THE FLESH WAS MADE WORD

New Testament Monographs, 27

Series Editor
Stanley E. Porter

THE FLESH WAS MADE WORD

A METAHISTORICAL CRITIQUE OF THE CONTEMPORARY QUEST OF THE HISTORICAL JESUS

Susan Lochrie Graham

SHEFFIELD PHOENIX PRESS

2010

Published by Sheffield Phoenix Press
Department of Biblical Studies, University of Sheffield
45 Victoria Street
Sheffield S3 7QB

www.sheffieldphoenix.com

A CIP catalogue record for this book
is available from the British Library

Typeset by ISB Typesetting
Printed on acid-free paper by Lightning Source UK Ltd, Milton Keynes

ISBN 978-1-906055-96-7

CONTENTS

Preface

It is a commonplace in gospel studies before attempting to interpret a biblical text to wonder about its genre. According to Mark, the text that he has produced is a 'gospel'. What is that? Is it a genre? Or is that simply a misunderstanding of the Greek, which posits that the content of this report is 'good', even 'good news', but makes no other claim? We are immediately thrust into a narrative, a story which is set in a historical time and place, with a few markers to indicate that some of it, at least, is supposed actually to have happened. It centers around the actions of a person, Jesus of Nazareth, and the story tells hearers and readers what he did and what happened to him during a period at the end of his life. He came to a violent end, most of all in Mark's version of the story, and if the first line of the story didn't have the word εὐανγελίον in it, we would perhaps be forgiven for wondering what was good about this news. Is this history? Is it fiction? Is it biography? Is it myth? How does one go about distinguishing among these things? And what difference does it make?

Paul put it forcefully to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 15.14, 17): If the resurrection didn't really happen, then their faith is in vain, futile. They will themselves perish. Christianity puts all of its eggs in this basket, an Easter basket. What 'really' happened, the 'historical truth' of the story, undergirds Christian faith. Hundreds of years after the events narrated in the gospels, Christian missionaries went out to tell this story to people who had never heard it before. These missionaries, if anyone had asked, would probably have said that the events in the story were 'true'; the people in the stories actually lived, and the events actually happened. It was a 'historical' account, one whose truth they were willing to trust with their lives. But what of their hearers? How did they understand it? With different cultural concepts of what is 'real' or 'true' or 'historical', they were faced with a story that seemed similar in some respects to their own stories of the divine, but one which claimed to be better, more 'true', because it 'really' happened. Sometimes the missionaries were successful, as in St Augustine's conversion of the English; sometimes they were not. Two thousand years after the events, we continue to debate the question. Our tools are more sophisticated, our discussions perhaps more rational and learned. But Christian faith is based on the certainty that the stories about Jesus contain a core of historical truth, and so it is imperative to distinguish historical facts from fiction, to extract the 'historical Jesus' from

the narratives about him. If we cannot, the cathedral will crumble. Indeed, many would say it already has.

In the three hundred years since the beginning of the Enlightenment in Western Europe, theologians have sought to use rational methods to discriminate between the facts and fictions of the stories of Jesus. Two (or three, or even more) 'quests' have come and gone, and today we seem to be reaching an end of the latest one. The first quest began and ended with radical skepticism; the New Quest with the hope that faith and history might be disengaged, that the individual believer's understanding and response were enough to fill the gap in faith left by the historical horrors of two world wars. The third quest comes now, in the past twenty-five years or so, a period marked by another skepticism, this time the loss of confidence in the very idea of 'truth' or 'reason'. The 'bare ruined choirs'[1] are filled with the ghosts of modernists and their certainties, while the living find even their own subjectivity riddled with postmodern doubts. How can 'I' have faith in something or someone if my sense of self is an illusion? I can close myself in with others who are willing, for the space of a time, to pretend. Within this cloistered space, some things can be real and true, at least for a while.

It is within one such cloistered space that some have undertaken a new quest of the historical Jesus.[2] The energy, the enthusiasm, the sense of making progress, of succeeding, is palpable. New documents, discovered in the desert at Qumran, promise to answer old questions. Old criteria of 'authenticity' are dusted off, given a fresh coat of varnish, a new lease on life. Literary approaches from English departments, and models from sociology and anthropology, even from history, have been borrowed and embraced. The results have been fed into a massive publishing machine, always hungry for something new, and in a short space of time, hundreds of articles and books have found their way into libraries and homes. The lecture circuit is hot, and home computers allow still others access to discussion on a world wide scale. Television and film have been enlisted to reach even more consumers. Historical Jesus study, once a cottage industry, has hit the big time.

All of this because of that story about Jesus. The skeptical reader might well wonder what's going on here. What made Jesus the publishing success story of the nineties, and even into the new Millennium? Whose interests does it serve? What itch does it scratch? Answering that question will require a different way into the game, a back entrance for employees only, where the mechanism is exposed. If history is an illusion, an effect of language, we must get behind the scenes to see how the magic is done. Accordingly, I want to look into the mechanics of history: the matters of plot and character, the

1. Shakespeare's metaphor, read literally and used metonymically (Sonnet 73).

2. See John P. Meier's version of the cloister, in the fictional basement of Harvard Divinity School (1991: 1-2).

poetics of narrative, and the philosophical and theological engines that drive the machines. Only then will the broader questions of theology and ethics begin to find answers, historical answers, but answers based in contemporary times.

This book began as a doctoral thesis, started at the Toronto School of Theology and finished at the University of Sheffield. The history of its development is best plotted as a comedy, an ironic one. What the ideological implications of either the story of its writing or its content might be are for others to say. But looking back, there are many people to thank, only a few of whom can be mentioned here. At Toronto, Andrew T. Lincoln was the first to hear the idea and to encourage me to explore the possibilities; friends and colleagues there shared my enthusiasm and supported me with good humor. At Sheffield, the Biblical Studies Dept. was a heady place to be and an exciting place to work. I am grateful to the staff there, especially Stephen D. Moore and R. Barry Matlock, who saw the thesis through to completion. A study leave granted by the Bristol District of the Methodist Church in the UK has allowed me the time finally to prepare the manuscript for publication; special thanks are due to them and to the Chair, A. Ward Jones. Recently Archdeacon David Gunn-Johnson suggested that I should submit the manuscript for publication, echoing the advice given to me nearly two decades ago by Richard B. Hays at Yale Divinity School as I began my doctoral studies: publish everything; the value of the work is in sharing it with others. I have tried to do that. Thanks to you all. I am delighted to have worked through this long process with the excellent editorial staff at Sheffield Phoenix Press, especially Ailsa Parkin, and special thanks go to J. Cheryl Exum for her initial support, Stanley E. Porter for his enthusiasm for the project, and particularly to David J.A. Clines for his encouragement and patient editorial work on the manuscript. Finally, it is family and close friends who make it possible for any of us to do the research and writing that an academic book requires, and my thanks go to all of you, but especially to Pam and John Jarvis for their love and support throughout.

ABBREVIATIONS

Annales ESC	*Annales. Economies, Sociétés, Civilisations*
ANWR	Hildegard Temporini and Wolfgang Haase (eds.), *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt: Geschichte und Kultur Roms im Spiegel der neueren Forschung* (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1972–).
BETL	Bibliotheca ephemeridum theologicarum lovaniensium
BTB	*Biblical Theology Bulletin*
CSR	*Christian Scholar's Review*
HTR	*Harvard Theological Review*
JSNT	*Journal for the Study of the New Testament*
JSOT	*Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*
NTTS	New Testament Tools and Studies
RSN	Religious Studies News
SNTS	*Society of New Testament Studies*
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament

INTRODUCTION

This book began with an observation and a question. The observation was made by a number of biblical scholars interested in Historical Jesus research: very little of this work is done by women. That observation seems to be correct.[1] The question, simply, was why is that? Does this sort of work hold no interest for female—not to say, feminist of either gender—biblical scholars? For that matter, there is only a limited group of male scholars who do it. Who are they, and why are they doing it? Political and ethical questions then quickly arise: whose interests does this work serve, and what are those interests? How might we know?

It has been suggested that the text of the New Testament is a window on the past, a more or less transparent view into the first century; and that it is a mirror into which we peer and in which we see our own reflections. These two metaphors mask a problem with historical analysis: the window into the past is not transparent, and what is seen through the glass is overlaid with the contemporary context and the personality of the historian, so that the angle of vision affects the view of the past. This problem is sharply posed in studies of the historical Jesus. Since the end of the eighteenth century, biblical scholars have worked to create ever more sophisticated methods of literary and historical analysis, attempting to use these methods to draw accurate and authentic portraits of the historical Jesus. Two centuries of 'quests' have produced a variety of results, but no consensus has been reached as to the conclusions. Nevertheless, the study has continued, particularly in the past twenty-five years, beginning with the creation of two working professional groups, the Historical Jesus Section of the Society of Biblical Literature in 1983 (which began as a Consultation in 1981), and the independent Jesus Seminar in 1985. Since then, the literature has proliferated at a surprising rate, and so much

1. Until the publication of Paula Fredriksen's book in 1999, no book-length historical Jesus portrait by a female scholar had been available. Bibliographies of the main contributors to the contemporary quest indicate that male scholars rarely cite work by women, biblical scholars or other; those cited more than once, and those with whom the male scholars considered here have entered into critical conversation include W. Cotter, M. Douglas, J. Massynbaerde Ford, P. Fredriksen, M. Hooker, A. Jaubert, B. Levick, A.J. Levine, E. Linnemann, E. Pagels, P. Perkins, T. Rajak, J. Schaberg, E. Schüssler Fiorenza, and B. Thiering. With perhaps the exception of Fredriksen, none of these scholars would consider historical Jesus questions her primary research interest.

new work has been undertaken that some scholars speak of a 'third quest', and differentiate it from other work, characterized as the 'new New Quest', among other terms.[2] John Dominic Crossan, a former co-chair of the Jesus Seminar, is one of the leaders of this quest, along with John P. Meier, Richard A. Horsley, Burton L. Mack, E. P. Sanders, Marcus J. Borg, Ben Witherington, III, Dale Allison, and Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza (who would not include herself in this company), to name only a few. Among European scholars working in English, N.T. Wright, Geza Vermes, and Seán Freyne are the most prominent.[3] At the height of the latest research frenzy, not only articles in scholarly journals, but monographs for the academic reader and popularizing books for the general public were appearing almost monthly.[4] This social phenomenon is curious, and it invites critical scrutiny.

The recent work on Jesus has been accompanied by a new methodological concern. Biblical scholars have begun to examine their own biases and probe their methods, providing a 'meta-critical' backdrop for their analytical and reconstructive work. Ironically, however, they typically find it difficult to see how the results of their scholarship are informed by this self-scrutiny. Theological self-awareness and acknowledgement of one's own social situation

2. Although there has been a good deal of scholarly discussion concerning the term and whether indeed the work of the last two decades constitutes a 'new' quest or a continuation of one of the 'old' quests. Clive Marsh (1997) traces a variety of quests, using a New Historicist approach, a result echoed by S.E. Porter who sees 'a multi-faceted quest…with various modifications and adjustments in approach' (2000: 56). The terms 'third quest' and 'new New Quest' mask important differences and ideological implications, as we will see. See also Fowl 1989, Wright 1992, and Telford 1994, for detailed discussions.

3. N.T. Wright coined the term 'third quest', defining it narrowly and opening a polemicized debate over categorization (see Neill and Wright 1988 [1964]: 379-403; Wright 1996: 28-124, and Crossan 1998: 44, who comments that he is 'unable to decide whether [Wright's] cartography is amusing impertinence or annoying arrogance'). This study is concerned broadly with any work with an interest in the historical Jesus, whatever the approach or results, undertaken in roughly the past twenty-five years. This work is almost all in English, and much of it is North American; Continental scholarship on the historical Jesus during this period has largely ignored this quest, an issue to which I will return. See, for example, Gnilka 1990, about which Telford comments, 'Gnilka's book, a holistic treatment from a well-respected moderate within the German historical-critical establishment, is disappointing, in one respect, in that it fails to take account of developments in the eighties (especially in North American scholarship) and hence witnesses to the sad gulf that exists between Continental and North American scholarship' (1994: 41). Theissen and Merz (1998) include a brief life of Jesus at the end of their 'guide'; the book is primarily a textbook and its bibliography is limited.

4. Bibliographical resources are also numerous. For publications since 1980, see Kümmel 1988, 1989, 1990, 1991; Evans 1989b; Hollenbach 1989; Borg 1991, 1994a, 1994b; Chilton and Evans, 1994 (especially the survey by Telford 1994: 33-74) and Witherington 1995.

are not all that is needed. What is missing remains to be explored. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza comments that scholars generally provide 'litanies that ritually list biographical information without analyzing their function in the discourses of domination', and she calls for critical self-reflection which 'compels one to acknowledge the significance of power relations for producing knowledge and truth, which are always situated and perspectival' (2000b: 23).

A thorough analysis of the major research has not been attempted for the contemporary quest, although scholars began in the mid nineties to produce critical summaries of the different portraits; some well known examples include the work of Marcus J. Borg (1994a) and Ben Witherington, III (1995), and more recently, David B. Gowler (2007).[5] Witherington, for instance, classifies the recent portraits according to their results: for some, Jesus is an 'itinerant cynic philosopher',[6] for others, 'a man of the spirit',[7] an 'eschatological prophet',[8] or a 'prophet of social change'.[9] Witherington himself sees Jesus as a 'sage',[10] but he reserves his highest praise for those who understand Jesus as a messianic figure.[11] It is immediately clear to the reader of the portraits that there is little agreement, not only as to the interpretations but also as to the methods and the appropriate sources; moreover, the critical studies of these portraits disagree on their evaluations. Such variety of opinion indicates that a new approach would be welcome.[12]

Historians interested in theory have argued for over thirty years that the narrative form of historical writing has meaning, apart from its content. This observation suggests a fruitful area of research. If there is difficulty reaching

5. Witherington, not surprisingly, evaluates the work of the Jesus Seminar scholars far more negatively than does Borg, who is a Fellow. That difference is reflected, although in a less pointed way than might be expected, in their portraits of Jesus. Book-length annotated bibliographies treating third quest writers include Evans (1989) and Chilton and Evans (1994). Historical Jesus portraits often include detailed critiques of other scholars as a prelude to the writer's own analysis; Wright (1996: 28-124) provides a lengthy example.

6. He discusses Crossan (1991b), along with Burton Mack (1988) and F. Gerald Downing (1988).

7. Borg (1984, 1987) and Vermes (1983).

8. Particularly Sanders (1985).

9. Most importantly, Theissen (1987) and Horsley (1987).

10. See Witherington (1994), along with Schüssler Fiorenza (1995).

11. Meier (1991a, 1994); Wright (1992).

12. Graham Stanton notices the variety and then comments that 'the more vigorously the gospel traditions are sifted and weighed, and the more rigorously the Jewish and Graeco-Roman world of the first century is explored, the clearer it becomes that Jesus of Nazareth fits no formula. It is a mistake to try (as so many scholars have done) to portray Jesus primarily as a prophet, or as a wisdom teacher, or as a healer' (2001: 70). But if classification seems to lead into a dead end, then there is no question that a different approach is needed. See Vorster 1999 (1991).

consensus on the methods and results of historical Jesus research, and if critics are divided along polemical lines as to its purpose and value, perhaps a 'metahistorical' approach emphasizing literary and philosophical questions rather than the historical content of the portraits will provide some insight into the problem. So rather than reading these portraits as potential repositories of 'facts' about the 'real' Jesus, I propose to read them as literary structures in which the plot and the rhetorical figures preferred by the writers work together to create meaning for the historical events represented in the narrative. The purpose of this study is to analyze the narratives of historical Jesus portraits, showing how the works encode meanings other than the mere explanation of 'what actually happened in the past'.[13] It is not simply my contention that the contemporary concerns of the authors of historical narrative are reflected in their work,[14] but that the form of the narrative itself has a significance which may reinforce (or indeed be at odds with) the stated and implied purposes of the author.

Of course, there is no doubt that a literary taxonomy of the sort I am proposing is helpful in understanding fictional narratives. But we are concerned here with history. How is historical writing related to fiction? This is a fraught question, to which we will return in detail. For the moment it is enough to make a semiological distinction. Umberto Eco (1976, 1981), following Jurij Lotman (1977), helpfully differentiates between 'transmissive' texts, which provide information, and 'productive' texts, which create multiple meanings. The various effects are functions of the writing and reading codes of the text. As Anthony C. Thiselton observes, 'If a straight match of shared code between the author and the reader occurs, a clear-cut communicative or transmissive process of understanding may be set in motion'. One does not ordinarily look for multiple levels of meaning in a stop sign, for example. But, Thiselton continues, questions arise 'when *two or more semiotic systems*

13. 'Wie es eigentlich gewesen', Ranke's famous phrase, from the preface to his *Histories of the Latin and Germanic Nations from 1494–1514*. The context for the remark, quoted in Stern (1973: 57), is 'To history has been assigned the office of judging the past, of instructing the present for the benefit of future ages. To such high offices this work does not aspire: it wants only to show what actually happened'. R.J. Evans comments that a better translation is 'how it essentially was', since what Ranke sought to do was not just to collect facts but to try to understand the past as the people who lived in it understood it. The past ought not, according to Ranke, to be judged by present standards (Evans, 1997: 17). See below, Chapter 1.

14. The observation invariably cited is from George Tyrell (1909: 49): 'The Christ that Harnack sees [in *The Essence of Christianity*], 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'. For a similar view, see Schweitzer (1954: 4). It has become a truism in the history of New Testament scholarship that Schweitzer's book brought the first quest to an end (Borg, 1994a: 4).

operate simultaneously in the texts' (1992: 582-83, italics his). Historical Jesus texts, which like other transmissive texts provide information, are written within a narrative frame, which is productive. It is therefore appropriate to analyze them as productive, rather than strictly transmissive, texts. As we shall see, theological positions, theories of language and interpretation, matters of intention and so forth (which may well be intentionally bracketed) are incorporated into the account, smuggled in quasi-unconsciously, as it were (by readers as well as writers). But if, from a semiological perspective, literary methods of analysis are appropriate tools for understanding historical narratives, a question remains: which models?

Among theologians, Paul Ricoeur suggests a starting point. In order to understand the actions of human persons in the past, that is, to understand 'what happened', it is necessary to place actions and events in context, as parts of a meaningful whole (1978: 165). In historical writing, this understanding is mediated through the narrative; events are considered 'historical' to the extent that they contribute to the development of the plot (Ricoeur 1980: 171). Various plot structures suggest themselves to the historian before any evaluation of the importance of single events; events become important to the writer if they further one possible plot or another. This can be verified by personal experience: we remember those events in our own lives which can be understood as moments in a pattern that enables us to give meaning to our existence. Understanding the plot structures that are available will help us to see how the 'facts' of historical events can be given different meanings, or can be included or excluded as 'evidence', depending on the historian's preunderstanding of 'what really happened', that is to say, the narrative context.

Having explored the responses of various contemporary historians and philosophers of history to questions of method, facticity, and truth in historical writing, I will examine the forms of narrative in what Northrop Frye has defined as 'archetypal' terms;[15] these are the structures underlying and preceding all stories, whether fictional or not. Historical Jesus portraits, it will be seen, can be classified according to these types, depending on the sort of story the author thinks he or she is writing. The narrative structures function grammatically, shaping the writer's choices. We shall also see that these generic intertexts function whether or not the author is conscious of them. Moreover, the writers trope their stories in characteristic ways, and these preferences are related both to the narratives they produce and to the ideological prefiguration of the historical field.

15. Frye 1968 [1957]. He distinguishes his own understanding of archetypes from the psychological understanding of the unconscious in the work of C.G. Jung, although for many critics the distinction is one with little difference. See Sugg (1992, especially 21-37). For further discussion on the philosophical issues concerning archetypes in historical understanding, see below, Chapter 2.

Although some gospel studies involving generic archetypes have been conducted, and some structuralist studies of the inter-relationship of action and character have been produced,[16] no similar study has been attempted for historical Jesus narratives. Some of this kind of work has however been done before in non-biblical historical contexts, most notably by Hayden White, in his ground-breaking book *Metahistory*.[17] Relying partially on the structural categories developed by Northrop Frye, White has developed a critical method for analyzing historical narrative in literary terms. It is his thesis that the deep literary structures of these writings shape our understanding of human actions in the past and communicate a content different from and complementary to that provided by historical explanations in non-narrative forms. Frye has been criticised for the reductive nature of his system, and White agrees that it may be difficult to account for multi-layered literary works where the richness of meaning is produced by the simultaneous use of more than one type or mode. He comments, however, that since historians do not ordinarily think in terms of fictional structures they tend to use more typical patterns (1973: 8). Although his analysis is strictly formal, and he is dealing with a very different kind of historical narrative, his method will inform my work.

Having elaborated the critical framework for analyzing historical narratives, I turn in the second part to a literary study of some representative third quest historical Jesus portraits. The portraits of four representative writers: J.P. Meier, N.T. Wright, E. Schüssler Fiorenza, and J.D. Crossan are studied in depth. The analysis deals with the classification of the plots and modes of action in these portraits, the rhetorical concepts which shape the prefiguration of the plot, the type of argument which emerges, and the theological and other implications of the work. Certain patterns of meaning emerge that have little or nothing to do with the explicit 'results' of the historical research; the literary structures, themselves generated by the various prefigurations of the historical field, produce meanings which expand the range of possibilities generated under transmissive writing and reading codes.

The role of the author in the text, what narratologists call the 'implied author', must also be considered, no less so because the authors have provided personas for themselves. It is characteristic of these texts to describe the actual author's theology and social location, which results in a characterization of the implied author and a description of his or her cultural intertext. This study will show that this self-examination ignores issues of narrative

16. See in particular Via (1967) and Patte (1976). The structuralist schemas of Greimas have been influential in the historical Jesus work of N.T. Wright. See below, Chapter 4.

17. White (1973). His book analyses the writings of the nineteenth-century historians Michelet, Ranke, Tocqueville, and Burckhardt, as well as the historical philosophy of Hegel, Marx, Nietzsche, and Croce. See below, Chapter 2.

structure and attitudes about history, so that while the authors all acknowledge in one way or another that they are writing historical narrative, none is consciously aware of shaping the text by formal choices. Hence they are largely unaware of the ideological implications of their poetics.

Postmodern historians, under the influence of Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida, have begun to explore the contexts in which historical narrative is written. This work, which has only just begun to touch biblical studies, avoids the formalism inherent in a purely New Critical approach. While it is not unlike the historical critical effort to reconstruct the social milieu in which the gospels were composed, my analysis focuses instead on the contemporary cultural context of the biblical critics themselves. I want, then, to suggest ways in which the narrative form functions ideologically within the authors' cultural contexts.

This study will conclude with some final observations about the meaning of the form in historical writing, returning to explore a subject suggested at the beginning, the cultural context in which this work has been done. My original questions will come up again, but this time with the possibility of new answers. Why have these portraits been produced? What is the cultural impetus for this work, and how does it both reinforce and subvert the dominant culture and institutions? What, if anything, has gender to do with it? Using the tools provided by culture criticism and gender theory in particular, I will conclude with an exploration of the social implications of the contemporary quest of the historical Jesus.

Part I

Methodological Matters

INTRODUCTION TO PART I

Is the 'historical' Jesus an appropriate subject of inquiry for students of the gospels? What sort of thing is a gospel? When one extracts 'theology' from it, is 'history' what is left? What sorts of tools are needed for the operation?

Thirty-five years have passed since Graham Stanton first challenged the modern consensus that the gospels are not biography.[1] In the same year, C.H. Talbert published *Literary Patterns, Theological Themes and the Genre of Luke-Acts* (1974), and shortly afterwards, his *What Is a Gospel? The Genre of the Canonical Gospels* (1977) appeared.[2] The question still incites lively debate. Willem S. Vorster, in an entry in the *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, distinguishes between 'gospel', a word used to describe a variety of early Christian texts of different types, and 'gospel genre', a term reserved for discussions of the literary form of the text. This distinction allows him to classify the canonical gospels as 'narratives', and to distinguish them from 'gospels' which are not written in narrative form, particularly collections of sayings like the *Gospel of Thomas*, but also other non-canonical 'gospels' (1992: 1078). The gospel genre, according to Vorster, shares formal characteristics with other types of ancient writing which also use narrative structures. The most popular candidates for the generic analogue have been ancient histories, ancient biographies (especially the *encomium*), and ancient novels.[3] Klaus Berger's

1. In *Jesus of Nazareth in New Testament Preaching* (1974), arguing that the gospels are 'biographical' rather than 'biographies' (1974: 135-36, 170). See also his more recent *The Gospels and Jesus*, where he again argues that the gospel biographies should not be considered biographies in the modern sense of the term (1989: 15-20). For other views, see also Shuler (1982); and the proceedings from the 1982 Tübingen Symposium, edited by Peter Stuhlmacher (1983). Downing (1988) and Tolbert (1989) both question the form critical position without agreeing to the biographical proposal; see Burridge (1992) for a detailed survey.

2. Critiqued by David E. Aune, who describes Talbert as a 'blindfolded man staggering across a minefield' (1981: 17), a criticism echoed by Burridge, who finds it 'unsatisfactory on several grounds, especially in its handling of the classical material and its use of literary theory' (1992: 86). Burridge surveys the work on gospel genre critically, hoping to disprove the hypothesis of biographical genre; he concludes however that 'despite the poor quality of many of the arguments for this hypothesis…the gospels are part of the genre of ancient βίος literature' (1992: 105-106). For a generally positive review of Burridge, with some reservations, see Collins 1995.

3. The literature is ample. See particularly the extensive bibliography in Burridge 1992.

exhaustive treatment of genre in the New Testament provides a summary of the characteristics of ancient biography, many of which are exemplified in the gospels; he concludes that the genre of the gospels is ancient biography, which is in turn dependent on *encomium*.[4] To the extent that the *encomium* narrates the life and ideas of a historical individual and shapes its story in such a way as to create a rhetorical effect, it has a good deal in common with the canonical gospels.

If, then, it is possible to speak of the canonical gospels as ancient narratives about a historical individual, a formal analysis of their literary structure is an appropriate critical activity. The recent history of biblical scholarship reflects this interest. 'Literary criticism' in biblical studies, long mired in minute examination of textual details, has joined the mainstream, although hardly in the vanguard. 'New Critical' studies have become common, although the New Criticism has taken retirement after a long and respectable career in literature departments. In historically oriented studies, on the other hand, biblical scholars largely ignore the developments in historiography in this century. In biblical scholarship, the commonsense view is that history is an accurate written account of events in the past, based on verifiable evidence. To a great extent, the various quests of the 'historical Jesus' reflect this view. Scholars may readily acknowledge that the canonical gospels are literary texts which can be analyzed as such, on the one hand; and they may accept the idea that histories are also literary texts, on the other. But the idea that 'history' and 'truth' can only be grasped hermeneutically is not a comfortable notion for many. In historiographical studies, more positivistic historians denigrate the 'philosophers of history' who argue that 'truth' is always interpreted. Theologians and believers have even more at stake in their faith in the objective and verifiable truth of the historical foundations of Christianity.

The contemporary quest of the historical Jesus in biblical studies comes after a long period of self-critical examination by historians. The tussle between those who do history and those who think about it has not ended, as we shall see, but the issues have become more clear. In a contemporary context which doubts the possibility of objectivity, beleaguered positivists have found themselves on shifting sand, while philosophers of history, who call the scientific basis of the field into question, have begun to gain ground. As the problem of historical truth becomes more complex, changes in attitudes about texts and interpretation have raised further issues for historians. More recently scholars have begun to explore the cultural contexts in which historical narrative is written. The idea that not only does any writing reflect the context in which it was produced, but that even expressions of opposition reinforce the cultural institutions which they oppose is becoming more

4. Berger (1984); see Burridge's critique (1992: 98-99). Cf. L.C.A. Alexander (1998).

common[5], particularly among those contemporary historians and literary critics influenced by postmodern theory.[6] New Historicist critics and deconstructive historians, under the influence of the philosophical writings of Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida, are leaders in this kind of thinking, which has only just begun to touch biblical studies.

I will begin, then, with a review of research in historiography, turning afterwards to the work of Hayden White as a starting point for a new hermeneutical model with which to understand and interpret the historical accounts produced by writers in the third quest of the historical Jesus.

5. This dynamic can be seen particularly in the discussions of Jesus' Jewishness; see below, Conclusion.

6. A summary may be found in the introduction to H. Aram Veeser's collection, *The New Historicism* (1989: xi).

Chapter 1

History and Theory

N.T. Wright defines the purpose of historical Jesus study as 'the pursuit of truth—historical truth'. The task before 'the serious historian of Jesus', he continues, is 'the advancement of serious historical hypotheses–that is, the telling of large-scale narratives—about Jesus himself, and the examination of the *prima facie* relevant data to see how they fit'. Wright's 'serious historian' is presumably one who shares the aims of historical scholars generally and who uses their methods, rather than the methods of historical critical biblical scholarship, with its 'pseudo-historical use of home-made "criteria"' (1996: 87-88). His own practice, in contrast, involves advancing historical hypotheses and then verifying the hypotheses by the use of factual data.[1] He begins, in other words, by asking questions, and then proceeds by positing answers which can be established by a process of cross checking against the available data.[2] 'Facts' are inferred from the data at the end of the process.[3] In the

1. Wright's 'critical realism' is not his own invention (nor does he claim it is); he relies primarily on the work of Ben F. Meyer, whose *Aims of Jesus* (1979) contains what Wright describes as 'probably the finest statement on historical method by a practising contemporary New Testament scholar'. See Denton (2004) for a detailed examination of Meyer's method, compared favourably with that of Crossan. The introduction to E.P. Sanders's *Jesus and Judaism* (1985) is another important source for Wright, 'clear and helpful, though not as philosophically grounded or nuanced as Meyer' (1992: 98 n.32). Telford includes Meyer in his category of 'holistic' approaches which challenge the 'atomistic and diachronic approach of the traditio-critical methods'. Such approaches tend to be synchronic and interdisciplinary, drawing on both literary and social-scientific methods. Meyer and Sanders make the 'ambitious claim that an overarching hypothesis regarding the intentions of Jesus should be ventured and utilized to control the hitherto intractable components of the tradition'. Telford includes Harvey (1982) (who suggests that 'a check could be made on the foreground data by means of the historical "constraints"' on Jesus) and Freyne (1988) (whose 'combined literary and sociological approach…seeks to do justice to our texts as literary products but with "real-world" connections and concerns'); and he is almost alone in citing Schüssler Fiorenza 'with an interdisciplinary, socio-political and feminist perspective on Jesus and his movement' (Telford 1994: 69).

2. See Meyer (1979: 80, 276). Meyer himself relies on the work of the philosophical theologian Bernard J.F. Lonergan, especially *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding* (1958).

tradition of the English philosopher and historian R.G. Collingwood, he is concerned with getting inside the minds of historical agents and understanding their intentions.[4] Thus history is not concerned with 'mere facts', but 'attempts to plot, uncover, and understand from the inside the interplay of human intentions and motivations present within a given field of initial investigation' (1992: 91).

John Dominic Crossan bridles at Wright's pointed 'use of the word "serious" to dismiss alternative positions', including Crossan's own (1997: 345). If 'serious' history *ends* with the interpreted data Collingwood calls facts, then historians who *begin* by selecting data according to certain 'home-made' criteria, in this case, the criteria of authenticity developed by form critics, cannot be taken seriously. Crossan, in response, argues that Wright's historical method produces 'an elegant fundamentalism by taking a theology of the synoptic tradition and calling it a life of the historical Jesus' (1997: 351). Because, according to Crossan, the synoptic gospels cannot be treated as independent sources, the synthesis Wright proposes as his historical hypothesis does not distinguish the 'facts' about Jesus from the 'facts' about the early Church.[5] If Crossan's history is non-serious according to Wright, Wright's is non-critical according to Crossan. But beyond the name-calling, their dispute has to do with divergent ideas of history.

Historical Jesus studies, and studies of the various quests, often attempt to categorize various portraits according to strands in the tradition.[6] But while

3. Following Meyer's discussion of R.G. Collingwood's 'new understanding of fact': 'The unknown in history was "the inside" of the event, i.e., the thought or purpose which charged it, making it an "action" and giving it meaning and direction. Event in this plenary sense is "a historical fact". "Facts", therefore, emerge at the *end* of inquiry, as its conclusion. They are inferred "according to rational principles" from data "discovered in the light of these principles". Therefore, "for the historian there is no difference between discovering what happened and discovering why it happened"' (1979: 87; cf. Collingwood 1961: 176-77).

4. Collingwood believed that the work of the historian was to create historical knowledge by re-enacting the thought of the past: '…the historian must re-enact the past in his own mind' (1961: 282). By bringing the thought of the past into the present, investigation which led to historical knowledge was made possible. See van der Dussen 1981: 157.

5. Thus Wright's method errs in slighting traditio-critical methods, in Crossan's view; while Crossan's approach does not give adequate attention to holistic readings based on literary-historical perspectives, in Wright's view, although it is certainly what Telford would characterize as 'holistic' in its use of social-scientific methods. All four authors considered here use a mixture of 'traditio-critical' and 'holistic' methods, in varying proportions. Wright and Schüssler Fiorenza are more 'holistic' than Meier, who is the most 'traditio-critical' of the four; Crossan attempts to integrate the approaches in his three levels of interpretation. See Telford 1994: 69.

6. Wright characterizes two of them as the 'Schweitzerstrasse' and the 'Wredebahn' and places most of the recent historical Jesus scholars on one or the other. On his map, so

many writers are careful to describe their own methodological choices, they seldom place themselves in a strictly historiographical context: biblical scholars compare themselves, largely, with other biblical scholars. While the philological roots of historical critical methods are evident in both disciplines, in the twentieth century historiography has developed in ways quite different from biblical studies. Occasionally a biblical scholar will register some discomfort with arguments that seem to confuse apples and oranges,[7] but it is more likely to be the result of a conflict between theological and historical-critical interpretation. Consequently, it might be helpful to begin by exploring how historians who are not biblical scholars have thought and written about history, in order to place historical Jesus scholars in a wider historiographical context.[8]

Michael Stanford identifies six elements in historical activity: the events of the past; the evidence which 'spans the gap in time between the events and the historian'; the mental construction of the past reflected in the evidence; the historical communication (book, article, or lecture) which is a product of the mental construction; the historical beliefs of the public concerning the events in the past; and historical actions which are the result of the cycle and which form part of the historical events, the first step in another cycle (1986: 4-5). Some of these elements focus on the past, most connect the past with the present, and one looks to the future. 'Serious history' includes all these elements, and each raises questions which historians and philosophers of history have struggled to answer. We are concerned here with several specific issues: scientific history and method; knowing and telling in historiography; historical language and questions of truth; and the appropriate structures for communicating ideas about the past.

to speak, Third Quest Way is off the Schweitzerstrasse. In a recent overview which helpfully distinguishes nine interlocking quests, Clive Marsh notes that Craig Evans (1995), in contrast to Wright, defines the Third Quest by methodological choices rather than the conclusions reached (1997: 405).

7. The phrase is one used by Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza in an awkward debate with N.T. Wright and John P. Meier at a session of the Historical Jesus Section of the Society of Biblical Literature in Philadelphia in 1995. Neither Wright nor Meier was able to engage with her on the subject of her book, *Jesus: Miriam's Child, Sophia's Prophet*, which has little in common with the Quest as Wright and Meier understand it. See also Marsh 1997: 417 for a similar description of the occasion.

8. This brief survey is not intended to treat the history of history in the past two centuries in detail; my purpose is to sketch the development of ideas which are related to contemporary historical Jesus study. In addition to the works cited in the text, Gooch 1959 [1913] provides an overview of the history of history in the nineteenth century, while Breisach 1994 is a comprehensive introduction. Iggers 1985 is particularly useful for the early twentieth century.

1. *A Brief History of History*

The medieval and early modern idea that things happened because God willed them yielded in the eighteenth century to the Enlightenment notion that human motives and actions could account for historical events. 'History', writes Richard J. Evans, 'was "philosophy teaching by example"; human nature was universal, unchanging and unhistorical' (1997: 16).[9] But the abstract certainties supremely summarized poetically in Alexander Pope's *Essay on Man* in the early eighteenth century and echoed more prosaically by the Scottish philosopher David Hume[10] were shattered half a century later by the political upheavals of two revolutions and ongoing wars in Europe, in which social chaos born of passion was seen to triumph over order and reason.[11] Things changed: indeed human beings changed, and some explanation was needed. Because the idea that events could be explained by their origins was widely held by historians, the record of the past might provide a basis not only for understanding the institutions and society of the present, but also for re-establishing stability. Also, because the State was regarded as the chief agent of change, political history, rather than social or aesthetic history, became the primary area of interest (Stern 1973: 19).[12]

Historians set out to explain the events of the past, convinced that historical research, like research in the natural sciences, could yield objective knowledge. The enthusiasm generated by the progress in scientific research led historians to hope for similar results. What Evans characterizes as a 'change in direction' (1997: 16) was led by the German historian Leopold von Ranke, who lived and worked throughout almost the entire nineteenth century.[13] A

9. Historiography, in the sense of critical study and use of documentary sources, had its earlier roots in the Italian Renaissance, beginning with Petrarch, who wanted to establish the best versions of newly rediscovered ancient texts. Religious controversies beginning in the Renaissance also stimulated interest in historical questions in the modern sense. A good general survey for the early period is Hay 1977. See also J.M. Levine 1991.

10. '…there is a great uniformity among the actions of men, in all nations and ages, and…human nature remains the same in its principles and operations' (Hume 1972: 83).

11. The French Revolution and the Napoleonic era mark the beginning of modern historiography. For the transition, see C. Crossley 1993; and for the nineteenth century, Gooch 1959 [1913]. For the cultural background leading up to the history of modern history, see Bermingham and Brewer 1995.

12. A view recently reiterated by Evans: the 'emerging historical profession was dominated by the view that the historian's task lay principally in the study of the origins and developments of states and their relations with one another' (1997: 26-27).

13. The first of the modern historians, Ranke was born in Germany in 1795, during the Reign of Terror following the French Revolution; he lived, working and writing prolifically, until 1886. His determination to limit himself to the use of documentary evidence in his representations of the past is part of what Hayden White calls the 'historiographical

trained philologist, he was determined to apply the research methods of philology to historical study. Methods developed in philology for establishing primary sources, determining the authenticity and reliability of texts, and using arguments based on internal and external consistency were applied to historical documents. Over the course of the nineteenth century, the study of primary sources became indispensable; the French historian Fustel de Coulanges, in his inaugural lecture at Strasbourg in 1862, described his own conversion in these terms: 'I then resolved to have no other teachers on Greece than the Greeks, nor on Rome than Romans, and I boldly resolved to read the ancient authors…' (Stern 1973: 185). The painstaking study of primary sources was not merely a means to an end: it had become a heroic virtue.

Source criticism provided one of the warrants for considering modern historical study a 'scientific' pursuit. The legendary Ranke, whose goal was to understand the essential nature of the past through the critical study of sources, taught his colleagues what Stern has characterized as 'an overwhelming passion for truth, embodied in the critical method'. Using the inductive method developed in the natural sciences, the historian, eschewing personal concerns, was supposed to provide neutral, uninterpreted reconstructions of the past, which would enable the discovery of patterns in past events and laws of historical change. The work of the historian became (and remains, as Evans points out) the 'basic Rankean spadework' of the discovery and careful examination of documents contemporaneous with the events described, enquiry into the intentions of the writers and the circumstances in which they were written, and comparison with other related documents (1997: 19). Theological or philosophical reflections 'judging the past' and 'instructing the present for the benefit of future ages' were not Ranke's goals; rather he sought to show 'what actually happened' (Stern 1973: 57).

'What actually happened' was available in the scientific analysis of historical sources. As Evans points out, 'The understanding of science which these claims implied was rigorously inductive. Out there, in the documents, lay the facts, waiting to be discovered by historians, just as the stars shone out there in the heavens, waiting to be discovered by astronomers; all the historian had to do was apply the proper scientific method, eliminate his own personality from the investigation, and the facts would come to light. The object of research was thus "to fill in the gaps" in knowledge…' (1997: 20-21). Indeed, the French historians Langlois and Seignobos were even confident that the task could be completed: 'In the case of some ancient periods, for which documents are rare, we can now see that in a generation or two it will be time to stop'.[14]

profession's credo of orthodoxy' (1973: 163); Evans recounts that he became a historian when he realized that Sir Walter Scott's historical novel *Quentin Durwood* contained historical errors (Evans 1997: 16).

14. Quoted in Evans 1997: 21; for other similar remarks, see also Novick 1988: 37-39.

But new texts, new techniques, and new questions opened up new areas of interest, and by the end of the century, the idea that all facts could be known had begun to appear distinctly implausible (Evans 1997: 22).

At the same time, while advances in the sciences led historians to hope that their field might progress in the same way, given appropriate critical methods, the first cracks in the edifice of scientific history appeared. To the extent that history was concerned with collecting data about past events, it could be seen, to a certain extent, as a scientific enterprise. But it soon became clear that the reconstruction of the past in what Ranke called its 'interconnectedness', with the goal of discovering its 'essence', was not. Even in Germany, there was doubt as to the possibility of history ever being neutral and value free (Evans 1997: 28).

Ranke himself, in the same breath that proposed his purpose was to show what actually happened, continues, 'The strict presentation of the facts, contingent and unattractive though they may be, is undoubtedly the supreme law. After this, it seems to me, comes the exposition of the unity and progress of events'. This 'unity and progress' he later characterized as 'a universal view of events, …a knowledge of the objectively existing relatedness' (Stern 1973: 57-58). Frederick Jackson Turner, the early twentieth-century historian of the American West, saw the problem: 'Each age tries to form its own conception of the past', he wrote, but '…this does not mean the real events of a given age change; it means that our comprehension of these facts changes'. Thus while Turner found it possible to affirm the unity and continuity of history, at the same time he understood the role of the historian in creating a narrative of the past which addresses present concerns. The unity and continuity do not exist objectively in the narrative, as Ranke had supposed; historians bring their own abilities and limitations to the task of narrating the past, and '…each man is conditioned by the age in which he lives and must perforce write with limitations and prepossessions…' (Stern 1973: 201-202).

Echoing these ideas, the English historian G.M. Trevelyan, writing in 1903, discerned 'three distinct functions of history, that we may call the *scientific*, the *imaginative* or *speculative*, and the *literary*' (Stern 1973: 239). Questions of fact and evidence are included in the scientific function. The 'imaginative' function, 'when [the historian] plays with the facts that he has gathered, selects and classifies them, and makes his guesses and generalisations' is for Trevelyan the most important part of the historian's work.[15] It is

15. In contrast to the opinion of Dr Johnson, who is recorded by Boswell in 1763: 'Great abilities (said he) are not requisite for an Historian; for in historical composition, all the greatest powers of the human mind are quiescent. He has facts ready to his hand; so there is no exercise of invention. Imagination is not required in any high degree; only about as much as is used in the lower kinds of poetry. Some penetration, accuracy and

done best by the historian who, 'having discovered and weighed all the important evidence obtainable, has the largest grasp of intellect, the warmest human sympathy, the highest imaginative powers' (Stern 1973: 231-32). After the interpretive work comes the literary task: 'the exposition of the results of science and imagination in a form that will attract and educate our fellow-countrymen' (Stern 1973: 239). By distinguishing these three functions, Trevelyan provided a temporary solution. Fact (which could be scientific and objective) was differentiated from interpretation (which was artistic and subjective). The facts still lay out there in the sources like rough diamonds which could be found by anyone with adequate training; but the polishing and cutting of the stones and the fashioning of the necklace depended on the skill and artistic sense of the jeweller.

In Germany, Neo-Kantian philosophers, particularly Wilhelm Dilthey, attempted to develop a methodology for the human sciences which contrasted with that of the natural sciences. Unlike the natural sciences which sought to explain phenomena in terms of abstract laws, social science sought a means intuitively to 'understand' human actions in their cultural contexts, although how this was to be done remained unclear. Dilthey understood historical understanding as an intuitive act of empathy.

But the turn of the century brought overwhelming change. Darwinian theories of change and development, along with Marxist ideas about the operation of historical laws, had challenged received ideas about human beings and human society. In intellectual disciplines, the new science of psychology opened up new understandings of human motives and actions; and in physics, Einstein's General Theory of Relativity called traditional understandings of objective truth into question. In Europe, the social order and stability of the late nineteenth century was shattered by political developments which led to both the Russian Revolution and the First World War. Historians rushed to defend their own governments and to inculpate others; Stern comments that they were propagandists who 'often led the chorus of national hatreds' (1973: 20). With hindsight, positions on all sides were clearly seen to be biased, and as Evans notes, 'The rigorous scientific training which [historians] had undergone seemed to have had no effect at all in inculcating a properly neutral and "objective" attitude to the recent past…' (1997: 28). The support of German historians for the war eroded the admiration of English, French, and American historians for their academic attainments; as Trevelyan later noted, not only Germany, but also 'German "scientific history"' was defeated in the war (Evans 1997: 28).

colouring will fit a man for the task, if he can give the application which is necessary' (Boswell 1791: Vol. I, 424 [6 July 1763]).

At the same time, other historians began to look for new ways to do history. The loss of faith in scientific history, along with speculation among philosophers of history about the application of the theory of relativity in historical research, led to skepticism about the possibility of objective knowledge about the past. Benedetto Croce in Italy and especially R.G. Collingwood in England argued that the present concerns of historians influenced, if they did not determine, the historians' choices. From Herbert Butterfield's warning early in the 1930s that 'The study of the past with one eye, so to speak, upon the present is the source of all sins and sophistries in history' to John Dewey's declaration 'All history is necessarily written from the standpoint of the present' less than a decade had passed. No longer could historians observe and collect facts that they then interpreted: 'the very act of observing and collecting them was itself governed by the historian's *a priori* beliefs about the past' (Evans 1997: 30-31).[16]

In England between the wars, in addition to the ideas about scientific and objective history, a second strand developed, following the thought of the philosopher R.G. Collingwood. The historian, Collingwood argued, created historical knowledge by bringing the thoughts of past agents into the present: '…the historian must re-enact the past in his own mind' (1961: 282). Collingwood's perspective focused the attention of historians on the personal motivations of individuals, inferred from the evidence. The historian began with an intuitive sense of events and persons in the past, expressed in a historical hypothesis which he then verified with evidence. To the extent that the evidence could be used in the construction of a coherent narrative of the past which enabled an understanding of the motivations of the human agents involved, it became 'fact'. In biblical studies, this model has been championed by N.T. Wright, who stands firmly in the Collingwoodian tradition, as he himself acknowledges. This is, for him, 'serious history', but it is only one strand in the tradition of academic (or 'proper') history.

While Collingwood's model opened up new areas of historical investigation, it was limited in its ability to account for historical data regarding social groups and for events in which intention plays little or no part. It was in France, particularly, where a broadly based history of society, examining historical trends and themes, took hold. The French historians associated with the *Annales d'histoire économique et sociale*, first published in 1929, influenced historical scholarship in France over the course of the entire twentieth century.[17] Unlike their English- and German-speaking colleagues, who saw history progressing diachronically through one-dimensional time, the *Annales* historians stressed the relativity and multi-layeredness of time. Modern

16. Cf. Dray 1989: 164-89.

17. See P. Burke 1991 and Stoianovich 1976 for general histories; for a biography of Marc Bloch, Fink 1989.

French historiography, with its close ties to geography, economics, and anthropology, reflects the concepts and methods of Lucien Febvre and Marc Bloch, the founders of the school. To their interest in German social history, they added cultural geography, and from social anthropology drawing on the work of Emile Durkheim, the importance of norms, customs, and religion. Their interdisciplinary approach led them to integrate the traditional disciplines into the 'sciences of man' (Iggers 1997: 53-54)[18] including the traditional triad of economics, sociology, and anthropology, but also linguistics, semiotics, literature and the arts, and psychoanalysis. But it is important to notice that the description and analysis of the past 'as it actually was', while taking into account a broad range of factors, remained the goal of social history. The influence of the *Annales* historians, especially in the multi-disciplinary approach, has been felt in biblical studies generally, and historical Jesus work specifically, where archaeology, anthropology, sociology, and economics have been necessary additions to the historians' tools. Semiotic analysis and the view that time is multi-dimensional are more controversial, as we will see, although work of Fernand Braudel, particularly his massive study of Mediterranean culture (1949), has left its mark on J.D. Crossan's method particularly.

In the 1960s and 70s, especially with the availability of the computer, history in France was caught up in the fascination with quantification, which also marked the American historical scene. 'Total history' began with statistics of all sorts and attempted a new history of consciousness, analyzing trends in thought based on mass demographic data.[19] More recently, as skepticism regarding the value of statistical analysis and interest in the problems of language have grown, the 'history of everyday life' attempts to reconstruct the most intimate and personal details of ordinary individuals. As a result, history has begun to pay attention to those on the margins; for the first time in modern historiography, the lives of women, ethnic minorities, and the poor have become of interest to historians. In New Testament studies generally, much work on the social world of the first century reflects this interest in everyday life from a sociological perspective; those scholars who are interested in recovering the 'lost' voices of the past have found the subjects and methods of the history of everyday life to be congenial.

The German historical establishment, centered in the conservative structures of the university, was deeply marked by the political events of the first

18. '*Sciences de l'homme*', reflecting both their interdisciplinary vision and masculinist bias. The *Annales* historians, for all their innovation, continue in the tradition of scientific history, grounded in an analytical philosophy of history, which leaves little space for multiple voices from the margins.

19. Le Roy Ladurie's work on the peasants of Languedoc, a 'history without people', is perhaps the most ambitious of these studies. See Carrard 1992 for an overview.

half of the twentieth century. It was not until the rise to prominence of the 'Bielefeld School', a group of social historians loosely connected to the University of Bielefeld, that German historiography began to regain the prominence it had had in the nineteenth century. Led by Hans Ulrich Wehler, these historians approach the study of society with the assumption that research should result in social change. Influenced by the critical theory of Max Horkheimer and Jürgen Habermas,[20] these historians believe that they have an ethical responsibility to contribute to the organization of a reasonable and humane society where all individuals can live in dignity with the freedom to shape their own destinies (Iggers 1997: 69-72). This social scientific history with its roots in ethical thinking emphasizes hermeneutical approaches to research.

F.R. Ankersmit, in writing of the 'dilemma' of contemporary Anglo-Saxon philosophy of history, traces 'two alternative standpoints' or 'two tracks' in philosophy of history, and suggests that these two different forms of thinking about history are not only opposed to each other but have little in common (1986: 1). This distinction, which will be helpful in understanding the differences in historical Jesus interpretation, is related, according to Ankersmit, to the difference between the '…German (or Continental) hermeneutical tradition from Schleiermacher to Gadamer or Derrida–and beyond–and Anglo-Saxon hermeneutics from Collingwood on. The former has as its paradigm the interpretation of texts (preferably biblical, juridical, or literary) and the latter the explanation of intentional human action… German or continental hermeneutics has deeply influenced today's literary criticism, and via literary criticism has recently found its way into the narrativist tradition within Anglo-Saxon philosophy of history' (1986: 6-7).

2. *Knowing the Truth: Modernist History*

Modernist philosophy of history, rejecting German historicism and speculative philosophies of history, grew out of the attempt to discover the nature of the epistemological criteria for historical knowledge. Ankersmit marks the beginning of Anglo-Saxon philosophy of history with the publication in 1938 of M. Mandelbaum's *The Problem of Historical Knowledge*,[21] although he acknowledges that R.G. Collingwood had been doing 'a great deal of work in the field since the 1920s' (1986: 2). While Ankersmit recognizes two strands in the tradition, he sums up the similarities in a series of points, of which two are useful here. The first is that modernist philosophies of history are concerned

20. See Thiselton 1992: 379-92.

21. Making an exception for F.H. Bradley's *The Presuppositions of Critical History* (1874).

with historical explanation, with connecting the dots on a piece of white paper; they disagree that the task of the historian is primarily interpretive, discovering a pattern in the dots. They focus on details rather than on the larger picture.[22] The second is the assumption that historians 'can and should in all cases distinguish clearly among three levels: (1) the past itself, (2) the historical language we use for speaking about the past, and (3) the level of philosophical reflection concerned with how historians arrive at their conclusions and how these conclusions can be formally justified' (1986: 13). Postmodernist philosophies may blur the last two categories, muddling history and metahistory. But more troublesome for modernist hermeneutics is the blurring of the first two, resulting in the difficulty in knowing whether our concepts and descriptions of the past are indeed part of the past or intellectual constructs which we bring to it. In biblical studies, this discussion is part of the debate over reader-response theories of interpretation, which are concerned with locating the meaning of the text either in the text or in the reader. The extreme versions of this theory strip all meaning from the text and vest the readers with complete power to make meaning.[23]

Modernist philosophy of history undergirds much of the historical analysis of the twentieth century, and its presuppositions are common in historical Jesus work. The importance of establishing facts, for example, clearly marks historical critical inquiry in biblical studies. Much work has centered on distinguishing the facts about the life of Jesus from the narrative history of the evangelists, on undoing the gospels in a sense. Doing this has required wide-ranging inquiries into first-century history, archeology, sociology, philosophy, and theology, along with painstaking analysis of the texts available. Once the texts have yielded up the facts, in this case the words that Jesus is certain to have spoken and the deeds that he is certain to have done, a portrait of the man can be assembled, one that is historical, factual, and true. Out of these fragments, which for modernist historians seem to represent the past itself, the truth about his life and death can be told.

As we have seen, by the mid-twentieth century the scientific nature of historical study had been seriously challenged by relativists arguing that

22. A distinction I have found useful for workers in the historical field, although I have no idea where it comes from, is between 'mushroom pickers' and 'parachutists'. Interestingly, Ankersmit speculates that perhaps Collingwood's training as an archeologist 'goes a long way to explain his preoccupation with the problem of why people did, made, or thought certain things in the past; and it is undoubtedly true that his re-enactment theory is well suited to the problem of how to study the artefacts from a remote past which has left no written tradition' (1986: 11).

23. See Fish, *Is There a Text in this Class?: The Authority of Interpretive Communities* (1980). The answer Fish gives to this question is 'there is and there isn'that' (1980: vii). See Moore 1989 for an analysis of the 'theoretical challenge' to biblical studies which Fish and other literary critics present, along with a comprehensive bibliography.

objective truth was unattainable. C. Behan McCullagh describes this attack on the truth of history as 'arguments from cultural relativism, which point out that historians' descriptions of the world are largely determined by the concepts and language of the culture in which they live, and so cannot be regarded as simply representing the world as it was' (1998: 13). McCullagh holds what he calls 'a "correlation" theory of truth…[which] says that a description of the world is true if there is something in the world which resembles one of the conventional truth conditions of the description' (1998: 17). He recognizes three possible problems: our senses provide information, but do not mirror reality precisely; they are influenced by our culture; and they are influenced by our needs, interests, and desires. Nonetheless, he argues that truth in description is possible: according to him, language does refer to something outside itself and can be tested by our sense perceptions or experience and judged true or false. Colloquially speaking, if you had been there, you could have perceived it; in this sense, we can say that description is true (1998: 39).[24] Thus, while description is not culturally neutral, it is possible to make truth claims based on evidence. To the extent that the evidence is adequate, a very real constraint for ancient history, and that the historian does not ignore data which conflict with his or her interpretation, a historical description may be said to be true.[25]

So, if truth in description is possible, despite the cultural constraints and personal biases that affect us all, a second critique comes into play. This is 'a critique of historical inferences which historians draw from evidence available to them, showing that they rely upon historians' personal epistemic values, and that even when the inferences are widely accepted their conclusions are not necessarily true' (1998: 13). Our knowledge of the past, he observes, depends upon 'our procedures of inquiry and standards of inference' (1998: 32). The procedures in historical Jesus study, for example, continue to rely on the commonly accepted 'criteria of authenticity' by which historians decide whether their data provide evidence for the time of Jesus himself or for the time when the documents were composed.[26] Thus, to take one example, data which are present in more than one independent strand of the tradition, which are attested in multiple sources, are thought more likely

24. This ultimately leads him to conclude that cultural relativism is compatible with historical truth (1998: 171). A simple example may help: The fact that I am a white, middle-class, professional woman and that as a result of my cultural experiences and assumptions I notice certain things about gender differences does not mean that these things are not true. They may be true. My description of them, on the other hand, may or may not be fair.

