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0521580064 - The Zion Traditions and the Aims of Jesus  
Kim Huat Tan  
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## PART I

### **The background**

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## 1

## INTRODUCTION

Research on the historical Jesus is once again prominent in biblical scholarship. The recent output of major works<sup>1</sup> on this subject testifies to a new phase in an old study and terms like ‘The Renaissance in Jesus Research’<sup>2</sup> or ‘The Third Quest’<sup>3</sup> have been introduced to describe this phenomenon. Thus, the impasse in historical Jesus research, to which Drury refers,<sup>4</sup> is now regarded as *passé*. This is to be welcomed in that Jesus as a historical figure is a proper object of historical research.<sup>5</sup> The impact on the world of a movement which names him as founder makes such research urgent and relevant.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> G. Vermes, *Jesus the Jew*; B. F. Meyer, *The Aims of Jesus*; J. Riches, *Jesus and the Transformation of Judaism*; A. E. Harvey, *Jesus and the Constraints of History*; E. Bammel and C. F. D. Moule (eds.), *Jesus and the Politics of His Day*; M. J. Borg, *Conflict, Holiness and Politics in the Teachings of Jesus*; G. W. Buchanan, *Jesus: The King and His Kingdom*; E. P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*; and recently his *The Historical Figure of Jesus*; D. E. Oakman, *Jesus and the Economic Questions of His Day*; R. A. Horsley, *Jesus and the Spiral of Violence*; G. Theissen, *The Shadow of the Galilean*; I. M. Zeitlin, *Jesus and the Judaism of His Time*; J. Gnilka, *Jesus von Nazaret*; B. Witherington III, *The Christology of Jesus*; J. D. Crossan, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant*; M. de Jonge, *Jesus, the Servant-Messiah*; J. P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*; M. N. Bockmuehl, *This Jesus: Martyr, Lord, Messiah*; B. D. Chilton and C. A. Evans (eds.), *Studying the Historical Jesus: Evaluations of the State of Current Research*.

<sup>2</sup> This term is used by M. J. Borg, ‘Portraits of Jesus in Contemporary North American Scholarship’, *HTR* 84:1 (1991), 1–22.

<sup>3</sup> This phrase was coined by Wright in S. Neill and N. T. Wright, *The Interpretation of the New Testament 1861–1986*, p. 379.

<sup>4</sup> J. Drury, *The Parables in the Gospels*, p. 3.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. the comments of J. I. H. MacDonald, ‘New Quest – Dead End? So What about the Historical Jesus?’, in E. A. Livingstone (ed.), *Studia Biblica 1978 II. Papers on the Gospels*, p. 168.

<sup>6</sup> Significantly, an elaborate seminar called ‘The Jesus Seminar’ was started in the USA in 1985 (headed by R. W. Funk) in order to enhance co-operative research and to disseminate the results obtained by the Seminar to a wider public. See R. W. Funk, ‘A Forum for Informed Discussion’, *Forum* 1 (1985), 2–3.

