

Dr. Robert C. Newman, Synoptic Gospels, Lecture 1, Historical Jesus Survey

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Good morning. This is a recording of my Synoptic Gospels course, taught a number of times at Biblical Theological Seminary in the suburbs of Philadelphia. Lord willing, we're going to try to cover about 12 big topics here.

We're going to start with the historical Jesus, look a little bit at theological views of Jesus, and then allegedly historical views of Jesus, looking at some of the pictures of Jesus suggested by deism, rationalism, idealism, romanticism, and skepticism. Then we're going to take a little look at the present situation regarding Jesus, some popular books that have come out in the last generation, and then probably a short look at the Jesus Seminar, come back and make a summary on the liberal lives of Jesus, and such. That's our big first topic out of about 12.

Then we're going to take some time to look at the intertestamental period, and then the rule of the Persians, and the Greeks, and the Hasmoneans, and the Romans, think a little bit about messianic expectation at the time of Jesus, and then go beyond the ministry of Jesus to look at the end of the Jewish state, and then what happened after the fall of Jerusalem. Then we're going to do one of our three, I believe it is, looks at exegesis, introduction to exegesis, think a little bit about how we interpret narratives in the Gospels, and look at Matthew 2 at the visit of the wise men. Then, we will come back to what I think of as our background type work and look at the information we have on the authorship and date of the synoptic Gospels.

Then we're going to look at another passage; we're going to look at how to interpret parables and look at the Jesus parable of the marriage banquet in Matthew chapter 22. Then, in our sixth topic, if you like, we'll be looking at the Gospels as literary works. Then, seventh, we'll look at the synoptic problem.

Then, the geography of Palestine, both the land as a whole and Jerusalem, is pretty similar for Palestine over the whole period; obviously, Jerusalem is somewhat different. We'll look at some political features as well. Then, we look at four biblical accounts here.

We'll look at how to interpret miracle accounts and look at the incident with the demons and the pigs in Mark 5, verses 1 through 20. Then, we want to think a little bit about the biblical theology of the synoptics, looking especially at what Jesus has to say about the kingdom. Then, as our fourth passage, we want to look at how to interpret controversial accounts and look at the incident in Luke 11 where Jesus is accused of being, what should we say, empowered by Beelzebub.

And finally, we want to close our discussion by looking at form criticism and redaction criticism. So that's our scheme if you like. Lord willing, we will want to try to carry that out.

So, let's jump in here and have a look at the first topic, which we call the historical Jesus. Now, unless you've lived a very sheltered life, you're aware that people have enormously diverse views about Jesus. Some of these are motivated by their religion or worldview, and others claim to be honestly grappling with historical data.

Well, we're going to give a quick view of some influential modern views. We're going to start out with basically religious views and biblical data, and for this, you really have to read it and study it yourself, and anybody can do that. It'll take some time, but the biblical data points to Jesus, who is somehow fully God and fully human, and we're not going into a discussion of that.

That's a theology. Some stuff will come up, obviously, in our discussion of the synoptic gospels. The other religious alternatives could be divided into two big categories.

One of them is that Jesus is only human, not God in any real sense, and the other is that Jesus is divine in some sense, but not in the biblical sense of being, you know, one person of the triune God and fully God and fully man. So, a very quick view of the first of these. Jesus was only human, not God in any real sense.

We start with a remark or two about atheism. Obviously, in atheism, the view is there's no God, so Jesus can't very well be God in any sense then, and so Jesus was at best only human, and many atheists have, in fact, claimed that Jesus was fictional, that he never existed at all. In fact, this idea of the fictional Jesus was at one time the standard communist view.

I don't know where they stand now on that question. A second view of a rather different sort, but still under only humans, not God in any real sense, is that of Islam. In Islam, Islam does believe in God, though it's strictly monotheistic, not Trinitarian.

They believe that Jesus was a true prophet, that he was actually born of a virgin, which they don't claim for any of the other prophets, and that he worked miracles, which they don't claim even for Muhammad. Well, they. The Quran doesn't claim for Muhammad.

Some of the Hadith do, and they claim that Jesus will one day return to reign as Messiah, but he's not God. As I said, Allah is strictly one, and he has no son, and they also claim, there's perhaps some dispute on this, but this is a general reading of the Quran, that Jesus did not die on the cross, but rather he was snatched to heaven, and a substitute was put in his place. So, that's a quick tour of Islam.

A lot more could be said on any of these. Move to two of them that have grown more directly out of Christianity, and the first of these is what I call old liberalism. This is the form of liberal liberalism rising out of Christendom back in the, probably already starting in the early 1700s, but gaining some steam by the late 1700s and then running through the 1800s and even through the 20th century.

Basically, old liberalism believes that the Gospels contain a great deal of legendary material because miracles don't happen. Well, it's pretty straightforward that if miracles don't happen, since the Gospels have lots of miracles, they can't be very reliable. So, their claim is that God does exist, okay? God only worked providentially through Jesus, but somehow people misunderstood him, and he was deified by the early Gentile Christians.

He was some sort of ethical teacher, as perhaps the commonest view in old liberalism, and that he had more of God in him than others did. I believe it was Harry Emerson Fosdick who said that Jesus was divine, but so was my mother, something of that sort. So, Jesus died on the cross as an example, but his resurrection is only a spiritual resurrection.

Even Karl Barth was once asked by Carl Henry, I believe if a newspaper reporter had been at the tomb on Easter morning, would he have had anything to report? And Barth would not answer that directly. Move on to the development of old liberalism, which has often been called neo-orthodoxy, and that's got a wide range of views as well. At one time, Bultmann was even thought to be a neo-orthodox, though later on, that generally was dropped.

