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**Edited by Amy-Jill Levine, Dale C. Allison, Jr., & John Dominic Crossan:
The Historical Jesus in Context**

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INTRODUCTION

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Interest in the “historical Jesus” has continued unabated since the Enlightenment. Each year new books and magazine articles appear, the media offer new programs, and since the 1970s, college courses on the topic have been overflowing in enrollment. No single picture of Jesus has convinced all, or even most, scholars; all methods and their combinations find their critics as well as their advocates.

This volume does not offer yet another portrait of the historical Jesus—indeed, we editors each have our own view of Jesus’ agenda, of what can be considered authentic material, of how he perceived himself and how others perceived him (whether our diverse views stem from our training, our ages, our experiences, even our different religious backgrounds, cannot be determined). Rather, this volume provides information on cultural contexts within which Jesus was understood and perhaps even understood himself. This collection explores Jesus’ contexts not only through presenting select primary sources (most in new translations) but also by offering commentary by experts on those sources. By looking directly at the sources from the period—Jewish and Gentile, literary and archaeological—this volume allows readers to construct the setting within which Jesus and his earliest followers lived.

The point of this search is not to find “parallels.” Comparison is often an extremely subjective judgment: where one scholar finds a connection, another finds disjunction. Nor is it to suggest that Jesus simply recapitulates conventional sayings and deeds; to the contrary, had he not said or done some things that proved memorable, distinct, or arresting, it is unlikely we would have records of his teachings. Nor, however, could he have been completely anomalous; were he so, he would have made no sense either to those who chose to follow him or to those brought into the movement after his crucifixion.

All literature, be it historical report, biography, comedic anecdote, religious pronouncement, even deed of property, conforms to set patterns or what biblical scholars typically refer to as “forms.” Those who recorded the stories of Jesus would have presented their materials according to the forms of their time, and in turn their readers would have understood the Gospel accounts in light of these forms. Jesus too would be familiar with both Hellenistic (Gentile) and Jewish

forms: how one prayed and taught; how one was expected to act; how initiation rites such as baptism functioned; when and how one used apocalyptic language; recountings of miracles and martyrs. Further, the repertoire of stories available to Jesus' followers from both Jewish and Gentile traditions, as well as their own experiences, served as a source for adapted and even new stories of the man they considered the Messiah.

We cannot always determine which came first: a historical event or a literary creation. In some cases, Jesus may have been influenced by the scriptures of Judaism (e.g., the miracle-working prophets such as Elijah and Elisha, the suffering servant described by the prophet Isaiah, the apocalyptic "son of man" mentioned by Daniel as well as *1 Enoch*), as well as by Jewish accounts of martyrs, teachers, prophets, sages, and visionaries; yet it is equally possible that his followers, themselves steeped in these accounts, conformed their understanding of Jesus according to these narrative models. In other cases, those who told stories about him may have drawn from the rich traditions of the Greek and Roman worlds, from Homer to Aesop to Apollonius of Tyana and Apuleius of Madauros. In teaching and debating, Jesus would have used forms familiar to his audiences, such as parables and appeals to legal tradition or practice. Further, his audiences would have drawn upon this same repertoire in order to understand him.

Given its focus on an individual, or at least the records of him, this volume in the Princeton Readings in Religions series departs slightly from the focus of the earlier volumes, where the controlling factor has been a geographic region. The shift is not substantial, however. To investigate the context within which Jesus lived and his stories were told is already a focused investigation of both culture and period. The historical man from Nazareth cannot be understood fully if he is divorced from his context; the spread of the Gospel cannot be comprehended unless one appreciates its adaptations to the cultural expectations of its proselytes.

The focused approach of this collection also responds to a situation not addressed directly in the other volumes. A number of scholars working in biblical studies have insisted that we have an "ethical" responsibility to engage in historical Jesus research. Millions of people cite Gospel texts as moral guides. Consequently, it becomes imperative to determine to the best of our ability the situation in which those pronouncements were made. Do Jesus' comments on divorce or the construction of the family, for example, respond to a specific situation, perhaps one that no longer prevails, or are they universal injunctions? Are his comments on eschatology—the end of the present age—to be seen as metaphoric or literal? How are his values, or those of his followers, reflective of the Platonic dualism marking much of Hellenistic society? Did he in fact issue all the statements attributed to him, or were some added by his early followers and attributed to him, just as both Gentile and Jewish writers attributed material to prominent teachers? Are the Gospels to be assessed by criteria distinct from those applied to non-Christian material: for example, are Jesus' miracles "fact," whereas reports of the miraculous deeds of the Rabbi Honi the Circle-Drawer or the Pagan teacher Apollonius of Tyana the airy stuff of legend?

In order to locate the historical Jesus, access is needed not only to the Christian canon but also to the ancient primary sources that may confirm, complement, or complicate the canonical portraits. Today, the noncanonical Gospels and Patristic sources (writings of the Church Fathers) easily are available both in print and online; another volume in this series, Richard Valantasis's *Religions of Late Antiquity in Practice*, offers many of the late first-century and subsequent Christian as well as non-Christian texts. But even with the several source books available, the scholarly community still lacks a comprehensive volume that not only records the sources but also discusses their connections to the historical Jesus. This volume in the *Readings in Religion* series redresses that gap.

The History of the “Quest”

The so-called Quest for the historical Jesus seeks to understand the man from Nazareth as he was understood in his own context and as he understood himself. Its practitioners can be pictured as located on a spectrum ranging from positivism to skepticism. The positivistic side regards the Gospel accounts as accurate or at least relatively accurate reports, and the burden of proof is placed on those who would claim something attributed to Jesus was not historical (although the demand to “prove a negative” creates a logical fallacy: it is impossible, in most cases, to prove that Jesus did *not* say or do something the Gospels attribute to him). As we move toward the skeptical end, we find questors who presuppose a distinction between the “Christ of faith”—the resurrected Lord, second person of the Trinity, the divine man proclaimed in the pages of the New Testament—and the Jesus of history. The understandings of the man from Nazareth vary according to the investigator's personal interests and also vary depending on the method used, the aspects of Jesus' life highlighted, the construal of Jesus' social situation, even the investigator's theological worldview (e.g., does it accommodate miracles? does it presuppose the biblical texts are inerrant?).