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Two main features stand out in this new phase of Jesus research. The first concerns the Jewishness of Jesus.<sup>7</sup> Recent books on the historical Jesus take seriously this characteristic of Jesus and attempt to understand him (his intentions and message) within the limits of first-century Judaism.<sup>8</sup> The second concerns the intentions of Jesus.<sup>9</sup> The focus on these by recent works<sup>10</sup> represents a shift from the preoccupation with the *kerygma* of Jesus (or the post-Easter community) characteristic of the infant period of the New Quest whose inauguration is usually attributed to Käsemann's lecture, 'Das Problem des historischen Jesu'.<sup>11</sup> It also represents a shift from scepticism to optimism regarding the possibility of recovering what Jesus intended in his ministry. That this is a step in the right direction is well argued by Meyer: 'History is reconstruction through hypothesis and verification. Its topic is aims and consequences, for history involves first of all, the grasp of aims in relation to the dynamics of time. . .'<sup>12</sup> These two features are to be welcomed.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>7</sup> See the observations of D. J. Harrington, 'The Jewishness of Jesus: Facing Some Problems', *CBQ* 49 (1987), 3. Harrington tries to account for the interest in this particular aspect on pp. 1–2. This aspect has become even more prominent since the completion of our original research. Controversies over the possible connection between Jesus of Nazareth and the Qumran community were stirred up over the erstwhile unpublished fragments of the Qumran scrolls. Popular books were written to capitalise on this and they exaggerated the significance of these unpublished fragments. Through these books, public awareness of the identity and aims of Jesus of Nazareth has become greatly aroused. This subject need not detain us here. A good assessment of the impact of these fragments on Jesus research can be found in C. A. Evans, 'The Recently Published Dead Sea Scrolls and the Historical Jesus', in Chilton and Evans (eds.), *Studying*, pp. 547–65. There appears to be a counterpoint to the general trend of understanding Jesus according to his Jewish environment, and this approach emphasises the Graeco-Roman background instead and regards Jesus as a cynic teacher. It is predominantly a North American phenomenon represented mainly by the Claremont Graduate School, California and the Jesus Seminar in the USA. A British representative of this viewpoint is F. G. Downing, *Christ and the Cynics: Jesus and Other Radical Preachers in First-Century Tradition*.

<sup>8</sup> Most of the works cited in the first note take seriously this aspect.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Neill and Wright, *Interpretation*, pp. 398–9.

<sup>10</sup> See especially Meyer, *Aims*. But cf. also Sanders, *Jesus*; Borg, *Conflict*; Oakman, *Jesus*; Horsley, *Spiral*, where what Jesus was attempting to achieve in the context of his Jewish background receives the main focus.

<sup>11</sup> *ZTK* 51 (1954), 125–53 (ET: 'The Problem of the Historical Jesus', in E. Käsemann, *Essays on New Testament Themes*, pp. 15–47).

<sup>12</sup> *Aims*, p. 19.

<sup>13</sup> It should also be mentioned that the political and social contexts of Jesus' ministry are important features in many works cited in the first note. However, these two contexts can be subsumed under the two features we have highlighted.

The present book follows in the same vein and focuses on these two features. We hope to make a contribution to a better understanding of the aims of the historical Jesus by bringing to light certain important questions which have been left unanswered so far.

## 1 The questions posed

### The first question

To ascertain the overall aims of Jesus by taking into account the whole sweep of his life and ministry would be a task too wide-ranging for the compass of this book. The focus has to be narrowed and the attendant problem is how to avoid any misrepresentations caused by the necessity of a narrower focus. Working on the assumption that it is reasonable to suppose that Jesus' aims during his last days in Jerusalem were in continuity with his aims in his ministry prior to that fateful journey (if not its crowning explanation),<sup>14</sup> we propose to study the former set of aims.

Schweitzer wrote that 'one might use . . . as a principle of division . . . to clarify the lives of Jesus, whether they make him go to Jerusalem to work or to die'.<sup>15</sup> Hence, according to Schweitzer, how a scholar is to portray Jesus depends very much on his or her understanding of why Jesus made that final trip to Jerusalem. The first question posed in our study, then, is 'What intentions did Jesus have when he made that final trip to Jerusalem?' It may be that he had no intentions whatsoever and that he was simply overtaken by events. But whether or not this is the case has to be investigated. If he had intentions, the results of such an enquiry would be significant for Jesus research. In this connection, the significant *actions* of Jesus during this period would be of importance in the ascertaining of these intentions.<sup>16</sup> A detailed study which searches for an explanatory hypothesis of Jesus' intentions in Jerusalem<sup>17</sup> by

<sup>14</sup> In a semi-popular work, G. N. Stanton observes that the key to the story of Jesus' ministry and intentions is the ending in his *The Gospels and Jesus*, p. 274.

