JESUS THE PRIEST

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For Camie

Uxor carissima

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Preface

One of the great paradoxes of the history of biblical interpretation is the fact that the study of the historical Jesus began to take flight in a particular moment of intellectual history when many of the words and actions attributed to Jesus were suddenly being called into question. Indeed, it was precisely this tension, between the extraordinary events reported by the Evangelists and the Enlightenment's commitment to the critical sifting of fact from fiction that would eventually occasion the rise of various 'criteria of authenticity'. Had it not been for the Enlightenment, it is unlikely that scholars would have ever developed rules for adjudicating the historical reliability of things reportedly said and done by Jesus. In this respect, the discussion over historical method, which has dominated historical Jesus research even down to this day, retains the indelible genetic code of this intellectual revolution – for better or for worse, or perhaps for a little bit of both.

Of course, it hardly bears stating that the Enlightenment is a historically situated intellectual movement with its own distinctive agenda and set of assumptions. With this in mind, many over the years have objected that the Enlightenment's presuppositions about the nature of reality are *a priori* incompatible with theological positions which the Church has adopted since antiquity. Time and again, such theologically minded objectors have asked, 'But if Jesus really is divine as well as human, then hasn't the historically oriented quest of the historical Jesus started us off on the wrong foot by asking us to construct a Christology from below, as opposed to a Christology from above?' While a question like this is certainly valid on some level, I wonder if the very framing of the question in these terms – if the very categories of 'Christology from below' and 'Christology from above' – are actually not themselves highly distortive, owing more to Western dualism than to the milieu in which the Jesus movement first took shape. What if, more specifically, in the theologians' very attempt to save Jesus from the treacherous jaws of the 'downstairs' of empirical history by making his primary space the 'upstairs' of metaphysical speculation, they have unwittingly aggravated matters? What if the dualism standing behind the upstairs–downstairs framework for discussing Jesus actually obstructs our vision of his self-understanding and aims?

While there are at least a handful of motivations for my having written this book, one of these has to do with my conviction that, though first-century Judaism ordinarily maintained a strict Creator–creature distinction, it would not have been implausible for a high priest of that time and place to have considered himself – under the right conditions – as a human participant in the divine. This should come as no surprise. Israel's priests, much like the temples they served, were the liminal space separating the divine realm from the human realm. As such, they straddled both worlds, dynamically functioning as both the ceiling to our post-Enlightenment 'downstairs' (phenomena) and the floor to our unseen 'upstairs', and that without contradiction.

Needless to say, if the high priest was a kind of third category in which the human and divine converged, and if Jesus also regarded himself as Israel's rightful eschatological high priest, it follows that our Christology need no longer be necessarily dictated by rigid categories of 'from above' and 'from below'. The present book *largely* assumes (though not without some warrant) rather than sets out to prove the former of these two conditions: the quasi-divine character of the priesthood. It is the latter premise, Jesus' self-identity as priest, which is the main concern of this book. As I will labour to show in the pages to follow, once we locate Jesus in the role of priest *ex officio*, we are able to make much better sense not only of certain otherwise perplexing Gospel texts, but also of the historical Jesus himself. If Jesus really saw himself as a priest on the terms that I am claiming, this begins to open a third path somewhere between the two broad options currently on offer in so much of historical Jesus studies: a secular, Arian-style Jesus (Jesus was just a man – nothing more) and, on a more popular level, a vaguely docetic, Apollinarian-style Jesus (Jesus was a God-man but his humanity did not extend to his cerebral cortex). This is not to say that the results of the present project have been driven by a certain theological agenda, but rather that by doing *better* history, as I hope to do here, we will also – as a fringe benefit – be poised to do better theology.

At its core, this book is a historical work, written for historians and students of history. I will have more to say about my historical method below. But in the meantime, suffice it to say that if history matters at all, then doing history on Jesus must also matter. I am quite aware that Jesus' first biographers were hoping to register some pretty remarkable claims about their hero. I am also aware that precisely this agenda has often been taken as warrant for stretching a long swathe of yellow tape around early first-century Galilee and Jerusalem, as if to say, 'Non-History Line: Do Not Cross'. (All the while, ironically, some of the same dispensers of such yellow tape are not the least deterred from offering a highly speculative sociological reconstruction of the so-called Q community or a detailed mirror-reading of Ephesians.) For my part, I wonder if this hermeneutical trend, sustained to some extent in North America as a reaction to simplistic fundamentalist readings of the Gospels, may itself be liable to the charge of being another kind of fundamentalism.

History, like life itself, is complicated and messy. Faced with this messiness, we can either throw up our hands before we've even started (consoling ourselves with the thought that we were never meant to get 'behind the text' of the Gospels anyway); or we can attempt to construct a holistic portrait, knowing that even if some of its parts may be tentative or even flat-out wrong, there's always hope that the whole, once organized in a coherent and compelling paradigm, may have an evidentiary value that outweighs the sum of the parts. At this place in the woods of Jesus scholarship, I am no longer sure whether the path bending behind the undergrowth of the Gospel text is the road less travelled or the road more travelled – I'm not in the habit of counting noses. I am convinced, however, that neither the events of Jesus' life nor the Gospel writers' interpretations of the same are extraneous to reconstructing Jesus' aims, as these have often been made to be. Unlike most books in the historical Jesus genre, the present volume will dedicate relatively considerable space to figuring out what the Evangelists meant, even as it seeks to secure the final goal of figuring out what Jesus meant. In my judgement, in stark disagreement with the classic form critics, penetrating to the story 'behind the text' can hardly be accomplished without some sense of what is going on, compositionally, 'in the text'. No doubt that will irritate the purists among the narrative critics as well as the purists among the Jesus research guild, and for that I apologize but not necessarily with repentance. Meanwhile, for those who have been steeped in a counsel of despair when it comes to synthesizing all things dominical, may this book be one of those which says, 'Take heart!'

This volume would not have been possible without a number of people. I am grateful, first of all, to my doctoral students and certain other student friends who have been involved – from compiling the Bibliography to offering sage editorial input – in the project: Nicholas Piotrowski, David Broughton, Rhett Austin, Greg Thellman, Jeremy Otten, Susan Rieske, Peter Green, Jarrett Van Tine, Caleb Friedeman, Nathan LeMahieu and Tyran Laws. Special mention also goes to my friend and close fellow pilgrim Bryan Eklund, who willingly read chapters with extremely helpful comment; other friends I remember eagerly responded to invited elevator-speech versions of the same: Rick Richardson, Dan Treier, John Powell, David Vinson, Joan Brown and Doug Koenigsberg. Then there were my two administrative assistants over the past five years, who in the process of having this project inflicted on them now deserve honorary doctorates of their own: Valerie Austin and Jessica Tate. In the broader academy, I think of the encouragement and input of colleagues like Simon Kingston (SPCK), Jeannine Brown, Greg Beale, Wendy Cotter, Edmondo Lupieri, David Moffitt, Elizabeth Shively, Mark Alan Powell, Nathaniel Perrin, Michael Barber, Leroy Huizenga, Scott Hahn, Ben Gladd, Mark Strauss, Jon Pennington and Warren Carter – I'll stop there with trepidation, almost certain there are others I am forgetting. Especial thanks go to Tom Wright and Brant Pitre, both of whom have been great encouragers along the way; and also to Crispin Fletcher-Louis, who kindly reviewed a draft of the first half of the book and whose name is approvingly cited throughout my footnotes with almost embarrassing frequency. Philip Law also gets very honourable mention for hanging in there with me when the book became overdue (several times over).

Finally, my deepest debt of gratitude is to my immediate family: my two sons, Nathaniel and Luke, who do me so proud, and most of all, my wife

Camie. After 25 years of marriage, I have never been more grateful for her unwavering love and tireless support. With fond thoughts of her cheering me over the finish line of yet another book project, I dedicate this book to her.

Wheaton, Illinois

Abbreviations

Abbreviations for the titles of ancient sources other than the Bible follow SBL conventions.

AB	Anchor Bible
ABRL	Anchor Bible Reference Library
AGJU	Arbeiten zur Geschichte des antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums
AnBib	Analecta biblica
AnOr	Analecta orientalia
ANRW	*Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt*
AOTC	Apollos Old Testament Commentary
ASNU	Acta Seminarii Neotestamentici Upsaliensis
AThR	*Anglican Theological Review*
AYBRL	Anchor Yale Bible Reference Library
BAR	*Biblical Archaeology Review*
BASOR	*Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*
BBR	*Bulletin of Biblical Research*
BBRSup	Bulletin for Biblical Research Supplements
BECNT	Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament
BETL	Bibliotheca ephemeridum theologicarum lovaniensium
Bib	*Biblica*
BibInt	*Biblical Interpretation*
BibS(N)	Biblische Studien (Neukirchen, 1951–)
BIS	Biblical Interpretation Series
BJS	Brown Judaic Studies
BN	*Biblische Notizen*
BTS	Biblical Tools and Studies
BTZ	*Berliner Theologische Zeitschrift*
BU	Biblische Untersuchungen
BW	The Bible in Its World
BWANT	Beiträge zur Wissenschaft vom Alten und Neuen Testament
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
BZNW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft
CBQ	*Catholic Biblical Quarterly*
CBR	*Currents in Biblical Research*
CGTC	Cambridge Greek Testament Commentaries
CH	*Church History*
CHANE	Culture and History of the Ancient Near East
ConBOT	Coniectanea biblica: Old Testament Series