Those interpreters who regard the Evangelists (the authors of the Gospels, known as Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) as inheritors of oral tradition as well as authors in their own right seek to strip away the layers introduced by the Gospel writers as well as by Jesus' early followers to reach the pristine historical core of what he actually said and did. One conventional way of describing this distinction is to say that whereas Jesus proclaimed the kingdom of heaven, the Gospels proclaim Jesus. In this view, not every saying and deed, perhaps fewer than a half or even a quarter, the Gospels attribute to Jesus has a claim to historical authenticity. The materials are regarded as having developed among Jesus' followers, men and women who retrojected their experiences—disaffection from local synagogues, distrust by and of the Roman government, concerns over marriage, debates with other followers of Jesus as well as with both Gentiles and Jews who did not accept their claims—back to the story of Jesus himself. On this side of the spectrum, the burden of proof for claiming something historical rests with

those who regard the Gospel text as reliable. But this procedure requires a skepticism that is not usually applied to comparable texts, such as Suetonius's *Lives of the Caesars* or Josephus's *Antiquities of the Jews*. Nor in either case is it clear what would constitute "proof."

There is a consensus of sorts on a basic outline of Jesus' life. Most scholars agree that Jesus was baptized by John, debated with fellow Jews on how best to live according to God's will, engaged in healings and exorcisms, taught in parables, gathered male and female followers in Galilee, went to Jerusalem, and was crucified by Roman soldiers during the governorship of Pontius Pilate (26–36 CE). But, to use the old cliché, the devil is in the details.

For centuries, there was no "quest for the historical Jesus" per se. The gospels were taken to be trustworthy historical accounts. Although the earliest versions are anonymous, and although no Gospel identifies its author, the traditional attributions of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John were accepted as fact. Matthew (Matthew 9:9; the tax collector is called "Levi" in Mark 2:14 and Luke 5:27) was the tax collector summoned by Jesus, and "John" was considered to be the unnamed "beloved disciple" who reclined on Jesus' breast at the Last Supper (see John 13:23). Luke, who wrote both the Gospel bearing his name and the Acts of the Apostles, was considered the companion of Paul, as well as the confidant of the Virgin Mary, and Mark was the companion of Peter. Thus the testimony of the four "Evangelists" (a Greek term meaning "good news bringers"; *euaggellion*, or "good news," is the Greek term underlying the English "Gospel") was credible, resting on eyewitness testimony. The miracles happened as recorded; whereas supernatural events recorded of Pagan, Jewish, or Muslim individuals were seen as merely legends, those accorded to Jesus and his followers were seen as fact.

Discrepancies were noted: Matthew, Mark, and Luke date the Crucifixion to the first day of the Passover holiday (Matthew 26:17–19; Mark 14:12–16; Luke 22:7–13); John, who refers to Jesus as the "lamb of God" (John 1:29), dates it to the day before, when the lambs to be eaten at the festival meal were being sacrificed in the Jerusalem Temple (John 13:1; 18:28; 19:31). Mark 10:1–12 depicts Jesus as insisting there is to be no divorce; the Jesus of Matthew (5:32) states that there is to be no divorce except in cases of *porneia* (the Greek conveys the sense of "unchaste behavior" or "sexual perversion"). Even Luke remarks that whereas others had attempted to compile an orderly account of Jesus' actions, he would present the material accurately (the supposition being that the earlier materials were inaccurate [see Luke 1:1–4]). But apparent discrepancies were easily harmonized by means of allegory, or they were regarded as complementary rather than as contradictory.

Interpreters regarded stories that appeared to be variants of the same incident as accounts of separate events. Thus, Jesus was seen as having "cleansed" the Temple both at the beginning of his ministry (so John 2) and again at its end (so Matthew 21, Mark 11, and Luke 19); Jesus healed a demoniac named "Legion" at Gadara (so Mark 5) and two demoniacs named "Legion" at Gerasa (so Matthew 8). He taught "Blessed are the poor in spirit" (so Matthew's "Sermon on the

Mount,” 5:3) and “Blessed are you poor” (so Luke’s “Sermon on the Plain,” 6:20). Even today, these matters remain debated. For some scholars, Matthew adapted Luke’s “more original” Beatitude to stress personal attitude rather than economic situation; for others, Jesus spoke both Beatitudes, but on different occasions to different audiences.

The “Quest” itself formally began with the Enlightenment’s questioning of both theological dogma and religious authority and in particular with the English Deists. H. S. Reimarus, a German historian whose *On the Intention of Jesus and His Disciples* (published posthumously in 1768 by the philosopher G. E. Lessing) usually is credited for starting the “Old Quest,” although his arguments substantially repeat the idea of the Deists. Reimarus, who viewed the gospels as human products rather than inerrant and noncontradictory “truth,” distinguished between the historical Jesus and the Christ of faith. His image of the historical Jesus was of a failed revolutionary whose disciples stole his corpse, as well as invented both the Resurrection and the Second Coming (the *parousia*) to keep their movement going.

Following Reimarus, many scholars concluded that even if the gospels did contain some eyewitness testimony, the stories had been adapted and expanded to fit the needs of Greek-speaking, increasingly Gentile churches. The task was to separate the chaff of legendary development from the wheat of historical accuracy.

Aiding in this effort was the rise of source criticism, that is, the recognition that the first three canonical gospels—Matthew, Mark, and Luke—share a common literary basis; they became known as the “Synoptic Gospels” because they “see together.” But while the connection among the three was acknowledged, the specifics of that connection remained contested. The “Griesbach hypothesis”—named after its first major proponent—held that Matthew was the first Gospel, Luke followed Matthew but added material from his own sources, and Mark epitomized the two. That Luke had access to sources is indicated by the Gospel itself, for as noted earlier, Luke speaks of the “many who had attempted to compile a narrative of the events that have been accomplished among us” (Luke 1:1).

Yet Griesbach’s theory had its challengers. Why, some wondered, if Mark is a summary of Matthew and Luke, are Mark’s individual stories longer (e.g., Mark tells the story of the Gerasene demoniac in twenty verses [5:1–20]; Luke’s version takes fourteen [8:26–39], and Matthew uses only seven [8:28–34])? Why did Mark omit such major materials as the Beatitudes and the Lord’s Prayer? Why are there no nativity or resurrection accounts (Mark 16:9–20, the so-called longer ending of the Gospel, is an addition to the earliest texts)? Numerous other indicators, from grammatical infelicities to errors of fact, also contributed to the weakening of support for Griesbach.

Complicating the scholarship may well have been apologetic interests: did the church really want the first Gospel to be so “Jewish”: Matthew foregrounds Jesus’ Jewish ancestry by beginning with a genealogy that highlighted Abraham and David (1:1–17); Matthew depicts Jesus as insisting that he had “come not to abolish but to fulfill” the “Law and the Prophets” (5:17); Matthew has Jesus restrict his mission to “the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (10:6; 15:24). Mark, on the

other hand, lacks a genealogy, depicts Jesus as declaring “all foods clean” (7:19), and indicates that Jesus engaged in a Gentile mission (7:24–8:10). By arguing for Marcan priority, scholars could also argue for a more de-Judaized Jesus.

