

# 'Lives of Jesus' During the Great Quest for the Historical Jesus

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The quest after Jesus 'as he really was', and the lives of Jesus Christ which are its fruits, are one of the great accomplishments of mankind intellectually. Albert Schweitzer, himself a significant contributor to this quest, wrote in his famous study of 1906, that within the whole glorious realm of German theology (than which for Schweitzer there was nothing greater) 'the greatest achievement . . . is the critical investigation of the life of Jesus. What it has accomplished here has laid down the conditions and determined the course of the religious thinking of the future'.<sup>1</sup> More directly, and also more theologically, T. W. Manson once proposed the test of scholars that 'by their Lives of Jesus ye shall know them'.<sup>2</sup> For two hundred years this quest has been in active process, and instead of showing signs of abating, it has in the last decade exhibited new liveliness. To survey this great quest, especially in its recent stages, is the aim of this paper.

It is not hard to see why there should be so much concern and excitement about the quest. The man Jesus is of perennial interest, to Christian, Jew, Muslim, Hindu (recall Gandhi), and even Marxist (whose interest is often in Jesus as 'revolutionist'). If in any sense at all 'Christianity is Christ' and Jesus is authority, then the individual

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<sup>1</sup> Albert Schweitzer, *Von Reimarus zu Wrede* (1906). Eng. trans. by W. Montgomery, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus: A Critical Study of its Progress from Reimarus to Wrede* (London: A. and C. Black, 1910; 2d ed. 1911, and often reprinted; 3d ed. with a new Introduction by the author, trans. by J. R. Coates, 1954), p. 1. Editions from 1910 through the paperback ed. of 1964 contain a Preface by F. C. Burkitt; a new paperback ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1968) contains a more substantial Preface by James M. Robinson. Schweitzer's 2d German ed., entitled *Die Geschichte der Leben-Jesu-Forschung* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1913), revises the closing Chapter XIX and, bringing the survey down to 1912, adds six more chapters, which have never been translated; there is a German paperback ed., in two vols., with all three of Schweitzer's introductions (1906, 1913, 1950), plus Robinson's Preface (Hamburg: Siebenstern Taschenbuch Verlag, 2d ed. 1972), where the quotation above is on p. 45.

<sup>2</sup> In Manson's contribution to the Edward Allyn Lectures for 1943, published as *The Interpretation of the Bible*, ed. by C. W. Dugmore (London: SPCK, 1944), p. 92.

believer and the church must be interested in who he was and what he said and did. Even (or especially) in an age where reputedly 'God is dead', Jesus of Nazareth remains a figure of attractive magnitude; as someone has put it, 'God is dead, but Jesus is his only Son'. The 'Jesus people' are living examples of the power of this man to shape lives, even apart from formal church and academic study. Each man who in any sense calls himself Christian must and does, whether he realizes it or not have an image of Jesus of some sort, and thousands who disdain that name nonetheless know something of Jesus and have their views about him.

As we shall treat the topic, the last two centuries or so of life-of-Jesus studies fall into three broad chronological groupings. First comes the 'Old Quest for the historical Jesus', reaching its climax in Albert Schweitzer and his contemporaries, early in this century, and ended by a series of events, on the European continent, at least, about 1920. Then follows a period when many leading experts, especially in France and Germany, stressed that no biography of Jesus is possible. This second period stretches from 1920 to the early 1950's, though we must recognize that throughout these decades the old view of the quest persisted, especially in Anglo-Saxon scholarship. The 'New Quest for the historical Jesus' is a third stage, and we can date its inception rather precisely by a lecture given by Ernst Käsemann to fellow pupils of Bultmann in 1953.

It is the particular contention of this article that today we must speak of the 'fragmentation of the New Quest', and that in current study about Jesus a host of options exist, including most of those noted in the earlier phases of Old Quest and 'No Biography'. In the pages available here, we shall sketch the three periods in some brevity and concentrate on the current state of the quest and prospects immediately ahead.

### *I. The Old 'Quest for the Historical Jesus', Its Background, Development, and Results*

In many ways the quest is ages old, of course, for every age has produced accounts about Jesus, and each has tended to shape a Jesus in its own image and to suit its needs. The New Testament already gives us four different portraits of him in the gospels; and from Paul, Hebrews, and the sermons in Acts, other Christologies about who he is and bits of evidence of what he was like on earth can be gleaned. The church fathers too set forth lives of Jesus, as Robert M. Grant has shown; especially is this true of Origen.<sup>3</sup> Medieval piety and harmonies of the gospels produced still other accounts, so that Harvey K. McArthur has rightly spoken of a 'quest through the centuries'.<sup>4</sup> But it was really only after the Renaissance and Reformation and indeed

<sup>3</sup> R. M. Grant, *The Earliest Lives of Jesus* (New York: Harper; London: SPCK, 1961).

<sup>4</sup> H. K. McArthur, *The Quest Through the Centuries: The Search for the Historical Jesus* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1966).

the Age of Reason in the west, when historical-critical study of documents from the past began, that the quest can be said to have begun in earnest.

Joachim Jeremias (and most scholars would agree with him) has pinpointed the start of the great quest to the year 1778.<sup>5</sup> (In comparative terms, that makes the quest roughly as old as the United States, or as Indian history since the rivalry between the French and British.) - For 1778 was the year when a series of essays on Jesus and his purpose and his disciples and their deeds appeared by Hermann Samuel Reimarus, a teacher of oriental languages at a gymnasium in Hamburg (and married to the daughter of one of the most orthodox Protestant church leaders of the day). They were published posthumously and anonymously by the poet Lessing. For good reason Reimarus had not let his thoughts become public during his lifetime, lest they offend the pious, bring disgrace to his family, and censure to himself. Lessing put them forth as 'Fragments from an Unknown Writer, found in the Library at Wolfenbüttel'. Only in the next century did we get an English translation of parts of the Wolfenbüttel Fragments, and only in the last few years have they been translated fully, and then, ironically, in two separate versions.<sup>6</sup> In his clandestine sketches Reimarus had suggested that Jesus, far from being a religious figure, was a man with revolutionist intentions and that after his death his followers, too addicted to a vagrant life supported by the gifts of others, spread rumours that he was risen, so they could continue to live off the religion they were thus creating. Christianity was, in this view, a fraud from the start.

Needless to say, the views of the 'Wolfenbüttel unknown' (Reimarus) stirred up a storm of response, as did the even more provocative suggestions by David Friedrich Strauss in his two-volume life of Jesus in 1835-36.<sup>7</sup> Strauss, as is well known, took the Hegelian

<sup>5</sup> J. Jeremias, *The Problem of the Historical Jesus*, trans. by Norman Perrin ('Facet Books Biblical Series', 13; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1964, rev. ed. 1969); bibliography on the quest, pp. 25-27. Literature on the quest since 1778 is extensive. See especially Heinz Zahrnt, *The Historical Jesus*, trans. by John S. Bowden (New York: Harper and Row; London: Collins, 1963), and Hugh Anderson, *Jesus and Christian Origins: A Commentary on Modern Viewpoints* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964). From a conservative point of view, Charles C. Anderson, *Critical Quests of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969) and *The Historical Jesus: A Continuing Quest* (ibid., 1972). We omit from consideration the early life of Jesus written by the Jesuit missionary in India, Hieronymus Xavier, for the Mogul emperor, Akbar.

<sup>6</sup> *Reimarus: Fragments*, trans. by Ralph S. Fraser, ed. by Charles H. Talbert ('Lives of Jesus Series', ed. by L. E. Keck; Philadelphia: Fortress; London: SCM, 1970). *The Goal of Jesus and His Disciples*, introduction and trans. by George Wesley Buchanan (Leiden: Brill, 1970). Buchanan's introduction concentrates more on reactions in Germany in Lessing's day; the 'Lives of Jesus' edition provides more material at less price (the U.S. ed. is paperback).

