

JESUS

Then and Now

Rev Dr John Dickson

Senior Minister, St Andrew's Roseville

Lecturer, Historical Jesus, Sydney University

Visiting Academic (2017-18), Faculty of Classics, Oxford University

HISTORY *versus* THEOLOGY

HISTORY OF RESEARCH ON THE HISTORICAL JESUS



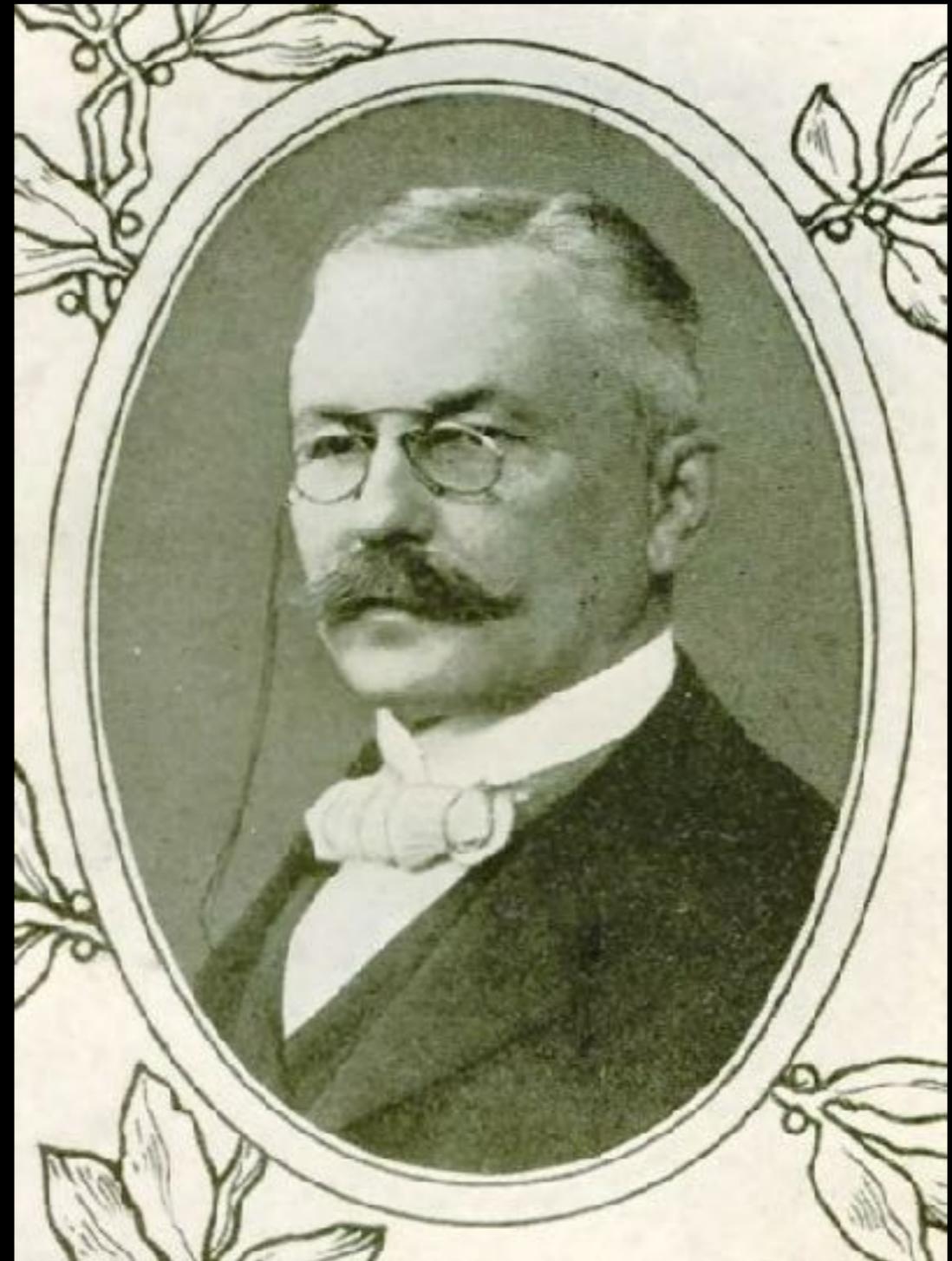
Luke 1:1-4. Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. Therefore, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, it seemed good also to me to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught.



The consummate textual and redactional scholar of antiquity

Origen of Alexandria and Caesarea (AD 185-253)

The Jesus of history and the
'Christ' of apostolic invention



Hermann Samuel Reimarus (1694-1768)

The Gospels' story as 'myth'



David Friedrich Strauss
(1808-1874)

Jesus. the wise ethical teacher

Joseph Ernest Renan
(1823-1892)





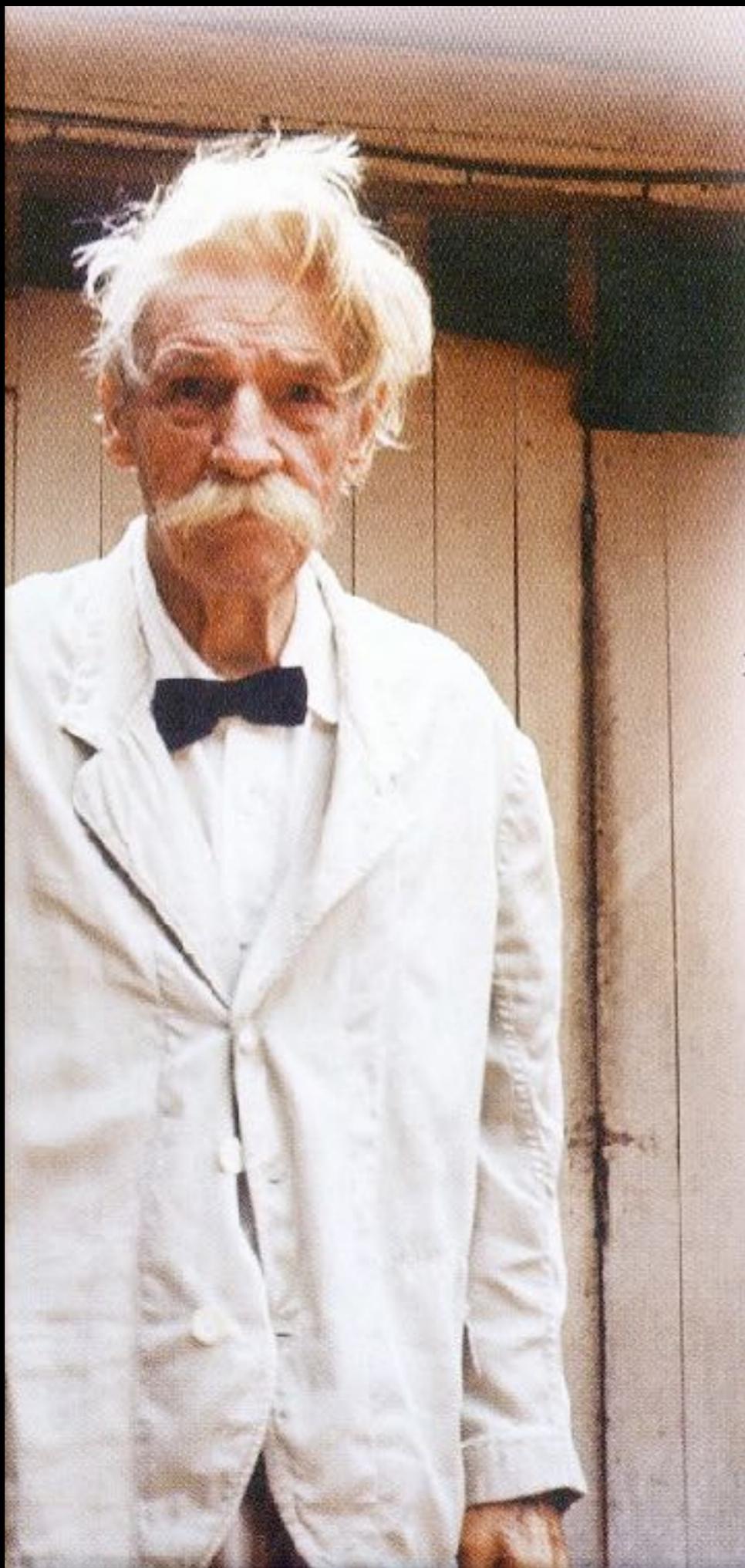
The priority of Mark and the
Q-theory

Heinrich Julius Holtzmann (1832-1910)



The messianic 'secret' invented
by the Gospel writers

William Wrede (1859-1906)

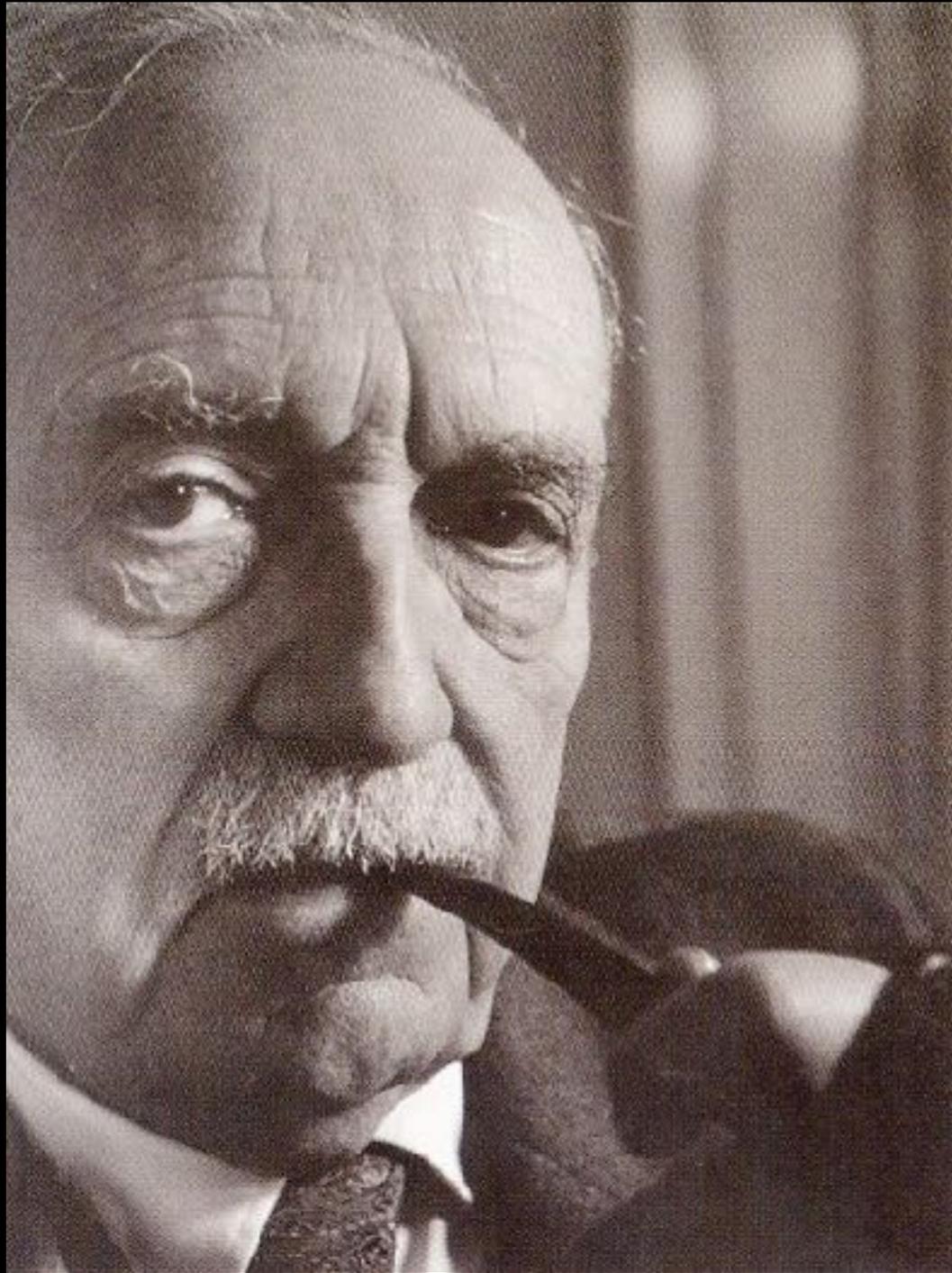


Albert Schweitzer (1875-1965)

The 'Jesus' proposed by scholars from Reimarus to Wrede is "a figure designed by rationalism, endowed with life by liberalism, and clothed by modern theology in an historical garb."



Kaysersberg, France/Germany

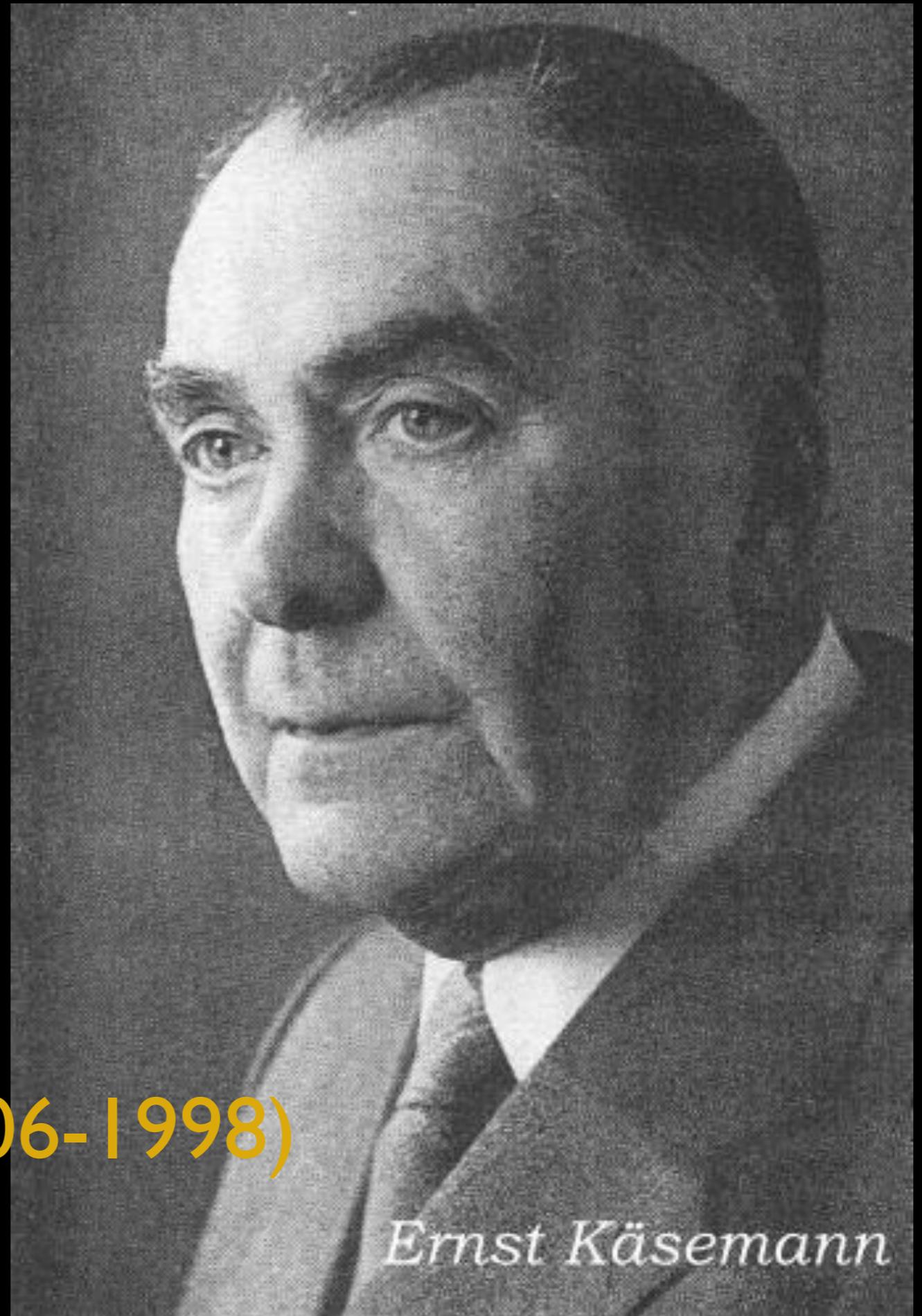


The life and teaching of Jesus
are of secondary importance to
Christian faith

Rudolf Bultmann
(1884-1976)

How much of Christianity's post-Easter faith is supported by the Gospels' pre-Easter story?

Ernst Käsemann (1906-1998)



Ernst Käsemann

The criterion of dissimilarity states that material in the Gospels which is markedly different from both Judaism and the early church is likely to have come from Jesus himself. The logic is as follows: teachings of Jesus with strong parallels in Judaism might, so it was thought, be the result of the Gospel writers trying to make Jesus fit with the Jewish culture of their day; and teachings of Jesus with strong parallels in early Christian practice might be attempts to justify later ecclesiastical traditions by having Jesus say it first. So, in the midst of uncertainty, things that are doubly dissimilar (from Judaism and Christianity) can be said with confidence to come from Jesus.

Professor Geza Vermes
Oxford University

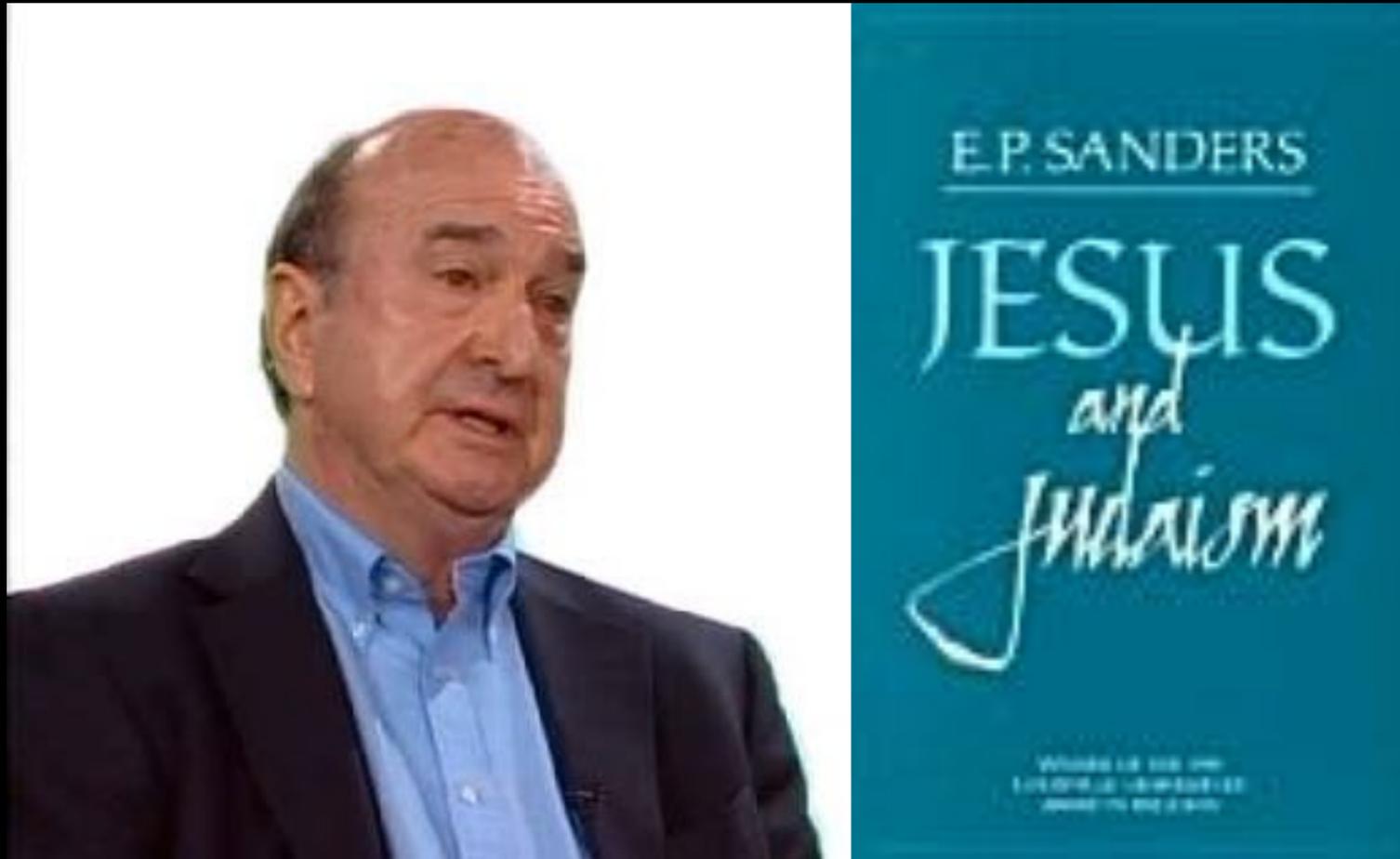
“How, then, can anyone imagine that a saying of Jesus, in order to be authentic, had to distance itself from every known expression of ‘Jewish morality and piety’? Such an angle of approach is quite close to the old-fashioned anti-Semitic attitude according to which the aim of Jesus was to condemn and reject the whole Jewish religion.”





Clarifying the Jewish and Hellenistic-Jewish origins of the Gospels' portrait of Jesus

Martin Hengel (1926-2009)



Jesus fits very plausibly into Jewish renewal movements which longed for a new temple and locus of God's presence in the world

Ed Parish Sanders (born 1937)

Nicholas Thomas Wright (born 1948)

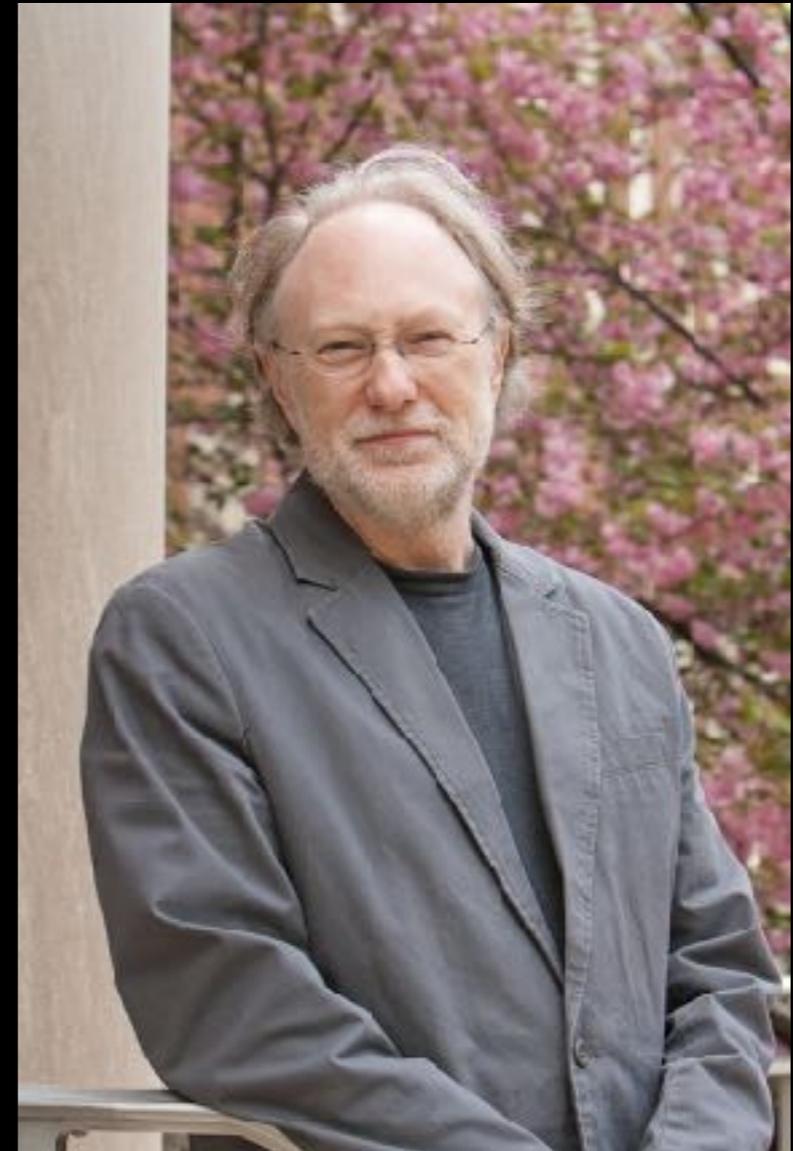
Jesus was an eschatological prophet who announced the end of exile and embodied the disclosure of God's kingship in the world. The key symbols of Second Temple Judaism crystalize in the Gospels' story of Jesus.



