

The Historical Jesus

A Comprehensive Guide

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1998
Fortress Press
Minneapolis

The Quest of the Historical Jesus

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Introduction

The quest of the historical Jesus has a dynamic all of its own. A whole culture has grown up to direct all its thoughts to a single figure, and in this figure to worship the incarnate God, to fear the eschatological judge, and to love the redeemer. What intellectual independence it shows to make this figure the object of historical criticism! First came the *criticism of the sources*. The question here was whether everything in the Gospel accounts was historical or authentic. It was not just a matter of whether a few 'satanic verses' had found their way into the sources, but whether in a great many verses Jesus has been surrounded with an unhistorical aura of myth and poetry. To source criticism was added *historical relativism*. Even if we had a historically reliable picture of Jesus, the problem would remain that this figure was deeply embedded in history and was less singular and absolute than people believed. In addition, finally, there was the awareness of *hermeneutical otherness*: even if we had historically reliable reports and in them encountered an irreplaceable person – this Jesus, who was as close to many people in childhood as a good friend, removed himself into his past world in which demons were driven out and there were strange anxieties about the end of the world.

Despite such distancing by source criticism, historical relativism and

hermeneutical otherness, our culture still clings to this figure. Even where he is no longer regarded as 'Lord', people seek in the rabbi from Nazareth the great brother as an ally. Where people press for a socialist form of society, Jesus becomes the forerunner of socialism, since he criticized the rich and rejected mammon. For those who promote joy in life Jesus becomes the Galilean artist who had the art of living, taunted by narrow-minded contemporaries as a 'glutton and winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners'. Where an existential decision is urgently called for, Jesus becomes the preacher of a call to decision who summons individuals from their forgetfulness of life. Where people advocate a humanism which emancipates itself from supervision by the church, Jesus becomes the one who challenges religious institutions. Was it not his claim to be *the* human being, the 'Son of Man'?

The quest of the historical Jesus and of portraits of Jesus is a history of constantly new approaches to Jesus and distancings from him. In what follows, only the most important phases of scholarly concern with Jesus will be sketched out – with fundamental and methodological insights which are still influential today. Precisely for that reason it should be emphasized that the history of pictures of Jesus is richer than the history of scholarly pictures of Jesus.

Suggested reading

Schweitzer, *Quest* *, 396–401, and Bultmann, *Jesus**.

I. Five phases of the quest of the historical Jesus

I.1 First phase: the critical impulse towards the question of the historical Jesus: H.S. Reimarus and D.F. Strauss

I.1.1 *Hermann Samuel Reimarus (1694–1768)*

H.S. Reimarus, a professor of oriental languages in Hamburg, was during his lifetime a literary champion of the religion of reason proposed by English deism. However, he made the historical-critical foundation of his ideas in his 'Apologia or Defence of the Rational Worshipers of God' available only to close friends. After his death, G.E. Lessing published seven fragments from this work (1774–1778) without indicating the identity of the author.¹ Reimarus marks the

¹Especially the sixth and seventh fragments in *Reimarus: Fragments*, ed. C.H. Talbert, Philadelphia 1971 ('On the Resurrection Narratives'; 'On the Intentions of Jesus and His Disciples') are important for the question of the historical Jesus.

beginning of preoccupation with the life of Jesus from a purely historical perspective with Reimarus.

1. The methodological starting point is above all pioneering: Reimarus distinguishes the preaching of Jesus from the apostles' faith in Christ: 'I find great cause to separate completely what the apostles say in their own writings from that which Jesus himself actually said and taught.'²

2. The historical insight that the preaching of Jesus can be understood only from the context of the Jewish religion of his time corresponds to this starting point. Reimarus sees the centre of Jesus' preaching in the preaching of the imminence of the kingdom of heaven and the call to repentance which follows from that. This is to be understood 'in accordance with the Jewish way of speaking'. Jesus promises a worldly kingdom, 'the kingdom of Christ or Messiah, for which the Jews had for long waited and hoped'.³ Jesus is a Jewish prophetic and apocalyptic figure, while Christianity, which detached itself from Judaism, was a new creation of the apostles.

3. Reimarus explains the discrepancy between the political and messianic message of Jesus and the apostles' proclamation of a Christ who brings redemption from suffering, who rises and comes again, by an objective theory of deception. The disciples of Jesus had stolen the body (cf. Matt. 28.11–15), so that they did not have to feel that they had failed, as Jesus had done, and after fifty days (when the body could no longer be identified) they had proclaimed his resurrection and imminent return.

Whereas the methodological separation between the historical Jesus and the apostles' belief in Christ is still normative today, and Jesus is once again being put in his Jewish context, the explanation of belief in Christ in terms of 'deception' was corrected at a very early stage by a second great critic, D.F. Strauss.

I.1.2 *David Friedrich Strauss (1808–1874)*

The philosopher and theologian D.F. Strauss, a pupil of F.C. Baur and F.W. Hegel, published his sensational *Life of Jesus*⁴ in 1835/36. It provoked a flood of attempts at refutation and earned its author lifelong social ostracism; however, scholarship can never go back behind its basic thesis of the mythical transformation of the Jesus tradition.

1. Strauss' main achievement is to have applied to the Gospels the concept of myth which was already current in the Old Testament scholarship of his time. He demonstrates the mythical approach to the Jesus tradition as a synthesis (in the

²'On the Intentions of Jesus and His Disciples', §3, p.64.

³Ibid., §4, p.66.

⁴D.F. Strauss, *The Life of Jesus Critically Examined* (1835/36), ed. P.C. Hodgson, Philadelphia 1972 and London 1973.

Hegelian sense) of the inadequate interpretations of supernaturalism on the one hand and rationalism on the other.

The main interest of the rationalistic accounts of the life of Jesus lies in their 'rational' explanation of the miracles of Jesus and the miraculous features in the Gospels. H.E.G. Paulus (1789–1851) might be mentioned here as an example.⁵ More or less perceptive reflections are meant to make the miracles comprehensible to the 'enlightened' consciousness (resurrection as a pseudo-death, walking on the lake as a vision of the disciples); the account of the evangelists is excused as a concession to the 'Jewish desire for miracles'. Strauss enjoyed refuting this kind of interpretation of miracles far more than arguing with traditionally naive (supernaturalist) credulity. In every section of his life of Jesus he first plays the two trends off against each other, points out their deficiencies and then shows that the mythical approach solves all the problems.

Strauss sees myth, 'the saga which is poetic without a purpose', at work wherever the laws of nature are contravened in the Gospel accounts, the traditions contradict each other, or motives widespread in the history of religion, and especially in the Old Testament, are transferred to Jesus.⁶ In contrast to Reimarus, he no longer explains the unhistorical by deliberate deception but by an unconscious process of mythical imagination.

2. For Strauss, a declared Hegelian, the inner nucleus of Christian faith is not touched by the mythical approach. For in the historical individual Jesus is realized the idea of God-humanity, the highest of all ideas. Myth is the legitimate 'history-like' garb of this universal human idea.⁷

3. Strauss was also the first to recognize that the Gospel of John is composed on theological premises and is historically less trustworthy than the Synoptics. F.C. Baur helped this thesis to make a breakthrough. The weakness of Strauss's criticism lay in the literary relationship between the Synoptic Gospels for which he argued: he put forward the view that Matthew and Luke are the earliest Gospels, and that Mark is an excerpt from both of them (the so-called Griesbach hypothesis). Therefore by clarifying the relationship between the sources through the two-source theory, liberal theology could hope to cope with the 'shock' caused by Strauss.

⁵H.E.G. Paulus, *Das Leben Jesu als Grundlage einer reinen Geschichte des Urchristentums*, Heidelberg 1828.

⁶Certainly Strauss does not dispute that the narratives also contain historical reminiscences, but he is not interested in these; he is solely concerned to demonstrate the omnipresence of myth.

⁷It would take us too far to outline Strauss's speculative christology. Reference need only be made to his conclusion, which was highly offensive to his orthodox contemporaries, that an idea is not realized in one example, and therefore that the classical attributes of Christ (the union of divine and human nature, etc.) are to be attributed to humankind as a whole.

1.2 Second phase: the optimism of the liberal quest of the historical Jesus

In Germany, the period of the Wilhelmine empire was the hey-day of theological liberalism and the classical 'quest of the historical Jesus'. Scholars hoped that by reconstructing the authoritative person of Jesus and his history through historical criticism they could renew Christian faith and thus leave the church's dogma of Christ behind. Heinrich Julius Holtzmann (1832–1910) can be regarded as a prime representative.

1. The methodological basis of the liberal study of Jesus is the literary-critical exploration of the earliest sources about Jesus: F.C. Baur demonstrated the priority of the Synoptic Gospels over the Gospel of John, and H.J. Holtzmann helped the two-source theory developed by Gottlob Wilke and Christian Hermann Weisse to achieve lasting success.⁸ Mark, a source which hitherto had been overshadowed, and Q, a source first reconstructed by scholars, were now regarded as the earliest, largely reliable sources for the historical Jesus. An emancipation from the traditional church picture of Jesus seemed possible on his basis.

2. Holtzmann took over from the Gospel of Mark the outline of the life of Jesus, reading out of it a biographical development with a turning point in Mark 8; Jesus' messianic consciousness had formed in Galilee, and in Caesarea Philippi he showed himself to the disciples as Messiah. The authentic sayings of Jesus reconstructed from the Logia source were inserted into the biographical framework derived from Mark.

3. The liberal 'lives of Jesus' are the result of a combination of the aprioristic notion of a development of the personality of Jesus reflected in the sources with an acute literary-critical analysis. They believe that they can rediscover the ideal personality of their author in the sources about Jesus.

1.3 Third phase: the collapse of the quest of the historical Jesus

In the final phase of theological liberalism around the turn of the century, three scholarly insights led to the collapse of the quest of the historical Jesus.

1. A. Schweitzer's book *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* showed that the images in the lives of Jesus were projections.⁹ Schweitzer demonstrated that each

⁸H.J. Holtzmann's work *Die synoptischen Evangelien. Ihr Ursprung und geschichtliche Charakter*, Leipzig 1863, won the day. The two-source theory is briefly described on p. 25 below.

⁹The first German edition appeared in 1906 under the title *Von Reimarus zu Wrede. Eine Geschichte der Leben-Jesu-Forschung*, and this was translated into English as *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, London 1910. The title of the considerably enlarged second edition of 1913 was *Geschichte der Leben-Jesu-Forschung*; unfortunately the additions made in this edition have never appeared in English. Schweitzer added a new preface to the fifth edition of 1951, which appeared in the English edition of 1953.

of the liberal pictures of Jesus displayed the personality structure which, in the eyes of its author, was the ethical ideal most worth striving for.

2. W. Wrede in 1901 demonstrated the tendentious character of the earliest extant sources for the life of Jesus. He argued that the Gospel of Mark is an expression of community dogma. The post-Easter faith in the messiahship of Jesus is here projected on to the intrinsically unmessianic life of Jesus. Wrede claimed that the unhistorical 'messianic secret theory' shaped the whole of the Gospel of Mark.¹⁰ This destroyed the confidence that it was possible to distinguish between the history of Jesus and the image of Christ after Easter by recourse to two ancient sources.

3. The fragmentary character of the Gospels was demonstrated by K.L. Schmidt. He showed that the Jesus tradition consists of 'small units' and that the chronological and geographical 'framework of the story of Jesus', to quote the title of his book, was created secondarily by the evangelist Mark. This destroyed the possibility of reading a development in the personality of Jesus from the sequence of pericopes. Moreover form criticism recognized that even the 'small units' have been primarily shaped by community needs and only secondarily by historical reminiscence – the kerygmatic character of the Jesus tradition governs even the smallest pericope (Dibelius, *Tradition**; Bultmann, *HST**).

The scepticism provoked by these insights was partly absorbed and partly intensified programmatically by theological motives, as for example in the work of R. Bultmann (1884–1976), the most significant exegete of dialectical theology, which had its heyday in the period between 1919 and 1968.

1. Dialectical theology opposes God and the world so radically that they touch only at one point – as a tangent touches a circle: in the 'that' of Jesus' coming and the 'that' of his departure, in the cross and resurrection. It was not what Jesus had said and done which was thought to be decisive but what God had said and done in the cross and resurrection. The message of this action of God, the New Testament 'kerygma', is not the historical Jesus but the 'kerygmatic Christ'.

