesus and the writers of the Bible made use of time schemes in order to put their understanding of God’s relationship to people into words. It goes without saying that *their* concept of time played a role in establishing *their* constructs. The mythological worldview of the first century Mediterranean world was oriented toward the *present*, while our “Swiss” time in the modern Western world is oriented toward the *future*.<sup>37</sup> However, this does not mean that *future* or *present* does not exist in the concept of time of the respective cultural spheres.

The issue with regard to time is important in Jesus studies. An aspect of the debate is whether or not Jesus was an eschatological figure. “Apocalypticism” is often viewed in connection with “eschatology,” the doctrine that concerns the end of time. The Greek adjective *eschatos* (εσχάτος), however, has two possible meanings in the New Testament: to be “last” or to be “least important.” From the meaning “to be last,” theologians developed a comprehensive thought structure with regard to time<sup>38</sup>. Social-scientific studies by especially Bruce Malina and John Pilch<sup>39</sup> investigated the phenomenon *apocalypticism* and the concepts “time” and “apocalyptic eschatology” from

a cultural-anthropological perspective. These social-scientific studies consciously attempt to take seriously the distance between the ancient and the modern and the consequent cultural differences. The studies demonstrate that it is a hermeneutical fallacy to interpret their concept of time (pertaining to a pre-industrial, advanced agrarian Mediterranean world) from a contemporary Western perspective (which is oriented towards the future).

As far as the Mediterranean concept of time is concerned, one may distinguish between *experienced time* and *imagined time*. That which is imagined relates to that which one experiences. Within such a culture, forefathers, for example, are regarded as “living dead.” The world beyond experience, for example the world beyond death, forms an elongation relative to what is experienced in the worldly life. What is sometimes called “apocalyptic eschatology” by scholars,<sup>40</sup> refers to experiences of “imaginary time” and this is related to an altered state of consciousness manifested in ecstatic experiences by means of visions or heavenly auditions that create a trancelike condition. The people of Jesus’ time regarded these phenomena as “natural.”

At present, the quest for the historical Jesus is of a multidisciplinary nature. Biblical archaeology, sociology, cultural anthropology, psycho-biography, cultural psychology, medical anthropology and socio-linguistics are some of the disciplines that provide a basis for the investigation of the historical Jesus. Upon closer inspection, all of this information points to the fact that people in today’s Western world will never be able to determine exactly what Jesus would have said or done. Our attempts to fathom the core of his message can only be through the literary witness of believers who proclaimed him *as* Messiah, *as* Child of Humanity, *as* Lord, *as* Child of God, and *as* God.

Since Emperor Constantine (fourth century C.E.) an image of Jesus known as classical ontological Christology was developed with the help of complicated Greco-philosophical metaphysics and Roman legal terminology. Terms such as “persona” and “substantia” were taken from the renowned Roman legal system. According to this system, the law provides for an individual to share some substance with someone else while retaining his or her own possessions. From this simple legal regulation, the sophisticated and ingenious monotheistic dogma of the One Triune God was developed: God Three-In-One. Sharing the same substance of being, three persons feature different aspects within the divine economics of salvation: *begetting and providing* (God the Father), *conciliating* (God the Son), *managing* (God the Holy Ghost).

Focusing on the second category, God the Son, the mode of the dogmatic discussion is to speculate about the two natures of the Son—his divine and human natures. At this point it becomes metaphysical, ontological Christology. Since Plato (circa 427–347 B.C.E.), metaphysics has been about the distinction and relationship between “natural” and “supernatural”: human-like and God-like. We already indicated that “Christian thinkers up to the nine century really did not develop theologically significant usages of the super-natural.”<sup>41</sup> Christology emerged as an enterprise of theologians who have reflected and systematized their thoughts about Jesus. They presumed that these thoughts are supported by witnesses in the New Testament, while most of it actually originated in later Christian thinking.

When thinking theologically, ontology has to do with the philosophical view that the “true” essence of someone or something exists only in its relationship to the ultimate unseen “idea” which lies beyond what can be empirically known or observed. The word

“ontic” has to do with the aspect of *relating* and not with someone’s behavior or way of functioning. The particular question of metaphysical ontology as it pertains to Jesus is primarily focused on what concerns God, not humankind. It is therefore also known as the “Christology from above.” It is concerned with the *similarity of being* in the *personae* of the Trinity in their threefold respective interrelationships. However, in the past, New Testament scholars<sup>42</sup> referred to the Christologies of the authors of the New Testament as “functional.” From this perspective, the focus is on Jesus’ *behavior* inferred from his words and deeds that directed his followers. Subsequently, the writers of the New Testament ascribed honorific titles to him.

Today, apart from the distinction between an ontological (*from above*) and a functional (*from below*) perspective on Jesus, a perspective *from the side* also has been introduced.<sup>43</sup> Critical New Testament scholars are convinced that an ontological perspective on Jesus is not to be found in the New Testament, not even in Johannine literature. In John 1:1 we read that the *Logos* (Word/Jesus) was with God and was God. Here, however, we do not have a typical ontological metaphysical scheme, but rather a “functional” way of speaking about understanding Jesus’ behavior. The term *Logos* originated in so-called Greco-Semitic wisdom speculation and has clear traits of gnosticism. In the Johannine literature, however, gnosticism is “converted” into something less docetic. This is a form of theology which says that God’s becoming event in Jesus can be explained by using the honorific title *Logos*: from the heavenly realm, God entered into the earthly context. As stated earlier, the functional perspective emphasizes those words and deeds of the pre-Easter Jesus that, in the post-Easter period, gave rise to the “majesty titles” ascribed to Jesus by the earliest Christians. However, the

perspective “from the side” does not endeavor to unravel the interweave of pre-Easter and post-Easter Jesus traditions. In this investigation, the issue is how Jesus would have been experienced by his contemporaries rather than how his later followers interpreted his words and deeds. The interpretation from a post-Easter faith perspective was filtered through experiences of resurrection appearances.

Earlier, the unraveling of—and continuity/discontinuity between—the historical Jesus and the kerygmatic Christ was carried out with the assistance of a number of criteria.<sup>44</sup> The investigation went through different phases.<sup>45</sup> The work of the Jesus Seminar focuses on the *historical* investigation of Jesus and the *historical* development of the trajectories of tradition in early Christianity. This project is not aimed at questions concerning the theological relevance of the *historical* investigation of Jesus. A number of individual researchers who form part of the Jesus Seminar do, however, in their own research, investigate theological issues. The results of the historical investigation of the Jesus Seminar move towards a minimum consensus. Jesus is seen as a person from the peasant farming community of Herodian Galilee with an “apolitical” criticism of the temple and a non-apocalyptic, inclusive, and anti-hierarchical vision of the kingdom of God. These investigations indicate that Jesus communicated his vision, in particular, by means of short proverbial expressions, his dealings with social outcasts, and exorcisms. His words and deeds are therefore seen as interacting with one another.

The *historical* investigation practiced in this study is multidisciplinary in nature. From a literary point of view, relevant documents are read against the background of their chronological periods and respective contexts. A multiplicity of congruent, independent evidence from a particular tradition carries relatively greater historical

weight.<sup>46</sup> The influence of Easter on the handing down of Jesus traditions is taken into account. This is necessary to distinguish historically between the pre-Easter and the post-Easter Jesus. Pre-Easter traditions are interpreted within ideal-typical situations in terms of a first-century, eastern-Mediterranean society. The contention of this study is that Jesus grew up as a fatherless son.

This point of departure is supported by a historical-critical deciphering of a post-Easter trajectory with regard to a legendary Joseph figure. Initially Joseph is found in the wisdom literature of the First Testament (Gen 37-50). Here he is depicted as the abandoned sibling who became an Israelite sage in Egypt. Having been called from Egypt, he was the Moses prototype who rescued Israel in need. I will show that Joseph's offspring, believed to be the forefathers of the Samaritans, were marginalized by the Judeans as illegitimate children of Israel. Nevertheless, in the New Testament Joseph became (by God's intervention) the savior of Mary and her child. This tradition was conveyed in both intertestamental documents and the New Testament. It developed in a distinctive way in "post-apostolic" literature, Roman Catholicism, and Protestant dogmatics. In the New Testament, we find this tradition behind and beyond Matthew, Luke, and John. In Matthew, there is the scene of a holy marriage and, as in Luke, the story of the adoption of Jesus by Joseph. According to John, Joseph is Jesus' biological father. Historically seen, the figure of Joseph as Jesus' father does not occur in the early sources behind Matthew and Luke. Joseph also does not play a role in the Pauline literature and the New Testament documents that built upon Paul. In chapter four of the book, I shall come back to this Joseph trajectory. At this point, it is sufficient to postulate that the presence of such a trajectory historically satisfies the so-called criterion of multiple, independent attestation of the fact that Jesus probably grew up fatherless. Jesus' fatherlessness is probably a historical fact that should be taken into account

when one considers his social identity, his a-patriarchal ethos, his behavior towards women and children, and especially his trust in God as his father.

Literary, historical and social contexts are therefore considered in an integrative way. In this project fatherlessness is *not* a topic about which one *fantasizes* as was done from a “psychopathological” perspective by those “liberal theologians” (“*freisinnigen Theologen*”) with whom Albert Schweitzer<sup>47</sup> was at loggerheads. In this study we shall try to avoid this “psychological fallacy.”

## Methodological Concerns

Because we do not have Jesus’ words as recorded by him, but only as transmitted by witnesses, two other fallacies may be created. The first fallacy is that it would be impossible to determine the historical core of the mind-set of Jesus of Nazareth. (Here the term “mind-set” is not used positivistically as though the researcher could enter into the head of someone else and read his or her mind empirically.) The second fallacy is that it may be deemed undesirable to undertake a historical Jesus investigation because the real Jesus is the Jesus to be found on the surface of the Bible and not behind the text. In orthodox theological circles, this is the Jesus of whom the ecclesiastical creeds bear witness. The title of Martin Kähler’s book (1896), referred to earlier, already indicates his opinion that only the Christ *proclaimed* (“*gepredigt*”) in the Bible (New Testament) really matters. This view is still prevalent among scholars who often ridicule the work of the Jesus Seminar.<sup>48</sup>

The work of Rudolf Bultmann (the most influential New Testament scholar of the twentieth century) has often been wrongfully used to validate the view that a quest for the historical Jesus is “impossible.” Bultmann was prompted by Albert Schweitzer’s finding that exegetes who draft biographies of Jesus often project their own ideologies onto their images of Jesus. Such ideologies include the exegetes’ own ideas regarding ethical-religious perfection, goodness, sinlessness, and holiness. These are projected onto the inner being of the person Jesus.<sup>49</sup> Bultmann called this “psychological fallacy.” One cannot describe another person’s mind.

Earlier Kähler<sup>50</sup> had already pointed out that a biography of Jesus would be impossible since sources did not mention Jesus’ psychological disposition. Therefore, Albert Schweitzer reacted against theories about supposed mental disorders in the mind of Jesus. In his doctoral thesis, *The Psychiatric Study of Jesus*, which served as the completion of his medical examinations, Schweitzer responded to the work of four “psychopathologists.” They claimed to build upon Schweitzer’s view that Jesus’ activities were those of a “wild” apocalyptic prophet.<sup>51</sup> Using the so-called psychopathological method (“the investigation of the mental aberrations of significant personalities in relation to their works”)<sup>52</sup> these men depicted Jesus as someone who was suffering from hallucinations and paranoia<sup>53</sup>. Schweitzer’s reaction to these “psychopathologists” was similar to his reaction to the “liberal theologians” from the previous century. According to Schweitzer, they constructed a “liberalized, modernized, unreal, never existing Jesus...to harmonize with [their] own ideals of life and conduct.”<sup>54</sup> With regard to these psychopathologists, Schweitzer stated: “[They] busy themselves with the psychopathology of Jesus without becoming familiar with the study of the



historical life of Jesus. They are completely uncritical not only in the choice but also in the use of sources.... We know nothing about the physical appearance of Jesus or about the state of his health.”<sup>55</sup>

In his well-known Jesus book, Bultmann<sup>56</sup> agrees that, “psychologically speaking” (*psychologisch verständlich*), we know virtually nothing of the “life” and “personality” of Jesus. Bultmann’s student, Ernst Käsemann<sup>57</sup> also agrees with this. But, according to Walter Schmithals<sup>58</sup> (another Bultmann student), in the *Nachwort* to Bultmann’s Jesus book, a gross misunderstanding (“ein groteskes Mißverständnis”) could arise here. It is misleading to believe that Bultmann (or Schweitzer, for that matter) considered it impossible to carry out a historical investigation of Jesus. Bultmann<sup>59</sup> also says that we know enough of Jesus’ message to be able to draw a coherent picture of him. The problem is not that we know too little of the historical Jesus. The question is whether this knowledge is at all relevant for faith. This issue nearly caused the debate between Bultmann and his students (in particular Ernst Käsemann and Joachim Jeremias) to become personal. Fortunately, both Käsemann and Bultmann<sup>60</sup> declared that the matter at hand was more important than persons.

One of the assumptions of this study is that historical Jesus research can be done. The question then would be whether it is necessary. Can one be a Christian without it? Marcus Borg<sup>61</sup> points out that there have always been Christians who believed in Jesus *as* Christ, *as* Child of God and *as* God without ever having engaged in the quest for the historical Jesus. Kähler<sup>62</sup> called it the “childlike faith” of millions throughout history. According to Luke Timothy Johnson<sup>63</sup> (a critic of the Jesus Seminar), the post-New Testament’s “developed, dogmatic Christ of church doctrine (true God and true man)” is

not the Jesus “limned in the pages of the New Testament.” The latter Jesus is “instantly graspable” by uncritical Christians, who let their lives be shaped by it and not by historiography. The problem, however, is that Luke Timothy Johnson sees the writings of Paul (and of 1 Peter and Hebrews) “converging” with the canonical gospels, but overlooks the New Testament’s diversity. The “converging” picture, then, is the “instantly graspable” image of Jesus!

The issue here is: in whom or in what do we place our ultimate trust? The members of the Jesus Seminar are often accused of being positivists who place their trust in “historical” facts. The opposing opinion presents itself as trusting only in what the New Testament says. However, trusting in the New Testament as an “objective entity” also exhibits positivism. It is claimed that “truth” is to be found in the “kerygma” (in the New Testament). How, then, does “truth” manifest in the witness regarding the “kerygmatic Christ?”

In a specific response to Luke Timothy Johnson, John Dominic Crossan<sup>64</sup> pointed out that the narrative form (as in the four canonical gospels) is not the only gospel format. There are also gospels in the format of a collection of proverbs of Jesus (“sayings or aphorisms gospel”) which undoubtedly came into being before the narrative type. The Sayings Gospel Q (hidden in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke), and the Gospel of Thomas (recovered in Greek fragments and in a Coptic translation found under the sand at, respectively, Oxyrhynchus and Nag Hammadi in Egypt) are examples of the aphorism format. Unlike the narrative gospels and the letters of Paul, the “sayings or aphorisms” gospels do not attach any redemptive meaning to the death of Jesus.

What, then, is “true” with regard to the “kerygmatic Christ” found on the surface of the New Testament, in contradistinction with the “historical Jesus” who is rediscovered by means of historiography? After all, these two types of gospel format with their different messages of God’s salvation cannot both lay claim to credibility! Even if one were to work only with the canonically accepted gospels, the problem would not be solved, since the interpretations of the death of Jesus by Mark and John differ radically, as Crossan<sup>65</sup> notes:

For Mark, the passion of Jesus starts and ends in agony and desolation. For John, the passion of Jesus starts and ends in control and command. But, I repeat, as gospel, both are equally but divergently true. Both speak, equally but divergently, to different times and places, situations and communities. Mark’s Jesus speaks to a persecuted community and shows them how to die. John’s Jesus speaks to a defeated community and shows them how to live.

Luke Timothy Johnson misses *the* important point. The issue is not that historical Jesus researchers want to ground their faith in historiography rather than in the normative nature of the Scriptures! One cannot formulate it better than Crossan:<sup>66</sup> “[O]ur faith is not in history, but in the meaning of history; not within a museum, but within a church.”

The present-day dialectic systematic theologian Eberhard Jüngel<sup>67</sup> says it in different words: “[F]aith in Jesus as the Christ cannot be *grounded* in the historical Jesus, it must nevertheless have a *support* in him.” Jüngel<sup>68</sup> is quite correct when he states that God cannot be known *historically*, but only on the basis of God’s *revelatory* acts in respect of which the *faith* of the one who receives the revelation corresponds. God is revealed by God’s own undertaking through the medium of historical events. By this, I

mean that, for Christian believers, God is manifested in the human Jesus of Nazareth. Another renowned systematic theologian from the Netherlands, Schillebeeckx<sup>69</sup> says: “Without Jesus’ historical human career the whole of Christology becomes an ideological superstructure.” If so, all of our reflections on Jesus’ relevance for us, as witnessed in documents written by biblical writers or afterwards, would be ideas flying without identifiable roots in human existence. Such ideologies unjustifiably separate the so-called “supernatural” from “natural” entities without realizing that the authors of the Bible did not have such a dichotomy in their mind-set.

Although God’s becoming event in Jesus of Nazareth occurred historically, and is therefore in principle open to historical investigation, the act of faith that confesses that Jesus is the Christ, the Lord, the Child of God, God-Self, is not grounded in historiography as such: “No one can say that ‘Jesus is the Lord’ but by the Holy Spirit” (1 Cor 12:3). But “(i)f God has made *this* human being—and not just any human being—to be the Christ, as faith confesses, the faith must be interested to know what can be known about this person: but not in order to *ground* faith in Jesus Christ historically, but rather to guard it from docetic self-misunderstanding.”<sup>70</sup>

The word “docetism” is derived from a Greek word (*doke/w*) that denotes “apparentness.” In other words, it yields to the other side of what is called “empiricism.” Yet docetism presents a viewpoint that is not really less positivistic in nature than empiricism. Over against the viewpoint that someone’s or something’s credibility depends on its empirically observed or tested value in this earthly world; a docetic viewpoint would emphasize that someone’s or something’s value could manifest to the senses or mind as “real” or “true” on the basis of evidence that does not need to be

empirically seen or touched. Exegetes of the Johannine literature have therefore explained the references in both prologues of the Fourth Gospel (Jn 1:14) and the First Letter of John (1 Jn 1:1) to the seeing and touching of the *Logos* which became *Flesh* as a polemic against Gnostic docetism.<sup>71</sup>

At the end of the first century C.E., writings that advocated a world-escaping gnosticism originated. Among the documents of the Nag Hammadi library, discovered in 1945 in the desert close to Luxor in Upper Egypt, a fair number of such texts were found.<sup>72</sup> In general, these documents view the empirical world negatively. The world is seen as inherently evil, domesticated by evil powers, or as an imperfect creation because of its transitoriness.<sup>73</sup> When the Nag Hammadi writings refer to Jesus “who became flesh” their intention is, for the most part, that “Jesus who is a spiritual being hides his spiritual ‘flesh’ under shapes, likenesses or a human body.”<sup>74</sup> However, writers such as Paul and John, instead emphasized that God’s becoming event in Jesus Christ is trustworthy because it comes to believers by means of the apostolic kerygma. According to this kerygma, Jesus was equal to people in terms of human history and the human condition. In all probability the apostolic kerygma originated in the Jerusalem church before the city was ruined by the Romans in 70 C.E.. In chapter four (where the Joseph trajectory) and in chapter eight (where the historicity of “the Twelve” will be discussed) I shall focus more critically on the role of the so-called “pillars” of the Jerusalem church.

Bultmann’s<sup>75</sup> well-known observation, that it is the *that* (“Daß”) of Jesus which is important for faith and not the *what* (“Was”), deals with precisely this type of dialectic between “spirit” and “flesh.” According to this stance, stories in the gospels about Jesus’ work and life, his birth and death (in other words the “whatness” of his life) are assertions

of faith in which the Jesus-kerygma is expressed. The Jesus-kerygma is the “thatness” of God’s becoming event in Jesus, the “ground of Christian faith.” However, it is on this point that students of Bultmann, such as Käsemann (and Jeremias), misunderstood their mentor. Bultmann<sup>76</sup> was not of the opinion that a “historical and material” antithesis<sup>77</sup> exists between Jesus and the kerygma of the early church. Bultmann<sup>78</sup> spoke of a distinction between “historical continuity” and “material relation.” It seems that he meant that a continuity clearly exists between Jesus and Christ (the two names “Jesus” and “Christ,” after all, refer to the same historical person) but that there is no historical continuity between the *kerygma* which takes the death of Christ Jesus as a redemptive event, and the *historical Jesus* himself who did not call on people to believe in him, but to depend, like him, on the presence of God. However, there is a material relation between the message of Jesus and the ecclesiastical kerygma: both announce that life in the kingdom of God is qualitatively and radically different from the meaning that people find in cultural arrangements<sup>79</sup>—life in the kingdom of God is *life according to the Spirit* and not a *life according to the flesh*. Paul, therefore, did not need to ground his kerygma in Jesus, the Jew, because then he would have grounded faith in the Christ who, as a human, came from the cultural context of the Israelites (Rm 9:5).<sup>80</sup>

Yet, it would be a misrepresentation of Paul to say “that Jesus in his flesh may well have been Jewish, but that as the resurrected Christ he certainly is not.”<sup>81</sup> Indeed, to Paul, Jesus would be bound to particularism, that is, to a peculiar cultural arrangement, had the significance of Israel’s messiah been solely of an ethnic nature. Such a messiah would be, according to Romans 9:5, “Christ according to flesh.” But this is *not* the material essence of the traditions of Jesus that had been handed down to Paul. On the

contrary, there is a material relation between Jesus of Nazareth and the Christ Jesus proclaimed by Paul. In other words, the *Jesus of history* is not irrelevant.

Faith assertions, according to Paul, do not need stories about miracles, pronouncements of controversies with Pharisees or parables about God's patronage. These stories, however, are vehicles of the faith assertions found in the gospel material. In other words, the authors of the gospels regarded them as functional. Furthermore, Paul did not deem it necessary to use the Jesus-kerygma as source in order to reconstruct a historical Jesus *before* he could believe. However, Paul could only base the life "in Christ" (as he, from an existential perspective formulated the Jesus-kerygma compactly), because he in some way or another had knowledge of the handed-down Jesus tradition. According to this tradition, Jesus was subversive towards the culture of his time. Thus, according to Jesus, living in God's kingdom means that neither mediators, nor specific cultural arrangements, are needed to give someone direct and immediate access to God's love. God's becoming event in Jesus has universal relevance—no one is excluded, as Paul's notion of "justification by faith" puts it. The concept of "immediacy" is a functional metaphoric way of explaining the *cause of Jesus*.

But, with regard to the Jesus-kerygma, let me put it very concisely (maybe in slight disagreement with both Bultmann and his students): the Jesus-kerygma is merely another faith assertion that cannot claim to be the sole credible reflection of the *cause of Jesus*, that is, *God's becoming event in Jesus of Nazareth*. The observation by Joachim Jeremias<sup>82</sup> that Bultmann runs the risk of replacing the message of Jesus with the preaching of Paul (and John), is therefore not entirely inappropriate. Such an admittance, however, does not eliminate the fact that Bultmann indeed emphasized the existence of a

material link between the message of Jesus and the Pauline kerygma. In Robert Funk's<sup>83</sup> version of Jesus' understanding of the kingdom of God, none other than Paul's statements are echoed in particular:

God's domain was for Jesus something already present. It was also something to be celebrated because it embraces everyone—Jew, gentile, slave, free, male, female. In God's domain, circumcision, keeping kosher, and sabbath observance are extraneous. The kingdom represents an unbroken relationship to God: temple and priests are obsolete.

The gospels presented this message in a version different from that of Paul, while John presented it in a version different from that of Mark, and the Gnostic writings in the Nag Hammadi library differently again. A harmonized composition of the Christ events, as recorded in the New Testament, is not “normative,” as Luke Timothy Johnson would have it; nor is a necessarily relativistic choice of one version above another. It is the mode of the dialectic between pre-Easter and post-Easter that is normative. Crossan says:<sup>84</sup> “It is because of that normative process that each Christian generation is called both to consider the historical Jesus and simultaneously to reinterpret that figure as Christ or Lord. Each side of the dialectic must be done over and over again....What is permanent is the dialectic.”

Seen in this way, the imposed injunction to repeat this same dialectic mode amounts to our always being oriented again by the evidence in the New Testament and other intra-canonical and extra-canonical literature. Where else do we learn of God's revelation in and through Jesus of Nazareth? To the writers of the New Testament he was: Jesus *as* Christ, Jesus *as* Child of Humanity, Jesus *as* Child of God, Jesus *as* Lord.



To the authors of extra-canonical literature, like the Nag Hammadi documents, Jesus was, among other things, the “Fullness of God.” And for me: Jesus *as* God, but then not necessarily in the classical ontological sense of the word alone.

In other words, when Funk<sup>85</sup> deliberately chooses to turn his back on Paul and, for that matter, decisively also on Bultmann as a dialectic theologian, one can have respect for his taking Jesus’ subversiveness seriously. However, to go along, towards the new millennium, with Jesus, but without the New Testament or the church as the believing community of Christians, would not be an act of faith that necessarily rests on or is implied by his cause. Yet it does not mean that the New Testament should be put, as Willi Marxsen<sup>86</sup> formulates it, “in the place of Jesus as *the* revelation.” William Thompson,<sup>87</sup> building upon the insights of philosopher-theologians Paul Ricoeur and David Tracy, says:

Christianity is not a religion of a book, but of a person, Jesus [as] the Risen One. But the Jesus event has left us “traces” of itself in the New Testament, and it is chiefly to this “text” that we must turn for “normative codification” of the Jesus event. That we go to Jesus *through the biblical text* is finally rooted in our tradition-bound character. Like all other things human, Christianity is an historically-mediated religion.

## END NOTES

1. Schweitzer, A [1906] 1913, *Geschichte der Leben-Jesu-Forschung*, p 642: “Als ein Unbekannter und Namenloser kommt er zu uns, wie er am Gestade des Zees an jene Männer, die nicht wußten wer er war, herantrat. Er sagt dasselbe Wort: Du aber folge mir nach! und stellt uns vor die Aufgaben, die er unserer Zeit lösen muß. Er gebietet. Und denjenigen, welche ihm gehorchen, Weisen und Unweisen, wird er sich offenbaren in dem, was sie in seiner Gemeinschaft an Frieden, Wirken, Kämpfen und Leiden erleben dürfen, und als ein unaussprechliches Geheimnis werden sie erfahren, wer er ist....”
2. E.g., Vergote, A. & Tamayo, A. 1981, *The Parental Figure and the Representation of God*; Vergote, A., Tamayo, A., Pasquali, L., Bonami, M., Pattyn, M.-R., & Custers, A. 1969, “Concept of God and Parental Images,” pp. 79-87. Recently, Francis, L.J. & Astley, J. 1997, “The Quest for the Psychological Jesus: Influences of Personality on Images of Jesus,” pp. 248f., summarize these authors’ findings. According to the 1969 study the parental image of God rather than the maternal image is for both males and females in the North America society samples more preeminent. This tendency was even stronger in males than in females. Also within Asian communities in North America God is for boys and girls more like a father than a mother. According to another study, the correspondence between God and father, or between God and the masculine image, was basic in women whereas in men, the relation between God and mother, or between God and the feminine image predominated (cf. Francis & Astley, p. 249). They also show that among French-speaking Belgians both males and females emphasize the parental image of God corresponding to their own gender. A more recent study among Canadian students draw attention to the “strong relation between the concept of God and the mother image for both male and female subjects.”
3. See Francis, L.J. & Astley, J. 1997, “The Quest for the Psychological Jesus,” pp. 247-259. By means of the so-called “Revised Eysenck Personality Questionnaire,” through which personalities are profiled, they quizzed 473 secondary school students between the ages of twelve and fifteen in the United Kingdom, 317 students studying religion at A level and 398 adult churchgoers. The data exhibit significant correlations between the respondents’ personality and their images of Jesus.
4. Francis & Astley 1997, p. 248.
5. See Schmidt, Darryl D. 1997, “Albert Schweitzer’s Profile of Jesus,” unpublished paper, Westar Institute’s Jesus Seminar, Fall Meeting 1997, Santa Rosa, CA.

6. Freyne, S. 1997, "Galilean Questions to Crossan's Mediterranean Jesus," p. 91.
7. Vaage, L.E. 1997, "Recent Concerns: The Scholar as *Engagé*," p. 181-182.
8. These words came from a New Testament scholar from the Netherlands, Cees den Heyer 1996, *Opnieuw: Wie is Jezus? Balans van 150 Jaar Onderzoek naar Jezus*, pp. 78-80: "Een Messias wat geen Messias wilde zijn."
9. During my visits to Mediterranean countries, I heard many people called by the name "Jesus." According to its Semitic origins, the name means "God is salvation." In Luke's gospel, Jesus is also called "Savior." In the First Testament, this epithet refers to men who delivered God's people from their enemies (see Bock, D.L. 1987, *Proclamation from Prophecy and Pattern: Lucan Old Testament Christology*, p. 78).
10. See Whiston, W. 1978, *Josephus Complete Works*, p. 767. These Jesuses were Jesus, son of Phabet, who was robbed of the high priesthood (Ant 6.5.3); Jesus, son of Ananus (BJ 6.5.3); Jesus, also called Jason (Ant 12.5.1); Jesus, son of Sapphias, governor of Tiberias (Vit 12.27; BJ 2.20.4); Jesus, brother of Onias, who was robbed of the high priesthood by Antiochus Epiphanes (Ant 15.3.1); Jesus, son of Gamaliel, who was proclaimed high priest (Ant 20.9.4); Jesus, the oldest priest after Ananus (BJ 4.4.3); Jesus, son of Damneus, who was proclaimed high priest (Ant 20.9.1); Jesus, son of Gamala (Vit 38.41); Jesus, son of Saphat, who was the leader of a band of robbers (Vit 22; BJ 3.9.7); Jesus, son of a priest, Thebuthus (BJ 6.8.3); Jesus, son of Josedek (Ant 11.3.10).
11. Clement of Alexandria (Protr 1:1): "We should think of Jesus Christ as we think of God."
12. See Ign Trall 7:1; Ign Smy 1:1; 10:1.
13. Ign Eph (prologue; 15:3; 18:2); Ign Rm (2x in prologue; 3:3); Ign Pol (8:3). What was important to Ignatius was precisely to indicate that there is nothing self-evident in viewing God as being present in the shape of the human Jesus Christ. However, his concern is not with the idea that God, at all, appeared in the shape of a human. To people like the Greeks and the Romans, such an idea was far too general for this to have been the case. What concerns Ignatius is the mystery that God appeared in the specific shape of the *suffering* Jesus Christ. Therefore there is, to him, a paradox which is expressed in the terms "incarnated God" (Ign Eph 7:2), "God's blood" (Ign Eph 1:1), the "suffering of my God" (Ign Rm 6:3) or the "bread of God, that is the flesh of Jesus Christ" (Ign Rm 7:3).
14. See also among others Bultmann, R. 1952, "Das christologische Bekenntnis des Ökumenischen Rates," p. 248; Bultmann, R. 1968a, *Theologie des Neuen Testaments*, p. 131 note 1; Richardson, N. 1979, *Was Jesus Divine?*; Harris, M.J. 1992, *Jesus as God: The New Testament Use of "Theos" in Reference to Jesus*. Apart from Jn 1:1, where the

15. See Theissen, G. [1999] 1999, *A Theory of Primitive Christian Religion*, p. 22.
16. Josephus, Ant 20.9.1 – cf. Whiston 1978, p. 423.
17. Tacitus, An 15.44.
18. Cf. Whiston 1978, pp. 639-647. For information about references to Jesus Christ in ancient sources by non-Christians, which may be of historical value, are those by Tacitus, Suetonius, Pliny, Celsius, Lucianus of Samosata, Thallus and Mara, son of Serapion (see Evans, C.A. 1996, *Life of Jesus Research: An Annotated Bibliography*, pp. 291-298).
19. Funk, R.W. (and the Jesus Seminar) 1998, *The Acts of Jesus: The Search for the Authentic Deeds of Jesus*, pp.27-28.
20. Kähler, M. 1969, *Der sogenannte historische Jesus und der geschichtliche, biblische Christus*, neu herausgegeben von E. Wolf.
21. Cf. Tatum, W.B. [1982] 1999, *In Quest of Jesus*, p. 157.
22. See Grillmeier, A. 1965, *Christ in Christian Tradition: From the Apostolic Age to Chalcedon (451)*.
23. Cf. Scubert M. Ogden 1996, *Doing Theology Today*, pp. 248-252; building upon the insights of Willi Marxsen 1978, *Christologie – praktisch*.
24. Cf. Funk, R.W. 1991, *The Gospel of Mark: Red Letter Edition*, with M.H. Smith, p. 18.
25. For an explanation of the program and aims of the Jesus Seminar, see *The Five Gospels: The Search for the Authentic Words of Jesus*, edited by R.W. Funk & R.W. Hoover 1997, pp 34-37.
26. Wright, N.T. 1996, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, p. 30. In fairness to Thomas Wright, one cannot but admire the fine scholarly way of articulating his disagreement with the Jesus Seminar, while also giving credit in some extent to aspects of the work of the Jesus Seminar's and some of its preeminent members like Robert W. Funk, John Dominic Crossan and Marcus Borg.
27. See Schrage, W. 1963, "'Ekklesia' und 'Synagoge': Zum Ursprung des urchristlichen Kirchenbegriffs;" Trilling, W. 1978, "Implizite Ekklesiologie: Ein Vorschlag zum Thema 'Jesus und die Kirche'," pp. 57-72.

28. Hahn, F. 1974, "Methodologische Überlegungen zur Rückfrage nach Jesus," pp. 28-29: "Es ist die Relation zwischen nachösterlichen und vorösterlichen Elemente in den einzelnen Überlieferungstücken zu prüfen und Exakt zu bestimmen."
29. See, e.g., 1 Enoch, 2 Baruch, The Lives of the Prophets and Pseudo-Philo. In these documents intertextual parallels occur, resembling each other with regard to messianic eschatological symbolism. 2 Baruch is important, for it shares with Matthew an intention to cope with the "eschatological meaning" of the Temple after the catastrophe of 70 C.E. and with the emergence of formative Judaism. In both the Gospel of Mathew and in 2 Baruch the history of Israel is interpreted by means of apocalyptic imagery in the light of the destruction of the Temple. However, it is difficult, almost impossible, to prove dependency on the part of the Gospel of Matthew. It rather a common dependency on apocalyptic imagery. Cf. Van Aarde, A.G. 1998, "Matthew 27:45-53 and the Turning of the Tide in Israel's History," pp. 16-26.
30. See Franzmann, M. 1996, *Jesus in the Nag Hammadi Writings*; Koester, H. 1990, *Ancient Christian Gospels: Their History and Development*, pp. 124-128..
31. Cf. Snyman, J.J. & Du Plessis, P.G.W. (eds.), *Wetenskapsbeelde in die Geesteswetenskappe*.
32. Cf. Pilch, J.J. 1996, "Altered States of Consciousness: A 'Kitbashed' Model," p. 134. Pilch, elaborating on his previous published research, discusses in the above-mentioned article a "social-scientific" a model for the exegesis of specific texts, such as the records on the appearances of the risen Christ. He makes use primarily of Bourguignon, E. 1979, *Psychological Anthropology: An Introduction to Human Nature and Cultural Differences*, Saler, B. 1977, "Supernatural as a Western Category," pp. 31-53; and Evans, D. 1987, "Academic Scepticism, Spiritual Reality, and Transfiguration," pp. 175-186.
33. Pilch, J.J. 1996, "Altered States of Consciousness," p. 134.
34. Pilch, J.J. 1995, "Insights and Models from Medical Anthropology for Understanding the Healing Activity of the Historical Jesus," pp. 314-337; Davies, S.L. 1995, *Jesus the Healer: Possession, Trance, and the Origins of Christianity*. However, Pilch, 1997a, pp. 71-72, in a "Review Article" on Davies' book, blames the author that he did not interpret the Mediterranean personality types and their contextual embeddedness cross-culturally adequately. Davies' use of cultural psychology, is also according to Pilch, anachronistic and ethnocentric from a Western "monocultural" perspective. Ethnocentrism amounts to the accusation that different ethnic cultural codes are unjustifiably composited.

35. Present-day studies on apocalyptic eschatology reveals a “sectarian mentality” (see, among other publications, Collins, J.J. 1984, *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to the Jewish Matrix of Christianity*): in a crisis, a minority group becomes marginalised, tending to be aware of only two sides of a matter (dualism): the right and the wrong, the divine and the satanic, a world here and now and a world beyond. As is well known, the worldview of the apocalyptic is marked on the one hand by pessimism and determinism, and on the other by hope: the present dispensation is a miserable dispensation, while the transcendent dispensation beyond this one is joyful. Such pessimism and determinism are relativized by the conviction that the course of history may be changed, for the sake of the self and others, by means of the prayers and martyrdom of the “righteous.” The crisis in the cultural world of Israel and the church, which gives rise to this, revolves around the pressure which heathen powers placed on the cult and the being of the church. The crisis is magnified because the presumed relation between deed and retribution is not realised. The godless are not punished and the righteous are not visibly the victors. Seen from Bruce Malina’s study (“Christ and Time: Swiss or Mediterranean?,” 1996, pp. 179-214), “experienced time” is as a result of this embarrassment projected into an “imaginary time” in which God exercises control.
36. See Allison, D.C. 1998, *Jesus of Nazareth: Millenarian Prophet*.
37. See Malina, B.J. [1989] 1996, “Christ and Time: Swiss or Mediterranean?,” pp. 179-214.
38. This applies with respect to New Testament scholars, to schemes like that of F.C. Baur’s historiography of early Christianity (*Urchristentum*) which is based on G.W.F. Hegel’s idealistic conception of time, Albert Schweitzer’s “consequent eschatology,” Charles Dodd’s “realised eschatology,” Oscar Cullmann’s “salvation history” (*Heilsgeschichte*), and even E. P. Sanders’ “restoration eschatology.” These time schemes are constructs from modern European era and are anachronistic with regard to their use of the Scriptures. This does not mean that aspects of these theological constructed eschatologies have been to a greater or lesser extent existentially meaningful to people of the nineteenth or twentieth centuries. Experience confirms that this was indeed the case, but it does not make a particular construct, viewed exegetically, more or less legitimate.
39. See, especially, Malina, B.J. 1996, “Christ and Time: Swiss or Mediterranean?,” pp. 179-214; and Pilch, J.J. 1993, “Visions in Revelation and Altered Consciousness: A Perspective from Cultural Anthropology” pp. 231-244.
40. See, e.g., Sim, D.C. 1996, *Apocalyptic Eschatology in the Gospel of Matthew*.

41. Pilch, J.J. 1996, "Altered States of Consciousness," p. 134. Referring to Saler, B. 1977, "Supernatural as a Western Category," p. 46, Pilch notes that "theologically significant usages of the supernatural" were only then introduced into the theology of Western Christendom when the works of Pseudo-Dionysios were translated into Latin in the ninth century C.E..
42. See, e.g., Balz, H.R. 1967, *Methodische Probleme der neutestamentliche Christologie*.
43. Cf. Malina, B.J. & Neyrey, J.H. 1988, *Calling Jesus Names: The Social Value of Labels in Matthew*, pp. x-xi.
44. Hahn, F. 1974, "Methodologische Überlegungen," pp. 11-77; Mussner, F. 1974, "Methodologie der Frage nach dem historischen Jesus," pp. 118-147; Calvert, D.G.A. 1971, "An Examination of the Criteria for Distinguishing the Authentic Words of Jesus," pp. 209-218; Du Toit, A.B. 1985, "Die Historiese Jesus en die Verkondigde Christus," pp. 267-293.
45. Cf. Tatum, W.B. [1982] 1999, *In Quest of Jesus*, pp. 91-109; Scott, B.B. 1994, "From Reimarus to Crossan: Stages in a Quest," pp. 53-280; Telford, W.R. 1994, "Major Trends and Interpretive Issues in the Study of Jesus" pp. 33-74; Breytenbach, C. 1995, "Jesusforschung: 1990-1995. Neuere Gesamtdarstellungen in deutscher Sprache," pp. 226-249; Borg, M.J. 1988, "A Renaissance in Jesus Studies," pp. 280-292; Borg, M.J. 1994a, "Portraits of Jesus in Contemporary North American Scholarship (with Addendum)," pp. 18-43.
46. Cf. especially Crossan, J.D. 1991, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant*, pp. 427-450.
47. Cf. Schweitzer, A. 1913, *Geschichte der Leben-Jesu-Forschung*, Band 2, p. 367.
48. See, among others, Luke Timothy Johnson. I am referring to two of his publications and not to his opinions, much more scholarly articulated, as expressed in an Internet debate between Marcus Borg, John Dominic Crossan and himself during 1996. Cf. Johnson, L.J. 1995, "The Search For (the Wrong) Jesus," pp. 20-44; Johnson, L.J. 1996, *The Real Jesus: The Misguided Quest for the Historical Jesus and the Truth of the Traditional Gospels*. See, however, Robert J. Miller (1999), *The Jesus Seminar and its Critics*.
49. Cf. Joy, C.R. 1948, "Introduction: Schweitzer's Conception of Jesus," p. 23; Kähler, M. 1969, *Der sogenannte historische Jesus und der geschichtliche, biblische Christus*, p. 28 note 1a.

50. Kähler 1969, *Der sogenannte historische Jesus*, p. 14: “Der sogenannte historische Jesus ist für die Wissenschaft nach dem Maßstabe moderner Biographie ein unlösbares Problem; denn die vorhandenen Quellen reichen nicht aus....”
51. Cf. Schweitzer, A. 1948, *The Psychiatric Study of Jesus: Exposition and Criticism*, pp. 46-53.
52. Schweitzer, A. 1948, *The Psychiatric Study of Jesus*, p. 33.
53. Cf. also Schweitzer, A. 1913, *Geschichte der Leben-Jesu-Forschung*, pp. 362-367.
54. Joy, C.R. 1948, “Introduction: Schweitzer’s Conception of Jesus,” p. 19.
55. Schweitzer, A. 1948, *The Psychiatric Study of Jesus*, pp. 44-45, 47.
56. Bultmann, R. [1926] 1988, *Jesus* (Neuausgabe), pp. 8-10.
57. Käsemann, E. [1954] 1960, “Das Problem des historischen Jesus,” pp. 212-213: “Bei einem Leben Jesu kann man schlechterdings nicht auf äußere und innere Entwicklung verzichten. Von der letzten wissen wir jedoch gar nichts, von der ersten fast gar nichts außer dem Wege, der von Galiläa nach Jerusalem, von der Predigt des nahen Gottes in den Haß des offiziellen Judentums und die Hinrichtung durch die Römer führte.”
58. Schmithals, W. 1988, “Nachwort,” p. 149.
59. Bultmann, R. 1988, *Jesus*, p. 13. Cf. also Painter, J. 1987, *Theology as Hermeneutics: Rudolf Bultmann’s Interpretation of the History of Jesus*, p. 102. To my knowledge, the most concentrated summary of Bultmann’s reconstruction of the historical Jesus is to be found in his *Das Verhältnis der urchristlichen Christusbotschaft zum historischen Jesus* ([1960] 1965a, p. 11): “Mit einiger Vorsicht also wird man über das 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.”
60. Käsemann, E. [1964] 1969, “Blind Alleys in the ‘Jesus of History’ Controversy,” p. 36; Bultmann, R. 1965b, “Antwort an Ernst Käsemann,” p. 190. Bultmann notes: “Denn ich bin mit Käsemann ganz darin einig, daß die Sache wichtiger ist als die Personen, und daß der Zusammenhalt einer Gemeinschaft, wie sie zwischen Käsemann und mir bestand und besteht, Spannungen ertragen muß, unter denen das persönliche Verhältnis nicht zu leiden



61. Borg, M.J. 1994b, "Does the Historical Jesus Matter?," p. 184.
62. Kähler, M. 1969, *Der sogenannte historische Jesus*, p. 44: "Der wirkliche, d. h. der wirksame Christus, der durch die Geschichte der Völker schreitet, mit dem die Millionen Verkehr gehalten haben in kindlichem Glauben, mit dem die grossen Glaubenszeugen ringend, nehmend, siegend und weitergebend Verkehr gehalten haben – der wirkliche Christus ist der gepredigte Christus."
63. Johnson, L.J. 1995, "The Search For (the Wrong) Jesus," pp. 20-44.
64. Crossan, J.D. 1996a, "Why Christians Must Search For the Historical Jesus," p. 42-43.
65. Crossan, J.D. 1996a, pp. 44.
66. Crossan, J.D. 1996a, p. 45.
67. Jüngel, E. 1995, "The Dogmatic Significance of the Question of the Historical Jesus," p. 88.
68. Jüngel, E. 1995, p. 83.
69. Schillebeeckx, E. 1987, *Jesus in our Western Culture: Mysticism, Ethics and Politics*, p. 13.
70. Jüngel, E. 1995, p. 97.
71. Cf., e.g., Robinson, J.M. 1981, "Sethians and Johannine Thought: The Trimorphic Protennoia and the Prologue of the Gospel of John," p. 663.
72. See, especially, Franzmann, Majella 1996, *Jesus in the Nag Hammadi Writings*.
73. Franzmann, M. 1996, p. 57.
74. Franzmann, M. 1996, p. 72.
75. Bultmann, R. 1965a, *Das Verhältnis der urchristlichen Christusbotschaft zum historischen Jesus*, p. 9.
76. Bultmann, R. 1965b, "Antwort an Ernst Käsemann," p. 191.
77. Käsemann, E. 1969, "Blind Alleys in the 'Jesus of History' Controversy," p. 36.
78. Bultmann, R. 1965a, *Das Verhältnis der urchristlichen Christusbotschaft zum historischen Jesus*, p. 9; 1965b, "Antwort an Ernst Käsemann," p. 191. Bultmann uses the phrase: "Unterschied zwischen *historischer Kontinuität* und *sachlichem Verhältnis*" (my emphasis).
79. Bultmann, R. 1969, "The Significance of the Historical Jesus for the Theology of Paul," pp. 223-235.

80. The (English) (Holy) Bible, the *New International Version of the New Testament*, 1984, p. 645, translates the Greek phrase in Rm 9:5, “from whom the Christ, according to (the) flesh, comes,” as “Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of Christ.”
81. As Robert T. Osborn 1990, “The Christian Blasphemy: A Non-Jewish Jesus,” p. 221, rightly sees.
82. J. Jeremias, in Käsemann, E. 1969, “Blind Alleys in the ‘Jesus of History’ Controversy,” p. 24. Earlier I said that this remark by Jeremias “is... entirely inappropriate” (cf. Van Aarde, Andries G., 1997b, “The Continued Importance of Jesus,” p. 784. However, by second thought, I have changed my mind.
83. Funk, R.W. 1996, *Honest to Jesus: Jesus For a New Millennium*, p. 41.
84. Crossan, J.D. 1996a, “Why Christians Must Search For the Historical Jesus,” p. 45.
85. Funk, R.W. 1996, *Honest to Jesus*, p. 304: “We can no longer rest our faith on the faith of Peter or the faith of Paul. I do not want my faith to be a secondhand faith. I am therefore fundamentally dissatisfied with versions of the faith that trace their origins only so far as the first believers; true faith, fundamental faith, must be related in some way directly to Jesus of Nazareth” (Funk’s emphasis).
86. Marxsen, W. 1968, *Introduction to the New Testament: An Approach to Its Problems*, p. 284.
87. Thompson, W.M. 1985, *The Jesus Debate: A Survey and Synthesis*, p. 115.

## 2 ~ IDENTIFYING A RESEARCH GAP

### From Doubt to Inquiry

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

Labeling historical Jesus research as the "New Quest" in distinction to the "Old Quest," was triggered by one of Bultmann's students, James Robinson, in 1959.<sup>3</sup> Robinson was the person who referred to the traverse into the newest phase of the itinerary as a "paradigm shift." Bultmann is often described as a proponent of the "No

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Therefore, according to some scholars,<sup>11</sup> one can ultimately seek to establish the “original” Jesus’ understanding of himself and the relation of this understanding to the understanding of Jesus by the early church. One of the assumptions in this regard is that the Jesus tradition, as reflected in the canonical gospels, can be regarded as authentic until one proves the opposite. The burden of proof lies with those scholars who argue for non-authenticity.<sup>12</sup> Methodologically, however, it can be helpful to argue for absolute accuracy in a complementary fashion: authenticity is only accepted when it is really proved. Therefore, “criteria for authenticity are needed,” like the criterion of dissimilarity or the criterion of coherence.<sup>13</sup> New Testament professors like Norman Perrin, Günther Bornkamm, Ernst Käsemann, and Joachim Jeremias<sup>14</sup> were advocates of the “criterion of dissimilarity” .

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

What are the facts in present-day Jesus research concerning miracles and resurrection appearances? With regard to the miracle stories, we are now aware of the fact that they have indeed become part of the quest for the historical Jesus. However, they have not been studied exactly according to what the conservatives previewed. As in North America, for example in the Jesus Seminar of the Westar Institute, and in particular the work of Gerd Theissen<sup>21</sup> in Germany, the miracles of Jesus have begun to be investigated along sociological and cultural-anthropological lines. At the same time, the New Testament canon does not constitute the boundaries within which independent attestations are critically scrutinized for possible analogies. At the very beginning when the Jesus Seminar started to compile a database of authentic deeds of the historical Jesus after completing the study of the Jesus sayings, Robert Funk, addressing the controversy with regard to the historicity of Jesus' miracles, made use of Peter Berger's and Thomas Luckmann's treatise on the sociology of knowledge. In their study *Social Construction of Reality*, Berger and Luckmann note: "Theories about identity are always embedded in a more general interpretation of reality; they are 'built into' the symbolic universe and its theoretical legitimations."<sup>22</sup> From this perspective of a "psychology of identity," Funk<sup>23</sup> comments:

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

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

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

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

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

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

adapted so that sociological and cultural anthropological models<sup>26</sup> are used in a heuristic and expository fashion to “contextualize” the historical Jesus within the Herodian Palestine of his day.

Both of the aspects raised above, namely the criterion of dissimilarity and John’s gospel as source for the historical Jesus, have also begun to receive attention. With regard to the first, Robert Funk<sup>27</sup> puts it as follows:

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

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

Significant developments have recently taken place also with relation to John's gospel as a source for determining the historical Jesus. For example, in an appendix to his book on the historical Jesus, Crossan<sup>29</sup> includes the Fourth Gospel in his "inventory of the historical Jesus tradition by chronological stratification and independent attestation." The first stratum covers the earliest Christian texts which originated in the period 30-60 C.E. Among these texts Crossan considers a hypothetical document, a Miracles Collection, which is embedded within the gospels of Mark and John. Among the documents that were seen as belonging to the second stratum (originating in the period 60-80 CE) Crossan includes another hypothetical document that Johannine scholars Fortna and Von Whalde,<sup>30</sup> independently of each other, identified with a high degree of probability. It contains a combination of miracles and discourse wherein the earlier "Miracles Collection" of the first stratum is integrated with an independent collection of the sayings of Jesus, and it is probably independent of the synoptic gospels.<sup>31</sup> The relationship between the Gospel of Signs, the Sayings Gospel Q, and the Gospel of Thomas seems to require future investigation so that more clarity can be gained with regard to the use of the Fourth Gospel as source for the historical Jesus.

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

historical Jesus definitely needs more reflection in this regard. By using the “historiographical” theory of the German sociologist Max Weber<sup>33</sup> in the construction of typical situations in the past (rather than being too positivistic about the possibility of accurately reconstructing the past), I deliberately tried in my own understanding of the historical Jesus to be critical-realistic. This is a choice that requires putting on a different thinking cap. At large, we have moved from doubt to inquiry—and that is already a giant step!

### **Putting on a Different Thinking Cap**

Marcus Borg<sup>34</sup> convincingly showed that the students of Rudolf Bultmann did not really change the scene with their “New Quest.” As said, labeling historical Jesus research as the “New Quest” in distinction to the “Old Quest,” was triggered by James Robinson in 1959. The term “Old Quest” refers to the constructs of Jesus, which are commonly reckoned to have been brought to an end by Albert Schweitzer in 1906. However, the South African scholar, Willem Vorster (who died unexpectedly in 1993), was correct when he said that it was not “the book of Schweitzer which ended the Old Quest, but the status of the problem which became apparent by its publication.”<sup>35</sup> Not only had a set of positivistic presuppositions about the nature of history formed the basis of the “Old Quest,” but also “assumptions about the sources for the life of Jesus which could hardly stand the test of critical scrutiny.” Nevertheless, the central elements of the “Old Quest” not only survived Schweitzer’s work, but also remained important in the

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

Since the eighties of the twentieth century, scholars have increasingly become occupied with a kind of historical Jesus research that, as we have seen, has been described as a “paradigm shift.” Some systematic theologians will refer to it as the *postmodern* quest of the historical Jesus.<sup>37</sup> Studies that are intentionally “post-historical” in nature have also proliferated.<sup>38</sup> The latter are however not the products of historical Jesus research, which is by definition historically bound. According to Marcus Borg, Jesus is now, from the perspective of the newest historical Jesus studies, regarded as a “teacher of a world-subverting wisdom”<sup>39</sup> and no longer as an “eschatological prophet” per se who “proclaimed the imminent end of the world.”<sup>40</sup> John Dominic Crossan, “the leading Historical Jesus scholar,” according to Richard Horsley and Neil Silberman<sup>41</sup>

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

For Crossan Jesus was not “non-eschatological.”<sup>42</sup> Crossan sees “apocalypticism” as one of the various “eschatologies” in the first-century Eastern Mediterranean world. According to Crossan, the notion “eschatology” denotes a “perfect world,” a “divine utopia.” He sees in the Sayings Gospel Q and in the Gospel of Thomas two different “eschatologies” operating. These two “sayings gospels” are, for Crossan, the earliest material one can find with regard to the historical Jesus. Crossan endorses the findings of Stephen Patterson<sup>43</sup> that one-third of the sayings in these two gospels are common material. Editorial recension transformed this material in the Sayings Gospel Q into “apocalyptic eschatology” in contradistinction to what happened in the Gospel of Thomas where redactional activity changed it into “ascetic eschatology.” Both eschatologies, “asceticism” and “apocalypticism,” advocate that God’s perfect world would be brought about by a termination of the created world which is domesticated by systemic evil. An apocalyptic perspective on the end of the world consists of a cosmic cataclysm and asceticism bringing the world to its end by means of celibacy. The “eschatology” in these two “sayings gospels,” which lies in the common material before it, underwent redactional changes and takes us, according to Crossan, to the mind-set of the historical Jesus. One can call it an “ethical eschatology” or “social apocalypticism.” Through his “ethical” behavior, Jesus tried to subvert the systemic violence that was forced upon the marginalized peasants in Israel by the powers to be in Rome, Sepphoris, Tiberias, and Jerusalem—the centers of the emperor, the Herodian family, and the priestly (Sadokite) elite respectively. Marcus Borg construes more or less in the same vein a Jesus within a



context of a cross-cultural conventional wisdom and the subversion of “holy men” with revitalizing aims.<sup>44</sup> In 1984, Bernard Brandon Scott<sup>45</sup> referred to this development as follows: “the historical quest for the historical Jesus has ended; the interdisciplinary quest for the historical Jesus has just begun.” The interdisciplinary aspect in this new development relates to the above-mentioned archaeological, sociohistorical, and cultural-anthropological studies. But it does not mean that historical research as such is now dismissed. According to Thomas Wright it only gives a “less artificial, historical flavour to the whole enterprise.”<sup>46</sup> Wright labeled this undertaking the “Third Quest.”<sup>47</sup> In his 1992 book, *Who was Jesus?*, he referred again to this label:

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

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

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

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

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

For Thomas Wright, the Jesus Seminar and a scholar like Burton Mack<sup>51</sup> are examples par excellence of this “Renewed Quest.” People like Marcus Borg and, to some extent and in some sense, John Dominic Crossan, Geza Vermes, and Richard Horsley (who has “considerable affinity” to Crossan), are “straddling,” in that they are walking with the legs wide apart, seemingly favoring two opposite sides. The two sides are respectively represented by the “Third Quest” and the “Renewed Quest.” Wright<sup>52</sup> describes the latter as the *Wredebahn* and the first as the *Schweitzer-stream*, referring to the two opposite roads that the two giants, Albert Schweitzer (1875-1965) and William Wrede (1859-1906), working in the beginning of the twentieth century, had taken with regard to the “historical status” of the Gospel of Mark. Wrede considered Mark’s gospel a theological treatise that already presents an apocalyptic interpretation of the historical Jesus, while Schweitzer’s basic position was that the “Jewish eschatology” found in Mark’s gospel represents also the context for Jesus. The *Wredebahn* leads to the search for Jesus hidden in the sources behind Mark and in other early documents like the Sayings Gospel Q and the Gospel of Thomas. Wright quotes Schweitzer from his *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, saying that there is no third option, “*tertium non datur*,”<sup>53</sup> and suggests that the time when the *Wredebahn* was a “helpful fiction” has now “come to an end.”

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

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

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

However, my interest in historical Jesus research is neither born from neoorthodoxy nor from neoliberalism. For me, it is a matter of urgency, if one would like to travel on the *Schweitzerstraße*, according to the designations of Albert Schweitzer himself, to prioritize and contextualize the sources that could lead to Jesus. Furthermore, it is in the “subversive and dangerous memory of Jesus,” as David Tracy<sup>57</sup> called it, that this road should be simultaneously, though paradoxically, also named the *Wredebahn*.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

## A Profile of the Historical Jesus

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

*Jesus, the son of Mary, the peasant who came from the Galilean village, Nazareth, grew up fatherless; he was unmarried, probably a carpenter. He was someone who lived in a strained relationship with his kin, and who sought and found company among the followers of John the Baptist, only subsequently to separate himself from them, having his own core group of followers. He came to the Baptizer to, in light of Isaiah 1:16-17, “wash himself” from (systemic) “evil” in order to give meaning to the life of people—among them were women and children living on the fringe of society because they were the nobodies (the divorced and the fatherless, the widows and the orphans) to whom patriarchy gave no place amidst the honorable. After he left the circle of the Baptizer, his life began to be characterized by an absolute trust in God as his Father, while the insignificant, the nobodies of the Galilean society, formed his audience when he spoke about his “Father’s rule.” To them, he was a pneumatic sage and healer,<sup>70</sup> a “popular king” threatening the ambitions of Herod Antipas<sup>71</sup>—very much like*



*those prophets who spoke out against the elite.<sup>72</sup> His sayings had an edge, they were short, pithy and memorable.<sup>73</sup> His stories were symbolic in nature, open-ended and shocking.<sup>74</sup> His acts, particularly those of healing, were of the same nature and can be considered as metaphors in themselves pointing to the idea of resocializing.<sup>75</sup> Both his words and his deeds were unconventional in a radical sense, and always crossed the boundaries of his culture.<sup>76</sup> He did not envisage the Kingdom of God as primarily cataclysmic in nature, that is, as something at the end of time that would bring about the vindication of martyrs or as comparable to earthly kingdoms where humaneness vanishes behind various symbols of power and hierarchy, but as something which is comparable to a household in which distorted relationships are healed by means of the “ethos of compassion”<sup>77</sup> and God’s unmediated presence.<sup>78</sup> His “alternative wisdom”<sup>79</sup> took offense at “conventional wisdom” embedded in the temple ideology of his day<sup>80</sup>—an attitude that was not fully understood by some of his prominent followers. He came into conflict with village leaders and Pharisees, was regarded as a threat by the Sadducees and priestly elite in Jerusalem, and was eventually crucified by Roman soldiers like a criminal. No family or fictive family took care of his body.<sup>81</sup> And if he was buried,<sup>82</sup> “certainly not in a respectable family tomb.”<sup>83</sup> Jesus of Nazareth died as he was born: a nobody among nobodies.*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



## END NOTES

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



### 3 ~ HISTORICIZATION OF MYTH

#### Myths as Emptied Realities

John Dominic Crossan<sup>1</sup> 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*<sup>2</sup>:

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.<sup>3</sup> 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,<sup>4</sup> 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 Barthes<sup>5</sup> 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.”<sup>6</sup> 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.”<sup>7</sup> 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.”<sup>8</sup>

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 psychical 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.<sup>9</sup>

For Gustav Jung<sup>10</sup> 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.”<sup>11</sup>

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.<sup>12</sup> 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 Crossan<sup>13</sup> 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.”<sup>14</sup> Crossan refers to Paul’s perspective on death through which sin is buried (1 Cor 15:3) as “historicization of prophecy.”<sup>15</sup> He distinguishes this concept with “history remembered”<sup>16</sup> 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?*, Crossan<sup>17</sup> 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):<sup>18</sup> "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,<sup>19</sup> in these words of Paul about "reconciliation" (*katallagh/*), 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.<sup>20</sup> 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."<sup>21</sup>

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."<sup>22</sup> 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).”<sup>23</sup> 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*].<sup>24</sup> 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, Bultmann<sup>25</sup> 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.”<sup>26</sup> 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,<sup>27</sup> 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.<sup>28</sup> 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.<sup>29</sup> 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.<sup>30</sup> 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.<sup>31</sup>

What comes *before*, to Jeremias,<sup>32</sup> 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.<sup>33</sup>

In a footnote to this summary, Bultmann refers to his student Hans Conzelmann's classic article on *Jesus*<sup>34</sup> 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.<sup>35</sup> 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*.<sup>36</sup> 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.<sup>37</sup> 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."<sup>38</sup> In his *Nachwort* to Bultmann's *Jesus* book, Walter Schmithals<sup>39</sup> 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."<sup>40</sup> According to Bultmann, it is "told in the interest not of biography but of faith."<sup>41</sup> 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."<sup>42</sup> 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...."<sup>43</sup>

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."<sup>44</sup> Bultmann does mention the embarrassment<sup>45</sup> 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* book<sup>46</sup>), elaborate either on what the Markan scholar R. Pesch refers to as a pre-Markan baptismal tradition (in German: "vormarkinischtauferischen Tradition")<sup>47</sup> 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."<sup>48</sup>

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.<sup>49</sup> 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)."<sup>50</sup> 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.<sup>51</sup>

In a separate publication on the traditions in Mark, Matthew, and Luke, Bultmann admits that Jesus underwent a "baptism of penitence" (in German: *Bußtaufe*)<sup>52</sup> 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,<sup>53</sup> 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.<sup>54</sup> 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.<sup>55</sup>

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.”<sup>56</sup>

## Beyond the Lack of Social-Historical Evidence

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

- [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”<sup>58</sup> 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.<sup>59</sup> 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).*”<sup>60</sup>

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.”<sup>61</sup> 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)...”<sup>62</sup>

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*.<sup>63</sup> 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.<sup>64</sup>

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.”<sup>65</sup> 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.<sup>66</sup> 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."<sup>67</sup>

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."<sup>68</sup> 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."<sup>69</sup> 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."<sup>70</sup> 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?"<sup>71</sup> 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 son<sup>72</sup> because, for John, "illegitimacy discredits Jesus."<sup>73</sup> 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-Matthew<sup>74</sup> stretch this notion to such an extent that they radically transform the "plainness" (for Bultmann, die *Unscheinbarkeit*)<sup>75</sup> 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.”<sup>76</sup> Marcus Borg also considers these accounts as “symbolic narratives and not historical reports.”<sup>77</sup> 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.”<sup>78</sup> 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.<sup>79</sup>

This consideration seems to be similar to Marcus Borg’s,<sup>80</sup> 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.”<sup>81</sup> 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.”<sup>82</sup> 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.”<sup>83</sup> 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.”<sup>84</sup>

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”:<sup>85</sup>

[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:<sup>86</sup>

- 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.<sup>87</sup> 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.<sup>88</sup>

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 Meier<sup>89</sup> 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?"<sup>90</sup> 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...?"<sup>91</sup> Why could Mark 6:3 also not be interpreted like Mark 1:9 as "without any defensive commentary?"<sup>92</sup> 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.<sup>93</sup>

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."<sup>94</sup> 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.”<sup>95</sup> 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.”<sup>96</sup> 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...”<sup>97</sup>

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.”<sup>98</sup> 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.”<sup>99</sup> 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.”<sup>100</sup> 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."<sup>101</sup> 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,<sup>102</sup> 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,"<sup>103</sup> 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*."<sup>104</sup> The better we can correlate the two, the more we shall understand."<sup>105</sup> But we have to be careful of "extravagant claims not undergirded by carefully screened evidence," Robert Funk alerts us.<sup>106</sup> 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.”<sup>107</sup> 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.”<sup>108</sup>

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.”<sup>109</sup> He reaches this conclusion because of his analysis of the relevant references in Josephus as well as in the “intracanonial” 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*<sup>110</sup> (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.”<sup>111</sup> 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.”<sup>112</sup> 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...”<sup>113</sup> 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*,<sup>114</sup> 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.”<sup>115</sup> 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.<sup>116</sup> 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.”<sup>117</sup> 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.”<sup>118</sup>

Neither did the Jesus Seminar ask the question why Jesus would want to be baptized.<sup>119</sup> 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,”<sup>120</sup> 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.<sup>121</sup> 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.”<sup>122</sup> 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).<sup>123</sup> As Jesus was a craftsman (τεκτων) “in the sense of ‘contractor’ or ‘builder’,” Hollenbach sets Jesus in a social class that “enjoyed considerable standing in society”.<sup>124</sup> 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.”<sup>125</sup> 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.”<sup>126</sup> 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.”<sup>127</sup>

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,"<sup>128</sup> 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 Wright<sup>129</sup> 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)".<sup>130</sup>

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")<sup>131</sup>, 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."<sup>132</sup> 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 conclusion<sup>133</sup> 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.<sup>134</sup> 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 peasant<sup>135</sup> 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.”<sup>136</sup> 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.”<sup>137</sup> 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.”<sup>138</sup>

As a “psychohistorian” Miller works “backward to childhood from analogous experiences in the life of the adult.”<sup>139</sup> This is the “developmental point of view” in psychology.<sup>140</sup> 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.<sup>141</sup>

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.”<sup>142</sup> 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.”<sup>143</sup> 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."<sup>144</sup>

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.<sup>145</sup> 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.<sup>146</sup> 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,”<sup>147</sup> 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.<sup>148</sup> 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. Meier<sup>149</sup> and Marvin Cain<sup>150</sup>) 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 presents<sup>151</sup> 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 οἱ Χριστοὶ κατὰ σαρκὰ into οἱ θεοὶ ἐν δυνάμει κατὰ πνεῦμα ἀγίῳ in Rm 1:4 as belonging to the same referential sphere than the expressions σὺν ματθῶν αὐτοῦ in Phil 3:21 and οἱ ἐστίν ἐν δυνάμει θεοῦ 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 Täufer: 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).

