

HISTORICAL JESUS, QUEST OF

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The idea of the quest of the historical Jesus gained currency through Albert Schweitzer's *The Quest of the Historical Jesus: A Critical Study of its Progress from Reimarus to Wrede* (1910). Schweitzer's original German title *Von Reimarus zu Wrede. Eine Geschichte der Leben-Jesu-Forschung* [From Reimarus to Wrede. A History of Research into the Life of Jesus] (1906) suggested a history of biographical research. The English title bestowed added drama to Schweitzer's narrative of the numerous efforts from the late eighteenth century down to his own day to discover the truth about Jesus as he really was. It heightened the impression that scientific research showed that the Jesus of history was different from the Christ of Scripture, the creeds, orthodox theology and Christian piety.

The period covered by Schweitzer is commonly designated as the original quest of the historical Jesus. It is generally thought to have terminated with Schweitzer's own reconstruction of Jesus, the rise of form criticism and the growing popularity of neo-orthodoxy. In the 1950s followers of Rudolf Bultmann initiated what was called the New Quest of the historical Jesus. More recently, the term Third Quest has been coined to describe the renewed interest in Jesus in his historical context.

1. The Original Quest (1778–1906)
2. From the History of Religions School to the New Quest
3. The Third Quest
4. Conclusion

1. The Original Quest (1778–1906).

1.1. The Initial Phase in Germany. Schweitzer dated the quest from the publication in 1778 of an anonymous article, "On the Intention of Jesus and his Disciples." The article was taken from a manuscript by the Hamburg scholar Hermann Samuel Reimarus (1694–1768), whose *Apology or Defence of the Rational Worshippers of God* had been withheld from publication on account of its dangerous ideas. Among the circle permitted to see it was the dramatist Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1729–81). Between 1774 and 1778 Lessing published extracts under the title *Fragments from an Unnamed Author* which he had ostensibly found in the library of the Duke of Brunswick at Wolfenbüttel. The extracts came to be known as the *Wolfenbüttel Fragments*. Although accurate guesses were made at the time, confirmation of the author's identity came long after Reimarus's death.

The *Fragments* included an attack on the historicity of the resurrection narratives. But the notoriety of this article was surpassed by the fragment "On the Intention of Jesus and his Disciples" (ET *Reimarus Fragments*, ed. C. H. Talbert, 1970). Jesus was depicted as a pious Jew, dedicated to calling Israel to repentance in order to establish the kingdom of God on earth (*see* Kingdom of God). He did not intend to introduce new teaching or ceremonies. As time went on Jesus became more fanatical, obsessed by the idea that he could force God's hand by dying a martyr's death (*see* Death of Jesus). However, he miscalculated popular support, and his beliefs about God proved to be misguided. He died disillusioned with the God who had forsaken him.

Christianity might well have ended then but for the ingenuity and duplicity of the disciples. When it became clear that there would be no general persecution, they emerged from hiding, proclaiming that Jesus had been raised from the dead and would return to establish the promised kingdom. Eschatology was thus the key to understanding both Jesus and the disciples, but in both cases it is mistaken. Jesus wrongly believed that God would establish his kingdom on earth through him; the disciples were guilty of encouraging false expectations of the coming kingdom.

The *Wolfenbüttel Fragments* provoked numerous replies. The weightiest came from the leading biblical scholar of the day and founder of "liberal theology," J. S. Semler (1725–91). Semler's *Answer to the Fragments* (1791) was virtually a line-by-line refutation, written from the standpoint of a moderate orthodoxy. In the meantime, Lessing protested that, while he did not fully agree with the *Fragments*, they nevertheless raised important questions. His standpoint expressed the Age of Enlightenment's confidence in reason, and sought to detach religion from history by claiming that nothing in history could be demonstrated beyond doubt. "If no historical truth can be demonstrated, then nothing can be demonstrated by means of historical truths. That is: accidental truths of history can never become the proof of necessary truths of reason" (*On the Proof of the Spirit and of Power*, 1777, in H. Chadwick, ed., *Lessing's Theological Writings*, 1956, 53). History might exemplify rational truth, but such truth was not dependent on history. To Lessing, Jesus was one of the great educators of the human race, being "the first reliable, practical teacher of the immortality of the soul" (*The Education of the Human Race*, 1780, #58, Chadwick, 92).

1.2. German Lives of Jesus. The latter part of the eighteenth century witnessed a growing number of accounts of the life of Jesus. The more conservative accounts were meditations and paraphrases of the Gospel stories, like J. J. Hess's popular three volumes on *The History of the Three Last Years of the Life of Jesus* (1768–72). Such works were the literary counterpart to the combination of text and meditation set to music by J. S. Bach (1685–1750) in his *Passions* according to St. Matthew and St. John. A work which stressed the moral aspect of Jesus' teaching was the *Essay on the Plan Developed by the Founder of Christianity for the Benefit of Humanity* (1781) by the court preacher, F. V. Reinhard.

K. F. Bahrdt's series of letters addressed to seekers of truth on *The Execution of the Plan and Purpose of Jesus* (1784–92) introduced the genre of fictitious reconstruction. Bahrdt depicted Jesus as a tool in an Essene plot to transform Jewish society. He had acquired remedies for eye infections and nervous disorders from a mysterious Persian. The crucifixion was rigged by Nicodemus who had enlisted the aid of Luke to give Jesus pain-killing drugs. Jesus duly appeared in public to convince people that he had risen from the dead. Another work in this genre was K. H. Venturini's *Natural History of the Great Prophet of Nazareth* (1800–2).

The first professor to lecture on the life of Jesus was Friedrich D. E. Schleiermacher (1768–1834). His lectures on *The Life of Jesus* (1819–20) were subsequently repeated and published posthumously in 1864 (ET ed. J. C. Verheyden, 1975). Schleiermacher regarded John's Gospel as a historical outline into which could be inserted material from the other Gospels. He reinterpreted Jesus in the light of his own philosophical theology which was based on his analysis of religious experience. The essence of religious experience was a sense of utter dependence on God. Jesus was a man in whom this sense of dependence was uniquely developed. His consciousness of God could be said to be an existence of God in human nature (*The Christian Faith*, 2d ed. 1830–31, §94, ET 1928). It was also the source of Jesus' redemptive power. In Schleiermacher's theology Jesus'

unique awareness of God replaced the traditional doctrine of Christ's divine and human natures.

While Schleiermacher sought to give a rationally credible account of Jesus' person, other scholars attempted rational explanations of his actions. In *The Life of Jesus as the Basis for a Pure History of Early Christianity* (1828) H. E. G. Paulus insisted that what was truly miraculous about Jesus was his holy disposition. Individual miracle stories (see *Miracles and Miracle Stories*) were capable of rational explanation. Jesus did not walk upon the water, but was standing on the shore. The five thousand were fed by those who had brought ample provisions. Jesus was taken down from the cross before death and revived in the cool of the tomb. Stripping off the grave clothes, he found the gardener's things, which explained the failure of Mary Magdalene to recognize him. A more restrained rationalism was adopted by K. A. von Hase in his widely used textbook on *The Life of Jesus* (1828). Like Schleiermacher he accepted John as the historical foundation of his chronology. The miracles were not violations of the laws of nature, but manifestations of the recovery of nature's original harmony. He doubted the infancy stories, but sought rational, psychological explanations for other events.

1.3. Strauss and the Question of Myth. The approaches noted so far were rejected by David Friedrich Strauss (1808–74) in *The Life of Jesus Critically Examined* (1835–36; ET 1846, repr. ed., Peter C. Hodgson, 1973). Strauss's work was prompted by reading notes based on Schleiermacher's lectures on *The Life of Jesus*. When the latter was published years later, Strauss subjected them to a bitter critique in *The Christ of Faith and the Jesus of History* (1865; ET ed. L. E. Keck, 1977). Strauss denounced Schleiermacher as a supernaturalist in his christology, but in criticism and exegesis a rationalist.

Strauss repudiated both the supernaturalism of orthodoxy and the attempts of the rationalists to salvage the underlying historicity of events by proffering rational explanations. Both had failed to take into account the myth-making tendencies in religion which had been at work in the Gospel stories long before they were put into writing (see *Myth*).

Strauss accepted a basic historical framework for the life of Jesus: he had grown up at Nazareth; he was baptized by John the Baptist; he collected disciples, he went about teaching, opposing Pharisaism and summoning people to the messianic kingdom; he fell victim to the hostility of the Pharisees and died on the cross. However, this outline was overlaid by the creative imagination of the early church which interpreted these events as the fulfillment of prophecy, and of the beliefs and institutions of the OT (see *Old Testament in the Gospels; Typology*). Messianic expectation predetermined that the Messiah should perform miracles and act like a new Moses and a Davidic king (see *Son of David*). Once Jesus acquired the reputation of being the Messiah (see *Christ*), popular belief created myths and legends about him. The historical Jesus was thus turned into the divine Messiah by the pious, but erroneous, devotion of the church.