25. But McCullagh recognizes that the 'belief in the truth of our best explanations is indeed an act of faith' (1998: 28).

26. The literature is substantial: see below Chapter 3 for some indications.

to be authentic than those which appear in only one strand. On this basis, which is widely accepted as a useful criterion, many scholars agree that the beatitudes, at least in part, come from Jesus. That is to say, many scholars agree that multiple attestation is a logical basis on which to draw a conclusion, on the one hand; and the conclusion that they draw is widely held on the other. But, say those who critique the method, it is not necessarily *true*. We may all agree in error. So, even when there is a consensus about the method and general agreement about the conclusion, it still may be false. And if there is inadequate data, it may not be possible to adjudicate the claims. Nonetheless, McCullagh would hold that events occurred in the past, whether or not the evidence or our methods enable us to verify it. And 'the fact that our knowledge is fallible is not a reason for saying that none of it can be true' (1998: 44).

3. *Telling the Truth in your Own Words*

A third critique of truth in history, and a more difficult problem for philosophers of history, comes from postmodernists 'who say that such descriptions pretend to describe the world but really only represent people's concepts of the past, concepts which are essentially linguistic and which have no particular relation to reality' (McCullagh 1998: 13). As a realist, McCullagh takes the position that language refers to extra-textual reality[27], taking issue with Roland Barthes's argument in 'The Discourse of History' (1986 [1967]). Barthes, arguing that the structure of historical discourse, apart from any appeal to the substance of the content, 'is essentially an ideological elaboration', goes on to comment that the notion of historical 'fact' has often been problematical. 'Once language intervenes (and when does it not intervene?), a fact can be defined only tautologically: the *noted* issues from the *notable*, but the *notable* is…only what is worthy of memory, i.e., worthy to be *noted*'. Thus, Barthes concludes, the paradox of historical discourse is that 'the fact never has any but a linguistic existence (as the term of discourse), yet everything happens as if this linguistic existence were merely a pure and simple "copy" of *another* existence, situated in an extra-structural field, the "real." This discourse is doubtless the only one in which the referent is addressed as external to the discourse, though without its ever being possible to reach it outside this discourse' (1986: 138). So what distinguishes historical discourse for Barthes is that the referent is detached from the discourse and is supposed to ground it; and in a second move, the signified is merged with the referent. The referent, then, 'enters into direct relation with the signifier, and the

27. Following Leon Goldstein (1976: xxi): 'the distinction between facts and the description of facts…does not exist'.

discourse, meant only to *express* the real, believes it elides the fundamental term of imaginary structures, which is the signified' (1986: 138-39). This two-term semiotic system characterizes any discourse with 'realistic' claims, where 'the "real" is never anything but an unformulated signified, sheltered behind the apparent omnipotence of the referent. This situation defines what we might call the *reality effect*' (1986: 139, all italics his). Like the meaning of the photograph, in comparison with a drawing, the meaning of this effect is to signify that the event represented has *really* taken place, while at the same time refusing to recognize the real as a signified. But just as both the photograph and the drawing are interpretive representations, so too is historical discourse. In terms of semiotic significance, history bears the same relationship to historical fiction as the photograph does to the drawing: history is how it *really* is supposed to have been, while fiction is only the way it has been imagined.[28]

But if, as Barthes argues, there is no extra-textual reality, there is no way to distinguish between history and historical fiction. Both narrate events in 'the past'. A common tactic is to argue for a distinction based on authorial intent: if the writer intends truthfully to relate events which actually happened, he or she is writing history. This presupposes that while there is extra-textual reality, we do not have unmediated access to it. The referent remains a sign pointing to the real but in no way identical to it. Historical data refer to 'the past', a linguistic construction, rather than to the past, which is inaccessible. By convention, 'the past' is supposed to be a representation of past extra-textual reality. Can it then be true?

In order to maintain his realist view, McCullagh defines the referent of historical discourse as reality as we would perceive it, as distinguished from the real. It is possible to make accurate and truthful statements about this historical reality: 'historians should say that [their well-supported conclusions] are probably true, relative to the available evidence and to their culture at the time' (1998: 43). Historical discourse, then, can refer truthfully and accurately to a subjectively constituted past reality, which retains a significant relation to the real. He denies the arguments which hold that the truth of

28. See W. Martin 1986: 72-73 for a discussion of the difference between historical and fictional narratives. He argues that the conventions of narrative are not constraints, but rather create the possibility of narration for both the historian and the novelist. According to Louis Mink (1978), 'at present we have no standards or even suggestions for determining how the connections between events in fictional narratives might differ from those in history' (Martin 1986: 73). Hayden White argues that the conventions of narrative determine whether or not an event will be considered a fact, a perspective which Mink describes: 'Instead of the belief that there is a single story embracing the ensemble of human events, we believe that there are many stories, not only different stories about different events but even different stories about the same events' (1978: 140).

historical description is a matter of coherence rather than correlation. To call an explanation true 'is not to say that it is well supported by the evidence', but rather that it is about something that really happened in the past (1998: 47); it is justified by arguments based on evidence. From a logical perspective, as Rorty argues, since we have no idea of nature other than our knowledge of it, is makes no sense to say that our descriptions are true or false. We have no way of making a comparison, so logically there is no truthful description of the real. But, says McCullagh, this is a logical, not an evidential concern. Conclusions reached by arguments based on evidence can be said to be true or false, despite our inability to verify them absolutely by comparison with some extratextual reality, and the ethical cost of dropping the notion of truth entirely is too high. A correlation theory of truth does not require an unobtainable objectivity or completeness, and 'it retains an essential intuition that there can be a significant relationship between our beliefs and the world outside us, a relationship worth discovering so that we can act more effectively in the world' (1998: 50).

To argue, as Barthes does, that there is an arbitrary relation between the signifier and the signified, a slippery relation between the signified and the referent, and no necessary relation between either the signified or the referent and the real, puts historical discourse into a linguistic abyss. McCullagh resists this move for ethical reasons: to give up description entirely because objectivity is unattainable would be 'seriously irresponsible' (1998: 42), presumably because it leaves us without philosophical justification for our choice of moral action. Using the de Man debate,[29] Evans warns in a similar vein that 'total relativism provides no objective criteria by which fascist or racist views of history can be falsified' (1997: 239). Postmodern relativism is culturally conditioned; in the United States it has accompanied multiculturalism, which Evans defines as 'the idea that different, disadvantaged cultural groups in society have equally valid perspectives on historical truth, and that these must be asserted in order to empower these groups in the face of the dominant concept of historical truth held by the ruling white male élite' (1997: 232).[30] It is, clearly, a two-edged sword, for if relativism enables the

29. A major academic scandal erupted in 1987 when it was revealed that Paul de Man, the respected Yale critic who was one of the eminent proponents of deconstructionism, had written for pro-Nazi publications during the War, but hidden his activities after he escaped to America. An entire issue of the journal *Critical Inquiry* (15.4), published in the summer of 1989, was devoted to the painful discussion.

30. Echoing the argument made earlier in *Telling the Truth about History*, where Joyce Appleby, Lynn Hunt, and Margaret Jacob argue that skepticism and relativism about truth result from the 'insistent democratization of American society' (1994: 3): 'The opening of higher education to nearly all who seek it, the rewriting of American history from a variety of cultural perspectives, and the dethroning of science as the source and model for all that is true are interrelated phenomena'. European society, although marked by other

revaluation of the marginal or subordinate, it simultaneously undercuts the philosophical grounds for action in opposition.

Cultural relativism and postmodern critiques of language and reality call into question naive claims about the truth of historical description. And although the past 'as it was in itself' is unknowable, there are reasons to be confident that our perceptions can provide truthful information about the past. Evans opines that 'even the most diehard deconstructionist concedes in practice that there is extratextual reality', and while that may be questionable, historical Jesus scholars are rarely 'diehard deconstructionists'. That being the case, he concludes, 'Through the sources we use, and the methods with which we handle them, we can, if we are very careful and thorough, approach a reconstruction of past reality that may be partial and provisional, and certainly will not be objective, but is nevertheless true' (1997: 249).

4. *Structuring the Past*

In his *On History and Philosophers of History*, William H. Dray argues that history is essentially causal; it responds to the questions 'What happened?' and 'Why did it happen?' with description and explanation. Its method is narrative, unlike the social scientific method which involves exemplifying or testing general theory (1989: 123). Indeed, as Arthur C. Danto points out, the causal question itself generates narrative. So, if historical Jesus portraits attempt to answer causal questions like 'What caused Jesus' death?' and 'Why did the early Church develop as it did?', it is not surprising that the form of explanation should be narrative, analyzing events in temporal sequence and seeking connections. They may include other non-narrative data, which Danto calls 'narratively inert information' (1965: 251), but to the extent that it focuses on describing events and explaining their causes, history is necessarily structured as narrative.[31] Analytical philosophers of history, particularly those who look for laws of historical change, are dissatisfied with narrative structures as explanations, partly because of the unpredictability of events in the world and partly also because of the unintended effects of intentional action: you never know what will happen next, and when you do something, you can never be sure that the results will be what you intended. History does

factors as well, has also seen the universalization of higher education, the development of multiculturalism, and the growth of skepticism about scientific truth.

31. When historians present 'narratively inert information', it is often in the interest of generating or testing historical 'laws' with a predictive value. While historians may use such laws to predict events in the future, in the interest of avoiding repeating certain kinds of events and encouraging the reoccurrence of others, experience has shown that history does not repeat itself, and the 'laws' of historical development have not been as helpful as might be hoped.

not necessarily proceed in a logically connected manner. Contingencies happen. What happened next does not always depend on what happened first, and events may not be deducible from their antecedents (1965: 131).[32]

While in this sense the contingent is unintelligible, this does not mean that it is unacceptable in historical narrative. An event which is contingent, which could not be predicted from its antecedents, may nonetheless be a necessary condition of a subsequent event; or it may be part of the narrative logic, providing continuity with the past even if it is not causal. Biblical miracles, for example, are by definition contingent events; but if subsequent events are inexplicable without the miracle, then it has a place in the historical narrative. But to have a place in historical narrative is not to claim that the event took place as it is described. Thus the Resurrection may be taken as the pivotal event which preceded the rise of the early Church after Jesus' death, providing continuity without necessarily arguing cause. Commentators who hold the view that history proceeds in a logically continuous and connected manner will argue that the early Church is inexplicable without this event, that it is a necessary condition of what followed. To make sense of the past is to find and trace these connections. Because we have confidence in the factual existence of the early Church, we can posit that the miraculous is historical. That is to say, something unpredictable and inexplicable happened historically, without which it is difficult to make sense of subsequent events. The event functions historically, marking the temporal place of contingency; the actual content of the event, however, is not thereby proved. For the historian who does not hold a disjunctive view of history, the miraculous need not be omitted from historical accounts if it is logically necessary to the narrative and if the event under description functions merely as a counter, not as evidence.

If history is necessarily narrative, to what extent is the narrative structure part of the events in the past? Is historical narrative made or found? It is helpful to recognize that although the historian creates structures for his or her history, events in the past provide certain structural limitations as well.[33] Michael Stanford has helpfully categorized six types of structures in historical writing, grouped under two headings, 'inherent' and 'imposed'. Of the first group, those limitations imposed by the logic of the universe, the qualities of the human organism, and the structures of 'the world', he writes, 'All these types, though often relating to humanity, seem to lie beyond the human will. They confront us' (1986: 108). These are the givens, in other words, of all human experience, and the historian who ignores these structural constraints will no longer be perceived to be writing history.[34] Entropy and the

32. See Gallie, in Dray 1989: 124-26.

33. What A.E. Harvey in his work on Jesus calls the 'constraints of history' (1982).

34. Ignoring human temporal limitations by traveling to the past, for example, changes

value of pi, for example, seem to be part of the mathematical structures of the universe, while the use of language and the experience of ageing and death are universal structures of the human. The chemical elements and the molecular constitution of matter are typical structures of 'the world'. Although advances in science have enabled human beings to refine their understanding of these structures, they are inherent in human experience.

Inherent structures function as limits to historical discourse; that is, historians are required to take the inherent structural constraints of reality into consideration in historical reasoning. As Namier aptly observed, our historical sense is 'an intuitive understanding of how things do not happen' (Stern 1973: 30). People walk; they do not fly. A historical narrative which presents reality differently may be understood as historical fiction; it will not be understood as historical fact. Equally, people who die remain dead. A historical narrative which argues otherwise will be questionable on the grounds of structural constraints. But as we have seen, such an event may be used to provide a logical connection between events as part of a historical explanation.

Stanford then explores the 'imposed' structures, those things which 'are not *within* the universe but are imposed *upon* it by the human mind. Although they may be unavoidable, they are also suspect' (1986: 109, italics his). These are socially and politically constructed structures, generalizations and patterns of meaning by which the historian recognizes the data which constitute evidence and shapes the evidence into a coherent and plausible historical narrative. As Evans points out, we know that 'we will be guided in selecting materials for the stories we tell, and in the way we put these materials together and interpret them, by literary models, by social science theories, by moral and political beliefs, by an aesthetic sense, even by our own unconscious assumptions and desires. It is an illusion to believe otherwise' (1997: 249-50). These structures are open to disagreement, and it is on this level that discussions about the social construction of reality take place, and where challenges to the accepted order of things may happen. While the inherent structures are usually implicit presuppositions which operate at the level of metaphysical conceptions, imposed structures, at least in a late modern or postmodern age, are less likely to be uncritically accepted, or to 'go without saying'. Those things that go without saying, we might say, often go better when we say them, and better still when we argue about them. Thus imposed structures are part of the content of the presuppositions which scholars attempt to make explicit in their work.

Having made this distinction, it is worth now wondering at what level the 'facts' which constitute historical evidence exist. In historical Jesus research,

history into historical fiction (its most realistic mode) or science fiction (in its fantastical mode). We read these narratives according to different conventions. Cf. Lentricchia1980.

how are facts recognized? What data seem to require the abrogation of the laws of the universe? The miraculous seems to pose difficulties here, as we have seen. But beyond that question, most historical enquiry assumes agreement on these matters, roughly based on a shared experience of scientific structures of reality. The effects of a solar eclipse on the Earth's atmosphere do not vary according to the social contexts of the scientists measuring them. The questions asked and the means devised for the measurement, on the other hand, may indeed differ. So it is with historical research: the social context of the historian may indeed cause him or her to ask one question of the data and not another, and the types of reasoning to which the data are subjected in analysis may also differ depending on the various contexts of the historians interested in the subject. In historical Jesus research, to choose only the most obvious example, the gender of the historian may well lead some historians to ask entirely different questions, and to think differently about what constitutes facts and what makes evidence. And so, not surprisingly, the problems of historical evidence appear in those areas of enquiry where the structures are imposed rather than inherent. It is at this level that the question of subjectivity arises, and at this level where the disputes begin. But not where they end.

Facts are not the only items under dispute. Facts have, at least, the claim to a certain objectivity: if history is at all scientific, it is at the level of the historical fact that this claim is most easily substantiated. Jesus, we know, was born in a certain time and a certain place. That time and that place are facts, whether we know them or not. One historian might argue that his or her decision regarding these facts is true, and another might disagree, but it is nevertheless the case that there is only one correct answer. But the *use* of these facts in a historical narrative is another matter entirely. A historian interested in political events in first-century Palestine would find Matthew's gospel a better source than Luke's; conversely, a social historian attempting to understand the class system at that time might find Luke provides more useful data. The facts which constitute the evidence for one historical explanation or another vary according to the question asked of the data, and the same fact might be used differently in the two analyses, and if they are not contradictory, we would have no difficulty saying that both are historically accurate and true. That is to say, as Evans points out, 'In the end, it simply is not the case that two historical arguments which contradict one another are equally valid, that there is no means of deciding between them as history because they are necessarily based on different political and historical philosophies. It is one thing to say that different historians use the same sources to ask different questions, quite another to say that they use them for the same question and come up with diametrically opposed answers' (1997: 220).

In the case of historical Jesus studies, however, it seems to be the case that the same questions are being answered in contradictory ways, and argument

rages over what the facts are, which sources provide the best evidence, which facts correctly constitute the evidence for an argument, and which argument best explains the data. No one disagrees that historical explanation must be based on facts if it is to be convincing, and that historical facts must bear a correlation to past reality. That is to say, historical Jesus study takes place within a largely modernist philosophical context, although some scholars have heard the postmodern siren's song. On the other hand, the sources and methods are contested, and despite the care and thoroughness of the scholars, conflicting interpretations of the data compound the problem. But if, as postmodern philosophers of history argue, history is a language game, a literary analysis of historical narratives may enable us better to understand the choices of the writers in shaping their accounts, and thus perhaps to limit the number of areas of disagreement.

Chapter 2

Elements of Historiography

1. *Hayden White's* Metahistory

Hayden White begins his study of 'the historical imagination in nineteenth-century Europe' with a desire to find a new perspective for thinking about the past and doing history. While for the past two hundred years, as we have seen, historians and philosophers of history have debated what it means to think historically and what methods of inquiry are specific to the study of the past, in the late twentieth century these questions have become fraught with difficulty. The attitude toward history that I have called postmodern lacks the modernist certainty that definitive answers are possible, and indeed thinkers in both the Continental European and Anglo-American traditions have challenged the scientific bases of all historical reconstruction.[1] As White characterizes it, 'The effect of these two lines of inquiry has been to create the impression that the historical consciousness of which Western man has prided himself since the beginning of the nineteenth century may be little more than a theoretical basis for the ideological position from which Western civilization views its relationship not only to cultures and civilizations preceding it but also to those contemporary with it in time and contiguous with it in space'.[2] He concludes, 'In short, it is possible to view historical consciousness as a specifically Western prejudice by which the presumed superiority of modern, industrial society can be retroactively substantiated'(1973: 2-3).

With this critique as his starting point, White proposes an 'analysis of the deep structure of the historical imagination' in order 'to provide a new perspective on the current debate over the nature and function of historical knowledge'. In one of the most often quoted passages of his book, he states his intention to 'consider the historical work as what it most manifestly is– that is to say, a verbal structure in the form of a narrative prose discourse that

1. See White 1966 for a discussion of the grounds for these positions. Among recent contributors, see particularly Lévi-Strauss 1966 and Foucault 1969, 1971.

2. For examples of the range of thinking, see Dray 1966; for a summary of the positions, Mink 1968.

purports to be a model, or icon, of past structures and processes in the interest of *explaining what they were by representing* them' (1972: 2-3, italics his).[3]

Because White defines the discourse of history in poetic terms, historians have felt uneasy about his ideas; as Jörn Rüsen points out, 'They felt consigned to the uncomfortable and ambiguous vicinity of poetry and robbed of their hard-earned dignity as scholars of a highly rationalized, methodologically confirmed discipline' (1987: 87). White takes scant interest in 'whether a given historian's work is a better, or more correct, account of a specific set of events or segment of the historical process than some other historian's account of them' (1973: 3-4). He is concerned with the historian's vision of the historical field, rather than with the data used. His model, then, seems ideally suited to the analysis of historical Jesus narratives, where despite the competence of the historians, the data and their interpretation remain highly contested. For White, historical narrative creates the past, and functions as a metaphor for it; whatever happened in the past is always linguistically mediated, and can only be represented, never mirrored. Texts can only mirror other texts. Thus he focuses on the deep structures of historical writing, particularly what he calls the modes of emplotment, argument, and ideological implication (1987: 5).

The 'unprocessed historical record' is arranged in forms White calls 'chronicle' and 'story', the 'primitive elements' in the historical account.[4] The chronicle is a temporal arrangement of events, which is transformed into story by various motifs which make logical connections between events and provide beginnings and at least provisional endings for the series of events described. Like the writer of fictional accounts, the historian tells a story. While it is sometimes asserted that the novelist invents stories and the historian finds them, the selection and arrangement of events include a good deal of invention, even if actual events in the past are part of the unprocessed historical record. In arranging events, the historian, like the novelist, addresses questions of process, causality, and significance: how did it happen? What

3. He is aware that he has wandered into a literary critical minefield, as an extensive footnote shows, but unlike critics who explore the historical components of realistic art, White is concerned with the artistic elements of realistic historiography. In this he is influenced by Auerbach 1968 and Gombrich 1960; but he relies particularly on Frye 1968 and K. Burke 1984 [1959]. See Kellner 1980, 1982; and Kramer 1989.

4. The chronicle takes the form of a list, beginning when the chronicler starts and ending when he or she stops, organizing the historical field by temporal seriality. White comments concerning pre-Enlightenment annalists that ultimately annals provide data from which historical narrative might be written, but they are not historical narrative. In the study of early Christianity, lists remain an under-examined topic, as Jonathan Smith has noticed (1982: 44); J.D. Crossan further explores the topic of lists of sayings and miracles as sources for early Christian history in his response to *Semeia* 55 (1991a).

caused it? What were the effects? What happened next? How did it come out in the end? And finally, what is the point of it all? Although the historical data bear some relationship to the actual events in the past, which exist outside the consciousness of the writer, even the simplest narrativization involves the inclusion of some events and the exclusion of others, and the highlighting of some and the downplaying of others, activities which move the historical account out of the realm of the transmissive language of chronicle into that of the productive language of story.[5] The narrative produces meaning, and in White's terms, 'Providing the "meaning" of a story by identifying the *kind of story* that has been told is called explanation by emplotment' (1973: 7, italics his).

2. *Structures and Truth*

Perhaps the most useful place to begin an analysis of plot structure is with Northrop Frye's third essay in *Anatomy of Criticism*, 'Archetypal Criticism: Theory of Myths' (1968: 131-239). Frye's book, first published in 1957, came during the twilight years of the New Criticism in English studies.[6] In its attempt to analyze the deep structures of literary language, it presages the structuralist studies in both linguistics and literature that shortly followed it.[7]

5. For White's account, which I have followed here, see 1973: 6-7.

6. See particularly Kreiger 1956, Kermode 1957, and Brooks and Wimsatt 1957, all of which understand the New Criticism to have reached an end point in literary historical terms. In *After the New Criticism*, Frank Lentricchia writes, 'By about 1957 the moribund condition of the New Criticism and the literary needs it left unfulfilled placed us in a critical void' and 'the emerging force of Frye's reputation, together with a series of theoretical events favorable to the partisans of myth and symbolic forms, made the time propitious for the appearance of a major theoretical treatise which would somehow move us beyond the New Criticism and its isolating habits of mind' (1980: 4).

7. Paul Ricoeur argues strongly that Frye's work 'does not belong to the same system of thought that governs the narrative theory of the French school of structuralism. I see in the latter an attempt to reconstruct, to simulate at a higher level of rationality, what is already understood on a lower level of narrative understanding, the level brought to light for the first time by Aristotle in his *Poetics*. This attempted reconstruction has the same ambitions and arises out of the same second-order rationality that we see at work in the domain of historiography; its best illustration is provided by nomological models of historical explanation' (1983: 1). So Frye's description of the narrative patterns of literature operates at a different epistemological level than does, for example, N.T. Wright's Greimassian analysis of the structure of the parable of the Prodigal (see below, Chapter 4). To use Louis Mink's terms, the 'configurational act' by which we 'grasp together' the various elements of historical research into a plot is what makes the narrative intelligible; 'it is this synthesis of the heterogenous in the configurational act that we understand as meaningful'. Frye's typologies, then, are 'grafted to this first order of intelligibility, without any recourse to the structuralists' narratological rationality, which begins by setting aside on principle

For all its limitations, it marked a watershed in literary criticism, and Frye's encyclopedic command of Western literature is rarely rivalled. It is an integrative, systematic, wide-ranging exploration of what the study of literature is about, a critical 'metanarrative'[8] of the sort we have learned to distrust a generation later. Beyond English departments, it has influenced thinkers in the philosophy of history, and it provided Hayden White with the forms for his analyses of emplotment.[9] For simple forms, and perhaps for more formulaic 'popular' literature, Frye's system is convincing. But his 'rage for order' resulted in a elaborate structure in which complex works sit uneasily in the box seats provided for them. The limited terminology available for naming and describing genre, form, and mode creates confusion, when one term must do double or triple duty. This is the problem, for example, with Romance, romance, and romantic, where the terms suggest both medieval tales of knights and dragons and modern love stories. Other problems exist with Satire, a term which does not connote all the theory would have it do, and Comedy, which suggests humorous content.

White has taken Frye's categories over for his own classification of nineteenth century history. The subjects of his analysis, however, are not easily understood in these terms, and ultimately emplotment becomes less important for him than other forms of explanation, although Ricoeur's analysis of the difference between narrative understanding and historical explanation may suggest the philosophical reason why this is so. Moreover, it is not surprising in that Frye's literary universe is grounded 'in a nonreferential discourse with no obligation to the real state of sublunary nature' as Frank Lentricchia puts it (1980: 24), while historical explanation is by definition referential.[10] But in the case of historical Jesus accounts, stories with a hero,

every chronological and therefore every narrative feature in its models of the deep grammar of narration' (Ricoeur 1983: 2).

8. Lyotard 1984.

9. Although history and literature, in the New Critical view, belong to different categories: a 'literary' analysis of historical writing of the sort White proposes breaks firmly established boundary rules. As Kermode points out, a dualism runs through the whole of the poetic tradition from Coleridge to Frye in the form of a distinction between poetic and discursive language, a binary which privileges the poetic or symbolic. Kermode makes a plea for the integration of poetic and ordinary language, a deconstruction of the binary which would allow statement in poetry as a corrective to symbolist excesses; but at the same time, by returning art from the aesthetic heights to what Clive Bell calls 'the snug foothills of warm humanity' the 'forbidden subjects of history, intention, and cultural dynamics could be taken up once again' (Lentricchia 1980: 6-7).

10. White is interested in a diachronic analysis of plot structures, in order to argue for changes in the historical imagination during the course of the period. It might be possible to analyze the First Quest, ending as Wright does with Schweitzer and Wrede, in terms of the development of the historical imagination traced by White. Theoretically, over the

as it were, Frye's categories are useful for building an interpretive paradigm for categorizing the various portraits. So for my purposes, looking at a form of historical biography, I have renamed some of Frye's categories in a way that clarifies the distinction between plot structure and trope, and I have redefined the 'archetypal' plot structures in order to look at plot in a way that is both less rigidly formalistic and more politically aware.[11] White's hermeneutical system, especially his understanding of plot and trope as constitutive of the deep structure of historical discourse, provides a different way of understanding not only historical discourse in general, but contemporary historical Jesus narratives in particular.

Within the structures of mythic imagery, Frye begins by identifying the 'movement' of the plot: 'The downward movement is the tragic movement, the wheel of fortune falling toward hamartia, and from hamartia to catastrophe. The upward movement is the comic movement, from threatening complications to a happy ending and a general assumption of post-dated innocence in which everyone lives happily ever after'. Having identified these narrative movements, he classifies them in terms of the literary categories of the romantic, the tragic, the comic, and the satiric. These are the structures underlying all stories, whether fictional or not. They are, according to Frye, 'narrative categories of literature broader than, or logically prior to, the ordinary literary genres' (1968: 162).[12] The literary critic who analyzes narrative in these terms can achieve a certain objectivity, in Frye's view, because of Frye's belief that these literary universals control all literary expression; the primary task of the critic is to discern these structures and communicate them to others.[13] Criticism can be understood as a systematic endeavor because the deep structures,

period of the nineteenth century, the troping of historical thought moved from irony through metaphor, synecdoche, metonymy and back to irony once more. In the context of the quest of the historical Jesus, further work might usefully be done here. If this specialized area of history and theology followed the same historical pattern at about the same time, it would serve to confirm White's thesis.

11. That is to say, the functioning of the typology outlined by Frye is characterized by traditionality, but it is not fixed; any tradition, according to Ricoeur, 'relies on the interplay between innovation and sedimentation' where sedimentation is the preservation of innovation through time (1983: 3-4).

12. The ordinary literary genres referred to here are various types of writing: the Greeks recognized drama, epic, and lyric. Vorster (1992) lists some others: the novel and short story particularly. In these terms, as he points out, the gospel is considered *sui generis*; it is only when writing can be classified according to its organization of material that deep structural similarities and differences of the sort Frye is interested in become apparent.

13. Although Frye argues that this is a 'hypothesis', as Lentricchia points out, this is a misnomer: 'the misleadingly termed "hypothesis" is in reality not the critic's heuristic device but the unmanipulable iron law which guarantees the objective order of the literary universe' (1980: 9).

in Frye's view, are actually *there* in the work: they have an objective reality which guarantees the possibility of a 'scientific' description of the text. Frye takes this position in order to avoid the subjectivism of New Critical arguments which are simply what Lentricchia characterizes as 'endless responses of "taste"' (1980: 9).

When White takes up Frye's archetypes in order to describe historical explanation by emplotment, the problem of the archetype remains. The realist critic or philosopher of history who analyzes historical narrative assumes that the structures are objectively within the text, not brought to it. Like Icarus, such a critic rises 'unconstrained by cultural and historical determinates, carried on the wings of an unsituated critical discourse to a realm of transparent consciousness' (Lentricchia 1980: 9). It is perhaps better, in view of the sort of questions raised by Stanley E. Fish and others,[14] to understand archetypes in terms of relationships between and among texts, rather than characteristics of, or elements in, a text. The term archetype, as Frye uses it, 'designates the genesis of a conventional and generic bond, stemming from a poem's external relations with every other poem (Ricoeur 1983: 9). And so, two things follow. First, if instead we take archetypes to be critical heuristic devices to enable distinctions to be made among elements in the field, then the task of historical explanation by emplotment must be reconfigured. This is not to say that plot structures do not exist, or that they are useless as critical tools. But it is to suggest that describing historical narratives in terms of plot structures does not illumine their hidden truth, doing apocryphal criticism as it were. Rather, within the context of emplotment or narrative shape, there are differences between texts which can be described, differences related to the subjective perceptions of the historians, not to the objective truth of the texts. Understanding the plot structure of the various historical Jesus portraits in archetypal terms, then, is a way of seeing the relationships among them, distinguishing them one from another. Analyzing the portraits in terms of the related concepts of trope, argument and ideology is a second-level task, in Ricoeur's terms, and produces a different kind of historical knowledge. Second, the task of the critic, as White recognizes, becomes one of understanding the choices made by the historians, discerning their social and personal situations as they are embodied in the language of the narrative. But these are not matters of taste, as Frye feared, a concern echoed by White when he comments that there are no *historical* grounds for preferring one structure over another in historical narration (1973: 432).[15] The differences are products of

14. The 'thereness' of the text is a question raised by Reader-Response critics, particularly Fish. See above, Chapter 1, n. 23.

15. Or, to put it another way, 'when it is a matter of choosing among these alternative visions of history, the only grounds for preferring one over another are *moral* or *aesthetic* ones (1973: 433).

the social situations in which the historians work, the values which they hold as a result, and their differing senses of the meaning of human existence.[16] Thus to rely on Frye's system here is to attempt to discern, from my own particular situation, the ethical, philosophical, and theological underpinnings of the work of the historians of Jesus.[17]

3. *Plot Structures and Historical Explanation*

The action of the plot provides an account of the hero's (or the heroine's) inclusion in or exclusion from the social order with which the story is seen to end. The movement of comedy, for example, is inclusive; that is to say, the hero's action will result in a new social order forming around him, in which he is included. Tragedy, on the other hand, is exclusive, which means that the social order is renewed because of an action that excludes the hero, usually his isolation and death. The mode of that action, on the other hand, plots the vision of the social order which results from the action. Narratives may be either stories of social integration or social disintegration; the social order in the first instance is challenged and then strengthened by the action of the plot, while in the second case, the action leads to the fragmentation of society. If the plot moves toward social integration, the form is that of heroic comedy or tragedy. If it moves toward social disintegration, we speak of ironic comedy or tragedy.

The literary mode which Frye describes as romantic is related to a plot structure for which Frye has used the related term Romance. The plot of a Romance has, as its most typical form, the quest. Frye's description implies the medieval Romance, with its three-fold action of perilous journey, leading to a crucial struggle, and a final exaltation of the hero. Because of the connotations of the term Romance, I have chosen here to call this plot an epic instead.[18] It is a story of wish-fulfillment in which social ideals are threatened

16. Frye's argument will lead him, in his 'Tentative Conclusions', to include criticism in his list of mythic discourses, and as Lentricchia points out, 'so he finishes the *Anatomy* by destroying his vast system, including its so-called scientific basis'. Lentricchia continues with an analysis of Frye's discourse as a situated discourse, for which the key 'is his vision of an uncoerced self; it is a vision generated by a thoroughly despairing and alienated understanding of the possibilities of historical life. For Frye actual history can be nothing but a theater of dehumanization, a place of bondage and torture'. He fantasized a utopia of human discourse 'free of all contingency, independent of all external forces', one in which the freedom of the world of romance and comedy far outstrips the world of tragedy and satire, 'the world as it actually is' (1980: 26).

17. And, of course, certain of the portraits considered here will be more attractive to me personally, insofar as I share the ethical, philosophical, and theological considerations of the historians in question, a matter to which we will return in the conclusion.

18. A term which is not used to name a generic form, as romance is; and which does

and the role of the hero is to release his society from the threat and to free humanity (1968: 186-87). The events of epics center around the hero, a person 'of heroic stature, of national or international importance, and of great historical or legendary significance', according to Thrall, Hibbard and Holman in their classic *Handbook to Literature* (1960 [1936]: 175). The action of the hero, particularly in the crucial struggle Frye identifies as the '*pathos*', requires great courage; 'supernatural forces' may intervene. While the hero may not survive the events of the narrative, his action has the effect of releasing society from the forces of oppression. In mythical terms, as Frye points out, the release of humanity from bondage to sin and death is one of the primary themes; thus the affinity of this plot structure with the gospel accounts of Jesus' death and resurrection is clear. All epics are stories of social integration; when the hero is included, we may speak of a comic form, and when he is excluded, of a tragic form.

A comic narrative is one in which the formation of a new community around the hero (and heroine) is the purpose of the action. Broadly speaking, comedy involves integration, usually the incorporation of the central character into society; in the heroic mode of old comedy, it focuses on the construction of the new society; in the mode of new comedy, the element of erotic intrigue becomes important. Ironic comedy plots social revenge on the blocking characters, who may risk death at the hands of the mob before being integrated into the final social order (Frye 1968: 46; cf. 165).

Comedy's roots in Greek legal rhetoric have long been recognized; in a lawsuit, two parties 'construct different versions of the same situation, one finally being judged as real and the other as illusory'.[19] This action, comprised of two parts, opinion and proof, has parallels in comic action in which the movement from 'a society controlled by habit, ritual bondage, arbitrary law and the older characters to a society controlled by youth and pragmatic freedom is fundamentally…a movement from illusion to reality'. Not surprisingly, the creation and dispelling of illusion is an important part of comic action, which makes ample use of mistaken identity and disguise, but also those illusions based on obsession, hypocrisy or unknown parentage (Frye 1968: 166-70).

not have the same (misleading) resonance as 'romantic' when used to describe a mode of action. The term, as I am using it here, helpfully retains some of the connotations of 'romantic' in Frye's use (chivalrous, epic, exemplary, gallant, legendary, mighty, mythical, and valiant are synonyms suggested in my thesaurus), but without the associations with medieval stories of knights and dragons.

19. Frye cites the *Tractatus Coislinianus*, a pamphlet 'closely related to Aristotle's *Poetics*, which sets down all the essential facts about comedy in about a page and a half' (1968: 166).

In new comedy, where the element of erotic intrigue becomes important, according to Frye, 'What normally happens is that a young man wants a young woman, that his desire is resisted by some opposition, usually paternal, and that near the end of the play some twist in the plot enables the hero to have his will' (1968: 163). The success of the hero and the emergence of the new society can only occur if the hero is strong enough to overcome the opposing forces of the old order. This is the case in the type of comedy that I have termed heroic, in which at the end of the action a new social order is consolidated, one which includes not only the hero but also all those who opposed him. Comedy is socially subversive to the extent that the younger hero triumphs over the established structures represented by the older opponents, the blocking characters who are inappropriate rivals, fathers and father-surrogates whose claim to the heroine is fraudulent. However, as the movement of comedy tends to be inclusive, even these blocking characters are reconciled whenever possible to the new order and included in the festivities with which the action usually ends (1968: 165). In ironic comedy, on the other hand, the new society may remain fragmented, unrealized, or unable to prevail at all over the old order.

The ending which enables the formation of this new society is usually manipulated by a twist in the plot, often involving the revelation of mistaken identity, and sometimes also including metamorphosis of character, when a blocking character experiences a total change that we are led to believe is permanent (1968: 170). In the generic pattern of comedy described by Frye, the comic movement is '…usually a movement from one kind of society to another'. The 'obstructing characters' who are in positions of power at the beginning are recognized by the audience or the readers to be 'usurpers' who must be replaced. This is accomplished, when it is successful, by a 'device in the plot that brings hero and heroine together [and] causes a new society to crystallize around the hero' (1968: 163). This is the point of comic resolution, which as Frye notes is usually marked by some kind of festive ritual, often a marriage, which takes place at the end or immediately thereafter, and in which the audience is invited to participate by forming part of the comic society. In the Shakespearean comedies that Frye is discussing, this is a marriage feast which the audience attends; but it is in line with the structure of the gospels, which invite the hearer or reader to participate in the new order inaugurated by Jesus. Frye concludes his survey with the comment that '[civilizations] which stress the desirable rather than the real, and the religious as opposed to the scientific perspective, think of drama almost entirely in terms of comedy' (1968: 171); it remains to be seen whether the same is true of the gospels and their interpretation.

Turning to tragic plot structure, Frye comments that thanks 'as usual' to Aristotle, the theory is 'in considerably better shape' and can be dealt with

more briefly, as it is more familiar (1968: 206).[20] Frye argues that there are two 'reductive' views of tragedy, neither of which is adequate. The first is that 'all tragedy exhibits the omnipotence of an external fate'. This is, in Frye's terms, to confuse 'the tragic condition with the tragic process: fate, in a tragedy, normally becomes external to the hero only *after* the tragic process has been set going'. This results in a confusion of tragedy and irony, according to Frye, who finds it significant that we speak of 'the irony of fate rather than of its tragedy'. The other reductive theory is that 'the act which sets the tragic process going must be primarily a violation of *moral* law, whether human or divine; in short, Aristotle's hamartia or "flaw" must have an essential connection with sin or wrongdoing' (1968: 209-10).

Frye responds that tragedy does not depend on the moral status of the hero; rather, it happens to him. In the classic form, an act of the hero begins the inevitable tragic process, and in this sense is the cause of the tragedy. But as Frye points out, that cause is 'not necessarily wrongdoing: it may be simply a matter of being a strong character in an exposed position….usually the place of leadership' (1968: 38). As tragedy becomes more ironic, it involves the isolation of a hero who does not necessarily have any tragic flaw or pathetic obsession which might be understood as the cause of the tragic action: 'whatever exceptional happens to the hero should be causally out of line with his character'. The typical victim of ironic tragedy, according to Frye, is the *pharmakos* or scapegoat: 'He is innocent in the sense that what happens to him is far greater than anything he has done provokes…; he is guilty in the sense that he is a member of a guilty society, or living in a world where such injustices are an inescapable part of existence'. Frye distinguishes two poles of tragedy, the incongruous and the inevitable, which separate as tragedy becomes more ironic. Adam is his example of the inevitably ironic, 'human nature under the sentence of death'; 'at the other pole is the incongruous irony of human life, in which all attempts to transfer guilt to a victim give that victim something of the dignity of innocence. The archetype of the incongruously ironic is Christ, the perfectly innocent victim excluded from human society' (1968: 41-42).

Frye takes the character of Adam in John Milton's *Paradise Lost* as the paradigm of the tragic hero: God argues that Adam was 'Sufficient to have stood, though free to fall'.[21] A hero who is not sufficient to have stood is ironic; while one who is not free to fall is romantic, in Frye's terms. Adam comes in between; tragedy is a working out of theodicy, the theology of

20. This does not prevent him from going on for seventeen pages (1968: 206-17), however; but it does mean that he feels free not to provide a short, quick definition of tragic action along the lines of that proposed for comedy.

21. He continues with the comment that the 'argument is so bad that Milton, if he was trying to escape refutation, did well to ascribe it to God'.

God's justice. Frye continues, 'Adam…is in a heroic human situation: he is on top of the wheel of fortune, with the destiny of the gods almost within his reach. He forfeits that destiny in a way which suggests moral responsibility to some and a conspiracy of fate to others'. He uses his freedom to lose his freedom. As the action of comedy is set up to overcome an arbitrary law, so the action of tragedy represents the subjugation of individual freedom by a process of causation, in which the hero's choice determines the 'shape of the life he has created for himself, with an implicit comparison with the uncreated potential life he has forsaken'. Adam falls, and as he does, he enters the created order as we know it, 'a world in which existence itself is tragic'. Tragedy moves to a crucial point, when what might have been and what will be can both be seen; from that point the wheel of fortune begins its inevitable descent (1968: 203).

The fourth form which Frye distinguishes is that of Satire, and which I find more helpful to think of as farce.[22] Frye calls the stories in this category 'mythical patterns of experience, the attempts to give form to the shifting ambiguities and complexities of unidealized existence' (1968: 223). Farce depends less on plot structure and character than other types of drama; Thrall, Hibbard and Holman point out the importance of improbable situations and incongruities (1960: 199). In this sense, it is a better term than satire to designate this type of plot. It is clearly easier to distinguish Satire by content or by its ironic tone than by its form, and Frye's difficulties are compounded by his use of the term Irony as a type of Satire. Ultimately, Frye settles for a negative definition: 'As structure, the central principle of ironic myth is best approached as a parody of romance: the application of romantic mythical forms to a more realistic content which fits them in unexpected ways' (1968: 203).

If Frye is intuitively right in seeing Satire as the parody of Romance, then we might expect a plot structure in which the hero is engaged in some sort of quest, that is, he has decided to try to do something for the sake of what he perceives as a greater good. Because the mode is ironic, it involves incongruities at all levels of meaning. As I have defined epic in terms of social integration, Satire, or farce, as I have termed it, is the story of social disintegration, whether in the comic mode which sees possibilities for a new social order inherent in the chaos all around; or in the tragic mode when the end leaves us with the sense that perhaps the hero's sacrifice was not *entirely* meaningless. As in the chronicle, in farce events are ordered in time, but without the sense of causality typical of tragic action. Events precede other events

22. The term farce comes from the Late Latin *farcire*, to stuff, and originally referred to the musical or dramatic expansions in the church liturgy; later it became any extemporaneous addition to a play. The limitation of the word to a humorous scene or play did not take hold until the seventeenth century.

without necessarily causing them, and history, in this view, is 'just one damned thing after another'. Whatever logic there may be is either beyond our comprehension, or arises from our own desire to impose order on essentially chaotic experience. The structure of farce involves the plotting of contingency, in the sense both of a chance occurrence, a fluke; and in the sense of necessity, a requirement, something dependent on another occurrence. If the attitude is 'things end well, but who knows how?', contingency is understood as chance: this is the comic mode. If the attitude is 'things end badly, but that's just the way it is', contingency is understood as necessity: this is the tragic mode. Farce, then, is the ironic inversion of epic, in which Murphy's Law is the only rule: if it can go wrong, it will.

There are then, four ways of understanding the structure of a narrative, depending on the pattern (or lack of pattern) involved: comedy, tragedy, epic, and farce. There are also four modes which overlap the plot structures. For my purposes, the general plot movement toward inclusion or exclusion, that is to say, the mode of action, is either comic or tragic. Further, if the final vision of society is integrative, the mode of the action is heroic; if the vision is disintegrative, the mode is ironic. In the first case, we will speak of comic or tragic modes and in the second of heroic or ironic modes. Whether a given narrative is characterized as a heroic tragedy or a tragic epic, though, is not a distinction without a difference, because the plot structure underlying the narrated events will conform in the first case to tragedy and the second to epic; but the modes will provide a means of contrasting different types of the same plot, in the first case heroic tragedy with ironic tragedy, and in the second case, tragic epic with comic epic. The eight general categories of plot, then, are heroic comedy, ironic comedy, heroic tragedy, and ironic tragedy, and comic epic, tragic epic, comic farce and tragic farce. These categories should provide ample means for distinguishing the types of arguments by emplotment, to use White's term, in the historical Jesus portraits to be considered.[23]

When Hayden White uses literary categories borrowed from Frye, it is in answer to the historian's question, 'What happened next?' The placing of events in time, one after another, is the beginning of historical narrative.[24] He

23. Frye himself did not limit the literary universe to literary objects, but rather argued in a neo-Kantian aestheticist line that every act of making is an artistic act; his argument leads to 'the principle that all structures in words are partly rhetorical, and hence literary, and that the notion of a scientific or philosophical verbal structure free of rhetorical elements is an illusion' (1968: 350). It follows, then, that 'the verbal structures of psychology, anthropology, theology, history, law, and everything else built out of words have been informed or constructed by the same kind of myths and metaphors that we find, in their original hypothetical form, in literature' (1968: 352; cf. Lentricchia 1980: 25).

24. White considers the possibility of forms which simply list events in time, as well as historical accounts which do not narrate events; these are important for the sort of historical writing with which he is concerned. For my purposes, the analysis of the plots in

follows Frye's categories, using four modes: romance, tragedy, comedy, and satire. Episodes in a historical narrative may follow any of these forms, but according to White, the historian puts the episodes together in a way that is structured by a 'comprehensive or *archetypal* story form' (1973: 8).

In White's taxonomy, both comedy and tragedy are forms of emplotment which 'suggest the possibility of at least partial liberation from the condition of the Fall and provisional release from the divided state in which men find themselves in this world' (1973: 9). He thus distinguishes comedy and tragedy from what I have termed farce. In comedy, there are 'occasional reconciliations of the forces at play in the social and natural worlds', but stories of transcendence, victory over the world of experience, and liberation are what he calls Romances. White considers both comedy and tragedy 'qualifications of the Romantic apprehension of the world' (1973: 10), and in terms of plot, he leaves himself with two main categories, Satire and Romance, which each include both comic and tragic elements. In other words, for White, the emplotment of history as Romance shares elements of what I have distinguished as the heroic mode of either comic or tragic plots, but it makes it difficult to distinguish between this and the comic or tragic modes of epic on the basis of the action of the plot. In either case, White observes, the historian will 'stress the emergence of new forces or conditions out of processes that appear at first glance either to be changeless in their essence or to be changing only in their phenomenal forms' (1973: 11). In analyzing historical biography, distinguishing the action from the mode in analyzing plot structures enables us more clearly to define the categories. For example, in heroic comedy, the hero succeeds in establishing the new conditions which are emerging. In heroic tragedy, on the other hand, the hero is isolated and ultimately excluded from the society which emerges. In epic forms, we would look for the transformation of existing society rather than the development of a new society.

For White, the tragic plot reflects the historian's sense that the events he or she is narrating are worse than they seemed, but that the failure or fall of the protagonist results in a 'gain in consciousness' for the survivors or spectators. That gain is the 'epiphany of the law governing human action' revealed by the hero's action. Reconciliation is present in tragedy, just as it is in comedy, but in tragedy it takes the form of resignation to conditions of life in the world, which are 'asserted to be inalterable and eternal, and the implication is that man cannot change them but must work within them'. When, according to White, 'human consciousness and will are…inadequate to the task of overcoming definitively the dark force of death', this inadequacy produces an

'lives of Jesus', the question does not arise. All of the lives considered here, to a greater or lesser degree, order their narration of historical events according to some chronology, and for most of the writers, the genesis of the early Church after the death of Jesus is the primary historical problem to be solved.

ironic vision (1973: 9). The inability to overcome, to transcend limitations, is typical of the ironic mode of both comedy and tragedy. Within the world of ironic tragedy, an inexorable law is at work to frustrate all human attempts to transcend the old order and to create something new. In ironic comedy, in contrast, social structures frustrate transcendence, and as a result there is a sense that whatever blocks the emergence of the new is a human creation that can change; the irony is that is does not. In ironic tragedy, we are made aware of the limitations of human agency, in which any change produced by human action is illusory. This form, in White's terms, is 'consonant with the interests of those historians who perceive behind or within the welter of events contained in the chronicle an ongoing structure of relationships or an eternal return of the Same in the Different' (1973: 11). Thus White finds ways of historicizing what are literary categories of analysis, but his analysis has not always been found convincing; in particular, he has been criticized for the relativism of his views, in which any historical narrative can be plotted in any number of ways.[25]

4. *Time and Historical Narrative*

In attempting to develop other ways of understanding the deep structures of historical writing, Jörn Rüsen uses a 'small but profound dialogue' from Shakespeare's *Henry IV, Part I*, in which 'time is seen as a threat to normal human relations, casting them into the abyss of uncertainty'. History, Rüsen argues, responds to the challenge of death, the 'most radical experience of time', overcoming our fears and uncertainties 'by seeing a meaningful pattern in the course of time, a pattern responding to human hopes and intentions. This pattern gives a sense to history. Narration therefore is the process of making sense of the experience of time' (1987: 88).

But while narrative may function in this way, it is still necessary to distinguish historical narrative from other sorts. Ordinarily the distinction is made on the problematical basis of fact and fiction. Historical narration is defined as dealing with fact, and anything which cannot be verified by hard data is classed as fiction. Rüsen suggests a better way, one which provides the means for humans to orientate themselves in time. He defines three characteristics of historical narrative. First, it is tied to memory: 'It mobilizes the

25. The matter has come to a head in the discussion of the appropriate representation of the Holocaust, beginning with a debate which took place at a conference in 1989 on 'History, Event, and Discourse'. White's contribution to that debate was published in 1992, in a volume entitled *Probing the Limits of Representation*; the discussion continued in two volumes of *History and Theory*, published in 1994 and 1995 (Jenkins 1997). It is at this point, a limit case in the ethics of representation and historical narration, that postmodern history begins fully to depart from modernist, empiricist models.

experience of past time, which is engraved in the archives of memory, so that the experience of present time becomes understandable and the expectation of future time is possible'. Second, by the concept of continuity, historical narrative organizes the three dimensions of time so as to make past experience relevant for present life and a formative influence on the future. Finally, historical narrative establishes the identity of both writers and readers by assuring readers of both the continuity of the world and of themselves (1987: 88).[26] Using these three 'peculiarities' of historical narration, Rüsen goes on to formulate a typology of historical narration which he claims enables him to move away from the literary and formalist system of Hayden White.[27]

Rüsen identifies four types of historical narration, all operative in every historical narrative, but with different emphases. First is the category of 'traditional' narratives, which 'remind one of the origins constituting present systems of life; they construct continuity as permanence of originally constituted systems of life, and they form identity by affirming given–or more precisely, pre-given–cultural patterns of self-understanding' (1987: 90). These foundational narratives create the identity of those whose myths they are: humankind is created in the image of God, according to the traditional narrative of Genesis. The horizons of these stories are the creation and the eschaton, and time is eternal. However, the diversity of experiences through time requires some systematization in order to be comprehended. One way of doing this is to tell stories which exemplify the rules and principles thought to underlie the diverse experiences. For Rüsen, such exemplary narratives preserve the memory of concrete cases in which these rules are applicable. Continuity is no longer seen in permanence but in the continuing validity of the rules in diverse circumstances. When, in a next step, the available patterns for historical understanding are felt to be inadequate, a third type of narrative develops. These are critical narratives are based on the human ability 'to say no to traditions, rules, and principles, which have come down to us'; these are 'anti-stories' which create 'space for new patterns'. They dissolve continuity and enable humans to judge temporal experience. But, Rüsen argues, 'critical narrative is not the last word of historical consciousness'; a fourth category of narration, the genetical narrative, 'finds…change

26. For a discussion of the concept of time as used by ancient Greek and Roman historians, in comparison with biblical writers, see Momigliano 1966 and the bibliography there. On Rüsen's typology, see Megill 1994.

27. Geoffrey Hartman criticizes Frye's Viconian historicism, like all cyclical historicism, as a betrayal of history. 'Hartman's charge (at bottom a charge of aestheticism), that Frye ignores real time, that he does not account for the distinctive voice–two sides of the same coin–is a just criticism, though as with most criticisms of Frye, it is made from a standpoint outside his set of assumptions' (Lentricchia 1980: 16). Using Rüsen's categories as they relate to Viconian tropes may provide a middle way.

itself meaningful and significant'. Rather than proposing a negation which replaces one pattern with its opposite, this pattern presents 'continuity as development, in which the alteration of forms of life is necessary for their permanence', in which human understanding is a temporally dynamic process (1987: 92-93).

Rüsen sees in this typology a way of moving out of the linguistic categories which White proposes, and he claims that his typology takes the 'specificity' of historical narration into account. Interestingly, he indeed enables us better to differentiate historians' attitudes toward time and progress, and the place of the human within time. Rüsen argues that all four elements are found in every historical narrative, on the one hand; and that 'there is a natural progression from the traditional to the exemplary and from the exemplary to the genetical narrative', with critical narrative serving as 'the necessary catalyst in this transformation (1987: 93). In this his thought connects with the description of logical progression suggested by Georg Lukács.

In his *Theory of the Novel*, Lukács argues in a very different context that logical understanding follows circular pattern. We begin with a pre-logical apprehension of the field of inquiry, and then begin to differentiate analogically, finding similarities and differences in individuals. Then we proceed to analysis, first placing individuals in relation to the whole of which they are part, and then classifying them according to characteristics. At this point, according to Lukács, we begin to consider whether the classifications are 'natural' or arise out of our own need to create order, a self-reflexive move which leads to the ironic disintegration of the field and a desire to escape from the constraints of the process by a reconfiguration of the field. This brings us to attempt to create a new apprehension of the field and the individuals within it. The intellectual moves which Lukács describes define the movement of various rhetorical tropes. The analogical apprehension of similarities and differences is a metaphoric activity, while the analytical apprehension of the organization of the whole and its parts has affinities with synecdochic thinking, and the classification according to characteristic qualities is metonymic. The loss of faith in classification leads to an ironic disintegration, in which the field is once more understood disjunctively, and that irony in turn creates a new desire for order.

