

From Old to New: Paradigm Shifts concerning Judaism, the Gospel of John, Jesus, and the Advent of "Christianity"

James H. Charlesworth

The twenty-first century begins with a worldwide recognition of massive paradigm shifts. Unfortunately, too many students and scholars tend to use commentaries and scholarly monographs without noting their date of publication. In the process, their own work and insight suffer from failing to perceive that more advances have been achieved in biblical research over the past twenty-five years than in the preceding 250 years. One cannot use scholarly works published from the nineteenth century to the present assuming naively that scholars are examining the same texts with similar methodology, sophistication, and perception.

At least five significant factors distinguish recent work from previous publications. First, we are much more sensitive to the distortions caused by the intrusion of inappropriate philosophy. In the nineteenth century, D. F. Strauss shaped his studies by following Hegelianism. In the twentieth century, R. Bultmann, his School, and even the "New Quest for the Historical Jesus" were marred by viewing ancient texts through the presuppositions of Existentialism. These two examples are focused and limited to Germany. What we learn from these masters is that we must be aware of our presuppositions and methodologies and be more accurate historians of Judaism and cultures influential in shaping ancient Palestinian thought and life.

Second, we have observed that prejudices blind us to what we seek to see. Consider, for instance, how Confessionalism and Anti-Semitism (along with supersessionism) have distorted the re-creations of first-century phenomena, and especially the presentation of the historical Jesus. Too many interpreters are unperceptive of how they have been influenced,

for example, by Kant and Spinoza, both of whom imagined Second Temple Judaism as corrupt.

We bring numerous unexamined assumptions to the text. Too many readers miss the fact that, according to Mark 9:1, Jesus, at least at times, thought the eschaton and the dynamic eruption of God's Rule (the Kingdom of God) would occur in his own lifetime or, at least, the lifetime of those who heard him. Likewise, a perception of the meaning of Genesis 3 and John 3 is often distorted, because of a hatred of snakes and a refusal to explore the meaning of ophidian symbology. The first blindness has been pointed out by G. Theissen and D. Winter in their *Quest for the Plausible Jesus*.¹ The second myopia is demonstrated in my *The Good & Evil Serpent*.²

Third, slowly we have grown to realize the tendencies (*Tendenzen*) and anachronisms of what were once our main literary sources: the intracanonical gospels, as well as Philo, Josephus, and early rabbinic and targumic texts. Those who labored on re-creating Second Temple Judaism and Jesus' environment before 1945 were consigned to work on documents and books that were biased and provided a *post facto* mirror of pre-70 Judaism.

Fourth, today, we have hundreds of ancient Jewish documents that are not edited by Christian scribes; and many of them were unknown before the forties. Indeed, recent research has been enriched by the exploration and comprehension of a flood of new and often previously ignored sources: the 65 Old Testament Pseudepigrapha, the Old Testament Apocrypha, the Jewish magical papyri, the Nag Hammadi Codices, and the more than 950 Qumran Scrolls.

Fifth, the explosion of archaeological data that is Jewish and clearly pre-70 has changed the landscape of historical Jesus studies. Henceforth, archaeology will be not only significant but fundamental in re-creating both the cultural and sociological setting of Jesus and also his own life and message.

These few comments indicate that works published after 1980 are often paradigmatically different from those issued in the preceding 1900 years. Too many scholars mislead too many students by using scholarly

1. Gerd Theissen and Dagmar Winter, *The Quest for the Plausible Jesus: The Question of Criteria* (trans. M. E. Boring; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002).

2. James H. Charlesworth, *The Good & Evil Serpent* (ABRL; New York: Doubleday, in press).

works published over the past century, as if the early ones are not seriously dated by old perceptions and the paucity of sources. Works published before 1980, the emergence of Jesus Research, must not be confused with more recent informed research; a synchronic malaise obscures not only the development of research but the re-creation of first-century Palestine.

To demonstrate the fundamental nature of this transformation in Jesus Research, we shall examine several specific paradigm shifts in selected areas. It should now be clear that a new and more informed approach to historical questions regarding Jesus from Nazareth is operative in many recent publications.

Judaism

Old Paradigm

For centuries scholars assumed that Second Temple Judaism was orthodox, monolithic, cut off from other cultures (especially the Greeks and Romans), and defined by four sects: Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, and Zealots.

New Paradigm

Now scholars are more critical of inherited assumptions. It is certain that Josephus was wrong to divide Jewish thought into four sects. Most likely, the most important and influential Jewish groups were the conservative Sadducees, the more liberal and politically influential Pharisees,³ the diverse and learned Essenes, and the pugnacious Zealots, who may have appeared only at the beginning of the First Revolt (66-70/74). But one can now perceive over twenty groups, subgroups, and sects. Obviously, the Samaritans were also Jews, with a Pentateuch almost identical to that preserved in the Tanak. One must also include the Baptist groups, the Enoch groups, and many others, including the Palestinian Jesus Movement.