The main alternative to the Griesbach theory, and the one held by the majority of scholars today, is known as the “four-source theory.” This view argues that Mark wrote first, and that Matthew and Luke, independently, used Mark as a source. Needing to account for the material common to Matthew and Luke but absent in Mark, scholars concluded that Matthew and Luke had access to a second source, comprising mostly sayings (such as the Beatitudes, the teachings of John the Baptist, and the Lord’s Prayer). This they labeled Q, which has come to be understood as related to the German *Quelle*, or “source.” Completing the four sources are, along with Mark and Q, Matthew’s special collection (M) and Luke’s unique material (L).

In the early years of the Quest, some optimism reigned in the study of the historical Jesus. Even if Matthew and Luke were late—and John, whose relationship to the Synoptics remains even more a debatable question, was considered even later—at least Mark and Q could provide some purchase on Jesus himself. Thus, the nineteenth century’s “Old Quest” produced a proliferation of Jesuses, each dependent on select citations from the gospels, and each bolstered by idiosyncratic appropriations of noncanonical sources.

Seeds of the Old Quest’s demise had been planted as early as 1835, with the publication of D. F. Strauss’s *Life of Jesus*. Rejecting both the supernaturalism of the literalist reader and the rationalism of the skeptic, Strauss contributed to the study of the gospels the “mythic” view, the recognition that while the gospels are based on historical fact, the facts have been so embellished by Christian teaching that a true “life of Jesus” would be impossible to write.

The optimistic bubble finally burst with the dawn of the twentieth century. Wilhelm Wrede’s *Messianic Secret in the Gospels* (1901) demonstrated that Mark was no more an objective source than Matthew or Luke. Noticing that the Marcan Jesus frequently commands silence from those for whom he has performed a miracle or provided a special teaching (e.g., 1:32, 43–44; 3:12; 5:43), Wrede claimed that the injunctions to secrecy were invented by the early church and retrojected into the story of Jesus to account for why he had so few followers during his lifetime. The real reason for this lack, in Wrede’s view, was that Jesus himself never claimed messianic status (a question that remains debated even today).

In the eyes of many scholars, Wrede’s work fatally damaged claims that Mark provided unmediated access to Jesus, and Albert Schweitzer’s *Quest of the Historical Jesus: From Reimarus to Wrede* (German 1906; English 1910) finally buried the Old Quest. Surveying the numerous “lives of Jesus” produced since Reimarus’s publication, Schweitzer neatly demonstrated how each author had constructed a Jesus in his own image. His warning remains relevant for all those who seek to explain the “real” Jesus or the “historical” Jesus.

The time from the publication of Schweitzer’s text until the rise of World War II is erroneously called the “No Quest” period; for the quest did continue, albeit

with new interests. One stream of scholarship redirected attention away from the “life of Jesus” focus and sought to analyze individual narrative units, such as sayings, healings, controversy accounts, and parables. Influenced by folklore analysis, Martin Dibelius looked to the structure, or form, of the unit (called a *pericope*, from the Greek term for “cut out”). He observed that healings took a set form (i.e., notice of the disease; type of healing; response of healed; response of crowd), as did controversy stories, nature miracles, and so forth. Whereas scholars might not have been able to penetrate through the level of the Gospel writer or the early traditions the Evangelist received to the historical Jesus himself, they were confident that they could locate the *Sitz im Leben*, the “setting in life,” of the individual forms and so come to understand the community that originally told the story. Thus, the gospels could be understood as we might, for example, understand the various versions of the story of “Cinderella” or the recountings of what have come to be known as “urban legends”: we might not have access to the actual event, and there may never have been an actual event, but we do have different versions of the same story.

When faced with similar accounts or what appeared to be variants of the same story, analysts sought to determine which was earlier: did Jesus insist, “All those things which you do not want done to you, do not do to another” (the quotation is found in an early Christian source called the *Teachings of the Twelve Apostles*, or the *Didache* [1:2b]) or “do to others as you would have them do to you” (Q/Luke 6:31 [material seen as belonging originally to Q is listed according to its appearance in Luke])? Is his advice to “Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly father is perfect” (Matthew 5:48) or is it to “Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful” (Luke 6:36)? Such concerns created an almost atomistic exegesis, wherein each word was interrogated for historical accuracy. That Jesus could have engaged in his own variations on the story rarely was acknowledged; focus was on the words themselves, with the attendant concern of retrojecting the Greek of the gospels into Jesus’ native Aramaic (whether Jesus could speak Greek, or whether he taught in Greek, still remains an open question), rather than on their import.

The form-critical focus also prompted increasing recognition of how literary templates (may have) provided the origins for stories attributed to Jesus. The early church used Jesus’ sayings as a lens through which to interpret their sacred texts (i.e., the Scriptures of Judaism), but they also used those texts as a resource for interpreting Jesus. These Jewish texts locate the cultural codes available to Jesus and his early followers for describing martyrs, messiahs, divinely appointed figures, heavenly mediators, and miracle workers. For example, in Mark 4:38, the disciples, fearing that they are about to drown, call to Jesus, “Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?” Jesus rebukes the disciples, and then the storm, and so prompts the twelve to wonder, “Who is this who can stop the winds?” Perhaps, suggested the critics, the story is less a historically objective report than a meditation on Psalm 107: “They cried to the Lord in their trouble, and he brought them out of their distress. He made the storm be still, and the waves of the sea were hushed.”

In like manner, Matthew 1–5 depicts Jesus as a new Moses who escapes the killing of Jewish infants ordered by Herod the Great, the new Pharaoh; like Moses, Jesus participates in a journey to and from Egypt, crosses water in a life-changing experience (the baptism recapitulates the Israelites' crossing the Red Sea), faces temptation in the wilderness for forty days as Israel was tempted to apostasy in its forty-year wilderness journey, ascends a mountain, and, like Moses again, delivers instruction (or "Torah"). John 6:25–59 makes explicit the connection between Moses who provided manna for the Israelites in the wilderness and Jesus who provided the "bread of life."

The Passion narratives (the accounts of Jesus' final week in Jerusalem) in Mark and Matthew can be read as reflections on Psalm 22, whose opening line, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me," the Jesus of Mark and Matthew quotes from the cross (Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34). The psalm goes on to describe the narrator's mockers and notes that "they divide my clothes among themselves, and for my clothing they cast lots." The more skeptical critic logically could conclude that for Matthew and Mark, the narrative of the Crucifixion was based not on eyewitness testimony—a conclusion bolstered by Mark's remark that Jesus' male followers "deserted him and fled" (Mark 14:50) while the women of Galilee only looked on the Crucifixion "from a distance" (Mark 15:40–41) and so perhaps were not close enough to see all the events the Evangelist reports—but on the historicizing of the psalm.