At the end of his work Strauss sought to rescue the underlying truth of the Christian faith by appealing to the philosophy of Hegel who had taught that reality is the manifestation of the infinite Spirit in the finite. Christianity was a symbolic representation of the general truth concerning the transformation of life by the absolute Spirit. The Incarnation was the mythological symbol of the divine manifestation in human kind in general.

Strauss's work provoked great outcry. Within five years some sixty replies appeared. A widely respected conservative response was August Neander's *Life of Jesus Christ* (1837; ET 1851). Strauss published three series of replies to his critics and made

revisions to his work. But the radical character of his position cost him his academic career, and he turned to literature and politics. In 1864 Strauss published *The Life of Jesus Adapted for the German People* (ET 1865). It was prompted by the popularity of J. E. Renan's *Life of Jesus* (1863) in French. Strauss's second *Life* retained his earlier mythical explanation but dropped the appeal to Hegelian philosophy. The desupernaturalized Jesus depicted by Strauss emerged as one of the great improvers of the ideal of humanity.

Strauss's methods pioneered those of more recent times. His emphasis on the role of myth in religion anticipated the History of Religions School, and his view of the preliterary formation of Gospel material anticipated form criticism (see 2.3. below). However, his underlying approach was if anything more rationalistic than that of the rationalists whom he repudiated. For the latter were willing to give some credence to the events for which they sought rational explanations, whereas Strauss rejected their historicity altogether. Strauss and the rationalists shared an underlying conviction that the homogeneous character of historical causes precluded special, supernatural interventions.

1.4. The Synoptics Versus John. The term "Synoptic Gospel" goes back to J. J. Griesbach's *Synopsis of the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke* (1776) which set out the text of the three Gospels in parallel columns, thus facilitating comparative, critical study of the first three Gospels. Up to this date scholars had widely accepted Augustine's view that the first Gospel was the work of the apostle Matthew, and that Mark abbreviated Matthew. Griesbach himself accepted this view, with the modification that Mark had also Luke before him. Griesbach also questioned the wisdom of trying to produce a harmony of the accounts on the grounds that the Evangelists themselves were not interested in strict chronology.

The priority of Matthew was widely accepted in the early nineteenth century. Among those who did so was Ferdinand Christian Baur (1792–1860), who had been one of Strauss's teachers and who emerged as the leader of the new Tübingen School. Baur insisted upon a purely historical approach which avoided supernatural explanations. For him the key to NT study was tendency criticism, which sought to identify and evaluate sources by discovering their basic tendencies. Baur believed that Matthew was the earliest Gospel on account of its Jewish character. Luke was written by a follower of Paul with the deliberate intention of softening Matthew's Jewishness. Mark's aim was to round off the Gospel story into a harmonious whole. John reflected the conflict with Gnosticism and the church's situation in the second century. It contained a docetic tendency which stressed the Spirit at the expense of the flesh. Historically, John was remote from the time of Jesus. But since Matthew was written c. A.D. 130, it was only relatively more historically reliable. Baur's view of Jesus was akin to that of Schleiermacher. Jesus had a unique consciousness of God. As the highest emissary of God, he mediates divine knowledge.

The Tübingen School enjoyed great notoriety, but membership was limited to Baur himself and a handful of disciples. Their views were too extreme for most scholars. In the meantime, the traditional view of the priority of Matthew began to be overturned. The year which saw the appearance of Strauss's *Life of Jesus Critically Examined* (1835) also witnessed the publication of an article by Karl Lachmann, "On the Order of Narratives in the Synoptic Gospels." Lachmann's article was the first to treat seriously the order of events as the key to understanding Synoptic relationships. Lachmann saw Mark as the middle term between Matthew and Luke. His work led to the growing popularity of the view that Matthew and Luke were dependent on Mark for their account

of events. This view was supplemented by the theory of Q, developed by H. J. Holtzmann (1832–1910). Q (German *Quelle* = “source”) was the designation given to the sayings source posited behind the teaching contained in Matthew and Luke, but generally omitted by Mark who gives relatively little of Jesus’ teaching (*see* Synoptic Problem).

By the end of the nineteenth century the traditional views of the apostolic authorship and priority of Matthew and the apostolic authorship of John, together with the latter’s reliable chronological framework, were largely replaced by a view which discounted the historicity of John and favored a two-source theory (Mark and Q) as the substratum for recovering the historical Jesus (*see* Synoptics and John). This tendency was linked with the further tendency to discount the miraculous and supernatural. The result was a portrait of Jesus which followed Mark’s general outline but focused on his moral, altruistic teaching.

1.5. French and British Lives of Jesus. Such a view of Jesus had already been developed in France by the former Catholic seminarian J. E. Renan (1823–92). In 1862 Renan was suspended from his chair at the Collège de France for describing Jesus as such an incomparable human that he would not contradict those who called him God. Renan had already completed the draft of a biography while on an archaeological expedition. Inspired by the scenery of the Holy Land, Renan resolved to write a life of Jesus. His account eschewed critical discussion of sources and method, seeking instead to retell the Gospel stories in a way that was credible to the modern French reader. Renan added imaginative splashes of local color to the scenes which he described and wrote with the calm assurance of a man who had got to the bottom of things. What made Jesus the Son of God was his realization that true worship did not depend upon places and ritual but upon spirit (*see* Holy Spirit) and truth (Jn 4:23). What made him unique was his dedication to the Father and to his divine mission.

Renan’s work enjoyed great popularity and was translated into most European languages. In the preface to the thirteenth edition Renan explained his underlying philosophy and aims. He complained that the Christ of Strauss, Baur and the German critics was like a Gnostic Christ, an impalpable, intangible creation of their philosophy. He claimed that his own Christ was rooted in “genuine history.” His method was to follow closely the original narratives, discard impossibilities, sow everywhere the seeds of doubt and put forth as conjectural different ways in which events might have happened.

The Strasbourg Protestant scholar T. Colani complained that Renan’s Christ was not the Jesus of history, but that of the Fourth Gospel without a metaphysical halo. Colani set out his own views in *Jesus Christ and the Messianic Beliefs of his Time* (1864). Colani believed that there was no connection between the historical Jesus and Jewish messianic beliefs. The eschatological teaching attributed to Jesus in the Gospels (Mt 24; Mk 13; Lk 17) was not authentic. Jesus had predicted the destruction of the Temple, and the disciples had asked when it would occur (Mt 24:3; Mk 13:4; Lk 21:7). Jesus replied that he did not know (Mt 24:36; Mk 13:32; Lk 21:33). The so-called little Apocalypse that comes between the question and answer was the work of over-zealous eschatologically minded Jewish Christians who could not accept Jesus’ confession of ignorance (*see* Apocalyptic Teaching). German and French thought made an impact on the English-speaking world through the translations of Strauss and Renan and also of more conservative scholars. In comparison with the German and French scholars, British scholarship was more modest and restrained. An exception was Charles Christian Hennell’s *Inquiry Concerning the Origin of Christianity* (1838), whose ideas were

similar to those of Strauss, but were eclipsed by the latter. Hennell was instrumental in introducing George Eliot (Mary Ann Evans) to skeptical views and arranged for her to translate Strauss into English.

Somewhere between the skeptical products of continental criticism and the conservative, devotional works which appealed to the British Christian reader ship was the anonymous *Ecce Homo* (1865). The title was taken from the Latin version of Pilate’s words “Behold the Man” (Jn 19:5). The author was J. R. Seeley, professor of Latin at University College, London, and later professor of modern history at Cambridge. The work was not so much a life of Jesus as an appreciation which downplayed the miraculous and the dogmatic. The power of Jesus lay in his ability to infect people with an enthusiasm for morality. Jesus stood in sharp contrast with Socrates with whom argument is everything and personal authority nothing. With Jesus personal authority was everything (*see* Authority and Power). His aim was to establish a divine society on earth, or in the language of Seeley’s day, “the improvement of morality” (chap. 9).

The first major Life of Christ by a British writer was that by F. W. Farrar (1874) which set the model for the rest of the century. Like Renan’s work, it was inspired by a visit to the Holy Land and was filled with imaginative descriptions of places and events. But unlike Renan, Farrar did not tamper with orthodoxy. Jesus was both the divine Son of God (*see* Son of God) and a flesh-and-blood human personality.