Some scholars have tended to think about Jewish thought before 70 CE

3. The Pharisees were astoundingly latitudinarian with Hillel, usually disagreeing with Shammai.

as being chaotic; but chaos broke out in 66 CE. Likewise some scholars see disunity and talk about "Judaisms." Other scholars are still too influenced by post-second-century Rabbinic texts and imagine a unified Judaism or "Covenantal Nomism." Such a term is not found in pre-70 Jewish texts, and one might wonder if it is a modern construct that miscasts the world of Second Temple Judaism. Moreover, "covenant" and "Nomism" (which is not clear to me and may represent Torah) were like the Temple cult, often signaling not only unity but also disunity among pre-70 Jews. Most likely, there was a powerful and influential ruling party within Jerusalem; but it was mixed, composed of Pharisees, Sadducees, and most likely other types of Jews (the Boethusians were intermittently powerful). The Shema and the Psalter, in my opinion, helped to check the centripetal forces that eventually produced the ill-conceived Revolt; after all, the Jews revolted against the Roman Imperium without an army and in the midst of what might be labeled a civil war.

This picture of Second Temple Judaism derives from studying sources unknown or unexamined by our grandparents. They examined Philo, the New Testament, Josephus, and especially Rabbinics. These are now exposed as sources needing to be used with caution in light of their *Tendenzen* to distort historical and social realities. The primary sources are clearly pre-70 Jewish documents only recently unearthed, and therefore unedited by later Christian scribes. These documents are the Qumran Scrolls; and the corpus is now voluminous. If 66 books define the Christian Bible, more than 900 documents are now known to be preserved, usually in fragmentary form, within the Qumran corpus. Secondly, in light of these clearly Jewish works, we can examine with new sensitivity the 65 documents in the Old Testament Pseudepigrapha. The Septuagint is now perceived to preserve ancient text types, as well as translation additions and revisions. Studying all of these sources helps place pieces together in the massive attempt to re-create a historical jigsaw puzzle.

The Gospel of John

Old Paradigm

For hundreds of years, experts approached the Gospel According to John with the presupposition that this gospel was a supplement to the Synoptics

(Matt, Mark, Luke), and since it was not a Jewish composition it should be studied in light of non-Jewish cultures and religion. Before 216, when he died, Clement of Alexandria, according to Eusebius (*Hist. Eccl.* 6.14.7), claimed that "John, perceiving that the external facts had been explained in the (Synoptic) Gospels, . . . being carried along by God in the Spirit . . . composed a spiritual gospel." St. Augustine found the Fourth Gospel attractive; the Evangelist portrayed Jesus weeping (John 11:35), suggesting to Augustine the truth "the Word assumed soul and flesh" (*Tract. Ev. Jo.* 49.18-19). While Luther highlighted the Fourth Gospel, because of the elevated discourses, and while Schleiermacher preferred this gospel over the Synoptics, because it best revealed Jesus' utter dependence on God, the tide was turning against the Fourth Gospel.

In 1835⁴ and the following years, in his influential tomes on Jesus' life, D. F. Strauss not only denied the apostolic authorship of the Fourth Gospel, but set up a false paradigm still plaguing some publications; that is, Strauss postulated an orthodox Judaism in Jesus' time and clearly separated "Christianity" from Judaism. In 1853, Strauss's teacher, F. C. Baur, interpreted the Christology of John in a way requiring a "complete disengagement" from any forms of Judaism.⁵ Subsequently, in 1913 in *Kyrios Christos*,⁶ W. Bousset led the way in seeking the origin and understanding of the Fourth Gospel within Greek and Roman religions. The stage had been set for R. Bultmann to claim, in numerous influential publications, the existence of a non-Jewish source, the *Offenbarungsreden (Revelatory Source)* which represented Oriental Gnosticism and which definitively shaped the Christology of the Fourth Gospel.⁷ In fact, Bultmann thought the Gnostic source behind the Fourth Gospel was anti-Jewish.

4. David Friedrich Strauss, *Das Leben Jesu* (Tübingen: C. F. Osiander, 1835-6); ET: *The Life of Jesus Critically Examined* (trans. M. Evans; New York: Calvin Blanchard, 1860).

5. Ferdinand Christian Baur, *Das Christentum und die christliche Kirche der drei ersten Jahrhunderte* (Tübingen: L. F. Fues, 1853); ET: *The Church History of the First Three Centuries* (2 vols.; trans. Allan Menzies; London: Williams and Norgate, 1878-79 [3rd ed.]), pp. 153-83.