Scholars also noticed that the stories of Jesus resonated with Greek and Roman culture. The "true vine" of John's Gospel, the doer of signs who turns water into wine (John 2), is killed, and then rises, resembles Dionysius; the divine conception had numerous classical antecedents; Socrates died a heroic death as did Jesus; Apollonias of Tyana was reputed to have healed and raised the dead, taught by means of memorable short sayings, was persecuted by his enemies, was killed, and rose again.

The form-critical process did advance the Quest for the historical Jesus, but it also had, like source criticism, inherent problems. Just as source criticism could not, with complete assurance, settle on the question of which Gospel served as the source for the others, so form criticism had its own question of priority: was the *Sitz im Leben* to be understood by the analysis of the forms, or were the forms to be understood on the basis of an anterior setting in life? The argument at best risked circularity. It also left a number of people dissatisfied. The stress on the community setting of the material deflected attention from Jesus himself and onto those who received his teachings, be those first-century Galileans or early twentieth-century Central Europeans. Whereas an existential relationship with the text, as Rudolf Bultmann promulgated, held some attraction, the appeal of history had not gone away.

The Quest regressed during World War II. Some Nazi and Nazi-influenced scholars, led by Walter Grundmann, a professor of New Testament at the University of Jena, worked in the Institute for the Study and Eradication of Jewish Influence on German Religious Life. Their publications, widely disseminated in

Europe, proclaimed an Aryan Jesus fully divorced from Judaism not only in terms of practice and ideology but also by ethnicity. Whereas the various quests have never been free of bias—no historical reconstruction can be fully objective, for scholars will always need to determine what to mention, to highlight, and to ignore—the Nazi example presents the most egregious instance of such bias. Sadly, proponents of this Aryan Jesus still promulgate their hate-filled messages today; thus, they indicate yet another reason why the study of the historical Jesus includes an ethical component.

At the end of the war, spurred by both historical interest and theological need, Ernst Käsemann began the next stage—variously called the “New Quest” or the “Second Quest”—with his essay “The Problem with the Historical Jesus” (1953). Käsemann first insisted that the jettisoning of history in favor of the ahistorical folktale or a theological existentialism marked by one’s personal encounter with the text (an approach resembling today’s reader-response criticism) was unwarranted. The church itself was interested in history, he averred: otherwise, why write the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles? Moreover, Christians must be concerned with some fact, for otherwise the church rests on a very poor foundation.

To provide such a foundation, Käsemann articulated what have come to be known as the “criteria of authenticity,” the means by which tradition and redaction may be separated and with which scholars could penetrate behind the editorial (sometimes called the “redactional”) level, behind the oral tradition (the level of form criticism’s concentration), and to Jesus himself. Again, a burst of optimism was followed by sober reconsideration.

The criteria of authenticity, refined and described by various names and specifics, are basically three techniques by which the sources can be analyzed. The *criterion of multiple attestation* proffered that if a saying or action attributed to Jesus appeared in two or more independent sources, then its “authenticity” (i.e., its connection to Jesus himself) is comparably more likely. Materials that appear to fit this criterion include Jesus’ institution of a memorial meal with connections drawn between bread and flesh, wine and blood; the commission is attested in the Synoptics, 1 Corinthians, the *Didache*, and probably John 6, the “bread of life discourse.” Paul, Mark, and Q all attribute to Jesus a pronouncement against divorce. John and the Synoptics record Jesus’ relationship with John the Baptist, gathering disciples, and feeding of the five thousand. John and Luke attest that two sisters, Mary and Martha, were Jesus’ close friends.

The problem with this criterion is that we cannot with surety determine which sources are independent. Clearly the Synoptics do not fit the criterion, for they share a common source. The Synoptics and John’s Gospel may be independent, but there is no scholarly consensus. Nor do we know the extent to which, if at all, Paul’s letters influenced the composition of the gospels, let alone what the relationship is between the noncanonical and canonical texts. Further, conformity to the criterion cannot “prove” authenticity; it can only prove anteriority.

The second criterion, that of *dissimilarity*, claims that if a saying or deed attributed to Jesus is dissimilar to first-century Jewish thought and dissimilar or anti-

thetical to the interests of Jesus' followers (e.g., the nascent "Church"), it has a greater claim to authenticity. Each part of the criterion has benefits and debits. Concerning the connection to Judaism, for example, Jesus' supposed preference for celibacy (e.g., Matthew 19:12) is dissimilar to the majority of Jewish thought and practice in the first century, although the Essenes described by Josephus and the Therapeutae/Therapeutrides described by Philo show that it is not completely anomalous. The criterion works less well when we turn to Jesus' own followers. The early Christian literature shows both an ongoing interest in celibacy—such as Paul's own preference (1 Corinthians 7), the reference in Acts 21 to Philip's four virgin daughters, and the 144,000 "virgins" of Revelation 14 who "have not defiled themselves with women"—as well as strong interest in conforming to Roman family values of marriage and children (so 1 Timothy 2).

For an account dissimilar to ecclesiastical interests, the Evangelists' struggling with Jesus' baptism by John appears to fit the criterion. If John is baptizing for the remission of sins (Mark 1:4), why would the incarnate Lord proclaimed by the church need to submit himself to this ritual? Matthew (3:15) states that Jesus is baptized "to fulfill all righteousness." Luke, by providing a nativity story for John as well as making very clear that John, even in utero, recognized Jesus' superiority, avoids the impression that Jesus is subordinate to John. In John's Gospel, the Baptist never actually baptizes Jesus, but he does insist that Jesus is the "one who ranks ahead of me because he was before me" (John 1:30), a line that comports beautifully with the fourth Gospel's insistence on the preexistence of Jesus, the "Word" (*Logos*) who was "in the beginning" (1:1).