CRHP	Cahiers de la Revue d'histoire et de philosophie religieuses
CSCD	Cambridge Studies in Christian Doctrine
DSD	*Dead Sea Discoveries*
Ebib	Études bibliques
EJL	Early Judaism and Its Literature
EKKNT	Evangelisch-katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
EncJud	*Encyclopaedia Judaica* (1971)
ETL	Ephemerides theologicae lovanienses
EvQ	*Evangelical Quarterly*
ExAud	*Ex auditu*
ExpTim	*Expository Times*
FAT	Forschungen zum Alten Testament
FoiVie	*Foe et vie*
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments
HBT	*Horizons in Biblical Theology*
HeyJ	*Heythrop Journal*
HSCP	*Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*
HSS	Harvard Semitic Studies
HTKAT	Herders theologischer Kommentar zum Alten Testament
HTKNT	Herders theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
HTR	*Harvard Theological Review*
HTS	*Harvard Theological Studies*
HUCA	*Hebrew Union College Annual*
HvTSt	*Hervormde teologiese studies*
IBC	Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching
ICC	International Critical Commentary
Int	*Interpretation*
ISFCJ	International Studies in Formative Christianity and Judaism
JAAR	*Journal of the American Academy of Religion*
JAJSup	Journal of Ancient Judaism Supplement
JANER	*Journal of Ancient Near East Religions*
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
JBTh	*Jahrbuch für biblische Theologie*
JETS	*Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*
JGRChJ	*Journal of Greco-Roman Christianity and Judaism*
JJS	*Journal of Jewish Studies*
JSHJ	*Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus*
JSJ	*Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman Periods*
JSJSup	Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism
JSNT	*Journal for the Study of the New Testament*
JSNTSup	Journal for the Study of the New Testament: Supplement Series

JSOT	*Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament: Supplement Series
JSP	*Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha*
JSPSup	Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha: Supplement Series
JTS	*Journal of Theological Studies*
JudAnc	*Judaïsme Ancien*
LBS	Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies
LD	Lectio divina
LNTS	Library of New Testament Studies
LSTS	Library of Second Temple Studies
LtSp	*Letter & Spirit*
MSU	Mitteilungen des Septuaginta-Unternehmens
NAC	New American Commentary
NedTT	*Nederlands theologisch tijdschrift*
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
NICOT	New International Commentary on the Old Testament
NIGTC	New International Greek Testament Commentary
NovT	*Novum Testamentum*
NovTSup	Supplements to Novum Testamentum
NSBT	New Studies in Biblical Theology
NTAbh	Neutestamentliche Abhandlungen
NTL	New Testament Library
NTM	New Testament Monographs
NTS	*New Testament Studies*
NTTS	New Testament Tools and Studies
OBO	Orbis biblicus et orientalis
OTL	Old Testament Library
PNTC	Pillar New Testament Commentary Series
PrTMS	Princeton Theological Monograph Series
PTMS	Pittsburgh Theological Monograph Series
RB	*Revue biblique*
RelSRev	*Religious Studies Review*
RevExp	*Review and Expositor*
RivB	*Rivista biblica italiana*
RSPT	*Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques*
SBEC	Studies in the Bible and Early Christianity
SBG	Studies in Biblical Greek
SBL	Studies in Biblical Literature
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SBLEJL	Society of Biblical Literature Early Judaism and Its Literature
SBLMS	Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series
SBLSP	Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers
SBS	Stuttgarter Bibelstudien
SBT	Studies in Biblical Theology

ScEs	*Science et esprit*
SCS	Septuagint Commentary Series
SHJ	Studying the Historical Jesus
SJ	Studia judaica
SJCA	Studies in Judaism and Christianity in Antiquity
SJLA	Studies in Judaism in Late Antiquity
SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series
SOTSMS	Society for Old Testament Studies Monograph Series
SPAW	Sitzungsberichte der preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften
SPB	Studia post-biblica
SR	*Studies in Religion*
STDJ	Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah
Str-B	Strack, Hermann L., and Paul Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch*. 6 vols. Munich: C. H. Beck, 1922– 61
StudBL	Studies in Biblical Literature
SUNT	Studien zur Umwelt des Neuen Testaments
SVTP	Studia in Veteris Testamenti pseudepigraphica
SWBAnt	Social World of Biblical Antiquity (second series)
TANZ	Texte und Arbeiten zum nutestamentlichen Zeitalter
TB	Theologische Bücherei: Neudrucke und Berichte aus dem 20. Jahrhundert
TBei	*Theologische Beiträge*
TBN	Themes in Biblical Narrative
THKNT	Theologischer Handkommentar zum Neuen Testament
TRu	*Theologische Rundschau*
TSAJ	Texte und Studien zum antiken Judentum
TynBul	*Tyndale Bulletin*
TZ	*Theologische Zeitschrift*
VT	*Vetus Testamentum*
VTSup	Supplements to Vetus Testamentum
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WMANT	Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament
WTJ	*Westminster Theological Journal*
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
ZAW	*Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*
ZNW	*Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche*
ZTK	*Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche*

Introduction

Treasures from the scrapheap

In the provocatively titled documentary *Who the *$&% Is Jackson Pollock?*, we are told the story of a 73-year-old retired lorry driver named Teri Horton whose life suddenly took a very curious turn. One day while browsing in a local charity shop in California, Horton put down five US dollars cash for a large, brightly coloured painting – just the thing, she thought, to cheer up a despondent friend. When it later became obvious that the artwork wouldn't fit inside her friend's trailer, Horton took the painting back home and put it in front of her house in hopes of making at least a few dollars back on it. Before the day was over (with no luck moving the canvas), an art teacher happened to stroll by and mused that the piece might be the handiwork of the abstract-expressionist Jackson Pollock. Even though at the time Horton had no idea who Jackson Pollock was, she decided to follow up on the suggestion by doing a little research. To make a long story short, at least if the analysis of certain forensic art experts is to be believed, the art teacher was correct: the item was – and is – a Jackson Pollock original. The 'trash' Horton had purchased for $5 has since commanded offers as high as $9 million. And thus the aphorism: 'One person's trash is another person's treasure.'

For the purposes of introducing the present book, the story of Teri Horton may serve as a parable. In response to the question 'What is the kingdom of historiography like and to what should we compare it?', one answer might go something like this: 'It is like a woman who bought a piece of artwork from a charity shop. She thought it was insignificant, but it turned out to be treasure.' Though not nearly as memorable as any of Jesus' parables, such a parable just might illustrate the truth that the study of history tends to advance not so much through the fresh discovery of new data but through a fresh re-evaluation of that which has been set aside.

A tale of two Jesus scholars: Schweitzer and Bultmann

The principle certainly applies to one memorable passage from Albert Schweitzer's 1906 classic, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*. Here, in his dialogue with the Old Liberalism of Albrecht Ritschl's school, Schweitzer takes his interlocutors to task for their neglect of Jesus traditions relating to predicted suffering. For these colleagues, lamentably so, 'the prediction of suffering has as little to do with objective history as the prediction of the parousia'.[1]

[1] Schweitzer 2001 (1906): 329.

Yet, according to Schweitzer, the widespread assumption of this material's inauthenticity had more than a little to do with the fact that Jesus' anticipation of suffering did not integrate well with the standard reconstruction of Old Liberalism:

> Consequently, none of the Lives of Jesus which follow the lines of a natural psychology, from Weisse down to Oskar Holtzmann, can make anything of it. They either strike it out, or transfer it to the last 'gloomy epoch' of the life of Jesus, regard it as an unintelligible anticipation, or put it down to the account of 'community theology', which serves as a scrap-heap for everything for which they cannot find a place in the 'historical life of Jesus'.[2]

With this poignant metaphor of the 'scrap-heap', powerfully descriptive as it is penetratingly insightful, Schweitzer explains how and why the nineteenth-century Lives had sanitized the 'Jesus story' of suffering. At the turn of the twentieth century, Schweitzer had the perspicacity to recognize that the discussion surrounding the historical Jesus had been unduly constrained by a Kantian idealism which left little room for such larger-than-life portraits of Jesus, dripping with dark premonitions and gloomy experiences. Even if Ritschl's heirs could find it within their hearts to grant authenticity to these foreboding streaks on the canvas of the Gospels, they wouldn't know what to make of them. Steeped in their zeitgeist, such thinkers did not have the categories for even countenancing the possibility that Jesus' experience and anticipation of suffering were actually the very method of his madness.

Parting company with his interlocutors at this juncture, just as he had parted ways with Old Liberalism's eschatology by insisting that Jesus was indeed looking forward to the imminent transformation of the cosmos, Schweitzer assigned considerable significance to the Jewish background of the 'Great Tribulation'. For our Alsatian author, it was precisely this anticipated event, a scenario of apostasy and suffering leading up to the messianic dawn, that explained not only Jesus' determination to 'turn his face towards Jerusalem' but also his willingness to accept the grim fate awaiting him. However, as Schweitzer's reconstruction would have it, Jesus would in the end experience sharp cognitive dissonance between his expectation of events and the reality which actually unfolded. As Jesus expires on the cross, he realizes that the much-anticipated tribulation had not climaxed in the way he had hoped. God had neither come to the rescue nor brought about the kingdom, leaving Jesus to die a disillusioned man.

But what if Schweitzer was essentially right about Jesus? What if Jesus did expect God to install a new cosmic order in a moment of crisis? How are we to reconcile this with his ethical teachings, which seem to imply their own ongoing relevance? At this juncture one might have expected Schweitzer, given his distinctive understanding of Jesus' eschatology, to

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2 Schweitzer 2001 (1906): 329.

attribute the Gospels' ethical materials to later ecclesial redaction. But instead our author boldly declares that these teachings are but an 'interim ethic', a kind of *ad hoc* measure temporarily implemented in preparation for the end of the present world order. And so: historical problem solved. But then this reconstruction creates problems of other sorts, namely, that since the 'interim' on Schweitzer's scenario could have only been a matter of months, we can hardly suppose that these same makeshift norms would have had anything meaningful to say to the great moral questions of his day – much less ours. On Schweitzer's reading, Jesus was far more interested in announcing his apocalyptic vision than in conveying a well-ordered set of moral teachings; consequently, the master's ethical materials quickly consign themselves to theological irrelevance.

Perhaps like Shakespeare's queen who 'protests too much', the initial reception of *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* was overwhelmingly negative; Schweitzer's reviewers subjected his methods and conclusions to withering criticism. Today, with the luxury of more than a hundred years of hindsight, we can still agree that a number of these initial criticisms were justified. But by the same token, the clarity afforded by time has also allowed us to see that Schweitzer had become an *enfant terrible* in his day largely because he had, very unconventionally, smeared paint strokes on the conventional portrait of Jesus. The result was a portrait that raised serious questions about Jesus' theological relevance. (What after all could be more irrelevant than a historical figure who was flat-out wrong in regards to his central conviction?) Equally troubling was Schweitzer's representation of a wild and woolly, if not capricious, Jesus, one who ultimately defined himself by contingent crises, persecution and suffering. Neither good taste nor Kantian idealism had much tolerance for such things.