6. Wilhelm Bousset, *Kyrios Christos: Geschichte des Christusglaubens von den Anfängen des Christentums bis Irenaeus* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1913); ET: *Kyrios Christos: A History of the Belief in Christ from the Beginnings of Christianity to Irenaeus* (trans. John E. Steely; Nashville: Abingdon, 1970).

7. This claim first appeared in Bultmann's *Das Evangelium des Johannes* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1941); ET: *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (ed. Rupert W. N. Hoare and John K. Riches; trans. George R. Beasley-Murray; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1971).

Bultmann's student, E. Käsemann, who characteristically distinguished himself from his teacher, continued the overwhelming tendency of contextualizing the Fourth Gospel in non-Jewish sources and settings. In his 1966 work *Jesu letzter Wille nach Johannes 17*, Käsemann chose a historical approach to the Fourth Gospel, but the context was perceived to be a Christian intra-church conflict.⁸

New Paradigm

Against this contextualizing of the Fourth Gospel in anything but a Jewish setting, a new position is rapidly becoming a near consensus. Scholars around the world are now perceiving that John is a very Jewish work. They claim that this gospel should be studied within Judaism.⁹

To this new paradigm, I now choose to emphasize one point: The Fourth Evangelist is exceptional among the four evangelists for his knowledge of pre-70 Jewish religious customs and especially of the topography and architecture of Jerusalem. Such elements in his narrative pop up intermittently without relevance for the narrative or rhetoric of persuasion.

In the past these details were either overlooked or explained away as theological reflections that were not grounded in historical observation. Space precludes exhaustive treatment; thus, I have chosen to focus only on Jerusalem and limit my comments to five seemingly irrelevant architectural or topographical details. These cumulatively disclose that the Fourth Evangelist is not ignorant of Jerusalem, as many commentators have assumed; he is amazingly cognizant of Jerusalem in 30 CE which ceased to exist after the city's destruction in September of 70 CE.

The first example of the Fourth Evangelist's knowledge of Jerusalem concerns the Pool of Bethzatha (or Bethesda) with its "five porticoes" (John 5:2). Interpreters focused only on Johannine theology have pointed out that Josephus and others acquainted with Jerusalem never mention such a major pool. These thinkers, who often have their eyes focused on dogmatics, report that in antiquity no architect constructed a pentagon

8. Ernst Käsemann, *Jesu letzter Wille nach Johannes 17* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1966); ET: *The Testament of Jesus: A Study of the Gospel of John in the Light of Chapter 17* (trans. Gerhard Krodel; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1968).

9. See the chapter in this collection by C. Claussen.

which could have five porticoes; hence, they conclude that John could not have known Jerusalem. What then is the meaning of John 5:1-9? It must mean that the five porticoes in which the sick man wished to be healed denote the Pentateuch. Jesus thus provides what was lacking. The man is healed, takes up "his pallet and walked."

This is problematic and reveals a lack of attention to Johannine theology. There is no tension between Moses and Jesus in this gospel. The history of salvation is "grace upon grace"; the Fourth Evangelist emphasizes that the Law was "given through Moses" and "grace and truth came through Jesus Christ" (1:16-17). While some theologians imperceptively imagine an adversative connective between the protasis and apodosis, the two parts of the sentence in 1:17 are an example of asyndetic contiguity, whereby the connection is immediate and not separated by an otiose conjunctive: "The Law through Moses was given; grace and truth through Jesus Christ came." As the appositional genitive denotes identity — as in *Bath Zion* denoting "Daughter Zion" — so asyndetic contiguity (the lack of any connective) usually denotes similarity; thus, God has revealed through Moses God's will (the Torah) and through Jesus God's grace and truth. The Fourth Evangelist presents no antithesis between Moses (or the Pentateuch) and Jesus (or the Good News about the incarnation of God's Son). Hence, the five porticoes cannot be a metaphorical reference to the Pentateuch.

In fact, the pool of Bethzatha does exist, although only the Fourth Evangelist mentions it. Archaeologists have unearthed this pool. It is situated precisely where the Evangelist states: north of the Temple Mount and inside the Sheep Gate (5:2). It has five porticoes, because there are two pools, arranged from the north to south so as to catch the rain water that runs from the hills to the northwest. Porticoes are on the north, east, south, and west . . . and also through the area that separates the two pools. These two pools even seem to be noted in the *Copper Scroll* found in Qumran Cave III. We begin to perceive that saluting the Fourth Evangelist as a brilliant theologian does not mean he is a misinformed historian.

The second example of the Fourth Evangelist's exceptional knowledge of Jerusalem concerns the Pool of Siloam and *mikvaot*¹⁰ (John 9:1-12). New Testament scholars, dogmaticians, and theologians have rightly pointed out that the Pool of Siloam honored by the Byzantines as the place where

10. A *mikveh* (plural, *mikvaot*) was a Jewish pool for ritual cleansing. A number of *mikvaot* have been discovered, including at Qumran, at Masada, and on the Temple Mount.