<sup>7</sup> An English translation by George Eliot of *Das Leben Jesu kritisch bearbeitet* appeared in 1848, 2d. ed. 1892, 3d ed. 1898, 4th ed. 1902. It is being

pattern of the Tübingen School (thesis, antithesis, synthesis) and applied it to (1) traditional views about Jesus over the centuries which thought in terms of 'supernatural explanations' (the biblical and orthodox view of Jesus); (2) 'rationalistic explanation' (the sort of thing that had been developing under the approach of reason, in opposition to the supernaturalistic thesis); and (3) resulting 'mythological interpretation' (Strauss's own synthesis). By this he meant that myths supposedly were 'in the air' of the day and were employed by early followers to make Jesus into the messiah supernaturally pictured in the gospels. No rationalistic explanations are needed; it is enough to strip away the myths. To Strauss an even greater reaction followed than in the case of Reimarus. (Schweitzer devotes a special section of his book to listing literature called forth by Strauss's *Leben-Jesu*.<sup>8</sup>)

Through such sensationally significant books the quest was launched. Its myriad 'lives' are detailed by Albert Schweitzer (though not completely without prejudice, for Schweitzer is seeking to set up the history of life-of-Jesus study from 1778 to about 1900 in such a way that certain trends will undergird the emphasis he is going to make in his closing chapter). Along with Reimarus and Strauss, the Frenchman Ernest Renan, whose *La vie de Jésus* appeared in 1863, provides a high spot, or for piety a low spot (though Schweitzer, who has little good to say for most of French scholarship, dismisses Renan, with his use of 'aesthetic feeling' as a 'fifth gospel' source, as 'lacking conscience').<sup>9</sup> It is important to note that conservative as well as liberal orthodox believer as well as rationalist, pietist as well as impious biographers, thereafter tried their hands at sketching Jesus 'as he was'.

All in all, the nineteenth-century quest (the beginning of the great quest or, as we have called it, the Old Quest, in contrast to the new one which began in 1953) failed to issue in any dominant reconstruction of Jesus on which most could agree; certainly no one 'life' carried the day. Many of the efforts detailed in Schweitzer's history are long forgotten, and his chapters are aptly called 'a graveyard of lost hypotheses'. (Unless, however, we are aware of these theories, we shall be taken by surprise when one comes along in new guise as 'the latest' about Jesus).

Yet for all its failure to produce *the* biography of Jesus, the Old Quest can be said to have had some significant results. For one thing, it exhibited genuine concern for the historical figure of the man from Nazareth. Throughout the history of Christianity there has been a perennial danger of docetism, the notion that a divine figure

reprinted in the 'Lives of Jesus Series' referred to above (note 6) under the title, *The Life of Jesus Critically Examined*, as is Strauss's later work of 1865, *The Christ of Faith and the Jesus of History*, which was directed against Schleiermacher's *Life of Jesus* (also reprinted in this series).

<sup>8</sup> In the German paperback ed. of 1972 (cited above, note (1), pp. 632-35 (sixty titles); it is not included in the Eng. trans.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, Chapter XIII, for Schweitzer's strictures (pp. 207-218), with a listing of 'anti-Renan literature' from the nineteenth century, pp. 635-39; in the Eng. trans., pp. 180-92, with the list of literature not included.

had merely appeared in the world ('appearance-ism'). In doing justice to his divine side and the deity that faith confessed in him, Christians had often minimized his humanity. This was often a danger in Protestant Scholasticism, just as it had been in Catholic and Orthodox thought. The quest took the man seriously in his humanity, and compelled preaching, New Testament study, and theology in general to do so too.

A corollary of this concern for 'the man among men' was the opposition it mounted to, and its defeat of, the 'Christ Myth School'. There had emerged, around the turn of the century, voices who argued that 'Jesus' never lived, or that the 'Christ figure' was some projection from the ideas of the early church, or a mythical reflection of age-old religious themes. This notion was refuted precisely by Liberal scholars (as well as conservatives), but that is why many a book on Jesus written in the first few decades of our century begins with an assertion and some historical proof that Jesus did live.<sup>10</sup>

A second result of the nineteenth-century quest stems from the fact that these 'questers' knew the scriptural material well and in the course of ferreting out what might or might not be 'historical' examined the gospel passages in minute detail. They knew their Greek and the Aramaic or Hebrew that they conjectured lay behind the gospel accounts. Out of this historical-linguistic study came lines of solution, widely accepted, for the 'Synoptic problem'. At the start of the great quest, we must remember, John's Gospel was the one most revered, Mark the one least regarded. (This stems, in part, from Augustine's dictum, that Mark was a 'mere abbreviator' of Matthew; this situation can be confirmed by the observation that most traditional lectionaries in liturgical churches make comparatively little use of Mark.) In reflection of this situation, the early 'radical' lives of Jesus often began with John's Gospel as basic, and when they overthrew the Johannine Jesus as not likely historical, that spurred others, especially conservatives, to examine the Synoptics to see if here there might not be a more firm outline of Jesus' life.

Thus it was that in the nineteenth century care was taken to establish scientifically which gospel was first written and what possible sources lay behind our accounts. The conclusion most widely accepted was that Mark, so long overlooked, was the oldest and, they added, most untheological (in contrast to John) and therefore (they felt) more historically correct. (The 'official' Roman Catholic position, that Matthew is prior, had its defenders down into the 1950's, but ironically, just as most Roman Catholics have shifted to Markan priority, William

<sup>10</sup> On the 'Mythicist School' (J. A. Robertson, Arthur Drews, Dujardin, W. B. Smith, Georg Brandes), cf. A. D. Howell Smith, *Jesus Not a Myth* (London: Watts and Co., 1942), and in the 2d German ed. of Schweitzer (cited above, note 1), Chapters XXII and XXIII. The controversy has nothing to do, of course, with Bultmann's proposal in 1941 for 'demythologizing' the New Testament (i.e., translating its antique world-view and terminology into existentialist language; Bultmann insists emphatically in *Jesus and the Word* (cited below, note 25) and other writings of his that Jesus of Nazareth did live, contrary to the Christ Myth School.

R. Farmer has returned to the Matthean theory.<sup>11</sup>) Along with Mark, a second source, dubbed 'Q', was assumed to have been used by Matthew and Luke for passages which they share in common and which are not in Mark. Special sources were also conjectured behind Matthew (M) and Luke (L). The high-water mark of Synoptic source criticism was Streeter's *Four Gospels* in 1924,<sup>12</sup> an outgrowth in many ways of the quest's appetite for locating the most accurate sources about Jesus. The 'four-source hypothesis' and versions of it, and indeed the whole concern with gospel sources was a fruit of the quest, even if, given the variety of source analyses and varying interpretations of them, no one 'life' emerged dominant.

In connection with this variety of views about the life of Christ, even after almost a century of search, mention should be made of one prophetic voice who opposed the entire enterprise and stood athwart all efforts to recover the 'historical Jesus'. Martin Kaehler was a maverick professor of New Testament and systematic theology at Bonn and later Halle who in 1892 published his lectures on 'the so-called historical Jesus' and what he termed, in contrast, 'the historic, biblical Christ'.<sup>13</sup> (Again, this publication was not translated into English until the last decade, but its influence has been enormous.) Kaehler stated quite clearly that the 'historical Jesus' is, and will always remain, an unsolvable problem for scholarship, if for no other reason than the inadequacy of sources. But never mind, he went on, what matters is the 'historic, biblical Christ', by which he meant the portrait of a redeemer, from out of the whole Bible, set forth in Christian proclamation, for faith. Kaehler thus introduced a distinction which, even if it is possible only in German, is significant, between the *historische* Jesus (as the quest had spoken of its target) and the biblical *geschichtliche* Christ. The first term has the idea of 'that which happened in the past' with no implication of further significance, while the latter adjective means 'that which happened in the past but with ongoing

<sup>11</sup> W. R. Farmer, *The Synoptic Problem: A Critical Analysis* (New York: Macmillan, 1964). The multitude of those accepting Markan priority (and the likelihood of a 'Q' source) in spite of Farmer's campaign is too numerous to list. The failing of those who accept conventional Synoptic source analysis has usually been that they sometimes state too dogmatically as fact what must remain hypothesis (though a highly likely one). Farmer's greatest contribution lies in pointing out the history of (often careless) scholarship in the past on the issue and, I think, a desire on all sides in the nineteenth century to find in Mark a factual basis for writing a life of Jesus. His position is best refuted by painstaking analysis of the Synoptics, pericope by pericope, asking which theory on priority explains more of the evidence; on Farmer's own theory, Mark again and again appears as an inept (not to say stupid) rewriting of Matthew (and Luke); cf. my review in *Dialog* 4 (Autumn, 1965): 308-11.