## 4 ~ THE JOSEPH TRAJECTORY

### **The Joseph Theme in Biblical and Extrabiblical Material**

The Joseph-Jesus relationship is a matter of “like father like son.” This idiom does not often point to a reality, but in Mediterranean culture, at least, it is a common ideal. In this regard, we have in the Gospel of John (5:17) a Jesus saying, undoubtedly not authentic, that he is at work as his father is at work. In the Johannine context this saying refers to deeds of healing and compassion, and a relationship between Jesus and God as his Father. The context also involves the outrage of the Pharisees that Jesus could dare to see himself as child of God. F.C. Grant<sup>1</sup> valued this Johannine phrase as a probable indication that the son Jesus stood in the shoes of his father Joseph. Jesus was a carpenter, like his father, but typical to Johannine style, the author of the Fourth Gospel draws an analogy between the physical son-father relationship and the spiritual relationship between Jesus and his heavenly Father. Other examples of similar analogies are John’s comparisons of physical birth with spiritual birth (Jn 3:6), natural water and bread with water and bread that bring eternal life about (Jn 4:13; 6:27), worshipping God either in Jerusalem or on the Gerizim Mountain in Samaria with worshipping God “in spirit and in truth” (Jn 4:21), resuscitation from sleep with the resurrection from death (Jn 11:12).

Thus, according to the interpretation in the Fourth Gospel, it is quite possible to understand the relationship between Jesus and Joseph in this manner. However, It is doubtful that the relationship between Jesus and his heavenly Father could be analogous to the “working” of father and son (Jn 5:17) in the sense of their mutual craftsmanship. Nowhere in the Gospel of John do we find an indication that the Johannine school knows or makes use of the Markan tradition (6:3) that Jesus himself was a carpenter. We know that this tradition was changed by Matthew (13:55) to be read as “the carpenter’s son.” Luke simply ignores Mark’s notation of Jesus (or Joseph) being a carpenter in the particular passage. Luke proffers only the question: “Isn’t this Joseph’s son?” (Lk 4:22).

Apocryphal gospels, like the second-century Proto-James and documents, and fragments thereof, for example *The Life of Joseph the Carpenter* and *Pseudo-Matthew*,<sup>2</sup> took over the Matthean hunch that Joseph was a carpenter but without elaborating on this mien as such. These documents were written (maybe translated into the Greco-Egyptian language Coptic and Latin respectively) during the period from the end of the fourth century to the six century. They only mention:

- Joseph’s righteousness;
- his old age;
- the death of his wife while his youngest son James was still a child;
- the names of other siblings (taken over from evidence in the New Testament itself);
- that Joseph was of old age (eighty-nine years) when he took Mary as wife, though he never slept with her, and that he lived to the age of one hundred and eleven.

The title of the fifth-century document *The Life of Joseph the Carpenter* bears witness to the notation. In the first century, we find only in the Gospel of Matthew evidence that Joseph the carpenter adopted Jesus as his son. However, the alluded analogy between father and son in this text does not concern craftsmanship or even Jesus' relationship with Joseph. What we actually find is a similarity between two Josephs: Joseph the widower who took the pregnant Mary into his house and Joseph the First Testament patriarch. The equivalent to the parallel of the two Josephs is the parallel between the character of Mary and that of the First Testament Eve (Gen 4:1)<sup>3</sup> and Hannah (1 Sam 1:11). The Mary-Hannah parallel is found in Proto-James and in the above-mentioned dependent apocryphal documents.

Also in the Coptic Arabic version of *The Life of Joseph the Carpenter*<sup>4</sup> (chapter 7), the correspondence between father and son pertain to geographical issues. Characteristic of Mediterranean mores, the residential cite of a family/clan is located at the burial place of the founder of the group. The tomb, in turn, is the place where a future leader is expected to be born. This leader will continue the work of the forefather. In *The Life of Joseph the Carpenter*, the tradition is that Jesus was born in Bethlehem as it is the case in the New Testament gospels where this tradition is also taken up (Mt 2:6; Lk 2:4; Jn 6:41; 7:27, 41). In all of these instances the relationship between Jesus of Nazareth and Joseph, whose ancestors were claimed to be from Bethlehem, is in focus.

This particular tradition, explicit in Matthew and implicit in Luke and John, originated in the prophetic witness (Micah 5:2) against the supposedly mighty Judean royalty in favor of an allegedly inferior ruler whose roots were in Bethlehem.<sup>5</sup> The Bethlehem referred to in Micah lies six miles southwest from Jerusalem: "But you, Bethlehem, in the

land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah: for out of you will come a ruler who will be the shepherd of my people Israel” (Micah 5:2, in Mt 2:6). The prophetic voice in Micah (chapters 2-5) was raised against the lack of righteousness among the elite in Jerusalem.

Bethlehem<sup>6</sup> (i.e. Ephrat—see Gen 48:7) was the burial place of Rachel, wife of Jacob, and mother of Joseph and Benjamin. According to the source behind Genesis 50:1-12, Jacob<sup>7</sup> was buried in a cave in the field of Machpelah near Mamre while Joseph’s burial place, according to Joshua 24:32, is to be found at Shechem.<sup>8</sup> Part of the fabric of Israel’s political history is the connection between *Rachel’s tomb* (which lays on the road to Bethlehem—Bethlehem was in ancient times located where a church, later became known as the church of the nativity, was erected in the fourth century C.E.) and *Joseph’s tomb* (at the foot of the Gerisim and the Ebal mountains in Samaria). Because of this link, Bethlehem was an ideal place to symbolize the unity of the northern tribes (with Samaria as capital since the time of king Omri) and the southern tribes. According to 1 Samuel 16, David was born there to an Ephratite family (see also Ruth, chapters 1-4). After been chosen as leader of the united Israelite tribes, David, however, did not decide on either Schechem (at that time the main cultic center of the northern tribes) or Bethlehem as his capital. He probably learned from Saul’s experience who “had greatly diminished his own effectiveness by locating the capital in the territory of the tribe to which he belonged.”<sup>9</sup> Jerusalem, instead, was chosen because of its neutrality.

During the time of Micah, Bethlehem was an insignificant village, but still remembered as the town of David that once symbolized the unification of the tribes of Judah (Jerusalem) and Joseph (Samaria). According to prophets such as Micah (see also



inter *al.* Ezek 37:15-25 and Zech 10:16), the messiah who came from the roots of David (i.e., Bethlehem), would restore this unity again.<sup>10</sup> In the Matthew's and Luke's gospels, the story of the birth of Jesus the messianic child is imbued with both the "Davidic" and "Josephic" spirit. When the prophet Jeremiah spoke of an unified Israel that the messiah would bring about from the ruins of both North and South, he refers to its devastated past by mentioning Rachel who is weeping about her lost descendants (Jer 31:15). Matthew (2:17-18) quotes this phrase within the context of the good tidings that the child Jesus outlived the onslaught of Herod the Great so that he could inaugurate this "new" kingdom.

However, the story of Herod the Great's infanticide emphasizes also an opposition from the Jerusalem royalty against the descendents of Joseph that goes way back in the history of the people of the "holy land." Round about the middle of the eight-century B.C.E., the dominant belief in Israel was that Israel was God's covenanted people and that the cultic shrine at Bethel was the visible guarantee that Israel would continue to exist as kingdom (see, inter alia, Amos 7:10-13).<sup>11</sup> Among the evidence in the Pentateuch traditions, Deuteronomy 33:13-17, Genesis 37:1-11 and Genesis 49:26<sup>12</sup> witness to the belief that Joseph was the legitimate successor of his father Jacob and not Judah. According to this tradition, the cultic site to which God's people were attached was Bethel, also called Luz (Gen 28:19; 35:6). At Bethel, heaven and earth met as God entered into a covenant with Jacob and Jacob's children. Here, on the road between Bethel and Bethlehem (Ephrath), Rachel died and was buried (Gen 35:19).

At the time of the centralization of the cult in Jerusalem, earnest attempts were made to disfavor and even to destroy the Bethel tradition (see, e.g., Hos 4:15 where the

expression Beth Aven serves as a cacophony for Bethel; Hos 10:5; Am 5:5; 8:14). The prophet Hosea (1:4-5), for example, announced that the vengeance of God would be wreaked against the Northern Kingdom Israel because of the “massacre” of Judeans in the Valley of Jezreel by Jehu, the king of the Northern Kingdom (see 2 Ki 9:1-10:28). According to Hosea, the termination of the covenant entered into at Bethel would be the punishment of God.

Jehu’s treachery, an act of familial betrayal, is symbolized in the book of Hosea (1:2-9) by the prophet’s marriage to a prostitute and the conception of his children from this adulterous union. *Lo-Ammi*, the name of the third sibling, is specifically an indication of the annulment of the covenant. This name means “for you are not my people, and I am not with you” (Hos 1:8). The separation between God and the Northern Kingdom is sealed by the prophet’s divorce. Yet his reconciliation with his adulterous wife (Hos 3:1-5) symbolizes that God would keep the covenanted promises, though in an unconventional way (see Hos 2:21-23).

During the “second Jerusalem temple period,” a final onset was made on the Bethel tradition. The destruction of Samaria (capital of the Northern Kingdom since the reign of Omri—1 Ki 16:23) by the Assyrians (2 Ki 17:7-23) gave birth to this onslaught. In the reestablished Judean kingdom, after the Babylonian exile, the conviction was nurtured that the Israelites of the Northern Kingdom were replaced by outsiders (2 Ki 17:24-26). The northerners came to be labeled “Kutim,” that is “the Samaritans.” According to this conviction, the revival of the northern Israelite cult was a failed endeavor by the king of Assyria who let one of the priests (who had been exiled from

Samaria) come to live in Bethel and teach the Samaritans how to worship [God] (2 Ki 17:25-28).<sup>13</sup>

For the Judeans, Jerusalem became the uncontested “City of David.” What both David and Solomon intended to be an act of peacemaking became an ideological instrument par excellence both during the first period and, specifically, the second period to marginalize and silence opposition. David’s choice of Jerusalem, a “neutral location,”<sup>14</sup> as the site of the official cult, was a conciliatory venture to bring the north and the south into one royal household (2 Sam 5:1-11).

After Solomon, unity failed and Jerusalem functioned as the cultic center for the Southern Kingdom only. Jeroboam, ruler of the Northern Kingdom, was immediately advised to choose “Shechem in the hill country of Ephraim,” then Peniel, and finally Bethel as cultic sites (1 Ki 12:25-33—a passage colored by a “southern” bias). These sites were chosen mainly for two reasons. The ancient traditions concerning Abram (Gen 12:6-8) and Jacob (Gen 28:10-27; 32:30-31), and the traditions concerning the settlement of the descendants of Joseph. According to the traditions of the northern tribes, Joseph was the legitimate successor to lead the house of Abraham and Jacob to the center of the land.

The bias of the editorial reinterpretation of the Bethel tradition by Judean priests, as if the northern tribes were inherently defiled by pagan syncretism, should not be overlooked by a naive reading of the above-mentioned references in the First Testament. The domination of the Jerusalem cult should also be judged in the light of prophetic protests. The prophets brought the Judeans’ attempt to ensconce God’s sovereignty within the boundaries of Jerusalem as “City of David” to light. They challenged the royal

household in Jerusalem and its priestly retainers not to be instrumental to the ostracism of their opponents<sup>15</sup> According to the prophet Jeremiah (23:1-6; 33:14-26), a newborn Davidic king would reign righteously over both Israel and Judea in the period after the Babylonian exile (see also Hos 3:5). This prophetic voice seems to be ambivalent.

Similar apparently conflicting announcements occur in the book of Micah (chapters 2-5). It simultaneously supports the continuance of the Davidic dynasty and criticizes the exploitation of the peasants by the elite. Ezekiel prophesied in the same vein, using the metaphor of two tribal wood sticks:

The word of the Lord came to me: “Child of Humanity, take a stick of wood and write on it, *‘Belonging to Judah and the Israelites associated with him.’* Then take another stick of wood, and write on it, *‘Ephraim’s stick, belonging to Joseph and all the house of Israel associated with him.’* Join them together into one stick so that they will become one in your hand. When your countrymen ask you, “Won’t you tell us what you mean by this”? say to them, *“This is what the Sovereign Lord says: I am going to make the stick of Joseph—which is in Ephraim’s hand—and of the Israelite tribes associated with him, and join it into Judah’s stick, making them a single stick of wood, and they will become one in my hand.”* Hold before their eyes the sticks you have written on and say to them, *‘This is what the Sovereign Lord says: ‘I will take the Israelites out of the nations where they have gone. I will gather them from all around and bring them back into their own land. I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel. There will be one king over all of them and they will never again be two nations or be divided into two kingdoms. They will no longer defile themselves with their idols and vile images or with any of their offenses, for I will save them from their sinful backsliding, and I will cleanse them. They will be my people, and I will be their God. My servant David will be king over them, and they will all have one shepherd. They will follow my laws and be careful to keep my decrees. They will live in the land I gave to my servant Jacob, the land where your*

fathers lived. They and their children and their children will live their forever,  
and David my servant will be their prince forever....”

(Ezek 37:15-25; NIV—my emendation and emphasis).

In the period subsequent to the exile, the priestly elite continued with the process of ostracizing. This can be seen, for example, in the command the priests authorized as the “law of God,” that the “men of Judah and Benjamin” must divorce their “foreign spouses” and abandon the children born of such allegedly illegitimate marriages (Ezra 10; Neh 13:23-28). In turn, the metaphorical story of the prophet Jonah undermines the tendency to marginalize outsiders. On the other hand, 1 and 2 Chronicles try to restore the role of the monarchy and its priestly retainers. But, according to Ezekiel (11:14-21; 33:23-26), the Israelites who were not exiled represent the people to whom God’s promise made to Abraham applies. However, one reads in the version of 2 Chronicles (36:17-20) that nobody among God’s people was spared by Nebuchadnezzar and, subsequently, no “true believer” could possibly be found in Jerusalem or Judea—“the land enjoyed its sabbath rests” until God made the king of Persia return God’s people to reestablish the cult in Jerusalem (2 Chron 36:21-23). Supported by birth records in the books Ezra and Nehemiah, the returning exiles were designated as the “true” and “pure” inheritors of the land. Against this claim, one reads in 2 Kings 25:12, deliberately changed by priestly writers (2 Chron 36:17-20), that peasants (“some of the poorest people of the land”) were left behind in Judea by the commander of Nebuchadnezzar’s imperial guard “to work the vineyards and fields.” Against this background an post-exilic prophet describes the truth and righteousness of God by specifying both Jerusalem’s atrocities and God’s sustenance for the needy as follows:

Therefore this is what the Sovereign Lord says:

“My servants will eat,  
but you will go hungry;  
my servants will drink,  
but you will go thirsty;  
my servants will rejoice,  
but you will be put to shame.  
My servants will sing  
out of the joy of their hearts,  
but you will cry out  
from anguish of heart  
and wail in brokenness of spirit...

Whoever invokes a blessing in the land  
will do so by the God of truth;  
(s)he who takes an oath in the land  
will swear by the God of truth.

For the past troubles will be forgotten  
and hidden from my eyes.

Behold, I will create  
new heavens and a new earth  
The former things will not be remembered....  
For I will create Jerusalem to be a delight  
and its people a joy.

I will rejoice over Jerusalem to be delight  
and take delight in my people;  
The sound of weeping and of crying  
will be heard in it no more.

Never again will there be in it  
an infant who lives but a few days,  
or an old (wo)man who does not live out her/his years....

(Isaiah 65:13-256 –NIV)

This positive attitude towards the poor is also to be found in literature that refers to the period prior to the Davidic dynasty and the establishment of the Temple in Jerusalem. At the consummation of the period of the judges, Hannah's hymnal prayer (1 Sam 2:1-10) also attested to both God's ubiquitous sovereignty and God's act of humbling patrons and exalting clients. The background of Hannah's prayer is her "unusual" presence as a woman in the shrine at Siloh (after she gave birth to the prophet Samuel who was miraculously conceived) and the references in the texts to the exploitative behavior of priests (Eli's sons) (1 Sam 1:21-28; 2:12-17).

The history of Eli, the chief priest of the shrine at Siloh, ties in with our interest in the interrelatedness between Joseph the patriarch and the gospel traditions in the New Testament about Jesus, son of Joseph, son of Eli (Lk 3:23). According to John's gospel, the Pharisees belittled Jesus because Joseph's family was known to them (Jn 6:42). Their accusation was that Jesus was not a "child of Abraham" as they are "children of Abraham." He, and not they, was therefore "illegitimate" (Jn 8:42), a "sinner" (Jn 9:16), a "Samaritan" (Jn 8:48).

The traditional Pharisaic version sees the origin of the Samaritans "in the events related in 2 Kings 17."<sup>16</sup> According to this view, the Samaritans were "a mixture of pagans and inhabitants of the Northern Kingdom that had not been deported." The Samaritans themselves, up to our times,<sup>17</sup> furiously denied this denunciation that had already become wide-spread during the first century C.E., as can specifically be seen in the work *Antiquities* by Flavius Josephus.<sup>18</sup> By this time, the opposition of the Judeans (and particularly of the Jerusalemites) to the Samaritans is "clear and unequivocal."<sup>19</sup> R. Pummer puts it as follows:

...[the] modern critical view...recognizes that antagonism between north and south in Israel existed for many centuries, but it also realizes that there was no sudden break that brought the separation of Jews and Samaritans....If one wants to name a definite date when the two communities began to exist as separate entities, it would be the end of the 2nd cent. BCE when John Hyrcanus<sup>20</sup> [captured Shechem<sup>21</sup> and] destroyed the Temple on Mt. Gerizim and the Samaritans in all probability, like other groups [e.g. the Pharisees and the Essenes], began to adapt certain passages in the Pentateuch to their particular theology.<sup>22</sup>

This development could explain the striking similarities between Samaritan beliefs and those of the Sadducees, the party that came forth from Hyrcanus' Maccabean family. The "close relationship in theology and practice of the Samaritans with the later Sadducees, who were the party of the hierarchy, can best be explained by the supposition of the maintenance of intercourse between the priests of Jerusalem and of the Shechemites."<sup>23</sup> Correspondence in this regard (such as attesting to the five books of Moses as the only authoritative scriptures and denouncing the belief in resurrection) could be ascribed to the power of the stronger party to enforce conformation. However, conformation with "orthodoxy" does not necessarily make people sociologically acceptable, specifically by "puritans" trapped within an ideology that is based on a "social" and "ethnic" purity line! It can be seen in the fact that the only two references to Shechem that appear in First Testament pseudepigraphical writings reveal a hostile attitude. This antagonism of the Judeans against the Samaritans is recorded in Josephus, the New Testament, and Talmudic literature.



Today, research has established the scholarly opinion that the “Samaritans are associated not with Samaria but with Shechem.”<sup>24</sup> A more appropriate geographical designation used by Josephus for the people who generally came to be known as Samaritans, is therefore “Shechemites.”<sup>25</sup> In the Wisdom of Jesus Son of Sirach (50:25-26), the contempt for the Samaritans is clear: “With two races in my soul vexed; and the third is no nation: with the dwellers of Seir and Philistia, and with the foolish race that sojourns in Shechem.” Likewise, in the Testament of Levi (chapter 7): “From this day will Shechem be called the City of Fools.”<sup>26</sup> In Rabbinical literature, a separate treatise is taken up in the Mishnah Tractate Masseket Kutim (“Tractate on the Samaritans”).<sup>27</sup>

Not everything in the Talmud concerning the Samaritans is negative. A saying of the “very conservative” Rabbi Simon ben Gamaliel (circa 165)<sup>28</sup> which is frequently quoted in the Mishnah, is his remark that “(e)very command the Samaritans keep, they are more scrupulous in observing than Israel.” Therefore, “a Samaritan is like a full Jew.” But then, applied to sabbatical limits (Gemara 57a), among others, one picks up the antagonism in Masseket Kutim 16 (see also Nidda vii,4): “This is the rule: Whatever they are suspected in, they are not to be believed in.”<sup>29</sup>

Specifically, the designation “Kutim” for the Samaritans is intended to be very negative. This label goes way back to the first century and beyond. Josephus (BJ 1, 63) reported that John Hyrcanus crushed the “Kuthean sect.” He referred to the “Judean colored” report in 2 Kings 17:24 that the king of Assyria brought people from, among other pagan places, Babylon and Cuthah to dwell in Samaria, displacing the people of Israel. In the First Testament, including 1 Maccabees, Cuthah refers to people somewhere in the western Mediterranean, probably either the Greeks or the Romans. In

the Dead Sea Scrolls, Cutnah sometimes refers to the people of Assyria, and sometimes either to the Egyptians or the Chaldeans, calling them the end-time enemies.<sup>30</sup> According to Talmudic mentality, the world was divided in line with these categorizations: Judeans, Samaritans, and Gentiles.<sup>31</sup>

This particular division is also evident in Acts 1:8. Samaritans were considered to be “Mamzerim,” that is, people of uncertain parentage<sup>32</sup> or illegitimate. In the Talmudic Tractate Kiddushin 75a (cf. Mass Kut 27) they were treated as “bastards.”<sup>33</sup> A mishnah qualifies the status of the Samaritans with respect to marriage arrangements of the Jerusalem cult in like terms: “They are the people of uncertain condition (i.e., with whom one may not marry): those of unknown parentage, foundlings, and Samaritans.” The Gemara (Nidda 74b) also classes the “sect” amongst those peoples (the Ammonites, Moabites, Egyptians, Edomites, and Nethinim [eunuchs, i.e. descendents of the ancient-slaves]) whom priests are forbidden to marry. If the regulation of Deuteronomy 23:3-5 was followed, the Samaritans could not hope to marry Judeans until the tenth generation (which is practically indefinite). This application is actually made in Kiddushin 75a.

The Johannine report (4:1-26) of Jesus talking to the Samaritan woman at “Jacob’s well” is all but an innocent tale. The well is situated on the plot of the land “Jacob had given to his son Joseph.” The land is near the Samaritan town Sychar. From this well “our father Jacob “drank,” as did “his sons.” Here again we have an indication of the dualistic Johannine mentality: the “*physical*” *Joseph* and his ancestors drank the “physical” water from the well; and then there is the “*spiritual*” *son of Joseph, Jesus*, who gave the water of eternal life.

The fact that this story in John pertains to a Samaritan woman is particularly striking. It is possible that the words “Judeans do not associate with Samaritans” (Jn 4:9) could be a euphemism for intermarriage. Of the “principal points in which Judaism condemned the Samaritans, there is none more important and significant than its attitude towards women.”<sup>34</sup> It capitalizes specifically on sexual matters. For example, Nidda (iv, i) imbues a spirit that could throw light on Jesus’ healing, probably authentic, of the suffering woman who had been bleeding for twelve years (cf. Mk 5:25-29; Lk 8:43-48; Mt 9:20-24): “The Samaritan women are menstruous from the cradle.”

The notation of Sychar in the above-mentioned Johannine story is understood by Eusebius and Jerome to be the site of the ancient Shechem.<sup>35</sup> In the light of archaeological evidence,<sup>36</sup> there can be no “serious doubt” that there were contacts with the Shechemites over several periods: in patriarchal times (see Gen 34), the period of settlement (see Josh 24), the first attempt to establish kingship in Israel (see Jdg 8:30-9:57), and the circumstances surrounding the division of the kingdom after the death of Solomon (see 1 Ki 12).

The ancient Shechem is today called Tell Balatah. The present-day Samaritan community in Nablus likes to identify their residential town Nablus near the Gerizim Mountain with old Shechem.<sup>37</sup> Nablus is the modern name of the city Neapolis (“New City”) which the emperor Vespasian founded, but which the Roman writer Pliny (His nat v. 14) assigned to a place originally called Mabartha. The ancient mosaic map of Madaba (in modern Jordan) also distinguishes between Neapolis and Shechem.

Sychar (Jn 4:5) itself has now come to be identified with Ain Askar which lies 1250 meters northeast of Jacob’s Well. However, the ruins of Nablus extend a distance

east of the modern town. It could be that (because of text corruption in the Gospel of John) Shechem (i.e., Nablus) accidentally became Sychar.<sup>38</sup> In John's gospel, as in the case of Luke-Acts, we have the allusion to the Judean division of the world in Judea, Samaria, and Galilee/Gentiles. A clear-cut distinction between Jerusalem and Sychar (Shechem) is made in the story line of the first five chapters of the gospel. Over against both the Judeans in Jerusalem (Jn 2:12-25; esp. 23ff.) and the Galileans in Cana (Jn 2:1-11) and Capernaum (Jn 4:43-45) who put their trust in Jesus because of their *physical* experiences of his heroic deeds to humankind that uphold finiteness, the Samaritans of Sychar (Jn 4:1-42) believed in him as the savior of the world by virtue of the *spiritual* water he gave them to drink so that they could receive infinite life. The story line concludes with a another scene in Jerusalem, at the pool of Bethesda, where the Judeans severely opposed Jesus, who proclaimed that he is God's son (Jn 5:1-47).

According to a relatively correct interpretation of available textual evidence in the First Testament, Priest Hasanein Wasef Kahen of the Samaritan Community in Nablus explained in 1966 that the establishment of the Judean cult in Jerusalem was the result of a wrong political evaluation. "King Daoud who is the descendent of Yahuda tribe moved the capital to Jerusalem instead of Nablus."<sup>39</sup> According to this tradition, David thought that building the capital of a united kingdom in a neutral place (and not at "the political and religious capital of the kingdom Nablus") could contribute to "supervising successfully all parts of the kingdom." After that, Solomon constructed the temple in Jerusalem. This was built "by human hands" (see the tradition used in Stephen's speech in Acts 7:48-49), while God's tent, the tabernacle, was still "erected...on a big rock that can be seen in Gerizim Mountain until now."<sup>40</sup>

In agreement with the Samaritan Book of Joshua in Arabic (chapter 43)<sup>41</sup> (retold slightly differently by representatives of the present-day Samaritan community in Nablus)<sup>42</sup> the Samaritans consider themselves as “original Israelites whom the Jews split off in a schism under Eli who moved the ark of the covenant from Shechem to Shiloh.”<sup>43</sup> They claim to be descendants of Ephraim and Manasseh, sons of Joseph born in Egypt. The mother of Ephraim and Manasseh is Asenath, the Gentile daughter of the Egyptian Potiphera (Gen 41:45, 50), priest at Heliopolis (On). Manasseh and Ephraim are the children God gave to Joseph and they were, according to Genesis 48:1-21, legitimized by the head of the covenanted family, Jacob (Israel), in terms of a Near Eastern judicial practice of adoption (see esp. Gen 48:12).

Against the claim that Jerusalem is the “City of David,” the Johannine school knew the ancient northern tradition that the nascence of the messiah, son of David, should rather be sought at Rachel’s tomb at Ephrat (Bethlehem) where Rachel (Jacob’s wife and mother of Joseph) died during Jacob’s journey from Bethel.

Like father like son, like Joseph the patriarch, victim of slander, being rejected by his own people, sold for forty pieces of gold but exalted over all the Egyptians at the age of thirty (Gen 41:46), Joseph’s son, Jesus of Nazareth, was hated by the Judeans and belittled as demon-possessed, a sinner, a Samaritan, an illegitimate person. But like father like son, like Joseph the patriarch who became an example of compassion and one who forgave and loved his brothers (Gen 50:17), Jesus, in Johannine terms, loved the cosmos (i.e., the Judeans) despite its hate.

Very few things that Joseph actively did are mentioned in the gospel tradition in the New Testament. The only things we read about are the references to his

righteousness, his Davidic ancestry, his dream and the angel's conversation with him, and his "holy marriage" with Mary (who stands in the line of the "impure" women Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and Uriah's wife Bathsheba). Matthew depicts Joseph in legendary fashion as someone who took his family, Mary and the child Jesus, to Egypt. With a fulfillment formula, Matthew (Mt 2:15) quotes the prophet Hosea (11:1) that God called back his child from Egypt to settle in Galilee. Galilee is referred to in Isaiah 9:1; 1 Maccabees 5:15; and Matthew 4:15 as "Galilee where the heathens live." (Remember Hosea's connection with the Joseph tradition in terms of his marriage to an impure woman so that God's sovereignty to act outside the conventional cultic structures could be proclaimed.) Matthew (2:18) also narrates an attempt by Herod the Great to kill the "newborn king." Herod was the "king of the Judeans" who was ironically from a "bastard" background. Matthew reports this attempt in terms of another fulfillment quotation, taken from the prophet Jeremiah (Jer 31:15): "Rachel weeping for her children...because they are no more." (Remember the context within which the prophet argues. While holding onto the importance of the Davidic household, he nevertheless expects a totally new beginning in order to make an end to the atrocities of the royalties and their priestly retainers.)

The Gospel of Luke does not share this material peculiar to Matthew, but clearly has knowledge of the tradition that Bethlehem is the location of the Joseph family. He also knows that the origin of the savior of all people (Judeans, Samaritans, and Galileans alike), according to the prophets, is not to be sought in Jerusalem but in Bethlehem. When Luke, in the speech of the "Hellenist outsider" Stephen in Acts (7:55-56), draws an analogy between Stephen and Jesus by retelling the story of the patriarchs, research shows that Luke is dependant not on the Judean (Masoretic) but on the Samaritan

Pentateuch.<sup>44</sup> In this speech (Acts 7:1-53), as well as the record about the “Samaritan mission” headed by Philip (Acts 8:1-4), the controversy between the two tribes Judah and Joseph is to be read “between the lines.”

Whatever the origin of the Stephen-Philip group could be, they clearly did not share the majority view of the Judeans with regard to the Samaritans. According to this view, the Samaritans were descendants of foreigners who settled in the North after the fall of Samaria and that the “true” *Ten Tribes* were still in exile in some far distant land. The Samaritan mission implies an acceptance of the Samaritans as part of God’s people (as the Samaritans themselves have always maintained). Perhaps the Stephen-Philip group had in mind the great prophetic hopes (Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Zechariah) for a reunion of North and South. Now that the new age had dawned, the time for such a reunion had come.<sup>45</sup>

Matthew’s notation (also in other gospel traditions) of forgiving one’s brother is one of the central characteristics of the portrayal of Jesus. The motive of compassion and forgiveness of sin by Joseph the patriarch is also the most outstanding theme in the intertestamental pseudepigraph *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*.<sup>46</sup> The gospel tradition in the New Testament shares and makes in striking ways use of this tradition in its depiction of Jesus. See, for example, H.W. Hollander<sup>47</sup> (my emphasis):

...it is the patriarch Joseph above all who plays a pre-eminent role in the ethics of the Testaments. Not only in his farewell-discourse is Joseph put forward as a good example for his sons, but his brothers too refer to him on their deathbeds, exhorting their sons to be like Joseph. He was one who kept himself free from adultery, who never stopped loving his brothers, who was full of mercy, compassion and forgiveness, who humiliated himself. He was a righteous man tried by God and rewarded and exalted afterwards.

In the Testament of Benjamin (4:2) one reads:<sup>48</sup> “The good person has not a dark eye. For (s)he shows mercy to all people, even though they are sinners” and, in Testament of Benjamin (4:4d)<sup>49</sup>: “...on the poor person (s)he has mercy; with the weak (s)he feels sympathy.” In the Testament of Zebulon (6:5; 7:3f),<sup>50</sup> the same attitude towards the poor and feeling of sympathy towards the weak is described as virtues of the patriarch Zebulon, imitating the attitude and feeling of Joseph. In the Testament of Gad (4:1-2), in a passage where Gad instructs his children, a very remarkable phrase appears that the gospel tradition in the New Testament attributes to Jesus: Gad reveals that “lawlessness” against the Lord amounts to disobedience to the words of God’s “commandments concerning the love of one’s neighbour, and its sins against God.”<sup>51</sup> These instructions clearly go together with the confession of one’s own sin and repentance and an ongoing forgiveness of the sin of others (see T. Gad 6:3-4, 7).

Here we have a clear resemblance of the Matthean Jesus’ words in the Lord’s Prayer (Mt 6:12) and in the essence of the Ten Commandments (Mt 22:37-40). These words in the Testament of Gad refer to Gad’s memory that Joseph wronged him several times. He also reminds himself of his bitter hatred towards Joseph so that he “very often...wanted to kill him” (T. Gad 2:1), and his (and Judah’s) own covetousness by selling Joseph for “thirty pieces of gold” (cf. T. Gad 2:3-4).

In light of these quotations, powerful parallels exist between the Jesus of faith, recorded in the gospel tradition, and Joseph the patriarch as depicted in the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs. For example, the references to Jesus’ death on behalf of others. This deliberate resemblance, seen from another angle, should not surprise us. In the



Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, next generations are instructed to imitate “our father Joseph.” It is therefore noteworthy, also with regard to the first-century Josephus, that the “biblical Joseph’s relationship with his brothers emerges as that part of the story which is most similar to Josephus’ own life”<sup>52</sup> (compare Jos JA ii, 16 with Jos Vit 314, 306, 333, 389, 353).

In her work on *The Figure of Joseph in Post-Biblical Literature*, Maren Niehoff finds: “For one reason or another, Joseph seems to represent for each narrator a certain Idealtyp.”<sup>53</sup> The same is true with regard to Matthew’s Joseph and the Joseph depicted in the romance “Joseph and Asenath.” Whereas the writing “Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs,” in its present form, is dated in the second or third century C.E. but actually going back to probably the second century B.C.E., the romance “Joseph and Asenath” is dated between 100 B.C.E. and 115 C.E.<sup>54</sup>

The latter is a Hellenistic-Semitic romance that focuses on God’s intervention in the life of Joseph the patriarch (parallel to the Joseph in the gospel tradition) to take Asenath, an “impure” woman, though a virgin, into his house. It is a story of a “holy marriage.” Most striking is the reference (in the shorter constructed version of Marc Philonenko)<sup>55</sup> where Sophia is replaced by the figure Metanoia (referring to Asenath): “And Metanoia is a virgin, very beautiful and pure and chaste and gentle; and God Most High loves her, and all his angels do her reverence” (JosAs [Ph] 15:7-8).<sup>56</sup> A longer constructed version (that of Christoph Burchard)<sup>57</sup> reads as follows: “(What a) foolish and bold (woman) I (am), because I have spoken with frankness and said that a man came into my chamber from heaven; and I did not know that (a) god came to me.” (JosAs 17:9 [B])<sup>58</sup>

One has to keep in mind that Asenath's virginity is not mentioned in the Genesis account (Gen 41:45, 50).<sup>59</sup> However, both the nature of Joseph's marriage to Asenath and her virginity were already among the first-century C.E. widespread literary topics. For example, Josephus (JA ii, 9), parallel to Joseph and Asenath, refers to their "most distinguished marriage" and Asenath's virginity.<sup>60</sup> This reference alone rules out the possibility that the author of Joseph and Asenath took this topic over from the evidence in the New Testament. What is in all probability the case, is that both the tradition in the gospel material in the New Testament and documents like Joseph and Asenath share a common idealization of Joseph's holy marriage. It is furthermore remarkable to notice that "rabbinic Midrash is...concerned with Asenath's alien origin and (that) this disturbing fact is accounted for in numerous ways."<sup>61</sup>

There are New Testament scholars who regard both the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs and Joseph and Asenath as totally or to a great extent dependent on the New Testament. This opinion is not really convincing.<sup>62</sup> Arguments, however, will take us on a road that does not fit the purpose of the present study. My concern is to focus on the references to the correspondence between father and son, between Joseph and Jesus. Actually, in this regard, it is highly problematic to refer to Joseph as the father of Jesus at all. These references do not occur in writings originating in the period before the beginning of the separation of the Pharasaic synagogue and the church after the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 C.E. and the termination of the earliest Jesus movement in Jerusalem.

No known father played a role in the life of the historical Jesus. Such a conclusion has far-reaching consequences for historical Jesus research. It seems that

Joseph did not die early in Jesus' life. Joseph, actually, entered the scene rather belatedly, at a time when Jesus was already crucified. For Greek-speaking Israelites, Joseph was an ethical paradigm. For Pharisees, he was the symbolic adversary of Judah. For them, he was the forefather of people who either came from the pagan world or mixed with them. In other words, the Joseph-people were regarded by the Judeans as bastards because they were a mixture of the children of God and Gentiles, people who should be treated as if they had no parentage.

Who claimed first that the fatherless Jesus was the son of Joseph? Was it the Pharisees who regarded such a charge as a denotation of illegitimacy? Or was it the Greek-speaking Christians among the Israelites who regarded such a claim as a denotation of the intervention of God who turns slander into exaltation? We do not know. What is important, though, is that these two different perspectives relate to the way one looks at Jesus! The eye is the lamp of the body (Mt 6:22): if you look with an evil eye like his "physical" brothers and sisters, then he is insane (Mk 3:21), filled with an evil spirit (Mk 3:30); with a good eye like his "spiritual" brothers and sisters, he is the child of God, filled with the Spirit of God (Mk 1:9-11), the savior who casts away the evil spirit!

### **The Ordering of Unorganized Parallels into Trajectories**

This chapter started with a reference to the tomb of Rachel which is on the road from Bethel to Bethlehem. With regard to the role of tombs in the world of Jesus, the late

Joachim Jeremias (the German scholar and student of Bultmann who had a significant impact on historical Jesus research during his short lifetime) wrote a remarkable book.<sup>63</sup> In the Mediterranean culture, as can also be experienced in Africa and elsewhere, tombs of special patriarchs, matriarchs, martyrs, or prophets are of crucial cultic and political importance. The tombs of Rachel and Joseph, we have seen, has been a special place of veneration up to this day. However, one of the Jesus sayings, which can probably be regarded as authentic, urges potential followers of his cause to “leave the dead to bury their own dead” (Sayings Gospel Q 9:59). The context of this saying in both the gospels of Matthew (8:21) and Luke (9:59) is the veneration of the dead, which is used as an excuse not to follow Jesus on his journey of subverting conventional wisdom. More or less the same sort of saying can be found in the Gospel of Thomas (GThom 42): “keep on walking.”

Luke interpreted this Jesus saying (which he found in Q) within an apocalyptic frame of reference and against the breach between Jerusalem and Samaria (cf. Lk 9:51-53). Luke (9:54) referred to the hostile attitude of the Jesus movement in Jerusalem (transparent in the reaction of the two disciple brothers James and John) towards the Samaritans. Samaria is compared with Sodom and Gemorrah (cf. Gen 19:24). The two brothers, as spokesmen of the Twelve, requested fire down from heaven to destroy Samaria. Jesus reportedly reprimanded them. In Genesis, it is reported that the family of Lot was advised not to look back but to keep on walking (Gen 19:17). Lot’s wife did not and became petrified (Gen 19:26). According to Luke’s apocalyptic message, nothing can warrant such behavior. “No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is qualified for God’s kingdom” (Lk 9:62).

Therefore, those who would like to participate in Jesus' itinerary should take note of what the Samaritan woman in John's gospel did. She responded positively to a similar Jesus saying by which Jesus showed his indifference to the cult, whether "sinners" venerated their forefathers on the Gerizim Mountain or in Jerusalem (Jn 4:19-24). Participating in Jesus' cause is to become a passerby, to keep on walking, to stay on track, to leave the "fathers" behind! Yet in order to join Jesus' journey, one has to know the direction of the trajectory.

All of these "parallels" and "analogies" between biblical characters, events, and even religions could easily create an impression of an environment where a monolithic unity seems to prevail. But that is certainly not the case. One should therefore act with caution to not be caught in the net of "parallelomania"<sup>64</sup> that amounts to thinking in terms of a disorganized mass of material. One needs to think along the lines of a particular development of the data. The result of not following a trajectory is to walk in circles. Rather, one needs to keep on moving in a linear way, starting at a point, passing another on the way, always heading towards the next. It is to think about biblical material in specific contexts that relate to developing stages.

The "background" or "environment" of the biblical world should not therefore "be mastered by reducing it to a mass of disorganized parallels to the New Testament; it must be reconceptualized in terms of *movements, trajectories....*" These words (my emphasis) are quoted from a book written by James M. Robinson (emeritus professor at Claremont) and Helmut Koester (emeritus professor at Harvard) entitled *Trajectories through Early Christianity*. In the introduction of this work, Robinson writes:<sup>65</sup>

We now have, as a result of two centuries of critical historiography, its limitations notwithstanding, a history of early Christianity which makes indisputable the theological change from Jesus to Paul, from Paul to Mark or Ignatius, from Ignatius to Irenaeus or Origen, and then to Augustine or Athanasius. This is not simply a case of random variety, of pluralism. A more penetrating analysis reveals individual items to be exponents of intelligible movements....Such sequences of development have come to the surface in the course of the critical historical research of the past generations. Yet the implications of their discovery have been obscured by the context in which they [the above-mentioned individual items] arose and continue to be used. These stages were generally found in the process of seeking a fixed date for a document, or at least enough chronological accuracy to rule out apostolic authorship; or as part of an argument to establish that one document attests to the existence and circulation of another.

Applying these ideas, many aspects of the interrelatedness between the Jesus of history and the Jesus of faith could be described and explained in a more adequate way. Establishing a sequence of movement, attested to different documents, can do this. Although these writings originated in divergent contexts, many of them are interrelated in some way or another. However, it is a hermeneutical danger, as James Robinson<sup>66</sup> also realizes, that the term *trajectory* “may suggest too much determinative control at the point of departure.” But it does not need to be so. Robinson notes: “At one stage of a movement a document may function in a specific way, have a certain meaning or influence on the movement; at a subsequent stage on the trajectory that document, unaltered, may function or cut in a different way, may mean in effect something different, may influence the movement differently.”

How does it work out in practice? Take the belief of Christians regarding the virginal conception of Jesus as an example. The *locus classicus* of this dogma is

Matthew 1:23 where the word “virgin” (παρθε/νοῖα) occurs. Actually, what Matthew is doing here is quoting from the book Isaiah (7:14) in the First Testament. The prophet Isaiah lived in the eighth century B.C.E, and he referred to a very particular wartime situation where ancient Syrians were involved in the history of both the Northern and Southern Kingdoms of Israel. The Hebrew word that the prophet used did not intend to mean “virgin” at all. Sometime since the third century B.C.E. in Egypt, the authors of a specific Greek version of the First Testament (the Septuagint, abbreviated as LXX) translated this word as virgin. Matthew’s quotation comes from this Greek translation. But it is also possible that Matthew probably did not have the virginity of Mary in mind at all when he quoted Isaiah 7:14. What Matthew 1:23 (see also Mt 28:20) probably had in mind is the concept “Emmanuel” (i.e., “God-with-us”), a motive found in Isaiah 7:14 (which is an allusion to the motive of the “child of the king,” mentioned in Isaiah 8:8 as “God with us”).

Here, again, one has to beware of anachronistic exegesis. An illustration of this would be to interpret the term “Holy Spirit” not only in, for example Psalm 51:11(13), but also in Matthew 1:18 (ἐκ πνεύματος ἁγίου) and in Matthew 1:20 (ἐκ πνεύματος ἁγίου ἐστὶν ἁγίου) from the perspective of the Christian dogma of the Trinity. Such an interpretation can be found in the edict of 1555 by Pope Paul IV against the anti-Trinitarians and the Socinians. These people taught that “...our Lord (is) not the true God..., not in all respects of the same being as the Father and the Holy Spirit, or that he was, according to the flesh, not received from the Holy Spirit in the lap of the most holy and always virginal Mary (*aut eundem secundum carnem non esse conceptum in*

*utero beatissimae semperque Viginitas Mariae de Spiritu Sancto*), but like the other people from the seed of Joseph (*sed sicut ceteros homines ex semine Joseph*).”

It is worth pointing out that Pope Paul IV, by rejecting the anti-Trinitarians, he in fact defended Roman Catholic Mariology. The interwoven dogmas of the “immaculate conception” and the “always virginal Mary” are part and parcel of this doctrine. It is built upon an early belief that Joseph withheld himself from sexual intercourse with Mary. This belief originated in apocryphal documents dating back to the second century C.E. Protestants used this tenet in the Belgic Confession (Article 18 and 19) as support of the belief in Jesus’ “two natures”: his humanity and his divinity. However, a “jumping conclusion” should not be made. To point out that both of these tenets regarding Joseph’s role (or rather lack of role) and Mary’s virginity are post-New Testament developments, does not necessarily mean a rejection of the dogmas of either Jesus’ divinity or the Triune-God.

The roots of Mariology come from the second-century church father Ignatius (Ephesians 18:2; Smyrneans 1:1; Trallians 9:1) who was the first Christian to interpret Matthew 1:23 explicitly as a reference to Mary’s virginity in relation to Jesus’ divinity. But it was specifically because of the elaboration on both themes regarding Joseph and Mary in the post-New Testament document Proto-James (and writings dependent on it, such as *The Life of Joseph the Carpenter* and *Pseudo-Matthew*) that Mariology firmly took root.

How can one keep anachronisms out of our understanding of Matthew’s interpretation of Jesus’ adoption as “son of Joseph” on the basis of the intervention of the Holy Spirit? We could take note of texts contemporary to Matthew that emphasize a



particular tradition with regard to “Joseph, the son of Jacob.” We have already seen that the pseudepigraphic document Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs (containing material that probably goes back to the second century B.C.E.) witnesses to this tradition concerning the First Testament figure Joseph, the son of Jacob. According to this tradition, Joseph was not merely the innocent victim of the spiteful and jealous “evil eye,” manifesting in the envy of his brothers. He, in fact, successfully conquered the evil spirits.<sup>67</sup>

Against this background, rabbis of the Jamnia Academy<sup>68</sup> were of the opinion that the protection that Joseph enjoyed against the evil spirits also applied to his offspring. These rabbis (belonging to the Pharisaic school) are generally viewed as opponents of the Jesus movement. Against this opposition, among others, Matthew defended the notion that Jesus is “child of God.” In the Talmud (b. Bava Mezia 84a; cf. Berakot 20a), there is a tradition with respect to one of the leaders of the Jamnia Academy. According to this tradition, the leader sees himself as being of the “seed of Joseph.” Therefore, the “evil eye” has no power over him.<sup>69</sup> Within the symbolic world of Israel, the Holy Spirit was the power that overcame evil. Similar evidence occurs a number of times in the Gospel of Matthew (e.g. Mt 12:28). Wordplay emphasizes the opposites: ‘son(s) of God’ versus “son(s) of evil.” According to Matthew, the disciples, as “children of God,” just like Jesus, as the adopted “son of Joseph” and “child of God,” were also supposed to have power over “evil” and the “children of evil” (e.g. Mt 10:20; 24-26).<sup>70</sup>

Subsequently, it is of significance to take note of the research done by a distinguished scholar of Mediterranean culture, J. Duncan M. Derrett.<sup>71</sup> In the context of his discussion on the “evil eye” in the Mediterranean social world, he remarks as follows

with regard to the view Israelites had of births in general: “The Hebrews viewed childbirth as symbolic of destiny in a most intimate way. No conception took place without the co-operation of the (H)oly (S)pirit.”<sup>72</sup> If the use of the word “virgin” in Matthew’s quotation of Isaiah 7:14 was indeed intentional, then Matthew most probably had the divine conceptions such as those in the haggadic Moses paschal document (b. Baba Batra 120a) and in the Midrash Rabbah (Ex Rab 1:19) about Jochebed, the mother of Moses, in mind.<sup>73</sup> According to this tradition, God restored Jochebed’s “virginity.” This happened before she, without the involvement of her husband Amram, gave birth to Moses.

But it is also a fact that the mythological idea of a divine son who was conceived by some deity or other was taken over by Hellenist Egyptians within the Israelitic tradition and applied to the “holy people”<sup>74</sup> of the First Testament. This mythological idea was not only known to the Greek tradition (e.g., the birth story of Asclepius, son of a mortal mother Coronis, but conceived by the god Apollo, son of Zeus). It was also a general notion within the context of the Babylonian, and particularly, the Egyptian “royal legend.” Since this idea was well known in Hellenistic Egypt, it is not surprising that the legend of the virgin birth already appeared early on in Hellenistic Christianity. Within the Greco-Israelite tradition, it is not unusual to be confronted by the mythological notion of “divine beings” like angels impregnating “mortal women.”<sup>75</sup> In the Wisdom of Solomon (8:16-18), an erotic love affair between the preexistent Sophia (“Wisdom”) and the “wise person” is mentioned: “(Always when) I come home I shall sleep with her,<sup>76</sup> for intercourse with her<sup>77</sup> has no bitterness and the marital communion with her no hurt, but joy and merriment.”<sup>78</sup>

As far as the Lukan birth narrative is concerned, research has convinced me that placing it against the background of the divine son myths in contemporary Greco-Roman literature provides the clearest explanation. This research is particularly supported by the work of Rudolf Bultmann, Walter Schmithals, and John Dominic Crossan.<sup>79</sup> The fact that the legend relating to the virgin conception was unknown to Paul does not necessarily prove that this was not a common idea in non-Pauline Christian circles, even before Paul's time.<sup>80</sup> Virgin conception was a common notion in non-Christian circles.<sup>81</sup> Examples are the conceptions of Perseus and Romulus in Greco-Roman mythology, as well as of the pharaohs, Alexander, and Augustus, in legendary material emanating from, on the one hand, Egyptian and Greco-Roman history, and, on the other hand, from famous philosophers and religious thinkers such as Plato and Apollonius of Tyana.<sup>82</sup>

In this regard one cannot but agree with Raymond Brown.<sup>83</sup> He points out that it is inconceivable that converts from heathendom to Christianity would have been unaware of these parallels from Egypt, Greece, Anatolia, and Latium. Sketches and portrayals of figures of divine birth and/or virgin conception, for instance Hercules, Perseus, Horus (the Isis cult), and Priapus, were found in houses in the cities Herculaneum and Pompeii, and surrounding villages. This area was damaged by an earthquake in 62 C.E., and buried in lava in 79 C.E. as a result of the volcanic eruption of Mount Vesuvius. These portrayals provide a clear indication that miraculous birth stories were common and well known.<sup>84</sup>

The notion of the divine birth of Jesus does not appear in the New Testament except in Matthew 1 and Luke 1. This is remarkable in the light of its common occurrence in the contemporary world. The words in Galatians 4:4, "when the fullness of

the time came, God sent forth his Son, *born of a woman* (γενο/μενον εκ γυναικο/ς),” offer absolutely no indication that Paul knows of the tradition relating to the virginal conception of Jesus.<sup>85</sup> Nonetheless, in my opinion, we cannot suppose that Paul is silent about *how* Jesus was conceived.<sup>86</sup> According to Paul, Jesus was at birth the preexisting child of God and therefore of a completely different order than that of people. At birth, however, he became equal to people in all respects. This is true of the nature of human birth, the nature of human history, and the human condition.<sup>87</sup> Paul does not think of the birth of Jesus in terms of any other than those of a natural birth.<sup>88</sup> Paul’s expression, “born of a woman,” also appears elsewhere, for example in Job 14:14 and Matthew 11:11. Here it pertains to natural birth. In other words, according to Paul, it is not Jesus’ birth that determines his *being the son of God*: he was this already before being born of a woman. Paul (as in John’s gospel) emphasizes the anomaly, the paradox, that the “eternal child of God” experienced a brief life and remarkable suffering because he was born of a woman. This view of what “being the child of God” entails, cannot be reconciled with that offered by the concept of a divine birth.<sup>89</sup>

It is clear that Matthew’s and Luke’s narratives of the birth of Jesus represent an unusual position in the New Testament. Bultmann’s<sup>90</sup> conclusion is therefore correct when he notes that the particular understanding of “being the child of God” that underlies the narrative of the virgin birth is overshadowed (*überflügelt*) by the understanding of “being the child of God” to which Paul and John bear witness. Both, each in a specific way, work with “adoption as child of God.” In chapter 7 I shall elaborate a little bit more on the background against which writers like Paul reasoned.

## A Chain of Seven Links

It is clear that parallels exist between Matthew's understanding of Jesus as "son of Joseph," "son of Abraham," and "child of God," and conceptions in the Greco-Israelite and rabbinical world, including texts like Wisdom of Solomon and Joseph and Asenath. These parallels do not necessarily imply a direct source dependence; rather, they indicate common thinking.<sup>91</sup> However, the background material of the notion of Mary's virginity does not constitute a "mass of disorganized" parallels. A clear trajectory can be discerned.

In Matthew's gospel, the Joseph trajectory begins with a quotation from the prophet Isaiah. The book Isaiah appears within the Hebrew Scriptures, but the quotation comes from the Greek translation that originated in a Hellenistic environment. Matthew's quotation focuses on the expectation of an ideal king as well as on the motive of a Moses-like deliverance. This focus should be understood in the light of the Bethlehem-Jerusalem controversy. We have seen the extent to which this controversy relates to the Joseph-Judah conflict.

Luke has something different to say concerning the notion of Mary's virginity. The Lukan birth story is told within the context of Greek myths about deities and the emperor cult of the Romans. John does not elaborate at all on the aspect of virginity. However, the Joseph figure plays a remarkable role in John's gospel. His understanding of Joseph within the context of the Jerusalem-Bethlehem controversy is in some sense similar to Matthew's. Both of these gospels originated against the background of the

antagonism of the Pharisaic Academy in Jamnia towards the Jesus movement during the period after the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem in 70 C.E.

Paul and Mark wrote a good few years earlier than Matthew, Luke, and, John. Both Paul and Mark do not know anything about either Joseph or Mary's virginity. Even Mary, according to Mark, does not regard Jesus as someone of high esteem. Likewise, a complete silence falls, with regard to both Joseph and Mary, in the rest of the New Testament.

During the second century, a steady development in a totally new direction is discernable. It starts with Ignatius' emphasis on Jesus' divinity over Gnostic belief that *God's becoming event* in "flesh" was unthinkable. In Proto-James, the Joseph figure serves to support the new upcoming belief in the perpetual virginity of Mary. Other documents and theologians took up this line. During the Middle Ages, exactly the same Joseph motive, which occurred in the previous stage, was used to support the dogma of the Trinity. The Reformers obviously disliked Mariology. Nevertheless, from the sixteenth century onwards, they implemented the role of Joseph to defend the tenets of Jesus' "two natures" (*true God* and *true human*) and the dogma of the Triune God (see the Belgic Confession, Articles 18 and 19).

One can explain this development, from its beginning to the end, with the image of a chain consisting of seven links. However, the silence with regard to Joseph in the documents closest to the historical Jesus presents a missing link in the center. The thrust of each of the first three rings is in some way or another transparent in the themes of the overlays in the gospel tradition. These overlays fill the emptiness in the center.

## The First Link ~ The Wisdom Tradition

The first link contains the Joseph saga in the First Testament. This story is well known. It is about acceptance despite rejection. It is a story of tension within Jacob's family. Jacob's other name is Israel. The twelve sons in the family do not have the same mother. Rachel, Israel's beloved wife, is the mother of Joseph and Benjamin. All the sons, however, have the right to be called children of their ancestor Abraham. The records in the First Testament about the twelve sons are not fully in concordance with one another. One particular tradition would like to put Joseph on a pedestal. According to this bias, Joseph was not his brothers' equal because he did not work with them in the fields. His father had prevented him from doing manual labor with his brothers by giving him a special multicolored robe. Such a robe is not worn for labor. In the same vein, this tradition records that the first-birth right was taken away from both the oldest, Rueben, and the second in line, Judah, because both of them shamed their father by their sexual misbehavior. Later in the story, Joseph reportedly stood steadfast against any temptation.

The father's favoritism is clearly seen when Joseph gossiped to his father about his brothers and received no reprimand. The direction of the story develops from slander into rejection as Joseph was betrayed by his brothers and abandoned. Outside of the Promised Land, he continued to play his role as the beloved son of his father. The pharaoh of Egypt exalted him "because of his father's God" (Gen 41:38-39; 50:17-18). His exaltation was the result of God's intervention in his life. He married, from the perspective of his brothers, an impure woman. However, this became a "holy marriage"

because the children, born of this union, strictly speaking also impure, were legitimized by Israel when he adopted them into the circle of God's covenanted people.

Mediterraneans are accustomed to judicial retribution: an eye for an eye. Joseph, meeting his brothers again, responded with an act of forgiveness and compassion. This is the first link.

## **The Second Link ~ The Prophetic Tradition**

Joseph's children, born in Egypt, became the forefathers of the people living in the Holy Land in the region north of Jebus. They had their own places of political power and cultic worship. Since the Israelites entered Canaan, there was tension between the two tribal groups, the Makarites/Shechemites (Joseph's children) and the Judeans. After Joshua's return from Egypt the tension mounted. The restoration of Judah began when David, from the tribe of Judah, became the leader of all of Israel. David and Solomon were the peacemakers. To this end they chose Jebus/Salem, since then called Jerusalem, as a neutral location for political power and cultic worship. However, in the long run, it was of no avail.

Two empires came into being. Prophets tried to unify the two groups. Ezekiel, for example, would have liked to transform the "pair of sticks" (Ezek 37:15-28) into one. However, the northerners continued to pray to God on the mount Gerizim, close to Shechem, Joseph's burial place (see Josh 24:32). In Judea, Jerusalem was the symbolic center of the power of the Davidic family, the economy of the land, and the Jahwistic religion. The Judeans tried to silence their opponents by creating the myth of the lost ten



tribes. The Judean priests legitimized this bias by canonizing their version of the books of Moses. The northerners, however, had their own version of the books of Moses, the Samaritan Pentateuch. For the puritan Judeans the name “Samaritan” was equivalent to being a bastard, a person with no right to enter the temple in Jerusalem because he or she were not the “true” child of Abraham. Here, the second link ends.

### **The Third Link ~ The Judean Tradition**

One should probably not take the Judeans’ restoration of the defamation of the house of David too seriously. Like the forefather, Judah, David himself had his own story with women despite efforts made by the priestly Judean writers of the Chronicles to erase this story from the royal annals in the books of the kings. Much less sensational than the sexual morality of kings were the atrocities of the elite exploiting the peasants. Small wonder the prophetic voice (of Micah) was looking to a new king in Jerusalem, who was expected to come from the grass roots of Bethlehem. In the same vein, another prophet (Hos 11:1) predicted that a “God’s son” would come from Egypt. This failure to restore defamation, is the third link. At this stage, the air was pregnant with the peasants’ expectations of a popular king. For the “northerners,” the “son of Joseph” would be this king. For the prophets the “son of David,” the messiah of the united Israel, could encompass both expectations

## **The Missing Link ~ The Jesus Tradition**

But when he came, nobody recognized him. He did not see himself in the role of a king. He was one of them. No biological father played a role in his life. History does not reveal a figure like Joseph at this point in time. His family thought he was insane. His wisdom subverted conventional culture. His heart and deeds were filled with compassion and anger because of the pain against which the prophets had already protested. The powers that were killed him as a nobody. There was no family tomb in which his body could be laid. This link is about the story of the fatherless Jesus.