<sup>15</sup> A. Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, p. 389 n. 1.

<sup>16</sup> This should not be taken to mean that the sayings are of no importance. See discussion in next section.

<sup>17</sup> Hereafter, the phrase 'Jesus' intentions in Jerusalem' (and other similar phrases) will be a shorthand way of referring to his intentions during his last days in Jerusalem. It does not presuppose that Jesus made only one trip to Jerusalem.

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taking into account the significant actions performed in that city has yet to be carried out. Nor has there been a quest for a unifying hypothesis to explain these actions. This study will attempt to address these matters.

## The second question

The mention of the word 'Jerusalem' recalls the rich stream of traditions which developed in the first and second temple periods (perhaps even before that), often called, in OT scholarship, 'the Zion traditions'.<sup>18</sup> These traditions have ingrained in the minds of the Jews of Jesus' day the concept that Jerusalem is the city which God has promised to dwell in and save. Hence, in the political and religious ferment of first-century Palestine, Jerusalem (regarded as both a political and religious centre of Israel) inevitably became involved and implicated.<sup>19</sup> What then is the relationship between Jesus' conception of his own ministry and these important traditions (the importance of which we hope to demonstrate in chapter 2)? Did the latter influence the former? This important question has yet to be explored even with the resurgence of interest in the Jewishness of Jesus. Hence the second question posed is 'Did Jesus appropriate the Zion traditions for his ministry?'

The two questions posed are related, for it is legitimate to ask whether or not the intentions of Jesus (and his significant actions) in Jerusalem were informed by the Zion traditions. The conjoining of these two questions implies our prior commitment to test their relatedness. And this relatedness forms the hypothesis which we hope to verify in the course of our study.

during his public ministry, nor does it suppose that the pericopae of the passion narrative in the Synoptic gospels are chronologically arranged or accurate.

<sup>18</sup> We shall give a proper definition of what we understand by the term 'Zion traditions' in chapter 2. But for an example of how certain OT scholars define the Zion traditions see J. J. M. Roberts, 'Zion in the Theology of the Davidic-Solomonic Empire', in T. Ishida (ed.), *Studies in the Period of David and Solomon and Other Essays*, p. 94. For a recent and succinct exposition of these traditions see J. D. Levenson, 'Zion Traditions', *ABD* VI, pp. 1098–102.

<sup>19</sup> J. Jeremias mentions that Jerusalem was bound to be the objective of every messianic movement in his *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*, p. 73. See also G. Theissen, *Social Reality and the Early Christians: Theology, Ethics and the World of the New Testament*, pp. 96–7 for a similar viewpoint.

## 2 Method

### Overview of approach taken

Our study will use a broadly based approach. We shall first show the importance of the Zion traditions to the Jews of the first century in the remainder of Part I of the book. The next two major parts (II and III) will be devoted to a study of Jesus' sayings which may shed light on his intentions in Jerusalem and his attitude towards the Zion traditions, and his actions in Jerusalem respectively.

One should not reconstruct the intentions of Jesus purely out of the sayings tradition. It has been pointed out by Sanders that the methodological uncertainty over ascertaining the authenticity of the sayings of Jesus makes them too shaky a foundation on which to build.<sup>20</sup> Hence, there is a need to broaden our study by an investigation into the actions of Jesus. But it has also been observed that investigating the meaning of actions without recourse to sayings may lead to fanciful speculations as actions by themselves are often not transparent.<sup>21</sup> However, it is admitted that, in principle, the authenticity of an action may be easier to ascertain<sup>22</sup> than is that of a saying. None the less, both actions and sayings are to be given due weight in order that our reconstruction of the aims of Jesus be founded relatively securely.