<sup>12</sup> B. H. Streeter, *The Four Gospels* (London: Macmillan; New York: St Martin's Press, 1924).

<sup>13</sup> *Der sogenannte historische Jesus und der geschichtliche biblische Christus* (1892). Eng. trans. by Carl E. Braaten, *The So-Called Historical Jesus and the Historic Biblical Christ*, 'Seminar Editions', ed. by T. G. Tappert; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1964).

implications'. 'Historical' and 'historic' have become agreed English renderings, and some English dictionaries now recognize this distinction between the terms. For faith, the historic, biblical Christ matters, not some reconstituted historical Jesus.

Kaehler's views attracted only minor interest in his own day (Schweitzer's book takes no note of him), for an optimism about the quest, and the desirability of recovering the historical Jesus (in contrast to the Christ of the church's faith) dominated the period. But Kaehler's voice is evidence of a bit of the variety in outlook which existed even at the height of the Old Quest.

## II. *The 'No Biography' View, 1920-1953*

The years around the end of World War I brought changes to the theological as well as to the political map. The optimism of the Liberal era gave way to a new realism and even pessimism. In New Testament studies the epistles, Paul, and the early church experienced a revival of interest. In systematics, 'Word-of-God theology' came to the fore, with Neo-Orthodoxy. So far as life-of-Jesus studies went, four factors helped to put an end to the Old Quest in many quarters and to direct attention along new lines, leading for some to the conclusion that a biography of Jesus was neither possible nor desirable. In this way Kaehler's views triumphed.

The first factor, chronologically at least, has to do with 'eschatology'. Conventional theology made the study of the 'last things' a final chapter, formally affirmed but seldom vital, and treated, if at all, only at the end of a lecture course or book. Liberalism knew even less what to do with a 'second coming' or passages about apocalyptic signs, judgment, heaven and hell. It was the service of Albert Schweitzer that he put eschatology on center stage, so that it could not henceforth be ignored, thereby causing a revolution in Jesus studies.

There were, of course, in earlier writers inklings of what Schweitzer stressed. In 1892 Johannes Weiss had published a penetrating study (again not translated until recently)<sup>14</sup> showing that when Jesus and the gospels spoke of 'the kingdom of God' the reference was not to a pious feeling inwardly, or to a welfare state constructed by human efforts (the 'Social Gospel'), but to a catastrophic intervention by God himself apocalyptically. William Wrede, another German professor again in a book put into English only in 1971 but first published in 1901,<sup>15</sup> saw the dilemma and posed the issue sharply: the nineteenth-century quest and especially Liberal theology saw Jesus as a 'great teacher' whose 'timeless truths' deserved to be heeded by all men. But closer examination of the gospels showed that, again and again, Jesus spoke in apocalyptic terms. Was he historically a rabbinic teacher or a messianist-apocalyptist? Wrede moreover noted how,

<sup>14</sup> *Jesus' Proclamation of the Kingdom of God*, trans. by R. H. Hiers and D. L. Holland ('Lives of Jesus Series'; 1971).

<sup>15</sup> *The Messianic Secret*, trans. by J. C. G. Greig ('The Library of Theological Translations', ed. by William Barclay; Cambridge and London: James Clarke & Co., 1971).

whenever Jesus was confessed as a messianic figure, he regularly enjoined silence on those involved (e.g., Mark 1:25, 34, 44; 2:12; 5:43, etc.). Did this device of keeping the messiahship a secret go back to Jesus (so that he was more than a teacher), or is it a later creation, to explain how an originally non-messianic teacher who after Easter came to be regarded as Messiah could have been unrecognized during his earthly life? Wrede opted for the latter view: the messianic secret is a device foisted by the early church on the unmessianic teaching material. But the unhappy choice for orthodox Christians was thus between the non-eschatological teacher (of Wrede and Liberalism) and a Jesus who had been wholly eschatological, but wrong (so already Reimarus, cf. J. Weiss).

Albert Schweitzer, in 1906, after first tracing the history of life-of-Jesus study 'from Reimarus to Wrede' (whom he thus made the pivotal interpreters), set forth a Jesus entirely dominated by eschatological concerns, not merely in his idea of the kingdom but in everything he did.<sup>16</sup> The story of how Schweitzer arrived at his views need not detain us here, save that Matthew 10:23 was the key verse, 'You will not have gone through all the towns of Israel before the Son of man comes'. Schweitzer reasoned that this 'M' saying must be authentic prophecy from Jesus, otherwise the church would never have preserved it, for the twelve did go throughout Israel and returned to Jesus (Mark 6:12-13, 30). Nor need we recount how Schweitzer then reconstructed the life of Jesus, reversing the canonical sequence of Peter's confession and the transfiguration, and arguing that what Judas betrayed was Jesus' secret claim to be messiah. What does interest us is how Schweitzer portrayed a Jesus who expected the coming of the Son of man in his lifetime; later realized he must go up to Jerusalem to die himself, and become the Son of man; and who died really as a disappointed eschatologist, since God did not bring history to an end after he expired upon the cross. Jesus' teachings, Schweitzer saw merely as an 'ethic for the interim', that brief period between the appearance of Jesus and the apocalyptic end of all history; contrary to the Liberals, such heroic ethics have no direct value for subsequent centuries.

Clergymen who allude to Schweitzer in sermons probably do not always know exactly what he said about Jesus' teachings or intentions (they might be shocked if they did), but so magnificent are some of Schweitzer's phrases and so inspiring his own life (although his medical

<sup>16</sup> See especially Chapter XIX in the 1906 German ed. and the Eng. trans.; Schweitzer's views are already worked out in a book published in 1901 in German, Eng. trans. by Walter Lowrie, *The Mystery of the Kingdom of God: The Secret of Jesus' Messiahship and Passion* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1914; 2d ed., Macmillan, 1950). Schweitzer's subsequent writings are less important for his view of Jesus, which in a sense never changed, but cf. his medical dissertation, *Die psychiatrische Beurteilung Jesu* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1913), trans. by W. Montgomery as 'The Sanity of the Eschatological Jesus', in *The Expositor*, VIII Series, Vol. 6; and then by Charles R. Joy, *The Psychiatric Study of Jesus: Exposition and Criticism* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1948).

mission techniques have been much criticized in the post-colonial period) that his influence can scarcely be exaggerated. Schweitzer himself boasted he had put an end to old-style 'lives' of 'Jesus the teacher', and that is true, even if we think he exaggerated somewhat the dogmatic-eschatologism of Jesus. Henceforth no 'life' could ignore the apocalyptic side. Negatively he forced the judgment of 'inadequate' over all previous lives which left out this element.

The second factor, after Schweitzer wrote, which helped turn scholars away from biographing Jesus' life was the rise of the form-critical method.<sup>17</sup> It is well known how this technique, developed in Old Testament studies to get at oral traditions which lay behind the written sources, came to be applied to the gospels about 1920 through the work of Martin Dibelius, Karl Ludwig Schmidt, and Rudolf Bultmann.<sup>18</sup> If Mark was written, as the oldest gospel, sometime just prior to A.D. 70, and if pre-synoptic sources might be traced back two decades earlier ('Q' perhaps to about A.D. 50—compare the views of Streeter in this period), then there still remained a crucial twenty to forty years between the historical Jesus and our oldest written sources about him. What had happened in these decades? Had the Jesus-tradition been faithfully preserved, or was there elaboration or even falsification in these years (e.g., the creation of the 'messianic secret' or revamping of Jesus' eschatology, or even the development of a 'Christ myth' as some had charged)? If progress was to be made, the tool had to be forged and used which would allow one to get at the oral traditions concerning Jesus which were circulating in Christian communities in the decades immediately after the resurrection.