Dale C.Allison (born 1955)

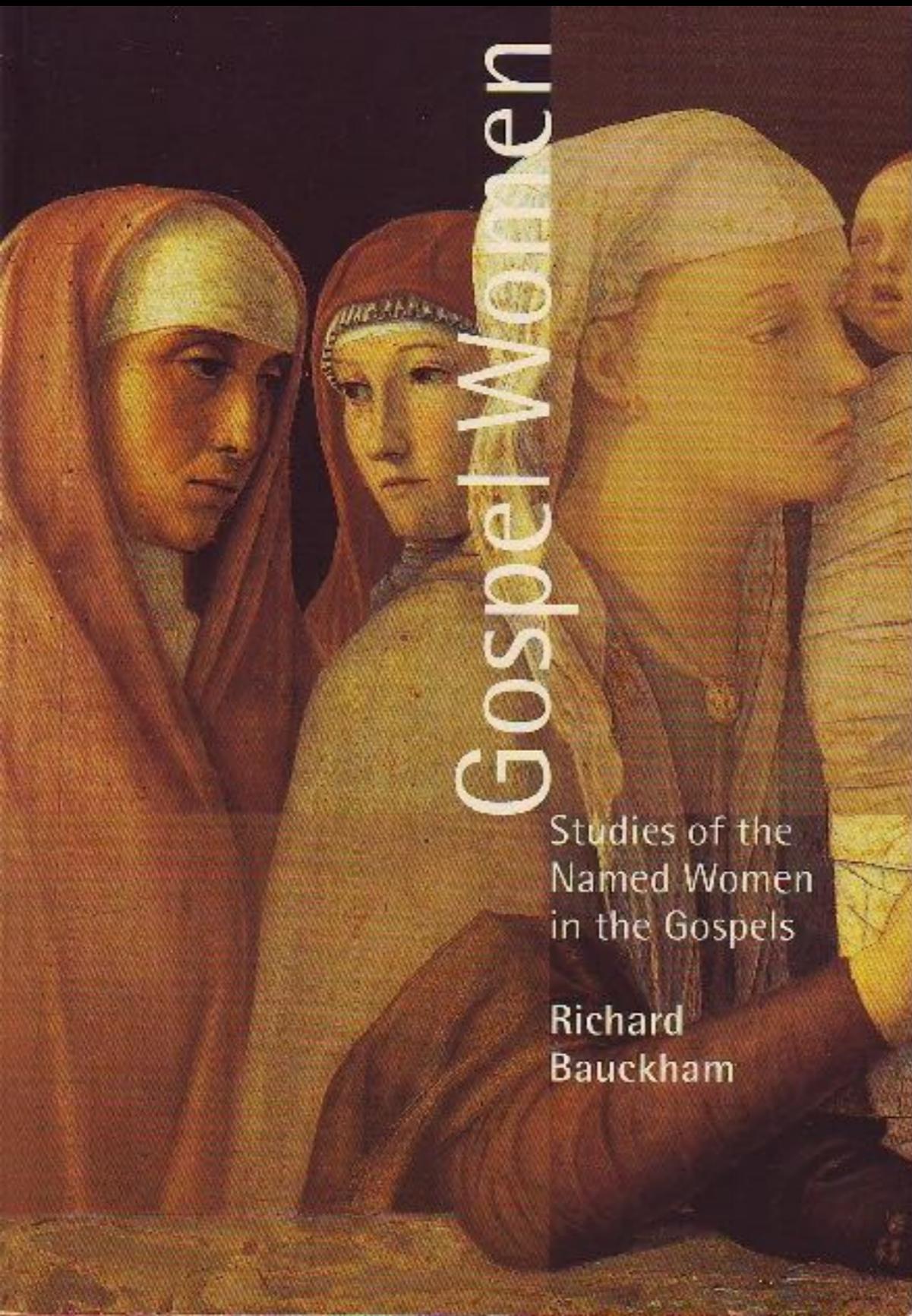
Sounding a caution about the
Third Quest:

1. Memory studies
2. An improper confidence that resonance equals accuracy

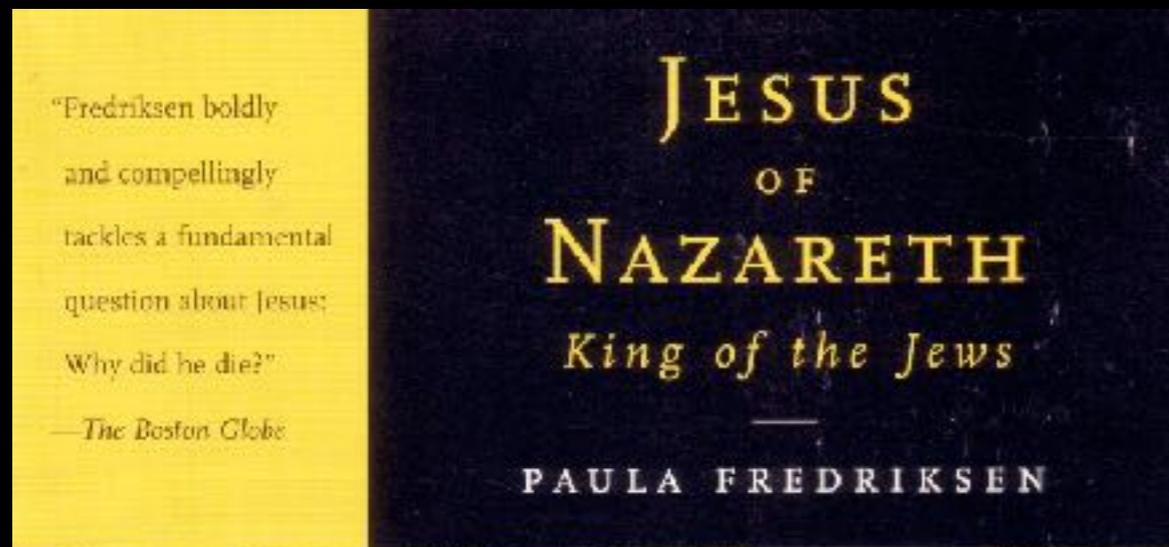


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THE COMPANIONS OF JESUS



Professor Richard Bauckham,
St Andrew's University



Prof. Paula Fredriksen,
Boston University

“...the more facile the ethical or political relevance that a particular construct of Jesus presents the more suspect its worth as history. Only ancient evidence, not modern agendas, can reveal what might have mattered to ancient people.”

Women bankrolled his mission

Loaf of bread

1/12 of a denarius (\$9.16)

Modest meal in an inn

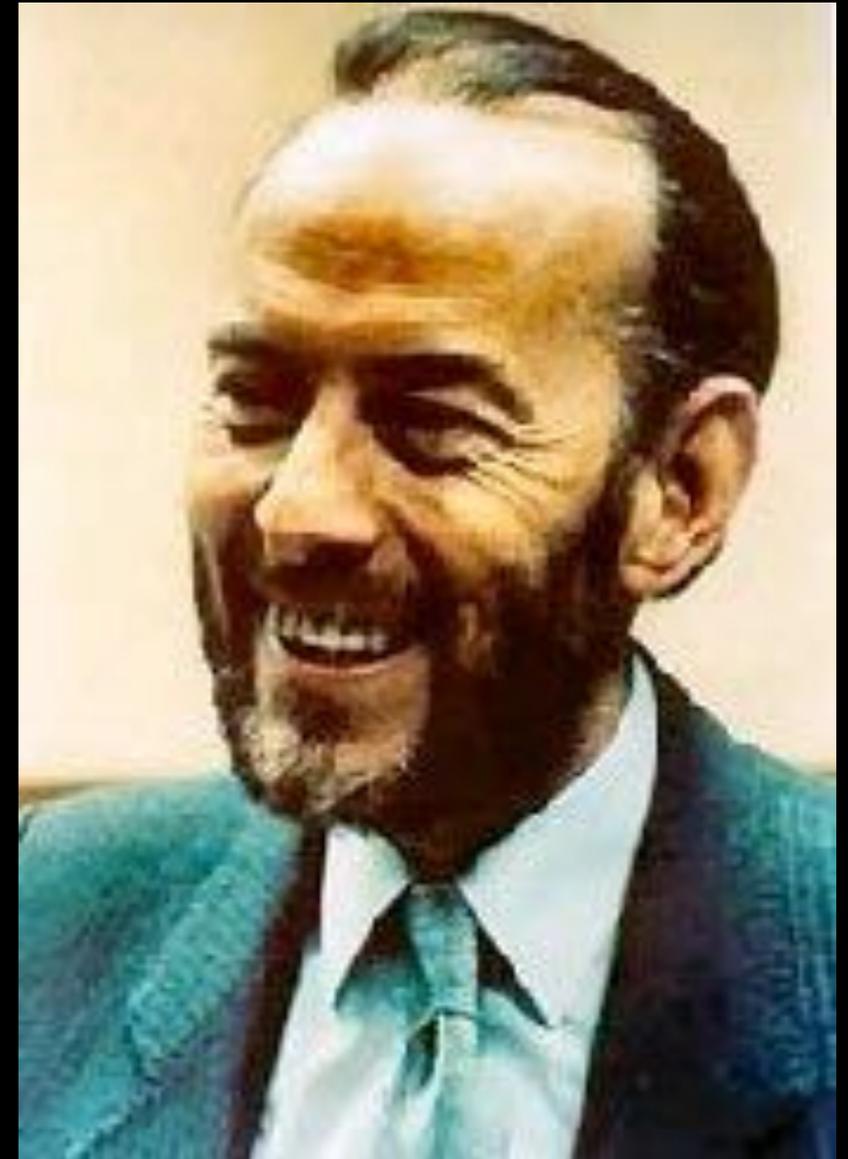
1/4 denarius (\$27.50)

Women bankrolled his mission

Luke 8:1-3. Jesus traveled about from one town and village to another, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God. The Twelve were with him,² and also some women who had been cured of evil spirits and diseases: Mary (called Magdalene) from whom seven demons had come out;³ Joanna the wife of Cuza, the manager of Herod's household; Susanna; and many others. These women were helping to support them out of their own means.

“... must have raised a few eyebrows in ‘polite society’ at the time”

(Prof. James Dunn, Durham University.
Jesus Remembered. Eerdmans, 2003, 537)



*The
Aims
Of
Jesus*

By

BEN F. MEYER

With a New Introduction by

N. T. WRIGHT

“To his contemporaries it was a staggering phenomenon that he did not shrink from dining with the irreligious; indeed, he did so at his own initiative.”

Ben F. Meyer, *The Aims of Jesus*. SCM, 1979, 158.

Mark 2:15-17 (Matthew 9:9-13; Luke 5:27-32).

While Jesus was having dinner at Levi's house, many tax collectors and sinners were eating with him and his disciples, for there were many who followed him. When the teachers of the law who were Pharisees saw him eating with the sinners and tax collectors, they asked his disciples: "Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?" On hearing this, Jesus said to them, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners"

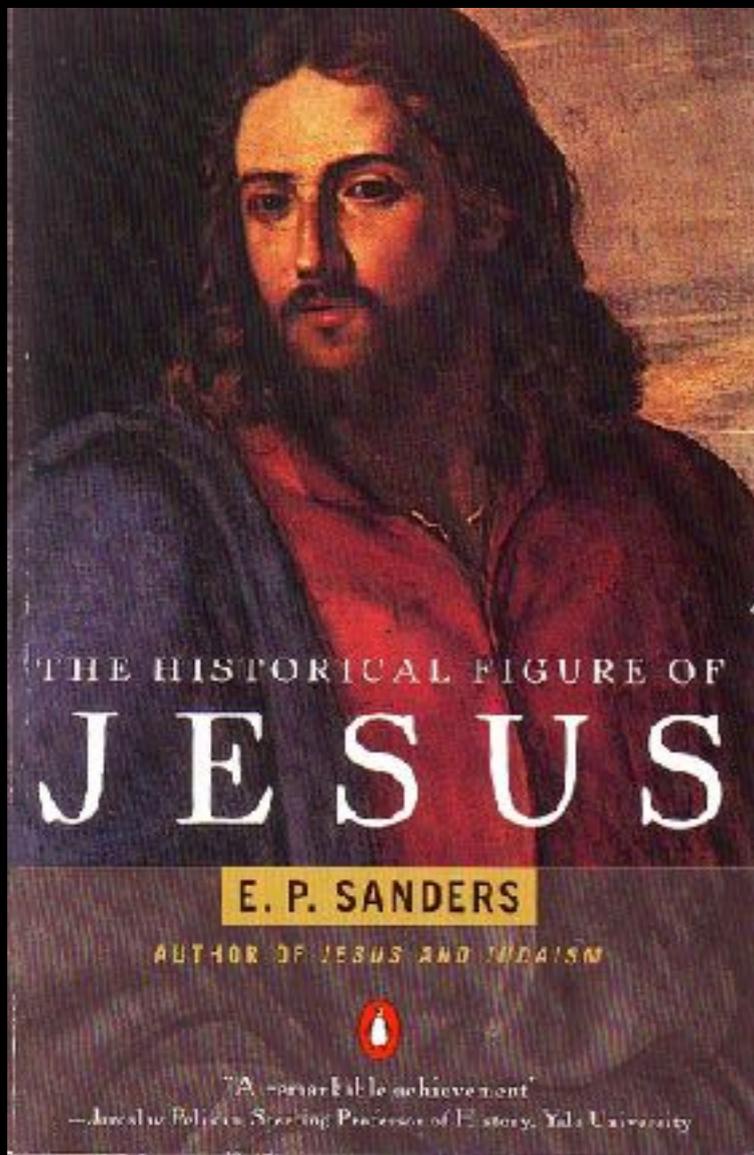




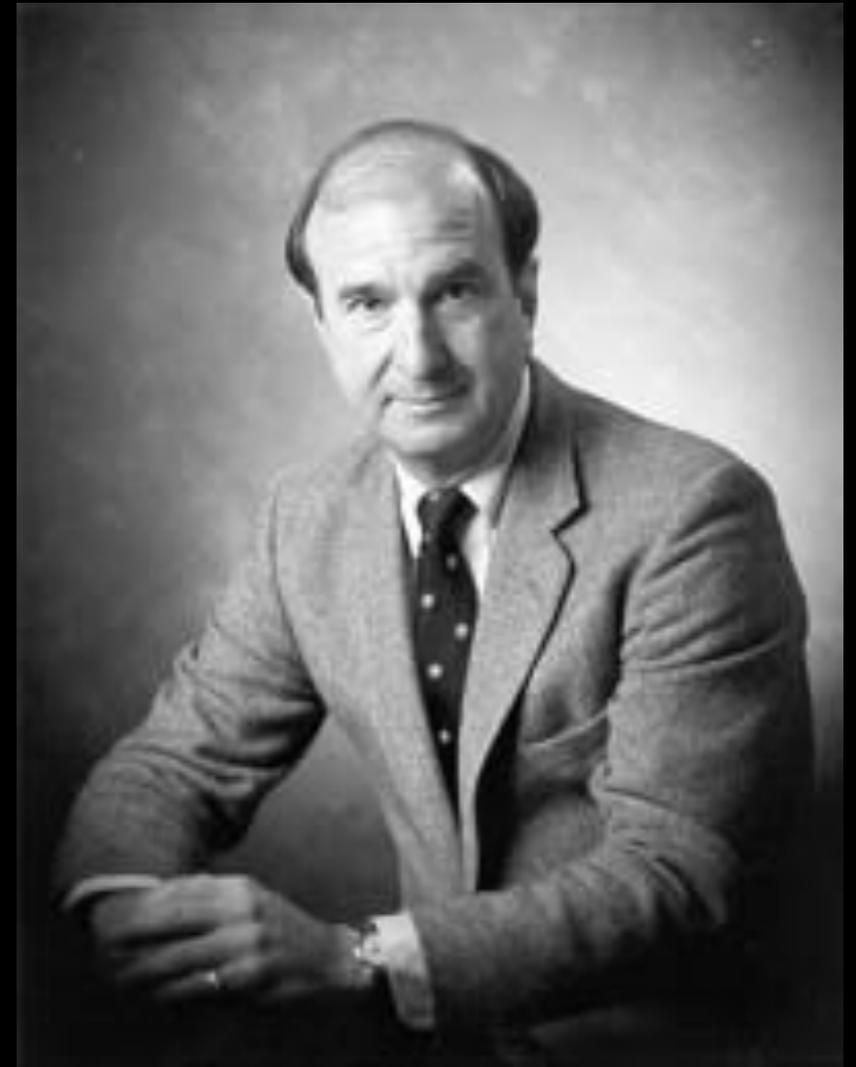
‘Sinners’ were simply the common folk, the amme-ha-aretz (people of the land), whose vulgar trades and lack of education left them ignorant of the noble ways of Judaism and therefore prone to moral lapses.

(Joachim Jeremias, *New Testament Theology* (vol. I): *The Proclamation of Jesus*. SCM, 1971, 109-112.)

Joachim Jeremias
(University of Leipzig)



Professor Ed Sanders
(Duke University)



“Sinners were Jews who systematically or flagrantly transgressed, and who were, therefore, like Gentiles, except that they were even more culpable.”

(E. P. Sanders, *The Historical Figure of Jesus*. Penguin Books, 1993, 227.)

CHRISTIANITY in THE MAKING

JESUS REMEMBERED



JAMES D. G. DUNN



“‘Sinners’ also functioned as a factional term a term of vituperative insult, a dismissive ‘boo-word’.”

(James Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*. Eerdmans, 2003, 529-530.)

The sinner stumbles and curses his life, the day of his birth, and his mother's pains. He adds sin upon sin in his life; he falls—his fall is serious—and he will not get up. The destruction of the sinner is forever, and he will not be remembered when God looks after the righteous.

(Psalms of Solomon 3.9-12)



This is the share of the sinners forever.

But they [the righteous] shall pursue sinners and overtake them, for those who act lawlessly shall not escape the Lord's judgment.

They shall be overtaken as by those experienced in war, for on their forehead is the mark of destruction.

And the inheritance of sinners is destruction and darkness.

(Psalms of Solomon 15.8-10)

Undergird him with the strength to destroy the unrighteous rulers, to purge Jerusalem from gentiles who trample her to destruction; in wisdom and in righteousness to drive out the sinners from the inheritance; to smash the arrogance of sinners like a potter's jar. There will be no unrighteousness among them in his days, for all shall be holy, and their king shall be the *Lord Messiah*.

(Psalms of Solomon 17.21-32)





All the people saw this and began to mutter, “He has gone to be the guest of a sinner.” But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, “Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount.” Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost”

(Luke 19:7-10)



**Prof. Graham Stanton,
Cambridge University**

Sharing a meal with a friend today is often no more than a convenient way of consuming food. In the Graeco-Roman and Jewish world of the first century, however, eating food with another person was far more significant socially: it indicated that the invited person was being accepted into a relationship in which the bonds were as close as in family relations. One normally invited to meals only people whom one considered social and religious equals

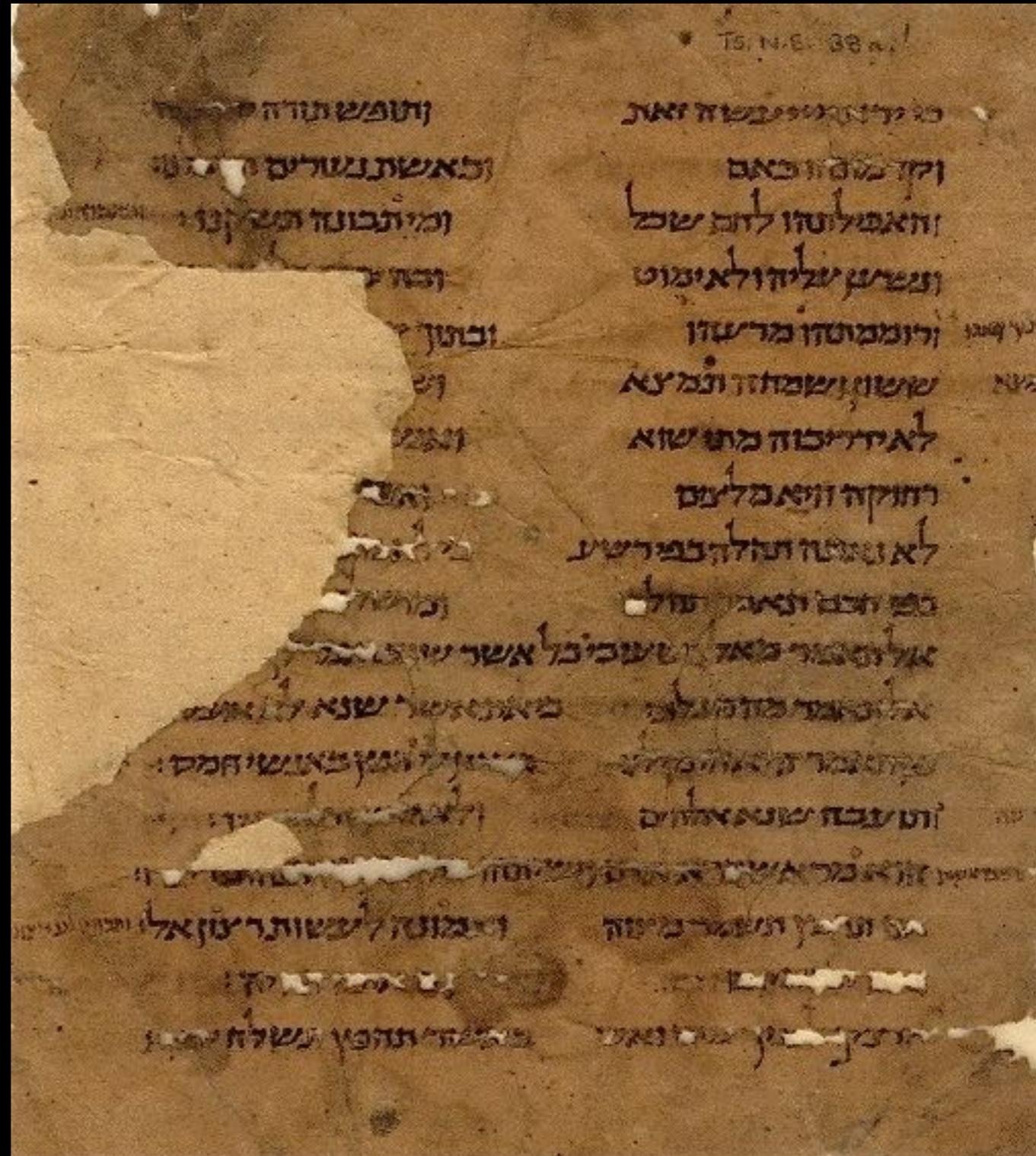
The Cambridge Companion to Jesus (Cambridge University Press, 2001, page 69).

Psalm 141:4.

Let not my heart be drawn to what is evil, to take part in wicked deeds with men who are evildoers; let me not eat of their delicacies.”

“Let the righteous be your
dinner companions.”
Ben Sira 9.16.

“Do not invite everyone
into your home, for many
are the tricks of the crafty.”
Ben Sira 11.29.



Genizah Collection manuscript
of ben Sira (Cambridge)



Qumran Cave I,
where this text was
discovered

Rule of the Community: “If one is found among them who has lied knowingly concerning possessions, he shall be excluded from the pure food of the Many [i.e., the community] for a year and they shall withhold a quarter of his bread.” IQS 6.24.