Jesus healed a man born blind is not Herodian. It does not date from Jesus' time and is rightly to be dated to Hezekiah's building projects in the eighth century BCE. Having discredited this false "Pool of Siloam," they then pointed out the deep theological profundities of John 9. The man has been in darkness since his birth; but Jesus proclaims that he is "the light of the world" (9:5). Jesus then spat on the ground, made clay from the spittle, and anointed the man's eyes with the clay. Surely, here is an allusion to Jesus being the Anointed One. There is more: Jesus tells the blind man with Jesus' spittle on his eyes, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" — and the Evangelist provides all the meaning one needs: "which means Sent" (9:7). *This* is the meaning of the pericope: since Jesus is one sent from God. Christology is perceived to define the Pool of Siloam, "which means Sent."

Such theological reflection may be insightful, but it presumes we are reading only a christological story. The Evangelist would not be pleased, since he has stressed the Incarnation (1:14) and depicts Jesus as very human. Jesus sits on a well, because he is exhausted. Jesus requests water from a woman, because he is thirsty. Jesus weeps, because Lazarus, whom he loved, has died. Is there no Pool of Siloam from Jesus' time? Are we left with theologoumena devoid of historical reality?

No. The Pool of Siloam from Jesus' time has recently been unearthed. An attempt to repair a large sewer pipe demanded the removal of soil. Beneath the soil was revealed a pool with long and numerous steps. The pool is south of the Temple Mount, where Jesus met the man born blind (John 9:1), and it is the largest *mikveh* discovered in ancient Palestine or anywhere. Ronnie Reich and Eli Shukrun showed me the pool and stressed that the construction is clearly Herodian, meets the requirements of a *mikveh*, and would have been used only when the Temple cult was active. Pilgrims stopped here to purify themselves so that they could enter the Temple to worship. The destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE buried the ancient *mikveh*; the pool was not used and was unknown to those living nearby until a sewer pipe needed to be repaired.

A third example of the Fourth Evangelist's precise knowledge of Jerusalem concerns Herod's expanded Temple area and oxen within it. The following account is full of details found only in the Fourth Gospel: "In the Temple he (Jesus) found those who were selling oxen and sheep and pigeons, and the money-changers at their business. And making a whip of cords, he drove them all, with the sheep and oxen, out of the Temple" (John 2:14-15). This account may seem fanciful and legendary, until one

learns that Herod the Great expanded the Temple Mount to the west and to the south. The action depicted here occurred in the southern section of the Temple mount. The expanded area was part of the Temple Mount, but not part of the sacred space within it. If oxen had been moved within the southern extended area of the Temple Mount, and some think this occurred just before 30 CE, then the corridor leading from the so-called Solomon's Stable to the steps inside the Hulda Gate would be where Jesus saw these large animals (and their droppings) and could have fashioned a "whip" out of the "cords" used to tether the large animals.

A fourth example demonstrating the Fourth Evangelist's exceptional knowledge of Jerusalem pertains to the different locales in which Jesus is interrogated after his "arrest" in the Garden of Gethsemane. The author independently, but accurately, refers to Gethsemene as a garden "across the Kidron Valley" (John 18:1). The band of soldiers and the officers of the Judean authorities (= *Ioudaiōn*) take Jesus first to Annas (18:13). Apparently Annas, the father-in-law of the reigning high priest Caiaphas, was living in the house of the high priest. The description of "the court of the high priest" (18:15) is detailed, disclosing intimate knowledge of the area (18:15-18, 25-27). Annas subsequently sends Jesus to Caiaphas. The author assumes Caiaphas is nearby, perhaps elsewhere in the complex of buildings controlled by the high priestly families; but the oblique references are frankly obscure and give the impression the Evangelist may be working from his own memory of the topography and architecture of pre-70 Jerusalem.

Next, Jesus is led from "the house of Caiaphas" (18:28) to "the praetorium" (18:28). The author provides the irrelevant theological detail that "it was early" (18:28), without any aside to the Johannine light-darkness paradigm, and adds that the Judean leaders "did not enter the praetorium, so that they might not be defiled, but might eat the Passover" (18:28). Hence, Pilate was forced to go out to them. Pilate returns to the praetorium and calls for Jesus. A conversation is recorded between Pilate and Jesus (18:33-38). As most commentators have seen, it is difficult to ascertain the source of this dialogue, since no follower of Jesus is described as present. Then Pilate goes out again to the Judean authorities, informing them he can find no fault in Jesus. Finally, Pilate acquiesces to the Judean authorities (which for the Evangelist includes "the chief priests and the officers," 19:6), scourges Jesus, and the soldiers mock him.