Again, the approach is compromised. Not only is our knowledge of first-century Galilean and Judean Jewish thought and practice incomplete, such that what may seem "dissimilar" is an accident of what was preserved and what was lost, but also the method risks deforming our image of Jesus by highlighting what distinguishes him from Judaism rather than what embeds him within his own religious and cultural tradition. Critics of the criterion of dissimilarity, especially in its classical focus of separating Jesus from Judaism, have also recognized the negative repercussions of this process. In light of the Shoah (the Holocaust), the Jewishness of Jesus increasingly has been highlighted (ideological pressure and historical-critical rigor need not be mutually exclusive). However, beyond recognizing that "Jesus was Jewish," rarely does the scholarship address what being "Jewish" means (aside from a connection to Mary's ethnic group—and here we might note, as well, that the entire category of ethnicity is itself fraught with difficulty). The lack is caused substantially by gaps in the training of New Testament experts: few have complete familiarity with the varied Jewish sources of the period (Pseudepigrapha, Dead Sea Scrolls, Josephus, Philo, the myriad Rabbinic texts, Targumim . . .).

A similar problem plagues the second part of the criterion. We do not know what the early followers of Jesus would have found embarrassing. Finally, it is likely that Jesus and the early church founded in his name were substantially continuous rather than distinct. Just as the criterion threatens to yank Jesus out

of his Jewish context, so it threatens to sever his connection to those who followed him.

The third criterion, that of *consistency* or *coherence*, depends on the first two. If application of *multiple attestation* and *dissimilarity* assigns a saying or action to Jesus, then similar sayings or actions have, according to this criterion, greater claims to authenticity. Again, problems abound. Not only is “similarity” in the eye of the beholder, one of Jesus’ followers easily could have developed a new story on the basis of the old. It is quite possible that sayings or deeds attributed in the gospels to Jesus originally were spoken or performed by another (perhaps a disciple) and only later attached to the master (a similar case can be made that King David did not kill Goliath [1 Samuel 17]; the Philistine was killed by the soldier Elkhanaan [2 Samuel 21:19; cf. 1 Chronicles 20:5], but the story later became attached to the commander in chief). Attributing to religious leaders additional material is by no means uncommon.

Just as source criticism marked the Old Quest period and form criticism the No Quest phase, so redaction criticism grew in prominence in the decades following World War II. Already the form critics had noted that the Evangelists compiled individual *pericopae* into a narrative of Jesus’ life. Redaction criticism turns to the Evangelist, the “redactor” (editor), first to distinguish between “redaction” (the author’s contribution) and “tradition” (what the author received in either oral or written form). This approach would soon give rise to more literary forms of interpretation, wherein the Evangelists or “redactors” were acknowledged as artists and theologians rather than mere copyists. For example, Mark was seen to stress a “suffering Messiah”; Matthew presented a new Moses characterized by teaching; Luke offered the “champion of the poor”; and John’s Christology, the highest of the canonical Gospels, featured a “man from heaven” and “incarnate *Logos*.”

In the later decades of the twentieth century, historical Jesus studies shifted from its basis in Germany to Great Britain and then to the United States and Canada, and as it moved, so too did its sources. The Quest already had made occasional references to Philo of Alexandria and Josephus, as well as to the collection of so-called Rabbinic parallels from the somewhat tendentious *Commentary* by Hermann Strack and Paul Billerbeck (Strack was the famous scholar whose name appears first on the title page; Billerbeck was a pastor who did most of the work). From the Christian side, the Church Fathers offered a few citations of documents no longer extant, such as the *Gospel of Thomas*.

The publication of two sets of documents changed, if not the pictures of Jesus already available in the scholarly literature, at least the bibliographies of the biographies. Discovered first in 1947, with documents still continuing to surface, the Dead Sea Scrolls provided insight into an apocalyptic, eschatological Judaism disaffected from the Temple. In 1945, a cache of Coptic documents was found at Nag Hammadi in Egypt; these provided copies of many of the texts known only from Patristic citation as well as possible candidates, such as the Gospels of Thomas, Peter, and Mary, for the criterion of *multiple attestation*. For example, is

the kingdom of heaven “like yeast that a woman took” (Matthew 13:33) or “like a woman who took yeast” (*Gospel of Thomas* 96)?

Lack of methodological security continued. Concerning the canon, scholars still typically privilege the Synoptics over John for historical reconstruction, but they do not explain why. Q and *Thomas*—a hypothetical document and a text that may be second-century—are sometimes seen as closer to the historical Jesus than the canonical Gospels. The less skeptical contingent finds this approach to strain credibility; the more skeptical replies that the privileging of the canon is based on religious interests, not historical evidence. Complicating any reconstruction is the lack of autographs: we have no originals of the Gospels. The earliest manuscripts of the full canonical Gospels date to the third century (ca. 200). There are approximately fifty-four hundred copies of all or parts of the Greek New Testament (copies of translations add substantially more to the total) dating from the early second century (a few fragments) to the invention of the printing press in the fifteenth century and even following that time. Moreover, save for a very few fragments, these thousands of texts are not in full agreement.

Although no new major sources have been discovered in the past quarter century, today's Quest has not failed to introduce new methods into the discussion and new categories by which to understand Jesus. The study of the historical Jesus is now accompanied by greater attention to social modeling: comparative peasant economies, scribal communities, millenarian movements, studies of shamans and folk healings, psychobiography, cultural anthropology, political theory, and the like have all been adduced to provide the context for understanding the Gospel accounts. Archaeology, especially the archaeology of the lower Galilee, also stakes a claim to direct relevance, although finding an artifact and determining its import for understanding Jesus remain quite distinct.

- Jesus has been described as a Jewish reformer seeking to prepare his people for the inbreaking of the kingdom of heaven. This is the Jesus who “makes a fence” (the expression is Rabbinic [*Pirke Avot* 1:1]) about the law to prevent transgression: rather than forbid murder, Jesus forbids hate (Matthew 5:21–22). Rather than forbid adultery, he forbids lust. This Jesus insists “not one jot or stroke of the Law will pass away” (Matthew 5:17–18).
- Conversely, there is Jesus the antinomian who “declared all foods clean” (Mark 7:18–20) and dismissed Temple and Torah as antiquated and irrelevant.
- Jesus the Cynic-like philosopher teaches a subversive wisdom and so calls into question the status quo. To those concerned with social propriety, Jesus proffers the image of the lilies of the field. To those occupied by the cares of tomorrow, he asserts, “the cares of today are sufficient” (Matthew 6:34; F. Gerald Downing's study offers numerous citations of Cynic statements with what he finds to be Gospel equivalents).
- Jesus the apocalyptic eschatological proclaimer divides the world into the saved and the damned, the “sheep and the goats” (Matthew 25), as he awaits what some Jews called “the world to come,” for his “kingdom is not of this world” (John 18:36).