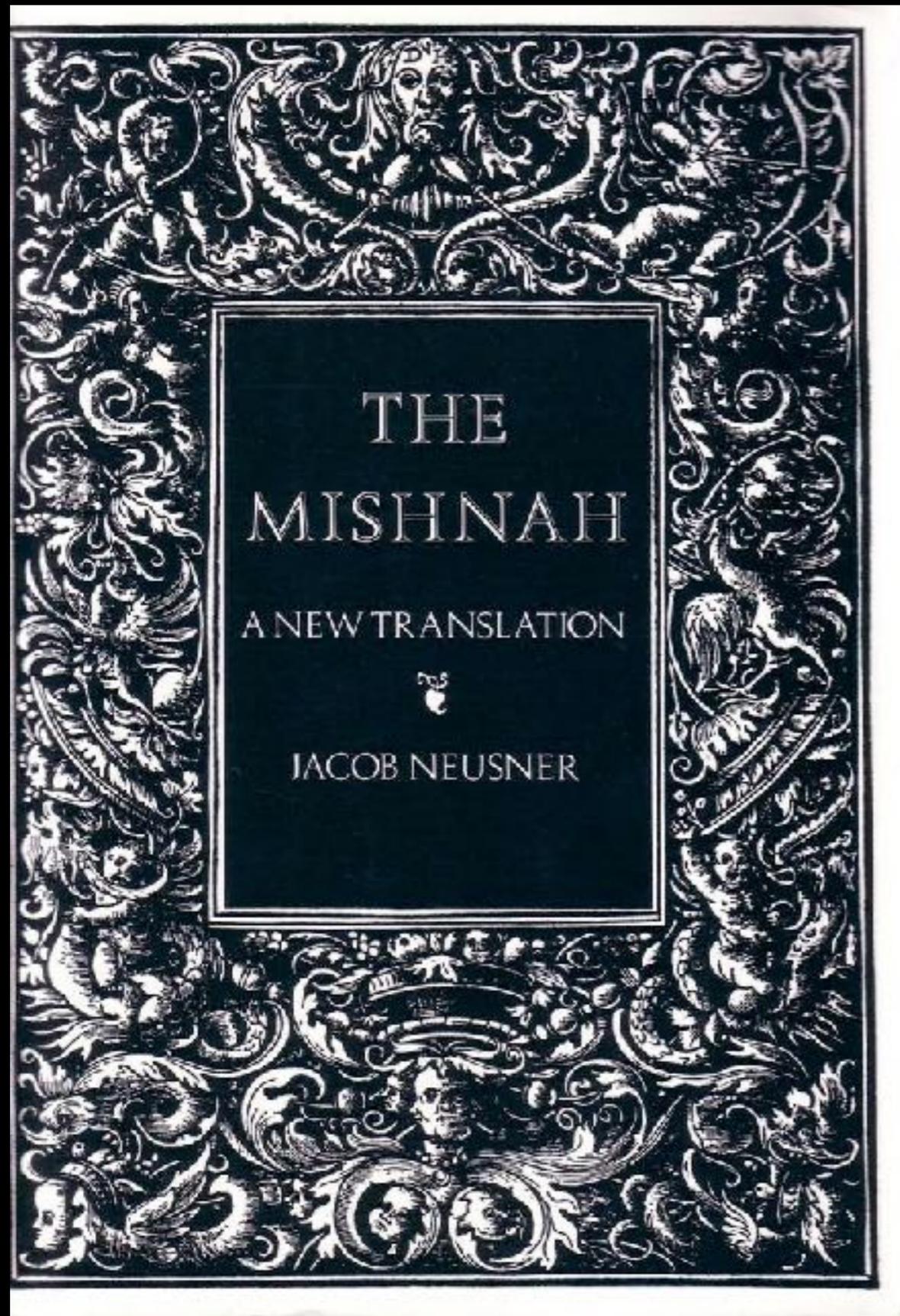
LOEB CLASSICAL LIBRARY

JOSEPHUS
THE JEWISH WAR
BOOKS V–VII



Translated by
H. ST. J. THACKERAY

“The Essene is not at liberty to partake of other men’s food.”
Josephus, Jewish War 2.129-144.

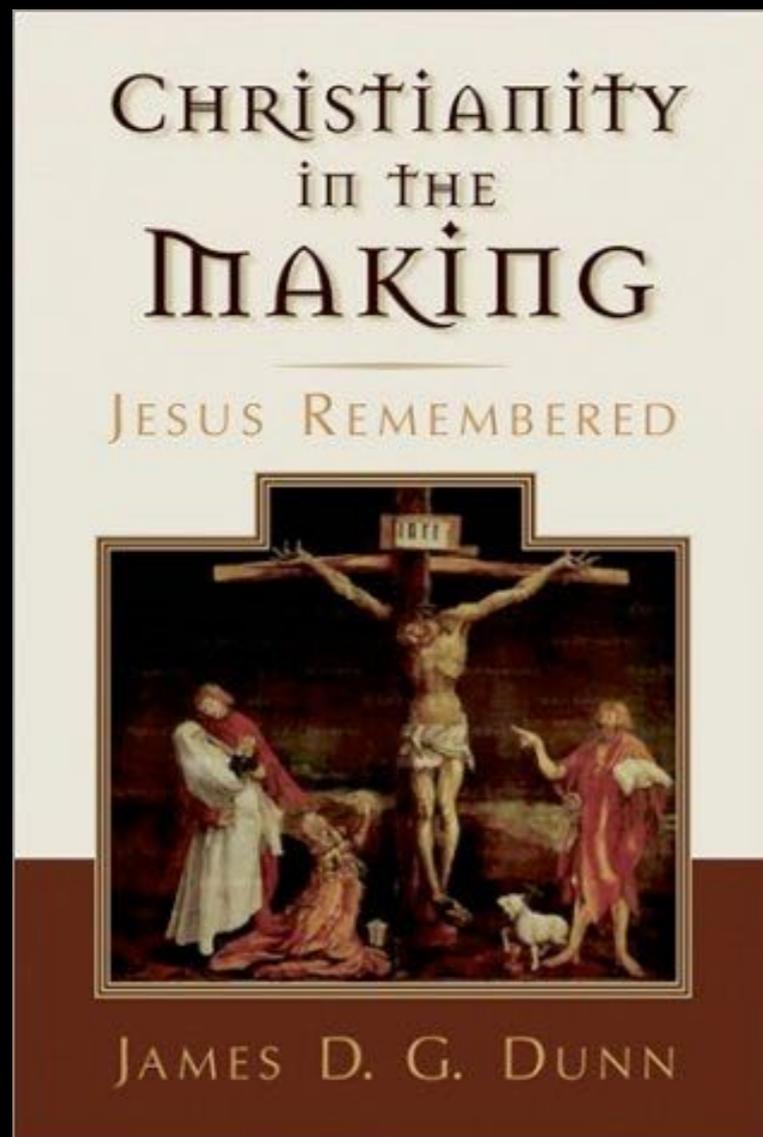


Concerning tax collectors who enter the house—the house is unclean. Concerning thieves who enter the house—only the place trodden by the feet of the thieves is unclean. And what do they render unclean? The foods, and the liquids, and the clay utensils which are open. But the couches and the seats and clay utensils which are sealed with a tight seal are clean. If there is a gentile with them, everything is unclean. Mishnah Tohorot [Purities] 7:6



Now the tax collectors and sinners were all gathering around to hear Jesus. But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, “This man welcomes sinners and eats with them.”
(Luke 15:1-2)

Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners (Luke 7:34 / Matt 11:19)

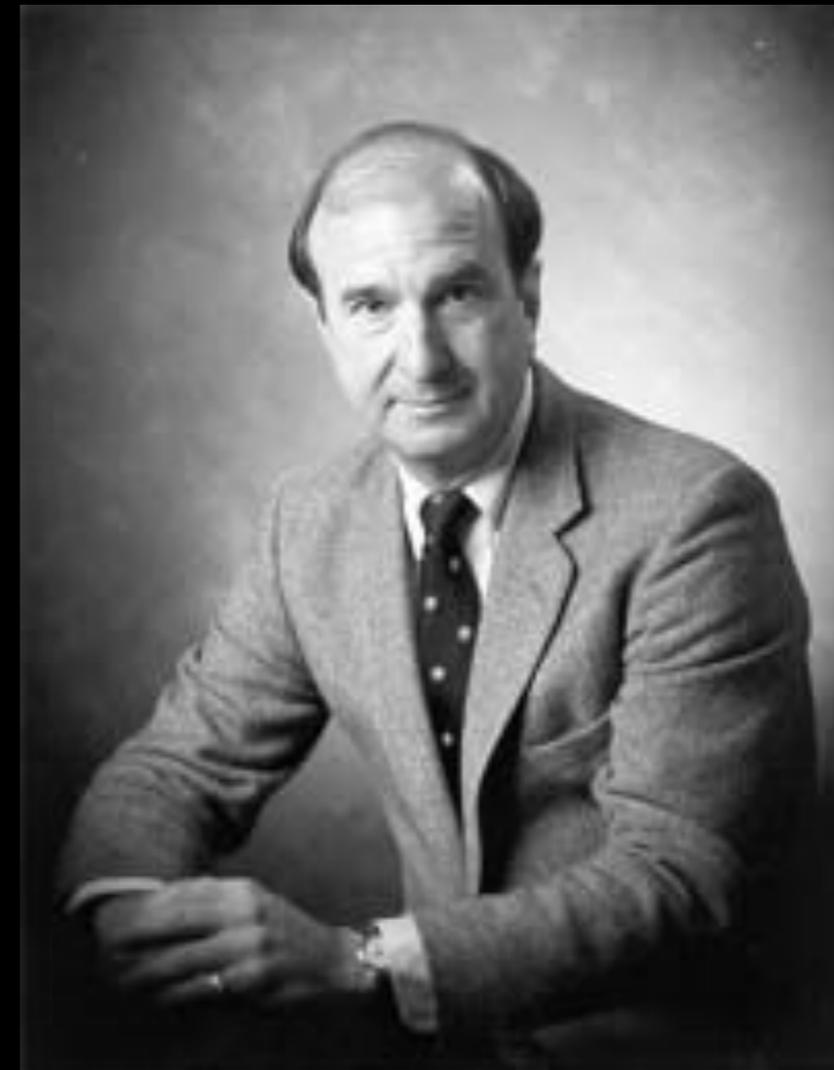
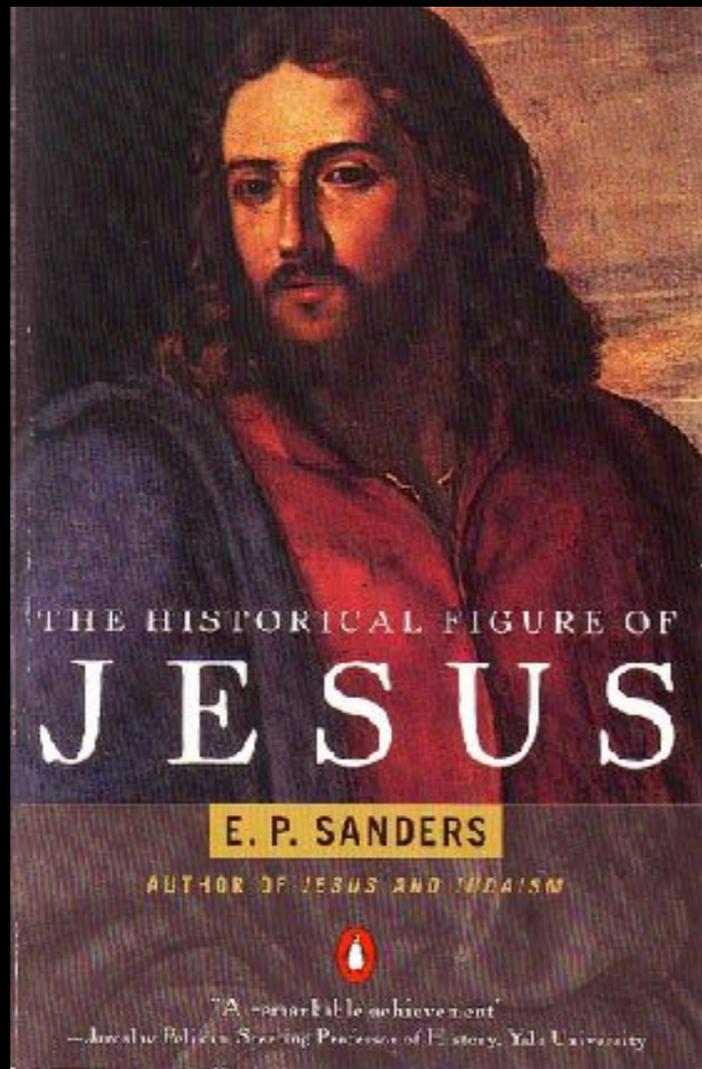


“It is scarcely credible that such a critique of Jesus was interjected into the Jesus tradition on the initiative of later disciples.”

James Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*.
Eerdmans, 2003, 527.



James Dunn,
Durham University



Professor Ed Sanders
(Duke University)

*The
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BEN F. MEYER

With a New Introduction by

N. T. WRIGHT

The novum in the act of Jesus was to reverse this structure: communion first, conversion second. His table fellowship with sinners implied no acquiescence in their sins, for the gratuity of the reign of God cancelled none of its demands. But in a world in which sinners stood ineluctably condemned, Jesus' openness to them was irresistible. Contact triggered repentance; conversion flowered from communion. In the tense little world of ancient Palestine, where religious meanings were the warp and woof of the social order, this was a potent phenomenon.

(Ben F. Meyer, *The Aims of Jesus*. SCM, 1979, 161.)



Prof James Charlesworth, Director of the Princeton Dead Sea Scrolls Project





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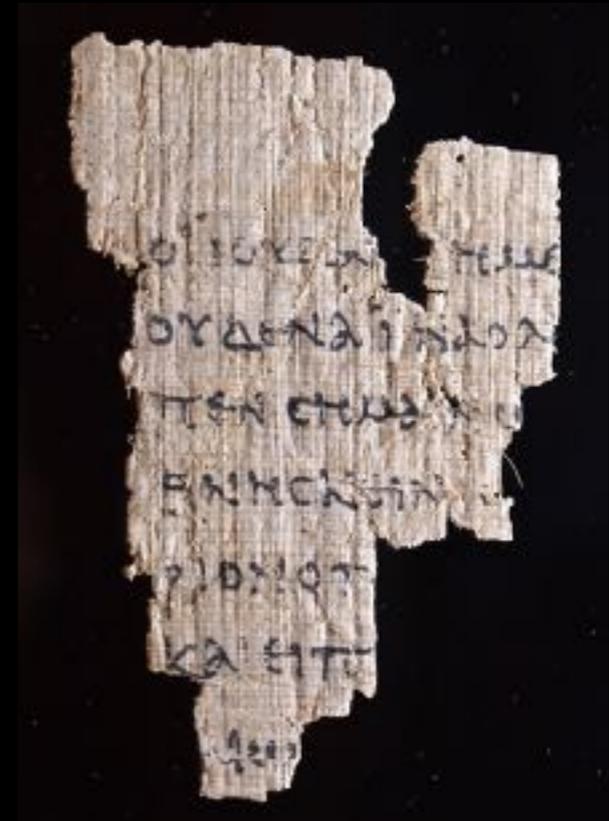
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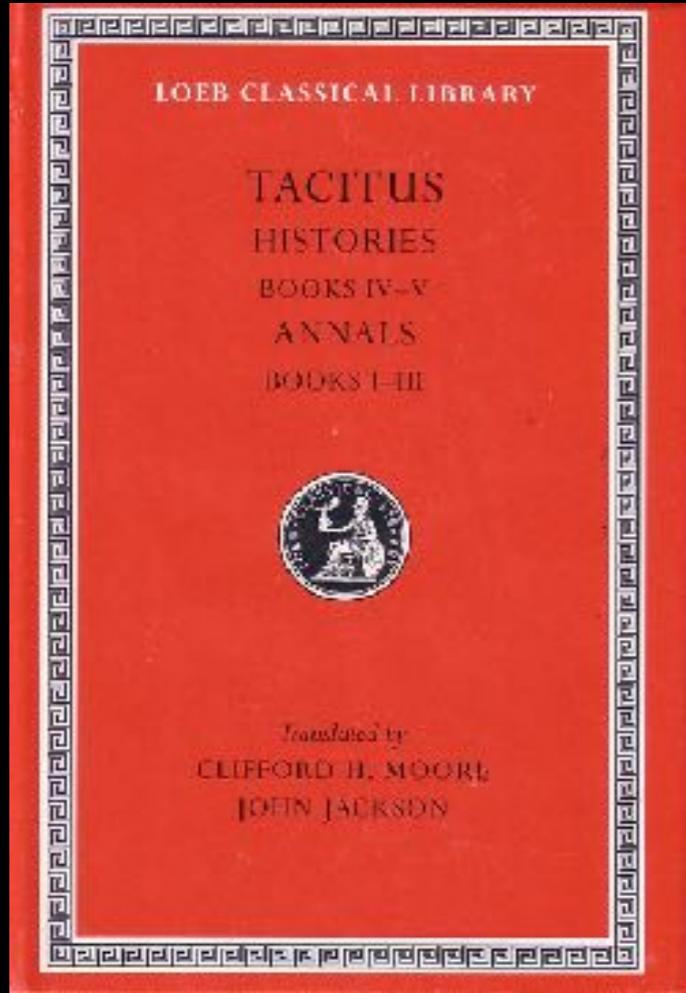
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1. Non-Christian sources provide a basic outline of Jesus' life



Papyrus 52
A fragment of
John's Gospel

Christians derived their name from a man called Christ, who, during the reign of Emperor Tiberius had been executed by sentence of the procurator Pontius Pilate. The deadly superstition, thus checked for the moment, broke out afresh not only in Judea, the first source of the evil, but also in the City of Rome, where all things hideous and shameful from every part of the world meet and become popular (*Annals* 15.44).





Josephus, AD 90

(*Jewish Antiquities* 18.63-64,
20.200)

Manuscript of St John's College
Library, Cambridge

“About this time there lived Jesus, a wise man. For he was one who wrought surprising feats and was a teacher. He won over many Jews and many of the Greeks. When Pilate, upon hearing him accused by men of the highest standing amongst us, had condemned him to be crucified, those who had in the first place come to love him did not give up their affection for him. And the tribe of the Christians, so called after him, has still to this day not disappeared .” 18.63-64

THE
CAMBRIDGE
ANCIENT HISTORY



X
THE AUGUSTAN EMPIRE,
43 B.C.—A.D. 69

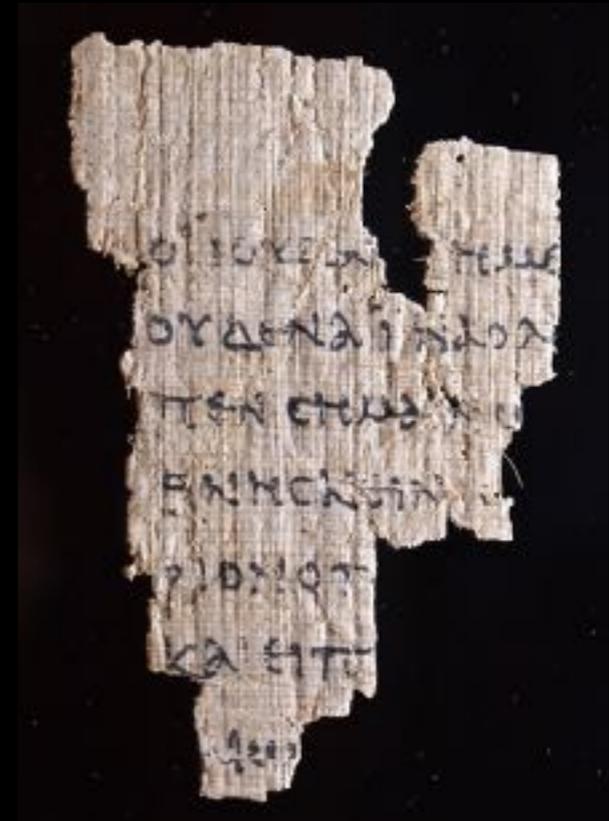
THE OXFORD
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DICTIONARY

THE ULTIMATE REFERENCE WORK
ON THE CLASSICAL WORLD

THIRD EDITION REVISED

EDITED BY SIMON HORNBLLOWER
AND ANTONY SPAWFORTH

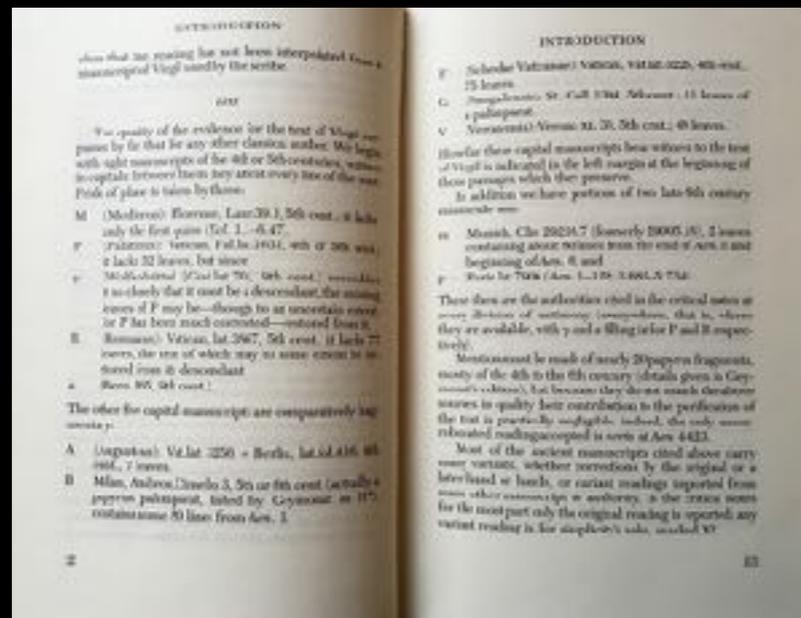
1. The text of the
New Testament
is well attested



Papyrus 52
A fragment of
John's Gospel

Virgil's *Aeneid*

Rome's best attested text



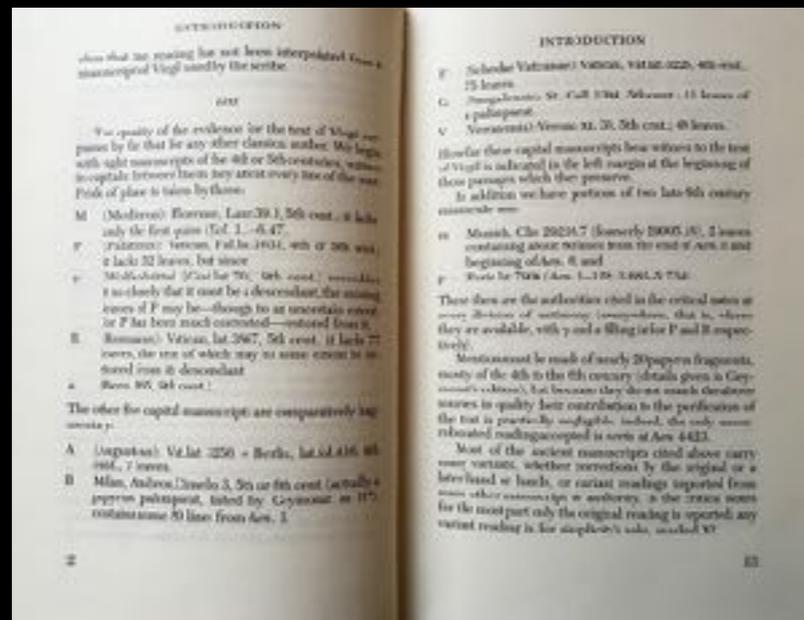
3 complete / near-complete manuscripts

7 partial manuscripts

20 papyrus fragments

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New Testament

Antiquity's best attested text

The image shows a table titled 'LISTED MANUSCRIPTS' with the subtitle 'NOVUM TESTAMENTUM LINGUAE LATINAE'. The table lists the number of complete, partial, and papyrus manuscripts for various books of the New Testament. The books listed are: Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts, Romans, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians, 1 Peter, 2 Peter, 1 John, 2 John, 3 John, and Revelation. The table also includes a section for 'I. The Constantine City Witnesses'.

- 4 complete / near-complete manuscripts
- 340 partial manuscripts
- 1000s papyrus fragments

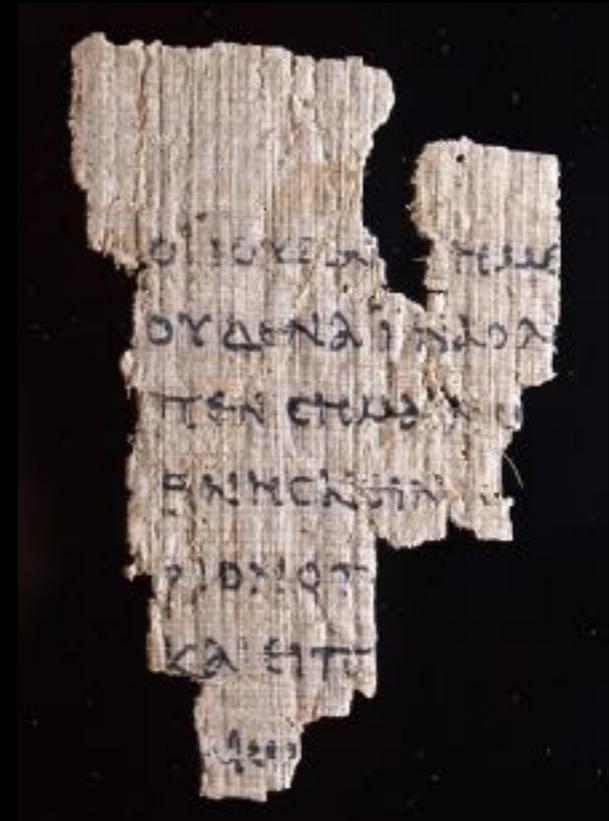


James 3



John 18-19

4. The New Testament offers early evidence for Jesus



Papyrus 52
A fragment of
John's Gospel

(1) **Alexander the Great (356-323BC)**: first extant historian to offer biographical details is Polybius (c. 203-120 B.C.), **120 years** after Alexander; the best source is Arrian (AD 86-160), 400 yrs later

(2) **Emperor Tiberius (AD 14-37)**: best source is Tacitus, written around **80 years** after (AD115)

(3) **Jesus (AD 30)**: earliest NT text is from **20 years** later (AD 50); the last NT text is from 60 years later (AD90).

