

Jesus Research and the Appearance of Psychobiography

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It is a pleasure to honor Truman G. Madsen, with whom I have enjoyed fruitful conversations in Provo, Jerusalem, and elsewhere. As I assess the present state of Jesus Research—or the Third Quest of the Historical Jesus—a new method of research appears surprising. It is the appearance of psychobiography. Before we can discuss this new aspect of Jesus Research, we need to review the study of the historical Jesus from circa 1835 to the present. Of course, the limitations of this essay demand brevity. Perhaps such focus will advance one of the reasons for this essay: to encourage others to become involved in the study of the historical Jesus from various scientific and theological perspectives.

The incomparably great Albert Schweitzer once referred to the “chaos of modern lives of Jesus.”¹ He was referring to the books on Jesus that appeared after his *magnum opus* on the historical Jesus. Schweitzer was not a prophet; he was merely prescient. As one sees the veritable flood of books on Jesus, one may be forgiven for thinking that the field is in more chaos today than when Schweitzer wrote. Some among the weak-minded think the study of the historical Jesus is a dead end. Others parade their ignorance in thinking that Papias (whose work is lost) and Irenaeus (who was a defender of the faith) were reporting objectively that at least two gospels were composed by eyewitnesses of Jesus.²

In the field of Jesus Research, as well as in archaeology, we confront the minimalists and the maximalists. In this short review essay, I shall attempt to point out how and why these extremists have followed the blind and fallen into a pit. I also wish to point out that behind the apparent chaos is an unparalleled consensus on methodology and on some major aspects of Jesus’ life and thought. The difference between a book by a scholar and one by a nonscholar is the amount of attention given to methodological issues and the degree to which a scientific, unbiased method is followed in asking historical, literary, and theological questions. All scholars who are focusing their research on the historical Jesus acknowledge that the historical-critical method needs to be employed. Too few scholars recognize and attempt to supplement their Jesus Research by including insights obtained from sociology, anthropology, archaeology, rhetoric, and perhaps psychobiography.

The field of Jesus Research is vast. No one has read all the publications. It may be impossible now even to claim to have read all the important publications since they are so numerous, scattered in so many different fields, and written in over twenty languages. Fortunately, we have a useful bibliographical guide to most publications up until 1996: Craig A. Evans’s *Life of Jesus Research*.³

My inaugural at Princeton Theological Seminary in 1984 was focused on “Jesus Research.” I stressed that from A.D. 30 (the date of the crucifixion) to 1835 (the date of the appearance of the first critical examination of the life of Jesus, David F. Strauss’s *Das Leben Jesu*), the approach to Jesus was devotional.⁴ That is to say, Christians had approached Jesus by worshiping him as the Christ, the Son of God. In the early centuries, scholars claimed, and thence it was presupposed, that eyewitnesses composed the gospels: Matthew and John were apostles, Mark was the assistant of Peter, and Luke was the companion of Paul.

The years from 1835 until 1906 were filled with excitement in the historical search for Jesus. Strauss initially, and others intermittently, dreamed of giving persons in the pew a reliable biography of the one they followed. Many,

including Strauss, were finally led to question whether an informed and enlightened person could still remain a Christian.

Some scholars claimed Mark was the most reliable biographer of Jesus; others defended John. Some arguments may have been by scholars, but they were hardly scholarly. Some New Testament experts even claimed that Judas was the Beloved Disciple of the Gospel of John. The distinguished Frenchman Ernst Renan opined that Jesus' painful last moments in Gethsemane may have been due to his regret over the women he should have loved in Galilee. The famous church historian Adolph Harnack claimed that Jesus taught the fatherhood of God, the brotherhood of humankind, and the ethic of love. Readers were not hearing the voice of the Galilean rabbi; they were in touch with French romanticism and German idealism. The attentive reader pondered why Jesus was so misunderstood by his followers and why he was crucified. This period (1835–1906) has come to be known as the “Old Quest for the Historical Jesus.”

In the first edition of his study on the historical Jesus, published in 1906, Schweitzer showed that all who had written during the nineteenth century were simply offering a view of Jesus that they could admire or understand. His work, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*,⁵ is not only a classic, but it is perhaps the most influential study of Jesus ever published. Virtually every scholar who has been working independently has come to agree with Schweitzer that Jesus was deeply influenced by Jewish apocalypticism.⁶

George Tyrrell, an Irish modernist and Roman Catholic, insightfully emphasized a statement that is too often associated with Schweitzer (although it was clearly influenced by him). In his review of Harnack's *What Is Christianity?* Tyrrell stated that those who had written a putative historical work on Jesus had merely peered down the well of history and seen the reflection of their own faces.⁷

Thus the historical search for Jesus died in many seminaries and universities—especially in the influential and leading German institutions. The formative judges—like Rudolf Bultmann, Karl Barth, and Paul Tillich—announced that it was not only impossible to achieve, but that it was also irrelevant for Christian faith.⁸ A slogan seemed to be heard: all the Christian needs to know is that one who is saved is saved by “faith alone.” This cliché not only misrepresents the complex theologies of Luther and Paul,⁹ but it also masquerades as a mandate to be lazy and forgo historical research. Sadly, these perspectives, now clearly disproved by biblical scholars and theologians, can be heard as ghostly echoes in lectures and sermons.

From 1919 (the date of Barth's commentary on Romans) and the 1920s (the beginnings of Bultmann's school) until 1953, the theology of Bultmann and Barth flourished, but they and their followers tended to denigrate historicism. Although many New Testament scholars, especially the Frenchman Pierre Benoit and the Norwegian Nils A. Dahl, stressed the importance of historical research on Jesus before 1950,¹⁰ it is widely recognized that Ernst Käsemann opened up “the New Quest for the Historical Jesus” in 1953.¹¹ He did so boldly—before Bultmann and at a celebratory gathering of his students. Käsemann demonstrated that there is history in the New Testament. Arguing that Christian theology was grounded not in ideas or existentialism, Käsemann was able to convince many New Testament experts that Christianity was founded on real history and that there was some continuity between Jesus' words and the kerygma.

This New Quest slowly sank from view, perhaps because it was heavily laden with theological interests and with a lingering fascination with existentialism. Lack of dedication to sociology and archaeology and too much interest in Christology marred an objective historiographical search for an understanding of Jesus before age thirty. About

1980 something new appeared in scholarship,¹² which I have called “Jesus Research.” Regardless of their own theology or beliefs, many scholars around the world found it interesting and important to ask historical questions. First-century buildings and pavements found unexpectedly in Jerusalem raised questions about what kind of people walked there two thousand years ago.