A similar view of the Gospels to old liberalism, that is, that miracles don't happen and such, but neo-orthodoxy feels that the Jesus of history is not nearly as important as the Christ of faith, so you tend to get this sort of two-level kind of approach to things, and Christians should be interested in Christ of faith rather than the Jesus of history. This seems to be an attempt to rescue, if you like, religious values while accepting the so-called scientific history in which miracles do not occur. So that's a very whirlwind view of four different approaches to the idea that Jesus is only human but not God in any real sense.

A second sort of category is that Jesus is divine in some sense, but not in the biblical sense. And here we look first of all at Jehovah's Witnesses. The Jehovah's Witnesses believe in God who works miracles, etc., though God is rather more like the God of Islam in the sense that he's strictly one.

So, Jesus is a small g-god, if you like. In one of the suggestions, and I don't know if this is the official one at present, Jesus is some sort of reincarnation, we might say, they don't use that term, of the archangel Michael, that Michael was taken out of

existence but his life force was put in Jesus then as he is created if you like. And that by this archangel Michael, that's the way in which Jehovah God had created all things.

He was God's agent in creation. So, I'm trying to handle some of the biblical passages that picture Jesus as God's agent in creation. So, Jesus, in Jehovah's Witness's view, is not the almighty God, and he's not to be worshipped.

He was born of a virgin, he worked miracles, and he died on the cross; for some reason, they have his body dissolving in the tomb, but he's one day going to return to set up an earthly kingdom for his faithful witnesses, Jehovah's Witnesses, a version of Jesus is divine in some sense but not in the biblical sense. Mormonism. I'll try and avoid getting carried away on Mormonism here, which I've done a fair bit of work on their historical background, but the Book of Mormon is fairly orthodox, more or less Trinitarian, in its view of Jesus.

Jesus is viewed as virgin-born, the Messiah, the miracle worker who rose from the dead. But they have some later scriptures. They have the work called the Pearl of Great Price and another work called the Doctrines and Covenants, and according to these later scriptures, the teaching of Mormonism is that humans can become gods as Jesus did, and like the Father did, that the Father was once a man.

Jesus was merely a man at the time he was on earth, though he was unusual in that he was the firstborn spiritual son of his father and his spiritual mother in heaven. He was sent from heaven when Mary conceived, and since his ascension, he has become a god. His death, however, only saves us from original sin, and we have to do most of the rest of the work to be satisfactory to God and to enter into the highest level of heaven.

I list a third category here under Jesus with God in some sense but not in the biblical sense: the New Age movement. The New Age movement is a very diverse group of views that are characterized, if you like, by a mixture of Western attitudes towards personality and that sort of thing, with elements that come from Hinduism and Buddhism, typically reincarnation. Generally, Jesus is viewed as one of the great, but usually, not the greatest, of what they call the ascended masters, ones who have, through their spiritual effort and enlightenment, risen far above the level of most humans.

You, too, in the New Age movement, can become a god through one or more techniques that differ from guru to guru. The term Christ in the New Age movement is typically used for a level of spiritual enlightenment and was not an office held uniquely by Jesus. I have a little PowerPoint on our IBRI website called Jesus in New Age, which sketches the views of Jesus by two of the New Age teachers, Edgar Cayce and Benjamin Crimm.

So, that's a kind of quick tour of what we might call various religious views. That does not cover the whole spectrum but does give you an idea of the diversity that exists there. We want to think next about what we might call allegedly historical views.

In the past 200 years, there have been numerous attempts to produce the real historical Jesus, who's allegedly quite different than the person pictured in the Gospels. These attempts regularly assume that miracles do not occur. They wouldn't have to do that, but that's a characteristic of this whole run because they've been disproved by science in some way so that the Gospels, as I've mentioned before, filled as they are with miracles, cannot be reliable.

Proponents of such views accept some of the Gospel material and reject the rest, and they differ on which they accept and which they reject, though they agree in rejecting miracles. We're going to give some examples here that are characteristic of various philosophical movements over the past 200 years, since before 1800. Albert Schweitzer, in his book written just after 1900 called *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, discusses over 100 such liberal biographies of Christ, if you like.

I remember when I first read this a long time ago that when you read the first chapter, too, it's kind of scary. You say, wow, what if Jesus were really like this? But after you've read 50 or 75 of them, you'd say, these guys are all shooting in the dark. They have thrown out something that is crucial to Christianity, and then they're basically floundering around after that, in spite of the fact that these people are intelligent, and many of them very considerable scholars.

Well, we're going to have a look, and we'll classify each one of these sort of tentatively under a philosophical view, though the guys who are doing this are not philosophers, but they basically held to some kind of philosophy of the sort. So we start with deism, first of all. Deism sees God as the creator, but he's sort of the creator watchmaker.

He puts together the universe, but then he doesn't mess with it after that. He's one who doesn't intervene in human affairs, just as it would be rather gauche for a watchmaker to have to keep opening the back of the watch and fiddling around with the stuff inside. So, deists think that it would be very gauche of a God who keeps doing miracles in the universe.

I guess they don't consider the possibility that the universe might not be a watch, but might be something like a guitar, or a violin, or an interactive game in which it's designed for the player, if you like, who is also the maker in this case, to intervene to do various things with this particular tool, the universe. Well, back to our topic, we want to think a little bit about Hermann Samuel Reimarus and his book, which was actually a collection of fragments. The whole book that he had prepared was never

published, but the book is called the Wufenbüdel Fragments and was published from 1774 to 1778.