- Jesus the Rabbi cares about Torah, wears *tzitzit* (fringes) according to the commandment in Numbers 15:37–41, celebrates the Sabbath, and worships in synagogues as well as the Temple.
- Jesus the universalist preaches his Gospel to Samaritans (John 4) and Gentiles (the feeding of the four thousand [Mark 8, Matthew 15]).
- Jesus the nationalist restricts his mission to “the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Matthew 10:6; 15:24).
- Jesus the charismatic wonder-worker in the mold of Elijah (see 1 Kings 17–19, 21; 2 Kings 1–2) and Elisha (see 2 Kings 2–6, 8–9, 13) and comparable to the Jewish figures Haninah ben Dosa and Honi the Circle-Maker heals and controls nature.
- Jesus the magician uses spells and incantations to facilitate cures (Mark 5:41; 7:33–34).
- Jesus the social reformer seeks to inaugurate the economic justice envisioned by the Prophets and the year of Jubilee (Leviticus 25:8–55) by teaching his followers to pray, “Forgive us our debts, as we forgive those who are indebted to us” (Matthew 6:12) and insisting, “Give when you are asked” (Matthew 5:42).
- Jesus the celibate hails those who have “made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 19:10–12) and promotes a new family based on loyalty to him/to God and not on biological or marital connections. This Jesus echoes the prophet Micah (7:6) by announcing, “Do not think I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have come not to bring peace, but to bring a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law” (Matthew 10:34–35).
- Jesus the affirmer of family values reminds his followers, “For God said, ‘Honor your father and mother,’ and ‘whoever speaks evil of father and mother must surely die’” (Matthew 15:4); he teaches, “Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her, and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery” (Mark 10:11–12).
- Jesus the mystic claims esoteric knowledge (see Mark 4:11–12), sees Satan fall like lightning (Luke 10:18), and proclaims himself the “true vine” (John 15) and the “bread of life” (John 6).
- Jesus the near hedonist takes and teaches pleasure in food and companionship; this “glutton and the drunkard” (Luke 7:34) does not fast, and enjoys a woman’s kiss and touch (Luke 7:36–50).
- Jesus the pacifist advises that “if someone strike you on the right cheek, turn the other also” (Matthew 5:39).
- Jesus the revolutionary has a Zealot in his entourage (Luke 6:15) and advises followers to buy swords (Luke 22:35–38).
- Jesus the nonviolent resister teaches, “If a man in authority makes you go one mile, go with him two” (Matthew 5:41; the reference is likely to the Roman custom of conscripting locals to carry their gear, but only for one mile; to carry the accoutrements of the enemy willingly signals the refusal to be victimized), and “If a man wants to sue you for your shift, let him have your coat as well” (and so literally lay bare the injustice of taking a poor person’s clothing [Matthew 5:40]).

And the list goes on.

Whatever model provides the heuristic for understanding Jesus, recourse to primary sources in their historical context is essential. For all readers of the New Testament generally are aware that the texts did not take shape in a vacuum. Understanding of the history of the period is often meager at best (some New Testament textbooks dedicate a few pages in an introductory chapter to “Jewish history” and “Greco-Roman history” and then generally ignore the historical context in discussion of the canonical documents). Thus, before turning to an overview of the primary sources presented in this volume, we first explore the historical context of Jesus and that of his early followers.

The Historical Context

Judaism and Christianity (as well as Islam) are called “historical” religions because they ground their story in the manifestation of their God in time. At a particular historical moment, God appeared to Moses and through him established a covenant with the people Israel. Jesus of Nazareth, the “incarnation” (literally, “enfleshment”) of divinity (so John 1), “suffered under Pontius Pilate” (the Apostles’ Creed) or, as the Nicene Creed proclaims, “was crucified under Pontius Pilate.” Consequently, to understand the life of the Jew Jesus and the development of accounts concerning him, one must understand the historical contexts in which he and his earliest followers lived. This context is one of cultural struggle and colonial power, regional practice and imperial standards, religious debate and cultic competition.

The background for understanding Jesus begins with what the church would eventually call the “Old Testament” and Jews the *Tanakh*, an acronym for Torah, or Pentateuch; *Nevi'im* or Prophets; and *Ketuv'im* or Writings. Jesus and his contemporaries would have been familiar with the stories of Adam and Eve, Abraham and Moses, David and Solomon. They would have known of the prophets such as Isaiah and Jeremiah, Jonah and Daniel. Moreover, these texts would not have been seen simply as records of past events; rather, the Scriptures were seen as speaking to them in their own time (as the Dead Sea Scrolls make explicit and as Luke has Jesus himself state, “Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing” [Luke 4:21]).

Jesus and his fellow first-century Jews were also heirs to Greek and Roman thought. Galilee and Judea, like the rest of the Middle East, became part of the empire established by Alexander the Great. In 333 BCE, Alexander defeated the Persian empire, and the lands where Jews lived, both the Diaspora (literally, “dispersion”; any place outside of the Land of Israel where Jews could be found) and Israel itself, became permeated with Greek ideas.

Through the synthesis of indigenous and Greek cultures arose “Hellenism,” and it is within the matrix of Hellenism that Jewish life developed. A modern example of such penetration would be the presence of American terms (such as Coca-Cola and ATM) in the vocabularies of most languages today.

In Judea and Galilee, Aramaic remained the vernacular; Hebrew was the language of scripture and liturgy. Yet even within these regions, Greek knowledge continued to increase. By the first century CE, Justin of Tiberius and Josephus from Judea are writing in Greek. In the Diaspora, the Scriptures were translated into Greek (the translation is the Septuagint), and it would be the Greek translation that became the sacred text of the church whose own canon, the New Testament, was written entirely in Greek.

Politically, Judea (the former Persian province of Yehud) was not substantially affected by the transfer of power from Persia to Greece. Taxes continued to be paid; worship in the Jerusalem Temple continued; the sacred texts of the people continued to be copied. During the early years of this cultural synthesis, Jews also continued to produce literature. Canonical today for Roman Catholics, Anglicans, and Eastern Orthodox churches are the Deuterocanonical texts or the Old Testament Apocrypha: books preserved in and in some cases originally written in Greek.

On the international scene, following Alexander's death in 323, Judea passed from one government to another. First, it fell under the control of Alexander's general Ptolemy, who held authority over Egypt. In 190, at the Battle of Paneas, Judea passed into the control of the Seleucids, the family of another of Alexander's generals, this one whose base was in Syria. Hellenization continued, such that by the 170s, many among the upper class in Jerusalem were seeking education in Greek philosophy, participating in Greek sport, and questioning those practices and beliefs of Judaism—circumcision, condemnation of “idolatry,” dietary regulations, and so forth—that made Jews a distinct nation within the wider Greek empire. By the 170s, we find high priests with such Greek names as Jason and Menelaus.