The most notable British “life” was Alfred Edersheim’s *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* (1883). Edersheim was born in Vienna of Jewish parents and studied in Berlin. He became a convert to Christianity and spent his last years in England as vicar of a country parish. Edersheim avoided critical discussion of sources and took the Gospel narratives at face value. Matthew and John were the work of the apostles whose names they bear. Luke and Mark had access to apostolic testimony to supplement their own reminiscences. Edersheim accepted duplicate events behind duplicate traditions: there were two cleansings of the Temple (*see* Temple Cleansing), two feedings of the multitudes, numerous journeys to and from Jerusalem, and no conflict between John and the Synoptics. The value of Edersheim’s work lay in its author’s immense erudition. No other British (and perhaps no continental) scholar had such a grasp of the Jewish world, the Talmud (*see* Rabbinic Traditions and Writings), Philo, Josephus, the apocryphal and pseudepigraphal literature, archeology and geography (*see* Archeology and Geography). Whereas Farrar resorted to florid prose for his effect, Edersheim was able to elucidate the details of the Gospel stories with a wealth of exact learning.

The contributions of the Cambridge trio of B. F. Westcott (1825–1901), J. B. Lightfoot (1828–89) and F. J. A. Hort (1828–92) helped to vindicate the NT against continental radicalism. However, their grand plan for a series of commentaries covering the NT was only partially realized. Westcott’s commentary on John (1881) defended apostolic authorship and the historical integrity of the Gospel. The commentaries on the Synoptics remained unwritten.

The leading British NT scholars of the next generation were the brilliant but unconventional F. C. Burkitt (1864–1935) at Cambridge and William Sanday (1843–1920) at Oxford. Both were instrumental in disseminating the views of Schweitzer and modern critics. Burkitt’s contributions included *The Gospel History and its Transmission* (1906) and *Christian Beginnings* (1924). Sanday never completed his projected life of Christ, but left behind a number of important studies. His seminar produced *Oxford Studies in the Synoptic Problem* (1911). His article in *Hastings’ Dictionary of the Bible* was published in book form as *Outlines of the Life of Christ* (1905). Sanday gathered together various papers in *The Life of Christ in Recent*

Research (1907) and developed a tentative christology in *Christologies Ancient and Modern* (1910), which was reprinted in *Christology and Personality* (1911). Drawing on William James's theories about the unconscious, Sanday suggested that the locus of divine indwelling in human beings was the "subliminal." Consciousness was the "narrow neck" through which everything comes up from the depths. While Jesus was fully human in every sense, he had a deep relationship with God in the depths of his being. It was this relationship which produced his messianic consciousness as Son of God.

1.6. The Ritschlian School. A major theological force in the second half of the nineteenth century was the school of A. B. Ritschl (1822–89). In his younger days Ritschl had followed his mentor, F. C. Baur, but came to reject the latter's account of Christian origins. Ritschl's theological outlook matched the empirical emphasis of the University of Göttingen, where he taught. The university was a center of scientific research. The focus of Ritschl's attention was the empirically observable experience of the church. The origin of the person of Jesus was not a fit subject for theological inquiry, because it transcended all inquiry. His divinity was not to be understood as a statement of fact but as an expression of the revelational value of Jesus to the church. His vocation was to be the bearer of God's ethical lordship (*see* Lord) over human beings. Ritschl's major work on *The Christian Doctrine of Justification and Reconciliation* (3 vols., 1870–74; partial ET 1900) identified two focal points in Christianity. The first was the redemption wrought by Christ, understood as freedom from guilt and freedom over the world through the realization of God's fatherhood. The second was the kingdom of God, understood ethically (*see* Ethics of Jesus) as the extension of God's ethical lordship over the world through the redeemed.

The ethical side of Christianity was stressed by the great church historian Adolf Harnack (1851–1930), who shared Ritschl's suspicion of the adverse effects of metaphysics on theology. As a historian of the development of dogma, Harnack sought to separate the kernel from the husk by extracting the essence of Christianity from the Hellenized formulations of the church. In his celebrated lectures at Berlin University on "The Essence of Christianity" (1899–1900; ET *What Is Christianity?* [1901]), Harnack argued that Jesus desired no other belief in his person than what was contained in keeping his commandments. His consciousness as Son of God was nothing but the practical consequence of knowing God as the divine Father. Jesus' teaching could be summed up under three heads: the kingdom of God and its coming; God the Father and the infinite value of the human soul; the higher righteousness (*see* Justice and Righteousness) and the commandment of love. In *The Sayings of Jesus* (ET 1908) Harnack declared that Q expressed most clearly the teaching of Jesus and the essence of Christianity. Q provided the refutation of those who exaggerated the apocalyptic and eschatological elements in Jesus' teaching.

Harnack's celebrated lectures prompted the comment of the French Catholic modernist Alfred Loisy, which was repeated by George Tyrrell in *Christianity at the Cross-Roads* (1909, chap. 7): "The Christ that Harnack sees, looking back through nineteen centuries of Catholic darkness, is only the reflection of a Liberal Protestant face, seen at the bottom of a deep well." However, Loisy's alternative was scarcely more acceptable to the Catholic authorities. In identifying the essence of Christianity with the "idea" of Christ in Catholic Christianity, Loisy was implicitly questioning the historical basis of that idea. Modernism was condemned by the decree *Lamentabili* and the encyclical *Pascendi* (1907), and an oath against Modernism was imposed by *Sacrorum Antistitium* (1910).

1.7. Weiss, Wrede, Schweitzer and the End of the Original Quest. Despite Harnack's prestige and popularity, signs of strain were already evident in the edifice of Ritschlian theology. In 1892 Ritschl's son-in-law, Johannes Weiss (1863–1914), published *Jesus' Proclamation of the Kingdom of God* (2d ed. 1900; ET ed. R. H. Hiers and D. L. Holland, 1971). Weiss's personal outlook was much the same as that of his father-in-law, in deference to whom he delayed publication of his findings. However, his research showed that, though it might be unacceptable to the modern mind, Jesus' teaching about the kingdom was definitely eschatological. Weiss identified six characteristics: The kingdom was transcendent and supramundane; it belonged to the future; Jesus was not the founder or inaugurator but waited for God to bring it; the kingdom was not identified with the circle of Jesus' disciples; it did not come gradually by growth or development; its ethics were negative and world-denying. Jesus was a rabbi or prophet who believed that in God's good time he would become the Son of man (*see* Son of Man). Eventually, he came to realize that this would occur only after his death.

A further blow to the liberal picture of the historical Jesus was delivered by William Wrede's *The Messianic Secret in the Gospels* (1901; ET 1971). Wrede challenged the prevailing assumption on which the liberal picture of the historical Jesus was based, viz., that Mark's Gospel was an unadorned account of the historical facts. Wrede saw Mark not as an objective reporter but as the theologian of the *Messiasgeheimnis* (a term which could be translated either as "messianic secret" or "messianic mystery"). According to Wrede, Jesus himself did not claim to be the Messiah. It was the church that thought of Jesus as Messiah in the light of its resurrection faith. The church explained the paucity of messianic claims by Jesus by devising stories that Jesus had secretly revealed his messiahship to the disciples and had forbidden them to broadcast it. On this view the Gospels were primary sources not for the life of Jesus, but for the beliefs of the Evangelists and the communities which they served.

On the same day that Wrede's book was published, Albert Schweitzer published a two-volume dissertation which put forward an alternative view. The first volume was entitled *The Problem of the Lord's Supper according to the Scholarly Research of the Nineteenth Century and the Historical Accounts* (ET 1982). The second volume dealt with *The Mystery of the Kingdom of God: The Secret of Jesus' Messiahship and Passion* (ET 1914). Although the work was published in 1901, Schweitzer had reached his conclusions as early as 1897. He later declared his "thoroughgoing eschatology" to be a consistent extension of Weiss's views and the answer to Wrede's skepticism. Whereas Weiss had made eschatology the key to Jesus' teaching, Schweitzer saw that it was also the key to the course of Jesus' life. The title *Son of man* was a designation of the Messiah coming on the clouds as judge. Jesus believed that it was his vocation to be the coming Son of man. Initially he revealed this messianic secret only to Peter, James and John. Later, Peter told it to the rest of the Twelve. Judas told the secret to the high priest (*see* Priest and Priesthood) who used it as the ground for Jesus' execution (Mk 14:61–64; cf. Dan 7:13).

Jesus had sent out the Twelve on a mission to proclaim the coming kingdom of God. He did not expect them to return. The Twelve were the "men of violence" (Mt 11:12) who would provoke the messianic tribulation that would herald the kingdom. Whereas Weiss believed that one could only wait passively for the kingdom, Schweitzer believed that the mission was designed to provoke its coming. When this did not happen, Jesus determined to give his own life as a ransom for many (Mk 10:45) and so cause the kingdom to come.