It was not published until after Reimarus died, and it was published in fragments, and perhaps the whole thing would have eventually been published except for the reaction to the fragments that were published. The two that we would be interested in here are the ones that deal with Jesus. one of these fragments is called Concerning the Story of the Resurrection, and the other one is called The Aims of Jesus and His Disciples. According to Reimarus, Jesus claimed to be a Jewish-type messiah, that is, one who was going to come to rescue Israel from their political oppressors, bring them back to God, and that sort of thing.

And so, he then, Jesus thought he was this, according to Reimarus, and so he made an attempt to do this, but he made no attempt to found a new religion. He did, according to Reimarus, do some psychosomatic healings. You'll find a lot of the early liberals, at least, believe that Jesus was able to do the kind of healings, I suppose, that non-Christians think that charismatics can do or something of that sort, that they're not miraculous, but they're some kind of psychosomatic or hypnotic or something of that sort healings.

Well, Jesus tried to start a revolt against Rome, but failed, and so he was put to death as a revolutionary. However, after his death, his disciples realized he had failed, but they'd gotten out of the habit of working. As everyone who is not a pastor knows, pastors don't do anything but crank out a 30-minute sermon or 15-minute sermon once a week, and so it's a disciple, having gotten out of the habit of working, decided to start a new religion, and so they stole Jesus' body from the tomb, claimed he had risen from the dead, and claimed that he had sent them out to preach this new religion.

So, they invented a new eschatology in which the Messiah would come back a second time. Well, the publication of Reimarus' material created a sensation, destroyed his reputation, and his family discouraged any further publication of the fragments. So that was Reimarus.

However, Reimarus had an effect besides the sensation. Reimarus' work opened the way for a later liberal reconstructions which were less drastic in general. It also set a precedent for ignoring the epistles of the New Testament, epistles of Paul and Peter and John, of emphasizing Jesus' end times teaching, eschatological teaching, which Reimarus and most liberals really do not like, and of claiming that much of the material in the Gospels was the creation either of the apostles or the later church, rather than going back to Jesus.

So that's Deism and Reimarus' Wolf and Boodle fragments. We move on about 50 years to rationalism, and a rationalism is a worldview that thinks that revelation is

unnecessary because moral truth is what really counts. It's eternal, and it can be deduced by good reasoning that you don't really have to look too much around the world to see how things are. You can look inside your mind and see how things are.

The idea had been around since Greco-Roman philosophers and had been revived, if you like, even in the 1600s, but it was coming on strong now in the early 1800s. We want to look here at Heinrich Paulus. Unlike Reimarus, Heinrich Paulus wrote a work, *Leben Jesu*, Life of Jesus, and *Leben Jesu* is the German, wrote a sympathetic life of Christ.

So, he was attracted to Jesus and at least liked his version of Jesus. And so we see with Reimarus, with Paulus, what is perhaps more typical of what I mentioned is theological liberalism earlier, that is Jesus was a great moral teacher of unusual insight and ability. Most of what Paulus taught has been forgotten today.

The main impact of Paulus's work was his rationalistic treatment of miracles. Namely, he claimed the miracles really did happen, but they weren't miraculous. They were misunderstood as non-supernatural events, and the disciples or the people in the crowd thought they were miraculous.

So, Jesus really did heal people, but it was by some unknown spiritual power that worked on the nervous system—something like hypnosis or ESP or something of that sort. Jesus, according to Paulus, also used natural medicine and diet, as today's holistic healers and healthy food people do.

Jesus' nature miracles are obviously tougher to explain. Paulus suggested the following sorts of things varied from one to the other. Jesus was walking on the water.

He was really walking on the shore or walking on a sandbar. And so, when Peter steps out of the boat, he doesn't step onto the sandbar and naturally he goes in etc. So that's basically the problem there.

How about Jesus healing of the feeding the 5,000? Well, it turns out that about 2,500 of them have quite substantial lunches hidden under their cloaks. But when this little boy brings out his loaves and fishes, that shames all the other people, and they bring theirs out, and they share them, and there's plenty for everybody. What about Jesus' transfiguration? Well, you remember the disciples were about half asleep when this happened, and they're up on the top of a mountain, and the sun is rising, and it happens there on the west side of the top of the mountain.

Jesus is right on top of the mountain, and the sun is coming up behind him, so it illuminates his hair, his clothes, etc. And so, he shines like that, and these two

distinguished guys from Jerusalem, they mistake as Moses and Elijah. So that's the transfiguration.

Resurrection of Lazarus and the others. Jesus recognized they were in a coma and somehow managed to wake them up. Jesus' own resurrection was rather similar in that he did not die on a cross, according to Paulus, but he went into a coma.

The cool tomb and the aromatic spices revived him. The earthquake conveniently rolled the stone away, and Jesus appeared to his disciples for a while. But in fact, he was very badly damaged by the crucifixion, and so he later left them to die.

His final departure, he walks up the hill into the clouds and they think it's an ascension. Well, that's Paulus's rationalistic view of miracles. Paulus's work was important in spreading such liberal views into what we would call Christian circles.

So, deism had been rather distinct from Christianity. That's not to say there weren't professing Christians who were actually deists, but now you begin to get this more of a rationalistic view of things in Christian circles, and you begin to get a liberalizing version of Christianity. That is, people who claim sympathy for Jesus but still reject the miracles.

Paulus did not lose his job as presumably Ramaris would have if he'd been still alive, or lose his prestige over the book as, in fact, Ramaris did. His rationalizing approach to miracles, though fairly quickly ridiculed even by liberals, is still used by them in some cases. So occasionally, we'll see a Sunday school lesson on the feeding of the 5,000 in a liberal Sunday school book, and it will be about sharing.