The classification schemes for such oral forms, the use assumed for material in preaching, teaching, and worship, and the attempt to assess the creative power of the church under the Spirit as well as the community's work of faithfully transmitting material about Jesus, as sketched by various critics, need not be repeated here. Suffice to say that *Formgeschichte* came into New Testament studies in the English-speaking world only in the 1930's (Vincent Taylor, R. H. Lightfoot), then often in less radical versions, frequently stressing a role of the church congenial to Anglicans (cf. F. C. Grant's views)

<sup>17</sup> On *Formgeschichte*, cf., e.g., Edgar V. McKnight, *What Is Form Criticism?* ('Guides to Biblical Scholarship', ed. by D. O. Via; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1969); W. Doty, 'The Discipline and Literature of New Testament Form Criticism', *Anglican Theological Review* 51 (1969): 257-322; and R. S. Barbour, *Traditio-Historical Criticism of the Gospels* ('Studies in Creative Criticism', 4; London: SPCK, 1973).

<sup>18</sup> Dibelius (German published in 1919), *From Tradition to Gospel*, trans. by B. L. Woolf (New York: Scribner's, 1935, paperback 1966; British reprint, 1973, in 'The Library of Theological Translations', cited above, note 15). Bultmann (German, 1921), *The History of the Synoptic Tradition*, trans. by John Marsh (New York: Harper and Row; Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1963). Schmidt, *Der Rahmen der Geschichte Jesu: Literarkritische Untersuchungen zur ältesten Jesusüberlieferung* (Berlin: Trowitzsch and Sohn, 1919; reprinted, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1960).

and with more rigorous German treatments translated only belatedly (Bultmann, 1963, and badly at that) or not at all (K. L. Schmidt).<sup>19</sup> Hence form criticism never had the full effect on English scholarship that it exercised on the continent. (Englishmen raised on T. R. Glover therefore simply could not understand why Maurice Goguel spent half of his *Vie de Jésus* dealing with 'Prolegomena'!<sup>20</sup>) Yet however mildly or radically, form criticism had at least two clear effects on life-of-Jesus studies.

The first influence came in the form critics' contention that the material now in our gospels or in sources behind them circulated originally in brief units, unconnected with each other, and having no indications of time or place, let alone biographical interest. Such details were held to be the later work of the evangelists, who in effect strung together pearls and gems (the stories about Jesus and sayings by him) to create the necklace effect in our gospels. To change the figure, the oral anecdotes and logia attributed to Jesus were like points on a railway timetable: each one exists, tracks have later been laid to link them, but connections are not guaranteed; indeed, points on the journey can be arranged in a different sequence (and were, in some instances, by the evangelists). This point was simply devastating for the old-style endeavour to put together on a day-by-day basis an account of Jesus' life which moved from event to event. The only exception the form critics allowed, where there might have been a nexus of time and place connections from the outset, was the Passion story—and even the unified character of the passion story has been challenged in more recent times.<sup>21</sup>

Particularly neuralgic was the debate over whether the gospels provide a historically reliable outline of Jesus' life. English scholars like C. H. Dodd argued the kerygma (or apostolic preaching, such as we have in Acts) does and that Mark has simply followed it; Vincent Taylor assumed such a framework was available to Mark.<sup>22</sup> K. L.

<sup>19</sup> See above, note 18. For V. Taylor, see *The Formation of the Gospel Tradition* (London: Macmillan, 1933); R. H. Lightfoot, *History and Interpretation in the Gospels* (The Bampton Lectures, 1934; London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1935); F. C. Grant, *Form Criticism: A New Method of New Testament Research*, a translation of essays by Bultmann and Kundsinn (Chicago and New York: Willett, Clark & Co., 1934, later reprinted in Harper Torchbooks), e.g., pp. 3, 8. It has been remarked that it was the emphasis on the church (German, *Gemeinde*, 'community', which does not have quite the same connotation) which attracted certain Anglicans to the discipline.

<sup>20</sup> *La vie de Jésus* (Paris: Payot, 1932). Eng. trans. by Olive Wyon, *The Life of Jesus* (London: Macmillan, 1933), reprinted as *Jesus and the Origins of Christianity*, paperback in 2 vols., with an introduction by C. Leslie Mitton (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1960).

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Eta Linnemann, *Studien zur Passionsgeschichte* ('Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments', 102; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1970).

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Taylor's book on form criticism (cited above, note 19), his commentary on Mark (London: Macmillan, 1955), and his book, *The Life and Ministry of Jesus* (Macmillan, 1954, paperback reprint 1968) and the article on which it

Schmidt, on the other hand, wrote in order to 'blow the Markan outline skyhigh',<sup>23</sup> and most German form critics assume the outline, even in broad terms of 'Galilee, then Jerusalem', is a creation of the early church (or was it 'Galilee-Samaria-Jerusalem', as in Luke, or is John right to jump back and forth from Jerusalem to Galilee several times, or are all these patterns created for literary and theological purposes?).

The other effect from form criticism came in its contention that all material about Jesus in the early church was told 'from faith, for faith' (Rom. 1:17). That is, it arose out of belief in Jesus as lord, and aimed to undergird faith in him. Therefore preservation of data for biographers was not its aim, and so the Jesus tradition took no interest in physical description of the man from Nazareth, recounting his emotional development, or all the other things in which biography delights. This understanding of the purpose of the material behind the sources behind the gospels served further to diminish any hope of writing a 'life'.

Often closely related to the growth of 'form history' was a third factor in writing 'finis' to some of the Old Quest: a changed view of history from that dominant in the nineteenth century. Then the ideal had been to treat history 'objectively', to discover without favoritism or prejudice 'what had really happened' (von Ranke). The ideal historian was a spectator, sitting in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean, viewing his data dispassionately. History was a 'thing', to which he stood in an 'I-it' relationship.

But, it came to be asked in the post-Freudian revolution and after a world war and depression and the varying interpretations thereof given by competent historians, whether impartiality was possible—e.g., in discussing the historicity of the 'Black Hole of Calcutta', let alone Jesus and his claims. Was such 'objectivity' desirable? Or is history, precisely because it differs from the physical sciences and concerns people and events, always a matter of involvement, the historian never a man who stands apart, without presuppositions, but is intimately involved? Is not history often a matter of making sense of the data via a nexus created by the historian (R. G. Collingwood)? In the light of such questions, a 'new view of history' arose among some secular historians, which was eagerly taken over by New Testament scholars like Bultmann. History here becomes an 'I-thou' relationship, and only the historian excited by his own historicity and existence can really understand the texts and what they want to say.<sup>24</sup> Coupled

is based in *The Interpreter's Bible*, Vol. 7 (Nashville: Abingdon, 1951), pp. 114-44. For Dodd, cf. *The Apostolic Preaching and its Developments* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1936).

<sup>23</sup> The phrase, used in Schmidt's *Rahmen* (cited above, note 18), reflects World War I imagery.

<sup>24</sup> A good general account of developments is to be found in E. H. Carr's Trevelyan Lectures for 1961, published as *What Is History?* (New York: Knopf, 1963, also in Penguin Books). For Collingwood, cf. especially his book, *The Idea of History* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1946). Bultmann's views are especially expressed in his Gifford Lectures for 1955, *History and Existence* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1962).

with Schweitzer's emphasis and in the light of the negative results from form criticism regarding the merely 'historische Jesus', this new view led to an understanding of history as 'eschatological moment' and 'call to my historicity'. Writing the life of Jesus could, on this showing, no longer be an exercise in biography about a Jew of the first century, but must stress his teachings and their meaning now.

That brings us to the fourth factor. Events had conspired to kill off the 'lives' from the Old Quest as pious (or irreverent) fictions which ignored eschatology, to emphasize that an old-fashioned biography of Jesus was critically impossible due to the nature of the source material, and to open the way to a different view of history. These factors all fitted with the current developments of philosophy and theology on the European continent in the 1920's and '30's. Karl Barth and 'Word-of-God theology' rejoiced in the collapse of the quest for the Jesus of history; now the kerygma or 'word' could be all-central, and faith could really be faith, in God's word, and not in human power of historical reconstruction of a palatable Jesus. Bultmann revelled in this hopelessness about the quest: let all 'lives of Jesus' burn, they are nothing but phantasies anyway; our stay is not any 'Christ after the flesh' (2 Cor. 5:16; taken to refer to the historical, biographical Jesus) but the Lord Christ of the kerygma, proclaimed in terms meaningful for existence today. The younger Heidegger's existentialism was taken as the cradle of language in which the Christ of the New Testament could be placed. Existentialism and Word-of-God theology were thus elements that fitted together to provide a practical and theological alternative to the role the biographical Jesus had played previously.