## **The Fifth Link ~ The Gospel Tradition**

The people, who were attracted by Jesus' message about God's all-inclusive presence, looked with new eyes at Jesus after his death. They began to adore him in terms of the expectations the prophets had of God's messiah who would inaugurate a dispensation of righteousness. They used names taken from Israel's scriptures and the surrounding world to express their adoration. Simultaneously, those who saw it as their task to maintain the conventional wisdom with regard to their images of God and culture opposed this movement by labeling its "founder" and its messengers. This can clearly be seen in the earliest Christian documents available, the authentic letters of Paul. The opposition was specifically directed against his notion that *God's becoming event in Jesus* meant that God's presence was available also to the people outside the boundaries of Israel.

Chronologically, the Gospel of Mark presents the second available Christian text. In this document, Jesus is called the “prince of the demons.” As in Paul’s letters, one can trace in Mark a tradition that went back to the earliest Christian movement in Jerusalem. It is clear that, from the very beginning, the community of Christian believers was diverse with regard to their understanding of what the core of Jesus’ message really was. Although both Paul and Mark used the traditions transmitted from the Jesus movement in Jerusalem, they changed some essential aspects.

What was common to this early phase is that no one knew about Jesus’ miraculous conception, or that Joseph was his father. The silence with regard to Joseph represents the missing fourth link in the Joseph trajectory. The gospel tradition in the later documents (Matthew, Luke, and John) have “overlays” that fill up the empty center in the tradition that originated in Jerusalem and was adapted by Mark. One of the aspects in the tradition of the Jesus movement in Jerusalem that does not go back to the historical Jesus, is the idea of “The Twelve.” In Jerusalem, the first Jesus followers seemingly regarded the Jesus movement as the inauguration of the united Israel. The idea of “The Twelve” fulfilled the role of focussing on Israel as God’s unified people. The death of Jesus, understood in terms of dying, being buried, and resurrected, is also part of this early tradition. This formula was taken over by both Paul and Mark. To them it accentuates the empty tomb tradition (which probably did not originate within the circle of the earliest Jesus movement in Jerusalem but rather in a Greco-Roman environment). The empty tomb tradition was seemingly understood as an indication of God’s acceptance of Jesus as God’s child.

A similar motive, also known in Roman Palestine of the time, is found in the stories of Hercules' "deification" (in Greek: *apotheosis*), as can be seen in the satires and tragedies of Seneca in the fifties of the Common Era. These correspondences are yet another indication of the extent to which Hellenization had taken place in the earliest Jerusalem faction. Jesus' death, however, was understood as if the Hebrew Scriptures foretold its vicarious intention. The same happened with regard to the resurrection tradition.

This earliest tradition knows neither about Joseph's link to Jesus nor the mission of the Christian movement among Samaritans. In this tradition, there is also no knowledge of the virginal conception of Jesus. Matthew and Luke, using Mark as source, filled the gap against the background of a particular process and mind-set. The process was that of the separation between the synagogue and the church that started after the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem in 70 C.E. The mind-set was that of apocalypticism which both Matthew and Luke took over from Mark and a later version of the Sayings Gospel Q. All three of these synoptic documents present an understanding of the death and resurrection of Jesus in the light of an apocalyptic mind-set.

The apocalyptic expectation was that this world would be transformed into the final Kingdom of God. The vicarious death of a martyr was an important dynamic in this expectation because the martyr died on behalf of others to procure a better future for them beyond death. According to a specific prophetic tradition, the new age would dawn when the messiah was revealed in Jerusalem as the child of humanity so that the nations came to Jerusalem to join the unified Israel. In Mark and Matthew, this cosmic event happened when, in accordance to Amos 8:9, the sun went down at noon (see Mk 15:33;

Mt 27:45) and Jesus, in accordance to Daniel 7:13-14, been revealed as the messianic child of humanity igniting the “discipling” of all the nations (see Mt 28:18-20; Mk 15:39; Mt 27:54).

In Mark and Luke, the focus was moved from Jerusalem to the Gentiles. Luke, in particular, geographically divided the world into concentric circles: Judea, Samaria, and Rome, symbolizing the greater world. The Joseph tradition, as we have seen, is very much intertwined with Samaria. Jesus, son of Joseph, was seen as the precursor coming from Bethlehem, entering Jerusalem as Israel’s messiah after he had journeyed from Galilee through Samaria to Jerusalem. For Matthew, the journey into the pagan world was not at issue anymore. The focus was on the “lost sheep of the house of Israel” so that the temple in Jerusalem could become the house of prayer for all nations, including the impure and the outcasts.

The social location of Luke’s audience differed from that of Matthew’s. Matthew is either a Syrian or Galilean gospel in which there is a tendency to both conform to and separate from the (Pharisaic) synagogue. The Pharisees remained the advocates of the ideology even after its destruction. An aversion to the Samaritans formed part of this ideology. The defamation of Jesus on account of his illegitimate background seems to be part of this aversion. Matthew apologized by explaining that Jesus’ birth was the result of an intervention by God. However, he conformed to the synagogical view by explicitly denying that Jesus nor his followers ever went to the region of the Samaritans (Mt 10:5). Matthew represented the Judean emphasis of only one Israel as if the “northern stick” did not exist at all.

For Matthew, the *son of David* was the messianic *child of humanity* who was expected to inaugurate the utopia for the lost sheep of Israel. Paradoxically, Matthew departed from synagogical policy by emphasizing the ingathering of the social outcasts into the symbolic temple (which did not concretely exist anymore) and, therefore, into God's kingdom. For Matthew, as for Mark, the Jesus-kerygma became the message of an apocalyptic death, although he did not mention Jesus' death as for the benefit of others. The only hint of such an idea in Matthew's gospel (Mt 26:26-29) is the eucharistic formula that he (cf. also Paul in 1 Cor 11:23-26) took over from Mark's version (Mk 14:22-25) of the convictions of the Jesus faction in Jerusalem.

Luke also knew of the illegitimacy charge. His audience was probably located in Ephesus in Asia Minor. The influence of the conflict between the synagogue in Jamnia and the Christian communities reached far beyond the boundaries of Roman Palestine. This was the case in Asia Minor where the emperor granted judicial rights over Israelites to the synagogue.

The defamation on account of Jesus' illegitimate background seemingly originated in the synagogue probably because of his fatherlessness. The Jamnia Academy did not see Jesus' illegitimacy as the outcome of rape. We have seen that second-century rabbinical Judaism saw it this way on account of a satirical reading of the traditions of Jesus' birth found in Matthew and Luke. They created the Ben (son of) Panthera tradition as a satirical wordplay on *parthenos* (parqeno/j), the Greek word for virgin. Panthera was the name they gave the Roman soldier who allegedly raped Mary.

Luke represented the prophetic tradition of the reunification of the North and the South. This can be seen in his tripartite mission to the Judeans, Samaritans, and the Gentiles (Acts 1:8). The Samaritans were, according to Luke, a necessary link backward to the “mission” to the outcasts in Judea, and forward to the Gentile mission. In the parable of the Good Samaritan, Luke (10:30-35) depicted Jesus as both the Samaritan and the impure Israelite lying in the ditch. Jesus was also Lazarus who became one of the “dogs” (cf. Lk 16:21). The label “dog” was conferred on Gentiles (cf. Mk 7:28). In the Israelite tradition, the name Lazarus was linked to Abraham’s family, and it meant “God helps.” In another story of Luke (15:11-32), Jesus was portrayed as a defiant sibling who moved from the land of his fathers into an impure country where he became one of the outcasts. Paradoxically, the outcasts, the Samaritans, rejected Jesus but he did not reject them, although Luke tells us that the disciples James and John (projecting the Jerusalem faction) expected him to do so (cf. Lk 9:51-55).

Luke’s apology for the slander concerning the scandalous birth memoir differs from that of Matthew’s. Luke combined the Jerusalem faction’s claim of Jesus’ messianic origin with the tradition of the “newborn baby.” This combination was placed within the common context of Greco-Roman deification (*apotheosis*) and emperor-cult motives. For the Jerusalem faction, Jesus was “messiah” in an adoptionistic sense:<sup>84</sup> as “son of David” he was the messiah who, as “messiah” became the “child of God.” Analyzing this tradition historically, especially in light of how it was used in New Testament writings, one can infer that the post-Easter followers of Jesus in Jerusalem did not understand this “adoptionistic” motive as correlating with divine conception. The same is true for Paul and Mark.

For Luke, Jesus was:

- Israel's messiah (Lk 1:11; 2:26; 4:18; Acts 4:26-27), filled with the Spirit of God (Lk 4:1; Acts 2:33);
- savior and *kyrios* (Κυ/ριος) of the world (Lk 1:11; Acts 2:34, 36; 4:12);
- virginally conceived (Lk 1:34-35a)—like Perseus and Asclepius;
- the son, so people thought, of Joseph, who was the son of Eli (Lk 3:23), the son...of Perez, the son of Judah, the son of Jacob (Lk 3:33-34), the son...of Seth, the son of Adam, the child of God (Lk 3:38);
- adopted as God's child (Lk 3:21), because of his divine origins (Lk 1:35)—similar to the emperor of the time, the deified Augustus; and
- ascended to heaven (Lk 24:51; Acts 1:9) like Hercules, the godlike hero who had a human mother impregnated by Zeus and was adopted as Zeus' son because of an empty tomb (pyre) tradition.

Luke's way of thinking must also be understood against, among others, the background of the defamatory assertions concerning Jesus' origins by the "opponents" attached to the Jamnia Academy.

Just as with the virginal conception, I do not trace the empty tomb tradition back to the Jesus faction in Jerusalem, but to common Greek thinking that manifests in the



stories of the deification of Hercules. In this respect, Luke shares the opinion of Paul, who apparently got his idea of the empty tomb (cf. 1 Cor 15:4) from the common thinking in the Greco-Roman world. This idea partly lies behind the Christ hymn in Philippians 2:6-11.

Luke also knew the resurrection appearances because of his acquaintance with the Pauline tradition. This can be seen, among others, in the correspondence between Paul's reference in 1 Corinthians 15:6 to the five hundred who experienced the risen Christ at the same time and in Luke's version in Acts 2:1-13 of the "pentecostal" experience of a multitude of believers. Paul, in turn, took over the core of the appearance tradition, as it falls out in the traditional formula in 1 Corinthians 15:3-7, from the Jerusalem faction:<sup>92</sup>

Christ:

*died*, for our sins, according to the Scriptures

*was buried*,

*was raised*, on the third day, according to the Scriptures

*appeared* to *Cephas* (i.e., Peter), then to the *Twelve*

to *James*, then to *all the apostles*.

The Jerusalem faction seemingly understood the notion of "The Twelve" as exchangeable for "all of Israel," represented by "all of the apostles." In Paul's version of the traditional formula it is clear that he differed from this juxtaposition.<sup>93</sup> Apart from himself, he named Junia, Andronicus, Cephas, and probably James, and Silvanus as apostles. For Paul the concept "apostles" is an expansion of "The Twelve" in

Jerusalem.<sup>94</sup> Luke added a reference to Jesus' ascension to the resurrection motive by making use of stories such as that of Hercules. He did this because it apparently fits in with the notion of divine conception.

Luke, like Matthew, knew that a man called Joseph was not Jesus' biological father (cf. Lk 3:23). We have seen that the earliest tradition does not reveal any knowledge of Jesus' parentage except the suggestion of his fatherlessness. I also proffered a solution to the question as to where the perception that Jesus was the (adopted) grandson of either Jacob (Mt 1:16) or Eli (Lk 3:23), the father of Joseph, could have originated. Evidence directs us to the pharisaic tradition from the Jamnia Academy. In the next chapter I will demonstrate to what extent the Jerusalem ideology debarred someone from the privilege of being counted among the children of Abraham if he did not know who his father was.

For the puritans in the Judean tradition, it did not take much to label a "son of Joseph" for his alleged illegitimate background and his association with prostitutes and other outcasts. Seen from the Christian perspective, the Joseph legend was also used in the apology found in the gospel tradition. This apology concerned both Jesus' subversion of the Judean ideology and the defamation it evoked. The post-Easter Jesus movement filled the gap caused by Jesus' "fatherlessness" in its own way. Christians exalted Jesus as the risen Christ and Lord. This exaltation was substantiated by placing him in succession to the forefather Joseph, the First Testament patriarch. According to the Joseph saga in the First Testament, God exalted Joseph despite slander.

Furthermore, early witnesses, like both Paul and Mark, knew the tradition that the historical Jesus called upon God as his Father. By calling God his Father, Jesus claimed

to be a “child of Abraham” regardless of the defamation concerning his fatherlessness. In the same vein, the Q tradition (Lk 3:8/Mt 3:9) contains a statement by John the Baptist that critically rejects the selfconfident assumption of the Israelites that they have “Abraham as father.” This statement was made within the context of Jesus’ baptism. According to John the Baptist, “God can produce children of Abraham from desert stones.” In Matthew (3:7), this statement was directed at the Pharisees and Sadducees. In this respect, both Jesus and John the Baptist represented the critical voice of the prophets against the royal hierarchy, and both were also killed as a result. As we have seen, Jesus did not agree with John the Baptist’s view that God would, only at the end of time, catastrophically intervene in a apocalyptic way, in order to create the ideal condition of righteousness. According to Jesus, God was already fully present here and now, and would not be fully present only at the end of time.

This discussion touches on Dominic Crossan’s<sup>95</sup> understanding of God’s presence against John the Baptist’s apocalyptic view. John the Baptist was of the opinion that God would soon intervene as an avenger: God was like a forester who separates the good trees from the bad with his axe, like a farmer who separates the wheat from the chaff with his fork. In this view, there were only two paths, the good and the evil, and there was little time for people to decide which path to take.

The Baptizer, like the prophets of old, announced that God would intervene to rectify an iniquitous state of affairs so that people who were oppressed might be saved. John, like a Moses or Joshua,<sup>96</sup> set out to the desert across the river Jordan to lead people back to the promised land with God’s help. But, unlike other apocalyptic prophets, John did not physically collect his followers *en masse* to lead them into the Promised Land

across the river Jordan. According to Crossan, John's strategy was different. John was not a political activist such as those "rebel leaders" to whom, among others, Josephus referred. His baptism was a symbolic act of entering into the Promised Land.

People in the baptism scene, referred to by Luke (3:7) as a "multitude," were, in the view of the Pharisees and Sadducees, not deemed "children of Abraham." Therefore, they were labeled "sinners." According to Mark (1:5), they came to John from all over Judea and, specifically, from Jerusalem in order to be baptized in the river Jordan. By doing this, they *acknowledged*<sup>97</sup> that they belonged to the category of "sinners" (Mk 1:5).<sup>98</sup> The italicized word "acknowledge" in Mark 1:5 (ε) *comologe/w*) has normally been translated with "confess." Confessing, however, presupposes the recognition that one has acted wrongly. The Greek word does not necessarily have this meaning. It can mean:<sup>99</sup> "to express openly one's allegiance to a proposition or person."

Who could be the people in the baptism scene who would openly declare that they belonged to the group labeled "sinners?" In this context, "sinners" means "outsiders."<sup>100</sup> But "outsiders" to what or whom? According to the Judean cult of Jerusalem (see again Isaiah 65:13ff.), they were "outsiders" to the house of Israel, the family of Abraham, the "Israel of God" of whom God was the "Father."

As said, one needs not doubt the historicity of Jesus' baptism. However, It is not so obvious that Jesus himself initially understood his baptism as "apocalyptic penance."<sup>101</sup> The later tradition, explicitly to be found in Mark (10:39; see also Mt 3:15), understood both Jesus' baptism and death in the light of the apocalyptic mind-set. A martyr acting and dying for the forgiveness of sins forms the center of this mind-set. We have already seen that "acknowledgement" does not necessarily presuppose "confession

of guilt.” Perhaps in the beginning, Jesus did share the apocalyptic expectations of John the Baptist—who knows? The little information we have, however, indicates that Jesus’ motive to go to John “from Nazareth [in Galilee]” (Mk 1:9; cf. also Mt 3:13) to be baptized was the same as that of those who came “from Jerusalem [in Judea]” (Mk 1:5). But we should not lose sight of the fact that Mark interpreted the baptism of Jesus from the perspective of a post-Easter debate on who were “insiders” and who were “outsiders.”<sup>102</sup>

In additional editorial material,<sup>103</sup> according to Luke, John the Baptist expected people like publicans and soldiers who came to be baptized to follow a particular ethical lifestyle. This lifestyle was to be different from that of those labeled by the Sayings Gospel Q (3:7) as “snakes, viperous brood.” According to the Q tradition (Lk 3:8-9//Mt 3:7-10), such people were called upon to produce fruit in keeping with conversion. It was not the “outsiders” (in Q’s view) who came to be baptized. This is because they, the leaders of the (Judean) family of Abraham, centered in Jerusalem, considered themselves justified before God. According to this particular tradition in a later version of the Sayings Gospel Q, it would have been useless for them to desire baptism. They would not have succeeded in fleeing the coming apocalyptic catastrophe.

In other Q traditions,<sup>104</sup> the expression “snakes, viperous brood” was credited to Jesus. To John the Baptist (Q 3:8), these “viperous brood” were the people who boasted that they had “Abraham as father.” However, according to this Q tradition, God was able to produce children of Abraham from stones! Matthew (3:7) specified quite clearly that these people were the Pharisees and Sadducees. Also, when Matthew (23:33) incorporated the words of Jesus (“snakes, viperous brood”) into the Sayings Gospel Q

(11:39-52), he had Jesus refer specifically to those who sat on the “chair of Moses.” A similar conviction is found in John’s gospel (8:31-59).<sup>105</sup>

Multiple, independent evidence therefore confirms the historicity of the baptism of “sinners” by John the Baptist and his criticism of the Judean cult of Jerusalem. For various reasons we have already discussed, Jesus, like the other people baptized by John the Baptist, was probably not considered to belong to the “people of the covenant.” John the Baptist’s message that God could produce “children of Abraham” and that their “sin” could be forgiven by God independent of the cult, must undoubtedly have touched the hearts of the “outsiders.” How else are we to understand Josephus’ biased denial that John’s baptism implied forgiveness of sin (Jos Ant 18.5.2)?<sup>106</sup> According to Josephus, he attracted so many people that Herod [Antipas] feared him and had him killed.<sup>107</sup>

In another passage in John’s gospel the Judean temple authorities labeled Jesus as a “sinner” and a “Samaritan” (Jn 8:46). This defamation should be understood against the background of a dispute with the authorities about who truly were the “children of Abraham” (in other words, the “children of God”). The debate was related to the tradition that Jesus was the “son of Joseph.” It is therefore understandable that the early church wanted to defend the “sinlessness” of Jesus.<sup>108</sup> “Sinlessness” is, according to the Johannine tradition, implicitly the fruit of the life of “God’s children.” In the first letter of John (3:9), the author(s) makes use of a ring composition<sup>109</sup> to express this view:

- A      Whosoever is BORN OF GOD
- B      does not commit SIN
- C      for his seed remains in him
- B<sup>1</sup>     and he cannot SIN
- A<sup>1</sup>     because he is BORN OF GOD.

In the Gospel of John (1:18), Jesus was the preexistent “only begotten child of God.”<sup>110</sup> Jesus also had the authority to grant to all who believed in him the right to be called “children of God” (Jn 1:12). They were “not of blood, nor of the will of man, but of God” (Jn 1:13). According to the Johannine tradition, “children of God” live a “righteous life” and do not “continue sinning” (1 Jn 29-3:1). God’s “children” are free from the bondage of sin (Jn 8:31-36).

This last reference is to that passage in the Johannine tradition related to the dispute between Jesus and the Pharisees concerning whether the concept “children of Abraham” (“children of God”) presupposes a physical relationship. In John’s story, this controversy pertains to what is told in previous passages. It relates to:

- the story of the *Samaritans* who believed in him (Jn 4:39-42);
- the desertion of many *disciples* (Jn 6:60-66);
- the distrust of *Jesus’ brothers* within the context (Jn 7:1-9) of the hatred of the *cosmos* (i.e., the Judeans who regarded Jerusalem as the “center” of the world);
- the schism (Jn 7:40-44) among the *people* (notice, not among the Judeans—cf. Jn 7:40!) whether it was possible that a Galilean (a “northerner”) could be the *messiah* since, according to the Judean tradition, Scriptures said that the “seed of David” was allocated to Bethlehem;
- the *Judean elite*, too, who could not take it seriously that a *prophet* could come from Galilee (Jn 7:45-52);
- those *Judeans* (initially attracted to Jesus) who, in the end, regarded Jesus as a person with an illegitimate background—there is no way that he could have been a son of

With regard to this labeling of Jesus as a Samaritan and a sinner, Rudolf Bultmann<sup>111</sup> correctly recognized “traditional material” in these passages (Jn 7:1-13). For him it attested to the compassion of the historical Jesus towards the outcasts. John, however, interpreted this tradition within a specific context and from a particular perspective. The Fourth Gospel shares the “Semitic-Hellenistic” wisdom speculation. God’s wisdom (son) came from above. Salvation is grounded in the mission of the savior from above to beneath, becoming human in all aspects from birth to death.

John’s community, such as those of Luke and Matthew, consisted of Israelites and Hellenists. Against the synagogical charge that Christians were deviant and impure, similar to their “founder” Jesus, John claimed that his community of Christians was part of the *one* assembly of God (cf. Jn 10:16). Jesus, who came from above and went up again (his death and resurrection), was God’s victorious deliverance of his people’s incarceration.

The claim of unity in the Johannine community should be seen against the defamation of the Judean synagogue that the Christian community was of illegitimate offspring, that is that they were descendants of the Joseph tribe. According to the synagogue, Jesus was therefore a Samaritan. John knew that there had been Judeans who followed Jesus, but to him they did not really continue the cause of Jesus. John created the Nicodemus legend to illustrate that some of the Judeans were not prepared to accept the scandalous message that Joseph’s son came from the world of God. Others closer to



Jesus, like Peter, had difficulty accepting the death of Jesus as God's victory over the flesh. John, therefore, created another legendary figure, the *beloved disciple*, to portray his understanding of the ideal way to follow Jesus. Against this background, we read that a disciple, like Thomas, did not believe in Jesus' death and resurrection as the starting point for the mission of the Christian community. Against such skepticism, both Mary Magdalene and the beloved disciple showed that Christians are sent just as Jesus was sent. The objective of this mission was to show compassion to the weak. The Samaritan passages in John's gospel underline this message.

### **The Sixth Link ~ The Dogmatic Tradition**

Whereas the fifth link in the Joseph trajectory consists of the gospel tradition that fills the absence of a Joseph figure in the life of Jesus, the material in the sixth link coincides mainly with the development of post-New Testament Mariology. This tenet concerns the figure of the Virgin Mary, Mother of God, "one of the most powerful imaginary constructs known in the history of civilizations."<sup>12</sup> During this phase we find Joseph as "passively" active. Christians used the Joseph legend to support the upcoming belief in Mary's immaculate conception and perpetual virginity.

According to this dogma, Mary conceived without sexual intercourse. No sperm or male seed entered her womb. This doctrine used the Gospel of John to support its argument. The author(s) of the Gospel of John (1:13) referred to God's children as people who were not born of natural descent. They had the right to be called "children of God." This right was not comparable to being physically born as someone's child. To be

“born from above” (Jn 3:5-7) eliminated human decision or a husband’s desire. “Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit” (Jn 3:6). Both Mariology and the (sixteenth century) Belgic Confession (Articles 18 and 19), however, did not comprehend the thrust of this dualistic Johannine mentality. Furthermore, the Joseph legend provides the material for later doctrinal development. Roman Catholicism’s Mariology, and Orthodox Protestantism’s focus on Jesus’ divinity have been supported by the use of the Joseph legend. This relates to the belief that Joseph did not have intercourse with Mary.

We have seen that the roots of this tenet came from the second-century church father Ignatius. He understood Matthew 1:23 as a reference to Mary’s virginity in relation to Jesus’ divinity: “For our God Jesus the Messiah was conceived by Mary according to the plan of God: on the one hand of the seat of David [cf. Rom 1:3], on the other hand of the (H)oly (S)pirit [cf. Matt 1:18, 20].”<sup>113</sup> These two themes (Mariology and Jesus’ divinity) specifically form the plot of the story about Mary in the second-century document Proto-James. In later centuries, writings such as *The Life of Joseph the Carpenter* and *Pseudo-Matthew* elaborated extensively on these themes.

### **The Seventh Link ~ The Patristic Tradition**

The seventh link is the last in the Joseph trajectory. The discussion of this trajectory makes it clear that there is an enormous distance between the empty center and the traditions in the gospels and post-New Testament documents.<sup>114</sup> J.P. Meier, in his *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus, Volume One: The Roots of the Problem*

*and the Person*,<sup>115</sup> admits that “...the total silence about Joseph is significant.” However, he does not think that this gap is an “unbridgeable gulf.”<sup>116</sup>

According to Meier, there is “converging evidence of the notable silences found in the Four Gospels and Acts, all of which have references to the mother and brothers (and sometimes the sisters).” For him the traditional solution, already known in the patristic period, remains the most likely.<sup>117</sup> According to some church fathers (e.g., Epiphanius, Panarion 3.78.10), Joseph was already dead when Jesus began acting in public. The first hint of this idea can be found in Proto-James. Here Joseph is portrayed as a very old man when he took Mary into his home. According to the church father Epiphanius (Panarion 3.78.10—written circa 377 C.E.), Joseph died shortly after the family visited the temple in Jerusalem with the twelve-year-old Jesus (as recorded by Luke 2:41-52).<sup>118</sup>

I cannot see how Meier could seriously consider the patristic evidence as historically authentic. This evidence uncritically links Joseph’s death with the episode of the twelve-year-old Jesus in the temple. It is almost impossible to argue for the authenticity of this scene. Meier<sup>119</sup> quite correctly realizes that “there is a completely neutral stance [of Joseph as father] toward Jesus’ ministry.” However, it is less likely that this “neutral stance” could be explained as being “of no symbolic use to the evangelists.” A male figure in the Mediterranean world, such as Jesus in light of Mark 6:3, without an explicit connection to his father was someone without identity. Even today, when crosses the border of Israel, or an Arabic country like Jordan, one has to provide the name of one’s father on the application form for a visa or entrance permit.

Meier<sup>120</sup> is right when he argues that when Jesus mentioned a sister belonging to the household of God, he had his earthly relatives in mind. However, I find it difficult to see that the silence about his earthly father would imply that his father was already dead. One would rather expect that, if Jesus used his earthly family as an analogy for God's heavenly family, the role of the father would be important. Given the importance of the father in Mediterranean culture, the cancellation of the role of an earthly father is inexplicable.

In my view, the other possible explanation to which Meier also refers fits in better with the converging evidence in the relevant material closest to the historical Jesus. The father could have abandoned the family. It seems that the reason he would have done this had to do with the conception of Jesus. Historically seen, we know nothing at all of the circumstances of Jesus' conception. Furthermore, there is no historical reason (including New Testament evidence—cf. Lk 2:7)<sup>121</sup> why Jesus should be seen as the firstborn. The suggested father's abandonment could have had certain consequences that would have conformed to the information which, in all probability, we can discern historically:

- Jesus' tension with his family;
- Jesus' defense of the fatherless;
- Jesus' judgment of the abandonment of women (and children) by an act of divorce;
- Jesus' calling upon God as his Father;
- Jesus' criticism of the Jerusalemites;
- the absence of a family tomb as his last resting place.

Nonetheless, for other patristic fathers, Joseph the “woodworker” was still “deadly alive.” According to an expert among a previous generation of patristic scholars, A.W. Argyle,<sup>122</sup> one does not find references to Joseph, the First Testament patriarch, in the prophets. However, as I have shown, the prophetic voice with regard to the conflict between the Northern Kingdom and the Southern Kingdom is very much embedded in the Joseph saga (e.g., Ps 77:16; 78:67; 80:2; 81:6; (105:17); Ezek 37:16, 19; 47:13; 48:38; Amos 5:6, 15; Ob 1:16; Zech 10:6) . For example, in Amos 6:1, 6 we read: “Woe to you who are complacent in Zion, and to you who feel secure on Mount Samaria....You drink wine by the bowlfull...but you do not grieve over the ruin of Joseph”[NIV] (see also Ezek 37:15-17). We have also seen that Joseph was more directly mentioned from the second century B.C.E. onwards.<sup>123</sup>

A similar pattern with regard to Joseph being simultaneously “dead” and “alive,” can be found in both Judaism and Christianity. In Judaism, Joseph became an ethical paradigm for repentance.<sup>124</sup> Seeing Joseph as an ethical example also finds its way into Christian thinking. The First Testament saga of Joseph, the patriarch, provides an abundance of material for elaboration: he was “a righteous man afflicted and sold by his brethren, steadfast in resisting temptation, unjustly accused, arrested, the benefactor of others, tender hearted, forgiving his brethren who had wronged him.”<sup>125</sup> The patristic fathers made use of this ethical paradigm in two ways: (1) as prefiguring the incarnation, passion, and exaltation of Jesus;<sup>126</sup> (2) as providing a model for Christian character and conduct.<sup>127</sup>

The seventh link of the Joseph trajectory is therefore open-ended. In Christendom, some think Joseph died early in Jesus’ life. Others think he lives as an

ethical symbol. And, to me, it seems that Joseph is a legend. Therefore, the search for Jesus as child of God cannot avoid the issue of his fatherlessness. Within Christendom, the Joseph tradition clearly developed as a trajectory. This line of thought was impelled by the anti-Christian calumny against Mary and the associated evolution of the idea of the “pure” (sinless) birth of Jesus. This idea led to the conviction that Mary remained a virgin after Jesus’ birth, and even that she was herself the fruit of a “divine birth.” However, there is no trace of a father who fulfilled a role in Jesus’ life in historical Jesus material. For Jesus, God filled this emptiness.

## END NOTES

1. Grant, F.C. 1956, "The Economic Background of the New Testament," pp. 96-114.
2. Among the many publications available I have had make use of Hennecke. E. (edited by Schneemelcher, W.) [1959] 1973, *New Testament Apocrypha, Vol. 1: Gospels and Related Writings*, pp. 404-417; Manns, F. 1977, *Essais sur le Judeo-Christianisme*, pp. 80-114; Robinson, F. 1896, 'Coptic Apocryphal Gospels: Translations Together with the Texts of Some of Them'; Schaberg, J. 1993, 'The Infancy of Mary of Nazareth (Proto-James and Pseudo-Matthew)'; Sellew, P. 1997, 'Heroic Biography and the Literary Intent of the Protevangelium Jacobi'.
3. Concerning the parallel of the two Josephs, see Manns, F. 1977, *Essais sur le Judeo-Christianisme*, pp. 82, 87; concerning the parallel of Mary and Eve, see Thompson, T.L. 1999, *The Bible in History: How Writers Create a Past*, pp. 328-329: "In the story's opening [Gen 2 and 3], all our characters bear cue-names. There is Adam 'the human' of the garden story (Gen. 2:7) and Eve, his wife, whose name is interpreted: 'the mother of all living' (Gen. 3:20). Adam has sex with his wife, who bears a child whom she names 'Cain' (Gen. 4:1). Adam's involvement, as far as the story is concerned, is not terribly important. It provides only the occasion of Eve's pregnancy; human fertility is not his to give but God's. When she gives birth Eve tells the audience: 'I have made a man with Yahweh!' Eve creates her children with God! Eve, the great mother of all, makes men. Her child 'Cain,' whose name puns with Eve's word *qaniti* ('to make'), has the name of 'creature'. Human life is born of god and woman. The child who is born is the creature, divine and human: he is us."
4. Manns, F. 1977, *Essais sur le Judeo-Christianisme*, p. 87.
5. There were two villages in ancient Israel with the name "Bethlehem." Apart from the one in Judah, the other one was situated in Sebulon, seven miles northwest from Nazareth (see Jdg 12:8, 10).
6. Bethlehem (Bit-Lahmi) in Judah is first mentioned in the Amarna letters (circa 14<sup>th</sup> century B.C.E.) (see Murphy-O'Connor, J. [1980] 1998, *The Holy Land*, pp. 198-199).
7. In Stephen's speech (Acts 7:15-16), Luke, relying on the Samaritan Pentateuch and not the Greek translation (LXX) of the Masoretic text (see Coggins, R.J. 1975, *Samaritans and Jews*, p. 122) says both Jacob and Joseph were buried at Shechem in the land that *Abraham* bought from the sons of Hamor.

8. “And Joseph’ bones, which the Israelites had brought up from Egypt, were buried at Shechem in the tract of land that *Jacob* bought for a hundred pieces of silver from the sons of Hamor, the father of Shechem. This became the inheritance of Joseph’s descendants” (Joshua 24:32). From a Palestinian’s perspective, Joseph’s tomb is described in a tour guide (PACE & PACL 1999, *Pace Tour Guide of the West Bank & Gaza Strip (“Palestine”): Historical & Archaeological Guide*, p. 167) as follows: “ Just north of Jacob’s well, right at the foot of Tell Balata [mount Ebal], is the traditional site of Joseph’s tomb. This rather simple white-domed building is believed to be Joseph’s grave. His remains, according to the Old Testament, were carried from Egypt and buried here [Joshua 24:32]. Others believe that the remains were buried in Hebron [see the Judean tradition as reported in Gen 50:12-13; cf. Murphy-O’Connor, J. 1998, *The Holy Land*, pp. 273-277; esp. pp.276-277]. The place was occupied by Israeli settlers who started a religious school in it at the beginning of the 1980s. Although Nablus [present-day Shechem] was transferred to the Palestinian Authority late in 1995, the site remained in the hands of the settlers. It is heavily guarded by the Israeli army and closed to visitors.”
9. Murphy-O’Connor, J. 1998, *The Holy Land*, p. 199.
10. Micah mentions the link between Rachel’s tomb and the North of the land by alluding to Genesis 35:19-20 where Rachel’s tomb is noticed in juxtaposition to Migdal Edar, in the vicinity of Schechem. The Hebrew for this location is also found in Micah 4:8, translated in the *New International Version* as “watchtower of the flock.”
11. For the interrelatedness between the prophetic traditions in the First Testament and the Joseph trajectory I am specifically indebted to the research of my colleague at the University of Pretoria, Andries Breytenbach (see Breytenbach, A.P.B. 1997, “Die Herfsfees en die Koningsrite by Bet-El as interteks van Amos 7:10-8:14 en Hosea 9:1-9,” pp. 513-528; Breytenbach, A.P.B. 1997, “Meesternarratiewe, Kontranarratiewe en Kanonisering: ‘n Perspektief op Sommige Profetiese Geskrifte,” pp. 1161-1186; Breytenbach, A.P.B. 1998, “‘Seun van Josef’ uit ‘n Noord-Israelitiese Perspektief,” pp. 415-426. For a treatise on the Pentateuch traditions regarding the two settlements in the land of Canaan that explains both the occupations of the center of the land (by the tribes Ephraim, Manasseh, and Benjamin) and the plain of Esdraelon in the north (by the house of Makir, the adopted (grand) son of Joseph born in Egypt), see Michaud, R. 1976, *L’Histoire de Joseph, le Makirite (Genese 37-50)*, pp. 77-135. Manasseh and Ephraim were born to Joseph by Asenath, daughter of Potiphera, priest of Heliopolis (On) in Egypt (cf. Gen



12. Genesis 49:26 (“Let all these rest on the head of Joseph, on the brow of the prince among his brothers” – *NIV*) stands in clear opposition to Genesis 49:10 (“The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet....” – *NIV*)
13. “The following section, v. 29-33, is evidently drawn from another tradition, for it contains a different story concerning the origin of the priests among the new colonists” (Montgomery, J.A. [1907] 1968, *The Samaritans: The Earliest Jewish Sect. Their History, Theology and Literature*, p. 449).
14. Breytenbach, A.P.B. 1997, “Meesternarratiewe, Kontranarratiewe en Kanoniserings: ‘n Perspektief op Sommige Profetiese Geskrifte,” p. 1171.
15. For evidence of ostracism see 2 Ki 10:1-17 and for examples of the prophetic voice, see Jer 11:18-12:6; 18:18-23; 36:5, 19, 26; 37:11-38:13; cf. Breytenbach, A.P.B. 1997, “Meesternarratiewe, Kontranarratiewe en Kanoniserings,” p. 1172. However, the same bias against the Jerusalem royalty is to be found among the people from the north (see, e.g., the revenge of Athaliah who tried to destroy the whole royal family in Jerusalem – 2 Ki 11:1-21).
16. Pummer, R. 1987, *The Samaritans*, p. 3.
17. See the booklets of Amram Ishak, Samaritan Priest and President of the Higher Community of the Samaritan Religion, *The History and Religion of the Samaritans* (sine anno); and Hasanein Wasf Kahen, Priest of the Samaritan Community, *Samaritan History, Identity, Religion and Subdivisions, Literature and Social Status* (1966).
18. See especially Rita Egger 1986, *Josephus Flavius und die Samaritaner: Eine terminologische Untersuchung zur Identitätsklärung der Samaritaner*.
19. Coggins, R.J. 1975, *Samaritans and Jews: The Origins of Samaritanism Reconsidered*, p. 53 (see Josephus, Ant 11.96-97; Jn 4:9).
20. Josephus (AJ 13.9.1; BJ 1.22.6). These expansionist activities shouldn’t be seen as driven by orthodox zeal. For further military operations by Hyrcanus’ sons, Antigonus and Aristobulus, not long before 107 B.C.E. and that of the Hasmonean Alexander Jannaeus in 88 B.C.E., see Josephus (AJ 13.10.1-3; BJ 1.2.7) and Josephus (AJ 13.14.1-2; BJ 1.4.4) respectively. Cf. Montgomery, J.A. [1907] 1968, *The Samaritans: The Earliest Jewish Sect*, pp. 79-81.
21. Montgomery, J.A. [1907] 1968, *The Samaritans*, p. 79. According to Montgomery, this happened in the year 128 B.C.E.. Josephus relates that John Hyrcanus crushed the “Kuthean

22. Pummer, R. 1987, *The Samaritans*, p. 3.
23. Montgomery, J.A. [1907] 1968, *The Samaritans*, p. 72.
24. Coggins, R.J. 1975, *Samaritans and Jews: The Origins of Samaritanism Reconsidered*, p. 9. Cf. also Wright, G.E. [1962] 1992, "The Samaritans at Shechem," pp. 263-273.
25. Montgomery, J.A. [1907] 1968, *The Samaritans*, p. 70.
26. Citations in Montgomery, J.A. 1968, *The Samaritans*, pp. 154-155 (my emphasis).
27. Montgomery, J.A. 1968, *The Samaritans*, pp. 165-166: "It is now generally recognized that its [the Talmud] basis, the Mishnah, was completed by the end of the IId Century A.C., while the commentary thereon, the Gemara, was not finally redacted, at least in the case of the Babylonian Talmud, until the VIth Century."
28. In this regard one has to be reminded that the Talmuds of Babylon and Jerusalem and their additional clusters of Toseftas originated over a long period of time. But it is also acknowledged that some traditions go back to the period of formative Judaism during the time of the New Testament. R. Simon b. Gamaliel was the father of Juda ha-Nasi, who was responsible for editing the Mishnah. Cf. Montgomery, J.A. 1968, *The Samaritans*, pp. 169-170; also note 8, p. 170.
29. Montgomery, J.A. 1968, *The Samaritans*, p. 170.
30. For textual references, see Egger, R. 1986, *Josephus Flavius und die Samaritaner*, pp. 179-192.
31. Montgomery, J.A. 1968, *The Samaritans*, p. 178.

32. Montgomery, p. 181.
33. Montgomery, pp. 180-181.
34. Montgomery, p. 179.
35. Montgomery, pp. 19-21.
36. Coggins, R.J. 1975, *Samaritans and Jews*, pp. 104-105; Wright, G.E. [1962] 1992, “The Samaritans at Shechem,” pp. 263-273.
37. Kahen H.W. 1966, *Samaritan History*, p. 8; Ishak, A., *The History and Religion of the Samaritans* (sine anno), p. 23.
38. Montgomery, J.A. 1968, *The Samaritans*, p. 21.
39. Kahen H.W. 1966, *Samaritan History*, p. 8.
40. Kahen, p. 5.
41. Coggins, R.J. 1975, *Samaritans and Jews*, pp. 122.
42. Kahen, p. 5-8; Ishak, A., *The History and Religion of the Samaritans* (sine anno), pp. 8-16.
43. Pummer, R. 1987, *The Samaritans*, p. 3. The intention of the beginning of Jesus’ birth record in Luke (2:23b), totally different from the ending of the genealogy found in Matthew (1:16), requires more research in the light of the common tradition of the parallel between Joseph the First-Testament patriarch and Jesus that Luke transmitted. Luke’s way of articulation this parallel is very striking: “ And Jesus was about thirty years old [cf. Gen 41:46 with regard to Joseph] when he began [his ministry as Israel’s messiah] against the background [the Greek participle  $\omega\upsilon\tau\omicron\iota$  is seen as circumstantial] of his sonship, so it was thought ( $\omega\upsilon\tau\omicron\iota$   $\epsilon\omicron\upsilon\omicron\omicron\iota\omicron\iota$ /zeto): son of Joseph, son of Eli...” (Lk 2:23b). Could it be that Luke thought of the messiah as someone who would “revive” an era before Israel’s division began (in accordance to the Samaritan sources) in the time of Eli?
44. See esp. Scobie, C.H.H. 1973, “The Origins and Development of Samaritan Christianity,” pp. 393-396.
45. Scobie, pp. 399-400.
46. Cf. Hollander, H.W. 1981, *Joseph as an Ethical Model in the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*; Sklar, H.W. 1996, “The Fighter of Horizons: The Story of Joseph as a Model for Social and Spiritual Reconciliation”; Zerbe, G.M. 1993, *Non-Retaliation in Early Jewish and New Testament Texts*; Argyle, A.W. 1951-2, “The Influence of the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs upon the New Testament,” pp. 256-258.
47. Hollander, p. 65.
48. Hollander, pp. 69-70.

49. The Greek in Testament Benjamin 4:4d contains references to mercy shown to the poor (πε/νηj) and sympathy to the helpless (α) σγενh/j).
50. Hollander, pp. 73.
51. Sklar, H.W. 1996, "The Fighter of Horizons: The Story of Joseph as a Model for Social and Spiritual Reconciliation," p. 51.
52. Niehoff, M. 1992, *The Figure of Joseph in Post-Biblical Jewish Literature*, p. 101.
53. Niehoff, p. 52.
54. Cf. Chesnutt, R.D. 1996, "From Text to Context: The Social Matrix of Joseph and Aseneth," p. 286.
55. Pilonenko, M. 1968, *Joseph et Aseneth: Introduction, texte critique en notes*.
56. Standartinger, A. 1996, "From Fictional Text to Socio-Historical Context: Some Considerations from a Textcritical Perspective on Joseph and Aseneth," p. 309.
57. Burchard, C. 1965, *Untersuchungen zu Joseph und Aseneth: Überlieferung-Ortbestimmung*.
58. Standartinger, A. 1995, *Das Frauenbild im Judentum der hellenistischen Zeit: Ein Beitrag anhand von "Joseph & Aseneth,"* p. 311.
59. It is possible (as Knud Jeppesen 1994, "Then Began Men to Call upon the Name of Yahweh: An Idea," pp. 158-163; esp. pp. 162-163, suggests with regard to other issues, including sexual matters) that reports in Genesis and Exodus react against tendencies in extrabiblical pseudepigrapha that depict God humanlike. Jeppesen refers among others to Jubilee (and the Septuagint), a text contemporary to Joseph and Aseneth.
60. Cf. Niehoff, M. 1992, *The Figure of Joseph in Post-Biblical Jewish Literature*, p. 106. Niehoff, p. 107, refers also to Philo's knowledge of the "marriage as a social distinction."
61. See Aptovitzer, V. 1924, "Asenath, the Wife of Joseph," pp. 239-306; Niehoff, M. 1992, *The Figure of Joseph in Post-Biblical Jewish Literature*, p. 107.
62. With regard to the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, see esp. De Jonge, M.J. 1975, *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs: A Study of their Text, Composition and Origin*, pp. 96-110; and with regard to Joseph and Asenath, see Price, R.M. 1997, "Implied Reader Response and the Evolution of Genres: Transitional Stages Between the Ancient Novels and Apocryphal Acts." Over against De Jonge, Hollander, p. 10, would argue that the Testaments "are certainly not a Christian composition." However, it does not mean that I deny any Christian interpolation at all. The reference in the Testament of Joseph to the "lamb of God," born from a virgin who takes away the "sin of the world" is in all probability such an interpolation. These arguments concern set of complicated issues with

63. Jeremias, J. 1985, *Heiligengräber in Jesu Umwelt (Mt. 23, 29; Lk 11,47): Eine Untersuchung zur Volksreligion der Zeit Jesu*. For the information with regard to this particular topic, I am especially indebted to some extent to the unpublished article of Cathleen Corley, “Gender and Class in the Teaching of Jesus: A Profile.” See also the independent but similar conclusions reached by another member of the Jesus Seminar in 1996, Philip Sellew, “Death, Body, and the World in the Gospel of Thomas,” pp. 530-534. I am responsible for the parallel between the Sayings Gospel Q, the Gospel of Thomas, and the Gospel of John.
64. Cf. Sandmel, S. 1962, “Parallelomania,” pp. 1-13.
65. Robinson, J.M. 1971, “Introduction: The Dismantling and Reassembling of the Categories of New Testament Scholarship,” pp. 10-11.
66. Robinson, J.M. 1971, “Introduction,” p. 14.
67. T. Simeon 1-2; T. Dan 1:6; 2:5; T. Gad 1-3; T. Joseph 1:3, 7; T. Benjamin 3-6 (see Elliott, J.H. 1994, “The Evil Eye and the Sermon on the Mount: Contours of a Pervasive Belief in Social Scientific Perspective,” pp. 68-89).
68. See, inter alia, Overman, J.A. 1990, *Matthew’s Gospel and Formative Judaism: The Social World of the Matthean Community*, pp. 35-71; Stanton, G.N. 1992, *A Gospel for a New People: Studies in Matthew*, pp. 113-281; Saldarini, A.J. 1994, *Matthew’s Christian-Jewish Community*, pp. 167- 177; Van Aarde, A.G. 1994, *God-with-us: The Dominant Perspective in Matthew’s Story, and Other Essays*, pp. xiii-xvii, 248-260.
69. See Elliott, J.H. 1994, “The Evil Eye and the Sermon on the Mount,” p. 73 note 26.
70. See Van Aarde, A.G. 1994, *God-with-us*, pp. 69-71.
71. Derrett, J.D.M. 1973, *Jesus’s Audience: The Social and Psychological Environment in which He Worked*, p. 123.
72. Derrett, p. 119.
73. Cf. Allison, D.C. 1993, *The New Moses: A Matthean Typology*, pp. 147-155.
74. “Die Frommen”– Bultmann, R. [1958] 1968, *Theologie des Neuen Testaments*, p. 133.
75. See 1 Henoch 6-7; Genesis Apocryphon, Qumran (1) [1QapGen] 2; Testament of Solomon [Test Sol] 5:3; Proto-James [Prot Jam] 4:1. Cf., among others, Allison D.C. 1993, *The New Moses*, p. 147 note 14.

76. See Rahlfs, A. (ed.) [1935] 1971, *Septuaginta*, p. 357.
77. The LXX uses the word *sumbi/wsij*.
78. Standartinger, A. 1996, “From Fictional Text to Socio-Historical Context: Some Considerations from a Textcritical Perspective on Joseph and Aseneth,” 309; translation by Dieter Georgi.
79. Bultmann, R. 1968, *Theologie des Neuen Testaments*, p. 133; Schmithals, W. 1980, *Das Evangelium nach Lukas*, pp. 25-28; Crossan, J.D. 1994, “The Infancy and Youth of the Messiah,” pp. 72-76.
80. Cf. Bultmann, R. 1968, *Theologie des Neuen Testaments*, p. 133.
81. See Brown, R.E. 1979, *The Birth of the Messiah: A Commentary on the Infancy Narratives in Matthew and Luke*, p 522.
82. Traditions about a ruler who was deemed a “god” also need to be mentioned in this regard (see Harris, M.J. 1992, *Jesus as God: The New Testament Use of **Theos** in Reference to Jesus*, p. 26). On the Rosetta stone, 196 B.C.E., it is reported of Ptolemy V Epiphanes that he “is a god from a god and a goddess, as Horus is the son of Isis and Osiris” (*Orientalis Graeci Inscriptiones Selectae* 90:10). From Ephesus comes an inscription, dated 48 B.C.E. (see Dittenberger, W. 1960, *Sylloge Inscriptionum Graecarum*, Volume 2, 760.7), which mentions that Julius Caesar “is the manifestation of a god, born from Ares and Aphrodite and (the) general redeemer of human life” . As far as Augustus is concerned, a number of inscriptions are known which refer to him as god. From Egypt comes the Oxyrhynchus Papyrus (1453.11), dated 24 B.C.E., which refers to Augustus as “Caesar, a god from god” (see Grenfell. B.P., Hunt, A.S. & Bell ed. 1898-1927, *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri*, 17 Volumes) as well as another inscription dated 24 B.C.E. with the same reference, namely “god from god” (*Orientalis Graeci Incriptiones Selectae* 655.2). Sometime in the period before the writer Strabo’s death in 21 C.E. (Berkowitz, L. & Squitier, K.A. [1977] 1986, *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae: Canon of Greek Authors and Works*, p. xix), he also refers in his work *Geographica* (4.177 – cf. also Taylor, L.R. [1931] 1981, *The Divinity of the Roman Emperor*, pp. 142-246, 270-283), to Augustus as “the god Caesar” . The New Testament (Acts 12:22) also knows a tradition according to which Herod Agrippa I was called a god – a tradition also known to Josephus (*Antiquitates* 19.345). Similar traditions exist with regard to the Roman emperors Nero and Domitian (Harris, M.J. 1992, *Jesus as God*, pp. 28 notes 34 and 35). As far as Nero is concerned, Deißmann, A. [1927] 1965, *Light from the Ancient East*, p. 345 note 4) refers to the inscription of Gaius Stertinus Xenophon of Kos in which he addresses the emperor as “ (to) the good god.” Suetonius

83. Brown, R.E. 1979, *The Birth of the Messiah*, pp. 522-523.
84. See Maulucci, F.P. 1996, *The National Archaeological Museum of Naples*, pp. 86-87, 106-107, 115; Bonechi (Casa Editrice) 1995, *Art and History of Pompeii: With the Reconstructions of the City*, pp. 48, 98-100.
85. Cf. Brown, R.E. 1979, *The Birth of the Messiah*, p. 519.
86. Cf. Dibelius, M. 1932, *Jungfrauensohn und Krippenkind: Untersuchungen zur Geburtsgeschichte Jesu im Lukas-Evangelium*, pp. 29-34; contra Brown, R.E. 1973, *The Virginal Conception & Bodily Resurrection of Jesus*, p. 57.
87. Oepke, A. 1973, *Der Brief des Paulus an die Galater*, pp. 132-133. Cf. also Schlier, H. [1949] 1971, *Der Brief an die Galater*, p. 196; Byrne, B. 1979, “sons of God” – “seed of Abraham,” p. 181.
88. Dibelius, M. 1932, *Jungfrauensohn und Krippenkind*, p. 34: “Paulus spricht nirgends von der wunderbaren Geburt Jesu und zeigt deutlich die völlig entgegengesetzte Richtung seines Interesses: er legt entscheidenden Wert darauf, daß das Erdensein des Christus begonnen hat wie das eines anderen Menschen, durch eine natürliche Geburt.”
89. Pannenberg, W. [1964] 1968, *Jesus – God and Man*, p. 143.
90. Bultmann, R. 1968, *Theologie des Neuen Testaments*, p. 133.
91. After having commented on the parallels in the tradition concerning the birth of Jesus and the remainder of the Gospel of Matthew, Anthony Saldarini 1994, *Matthew’s Christian-Jewish Community*, pp. 167-177, makes the following observation: “The author of Matthew drew upon this rich and varied tradition when he stressed God the Father of Jesus in the birth narrative (chap.1). At the same time, he brought a variety of titles, roles, and scriptural passages to bear on Jesus in order to establish him firmly within the biblical worlds and further mark him out as a special figure in Israel...” (p. 176).
92. Cf. Gaston, L. 1984, “Paul and Jerusalem,” pp. 69.
93. See Murphy-O’Connor, J. 1981, “Tradition and Redaction in 1 Cor. 15:3-7,” pp. 582-589; Gaston, L. 1984, “Paul and Jerusalem,” pp. 66-67.
94. “Apart from himself, Paul names Apostles Junia, Andronicus, Cephas and probably Barnabas, James, and Silvanus” (Gaston, L. 1984, “Paul and Jerusalem,” p 67 note 36).

95. Crossan, J.D. 1996, *Who is Jesus? Answers to your questions about the historical Jesus*, pp. 44-47.
96. Cf. Funk, R.W. 1996, *Honest to Jesus: Jesus for a new millennium*. p. 188.
97. In Greek: e) comologe/w.
98. Mk 1:5 – e) comologou/menoi ta\j a(marti/aj).
99. Cf. Louw, J.P. & Nida, E.A. 1988, *Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament based on semantic domains, Vol I: Introduction & domains*, pp. 419-420.
100. Cf. Funk, R.W. 1996, *Honest to Jesus: Jesus for a New Millennium*.
101. In German: *Bußtaufe* – see Bultmann, R. 1968, *Das Evangelium des Johannes*, p. 65; Jeremias, J. 1971, *New Testament Theology, Vol. I: The Proclamation of Jesus*, p. 49; Schmithals, W. 1986, *Das Evangelium nach Markus: Kapitel 1,1-9,1*, p. 65; Schmithals, W. 1994, *Theologiegeschichte des Urchristentums: Eine problemgeschichtliche Darstellung*, p. 99.
102. Cf. Funk, R.W. 1996, *Honest to Jesus*, pp. 194-194.
103. See Kloppenborg, J.S. 1988, *Q Parallels: Synopsis, Critical Notes & Concordance*, pp. 10-11.
104. See Q 6:43-45 and 11:39-52.
105. Cf. Vellanickal, M 1977, *The Divine Sonship of Christians in the Johannine Writings*, pp. 286-293.
106. Cf. Whiston, W [1960] 1978, *Josephus Complete Works*, p. 382.
107. Cf. Jeremias, J. 1971, *New Testament Theology*, p. 4; Crossan, J.D. 1994, *The Historical Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography*, p. 34.
108. See Heb 4:15; GNaz 2; also by implication Mt 3:14-15.
109. Vellanickal, M. 1977, *The Divine Sonship of Christians*, p. 268.
110. According to a certain manuscript, translation and patristic tradition, although another tradition reads the word “God” in place of the word “son.” Be that as it may, the “only begotten sonship” of Jesus is further proclaimed in Jn 3:16, 18, and 1 Jn 4:9. Jesus’ “sonship” is related, according to the Johannine vision, to the conviction that Jesus is the “one sent by God.”
111. Bultmann, R. [1964] 1971, *The Gospel of John*, p. 289.
112. Kristeva, J. 1987, “Stabat Mater,” in *Kristeva Reader*; cf. Schaberg, J. 1993, “The Infancy of Mary of Nazareth (Proto-James and Pseudo-Matthew.”
113. Ignatius, Ephesians 18:2; see also Smyrneans 1:1 and Trallians 9:1. Notice also in “Ignatius the typical blending of elements from the Johannine tradition (Jesus is God), Matthew



114. Cf. Oberlinner, L. 1975, *Historische Uberlieferung und christologisch Aussage*, pp. 73-78.
115. Meier, J.P.1991, *A Marginal Jew, Vol.1*, p. 317.
116. Meier, p. 353 note 7.
117. Meier, p. 317.
118. Cf. Bertrand, F.-G. & Ponton, G. 1955, “Textes patristique sur saint Joseph,” *Cahiers de Josephologie* 3, pp. 141-174; 4 (1956), pp. 325-357; 5 (1957), pp. 125-167, 289-320; 6 (1958), pp. 139-179, 265-321; 7 (1959), pp. 151-172, 275-333; 8 (1960) pp. 171-186, 347-374; 9 (1961), pp. 333-357; 10 (1962), pp. 149-182. See Meier, p. 353 note 6.
119. Meier, p. 317
120. Meier, p. 353 note 5.
121. William Whiston [1960] 1978, *Josephus Complete Works*, p. 415, the translator of Josephus’ works, refers in a footnote to Izates, the “only-begotten” son of Helena, the queen of Adiabene, as the “one best-beloved”: “Josephus here [Ant. xx.ii.1] uses the word *monogene*, as only-begotten son, for no other than one best-beloved, as does both the Old and the New Testament; I mean where there were one or more sons besides, (Gen. xxii.2; Heb. xi.7.)” In Lk 2:7 the expression  $\tau\omicron\nu\ \rho\omega\tau\omicron/\tau\omicron\kappa\omicron\omicron$  is used.
122. Argyle, A.W. 1956, “Joseph the Patriarch in Patristic Teaching,” pp. 199-202.
123. See Wis 10:13f.; Sir 49:15; 1 Macc 2:53; Jub 39-43; 1 En 89:13; JosAs; Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs.
124. See Schimmel, S. 1981, “Joseph and his Brothers: A Paradigm for Repentance,” pp. 60-65.
125. Argyle, A.W. 1956, “Joseph the Patriarch in Patristic Teaching,” p. 199.
126. For Joseph as prototype of Jesus, see e.g. Justin Martyr, Dial. c. Trypho 36; Tertullian, Adv. Marcionem 3.18; Adv. Judeaos 10; Origen, in Genesim, Hom. 15; Cyprian, Liber de bono patientiae [Migne, P.L., 4.col. 652-653; Jerome, Ep. Ad Riparium presbyterum, n. 2 [P.L., 22. col. 908]; Chrysostom, in Gen. 37, Hom. 61[P.G., 54. col. 528; Hom. 84, Mt 26:51-54]; Ambrose, De Joseph Patriarcha, 14 [P.L., 14. col. 646]; Augustine, Ep. Cl., 3. c. 39 [P.L., 33. col. 919]; Quaest. In Heptat., 148 [P.L., 34. col. 588]; Cyril of Alexandria (see

127. For Joseph as an allegory of Christian conduct, see e.g., Athanasius, *Apologia ad Constantium Imp.*, 12 [P.G., 25. col. 609]; Gregory of Nyssa, *Contra Fornicarios* [P.G., 46. col. 493f.]; St Basil, *Sermo 19 (De Temperantia et Incontinentia)* [P.G., 32. col. 1348]; *Epistles*, 2; 46 (*Epistolarum Classis*, 1); Cyprian, *Ad Fortunatum de Martyrio* [P.L., 4. col. 693]; *Liber de zelo et livore* [P.L., 4. col. 666]; Chrysostom, *Hom.*, 44, Gen 41:46-49, n. 7; Bede, in *Marci Evangelium Exposito*, Lib. 4 [P.L., 92. col. 279].

## 5 ~ A CROSS-CULTURAL AND SOCIAL- PSHYCOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

### **Status Envy and Social Identity**

In the peasant society of the first-century Mediterranean world, everyone had a social map, precisely defining one's position in terms of identity, kinship, and expected behavior.<sup>1</sup> Seeing Jesus in light of an ideal type of a fatherless figure in the first century C.E., can help to explain in a coherent way the individual facets of his life we thus far untangled; specifically, when one keeps in mind that in the peasant society of Jesus' world, the family revolved around the father.

The father and the mother were the source of the family, not only in the biological sense, but because their interaction with their children created the structures of society. A peasant economy was geared toward subsistence, the mere maintenance of the family, rather than investment in the future. This was the peasant father's goal and therefore the socialization process employed in such communities was one that fostered the child's dependence. In the 1960's, Harvard University conducted, from a social psychology perspective, a cross-cultural study on the father's position in the family as it relates to the process of identification of children.<sup>2</sup> This research, supported by cross-cultural material, was related to what is called the "status envy hypothesis." Specifically, the evidence focused on the effect of father absence in the household.

The outcome of the study differed from some other theories of identification in that, in terms of the hypothesis, a relationship that fully satisfies both parties is not conducive to identification. According to the status envy hypothesis, for a child to identify fully with adults, it is necessary that they openly consume resources that are denied to the child. In other words, love alone will not produce identification unless the people a child loves withhold from him or her something he or she wants. This is particularly true during the process of socialization. This process involves familiarizing the child with the privileges and disabilities fundamental to the structure of a particular society.

As part of the cultural rules in every society, there is a status system that gives the privileged access to resources for some positions in the system and, at the same time, debars other positions from controlling and consuming them. A resource is a material or nonmaterial commodity, such as food, water, optimum temperature, and freedom from pain, including punishment, which one person may desire, but over which some other person may have control. Symbolic resources include love, comfort, power, and success. Were these resources inexhaustible, and equally and completely available to all, there would be no learning by identification because there would be no such thing as status envy. This, however, is never the case. Nobody in a household in whatever society has unlimited access to every resource. Societal taboos make it practically impossible. It is inevitable that some resources will be withheld and that someone will want them. It is particularly true in agrarian societies with limited goods and that are patrilocal in nature. In societies with patrilocal residence, a man spends his whole life in or near his place of birth. This results in a core of closely akin blood-related male residents, supplemented by

wives drawn from neighboring communities. The women are literally and figuratively outsiders. It is the men who are the locus of power and prestige: the “adult males are the ones to be envied.”<sup>3</sup> This hypothesis about the process of identification and the development of identity may be summarized as follows:<sup>4</sup> identification is achieved by the imitation of a status role that is envied. This happens not overtly but in fantasy, and the driving force is envy of the person who enjoys the privileged status.

