Jesus and the Rise of Christianity: Sources, traditions, problems

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- Sources for the life of Jesus: Canonical gospels and other material
- Our dual project: life of Jesus and Jesus as proclaimed by ancient Christians
- Historicity and biography: methods and problems

Sources for the life of Jesus: Canonical gospels and other material

- Canonical gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke, John
- Josephus, so-called Testimonium Flavianum
  - May be a later Christian interpolation
- Non-canonical Gospels
  - May reflect early traditions, but frequently later texts
- Ultimately: almost entirely dependent upon canonical gospels

Our dual project ... 

- Life of Jesus
  - Biography of a Palestinian holy man
  - Internal and external politics of a Roman province leading to crucifixion
  - Development of the image of Jesus as proclaimed by ancient Christians
    - Jewish messiah or prophet
    - pre-existing divine Logos (Word)
Historicity and biography: methods and problems

- Problem of text and transmission
- “Synoptic Problem”
- “Q” hypothesis (four-source hypothesis)
- Criteria of historicity

Problem of text and transmission

- Text is transmitted by manuscript, and differences arise, e.g.,
  1. Gerasa, Gadara (Mk 5:1, and parallels)
  2. “Forgive them Father, they know not what they do” (Lk 23:34). Some mss include others do not
  3. Ending of Mark: some very old mss. end with 16:8; others longer endings.
- Differences such as nos. 2 and 3 above:
  - religious implications
  - significant for development of image of Jesus

“Synoptic problem”

- “Synopsis” a “seeing together”
- Synoptic gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke:
  The outline (and wording!) of the story can be arranged in parallel columns
- Synoptic problem: which is first, what is the relationship between them?
  - Broad consensus: Markan priority: Mark is prior, Matthew and Luke used Mark
  - Common (not universal) view: Q-hypothesis
“Synoptic Problem”:
Gospel of John by contrast

- John uses different chronology:
  - Jn: Several visits to Jerusalem; Synoptics one culminating visit
  - Tables of the moneychangers in Jn 2:13ff; in Jesus’ final week in Synoptics (Mk. 11:15ff.)
- John also has different stories (e.g., Lazarus, Water into wine)

“Q” hypothesis:
Four-source hypothesis

- Matthew and Luke used Mark
- Material common to Matthew and Luke derives from a common source (“Q”)
- Matthew and Luke each had sources special to them (e.g., nativity, infancy)

“Q” Hypothesis:
Use of Mark and Q
“Q” Hypothesis:
Four sources

Criteria of historicity

- The problem: multiple sources, disagreements, faithful embellishments. **How much goes back to Jesus?**
- Criteria of historicity: what *might* be historical? (3 examples)
  - Multiple attestation (e.g. Eucharist, 1 Cor. and Paul)
  - Embarrassment (e.g., baptism by John)
  - “Dual dissimilarity” (e.g., Jesus’ non-fasting)