Notwithstanding the furore provoked by the *Quest*, Schweitzer's recourse to ancient Jewish apocalyptic as a way of explaining Jesus' vision of suffering has retained an enduring historical plausibility. The account has proven to be so plausible in fact that nine decades later N. T. Wright was able to declare that the *Schweitzerstraße*, one of two major avenues for twentieth-century Jesus research, was still open to considerable traffic. But the *Schweitzerstraße* would have never become anything more than a bramble-covered footpath, had Schweitzer not retrieved Jesus' suffering from the scrapheap of history. Contemporary critics of Schweitzer may continue to doubt the authenticity of this piece, even as some art critics continue to doubt the authenticity of Horton's alleged Pollock, but no matter. The point has been made and is still very much on the table, awaiting further discussion. A critical mass of Jesus scholars have come to agree that suffering occupied a prominent place in Jesus' consciousness, but we have not sufficiently explored why.

The great Rudolf Bultmann was among the next generation of Jesus scholars obliged to engage Schweitzer's thesis directly or indirectly. Publishing his *Theology of the New Testament* a half-century and two world wars after Schweitzer's epic contribution, Bultmann was convinced of an apocalyptic Jesus in principle, but was careful to stipulate – against his predecessor's thoroughgoing apocalypticism – that Jesus' vision really pertained neither to the end of the current order nor to the ushering in of new political realities. Instead, on his reconstruction, Jesus had transposed the apocalyptic moment into a call for decision, requiring the individual to stand before God in a posture of absolute dependence and radical obedience. In taking this approach, Bultmann was attempting to distance himself from two fronts. Against, on the one side, the Jesus of Old Liberalism, depicted now by the likes of Adolf von Harnack (for whom the kingdom was largely a matter of personal formation) or Walter Rauschenbusch (for whom the kingdom was a renewed social-political order), the Marburger insisted that the historical Jesus' message was characteristically apocalyptic; against, on the other side, those who like Schweitzer emphasized Jesus' apocalypticism, he was equally firm that the synoptic reports of Jesus' rabbinic-style ethical concerns could not have very well been tacked on by the same Church which declared him as Risen Christ. Yet like Schweitzer, Bultmann also believed that the only finally convincing account of the historical Jesus was one which maintained a basic unity between his eschatology and his ethics. Such unity was forthcoming, so he argued, on the premise that all of Jesus' ethical teachings were eschatological in the sense that they were backed by the timeless demand of God on the individual. Thus, for Bultmann the existential crisis remained paramount: 'All that man can do in the face of the Reign of God now breaking in is this: Keep ready or get ready for it. Now is the *time of decision*, and Jesus' call is the *call to decision*'.[3]

Though Bultmann would also eventually distance himself from his friend and Marburg colleague Martin Heidegger, the former's emphasis on individual decision had been much influenced by the latter. In the period between the wars, the sense of alienation generated by overwhelming socio-economic and political forces spawned the felt need for a fresh philosophical assertion of human freedom, much as Heidegger's existentialist philosophy was able to provide. Now, in his post-war *Theology of the New Testament*, Bultmann sought to apply the same existential grid to Jesus. This was plausible at first blush simply because, as our author points out, the Gospel records are replete with indications that Jesus was constantly calling his hearers to *decide*. And although the call to ethical decision was certainly not absent from Old Liberalism's moral suasion theories of Jesus, these accounts did not come close to explaining, as Bultmann had so magnificently done, the sense of urgent crisis pervading the dominical materials. Like Schweitzer before him, Bultmann had at least recognized the inherent persuasiveness of a vision that could do justice to the breadth – apocalyptic and sapiential wisdom material alike – of the synoptic tradition. But in order to achieve such a vision, it would be necessary to rescue not Jesus' suffering but his call for decision from

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[3] Bultmann 1951: 9.

the scrapheap of history. Once again: one Jesus scholar's trash is another Jesus scholar's treasure.

In offering their respective unified theories of the Jesus traditions, both Schweitzer and Bultmann were each in their own way attempting to resolve what is perhaps *the* central problem of historical Jesus studies: the tension between Jesus as sage (speaker of universal truths) and Jesus as apocalyptic prophet (predictor of future cataclysmic events). We barely need to restate the problem. If the historical Jesus' principal concern was ethics, how could his moral teaching have been conceivably informed by the end of the space–time continuum (unless we are to suppose, lamely, that Jesus lingered on these looming eschatological realities merely to convey a little extra urgency)? Conversely, if Jesus' main interest was in the apocalypse, then what lasting relevance could there have been in moral ruminations? While one common strategy (before and after the period of Schweitzer and Bultmann) for solving this dilemma has been to assign the apocalyptic material to one stage in the formation of the synoptic tradition and the sapiential material to another, neither writer was willing to go this route. (Perhaps they both sensed the inevitable circularity of an argument which conveniently escapes through the back door of a traditions-history argument wherever the paradigm incurs counter-indications.) For his part, Schweitzer's solution to this dilemma was to reframe Jesus' ethical message as a subsidiary crater of the imminent eschatological crisis, an event which finally turned out to be the great non-event. By contrast, Bultmann's solution was to redefine (demythologize) the eschatological moment as the everlastingly present moment, which had the effect of severing moral reflection from one's location in the time–space continuum. Despite coming to radically different conclusions regarding the nature of Jesus' programme, both Schweitzer and Bultmann instinctively sensed that the best solution to the problem posed by the ethics and eschatology of Jesus is one which effectively integrates both.

Schweitzer and Bultmann revisited

The present book is, among other things, an attempt to revisit the same integrative project undertaken by Schweitzer and Bultmann. In doing so, I propose to retrieve certain components of their reconstructions, components which, though seemingly now right back on the scrapheap in more contemporary Jesus scholarship, deserve serious reconsideration. For the purposes of my project, I look to each writer in two respects. First, with Schweitzer I intend to take seriously the crucial importance of the tribulation within the self-understanding of the historical Jesus. Second, again alongside Schweitzer, I will entertain the possibility that Jesus was not so much interested in promulgating a universal norm ('universal' in the sense of being true at all times, for all persons and in all places) but rather in conveying an ethical message which, though eventually lending itself well to being principalized in different directions, was in the first instance intended to apply to the specific conditions occasioned by the tribulation. Issued as a guide for negotiating the current trials in the current eschatological crisis, Jesus' teachings were fundamentally eschatological in nature. Third, with Bultmann I will agree that Jesus' message implicated its hearers in a crisis of decision, demanding urgent response. The very nature of his challenge, implicit in his teachings, left no room for aloof detachment or hedging deferment: the time was now. Fourth and finally, again with the author of *Theology of the New Testament*, I will maintain that this enjoined decision was a totalizing and self-involving decision. Jesus' instruction was not offered as a bit of for-what-it's-worth advice but a call for absolute self-surrender. The only platform for working out that self-surrender was the controversial, even socially scandalous, community now taking shape around Jesus.

So much for my disclosed points of agreement with Schweitzer and Bultmann, but there are also critical junctures at which I will also disagree. First, Schweitzer's account of tribulation is far too rough and unpolished a fixture to function properly within Jesus' mental apparatus. While this book does not undertake a thorough critique of Schweitzer on this point, it can be said for now that there is no evidence that ancient Judaism coupled tribulation and divine intervention with the same chronological tightness that Schweitzer's Jesus did.[4] Consequently, to make my second point, as ingenious as Schweitzer's theory of the 'interim ethic' may be, it turns out to be entirely unnecessary. I can agree that 'interim ethics' may be a fitting description for Jesus' moral teachings, so long as we can stay flexible on the duration of 'interim', which for Jesus was an indefinite period. Third, whereas I agree with Bultmann on the critical nature of Jesus' call for decision, I will disagree on the substance of that decision. Against the Marburger, who believed that both Jesus' call and the enlisted response were individualized transactions easily abstracted from the historical context, I maintain that Jesus' call to decision was his summons to join his society, with its own distinctive ways of thinking and doing. True, Jesus' invitation was extended to the individual, but it was an invitation which demanded as an initial step personal solidarity with a specific social reality, the Jesus movement itself. Fourth, on a related note, though Bultmann's Jesus has far more to say about the individual's vertical commitments than their horizontal commitments, I believe that the historical Jesus' conception of absolute surrender had a vertical *and* a horizontal aspect, demanding that self-surrender unto God be expressed through self-surrender unto the community – and vice versa. The notional intersection between these axes was nothing less than the vocation Jesus imposed.

Gleaning the most promising insights of both Schweitzer and Bultmann, while setting aside the less promising, I intend to renew their project of integrating eschatology and ethics. The key to this integration begins by

[4] The definitive book on Jesus and the tribulation is still Pitre 2005.

describing Jesus in *priestly terms*. By stating that Jesus was 'priestly', I am not proposing that he laid claim to an officially sanctioned Levitical or Zadokite or Hasmonean office, but rather that he represented himself as taking on certain priestly *functions* notwithstanding his lack of conventional qualifications. These functions pointed to the onset of a divinely initiated process through which Jesus would become and in some sense already had become the eschatological high priest.