In every society, statuses have names or labels. In modern Western society, for example, there are the familiar kinship statuses of father, mother, uncle, aunt, brother, sister; the age-determined statuses of infant, child, adolescent, adult, and aged; the occupational statuses such as doctor, lawyer, clerk, and workman; and the sex-determined statuses of male and female. As said, the family, and especially the father, was at the center of the first-century Mediterranean world. Beyond the family laid the village, beyond that the city, and further still the limits of the world. This understanding of society served as an analogy for the concept “Kingdom of God.”<sup>5</sup> The father’s role in the family was not only that of God’s representative but also the person who had to ensure that God was worshipped and obeyed. One had to belong to a family to enjoy God’s blessing, and, within the family, the father’s status was divinely ordained.<sup>6</sup> And so, the divine and the human met each other at the most intimate level, the familial.

The identity of a person is his or her position or positions in the status system of a particular society. Three kinds of identity can be distinguished: attributed, subjective, and optative.<sup>7</sup> *Attributed identity* consists of the statuses assigned to a person by other members of his or her society. *Subjective identity* consists of the statuses a person sees himself or herself as occupying. And finally, *optative identity* consists of those statuses a

person wishes he or she could occupy but from which he or she is debarred. The aim of socialization in any society is to produce an adult whose attributed, subjective, and optative identities are isomorphic: “I see myself as others see me, and I am what I want to be.” However, such isomorphism necessitates a transition marked by status debarment, which produces status envy and a reaching out from attributed to optative identity. That is, when an adult fantasizes of having a father, according to the status envy hypothesis, he or she would to become an adult who was deprived of the privilege of having a father during infancy. When society then permits him or her to occupy this privileged status, there is agreement on what he or she wants to be, on what society says he or she is, and on what he or she sees himself or herself to be.

Obviously, one’s optative identity derives from status envy and it should always be objective and realistic. In households where the father is absent, the wish to be a father is not as realistic as the wish to have a father. The wish to have a family seems realistic in a situation where the privilege of having a position in a family is debarred. According to this theory, a fatherless infant who has been given everything by his or her mother would not identify with her as he or she already occupies the privileged status. We can presume that if a man wishes to have a fictive family, he did not occupy a privileged status within his biological family during infancy. And one could continue on this line: if someone is said by members within the community of Israelites to be the son of Abraham and the son of God, these labels could express status envy and optative identity. The first name is an expression of a position within the extended genealogical family of Israel; the last the symbolical/fantasied expression of the mentioned position of having or being a father. In normal conditions, both types of labels are expressions of

attributed identity. Having a position in the family is an identification of secondary nature and having a father is a primary identification.

Applied to a different context, but referring to the Eastern Mediterranean, Crossan says that “to be a child was to be a nobody, with the possibility of becoming a somebody absolutely dependent on parental discretion and parental standing on community.”<sup>8</sup> In other words, arrangements in infancy lead to primary identification; whereas those in childhood lead to secondary identification. But there could also be a discrepancy between these two identifications because of status debarment on the primary level that needs to be resolved by an initiation ritual.

Cross-cultural studies yield significant variables bearing upon the hypothesis as postulated. Specifically, the social structures of a sample of societies were judged for the degree to which the father and adult males in general occupy privileged statuses as perceived by the infant and later by the child.<sup>9</sup> One such measure of privileged status, and therefore of status envy in childhood, is provided by the sleeping arrangements that appertain to a society.<sup>10</sup> Because it is the place where resources of greatest value to a child are given or withheld, a child’s bed is at the center of its world during infancy. Those who share sleeping arrangements with the child become the child’s models for primary identification, and the key question in this regard is whether or not the father also sleeps with the mother. A baby sleeping on his or her own in a separate room is something quite unique. In thirty-six out of sixty-four societies examined, the parents sleep apart during the nursing period so that the infant can enjoy the mother’s exclusive attention. In the remaining twenty-eight societies, the parents sleep together with the child either sleeping in the bed with them or placed in a crib or cradle within reach of the

mother. It follows that, in terms of the hypothesis, the different situations prevailing would have a profound effect on the child's primary identification. If the parents sleep together, they both bestow and withhold resources so that the envied status would be in either parent. The infant perceives the juxtaposition of privilege to be between himself or herself and an adult. On the other hand, where the parents sleep apart, the mother assumes a vast importance in the child's life. The juxtaposition of privilege is between the child and mother and, because she sometimes withholds resources, she is the person who is envied. In societies where infants enjoy their mother's exclusive attention in terms of sleeping arrangements, the optative identity of boys may be expected to be cross-sexual in nature, while those reared in societies where, because of the sleeping arrangements both adults withhold resources and are therefore envied, the optative identity of boys is more likely directed to adulthood as such.

Residence patterns provide the conditions for secondary optative identity also in the case where sex-determined statuses are relatively unprivileged because of primary cross-sex optative identity. Patrilocal societies would produce a conflict between primary and secondary optative sex identity when there are exclusive mother-child sleeping arrangements. In societies with maximum conflict in sex identity, for example, where a boy initially sleeps exclusively with his mother but the domestic unit is patrilocal and hence controlled by men, initiation rites at puberty function to resolve this conflict in identity. In the above-mentioned sample of sixty-four societies, there are thirteen in which there are "elaborate initiation ceremonies with genital operations"<sup>11</sup> takes place. All thirteen of these societies have the exclusive mother-infant sleeping arrangements which, according to the hypothesis, cause a primary feminine identification. Furthermore,



twelve of these thirteen have patrilocal residence that produces the maximum conflict in identity and hence the need for an institution such as an initiation rite to help resolve this conflict. Initiation rites serve the psychological function of replacing the primary feminine identity with a firmly established male identity.<sup>12</sup> This is accomplished by means of hazing, deprivation of sleep, tests of manliness, and painful genital operations, which are rewarded with the high status of manhood if the initiate endures them unflinchingly. By means of the symbolic death and rebirth through the initiation rites performed at puberty, a male born in these societies leaves behind the woman-child status into which he was born and is reborn into his optative status and identity as a man.<sup>13</sup> It is also referred to as a “clarification of status.”<sup>14</sup>

With regard to the first-century Mediterranean world, the nature of the roles performed in the family by men, women, and children correlated with the “division of honor into male and female.”<sup>15</sup> The family from which someone came was called the “family of orientation.” The “family of procreation” was involved in the roles of the women in the family whose “exclusiveness” was defended by the males. Male honor, symbolized by the testes, was associated with not accepting slights, standing up to other males, exercising authority over the family, and defending its honor. Female honor, symbolized by the hymen, related to sexual exclusiveness, reserve, caution, modesty, and timidity. Although a mother’s sexual purity was the concern primarily of her husband, it impinged also on her male children. Furthermore, males were involved in the purity of their daughters and sisters. The father of a household was not merely a begetter, but also a provider and protector.<sup>16</sup> So it was not a child’s birth that made the child a part of a household, but the father’s decision to adopt the child into the household.<sup>17</sup> This, rather

than birth, was the beginning of life and the father exercising the power of life and death over his offspring was a “godlike being.”

Although women fulfilled the primary, gender-specific role of childbearing, the mother of a household was empowered to ensure that the other female members of the household regularly bore children as well.<sup>18</sup> Her role as manager of the household was not gender-specific. The responsibility for ensuring that everyone was fed and that the food would last entailed careful stewardship of the resources which the village allocated to her household. The responsibility necessitated absolute control over this aspect of household life.<sup>19</sup> The mother was not only the childbearer and the manager of the household, she was also the teacher of its women and children. As to boys, this role was transferred to the father once the boy became a young man and participated in the communal labor of the village. As storyteller, the mother communicated the traditions of the community to her children. Apart from practical skills, she taught them all kinds of wisdom as well.<sup>20</sup> Typical female behavior included taking the last place at the table, serving others, forgiving wrongs, having compassion, and attempting to heal wounds.<sup>21</sup> All these acts are to be found among the list of the authentic deeds of the historical Jesus.

Various studies<sup>22</sup> that focused on the factor of father-absent households in the early life of boys support the postulated hypothesis of status envy. Specifically, some of these studies indicated that “war-born” boys from father-absent households not only behaved like girls in fantasy behavior but also showed very little aggression.<sup>23</sup> This kind of performance derived from the boys’ first or primary identification. Their secondary identification led to behavior, overtly and in fantasy, that produced father-like performance. In her book, *Beyond Patriarchy: The Images of Family in Jesus*, Diane

Jacobs-Malina<sup>24</sup> poses a very interesting thesis that Jesus' role was most like that of the "wife of the absent husband."

Focusing on the "submerged and subordinated social world of women in patriarchal society," Jacobs-Malina<sup>25</sup> considers the "nineteenth-century western debate over the Jesus of history versus the Christ of faith" as irrelevant to the discussion in her book. However, exactly because of her focus, I regard the quest for the historical Jesus as central to her thesis, although I agree that in a particular sense, with regard to her hypothesis, it does not matter whether the perspective of theology or sociology provides one's point of departure. From the perspective of *theology*, fatherlessness would refer to an "absent father in heaven"; from the point of view of *sociology*, the same phenomenon would be studied in terms of analogies in everyday society—thus, in terms of the ideal type of being fatherless in first-century Palestine.

From the perspective of the belief (attested to in Luke's gospel and elaborated upon in some post-New Testament documents) that God, the absent Father who is in heaven, impregnated Mary, who gave birth to Jesus, Jacobs-Malina studies the behavior of the wife of an absent husband in the patriarchal first-century Eastern Mediterranean society. By reading the Gospel of Mark and also investigating other themes in Mark and in the Pauline tradition, Jacobs-Malina finds that Jesus, the "fatherless son" did not act according to the expected role of the eldest son in a patriarchal family, but rather like that of the wife of the absent husband. She suggests that the image of Jesus reflected in the gospels is reminiscent of that of the idealized wife/mother as established in the life-world of Jesus. Acting on behalf of an absent Father in heaven, his primary role was the maintenance of God's household on earth.<sup>26</sup> In patriarchal societies, the belief is

commonly held that a male presence is necessary lest a woman bring shame on the family. So, if her husband is absent, a woman has to serve his interest by strictly conforming to his wishes or instructions. This results in close social scrutiny. A husband's absence imposes on his unsupervised wife even more rigorous expectations of decorum than those that are normally applied. Although he is absent, he remains present to his children through his wife as his authorized agent, who has the responsibility to ward off any challenge to her husband's prerogatives. This role, with its attendant rights, obligations, values, and activities, Jacobs-Malina<sup>27</sup> claims, furnishes a good analogy or conceptual frame of reference for the role we see Jesus fulfilling in the gospels in his relationship to God, to his followers, and to outsiders. Domestic settings, as can be seen in the "concrete language of parables," served as analogies for God's kingdom, revealing the absent Father, whose household Jesus was authorized to create and maintain.<sup>28</sup> My hypothesis differs from that of Jacobs-Malina. I do not metaphorically regard Jesus' relationship to God as one of husband and wife but, according to textual evidence, as father and son. I see this relationship as the product of the historical Jesus' "fantasy" caused by being "fatherless" in life.

According to the Freudian Oedipal complex,<sup>29</sup> the child's identification with its father originates in the child's desire to be like the father, but that this is later replaced by the drive to replace the father in the mother's affections. Is my thesis just another modern version of the Oedipal complex? Or, is my image of the first-century Jesus the very beginning of the process that Hubertus Tellenbach<sup>30</sup> identifies in his *Quest for the Lost Father* [*Suchen nach dem verlorenen Vater*]? Contrary to Freud's contention that the father is at the center of consciousness,<sup>31</sup> Tellenbach is of the opinion that the role of

the father figure has vanished today from the Western psyche. In the seventies, Tellenbach was the chairperson of the Department of Clinical Psychopathology at the Psychiatric Clinic in Heidelberg, Germany. From years of experiencing young schizophrenics (in German: *Hebephrenen*) he found that the father played no role whatsoever in their lives.<sup>32</sup> According to Tellenbach, the disappearance of the father today is the result of a long process. He traces this process back in art and literature. From a macro-sociological perspective, it might be seen as something that has its roots in the period in which “simple agrarian societies” in the Middle East developed into “advanced agrarian societies.”<sup>33</sup> Although kinship ties remained of great importance for individuals throughout the agrarian era, they were no longer the “chief integrating force” in advanced agrarian societies.<sup>34</sup>

Such profound economic changes, especially with regard to Herodian Palestine, had an inevitable effect on kinship patterns and social relationships. The extended family (the *beth-av*) was slowly breaking up.<sup>35</sup> The Hellenistic period inaugurated far-reaching change for many Israelites who had previously lived in extended family units, subsisting through communal labor on isolated farms. They now found themselves most commonly in nuclear families living and working on large estates.<sup>36</sup> It seems that only two options were open to peasants if they needed to adjust to their income when their families disintegrated because their “agroeconomic” base was removed.<sup>37</sup> They could either increase their production or reduce their consumption. The former strategy necessitated putting more labor into their pieces of land, but in terms of the returns, this was hardly worthwhile. So they were propelled to supplement their income from the land. They

could hire themselves out as day laborers doing seasonal agricultural work or working temporarily in the fishing industry, or perhaps as craftsmen.<sup>38</sup>

Neighbors of the courtyard of the village, which became the only viable economic unit, started to function as a socially supportive unit. This was true of village life in the ancient Mediterranean world, and, as children seldom left the village on attaining adulthood, neighbors increasingly constituted the socioeconomic basis of relationships.<sup>39</sup> Villagers were generally related to each other by ties of blood or marriage. Furthermore, marriage arrangements in Judean society were very tightly linked to the way in which the temple cult in Jerusalem was organized. The temple cult also determined both the classification of people and politics. This meant that “holiness was understood in a highly specific way, namely as separation.”<sup>40</sup>

To be holy meant to be separate from everything that would defile holiness. The Jewish social world and its conventional wisdom became increasingly structured around polarities of holiness as separation: clean and unclean, purity and defilement, sacred and profane, Jew and Gentile, righteous and sinner...“Holiness” became the paradigm by which the Torah was interpreted. The portions of the law which emphasized the separateness of the Jewish people from other peoples, and which stressed separation from everything impure within Israel, became dominant. Holiness became the *Zeitgeist*, the “spirit of age,” shaping the development of the Jewish social world in the centuries leading up to the time of Jesus, providing the particular content of the Jewish ethos or way of life. Increasingly, the ethos of holiness became the politics of holiness.<sup>41</sup>

When someone, according to this politics of holiness, was considered as a nobody, such a person, according to society, would have no identity and would experience a tense relationship with villagers and even with close relatives. Status envy would therefore

come as no surprise. Calling God father and negating the importance of patriarchy goes hand in hand. This disposition amounts to a redefinition of the whole system of holiness. It created not only tension between Jesus and his relatives, but also between him and the proponents of the Judean temple cult. Eventually it led to his killing by the Roman authorities. At the center of Jesus' disposition lies a different understanding of who God is and who humankind is. To apprehend this understanding we need to know more about the Jerusalem cult and its ideology with regard to fatherlessness.

### **The Jerusalem Cult and Marriage Arrangements**

At the time when the Jesus movement originated, the Israelites, besides the Samaritans, were subdivided by Josephus into four factions: Sadducees, Pharisees, Essenes, and Zealots. The latter group was constituted as a group only in 68-70 C.E. during the Jewish War. Prior to this time, the term “zealot” had only referred to those who were diligent about faithfully following the law. Whether the Zealots were related to the militant group that since the late fifties of the Common Era had become active and were known as the “Sicarii” (“swordfighters”), and whether both the Zealots and the Sicarii grew from the movement Josephus called the “Fourth Philosophy,” are questions that are not relevant here.<sup>42</sup> What is important for the purpose of this study, however, is that Israel was a temple state and that the “policies” of all these groups, including the vision of Jesus, were determined by their respective perspectives on the purity ideology of the Jerusalem temple cult—an ideology that marked the conventions of the entire

Israelite society as exclusivist and hierarchical. It circumscribed familial, political, economic, and religious life.

The Sadducees, whose origin is found in the aristocratic Maccabaeon-Hasmonaean family, had ruled over the temple state in Jerusalem since the Maccabean War in the second century B.C.E. Since then, high priests had been appointed from the ranks of this family, which meant that the regulation of cultic acts by the priests (including the collection of offerings) was being compromised by family interests. Offerings formed the basis of a taxation system that was supposed to be grounded in the economic values of reciprocity and redistribution. By means of the products of their small-scale farming, the “people of the land” supplied the aristocratic temple elite with goods. Because of the system of patronage, the elite, as patrons, had to reciprocate by looking after the needy. Religion, economy, family interests, and politics were therefore interwoven in this society. The equilibrium between “patrons” and “clients” in this hierarchically stratified society teetered on a knife’s edge.<sup>43</sup>

As the hierarchical ladder became longer because more taxes had to be supplied to the rulers on the higher rungs of the ladder, the peasants towards the bottom had to supply more surpluses on smaller bits of land, while less was passed down by the supposed “patrons” to the needy. In this way, taxes more than doubled.<sup>44</sup> Galilean peasants, for instance, not only had to pay temple tax and supply the Sadducean elite with their offerings, but also had to pay the Herodian royal house. Herod and the high priest, in turn, had to pay tributes to the emperor. The extended families in the peasant community started breaking up and poverty increased, and some unfortunate beggars even started finding it difficult to survive on charity.



Thus, the following picture supplied the content for a story by Jesus in the Gospel of Luke (16:19-31): a beggar lies before the closed gates of a wealthy master; curs overwhelm the weakened man by greedily grabbing from him the leftover food thrown outside the gates of the rich aristocrat and even start mauling the half-dead person; he has only God to help him. This is what the name “Lazarus” means.<sup>45</sup>

Leftover food was not something that fit into the temple cult in Jerusalem. The purity regulations of this cult consisted of strict dietary prescriptions, among others. In the same way that there was pure and impure food, there were also pure and impure animals. Dogs and pigs were symbols of impure people. Pure people were the “sons of Abraham.” Circumcision was a visible sign of purity. When Israelite men were older than twenty they could enter into the outer court of the Israelites of the “holy place,” the temple. They had to do this to entreat God by means of “gifts,” which had really been given to them by God, to forgive them their infringements of the purity laws. The priests received these “gifts” and they brought the offerings to God, although, in the meantime, the emperor would also receive his share. However, it remained a question to Jesus if God in fact received what was God’s own!<sup>46</sup>

Only the “most important priest” could enter the “purest” place in the Temple, and only on the “purest” Sabbath of the year, the “Day of Atonement!” In this way, the exclusive and hierarchical purity regulations were ordered by means of prescriptions governing the calendar, circumcision, and diet.<sup>47</sup> But the author of Luke-Acts told us that Jesus lived as if the temple, by implication, did not have outer courts.<sup>48</sup> Matthew (12:1-8), in turn, emphasized Jesus’ indifference towards the rules relating to the Sabbath and the temple cult. Paul (Gl 6:12-13) said that Jesus’ death on the cross metaphorically

referred to the hypocrisy that accompanied the practice of circumcision, while Mark (7:14-23) handed down the tradition that Jesus ridiculed the customs relating to dietary prescriptions.

The Essenes and the Pharisees may be viewed as the parties in opposition to the Sadducees. The control by the Sadducees of “God’s house,” in the eyes of Jesus a “cavern where robbers live” (cf. Mk 11:17), was to both the Essenes and the Pharisees a source of resentment. How could they neutralize this power? They were not of Hasmonaean descent and high priests were not born from them or appointed from their own elite families by self-appointed people in power as a result of nepotism! What the Essenes did was simply to leave Jerusalem and replace the temple with their own community at Qumran.<sup>49</sup> The Essenes considered the Jerusalem Temple cult to be completely corrupt.<sup>50</sup> To them, the Qumran community took the place of the “true” temple.<sup>51</sup>

The policy of the Pharisees as “opposition party” was particularly ingenious.<sup>52</sup> Instead of replacing the “house of God,” they broadened it by extending the regulations that related to the temple cult in Jerusalem to that sphere where Pharisees could exercise control! Each house of each “son of Abraham” was seen by the Pharisees to be a replica of the temple.<sup>53</sup> Even the design of the house was modeled on that of the temple. Women, and children were limited to their quarters, just as in the temple in Jerusalem. Above all, the regulations surrounding meals, in particular the Sabbath meal which was a replica of the sacrificial temple meal,<sup>54</sup> together with the manifold dietary and purity prescriptions, transformed the country households into “holy places.”

To the peasant community, in which families were already poverty stricken, these prescriptions by the Pharisees were a heavy yoke. Families had started to disintegrate because of the heavy burden of temple tax. Cereal and animal offerings as well as sin-offerings, and toll money, which were to be paid at strategic places on the roads to markets in the cities, were demanded. A rebelliousness against their own royal elite, as against the pagan oppressors, lay very close to the surface. The desire for a “popular” messianic king grew.<sup>55</sup> Gang leaders who sporadically opposed the authorities were seen as “messiahs” and, often, brigands who attacked patrols by the Romans or Herodians were offered hiding places. Publicans were, as tax collectors, hated as if they were thieves who had personally robbed the people.

Nevertheless, an Israelite peasant far in “Galilee where the Gentiles live” (1 Mac 5:15; Mt 4:15) could not ignore the cult of Jerusalem all that easily! After all, as Jesus reportedly said in the Gospel of Matthew (23:2): the Pharisees, as representatives of this cult, “sat [on the] chair of Moses,” and this meant that they had the authority to interpret the “Law of Moses.” Despite the fact that the Pharisees referred to the peasants, the “people of the land,” as “ignorant with regard to the Torah,”<sup>56</sup> the Law of God formed the conscience of each “true Israelite.” The Torah contained the conventional wisdom. On the one hand, “God’s Wisdom” was equated with the Torah.<sup>57</sup> On the other hand, this “Wisdom of God” was taken to apply to Israel only.<sup>58</sup> Convention insisted that “pious” peasants also made the journey to Jerusalem for big religious festivals and to pay temple tax. The collectors of the temple tax also went from Jerusalem to the countryside to collect the taxes. This was done if the people had not deposited their share into the treasure chest in the outer temple court, or had not exchanged their “incorrect” coins (at a

considerable commission) for the correctly minted silver coins (as prescribed by the Torah) at the money tables.<sup>59</sup>

In addition, the marriage regulations determined by the temple would have continually reminded a Galilean of Jerusalem. Marriages took place in all households, also those in the Galilean countryside. The rules prescribing who could marry whom were determined by the Torah. The hierarchy making up the pattern of the temple community was clearly visible in the post-exilic marriage regulations. We have to remember that the world of the Bible was patriarchal in nature, with everything happening in terms of the interest of the head of the family. We have seen that this world can also be described as patrilocal. A spouse remained a “stranger” in her husband’s household until she gave birth to a son. In communities with patrilocal residence, the man spent his entire life in or near the place of his birth. This led to a nuclear group of male persons that was determined through blood relations. The group was supplemented by spouses who came from neighboring towns. This was a society that was characterized, for the sake of self-preservation and survival, by strong competition in politics and the economy were concerned. Identity functioned within the bounds of the group. Therefore, one must distinguish between the “family of procreation” and the “family of orientation.” In the first case one might refer to someone as “Simon, son of Jonah,” and, in the latter, to the “sons of Abraham.”

Three types of marriage strategies can be distinguished in the world of the Bible:<sup>60</sup> “reconciliatory,” “aggressive”, and “defensive.” The term “marriage strategy” is meant to indicate that marriage regulations were related to the way society was organized. The three marriage types were broadly related to three successive periods in the life of Israel:

the period of the patriarchs, the period of the kings, and the post-exilic second temple period.<sup>61</sup> Regulations with regard to marriages during the post-exilic second Temple period were determined strongly by cultic purity regulations. Thus, for instance, marriages were only allowed when they took place within the ambit of one's own group of families, the "family of procreation"; that is, the "house of Israel."<sup>62</sup> Marriages were geared towards the continuation of the "holy seed," that is, of the physical "children of Abraham."<sup>63</sup> The practice of circumcision and admission to the temple as the place of God's presence was closely related to this. The commandment on divorce, by means of the marriage reform regulations (Neh 9-10; Ezra 9:10), was meant to achieve the dissolution of undesirable "mixed marriages."<sup>64</sup>

These marriage arrangements were embedded in the stratification of people from holy to less holy to impure:<sup>65</sup>

1. Priests;
2. Levites;
3. Full-blooded Israelites;
  
4. Illegal children of priests;
5. Converts (proselytes) from heathendom;
6. Converts from the ranks of those who had previously been slaves, but had been set free;
  
7. Bastards (born from mix-marriage unions or through incest);
8. The fatherless (in Aramaic: *s<sup>e</sup>tuqin*) (those who grew up without a father or a substitute father and therefore were not embedded within the honor structures);
9. Foundlings (in Aramaic: *a<sup>a</sup>supin*);
10. Castrated men (eunuchs);

11. Men who had been eunuchs from birth;
12. Those with sexual deformities;
13. Hermaphrodites (bisexual people);
14. Gentiles (non-Israelites).

The principle behind this classification was related to the marriage regulations that were obtained during the second temple period. They also determined who could marry whom and who could enter into the temple, where “God’s people” met for the reading of the Scriptures, among other activities.

The above-mentioned fourteen groups may be divided into seven categories.<sup>66</sup> The priests, Levites, and “full-blooded” Israelites formed the first three categories. Illegal (not illegitimate) children of priests were children born of marriages that were inadmissible to priests. A priest was forbidden to marry a woman who already “belonged to a man,” like a widow, divorcee, or a woman who had been raped. These “illegal children” of priests formed, with both groups of proselytes, the fourth category. Bastards, the fatherless, foundlings, and the castrated formed the fifth category. Jeremias<sup>67</sup> said the following about the “fatherless” and the “foundlings:”

We have no information worthy of note on the *fatherless* (men whose father was unknown) and the *foundlings*. They were forbidden marriage with both Israelites of pure descent and with illegitimate children of priests (M. Kidd. iv.1), for their father, or their parents were unknown. In fact, they were suspected of bastardy (cf. M. Ket. i.8-9); and on the other hand the possibility could not be excluded that they might without being aware of it, contract a forbidden marriage with a relation (b. Kidd. 73a).

Those born eunuchs, those with deformed genitals, and hermaphrodites, in other words, people who could not marry at all, made up the sixth category. People with another ethnic orientation, those, in other words, outside of “God’s people as people of the covenant,” formed the seventh category. Any involvement with these people was very strongly discouraged in Israel.

The second last category, the sixth, could make no biological contribution to the continuation of “holy seed,” the “children of Abraham.” “True Israel,” actually, consisted only of the first three categories. They could, with certain limitations, freely intermarry. People from the fourth category (“illegal children” of priests and proselytes) did belong to Israel and were allowed to marry Levites and “full-blooded” Israelites, but daughters among these “illegal children” and daughters of proselytes were under no circumstances allowed to marry priests. The fifth category was simply deemed “impure;” people outside of the covenant, doomed, as far as the temple in Jerusalem was concerned, not to approach any closer than the temple square, the “court of the Gentiles;” they were obliged to live as if God did not exist,<sup>68</sup> people labeled as not forming part of the children of Abraham and therefore not being children of God. If a man like this wanted to get married, he could do so only with an “impure” woman, among whom the Gentiles too were categorized. Otherwise such a person remained unmarried. In a society in which the honor of a man, in fact his entire social identity, was determined by his status as a member of the family of Abraham and his contribution to the physical continuation of that family, one’s status as being unmarried had, to put it mildly, serious implications.

The image of the historical Jesus as the fatherless carpenter, the unmarried son of Mary, who lived in a strained relationship with his village kin in Nazareth, probably

because of the stigma of being fatherless and, therefore, a sinner, fits the ideal type of the fifth category described above. Although innocent as a child who was not supposed to know the nature of sin, the historical Jesus was denied the status of being God's child, doomed not to transmit the status of proper covenant membership and, therefore, not allowed to enter the congregation of the Lord in the light of the ideology of the temple and its systemic sin.

Yet Jesus was someone who shared the vision of John the Baptist that remission of sin could be granted by God outside the structures of the temple. Both before and after his baptism and breach with John the Baptist, Jesus was noted for association and friendship with "sinners," and his trust in God as his Father. This attitude is certainly subversive towards the patriarchal values that underlined the marriage strategy of the second temple period. The historical claim may therefore be made, in terms of the criteria of the period of the second temple, that Jesus was regarded as being of illegitimate descent in the sense of his being fatherless. On account of this "permanent sin" fatherless men (boys over the age of twenty) were not allowed to enter the Temple (cf. Deut 23:3) or to marry a "full-blooded" fellow Israelite.<sup>69</sup>

John Pilch<sup>70</sup> made a valuable contribution with regard to child rearing in the Mediterranean world and its application to the life of Jesus. It was not Pilch's intention to distinguish between the historical Jesus and the Jesus of faith as recorded in the New Testament. Although one can, therefore, disagree with his statement that Jesus' "parents successfully socialized him into his cultural world, and Jesus' behavior bears witness to their success," the results of Pilch's study remain of special importance for my own research. The point is that Pilch shows how ambivalent Mediterranean society was in



respect of its value system, since both the feminine quality of nurture and the male quality of assertion were emphasized.

In early childhood, the boy learned nurturing values, but these became displaced by the “clarification of status” that marked his passage at puberty from the gentle world of women to the authoritarian world of men. It is a kind of transformation that developed out of a parenting style in the Near East through which the boy learned from his father (or male-next-of-kin) that “Abba isn’t Daddy” in the Western sense of the word, to use the words of James Barr!<sup>71</sup> In the aggressive and hierarchical world of men, Jesus learned, according to Pilch, to reject the comfort of childhood and the warmth of feminine values and to embrace instead the rigors of manhood, subjecting himself in unquestioning obedience to the severity of the treatment that his father and other males might inflict on him.

If a “clarification of status” is lacking because of fatherlessness, one can anticipate a diffused identity. It is likely that status envy could cause, as Donald Capps<sup>72</sup> suggests with regard to Jesus, the “child...as an endangered self” to desire “to be another man’s son.” In the words of Jane Schaberg,<sup>73</sup> “the paternity is canceled or erased by the theological metaphor of the paternity of God.” The resources that were withheld in Jesus’ case would be those that a father was expected to give his son. Since Jesus called God his Father, it seems that the followers of Jesus interpreted his suffering as a filial act of obedient submissiveness to God, his heavenly Father.

Because of the assumption that his primary identification was never “clarified” by a secondary identification, the fatherless Jesus seemingly behaved in womanlike manner as an adult. It can be seen in his sayings and deeds, in which he advocated and acted with behavior

like taking the last place at the table, serving others, forgiving wrongs, having compassion, and healing wounds. Given this interpretation, status envy produced spontaneous, if not intentional, anti-patriarchal behavior.

Jesus' attributed identity seems to consist of his fatherless status, or his being as the members of his society perceived him. This position, assigned to him because of the purity ideology during the second temple period, would lead to his debarment from being child of Abraham, that is, child of God, a nobody who was not permitted to marry a "full-blood Israelite." Jesus' *subjective identity* seems to consist of the status he saw himself occupying: the protector and defender of the honor of outcasts, like abandoned women and children, and giving the homeless a fictive home. And finally, Jesus' *optative identity* which consists of that status he wished he could occupy but from which he was debarred, seems to be child of Abraham, that is, child of God—that could be the reason why the fatherless Jesus called upon God as his Father.

## END NOTES

1. Scott, Bernard B. 1990, *Hear Then the Parable: A Commentary on the Parables of Jesus*, p. 79; depending on Jerome H. Neyrey.
2. At a symposium during which the evidence of this research was tabled, Roger V. Burton of the National Institute of Mental Health and John W.M. Whiting of Tulane University shared a paper. A shortened revision of the paper was published in 1961 in the *Merrill-Palmer Quarterly*.
3. Burton, R.V. & Whiting, J.W.M. 1961, "The Absent Father and Cross-Sex Identity," p. 89.
4. Cf. Burton, R.V. & Whiting, J.W.M. 1961, "The Absent Father," p. 85.
5. Scott, Bernard B. 1990, *Hear Then the Parable*, p. 79.
6. See Hamerton-Kelly, R. 1979, *God the Father: Theology and Patriarchy in the Teaching of Jesus*, p. 27.
7. Burton, R.V. & Whiting, J.W.M. 1961, "The Absent Father," p. 85.
8. Crossan, J.D. 1991, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant*, p. 269.
9. See Burton, R.V. & Whiting, J.W.M. 1961, "The Absent Father," pp. 88-89.
10. Cf. Whiting, J.W. M., Kluckhorn, R. & Anthony, A. 1958, "The Function of Male Initiation Ceremonies at Puberty," pp. 359-370.
11. Burton, R.V. & Whiting, J.W.M. 1961, "The Absent Father," p. 90.
12. Burton, R.V. & Whiting, J.W.M. 1961, p. 90.
13. Cf. Whiting, J.W. M., Kluckhorn, R. & Anthony, A. 1958, "The Function of Male Initiation Ceremonies at Puberty."
14. John Corbett 1983, "The Foster Child: A Neglected Theme in Early Christian Life and Thought," p. 312, centering in on the "spoiled identification" of foundlings in the Greco-Roman world in terms of Victor Turner's concept of "liminality," refers to this kind of "rebirth"/"resurrection"/"integration into the community" as a "clarification of status."
15. Malina, B.J. 1993, *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology*, pp. 48-55.
16. Cf. Matthews, V.C. & Benjamin, D.C. 1993, *Social World of Ancient Israel 1250-587 BCE*, p. 8.

17. Cf. Matthews, V.C. & Benjamin, D.C. 1993, *Social World of Ancient Israel*, p. 10.
18. Cf. Matthews, V.C. & Benjamin, D.C. 1993, p. 25.
19. Cf. Matthews, V.C. & Benjamin, D.C. 1993, p. 25.
20. Cf. Matthews, V.C. & Benjamin, D.C. 1993, pp. 28-29.
21. Cf. Malina, B.J. 1993, *The New Testament World*, p. 54.
22. See, inter alia, Blankenhorn, D. 1995, *Fatherless America: Confronting our Most Urgent Social Problem*; Bach, G.R. 1946, "Father-Fantasies and Father-Typing in Father-Separated Children," pp. 63-79; Grønseth, E. 1957, "The Impact of Father Absence in Sailor Families upon the Personality Structure and Social Adjustment of Adult Sailor Sons," pp. 97-114; Lynn, D.B. & Sawrey, W.L. 1959, "The Effects of Father-Absence on Norwegian Boys and Girls," pp. 258-262; Tiller, P.O. 1957, "Father Absence and Personality Development of Children in Sailor Families," pp. 115-137; Mitscherlich, A. 1969, *Society without the Father: A Contribution to Social Psychology*; Tripp-Reimer, T. & Wilson, S.E. 1991, "Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Fatherhood," pp. 1-27; Stearns, P.N. 1991, "Fatherhood in Historical Perspective: The Role of Social Change," pp. 28-52; Marciano, T.D. 1991, "Religion and Its Impact on Fatherhood," pp. 138-161; Adams, P.L., Milner, J.R. & Schrepf, N.A. 1984, *Fatherless Children*; Bowen, G.L. & Orthner, D.K. 1991, "Effects of Organizational Culture on Fatherhood," pp. 187-217; Jurich, A.P., White, M.B., White, C.P. & Moody, R.A. 1991, "Internal Culture of the Family and Its Effects on Fatherhood," pp. 237-262; Herzog, J.M. 1982, "On Father Hunger: The Father's Role in the Modulation of Aggressive Drive and Fantasy," pp. 163-174; Angel, R.J. & Angel, J.L. 1993, *Painful Inheritance: Health and the New Generation of Fatherless Children*; Mott, F.L. 1990, "When is a Father Really Gone? Paternal-Child Contact in Father-Absent Homes," pp. 1-27.
23. Burton, R.V. & Whiting, J.W.M. 1961, "The Absent Father," p. 93.
24. Jacobs-Malina, D. 1993, *Beyond Patriarchy: The Images of Family in Jesus*, p. 2.
25. Jacobs-Malina, D. 1993, *Beyond Patriarchy*, p. 8.
26. Jacobs-Malina, D. 1993, p. 2.
27. Jacobs-Malina, D. 1993, p. 6.
28. Jacobs-Malina, D. 1993, p. 7.
29. Cf. Hamerton-Kelly, R. 1979, *God the Father*, p. 38.
30. Tellenbach, H. (Hrsg.) 1976, *Das Vaterbild im Mythos und Geschichte: Ägypten, Griechenland, Altes Testament, Neues Testament*, pp. 7-11. The University of Heidelberg organized, against the backdrop of the revolutionary student protests of the

31. Cf. Hamerton-Kelly, R. 1979, *God the Father*, p. 5.
32. According to Tellenbach, H. (Hrsg.) 1976, *Das Vaterbild im Mythos und Geschichte*, p. 7, the Oedipal “Phase des Vaterprotestes in der Vorgeschichte so gut wie immer fehlte.”
33. Cf. Lenski, G., Nolan, P. & Lenski, J. [1970] 1995, *Human Societies: An Introduction to Macrosociology*, pp. 188-222.
34. Lenski, G. *et al.* 1995, *Human Societies*, p. 213.
35. See Fiensy, D.A. 1991, *The Social History of Palestine in the Herodian Period*, p. 132.
36. See Fiensy, D.A. 1991, *The Social History of Palestine*, p. 121.
37. See Wolf, E.R. 1966, *Peasants*, p. 15.
38. See Fiensy, D.A. 1991, *The Social History of Palestine*, p. 95.
39. Fiensy, D.A. 1991, p. 135. Fiensy refers to the work of, inter alia, Harper, M. 1928, “Village Administration in the Roman Province of Syria” , p. 106.
40. Borg, M.J. 1987, *Jesus – A New Vision: Spirit, Culture and the Life of Discipleship*, p. 86.
41. Borg, M.J. 1987, *Jesus – A New Vision*, pp. 86-87.
42. Cf. Van Aarde, Andries G. 1994, *Kultuurhistoriese Agtergrond van die Nuwe Testament: Die Eerste-Eeuse Mediterreense Sosiale Konteks*, pp. 152-157.
43. Cf., inter alia, Stegemann, E.W. & Stegemann, W. 1995, *Urchristliche Sozialgeschichte: Die Anfänge im Judentum und die Christugemeinden*, pp. 43-44.
44. Fiensy, D.A. 1991, *The Social History of Palestine*, pp. 100-101.
45. Cf. Bernard B Scott, *Hear then the parable*, pp. 141-159.
46. Mk 12:13-17 [parallel texts: Mt 22:15-22//Lk 20:19-26]; GosThom 100:1-4; Egerton Gospel 3:1-6. See Funk, R.W. & Hoover, R.W. 1997, *The Five Gospels – What Did Jesus Really Say? The Search for the Authentic Words of Jesus*, pp. 102-103.
47. See Dunn, J.D.G. 1991, *The Parting of the Ways: Between Christianity and Judaism and their Significance for the Character of Christianity*, pp. 28-31.

48. See Conzelmann, H. 1963, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, p. 123, 243; especially with regard to Acts 21:30.
49. See Gärtner, B., 1965, *The Temple and the Community in Qumran and the New Testament*, pp. 18-21; Klinzing, G. 1971, *Die Umdeutung des Kultus in der Qumrangemeinde und im Neuen Testament*, pp. 50-93.
50. Cf. 1 QpH 8:8-13; 12:9.
51. Cf. 1 QS 5:6; 8:5; 9; 9:6.
52. See Saldarini, A.J. 1988, *Pharisees, Scribes, and Sadducees in Palestinian Society: A Sociological Approach*, p. 234.
53. See Neusner, J. 1973, *From Politics to Piety*, p. 75; Elliott, J.H. 1991, "Temple versus Household in Luke-Acts: A contrast in Social Institutions," pp. 211-240; Elliott, J.H. 1991, "Household and Meals versus the Temple Purity System: Patterns of Replication in Luke-Acts," pp. 102- 108.
54. See Neusner, J. 1979, *The Way of Torah: An Introduction to Judaism*, p. 47.
55. See Horsley, R.A. & Hanson, J.S. 1985, *Bandits, Prophets, and Messiahs: Popular Movements in the time of Jesus*.
56. Cf. Bultmann, R. [1964/1966] 1971, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, pp. 310-311 note 5.
57. See, *inter alia*, Sirach 1:25-27; 6:37; 15:1; 19:20; 24:23; 33:2-3 and Baruch 4:1. Cf. Witherington, B. 1994, *Jesus the Sage: The Pilgrimage of Wisdom*, pp. 114-116.
58. See, *inter alia*, Ben-Sirach 24:8-2 and Wisdom of Solomon 10:1-21.
59. See Richardson, P. 1992, "Why Turn the Tables? Jesus' Protest in the Temple Precincts," p. 513.
60. See Malina, B.J. 1993, *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology*, pp. 159-161.
61. The following information concerning the *reconciliatory* strategy during the patriarchal-immigrant period can be pointed out: Abraham emigrated to Canaan, which was already inhabited by people grouped in city states ruled by kings. Marriages were endogamic. This led to the insistence that the spouse had to come from one's own family. Abraham married his half-sister (Gen 20:12); Nahor his brother's daughter (Gen 11:29); Isaac his father's brother's (his uncle's) son's (his cousin's) daughter (Gen 24:15); Esau, among other women, his father's brother's (his uncle's) daughter (his cousin) (Gen 28:9); Jacob his mother's brother's (his uncle's) daughter (Gen 29:10); Amram, Moses' father, married his father's sister (his aunt) (Ex 6:20; Num 26:57-59). Because married women

62. See Malina, B.J. 1996, *The Social World of Jesus and the Gospels*, p. 50.
63. See Malina, B.J. 1993, *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology*, pp. 137-138.
64. See Bossman, D. 1979, "Ezra's Marriage Reform: Israel Redefined," pp. 32-38.
65. See Jeremias, J. 1969, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus: An Investigation into Economic and Social Conditions during the New Testament Period*, pp. 271-273; Neyrey, J.H. 1991, "The Symbolic Universe of Luke-Acts: "They Turn the World Upside Down," p. 279; Funk, R. W 1996, *Honest To Jesus*, p. 202. This hierarchical construct is inferred from m.Kiddushin (4:1); m.Horayoth (3:8); t.Rosh hash-Shenah (4:1) and t.M'gillah (2:7).
66. See Malina, B.J. 1993, *The New Testament World*, pp. 159-161.
67. Jeremias, J. 1969, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus: An Investigation into Economic and Social Conditions during the New Testament Period*, p. 343.
68. See Sanders, E.P. 1993, *The Historical Figure of Jesus*, p. 229.
69. Cf. [Babylonian] Y'bamot 78b; see Fiensy, D.A. 1991, *The Social History of Palestine in the Herodian Period*, p. 165.
70. Pilch, J.J. 1991, "Beat his Ribs while He is Young" (Sir 30:12): Cultural Insights on the Suffering of Jesus."
71. Barr, J. 1988, "Abba Isn't 'Daddy'," pp. 28-47.
72. Capps, D. 1992, "The Desire to be Another Man's Son: The Child Jesus as an Endangered Self," p. 21.
73. Schaberg, J. 1994, "The Canceled Father: Historicity and the NT Infancy Narratives."

## 6 ~ GOSPEL ECHOES

### Jesus~Kingdom of God~Children

In chapter 4 I argued that a biological father did not play a role in the life of the historical Jesus. I ended chapter 3 by stating that Jesus' baptism, according to Mark 1:9, fits into the social context of someone who went to John the Baptist to, in light of Isaiah 1:16-17, "wash himself" of (systemic) "evil" to "plead for the widow" and "defend the fatherless." According to this particular context in Mark (cf. Mk 1:10-11), it is also clear that (the fatherless) Jesus, child of Mary (cf. Mk 3:31-35; 6:3), was believed to be child of God. By this remark, I anticipated my understanding of Jesus, child of God who, according to Mark 10:1-12 and 13-16, pleaded for the (patriarchless) widow and defended the (fatherless) street children. The latter passage, the one about Jesus blessing the children and seeing them as central to God's kingdom, is often referred to as the *Gospel for Children* (in Latin: *Evangelium Infantium*).

Without repeating the painstaking detail of historic-critical analysis, I accept John Dominic Crossan's finding on the "complex" *Jesus-Kingdom of God-Children*.<sup>1</sup> Crossan is clear that, in terms of the sequence of strata, the first stratum contains data chronologically closest to Jesus. Literary "units" of Jesus tradition composed within the first stratum are not necessarily historically the most accurate. Theoretically, a "unit" from the fourth stratum can be more original than one from the first stratum. Therefore, a



hierarchy of attestation of “units” and, especially, “complexes” of “units” is necessary, beginning with the first stratum and working from there to the second, third, and fourth. The complex *Jesus–Kingdom of God–Children* comprises six “units,” namely the Gospel of Thomas 22:1-2; Mark 10:13-16//Matthew 19:13-15//Luke 18:15-17; Matthew 18:3; and John 3:1-10. Thus, it is a “complex” that is attested by a textual “unit” belonging to the first stratum (Gospel of Thomas) and that is supported by multiple independent attestations of the second stratum (Gospel of Mark) and third stratum (Gospel of Matthew and Gospel of John).

These multiple and independent attestations show how seriously Jesus’ attitude towards children should be taken historically. I will argue that it is possible to consider these children, from a perspective of the social stratification of first-century Herodian Palestine, as part of the lowest “class,” namely the “expendables.” Neither Mark nor its parallel texts in the other gospels refer to parents bringing these children to Jesus. It seems that the children were “street urchins.” I am interpreting, on the one hand, this episode of defending the cause of the fatherless from the perspective of Jesus’ own fatherlessness and, on the other hand, in light of the notion “child of God” in the context of Paul. In chapter 7 I will focus on Paul’s implicit reference to Jesus’ call upon God as *Abba* (“Father”) and on Paul’s explicit notion (and its Greco-Roman background) of believers’ adoption by God as children of God.

Scholars have argued from a historical-critical perspective (especially from the exegetical point of view that is referred to in German as *formgeschichtlich*) that the original social setting (*Sitz im Leben*) of the *Evangelium Infantium* (“The Gospel for

Children”) in Mark 10:13-16 should be seen as a miracle story.<sup>2</sup> This passage in the Jesus Seminar’s *Scholars Version* reads as follows:

13 And they would bring children to him so he could lay hands on them, but the disciples scolded them. 14 Then Jesus grew indignant when he saw this and said to them: “Let the children come up to me, don’t try to stop them. After all, God’s domain is peopled with such as these. 15 I swear to you, whoever doesn’t accept God’s imperial rule the way a child would, certainly won’t ever set foot in (God’s domain)!” 16 And he would put his arms around them and bless them, and lay his hands on them.

The Jesus Seminar colored the saying in verse 14 pink and the one in verse 15 gray.<sup>3</sup> This means that most Fellows of the Jesus Seminar believe that these sayings about Jesus’ acceptance of “street children” and seeing God’s kingdom as belonging to people who are like these children circulated independently during the oral period of transmission of the Jesus tradition.

This passage represents one of those examples where *telling* and *showing* have been dialectically interlinked. The result is that it is almost impossible to discern between authentic individual components that go back to the historical Jesus and individual components that were colored by early Christians during the process of oral transmission. However, in terms of “individual features” and not of sayings as “units,” as I argued in chapter 1, there is no reason to see the thrust of the *Evangelium Infantium*, even if it (the thrust of the episode) originally goes back to a “healing” episode (or episodes) in the life of Jesus, as authentic. Mark 10:13-16 as literary unit is Mark’s composition.

Since the time of the Reformation, Mark 10:13-16 has been associated with the practice of baptizing children.<sup>4</sup> This is still so in modern times.<sup>5</sup> Today this direct association between the baptizing of children and the *Evangelium Infantium* is not generally accepted.<sup>6</sup> As far as form is concerned, Mark 10:13-16 demonstrates the characteristics of what Martin Dibelius calls a “paradigm” and Rudolf Bultmann an “apothegm.” Without going into detail, what this amounts to is that the *Evangelium Infantium* is a short (almost aphoristic) narrative that should be formally distinguished from, for example, the parable and the miracle story. Bultmann<sup>7</sup> points out that the children in this story should be seen as the “idea,” that is, a symbol or parable of some concern. The German exegete J. Sauer<sup>8</sup> has, however, very convincingly shown that Mark 10:13-16 is a combined form of an *apothegm* and a healing story, although it shows more of the characteristics of the latter, i.e., a miracle story. Influential studies have independently or consciously supported Sauer in this view.<sup>9</sup>

What is immediately noticeable is that the introduction to Mark 10:13-16 demonstrates strong similarities with other healing narratives where the disabled are brought to Jesus as a performer of miracles, with a call on him to heal them.<sup>10</sup> For our purposes the following terminological aspects of this research can be pointed out:

- “Brought to Jesus”:<sup>11</sup> in the synoptic gospels, this expression is often used to refer to the bringing of the disabled and the sick closer, so that they could be healed.<sup>12</sup>
- “That Jesus should touch them”:<sup>13</sup> in the synoptic gospels, this expression is used only in relation to miracle stories and the raising of the dead.<sup>14</sup>

- “The disciples rebuked the people”:<sup>15</sup> this expression is frequently used in the New Testament with regard to miracle stories.<sup>16</sup>
- “Do not prevent [the children]”:<sup>17</sup> the Greek verb for “do not prevent”, on its own, does not concern the baptism tradition.<sup>18</sup> What is certainly noticeable is that this verb appears in Matthew only in relation to the parallel context, namely Matthew 19:14, and in Mark 9:38-41 two times more in one and the same pericope that has a miraculous exorcism as its theme.<sup>19</sup>
- “Jesus put his arms around the children”:<sup>20</sup> this expression only appears here in Mark 10:13-16 in the New Testament. On the strength of Proverbs 6:10 and 24:33 (Septuagint, the Greek translation of the First Testament), among other references, the Greek word for “put one’s arm around” has an affective connotation of compassion. Diodorus Siculus (one B.C.E.) used it in the context of the healing of children.<sup>21</sup>
- “Jesus put his hands on the children and blessed them”:<sup>22</sup> According to the German exegete J. Sauer,<sup>23</sup> the phrase “to place his hands on them” expresses a typical ritual found in healing practices (“ein typischer Ritus der Heilungspraxis”).

Walter Schmithals<sup>24</sup> understands Mark 10:13-16 against the background of the healing of ostracized children. In line of this interpretation, my research demonstrates that the Greek word *tithemi* (τι/ϑημι), that is translated above as “to place...,” functions semantically as the antonym for the Greek word *ektithemai* (ε)κτι/ϑημαί). In some contexts the latter is used to denote “being put out of the home”/“left out of doors”/“abandon,” while *tithemi* (τι/ϑημι) denotes “accommodating someone.” This

accommodation especially concerns ostracized children. To bless your child, or to give your child a name, implies accepting the child into your house. When the father proclaims the name of the child, he recognizes it as his own. In the fifties, the late Professor At van Selms, my teacher of Semitic Languages at the University of Pretoria, wrote about family life in Ugarit literature and noted: “Through the proclamation of the name the child becomes legally existent.”<sup>25</sup>

To bless your children is to accept them into your home; to not bless your children is to abandon them. Putting a child out of the home was often the lot of unwanted children, like the handicapped. The same fate fell on children “born of unlawful unions” (cf. Wisdom of Solomon 4:6). Physically and mentally disabled children, the blind, those with only one eye or one arm, the leprous, the deaf, and the dumb were often ostracized in this way.<sup>26</sup> The Roman philosopher and statesman, Seneca (*Controversiae* 10:4.16), who was a contemporary of Jesus and well known for his call for a charitable attitude,<sup>27</sup> referred to incidents in this connection.<sup>28</sup>

In the second or third century C.E., the anonymous writer of the well known Letter to Diognetus referred to the widespread Hansel and Gretel phenomenon of children being put out of homes:<sup>29</sup>

For the distinction between Christians and other [human beings], is neither in country nor language nor customs. For they do not dwell in cities in some place of their own, nor do they use any strange variety of dialect, nor practise an extraordinary kind of life....Yet while living in Greek and barbarian cities, according as each obtained his lot, and following the local customs, both in clothing and food, and in the rest of life, they show forth the wonderful and confessedly strange character of the constitution of their own citizenship. They dwell in their own fatherlands, but as if sojourners in them; they share

all things as citizens, and suffer all things as strangers. Every country is their fatherland, and every fatherland is a foreign country. They marry as all [human beings], they bear children, but they do not expose [e)kri/ptw]their offspring.<sup>30</sup> They offer free hospitality, but guard their purity....

The Greek word translated above as “expose” is used in several places to refer to the ostracizing action of “putting someone out of the house or country.”<sup>31</sup> This casting away of children should probably be seen as a primitive means to control population growth and ensure survival.<sup>32</sup> “The society tends to mandate infanticide in areas affecting the entire society in either ecological (overpopulation) or social (illegitimate) domains.”<sup>33</sup> In many societies, records witness that “adulterous conception was offered as grounds for infanticide.”<sup>34</sup> In some tribes males were said to assist upon the death of any child whose features suggested a nontribal sire. Cases are recorded that “deformed children were described as ghosts or demons, with the rationale for infanticide expressed in terms of a struggle with hostile supernatural forces.”<sup>35</sup> Susan Scrimshaw refers to stories told by the Yaudepu Enga of New Guinea about “supernatural beings who take abandoned children and rear them to live privileged lives.” The Greco-Roman legend of the rescue of the unborn Asclepius by the one who conceived him, the god Apollo, also is a remarkable example. Asclepius’ mortal mother, Coronis, was accused of infidelity when she was found to be pregnant with Asclepius. She was exposed to die on a funeral pyre, but Apollo tore out his unborn child. After Asclepius learned the art of medicine, he son of Apollo, became the healer-god in die Greco-Roman world (that included first-century Palestine) and founder of a very famous healing cult (of which traces are found at the Pool of Bethesda in Jerusalem).<sup>36</sup> In Somali (in the days before Islam) “infanticide of

healthy children was alleged to occur for purely magical reasons...Somali (Africa) parents used to dispose babies born under inauspicious astrological signs.”<sup>37</sup>

Closer to the life and times of Jesus, several other references to the casting out of children are encountered in the writings of, among others, Lactantius<sup>38</sup> (circa 250-circa 325 C.E.), Justin Martyr<sup>39</sup> (died circa 165 C.E.), Clement of Alexandria<sup>40</sup> (circa 160-215 C.E.), Seneca<sup>41</sup> (circa 4 B.C.E.-65 C.E.), and Tertullian<sup>42</sup> (circa 160-circa 212 C.E.). It is in particular the Greek verb and noun *ektithemai* (e)kti/qemai / *ekthesis* (e)kqe/sij)<sup>43</sup> and the Latin *exposito* that are used to refer to this ostracizing action. It often took place under the pretext that it was a sacrificial religious action. The practice in the Middle Ages of “donating” children to cloisters with ecclesiastic approval and regulation<sup>44</sup>, should be seen in the same light.

Just as the words “hot” and “cold” cannot be used in a semantically independent manner—the one finds its meaning in terms of the other—the meaning of the Greek word *ektithemai* (e)kti/qemai) is complemented by the word *tithemi* (ti/qhmi). The latter can indicate, among other meanings, an act of “assigning/appointing someone to a particular task, function, or role.”<sup>45</sup> It is in other words an act of “choosing.”

“Choosing” need not always imply “selection,” but could also mean the “acceptance” or even the vocation to the fulfillment of a specific role. The name given to a child by the parents was sometimes related to the identification and vocation to fulfill a particular role or perform a task.<sup>46</sup> In this connection, it is important to note that the parental custom of blessing a child and placing one’s hands on that child (cf. the analogy in Mark 10:16) relates to the action of “accepting into the home” as opposed to “putting out of the home.” To bless your child is to promise help and care.<sup>47</sup>

As a result of the (covenantal) relationship between a son and his father, one of the most important signs of honor that a son can show his father is to care reciprocally for him when he is old, and to bury him. The Greek word *tithemi* (τι/ϑημι) is also used for this (see Acts 7:16), as well as *prostithemi* (προστι/ϑημι) (see Acts 13:36, where the word literally means “to entrust your father to his fathers”).<sup>48</sup>

It seems that Old Israel took better care of its children than its neighbors took care of their children. For example, in Psalm 106:37 Israel is called out to abandon the heathen practice of child sacrifice.<sup>49</sup> This does not however mean that this custom was no longer practiced by the Israelites. In Ezekiel 16, God’s covenant with Israel is compared to finding a little girl who had been rejected at birth, but who had been cared for by God as her parent in terms of a covenantal agreement. In Stephen’s speech, the putting out of Moses<sup>50</sup> in a death-basket is also described using the Greek verb *ektithemai* (ε)κτι/ϑημαι (Acts 7:21; cf. [LXX] Ex 2:3).

Children were abandoned for various reasons. Apart from survival motives or religious considerations, children were often “thrown away” because of an unwanted marriage and pregnancy.<sup>51</sup> In the Wisdom of Solomon (4:3-6), for example, these children were considered as “born of unlawful unions.” Jane Schaberg<sup>52</sup> understands the first-century Mediterranean society’s attitude towards the status of the child carried by the pregnant, betrothed woman, like Mary, as Matthew’s story describes it, in light of the depiction that appears in the Wisdom of Solomon as well as in the Wisdom of Jesus, son of Sirach. These texts contain references to the divorce of a “seductress” who became pregnant:

So it is also with a woman who leaves her husband



And produced an heir by a stranger.  
For first, she disobeyed the law of the Most High;  
Second, she committed an offense against her husband;  
And third, she committed adultery through fornication;  
And produced children by a strange man.  
She will be led away unto the assembly,  
And punishment will fall on her children.  
Her children will not spread out roots,  
And her branches will not bear fruit.  
She will leave her memory for a curse,  
And her disgrace will not be blotted out.<sup>53</sup>

A similar attitude toward the “children of adultery” appears in the Wisdom of Solomon.<sup>54</sup>

But the children of adulteress will not come to maturity,  
and the offspring of an unlawful union will perish.  
Even if they live long they will be held of no account,  
and finally their old age will be without honor.  
If they die young, they will have no hope and no consolation in the day of  
decision....

For children born of unlawful unions  
are witnesses of evil against their parents when God examines them.

In the First Testament the analogical reference in Ezekiel 16:3 to the abandonment of a child was precisely the result of an undesirable mixed marriage. Incisive studies have been done on the prohibition on mixed marriages during the reign of the last Judean kings in particular.<sup>55</sup> This was mainly the effect of Ezra’s post-exilic marriage reforms.<sup>56</sup> At the time of first-century Judean purification, these “reforms” led to divorce being

justifiable on the basis of Mosaic law (see Mk 10:1-10 and parallel texts). This state of affairs was conducive for the ostracism of the “impure” wife and her oldest child.<sup>57</sup> The debate between Jesus and the Pharisees, (reported in at least three independent sources:<sup>58</sup> Mark 10:1-12; Q 16:18 [cf. Mt 5:32], and Paul [1 Cor 7:10-11]) on whether or not divorce was justified should probably be understood against this background. The story of Jesus’ empathy for and touching of an impure woman who was called a “sinner” and had been put out of her house (cf. Lk 7:36-50)<sup>59</sup> seems to reflect similar circumstances.

This is still a modern-day phenomenon. A South African newspaper,<sup>60</sup> on 25 June 1991, carried a report about young women being put out of their homes in Nazareth:

In an unusual demonstration in Nazareth, Israel, yesterday [24 June 1991], about fifteen young Arabian woman protested against the killing of women by their male relations as a result of shame they had brought on their families. These women say that about forty young women are killed every year after extra-marital pregnancies, unsanctioned love affairs and wanting to marry men not considered suitable by their families.

On 20 September 1994, Sapa-Reuter reports about a “girl killed in ‘crime of honour’” in Amman, Jordan:<sup>61</sup>

A Jordanian teenager killed his 18-year-old physically handicapped sister after she gave birth to an illegitimate child. The 17-year-old stabbed his sister several times before shooting her while their parents ululated. The Jordan Times newspaper, quoting relatives and officials, said the girl, identified only as Jizia, was attacked a day after her family freed her from jail and signed a paper saying they would not harm her. The pregnant girl had been kept in custody until the baby was born to protect her from what is known in the Middle East as a “crime of honour.” The brother surrendered to police.

A woman, remains, in some sense, a “member of the father’s house” in which (she) was born...and would return to (her family) if she was divorced or left widowed and childless.”<sup>62</sup> When a woman with an unwanted pregnancy (whether married, betrothed or not) escapes death, yet is abandoned, the child could be cast away at birth. It seems that in New Testament times, people of other fringe groups who tried to exist outside the circle of normal family care were often the only refuge of the outcast woman and/or child. It is possible that among these people was the socioeconomic group that Josephus frequently referred to as the “bandits.”<sup>63</sup> Also among them seems to be people such as we encounter when we read texts like Matthew 15:29- 32:64:<sup>64</sup>

29 Then Jesus left there and went to the sea of Galilee. And he climbed up the mountain and sat there. 30 And huge crowds came to him and brought with them the lame, the blind, the maimed, the mute, and many others, and they crowded around his feet and he healed them. 31 As a result, the crowd was astonished when they saw the mute now speaking, the maimed made strong, and the lame walking and the blind seeing. And they gave all credit to the God of Israel. 32 Then Jesus called his disciples aside and said: “I feel sorry for the crowd because they have already spent three days with me and haven’t had anything to eat. And I do not want to send these people away hungry, otherwise they’ll collapse on the road.”

“Unclean” and “imperfect” people were seen as estranged from God. From the perspective of the “politics of holiness,” they were the “sinners” who were under the influence of demons. It is with reference to this that Matthew refers to some of the Galileans as those living in the “land of the shadow of death” (Mt 4:16).

According to Matthew (who developed his understanding of Jesus' healing activities from themes in the Hebrew Scriptures—cf. Is 8:23-9:2; 58:10), Jesus' message that God's kingdom was near-at-hand was for the peripheral people (the outcasts, the “people who lived in darkness”) and was like the dawning of a light. According to purification customs,<sup>65</sup> these people were the socially despised who were put out of homes and were refused admittance to the temple and synagogues.<sup>66</sup> Jesus' miracles were aimed at the outcasts in Galilee.<sup>67</sup> Matthew 4:23-5:4ff. is also an example of such a report:<sup>68</sup>

23 And he toured all over Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of (Heaven's) imperial rule, and healing every disease and every ailment the people had. 24 And his reputation spread through the whole of Syria. They brought him everyone who was ill, who suffered from any kind of disease or was in intense pain, who was possessed, who was epileptic, or paralytic, and he cured them. 25 And huge crowds followed him from Galilee and the Decapolis and Jerusalem and Judea and from across the Jordan. 5 Taking note of the crowds, he climbed up the mountain, and when he had sat down, his disciples came to him. 2 He then began to speak, and this is what he would teach them:

3 Congratulations to the poor in spirit!

Heaven's domain belongs to them.

