Reading the Gospels

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Biblical Interpretation in the Catholic Tradition

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To
Kelly, Katrina, Liv, and Em
For teaching me how to read the Gospels

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Contents

In his classic essay "Fern-seed and Elephants," C. S. Lewis (1898–1963) decried the state of modern New Testament studies. He criticized its preoccupation with the history behind the biblical text as well as its general neglect of claims made by Scripture itself.[1] Lewis, admittedly only an amateur theologian, felt compelled to address the thoroughgoing skepticism of exegetes like Rudolf Bultmann (1884–1976) and others, who in the early part of the twentieth century insisted on reading the New Testament in a way that seemed to completely divide the life and ministry of Jesus from the proclamation of the early church. For Lewis, that way of reading seemed to neglect the realities to which the text bore witness. Lewis thought modern biblical interpretation had become preoccupied with generating complex hypotheses about the prehistory of the text and then baptizing those hypotheses with the certainty of empirical science. While Lewis admitted in his essay that the history behind the biblical text deserved attention, he also argued that such attention must be chastened and subordinated to the text itself.

Yet given both Lewis's critique of the method and his affirmation of the importance of the history behind the text, the question of exactly how to proceed remained unanswered. In the material that follows, a few of the basic insights and questions of modern Catholic biblical scholarship will provide a map of the issues at stake in the interpretation of the Bible in general and the Gospels in particular. This map will, in turn, help readers make sense of the structure and methodology used throughout the subsequent chapters of this book.

Modern Catholic Biblical Studies and the Historical-Critical Method

One cannot adequately explore the story of modern Catholic biblical interpretation here, but a few issues and episodes might help readers understand why reading the Bible is not nearly as straightforward as it might seem at first. In fact, the story of modern Catholic biblical interpretation intersects with the development of major philosophical and political movements, and it forms the center of important battles within the Catholic Church itself. In this section, a brief and functional description of the historical-critical method will set the stage for an overview of the method's controversial history and its vindication in the official teaching of the Catholic Church. Finally, this section briefly considers how the historical-critical method has emerged as a major point of contention within the Catholic Church and beyond.

The Historical-Critical Method (Loosely) Defined

The term *historical criticism* often leaves students understandably perplexed. The history of the

term, its many meanings, and the variety of methodologies it embraces can almost rob or void the term of any concrete significance.[2] For the purposes of this work, one may define historical criticism or the historical-critical method as the disciplined attempt to place a given text into its appropriate historical, theological, and literary context. This disciplined activity centers on one basic question: What did the author(s) intend to convey when a given text was composed? Notice that the method does not begin with a question as to what meaning God may have intended to convey to the community of believers, to Israel or the church; instead, the question posed is straightforwardly historical and, therefore, quite limited. The task of the exegete, the interpreter of Scripture, is certainly theological in the end, but it begins simply as a historical question, for the interpreter wants to discern what an author intended to say to a particular audience—and neither the author nor the intended audience are available for direct questioning. One is simply left with the text itself, and from the text one must discover the answers to the question of context. That is, these answers must be "drawn out" of the text (this is the meaning of the word *exegesis*), though other texts may be available to help round out the picture of the history in question.

The phrase *the historical-critical method* has many layers. First, it refers to the study of a text in order to determine its historical accuracy. In fact, the word *critical* should be construed carefully. At its root, *critical* (from the Greek word *kriticos*, meaning "able to discern or judge") simply refers to the act of judging. So a historical-critical approach to the Gospels asks the interpreter to make a judgment about the text's relationship to historical events. For example, when Matthew and Luke each narrate the birth of Jesus in the opening chapters of their respective Gospels, they make certain claims about when and how that birth took place. Historical-critical exegesis attempts to make judgments about how well these narratives reflect actual historical events. After all, the two narratives are, in several places, incompatible, and judging which narrative stands closer to the historical event becomes important for interpreting the material. To the extent that one argues that either Matthew or Luke presents a more historically accurate account of Jesus in one respect or another, one is practicing historical-critical exegesis. Depending on how the method is practiced, it can tend to separate historical events from the biblical narrative—hence Lewis's complaint: the judgments of historical-critical exegetes seemed to be consistently running against the historicity of the biblical narratives.

Second, the historical-critical method also makes judgments about how various historical factors helped shape the biblical text. For example, historical-critical exegetes will ask questions about the sources used to compose a given biblical passage. Sometimes these sources can come from the broader culture, or sometimes the source can be another biblical text. How those sources have been edited or redacted also deserves serious consideration. Historical-critical exegetes may also ask questions about the "form" of a biblical passage. For example, one might ask if a given text is poetry as opposed to prose. If so, what would the identification of poetry as the genre of a biblical text mean for its interpretation?

Third, the historical-critical method attempts to examine the identity of the author of a text and the intended audience insofar as the text holds clues for the interpreter. Obviously, some texts better lend themselves to concrete and specific contextualization than other texts. For example, the book of Job in the Old Testament contains no concrete historical markers, and scholars have assigned dates as early as the eighth century BCE and as late as the second century BCE; the concrete historical circumstances of

Job remain extremely vague. In contrast, Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians contains enough historical referents and markers to allow scholars to place it at a very particular time and place: it was addressed to the fledgling Christian community in Corinth around the year 54 CE, and the context of the audience can be inferred from the specific references Paul makes to reports and earlier letters sent to him by members of the Corinthian community.

In sum, the historical-critical method attempts to paint a picture of the world behind the text, including the intentions and processes involved in the creation of the text. One cannot overestimate the importance of this world behind the text, for it is the conviction of Christians everywhere that God's revelation, God's self-disclosure, occurs in the concrete circumstances of history. This conviction is at the heart of the Christian understanding of God's word, God's self-communication for the salvation of the world. Yet historical-critical exegesis can present the Christian tradition with some problems, and even dangers, as well.

THE WORD OF GOD AS A SYMPHONY

The expression *word of God* has several senses. What follows comes from the Roman Catholic synod of bishops (a representative gathering of bishops every few years), which set forth the document *The Word of God in the Life and Mission of the Church* to highlight the multiple meanings that the expression *word of God* has within the Christian tradition. In the adapted excerpts below, one will notice that the word of God is not exclusively or even primarily understood as a text.

a. In Revelation, the Word of God is the Eternal Word of God, the Second Person of the Most Blessed Trinity, the Son of the Father, the basis for intra- and extra-communication of the Trinity.

b. Therefore, the created world "*tells of the glory of God*" (Ps 19:1); everything is his voice (cf. Sir 46:17; Ps 68:34).

c. "*The Word became flesh*" (Jn 1:14): The Word of God par excellence, the ultimate and definitive Word, is Jesus Christ.

d. In view of the Word who is the Son-Incarnate, the Father spoke in ancient times to the fathers through the prophets (cf. Heb 1:1). Through the power of the Holy Spirit, the apostles continue to proclaim Jesus and his gospel.

e. Sacred Scripture, under divine inspiration, unites Jesus-the-Word to the words of the prophets and apostles. . . . Through the charism of divine inspiration, the books of Sacred Scripture have a direct, concrete power of appeal not possessed by other texts or holy writings.

f. But the Word of God is not locked away in writing. Even though Revelation ended with the death of the last apostle, the Word-Revealed continues to be proclaimed and heard throughout church history.