Rüsen's typology of historical narration can be similarly seen as a progression of tropes. Thus the traditional narrative relies on metaphor to represent the foundational myths of a culture. When mythic patterns are felt to be inadequate for understanding historical events, the exemplary narrative refigures the relationships within the field by metonymical reduction, so that the patterns and rules which structure experience can be apprehended. Genetical narrative, which allows the understanding of permanence in terms of development, so

that the present is an organic part of all experience through time, will have an affinity for the integrative movement of synecdochic tropes, while critical narrative's 'no' is an ironic denial of the patterns and relationships that once seemed adequate. Thus it is possible to understand Rüsen's typology of historical narration in terms that Lukács traces as the process of human understanding. Far from contradicting Hayden White, Rüsen has provided a way of troping attitudes toward time and continuity which allows further historicization of White's model.

For White, the tropes precede and form the basis of the prefiguration of the historical field. It would not be surprising, then, to find that each historical Jesus narrative is related to a specific trope, and that each trope represents a preference in understanding the relationship between human life and temporality.

5. *Turning to Tropes*

Metahistory bases its analysis of historical narrative on the historical styles which emerge from the combination of explanatory modes, what White calls explanation by emplotment, explanation by argument, and explanation by ideological implication. Explanation by emplotment has been criticized for its reduction of real human experience, and particularly human suffering, into abstract literary categories. Rüsen, as we have seen, looks for other ways of understanding historical narrative, ways which ultimately can be seen in terms of tropes. For White, 'before a given domain can be interpreted, it must first be construed as a ground inhabited by discernible figures'; these figures are then classified and related to one another. Before the historian can begin to address the historical problems at hand, let alone provide explanations for the questions raised, he or she must first 'construct a linguistic protocol…by which to characterize the field and its elements *in his* [*or her*] *own terms*…' This operation 'by virtue of its essentially *prefigurative* nature' is, White argues, understandable in terms of trope. For White, this prefiguration is a poetic act, first because 'it is precognitive and precritical in the economy of the historian's consciousness', and second because 'it is constitutive of the structure that will subsequently be imaged in the verbal model offered by the historian as a representation and explanation of "what *really* happened" in the past' (1973: 30-31). This troping constitutes not only the historical domain, but also the concepts and the kinds of relationships possible among objects in the domain. It is important to notice that for White this prefiguring of the field is not the conscious choice of the historian who has collected his data and begun his analysis; rather it comes before the historical work begins and determines what counts as historical evidence and what kinds of logical connections can be made. The number of possible explanatory strategies 'is

not infinite', as we have seen; White discerns four types of plot, four types of argument, and four types of ideological implication. Not surprisingly there are four principal tropes to which these strategies are related.

Positing then that all historical narrative arises out of a preliminary understanding of the field in rhetorical terms, White borrows the idea of tropes from the hermeneutical tradition starting with Vico.[28] Although recognizing the value in linguistics of limiting the discussion of tropes to metaphor and metonymy, White hesitates to use it as a framework for characterizing literary styles: 'I am inclined to utilize the fourfold conception of the tropes, conventional since the Renaissance, for distinguishing among different stylistic conventions within a single tradition of discourse' (1973: 32). And so, following Kenneth Burke, he retains four 'master tropes' which will enable him to specify differences in 'styles of thought'.[29] These tropes are metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, and irony.

Metaphor and metonymy are seen as the poles of all linguistic phenomena by structuralist linguists like Roman Jakobson. White acknowledges the distinction between the two, and includes synecdoche as a kind of metaphorical usage and irony as a kind of metonymical usage. Paul Ricoeur, in his *Métaphor vive*, distinguishes three kinds of relationship: correlation, connection, and resemblance (1986: 56). A relation of correlation or correspondence brings together two things 'each of which can be understood as "an absolutely separate whole"' (1986: 79). This classification by exclusion or separation is metonymy. The two objects constitute a whole of which each is part; the relationship therefore is that of part to part. Metonymy distinguishes between two things and sees one in terms of the other; it separates and classifies things logically by a process of reduction. When two objects 'form an ensemble, a physical or metaphysical whole, the existence or idea of one being included in the existence or idea of the other' the relation is one of connection. This classification by inclusion is synecdoche, and it focuses on the relationship of the part to the whole, emphasizing shared qualities. Metaphor, on the other hand, classifies by resemblance; the relationship is object-object. In metaphor, a word for one thing is used to name another thing,

28. See Vico 1946 [1744], although the idea was originally suggested in the sixteenth century by La Poplinière (Huppert 1971: 161). In a lengthy footnote, White notes that the 'two leading exponents of the tropological conception of nonscientific (mythic, artistic, and oneiric) discourse are the Structuralists Roman Jakobson and Claude Lévi-Strauss'; he also includes the psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan. For Jakobson's use of 'trope' in linguistics, see Jakobson 1960; Jakobson and Halle 1971; for cultural anthropology, see Lévi-Strauss 1966; and for an analysis of linguistic structure in the interpretation of dreams, see Lacan 1966.

29. See K. Burke 1984 [1959]: 503-17. Defining tropes is problematical: 'the literature…is varied and beset with congenital disagreement' (White 1973: 33). See Preminger 1965 and Groden and Kreiswirth 1994.

although in fact the relationship is between ideas, not objects. Metaphor calls attention to the fact that the semantic content of one thing can be transferred linguistically to an entirely different thing; the surface structure retains the difference while the deep structure expresses certain similarities.[30] Irony is the negation of the relationships that the other three tropes suggest, a way of expressing, in White's terms, 'the absurdity of the characterization of the thing designated in the Metaphor, Metonymy, or Synecdoche used to give form to it' (1973: 37). For example, to see Jesus in terms of the Prodigal Son, as Wright does, is metaphoric. To understand his relationship with the disciples as a community of equals is synecdochic, while to understand it as a hierarchical family of which he is the head is metonymic. The image of Jesus as a suffering servant, the last who will be first, is ironic. Similar examples might be drawn from the various understandings of the Church, whether as the body of Christ, the people of God, living stones and the like.

For White, each of the tropes has affinities with a certain kind of historical argument and to a certain kind of explanation by emplotment. Following Stephen C. Pepper, he distinguishes four types of argument. Those arguments which proceed by the identification of the objects in the historical field, in order to distinguish each object from all the rest are Formist. Formist explanations are interested in details rather than generalizations, and focus on the uniqueness of each object in the field. The distinguishing of one object from another is related, according to White, to the trope of metaphor. A more integrative approach depicts particulars as a part of a process or a whole, prefiguring the field synecdochically; the historian 'will tend to be governed by the desire to see individual entities as components of processes which aggregate into wholes that are greater than, or qualitatively different from, the sum of their parts'. This is an Organicist argument. Organicist arguments do not appeal to the laws of the historical process, but are inclined to talk about the 'principles' and 'ideas' which image or prefigure 'the end toward which the process as a whole tends' (1973: 15-16). Mechanistic argument, on

30. White defines the tropes and gives some examples, although his discussion may confuse more than it enlightens (1973: 34-38). To develop further the familiar examples, 'my love, a rose' is a metaphoric renaming of 'my love' as the flower, which he or she manifestly is not. But the connotations of the word 'rose', that is, the idea of the rose, might be applied to 'my love': the metaphor implies that the loved one is beautiful, delicate, and so forth. 'My love' names the object of one's affection in terms of one's own emotions, reducing the other person to a function of oneself by a metonymic trope. If one continues in this vein and adds that 'my love is all heart', the effect is to classify the person according to the characteristics of one part, the heart, which is metaphorically understood to be the source of loving and generous emotions. Any of these tropes can be construed ironically: 'my love' may be used to deny that any affection exists; 'a rose' may imply a certain thorniness; and 'all heart' may be used to indicate the opposite of what the words connote.

the other hand, 'turns upon the search for the causal laws that determine the outcomes of processes discovered in the historical field. The objects that are thought to inhabit the historical field are construed as existing in the modality of part-part relationships, the specific configurations of which are determined by the laws that are presumed to govern their interactions'. Typical Mechanistic arguments explore relations of cause-effect, instrument-purpose, thing-location and other metonymically related objects in the field, looking ultimately to explain the laws governing not only these relations but also history in general. A final type of argument, one which is less reductive than the Organicist and Mechanistic arguments, looks to restore the scope and concreteness of the Formist argument, but in a way which provides a less impressionistic explanation. In Pepper's terms, this is a Contextualist position, which holds that events can be explained by being set in their context (1973: 17-18). Unlike Formism, which remains content with outlining the similarities and differences which characterize the objects in the historical field, Contextualism looks for interrelationships among them in a process called 'colligation'[31] which discerns 'threads' linking events and searches for 'trends' in a given period. The Contextualist begins with one object in the historical field and then moves outward from it, picking out threads which connect the event to others in the context. The threads are also traced backwards and forwards in time, in order to determine the 'origins' and 'impact' of the event on other events. The Contextualist historian, however, does not attempt an Organicist synthesis of the whole process or a Mechanistic reduction of the events to timeless laws of historical processes; rather the trends are examined synchronically, 'cuts made across the grain of time, as it were' (1973: 18-19). This sort of argument, which is satisfied to make connections within a limited context without aspiring to explain the entire historical field either by developing synthetic world views or by analysis according to laws of historical development, has affinities with the perspective that questions the adequacy of language to represent reality. It is ironic in its 'apprehension of the capacity of language to obscure more than it clarifies in any act of verbal figuration' (1973: 37).

These 'affinities' (and White does not claim any stronger relationship than this) between trope and mode of argumentation include mode of emplotment as well. The metaphoric apprehension of the historical field, which finds expression in a Formist argument, has affinities as well with the Romance, or epic plot. The plot structure of comedy, with its movement toward integration, and the Organicist mode of argument, have affinities with synecdoche, while the tragic action which represents the working of immutable laws is suited to a Mechanistic argument and a metonymic prefiguration of the field.

31. The term used by W.H. Walsh (1961) and Isaiah Berlin; general remarks in Mink 1978.

Irony, because of its self-reflexivity, is the trope of skepticism and relativism, calling into question as it does the adequacy of language for telling the truth. It presupposes the limited and realistic argument of contextualism, and the sorts of contingency in plotting for which farce is best suited.[32]

Like Lukács and Rüsen, White also plays with the idea of sequence in tropes, where thinking moves from the metaphorical apprehension of things as like and unlike other things to the metonymic understanding which connects aspects of things by logical association, to the synecdochic desire to integrate things by seeing them as parts of a greater whole, and finally to the self-critical recognition that the connections we see are our own inventions, not part of the nature of things themselves, and an ironic denial of the unity of the historical field. Then out of the dissatisfaction with the ironic view, a new configuration may be suggested, in which different likenesses and different structures of connectedness come to the surface. And the whole process begins again, with metaphor. Over time, if White is right in this, the historical vision of an age would change in a cyclical process; the logical relations between the tropes, rather than historical data, would determine the direction of the debate. This is a reductive view of history, and perhaps an ironic view, to which White would admit, in which historiography is reduced to rhetorical effect, and the effect of the real in fact denies reality. White would doubtless respond that reality is always linguistically mediated and realism is the best we can do, but most modernist historians are not ready to follow him that far. But if all historiography is interpretive, another problem is raised, that of the criteria for validity in interpretation. Why is one way of troping to be preferred over another? Why does one plot provide a better explanation than another? These questions have not yet been resolved in philosophy of history, and in a postmodern vein, historians argue that explanations from multiple points of view, which all may be valid, provide the means for coming closer to the truth about the past that historians seek. In the context of historical Jesus studies, then, a metahistorical analysis of the sort White has developed will not enable us to decide definitively whose portrait is best. There is no necessary reason for preferring irony to metaphor, other than personal tastes; and there is no way to prove the superiority of a comic plot to a tragic one, or vice versa. But the various tropes and plot structures provide ways of expressing ethical ideas concerning 'the implications that can be drawn from the study of past events for the understanding of present ones' (1973: 22). For White, these are ideological positions, and following Mannheim, he cites four

32. White provides a chart which graphs the affinities of mode of emplotment, argument, and ideological implication (1973: 29); the introduction then moves into a discussion of the relation between trope and these other categories (1973: 31-38). See below, p. 56, for a schematic representation of the terms as I am using them.

which relate to the questions of time and ideal social structures. For my purposes, these ideas can be expressed in more theological terms, those of eschatology and the kingdom of God.

6. *Ideological Implications: A Theology of Historical Narratives*

The terms White uses to discuss the ideological implications of various historical accounts are appropriate for the study of the nineteenth century, particularly an analysis of the historical imagination of the period as writers considered the political events in Europe and America. His four basic positions are Anarchism, Conservatism, Radicalism, and Liberalism, and in a long footnote he justifies both his choices and the exclusion of other terms suggested by Mannheim (1973: 24-25).[33] While White is careful to stress that the terms 'are meant to serve as designators of general ideological preference rather than as emblems of specific political parties', they would prove troublesome if translated to theological positions. For White, the terms 'represent different attitudes with respect to the possibility of reducing the study of society to a science and the desirability of doing so; different notions of the lessons that the human sciences can teach; different conceptions of the desirability of maintaining or changing the social status quo; different conceptions of the direction that changes in the status quo ought to take and the means of effecting such changes; and, finally, different time orientations (an orientation toward past, present, or future as the repository of a paradigm of society's "ideal" form)' (1973: 24). For my purposes, the various positions represent different attitudes with respect to the possibility or desirability of eliminating theological concerns from the study of the life of Jesus; different conceptions of the present time and different understandings of the ideal social order represented by the term 'kingdom of God'; different ideas as to how the kingdom is actualized in human society; and different orientations, whether to the past, the present, or the future, as to the time of the coming of the kingdom. These positions parallel White's use of Mannheim's categories, but with a narrower focus, and in order to avoid using already contested terms in the debate, I will refer to evolutionary utopians, present utopians, visionary utopians, and past utopians.

Evolutionary utopians, White's Conservatives, agree that the kingdom is coming, but see it in terms of a time in the far future which will gradually grow out of present conditions. Change is necessary, but present social structures are the best we can realistically hope for in this life, and they see change as development and improvement of what is basically good in the

33. Mannheim 1998 [1946].

present. Present utopians, whom White calls Liberals, share a positive assessment of the present, and see progress toward the full realization of the kingdom in the future through adjustments in the existing structures. More activist than evolutionary utopians, they look for human means to make progress toward the goal through educational and parliamentary procedures. Visionary utopians, on the other hand, White's Radicals, see the present structures as flawed and believe in the possibility of a transformed society in the near future. As a result, they look for revolutionary means to transform structures and to reconstitute society as the kingdom. Past utopians, finally, look nostalgically back to a golden age when, at least for a fleeting time, the kingdom was present. The present time represents a fall away from this ideal and present social structures must be radically transformed. Past utopians, White's Anarchists, do not advocate the sort of revolutionary changes needed to bring about the imminent kingdom of the visionary utopians, however. Rather, they imagine a change in human consciousness which will destroy the erroneous bases of the present social order and allow the appearance of a new society based on new values.

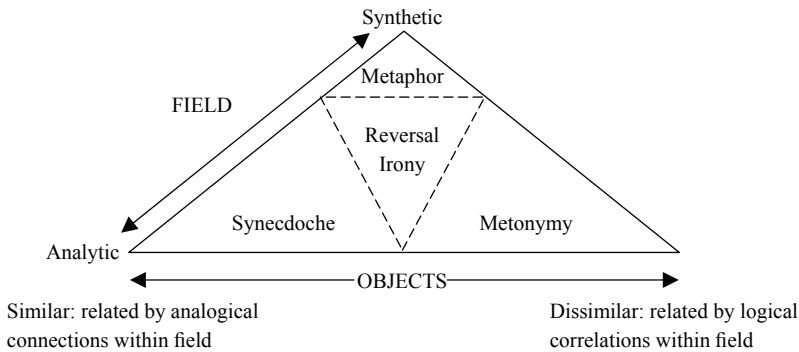
These attitudes toward historical time and progress are reflected in ideas about the study of the past and the kind of historical explanation which is best. If White is correct (1973: 26-27), those with the greatest faith in the possibility of the scientific study of history, in which theological ideas can and should be completely 'bracketed', are the present and the visionary utopians, although the former look for trends and developments in history while the latter are more interested in the working out of laws of historical development. Those on the other hand who admit a wider view of historical processes and would include theological attitudes as legitimate interests are the evolutionary and past utopians.

It is White's contention that any historical narrative can be understood in terms of the primary trope which enables the historian to prefigure the field, the plot structure of the narrative which explains why things are ordered in one way and not another, the kind of relationships one can expect among historical objects, and hence the type of argument used, and the ideological implications of attitudes toward the ideal society and time. As we have seen, White distinguishes certain 'affinities' in these categories, but argues that historiographical style 'represents a particular combination of modes of emplotment, argument, and ideological implication' (1973: 29). Thus a historian who prefigures the field in terms of the relationship of parts to a greater whole, that is, synecdochically, might have evolutionary ideas about time and progress toward the kingdom and might make an organicist argument which seeks evidence of growth and development. Such an argument might well be plotted as comedy, which is a plot structure tending toward integration and inclusion in a basically optimistic tone. But variations are possible, and indeed

contribute to the richness of the historical vision presented. These terms will enable me to characterize the deep structure of the historical Jesus narratives which I am examining in a way that may help to explain how these narratives function in the context of the present.

Terminology Used in This Chapter

1. *Tropes*



2. *Affinities among tropes, explanations by emplotment, argument and ideological implications, with Rüsen's typology*

Characteristics	*Trope*	*Plot*	*Argument*	*Ideology*	*Rüsen's Type*
Uniqueness, distinguishing objects	Metaphor	Epic	Formist	Past Utopian	Traditional: create identity through myth
Connections of part to whole	Synecdoche	Comedy	Organicist	Evolutionary Utopian	Genetic: change as growth
Correlations in terms of logical processes	Metonymy	Tragedy	Mechanistic	Visionary Utopian	Exemplary: preserve memory of underlying principles
Questioning or denial of other patterns of relationship	Irony	Farce	Contextualist	Present Utopian	Critical: tell anti-stories

3. *Ideological implications*

Perspective	*Time of Kingdom*	*Means of Realization*	*White's Term*
Past Utopian	Remote past, to be recaptured in the present	Radical transformation in human consciousness	Anarchism
Evolutionary Utopian	Far future, slowly growing out of present structures	Happens as a process, inherent in present structures	Conservatism
Visionary Utopian	Future	Revolutionary transformation	Radicalism
Present Utopian	Near future	Human action on the basis of education and democratic decision-making	Liberalism

Part II

PORTRAITS REPAINTED

Introduction to Part II

As we have seen, history is a kind of writing which provides information about the past based on facts construed as evidence. Even the basic elements of a historical account, the facts, often imply a rudimentary narrative structure (someone did something); when facts are combined so as to describe human actions within a past time frame, the narrative structure becomes more explicit (something happened, after which or as a result of which other things occurred). Connections between events are made. Historical writing, then, characteristically narrates past events; the historian creates an ordered account based on facts which he or she is constrained not to invent. Historical narrative, in other words, is the emplotment of factual evidence. But, in the case of historical Jesus narratives, how are the facts discovered?

The primary sources for historical Jesus research are relatively limited in number. For most of the history of the various quests, the gospels provided nearly all of the information available to historians, with some attention to first-century historical writings and extra-canonical materials. Source criticism as Ranke understood it, the critical reading of the sources so as to discern the facts behind the events narrated, was adapted in biblical interpretation to the study of the relationships among the synoptic gospels. It became important to know which texts provided source materials for later texts and to begin to explore what oral sources might lie behind the first written texts. The earlier material was deemed more historically accurate. All of the historical Jesus work done in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, that is to say, during the period of the first quest, was based on source-critical conclusions. It was not until German biblical scholars began to attempt to reconstruct primitive forms of the texts based on their presumed uses in their original settings that the necessary tools for historical Jesus work were developed. These were logical rules for assessing the probability of accurate historical content in texts, the 'criteria for authenticity'. All contemporary historical Jesus scholars acknowledge the importance of agreed criteria for establishing historicity, and to a certain extent, all the writers I am examining use them. But their preferences differ, as do the number of criteria they choose to use. Not surprisingly, the 'authentic' historical facts about Jesus which they discover by using the criteria also differ. Indeed, perhaps the greater surprise is that there is as much agreement as there is. More important differences arise from the various interpretations of the same data, as we will see.

All the third quest historical Jesus portraits I will analyze here are embedded in a lengthy discussion of method, which seems to be part of the genre. Along with methodological observations and critiques of other scholars, these discussions include what might be called the writers' philosophy of history and their attempts to describe their own social positions and any 'biases' that might inject unwanted subjectivity into their historical narratives. In his metahistorical analysis of the historical imagination of the nineteenth century, as we have seen, White distinguishes between historians and philosophers of history, showing how both kinds of writing about history can be understood in terms of the same deep structures.[1] In the case of historical Jesus portraits, the authors have provided both historical arguments and explanations and the philosophical framework which justifies them. Thus their work can usefully be analyzed both as theory and as practice, with an eye to understanding the ways in which the philosophy of history may undergird or indeed undermine the historical narrative which is supposed to arise from it. In this way, we may discover new tools for understanding the ways in which personal 'biases' function in the writing of historical narrative.

In what follows, we will see how the traditional tools of historical criticism have been used and adapted by four major biblical scholars in their portraits of the historical Jesus. We begin with John P. Meier, whose discussion of the criteria is more detailed than that found in other portraits, and who systematically uses several of the criteria in combination to discern the historical facts in his material. The three other writers, N.T. Wright, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, and John Dominic Crossan, vary in the criteria they use and in the place they give to them. Despite these differences, there is surprising overlap in the data used to construct the various historical portraits. However, the prior understanding of the historical field, the historical hypotheses suggested, and the construal of the data as evidence in the various arguments constructed all differ considerably. Thus in spite of the great care taken to identify factual or authentic data, the various presuppositions and interpretations of the writers

1. Thus the four historians White examines each plot 'historical realism' in one of the generic forms: Ranke as comedy and Tocqueville as tragedy, for example. These plot structures, as we have seen, are related to the tropes which characterise the authors' various prefigurations of the historical field. The philosophers of history, whose role it is to make the narrative and explanatory strategies of historians explicit, prefigure their field of inquiry with the same tropes, which function as their philosophical defence of their preferred way of knowing about history (White 1978: 276-77 and passim). But these tropes are related to preferences in the emplotment of the idea of history, the type of argument and its ideological implications; as a result, as White demonstrates, both history and philosophy of history can be interpreted in the same terms.

have resulted in four quite different historical works, serving four quite different political and religious agendas. For those who share their perspectives, each portrait will seem more congenial than the others. But congenial is not the same thing as true.

Chapter 3

SEEING JESUS TWICE: J.P. MEIER'S DUAL VISION

The first volume of *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, subtitled *The Roots of the Problem and the Person*, John P. Meier's contribution to the methodological discussion in historical Jesus studies, was published in1991. His second volume, specifically focused on Jesus himself and subtitled *Mentor, Message, and Miracles*, appeared three years later. For a variety of personal reasons, the next two volumes in the series were delayed. The third volume, subtitled *Companions and Competitors*, was published in 2001; and the fourth, *Law and Love*, has just been released in 2009. The first two volumes include his methodological reflections and the outline of his portrait of Jesus, exploring Jesus' activities and the development of his thought; Volume III explores the social groups centered around Jesus, and those who in some way opposed him. Meier's original intention was to complete his work with a discussion of four 'enigmas' in Volume IV, but the subject of the study, Jesus and the Mosaic Law, required the entire book, and we must wait once more for the completion of his analysis in a fifth (and perhaps more) volume in the series.

1. *Method in Historical Jesus Research*

Meier more than once characterizes the process toward his goal of a reliable portrait of Jesus as 'a long and dusty road' (1994: 4, 967, 1047). It is so because, first of all, each of the volumes is massive, together comprising over 3000 pages, with close to half the material included in dense endnotes found after each chapter. And it is so because he so clearly thirsts for his elusive historical data using a method which requires the exploration of many dead ends, from which he must trudge back empty-handed.

Volume I opens with 'a simple rule: [my method] prescinds from what Christian faith or later Church teaching says about Jesus, without either affirming or denying such claims'. He then proposes 'the fantasy of the "unpapal conclave"', a group of 'honest historians', one Catholic, one Protestant, one Jewish, and one agnostic, who have allowed themselves to be locked up in the basement of the Harvard Divinity School library, put on an

ascetical regime and 'not allowed to emerge until they had hammered out a consensus document on who Jesus of Nazareth was and what he intended in his own time and place' (1991a: 1).[1] Meier structures his books on two levels, aimed at two different audiences: the main text is a consensus statement of what his 'conclave' concludes, while the notes provide the record of the debates into which they entered.[2] The four imaginary historians, with their various religious affiliations, are the implied authors of the text, while Meier is the narrator. The effect, and perhaps the purpose, of this rhetorical construct is to distance Meier from the criticism that his views retain a Roman Catholic bias, despite the imprimatur which proclaims the acceptability of the ideas.

He explores the question of objectivity, arguing along with Karl Rahner that it is an 'asymptotic goal', that is one which 'we have to keep pressing toward, even though we never fully reach it' (1991a: 4). In order to avoid 'rampant subjectivism', it is necessary to use one's sources critically, with appropriate criteria for making judgments, and to enter fully into the academic debate with one's peers. But more important still, it is necessary to make 'an honest admission of one's own personal stance, one's own point of view and background'. In his case, the danger is that he will create 'a Catholic Chalcedonian Jesus', because 'everyone who writes on the historical Jesus, writes from some ideological vantage point; no critic is exempt' (1991a: 5). The solution is 'neither to pretend to an absolute objectivity that is not to be had nor to wallow in total relativism', but rather to admit one's own standpoint. Having done so, he remains nervous, however, and invites his non-Catholic readers in particular to point out those places where he reads Catholic theology into the quest (1991a: 6). But while Meier takes pains to identify his own theological biases, he seems unaware of the other ways in which biases may enter his argument, particularly the effects of his social situation. As a white, urban male, well-placed in the hierarchy of both church

1. Ironically, this vision of a group of scholars working together, exchanging papers and opinions in an effort to come to conclusions about historicity, using historical critical tools to come to a consensus view, looks very like the activity of the Jesus Seminar. Meier feels a sense of 'unease' with the Jesus Seminar, because of the misleading appearance of scientific accuracy inherent in the voting, not because of their method (1991a: 33). The image of the conclave suggests the all-male forum of papal elections, and one might expect his consensus document to bear a strong male bias, although he does not seem to be aware of this possibility. In Vol. IV he adds a Muslim scholar, perhaps in response to changes in world politics over the nearly two decades since the 'unpapal conclave' began. It is not clear what, if anything, the imagined scholars in this group individually contribute to the discussion, which judging from the notes is dominated by the Roman Catholic.

2. Luke Timothy Johnson 1992: 25 comments that Meier's approach is 'invariably irenic, discriminating, and fair', 'a safe and reliable guide through the maze of questions concerning the historical Jesus'.

and academy, Meier speaks from the center: 'the ordinary, the usual, the clear, the stable, the safe, the well-off' (1991a: 7).[3] It would not be surprising if both his questions and his answers reflected this social situation, nor would it be surprising to find traces of anxiety arising from the tension between himself at the center and the Jesus he pursues on the margins.

As the title indicates, Meier's Jesus is a 'marginal Jew' (1991a: 6). He recognizes that the term 'marginal' is used in different ways by different authors, and thus reflects 'the puzzling, many-faceted reality of Jesus'. Moving from the spatial image of things with centers and edges, Meier interprets the marginal as that which is characteristically 'the strange, the unusual, the ambiguous, the unstable, the dangerous, the impoverished'.[4] Meier's use of the term does not follow the usage of sociologists strictly, although he cites the work of Janice E. Perlman, who studied the phenomenon of marginal groups in contemporary urban society. Her categories parallel some of his in 'intriguing' ways: the marginal actually live on the periphery of the city; they are jobless or underemployed; they are rural migrants to the urban center; they belong to racial or ethnic minorities; and they are, broadly speaking, deviant: 'pathological, gifted or nonconformist' (1991a: 7). Meier warms especially to three of these categories, the rural migrant who is jobless, and the deviant. Perlman comments that 'in the case of an artist, criminal, prophet, or revolutionary, marginality implies a lack of participation in the occupational, religious, or political mainstream' (1991a: 16), a case which invites application to Jesus. The deviant is defined by the mainstream as marginal to its positions and interests, as Other. Thus the category of analysis implies the point of view of the dominant group, which defines subordinate groups as

3. Although some have found in his work 'a commitment to common scholarly interchange and discussion across confessional, national and gender lines', it should be noted that male scholars overwhelmingly outnumber females, that most of his discussion partners are either American or German, and that a large number are Roman Catholic. See Hurtado 1997: 282. The paucity of female voices is particularly evident. Meier draws on little work by women scholars either in the text or in the notes; a quick count of the first two volumes shows that of the fewer than two dozen women cited, only five are cited more than two or three times, two for an extended critique.

4. In Vol. III, Meier complains that 'contrary to my express intention…some critics have taken the phrase "a marginal Jew" to be my set definition of Jesus rather than my refusal to give a set definition'. It is not clear what that means, but he provides some further help: 'The person who was to become the religious center of European civilization started out so far on the periphery as to be barely visible. That paradox…is what the label "marginal" is meant to underline for the reader' (2001: 8). So although he provides a definition of marginality (in Vol. I), he is uncomfortable with his flirtation with sociological models, and ten years later he prefers the language of paradox and enigma. He firmly insists, though, that 'in no way is the term intended to deny, attenuate, or call into question the essential Jewishness of Jesus' (2001: 8). We will return to this question later.

deviant. These categories characterize Meier's prefiguration of the historical field: the social world of first century Palestine is comprised of the dominant group at the center and the deviant or subordinate group at the margin. The relationship between the two groups is one of correlation, where according to Paul Ricoeur (1986), the elements are classified by exclusion or separation. For Meier, the historical field, at its most fundamental level, is troped metonymically.

In Meier's work, the term marginal is used 'to conjure up and connect a number of allied aspects of Jesus' life and ministry'. He finds six of these aspects important as a starting point in understanding Jesus (1991a: 7). To begin with, he was considered historically insignificant, peripheral to the interests and concerns of both Jewish and pagan historians of the first and second centuries. Second, anyone who is condemned and publicly executed 'has obviously been pushed to the margins of [his] society'. Third, Jesus marginalised himself 'in the eyes of ordinary working Jews in Palestine', by abandoning his home and livelihood, relying on 'the goodwill, support, and economic contributions of his followers'. Next, 'he dared to challenge teachings and practices accepted by many Jews of his day' with 'a sovereign authority whose basis was by no means clear to his opponents' (1991a: 8). Fifth, his 'style of teaching and living was…offensive to many Jews….and so pushed him to the margins of Palestinian Judaism'. His 'swift and brutal end' can be simply accounted for, in that 'by the time he died, he had managed to make himself appear obnoxious, dangerous, or suspicious to everyone from pious Pharisees through political high priests to an ever vigilant Pilate', alienating so many people that he had few on his side. Last, Jesus as a rural Galilean did not integrate well into the dominant urban culture in Jerusalem: 'a poor layman…with disturbing doctrines and claims was marginal in both the sense of being dangerously antiestablishment and in the sense of lacking a power base in the capital', and so was disposable (1991a: 9).

This overview of Jesus' marginality provides a synopsis of the main action of the plot of Meier's portrait. Even though the chronology of events in Jesus' life cannot be determined with any accuracy, in the two or three years of his public ministry Jesus found himself increasingly involved in controversy and confrontation with those in power. While insisting that the best metaphor for his work is that of 'pieces of a mosaic that we must put together as best we can', Meier admits that

> there is a certain dynamism of cause and effect, before and after, pervading our whole project. Whatever the exact order of Jesus' events and sayings, as a whole they precede and somehow precipitate the final confrontation with his enemies in Jerusalem, resulting in his crucifixion. The criterion of Jesus' violent death, while not solving individual problems of chronology or authenticity, does provide a thread that runs true to the end (1991a: 409).

Thus Meier prefigures the historical field metonymically and suggests that a diachronic analysis of the events in Jesus' life is best understood in terms of causal relationships, even though, for the most part, his portrait is a synchronic 'mosaic' which avoids consideration of change and development based on chronological analysis. He is careful to make this distinction, but he admits that there are certain 'laws of nature' and human development which must apply to Jesus, even though our sources are largely silent about them. Jesus, 'like every human being, struggled toward some definition of self within, in relation to, and perhaps in opposition to, larger social units', despite our inability at this distance to know what his development entailed. By historical analogy, we can assume growth, development and change in the process of maturation. Meier will use these assumptions to hint at historical explanations based on causal relationships, but his strict method does not permit him to speculate further: 'with no data to control speculation, no particular scenario can be disproved any more than it can be proved' (1991a: 254).

So, on the diachronic level, Meier prefigures the historical field metonymically and proposes an explanatory argument based on predictable patterns of human development and causal logic. According to White's analysis, a tragic plot structure is most closely affiliated with these elements, and this is what we might expect. But Meier emphasizes his synchronic portrait instead, beginning by contextualising Jesus in his historical milieux (the mosaic) and then distinguishing Jesus from those various contexts (including his family relationships, his social groups, and the Judaism of first-century Palestine).

2. *Putting Jesus in Context*

As for so much of Jesus' story, 'the sources that might allow us to say anything about Jesus' birth, family, and upbringing are meager at best'; but Meier is convinced that careful sifting of the infancy narratives and a review of social conditions in first century Palestine can provide a rough picture (1991a: 205). This portrait, a mosaic made of historical fragments, is the synchronic level in Meier's analysis. He proceeds by sketching the general context into which he places Jesus, and because the sources provide so few data, he is careful to make only limited claims for historicity concerning Jesus. In this part of his work, Meier raises questions of family and society in first century Galilee, attempting by a process of 'blending' to fit what is known about Jesus into this general context (1991a: 10).[5]

5. Establishing the most appropriate background for Jesus among many possibilities is a difficulty which Meier does not adequately acknowledge. William R. Telford comments, 'Which proposed background, especially within Judaism, can be established as the most important interpretative context for the reconstruction of Jesus' teaching and mission: Pharisaism, apocalyptic, the wisdom tradition, Rabbinic Judaism, the prophetic tradition,

Jesus was born during the reign of Herod the Great into a Jewish family in Nazareth. His mother's name was Mary and his legal father's name was Joseph. These three names, along with the names of his 'brothers' are 'patriarchal' or 'matriarchal' names, indicating that the family participated in the 'reawakening of Jewish national and religious identity', the 'upsurge of native-religious feeling' following the Seleucid persecution of the time of Antiochus IV Epiphanes (1991a: 207-208).

The traditions of Jesus' Davidic descent and the virgin birth occupy Meier for the better part of forty pages of text and notes. Despite modern scientific knowledge of human reproduction, Meier feels he must explore the evidence supporting the historical claim that Joseph–or another man–actually fathered Jesus. Although the evidence that Jesus was of Davidic descent, through Joseph, is early and widely attested, it does not prove that he was '*literally*, *biologically* of Davidic stock' (1991a: 219, emphasis his). We cannot be certain, then, that Joseph was Jesus' biological father, but we have even less reason to think that Jesus was illegitimate.[6] As for his mother Mary, 'historical-critical research simply does not have the sources and tools available to reach a final decision on the historicity of the virginal conception' (1991a: 222).[7]

Essene sectarianism, the charismatic hasidism of Galilee, the Zealots? All have been suggested. The diversity in pre-70 Judaism, its heterodox character and the eclipse moreover of the rigid dichotomy between Judaism and Hellenism in first-century Palestine has made this question an urgent one for future Jesus studies'(1994: 68). The problem is even more difficult in the case of Jesus' childhood and youth, where we have no idea how the religious ideas of his family of origin fit into the diverse traditions. Were Joseph's sympathies with the Pharisees, for example? Does that explain why Jesus might have been taught to read and write? Or was he attracted to the Hellenistic wisdom tradition? Would that be an argument in favor of a Greek-speaking Jesus? And so on. The sources we have do not permit us to answer these questions, let alone draw these conclusions. Moreover, while Meier clearly argues for a Jewish Jesus, it has been suggested that Jesus pushed the conventional limits of Judaism: 'Riches, for example, sees Jesus as a liminal figure who broke the mould of Judaism even while having to work within its existing conventions. Hagner argues that Jewish scholars have failed to come to grips with the originality of Jesus, and that important parts of the Gospels should not be rejected because of their incompatibility with that Jewishness' (Telford 1994: 71; see Riches 1980 and Hagner 1984).

6. Meier is uncomfortable with the suggestion that Mary might have been raped by an unknown assailant and become pregnant with Jesus, although he avoids discussing the possibility on the grounds that such a suggestion is 'usually not mentioned in polite company or in polite books' (1991a: 222). Among other things, this polite attitude betrays a misogynistic assumption that female victims of male sexual violence are to blame for what has happened to them. See Schaberg 1997: 156.

7. The question of Jesus' illegitimacy is explored in Schaberg 1995. She examines the possible origins of the doctrine of the virginal conception, suggesting 'a few working hypotheses': it is 'primarily a Gentile product' which reflects Greco-Roman tales of

Historically speaking, Meier can only conclude that Jesus was the biological child of a young woman named Mary about whom little else is known; his 'legal', 'putative' father was a man named Joseph who may have been a descendent of King David. Any other conclusions would have to be made on theological grounds, and although Meier asserts that his position 'is not predetermined by confessional concerns', these are important theological questions for him as a Roman Catholic. Meier painstakingly explores the possibilities in great detail, while no other historical Jesus scholar thinks to ask if there might be historical grounds for making claims for Jesus' divine parentage.

Meier turns next to questions of language and literacy, arguing that Jesus' usual language was Aramaic, but that due to the 'demands of business and trade' he probably spoke Greek, at least to a limited extent. As a small businessman with a 'woodworking establishment', which required him to use Greek, he apparently gained proficiency 'enough to communicate directly with Pilate at his trial', assuming the historicity of that episode (1991a: 262). Because literacy was especially important to Jews, it is reasonable to suppose that Jesus might have been able to read: there is archeological and literary evidence for 'a fairly wide diffusion of literacy among Palestinian Jews in the first centuries B.C. and A.D.' (1991a: 275). Meier paints a picture of Jewish intellectuals 'who probably came from the town "bourgeoisie"' and 'would be both zealous and financially equipped to spread the ability to read the Scriptures among their comrades and offspring' (1991a: 275).[8] And while Meier carefully points out that Jewish peasants did not enjoy the advantages of the scribal class, Jesus was a special case. Because of 'the piety of the father and the existence of a local synagogue', Meier argues that it is possible that his education was better than most, thus enabling him to read. Because 'almost all of the various Gospel traditions' provide indications that Jesus was literate, he concludes that 'it is reasonable to suppose that Jesus' religious formation in his family was intense and profound, and included instruction in reading biblical Hebrew' (1991a: 276). His skill in debate, even in an oral culture, suggests 'some reading knowledge of the sacred texts', and Meier imagines that this knowledge was 'imparted either directly by Joseph or by some more learned Jew procured for the purpose' (1991a: 276-77). The synagogue at Nazareth was 'a sort of religious "elementary school"' (1991a: 277). Jesus' formal education did not go further than this, but 'one therefore has to

miraculous births of great men; it draws on a Jewish explanation that Jesus' conception was like a second creation, where Mary is the anti-type of Eve; it covers up the real anguish of a woman and her illegitimate child; it is a Johannine christological reading of Matthew and Luke; and it took shape primarily in debate with Gnostics. (1995: 178-81).

8. He distances himself from this language in the notes, commenting that the term 'bourgeoisie' 'must be taken with more than a grain of salt' (1991a: 305).

allow for a high degree of natural talent—perhaps even genius—that more than compensated for the low level of Jesus' formal education' (1991a: 278). While Jesus was a 'marginal Jew', he was not an ordinary peasant, and he had 'the ability to read sophisticated theological and literary works and comment on them' (1991a: 278).

As Meier understands the term, Jesus was not a peasant because he was not a farmer, even though he was 'economically connected' with an agrarian society and might have farmed, so 'to that extent, he may be considered a peasant, however atypical' (1991a: 280). He was probably not married, although 'we cannot be absolutely sure' (1991a: 345, 364 n. 57).[9] He lived in Nazareth, a town of about 1600-2000 inhabitants (1991a: 277, 317) where he was probably the town carpenter. His trade involved 'a broad range of skills and tools', and along with technical skill, physical strength: 'the airy weakling often presented to us in pious paintings and Hollywood movies would hardly have survived the rigors of being Nazareth's *tektón* from his youth to his early thirties' (1991a: 281). The historical evidence for Jesus' working in this trade is scant, but accepted on the basis of embarrassment (1991a: 310).

From an economic perspective, Jesus as a craftsman earned a modest living. While he was certainly poor, 'poverty is always a relative concept', and 'our imagination, rhetoric, and desire for instant social relevance can get carried away in depicting the grinding poverty Jesus supposedly endured' (1991a: 281-82). Rather, Jesus was included in a 'middle group' which included business people, craftsmen, and farmers; 'further down the ladder were day laborers, hired servants, traveling craftsmen, and dispossessed farmers forced into banditry'. Slaves, of course, were at the bottom. So Jesus was 'perhaps equivalent–if we may use a hazy analogy–to a blue-collar worker in lower-middle-class America', and probably 'no poorer or less respectable than almost anyone else in Nazareth' (1991a: 282). Indeed, for Meier, it is important to understand that leaving his position of carpenter to embrace itinerant ministry would result in a loss of honor, shaming him 'in the eyes of opponents' (1991a: 312); this note is surprisingly the only mention of honor and shame in the discussion. As a craftsman, Jesus may have been employed in Sepphoris when it was being rebuilt, and so may have been exposed to urban culture, which 'might have helped loosen the natural provincialism adhering to Jewish peasants from the countryside' (1991a: 284). While Meier distances himself from this idea, commenting in the notes that it is 'a pure possibility with no real footing in any Gospel text' (1991a: 284), it is all too easy to picture a brilliant and sophisticated Jesus rather than a

9. Celibacy was an option for members of some religious groups, as research on the community at Qumran indicates; so it is not beyond possibility that Jesus remained celibate. His followers, on the other hand, included women, a fact which 'contrasted substantially with the apparent exclusion of women among Qumranites' (McCready 1997: 200).

landless peasant eking out a precarious living in harsh economic conditions. Although Meier is careful to make disclaimers regularly, the rhetorical effect of such descriptions is persuasive, and the reader is lulled into imagining that because something is possible, it is probable. As for Jesus' social standing, it is not at all certain that artisan workers enjoyed the same economic security as freehold farmers, for example;[10] nor of course that there is any analogy between freehold farmers in first century Galilee and contemporary American lower-middle-class workers. But the effect of the suggestion is to make the claim. Since Meier argues that Jesus prophesied God's intervention in human affairs, an eschatological perspective, he denies that Jesus' aim was subversive or revolutionary. Indeed, he uses the suggestion that 'the ordinary people judged the advantages of peace and a modest standard of living to outweigh the perilous promise of revolt' (1991a: 283)[11] to undermine the argument that Jesus' actions and message were a politically motivated response to the social inequalities of his time.[12]

To summarize: we begin the story of Jesus according to Meier with the birth of a first son to a devout Jewish couple in Galilee. The question of his parentage remains unresolved, because it is impossible to verify historically. Jesus' legal father was a carpenter who taught his son the trade. Because his trade was physically demanding, Jesus was probably a big and strong man. He lived with his family in Nazareth, and as a youngster Jesus was fortunate to have some formal education. He had unusual intellectual gifts, and unlike

10. See, *contra*, Crossan 1991, and the bibliography there.

11. Meier draws on James C. Scott's analysis of peasant farming practices, arguing that the 'innate conservatism' in technique protected against risk and loss; he suggests an analogy with political thinking: 'in a grudging sort of way, Galilean peasants may have viewed Antipas as safe too' (1991a: 313). Crossan will put Scott to work to quite different effect. See below, Chapter 6.

12. The question of Jesus' political involvement divides scholars, as we will see. Telford outlines some of the major positions: ' Downing argues that Jesus' ministry was in effect political since as a Cynic teacher in a Jewish mould he was spreading ideas that were or were perceived to be subversive. For Theissen, Jesus was a social revolutionary transposing aristocratic values into a popular key. Jesus held a revolutionary ideology (so Oakman) and the reign of God as a total social programme. Borg wishes to rehabilitate the political dimension in life of Jesus research without ascribing to Jesus violent, revolutionary nationalism, and Horsley, too, claims that Jesus actively opposed violence. Buchanan's Jesus, on the other hand, is one who was committed to the principles of the Jewish conquest theology, and Sanders' "reasonable visionary" one who was steeped in a Jewish restoration eschatology and looking (albeit in other-worldly and apolitical terms) for the new Temple, the gathering of the twelve tribes, and the kingdom of God on earth' (1994: 72). None of the four scholars considered here characterizes Jesus as a violent revolutionary figure, but the views of Crossan and Schüssler Fiorenza are closer to Downing's and Borg's positions, while Meier and Wright lean toward the views of Sanders. For an attempt to argue a 'both/and' rather than 'either/or' position, see Vorster 1991.

most peasants, he was probably trilingual and literate. He did not marry, and until his late twenties or early thirties, he lived at home, working with his father; after his father's death, he probably took over the family business. His craft enabled him to earn an adequate living and to enjoy a certain social standing in his community. It is from this point that the historical records begin to provide data which, when analyzed according to historical criteria, constitute evidence for an account of the last two or three years of Jesus' life, and which enable Meier to flesh out the diachronic level of his analysis.

3. *Elements of a Story of Jesus*

Meier's portrait of Jesus can best be understood by reading it on two levels. The explicit level is a synchronic account of Jesus in his historical context; implicit in this account is a diachronic narrative of events in his life. The two are prefigured and plotted differently, which suggests that there will be different implications which may complement or may be in tension with each other. To begin with the diachronic level, while Meier resists the temptation to provide a story of Jesus' public ministry, he finds logical connections that enable him to sketch an outline of a plot.

As we have seen, before his baptism, Meier's Jesus was a respectable Galilean woodworker living in modest but honorable circumstances in Nazareth. The sources are silent regarding his motivation, and Meier comments that 'apparently there was nothing in his previous life that foreshadowed or ostensibly prepared for his decision to dedicate himself totally to a religious mission to all Israel'. As the eldest son, responsible in Meier's view for the family business, his leaving home may well have caused economic hardship for those left behind. At any rate, his decision 'shocked and offended' his family and neighbours (1994: 109).

Whatever his motivation for seeking baptism, Jesus apparently agreed with John the Baptist's message, characterised by Meier as 'fierce imminent eschatology tinged with apocalyptic' (1994: 53). The disaster threatening Israel could be avoided only by national repentance. As Meier defines it, the term eschatology refers to 'the definitive end of the history of God's people as they have experienced it from the time of their election. It is an end–but also a new beginning–brought about by God's wrathful judgment and extermination of sinners within his holy people and by the salvation of those who have proved faithful or who sincerely repent in the last hour…' (1994: 31). Meier sees a continuum from those writers who believed the 'ordinary, earthly realities' of Israel would remain in continuity with the future Israel to those who envisioned the transformation of Israel into 'an idealized, magical, or heavenly world'. As far as John the Baptist is concerned, 'the motif of imminent judgment, the threat of annihilation by fire…, the denunciation of even

the apparently sincere as really evil, and the rupture of salvation history…, as well as the dark and dire view of the future…, help push John's eschatology in the direction of apocalyptic, without fully arriving there' (1994: 31). If Jesus accepted John's baptism, he presumably held similar views, so that 'recent interpretations of Jesus that wish to play down or exclude the element of future eschatology' are questionable (1994: 31): 'the picture of an un-eschatological Jesus, Jesus the wisdom teacher concerned with people's lives here and now…simply does not square with historical reality' (1994: 110). Meier will nuance this position, especially in Volume IV,[13] but in his view, at least at the beginning of his public ministry, Jesus believed God would act to bring about a cataclysmic end to history.

While John had disciples, Meier sees no evidence of 'any structured community'; he imagines a network instead, an 'amorphous' group of disciples who 'moved in and out of his ambit' (1994: 117). Using the criterion of embarrassment as grounds for his conclusion, Meier suggests that Jesus probably remained for some time as John's disciple (1994: 128), and he argues that 'a firm substratum of the Baptist's message and life remained… throughout Jesus' ministry' (1994: 124). Because the gospels do not allow us to reconstruct the years of Jesus' ministry in chronological order, it is impossible to say why Jesus began his own ministry independent from John. Meier suggests that there must have been 'a certain spiritual leave-taking', perhaps with John's imprisonment marking a turning point (1994: 124). Moreover at some point Jesus found himself able to perform healings and exorcisms, although it is not clear whether his healing ministry began before or after his break with John. Meier warms somewhat to Witherington's reconstruction in which John's imprisonment was the event which led Jesus to 'go a step further than the Baptist, perhaps with a somewhat different emphasis or modus operandi' (1994: 197; cf. Witherington 1990: 54). However, he is reluctant to speculate further, arguing that if the chronology of the gospels is eliminated as redactional, it cannot be historically reconstructed (1994: 125). In particular Hollenbach's 'use of "disciplined historical imagination" is dismissed; 'as usual in such exercises, his reconstruction displays great imagination, less discipline, and little history' (1994: 125; cf. Hollenbach 1982: 206-207).

13. Commenting that 'Jesus does not explicitly ground any of his legal pronouncements in the presence or coming of the kingdom of God', he argues nonetheless that '…the halakic life [Jesus] demands of his disciples is one that already is made possible by and responds to the power of God's rule, present in Jesus' preaching and actions' (2009: 658). He calls this 'eschatological morality' or 'kingdom ethics' (2009: 657). He has argued that Jesus' pronouncements on the laws concerning divorce and oaths are binding on those living 'proleptically' in the coming kingdom, and would presumably hold that the same demands are binding on present-day disciples who still live in wait (2009: 206).

Jesus, in Meier's reconstruction, agreed with John that the end time was imminent, allowed himself to be baptized by John and joined the network of John's disciples; at some point John was imprisoned and executed, and Jesus continued his own ministry of baptism. During this time, some of John's disciples joined Jesus, whose ministry expanded to include healing and exorcism. But the end time had arrived in Jesus' ministry 'at least to some extent. And it is a time of joyful salvation more than of fiery punishment' (1994: 144). Why Jesus and John held different views is not clear; Meier speculates that it had to do with Jesus' claims to perform miracles; the claim 'may correlate to some degree with John's emphasis on imminent judgment and Jesus' stress on the joy of the kingdom already present in his ministry' (1994: 171). Nonetheless, in Meier's view, Jesus continued to agree with John that a new world order was being put in place by God. But John's vision was darker.

Jesus, understanding salvation in terms of present healing, continued to expect God's kingdom in the future but recognized signs of its presence in his own ministry: 'It was this dynamic, multivalent, "salvation-history-in-a-nutshell" quality of "kingdom of God" that allowed Jesus to use it both of his pivotal ministry in the present and of the denouement of his ministry, soon to come' (1994: 1042). But while Meier recognizes some signs of the kingdom in the ministry of Jesus, he emphasizes its futurity: 'the effect of the kingdom's coming cannot be separated from the person of God who comes as king. Thus "the kingdom of God" is not a political movement or a program for social improvement' (1994: 287).[14] Moreover, in Meier's visionary utopian view, the coming kingdom is discontinuous with the present; it is 'not just a full flourishing of something already happening in miniature' (Witherington 1995: 209; cf Meier 1994: 337).

The recognition of the signs of the kingdom in his ministry did not, according to Meier, mark a change in Jesus' worldview. He continued to expect and to preach an imminent eschatological reversal of the world order. Meier uses the parable of the children in the marketplace (Mt. 11.16-19 par.), which he accepts as authentic, to support this conclusion: 'this generation, like the recalcitrant second group of children, rejects the call to repentance of both the excessively ascetic John and the excessively jolly Jesus' (1994: 149). Whether Jesus could ever have been considered 'excessively jolly' is an open question. The ending of the pericope suggests that both John and Jesus are children of Sophia, divine wisdom. The verse is difficult;[15] Meier concludes

14. In contrast to Crossan in particular. See below, Chapter 6.

15. Taking Luke 7.35 to be the more original, with *kaì* taken adversatively and *edikaiōthē* understood as a Lukan redaction: Yet wisdom is justified by her children. He is not convinced that this is the best translation, and argues that 'all her children' might better be understood as those who prove themselves true children of wisdom by accepting the word of her prophets. But it remains an interpretive 'puzzle' (1994: 152-53).

that it may not be authentic. It nonetheless serves as a reminder that 'Jewish apocalyptic resulted at least in part from the amalgam of prophetic and sapiential influences'(1994: 152), an amalgam which can be seen in Q. Meier is happy to accept Q as 'a distinct and valuable source for the sayings…of John and Jesus', but he believes that distinguishing redactional layers is 'an exercise in trying to know the unknowable' (1994: 180).[16] He takes wisdom to refer to 'God's wise, well-ordered plan of salvation' and argues that those who accept the message of the prophets 'will be the means by which God's wisdom is finally vindicated' (1994: 153). The conclusion remains that both John and Jesus expected an imminent end, in accordance with God's plan of salvation for those who are faithful. Despite some sapiential elements in his preaching, Jesus was not a wisdom preacher.

Having said this, Meier also argues that there was 'a major shift' in Jesus' message. Jesus began to emphasize God's will to seek out and gather in 'the lost, the poor, the marginalized, yes, even the irreligious' in Israel, and to bring 'the scattered people of God back into one, holy community' (1991b: 90), 'an eschatological whole' (1994: 401).[17] Meier argues that Jesus' answers to John's questions, referring to Isaiah, 'where such miraculous healings are symbols of God's redemption of Israel from the Babylonian exile and the return of the people to a renewed Jerusalem', mark this shift. Jesus saw himself as the person called by God to bring this message, but the action would be God's doing. Jesus was neither a political revolutionary nor a social reformer (1991b: 92). While 'he implicitly made himself the pivotal figure in the final drama he was announcing and inaugurating', Jesus gave no clear answer as to his identity. He probably considered himself 'the final prophet sent to Israel in its last days', while his disciples may have had messianic hopes for him (1991b: 99).[18]

16. He notes that 'Kloppenborg sees it as a type of wisdom-sayings collection with prophetic additions, while Sato sees it in analogy to the Old Testament prophetic books, with sapiential additions'. The difficulty with such reconstructions is that 'we lack the adequate data and criteria to discern what is primary and what is secondary in Q'. Yet the discussions concerning stratification in Q are ultimately irrelevant in deciding the authenticity of a saying; 'even if one could establish with fair certitude that a particular logion entered into the Q document at a secondary stage of its composition, that in itself would tell us nothing about whether the logion originally came from Jesus or was created by the early church'. So Meier concludes that, considering 'the hypothetical nature of Q—and, indeed, the hypothetical nature of my entire project—I think it unwise to make my conclusions depend on detailed hypotheses about Q that are tenuous at best' (1994: 180-81).

17. In contrast to Geza Vermes, who sees Jesus in terms of a more individualistic religiosity (1993: 195). See Hurtado 1997: 278-79.

18. Meier maintains and sharpens this position in his latest volume: 'Jesus consciously presented himself…as the eschatological prophet, performing Elijah's task of beginning the regathering of Israel in the end time' (2009: 126).