4 Congratulations to those who grieve!

They will be consoled

....

I do not think that this report is, in its entirety, historical but it signals in all probability a clear picture of the fact that Jesus did not act only as a healer of disease but

also as a critic of society.<sup>69</sup> “The healings must be seen against the background of the community that recounted them, as collective symbolic actions by which distress was remedied and in which the members found strength to combat it in their ordinary lives by actions that were not merely ‘symbolic.’”<sup>70</sup> The people who were ill were the people who were *poor*, who *grieved*. These verbs came from the first two beatitudes (Mt 5:3-4) that preface Matthew’s Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5:1-7:28). The Jesus Seminar regards these two and the one about hunger and thirst (Mt 5:6) as already been interpreted by Matthew as “religious virtues rather than...social and economic conditions.”<sup>71</sup> However, the “Fellows of the Seminar were virtually unanimous in their view that [the historical] Jesus is the author of the[se] three congratulations.”<sup>72</sup> The Lukan versions of those congratulations that are “addressed to the poor, the weeping,, and the hungry,” taken from the Sayings Gospel Q (6:22-23) are probably more original. They are not like the Matthean spiritualizations because they do not have the stipulations “poor *in spirit*” and “hunger and thirst *for justice*.”

Yet what Matthew does should not go unnoticed or be seen as irrelevant. Matthew has a “typifying style of composition.”<sup>73</sup> He often summarized his understanding of Jesus’ miracles. When Matthew added religious virtues to Jesus’ talk on political and economic conditions, he certainly did not distance himself from the concrete social consequences of Jesus’ healing activities. “The programmatic miracle summary in [Mt] 4:23-25 precedes the Sermon on the Mount. In it teaching and healing are linked. What Matthew has joined, let not the exegete put asunder. Distinguishing between the two is a different matter.”<sup>74</sup>

This wisdom comes from the German exegete and theologian Gerd Theissen. In his book *The Miracle Stories of the Early Christian Tradition* ([1974] 1983), he focuses on the meaning of the fact that Jesus turned to the social and political outcasts. Theissen<sup>75</sup> notes that belief in miracles among the humble people was “concentrated...on specific situations of distress, on possession, disease, hunger, lack of success and danger.” And it is true, the Matthean miracle summaries “leave no doubt about the sort of people who flocked to [Jesus]; it was the *ochlos*, the ‘crowd’, the humble people.” They were part of the expendable class, “about 5-10%, for whom society had no place or need. They had been forced off the land because of population pressures or they did not fit into society. They tended to be landless and itinerant with no normal family life and a high death rate.”<sup>76</sup>

Street children were to be found among them. It is striking that, in many places in Matthew, the “crowd” was called the “least” (Mt 25:40, 45), the “children” (Mt 15:26; 18:3), the “little ones” (Mt 18:14), and “sheep” (Mt 18:12; cf. Mt 10:36, and 15:26). The metaphorical use of “sheep” in Matthew 9:36 and 18:12 correlates with the expressions “the lost sheep of Israel” in Matthew 10:6 and “the little children” in Matthew 18:3-5, as well as “the little ones” in Matthew 18:6, 10, 14 (cf. Mt 10:42).

In the first-century C.E., the outcast of children generally meant abandoning them to all types of social evils. The Christian apologist, Lactantius (*Institutiones Divinae* 5.9) pointed out that children abandoned thus often fell prey to wild animals or sexual abuse. Also Justin Martyr (1 *Apologia* 27) argued that Christians should be taught not to put their newly born children out of their homes, since almost all such children, both daughters and sons, would be abused as prostitutes. Clement of Alexandria (*Paedagogus*

3.3) also called attention to this wretchedness and noted that men would later unwittingly have sexual intercourse with their own children, who had become prostitutes. Tertullian (Ad Nationes 1.3.16) objected to the custom of putting children out of the house since the children would suffer. He acknowledged that it was not usually the parents' intention to harm their children, that strangers would sympathetically adopt the children and care for them better than their biological parents could because of limited resources.

Throughout the Middle Ages, the church received children who had been ejected from their homes and it functioned as a sort of children's home. In a certain sense, the church facilitated the ostracizing practice. Thomas Aquinas<sup>77</sup> studied in detail the teaching of children in the cloisters and questioned whether children who did not yet understand what it was all about could be bound by a lifelong oath, and whether such children had any place in the cloister. It would appear that this did not, in fact, reflect true concern for the children, but that the large number of children put out of their homes and given to the church by their parents disrupted church life.<sup>78</sup> This practice of "sacrificing children" was called *oblatio* and by the first century C.E. it had already been identified as distinct from *expositum*<sup>79</sup> by Seneca (Controversiae 10:4.16).

By the Middle Ages it had become important for the church to regulate the baptism and the reclaiming back of expositi.<sup>80</sup> Ecclesiastical practices of the sixth century that even organized the sale of children are known to us. Within the Benedictine Order, in particular, we find that *oblatio* was sanctioned. Parents were forbidden to have any further say in the instruction and formal education of these children. The instruction of these children was also distinct from the normal instruction given to children in the cloisters.<sup>81</sup> At first, only the children of aristocrats were received, but later children from

parents in the peasant society were also taken in. In the thirteenth century, the papal Decretum Gratiani began to forbid the practice of *oblatio* and attempts were made to avoid receiving children under the age of eighteen in the monasteries.<sup>82</sup>

We have seen that Schmithals<sup>83</sup> describes the original social location (*Sitz im Leben*) of the *Evangelium Infantium* (as far as it can be discerned historically) as that which should be understood against the background of the healing of ostracized children. He also notes that Jesus' acceptance of the children, which is apparent from his actions, should be seen as a condemnation of the practice of "turning the children out of the home." Persons, such as widows and orphans, who had no connection with a patriarch were necessarily marginal to the society.<sup>84</sup> From the socio-historical information given above, one can argue that the social world mirrored in the *Evangelium Infantium* (and in the contexts of both Jesus' birth record in Mt 1:1-17 and the birth narrative itself in Mt 1:18-25) correlates with what is found in the contextual world in which Matthew's story as a whole makes sense.

I already mentioned that the infancy narratives are so filled with legendary content that almost no history can be inferred from them. In a published lecture (given for St Andrew's Trust for the Study of Religion and Society, New Zealand) Dr. James Veitch (Senior Lecturer in Religious Studies at Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand and Fellow of the Jesus Seminar) puts it as follows in his paper entitled *The Birth of Jesus: History or Myth?*<sup>85</sup>

Matthew's birth stories were created out of stories in the Hebrew Bible. They are not accounts of what actually happened....The third gospel, known to us as "Luke," probably circulated in the wake of the persecution of Domitian



around the mid-90s of the 1st century. Its communities were Greek Christians....In the light of persecution, they wished to present a story of Jesus using language and thought–forms of their contemporaries living in cities throughout the empire. Since the Roman Senate deified its emperors from Julius Caesar onwards, it is not surprising to find Christian writers doing the same for Jesus.<sup>86</sup> ...So what can be gleaned from “Matthew” and “Luke” about the actual historical circumstances of Jesus’ birth? Very little...There is the admission that the circumstances of the birth were not straightforward but quite special, prompting a suggestion of illegitimacy or premarital activity. Perhaps in a small village like Nazareth, set in a mixed-Jewish and non-Jewish area, a conception like this would give rise to speculation and gossip. But religious concerns prompted by creative human imagination have already taken over by the time we reach “Matthew,” and the human Jesus is already lost from sight.<sup>87</sup> ...*So forget the history and enjoy the myth.*<sup>88</sup>

Yet, when one sees myths as emptied realities and one fills the emptied history with nature (as I suggested in chapter 3), one catches a glimpse of how the stories about Jesus’ birth gave meaning to the life of people—among them were women and children living at the fringe of society because they were the nobodies (the divorced and the fatherless, the widows, and the orphans) to whom patriarchy gave no place amidst the honorable.

Connecting the infancy narratives with Jesus’ defense of patriarchless women and fatherless children is one way to demonstrate how *Matthew’s showing* and *Jesus’ telling* (and acting) interlink. To realize this dialectic is to take into consideration that the *Jesus of history* is retold as the *Jesus of faith*—that the *proclaimer* became the *proclaimed*.

## **A Tale of Two Kings**

I have argued that the accommodation of the abandoned child forms the original *Sitz im Leben* of both Mark 10:1-12 (Jesus' critique of divorce) and Mark 10:13-16 (Jesus' blessing of street children). It seems also to be the fundamental social setting of the Matthean parallel in Matthew 19:13-15. Here the *Evangelium Infantium* in Mark served as the source for Matthew's version of the complex "Jesus-Kingdom of Heaven-Children." In my view the same social setting can be assumed to be part of the background of the narrative about the birth of Jesus, at least as told in Matthew's story.

Matthew's story about the genesis and infancy of Jesus forms an appropriate parallel to what many find to be perhaps the most distinctive aspect of Jesus' ministry:<sup>89</sup> his association with the "least," the "children," the "little ones," the "sheep." The use of these names portrays the care and love of Jesus, symbolized in the Matthean infancy narrative as shepherd of God's people (cf. Mt 2:6). Against this background, it is so much more comprehensible that the *Evangelium Infantium* (in both Mark 10:13-16 and Matthew 19:13-15) should have been placed between the debate on divorce (Mk 10:1-12//Mt 19:1-12) and the rich young man's question about the implications of obeying the law in terms of compassion and the constitution of a "new" fictive family (Mk 10:17-31//Mt 19:16-30).<sup>90</sup>

A genealogical record is a kind of certificate of status in terms of someone's "attributed identity": "it certified the bearer as an official member of his culture in good standing, and conferred upon him the cultural credentials of role and status apposite to his ancestral heritage."<sup>91</sup> According to Matthew's narrative strategy, the birth record of Jesus (Mt 1:1-17) paves the way for the birth narrative as such (Mt 1:18-25). And the birth narrative in its turn paves the way for the story of King Herod versus the newborn king of

the Jews (Mt 2:1-23). Instead of leading God's people, Herod (appointed by Caesar as "king of the Jews"), killed children (see Josephus BJ 1.431-440) and in response was feared (see Assumptio Mosis 6:2-9).<sup>92</sup> Susan Scrimshaw,<sup>93</sup> therefore, postulates "dynastic politics" as the "proximate reason" for Herod's infanticide. Jesus, on the contrary, being an adopted child (Mt 1:19-20), touched (Mt 19:13-15) and healed children (Mt 21:14) and, in response, was honored in the temple by children as Son of David (Mt 21:15). The Matthean infancy narrative can thus be interpreted from the perspective of the social pattern of *challenge* and *response* in terms of the ascribed and acquired honor of two kings.

This "challenge and response" can be studied from the social-scientific perspective of honor and shame as pivotal social values.<sup>94</sup> In the first-century Mediterranean world, every social interaction that took place outside one's family or group of friends was perceived as an affront to one's honor. Bruce Malina helps exegetes of Jesus' birth record to understand that "being born into an honorable family makes one honorable, since the family is the repository of the honor of past illustrious ancestors and their accumulated acquired honor."<sup>95</sup> Malina notes that one of the purposes of genealogies as birth records is to legitimize a person's ascribed honor.

The "game" of challenge and response can only be played among equals. This is a problem where Jesus is concerned. Jesus was not an equal of Herod the Great. We know that Antipater, the father of Herod the Great, was ascribed honor by Caesar when he was declared king of the Judeans in 47 B.C.E.<sup>96</sup> Herod the Great himself was made king by the Roman Senate.<sup>97</sup> However, although he was a Judean by religion, his racial

descent was Idumaeen.<sup>98</sup> Herod acted as patron among the people through agriculture and commercial enterprise<sup>99</sup> but the response to his program was fear and hostility.

Matthew's version of Jesus' genealogy places him among the disreputable. Matthew's reference to Tamar (as the mother of Perez, Mt 1:3) alludes to the tortuous way in which Judah begot Perez and Zerah (Gen 38:6-30); Rahab, the mother of Boaz (Mt 1:5), was the foreign prostitute who helped the Israelite spies at Jericho (see Jos 20); Ruth, the mother of Obed (Mt 1:5), was also a foreigner (see Ruth 4); the very designation of the mother of Solomon as "the wife of Uriah" (Mt 1:6) reminds the readers of David's dubious behavior (see 2 Sm 11).<sup>100</sup>

These "foremothers" of Jesus were dishonorable people. A prostitute had no honor because of her unconventional lifestyle. She was not sexually exclusive to a patriarch. She symbolized chaos.<sup>101</sup> According to the Mediterranean culture, such people had no honor at all. In other words, there was no honor to defend. They were comparable to other defenseless people: orphans, widows, destitute poor, resident aliens—"people incapable of defending their own honor."<sup>102</sup> This meant that a patron with honor was needed in order to defend a person without honor.

According to Matthew, God was the one who intervened on behalf of Jesus. "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."<sup>103</sup> In the Matthean infancy narrative, the life of the child Jesus was threatened by Herod the Great. Though Jesus was portrayed as born from and among despised outcasts, he was God's "adopted son" (see Mt 3:17).

It is clear that the thrust of the Matthean genealogy is that Jesus was an adopted child. Because of God's intervention, he became Joseph's adopted son (see Mt 1:25). Combining the messianic interpretation of Jesus and the tradition that Jesus was from the tribe of Joseph (see again chapter 4, "The Joseph Trajectory"), Matthew says that Joseph's line goes back to both David and Abraham. Yet children of Abraham were God's children. From the Matthean point of view, a son of David and of Abraham was not someone characterized primarily by biological offspring, but by what he would do, his vocation.<sup>104</sup> In Matthew 3:7-9, the "true children of Abraham" are described as people who do certain things: they bear fruit that befit repentance.

Matthew's story presupposes that Joseph knows something about Mary's pregnancy. It seems that he thought that she had committed adultery.<sup>105</sup> However, the narrative does not describe how Jesus was conceived but rather the reason why Mary's pregnancy should not be perceived as shameful; that which is conceived in her is not impure but is of the Holy Spirit, and thus holy. The Greek syntax of this sentence puts the emphasis on the word "holy." The text opposes diverging evaluations of Mary's pregnancy, either as something that is shameful and a cause of disgrace and rejection (Mt 1:19) or as something that one should not fear because it is of God (Mt 1:20).<sup>106</sup> The divine is defined in terms of holiness. Joseph, when wanting to divorce Mary, is described as her husband; just (or righteous); unwilling to put her to shame (Mt 1:19); Joseph, when taking Mary into his home, is described as son of David, obeying (Mt 1:24), without fear (Mt 1:20), adopting Jesus by giving him his name (Mt 1:25), and transmitting the vocation to be *son of David* and *son of Abraham* (Mt 1:1).

From Matthew's perspective, "true righteousness" (*dikaiosunē*), which "exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees" (Mt 5:20), is expressed in love, given without discrimination to deserving and undeserving alike (Mt 5:44-48). "The 'just' man is merciful, as God is merciful."<sup>107</sup> Four of the five instances of the verb "to have compassion" and five of the eight instances of the verb "to have mercy"<sup>108</sup> occur in Matthew in connection with healing and in almost every case the names "Lord" [Κυ/ριος] and/or "Son of David" appear in the same context.<sup>109</sup> Except for the narrator, it is only the crowd (Mt 9:27; 12:23; 20:30, and 21:15) and the Gentiles (Mt 15:22) who address Jesus as "Son of David" and not the disciples or the Judean leaders. All of these passages deal with healing and all, except Matthew 15:21-28, deal with the healing of the blind in one way or another. Matthew 21:9, the entry into Jerusalem, is an exception because it does not deal directly with healing. However, the entry bears a close relation to the following incident of healing that takes place inside the temple and leads to a climax when "children in the temple" honored Jesus as the "son of David" (Mt 21:15). From a "medical-anthropological" perspective, we know that the healing incidents (for example, the healing of "lepers") in the gospels provide evidence that human illnesses "were thought to be a source of pollution, not contagion, and that Jesus' cure invariably involved establishing new self understandings so that these formerly unclean and excluded from the holy community now found themselves clean and within the holy community."<sup>110</sup>

In the Mediterranean world, children were considered nobodies. Herod the Great, the challenger of Jesus, was also the murderer of children. Research, studying infanticide from a cultural-anthropological perspective, mentions resource competition among

individuals and families in preindustrial societies competing for other valuables besides land and geopolitical power. “Human history is full of cases of competition for access to office (read: economic and reproductive dominance) most especially among royalty. We should expect that the greater the value of the office, the greater the benefit of assassination of potential competitors.”<sup>111</sup> These studies found that the practice of infanticide was used in hunter-gatherer, horticulturist, and stratified agrarian societies for purposes ranging from population control to maintenance of the social structure.<sup>112</sup>

In order to maintain his geopolitical power, Herod the Great murdered those sons who would be more readily acceptable to the Judeans as king. The legend about Herod’s infanticide in Matthew should be understood against this background. Matthew narrates that Jesus escaped being murdered by Herod. This was a result of God’s intervention. In Matthew’s story Jesus, in his turn, became the protector of defenseless children. Matthew encompassed the beginning and end of Jesus’ public ministry within the context of Jesus’ relationship to children. Jesus’ baptism by John (so that they both can fulfill “all righteousness”—Mt 3:15) and Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem (Mt 21:1-17) formed the two poles of his ministry. Both episodes can be described as cleansing of the temple—the last episode is explicitly told and the first episode implicitly. Both incidents were (in a midrash fashion) understood by Matthew as fulfillment of Scripture. The baptism scene is a Matthean allusion to Isaiah 1:13-17 and the record of the entry into Jerusalem is an explicit interpretation of Jeremiah 7:1-8:

“Stop bringing meaningless offerings! Your incense is detestable to me. New Moons, Sabbaths and convocations—I cannot bear your evil assemblies...I am weary bearing them. When you spread out your hands in prayer, I will hide my eyes from you; I will not listen. Your hands are full of blood; wash and make

yourselves clean. Take your evil deeds out of my sight! Stop doing wrong, learn to do right! *Seek justice, encouraged the oppressed. Defend the cause of the fatherless, plead the case of the widow.*”

(Is 1:13-17; my emphasis)

“This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord: ‘Stand at the gate of the Lord’s house and there proclaim this message: ‘Hear the word of the Lord, all you people of Judah who come through these gates to worship the Lord. This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says: Reform your ways and your actions, and I will let you live in this place. Do not trust in deceptive words and say, ‘This is the Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord!’ If you really change your ways and your actions *and deal with each other justly, if you do not oppress the alien, the fatherless or the widow and do not shed innocent blood in this place*, in the land I gave your forefathers for ever and ever. But look, you are trusting in deceptive words that are worthless.’”

(Jer 7:1-8; my emphasis)

In the beginning of Matthew’s story the “authorities” in Jerusalem almost murdered the infant Jesus with other “expendable” children. In the middle part of the story Jesus acted as the protector of the honor of the miserable. At the end, quite unconventionally, Jesus was honored by infants. Here, near the end of Jesus’ life, Matthew unexpectedly places the children in the temple. Children were not permitted to enter the temple. Yet, according to Matthew, children were the ones to honor Jesus. Jesus, seemingly a fatherless person, born from among the despised, was also not expected to be found in the Temple. We have seen that honor could only be ascribed by notable persons.<sup>113</sup> The implication of this is that Matthew treated both Jesus and the children as notable people.



It becomes clear that in Matthew's story, God is shown "to be one who sides with the outcast and endangered woman and child."<sup>114</sup> Matthew retold the tradition of the divine intervention that caused Joseph's acceptance of the messianic child and his mother. Therefore, Jane Schaberg is on the right track when she understands Matthew's emphasis of God as Father as an indication that the Jesus movement is the commencement of a new (fictive) family (cf. Mt 19:29), a family of God (cf. Mt 23:9). By making the child and not the father the model for entry into the reign of God, the fatherless Jesus "reversed the hierarchical assumptions that governed all of life."<sup>115</sup> The Matthean Jesus' attitude towards the status of women and children represents the deliberate breaking down of boundaries. The new way was for all to assume the position of children (cf. Mt 23:11-12).<sup>116</sup> Jane Schaberg<sup>117</sup> says about her work on Jesus' illegitimacy: "If my reading of Matthew's infancy narrative is regarded as a possible reading, other ears may recognize its echoes in the rest of this Gospel." This is what my reading scenario does: the fatherless Jesus defended the fatherless street urchins. Jesus erased and replaced the "god-like" status of the biological father with God as "our Father in heaven." He opened the door for the fatherless to call upon God as their Father.

At this point, it is as if we have realized that we crossed a bridge. From hindsight it was a movement from seeing Jesus, being child of God, to seeing his followers who became children of God. Actually, the transition from the *Jesus of history* to the *Jesus of faith* can be explained in terms of a suspension bridge. According to this analogy, the quest for Jesus means an involvement of the scholar as *engagé*. Every time, when one sets foot on the left side of the bridge, the pedestrian is swayed to the right side. It is a motion from *telling* (the Jesus of history) to *showing* (the Jesus of faith). It represents a

movement between what can be historically discerned with regard to the words and deeds of Jesus on the one hand, and the faith assertions of his followers on the other hand. What is at issue is engaged hermeneutics. While bridging the transition between pre-Easter and post-Easter, the scholar is critically testing whether the cause of Jesus has been adequately conveyed in the process of transition.

## END NOTES

1. Cf. Crossan, J.D. 1991, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant*, pp. xxxiii-xxxiv; Crossan, J.D. 1991, "The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant," p. 1200.
2. Sauer, J. 1981, "Der ursprüngliche 'Sitz im Leben' von Mk 10, 13-16"; Robbins, V.K. 1983, "Pronouncement Stories and Jesus' Blessing of the Children: A Rhetorical Approach"; Schmithals, W. 1986, *Das Evangelium nach Markus, Kapitel 9,2-16,18*, pp. 447-448.
3. Cf. Funk, R.W. & Hoover, R.W. 1993, *The Five Gospels: The Search for the Authentic Words of Jesus*, p. 89.
4. Cf. Ludolph, I. 1973, "Zur Geschichte der Auslegung des Evangelium Infantium."
5. See *inter alia* Cullmann, O. 1948, "Spuren einer alten Taufformel im Neuen Testament," pp. 65-73; Jeremias, J. 1958, *Die Kindertaufe in den ersten vier Jahrhunderten*, pp. 61-68; Lindemann, A. 1983, *Die Kinder und die Gottesherrschaft*, pp. 77, 97-99.
6. See *inter alia* Aland, K. 1961, *Die Säuglingstaufe im Neuen Testament und in der alten Kirche: Eine Argument a Joachim Jeremias*, pp. 67-71; Klein, G. 1970, "Jesus und die Kinder: Bibelarbeit über Markus 10, 13-16," pp. 68-69; Schweizer, E. 1975, *Das Evangelium nach Markus*, p. 112; Gnifka, J. 1979, *Das Evangelium nach Markus, 2. Teilband: Mk 8,27-16,20*, p. 81; Sauer, J. 1981, "Der ursprüngliche 'Sitz im Leben' von Mk 10, 13-16," pp. 27-29; Derrett, J.D.M. 1983, "Why Jesus blessed the children (Mk 10:13-16 par.)," pp. 1-3; Ringshausen, G. 1986, "Die Kinder der Weisheit: Zur Auslegung von Mk 10, 13-16 par.," pp. 34-42; Schmithals, W. 1986, *Das Evangelium nach Markus, Kapitel 9,2-16,18*, pp. 445-446).
7. Bultmann, R. 1964, *Die Geschichte der synoptischen Tradition*, p. 215: "das Bild wird zur Sache selbst."
8. Sauer, J. 1981, "Der ursprüngliche 'Sitz im Leben' von Mk 10, 13-16," pp. 41-45.
9. See Derrett, J.D.M. 1983, "Why Jesus blessed the children (Mk 10:13-16 par.)," pp. 1-2; Ringshausen, G. 1986, "Die Kinder der Weisheit: Zur Auslegung von Mk 10, 13-16 par.," p. 41.
10. Cf. Klein, G. 1970, "Jesus und die Kinder: Bibelarbeit über Markus 10, 13-16," p. 59; Pesch, R. 1977, *Das Markusevangelium, 2. Teil: Kommentar zu Kap. 8,27-16:20*, p. 131; Sauer, J. 1981, "Der ursprüngliche 'Sitz im Leben' von Mk 10, 13-16," p. 41; and

11. In Greek: *prosfē/rw*.
12. See Mk 2:4 par.; Mt 4:24 = 14:35; Mt 8:16 par.; Mk 1:32 (*e1feron*); Mt 9:2 par.; Mk 2:3 (*fe/rontej*); Mt 9:32; 12:22; 17:16 par.; Mk 9:17 (*h1negka*); cf. also *fe/rw*: Mk 1:32; 2:3 par.; Lk 15:18; Mk 7:32; Mk 8:22; Mk 9:19-20 par.; Mt 17:17; Ac 5:16; exceptions: Mt 18:24; Lk 23:14.
13. In Greek: *a3ptomai*.
14. Mk 1:41 par.; Mt 8:3/Lk 5:13; Mk 3:10 par.; Lk 6:19; Mk 6:56 par.; Mt 14:36; Mk 5:27-28 par.; Mt 9:20-21/Lk 8:44; Mk 5:30-31 par.; Lk 8:45-46; Mk 7:33; 8:22 (*i3na au0tou= a3yhtai*); Mt 8:15; 9:29; 17:7 (with reference to raising from the dead); Mt 20:34; Lk 7:14; 8:47; 22:51; exception: Lk 7:39).
15. In Greek: *e0pitima/w*.
16. Mk 1:25 par.; Lk 4:35; Mk 4:39 par.; Mt 8:26/Lk 8:24; Mk 9:25 par.; Mt 17:18/Lk 9:42; Mk 10:48 par.; Mt 20:31/Lk 18:39; cf. also Lk 4:39 and the “Markan seal of confession” in Mk 3:12 par., Mt 12:16/Lk 4:41; outside the framework of the miracle story one finds the word *e0pitima/w*, as far as the synoptic gospels are concerned, only in the Petrine confession in Mk 8:30, 32, 33 par., and in the Lukan redaction in inter alia Lk 17:3, but also in the Lukan material in Lk 19:39 and 23:40.
17. In Greek: *kwlu/w*.
18. I am saying this despite what Oscar Cullmann and Joachim Jeremias, among others, inferred from Acts 8:36. A form of baptism could be expected to be formulated interrogatively, while, in the synoptic gospels, *kwlu/ete* occurs only as an imperative or as an assertion in the indicative (cf. Klein, G. 1970, “Jesus und die Kinder: Bibelarbeit über Markus 10, 13-16,” p. 69; Pesch, R. 1977, *Das Markusevangelium, 2. Teil: Kommentar zu Kap. 8,27-16:20*, p. 132; Sauer, J. 1981, “Der ursprüngliche ‘Sitz im Leben’ von Mk 10, 13-16,” p. 41).
19. “Es ist ganz evident, daß im Hintergrund dieser Perikope Probleme urchristlicher Wunderpraxis stehen. *Mh\ kwlu/ete* erweist sich somit als ein Terminus, der Raum dieser Praxis zumindest nicht unüblich war” (Sauer, J. 1981, “Der ursprüngliche ‘Sitz im Leben’ von Mk 10, 13-16,” p. 42). 1 Corinthians 14:39 is the only place in the New Testament where the expression *mh\ kwlu/ete* occurs outside the referential framework of the “Wunderpraxis.”
20. In Greek: *e0nagkali/zomai*.

21. “Kybele schließt die kleine Kinder in die Arme [e0nagk.] u. heilt sie [sw/ | zw], wenn sie krank sind” (see Arndt, W. F & Ginrich, F.W. 1957, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, p. 261. According to Sauer, J. 1981, “Der ursprüngliche ‘Sitz im Leben’ von Mk 10, 13-16,” p. 42, it is therefore also possible “daß e0nagkali/samenoj, auch in Mk 10:16 eine Heilgestus beschreibt.”
22. In Greek: ti/qhmi ta\j xei=raj e0p 0.... or e0piti/qhmi ta\j xei=raj....
23. Sauer, J. 1981, “Der ursprüngliche ‘Sitz im Leben’ von Mk 10, 13-16,” p. 42. Cf. Mk 8:23; Mk 5:23 par.; Mt 9:18; Mk 6:5; 7:32; 8:23, 25; 16:18; Lk 4:40; 13:13; Ac 28:8; cf. also Ac 3:7.
24. Schmithals, W. 1986, *Das Evangelium nach Markus, Kapitel 9,2-16,18*, pp. 447-448.
25. Van Selms, A. 1954, *Marriage & Family Life in Ugarit Literature*, p. 90.
26. Stockton, I. 1983, “Children, Church and Kingdom,” p. 90.
27. See Dibelius, M. 1961, s.v. “Seneca, Lucius Annaeus,” *RGV*, V, pp. 1694-1695.
28. See Boswell, J.E. 1984, “*Exposito* and *Oblatio*: The Abandonment of Children and the Ancient and Medieval family,” p. 21 note 26; cf. Rawson, B, 1986, “Children in the Roman ‘Familia’,” pp. 170-200.
29. *Loeb Classical Library* 1965, s.v. “The Epistle to Diognetus,” in *The Apostolic Fathers*, II, pp. 358-361; cf. Wilson, S. 1988, “Infanticide, Child Abandonment, and Female Honour in Nineteenth-century Corsica,” p. 763 note 4.
30. In Greek: a0ll 0 ou0 r9i/ptousi ta\ gennome/na.
31. See Liddel, H.G. & Scott, R. 1961, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, p. 1572.
32. See Boswell, J.E. 1984, “*Exposito* and *Oblatio*,” pp. 10-33; Countryman, L.W. 1989, *Dirt, Greed and Sex*, p. 22.
33. Scrimshaw, S.C.M. 1984, “Infanticide in Human Populations: Societal and Individual Concerns,” p. 448.
34. Daly. M & Wilson, M. 1984, “A Sociobiological Analysis of Human Infanticide,” p. 489.
35. Daly. M & Wilson, M. 1984, “A Sociobiological Analysis of Human Infanticide,” p. 492.
36. Scrimshaw, S.C.M. 1984, “Infanticide in Human Populations,” p. 443; Cimok, F [1993] 1998, *Pergamum*, p. 84; White Fathers – Saint Anne s.a., “Bethesda: St. Anne” .
37. Cf. M H I Galaal, M.H.I., in Daly. M & Wilson, M. 1984, “A Sociobiological Analysis of Human Infanticide,” p. 494.
38. Lactantius, *Institutiones Divinae* 5.9.
39. Justinus Martyr, 1 *Apologia* 27.

40. Clemens Alexandrinus, *Paedagogus* 3.3.
41. Seneca, *Controversiae* 10.4.16.
42. Tertullianus, *Ad Nationes* 1.3.16.
43. In Greek: ε) κτi / qemai / ε) κqε / sij.
44. Cf. Deroux, M.P. 1927, “Les origines de l’oblation benedictine,” pp. 1-16, 81-113, 193-216.
45. Cf. Louw, J.P. & Nida, E.A. (eds.) 1988, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains*, p. 483.
46. Cf. Patte, D. 1987, *The Gospel according to Matthew: A Structural Commentary on Matthew’s Faith*, pp. 23-28, with regard to Joseph’s name of “Son of David” in the Gospel of Matthew, as well as the designation of “God-with-us” given to Jesus.
47. Horst, F. 1961, s.v. “Segen und Fluch,” in *RGG*, V, p. 1650, refers in this connection to Ruth 4:13-16.
48. Louw, J.P. & Nida, E.A. (eds.) 1988, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, p. 531. The Greek expression used in Acts 13:36 is: prosete/qh pro\j tou\j pate/raj au0tou=.
49. See especially the comprehensive study by Stager, L.E. & Wolff, S.R. 1984, “Child Sacrifice at Carthage: Religious Rite or Population Control? Archaeological Evidence Provides Basis for a New Analysis,” pp. 31-51, in this regard. Cf. also Thompson, Y. 1986, “A Missing Hexateuchal Narrative Concerning Child Sacrifice,” pp. 38-42; Countryman, L.W. 1989, *Dirt, Greed and Sex*, p. 27 note 11.
50. See Louw, J.P. & Nida, E.A. (eds.) 1988, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, p. 728.
51. Boswell, J.E. 1984, “*Exposito* and *Oblatio*,” p. 19.
52. Schaberg, J. 1987, *The Illegitimacy of Jesus*, pp. 55-56.
53. Sirach 23:22-26; translation by Trenchard, Ben Sira’s View, p. 95; cf. Schaberg, J. 1987, *The Illegitimacy of Jesus*, p. 217 note 154.
54. Wisdom of Solomon 4:3-6 [RSV]; cf. Schaberg, J. 1987, *The Illegitimacy of Jesus*, p. 56.
55. See *inter alia* Epstein, L.M. 1942, *Marriage Laws in the Bible and Talmud*.
56. See *inter alia* Bossman, D. 1979, “Ezra’s Marriage Reform: Israel Redefined,” 32-38.
57. Cf. Bakon, S. 1981, “Jacob, Man of Destiny: His Youth,” p. 119; Meijer, A. & Meijer, A. 1984, “Matriarchal Influence in the Bible: A Medical-Psychological Study,” p. 817; Goodnick, B. 1988, “The Saga of the Firstborn,” pp. 170-178; Weaver, P.R.C. 1986,

58. See Funk, R.W. & Hoover, R.W. 1993, *The Five Gospels: The Search for the Authentic Words of Jesus*, p. 88.
59. “There are three quite different versions of this story, which appear to derive from three independent sources: Mark [14:3-9], Luke [7:36-50], John [12:1-8]. Matthew has simply copied Mark, so his version provides no additional information. The affinity of these stories with one another is unmistakable. Yet the differences suggest that the story (or stories) had a long and complicated history...The Fellows of the Jesus Seminar were of the opinion that the original form of the story is beyond recovery. As a consequence, they also doubted that any of the words preserved by the evangelists could be attributed to Jesus” (Funk, R.W. & Hoover, R.W. 1993, *The Five Gospels: The Search for the Authentic Words of Jesus*, pp. 115-116).
60. *Transvaler* 25 June 1991, “Vroue maak beswaar,” p. 7 (my translation from the original Afrikaans).
61. *The Pretoria News* 20 September 1994, “Girl killed in ‘crime of honour’,” p. 4.
62. Countryman, L.W. 1989, *Dirt, Greed and Sex*, p. 160.
63. Horsley, R.A. 1979. “Josephus and the Bandits,” pp. 37-63.
64. *Scholars Version*, in Miller, R.J. 1992, *The Complete Gospels: Annotated Scholars Version*, p. 86.
65. Cf. Theissen, G. [1974] 1983, *The Miracle Stories of the Early Christian Tradition*, p. 249.
66. See *inter alia* Neusner, J. 1973, *From Politics to Piety*, pp. 15-26.
67. Cf. Elliott, J.H. 1991, “Temple versus Household in Luke-Acts: A Contrast in Social Institutions,” p. 100.
68. *Scholars Version*, in Miller, R.J. 1992, *The Complete Gospels*, p. 65.
69. See Crossan, J.D. 1996, *Who is Jesus?*, p. 84.
70. Theissen, G. 1983, *The Miracle Stories of the Early Christian Tradition*, p. 251.
71. Funk, R.W. & Hoover, R.W. 1993, *The Five Gospels*, p. 139.
72. Funk, R.W. & Hoover, R.W. 1993, *The Five Gospels*, pp. 289-291.
73. See Theissen, G. 1983, *The Miracle Stories*, p. 207.
74. Theissen, G. 1983, p. 207.
75. Theissen, G. 1983, p. 249.

76. Saldarini, A.J. 1988, *Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees in Palestinian Society: A Sociological Approach*, p. 44.
77. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* 2a.2ae.88.9, 2a.2ae.189.5, 2a.2ae.189.5.2; *Quodlibetales* 3.5.11.12, 4.12.23, 4.12.23.7.
78. See Boswell, J.E. 1984, “*Exposito and Oblatio*,” p. 29.
79. See Boswell, J.E. 1984, p. 14 note 4.
80. See Boswell, J.E. 1984, p. 16.
81. See Boswell, J.E. 1984, p. 17.
82. See Boswell, J.E. 1984, p. 25.
83. Schmithals, W. 1986, *Das Evangelium nach Markus, Kapitel 9,2-16,18*, pp. 447-448.
84. Cf. Countryman, L.W. 1989, *Dirt, Greed and Sex*, pp.167-168.
85. Veitch, J. 1997, *The Birth of Jesus: History or Myth?*, p. 11.
86. Veitch, J. 1997, *The Birth of Jesus*, p. 11-12.
87. Veitch, J. 1997, p. 13.
88. Veitch, J. 1997, p. 17 (my emphasis).
89. Cf. Horsley, R.A. 1989, *The Liberation of Christmas: The Infancy Narratives in Social Context*, p. 182 note 42.
90. Cf. *inter alia* Wenham, D. 1982, “A Note on Mark 9:33-42/Matt. 18:1-6/Luke 9:46-50,” pp. 113-118; Robbins, V.K. 1983, “Pronouncement Stories and Jesus’ Blessing of the Children: A Rhetorical Approach,” pp. 54-55.
91. Yaghjian, L. 1992, “How Shall We Read? A Preface to Matthew’s Protocols of Reading,” p. 3.
92. See Tromp, J. 1993, *The Assumption of Moses: A Critical Edition with Commentary*, pp. 17, 211-213.
93. Scrimshaw, S.C.M. 1984, “Infanticide in Human Populations: Societal and Individual Concerns,” p. 445.
94. Cf. Malina, B.J. 1983, *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology*, pp. 28-55.
95. Cf. Malina, B.J. 1983, *The New Testament World*, p. 33.
96. Cf. Josephus, *Bellum Judaicum* I.201-203.
97. Josephus, XIV.14.4; *Bellum Judaicum* II.14.4.
98. See Botha, P.J.J. 1995, “Herodes die Grote,” pp. 1015-1016. See also the reference to “the hated Idumaeen” in Brandon, S.G.F. 1967, *Jesus and the Zealots: A Study of the Political Factor in Primitive Christianity*, p. 27.



99. Josephus, *Antiquitates Judaicae* XV.8.1b; *Bellum Judaicum* C.21.1; Cf. Botha, P.J.J. 1995, “Herodes die Grote,” pp. 1012.
100. Cf. Patte, D. 1987, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, p. 19.
101. Malina, B.J. 1983, *The New Testament World*, p. 53.
102. Malina, B.J. 1983, *The New Testament World*, p. 44.
103. Malina, B.J. 1991, “Is There a Circum-Mediterranean Person? Looking for Stereotypes,” p. 71.
104. Cf. Patte, D. 1987, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, p. 23-28.
105. Cf. Brown, R.E. 1977, *The Birth of the Messiah*, pp. 125-128. Beare, F.W. 1981, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, p. 68, puts it as follows: “Since he [Joseph] plans to divorce her [Mary] at all events, he must be taking it for granted that she is guilty of unchastity.”
106. Patte, D. 1987, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, p. 27.
107. Beare, F.W. 1981, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, p. 68.
108. In Greek: *splagxni/zomai* (= “to have compassion”); *e0lee/w* (= “to have mercy”).
109. Duling, D.C. 1991, “Mathhew’s Son of David in Social Science Perspective: Kinship, Kingship, and Magic,” p. 10.
110. Pilch, J.J. 1988, “Understanding Biblical Healing: Selecting the Appropriate Model,” p. 60; cf. also Pilch, J.J. 1991, “Sickness and Healing in Luke-Acts,” pp. 181- 210.
111. Dickemann, M. 1984, “Concepts and Classification in the Study of human Infanticide: Sectional Introduction and Some Cautionary Notes,” pp. 429-230.
112. Dickemann, M. 1975. “Demographic Consequences of Infanticide in Man”; cf. also Scrimshaw, S.C.M. 1984, “Infanticide in Human Populations: Societal and Individual Concerns,” p. 440.
113. See Malina, B.J. 1983, *The New Testament World*, p. 34.
114. Schaberg, J. 1987, *The Illegitimacy of Jesus: A Feminist Theological Interpretation of the Infancy Narratives*, p. 74.
115. Countryman, L.W. 1989, *Dirt, Greed and Sex*, p. 188. Likewise, John Riches, 1980, *Jesus and the Transformation of Judaism*, pp. 132-133, connects the anti-patriarchal tendency with Jesus’ disregard for the politics of holiness.
116. Cf. Countryman, L.W. 1989, *Dirt, Greed and Sex*, p. 189.
117. Schaberg, J. 1987, *The Illegitimacy of Jesus*, p. 77.



## 7 ~ THE JESUS OF HISTORY AND THE JESUS OF FAITH

### The Metaphor “Son-of-God” and its Hellenistic-Semitic and Greco-Roman Background

In light of the central aspect of the book, the focus of chapter 7 is on the transition between Jesus’ *foundational experience* (in German: *Existenzverständnis* or *Anfangserfahrung*<sup>1</sup>) of being child of God to the confession of Christians (in German: *Glaubensbekenntnis*<sup>2</sup>) in a metaphor that Jesus is God’s son. This movement simultaneously represents the elements of *distanciation* (in German: *Entfernung*) and *engagement* (in German: *Aneignung*<sup>3</sup>). It is part and parcel of the *telling* and *showing* process in which Jesus is seen, on the one hand, as the defender of the fatherless and the notion, on the other hand, found in the Christian tradition, that God adopted people as God’s children.

In chapter 8, my concern is the transition from the historical Jesus to the origins of the church. I pose five statements in this regard. One concerns the historicity of the circle of “The Twelve.” I argue that Jesus did not create such a circle but that it was a notion used by the followers of Jesus to claim positions of power analogous to the twelve patriarchs of Israel. This phenomenon shows that the earliest post-Easter Jesus movement already was inclined to *distanciate* themselves from Jesus’ cause without even

knowing it. Therefore, the faith assertions of the post-Easter church also should be critically tested. I am referring to this process as *engaged hermeneutics*. In chapter 9, I demonstrate that the experience of being child of God, and the confessional assertion that Jesus is God's "adopted" child, form the nucleus of the notion that Jesus is both divine and human. This notion eventually led to the development of the dogma of the two natures of Jesus. I *deconstruct* this dogma to *affirm* the significance of the metaphor of being child of God. In the last chapter, the merit to reflect once more on the continued importance of the quest for the historical Jesus will be considered from the perspective of engaged hermeneutics.

Chapter 7 focuses on the roots of the dogma of the "two natures" of Jesus. This tenet can be traced back to Paul's thinking and to Johannine literature. Its foundation, however, is to some extent Jesus' invocation of God as "Father" (*Abba*). The expression "Abba, Father" is used by Jesus, as recorded in Mark 14:36. Matthew (26:39) contains only the expression "my Father," while Luke (22:42) has "Father." This invocation does not have exactly the same connotation as when Paul had Christians address God in this way. However, what Jesus and Paul do have in common is that "children of God" are not necessarily biological children of Abraham, as thought conventionally by the Israelites. By means of the expression "adoption as child," Paul gives expression to the conviction that believers are not by nature children of God, but on the basis of their being bound to Jesus, the Son-of-God.

The concept of adoption as God's child is a recurrent theme in Greco-Roman and Hellenistic-Semitic literature. I, therefore, present a few sidenotes for how the concept "son-of-god" was used in Greco-Roman and Hellenistic-Semitic literature.<sup>4</sup> First, I

mention that the second-century Roman philosopher Celsus accused the Christians of unjustifiably comparing Jesus' life story with the heroic figures in Greco-Roman literature. Perseus was the first in the series mentioned by Celsus. Second, I retell Ovid's story of the virginal conception of Perseus. Third, I will discuss the parallels between Paul's notion of adoption and Seneca's references to Hercules being adopted by Zeus. The focus will then shift to the Pauline notion of believers being adopted as children of God.

In Philippians 2:9-11, Paul uses the designation "Lord" (Κυ/ριος) to describe the crown of Jesus' redemptive work: "God gave him...the name which is above each name, so that in the name of Jesus...each tongue would confess: 'Jesus Christ is *Kyrios*'." Similarly, the designation "son" is a metaphorical label with which the resurrected Jesus is addressed. Thus we read, for instance, in Hebrews (1:4) that the "most excellent name" that God gave the exalted Jesus and that lifted him above the angels, was the designation "son." In the Shepherd of Hermas (Sim. IX,14, 5) we learn that the "name Son-of-God is firm and supports the whole world."<sup>5</sup>

The two names "Kyrios" and "Son-of-God" belong together.<sup>6</sup> Son-of-God refers to the divine nature of the *Kyrios* who is honored as a cultic figure. Inversely, *Kyrios* refers to the status and function of the figure called Son-of-God. It was in Hellenistic Christianity that the label *Kyrios* was first given to Jesus to express his divine nature. Previously, Jesus was already called *Kyrios* by Aramaic-speaking Christians, but for another reason. In the synagogue, teachers of the law were called "Rabbi." The Aramaic-speaking Christians, influenced by Greek idiom, translated the word "Rabbi" with "Kyrios" and referred to Jesus as such, as can be seen, for example, in Matthew.<sup>7</sup>

Hellenistic Christians used the label “Son-of-God” as part of their missionary message. In the First Testament, this name referred to a messianic king. Now it attained a new meaning. For Christians today it seems that “Son-of-God” applies uniquely to Jesus in an ontological way. However, in the Hellenistic environment, it was commonly used for people who were considered divine. At this stage, the metaphor “Son-of-God” started referring to the divine being of Jesus. Jesus was distinguished from the human sphere on the basis of his divine nature. The metaphor thus pertained to a confessional function. With the confessional metaphor “Son-of-God” the claim was being made that Jesus had a divine origin and was filled with divine power.

To Christians embedded within the Israelite tradition, the idea that a messianic figure could be represented as being subject to suffering was offensive. However, to Hellenistic Christianity, such a representation regarding a son-of-god figure was not an obstacle, but a “mystery.”<sup>8</sup> This paradoxical mystery consisted of the fact that a figure, divine in being, appeared in human form and accepted the fate of suffering as a human. This can be seen in the Christ hymn quoted by Paul in Philippians 2:6-11. For them the divine origin and power of the Son-of-God were not belied by his humanness.

One way in which divinity and humanness came together was in a child conceived through sexual intercourse of a deity with a mortal human. This is a legacy from the Greek tradition. The lives of people who were born as a result of such a union were characterized by heroic acts and spiritual contributions to humanity—benefactions far beyond ordinary human measure.<sup>9</sup> Many divine figures were known in the Hellenistic period. Such a figure claimed to be “son-of-god.” Some of them were honored in cults. In these cults, the combination of divinity and humanness was not an issue. The

prevalent view in Greek thought was that the soul of each person was a “divine entity.”<sup>10</sup> From the perspective of Greek mythology, interest was not as much in the ontological interrelationship of someone’s divine nature and human nature, as in later Greek metaphysical philosophy, but more in the content of the divine figure’s life (βίος) that was characterized by charismatic phenomena and miracles.<sup>11</sup>

Another way in which divinity and humanness came together during the time when the New Testament was written was the idea of “sons-of-gods.” This was a legacy from eastern Hellenism and, initially, from ancient Eastern mythology. The sons-of-gods were honored in the cults of the mystery religions. They were taken to be savior figures of redemption. The myths about them recounted how they suffered the human fate of death but again rose from death (cf., e.g., the dying and rising Osiris myth in Egypt). Worshippers could partake in the redemption if they experienced the god’s death and resurrection in the form of rites. The origin of these divine figures lies in ancient fertility religions.

The figure of the redeemer in Gnostic myth is related to these “mysteries.” Some of the Christians who came from the heathen world made the birth and death of Jesus comprehensible by making use of the concepts “sonship-of-God” and the “Gnostic redemptive figure” who comes from above. Thus we read that the writer(s) of the Gospel of John say(s) the following about Jesus: “Such is God’s love for the *cosmos*: He gave his ‘only begotten’ Son” (Jn 3:16). The Johannine school has Jesus say on the eve of his death: “I was born for this and entered the *cosmos* for this” (Jn 18:37). In 1 John 3:16 we read: “In this way we know what love is: that man [Jesus Christ, the Son-of-God – cf. 1 Jn 3:23], gave his life for our sake.” In this kind of statement we see that the paradoxical

concept of a divine being (a “son-of-god”) who became human and suffered a human fate may be related to the Gnostic idea of a redeemer who entered from above into the *cosmos* here below. The conceptualization of Jesus as Son-of-God varied in Hellenistic Christian circles, depending on which tradition—that of the Greek mythological or that of the Eastern mythological-Gnostic “son-of-god”—more greatly influenced it.

The synoptic gospels in essence represent the first type (the Greek tradition) insofar as they represent Jesus as the Son-of-God who reveals his divine authority.<sup>12</sup> This is a mode of representation that fit into that part of Christian thought that was determined by Israelite views. Within this structure, the “power” manifested in the life of the divine figure is attributed to the Divine Spirit. This is a phenomenon that, according to Hellenistic interpretations, also appeared in the lives of First-Testament “holy men of God,” like David and the prophets. To those Christians influenced by Israelite thinking, this served as an analogy for their confession that the Christ was the Son-of-God. The faith assertion found in the Markan report about Jesus’ baptism can be seen as an illustration of this conviction.<sup>13</sup>

In the first type of the combination of the divine and human, the divine figure was a miracle worker filled with the Divine Spirit. According to the second type (Eastern mythology), Jesus was seen as the preexisting Son-of-God who became human. Paul (like John) takes this notion as his point of departure. The pre-Pauline Christ hymn (Plp 2:6-11) also indicates that Paul was not the first person to have imported this idea into Christian thought. It is a pre-Christian concept that is found in the writings of Greek-speaking Israelites.<sup>14</sup> Paul, therefore, did not see Jesus as a miracle worker.<sup>15</sup> In a certain sense, these two types were mutually exclusive.



These two “christologies” were combined at a later (post-New Testament) stage. In this time, the New-Testament writings were used for reflection. Both types were represented in the various New-Testament texts. The synoptic gospels portray Jesus Son-of-God as a miracle worker. The other type is found in the Pauline and Johannine literature. Church fathers combined these two (incompatible) types in their homilies and writings. Ignatius seemingly had a sense of this incompatibility. Therefore, he referred to the virginity of Mary, her falling pregnant, and the death of the *Kyrios*, as “three enigmas” (“mysteries”).<sup>16</sup> He was probably also aware of the paradox found in the second type (the preexistent christology).

On the periphery of the New Testament, a third type can be found. In this type a preexistent divine figure was co-creator of the *cosmos*.<sup>17</sup> For Gnostics, however, the *cosmos*, because of its transience and corruption, could not possibly be the realm of the loving God (the Father of Jesus). The genesis of the *cosmos* is to be sought in the creating work of the God (witnessed to in the First Testament) who is to be distinguished from the Father of Jesus. Therefore, in relation to their witness of Jesus, Gnostic Christians tried to get rid of First-Testament elements. They denied that God’s son could take on human form.

In the polemics of Ignatius against the Gnostics, in his letter to the Ephesians (19:1), Ignatius combined all three types. With the first type he refuted the Gnostic heresy that a “Creator-God” (revealed in the First Testament) could not possibly be the Father of Jesus. In this first type, Greek mythology intertwined with First-Testament features regarding the “holy men of God” who performed charismatic deeds. With the second type, namely that the preexistent “Son-of-God” took on human fate, Ignatius

refuted the Gnostic idea (that functioned within the sphere of the third type) that God could not associate with perishable humanness.

These polemics, employing the metaphor “Son-of-God,” originated from various cultural backgrounds and formed the basis for confessional creeds that were used as the building blocks for the formation of the fourth-century ontologic-metaphysical dogma of the two natures (divine and human) of Jesus. It is clear that this is a long way from Jesus’ foundational experience (*Anfangserfahrung*) of being child of God and, because of this experience, became the defender of the fatherless and subverter of conventional wisdom. He who proclaimed unmediated access to God now became the mediator—the iconoclast became a cultic icon as a result of the combination of two traditions (the Israelite and the Greek). The following statement by Robert Funk<sup>18</sup> is a good summary of this complexity:

The paradox of the dead god represents the marriage of the imageless tradition of Israel with the iconic mentality of the Graeco-Roman world. For descendents of Abraham, no one has ever seen God, and God cannot be pictured. For the Greeks, to consort with the gods was an everyday matter, and it was commonplace to make images of every imaginable deity. For hellenized Christians, Jesus the iconoclast became Christ the icon. Because Christianity has a twin heritage its ancestors are both Jews and Greeks it has never quite made up its mind whether it is iconic or iconoclast.

The intention of the metaphor “son-of-god,” applied to Jesus in the New Testament ,according to his experience of being child of God, was to convey unmediated access to God. This metaphor functioned in two spheres, that of divine origin and of divine power. In the first type the divine pertains to the miraculous birth of the son-of-

god. In the second the son-of-god was preexistent and became human. In the first divine power was the result of the miraculous birth. Some of these traditions represented the mother of the son-of-god as a virgin. For instance, Perseus was born from the union of the virgin Danae and Zeus. Other traditions placed no emphasis on the virginity or otherwise of the woman. Examples are Coronis and Alkmena. Coronis was impregnated by Apollo and her unborn child, Asclepius, was torn out of his mothers' womb by Apollo to be reared as a deified diviner and "medicine-man." Hercules was born from the union of the married woman Alkmena and Jupiter. Both traditions, however, placed the emphasis on the benefactions and heroic deeds of the son-of-god. In the second type the divine power of the son-of-god manifested in his victory over death.

In the first type, intermediary figures like angels and the Divine Spirit played a role in the life of a divine figure. Against this background the "holy men of God" in the Israelite tradition were represented as having been filled with the Spirit of God, something that would have occurred either at birth, or at their "adoption as sons-of-god" which was not necessarily represented as having occurred at birth. We have seen that Paul did not take up the tradition of Jesus as the miracle-working son-of-god. We can assume, in light of what Paul says in Philippians 2:7-8 and 2 Corinthians 8:9 about the self-humiliation of the preexistent Christ, that Paul did not view the miracle stories about Jesus as being reconcilable with his (Paul's) gospel. The miracle narratives represented Jesus as someone with divine power, while, according to Paul, Jesus' deeds were characterized not by power but by weakness and vulnerability even upon his death on the cross. In Romans 1:3-4, Paul related that Jesus' preexistent sonship was manifested in

the resurrection events. A few years later, Mark attested to Jesus' "adoption as "Son-of-God" on the basis of the work of the Spirit of God in the life of Jesus.<sup>19</sup>

Mark, like Paul, did not relate this status as "Son-of-God" to a divine birth. For Mark, Jesus was declared Son-of-God at his baptism, which is to say at the beginning of Jesus' activity as miracle worker when he was filled with the Divine Spirit. Some years later, Luke, who used Mark as a source, took over the tradition of fulfillment with the Spirit that occurred with the baptism of Jesus. Luke, however, saw Jesus' adoption as Son-of-God as already anticipated in the story of Jesus' virginal conception on the basis of the work of the Spirit of God.

In chapter 4 where I discussed the Joseph-trajectory, I mentioned that the divine births in the mythological narratives of the gods and the emperor cult form the background against which Luke (as a sophisticated Greek) represented the birth of Jesus (and the ascension) in light of the hellenistically interpreted First-Testament traditions concerning the "holy men of God." Matthew, chronologically the third literary witness within the synoptic tradition, related Jesus' being filled with the Spirit (as did Luke) to Jesus' role as the Messiah and as the apocalyptic Child of Humanity. The "adoption as son-of-god" theme was related by Matthew to the motif of the holy marriage into which Joseph, on the basis of a divine intervention, entered with an impure, pregnant Mary. We have seen that a similar motif is found in the First-Testament pseudepigraphic document Joseph and Asenath.

John stands outside of the synoptic tradition and, like Paul, represented the second type. This second type of "sonship-of-god" of which traces are to be found in the New Testament, emphasizes an anomaly, a paradox. Here the point of departure is the

assumption that a preexistent figure, equal in status to God (cf. Jn 1:1-2), took upon himself the fate of being completely human. A normal, natural birth was one way in which this complete participation in humanness was represented (cf. Gl 4:4 and Jn 1:14). In the Gospel of John (3:5-6; 7-8), the brothers of Jesus and bystanders saw him as somebody completely Galilean. Both Paul and John proclaimed something at which, paradoxically, Judeans took offense: namely that the preexistent Son-of-God was born in the shape of an insignificant human, and also died as one. However, in this apparent anomaly the divine redemptive events lie hidden. John portrayed this redemption as the suspense resulting from the fact that people born naturally could, on the basis of sharing in Jesus as the only begotten Son-of-God, also be born out of the Spirit of God and could therefore be designated children of God. More or less, the same idea also occurs in Paul. As far as Paul is concerned, people were, on the basis of sharing in the fate and suffering of the preexistent Son-of-God, adopted as children of God.

As said, parallel stories of both types (miraculous birth and victory over death) were well known in the first century and it comes as no surprise that both traditions were applied to Jesus. An example of the first type (virginal conception) is the story of Perseus. The story of the birth, death, resurrection, and ascension of Hercules is a combination of both types.

### **Ovid's Perseus**

The mythological legend of Perseus is a model of a fatherless son becoming a hero. This story is told in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.<sup>20</sup> According to the myth, Perseus was

the abandoned son of Danae by Zeus. Danae was the daughter of King Acrisius of Argos. The king was warned by prophecy that a son born to his daughter would kill him. So, he shut her away in a brazen tower. (According to another version, it was in an underground chamber.) There through a narrow window Zeus went to her in the form of a shower of gold and she became pregnant. Danae called her son Perseus. In an act of dynastic politics, Acrisius enclosed the son and his mother in a chest and set it afloat on the sea. Acrisius' name means "ill judgment" and Perseus means "the destroyer."

Earlier in this study I mentioned that cultural-anthropological studies show that resource competition among individuals and families in preindustrial societies, that is, competition for other valuables besides land and geopolitical power, was one of the reasons for infanticide.<sup>21</sup> Acrisius was threatened by the oracle, he denied his vocation of fatherhood, and he absented himself from the child Zeus provided. It is ironic that the very attempt to make sure an oracle's prediction would not come true caused it to happen as foretold. By getting rid of a male heir, Acrisius weakened his line and thereby harmed himself.<sup>22</sup>

Zeus was the "god of illegitimacy," and appeared whenever what was "legitimate" needs to be called into question. (See, e.g., the story of the infidelity of Coronis after she was impregnated by Apollo, son of Zeus, and Zeus who interfered to safeguard Coronis who was destined to die on a funeral pyre as punishment.) The implication is that the divine and the human cannot be separated. Though humans do not always realize it, there is a higher meaning to their bodily existence in the world. Against human heartlessness, Zeus combines divinity and humanity. The child that results from this union will carry forth this spirit. According to the myth, Acrisius did not believe that

it was the work of Zeus. The myth gives an indication of what awaits a person who is burdened with restoring meaning and value to human life. “Every single mother and fatherless son is playing our drama of a society in need of a new father, as surely as Mary and Jesus did.”<sup>23</sup>

The chest (compare to this the “death basket” in which the endangered child, Moses, was set afloat) floated to the island of Seriphus. A fisherman named Dictys, the brother of Polydectes, the king of Seriphus, found the chest. He rescued the endangered mother and son, and gave them shelter. Polydectes tried without success to force Danae into marrying him. However, the protection of Perseus, who was growing into manhood, hindered him in his pursuit of Danae. To get rid of the son, Polydectes sent Perseus off on a quest to bring back the head of Medusa—according to Ovid, a “snaky-haired monster.” Medusa was one of three winged sisters, the Gorgons, whose heads were wreathed with serpents instead of hair. The Gorgons had the power to turn whoever looked upon them into stone.

The goddess Athena, who hated the Medusa and who was responsible for the serpented heads of the Gorgons, aided Perseus in various ways. She gave him a brightly polished shield so that he could see Medusa’s head reflected in it and not face her directly. Hermes, the son of Zeus and Maia, daughter of Atlas, was the messenger of the gods and the guide of travelers. He guided Perseus to the cave where the three Graeae (“Gray Ones”), sisters of the Gorgons, dwelt. These women were gray from birth and had among them just one tooth and one eye. Perseus seized the communal tooth and eye and would not give it back until the “Gray Ones” told him how to find certain nymphs

who could act as helpers. They had the equipment he needed to perform his commission. Thus Perseus was able to behead the Medusa.

During an eventful return trip, Perseus rescued Andromeda, the daughter of Cepheus and Cassiope, the king and queen of Joppa in Philistia. King Cepheus was of Ethiopian origin. Andromeda was sacrificed to a sea dragon to appease the furious Poseidon. After Perseus slayed the monster he was rewarded with Andromeda's hand in marriage. Ovid recounted that Cassiope and Cepheus "were filled with joy: they greeted Perseus as their son-in-law, calling him the saviour and preserver of their house." Perseus and Andromeda returned to Seriphus, where Polydectes was still harassing Danae. She, fearing Polydectes' violence, took shelter in a temple with the fisherman Dictys. There Perseus found them. Polydectes was petrified when Perseus showed him Medusa's head. The fisherman Dictys succeeded his deceased brother and he became the king of Seriphus. Perseus, Danae, and Andromeda set out for Argos. On hearing of their approach, Acrisius fled to Thessaly. (According to another version, it was Larissa.) Later Perseus went to Thessaly (or Larissa) to participate in athletic contests. These were the funeral games that the king (of Larissa) held in honor of his dead father.<sup>24</sup> At the games, Perseus threw the discus that was diverted by the wind and killed Acrisius, who was there as a spectator.

Perseus refused to succeed Acrisius as king of Argos. He established himself elsewhere as king and father of a new dynasty, the Tiryns. Thus he became the model of the destroyer of patriarchy and, at the same time, as the "father of outsiders," the savior of the endangered woman.



Perseus does not look back—but he does go back, to the beginning—by way of Seriphos to Argos...His first concern is with his mother and Polydectes: he goes back to the place in which he grew up but could not come to manhood: something must be resolved there. His second concern is with his origins, the place, the mystery of his birth. The myth doesn't clarify the extent of Perseus's knowledge of his relationship to Acrisius. It is unlikely that he knows of the oracle's prediction. There is a feeling, created by the silence of the myth, of some unknown guilty secret being tracked down. Was it maintained in silence by Danae? Perhaps Perseus has doubts about his patrimony, cannot believe his mother's story about Zeus—or whatever she has told him—suspects incest, rape, illegitimacy?<sup>25</sup>

Perseus' return to the "fatherland" can be seen as his search for kinship and ancestry. The loyalty shown to a blood-bond can be very strong, but is often betrayed. As adults, adopted and illegitimate children often attempt excessively to reconnect with the missing father or the original parents. As is often the case with such children, Perseus was proffered a kinship relationship in an imperfect way. He was thus separated from his origins—a common occurrence in times of social upheaval and restructuring.<sup>26</sup> Nevertheless, the image of Danae and Dictys in the temple is a powerful symbol. Perseus needed affirmation, which he received from the man who played a positive role in his life. Dictys, "the father in the temple,"<sup>27</sup> who had saved Perseus at birth, now became a father figure. The temple added a spiritual dimension to the qualities he brought to Perseus' life.

