

# *The Validity of Historical Methodology for the Study of Jesus*

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**T**HERE has been what appears to be an increasing tendency to question the validity of the search for the historical Jesus.

There are those who question the historical methodology that is used, others who question the results of the application of this methodology, and still others who repudiate both the method and the results. Those who use this methodology in the study of Jesus are sometimes stigmatized as "historicists" (actually an honorable designation), or as "nineteenth century liberals." To use what may be a discarded cliché, these critics are probably primarily interested in "the Christ of faith," rather than in "the Jesus of history," as Jesus is recovered by accepted historical investigation. Accordingly, it is my purpose briefly to present the methodology, secondly, to summarize its results, and finally, to consider some of the objections that have been raised to the one or the other, or to both.

Historical methodology as known and practiced in our Western culture dates back to the ancient Greek historians, among them Herodotus, Thucydides, and Polybius. The method deteriorated in Roman and early Christian times, but was beginning to show signs of revival in the Renaissance period when Lorenzo Valla, for example, by utilizing certain canons of historical criticism demonstrated once and for all that the influential "Donation of Constantine" was a forgery. In more recent times, in the beginning of the nineteenth century Leopold von Ranke stated that the purpose of the historian was "simply to find out how events actually occurred"

("wie es gewesen"). His historical writings and his seminars, in which many noted historians received their academic training, mark the beginning of modern historiography. Indeed, von Ranke has been called the father of this exacting discipline. More recently another German, Ernst Bernheim, was the first scholar to systematize historical methodology thoroughly in his *Lehrbuch der historischen Methode* (1889), an important work which has, directly or indirectly, influenced historical, and consequently biblical, studies ever since. Since Bernheim's day numerous books have been written on one or more aspects of historiography, elaborating one aspect, or emphasizing another. Moreover, as stated above, students of the Bible, both Old Testament and New Testament, employed historical disciplines (which were known as lower criticism and higher criticism) in their scholarly studies.

The basic features of the methodology are fairly well known. First of all, it consists of obtaining and identifying historical sources, for without historical documents there can be no historical study. If these sources are in languages other than our own, it is necessary to master these languages, or to depend upon translations made by linguists who have mastered them. Furthermore, unless the documents are originals, undoubted autographs, textual studies (lower criticism) must be undertaken in order to detect and remove scribal errors and other corruptions so that the text of the original may be restored as accurately as possible. Indeed, in the event that an original document has "primitive errors" or has been mutilated, textual emendation is resorted to.

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When these functional requirements have been satisfied, then it is necessary to localize a given source, determining the author, if possible, and all that may be learned about him. Is he, for example, a participant in or an eye-witness of the events that he relates? Sources that are anonymous or pseudonymous present their peculiarly difficult problems. Closely related to these considerations is the question of genuineness, whether a source is what it purports or seems to be. A source may be based upon another source or sources; if so, source analysis is indicated. These disciplines, with refinements, are in the interest of determining the relative reliability of documents.

Furthermore, the sources should not be studied in a historical vacuum. As stated above, when authorship can be determined, it is essential to know what may be discovered concerning the author. Research may also reveal features about authors of anonymous or pseudonymous sources. Moreover, everything that can possibly be discovered about the political, economical, social, cultural, intellectual, religious background of the place and time under consideration should be studied so that the sources may be fitted in their historical environment. The historian should attempt to project himself back into the place and time he is investigating, should, as Fiske urged, "seek to imbue himself with the life and spirit of the time. He must study events in their bearing, near and remote; in the character, habits and manners of those who took part in them. He must be, as it were, a sharer or a spectator of the action he describes."<sup>1</sup> This approach to history has been termed the "New History." Shirley Jackson Case calls it, more descriptively, "Social-Historical Criticism." Or, in other words, the study of history is an environmental disci-

pline. I may, perhaps, be allowed a personal observation. I have been greatly interested in the beginnings of religious bodies in this Rocky Mountain-Plains region, and have done some writing in this field. Accordingly, for the historical background I have read rather widely in the general history of the place and time, and have read the available biographies and autobiographies, even though my concern is religious, not secular, history.