The true repentance necessary for salvation was shown in 'acceptance of himself and his message' (1991b: 93). While he affirmed Mosaic Law as God's will, he at times insisted on his own interpretation of it: 'In such cases, the Law had to give way to or be interpreted by the command of Jesus, simply because Jesus said so ("but *I* say to you")' (1991b: 95). Jesus, then, was a 'charismatic' who 'located his authority…in his own ability to know directly and intuitively what was God's will for his people Israel in the last days' (1994: 1046; cf. 2009: 415).[19] This aspect of Jesus message, this 'unheard-of claim to authority over the Mosaic Law and over people's lives' put Jesus 'on a collision course not only with the Temple priests but also with sincere Jews in general' (1991b: 95; cf. 1991a: 1045). This conflict with the authorities came to a climax in the Temple action, which Meier sees as an act of 'reform and purification' rather than a symbol of eschatological judgment.[20]

In Volume II, the story of 'Jesus seen in himself' ends with Meier's treatment of nature miracles, including the cursing of the fig tree. The action in the temple and its significance are discussed, but the last week of Jesus' life is not narrated. The only further reference to events of that week is the comment that 'It was with anguish and yet trust that Jesus told his disciples at his last fellowship meal that he would not drink wine again until he drank it in the kingdom of God' (1994: 1042; cf. 1036). How much of the gospel traditions concerning the Last Supper Meier considers historical is not yet clear. Elsewhere he mentions the arrest, trial(s), and crucifixion of Jesus (1994: 626-27), speculating that the fact of his miracles may be 'an "aggravating circumstance" leading to Jesus' death'. For any further exploration, we must wait for the fifth volume.

Nonetheless, in the minimal details of the evidence available to Meier so far, an outline of a narrative can be discerned. Jesus left his home and livelihood and sought baptism by John the Baptist. Whatever his motivation, Meier argues that Jesus' baptism by John was the turning point in his life, 'the

19. This is at the heart of the 'real enigma' of Vol. IV: 'how Jesus can at one and the same time affirm the Law as the given, as the normative expression of God's will for Israel, and yet in a few cases or legal areas (e.g., divorce and oaths) teach and enjoin what is contrary to the Law, simply on his own authority' (2009: 3). The pronouncements that create a serious problem for understanding Jesus within mainstream Judaism, like the absolute prohibition of divorce, can best be understood, in Meier's view, as the words of an eschatological prophet proclaiming 'the rules of conduct binding on those who already live proleptically in the kingdom of God' (2009: 205-206). Thus the kingdom is partially realized in Jesus' life and ministry, but still to come through God's action in the future.

20. Meier argues that the idea of a prophetic judgment on the Temple was a later development in the tradition, accomplished by the intercalation of the story of the cursing of the fig tree: 'By mutual interpretation, the two intercalated stories made clear that Jesus was not urging the temple's reform but pronouncing the temple's doom' (1994: 894). Cf. Richardson 1997: 306.

external marker of his conversion' (1994: 109). This turning point is also the beginning of the tragic action which will lead ultimately to Jesus' death. In the two or three years of his public ministry, Jesus preached and taught, baptized, gathered disciples, did deeds that at the very least were considered to be miracles by others at the time, engaged in conflict with various groups within Judaism, until finally he was arrested, condemned, and executed. He was not a prophet of social reform, but rather an eschatological prophet who may have been considered the Messiah by his disciples. He expected God's imminent intervention in human affairs, and called the people of Israel to repent and believe in him. Meier tends to accept a Johannine chronology, and imagines that Jesus 'regularly alternated his activity between his home area of Galilee and Jerusalem…, going up to the holy city for the great feasts, when the large crowds of pilgrims would guarantee an audience he might not otherwise reach' (1991a: 407). But his reinterpretation of Mosaic Law offended many, and gradually he became more and more marginalized, until at the end he had few supporters and could be disposed of easily by the authorities. The action of the plot traces Jesus' downfall, from the point of his baptism to his death. From being the one chosen by God to announce the coming kingdom, a kingdom partially visible in the banquets and miraculous healings, he falls to his death. Rather than gathering Israel around him in anticipation of the eschaton, he is deserted by even the inner group of disciples, the twelve who represent the tribes of Israel.

On the diachronic level, the action of the plot seems to place it in the realm of tragedy, although the mode of the action is not yet clear. In terms of Jesus' own vision, he fails. We might say that his downfall and death, starting from such a high expectation of victory, is tragic. But formally speaking, is it tragedy? Jesus' fall, in Meier's account, is not the working out of an inevitable destiny. The tragic sense of immutable laws governing human experience is only hinted at in Meier's narrative, as is the idea that what happened to Jesus was both inevitable and incongruous. It may be that in the events of the last few days of Jesus' life Meier will narrate a tragic denouement, but he has not yet done so.[21]

21. In contrast, Geza Vermes presents another possibility, the deeply ironic view that Jesus died because he did the wrong thing in the wrong place at the wrong time; he characterizes this as 'the real tragedy of Jesus the Jew' (1993: x). His portrait is better understood as a tragic farce than as tragedy. When Meier's is complete, it may take the form of ironic tragedy, but it is unlikely to be farce. Vermes's more recent book provides a fictionalized vision of the 'return of the real Jesus', who denies two millennia of christological tradition: 'You've been told to expect everything from me. I say, you must save yourselves. Don't forget that the Kingdom of God is always at hand. Get on with it at once. You can do it, on your own, as you are children of our heavenly Father who alone is God, blessed for ever' (2000: 270).

Stories of social integration, as we have seen, are heroic; stories of social disintegration are ironic. It is tempting to speculate that Meier's final vision will be one of social integration, in which the social order is challenged and strengthened by the events in Jesus' life, particularly in the last week. That is to say, on this level of plot at least, Meier's portrait may ultimately take the form of heroic tragedy or tragic epic. If this is to be an epic story, we might expect Meier to use his data as historical evidence for a narrative journey from bondage to freedom. But historically, Meier's Jesus is marginal, as we have seen, not heroic. He is not a person of national or international importance. There is here, as yet, no crucial struggle, no release of society from bondage. So, on the level of the action of the plot, the narrative tends toward tragedy rather than epic. But will it be heroic or ironic tragedy? In the narrative as it stands, Jesus remains isolated, and the language of scattering suggests that social disintegration is the result. This suggests that Meier sees the story of Jesus as ironic tragedy.

We have already explored Meier's troping of the historical field. Meier prefigures his implicit narrative metonymically, with a vision of Jesus as a marginal Jew who is progressively isolated by the action of the plot.[22] On the synchronic level, on the other hand, Meier places Jesus in his first-century context and then distinguishes him from others in that context. His detailed picture of 'Jesus seen in himself' focuses on events and characteristics which make Jesus unique, which distinguish him from others in his milieu. This is a metaphoric prefiguration, one which is affiliated, in White's taxonomy, with an epic plot structure. Thus in terms of trope and plot, the two levels of Meier's portrait remain in tension.

4. *Dragging in the Net*

Having given his work a metonymic frame in the title, and plotted the diachronic narrative of Jesus in terms that suggest a tragic vision, it is important to consider how the sources and the criteria Meier uses are related to the results. How is his method related, if it is, to the deep structures of the historical narrative which he has produced? Do the structures precede the data which are used to construct them? Or do the data suggest structures for which they then become evidence? In this case, does Meier's sense that this story is

22. Meier makes a good deal of the title of Vol. IV, *Law and Love,* which he explains is a type of synecdoche called 'merism' in which a totality is expressed by two contrasting parts (2009: 23). This trope does not signal a change in his prefiguration of the historical field, however. Rather, it implies that 'far from being opposed to the Law, love for Jesus is the Law's supreme value and command (2009: 10). The explanation serves to make clear that Meier is not inscribing a Law-Gospel conflict which might reinforce Christian anti-Judaism.

a tragic narrative about a unique individual lead him to make decisions about his sources and methods that will produce the evidence he needs to make his case? Or has his work with his sources produced historical data that leads him to construct this story as he has rather than in another way?

Meier's method is intended to produce 'reliable data'; indeed, he comments that the interpretation of the data is beyond the scope of this work. Instead, at least in the first volumes, he uses the tools of historical criticism, as conventionally conceived, to extract data from the texts which may later be used for historical and theological interpretations. He begins by claiming that he does not intend to provide those interpretations, but in Volume III he admits that 'the writing of history and biography, while always interpretive to some degree, allows various levels of interpretation. The very gathering of data and the passing of judgment as to their historicity involve a certain 'low level' of interpretation' (2001: 15). The sources and the criteria he uses to establish his data lead him to descriptions and conclusions that necessarily interpret the evidence. Although he attempts to be objective, the results indicate subjective preferences, not to say biases. His concern is to avoid beginning with a 'predetermined interpretive grid, be it political, economic or sociological' (2001: 15); I am arguing that like all historians, he begins by prefiguring the field, seen in terms of trope. As he shows a preference for troping the story of Jesus metonymically, it would not be surprising if his method for establishing the data he will use were troped in the same way.

In the first volume, Meier begins with an exploration of the method of historical research. The scientific study of history requires 'empirical data from ancient documents, sifted by human minds operating by inference, analogy, and certain specific criteria' (1991a: 31). Meier uses a biblical metaphor to describe his critical activity in analyzing sources: the entire corpus of Jesus material in all the sources is 'the Matthean dragnet (Mt. 13.47-48) from which the good fish of early tradition must be selected for the containers of serious historical research, while the bad fish of later conflation and invention are tossed back into the murky sea of the uncritical mind'(1991a: 140). He complains that 'the major source of our knowledge about the historical Jesus is also the major problem: the four canonical Gospels' (1991a: 41). The problems are well-known: the gospels are not primarily works of history, their scope is limited, the chronology is questionable, and the words attributed to Jesus may not be exactly what he said. Concerning the sources of the gospels, Meier accepts the two-source hypothesis, 'the standard view in New Testament research today' (1991a: 43). This enables him to posit two sources, Mark and Q; and he accepts C.H. Dodd's argument that John represents an independent tradition (1991a: 44). The gospels, then, provide three independent major sources: Mark, Q, and John. The traditions unique to Matthew (M) and Luke (L) are problematical because it is extremely difficult to distinguish

between tradition and redaction. Since materials related to the life of Jesus do not figure largely in Paul, the letters provide little useful material, and serve to confirm the gospel accounts (1991a: 46). The rest of the New Testament 'yields an even more meagre harvest' (1991a: 47).

When Meier turns to material about Jesus not included in the New Testament, the results are even more disappointing. Josephus serves to confirm that Jesus lived (1991a: 87); Tacitus 'tells nothing that Josephus had not already said' (1991a: 91); and so Suetonius, Pliny the Younger, and Lucian of Samosata (1991a: 92). As for Jewish sources, 'apart from the texts of Josephus…, this vast literature contains no independent reference to or information about Jesus of Nazareth' (1991a: 93). This includes the Dead Sea Scrolls, which Meier eliminates as sources both because Jesus is never mentioned in them and because 'his freewheeling attitude toward the stricter interpretation of the Mosaic Law is the very antithesis of the superobservant Qumranites, who considered even the Pharisees too lax' (1991a: 94).[23] He concludes, 'For all practical purposes, then, our early, independent sources for the historical Jesus boil down to the Four Gospels, a few scattered data elsewhere in the New Testament, and Josephus'. This is so because, 'contrary to some scholars', he does not believe that 'the rabbinic material, the *agrapha*, the apocryphal gospels, and the Nag Hammadi codices (in particular the *Gospel of Thomas*) offer us reliable new information or authentic sayings that are independent of the New Testament' (1991a: 140).

Following the analysis of Vaganay, who argues that the Gospel of Peter is dependent on the synoptic gospels, especially Matthew, Meier takes issue specifically with the views of John Dominic Crossan, whom he accuses of building a 'monumental hypothesis on…a slim basis: the paucity of material allows for much theorizing and little verification' (1991a: 150). But while Meier distances himself from Crossan, he notes that the Cross Gospel is composed of verses 'supposedly immune from signs of Synoptic influence' (1991a: 117). Even though the vocabulary of Peter is typical of Matthew, such comparisons are not statistically significant since Peter is much shorter than Matthew (1991a: 150). Other data, such as Secret Mark, he characterizes as 'dubious': 'obviously, no serious sketch of the Jesus of history can use such

23. In an proposal which would have provided support for Meier's view of Jesus, Wayne O. McCready argues that 'Jesus likely understood himself within an eschatological prophetic tradition…[which] has parallels to views expressed in the Dead Sea Scrolls', and he suggests that Jesus and his followers may have built on the religious ideas of the Qumranites (1997: 191-92). Since Meier's concern is to find data in texts about Jesus which can be used as evidence for his portrait, he eliminates the Qumran texts which predate Jesus, and he expresses suspicion of scholars who see connections: 'this simply proves that learned fantasy knows no limits' (1991a: 94). In this, he has Barbara E. Thiering (1979: 213-14) in his sights.

material' which is the product of the 'over heated imaginations' of second century Christians (1991a: 122). His conclusion is that, with the exception of the Gospel of Thomas, 'there is nothing here that can serve as a source in our quest for the historical Jesus. To use these texts on what is from the start a precarious venture would render the venture completely incredible' (1991a: 123).

The Gospel of Thomas falls into a special category. Meier argues that the 'overarching intention of the redactor…is a gnostic one' (1991a: 127), so it must be later than the second century. Jesus is fully divine, not human, and people are saved by his revelation of the truth of who they are, their own divinity. There is, then, no future salvation: 'the Gospel of Thomas thus represents "realized eschatology" in its most radical form' (1991a: 126). If the sources of Thomas are early and independent, as Crossan argues, Thomas is an important witness which must be taken into consideration in understanding Jesus' eschatology. Meier, however, argues for dependence. His first impression, an *a priori* consideration, is that if Thomas is independent, it is 'practically unique' in second century literature. If, on the other hand, it is dependent, 'it fits perfectly into the larger picture' (1991a: 131). Of course, he will later use this reasoning from dissimilarity to argue for the historicity of some of the gospel material. But he is willing to concede that direct dependence may be questionable. Even so, 'indirect dependence' on the gospels 'through preaching and catechesis, citation from memory, Gospel harmonies, and creative reworking must be taken seriously' (1991a: 131). The concision of Thomas' forms, which may indicate a more primitive form, is not probative, according to Meier, because it can be explained by his redactional needs: since Thomas' view of salvation is 'ahistorical, atemporal, [and] amaterial, …he regularly removes from the Four Gospels anything that contradicts his view' (1991a: 134). In addition, Meier argues that the importance of the Q parallels is not a definitive proof; the parallels to other sources, particularly M and L, may indicate that Thomas used either Matthew or Luke, and there are indications of his possible use of Mark and John. Ultimately, Meier concludes that Thomas is 'dependent not on the four canonical Gospels, but on some conflation of them that had already been composed in Greek'. Finally, traces of the synoptic order, 'especially striking since… Thomas reorders the Synoptic sayings around clusters of similar motifs and catchwords' (1991a: 137), also contribute to Meier's conclusion and his decision not to use Thomas as an independent source in his reconstruction. He recognizes that the occasional authentic text may be omitted, but argues that 'such an isolated, random datum would make no difference in the overall picture we draw of Jesus' (1991a: 166). Since the data thus eliminated provide evidence to support an argument in favor of realized eschatology, it might be argued that the material is neither isolated nor random. This has

important consequences on Meier's understanding of Jesus. In contrast, for Crossan, the material thus eliminated by Meier provides an early, multiply-attested source for a very different portrait.

So, after a long and detailed examination of the sources, Meier concludes with the dragnet image, that 'we have been sitting on the beach, sorting the dragnet and throwing the *agrapha*, apocryphal gospels, and the *Gospel of Thomas* back into the sea' (1991a: 140). This leaves him with the gospels and a few 'scattered tidbits', disappointing for the hungry scholar whose desire for more to chew on is 'understandable but not always critical'. Those who disagree are wishful thinkers: 'It is a case of the wish being father to the thought, but the wish is a pipe dream' (1991a: 140). Having limited the sources he is willing to work with, Meier signals the difficulty involved in using even these documents, which are 'shot through and through with the Easter faith of the early Church, highly selective, and ordered according to various theological programs' (1991a: 141). The narrow range and the 'highly theological nature' of the sources create a 'pressing need to hammer out clear criteria for discerning what within the Gospels can be judged historical' (1991a: 141). Meier turns next to the task of deciding which criteria he will use.[24]

The criteria of authenticity are a series of generalisations which provide a rationale for deciding whether the data provide material which may be used to construct historical evidence. The data are examined to see whether they are specific cases of the general rule, and if they are, they are judged 'authentic'. Such data become evidence for building the historical portrait of Jesus. Meier complains that popular books on Jesus are marked by a 'haphazard' use of criteria for deciding historicity; authors are likely to decide 'at any given moment that what strikes them as reasonable or plausible is therefore historical' (1991a: 167). Even technical books do not escape his critique: Ben Meyer is cited as an example of a scholar who carefully outlines criteria, but 'as the book proceeds, more and more of the redactional theology of the evangelists is declared to come from the historical Jesus, leaving one wondering

24. The bibliography is vast, and Meier discovers 'a wearisome repetition in much of the literature' (1991a: 186). See particularly Stein 1980; and Boring 1988, with a full bibliography, Evans 1989a and 1989b . More recently, see Porter for a thorough review of the discussion and suggestions for three new criteria, Greek language and its context, Greek textual variance, and discourse features, which have the advantage of relying on textual evidence rather than inference based on uncertain interpretations of the historical context (2000). For a brief review of the problems of the sources, see Telford 1994; 65-68, dealing with the questions of sufficiency and reliability of the data. Another proposal, the principal of 'immediacy' is suggested in Crossan 1988, but has not been widely attempted.

how useful the indices really are' (1991a: 185).[25] He levels a similar critique at Geza Vermes as one who prefers to 'muddle through' (2001: 12, 16 n. 21). Criteria are not proof, but norms used to make a judgment; historical proof, he warns, cannot be more than a high degree of probability (1991a: 167).[26]

Meier distinguishes five 'primary' and five 'secondary' criteria;[27] the primary criteria should be used in conjunction and the secondary criteria to verify the conclusions made on the basis of the primary criteria. Thus theoretically there is always more than one reason for deciding that the data can be included as historical evidence. In practice, the primary criteria play a far greater role than the secondary, which are rarely mentioned, and some of the criteria are more important than others.[28]

Meier's first primary criterion is embarrassment, which 'focuses on actions or sayings of Jesus that would have embarrassed or created difficulty for the early Church' (1991a: 168). If such material remains in the gospels, it is unlikely to have been invented by the tradition. Meier argues that while the oral tradition may have undergone a creative process of development, eyewitnesses who later became leaders must have exercised a conservative force, so that the embarrassing events were retained in the tradition (1991a: 170). But the criterion should not be used alone.

His second criterion is discontinuity, which he sees as 'closely allied to the criterion of embarrassment; it 'focuses on words or deeds of Jesus that cannot be derived either from Judaism at the time of Jesus or from the early Church after him' (1991a: 171). This criterion, although it may have been dethroned (Borg 1994b: 27) was the basis of all reconstructions according to Perrin (1967: 39). Meier is careful to note criticisms of it,[29] even though he retains

25. See Donald L. Denton for a book-length comparison of the work of Meyer and Crossan, where Meyer's method is compared positively to the 'tradition-historical' work of Crossan (2004).

26. Schüssler Fiorenza will make the same point, but to very different ends, following Gordon Leff (1971): 'the letters on a stone or a piece of parchment or the remains of a medieval village or a treatise by a schoolman do not of themselves provide more than the data on which the historian sets to work; and in order to make them into historical facts…he has to employ a full critical and interpretive apparatus of selection, evaluation, interpolation, and rejection–which rests on inference as opposed to observation, and hence can never pass beyond a high degree of probability' (1971: 111).

27. Reiterated, nearly verbatim, in each of the volumes in the series. Cf. 1991a: 168-77 and 2009: 15-16.

28. Until recently, the criterion of dissimilarity has been the most important tool in the historical-critical kit. See Käsemann 1963: 37: 'In only one case do we have more or less safe ground under our feet; when there are no grounds either for deriving a tradition from Judaism or for ascribing it to primitive Christianity, and especially when Jewish Christianity has mitigated or modified the received tradition, as having found it too bold for its taste'.

29. He agrees with Holmén (1999) that 'we should be suspicious of a historical Jesus

it. Morna Hooker, in particular, 'complains that the criterion presupposes what we do not possess: a sure and full knowledge of what Judaism at the time of Jesus and Christianity right after him were like, and what they could or would not say' (1991a: 172; cf. Hooker 1972). Meier comments that we have documents and archaeological finds for the period, even if they are limited; our judgments will 'no doubt' need correction in the future. 'But if we were to wait until we possessed a fullness of knowledge that excluded later revision, we would postpone all New Testament scholarship until the parousia' (1991a: 172) More importantly, the criterion focuses on elements of the tradition which create a portrait of Jesus so divorced from his cultural setting that 'he would have been unintelligible to practically everyone' (1991a: 172). Meier acknowledges the problem but does not respond to it by eliminating or editing the criterion. Instead he chooses to use it with 'complementary and balancing insights from other criteria' (1991a: 173).

To the criteria of embarrassment and discontinuity Meier adds that of multiple attestation, insisting on both multiplicity of source and of form. If a saying is found in a 'wide sweep of witnesses in different sources and genres, coming largely from the first Christian generation, it becomes extremely difficult to claim that such material is simply the creation of the Church' (1991a: 175). Unlike Crossan, who uses this criterion along with precise stratification, Meier does not distinguish between different stages in the tradition. Meier's judgment that Mark, Q, and John are independent provides him with multiply attested material, despite the fact that the sources come from three different stages in the development of the tradition. By definition, of course, an authentic saying of Jesus which entered only one strand of the tradition would be eliminated; on the other hand, a saying invented by the early Church which rapidly entered several strands would be erroneously included under this criterion, which is not 'an infallible indicator of historicity' (1991a: 175).

The fourth primary criterion is the criterion of coherence, one which draws on the results of the first three. Any material which 'fits in well' with the historical data identified by other criteria is likely to be historical. The 'fittingness' which is the basis for this criterion is of course an aesthetic judgment, a

who is strikingly discontinuous for the Judaism of his time and place' (2009: 25), but despite Holmén's thorough critique of the criterion, particularly double dissimilarity, he retains it. Marcus Borg finds it 'striking' that the criterion of dissimilarity plays such a minor role in J.D. Crossan's method, and notes E.P. Sanders's 'thoughtful and helpful methodological recommendation, which also sets aside the criterion of dissimilarity'. Borg concludes that 'the decline of dissimilarity as the primary criterion of authenticity is generally characteristic of North American scholars today' (1994b: 26). Gerd Theissen and D. Winter suggest a new criterion of 'plausibility' (2002 [1997]), an approach that is echoed in Schüssler Fiorenza's work; she, however, will argue that 'plausibility' should be replaced by 'possibility' (2000a: 13). For a thorough overview, see Porter (2000).

subjective sense of what may correctly be included in the whole and what may not be.[30] Rather than a metonymic process of logical deduction, here the evidence, however partial, is seen as characteristic of the whole, a synecdochic trope, and on the basis of analogy, other data is used evidentially. Meier is aware of the difficulties inherent in this criterion, and he argues that its value is in 'broadening an already established data base' (1991a: 176). He warns against using it negatively, however, 'declaring a saying or action inauthentic because it does not seem to be consistent with words or deeds of Jesus already declared authentic on other grounds' (1991a: 176). That is to say, scholars must recognize that 'ancient Semitic thought' admitted logical contradiction.[31] Moreover, what appears to be contradictory may in fact stem from Jesus' skill at tailoring his language to his audience.[32]

The last primary criterion is 'notably different from the first four criteria', in that it appeals to material which can explain the reasons for Jesus' trial and execution. Meier denies that Jesus was a political agitator, but admits that 'a Jesus whose words and deeds would not alienate people, especially powerful people, is not the historical Jesus' (1991a: 177). This criterion assumes a cause-effect relationship between events, despite the difficulties inherent in such an argument.

If the primary criteria are all to be used with caution, the secondary criteria are even less reliable. Meier outlines five: the criterion of traces of Aramaic, as developed in the work of Jeremias; that of Palestinian environment, a criterion which in its positive guise seems to contradict the criterion of discontinuity; the criterion of vividness of narration; that of the tendencies of the developing synoptic tradition; and finally, the criterion of historical presumption, on which Meier agrees with those who 'state the obvious: the burden of proof is simply on anyone who tries to prove anything' (1991a: 178-83). None of these criteria can be used alone to build an argument; as for the last two, they are, 'for all practical purposes, useless' (1991a: 184). But Meier's exploration of all the criteria, only to conclude that most of them are of dubious value and none can be relied on absolutely, parallels his presentation of the sources on the one hand and the historical data on the other: the

30. See Wolterstorff 1997 for a detailed theological analysis of the concept.

31. In a curious aside, Meier comments 'Even in our own day, American and European professors are often befuddled when they find out that students from Asia, while fiercely intelligent, may not subscribe to the Western principle of noncontradiction' (1991a: 176).

32. From this, Meier concludes that the crucial debate over Jesus' eschatology may be 'misplaced': Jesus' preaching may 'have contained elements of both apocalyptic eschatology and traditional Israelite wisdom' (1991a: 176-77). If one or the other is to be eliminated from the portrait of Jesus, it should be done on another basis than coherence.

possibilities are explored in a detailed and even-handed manner, but ultimately most of the material must be eliminated from historical consideration. That is to say, Meier takes his readers to the beach while he sorts out the contents of his dragnet. Though he seems to have caught vast amounts, there are surprisingly few good fish left after he sorts out the rest. But the readers may retain the impression of a great catch, despite the meagre remains.

It is clear that Meier's approach to the historical Jesus is limited by his decision to ignore evidence that cannot be inferred from his source texts, and he has narrowed the sources considerably by his use of the criteria of authenticity. In terms of the evidence for a diachronic portrait of Jesus, he tropes historical method, like the historical field, metonymically, reducing the available data according to a rules based process of elimination; the argument based on the evidence so construed is mechanistic.

In terms of his synchronic construction of the context, on the other hand, Meier's approach is different. His sample, in modern sociological terms, is perhaps flawed by his elimination of archeological evidence from first-century Galilee and by his refusal to use sociological models for his analysis. In his first volume, Meier uses sociological description in order to support his image of Jesus, but he rejects the sociological analysis of data as his method. Thus the concept of marginality provides a metaphor rather than a model based on metonymic troping for understanding the historical Jesus. This is so because he agrees with Jerome H. Neyrey that cross-cultural analysis is too abstract for his purposes: '[modeling] cannot reconstruct history, for it is a static photograph of a society and does not yield the particularity of experience that constitutes data for the writing of history' (Neyrey 1988: 210). History, in Meier's view, reconstructs 'the particularity of experience' whether indeed the reconstruction is synchronic or diachronic (1991a: 10). So, while all the criteria of authenticity he uses operate largely on the basis of metonymic reasoning, the criterion of multiple attestation, and ultimately that of rejection and execution, provide data which can be put to work in the diachronic narrative to make a mechanistic argument, while the criteria embarrassment and of dissimilarity produce data that can effectively be used on the synchronic level of analysis to construct a formist argument concerned with 'particularity'. Meier does not attempt to 'explain the data within an overarching theory' (1991a: 11).

A second and related concern, one indicative of his political affiliations, is that sociological methods are unscientifically reductionist, leading the practitioner to misunderstand religion as 'a mask for social and political agendas, a tool by which various socioeconomic groups advance their power plays'. This reductionism, in his view, is 'usually the result of imposing a particular ideology (often Marxist) on the data' (1991a.11). It is not clear who, in particular, Meier has in his sights here, since he does not provide an explanation

of his comment; but for Meier, sociological analysis exposes historical explanation to the dangers of a reductionist and unscientific manipulation of the data for questionable ideological motives.[33]

The historical data which Meier uses as evidence are derived from strict manipulation of the criteria of authenticity, that is to say, from a metonymic operation which characterizes some data as historical and eliminates the rest. In his first volume, Meier argues analogically, developing a descriptive grid in which to place Jesus. In the second and third volumes, on the other hand, Meier prefigures the field differently. He is not interested in creating a generalised description into which to fit Jesus comfortably. Rather, he sees the field in terms of difference, using the data to distinguish Jesus from others. This is a metaphoric concern with similarity and difference. The operation of the criteria of authenticity is metonymic, a logical and rules-based system of classifying data; but the criteria preferred by Meier are those which enable him to find evidence for Jesus' uniqueness. As we have seen, the rules, particularly the criteria of embarrassment and of discontinuity, produce evidence that constitutes a historical Jesus who stands out, and is distinguished from, his context. These data are troped metaphorically, in White's terms, and are affiliated with a presentation of the evidence in epic form. But as we have seen, at this point, Meier's plotting of the Jesus story has more points of contact with tragic form than with epic. In terms of troping, Meier conceives of two orders of phenomena characterized differently, in one case actions and events, and in the other social and cultural phenomena. The events in the life of Jesus are related logically, and could be understood in terms of cause and effect, if only we could be sure of the chronology. The historical processes at work in Jesus' experience are necessarily the same processes we experience in our lives; the logic of those relationships is metonymic. White suggests that a metonymic prefiguration of the field has affinities for a mechanistic argument, in which the historical process is governed by laws, particularly causal law. But in his synchronic analysis, Meier does not make a mechanistic argument. Instead, he focuses on Jesus in terms of his social and cultural milieu, building a portrait which is prefigured metaphorically. Thinking in terms of similarities and differences, Meier's portrait attempts to show how Jesus is unique, and to develop the tensive symbol of the kingdom of God

33. William R. Telford comments that there is a striking diversity in methods employed in the contemporary historical Jesus research, in which 'the atomistic and diachronic approach of the tradition-critical methods…is now being challenged by holistic, synchronic and interdisciplinary methods'. He notes Meyer's and Sanders's 'ambitious claim that an overarching hypothesis regarding the intentions of Jesus should be ventured and utilised to control the hitherto intractable components of the tradition', a method which Meier explicitly rejects. Telford finds such reservations more typical of Continental scholarship (1994: 69).

which is both now and in the future. Things are best explained when they are identified in their uniqueness, by discerning the multitude of details which make one thing similar to and yet different from another. This kind of argument, in White's terms, is formist. We understand the historical Jesus best by seeing the ways in which he was unique.

Time, in Meier's view, continues unbroken toward its eschatological climax. The kingdom promised in Jesus' message, marked by God's final intervention in human history, has not yet (fully) arrived. And yet, for Meier, there are glimpses of what is to be. These glimpses occur in Jesus' ministry, in the healing and exorcisms, and in the shared meals, and they presumably continue to be mediated by the Church, in the lives of faithful Christians, living, as he says, 'proleptically'(2009: 206): '…in Jesus' view of things, the halakic life he demands of his disciples is one that already is made possible by and responds to the power of God's rule, present in Jesus' preaching and actions. Thus, Jesus' legal commands express the proper eschatological implementation of God's will as expressed in Torah—an eschatological implementation that is meant not just for a short, sui generis interval but for the whole future of Israel as God's people, restored in the end time (2009: 658). So like Jesus, who expected and preached God's imminent intervention, Meier is on one level a visionary utopian. That is the ultimate frame within which our daily experience must make sense. But on another level, just as Jesus mediated the coming kingdom, so our present experience within the Church is a foretaste of what is to come, but meanwhile the best we can reasonably hope for. That is to say, in terms of life in the real world, Meier takes an evolutionary utopian stance.

So in a number of ways, Meier has constructed his portrait on two levels. His prefiguration of the historical field is both metonymic and metaphoric, in that on the one hand he understands the story of Jesus in terms of cause and effect, using the death of Jesus as a criterion for identifying authentic historical data which will explain this outcome. But in these volumes, his concern is not to create a narrative but to provide a synchronic view of 'Jesus in himself'. In doing this, he begins by sketching Jesus' milieux, insofar as the texts enable him to describe them. Jesus, in this first step, must fit comfortably into the context. Then, in a second step, he distinguishes Jesus from the background, showing how he is unique. In order to do this, he prefigures the field metaphorically and creates a formist argument to explain Jesus' place in history.

None of this is, of course, specifically Roman Catholic. Meier's fear that his portrait might be biased by his doctrinal positions is largely unfounded. But it is worth considering the ways in which his portrait might support views congenial to a man in his social location. Some of his questions explore matters of doctrine from an unexpected perspective, as we have seen: he

approaches the question of Jesus' parentage and his miracles, for example, in a way that enables him to call into question the scientific presuppositions of 'normal history'. It is particularly in his insistence on Jesus' eschatological views that a conservative bias can be seen. A Jesus who expects God to intervene in the future leads his disciples, of whom Meier is certainly one, to resist social activism.[34] Jesus, in Meier's portrait, justifies those who prefer, from their positions of privilege, to wait patiently for God's action in an eschatological climax to human history which is always yet to come.

34. So, too, Larry Hurtado, who suggests that 'the strong denial of the revolutionary and the social-reformer Jesus coheres with and likely serves a religious and social posture that rejects either option in the name of Jesus today… [Here] we have implicitly a Jesus more congenial to relatively traditional Christian christological affirmation' (1997: 283).

Chapter 4

N.T. Wright's Prodigal Jesus

Unlike Meier, N.T. Wright begins his portrait of Jesus with a story. 'History proceeds by telling stories', he says. 'Here is one of the best known' (1996: 125). He then quotes the text of Luke 15.11-32, calling it 'an explosive narrative, designed to blow apart the normal first-century reading of Jewish history and to replace it with a different one' (1996: 126). He uses the story here in several ways: 'as a case-study to whet the appetite, to point forward to some of the main themes that will emerge, and to underscore the points of method that emerged from the previous chapter' (1996: 126). His reading of the parable as the story of Israel stands in contrast to 'many' which he has consulted, none of which

> has noted the feature which seems to me most striking and obvious. Consider: here is a son who goes off in disgrace into a far country and then comes back, only to find the welcome challenged by another son who has stayed put. The overtones are so strong that we surely cannot ignore them. This is the story of Israel, in particular of exile and restoration. It corresponds more or less exactly to the narrative grammar which underlies the exilic prophets, and the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, and a good deal of subsequent Jewish literature, and which must therefore be seen as formative for second-Temple Judaism. The exodus itself is the ultimate backdrop: Israel goes off into a pagan country, becomes a slave, and then is brought back to her own land. But exile and restoration is the main theme. This is what the parable is about (1996: 126).

Wright interprets the parable in its historical context as 'the central drama that Israel believed herself to be acting out. And the story of the prodigal says, quite simply: this hope is now being fulfilled–but it does not look like what was expected. Israel went into exile because of her own folly and disobedience, and is now returning simply because of the fantastically generous, indeed prodigal, love of her god. But this is a highly subversive retelling. The real return from exile, including the real resurrection from the dead, is taking place, in an extremely paradoxical fashion, in Jesus' own ministry'.[1]

1. He cites a long argument in *The New Testament and the People of God* and several biblical passages to support the view that, for devout Jews in the time of Jesus, the return from exile in the fulfillment of prophecy (including forgiveness of sins, renewal of the

The figure of the prodigal turns up in more than one context in Wright's work. In his methodological ruminations the prodigal and his elder brother stand for history and theology as they have grown apart in much post-Enlightenment historical Jesus work. It is history that finds itself in a far country, separated from home and family, and living on dried corn cobs. But history has begun to come home; Wright sees his own work as an attempt to reestablish the family, where history and theology can live under the same roof and be nourished at the same table.[2] He sees himself, by extension, as the prodigal historian returning to theological hermeneutics in a serious and responsible way. Indeed, 'serious' is the most common adjective he uses to characterize his historical project, implying that those historians who attempt to 'bracket' theology (Sanders specifically, but others as well) are less 'serious' historians.[3] So it is with Wright's use of the parable in enabling an interpretation of the life of Jesus that I wish to begin.

Wright, of course, is hardly the first to find the parables of significant historical interest. C.H. Dodd, in 1935, prefaced his monograph with this comment: 'It is my submission that the parables, critically treated, become one of our most important sources for a knowledge of the historical career of Jesus Christ, especially in respect of the motives behind it and the issues it raised'.[4] This is the story of Israel, in Wright's view, and against Dodd,[5] he argues that the parables fall within the Jewish prophetic tradition, where both

covenant, rebuilding of the Temple, raising of the dead) had not occurred, although the people had returned from Babylon. He notes, 'Anyone who supposes that all these things had happened by the time of Jesus, or that any devout Jews of the period would have imagined that they had, has simply not learned to think historically'(1996: 127).

2. In an autobiographical note to his *Challenge of Jesus*, Wright comments, 'I live in a world that has done its best, since the Enlightenment, to separate the church from the academy. I believe passionately that this is deeply dehumanizing in both directions, and I have lived my adult life with a foot on both sides of the divide, often misunderstood by both. I live in a world where Christian devotion and evangelical piety have been highly suspicious of and sometimes implacably opposed to serious historical work on the New Testament, and vice versa. I believe passionately that this is deeply destructive of the gospel, and I have done my best to preach and to pray as a serious historian and to do my historical work as a serious preacher and pray-er. This has resulted in some fellow-historians calling me a fundamentalist and some fellow-believers calling me a compromised pseudo-liberal. The irony does not make it any less painful' (1999: 191-92).

3. For Wright to take on the image of the prodigal as he uses it may give readers pause: the prodigal in Wright's telling stands both for Israel and for Jesus as Israel, and in a Barthian christology, as God in Christ. Thus the implications of suggesting that one's work may be seen in terms of this parable are worth exploring further, once the details of the plot structure are clearer.

4. Dodd 1961 [1935]: viii. Wright would concur, although he disagrees with Dodd at a number of significant points.

5. And Jülicher 1910 [1899] and Jeremias 1963 [1947]. See Wright 1996: 177.

allegory and apocalyptic are put to use in stories of warning and judgment. Wright's conclusion here is that Jesus 'used allegory within a Jewish framework, and apocalyptic language and themes in a way which broke open the Jewish worldview' (1996: 177). This conclusion enables him to move ahead in his project of using parable himself in order to 'break open' the worldview of many historical Jesus scholars whose portraits of Jesus tend to be hellenized. The parable of the prodigal son in particular grounds his argument that Jesus stood within the Jewish prophetic tradition and saw himself as the key figure in the return of exiled Israel and the fulfillment of prophecy. Jesus' message, as Wright's interpretation of the parable shows, was not intended as 'timeless truth' or Cynic wisdom, but rather as the story of the end of the old order and the beginning of the new Israel.[6] And so it is worth looking at the structure of the parable itself to see how this parable functions in Wright's work.[7]

As it stands, the Lukan parable is placed in a context that invites readers to make connections with Jesus, the 'sinners' with whom he associates, and the scribes and Pharisees who criticize him. Traditionally, the parable has been read as C.H. Dodd does, as a story which contrasts those whom the evangelists call either the 'righteous' or 'sinners'; its point, he claims, 'would seem to lie in the contrast between the delight of a father at the return of his scapegrace son, and the churlish attitude of the "respectable" elder brother' (1996: 92-93). The recent analysis of Bernard Brandon Scott is considerably more nuanced. The purpose of the story, as Scott sees it,[8] is the vindication of Jesus: this is what he calls the primary level. The story of the parable itself, with the characters of the father and two sons, is Scott's third level. The second level

6. Klyne R. Snodgrass criticizes Wright's interpretation as an 'overreading,' and comments that his 'case would have been stronger without the distraction these overreadings cause' (1999: 69).

7. Luke Timothy Johnson perceptively notes that Wright's project closely resembles the New Quest in that the 'choice of pattern very much determines the selection and interpretation of the pieces'. The New Quest analyzes data to produce evidence for a narrative, along the lines of what Meier has done, while Wright begins with the narrative 'and does not appear to make any real systematic discrimination among traditions with regard to reliability'. But taking the example of the prodigal, Johnson comments 'It is the master parable for Robert W. Funk, the pure representation of the vision of Jesus, even though it does not meet any of the fabled criteria. But it is equally important for Wright not because it has passed any tests but because it can be read…as an allegory of the same master-script that Jesus both follows and enunciates–the script of Israel's exile coming to an end in the triumph of God' (1999: 208). On another level, however, the deep structure of the parable is related to the deep structures of the historical narrative as seen by both Funk and Wright; this is the plot.

8. Scott 1989: 99-125.

connects levels one and three by an act of interpretation by analogy (1989: 102), which is to say that characters in the third-level story, the parabolic fiction, are understood to occupy analogous relationships to those in the primary level narrative.[9] Dan O. Via argues that 'the elder brother in some sense represents the scribes and Pharisees, who protested Jesus' fellowship with publicans and sinners, who in some sense are represented by the prodigal'.[10] But, as Scott points out, there is a problem here. The parable presents two audiences who do not necessarily occupy analogous roles: the fictional audience listening to Jesus (including both disciples and opponents) and the actual audience (Luke's readers, presumably identifying with Jesus' cause). The actual audience, reading from a Christian perspective, identify with the younger brother. Because in the primary narrative, the scribes and Pharisees are opponents who are rejected, by analogy the parable has been taken to imply rejection of the elder brother. But this is not the case. As both brothers are welcomed into the father's banquet, so all would seem to be invited to join Jesus.

Wright finds the actantial model of narrative structure developed by Greimas to be helpful in his own analysis of story, particularly Israel's story.[11] According to this model, on one level the sender is aware of the receiver's need for the object. On a second level, the agent is defined in terms of the object and has both helpers and opponents in his task of enabling the receiver to have the object in question. In Wright's version of Israel's story, Yhwh is the sender, the return from exile is the object, and Israel is the recipient. Jesus as agent enables, with the help of his disciples, and in spite of his various opponents, Israel's receipt of that return. He provides a Greimassian schema (1996: 244) to illustrate his point:

Yhwh	→	Return from exile	→	Israel
		↑		
Helper	→	Jesus	←	Opponent

In Wright's reading of the parable as Israel's story, Jesus is claiming that in his ministry, the people of God are being gathered in from exile, and the

9. The elder brother, for example, murmurs against the father's feast just as the scribes and Pharisees do against Jesus' welcoming sinners to the feast (1989: 102). Scott is using distinctions in the levels of narrative developed by the Entrevernes Group in *Signs and Parables*. On structural exegesis, see Patte 1976.

10. Following Linnemann 1962; Jeremias 1963 [1954]; and Michaelis 1956. Via 1976: 164. Via acknowledges his debt to this 'rich exegetical' (and German) tradition, all the while proposing a more literary approach in his own work (1976: ix-x).

11. That is to say, the primary level of interpretation according to Scott. Wright does not differentiate between the two audiences (those listening to Jesus in the gospel narrative and the actual audience who hear or read Luke's gospel), but rather presumes that they occupy analogous roles.

promises of the prophets are coming true at last. Those who had turned from God, who had gone both literally and figuratively into a far country, could count on God's welcome to them if they came to their right minds and returned. All are welcome through God's free gift, and those who refuse the welcome, who do not know God as one who forgives and accepts all, are the elder brothers still in bondage to the old law. They are welcome, but they are equally free to refuse.

1. *The Prodigal as Heroic Comedy*

If the story of the prodigal son is to function for Wright as a metaphor for Israel's story, then it is worth looking at it both as parable and as historical moment within the gospel from a Greimassian perspective. The younger son, having asked for the right to dispose of his portion of the family wealth, leaves the family home and goes to a far country, where he loses all he had. He is forced to look for help among foreigners, working with pigs and suffering from hunger, until he 'comes to himself' and decides to return home. The expression may mean 'repent' as Jeremias argued, or it may mean, as Scott prefers, simply 'have second thoughts', without the theological implications. When the son returns, the father, rather than offering forgiveness, as might be expected if 'repentance' is the theme of the son's story, instead acts in his patriarchal role as head of the family and restores his son to his proper place of honor, a place which had been abrogated by his loss of the family property (1996: 118). The story ends with a banquet, in which both sons are welcomed.

Using Greimas, Pheme Perkins has made a perceptive analysis of the structure of the parable: the sender is the father's love for his sons, the object reconciliation, and the receivers are the brothers. The agent is the father, helped by the legal bond in the family and by his own joy, and opposed by his treatment of the younger brother, anger, and resentment (1981: 57). The diagram looks like this:

Love for both sons	→	Reconciliation	←	Brothers
		↑		
Legal bond Joy	→	Father	←	His treatment of the younger son Anger and resentment

However, there are problems with Perkins's structure in that it is the brothers who oppose the father, and who are nonetheless the receivers of the father's reconciling love. In the economy of the story, they play two contradictory roles. If we attempt to shift these relationships to the first level of interpretation, then the sender is once again love, the object reconciliation, and the receiver Israel; and on the second level, the agent is Jesus, but it is not clear what historical elements are analogous to the parabolic helpers and opponents.

Another interpretation of the parable in Greimassian terms is possible, one which sits more easily with the analogous interpretation of fictional and historical levels suggested by Scott's work. If the object in the parable is the ideal social order characterized by love and joy, the receiver may be seen as the members of the whole family. The sender implied in the parable is God, who has created human beings in family relationships. The agent, working to enable that end is the father. He is helped by the obedience and repentance of his younger son, and hindered by the anger and resentment of the elder. The schema looks like this:

God	→	Ideal social order	→	Whole family
		↑		
Obedience and repentance of younger son	→	Father	←	Anger and resentment of elder son

In terms of plot structure, the parable appears to be a comedy. The movement of the plot, in which threatening complications are resolved in a happy ending, is inclusive, and the ending suggests that society is reintegrated. But the elements of comedy identified by Frye sit uneasily in this interpretation. Frye suggests that in a comic action, some sort of arbitrary law is in place at the beginning, and the point of the action is to release the social order from bondage to that law and to put in place a society of freedom. Ordinarily a young man's desire is resisted by his father, who is the arbiter of the law, and as the young man succeeds, a new and freer society is formed. Via, interpreting the prodigal as the hero of the story, argues that the plot 'does not present a movement from a society dominated by law…but rather a movement from irresponsibility on the part of the prodigal to a new contextual freedom' (1976: 166).

But if the comic pattern of desire triumphing over irrational law is not evident in the plot, then perhaps it is necessary to read the story differently. If the father, rather than the younger son, is seen as the hero of the story, despite the inversion of the generations, then it is possible to see both the elder and the younger brother as blocking characters, resisting the father's vision of the social order.[12] The absurd law can be seen as the irrational desire that causes the fragmentation of the family. The prodigal's desire for what is not (yet) his, and the elder brother's desire for recognition as the prodigal's better, that is to be first among sons, are what threatens the family. The desires are absurd because within the family, both brothers have what they desire, demand what they already have, and in so doing nearly lose it entirely. Usually the young man's desire is a young woman, but the female element is conspicuously

12. Jeremias sees the purpose of the parable as a vindication of Jesus' association with outcasts and sinners, and goes on correctly to argue that it is the father, rather than the prodigal, who is the central figure (1963 [1954]: 128 n. 63).

absent from this story. In this case, the object of the prodigal's (improper) desire is his inheritance. It represents the correctly structured relationships in the family, including identity, honor, and love. This is what he loses, and what is finally restored by the father. Upon returning home, the prodigal is reintegrated into the family, no longer blocking the father's vision. The irrational desire which threatened the social order is redeemed, and the social structure represented by the family is celebrated in the banquet. The patriarchal structures remain in place, but the demands of honor, the irrational law which the father might have invoked, and which might have led to a tragic conclusion, are here overlooked. The elder son, who plays a second blocking character, is invited to the banquet, although his response is left open by the narrative. Nonetheless, the action of the plot is inclusive, and the vision of society which results from this action is integrative. Seen from this perspective, with the father as hero, the structure of the parable (the third level of interpretation in Scott's terms) is what I have termed heroic comedy.

Thus it is possible to read the third-level narrative as a heroic comedy centered around the father and ending with the reconciliation of the prodigal son and the opportunity for reconciliation for the elder brother. But then the analogical reading of the parable on the primary level differs from Wright's analysis of the story of Jesus. As a story told by Jesus, the parable would seem to indicate that the kingdom of God is available to all those who through obedient discipleship help Jesus to bring it about, and closed to those who refuse or deny Jesus. In terms of actual audience, those who are outcast, the sinners with whom Jesus associates, are welcome in the family banquet, whatever their sins, however they may have compromised their religion. But then the scribes and Pharisees, Jesus' opponents, are also welcome in God's realm. It is their refusal, not God's rejection, which determines their fate. In terms of the actual Lukan audience, those who through faith in Jesus enable the kingdom embodied in the Church are helpers, and those who lack this faith are opponents. As Scott observes, the parable makes it impossible to resolve the problem of the chosen and the rejected. The elder is not rejected. 'This parable subverts a mytheme by which the kingdom decides between chosen and rejected. Here the father rejects no one; both are chosen' (1989: 125). The parable opens the kingdom to all those who accept Jesus. Jesus, then, occupies a position in the narrative analogous to the father in the parable.[13] He

13. Scott comments, 'In the son's speech, the father replicates the demands of heaven, and in this way the narrative metaphorically suggests that he stands in for God' (1989: 116). While it may be tempting to rely on language of God the father and Jesus the son to interpret this parable, the Greimassian paradigm suggests that Jesus occupies the position of the father in the parable, and God (by extension, God present in the kingdom and by analogy the ideal social order) occupies the position of the sender rather than the agent.

enables reconciliation with God for those who believe and become disciples. In the Greimassian paradigm, the structure looks like this:

God	→	Kingdom of God	→	People of Israel
		↑		
Obedient disciples	→	Jesus	←	Opponents

There remain some loose ends in this narrative. One concerns the figure of Jesus. Jesus stands as a mediating figure on the first level. As we have seen, Jesus, by welcoming the returning prodigal and his brother, seems to occupy a role analogous to the father in the parable. In Wright's telling, however, the prodigal stands for both the true Israel and for Jesus as Israel. This suggests Karl Barth's christological use of the image of the prodigal in *Church Dogmatics*: the title of a section of Volume 4 is 'The Way of the Son of God into the Far Country'. In this theology, God sends the Son, who is God, into the far country to redeem the people of God in exile. God in Christ is the prodigal, and Christ is God incarnate. It is not Barth's intention to interpret the parable in detail, but his title hints at least at a theological reading of the first level which suggests the identification of Jesus with God. This is consonant with Wright's christology. But from a structuralist perspective, the narrative is better understood both historically and fictionally if God is taken as sender and Jesus/father as agent. Whether the parable provides a metaphor for understanding the person of Christ in theological terms remains to be seen.

I have hinted at another loose end, the problem of the absent feminine, which creates a difficulty both on the first and on the third levels of interpretation. The parable, as I have read it, has a hero, the father, and two blocking characters, the sons. If the sons' desire is displaced, given inappropriate objects, and if the father is the hero whose desire is for the integration of his children into the family in their proper roles, where is the feminine element? Scott argues that the food metaphors in the story suggest the feminine, because the feminine is associated with nourishment (1989: 115). It is nourishment that the prodigal lacks when he is separated from home and family, and it is nourishment which is offered in abundance at the banquet. The invisible mother, then, 'the unspoken binary of the father' (1989: 115), is the image of the female. This interpretation then suggests, on the first level of interpretation, that the female in Jesus' interpretation of Israel's story is the unseen, unspoken binary of God, God's female side, as it were. If, on the other hand, we read the prodigal as Israel, returning home, the female is again invisible, the unspoken binary this time of Israel imaged as the male son.

The parable of the prodigal, then, can be read as heroic comedy, in which the father plays the heroic role and in the end social integration is the result. By analogy we take Jesus to be the hero of the historical story, but a close reading of the parable has suggested that the object of the historical narrative is best symbolized in the phrase 'kingdom of God'. This is related to the

concept of 'return from exile' proposed by Wright, but it is not the same thing. Moreover, the return of the prodigal in the parable is not the object of the narrative, but instead a condition of its fulfillment. The parable, then, may only function in part as a metaphor for Israel's story as Jesus understood it, a rich and suggestive interpretation, but one which cannot bear the weight of meaning that Wright's analysis requires. And a careful analysis of the plot structure of Jesus' story as Wright presents it may vary considerably from the plot of the parable. Working with the change of object but keeping the deep structures of the Greimassian analysis proposed by Wright, is it still possible to understand the historical narrative as heroic comedy? Or do the changes in Wright's telling suggest another plot?

2. *Jesus' Story as Comic Epic*

Wright's story of Jesus does not begin, as Meier's does, with the infancy narratives. Indeed, his story of Jesus is a sophisticated narrative, developed thematically with flashbacks and flash-forwards, but covering the period of time beginning with Jesus' baptism by John and ending with his resurrection. He is concerned with developing a narrative explanation of Jesus' actions, one which will allow him to discern Jesus' world view and to distinguish Jesus from others of his time who held similar views or performed similar actions. Such an explanation calls for a formist argument, with a focus on similarities and differences, and in White's terms, it is the argument most closely related to a metaphoric troping of the historical field. Because Wright develops his argument primarily in terms of two of Jesus' parables, the Wicked Tenants (in Volume I) and the Prodigal Son (in Volume II), his preference for metaphor as trope is clear. The parable of the Wicked Tenants provides a metaphor for his theological analysis of Jesus' role, and the Prodigal Son acts as a metaphoric frame for the story of both Israel and of Jesus himself.[14] Wright argues that Jesus saw himself as sent by God to inaugurate the kingdom by welcoming the prodigal Israel home. As Wright believes that the best explanation of Jesus' activities and preaching is that which takes into consideration both the Jewish milieu in which he lived and the theology of early Christian movement, he argues that 'the simplest solution…is that Jesus himself believed that he was the agent of the strange return from exile, and

14. Klyne R. Snodgrass disagrees: 'the parable of the prodigal…is not about us or Israel's return from exile', although he considers Wright's reading a creative and legitimate application of the theology and imagery of the parable to modern Christians and modern scholarship (1999: 70). Luke Johnson is critical of Wright's 'remarkable confidence in the historian's ability to move from literary judgments to historical conclusions when working with ancient sources' (1999: 209).

that he lived and acted accordingly' (1996: 128). Hence he preached a message of repentance and redemption, embodied in his ministry of welcome 'to all and sundry', which functioned as 'a sign that resurrection—forgiveness—restoration—return from exile—the reign of Yhwh—were all happening… The covenant was being renewed, and Jesus' welcome to the outcasts was a vital part of that renewal' (1996: 128-29). For Wright, all those who accepted Jesus were welcomed, and the inclusiveness of Jesus' ministry was a sign pointing to the inbreaking kingdom, a term which in Wright's use is synonymous with the restoration and return of Israel, characterized by forgiveness and reconciliation: 'Jesus is reconstituting Israel around himself. This is the return from exile; this, in other words, is the kingdom of Israel's God' (1996: 131).