The Word of God displays all the qualities of true communication between persons. For example, it is informative, because God communicates his truth; expressive, because God makes plain his manner of thinking, loving and acting; and finally, it is an appeal addressed by God to a person to be heard and given a response in faith.

—The Twelfth Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, *The Word of God in the Life and Mission of the Church*

Problems with the Historical-Critical Method

For a variety of reasons, historical-critical exegesis has endured a troubled history within Roman Catholic circles. In fact, the advent of historical-critical exegesis roughly coincides with the period known as the Enlightenment, a movement that extended from the late seventeenth to the early nineteenth centuries and sought to emancipate human beings from structures of authority in order to facilitate a more open and dynamic society.[3] This movement generally viewed Christianity and its claim to ultimate authority with great suspicion, especially since both Catholic and Protestant churches still tended to subordinate human reason to the demands of revelation as it was articulated through religious authorities (e.g., individual pastors, church hierarchy, doctrine, the Bible). Moreover, Christian leaders seemed to be invested in the status quo, the established order of society that tended to guard

THE FOUR SENSES OF SCRIPTURE

Although John Cassian (360–453) originated the concept of the *four senses of Scripture* (*Conferences*, 14. 8), his insights built upon the work of Alexandrian theologians like Origen (c. 250), who emphasized the manifold spiritual dimensions of the biblical texts. For his part, Cassian distinguished three distinct spiritual senses of the text along with its literal or historical meaning. The four senses of Scripture became the hallmark of medieval Christian exegesis (see also Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* Ia, q. 1, a. 100).

The Historical or Literal Sense

The historical or literal interpretation of the text stands in sharp contrast to its spiritual meaning. The historical or literal sense of the text should not be confused with a naïve biblical fundamentalism or literalism. Rather, the literal meaning of the text was simply the meaning of the text that could be gained by looking at the text in its literary context. This was considered the most banal sense of the text because it could be accessed without the "eyes of faith."

The Allegorical Sense

The first of the three spiritual senses of the text is the allegorical. For the ancients, the literal or historical sense of Scripture was the least important. The allegorical sense functioned as a doorway to the exploration of some mystery or doctrine of the faith. A prominent example of this approach to Scripture can be found in Scripture itself: in Galatians 4:21–31 the Apostle Paul offers an allegorical reading of the story of Sarah and Hagar from Genesis 16 and 21. In this example, the two women are not considered as individuals, but instead represent contrasting approaches to the relevance of the Mosaic Law for Gentile Christians (see also Midrash within Judaism).

The Anagogical Sense

The anagogical sense bolsters the allegorical by offering a "deeper" spiritual sense whereby Scripture discloses the object of Christian hope: heaven and union with God.

The Moral or Tropological Sense

The tropological or moral sense of Scripture provides the reader with instruction on how to improve one's life and how to live practically. Cassian used the city of Jerusalem to exemplify how one word in Scripture could have four

continued

THE FOUR SENSES OF SCRIPTURE *continued*

different senses: (1) historically, it is "the city of the Jews"; (2) allegorically, it is the church of Christ; (3) anagogically, it is the heavenly city of God; (4) tropologically (i.e., morally), it refers to the human soul. Each biblical text, therefore, carries multiple meanings, all held together in dynamic tension. This fourfold approach to biblical interpretation became so widespread that a medieval Latin maxim, attributed to the thirteenth-century writer Augustine of Dacia, became a definitive hermeneutic for Scripture:

> *Littera gesta docet; quid credas allegoria;*
> *Moralis quid agas; quo tendas anagogia.*
>
> [The literal sense teaches deeds; allegory what you are to believe; the moral sense what you are to do; the anagogical sense where you are going.]

the privileged role of the church. Quite understandably, church authorities saw the Enlightenment and its approach to the Bible, the central authority in the Christian tradition, as hostile and dangerous.

Many scholars of the modern era pursued the practice of historical-critical exegesis as a way of unmasking traditional Christianity as a fraud, or at least a mistake. By means of this sort of open hostility, the Enlightenment helped to provoke two extreme positions on the relationship between faith and reason within the Christian community. On the one hand, many Christians began to assert that human beings could only come to know who God was and what God wanted through the use of human reason. All intermediaries like Scripture, church doctrine, theology, bishops, and popes were obstacles to the true knowledge of God. This position became known as Rationalism, and the rationalists held the conviction that any claim about God that did not conform to demands of human reason was dubious at best. When rationalists approached the Bible, they tended to dismiss the miraculous elements and reduced the biblical material to a set of timeless truths couched in primitive mythological or symbolic language—these primitive elements were dispensable and the timeless truths became accessible and affirmable by human reason.

Predictably, the rise of the Enlightenment and Rationalism created a backlash in many quarters, and in the Christian churches this backlash was evident in the emergence of Pietism and its corresponding suspicion of human reason. For Pietist Christians, the only way one could know God and God's will was through faith and a corresponding *sacrificium intellectus* ("sacrifice of the intellect"). Also later known as Fideism, this outlook was shared across confessional lines. In fact, even the phrase *sacrificium intellectus* is a paraphrase of the Jesuit obligation to subordinate one's mind to become obedient to the gospel (Jesuits are an order of priests in the Catholic Church). Among many subgroups within various Christian communities (e.g., Catholic Jansenists, Lutheran Pietists, Anglican Methodists) various shades of Fideism became part of their life and theology, and the echoes of this movement still permeate contemporary Christianity. Pietism sowed the seeds that would eventually become biblical fundamentalism in the late-nineteenth century, with its suspicion of any attempt to attenuate the biblical text and thereby the demands of Christian faith.

The Catholic Church was certainly not immune from these debates, and as in the case of the scientist Galileo Galilei in the seventeenth century and the modernist controversy in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, it did not always steer a middle course in the debates either. It must be said, however, that the Catholic Church had long asserted that there was a close relationship between faith and reason, a position emphasized in the work of great theologians like Anselm of Canterbury and Thomas Aquinas in the Middle Ages. In the nineteenth century, the Catholic Church found it necessary to address and clarify the issue once again, and at the First Vatican Council (Vatican I, 1869–1870), it declared the inadequacy of both Rationalism and Fideism and clearly reaffirmed the inherent goodness and health of human reason and the manner in which both reason and faith direct human beings toward God. This reaffirmation, which might seem far removed from the questions of biblical interpretation, actually helped to set the stage for a positive assessment of the historical-critical method and its potential as a tool for biblical interpretation in the twentieth century. In 1943, Pius XII issued *Divino afflante spiritu* ("Inspired by the Divine Spirit"), an encyclical letter that promoted the limited use of the historical-critical method within the Catholic Church. In the years following this encyclical, however, there was a heated debate within the Catholic Church concerning how far one could pursue historical-critical exegesis and still remain faithful to Christian doctrine. It was not until the Second Vatican Council (Vatican II, 1962–1965), which issued *Dei verbum* (*The Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation*), that the historical-critical method was officially adopted as a necessary means by which one should interpret the Bible. The determination of the necessity of the method and its connection to a doctrine of divine revelation demands attention.