How should the historian assess such remarkable details? The Fourth Evangelist seems to know how to get around Jerusalem, how Annas's house

and Caiaphas's house and Pilate's praetorium are geographically related; and he intimates an eyewitness view of "the court of the high priest." Was the Evangelist an eyewitness of these events? Was he informed by an eyewitness (perhaps the Beloved Disciple)? We are not confronted with a narrative devoid of surprising architectural and topographical detail. However we may answer such questions, we should admit that the Fourth Evangelist knows Jerusalem intimately, and he assumes his readers can fill in what he has only outlined. Reading and re-reading chapters 18 and 19 provides the impression that the author assumes his readers share with him a rather intimate knowledge of Jerusalem. I often hear asides or assumptions; for example, when the author describes the "court of the high priest," he seems to mention "the maid," as if the reader already knew that she "kept the door" (18:16). Likewise, the irrelevant theological detail that the servants and officers had "made a charcoal fire" (18:18) suggests the reader might know, surmise, or remember that "it was cold" that evening (18:18).

How should a historian and a New Testament exegete evaluate and explain such details? I would think it forced to dismiss such irrelevant details as serving Johannine rhetoric. The Fourth Evangelist seeks to demonstrate that Jesus is from above (*anōthen*) and is returning to "the Father" who has sent him into the cosmos. Rather than created solely to serve rhetoric, the topographical and architectural details we have examined may indicate a keen memory and reliable knowledge of Jerusalem.

The Evangelist seems to assume his implied readers are familiar with a great amount of historical detail. To what extent are we confronted with oral tradition and eyewitness accounts? In any case, we now perceive that much of the detail can be verified archaeologically.

The fifth and final example I would highlight concerns Pilate's Judgment Seat. Alone among the Evangelists, the Fourth Evangelist refers to this public area as *Lithostrōton* in Greek and *Gabbatha* in Hebrew (John 19:13). The Greek designates a large paved area or "Pavement." The Hebrew is not a translation of the Greek; it means an elevated place. The Evangelist seems to have exceptional and precise knowledge of the place in which Jesus was brought before Pilate who had taken his authoritative chair or "the judgment seat" (John 19:13). Massive stones have been disclosed in and near the area of Herod's palace, Pilate's praetorium and Judgment Seat. Apparently, the Fourth Evangelist, or his sources, knew intimately this area of Jerusalem.

These five examples must now suffice for readers to obtain the point, although it is tempting to add others.¹¹ Archaeologists have repeatedly demonstrated that the Fourth Evangelist reflects an intimate knowledge of the Jerusalem of Jesus' day.¹² The evidence indicates that the Fourth Gospel must be understood within its Jewish context and that the Fourth Evangelist had personal knowledge of Jerusalem.

Jesus

As is well known, the scientific study of Jesus of Nazareth has gone through many phases. Over the past forty years scholars have generally come to comprehend that Jesus must not be understood over *against* Judaism, nor should we talk about "Jesus *and* Judaism"; Jesus is to be studied *within* Judaism, as I tried to show in a book by that title.

There is an exception that should be noted. The Jesus Seminar in the United States has consistently portrayed Jesus without the prerequisite sensitivity to his context within Second Temple Judaism. The members of the Seminar have argued for a Cynic Jesus, a Mediterranean peasant, and a man who was not eschatological. A critic might label such productions as remnants of Anti-Judaism. I would prefer to contend that the members of the Jesus Seminar have failed to immerse themselves within Jewish texts, like the Pseudepigrapha and the Qumran Scrolls, and thus miss the point of how fundamentally Jewish were Jesus and his followers.

Jesus was clearly a very devout Jew. The claim that Jesus broke the commandments and did not honor Shabbat is misinformed. Jesus knew

11. For instance, Bethany (which Jerome in his *Onomasticon* defines as *domus afflictionis* or "house of affliction") was a place for a sick person, especially a leper, which is precisely the area designated for lepers according to the traditions in the *Temple Scroll*. Perhaps Lazarus of Bethany (John 11:1) had suffered from leprosy. R. T. Fortna includes John 11:1 as an example of incidental data that may reflect memory. Fortna in *Jesus in Johannine Tradition*, edited by R. T. Fortna and T. Thatcher (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), p. 203. See J. P. Meier's impressive methodology for discerning tradition behind the Fourth Evangelist's superbly suspenseful narratives. Meier, "The Johannine Tradition: The Raising of Lazarus (John 11:1-45)," *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus* (New York, London: Doubleday, 1994), vol. 2, pp. 798-832. Clearly, Lazarus's illness is to reveal God's glory, but the historian will note that Lazarus is ill in Bethany (11:1), precisely where the *Temple Scroll* locates lepers and presumably other sick persons.