## Paul's Son-of-God and Seneca's Hercules

Contemporary sketches and portrayals of divine birth and/or virginal conception and adoption (for instance of Hercules, Perseus, Horus, and Priapus) were well known in the time when the New Testament was written. Among these, the figure of “Herakles” (“Hercules” to the Romans)<sup>28</sup> stands out not only because of his divine conception but also his adoption as child of Zeus when he conquered death. The concept “adopted as child of God” is also eminent in Paul’s writings. One can therefore imagine that Paul’s use of this idea was a common feature with the surrounding world.

The word “adopted as child” (υἱοθεσί/α) occurs four times in the epistles of Paul, namely in Romans 8:15; 8:23; 9:4, and Galatians 4:5. Apart from these four incidences, the word turns up only once in the remainder of the entire New Testament, in the deuterio-Pauline epistle to the Ephesians (1:5). In the epistle to the Romans, Paul used the expression against the background of his argument that the “house of Israel” was expecting God to fulfil his promises.<sup>29</sup> Paul was concerned with a “new” Israel, with people who did not necessarily physically belong to the “children of Abraham” but who nonetheless were adopted as such by God. In Galatians, too, Paul used the metaphor “inheritance” in order to refer to the reception of God’s promises. It would no longer be the physical “sons of Abraham” as “sons of God” who would inherit (Rm 9:8). *Children of God* are the people who *in Christ* have, in a fictional way, become part of Abraham’s family.

Paul called Christ the “first of many brothers” in Romans 8:29. These “brothers” [and “sisters”] are “family,” not because they are blood relatives, but because they shared

in the preexistent Son-of-God, “who made everything and gives us life” (1 Cor 8:6). They became part of “God’s family” by God’s having adopted them as God’s children. God predestined that they would conform to Christ, the preexistent Son-of-God. The precise phrase employed by Paul in Romans 8:29 is “conforming to the image of [God’s] Son.” Paul apparently used the term “first” ( $\text{πρῶτο/τόκον}$ ) to indicate that the aspect of “being the preexistent child of God” did not apply to other believers and that Christ Jesus, in this respect, was the “unique” child of God.

Some are of the opinion “that there are analogies in the ancient world that might serve as parallels or even sources for such an evaluation of Jesus.”<sup>30</sup> According to this opinion, the expression “firstborn of many brothers” is a Pauline notion of “mass deification” (apotheosis). As far as Israel is concerned, this motif of “child of God” was spread throughout the First Testament and related literature. In Israel, the “children of God” are those who physically form part of the biological “family of orientation,”<sup>31</sup> the “children of Abraham.” I will indicate that the concept “adoption as child” was also familiar to Israel and it too should be seen in light of other sociocultural motifs. The concept is not limited to Israel: it occurred widely in the ancient world. Paul’s use of the expression “adoption as child” contained connotations, the background of which could be sought in the Greco-Roman world. I subsequently consider the Hellenistic-Semitic and Greco-Roman literature.

The notion “adoption as child” occurs once in Greek mythology.<sup>32</sup> This incident concerned Hercules. In the works of Diodorus of Sicily and in the tragedies of Lucius Annaeus Seneca (*Hercules Furens* and *Hercules Oetaeus*), it is clear that this Greek hero is the biological son of Zeus. According to the myth, Zeus, who was notorious for his

escapades, disguised himself as Alkmena's husband, and begot a child. Directly after this incident, Amphitryon slept with his wife. She gave birth to twins: the son of Zeus (Hercules) and the son of Amphitryon. Amphitryon was the son of Alcaeus, who in his turn was the son of Perseus, the fruit of a virginal conception and also the doing of Zeus.<sup>33</sup> Amphitryon took Alkmena, the widow of his deceased brother Electryon, as his wife. When he found out that Alkmena was pregnant (with Hercules) he was so angry that he built a pyre and would have burned her (and Hercules) alive had Zeus not sent "two clouds" that poured water on the flames and so saved the life of the woman (and her unborn child).<sup>34</sup> Amphitryon then fulfilled his role as Hercules' adoptive father with honor.

Diodorus Siculus reinterpreted this Greek myth in his Book Four<sup>35</sup> during the first century B.C.E., circa 60-30. The entire Book Four deals with Greek mythology and with the myths relating to Hercules, among others. It is assumed that it was in Alexandria where Diodorus derived the information pertaining to these myths from a certain Dionysios of Mytilene, and that he assembled his narratives with supplementary material from the library in Alexandria.<sup>36</sup> Diodorus himself said that the reason he retold the Greek myths was that the narratives concerning the "honored heroes and demi-gods"<sup>37</sup> had such an important effect on the everyday lives of people.<sup>38</sup>

Diodorus began by telling the divine birth of Dionysos because this deity brought about great bounty for humankind.<sup>39</sup> Earlier in his work, he referred to certain "barbarians", who did not speak Greek, who claimed the significance of the "birth of this god"<sup>40</sup> for themselves. By "barbarians," he meant the Egyptians, whose god Osiris was called Dionysos by the Greeks. Diodorus wrote that the Greeks related that Cadmus took

Harmonia, the daughter of Aphrodite, as his wife and that they had a daughter called Semele. Zeus was attracted to Semele because of her beauty and had sexual intercourse with her secretly. Because he did not talk to her during their sexual intercourse, Semele believed that Zeus held her in contempt. She therefore asked him to embrace her in the same way that he embraced his wife, the goddess Hera. He then appeared to her as it befitted a god: with thunder and lightning. He embraced her, but the pregnant Semele could not endure the majesty of such a divine presence and gave birth prematurely, while she herself was destroyed by the lightning. Zeus picked up the baby and ordered Hermes to lay it down in a cave in Nusa, somewhere between Phoenicia and the Nile river, while nymphs were ordered to bring it up with the greatest possible care. Diodorus wrote that Dionysos was therefore given a name made up of Zeus (in Greek: *Dios*) and Nusa (in Greek: *Nuses*). However, this Dionysos, according to Diodorus, must not be confused with the much earlier Dionysos, son of Zeus and Persephone.<sup>41</sup>

According to Diodorus, the birth of the “earlier” Dionysos, as well as the sacrifices and honor related to it, was celebrated secretly at night because of the shame of the orgiastic beastliness it involved. This religious practice is usually referred to as the Dionysian mysteries.<sup>42</sup> The “later” Dionysos gave people the “gift of the vine.” The above-mentioned orgiastic feast was a result of confusion between the two Dionysoses. Fasting was followed by an ecstatic orgy, the slaughtering of cattle and the eating of bloody flesh. The “later” Dionysos (or Bacchus), as Diodorus related the myths told by the “ancient people,”<sup>43</sup> was under the influence of wine when he had an erotic urge and begat a son with Aphrodite. The son was named Priapus.<sup>44</sup>

Diodorus<sup>45</sup> mentioned that the Egyptians equated the birth of Priapus with the miraculous birth of Horus. Horus was the son of Isis and he was born after Isis' husband, Osiris, was murdered by the Titans.<sup>46</sup> The Isis-Osiris myth in Egypt gave rise to the practice of a phallic religion. On the island Philae (today an island in the Aswan dam), high in Upper Egypt, the temple of Isis, standing alongside the statues of emperors like Augustus and Claudius, indicates clearly the influence of the Ptolomeans and later the Romans in the Greco-Roman period.<sup>47</sup> To the western side of the temple court lies the "birth room" that contains reliefs of a papyrus marsh where, according to legend, Horus was born.<sup>48</sup> The northern wall contains a relief of Isis with the newborn Horus in her arms. This picture was an early influence on the Christian image of the Madonna and Jesus child. This can be seen in wall paintings from the Coptic period in Nubia and Egypt, which are being preserved in the Coptic Museum in Cairo.<sup>49</sup>

The Priapus cult was popular particularly in Alexandria.<sup>50</sup> The practices of a phallic religion entailed worshipping the creative power of nature as symbolized by the male sexual organ. Even though Diodorus did not mention the particulars of the Egyptian version of the birth of Priapus/Horus, he did refer to phallic religious practices in Egypt as well as to the beliefs regarding the "eye of Horus," the "evil eye," that related to these practices.<sup>51</sup>

Paul undoubtedly knew the beliefs relating to the "evil eye" well.<sup>52</sup> The apostle wrote in Galatians 3:1 (own translation): "Oh, foolish Celts, who cast the 'evil eye' on you? You before whose eyes Jesus Christ was exhibited as the crucified one"!<sup>53</sup> The practice of crucifixion in ancient times served as a deterrent to evildoers.<sup>54</sup> According to the Israelites, a wrongdoer who was hanged on such a "pole of shame" was cursed by

God (Dt 21:23). In Galatians 3:13, Paul quoted from the Greek translation of Deuteronomy in order to argue that the crucified Jesus became a curse on behalf of his followers and in this way liberated them from the curse. Paul's contemporary Seneca (1 B.C.E.-65 C.E.), in his work *Dialogi* (6:20.3), refers to the Roman practice of crucifixion and says that some victims were nailed to the cross through their genitals. This type of deed evoked a greater degree of ridicule among the passersby and onlookers.

The following case to which Josephus<sup>55</sup> referred, and which was also mentioned in 1 Maccabees 1:60-61,<sup>56</sup> is another example of the cross as a particular object of ridicule: the Syrian monarch Antiochus Epiphanes IV had parents whose children were circumcised, seriously maltreated physically, and crucified alive. The children were strangled and hung over the necks of their crucified parents. The reference in 1 Maccabees 1:60-61 also mentions that the families of the victims, and those who had carried out the circumcision, were put to death as well. Massyngbaerde Ford's commentary on this is: "The motif of shame is important here; not only do the parents suffer the public shame of crucifixion, but a mockery is made of the very mark of the covenant, namely, circumcision (cf. Gen 17)."<sup>57</sup>

Paul's words in Romans 1:16 are an indication that he was not ashamed of the gospel of "Christ Jesus." As far as he was concerned, he says in 1 Corinthians 1:18 and 23, he proclaimed the "crucified Christ" who offended Israel and was considered something foolish by Gentiles (Greeks/Romans?). In Galatians 6:11-14, Paul wrote that the "cross of Christ" resulted in the persecution of Christians, but as a "new creature" he exulted in the cross of his *Kyrios*, Jesus Christ, and described the cross as "marks" that he too must bear.<sup>58</sup> By this he meant that the cross, seen against the background of magical

beliefs, was like an amulet that wards off the harmful influence of evil.<sup>59</sup> The historiographer Herodotus<sup>60</sup> used the word “marks” as well in the context of Egyptian slaves who fled into the temple of Hercules and burned “marks,” that is, tattoos, onto their bodies as signs that they had become the property of the god Hercules and would be protected by that god.<sup>61</sup>

When, in the second century, the Greek philosopher Celsus attempted to make Christian belief as to Jesus’ deification (apotheosis) seem ridiculous, he used the nature of Jesus’ death as the deciding evidence.<sup>62</sup> According to Celsus, Jesus was a “magus” (ma/gɔj) rather than a “god” (qeɔ/j).<sup>63</sup> First Celsus ridiculed the illegitimate birth of Jesus and his humble peasant origins.<sup>64</sup> Mockingly, he wanted to know how someone with such a background could be assumed to have had a divine birth like that of Perseus, Amphion, Aecus, or Minos.<sup>65</sup> And, finally, from an Israelite perspective (cf. the first type of a divine figure as son-of-god): how could the shameful death of Jesus lead to him being called a god?<sup>66</sup> If God was his “Father,” as Jesus himself and the Christians afterwards claimed, how can one begin to imagine, Celsus<sup>67</sup> asked, referring to Dionysos and Hercules whose “father” was Zeus, that a father could let his “divine son” undergo such a death?

An interesting graffito from the third century C.E. was found on the Palatine hill in the Roman Forum.<sup>68</sup> In this cartoon, to the right of a crucified man, is a figure with the head of a donkey and a young man is pointing his arm to the “crucified donkey.” A badly written inscription reads: “Alexamenos worships God.”<sup>69</sup> Polybius<sup>70</sup> also related how, in 214 B.C.E., Achaios was killed in Sardis by the Seleucid monarch Antiochus III after Achaios had attempted to usurp the throne. He was beheaded and his body woven



into the skinned hide of a donkey, after which it was crucified in public on a pole in order to serve as a deterrent. Tertullian,<sup>71</sup> in turn, described a painting in which Jesus is ridiculed by being portrayed as a teacher in a gown and with a book in the hand, but as a figure of something with the ears of a donkey and one hooved leg.

Such satires ridiculing gods occurred regularly in Roman literature. In Seneca's tragedies about Hercules, *Hercules Furens*<sup>72</sup> and *Hercules Oetaeus*,<sup>73</sup> it is particularly evident how the triumphant "descent into Hades" of the hero correlates with his "divine birth" and how his deification is confirmed by his "ascension." Carolyn Osiek<sup>74</sup> referred to this mythical constituent as follows:

Most texts [about the relationship between resurrection beliefs and resuscitated body in the first-century Mediterranean world] are ambiguous, but some...seem to suggest a close connection, as does one Greco-Roman apotheosis story, that of Hercules by the first-century BCE, historian, Diodorus Siculus.<sup>75</sup> Hercules mounts the funeral pyre, which is consumed by a bolt of lightning. Those who came afterwards to gather the remains find no bones, and conclude that Hercules has been translated to the realm of the gods. Paul's analogies to seed sown and astral bodies in 1 Cor 15:35-44 are open to a variety of interpretations, but it does seem as if some continuity with the physical is supposed in the pneumatic transformation.

Yet in Seneca's satire on the "deification" of the emperor Claudius, which should rather be called a "pumpkinification," Seneca reached the apogee of his satiric discourse "Apocolocyntosis" when he mockingly described the "descent to Hades" of Claudius. This Latin writer-philosopher used a Greek expression derived from the Isis-Osiris myth relating to the "incarnation" of the god Osiris in the form of a bull, the annual "rebirth" of this Egyptian god: "We have discovered him; let us be glad."<sup>76</sup> Seneca's ridicule was

sharp: it is not the discovery of the “incarnated god” but the “descent to Hades,” from which one “never returns,”<sup>77</sup> that is the source of joy. Seneca clearly had his knife into Claudius. In his satire, he implied that the emperor was a “pumpkin” and that it was ridiculous to call him a god. Instead of having “immortality” (αἰθανατι/σις), the pumpkin was “yanked by the neck”<sup>78</sup> from heaven, from Olympus: a motif that suggests condemnation.<sup>79</sup>

The strong suspicion that we are dealing here with satiric wordplay on “pumpkinification” and “immortality” is derived from Seneca’s brother Lucius Junius Gallio, proconsul of Achaia in C.E. 51/52, resident in Corinth (cf. Acts 18:12-17). It is the writer Dio Cassius<sup>80</sup> who told us that Gallio was aware of his brother’s intentional wordplay. Claudius was poisoned with mushrooms, “heavenly food,” by his wife Agrippina and his son Nero (ironically the very people who requested the senate to “deify” him). According to the satirist, his death was characteristic of Claudius (blood relative of the first emperor Augustus,<sup>81</sup> but murderer of members of his own family). At his death, Seneca<sup>82</sup> mockingly said that the truth comes from the mouths of the “magi” (in Latin: *mathematicos*). His premature birth and the probable cause of his physical disablement resulted in no one announcing his birth; for this reason, his existence may be ignored and he may be delivered to death!<sup>83</sup>

Seneca<sup>84</sup> let the heroic divine figure Hercules ridicule Claudius by having Hercules say that it was only the “barbarians” in Britannia who have erected a temple for the fool and who honored him as if he was a god. Hercules asked the fool in Greek: “Who are you and from where? From what town are you and who are your parents?”<sup>85</sup> How ironic! The “divine Augustus,”<sup>86</sup> himself a blood relative of Claudius, so Seneca

continued with his ridicule, asked how it was possible that such a person could have been made a god! “Look at his body, born when the gods were angry!”<sup>87</sup>

In chapter 3 I mentioned that, according to the Gospel of John (19:9), a similar question was addressed to Jesus of Nazareth by the governor in Jerusalem, Pontius Pilate. In John’s report on the trial of Jesus by the governor, Pilate reacted to the accusation of the head priests that Jesus claimed to be a “king” and the “Son-of-God.” Pilate asked: “From where are you?” According to the Gospel of John (chapters 7-8), everyone, the brothers of Jesus as well as the bystanders, knew that Jesus was from Galilee. But what good can come from Nazareth (Jn 1:46)? Right at the beginning of John’s narrative, an aspirant disciple of Jesus first had to overcome the offense created by this paradoxical question before he could become a follower of the “Man of Nazareth.” At the beginning of his narrative (Jn 1:41, 45), the narrator identified Jesus, through his followers, as the “Son of Joseph” and the “Messiah of Israel.” The offense in question was thus overcome by acknowledging that Jesus was “Rabbi,” “the Son-of-God,” and “King of Israel” (Jn 1:49).

However, it is significant that Jesus did not respond to Pilate’s question with regard to his social identity (Jn 19:9). According to Rabbinical literature (Qiddushin 4:2), a person had to remain silent when confronted with a question as to his origins if he did not know who his father was. John’s reason for Jesus’ silence cannot be accepted as being historical. However, we are told that Jesus was more than the “Son of Joseph.” In the Gospel of John (1:18), Jesus was the preexistent Son-of-God, unique in kind,<sup>88</sup> the one best-beloved.<sup>89</sup> Jesus’ sonship was, according to the Johannine vision, related to the conviction that Jesus was the “one sent by God.” Jesus also had the authority to grant the

right to all “those who believe in his name,” an expression that is “typically and exclusively Johannine,”<sup>90</sup> to be called “children of God” (Jn 1:12). They are children “not born from sexual union, not from physical desire, and not from male willfulness: they were born of God.”<sup>91</sup> Therefore, Jesus said to Pilate: “My kingdom is not of this world” (Jn 18:36). This is the way in which John deals with the ridicule that the “Man of Nazareth” was confessed to be “God” after his shameful death.

However, in terms of the ridicule that followed the poisoning of Claudius, there were no devotees who could react apologetically to Seneca’s satire following the deification of the emperor. The fact that the appellation “pumpkin” (in Greek: *koloku/nth*; in Latin, *cucurbita*)<sup>92</sup> rather than “god” was used to name Claudius, is most probably related to the fact that the *cucurbita* has a phallic form.<sup>93</sup> This comparison places the climatic denouement of Seneca’s *Apocolocyntosis* in a particular context. We have seen that Seneca’s ridicule resulted in the ironic comparison of the “godlike human” Claudius with the “godlike human” Osiris, the symbol of phallic religious practice. This reminds us of the Priapus cult and the satires in the contemporary Greek-Roman literature that ridicule this god and his characteristic phallic representation.

It is understandable that Amy Richlin too, in her work *The Garden of Priapus: Sexuality and Aggression in Roman Humor*, related Seneca’s *Apocolocyntosis* to the *Priapea*.<sup>94</sup> The *Priapea* are poems that were either written about, addressed to, spoken by, or meant to ridicule Priapus.<sup>95</sup> Because the male sexual organ was seen as an amulet to ward off the “evil eye,” the representation of Priapus with an erection made him the “god of the garden”—the symbol of fertility and the protector of the fruits of the garden. The first references to Priapus in Greek appeared from the third century B.C.E. and were

found in literature until the sixth century C.E.. The reference to the function of Priapus as the protector of the garden already appeared in the earliest Greek *Priapea*. Furthermore, he was also honored in the Greek *Priapea* as the god of fishermen in particular. This is seen in, among other works, those of Antipater of Sidon, written around the turn of the century, as well as of Antiphilus, written during the first century C.E.<sup>96</sup> The earliest available fragment in Latin<sup>97</sup> in which a reference to Priapus appeared can be found in the comical writer Apherianus, circa 150 B.C.E. In this fragment, Priapus said: “What people say of me, namely that I was born of a long-eared parent [in other words, a donkey], is simply not true.”<sup>98</sup> Catullus (circa 84-circa 54 B.C.E.) also mentioned that Priapus came from Lampsacos and that the god was honored by fishermen.

### **Children Calling God Abba**

We got to Priapus, who wards off the *evil eye*, via our earlier sidenotes on the *eye of Horus*, the son of Isis and Osiris. We saw that Diodorus, in the run-up to his narrative of the divine adoption of Hercules, equated Osiris with Priapus. Diodorus’ material about Hercules was probably taken from the Encomium (Praises) of Hercules by Matris of Thebes.<sup>99</sup> In the course of retelling the story, Diodorus<sup>100</sup> referred to the deification of Hercules. According to the story, Zeus persuaded his wife, the goddess Hera, to *deify* Hercules by *adopting* him as his son. The jealousy of Zeus’ wife towards Hercules was therefore reversed and she symbolically “adopted him as son” to protect him against the shame of adultery and to legitimize his deification. The way she passed Hercules off as

her own son is important. Its importance lies in the fact that, according to Diodorus,<sup>101</sup> this same ceremony was still used in his time by “barbarians” when they wanted to adopt a son. According to the myth, Hera lay down on the bed, held Hercules close to her body and let him fall, through her clothes, onto the floor to imitate a real birth.<sup>102</sup> This action by which the adoption of the child was symbolized is important as it relates to the question of who the “barbarians” (who did not speak Greek) might be,<sup>103</sup> and who, according to Diodorus, practiced this ceremony in his time.

We have seen that Diodorus retold these myths during his residence in Alexandria in the first century B.C.E. and that he counted the Egyptians as being among the “barbarians.”<sup>104</sup> We are, furthermore, also aware of the stories about divine intervention at the births of the children of Israelite women like Sarah, Rachel, and Hannah.<sup>105</sup> As far as Rachel is concerned, in Genesis 30:1-8 (Septuagint) we read that she, as in the story of Sarah and Hagar (Gen 16:1-3),<sup>106</sup> offered the slave Bilhah to her husband Jacob so Bilhah could fall pregnant, give birth upon the knees of Rachel<sup>107</sup> and Rachel, “through her [Bilhah], could have a child.”<sup>108</sup> The expression “to make into a child” may be seen as being interchangeable with “to adopt as child.”<sup>109</sup>

The expression “to give birth on one’s knees” is, in a Dutch study on “adoption in ancient Israel,”<sup>110</sup> understood as constituting a reference to the assistance rendered to Bilhah during the birth of her child. When the reference of Diodorus Siculus is taken into account, however, this explanation becomes improbable. In Job (3:12a), the expression “knees to put me down on”<sup>111</sup> was used as a symbolic reference to the birth of Job. This expression was, then, also followed in the second half of the verse with “breasts to feed me.” Apart from the possibility that this is a reference to someone’s birth,<sup>112</sup> we might

also be dealing here with an adoption formula.<sup>113</sup> In Genesis 30:3 and 50:23, the expression was clearly used as an adoption formula. The reference would in this case be to a father who took the child onto his knees as an indication that he recognized the child as his own.<sup>114</sup> In chapter 4 we saw that these references in Genesis pertain to Joseph's children and grandchildren born in Egypt.

When God let Ruth fall pregnant (Ruth 4:13), Ruth was compared to Rachel, among others (Ruth 4:11). We are told that, at the birth of Obed, the "ancestor of David" (Ruth 4:17), Naomi "laid him in her lap," "and became his nurse."<sup>115</sup> As to the first part of the verse, "took the boy onto her lap," commentaries are unanimous that we are dealing with an adoption formula.<sup>116</sup> Similarly, we learn,<sup>117</sup> as far as the adoption of the two sons of Joseph born in Egypt (see again chapter 4) is concerned, that the ceremony consisted of Jacob picking up the boys and putting them "on his lap" while Joseph picked them up from there (Gen [LXX] 48:12).<sup>118</sup> Joseph, just prior to his death and funeral in Egypt, still had the opportunity to adopt his grandchildren born in Egypt "as his own." In a more literal translation, "they were born on Joseph's thighs" (Gen [LXX] 50:23).<sup>119</sup> By means of this act of adoption, he included the children, whose grandmother (Asenath) was an impure foreigner, into God's covenant with Israel.

Gerleman,<sup>120</sup> in his commentary on the adoption formula in Ruth 4:16, related Joseph's adoption of the children (the Makarites who were born outside the fatherland and who later became the forefathers of the Samaritans) and their subsequent inclusion among the people of the covenant to Naomi's adoption of Obed, the son of the foreigner Ruth, in the following way:

Boas took Ruth as his wife and she gave birth to a son. It is, however, notable that the final scene of the Ruth narrative does not focus on Ruth, but on Naomi. She [Naomi] today received a redeemer [a substituting patron]; in other words, the newly born child will become a patron and provider to her. It did not suffice, for the narrator, to let Ruth be included within the Israelite community. He takes care to give the newborn a true Israelite mother by means of a distinctive act of adoption. Naomi (therefore) presses the child to her bosom and the bystanders say: “A son has been born to Naomi.” This widespread ancient Eastern legal act is not mentioned in the First Testament. Different narratives (in the First Testament), however, indicate that this manner of adopting children was not unknown to Israel. In this way the children of Bilhah and Zilpah and Rachel and Leah were adopted (Gen 30:3-13). Traces of the same rite of “taking on the knees” [*Kniesetzungsritus*, translated above as: “laid him in her lap”] is found in the blessing of Ephraim and Manasseh (Gen 48). The sons of Makir are, similarly, born “on the knees” of Joseph; in other words, they are through this action adopted (legally) as children of Joseph.

Apart from the apologetic context in the case of Diodorus of Sicily, where the illegitimacy of Hercules was hidden so he could enjoy the right of being “son-of-god,” the Greek word for “adoption as child” ( $\alpha\upsilon\theta\iota\omicron\gamma\epsilon\sigma\iota/a$ ) occurs in ancient Greece only within a juridical context. The context here is the provision of an heir where there was none.<sup>121</sup> The same applies to Latin documents. Apart from the precaution that someone could inherit legally, the adoption appears particularly within the context of ensuring the continuation of the imperial dynasty of the Julius-Claudius family.<sup>122</sup>

Even before Augustus became the first emperor of the Roman Empire, we learn that Julius Caesar (49-44 B.C.E.) adopted Augustus (44 B.C.E.-14 C.E.), the son of the daughter (Atia) of Caesar’s son (Atius Balbus) with Iulia, as his son. Although such a grandson (the son of the daughter of the heir’s son) was recognized by the Romans as



being equal in status with the son of the heir, Augustus' adoption by Caesar probably took place in order to ensure that Augustus would be more than merely the equivalent of a son, but, in fact, a son in the full sense of the word.<sup>123</sup> In the same manner, Augustus, in order to continue the line of imperial succession within the Julius-Claudius family, adopted his corresponding grandsons, Gaius and Lucius, while Tiberius adopted his daughter's son, Germanicus, and Claudius his daughter's spouse, Nero. In the last two cases, the genealogical relation with an "own son" was therefore bypassed.

I have now reached a point of conclusion. Paul's usage of the expression "adoption as child of God" in Romans 8 is not only an example of what is merely one of a number of widely recurring motifs related to the way Christians see themselves in the New Testament: indeed, it may be described as a "root metaphor." The roots of this metaphor lie deep. According to the First Testament and intertestamental evidence, Israel regarded itself as "people of the covenant" and as "children" who were adopted by God. For Israel, this metaphor possessed an enduring power, as over many years it remained one of the basic ways by means of which the "family Israel" saw themselves as being distinguished from other nations.

As for Paul, in both his epistle to the Romans and his epistle to the Galatians, he used the metaphor "inheritance" to refer to the reception of God's promises. It is no longer the biological "sons of Abraham" as the "sons of God" who are to enjoy the inheritance (Rm 9:8), but those who, in Christ, have in a fictional way become part of Abraham's family, and therefore have become children of God. In order to express the idea that believers in Christ are not by nature *children of Abraham*, in other words *children of God*, but on the ground that they believe as Abraham believed and therefore

have become part of God's household in a non-biological way, Paul used, among others, the metaphors "children of the promise" and "adoption as child."

It is clear that Paul's use of the expression "adopted as God's child" contained connotations that can be understood against the background of the Greco-Roman and Hellenistic-Semitic world. However, biblical scholarship does not at present have much new to add regarding the usage of the term "adoption as child" in the New Testament. Research progresses not only through the dissemination of new information about a particular topic, but is served too through the development of different interpretations of well-known data. One way to do this is to indicate the extent to which Paul found the term "adoption as child" useful as a means of emphasizing his conviction that all people have equal access to the presence of God. The adjectives "all" and "equal" relate, respectively, to the values of inclusivity and egalitarianism.

I already indicated the considerable extent to which these values stand in opposition to the conventional views that were and are prevalent in the world of the inhabitants of the area surrounding the Mediterranean. These are values that can be traced back to Jesus himself and have been handed down by Christians who have communicated the cause of Jesus. When Paul explained who really constituted the true "Israel of God," he used the metaphors "Israel as family" and "adoption as child of God." By doing this he continued to transmit the "heart" of Jesus' message about children entering God's kingdom.

One can expect rhetoric related to this "alternative wisdom" to occur particularly in those New Testament documents where the tension between the conventional wisdom of the temple cult of Jerusalem and the "new" wisdom is in the foreground. In this

regard, I am thinking in particular of the authentic letters of Paul. We have seen that the New Testament reflects the tradition of the Jesus faction in Jerusalem as being in opposition to the Pauline (cf., e.g., Gl 2:2-14), even though authentic writings by representatives of the Jerusalem faction, such as James and Peter, do not occur in the New Testament. This ironic situation is sketched in the following way by Robert Funk:<sup>124</sup>

Broadly speaking, in the rivalry with Paul, Peter represents the connection with the historical Jesus. After all, Peter had been a close companion and confidant of Jesus until his arrest. Paul, on the other hand, claimed only to know the risen Jesus, the Christ of vision and spirit possession. It is perhaps ironic that it was Paul, and not Peter, who understood the heart of Jesus' parables and aphorisms.

The "heart" of Jesus' message consisted of his vision of how God is present to people. Jesus used the metaphor "Kingdom of God" as an image to communicate this message. We have seen that this is in itself shocking, as the concept "kingdom" presupposes domination and hierarchies. Those in Israelite society, who were the victims of the abuse of power by monarchs avidly looked forward to a future ideal "kingdom." In this apocalyptic and messianic kingdom, God will govern in the "heavenly Jerusalem" and "a temple will not be seen in the city, for its temple is the Lord God, the Almighty, and the Lamb" (Rev 21:22). Jesus' alternative definition of the "Kingdom of God" was not portrayed in apocalyptic symbols. God's domain was for Jesus something already present.<sup>125</sup> Paul's pronouncement that circumcision was superfluous echoed Jesus' message that God's kingdom represents an unbrokered relationship to God. His use of

the notion “adoption as child” forms part of the above-mentioned rhetoric. It is therefore also not surprising that this concept, or the matter to which it relates, occurs especially in Paul’s letters to the Galatians and Romans. The expression “blameless children of God” also occurs in Philippians 2:15 as an allusion to the concept “Israelite sonship of God” that appears in the Greek translation (Septuagint) of Deuteronomy 32:5. The same polemical tendency occurs in 2 Corinthians 6:18, where Paul quoted from a different part of the Septuagint. His argument here is that Christians constitute the “Temple of God” (2 Cor 6:16). In this case, Paul referred to them as “sons and daughters” of God the “Father.” I am focusing however on Paul’s usage of the expression “adoption as child of God” in Romans 8.

In order to express the idea that believers in Christ are not by nature “children of Abraham,” in other words “children of God,” but that they believe as Abraham believed and therefore have become part of “God’s household” in a non-physical way, Paul proceeded with, *inter alia*, the metaphors “children of the promise” and “adoption as child.”<sup>126</sup> For Paul there were two Israels: the “Israel of God” and the “Israel according to the flesh.” Physically speaking, the latter refers to Paul’s fellow Israelites.<sup>127</sup> Paul admitted that they were the people who God previously allowed to share in God’s glory, made covenants with them, gave them the law of Moses and the temple service and let Jesus (the Christ) be born in their midst. Yet, because Paul surrendered to God (Rm 9:5b), he, on the basis of the work of the Holy Spirit (Rm 9:1), became conscious of the fact that God in a new way places people into a proper relationship with God (Rm 10:3-4). Because Paul knew that God welcomed anyone who believed, Paul proclaimed that Jesus redefined the meaningfulness of the things mentioned above. Paul summarized this

concisely in Romans 10:4 by saying: Christ is the end of the law.<sup>128</sup> The matter that was given a new meaning in Jesus, and that, for now, interests me, is Paul's agreement with the notion that Israel was adopted as child of God.

The conviction that something radical changed led Paul to distinguish between a life that is of "nature," and a life in which transience is transcended. Participation in the latter by the believer is not possible through physical means but through spiritual means. This can only be expressed with the aid of metaphors. Participants may therefore be described as the "fictive house of Abraham." In Romans 11:17, the metaphor of the "wild olive" that has been grafted onto the "tame olive" is used in this regard. In Galatians 6:16, Paul referred to this "fictive" household as the "Israel of God." This Israel represents a life beyond that which is "of nature." And where there is life—be it the life that is "of nature" or the life that is beyond the "physical"—the (S)pirit is active: the human spirit or the Spirit of God. Paul wrote that the first way of life is a life of bondage. Bondage is dependence. Slaves are not free people, but dependent. The "physical" person is like a slave, someone bound to nature, transience, death. In Romans 8:15, among others, Paul said that the Spirit of God liberates. The Spirit of God does not lead to slavery. The Spirit leads to "adoption as child."<sup>129</sup> Children of God are free (Rm 8:21), free from slavery, from bondage, from that which is physical. On the basis of these events that lead to one's adoption as child, one may call God "Father" (*Abba*) as a teenager would in her of his relationship towards a father.

According to Romans 8:15, Paul referred to these "spiritual" (*pneumatic*) events concerning the adoption of the believer as child of God as something that occurred in the past. Grammatically, the past tense is used.<sup>130</sup> In Romans 8:23, however, it was said that

the Spirit received by the children of God is merely a “deposit gift,” a “first gift.”<sup>131</sup> Paul continued by saying that the children of God are therefore “freed in hope”<sup>132</sup> (Rm 8:24). And “hope” really does mean “hope!”<sup>133</sup> Hope is the situation in which believers live.<sup>134</sup> A reality built on hope is a reality that cannot be seen (Rm 8:24-25). The reality of “adoption as God’s children,” that is, as “children of Abraham,” is a real event that occurred in the past. This reality must, however, be distinguished from the reality that is “of nature.” The latter reality can be seen. Being “child of God,” while not being “son of Abraham” by nature, is something that cannot be seen, unlike circumcision, as a visible sign. Being a “child of God” is something one hopes will eventually become visible beyond this transient life, the life that is “of nature.”

Paul looked forward to the liberation from a stressful, physical existence.<sup>135</sup> He described this (future?) liberation in Romans 8:23 as “a redemption from our body,”<sup>136</sup> that is: God will free us from transience. This is definitely a reference to the “resurrection of the body.”<sup>137</sup> Paul did not employ the idea of “immortality” or that of the “raising of the flesh.”<sup>138</sup> He was thinking of the transition of the earthly body into a new kind of corporeality. In 1 Corinthians 15:44, the body of resurrection is called the “spiritual body” as opposed to the “physical body.”<sup>139</sup>

As already mentioned, the resurrection faith of the earliest Christians was embedded in apocalypticism. This belief must be understood against the background of the post-exilic notion of a general resurrection from death. The resurrection of the body was an unacceptable idea to Gnosticism that despised physical corporeality. The assertions in Romans 8:11 about the resurrection of Jesus therefore indeed make it impossible to interpret the expression “redemption of our body” in Romans 8:23 as

Gnostic.<sup>140</sup> In Romans 7:14-8:30, as a literary unit, we are dealing with a transition from a Gnostic mind-set to an apocalyptic one. The apocalyptic mind-set is closely related to the idea of switching from the transient world of daily experience to the imaginary transcendental world. The conviction that there will be a general resurrection from death is embedded in this (mythological) idea of the switching of worlds. For the earliest Christians, the resurrection of Jesus was taken to be the start of the general resurrection from death. The Gnostic-dualistic elements, such as the dichotomy between “flesh” (sa/rc) and “spirit” (pneu~ma) that occurs in Romans 8:2-11 and Galatians 4:21-31, are not found in strongly marked apocalyptic passages of Paul’s epistles.<sup>141</sup> On the other hand, apocalyptic concepts are connected by Paul with the Gnostic-dualistic aspect of his thought. Both Romans 7:14-8:30 and Galatians 4:4ff are examples of this.<sup>142</sup>

The motif “fullness of time” (that is related to the apocalyptic switching of the world of experience and the imaginary world) is in Galatians 4:4-7 associated with the Gnostic preexistence christology that God sent God’s Son in order that the believer “may receive adoption as child of God”<sup>143</sup> (verse 5). Similarly, in Romans 8:12-16, Paul commenced with the Gnostic “presentist eschatology,” and proceeded from verse 17 to the idea of a “futuristic eschatology.”<sup>144</sup> In this regard, he called Christ, in Romans 8:29, the “first of many brothers.”

We have seen that Paul, in Romans 8:23, related the announcement that God adopted believers as God’s children and, therefore, predestined them to the resurrection from death. But we must not assume that to Paul this is only a question of hope with reference to the end of time. We must remember that the reality of faith is not dependent on “physical sight.” And to be a “son-of-god” is perfectly real in faith. There is

therefore no tension between the past tense of Romans 8:15 and the usage in Romans 8:23 that describes the same reality as an occurrence of hope, of the future.<sup>145</sup> Within the framework of Paul's apocalyptic worldview, the reality of being "adopted" as God's child is not something "physical" and does not create any tension.

To interpret Romans 8:24 as meaning that being a child of God can only be fully realized at the end of the time<sup>146</sup> is incorrect. According to Paul, being child of God is made possible by Jesus in the world of everyday experience. The problem here lies with the usage of the adverb "fully," and not with the conviction that "childhood" has already been realized. This problem is related to the well-known tension in Paul's letters between what "is already" and what "is not yet."<sup>147</sup> The question is, however, whether it is correct to describe Paul's usage of the expression "adoption as child" as only a future and transcendent reality. Such an "eschatological" view may perhaps agree with John the Baptist's beliefs, as we saw earlier, but it certainly does not continue those of Jesus!<sup>148</sup>

Paul's linking of Christians' "adoption as children" to a *future* liberation from the body," that is, the "resurrection from death," must not be read separately from the apostle's conviction that Christians have *already* "died with Christ" (Rm 6:8) and now *already* believe that they live with Christ for God (Rm 6:10). According to Paul, Christ Jesus was, after all, on the basis of his resurrection from death, declared to be the "Son-of-God" (Rm 1:4)—a "sonship" that Jesus, according to Paul, possessed *already* before his resurrection (Plp 2:6). Paul argued that the Spirit *already* lives (Rm 8:11) in the life of believers too and "will also quicken our [the believers'] mortal bodies" (Rm 8:11), but now *already* "makes us children of God and lets us call to God: 'Abba!' that means Father" (Rm 8:15).<sup>149</sup>



In chapter 5 I indicated that the arrangements around the temple cult of Jerusalem were in essence related to the idea of who the “children of God” were. At the most basic level, the post-exilic marriage regulations of this cult created the parameters of their view of social identity and their relationship with God. These regulations not only robbed “outsiders” of honor and status and of familial security, but attempted to alienate them from God. Against this background, the fatherless Jesus, victim of this systemic evil, went to John the Baptist. While he acknowledged his position as “sinner,” he went with the expectation to receive “forgiveness” in an unconventional way. The Baptizer was busy planting, as it were, “ticking time bombs”:<sup>150</sup>

When people came to him [John], he kept sending them back from the wilderness, through the Jordan, purified and forgiven into the Promised Land, there to await the imminent coming of the avenging, saving God. In essence, John was forming a giant system of purified individuals a network of ticking time bombs all over the Jewish homeland. Because of John, when Jesus began his ministry, he found already a vast network of people expectant, eager, waiting for God’s power to be revealed.

One of these time bombs already exploded before the time intended by John, that is, before the “general resurrection from death” could happen! Since Jesus of Nazareth, the notion of being *child of God* has changed for Israel! In other words, John still belonged to the old dispensation, like all of those who, up to today, still wait for God to intervene. Nonetheless, John began to invert roles. After his baptism, Jesus became convinced that the Kingdom of God was a reality, and that it had already come. Radically

opposed to what the conventions of the temple cult of Jerusalem prescribed, he, as an unmarried “outsider,” addressed God as “Father” and, like a child who, as it were, did not know what “sin” was, put his trust in God. Jesus went even further and called the other “outsiders” children and invited them to live now already as “children of their heavenly Father.” In other words, he wanted the other “time bombs” to explode as well, but not in the sense of the revolutionary political activists who were feared by monarchs whose power was threatened! To enter God’s kingdom as children is certainly no military coup d’état, but the image has a dynamite affect. The Gospel of Thomas, Saying 46 (cf. Sayings Gospel Q 7:28) gives some witness to this: “Jesus said, ‘From Adam to John the Baptist, among those born of women, no one is so much greater than John the Baptist that his eyes should not be averted. But I have said that whoever among you becomes a child will recognize the (Father’s) imperial rule and will become greater than John’.”<sup>151</sup>

The traditions about Jesus’ life and work, as they have been handed down in the gospel tradition, including within the circle of the Johannine school, carried further the “heart” of this message of inclusivity and egalitarianism, of “new life.” Among the witnesses in the documents of early Christianity, the unmarried Paul, in my view, did this most clearly. Even though he was influenced strongly by a Greco-Roman mind-set and by Hellenistic-Semitic wisdom traditions when he referred to Jesus as preexistent “Son-of-God,” Paul’s usage of the expression “adoption as child of God” was a striking way to verbalize Jesus’ invitation to enter the new world of God.

We have seen that the myths of virginal conceptions, ascensions to heaven and being adopted by the gods are almost “recycled language.” In this regard, Seneca’s tragedies of Hercules’ adoption and Ovid’s story of Perseus’ conception are most striking. These stories were not only very familiar in the first-century Greco-Roman world, but also came to mind when (Gentile) philosophers of that period reflected on what Christians said about Jesus, child of God.

## END NOTES

1. Cf. Ricoeur, P. 1974, “Philosophische und theologische Hermeneutik,” p. 26.
2. See Ricoeur, P. 1974, p. 38.
3. See Ricoeur, P. 1974, pp. 42-43.
4. A sizeable amount of research has already been done in this field. See *inter alia* Bultmann, R. [1958] 1968, *Theologie des Neuen Testaments*, pp. 130-135; Porkorny, P. 1971, *Der Gottessohn: Literarische Übersicht und Fragestellung*; Hahn, F. 1974, *Christologische Hoheitstiteln: Ihre Geschichte im frühen Christentum*; Hengel, M. 1976, *The Son-of-God The Origin of Christology and the History of Jewish-Hellenistic Religion*.
5. Cf. Bultmann, R. 1968, *Theologie des Neuen Testaments*, p. 130.
6. See Bultmann, R. 1968, *Theologie*, p. 125.
7. See Sand, A. 1974, *Das Gesetz und die Propheten: Untersuchungen zur Theologie des Evangeliums nach Matthäus*, p. 164; Van Aarde, A.G. 1994, *God-with-us: The Dominant Perspective in Matthew’s Story, and Other Essays*, p. 62.
8. See Bultmann, R. 1968, p. 131.
9. See Bultmann, R. 1968, p. 132.
10. In works by Epictetus, Marcus Aurelius and Plotinus, we learn that those who were deemed to be people with “good sense” were taken to be people with a “god in them.” See Harris, M.J. 1992, *Jesus as God: The New Testament’s Use of “Theos” in Reference to Jesus*, p. 28 note 38.
11. See Bultmann, R. 1968, p. 132.
12. Cf. Bultmann, R. 1968, *Theologie*, p. 133; Betz, H.D. 1968, “Jesus as Divine Man,” pp. 114-133; Koester, H. 1971, “One Jesus and Four Primitive Gospels,” pp. 158-204.
13. Cf. Bultmann, R. 1968, *Theologie*, p. 133. According to Mark (1:9-11), Jesus manifested himself as Son-of-God when, on the occasion of his baptism, he was filled with the Spirit of God. Bultmann points out that this same view appears quite clearly in the “Western” manuscript tradition of Luke 3:22 up to Augustine (*inter alia*, the Latin version of the fifth-century Codex Bezae Cantabrigiensis [Dit], Justine, Clement, and Latin documents by a number of Western church fathers—see Aland *et al* (ed.) [1966] 1994, *The Greek New Testament*, p. 207. According to this tradition, a voice came from heaven that said, in the words of Psalm 2:7: “You are my Son; today I have begotten you.” In line with

14. See, for instance, the Similitudes of Enoch (1 En 39:4ff; 70:4–cf. Casey, M. 1991, *From Jewish Prophet to Gentile God: The Origins and Development of New Testament Christology*, pp. 79-85) and in the “love romance” Joseph and Asenath, in which Joseph is not only called the “son-of-god” (JosAs 6:3, 5; 18:11; 21:4—see Chesnutt, R.D. 1996, “From Text to Context: The Social Matrix of Joseph and Aseneth,” p. 296), but also the “firstborn” (JosAs 18:11; 21:4; 23:10 see Standhartinger, A. 1995, *Das Frauenbild im Judentum der hellenistischen Zeit: Ein Beitrag anhand von “Joseph & Aseneth,”* p. 203; Standhartinger, A. 1996, “From Fictional Text to Socio-Historical Context: Some Considerations from a Textcritical Perspective on Joseph and Aseneth,” p. 314. The view in Paul that the preexistent Son-of-God became human should be seen in connection with the above-mentioned paradox of the redemptive events. The total emphasis in this regard is on the fact of the humanity and the human fate of Jesus the Son-of-God who became human. This fact, as clearly witnessed in Philippians 2:6-11, is, however, contradicted by the idea that Jesus, in the last days of his (earthly) life, showed himself to be God’s son through miracles.
15. Cf. Bultmann, R. 1968, *Theologie*, p. 134.
16. Ignatius, Ad Ephesios 19:1; cf. also Ad Smyrnaeos 1:1.
17. Bultmann, R. 1968, *Theologie*, p. 134. The Gnostic notion of the divine son has not only a soteriological but also a cosmological meaning. In fact, the cosmological meaning was probably the primary one that developed independently in mythologies and religio-philosophical speculations like those of Philo. In Philo, the cosmic Logos is the Son-of-God. A similar development is also found in Hermetic writings. A parallel phenomenon is the personification of Wisdom as a cosmic figure that is found, too, in the wisdom literature in the Israelite tradition (cf. Proverbs 8:22-30), and which became an object of speculation in Judaism, especially among Greek-speaking Israelites. Very early, this speculation about the Logos and Wisdom opened a way into Hellenistic Christianity. Early in the fifties Paul already refers, in 1 Corinthians 8:6, to Jesus as “he through whom everything exists and through whom we live,” a formula in which the cosmological and soteriological roles of Jesus have been combined. Whether it was Paul who first attributed a cosmic role to Christ as “creation mediator” cannot be determined with certainty. The way in which he refers to it does create an impression of generality and



18. Funk, R.W. 1996, *Honest to Jesus: Jesus for a New Millennium*, p. 44.
19. Paul describes in Romans 1:3-4 Jesus' adoption as Son-of-God in terms of the antinomy spirit-flesh. The expression "spirit of holiness" used here is not a reference to the Holy Spirit within the sphere of the (later formed) ontological dogma regarding the Triune God. The expression "according to the spirit of holiness" in Romans 1:4 must be seen as

20. Ovid, *Metamorphoses* (IV, V), translated by Innes, M.M 1955, see esp. pp. 110-122. Cf. Kirkwood, G.M. [1959] 1966, *A Short Guide to Classical Mythology*, pp. 76-77. A version of the myth is also to be found as *The Doom of King Acrisius* in William Morris's *The Earthly Paradise* (1868) and as *Andromeda*, written by Charles Kingsley (1858) (see Pirani, A. [1988] 1989, *The Absent Father: Crisis and Creativity*, p. 3. My discussion of the story of Perseus is heavily dependent on Pirani's work.
21. See Dickemann, M. 1984, "Concepts and Classification in the Study of Human Infanticide," pp. 427-438.
22. See Pirani, A. 1989, *The Absent Father*, p. 9.
23. Pirani, A. 1989, pp. 13, 14, 18.
24. Cf. Pirani, A. 1989, pp. 3, 101-107.
25. Pirani, A. 1989, p. 95.
26. See Pirani, A. 1989, p. 97.
27. Pirani, A. 1989, pp. 98-99.
28. See Kirkwood, G.M. [1959] 1966, *A Short Guide to Classical Mythology*, pp. 48-54.
29. See Atkins, R.A. 1991, *Egalitarian Community: Ethnography and Exegesis*, p. 172.
30. Tabor, J. 1984, "Firstborn of Many Brothers: A Pauline Notion of Apotheosis," p. 295.
31. See Malina, B.J. 1993, *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology*, pp. 48-55.
32. In Greek:  $\upsilon\iota$  ( $\omicron\upsilon\epsilon\sigma\iota/a$  /  $\upsilon\iota$  ( $\omicron\pi\omicron\iota\eta/sas\sigma\alpha\iota$  /  $\eta\epsilon\tau\omicron\nu$   $\upsilon\iota$  ( $\omicron\nu$   $\pi\omicron\iota\epsilon\iota\sim\sigma\alpha\iota$ ). Cf. Schweizer, E. 1985, s.v.  $\upsilon\iota$  ( $\omicron\upsilon\epsilon\sigma\iota/a$ , in Bromiley, G., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, p. 1215.
33. Cf. Kirkwood, G.M. [1959] 1966, *Classical Mythology*, pp. 76-77.
34. See Burn, L. [1990] 1996, *Greek Myths*, pp. 16-17.
35. Diodorus Siculus, BIBLOS TETARH. See Oldfather, C.H. 1935, "Introduction," in Diodorus of Sicily (*The Loeb Classical Library*); Wulfing von Martitz, P. 1969, s.v.  $\upsilon\iota$  ( $\omicron/j$ ,  $\upsilon\iota$  ( $\omicron\upsilon\epsilon\sigma\iota/a$ , in *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, Band VIII, p. 401.
36. See Oldfather, C.H. 1935, "Introduction," in Diodorus of Sicily, p. ix.
37. Diodorus Siculus, BIBLOS TETARTH 1, 5.
38. Diodorus Siculus, BIBLOS TETARTH 1, 5.
39. Diodorus Siculus, BIBLOS TETARTH 1, 6-2, 3.

40. Diodorus Siculus, BIBLOS TETARTH 1, 6-2, 3.
41. Diodorus Siculus, BIBLOS TETARTH 4, 1-2. Cf. Van Aarde, A.G. 1994, *Kultuurhistoriese Agtergrond van die Nuwe Testament: Die Eerste-eeuse Mediterreense Sosiale Konteks*, p. 23.
42. See Van Aarde, A.G. 1994, *Kultuurhistoriese Agtergrond*, p. 23.
43. Diodorus Siculus, BIBLOS TETARTH 4, 6, 1-4.
44. See Parker, W.H. 1988, *Priapea: Poems for a Phallic God*, p. 1.
45. Diodorus Siculus, BIBLOS TETARTH 6, 3.
46. According to Diodorus Siculus, BIBLOS TETARTH (1, 21-22), by Typhon.
47. See Farid, S. & Busath, D. 1990, *The Temple of Philae*.
48. Farid, S. & Busath, D. 1990, *The Temple of Philae*, p. 16.
49. Cf. Gabra, G. 1993, *Cairo: The Coptic Museum & Old Churches*, pp. 44, 92.
50. See Parker, W.H. 1988, *Priapea*, p. 1.
51. Diodorus Siculus, BIBLOS TETARTH 6, 4.
52. See Elliott, J.H. 1990, "Paul, Galatians, and the Evil Eye," pp. 262-273.
53. Galatians 3:1 (own translation): "who cast the "evil eye" on you"? (ti/j u(ma~j e)ba/skanen); "You before whose eyes Jesus Christ was exhibited as the crucified one!" (0oi[j kat 0 oofqalmou\j...proegra/fh e0staurwme/noj;).
54. Cf. Van der Watt, J.G. & Joubert, S.J, 1996, "Hoe is Jesus Gekruisig?," p. 535.
55. See Josephus, De Bello Judaeorum 5.551; cf. Van der Watt, J.G. & Joubert, S.J, 1996, "Hoe is Jesus Gekruisig?," p. 636.
56. See Ford, Massyingbaerde J. 1996, "The Crucifixion of Women in Antiquity," p. 294.
57. Ford, Massyingbaerde J. 1996. "The Crucifixion of Women," p. 295.
58. Galatians 6:17 – ta\ stigmata tou~ 0Ihsou~ e0n tw~| sw/mati/ mou.
59. See Oepke, A. 1973, *Der Brief des Paulus an die Galater*, pp. 206-207.
60. Herodotus, *Historiae* II.113.
61. See Schlier, H. [1949] 1971, *Der Brief an die Galater*, p. 2824; Oepke, A. 1973, *Der Brief des Paulus an die Galater*, pp. 206-207.
62. See Callagher, E.V. 1982, *Divine Man or Magician? Celsus and Origen on Jesus*, p. 127.
63. See Callagher, E.V. 1982, p. 49.
64. See Callagher, E.V. 1982, p. 49.
65. Celsus, 0Alhqh\j Lo/goj I.28; cf. Callagher, E.V. 1982, *Divine Man or Magician?*, p. 53.
66. Celsus, 0Alhqh\j Lo/goj I.67; cf. Callagher, E.V. 1982, p. 61.

67. Celsus, 0A1hqh\j Lo/goj VIII.41. cf. Callagher, E.V. 1982, p. 127.
68. See Hanfmann, G.M.A. 1979. “The Crucified Donkey Man: Achaios and Jesus,” p. 206.
69. In Greek: ALECAMENOS SEBE QEON.
70. Polybius, VIII.21; cf. Hanfmann, G.M.A. 1979. “The Crucified Donkey Man: Achaios and Jesus,” p. 206.
71. Tertullian, Adversus Nationes I.14, 1; Apologia 16,12.
72. See Pratt, N.T. 1939, *Dramatic Suspense in Seneca and in His Greek Precursors*, p. 27.
73. See Pratt, N.T. 1939, *Dramatic Suspense in Seneca*, p. 27.
74. Osiek, C. 1993. “The Women at the Tomb: What Are They Doing There?,” p. 102.
75. Diodorus Siculus, Bibliotheca Historica 38.3-5.
76. Seneca, Apocolocyntosis 13.12. See Ball, A.P. 1902, *The Satire of Seneca on the Apotheosis of Claudius*, pp. 231-232; Eden, P.T. (ed.) 1984, *Seneca “Apocolocyntosis,”* p. 139; Schönberger, O. 1990, *Lucius Annaeus Seneca–Apocolocyntosis Divi Claudii: Einführung, Text und Kommentar*, p. 54.
77. Seneca, Apocolocyntosis 11.28– *unde negant redire quemquam.*
78. Eden, P.T. (ed.) 1984, *Seneca “Apocolocyntosis,”* p. 3.
79. Seneca, Apocolocyntosis 11.27 – *collo obtorto.*
80. Eden, P.T. (ed.) 1984, *Seneca “Apocolocyntosis,”* p. 127.
81. Dio Cassius, *Historiae Romanae* 60.35.3ff; cf. Eden, P.T. (ed.) 1984, *Seneca “Apocolocyntosis,”* p. 1.
82. See Ball, A.P. 1902, *The Satire of Seneca on the Apotheosis of Claudius*, p. 203.
83. Seneca, Apocolocyntosis 3:2.
84. See Eden, P.T. (ed.) 1984, *Seneca “Apocolocyntosis,”* p. 73.
85. Seneca, Apocolocyntosis 8.3.
86. Seneca, Apocolocyntosis 5.19–ti\j po/qen ei0j a0ndrw~n, pie po/lij ei0j e/de toke/ej;
87. Seneca, Apocolocyntosis 10.1–*diius Augustus.*
88. Seneca, Apocolocyntosis 11.3–*videte corpus eius dis iratis natum.*
89. The phrase “only begotten [unique in kind] Son-of-God” appears only in a certain manuscript, translation and patristic tradition; see Aland, B., Aland, K. *et al.* (ed.) [1966] 1994, *The Greek New Testament*, p. 314 note 18. Another tradition reads the word “God” (qe0/j) in the place of the word “son” (ui (o/j). In any case, that Jesus is “the only begotten Son-of-God” is further professed in John 3:16 and 18, as well as in 1 John 4:9; see Metzger, B.M. 1971, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, p. 198.



90. William Whiston [1960] 1978, *Josephus—Complete Works*, p. 415, translator of Josephus’ works, refers in a footnote to Izates, the “only-begotten” son of Helena, the queen of Adiabene, as the “one best-beloved”: “Josephus here [Ant. xx.ii.1] uses the word *monogene*, as only-begotten son, for no other than one best-beloved, as does both the Old and the New Testament; I mean where there were one or more sons besides, (Gen. xxii.2; Heb. xi.7.)”
91. Schnackenburg, R.[1965] 1968, *The Gospel according to St John, Volume One: Introduction and Commentary on Chapters 1-4*, pp. 262f. For references about the link between fatherlessness and silence when one was asked about his heritage, see Fiensy, D 1991, *The Social History of Palestine*, pp. 164-165.
92. Translation in Miller, R.J. (ed.) [1992] 1994, *The Complete Gospels: Annotated Scholars Version*, p. 200.
93. Eden, P.T. (ed.) 1984, *Seneca “Apocolocyntosis,”* p. 3.
94. Richlin, A. 1983, *The Garden of Priapus: Sexuality and Aggression in Roman Humor*, pp. 160-161.
95. It would seem that the Priapus cult originated in Lampsacos on the Hellespontic straits (see Parker, W.H. 1988, *Priapea: Poems for a Phallic God*, p. 1). These straits connect the Achaian Sea with the Sea of Marmara and the Black Sea. The Priapus cult presumably spread from Lampsacos to Greece and from there to the remainder of the Mediterranean world. A Greek inscription found at Thera, the old city on the Achaian island (today Santorini), reads as follows: “I, Priapus, came from Lampsacos to the city Thera, and I brought along sustained prosperity. I came to help all of you and render you assistance, both citizens and foreigners” (IG 12.3–Parker, W.H. 1988, *Priapea: Poems for a Phallic God*, p. 1). The southern seaboard of the Sea of Marmara is blessed with fertile valleys where olive and fruit orchards, as well as sunflower fields, are bountiful (Brosnahan, T. 1990, *Turkey*, p. 230).
96. Parker, W.H. 1988, *Priapea*, pp. 3-9.
97. We can, however, not be sure of who compiled the *Carmina Priapea*, a corpus of 80 poems earlier included among the minor works of Vergil. Similarities to the works of Catullus, Ovid, and Martial can certainly be indicated (see Richlin, A. 1983, *The Garden of Priapus*, p. 143). Even though the date of Catullus’ Epigramma Dedicatum is uncertain (see Berkowitz, L. & Squitier, K.A. [1977] 1986, *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae: Canon of Greek Authors and Works*, p. 78), we may date the *Priapea*, on the basis of similarities with the work of Ovid, to be from the period of the emperor Nero. The

A fig-tree once I was, which useless wood  
The carpenter in doubt was if he should  
To a priapus turn, or to a chair.  
He chose the god, and so my job's to scare  
Away the thieves with penis painted red  
From loins erect; the wreath upon my head,  
From gardens new deters the birds.

*Olim truncus eram ficulnus, inutile lignum,  
cum faber, incertus scamnum faceretne Priapum,  
maluit esse deum, deus inde ego,  
furum aviumque maxima formido;  
nam fures dextra coercet obscenoque ruber porrectus ab inguine palus;  
ast importunas volucres in vertice harundo terret fixa vetatque novis considerare in  
hortis.*

Horace here mockingly refers to an extension to the gardens of Maecenas on the Esquiline hill in Rome as the “new gardens”—the place where, earlier, slaves and other poverty-stricken “expendables” had been buried (Parker, W.H. 1988, *Priapea*, p. 15) and “where, among the tombs, witches practiced their weird and infernal rites. Here, however, Maecenas, co-operating with Augustus in the work of city improvement, had laid out beautiful gardens, in which he later built himself a palace with a conspicuous tower” (Page, T. E. [ed.] 1960, *Seneca's Tragedies*, p. 95). During the first century B.C.E., Columella (10.29–Parker, W.H. 1988, *Priapea*, pp. 82-83) writes that such wooden sculptures are not exactly works of art it is merely a trunk from an old tree (*sed truncum forte dolatum*). And in the *Inscriptio Harleianus* (2578–Parker, W.H. 1988, *Priapea*, p. 82), Priapus is annoyed by a “stupid girl” (*insulsissima puella*), who laughs at the image of a comical piece of wood and takes him to be a joke he is not a god who was

- portrayed by famed Athenian sculptors, but was carved from wood by a rustic hand (*sed lignum rude vilicus dolavit*). It is precisely “his status as a ridiculous god, a god to be mocked something of a contradiction in terms” (Richlin, A. 1983, *The Garden of Priapus*, p. 141) which is accorded attention in the poems by Martial.
98. Parker, W.H. 1988, *Priapea*, p. 11.
  99. See Oldfather, C.H. 1935, “Introduction,” in Diodorus of Sicily (*The Loeb Classical Library*), p. ix.
  100. Diodorus Siculus, BIBLOS TETARTH 39, 2; α0ποqewsi/j (deification); ui (οpoiη/sasqai (adopting).
  101. Diodorus Siculus, BIBLOS TETARTH 39, 2; qeto\n ui (ο\n ποiei~sqai.
  102. In Greek: mimoume/nh th\n a0lhqi/nhn gene\sin.
  103. See the uncertainty in Wulfing von Martitz, P 1969, s.v. ui (ο/j, ui (οqesi/a, *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, Band VIII, p. 401 note 10.
  104. Diodorus Siculus 1, 15, 6ff.
  105. See Sheres, I. & Blau, A.K. 1995, *The Truth about the Virgin: Sex and Ritual in the Dead Sea Scrolls*, pp. 48- 73.
  106. “There was no greater sorrow for an Israelite or Oriental woman than childlessness. Even today among the Arabs the barren woman is exposed to disgrace and even grievous wrongs. These views, which derive from the human code of honor, and the customs to which they give birth also play a role in the patriarchal stories. For there was a legitimate way to avoid all these difficulties, the way that Sarah proposed to Abraham in v. 2b. To understand the conflict that now ensues, one must refer to legal customs that were apparently widespread at that time. The wife could bring to marriage her own personal maid, who was not available to her husband as a concubine in the same way his own female slaves were. If she gave her personal maid to her husband, in the event of her own childlessness, then the child born of the maid was considered the wife’s child: The slave was born “on the knees” of the wife, so that the child then came symbolically from the womb of the wife herself (cf. ch. 30.3, 9)!” (Von Rad, G. [1961] 1972, *Genesis: A Commentary*, p. 191.
  107. Von Rad, G. [1961] 1972, *Genesis*, p. 294.
  108. In Greek: tekno/poihsomai ka0gw.
  109. tekno/poihmai (“to make into a child”); ui (οqesi/a (“to adopt as child”).
  110. David, M. 1955, “Adoptie in het Oude Israel,” pp. 13-15.
  111. The Septuagint reads: i9na ti/ de\ sunenth/san moi gwna/ta.