Jewish and Christian historians pondered what can be known concerning the founder of the Qumran Community (the anonymous Righteous Teacher), Hillel (the “Pharisee” who was a close antecedent of Jesus), Gamaliel, and Johanan ben Zakkai (the one who chaired the first rabbinic “academy” at Jamnia). They also found themselves asking similar questions about Jesus of Nazareth. This new approach was distinct from the previous ones that had dominated the field: it was not tied to a theologically motivated “search” for Jesus. Jesus Research was often stimulated by studies of the Dead Sea Scrolls, early rabbinics, Josephus, and other early Jewish writings—especially the Old Testament Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha. This study was actual “research”; that is, archaeology, anthropology, and sociology became important in the study of the historical Jesus. Sometime in the late 1980s, Jesus Research was infiltrated—some might say contaminated—by authors, some of whom are scholars, who basically took up the Old Quest, seeking to find a Jesus whom they could follow or worship. The most attractive of their books may be Marcus Borg’s *Jesus, A New Vision*.¹³ It is understandable why some scholars call the new period of the study of the historical Jesus the “Third Quest” or “Third Search.”¹⁴

Some experts may find a distinction between the study of Jesus before and after 1980 (or later) to be misleading. Granted, such distinguished scholars as Guignebert, Goguel, Loisy, Strauss, and Bauer would disclaim that their studies were motivated by theological agendas. It is also not fair to brand Bultmann as one whose christological concerns simply dictated his historical research. It is surely debatable to what degree Borg, John Dominic Crossan, and others like Luke Johnson are true historians whose work is not in any way shaped by christological perspectives. What I wish to stress is that more concern for objective research on Jesus is apparent today than it was before approximately 1980.

More illustrations are necessary to clarify that the paradigm shift is not only apparent but real and that the new wave of research is not different only because of more primary data like the Dead Sea Scrolls and other archaeological discoveries that antedate A.D. 70. Once David Flusser’s book *Jesus* could end by reporting Jesus’ death. Now his study requires an epilogue in which he can show how the ideas of the historical Jesus evolve into the faith of Christians. Once Father Marie-Joseph Lagrange, the founder of the École Biblique et Archéologique Française in Jerusalem, had to keep one eye looking out for possible Vatican censorship. Now Roman Catholic scholars are free to explore historical issues: Raymond E. Brown¹⁵ and John Meier can query the historicity of the virgin birth (and yet confess it liturgically), and in the *cole Biblique*, Jerome Murphy-O’Connor can publish a life of Paul that is in no way designed to please the papacy.¹⁶

Of course, vast differences exist in contemporary Jesus study. At the outset one can try to bifurcate scholars into those who, like E. P. Sanders, want history and not confessionalism and those who, like Borg, mix history and Christology; but, finally, all such neat categories, like liberal versus conservative, distort rather than represent. Books in the field of Jesus Research—like those by Flusser, James H. Charlesworth, Meier, Richard A. Horsley,¹⁷ and Sanders—appear alongside other publications on Jesus that resist categorizing, such as those by Ben Witherington, Crossan, Nicholas T. Wright,¹⁸ and Paula Fredriksen.¹⁹

Once one scholar, Schweitzer, could summarize the study of the historical Jesus during the nineteenth century. The review of the study of the historical Jesus during the twentieth century is a monstrous task. Three experts

now seek to assess what has been happening. Walter P. Weaver, Pendergrass Professor of New Testament Emeritus, at Florida Southern College, completed the first book in 1999; it is entitled *The Historical Jesus in the Twentieth Century*.²⁰ He covered the study of the historical Jesus from 1900 to 1950. Ernst Baasland, a New Testament scholar who has become a bishop of the Lutheran Church in Norway, will cover the period from 1951 to 1980, and Charlesworth will assess the period from 1981 to 2000. The publisher of the trilogy is Trinity Press International.

For those who cannot spend months working through the erudite and exhaustive volumes on Jesus by Meier entitled *A Marginal Jew*,²¹ a small book entitled *Jesus Two Thousand Years Later* may be attractive. This latter book contains essays that are written for nonscholars.²² Five well-known scholars—Weaver, Crossan, Sanders, Amy-Jill Levine, and Charlesworth—present their ideas in this recent volume in the Faith and Scholarship Colloquies that are held each year at Florida Southern College.

What Can Be Known about Jesus' Actions?

A remarkable consensus has appeared among many of the leading scholars regarding Jesus' actions. Here are some Jesus traditions that seem to be, if not virtually *bruta facta*, at least highly probable conclusions:

- Jesus grew up in Nazareth.
- He was baptized by John the Baptizer.
- He was obsessed with doing God's will.
- He was "intoxicated" with another dimension and identified himself as a prophet.²³
- He chose twelve men to be his disciples.
- He was very close to Mary Magdalene.
- He performed healing miracles.
- He taught in synagogues (at the beginning only, perhaps), small dwellings, and on the fringes of villages (not cities).
- In shocking contrast to the actions of many Pharisees and the Essenes, he associated with the outcast, physically sick or impaired, and social misfits.
- He went to Jerusalem to celebrate Passover and worship within the temple cult.
- He frequented the temple, worshiped there, and taught in the porticoes.
- When he was in Jerusalem, he attacked some corruptions in the temple cult.
- His meals were often religious events, and his last meal with his disciples was at Passover time in Jerusalem.
- He seems to have been betrayed by Judas and was certainly denied by Peter.
- He was forcefully taken by some Jews, most likely some related to the cult.
- He was crucified by Roman soldiers outside the western walls of Jerusalem.²⁴
- He died before the beginning of the Sabbath on Friday afternoon.

During thirty years of lecturing on Jesus and the Twelve, and pointing out that Peter is always first and Judas last, I strove to convince my students that Jesus' followers created the concept of Twelve. Since it is undeniable that Judas is in the list and is often referred to as one of the Twelve, I now conclude that Jesus chose twelve. I am pleased to observe that Sanders and Meier—leading experts in Jesus Research—independently came to the same conclusion: that Jesus certainly had some political agenda.²⁵ In *Who Was Jesus?* Hendrikus Boers points to the evidence that Jesus' followers "were armed in Gethsemane," and thus it is "difficult to deny that he himself may have been involved in armed resistance against Rome."²⁶ I find it absurd that leading scholars stress, on different

occasions, two mutually exclusive ideas—sometimes claiming that Jesus had a political agenda and at other times arguing that he was not interested in or linked with politics. We should rather consistently stress that politics and religion in first-century Judaism cannot be distinguished or separated.²⁷ The absurd inconsistency in scholarly publications should have been broken by Borg's superb book *Conflict, Holiness, and Politics in the Teachings of Jesus*²⁸ and by a collection edited by Ernst Bammel and Charles F. D. Moule entitled *Jesus and the Politics of His Day*.²⁹

Debates certainly continue regarding Jesus' actions. In no way was Jesus a marginal Jew³⁰ or a peasant.³¹ He was devoutly Jewish; and he was far too sophisticated, learned, and involved with urban life to be a "peasant." Sometimes these discussions appear without the demeanor of scholarly dialogue.