PERSON

WRITINGS

Alexander _____ 120 yrs

Tiberius _____ 80 yrs

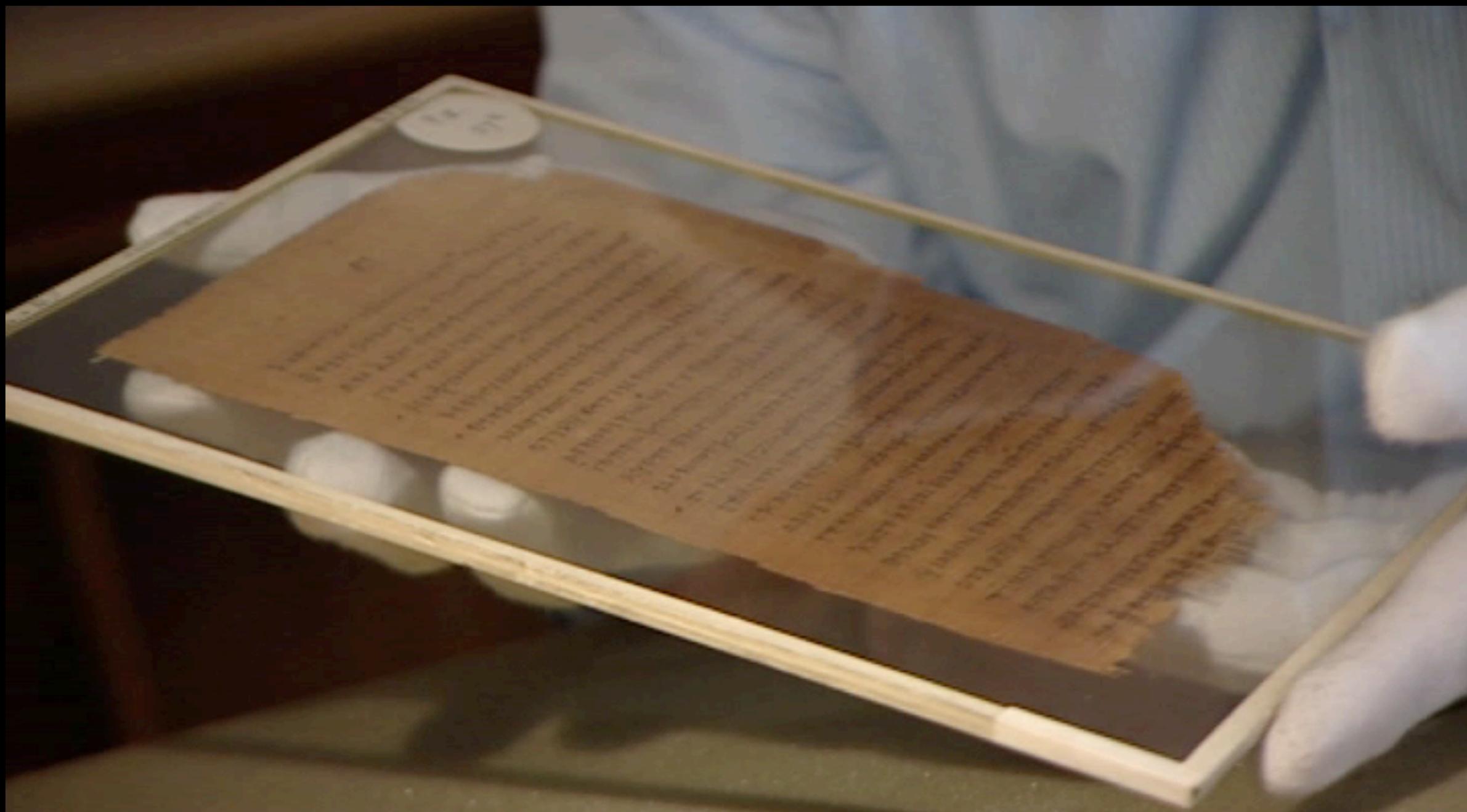
Jesus _____ 20 yrs

1 Corinthians 15:3-8

For what I received (*paralambanō*) I passed on (*paradidōmi*) to you as of first importance: **that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures,** ⁴ **that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,** ⁵ **and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve.** ⁶ After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. ⁷ Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, ⁸ and last of all he appeared to me also.



Papyrus 46
1 Corinthians 15



Episode 3 - *The Christ Files*



4. The New Testament is a collection of sources

Independent sources in the New Testament

Gospel of Mark

A source within
Matthew & Luke

Q

Paul's letters

M

A source within
Matthew alone



L

A source within
Luke alone

SQ

A source within
John alone

James

The criterion of multiple attestation

When numerous sources independently offer roughly same portrait of an event or person, that portrait takes on greater plausibility.

Healers in the Time of Jesus



Healing the Blind
(Duccio, 13th century)



Healers in the Time of Jesus



Healing the Blind
(Duccio, 13th century)

Miracles across the range of Gospel sources

- 13 references to healings in G. Mark (usually dated late-60s);
- 4 in Q (source shared by Matthew and Luke, dated 50s);
- 5 in L (Luke's special source, dated 60s);
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Healing in Jesus' name:

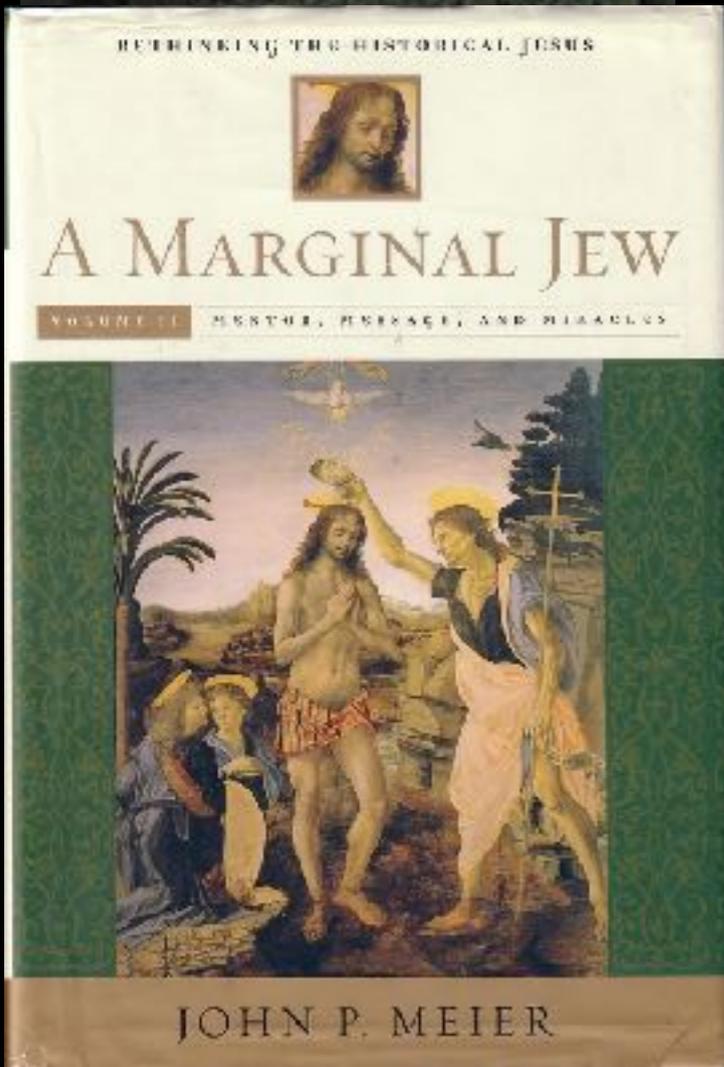
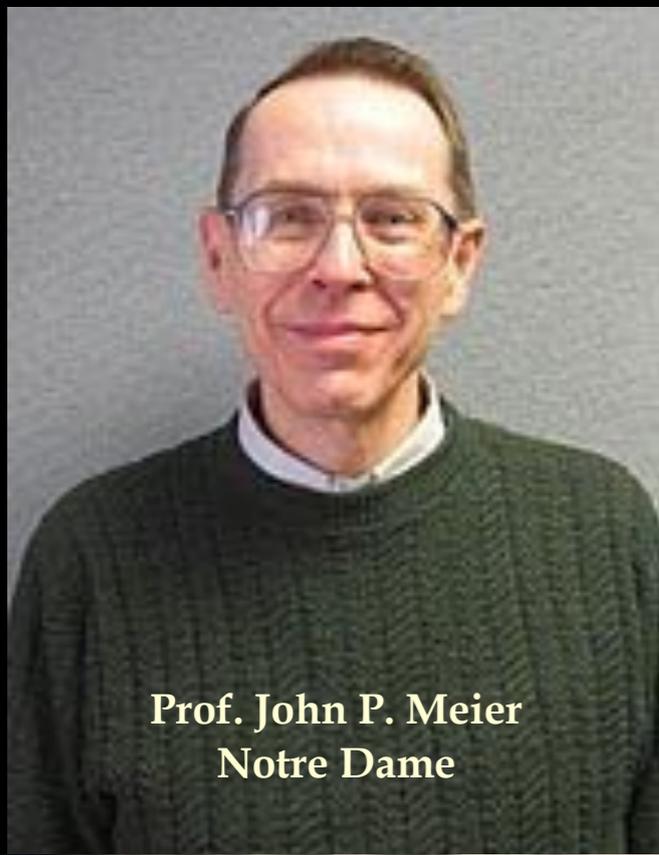
- 2 Cor 12:12 (55/56);
- James 5:14-15 (pre-62)



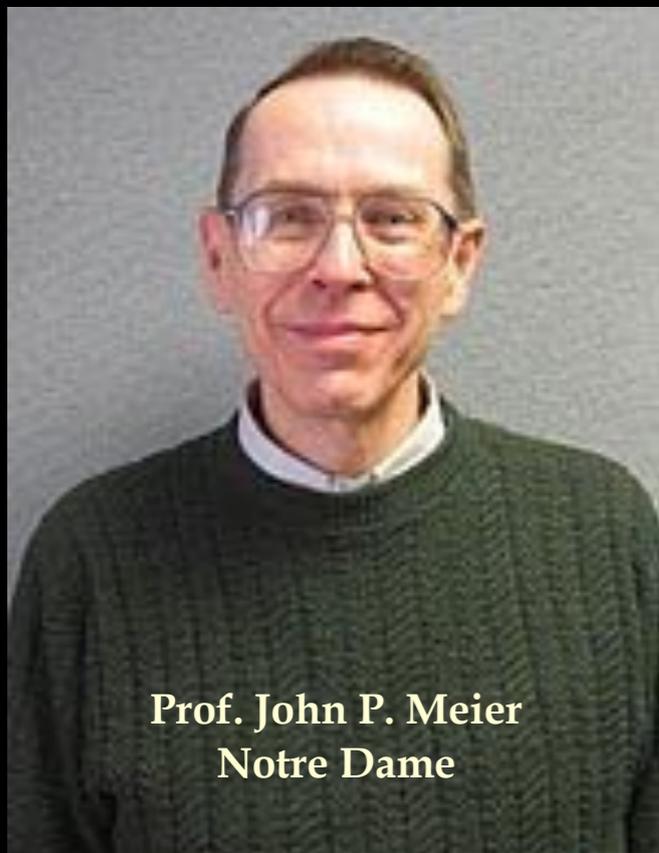
Josephus, AD 90
(*Jewish Antiquities* 18.63-64)

Manuscript of St John's College
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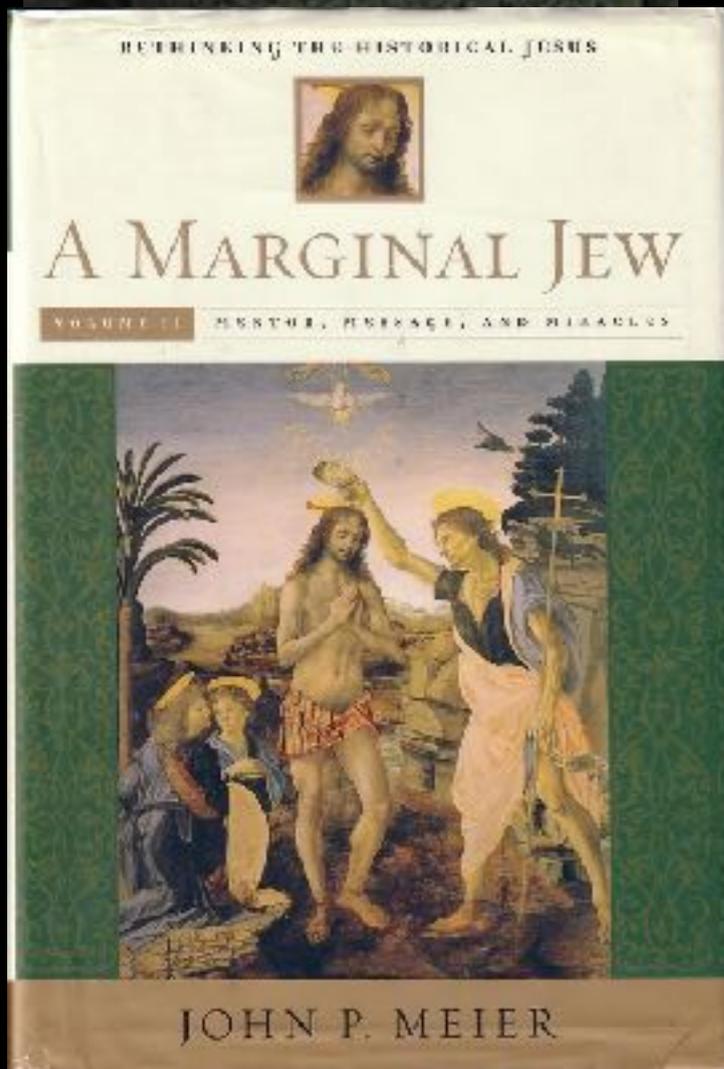
At this time there appeared Jesus, a wise man. For he was a doer of startling deeds (*paradoxa erga*), a teacher of people who received the truth with pleasure. And he gained a following both among many Jews and among many of Greek origin. And when Pilate, because of an accusation made by the leading men among us, condemned him to the cross, those who had loved him previously did not cease to do so.



To sum up: the historical fact that Jesus performed extraordinary deeds deemed by himself and others to be miracles is supported most impressively by the criterion of multiple attestation of sources and forms and the criterion of coherence. The miracle traditions about Jesus' public ministry are already so widely attested in various sources and literary forms by the end of the first Christian generation that total fabrication by the early church is, practically speaking, impossible ... The curious upshot of our investigation is that, viewed globally, the tradition of Jesus' miracles is more firmly supported by the criteria of historicity than are a number of other well-known and often readily accepted traditions about his life and ministry ...



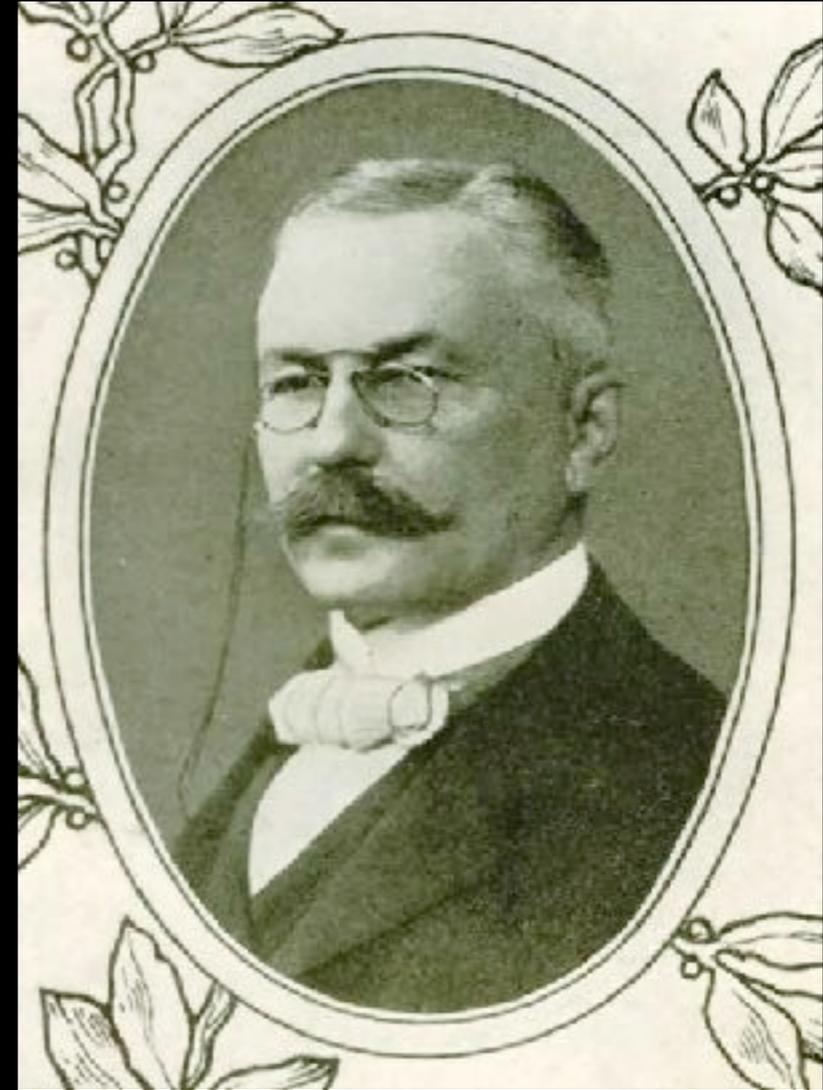
Prof. John P. Meier
Notre Dame



Put dramatically but with not too much exaggeration: if the miracle tradition from Jesus' public ministry were to be rejected in toto as unhistorical, so should every other Gospel tradition about him. For if the criteria of historicity do not work in the case of the miracle tradition, where multiple attestation is so massive and coherence so impressive, there is no reason to expect them to work elsewhere. The quest would simply have to be abandoned.

**A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus, vol.2.
Doubleday, 1994, 630-31**

Miracles as fabrication



Hermann Samuel Reimarus
(1694-1768)



Karl Friedrich Bahrdt.

Bahrdt auf seinem Weisberge bei Halle, gezeihnet und gestochen von einem Bruder der deutschen XXI. Union 1789. Verkleinertes Kupfschnitt.

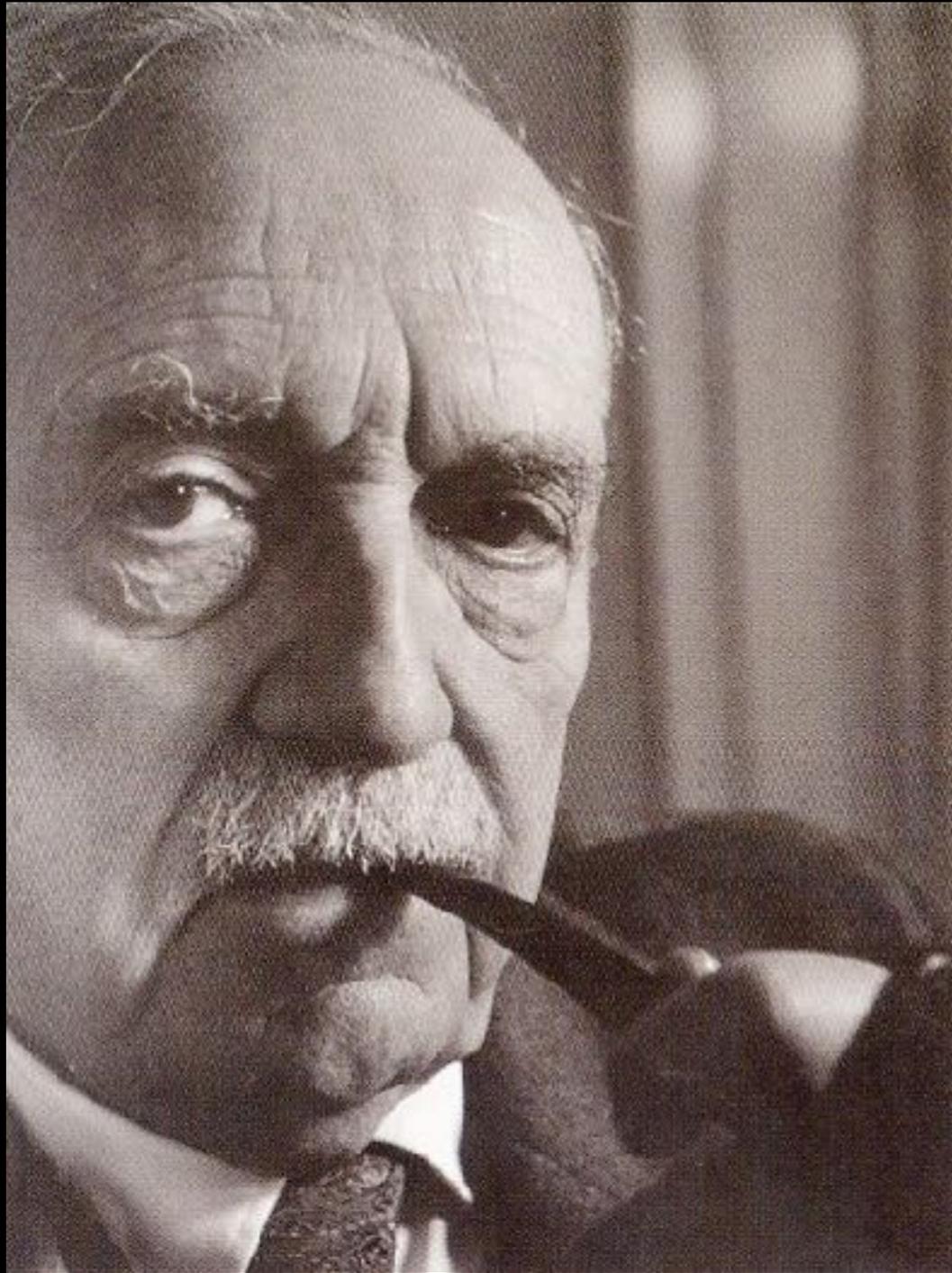
Miracles as natural events

Karl F Bahrdt (1741-1792)

Miracles as myth



David Friedrich Strauss
(1808-1874)



Jesus' healings as copies of pagan miracle stories. The Christians borrowed these myths, he said, in order to convey their own unique convictions about Jesus. Jesus' miracles were pictures of the gospel message, not memories of actual events

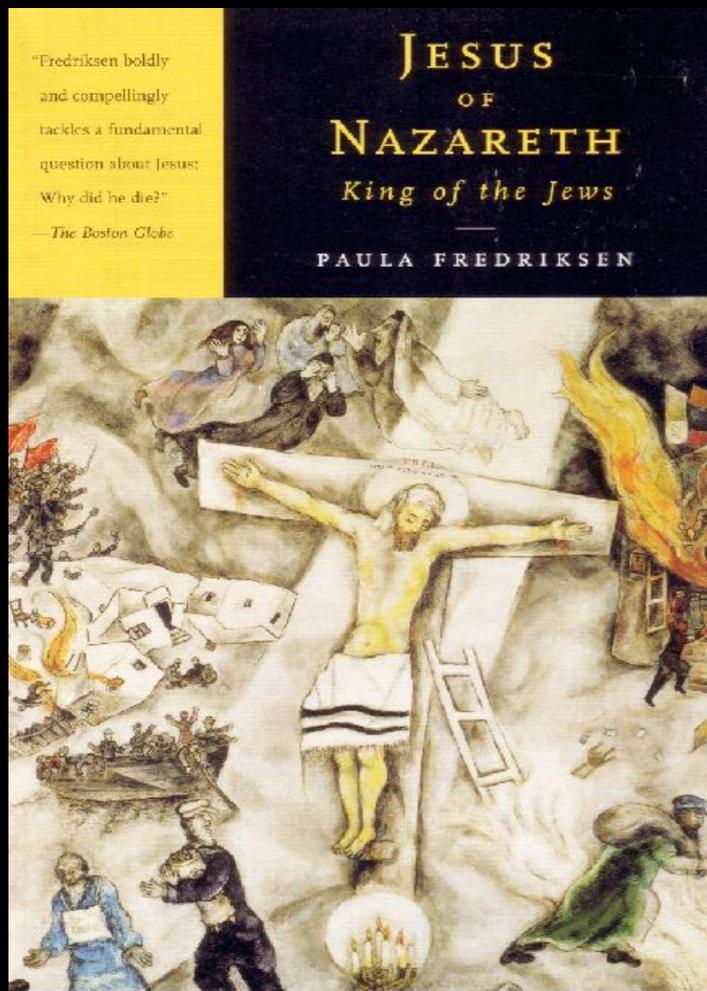
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Professor Paula Fredriksen,
Boston University.