In maintaining Jesus' sacerdotal self-understanding, I do not rule out the possibility that he also thought of himself as a prophet and messianic king. Indeed, although I won't take the time to make a thorough argument to this effect, in my view – as will become clear – it is highly likely that Jesus considered himself to be both. My relative neglect of the messianic category in particular is not meant to indicate its relative (un)importance in Jesus' mind. Yet I am writing this book to offset a particular problem: while scholars will regularly sling around terms like 'messiah' or 'messianic', and then unselfconsciously shift over to seemingly interchangeable terms like 'king' or 'royal', we still have hardly begun to elucidate how the Jewish messianic concept, variegated as it was, *brought together the royal aspects and priestly aspects*. To anticipate myself, I am convinced that in many a first-century mind the ultimate significance of the promise of Davidic restoration lay not in its implications of political autonomy (as important as autonomy might be) but in its cultic entailments, for as pressing as the problem of Roman occupation might have been, even more acute was the festering defilement of the temple. Along the same lines, in the imagination of the first-century pious, the final significance of the expected messiah was not in his vanquishing of Israel's political foes (again, as important as this piece might have been) but in his renewing of temple space. The point is hardly extraordinary. I trust it will come as no shock when I suggest that the Jews of Jesus' day did *not* stand in the streets of Jerusalem, chanting the Aramaic equivalent of 'Liberty, Equality, Fraternity'. Likewise, I hope that it would not be the height of scandal if I were to suggest that ancient Israel never held out political autonomy as a moral end unto itself. For Israel the point was not political autonomy but its chief concomitants: a politically unified theocracy unburdened by the authority and ideology of foreign gods – crucial pieces for a finally functioning temple. As important as Jesus' royal messianic aspect may be, the evidence suggests that he subordinated his royal identity to his primary identity as priest. Jesus sought to implement not a theocracy but a hierocracy under the God of Israel.

A few notes of explanation

For those conversant with contemporary historical Jesus studies, the account which I am proposing – if not the very title of this book, *Jesus the Priest* – may come as something of a surprise. After all, while Jesus' self-consciousness of his messiahship has been both touted and denied, neither the affirmers nor the deniers on this issue have been generally willing to identify Jesus in priestly terms. 'Jesus as priest' may be a well-worn concept for students of the biblical book of Hebrews; not so much for those in the historical Jesus trade. For this reason, even in writing this book, I confess to feeling a little like Paul on the way to the Areopagus (Acts 17), half-expecting that some half-incredulous readers will pick up the book whispering to themselves, 'What is this babbler trying to say?', while others will consider my basic argument with a critical open-mindedness, as if to say, 'May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting?' But in arguing for Jesus as a priest, I am not so much making a brand-new argument as making an argument that has not yet, for whatever reason, received the traction that it's due.

With that in mind, it may be helpful to speak not only to the context of the present project, but also to certain contemporary socio-historical contexts that may help us better understand a 'whatever reason' here and there. In writing the current book, I am offering the second instalment of a three-volume trilogy. In the anticipated third book, *Jesus the Sacrifice*, I intend to explore Jesus' death and the meaning – to tip my hand on this point already – which Jesus assigned to it. I mention this as part of a caveat: while some readers of the present tome may be frustrated by my occasional use of words like 'atonement' without fully explaining what I mean, I beg their patience ahead of time with the good hopes of their seeing the full case face to face in volume three. Meanwhile, in my earlier book *Jesus the Temple* (2010), I advanced a case similar to but not identical with the one being made here. To summarize the first book in this trilogy, I argued that the Jesus movement was a counter-temple movement whose most defining moment occurred with the so-called cleansing of the temple. In addition, I maintained that various activities characteristically attributed to Jesus in the tradition, including exorcism, healings and feedings, are best interpreted as counter-temple activities. While the present volume is a continuation of the project which began with *Jesus the Temple*, my argument here does not materially depend on the arguments marshalled there. Making minimal recourse to the first volume, *Jesus the Priest* offers a different argument on a different trove of evidence. As will become clear enough to readers of *Jesus the Temple*, the present book also retains a somewhat different thrust and methodology. In terms of scope of materials, the principal difference between this book and its predecessor is that while the earlier volume focused primarily on Jesus' actions, the current book concerns itself more with Jesus' words (with the exception of Chapter 2 which focuses on Jesus' baptism, in which case we are dealing with the alleged voice from heaven). In terms of focus, while *Jesus the Temple* was principally concerned with Jesus' quest for renewed sacred space, this present volume will attend more to how he and his followers self-consciously functioned as proleptic priests within that quest. I would like to think of the two books as complementary, sometimes overlapping but far from redundant.

That the essential argument of *Jesus the Temple* has been reviewed but unrebutted, I trust, provides initial warrant for the basic premise of *Jesus the Priest*. But as I have already hinted, in taking up this line of argument I am hardly standing alone in the field. Others have written persuasively on this topic. For some, the particulars of their arguments and/or their conclusions are somewhat different from mine; for others, the overlaps are quite close.[5] Still others have written on the topic and I share many of their judgements. Perhaps like Teri Horton, who was emboldened by the musings of an art teacher passing by, I too have been encouraged by the musings of other scholars who are now seeing many of the same things I have been seeing. In writing this book, as well as its prequel, I am hoping to set out (for many) a new and (for some) an unusual portrait of Jesus for both a semi-popular readership and the guild alike.

Even so, perhaps an explanatory word or two is in order as to why the particular angle I am exploring appears to be such a *novum*. I think there are a number of complex reasons for this, but I will try my hand at naming a few of them. In the first place, I believe that ancient Judaism's long-overdue makeover, set into motion by E. P. Sanders' *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* and continuing in discussions surrounding the New Perspective on Paul, has yet to make its full impact on historical Jesus studies.[6] If Sanders insisted that the twentieth-century study of Paul had been warped by its reliance on inaccurate and fundamentally anti-Judaistic portrayals of ancient Judaism, the sub-discipline of Pauline studies seems to have heard the implicit call to repentance. In recent years, I notice that when the same set of concerns is raised in historical Jesus studies, it regularly appears in connection with allegations of supersessionism or replacement theology, that is, a reconstruction which envisions the Church as a replacement for Israel. While I have been accused by at least one reviewer of peddling a form of supersessionism in publishing *Jesus the Temple* (and may perhaps receive the same criticism in relation to *Jesus the Priest*), I dispute the charge but nevertheless find a certain irony in the fact that it has been the anti-Judaistic tendencies latent within so much twentieth-century scholarship that has long impeded the very thesis I am seeking to advance. Here we need to go no further than Bultmann's above-discussed *Theology of the New Testament*, where he not uncharacteristically writes:

> Polemic against the temple cult is completely absent from the words of Jesus. As a matter of fact it, too, had essentially lost its original meaning in his time; for Judaism was no longer a cultic religion, but had become a religion of observance.[7]

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5 All this will become clear enough in the footnotes. For now, see Friedrich 1956; Sanders 1985; Meyer 1992; 2002 (1979); Chilton 1992; 1996; Wright 1996; Fletcher-Louis 1997b; 2000; 2006; 2007b; Tan 1997; Bryan 2002; Pitre 2005; 2008; 2015; Klawans 2006; Barber 2013b. This isn't even to touch on the burgeoning literature on the centrality of the temple in the Old Testament; see, e.g., the collection in Morales 2014.

6 Sanders 1977.

7 Bultmann 1951: 17.

With the disparaging phrase 'religion of observance' Bultmann of course means that Judaism had devolved to a religion of meaningless externalities. Accordingly, the day-to-day operations of the cult and the life of the temple had become nothing more than a trifling legal formality – and therefore virtually irrelevant not only to many pious Jews who deserve better but also to Jesus himself (good neo-Kantian that he was). Sentiments such as Bultmann's are exactly the kind of thing Sanders has in mind when he draws up his excoriating and broad-sweeping indictment. But sentiments such as these also explain why the vast bulk of Jesus scholarship has neglected the temple, despite clear indications in the Second-Temple literature of its utmost significance, in its reconstruction of Jesus. Is it going too far to suggest that the current disregard of Israel's cultus within contemporary Jesus studies is at least indirectly related to the anti-Judaistic (and therefore anti-cultic) paradigm instantiated in Bultmann? I think not. For my part, I believe, hope and trust that the current project actually stands near the culmination of guild-wide effort to escape the (conscious or unconscious) anti-Judaism of our academic forebears and to allow Jesus to be a fully fledged Jew of his time.

If anti-Judaistic thinking has been one of the scandalous skeletons in New Testament scholarship's closet, the other remaining set of bones – and perhaps, to cite Philip Jenkins' title, 'the last acceptable prejudice' – is the anti-Catholic tenor of the last two hundred years of Protestant-dominated scholarship.[8] This point, I think, is commonly enough observed that it hardly needs demonstrating.[9] As a Protestant scholar, I suspect that much of the inertia surrounding Jesus' interest in the cultic has at least something to do with Protestants' characteristic disinterest in the same topic. I am not alone in this suspicion. In her book *Anti-Cultic Theology in Christian Biblical Interpretation: A Study of Isaiah 66:1–4 and Its Reception*, Valerie A. Stein speaks to this point when she comments how it is

> evident that Protestant anti-cultic theology is reflected in interpretations of Isa 66:1–4 in the Modern Era, including in historical-critical scholarship. The anti-cultic attitude is rooted in the theology of Martin Luther. Protestant scholars have dominated modern biblical scholarship until recently. This is especially true for German scholarship of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, which is still influential today. Aversion to ritual dominates this scholarship. Sometimes these attitudes take the form of a preference for prophetic and Deuteronomistic material (which is often identified closely with Christianity) over Priestly material (which is identified with Judaism).[10]

Stein's remarks pertaining to the reception history of Isaiah 66 may perhaps, with only slight modification, be extended to the modern-day quest of the

8 See Jenkins 2003.

9 For an overview of literature investigating anti-Catholic urges in nineteenth-century culture and thought, see Drury 2001.

10 Stein 2006: 4.

historical Jesus. Is it far-fetched to imagine that, despite all its pretensions of scientific objectivity, Protestant-dominated Jesus research for the past two hundred years has unconsciously yet systemically downplayed Jesus' priestly aspect? Hardly. If studies show that business recruiters tend to hire people like themselves again and again, Protestant Jesus scholars have likewise been unconsciously attracted to a very Protestant Jesus again and again.

As readers we can hardly extract ourselves from our own social locations, but with a little self-awareness we can at least put *some* critical distance between our scholarship and our culturally conditioned biases, just as we can reflect self-critically on our pre-theoretical assumptions. Call me naive, but I am enough of a modernist to believe that, with a measure of intellectual honesty, escape from solipsism remains possible. As responsible readers of history, we are not entirely doomed to the vicious circle of our self-referential universe. My hope in writing this book is no different from the hope of any author: that its readers will be able to set aside constraining prejudices (not least anti-Catholic and anti-Judaistic biases) and judge its merits by the overall strength of the argument.