In this way the Old Quest virtually died out, at least in Germany, between the end of World War I and the period after World War II. (Actually three important qualifications have to be made to that statement, below, but we have deliberately emphasized the dominance of the 'no-biography' view in the land where the Old Quest had begun and was strongest, in order that the significance of the New Quest will properly stand out.)

The first qualification: so strong was the Old Quest tradition that even scholars like Bultmann and Martin Dibelius and K. L. Schmidt who eschewed it still wrote 'lives of Christ' of a sort.<sup>25</sup> (Bultmann's even appeared in a series of 'great biographies' called 'Lives of the Immortals'.) It needs to be stressed, however, how much these books differed from the older lives. There is almost no chronology, and certainly no psychological interest in how Jesus came to regard

<sup>25</sup> R. Bultmann, *Jesus* (Berlin: Deutsche Bibliothek, 1926). Eng. trans. by Louise Pettibone Smith and Erminie Huntress, *Jesus and the Word* (New York: Scribner's, 1934). M. Dibelius, *Jesus* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1939, 2d ed. 1949). Eng. trans. by Charles B. Hedrick and F. C. Grant, *Jesus* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1949). K. L. Schmidt did the article on 'Jesus Christus' in the German encyclopedia, *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, 2d ed., which has been translated in the series, *Twentieth Century Theology in the Making*, ed. by J. Pelikan (London: Collins, Fontana Books; New York: Harper and Row), Vol. 1, *Biblical Theology* (1969), pp. 93-168.

himself as messiah; the sources do not permit that, and besides the historical Jesus presumably made no messianic claims for himself. It is his teaching, not his 'life' that is featured, but even this is retold in such a way that the emphasis is on its existential meaning. It is not without reason that Bultmann's 'life' was retitled in its English translation *Jesus and the Word*. What you do in a book about Jesus has been redefined by eschatology, existentialism, the Word-of-God nature of scripture, and what we now understand history and the gospel sources to be.

The second qualification is the fact that in the Anglo-Saxon world, for reasons noted above, the Old Quest went on, or as T. W. Manson put it, '*The Quest . . . continued*'.<sup>26</sup> None of the four factors noted above came through so radically to English students of the New Testament. What was discovered to be the portrait in the gospels was assumed to be, by and large, the direct influence of the historical Jesus himself, who combined the Servant concept of Isaiah 53 with the Son-of-man idea in Daniel 7, to create his personal messianology.<sup>27</sup> It was unthinkable that most of the material in the gospels could not, with few exceptions, go back to Jesus during his earthly ministry.

Thirdly we must again underscore the variety of views during the period between 1920 and 1953, just as during the period of the Old Quest. While we have highlighted the German position that no *Leben-Jesu* was possible, and the British tendency to go on writing 'lives', the fact is that Germans also wrote Old-Quest-style biographies and a few people in the English-speaking world questioned whether we could ever hear 'little more' of the historical Jesus 'than a whisper of his voice', since in the gospels we trace 'but the outskirts of his ways' (a poetic phrase from R. H. Lightfoot for which he was roundly criticized).<sup>28</sup> Further, there were 'lives' in this period which fit no easy classification, especially in America, where influences from both German and British scholarship were felt.

As example, one which will prove significant for developments in our day, I cite *Jesus: A New Biography* by Shirley Jackson Case.<sup>29</sup> A Canadian, he taught at the University of Chicago Divinity School

<sup>26</sup> 'The Quest of the Historical Jesus—Continued' (1949), in Manson's collected essays, *Studies in the Gospels and Epistles* ed. by Matthew Black (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1962), pp. 3-12; cf. also his contribution, 'The Life of Jesus: some tendencies in present-day research', in *The Background of the New Testament and its Eschatology: Essays in Honour of C. H. Dodd*, ed. by W. D. Davies and D. Daube (Cambridge University Press, 1954, reprinted 1964), pp. 211-21.

<sup>27</sup> So T. W. Manson, *The Servant-Messiah: A Study of the Public Ministry of Jesus* (Cambridge University Press, 1953; paperback, 1961).

<sup>28</sup> R. H. Lightfoot, *History and Interpretation* (cited above, note 19), p. 225. The phrase was intended by Lightfoot to allude to the hiddenness of God as described at Job 26:14,

Lo, these (the wind, cloud, etc.) are but the outskirts of his ways;  
and how small a whisper do we hear of him!

<sup>29</sup> Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1927; reprinted in the 'Lives of Jesus Series', 1972).

from 1908 to 1938, and succeeded Shailer Mathews as Dean there, from whom he learned the 'socio-historical method' characteristic of the 'Chicago School' of biblical studies. Oriented to the natural sciences, empiricism, and humanism, this method stressed the social environment, not as a grounds for modern social action (as many might today) so much as for getting at the factors involved in the rise of religion and its pragmatic and functional values. The criterion stressed for isolating authentic material from Jesus was suitability to the environment of Jesus' day (contrast Bultmann, writing about the same time who set aside not only all that betrays the interests of the early church but also anything paralleled in the Judaism of the day). Social environment was thus stressed, the Jesus who emerges is one who conforms to that world, and the religion he taught and lived is what matters most. Thus, in America, at least, other views, newer trends, Liberalism, Neo-Orthodoxy, existentialism, Fundamentalism, all exercised influence in the study of Jesus in the 1950's.

### *III. The New Quest and its Fragmentation*

Inevitably the pendulum swung again, toward fresh interest in the Jesus of history, even among those who had seemingly renounced any quest. The particular impetus toward this development came not from conservatives or those in Britain who had long championed investigation after the figure of Jesus as he must have been, but surprisingly among Bultmann's own pupils. It led to what has been called the New Quest of the historical Jesus, in the 1950's and 1960's.

In the post-war period it was the custom for a select group of New Testament scholars who had worked under Bultmann at the University of Marburg and friends who agreed with his approach to gather for a few days each year and discuss papers on the latest trends in critical studies. At the meeting on October 20, 1953, of these 'old Marburgers', most of them themselves New Testament professors, Ernst Kaesemann gave an address on 'The Problem of the Historical Jesus' in which he proposed that a new quest was both scientifically possible and theologically necessary, and that this group should give itself to it.<sup>80</sup> While it was never a mark of the 'Bultmann School' to insist on uniformity of outlook, Kaesemann in particular had always retained an independent outlook, as a parish pastor of the 'Confessing Church' against the Nazis and later as a professor in Göttingen and subsequently in Tübingen. His paper in 1953 traced developments in Jesus study from Kaehler through Bultmann and argued that, in spite of all the critical problems of criteria for authenticity and dangers of 'historicization', there is a significant historical element in our gospels where can be seen what was distinctive about the mission of Jesus. Kaesemann pointed particularly to the sovereign freedom and authority of Jesus, in the proclamation of this prophet about the kingdom coming in his word, yet who made no claim for himself. The most rigorous scholarship allows such insights into the historical Jesus,

<sup>80</sup> Eng. trans. in Kaesemann's *Essays on New Testament Themes* ('Studies in Biblical Theology', 41; London: SCM, 1964), pp. 15-47.

he held, and it is necessary to emphasize again the life of Jesus precisely because it did have significance for faith in the early church. (Presumably, early Christians might have been content simply to tell the Christ story in terms of Philippians 2:6-11, but the church also wrote gospels about the man who was its lord.) The theological necessity of a New Quest was well epitomized in the phrase about the need to counter 'kerygma docetism'<sup>31</sup>: i.e., the notion that the mere appearance of the Christ figure on earth was sufficient in the preaching of the early church. To avoid the age-old heresy of the Docetists, it must be stressed anew that the crucified Christ was Jesus.