Wright's construction of Jesus depends, first of all, on his assertion that 'in Jesus' day many, if not most, Jews regarded the exile as still continuing. The people had returned in a geographical sense, but the great prophecies of restoration had not yet come true' (1996: 126). The tradition of the return, as represented in the literature of Ezra–Nehemiah, supports sectarian claims; Wright cites the work of Robert P. Carroll to argue that exile and restoration are categories invented for the ideological purposes of those in power in Jerusalem, that is to say, the Persian party. 'A squalid deportation of disruptive elements has been thereby transformed into a significant exile of leadership elements awaiting the work of Yahweh in restoration' (1992: 574-75). Ordinary Jews would not have understood the deportation as 'exile' along the lines of the sojourn in Egypt; nor, as a result, the return as 'restoration'. Carroll argues that 'the myth of a return belongs to a particular set of sectarian beliefs and values which was probably not shared by all (perhaps not even by many) Jewish communities' (1992: 575). Other communities, including the Jesus movement, can best be understood in terms of sectarian struggles for power. Carroll suggests that 'a Persian instrument of control was used to construct in Jerusalem an ideologically defined elite group commanding the regulation of temple purity and religious identity' (1992: 573). He goes on to argue that 'it might be a sound methodological principle to treat the whole period of the Second Temple as a single period dominated by sectarian ideology and struggles and to read *all* the literature as bearing on different aspects of these ideological struggles (including a good deal of the Gospels and Paul in the New Testament)' (1992: 574). Jesus' use of the parable of the Prodigal Son, then, was specifically intended to undermine the ruling party in Jerusalem by, according to Wright, retelling the story of exile and return in a subversive way. But his opposition to the authorities did not include a recourse to violence. Rather, he proclaimed the establishment of a new covenant, and the advent of a new kingdom through the action and will of Yhwh.

Wright begins his historical narrative by establishing the actions of Jesus: 'one of the first tasks…is to establish the known actions of the subject (not to exclude words, but to set them in their fullest context), and to see what may be deduced from them. Actions, especially symbolic actions, speak louder than words' (1996: 141).[15] His summary of Jesus' life is brief:

> He was most likely born in what we now call 4 BC… He grew up in Galilee, in the town of Nazareth, close to the major city of Sepphoris. He spoke Aramaic, some Hebrew, and probably at least some Greek. He emerged as a public figure in around AD 28, in the context of the initially similar work of John the Baptist. He summoned people to repent (in some sense, to be discussed later), and announced the kingdom, or reign, of Israel's god, using parables in particular to do so. He journeyed around the villages of Galilee, announcing his message and enacting it by effecting remarkable cures, including exorcisms, and by sharing in table-fellowship with a socio-culturally wide group. He called a group of close disciples, among whom twelve were given special status. His activities, especially one dramatic action in the Temple, incurred the wrath of some elements in Judaism, notably (at least towards the end) of the high-priestly establishment. Partly as a result of this, he was handed over to the Romans and executed in the manner regularly used for insurrectionists. His followers claimed, soon afterwards, that he had been raised from the dead. They carried on his work in a new way, and some of them were persecuted for doing so, both by Jews and by pagans (1996: 147-48).

Wright considers this summary to be 'comparatively non-controversial', noting that 'this list is no more tendentious than most', citing the fictionalized 'overture' in Crossan's *Historical Jesus* (1991b: xi-xxvi). The outline is supplemented with further details, primarily what Wright considers characteristic of Jesus' practice. His ministry was itinerant and varied. He met with his followers privately and with the public, and he was found in homes and synagogues, as well as in the open countryside. Jesus made at least one journey to Jerusalem, and Wright suggests that he may have gone there frequently. He was a man of prayer. Unlike other pious Jews, he did not fast, with the exception of 'an early period in the wilderness'. He 'sat loose to family commitments' and made 'shocking demands for family disloyalty' on his followers. He shared meals with all sorts of people, regardless of their 'religious uprightness', which gave offense to some of the pious. (1996: 148-50).

15. In this, Wright is close to E.P. Sanders, who begins with a list of facts about Jesus; he then moves to interpret these facts within a restoration eschatological framework. Starting with the Temple action, he argues that Jesus 'predicted the imminent appearance of the judgment and the new age' (1985: 73). This presupposition is Sanders's understanding of what the story of Jesus is about; it underlies his plot structure. Like other scholars who understand Jesus in thoroughly eschatological terms, Sanders's Jesus is essentially apolitical. See Borg 1994a: 19-21. For a different analysis of the acts of the historical Jesus, see Funk and the Jesus Seminar 1998.

Wright asserts that 'almost all serious contemporary writers about Jesus would agree that something like this activity was indeed characteristic of him' (1996: 150). He concludes, then, that 'Jesus habitually went about from village to village, speaking of the kingdom of the god of Israel, and celebrating this kingdom in various ways, not least in sharing meals with all and sundry' (1996: 150). He argues that 'the best initial model for understanding this praxis…is that of a prophet bearing an urgent eschatological, and indeed apocalyptic, message for Israel', as against those who prefer 'a "sapiential" outline of Jesus as simply a teacher of wisdom' (1996: 150).

If indeed almost all serious contemporary writers about Jesus would agree with Wright that these activities are characteristic of Jesus, then the issue which arises immediately is Wright's interpretation; the rest of his book is concerned with arguing the details. Rather than analysing his argument, I want, instead, to explore the pattern of the historical narrative he constructs with his facts in order to make that interpretation. If, as we have seen, the parable of the Prodigal Son is plotted as a heroic comedy, this gives us a place to begin.

3. *Jesus' Story Plotted*

A comic narrative, as I have defined it here, deals with the formation of a new community centered around the hero (and often the heroine). The action of the plot moves from bondage to freedom, and usually involves the abrogation of the old order of irrational law by youthful pragmatism.[16] In the parable of the Prodigal Son, as we have seen, the father (rather than the sons) is the hero; his desire is to create a new family order based on love and forgiveness rather than the expected social structures. In the end, the younger son is reconciled and included in the family he had rejected, and the invitation is extended to the older son as well. If he as a blocking character responds in true comic mode, the expectation is that he will accept the invitation to be reconciled and join the festivities, but his decision is left open by the narrative. The twist in the plot which enables the festive ending involves a metamorphosis in character, in this case, the repentance and return of the younger son. The story ends with a banquet, not to celebrate the marriage of the hero, but to celebrate the reformation of the family.

We are invited, in Wright's telling of the parable, to see Jesus as the father, Israel as the prodigal, and those who reject Jesus as the elder brother. We might expect the story to end, then, with the reconstitution of the people of Israel around Jesus, whose offer of redemption and reconciliation extends to all and sundry. But does the historical record as Wright presents it support

16. See above, Chapter 2.

that interpretation? The action of the plot can be seen as comic if we understand the ending to show a new social order crystallizing around the hero. Wright's story shows a Jesus who is progressively isolated until in the end, he faces death alone, with the understanding that he must take it on for the sake of all the people. The integrated social order which results, the kingdom as experienced in the Church, is perhaps better seen in terms of a heroic mode or vision than as a comic plot.

Like John the Baptist, Jesus was a prophet. Wright argues that he was a type of oracular prophet, 'proclaiming a message from the covenant god, and living it out with symbolic actions. He was confronting the people with the folly of their ways, summoning them to a different way, and expecting to take the consequences of doing so' (1996: 167-68). We are on 'certain ground' here, according to Wright. Jesus went further than John: 'he was itinerant; he gave extensive teaching which…carried a note of even greater urgency than that of John; and he engaged in a regular programme of healing' (1996: 169). Wright does not imagine that Jesus changed his message as he went from village to village, but rather argues that wherever he went he said substantially the same thing: 'The chances of his finding totally new things to say all the time, so that everything he said once and once only, must be reckoned at nil' (1996: 170). This conclusion has, as Wright recognizes, 'enormous implications' for synoptic criticism; not least it renders the tools of source and redaction criticism at best unwieldy. More problematically still, for historical Jesus criticism, the criterion of multiple attestation is useless: multiple versions of a saying or story exist, 'not because one is adapted from the other, or both from a single common written source, but because these are two out of a dozen or more possible variations that, had one been in Galilee with a tape-recorder, one might have "collected"' (1996: 170). There is no way, then, using literary means, to determine which of the sayings or stories is more likely to be 'authentic'. The criteria for deciding which of the traditions about Jesus are historically accurate are those which rely on the use of the historical context, reasoning on the basis of similarity and difference.

Jesus' message was not abstract, 'timeless' truth, but instead '*a new way of understanding the fulfilment of Israel's hope*' (1996: 176, italics his). His vision was apocalyptical, shaped in part by a subversive motive, 'the cryptic undermining of a dominant and powerful worldview; and the encouraging and supporting of a revolutionary one' (1996: 179). Thus the oracles of judgment and traditions of warning which are part of the gospels 'would be perfectly natural, and indeed might be expected' (1996: 184). In addition, he was possessed of remarkable powers of healing, which Wright sees as the 'restoration to community of those who were ritually unclean' (1996: 191).[17] He

17. Cf. Davies 1995 for an argument on the function of parables in healing.

worked outside the system, without official sanction, and thus may be seen as a magician, but not a 'Hellenistic-style wonder-worker' (1996: 190). His works of power functioned instead as signs of his prophetic message, 'a vital ingredient in the inauguration of the kingdom…they might also be seen as the breaking in of the new order planned by the creator god' (1996: 193).

Thus Jesus can be seen as a Jewish leadership prophet, who 'believed that he was called to spearhead the movement of Israel's renewal and salvation. Israel's true god was becoming king; Jesus claimed to be his true prophet' (1996: 200).[18] Jesus evoked the story of Israel, summoning people to follow him 'in his new way of being the true people of God'. The 'great, climactic ending' of the story included both judgment of the impenitent and vindication of those who followed him. Like others, especially John the Baptist, and even Josephus, this reworking of the controlling narrative of Israel 'involved substantial adjustments at the level of praxis, symbol and questions-and-answers' (1996: 200-201). His activity can be easily understood within the context of first-century Judaism, where his retelling of the story of Israel put him in conflict with other Jewish groups who told the story differently. Wright's Jesus is engaged 'in that characteristically Jewish activity of subversively retelling the basic Jewish story, and adjusting the other worldview-elements accordingly'; and he is in no way a Jesus 'whose mindset was an amalgam of Cynic and proto-gnostic wisdom' (1996: 201).[19] Where Jesus differed from others who announced the coming of the kingdom is in his understanding that the return from exile, the defeat of evil and the return of god was at hand, but was not happening in the way that Israel had supposed. Violent action, rather than advancing the kingdom, would lead to national disaster. The real enemy was not Rome, or any other earthly power. A greater battle was coming, in which Jesus faced a satanic enemy; 'the conflicts generated by his proclamation were the inevitable outworking of this battle, which would reach its height in events yet to come, events involving both Jesus himself and the Temple' (1996: 201). That battle, and the defeat of evil, mark the climax of Israel's story, and indeed the climax of Jesus' life.

This is an eschatological vision, but Wright insists that the end of the world language should be read metaphorically. The result will be 'a new and quite different phase *within* space-time history' (1996: 209). In Wright's view, Jesus' eschatology went far beyond 'timeless teaching or mere social critique'; a 'great battle' would be fought, Israel would at last return to the land, 'saved and free', and Yhwh would return to Zion (1996: 209). Jesus' message was apocalyptic, not sapiential: it was not intended to change the way people look at the present, but to express their hope for the future. Like Meier, Wright

18. Here Wright pointedly distances himself from 'the old liberal idea that Jesus in no way included reference to himself as part of his proclamation' (1996: 200).

19. Against Mack in particular (1996: 201).

sees Jesus' death as both an end and a new beginning. The healings and the feedings were signs of the coming kingdom, and its inauguration comes with Jesus' death and resurrection. According to Wright, Jesus probably thought of himself as the leader of a new restored Israel which God was bringing about in a political way; his death and the destruction of the Temple made a new interpretation necessary. The early Church provided that interpretation, based on Jesus' proclamation, and recorded in 'the earliest Christian writing about the kingdom that we possess' (1 Cor. 15.20-28). Here 'the point is that the creator god is completing, through the Messiah, the purpose for which the covenant was instituted, namely, dealing with sin and death, and is thereby restoring creation under the wise rule of the renewed human being' (1996: 216). The 'kingdom of the Messiah' had already begun, while the 'kingdom of God' is yet to come. The early Church understood itself to be living in that paradox, with 'a firm belief in the presentness of the kingdom, *alongside* an equally firm belief in its futurity, these two positions being held together within a redefined apocalyptic schema' (1996: 216-17). This is not a new story, but a revision, 'generated, not by the *abandonment* of the classic Jewish story, but by the belief *that they were living in its long-awaited new phase*' (1996: 219, italics his).

Wright's plotting of the Jesus story, then, corresponds best to the epic pattern. In an epic, as we have seen, the hero, a person of great historical or legendary significance, releases his society from a threat and frees humanity. In the crucial struggle, one requiring great courage, supernatural forces may be at work, and although the hero may not survive the events of the narrative, society is released from oppression. Unlike the pattern of comedy, which narrates the triumph of a new, free society centered around the hero, epic recounts the hero's triumph over forces which threaten society. The epic plot focuses on the hero, who is clearly the protagonist of the action. In comedy, the memorable characters tend to be the blocking characters and those who set the mood; the story is one of their defeat and integration. In epic, on the other hand, the hero is the center of the action. He (and it is rare to find a female in this role) faces a series of opponents, presented as increasingly dangerous, until the final battle which decides the future of his society.

Seen in this perspective, Wright's Jesus is clearly an epic hero. He was born into a society which in Wright's reading is still in exile. He appeared on the scene as an adult, coming to be baptized by John. He shared John's apocalyptic views, and like John, he called people to repent, although his usage must be understood within 'a wider Jewish notion of "eschatological repentance"' (1996: 248). That is to say, Jesus' notion of repentance meant '*what Israel must do if her exile is to come to an end*' (1996: 248). Using the term as it is used by Josephus, it implies abandoning revolutionary zeal, and giving loyalty to him as a leader. Wright argues that Jesus' call to repent and

believe the gospel is authentic on the basis of multiple attestation, although he concedes that the gospel writers may have understood the phrase differently. Jesus rejected the violent nationalism characteristic of other leadership prophets and groups in Israel; he expected God to act (1996: 253). Thus Jesus' call to repent was 'an *eschatological* call, not the summons of a moralistic reformer. And it was a *political* call, summoning Israel as a nation to abandon one set of agendas and embrace another' (1996: 251, italics his).

Along with a redefinition of the idea of repentance, Jesus understood faith in eschatological terms, as 'a crucial element in the eschatological reconstitution of Israel around himself' (1996: 261). The faith 'which is the concomitant of so many acts of healing is not simply "believing Israel's god can do this". It is believing *that Israel's god is acting climactically in the career of Jesus himself*' (1996: 262, italics his). So too, the forgiveness of sins which was characteristic of acts of healing communicated another aspect of Jesus' eschatology; it is, Wright asserts, 'another way of saying "*return from exile*"' (1996: 268).

Those who responded positively to Jesus' prophetic message and were loyal to him formed a new community, the true Israel. Wright comments that this community may be seen dramatically as 'one of the "characters" in the "story" of the kingdom' (1996: 275). While Jesus understands himself as the one sent to save Israel, his community was a small part of that whole, a part which represents, in a synecdochic movement, the new Israel, open to all who believed in Jesus and followed him. 'The real enemy', says Wright, 'was not Rome, but the evil one, who was to be watched and guarded against constantly' (1996: 294). Wright presents the community synecdochically, but Jesus metaphorically. Jesus' community was characterized by their nonviolent resistance and their forgiveness of each other. 'Jesus…apparently envisaged that, scattered about Palestine, there would be small groups of people loyal to himself, who would get together to encourage one another, and would act as members of a family, sharing some sort of common life, and, in particular, exercising mutual forgiveness' (1996: 297).

If a peace-seeking and forgiving community of disciples was what Jesus sought to create, then the question of his death by execution becomes difficult. Wright argues that Jesus' recasting of the central symbols of Israel's faith caused controversy, and that 'controversy, and perhaps even violence, can be expected' where symbols clash (1996: 369). Jesus probably did not die as a revolutionary, that is, in Wright's understanding, as someone who wanted to overturn Roman rule in Palestine; he comments that this theory is now largely abandoned, 'despite some contemporary political reasons for wanting it to be true' (1996: 370). Nor was he a teacher of a new religion; this view constitutes a 'gross misrepresentation of Judaism' (1996: 370). Along with other scholars, even Crossan, Wright sees Jesus' action in the Temple as

'the proximate cause of his death' (1996: 370). But throughout his lifetime he claimed that 'both fulfilment and catastrophe were being radically redefined through his own work' (1996: 371). In attacking the central symbols of Israel, he attacked those who were most resistant to his kingdom-vision, and as a result, 'he was guilty of the offence spelled out in Deuteronomy 13, that is, "leading Israel astray"' (1996: 372).

Controversy dogged Jesus wherever he went, in Wright's view. The controversy stories were not about religion or morality, but were instead about eschatology and politics; in particular, they undermine 'the revolutionary anti-pagan zeal that was the target of much of Jesus' polemic' (1996: 372). Jesus clashed with his Jewish contemporaries, challenging the adequacy of the Law, claiming to be 'the spokesman of Israel's god', and announcing the kingdom. These activities are the cause of his conflict with other Jewish groups. While Wright does not deny that the early communities, even during Jesus' lifetime, retold the controversy stories for their own purposes, he argues 'there is no reason…to suggest, on grounds of form, that the controversy-stories are essentially later inventions' (1996: 373). Although 'received wisdom' argues that the controversy stories are later developments from isolated sayings, Wright sees a contemporary political motive for such an opinion: the historicity of the controversies is denied because of 'quite blatant twentieth-century motives, to deny that Jesus clashed at all with his Jewish contemporaries' (1996: 373).[20] Thus Wright disagrees with Vermes (1983), who argues that Jesus had little to say or do with the Temple, and with Neusner (1989), who argues that Jesus was doing something completely unrelated to Judaism. He is closest to Sanders, but when Sanders (1985: 259) comments that 'the eschatological key does not open every door', Wright disagrees, pushing the metaphor even further to say that it does 'once one cuts the eschatological key even more accurately than Sanders has done' (1996: 377).[21] For Wright, the kingdom announcement 'was not simply a matter of telling people what

20. Citing Paula Fredriksen's work, which Wright characterizes as criticizing 'some recent writers on Jesus for having him conveniently oppose various features of ancient Judaism which happen to offend certain contemporary sensibilities (in respect of economic inequality, racial prejudice and even sexism)', Wright distances himself from Schüssler Fiorenza and Crossan in particular. He does not argue the case, however: '[Fredriksen's] critique may or may not be valid; it does not apply to the case I am mounting' (1996: 385). This amounts to using the critique without taking responsibility for arguing it and dismissing those whose Jesus portrait includes contemporary questions of injustice, racism, and sexism.

21. Wright agrees with Sanders's view that Jesus was announcing 'restoration eschatology' but finds that Sanders's discussion of the question of Jesus and the Law within the 'non-eschatological category of "patterns of religion"' leaves the question unresolved (1996: 382).

time it was', *pace* Sanders. 'It carried an agenda….It constituted a challenge'. And it included a warning (1996: 383).

The agenda Wright sees in Jesus' preaching and praxis took the form of a critique and redefinition of the 'crucial marks of Jewish identity': Temple, sabbath, circumcision and purity of food (1996: 387). Jesus insisted that 'it was time to relativize those god-given markers of Israel's distinctiveness', a message that enables contemporary readers to interpret Jesus in an egalitarian mode, accepting all and sundry. It is this emphasis in particular that Wright understands as a contemporary desire to 'see its own face at the bottom of the historical well'. Jesus was hardly 'a modern egalitarian born out of due time', and his open table was balanced by 'the quite sharp exclusivism implied by his controlling categories: those who "heard his words" and followed him were part of the true people, and those who did not were not' (1996: 389).

The clash between Jesus and other groups within Judaism came to a head in the Temple action. The meaning of the action is 'clearly underdetermined' according to Wright; 'there is insufficient data for the full application of the normal criteria for hypotheses' (1996: 414). Wright catalogues the conclusions of other critics, who fall along a continuum which runs from 'cleansing' to 'acted parable of destruction'.[22] His own view is that the meaning of the Temple incident should cohere with everything else in his portrait: 'we must assume that what he did in the Temple was closely integrated with, perhaps even climactic to, the rest of his work' (1996: 414). Thus, if Jesus' message and praxis are understood as expressions of apocalyptic eschatology, so too should the Temple incident be understood: 'the Temple, as the central symbol of the whole national life, was under divine threat, and, unless Israel repented, it would fall to the pagans' (1996: 417). His action led to a symbolic 'brief cessation of sacrifice', over so quickly that he was not immediately arrested.[23]

The redefined symbols find climactic expression in the meal in the upper room. There Jesus feasted with his followers 'as a sign of their healing and forgiveness', which is to say, a sign of the restoration of Israel, the real return from exile. This praxis 'did for them what the Torah did for pre-eschatological Israel' (1996: 437). Jesus formed a counter-Temple movement around himself. The meal in the upper room was 'a quasi-Passover' which was intended

22. The critics he discusses are Sanders, Borg, Crossan, Neusner, and Catchpole, although he cites others. Borg had seen the Temple-action as 'an acted parable of judgment' but has since changed his views to emphasize 'the element of socio-economic critique' (1996: 413-14).

23. See in contrast Fredriksen 1999: 231-32, arguing that the crowds would have prevented all but a few pilgrims from witnessing the incident; only the Roman soldiers stationed above the floor of the building could have be aware of any disruption. Its effect would have been minimal as a result.

'to bring in the kingdom' and at the center of this 'freshly conceived symbolic universe' was Jesus himself: 'he himself was the greatest symbol of his own career' (1996: 438).

Wright is able at this point to answer his own historical questions. The subject, in Greimassian terms, is the 'true Israel', those who are at last being liberated. The object is liberation, the return from exile. But unlike other critics, Wright argues that Jesus was offering a different way of liberation. He was not a Jewish freedom-fighter.[24] Jesus' struggle was against a different adversary: not Rome, but Satan (1996: 450).

The victory over this greatest of adversaries began in the wilderness temptation. Wright acknowledges the difficulties in fitting such an episode into a historical treatment. But since it is a spiritual battle which is part of vocation, Wright reasons that either Jesus talked about it, or that the sources invented the story to explain later events. In either case, the struggle, whatever form it took, was real (1996: 458). This enemy was active in the present Jewish rulers, 'in Israel, and in her cherished national institutions and aspirations' (1996: 461). Jesus eventually came to see his disciples 'as ambiguous; allies after a fashion, but also a potential threat' because they tempted him away from what he perceived as his calling. So, 'at some point' Jesus 'must have realized' that he 'would eventually have to fight the battle alone' (1996: 463). His helpers, then, fall away, and he is completely isolated in his battle against his opponent.

Jesus retold the story of Israel as his own story, in which his public ministry inaugurated the kingdom which would shortly be established, marked by the return from exile, the defeat of evil, and the return of Yhwh to Zion. The climax of Jesus' story, the final battle, was the beginning of a new time, the eschatological kingdom. The king who would come 'as *Israel's representative*' would share Israel's identity as the son of god. Jesus understood himself in this role and accepted the vocation, knowing that it required him to take Israel's destiny on himself. His death was 'the inevitable result' of his career, and it is no surprise if he expected and predicted it.

Jesus, then, understood himself as the son of God who would defeat evil and inaugurate the kingdom through his suffering and death. In this sense, he understood himself as the Messiah.[25] Wright argues that 'there was something at least about Jesus' death, and quite possibly also his life, that…must be regarded as messianic' (1996: 468). Jesus, 'at the climax of his prophetic ministry, engaged in a powerful and implicitly messianic act, in riding into Jerusalem and symbolically enacting the Temple's destruction' (1996: 521); he was executed as a messianic claimant, as the robe and crown of thorns, the

24. As Wright characterizes Horsley's and Crossan's portraits (1996: 449).

25. For a counter-argument, in conversation with Wright, see Borg and Wright 1999, esp. 54-58. Cf. Borg 1999.

mocking, and the titulus show. The trial is comprehensible in this context, and thus it is possible to understand it as historical, along with the charge before Pilate ('which there is every reason to regard as historical') (1996: 547). There had been indications throughout his ministry that indicated that Jesus 'had some redefinitions of 'Messiahship' in mind; but he accepted the title itself' (1996: 530). In particular, the calling of the twelve, which Wright considers historical, shows that Jesus 'believed himself to be the one through whom the true Israel is being reconstituted' (1996: 532). Feasting is 'a symbolic evocation of the coming messianic banquet'; the feeding of large crowds 'formed a sign not so much of generalized social egalitarianism as of his implicit messianic claim' (1996: 532-33). Wright suggests that Jesus 'became aware in a new way of a messianic vocation' at his baptism (1996: 537). All provide historical evidence for Jesus' messianic claims, as does Jesus' use of the 'son of man' expression (1996: 517).

Jesus, then, was executed 'because of crimes punishable by death in Jewish law–specifically Deuteronomy 13 and similar passages, and their later rabbinic interpretations' (1996: 548). This is 'as close as we can come to a fixed point'. Moreover, 'whereas Herod and the Romans taunted Jesus as a would-be Messiah, the Jewish leaders mock him as a would-be prophet', performing signs, leading people, putting the Temple at risk (1996: 549-50). Citing John 11.47-48, Wright comments that the account of their anxiety 'bears all the hallmarks of historicity'.[26] Wright believes that, although 'certainty at this point is impossible', John 11 was 'the real "trial"' (1996: 550), and that 'the reaction of Caiaphas…is substantially historical' (1996: 551).

Considering the problem of the chronology of the last days of Jesus' life, Wright suggests that Jesus organized his last meal with his disciples as 'a special quasi-Passover meal a day early' (1996: 556). In his view, Jesus was drawing the symbols of Passover onto himself, symbolically 'leaving Egypt', so that 'the new exodus, and all that it meant, was happening *in and through Jesus himself*' (1996: 557, italics his). The actions with the bread and the cup are historical, intended to carry this symbolic meaning. In order to distinguish his act from the traditional Passover meal, Jesus chose a different date (1996: 557). At that meal, Jesus presented himself as the alternative to the Temple system; his sacrifice and his suffering, as the representative of Israel, would be part of the means by which redemption would be effected (1996: 591). In replacing the Temple, Jesus 'intended that his death should in some sense function sacrificially' (1996: 604). Jesus, as the representative of Israel, took the suffering of Israel upon himself, solo.

26. Wright suggests that there are two possible attitudes toward this evidence, either 'extreme scepticism' which leads us to 'deny that we know anything at all about how and why Jesus was executed' or the acknowledgement that 'the combination of charges we now have before us lay at the core of the hearing before the chief priests' (1996: 550).

Thus Jesus saw himself as the Messiah who would bring about the return of Yhwh to Israel, the defeat of evil and the redemption of the people of Israel. He was executed as a messianic pretender, and subsequently vindicated. His disciples did not understand his messianic role in the same way. The vindication Jesus expected took the form of resurrection. Wright argues that the resurrection is a historical event, because without the resurrection 'it is simply inconceivable that anyone would have regarded Jesus as Messiah, especially if they had not regarded him thus beforehand' (1996: 488).

4. *Plausible History*

Jesus, as the prophet-leader of his community, 'offered his contemporaries a challenge and summons to leave the path of received wisdom and to follow a different route'; he stood 'in a line of great wisdom teachers… Jewish and pagan' (1996: 311). Thus Wright's Jesus is a sage, but one with a political message: '…like all other Jewish sages known to us, he would have addressed the burning issues of his day, confronting his contemporaries with a choice between wisdom and folly *seen in terms of* the choice between following the prophetic call to covenant renewal and following the merely human way' (1996: 314, italics his). Thus unlike sages described in other portraits,[27] Wright's Jesus is delineated as a sage with political commitments in regards to specific political issues of his time. He expected a national disaster, and Wright considers his sayings authentic: 'The theme of judgment upon the present generation can be seen to particularly striking effect in the long sequence from chapters 11 to 19 of Luke's gospel… Though the sequence and ordering are of course Luke's, the emerging historical hypothesis suggests strongly that this was indeed the sort of thing that Jesus regularly said, the devastating story he habitually told' (1996: 330). Jesus' message, in Wright's analysis of 'a wide variety of texts' seems to have continually emphasized the warning that judgment was imminent (1996: 326). Those who would be saved were those who learned the new, non-violent way of being the people of Israel. To those who argue that the thrust of the argument is Lukan redaction, Wright responds in two ways. 'First, it is a basic mistake of method to suppose that because the evangelist, like all writers that ever existed, had reasons for selecting and arranging what was written, the material is therefore non-historical…. Second, we should take careful note of the implication of saying that this whole swathe of Lukan material does not relate to Jesus. We are forced, quite frankly, to say *either* that Luke did not know anything at all about the emphases of Jesus' teaching, the plot of his story, *or* that the ministry of Jesus really did have the warning of imminent national disaster high

27. See Witherington 1994.

on the list of its regular themes. No middle ground is really tenable' (1996: 333).[28] The objections beg the question of authenticity. Writers of historical fiction do exactly what Wright suggests the evangelist has done: they select historical material and weave fictional material through it. The historical material remains historical; it may be factual and well-documented. The difficulty, as any reader of the novels of Gore Vidal, for example, can attest, is distinguishing the factual from the fictional material in the novel. For that, other evidence is required. So, while it is indeed possible that Luke's narrative includes historically accurate material, it is necessary for the historian to distinguish between Jesus and the redactors of the traditions about Jesus. On another level, to say that 'this whole swathe of material does not relate to Jesus' is to argue that it is entirely the redactor's invention. While Burton Mack (1988) makes this argument concerning the gospel of Mark, few historical Jesus scholars would take such an extreme view. Rather, instead of arguing either that the material must all come from the life of Jesus or that it all comes from the evangelists, the task has been to find grounds for arguing a middle way, one which attempts to find rational means of identifying the original or authentic strands and those which are redactional. It is this attempt which Wright characterizes as not tenable. Thus, in practice, if we take the example of the cursing of the fig tree, Wright will agree that the arrangement of the story in relation to the Temple action is redactional. He comments that 'the fig tree functions as a visual aid of what was really intended: Mark has made this stand out by dividing the fig-tree narrative into two and placing the Temple action in between…' (1996: 334), but it is not clear from his argument whether Jesus actually cursed the fig tree or whether the evangelist created the image as a metaphor for the meaning of the Temple action. In the latter case, the Temple action may not have been intended by Jesus as 'an acted parable of judgment' (1996: 334) as Wright believes. And while Wright's historical hypothesis enables the inclusion of the fig tree story and its interpretation in terms of the Temple action, we are left with the conclusion that while his interpretation is compelling, it does not provide enough evidence to enable us to decide whether the incident is indeed authentic.

Wright argues that Israel hoped that 'the enemies of the chosen people would be destroyed, and the chosen themselves vindicated'; this language suggests the wisdom genre of 'stories of persecution and vindication' identified by G.W.E. Nickelsburg (1980). Nickelsburg convincingly shows that the Passion narrative in Mark and in a pre-Markan narrative source follow this pattern. In the Wisdom of Solomon, one of the righteous people of God is tortured and condemned to a shameful death by the ungodly, those who have not covenanted with God but with death. God's ultimate vindication of

28. This is one example among many of the black and white reasoning Wright often uses. See David Hackett Fischer's *Historians' Fallacies* (1970), cited in Johnson 1999.

him provides a word of hope for God's people. In the Passion narratives of the gospels, of course, the story is used to show the condemnation of the righteous Jesus at the hands of the enemies of God, both Romans and Jews. Using the same motif, Wright argues that Jesus saw himself historically as the persecuted righteous man, telling a story of 'the coming judgment and vindication exactly as one might imagine it within mainline restoration eschatology; *except for the fact that*…Israel's official leaders…have been cast in the role of "enemies", while the role of "persecuted and vindicated Israel" is given instead to Jesus and his disciples' (1996: 339).[29] Nickelsburg's argument that the use of the motif is redactional is made on strong textual grounds, while Wright's argument relies on the criteria of similarity and coherence. He attacks the redactional argument by saying that 'nothing could be more natural, within a movement of scholarship that, fuelled by a phenomenalist or empiricist epistemology, assumed that sayings which the early church would have found useful must therefore have been invented by them' (1996: 339). But a detailed analysis of the language of the Passion narratives suggests that they are careful and creative literary accounts with elements which may or may not be historically accurate. Wright's argument does not enable him to distinguish the historically probable from the historically plausible.[30] He recognizes the problem, but dismisses it: 'we are fairly near to a straightforward clash of worldviews at this point, and assertion will simply be met with counter-assertion' (1996: 339). But his claim to make more sense of the data ignores the inconvenience of having to determine whether the data in the texts are historically accurate first. In Wright's method, historical accuracy is determined by plausibility within the narrative hypothesis, which is to say, whatever makes sense is historical. But since the gospel narratives are coherent accounts themselves, this amounts to arguing that the gospels are historically accurate wherever they provide data which supports Wright's hypothesis.[31]

29. In Matthew's telling particularly, 'the people of Israel…with the exception of those who follow Jesus, are no longer the chosen people of God. The promise of the covenant… passes from the original recipients of the promise to the righteous Son of God and those who follow him. While in the Wisdom text, God's vindication provides hope in what seems to be a hopeless situation, Matthew has used this text as a curse upon the people for whom it was a word of hope. The gospel thus neutralizes Israel's hope by portraying the people of God as both the enemies of God and the persecutors of the righteous children of God. Those who were once the recipients of God's promise, and those who were the original guardians of righteousness in Israel, have been transformed by this text into Israel's enemies' (Graham 1997: 509-10).

30. As Luke Johnson observes, 'historiography—as Wright himself recognizes—must move from the plausible (it is possible and it makes sense) to the probable (there is a stronger reason for thinking it happened this way and not some other way), and the only way to the probable is through the assessment of specific historical evidence' (1999: 214).

31. Wright does not analyze literary relationships, nor does he assess the difficulties

There are two questions involved in this 'clash of worldviews'. First, was Jesus an apocalyptic prophet of the end? And second, is the Bible a generally reliable source of historically accurate data? Wright would respond in the affirmative to both questions. Those who begin with a different hypothesis about Jesus or who are less confident about the Bible's historical accuracy will not find his solutions, or his portrait of Jesus, convincing.

5. *When Is the Kingdom Come?*

The problem is, Jesus thought his action on behalf of Israel would bring about the end of the old order and the beginning of the new. He thought, at least in Wright's telling, that he was gathering Israel around himself at the end of exile. He thought that in the new community of his followers the Temple would find its true expression. God would return to God's people and the evil one would be conquered forever. People would find peace and freedom. Evil would be no more. The climax of history was reached in Jesus' life and death. But the story continues, with little evidence for the end and new beginning that Jesus expected. If that was the turning point in human history, why haven't things changed? If the exile is over, why isn't it more apparent? What are we supposed to do now?

Wright is aware of these problems. He muses, 'Jesus interpreted his coming death, and the vindication he expected after that death, as the defeat of evil; but, on the first Easter Monday evil still stalked the earth from Jerusalem to Gibraltar and beyond, and stalks it still' (1996: 659). Richard B. Hays puts the point well: 'the realized eschatology of Wright's account enhances the internal tension of the theodicy question virtually to the breaking point. Surely this is a matter that Wright must address as the rest of his opus unfolds' (1999: 155).[32] This question is related to two others that Hays explores. In Wright's view, Jesus' unique vocation was to go to the cross alone, taking on himself Israel's punishment and vindication. Yet, as Hays points out, 'the more [Wright] emphasizes the radically vicarious character of Jesus' death and resurrection…the more one wonders whether the whole drama of suffering and triumph is already complete' (1999: 154). Our experience tells us that this is not the case, and we are left wondering if Jesus was wrong. A further issue is a theological problem: 'the virtual evaporation of any element of future hope in Christian proclamation' (Hays 1999: 148).

presented by the various forms of the story in the different sources. See Johnson 1999: 216.

32. James D.G. Dunn comments that Wright's 'reappraisal of Jesus' mission' in *Jesus and the Victory of God* 'leaves something of an awkward gap between the climax that he portrays Jesus as expecting and the outcome that follows, which his further volume in the series (*The Resurrection of the Son of God*) fails adequately to bridge' (2005: 64).

From the perspective of first-century thought about time, twenty-first century analyses of realized and future eschatology focus on the wrong question, if Bruce Malina is correct. Malina concludes that in the New Testament period, 'there was no tension between the "now" and the "not yet." When those writings were written and collected, there was only emphasis on a rather broad "now"'. He continues, 'All the evidence indicates that New Testament authors were present oriented…as were Jesus and the others described by those authors' (1996: 210). For them, then, the 'present' included 'antecedents' and what was 'forthcoming' from the present. Beyond the antecedents in the past or the forthcoming experience of the future was the realm of the imaginary, known to God and communicated through the prophets. Thus, 'Jesus was once perceived by present-oriented people as the forthcoming Messiah with power. This perception of theirs was rooted in actual, experienced time situated in an operational realm abutting the horizon of the present. Given the press of events, however, this perception had subsequently proceeded beyond that horizon into the realm of the possible, of the future, rooted in imaginary time… And this shift from forthcoming to future occurred during the period of Christian origins' (1996: 208). This means that for Jesus the kingdom was both realized and imminent, connecting the present and the forthcoming through him. He would bring about the new. The kingdom would grow out of his activity and actions. But his death was then a radical disjunction. The organic connection was broken, and the kingdom moved into the imaginary time of God, both past and future.

In sociological terms, after the first generation of Christians, the prophetic word was the only access to this imaginary time.[33] As a result, the concept of the kingdom moved from a 'present' (realized/imminent) state in Jesus' preaching and life to a future which was not forthcoming but imagined and described in prophetic terms, a remote imaginary realm, and not part of the normal human experience of the present. In twenty-first century terms, realized eschatology became future eschatology in the first generation of the Church, and it is through the prophetic witness of the Church that the kingdom 'comes'.

What form does that prophetic witness take? Wright suggests that 'the unique and unrepeatable nature of Jesus' own sense of vocation extends to those who followed him' (1996: 245), but it is not clear how that is to happen. Hays's hunch is that it has to do with living out the Christian story; the ethical question for today's disciples is how to 'form the life of our communities so that we carry on the story of return from exile, the story of a restored alternative Israel and the story of the victory of God' (1999: 156). If 'the

33. From a different critical perspective, Theissen explores the time shift between text and situation using Mark 13 to raise the question 'where in Mark 13 (or in its source text) is the transition from fictional to real future?' (1991: 131).

unique and unrepeatable' vocation of Jesus is extended to others who are called somehow to live the story, then in the terms I have been using here, followers of Jesus today are called to understand the pattern of their lives within the same plot structure as Wright's portrait of Jesus. The epic plot becomes a paradigm for Christian discipleship, and each individual Christian is a prodigal making his way home, just as the community of believers who form the Church is the prodigal Israel returning from exile in a far country. The kingdom exists wherever there are those who live this story: Wright's present utopian view of time suggests that the exile is over and we continue to progress toward the full realization of the kingdom which will come. In terms of time, the imaginary future of present oriented thinking moves back into the forthcoming present. The organic connection is made through the Church, understood as the body of Christ, eternally present in the Eucharist. Wright has successfully recontextualized the data in his sources within the larger story of Israel then and now, creating a new narrative of the faith. Hays believes that 'his account is a historical lens through which we should reexamine the shape of Christian teaching in order to see it more clearly' (1999: 158). But is it historical? Wright would say that this is the wrong question: 'Schweitzer said that Jesus comes to us as one unknown. Epistemologically, if I am right, this is the wrong way round. *We* come to *him* as ones unknown, crawling back from the far country, where we had wasted our substance on riotous but ruinous historicism' (1996: 662).

Chapter 5

Anamnesis as Political Theology: Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza's Jesus

Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza describes herself as a feminist historian and theologian (1983: xiv). She has sketched the historical Jesus in two of her books. The first, *In Memory of Her*, appeared at the beginning of what I have called the third quest; the second, *Jesus: Miriam's Child, Sophia's Prophet*, was published in 1995. Neither book claims to provide a portrait of Jesus, although both in fact do. While her more recent work shows increased critical sophistication, her basic historical conclusions have changed little over the years, and *In Memory of Her* provides most of the material for my analysis of her historical Jesus writing. Schüssler Fiorenza's intent is to create a historical reconstruction of Christian origins which focuses on women: to 'reconstruct early Christian history as women's history' by restoring women's stories where the tradition has forgotten them and 'to reclaim this history as the history of women and men' (1983: xiv). In *Jesus* she explicitly distances herself from what she calls the Newest Quest, asking 'Do we not already have enough accounts about Jesus of Nazareth that seem to mirror the image and likeness of their authors more than that of Jesus the Galilean?' (1995: 4). Despite its title, the book 'is not and does not pretend to be another Christian testament study about Jesus'.[1] She continues, 'Instead, I seek to employ a critical feminist hermeneutics in order to explore the theoretical frameworks of various discourses about Jesus the Christ…' (1995: 4). This is necessary in her view because those biblical scholars who have worked to bring biblical and christological analyses together have done so with the conservative aim of constructing and propagating 'Christian and Western identity not only as a universally valid, masculine-determined, and canonical-theological or classic-cultural "given," but also as a preconstructed kyriarchal identity that has become both cultural and religious "common sense"' (1995: 74).

A classically trained biblical scholar, Schüssler Fiorenza relies on the methods of historical criticism, particularly form- and redaction-criticism, to

1. She includes a note thanking Werner Mark Linz of Continuum Publishing Company for adding 'Jesus' to the title; presumably the title included only the names of female figures originally (1995: x).

do her own theological work.[2] Unlike most biblical scholars, however, she does not attempt to be 'objective' in her historical analysis: her feminist ethics are foregrounded, and the historical work is in the service of her theological aims.[3] She is scathing in her evaluations of scholars who ignore or deny their own biases, particularly if they take non-feminist and non-liberationist stances which are variously named as 'conservative', 'reactionary', 'colonialist', 'racist' and 'fundamentalist' (1995: 9-11). The tone of this language indicates how much is at stake for Schüssler Fiorenza: this is a holy war in which committed Christian feminists are called on to 'claim and exercise our own spiritual-theological authority and power of naming for the sake of life in the global village' (1995: 11).[4] It is probably this frank acknowledgement of her political purpose (cf. 1983: xiv) that separates her work most clearly from that of other third quest writers.

Long before it became commonplace in biblical studies (trailing behind other fields in the humanities and arts) to acknowledge that the social context

2. Although from the beginning she is clear that a feminist methodology cannot employ historical-critical tools naively: 'Where form criticism and tradition history stress the "word" component of a story or tradition, often favoring it as more original than the narrative, I have focused on the narrative text and the historical actors involved, because women are found in the story of Jesus and his movement…. If the revelatory word is a word in which God's praxis with respect to Israel is disclosed, the "word" is a story, and the story *may not be reduced* to an "ideological" statement. This insight has revolutionized parable interpretation in recent years and will do the same for the other Gospel narratives' (1983: 152). N.T. Wright, who bases his interpretation on a storied 'world view' rather than specific sayings, might agree, although the story he tells is quite different, and as we have seen women are conspicuously absent from his narrative.

3. She would say, more precisely, that she attempts 'to be objective, but not objectivist and positivist' (in a letter dated 17 Dec. 1999). Especially in her more recent work, her aims are clear: 'Nothing stops feminist theologians from critically assessing the kyriocentric framework of the wisdom traditions (and all other biblical traditions) in order to rearticulate some of its discourses in such a way that wo/men can theologically claim it' (1995: 157). Witherington comments, 'It is one thing to assert that no historical research is value-free and to be aware of and cautious about one's own presuppositions and predilections. It is quite another to deliberately use the historical data to support or buttress one's own agendas' (1995: 177). He fears that her tendentious reading will alienate those readers 'who most need to hear some of her very helpful historical insights into Jesus' (1995: 178). Cf. Thiselton 1992. Renita J. Weems points out that the effect of such observations has been 'to undermine marginalized reading communities by insisting that their questions and experiences are superfluous to Scripture and their interpretations illegitimate, because of their failure to remain objective' (1993: 103).

4. Schüssler Fiorenza prefers the metaphor of struggle to that of holy war, which she reserves for those who oppose feminism: 'Since today, as in the past, the political Right fights its "holy war" against feminism under the banner of the doctrinal paradigm of biblical interpretation, our defense must directly address the question of the Word of God as proclaimed in scripture' (1985b: 132).

of writers influences their vision, Schüssler Fiorenza was arguing that objectivity in historiography was impossible: 'Historical interpretation is defined by contemporary questions and horizons of reality and conditioned by contemporary political interests and structures of domination' (1983: xvii). One might 'approach' objectivity, she continues, 'by reflecting critically and naming one's theoretical presuppositions and political allegiances' (1983: xvii).[5] Schüssler Fiorenza cites James Robinson to the effect that interpretation is reciprocal, both reflecting our understanding of reality and forming it. Biblical scholarship has traditionally ignored this perspective, she believes, because of 'an unconscious or conscious refusal to modify our androcentric grasp of reality and religion'; it is this rather than 'a legitimate concern for the integrity of biblical-historical scholarship' that has limited the methods and logic of biblical historiography (1983: xvii). In traditional scholarship, the human is conceptualized in male terms and the female is peripheral. The 'new field' of women's studies makes women's agency 'a key interpretive category' and moves from an androcentric perspective to one which is 'truly human', and 'inclusive of all people' (1983: xx).[6]

In Schüssler Fiorenza's view, the history of biblical interpretation since the Enlightenment can be seen as a progressive analysis and classification of data. The tools of 'lower' criticism were not designed for interpretation, but for textual analysis of the sort that would sieve out historical gravel to yield the flakes of pure theological gold, gold which then could be further refined by 'higher' criticism until its meaning became clear. This historical critical understanding then led to a need to distinguish what is historically conditioned in the tradition from what is theologically true, 'the word of God' or 'the heart of the Christian message' (1983: 14). Thus the enterprise became a search for the canon within the canon, with criteria formulated along both philosophic-dogmatic lines and historical-textual lines. Critics attempted to distinguish 'revelatory essence' from 'historical accident' (or 'Tradition' from

5. As we have seen, this notion is echoed in the works of most historical Jesus critics since then, and a good deal of earnest ink has been spent in agonized self-reflections which then presumably serve to warn readers of writers' personal critical quirks. This may be helpful. On a less superficial level, on the other hand, it is doubtful that the writers themselves are either willing or able to escape their own presuppositions; making one's views of reality explicit does not lead to abandoning them. Schüssler Fiorenza's view of our contemporary 'androcentric' society, on the contrary, acts as both presupposition and governing framework for her historical reconstruction.

6. For a review of recent feminist work in early Christian studies, see Castelli 1994. She points out that feminist work is 'thoroughly interdisciplinary, drawing upon insights from various disciplines in the humanities and social sciences, and asking new questions that often cannot be posed within the framework of traditional disciplines' (1994: 76). Her article provides lengthy bibliographic notes for reading in the field. See also The Bible and Culture Collective 1994.

'traditions', and eventually 'the historical Jesus' from 'the Christ of faith'), using text-, source-, and tradition-criticism to solve these problems. This 'neo-orthodox hermeneutics' has been described by Peter Berger as an attempt 'to absorb the full impact of the relativizing perspective but nevertheless to posit an "Archimedean point" in a sphere immune to relativization' (cited by Schüssler Fiorenza, 1983: 15). From this fixed point of reference, critics can adjudicate between the usable and the unusable in the tradition. Early feminist methods of interpretation were based on this metonymic analysis. So, for Letty Russell, the 'essence of biblical revelation' is 'God's salvific action in the world' or 'God's redemptive and liberating activity in Jesus Christ' (1983: 15; see Russell 1985). For Rosemary Radford Ruether, it is the 'prophetic-messianic tradition', not, of course, 'some particular statements about women's liberation, but rather the critical pattern of prophetic thought, that is the usable tradition for feminism in the Bible' (1983: 15; see Ruether 1983). Schüssler Fiorenza is quick to point out that 'liberating social-critical impulses' are held captive by 'historical-patriarchal elements of the prophetic traditions' and must be set free if the tradition is to work as Ruether suggests.[7] Finally, Phyllis Trible's work using rhetorical criticism enables readers 'correctly' to hear the voice of God embodied in this 'pilgrim' text (1983: 19), a strategy which trades interest in the movement of the text for emphasis on historical factors. Schüssler Fiorenza notes that in spite of Trible's definition of feminism[8] her method 'allows her to abstract the text from its cultural-historical context', so that history is a 'supplement' to interpretation (1983: 20). All three proposals for a feminist reconfiguration of the field retain the metonymical troping characteristic of what Schüssler Fiorenza would call the 'androcentric' model of historical-critical scholarship. In all three cases, the feminist attempt to read beyond the androcentrism of the text has led to an a-historical and a-political stance of which Schüssler Fiorenza is critical.

The task of feminism is to move from androcentric constructions to social-historical contexts. This cannot be done in neo-orthodox fashion, as Russell and Ruether have, by abstracting the essence of the biblical message; nor can it be done as Trible has, by focusing on biblical passages about women. Reconstruction 'must, therefore, be based on an alternative feminist biblical vision of the historical-cultural-religious interaction between women and men within Christian community and history' (1983: 30). Rather than understanding biblical revelation as an archetype, 'an ideal form that establishes an unchanging timeless pattern' (1983: 33), this new feminist theology 'challenges biblical theological scholarship to develop a paradigm for biblical revelation' that understands the New Testament 'as a prototype', which is

7. The vocabulary used here may indicate instead that Schüssler Fiorenza favours the Exodus tradition as the paradigm for liberation, rather than that of the later prophetic texts.

8. As a 'critique of culture in light of misogyny' (1987: 7).

'critically open to its own transformation' (1983: 33). This revelation cannot be identified with the androcentric text. Schüssler Fiorenza maintains that 'such revelation is found in the life and ministry of Jesus as well as in the discipleship community of equals called forth by him. Biblical texts and their subsequent interpretations are formulated in interaction…' (1983: 33). Thus, in her complex rhetorical-hermeneutical model, revelation is located in experience, and critical methods which enable readers to interpret the 'clues and allusions that indicate the reality about which the text is silent' are needed.[9] Her model 'does not rely solely on historical "facts" nor invents its evidence, but is engaged in an imaginative reconstruction of historical reality' (1983: 41).

It is worth pausing for a moment here to consider the language Schüssler Fiorenza uses. Her task is one of reclamation, of searching for roots, of integration and solidarity; her goal is to create an organic, synthetic vision of the first century Church, what she calls the *basileia* movement,[10] as a history of women and men. The history of Christianity has been traditionally told as a story of men, although the sources hint of women's activities. From her contemporary vision of church as the *ekklēsia* of wo/men, Schüssler Fiorenza posits a non-hierarchical 'society of equals' including both women and men, which goes back to the roots of Christianity. In her vision of the tradition, women have been forgotten, not so much erased from the records as never included. The inclusive and egalitarian practice of the earliest communities gives way, after the death of Jesus, to the early Church structures in which women were progressively marginalized and silenced. While traces of the practices of the discipleship of equals remain, in the texts which are our sources for this history humanity is troped metonymically: the part that is male stands for all people of both sexes. The interpretive task, she explains, 'involves not so much rediscovering new sources as rereading the available sources in a different key' (1983: xx). The musical metaphor might better be one of tropes: her task has been to reconstitute the historical field in such a way that a metonymic vision is translated into synecdoche. Thus from the metonymic constitution of the androcentric tradition, she moves, by integrating women's lives into the story, to a synecdochic vision based on contemporary feminist and liberationist experience in the *ekklēsia* of wo/men. Interpreting the earliest communities through the synecdochic lens of the contemporary *ekklēsia* enables Schüssler Fiorenza to reenvision the Jesus community. The

9. For an exegesis of silence as a feminist method, see Ricci 1991; cf. Graham 1991.

10. 'The *basileia* movement is…best understood as a Wisdom/Sophia movement in which Jesus is *primus inter pares*, first among equals'. But *basileia* is a political term, denoting an 'emancipatory movement of Galilean Jewish wo/men…as part of the variegated *basileia* and holiness movements that in the first century sought the "liberation" of Israel from imperial exploitation' (2000a: 166-67).

characteristics of this contemporary ideal, based on equality, justice and the practice of resistance to structures of domination, by the rhetorical change of trope, can be understood to imbue the earlier *basileia* movement. To the extent that the sources can be reread in this way, contemporary Christian feminism is grounded and rooted in the early history of Christianity going back to those Jesus people, Jewish women and men, who participated in the earliest communities and who worked for justice and freedom from oppression.

1. *Historical Construction*

Methodologically, Schüssler Fiorenza prefigures history synecdochically, and one might expect her to plot her history in a manner congruent with that choice: that is to say, to write the story of Jesus as a comedy. In Hayden White's terms: 'The *mythos* of synecdoche is the dream of *comedy*, the apprehension of a world in which all struggle, strife, and conflict are dissolved in the realization of perfect harmony, in the attainment of a condition in which all crime, vice, and folly are finally revealed as the *means* to the establishment of the social order which is finally achieved…' (1973: 190). This is Schüssler Fiorenza's vision of the kingdom, what she terms the *basileia*; it was partially realized in the Jesus movement, and exists now in the *ekklēsia* of wo/men (1995: 24).

The significant action of the story is the growth of that community and its self-understanding, from its beginnings among the followers of Jesus to its fulfillment as the post-Easter Jesus movement. The action of the story follows the familiar lines of the gospel: implied in Schüssler Fiorenza's account is the beginning of Jesus' ministry in the baptism by John, the teaching, healing, and table fellowship of the community during the days in Galilee, the trip to Jerusalem, the conflict with the authorities and Jesus' condemnation to death by the Romans. The death and burial in her narrative lead to the climax: the empty tomb, which she takes to be historical, is witnessed by the women who come in compassion to anoint the dead body of their friend; and the narrative ends with the suggestion that Jesus has gone ahead to Galilee where the women will find him.[11]

In terms of the comic movement from blocking to freedom, the story of Jesus as Schüssler Fiorenza tells it begins with his baptism by John, clearly

11. Schüssler Fiorenza acknowledges that there are two traditions of post-Resurrection revelation: the experiences of the women at the empty tomb, and the appearances to a limited number of male disciples. It is difficult to know which is primary, she believes, but it is helpful to privilege the women's tradition 'as a heuristic means to develop and adjudicate our own christological meaning-making in the face of violence and killing today' (1995: 125).

placing him in a social world which is governed by the laws of two obstructing societies: the world of Palestine under Roman rule, and the religious world of Judaism as it is represented by the establishment order. Jesus responds to the message of John the Baptist and is baptized by him, thus placing himself outside of the religious power structures of his time. Not only Jesus but many groups within Palestinian Judaism of the first century were convinced that 'God's intervention on behalf of Israel was immediate' (1983: 111). But this intervention was not necessarily an apocalyptic end of time; rather the expectations were those contained within the boundaries of the tensive symbol *basileia*. While John the Baptist expected and preached the eschatological restitution of Israel, Jesus preached that the 'eschatological salvation and wholeness of Israel as the elect people of God [was] already experientially available'(1983: 119), available according to Schüssler Fiorenza whenever Jesus 'casts out demons (Lk. 11.20), heals the sick and the ritually unclean, tells stories about the lost who are found, of the uninvited, or of the last who will be first'. Thus Jesus' actions and words mediate the future kingdom 'into the structures and experiences of his own time and people' (1983: 120-21). His actions drew crowds of people anxious to share in this experience of the inbreaking kingdom in their midst.