Central to the previous reflections are methodological searches for authenticating Jesus' activities. Fortunately, Bruce Chilton and Evans have edited a book that will be essential in any future search for Jesus' actions. In *Authenticating the Activities of Jesus*, nineteen established New Testament experts share their own methods and conclusions.³² The purpose of the collection is "to clarify what procedures should be undertaken to distinguish tradition and meaning that stem from Jesus from that which stems from later tradents and evangelists"³³ A third of the book is on methods and assumptions and two-thirds on authenticating the activities of Jesus. Seventeen essays appear in this volume; eleven are new, and six have been revised. J. D. G. Dunn and most scholars who contributed to this volume (and its companion) are convinced that the goal of Jesus Research or the Third Quest will be—or is—most likely successful. Martin Hengel and Evans present papers to show that Jesus did have a messianic mission. Personally, I am convinced that while Jesus never declared himself to be the Messiah (the Christ), he may have had a messianic self-understanding.³⁴

In *Authenticating the Activities of Jesus*, William Klassen brilliantly raises again a perplexing question—what did Judas betray?—and disagrees with Charlesworth, Borg, Ruth Tucker, Crossan, and others. Klassen rightly points out that the New Testament verb used to describe Judas' act is *paradidomi*. It means "to hand over," or "transmit," and not "betray" (which is *prodidomi*, a verb that does not appear in the New Testament; compare the obviously incorrect reading in Mark 14:10 that is found in only Codex Bezae). Thus, Klassen is convinced that "Judas acted in obedience to Christ's will and that in his act of handing over could have been obedient to God's will."³⁵ Klassen is correct to point out that Judas is a much more positive character than Christian traditions allow; he was certainly one of the Twelve, and he may have been the treasurer of Jesus' group (see John 12:6; 13:29). The tendencies of the later strata of the Gospels do certainly increase the vilification of Judas, but narrative exegesis and the rhetorical thrust of the Gospels clarify that Judas left Jesus' group, joined his enemies, and initiated a process that eventually led to Jesus' crucifixion. We have no way of knowing Judas's motives or Jesus' final evaluation of him.³⁶

It is important, of course, to seek to know what can be reliably ascertained about the reasons for Jesus' horrible death in A.D. 30.³⁷ Jesus ascends to Jerusalem from Galilee in order to celebrate Passover. Pontius Pilate brings thousands of his soldiers from Caesarea Maritima to the Holy City. Pilgrims flood in from everywhere: from as far away as Parthia in the East and Rome in the West. The city becomes electric with messianic and eschatological fever, as the Jews begin to celebrate—actually relive—how God acted on their behalf and saved them from the pharaohs. In his well-written *Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography*, Crossan captures the social setting. Caiaphas and Pilate "would no doubt have agreed before such a festival that fast and immediate action was to be taken against any disturbance and that some examples by crucifixion might be especially useful at the start."³⁸ For Caiaphas and

Pilate, who must preserve order amidst potential crises and perhaps against the wishes of most in the Sanhedrin, Jesus was dangerous because of his ability to arouse unruly crowds (the most unstable of social institutions).

What Can Be Known about Jesus' Teaching

While it is important to know something reliably about Jesus the man, it is equally central—and perhaps more important for many scholars—to examine what can be known regarding his teachings. A major turning point in the study of Jesus by a Jew is seen in the brilliant and challenging trilogy written by Geza Vermes of Oxford: *Jesus the Jew: A Historian's Reading of the Gospels* (1973), *Jesus and the World of Judaism* (1983), and *The Religion of Jesus the Jew* (1993). Another pioneer in Jesus Research is the late David Flusser, an incredibly erudite and creative professor of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. In the major revision of his book *Jesus*, he focuses attention on Jesus' concept of love.³⁹ In contrast to the Jewish authors who reject Jesus because of his apparently absurd command to love our enemies (see Matthew 5:44), Flusser has crafted a sensitive and scholarly book that is one of the best discussions of Jesus' understanding of love. Flusser sees a markedly "new sensitivity" among Jesus' contemporary Jews; Jesus knew that love must include all and be like God's mercy (see Matthew 5:4; Luke 6:36). From years of discussing Jesus with Flusser, I have come to perceive Jesus' teachings more clearly. Jesus taught that love defined by boundaries may be only a self-serving affection. As we reflect on our own lives, and as we grow older, it becomes obvious that we cannot know who our friends or our enemies may be—and that such a bifurcation of humanity distorts reality. Moreover, if we do not strive to love our enemies, how are we to live in a world without enemies?

One of Flusser's students has written a solid assessment of Jesus' parables. Brad Young's *The Parables* focuses on the attempt to understand Jesus in light of what can be known of Jesus' own time.⁴⁰ Young rightly points out that "Christian" interpretation, even by the early Greek scholars, often missed Jesus' message because they removed him from his Jewish environment. There should be no doubt that the parables originate with Jesus, though edited by the Evangelists, and Charles W. Hedrick rightly sees Jesus' creativity in them.⁴¹

Most scholars concur that Jesus' central message is the dawning of God's rule (the Kingdom of God—for Matthew, "the Kingdom of Heaven"). Thus, among the most certain aspects of Jesus' teachings are the following:

- His central proclamation was the dawning of God's rule.
- His custom was to speak pictorially, using parables.
- He knew Greek and Hebrew, but his usual speech was in Aramaic.
- He seems to have taught his disciples a special way to pray (the Lord's Prayer).
- In line with ideas implicit in the world of other early Jews, Jesus taught his followers that they should love their enemies.
- He often argued with the Pharisees because his theology was close to theirs.
- He was influenced by some Essene thought (as reflected in the Dead Sea Scrolls) but would have been highly critical of their predestinarian beliefs and exclusivism.⁴²
- He apparently perceived his mission and that of his followers to be focused on Israel alone (compare "go nowhere among the Gentiles" in Matthew 10:5).
- He argued against the Jerusalem-based, elevated concept of purity and most likely attacked the money changers in the Temple.