2. According to the view of existentialist philosophy, human beings first achieve their 'authenticity' in decision, which cannot be guaranteed by objectifiable arguments (like historical knowledge). For a Christian existentialism, this decision is the answer to God's call in the kerygma of the cross and resurrection of Jesus, which men and women give by an existential dying and living with Christ.

3. The two most prominent sketches of New Testament theology show little interest in the historical Jesus. In II Cor. 5.16 Paul denies that it is of theological significance to have known Jesus after the flesh.¹¹ In the Gospel of John the

¹⁰Wrede, *Messianic Secret*.

¹¹II Cor. 5.16 is probably to be understood to be about not 'Christ after the flesh' but about 'knowing after the flesh'.

revealer reveals only *that* he is the revealer. Both develop the kerygma, i.e. a post-Easter faith which in the light of cross and resurrection has 'recast' the pre-Easter memory. If D.F. Strauss saw the truth of the Christ myth in the 'idea', Bultmann sees in the 'kerygma' a 'call of God' coming from outside.

4. Research into the history of religions made it clear that theologically Jesus belongs to Judaism¹² and that Christianity begins only with Easter. From this Bultmann drew the conclusion that the teaching of Jesus is of no significance for a Christian theology.¹³ However, he did concede that post-Easter christology is 'implicitly' presented in Jesus' pre-Easter call to decision. That was the starting point for his pupils to put the question of the historical Jesus afresh.

1.4 Fourth phase: the 'new quest' of the historical Jesus

Whereas the (old) liberal quest of the historical Jesus played him off against the proclamation of the church, 'the new quest',¹⁴ which developed in the circle of Bultmann pupils, began from the kerygmatic Christ and asked whether his exaltation, grounded in the cross and resurrection, has any 'support' in the proclamation of Jesus before Easter.¹⁵

1. The christological kerygma commits itself to the 'quest of the historical Jesus', as (in a stand against enthusiasm¹⁶) it refers to an earthly figure and speaks of it as an earthly figure in the Gospels. The identity of the earthly Jesus and the exalted Christ is presupposed in all the earliest Christian writings.

2. The methodological basis of the 'quest of the historical Jesus' is the confidence that a critically ensured minimum of 'authentic' Jesus tradition can be found, if everything is excluded that can be derived from both Judaism and earliest Christianity. Methodologically the place of the literary-critical reconstruction of the earliest sources in the 'old' quest of liberal theology is replaced by a comparison which makes use of the history of religions and the history of tradition: the 'criterion of difference'.

¹²Cf. Wellhausen's dictum, which has become famous: 'Jesus was not a Christian but a Jew', *Einleitung in die ersten drei Evangelien*, Berlin 1911, 102.

¹³As is well known, Bultmann's *Theology** begins with the statement: 'The message of Jesus is a presupposition for the theology of the New Testament rather than a part of that theology itself' (3).

¹⁴The 'new' quest was sparked off by E.Käsemann's lecture 'The Problem of the Historical Jesus', given in Marburg in 1953.

¹⁵The expression 'return to the historical Jesus', which has become a technical term, is characteristic of this line of questions.

¹⁶The thesis that anti-enthusiastic/anti-docetic motives played a role in the writing of the Gospels has been put forward especially by Käsemann (e.g. 'Problem*', 30–4).

3. The quest for pre-Easter support for the kerygma of Christ is independent of whether Jesus used christological titles (like Son of Man, Messiah, Son of God). Rather, this claim is implicit in his conduct and his proclamation:

- as a call to decision by Jesus in the face of the presence of God in the beginning of the rule of God (Bultmann);¹⁷
- as Jesus' criticism of the Law, which puts in question the foundations of all ancient religion, a 'call of freedom' (Käsemann);¹⁸
- as the immediacy of Jesus by which he is distinguished from the apocalyptic and casuistry of his environment (Bornkamm);¹⁹
- as the claim of the love of God for sinners, both in Jesus' conduct and in his proclamation (Fuchs);²⁰
- as the paradoxical unity of radicalized Torah and radical grace, in which God's will occurs and takes place in Jesus (H. Braun);²¹
- as 'Jesus' faith', which makes it possible for him to participate in God's omnipotence: 'all is possible to the one who believes' (Ebeling).²²

4. The theological intention to discover the germ of the kerygma of Christ already in the preaching of Jesus, combined with the criterion of difference, necessarily led to seeing Jesus in contrast to Judaism.²³

Excursus: Jewish research into Jesus

P. Winter, *On the Trial of Jesus*, Berlin 1961; D. Catchpole, *The Trial of Jesus*, Leiden 1971.

Whereas Christian theology devalued the quest of the historical Jesus by turning away from theological liberalism, the beginning of scholarly Jewish research into

¹⁷However, Bultmann himself, in contrast to his pupils, did not attach any essential significance to the fact 'that Jesus' appearance and his preaching imply a christology in so far as he called for a decision over against his person as the bearer of the word of God'. For this claim to authority remains a historical phenomenon, and no decision can be made about its appropriateness. The unity in content of the proclamation of Jesus and the kerygma of Christ discloses itself only to existentialist interpretation: both force a decision and make a new existence possible. However, after Easter the kerygma has taken the place of the proclamation of the historical Jesus – to refer back to him is essentially superfluous. Cf. Bultmann's critical discussion with his pupils in 'Kerygma'* (the quotation above comes from p.28).

¹⁸Käsemann, *Jesus Means Freedom*.

¹⁹Bornkamm, *Jesus**, passim.

²⁰Fuchs, 'The Quest of the Historical Jesus'.

²¹Braun, 'The Meaning of New Testament Christology'.

²²Ebeling, 'Jesus and Faith'.

²³Theissen, 'Theologie*', esp. 319–25.

Jesus which began at the same time continued the liberal tradition. In so doing, it emphasized aspects to which insufficient justice was done in Christian research, namely the Jewish character of the life and teaching of Jesus – a process which is part of 'bringing Jesus home to Judaism'. Because the conflict with the Jewish Law was no longer located at the centre of Jesus' life, other possibilities of interpreting Jesus' violent death historically were considered. Was he perhaps a political rebel against the Romans? The three classical accounts of Jesus in Jewish research from the beginning of this century represent Jesus as a ethicist, prophet and rebel.

1. Jesus as *ethicist*. J. Klausner, *Jesus of Nazareth* (Hebrew 1907, English 1925), saw Jesus as the representative of an impressive Jewish ethic. He could call him an extreme nationalist (413) – but with a 'new concept of God' (379), which detached God from his bond to people and history.

2. Jesus as *prophet*. C.G. Montefiore (*The Synoptic Gospels*, 2 vols, London 1909, ²1927 and many other publications) is probably the most significant of these first Jewish scholars concerned with Jesus: for him Jesus continues the series of the great prophets, but in a different historical situation. The old prophets did not yet have to grapple with the Law as a finished, completed entity. They uttered polemic against the sacrificial cult. But in the time of Jesus this was limited to the Jerusalem temple, whereas other rites – sabbath, food regulations, purity regulations – were externalized. Therefore Jesus attacked these rites.

3. Jesus as *rebel*. the thesis at the beginning of research into Jesus that Jesus had wanted to found a worldly kingdom (cf. above pp 2f. on Reimarus) was revived by R. Eisler (ΙΗΣΟΥΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ ΟΥ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣΑΣ, 2 vols, Heidelberg 1927/30);²⁴ in the first half of his life Jesus had presented a non-violent teaching, but then seized and occupied the temple violently and finally came to grief in conflict with the Romans.

Jewish research into Jesus has also kept away from the specifically theological questions of the 'new quest' of the historical Jesus. Thus two more recent representatives became forerunners and representatives of the 'third quest' (see 1.5 below): D. Flusser (*Jesus*, 1969) represented Jesus as a Jew who was faithful to the Law. His preaching was governed not by criticism of the Law but by the commandment to love, the overcoming of the notion of retribution and the expectation of the kingdom of God – all Jewish traditions. G. Vermes (*Jesus the Jew**, 1973) put Jesus in a charismatic milieu in Galilee: we also find miracles and wisdom sayings combined in Hanina ben Dosa in Galilee at that time. He gives the christological titles an interpretation which fits into the framework of Judaism: Son of man simply means 'a man' – a thesis which had already been put forward by Wellhausen – or is a periphrasis for 'I'.

²⁴The translation of the title of the book is: 'Jesus a King who did not become King'.

1.5 Fifth phase: the 'third quest' of the historical Jesus

With the fading out of the Bultmann school, the one-sidednesses of the 'new quest' of the historical Jesus became increasingly clear. It was primarily governed by a theological interest in finding a basis for Christian identity by marking it off from Judaism and in safeguarding this identity by marking it off from the earliest Christian heresies (like Gnosticism and enthusiasm). The 'new quest' therefore preferred 'orthodox' sources. In the 'third quest',²⁵ which first emerged predominantly in the English-speaking world, a sociological interest replaced the theological interest, and the concern to find Jesus a place in Judaism replaced the demarcation of Jesus from Judaism; an openness to non-canonical (sometimes 'heretical') sources also replaced the preference for canonical sources.

1. *The interest in social history.* Tensions characteristic of the Jewish society of the first century CE are reflected in the appearance and fate of Jesus. Comparable 'millenarian' renewal movements²⁶ in other cultures are always shaped by a dominant prophetic figure. We can also draw conclusions from them for primitive Christianity: there is a social continuity between the pre-Easter circle around Jesus and Christianity after Easter.²⁷ The earliest Christian itinerant charismatics continued the preaching and life-style of Jesus.²⁸

2. *The place of Jesus in Judaism:* Jesus is the founder of a 'renewal movement within Judaism', whose intensification of Torah and eschatology corresponds to 'radical theocratic' movements which took another form.²⁹ In terms of content the preaching of Jesus is 'restoration eschatology'. It aims at restoring the Jewish people.³⁰ There is also greater theological continuity between Jesus and the

²⁵The term 'third quest' was coined by S. Neill and T. Wright, *Interpretation*, 379ff.

²⁶'Millenarian' comes from 'millennium' (= 1000) and originally refers to the thousand-year kingdom of Rev.20. Movements which expect a fundamental change of things are called millenarian (or chiliastic).

²⁷H. Schürmann, 'Die vorösterliche Anfänge der Logientradition', in H. Ristow and K. Matthiae (ed.), *Der historische Jesus und der kerygmatischer Christus*, Berlin 1960, 342-73; id., *Jesus. Gestalt und Geheimnis*, Paderborn 1994, 85-104, was the first to recognize this social continuity between Jesus and primitive Christianity, even before the beginning of the 'third quest'.

²⁸Theissen, 'Wandering Radicals'*, id., *First Followers**.

²⁹Theissen, *First Followers**.

³⁰Sanders, *Jesus**.

kerygmatic Christ, since the status of Jesus after Easter was articulated with the help of the Jewish-biblical pattern of interpretation.³¹

3. *The attention to non-canonical sources.* The Logia source reconstructed from the canonical sources is taking on increasing significance, as is the Gospel of Thomas, discovered around 1945, in so far as it is thought to be independent of the Synoptic Gospels.³² There is a consensus that the multiplicity of pictures of Jesus must be explained independently of the limits of the canon (H. Koester, J.M. Robinson).³³ However, there is a dispute over whether non-canonical sources are to be preferred to canonical sources, as they are by J.D. Crossan. He does not count any of the canonical Gospels as primary sources, preferring to them the earliest stratum of the Gospel of Thomas, the Egerton Gospel, the Gospel of the Hebrews, the Logia source and a 'Cross Gospel' reconstructed from the Gospel of Peter.³⁴

Meantime the Jesus research within the 'third quest' has split into different trends (cf. M.J. Borg, *Jesus*). The most important differentiation is that on the one hand there is a return to a 'non-eschatological picture of Jesus' in which Jesus becomes the advocate of a paradoxical existential wisdom influenced by Cynicism – a 'Jewish Cynic' who, shaped by Hellenistic influences, moves to the periphery of Judaism (B.L. Mack; J.D. Crossan). On the other hand, as in previous research, Jesus is interpreted in the framework of his eschatology and placed at the centre of Judaism, for the restoration of which he hoped (E.P. Sanders). The interpretation of Jesus presented here belongs with the second tendency. The 'non-eschatological Jesus' seems to have more Californian than Galilean local colouring.

However, it is true of all the currents within the 'third quest' that research into Jesus dissociates itself clearly from the 'criterion of difference' as a methodological foundation of research and tends towards a historical criterion of plausibility: what is plausible in the Jewish context and makes the rise of Christianity understandable may be historical (see 4 below).