12. See Charlesworth, ed., *Jesus and Archaeology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006).

that according to Genesis 2:2, God continued creating on Shabbat, and then rested: "On the seventh day *God completed the work that He had been doing*, and He ceased (or rested) on the seventh day from all the work that He had done."¹³ Perceiving the Torah's concept of God working on Shabbat informs Jesus' comment that he is working on Shabbat to heal the sick, just as the Father worked on Shabbat completing the creation. The meaning of John 5:16-18 takes on deeper meaning, and perhaps for the first time the context is theologically and sociologically clear:

And this was why the Judean leaders persecuted Jesus, because he did this on Shabbat. But Jesus answered them, "My Father is working still, and I am working." This, therefore, was why the Judean leaders sought all the more to kill him, because he not only broke the Shabbat but also called God his own Father, making himself equal with God.

Jesus' deep Jewish devotion is also evident in his worship. During his last week alive, Jesus was in Jerusalem. Why? He had ascended to the Holy City to celebrate Passover, as required by Torah. During this week, Jesus taught in the Temple and declared it "my Father's House." His followers, James and John (Acts 3:1), and later Paul (cf. Acts 21:26; 22:17), continued to worship in the Temple.

Thus, Jesus should not be imagined as the first Christian. He was a very devout Jew. It is conceivable that the reference to the fringe of his garment (Mark 6:56; Luke 8:44; Matt 9:20; 14:36; cf. 23:5) may indicate that he wore the religious garment of a conservative Jew, the *šīšit*.

Jesus' words sometimes make sense only when understood in light of newly discovered Jewish traditions. His comments make best sense within the hermeneutic of pre-70 Judaism and the vastly different interpretations of Torah of his day. Jesus affirmed Torah as the revelation of God's will that must be followed accurately and perceptively. Thus, Jesus differed from the interpretations of Shabbat that he knew were against God's will. For instance, Jesus' comment about leaving an animal in a pit on Shabbat (Matt 12:11) makes no sense to a religious person. But now Jesus' comment becomes clear, because the *Cairo Damascus Document* legislates that one must not help a struggling animal out of a pit on Shabbat. Likewise, Jesus' aside that the hairs of one's head are numbered (Matt 10:30; Luke 12:7)

13. JPS Tanakh, italics mine.

seems meaningless, even absurd. But its meaning now becomes clear, since the *Cairo Damascus Document*¹⁴ contains instructions for one with a skin disease on the head to see a priest and have the hairs of your head counted. These two examples provide proof how sometimes Jesus' intended meaning, once unknown and confusing, obtains clarification and importance in light of archaeological discoveries. At other times, familiar terms — like the Son of Man, the Messiah, and God's Kingdom — now obtain fuller meaning. The obscure sometimes becomes known, and the known frequently becomes clarified.

Once scholars portrayed Jesus only within "emerging Christianity." Then, Jesus was imagined to be partially Jewish and comprehended with Judaism as a background. Now more and more experts acknowledge that Jesus was a very devout Jew who must be grasped *within Second Temple Judaism*.

The Advent of "Christianity"

False Presuppositions

For 200 years, New Testament experts have tended to assume that the great theological and Christological masterpieces in the New Testament corpus must be dated late; a late date presumably shows the development of thought and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. This penchant must be exposed as absurd.

Such reasoning would mean that Jesus, Paul, and the earliest thinkers in the Palestinian Jesus Movement were not advanced and that we need to wait decades for brilliance. Many scholars, including myself, have tried to demonstrate that Second Temple Judaism was the most advanced symbolic and theologically sophisticated culture in the ancient Mediterranean world. Jewish thought was not only indigenous to Palestine, developing in line with an improved interpretation of Torah, God's will; it was also enriched by Greek, Roman, Egyptian, Persian, and other cultures. Material borrowed from these other cultures was re-thought and re-minted in light

14. These fragments from Qumran are now published in James H. Charlesworth, et al., eds., *Damascus Document II, Some Works of the Torah, and Related Documents*. Vol. 3 of *The Dead Sea Scrolls: Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek Texts with English Translations*. Ed. James H. Charlesworth, et al. PTS DSSP 3. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2006).

of Torah, as witnessed by the vast amount of parabiblical works and compositions that expanded or developed stories, concepts, and dreams imbedded within Tanak, or the Hebrew Bible (the Old Testament).

The five or more books composed, perhaps in Galilee from 300 to 4 BCE, under the name of Enoch, are so advanced theologically that with the advent of the Messiah, the Son of Man, no more development in theological vocabulary was requisite. It was necessary instead to explore how to transfer to Jesus of Nazareth the terms for the coming One developed within Second Temple Judaism, and to search for how and in what ways prophecy, canonized in Torah, proved Jesus was the Messiah. This task was performed before Paul and indeed by Paul and the Evangelists.