The final part of historical study is exposition. After data and "facts" have been recorded with some degree of confidence, then it is necessary to group and arrange them, an operation that is called synthesis, and to write up a coherent, readable account of the events under consideration. This, then, is a brief summary of historical methodology, a well tested and widely accepted scholarly discipline.

It is probably safe to say that no historical records have been studied more thoroughly by the use of historical methodology than the books of the Bible, and of these sixty-six books none more rigorously than the four gospels, the basic sources for our knowledge of Jesus. In no other area of historical study has greater attention been given to linguistics, to manuscripts and texts (lower criticism), to literary historical studies (higher criticism), and to socio-historical environmental consideration. No questions are raised when scholars use modern historiography in studying the life of men like Luther, Calvin, Wesley, Napoleon, or Lincoln. Indeed, when a writer fails to use the methodology adequately he is subjected to valid criticisms. We may wonder why the application of this same methodology to the study of the life of Jesus is considered to be invalid, why those who apply it are downgraded as "historicists" and "nineteenth century liberals."

The methodology which has been termed "Formgeschichte" is a refinement which has been especially applied to the Synoptic Gospels. Many historical

<sup>1</sup> John Fiske, in his introductory essay to the Champlain edition of Parkman's Works, cited by G. J. Garraghan, *A Guide to Historical Method*. Fordham University Press, New York, 1946, pp. 362-63.

sources have a history of oral transmission prior to being written down. The Grimm brothers, early in the nineteenth century, made critical literary and historical studies of Germanic songs and tales that had been transmitted orally for generations. As a result of their studies and later investigations certain so-called "laws" of oral transmission have been formulated. A brilliant example of the critical study of oral tradition is provided by J. A. K. Thomsen in his delightful book, *The Art of the Logos*, in which he evaluates the fascinating traditional tales (logoi) which Herodotus heard and wrote down in his history.

Gunkel initiated the application of this same methodology to certain areas of the Old Testament which showed evidence of being written deposits or oral transmission. As Terrien has stated, Gunkel "paid particular attention to the literary forms of the Old Testament, and by initiating the method of form criticism made his most notable contribution. He showed conclusively that Hebrew literature followed precise aesthetic patterns or structures characterizing specific literary characteristics or genre (Gattungen) which did not emerge in *vacuo*, but were born over the centuries from the requirement of the life situation *Sitz im Leben*."<sup>2</sup>

It was inevitable that this method of Form Criticism, which might better be termed Tradition Criticism, with emphasis upon the life situation, would be applied to the New Testament as well as the Old, and particularly to the Synoptic Gospels. Jesus, in so far as we know, did not write down any of his teachings, as his first century contemporary Seneca did, nor an autobiography, like Josephus composed. Furthermore, save in conservative circles, scholars generally agree that it is highly probable that during his life time no one wrote down what they had seen him do, as Nicolaus of Damascus wrote about his friend Herod the Great, or

wrote down what he taught and said, as Arrian wrote down the teaching of his teacher, Epictetus. However, teachings and deeds of Jesus were remembered, and recounted, being passed down by word of mouth from persons to persons (unknown to us by name), first in his native Aramaic, and then in Greek versions. In the course of transmission, in accord with the "laws" referred to above, changes occurred. These changes might consist of omissions or of additions. Moreover, teachings that Jesus had not uttered, deeds that he had not performed, may well have been added to the tradition materials. We readily see this process in operation in the written period by comparing Luke and Matthew with their source for much of their material, the Gospel of Mark, or by comparing the Gospel of Peter with the four canonical gospels. If these modifications occurred during the writing of the gospels, it is logical to assume that they occurred even more readily during the period of oral transmission.

There may well have been intermediary stages. Certain teachings, such as some of the parables, and certain incidents with teachings, such as the so-called conflict stories, may have been formed into short collections, which before long may have been written down. A striking example of this process is to be found in the collection of seven parables, plus a concluding parable, from different sources, in the thirteenth chapter of Matthew, quite possibly made by the author of this gospel. Moreover, it is widely maintained that the passion narrative in Mark was probably based upon a pre-literary collection of gospel materials.

There is general agreement that the first written gospel as such, the Gospel of Mark, was not composed until around 70 A.D., a generation or so after the crucifixion. In so far as can be ascertained it was anonymously written. There is a decreasing belief that it was, as Papias averred, the memoirs of Peter.