Did Jesus of Nazareth, then, perform miracles? Here I as a historian have to weigh the testimony of tradition against what I think is possible in principle. I do not believe that God occasionally suspends the operation of what Hume called ‘natural law.’ What I think Jesus might possibly have done, in other words, must conform to what I think is possible.

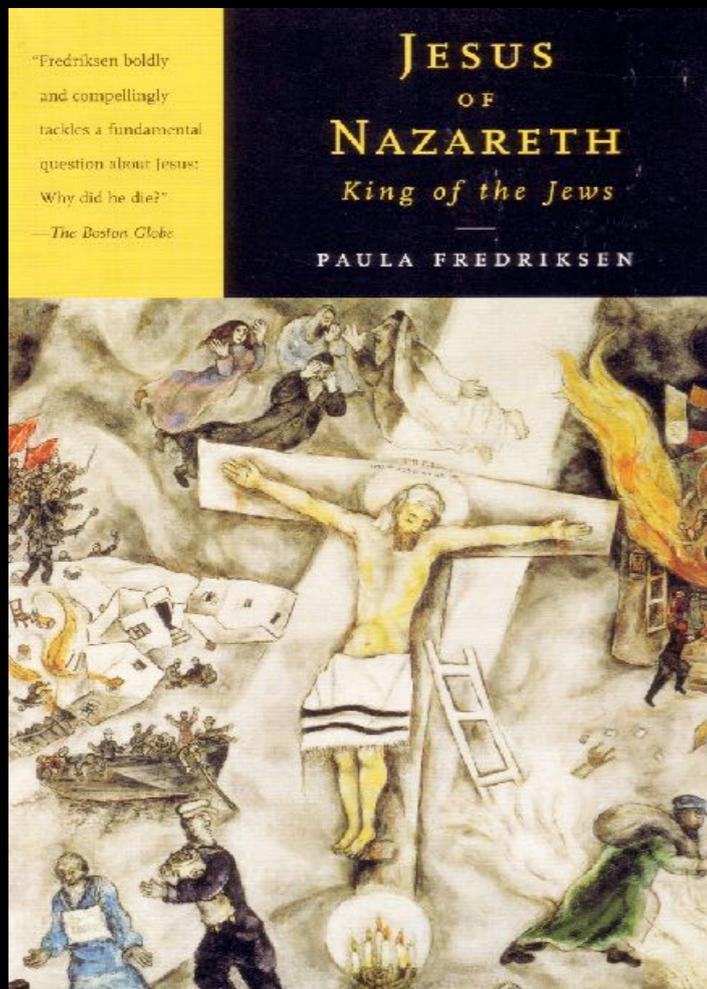
(Jesus of Nazareth: King of the Jews. Vintage Books, 1997, 114)





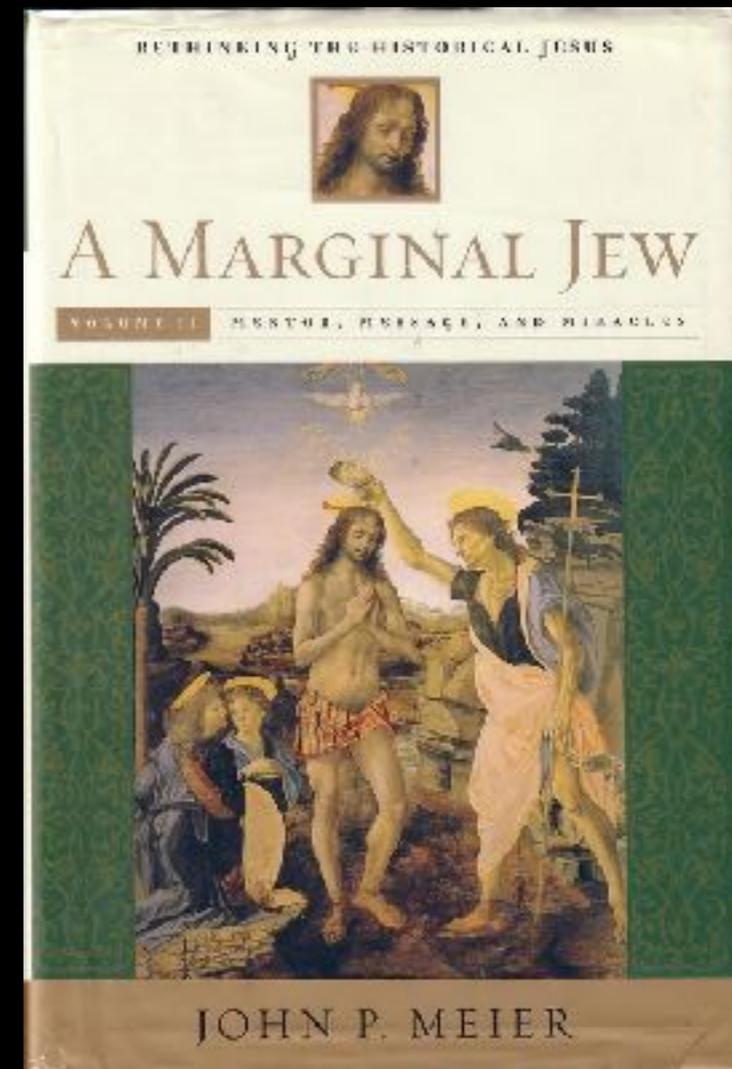
Professor Paula Fredriksen,
Boston University.

So, to answer my own question:
Yes, I think that Jesus probably
did perform deeds that
contemporaries viewed as
miracles. Those I have least
trouble imagining his working
conform to those also named by
Paul: healings and exorcisms.



(Jesus of Nazareth: King of the Jews. Vintage Books, 1997, 114)

To repeat my main point: the historian can ascertain whether an extraordinary event has taken place in a religious setting, whether someone has claimed it to be a miracle, and—if there is enough evidence—whether a human action, physical forces in the universe, misperception, illusion, or fraud can explain the event. If all these explanations are excluded, the historian may conclude that an event claimed by some people to be miraculous has no reasonable explanation or adequate cause in any human activity or physical force. To go beyond that judgment and to affirm either that God has directly acted to bring about this startling event or that God has not done so is to go beyond what any historian can affirm in his or her capacity as a historian and to enter the domain of philosophy or theology.



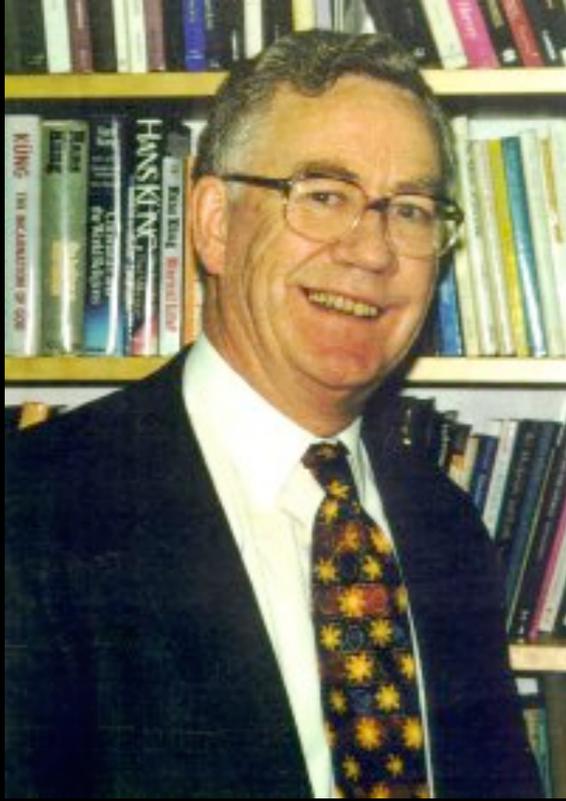


Based on the multiplicity of our sources and their early date, historians confidently affirm that Jesus did things which were widely interpreted from the beginning as miracles.



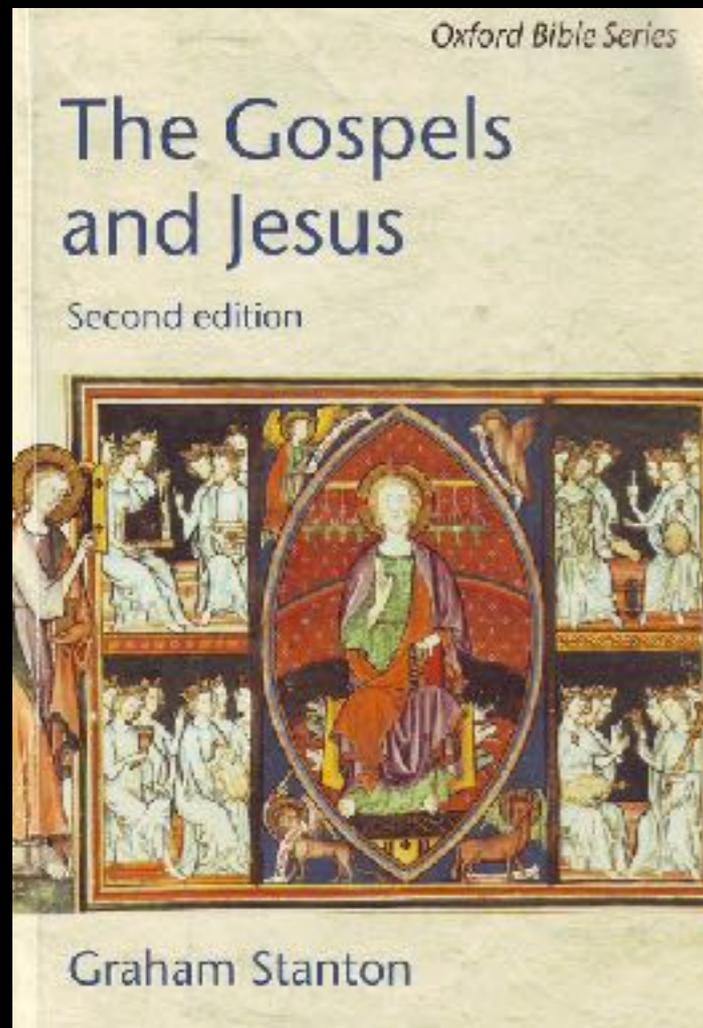
“Thus even when strict critical standards have been applied to the miracles stories, a demonstrably historical nucleus remains. Jesus performed healings which astonished his contemporaries.”

*(Joachim Jeremias, University of Leipzig).
New Testament Theology (vol.1): The
Proclamation of Jesus. SCM, 1971, 92.)*



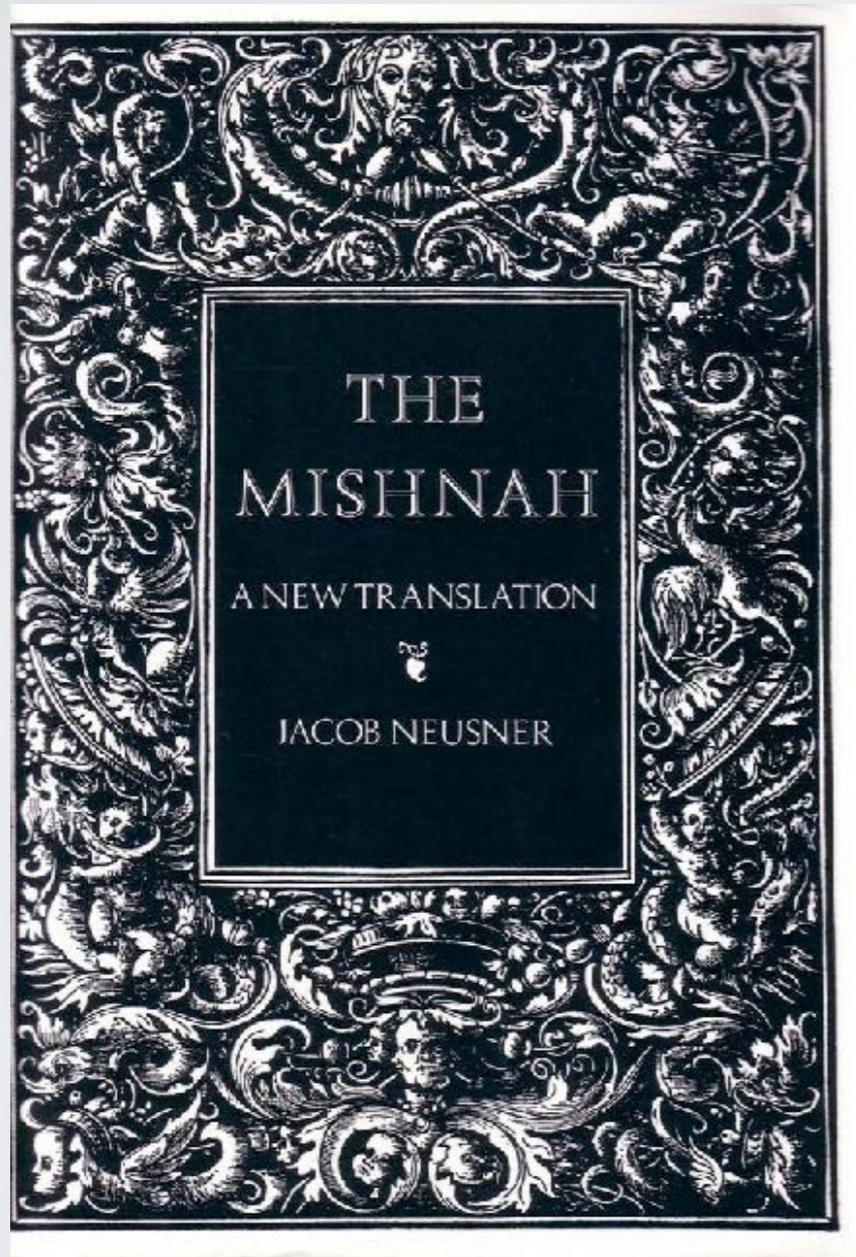
**Prof. Graham Stanton,
Cambridge University**

“Today few scholars doubt that Jesus possessed unusual gifts as a healer, though of course varied explanations are offered. Some suggest that many of the illnesses and disabilities had psychosomatic roots. While this may well have been the case, we have no ways of investigating the matter further.”

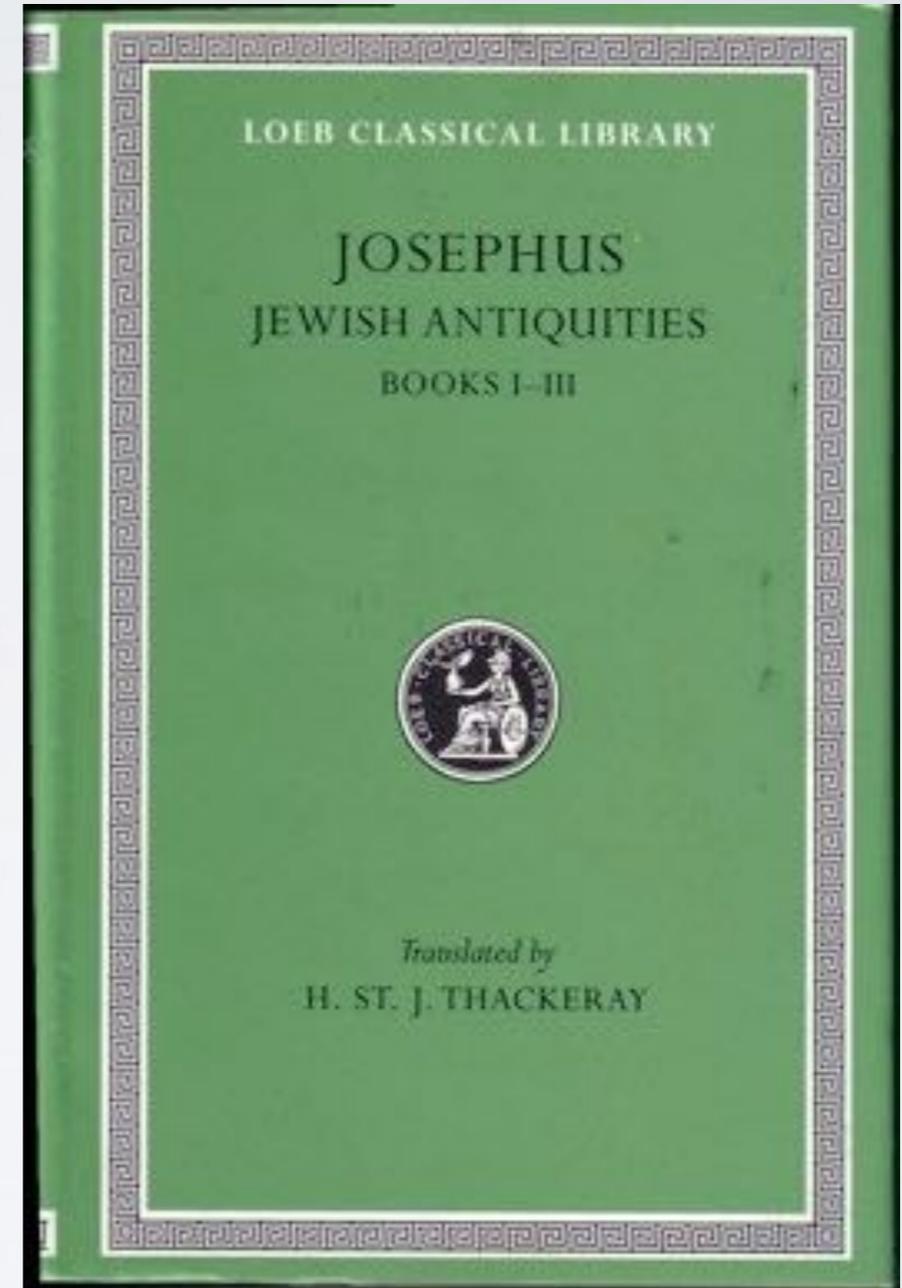


***The Gospels and Jesus (Second Edition).* Oxford University Press, 2003, 236.**

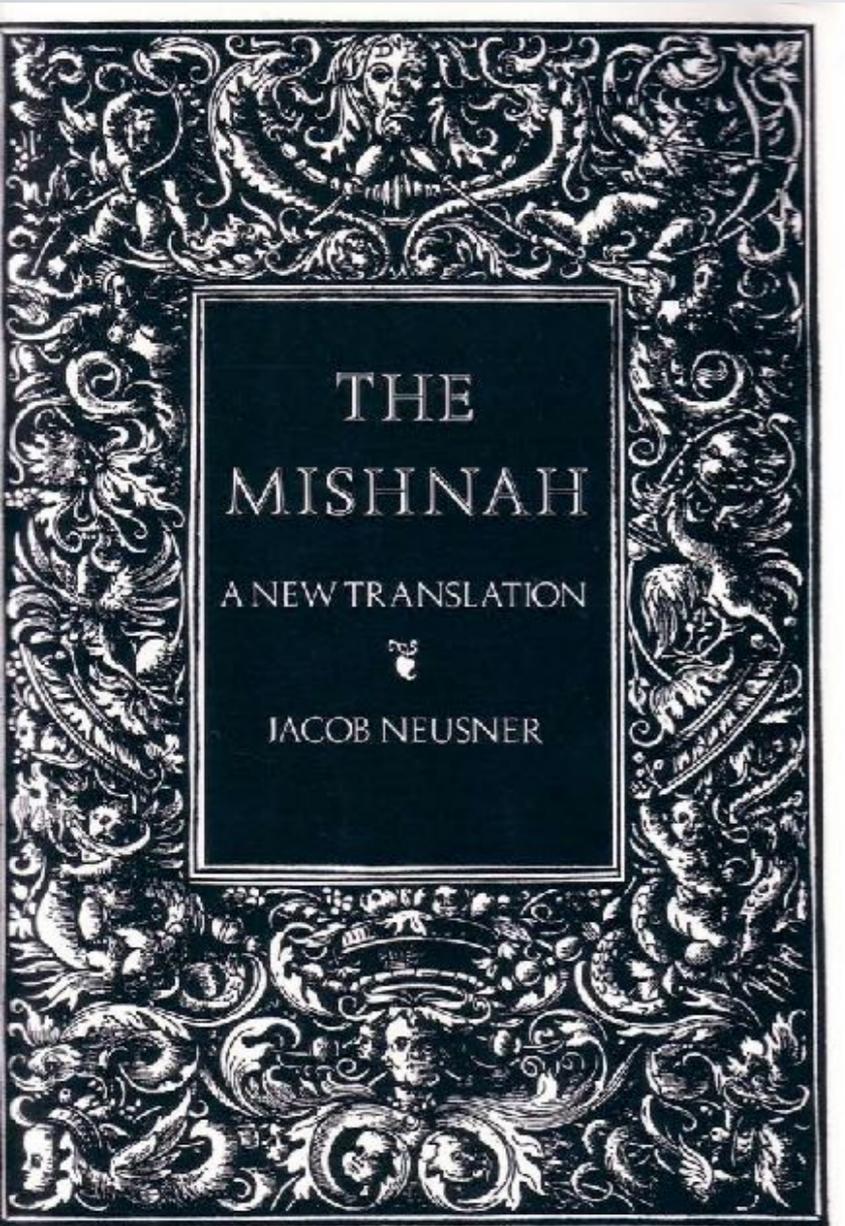
Rabbi Honi the circle-drawer (65 BC)



AD 200



AD 90



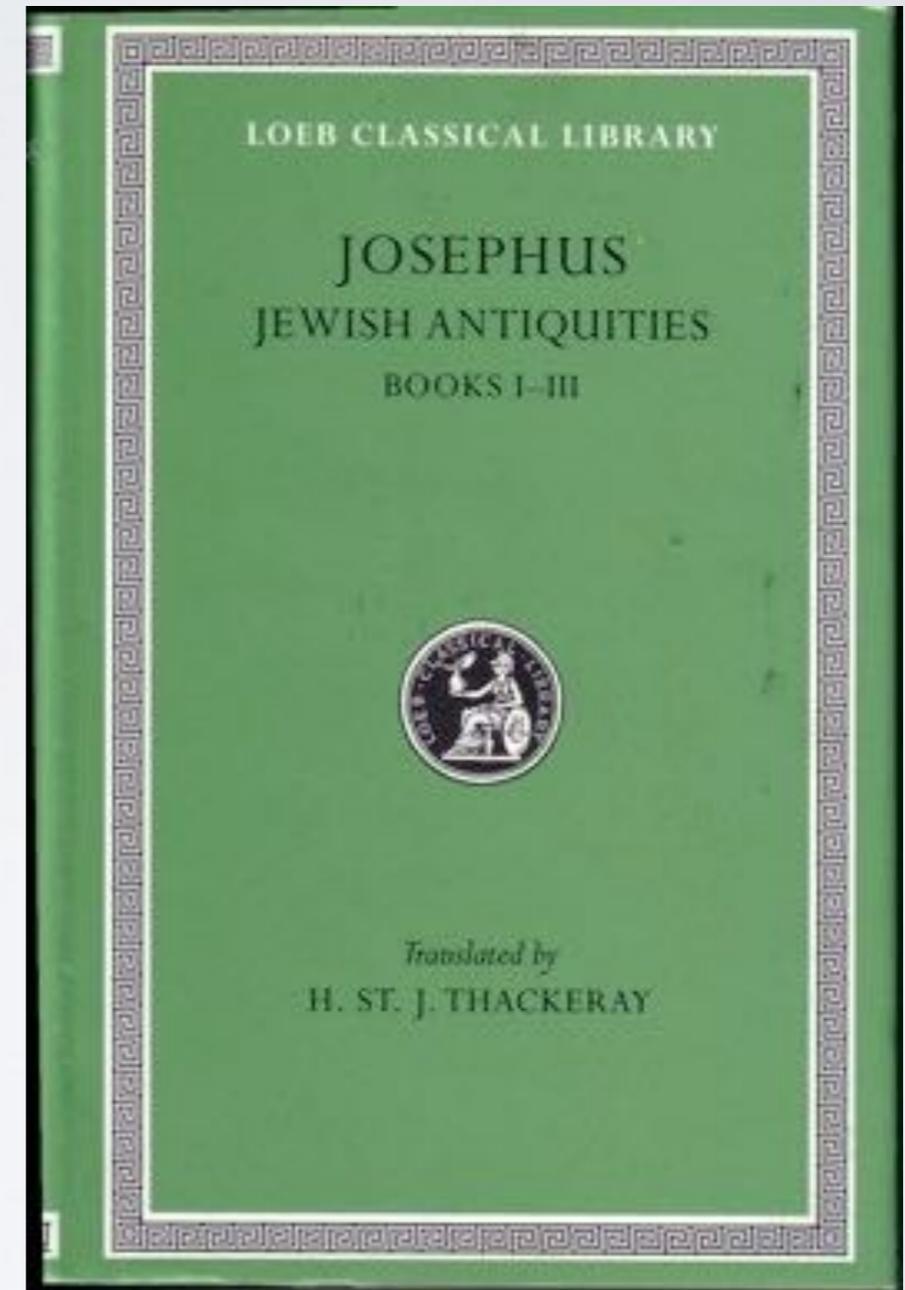
AD 200

They said to Honi, the circle drawer, 'Pray or rain.' He said to them, 'Go and take in the clay ovens used for Passover, so that they not soften in the rain which is coming.' He prayed, but it did not rain. What did he do? He drew a circle and stood in the middle of it and said before Him, 'Lord of the world! Your children have turned to me, for before you I am like a member of the family. I swear by your great name—I'm simply not moving from here until you take pity on your children.' It began to rain drop by drop. He said, 'This is not what I wanted, but rain for filling up cisterns, pits, and caverns.' It began to rain violently. He said, 'This is not what I wanted, but rain of good will, blessing, and graciousness.' Now it rained the right way, until Israelites had to flee from Jerusalem up to the Temple Mount because of the rain.