The Qumran *Pesharim* provide a paradigm for assisting scholars to discern the ways early Jews not in the Palestinian Jesus Movement understood scripture. Scripture had been composed not for the past; it was recorded (without insight or comprehension) for the present Community defined by the special revelation and knowledge given by God only to the Righteous Teacher (1QpHab 7). God's promises were trustworthy; indeed members of the Qumran Community could see in their own history how God has mysteriously proved trustworthy. Such interpretation was aided by the Holy Spirit from God and was comprehended and communicated in light of the conviction that the present was the Latter Days. These had been spoken about by the prophets, especially Isaiah and Habakkuk, even though God had not disclosed to the early prophets the meaning of the words they recorded. Hence, it was even possible to correct their records; that is, scripture could be corrected in the scriptorium. Thus exegesis of scripture at Qumran was pneumatic, eschatological, and an example of fulfillment hermeneutics.

This Jewish Community at Qumran, which antedates Jesus and his group by at least one hundred years, helps us comprehend the exegetical moves and hermeneutical norms of the earliest members of the Palestinian Jesus Movement. Two noted differences appear as we compare the *Pesharim* with the gospels and Paul's earliest letters. While messianism is found at Qumran, it does not shape the *Pesharim*. Only in the Palestinian Jesus Movement can one faithfully talk about messianic exegesis. The perspective that the Messiah has come and all promises are fulfilled in him distinguishes Jesus' group from all others. Secondly, all is explained in light of what is remembered about Jesus' life and thought.

The source of messianic speculation within the Palestinian Jesus

James H. Charlesworth

Movement was to a certain extent the ancient prophecies and the concepts of the Messiah found, for example, in the *Psalms of Solomon*; but the fundamental source of messianic understanding for Jesus' followers was their understanding of Jesus himself. Thus, while an exegesis of Isaiah's suffering servant passages is not present in Jewish messianic thought prior to Jesus and his group, such an interpretation defined his group, and the source of the reflection is primarily a focus on the man from Nazareth. Likewise, while the Messiah was not one who was to perform healing miracles, such undisputed aspects of Jesus' ministry defined messianism for Jesus' followers. In summation, the source of thought for Jesus' earliest followers was a vast store of written and oral traditions, all deemed revelatory and infallible; but the fundamental source of Christological thought within the Jesus Movement was the one who founded and defined the Movement: Jesus from Nazareth.

These widely recognized perceptions and articulations represent a new consensus emerging among historians and archaeologists devoted to re-creating first-century Palestinian social and religious phenomena; yet we have not encountered the term "Christian" or the concept "church," as we did so repeatedly when the Bultmannian School was regnant. These two nouns are clearly anachronistic within first-century phenomena. In order to re-present ancient social organizations without confusing them with modern concepts, we ought to transfer to our task of translating the New Testament Greek what we learned from translating papyri. That is, we usually translate *synagōgos* as "assembly" in pre-70 papyri; hence, we should translate *hē ekklēsia*, as "the assembly," as in Act 19:32 in the RSV (cf. 19:39 also).

It should now be clear that what was once called Earliest Christianity is now perceived to be a Jewish phenomenon. The group, probably a sect, was centered in Palestine.¹⁵ It originated with Jesus of Nazareth. Unlike Qumran, disappearing under the flames ignited by Vespasian's troops in 68 CE, the group became a movement that survived 70. Hence, for terms like "church," we now should use the term "Palestinian Jesus Movement."

The term "Christianity" — which is too often understood as an antithesis to Judaism — is thus revealed as misleading in describing first-century religious phenomena. The disciples of Jesus were labeled by some at

15. Gk. *Palaistinē*; Lat. *Palestina*, from Heb. *P'lesheth*. This term antedates the first century, being Herodotus' term for the land of the Philistines. "Philistia" is the land of the Philistines, the coastal plain from Joppa to Gaza.

Antioch as "Christians" (Acts 11:26); but they would have been as pleased with that label as the early Methodists were with the surrogate "Bible moths." Paul prefers to refer to the followers of Jesus as a Jewish "sect" known as the "Way" (Acts 9:2; 22:4; 24:14 and 24:22; cf. 24:5), and that brings into focus a concept and term well known from the Qumran Scrolls; the Qumranites, under the influence of Isa 40:3, portrayed themselves as members of the Way. As we refine the terms by which we portray first-century social groups, we might do well to use terms and concepts they themselves coined, inherited, and used.