Well, there's a little something about sharing there but that's surely not the major point of the actual miracle. So, deism and rationalism. Now, we turn to idealism.

Idealism is, of course, used in a very broad way in popular speech today, but in philosophical circles, it's a type of worldview. It's the idea that mind or ideas is the basic reality rather than matter. For instance, the cult we call Christian science believes that matter doesn't really exist, that it's the mind that's operating, and that, therefore, if your mind can be enlightened in the right way, that will overcome your diseases because diseases are basically illusions.

Well, we're going to look at David Friedrich Strauss and his work, also called *Leibniz, Life of Jesus*, published only in 1835, only seven years after Paulus's work. According to Strauss, the entire life of Jesus has been colored by mythological interpretation, not just his birth and resurrection, as had been suggested by some of the slightly earlier liberals. Strauss defines myth here as a timeless religious truth clothed in historical form.

So, it's things that actually didn't happen in history, but for teaching purposes, they are structured in a historical form. So, it's kind of parabolic if you like something of that sort. And Strauss claimed that this historical form was often produced by using legendary materials.

So, to Strauss, the religious ideas expressed in the life of Jesus are what is true, but the events didn't really happen. For example, the deity of Christ is not a historical truth according to Strauss but rather it is the, what should we say, the higher idea, the highest idea ever conceived by man. That is the unity of godhood and manhood.

That man and God are really the same, and the deity of Christ is used as a mythological way of expressing this. That we're all divine brings us back to Harry Emerson Fosdick and his *My Mother Was Divine*, etc. In *Leibniz*, Strauss attacks both the orthodox and the rationalistic ideas of Jesus, especially mocking Paulus's explanations of the miracles, which, of course, are not hard to mock, as you've already seen.

Yet Strauss produces few positive explanations of his own for the historical events, probably because he was not really concerned with what actually happened. He's an idealist. That's not what matters.

You see some of this already way back in Plato, who was concerned about ideas and not about events in history. Strauss' book met with a rather strong reaction in his day because it was both anti-Christian and anti-rationalistic. However, it laid the groundwork for Bultmann in the 20th century, whom we'll say a bit about further on, and the demythologizing school of Bultmann's time.

Strauss also posed three problems, which problem areas we could say have continued to dominate liberal studies of Jesus to this very day. One of these is the problem of miracle versus myth. Strauss, in liberal circles, virtually ended the liberal acceptance of miracles in the gospel account as historical.

Only the healing accounts are accepted by some liberals today who say that Jesus did some psychosomatic healing as faith healers still do. Strauss raised this whole question of the Jesus of history versus the Christ of faith. Strauss separated historical truth from religious value and he favored a Christ of faith approach.

Not all liberals have done that. Some have gone in the other direction. We want to find out what the real Jesus of history was like and have the same religion that he did or at least gain some ideas from him or something of that sort.

A third area is the distinction between the gospel John and the synoptics. Strauss established a widespread rejection of John, gospel John, by attacking its reliability more effectively than Ramirez had done earlier. So that is idealism.

Next romanticism. Romanticism is a reaction against rationalism's emphasis on reason and logic. For romanticism, emotions, and intuition give insights that you cannot obtain through reason.

Should we stop there and pick up after that quits? Okay. We're going to look here at romanticism, a reaction against rationalism's emphasis on reason and logic. For romanticism, emotions, and intuition give insights that you cannot obtain through reason.

As Ernest Renan sees it, he's the one we're going to look at, and his life is the life of Jesus, but in French, *la vie de Jésus*. As Ernest Renan sees it the gospel picture of Jesus doesn't make sense with the miraculous removed. So, he sorts the material into three different phases in Jesus' life.

He sees Jesus as an ethical teacher, a revolutionary, and then a martyr. Renan claimed that all three phases of this view, ethical teacher, revolutionary, and martyr, were historical, but they got mixed together somehow in the gospel accounts, which were mixed up chronologically, and he claims that each facet had a distinct period in Jesus' life. First of all, he says Jesus was an ethical teacher.

Jesus begins as an optimistic, pleasant, ethical teacher who learned to preach from John the Baptist. He returns to Galilee as a gentle teacher of love and attracts a devoted following of young men and women, plus a large group of charmed Galileans. He does no miracles except for some psychosomatic healings.

When he goes to Jerusalem, he finds that the rabbis will not accept them. As a result, we enter phase two. He became a revolutionary and campaigned to get rid of the rabbis. He begins doing fake miracles to attract a larger following.

Soon, Jesus realizes that his movement does not have enough popular support to beat the rabbis and that he cannot continue to stage miracles indefinitely without being discovered. So, we enter phase three and that is that he decides he's going to throw off earthly ambitions and become a martyr. Before his death he starts a religious movement so the teachings will be preserved.

He institutes the simple ceremonies of baptism and the Lord's Supper to give unity to the group and he chooses leaders he calls the and he allows himself to be caught and dies on the cross. His strategy works in fact works out better than he expected because Mary Magdalene has a hallucination that Jesus is alive. Well, that's Renan's life of Jesus.

Renan's work is important for spreading liberal reconstructions of Jesus' life to the popular educated audiences because the previous books had all been written rather

technical works and particularly spreads it into Catholicism. So, we begin to see the beginning of liberal Catholicism about this time. Renan opened the door to the idea that reliability can be judged by aesthetics.

God can't be that way because I don't like it. It isn't beautiful enough, and that idea has not gone away. His idea that the chronological framework of the Gospels is untrustworthy will be picked up later in form criticism.