³¹P. Stuhlmacher, 'Jesus als Versöhner. Überlegungen zum Problem der Darstellung Jesu im Rahmen einer biblischer Theologie des Neuen Testaments', in id., *Versöhnung, Gesetz und Gerechtigkeit. Aufsätze zur biblischen Theologie*, Göttingen 1981, 9-26, is representative of this.

³²Patterson, *Gospel*.

³³See §2.1.3, pp. 23f. below.

³⁴Crossan, *Jesus**; id., *Cross*.

2. Summary and survey: the quest of the historical Jesus

	Critical stimuli to research into Jesus	The liberal quest of the historical Jesus	Collapse of the quest of the historical Jesus	The 'new quest' of the historical Jesus	The 'third quest' of the historical Jesus
Important representatives	Reimarus; Lessing; Herder; Strauss	Holtzmann; Hase; Beyschlag	Schweitzer; Bultmann; Dibelius; Schmidt; Wrede	Käsemann; Bornkamm; Fuchs; Ebeling; Braun	Sanders; Vermes; Theissen, Burchard; Crossan
Main statements	<p>H.S. Reimarus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Distinction between the historical Jesus and the church's Christ Objective theory of deception explains the discrepancy Jesus interpreted in a Jewish context <p>D.F. Strauss:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Myth theory: the Jesus tradition (especially John) is heavily overlaid with myth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Historical-critical reconstruction of the life of Jesus on the basis of the earliest sources: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Gospel of Mark as the framework (biographical development: turning point Mark 8) Teaching of Jesus reconstructed on the basis of Q is inserted 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The character of the portraits of the life of Jesus as projections (A. Schweitzer) The fragmentary character of the Jesus tradition; small units, framework secondary Kerygmatic character of the Jesus tradition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Believed identity of the earthly Jesus with the exalted Christ necessitates the quest of the historical Jesus The basis of the kerygma of Christ is found in Jesus' claim to authority ('implicit christology') Consequence: Jesus is perceived in contrast to Judaism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jesus in the Jewish context perceived as the founder of a 'renewal movement within Judaism' (Sanders) Continuity between Jesus and Christ: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> theological: application of Jewish-biblical pattern of interpretation, sociological: itinerant charismatics continue Jesus' lifestyle
Method/criterion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reimarus: purely historical question Strauss: mythical approach (form criticism) 	Literary criticism (two-source theory)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Form criticism Redaction criticism History of religions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Criterion of difference (removing Jesus from Judaism and earliest Christianity) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Criterion of historical plausibility (with respect to the Jewish context and the influence of Jesus on Christianity)
Theological and philosophical context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Enlightenment calls for the application of historical critical methods to biblical texts Hegel's philosophy influences Strauss 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A motif of liberal theology critical of the church: to liberate faith from dogma and renew it in the light of history 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dialectical theology (the 'that' is enough) Existentialism (against reassurance through historical facts) The history-of-religions-school (locates Jesus in Judaism) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Later representatives of dialectical theology are concerned to bridge the gulf between revelation and history 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Christian-Jewish dialogue <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jews discover Jesus as part of their history Christians make sure of their Jewish roots

3. Hermeneutical reflections

The multiplicity of pictures of Jesus is reason to suspect that they are in reality self-portraits of their authors. That they are certainly more than this can be shown by the following experiment. Take all the biographical accounts in world history and make them anonymous by deleting proper names (of persons, places and institutions). Even so, all the books about Jesus would clearly stand out. For they had to use the same sources, indicate the same constellation of persons, and quote the same core sayings of Jesus. The key phrases 'twelve disciples', the admonition 'love your enemies' and mention of the crucifixion would be enough for a clear identification.

Nevertheless, there is a wide range. For all the accounts of Jesus contain a constructive element which goes beyond the data contained in the sources. Historical imagination with its hypotheses creates an 'aura of fictionality' around the figure of Jesus, just like the religious imagination of earlier Christianity. For in both cases a creative power of imagination is at work, sparked off by the same historical figure. In both cases it seems incomplete: religious symbols, images and myths can continually be reinterpreted, historical hypotheses constantly corrected. Here neither the religious nor the historical reconstruction of the history of Jesus proceeds arbitrarily, but on the basis of axiomatic convictions. The religious imagination of primitive Christianity is guided by the firm belief that through Jesus it is possible to make contact with God, the ultimate reality. The historical imagination is governed by the basic convictions of the historical consciousness: all sources come from fallible human beings and must therefore be subjected to historical criticism. Furthermore, they must all be interpreted in the light of a historical relativism which knows that everything is correlated with everything else; everything has analogies. Finally, the maxim is true that historical distance prohibits an anachronistic interpretation of the sources within the framework of present-day values and convictions. Scholarly accounts of Jesus governed by such ideas are constructs of historical imagination: relatively free of arbitrariness, capable of being corrected by sources and portraits the presuppositions of which can be seen. If the religious imagination is concerned with access to God, the historical imagination is concerned with access to a past reality. Therefore historical sources are the decisive criterion for its work. Everything must be measured by these sources, and every thought subjected to them. Therefore any scholarly description of Jesus must begin by presenting the sources on the historical Jesus.

4. Tasks

4.1 Five phases of the quest of the historical Jesus

Here are five texts each of which belongs to one of the five phases of the quest of the historical Jesus. Assign the texts to their period and give reasons for this by briefly noting the most important identifying features. Make a guess at who the author could be.

Text 1:

'All exegesis is agreed that the authenticity of the first, second and fourth antitheses in the Sermon on the Mount cannot be doubted . . . The determining factor, however, is that the words ἐγὼ δὲ λέγω [= but I say] embody a claim to an authority which rivals and challenges that of Moses . . . To this there are no Jewish parallels, nor indeed can there be. For the Jew who does what is done here has cut himself off from the community of Judaism – or else he brings the Messianic Torah and is therefore the Messiah . . . The unheard-of implication of the saying testifies to its genuineness . . . [Jesus] was a Jew and made the assumption of Jewish piety, but at the same time he shatters this framework with his claim.'

Text 2:

'We must take into account the overwhelming impression which was made upon those around him by the personal character and discourse of Jesus, as long as he was living amongst them, which did not permit them deliberately to scrutinize and compare him with their previous standard. The belief in him as the Messiah extended to wider circles only by slow degrees; and even during his lifetime the people may have reported many wonderful stories of him . . . After his death, however, the belief in his resurrection, however that belief may have arisen, afforded more than sufficient proof of his messiahship; so that all the other miracles in his history need not be considered as the foundation of the faith in this, but it may rather be adduced as the consequences of it . . . It is to be considered that in ancient times, and especially amongst the Hebrews, and yet more when this people was stirred up by religious excitement, the line of distinction between history and fiction, prose and poetry, was not drawn so clearly as with us . . . The only question that can arise here is whether to such fictions . . . we can give the name of myths. If we regard only their own intrinsic nature, the name is not appropriate; but it is so when these fictions, having met with faith, come to be received amongst the legends of a people or religious party, for this is always a proof that they were the fruit, not of any individual conception, but of an accordance with the sentiments of a multitude.'

Text 3:

'I do indeed think that we can now know almost nothing concerning the life and personality of Jesus, since the early Christian sources show no interest in either, are moreover fragmentary and often legendary; and other sources about Jesus do not exist. Except for the purely critical research, what has been written in the last hundred and fifty years on the life of Jesus, his personality and the development of his inner life, is fantastic and romantic . . . I have in this book not dealt with the question at all – not so much because nothing can be said about it with certainty as because I consider it of secondary importance.'

Text 4:

'Whatever else Jesus was, he was a Jew from Galilee, and the Jesus movement was, at least in its beginnings, Galilean Jewish or, at any rate, Palestinian Jewish . . . Hence, one has access to Jesus in two ways: first, by the the history of primitive Christianity, insofar as it can be understood as the history of Jesus' influence; and second, the history of Palestine, insofar as it was the place of Jesus' ministry . . . The points of access complement each other and sometimes overlap. Both Jesus and the beginnings of early Christianity are part of the history of Judaism in Palestine.'

Text 5:

'Finally, attention must also be drawn to the way in which both sources [Mark and Q] deal with the material in so completely a homogeneous way that they offer further attempts to define the moral character of Jesus. In both, a harmonious picture of his mind is developed, the basic feature of which is the force of his consciousness of God which was always and everywhere present: a development in his life which progressed in many directions, the driving principle of which forms the religious and moral factor.'

Retrospect: A Short Life of Jesus

Historical scholarship does not relate what happened, but reflects on sources, levels of research, methods and problems. And yet history ultimately deals with events that can be narrated – even if any narration of them curtails them. So in conclusion we shall attempt a brief narrative: a short life of Jesus. The whole of the book which has gone before can be regarded as an introduction to this life with question marks, qualifications and alternatives. We give this summary with great hesitation. The results indicated here are less important to us than the problems which underlie them; the answers given by those who research into Jesus are less important than the questions which lead to them. At present our answer to the question ‘Who was Jesus?’ would take the form of the following short narrative.

Jesus was born in Nazareth shortly before the end of the reign of Herod I (37–4 BCE), the son of Joseph, a craftsman in wood and stone, and his wife Mary. He had several brothers and sisters. We know the names of some of his brothers. He must have had an elementary Jewish education, was familiar with the great religious traditions of his people, taught in synagogues and was called ‘rabbi’ during his public activity.

In the 20s of the first century CE he joined the movement of John the Baptist, who was calling on all Israelites to repent and promising them deliverance in the imminent judgment of God by a baptism in the Jordan. Here John offered the forgiveness of sins in ritual form – independently of the possibilities of the temple in providing atonement. This was a vote of no confidence in the central religious institution of Judaism, which had become ineffective. Jesus, too, had himself baptized by John. Like everyone else he confessed his sins. Like everyone else he, too, expected the imminent judgment of God.

Soon Jesus made an appearance independently of John the Baptist – with a related message, but one which put more emphasis on the grace of God that still gives everyone a chance and allows more time. Perhaps this was the way in which Jesus used his experience that the judgment announced by John did not break in immediately. The world went on, and that in itself was a sign of the grace of God. Jesus’ basic certainty was in fact that a final shift in the direction of the good had

taken place. Satan had been conquered, and in essentials evil had been overcome. One could experience this in exorcisms, in which the demons had to flee.

With this message Jesus travelled through Palestine as a homeless itinerant preacher, focussing his attention on small places north-west of the Sea of Galilee. He chose twelve disciples from among ordinary people, fishermen and farmers, with Peter at their head. They were representatives of the twelve tribes of Israel with whom he wanted to 'rule' the Israel that would soon be restored. His idea was a kind of 'representative popular rule'. Moreover others from among the people followed him, including women, which was unusual for a Jewish teacher. Mary Magdalene had a special position among them. For a while Jesus' family thought that he was mad, though later, after his death, they joined his followers.

At the centre of Jesus' message stood Jewish belief in God: for Jesus, God was a tremendous ethical energy which would soon change the world to bring deliverance to the poor, the weak and the sick. However, it could become the 'hell-fire' of judgment for all those who did not allow themselves to be grasped by it. Everyone had a choice. Everyone had a chance, particularly those who by religious standards were failures and losers. Jesus sought fellowship with them, the 'toll collectors and sinners'. He found prostitutes more open to his message than the pious. He was confident of his power to move people to repentance. He did not call for any demonstration of repentance, nor any baptism. For him God's grace was certain without such rites.

In his picture of God Jesus combined two traditional images in a new way. For him, God was father and king. However, he never spoke of God as king but always only of God's 'kingdom'. He was confident that the goodness of the Father would establish itself in his kingly rule and that this process began in the present. He proclaimed that in words and deeds.

The most impressive of his words were the parables, little poetic narratives which ordinary people could also understand. However, in them he inculcated an 'aristocratic' self-confidence: everyone had infinite responsibility before God, and in view of that all could risk their whole lives. Salvation and damnation were now near.

At the same time Jesus was active as a charismatic healer. People flocked to him in order to profit from his gift of healing. He saw these healings as signs of the kingdom of God which was already beginning, and at the same time as an expression of the power of human faith. At a very early stage people attributed incredible things to him: his fame as a miracle-worker made him independent of reality even during his lifetime, as when for example people told of his miraculous multiplication of loaves of bread.