<sup>2</sup> *The Interpreter's Bible*, Vol. 1, p. 136

Instead it was probably based upon units of gospel traditions (pericopes) or collections of gospel traditions that had been transmitted during a period of some forty years. The Gospels of Matthew and Luke (likewise anonymous) were based upon Mark as a common major source. In addition their authors used other sources both oral and written, some of which they also had in common.

Despite the appearance of written gospels, beginning with Mark, the stream of oral tradition continued to flow. This is evidenced by Papias around the middle of the second century who said that he preferred the living word (oral traditions) to anything that was written down. Further evidence for this continuing process is provided by the large number of *agrapha* (unwritten sayings) of Jesus in the writings of the church fathers, and also by non-canonical sayings and deeds in the uncanonical gospels, among them the recently discovered Unknown Gospel and the Gospel of Thomas (sayings only).

In time, of course, the methods of Form or Tradition Criticism that had been applied in the study of secular history and then to the Old Testament were applied to the Synoptic Gospels. Although they had been anticipated in part by others, Martin Dibelius and Rudolph Bultmann, all but simultaneously in the years 1919-21, were the first to do this systematically, studying and classifying the individual pericopes (units) of gospel tradition, with special attention to both Form and Sitz im Leben.<sup>3</sup>

Accordingly, if we accept the premise that the Synoptic Gospels are in fact the written deposits of anonymous units of gospel traditions that originated and had their development during the first

Christian generation, that each had its own history, then the gospels should be studied unit by unit. With regard to the authenticity of a given unit there are three possibilities: a) the unit is basically authentic as it appears in a given gospel; b) it has an authentic base which has been changed by deletions and/or accretions in the course of transmission; or c) it is unauthentic in its origin, but has been added to the stream of continuing tradition.

In studying these units Form is significant, but Sitz im Leben is probably of greater importance; however, the two should be considered together, for they are complementary. Since these gospel traditions are overlaid with various accretions, such as Christology, Mariology, miracles, ecclesiasticism, etiological explanations of the Christian cultus, apologetic, polemic, anti-Semitism, accommodations to purported Old Testament prophecies, expectations of the parousia, certain Hellenistic and Gnostic intrusions, and the like, the authentic tradition about what and who Jesus was, what he did, and what he taught, may be recovered with the greatest difficulty, and with various degrees of certainty. However, the problems and difficulties that will beset the scholar should not deter him from the rigorous and conscientious application of this methodology of Form or Tradition Criticism, which, as we have seen is a specialized type of historical methodology, to the gospels as sources.

The application of this methodology is made against the background of what can be learned about the Jewish and Graeco-Roman environments and of early Christianity itself. The historian will become acquainted with the Jewish sources, such as the so-called Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha, the Mishnah and Bemara, the Midrashim, the Targums, the works of Josephus and Philo, the materials discovered in the Dead Sea Caves. He will become acquainted with both Palestinian and Dispersion Judaism, with the pertinent

<sup>3</sup> See Kenneth Grobel, "Biblical Criticism," and "Form Criticism," in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*. Also, Samuel Terrien, "History of the Interpretation of the Bible: The Modern Period," *The Interpreter's Bible*, Vol. I, pp. 127-141.

Roman history, with Hellenistic beliefs and practices, and with what can be reconstructed concerning the history of early Christianity, from both canonical and uncanonical sources. By these means he will be enabled to discern what may be Jewish, or Hellenistic, or Christian in the sources, that is, in the Gospels and related documents.

Even so, objections are raised, as stated before, to the application of this methodology to the sources for the life and teachings of Jesus. Why are these objections raised? This question is difficult to answer, but some possible answers may be proposed. First of all, there is the matter of canonicity. For centuries the books of the Bible have been considered to be separate and different from all other writings, in that they are classified as scripture, they have been canonized, that is, they are in one way or another the revealed word of God. Consequently, they are not to be treated in the same manner that secular books are. Although canonicity should theoretically be absolute, for many Protestants there are degrees of canonicity. For them the Apocrypha is not sacred, the Old Testament is sacred, but the New Testament is more sacred, and the Gospels are the most sacred. In other words, to some extent the gospels are untouchable.