A word on method

At the present moment, many sense that the quest of the historical Jesus is lurching towards a cul-de-sac which will soon be requiring us to wheel around and try a different route. The present impasse is both methodological and substantive, fraught with unresolved issues involving criteria and interpretative judgements, stymied by controverted questions of 'How can we know?' and 'What do we know?' Confidence in the once tried-and-true tools of critical scholarship has eroded; conventional methodologies, like an old bridge failing the engineers' annual inspection, are no longer being trusted to bear the evidentiary load they once had carried.[11] For some, such developments sound like the final tolling of the bells for historical Jesus scholarship. I demur. As long as we can agree that Jesus of Nazareth existed in time and space, we should continue to work towards a mutually agreed-upon means by which we might access this figure historically. Obviously, the old positivistic approaches will no longer do. But it is equally obvious that a radical scepticism regarding the possibility of retrieving meaningful facts about Jesus is simply the reverse side of the coin of this old positivism. Then there are those who oppose historical Jesus studies out of a theologically high-minded commitment to the canonical text, over and against any attempted reconstructions behind the text. I find such a posture unconvincing. To deny the possibility of meaningful reflection on the historical Jesus in principle is to commit oneself ahead of time to a version of Docetism.

Nevertheless, convinced that we will soon need some new options on

[11] See, e.g., Sanders 1998; Holmén 2002; Rodríguez 2009; Wedderburn 2010: 161–82; Allison 2010: 3–30; Keith and LeDonne 2012.

both fronts, I attempt in this book to go in a new direction by offering a microhistory of Jesus. By undertaking a microhistory I intentionally restrict myself to a very limited number of source texts, largely undisputed as reflecting the setting of Jesus, all the while seeking to ask, in the words of Charles Joyner, 'large questions in small places'.[12] There are inherent advantages to such selectivity. First, by relying on materials which the critical consensus has already assigned to the dominical setting, I stand a better chance of convincing the full breadth of my readers, including those who are relatively reluctant to credit Jesus with material ascribed to him in the Gospels. Accordingly, as I approach the authenticity of the various pericopae, I will normally be able to get by with little more than a nod to the trump cards of scholarly opinion. In the few places where I rely on a controverted tradition (Chapter 4), I intend to play out the hand by the current rules of the game. In this way, I hope to demonstrate that my case can be successfully established on the so-called 'critical minimum' of authentic Jesus tradition – without requiring lines of evidence that some would, for source-critical or form-critical reasons, regard as dubious. And so, just as Paul sought to make his point at the Areopagus on the basis of a very few but very well-accepted texts, I will be employing a fairly limited range of texts as a baseline, involving not many more than a dozen passages from the Jesus tradition. The added benefit of this approach is that it avoids the methodological quagmire that even sometimes taxes the patience of professional Jesus scholars. I justify this approach to the historical Jesus in the hope that the famous dictum of Ludwig Mies van der Rohe will prove true: 'Less is more.'

Second, by limiting the number of texts under consideration, I also hope to avoid the all-too-common mistake of rushing isolated texts (pericopae, sub-units, etc.) on and off the stage, impressing them into a chorus of 'standard' but sometimes misguided readings, and all the while failing to do exegetical justice to any of them. And so, compared to many of its counterparts in the genre, this book will offer a relatively deep reading of the biblical texts. This will involve synthesizing the web of insights garnered from composition criticism, redaction criticism, socio-historical backgrounds, and the study of the Hebrew Bible. While negotiating the relationship between these vertices will be complicated enough, I will be particularly interested in exploring Jesus' voice as a centralizing theme behind synoptic variation, as well as in reconstructing the dialogue between Jesus' sayings and their invoked scriptural traditions. If we allow for the possibility that Jesus, along with the Jews of his day, gleaned from these scriptures a roughly coherent narrative, the main talking points of what Schweitzer calls a 'dogmatic history', this puts us in a position to interpret Jesus' aims in the light of that narrative. I am fully aware that for some of my dialogue partners this approach will draw charges of 'metanarrative' (the great bogeyman of postmodernity) and

[12] Joyner 1999: 1.

'maximalist reading'. But then again, it is too often these same critics who either refuse to advance a constructive account of their own (and in this sense may be cheerful consistent minimalists but are nonetheless contributing nothing positive to the discussion), or sneak in a hopelessly maximalist reading on another front, involving, say, some highly detailed social agenda on Jesus' part, or well-detailed 'Q community', or something of the sort. My basic defence and the premise of my argument is that Jesus took the Hebrew scriptures extremely seriously, and to the degree that contemporary accounts of the historical Jesus fail to take this point seriously, I believe, they will be all the more off point. I therefore also believe that in order to understand Jesus' aims, we must be willing to engage in a deep but historically disciplined reading of the Scriptures.

My argument proceeds on two concurrent levels: one largely cumulative and the other linear. In the cumulative thread of my argument, I provide a fresh reading of the aforementioned blocks of Jesus tradition by paying attention to certain – often seemingly minor – textual details, presumably reflective of Jesus' oral utterances. Focusing first on the Lord's Prayer and its scriptural subtexts, I set forth a working hypothesis that Jesus identified his movement as a priestly movement, tasked with ushering in the renewed cultic space promised in Ezekiel 36 (Chapter 1). In subsequent chapters, this hypothesis is then tested with reference to other dominical texts; moving from the peripheral textual detail to the big picture, my approach remains inductive throughout. Meanwhile, the unearthing of new clues gives rise to new questions, leading to the acquisition of even more clues, followed by a new set of questions, and so it goes across the chapters – all, I hope, in growing support of my overall argument.

In principle, this approach is not unlike the one adopted by the Italian microhistorian Carlo Ginzburg, who justifies his method as follows:

> Historians cannot help sometimes referring back (explicitly or by implication) to comparable series of phenomena; but their strategy of finding things out, like the volumes in which they present their work, is basically about particular cases, whether concerning individuals, or social groups, or whole societies. In this way history is like medicine, which uses disease classifications to analyse the specific illness of a particular patient. And *the historian's knowledge*, like the doctor's, *is indirect, based on signs and scraps of evidence, conjectural*.[13]

For physicians and murder-mystery detectives alike, as well as for historians of Christian origins, sometimes the surest path to discovery begins not with a grand theory but with a journey that looks carefully at the isolated parts one at a time in the hopes of finding a connective thread. Likewise, in undertaking a text-centred microhistory of the Jesus tradition, I find that certain deceptively inconsequential details of the tradition eventually force

[13] Ginzburg 1980: 16; emphasis added.

some major questions about the historical Jesus' cultic interests. On 'the systematic gathering of these "small insights"' (to quote Ginsburg quoting the great eighteenth-century art historian J. J. Winckelmann), drawn from passages which are regularly regarded as conveying not just the words but the very pulse of Jesus, I seek to trace a series of lines from the capillaries of isolated textual phenomena back – often by an admittedly circuitous route – to the main arteries of Jesus' aims, and on to the heart valves of his movement.[14] There is a theory behind this approach. In penetrating the thought world of a bygone age, it is often the implicit assumptions *behind* the surviving texts rather than the assertions *within* them that proves most useful. To be sure, a microhistorical approach to Jesus is not unencumbered by the potentially problematic issue of selectivity (why are we talking about *this* saying or episode rather than *that* one?), but concerns over the privileging of certain data and the implicit demotion of other data (inevitable in any historical study) should be somewhat mitigated as the clues begin to take on a voice of their own. Once the authentic tradition's cultic metaphors and narratives are properly coordinated, the case for a self-consciously priestly Jesus becomes compelling.

The second and more linear layer of my two-fold argument also begins in Chapter 1. My point of departure begins with noting the evidentiary weakness for the traditional explanation for Jesus' identification of God as 'Father'. Against the commonly held theory that Jesus called on God primarily on the basis of inward personal experience or feeling, I suggest that Jesus' distinctive naming of the divine was occasioned by a redemptive-historical analogy, operationalized by Jesus himself, between his persecuted disciples and the exodus generation persecuted under Pharaoh. Just as the trials (*peirasmoi*) of the exodus would be the means by which Israel, precisely as son of god (Exod. 4.22–23), would actualize its elect role as a 'kingdom of priests' (19.6); so too, Jesus' followers were to realize their sonship and priesthood through suffering. This observation lays the groundwork for Chapter 2, where I find evidence that when Jesus was identified as the 'son of God' at his baptism, this title was intended to convey his function as imminent high priest. Then, building on Chapter 3, Chapters 4–6 attempt to resolve how Jesus' filial status relates to his alleged title as 'Son of David', as well as to his also alleged title 'Son of Man': here I will argue that both of these titles denote a priestly function that has thus far been seldom appreciated. Finally, in Chapter 7, history testifies to the confrontational quality of Jesus' identification with the Son of Man.

The book closes out with a recapitulation of some of the most important implications of my argument, historical and theological. For those who take up this book out of a purely historical interest, I hope I will have provided an intriguing new point of departure for understanding Jesus. For those whose

[14] Ginzburg 1989: 105.

primary interest lies in the sphere of theology, there will probably be more than a few points of relevance along the way, that is, after a little connecting of the dots on the theologian's part. Meanwhile, I hope and trust that those who read this book out of both a historical and a theological concern will be well served on both fronts. If Jesus is the priest and was so in his lifetime, the historical and theological ramifications are far-ranging indeed. Whether I have successfully established this thesis I will leave to the reader to judge.

1

The prayer of Jesus

Introduction

It is a truth universally acknowledged that any single, young faith-tradition in possession of at least a few adherents and some longevity must be in want of marrying itself to certain defining practices. The early Church is no exception. Judging by our sources, the most central of these must have been baptism and the Lord's Supper. But right up alongside these two was yet another practice integral to the life of the Church: the recitation of the *Pater Noster* (*PN*) or the Lord's Prayer. The late first-century *Didache* called for the repeating of the Lord's Prayer three times a day (*Did.* 8.2). The second-century church father Tertullian summarized the petition as an 'abridgement of the entire gospel', and summoned believers to preface their own personal prayers with the words of this prayer (*Or.* 1). A third-century Carthaginian bishop by the name of Cyprian labelled it as 'a compendium of heavenly doctrine' (*Dom. or.* 9). Finally, the late fourth-century *Apostolic Constitutions* (7.44) required that the Lord's Prayer be uttered while standing, much as Jews for centuries had recited the Amidah. Even though the canonical writings record no instance of the early Church reciting the Lord's Prayer, by the post-apostolic era the repeated words had already become well entrenched in its liturgical life.