The great transformation of the world by God was also to change human wills: Jesus' ethical teaching was the pattern for a human being who was governed entirely by the divine will. He intensified the universalist aspects of the Jewish

Torah and dealt in a 'liberal' way with those ritual aspects which distinguished Jews from Gentiles. But all his teaching remained grounded in the Torah. He put the commandment to love God and neighbour at the centre of his ethic, but he radicalized it so that it became an obligation even to love enemies, strangers and the religious outcasts. In ritual questions he was demonstrably non-fundamentalist. He extended the recognized exceptions to sabbath regulations when it was a matter of saving a life to cases where life was enhanced. He showed his scepticism towards the distinction between clean and unclean things, which could separate people from God, without drawing specific consequences for behaviour in the present. In any case, his vision of the future rule of God was that of a great shared meal in which Jews and Gentiles were no longer divided by commandments about food and cleanness.

What he taught to all has to be distinguished from the demands he placed on his followers, men and women: here in individual instances he could require transgressions against the Torah, including contempt for the commandment to honour one's parents and (probably) for the commandments about cleanness. Here he called for a radical ethic of freedom from family, possessions, home and security. As an itinerant preacher, along with his followers he could avoid the domesticating power of everyday duties.

Jesus attracted attention and provoked opposition by his teaching and life. He discussed his behaviour with the Pharisees, precisely because in many things he was close to them. They both wanted the whole of life to be penetrated by the will of God, but argued over the way in which this should be done. Such a dispute did not create any deadly hostility. It was Jesus' criticism of the temple which was fateful for him when he went up to Jerusalem for the Passover. John the Baptist had already denied the legitimacy of the temple, but Jesus attacked it directly: he prophesied that God would replace the old temple with a new one. By a symbolic action, the so-called cleansing of the temple, he disrupted the temple cult and deliberately provoked the aristocracy associated with the temple. For his disciples (as a substitute for the sacrificial rites in the temple?) at the last meal that they shared he instituted a new rite: a simple meal which he shared with them one day before the beginning of the Passover in expectation of a dramatic escalation of the conflict with the Jerusalem aristocracy. Probably (as is expressed in his prayer in Gethsemane, in a scene composed in poetic fashion) he hovered between expecting death and the hope that God would intervene before his own death and usher in his rule. Judas, a member of the most intimate circle of disciples, betrayed the place where Jesus was staying so that he could be arrested inconspicuously by night. The aristocracy which arrested him took steps against him because of his criticism of the temple, but accused him before Pilate of a political crime, of having sought power as a royal pretender. In fact many among the people and his followers expected that he would become the royal Messiah who would lead

Israel to new power. Jesus did not dissociate himself from this expectation before Pilate. He could not. For he was convinced that this God would bring about the great turning-point in favour of Israel and the world. He was condemned as a political troublemaker and crucified with two bandits (very probably in April 30 CE). His disciples had fled. However, some women disciples were braver, and witnessed the crucifixion from afar.

After his death Jesus appeared first either to Peter or to Mary Magdalene, then to several disciples together. They became convinced that he was alive. Their expectation that God would finally intervene to bring about salvation had been fulfilled differently from the way for which they had hoped. They had to reinterpret Jesus' whole fate and his person. They recognized that he was the Messiah, but he was a suffering Messiah, and that they had not reckoned with. They remembered that Jesus had spoken of himself as 'the man' – specifically when he was confronted with excessively high hopes in himself. He had given the general term 'man' a messianic dignity and hoped that he would grow into the role of this 'man' and would fulfil it in the near future. Now they saw that he was 'the man' to whom according to a prophecy in Dan. 7 God would give all power in heaven and on earth. For them Jesus took a place alongside God. Christian faith had been born as a variant of Judaism: a messianic Judaism which only gradually separated from its mother religion in the course of the first century.

Thus far our attempt at a short narrative about Jesus. Narratives form the basis of identity. The narrative about Jesus is the basis for Christian identity. If our narrative is correct, then the self-understanding of Christianity must change on one point. Historically and theologically, Jesus belongs in Judaism. Through Jews who believed in him, at the same time he became the foundation of Christianity. Thus today he belongs to two religions, which developed out of each other only after his death. Their common theme is life in dialogue with the one and only God and ethical responsibility for the world and society. A Christianity which in the footsteps of Jesus is concerned with both these things can remain true to itself only if it remains true to its Jewish roots, if it perceives its social responsibility, and if it understands the Jesus tradition as a chance to keep beginning the dialogue with God all over again.

Solutions

1. The Quest of the Historical Jesus

Five phases of the quest of the historical Jesus

Text 1: E. Käsemann, 'The Problem of the Historical Jesus', in *Essays in New Testament Themes*, London 1964, 15–47: 37f. ('New quest')

Text 2: D.F. Strauss, *The Life of Jesus Critically Examined*, ed. P.C. Hodgson, Philadelphia 1972 and London 1973, 85f. (mythical approach to the sources about the life of Jesus)

Text 3: R. Bultmann, *Jesus and the Word*, London 1934 reissued 1958, 14f. (collapse of the quest of the historical Jesus)

Text 4: C. Burchard, 'Jesus of Nazareth', in J. Becker et al., *Christian Beginnings*, Louisville 1987, 15–72: 15f. ('third quest')

Text 5: H.J. Holtzmann, *Die synoptischen Evangelien. Ihr Ursprung und geschichtliche Charakter*, Leipzig 1863, 458f. (liberal quest of the historical Jesus)

2. Christian Sources on Jesus

Extracanonical sources and research into Jesus

Text 1: J. Jeremias, *Unknown Sayings of Jesus*, London 1957, 33.

Text 2: J. Gnllka, *Jesus von Nazareth*, HThK Suppl. III, Freiburg, Basel and Vienna 1990, 25.

Text 3: H. Koester, *Introduction to the New Testament*, Vol. 2, 1ff.

The following objections might be made:

to Text 1 (J. Jeremias): First of all the circular argument is a methodological weakness: as the extra-canonical texts are thought only to be worth investigating

The Geographical and Social Framework of the Life of Jesus

S. Applebaum, 'Judea as a Roman Province: The Countryside as a Political and Economic Factor', *ANRW* II 8, 1977, 355-96; R.A. Batey, *Jesus and the Forgotten City. New Light on Sepphoris and the Urban World of Jesus*, Grand Rapids 1991; J.R. Charlesworth, *Jesus within Judaism. New Light from Exciting Archaeological Discoveries*, New York, etc. 1988, 103-30; V.C. Corbo, 'Capernaum', *ABD* 1, 866-9; id., *The House of Saint Peter at Capernaum*, Jerusalem 1969; J.A. Fitzmyer, 'The Languages of Palestine in the First Century A.D.', *CBQ* 32, 1970, 501-31; G. Dalman, *Jesus-Jeshua*, London 1929; id., *Sacred Sites and Ways: Studies in the Topography of the Gospels*, London 1935; D. Fiensy, *The Social History of Palestine in the Herodian Period*, Queenston 1991; S. Freyne, *Galilee from Alexander the Great to Hadrian*, Notre Dame 1980; id., *Galilee, Jesus and the Gospels*, Philadelphia 1988; id., 'Hellenistic/Roman Galilee', *ABD* 2, 895-9; id., 'The Geography, Politics, and Economics of Galilee and the Quest for the Historical Jesus', in *Studying**, 75-121; J. Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*, London 1969; L. Levine (ed.), *Ancient Synagogues Revealed*, Jerusalem 1981; id. (ed.), *The Galilee in Late Antiquity*, New York/Jerusalem 1992; R.H. Lightfoot, *Locality and Doctrine in the Gospels*, London 1938; S. Loffreda and V. Tsferis, 'Capernaum', *NEAEHL* 1, 291-6; E.M. Meyers, E. Netzer and C.L. Meyers, *Sepphoris*, Winona Lake 1992; E.M. Meyers and J.F. Strange, *Archaeology, the Rabbis and Early Christianity*, London 1981; D.E. Oakman, *Jesus and the Economic Questions of His Day*, Lewiston and Queenston 1986; J.J. Rousseau and R. Arav, *Jesus and his World*, Minneapolis and London 1995; S.E. Porter, 'Jesus and the Use of Greek in Galilee', in *Studying**, 123-54; J. McRay, *Archeology and the New Testament*, Grand Rapids 1991; id., 'Gabbatha', *ABD* 2, 861f.; S. Safrai and M. Stern (eds.), *The Jewish People in the First Century. Historical Geography, Political History, Social, Cultural and Religious Life and Institutions*, Compendia Rerum Iudaicarum ad Novum Testamentum 1/1-2, Assen 1974, 1976; J.E. Stambaugh and D.L. Balch, *The Social World of the First Christians*, Philadelphia and London 1986; J.F. Strange, 'Archaeology and the Religion of Judaism in Palestine', *ANRW* II 19.1, 1979, 646-85; id., 'Sepphoris', *ABD* 5, 1090-3; J.F. Strange and H. Shanks, 'Has the House Where Jesus Stayed in Capernaum Been Found?', *BAR* 8, 1982, 26-37; id., 'Synagogue Where Jesus Preached Found at Capernaum', *BAR* 9, 1983, 25-31; D. Urman and P.V.M. Flesher (eds.), *Ancient Synagogues. Historical Analysis and Archaeological Discovery*, Leiden 1995; Z. Weiss, 'Sepphoris', *NEAEHL* 4, 1324-8; P. Welten, 'Jerusalem I', *TRE* 16, 1987, 590-609.

Introduction

Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee. When he is emphatically called 'the

Galilean', the term denotes more than mere origin. Thus in modern Jesus research, as a 'Galilean' Jesus is often removed from Judaea, indeed from Judaism generally. This has happened (and still happens) in three variants: ethnic, cultural and sociological.

Jesus the Galilean once meant the 'Aryan Jesus'. In Isa. 8.23 Galilee is called 'Galilee of the Gentiles' - occasion enough for asking whether it was a purely Jewish land. In the time of the National Socialists there was a search for a Jesus who could pass the Aryan regulations: Jesus, the Galilean, was said to have been descended from a non-Jew. This is the thesis of N. Grundmann in his book *Jesus der Galiläer und das Judentum* (1940). This dark antisemitic chapter also belongs to the history of the study of Jesus.

But 'Jesus the Galilean' often also means the Jew who was open to the world, open to Hellenistic influences. Independently of the racist theories sketched out above, one could ask: because of pagan cities in its neighbourhood and within it, was not Galilee much more under Hellenistic influence than Judaea? The assumption of such influence leads to W. Bauer's thesis: 'The Galilean Jesus represented Judaism in a form directed towards the universally human or, if you like, a syncretistically weakened form' ('Jesus der Galiläer' (1927), in *Aufsätze und Kleine Schriften*, Tübingen 1967, 104). Nowadays there is a discussion as to whether Jesus was a kind of Jewish Cynic who was moved by the same motives as the Hellenistic environment of Galilee.¹

Jesus the Galilean, finally, can mean a prophet untouched by political and social conflicts. According to W. Bauer, there was little explosive material in Galilee for a revolution. 'Therefore Jesus' grandiose self-awareness did not clothe itself in political forms. He in no way felt himself to be a messianic king who would shatter the heathen, but to be the heavenly "Son of Man"' (ibid., 105). S. Freyne in particular has argued that Galilee was structurally different from Judaea (see pp. 173-5 below). In his writing Galilee appears as a pacified world. The consequence is obvious: Jesus must not be interpreted in terms of the social conflict of his time. A sociological interpretation of the crisis of the Jesus movement would be inadmissible.

However, already at this stage it should be emphasized that there are also other approaches to assessing Jesus' Galilean origin and home. Ethnic groups in a threatened marginal situation often attach themselves to the centre of their culture with especial intensity. They have to preserve their identity in the face of the overwhelming presence of foreigners. At the same time they are judged disparagingly at the 'centre': 'No prophet comes from Galilee', argues the Sanhedrin in John 7.52. So was the Galilean origin of Jesus a 'stigma' for the prophet from Nazareth?² It is worth asking what the significance of Jesus' Galilean origin and home is for his preaching and his fate.

¹Cf. B. Mack, *The Lost Gospel*, San Francisco 1993.

²M.N. Ebertz, *Das Charisma des Gekreuzigten*, Tübingen 1987.