This, as historians know, has not always been true. The authors of Matthew and Luke had no canonical inhibitions in writing gospels to supplant Mark; the author of the Gospel of Peter, around 150 A.D., had no hesitancy in making one gospel out of the four gospels plus some other material; Tatian, towards the end of the second century had no qualms about interweaving the four gospels, forming his Diatesseron, which became scripture for Syrian speaking Christianity. As mentioned before, Papias thought that the oral traditions were superior to the written gospels. In other words, the whole concept of canonicity is artificial and man made. It was Marcion who replaced the Jewish

Scripture with a gospel and letters of Paul as scripture around 140 A.D. But it was not until about 200 A.D. that the four gospels in our New Testament canon were accepted as scripture, but not universally so. Billy Graham can state, "The Bible says," using the Bible as absolute divine authority, but scholars have a very different attitude, or should have, towards canonicity, which was, as Goodspeed observed, a social process. Accordingly, why should there be any reasonable objection to studying the gospels and related sources by the same methods that secular historical documents are studied? Is there actually, as has frequently been stated in the past, any validity to the distinction between sacred and secular history? The historian does not accept this distinction.

Another common objection is the supposition that when the historical scholars get through with their investigations of the gospels there is not much left concerning the life and teachings of Jesus. To be sure, there is now general (but not complete) agreement that there is not much authentic material in the Gospel of John concerning who Jesus was, what he did, and what he taught. Furthermore, many accretions to the gospel traditions have been identified and pruned away. Furthermore, scholars have discovered some support for their findings concerning the teaching of Jesus in the Gospel of Thomas, which in the judgment of some of us is not derived from the Synoptic Gospels but is based upon gospel traditions similar to those used by the canonical writers. It might be noted that the Dead Sea scrolls do not seem to have added much if indeed anything to our knowledge of the life and teachings of Jesus, but they do throw light on a Jewish sectarian movement.

Actually, a considerable amount of information concerning Jesus and his teachings remains. The following bare-bones summary may be given with a

good conscience; not a "life," but deeds and words of Jesus:

Briefly, his name was Yeshua. He was a Galilean Jew, and was probably born in Nazareth, or at any rate in Galilee, in the days of Herod the Great and of the Emperor Octavian (Augustus Caesar). His father was a Jewish artisan named Joseph (Yoseph); his mother a Jewess named Mary (Miriam). He had four brothers (not foster brothers or cousins), James (who became the leader of the Jerusalem church), Josés, Simon, and Judas, and at least two sisters who are unnamed. His home life and training were presumably like those of any other Galilean Jewish boy of his family status. He probably was given religious training by his father. He may have attended a synagogue school. His native tongue was Aramaic, but he may have known some Hebrew and possibly some Greek. More than likely, as was customary in those days, he worked at his father's trade. It is possible, but by no means certain, that while Jesus was still at home his father died. In this event, again according to custom, as the eldest son he may have become the head of the rather large family. He probably continued with his trade until that fateful day when he heard John the Baptist proclaiming his urgent message of repentance and the Kingdom of God. Along with others he accepted John's baptism of repentance for sins, and for a time may have been one of his followers, his disciples. There is evidence, supported by the Gospel of Thomas, that he held John in the highest regard.

Before long he started a prophetic mission of his own, probably following the imprisonment of John the Baptist by Herod Antipas, the puppet ruler of Galilee under the Romans. Like John he urged the necessity of repentance, he preached high ethical and moral standards, the knowing and doing of God's will, and proclaimed the Kingdom of God (Heaven). In his teachings he emphasized God, not his own person as is depicted in the Gospel of John. As

was true of John the Baptist, there was an urgency, and immediacy about his proclamations. Indeed, he, like John, may be compared with the prophets of old, indeed, he may have considered himself to have been a prophet (not a messiah) like John the Baptist, a second Elijah, preparing Israel for the advent of the Kingdom of God. As was true of John he had disciples, personal followers, who went with him as he traveled from place to place. The number of twelve disciples may have been a symbolic tradition. He seldom stayed in any one place, though for a time he had headquarters, if, indeed, not a home in Capernaum. His mission was at first largely confined to his native Galilee, and, for the most part, to his fellow Jews, the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