112. Rowley, H.H. 1970, *Job*, p. 46.
113. Van Selms, A. 1967, *Genesis*, II, p. 103.
114. E. Dhorme, in Rowley, H.H. 1970, *Job*, p. 46.
115. (“laid him in her lap” – *New International Version*); (“and became his nurse” – *Revised Standard Version*).
116. See Köhler, L. 1909, “Die Adoptionsform von Ruth 4,16,” pp. 312-314.
117. Van Selms, A. 1967, *Genesis*, II, p. 103.
118. The Septuagint reads: a0po to\n gwna/ton au0tou~.
119. The Septuagint reads: e0texqe/san e0pi\ me\rw~n 0Iwshf.
120. Gerleman, G. 1963, *Ruth–Das Hohelied*, pp 37-38. My translation of and additions to the original German.
121. Schweizer, E. 1985, s. v. ui (oqesi/a, in Bromiley, G., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Abridged in one volume), p. 1215.
122. See Bush, A.C. 1982, *Studies in Roman Social Structure*, pp. 93-96.
123. See Bush, A.C. 1982, *Studies in Roman Social Structure*, p. 93.
124. Funk, R.W. 1996, *Honest to Jesus: Jesus for a New Millennium*, p. 136.
125. Funk, R.W. 1996, *Honest to Jesus*, p. 41.
126. Rm 9:8– ta\ te/kna th~j e0paggeli/aj (“children of the promise”).
127. Rm 9:3–oi3 suggenai/ mou kata\ sa/rka (Paul’s fellow-Israelites); h3 do/ca (God allows the Israelites to share in God’s glory); ai9 diaqh~kai (concluded covenants); h9 nomoqesi/a (gave them the law of Moses); h9 latrei/a (the Temple service); oi9 pate/rej (the ancestors); e0c w[n o9 Xristo\j to\ kata\ sa/rka (the Christ who as human came from them).
128. Rm 10:4–te/loj ga\r no/mou Xristo\j ei0j dikaiosunhn panti\ tw~| pisteu/onti.
129. Rm 8:21–pneu~ma doulei/aj (the Spirit of God does not lead to slavery); pneu~ma ui9oqesi/aj (to adoption as child).
130. In Greek, the aoristus: e0la/bete (Rm 8:15).
131. Rm 8:23 –a0parxh/ (“deposit gift”/“first gift”).
132. Rm 8:24–th~| ga\r e0lpi/di e0sw/qhmen (“freed in hope”).
133. See C.K. Barrett’s, *The Epistle to the Romans*, p. 161, translation of Rm 8:24b.

134. E. Käsemann, *An die Römer*, p. 230: “Hoffnung ist die Situation, in der wir...als Geretteten leben.” The dative translated with “in hope” (e0lpi/di) must be understood as a dative of modality.
135. Käsemann, E. 1974, *An die Römer*, p. 229.
136. Rm 8:23–a0polu/trwsij tou~ sw/matoj h9mw~n (“a redemption from our body”).
137. Cf. Byrne, B. 1979, “Sons of God”–“Seed of Abraham,” p. 109.
138. Cf. Käsemann, E. 1974, *An die Römer*, p. 229.
139. 1 Cor 15:44–sw~ma pneumatiko/n (“spiritual body”); sw~ma yuxiko/n (“physical body”).
140. Interpreting the expression “of our body” (in the phrase “a redemption from our body”) as a “genetivus separationis” might, create the impression that we are dealing here with a Gnostic redemption idea (cf. H. Lietzmann 1933, *An die Römer*, p. 85). If it is taken as an “objective genitive,” as in Rm 8:11, then the idea of apocalyptic liberation from afflictions at the end of time would figure more strongly (cf. E. Käsemann, 1974, *An die Römer*, p. 229; B. Byrne 1979, “Sons of God”–“Seed of Abraham,” p. 109 note 120). However, it is not necessary to see gnosticism and apocalypticism as mutually exclusive mind-sets. On the one hand it seems as if all of Rm 7:14-8:30, which may be seen as an independent unit dealing with the total degeneration of humanity, as well as with the redemption of humanity from that state of sin, is cast in Gnostic presuppositions and mind-sets. Against the Gnostic notion that redemption primarily has the quality of presence, redemption is in apocalypticism understood as being something belonging to the end of time. Walter Schmithals 1994, *Theologieggeschichte des Urchristentums: Eine problemgeschichtliche Darstellung*, p. 82, explains this distinction by means of the respective images of Christ in apocalypticism and gnosticism: in apocalypticism, Christ is primarily “der Kommende” (salvation is a future occurrence), while in gnosticism he is “der Gekommene” (salvation is a present occurrence).
141. Schmithals, W. 1994, *Theologieggeschichte des Urchristentums*, p. 70.
142. Schmithals, W. 1994, *Theologieggeschichte*, pp. 76, 82. Cf. the combination of the second and third type christologies discussed earlier.
143. Gl 4:5–i3na th\n ui9oqesi/an a0pola/bwmen (“may receive adoption as child of God”).
144. Schmithals, W. 1994, *Theologieggeschichte*, p. 83.

145. Some scholars (see Byrne, B. 1979, “Sons of God” – “Seed of Abraham,” p. 2 note 1, pp. 108-11) are of the opinion that the omission of the expression “adoption as child” (ui9oqesi/a) in Rm 8:23 in, for instance, the second-century papyrus manuscript Chester Beatti *P*<sup>46vid</sup> (which is damaged and legible only with difficulty at this point) may be attributed to such a tension (see Metzger, B. 1971, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, p. 517). However, the reading without the omission is without doubt the more difficult one (*lectio difficilior*) and also preferable (cf. Käsemann, E. 1974, *An die Römer*, p. 229). This omission was unnecessary.
146. See De Villiers, J.L. 1950, *Die Betekenis van HUIOTHESIA in die Briewe van Paulus*, pp. 69, 160.
147. See Ridderbos, H. 1973, *Paulus: Ontwerp van zijn Theologie*, pp. 214, 217, 218.
148. Similarly, the attempt to solve this supposed tension by imposing on the text the idea of an “eschatological order of salvation” cannot be endorsed. Such a perspective yields to a “salvation-historical” explanation of Galatians 3:25, 26 (as well as Eph 1:5) (see Ridderbos, H. 1973, *Paulus*, pp. 216-217). According to this view, Paul would argue that God acted within a linear temporal order by first electing Israel (Eph 1:5) and then, when the “fullness of time” came (Gl 4:4ff.), God sent Jesus as God’s son so that believers could receive the “adoption as children” which will be revealed fully at the end of time. However, the above-mentioned “salvation-historical explanation – the linear “yet-not-yet” time scheme–lacks persuasiveness in view of what we today know about the concept “time” in the world of the Bible (see Malina, B.J. 1996, “Christ and Time: Swiss or Mediterranean?,” pp. 179-214). Bruce Malina 1996, “Christ and Time,” p. 210, 185, concludes his contribution by saying: “...in the New Testament period there was no tension between the ‘now’ and the ‘not yet’. When those writings were written and collected, there was only emphasis on a rather broad ‘now’. On the other hand, the ‘not yet’, is a continual concern of persons from future-oriented societies.” Malina argues that “the only scholarly evidence for the existence of anxiety and concern about a perceived delay of a parousia, for interest in eschatology, or some future-oriented apocalyptic was in the eyes of liberal, Enlightenment-oriented, nineteenth-century northern European biblical interpreters and their twentieth-century heirs.”
149. Rm 8:11–e0noikou~ntoj au0tou~ pneu/matoj (“the Spirit lives); zw|opoih/sei kai\ ta\ qnhta\ sw/mata (“will also quicken [our] mortal bodies”); Rm 8:15–a0lla\ e0la/bete pneu~ma ui9oqesi/aj e0n w[|

150. Crossan, J.D. 1996, Who is Jesus? Answers to Your Questions About the Historical Jesus, pp. 45-47 (my emphasis).
151. Gospel of Thomas, 46. Translation by Miller, R.J. (ed.) 1992, *The Complete Gospels*, p. 312.

## 8 ~ THE CRADLE OF THE CHURCH

### Continuity~Discontinuity~Resurrection

Jesus never *conceived* the church or *intended* to *establish* the church. The church is not a product of Jesus' will, intention, or action. The earliest Jesus movement in Jerusalem emanated from a faith based on the resurrection belief. However, it is an open question whether this "church" reflects a continuity or discontinuity with the cause of Jesus. The peculiar quality of Jesus' cause is its inclusiveness and antihierarchical tendency. The Jerusalem faction is known for its embeddedness in Israel's mores. It is not known for openness towards the Gentiles or for egalitarianism. Yet it does not mean that there is an absolute discontinuity between Jesus and the earliest Jesus movement in Jerusalem. The historical Jesus brought his message within the scope of Israel. The Jerusalem faction searched Scriptures and found evidence that Jesus was adopted by God to be Israel's messiah.

From this messianic outlook and with an apocalyptic mind-set, the Jerusalem faction apparently started a process of institutionalizing Jesus' last meal with close followers as a table fellowship symbolizing their participation in God's "spiritual kingdom." These followers of Jesus distinguished themselves from the circle of the disciples of John the Baptist. Like Jesus himself, some of them could initially have belonged to this circle. Their separation was symbolized by their distinctive understanding of the baptismal rite. The baptism by John the Baptist was a water ritual that initiated a lifestyle to be lived when and where God reigns. The fellows of the Jesus



movement in Jerusalem institutionalized a “spiritual baptism” in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Spirit of God as sign of initiation into a discipleship of the “heavenly kingdom.” According to their scrutinizing exegesis of the Hebrew Scriptures, this “imperial rule” was inaugurated by Jesus as Israel’s spirit-filled messiah who triumphed by his victory over death as it was expected within an apocalyptic mind-set that the Child of Humanity would do. Apocalypticism can therefore be seen as the mother of the Jerusalem faction’s theology<sup>1</sup> and unthinkable without the belief in the resurrection from the death.

The first sentence of the first paragraph above is my paraphrase of the well-known words of Wolfgang Trilling:<sup>2</sup> *Jesus never conceived the church or intended to establish the church.* These words have since been repeated with approval by many historians, of whom Geza Vermes<sup>3</sup> is a recent example. The establishment of the “church” is, therefore, not to be traced back to a foundational event (*Anfangserfahrung*) in the life of the historical Jesus. After Jesus’ brutally maltreated body had not been laid in a family tomb, Jesus arose in the kerygma. In other words, Jesus lived forth through the retelling of his cause. This process resulted in a development of Jesus movements<sup>4</sup> that reached back to his followers’ experience of resurrection appearances of Jesus, in particular, by Mary Magdalene, Peter, James, and Paul.<sup>5</sup>

For some in early Christianity, it was as if they experienced the appearance of the resurrected Jesus in the form of the Child of Humanity in an altered state of consciousness (for evidence in Matthew, see *inter alia* Mt 24:30; 27:52-53; 28:16-20). The Child of Humanity is that triumphant apocalyptic figure who had been expected to come at that point in history when the experiences in this world would be almost

unendurable so that God's people began to fantasize about the inauguration of the Kingdom of God transcending the worrisome times that they experienced (see *inter alia* Dn 7:13-14).

Others could only hold on to the kerygma of those who said that they had been sent by the exalted Jesus to convey his cause (cf. Jn 20:29). Paul said explicitly that he was sent by God to become an “apostle for the Gentiles” (see Gl 2:8). It is reported that this commission was given to Paul when he was transformed by an epiphany by means of a divine light in which the risen Jesus appeared. This is, however, not described as a visual experience. It is reported that he heard Jesus’ voice (see Acts 9:3-4; 22:6-7; 26:13-14; cf. Gl 1:25-27).

Mary of Magdala claimed to have been the first to have experienced an appearance of the risen Jesus. This is probably authentic (see Mk 16:1, 9; Mt 28:1; Lk 24:10; Jn 20:1; Gospel of Peter 12:50; Epistula Apostolorum 9 [in both the Ethiopic and Coptic versions]). Only the Epistula Apostolorum does not place the previously demon-possessed Mary Magdalene first on the list of the women who said they had a vision of the resurrected Jesus. This story of the women *confused* (in Greek: ἐθαμβήθησαν) the men (Lk 24:22-24)—the Greek word *existemi* (ἐθαμβήθησαν) refers to amazement, astonishment—what man could believe the witness of a woman! Fortunately, for the sake of the men, another “stone” pillar of faith confirmed that the master appeared to him (cf. Lk 24:34). It seems that Paul believed Peter in that he was actually the first to have seen Jesus (Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza<sup>6</sup> calls 1 Cor 15:3-8 a “...list intended to legitimate male authority”), although Peter himself and the other “pillars of faith” fled during the turmoil surrounding Jesus’ crucifixion (Mk 14:50). The rumor follows that when Peter’s

shame prompted him to return his heart failed him again (see Mk 14:34, 66-72). Nevertheless, it is believed that God made him an “apostle for the Israelites” (see Gl 2:8).

According to Paul, Jesus also appeared to the core group of Jesus’ followers, believed to be twelve, as if they could claim to represent all the sons of Israel (cf. 1 Cor 15:5; Lk 24:36-49; Jn 20:19-23; 26-29). Another early tradition was also transmitted that the cause of Jesus began to find its way through the Roman Empire after the “end-time” Spirit of God came upon a larger group of people, from many different ethnic backgrounds, who came to Jerusalem as the prophets said the nations would do. This spiritual experience of an altered state of consciousness happened when Peter started “evangelizing,” telling the people about the crucified Jesus whom God made to be Lord (*Kyrios*) and Messiah (*Christ*) of *all* of Israel (Israelites and Gentiles included) (cf. Acts 2:1-42). Through his death, a transformation of the temple cult took place. Instead of sacrificial rites for receiving forgiveness of sin, everyone could now be baptized in the name of Jesus Messiah as a sign of their spiritual renewal (cf. Acts 2:38ff).

This message is referred to as *good tidings* (eu0agge/lion). The word *gospel* was used over the alleged “good news” of the divine birth of the emperor Augustus who claimed to be the saving patron of the whole world. This altered state of consciousness happened when the Spirit of God came upon not only an individual but upon many sons and daughters of Israel (see Acts 2:17-21). According to an earlier transmission of probably the same story, it might have been that their numbers were more than five hundred (see 1 Cor 15:6). Paul, the source of this early testimony (cf. 1 Cor 15:6), said he was informed that Jesus’ brother James claimed to have seen him after his crucifixion (also witnessed to in the Gospel of the Hebrews, fragment 7, preserved by Hieronymus,

De Viris Illustribus 2). This reportedly happened before the appearance to “The Twelve” as a group. The authority of James’ upcoming leadership of the Jesus movement in Jerusalem probably depended on his being a primary witness (see 1 Cor 15:6). The historian Josephus (Ant 20.197-203) mentioned that James became an important official in the priestly circles of Jerusalem after the Romans had killed his brother. The experience of seeing his crucified brother resurrected apparently ignited in James the desire to become a follower of Jesus. However, while Jesus was among them, James, his mother, and other kin from Nazareth did not believe in Jesus’ cause. Nevertheless, he became one of the “pillars of faith” in Jerusalem. Having never been a follower of Jesus during his lifetime, it comes as no surprise that James did not believe that the gospel should go further, from Jerusalem through Samaria into the rest of the Roman Empire, even to the world of the barbarians who could not speak Greek. The legitimacy of his *apostleship* can therefore be questioned.

Another man, Paul, who apparently did not even know Jesus personally, was truly an *apostle* because he advocated this cause. This he did in the midst of afflictions that made him feel like a woman being crucified (according to a “reading between the lines” of 2 Cor 4:12). Likewise he considered his right to be an apostle to be based on the authority of a revelation of the resurrected Jesus (see Gl 1:12). Here it seems that both parties used the resurrection belief in a way that indicates that they did not internalize Jesus’ disdain for selfish superiority (cf. Mk 10:42-44). Yet Paul dissociated himself from the Jerusalem faction with his ideology critique of the idea that the obedience to cultural conventions makes right the relationship with God (see Phlp 3:7-11). He also

disagreed with the notion of an apostle bringing the light of the gospel to the nations outside of Jerusalem.

Paul was eventually killed in Rome, so it seems to (despite 1 Clem 5:7), because the Roman emperor Nero used Christians for his own end. The emperor wanted to expand the mansions of his family members. For that he needed the land where catacombs were used as shelter by outcasts. He started a fire, lied, and said that Christians were responsible. The outcome of this was that many Christians were killed (cf. Tacitus Ann xv.44). Two years earlier, Jesus' brother was also killed in Jerusalem. The historian Josephus (Ant 20:197-203) reported that the high priest eliminated this "pillar of faith" in 62 C.E. because he and other Pharisees were charged with lawlessness (ἀνομία), probably because their opposition to the high priest could topple him from his lofty position.

## **A Movement of and for Others**

Apart from those pre-Easter followers of Jesus, centered in Jerusalem after his crucifixion, the cause of Jesus soon also became a movement for others—Israelites in the Diaspora and devout Hellenists who associated themselves with the religion of the "children of Abraham." Pioneers like Paul played a major role in this Jesus movement. We have seen that the origins of the Jesus movement in Jerusalem seemingly lie in the claims of Peter and James (and probably also the sons of Zebedee, John, and James) that they saw the resurrected Jesus. We have seen that Mary Magdalene also had such a

vision and that it was not brought up in the tradition of the Jerusalem faction. Paul and Mark (and Christian writers dependent on them) knew of this tradition about “The Twelve” and conveyed it further—albeit not very enthusiastically. However, Paul seems unaware of the bias that caused the astonishment among the Jerusalemites about Mary’s experience of the resurrected Jesus.

Paul developed a theological construct of participation in the risen Christ Jesus. This “unity” with the cause of Jesus was a faith experience that can be described as an altered state of consciousness because of its spiritual nature. Spirituality was expressed by Paul with the formulae “to be in Christ,” “to be in the *Kyrios*,” “to be in the Spirit,” and “to call upon God as *Abba*.” The “live in Spirit” formed an alternative to a life according to everyday cultural arrangements. In this regard, Paul differed from the Jerusalem group in his opinion that the continuing experience of the meaning of Jesus’ life through the resurrection belief meant that the “old” Israel died as well. The Jesus movement in Jerusalem believed that Jesus “restored” Israel as an ethnic entity. For Paul, “the Israel of God” was totally transformed into a spiritual entity. He grounded his conviction in his understanding of Jesus’ death and resurrection. The church as an “altered” Israel meant that it was seen as a movement of people who believed in *Christ* and in the *Kyrios*, the Jesus of faith for both Israelites and non-Israelites.<sup>7</sup>

The historical Jesus did not foresee that an entity like “the church” would be built upon such an interpretation of his death. However, Paul’s “altered” vision of egalitarianism and cultural subversiveness was in continuity with Jesus’ “altered” relationship with God as the Father of “nobodies.” According to the core of the Pauline and gospel tradition in the New Testament, Jesus’ interpretation of the Kingdom of God,

his wisdom, his redefinition of the concept “children of Abraham” (i.e., “children of God”) constituted the essence of human self-understanding. For Paul, the essence of religion is doing what fits in with God (Rm 12:1-2). If rejection and death were seen as failure, folly or offense, then Jesus’ vision would have failed. But this paradoxical and repugnant perception was what the life of Jesus pertained to be. The Pauline tradition conveyed this vision. It is a contra-cultural perspective without escaping reality. It comprises the vision that strength is possible in weakness, wisdom in folly, honor in shame, and life in death. Cultural institutionalization always causes people to become accepting of hierarchical hegemony, exclusive hybrid and alienating agony provoked by the powers that be. Because God turns shame into honor, the resurrection faith is, according to Paul, the sign of a new birth, a new start, a new creation (2 Cor 5:17; Gl 6:15), the birth of the “true Israel,” the “Israel of God” (Gl 6:16). According to Jesus’ gospel, an “altered” vision, not arrogant egotism, constitutes the self-understanding of human beings.

To deny the foundation of the church in the Jesus cause (that is folly to the world, but wisdom in the eyes of faith) is to deny the historic cradle of the church and to allow the essence of the church to evaporate into an ecclesiological ideology. This also amounts to Paul’s thinking. The core of the Pauline gospel with regard to the crucified Jesus (1 Cor 1:17-31) should be understood as “condensed history” of the historical Jesus. C.H. Dodd<sup>8</sup> puts it as follows:

Thus Paul’s preaching represents a special stream of Christian tradition that was derived from the mainstream at a point very near to its source. No doubt his own idiosyncrasy counted for much in his presentation of

the Gospel, but anyone who should maintain that the primitive Christian Gospel was fundamentally different from that which we have found in Paul must bear the burden of the proof.

The source behind Paul's kerygma is found in the Jerusalem faction's emphasis of Jesus' death. The kind of life Jesus lived led to his death. It is in this sense that his crucifixion should be seen as "condensed history."

### **The Circle of "The Twelve"**

There is some evidence in the New Testament that seemingly traces the establishment of the church directly to Jesus himself. However, this evidence is limited, uncertain, and historically unreliable. Three references in this regard deserve to be mentioned. The first consists of the reported words of Jesus to Peter in Matthew 16:17-19: "You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church." The next is presupposed in the report on the institution of the Eucharist: "The Lord (*Kyrios*) Jesus...said: 'This is my body...'" (1 Cor 11:23-26; Mk 14:22-25). Both references must, however, without doubt be dated later, and are, in addition, historically unreliable.<sup>9</sup>

The most outstanding New Testament source that has something to say about the establishment of the church is the Pauline credo in 1 Corinthians 15:3-5b.<sup>10</sup> According to the credo, Peter (see also Lk 24:34) was the first observer of an appearance by the Resurrected One and therefore, viewed historically, was the "founder" of the church—a creed that assumes that this founding can be traced back to a deed of the resurrected



Jesus. A second aspect of this credo is that the Risen One appeared to “The Twelve” (1 Cor 15:5b) and also to “all the apostles” (1 Cor 15:7b). It could, with reference to this, be argued that Jesus himself *legitimated* “The Twelve” and in this way indirectly gave rise to the idea of the church (expressed in “The Twelve” as representatives of God’s chosen people).<sup>11</sup> However, there is no historical evidence that Jesus called “The Twelve” or sent out the “the apostles.” These designations seem to be interchangeable for Mark and for those documents that are modeled after Mark. Paul did not see it this way. He regarded the concept “apostles” as an expansion of “The Twelve” in Jerusalem. The group of Jesus followers in Jerusalem created the idea of “The Twelve.” The number twelve represented the apocalyptic “true Israel.” The circle of “The Twelve” came into being as a result of the traditions concerning the appearances of the resurrected Jesus.

The phrases “disciple of Jesus” and “follower of Jesus” have different connotations. Discipleship presupposes that the historical Jesus called someone who then physically followed him. Therefore, according to the gospel tradition, people such as Mary, Martha, Bartimaeus, and Zacchaeus were “followers” of Jesus but not “disciples.” The question is whether the designation of “The Twelve” in Mark (e.g., Mk 6:7) and John (e.g., Jn 6:67) should be seen as an “inner circle”<sup>12</sup> among Jesus’ disciples and whether the term “apostle” equates “disciple” and pertains particularly to the circle known as “The Twelve.”

Matthew also employed the phrase “the twelve disciples” (Mt 10:1; 11:1; possibly 20:17). This phrase seems to be an equivalent for “disciples.” If this is the case, “The Twelve” and the “disciples” were, according to Matthew, the same group of people. However, it is important to notice that the term “twelve apostles” also occurs in Matthew

(10:2). Luke, based on Mark, took over the Markan designation of “The Twelve” but does not employ the Matthean phrase “the twelve disciples” or “twelve apostles.” According to Meier<sup>13</sup> the “use of ‘the Twelve’ as completely equivalent to ‘the disciples’ does not reflect the earliest strata of Gospel traditions or the historical situation of Jesus’ ministry.” I fully agree with Meier in this regard, but I will argue that Jesus also did not call an “inner circle” to whom he referred as “The Twelve.” There is no historical evidence that Jesus was responsible for the concept “The Twelve” or the phenomenon “the apostles.”

Both the Markan character with the name “Levi” (see Mk 2:13-15) and the Johannine character with the designation the “beloved disciple” (also referred to as “the other disciple”— see Jn 13:23-25; 18:15, 16; 19:26-27; 20:2, 3, 8; 21:20-23) do not occur in the list of “The Twelve” (Mk 3:16-19). However, according to Mark and John, both were called “disciple.” It is remarkable that, at the time when Levi was reportedly called to be Jesus’ disciple (cf. Mk 2:15), Mark did not count him among “The Twelve.” At this stage in the Markan narrative, the individuals among “The Twelve” mentioned were Peter, Andrew, James, and John. The actual selection and naming of “The Twelve” was recorded for the first time in Mark 3:13-19.

Mark 3:7 makes a clear distinction between Jesus’ disciples and the crowds. Mark 3:13 could therefore be interpreted<sup>14</sup> that Jesus summoned “The Twelve” out of a larger group of disciples. This is how Luke understood Mark 3:13: “And [Jesus] called his disciples, and chose from them twelve....” With regard to Jesus’ calling of the “rich man” to be a disciple (Mk 10:17-22) one can also argue that a larger group of disciples apart from “The Twelve” existed. The fact that the “rich man” reportedly responded

negatively seems to be irrelevant for Mark when he referred to the “rich man” as a potential *disciple*.

However, in a number of cases Matthew redactionally changed Mark’s tendency to equate “The Twelve” with *all* of the disciples. In the case of Levi, Matthew transformed “the toll collector’s” name into “Matthew” – a name that is found in the list of “The Twelve.” Actually, in the Matthean narrative, no individual “disciple” appeared who was not named in the list. Whereas Luke (6:12-16) took over the Markan report of the selection and the naming of “The Twelve” (Mk 3:13-19), Matthew did not narrate a story in which Jesus called “The Twelve” out of a larger group of disciples. When Matthew referred to the calling of the “rich man” and his negative response, he characterized him as someone who associated himself with Jesus’ opponents.<sup>15</sup> Meier concludes: “Perhaps one can say that Matthew presents the circle of the Twelve as de facto coterminous with the circle of the disciples.”<sup>16</sup>

The word “apostles” refers to envoys sent by Jesus and it occurs only once in Mark (6:30). The parenthetical phrase (i.e., printed in italics) in Mark 3:14 (“and [Jesus] appointed twelve, *whom he also designated apostles*, in order to accompany him and to send them out to proclaim...”) should not be seen as the best reading.<sup>17</sup> It represents a secondary reading and should be regarded as a harmonization with Luke 6:13. The “Greek manuscript tradition evinces various attempts to harmonize Mark’s story of the selection of the Twelve with Matt 10:1-4 and Luke 6:12-16.”<sup>18</sup>

In Mark 6:30, the word “apostles” is used within the context of messengers who accomplished their missionary itinerary and it could refer to a concept known in Aramaic as *schaliach*.<sup>19</sup> This figure was a legitimized agent who was sent out with the full

authority of the sender. Matthew (10:2) took the reference to the “apostles” over from Mark. The context of Mark 6 represents the typical Markan “sandwich-style.”<sup>20</sup> Between the sending of *The Twelve*, two by two (Mk 6:7-13), and the return of *The Apostles* (Mk 6:30-32), the narrator intercalated the report of John the Baptist’s decapitation (Mk 6:1-29). A function of this particular narrating technique in Mark<sup>21</sup> could be to create for the implied reader a distance between the role of “The Twelve” and the *mission* of the “apostles.” However, this is no mere repetition, for the second part adds precision and clarifies the first part.<sup>22</sup> Both parts comprise a two-step progressive description. The first part is important, yet the emphasis often lies on the second step, which usually contains the more significant element.”<sup>23</sup>

After his reference to the completion of the mission by the messengers (“apostles”), Mark does not use the word “apostles” any longer. At least one can conclude that when Mark linked “The Twelve” to the concept “apostles,” he did it only within the context of mission. But Markan research has also pointed out that the “disciples” in Mark’s story were not very enthusiastic to serve people from outside the boundaries of their own homeland. The story of the apostles’ return is followed by the “double story” about Jesus giving bread to people. In the first narration of this story (Mk 6:35-44), the recipients of bread were people from the land of Israel and the disciples took the initiative (cf. Mk 6:35). In the second version (Mk 8:1-10) the recipients were from across the boundaries of the homeland and the disciples were not only hesitant to react on Jesus’ initiative but were also unwilling to act as mediators of Jesus’ gift of bread to the people. This “double story” is again intercalated by, among others, the report of the Syro-Phoenician woman (Mk 7:24-30) who received leftover bread intended

to be consumed by dogs. A possible interpretation of Mark's narrative point of view in the mission discourse could be to understand the intention of his creation of a distance between "The Twelve" (i.e., the "disciples") and the "apostles" as an illustration that the nature of their "apostolate" was particularistic. This is exactly how Matthew (10:5) interpreted Mark. Yet, in line with his overall narrative point of view, Matthew did not report this particularistic attitude pejoratively.

However, a comparison with Luke clearly points out that Luke did not consider the "apostles" as equivalent to "The Twelve." For Luke, "apostles" were rather the "itinerants" who traveled two-by-two (seemingly male and female).<sup>24</sup> It is therefore noticeable that Luke did not characterize Paul as an "apostle." In the Lukan mission discourse, the "itinerants" were numbered seventy (or seventy-two, according to other early manuscripts). It is also important to see that Luke expanded the "mission of the disciples" into a journey with Jesus from Galilee to Jerusalem (commencing at Lk 9:51) and that they traveled through Samaria. Luke also made it clear that the "disciples James and John" (sons of Zebedee) wanted the Samaritans to be struck by an apocalyptic catastrophe similar to Sodom and Gomorrah (Lk 9:51-56). The sons of Zebedee clearly disapproved of Jesus travelling through Samaria and their hatred towards the Samaritans was easily evoked by the bastards' reported antagonism against Jesus. Luke (9:57-62) however compared James and John to "would-be followers" of Jesus. The "itinerants," on the other hand, were implicitly described as "apostles."<sup>25</sup> They traveled to "every city and place" where Jesus himself was prepared to go (Lk 10:1). According to the context in Luke, this reference would include Samaria.

In light of our knowledge of Luke's overall conservative transmission of Q traditions, one can assume that Matthew's version represented more of a radical

redactional change of the Q tradition than Luke. In the Sayings Gospel Q and in Luke, the itinerant emissaries were distinguished from “The Twelve” in Jerusalem. This can be seen in the designation in the mission discourse of those who were sent out as “others.”<sup>26</sup> Luke described this group as seventy or seventy-two (Lk 10:1). This is a clear distinction between the “mission of the disciples” and the “mission of the seventy/seventy-two.” These “itinerants” were depicted against the disciples such as the sons of Zebedee to whom Luke explicitly referred as “disciples” (Lk 10:5), but in Mark (3:16f) as “The Twelve.” Thus, both Luke and Mark created a distance between the “itinerants” and the “disciples”/“The Twelve.” The opposing ideologies behind this distinction can be read between the lines as that of a particularistic mission and a universal mission.

We have seen that Matthew changed this and equated the “itinerants” with the “twelve disciples” (Mt 10:1). He also referred to them as the “twelve apostles” (Mt 10:2) and said that they did not travel on the “road to the nations” or visit a “city in Samaria” (Mt 10:5), but *rather* proclaimed the “approaching kingdom of heavens” only to the “lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Mt 10:6). The “rich man” was, for Matthew, a potential follower of Jesus who chose to share the ideological perspective of Jesus’ opponents (in Matthew represented by the “coalition” of Pharisees, Sadducees, chief priests, and the “elders” in Jerusalem).<sup>27</sup> In Matthew, the “rich man” was not seen as a disciple. He displayed an ambivalence similar to that of the character of the person without a wedding garment (Mt 22:11-13) in the parable of the wedding banquet.<sup>28</sup> In Matthew, disciples of “little faith” were also tempted to collaborate with the enemy. Like the “rich man,” Judas (a “disciple” among “The Twelve”) and other renegades revealed their preference by using names for Jesus that were constantly used by the antagonists in Matthew’s story.<sup>29</sup>

My hypothesis with regard to Matthew is that Matthew conformed to the Jesus faction in Jerusalem. The existence of such a group is historically sure. Independent multiple witnesses of the role of, among others, James (the brother of Jesus) in this group are found in the Pauline tradition (Gl 1:19; Acts 1:14 [implied]; 15:13 [explicit]) and Josephus (*Antiquitates* 20.200). Similar witnesses with regard to the killing of James (the brother of John), due to his role in the Jesus faction in Jerusalem, occur in Mark 10:38ff. (implied) and in Acts 12:1ff. (explicit). According to information gained from the gospel tradition, this faction was probably formed around a core group (the “inner-circle”) that Paul (Gl 2:9) referred to as “the pillars” (of which Cephas, i.e. Peter, and James, i.e., the brother of Jesus, and the brothers James and John were the leaders). This group idealized their movement by thinking about it as the “end-time Israel” and referring to the “first” disciples as “The Twelve.” This designation is clearly analogous to “the twelve patriarchs” referred to in the Hebrew Scriptures.

It seems as though Luke (and Mark as the source of Luke) knew that the indication of the “inner circle” as “the twelve disciples” was not authentic. Therefore, they interpreted “The Twelve” as a selection from a larger group of disciples. We have seen that Matthew differed from Mark and Luke by equating the “disciples” with “The Twelve.” Matthew would not use the term “disciple” when referring to potential disciples. He therefore changed the name “Levi” into “Matthew” in order to have all “disciples” explicitly referred to by a name that appears in the list of “The Twelve.” This list was taken over from Mark, but probably originated earlier within the Jerusalem faction. Paul was acquainted with a group in Jerusalem called “The Twelve” but he did not mention their names. He only mentioned the leaders Peter and James. Paul’s

reference to “*all* the apostles” in juxtaposition to “The Twelve” in 1 Corinthians 15:3-7 indicates that “apostles” were people who should be seen as an *extension* of “The Twelve.” It means that “The Twelve” were also seen as “apostles,” but the “apostles” were not restricted to “The Twelve.”

In Luke-Acts, “The Twelve” were distinguished from a “crowd of disciples” and also from the “servants of the word” (see Lk 1:2). Probably due to Pauline influence, the election of Matthias in Acts (1:26) was described as an addition to the “eleven apostles” (cf. also Acts 2:14). In Acts 6:2, the eleven plus Matthias are called “The Twelve.” After Acts 6:2 both the terms “The Twelve” and “apostles” do not appear in Acts again. It seems that the “servants of the word” took over the role of the “apostles” as if they were athletes in a relay race. In Luke 1:2, these two “character roles” were anticipated by means of the expressions “eyewitnesses” and “ministers of the word.” It is, however, noticeable that Luke did not describe Matthias as an “apostle.”

It seems that for both Paul and Luke, someone could only claim to be an “apostle” if he<sup>30</sup> was a “witness of Jesus’ resurrection” (Acts 1:22; 1 Cor 15:7f). This is the reason why Paul saw himself as an “apostle,” though the “last among the apostles” (1 Cor 15:9). Apart from witnessing Jesus’ resurrection, Acts (1:22) also expected an apostle to be someone who accompanied Jesus from his baptism to his ascension (see the term “eyewitnesses” in Lk 1:2). In this regard Luke could not have been influenced by the Pauline tradition, since Paul never knew the historical Jesus. This material is peculiar to Luke (in German: *Sondergut*). It also explains why Luke, apart from Acts 14:4 and 14, preferred not to call Paul an “apostle.”<sup>31</sup>



However, the New Testament does not attest unanimously that the “apostles” were the same as “The Twelve.” We have seen that this is Matthew’s presentation. In this regard, it could be that Matthew conformed to the Jerusalem faction’s opinion. The world of Matthew seems to depict a Syrian situation (Antioch?) that reflected Pauline influence, albeit more than forty years after Paul’s contact with Antioch.<sup>32</sup> According to Meier<sup>33</sup> “(t)he viewpoint of the late-first-century church may be reflected ever so fleetingly here.” For Mark, “apostles” were emissaries who should be distinguished from the Jerusalem faction.

This distinction indicates Mark’s use of the second redactional layer (according to Burton Mack,<sup>34</sup> Q<sup>3</sup> additions) of the Sayings Gospel Q.<sup>35</sup> The tradition about Jesus addressing his followers as “lambs among wolves” originated prior to the first “formative” stratum of Q. This saying, however, does not appear in Mark. Scholars increasingly “assume the literary independence of the Sayings Gospel Q and Mark, as well as their use of some shared tradition.”<sup>36</sup> Parts of the “mission discourse” (Mk 6:6b-13, 30; Lk 10:1-22; Mt 10:1-42/43) are examples of these shared traditions.

The “formative” stratum of Q underwent at least two major redactional changes. Apart from the “formative” stratum (Q<sup>1</sup>), a second (Q<sup>2</sup>) and a third stratum (Q<sup>3</sup>) can be distinguished. The reference in the “mission discourse” (Q 10:3) to the *sending out* (u9pa/gete: i0dou a0poste/llw u9ma=j ) of “The Twelve” (Mk 6:7) / “others” (Lk 10:1) / “the twelve disciples” (Mt 10:1) as “wandering missionaries” seems to be part of the first “formative” stratum. The designation of the followers of Jesus as either “The Twelve” (Mark), “the twelve disciples” (Matthew) or simply “others” (Luke), seems not to appear in Q<sup>1</sup> but is rather the product of the three synoptics’ respective

responses to a tradition. In other words, designating the “inner circle” of the followers of Jesus as “The Twelve” represents a pre-Markan tradition.

One can infer that some uneasiness with regard to this tradition caused the synoptics to reflect on its meaning. We have seen that Mark considered it necessary to distinguish between the sending of “The Twelve” (Mk 6:7) and the successful return of “apostles” (Mk 6:3). The designation “apostles” is a Markan addition. It does not occur in the “mission discourse” found in the Q collections.<sup>37</sup> Matthew combined the concept “disciple” with “The Twelve” (Mt 10:1; 11:1), but did not report the successful completion of the mission, as did Mark and Luke.<sup>38</sup> Instead, Matthew considered it necessary to give the “twelve disciples” their own identity over the “disciples” of John the Baptist (Mt 11:2ff.). This episode appears in Luke before the commencement of the mission.

Luke emphasized that the “itinerants” were *other* persons than “The Twelve.” In Matthew’s “mission discourse,” the list of the names of “The Twelve” appears at the beginning of the mission (Mt 10:2-4), described as a mission to the “lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Mt 10:6). Jesus’ appointment of “The Twelve” and the presentation of a list of their names coincide in Mark’s gospel (Mk 3:16-19) and are reported to have happened prior to the mission (Mk 6:7ff). In Luke (6:14-16) the list of twelve names appears *before* Jesus reportedly presented a Sermon on the Plain (Lk 6:20-49) and *before* he sent *others* on a mission beyond the boundaries of the homeland of the Israelites (Lk 10:1ff). As I have said, Matthew mentioned the list at the beginning of the mission discourse (Mt 10:2) and the mission is reported to have happened *after* the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5-7). It is probably Mark’s reference that “The Twelve” were sent out “two-

by-two” (Mk 6:7) means that Matthew arranged the twelve names in six pairs. Luke saw the mission of the “seventy”/“seventy-two” as an itinerary of pairs.

The idea of the *sending out* is a Q<sup>1</sup> addition to the tradition that Jesus compared his followers with “lambs among wolves.” This addition, as is generally the case with the other Q<sup>1</sup> additions,<sup>39</sup> seemingly intended to make the Jesus sayings relevant to a larger Israelite community. It is unclear whether Q<sup>1</sup> already contained a list of the twelve names or that it should rather be seen as a Q<sup>2</sup> addition. Be that as it may, it appears that in the collections of the Sayings Gospel Q a list of “The Twelve”<sup>40</sup> was included at the second stratum phase of the tradition history of Q. But I will also argue that a pre-Markan list existed that differs from the one that was included in Q<sup>3</sup>.

This second stratum was prompted by the opposition from the ranks of Israel against the Jesus movement before the Romans destroyed the temple in 70 C.E. It led to Q<sup>2</sup> additions in which the mission to Israel was extended to the nations. After the war, the Q community sought its self-identity in light of increasing Pharisaic bigotry. Q<sup>2</sup> also introduced apocalyptic eschatology into Jesus sayings. It can be seen in the “appended prophetic threat” in Q 10:13-15.<sup>41</sup> This addition pertained to an announcement in Q 10:11 that the kingdom was near. In Q 10:13ff., it also pertained to woes against antagonized Galilean cities and to an announcement that those who rejected the “laborers” would be judged. These elements are absent from Mark. It is possible that both the proclamation of judgment and the woes against Capernaum, Gorazin, and Bethsaida as the “Galilean counterpart of Jerusalem”<sup>42</sup> should be seen as Q<sup>3</sup> additions.<sup>43</sup>

In the third stratum (i.e., the “second recension” of the “formative” stratum), the mission discourse was reinterpreted from an “universal” perspective. Both Matthew and Luke

used the third version of the Sayings Gospel Q,<sup>44</sup> but Mark was only acquainted with the second version of Q. Luke was closer to the intention of Q<sup>3</sup>, while Matthew redactionally changed some aspects of the “universal” tendency in Q<sup>3</sup>. Luke knew that the “intinerants” were not “The Twelve,” but Matthew equated them with “The Twelve.” Whereas, for Mark, “The Twelve” (Mk 6:7-13) were linked with the “apostles” (Mk 6:30-32), for Luke the concepts “disciples” and “apostles” were interchangeable.

Luke is the only witness of the tradition (either the creator thereof or he took it over from the Jerusalem faction)<sup>45</sup> that the number “twelve” was restored by the selection of Matthias after Judas’ death. In the “salvation history” scheme of Luke-Acts, this “historical” core group is separated from the “servants of the word” (such as Stephen and Paul). In the Lukan narrative the “disciples”/“apostles” fulfilled their role within the central part of the narrative (in German: the *Mitte der Mitte*). In Luke’s salvation history, the Jesus story forms the middle narrative line and should be seen as apart from the story of the prophets (the first narrative line) and the story of the church (the third narrative line). In the plot of Acts, the “servants of the word” appear later. According to Acts, they took the Jesus tradition over from Peter as the leader among the “apostles”/“disciples.” The “servants” are characters in the story of the church that began in Jerusalem with the missionary work of Peter and the other “pillars” and ended in Rome with Paul’s mission.

Paul explicitly referred only to Peter as an *apostle* (see Gl 1:17-19; 2:8). Allusions in this regard to John (the son of Zebedee) and James (the brother of Jesus) seem to be ambiguous. Within the context of Galatians 2:1-10, the reference to James and John (vs 9) in juxtaposition to Cephas (explicitly called an apostle in vs 8) could

indicate that they were included among the apostles. Also Galatians 1:19 may be read as “I did not see any other of the apostles *except* (in Greek: εἰὼ μὴ) James” or as “I did not see any other of the apostles, *but* (in Greek: εἰὼ μὴ) [I did see] James.”<sup>46</sup> In 1 Corinthians 15:9, Paul saw himself as “the last of the apostles.” Because of this reference and also his articulation “*all* the apostles” as an expansion of the “The Twelve,” it seems that Paul did not fully equate the “apostles” with “The Twelve.” He did, however, regard “The Twelve” as among the “apostles.” The context of Galatians 1 and 2 also does not clearly indicate whether Paul regarded only Peter, James (the brother of Jesus), and John (the son of Zebedee) or the entire group of “The Twelve” as the “pillars” (Gl 2:9).

In the New Testament as a whole, references to the “The Twelve” are relatively scarce:

(T)he Twelve are mentioned in the Four Gospels, in the pre-Pauline formula in 1 Cor 15:5, and in the early chapters of the Acts of the Apostles (the group called the Twelve is never mentioned after Acts 6:2, while even references to “the apostles” diminish notably after chap.8, disappearing entirely after 16:4). This exhausts all purportedly historical reports of the Twelve in the NT. They are mentioned again only fleetingly in Rev. 21:14, an apocalyptic vision of the heavenly Jerusalem at the end of time (“the twelve apostles of the Lamb”).<sup>47</sup>

According to Meier,<sup>48</sup> the “reasons for the swift disappearance or total absence of the Twelve from most of the NT are unclear.” He suggests that after the death of some members (such as the martyred James, the son of Zebedee) during the first decade after Jesus’ crucifixion, “it made little sense to continue to speak of the Twelve in regard to the present situation of the church...” Or it could be that “the power of the Twelve as a group was eclipsed by the ascendancy of individual leaders like Peter or James [the brother of

Jesus?], or some other members of the Twelve imitated Peter in undertaking a mission to Diaspora Jews in the East or the West—thus leaving no visible group of twelve leaders ‘on the scene’ in Palestine.” Meier summarizes Schmithals’ viewpoint as follows: <sup>49</sup>

(1) a life of Jesus without the Twelve, (2) the sudden creation of the Twelve after Easter as a result of a resurrection appearance, (3) the conferral of such an important and lofty status on the Twelve in the early church that the group was retrojected into various streams of NT tradition (Mark, Q, L, and John), (4) the disintegration of the Twelve quite early as the apostasy of Judas and not later that the martyrdom of James the son of Zebedee, and consequently (5) the almost total absence of the Twelve from the rest of the traditions and writings of the first-century church.

Meier regards it as specifically “complicated” when Schmithals<sup>50</sup> notes that Mark was the first to retroject “The Twelve” into the public ministry. Schmithals, like many other historical critical exegetes (e.g., the Jesus Seminar),<sup>51</sup> sees Mark’s transfiguration story (Mk 9:2-8) as a reworked edition of a story of an appearance of the risen Jesus.

The appearance tradition links up with Mark’s understanding of Jesus as Son-of-God within a Greco-Roman environment and the apostolate of the church outside the boundaries of Judean particularity. What actually happens here is that Meier expresses his disapproval of Schmithals who says that Mark was the first to “free” the Jerusalem faction from its particularistic attitude by transforming its self-designation (as though the members are “The Twelve”) into “apostles.”<sup>52</sup> By doing so, Mark in fact criticized the leaders of the Jesus faction in Jerusalem.

Although Meier sees this view as a “convoluted hypothesis,” I concur fully with Schmithals in this regard. According to Meier, Schmithals sketches the origin and

disappearance of the idea of “The Twelve” as a “meteoric rise” followed by a “meteoric fall.” It “strains credulity and in the end is totally unnecessary.”<sup>53</sup> Meier utilizes both the “criteria” of “multiple independent attestation” and “embarrassment” to argue that the “circle of the Twelve did (probably) exist during Jesus’ public ministry.” However, I will argue in light of Meier’s discussion of “multiple independent attestation” against the probability that Jesus created the idea of “The Twelve.”<sup>54</sup> Both concepts “The Twelve” and “apostles” are lacking in the earliest Jesus traditions.<sup>55</sup> The idea of “The Twelve” should rather be seen as going back to the earliest Jesus faction in Jerusalem.<sup>56</sup>

The primary evidence for this statement, from a tradition critical perspective, is that both Paul and Mark related their knowledge of the idea of “The Twelve” to their receipt of the kerygmatic tradition (i.e., the gospel about the salvation through the death and resurrection of Jesus). This tradition is said to have been taken over from the leaders in the Jerusalem faction who regarded themselves as “The Twelve.” From the ten (or eleven) times that Mark mentioned “The Twelve,” two “at least...seem firmly embedded in the pre-Markan tradition”:<sup>57</sup> the list of names in Mark 3:16-19 and the reference to Judas as “one of the Twelve” in Mark 14:43.

The following synopsis<sup>58</sup> clearly indicates that Matthew and Luke represent an independent tradition about “The Twelve” with regard to Mark :

<b>Mark</b>	<b>Matthew</b>	<b>Luke</b>	<b>Acts</b>
<b>3:16-19</b>	<b>10:2-4</b>	<b>6:14-16</b>	<b>1:13</b>

*First Group of Four*

Simon Peter	Simon Peter	Simon Peter	Simon Peter
James [son of] Zebedee	Andrew his brother	Andrew his brother	John Zebedee
John brother of James	James [son of] Zebedee	James	James
Andrew	John his brother	John	Andrew

*Second Group of Four*

Philip	Philip	Philip	Philip
Bartholomew	Bartholomew	Bartholomew	Thomas
Matthew	Thomas	Matthew	Bartholomew
Thomas	Matthew the toll collector	Thomas	Matthew

*Third Group of Four*

James [son of]	James [son of]	James [son of]	James[son of]
Alphaeus	Alphaeus	Alphaeus	Alphaeus
Thaddeus	Thaddeus	Simon the Zealot	Simon the Zealot
Simon the Cananean	Simon the Cananean	Jude [of] James	Jude [of] James
Judas Iscariot	Judas Iscariot	Judas Iscariot	

An explanation of the differences in the texts above is that a list of “The Twelve” was orally transmitted before it was taken up in the narrative gospels and that the differences occurred during the oral transmission.<sup>59</sup> According to Sanders,<sup>60</sup> Jesus referred only symbolically to his disciples as “twelve.” Consequently, it could be that there was not necessarily always a group of twelve followers around him.



Meier<sup>61</sup> does not think the lists vary much. The only name that varies in all four lists is *Thaddeus* versus *Jude of James*. According to Meier,<sup>62</sup> the “replacement of Thaddeus by Jude of James finds no explanation in the theological program or stylistic preferences of Luke.” I am in agreement with this judgment. I also agree that Luke 6:14-16 most likely represents a “tradition of the names of the Twelve that is independent of that in Mark 3:16-19.” But I disagree that this evidence “witnesses both to the existence of the Twelve during the life of Jesus and the names of the individuals who made up the Twelve.” Multiple independent attestations illustrate four other points:

- A single list that could go back to Jesus himself did not exist.
- A pre-Markan list that differed from the one that was added to Q<sup>2</sup> (in other words, a Q<sup>3</sup> addition) existed.
- The list in Q<sup>3</sup> was used by Luke and Matthew (and also known to John).
- Matthew’s list represents both an acquaintance with Q<sup>3</sup> and redactional changes of the list found in Mark.

We have seen that the list of the names of “The Twelve” appears in Matthew at the beginning of the mission discourse. The fourth point is therefore specifically important because it demonstrates that the *Sitz im Leben* of the sending of “twelve apostles” on a mission does not go back to the historical Jesus. In this regard, Kloppenborg’s remark about Matthew’s conflation of Q with Mark is relevant:<sup>63</sup>

That Matthew both conflates Q with Mark and displaces Marcan stories is a matter of empirical fact. When we encounter a Q pericope that is conflated

with a Marcan story [e.g., the *sending* (Q) of *the Twelve, designated as apostles* (Mark) and, therefore, referred to as *twelve apostles* (Matthew)] we may assume that the setting is secondary. Similarly, when a cluster of Q sayings [e.g., those relating to the “mission discourse”] is placed in such a way as to fulfil a specific function in respect to the *Marcan framework or Marcan materials* (i.e., a function it could not originally have had in Q [e.g., Mark’s presentation of the mission discourse in terms of his “sandwich-style”]), then its position is certainly secondary (emphasis by Kloppenborg, but my additions).

Yet the *difference* in the lists with regard to *Thaddeus* and *Jude of James* is not the real issue. It is the *similarity* with regard to the place of *Judas Iscariot*, despite of the respective redactional changes made by all three synoptists, that points to a common pre-Markan *Sitz im Leben*. This setting however does not go back to the historical Jesus. Both the research of John Shelby Spong (Judas was Mark’s invention) and John Dominic Crossan (Judas was a real person but Mark’s story about Judas’ betrayal is fiction with the aim to place the guilt on the Judean elite) point to a unauthentic situation.<sup>64</sup>

The most important issue is the fact that the reference to Judas Iscariot is independently linked to the “Last Supper” as an eschatological meal (cf. Mk 14:17-25; Jn 13:18-30). It is possible that Jesus could have had such a “last meal” with close followers but the interpretation of this meal as an eschatological event, in all probability, goes back to the earliest Jesus movement in Jerusalem. This evidence is also supported by John 14:22. Where Judas Iscariot referred back to John 13:18-30 and was called “Judas son of Simon Iscariot.” The context here pertains to the tradition of the “Last Supper” as an eschatological meal. Thus, in light of the diversity of the “list” tradition, we cannot affirm the existence of *a* list that could be traced to the historical Jesus.

However, we can trace the tradition of “The Twelve” back to the origins of the kerygmatic tradition because of Mark’s passion tradition with regard to Judas’ betrayal.

The “minor agreement” between Matthew 19:28 and Luke 22:30 supports my belief that the Jerusalem faction was responsible for putting itself on the pedestal of the “new” Israel. The common source of this saying is Q<sup>3</sup>.<sup>65</sup> From a post-war situation Q<sup>3</sup> reflected on the position of the Jesus movement that originated in Jerusalem. It attested to a position of trying to clarify its self-identity in light of the Pharisaic reformation at Jamnia. The difference between Matthew 19:28 and Luke 22:30 with regard to Q<sup>3</sup> is important. It demonstrates their respective attitudes towards the Jerusalem faction. These perspectives cohere with their overall ideological points of view. Matthew, who conformed to the Jerusalem tradition, wrote: “you shall sit on *twelve thrones* obtaining justice (in Greek: *kri/nontej*) for the *twelve tribes of Israel*.” Luke, who was ambivalent towards the Jerusalem tradition and, on the one hand, legitimized the “authority” of the *apostles in Jerusalem* but, on the other hand, did not regard them as “The Twelve”, wrote: “You shall sit on *thrones* obtaining justice for the *twelve tribes of Israel*.”

Meier asks:<sup>66</sup> “Did ‘the Twelve’ count as ‘apostles’ in the earliest days of the church?” Scholars such as Günter Klein and Walter Schmithals do not think so. Jürgen Roloff believes that they were.<sup>67</sup> Meier says: “It was in the early church that ‘apostle’ was first used as a set designation for a specific group—though different authors used the designation in different ways.”<sup>68</sup> Which of these opinions is correct can only be ascertained if expressions such as the “earliest days of the church” and “early church” are clarified. We must keep in mind that, since its earliest days, the “church” was a diverse

phenomenon.

Considering only the form-critical development of the disciple/apostle tradition, it has become clear that the post-Easter resurrection belief in particular influenced this tradition. This influence pertains specifically to the convictions held in Jerusalem by influential male followers of Jesus. They regarded themselves as “apostles” (i.e., legitimized “agents” of the cause of Jesus) and as the most important “prophets” (i.e., “The Twelve” analogous to the twelve patriarchs) of the “new Israel.”

The tradition history of the “disciples’ mission” be can diagrammatically be described as follows:

### **The historical Jesus**

(addressing followers as “lambs among wolves”)

### **The Jerusalem faction**

(“inner circle” was “The Twelve,” “apostles” of Jesus, the Messiah)

**Q<sup>1</sup>**

(reference to discipleship and God’s kingdom; unclear whether a list of twelve names was included)

### **Paul**

(“The Twelve” expanded to *other* “apostles” of Jesus Christ, including Paul himself)

**Q<sup>2</sup>**

(mission to larger Israelite community; a list of twelve names included and apocalyptic woes added, but without a return reported)

### **Mark**

(a list of twelve disciples *and* the mission of “The Twelve” to “Israel” [including those living in the Decapolis]; woes included and the return of the *apostles* separately reported)

**Q<sup>3</sup>**

(a list of twelve names; mission discourse included woes, but without a return reported)

### **Matthew**

(conflation of Q<sup>3</sup> with Mark: Markan list of the twelve disciples coincided with the mission of “twelve apostles” [i.e., non-Markan tradition in conformation with the Jerusalem faction] to “lost sheep of Israel” [i.e., non-Markan tradition]; woes included but no return reported [i.e., non-Markan tradition but rather Q<sup>3</sup> ])

### **Luke**

(influenced by Pauline tradition and both Q<sup>3</sup> and Mark: adapted list of twelve names and mission of seventy/seventy-two *other* apostles to Israelites, Samaritans, and Gentiles; woes included; in connection with Mark, a successful return is reported in terms of Lukan *Sondergut*)

### **Revelation**

(the “twelve apostles of the Lamb” [a tradition shared by Matthew in conformation with the Jerusalem faction; in Revelation, the expression “twelve apostles” symbolizes the “heavenly Jerusalem”]).

## From Jesus to the Church

We have seen that the Jesus of history did not see his death as a kerygma, as a gospel, as “good tidings.” Seen as “condensed history,” however, the earliest Jesus movement in Jerusalem understood the crucifixion as something intended by Jesus himself. They found proof for this in the Hebrew Scriptures. Yet there were also other early factions among the followers of Jesus. An example is the audiences to whom the Sayings Gospel Q and the Gospel of Thomas were directed. They followed Jesus simply as an “ethical model.” Seemingly, they did not need the apocalyptic kerygma (i.e., an Israelite-Hellenistic notion) of Jesus dying and rising. This kerygma originated in the Jerusalem movement and was transmitted to Paul and Mark, and from them on to other New Testament writings.

The inclusive and egalitarian perspectives presented in the sayings and deeds of the historical Jesus are the ones, which were mainly expressed fully within the faction that became known as the *church* (in Greek:  $\epsilon\omicron\kappa\kappa\lambda\eta\sigma\iota/a$ ). This expression should be “technically” understood as reference to the faction distinguished from the *synagogue* (in Greek:  $\sigma\upsilon\nu\alpha\gamma\omega\gamma\eta$ ). For this reason, the forming of the church cannot be viewed as being totally discontinuous to Jesus. The discontinuity pertains to the Paschal kerygma. The continuity pertains to the church’s inclusiveness and egalitarianism. Viewed historically, the establishment of the church (in German: die *entstehende Kirche*) is therefore, because of the discontinuity, not totally identical to the pre-Easter Jesus movement.<sup>69</sup>

The transition from the Jesus movement to the church represents phases of a sociological process. Historically, diversity can be indicated early. Some groups (for instance, the non-kerygmatic followers of Jesus in Northern and Trans-Jordan who, in certain later sources, were referred to as the sect of the Nazarenes and are closely related to the Ebionites) linked themselves closely to the historical Jesus, but, in fact, theirs was an exclusive and very particularly focused nationalist ideology discontinuous with the Jesus of history. It does not really matter whether these followers of Jesus are to be mentioned in the same breath as, or alongside, the Jerusalem group.

However, they must be distinguished from that Jesus movement in Antioch designated by outsiders (Romans? Or Judeans in Jerusalem?) as “Christians” (in Greek: *Xristianoï*/—see Acts 11:26; 26:28; 1 Pet 4:16). Luke’s acquaintance with the Antioch tradition probably came by way of the Pauline tradition. In this regard, one can say that between Paul and the Jesus movement in Jerusalem stood the Hellenistic churches in Antioch, Damascus, and Tarsus.<sup>70</sup> Paul was converted to this community of believers in Damascus and Antioch—a Jesus movement with a universal and egalitarian aim. It was a conversion that was described by Paul himself as the experience that the Crucified One still lived, that God had made known his “Son” (Jesus) to him (Paul) (Gl 2:12, 16), and that he (Paul) was crucified with the Crucified One, so that he was now living with the Crucified One (Gl 2:20; Phlp 3:10-11). The origins of the movement that is called “Christianity” are grounded in the kerygma of this “new life.”

The pre-Easter Jesus movement and the establishment of the post-Easter church cannot therefore be absolutely separated from each other.<sup>71</sup> This continuity is, as far as the process of group forming is concerned, like links in a chain. The first link represents

the phase during which an isolated group within the boundaries of a parent body<sup>72</sup> comes into being. The “parent body,” in this case, was “Israel” (consisting of diverse groups like the Sadducees, Pharisees, Essenes, and Samaritans), defining themselves genealogically by means of the metaphor “family”<sup>73</sup> and, indeed, in the physical sense as the “children of Abraham.” The start of the first phase may be situated historically in the time when Jesus was still identifying closely with John the Baptist and started attracting disciples (followers).

### **From Faction to Sect to Church**

“Christianity” came into being as a set of factions within Israel. Differences and tensions about particular matters (especially as far as the resurrection faith, the nonphysical understanding of the concept “children of Abraham,” and the belief in the miraculous conception of Jesus were concerned) lead to the development of “Christianity,” which consisted of different factions, into a sect that eventually became the church (in Greek: *e0kk1hsi/a*), independent from and opposed to the synagogue (in Greek: *sunagwh/*).

The nonphysical understanding of the concept “children of Abraham” is particularly well expressed in Romans 9:8.<sup>74</sup> Here the “children of God” form a fictive family. As we have already seen, this concept can be traced back to Jesus. Jesus, whose relationship to his own family was tense, cherished the notion of an imaginary familial structure. In this fictive family, God fulfilled the role of Father. The mutual relations



between the members of the family as brothers and sisters were not necessarily determined by biological, and therefore, ethnic kinship.

This understanding of God formed the basis of the social constitution of Christianity. It is the basis of the fundamental difference between Israel and the church. Israel also used the metaphor “family” to indicate the bonds that invisibly linked Israelites to one another. Herein lay the justification for the excommunication of groups like the Samaritans and the Christians. According to the Pauline and Johannine traditions, Christians formed the “spiritual” Israel, while those belonging to the Judean temple formed the cult, “Israel in the flesh.” Genealogy indicated the bonding of the latter.<sup>75</sup>

In this regard, the genealogical register of Jesus and the nativity and childhood narratives in the gospel of Matthew reflect in a remarkable way the break between the church and the synagogue. Jesus’ “sonship of Abraham” does not exist on the basis of physical kinship. The infancy narrative in the gospel of Matthew emphasizes God’s legitimization of Jesus as child of God. The metaphor “the church as the household of God” has its origins in these Jesus events. It also explains the fundamental distinction between the synagogue and the church. This break between the synagogue and the church,<sup>76</sup> that is, the coming into being and rise of the church, can be studied as a movement from a faction to a sect.