Tasks

Galilee can be divided into three districts: Upper Galilee (with mountains between 600 and 1200 metres high); hilly Lower Galilee (with heights between 100 and 600 metres); and the land around the Sea of Galilee. Here different political territories adjoin one another. By means of the place names mentioned in the Synoptic Gospels and a map determine: 1. in which districts Jesus was active, and 2. which political territories he touched on in so doing (according to the information in the Synoptics).³

Suggested reading

The *New Encyclopedia of Archeological Excavations in the Holy Land (NEAHL)*, published by the Israel Exploration Society in 1993, contains admirable articles on the present state of archaeological investigation of biblical places.

I. Jesus' birthplace: Nazareth

1. Throughout the Gospel tradition *Nazareth* is regarded as Jesus' home town.⁴ Mark and John implicitly presuppose that Jesus was also born there.

- In Mark, Jesus is emphatically called 'the Nazarene' (ὁ Ναζαρηνός, Mark 1.24; 10.47; 14.67; 16.6), and Nazareth itself is referred to with the designation 'his ancestral city' (πατρις αὐτοῦ, Mark 6.1). Luke avoids the obvious association that he was also born there by calling Nazareth the city in which Jesus grew up (οὗ ἦν τεθραμμένος, Luke 4.16).
- John still indicates that Jesus' origin from Nazareth in Galilee, which was known to all, made the Christian message of his messiahship unbelievable. When Philip told Nathanael that Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph, was the one of whom Moses and the prophets had written, the latter replied, 'Can any good come out of Nazareth?' (John 1.45f.). Nicodemus had to be reprimanded in a similar way: 'Search and you will see that no prophet is to rise from Galilee' (John 7.52).

2. By contrast, the independent traditions Matt. 2 and Luke 2 report that Jesus

³W. Bösen, *Galiläa als Lebensraum und Wirkungsfeld Jesu*, Freiburg ²1990, provides information on the name Galilee, the extent of the area and the lines of its frontiers, its climate and geophysical conditions.

⁴Cf. Mark 1.9, 24; 10.47; 14.67; 16.6; Matt. 21.11; John 1.45f.; 18.5, 7, etc.

was born in the city of David, in Bethlehem. In both cases the tradition is steeped in belief in the Davidic sonship of Jesus as the Messiah.

- The birth narrative in Luke is shaped with motifs from the Davidic tradition. Joseph comes from the house and family of David (2.4). Because of a tax assessment ordered by the emperor, he went with Mary to the city of David, in which according to the promise of Micah 5.1 the Messiah was to be born (cf. Luke 2.11). Thus the evangelist achieves a close connection between world history and salvation history and at the same time explains how it was that Jesus was not born in Galilee. The shepherd motif also recalls David.
- Matthew also offers elements of the Davidic tradition in the narrative about the veneration by the Magi: the motif of the star perhaps comes from the messianic prophecy in Num. 24.17. As the Magi do not find the 'newborn king of the Jews' at the court of Herod, the scribes investigate where the Messiah was to be born; they come upon Micah 5.1 and send the wise men to the city of David.

Our conclusion must be that Jesus came from Nazareth. The shift of his birthplace to Bethlehem is a result of religious fantasy and imagination: because according to scripture the messiah had to be born in Bethlehem, Jesus' birth is transferred there.

3. In the first century CE Nazareth was a Jewish settlement in the hill country of southern Galilee remote from the trade routes, of so little political and economic importance that it is not mentioned anywhere in ancient sources (OT, Josephus, Talmud). However, archaeological excavations attest a settlement from around 2,000 BCE. At the time of Jesus the inhabitants (estimated at between 50 and 2000), who were predominantly engaged in agriculture, lived in wretched caves, partly natural and partly dug in the chalk; some of these had been extended by a roofed structure at the front. So far there are no archaeological traces of the synagogue mentioned in the Gospels (Mark 6.1; Matt. 13.54; Luke 4.16).

4. Nazareth is only about six kilometres from Sepphoris, a city which had been completely destroyed in 4 BCE by the Syrian legate Quintilius Varus. Herod Antipas (4 BCE–39 BCE) initially constructed it as his capital before he founded Tiberias as a new capital of Galilee around 19 CE. Excavations show that Sepphoris was a flourishing city with a Hellenistic Jewish stamp. Whether the great theatre, which contained 5,000 people, was built under Antipas is disputed. At all events, in his youth Jesus grew up within the sphere of influence of a Hellenistic city.⁵ As he was a τέκτων, a craftsman (like his father), he possibly

⁵Cf. Batey, *Jesus and the Forgotten City*. Strange, 'Sepphoris'; Meyers et al., *Sepphoris*; and Weiss, 'Sepphoris', provide information about the most recent excavations in Sepphoris.

took part in the construction of Sepphoris. However, that remains a conjecture. Some imagery in his parables and sayings points to an urban world:

- Jesus attacks dishonest piety as 'play-acting' (ὕποκρισις; Matt. 6.2, 5, 16; Mark 7.6; Luke 13.15).
- The parable of the talents shows familiarity with banking practices (Luke 19.11ff. par.).
- Matt. 5.25f. presupposes that debtors and creditors must be taken a certain distance to judgment. Gabinius (57–77 BCE) set up the court with jurisdiction over Galilee in Sepphoris (*Antt.* 14, 91).

However, this must not be overestimated. The more archaeology demonstrates the significance of Sepphoris, the more eloquent is the silence of the Jesus tradition about this city: Jesus must have known it. But he was not active in it any more than he was active in Tiberias. He turned to country people. It was among them that he found a response.

2. The centre of Jesus' activity: Capernaum

The centre of Jesus' public activity lay on the north shore of the Sea of Galilee: he called his first disciples in Capernaum (Mark 1.16ff.). There he found a welcome in Peter's house (Mark 1.29; 9.33) and probably also a base for an itinerant activity which began from there. Even the Logia source, which contains very few place names, mentions the place twice: in the story of the centurion from Capernaum (Luke 7.1ff.) and in the threat against the cities of Galilee (Luke 10.13–15 par.). According to Matt. 4.12f., Jesus of Nazareth moved to Capernaum. Therefore in this Gospel Capernaum can be called Jesus' 'own city' (Matt. 9.1).

Territorial history and archaeology can illuminate the Jesus traditions associated with Capernaum in a surprising way.

1. Geographically, Capernaum lay on the frontier between the territory of Herod Antipas and that of Philip. That perhaps explains the presence of a detachment of troops (Luke 7.11ff. par.) and a toll station (Mark 2.14) there. However, this toll station would only have made sense for a limited period:⁶ there was a frontier here only from 4 to 39 CE. After the deposition of Herod Antipas, his land was divided into other territories. So the tradition of the call of a toll-collector in Capernaum goes back to the earliest period. Possibly Capernaum later lost political significance when it lost its position on the frontier. Josephus

⁶For what follows cf. Theissen, *Gospels**, 119f. It should be noted that toll stations were not just on frontiers. Toll collectors collected many taxes, and not just tolls. However, Mark 2.13f. clearly envisages a station on the road outside the town, to collect road and frontier tolls.

mentions the place only twice: once because he was thrown by his horse nearby and broke some bones (*Vita* 403), and the other time as the name of a spring in connection with a description of the countryside (*BJ* 3, 516–524). Although he organized the defence against the Romans in Galilee, for him Capernaum was totally insignificant at that time (i.e. c.66–68). Now and then it is conjectured that this frontier situation was welcome to Jesus because he could escape politically explosive situations so rapidly by moving to another territory. That is possible (cf. Luke 13.31ff.), but cannot be demonstrated.

2. The archaeological discoveries in Capernaum are striking. We hear from the Jesus tradition of a synagogue and a house of Peter's. Possibly both have been located by excavations.⁷

- The *synagogue*, which according to Luke 7.5 was founded by the centurion of Capernaum, is not identical with the fourth/fifth-century synagogue, the remains of which we can now admire in Capernaum. In the first century CE the 'synagogues' (συναγωγαί means assemblies) probably took place largely in rooms in private houses. For of the few first-century synagogues excavated in Palestine (in Gamla, Herodion and Massada), at least two (Herodion and Massada) are secondary, undedicated rooms without specific synagogue architecture.⁸ However, it could be that the remains of synagogues visible today stand where there was already a synagogue in the first century (the so-called law of the constancy of holy places). The excavators at least are convinced that they have demonstrated remains of this New Testament synagogue.⁹
- The so-called *house of Peter* is even more important. Remains of dwellings have been found under a splendid octagonal church from the Byzantine period – miserable houses which go back to the first century BCE. Hooks found there indicate that they were lived in by fishermen, between 50 and 100 CE. One of these wretched houses was obviously 'restored'. Its crude walls were decorated and its floor covered with several layers of limestone. In the debris that has fallen down there are symbols and inscriptions which indicate an early Christian house church. Jesus is often mentioned with honorific titles, and the name of Peter also possibly occurs. All this suggests that the house of Peter was located here as early as the first century – possible on the basis of an accurate local tradition. So have we found Peter's house?¹⁰

⁷See Loffreda and Tsafiris, 'Capernaum'.

⁸For the history of the synagogues in Palestine on the basis of literary evidence and archaeological excavations cf. Levine (ed.), *Ancient Synagogues*, and Urman and Flesher, *Ancient Synagogues* (1995), especially the contributions by L.L. Grabbe, 17–26, and P.V.M. Flesher, 27–39.

⁹Cf. Corbo, 'Capernaum', 866–9, and Strange and Shanks, *Synagogue*.

¹⁰Cf. Corbo, 'House', and the summary in Charlesworth, *Jesus*, 109–15.

3. Jesus' travels: Galilee and the surrounding district

Jesus was an itinerant preacher. The places in which he was active and the routes by which he travelled can no longer be reconstructed. K.L. Schmidt has demonstrated that topographical and chronological information in the Gospels often form part of the redactional framework which the evangelists created when they adopted individual traditions and which is governed by theological, not historiographical interests (*Rahmen**).

- The Markan scheme of an activity initially concentrated completely on Galilee and adjacent areas and a single journey to Jerusalem to the passion is just as governed by theological criteria¹¹ as is the conception of the Gospel of John, which has several journeys by Jesus to Jerusalem for festivals.¹² It is impossible to be certain whether Jesus was in Jerusalem often, or only once.
- Certainly traditional topographical information is attached to some pericopes, but it is impossible to produce an itinerary of Jesus' journeys from these remains, nor in individual cases can it be decided with certainty whether in the detail of a place there is an accurate historical reminiscence or a local tradition which grew up very early. However, centres of Jesus' preaching can be established: Capernaum (see above) and the countryside around the Lake Gennesaret stand out. Apart from Nazareth and Cana, which lie in Lower Galilee, and Nain, which is as far away as the plain of Jezreel, all the places in the Jesus tradition point to the area around the Sea of Galilee: Capernaum, Magdala, Chorazim, Bethsaida – or the immediate environs of Galilee: to Tyre and Sidon, Caesarea Philippi (Mark 8.27ff.) and the Decapolis (Mark 5.1ff.).

How one estimates conditions in Galilee – especially possible tensions between Gentiles and Jews, town and country, rich and poor, rulers and ruled, is of great importance for an understanding of the preaching of Jesus. Our picture of Jesus changes considerably depending on whether we imagine him in a relatively stable and pacified world or in a society stamped by latent and manifest conflicts.¹³

3.1 Ethnic and cultural tensions between Jews and Gentiles

In Isa. 8.23 (quoted in Matt. 4.14), Galilee is called 'Galilee of the Gentiles'. Isaiah is probably referring to the fact that after the Assyrian conquest of the Northern

¹¹Cf. Bultmann, *HST**, 337–50; W. Marxsen, *Mark the Evangelist*, Nashville 1969, 54–116.

¹²Most exegetes regard these journeys as a means of redactional shaping.

¹³For more detail on what follows see Theissen, *First Followers**, 31–95.

Kingdom (721 BCE), foreign people were settled there. That is well attested for Samaria, but it can only be inferred for Galilee. At all events the name Galilee of the foreigners (Γαλιλαία ἀλλοφύλων) occurs again during the Maccabean revolt in the second century BCE: the Jewish minority there asks the Jews in Judaea for help (cf. I Macc. 5.14f.). One of the sons of Judas Maccabaeus, Simon, thereupon moves this Jewish minority from Galilee to Judaea (I Macc. 5.21ff.). Galilee was conquered under one of his successors, Aristobulus I (104–103 BCE), and united with Judaea. The land again became Jewish: Ituraeans who had penetrated it could remain, provided that they had themselves circumcised (*Antt.* 13, 318f.). This policy of re-Judaizing must have been successful. When Pompey reorganized Palestine in 63 BCE and 'liberated' the Hellenistic city states which existed there from their Jewish rulers, the Jewish high priest was left with only those areas whose inhabitants were adherents of the temple cult in Jerusalem: only Galilee in addition to Judaea and Peraea. In the time of Jesus, Galilee was without doubt a land with a Jewish stamp.