Some of those crowds of people began to follow Jesus as his disciples, either traveling with him or providing food and lodging. Schüssler Fiorenza believes that the calling of the twelve male disciples is a later tradition; within the early Jesus movement an egalitarian mode of leadership obtained, with various people taking various leadership roles as needed. Because 'the Jesus movement refused to define the holiness of God's elected people in cultic terms, redefining it instead as the wholeness intended in creation' (1983: 113); and because he saw that wholeness as already available in his own ministry, his own practices were not ascetical. Jesus, then, rejects the ascetic vision of John the Baptist and his disciples, as well as the ritual purity of the table fellowship among the Pharisees and Essenes; rather 'the festive table-sharing at a wedding feast' is characteristic of Jesus and his movement. 'The central symbolic actualization of the *basileia* vision of Jesus', Schüssler Fiorenza states, 'is not the cultic meal but the festive table of a royal banquet or wedding feast'(1983: 119). Jesus' ministry was characterized by 'festive table sharing'; and the parables which characterize his teaching provide 'ever-new images of a sumptuous, glorious banquet celebration' (1983: 119). In Jesus' practice of inclusiveness, the banquet is a symbol for God's inclusion of all people. Jesus' willingness to accept others without qualification was the root cause of the opposition of the religious authorities (1983: 120). The action of the plot focuses on the gathering of those people on the outside of the old society around a figure who promises to be at the center of a new society of hope and freedom, a society symbolized as *basileia*.

The weight of the blocking characters in this narrative places Schüssler Fiorenza's plot in the realm of ironic comedy, where the new society will remain in embryo at the end of the action. But the comic expectation is that a romantic liaison, ordinarily embodied in a heroine, will produce the kernel around which the new society may develop. The gospels of course provide no romantic interest for Jesus, although late traditions and apocryphal writings respond with stories centered on Jesus and Mary Magdalene. The desire for a couple who will provide the new family around whom the new comic society will grow marks Schüssler Fiorenza's comic structure. This element is displaced, but not entirely eliminated. In Schüssler Fiorenza's narrative, it is accomplished by coupling Jesus with a mother God figure: Sophia. Schüssler Fiorenza argues that in Jesus' ministry 'God is experienced as all-inclusive love…a God of graciousness and goodness who accepts everyone and brings about justice and well-being for everyone without exception' (1983: 130).[12] This vision of God, ascribed to the earliest Jesus traditions, will allow Schüssler Fiorenza to present God in a woman's form as divine Sophia.[13] The

12. The metaphorical language used in *Jesus* make this feminine image even more clear: 'In light of the overwhelming androcentric shape and kyriocentric framework of the texts that speak of Divine Wisdom, we must ask whether it is possible in a feminist exegetical-theological "alchemy" to transform such a figure clothed in kyriocentric language in a way that she can once again not only develop her freeing power in feminist theologies but also have a liberating function in emancipatory struggles for a more just world. How can we trace the submerged spirit of Divine Sophia in biblical writings in such a way that the theological possibilities offered by Wisdom, the Divine Woman of Justice, but never quite realized in history, can be realized? How can we reconstitute this tradition in such a way that the rich table of Sophia can provide food and drink, nourishment and strength in the struggles for transforming kyriarchy?' (1995: 133). The task for the feminist historian is one of 're-construction', starting from the point when Sophia was suppressed. Schüssler Fiorenza locates two strands of New Testament Sophialogy: 'One presents Jesus as the prophet of Sophia, and the other identifies him as divine Wisdom (while an intermediary stage identifies the Logos with divine Wisdom)'. (Greene-McCreight 2000: 94-95).

13. Using Lk. 7.35 (Q): 'The very old saying, "Sophia is justified [or vindicated] by all her children" probably had its setting in Jesus' table community with tax collectors, prostitutes, and sinners' (1983: 132). Ben Witherington comments, 'As an alternative to a religion that worships God as Father, [Schüssler] Fiorenza argues that Jesus held up a vision of God as Sophia'. Witherington questions whether the Sophia image was used by Jesus to speak of God's presence, an argument based largely on Lk. 7.35//Mt. 11.19 (and perhaps Lk.11.49). He believes that the Matthean form, which suggests that Jesus saw *himself* rather than God as Wisdom, is the earlier form. He concludes, 'even if [Schüssler] Fiorenza's interpretation of Luke's two sayings is correct, it is too slender a basis to support the argument that Jesus' dominant image for God was Sophia, or Wisdom, *rather than* Father, or *abba*. The later is better attested' (1995: 174, his emphasis). He nonetheless agrees that Jesus created a community which was more egalitarian than the patriarchal Jewish society which Jesus critiqued (1995: 175).

female figure of Sophia functions here in the heroine's role, so that coupling Jesus with this female image provides a male-female pair around which the new society can emerge. 'It was possible to understand Jesus' ministry and death in terms of God-Sophia', she argues, 'because Jesus probably understood himself as the prophet and child of Sophia' (1983: 134).[14] In Schüssler Fiorenza's work, this is a theological interpretation made possible by certain historical data; but it is also a generic necessity.

Like other historical Jesus critics, Schüssler Fiorenza is at pains to explain how the actions of Jesus could lead to his death, and how the early Church could have developed from such inauspicious beginnings. She ascribes Jesus' execution to the political action of the Romans concerned with destroying any Messianic pretenders who might threaten Roman rule.[15] The early Church then quickly moved to develop a theological rather than political explanation for Jesus' death, nearly effacing what she considers the real reason, and substituting the idea of atonement. In Schüssler Fiorenza's view, Jesus was not an innocent victim whose suffering and execution were in accordance with God's will; rather Jesus was *guilty* of the political charges against him. In a sense, his execution is the result of his success: 'Jesus' death is not willed by God but is the result of his all-inclusive praxis as Sophia's prophet' (1983: 135). She argues that theology cannot ignore the socio-political causes of Jesus' execution in focusing exclusively on the atoning results of his death; to do this is to continue 'the kyriarchal cycle of violence and victimization instead of empowering believers to resist and transform it' (1995: 106).

The climax of the story then is not the redemption of humankind through the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross, but instead the empty tomb and the resurrection experiences of the women disciples. The empty tomb is the point of comic resolution, when some sort of festive ritual might be expected: here the 'visionary-ecstatic experiences' of the women function to mark the close of the comic action and invite the participation of the hearers or readers. While she does not claim historicity for the resurrection, when the women who had followed Jesus went to anoint his body, their 'visionary-ecstatic' experience at the empty tomb empowered them to keep the movement alive (1983: 139). This is the new society toward which the plot moves, but which remains only partially realized at the end of the action.

14. Witherington distinguishes his own portrait of Jesus as a sage from Schüssler Fiorenza's at precisely this point. He argues 'that Jesus presented himself explicitly as a sage and at least implicitly as the embodiment of Wisdom' (1995: 182). In Schüssler Fiorenza's reading, the earliest tradition identifies Sophia with God rather than Jesus.

15. This argument does not necessarily lead to the conclusion that Jesus organized a resistance movement along the lines of the Zealots, *pace* Witherington. Schüssler Fiorenza's Jesus was engaged in the renewal of Judaism, not in a political struggle to overthrow Roman rule.

The ending which enables the formation of this new society, as we have seen, usually includes some twist in the plot, often involving the revelation of mistaken identity, and sometimes also including metamorphosis of character. In the case of the gospels, the twist in the plot is no doubt the resurrection, where it is Jesus' identity that is revealed. The tradition provides further images of mistaken identity in order to heighten the effect of the final revelation: the traveler on the road to Emmaus in Luke's gospel is one example; the 'gardener' at the tomb in John is another. For Schüssler Fiorenza, it is the disciples who experience a change of character from weak, disbelieving, and mistaken followers to the powerful and committed core of the early Church. This change is usually given a theological interpretation, but it can also be seen as a generic requirement. Because such a change is appropriate in comic structure, it is believable.

Schüssler Fiorenza does not distinguish between the Jesus movement which grew up during the historical lifetime of Jesus from the post-Easter Jesus movement, nor does she attempt to delineate a historical Jesus apart from the movement. The gospels, she argues, 'are paradigmatic remembrances, not comprehensive accounts of the historical Jesus', and the paradigm is the discipleship of equals (1983: 102). She takes it as given that readers of the gospels will be motivated by a desire to understand what this discipleship entails, and that women particularly will be helped to take on what she sees as their original role as active participants and leaders in the early Church.

To enter this discipleship 'does not mean to imitate [Jesus] or the Christians of New Testament times', and she does not work to discern Jesus' personality or mindset. Because of her insistence on a feminist perspective and her determination not to reinscribe a kyriarchal structure into her own Christological work, she is at pains not to construct a heroic Jesus, 'the exceptional man and unique person' (1997: 348), at the center of her work.[16] The third quest desire to set Jesus over against Judaism leads to reconstructions of his ministry and message in kyriarchal terms, she claims. But at the same time, portraying Jesus in terms of Jewish male prerogatives leaves a heroic individual whose maleness is constitutive for faith and Christian identity (1995: 87). This concern remains as strong for her as it was in 1984 when she warned of

16. In an article in honor of Helmut Koester (1997), Schüssler Fiorenza describes the 'politics of liberal Jesus research' using Dieter Georgi's analysis (Georgi 1992: 51-83). Georgi traces 'a trajectory of bourgeois historical Jesus theology' beginning with the early Christian concept of the 'divine man' and continuing through the New Quest, with its exceptional hero. In Schüssler Fiorenza's reading, the liberal Jesus is a creation of the conservative politics and middle-class economics of post-War Europe and North America (Schüssler Fiorenza 1997: 346-47). On the feminist question of the maleness of Jesus as a savior for women, see particularly Ruether 1983: 116-38.

Christian anti-Judaism 'which is especially deeply ingrained in popular consciousness' (1983: 105).[17] According to Schüssler Fiorenza, feminism must reject the methods of the third quest because 'kyriocentric scientific reconstructions reproduce not only androcentrism but also anti-Judaism in Christian historical-theological terms'.[18] In order to avoid this, she rejects a narrative method of historical explanation centered on Jesus as the hero. Instead, the implied narrative traces some of Jesus' ideas but few of his actions: this is the story of the community grouped around Jesus, the child of Sophia sent by God/Sophia to bring about the *basileia* of God in a community of equals (1995: 87-88). Egalitarian implies not just inclusive of women, but of women's leadership (1983: 140). Schüssler Fiorenza uses sociological studies of the roles and relationships between men and women in antiquity to argue for the plausibility of her *basileia* model. Despite the 'formal canons of codified patriarchal law' Schüssler Fiorenza argues that 'the actual interaction and relationship of women and men and the social reality which [the laws] govern' is actually less restrictive: 'women's actual social-religious status must be determined by the degree of their economic autonomy and social roles rather than by ideological or prescriptive statements'(1983: 108-109).

In Schüssler Fiorenza's view, Jesus' movement was one of many in Israel which shared the common symbol of *basileia*, but whereas others emphasized Temple and Torah as the locus of God's presence, Jesus redefined holiness, finding it instead in the people of God (1983: 113). Schüssler Fiorenza discusses various models for the Jesus movement, particularly the sect and millenarian movements described by Gager, Theissen, and Stegemann (1983: 73-74). While she is critical of all these models, they have in common an 'a-familial' ethos which provides her with a useful point of entry. The inclusive and egalitarian community which formed around Jesus was composed of three groups: the destitute poor; the sick and crippled; and tax collectors, sinners, and prostitutes (1983: 122). It was characterized by an anti-patriarchal and 'a-familial' ethos: 'The praxis and vision of Jesus and his movement is best understood as an inner-Jewish renewal movement that presented an *alternative* option to the dominant patriarchal structures rather than an oppositional formation rejecting the values and praxis of Judaism' (1983: 107). That alternative, however, was 'not an alternative lifestyle but an alternative ethos'

17. Corley (2002.141); cf. Johnson-deBaufre (2005: 129-30).

18. Witherington provides a typical example of reasoning which supports such Christian anti-Judaism: 'The necessary and sufficient explanation of why Christianity differed from its religious mother, Judaism, in these matters is that Jesus broke with both biblical and rabbinic traditions that restricted women's roles in religious practices, and that He rejected attempts to devalue the worth of a woman, or her word of witness' (1984: 127). For a feminist critique from a Jewish perspective, see Plaskow 1993. Cf. Pui-Lan 1993.

(1983: 135).[19] Schüssler Fiorenza argues that it is a misunderstanding to see such an ethos as 'antiwomen'; rather 'it is an indication of a "rule-revolt" which allowed women to "legitimately" move out of the confines of the patriarchal family', thus supporting 'emancipatory tendencies within the contexts of Roman Hellenism' (1983: 90-91).

Despite a reluctance to rely on criteria of authenticity for her data, Schüssler Fiorenza uses historical-critical methods of analysis in support of her contention that the *basileia* vision of Jesus was embodied in a community of equals. But because her purpose is to create an imaginative reconstruction, to see what the texts do not say, she approaches the texts with a hermeneutics of suspicion: things are not what they seem. Accordingly, she prefigures the interpretive task ironically, and the texts yield alternative interpretations as a result. For example, she cites the 'two pre-Markan controversy dialogues on patriarchal marriage' in support of her argument that Jesus' vision was anti-patriarchal: divorce was necessary as long as the structures of the patriarchal family remained in place. Ideally, in Jesus' view, in marriage two people enter a common life together as equal partners (Mk 10.2-9; 1984: 143). Furthermore, in 'the world' of God, patriarchal marriage will cease to exist, because 'its function in maintaining and continuing patriarchal economic and religious structures is no longer necessary' (Mk 12.18-27). As for her contention that the Jesus movement was 'a-familial', she differs with Gerd Theissen's analysis showing that the Jesus movement was composed of 'itinerant charismatic *men*', arguing that a careful scrutiny of the texts shows that 'it is not the Q traditions (but rather Lukan redaction) which count the wife among those family members who are to be left behind in following Jesus' (1983: 145). And while the Q text which precedes the discipleship saying announces that Jesus does not bring peace to the patriarchal household, it does not indicate that problems will arise in the relationship between wife and husband. She concludes, 'Without question the discipleship of Jesus does not respect patriarchal family bonds, and the Jesus movement in Palestine severely intrudes into the peace of the patriarchal household' (1983: 146). Moreover disciples must 'relinquish all claims of power and domination over others' (1983: 148);[20] in the new family of disciples, there is no place for 'fathers' other

19. Although Jesus' stance on behalf of the poor is clear, he does not explicitly articulate strategies for social change: 'Jesus' proclamation does not address critically the structures of oppression. It implicitly subverts them by envisioning a different future and different human relationships…. Jesus and his movement set free those who are dehumanized and in bondage to evil powers, thus implicitly subverting economic or patriarchal-androcentric structures, even though the people involved in this process might not have thought in terms of social structures' (1983: 142). In this, she anticipates J.D. Crossan's views, although in his view, Jesus *enacts* the different future, explicitly subverting social structures. See below, Chapter 6.

20. Using Mt. 10.30, 34-36//Lk. 12.51-53; Mk 3.31-35; Mk 10.15, 42-45; Mk 9.33-37;

than God; so any patriarchal structures and relationships must be rejected in the community of equals (1983: 150). Thus Schüssler Fiorenza uses both sociological models and the tools of historical-critical analysis in order to show that her unifying vision of *basileia* was indeed articulated by Jesus and practiced in his community, but because she approaches the task from an ironic perspective, the interpretations vary from what one might achieve by troping differently, particularly metonymically.

Schüssler Fiorenza's reconstruction of the early Jesus movement, then, can be seen as a story of social integration in the comic pattern. But this is ironic comedy: in the larger historical context, the old social order triumphs over the new, nearly obliterating any traces of the egalitarian social structures created by those who participated in the Jesus movement. Thus the vision of the Jesus movement as comedy is embedded in a larger historical narrative of the Church. It may be helpful at this point to use Rüsen's typology. Schüssler Fiorenza posits a 'traditional' mythic narrative of the Jesus movement in a comic pattern, placing this moment at the beginning of the larger narrative of the Church. In this larger narrative, history proceeds in a tragic pattern according to laws of domination and exclusion, ongoing structures with different historical manifestations, which have served to demonstrate the limitations of human agency to effect change. The larger historical context is an 'exemplary narrative', to use Rüsen's terms, a historical explanation troped metonymically, which shows how the rules of the historical process operate when applied to specific situations. But as Rüsen argues, historical thinking can only move forward when a 'critical' narrative dares to question the ruling exemplary narrative: someone has to say no. In Schüssler Fiorenza's work, the 'kyriarchic' process, troped metonymically, is challenged by a feminist critical narrative which opens the space for alternative visions of the historical process. She then proposes a new view, reimaging the vision of a mythic egalitarian community in a 'genetical' narrative. Rüsen's term implies an organicist argument in which change will grow slowly out of present conditions; this is consonant with White's 'conservative' mode of ideological implication, or what I have called the evolutionary utopian view, with its affinities with comedy.

Instead, Schüssler Fiorenza's vision is past utopian: the kingdom, or *basileia*, was realized, albeit partially, in the distant past when Jesus was alive. In the larger narrative context of history to the present time, that vision of justice and well-being has become the hope rather than the reality of a Church characterized by a social system which is both hierarchical and

Mt. 18.1-4; Lk. 9.48; Mt. 23.8-11. She argues on the basis of multiple attestation for the importance of sayings regarding role reversals which subvert patriarchal family structures; 'liberation from patriarchal structures is not only explicitly articulated by Jesus but is in fact at the heart of the proclamation of the *basileia* of God' (1983: 151).

androcentric, what Schüssler Fiorenza calls 'kyriocentric'.[21] Within this context, the egalitarian vision of Jesus continues to function as a partially realized alternative pointing to the creation of a new social order of justice and peace. The *basileia* is recreated in the *ekklēsia* of wo/men wherever and whenever people are willing to change.

While she does not argue for the authenticity of the texts herself, she shares the position of others on Jesus' eschatological views, citing Perrin's *The Kingdom of God in the Teaching of Jesus*. The chapter she cites puts her in the line of scholars who argued that the kingdom of God is 'both present and future in the teaching of Jesus' (1963: 79),[22] but the nuances of the various positions suggest different ideological implications. Jeremias had suggested the phrase 'eschatology that is in process of realization'[23] to describe this tension, an evolutionary utopian ideology. Perrin describes it slightly differently as 'the relationship between a present in which the long-promised eschatological salvation is known at a personal level in and through the ministry of Jesus and a future in which it will be manifested universally or cosmically through some climactic act of God…' (1963: 88). The expectation of a cosmic intervention rather than a slowly evolving development makes Perrin a visionary utopian looking to the radical restructuring of society. Jeremias agrees with C.H. Dodd that the kingdom is present in the ministry of Jesus, but disagrees in seeing a future kingdom as well (Perrin, 1963: 73). While Dodd and Jeremias cite the parables among the evidence for the present kingdom, the beatitudes and reversal sayings are used as evidence for a future kingdom (1963: 83). Schüssler Fiorenza's position seems closer to the scholars Perrin characterizes as 'post-Bultmannian'.[24] she expects a future kingdom in which a new society based on new values is brought about by individual changes in consciousness, a personal conversion marked by the awareness of belonging with others in an *ekklēsia* of shared values, as 'resident aliens' in the world.[25]

21. A neologism introduced in Schüssler Fiorenza 1992; cf. 1995: 14.

22. This includes the work of C.J. Cadoux, H.A. Guy, A.M. Hunter, Vincent Taylor, and R.H. Fuller, and particularly Perrin's *Doktorvater*, Joachim Jeremias.

23. In the German edition, '*sich realisierenden Eschatologie*', a change from Dodd's 'realized eschatology' (*realisierter Eschatologie*). Jeremias 1978. Both phrases imply a concept of time in which the realized future is forthcoming from the present, that is to say, understandably a potential in the present. See Malina 1996: 209.

24. Ernst Käsemann, Günther Bornkamm, Ernst Fuchs, and Hans Conzelmann, along with J.M. Robinson (Perrin, 1963: 119-20).

25. The phrase is further used in ecclesiology and ethics by Stanley Hauerwas and William Willemon (1989) to describe the positions of Christians in post-Christian society, where the 'church' provides the necessary structures to enable believers to live out a Christian ethic in the world. It has affinities with Schüssler Fiorenza's vision of *ekklēsia* without her primary feminist and liberationist commitments (1995: 10).

In this analysis of Schüssler Fiorenza's work, I have tried to read the implicit narrative of Jesus' life as she presents it as if it were a fictional plot patterned on the comic genre. Understanding the plot structure can reveal how the 'facts' of historical events can be given different meanings depending on the historian's understanding of 'what really happened', that is to say, the narrative context. For Schüssler Fiorenza, 'what really happened' is the creation of an inclusive community, a discipleship of equals, centered around the figure of Jesus of Nazareth in his self-understanding as a child and prophet of Sophia. In contrast to what she calls 'malestream'[26] scholarship, which is characterized by metonymic troping of the historical field, reducing human experience to types and laws, Schüssler Fiorenza tropes the field synecdochically, in order to integrate her social vision in terms of certain properties which characterize a feminist and liberationist perspective: particularly equality, justice, and freedom. But because of her view that the comic vision suggested in the story of Jesus has remained unrealized in subsequent history, her argument suggests that history is at least a struggle, if not a process of decline which only a complete break from the past can stop. Her eschatological vision does not require heavenly intervention, but rather can be willed through a change in human consciousness. In intellectual terms, Schüssler Fiorenza expresses this change as a 'paradigm shift', which is brought about by the recognition of the evil effects of the 'kyriocentric' social order and a determination to change. The moral language of evil and the theological language of sin is never far below the surface of this historical narrative, and the paradigm shift that is required for the realization of the kingdom resembles for the individual the process of repentance and amendment of life.

2. *Philosophy of History in a Feminist Mode*

In Memory of Her appeared early in feminist biblical interpretation, and much of what Schüssler Fiorenza does is foundational. She wants to find common ground with historical critical scholarship in order to develop her method, which will attempt to respect canon and tradition. Despite her criticism of Enlightenment thinking, she remains modernist in her philosophy of history; complete objectivity may not be possible, but truthful conclusions based on evidence are nevertheless the goal of historical reconstruction. 'What one sees depends on where one stands', she argues. 'Historical objectivity can be approximated only in and through a careful rhetorical analysis. In addition, the rhetorical political model insists that historical reconstruction must carefully spell out the criteria with which it adjudicates different texts, sources,

26. A term coined by the sociologist Dorothy Smith, used by Schüssler Fiorenza 'to indicate that mainstream scholarship is still determined by elite white men' (1997: 347).

and interpretations. Finally it maintains that historical re-construction can claim only probability but not normativity' (1997: 355).

As Schüssler Fiorenza sees it, historical positivism 'tends to go hand in hand with political conservatism'[27] because 'its emphasis on the *realia* of history serves to promote a kind of scientific fundamentalism, since it fails to acknowledge that historians select and interpret archaeological artefacts and textual evidence as well as incorporate them into a scientific model and narrative framework of meaning' (1997: 349). But because, in her view, mainstream historical critical scholarship shares her Christian commitment,[28] she hopes that a common hermeneutical perspective might be developed that can overcome 'the chasm between historical-critical studies and the contemporary church of women' (1983: xxiii). Feminist work which revises or rejects the common ground, as for example the work of Mary Daly, comes under close scrutiny here. It is important for Schüssler Fiorenza that those for whom the Bible has 'significance and authority' be enabled to read it in a feminist way (1983: 4).

The problem she sets for herself, then, is how to retain some notion of biblical authority and still provide a basis for liberation. The 'doctrinal approach' in which the Bible as the Word of God is 'an absolute oracle revealing timeless truth and definite answers to the questions and problems of all time' has been challenged by 'positivist historical exegesis' which provides an opportunity for textual interpretation. The value of this model is that it enables reading and understanding on more than a literal theological level, in which the text becomes an object for critical probing. But while historical criticism has changed since its positivist beginning, it remains unfortunately marked by Enlightenment habits of thought and 'still adheres to the dogma of value-neutral, detached interpretation'; it fears being labeled as 'ideologically motivated' even though, in Schüssler Fiorenza's opinion, it is 'theoretically impossible' to avoid (1983: 5).

27. 'The political context and rhetorical situation in which feminist as well as malestream Historical-Jesus research takes place, I submit, is constituted by the resurgence of the religious Right around the world claiming the power to name and to define the true nature of religion. Right wing, well financed think tanks are supported by reactionary political and financial institutions that seek to defend kyriarchal capitalism. The interconnection between religious anti-democratic arguments and the debate with regard to wo/men's proper place and role is not accidental or just of intra-religious significance. In the past decade or so, right-wing movements around the globe have insisted on the figuration of emancipated wo/men as signifiers of Western decadence or of modern atheistic secularism, and have presented masculine power as the expression of divine power' (2000b: 15-16, with bibliography; cf. 2000a).

28. That is, 'has as its hermeneutical presupposition a theological engagement insofar as it operates theoretically within the boundaries of the canon as well as institutionally within Christian schools of theology' (1983: xxii).

Still hoping to create a model in which the inescapable biases of critics can sit easily with some sort of historical truth claims, she turns to an ethical reader-response model next, citing James Barr's attempt to understand biblical interpretation within the context of the believing community.[29] According to her description of the model, it is 'the subject matter of the text, or the text as such, and not preconceived ideas or a presupposed situation that should determine the interpretation of biblical texts' (1983: 6). Combined with the 'neo-orthodox theological enterprise', this model provides for a hermeneutical action in which the meaningful texts of the past can take on present meaning within the context of the faith experience of the believing community. Thus in this model, contemporary interpretation is not limited by traditional understandings, but it is controlled by the context in which it occurs. The terms of this model are problematical, as it is by no means simple to decide what the content of 'the faith experience' in 'the believing community' is. At any rate, even if it were possible to find a lowest common denominator that reflected the consensual understanding of the whole of the 'believing community', interpretations made in this context would necessarily be conservative; thus while the model is in some ways attractive for Schüssler Fiorenza's project, it retains biblical authority at the expense of marginal readings, including those which would provide some basis for liberation.

She turns finally to 'liberation theology' as a model for feminist interpretation, arguing that in this perspective 'all theology, willingly or not, is by definition always engaged for or against the oppressed' (1983: 6). Since academic scholarship serves the interests of the institution, it 'not only makes males normative subjects of scholarship but also serves theoretically to legitimize societal structures of oppression' (1983: 6). Thinking ironically leads her to look for ways to read against the grain of the text. Liberation theology provides a model which will enable her to read the Bible from the margins, as one of the oppressed, while at the same time allowing her to retain the notion of biblical authority.[30] She does so by setting up within the complex notion of

29. Barr, 'The Bible as a Document of Believing Communities' in Betz 1981. The position is often argued by more theologically conservative biblical scholars and theologians who attempt to retain the idea of objective truth while admitting the necessary subjectivity of interpretation. For a recent review of the literature, see Watson 1997.

30. Schüssler Fiorenza is critical of 'white feminist liberation theological discourses' in which the Bible 'as the authoritative and authorizing "word of God" has occupied center stage' and she calls for 'the articulation of the feminist subject of biblical interpretation or that of a theological model of reading as a critical praxis for liberation'. Fearing that feminist biblical interpretation may be 'co-opted in the interests of the Western patriarchal "logic of identity", she seeks to situate feminist theological interpretation in the context of liberation, locating authority in the *ekklēsia* of wo/men rather than in the Bible, so as to 'engender critical discourses which can claim the theological authority of the "others" to

kyriarchy a binary opposition of oppressor and oppressed, by which to classify all interpretation, a metonymic troping coupled with a mechanistic mode of argumentation. Like the conservative scholars she opposes, Schüssler Fiorenza uses the available tools for analysis, in modes which sit uncomfortably with their ideological positions, playing with the enemy, as it were. The advantages of such a strategy are clear: the oppressed are an integral part of the structure, but as the dominant term in the binary represses its other half, the voices of the oppressed have been silenced within the institutions that provide the context for interpretation. Having identified these strands of interpretation, the critic can proceed, within the boundaries of biblical authority, to give voice to the oppressed, in this way providing a liberatory reading. Using the tools ironically, from the perspective of a suspicious reading, gives Schüssler Fiorenza some critical space in which to read differently. The disadvantage from a modernist perspective, which Schüssler Fiorenza recognizes, is that a simple revalorization of the subordinate term continues to inscribe the same binary. A next step is needed. Although the process was less apparent in the early days of post-structuralist biblical interpretation when Schüssler Fiorenza was writing *In Memory of Her*, from a later postmodern perspective, all binary oppositions are vulnerable to deconstruction. A political position grounded in these shifting sands may well find truth is a mirage on the horizon, moving and changing as the seeker approaches. In *Jesus*, Schüssler Fiorenza has come to espouse a limited postmodernism (1995: 10-11), and she calls for feminist theologians to be 'troublemakers', or 'resident aliens' in mainstream theology.[31] But while Schüssler Fiorenza's model enables her liberatory reading, it does so at great expense. While in her later work she seems to accept a multiple vision of truth, she finds it inadequately supports her political project, and she turns to a different mode of historical reasoning.

Taking as a given that the 'scarcity of information about women is conditioned by the androcentric traditioning and redaction of the early Christian authors', she argues that 'the androcentric selection and transmission of early Christian traditions have manufactured the historical marginality of women', while the historical reality must be quite different. She continues, 'Since for a variety of reasons the New Testament authors were not interested in extolling

engage a deliberative process of biblical interpretation' (1992: 150). Cf. Schüssler Fiorenza 1984: 25-29; Camp 1993.

31. Her language of 'destablization' of centers suggests this, although she then calls for feminist theologians to 'claim the center of theory and theology in order to transform it'. Ultimately, she wants to redraw the boundaries of the context to integrate 'four quite different discourses, those of the university, organized religion, feminist theory and the feminist movement'. This would entail changing all four discourses, 'their boundaries and their centers' (1995: 11).

women's as well as slaves' active participation in the Christian movement, we can assume methodologically that the early Christian writers transmit only a fraction of the possibly rich traditions of women's contributions to the early Christian movement'(1983: 52). This assumption leads her to posit the context rather than the canon as the source of revelation, and rather than creating an essentialist neo-orthodox canon within the canon, she calls for a 'unifying vision' of the whole. Dissatisfied with the limitations of the metonymic methods of both 'malestream' and feminist biblical interpretation, Schüssler Fiorenza proposes a synecdochic reconfiguration in which both text and community are dynamically related in a developing tradition of ongoing revelation. In other words, while it is a common analytical move to contract the historical field by the metonymical selection of parts, Schüssler Fiorenza rejects this method and constitutes the field synecdochically as an organic whole into which the parts are fitted. She criticizes form- and redaction-critical analysis which inserts Christianity into its background, preferring social scientific models of 'dynamic interaction' between Christianity and its context.[32] The language of her description parallels the language used by Gordon Leff to describe historiography: 'historical objectivity consists…in the dynamic interrelation between the information gleaned from the sources and the unifying vision of the interpreter'.[33] Historians must 'go beyond the events' by creating 'a theoretical frame of reference and must construct a model that is at once a comparative and an ideal construct'. With a nod to Collingwood, Schüssler Fiorenza notes that all historical thinking is inferential (1983: xvii); it must take place within a heuristic framework, which for her is 'women's active participation in early Christian beginnings' (1983: 70). This is the ideal whole which she seeks to construct from the fragments of androcentric historical sources, filling in imaginatively the connections and the details which are missing so that a coherent picture emerges. Her study of early Christian history, then, is a methodological prototype, and her work is intended both as a model for and a contribution to a critically engaged rewriting of the past from a feminist perspective.

Central to Schüssler Fiorenza's unifying vision of Jesus and the 'community of equals' that gathered around him is the 'tensive symbol' *basileia;* citing Perrin, she argues that this is the 'central perspective and "vision" of Jesus' and that he and his movement 'shared this symbol, and the whole range of expectations evoked by it, with all the other groups in Palestine'

32. Not that sociological models are 'objective' tools; see Tolbert 1993; MacDonald 1996.

33. Leff 1971; cf. Schüssler Fiorenza 1985a: 49. Schüssler Fiorenza defines objectivity in historical judgments as 'intersubjectively understandable and intersubjectively verifiable' (1985: 53). Cf. Bird 1997: 127-28.

(1983: 111).[34] The expectations ranged from the imminent restoration of the Davidic kingdom to a cosmic transformation, and perhaps both at the same time. What they had in common was 'their concern for the political existence and holiness of the elected people of Israel' (1983: 113). But an understanding of the community as separate, called apart and defined by cultic purity laws is a metonymic image which Schüssler Fiorenza rejects. She argues that Jesus does not share the 'understanding that the "holiness" of Temple and Torah is the locus of God's power and presence' (1983: 120), although she stops short of saying that Jesus totally rejects the validity of Temple and Torah 'as symbols of Israel's election'; instead the Jesus movement 'offers an alternative interpretation of them by focusing on the people itself as the locus of God's power and presence' (1983: 120). The power of God is experienced as a present reality, and 'the Jesus movement integrated prophetic-apocalyptic and wisdom theology insofar as it fuses eschatological hope with the belief that the God of Israel is the creator of all human beings, even the maimed, the unclean, and the sinners' (1983: 120). The presence of God is 'experientially available' in the exorcisms, the healings, and the reversals, and is 'realized in Jesus' table community' with outcasts (1983: 121). The *basileia* 'is like dough that has been leavened, but not yet transformed into bread, like the fetus in the womb, but not yet transformed in birth to a child' (1983: 121), metaphors of growth and development with clear affinities for her organicist argument. The future can be experienced in the present, although 'Jesus still hopes and expects the future inbreaking of God's *basileia*' (1983: 121). In this way *basileia* is a 'tensive' symbol, holding together two moments in time.

Historical Jesus portraits typically assemble a collection of sayings and events which are arguably 'authentic', as Meier's work demonstrates. This collection of 'authentic' material provides 'evidence' for the historical argument, whether to classify Jesus in one way or another, or to show how events are causally related. Schüssler Fiorenza uses the criteria of authenticity in her earlier work, but comments in *Jesus* that third quest authors 'rightly… rejected the reductive criteria of authenticity formulated by the New Quest' (1995: 86). Her critical-rhetorical model for historical re-construction uses four 'touchstones' for determining the plausibility of its reconstructive proposals. These identify points of agreement on crucial historical information concerning Jesus, and these 'topoi' modify the use of the criteria of authenticity. First, 'Jesus was a Galilean Jew', and so should be seen 'as part of the

34. The source for this idea, according to Schüssler Fiorenza, is Exod. 19.6: 'Although Exod 19.6 is only very rarely quoted in the literature of the first century C.E., the common ethos or life praxis of Israel as the "kingdom of priests and holy nation" determined all groups of first-century Judaism' (1983: 110).

variegated Jewish piety of his time'; thus the criterion of dissimilarity 'should give way to one of contextuality'. Second, 'Jesus is historically distinct from his followers and from most of his Jewish compatriots because of his execution' by the Romans; 'texts which displace this conflict with Rome onto fellow Jews must have been articulated after Jesus' violent death'. This criterion 'modifies the criterion of multiple attestation'. Third, Jesus preached a 'sociopolitical rather than individualistic-spiritual' message of the kingdom; 'Jesus' hearers could not but think of the Roman empire when they heard the phrase'. As a result, 'texts and sources must…be read and adjudicated in terms of this religious-political vision of God's alternative world'. And finally, 'Jesus, like other Jewish prophets, gathered around him…the marginal in his society. Hence, the criterion of dissimilarity should be replaced with that of inclusivity and equality' (1997: 356-57). In this proposal, since the criterion of dissimilarity is replaced by the criteria of contextuality and inclusivity, it is difficult to identify data which can be used for a formist argument. The criteria Schüssler Fiorenza proposes, on the other hand, enable an ironic troping and contextual argument; they are likely to appeal most strongly to J.D. Crossan, among the critics considered here. The touchstones are least congenial to Wright, who has built a formist argument; his portrait requires data which enable him to distinguish Jesus from others in the historical field, and hence the criterion of dissimilarity is useful to him. Meier uses contextualization in his synchronic picture of Jesus, particularly to explore by analogy the period of his life about which the texts are silent. Because Schüssler Fiorenza is also interested in exploring what the texts do not say, and because she does not wish to sketch a heroic Jesus, contextuality is important to her, but neither Wright nor Meier, as we have seen, would agree wholeheartedly with her third touchstone, and Wright further disagrees about the Roman involvement in Jesus' execution.

Categorizing Jesus in terms of first-century types is not part of Schüssler Fiorenza's project and is foreign to her way of seeing the field. Moreover she eschews the effort to categorize Jesus on methodological grounds, as we have seen: she does not wish to reify a male hero in the center of her account. Because Jesus as an individual is not her primary focus, historical-critical tools designed to distinguish 'authentic' sayings material are used sparingly; instead Schüssler Fiorenza works with sociological models, particularly those of Elise Boulding, Susan Moller Okin and Marilyn B. Arthur, to understand the roles available to women and men in the Jesus movement (1984: 84-92). She prefigures the field synecdochically and creates an organicist synthesis of the whole of which Jesus is a part. Since she does not seek 'to distill the "historical Jesus" from the remembering interpretations of his first followers' (1983: 103), she does not attempt to argue for the authenticity of this vision on the basis of detailed exegesis. So, while she identifies what she considers

to be the earliest sources,[35] she intends to read her sources in terms of her 'unifying vision', for which she distinguishes a 'key integrative symbol', that is, 'the *basileia* of God' (1983: 103). The vision of wholeness that characterizes the symbol 'comes to the fore especially in those *basileia* sayings that are considered most "authentic": the beatitudes and eschatological reversal sayings, the table community of Jesus with tax collectors and sinners, Jesus' "breaking of the sabbath law," and his authoritative reinterpretation of the Torah in the antitheses' (1983: 121). But she nonetheless finds it necessary to posit 'authentic' material as a basis for her unifying vision, which she will then use to explain Jesus' death and the rise of the early Church. In order to do this, she too argues, in *In Memory of Her*, on the basis of the traditional criteria of authenticity.

For example, and to take only one, critics are divided on the question of authenticity concerning the beatitudes. Bultmann had argued for their authenticity on the basis of Jesus' distinctive eschatology: by dissimilarity to the Jewish milieu, the beatitudes could be considered authentic. Others, particularly Käsemann, Perrin, and Schulz, argue that the eschatology of the beatitudes is indistinguishable from the eschatology of the early Church. Schüssler Fiorenza, on the other hand, uses dissimilarity precisely to distinguish the Jesus movement from the early Church, which represents for her a movement away from the vision of the kingdom typical of Jesus and his movement. She then relies on the Palestinian context to provide a further test: 'The reconstruction of the Jesus movement as the discipleship of equals is historically plausible only insofar as such critical elements are thinkable within the context of Jewish life and faith' (1983: 107). What is 'thinkable' is what is coherent, but in the last resort, not coherent with the rest of the material or what we know of 'Jewish life and faith', but coherent with her unifying vision of the kingdom. As a result, in only this case, Schüssler Fiorenza uses material which others have argued is authentic on the basis of dissimilarity from the Jewish milieu to argue the case for its authenticity on the basis of

35. She identifies Q, pre-Q, pre-Mark, SL, SM, and the earliest strata of John as her primary sources, as well as the 'proclamation in pre-Pauline, Pauline, and post-Pauline writings'. What exactly constituted these sources is not clarified, and one is left with the impression that if Schüssler Fiorenza has used a text we are to assume it is part of the earliest material. This is a nod to traditional historical critical scholarship; but her own method, as we have seen, is not to reduce the gospels to their historical essence but to create a heuristic framework which is greater in scope than the gospels. This framework gives her a point in common with Wright, although he uses a very different kind of hypothesis and explicitly rejects the use of models. Nevertheless she is careful to calm jittery traditional scholars who might suspect her of historical critical heresy: the sources she has identified 'provide the paradigmatic informational and interpretational framework in which all later remembrance, discussion, appropriation, and redaction of Jesus moves and must move' (1983: 103).

coherence with that milieu; moreover she uses material that is used to argue the case for Jesus' apocalyptic eschatology to support her description of the reality of the conditions which obtained historically in the Jesus movement. While she may well be correct, she does not enter into the discussion on this level with other scholars. Not surprisingly, considering her organicist argument, her primary criterion is coherence, defined in a literary sense. Authentic material is that which can believably be included in her synthetic view of the *basileia*.

More recently, she explores in further detail the problems of criteria, distancing herself from the criterion of dissimilarity and then looking at work which uses 'plausibility' instead. In this case, the portrait of Jesus which emerges is that of 'a devout Jewish man who did not question the dominant structures of his society but fully subscribed to them'. Thus to the extent that Jesus is integrated into his context, using the criterion of plausibility instead of dissimilarity, 'within a kyriarchal frame of reference, one cannot but reconstitute Jesus' Jewishness in terms of the dominant patriarchal ethos of the first century' (2000b: 13). So for her reconstructive project, she suggests 'that the reductionist criterion of dissimilarity…and the conservative criterion of plausibility be replaced with the criterion of "possibility"'. In this model, what is possible historically 'must be adjudicated in terms of an emancipatory reconstructive model of early Christian beginnings and how it utilizes its source-information and materials'. This change enables an understanding of the Jesus tradition and early Christian beginnings as shaped by the agency and leadership of wo/men (2000b: 22). What characterizes the Jesus movement is its *basileia* vision of justice and well-being; those data which provide evidence for its historicity under the criteria of contextuality and inclusivity are used, and where the data do not seem to provide evidence, the 'criterion of possibility' works to broaden the evidential base. This is a necessary move for Schüssler Fiorenza because, as we have seen, she believes that the texts otherwise will not enable a reading against the grain of the dominant patriarchal ethos. That is certainly the case for Meier's and Wright's portraits; it remains to be seen whether Crossan's method provides an alternative.

Thus as we have seen, Schüssler Fiorenza's views of the historical process from a feminist perspective are troped synecdochically, and she is critical of the metonymic vision of traditional scholarship. Her preferences are signalled in her use of the vocabulary of integration, wholeness, inclusion, coherence, and the like, and in the type of argument she uses, an organicist synthesis which is coherent with a unifying vision. The usual tools of historical Jesus scholarship are molded to her specific needs, and she emphasizes coherence with her unifying vision as the primary criterion. Of the historical data she might have used, what count as 'facts' are those data which can help her build this meaning. And the comic plot, which is the structure of inclusivity

and the creation of new community where human persons can flourish, underlies and reinforces this view.

In the ternary movement of comedy as Hayden White describes it, a situation of order is disrupted by conflict involving a new vision, which is then resolved in a new social order. Within the historical context of Schüssler Fiorenza's life of Jesus, the pre-existent social order is characterized politically in terms of the Roman Empire and theologically in terms of Torah and Temple. With Jesus came a new vision of society as the kingdom of God and the establishment of a movement that grew into a new social order, at least in embryonic form. Within the larger historical context, the early Church struggled to impose one version or another of its vision, creating a situation of conflict which still continues today. A 'paradigm shift' is needed to bring about the cosmic comic resolution, when the *basileia* of God envisioned by Jesus will be fully realized; for the present, the new society remains in embryonic form in the *ekklēsia* of wo/men. Thus the entire movement of the history she constructs is directed toward a future comic resolution. Unlike the view which believes in the possibility of progress, Schüssler Fiorenza recognizes a need for complete reform of present social structures, not by revolutionary means, but by a change in consciousness which will enable the creation of a new society based on new values. This kingdom, the *basileia* which was and is to come, can be glimpsed in the present in the structures of the *ekklēsia* of wo/men. The kingdom of God which was partially realized in Jesus' actions remains to be realized in our own communities, where the liturgy might give expression to the memory of that first community and the visionary ecstatic experiences of the women at the tomb. The struggle is part of the process, and maintaining a comic framework allows an optimistic mood to prevail; in theological terms, there is hope for the realization of God's kingdom. Thus the conflicts which arise and the partial solutions are a part of a greater whole toward which the movement of history tends.

For Schüssler Fiorenza this new order is within the capacity of humanity to attain, and it serves as a theological and ethical ideal. The 'critical feminist theology of liberation' which she has been elaborating 'aims to change entirely structures of alienation, exploitation, and exclusion…' (1995: 13). Plotting her historical narrative as comedy provides an optimistic view of the future toward which in her judgment we must strive.

Chapter 6

Programmed Performance: John Dominic Crossan's Jesus

John Dominic Crossan's *The Historical Jesus* opens with an Overture, as befits 'a score to be played and a program to be enacted' (1991b: xiii). It begins with a narrative, starting where Albert Schweitzer stopped: 'He comes as one unknown into a hamlet of Lower Galilee' (1991b: xi). The story is a parable, a condensation of many events in the life of this peasant exorcist who here comes into a village and heals a demented woman, accepts the hospitality she offers, and then is gone, leaving at least some of the villagers with a glimpse of new hope for a better world. The hero of the parable disappears through the dusty countryside, but the story remains as a memory and a challenge, even after his death. This is Crossan's view of the practice of Jesus, and the Overture ends with a sayings gospel, 'a reconstructed inventory' of what he might actually have said. Lists are typical of early Christian writing, according to Crossan (1998: 241), and the earliest gospels used just such a collection, which Crossan calls the Common Sayings Tradition (1998: 255). The challenge, now as then, is to act on those words, and so continue the kingdom which he brought, not as just a memory but as a way of life.

The list of sayings which can be attributed to the historical Jesus, like the list of actions provided in E.P. Sanders's *Jesus and Judaism* (1985: 11), bears the same relation to historical Jesus narratives as the annal form does to historical narrative generally. Hayden White comments that annals reflect historians' desire to put the past in some kind of order, temporal being readily available, in which 'truth' is assumed to inhere in the extrinsic aspects of events (1973: 59-60). Such inventories may appear to be free of the subjectivity that marks narrative accounts, although White is careful to show that they are not. Sanders remarks that his list is 'more or less in chronological order' (1985: 11); Crossan's inventory is not, although probably some logical arrangement could be found for the sayings he lists. White notes that 'in the end, [annalists] were able to provide only the materials out of which a true history might be written, not true histories themselves' (1973: 60). As the work of Crossan and Sanders shows, while the annalistic form of history seems to promise more objectivity, it is clearly felt by historians to be inadequate to their conception of the historiographical task. To explain what

happened in the past and why, another form is necessary. Crossan's inventory is not yet even a score to be played; it is the collection of musical themes which will become a score. His own historical narrative is one possibility of how the score might be assembled, and he invites his readers to create their own by actualizing the themes in the events of their own lives: 'This book is an account of [the] inaugural orchestration and initial performance. In the end, as in the beginning, now as then, there is only the performance'(1991b: xxvi).

But if that is the case, and there is only the performance, improvizations seem inevitable, even welcome. This orchestration ironically undercuts its own authority, its own claims to truth, in a postmodernist mode which recognizes and applauds the polyvalence of texts. It is questionable whether Crossan's 'inaugural orchestration', which might be seen as a fictionalized history with a massive critical apparatus, ultimately revels in postmodern multiplicity of meaning. Crossan is convinced that his interpretation is more firmly grounded in 'what actually happened' than are some other competing readings, a modernist claim which necessitates the long and detailed sociological, historical, and literary argument which supports his summary parable. In the postmodernist mode 'the field of historiography would appear to be rich and creative precisely in the degree to which it generated many different possible accounts of the same set of events and many different ways of figuring their multiple meanings' (White 1973: 276). But even Crossan, the most playful of the contemporary historical Jesus scholars, wants to limit the context for this work in a way that makes it possible to make truth claims. Indeed, although he eschews the vocabulary of quests, 'which seem to indicate a positivistic process in which we are going to attain an answer once and for all forever' (1998: 44), his definition of history attempts to adjudicate between postmodernist relativism and modernist proof: *'History is the past reconstructed interactively by the present through argued evidence in public discourse'*. While anything might be possible, in this case, a historical reading is one which corresponds to what is arguably true about past reality. It is method, 'the due process of history', which provides the evidence and enables the scholarly conversation to take place (1998: 20, italics his; see also 1999: 2-3).[1]

1. Crossan likens his 'interactivism' to Wright's 'critical realism'(1998: 44), although a careful comparison calls the similarity of their methods into question. Crossan has been criticized by Wright for presenting a thoroughly modernist portrait in postmodern dress, although Crossan would argue that there is nothing particularly modernist in attempting to improve the critical handling of data, and nothing particularly postmodernist about the differences in interpretation that result (personal correspondence, 6 April 2000).

1. *Fictional History and Historical Fiction*

Although historians may know what Jesus said and did with some degree of certainty, Crossan agrees that the chronology of Jesus' life is historically impossible to determine, with the exception of the baptism by John, which belongs near the beginning, and the death and Easter stories, which belong near the end. The Overture, as we have seen, provides a synthesis of Crossan's research in a consciously fictional character sketch, which is then developed in the historical analysis that comprises the rest of the book. The opening begins with Jesus' baptism by John (1991b: xi), historically 'one of the surest things we know about them both' (1991b: 234). John's practice of baptism, sending those thus purified back into the Promised Land to wait for the imminent coming of God, formed 'a giant system of sanctified individuals, a huge web of apocalyptic expectation, a network of ticking time bombs all over the Jewish homeland' (1994a: 43). Crossan argues that initially Jesus accepted John's apocalyptic expectations, but the 'greater than John' sayings in *Thomas*, which are 'as old as anything' we have, indicate that at some point Jesus changed his mind (1991b: 237; cf. 1994a: 47-48). Their differing perspectives are attested in the tradition, both in what Crossan calls the 'Fasting and Wedding' complex[2] and in the 'Wisdom Justified' complex[3] (1991b: 259-60). He suggests that a 'tentative hypothesis' for the break between the two men is that Jesus rejected John's apocalyptic vision and his asceticism. 'Some time after the execution of John' by Herod Antipas (1991b: 259), when 'there was no apocalyptic consummation', Jesus 'began to speak of God not as imminent apocalypse but as present healing'(1991b: xii). But an emphasis on the presence of God here and now rather than coming in some unknown future is still an eschatological vision. Crossan warns that 'it would be incorrect to presume that, in my terminology, a sapiential Kingdom of God was any less world-negating than an apocalyptic one' (1994a: 56). Crossan does not appeal to the tradition of the canonical prophets who called for repentance and obedience, but rather grounds his Jesus in the northern Israelite prophetic tradition, 'an ancient magical prophecy as present in Elijah and Elisha, and one which was certainly wholly transcended by the canonical

2. 106 *Fasting and Wedding* [1/ 2], which includes *Gospel of Thomas* 104 and Mark 2.18-20.

3. 144 *Wisdom Justified* [1/1]: *Sayings Gospel Q,* 2Q: Lk. 7.31-35//Mt. 11.16-19. Although the texts provide only single attestation, because the theme is doubly attested in the two complexes, Crossan argues that they cannot be ignored. Jesus and John are thus both seen as children of Sophia (following Kloppenborg 1987), although Jesus was not an apocalyptic ascetic (1991: 260). This saying is essential to Schüssler Fiorenza's argument as well; see 1983: 132, where it serves to identify Jesus with Sophia; and both Meier and Wright discuss it.

prophets' (1991b: 138-41). John followed in the Great Tradition, and if Crossan is correct in his contention that Jesus rejected John's message of imminent judgment, it is not surprising that he looks for evidence of a different prophetic tradition.

The Israelite tradition might have provided Crossan with historical support for the idea of an egalitarian community as well. He uses James Scott's cross-cultural study of peasant resistance to argue that such an idea of egalitarianism is not anachronistic, but instead stems from peasant society (1991: 263). In Scott's terms,

> It nearly always implies a society of brotherhood in which there will be no rich and poor, in which no distinctions of rank and status (save those between believers and non-believers) will exist. Where religious institutions are experienced as justifying inequities, the abolition of rank and status may well include the elimination of religious hierarchy in favor of communities of equal believers. Property is typically, though not always, to be held in common and shared. All unjust claims to taxes, rents, and tribute are to be nullified (1976: 225-26).

Scott's analysis is echoed on another level in Norman K. Gottwald's massive sociological study *The Tribes of Yahweh,* which explores the Yahwism of the heroic age in Israel as the concrete expression of radical social equality:

> 'Yahweh' is the historically concretized, primordial power to establish and sustain social equality in the face of counter-oppression from without and against provincial and nonegalitarian tendencies from within the society. 'The Chosen People' is the distinctive self-consciousness of a society of equals created in the intertribal order and demarcated from a primarily centralized and stratified surrounding world…. 'Eschatology', or hope for the future, is sustained commitment of fellow tribesmen to a society of equals with the confidence and determination that this way of life can prevail against great environmental odds (1979: 692).

Here there are clear biblical parallels to Crossan's view of the Jesus movement.[4] Whatever Crossan's reasons (or, for that matter, Schüssler Fiorenza's) for ignoring Gottwald's work, this description of a 'society of equals' in a 'nonegalitarian', 'centralized' and 'stratified' social order might well have provided further historical grounding for their visions of Jesus, his community and his message of a present kingdom.

4. Both in Scott and in Gottwald, the language seems to limit the egalitarian vision to matters of male status: Scott refers to 'a society of brotherhood', and Gottwald to 'fellow tribesmen' in a context which clearly must include women. But were the women in either case part of the egalitarian structures? Schüssler Fiorenza would argue that they were; Crossan does not comment. Both books were published before gender was widely accepted as an analytical category, which may account for the exclusive language.

Crossan uses the model of women in peasant society in the initial stages of commercialization developed by Susan Carol Rogers, who argues: 'As industrialization takes over the countryside, peasant men lose control of their resources, or these are devalued by the group as a whole, with a subsequent rise in the relative value of women's resources, and a power imbalance favoring women'(1978: 158-59). Crossan concludes, 'If Rogers's analysis is correct, the initial stages of colonial commercialization in Lower Galilee, for example, would have left peasant women in a temporarily better position than peasant men'(1998: 165). This devaluation of male status and the corresponding improvement in female status, which Crossan argues is typical of the society in which the Jesus movement flourished, lends support to the idea of gender egalitarianism, at least in the short term. The power imbalance in favor of women disappears, according to Rogers, as 'male control resurfaces, with new resources, most notably those relating to integration in a larger group' (1978: 159).

In view of the importance for Crossan of the idea of egalitarianism, it is surprising that women, either past or present, figure so infrequently in his pages. In a conference at DePaul University exploring Crossan's work,[5] Catherine Keller points out that Crossan's work intersects with that of Schüssler Fiorenza, 'especially concerning the criteria of inclusive, communal and commensal mutuality'. Nevertheless, in *The Historical Jesus* there is 'virtually no dialogue with feminist sources, … [although] 'the text overflows with quotations' (1994: 75). This is not exceptional among historical Jesus studies, as we have seen: neither Meier nor Wright use feminist sources or feminist approaches in their work.[6] Schüssler Fiorenza has often been vocal about this 'neglect of feminist work' (2000a: 26, 31-34). Crossan denies that his practice is 'neglect'; he then goes on to complain that there is little feminist work exploring his area of interest: 'But there is a special problem with "feminist sources" on the historical Jesus. Where are they? Why are so few women interested in that area of research?' (1994b: 151). It is indeed the case that female feminist biblical scholars working on historical Jesus reconstructions are few and far between; that is abundantly clear to anyone researching

5. 'Jesus and Faith: Theologians in Conversation with the Work of John Dominic Crossan'; the proceedings have been published in Carlson and Ludwig 1994.