The broad and enduring reception of the Lord's Prayer in the early Church provides a convenient point of departure for assessing its significance in the life of the historical Jesus. Whether it was Matthew and Luke who more accurately preserved the petition as they found it in Q or whether, as is more likely, both fell back on a shared oral tradition, it is noteworthy that this is the only prayer which Jesus is recorded as having enjoined upon his disciples. This in turn provides the best explanation for the theological and liturgical prominence of the Lord's Prayer in the life of the early Church: the disciples, having received the prayer directly from Jesus and having committed themselves to repeating it dutifully on a regular basis, set the standard for subsequent church practice. In following years, the prayer would continue to be sustained in ecclesial memory through regular, communal repetition – as it is even today. This does not mean that Jesus' full prayer can be confidently reconstructed on an exact word-for-word basis as he first gave it in the Aramaic (occasional difficulties in the Greek together with obvious differences between the Matthean and Lukan versions render this project problematic). Nevertheless, given good reason to believe that a verbal core of the Gospel accounts goes directly back to the historical Jesus, a reconstruction of the original becomes feasible.[1] This judgement is hardly controversial – even the most sceptical of historical Jesus scholars would agree.[2]

Yet for our purposes it is not enough to infer that the Lord's Prayer was repeated early, far and wide: there must also be some significance in its having been regarded as a convenient précis of the gospel itself. Undoubtedly, the summative function which the early church fathers assigned it could not have endured apart from a high degree of interpretative interest in Matthew 6.9–13//Luke 11.2–4. While many today think of the *PN* as a kind of formulaic 'toss in', recited mechanically and unreflectively in liturgical settings, this does not seem to be how the early Church thought of it. Indeed, the evidence suggests that there were at least some influential thinkers who correlated the Lord's Prayer with cardinal points of doctrine. This collective interest helped solidify the prayer's function as a theological outline.

The impetus for this trend is worth pondering. In theory, the continual repurposing of the Lord's Prayer in the patristic era could be chalked up to, as much as anything, the theological creativity of the fathers, who were keen to offer whatever notional support they could to such a central component of the Great Church's liturgy. But another, more attractive option is to suppose that the broadly held vision of the Lord's Prayer as an all-encompassing prayer – a prayer, both literally and figuratively, to end all Christian prayers – is to be traced to its first reception among the disciples. This is not to say that the likes of Peter and John would have interpreted the prayer exactly in the manner of the Didachist and Tertullian (certainly they did not), but rather that the early second-century interpreters' tendency to ascribe the prayer such extraordinary status was an inherited tendency. Ultimately, the weightiness of the *PN* is to be related back to the historical Jesus himself. Since history records Jesus enjoining one prayer and one prayer only, it would not be surprising for him to have carefully formulated it as a kind of executive summary of his programme. Indeed, I believe that a proper understanding of this prayer will confirm this to be the case. In this chapter, I shall consider both the opening address ('Father') and the subsequent petitions in the hope that the prayer, when viewed through the appropriate lens, may shed more light than we have heretofore realized.

On comparing the opening line of the Lord's Prayer in Matthew (6.9b) and Luke (11.2b), we find that the Lukan version omits the modifiers 'our'

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1 As classically presented in Burney 1925: 113. Despite offering an extraordinarily speculative source-critical explanation for the Sermon on the Mount as a whole, Betz and Collins (1995: 375) remain sceptical in principle when it comes to the task of reconstructing the prayer. I will be following the conventional view that the scope of the prayer is best represented by Luke (with passing comment on two petitions usually credited to Matthew); see Carruth and Garsky 1996.

2 Contra Mell 1994. The Jesus Seminar (Funk and Hoover 1993: 148–9) ascribes the first, second, fourth and fifth petitions to Jesus; it remains mildly dubious on the sixth ('lead us not into temptation/test') petition and thoroughly sceptical on the third ('your will be done') and seventh ('deliver us from evil') petitions.

and 'who is in heaven'. The variation may be due to the modulation of tradition that comes with repeated performance (compare how the wording of 'institution' of the Lord's Supper is variegated across the earliest witnesses), or it may simply have to do with changes which occurred at an editorial level, that is, Matthew choosing to add the phrases in accordance with his theology and literary style. In the latter case, this would mean that Luke's version more closely reflects the original wording. But all such matters negligibly impact the focal point here: the curious fact that Jesus addresses the divine being as 'Father' and encourages his disciples to do the same.

In the Lord's Prayer and elsewhere, there is little doubt that Jesus did in fact call God 'Father'.[3] This is demonstrable, simply and quite convincingly, by the frequency with which the Gospel tradition ascribes such language to him. In an overwhelming number of instances in which Jesus speaks of divinity, he uses the term 'Father'.[4] In Jesus' prayers, 'Father'-laden language is standard; the sole exception is the cry of dereliction (Mark 15.34//Matt. 27.46), an exception which essentially proves the rule.[5] Jesus' habit of referring to his community in familial terms corroborates our suspicions: for the historical Jesus, the preferred term for the divine was 'Father'.[6]

Of course in the ancient world, comparisons between deities and 'father' were not unheard of. Perhaps this is not surprising. Given the array of ancient cosmogonies which include a personal creator, it would only be natural to think of these creating deities in paternal or maternal terms, as the case might be. Both in Ancient Near Eastern (ANE) and Greco-Roman contexts, the one who gave birth to humanity is not infrequently designated 'Father' or 'Father of humankind' or the like, and this in relation to both humanity as a collectivity and individuals alike.[7] On one level, Jesus fits hand in glove with the first-century world.

At the same time, it would be short-sighted to leave off there. Jesus' usage of 'Father' in addressing the divine is indeed distinctive, and this is clearly so for at least three reasons. First, as suggested directly above, Jesus' use of 'Father' (as an appellation of God) is notable for its frequency. Whereas other texts or figures from antiquity may be found addressing God in paternal terms here and there, Jesus has neither predecessor nor contemporary who calls God 'Father' with anything approaching his frequency and consistency.

3 Despite the objections of D'Angelo (1992a; 1992b).

4 Examples abound: 'Father' *simpliciter* (Matt. 11.25–27; 24.36; 28.19; Mark 13.32; 14.36; Luke 10.21–22; 22.42; 23.34, 46; John 4.23; 5.19, 20; *passim*), 'my [heavenly] Father' (Matt. 6.21, 32–33; 11.27; 12.50; 15.13; 16.17; Luke 10.22; 22.29; 24.29; John 5.17; 6.32, 40; 8.19; etc.), and 'your [heavenly] Father' (Matt. 5.16, 45, 48; 6.1, 4, 6, 8; Mark 11.25; Luke 6.36; 12.30; John 20.17; etc.). Although the Evangelists' redactional activity may have much to do with the precise wording ascribed to Jesus, the point remains that variations are merely that – variations on a consistent theme.

5 Matt. 11.25, 26, 27 par.; Mark 14.36 par.; Luke 22.34, 46; John 11.41; 12.28; 17.1, 5, 11, 21, 24, 25.

6 See, e.g., Mark 3.31–35 par.

7 See Fensham: 1971: 129; Marchel 1963: 134. I am indebted to Susan Rieske for these references.

This is not simply a function of the size of the database of sayings ascribed to Jesus, for on any audit of the Jesus tradition 'Father' is a distinctively recurring motif. Second, for Jesus the term is virtually his exclusive way of naming God. While those texts that speak of divine fatherhood will invariably also use other names for the deity, this is not really the case for Jesus. When it came to speaking of God, Jesus invariably fell back to the same term over and over again: 'Father'. Third, on considering the evidence of the early Church, we have the strong impression that the primitive Christians adopted Jesus' familial language in a highly self-conscious way.[8] Although this point will be argued more fully below, suffice it to say for now that early Christianity seemed to have taken on the fatherhood of God as a kind of distinctive trademark. The best explanation for this self-conscious use of the term involves tracing a trail back to Jesus' frequent and virtually exclusive use of 'Father'. While there may be more going on here (undoubtedly there is), at the very least the early Church must be seen as tipping its collective hat in Jesus' direction every time they uttered the term in connection with God. Some modern scholars may doubt that Jesus' father-language was distinctive; the early Church was not of the same opinion. Jesus did not simply call God 'Father', but did so conspicuously and purposefully.

Given the importance of 'Father' in Jesus' vocabulary, it stands to reason that in unpacking this term both in the Lord's Prayer and in the larger Jesus tradition, we might reasonably hope to acquire substantive insight into what made him tick. Indeed, if the historical Jesus' concept of the 'kingdom of God' is like a reconstructed house, then the meaning of 'Father' is its foundation. And for that reason the task becomes all the more burdened: no matter what the angle, one's interpretation of this address largely defines – and in turn will largely be defined by – how one understands the sum and substance of his message. Considering the various approaches to the problem at hand, it is clear that getting at the significance of 'Father' is easier said than done.

The meaning of 'Father': a historical-critical conundrum

So then, what did Jesus mean when he called upon God as 'Father'? Was this a carry-over from Greco-Roman divine-naming practices? Or is the context more directly Jewish? And if it was Jewish, was this a substantive departure from antecedent theological tradition or of a piece with it? Alternatively, if Jesus invited others to share in his own particular way of speaking about God, did he do so without intending any profound theological entailments, that is, without meaning to revise current beliefs about the God of Israel? To summarize all these questions: how, if at all, does Jesus' naming God as 'Father' stand in continuity with his own religious trajectory?