The vernacular in Palestine was Aramaic, and in Galilee a dialect of Aramaic was spoken. It betrays Peter as a Galilean (Matt. 26.73). In the Talmud the story is told of a Galilean who wanted to buy something in the market in Jerusalem which he calls *amar*. He was mocked: 'You stupid Galilean, do you want something to ride on (donkey = *hamar*). Or something to drink (wine = *hamar*)? Or something for clothing (wool = '*amar*)? Or something for a sacrifice (lamb = *immar*)' (bEr53b, quoted from Vermes, *Jesus**, 52). Evidently the Galileans could not differentiate between the various gutturals of Aramaic. Some Galileans will also have spoken Greek – at least in the two largest cities, Sepphoris and Tiberias. The fact that there was a large theatre in Sepphoris probably presupposes a public with a knowledge of Greek. A toll-collector like Levi must have known a few scraps of Greek in order to be able to exercise his profession. Numerous epigraphical testimonies (coins with Greek inscriptions, papyri, epitaphs and other inscriptions) attest the wide dissemination of Greek in Palestine. Hebrew was also written in the time of Jesus (Qumran texts, ossuary inscriptions, the Bar Kochba archive) and probably also spoken in certain religious circles.¹⁴

In what language(s) did Jesus preach? Whereas only a minority believes that he presented his teaching wholly or partly in Hebrew, there is a lively discussion as to whether we should suppose that Jesus spoke Greek. In view of the clearly recognizable way in which Jesus turned to the simple population of the villages and small towns of Galilee (see below 3.2), that seems more improbable.

Only a minority of Gentiles lived in the land. In Tiberias this minority was

¹⁴For the question of the languages of Palestine cf. J.A. Fitzmyer, 'The Languages of Palestine in the First Century AD', *CBQ* 32, 1970, 501–31; Schürer, *History II**, 20–8, 74–80; Porter, *Use of Greek*; Meyers and Strange, *Archaeology*, 62–91.

murdered at the beginning of the Jewish War (*Vita*, 67) – just as conversely the Jewish minorities were massacred in the neighbouring city republics (e.g. *BJ* 2, 457f., 466ff., 477f., 559ff.). The relationship between Jews and Gentiles has never been totally free of tension. The two stories of an encounter of Jesus with Gentiles, with the Syro-Phoenician woman (cf. Theissen, ‘Local Colouring*’, 61–80) and the centurion of Capernaum indicate tension between Jews and Gentiles. In both cases we have healings at a distance. A difference always had to be overcome.

3.2 Social and ecological tensions between city and country

In New Testament times Galilee was surrounded by Hellenistic city republics. On the Mediterranean coast it bordered on the cities of Sidon, Tyre and Ptolemais, to the east on the Decapolis, an alliance of around ten Hellenistic city states. In the south, Samaria separated the whole territory from Judaea. Sebaste, the centre of Samaria, was a city with a Hellenistic stamp. In other words, Galilee was a Jewish enclave.

However, Hellenistic culture did not spread only in the region around Galilee. Herod Antipas encouraged this culture in the centre of Galilee itself.¹⁵ He made Sepphoris a flourishing Jewish-Hellenistic city. Tiberias competed with it. The very founding of the city, around 19 CE, was disputed. Two offences against Jewish norms are attested. First of all there was an offence against the commandment regarding cleanness: Tiberias was built on a cemetery (*Antt.* 18, 37ff.). There was also a transgression of the prohibition against images. Herod had his palace in Tiberias decorated with pictures of animals. At the beginning of the Jewish war they were destroyed by rebel groups from Tiberias and by Galileans from the surrounding area, who not least hoped to be able to plunder great treasures (*Vita*, 65f.). Sepphoris, which was supported by the Romans and in the meantime had been conquered by Josephus for the rebels, felt the destructive force of the Galilean country population (*Vita*, 375–80). These events show that the cities with a Hellenistic stamp were in tension with the surrounding Jewish countryside because of their Hellenized culture and the wealth concentrated in them. There were differences of mentality: in times of peace these did not necessarily prevent a lively economic exchange (which is attested by archaeology), but in times of crisis they could lead to quite different reactions. Thus in contrast to the surrounding country, in the Jewish War Sepphoris remained loyal to the Romans and because of this for a while called itself ‘city of peace’ (Eirenopolis). Given this difference of mentality between the city and the surrounding coun-

¹⁵S. Freyne, ‘*Geography*’, 104–21, illuminates the social changes which took place with the flourishing of two Hellenized centres, which concentrated the market, finances and administration there.

tryside, it is quite improbable that in his youth Jesus was decisively stamped by influences from Hellenistic culture through Sepphoris, though there may also be points of contact with e.g. Cynicism (cf. 8.5.3).

So it is not by chance that the Synoptic Jesus tradition is silent about the two largest Galilean cities. Sepphoris, only six kilometres from Nazareth, is no more mentioned than Tiberias, which is only sixteen kilometres from Capernaum. Neither city seems to exist. From this we may conclude that Jesus above all addressed the country population, which lived in the many smaller places.

His journeys into neighbouring Gentile territory are interpreted by Mark and Matthew as an anticipation of the course of the gospel to the Gentiles. Here post-Easter developments are projected into the time before Easter, but not without a basis in the life of the historical Jesus. For Jesus in fact touched on the rural territories of the neighbouring Hellenistic city states, though not to gain Gentiles for his message. Rather, he turned to the Jewish minorities living there. The religious and cultural identity of these minorities had been just as much put in question by the domination of the Hellenistic city culture as the Jewish rural population in Galilee. The social milieu in which Jesus was active can therefore be defined as follows: it is the Jewish population in and around Galilee – above all where the influence of urban Hellenistic culture put Jewish identity in question. Here Jesus found openness to his preaching, whereas he had a distant relationship to the cities.

3.3 Social and economic tensions between rich and poor

As land was the primary source of employment, the social stratification was closely connected with ownership of land. In Galilee in the time of Jesus large landowners and smallholders lived side by side. There is conclusive evidence of large estates on the plain of Jezreel: Queen Berenice had estates in the Kishon defile, where Galilee borders on the city territory of Ptolemais (*Vita*, 119). It is also possible to infer from the Zeno papyri that there were great estates on the plains north of Sepphoris. Josephus attests that the village around Gischala had to pay a contribution from their harvest to the emperor (*Vita*, 71). Further domains are conjectured for the fertile north and north-west shore of the Sea of Galilee.¹⁶

There is evidence that there were smallholders in Jesus’ family. Hegesippus reports on them (in Eusebius, *HE* 3, 20,1–6):

‘But there still survived of the family of the Lord the grandsons of Jude, his brother after the flesh, as he was called. These they informed against, as being of the family of David; and the *evocatus* brought them before Domitian Caesar. For he feared the

¹⁶Cf. J. Herz, ‘Grossgrundbesitz im Palästina im Zeitalter Jesu’, *PJ* 24, 1928, 98–113; Applebaum, ‘Judea’, 355–96; Bösen, *Galiläa* (n.3), 183ff., and Fiensy, *Social History*, 21–73.

coming of the Christ, as did also Herod. And he asked them if they were of David's line, and they acknowledged it. Then he asked them what possessions they had or what fortune they owned. And they said that between the two of them they had only nine thousand denarii, half belonging to each of them; and this they asserted they had not in money, but only in thirty-nine plethra of land, so valued, from which by their own labours they both paid the taxes and supported themselves. And (he adds) that then they showed also their hands, and put forward the hardness of their bodies and the callosities formed on their hands from continual working, as a proof of personal labour. And that when asked about Christ and the kingdom, its nature and the place and time of its appearing, they tendered the reply that it was not of the world nor earthly, but heavenly and angelic; that it would appear at the end of the world, when he should come in glory and judge the quick and the dead, and render unto every man according to his conduct. And (he says) that after this Domitian in no way condemned them, but despised them as men of no account, let them go free, and by an injunction caused the persecution against the church to cease. And that when released they ruled the churches, inasmuch as they were both martyrs and of the Lord's family; and, when peace was established remained alive until [the time of] Trajan.'

Like these members of Jesus' family, most of his followers will have been active in agriculture. Fishermen and craftsman are the exceptions: that is the reason why we hear of them. Like his father, Jesus was a τέκτων. According to Justin (*Dial.* 88), that is someone who makes ploughs and yokes. Other evidence suggests work with wood and stone, i.e. a craftsman; that will especially come to mind in the case of Palestine, a country short of wood.

Social and economic tensions between poor and rich emerge from the parables. The large landowners were sometimes 'absentee' landowners, and (probably) lived in the city. For them the land was a source of exploitation. The leaseholders who were dependent on them handed over their produce with inner resentment. The parable of the wicked husbandmen documents the rebellious mood among them (Mark 12.1ff.). The Zeno papyri from the third century BCE indicate that conflicts indeed occurred when the produce was collected. The hired labourers with no possessions were in an even worse situation than the leaseholders; they were recruited for the harvest by the hour and the day. Matthew 20.1-16 depicts their situation. They could only 'murmur' against unjust treatment. They were dependent on the favours of the rich.¹⁷ The conditions in which the free smallholders mentioned above lived were also grim. They were always threatened with debt if a scant harvest was insufficient to provide for the taxes, the support of the

¹⁷Cf. C. Hezser, *Lohnmetaphorik und Arbeitswelt in Mt 20, 1-16. Das Gleichnis von den Arbeitern im Weinberg im Rahmen rabbinischer Lohngleichnisse*, NTOA 15, Fribourg, CH and Göttingen 1990, 50-97.

family and the seed for the next year. Two parables presuppose imprisonment for debt (Matt. 5.25f.; 18.23ff.) – an indication that Palestine had come under the influence of alien law, since Jewish law knew no imprisonment for debt, but only temporary slavery for debt. Smallholders who lost their land sank to becoming leaseholders, emigrated, or swelled the ranks of the hired labourers, beggars and robbers at the bottom of the social hierarchy.

Given the difficulty of finding meaningful comparative economic data in antiquity, it is hard to judge whether all this is 'normal' or whether an especially oppressive situation had developed in Palestine at that time. Certainly the message 'Blessed are you poor, for yours is the kingdom of God!' found ready ears – those of people who were indeed poor and longed for a revolution in their situation.

3.4 Social and political tensions between rulers and ruled

Herodian client princes reigned in Galilee in the first century. The Romans resorted to this indirect form of rule where developments did not yet allow them to entrust the land to semi-autonomous city republics and put them under Roman administration. After the death of Herod I, the land was divided out between his three sons. Archelaus (4 BCE-6 CE) received the territory of Judaea and Samaria, which belonged together geographically but was disparate in religious terms; Philip (4 BCE-34 CE) received a territory in the north-east of Palestine which was predominantly settled by non-Jews (Gaulanitis, Trachonitis and Batanaea). Only Herod Antipas (4 BCE-39 CE) ruled over two ethnically homogenous territories, though they were geographically separate, Galilee and Peraea. The division of the land was a model application of the slogan 'Divide and rule'. However, this plan failed in Judaea and Samaria. After only ten years Archelaus was deposed because of complaints from the Samaritans and the Jews. After that Roman prefects, including Pontius Pilate, ruled his territory, from 26 to 36 CE.

Sean Freyne has put forward the thesis that Galilee was essentially freer from tension than Judaea.¹⁸ He claims that this is shown, among other things, by the unusually long reign of Herod Antipas (4 BCE-39 CE). He argues that the resistance movement developed above all in Judaea, where the Romans ruled directly. By contrast, in Galilee and Peraea the Herodian client princes could mitigate the worst effects of Roman oppression. Here we shall go on to mention the indications that the political situation was unstable in Galilee also – despite the long reign of Antipas.

¹⁸Most pointedly in the *Anchor Bible Dictionary* article 'Hellenistic Roman Galilee', 89ff., cf. in more detail *Galilee*, 1980, 68-71, 208-47; *Galilee*, 1988, 135-75, 190-8. However, Freyne reckons with increasing tensions in Galilee, at times especially in the economic sphere. These he sees closely connected with the links between town and country, which became greater as a result of the construction of the centres of Sepphoris and Tiberias ('Geography', 104ff.).