Of course, every part of this list—and also the previous one—can be and has been debated. What I present is only a consensus I observe in experts who have been independently involved in Jesus Research.

More should be reported about Jesus' teachings. I am personally convinced, and most experts in Jesus Research would concur, that his teaching was eschatological and apocalyptic. This issue is unfortunately no longer a major consensus among authors, but it is clearly a consensus among scholars who have studied early Judaism and the earliest stratum of Jesus traditions. Klassen is certainly correct to stress that members of the Jesus Seminar try

“to free” Jesus from the “shackles of Jewish apocalypticism” so that they may “tailor Jesus to their own likes” and so “find him more palatable.”⁴³

Such massive disagreement in published books leads us to ponder how one can access Jesus’ message. I agree with Wright and disagree with Sanders that Jesus called sinners to repent (compare John 7:53–8:11, which has strong a case for representing Jesus as any other section of the New Testament, even though it is not original to John).⁴⁴ Other lists, often strikingly similar to mine, are provided by Wright and Sanders. I agree with Evans in adding to their lists “that Jesus was viewed by the public as a prophet, that the Romans crucified him as ‘king of the Jews,’ and that following Easter his followers regarded him as Israel’s Messiah.”⁴⁵ Thus the pendulum has swung from the declarative “we cannot know anything about Jesus” to the interrogative “how much can we reliably know about the historical Jesus?” Perhaps the central issue once again concerns methodology. How do we know we are hearing Jesus’ own voice and not merely distorted echoes passed on by those who never knew him?

Chilton and Evans have also edited a work entitled *Authenticating the Words of Jesus*. Again the purpose is to seek behind redactions some reliable traditions that derive ultimately from Jesus. The book includes seventeen essays; almost all are by leading experts who write in English. Essays on methodology are presented by Evans, Chilton, Bruce J. Malina (whose essay is superb), and Tom Holmn.⁴⁶ Two essays are directed to the Lord’s Prayer.

Only one essay is devoted to “the Son of Man,” and in it Chilton makes some important contributions. He fails to realize, however, that today most experts on the Pseudepigrapha conclude that the author of *1 Enoch* 37–71 tends to identify the Messiah with the Son of Man⁴⁷ and that this tradition antedates Jesus’ own authentic words.⁴⁸ If this document, the so-called *Parables of Enoch*, is prior to or contemporaneous with Jesus, then “Christian” theology is much closer to some forms of Judaism than we expected, and we may have an invaluable source for grasping the self-understanding of Jesus. Yet, I do want to prescind from a creative suggestion by J. C. O’Neill in his *Who Did Jesus Think He Was?* O’Neill is convinced that Jesus’ claims in the Gospel of John do not derive from Jesus but from Jewish documents that antedate Jesus.⁴⁹

Only one essay in *Authenticating the Words of Jesus* is directly on the parables.⁵⁰ In one of the best essays in these two volumes on authenticity, Klassen demonstrates how the command to love our enemies is both authentic to Jesus and also rooted in the Greek theater and in the new morality appearing in early Jewish theology (as Flusser’s book also demonstrates).⁵¹ It is a pity that the index to Chilton and Evans’s book is limited only to biblical literature.

Both of the volumes by Chilton and Evans appear in a series inaugurated and edited by Bruce M. Metzger: *New Testament Tools and Studies*. Each is obviously intended as a reference work for scholars. The essays are mostly in English, but one is in German. The discussions often demand knowledge of Hebrew and Greek philology. It is a pity that all the authors are (or seem to be) Christians; that is, some superb work on Jesus is being published by Jews and others that defy the traditional labels. More research should have been grounded on sociology and archaeology (a dimension of Jesus Research that will be corrected by the proceedings of the millennium celebration held in Jerusalem in August 2000).⁵² While these reference volumes are handsome, they are also extremely expensive. Each costs \$160. One can imagine that some scholars who must study them may not be able to afford them.

What are the tendencies of these essays? There is a move to distance research from the popular and often journalistic publications of the Jesus Seminar which, inter alia, has sought objective proofs and announces, with distorted methodology, that Jesus must be divorced from Jewish apocalypticism. Many readers will agree with Wright that the Jesus Seminar employs a misleading methodology, with five gospels but “no Gospel.” Yet, some good is coming out of the Jesus Seminar, and Robert W. Funk’s initiative and desire to take the historical Jesus seriously is commendable.⁵³

Funk’s essays show a willingness to consider Jesus’ messianic self-understanding. He demonstrates an awareness that Jesus was thoroughly Jewish and that the New Testament Gospels incorrectly tend to shift the blame for his death onto “the Jews.” He also tends to avoid positivism (which claims something like objective, unedited data regarding Jesus) and to keep clear of the distorting claim that all conclusions are merely tenuous speculations by scholars.

We are now in a new day in the study of the historical Jesus; our world is different. One difference is placarded by some words written by Hermann Gunkel, the great German biblical scholar who wrote during the first half of the twentieth century. It is riveting to hear Gunkel’s words: “To us, for whom war has become the solution for the problems of today, this book (the Old Testament) can become a source of strength. Our people also will remain invincible if we know both: the heroism of the sword and the heroism of faith.”⁵⁴ I am convinced that world leaders today have learned that war is not “the solution for the problems of today,” but no one would be so foolish as to suggest that there is peace on our fragile globe.

Scholars should be grateful to Chilton and Evans for the two books highlighted in this review essay—*Authenticating the Activities of Jesus* and *Authenticating the Words of Jesus*. This adds to the attractiveness of their other works, especially their earlier edited collection of essays in *Studying the Historical Jesus: Evaluation of the State of Current Research*,⁵⁵ as well as those in *Jesus in Context: Temple, Purity, and Restoration*.⁵⁶ Reading the contributions to these books leaves one with an impression of diversity but not chaos.

Jesus Research and the Appearance of Psychobiography

The two volumes in *New Testament Tools and Studies* are helpful, but they could have been much better. It is not easy to separate the story of Jesus into his deeds and his words. Sometimes Jesus’ message is most articulate in his actions. This point is made when one looks at the books that study Jesus from the sociological and psychological point of view—perspectives noticeably absent in the NTTS collection.