At the time that Schweitzer wrote *The Mystery of the Kingdom of God* he was an unknown instructor at Strasbourg. His work attracted little attention, and it was only after World War 1 and the collapse of liberal optimism that eschatology and the “otherworldly” gospel got a wider hearing. In the meantime, Schweitzer’s celebrated *Quest of the Historical Jesus* established his reputation as a scholar. Schweitzer went on to earn doctorates in music and medicine. His medical work in Africa enhanced the impact of his writing.

The Quest of the Historical Jesus was originally intended as a supplement to the earlier, shorter book. It rapidly established the reputation of being the definitive history of research on the historical Jesus. In intent it was a massive vindication of Schweitzer’s earlier conclusions which had largely been ignored and which were repeated in the final chapter. It did not show, as is often assumed, that recovery of the historical Jesus was impossible. Rather, it presented a massive critique of the views of the theological establishment, set out in such a way as to show that all paths but Schweitzer’s proved to be dead ends.

Schweitzer identified three major crises in which critical study was faced with a choice between stark alternatives (238). The first was the crisis provoked by Strauss: either a purely historical approach or a purely supernatural one. The second was posed by the Tübingen school and Schweitzer’s teacher, Holtzmann: either the Synoptic Gospels or John. The third was the choice between Wrede and himself: either an eschatological or a non-eschatological Jesus. In each case Schweitzer left no doubt as to the path which the reader should follow.

There were certain ironies in Schweitzer’s position. Although Schweitzer was concerned with critical history, he made no attempt to deal critically with sources. He accepted the Synoptic narrative more or less at face value (though with a preference for Mark supplemented by Matthew, understood in a non-supernatural way). Consistent eschatology was the connecting theme which gave the story credibility as history, though not as something to be believed in the twentieth century. Schweitzer himself did not accept the eschatological views of Jesus and the Gospels any more than did Johannes Weiss or the liberal scholars who treated them as a husk to be discarded.

The *Quest* (403) concludes by remarking on how good it was that “the true historical Jesus should overthrow the modern Jesus.” Jesus was not a teacher, but “an imperious ruler,” as can be seen from his belief in himself as the Son of man. However, titles like Messiah, Son of man, Son of God, are merely “historical parables.” “We can find no designation which expresses what He is for us.” Jesus comes to us “as One unknown,” summoning followers and setting new tasks in each generation. Those who follow shall learn “as an ineffable mystery” in their own experience “Who He is.” For Schweitzer himself, this meant life as a medical missionary in West Africa, guided by a philosophy based on “reverence for life.”

If Harnack’s historical Jesus was a reflection of the liberal Protestant scholar, Schweitzer’s had an element of the heroic “superman” of Nietzsche, a philosopher whom Schweitzer admired. Schweitzer went on to apply his “Christ mysticism” to the apostle Paul (*Paul and His Interpreters*, 1911; ET 1912; *The Mysticism of the Apostle Paul*, 1930; ET 1931). Schweitzer’s medical thesis on *The Psychiatric Study of Jesus* (1913; ET 1948) sought to vindicate Jesus against charges of paranoia. *The Kingdom of God and Christian Origins* (ET 1968) summarizes Schweitzer’s final position.

1.8. Re-evaluation. The monumental character of Schweitzer’s *Quest* is apt to conceal its omissions and apologetic character. It is now clear that the enterprise did not begin with Reimarus, but with the English deists on whom Reimarus had heavily drawn

and whose ideas were already well known in Germany. Among the British writers cited by Reimarus in his *Apology* were Toland, Shaftesbury, Collins, Tindal, Morgan and Middleton. His personal library included most of the English deists. Hobbes, Spinoza and Hume were among the philosophers who had already raised doubts about the historical reliability of the NT picture of Jesus. Schweitzer’s work took little account of the interplay between philosophy and theology, especially the influence of Kant, though Schweitzer himself had already written a dissertation on *Kant’s Philosophy of Religion from the Critique of Pure Reason to Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone* (1899).

Schweitzer confined his attention largely to works in German, plus a few in French. Having adopted the methodological principle, allegedly forced upon him by Strauss, of working strictly with the “historical” which was juxtaposed to the “supernatural,” the work of systematic theologians could safely be left out of account. Consequently, scant attention was paid to the Mediating School of theologians like I. A. Dorner (1809–94) whose *History of the Development of the Doctrine of the Person of Christ* (ET 5 vols., 1861–63) concluded with an attempt to restate christology drawing on contemporary philosophy. Also ignored were the confessional theologians, like J. C. K. von Hofmann (1810–77) and Gottfried Thomasius (1802–75). Hofmann sought to understand christology in the wider context of salvation history. Thomasius’ doctrine of kenosis sought to show the conceivability of the divine incarnation of God, if the Son of God had in some way emptied himself of his divine glory during his earthly life (cf. Phil 2:7).

It was perhaps inevitable that not only Schweitzer but also nineteenth-century theologians in general ignored the thought of the Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard (1813–55) whose works remained largely inaccessible until the twentieth century. Kierkegaard’s *Philosophical Fragments* (1844) provided a counterpart to the *Fragments* of Reimarus. Kierkegaard asked what conditions would have to be fulfilled if God intended to save human beings. He replied that God might communicate with human beings by becoming human and thus utterly like them. This entails the paradoxical conclusion that, in reaching out to human beings in history, God remains incognito in Christ.

In the meantime the whole enterprise of trying to get behind the church’s faith and tradition was condemned by Martin Kähler (1835–1912). In *The So-Called Historical Jesus and the Historic Biblical Christ* (1896; ET ed. C. E. Braaten, 1964) Kähler repudiated the attempt to make faith dependent upon historical research. He also argued that it was impossible to separate the historical Jesus from the Christ of faith. The Christ who influenced the course of history is the Christ who is preached, the Christ of faith. Kähler’s work appealed not only to conservatives who believed that their faith was grounded in history, but also to radicals like Kähler’s pupil Paul Tillich, who went on to treat the Gospel stories as symbols mediating the depths of existence.

2. From the History of Religions School to the New Quest.

2.1. The History of Religions School. The History of Religions School flourished between 1880 and 1920. In seeking to understand the Bible in the context of the broader religious and cultural setting of Egyptian, Babylonian and Hellenistic religion, it emphasized the continuity between the Bible and the ancient Near East and also the discontinuity between the Bible and the modern world. The school was anticipated by D. F. Strauss. The views of Johannes Weiss and William Wrede who were linked with the school have already been noted.

The most comprehensive application of the school's method to the historical Jesus was made by Wilhelm Bousset (1865–1920) in *Kyrios Christos* (1913; ET 1970). Bousset argued that the eschatological ideas underlying the terms Messiah and kingdom of God were derived from other religions. He traced the title Lord (Greek *kyrios*) to Hellenistic religion, and saw the ascription of divinity to Jesus as the result of alien influences. Bousset believed that the earliest tradition of the life of Jesus was relatively free from the miraculous. People transferred to Jesus current stories about wonder workers and miracles (see Divine Man). Bousset made little attempt to show how such stories came to be applied to Jesus. It was enough to note alleged parallels, no matter how remote the source might be.

The methodology of the school was set out by the former Ritschlian Ernst Troeltsch (1865–1923). Troeltsch's paper "On Historical and Dogmatic Method in Theology" (1888) laid down principles for approaching history. Every tradition and interpretation must be sifted by an unending process of Criticism. The principle of analogy serves as the criterion by which events are identified and their historicity assessed. Present experience and knowledge must be used to interpret the past. The historian accepts only those events which bear analogy with present experience and understanding of the world. The principle of correlation asserts that every historical event is correlated with others in the same series. Since all events are of the same order, no particular event can be final or absolute. Since Christianity belongs to the sphere of religious and human history as a whole, no absolute claims may be made on behalf of it. No absolute claims may be made on behalf of Jesus. Christianity may be the absolute religion for the Westerner, but only because there is nothing else (*The Absoluteness of Christianity and the History of Religions*, 1901; ET 1971; *Christian Thought: Its History and Application*, 1923).

2.2. Neo-Orthodoxy. In reaction to liberalism with its emphasis on humanity, religious experience and scientific study, the neo-orthodoxy of Emil Brunner (1889–1966) and Karl Barth (1886–1968) stressed the sovereignty of the transcendent God, human need of redemption and revelation, and the centrality of Jesus Christ. Brunner's *The Mediator* (1927; ET 1934) rejected attempts to interpret Jesus as a religious hero, genius or moral personality. God must be understood biblically rather than philosophically, and known through personal encounter through Christ. Although Brunner insisted on the reality of the humanity of Christ, his lack of interest in history led to charges of docetism.