- In the so-called Robber War after the death of Herod I, Galilee was one of the centres of unrest in Palestine. A Judas, son of Hezekiah, from Gamala, captured the arsenal in Sepphoris at that time. The city was drawn into the rebellion. The Syrian legate Quintilius Varus had it destroyed completely, and the inhabitants sold into slavery (*BJ* 2, 56, 68; *Antt.* 17, 271f., 289). No other Jewish city was treated with such cruelty at that time. Did not the tetrarch Antipas, who had been appointed by the Romans, *a priori* encounter opposition here?
- According to Strabo (*Geogr.* XVI 2, 46 = *GLAJJ* no.115), Antipas and Philip, the two sons of Herod, were put in danger when Archelaus was deposed in 6 CE. They had considerable difficulty in returning home and preserving their tetrarchies.
- When Judaea and Samaria went over to direct Roman administration after the deposition of Archelaus, a Judas who came from Galilee (and who is perhaps identical with the Judas of Gamala mentioned above) agitated against the payment of tax to the Romans (*BJ* 2, 118; *Antt.* 18, 4-10, 23).¹⁹ Granted, the area of unrest is not Galilee, but the roots of the unrest point in that direction. That is shown by the following events: a generation later, after 44 CE, Galilee, too, was brought under direct Roman rule. Now two sons of Judas of Galilee appeared, Simon and Jacob, and were crucified by the Roman procurator Tiberius Alexander (*Antt.* 20, 102). If they delivered the same message as their father – namely that tax must not be paid to the Romans – after 44 CE, this message was topical only in Galilee. For only there was there a move to the direct payment of tax to the Romans. Furthermore, Luke wrongly regards this unrest under the sons of Judas as the real ‘revolt’ of Judas of Galilee. Therefore he can date him after Theudas, who appeared c.44/45 (*Acts* 5.36f.).
- In the period between 6 CE and c.30 CE there was an (a new) edition of the apocalyptic writing *Assumptio Mosis* in Palestine. Part of it which goes back to this time prophesies that the sons of Herod will rule for a shorter time than their fathers (*AssMos* 6, 7). As Archelaus had already been deposed, and Philip was ruling in remote areas, the interest of the work is focussed entirely on Herod Antipas: if prophecies throughout the land are fulfilled, he will soon disappear, and it would certainly not be possible to describe the political situation as ‘stable’.
- Such expectations were fostered not only by writings but also by an influential prophet. In the 20s, in the territory of Herod Antipas, John the Baptist appeared and criticized the marital policy of the ruler. According to Josephus, Antipas had him executed in order to prevent an open revolt (*Antt.* 18, 118).
- We do not know what lay behind the bloodbath caused, according to Luke

¹⁹See above, p. 154 and §5.3.2.

- 13.1ff., by Pilate among the Galilean pilgrims. But we may presuppose that Pilate was convinced that they threatened public order.
- Among the resistance fighters in the Jewish War two groups in particular emerged: on the one hand were the ‘Galileans’ around John of Gischala, who defended the outermost precinct of the temple, and on the other hand were the Zealots, who occupied the temple itself. As has rightly been emphasized for some time, these ‘Zealots’ appeared only with the Jewish War (i.e. from 66 CE) – and only in Jerusalem itself. But they were already in existence. For the period before 66 CE there is certain evidence only of one ‘Zealot’: Simon the Zealot, a follower of Jesus, who went around with him through Galilee (cf. *Luke* 6.15; *Acts* 1.13). He probably came from Galilee. Possibly there is epigraphical evidence for a ‘Zealot’ buried in Rome: his home town is given as Sepphoris in Galilee (*CIJ*, no.362). So the prehistory of the most radical resistance groups leads to Galilee.
 - Herod Antipas probably did not feel secure. This is indicated by his transfer of the capital from Sepphoris to Tiberias: the foundation of Tiberias is associated with the attempt to settle a population there which was loyal to him (*Antt.* 18, 37f.). Probably he also gathered there the armed force for which he was later denounced to the Romans and as a result of which he lost his kingdom: it is improbable that he needed these weapons only as a protection against external enemies (cf. *Antt.* 18, 240-256).

All in all, it can hardly be said that the political situation in Galilee was peaceful. Even the long reign of Herod Antipas is no evidence for this. His father Herod I had reigned just as long. Nevertheless, during his reign powerful tensions built up which exploded powerfully immediately after his death.

The conclusion must be that Galilee was riven by deep structural tensions, by tensions between Jews and Gentiles, town and country, rich and poor, rulers and ruled. When Jesus proclaimed here a turning point in everything, one which was beginning in the present, he found an audience which had reasons to long for a change. Nevertheless, the interpretation of the emergence of Jesus as a response to a structurally conditioned crisis is only one side of the coin. It is also true that in the midst of a period characterized crises (from the unrest after the death of Herod to the Jewish War), the time of Jesus was relatively peaceful. Tacitus’ verdict on Palestine at that time was *sub Tiberio quies* (‘There was peace under Tiberius’, *Hist.* 5, 9, 2). The situation in Judaea could have been relatively free of tension by comparison with that in Galilee. But that mainly explains why Jesus’ response to the crises of his time could be so ‘peaceful’. The rule of God which he was proclaimed was already a hidden reality in the present: i.e. it could (for the moment) co-exist with the rule of the Romans and the Herodians.

3.5 The religious character of Galilee

The situation of Galilee as an enclave within non-Jewish territory, its geographical separation from the religious centre of Jerusalem and its various forms of government by contrast with Judaea up to 44 CE, could hardly fail to have consequences for the religious institutions of the Galileans. However, it is difficult to produce an adequate picture of the religious mentality in Galilee, not least because of the perspective of the sources with their one-sidedly Judaeian stamp. The rabbinic literature, composed by Judaeian scholars who after 135 – the defeat in the third Jewish War – had been forcibly resettled in Galilee, depicts the Galileans as uneducated in religion, as ignorant in ritual questions, indeed as despisers of the Torah. This view is already evident in the exclamation attributed to Johanan ben Zakkai (c.70), ‘Galilee, Galilee, you hate the Torah!’,²⁰ which was handed down by the teachers of the second century. It expresses the frustration of the rabbinic movement, which was emerging with an increasing claim to absoluteness, in the face of the resistance of the Galilean population to assimilation with it. However, a similar attitude to Galilee is already attested for the first century in the Gospel of John. The Jewish leaders react with annoyance to Jesus’ public proclamation in Jerusalem. It is impossible for the Christ to come from Galilee; only the accursed people ‘which knows nothing of the law’ can believe that (John 7.41–49). When Nicodemus, himself a scribe, offers protection to Jesus, he is asked, ‘Are you perhaps also from Galilee?’ (John 7.52). Here too it is clear that this is an outsider’s perspective, that of members of the religious elite in the capital, which had an interest in preserving their moral and religious superiority.

Unfortunately there are only a few sources which allow insights into the religious self-understanding of the Jews of Galilee. Their relationship to the central religious entities of temple, land and Torah can only be sketched out – with diminishing degrees of clarity.

1. *The temple.* A marked temple piety on the part of the Galileans, a close tie between the inhabitants of the periphery and the centre of the Jewish cult together with the institutions affiliated with it, can be clearly inferred from the sources. Even the critical attitudes towards the temple expressed by individuals (see below 4.1) are based on this foundation of intensive commitment to the temple (since they show the opposite of indifference towards it). The payment of the annual temple tax of half a shekel, which was collected centrally in places in Galilee, though evidently on a voluntary basis (cf. Matt. 17.24–27), in keeping with the Sadducean halakah against the Pharisaic tradition, and the collection of tithes were external expressions of this. In addition there were the regular pilgrimages to one of the three annual pilgrimage festivals (cf. Luke 2.41f.).²¹ In times of crisis

²⁰Shab 15d, quoted in Vermes, *Jesus**, 57.

²¹For pilgrimage see S. Safrai, in S. Safrai and M. Stern (eds.), *Jewish People VI*, 1291–201; *II*, 898–904; S. Freyne, *Galilee* (1980), 259–304; Jeremias, *Jerusalem*, 58–84.

people remained loyal to the temple: in 39 CE, Judaeans and Galileans in Tiberias protested *en masse* against the threat of the desecration of their capital by the erection of a statue of Caligula in the temple (*Antt.* 18, 269ff., see pp. 181f. below). When Josephus organized resistance in Galilee at the beginning of the Jewish War, he referred successfully to his priestly descent, as his account in the *Vita* shows throughout, and appealed to the loyalty of the population to Jerusalem, which he calls ‘our all-powerful city’, and the temple, ‘the sanctuary which is common to us all’. The refusal of help by Sepphoris remained a notable exception (*Vita*, 348).

2. *The land.* The Galilean love of freedom is emphasized both by Josephus (e.g. *BJ* 3,41) and by the rabbis (jKet 29b); the resistance fighters from Galilee have already been mentioned above (3.4). The theological foundation of this attitude lies in the traditional faith that God alone is the owner of the land, which his people occupy. Therefore it is a religious concern that they should occupy it in the way required by God and without any ‘pollution’ by alien peoples, their customs and their gods. This concern was possibly felt particularly strongly because of the proximity of Gentile territories to Galilee. Nor can a certain ‘nationalism’ even on the part of Jesus be overlooked, as is shown by the comparison of a Gentile child with a dog (Mark 7.27); statements like Matt. 10.5; or the vivid symbolic action attributed to Jesus in Mark 5.11–13 – the drowning of a herd of swine. Although the kingdom of God which Jesus proclaimed has universalistic features, as a matter of course it is to constitute itself in the Promised Land as a restoration of the people of twelve tribes.

3. *The Torah.* The majority of the population in Galilee was Jewish, and Jewish life in all its forms is based on the Torah. The question was not whether, but how, this should be implemented. The Pharisaic halakah (which had stricter and more liberal expressions) was hardly predominant in Galilee in the time of Jesus. It seems, rather, that the Pharisaic movement in the first century spread only slowly, with powerful support from Jerusalem, in this area which had been reconquered at one point from the domination of the Sadducees. Nothing is known of any Essenes in Galilee. So what was the teaching of the leaders of the synagogues and the scribes who read the Torah aloud, translated it and interpreted it on the sabbath in the numerous synagogues of Galilee? Apart from Jesus of Nazareth, only isolated names of Galilean scribes have been handed down from the first century. They include Judas of Galilee (see above, 5.3.2), whose teaching had radical political consequences. In addition mention might be made of a certain Eleazar, who taught at the court of Izates, the king of Adiabene (*Antt.* 20, 43), and Joses the Galilean among the scholars of Jabneh. Generally speaking, virtually nothing is known about the Galilean halakah. May we assume that it was adapted to the requirements of agricultural life (just as the Pharisaic halakah corresponded more to an urban milieu)? The sources only give us isolated insights: thus Josephus, *Vita*, 74–76, relates that during a food shortage the

Jewish inhabitants of Caesarea Philippi were prepared to pay a quite excessive price for oil from Gischala prepared by Jews, 'so that they did not need to transgress their precepts by using Greek oil in an emergency'. As already mentioned, the country people in Tiberias destroyed pictures of animals in Herod's palace, and the protests of John the Baptist against the liberal manipulation of the marriage laws by the Herodians met with a response among the people. All this points to the fact that in Galilee, which had the bad reputation of being lawless, there was a great concern to observe the Torah. On the other hand, Josephus accuses the Zealot leader John of Gischala of having eaten food prohibited by the Law, and having violated the traditional rules of cleanness (*BJ* 7, 264). Perhaps this only means that he followed other (Galilean) halakoth. The rabbis, too, accused Galilean sages of laxity over the laws relating to cleanness (Vermes, *Jesus**, 54). This is possibly also an explanation of the liberal attitude of Jesus towards the food laws and questions of cleanness.

Unfortunately the Galilean context of the teaching of Jesus has largely been concealed by the later transformation of Galilean piety by the rabbis on the one hand and Christianity on the other. However, there is no doubt that at the time of Jesus Galilee was an area with a Jewish stamp, that its inhabitants were dependent on the temple, were interested in the distinction between the peoples and followed the precepts of the Torah in their oral and written form, presumably in specifically local versions.

4. The place of the passion: Jerusalem

At the end of his life, Jesus and his disciples went to Jerusalem for the Passover feast. They went there through Peraea (*Mark* 10.1). We can only understand Luke to imagine a direct way through Samaria (*Luke* 9.5 ff.). But because Jesus is rejected in a Samaritan village, Luke too only speaks of a journey 'between Samaria and Galilee' (*Luke* 17.11). If by 'Galilee' Luke means the territory under the rule of Herod Antipas (including Peraea), he could have envisaged a route along the frontiers of Samaria through Peraea. In fact a route through Peraea is more probable. That was the only way of avoiding setting foot on non-Jewish land.