Shirley J. Case introduced the sociological approach to Jesus before World War II. He died in 1947 before he could complete his second book on Jesus.⁵⁷ Gerd Theissen, in a brilliant monograph, began the new wave of studying Jesus in light of sociology. His book appeared in 1978 under the title *Sociology of Early Palestinian Christianity*.⁵⁸ Horsley added a major contribution to this field in 1989. His book is focused on Theissen’s *Sociology and the Jesus Movement*.⁵⁹ While no recent book has been dedicated to a sociological biography of Jesus, and I am not familiar with a possible neologism such as “sociobiography,” much valuable information regarding the social world of Jesus is amassed in *The Jesus Movement: A Social History of Its First Century*.⁶⁰ Still waiting to be written are major monographs on sociology and Jesus, for example, taking into account Gustave Le Bon and other sociologists’ insights into the “crowd” and the importance of the crowd in Jesus’ story.⁶¹

In contrast to a sociological study of Jesus, a psychological assessment of Jesus has assumed some prominence after being relatively dormant for over fifty years. While no one should attempt to psychoanalyze Jesus—as if one

could put him on a couch and cross-examine him—it is essential to complete what is known from other methodological approaches by adding what one trained in psychology may see or query.⁶² Jesus Research (or the Third Quest) has been converging with psychobiography and psychohistory. Two superb attempts at a psychobiography of Jesus have appeared; they deserve highlighting, if only briefly.

John W. Miller has written *Jesus at Thirty: A Psychological and Historical Portrait*.⁶³ Miller, who was formerly director of Psychiatric Rehabilitation Services at a hospital and taught religion at the college level, is convinced that the proper method to use in writing a psychological biography of Jesus is a refined method adapted from Freud, Fromm, Erikson, and Levinson. Especially important for Miller is Freud's insight into the oedipal complex. Miller attempts to demonstrate that Jesus was estranged from his family, lost his father at an early age, and became a surrogate father and husband. During his baptism by John the Baptizer, Jesus had a powerful pneumatic experience and broke with his mother at age thirty. Jesus, however, resisted the temptation to be the Messiah, did not marry (because his father was not around to find him a woman), and found peace in recognizing that he had found a heavenly Father.

Critics will easily point out that Miller places too much emphasis on Luke's portrayal of Jesus: that he was the firstborn and began his ministry at thirty (which Miller admits may actually be between ages 28 and 33).⁶⁴ They will find his analysis unconvincing because he misses the tendencies of the Evangelists (*Redaktionsgeschichte*). Miller does miss the advancements made since Jeremias on "Abba"⁶⁵ and incorrectly claims that only women were with Jesus at the cross (see John 19:26–27).⁶⁶ Yet scholars may learn from Miller's book; he does show that one can obtain some insight into Jesus' early years by looking at what is reported about him after he joins John the Baptizer. He does bring into shocking focus the apparently reliable evidence that Jesus was estranged from his mother and siblings (but not his father).

New and even more challenging is Donald Capps's *Jesus: A Psychological Biography*.⁶⁷ Capps, a professor at Princeton Theological Seminary and a leading specialist on the psychology of religion, carefully assesses what advances have been achieved by those dedicated to Jesus Research. He chooses to focus on Jesus' role as healer. Capps certainly demonstrates that Jesus scholars have inadvertently drawn conclusions about Jesus that impinge on the field of psychology. He shows also that psychological theories are not only legitimate but essential in the historical reassessment of Jesus the man.

More sensitive than Miller to the way the Evangelists' communities and the Evangelists themselves shaped and edited the Jesus traditions, Capps rightly claims that Jesus, as most scholars contend, performed healing miracles. Capps explores Jesus' role as exorcist-healer and makes some fascinating suggestions.⁶⁸ His discoveries are often fresh, and they provide a stimulus to more explorations.

Capps's book is also controversial. For example, Capps is convinced that Jesus' birth was illegitimate,⁶⁹ that Joseph failed to adopt him, and that "Jesus was a melancholic male who turned to an alternative religious formulation—based on belief in Abba—to address and overcome his melancholia."⁷⁰ What may be most impressive about the studies by Miller and Capps is that they are not pathologies as were many of the early attempts to study Jesus in light of Freud and psychology. Miller and Capps present a portrait of Jesus as one who overcame major psychological problems and emerged as *a healthy male*.

Conclusion

Johnson, in his *The Real Jesus*, rightly stresses the fundamental truth of the story in the Gospels. Story is essential for humans. We are able to obtain meaning only when we put facts—or lists of apparent facts—into a framework or story. Johnson thus wisely points out that “the most critical thing about a person is precisely what most eludes the methods of critical historiography, namely, the *meaning* of a character.”⁷¹ Indeed, I agree with Johnson that our “problem is not the lack of data, but the inaccessibility of meaning” in the vast primary data. “Meaning derives from the interpretation of the facts rather than the facts themselves. And such interpretation depends on story.”⁷² Have not the psychologists of religion helped us see that psychobiography is important in comprehending the story of Jesus?

We need to comprehend that history is accessible only through tradition and comprehensible only through interpretation.⁷³ Thus we need to ask the following question: “Is the New Testament witness so powerful to so many because the story is not only historical but also real?” Is not the story of Jesus fundamentally founded on some real, uninterpreted events in history?⁷⁴ Thus I must disagree with Johnson, who is too focused on exposing the problems with the Jesus Seminar, when he advises that “Christian faith (then and now) is based on religious claims concerning the present power of Jesus.”⁷⁵ That statement can be used out of the context in which Johnson has carefully crafted it; if so, it can lead to Docetism, ahistorical mysticism, and idealism. I am convinced we should add to Johnson’s assessment that these “religious claims” must be grounded not only in what is putatively the “real Jesus” but also in the secular history of Rome and of Judaism. We professors must not teach something that would make our students sound foolish in the halls of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem.⁷⁶

Why is Jesus Research necessary? Jesus Research should begin with purely historical and scientific methods and honest questions. It must be “disinterested” in the sense that one should not lead the evidence to obtain a desired conclusion. When scientific research is completed—if only temporarily—then there is more to do, at least for the Jew and the Christian (including the Latter-day Saints). We need to be alert and to explore how sacred traditions and faith are informed by the ramifications of the scientific study of antiquity, especially Jesus in the first half of the first century a.d.