We come to the last of our tour before we get to the present situation, and that is the philosophical view we call skepticism. Skeptics are doubters to a greater degree than the positions above, and they feel it's impossible to reconstruct the life of Jesus. We're going to look at Wilhelm Wrede and his work, which will stick with the English title *Messianic Secret*, published in 1901 so, just a couple of years before Schweitzer's quest for historical Jesus.

Wrede reacts against the reconstructions that were popular at that time, somewhat like those sketched above, arguing that much in these pictures is obtained by reading between the lines and ignoring what Jesus had to say about the second coming judgment, hell, and such, which modern theological liberalism tends to do as well. Wrede does not attempt to sketch a full-scale life of Jesus but tries to solve a single problem. That problem is if Jesus never claimed to be the Messiah as theological liberalism thought, why did he keep telling people to keep this a secret, okay? Excuse me I just spoke myself.

If Jesus claimed to be the Messiah, why did he keep telling people to keep this a secret? Wrede's answer is that Mark invented the Messianic Secret because Jesus never claimed to be the Messiah, but Mark and his circle thought that he was. Wrede comes to believe that Mark's whole narrative framework is unreliable and that only some of the individual stories and sayings in this gospel really happened. At this point in our narrative of the liberal lives of Jesus, notice that the liberals have now thrown out all the gospels. John is late, Matthew and Luke build on Mark, and Mark is unreliable.

We'll come back and discuss the Matthew and Luke building on Mark when we get to discuss our synoptic problem. This deep skepticism toward the gospel accounts led to the application of form criticism to the life of Christ by Rudolf Bultmann and others beginning about 1920 and thereafter brought a stop to the writing of scholarly liberal lives of Christ until about 1950. Quests for the historical Jesus were resumed in the 50s so-called second quest by liberals who were dissatisfied with a particular form of extreme skepticism advocated by Bultmann, and we're now generally thought to be in a phase called the third quest.

I will not follow that up in great detail. What I would like to look at is what we can call the present situation and here we're going to sketch a number of things going on

but the present situation is characterized by considerable diversity. Renan made an observation back when he wrote his *Life of Jesus* that the Jesus once you remove the miracles doesn't make sense and so he started sorting various characteristics of Jesus into these three categories the ethical teacher and the revolutionary and the martyr and so basically claimed there had been a chronological mix-up.

It is true that once the miraculous is excluded from Jesus' ministry, his person and life don't make sense, and a variety of possibilities can be imagined. Modern theories are often simply various combinations of previously noticed possibilities. We're going to give here another fast sketch of some of the views advocated since World War II and we'll call these the Post-Bultmannians, Schoenfield's Passover Plot, John Marko's *Allegro's Sacred Mushroom* and the Cross and Morton Smith's *The Secret Gospel* and *Jesus the Magician* and then we'll have a little bit to say about the Jesus Seminar.

The Post-Bultmannians. Post-Bultmannians is a term for former students of Rudolf Bultmann especially Gunther Bornkamp, Hans Konzelmann, Klaus Fuchs, Ernst Käsemann and those all sounded very German, James M Robinson. Okay, American.

Bornkamp is the only one of those who actually wrote *A Life of Christ* entitled *Jesus Nazareth*, published in 1960 English translation. The others, however, wrote encyclopedia articles or journal articles. All are anti-supernatural but all of them feel Bultmann went too far in his skepticism.

They have more interest in history than he did and they feel that the New Testament material gives us at least a feeling that Bultmann for what people thought about Jesus. Their own historical methodology however still very skeptical. They ignore the Gospel of John.

They use the synoptics. They pick out the authentic incidents and sayings of Jesus by using what they call a method of dissonance. What's that? Well take an example.

Jesus himself was a Jew. His followers were Christians. Thus, any features of Jesus' reported teachings that look Jewish might go back to the Jews rather than Jesus.

Okay and any material which Christians looks Christian may go back to the early Christians rather than Jesus. So only that which is incomparable with both Judaism and Christianity likely goes back to Jesus. So, we examine this material to get Jesus' self-understanding.

Well, that's a very minimalist approach to Jesus, but strangely enough, it does turn out some interesting results. I mention here that dissonance does have a problem as a methodology. Take Martin Luther.

Martin Luther was a Catholic. His followers were Lutherans. So, you throw away anything in Martin Luther that looks Catholic, and you get rid of all of traditional Orthodox theology, and you throw away anything else that looks Lutheran, and you wind up with probably the bondage of the will or something of that sort, but even that looks kind of Augustinian Catholic if you like.

So, what do you do? Well, let's look at some results from what the post-Bultmannians got. They did deduce some interesting results which don't fit the liberal models very well. Take for instance Jesus' view of himself.

Käsemann thought that there's a very distinct atmosphere on this question in the New Testament. That Jesus thought of himself as divinely and uniquely inspired and that he was greater than a prophet. Jesus, in fact, says Käsemann, made messianic claims.

A lot of liberals do not want to go that way. More common folks, thinking about Jesus' view of himself, said Jesus claimed that he could forgive sins. What kind of person can forgive sins? Well, you remember the remark of the Jews when they heard Jesus say something like that.

Then we think about Jesus' teachings. Käsemann. Jesus' main message is that God has come to give men what they don't deserve and to set them free from bondage.

So, we picture grace and redemption in Jesus' message, according to Käsemann. Hans Conzelmann. Jesus spoke of a future kingdom which in some sense is confronting us right now.

That's rather interesting because when I was taking a New Testament course at Duke, not a conservative course, the big point was made: oh well, you've got two elements that you see in the gospel that are inconsistent. Future kingdom, present kingdom. But here, Conzelmann says they're both there.