To this last question there have been several standard responses. In the late

8 Rom. 1.7; 6.4; 8.15; 15.6; 1 Cor. 1.3; Eph. 1.3; 2 Tim. 1.2; Heb. 2.11; Jas. 1.17; 1 Pet. 1.2–3; 2 Pet. 1.17; 1 John 1.2; Rev. 1.6; *1 Clem.* 8.3; Ign. *Eph.* 4.2; etc.

nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century, a good number of writers alleged a radical discontinuity between Jesus' God-talk and that of his contemporary Jews – and this discontinuity was the genius of his message. For example, Wilhelm Bousset writes: 'It is in the proclamation of God as heavenly Father that we meet the most original and truly creative aspect of Jesus' preaching'.[9] Bousset's heirs in the *Religionsgeschichteschule* would follow suit.[10] According to this line of scholarship, Jesus' emphasis on the fatherhood of God stood at the core of his revolt against Judaism – whether in its nationalism (e.g. Heitmüller) or in its supposedly legalistic trammels (e.g. Bosworth, Warschauer).[11] Here, too, one finds recurring statements to the effect that Jesus' filial language flowed out of his own personal intimations of divine fellowship; his invitation to address God as 'Father' – in the Lord's Prayer and elsewhere – followed on his own experience of God's father-like presence and care.[12]

This last line of interpretation is of course still very much alive and well today, and this is in part due to the highly influential writings of Joachim Jeremias. Paying special attention to the Aramaic term *Abba* ('father'), Jeremias emphasizes the radical discontinuity between Jesus' prayer and the prayer of his contemporaries, and writes that prior to Jesus it 'would have been irreverent and therefore unthinkable to call God by this familiar word'.[13] Moreover, according to Jeremias:

> [w]e are confronted with something new and unheard of which breaks through the limits of Judaism. Here we see who the historical Jesus was; the man who had the power to address God as Abba and who included the sinners and the publicans in the kingdom by authorizing them to repeat this one word, Abba, dear father.[14]

For the Göttingen scholar the essential genius of Jesus was in his flouting religious convention of his day and daring to name God with such an intimate term; it was this divinely directed address *Abba* and its connotations of childlike trust that defined both him and his movement. It was also the use of this word that set him apart from first-century Judaism as a whole. For Jeremias, *Abba* provided the much-needed window into Jesus' inner life which the Liberal tradition after Schleiermacher had been requiring.

There are admittedly some serious problems here.[15] First, given *Abba*'s sparse attestation both in the Gospels and in the first-century milieu, we

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9 Bousset 1892: 41 (reference is originally cited in Thompson 2000: 14). The translation is my own.

10 The most famous of these heirs, Bultmann, recognized the essentially Jewish roots of Jesus' father-language (see Bultmann 1958 (1934): 191–4), but also insisted that the 'stark simplicity of "Father"' in Jesus' prayers stood in contrast to the 'over-loaded' forms of address in Jewish prayer practices (Bultmann 1951: 23).

11 Heitmüller 1913; Bosworth 1924; Warschauer 1927: 172–3.

12 Manson 1951 (1931): 102–8; McKnight 1999: 61–2; Dunn 2003: 717–8; Keener 2009: 271–2.

13 Jeremias 1965: 21.

14 Jeremias 1965: 30.

15 See especially Thompson 2000: 25–34.

have a right to be suspicious that it was really the recurring catchphrase Jeremias makes it out to be. Within the Jesus tradition, the term occurs only once (Mark 14.36); prior to the time of Jesus, it is completely unattested. Of course, it is possible that behind each instance of the Greek word 'Father' (*patēr*) in the Gospel tradition we hear Jesus uttering *Abba*, but this would be nothing more than speculation. Other lexical options, including Hebrew vocatives (Hebrew was the standard language of prayer for many Jews of the period), are plausible. That Jesus used *Abba* at least on occasion is, I believe, likely. That Jesus used *Abba* in reference to Yahweh at all places and at all times cannot easily be demonstrated.

Second, as James Barr noted in the title of his well-known essay: *Abba* does not mean 'Daddy'.[16] The term is neither childish (as if it were restricted to the domain of little children) nor even specifically connotative of prepubescence. This portion of Jeremias's argument is simply mistaken, a fact which he himself later acknowledges.[17] While this does not rule out the possibility that the term entailed a sense of intimacy, there is no reason to think that it would have conveyed any more or any less intimacy than the Greek equivalent (*patēr*). The Aramaic utterance cannot hold the lexical freight Jeremias assigns to it; the word *Abba* is certainly too fragile a foundation on which to establish Jesus' consciousness of God.

Third, and perhaps most problematically, Jeremias bracketed out consideration of sources from the Diaspora and restricted his query to the very limited lexical evidence of Palestinian Judaism. The added value of this move, so far as Jeremias' thesis was concerned, was that it effectively quarantined instances of 'Father' which might have otherwise put his argument at risk. In the 1960s when Jeremias first set out his position, such a move appeared legitimate, since biblical scholarship tended to imagine that Diaspora Judaism and Palestinian Judaism occupied two separate silos. However, over the past half-century scholarly opinion has moved on and the alleged hermetic seal separating Palestinian Jews from their confreres in the Diaspora is now no longer as airtight as we once imagined. If the ascription of father-imagery to God was acceptable in the Diaspora, it was almost certainly also acceptable in Jerusalem. In that case, Jeremias' exclusion of Diaspora texts from consideration is unwarranted.

Against Jeremias's approach, it must be acknowledged that the Jewish scriptural tradition was by the first century already comfortable with the concept of Yahweh as Father. We might consider the following passages drawn from a handful of pre-Christian texts written within several hundred years of Jesus' lifetime:

> O Lord, *Father* and Master of my life, do not abandon me to their designs, and do not let me fall because of them! Who will set whips over my thoughts,

[16] Barr 1988.
[17] Jeremias 1971: 67.

> and the discipline of wisdom over my mind, so as not to spare me in my errors, and not overlook my sins? Otherwise my mistakes may be multiplied, and my sins may abound, and I may fall before my adversaries, and my enemy may rejoice over me. O Lord, *Father* and God of my life, do not give me haughty eyes . . .[18]

> But it is your providence, O *Father*, that steers its course, because you have given it a path in the sea, and a safe way through the waves . . .[19]

> He has shown you his greatness even there. Exalt him in the presence of every living being, because he is our Lord and he is our God; he is our *Father* and he is God for ever.[20]

The willingness to call God 'Father' is also attested in older Hebrew scriptures as well (Isa. 63.16; 64.8; 1 Chron. 29.10 LXX). Furthermore, it was an ancient trajectory that continued down to the first century CE and beyond. If the reports concerning the first-century Hillelite Yohanan Ben Zakkai or Rabbi Abiba (*m. Soṭah* 9.15; *m. Yoma* 8.9) are accurate enough, Jesus' own contemporaries would have cheerfully embraced the epithet.[21]

The implications of this should be clear enough. Because Jesus' father-language has more precedent than Jeremias would have us believe, this interpretative approach has naturally failed to consider the possibility that Jesus, rather than sitting askance to Hebrew traditions of divine fatherhood, is in fact engaging them. Moreover such evidence throws up serious obstacles to any attempt to explain Jesus' filial term as being motivated by his personal religious experience. For once it is admitted that the concept of God as Father was in place within Judaism both well before and after the time of Jesus, and that this concept has no discernible link with the subjective experience of God as Father, then the common explanation that Jesus' fatherly God-talk was a unique expression of *his* subjective experience – well, all this suddenly begins to look thin. Given the data on the table, the 'experiential view', as I might call it, is unsupportable.

One way out of this dead end (and as far as I can see, the only way out) is to drum up support from some insight into Jesus' consciousness. But the problem here is that that is exactly what we do not have. Marianne Meye Thompson states the issue succinctly:

> The problem, of course, is that the Gospels recount nothing that purports to be a 'report' from Jesus of his 'experience' or 'subjective consciousness.' We do not know, because we have no evidence for it, that Jesus considered his understanding of God as Father an aspect of his inner experience or that he 'experienced' God as Father. The Gospels do not portray Jesus as explaining whence he derived this designation for God. It may have arisen from his personal or inner experience, but to posit personal experience as the origin of

[18] Sir. 23.1–4; emphasis added.
[19] Wisd. 14.3; emphasis added.
[20] Tobit 13.4; emphasis added.
[21] 'On whom can we stay ourselves? – on our Father in heaven'.

the designation and then to argue that Jesus' use of Father gives us direct access to his experience of God is simply a circular argument.[22]

Indeed, to maintain that Jesus' personal experience was the fulcrum on which his Father-God language rested is to maintain a point which cannot be deduced from the Gospel tradition itself. Suppositions regarding Jesus' consciousness of God are the stuff of unsupported premises, not the logical consequence of an argument.

In fact, arguably, the closest we come to Jesus' consciousness, surfacing in the recorded witness to his prayers, leads us in a quite opposite direction. For when Jesus does pray 'privately' as a Son to the Father, he is regularly praying as a Son in a unique sense, occupying an inimitable role. One might consider, for example, a prayer preserved in Matthew and Luke; Matthew's version reads as follows:

> 25 At that time Jesus said, 'I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants; 26 yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. 27 All things have been handed over to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.'[23]

While scholars are divided as to whether or not Jesus spoke these words, all should be able to agree that we have at least an unambiguous and early articulation of a collective memory of Jesus reaching back at least as far as the putative Q source. Verse 27 makes clear that Jesus sees his own status as 'Son' in unique terms: he alone, precisely as the Son, has been entrusted with 'all things'. In this instance, Jesus' consciousness of his sonship is tightly bound up with his perceived role as exclusive recipient and mediator of revelation. Again, at least in this context, when Jesus speaks of God as 'Father', it is a way of speaking that *cannot* be shared with his disciples or even translated into their terms.[24]

While some would object that the interpretation of Jesus' sonship in Matthew 11.25–27 par. is a post-Easter – and therefore theologically overwrought – misinterpretation of his intentions, we have other instances where Jesus uses Father–Son language in an exclusive sense. For example, there is a relevant passage from John 5; it reads as follows:

> Therefore the Jews started persecuting Jesus, because he was doing such things on the sabbath. But Jesus answered them, 'My Father is still working, and I also am working.' For this reason the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him, because he was not only breaking the sabbath, but was also calling God his own Father, thereby making himself equal to God.[25]

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22 Thompson 2000: 31.
23 Matt. 11.25–27.
24 'God and his unique agent belong intimately together' (Hagner 1993: 321).
25 John 5.16–18.