Christians need to avoid some major pitfalls. On the one hand, we must not err and seek to ground Christian faith on some mirage of objective scientific knowledge. To remove from Christian faith the scandalous and the gnawing uncertainty of a personal and total commitment drains authentic spirituality of faith. On the other hand, authentic Christian faith is more than a Kierkegaardian leap of faith. If one is to follow Jesus, then some reliable knowledge about how he lived and what he thought is imperative. If Christianity is to survive or blossom in the ever increasingly secular world, it must be more aware of its origins in first-century Jewish culture. It must also be grounded and enriched by absorbing the truths authentically embodied in Jesus’ life and message.⁷⁷ And as Madsen points out, after living in Jerusalem, one must avoid the fallacy of thinking that “the main vehicle” for understanding Jesus is his words. We should also comprehend that his meaning comes to life when we experience and imagine his environment and circumstance.⁷⁸

Schweitzer, who perceived Jesus to be incomparably great, saw chaos in the works on the life of Jesus that postdated his own *magnum opus*. On the one hand, Schweitzer and his generation were correct to point out that we cannot psychoanalyze Jesus—as if we could use Freudian methods to examine Jesus who lies before us on a couch. On the other hand, it is also unwise to follow Bultmann and his school and refuse to consider Jesus’ self-consciousness because his earliest followers and the earliest sources had no objective interest in his personal development. As I pointed out in *Jesus within Judaism*, every person has some self-understanding; hence, the historian and not only the theologian is entitled to ask about Jesus’ self-understanding. Now, with the new methods developed from psychologists of religion, we can explore the psychobiographical possibilities as we imagine Jesus, the man, in his earthly context. Perhaps the following are only minor questions: What was Jesus’

relationship with his father, Joseph, and his mother, Mary?⁷⁹ What was his relationship with John the Baptizer and Mary Magdalene? Did he have an elevated ego, and did he claim that he was the Messiah? Surely, historical research leads us to ask questions that have been charted by the psychologists of religion.

In the twenty-first century we may, at first glance, see an even greater chaos among Jesus scholars than Schweitzer envisioned. With patience and more pellucid perception we may comprehend a challenging consensus that helps us see through the mists of history more clearly. Certainly, there is at least a consensus regarding the big questions: Who was Jesus? Who did he think he was? What was his purpose? How did he think he was related to God?

Belief in Jesus Christ is rooted in faith in a Jew named Jesus and dedicated to a faithful and honest—and above all a scientific and disinterested—inquiry into the What (*Was*) and the How (*Wie*) that give meaning to the dilemma of a public crucifixion and confer sense on the That (*Das*).

Can any of these questions be adequately assessed without any concern for psychobiography? And should those who work on Jesus' psychobiography not be better trained in the archaeology and history of first-century Palestinian culture? I am convinced most experts on the historical Jesus would today say "yes" to both questions.

Addendum

After this essay had been completed, another book appeared that belongs within the category of a psychobiography of Jesus. It is Andries van Aarde's *Fatherless in Galilee: Jesus as Child of God* (Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 2001). The author is a professor of New Testament at the University of Pretoria in South Africa.

Andres van Aarde—informed by Erickson's *Young Man Luther* (which seems to have stimulated those engaged in a psychobiography of Jesus), by specialists in Jesus Research (especially Crossan, Horsley, Meier, and Sanders), and also by the challenging claims made by Schaberg—is convinced that Jesus' loss of his father is fundamental in understanding Jesus' message and life. Aarde is convinced that Jesus, who became fatherless, called on God to act paternally on behalf of his children, Israel. Jesus not only destroyed conventional patriarchal values in early Judaism, he "focused his ministry on 'fatherless' children and 'patriarchless' women."⁸⁰

Aarde's *Fatherless in Galilee* prompts some brief reflections on the differences between the psychological study of Jesus at the beginning of the twentieth century and the recent psychobiographies of Jesus. Four differences make the two periods of work paradigmatically different. First, in Schweitzer's day, psychopathologists simply applied Freudian psychology to ancient sources in an attempt to prove some mental disorder in Jesus' mind; that is, the sources for studying Jesus were the paranoid persons in their own clinics. Second, these authors, in contrast to those who write psychobiographies of Jesus, were untrained in New Testament research and remained uncritical of the sources about Jesus. Third, the authors of the psychobiographies, in contrast to the former attempts, take seriously the historical context of Jesus and learn from some of the leaders in Jesus Research. Fourth, as Schweitzer pointed out in his *Psychiatric Study of Jesus*, the psychopathologists depicted a hallucinating Jesus. Thus, the psychopathologists projected onto the first century and Jesus a portrait of a liberalized, indeed paranoid, Jesus that existed only in their own "modern" conceptual world. In summation, the psychopathological approaches to Jesus were unscientific psychological creations, but the current psychobiographers are informed by and contribute to historical research. They help us explore what the intention of the human Jesus was in his own context.

Notes

1. Walter P. Weaver, *The Historical Jesus in the Twentieth Century, 1900–1950* (Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 1999), xi.

2. This perspective appears in the uninformed, uncritical, and journalistic book by Lee Strobel entitled *The Case for Christ: A Journalist's Personal Investigation of the Evidence for Jesus* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1998). I am encouraged that Strobel moved from atheism or skepticism to Christianity by his own search for Jesus, but his search is far from objective and critical, despite the promises of the attractive anecdote that begins the book (pp.9–15). I would expect all scholarly work to lead to a better perception of truth.

3. Craig A. Evans, *Life of Jesus Research* (Leiden: Brill, 1996).

4. Of course, Albert Schweitzer was correct to point out that Reimarus was the inaugurator of the Old Quest.

5. Albert Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus: A Critical Study of Its Progress from Reimarus to Wrede*, trans. William Montgomery, 2nd ed. (London: Black, 1911).

6. One needs to be careful not to confuse the German second edition with the English second edition (which was based on the German first edition).

7. George Tyrrell had focused his thoughts on the liberal Protestant Adolph Harnack: “The Christ that Harnack sees, looking back through nineteen centuries of Catholic darkness, is only the reflection of a liberal Protestant face, seen at the bottom of a deep well.” Of course, Tyrrell’s own fiery spirit and some tension between Catholics and Protestants are not well hidden in this outburst. See Tyrrell, *Christianity at the Crossroads* (1909; reprint, London: Allen and Unwin, 1963), 49. I am grateful to Weaver for his discussions in *The Historical Jesus* on Tyrrell’s pellucid insight.

8. One of the best examinations of the denigration of historicism by Barth and Bultmann is by Hugh Anderson in *Jesus and Christian Origins: A Commentary on Modern Viewpoints* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964), 16–55.

9. For a recent discussion that attempts to show that Paul possibly knew about Jesus’ life and teachings and not only about his passion and resurrection, see David Wenham, “The Story of Jesus Known to Paul,” in *Jesus of Nazareth: Lord and Christ—Essays on the Historical Jesus and New Testament Christology*, ed. Joel B. Green and Max Turner (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1994), 297–311.

10. Pierre Benoit, “Réflexions sur la ‘Formgeschichtliche Methode,’” in *Exégèse et théologie* (Paris: Cerf, 1961), 1:25–61. See the recent collection of Nils A. Dahl’s essays in *Jesus the Christ: The Historical Origins of Christological Doctrine*, ed. Donald H. Juel (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991).