They're both in Jesus. So, this point was regularly lost in old liberalism, which typically sets these two elements in contradiction. Whereas Christians in recent years have come to think in terms of the already and not yet as what's going on there, and there's that real tension, and it really turns out to be a major feature of Christian theology.

Jesus' conduct. More commonly, folks say that Jesus' actions show us that he's submitted to God, yet he claims a unique authority. Seen, for instance, in his cleansing of the temple.

He also showed great graciousness to outcasts. Contrast Jesus' attitude with the Pharisees' attitude. Well, that's a quick tour of those, and these results seem rather minimal, but they're striking.

They suggest that Jesus is much more than liberals have granted and that they should reconsider their skepticism. Well, we move on from the post-Bultmannians to look at Hugh Schoenfield, the Passover plot 1966. Hugh Schoenfield was a liberal British Jew who worked on the International Dead Sea Scroll Committee.

Apparently, he had accepted the claims of Jesus at one point earlier in his career but later gave it up. So, he was apparently some sort of early messianic Jew at one point. He is quite familiar with evangelical interpretations of Old Testament prophecy, and if other liberals are familiar with that, they either just scorn it or they don't take it into account at all, but Schoenfield does.

According to Schoenfield, Jesus' ministry is an elaborate plot to fulfill the Old Testament prophecies regarding the Messiah, especially his death and resurrection. In Schoenfield's view, Jesus is convinced that he is the Messiah, and he gathers disciples but avoids publicly claiming to be the Messiah for his own safety. Notice there, Schoenfield has a nice explanation for the messianic secret.

It's not safe to claim to be the Messiah too early, okay? There might be some other reasons as well, but that shows us that Vreda has perhaps built way too much on his messianic secret. Eventually, however, Jesus is rejected in Galilee and realizes that he's got to die and rise again in order to fulfill Old Testament prophecy, probably thinking about Psalm 22 or Isaiah 53.

Jesus decides, however, to fake his death rather than trust God for a resurrection. He constructs a plot using several assistants who are only in on part of the plot, okay, so I don't know for sure what the other persons are doing or who the other people are even. Lazarus' death and resurrection is faked to build tension with the authorities.

The cult for the triumphal entry is arranged, forcing the Jewish authorities to take action to avoid a revolt. Jesus controls the timing of his arrest, that is so they won't find him until a certain point, so that he will only be crucified for a few hours. And then, when he's being crucified these few hours, he shouts the code words, Ali, Ali, Lama Sabachthani, and an assistant runs out with a sponge that drugs him, and Jesus goes into a coma.

Well, that's how Schoenfield is headed. Schoenfield then believes that the plot, almost perfect, is ruined by the spear thrust by the Roman soldier. Jesus is taken down from the cross by Joseph Arimathea and an unnamed conspirator whom we'll call X. That night, Jesus is removed from the tomb, taken to another place, and revived.

He gives X a message to carry to the disciples. Message, tell them to meet me in Galilee. But after X leaves, Jesus dies and X is trying to deliver the message, but apparently doesn't know that Jesus is dead.

X tries to tell the women at the tomb the next morning, but they think he's an angel. He tries to tell some disciples on the road to Emmaus, but they mistake him for Jesus. The confusion continues.

Any appearances where Jesus was not immediately recognized are treated as those of X. The clear and solid appearances are made up by the church later. Well, Schoenfield's story reflects the influence of the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls with some emphasis on the messianic expectations about that time. In fact, the Dead Sea Scrolls give us a lot of information in that direction that we hadn't had before, and it gives us a renewed appreciation for the Gospel of John as a source.

It's peculiar in the daring treatment of Old Testament prophecies. It has the classic features of what we call a plot theory. So that leads us to an aside for a moment on plot theories.

A plot theory claims that some set of historical events can better be explained not by the stated or surface motivations, etc., but by an unstated, secret, hidden plot. Some examples are the claim that Kennedy was killed by the CIA, or Lincoln killed by the Radical Republicans, or that the 9-11 disasters were actually staged by the U.S. government. Plots clearly occur in human history, but plot theories face serious methodological problems.

First, the better the plan, the more hidden it was, that is, and therefore, the less useful our data is. A perfect plot doesn't fit the data at all. Therefore, it's possible to construct far more plots than could actually happen so that the chance of any one plot being true is really very, very small.

It's impossible to prove a plot theory right or wrong before the last judgment, and it's very dangerous to hang one's worldview on a particular plot theory. Let's have a look at John Marco Allegro, *The Sacred Mushroom and the Cross*, 1970. John Marco Allegro was a professor at the University of Manchester in England, and another British representative of the international Dead Sea Scroll team.

You wonder about this team, huh? This book ruined his academic reputation. If you think that Schoenfield has a plot theory, Allegro has a super plot theory. More radical than Bultmann or Schoenfield.

Why? Well, Jesus never existed. Christianity never existed. Judaism never existed, at least in this part of the first century.

Their books and teachings are all expressions of code words used to disguise a super-secret mushroom fertility cult, sex drug cult, or any sort of thing that was popular in the 70s. Judaism and Christianity do not appear to be such now, because the secrets were lost under persecution, and the front organizations continued and developed on their own. Allegro tries to prove his position by etymology, the derivation of words.

He tries to prove that the Old Testament and New Testament are filled with secret codes relating to hallucinogenic mushrooms and sexual orgies. He uses Latin, Greek, Arabic, Persian, Syriac, Hebrew, Aramaic, Sanskrit, Ugaritic, Akkadian, and Sumerian, enough to snow all but the best linguists. That's John Marco Allegro, *The Sacred Mushroom and the Cross*.