This call for a New Quest was taken up with great alacrity in Bultmannian circles and hailed by others with varying degrees of enthusiasm. Carry-over of the development into the Anglo-Saxon world was this time assured through prompt translation and publication of certain key books and championing of the cause by American scholars sympathetic to the Bultmannian outlook, notably James M. Robinson, who wrote on the quest in the series 'Studies in Biblical Theology' and edited the English version of Günther Bornkamm's German paperback 'life', *Jesus of Nazareth*.<sup>32</sup> Most conservative scholars welcomed the emphasis on Jesus; Catholics entered into the quest as never before and almost every New Testament scholar who was of any importance had a say in print, notably in several fat anthologies, entire issues of periodicals given over to the topic, or symposia at learned societies.<sup>33</sup> In the English-speaking world 1961 might be reckoned the high point of interest. The movement also had its effects in theology generally, well summed up in the book by the systematist, Paul Althaus, *The So-Called Kerygma and the Historical Jesus* (a play on Kaehler's title of almost seventy years before).<sup>34</sup>

Of course, the label 'New Quest' came to cover a vast array of approaches, often very different from what Kaesemann had envisioned.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Nils A. Dahl, 'The Problem of the Historical Jesus' (1953), Eng. trans. in *Kerygma and History: A Symposium on the Theology of Rudolf Bultmann*, ed. by C. E. Braaten and Roy A. Harrisville (New York and Nashville: Abingdon, 1962), pp. 138-71. Cf. also Bo Reicke, 'Incarnation and Exaltation: The Historic Jesus and the Kerygmatic Christ', *Interpretation* 16 (1962): 156-68.

<sup>32</sup> *A New Quest of the Historical Jesus* ('Studies in Biblical Theology', 25; London: SCM, 1959); Robinson's German version, *Kerygma und historischer Jesus* (Zurich: Zwingli Verlag, 1960), represents a later expansion of his thoughts. Bornkamm's *Jesus von Nazareth* appeared in 1956 (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 8th ed., 1969); Eng. trans. by Irene and Fraser McLuskey with James M. Robinson, *Jesus of Nazareth* (New York: Harper, 1960).

<sup>33</sup> Cf. *Der historische Jesus und der kerygmatische Christus*, ed. by H. Ristow and K. Matthiae (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1962), 48 essays; *Der historische Jesus und der Christus unseres Glaubens*, ed. by K. Schubert (Freiburg: Herder, 1962), Catholic contributions; *Interpretation* 16,2 (April, 1962): 131-92; *Journal of Bible and Religion* 30,2 (July, 1962): 198-223.

<sup>34</sup> The American edition is entitled *Fact and Faith in the Kerygma of Today* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1959), whereas the British ed. (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd) is closer to the literal German title of 1958 (cited above).

If one were to try to characterize it briefly, however, one would have to say the New Quest stressed the teachings of Jesus far more than his career. Lack of real chronological, biographical development in Jesus' life marked it off from the Old Quest, yet it exhibited more interest here than the 'no biography' view had done. Another way of describing it, in a pun on German terms, is to say that Bultmann had been content merely with the '*dass*' of Jesus' existence, 'the fact *that*' the man from Nazareth did live, taught, etc., whereas the New Quest was concerned with the '*Was*' or 'what he was like, how he had thought, etc.'; it sought to fill out the '*Was*-ness of the *dass*-ness'.

More specifically, the New Quest agreed on at least three points (cf. Robinson, Althaus, and Reicke, cited above): (1) the centrality of the kerygma; (2) the fact that a 'reconstructed Jesus' is not gospel; and (3) the possibility of a New Quest. As to (1), the insight since the twenties of the kerygma as the center of primitive Christianity and of the gospels had triumphed, in the work (albeit in differing forms) of Bultmann and C. H. Dodd. This recognition of the apostolic proclamation as the cutting edge of the gospel helped to end the old Jesus-of-history quest. The gospels were now clearly recognized as estimates always of Jesus as Christ (*geschichtliche*, in Kaehler's term) and never just as a man Jesus (*historische*). Therefore (2) the old reconstructions could scarcely serve as a source for religious authority; besides, a 'proved Jesus' would not be God's 'Good News'. But now (3) without seeking to prove a historical Jesus and without setting aside the kerygma as Liberalism had done, one could hope to move through the kerygma back to the figure behind it and say a little more about the man in the gospels historically than Bultmannian scholarship prior to 1953 had done. The hope was that such a historical Jesus would accord with the Christ of the gospels, and one could see a certain consistency between the actual man and the portraits of him in the kerygma and in the gospel books.

The difference of the New Quest from the Old and from the Bultmannian view can be summed up graphically in the following charts<sup>36</sup> where 'J<sup>2</sup>' represents Jesus as he is portrayed in our gospels, 'C' denotes Jesus as Christ and Lord in the church's apostolic preaching, and 'J<sup>1</sup>' stands for Jesus as he was in his historical ministry. The Old Quest sought to begin, as one must, with the existing gospels (J<sup>2</sup>) but then to get around the kerygmatic, christological element, and get back to Jesus 'as he was'.



The 'no biography' view was content to move from the gospels as they are, critically, to the Christ of the kerygma, saying little about the actual Jesus behind it all:



The New Quest, in contrast, with the same starting point, and retaining high regard for the kerygma, wanted to move back through the kerygma to the Jesus behind it:

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Reicke, cited above, note 31.

It would be impossible here to describe all of the barques that braved the sea of gospels-criticism under the banner of the New Quest. A motley armada sailed, many of the ships not seaworthy and scarcely deserving inclusion. Some foundered and were forgotten, some were torpedoed by time, or grounded on sandbars through bad navigation. Kaesemann quickly opted out of the crusade he had preached. He never wrote a 'life' and pointed to certain well-known attempts as 'dead-end streets'.<sup>36</sup> Bultmann himself responded to the quest in a famous address to the Heidelberg Academy in 1959, going part way with it.<sup>37</sup> He listed features of Jesus' activity and preaching which surely must be accepted as authentic. But he also raised the question of scholarship's embarrassment at being unable to describe how the historical Jesus must have understood his own death (the 'passion predictions' being regarded as creations of the early church after Easter). Bultmann also voiced his fear that the historical Jesus would, in spite of all precautions, again become a substitute for the word of the kerygma, a fear that proved not unreal in view of the direction some New Testament scholars took.

The New Quest, so widely hailed, yet by and large disavowed by leaders like Kaesemann and Bultmann, soon fragmented into half a dozen directions, as we have claimed above. Indeed, the movement can be likened to an arm, dividing at the end into a number of fingers, each reaching out or pointing in a slightly different direction. (Readers will have to decide which of the following 'fingers' point toward nothingness, and which seem 'all thumbs'.) We now sketch some of these varying approaches which have been grouped under the 'New Quest'.

Pride of place no doubt belongs to Bornkamm's *Jesus of Nazareth* (1956)<sup>38</sup>, in some ways the only 'life' to come out of the New Quest. In the tradition of the Bultmannian approach to the gospels, yet nudging at times to the right, along more conservative lines (e.g., in allowing that Jesus did make a deliberate decision to go up to Jerusalem and death), this little volume reflects most features of the post-1953 quest in its strengths and weaknesses.

<sup>36</sup> 'Blind Alleys in the "Jesus of History" Controversy' (German, 1964), Eng. trans. by W. J. Montague in Kaesemann's *New Testament Questions of Today* (Philadelphia: Fortress; London: SCM, 1969), pp. 23-65. Instead of a 'life', Kaesemann, while hospitalized and out of experiences with church struggles for the Gospel going back to Nazi times, did write, from a tradition history perspective, a study of 'freedom' in the New Testament witnesses, beginning with the historical Jesus, *Jesus Means Freedom* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971).

<sup>37</sup> 'The Primitive Christian Kerygma and the Historical Jesus', address of June 25, 1959, Eng. trans. by C. E. Braaten and R. Harrisville (eds.) in *The Historical Jesus and the Kerygmatic Christ* (New York and Nashville: Abingdon, 1964), pp. 15-42.

<sup>38</sup> Cited above, note 32.