When a person became conscious of the necessity of change and started sharing this consciousness with others he or she cherished the expectation that change within a particular cultural context could be brought about successfully. Small groups then formed.<sup>77</sup> The investigations of sociologists into the factors that gave rise to factions in

society help us to understand the establishment of the church. Four prerequisites for the forming of small groups can be distinguished:<sup>78</sup>

- conditions for change are favorable;
- a vision of a new situation comes into being;
- this vision is accompanied by the expectation that change will be brought about successfully;
- the social system (society) within which the change is brought about inherently contains the possibility of accommodating or facilitating problem-solving groups.

Favorable conditions for change were the manipulation of the Roman Empire (and the Herodians as its client kings) and the exploitative and exclusive temple ideology of the Judeans centered in Jerusalem. During the time of the historical Jesus, the Jerusalem cult was an outrage and led to the formation of the different factions among the Jesus movement. The historical Jesus offered an alternative order for life and redefined the concept of power as compassion. He did this by his ironical use of “kingdom” as the apogee of power in the sense of imperial rule. Through his (often metaphoric) words and deeds, he himself became the living symbol of a vision that focused on both his conception of God and on society in terms of a father-child relationship. In spite of being considered alienated from God, fervor that the above-mentioned vision might offer special opportunities to authentic life for outcasts loomed.

Historically, this conversion to a new life was a phenomenon in both pre-Paschal and post-Paschal Jesus movements. In the Jerusalem and Pauline movements, one finds

such an “alternative consciousness” expressed in the resurrection faith. During the period before 70 C.E., the relative accommodating spirit prevalent within a variety of Judaisms (Sadducees, Pharisees, and Essenes—the severe antagonism against the “impure” Joseph tribe [the Samaritans] was an exception to the rule) made possible the forming of Jesus factions. The increasing intolerance after 70 C.E. resulting from the Pharisaic reformation<sup>79</sup> at the “Jamnia Academy” and at centers of scribal activity in Galilee and Syria caused the Jesus factions to develop into sects and ultimately into “churches” independent of and opposed to Judaism. The following phases<sup>80</sup> may, sociologically speaking, be distinguished in the forming of groups: forming, storming, norming, performing, and adjourning.

In the period of *forming*, Jesus shared his alternative vision with similarly disillusioned people who suffered as a result of oppressive circumstances and alienation from God. This is the phase of the pre-Easter Jesus movement. The period of *storming* pertains to the actions of the Herodian dynasty, village leaders in Galilee and Judean “royalties” against the cause of Jesus. Against the background of the brutality of Roman imperial might, Jesus’ life culminated in the traumatic events of the crucifixion. The confusion of his bewildered disciples led to a highly diverse post-Easter Jesus movement. The recovery of a section, first led by Peter and then by James, the brother of Jesus, within the Jerusalem movement was accomplished through their resurrection faith.<sup>81</sup> The diversity was probably a result of the following set of factors:

- The search for an identity in view of the development away from, first, the Judean ideology in Jerusalem and, later, the Pharisaic movement at Jamnia and in Galilee/Syria.
- The issue of whether the vision of Jesus has to be seen as the “narrow gate,” in contradistinction to the temple cult and the Pharisaic movement as the “wide gate.”<sup>82</sup>
- The issue of how to interpret the nature of Jesus’ death. Foremost, one finds among the “pillars of faith” in Jerusalem the apocalyptic inference that Jesus’ martyr-like vicarious death should be seen as a “ransom for many.” This tradition was also taken over by Paul and Mark and authors depending on them. It is an assessment that could be influenced by questions as to how the offense caused by the scandal of the crucifixion could be overcome (Jesus’ brother, James); how one could make peace with intense sorrow because of denial (Peter) or because of persecution of those who proclaimed Jesus’ cause (Paul); and how one could deal with intense personal reminiscences (Mary Magdalene)?
- The issue of the crossing of the boundaries between Israel and the Gentiles (including the Samaritans). Was this a logical consequence of Jesus’ compassionate vision towards degraded people and of his pushing against the conventions of the Judean purity regulations through which the particularistic temple ideology, the calendar, and the idea of the ethnically circumcised children of Abraham were maintained?
- The issue of whether faith in/like Jesus required obedience to the Torah (e.g., the Jerusalem faction and Matthew who shared this view) or not (e.g., Paul).

During the *norming* phase, a degree of cohesion developed as a result of certain compromises. This was the period of the institutionalizing of the church and could also be referred to as “the institutionalization of authority.” During this time, the antihierarchical and symbolic nature of Jesus’ message resulted in imaginary household structures (Luke-Acts, 1 Timothy, writings of the Apostolic Fathers). However, the inclusive vision of Jesus and people like Paul was organized into structures that were not characterized by ethnic limitation, even though the biological and hierarchical family remained the metaphor for this “spiritual” and egalitarian “family.”

The period of *performing* pertains to the transition from the initial “missionary work” across boundaries (the epistles of Paul and the Pauline traditions in Luke-Acts) to “missionary work” towards the marginalized, like widows (also among the Hellenists) and Samaritans, by the Stephen-Philip group, orphans, street children, and those possessed by demons (see, e.g., evidence in Luke-Acts and the Gospel of Matthew, the writings of Clement of Alexandria, the author of the letter to Diognetus and 1 Timothy).

The *adjourning* phase has to do with the potential destruction of the church. This was a strong possibility already in the initial phase of the pre-Paschal Jesus movement. Yet although this social-scientific theory of group formation mainly concerns the forming and dissolution of “small groups,” the aspect relating to the adjourning of groups may also be applied to the post-Paschal church as an institute. Dissolution (“adjourning”) was, during the post-Paschal period (and still is today), a possibility that should not be ignored. Facets of it may be:

- Early on, the pre-Easter Jesus movement was confronted with the “scandal” of both Jesus’ “birth from a (humble) woman” (Paul, in Gl 4:4) and his scandalous crucifixion, as if he were a criminal. In the post-Easter phase, the Jesus movement made a thoroughfare of what seemed to be a cul-de-sac. The words and acts of Jesus live on in the honorific names his followers granted him. The offense of the cross was overcome by means of the resurrection faith.
- The ascetic (later, Gnostic) Christians were first confronted with the separation between the synagogue and the church (the *aposunagogos* movement) and later the ecclesiastical councils. The first refers to the abandonment by Christians of the synagogue and the latter to the formation of the New Testament canon and the ontologic-metaphysical dogma of “two natures” of Jesus as human and divine. Gnostics did not like the First Testament. They did not like the Creator-God of Israel at all. On the other hand, the synagogue did not distinguish between the Jesus factions. Some “Christian” communities, to a greater or lesser extent, conformed to many aspects of synagogical ideas and caused an increasing hostility against the Gnostics in their midst. Because of the anti-Arian movement<sup>83</sup> and the ecclesiastical councils in the fourth century, Gnostic Christianity, in the end, did not survive. The reopening in 1947 of the “Nag Hammadi Library” may cause their writings to breathe new life into similar contemporary thinking.
- The “non-kerygmatic” Jesus followers did not proclaim Jesus in apocalyptic sense in terms of the formula buried, resurrected, and ascended. They regarded him as an ethical exemplar. This group expanded not only into an ascetic movement but also formed the group in Trans-Jordan, known as the “Ebionite Nazarenes.” These people

- At the beginning, the Constantinian-Catholic church was confronted by the supporters of Arius. Later, Roman-Catholicism was challenged by the influence of the Renaissance, humanism, Socinianism,<sup>84</sup> and sixteenth-century Reformation. The church of the Reformation, too, has always had to struggle against the hierarchical system hidden in its bosom.
- Modern Christendom is being confronted with institutionalization and secularization. But this “offense,” too, can be overcome if we can share the consciousness that the cause of Jesus has the dynamics to provide meaning to disillusioned people living in depressing circumstances in a plural and multicultural, post-modern world. But there are certain conditions: the inhibitory effect of institutionalization, that dooms the church, must be opposed, and secularization must be seen as an opportunity for the church to be “church for the world.” Seen in this way, we can still say today, in the words of Willi Marxsen: *Die Sache Jesu geht weiter!*<sup>85</sup> The cause of Jesus is still on its way!

## END NOTES

1. These words intentionally resemble that of Ernst Käsemann 1960, “Die Anfänge christlicher Theologie,” p. 180: “Die Apokalyptik ist–da man die Predigt Jesu nicht eigentlich als Theologie bezeichnen kann–die Mutter aller christlichen Theologie gewesen.” However, Käsemann’s expression “all Christian theology” should be reduced to only the theology of the Jesus faction in Jerusalem. Other “Christian” factions, contemporaneous to that in Jerusalem (e.g., the communities respectively responsible for the formative stratum of the Sayings Gospel Q and the first layer of the Gospel of Thomas), did not interpret the Jesus event from an apocalyptic perspective but from a sapiential one.
2. Trilling, W. 1978, “‘Implizite Ekklesiologie’: Ein Vorschlag zum Thema Jesus und die Kirche,” p. 68.
3. Vermes, G. 1993, *The Religion of Jesus*, pp. 214-215.
4. See Schillebeeckx, E. 1974, *Jezus: Het Verhaal van Een Levende*, p. 38; Schille, G. 1994, “Die Jesusbewegung und die Entstehung der Kirche,” p. 104.
5. Cf. Lüdemann, G. [1994] 1994, *The Resurrection of Jesus: History, Experience, Theology*, pp. 68, 100, 170, 176-177, with regard to Peter and Paul, and the Jesus Seminar with regard to Mary Magdalene, *contra* Lüdemann, p. 160.
6. Schlüssler Fiorenza, E. 1994, *Jesus–Miriam’s Child, Sophia’s Prophet: Critical Issues in Feminist Christology*, p. 122.
7. Cf. Bousset, W. [1913] 1926, *Kyrios Christos: Geschichte des Christusglaubens von den Anfängen des Christentums bis Irenaeus*, pp. 76-77.
8. Dodd, C.H. [1936] 1956, “The Primitive Preaching,” p. 16.
9. Cf. Conzelmann, H. 1988, “History of Early Christianity,” p. 341.
10. Cf. Conzelmann, H. 1973, *Jesus*, p. 94.
11. Cf. Conzelmann, H. 1988, “History of Early Christianity,” pp. 341-342.
12. Meier, J. P. 1997, “The Circle of the Twelve: Did it Exist during Jesus’ Public Ministry?,” p. 637.
13. Meier, J. P. 1997, “The Circle of the Twelve,” p. 638.
14. Meier, J. P. 1997, “The Circle of the Twelve,” p. 638 note 8.
15. See Van Aarde, A.G. 1994, *God-with-us: The Dominant Perspective in Matthew’s Story, and Other Essays*, pp. 56-57.



16. Meier, J. P. 1997, "The Circle of the Twelve," p. 638 note 8.
17. Metzger, B.M. 1971, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, p. 69.
18. Meier, J. P. 1997, "The Circle of the Twelve," p. 639 note 11; cf. also Meye, R.P.1968, *Jesus and the Twelve*, p. 190.
19. See Schmithals, W. 1986, *Das Evangelium nach Markus: Kapitel 9,2-16,20*, pp. 737-738; Meier, J. P. 1997, "The Circle of the Twelve," p. 639.
20. See Best, E. [1983] 1985, *Mark: The Gospel as Story*, p. 11.
21. See Rhoads, D. & Michie, D. 1982, *Mark as Story: An Introduction to the Narrative of a Gospel*, pp. 47-49,
22. See Neiryneck, F. 1972, *Duality in Mark: Contributions to the Study of the Markan Redaction*, on the "two-step progression" as a Markan rhetorical device.
23. Rhoads, D. & Michie, D. 1982, *Mark as Story*, p. 47.
24. Cf. Seim, T.K. 1994, *Patterns in Gender in Luke-Acts*, p. 21.
25. See Luke's (10:1) use of the verb ἀποστε/llw.
26. In Greek: εἰτε/rouj.
27. See Van Tilborg, S. 1972, *The Jewish Leaders in Matthew*, p. 1.
28. See Van Aarde, A.G. 1994, *God-with-us: The Dominant Perspective in Matthew's Story*, p. 242.
29. See Van Aarde, A.G. 1994, *God-with-us*, pp. 54-59.
30. It seems that Luke (see Lk 24:10f, 22f) and Paul (see the omission in 1 Cor 15:3-8) found it difficult to take the witness of women, such as Mary Magdelene, seriously.
31. Schmithals, W. 1982, *Die Apostelgeschichte des Lukas*, p. 131, refers to Paul's "apostleship" in Acts as follows: "In V.4 überrascht wie in V.14 die Bezeichnung 'Apostel' für Paulus und Barnabas. Da Lukas den Aposteltitel im übrigen für die Zwölf Apostel reserviert, um sie wegen ihrer unwiederholbaren Rolle am Beginn der apostolischen Tradition auszuzeichnen (vgl. 1,21f.), dürfte im vorliegenden Fall die Bezeichnung 'Apostel' für Paulus und Barnabas auf die Quelle des Lukas zurückgehen. Natürlich hat Lukas diese Bezeichnung nicht ohne Bedacht übernommen (oder ggf. eingeführt). Daß Paulus selbst sich mit Betonung 'Apostel' nannte, war Lukas ohne Frage bekannt. Er konzidiert diese Benennung auch, freilich in der hier vorliegenden funktionalen Weise: Paulus ist Apostel nur wie Barnabas in dem allgemeinen Sinn, in dem man die christliche Missionäre, die von Antiochien abgesandt wurden (13, 1-3), 'Apostel' (= Abgesandte) nennen konnte. Mit dem genuin lukanischen Apostelbegriff, wie er in 1,21f. dargelegt wird, hat der Apostolat des Paulus nichts zu tun. Eben dies

32. According to David Sim 1998, “Are the least included in the kingdom of heaven? The meaning of Matthew 5:19,” pp. 573-587, Matthew was highly critical of Paul and his alleged “law-free” gospel.
33. Meier, J. P. 1997, “The Circle of the Twelve,” p. 639 note 12.
34. Mack, B.L.1993, *The Lost Gospel: The Book of Q & Christian Origins*, pp. 177-179.
35. According to Burton Mack, *The Lost Gospel*, pp. 128-130, the mission itself was also part of the first stratum of Q and the saying regarding the lambs and wolves was earlier (a saying of the historical Jesus?). Mack therefore supports me in this regard. The following judgmental pronouncements against towns that rejected the Jesus movement are Q<sup>2</sup> additions. For Mack, the Q<sup>3</sup> additions were added shortly after the war and it is this stratum that “was subsumed by the authors of the narrative gospels later in the century” (Mack 1993:172). The Q<sup>3</sup> additions represent “(1) the mythology of Jesus as the son of God, (2) the relationship of Jesus as the son of God to the temple in Jerusalem, and (3) the authority of the scriptures” (Mack 1993, p. 173). Kloppenborg, J.S. 1987, *The Formation of Q: Trajectories in Ancient Wisdom Collections*, p. 101, refers to Q<sup>1</sup> as the “formative” stratum, to Q<sup>2</sup> as the “first recension” (see Kloppenborg 1987, pp. 167-170) and to Q<sup>3</sup> as the “second recension” (Kloppenborg 1987, pp. 238-243). Jacobson, A.D. 1992, *The First Gospel: An Introduction to Q*, p. 49, explains it as follows: “What we have, therefore, are two basic recensions of Q, followed by a third stage during which only the temptation account (Q 4:1-13) was added.” Q<sup>1</sup> represents a “sapiential” layer and contains sayings with regard to discipleship, poverty and the Kingdom of God. This layer entails the redaction of earlier sayings by a “missionary-sending community” (cf. Jacobson 1992:50). According to Kloppenborg Q<sup>3</sup> was induced because of the “failure of the mission to Israel. Q<sup>3</sup> added material concerning the announcement of judgment in an apocalyptic fashion. My disagreement with Mack’s stratification pertains to both the date of the writing of Mark and that the above-mentioned Q<sup>3</sup> additions should be regarded as part of the second stratum. I do not think that Mark was written almost half a decade after the war, but rather in the immediate aftermath of the war. The third stratum represents those sayings that pertain to the self-identity of the Q community over against the Jamnia Academy. Matthew and Luke made use of the Sayings Gospel Q in its final redactional stage, but the Q known to Mark represents the second redactional layer.

36. Jacobson, A.D. 1992, *The First Gospel* p. 62 note 2; cf. *inter alia* Lührmann, D. 1989, “The Gospel of Mark and the Sayings Collection Q,” pp. 51-71. The following advice of Arland Jacobson 1992, p. 62 note 2, is worth taking into consideration: “For the study of the theology of Q, it is advisable to include only those possibly shared traditions where there is significant evidence of Q, and where there is sufficient recoverable Q material to support the argument that this material presents a point of view different from Mark’s. I include among these esp. Mark 1:1-8; 4:30-32; 6:6b-13; 8:11-13 and their Q parallels.”
37. See Jacobson, A.D. 1992, *The First Gospel*, pp. 138-139.
38. See Van Aarde, A.G. 1994, *God-with-us*, p. 103.
39. Cf. Kloppenborg, J.S. 1987, *The Formation of Q*, p. 200.
40. See Schürmann, H. 1969, *Das Lukasevangelium, I: Kommentar zu Kap. 1,1-9,50*, pp. 318-319, and Schneider, G. 1980, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, Erster Band, p. 206, with regard to Luke’s relationship to Q.
41. See Jacobson, A.D. 1992, *The First Gospel*, p. 68.
42. Van Aarde, A.G. 1994, *God-with-us*, p. 124.
43. Jacobson, A.D. 1992, *The First Gospel*, p. 68, does not distinguish between three layers as such, but rather describes the “theology” of Q as a literary unit, consisting of sayings that are added linearly. He explains Q in light of the above-mentioned absence from Mark as follows: “In contrast to Mark, who omits any reference to the kingdom, Q makes it clear that in the person of the ‘laborers’ the kingdom draws near to Israel, and that this means judgment, so that those in Israel who reject the ‘laborers’ reject God and bring wrath upon themselves. What we have in Q, therefore, is not really a mission at all but rather an errand of judgment. The results seem predetermined, for the discourse opens with a saying describing the laborers as lambs in the midst of wolves. Here the image of God’s lamb, Israel, in the midst of hostile Gentile wolves has been sarcastically inverted. The appended prophetic threat (Q 10:13-15), which says that Gentiles would have responded better than Israel, assumes the failure of the call for Israel to return to Yahweh.”
44. The Q version used by Matthew and Luke represents the “final” addition. This version, according to Kloppenborg, J.S. 1987, *The Formation of Q*, pp. 246-262, includes the last addition, namely the “temptation” report (cf. Jacobson, A.D. 1992, *The First Gospel*, pp. 94-95).
45. This possibility would be in accordance with the probability that Luke received the outline for his representation of the “apostolic preaching” (e.g., that of Peter and Paul) in

46. Meier, J. P. 1997, "The Circle of the Twelve," p. 640 note 15.
47. Meier, J. P. 1997, "The Circle of the Twelve," p. 670.
48. Meier, J. P. 1997, "The Circle of the Twelve," p. 671.
49. Meier, J. P. 1997, "The Circle of the Twelve," pp. 671-672 note 83; Schmithals, W. [1961]1969, *The Office of Apostle in the Early Church*, pp. 96-70.
50. Schmithals, W. 1972, "Der Markusschluß: Die Verklärungsgeschichte und die Aussendung der Zwölf," pp. 398-401.
51. Cf. Funk, R.W.(& The Jesus Seminar) 1998, *The Acts of Jesus: What Did Jesus Really Do?*, p. 106.
52. Schmithals, W. 1986, *Das Evangelium nach Markus: Kapitel 9,2-16,20*, pp. 736-737: "Die missionarischen Aktivität der Urgemeinde setzt vermutlich das 'Messiasbekenntnis des Petrus' voraus; denn eigentlich christliche Verkündigung gibt es erst mit dem Glauben an Jesus als den 'Sohn Gottes': 'Dies ist mein geliebter Sohn; hört auf ihn [Mk 9:7]!' Dadurch werden die Zwölf, anfangs die Repräsentanten der endzeitlichen Gemeinde, welche die apokalyptisch vorgestellte Äonenwende erwarten, zu den 'Zwölf Aposteln.'"
53. Meier, J. P. 1997, "The Circle of the Twelve," p. 672 note 83.
54. See Denaux, A. 1966, "Did Jesus Found the Church?," pp. 25-45, for a list of scholars who argue pro and contra the historicity of the belief that the historical Jesus constituted "The Twelve." For arguments used on both sides, see Klein, G. 1961, *Die Zwölf Apostel: Ursprung und Gehalt einer Idee*, pp. 34-37. Among the scholars from a previous generation who "affirm the existence of the Twelve during Jesus' ministry" are W.G. Kummel, H. von Campenhausen, G. Bornkamm, and J. Gnilka. Among those who questioned the possibility are J. Wellhausen, J. Weiss, E. Hirsch, R. Bultmann, P. Vielhauer, W. Schmithals, H. Braun, G. Schille, S. Schulz, and H. Conzelmann (cf. Meier, J.P. 1997, "The Circle of the Twelve: Did It Exist during Jesus' Public Ministry?," p. 643 note 22.). Recently E.P. Sanders 1985, *Jesus and Judaism*, pp. 11, 98-106 (see also Sanders, E.P. 1993, *The Historical Figure of Jesus*, pp. 169-195) and J.P. Meier 1997, "The Circle of the Twelve: Did It Exist during Jesus' Public Ministry"?, pp. 643-672, have been among the "positivists" and J.D. Crossan 1995, *Who Killed Jesus?*, p. 75, and

55. E.g., miracles, chreias, apothegms, and controversy reports.
56. Cf. Conzelmann, H. 1988, "History of Early Christianity," pp. 341-342. Schmithals, W. 1986, *Das Evangelium nach Markus: Kapitel 9,2-16,20*, p. 733, puts it as follows: "Die Konstituierung des Kreises der Zwölf fällt in die früheste Zeit der Jerusalemer Urgemeinde, wie aus 1 Kor 15,5 hervorgeht. Ob die Zwölf durch eine Erscheinung des Auferstandenen berufen wurden oder ob sie sich auf die Erscheinung vor Petrus hin zusammenfanden und dann dem Auferstandenen begegneten, sei dahingestellt. Sie verstehen sich offenbar als Repräsentanten jener eschatologischen Heilsgemeinde des neuen Israel (vgl. Lk 22,29f.), die wie anfänglich auch Petrus [Mk 9,5f.] in Jesu Auferstehung den Anbruch der allgemeinen Totenaufstehung sah (1 Kor 15,20). Vielleicht repräsentierte jeder der Zwölf einen der Stämme Israels; jedenfalls bildeten sie den 'Ältestenrat' der Heilsgemeinde (vgl. Bar 8,3)."
57. Meier, J.P. 1997, "The Circle of the Twelve," p. 644; cf. Schmahl, G. 1972, "Die Berufung der Zwölf im Markusevangelium," pp. 203-213; Trilling, W. 1977, "Zur Entstehung der Zwölferkreises: Eine geschichtskritische Überlegung," pp. 204-206; Kertelge, K. 1969, "Die Funktion der 'Zwölf' im Markusevangelium," pp. 193-206.
58. Taken from Meier, J.P. 1997, "The Circle of the Twelve," p. 646.
59. Meye, R.P. 1968, *Jesus and the Twelve*, pp. 200-201.
60. Sanders, E.P. 1985, *Jesus and Judaism*, p. 102.
61. Meier, J.P. 1997, "The Circle of the Twelve," pp. 647-648.
62. Meier, J.P. 1997, "The Circle of the Twelve," p. 652.
63. Kloppenborg, J.S. 1987, *The Formation of Q*, p. 72.
64. See Funk, R.W. (& The Jesus Seminar) 1998, *The Acts of Jesus: What Did Jesus Really Do?*, pp. 136-137.
65. See Mack, B.L. 1993, *The Lost Gospel*, p. 205.
66. Meier, J.P. 1997, "The Circle of the Twelve," p. 636.
67. Günter Klein, G. 1961, *Die zwölf Apostel: Ursprung und Gehalt einer Idee*; Schmithals, W. 1969, *The Office of Apostle in the Early Church*; Roloff, J. 1965, *Apostolat – Verkündigung – Kirche*, pp. 57-60.
68. Meier, J.P. 1997, "The Circle of the Twelve," p. 64.
69. See Schille, G. 1994, "Die Jesusbewegung und die Entstehung der Kirche," p. 106.

70. See Wilhelm Bousset 1926, *Kyrios Christos: Geschichte des Christusbis Irenaeus*, p. 75. Cf. also Schmithals, W. 1994, *Theologiegeschichte des Urchristentums*, pp. 88, 90.
71. Cf. Schille, G. 1994, “Die Jesusbewegung und die Entstehung der Kirche,” p. 104.
72. Cf. White, L.M. 1988, “Shifting Sectarian Boundaries in Early Christianity,” pp. 7-9; Stanton, G.N. 1992, *A Gospel for a New People: Studies in Matthew*, pp. 89-91.
73. See Neusner, J. 1987, “Israel: Judaism and its Social Metaphors,” pp. 331-361.
74. See Schmithals, W. 1994, *Theologiegeschichte des Urchristentums*, p. 156.
75. See Neusner, J. 1987, “Israel: Judaism and its Social Metaphors.”
76. Cf. Schmithals, W. 1994, *Theologiegeschichte des Urchristentums*, pp. 86, 111, 118, 169-176.
77. See Malina, B.J. 1994, “Early Christian Groups: Using Small Group Formation Theory to Explain Christian Organizations,” p. 6.
78. See Malina, B.J. 1994, “Early Christian Groups.”
79. See Neusner, J. 1973, *From Politics to Piety*.
80. See Tuckman, B.W. 1965, “Developmental Sequence in Small Groups,” pp. 384-399; cf. Malina, B.J. 1994, “Early Christian Groups.”
81. Cf. Lüdemann, G. 1994, *The Resurrection of Jesus: History, Experience, Theology*, p. 176.
82. With regard to the Sayings Gospel Q as evidence, see, *inter alia*, Horsley, R.A. 1989, *Sociology and the Jesus Movement*; Kloppenborg, J.S. 1993, “The Sayings Gospel Q: Recent Opinion on the People behind the Document,” pp. 20-21.
83. Arian christology denied that Christ was of the same “substance” as God, and thereby denied that Jesus was simultaneously “true” divine and “true” human.
84. Socinianism was a school of theological thought in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century that denied Anselmus’ view of Christ’s death as satisfaction. “While accepting the finality of God’s revelation in Christ, it nevertheless argued as follows: If God forgives sin, satisfaction is unnecessary; if there was satisfaction, then forgiveness is an illusion. In this context Christ was seen as a supreme example to all Christians and as an ordinary man chosen by God to be head of the church” (Deist, F. 1984, *A Concise Dictionary of Theological Terms*, p. 159).
85. Marxsen, W. 1976, “Jesus–Bringer oder Inhalt des Evangeliums?,” in *Die Sache Jesu geht weiter*, pp. 45-62.

## 9 ~ THE CONTINUED IMPORTANCE OF JESUS

### Deconstructing Dogma

This study is partly about the historical Jesus and partly about the early Jesus movements. Both parts are studied against the background of the intermingled contexts of the Judean, Herodian Galilean, Hellenistic-Semitic, and Greco-Roman worlds in mind. In Ovid's story of the virginal conception of Perseus and in Matthew's and Luke's nativity stories, Zeus and God appeared whenever what was legitimate was called into question. I said that the implication is that the divine and the human cannot be separated wherever legitimacy is concerned. For Ovid, the legitimacy of Perseus laid in Perseus' heroic deeds that resulted in his kingly enthronement. For the early Jesus movements, the legitimacy of the fatherless and crucified Jesus laid in Jesus' claim to be God's child. In this chapter, the focus is on the dogma of the "two natures" of Jesus. This dogma is *deconstructed* to *affirm* the significance of the metaphor of being child of God. Deconstruction means moving back to the building blocks. And the first of these "blocks" is Jesus himself. The chapter, to a certain extent, serves the purpose of condensing the previous eight chapters into a conclusion. It is done by showing that the dogma of the "two natures" of Jesus as both *human* and *divine* developed out of the dialectic of the historical, fatherless *Jesus who called God Father*, and *believers who confessed him as child of God*.

My quest for Jesus did not begin at the point where Jesus met John the Baptist. The starting point, in other words, was not when the voice from heaven declared that Jesus

was the child of God. This declaration was of course Mark's confession. To confess means to verbalize a basic religious experience. Mark's experience was grounded in Jesus' *Abba* experience. Mark began and ended the life of Jesus with *Abba*. In the Gethsemane episode, the words Mark chose for Jesus to pray are the typical words spoken at meals where the eldest son asked his father if the cup could be handed to someone more worthy than himself at the table. The story of the sleeping disciples in Gethsemane was Mark's answer to this question. Jesus, and none other, was the child of God in whom God delighted. This *Abba* experience originated before Mark. It began with Jesus himself.

Jesus called God "Father." To call someone "father" presupposes conception by means of the father. Mark (like the Jesus movement in Jerusalem)<sup>86</sup>, however, does not contain any reference to the birth of Jesus. My study, therefore, starts before the beginning of Mark (and the Jerusalem faction). Matthew and Luke also go further back than Mark. They took up the Jerusalem faction's conviction that God adopted Jesus as *Israel's messiah* and Mark's conviction that Jesus was adopted at his baptism as *God's child*. For Matthew and Luke, God adopted Jesus at his *birth* as *God's child* and declared his status again at his *baptism*, as though people met Jesus there for the first time.

The tradition of Jesus' dual nature, his divine and human origin, is spoken in the language of confession. By means of myths and metaphors, the creeds express the experience of a special intimacy between God and humankind. Here too the articulation of this experience connects to a more foundational experience in the life of Jesus himself.

Paul (and in a certain sense, Matthew and John) extends this experience to include other believers who participated in the similar experience of being "children of God."



Paul especially made use of the metaphor “adopted as child.” His metaphor originated in a Greco-Roman world where blood relationships between a father and his children were not of the utmost importance. Children from outside the family could be adopted as children. “Children of Abraham” should therefore be understood spiritually rather than physically. Gentiles could also become part of God’s household.

Much later, John articulated this matter in a similar way when he distinguished between a *natural birth* and a *spiritual birth*. According to him (as with Paul), Jesus was born in a natural way, but as child of God, in a spiritual way too. A further similarity between Paul and John is that both describe Jesus’ sonship of God not as beginning at his birth but as a matter of preexistence. John opposed the Gnostic idea that God does not engage transient humanity. God’s only begotten son became human in all respects, including his birth.

John’s (and Paul’s) idea cannot be reconciled with the miraculous birth stories found in both Matthew and Luke. They are radically opposing ideas. In his controversy with the Gnostics, Ignatius harmonized Paul and John on the one hand, and Matthew and Luke on the other hand. For the first time in the history of biblical interpretation, the virginal conception of God’s eternal son was emphasized. The rest of the New Testament, besides Luke, does not attest to this idea. Ignatius was responsible for the combination of mutually exclusive myths. The point he wanted to stress is that Jesus was truly human. Seemingly, every time the early church mentioned Jesus’ virginal conception in a confessional way, it was strongly communicating the message that Jesus was undoubtedly human.

This process pertains to the way religious language originates and develops. “Language” (*langage*) must be distinguished from “language usage” (*parole*). The term “language” in this instance must not be seen as referring to a specific language (*la langue*), such as French or German. Language is the expression of experience. Language usage is characterized by specific articulation. Aspects such as style belong to this category. Religious language (a specific type of *langage*) is the verbalization of religious experience. Religious experience is essentially an individual matter. Religious experience is uniquely personal—it is one person’s encounter with God. The only possible way to describe and interpret this encounter is to make use of imagery. Religious language speaks of God’s encounter with a human being in an objectifying manner. God is not an object. In God-talk God cannot be introduced to people by any other means than imagery derived from the world of human experience. Imagery is figurative language usage (*parole*). Poets, for instance, freely make use of figurative language. Figurative language becomes *metaphor* when it transcends the language usage of the individual. When a group acknowledges the power and validity of an image, the *image* becomes a *metaphor*. Metaphors are specific to culture and time.

Religious experience has to be *expressed*. It is expressed in figurative language usage. Individual religious experience is extremely private and personal, but religion (a cultic activity characterized by specific rites) is always group oriented. Therefore, the language that expresses religious experience common to a specific group (bound by culture and time) will consist mainly of metaphorical language usage. When this metaphorical religious language usage becomes standardized, it becomes confessional formulae. Creeds, in turn, become fixed entities, that can remain relevant across the

boundaries of time and culture. When a creed begins to function separately from the context and time of its origin, it becomes dogma. When confessional formulae function abstractly, timelessly, and continually, they act in a doctrinal way. A doctrine presupposes the teaching of specific truths. Truthfulness goes hand-in-hand with what a particular group regards as correct. It assumes cognitive consensus and disapproves of dissent. Dogma represents distance (in German: *Entfernung*) from individual subjective experience. Dogma can be used as an instrument to manipulate, to marginalize, and to eliminate opponents. This complicated process implies four simple phases. It represents a movement from *foundational religious experience* to *metaphorical language usage* to *confessional formulae* to *dogma*.

In this study, my encounter with Jesus through engaging the historical and literary evidence, brought me to articulate his foundational experience of God in terms of inclusiveness and egalitarianism. In the time of Jesus, the Judeans had a very specific foundational experience in God. Outside the boundaries of the Promised Land, no meaningful existence was possible. God was only present to “full-blooded” Israelites in an exclusive way. God could only be encountered at a particular place of cultic worship, namely Jerusalem. God’s saving acts were performed in the temple. The exile and the siege of Jerusalem when the temple was destroyed caused a crisis in the Judeans’ religious experience. This resulted in the apocalyptic expectation of a heavenly utopia.

The fatherless Jesus grew up in Galilee of the Gentiles. His God-talk consisted of imagery, that expressed an alternative experience in God. His stories about the Kingdom of God and his healing acts became metaphors of which God’s limitless, unmediated presence was expressed. Jesus made use of a symbol, that, in his culture, signaled a most

intimate bond, that of the father-son relationship. A father without a son had no honor or credibility. A son without a father had no honor or identity. However, even in his use of this symbol Jesus subverted the cultural arrangements of his time. According to these hierarchical arrangements in the culture, the patriarch represented his family before God. No one in the family could experience God's presence without being embedded in the realm of the father.

Jesus, however, did not use the metaphor *father* as the way to God, but *child*. Those not childlike could not experience the presence of God. Even more radical than this is that Jesus did not use the child who had been legitimized by the father as symbol. He pointed to an illegitimate child as a symbol of those who belonged to the realm of God.

It seems as though Jesus expressed his own fundamental religious experience through this symbol. As a fatherless figure, Jesus saw himself as the protector of fatherless children in Galilee, as well as of women who did not "belong" to a man. These women and children were regarded as outcasts since they did not fit into the patriarchal system. In many ways, Jesus acted like a woman. For example, it was said that he took the last place at the table, served others, forgave wrongs, showed compassion, and healed wounds. But it was also said that he protected patriarchless women and fatherless children; not as a patriarch or father himself, not from above, but from a position of being one of them. Jesus not only called God "Father," but also lived among the outcasts as if they were all children of God. In other words, Jesus lived as their "fictive" brother.

As the cause of Jesus expanded, the metaphor "child of God" became part of the Christian language usage. They were the people who experienced God's presence in

their lives because of their embeddedness in the cause of Jesus. Believers now became “children of God” and therefore brothers and sisters of Jesus, the “firstborn.” Paul’s Jesus was a Hercules figure who was publicly and mightily declared to be God’s child on account of his victory over death at his resurrection. This idea influenced Luke. Luke, however, already attested to Jesus’ sonship at the conception that Luke regarded as divine. Hercules was also the product of a divine conception. Even stronger parallels are the myth of the birth of the healer-god Asclepius and Ovid’s story of Perseus where divine conception canceled illegitimacy. In Luke’s view, the Divine Spirit conceived Jesus and he was adopted as child of Joseph. According to Luke, Joseph’s genealogy can be traced to Adam, child of God. Another parallels can be found in Diodorus’ story of Hercules’ empty pyre and Seneca’s story of Hercules’ ascension. For Luke, Diodorus, and Seneca, the act of adoption as son is “proven” by the empty tomb and the “fact” of resurrection and ascension. The Greco-Roman ideas of the emperor cult and divine-human legends are mirrored in Luke.

Luke also provided insight into the tension between the synagogue and the church. Because of the schism between the synagogue and the church, the rumors of Jesus’ illegitimacy began playing a more decisive role. The legend that Joseph adopted Jesus as his child seemed to have originated within this context. Joseph was regarded as the forefather of the Samaritans. Luke emphasized the tradition that Jesus traveled through Samaria. Jesus was even identified as a Samaritan. In the parable of the Good Samaritan, the Samaritan plays the role of Jesus. Against the background of a schism between synagogue and church, John, in his apology, noted the label of Samaritan given to Jesus.

John referred to two origins of all of God's children (this includes Jesus and his followers). They had a physical and a spiritual birth. In the same vein, this gospel speaks of physical bread and spiritual bread, physical water and spiritual water. This means that although people were born in a natural way, they were also spiritual people born in a spiritual way. This pertains to Jesus as well and very specifically to Jesus as the beloved child ("firstbegotten") of God. With this rhetoric, John wanted to persuade people not to place their ultimate trust in the tradition that Jesus was the physical son of Joseph, but rather in the faith that he was God's spiritual child. The consequence of such a faith is that whoever sees Jesus sees the Father. The thrust of this rhetoric is that the humanness of Jesus should not become an obstacle to experiencing God's presence when the Jesus-kerygma is proclaimed.

In Paul, Mark, Matthew, Luke, and John the metaphor "child of God" was used in a functional way. Their focus was on the events: what Jesus did and what believers did and do. In the New Testament, the proclaimer became the proclaimed. After the New Testament, the event of Jesus' sonship of God became dogma. Functional metaphors became philosophical metaphors. Functional christology became ontological christology. What was concrete became abstract.

In the New Testament, the "dual natures" of believers functioned to stress their human and spiritual origins. After the New Testament, this metaphor became expression of the way in which Jesus was in relationship to the heavenly Father (a static, abstract, ontological category).

The "dual nature" concept first originated in metaphorical language usage. This language usage expressed the foundational experience that nothing physical or cultural

could hinder a spiritual, unmediated presence of God. A child of humanity is born anew to be child of God. This “dual nature” metaphor became a confessional formula and later the unquestionable, fixed dogma of Jesus’ two natures. Against the convictions of the Arians (4th century), the Socinians, and Anabaptists (16th century), this dogma emphasized Jesus’ humanness.

Later orthodox fundamentalism has reversed the emphasis and the divine nature has become almost the only concern. Ironically, those who have participated in the Jesus cause by paradoxically loving the *cosmos* unselfishly have become the opponents of the fundamentalists. Engaging in the cause of Jesus means taking the encounter between divinity and humanness seriously. However, in the hands of the fundamentalists, the dogma of Jesus’ two natures has become a stick with which to strike and a rod with which to destroy. According to the fundamentalist view, the dogma generates justifying and saving faith. Those whose views are differing from theirs are regarded as opponents of the dogma. They are therefore considered to be godless and must be excommunicated. In the process of marginalizing and eliminating opponents, the “retainers” of the dogma often lose sight of Jesus’ humanness and humaneness, and of the history of the origins of the dogma.

However, reconstructing the foundational religious experience that gave birth to the dogma does not equal foundationalism.

He who believes in foundationalism, believes that knowledge has firm foundations. The theory reassures us both that we have a solid foundation for our knowledge, and that we have a mechanism to construct the rest of the edifice of knowledge on this firm foundation....In short, it reassures us that we can answer the

sceptic....This theory has a long history that can, in modern times, be traced to the period immediately following the Reformation—a fact that is in itself not without significance....An obvious response to the anti-foundationalist position, such as outlined above, is to say that it inevitably results in relativism....Anti-foundationalism [however] does not preclude certainty—neither in epistemology nor in theology....The anti-foundationalist theologian should also have no problem with certainty regarding elements of his [or her] faith. What she/he refuses to do, however, is to situate these certainties at the basis of his/her theology, and attempting to infer the rest of the edifice of theological knowledge from them. Certainty is more or less randomly distributed through the fabric of knowledge, it is not in the basement, because there is no basement! Anti-foundationalism has no hang-ups about a certain foundation because it does not take the possibility of radical scepticism seriously.<sup>1</sup>

Constructing an image of Jesus and then considering it to be the exclusive legitimate basis for God-talk operates exactly according to the principles of foundationalism and of orthodoxy. It is also in discord with the cause of Jesus. Favoritism was not part of Jesus' vision. Foundationalism favors a pretended fixed basement and the certainties built upon such a foundation. Thus, deconstructing dogma does not aim to recover the historical Jesus as the “foundation” of our faith assertions. Quests that have tried to do this are like waves that come and go. However, my program of deconstructing dogma is not a choice for relativism, which means that anything goes.

Engaged hermeneutics does not presuppose absolute freedom from ecclesiastical confessions. On the contrary, it takes faith seriously and respects confessional formulae in terms of their intentions. It is a *search* for what is foundational to faith and seeks to find it distributed through the fabric of our *quest for Jesus*, knowing the dialectic between



the pre-Easter Jesus “telling” of God as Father and the post-Easter church “showing” Jesus as God’s child. Engaged hermeneutics presupposes a lifelong journey. Every quest will be determined by the circumstances of the time and culture in which the traveler exists. To engage is to distance oneself from one’s culture to such an extent that one can see the pain that cultural measures cause. Engaging in the cause of Jesus necessitates culture critique. It asks for a critical reading of and conscious reflection on the Scriptures and dogmas. It is a journey that never ceases.

It is clear that in a strategy of engaged hermeneutics intolerant foundationalism will be unacceptable. The metaphors by which faith assertions are expressed are bound by culture and time and can lose their relevance. However, a choice for anti-foundationalism is not a choice for relativism. Relativism occurs when creeds have no guiding function anymore. There is total freedom. However, engaged hermeneutics, though anti-foundationalistic in nature, does not intend that anything goes. The rhetorics of the dogma (the contents that the dogma wants to convey; i.e., the doctrine taught) remain important. To uncover the rhetorics of the dogma, one must deconstruct it.

As I have said, deconstruction involves moving back to the building blocks. This strategy distinguishes the four phases in the development of dogma. The foundational religious experience is expressed by metaphors that in turn are transformed into confessional formulae that can lead to fixed dogmas. Power interests come into play when dogmas are formed. Those who are powerful use dogmas to manipulate or excommunicate opponents. Deconstructing dogma does not mean to get rid of the confessional formulae as such. Deconstruction in this regard has a positive and a negative motivation. On the negative side, power interests are to be exposed and on the

positive side, the relevance (or lack thereof) of confessional formulae are to be ascertained. The positive strategy asks two questions: firstly, whether the metaphors used are still functional and secondly, whether the confessional formulae are adequate vehicles for the expression of the foundational religious experience.

It is an illusion to think that worldly interests do not play a role in the formation of dogmas. The nature of these interests varies in different times and cultures. Sometimes economic and political interests will prevail, while at other times familial and political interests triumph. In the course of the development of the dogma of Jesus' two natures, familial and political interests dominated in the beginning. During the last phase, the familial was no longer a factor.

The last phase occurred in the sixteenth to the seventeenth centuries. Firstly, a papal edict expanded this dogma to include the immaculate conception and the perpetual virginity of Mary. The Socinians, who did not accept the full humanity of Jesus, were thereby declared heretics. In the Netherlands, the Calvinists conformed to this edict, with the exception of the Mariology. They had a political motive for doing so. By means of the Belgic Confession, they implored the Roman-Catholic Spanish king of the Netherlands to stop the persecutions of the Calvinists.

The intention of both the Belgic Confession and the papal edict was to emphasize the humanity of Jesus. With this confession, the Calvinists refuted the Anabaptists who undervalued the humanness of Jesus. Ironically enough, the wording used to emphasize Jesus' humanness in relation to his divine origin later (since the seventeenth century) became the instrument of orthodoxy to emphasize Jesus' divinity and to downplay his humanness. The phrase "Joseph had no sexual intercourse with Mary" (used by Pope

Paul IV and the Belgic Confession) was the trigger for orthodoxy to underplay the humanness of Jesus and to place the main emphasis on his divinity. The proof text that the Calvinists used to substantiate this came from the Johannine metaphoric expression of the dual nature of a child of God who was born physically and spiritually (Jn 1:13). The proof the papal edict used was taken from apocryphal evidence (Proto-James, Joseph the Carpenter and Pseudo-Matthew). Both the Roman Catholics and the Calvinists were seemingly unaware of the different types of christology that formed the context within which these metaphors were used in the first century. They simply expanded the evidence found in the Nicene Creed (from the fourth century).

The political interest behind the formation of the Nicene Creed was Constantine's wish to preserve the unity of his empire. He used the religious controversy with the Arians to attain his goal. The Arians were Gnostic in their orientation and also denied the humanness of Jesus. In other words, the two natures of Jesus expressed in the Nicene Creed intended to emphasize Jesus' humanness. The Nicene Creed originated with Ignatius (second century C.E.). He combined mutually exclusive christologies that were expressions of Jesus' humanness and divinity. The New Testament was mainly written during the first century. The faith assertions about Jesus' dual nature expressed in the New Testament made use of metaphors from mythology and the emperor cult. Jesus, child of the heavenly emperor, described in his metaphoric stories God's kingdom in categories other than worldly hierarchies. These metaphors were utilized to express the faith, based on the words of Jesus, that Christians were children of God even though they did not physically belong to the family of Abraham. Thereby, they emphasized the

unmediated access to God. The foundational experience in the life of Jesus underlying this faith is that he, as fatherless person, experienced God as his Father.

The issue is whether the rhetoric in the last phase of dogma formation is congruent with this foundational experience. It is clear that orthodox fundamentalists' understanding of the dogma of the two natures is incongruent with this foundational experience. They use the dogma to generate faith, whereas Jesus understood faith as living in the immediate presence of God. Fundamentalists use the dogma to bar people from God's presence. For Jesus, outcasts symbolized those who live in the presence of God. Another concern is whether the metaphor "child of God" is still relevant for a postmodern era. The postmodern era brought sensitivity for the disadvantaged. One of the most urgent problems of our time is the prevalence of street urchins in societies all over the world. The extent of their misery is understood by all. We have seen that these children were the symbol Jesus used to express God's healing presence for disillusioned people. When the church formulates its faith assertions today, the power of this symbol should not to be violated.

## **Jesus for Today**

Is the investigation of the historical Jesus significant today? This question can be approached from a number of angles. The church, for instance, constitutes one such angle and the university another.

As far as the church is concerned, the preaching and the dogmas of the church cannot claim to be free from testing. Depending on the current scientific paradigm,

criteria for testing may take different forms. Here one should bear in mind that the discourse of the church should under all circumstances be bound to the gospel with regard to Jesus. The word “gospel” implies *soteriology*. Like many other technical terms used by theologians, the word *soteriology* points to something intrinsic and foundational to human experience. It is an experience that assumes peace between God and humankind. To meet God as savior is to experience serenity amidst adversity. For the Christian, God-talk is bound to the essence of Jesus’ foundational religious experience. At least, God-talk for the Christian implies the quest for what this experience could have been. In its articulation of this experience, the earliest church referred to it soteriologically as *good tidings*—the gospel with regard to Jesus, child of God (cf. *inter alia* 1 Th 1:5; Mk 1:1).

The church is supposed to be the bearer of the gospel. Therefore, it may be that people today want to test the validity of what the church says on the basis of the concrete effect of the gospel on the church and society. The church inherently faces the possibility of, and mostly unknowingly, falsifying and obfuscating the gospel, and even of manipulating and exploiting *others* in the name of that gospel. By doing this, the church alienates itself from the One to whom it bears witness.

That possibility was already present in the earliest Jesus movement, as well as among those who handed down the Jesus tradition orally, those who put it to paper and adapted it editorially, and those who canonized the twenty-seven documents as the New Testament. Generally, we believe that this process of the handing down of tradition and the writing of the Bible took place under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. However, I do not picture or experience the work of the Holy Spirit in a mechanical way. The Holy

Spirit did not detract from the humanity of either the writers of the Bible, or of those who, before them, had handed down the gospel, or of those who, afterwards, interpreted it. What has been included in the canon, after all, has not lost its worldly or human character. Two examples of social phenomena found in and advocated by the canon that cannot be traced back to Jesus of Nazareth are a concept of office with a twisted claim to authority and the submission of women (cf. 1 tim 2:9-15; Tit 2:5).

Apart from the scientific merit of the historical Jesus investigation, because it helps us to clarify in a responsible fashion the process by which the New Testament was historically handed down, the church may with the assistance of this investigation reach greater clarity with regard to the self-understanding of Christendom. This benefit of Jesus research can be referred to as an inwardly directed desirability.

Yet there is also an outwardly directed desirability. The church also needs the investigation of the historical Jesus for the sake of the interreligious debate. In the world, Christians are confronted with the question: Who is this Jesus you confess and proclaim and whom you invite us to accept as our redeemer? How is it that he, who was a particular Israelite from Galilee, is presented as universally significant? A paper character without “flesh and blood” would, in such a situation, lack credibility! If we do not ask the question as to the historical Jesus, then the kerygma and the values of Christians could become an ideology, that could be manipulated as people wished. When we remind ourselves of the images of Christ presented to people of different religious persuasions during crusades, colonization in the name of missionary work, and in gas chambers, then the historical Jesus question assists us in rediscovering the inclusive and antihierarchical meaning of the gospel.

Furthermore, Jesus of Nazareth ceased to be the sole property of the church a long time ago! The sole applicability of the *kerygmatic Christ*, as well as the priority of the “proclaimed Christ” over the “proclaiming Jesus,” is therefore inconceivable. Whether we like it or not, the importance of the Jesus question stretches further than Sunday services in church buildings, further than the normative documents of the official church, further than churches’ programs of evangelism, further than the God-talk of Christians in the street. One need only think of novellas and films, of art and music, that use Jesus as a theme.

One could barely imagine the implicit lack of service to a diverse community if scholars would be unwilling to undertake basic and fundamental research on the historic origins of Christianity and on the Jesus of history! Those in a non-Christian, post-Christian, or plural religious community, just as those in the church, could be reminded by historical Jesus research of the possibility of the alienation of the Jesus of history.

Historical Jesus research matters. At least, it makes a significant contribution towards the historical understanding and theological application of the New Testament. The Jesus of history is either the implicit or explicit point of departure for inquiry into the sources behind, the social locations of, and the theological tendencies represented by the New Testament writings.

The fact is, in the New Testament a material relationship does exist between the “proclaimer” and the “proclaimed.” Theologians should not avoid the exegetical task tracking this relationship to show the existence of a core continuum between the Jesus of history and the Jesus of faith without, however, denying a discontinuity regarding various aspects or claiming that faith, in order to be true faith, must be based on historical facts.

Historical Jesus research is fundamental to the credibility of Christianity, in that Christianity is not a “book-religion” but represents belief patterns witnessed in the New Testament and is modeled on the words and deeds of Jesus of Nazareth, experienced and confessed by Christians as child of God. The quest for the historical Jesus is also important with regard to the interreligious dialogue. In this realm Christianity was often, either unjustly or justly, accused of being exclusive since it was built upon the Jewishness of Jesus. But the fact is, Jesus of Nazareth, ethnically an Israelite, had been crossing boundaries all the way without being “un-Jewish.” The kerygma about living through faith alone historically finds its main support in a gender equitable, ethnically unbound, and culturally subversive Jesus.

Therefore, with regard to engaged hermeneutics, the quest for the historical Jesus illuminates what emancipatory living, in memory of the Jesus of history, entails existentially. As the living symbol of God’s unmediated presence in terms of God’s unbrokered household, the historical Jesus set people free and, as the risen Christ and *Kyrios* (Lord), still sets people (irrespective of sexual orientation, gender, age, ethnicity, social, and religious affiliation) free from distorted relationships with oneself, with *others*, and with God. Christian ethics is not an abstract ideology but is based on the humanness and the humaneness of the Jesus of history. Thus, the quest for the historical Jesus is to play an important role in postmodern theological thinking. This opinion should be seen against the background of the conviction that postmodernity features a mondial and pluralistic perspective as a result of a broadened rationality that goes beyond foundationalism and relativism.



The category “kerygmatic Christ” (the faith assertions of the church modeled on the New Testament) seems to increasingly lose its explanatory and heuristic power in the secular and postmodern religious age. I, however, still find myself within the realm of the church and therefore would like to uphold the relationship between the *historical Jesus* and the *kerygmatic Christ*. Yet the twenty-first century could be the time when the relevance of the church as institution and the Christian Bible as its canon became outdated for people on the street. If and when the process of secularization reaches its consummation, another Christian generation will be called both to reconsider the continued importance of the historical Jesus and to reinterpret simultaneously that figure as the manifestation of God.

The question as to the relationship between the historical Jesus and the faith assertions that follow, will have to be asked and answered over and over again. Never in history has this question been adequately and finally answered. The challenge is to find a meaningful answer to this question for the immediate present. We cannot do more. To acknowledge our limitations is no weakness. When times change, the answers will change. This does not mean that we were wrong before. To think that the journey ended in the fourth century or in the sixteenth century or in the twentieth century is a betrayal of the cause of Jesus. Or to think that the journey ended with the *Old Quest* or the *New Quest* or the *Third Quest* or even the *Renewed Quest* is to miss the reason for the search for Jesus. The direction to follow is to engage in the dialectic between Jesus and God in such a way that we today can still acknowledge him as child of God and also find ourselves as children of God living in the presence of God.

## END NOTE

1. Mouton, J. & Pauw, J.C. 1988, "Foundationalism and Fundamentalism: A Critique," pp. 177, 185-186.



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## SUMMARY

In the year 2000 the birthday of Jesus of Nazareth two millennia ago is celebrated. If Jesus was seen as merely a historical figure, the significance of his life would be no different from that of people like Socrates or Alexander the Great. In Greco-Roman culture Alexander the Great, among other heroic figures and emperors, was regarded as son of God. However, since the first century followers of Jesus have worshipped Jesus as God's son. This study asks questions as to the importance of Jesus within Hellenistic-Semitic and Greco-Roman contexts and his continued importance today. The first aspect is studied from a social-cultural perspective and the second from the angle of both the (Christian) believing community and the (secularized) university. Chapter one deals methodologically with the fact that, as in the case of Socrates, Jesus did not himself put to pen either the message of his words and deeds or the interpretation of his birth and death. Jesus' vision should therefore be deciphered from what others said about him. Identifying a research gap with regard to existing Jesus research, chapter two will specifically aim at showing that today a new interdisciplinary frame of reference has come into being in the social sciences within which historical Jesus research is carried out. In chapter three it is argued that the starting point of the quest for the historical Jesus could be the nativity stories, despite all their mythological elements. Yet, in taking such a step, one should be aware of historiographical pitfalls when one studies the process of the "historization" of myth. In chapter four, entitled the "Joseph trajectory", it is demonstrated that Joseph, the father of Jesus, should probably be seen as a legendary figure. With the help of cross-cultural anthropology and cultural psychology chapter five explains an ideal-typical situation of someone in first-century Herodian Palestine who bore the stigma of being fatherless, but who trusted God as Father. In chapter six the tradition about Jesus' relationship towards "fatherless" children and "patriarchless" women is studied. Chapter seven shows that the "myth of the absent father" was very well known in antiquity. Ovid's story of Perseus (who was conceived virginally) is retold. The intention is to show why the second-century philosopher Celsus thought that the Christians unjustifiably mirrored this Greek hero, son of Zeus, in their depiction of

Jesus. Other examples within Greek-Roman literature are the myths surrounding among others Hercules and Asclepius. In explaining Hercules' adoption as son of Zeus (which implies his deification), the Greek writer Diodorus Siculus tells the story of an empty tomb and an ascension to heaven. The Roman writer Seneca also tells the story of Hercules' divine conception and his adoption as child of Zeus. In the New Testament Paul (Seneca's contemporary) is particularly known for the notion "adoption to become God's child". This notion is explained in the light of the parallels found in Seneca's tragedies about Hercules, his satire on the emperor Claudius and the references by Diodorus Siculus and in the *Carmina Priapea* to the notion of "adoption" and miraculous conceptions of god-like human figures. Chapter eight focuses on the origins of the church and the development of the dogma of the "two natures" of Jesus as both human and divine. In the last chapter the continued importance of the historical Jesus today is discussed. One of the most urgent social problems of our time is that millions of children are growing up fatherless. This study is about the historical Jesus who filled the emptiness caused by his fatherlessness with his trust in God as his Father.

## **Keywords**

Historical Jesus

Son of God

Hellenistic-Semitic context

Graeco-Roman context

Interdisciplinary research

Historicization of myth

Joseph trajectory

Fatherlessness

Adoption as child of God

Deification (apotheosis)

## OPSOMMING

In die jaar 2000 word die geboortedag van Jesus twee millenia gelede gevier. Indien Jesus as bloot net nog 'n historiese figuur gesien word, sal die betekenis van sy lewe op dieselfde vlak lê as mense soos Sokrates en Aleksander die Grote. In die Grieks-Romeinse kultuur was Aleksander die Grote, soos sekere andere heroïese figure en regeerders, as seun van God geag. Sedert die eerste eeu het Christene egter Jesus as seun van God aanbid. In hierdie studie word ondersoek gedoen na sowel die betekenis van Jesus se lewe teen die agtergrond van die Hellenisties-Semitiese en Grieks-Romeinse kontekste as sy volgehoue belang vir die gemeenskap in die hede. Die eerste aspek word bestudeer vanuit 'n sosiaal-kulturele perspektief en die tweede vanuit beide die invalshoek van die Christelike geloofsgemeenskap en die universiteit. Hoofstuk een gaan metodologies in op die feit dat Jesus, soos ook Sokrates, nie self sy boodskap en betekenis van sy optrede neergeskryf of sy geboorte en en dood geïnterpreteer het nie. Jesus se visie moet daarom ontrafel word vanuit wat ander oor hom gesê het. In hoofstuk twee word, wat bestaande ondersoeke na die historiese Jesus betref, 'n bepaalde navorsingsleemte geïdentifiseer en word aangedui dat resente navorsing deur interdisiplinêre studies gekenmerk word. In hoofstuk drie word redes aangetoon waarom die onderhawige ondersoek by die geboorte- en kindheidsvertellings begin ten spyte van die mitologiese aard daarvan. Hoofstuk vier is getitel "Die Josef-trajek". In hierdie hoofstuk word argumente verskaf waarom Josef, volgens tradisie die vader van Jesus, as 'n legendariese figuur beskou kan word. Met behulp van kruis-kulturele antropologie en sosiale psigologie word 'n ideaal-tipiese situasie van 'n "vaderlose" figuur in die eerste-eeuse Herodiaanse Palestina in hoofstuk vyf bespreek. Hoofstuk ses bestudeer die tradisies van die historiese Jesus ten opsigte van kinders sonder vaders en vroue sonder patriarge in hulle lewe. Hoofstuk sewe toon aan dat die "mite van die afwesige vader" 'n welbekende literêre tema in die antieke kultuurgeskiedenis is. Die storie van Ovidius oor Perseus (wat "maagdelik verwek" is) word oorvertel om aan te toon waarom die tweede-eeuse filosoof Celsus die volgelinge van Jesus beskuldig het dat hulle ongeregtig Jesus met die Griekse held Perseus vergelyk het. Ander

voorbeelde in die Grieks-Romeinse literatuur is die mites oor onder andere Herkules en Asklepios. Wanneer die Griekse skrywer, Diodorus Siculus, Herkules se aanneming as seun van Zeus berig (wat neergekom het op Herkules se vergoddeliking) vertel hy die storie van ‘n “leë graf” en ‘n “hemelvaart”. In die tragedies van die Romeinse skywer, Seneka, oor Herkules word soortgelyke vertellings oor Herkules se goddelike verwekking en vergoddeliking aangetref. In die Nuwe Testament is dit veral Paulus, ’n tydgenoot van Seneka, wat die uitdrukking “aanneming tot seun van God” gebruik. Hierdie Pauliniese uitdrukking word verduidelik in die lig van die parallelle in Seneka se tragedies oor Herkules en Seneka se satire oor keiser Klaudius asook verwysings by Diodorus Sikulus en in die Priapea Liedere. Hoofstuk agt fokus op die oorgang van Jesus na die begin van die kerk en op die ontstaansgeskiedenis van die dogma oor Jesus se “menslike natuur” en “goddelike natuur”. In die laaste hoofstuk word ingegaan op die vraag na die eietydse belang van Jesus. Een van die dringendste sosiale vraagstukke van ons tyd is die groeiende wêreldwye tendens dat kinders vaderloos grootword. Hierdie studie handel oor die historiese Jesus wat ‘n soortgelyke “leegheid” met sy vertroue in God as Vader gevul het.

## **Sleutel terme**

Historiese Jesus

Seun van God

Hellenistiese-Semitiese konteks

Grieks-Romeinse konteks

Interdissiplinêre ondersoek

Historisering van mite

Josef-trajek

Vaderloosheid

Aanneming tot seun van God

Vergoddeliking

## Conclusion

This study is partly about the historical Jesus and partly about the early Jesus movements. Both parts are studied against the background of the intermingled contexts of the Judean, Herodian Galilean, Hellenistic-Semitic and Graeco-Roman worlds in mind. From a socio-historical perspective Jesus is compared with Greek semi-gods and deities and with Roman emperors who were worshipped as sons of God. The dissertation aims at arguing that the starting point for the quest for the historical Jesus could be the nativity stories, despite its mythological elements. In existing historical-critical research Jesus' baptism by John the Baptist has been the point of departure for the reconstruction of his words and sayings within a coherent framework. In this study it is demonstrated that Joseph, the father of Jesus, could probably be seen as a legendary figure. The study also focuses upon Jesus' interaction with fatherless children and women without husbands in a patriarchal society. The study concludes with the question as to the continued importance of Jesus today. One of the most urgent social problems of our time is that millions of children are growing up fatherless. This study is about the historical Jesus who filled the emptiness caused by his fatherlessness with his trust in God as his Father.