Whether or not this particular event actually occurred (or occurred exactly as the Evangelist reports it) is beside the point. Nor, if the episode is historically rooted, is there any need to quibble over the Evangelist's interpretation of each party's motives. Assuming that the author of the Fourth Gospel is writing near the close of the first century and has a pastoral eye on mounting tensions between the local communities of believers and their detractors in the nearby synagogues, we must surmise that his description of the Jews' offence bore at least some semblance to reality. While it cannot be denied that the Gospel writer was interested in casting Jesus' opponents in a negative light, this does not mean that he would have invented wholesale the flashpoints that marked out the lines of debate between the messianic communities and the synagogues. On the contrary, unless the Evangelist was willing to undermine completely his own elucidation of Jesus' sonship (John 5.19–47), framed as a response to his opponents' suspicions, the account in John 5.16–18 must have plausibly portrayed contemporary sensitivities on this point for the sake of his audience who knew very well what was – and what was not – acceptable God-talk in the Judaism of the day.[26]

According to John, Jesus' invocation of God as 'Father' was understood by some as implying his own equality with God. Assuming that the likes of Tobit and Ben Sira did not imply their own co-equality with God when they named the divine in paternal terms, one infers that it wasn't simply Jesus' invocation of 'Father' that caused offence, but rather his claim to be 'the Son' in a unique way. In the narrative leading up to John 5.18, the theological anxieties of Jesus' doubters would have been quickly dispelled on their being assured that Jesus was not claiming to be 'a son' in any unique or especially theologically loaded sense. What makes the remainder of the chapter all the more surprising, then, is the very fact that John's Jesus, rather than downplaying his own filial status, actually exacerbates the tensions by claiming for himself two responsibilities normally reserved for Yahweh: the giving of life and the issuing of final judgement (5.20–30). If modern readers might wonder what all this business of raising the dead and offering judgement has to do with Jesus' co-equality with God (5.18), we must remind ourselves that both Jesus and his opponents would have thought of divine co-equality in primarily functional rather than metaphysical terms. At issue, then, was not the question of Jesus' divine substance or essence (as would later preoccupy the framers of the Nicene Creed); the issue was the authority of John's Jesus to serve as Yahweh's agent. In this respect, the Johannine witness, much like the synoptic tradition, makes a principle distinction between Jesus' sonship and any sonship that might be claimed by the disciples.

And so we have come face to face with a paradox within the tradition.

[26] Likewise, Paul's statement in Phil. 2.6 ('who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited') would border on the absurd if (the apostle himself were not persuaded that) the earthly Jesus had controversially asserted his co-equality with God.

On the one hand, we have Jesus referring to Yahweh as 'your Father' and inviting his followers to pray, '[Our] Father'; on the other hand, we have, according to the same Gospel tradition, Jesus claiming a unique filial identity. To put this in theological terms, there are apparently communicable and non-communicable aspects to Jesus' Sonship/sonship. Just how these aspects related to each other and on what basis is not merely a problem for post-Chalcedonian theologians; students of the historical Jesus are also on the hook. It is a problem which must admit at least some level of resolution, a way forward.

One path forward, to get back on the road travelled by Old Liberalism, proceeds first by flattening out any principle distinction between Jesus and his followers, and second by suggesting that any and all categorical distinctions between Jesus and his disciples were smuggled into the Gospel tradition at a late stage. In this vein, the originality of the historical Jesus consisted in his inviting humanity to join him in calling on the Creator God as the common Father, and to consider fellow human beings as siblings within the family of humanity. In this case, the thrust of Jesus' message could perhaps be summarized in the words of the German Romantic poet Schiller, immortalized through the chorus of the last movement of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony:

> Be embraced, you millions.
> This kiss is for the whole world!
> Brothers, over the starry canopy
> Must a loving Father live!

This is a viable route in theory. But unless we are willing to jettison indications of Jesus' unparalleled sonship as the greasy fingerprints of the post-Easter Church, as a comprehensive model it will not do. More far-reaching objections to this view have to do with its still needing to prove, against the grain of the evidence, either that Jesus' use of 'Father' was altogether innovative (which is belied by the above-cited Jewish sources) or that Jesus' true innovation lay in his consciousness of God (which is indemonstrable because this consciousness is fundamentally inaccessible). On this issue, the Old Liberal Jesus seems to tell us more about Romantic sentimentalism than it does about the historical Jesus.

Another possibility, breaking off from this one, is to maintain that Jesus' filial language was a function of his inner piety, but to insist too that Jesus also claimed to be '*the* Son' in a unique and quite separate sense. On this view, it may be supposed that Jesus called on God as Father in an exclusive sense, even as he encouraged his disciples also to call on God as Father on a different basis and on far more democratic terms. To its credit, this solution avoids one of the burdens of the previous approach, namely, the need to strip away sundry Christological references like an old layer of outdated wallpaper. Yet economy on one level exacts an inordinate price at another, for now there is a certain awkwardness in explaining how Jesus' (upper-case) Sonship relates to the generic sonship of the disciples. If Jesus objectively holds the role of 'Son' and is privy to an accompanying set of 'son-like' subjective experiences, is it only the latter that is extended to the disciples? And in this case, are we to suppose that Jesus' identity as 'the Son' has no logical relationship to his communicable experience as Son, so that it is virtually a matter of coincidence that his identity and experience happen to be summarized with one and the same word? In addition to harbouring such unsatisfactory entailments, this approach shares the same basic weakness of the drill of Old Liberalism: it makes an unknown quantity its point of departure. So far as the origins of Jesus' father-language are concerned, it makes no sense to begin with a background we cannot hope to have (the religious musings of Jesus' heart), all the while setting aside backgrounds we do have, namely, the naming of God as 'Father' in early Christianity and pre-Christian Judaism.

Before attending to those traditions, it bears stating that notwithstanding the weaknesses of Jeremias's argument, he deserves our praise and consent on two important points. First, as Jeremias insisted, Jesus did use *Abba* at least once. Even if the occurrence of *Abba* at Mark 14.36 represents an isolated instance, there is no reason to doubt the authenticity of this word, reflecting the moment at Gethsemane (assuming the historicity of the Gethsemane event itself) or other moments which might have given rise to this utterance.[27] This might seem a rather small gain, but in this complex business of Jesus research we are grateful for such little mercies.

Second, Jeremias was also right to maintain that Jesus' usage was distinctive. This follows not so much on any lexicographical evidence surviving from Palestinian Aramaic texts, scarce as it is, but on the evidence of early Christianity's own theological reflection. Writing in the 50s, the apostle Paul indicates that the believers' invocation of God as '*Abba* Father' was an eschatological privilege, reserved for those who possessed the Spirit, that is, those who had put their faith in Christ (Rom. 8.15; Gal. 4.6). Mark's decision to preserve the Aramaic wording of Jesus' prayer (Mark 14.36) only corroborates the distinctiveness of the title '*Abba* Father' within the Christian community. Taken together, the Pauline and Markan evidence suggests that the Aramaic word, even if not necessarily exclusive to Christian worshippers, was at least a characteristically Christian prayer term. And if praying to *Abba* was a practice distinctive of the early Jesus movement, it was almost certainly distinctive of Jesus' prayers as well. After all, while Jesus' willingness to call God '*Abba*' was not necessarily inconsistent with the Judaism of his day, there must be some historical explanation for how and why early Christianity came to define itself over and against surrounding Judaism by imitating Jesus on this score. Given the transition from Jewish invocation of Yahweh as 'Father' to early Christian cries of '*Abba* Father', all this must have at least *something* to do with the historical Jesus. But what?

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[27] So, e.g., Pesch 1976–80: 2.391; Grassi 1982; Gnilka 1997: 262; Dunn 2003: 716; etc.; contra D'Angelo 1992b: 160; Collins 2007: 678.

At this point, perhaps a restatement of the problem I am flagging up would be helpful. In this chapter, I have sought to challenge the very common argument that Jesus' use of father-language simply issued from his personal experience of God as father – all in reaction against Judaism as he knew it. As I see it, this approach has two basic weaknesses. First, because Jesus' naming Yahweh as 'Father' is not nearly as original as we have often been led to believe, it becomes difficult to argue that his doing so was a groundbreaking way of seeing God. At best one might argue that Jesus emphasized God as father *more* than his contemporary Judaism, but then this would only suggest a difference of degree. Second, there is no salvaging the experience-of-God-as-father argument on the basis of some alleged insight into Jesus' consciousness. Not only are the inner workings of Jesus' mind more or less impenetrable to us, but also, when we do have such fleeting glimpses, we find a figure who thinks of himself as a Son in a way that his followers could never hope to be.

This leaves us with several questions. First, if Jesus saw himself as *the* Son in a specialized sense, how, if at all, does this relate to his ascription of sonship and daughtership to his disciples? Second, granting that there was something distinctive about the father-language of Jesus and the early Church, how do we describe that distinctiveness? The first of these questions is rather looming and will need to be left aside for now; the second question will detain us for the remainder of this chapter.

Naming Yahweh as 'Father' in early Christianity and Judaism

Rather than insisting against the evidence that *Abba* originated out of Jesus' interior experience with God, I suggest a more promising line of interpretation begins with parsing the context in which *Abba* and God-as-Father language occur. The 'Jeremias model' has maintained that Jesus' filial prayer-language was virtually unparalleled and thus constituted a fundamental break with Judaism. I believe that the extant pre-Christian prayers referring to God as 'Father' speak against this conclusion. Now I propose that when the relevant texts both pre- and post-Jesus are properly considered, there emerges a common theological grammar, shared both by Jesus' forebears in Judaism and by his followers in early Christianity. To put a sharper point on it, whereas Old Liberalism had assumed that Jesus' habit of addressing God as 'Father' followed from his forming an unprecedented judgement about God (God is like a father), I would argue instead that these invocations had much more to do with his conviction that he and his followers had been called to a special role within the eschatological scenario, a role already anticipated by the redemptive story *par excellence*: the exodus. Towards demonstrating this, we should start not with the historical Jesus but with early Christianity, on one side, and Second-Temple Judaism, on the other. If the early Christians had a special place in their heart for the term *Abba* (and, as far as we can tell, they