Barth's emphasis on revelation brought him into sharp conflict with his former teacher Harnack (*Revelation and Theology: An Analysis of the Barth-Harnack Correspondence of 1923*, ed. H. M. Rumscheidt, 1972). The christocentric theology developed in Barth's *Church Dogmatics* (1932–81) elaborated the theme of God taking humanity into partnership with himself on the basis of the incarnation of God in Jesus of Nazareth. Barth stressed the historical reality of this event, but showed little interest in the historical Jesus as such.

2.3. Bultmann, Form Criticism and Demythologization. Form criticism was pioneered by K. L. Schmidt, Martin Dibelius and Rudolf Bultmann (see Form Criticism). Schmidt's *Der Rahmen der Geschichte Jesu* (1919) claimed that the framework of the Gospel stories was created by the Evangelists for their own purposes and was thus historically valueless. The Heidelberg scholar Martin Dibelius (1883–1947) adopted a more constructive approach in *Die Formgeschichte des Evangeliums* (1919; ET *From Tradition to Gospel*, 1934). His *Jesus* (1939; ET 1949) showed how the Gospel traditions related to the historical Jesus. However, a more skeptical view was

taken by Rudolf Bultmann (1884–1976) of Marburg who was the most influential NT scholar of his generation. Bultmann's theology combined neo-orthodoxy, Neo-Kantianism, Heidegger's existentialism with the traditions of liberal criticism and the History of Religions School. His personal influence was extended through his pupils in key university chairs throughout the German-speaking world.

Bultmann's major work on *The History of the Synoptic Tradition* (1921, ET 1963) gave an analysis of the forms of the traditions behind the Gospel as shaped by the Christian communities. He concluded that the material throws more light on the *Sitz im Leben*, or life setting, of the traditions in the early church than they do on the life of Jesus. Many utterances attributed to Jesus were the deliverances of Christian prophets speaking in his name. The Christ preached in the Hellenistic church was not the historical Jesus, but the Christ of faith and the cult. Teaching which applied to the church situation could not be attributed to the historical Jesus.

Basic to Bultmann's method was the criterion of dissimilarity as a test of authenticity. "We can only count on possessing a genuine similitude of Jesus, where, on the one hand, expression is given to the contrast between Jewish morality and piety and the distinctive eschatological temper which characterized the preaching of Jesus; and where on the other hand we find no specifically Christian features" (205). To Bultmann, as to later form critics and redaction critics (see Redaction Criticism), use of this criterion was the hallmark of scientific criticism. To others it was arbitrary and absurd to assume that the historical Jesus could have nothing in common with either Judaism or the early church. Bultmann's other test of authenticity was equally controversial. Phraseology and language serve to corroborate the origin of material (see Languages of Palestine). Thus, the presence of Semitisms is deemed to suggest a Palestinian origin (12). Critics of Bultmann and others who have used this criterion complain that it is equally arbitrary and useless. For the presence of Semitisms does not necessarily mean that Jesus was the original speaker. On the other hand, idiomatic translation into Greek is assumed to be a mark of inauthenticity (see Gospels [Historical Reliability]).

Bultmann's *Jesus* (1926, ET *Jesus and the Word*, 1935) depicted Jesus as the bearer of the word in which he assures human beings of divine forgiveness. Bultmann understood this event existentially as a summons to decision. Bultmann's celebrated demythologization program was outlined in his paper on "New Testament and Mythology" (1941; ET in H.-W. Bartsch, ed., *Kerygma and Myth*, combined vol., 1972, 1–44). It inaugurated one of the great debates of the twentieth century. Bultmann developed his position in various writings, including *Theology of the New Testament* (2 vols.; 1948–53; ET 1952–55), *The Gospel of John* (1941; ET 1971) and *Jesus Christ and Mythology* (1958).

Bultmann contended that the thought world of the NT was essentially mythological, being shaped by myths drawn from Jewish apocalyptic and gnosticism (see Myth). Such myths caused Jesus to be presented as a heavenly redeemer in a cosmic struggle. Bultmann claimed that his aim was not to eliminate myth, but to interpret it so as to allow the true offense of Christianity to make its impact. The mythological eschatology of the NT with its central message of the cross and resurrection is to be seen as a summons to live existentially by faith in the cross and resurrection of Christ. Drawing on the categories of Heidegger's existentialism, Bultmann reinterpreted the life of faith as "authentic existence" in contrast with the "inauthentic existence" of life apart from faith. What God has done in Jesus Christ is not a historical fact capable of proof. The objective historian as such cannot see that a historical person is the eternal Word. Nevertheless,

the NT paradoxically testifies to Jesus Christ as the eschatological event which brings liberation through the message of the cross and resurrection.

2.4. Other Approaches. Despite the claims of Schweitzer that his historical Jesus was the sole credible option, and the claims of the neo-orthodox and the Bultmann school that recovery of the historical Jesus was impossible but fortunately unnecessary, other scholars patiently pursued historical research.

In Britain T. W. Manson protested that the proper task of form criticism was the classification of the material, and that it was illegitimate to treat forms as a test of historical authenticity (“The Life of Jesus: Some Tendencies in Present-Day Research,” in *The Background of the New Testament and its Eschatology. In Honour of C.H. Dodd*, eds. W. D. Davies and D. Daube, 1954, 211–21). Demythologization issues in the myth of a Heideggerian Jesus, which on closer inspection turns out to be Heideggerian robes with only a pale ghost inside them. Elsewhere he remarked that Bultmann’s *History of the Synoptic Tradition* was not an account of how the life of Jesus produced the tradition, but how the tradition produced the life of Jesus. Manson’s own work included *The Teaching of Jesus: Studies in its Form and Content* (1931), *The Sayings of Jesus* (1949), which first appeared in the volume Manson co-authored with H. D. A. Major and C. J. Wright, *The Mission and Message of Jesus* (1937) and *The Servant-Messiah* (1953). His “Materials for a Life of Jesus” was published posthumously in *Studies in the Gospels and Epistles* (1962).

Other British studies of form criticism drew positive results from it. Among them were William Manson’s *Jesus the Messiah: The Synoptic Tradition of the Revelation of God in Christ, with Special Reference to Form-Criticism* (1943) and Vincent Taylor’s *The Formation of the Gospel Tradition* (1933). Taylor’s other works include *Jesus and his Sacrifice: A Study of the Passion-Sayings in the Gospels* (1937), *The Atonement in New Testament Teaching* (1940), his massive commentary on Mark (1953), *The Life and Ministry of Jesus* (1954) and *The Person of Christ in New Testament Teaching* (1958).

The challenge of form criticism and in particular of K. L. Schmidt’s contention that the units of the Gospel tradition were arranged with scant regard to chronology or topography, was met by C. H. Dodd (1884–1973), who made influential studies of the early church kerygma (“The Framework of the Gospel Narrative” [1932], *NTS* [1952] 1–11; and *The Apostolic Preaching and its Developments* [1936]). Dodd argued that the early preaching of the church contained a basic outline of the ministry of Jesus which emphasized certain themes, and that this outline was used by Mark whose account is partly chronological and partly topical. Dodd’s work has provoked considerable debate. It now seems clear that the early preaching was not intended to give a biography of Jesus in the modern sense (for the materials are too selective, and in any case are not full enough). Nor was it preaching designed for all occasions. Rather it was the church’s answer to charges against Jesus which led to his execution, whose purpose was to rebut the charges by appealing to teaching and incidents in the life of Jesus (see C. Brown, “The Structure and Content of the Early Kerygma,” *NIDNTT* 3.57–67).

In *History and the Gospel* (1938) Dodd drew attention to the fact that different kinds of forms identified by form critics indicate a common underlying picture of God and Jesus in the tradition. Dodd’s study of *The Parables of the Kingdom* (1935) developed realized eschatology in antithesis to Schweitzer. Dodd argued that the ministry of Jesus was not a prelude to the kingdom; it was the kingdom. In his later work Dodd turned to the study of John. In *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (1953) Dodd charged that the nineteenth-century quest, with its concentration on the Synoptics to the exclusion of John, “leads to an impoverished, a one-sided, and finally an

incredible view of the facts—I mean, of the facts, as part of history” (446). He went on to say that the Johannine formula “the hour is coming and now is” was John’s way of expressing realized eschatology. He welcomed the emendations proposed by Georges Florovsky (“inaugurated eschatology”) and Joachim Jeremias (“a self-realizing eschatology”) as attempts to prevent misunderstanding of the term (447). Dodd further explored John in *Historical Tradition in the Fourth Gospel* (1963). His final work was a study of *The Founder of Christianity* (1970).