With reference to the Jewish groups of his day, how might we classify him? Obviously, he was not a priest, for the office was hereditary, and not a Sadducee, although he did support the temple and its cultus. He was not a Zealot advocating revolt against Rome. However, we may assume that according to his concept of the Kingdom of God when this was established in some way or other. Rome's sovereignty would be removed. He was not an Essene, as some have maintained; he was definitely not a member of the exclusive Qumran community as some have fondly imagined. He was not a trained rabbi but he may have been called "teacher." He was not a Pharisee, for in his teachings he is frequently quite critical of them. However, he did have much in common with this group. He should not be classified as an Am-ha-harez, an irreligious person, although some rigid Pharisees might have thought of him in these terms. He, of course, was not a Samaritan; nor was he a Hellenistic Jew like Paul, Barnabas, and Stephen. If he had once been a disciple of John's, he no longer was one of his followers. More positively, since he was a regular attendant at the

synagogue, and as a boy may have attended a school associated with a synagogue, we may perhaps designate him as a synagogue Jew for lack of a better classification. Since the synagogues were to some degree associated with the teachers of the Pharisees (in time termed rabbis), this might account for the high degree of similarity between his teachings and those of the Jewish teachers as preserved in Talmud and Midrash and other sources.

His God was the God of the Jews as he was thought of in the prophetic and Pharisaic traditions. He evidently believed in Satan, in demons, and in angels, in keeping with the times. He worshiped God in the Temple, and in the synagogues. In addition, he worshiped with his disciples or in private. He accepted the written Torah (Old Testament) as God's word, quoting from it frequently, and at times giving a passage his own interpretation. He no doubt had a layman's acquaintance with the oral Torah, the tradition of the fathers, which was taught and transmitted by the scribes of the Pharisees. He evidently accepted much of this traditional teaching, but modified or rejected it as he thought best, teaching on his own authority. He was loyal to Judaism, making no conscious break with the religion of his people. His intention apparently was to reform Judaism, not to found the Christian church. he was loyal, as stated above, to the Temple and its cultus. He kept the Jewish festivals, such as the Sabbath and the Passover, and quite likely others as well. However, he differed with the Pharisees concerning the rigorous and meticulous observance of the Sabbath. He probably accepted circumcision, and all that it implied. Neither Paul nor Peter seemed to have been acquainted with any rejection of circumcision; however, there is a teaching in the Gospel of Thomas to this effect. Furthermore, he seemingly accepted the dietary laws. Would he have eaten pork if it had been offered to him?

Would he have had table fellowship with an uncircumcised Gentile? If so, his disciples seemed to have been unaware of this practice.

Unlike the Pharisees, he associated with the irreligious, with sinners, with persons who were ritualistically impure. There were a number of women among his followers, even among his close associates. He evidently did not share the common Jewish antipathies towards the Samaritans, a schismatic Jewish sect and people. He had a strong concern for people, whoever they might be; there is evidence that he, like John the Baptist, was popular with the people, and, like John, aroused the suspicions of Herod Antipas because of his popularity and later on, of Pontius Pilate. The Gospels depict him as a miracle worker, healing the sick, at times by driving out demons, raising the dead, and multiplying loaves and fish for a hungry multitude. Most scholars, in all probability, reject the accounts of these miracles as being unhistorical, would say that Jesus was not a peripatetic miracle worker.

Jesus used certain forms of teaching that were Jewish, rabbinic, even, in nature, such as parables, quotations from the Old Testament, striking proverbial and paradoxical statements, and Jewish poetic parallelism. He was adept in give and take in his conversation, in repartee. According to the Gospel of Thomas much of his teaching was essentially the same as or parallel to the teaching of the Synoptic Gospels in form and content. It contains a few additional parables and one fable (the dog in the manger). However, the Gospel of Thomas reveals the process of accretions to the tradition, more or less Gnostic in character. Moreover, since the Gnostics rejected the Old Testament, Jesus is not depicted as relying upon quotations from the Jewish scriptures. A great deal of the content of the teaching in the Synoptic Gospels is paralleled in Jewish teachings, as was mentioned above.