Rabbi Honi the circle-drawer (65 BC)

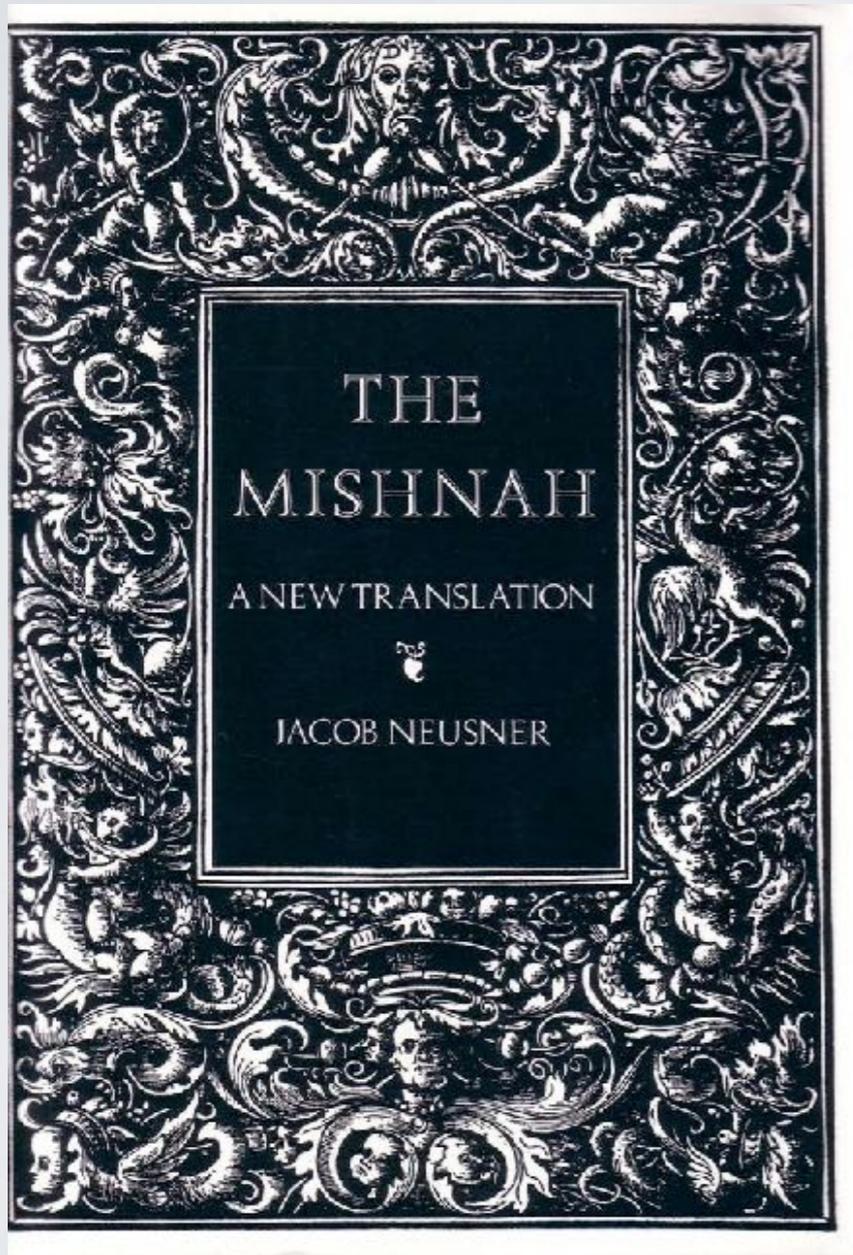
Now there was a certain Onias (Honi), who, being a righteous man and dear to God had once in a rainless period prayed to God to end the drought, and God had heard his prayer and sent rain.

(Jewish Antiquities 14.22)



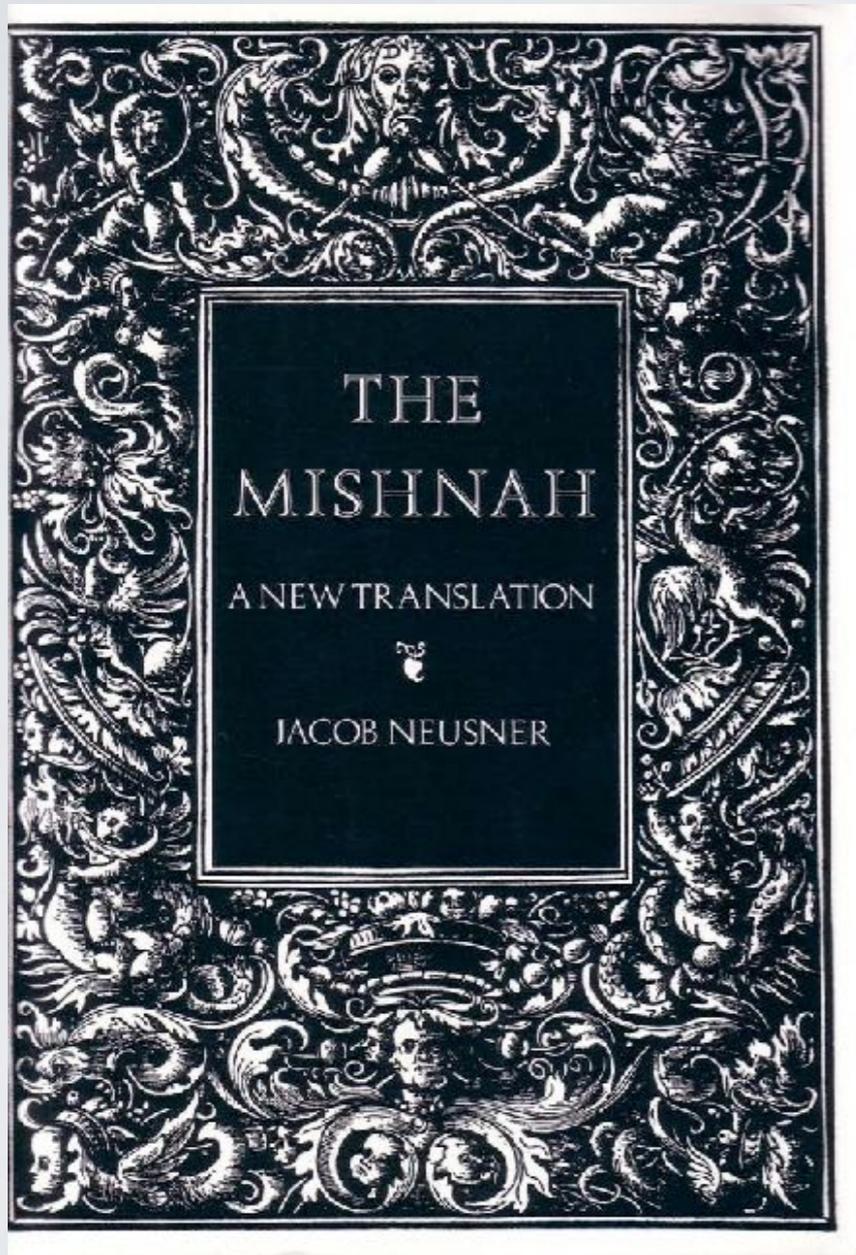
AD 90

Rabbi Hanina ben Dosa (AD 70)



AD 200

Rabbi Hanina ben Dosa (AD 70)

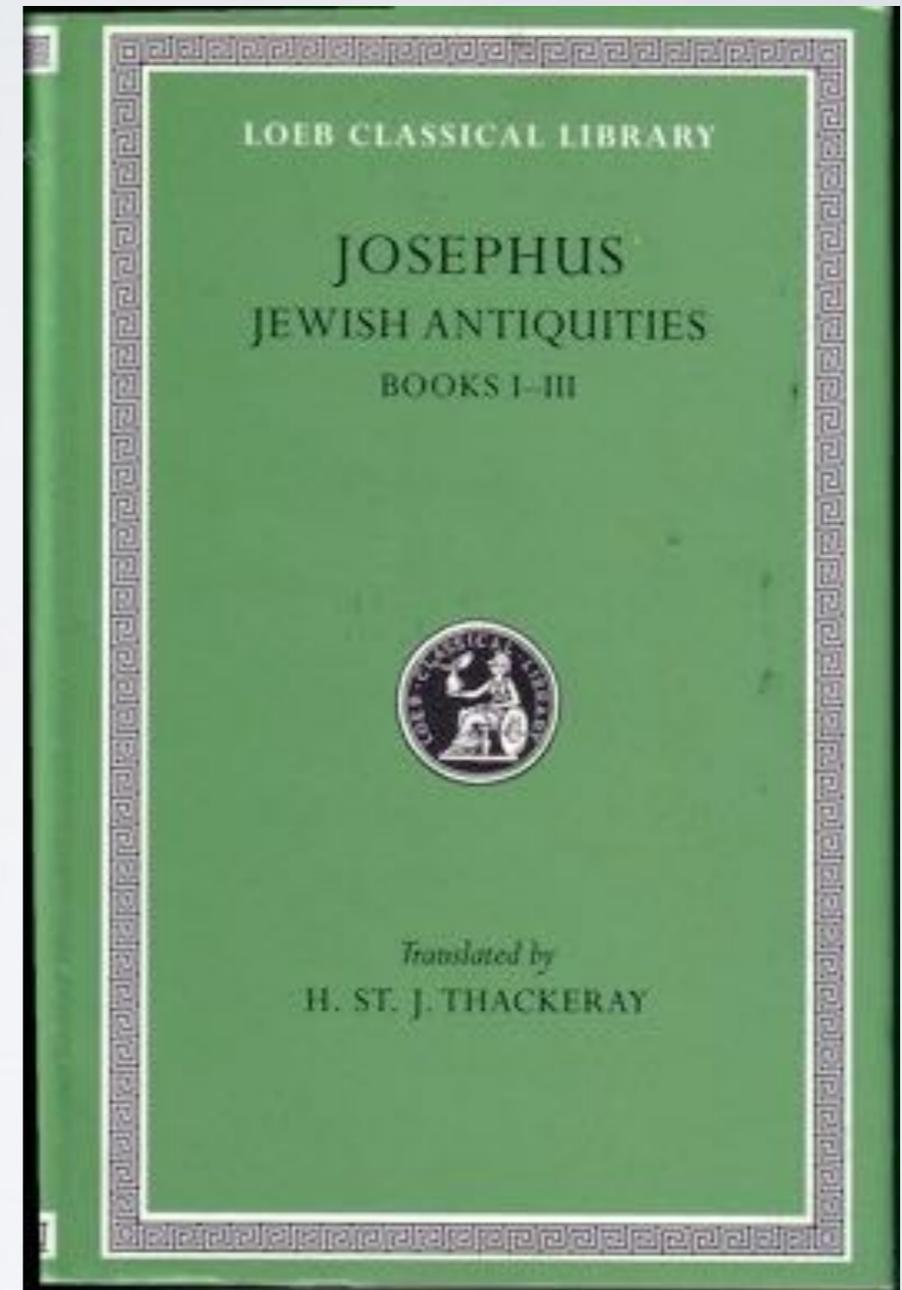


AD 200

When he would pray for the sick he would say ‘This one shall live’ or ‘This one shall die.’ They said to him, ‘How do you know?’ he said to them, ‘If my prayer is fluent, then I know that it is accepted and the person will live. But if not, I know that it is rejected and the person will die.’

Mishnah Berakhot 5.5.

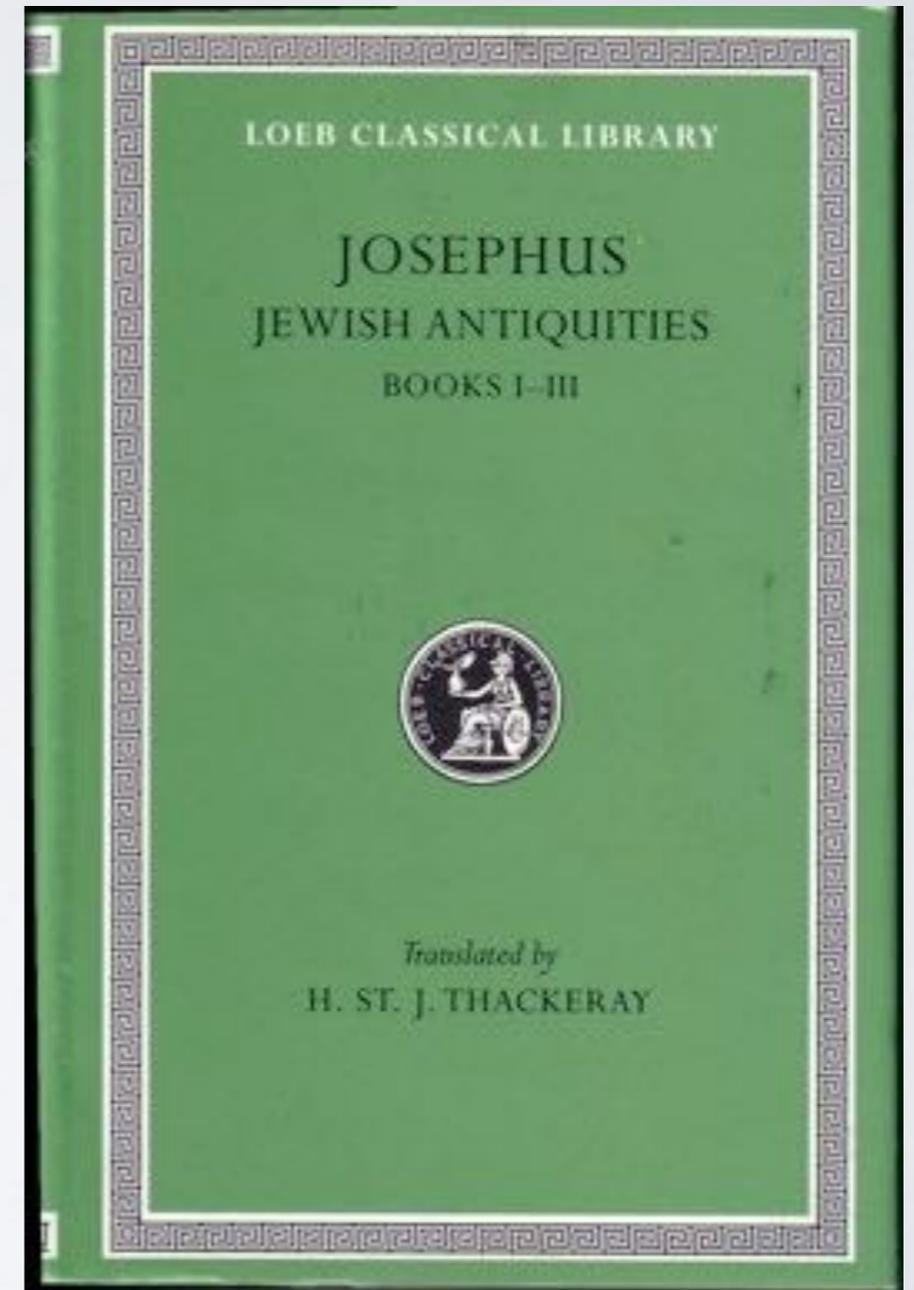
Eleazar the exorcist
(circa 70)



AD 90

I have seen a certain Eleazar, a countryman of mine, in the presence of Vespasian, his sons, tribunes and a number of other soldiers, free men possessed by demons, and this was the manner of the cure: he put to the nose of the possessed man a ring which had under its seal one of the roots prescribed by Solomon, and then, as the man smelled it, drew out the demon through the nostrils, and, when the man at once fell down, adjured the demons never to come back into him, speaking Solomon's name and reciting the incantations which he had composed. Then, wishing to convince the bystanders and prove to them that he had this power, Eleazar placed a cup or foot-basin full of water a little way off and commanded the demon, as it went out of the man, to overturn it and make known to the spectators that he had left the man. And when this was done, the understanding and wisdom of Solomon were clearly revealed, on account of which we have been induced to speak of these things (Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* 8.46-49).

Eleazar the exorcist (circa 70)



AD 90

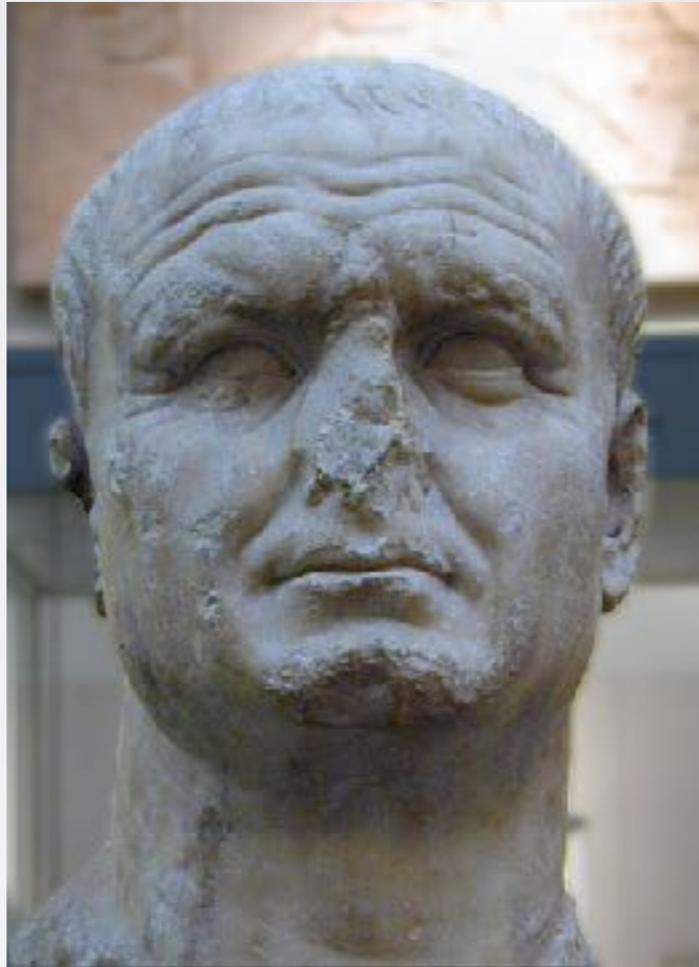


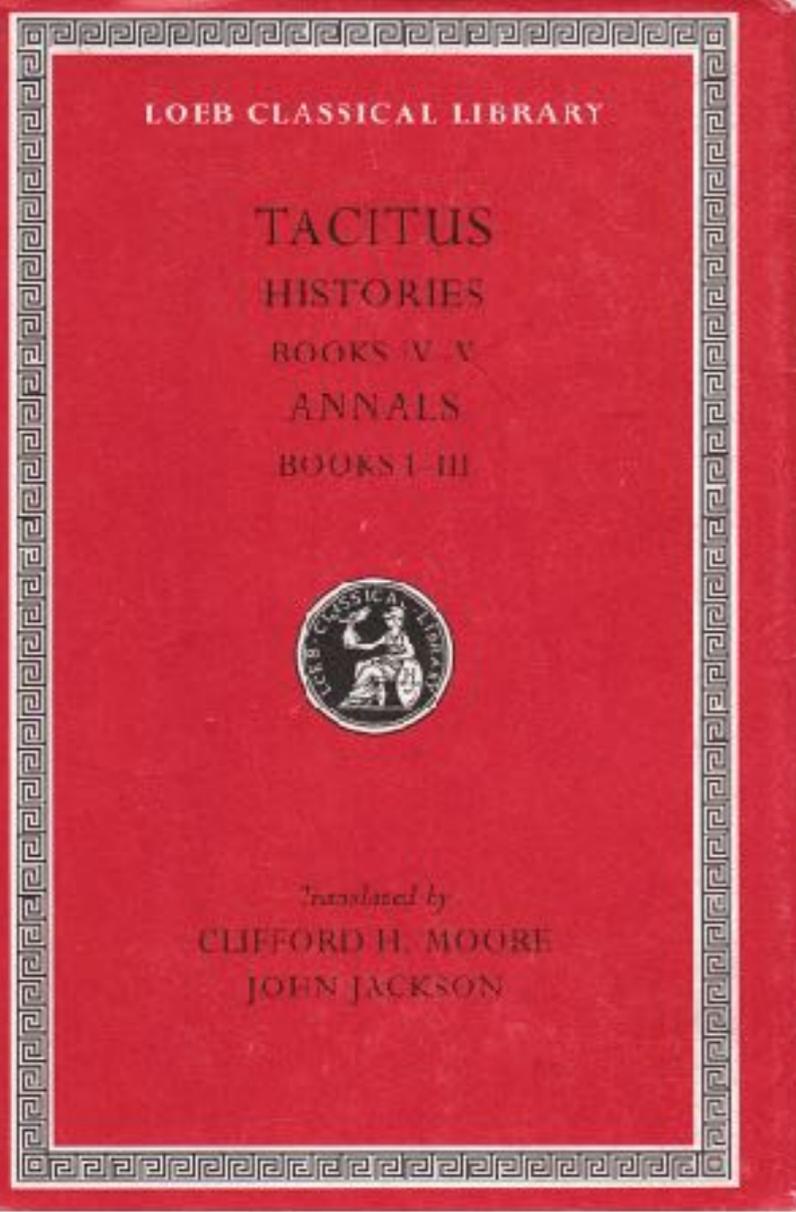
Just then a man in their synagogue who was possessed by an evil spirit cried out, “What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God!” “Be quiet!” said Jesus sternly. “Come out of him!” The evil spirit shook the man violently and came out of him with a shriek. The people were all so amazed that they asked each other, “What is this? A new teaching—and with authority! He even gives orders to evil spirits and they obey him” (Mark 1:23-27).