In America the tradition of liberal lives of Jesus was continued by Shirley Jackson Case’s *Jesus: A New Biography* (1927) and Shailer Mathews’s *Jesus on Social Institutions* (1928). C. C. McCown, Frederick C. Grant, John Knox and Amos N. Wilder carried on the liberal tradition of presenting Jesus as a social prophet. Meanwhile in Europe the historical basis of the Gospel tradition continued to be investigated by distinguished scholars. Joachim Jeremias of Göttingen University sought to recover the original teaching and intentions of Jesus in *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus* (rev. ET 1966), *The Parables of Jesus* (rev. ET 1963), *The Prayers of Jesus* (ET 1967) and *New Testament Theology I: The Proclamation of Jesus* (1971). In *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus* (ET 1969) Jeremias investigated economic and social conditions. Ethelbert Stauffer examined rabbinic materials in his account of *Jesus and His Story* (1960). The foundation for Leonhard Goppelt’s two-volume *New Testament Theology* (ET 1981–82) was “The Ministry of Jesus in its Theological Significance.” Oscar Cullmann developed a functional christology which examined the connection between Jesus and the various titles applied to him in *The Christology of the New Testament* (ET 1955). Cullmann set his christology in the wider context of salvation history in *Christ and Time* (ET 1951) and *Salvation in History* (ET 1967).

2.5. The New Quest.

2.5.1. The New Quest in Europe. In 1959 James M. Robinson published *A New Quest of the Historical Jesus*. The book was both a history of, and an apologia for, the developments that were taking place in the Bultmann school. The starting point was a lecture given by Ernst Käsemann to a reunion of old Marburg students in 1953 on “The Problem of the Historical Jesus” (ET in Käsemann, *Essays on New Testament Themes*, 1964, 15–47). Like others engaged in the New Quest, Käsemann protested his fidelity to Bultmann’s methodology and proclaimed the impossibility of writing a biography of Jesus. However, to disengage interest in the earthly Jesus would fail to grasp the earthly church’s concern with the identity between the exalted and humiliated Lord, and lapse into docetism. The way forward was to discover the earthly Jesus through investigation of his preaching. Jesus did not come to proclaim general religious or moral truths, but to tell of the kingdom that had dawned and of how God had come near in grace and demand. Jesus did not preach realized eschatology; he inaugurated it.

Bultmann’s successor at Marburg, Ernst Fuchs, wrote numerous articles over the years which were published in *Studies of the Historical Jesus* (1960; partial ET 1964). Fuchs drew attention to Jesus’ “conduct” as the context of his preaching.” Jesus’ table fellowship (*see* Table Fellowship) with sinners was the conduct of neither the prophet nor the sage, but that of a person who dared to act in God’s stead, calling sinners near to him who otherwise would have to flee from God. Fuchs also introduced a psychological element by suggesting motives behind Jesus’ actions. Jesus transformed the Mosaic Law into a Law of suffering. The way of salvation was not by works of the Law but by suffering for the faith. Fuchs suggested that, after the martyrdom of John the Baptist, Jesus began to envisage the possibility of his own suffering and death.

A further step was taken by Günther Bornkamm who wrote a full-length study of *Jesus of Nazareth* (1956; ET 1960). Bornkamm stressed the note of authority in Jesus' teaching. Whereas Bultmann had stressed the future coming of the kingdom in Jesus' teaching, Bornkamm underlined the present element: the new age was already breaking in through Jesus' words and actions. Bornkamm followed in the footsteps of his predecessor at Heidelberg, Martin Dibelius. In marked contrast with Bultmann, Bornkamm could write: "Quite clearly what the Gospels report concerning the message, the deeds and the history of Jesus is still distinguished by an authenticity, a freshness, and a distinctiveness not in any way effaced by the Church's Easter faith. These features point us directly to the earthly figure of Jesus" (24).

The methods and conclusions of the New Quest were summarized in an encyclopedia article which Hans Conzelmann wrote for *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*. It was later published separately in expanded form as *Jesus* (ET 1973). The ethos of the New Quest was captured by Gerhard Ebeling in *Theology and Proclamation: Dialogue with Rudolf Bultmann* (1962; ET 1966). Through the person Jesus "God comes to expression in such a way that we come to know Jesus himself as the Word which brings certainty and therefore as the point where reality is radically challenged" (79). Bultmann responded to the New Quest in a paper on "The Primitive Christian Kerygma and the Historical Jesus" (ET in *The Historical Jesus and the Kerygmatic Christ*, ed. C. E. Braaten and R. A. Harrisville, 1964, 15–42). He denied that he had destroyed the continuity between the historical Jesus and the kerygma, insisting that the kerygma presupposes the historical Jesus, however much it may have mythologized him. Bultmann remonstrated with attempts to make psychological reconstructions of Jesus and to legitimate the kerygma by historical research. He concluded by accepting the charge that in his interpretation Jesus has risen in the kerygma. For it presupposes that the kerygma is an eschatological event and expresses the fact that Jesus is present in it.

2.5.2. The New Quest in the English-Speaking World. In the English-speaking world the two leading representatives were James M. Robinson and Norman Perrin. For Robinson the key question was how did Jesus the proclaimer of the kingdom become Christ the proclaimed. He disdainfully dismissed as positivistic the methods of the original quest, claiming the old objectifying approach to historiography had been replaced by existential historiography which required openness to encounter. The quest of the historical Jesus must have meaning in terms of the human quest for meaningful existence. Inquiry into historical continuity is replaced by inquiry into its inner necessity.

Perrin sought to work within the tradition of the New Quest in *Rediscovering the Teaching of Jesus* (1967). However, to Perrin a serious weakness of the New Quest lay in the assumption of the identity of the historical Jesus with the kerygmatic Christ. The assumption ignored the variety of kerygmata in the NT, and assumed that historical research would always point to parallels between Jesus and a form of the kerygma (233). Perrin himself distinguished between "historical knowledge" (which included Jesus' acceptance of his own death as the necessary consequence of his proclamation of the kingdom, his table fellowship with tax collectors [see Taxes] and sinners, and belief that his death would further God's purposes), "historic knowledge" (which occurs when a historical event assumes direct significance for a future time), and "faith knowledge" (which has to do with trans-historical reality and the ascription of special significance in terms of revelation, experience and belief).

2.6. The End of the New Quest. If Harnack's Jesus had the face of a liberal Protestant, and Schweitzer's the heroic demeanor of Nietzsche's superman, the Jesus of the New Quest was an existentialist philosopher whose presence in history was barely discernible behind the kerygma. He is encountered in a kind of existential vacuum from which the historical conditions of the first century are largely excluded. The New Quest ended scarcely two decades after it started. Its demise coincided with the end of the Bultmann era and the passing of existentialist philosophy.

Despite its emphasis on scholarly rigor, its methods and assumptions were limited to those of the Bultmann school. For all its stress on history, it remained curiously indifferent to the world of first-century Judaism as known from Josephus, the Dead Sea Scrolls (see Dead Sea Scrolls) and rabbinic literature (see Rabbinic Traditions and Writings). To those engaged in the New Quest the proclamation of the cross was the pivotal event which linked existence with the historical Jesus. By positing the crucifixion of Jesus as a fact, docetism was averted. But little attention was paid to the question Why exactly was Jesus crucified? Insofar as it was answered at all, it was answered in existential terms. To exclude the close connection between religion, theology, politics, sociology and economics as interrelated factors in answering this question now looks curiously unhistorical and short-sighted.

3. The Third Quest.

3.1. The Quest Continued. It is open to question whether the term Third Quest will succeed in establishing itself to describe post-Bultmannian developments in Jesus research. There is certainly no common methodology or sense of unity of purpose beyond the conviction that more may be known about Jesus than was known or admitted in the earlier quests. If the term Third Quest is taken to embrace all scholarly investigation of the relationship between the texts of the NT and the historical figure of Jesus in the light of current knowledge of the first-century world, we are at once confronted with a variety of conflicting views and methods. At first sight it may appear to be a case of *plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose*. For connections between current research and what has gone before appear to continue without interruption. If there is a common theme, it lies in the belief that Jesus was not the Jesus of liberal Protestantism or of the New Quest, but a historical figure whose life and actions were rooted in first-century Judaism with its particular religious, social, economic and political conditions.

3.2. Varieties of Approach. Three main lines of approach may be noted: the radical tradition, the conservative tradition and attempts to see Jesus in new perspectives.

3.2.1. The Radical Tradition. The radical redaction-critical tradition is exemplified by the Jesus Seminar in the United States which seeks to examine the layers of tradition in both the NT and extra-canonical accounts of Jesus' words and actions in order to develop a firm data base for determining who Jesus was. The Seminar meets twice yearly to discuss research papers and vote on the authenticity of the material. Using a color system of balloting, the Seminar is producing a series of Red Letter Editions. The first to be published was *The Parables of Jesus* (1988). In the text words printed in red indicate that Jesus said it or something very like it, and that it could be used for the data base. Pink indicates that Jesus probably said it. Gray indicates doubt, and black rejection of authenticity. As in all scholarship, the conclusions of the scholars involved depend on the methods employed.