One insight derived from form criticism is that the pericopae of the gospels may not have been arranged in chronological order and that even their narrative and chronological frameworks may have been the creation of the evangelists.<sup>23</sup> In order to circumvent this problem, we propose to investigate the sayings relevant to our study without any attempt to situate them chronologically or geographically. Given the constraint on space, we shall focus on

<sup>20</sup> Sanders, *Jesus*, p. 4.

<sup>21</sup> As has been observed by J. Riches in his critique of Sanders' *Jesus* in 'Works and Words of Jesus the Jew', *HeyJ* 27 (1986), 53.

<sup>22</sup> To Sanders, the actions are 'facts'. See his *Jesus*, p. 5.

<sup>23</sup> So K. L. Schmidt, *Der Rahmen der Geschichte Jesu*, p. v. For good critiques of the weaknesses of form criticism, see the essays by G. N. Stanton, 'Form Criticism Revisited', in M. D. Hooker and C. J. A. Hickling (eds.), *What About the New Testament? Essays in Honour of C. F. Evans*, pp. 13–27; P. Stuhlmacher, 'Zum Thema: Das Evangelium und die Evangelien', pp. 2–12; and E. E. Ellis, 'Gospels Criticism: A Perspective on the State of the Art'. These last two essays are found in P. Stuhlmacher (ed.), *Das Evangelium und die Evangelien*.

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only a few key sayings and not attempt to analyse every saying which might be relevant. We hope to draw these sayings from diverse streams of tradition (Mark, Q, L and M). As for the actions, they could be much more easily situated chronologically and geographically by virtue of their very nature.

The approach adopted for Part III of our study is relatively straightforward. We shall try to show that the actions selected for investigation (the 'triumphal' entry, the incident in the temple and the last supper) did occur during the final days of Jesus in Jerusalem<sup>24</sup> and were performed in chronological proximity to one another. Whenever a saying is purportedly attached to a certain action (according to the data offered by the evangelists' accounts), we shall ascertain whether the two were originally joined.

Two other methodological points ought to be noted here. First, we shall refrain from using as evidence any saying or pericope from the gospel of John that does not have a parallel in the Synoptic gospels. This, however, is not meant to prejudge the question of the historicity of John's peculiar material. Rather, this is done because of space limitation and the prevalent scholarly doubt over this question.<sup>25</sup> Nevertheless, any Johannine parallel to a saying or pericope found in the Synoptic gospels will be considered.

Second, this study presupposes the viability of the two-document hypothesis as an explanation of Synoptic relationships. We are aware of the resurgence of scholarly support for the Griesbach hypothesis but, in our opinion, such a hypothesis creates more problems than it solves. We are also aware that the two-document hypothesis has its own problems but we concur with scholars who view this hypothesis as the simplest and least problematic explanation of Synoptic relationships.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>24</sup> It is of course obvious that if the actions selected were authentic, they must have occurred in Jerusalem.

<sup>25</sup> Classically set forth by D. F. Strauss, *The Life of Jesus Critically Examined*, p. 649 and *passim*. See also the commentaries by R. Bultmann, *The Gospel of John*; B. Lindars, *The Gospel of John*; and C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St John*, especially pp. 141–2. But cf. recently the cautiously positive assessment of D. Moody Smith in his 'Historical Issues and the Problem of John and the Synoptics', in M. de Boer (ed.), *From Jesus to John: Essays on Jesus and New Testament Christology in Honour of Marinus de Jonge*, pp. 252–67.

<sup>26</sup> For a good defence of this hypothesis, see G. M. Styler, 'The Priority of Mark', in C. F. D. Moule, *The Birth of the New Testament*, pp. 285–316; C. M. Tuckett, *The Revival of the Griesbach Hypothesis*; R. H. Stein, *The Synoptic Problem: An Introduction*. See also the collection of essays in C. M. Tuckett (ed.), *Synoptic Studies. The Ampleforth Conferences of 1982 and 1983*.