Historical Criticism and Divine Revelation in *Dei Verbum*

The doctrine of revelation quickly became one of the most controversial issues confronted by the bishops gathered at Vatican II. In the period leading up to the council, the commission responsible for drafting texts for the bishops to discuss devised a document that reflected the concerns of the counter-Reformation; that is, it reflected the theology that grew out of Roman Catholic reactions to the doctrines of the Protestant reformers. So whereas many Protestant theologians tended to emphasize the sole authority of the Bible for Christian living, Roman Catholics had emphasized the dual roles of Scripture and tradition. The document drafted by the commission prior to the council actually characterized the economy of revelation as comprising two distinct "fonts," or sources, of divine revelation. The bishops at the council rejected this approach as theologically inadequate and set about the long and arduous task of reformulating the document. At the end of the council's last session, the final document was approved, *Dei verbum*. The approach to revelation expressed in that document broadly reflects the doctrine of revelation as understood by Christian theologians today.

Dei verbum begins with a discussion of the nature and purpose of divine relation by focusing on the deep connection between revelation and salvation. According to the document, the ultimate purpose of revelation is that human beings might "come to share in the divine nature" (see 2 Peter 1:4).[4] As described in *Dei verbum*, revelation does not center on the disclosure of information, though it does include information (knowledge is always constitutive of any relationship). Rather, divine revelation constitutes a personal communication in which God shares all that God is. In revelation, God creates communion or fellowship with human beings, and it

is in this fellowship that human beings come to know and share in who God is. The realization of this purpose, therefore, cannot be reduced to information or tactics. The communication of the divine plan, and the plan itself for that matter, is relational and, therefore, necessarily historical for human beings. Revelation unfolds through an economy of word and deed.

> [T]he deeds wrought by God in the history of salvation manifest and confirm the teaching and realities signified by the words, while the words proclaim the deeds and clarify the mystery contained in them. By this revelation then, the deepest truth about God and the salvation of man shines out for our sake in Christ, who is both the mediator and the fullness of all revelation. (*Dei verbum*, 2)

Human experience itself teaches that relationships are constituted through both word and deed. In much the same manner the words of Scripture and the deeds of history illuminate each other so that event and text stand together in the context of the church's relationship with God. For Christians, revelation culminates, or finds its fullest expression, in the person of Jesus. Jesus is the supreme Word and deed of God, and the life of Jesus is the definitive revelation of God. In Jesus, Christians come to know God and are drawn into a divine fellowship or communion, and it is this communion that forms the heart of the church's teaching on revelation.

The doctrine of revelation, as articulated in *Dei verbum*, locates Scripture within the context of the communion that represents the goal of God's revelation, emphasizing Scripture as relational rather than simply informational. The texts that make up the canon of Scripture uniquely express the preaching of the apostles and bear witness to the unrepeatable events of Christ's saving work. Yet the life of the church is inseparable from the texts of Scripture; this is what Catholics mean when they speak of the relationship between Scripture and tradition.

> The Church, in her teaching, life and worship, perpetuates and hands on to all generations all that she herself is, all that she believes. . . . The words of the holy fathers witness to the presence of this living tradition, whose wealth is poured into the practice and life of the believing and praying Church. Through the same tradition the Church's full canon of the sacred books is known, and the sacred writings themselves are more profoundly understood and unceasingly made active in her. (*Dei verbum*, 8)

This entire second chapter of *Dei verbum* is dedicated to exploring the way the lives of the faithful, in conjunction with pastors (i.e., bishops), impact the understanding of the faith and the understanding of Scripture. Tradition, therefore, is not something separate from Scripture; rather, it is part of the process of reading Scripture, reflecting on Scripture, and reflecting on the experience of faith that is personal, but also more than personal. It is a reflection on a faith that belongs to a people that God has called together from throughout the world and from across history. It is through this historical and communal process of formation that "the believing and praying Church" comes to understand and live more fully the gospel.

Biblical interpretation itself is also concrete and historical, because human living and the human experience of God's revelation are equally concrete and historical. Although the church always affirms that God is the ultimate author of the Bible, the following excerpts demonstrate that a careful balance must be achieved when describing the relationship and agency between God as author and the historical human authors in the creation of the biblical texts.

> In composing the sacred books, God chose [human beings] and while employed by [God]

> they made use of their powers and abilities, so that with [God] acting in them and through them, they, as true authors, consigned to writing everything and only those things which [God] wanted.
>
> . . . It follows that the books of Scripture must be acknowledged as teaching solidly, faithfully and without error that truth which God wanted put into the sacred writings for the sake of salvation. . . .
>
> However, since God speaks in Sacred Scripture through [human beings] in human fashion, the interpreter of Sacred Scripture, in order to see clearly what God wanted to communicate to us, should carefully investigate what meaning the sacred writers really intended, and what God wanted to manifest by means of their words. (*Dei verbum*, 11, 12)

The exegete must attempt to discern the meaning the ancient writers intended to express given their circumstances and their culture. The document even suggests that there is a rough analogy between the manner in which the Word became flesh in Christ and how the Holy Spirit works through human authors in the production of Scripture. While God remains the ultimate author of Scripture, human beings are nonetheless "true authors," and it is incumbent upon anyone who interprets Scripture to ascertain the intention of the historical human author. This is a cumbersome task and an elusive goal, but it is a necessary part of biblical interpretation. The necessity of the method was reaffirmed in the 1993 document "On the Interpretation of the Bible in the Church," issued by the Pontifical Biblical Commission (PBC) in response to growing dissatisfaction with the historical-critical method. The PBC left no doubt about the place of the method in Catholic exegesis: "The historical-critical method is the indispensable method for the scientific study of the meaning of ancient texts."[5]

A Few Theological Points on Inspiration and Interpretation

According to the doctrine of inspiration noted in *Dei verbum* and generally articulated across the Christian tradition, God must be recognized as the true author of the Bible. While all Christians affirm the inspired character of the sacred books (that is, the divine authorship of the books), they disagree on precisely *how* to understand God's authorship and the corresponding role of the human authors. Most approaches to the problem have focused on the individual human author in what is often called an "author-centered approach."

Author-centered approaches to an understanding of inspiration focus on the relationship between God and the individual human author. According to some ancient approaches to the question of inspiration, the biblical author sat at a table with pen in hand while an angel dictated the text. God remained the undisputed author of the text and the human being had an instrumental role.

According to one interpretation of the idea of the human author as instrumental cause, the human being is simply the pen by which God inscribes the biblical text. This idea of instrumental causality leads to the claim that the words of Scripture themselves are preserved from all error because they are quite simply the words of God. The human author was as insignificant to the process by which the books were written as a pen is to a student taking notes in class. The pen may frustrate the student's efforts to some extent, but it makes no positive contribution to the process of writing. The text is therefore removed from the human context of both its composition and its canonization.

This understanding of instrumental causality often yields a doctrine of plenary (i.e., full) verbal inerrancy wherein God is really the sole author of the biblical text so that the text can contain no errors whatsoever. The following

ALLEGORY, *SENSUS PLENIOR*, AND EXCESS MEANING

In medieval theology, scholastics developed what was called "the fuller sense" (*sensus plenior*) of a biblical text. This fuller sense went beyond the intention of the author. Raymond Brown defines the *sensus plenior* as "the deeper meaning [of the text], intended by God but not clearly intended by the human author, that is seen to exist in the words of Scripture when they are studied in the light of further revelation or of development in the understanding of revelation."[6] This approach to the fuller meaning of the text developed out of the scholastic understanding of instrumental causality, whereby God used the words of human beings to communicate meaning beyond the intent of the human author. In some ways, it is similar to the allegorical approach championed in Alexandrian theology in the early centuries of the church. While the *sensus plenior* has not played a significant role in contemporary discussions, the insights of Paul Ricoeur and his emphasis on the excess or surplus meaning of a text resonates strongly with the concerns articulated as *sensus plenior*.

quote helps explain how such instrumental versions of inspiration can lead to distorted and expansive claims of biblical inerrancy:

> Inerrancy follows from divine authority, period. For whatever God utters is without error. And the Bible is the Word of God. Therefore, the Bible is without error. But if this is so, then the inerrancy of the Bible cannot be lost by simply adding the human dimension. As long as it is God's word, then it is thereby inerrant, whether or not it is also the words of men.[7]

The authority and sovereignty of God, staples of Calvinist and much evangelical theology, control the reading of Scripture and discount any meaningful role played by the human and historical aspects of the biblical text.