Another example of the radical tradition is Burton L. Mack's *A Myth of Innocence: Mark and Christian Origins* (1988). Mack rejects Mark as a historical account of Jesus in favor of seeing the first Gospel as a complex of traditions. He suggests that Jesus'

themes, topics and use of epigrammatic *chreiai* (see Chreia) were closer to the Cynic

idiom than to characteristic Jewish piety. Jesus was not trying to reform Judaism; he was taking up a Hellenistic kind of social criticism. Similarities and differences between Jesus and the Cynics may be studied in the collection of source material compiled by F. Gerald Downing, *Christ and the Cynics* (1988).

3.2.2. *The Conservative Tradition.* The tradition of pre-war British scholarship is maintained by C. F. D. Moule in *The Origin of Christology* (1977). Moule rejects the idea of evolutionary process in the manner of the History of Religions School which would imply that the historical Jesus had been transformed into another species through the influence of Hellenistic savior cults. Instead he sees a developmental process taking place which relates later perceptions of Jesus to Jesus himself. Moule seeks to show how the titles Son of man, Son of God, Christ and Lord were appropriate to the historical Jesus, and how the corporate savior of Pauline theology was grounded in him.

In similar vein is Graham N. Stanton's *The Gospels and Jesus* (1989). Other examples of the conservative tradition are I. Howard Marshall's commentary on *The Gospel of Luke* (1978), Marshall's collected studies *Jesus the Saviour* (1990) and G. R. Beasley-Murray's *Jesus and the Kingdom of God* (1986). Mention may also be made of John A. T. Robinson's reappraisal of the field of Johannine scholarship and rehabilitation of the historicity of the Fourth Gospel in *The Priority of John* (ed. F. J. Coakley, 1985). At its best conservative scholarship exhibits meticulous attention to detail in careful response to previous discussion as it seeks to vindicate and refine our understanding of the history behind the text.

3.2.3. *New Perspectives.* Perhaps the most distinctive development in the Third Quest is the search for new approaches by way of forming general hypotheses to account for questions posed by the text. Such hypotheses seek to address questions sometimes neglected in the past and endeavor to understand Jesus in the context of the religious, social, economic and political world of Judaism. In particular, attention is focused on the questions "Why did Jesus come into conflict with the Jewish authorities?" "Why was he handed over to the Romans, and put to death in a manner normally reserved for political revolutionists?"

Among the remarkable modern phenomena is the considerable interest in Jesus on the part of Jewish scholars. In the period after World War 1 scholars like Joseph Klausner, Martin Buber and J. C. G. Montefiore pioneered Jewish studies of Jesus and Christian origins. More recently David Flusser's *Jesus* (1969) presents a picture of a religious teacher like the Pharisees. Jesus belonged to the liberal wing of the school of Hillel and sought a Judaism purified of resentment and hatred. In *Jesus the Jew* (1973) and *Jesus and the World of Judaism* (1983) Geza Vermes depicts Jesus as a Galilean charismatic miracle-worker in the mold of Honi the Circle Drawer and Hanina ben Dosa, who held loose to the stricter traditions of the Jerusalem rabbis and who ultimately came to grief. Jewish scholarship has been examined by Donald A. Hagner in *The Jewish Reclamation of Jesus* (1984).

Non-Jewish scholars are also paying much attention to the Jewish world in which Jesus lived. In this category belong John Bowker's *Jesus and the Pharisees* (1973); J. K. Riches, *Jesus and the Transformation of Judaism* (1980); Bruce D. Chilton, *A Galilean Rabbi and His Bible* (1984); James H. Charlesworth, *Jesus within Judaism* (1988); and Sean Freyne, *Galilee, Jesus and the Gospels* (1988). In *Jesus als Lehrer* (1981) Rainer Riesner has compared Jesus' teaching methods in the Gospels with Jewish teaching methods (see Teacher). In *Jesus and Judaism* (1985) E. P. Sanders deviates from the traditional approach which begins with an investigation of the sayings of Jesus. Instead he focuses on the accounts of Jesus' actions. His starting point is Jesus' action in the Temple (see Temple Cleansing; Death of Jesus) and its significance within a contemporary eschatology which expected restoration. Sanders then works backwards, exploring the ways in which Jesus offended Judaism. He finds them in Jesus' relativizing of the present age, in his claim that sinners would be in the kingdom and in his attack on the Temple.

A major work is Ben F. Meyer's *The Aims of Jesus* (1979). Meyer's study is significant not only for the way in which it seeks to locate Jesus within Judaism, but also for its response to previous scholarship and the challenge it makes to reconsider the question of methodology. Common features of previous scholarship were the attempt to interpret Jesus in terms of a closed view of the universe and the use of Troeltsch's principle of analogy with its reductionistic consequences. Drawing on the philosophy of Bernard Lonergan, Meyer seeks to develop a cognitional theory which enables the historian to grasp the transcendent element in history. According to Meyer the theme underlying Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom of God was the restoration of Israel. Jesus understood himself to be the unique revealer of God's will. He offered a critique and reform of Temple worship, and in his table fellowship with sinners he anticipated the messianic banquet. In private Jesus indicated to his disciples that in his mission the Scriptures were reaching their fulfillment (see Old Testament in the Gospels). But this would be reached only through his suffering and death. Until the definitive gathering of the saved at the end of time the aims of Jesus will be incarnated in his community, the remnant and first fruits of messianic Israel.

Another work which tries to develop an alternative methodology is Anthony Harvey's *Jesus and the Constraints of History* (1980). In any given historical situation any individual who wishes to influence others is subject to constraints imposed by culture. Jesus was no exception. Harvey endeavors to identify the constraints under which Jesus found himself and use them in his reconstruction of history. Working backwards from the crucifixion, Harvey tries to identify what led to it. Jesus died the death of an anti-Roman revolutionary, though the historical sources do not indicate that he was. This apparent contradiction leads Harvey to think that there must have been something in Jesus' teaching and conduct that led the Jewish authorities to hand him over to the Romans. In the light of the constraints of the Law, Harvey infers that Jesus' teaching must be regarded as that of someone who claims that the urgency of the moment overrides some of the Law's provisions. The constraint of time indicates that current expectation of God's breaking into history sets the stage for Jesus' message. Other constraints are miracle, messiahship and Jewish monotheism (see God).

A major area of interest for the Third Quest is Jesus and politics (see Revolutionary Movements). S. G. F. Brandon claimed that Jesus sympathized with the ideals and aims of the Zealot movement, suggesting that these sympathies were downplayed by the Evangelists (*The Fall of Jerusalem and the Christian Church*, 1951; *Jesus and the Zealots*, 1967). This thesis has been challenged by numerous scholars, including Alan

Richardson, (*The Political Christ*, 1973) and Martin Hengel (*Victory over Violence*, 1973; *Christ and Power*, 1974; *The Zealots*, 2d ed. 1976, ET 1989). Studies of numerous political issues have been collected by Ernst Bammel and C. F. D. Moule in *Jesus and the Politics of His Day* (1984). The importance of the Zealots in the time of Jesus has recently come under close scrutiny and has been rejected by Richard A. Horsley and John S. Hanson (*Bandits, Prophets, and Messiahs*, 1985; R. A. Horsley, *Jesus and the Spiral of Violence*, 1987). Nevertheless, Horsley allows that Jesus' actions and teaching were increasingly affected by social and political conditions.

Jesus' actions have been studied from the stand point of sociology (see Sociological Analysis of the Gospels) by Gerd Theissen in *Sociology of Early Palestinian Christianity* (1978) and in an imaginative reconstructive narrative *The Shadow of the Galilean* (1987; see Narrative Exegesis). Horsley has responded with *Sociology and the Jesus Movement* (1989). Martin Hengel has compared Jesus with other types of Jewish leaders in *The Charismatic Leader and his Followers* (1981). Hengel's earlier studies of *Crucifixion* (1977) and *The Atonement* (1981) probe the circumstances surrounding the death of Jesus and its significance for the Christian community. The sociologist Irving M. Zeitlin sees the key to understanding Jesus in the concept of charisma, the gift which bestows authority (*Jesus and the Judaism of his Time*, 1988).

The links between politics and holiness have been explored by Marcus J. Borg in *Conflict, Holiness, and Politics in the Teachings of Jesus* (1984) and *Jesus: A New Vision* (1987). Borg rejects Schweitzer's eschatological interpretation of the kingdom and prefers to see the kingdom as a linguistic symbol for the power of the Spirit and the new life which it created. The image points to a life centered on God. Jesus was "an epiphany of God" and a model for human life.