To repeat a previous observation, most of Jesus' ministry was spent in Galilee. During the Passover season of the year 29 or 30 in the reign of Tiberius Caesar and the procuratorship of Pontius Pilate he traveled with his disciples and other followers to Jerusalem, where he celebrated this annual feast. It is unlikely that he went to die for the sins of mankind, but rather to proclaim his message of repentance, of doing God's will, and of the Kingdom of God and its immediacy to both the inhabitants of Jerusalem and the many thousands of pilgrims who would be there. He probably was aware that by doing this he might well be endangering his life. He apparently aroused the hostility of the priestly authorities by his prophetic act of cleansing the Temple; he may also have caused some of the Pharisees to oppose him. On the other hand, he seemingly was well received by the populace and by the pilgrims. All this, combined with his proclamation of some kingdom other than Caesar's stirred up the suspicions of Pontius Pilate, even though he had taught obedience to Rome. It is not clear that he celebrated the Passover with his disciples, but he did have a "last" supper with them. It is doubtful that he established the Christian Eucharist, for even the symbolic drinking of blood would be abhorrent to Jews who observed the dietary prohibitions. He was arrested on Pilate's orders, summarily tried, possibly on the false charge that he was inciting an insurrection, and executed by the Roman method of crucifixion, reserved for rebels against Rome and for slaves. His descent to Hades, his bodily resurrection, and his bodily ascension to heaven are articles of faith.

This is a bare outline. It could readily be expanded into a book similar to those written by historically minded scholars, such as Case, Guignebert, Bornkamm, and Enslin. Even so, we all earnestly desire that we could know much more about Jesus than can be derived from the sources at hand. Ad-

mittedly, the application of historical methodology has to some extent reduced the amount of material that might be considered to be reasonably authentic. However, not all of this may be a real loss. For example, what value may be attached to the birth stories in Matthew and Luke, to the dialogue with Satan in the same two gospels, to the numerous miracles in all of the four gospels, and to certain other historically questionable deeds and teachings? As for his teachings, it is possible that even if we had more complete sources we might not know much more about their content than we do now. It may well be that we actually do possess his basic message. Going from place to place as he did, he quite possibly repeated his teachings numerous times, with variations, to be sure. That this might be so is indicated by the Gospel of Thomas which contains a number of sayings not in the Synoptic Gospels but which are similar in content to the canonical teachings. If it should be decided that some of these are authentic, they would enrich but not materially modify the message of Jesus as we know it. Nothing is added to his basic teachings.

From one standpoint, historical investigations have added to our knowledge of Jesus, for increasingly he is being studied against the background of the Judaism of Palestine in the first part of the first century. Accordingly, we see him in his actual, real life environment, more than ever as a real person. For many people this historical study of Jesus is most welcome.

On the other hand, there are many people who will find the results of historical methodology most unsatisfactory, for they do not provide any basis for a high, cosmic, salvation Christology which most Christians earnestly desire. Many find their satisfactions in the Christology of the Fourth Gospel where Jesus Christ is the Logos creator, and is all but God himself. Others rely upon Paul, with his concept of a cosmic Christ who, through his death and re-



surrection, coupled with his return from heaven in glory and power, has provided the means of salvation for all mankind. Prof. Sittler gave what had been termed an original and challenging address at a session of the World Council of Churches in New Delhi. Actually, it was not too original, for he called for a Christology for these perilous times, using as his basic text Col. 1:15-20, which reads in part that Jesus Christ "is the image of the invisible God, the first born of all creation; for in him all things were created . . . all things have been created through him and unto him, and he is before all things, and in him all things consist." There is no suggestion that the Jesus of history, as he is recovered by historical studies, ever thought of himself as a cosmic personage who, rather than God, was the creator of all that exists, who, rather than God, could be considered to be savior. Indeed, if he actually was a pious Jew of his own time and place he more than likely would have considered such claims to have been blasphemous to a high degree.