Closely related is the approach represented by James M. Robinson in several essays<sup>39</sup>, stressing the 'concept of existence' to be found in the teachings of Jesus. Robinson argues that in authentic sayings of Jesus is found a pattern very much like that in the kerygma of 'death/life, suffering/glory, judgment/grace, humiliation/exaltation'; cf. Luke 14:11 or 17:33 with Philippians 2:6-11 or 1 Peter 1:11. The difference is, of course, that Jesus spoke prior to his death, while the kerygma was proclaimed after Easter, but the understanding of existence in both is what links Jesus' sayings with the apostolic kerygma. Robinson indeed implies that now there are two avenues of access to the message of this good news, one via the preaching of the apostolic church and the other by historical research!

Intertwined at many points with the New Quest, yet in some ways distinct from it and reflecting 'the quest . . . continued', is a third approach involving the 'ipsissima vox Jesu'. The Latin term is a variation on the old idea of the 'ipsissima verba Jesu', the notion that the gospels give us, or we could recover by research, the 'very words' of Christ. Critical scholarship has made moderns reserved about that notion, and it is rare that one can claim to have worked back to the actual Aramaic phrases which Jesus might have used. The East German Roman Catholic scholar Schuermann proposed a much more modest phrase about the 'very voice' (*vox*) of Jesus, and Joachim Jeremias, who pioneered in efforts to recover the Lord's Prayer and Words of Institution in Aramaic and thus knows well the problems involved, has championed this hope that, even though we cannot be sure of recovering the very words of Jesus, we can at least hear his authentic voice (*ipsissima vox*).<sup>40</sup>

In the case of Jeremias it should be added that (1) his emphasis on the vox Jesu is coupled with a comparative down-grading of the kerygma (in contrast with Bultmann). What Jesus said and did are the revelation of God; the kerygma is simply the church's response. (2) In actuality the 'vox' which Jeremias leads us to, by exacting critical scholarship, sometimes turns out to be quite precise verba—e.g., 'Abba'

<sup>39</sup> In addition to the monograph cited above, note 32, see Robinson's essay, 'The Formal Structure of Jesus' Message', in the festschrift for Otto Piper, *Current Issues in New Testament Interpretation*, ed. by W. Klassen and G. F. Snyder (New York: Harper, 1962), pp. 91-110. The fact that Robinson's particular interest in recent years has been the publication, translation, and interpretation of the Gnostic texts from Nag Hammadi need not mean that he has abandoned the approach exhibited here, but simply that he is seeking it also in the understanding of existence found in Gnosticism.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. Heinz Schuermann, 'Die voroesterliche Anfaenge der Logientradition', in *Der historische Jesus und der kerygmatische Christus* (cited above, note 33). Jeremias, 'Characteristics of the ipsissima vox Jesu', (1954), Eng. trans. in *The Prayers of Jesus* ('Studies in Biblical Theology, Second Series', 6; London: SCM, 1967), pp. 108-15, and now in his *New Testament Theology: Part One, The Proclamation of Jesus* (London: SCM; New York: Scribner's, 1971), pp. 29-37. The key examples are the Semitic words 'Abba' and 'amēn'. For Jeremias's general position in the quest, see *The Problem of the Historical Jesus* (cited above, note 5).

or the distinctive use of 'amēn' by Jesus at the start of a sentence. Jeremias would scarcely count himself one of the 'New Questers' but rather one who has patiently sought after Jesus and his teachings all along. Yet almost all the neo-Bultmannians avail themselves of certain of his findings: the excellent analysis of the parables which strips off the redaction of the evangelists and reapplications of the church to get at the original stories as set in Jesus' ministry; and even his results with 'Abba' as a term used uniquely by Jesus. In this way Jeremias is commonly identified as part of the New Quest, yet deserves a separate classification.

A fourth way of approaching the key issue in the quest, that of finding some sort of continuity between the historical Jesus and the kerygmatic Christ, is in terms of 'implicit/explicit Christology'. It had become a commonplace since Harnack to hold that Jesus preached not himself but God's kingdom, and since Bultmann to argue that Jesus did not use any messianic titles of himself. Thus Bornkamm relegates all such titles to an appendix in *Jesus of Nazareth* and explains them as post-Easter christological confessions from the early church.<sup>41</sup> Even Jeremias writes that 'titles can be added afterwards' (except for some instances of 'Son of man', which he regards as genuine).<sup>42</sup> But if Jesus employed no titles of exaltation and made no claim for himself directly, he nonetheless did say and do certain things which implied the Christologies which the church spelled out after Easter. In Hans Conzelmann's famed encyclopedia article of 1959 on Jesus Christ, an implicit Christology is allowed during the lifetime of Jesus, which was then made explicit after the resurrection.<sup>43</sup> Thus the fact that Jesus confronted men in God's name and ate with sinners implies a 'Christology in the making'. Use of 'Abba' has been interpreted by some as suggesting a unique filial consciousness on the part of Jesus, expressed later by the title 'Son (of God)'.

Yet another way of linking Jesus before the resurrection with the Christ of the church's kerygma was through the concept of faith. Even if Christology proper began only after the resurrection, trusting obedience can be seen at work in Jesus' lifetime as well as in the early church. Bultmann, who did the article on 'faith' (*pistis*) in the *Kittel Theologisches Wörterbuch* ignored use of the term to a great extent in the Synoptic Gospels, but Gerhard Ebeling remedied that lack in an essay on 'Jesus and Faith'.<sup>44</sup> Willi Marxsen then took up some of

<sup>41</sup> *Jesus of Nazareth* (cited above, note 32), pp. 226-32.

<sup>42</sup> *New Testament Theology*, Vol. 1 (cited above, note 40), p. 250, cf. 250-76.

<sup>43</sup> 'Jesus Christus', in *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, 3d ed. (Tübingen: Mohr), Vol. 3 (1959), cols. 619-53. Eng. trans. by J. Raymond Lord, *Jesus Christ*, ed. by J. Reumann (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1973).

<sup>44</sup> While Bultmann's article on *pisteuō*, *pistis*, etc. in the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. by G. Kittel and G. Friedrich, Eng. trans. by G. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans), Vol. 6 (1968), pp. 203-28, is deficient here, compare his *Jesus and the Word* (cited above, note 25), pp. 135-59. Ebeling's essay, 'Jesus and Faith' (1958), appears in his collected essays, *Word and Faith*, trans. by James Leitch (Philadelphia: Fortress; London: SCM, 1963), pp. 201-46, and cf. also 288-304.

these findings and used them to show a continuity: the historical Jesus called for faith in God, the kerygma for faith in Christ, but there is a link here that provides continuity.<sup>45</sup> The studies of Ernst Fuchs on the historical Jesus should also be mentioned here, for he too stresses faith, often seemingly in the sense of how Jesus believed, so that the historical figure becomes a paradigm of believing.<sup>46</sup>

Some of these ways of developing the New Quest point clearly to what was an underlying issue, that of interpretation of the text and application to today in a meaningful way. In a sense the quest had become an exercise in hermeneutics: how is the historical Jesus appropriated and made significant today? It is no accident that the New Quest thus forced a re-examination of an area of theology that had been in the doldrums since early in the present century, the 'art and science of interpreting'. And out of the critical, historical, theological, and existential ferment centered on Jesus arose a 'New Hermeneutic', as it was called.<sup>47</sup> It would take us too far afield to explore its labyrinth, but some of the New Questers, notably Ebeling and Fuchs, were much involved in the New Hermeneutic as well. Indeed, the hermeneutical question superseded the Jesus issue for some, and was an outgrowth of the New Quest.

In such ways the New Quest developed in a multiplicity of styles, during ten to fifteen years of intensive work and publication—with very few 'lives' but a host of insights on Jesus and his relevance for today, in the light of (and some would say, in spite of) critical-historical study.

#### *IV. The Current Situation and Prospects for the Future*

We have outlined two hundred years of 'questing' in terms of three main periods, but have admitted that for many the Old Quest continued throughout the Bultmannian period and likewise during the more recent developments. It is perhaps significant that of our three periods, the first can be said to have lasted more than a century, the second some thirty years, the third only half as long. Is it that with mass media and greater world involvement new developments move more quickly, or is it that, as one approaches his own time, current developments always look more significant? It could also be observed that the Old Quest had its subdivisions and trends too, as a look at Albert Schweitzer's book shows.