4.1 The structural opposition of city and country in the passion narrative

Jesus made an appearance in Jerusalem with a prophecy against the temple which he underlined by the typically prophetic symbolic action of the cleansing of the temple. This prophecy and the fate of Jesus become more understandable if we reckon with an opposition between capital and country, between Jerusalem and Galilee (cf. Theissen, 'Tempelweissagung').

- A comparable opposition to the temple is also rooted elsewhere in the country. The Old Testament prophets who prophesied against the temple came from the country: Micah from Moresheth (1.1), Uriah from Kiriath-jearim (*Jer.* 26.20), Jeremiah from Anathoth (1.1). In the New Testament period Jesus comes from Nazareth in Galilee. After him another Jesus, son of Ananias, prophesied against Jerusalem and the temple before the Jewish war (c.62–60, *BJ* 6, 300ff., quoted p. 470 below). He too came from the country (τῶν ἰδιωτῶν ἀγροικοῦς = one of the uneducated country people). Furthermore, in 35 CE a prophet appeared in Samaria who claimed to have found the vanished temple vessels on Mount Gerizim, doubtless to demonstrate the sanctity of this place over against the Jerusalem temple. He gathered his followers in a small village (*Antt.* 18, 85–9).
- Jesus made a public appearance with his prophecy against the temple during a pilgrimage festival, i.e. while the city of Jerusalem was full of country people. We know that in this situation there were often tensions between the people of Jerusalem and the country population (e.g. *Antt.* 20, 106f., 225). That is why the Roman prefect was in Jerusalem during such festivals. It should be noted that Jesus was greeted with 'Hosianna' not by the population of the city but by the pilgrims who went to Jerusalem with him (*Mark* 11.8f.). The population of the city was more provoked by his prophecy against the temple. Its own economic existence was too closely connected with the temple: criticism of the temple had necessarily to be understood as criticism of the foundation of its existence. The temple aristocracy will not have found it difficult to stir up part of the ordinary population of the city against Jesus. Thus the change from 'Hosianna' to 'Crucify him!' could be more understandable if there was a historical recollection behind the Barabbas scene.

4.2 Places and routes in the passion narrative

It is not only the major structural tensions which play a role in the passion. The passion narrative gives us more indication than other traditions of the routes taken by Jesus and the places where he was. Even for K.L. Schmidt, the details of place in it had to be evaluated differently from the preceding pericopes. Only here did he find (rightly) an old consecutive account. Doubtless specific memories were associated with place names like Bethphage and Bethany (*Mark* 11.1), the Mount of Olives (13.3), Gethsemane (14.32), Pilate's Praetorium (15.16), Golgotha (15.22), and probably also the tomb of Jesus. Now and again we can bring to life what has been handed down to us by literary sources through archaeological insights.

(a) The *Praetorium* was the seat of office of the Roman prefects. It was often sought in the citadel Antonia, directly adjoining the north-east corner of the temple. However, the prefect probably resided in Herod's palace, which lies in the

west of the Jerusalem of that time (near the present-day Jaffa Gate, cf. Philo, *LegGai* 299; Josephus, *BJ* 2, 301). This palace was at a higher level than the temple. From it one could check what was going on there. The *lithostroton* (something like marble floor) before the Praetorium is called Gabbatha in Aramaic (John 19.13), which means 'height', 'high place'.²² As the whole of the former west city was called the 'upper city' (cf. *BJ* 1, 402; *Antt.* 15, 318) and a stone platform was found there in the 1970s, the 'high place' should probably also be located in it.²³ From there Jesus was led to the place of execution after his condemnation – and therefore not by what is now called the Via Dolorosa.

(b) According to the unanimous report of all the Gospels the place of execution, *Golgotha*, lay outside the city. Such an unclean place was only conceivable there. However, in Byzantine times the present-day Church of the Sepulchre, within which Golgotha and the tomb of Jesus²⁴ have traditionally been located, clearly lay in the centre of the city. Still, there is much to indicate that in the 30s the land lay outside the city walls. Josephus reports that Jerusalem had three walls (*BJ* 5, 136, 142ff.). The latest, so-called third, wall was only begun by Herod Agrippa I between 41 and 44, and then had to be left incomplete because of Roman intervention. So the course of the second wall, which in the time of Jesus was the outer city wall, is decisive. However, this is difficult to reconstruct. If the Church of the Sepulchre proves to lie outside it, the location of Golgotha within it could preserve an old tradition going back to the time before 70. If, however, the Church of the Sepulchre proves to lie within this wall, this is a later localization – say from the period after the Jewish War, when Jerusalem had been destroyed. Today archaeologists tend to put Golgotha outside the second wall.²⁵ In that case, in New Testament times Golgotha would have been a rock towering around thirteen metres above the rocky ground – the remains of an abandoned quarry from the pre-exilic period. Jesus could have been crucified there.

5. Hermeneutical reflections

Jesus' way led from Nazareth in Lower Galilee to the Sea of Galilee, from the northern bank of which he began his lively activity as an itinerant preacher. The centre of his itinerant activity was Capernaum. From here he addressed the Jewish countryfolk in and around Galilee who had been made unsure of their identity by

²²Unfortunately this interpretation is not completely certain. Scholars have also thought of *gabbatha* ('bald forehead', thus Dalman, *Jesus-Jeshua*, 14).

²³Cf. McRay, 'Gabbatha'; id., *Archeology*, 114–19.

²⁴For the tomb of Jesus see below §15.2.5.3.

²⁵Cf. Charlesworth, *Jesus*, 123f.; E. Otto, *Jerusalem – die Geschichte der heiligen Stadt von den Anfängen bis zur Kreuzfahrerzeit*, Stuttgart 1980, 153–9; P. Welten, 'Jerusalem I', *TRE* 16, 1987, 598.

Hellenistic city culture. His preaching addressed a world full of social, economic and political tensions. When he went up to Jerusalem he became a victim of these tensions. Traces of his way can be illuminated by territorial history. Sometimes they also become tangible in archaeological remains: Peter's house in Capernaum, the Praetorium in Jerusalem, and Golgotha as a place of execution could derive from traditions extending back into the first century with which remains visible today were possibly originally associated.

The connection of the historical Jesus with archaeological discoveries and the material reality of the land of Israel which is still tangible today continue to exert a special fascination. Archaeological material preserved by chance is more authentic than sources written from a particular perspective. However, when it comes to the archaeology of the New Testament we also have the human, all-too-human longing for 'a tangible form of transcendence'. Therefore it is impossible to emphasize enough how provisional all our conclusions are. New datings, new discoveries and new interpretations can put in question at any time the picture which has been formed. We must expect that a very early stage the places and routes of Jesus were identified with particular places and remains – probably as early as the first century CE. Such identifications need not be accurate – but they need not necessarily be false either.

Historical criticism of the Gospels and the story of Jesus has long neglected archaeology and territorial history (at least in Germany). Both have often been left to conservative scholars – or American exegetes. This is a regrettable development, since neither archaeology or territorial history are the problem, but the uncritical evaluation of them. The fascination exerted by Galilee and Jerusalem is quite untouched by this: whether the supposed 'traces' of the history of Jesus that we come across are spurious or authentic, he certainly worked somewhere in this small area. Somewhere on the north shore of the 'Sea of Galilee' he called people to follow him. Somewhere in Jerusalem he was condemned. Somewhere – not just in a place invented by religious fantasy – he was tortured and executed. The word was made flesh. That means it was located, was dated, and was in the thick of the conflicts and tensions of its time. But who was this Jesus? So far we have described only the context of his activity. In the next section we shall turn to his person.

6. Tasks

6.1 *Petronius and the resistance against the statue of the emperor*

In the year 39 Gaius Caligula ordered that his statue was to be set up in the Jerusalem temple and instructed Petronius, the legate of Syria, to implement this, if need be by armed force. After a first unsuccessful intervention by the

Jews in Ptolemais, Petronius established himself in Tiberias (Antt. 18, 261–268).

'The Jews, though they regarded the risk involved in war with the Romans as great, yet adjudged the risk of transgressing the law to be far greater. As before, many tens of thousands faced Petronius on his arrival at Tiberias. They besought him by no means to put them under such constraint nor to pollute the city by setting up a statue . . . And falling on their faces and baring their throats they declared that they were ready to be slain. They continued to make their supplications for forty days. Furthermore, they neglected their fields, and that, too, though it was time to sow the seed. For they showed a stubborn determination and readiness to die rather than to see the image erected. At this juncture Aristobulus, the brother of king Agrippa, together with Helkias the Elder and other most powerful members of this house, together with the civic leaders, appeared before Petronius and appealed to him, since he saw the deep feeling of the people, not to incite them to desperation but to write to Gaius telling how incurable was their opposition to receiving the statue and how they had left their fields to sit protesting, and that they did not choose war, since they could not fight a war, but would be glad to die sooner than transgress their customs. Let him point out that, since the land was unsown, there would be a harvest of banditry, because the requirement of tribute could not be met. Petronius dismissed the assembly of the Jews and requested those in authority to attend to agricultural matters and to conciliate the people with optimistic propaganda' (Antt. 18, 269–274, 284).

Which of the structural tensions in Galilee discussed above are suggested by this account of events in Tiberias in 39 CE?

6.2 Jesus and Sepphoris

Discuss the two following attempts at an explanation by W. Bösen and S. Freyne for the silence of the Jesus tradition on Sepphoris, the 'glory of all Galilee' (Antt. 18, 27):

W. Bösen justifies his thesis that 'the Gospels are silent because Jesus was active in Sepphoris but without success' (*Galiläa als Lebensraum und Wirkungsfeld Jesu*, Freiburg ²1990, 74) as follows:

Geographical and theological considerations suggest that Jesus was active in Sepphoris. Galilee is a small area, which can be crossed from any point in two or three days . . . There was no real reason for keeping away from [the former capital]. On the contrary, if he [Jesus] wanted to remain faithful . . . to himself and his programme, he could not by-pass it. Certainly at that time the countryside was full of the 'lost', the poor and the sick, the social and religious outcasts; but the majority of

them gathered . . . in the cities. So Sepphoris too . . . was overwhelmed by the poor in the broadest sense. To by-pass them without having confronted them with the new offer of salvation robbed Jesus of credibility – and not just in the eyes of the people of Sepphoris (74). In view of the failures of Jesus that are reported in Nazareth (Mark 6. 1–6a), Capernaum, Chorazim and Bethsaida (Matt. 11.20ff./Luke 10.12ff.), Bösen states: 'Thus a failure of Jesus in Sepphoris would not be out of the ordinary; given its proximity to Nazareth it was a probability' (75).

By contrast, S. Freyne, *Galilee*, 1988, 139f., thinks that Jesus deliberately avoided Sepphoris and Tiberias:

It is quite unlikely that Jesus' avoidance of either place [Sepphoris or Tiberias] was due to religious attitudes, in view of his apparent disregard for the purity laws and his openness to the Gentiles, even to the point of travelling in their territory – something that is well attested in all the narratives. His avoidance of the main Herodian centres of Galilee is best explained, therefore, in the light of a conscious decision not to become directly embroiled in a confrontation with Herodian power. The fate of the Baptist must surely have been a salutary warning (see Matt. 14.13). It was possible to conduct an itinerant ministry adopting the strategy of avoiding open confrontation.

Task on 5–7: Chronological survey²⁶

Put the following names in the spaces in the table on the next page: Agrippa I, Archelaus, Claudius, Gaius Caligula, Herod I (the Great), Herod Antipas, Octavian Augustus, Philip, Pilate, Quintilius Varus, Quirinius, Tiberius.

²⁶Cf. Bösen, *Galiläa* (n.3), 150.

Roman emperors	Rulers in Palestine			Syrian legates
	(5) (37-4)			-----
(1) (-27 - +14)	Judaea and Samaria (6) (-4 - +6)	Galilee and Peraea (9) (-4 - +39)	Gaulanitis + Trachonitis + Batanaea (10) (-4 - +34)	(11) (6-3) -----
	Roman prefects			(12) (6-11) -----
(2) (14-37)	(7) (26-36)			
(3) (37-41)				
(4) (41-54)		(8) (39/41-44)		