This cultural crisis came to a head when the high priests worked with the Seleucid ruler, Antiochus IV Epiphanes, to bring Judea and its Jews fully into imperial culture. The events, recorded by Josephus as well as in the Deuterocanonical volumes of 1 and 2 Maccabees and hinted at in several of the documents associated with the community at Qumran, attest to religious and cultural as well as political struggle. Antiochus arranged for the succession of one of the assimilationists, Jason, to the high priesthood and so replaced the legitimate priest, Onias III.

Meanwhile, in Jerusalem, Antiochus and his local affiliates banned circumcision and sacrificed a pig on the altar of the Jerusalem Temple. According to 1 Maccabees 1:60–61, babies found to have been circumcised were killed and then tied to the necks of their mothers as a sign to all of the fate of those who insisted on practicing their tradition. Leading the revolt against this system was a family from Modein: a local priest named Eliezar, son of Hasmon, and his sons. Under the leadership of one son, Judah, called “Maccabee” or “Hammerer,” these Hasmonians or Maccabees through guerrilla warfare in 165 defeated the Syrian army, rededicated the Temple (“rededication” is, in Hebrew, “Hannukah,” and hence the origin of the holiday mentioned in John 5 and still celebrated by Jews today), and took over the government. Shortly thereafter, they also took over the priest-

hood, a move that caused additional disaffection among several Jewish groups. Likely at this point, a group of Jews led by the “Teacher of Righteousness” (or Righteous Teacher) rejected both the Temple and Jerusalem. Eventually settling at Qumran, by the Dead Sea, they produced their own scriptures as they waited for the redemption of Israel.

The Hasmoneans reigned for the next one hundred years. Consolidating their power, they engaged in expansionist practices that included the annexation of territories both north and south of Jerusalem. By the end of the reign of Alexander Jannaeus (107–76), the borders of Israel were more-or-less equivalent to the territories associated with King David: from Dan (upper Galilee) in the north to Beersheva (the Negev) in the south. Local populations were given the choice: circumcision or death; most chose the former option, including the Idumaeans and Ituraeans. Relations with the Samaritan population to the north, which were never smooth, worsened when Alexander Jannaeus burned their temple on Mount Gerizim (see John 4).

Josephus, our first-century historian, locates during the Hasmonean period the origin of the three major Jewish groups (he calls them *haireseis*, meaning “parties” or “sects”) often mentioned in New Testament introductions. In the context of the high priesthood of Jonathan, circa 145, he notes that there arose three groups “which held different opinions concerning human affairs; the first being that of the Pharisees, the second that of the Sadducees, and the third that of the Essenes. As for the Pharisees, they say that certain events are the work of fate, but not all; as to other events it depends upon ourselves whether they shall take place or not. The sect of Essenes, however, declares that Fate is the mistress of all things, and that nothing befalls people unless in accordance with her decree. But the Sadducees do away with Fate, holding that there is no such thing and that human actions are not achieved in accordance with her decree, but that all things lie within our own power” (*Ant.* 13.171–73). The impact of Hellenism is epitomized by the descriptions, for Josephus has presented the Jewish groups as philosophical schools; he will later compare Pharisees to Stoics (*Life* 12), Essenes to Pythagoreans (*Ant.* 13.171–73), and (implicitly) Sadducees to Epicureans.

The New Testament does not mention the Essenes; whether this group should be associated with the Dead Sea Scrolls and so the group that followed the Righteous Teacher remains, although usually accepted, still not demonstrated by the scrolls themselves. The scrolls do mention a “wicked priest” (1QpHab), an illegitimate figure presiding in the Temple: Jonathan (ca. 152 BCE) as well as his brother Simon (ca. 143/142 BCE) are both plausible candidates. Whereas Josephus indicates that the Essenes lived in groups throughout Judea, Pliny the Elder and Dio Crysostom locate their community by the Dead Sea. Both views may be correct. The document known as the Rule of the Community (1QS; the number indicates which of the fourteen caves in which the scroll was found; Q stands for Qumran, and the S stands for *Serek ha-yachad*, Hebrew for “Rule of the Community”) notes that the community was composed of celibate men, but the Cairo-Damascus Document (CD), a text that surfaced earlier than the finds at the Dead Sea but that is

clearly associated with the people who composed the scrolls (as we see with the 4QDamascus Document Fragments and other remains), mentions married members with children. Archaeological investigation indicates that the Qumran community itself was inhabited from approximately 140 BCE until 68 CE, when it was overrun by the Roman Legion 10 Fratensis and turned into army barracks.

The Gospels mention the Sadducees in the context of the Passion narrative, and Sadducees are oddly grouped with Pharisees as coming to John the Baptist. The Gospels as well as Acts confirm the Sadducees' lack of belief in the Resurrection.

Jesus is more often portrayed as in confrontation with the Pharisees. Josephus, the Gospels, Paul (see Philippians 3), and the Rabbinic sources can be correlated to provide at least a partial reconstruction of Pharisaic beliefs, such as their "handing down to the people certain regulations from the ancestral succession and not recorded in the Laws of Moses" (*Ant.* 13; cf. *Pirke Avot* 1; Mark 7/Matthew 15). Although never explicitly identified as "Pharisees" in the early Rabbinic documents, Hillel and Shammai are typically seen as representing diverse forms of Pharisaic thought. It is Hillel who is recorded as responding, when asked to summarize the Law while standing on one foot, "What is hateful to you, to not do to others. This is the whole Torah; the rest is commentary. Now go and learn" (*b. Shabbat* 31a). (Given the difficulties of using the various tendentious sources for reconstructing Pharisaic views, a "quest for the historical Pharisees" would be well in order.)

Hasmonean power began to crumble within a generation. Jannaeus was succeeded by his wife, Queen Salome Alexandra (Shlomzion or Shalom-Zion), who according to Josephus reigned with the support of the Pharisees. Her rule would mark the last independent Jewish state until 1948. Under her direction, the Sanhedrin shifted from being an entirely aristocratic organization to a more representative juridical body.

Upon the queen's death in 67 BCE, her two sons, Aristobulus and Hyrcanus II, vied for power. Aristobulus garnered Sadducaic support and so returned to power the group that previously held influence in the court of Jannaeus. Meanwhile, his older brother, Hyrcanus II, not only the heir apparent but also the high priest, attempted to consolidate his own support base. Following a battle between the two forces, Hyrcanus eventually surrendered, and Aristobulus took the throne as well as, likely, the high priesthood.