In the sixties I used the term "Johannine Christians" to describe those within the Johannine Circle (or School). Now, over forty years later, I prefer to refer to a struggle within Judaism between synagogal Jews and Johannine Jews. As is well known, the term *aposynagōgos* (only in John 9:22, 12:42 and 16:2), which denotes being cast out of the synagogue, discloses not only that some in the Johannine Circle were being thrown out of the synagogue but that they wanted to attend synagogal services.¹⁶ These followers of Jesus are thus clearly Jews.

One may argue that this new perspective is anachronistic, because it reads back into the first century the definition that a Jew is one who has a Jewish mother. Such a claim misses my point.¹⁷ This was not my method or intention. As far as I know, early Jews did not call others who were Jews "non-Jews." A case study is provided by the polemics in the *Pesharim*. Those ministering in the Temple were "Sons of Darkness," but the Qumranites did not claim that they were not Jews. Many early Jewish texts, like *Some Works of the Torah*, clarify that one who was a suspect Jew was a *mamzer*; but this charge usually comes from the top down. That is, it was a way of exerting pressure and authority. The real question among Jews was an interpretation of Lev 19:18: "Who is my neighbor?" That should not be confused with "Who is a Jew?"

My point now is simply to point out that to claim we can talk about "Jews" and "Christians" in the first century is anachronistic and distorts our attempts at reconstructing first-century Palestinian society.¹⁸ The new emerging consensus, in my judgment, moves away from calling "Chris-

16. According to Acts 18:8, Crispus, who is the *archisynagōgos* of a synagogue, "believed in the Lord." I have profited from conversations on this text with C. Claussen.

17. This question was raised by a member of the symposium in Prague.

18. According to Phil 3:20, followers of Jesus perceived that their *politeuma* was in heaven.

tians” those who believed that Jesus had been raised by God. Those who made that claim in the first century continued to affirm that they were Jews (e.g., Paul and Peter [according to Acts]).

These brief reflections help clarify new perspectives of Judaism, the Gospel of John, Jesus, and the advent of “Christianity.” Not only are the new methodologies and perspectives more attuned to Jesus and his Judaism, but both open avenues of communication with Jews who have been miscast, castigated, and even murdered because of poor biblical exegesis and hermeneutics. Perhaps with renewed honesty in biblical research and a living out of the command of love, as evidenced by the man from Nazareth, those who are abandoning the institution called “the church” for religious and spiritual reasons may hear the echo of *quo vadis*.

Turning Water to Wine: Re-reading the Miracle at the Wedding in Cana

Carsten Claussen

Over the centuries the question of “what actually happened”¹ has led most critical interpreters of the Gospel of John, from David Friedrich Strauss and Ferdinand Christian Baur onwards, to radical skepticism. Already in the early third century CE Clement of Alexandria characterized its significance as “a spiritual Gospel.”² Unlike the Gospels of Mark and Luke,³ which the author of the Fourth Gospel probably knew, this later account may be regarded as “the Evangelist’s meditations on significant words and deeds of Jesus,”⁴ tempting one to affirm Martin Kähler’s verdict against the

1. Leopold von Ranke, *Geschichten der romanischen und germanischen Völker von 1494 bis 1514* (Sämtliche Werke 33/34; Leipzig: Duncker und Humblot, 1874 [2nd ed.]), p. vii.

2. *Apud* Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* 6.14.7: “But John, last of all, perceiving that what had reference to the body in the gospel of our Savior, was sufficiently detailed, and being encouraged by his familiar friends, and urged by the spirit, he wrote a spiritual gospel.” Translation follows: *Eusebius’ Ecclesiastical History: Complete and Unabridged* (trans. C. F. Cruse; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1998).

3. Jörg Frey, “Das Vierte Evangelium auf dem Hintergrund der älteren Evangelienliteratur: Zum Problem: Johannes und die Synoptiker,” in *Johannesevangelium — Mitte oder Rand des Kanons? Neue Standortbestimmungen* (QD 203; ed. T. Söding; Freiburg: Herder, 2003), pp. 60-118; for an overview of the discussion concerning the relationship between John and the Synoptics, see: D. Moody Smith, *John Among the Gospels* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2001 [2nd ed.]).

4. James D. G. Dunn, *Jesus Remembered* (CM 1; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), p. 167; Martin Hengel, “Das Johannesevangelium als Quelle für die Geschichte des antiken Juden-

I am grateful to Prof. Dr. A. J. M. Wedderburn and Prof. Dr. J. Frey, both from the University of Munich, for correcting my English and for helpful comments.

Jesus Research:
An International Perspective

*The First Princeton-Prague Symposium on Jesus Research,
Prague 2005*

Edited by

James H. Charlesworth with Petr Pokorný

and with Brian Rhea, Jan Roskovec, & Jonathan Soyars

WILLIAM B. EERDMANS PUBLISHING COMPANY
GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN / CAMBRIDGE, U.K.