

Class 2b

## RECOVERING JESUS IN THE SECOND & THIRD QUESTS

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### Outline

- The Second or "New" Quest
- The Third Quest
  - Principles
  - Points on which critics agree
  - Points on which critics disagree
- How to Evaluate Historicity
  - For literary texts
  - For archaeological evidence

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## THE SECOND OR "NEW" QUEST

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## The Second or "New" Quest

Ernst Käsemann (1906–1998)

*The Problem of the Historical Jesus (1954)*



- The Christ of faith cannot be divorced from the Jesus of history
- A critically ensured minimum of authentic Jesus material can be recovered, if you filter out
  - Anything that looked too Jewish
  - Anything that looked too much like later Christianity
  - Anything that looked too much like human culture

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## THE THIRD QUEST

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## The Third Quest

The Current One

- Aims to study the strands of the textual tradition
- Utilizes new manuscript discoveries to develop a richer portrait of the textual tradition and social world
- Develops the criteria of historicity to filter tradition more effectively than the Second Quest
- Mines archaeological data to build more accurate portrait of social, political, economic context



John Dominic Crossan



Marcus J. Borg



John P. Meier



Paula Fredriksen

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### Points on which Critics Agree

- Jesus was born late in Herod the Great's reign
- Born and raised in Nazareth by Mary (and maybe Joseph); had brothers and sisters
- Baptized around age 28–30
- Preached a variation of John the Baptist's message
- Associated with social pariahs (and respectable citizens)
- Itinerant preacher and healer who embraced a lifestyle of poverty (he was a "peasant," so already subsistence)
- Encountered opposition from some Jews, Romans
- Crucified

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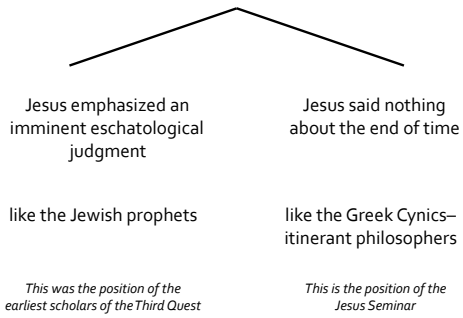
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### Points on which critics disagree



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### HOW TO EVALUATE HISTORICITY

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## Evaluating Historicity

### For Literary Texts

Something in the texts is more likely to be historical if it is

- IN the text (not an argument from silence)
- eyewitness testimony
- embarrassing to the author
- multiply attested in independent witnesses
- coherent with other sayings/actions established as historical
- discontinuous with known Jewish or Christian tradition
- consistent with Jesus' execution

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## Evaluating Historicity

### For Literary Texts

Additional considerations in favor of historicity:

- the author is careful with his sources
- the author has a good reputation; he's not a scandal-monger
- the author is reporting about the historical person or event
- the text itself has integrity: it was not likely changed by a later Christian scribe

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## Evaluating Historicity

### For Archaeological Sites & Artifacts

- Provenance
- Stratigraphy
- Analogy

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## Historical Evaluation of Artifacts

- All artifacts are historical. The question is, what history, or whose history, do they attest?
- Historians doubt the historicity of traditions or artifacts:
  - the later the first report of the artifact's existence
  - the more they match later or developing traditions rather than the circumstances of Jesus' lifetime
  - they amplify the miraculous, or the role of dreams and visions
  - they fill gaps or answer questions in stories
  - they include other and later "scripts"

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