However one outlines the history of life-of-Jesus research, the fact remains that influences from all past periods persist, and examples of varying approaches from the past can be found at any given time.

<sup>45</sup> Willi Marxsen, *The Beginnings of Christology: A Study in Its Problems* (1960), trans. by Paul J. Achtemeier ('Facet Books Biblical Series', 22; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1969).

<sup>46</sup> E. Fuchs, *Studies of the Historical Jesus*, trans. by Andrew Scobie ('Studies in Biblical Theology', 42; London: SCM, 1964), especially pp. 11-31, 48-64, 167-90.

<sup>47</sup> For a good survey, see Paul J. Achtemeier, *An Introduction to the New Hermeneutic* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1969).

This is to say that, though we stand in the New Quest or post-New-Quest period, recent lives of Jesus can be found in the '70's which still reflect the Old Quest, in its pious or radical forms, the agnosticism-about-biography view, and several varieties from the New Quest spectrum. So far as *Leben-Jesu* volumes go, we live in a time when on a library shelf of new publications (or reprints or translations) there may be a rationalist, a revolutionist, a Liberal, a Neo-Orthodox, and a Bornkamm-like life of the man from Nazareth side by side.

Not too long ago the American New Testament scholar John Wick Bowman, as he retired from his teaching career, surveyed lives of Jesus in the course of the quest since roughly 1900 and classified them into seven categories.<sup>48</sup> If you ask, as Bowman does, 'Which Jesus?' (i.e., which is the true one in a line-up of imposters) then the major poses since Schweitzer among which you must choose include the following.

(1) *The Apocalyptic Son of Man* (Albert Schweitzer). Here Jesus is regarded as a fiery eschatologist, convinced the End was near and seeing himself as part of God's plan for the last times, indeed as the figure promised by Daniel and the apocalyptists.

(2) *The existentialist rabbi*—this is the way Bultmann viewed Jesus, not as 'the first Christian', but a figure in Judaism, as one who taught like the rabbis (in his later writings Bultmann tended to describe Jesus more as prophet than as rabbi).<sup>49</sup> Above all, in *Jesus and the Word*, the rabbi from Nazareth is a teacher whose words about God's reign and demand lend themselves to modern understanding congenial to existentialism.

(3) The category which Bowman favours (and many Anglo-Saxon writers) stresses *God's plan, as seen by Jesus, from the Old Testament* (compare T. W. Manson, William Manson, C. H. Dodd, Cullmann, or Vincent Taylor).<sup>50</sup> The perspective is that of salvation history. Here Jesus perceives from the Law and the prophets the will of God in a new incisive way and his own role as a messiah who combines aspects of the Suffering Servant and of the Danielic Son of man.

(4) More bizarre is what Bowman calls the 'Nazorean Scheming Messiah' of Hugh J. Schonfield's book, *The Passover Plot*.<sup>51</sup> Here

<sup>48</sup> *Which Jesus?* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1970).

<sup>49</sup> Compare his 1959 Heidelberg Academy address (cited above, note 37) with his 1926 'life' (note 25). The point is noted by Richard H. Hiers in *Jesus and Ethics: Four Interpretations* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1968), in the section on Bultmann, pp. 79-114.

<sup>50</sup> For T. W. Manson, and Taylor, see above, notes 26-27 and 22, respectively. C. H. Dodd, *The Founder of Christianity* (London and New York: Macmillan, 1970; Fontana paperbacks, 1973). Cullmann has not written a *Leben Jesu*, but note the tendency in his *Christology of the New Testament* (London: SCM, 1959, rev. ed. 1963), to trace the titles of exaltation back to the historical Jesus. Cf. also William Manson, *Jesus the Messiah: The Synoptic Tradition of the Revelation of God in Christ, with Special Reference to Form-Criticism* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1946).

<sup>51</sup> *The Passover Plot: New Light on the History of Jesus* (London: Hutchinson; New York: Bernard Geis [Random House], 1966).

Jesus has roots in an earlier Nazorean sect, and as a Machiavellian mastermind, plots his own 'death' and resuscitation, in line, incidentally, with an Old Testament scenario seen in the scriptures. Elements of all these ideas appeared before in Jesus studies, especially in the early nineteenth century. Schonfield and his publishers have packaged them in an eye-catching way. The book became a publishing phenomenon in the late sixties. But it is doubtful, in spite of the excitement then, whether this will long be considered a significant 'life', and it is even worth investigating whether such a Jesus is consistent with the picture given by Schonfield himself in earlier, now obscure books by him.<sup>53</sup>

(5) The *Essene 'Teacher of Righteousness'* model assumes Jesus was like the leader of the Qumran community. A number of writers on the Dead Sea Scrolls (Edmund Wilson, Dupont-Sommer) have sought to establish parallels whereby Christianity becomes 'Essenism that succeeded' or Jesus is said to have patterned himself after the teacher of righteousness.<sup>54</sup> John Allegro claimed at one time that Jesus had been crucified just as the Qumran teacher had been before him. Actually there were efforts in the nineteenth century to make Jesus an Essene<sup>54</sup>; the scrolls have simply magnified the possibilities—if only similarities are considered, and differences ignored.

(6) *Jesus the revolutionist*, we have seen as an image in the writings of Reimarus two hundred years ago. Simkhovitch and the communists and socialists in the 1920's and Robert Eisler; S. G. F. Brandon and Joel Carmichael in the 1960's have depicted Jesus similarly.<sup>55</sup> That there were Zealot political revolutionists in the time of Jesus is likely

<sup>53</sup> Cf. Hugh J. Schonfield, *According to the Hebrews* (London: Duckworth, 1937).

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true; that Jesus engaged in revolt against Rome is contrary to the evidence. He was revolutionary in outlook, not revolutionist.<sup>56</sup>

(7) As a final type Bowman listed the Jesus found in Bornkamm's 'life', which he described as 'the church's resurrected lord'. Here the stress is on a historical Jesus who is seen in all the sources at the same time through the eyes of faith as the living Christ. In Bornkamm's famous phrase, each gospel pericope is written from the post-Easter kerygmatic view, 'each in itself contains the person and history of Jesus in their entirety'.<sup>57</sup>

As one scans the list of books on Jesus in recent years, even this sevenfold classification does not, however, exhaust the possibilities. At least five more can be added to the list, exemplified by recent titles. Two of them may prove as tendentious and ephemeral as (4) and (5) above; the other three have obvious staying power.

(8) John Allegro, not content to suggest Jesus was a pale copy of the teacher of righteousness, went on, in a later book, to claim he was in reality 'The Sacred Mushroom'.<sup>58</sup> With elaborate philological 'proofs' he argued 'Jesus' was really a code name for a hallucinatory drug used and worshipped by early Christians. There may have been some people convinced by this thesis; some Christians wrote books against the view; the majority of people can no doubt safely ignore it.

(9) *Jesus the Jew* deserves a place on any list. Almost all biographers, save those in Nazi Germany who sought to show Jesus was an Aryan of Nordic stock, have referred to the Jewishness of Jesus. Over the years a number of Jews, either converts to Christianity or still loyal to rabbinic Judaism, have written 'lives', (e.g., Klausner, Sholem Asch). In our own day may be listed works by David Flusser and Ben-Chorin, to say nothing of Jules Isaac's moving *Jesus and Israel* (on anti-Semitism).<sup>59</sup>

note 26), were directed against the interpretation in the first decades of this century that apocalyptic arose primarily because of economic oppression. Recent writings of W. R. Farmer have interpreted John the Baptist and Jesus along Zealot revolutionary lines.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. Martin Hengel, *Was Jesus a Revolutionist?* trans. by W. Klassen ('Facet Books Biblical Series', 28; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971).

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<sup>58</sup> *The Sacred Mushroom and the Cross: A Study of the Nature and Origins of Christianity within the Fertility Cults of the Ancient Near East* (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday, 1970). Against such fanciful views: John C. King, *A Christian View of the Mushroom Myth* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1971); John H. Jacques, *The Mushroom and the Bride* (London: Citadel Press, 1971).

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