Morton Smith, *The Secret Gospel*, 1973, and *Jesus the Magician*, 1978. Morton Smith was professor of ancient history at Columbia University. He earlier studied in Israel during the Second World War, got a PhD at Hebrew University, and then later got a PhD at Harvard.

Smith claims he discovered in 1958 at the Mar Saba Greek Orthodox Monastery in Israel a letter from Clement of Alexandria, who flourished about 200 AD, which, however, had been copied into the back of a Greek book published in the 1700s, so it was in the blank pages in the back. The book, with the letter, if it ever existed, has disappeared. For the text of the letter, see pages 14 through 17 of Morton Smith's *Secret Gospel*.

The letter answers some charges made by a Gnostic group called the Carpocratians, who had a different version of the Gospel of Mark, which included lewd materials used to justify their sexual immorality. Clement says he has a secret longer version of Mark himself, not including the lewd material, which the Carpocratians stole and then corrupted for their libertine group. Smith sides with the Carpocratians in claiming that Jesus really is a libertine Gnostic magician and that this explains his miracles, his personal claims to deity, his secrecy, and his statements about the law, namely that men are not responsible for the law in any way.

If this is a fraud, this is not a clumsy fraud, okay. Clement was interested in these topics. The letter resembles Clement's style.

If it is a forgery, the writer knew at least as much as Morton Smith, which is an interesting clue, and that has led to the suggestion that Morton Smith, in fact, invented all of this and made sure that the manuscript did not survive to have its ink examined or anything of that sort. You might say nobody would do things like this, would they? Well, we have a verified case in relation to Mormonism. I'm not thinking

of Joseph Smith back in the 1840s, though I think that probably is that, but a rather recent guy.

If you do a Google search on recent Mormon fraud and fraudulent Mormon manuscripts, you can see some material in that direction. How are we doing with time? Okay, we want to take a fairly quick look here at the Jesus Seminar, which has made a lot of public splash in the last 10-15 years. The Jesus Seminar is a group of radical New Testament researchers who've been meeting for 20 years or so to produce a scholarly presentation on Jesus that, in their view, will blow traditional Christianity out of the water.

They've been given extensive media publicity every time they meet, which Wallace was going on with about every six months, and in 1993, they presented their first book-length production. This was the book edited by Robert Funk, Roy Hoover, and the Jesus Seminar called *The Five Gospels, The Search for the Authentic Words of Jesus*, New York Macmillan, 1993. I want to give you a little sketch of where they're coming from and the results they obtain, and then that will close our discussion here of the liberal lives of Christ, if you like.

In the early part of their book, pages two through five, they give the seven pillars of scholarly wisdom. That's these beliefs or teachings on which their whole thing rests. The first one is the Jesus of History versus the Christ of Faith.

It's a big difference between the Christ people believe in and the Jesus of History. The second one is the Jesus of the Synoptics versus the Jesus of John, and they're claiming to opt for the Jesus of History and the Jesus of the Synoptics. The third claim is Mark's priority, that the Gospel of Mark was written first.

The fourth is the existence of Q. We'll come back and discuss this more in connection with the synoptic problem, but it's an alleged document that contained teaching, particularly sayings of Jesus, and that it was used by Matthew and Luke along with Mark. So, Mark and Q were combined together in slightly different ways by Matthew and Luke to make their Gospels. The fifth pillar, if you like, is the eschatological versus the non-eschatological Jesus.

So, which is the real Jesus? Two others. Six, oral culture versus print culture. So, they're going to make a big deal of oral transmission of the Gospel material before it's written down.

We'll discuss that in our discussion of form criticism. Number seven is a skeptical principle that Gospels are assumed non-historical unless proved otherwise. Well, we don't have time machines, okay? That's a somewhat strange way to approach historical documents.

If we do that in general, you really don't know anything about history, okay? But it has a great deal to do with what we mentioned earlier, the rejection of the miraculous, and if the miraculous cannot occur, then the Gospels can't very well be reliable. They then give a whole bunch of rules of written evidence and rules of oral evidence, and I will read them for you, but we will not discuss them anywhere here. Rules of written evidence, clustering, and contexting.

The evangelists frequently group sayings and parables in clusters that did not originate with Jesus. So, the idea they've reshuffled this material. Secondly, the evangelists frequently relocate sayings and parables or invent new narrative context for them. Then, the revision and commentary.

Number three, the evangelists frequently expand sayings or parables or provide them with an interpretive overlay or comment.

And four, the evangelists often revise or edit sayings to make them conform to their own individual language, style, or viewpoint—false attribution.

Number five, words borrowed from the fund of common lore or the Greek scriptures are often put on the lips of Jesus.

Six, the evangelists frequently attribute their own statements to Jesus—difficult sayings.

Seven, hard sayings are frequently softened in the process of transmission to adapt them to the conditions of daily living.

Eight, variations in difficult sayings often betray the struggle of the early Christian community to interpret or adapt sayings to its own situation. And then four of them, Christianizing Jesus.

Nine, sayings or parables expressed in Christian language are the creation of the evangelists or their Christian predecessors. Remember the Jewish Christian situation with the sayings of Jesus.

Ten sayings or parables that contrast with the language or viewpoint of the gospel in which they are embedded reflect older traditions but not necessarily traditions that originated with Jesus. Eleven, the Christian community develops apologetic statements to defend the claims and sometimes the attributes, and sometimes, such statements are attributed to Jesus. Twelve sayings and narratives that reflect knowledge of events that took place after Jesus' death are creations of the evangelists or oral tradition before them.

No fulfilled prophecy is really what we're getting there—rules of oral evidence from the gospels to Jesus. One, only sayings and parables that can be traced back to the oral period 30 to 50 CE can possibly have originated with Jesus.