The Catholic Church, and most other Christian churches, have often taken an author-centered approach to inspiration but have not espoused the doctrine of plenary verbal inerrancy. Rather, they have adopted an understanding of inspiration that emphasizes both the limiting and the creative roles of the human author. The human being is still the instrument by which God authors the text, but in this interpretation of instrumental causality there is an emphasis on the creativity and limitations of the instrument, the human author. This approach to inspiration yields a doctrine of limited verbal inerrancy. Limited inerrancy suggests that the text of Scripture is infallible with regard to its teaching on matters of faith and salvation. On matters of history and science the Bible may in fact be erroneous because while God is the ultimate author of Scripture, human beings, as instruments of the author, make choices in the creative expression of God's word and may be limited by a variety of factors like the lack of adequate scientific or historical knowledge. This is precisely the point made in *Dei verbum*, number 12, when reference is made to the culture of the human authors and "customary forms of speech." In order to interpret the Bible, one must develop a sense of the biblical author's historical, literary, and theological context.

Author-centered approaches to inspiration, however, ignore one fundamental element in any doctrine of inspiration: the role of the believing community, the people of God. The Catholic Church approaches the doctrine of inspiration not only from the perspective of the human author but also from the perspective of the human community. In fact, most of the biblical books are the result of multiple sources and the subsequent work of editors and scribes. For

example, modern theories about the origin of the Pentateuch emphasize the emergence of different traditions over the course of centuries (J, E, D, and P), and these sources were subsequently forged into five books rather late in time. Moreover, what is one to make of the various additions to already completed biblical texts made by scribes responsible for making copies of these texts over the course of centuries? For example, the story of the woman caught in adultery in John, chapter 8, was added by a scribe long after the Gospel had been written. Yet Christians still read this story as part of Scripture.

The Catholic Church teaches that Scripture is to be read and interpreted as part of a community of believers, because it is this community in which the Holy Spirit dwells. According to Karl Rahner (1904–1984) and other Catholic theologians, any understanding of the inspired character of Scripture must include an account of its composition, its canonization, and its continuing value within the dynamic Christian communities of different eras. In the following quote from his major work *Hearers of the Word*, Rahner dismisses the older notions of inspiration and instead offers an account of inspiration that places an emphasis on the relationship between revelation, the church, and Scripture.

> In the familiar interpretation of inspiration, God's intention would be achieved even more perfectly if man's function were but a secretary's. In our interpretation, the opposite is the case. A man [*sic*] intends to write a book, and he is to want to do this precisely according to God's ultimate intention. God's will is a supernatural and historical community of redemption, which finds its objective and self-realizing ultimate end in the book. And as he wills that community effectively and absolutely, historically and eschatologically, and in an historical process beginning anew in himself, God *eo ipso* is, in a real sense, an author.[8]

For Rahner and so many theologians today, the image of the biblical authors as God's secretaries fails to do justice to the complexities behind the formation of the biblical material and the process of canonization. Any adequate account of inspiration must account for God as the ultimate author while at the same time accounting for the historical and human character of the inspired texts. For Rahner, as seen in the quote above, God "of its (i.e., God's) very nature" (this is what the Latin phrase *eo ipso* means) is the author of the books because God wills the believing community into existence and guides it in history.

Biblical Interpretation in Crisis

Many theologians would agree that the past several decades have witnessed a crisis in biblical interpretation. This crisis is expressed by theologians from two distinct ends of the theological and political spectrum, even though their concerns are fairly similar. On the one side, the historical-critical method has suffered attacks from those who characterize it as vain and "modern" insofar as it seeks to establish singularity of meaning. The French philosopher Jacques Derrida (1930–2004) amplified this critique in a famous essay on the biblical story of the Tower of Babel (Genesis 11:1–9) in which he suggested that the imposition of diverse languages, which compromised the building of the tower, was no punishment; rather, it was a gift. For Derrida and other so-called post-modernists, the danger of the historical-critical method rests in its concern to define and limit the meaning of a text, thereby doing violence to the way the text and the reader play or interact.[9] At the other end of the spectrum, however, more "conservative" voices have assailed the historical-critical

method precisely for its inability to bring the biblical text together with the living tradition of the believing community, the church. They argue that the method reduces the biblical text to a historical artifact while it downplays the notion that the text bears witness to God's revelation to human beings.

Although these critiques come from two ends of the political spectrum within the church, one must observe that the major critiques of the method made by both "sides" tend to focus on the power of the historical-critical method to limit and confine a text. In other words, a wide range of theologians agree that the historical-critical method is problematic insofar as it attempts to limit or to singularly "fix" the meaning of the biblical text. In what follows, a discussion of the criticism leveled from both ends of the spectrum will help readers begin to appreciate the difficulties and complexities involved in reading and interpreting the biblical text.

A Philosophical Critique of the Historical-Critical Method

The twentieth-century French philosopher and literary critic Roland Barthes (1915–1980) offered one of the most decisive critiques of historical-critical methods in his 1967 essay, "The Death of the Author."[10] In that essay, Barthes attacks any interpretive method that relies on an account of the author's identity, circumstances, views, and so on. In short, for Barthes, any attempt to reconstruct "the world behind the text" in an effort to distill the meaning of the text is dangerous. Barthes alleges that such an approach to the text, far from being technical and sophisticated, is actually ragged and even violent. In short, "to give a text an Author" is to assign a single interpretation to it and "to impose a limit on that text." Instead, Barthes argues, readers must recognize that in the act of reading, of engaging the text, one separates the text from the author. To do this self-consciously is to liberate the text, to free it so that it might speak in all of its dimensions. Barthes capitalizes the word *Author* in the essay to emphasize the hegemonic power given to the author in relation to the text, and he uses the image of the text as a "tissue of quotations" assembled from a variety of sources, and not just the mind of an individual author. In fact, Barthes wants to avoid even assigning an "Author" to a text, believing that the connection between "author" and "authority" threatens to limit the power of the text. Rather, Barthes prefers to speak of the "scriptor," who may physically produce the text in some sense, but who is merely functional and stands at a distance from the text. The work is actually produced as a text, Barthes would argue, in the act of reading. So, in a sense, the text is rewritten with every reading:

> Once the Author is removed, the claim to decipher a text becomes quite futile. To give a text an Author is to impose a limit on that text, to furnish it with a final signified, to close the writing. Such a conception suits criticism very well, the latter then allotting itself the important task of discovering the Author (or its hypostases: society, history, psyche, liberty) beneath the work: when the Author has been found, the text is "explained"—victory to the critic. (Barthes, "The Death of the Author," 147)

The task of the interpreter is the discovery of "a multi-dimensional space." It is the job of the reader, the interpreter, to refuse all claims to ultimate meaning, to singular interpretations, and thereby refuse closure.