11. Ernst Käsemann, “The Problem of the Historical Jesus,” in *Essays on New Testament Themes*, trans. W. J. Montague (London: SCM, 1964).

12. W. Barnes Tatum rightly sees the shift from a theologically loaded “quest” to a new approach to the historical Jesus. He calls it “post-quest” and places the date at 1985 because of the appearance of Sanders’s *Jesus in Judaism* and the first session of the Jesus Seminar in that year. Neither initiated the new movement, but both were part of it. See Tatum, *In Quest of Jesus*, rev. ed. (Nashville: Abingdon, 1999), 102–3. Tatum’s 1985 date cannot have been in his first edition (1982), yet that book signifies that something new in the study of the historical Jesus had begun.

13. Marcus J. Borg, *Jesus, a New Vision: The Spirit, Culture, and the Life of Discipleship* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987). See Borg, *Jesus in Contemporary Scholarship* (Valley Forge, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 1994); Borg, ed., *Jesus at 2000* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1997); as well as Borg and Nicholas T. Wright, *The Meaning of Jesus: Two Visions* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1999).
14. Ben Witherington III, *The Jesus Quest: The Third Search for the Jew of Nazareth* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1995).
15. Raymond E. Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah: A Commentary on the Infancy Narratives in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke*, rev. ed. (New York: Doubleday, 1993).
16. Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, *Paul: A Critical Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).
17. See especially Richard A. Horsley, *Jesus and the Spiral of Violence: Popular Jewish Resistance in Roman Palestine* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987).
18. Nicholas T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (London: SPCK, 1996); Wright, *Who Was Jesus?* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1992).
19. Paula Fredriksen, *From Jesus to Christ: The Origins of the New Testament Images of Jesus* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988); and Fredriksen, *Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews: A Jewish Life and the Emergence of Christianity* (New York: Knopf, 1999).
20. Weaver, *The Historical Jesus*, 449 pages.
21. John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, 3 vols. (New York: Doubleday, 1991–2001).
22. James H. Charlesworth and Walter P. Weaver, eds., *Jesus Two Thousand Years Later* (Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 2000).
23. I agree with Borg, *Jesus, the New Vision*, that Jesus “was dominated throughout by intercourse with the other world” (p. 42) and that he identified “himself with the prophets” (p. 48).
24. It is certain that Romans were responsible for Jesus’ crucifixion. See John D. Crossan, *Who Killed Jesus? Exposing the Roots of Anti-Semitism in the Gospel Story of the Death of Jesus* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1995).
25. E. P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 61–119; John P. Meier, “The Circle of the Twelve: Did It Exist during Jesus’ Public Ministry?” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 116/4 (1997): 635–72.
26. Hendrikus Boers, *Who Was Jesus?* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1989), 93.
27. See the important insights found in Doron Mendels’s *The Rise and Fall of Jewish Nationalism* (New York: Doubleday, 1992).
28. Marcus Borg, *Conflict, Holiness, and Politics in the Teachings of Jesus* (New York: Mellen, 1984).

29. Ernst Bammel and Charles F. D. Moule, eds., *Jesus and the Politics of His Day* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

30. The title of Meier's book, *A Marginal Jew*, is not representative of Meier's erudite insights. When Meier uses the term *marginal*, he means that Jesus' life would not have been featured on CNN and that he was not a typical Jew.

31. John D. Crossan does argue that Jesus was a peasant. See especially Crossan, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991).

32. Bruce Chilton and Craig A. Evans, eds., *Authenticating the Activities of Jesus*, New Testament Tools and Studies 28.2 (Leiden: Brill, 1999).

33. *Ibid.*, ix.

34. I agree with Peter Stuhlmacher that any attempt to build bridges of understanding between Christians and Jews must be honest. For example, Christians should not think they are being admirably objective by claiming that Jesus must not be allowed to make messianic claims. Stuhlmacher, *Jesus of Nazareth—Christ of Faith*, trans. Siegfried S. Schatzmann (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1993), 5.

35. William Klassen, "The Authenticity of Judas' Participation in the Arrest of Jesus," in *Authenticating the Activities of Jesus*, 407.

36. John Spong is convinced that Judas was a name (and story) invented by "Christians." See Spong, *Liberating the Gospels: Reading the Bible with Jewish Eyes* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1997), 257–76.

37. In addition to the other works already cited, see Raymond E. Brown, *The Death of the Messiah: From Gethsemane to the Grave* (New York: Doubleday, 1994); and Ellis Rivkin, *What Crucified Jesus?* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1984).

38. John D. Crossan, *Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1995), 152.

39. David Flusser, with R. Steven Notley, *Jesus*, 2nd ed. (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1998).

40. Brad H. Young, *The Parables: Jewish Tradition and Christian Interpretation* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1998).

41. Charles W. Hedrick, *Parables as Poetic Fictions: The Creative Voice of Jesus* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1994).

42. See the contributions in James H. Charlesworth, ed., *Jesus and the Dead Sea Scrolls* (New York: Doubleday, 1992).

43. William Klassen, "The Authenticity of the Command: 'Love Your Enemies,'" in *Authenticating the Words of Jesus*, ed. Bruce Chilton and Craig A. Evans, New Testament Tools and Studies 28.1 (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 386 n. 4 and 386.

44. See Nicholas T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (London: SPCK, 1996); Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*; and Sanders, *The Historical Figure of Jesus* (New York: Penguin, 1993).