## Criteria of authenticity

Intrinsic to research on the historical Jesus is the important matter of establishing criteria for ascertaining whether or not a certain saying or action is authentic. Recently, great interest has been generated on this particular matter as can be seen from the numerous articles which have been published.<sup>27</sup> Hence, a brief word about our stance towards these criteria is necessary before the study proper begins.

In the past, great importance has been assigned to the criterion of double dissimilarity as the key tool to be used.<sup>28</sup> With this criterion, critical scholars isolate a pool of authentic traditions of Jesus on which to work and use them as a basis for ascertaining other traditions which may be authentic (the criterion of coherence).<sup>29</sup> Any tradition which does not pass the test of this criterion is judged inauthentic. The results obtained by the use of this criterion are often considered more assured than those obtained from other criteria formulated (e.g., the criterion of multiple attestation).<sup>30</sup>

It is becoming increasingly recognised that the negative use of this criterion (i.e., any material which does not pass the test of this criterion is judged inauthentic) is untenable. The primary weaknesses of this criterion which have been pointed out by scholars are

<sup>27</sup> R. Riesner, *Jesus als Lehrer*, pp. 86–96; R. H. Stein, 'The Criteria for Authenticity', in *Gospel Perspectives I*, pp. 225–63; S. C. Goetz and C. L. Blomberg, 'The Burden of Proof', *JSNT* 11 (1981), 39–63; M. E. Boring, 'Criteria of Authenticity: The Lucan Beatitudes as a Test Case', *Forum* 1,4 (1985), 3–38; D. Polkow, 'Method and Criteria for Historical Jesus Research', in D. J. Lull (ed.), *SBL 1987 Seminar Papers*, pp. 336–56; and Meier, *Marginal Jew*, pp. 167–84.

<sup>28</sup> So Käsemann, 'Problem', p. 37; J. M. Robinson, *A New Quest of the Historical Jesus*, pp. 116–19; R. H. Fuller, *The Foundations of New Testament Christology*, p. 18; N. Perrin, *Rediscovering the Teaching of Jesus*, p. 89 and his *What is Redaction Criticism?*, p. 71; D. L. Mealand, 'The Dissimilarity Test', *SJT* 31 (1978), 41–50. It was probably Bultmann who pioneered this criterion, see his *The History of the Synoptic Tradition*, p. 205.

<sup>29</sup> So Perrin, *Redaction Criticism*, p. 71. Polkow observes that 'it [the criterion of double dissimilarity] is the real basis for the entire "new quest" of the historical Jesus' in his 'Method and Criteria', p. 347.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. the statement of Käsemann: 'In only *one* case do we have more or less safe ground under our feet [in the search for authentic Jesus traditions]; when there are no grounds either for deriving a tradition from Judaism or for ascribing it to primitive Christianity' in 'Problem', p. 37. Emphasis mine. Such an outlook is also echoed in Perrin, *Rediscovering*, pp. 39–43 and R. H. Fuller, 'The Criterion of Dissimilarity: The Wrong Tool?', in R. F. Berkey and S. A. Edwards, *Christological Perspectives*, p. 48.



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the following. (1) By its very nature, it goes in search of a peculiar Jesus and not a characteristic one.<sup>31</sup> What may be characteristic of Jesus is not necessarily unique. And by focusing only on the unique aspects, a skewed picture of Jesus is obtained. (2) It presupposes that Jesus must be divorced from his Jewish environment.<sup>32</sup> (3) It assumes that Jesus made no influence on the post-Easter community whatsoever.<sup>33</sup> The assumptions of (2) and (3), if correct, make Jesus a man without parallel in history since he neither depended on his predecessors nor influenced his followers at any point.<sup>34</sup> (4) For this criterion to be viable, complete knowledge on our part of first-century Judaism and the theology of the early church is required.<sup>35</sup> But such knowledge is not available to us.