Certainly Barthes owes a debt to a number of predecessors who had earlier articulated concerns about assigning ultimate meaning to texts, but Barthes does stand at the head of the line

when it comes to contemporary discussions about the interpretation of texts, along with other notables like Paul Ricoeur, Hans Georg Gadamer, Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, and numerous other critics. But for the purposes of this introduction, perhaps the most important voices have come from liberationist theologies. Feminist, Latin American, Asian, Womanist, Mujerista, and Black theologies all, to some extent, share the critical concerns of Barthes (or perhaps Barthes has articulated, from a philosophical perspective, what these movements, in their longer pre-histories, have been saying).

Now many have noted that one can take Barthes's position out of context and use it in a destructive and absurd spirit. After all, the context of any "scriptor's" activity plays a role in interpretation, but Barthes's point concerns the hegemonic role that the contextual approach has come to assume in modern interpretation. Particularly within the Christian tradition, history and historical claims are unavoidable and even a principal aspect of the traditional understanding of revelation. Such is the case, in particular, with feminist biblical hermeneutics as articulated by such luminaries as Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza and Rebecca Chopp.[11]

Within feminist theology and liberationist theologies in general, the interpretation of Scripture has been a point of contention. In some circles, there has been a distinct movement away from the historical-critical method as the means of getting to "the world behind the text." Like Barthes and others, these critics allege that an ideological concern guiding historical-critical approaches to the text seeks to fix a text and its interpretation in some objectified past. Such a concern stands in sharp contrast to those who emphasize the liberating power of the biblical material and its capacity to subvert all attempts to fix or stabilize meaning. Yet these critics are countered by many Christian theologians of various stripes who steer a middle course between the historical-critical method and the more radically post-modern and liberationist concerns articulated by others.

Schüssler Fiorenza, for example, recounts an anecdote about her encounter with a graduate student who decried the way her professors were introducing students to the interpretation of the Bible.[12] The student was concerned with the professors' interest in the history behind the text whereas, to her mind, the only important issue was the world "in front of the text"—that is, how the text proposes to transform the world. After all, the student reasoned, dead white men have been behind the emergence of the historical-critical method, and their ideological commitments seem to control its outcome. Schüssler Fiorenza, while sympathetic to the student's concerns, nonetheless cautioned the student against a full demonization of the historical-critical method. After all, Christian feminist theology and feminist hermeneutics, she argued, are invested in historical claims about the place of women in the ministry of Jesus and in the early Christian communities. For Schüssler Fiorenza and others, the problem with the historical-critical method is the ideologies associated with it and embedded in its approaches, but the concern to research, interpret, and write history more accurately, more fully, and more dynamically and with an eye to the creation of a more grace-filled future remains a central concern for all Christian theology. The Christian tradition has always maintained that God works in history, and, in particular, in the person of Jesus, to defeat the powers of violence and evil, and a refusal to deal adequately with historical questions has remained a heretical temptation since the first century (e.g., Docetism, Gnosticism, and so on).

THE DIFFERENT "WORLDS" OF THE BIBLICAL TEXT

The World behind the Text

This world is the object of historical-critical investigation. In this world, the questions the interpreter asks include: What was the author's intention? What were the historical, cultural, theological, and sociological factors that shaped the author's approach? What sources or traditions did the author use? How did the text get edited or redacted over time? Since the Christian tradition claims that God's revelation is realized in history through certain non-repeatable events, questions about "the world behind the text" are indispensible.

The World of the Text

The text itself provides a world for the interpreter. This world is not concerned about history or the world beyond the reader's own horizon. As the reader is attentive to the text, its structure, its "play," and its world, the reader becomes vexed and provoked. Biblical interpretation prizes the power of the text to engage readers apart from historical questions. Like a piece of music one encounters on the radio, one does not need to know the artist, the composer, or the original purpose of the music to be provoked by its musicality, its arrangement, and its character. So too it is with the biblical text.

The World in front of the Text

The Bible envisions a world that is not yet. It seeks to engage readers and hearers so that they may become agents of change and participate, in some anticipatory way, in the world that is not yet.

An Example

If one reads the Beatitudes in Matthew (5:3–10), there are at least three "worlds" into which one could group the questions that arise in the wake of that reading. First, one might ask about the ancient parallels between the *makarisms* or "happy sayings" of nonbiblical literature and find that Jesus (or Matthew) is imitating an ancient literary form, or one might compare the Beatitudes found in Matthew with those found in Luke in an effort to understand Matthew's sources and his editorial tendencies. In these cases, one is inquiring about "the world behind the text." Alternatively, as a reader notices the structure and flow of the passage, the careful balance between the present and future tenses in each verse, and the subtle word choices made by the evangelist, the reader is being attentive to "the world of the text." Finally, as one asks about how one might become a "peacemaker," or "pure of heart," or "poor in spirit" in one's life as an individual, or how these blessings might be visited on a community of people, then one seeks after "the world in front of the text." These three "worlds" are not totally separate one from the other. In fact, how one responds to questions or issues raised in one "world" will impact how one engages the other "worlds" of the text as well.

Cardinal Ratzinger (Benedict XVI) and the Historical-Critical Method

As the prefect for the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF), Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger (later to become Pope Benedict XVI) also served as the head of the Pontifical Biblical Commission (PBC) and the International Theological Commission (ITC), two advisory bodies composed of theologians from across the globe. Over more than two decades as the cardinal prefect for that most important congregation,

Ratzinger exercised considerable influence on theological matters, including the interpretation of Scripture. Ratzinger's prowess as a theologian made him an interesting, if controversial, choice to head the CDF. Critics worried that he would bring a commitment to a particular school of thought to his job as "watchdog." In doing so, he would not simply intervene where orthodoxy, or right teaching, was an issue; rather, his interventions would tend to reflect his own theological predilections more than any limited concern for orthodoxy. Many still disagree about how well Ratzinger did his job, but there is little debate about the influence he exerted on Roman Catholic theology at the end of the twentieth century, and his approach to biblical interpretation provides an interesting example of this influence.

In 1988, Ratzinger was invited to New York by the Erasmus Institute, an ecumenical think tank headed by Richard John Neuhaus, then a Lutheran minister, to deliver an address on biblical interpretation. The title of his talk was indicative of his concerns: "Biblical Interpretation in Crisis: On the Question of the Foundations and Approaches of Exegesis Today."[13] In that address, Ratzinger laments the way the historical-critical method had been freighted with philosophical and ideological presuppositions that tend to compromise its validity and orient it against the church. Of particular concern was the method's natural scientific tendency to reduce Scripture to a mere set of historical facts.

Ratzinger views the historical-critical method as an example of the hubris, or excessive pride, of modernity. Contemporary exegetes often seek a level of methodological precision that would yield conclusions of the same certainty as in the field of the natural sciences. Yet Ratzinger notes that within the realm of the natural sciences, there exists the so-called uncertainty principle, which should be applied to the historical-critical method. The uncertainty principle was developed by the German physicist Werner Heisenberg (it is often called the Heisenberg principle), who demonstrated that the outcome of a given experiment or measurement is inevitably influenced by the observer.[14] In the field of historical inquiry, the uncertainty principle suggests that there can be no simple reproduction of history *wie es eigentlich gewesen*—"as it actually was"—to borrow a famous phrase from Leopold von Ranke, the father of modern historical science. The historian or the interpreter, for that matter, always stands between the data and the account he or she renders, so that the subjectivity of the interpreter becomes decisive for the outcome. In other words, the subjectivity of the historian or the interpreter is the condition for the possibility of objectivity.