Two, sayings and parables that are tested in two or more independent sources are older than the sources in which they're embedded. Three, sayings or parables that are tested in two different contexts probably circulated independently at an earlier time. Four, the same or similar content attested in two or more different forms has had a life of its own and, therefore, may stem from an old tradition.

Five unwritten traditions that are captured by the written gospels relatively late may preserve very old traditions: orality and memory. Six, the oral memory best retains sayings and anecdotes that are short, provocative, memorable, and often repeated.

Seven, the most frequently recorded words of Jesus in the surviving gospels take the form of aphorisms and parables. Eight, the earliest layer of the gospel tradition, is made up of simple aphorisms and parables that circulated by word of mouth prior to the written gospels. Nine, Jesus' disciples remembered the core or gist of the sayings and parables, not his precise words, except in rare cases. Then, there is a big section on the storyteller's license.

Ten, to express what Jesus imagined is imagined to have said on particular occasions, Jesus says to them, let's cross to the other side. Eleven, to sum up the message of Jesus to Mark, as Mark understands it, the time is up.

God's imperial rule is closing in. Change your ways and put your trust in the good news. To forecast the outcome of his own gospel story and to sum up the gospel then being proclaimed in his community, Mark has Jesus say that the son of Adam is being turned over to his enemies and they will end up killing him and three days after he is killed he will rise.

Thirteen, to express Mark's own view of the disciples and others, Mark has Jesus say to the frightened disciples after the squall had died down, why are you so cowardly? You still don't trust me, do you? Fourteen, since Mark links trust with the cure of the sick, he has Jesus say to the woman he has just cured, daughter, your trust has cured you. Jesus' remark is understood by Mark's narrative aside, and he was unable to perform a single miracle there except that he did cure a few by laying hands on them, though he was always shocked by the lack of trust. To justify the later practice of fasting, in spite of the fact that Jesus and his first disciples did not fast, the days will come when the groom is taken away from them and then they will fast on that day.

To elicit the right confession, Jesus has Mark ask, Mark has Jesus ask, what are the people saying about me? A little later in the conversation he asks, what about you?

Who do you say that I am? And then Peter then responds, you are the anointed, which is what Christians are supposed to say—distinctive discourse. Jesus' characteristic talk was distinctive.

It can usually be distinguished from common lore, otherwise it's futile to search for the authentic words of Jesus. 18. Jesus' parables and sayings cut against the social and religious grain.

19. Jesus' sayings and parables surprise and shock. They characteristically call for reversal roles or frustrate ordinary everyday expectations.

20. Jesus' sayings and parables are often characterized by exaggeration, humor, and paradox.

21. Jesus' images are concrete and vivid. His sayings and parables are customarily metaphorical and without explicit application. And then the laconic sage, the sage of few words.

Jesus does not as a rule initiate dialogue or debate, nor does he offer to cure people.

23. Jesus rarely makes pronouncements or speaks about himself in the first person.

24. Jesus makes no claim to be the anointed messiah. Well, those are some of the approaches that you see in the Jesus Seminar.

A little about their results: in the book *The Five Gospels*, the words of Jesus are printed in colors. And they use red for Jesus undoubtedly said this or something very like it.

Pink, Jesus probably said something like this. Gray, Jesus did not say this, but the idea originated, it contained, is close to his own. And black, Jesus did not say this.

It represents the perspective or content of a later or different tradition. Well, results. An index of red and pink letter sayings lists the sayings scoring in pink or red on this thing.

I have a little discussion here of how they do the scoring. They basically took marbles, and each of them was red, pink, gray, and black marble. They passed a basket around, and you put in the one for the particular saying they were voting on.

So, an index of red or pink sayings lists the 90 sayings that scored in red or pink, if you like, with detailed votes on their various versions in the different gospels. This is on pages 549 to 553 in the five gospels. According to a remark on page 5, 82% of the words ascribed to Jesus in the gospels were actually not spoken by him.

Black or gray, if you like. And so, only 18% of the words spoken by Jesus in the gospels are admitted to be his, according to the Jesus Seminar. In Mark, only one saying is viewed as authentic red.

What's that? Pay the emperor what belongs to the emperor and God what belongs to God. Not many even come into the pink. In John, only one saying even makes it pink.

A prophet gets no respect on his own turf, John 444. These are their own translations, so they have kind of a racy Brooklyn sound to them or something. The Gospel of Thomas is rated ahead of John, ahead of both of these, both John and Mark, with several reds and a fair bit of pink about comparable to Matthew and Luke.

Well, response. The best book that I've seen so far in response to the work of the Jesus Seminar is Michael Wilkins and J. P. Moreland's *Jesus Under Fire*. Modern scholarship reinvents historical Jesus.

Some specific responses to liberal lives in general, some of these before the Jesus Seminar, etc. Craig Blomberg, excellent work, *The Historical Reliability of the Gospels*, published by InterVarsity in 87. Gregory Boyd, *Cynic Sage or Son of God, Recovering the Real Jesus in an Age of Revisionist Replies*, 1995, Bridgepoint.

William Lane Craig, *Reasonable Faith, Christian Truth and Apologetics*, Crossway Books, 1994. Josh McDowell, joined by an associate, Bill Wilson, does what you might say is a sequel to his earlier book, and this new book is *He Walked Among Us, Evidence for Historical Jesus, Here's Life*, 1988. And Robert B. Strimple, *The Modern Search for the Real Jesus, an Introductory Survey of the Historical Roots of Gospel Criticism*, Presbyterian Reformed, 1995.

So that's a suggestion there.