Asclepius
The Greek healing god



Emperor Vespasian (69/70)

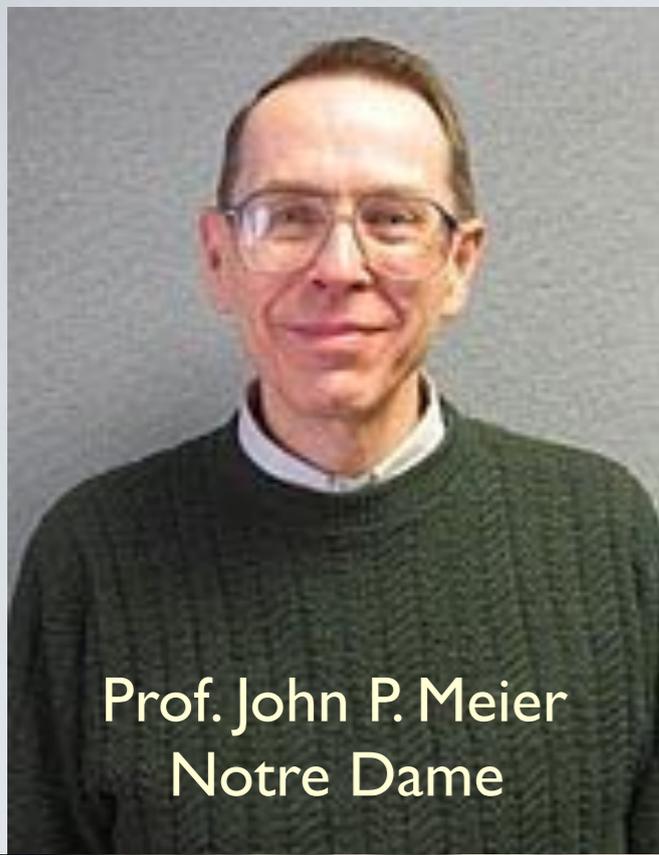




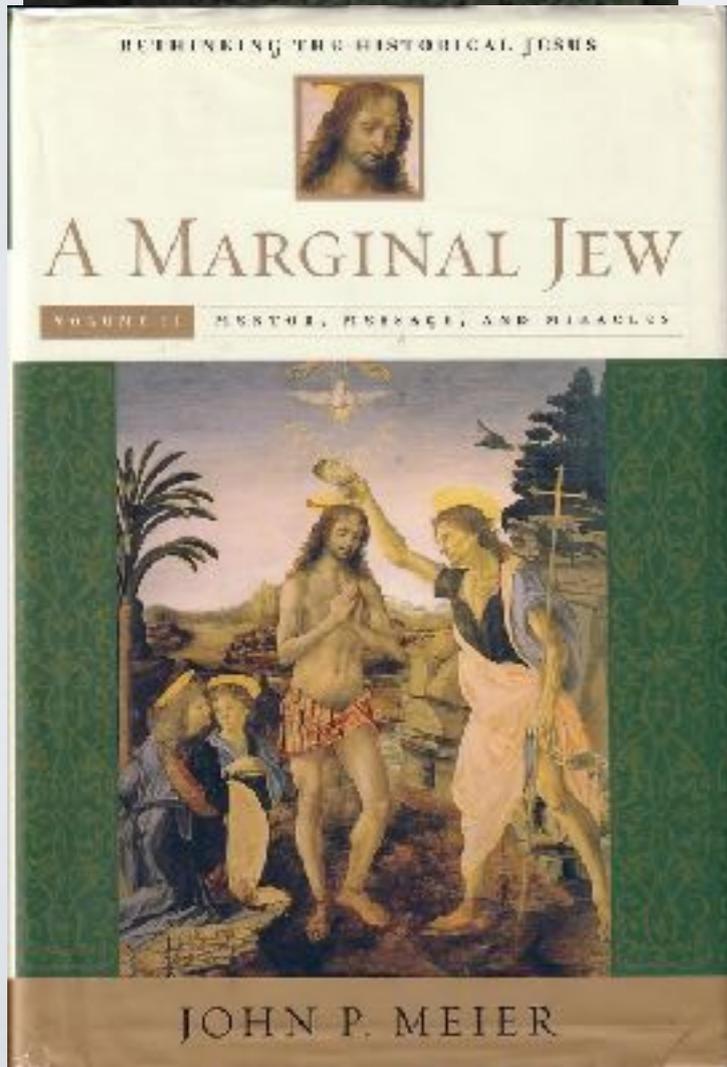
During the months while Vespasian was waiting at Alexandria for the regular season of the summer winds and settled sea, many marvels occurred to mark the favour of heaven and a certain partiality of the gods toward him. One of the common people of Alexandria, well known for his loss of sight, threw himself before Vespasian's knees, praying him with groans to cure his blindness, being so directed by the god Serapis, whom this most superstitious of nations worships before all others; and he besought the emperor to deign to moisten his cheeks and eyes with his spittle. Another, whose hand was useless,

prompted by the same god, begged Caesar to step and trample on it ... Vespasian, believing that his good fortune was capable of anything and that nothing was any longer incredible, with a smiling countenance, and amid intense excitement on the part of the bystanders, did as he was asked to do. The hand was instantly restored to use, and the day again shone for the blind man. Both facts are told by eye-witnesses even now when falsehood brings no reward

(Tacitus Histories 4.81).



Prof. John P. Meier
Notre Dame

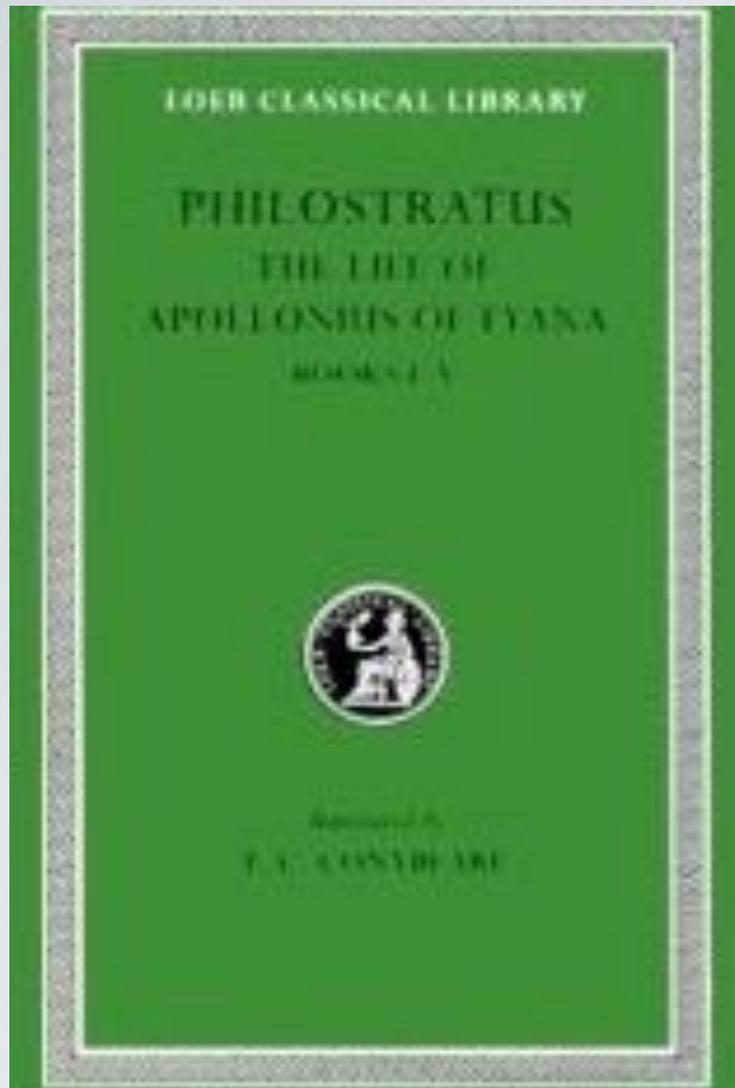


Suetonius and Tacitus seem to tell the whole story with a twinkle in their eyes and smiles on their lips, an attitude probably shared by Vespasian. The whole event looks like a 1st-century equivalent of a ‘photo opportunity’ staged by Vespasian’s P.R. team to give the new emperor divine legitimacy.

J. P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus* (vol.2). Doubleday, 1994, 625.

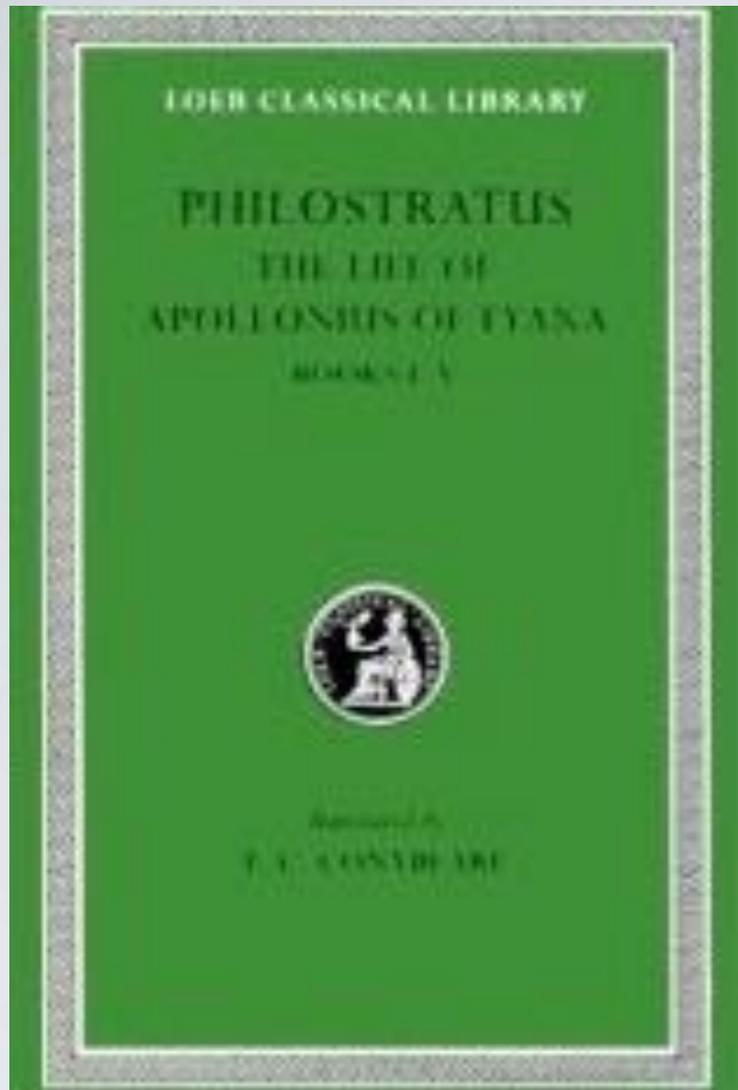
Apollonius of Tyana (died before 100)





“Apollonius performed another miracle. There was a girl who appeared to have died just at the time of her wedding. The betrothed followed the bier, with all the lamentations of an unconsummated marriage, and Rome mourned with him, since the girl belonged to a consular family. Meeting with this scene of sorrow, Apollonius said, ‘Put the bier down, for I will end your crying over the girl.’ At the same time he asked her name, which made most people think he was going to declaim a speech of the kind delivered at funerals to raise lamentation. But Apollonius, after merely touching her and saying something secretly, woke the bride from her apparent death. The girl spoke, and went back to her father’s house.”

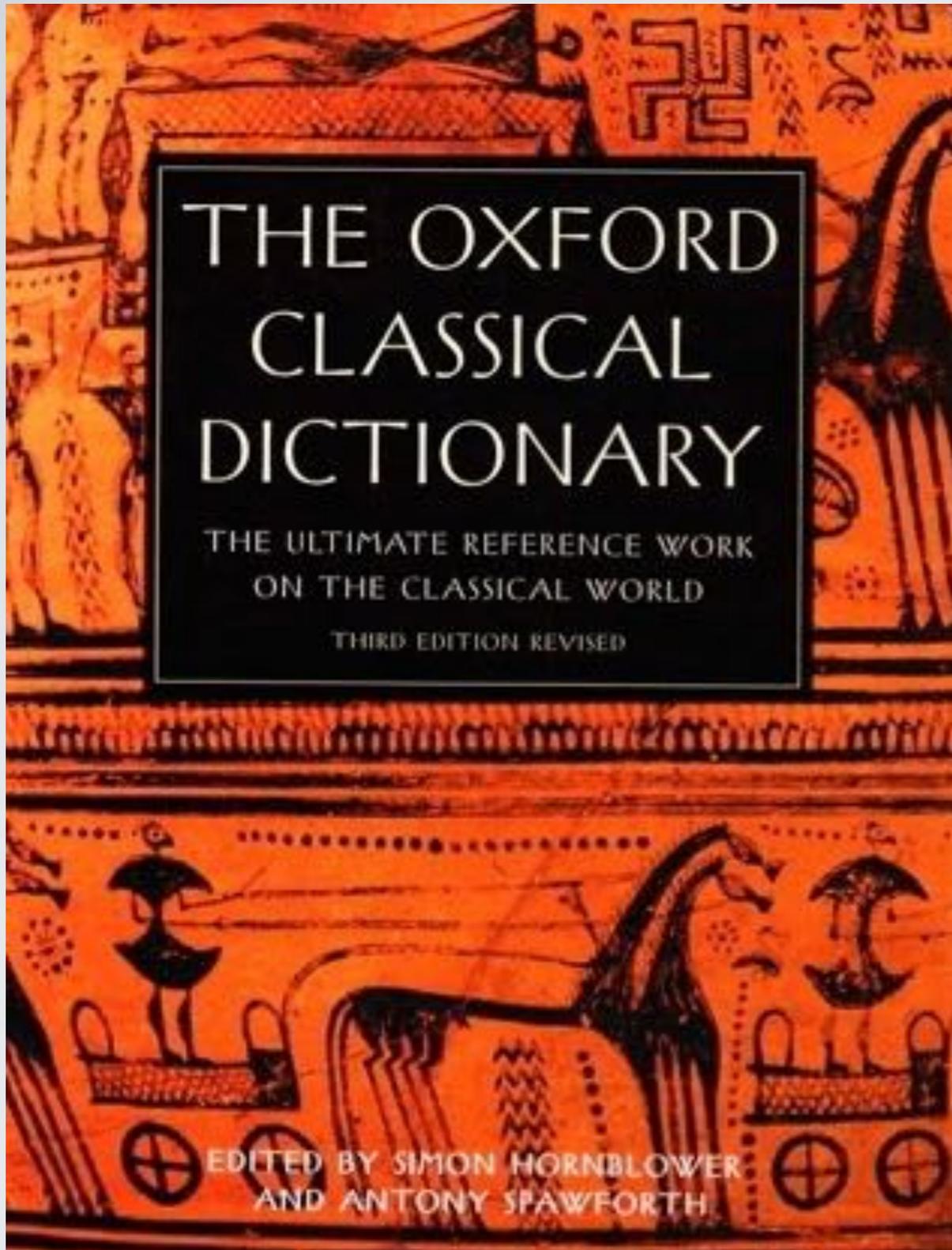
Philostratus, *The Life of Apollonius of Tyana* 4.45.



Written AD 220,
120 yrs after
Apollonius

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Philostratus, *The Life of Apollonius of Tyana* 4.45.



“The Life of Apollonius offers pagan hagiography under a sophistic veneer, and remains suspect both in sources and details.”

Walter Manoel Edwards, “Philostrati,” in *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*. Oxford University Press, 2003, 1171.

MIRACLE-WORKER

SOURCE(S)

Honi _____ 1 source _____ 2 sources
by 150yrs by 250 yrs

Hanina _____ 1 source
by 150yrs

Eleazar _____ 1 source
by 20 yrs

Vespasian _____ 1 source _____ 2 sources
by 45yrs by 55 yrs

Apollonius _____ 1 source
by 120yrs

Jesus _____ 3 sources _____ 8 sources
by 20yrs by 60 yrs

'Miracle'

Latin

miraculum 'object of wonder'



'Miracle'

Latin

miraculum 'object of wonder'

New Testament

dunameis 'strength' or 'authority'

sēmeia, 'signs'

'Signs' of the kingdom come

Jesus was driving out a demon that was mute. When the demon left, the man who had been mute spoke, and the crowd was amazed. ¹⁵ But some of them said, "By Beelzebub, the prince of demons, he is driving out demons." ¹⁶ Others tested him by asking for a sign from heaven. ¹⁷ Jesus knew their thoughts and said to them: "Any kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and a house divided against itself will fall. ¹⁸ If Satan is divided against himself, how can his kingdom stand? I say this because you claim that I drive out demons by Beelzebub. ¹⁹ Now if I drive out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your followers drive them out? So then, they will be your judges. ²⁰ But if I drive out demons by the finger of God, then **the kingdom of God** has come to you.

Luke 11:14-20 / Matthew 12:22-28

Jesus was remembered not simply as a great exorcist, but also as claiming that his exorcisms demonstrated the fulfilment of hopes long cherished for a final release from the power of evil. If the manifestation of God's final reign was to be marked by the binding of Satan, then Jesus' exorcisms showed, to that extent at least, that the binding of Satan had already happened or was already happening, the final exercise of God's rule was already in effect.

Jesus Remembered. Eerdmans, 2003, 461



Prof James Dunn
Durham University

Preview of the end

When John heard in prison what Christ was doing, he sent his disciples ³ to ask him, “Are you the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else?” ⁴ Jesus replied, “Go back and report to John what you hear and see: ⁵ The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor. ⁶ Blessed is the man who does not fall away on account of me.

Matthew 11:2-6 / Luke 7:18-23

In that day the deaf will hear the words of the scroll, and out of gloom and darkness the eyes of the blind will see (Isaiah 29:18).

Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Then will the lame leap like a deer, and the mute tongue shout for joy (Isaiah 35:5-6).

The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives (Isaiah 61:1).

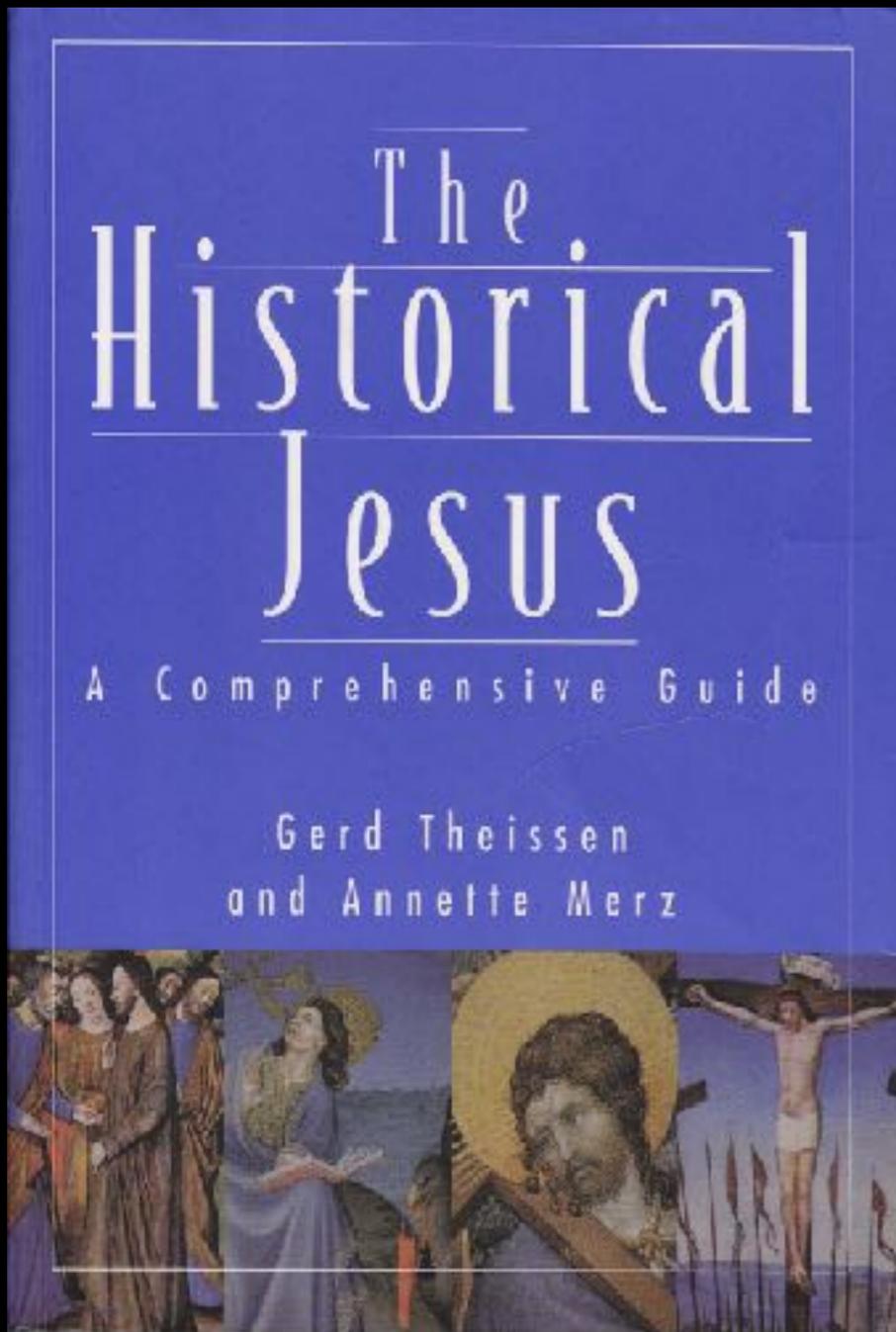
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Matthew 11:2-6 / Luke 7:18-23

... the earth will listen to his anointed one (*mashiach / messiah*) [and all] that is in them will not turn away from the precepts of the holy ones ... For he [the Lord] will honour the pious upon the upon the throne of an eternal kingdom, freeing prisoners, giving sight to the blind, straightening out the twis[ted.] ... And the Lord will perform marvellous acts such as have not existed, just as he sa[id,] [for] he will heal the badly wounded and will make the dead live, he will proclaim good news to the poor.

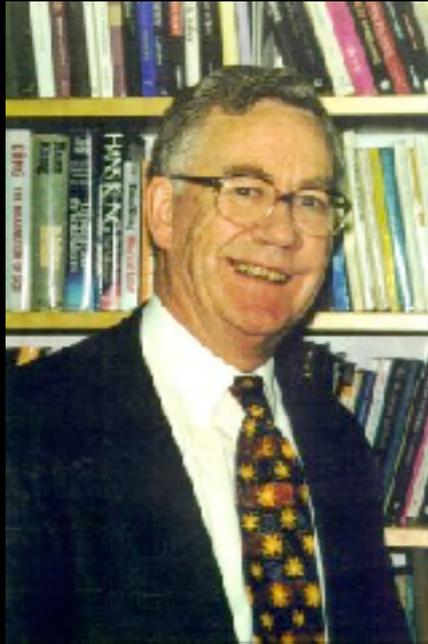
Messianic Apocalypse 4Q521



“He combines two conceptual worlds which had never been combined in this way before, the apocalyptic expectation of universal salvation in the future and the episodic realization of salvation in the present through miracles. Nowhere else do we find a charismatic miracle worker whose miraculous deeds are meant to be the end of an old world and the beginning of a new one. This puts a tremendous emphasis on the miracles (and it is unhistorical to relativize their significance for the historical Jesus). The present thus becomes a time of salvation in microcosm.”

Gerd Theissen and Annette Merz, *The Historical Jesus: a comprehensive guide*. Fortress Press, 1998, 309.

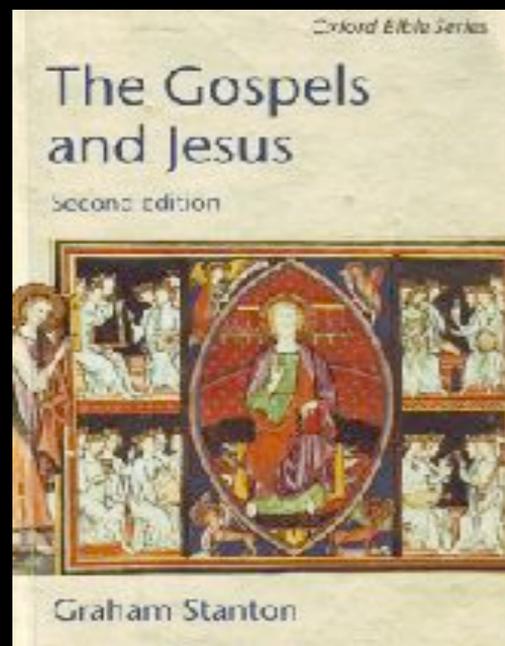
PHILOSOPHY



**Prof. Graham Stanton,
Cambridge University**

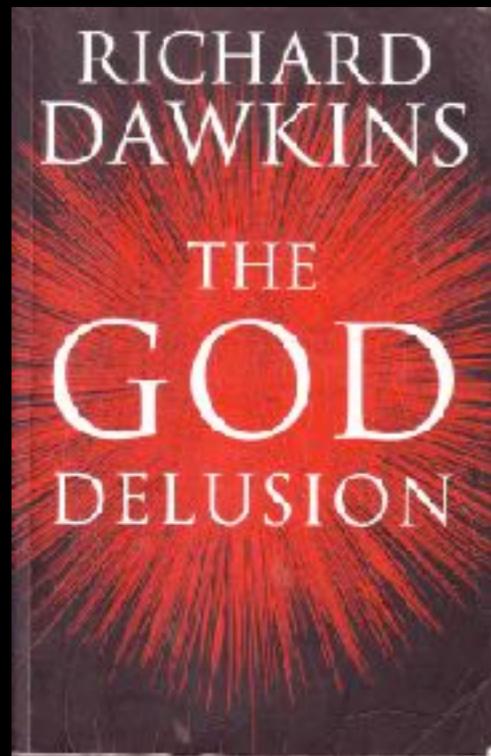
“Today few scholars doubt that Jesus possessed unusual gifts as a healer, though of course varied explanations are offered. Some suggest that many of the illnesses and disabilities had psychosomatic roots. While this may well have been the case, ***we have no ways of investigating the matter further.***”

The Gospels and Jesus (Second Edition). Oxford University Press, 2003, 236.