Ratzinger's constructive proposal for contemporary exegesis includes historical-critical exegesis, but it is to be disentangled from the Enlightenment philosophical presuppositions that have governed much of its implementation. Biblical interpretation must not operate on the analogy of the natural sciences; rather, attentive to the power and depth of the biblical text, the exegete must acknowledge the power of the word. Only with a developed openness to and sympathy with the text can the exegete engage the text with the possibility of encountering God. To exclude the encounter with God as a possibility from the outset is to fundamentally distort Scripture. Moreover, in line with *Dei verbum's* account of the economy of revelation, the inner connection between the event in history and the words of Scripture (as well as the tradition of the believing community) provides an important hermeneutical principle: the biblical text must be placed in its appropriate historical context, but the text must also be read in light of the total movement of history, with the centrality of God's revelation in Christ always playing the key role.

Although Ratzinger and liberationist critics come from opposite sides of the political

spectrum within the church, they nonetheless share a common concern regarding the ideological baggage of historical-critical approaches to Scripture. At the same time, they also share a commitment to history and the claim that God works in and through history to reveal the plan by which all creation may be saved from sin and death. It stands to reason, therefore, that historical inquiry, or historical-critical exegesis, remains an indispensible tool in the interpretation of Scripture, yet a tool that must be used with humility and in conjunction with the church's tradition and the *sensus fidelium* (i.e., the sense of the faithful) in order to understand and live up to the demands of the gospel more adequately.

The Plan for What Follows

The historical-critical method is indispensible for any interpretation of the Gospels. Yet, given the issues described above, interpreters must apply the method without succumbing to the totalizing interpretations it might seem to yield. There is always more to the text, more to the story than simply what historical criticism has to offer, but historical criticism will always provide a doorway into the material that cannot be neglected. This book tries to strike a somewhat uneven balance insofar as the vast majority of the material in the following chapters will address what we have been calling "the world behind the text." Whether the issues are theological, literary, or sociological, the primary emphasis will be historical, but this emphasis should serve as one movement within a broader context of biblical interpretation that seeks to enact the Gospels in the world. For whether or not the reader self-identifies with the Christian tradition, the tradition claims significance for the Gospels precisely insofar as they have the capacity to transform and to redeem the world, and the texts should be read and assessed with this claim in mind.

Background Material

Prior to any treatment of the Gospels themselves, this book attempts to clear some ground by providing background on the history and culture of first-century Palestine and the religious, political, and theological developments that shaped the world of Jesus and the New Testament authors in general. The presentation remains limited and selective and instructors will, no doubt, choose to supplement the presentation made here.

Chapter 2 treats the complex issue of historical Jesus research. It sets forth an account of the various attempts or "quests" for the historical Jesus, and provides a skeletal outline of the life and ministry of Jesus as it is understood by contemporary historians and exegetes. Although far from complete, the text steers a middle course in the minefield that is contemporary historical Jesus research and attempts to acknowledge the controversies among scholars where they are readily apparent. The chapter aims to provide students with a basic overview of the life and ministry of Jesus so as to establish a baseline for measuring and understanding the creative activity of the evangelists (i.e., the authors of the four Gospels).

The presentation of background material concludes in chapter 3 with an overview of the basic process by which the Gospels came into existence. In addition to treating issues like the Synoptic Problem (the question of chronology and influence among the three most strikingly similar Gospels: Mark, Matthew, and Luke) and the traditions behind the Fourth Gospel, the chapter also addresses the development of Christology and its impact on the New Testament. This chapter will assist students as they begin to grasp the basic evolutionary dynamics operative in the first century and come to distinguish the

life and ministry of Jesus from the proclamation of the early church. Such a distinction will inevitably promote a better perspective on the dynamics of the Christian tradition and a better sense of the power and the historical perspective of the Gospels themselves.

Chapters on the Gospels Themselves

One of the primary goals of this text is to provide enough information and sufficient tools to assist students and teachers adequately to bring the study of the Gospels to life, but to do so without supplanting the text of the Gospels with a textbook—a thin line indeed. The first three chapters on the background of the Gospels naturally take students away from the biblical text in an effort to help them subsequently engage the text more fruitfully. The next four chapters, however, direct students' attention to the Gospels themselves. Each of these four chapters provides historical background on the author, the historical circumstances of the intended audience of the Gospel, a detailed overview of the structure and flow of the narrative, and a discussion of the major and distinctive theological themes developed in each Gospel. The chapters, however, do not provide a full-blown commentary; rather, each chapter provides interpretive and pedagogical aids for students and instructors as they engage in an ongoing conversation about the meaning(s) of the Gospels. Naturally, summaries of the biblical material give the reader a sense of the larger "flow" of each Gospel, but these summaries are not meant to be exhaustive or even fully inclusive. Rather, they will provide appropriate prerequisite reading activities for students, enabling them to engage the biblical text itself more thoughtfully and constructively prior to class meetings.

The presentation of the Gospels will not follow the canonical order; rather, the Synoptic Problem will dictate the order of presentation. Mark will be treated first, providing a kind of base from which to pursue the other Gospels. This presentation will allow for the creativity and ingenuity of Mark to shine forth and will appropriately highlight the manner in which Matthew and Luke follow and then depart from the Markan tradition, which they inherit. The subsequent chapter will focus on Matthew's creative and subtle redaction of Mark. Of course, Matthew is more than just an editor of Mark, but his creativity and theological concerns come into bold relief when contrasted with the Markan prototype. Luke's Gospel will take the reader beyond the Markan tradition and explore the ways Luke exploits his unique source material, as well as the sources he has in common with Matthew, to provide a richly unique narrative, one that often surprises and challenges readers. Finally, the Fourth Gospel, John, provides a fascinating contrast with the synoptic tradition. Yet points of overlap with the Synoptic Gospels help to ground John as a consistent witness to the saving work of God in Jesus Christ.

Each chapter contains numerous sidebars that provide supplemental information and discussions, as well as charts and illustrations. Also, each chapter will contain units titled "Scripture in Detail" that treat in some depth a select passage from the Gospel. In addition, brief units titled "Alternative Approaches" will offer novel interpretations, that is, interpretations that do not necessarily focus on or presuppose the "author's original intention," but help convey the power of the biblical material always "to say something more." These two devices will provide approachable examples of biblical exegesis that readers can emulate, and along with ample endnotes and brief bibliographies, they will help to provide an initial orientation for further research into the Gospels.

The author and editors of this text hope to help students read the Gospels and, regardless

of personal faith convictions, begin to grasp the fundamental importance of the Gospels in the Christian tradition in general, and from the Catholic perspective in particular. The book is meant to develop an appreciation for the demands the Gospels place on those who would seek to enact the good news of Jesus in the world. The text may be judged a success or a failure against this modest claim. As always, textbooks offer themselves as mere tools that require the insight and experience of able educators and their students in order to be enacted. Yet, for the fullest understanding of the Gospels themselves, one requires a community of disciples, and this conviction forms the basic presupposition of the approach to the Gospels presented here.

FOR FURTHER READING

Collins, John J. *The Bible after Babel: Historical Criticism in a Postmodern Age*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005.