This cosmic salvation Christology, which is found in Paul, in John, in certain speeches in Acts, has been given the term "kerygma," which basically means the "proclamation." Apparently it is this "kerygma" which is fundamental to the so-called "new search" for the real Jesus which is currently attracting much attention. It is also fundamental to the methodology called "demythologizing," popularized by the noted New Testament scholar Bultmann, who, as stated above, was also and somewhat paradoxically one of the pioneers in the application of Formgeschichte to the Gospels. He still maintains the validity of this historical discipline, that is, up to the point where historical studies fail to support the Christ "event" whereby salvation is made possible. Still others admit the validity of the historical method, who, like Knox accept it, but at the same time state that it is what the early

church believed about Jesus, what the early Christians "remembered" not what is historically accurate, which should be accepted as the truth. Historical methodology with its results is on a lower level, is "historicism," is nineteenth century liberalism, according to many scholars, Biblical theologians and others. There seems to be a logical inconsistency in these positions. Historical methodology in the study of Jesus is accepted, but, again, up to a certain significant point which has been termed the Christ event, through which salvation is available to sinful mankind. I know of no other figure of history concerning whom it is said that what we may believe about this person is more valid than what may be recovered by solid, conscientious, historical research. The one exception is Mary, the mother of Jesus.

The historian is able to recover very little concerning Mary, because the sources are extremely meager. About all that can be stated is readily summarized: She was a Galilean Jewish woman whose husband was a Galilean Jewish artisan named Joseph. She gave birth to at least five sons, of whom Jesus was the eldest, and at least two daughters. Her relationship to Jesus during his ministry as well as that of his brothers) is somewhat equivocal. Her presence at the cross is, as best, problematical. She is mentioned by name as being among the women who were with the followers of Jesus and his brethren in Acts 1:14, and then silently disappears from history, but by no means from legend, which began as early as the Matthean and Lukan birth narratives, and grew during the following centuries. Despite the paucity of historical data, or possibly by reason of this paucity, a Marian "kerygma" has developed which for many is truer than history. She was immaculately conceived and without sin. She herself conceived by the Holy Spirit and was the virgin mother of Jesus. Chief among her many titles is the term Theotokos,

the mother (bearer) of God, that is, of Jesus Christ. She lived without committing any sins, and was perpetually a virgin (the "brothers" and "sisters" of Jesus are not her offspring). Following her death (if, indeed, she, a sinless person, actually did die), she was spectacularly taken up ("assumed") into heaven, and in consequence is termed the Queen of Heaven. This is no empty title, for nothing and no one (save God and Christ) are excluded from her authority. Since her cosmic powers include the control of the heavenly bodies, she dramatically displayed her approval of the papal pronouncement of her assumption by causing the sun to dip and gyrate while the pope watched in wonder and awe. Since the church is the body of Christ, she, as the mother of Christ, is also the mother of the church and of its members.

She is also, with her son, the co-mediator and co-redemptor of mankind, for upon her assumption into heaven every grace presumably made effective through Jesus Christ upon the cross is made available through her intercession with her son. Her powers are derivative, but nevertheless they are real. She, of course, is able to work miracles, mainly of healing. From time to time she has appeared to various individuals in her own person, in modern times at places like Guadalupe, Lourdes, and Fatima. These appearances are among the proofs of her assumption. All this, and much more, is believed about Mary. This is the Marian "kerygma," which has practically no historical validation; even so, it is increasingly becoming an article of faith among untold millions of Catholics, and in part is being given some serious consideration by certain Protestant ecumenical leaders.

By comparison, we know a great deal more about the Jesus of history than we do about the Mary of history. This may be granted. But does the Christological kerygma possess any more validity than the Marian kerygma, save as it, like the Marian, is accepted by faith? Yet, as in the past, scholars will continue to study Jesus as a historical person by the use of strict historical methodology, but many people, if indeed, almost every Christian, will continue to accept the unhistorical kerygma. This is their inalienable right; but I believe that they should be quite aware of their rejection of historical methodology in this area.

There is still another feature deserving consideration. Supposing that a person says, "I shall accept the Christ of faith as being valid." If so, then we might ask, "Which Christ of faith?" For, as I have shown in an article, "Some Aspects of New Testament Christology," no two authors of the books of the New Testament have the same Christology.<sup>4</sup> There are differences among their thinking, both major and minor. Each of them is the author of a canonical book; how are we to decide which one has the correct doctrine? As time went on, there was even more variation later on, in the second century. When a person selects a Christology for himself, he should, it would seem, have valid reasons for his choice. Accordingly, the dilemma is provided not solely between the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith, but it is also between (or among) the Christs of faith that were developed in New Testament times.

<sup>4</sup> "Some Aspects of New Testament Christology," *Religion in Life*, Vol. XXVII, 1958, pp. 494-503.

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