Aided by, indeed, prompted by, several allies, including Antipater, the son of the Idumean governor appointed by Jannaeus, Hyrcanus made a second attempt at the throne. Both brothers, recognizing that support from outside was required for securing power, turned to Rome. And Rome was more than happy to gain one more holding in the Middle East. In 64 BCE, Pompey brought the former Seleucid territories, including Judea and Galilee, into Roman control. Solicited by both brothers, in 63 Pompey also was petitioned by representatives from the population of Jerusalem, who rather than being ruled by either Aristobulus or Hyrcanus, actually requested direct Roman rule. When Pompey delayed his decision in order to resolve a crisis concerning neighboring Nabatea, Aristobulus

attempted to seize power yet again, this time by occupying the fortress of Alexandria. Pompey then invaded Jerusalem, where Hyrcanus welcomed him by opening the city gates. Aristobulus held the Temple grounds for three months until Pompey finally defeated his forces. The Roman general himself secured the Temple and entered the inner sanctum, the Holy of Holies. The *Psalms of Solomon*, expressing one form of Jewish messianic hope, were written in the wake of Pompey's incursions.

Pompey took formal control over the remaining Hasmonean territories: Judea, Galilee, Idumea, and Perea. He did return Hyrcanus II to his high priestly duties, but the office was stripped of much of its political power. Local power was put instead into the hands of Hyrcanus's Idumean adviser, Antipater. During the war of the First Triumvirate, in 48, Hyrcanus sent troops to support Julius Caesar in Egypt. As a reward, Caesar appointed Hyrcanus "Ethnarch of the Jews," but the position was more symbolic than authoritative.

Antipater appointed his son Herod the governor of Jerusalem in 47, and Rome expanded Herod's rule to include Coele-Syria and Samaria. In 42, Marc Antony, who along with Octavian and Lapidus defeated Brutus and Cassius and so ended the old Republican system, appointed Herod tetrarch of Judea. In 40, Antigonus, the son of Aristobulus II, allied with the Parthians, attacked Judea, captured Hyrcanus (and, by cutting off his ears, prevented him from continuing to serve as high priest; cf. Leviticus 21:17), and gained the throne. The Roman Senate then appointed Herod king of Judea; Herod, with full Roman support, regained complete power in 37 and held it until his death, decades later, in 4 BCE. It was during the latter years of this reign that, according to Matthew's Gospel, Jesus was born.

This combination of local Herodian rule and imperial Roman control provides the context for Jesus' life. The instability in local politics that created shifts in power between Pharisees and Sadducees, the founding of the Qumran community, and the replacement of Hasmonean with Herodian control was mirrored on the international scene. In 36, Herod's patron Antony left his wife, Octavian's sister, and married Cleopatra of Egypt. Five years later, Octavian avenged his sister and gained his own complete power over Rome with his defeat of Antony at the Battle of Actium. Octavian gained the title "Augustus" ("exalted one"; see Luke 2:1) and during his rule (27 BCE–14 CE) presented himself as the people's savior who established (by military means) the Pax Romana, the "peace of Rome," upon all his territories. From 31 on, Herod securely held Judea and Galilee, and Augustus held the throne in Rome. The empire was at peace, and Herod turned his attention to domestic matters.

Herod's building projects changed the face of his territories. He rebuilt Samaria (called "Sebaste" in honor of Augustus), built the port of Caesarea, reinforced the Hasmonean building complex on Masada, and began renovations of the Jerusalem Temple, a project that was not completed until 64 CE during the reign of his great-grandson, Agrippa II. The Temple, whose importance to Judaism has been noted already in connection with the Maccabean revolt, remained central in Jewish thought. For some it was a site of pilgrimage (see Luke 2) and worship (see Acts

1); for others it was a corrupt institution that would eventually be replaced (so from the Dead Sea Scrolls, 11QTemple). Religiously, it was the point of contact between heaven and earth, the dwelling place of the universal God. Economically, it was the national bank. Politically, it represented the relationship between Rome and the Jews, for the high priest could serve only with Rome's approval, and from 6 CE on, following the exile of Herod's son Archelaus from Judea, Rome kept control of the high priestly vestments. The Temple served as the basis of power for the party of the Sadducees; the Pharisees adapted the holiness signified by the Temple altar to the domestic sphere, such that the home became also a locus of sanctity. Jesus' followers continued to worship there (so Acts), a point that complicates any understanding of his "cleansing" of the Temple (John 2, Mark 11, Luke 19, Matthew 21). Did he mean to renew it? Reform it? Predict its destruction? Proclaim its illegitimacy? Did he even engage in an action in the Temple, or did his condemnation of certain Temple practices metastacize through legendary development into a full-blown scene of disrupting Temple activities?

Upon Herod's death, his territory was divided among his three surviving sons; he had executed his others, along with his Hasmonean mother-in-law, her daughter and his beloved wife, Mariamme, and a good many other rivals, both actual and imagined. (Matthew's account of the "Slaughter of the Innocents" [Matthew 2:16–18], although not elsewhere attested and certainly following the story of Moses, is not inconsistent with Herod's increasingly erratic behavior.) One son, Archelaus, ruled Judea from 4 BCE until 6 CE, when he was replaced by direct Roman rule. At this point, Judea and Samaria fell under the jurisdiction of a series of prefects; notable among these is Pontius Pilate, who ruled from 26 to 36 CE.

Another son, Herod Antipas, ruled Galilee from 4 BCE until he was exiled by Caligula in 39 CE. Antipas continued such large-scale construction with the rebuilding of Sepphoris, just a few miles from Nazareth, and the establishment of the new capital city of Tiberias. These two cities—the largest centers of Galilee—are not mentioned in the pages of the New Testament, although their connection to Jesus remains a matter of much speculation. Perhaps Jesus, identified in Mark's Gospel (Mark 6:3; cf. Matthew 13:55) as a "builder" (*tektōn*, sometimes translated "carpenter"), found work in Sepphoris; perhaps he found in Galilee's growing urbanization a depletion of peasant resources and the consequent increase in the disparity between rich and poor, or perhaps the new cities created an economic boom for the local population. Antipas is mentioned in the Gospels for his execution of John the Baptist (Mark 6, Matthew 14, Luke 9; cf. Luke 3). Whether the execution was prompted by John's condemnation of Antipas's incestuous marriage to Herodias (so the Gospels), or whether Antipas had engaged in a preemptive strike against the popular teacher (so Josephus, *Ant.* 18:118–19), the execution does indicate that gathering crowds in Galilee, or speaking of alternative rules to that of Rome and its local representatives, was a very dangerous enterprise. The fates of other "prophets of deliverance" such as the Samaritan prophet who led a crowd to Mount Gerizim (he and his followers were massacred by Pontius Pilate) confirm this point. The Gospel of Luke mentions that Pilate, learning