As a result of these criticisms, we propose that this criterion should not be the key tool and that it should be used positively and not negatively.<sup>36</sup> In other words, any material from the Jesus tradition which does not meet the requirements of this criterion should not be judged categorically as inauthentic. Instead, other criteria (and considerations) should be brought into service to ascertain the possibility of its authenticity. And if any material passes the test of this criterion, it will be judged authentic (the positive use).

Hence, we are not committed to any particular criterion but shall use all of them as appropriate and recognise, at the same time, their limitations. The particular material under consideration will prompt the tool. In our arguments for the authenticity of the sayings and actions we shall choose later, the procedure will be as follows: we shall attempt to show how past arguments against their authenticity are mistaken<sup>37</sup> and provide arguments to show why we

<sup>31</sup> So M. D. Hooker, 'On Using the Wrong Tool', *Theology* 75 (1972), 574.

<sup>32</sup> This assumption is rejected in principle by most works cited in note 1.

<sup>33</sup> Meyer observes that 'if authentic materials contrary to church tendencies were conserved, authentic materials in accord with church tendencies were *a fortiori* conserved' in *Aims*, p. 83. This observation sounds the death-knell for this assumption.

<sup>34</sup> So Goetz and Blomberg, 'Burden of Proof', 43.

<sup>35</sup> So Hooker, 'Tool', 575.

<sup>36</sup> Even as a positive tool it has an inherent weakness. This is implied in criticism (4). In other words, the results obtained through the positive use of this criterion are always in danger of being overturned by future research into first-century Judaism as it may demonstrate that what was once understood as unique of Jesus is attested elsewhere.

<sup>37</sup> S. Westerholm has made the interesting proposal that criteria for inauthenticity should also be formulated. His attempts at such a formulation can be found in his *Jesus and Scribal Authority*, pp. 8–10.

consider the contrary to be correct.<sup>38</sup> As the question of authenticity is a very important issue in historical Jesus research, much attention will be devoted to it in our study.

Obviously, the prior task of isolating the most primitive materials through source, form and redactional criticism will also be performed.

### 3 Review of research

In the history of scholarship on the historical Jesus, different answers have been given to the first question posed<sup>39</sup> but often only in a brief manner. A connection between the three significant actions of Jesus in Jerusalem (the 'triumphal' entry; the incident in the temple; and the last supper) has only rarely been sought. The second question posed<sup>40</sup> is largely ignored. It is the concern of this section, then, to give a brief survey of such scholarship. Basically, there are three lines of interpretation of the intentions of Jesus in Jerusalem: (1) Jesus intended to stage a coup in Jerusalem (the *putsch* theory); (2) Jesus intended to bring about his death; (3) Jesus intended to challenge the city with his message (Jesus might have *expected* death but he did not *intend* to die).

#### The Reimarus–Brandon line: the *putsch* theory

Why Jesus went to Jerusalem was a question of paramount importance to H. Reimarus, who is often regarded as the initiator of the 'Old Quest'.<sup>41</sup> According to him it was Jesus' intention to establish in the immediate future an earthly kingdom with himself as king. Hence, Jesus went to Jerusalem in order to stage a coup. He made a grand entry into Jerusalem near Passover, amid the acclamation of the crowds. The entry was deliberately timed to get maximum exposure, as Passover was a pilgrimage festival. Jesus

<sup>38</sup> Scholars have often debated the issue of where the burden of proof ought to lie. Should it be on the person who claims authenticity or the one claiming inauthenticity? Or perhaps it should be on anyone who wants to make his case (whether for authenticity or inauthenticity). On this important issue, see Goetz and Blomberg, 'Burden of Proof', 39–63. For our study we align ourselves with the third view although we judge that the second view has most merits.

<sup>39</sup> That is, 'What intentions did Jesus have when he made that final trip to Jerusalem?'

<sup>40</sup> That is, 'Did Jesus appropriate the Zion traditions for his ministry?'

<sup>41</sup> See C. H. Talbert (ed.), *Reimarus: Fragments*.