Fitzmyer, Joseph A. *The Biblical Commission's Document "On the Interpretation of the Bible in the Church": Text and Commentary*. Subsidia Biblica no. 18. Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1995.

Witherup, Ronald D. *Scripture: Dei Verbum. Rediscovering Vatican II*. New York: Paulist, 2006.

ENDNOTES

1. C. S. Lewis, "Modern Theology and Biblical Criticism," in *Christian Reflections* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 152–166. (The essay appears in various collections under two different titles, "Fernseed and Elephants" and "Modern Theology and Biblical Criticism.")

2. See James Barr, *History and Ideology in the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2000), 32–58.

3. Joseph Fitzmyer argues that the historical-critical method has been around in some form since ancient times, beginning with the practice of textual criticism on classic Greek texts like Homer. These methods were applied by Origen and others to the Bible. During the Middle Ages, while allegorical interpretation held sway in the church, many strong voices argued for a more literal interpretation. Fitzmyer does admit that with the Enlightenment biblical exegesis underwent some major developments. See Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Biblical Commission's Document "On the Interpretation of the Bible in the Church": Text and Commentary*, Subsidia Biblica no. 18 (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1995), 26–36.

4. *Dei verbum*, 2.

5. See Fitzmyer, *The Biblical Commission's Document*, 26.

6. Raymond E. Brown, "Hermeneutics," in *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, ed. Raymond E. Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, and Roland E. Murphy (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1990), 1157.

7. N. L. Geisler, "Inerrancy and Free Will," *Evangelical Quarterly* 57 [1985]: 350–51, quoted in R. F. Collins, "Inspiration," *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, eds. R. E. Brown, et al. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1990), 1031.

8. Karl Rahner, *Hearers of the Word: Laying the Foundation for a Philosophy of Religion*, rev. ed., trans. Michael Richards (New York: Herder and Herder, 1969), 60.

9. See Jacques Derrida, "Des Tours de Babel," in *Poststructuralism as Exegesis*, ed. David Jobling and Stephen D. Moore, *Semeia* 54 (1992): 3–34. The essay was originally published in English and French in 1985 and has appeared in various volumes over the years.

10. Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author," in *Image, Music, Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), 142–148.

11. See especially Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Bread Not Stone: The Challenge of Feminist Biblical Interpretation*, tenth anniversary ed. (Boston, MA: Beacon, 1995) and Rebecca S. Chopp, *The Power to Speak: Feminism, Language, and God* (New York: Crossroad, 1989).

12. Schüssler Fiorenza, *Bread Not Stone*, 93–94.

13. Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, "Biblical Interpretation in Crisis: On the Question of the Foundations and Approaches of Exegesis Today," in *Biblical Interpretation in Crisis: The Ratzinger Conference on Bible and Church*, Encounter Series, ed. Richard J. Neuhaus (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989), 1–24.

14. Werner Heisenberg, "Über den anschaulichen Inhalt der quantentheoretischen Kinematik und Mechanik," *Zeitschrift für Physik* 33 (1927): 879–893.

CHAPTER 1

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF FIRST-CENTURY PALESTINE

Anyone who has even casually read the New Testament will notice that the world that stands behind the text is vastly different from our own. Palestine in the first century of the Common Era (CE; what used to be called *Anno Domini* [AD] or "The Year of Our Lord") was certainly a complicated scene. It had served over the centuries as a crossroads of several major cultures, including Greek, Persian, Egyptian, and Babylonian. Moreover, the governing authority of this diverse but remote outpost stood more than one thousand miles away, across the vast Mediterranean Sea, in Rome. These and other factors contributed to the complex social, cultural, and political situation that is the background of the New Testament and the story of Jesus. References to the histories and cultures of these ancient lands abound in the pages of the Gospels and other New Testament books, and the modern exegete needs to become familiar with these histories and cultures to understand the text. This chapter will outline some of the most important factors shaping the background of the New Testament.

Greek Influences on First-Century Judaism

Any adequate understanding of the New Testament presupposes familiarity with the story of Israel and its covenant with God. Yet many readers succumb to the temptation to simplify the background of the New Testament by referring only to the Old Testament, as if knowing the stories of the Jewish people as narrated in Scripture was sufficient for understanding the context of the New Testament. Giving in to such a temptation, however, creates a distorted picture of first-century Judaism; for Judaism, even as it was expressed within the relatively limited orbit of Jesus' ministry (i.e., in Jerusalem and Galilee), was neither a parochial nor a monolithic faith. Rather, following the close of the Old Testament period (c. 150 BCE), Judaism continued to be influenced by new cultures, such as those produced by the Greek and Roman empires, so that even in the most remote corners of the Mediterranean world, Judaism had a rich and complex background. Even Aramaic, the everyday language of Palestinian Jews such as Jesus and his disciples, comes from the Babylonian language that dominated the region during the Babylonian and Persian periods (c. 600 BCE–300 BCE). Subsequently, as the Greek armies of Alexander (the Great) of Macedonia took control of Palestine in the fourth century BCE, they imported a vibrant culture that exerted influence in the region for the next several centuries during what has become known as the Greek period (c. 330 BCE–100 BCE).

IMPORTANT DEVELOPMENTS IN THE HISTORY OF PALESTINIAN JUDAISM

587–539 bce The Babylonian Exile

The Babylonian exile marks the end of the monarchy in Judah. Judah is forever marked by the destruction of the Temple and the years its leaders spent in exile in Babylon.

532–333 bce The Dominance of the Persian Empire in Palestine

The Persians, having conquered the Babylonians, establish their own extensive empire. The Jewish exiles in Babylon are sent home to rebuild the Temple. The Jews are now a people but no longer a sovereign nation.

333–164 bce The Greek Period

Alexander [the Great] of Macedonia conquers the Persian Empire and establishes a Greek empire that devolves to his generals after his early death. Two of those kingdoms, the Ptolemaic Kingdom and the Seleucid Kingdom, vie for control of Jerusalem and Palestine.

332 bce–200 bce The Greek Period I: The Ptolemeys

The Ptolemaic Empire: the part of Alexander's Empire that was centered in Egypt (ruled by the Ptolemy family) controls Palestine for more than a century after Alexander's death.

200 bce–164 bce The Greek Period II: The Seleucids

The Seleucid Empire: the part of Alexander's Empire that was centered in Asia (ruled by the Seleucid family) takes control of Palestine from the Ptolemaic Kingdom around 200 bce.

164–63 bce The Maccabean Kingdom

Following the atrocities of the Seleucid king, Antiochus IV Epiphanes, Jewish rebels ally themselves with Rome to throw off the yoke of the Seleucids.

63 bce The Beginning of Roman Dominance

Under the leadership of the Roman general Pompey, the relative autonomy of the Maccabean Kingdom comes to an end, and Rome begins to control and dominate Palestine.

66 ce–70 ce The First Major Jewish Revolt against Rome

Jewish rebels lead a revolt against Rome that is initially successful but eventually suppressed by Roman legions under Vespasian (and then under his son, Titus); Jerusalem and the Temple are destroyed in 70 ce.

c. 132 ce The Second Major Jewish Revolt

The Roman emperor Hadrian plans to rebuild Jerusalem as a Greco-Roman city (*Colonia Aelia Capitolina*) dedicated to the Roman god Jupiter. When news of these plans reaches pious Jews, they revolt under the leadership of Simon bar Kosibah. The Romans put down the revolt and ban Jews from entering the city.