**Prof. Richard Dawkins,
Oxford University**

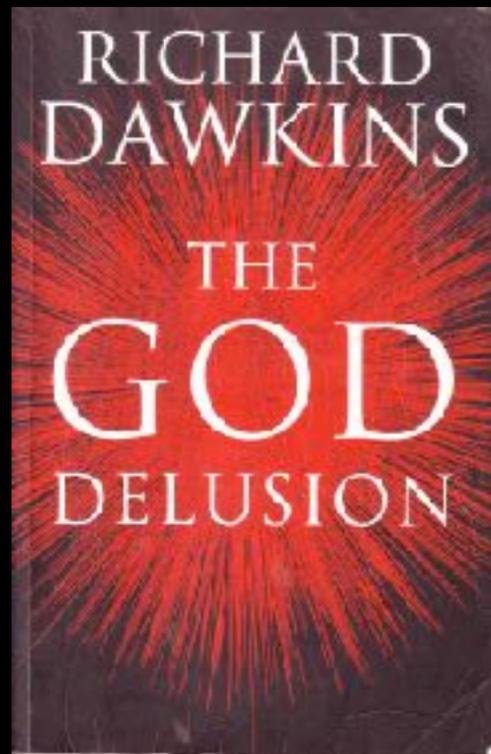


Seventy thousand pilgrims at Fatima in Portugal in 1917 reported seeing the sun “tear itself from the heavens and come crashing down upon the multitude.”

The God Delusion. Bantam Press, 2006, 91-92.



**Prof. Richard Dawkins,
Oxford University**



“any of these apparent improbabilities is far more probable than the alternative: that the Earth was suddenly yanked sideways in its orbit, and the solar system destroyed, with nobody outside Fatima noticing.”

The God Delusion. Bantam Press, 2006, 92.

“No testimony is sufficient to establish a miracle, unless the testimony be of such a kind that its falsehood would be more miraculous than the fact which it endeavours to establish.”



David Hume
(1711 – 1776)

David Hume, “Of Miracles” (115-136) in *On Human Nature and the Understanding*. Macmillan, 1962, 120.

See “Hume's Argument Against Justified Belief In Miracles” in The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (<http://plato.stanford.edu/contents.html>).

A host of books critiquing Hume's objection to miracles have been written by professional philosophers:

J. C. A. Gaskin, *Hume's Philosophy of Religion*. Macmillan, 1978 (Chapter 7 especially);

F. J. Beckwith, *David Hume's Argument Against Miracles: A Critical Analysis*. University Press of America, 1989;

M. P. Levine, *Hume and The Problem of Miracles: A Solution*. Kluwer, 1989;

J. Houston, *Reported Miracles: A Critique of Hume*. Cambridge University Press, 1994;

J. Earman, *Hume's Abject Failure: The Argument Against Miracles*. Oxford University Press, 2000.

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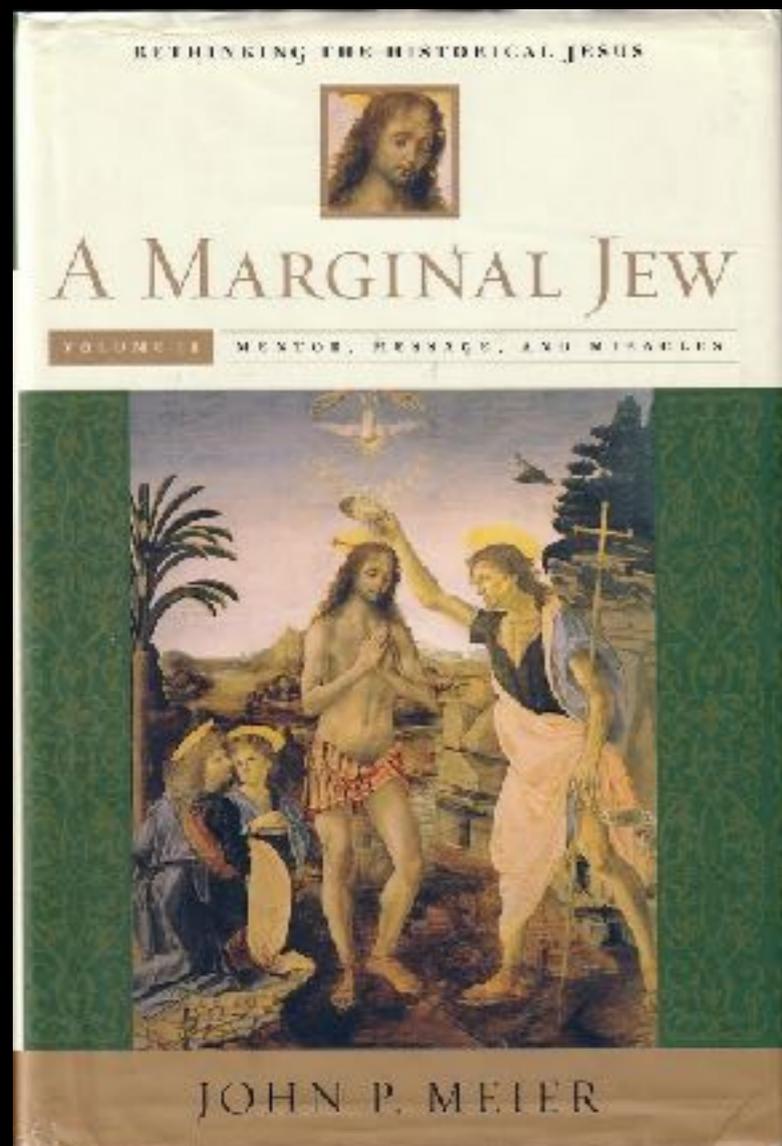
The appropriate test for evidence of miracles:

NOT

Is the evidence of such kind
that its falsehood would be more miraculous
than the event it seeks to establish?

BUT

Is there evidence of the kind you would
reasonably expect if the event did occur
and more evidence for the event
than you could reasonably expect if it didn't?



The atheist's judgment may be as firm and sincere as the believer's; it is also just as much a philosophical or theological judgment, determined by a particular worldview, and not a judgment that arises simply, solely, and necessarily out of an examination of the evidence of this particular case.

John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus* (vol.2). Doubleday, 1994, 514.

PHILOSOPHY

If I believe the 'laws of nature' define the limits of what is possible in the universe—that no Mind or Law-giver exists behind the laws—then miracles can *never* be seen as rational, and no amount of evidence could ever point to a supernatural event.

PHILOSOPHY

If I believe the ‘laws of nature’ define the limits of what is possible in the universe—that no Mind or Law-giver exists behind the laws—then miracles can *never* be seen as rational, and no amount of evidence could ever point to a supernatural event.

If I believe the ‘laws of nature’ do *not* define the limits of what is possible in the universe—that the laws themselves point to a Mind or Law-giver behind the laws—then miracles *can* be seen as rational, when there is good evidence pointing in that direction.

PRACTICE



Healing the Blind
(Duccio, 13th century)

PRACTICE



Healing the Blind
(Duccio, 13th century)

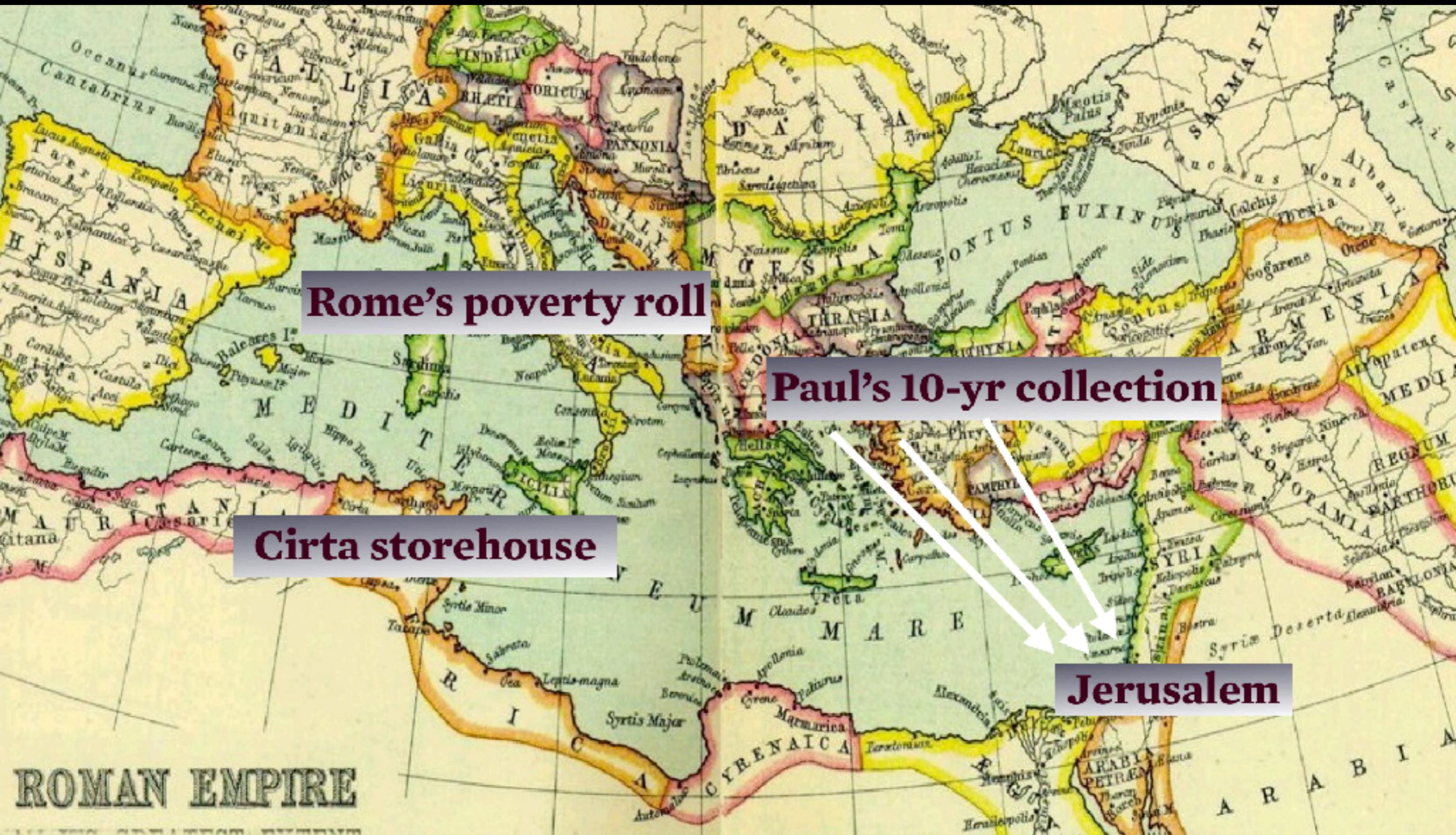
James 5:13-16. Is anyone among you in trouble? Let them pray. Is anyone happy? Let them sing songs of praise. 14 Is anyone among you sick? Let them call the elders of the church to pray over them and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord. 15 And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise them up. If they have sinned, they will be forgiven. 16 Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed.

PRACTICE



Healing the Blind
(Duccio, 13th century)

1 Corinthians 12:28-31. God has placed in the church first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, of helping, of guidance, and of different kinds of tongues. 29 Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? 30 Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? 31 Now eagerly desire the greater gifts.



Rome's poverty roll

Paul's 10-yr collection

Cirta storehouse

Jerusalem

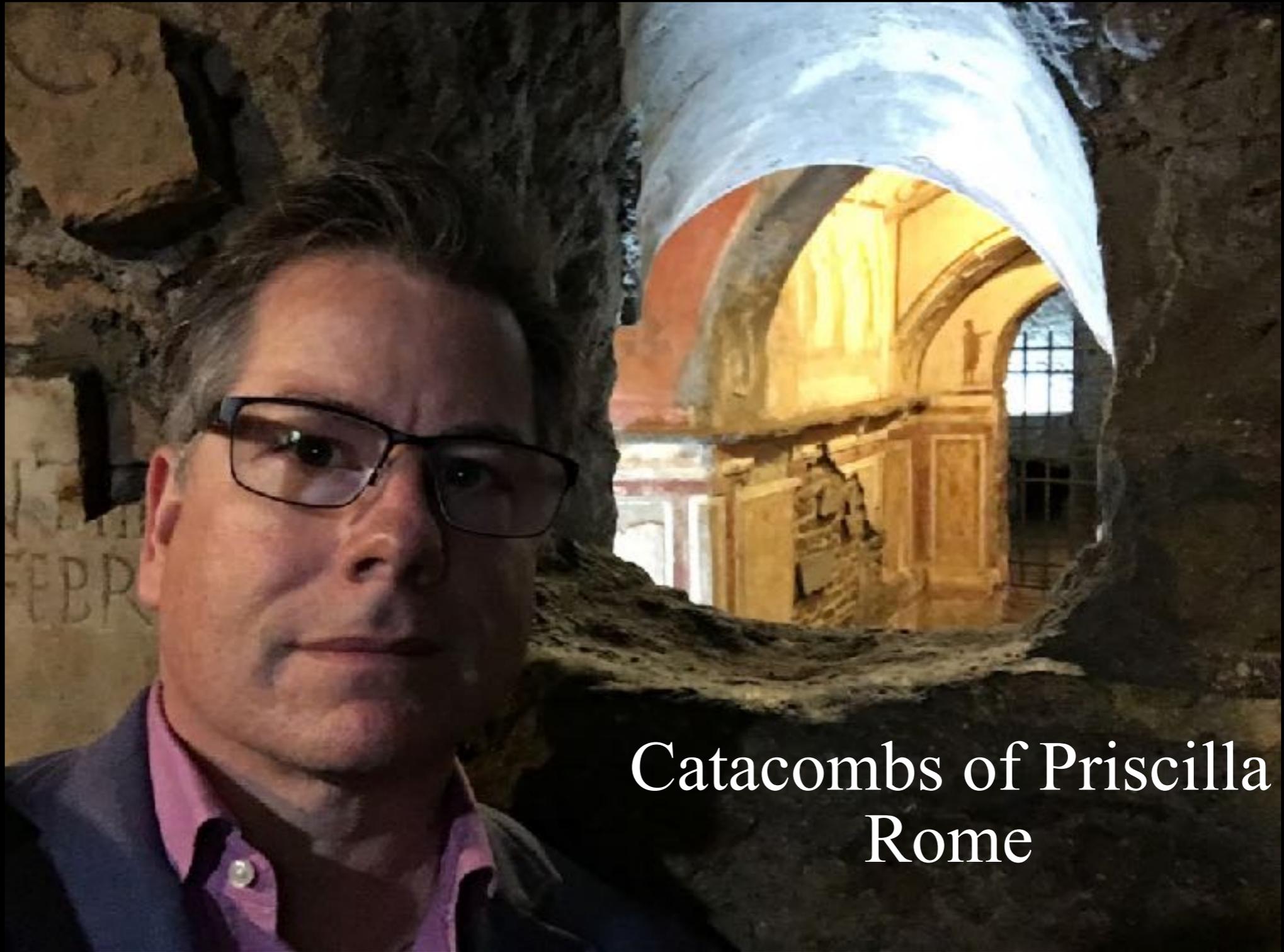
ROMAN EMPIRE

Why do we not observe that it is the Christians' benevolence to strangers, and their care for the graves of the dead, that have done most to increase this atheism? For it is disgraceful that the impious Galileans support not only their own poor but ours as well, all men see that our people lack aid from us.

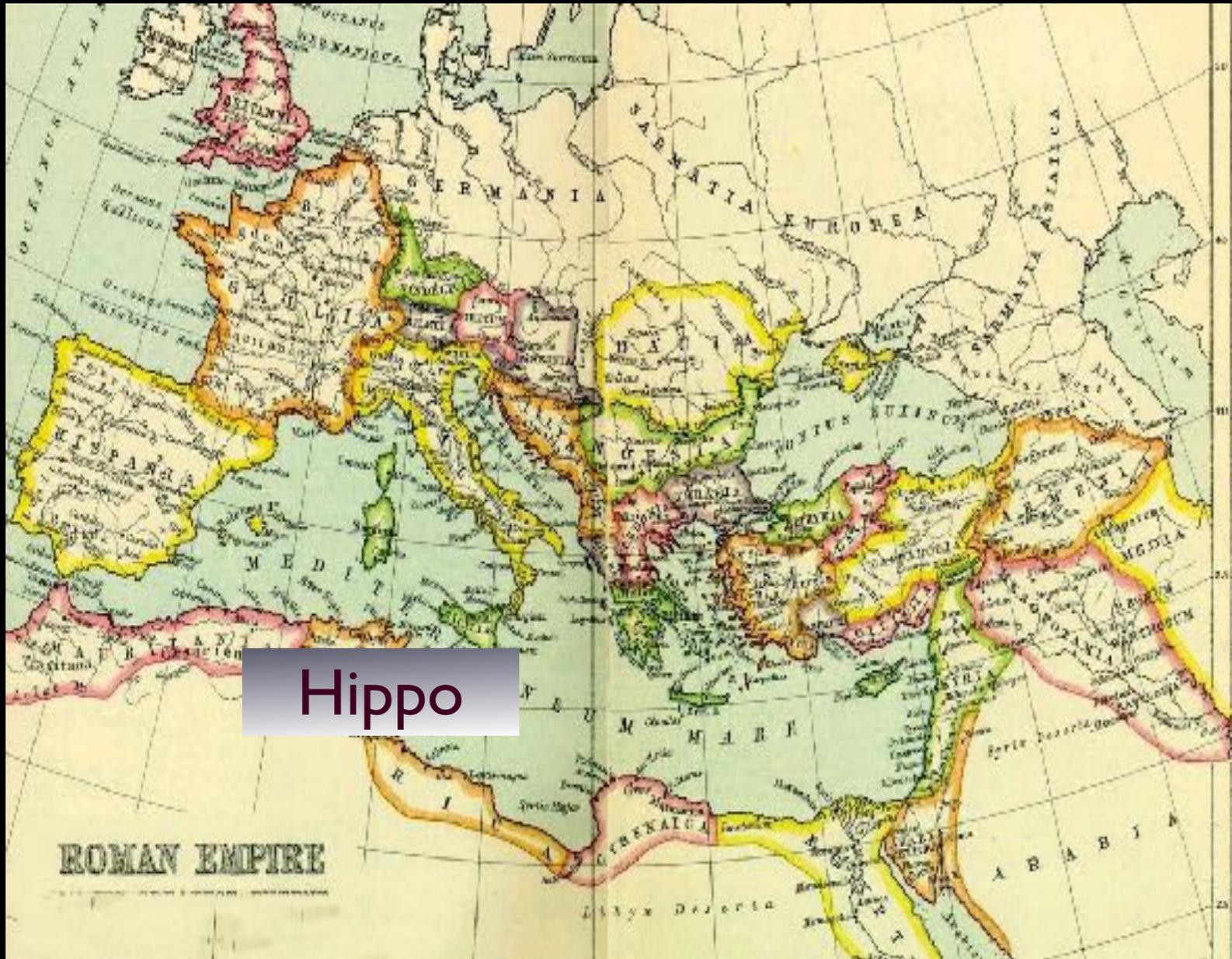
(Letter 22, To Arcadius, High-priest of Galatia)



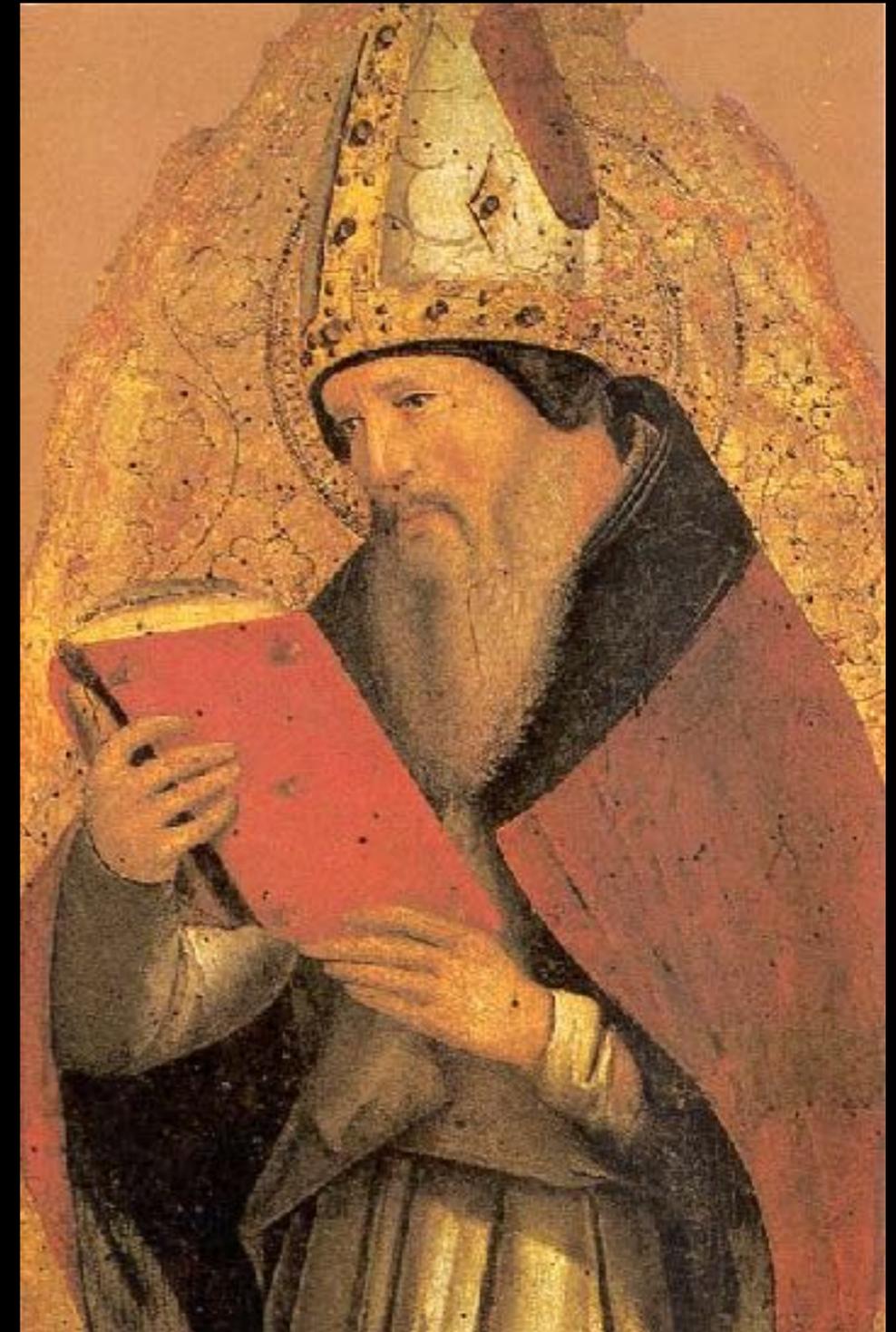
Emperor Julian
(AD 331-363)



Catacombs of Priscilla
Rome



Hippo



Augustine *To Alypius*, Epistle 10, AD 428

PRACTICE



Healing the Blind
(Duccio, 13th century)

PRACTICE



Fabiola of Rome
(died AD 399)

PRACTICE

“Fabiola broke up and sold all that she could lay hands on of her property and, when she had turned it into money, she disposed of everything for the benefit of the poor. First of all she founded an infirmary and gathered into it sufferers from the streets, giving a nurse’s care to poor bodies worn with sickness and hunger—maimed noses, lost eyes, scorched feet, leprous arms, swollen bellies. How often she carried on her own shoulders poor filthy wretches tortured by epilepsy!”



Fabiola of Rome
(died AD 399)

PRACTICE

“How often did she wash away the purulent matter from wounds which others could not even endure to look at! She gave food with her own hand, and even when a man was but a breathing corpse, she would moisten his lips with drops of water. And Rome was not large enough for her kindness. She went from island to island, and travelled round the Etruscan Sea, bestowing her bounty.”

(‘On Fabiola’, Jerome’s Letters, no.77, AD 399)



Fabiola of Rome
(died AD 399)

PRACTICE



Healing the Blind
(Duccio, 13th century)



Serampore, West Bengal, India + -