6. Crossan makes only a passing reference to the title *In Memory of Her* in his first volume (1991b: 416), although he argues briefly with her use of the term 'discipleship of equals' in his later work (1998: 337). Meier refers to her other writing, but only includes any detail in a note referring to her work on magic and miracle (1994: 565). Wright includes only a reference in a long bibliographical footnote (1996: 84). Crossan and Wright (but not Meier) take some notice of Paula Fredriksen's work, particularly in Wright's case to notice that she follows E.P. Sanders in several respects with which he disagrees.

the contemporary quest. But it is worth wondering why Schüssler Fiorenza's historical writing is not widely acknowledged; despite the fact that *In Memory of Her* preceded all the major volumes of their work, Meier, Wright, and Crossan make almost no reference to her. More importantly, in view of the importance of methodological reflections in all these works, there is no evidence that any of the 'malestream' scholars has engaged with feminist thinking. In Crossan's case, Schüssler Fiorenza believes this is so because feminist work on the historical Jesus 'has not adopted [his] method and reconstructive framework' (1997: 348). While she does not use Crossan's method of stratification, she has not entirely rejected historical-critical methods, as we have seen, but her presuppositions about history, which underlie the troping and plotting of her narrative of Jesus, are certainly different from his. There are, nevertheless, a number of connections between them.

Like Schüssler Fiorenza's *ekklēsia*, Crossan's community is inclusive and egalitarian, although it would be anachronistic to understand gender equality in contemporary terms. Turning to the evidence in the biblical tradition, Crossan finds ambiguity in the earlier texts. Although there may have been gender equality in the Jesus movement, by the time of Paul, there had been change. Despite texts like Gal. 3.27-28, Crossan is convinced that Paul's experience of unveiled women (who were therefore 'acting like men') and ecstatic prayer at Corinth 'badly unnerved' his sense of gender equality in Christianity. His position, however, remained ambiguous, unlike the later deutero-Pauline tradition which established 'strict inequality of women and men within Christianity'. A second and more serious ambiguity lurks behind the concept of the original androgyne, who 'was imagined as an original archetypal male': in order to achieve equality, women had to 'become men' (1991b: 297). Nevertheless, in Crossan's view, although the complex 'does not stem from the historical Jesus', it is 'an interpretation of something that does':

> Jesus' Kingdom of nobodies and undesirables in the here and now of this world was surely a radically egalitarian one, and, as such, it rendered sexual and social, political and religious distinctions completely irrelevant and anachronistic. Different Christian groups could and did focus that radical egalitarianism on this or that distinction, for example, the Corinthians on sex and gender, or Paul on religion and freedom. Usually and eventually such a single focus betrayed egalitarianism even in that one limited area. But radical lack of social differentiation remained as a permanent challenge to all other specifications, interpretations, and actualizations of the Kingdom proclaimed by Jesus (1991b: 298).

Such an egalitarian vision underpins the sayings about the family, which attack the 'normalcy of familial hierarchy'. These sayings, which Crossan argues are authentic, give contingent support to the notion of equality. In this case, 'Jesus will tear the hierarchical or patriarchal family in two along the

axis of domination and subordination', a division that 'cuts across sex and gender' (1991b: 300).

An egalitarian community where the kingdom of God could be actualized in the lives of believers is the eschatological vision of Crossan's Jesus. Crossan understands eschatology as 'world negation', that is to say, a world view that is 'radical, countercultural, utopian, or this-world negating' (1998: 259-60); its mandate is 'divine, transcendental, supernatural' and 'depending on *why* one announces that radical and cosmic *no* and *how* one intends to live out that *no* in a fundamentally negated world, there are various types and modes of the eschatological challenge'(1998: 260).[7] As we have seen, Bruce Malina's analysis of time suggests that for the present-oriented people of Jesus' time the present included the antecedent past and the forthcoming future, organically linked in what he calls 'an operational realm abutting the horizon of the present'; after Jesus' death, however, the antecedent and forthcoming moved into imaginary time, accessible only by prophetic vision (1996: 208). Thus, if he is correct, the materials preserved in the Common Sayings Tradition were marked by a present orientation which developed by the time of the *Q Gospel* and *Thomas* into the eschatological vision of time in the imaginary realm, whether past or future. Crossan argues that eschatological world-negation can look in two directions, 'either backward or forward in time to locate that perfect otherworld alternative', and he continues, 'The *Q Gospel*, for example, could look forward to the end and imagine its perfect world through apocalyptic eschatology. But the *Gospel of Thomas* chose the opposite path: it went backward to a perfect beginning rather than forward to a perfect ending'. In Crossan's terms, the eschatological stance of the *Gospel of Thomas* is not apocalyptic, but is instead ascetical. Following Stephen J. Patterson's analysis of the materials common to both the *Q Gospel* and the *Gospel of Thomas*, Crossan comes to the same 'inevitable conclusion': '*the original Common Sayings Tradition contained neither Gnosticism nor apocalypticism but required redactional adaptation toward either or both of those eschatologies*' (1998: 266, italics his).

Distinguishing the two redactional tendencies in these texts enables Crossan to move backward to the unredacted Common Sayings Tradition, which provides a third type of eschatological thought. Echoing Gerd Theissen, Crossan terms this type 'ethical eschatology' (1998: 274). Rather than the apocalyptic

7. James H. Charlesworth, who might ordinarily disagree with much of what Crossan argues, takes a nuanced view on 'last things', commenting that 'Jesus' eschatology does not mean a preoccupation with the end of time. It does not mean a focus on what has not yet happened. As is clear in most of his parables, for Jesus, eschatology means a focus and emphasis on the present, because the time is ripe for spiritual discernment and moral responsibility. The present is the time to open eyes and see those who have been marginalized or castigated as inferior, unworthy, or impure' (2008: 99).

stance which posits a violent God who will take action to destroy evil in the world, or the ascetical stance which counsels withdrawal from the world in the name of a greater good, ethical eschatology 'negates the world by actively protesting and nonviolently resisting a system judged to be evil, unjust, and violent… It looks at the systemic or structural evil that surrounds and envelops us all and, in the name of God, refuses to cooperate or participate any longer in that process'. Here it is humans who act, not God: 'in ethicism, as distinct from apocalypticism, God is not a violent God' (1998: 284).[8] In the historical and cultural contexts in which the Jesus movement flourished, the destitute and dispossessed who formed the core of Jesus' network of followers participated in nonviolent resistance to the social realities of their lives.[9] It is in this eschatological context that the 'meal and magic' of Jesus' practice should be understood.

The center of the book is the thirteenth chapter on 'Magic and Meal'. In Crossan's view, the banquet is at the center of the story, the sign that the kingdom is being formed: 'commensality is the very center of the original Christian community, which was inaugurated by Jesus himself' (1998: 35).[10] It is the banquet especially, the shared meal where Jesus is known and recognized, which provides the link between Jesus and the early Church for Crossan. The implications of Jesus' practice of 'open commensality' were deeply subversive, in Crossan's view.[11] The open table was not an act of benefaction, as it would have been had he invited only outcasts; rather he invited 'anyone', negating the social function of the table. Crossan's Jesus does not make appropriate distinctions, which gives offense (1991b: 261-63). This egalitarian attitude challenged the social hierarchy.

Jesus traveled from village to village exorcising and healing, sharing meals with those whom he healed, and speaking of the kingdom of God as experienced in the healing and the sharing (1991b: xii). While Crossan believes that

8. These categories help to clarify the terminological confusion in the discipline. See Borg 1994a: 9. Crossan (1973), agreeing with Perrin (1967), argued early on that 'eschatology' was not to be understood as referring to the end of the physical universe, the last judgment and the end of human history.

9. Cf. Yoder 1972.

10. As we have seen, in N.T. Wright's vision of Jesus bringing prodigal Israel back from exile, the banquet is being prepared at the end of the story, and the readers, like the elder brother, remain outside, their place in the festivities left uncertain.

11. He bases his argument on at least nine complexes which treat different aspects of the issues. See 1991b: 262-64. From a different perspective, Horsley argues that 'Jesus, while announcing that God was taking the initiative (the kingdom of God was at hand), emphasized that the kingdom was a matter of people renewing their social relations in accordance with the will and in response to the enabling presence of God' (1997 [1986]: 146).

some of the exorcisms and the healings, particularly the stories of the leper[12] and the lame paralytic,[13] are based on historical events, he argues that they are metaphorical condensations of many experiences over time. 'No single healing or exorcism is securely or fully historical in its present narrative form, although historical kernels may be discernible in a few instances', he claims (1998: 302; cf. 1991b: 332).[14] He does not argue for an understanding of Jesus' healing as miraculous cures of disease. But knowing what Jesus was doing is a central problem for him. Crossan understands the successful healing activity of the early Jesus movement in light of medical anthropology's distinction between disease and illness (1991b: 336-37; cf. 1998: 294). 'Was he curing disease through an intervention in the physical world, or was he healing the illness through an intervention in the social world?', he asks. Concerning the leper, he continues, 'I presume that Jesus, who did not and could not cure [leprosy] or any other [disease], healed the poor man's illness by refusing to accept the disease's ritual uncleanness and social ostracization' (1994a: 82).

Miracles, for Crossan, are historical occurrences implying changes in the social, not the physical, world. Importantly, he distinguishes between a 'marvel', 'a fact open to public discourse…, something that is assessed as neither trickery nor normalcy', and 'miracle', a marvel interpreted theologically as the action or manifestation of God (1998: 304). To claim that an event is a marvel is open to historical debate, while to claim that the event is a miracle is to make a faith statement. For Crossan, then, 'marvels' have a place in historical narrative. This is a very different solution to the problem of miracles from that of John P. Meier.

Like John the Baptist, who formed a network of apocalyptic expectation, Jesus formed a network of shared healing. As people experienced healing, they were sent out two by two as 'healed healers'. Since both men and women participated in this ministry, this way provided safety for female followers, who were paired as 'sister-wives' with men, a practice that Crossan feels 'might have been not only the best but the only way' to enable the women to do missionary work (1991b: 335). Like Schüssler Fiorenza, Crossan rejects the historicity of the Twelve. The Twelve, an image of the New Israel, was invented by the early Church: Crossan argues that it is 'impossible to imagine thirteen men traveling around together' in a culture which would have taken such a group for bandits. Moreover, the early tradition, including the *Q*

12. 110 *A Leper Cured* [1/2].

13. 127 *Sickness and Sin* [1/2].

14. Horsley (1997 [1986]: 147) argues that in doing such healings popular prophets, including Jesus, 'were not symbolizing in present dramatic "demonstrations"…what God would finally carry out at some time in the future, but were caught up in the keen conviction that God was acting in the present and that they were participating in the divine action'.

Gospel and the *Gospel of Thomas*, and the Didache, knows no such tradition; if Jesus had established such a group, Crossan argues it would have been widely known (1994a: 108-109).

Thus the community of disciples grew, with missionary activity a constant both for Jesus and for his followers. Jesus himself refused to settle in any one place so that his lifestyle could be a radical statement of 'unbrokered egalitarianism'. Crossan imagines that some people traveled with Jesus, while some welcomed him in their homes, and others traveled without him. They traveled without money and sandals, in order not to show self-sufficiency like the Cynics;[15] they carried no bag for bread, and thus were dependent on those whom they healed for food. 'They share a miracle and a kingdom, and they receive in return a table and a house', Crossan summarizes. 'Here, I think, is the heart of the original Jesus movement, a shared egalitarianism of spiritual and material resources' (1991b: 341). Such sharing was necessarily 'atopic' so as not to become another hierarchal operation (1991b: 346).[16] The political message is clear, and Jesus experienced opposition. Since his practice included both 'ecstatic vision and social program', based on 'principles of religious and economic egalitarianism', and since it challenged both purity regulations and patriarchal structures and values, it put Jesus in conflict with those in power.[17] He was executed as a result. Those difficulties come to a

15. Burton L. Mack begins a reassessment of the 'Cynic-like Jesus' in an article written nearly a decade after *A Myth of Innocence* (1988) with this analogy: 'There is loose shale on the eastern slope of the Mission Mountains in Montana. A single step off the high ridge can start a slide that cannot be stopped for a thousand feet to the glacier lakes below. You need good boots and a bit of balance if you want to enjoy the ride. It is dangerous otherwise' (1997: 25). Mack distances Jesus both from apocalypticism and from Judaism; Jesus did not seek to reform or renew Judaism, nor did he have any sense of mission or purpose (Borg 1994b: 22-23). Crossan's Jewish Cynic Jesus is both like and unlike Hellenistic Cynic philosophers, and Crossan has modified his position since *The Historical Jesus* appeared (Crossan 1994b: 122). Borg summarizes: 'both Jesus and the Hellenistic Cynics taught and enacted a shattering of convention: both involved practice, not just theory; both involved a way of looking and dressing, eating, living, and relating. The primary difference between Hellenistic Cynic sages and Jesus is that they were urban, active in the marketplace, and individualistic; Jesus spoke to rural peasants and had a social vision' (1994b: 35). The similarities are superficial; it is the differences in setting and social vision that are important in understanding Jesus as a type of prophet-sage in first-century Mediterranean culture.

16. See Freyne 1997: 64.

17. Witherington's critical review of *The Historical Jesus* points out that 'what is notably absent in his discussion is a third M—the message. Indeed all four Gospels suggest that for Jesus the transforming message was primary. The miracles were in the main secondary acts performed along the way as acts of compassion, though they too revealed that the kingdom was breaking in…. To judge from Crossan, Jesus had little or nothing to say about the future of Israel, the law, the covenants, eternal life, resurrection, last judgment or salvation as more than just a social adjustment. In short, Jesus did not

climax in his trip to Jerusalem and the Temple incident. While the order of events leading up to his death is unclear, at some point Jesus confronted and 'symbolically destroyed' the brokerage function of the Temple. If, as the accounts in the synoptic gospels would have us believe, this action took place during the Passover feast, it would have been 'quite enough to entail crucifixion by religiopolitical agreement' (1991b: xii).

Thus Crossan places the Temple incident just before Jesus' execution chronologically, and he argues that the action 'involving the Temple's symbolic destruction' is authentic (1991b: 159); but he has 'no plural attestation *linking* the Temple's symbolic destruction and Jesus' execution' (1991b: 360). So while Jesus no doubt did something in the Temple that actualized his teaching, healing and open commensality, it is not certain that the sayings, whether in Mark or in John, are historical. Indeed, although Crossan argues that the earliest stratum preserves evidence going back to the historical Jesus, any references to the destruction of the Temple, the resurrection, or the parousia are 'later explanations of an action considered enigmatic to begin with' (1991b: 359). Jesus functions as an opponent to the social order represented by the Temple whether or not the word or event is deemed historical: 'he was its functional opponent, alternative, and substitute; his relationship with it does not depend, at its deepest level, on this or that saying, this or that action' (1991b: 355). Like John, Jesus had formed a 'discrete but united community'; also like John, the diffusion of the network made it possible to strike down only Jesus himself. When he leaves a village, he apparently goes alone, although some in the village 'ponder the possibility of catching up with Jesus before he gets too far' (1991b: xi). This is the only notice in the parable of disciples following Jesus, until the crucifixion, when they flee; the community of disciples, those who formed the early Christian movement, is seen as a loose network rather than a group of vagabonds traveling together. Despite Jesus' death, the empowered community continued its work (1991b: 43-44).

Indeed, the network of itinerant healers who continued Jesus' work and vision may not even have known about his execution. Crossan ends his historical account with the desertion of the disciples, who as a result knew nothing about the details of his death (1991b: 375). Jesus died under the gaze of soldiers whose task it was to prevent families and friends from coming to rescue the victims. After his death, according to Crossan, the soldiers probably buried the body, because 'ordinary families were probably too afraid or too powerless to get close to a crucified body even after death' (1991b: 392). Thus no one could have known where the body was, and elsewhere Crossan

address the issues that most deeply concerned many early Jews' (1995: 74). In contrast, Meier's second volume includes 'message' in its title, closely associated with 'mentor', arguing that John the Baptist's concerns paralleled those of Jesus. Wright, coming from a different angle, stands in total disagreement with Crossan on this point.

speculates that it was thrown into a shallow grave, where wild dogs tore it apart (1994a: 124).

While Jesus disappears entirely from the historical narrative at this point, the community of disciples, because of their continued experience of power, grew and multiplied. For Crossan, because the accounts of the passion and the resurrection were created in order to explain the experience of the community, Jesus' identity is revealed in his practice, not in his death and resurrection, and the followers continued to experience his power in their own practice. They are not in need of the transformation which an atonement view of the death of Jesus provides, because it is their experience which ties the historical Jesus to the post-Easter Jesus.

While in the opening parable Jesus appears after the resurrection, in a story within the story which provides a metaphoric explanation for the development of the new society (1991b: xiii), Crossan does not argue that the sources provide an accurate historical account of what happened after Jesus' death. The death of Jesus is not the end of the story, because the people who 'had originally experienced divine power through his vision and his example still continued to do so after his death', and Jesus' followers began to talk about their experience in terms of resurrection.[18] The community of disciples lived on after his death and continued his ministry of healing and shared meals, preaching the kingdom (1991b: xiii).

When the stories of the first disciples came to be told, they were 'the metaphoric condensation of the first years of Christian thought and practice into one parabolic afternoon. Emmaus never happened. Emmaus always happens' (1991b: iii). But if 'Emmaus always happens', Jesus' practice of free healing and common eating, 'calculated to force individuals into unmediated physical and spiritual contact with God and unmediated physical and spiritual contact with one another'(1991b: 422), implies a vision of 'the brokerless kingdom of God' which was present then and is present now, wherever and whenever the program is enacted.

2. *Plotting History*

Karl Marx famously opens *The Eighteenth Brumaire* with the comment, 'Hegel remarks somewhere that all facts and personages of great importance in world history occur, as it were, twice. He forgot to add: the first time as

18. That is to say, the bereaved community of disciples had visions of the dead Jesus; in the first century, Crossan argues, the dead existed and could reappear to the living. Indeed, visions are so common that the argument that the resurrection of Jesus is a sufficient cause to explain the continuation of his movement is invalid (1998: xxi). Psychological studies of grief show, even in the contemporary context, that the large majority of people either see or hear (or both) their lost loved ones (see Crossan 1998: xvii).

tragedy, the second as farce' (1959: 320). From Marx's perspective, the difference is the lack of noble aspiration that characterizes the events of genuine tragedy, and he understands farce as the ironic effect of victory in defeat. The French Revolution, in this case, was historically significant because of its failure (White 1973: 323). In a similar way, for Crossan, only by Jesus' death could the movement he started prevail; and only by the Church's systematic betrayal of the ideals of Jesus could it continue (1991b: 424). The irony of history is that the hero is eliminated from the narrative while the institutions which arose from his movement became and perhaps remain antithetical to his aims. It is possible, as we have seen in Meier's presentation, to understand the story of Jesus as a tragedy. Indeed, in the Western literary tradition the story of Jesus has become an archetype for tragedy; this is Frye's reading (1968: 220). But troped ironically, both comedy and tragedy can slip into farce; even epic is not immune, as the story of Don Quixote shows.

Kant saw three ways of conceiving the historical process, which correspond to comedy, tragedy and epic, and which are all equally fictive. According to White, they indicate 'the mind's capacity to impose different kinds of formal coherence on the historical process, and for Kant, they have moral implications. The decision to plot one way or another might have a bearing on the way one lived one's own history, conceived the present and looked at the future'(1973: 57). Thus knowledge of the past is never of purely antiquarian interest but is integrally related to the needs of the present. Later Hegel, objecting to epic plot structures (and the corresponding metaphorical troping and formist explanations) argued that epic was morally dangerous because the values it presupposes of unity and coherence are aesthetic, not moral, values. He nonetheless retained the categories of comedy and tragedy, although he did not define them in terms of plot structure, as I have here. Unlike epic, where change does not occur, in tragedy the intention of the protagonist is both enabled and thwarted by the world; the resolution of the action leads to transformation. Comedy, on the other hand, serves to review the effects of tragic action; its resolution leads to reconciliation (1973: 95). For Crossan, while the story of Jesus is tragic in Hegelian terms, the end of all history is comic: the new order, in the metaphor of the kingdom of God, is available to all, wherever and whenever we seek it.

Thus Crossan tropes his history ironically, but plots it on two levels: the story of Jesus and the story of the Christian community. In the larger story of the community which grew up around Jesus, and which continues in the present, there are formal elements which belong in the world of comedy. The continued empowerment of Jesus' disciples displaces the resurrection, which cannot be narrated historically,[19] and provides an explanation for the rise of

19. Although this argument allows Crossan to posit historical effects (the early Church) without known historical causes (although something must have happened), or at any rate,

the Christian Church, the new comic society which must eventually triumph, formally speaking. From a formal perspective, it also provides the point of comic resolution. Crossan is able to open his narrative up to a larger comic vision of history, one like Schüssler Fiorenza's in which a future social order of justice, equality, and freedom is the goal, and in which the dignity of all human persons is affirmed. Thus like Schüssler Fiorenza, who constructs her story of Jesus as an ironic comedy in order to reconstruct an egalitarian community in which contemporary Christian feminists can root both their faith and their political activity, Crossan also plots the story of the Christian community as comedy. Empowerment, not domination, will provide the comic resolution of history by creating here and now the new society which Jesus called the kingdom of God. The story of Jesus, on the other hand, ends with his death, and it remains a tragic farce embedded in a larger ironic comedy. In Schüssler Fiorenza's version of the story, Jesus as a hero increasingly merges with his community, until historically he disappears; in Crossan's account, he becomes increasingly irrelevant as a historical character and it is the dispersed network of disciples who provide the link between Jesus himself and the Church.

In Crossan's telling the development of the plot focuses on the activities of Jesus and the community that formed around him.[20] In the opening parable, Jesus appears to act alone, sharing his vision and his program with the people in the villages of Galilee and then moving on. Jesus' kingdom of nobodies is the new, free, comic society created through his practice. In Schüssler Fiorenza's narrative, a twist in the plot at the end, in which Jesus' identity is revealed, allows the new comic society to form. In Crossan's story, there is no twist at the end; rather the new society begins to form from the time when Jesus breaks with John and begins his own ministry. Crossan's plot gives Jesus a social vision which conflicts with the religio-political realities of his day, and historically speaking, Jesus is defeated, although his community survives and eventually flourishes. He himself is an ironic hero in a narrative plotted as farce, a series of events which might have happened otherwise, ending in the death of the hero. The resulting effect is deeply ironic, similar

with causes other than those (the Resurrection, resurrection appearances, Pentecost) provided by the biblical tradition. Crossan argues that Christianity is the result of a continuing relationship between Jesus and his followers despite his execution (1998: xxi).

20. Books begin, of course, with their covers. Crossan comments that since 'the first law of postmodernism is the ascendancy of the image' it too should be read and interpreted. His intention was to create a 'video-bite that summed up what I had to say about Jesus in a single picture'. While he doubts its historicity, 'the image included Jesus "bringing life out of death" or "bringing the dead back to life" and doing it within a community which involved at least two women and two men'; so too the image on the latest book suggests a community of men and women united in receiving the body from the cross (personal correspondence, 6 April 2000).

to the sort of ironic comedy in which 'the demonic world is never far away', and 'the fear of a hideous death hangs over the central character to the end' when a potential tragedy is usually averted. Frye calls this moment 'the point of ritual death' (1968: 179), and in the historical narrative of Crossan, the hero does indeed die. Jesus remains the hero of a tragic farce, where one thing happens after another until he is finally executed. Jesus' crucifixion, which Crossan concedes as historical, had no effect on the kingdom he embodied, which is present in the shared meal.[21] But the comic society which develops around him, the network which Crossan imagines, does not disintegrate when he dies. It remains in place and continues to develop, so that the loss of Jesus as hero is less dramatically troubling, and there is room for optimism that one day Jesus' vision and program may prevail and finally triumph.

But here, just as Jesus does not function as a comic hero, from a literary perspective neither is he a tragic hero. Jesus comes into a village, as Crossan imagines the scene, and peasant villagers listen to him, at first from curiosity, then, after he performs an exorcism, with 'cupidity, fear, and embarrassment' (1991: xi), signs that while Jesus speaks of the kingdom of God, most of his audience is unreceptive. This is not irony that satirizes the hero, but rather irony that brings his 'all too human' characteristics to the fore (Frye 1968: 237). It is this that distinguishes tragic farce from tragedy, in which the heroic aspects of the character are developed; this form, according to Frye, 'looks at tragedy…from the moral and realistic perspective of the state of experience. It stresses the humanity of its heroes'. Thus Jesus is seen through the 'cold, hard eyes' of the villagers, looking something like a beggar, but without the cringe, whine, or shuffle (1991b: xi). Moreover, unlike tragedy, tragic farce stresses the 'social and psychological explanations for catastrophe' (Frye 1968: 237). What Jesus was doing was 'unacceptable' to the authorities, and they arranged to dispose of him with 'offhand brutality, anonymity, and indifference' (Crossan 1991b: xii). There is no sense here of time out of joint, no 'ineluctable dialectic' that characterizes a tragic fall (Frye 1968: 17). This ironic account leaves Jesus a 'nobody', not a tragic hero; his vision and his social program should have brought freedom to the peasants of rural Galilee, but even those who believed he could do exorcisms feared him instead of following him.

From the point of view of plot, Jesus created a new society by performing miracles and sharing with others, and in this he was 'an authoritative healing and purifying alternative to the Temple' (1991b: 322). In these acts, he was opposed by both the political authorities and by the religious establishment. Whatever the historical details, at this point the blocking characters begin to

21. As T.J.J. Altizer concludes, 'Not only is such a presence not a consequence of the crucifixion, it has nothing whatsoever to do with the crucifixion…' (1997: 43).

reassert control and the result is Jesus' execution. After Jesus' death, he returns, at least figuratively speaking, and the emphasis shifts. During his lifetime, Jesus is shown as an ironic hero, while after his death, his power and vision continue in the lives of his followers, who ironically do not know what happened to him; despite their ignorance, the community continues to grow and flourish until ultimately it triumphs over the blocking elements of both Jewish and Roman society. What Jesus himself could not do in life happened after his death, without any clear historical evidence of cause and effect.

As we have seen, even in ironic comedy, a female presence is felt to be necessary for the formation of the new society. In the more romantic phase of comedy which underlies Schüssler Fiorenza's work, a male–female couple is provided with the introduction of Sophia. In Crossan's account, this aspect is merely hinted at in his discussion of the servant leadership of Jesus. Arguing that the actions described in the Last Supper 'may well stem' from Jesus' own practice of open commensality, Crossan comments that two of the verbs, 'took' and 'blessed', refer to 'the actions of the master'; while the last two, 'broke' and 'gave', are the actions of a servant. More importantly, since Jesus' followers would have experienced being served by women rather than by slaves, 'Jesus took on himself the role not only of servant but of female. Jesus himself serves the meal, serves, like any housewife…' Crossan continues with the idea, drawn from Carolyn Walker Bynum,[22] that 'just as the female both serves food and becomes food, so Jesus would both have served food here below and would become food hereafter. But long before Jesus was host, he was hostess' (1991b: 404). That is, of course, a literary rather than a historical conclusion; nonetheless, for Crossan, Jesus is himself feminized by the narrative, and contains within himself the male and female elements around which the new society may develop.

3. *Philosophy of History*

From the perspective of historiography, Crossan can be understood to trope the historical field ironically and to plot the historical narrative of Jesus as farce. Taken together, these structures create a realistic effect, which even before the evidence is examined lends credibility to the final narrative. Unlike Wright, Crossan subordinates symbolism and allegory to the needs of realistic representation. As White points out in discussing the work of Burckhardt, 'This "realism"…was conceived to have two components: the apprehension of the historical field as a set of discrete events, no two of which are precisely alike; and the comprehension of it as a fabric of relationships (1973: 261). Thus the field is apprehended ironically and comprehended contextually.

22. Bynum1982; 1987.

History is 'invented', but 'what the historian "invents" are the formal relationships which obtain among the elements in the picture. These elements are related as event to context, rather than as microcosm to macrocosm…. This theory is contextualist, for it supposes that an explanation of historical events is provided when the various strands that make up the tapestry of a historical era are discriminated and the linkages among events, which make a "fabric" of the historical field, are displayed' (White 1973: 262).

The prefiguration of the data is the first step, and it produces, from the perspective of social scientific methodology, a mental image, a hypothesis in the form of a story, which guides the search through the materials available for the data which will form the evidence (Becker 1998). It is at this point that method takes center stage. How can evidence be constituted from the wealth of available data? Unlike more traditional biblical critics, Crossan draws on a remarkable range of materials, and he has developed a method for using social-anthropological and historical tools in conjunction with historical-critical tools of textual analysis.

In the Prologue Crossan explains the complex 'triple triadic process' he uses, 'a scientific stratigraphy' designed to order the historical field chronologically, so that the earliest data can be distinguished from the later. He views the field from three different heights, as it were: starting with the cross-cultural and cross-temporal models of social anthropology for the constants of Mediterranean culture,[23] descending to the more restricted field of first-century Greco-Roman history, and finally to the literary texts which provide the sources for information about Jesus. The three levels must work together to provide 'an effective synthesis' in which the information gleaned from history and models of anthropology corroborate the results of textual analysis.

In dealing with biblical texts, as we have seen, two general perspectives are possible. Either the material can be viewed as independent, in which case all witnesses have an equal claim to provide evidence, or some material can be seen as dependent on earlier material, and it is the earlier material which provides the most secure evidence for the historical portrait. Unlike Wright, Crossan is convinced that the textual material can be analyzed in terms of tradition history, and he has developed an elaborate system for 'sifting' the evidence, pushing historical critical method to the limits.[24] It is at this point

23. The 'Mediterranean world', as Schüssler Fiorenza points out, is a scholarly construct, not a scientific 'fact', despite the impression of scholarly objectivity given by the use of sociological models (1995: 80).

24. And, some would say, beyond; his work has been subjected to numerous critiques in this respect. The most virulent is probably that of Wright, 'Taking the Text with her Pleasure' (1993). Cf. Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Real Jesus* (1996); and Richard B. Hays (1994), who provides a less caustic assessment. Unlike them, my concern here is not to

that criteria of authenticity become important. A second triad of inventory, stratification, and attestation will allow him to determine the chronological sequence of the data and to rank them on the basis of independent attestation. Ideally, the earlier the data and the greater the number of independent sources for them the better, and so he limits himself methodologically to working with the earliest strata first, and avoids using data which are singly attested. With this method, Crossan hopes to approach 'formal objectivity', although he is aware that he may be eliminating important sources of information.[25] The method for establishing the historical data, then, is clearly delineated. Arguments may arise over the chronology Crossan suggests on the one hand, or concerning the validity of the method, in which case Crossan challenges scholars to provide an alternative (1991b: xxxiv).[26] It is at this point, having decided the basis on which data can be used as evidence, that Crossan can begin to construct his historical narrative.

From the methodological perspective, Crossan's three triads trope the field differently, unlike simpler methods of textual analysis relying on criteria of authenticity. On the 'micro' level of texts, where the goal of the analysis is to distinguish the part which can be designated 'historical' (rather than 'fictional', 'mythological', or 'theological'), the field is necessarily troped metonymically; the body of data yields its 'historical' component according to the workings of certain laws, in this case that of multiple attestation. On the

evaluate the decisions on which his evidence is based, but rather to analyze the structures of his historical narrative.

25. He recounts that when he started his work on the historical Jesus, he emphasized The Good Samaritan parable, classified now as a single attestation in the third stratum, like The Prodigal Son (1991b: 449). Although he judges that both The Prodigal Son and The Good Samaritan derive from Jesus, since they have only a single attestation, he avoids using them as a methodological safeguard. He stands by his interpretation of The Good Samaritan, but criticizes the method: 'if I can start there, somebody else can start anywhere else…' (1991b: xxxiii). As the Prodigal Son provides Wright with his point of entry, this methodological discussion remains unresolved.

26. Seán Freyne takes Crossan up on his invitation to replace the critical moves with which he disagrees with better ones (1997: 63-91). Rather than debating matters of detail, as Witherington does, for example, Freyne calls the method of stratification into question. If, as Crossan admits, his use of the sources causes him to omit important pieces of evidence, Freyne comments 'surely that is being methodologically correct to the point of distorting the picture from the outset by limiting the field of vision' (1997: 64). In the terms I have explored here, Freyne questions to what extent the prefiguration and plotting of the narrative have influenced the choice of data to be used as evidence. But the same question must be asked of all historians. For example, for Wright, as we have seen, the prefiguration and plot preclude the use of multiple attestation and stratification of data according to date. Cf. Kelber 1999, who comments, 'it is inadmissible to posit *as a matter of methodological principle* the iterative and adaptive behavior of tradition as a ground for historical authenticity' (1999: 110).

'meso' level, that of the historical context, the texts and artifacts which provide data are viewed with skepticism, and not surprisingly, careful analysis shows that they provide evidence which seems to be in direct contradiction to that which a 'naive' reading might suggest. The historical context which is then constructed from this evidence is troped ironically, and like the historical narrative it supports, it is marked by the effect of realism. On the 'macro' level, that of cross-cultural and cross-temporal social anthropology, on the other hand, the data is troped synecdochically, so that the models for analysis across the field can be seen as the macrocosm of which each part is a microcosm. The data which can be understood in terms of the model are retained as evidence. Thus the context for the historical Jesus narrative is constructed according to models which work for large numbers of people in societies through time. The synecdochal trope provides the 'logical' basis for understanding the data in this way. These three levels produce the evidence which Crossan uses to build his historical narrative, which in its turn, as we have seen, is troped ironically.

The ironic represents, in Frye's terms, 'the non-heroic residue of tragedy' (1968: 224). White comments that it represents 'the passage of the age of heroes and of the capacity to believe in heroism' (1973: 232): 'It tends to dispose the fruits of consciousness in aphorisms, apothegms, gnomic utterances which turn back upon themselves and dissolve their own apparent truth and adequacy. In the end, it conceives the world as trapped within a prison made of language…' (1973: 233). White's language suggests the Jesus of *In Fragments* (1983) or *Cliffs of Fall* (1980), a Jesus of parables; but it is also the Jesus of Crossan's Overture, this 'peasant nobody' executed on a Roman cross. If the story had ended there, it would have remained purely ironic. In White's terms, 'that is to say, "the point of it all" was that there is no "point" toward which things in general tend, no epiphanies of law, no ultimate reconciliation, no transcendence…' (1973: 252). But it did not end there.

In *The Historical Jesus* Crossan uses his evidence to construct a narrative which will explain Jesus' actions and words, his community, and his death; he also sketches the relationship between the historical Jesus and the movement which continued and grew after his death, a narrative which forms the body of a second volume, *The Birth of Christianity*. Like Schüssler Fiorenza, he uses the three levels of anthropology, history, and textual interpretation to make his argument, and he agrees with many of her historical-critical conclusions, although she reaches them by different means. But despite the areas of agreement, his portrait is substantially different from hers.

Crossan both tropes the historical field and plots the action differently, as we have seen. But these are not the only differences. In Pepper's terms, Crossan's work is contextualist, that is to say, events are explained by relation to other events in a process of 'colligation' (White 1973: 18). It is important that the

object of study be linked to the context, both spatially and temporally. Thus for Crossan, the cross-cultural and cross-temporal model provides a context for understanding the events in the limited space and time of his inquiry. The model works synchronically, rather than diachronically, and it provides Meier with one of the two levels of his Jesus portrait. The explanation embodied in the narrative is provided by the links made to the larger context, so that, for example, an understanding of the economics of peasant life in first-century Galilee is possible through a study of the patterns of peasant life in other places and other times. Because the view is synchronic rather than diachronic, it results in neither the mechanistic explanation which sees laws working over time to explain a given outcome, nor an organicist understanding of the principles governing a process of integration and development. Crossan understands Jesus in relation to the various contexts operating simultaneously, but changing at different rates. So while the patterns of family life in peasant society obtained for hundreds of years, including the first century, the historical context changed far more rapidly. Thus the triple triadic system provides Crossan with a flexible model for understanding a context in which change might be both slow and rapid, so that it is possible to distinguish elements of stability and to pinpoint areas of change.

How are historical Jesus portraits written? From the perspective of social scientific methodology, contemporary scholars begin with a mental image, a sense of the sort of story this is, and then sift the materials for the data; these data form the sample from which the historical explanation and proof of the hypothesis may be constructed. Indeed, they work in much the same way that Crossan imagines the writers of the Passion narrative did: by searching in scripture for texts thematically related to the Passion generally, and by organizing those scriptural connections into a coherent and sequential story, with an underlying generic framework. Details were added later in the interests of verisimilitude (1991b: 375-76).[27] So too contemporary historical Jesus critics begin with an outline of events and sayings structured by a generic intertext, search a wide variety of texts for facts, analogies, and models, and then write a narrative history. Crossan sees his own activity as analogous to that of the 'learned exegetes' of 'certain circles of the Kingdom movement' of the 30s. Indeed, he draws his own readers into the story at this point, using the second person to describe this historical group: you are 'very, very interested in studying the scriptures to understand your past, reclaim your present, and envisage your future' (1994a: 146). He understands this activity as one of the kinds of experience through which the revelation of Jesus to his followers occurred in the earliest Church, and presumably today as well (1994a: 169). In

27. Crossan acknowledges the importance of the story, but clearly understands its limitations: '*Even if all history is story, not all story is history*', he states (1998: 20, italics his).

this regard, he also writes himself into his text: the peasants of the 'Overture' who looked at Jesus with 'cold, hard eyes' (1991b: xi) find their modern counterpoint in Crossan as critic, who looks with the same 'cold, hard eyes' at the cruelty of human nature evidenced not only in the Crucifixion but in the events of the twentieth century as well (1994a: 124). But the Kingdom that Jesus brought into the peasant homes of first-century Galilee continues to flourish wherever people come together to experience healing and to share a meal in his name: 'You are healed healers, he said, so take the Kingdom to others…. It is, was, and always will be available to any who want it' (1991b: xii). In Crossan's view, the few 'healed healers' who shared what they had experienced with others formed a network of healing and hope which has endured to the present. The best is not far in the future, nor lost in the past, but now: this is a present utopian view. From a theological perspective, that kingdom which is and was and always will be is an eschatological vision in which at any moment anyone can move beyond space and time into the immediate presence of God. The irony, for there is always irony, is that we do not.[28]

28. In *Who Killed Jesus?* Crossan is very clear about the use of historical Jesus work: 'It is not (in a postmodern world) that we find once and for all who the historical Jesus was way back then. It is that each generation and century must redo that historical work and establish its best reconstruction, a reconstruction that will be and must be in some creative tension with its own particular needs, visions, and programs' (1995: 217). Luke Timothy Johnson critiques Crossan's 'theological agenda': 'his reconstructed Jesus is to provide a vision of Christian faith that should overturn that of the Constantinian era (read: established Christianity)' (1996: 49). If Crossan's Jesus is to be the Christ for the contemporary era, then the 'brokerless kingdom' must replace 'established Christianity': 'The paradox is that the key to this vision—the historical Jesus—is precisely the "broker" whom Christianity must reject if it is to truly live by his vision' (Johnson 1996: 49).

Ouroboric Conclusions and Reflections

This historical narrative, the story of Jesus, is one of the master narratives of Western culture, and it is the foundational story of the Christian Church. Not surprisingly, the four scholars whose work has been the primary focus of my analysis here are both Western and Christian. This story of Jesus is, in some way or another, their story. But each has told a different story, and if asked what the point of it all might be, each would doubtless respond differently. Critical analysis of their work, along with critical debates about the results, have produced little agreement about either the results of the research or the methods employed. Because this work has primarily historical rather than theological aims, I have used a metahistorical approach to provide new ways to read and interpret these contemporary historical narratives, and to point to new directions in future historical Jesus research and writing.

A critical taxonomy of historical narrative, in which any history writing can be seen to be a rhetorical construct, enables the historian to answer certain questions: What kind of story is this? How are the objects in the historical field related to each other? What is the logic of the narrative? What is the point of it all? What meanings are generated by the forms of the narratives? Using the work of Hayden White, I have attempted to analyze the deep literary structures of the historical accounts of J.P. Meier, N.T. Wright, E. Schüssler Fiorenza, and J.D. Crossan, in an effort to establish some answers to the rhetorical questions implicit in their historical work.

As a historian, where does one start? With the evidence or with the results?[1] Do the rhetorical structures of the historical narrative arise from the evidence that one has established, or does one's sense of the sort of story one is telling lead one to privilege certain evidence over other possibilities? Judging from the care taken to defend methodological procedures in all these histories, there is clearly some anxiety around this question. Probably the choice of the point of entry is merely a personal preference, a habit of mind, based on how familiar one already is with the subject at hand. Ultimately

1. In a comment about J.D. Crossan's work, Seán Freyne notes, 'In the end I found myself wondering whether the 'atopicality' which is so important a feature of Crossan's Jesus was the result of the minimalist position adopted from the outset with regard to the appropriate sources, or, conversely, whether the image of such a figure already created a predilection for a certain kind of evidence' (1997: 64).

historical narrative, 'mythology with footnotes', as Bruce Lincoln has said (1999: 209), requires both story and evidence. But choices regarding both the evidence and the structures arise from deep personal commitments hovering at the edges of conscious academic activities. More than biases or interests that might affect how one reads and interprets, these are the ethical values that are at the heart of our sense of self, our world view, and our allegiances. These commitments and values shape our choices.[2] It is no wonder, then, that the various portraits of Jesus analyzed here differ; rather it is surprising to find as much common ground as there is.

After summarizing the results of my rhetorical analysis and conclusions, I want to explore in more detail some of the personal commitments and values that seem to underlie the various portraits and that help to explain both the similarities and the differences among them.

1. *Summary Ending*

A modified version of Hayden White's hermeneutical system, especially his understanding of plot and trope as constitutive of the deep structure of historical discourse, has here provided a new way of understanding contemporary historical Jesus narratives. White uses the work of Northrop Frye to develop his understanding of plot structures in historical narrative. Like all literary narrative, historical narratives can be seen in terms of what I have called epic, tragedy, comedy and farce. As we have seen, epic takes the form of a quest, or perilous journey, in which the hero is engaged in a struggle to release his society from a threat and to free humanity. Tragedy narrates an inevitable process of events which ultimately isolates the hero, while comedy narrates the formation of a new society around him. Farce, an ironic inversion of epic form, is an attempt to impose some kind of order on essentially chaotic experience and is marked by incongruity and social disintegration, whatever happens to the hero. These plot structures, in White's taxonomy, are related to types of figurative language.

The prefiguration of the historical field according to tropes, following Vico's understanding, provides a literary means of understanding the deep

2. Despite some scholars' desire to 'bracket' these personal commitments and values in their research and writing, in their search for 'objectivity', writers of history 'engage in the generation of human meaning, in the production of world views', as William E. Arnal points out. This work comes with a responsibility: 'the responsibility that sets scholars apart from the more usual practitioners of myth-making is the care that we must take to document our claims' (2005: 74). Arnal calls for 'self-consciousness about the assumptions and agenda that influence one's work'. See also Dale Martin: 'I do suggest…that we might be better off…if we recognize our own interests and contingencies and *acknowledge how they relate to our readings*' (2001: 59, italics mine).

structure of the narratives. White uses four tropes: metaphor, metonymy, irony and synecdoche; briefly, metaphor seeks to express similarities in things that are different, metonymy uses an attribute of something to stand for the thing itself, synecdoche uses a part of something to stand for the whole thing, while irony uses language to suggest its opposite. Jörn Rüsen's typology of historical narration, which he claims enables him to move away from White's formalist system, opens up possibilities of analyzing historical thinking in terms of the same tropes, thus historicizing White's taxonomy.

Rüsen identifies four types of historical narration, all operative in every historical narrative, but with different emphases (1987). The foundational myths of a culture are what Rüsen calls 'traditional narrative', which has affinities to White's metaphorical thinking. The need later to systematize experience leads to a metonymic understanding of narrative as the exemplification of the rules and principles thought to underlie diverse experiences. For Rüsen, these exemplary narratives preserve the memory of various circumstances in which these rules are applicable. Then, when this understanding of why things happen as they do is found to be inadequate, critical narrative, troped ironically, enables us to create new patterns. When historical consciousness deconstructs the oppositional patterns of critical narratives, a fourth category, the genetical narrative, proposes development along other lines, where continuity is found in change and human understanding is seen as a dynamic process through time. In a genetical narrative, the relationship of the objects in the historical field, where the part that is ironically other comes to characterize the whole, is typical of synecdochic thinking.

Not surprisingly, the tropes and their function in historical thinking, as White sees it, are related to the types of argument found in historical narrative. So, the mythic understanding of Rüsen's traditional narrative provides a formist argument, while the systematisation of the exemplary narrative correlates with a mechanistic argument. A contextualist argument, which makes connections within a limited context rather than attempting to develop synhetic world views or to analyze the laws of historical development, has affinities with the ironic perspective that questions the adequacy of language to represent reality. Finally, the organicist argument which sees individual entities as components of processes which aggregate into wholes that are greater than, or qualitatively different from, the sum of their parts is related to genetical thinking which finds continuity in change and development.

Just as Rüsen's understanding of the 'peculiarities' of historical narrative suggests that it organises time so as to make the past relevant for the present and formative for the future, so White suggests that historiography is characterised by 'ideological implications', that is to say, the implications which can be drawn from the study of the past for the understanding of the present. White is concerned with the relationship between actual social situations and

ideal social orders. Here these ideological positions can be expressed in more theological terms, particularly with respect to the eschatological idea of the kingdom of God. Evolutionary utopians see the kingdom in terms of a time in the far future which will gradually grow out of present conditions; present social structures are the best we can realistically hope for. Present utopians share the evolutionary utopian's positive assessment of the present, but expect progress toward the kingdom to be made through institutional means. Visionary utopians look for revolutionary means to transform structures and to reconstitute society as the kingdom, while past utopians, who also see the need for radical transformation of society, imagine a change in human consciousness which will allow the appearance of a new society based on new values. So, in terms of social change and the realisation of hopes for a better world, past and present utopians share a sense that progress can be made by human agency, while evolutionary and visionary utopians look for change in the future, either slowly as humans improve or radically through God's intervention. For historians who expect change to occur through divine intervention, patient waiting in hope is the appropriate response. For those who experience the present as the culmination of a long process of change, and expect that process to continue slowly in the future, there is little point in social action. Others, with a less sanguine view of the present, who learned early on that God helps those who help themselves, encourage efforts to bring about the transformation in human lives promised in this story of Jesus.

So, how have the historians considered here constructed their portraits of Jesus? And what are the social and ethical implications of their choices?

John P. Meier prefigures the historical field metonymically, attempting to work out the rules of historical change in his narrative of Jesus' life. But because the chronology of events cannot be ascertained, for the most part his portrait is a synchronic 'mosaic' which provides a contextualist argument when biblical data are lacking, and, when he has biblical evidence, a formist argument distinguishing Jesus from others in the historical field. Meier's portrait of Jesus can best be understood by reading it on two levels. The explicit level is a synchronic account of Jesus in his historical context; and implicit in this account is a diachronic narrative of events in his life. On the diachronic level, the action of the plot seems to place it in the realm of tragedy, although as yet this conclusion is only hinted at, and Meier does not make (or has not yet made) the mechanistic argument which might also be expected. On the synchronic level, on the other hand, Meier focuses on events and characteristics which make Jesus unique, a metaphoric prefiguration affiliated with a formist argument. Here an epic plot might be the best explanatory strategy, but Meier does not view Jesus in epic terms. Thus in terms of trope, plot, and argument, the two levels of Meier's portrait remain in tension. Meier expects history to end in an eschatological climax in the future; in this he is a

visionary utopian. There are already glimpses of that future in our present experience within the Church, although the final consummation has not yet come. We must wait patiently and work to be prepared for God's final action: this is the conservative position of the evolutionary utopian.

N.T. Wright shares Meier's concern to develop a narrative explanation of Jesus' actions which will allow him to discern Jesus' world view and to distinguish Jesus from others of his time who held similar views or performed similar actions. Such an explanation calls for a formist argument, with a focus on similarities and differences. Wright's narrative is 'traditional', in Rüsen's terms, and his preference for metaphoric troping, both in his method and in his narration, is clear. Using parable as a pattern for understanding Jesus, Wright plots the Jesus story as an epic, in which the hero releases his society from a threat and frees humanity. Unlike Meier's historical narrative which is as yet undecidable in terms of its plot and argument, Wright's work provides a historical vision which is coherent in terms of the affiliation of its various explanatory strategies: it is troped metaphorically, plotted as an epic, and argued with a formist structure. In White's system, such a narrative might be expected to imply a present utopian view, a realised eschatology, and despite the continued existence of evil in the world, Wright does indeed argue that the kingdom was brought about by the death of Jesus, and a new world order is in place. But Wright also imagines a future event when God will intervene, suggesting a visionary utopian view which remains in some tension with his realised eschatology. In either case, however, the new world order, the kingdom, has been and will be brought about by God, and like Meier, Wright waits in faithful expectation.

Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza is engaged in an imaginative reconstruction of historical reality inclusive of women and allowing for the possibility of women's leadership. Her work is explicitly feminist, and we might expect to find ways in which it enables critical action for change. She has developed a complex rhetorical-hermeneutical model to provide evidence for a reality about which the texts are silent, and her goal is to create an organic, synthetic vision of the first-century Church as a history of women and men. This synecdochic vision of community as an inclusive whole is shaped in an organicist argument, and she plots the story of the *basileia* as comedy. Because her purpose is to create an imaginative reconstruction, to see what the texts do not say, she prefigures the interpretive task ironically; thus her method is troped ironically, while the narrative which she plots is troped synecdochically. In Rüsen's terms, then, her historiography, more clearly than that of Meier or Wright, emphasizes the critical 'no' which rejects traditional and exemplary understandings, and then turns to an organicist argument with affinities for the genetical narrative of development and change. But while such an argument might be expected to imply an evolutionary utopian ideology, this is not the

case; the quietism of such a view is counter to her aims. The *basileia* vision of Jesus has remained unrealised in subsequent history, although we experience it partially in the liberating vision of the *ekklēsia* of wo/men. This is a past utopian view, which recognizes a need for complete reform of present social structures, not by revolutionary means, but by a change in consciousness which will enable the creation of a new society based on new values. To the extent that the *ekklēsia* of wo/men and other movements for justice are partial realisations of the *basileia* vision in the present, her ideological position might be said to be present utopian, expecting progress toward the kingdom to come within the structures of the *ekklēsia*. Unlike the visionary or present utopian views of Wright, or the evolutionary utopian moments in Meier, Schüssler Fiorenza's position enables her to work actively for change.

John Dominic Crossan's narrative situates Jesus and his movement broadly within Mediterranean culture. From the methodological perspective, Crossan's three triads trope the field differently, unlike simpler methods of textual analysis relying on criteria of authenticity. Like his troping of the historical narrative, Crossan's troping of Jesus' immediate historical context is ironic; but in his use of cross-cultural and cross-temporal social anthropology, on the other hand, he tropes the data synecdochically. The mode of argument is contextualist, where the explanation embodied in the narrative is provided by the links made to the larger context. So, although Crossan tropes the historical narrative ironically, he plots it on two levels. The story of Jesus himself is plotted as ironic farce. But in the wider story of the community which grew up around Jesus, and which continues in the present, there are formal elements which belong in the world of comedy. The continued empowerment of Jesus' disciples displaces the resurrection, and provides an explanation for the rise of the Christian Church, the new comic society which must eventually triumph. The kingdom has not been fully realised in this view, but those who live according to the social vision of Jesus, who are Jesus' contemporary companions, may work to spread the companionship of empowerment. This vision is present utopian.

As we have seen, the interpretations of these four historians differ in various ways, both in terms of their methods and in terms of their narratives. Each would understand his or her narrative as a truthful representation, and in one way or another, each disagrees with the interpretations of the others. From a postmodern perspective, historiography which allows for multi-faceted 'truth' frees us to construct a variety of stories which together form our view of the past.[3] The various narratives of the life of Jesus demonstrate different

3. Reviewing various accounts of nineteenth-century historians, Hayden White comments, 'Placed before the alternative visions that history's interpreters offer for our consideration, and without any apodictically provided theoretical grounds for preferring one over another, we are driven back to moral and aesthetic reasons for the choice of one vision

understandings of the ways in which the remembered past can be meaningful in the present and give shape to our hopes for the future.

The theological implications of the sense of time and our place in it are important in understanding the various historical views of Jesus. But there are in addition other personal stances or questions which seem to touch each of the historians deeply. When we turn back to the scholars whose portraits of the historical-Jesus have occupied me here, it is possible to discern some of these underlying personal values and commitments.

For N.T. Wright, for example, history proceeds by telling stories, and he argues that the pattern of exile and return in the parable of the Prodigal Son is a key to understanding the life of Jesus and the history of Israel as the people of God. But beyond the historical narrative, this is a pattern which enables human experience in general, and Christian life in particular, to be understood. This is a theological narrative as well as a historical reconstruction; I would not disagree with it, but it is a story that I am more likely to tell from the pulpit than from the podium. But personally Wright describes his experience of a painful tension between his role in the church and that in the academy, and he looks for a way to tell the story of Jesus that does justice to both contexts, and enables prodigal history and prodigal historians to return to their theological home. And so, not surprisingly, the metaphoric troping of the historical field is congenial to him, as is the epic plot structure which best enables that story to unfold.

Like Wright, John P. Meier works in both ecclesial and academic contexts, although he expresses less discomfort, and perhaps experiences less tension than Wright does. He believes he can keep his theological and personal commitments separate from his historical research and is firmly resolved to do so, despite his awareness that this work requires 'intense personal grappling with an emotionally charged question' (1991: 4). Yet the personal and emotional elements of the work are part of what Meier has intentionally bracketed out.

So why does he do this work at all? This portrait of Jesus has become Meier's life work. In the introduction to Volume I, he creates his 'unpapal conclave' with the goal of creating a consensus view of the historical Jesus. The membership of this imagined group has changed over the nearly two decades they have been working, but the purpose of their work, and an insight into Meier's personal purpose, is to 'provide an academically respectable common ground and starting point for dialogue among people of various

over another as more "realistic." The aged Kant was right, in short; we are free to conceive "history" as we please, just as we are free to make of it what we will' (1973: 433). But see White 1992 on the Holocaust as a limit case.

faiths or no faith' (2009: 12). When his trek through the historical field is finally complete, there may be little common ground, but for Meier it is enough to begin to find ways to move toward whatever understanding or unity is possible. It is a purpose that finds echoes in Jesus' 'high priestly prayer' in John's gospel: 'that they all may be one.' When the gospel was written, this was a prayer for Christian unity; now it is a hope for conversation and understanding among people of all faiths, including those who have none.

Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, with her very different view of the function and use of history, proceeds differently. She would argue, and I would agree, that human persons thrive in egalitarian contexts where justice and freedom are available to all. To summarize using her terms, feminist and liberationist scholars like herself have an ethical responsibility to engage in a publicly accountable, and radically democratic politics of interpretation, by articulating the interests at work in Historical-Jesus meaning-making, and by reconceptualizing the Jesus movement in analogy to contemporary social movements for justice and well-being for all.[4] Her work, particularly *Jesus and the Politics of Interpretation* (2000a) and more recently, *The Power of the Word* (2007), makes this point repeatedly and forcefully. Her synecdochic image of the relationships in the contemporary *ekklēsia* of wo/men is a rhetorical figure which explains the qualities of the relationships between Jesus and those around him, qualities and often relationships which were omitted or obscured in the writing of the texts which are our historical sources. Making this rhetorical move enables her to ground the contemporary movement firmly in the practices of the past and to call for action in the present.

A commitment to justice also pervades the work of J.D. Crossan, where justice, 'the right of all to equal dignity and integrity of life', is linked to the righteousness and compassion of God (1998: 586). The life of the earthly Jesus embodied the justice of God in a world of injustice and unrighteousness; and that embodied life and death, reconstructed in each generation, become by faith the face of God for the believing community (1998: 45). This image of Jesus functions synecdochically to characterize contemporary Christian communities of faith as contexts in which God's justice and compassion are both expressed and enacted. The qualities of Jesus and his companions link the historical and the contemporary contexts. So Crossan's method and analysis serve to give form and expression to his personal commitment to justice, which he sees as related historically to the earthly life and context of Jesus. Both Crossan and Schüssler Fiorenza are committed to justice, but the connection between the past and present contexts is made differently: in Schüssler

4. She does not limit the 'space' of interpretation to her academic research and writing, but has also recently developed a pedagogical model and praxis for theological education, especially for biblical studies in graduate education (2009).

Fiorenza's work, the synecdochic image is the contemporary *ekklēsia*, while for Crossan, it is the historical Jesus. This difference in the temporal focus, one on the present and the other on the past, and in the movement of the trope, from present to past or from past to present, helps to explain why the work of the two has such a different feel, despite what are clearly important shared values and political commitments.

To varying degrees, the historians considered here are able to articulate some of these personal values. But there are, as I have suggested, other goals and other values which find expression in historical Jesus work, including the underlying cultural values which drive the search for links between historical events in first-century Palestine, along with whatever Jesus said and did, and our contemporary contexts. While as we have seen the personal concerns of scholars are often considered off limits, 'biases' to be bracketed out of the discussion in an attempt to be more 'objective', these cultural meanings are not so much consciously bracketed as ignored or buried. My own thought is certainly conditioned by the place from which I read, and is marked by class, race and gender interests. These interests shape my research and writing significantly, although not always consciously, and I attempt to remain alert to the cultural implications of my work. But those who would argue that the exploration of these issues is inappropriate to the real task of biblical studies also read, like me, from a political and social position; and these personal and institutional interests have social effects hidden within the brackets. In contemporary contexts, historical Jesus work contributes to the social construction of personal identity, group identity, and power within and through the cultural contexts of Church and academy. Culture criticism[5] in historical Jesus studies would render these interests more visible. This approach, in its culturalist

5. The importance of the notion of 'culture' to the social historian has its own history; as Carolyn Steedman has noted: it 'can be seen in the academy's elevation of nineteenth-century historians like Burkhardt and de Tocqueville to canonical status in the post-Second World War period. What Burkhardt's history did was to put together the disparate and fragmented elements of social life under the heading of cultural coherence' (1992: 617). In White's schema, Burkhardt's work is plotted as Satire, while de Tocqueville's is Tragedy; we might expect some correlation with the work of Crossan and Meier here. Both work, albeit differently, with cultural contextualisation; Meier's synchronic description of the culture in which Jesus grew up provides a base for his metonymic troping of the field on one level, while Crossan's broad cross-cultural analysis forms the third level of his portrait. In both cases, historical time is affected. As Carl Schorske points out in relation to Burkhardt and de Tocqueville, time does not stop in their writing, but is slowed down, as cultural coherence rather than transformation becomes the focus of historiography. For Dominick LaCapra, 'the culture concept', as he terms it, 'shatters chronology and dissolves the very ordinance of time' (Steedman 1992: 617). See LaCapra 1983, 1985.

mode,[6] opens up the space for political and moral agency; this, for me, is its value in biblical studies.[7]

Vincent Leitch, in his analysis of cultural studies from a North American perspective (1992), opens up the issues of both institutional and ideological critique. Here he poses the questions of the creation, conditioning, and commodification of knowledge, while raising the issue of the role of institutions in instilling attitudes which help to maintain the political and economic status quo. What is knowledge? he asks. How is it created and disseminated, and what role do the skills and attitudes inculcated by institutions play in maintaining power structures? Those who ask these questions do so generally as an act of resistance. Culture critics take issue with the 'aestheticism, formalism, anti-historicism, and apoliticism common among the dominant postwar methods of academic literary criticism' (1992). In biblical studies, the same critique can be made, not only of most historical-critical work but also of many literary studies, which can be equally ahistorical, apolitical, and acontextual. Specifically in these historical Jesus studies, whether the work privileges social science or literary approaches, most of the results of the studies are curiously neutral. So what difference, if any, might this work make? What is there to gain culturally from writing these books?[8]

2. *Cultural Criticism and the Politics of Interpretation*

Why historical Jesus research is necessary for us now is a question that JD Crossan has helpfully explored in the first part of his *Birth of Christianity* (1998). Included in his discussion of historical reasons is a critical conversation with Dieter Georgi and Helmut Koester regarding the effect or role of the historian's socio-economic situation in his or her historical reconstructions. Georgi places the quest in context: 'The contemporaneity of the New Quest with the end of the New Deal and the restoration of the bourgeoisie in

6. The distinction is made by Stuart Hall between 'culturalist' and 'structuralist' traditions in culture studies. The 'culturalist' stance allows the humans subject to create meaning and to rework social institutions, to the extent that such personal agency is possible.

7. William E. Arnal, calling into question the value of any attempt to reconstruct the life of Jesus, concludes that, 'the Jesus who is important to our own day is...the symbolic Jesus of contemporary discourse' (2005: 77). That 'symbolic Jesus', he claims, is a 'cipher' for cultural meanings.

8. Including, of course, my own. The language of the question itself ironically reflects my cultural context, with its concerns about profit and loss. Mine is a critical narrative, resolutely ironic in its perspective that things are not what they seem, yet hopeful that the questions raised here may lead to change for the better. Like Schüssler Fiorenza, I look for ways to do history that include and value my experience as a woman; like Crossan, I hope for the transformed relationships based on justice and compassion that come from being part of the companionship of Jesus.

the United States and Germany after World War II and within the confines of a burgeoning market-oriented Atlantic community is not accidental' (1992: 83). Whether or not this description is correct, it shows, Crossan says, 'that socioeconomic factors and religious emphases interpenetrate one another' (1998:24). Koester agrees, characterizing America as 'the victorious leader of the capitalist world' (1995: 14; quoted in Crossan, 1998: 22; cf. 1994: 539-540); he had previously argued that contemporary problems 'will not be cured through the ever renewed search for the exemplary personality of Jesus and his wisdom, in order to legitimize the individual's search for perfection and success' (1994: 544). Koester thus connects American academic scholarship with the drive of scholars to create an image of Jesus that justifies their own personal and professional desires to succeed and commodifies the production and sale of the results of their research. Perhaps this is indeed one of the things that historical Jesus research is about. The competition for teaching posts in prestigious universities (and the denigration of scholars who do not hold such posts[9]) is one indication, as is the profitability from the publishers' perspective of the work that has been produced. More work might usefully be done on this question.

But Crossan suggests another possibility: 'What if historical Jesus research... is about the "new world" of the Jewish God incarnated as human justice opposing the pagan God incarnated as Roman imperialism?' (1998: 25) This suggestion hints at another cultural issue, one which has influenced historical Jesus study from the beginning, and which has clear connections with the political events of the last century. That is the matter of Jesus' Jewishness and the anti-Semitism which culminated in the Holocaust. Crossan does not discuss this question, but comments on his awareness of the differences between his and Koester's cultural contexts and experiences: 'I am Irish and Roman Catholic; he is German and Lutheran. Furthermore, we lived in very different worlds in the 1940s.' He notices, crucially, 'That does not make either of us right and the other wrong, but it gives us different religious, political, and autobiographical sensitivities.' (1998: 25). And he does not see, 'as Koester does, the spectre of Hitler inevitably haunting such study' (1998: 26). Today Jesus' Jewishness, which William E. Arnal characterizes as a 'manufactured controversy' (2005: 20-38), is neither a controversial nor a debated issue.[10] But it is surprising, considering the contemporary political

9. NT Wright's criticism of the members of the Jesus Seminar is precisely along these lines, and echoed by Luke Johnson (1996: 3) and Richard B. Hays (1994: 47). Johnson comments that Jesus Seminar members 'by no means represent the cream of New Testament scholarship', adding that most are 'in relatively undistinguished academic positions. Some are not in the strict sense academic positions at all'.

10. What is debated, on the other hand, is the cultural impetus for the discussion of the

situation in the Middle East, that no systematic analysis of the results of the historical Jesus quests of the late nineteenth and twentieth century has focused on the issues of race and ethnicity, and this too is an area that might repay further analysis.[11]

3. *History and Supplements*

More broadly, culture criticism in historical Jesus studies would help to render all these interests more visible, and would highlight the large elephant in the academic and ecclesial room: the female, often missing or nearly invisible. In a sense, to use culture criticism in this context is to take culture as an additive, a supplement, to a field which is already complete in itself.[12] Here a cooking metaphor suits me: culture criticism would be like raisins added to bread dough. An improvement, perhaps, but not a fundamental change. We can see ways in which the metaphor holds for historical Jesus work. Certainly the emphasis on social history and on sociological analysis of data has some relation to culture criticism, as do the use of a wider variety of sources, and the emphasis on determining the context of the sources. We are doing history differently. Moreover, academic biblical studies have always focused on the analysis of text, rather than on the collection of hard data. Cultural criticism seems right at home here, especially when textual analysis asks literary questions intended to produce a coherent picture of the past. Reading methods which focus on narrative structures are part of this kind of work. These developments have resulted in the creation of new knowledge, and that is all to the good.

There is, though, another way to understand supplements. Rather than taking culture criticism as raisins added to bread dough, a supplement with which one could easily dispense, I want to end by suggesting that culture criticism in biblical studies is a different kind of supplement, one which

'Jewish Jesus', explored in detail by James G. Crossley (2008). Crossley links the discussion to American attitudes toward Israel since the Six-Day War in 1967, as well as the wider anti-Arab and anti-Muslim attitudes related to war and the fear of terrorism which continues in the present. See also Arnal 2010.

11. Although, as the title indicates, Arnal 2005 is a cultural critical study of 'historical scholarship, Judaism, and the construction of contemporary identity'. Weaver 1999 provides a detailed and helpful study of the quests during the period, with at least a nod to political events, but more work could be done. Another volume, bringing the history up to date, was promised but was incomplete on Weaver's death in 2004.

12. As Virginia Woolf suggested years ago: writing about the role of women, she noticed history's 'lopsidedness', and wryly suggested in 'A Room of One's Own', why 'not add a supplement to history? Calling it, of course, by some inconspicuous name so that women might figure there without impropriety?' Add women and stir, so to speak. Or to broaden that critique for my purposes, add culture criticism and stir.

supplies something that is missing. To continue with my homey imagery, I want to think of culture criticism as the yeast without which the bread dough will not rise. Seen this way, culture criticism changes the entire field of historical Jesus studies by insisting on the grounding of both the study and the scholars within their contemporary historical and political contexts. New knowledge is produced, but in this case, knowledge about the present as well as the past, about the effects and meanings of the text now as well as then. The same ingredients without the yeast will still produce bread of a sort, but with the yeast they produce a very different result. And once the yeast begins to work, there's no looking back; you can't pick it out like the raisins if it's not to your taste.

The point of the supplement is that it is an undecidable. Culture criticism focuses on both social meanings in the past, and on social meanings in the present. It is not an either/or relationship, but rather both/and. Feminist and liberationist readers, and perhaps resisting readers of all stripes, will welcome this development, as Leitch points out, because it represents a power change: a redefinition of who defines knowledge and what counts (1992). This might usefully open the field to others who have not fully participated in this area of research, groups that have previously been marginalized.

I have attempted here to suggest ways in which historical Jesus work might proceed. Scholars might take care to explore contemporary events and personal experiences, along with cultural and personal values, in self-reflective ways, as some have already begun to do. From a culture critical perspective, the contemporary quest for the historical Jesus is part of a larger cultural struggle for power. I live in that 'burgeoning market-centered Atlantic community' that Georgi criticizes, where the quest for a credible and useful understanding of Jesus is 'an expression of a socioeconomic and political momentum' (1992: 83). Helmut Koester comments that this cultural context, with its aversion to eschatology and its social concern, pre-determines the search for Jesus: 'This paradigm is the very cause of the quest' (1994: 539). So gaining a clear sense of one's personal and social position is a first step: it is a start to explore self-reflectively, to scrutinize one's social position. But it is not enough. Culture critical analysis in biblical studies might provide tools to enable scholars routinely to explore the real social effects, both personal and institutional, embedded in our academic work.[13]

And so I come around to the place where I started, looking down the well of history with these four historians whose faces are reflected back, just as Tyrell observed so long ago. But the details of the reflections and the reasons

13. A point made forcefully by Crossley, who points out that in a world where Palestinian Arabs, along with other Arab Muslims, are dying and subjected to torture, the Jewish Jesus is a 'potentially lethal cultural construct' created in the relative safety of ivory towers in the West (2008: 199).

why they differ are clearer. And if after all this analysis I were moved to write my own portrait of the historical Jesus, what would he look like? I come to the work with a liberationist and feminist world view and a commitment to work for justice and equality. I look to ground my social ethics in a faith based on Christian values rooted in the early community which formed around Jesus. So I would prefigure the historical field synecdochically, and because I am an optimist, I would plot the story of Jesus as a comedy, but one which experience has taught me is ironic. Still, I hope that a better world will grow out of present experience, as more people come, if they do, to share this vision. The historical data construed as evidence would permit me to shape my portrait of Jesus in ways that would support these views, and could arguably be said to be true. Would it be convincing? Perhaps, especially to those who share my presuppositions and my world view and who have similar political commitments. Those whose presuppositions and commitments differ from mine are likely to disagree with me and would find my portrait uncongenial. Does this mean that I am wrong and they are right? Koester's view is that the 'diverse details of the reconstructions will be informed by each interpreter's tacit or explicit hermeneutics, and they will largely remain outside of critical control' (1994: 540). But there is a precedent for multiple portraits written for various reasons from multiple perspectives. The early Church did this with the gospels, canonical and other, and successfully resisted attempts at synthesis. Perhaps that is enough for us. Perhaps the variety of views and the competing truth claims are what enable us all to resist capture, to escape entombment, in the cultural certainties we help to create and with which we must live. It remains now for others to consider how they retell this tale, what memory of Jesus they enshrine, and why.

WORKS CITED

Alexander, Loveday C.A.
1998 'Fact, Fiction and the Genre of Acts'. *New Testament Studies* 44:380-99.

Allison, Dale
1999 *Jesus of Nazareth: Millenarian Prophet*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press.

Altizer, Thomas J.J.
1997 *The Contemporary Jesus*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press.

Ankersmit, Frank R.
1986 'The Dilemma of Contemporary Anglo-Saxon Philosophy of History'. *History and Theory.* Beiheft 25: Knowing and Telling History: The Anglo-Saxon Debate: 1-27.

Appleby, Joyce, Lynn Hunt, and Margaret Jacob
1994 *Telling the Truth About History*. New York, London: W.W. Norton & Co.

Arnal, William E.
2005 *The Symbolic Jesus: Historical Scholarship, Judaism and the Construction of Contemporary Identity.* Religion in Culture: Studies in Social Contest and Construction. London; Oakville, CT: Equinox.
2010 Review of J.G. Crossley, *Jesus in an Age of Terror. RBL* 07.

Arnal, William E. and Michel Desjardins (eds.)
1997 *Whose Historical Jesus?* Studies in Christianity and Judaism 7. Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press.

Arthur, Marilyn B.
1975 'Women in the Ancient World'. Pp. 1-15 in *Conceptual Frameworks for Studying Women's History*. New York: Sarah Lawrence College.

Auerbach, Erich
1953 *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Culture.* Trans.Willard E. Trask. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Aune, David E.
1981 'The Problem of the Genre of the Gospels: A Critique of C.H. Talbert's *What Is a Gospel?* Pp. 9-60 in *Gospel Perspectives: Studies of History and Tradition in the Four Gospels.* Vol. 2. Eds. David Wenham and R.T. France. Sheffield: Sheffield University Press.

Barr, James
1981 'The Bible as a Document of Believing Communities'. Pp. 25-47 in *The Bible as a Document of the University*. Ed. Hans Dieter Betz. Chico, CA: Scholars Press.

Barth, Karl
1956 *Church Dogmatics*. 4/1. The *Doctrine of Reconciliation*. Ed. G.W. Bromiley and D.F. Torrance and translated by G.W. Bromiley. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark.

Barthes, Roland
1967 'Le discours de l'histoire'. *Informations sur les sciences sociales* 6/4: 65-75.
1986 'The Discourse of History'. Pp. 127-40 in *The Rustle of Language*. Ed. and trans. Richard Howard. New York: Hill & Wang.
Becker, Howard S.
1998 *Tricks of the Trade: How to Think about Your Research While You're Doing It*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
Bentley, Michael (ed.)
1997 *Companion to Historiography*. London, New York: Routledge.
Bermingham, A., and J. Brewer (eds.)
1995 *The Consumption of Culture 1600–1800*. London; New York: Routledge.
Betz, Hans D. (ed.)
1981 *The Bible as a Document of the University.* Chico, CA: Scholars Press.
Bird, Phyllis A.
1997 *Missing Persons and Mistaken Identities: Women and Gender in Ancient Israel.* Minneapolis: Fortress.
Borg, Marcus J.
1984 *Conflict, Holiness and Politics in the Teachings of Jesus*. New York: Edwin Mellen Press.
1987 *Jesus: A New Vision*. London: SPCK.
1991 'Portraits of Jesus in Contemporary North American Scholarship'. *HTR* 84:1-22.
1994a *Jesus in Contemporary Scholarship*. Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International.
1994b 'Reflections on a Discipline: A North American Perspective'. Pp. 9-31 in *Studying the Historical Jesus*. Ed. Bruce Chilton and Craig A. Evans. Leiden: Brill.
1999 'An Appreciative Disagreement'. Pp. 227-43 in *Jesus and the Restoration of Israel: A Critical Assessment of N.T. Wright's Jesus and the Victory of God*. Ed. Carey C. Newman. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.
Borg, Marcus J. and N.T. Wright
1999 *The Meaning of Jesus: Two Visions*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco.
Boring, M. Eugene
1988 'The Historical-Critical Method's 'Criteria of Authenticity': The Beatitudes in Q and Thomas as a Test Case'. *Semeia* 44:9-44.
Boswell, James
1964 [1791] *The Life of Samuel Johnson*. 2nd edn. Ed. L.F. Powell. Oxford: Clarendon.
Boulding, Elise
1976 *The Underside of History*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
Braudel, Fernand
1972 [1949] *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II.* Vol. 1. Trans. Sían Reynolds. San Francisco: Harper Collins.
Breisach, Ernst
1994 *Historiography: Ancient, Medieval and Modern*. 2nd edn. Chicago.
Brooks, Cleanth and William Kurtz Wimsatt
1957 *Literary Criticism: A Short History.* New York: Alfred A. Knopf.

Burke, Kenneth
1984 [1959] *Attitudes Toward History*. 3rd edn. Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press.
Burke, Peter
1991a 'History of Events and the Revival of Narrative'. Pp. 233-48 in *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*. Ed. Peter Burke. Cambridge: Polity.
1991b 'Overture: The New History, Its Past and Its Future'. Pp. 1-23 in *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*. Ed. Peter Burke. Cambridge: Polity.
Burridge, Richard A
1992 *What Are the Gospels? A Comparison with Graeco-Roman Biography*. SNTS Monograph Series, 70. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Bury, John Bagnell
1973 'The Science of History'. Pp. 210-23 in *The Varieties of History: From Voltaire to the Present*. 2nd edn. Ed. Fritz Stern. New York: Random House.
Bynum, Carolyn Walker
1982 *Jesus as Mother: Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages.* Berkeley: University of California Press.
1987 *Holy Feast and Holy Fast.* Berkeley: University of California Press.
Camp, Claudia V.
1993 'Feminist Theological Hermeneutics: Canon and Christian Identity'. Pp. 154-71 in *Searching the Scriptures*. I. *A Feminist Introduction*. Ed. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza. New York: Crossroad.
Carlson, Jeffrey and Robert A.Ludwig (eds.)
1994 *Jesus and Faith: A Conversation with the Work of John Dominic Crossan.* Maryknoll: Orbis.
Carrard, Philippe
1992 *Poetics of the New History: French Historical Discourse from Braudel to Chartier*. Baltimore, London: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
Carroll, Robert P.
1992 'Israel, History of (Post-Monarchic Period)'. Pp. 567-76 in *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol. 3. Ed. David Noel Freedman. New York: Doubleday.
Castelli, Elizabeth A.
1994 'Heteroglossia, Hermeneutics, and History: A Review Essay of Recent Feminist Studies of Early Christianity'. *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 10: 73-98.
Charlesworth, James H.
2008 *The Historical Jesus: An Essential Guide*. Nashville: Abingdon Press.
Chilton, Bruce, and Craig A. Evans (eds.)
1994 *Studying the Historical Jesus: Evaluations of the State of Current Research*. Leiden: Brill.
1999 *Authenticating the Words of Jesus.* Leiden: Brill.
Collingwood, R.G.
1961 [1946] *The Idea of History*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Collins, Adela Yarbro
1995 'Genre and the Gospels'. *The Journal of Religion 75:239-46.*
Collins, Adela Yarbro (ed.)
1985 *Feminist Perspectives on Biblical Scholarship*. Chico, CA: Scholars Press.

Corley, Kathleen E.
2002 *Women and the Historical Jesus: Feminist Myths of Christian Origins*. Santa Rosa, CA: Polebridge Press.
Crossan, John Dominic
1973 *In Parables: The Challenge of the Historical Jesus*. San Francisco: Harper & Row.
1980 *Cliffs of Fall: Paradox and Polyvalence in the Parables of Jesus*. New York: Seabury.
1983 *In Fragments: The Aphorisms of Jesus*. San Francisco: Harper & Row.
1988 'Divine Immediacy and Human Immediacy: Towards a New Principle in Historical Jesus Research'. *Semeia* 44: 121-40.
1991a 'Lists in Early Christianity: A Response to *Early Christianity, Q and Jesus*'. *Semeia* 55: 235-43.
1991b *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco.
1994a *Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco.
1994b 'Responses and Reflections'. In *Jesus and Faith: A Conversation with the Work of John Dominic Crossan*. Ed. Jeffrey Carlson and Robert A. Ludwig. Maryknoll: Orbis.
1995 *Who Killed Jesus?* San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco.
1998 *The Birth of Christianity: Discovering What Happened in the Years Immediately after the Execution of Jesus*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco.
1999 'The Historical Jesus as Risen Lord'. Pp. 1-47 in *The Jesus Controversy: Perspectives in Conflict.* The Rockwell Lecture Series. Ed. Gerald P. McKenny. Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International.
Crossan, John Dominic, and N.T. Wright
1997 'What Victory? What God? A Review Debate with N.T. Wright on *Jesus and the Victory of God*'. *Scottish Journal of Theology* 50: 345-79.
Crossley, Ceri
1993 *French Historians and Romanticism: Thierry, Guinot, the Saint-Simonians, Quinet, Michelet*. London: Routledge.
Crossley, James G.
2008 *Jesus in an Age of Terror: Scholarly Projects for a New American Century.* London: Equinox.
Danto, Arthur C.
1965 *Analytical Philosophy of History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Davies, Stevan L.
1995 *Jesus the Healer: Possession, Trance, and the Origins of Christianity*. London: SCM Press.
Dawes, Gregory
1996 'Beyond Critical Realism: Biblical Studies and the Forms of the Historical Imagination'. Paper to the Annual Meeting, Society of Biblical Literature, New Orleans, 23 November.
Denton, Donald L.
2004 *Historiography and Hermeneutics in Jesus Studies: An Examination of the Work of John Dominic Crossan and Ben F. Meyer*. London: T. & T. Clark.

Dodd, C.H.
1961 [1935] *The Parables of the Kingdom*. New York: Scribner's.
Downing, F. Gerald
1988 *Christ and the Cynics: Jesus and Other Radical Preachers in First Century Tradition*. JSOT Manuals, 4. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press.
Dray, William H.
1989 *On History and Philosophers of History*. Leiden: Brill.
1997 'Philosophy and Historiography'. Pp. 763-82 in *Companion to Historiography*. Ed. Michael Bentley. London, New York: Routledge.
Dray, William H. (ed.)
1966 *Philosophical Analysis and History.* New York, London: Harper & Row.
Dunn, James D.G.
2005 *A New Perspective on Jesus: What the Quest for the Historical Jesus Missed*. London: SPCK.
Eco, Umberto
1976 *A Theory of Semiotics*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
1981 *The Role of the Reader: Explorations in the Semiotics of Texts*. London: Hutchinson.
Evans, Craig A.
1989a 'Authenticity Criteria in Life of Jesus Research'. *CSR* 19: 6-31.
1989b *Life of Jesus Research: An Annotated Bibliography*. NTTS, 13. Leiden: Brill.
Evans, Craig A. and Stanley E. Porter (eds.)
1995 *The Synoptic Gospels: A Sheffield Reader.* Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press.
Evans, Richard J.
1997 *In Defence of History*. London: Granta Books.
Fink, Carole
1989 *Marc Bloch: A Life in History.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Fischer, David Hackett
1970 *Historians' Fallacies: Toward a Logic of Historical Thought*. New York: Harper & Row.
Fish, Stanley E.
1980 *Is There a Text in This Class? The Authority of Interpretive Communities*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
Foucault, Michel
1969 'What is an Author?' Pp. 101-120 in *Foucault: A Reader.* Ed. Paul Rabinow. New York: Pantheon, 1984.
1971 'Nietzsche, Genealogy, History'. Pp. 76-100 in *Foucault: A Reader.* Ed. Paul Rabinow. New York: Pantheon, 1984.
1977 *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972–1977*. Ed. Colin Gordon. New York: Pantheon.
1984 *Foucault: A Reader.* Ed. Paul Rabinow. New York: Pantheon.
Fowl, S.E.
1989 'Reconstructing and Deconstructing the Quest of the Historical Jesus'. *SJT* 42:319-33.
France, R., and D. Wenham (eds.)
1980 *Gospel Perspectives. Vol. I: Studies of History and Tradition in the Four Gospels.* Sheffield: JSOT Press.

Fredriksen, Paula
1988 *From Jesus to Christ: The Origins of the New Testament Images of Jesus*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
1999 *Jesus of Nazareth; A Jewish Life and the Emergence of Christianity*. London: Macmillan.
Freyne, Seán
1988 *Galilee, Jesus, and the Gospels: Literary Approaches and Historical Investigations.* Minneapolis: Fortress.
1997 'Galilean Questions to Crossan's Mediterranean Jesus'. Pp. 63-91 in *Whose Historical Jesus?* Ed. William E. Arnal and Michel Desjardins. Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press.
Frye, Northrop
1968 [1957] *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays*. New York: Atheneum.
Funk, Robert W.
2008 Criteria for Determining the Authentic Sayings of Jesus' Pp. 19-24 in *Finding the Historical Jesus: Rules and Evidence.* Jesus Seminar Guides. Santa Rosa, CA: Polebridge Press.
Funk, Robert W.. and The Jesus Seminar
1998 *The Acts of Jesus: What Did Jesus Really Do?* San Francisco: Harper-SanFrancisco.
Gadamer, H.G.
1960 *Wahrheit und Methode*. Tübingen: Mohr. English ed. *Truth and Method*. Trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall. London: Sheed and Ward, 1975. Rev. Ed. London: Continuum, 1989.
Gallie, W.B.
1964 *Philosophy and the Historical Understanding*. New York: Schocken Books.
Georgi, Dieter
1992 'The Interest in Life of Jesus Theology as a Paradigm for the Social History of Biblical Criticism'. *HTR* 85: 51-83.
Gnilka, Joachim
1997 [1990] *Jesus of Nazareth: Message and History.* Trans. Siegfried S. Schatzmann. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers.
Goldstein, Leon
1976 *Historical Knowing*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.
Gombrich, Ernst
1960 *Art and Illusion: A Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation.* London: Phaidon.
Gooch, G.P.
1959 [1913] *History and Historians in the Nineteenth Century*. Boston: Beacon.
Gottwald, Norman K.
1979 *The Tribes of Yahweh: A Sociology of the Religion of Liberated Israel*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis.
Gowler, David B.
2007 *What Are They Saying about the Historical Jesus?* New York, Mahweh, NJ: Paulist Press.
Graham, Susan Lochrie
1991 'Silent Voices: Women in the Gospel of Mark'. *Semeia* 54: 145-58.

1997 'A Strange Salvation: Intertextual Allusion in Mt 27, 39-44'. Pp. 501-11 in *The Scriptures in the Gospels*. Ed. C.M. Tuckett. BETL, 131. Leuven: Uitgeverij Peeters.

Greene-McCreight, Kathryn

2000 *Feminist Reconstructions of Christian Doctrine: Narrative Analysis and Appraisal*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Greimas, Algirdas Julien

1966 *Sémantique structurale*. Paris: Larousse.

Greimas, Algirdas Julien, and Joseph Courtés

1979 *Sémiotique: Dictionnaire raisonné de la théorie du langage*. Paris: Hachette.

Groden, Michael, and Martin Kreiswirth (eds.)

1994 *The Johns Hopkins Guide to Literary Theory and Criticism*. Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

Hagner, D.A.

1984 *The Jewish Reclamation of Jesus: An Analysis and Critiques of the Modern Jewish Study of Jesus*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan.

Hall, Stuart

1980 'Cultural Studies: Two Paradigms'. *Media, Culture and Society* 2:57-72.

Harvey, A.E.

1982 *Jesus and the Constraints of History*. London: Duckworth.

Hauerwas, Stanley, and William H. Willemon

1989 *Resident Aliens: Life in the Christian Colony*. Nashville: Abingdon Press.

Hay, D.

1977 *Annalists and Historians: Western Historiography from the Eighth to the Eighteenth Centuries*. London: Oxford University Press.

Hays, Richard B.

1994 'The Corrected Jesus'. *First Things* 43: 43-49.

1999 'Victory over Violence: The Significance of N.T. Wright's Jesus for New Testament Ethics'. Pp. 142-58 in *Jesus and the Restoration of Israel: A Critical Assessment of N.T. Wright's Jesus and the Victory of God*. Ed. Carey C. Newman. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

Hollenbach, Paul W.

1982 'The Conversion of Jesus: From Jesus the Baptizer to Jesus the Healer'. *ANRW* II/25(1): 196-219.

1989 'The Historical Jesus Question in North America Today'. *BTB* 19: 11-22.

Holmén, Tom

1999 Doubts about Double Dissimilarity: Restructuring the Main Criterion of Jesus-of-History Research'. Pp. 47-80 in *Authenticating the Words of Jesus*. Ed. Bruce Chilton and Craig A. Evans. Leiden: Brill.

Hooker, Morna

1972 'On Using the Wrong Tool'. *Theology* 75: 570-81.

Horsley, Richard A.

1986 'Popular Prophetic Movements at the Time of Jesus: Their Principal Features and Social Origins'. *JSNT* 26: 3-27. Pp. 124-48 in *New Testament Backgounds*. Ed. Craig A. Evans and Stanley E. Porter. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1977.

1987 *Jesus and the Spiral of Violence*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco.

Hume, David
1972 *Enquiries concerning the Human Understanding and concerning the Principles of Morals*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
Huppert, G.
1971 *The Idea of Perfect History*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press.
Hurtado, Larry W.
1997 'A Taxonomy of Recent Historical Jesus Work'. Pp. 272-95 in *Whose Historical Jesus?* Ed. William E. Arnal and Michel Desjardins. Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press.
Iggers, Georg G.
1985 *New Directions in European Historiography*. London: Methuen.
1997 *Historiography in the Twentieth Century: From Scientific Objectivity to the Postmodern Challenge*. Hanover, London: Wesleyan University Press.
Jakobson, Roman
1960 'Linguistics and Poetics'. Pp. 350-77 in *Style in Language*. Ed. Thomas A. Sebeok. New York; London: Technology Press and John Wiley.
Jakobson, Roman, and Morris Halle
1971 [1956] 'The Metaphoric and Metonymic Poles'. Pp. 1113-16 in *Critical Theory since Plato*. Ed. Hazard Adams. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.
Jenkins, Keith (ed.)
1997 *The Postmodern History Reader*. London: Routledge.
Jeremias, Joachim
1963 [1954] *The Parables of Jesus*. 2nd edn. Trans. S.H. Hooke. New York: Scribner's.
Johnson, Luke Timothy
1992 'A Marginal Mediterranean Jewish Peasant'. *Commonweal*, 24 April: 24-25.
1996 *The Real Jesus*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco.
1999 'A Historiographical Response to Wright's Jesus'. Pp. 206-26 in *Jesus and the Restoration of Israel: A Critical Assessment of N.T. Wright's Jesus and the Victory of God*. Ed. Carey C. Newman. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.
Johnson-de Baufre, Melanie
2005 *Jesus among Her Children: Q, Eschatology, and the Construction of Christian Origins*. Harvard Theological Studies 55. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
Jülicher, A.
1910 *Die Gleichnisreden Jesu.* 2nd edn. Tübingen: Mohr.
Käsemann, Ernst
1963 [1954] 'The Problem of the Historical Jesus'. Pp. 15-47 in *Essays on New Testament Themes*. 3rd ed. London: SCM Press.
Kelber, Werner
1999 'The Quest for the Historical Jesus from the Perspectives of Medieval, Modern, and Post-Enlightenment Readings, and in View of Ancient, Oral Aesthetics'. Pp. 75-115 in *The Jesus Controversy: Perspectives in Conflict*. The Rockwell Lecture Series. Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International.
Kelber, Werner, Luke Timothy Johnson and John Dominic Crossan
1999 *The Jesus Controversy: Perspectives in Conflict.* The Rockwell Lecture Series. Harrisbury, PA: Trinity Press International.

Keller, Catherine
1994 'The Jesus of History and the Feminism of Theology'. In *Jesus and Faith: A Conversation with the Work of John Dominic Crossan*. Ed. Jeffrey Carlson and Robert A. Ludwig. Maryknoll: Orbis.

Kellner, Hans
1980 'A Bedrock of Order: Hayden White's Linguistic Humanism'. *History and Theory: Metahistory: Six Critiques*, 19:1-29.
1992 'Hayden White and the Kantian Discours: Tropology, Narrative, and Freedom'. Pp. 246-67 in *The Philosophy of Discourse*. Ed. C. Sills and C. Jensen. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton Cook Publishers.

Kellner, H., P Pomper, M. Mandelbaum, O. Golobe, N.S. Streuver, J.S. Nelson.
1980 *Metahistory: Six Critiques. History and Theory* 19.

Kermode, Frank
1957 *The Romantic Image.* London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
1967 *The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction.* New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Kloppenborg, John S.
1987 *The Formation of Q: Trajectories in Ancient Wisdom Collections.* Philadelphia: Fortress.

Koester, Helmut
1994 'The Historical Jesus and the Historical Situation of the Quest: An Epilogue: Major Trends and Interpretive Issues in the Study of Jesus'. Pp. 535-45 in *Studying the Historical Jesus: Evaluations of the State of Current Research*. Ed. Bruce Chilton and Craig E. Evans. New Testament Tools and Studies, 19. Leiden: Brill.
1995 'The Historical Jesus and the Cult of the *Kyrios Christos*'. Harvard Divinity Bulletin 24: 13-18.

Kramer, Lloyd S.
1989 'Literature, Criticism, and Historical Imagination: The Literary Challenge of Hayden White and Dominick LaCapra'. Pp. 97-128 in *The New Cultural History*. Ed. Lynn Hunt. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Kreiger, Murray
1956 *The New Apologists for Poetry.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Kümmel, W.G.
1988 'Jesusforschung Seit 1981'. *Theologische Rundschau* 53: 229-49.
1989 'Jesusforschung Seit 1981'. *Theologische Rundschau* 54: 1-53.
1990 'Jesusforschung Seit 1981'. *Theologische Rundschau* 55: 21-45.
1991 'Jesusforschung Seit 1981'. *Theologische Rundschau* 56: 27-53, 391-420.

Lacan, Jacques
1977 [1966] 'The Agency of the Letter in the Unconscious, or Reason Since Freud'. Pp. 146-78 in *Écrits: A Selection.* Trans. Alan Sheridan. New York, London: WW Norton.

LaCapra, Dominick
1983 *Rethinking Intellectual History: Texts, Contexts, Language*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
1985 'Rhetoric and History'. In *History and Criticism*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Leff, Gordon
1971 *History and Social Theory*. New York: Doubleday.
Leitch, Vincent B.
1992 *Cultural Criticism, Literary Theory, Poststructuralism.* New York: Columbia University Press.
Lentricchia, Frank
1980 *After the New Criticism*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
Levine, J.M.
1991 *The Battle of the Books*. New York: Cornell University Press.
Lévi-Strauss, Claude
1966 *The Savage Mind*. London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson.
Lincoln, Bruce
1999 *Theorizing Myth: Narrative, Ideology, and Scholarship.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
Linnemann, Eta
1962 *Die Gleichnisse Jesu*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.
Lonergan, Bernard J.F.
1958 *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*. New York: Philosophical Library'.
Lotman, Jurij
1977 *The Structure of the Artistic Text*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.
Lukács, Georg
1971 *The Theory of the Novel: A Historico-Philosophical Essay on the Forms of Great Epic Literature*. London: Merlin.
Lyotard, Jean Francois
1984 *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
MacDonald, Margaret Y.
1996 *Early Christian Women and Pagan Opinion: The Power of the Hysterical Woman*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Mack, Burton
1988 *A Myth of Innocence: Mark and Christian Origins*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press.
1995 *Who Wrote the New Testament? The Making of the Christian Myth*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco.
1997 'Q and a Cynic-Like Jesus'. Pp. 25-36 in *Whose Historical Jesus?* Ed. William E. Arnal and Michel Desjardins. Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press.
2003 [2001] *The Christian Myth: Origins, Logic, Legacy*. New York: Continuum.
Malina, Bruce J.
1996 *The Social World of Jesus and the Gospels*. London: Routledge.
Mannheim, Karl
1998 [1946] *Ideology and Utopia: An Introduction to the Sociology of Knowledge.* Collected English Writings, I. Routledge Classics in Sociology. New York, London: Routledge.
Marsh, Clive
1997 'Quests of the Historical Jesus in New Historicist Perspective'. *Biblical Interpretation* 5(4): 403-37.

Martin, Dale
2001 'Paul and the Judaism/Hellenism Dichotomy: Toward a Social History of the Question'. Pp. 29-61 in *Paul beyond the Judaism/Hellenism Divide*. Ed. Troels Engberg-Pedersen. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press.
Martin, Wallace
1986 *Recent Theories of Narrative*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
Marx, Karl
1959 *Basic Writings on Politics and Philosophy*. Ed. Louis S. Feuer. Garden City, NY: Doubleday.
McCready, Wayne O.
1997 'The Historical Jesus and the Dead Sea Scrolls'. Pp. 190-214 in *Whose Historical Jesus?* Ed. William E. Arnal and Michel Desjardins. Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press.
McCullagh, C. Behan
1998 *The Truth of History*. London: Routledge.
Megill, Allan
1994 'Jörn Rüsen's Theory of Historiography between Modernism and Rhetoric of Inquiry'. *History and Theory* 30: 39-61.
Meier, John P.
1991a *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus.* I. *The Roots of the Problem and the Person.* New York: Doubleday.
1991b 'Reflections on Jesus-of-History Research Today'. Pp. 84-107 in *Jesus' Jewishness: Exploring the Place of Jesus within Early Judaism*. Ed. James H. Charlesworth. New York: Crossroad.
1994 *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*. II. *Mentor, Message, Miracle*. New York: Doubleday.
2001 *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*. III. *Companions and Competitors.* New York: Doubleday.
2009 *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*. IV. *Law and Love.* New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
Meyer, Ben F.
1979 *The Aims of Jesus*. London: SCM Press.
Michaelis, W.
1956 *Die Gleichnisse Jesu: Eine Einfuhring.* 3rd ed. Hamburg: Furche-Verlag.
Mink, Louis O.
1968 'Philosophical Analysis and Historical Understanding'. *Review of Metaphysics*, 21: 667-98.
1978 'Narrative Form as a Cognitive Instrument'. Pp. 129-49 in *The Writing of History: Literary Theory and Historical Understanding*. Ed. R. Canary and H. Kozicki. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press.
Momigliano, Arnaldo
1981 'The Rhetoric of History and the History of Rhetoric: On Hayden White's Tropes'. Pp. 259-68 in *Comparative Criticism: A Yearbook*. Ed. E.S. Shaffer. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Moore, Stephen D.
1989 *Literary Criticism and the Gospels: The Theoretical Challenge*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Neill, Stephen, and N. T. Wright
1988 *The Interpretation of the New Testament, 1861–1986*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Neusner, Jacob
1989 'Money-Changers in the Temple: The Mishnah's Explanation. *New Testament Studies* 35: 287-90.
Newman, Carey C. (ed.)
1999 *Jesus and the Restoration of Israel: A Critical Assessment of N.T. Wright's Jesus and the Victory of God.* Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.
Neyrey, Jerome H.
1988 *An Ideology of Revolt: John's Christology in Social-Science Perspective.* Philadelphia: Fortress Press.
Nickelsburg, G.W.E.
1980 'The Genre and Function of the Markan Passion Narrative'. *HTR* 73:156-67.
Novick, Peter
1988 *That Noble Dream: The 'Objectivity Question' and the American Historical Profession*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
Okin, Susan Moller
1979 *Women in Western Political Thought*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
Patte, Daniel
1976 *What is Structural Exegesis?* Philadelphia: Fortress Press.
Perkins, Pheme
1981 *Hearing the Parables of Jesus*. New York: Paulist Press.
Perlman, Janice E.
1976 *The Myth of Marginality: Urban Poverty and Politics in Rio de Janeiro.* London: SCM.
Perrin, Norman
1963 *The Kingdom of God in the Teaching of Jesus.* London: SCM.
1967 *Rediscovering the Teaching of Jesus*. London: SCM Press.
Plaskow, Judith
1993 'Anti-Judaism in Feminist Christian Interpretation'. Pp. 117-29 in *Searching the Scriptures*. I. *A Feminist Introduction*. Ed. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza. New York: Crossroad.
Porter, Stanley E.
2000 *The Criteria for Authenticity in Historical Jesus Research: Previous Discussion and New Proposals.* Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press.
Preminger, Alex *et al.* (eds.)
1965 *Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
Pui-Lan, Kwok
1993 'Racism and Ethnocentrism in Feminist Biblical Interpretation'. Pp. 101-16 in *Searching the Scriptures.* I. *A Feminist Introduction*. Ed. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza. New York: Crossroad.
Ranke, Leopold von
1973 [1887] *Histories of the Latin and Teutonic Nations from 1494–1514.* Trans. G.R. Dennis. In *The Varieties of History: From Voltaire to the Present.* Ed. Fritz Stern. 2nd ed. New York: Random House.

Ricci, Carla
1991 *Mary Magdalene and Many Others: Women Who Followed Jesus*. Trans. Paul Burns. Tunbridge Wells: Burns & Oates.
Richardson, Peter
1997 'Enduring Concerns: Desiderata for Future Historical-Jesus Research'. Pp. 296-307 in *Whose Historical Jesus?* Ed. William E. Arnal and Michel Desjardins. Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press.
Riches, J.K.
1980 *Jesus and the Transformation of Judaism*. London: Darton, Longman & Todd.
Ricoeur, Paul
1978 'Explanation and Understanding: On Some Remarkable Connections among the Theory of the Text, Theory of Action, and Theory of History'. In *The Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur: An Anthology of his Work*. Ed. Charles E. Reagan and David Stewart. Boston: Beacon.
1980 'Narrative Time'. *Critical Inquiry* 7/1: 169-90.
1983 '"Anatomy of Criticism" or the Order of Paradigms'. Pp. 1-13 in *Centre and Labyrinth: Essays in Honour of Northrop Frye*. Ed. Eleanor Cook *et al.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
1986 [1978] *The Rule of Metaphor: Multi-Disciplinary Studies of the Creation of Meaning in Language*. Trans. Robert Czerny, Kathleen McLaughlin and John Costello, SJ. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
Rogers, Susan Carol
1978 'Women's Place: A Critical Review of Anthropological Theory'. *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 20: 123-62.
Ruether, Rosemary Radford
1983 *Sexism and God-Talk: Toward a Feminist Theology*. Boston: Beacon.
Rüsen, Jörn
1987 'Historical Narration: Foundation, Types, Reason'. *History and Theory*, Beiheft 26. The Representation of Historical Events: 87-97.
1993 *Studies in Metahistory*. Pretoria: Pretoria Human Sciences Research Council.
2005 *History: Narration, Interpretation, Orientation.* New York, Oxford: Berghan.
Russell, Letty M. (ed.)
1985 *Feminist Interpretation of the Bible*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press.
Sanders, E.P.
1985 *Jesus and Judaism*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press.
1993 *The Historical Figure of Jesus*. Harmondsworth: Allen Lane/Penguin Press.
Schaberg, Jane
1995 *The Illegitimacy of Jesus*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press.
1997 'A Feminist Experience of Historical-Jesus Scholarship'. Pp. 146-60 in *Whose Historical Jesus?* Ed. William E. Arnal and Michel Desjardins. Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press.
Schüssler Fiorenza, Elisabeth
1984 *Bread Not Stone: The Challenge of Feminist Biblical Interpretation*. Boston: Beacon.

1983 *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins*. New York: Crossroad.
1985a 'Remembering the Past in Creating the Future: Historical-Critical Scholarship and Feminist Biblical Interpretation'. Pp. 43-63 in *Feminist Perspectives on Biblical Scholarship*. Ed. Adele Yarbro Collins. Chico, CA: Scholars Press.
1985b 'The Will to Choose or to Reject: Continuing our Critical Work'. Pp. 125-36 in *Feminist Interpretation of the Bible*. Ed. Letty M. Russell. Philadelphia: Westminster Press.
1995 *Jesus: Miriam's Child, Sophia's Prophet: Critical Issues in Feminist Christology*. London: SCM Press.
1997 'Jesus and the Politics of Interpretation'. *HTR* 90/4: 343-58.
2000a *Jesus and the Politics of Interpretation*. New York, London: Continuum.
2000b 'The Rhetoric and Politics of Jesus Research: A Critical Feminist Perspective'. Unpublished paper.
2007 *The Power of the Word: Scripture and the Rhetoric of Empire.* Minneapolis: Fortress.
2009 *Democritizing Biblical Studies: Toward an Emancipatory Educational Space.* Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press.

Schüssler Fiorenza, Elisabeth (ed.)
1992 *But She Said: Feminist Practices of Biblical Interpretation*. Boston: Beacon.
1993 *Searching the Scriptures*. I. *A Feminist Introduction*. New York: Crossroad.

Schweitzer, Albert
1954 [1910] *The Quest of the Historical Jesus: A Critical Study of its Progress from Reimarus to Wrede*. Trans. W. Montgomery. London: SCM Press.

Scott, Bernard Brandon
1989 *Hear Then the Parable: A Commentary on the Parables of Jesus*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press.

Scott, Bernard Brandon (ed.).
2008 *Finding the Historical Jesus: Rules of Evidence*. Jesus Seminar Guides. Santa Rosa, CA: Polebridge Press.

Scott, James C.
1976 *The Moral Economy of the Peasant: Rebellion and Subsistence in Southeast Asia*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Shuler, P.L.
1982 *A Genre for the Gospels: The Biographical Character of Matthew*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press.

Smith, Jonathan Z.
1982 *Imagining Religion: From Babylon to Jamestown*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Snodgrass, Klyne R.
1999 'Reading and Overreading the Parables in *Jesus and the Victory of God*. Pp. 61-76 in *Jesus and the Restoration of Israel: A Critical Assessment of N.T. Wright's Jesus and the Victory of God*. Ed. Carey C. Newman. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

Stanford, Michael
1986 *The Nature of Historical Knowledge*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Stanton, Graham
1974 *Jesus of Nazareth in New Testament Preaching.* London: Cambridge University Press.
1989 *The Gospels and Jesus.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.
2001 'Message and Miracles'. Pp. 56-71 in *The Cambridge Companion to Jesus.* Ed. Markus Bockmuehl. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Steedman, Carolyn
1992 *Past Tenses: Essays on Writing, Autobiography and History (1980–90)*. London: Rivers Oram Press.
Stein, Robert H.
1980 'The 'Criteria' for Authenticity'. Pp. 225-63 in *Gospel Perspectives*, I. Ed. R. France and D. Wenham. Sheffield: JSOT Press.
Stern, Fritz (ed.)
1973 [1956] *The Varieties of History: From Voltaire to the Present*. 2nd edn. New York: Random House.
Stoianovich, Traian
1976 *French Historical Method: The 'Annals' Paradigm*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
Stuhlmacher, Peter (ed.)
1983 *Das Evangelium und die Evangelien.* WUNT, 28. Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr.
Sugg, Richard P. (ed.)
1992 *Jungian Literary Criticism*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.
Talbert, C.H.
1974 *Literary Patterns, Theological Themes, and the Genre of Luke-Acts.* Missoula, MT: Scholars Press.
1977 *What is a Gospel? The Genre of the Canonical Gospels.* Philadelphia: Fortress.
Telford, William R.
1994 'Major Trends and Interpretive Issues in the Study of Jesus'. Pp. 33-74 in *Studying the Historical Jesus*. Ed. Bruce Chilton and Craig A. Evans. Leiden: Brill.
The Bible and Culture Collective
1994 *The Postmodern Bible*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
Theissen, Gerd
1987 *The Shadow of the Galilean: The Quest of the Historical Jesus in Narrative Form*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press.
1991 *The Gospels in Context: Social and Political History in the Synoptic Tradition*. Trans. Linda M. Maloney. Minneapolis: Fortress Press.
Theissen, Gerd, and Annette Merz
1998 *The Historical Jesus: A Comprehensive Guide*. German edition 1996. Trans. John Bowden. Minneapolis: Fortress Press.
Theissen, Gerd, and Dagmar Winter
2002 *The Quest for the Plausible Jesus: The Question of Criteria*. German edition 1997. Trans. M. Eugene Boring. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press.
Thiering, Barbara E.
1979 *Redating the Teacher of Righteousness*. Sydney: Theological Explorations.
1992 *Jesus the Man*. London: Doubleday.

Thiselton, Anthony C.
1992 *New Horizons in Hermeneutics*. London: HarperCollins.
Thrall, WF, A Hibbard and CH Holman
1960 [1936] *A Handbook to Literature Revised.* New York: Odyssey Press.
Tolbert, Mary Ann
1989 *Sowing the Gospel: Mark's World in Literary-Historical Perspective*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press.
1993 'Social, Sociological, and Anthropological Methods'. Pp. 255-71 in *Searching the Scriptures*. I. *A Feminist Introduction*. Ed. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza. New York: Crossroad.
Trevelyan, George Macaulay
1973 'Clio Rediscovered'. Pp. 227-45 in *The Varieties of History: From Voltaire to the Present*. 2nd edn. Ed. Fritz Stern. New York: Random House.
Trible, Phyllis
1987 *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press.
Turner, Frederick Jackson
1973 'The Significance of History'. Pp. 198-208 in *The Varieties of History: From Voltaire to the Present*. 2nd edn. Ed. Fritz Stern. New York: Random House.
Tyrell, George
1909 *Christianity at the Crossroads*. London: Longmans.
van der Dussen, W.J.
1981 *History as a Science: The Philosophy of R.G. Collingwood*. The Hague: Nijhoff.
Veeser, H. Aram (ed.)
1989 *The New Historicism*. New York: Routledge.
Vermes, Geza
1983 *Jesus the Jew: A Historian's Reading of the Gospel*. New York: Macmillan.
1993 *The Religion of Jesus the Jew.* London: SCM Press.
2000 *The Changing Faces of Jesus*. London: Allen Lane/Penguin.
Via, Dan O., Jr
1967 *Kerygma and Comedy in the New Testament: A Structuralist Approach to Hermeneutic*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press.
1976 *The Parables*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press.
Vico, Giambattista
1948 [1744] *The New Science of Giambattista Vico.* 3rd edn. Rev. Trans T.G. Bergin and M.H. Fisch. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
Vorster, Willem S.
1999 [1991] 'Jesus: Eschatological Prophet and/or Wisdom Teacher?' Pp. 301-317 in *Speaking of Jesus: Essays in Biblical Language, Gospel Narrative and the Historical Jesus.* Ed. J. Botha. Leiden, Boston, Köln: Brill. Reprinted from *Hervormide Teologiese Studies* 47: 526-42.
1992 'Gospel, Genre'. Pp. 1077-79 in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, II. Ed. David Noel Freedman. New York: Doubleday.
Walsh, W.H.
1968 [1965] The *Philosophy of History: An Introduction*. Rev. ed. New York: Harper & Row.

Watson, Francis
1997 *Text and Truth: Redefining Biblical Theology*. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark.
Weaver, Walter P.
1999 *The Historical Jesus in the Twentieth Century 1900–1950*. Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International.
Weems, Renita J.
1993 *I asked for Intimacy: Stories of Blessings, Betrayals and Birthings*. Philadelphia: Innisfree Press.
White, Hayden
1966 *The Burden of History. History and Theory* 5: 111-34.
1973 *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
1978 *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
1987 'The Value of Narrativity in the Representation of Reality'. *The Content of Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation*. Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
1992 'Historical Emplotment and the Problem of Truth'. Pp. 37-53 in *Probing the Limits of Representation: Nazism and the 'Final Solution'*. Ed. Saul Friedlander. Cambridge, MA, and London: Harvard University Press.
Witherington III, Ben
1984 *Women in the Ministry of Jesus*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
1990 *The Christology of Jesus*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press.
1994 *Jesus the Sage: The Pilgrimage of Wisdom*. Minneapolis: Augsburg-Fortress.
1995 *The Jesus Quest: The Third Search for the Jew of Nazareth*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.
Wolterstorff, Nicholas
1997 [1980] *Art in Action: Toward a Christian Aesthetic*. Carlisle: Solway [Eerdmans].
Woolf, Virginia
1991 [1929] *A Room of One's Own*. New York: Harcourt.
Wright, N. T.
1992 *Christian Origins and the Question of God*. I. *The New Testament and the People of God*. London: SPCK.
1993 'Taking the Text with her Pleasure'. *Theology*. 96: 303-10.
1996 *Christian Origins and the Question of God*. II. *Jesus and the Victory of God*. London: SPCK.
1999 *The Challenge of Jesus: Rediscovering Who Jesus Was and Is*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.
Yoder, John Howard
1972 *The Politics of Jesus*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

INDEXES

INDEX OF BIBLICAL TEXTS

OLD TESTAMENT

NEW TESTAMENT

INDEX OF AUTHORS