Spirit christology represents an alternative way of approaching the person of Christ by way of relating the Gospel accounts of Jesus and the Spirit to the study of Jesus' identity (see Holy Spirit). In *Jesus and the Spirit* (1975) James D. G. Dunn examines the Gospel accounts of Jesus as the recipient of the Spirit and the testimony of the early church to Jesus as the sender of the Spirit. Dunn interprets Jesus' divinity as his relationship with the Father as son and the Spirit of God in him. The eschatological kingdom was present for Jesus only because the eschatological Spirit was present in and through him. In *Christology in the Making* (1980) Dunn inquires into the origins of the doctrine of the incarnation. Dunn's *The Evidence for Jesus* (1985) responds to negative and fanciful claims made in a TV series and the book by Ian Wilson which accompanied the series, *Jesus: the Evidence* (1984).

A number of studies have examined the Gospel miracle stories and their background (see Miracles and Miracle Stories). They include Gerd Theissen's *The Miracle Stories of the Early Christian Tradition* (ET 1983), Howard Clark Kee's *Miracle in the Early Christian World* (1983) and *Medicine, Miracle and Magic in New Testament Times* (1986), and Herman Hendrickx, *The Miracle Stories of the Synoptic Gospels* (1987). The most radical position was taken by Morton Smith in *Jesus the Magician* (1979). Smith argued that the miracle stories point to the fact that Jesus was really a magician, and that the Gospels have deliberately tried to obscure the truth.

Colin Brown has sought to respond to this view and also to earlier claims that the miracle stories belong to later layers of tradition developed under the influence of the Hellenistic world, where "divine men" were expected to perform miracles (*Miracles and the Critical Mind*, 1984; "Synoptic Miracle Stories: A Jewish Religious and Social Setting," *Foundations & Facets Forum* 2 [1986] 55–76). The following hypothesis also

seeks to take note of Jewish views of Jesus and his Jewish environment and also of Spirit christology.

The Gospels present two conflicting types of theology: that of the Evangelists and that of the Jewish authorities. According to the Evangelists' theology, Jesus was anointed and empowered by the Spirit at his baptism. This fact determined his activity as the Christ (i.e., one who was anointed by the Spirit) who fulfilled the prophecy of John the Baptist that Jesus would baptize (i.e., consecrate) Israel with the Spirit (Mk 1:8; Mt 3:11; Lk 3:16; Jn 1:33). This ministry of consecration includes forgiving of sins, table Fellowship with sinners, reinterpretation of the Law and the Sabbath, healing, casting out demons, social and political teaching, and the "baptism" of the Temple. It culminates in his sacrificial death which establishes the new covenant.

By contrast the theology of the Jewish authorities is based on the Torah, which in terms of daily life meant living in accordance with the teaching of Deuteronomy. In particular, the authorities were alarmed by the combination of teaching and wonder-working that they perceived in Jesus. Turning to the Torah for guidance, they came to the conclusion that Jesus was the kind of prophet described in Deuteronomy 13, who was performing signs and wonders in order to lead the people astray. The only recourse was to follow the prescriptions of Deuteronomy 13 and purge the evil one from the midst of the people by putting him to death.

Jesus differed from contemporaries like Hanina ben Dosa, who also had the reputation of being a "man of deed" (i.e., miracle worker, cf. Lk 24:19). Hanina disclaimed the title of prophet and put forward no new teaching. It was precisely the combination of novel teaching, actions that were perceived as threatening, and wonder working which led to Jesus' downfall. Opposition to Jesus was bound up with his miracles and exorcisms which thus belong to the earliest layers of tradition. To his opponents Jesus was an evildoer who appeared to be bent on leading the people astray and thus must be dealt with in accordance with the prescriptions of the Torah. To his followers, Jesus was the anointed one who fulfilled both the Law and the prophets. The issue became one of whether Jesus' works were wrought by someone who was possessed by Beelzebul (Mk 3:22 par.) or whether they were the work of the Holy Spirit (Mk 3:29–30 par.; Mt 12:28). In the Fourth Gospel Jesus' works are said to be the works of the Father (Jn 14:10–11), though here too his opponents see him as someone possessed who is leading the people astray (Jn 7:12; 8:48; 11:47–48). In their different ways all four Gospels develop Word and Spirit christologies.

3.3. Systematic Theology. It remains to be noted that renewed interest in the historical Jesus has made a significant impact on other areas of theology.

The issue was brought into sharp focus by the Scottish systematic theologian D. M. Baillie (1857–1954) in *God Was in Christ* (1948). Baillie agreed with the old quest in insisting that we must think of Jesus as a historical human being. Anything less would be to lapse into docetism and unreality. However, the questions raised by Schweitzer and the historical skepticism of the Bultmann school appeared to negate the possibility of knowing the historical Jesus. Moreover, neo-orthodoxy was right to stress that knowledge of God involved more than historical reconstruction. Baillie's solution drew upon the moderate form criticism of C. H. Dodd and others which saw in different layers of tradition and forms patterns of the same divine action of God reaching out to human beings in Christ. Baillie went on to suggest that the "paradox of grace" might provide the best clue for thinking about how God might be present in Christ. As God dwells in believers by grace, so he might also dwell in Christ in a more complete way. Baillie's approach seems to restate that of Schleiermacher in a more attractive way, though he

seems to end with an incarnation of the Father. Nevertheless, his work draws attention to the significance of critical study for theology and raises the question of whether, if Baillie had paid more attention to the role of Word and Spirit in the NT, he might have achieved more satisfactory results.

Wolfhart Pannenberg (*Jesus—God and Man*, ET 1968) and Hans Küng (*On Being a Christian*, 1976) have urged the need to do christology “from below” as distinct from doing it “from above.” To Pannenberg the idea of doing it “from above” presupposes the divinity of Christ and ignores the most important task of christology, viz., to present reasons for confessing the divinity of Christ. To take the divinity of Christ as one’s starting point is to devalue the historical Jesus and his relationship with Palestinian Judaism. More over, human beings stand in history and do not have God’s absolute perspective. Therefore, Pannenberg adopts a phenomenological approach to the Gospel accounts of Jesus’ activity. However, the historical event of Jesus’ resurrection removes the previous ambiguity and provides the key to understanding the meaning of history. Pannenberg’s work is rich in insights, but it is open to question whether his method is successful. Nothing can be apprehended from a point of absolute neutrality. It is arbitrary to suspend judgment about God’s activity until after the resurrection, at which time an approach “from above” is allowed to come into play. Judgments about Jesus did not begin with the resurrection. Rather, this event is to be seen as confirming the identity of God’s personal presence in Jesus.

In the work of Jürgen Moltmann Jesus’ earthly messianic activity and especially his death on the cross serve as the basis for a reinterpretation of eschatology, the church, God’s character as a suffering God and the Trinity (*Theology of Hope*, 1967; *The Crucified God*, 1974; *The Church in the Power of the Spirit*, 1977; *The Trinity and the Kingdom*, 1981; *The Way of Jesus Christ*, 1990).

Latin American Liberation Theology bases its teaching and praxis on the Jesus of the Synoptic Gospels and his action among the poor and needy (see Liberation Hermeneutics). Important works include Leonardo Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator* (1978) and Jon Sobrino, *Christology at the Crossroads* (1978). For a survey see Arthur F. McGovern, *Liberation Theology and its Critics* (1989). In liberation christology, social conditions and the need for liberation raise the questions that are to be asked of the text and determine the agenda. However, the methods to be used in working through the agenda and developing a christology are the critical, historical methods that are valid everywhere.

This sample review of systematic theology underlines the need for theologians to take into account the work of biblical scholars and also the need of the latter to be aware of the theological dimensions of their research.

4. Conclusion.

In retrospect it is clear that impressions of the course of the quest of the historical Jesus, and even of how many quests there have been, have been shaped by the viewpoint of the person giving the impression. It also is clear that the Jesus that was discovered in particular quests all too often reflected the image of those engaged in it. Harnack’s Jesus was the reflection of a liberal Protestant face at the bottom of a well. Schweitzer’s Jesus had the demeanor of Nietzsche’s superman. The Jesus of the New Quest sounded like an existentialist philosopher summoning his hearers to make existential decisions. In all this the hermeneutical circle came into play: the questioner’s questions and outlook helped shape the answers that were given. No single school of thought has attained absolute

results and driven all rival theories from the field. As in all theorizing, all claims are open to evaluation in the light of the methods pursued. However, in the battles between rival schools of thought and in the process of successive approximation that belongs to all scholarly inquiry, positive gains have been made. It is no longer possible to have a docetic Christ. Jesus was a particular historical figure rooted in his times, but speaking to all times. The study of Jesus and the Gospels in the light of the social, economic, political and religious conditions of his times has immensely enriched our understanding not only of history but also of theological issues embedded in history.

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