45. Craig A. Evans, "Authenticating the Activities of Jesus," in *Authenticating the Activities of Jesus*, 5.
46. Those who are interested in methods for ascertaining authentic Jesus tradition should also consult Craig A. Evans's *Jesus and His Contemporaries: Comparative Studies* (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 1–49.
47. See especially James C. VanderKam, "Righteous One, Messiah, Chosen One, the Son of Man in 1 Enoch 37–71," in *The Messiah: Developments in Earliest Judaism and Christianity*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 176–85.
48. See, e.g., George W. E. Nickelsburg, "Enoch, Books of," in *Encyclopedia of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. Lawrence H. Schiffman and James C. VanderKam (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 1:250; Paolo Sacchi, *L'apocalittica giudaica e la sua storia* (Brescia: Paideia editrice, 1990), 154–69; and Siegbert Uhlig, *Das Äthiopische Henochbuch* (Gtersloh: Mohn, 1984).
49. John C. O'Neill, *Who Did Jesus Think He Was?* (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 6, 164–87. I do not agree that the Gospel of John was put together by "only collectors and dramatists" (p. 185).
50. Klassen, "The Authenticity of the Command."
51. For the latest on Jesus' morality, see Anthony E. Harvey, *Strenuous Commands: The Ethic of Jesus* (Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1990).
52. It is focused on *Jesus and Archaeology*, and all the leading archaeological experts participated. The proceedings will be published by Eerdmans in 2003. A very helpful, but dated, guide to Jesus and archaeology is John J. Rousseau and Rami Arav, *Jesus and His World: An Archaeological and Cultural Dictionary* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994). Also, see the equally dated book by James H. Charlesworth entitled *Jesus within Judaism: New Light from Exciting Archaeological Discoveries* (New York: Doubleday, 1988).
53. Robert W. Funk, *Honest to Jesus: Jesus for a New Millennium* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1996); Funk (and the Jesus Seminar), *The Acts of Jesus* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1996); Robert W. Funk, Roy W. Hoover, and the Jesus Seminar, *The Five Gospels: The Search for the Authentic Words of Jesus* (New York: Macmillan, 1993). It is interesting to observe that the two volumes by Funk and the Jesus Seminar and the two volumes edited by Chilton and Evans are divided into Jesus' acts and Jesus' words. I am dubious that a comparison of the four books would be fruitful: they are not responding to each other, and too many other important related works would be ignored.
54. Hermann Gunkel, *Israelitisches Heldentum und Kriegsfrömmigkeit im Alten Testament* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1916), 2–3, translated in Klassen, "The Authenticity of the Command," 392.
55. Bruce Chilton and Craig A. Evans, eds., *Studying the Historical Jesus: Evaluation of the State of Current Research* (Leiden: Brill, 1994).
56. Bruce Chilton and Craig A. Evans, *Jesus in Context: Temple, Purity, and Restoration* (Leiden: Brill, 1997).
57. Early portions of it are at Florida Southern College. I am grateful to Weaver for the opportunity to study these pages.

58. Gerd Theissen, *Sociology of Early Palestinian Christianity*, trans. John Bowden (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978). Also, for superb reading to obtain a feeling for life in ancient Palestine during the time of Jesus, see Theissen, *The Shadow of the Galilean: The Quest of the Historical Jesus in Narrative Form*, trans. John Bowden (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987).

59. Richard A. Horsley, *Sociology and the Jesus Movement* (New York: Crossroad, 1989).

60. Ekkehard W. Stegemann and Wolfgang Stegemann, *The Jesus Movement: A Social History of Its First Century* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999).

61. See, e.g., Gustave Le Bon, *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind* (New York: Viking, 1960). See also Elias Canetti, *Crowds and Power*, trans. Carol Stewart (New York: Seabury, 1978); and R. Fenn, "Crowds, Time, and the Essence of Society," in *Secularization, Rationalism, and Sectarianism: Essays in Honour of Bryan R. Wilson*, ed. Eileen Barker, James A. Beckford, and Karel Dobbelaere (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

62. Contemporary visions of Mary are well known, but visions of Christ are habitually kept secret and unexamined. For a recent attempt to take these "Christic visions" seriously and to study them in light of earlier books by Sparrow and Huyssens (and in light of P. Feyerabend's work in the philosophy of science), see Phillip H. Wiebe, *Visions of Jesus: Direct Encounters from the New Testament to Today* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

63. John W. Miller, *Jesus at Thirty: A Psychological and Historical Portrait* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997).

64. *Ibid.*, 80.

65. See the contributions in James H. Charlesworth, "A Caveat on Textual Transmission and the Meaning of *Abba*: A Study of the Lord's Prayer," in *The Lord's Prayer and Other Prayer Texts from the Greco-Roman Era*, ed. James H. Charlesworth, Mark Harding, and Mark C. Kiley (Valley Forge, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 1994), 1–14.

66. Miller, *Jesus at Thirty*, 72.

67. Donald Capps, *Jesus: A Psychological Biography* (St. Louis, Mo.: Chalice Press, 2000).

68. There is no doubt that Jesus did perform amazing healings; his opponents admitted as much when they said he was able to perform such healings because he was possessed. For a recent study of Jesus' healings, see Stevan L. Davies, *Jesus the Healer: Possession, Trance, and the Origins of Christianity* (New York: Continuum, 1995).

69. This position was developed by Jane Schaberg in *The Illegitimacy of Jesus: A Feminist Theological Interpretation of the Infancy Narratives* (New York: Crossroad, 1990).

70. Capps, *Jesus*, 260.

71. Luke T. Johnson, *The Real Jesus: The Misguided Quest for the Historical Jesus and the Truth of the Traditional Gospels* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1996), 133.

72. *Ibid.*

73. I am here indebted to conversations with Ernst Käsemann.

74. See my further reflections in “The Historical Jesus: Sources and a Sketch,” in *Jesus Two Thousand Years Later*, 84–128.

75. Johnson, *The Real Jesus*, 133.

76. I am most grateful to Truman G. Madsen for the opportunity to teach in the Jerusalem Center for Near Eastern Studies. Madsen begins one of his publications as follows: “Daily for the past two years I have looked out from the Jerusalem Center on the Mount of Olives to the vista of the ancient city of Jerusalem.” Indeed, I have seen the view—at sunset it can be spiritually invigorating. See Madsen, “The Temple and the Atonement,” in *Temples of the Ancient World*, ed. Donald W. Parry (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1994), 63–79.

77. I have tried to avoid referring to non-English publications, but one work is extremely important to note. Criteria for authenticating Jesus’ traditions behind the Jesus traditions are assessed in Gerd Theissen and D. Winter’s *Die Kriterienfrage in der Jesusforschung* (Freiburg: Universitätsverlag Freiburg Schweiz, 1997). Also, see Gerd Theissen and Annette Merz, *The Historical Jesus: A Comprehensive Guide*, trans. John Bowden (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998).

78. Truman G. Madsen, “The Olive Press: A Symbol of Christ,” in *The Allegory of the Olive Tree*, ed. Stephen D. Ricks and John W. Welch (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1994), 1–10.

79. Truman G. Madsen rightly points out that in the early traditions recorded in the New Testament, a kinship was perceived between Messiah and Father and thus between Jesus and God. See Madsen, “‘Putting on the Names’: A Jewish-Christian Legacy,” in *By Study and Also by Faith: Essays in Honor of Hugh W. Nibley*, ed. John M. Lundquist and Stephen D. Ricks (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1990), 1:458–81, see esp. 467.

80. Andries G. van Aarde, *Fatherless in Galilee: Jesus as Child of God* (Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 2001), 205.