While readers of the New Testament cannot help but notice that the Roman Empire dominated the politics of first-century Palestine, if one looks a little deeper, one can discern that the culture of the region was, in some ways, more heavily influenced by Greece than by Rome. To note the most obvious example of the cultural hegemony of the Greeks in the first century, the language of the New Testament is Greek, not Latin. The zeal with which Alexander and his successors imparted (or imposed) Greek culture was remarkable, and the long-term effects of the Greek presence in the eastern Mediterranean can still be appreciated today. Perhaps of greatest importance for the purposes of reading the Gospels are the intellectual achievements of Greece, particularly evidenced in its philosophical schools of thought.

Readers can discern the hallmarks of Greek philosophy embedded within the language and outlook of the New Testament. Even though the Greek philosopher Plato lived almost four hundred years before Jesus, his thought remained a powerful force within Judaism and early Christianity as well. The basic contours of Plato's thought may be summarized as a form of "idealism" in which what is most real tends to be beyond the physical world. For Plato, the forms (*idea* in Greek), and ultimately, the transcendentals (i.e., the One, the True, the Good, the Beautiful) are the ultimate ground of reality. Those who are caught up in the world of the senses will miss out on what is truly real, Plato believed, so one must cultivate a sense, a habit, for discerning that which is beyond the material world. A strong sense of morality permeates Plato's metaphysics (i.e., an account of what is real); it involves living in the world reflectively and in accordance with the transcendentals.

Many followers of Plato sought to expand his philosophy, and over the centuries several schools of platonic thought emerged. Within Judaism, Plato probably had no stronger ally than a philosopher and statesman named Philo (c. 20 BCE–50 CE). Philo was part of the large Greek-speaking Jewish community in Alexandria, Egypt, where Greek culture had long been integrated into the beliefs and customs of the local Jewish population. For Philo and many Greek-speaking or Hellenistic Jews, the banalities and materialism of the Old Testament (e.g., animal sacrifice, the polygamy of the patriarchs, anthropomorphic descriptions of God) were troubling in light of the claims made by Greek philosophers. The stories and theology of the Old Testament seemed rather primitive and did not align well with the claims made by philosophy, which tended to be more theoretical and systematic than the narratives and legal codes of the Old Testament.

The Old Testament became increasingly subject to allegorizing interpretations, that sought to go beyond the merely literal level of the text to uncover its transcendent meaning. For example, Philo's allegorical interpretation of Genesis made the stories of Israel's ancestors, the patriarchs, into stories about how the soul progresses in its journey toward God. Thus the stories had no historical currency; they merely had symbolic significance as a description of a universal journey of the soul.[1] Similarly, Philo offered an allegorical interpretation of Jacob's dream about the ladder to heaven that appears in Genesis 28:12–15. For Philo, Jacob's journey from Beer-sheba to Haran underscored the soul's mystical journey toward perfection and the consecutive steps necessary for this journey. Philo saw Jacob's journey from Beer-sheba to Haran as a journey of self-discovery where Beer-sheba represents natural knowledge and Haran represents the self. In other words, Jacob's journey represents the first step in the journey into God, and it begins by moving away from the knowledge of things to the knowledge of self. Rather than asking questions about the events in the narrative, Philo related this journey of Jacob

to the contemplation of God. Such allegorizing tendencies played a large role in the development of early Christian doctrine and early Christian approaches to the interpretation of Scripture.

Platonism was not the only philosophical school to influence early Judaism. In fact, Stoicism was a major influence in the region and continued to supply both Judaism and early Christianity with many of their basic concepts and much of Christianity's early technical language. The founders of Stoicism, Zeno (333 BCE–264 BCE) and Epictetus (first-century CE), envisioned a universe dominated by reason. For the Stoics, *logos* (the Greek term for "word") was the organizing principle of the universe, and human living was directed by conformity to the *logos*. Resignation to fate and total detachment from joy and grief were common ideals within Stoicism (hence the use of the term *stoic* in modern English to describe someone who seems remarkably unaffected by extreme circumstances). Yet Stoic ideas did not exclude compassion, a key component of developing Christian moral tradition. Rather, Epictetus and other Stoic philosophers emphasized the moral virtue of respecting and caring for all people, regardless of their social status, making compassion part of a Stoic moral vision (though not part of the common modern assumptions about Stoicism). Stoicism, Platonism, and several other Greek religious and philosophical traditions exerted significant influence on the early Christian movement, and elements of their thought and practice permeate early Christian writings and remain a factor in any understanding of the emergence of the Christian tradition.

HEALING AND MEDICINE IN THE FIRST CENTURY

Greek philosophy as well as Greek religious practices left their mark on the culture of first-century Palestine, including the worldview of the earliest Christians. These influences included belief in miraculous healing, as evident in the healing stories found in the Gospels. For example, in the healing of the man with the withered hand (Mark 3:1–6), the opponents of Jesus watch him carefully to see if he will heal the man on the Sabbath. When he does heal the man, the opponents begin to plot against Jesus. What many readers may find strange is the fact that the opponents of Jesus do not question whether Jesus actually has the power to heal: the opponents acknowledge Jesus' power to heal, and thus focus their critique entirely on whether Jesus will heal on the Sabbath, an act that violates the sanctity of the day according to their reading of the Torah.

This acceptance of Jesus' power to heal is less surprising given that throughout the eastern Mediterranean various healing cults had proliferated, among them the healing cult of Asclepius, the Greek god of medicine. From the time of Alexander, the cult of Asclepius had become increasingly popular. While the cult of Asclepius was predominant in Asia Minor, in Egypt, the healing cult of Serapis was immensely popular. In both of these cults, a sacred shrine was the locale for the healing event, which was usually accompanied by ritual and followed by an offering or sacrifice. Although these cults sound very strange to modern readers, it is useful to recall that real knowledge of the human body and the means to remedy illness remained a dark mystery until the end of the nineteenth

continued

HEALING AND MEDICINE IN THE FIRST CENTURY *continued*

century. Even so, Greek philosophy (particularly the Stoics) held room for the practice of healing arts and in Sirach 38:9–15 one finds support for such practices.

Itinerant healers and wonder workers complemented the healing cults, and prominent among these itinerants was Apollonius of Tyana, a contemporary of Jesus. Some ancients regarded Apollonius as a "divine man" (*theios anēr*), and a century after his death they even had a popular narrative of his life and healings commissioned by the Roman imperial household, within which were several admirers, including the wife of the emperor (Philostratus, *Life of Apollonius*). Many contemporary scholars believe that the healing cults of the ancient world as well as the tradition of itinerant healers such as Apollonius help to explain the ancient mindset around the miracles recorded in the New Testament.

In addition to the philosophical outlooks of Platonism and Stoicism, language itself represents perhaps the most important contribution the Greeks made to the background of the New Testament. Throughout the eastern Mediterranean, including many parts of Palestine, Greek had been the language of commerce, diplomacy, and politics. But the Greek that was spoken was not the classical Greek of Athens or the great schools of the day; rather, *koinē* ("common") Greek was the language of commerce and the language of the educated classes. Among Palestinian Jews, the language of the home and the synagogue was Aramaic, as it had been for several centuries. As the Greek language came to take on a prominent role in the marketplace, many people simply adapted to this development as best they could. For example, consider the way many native English-speaking students speak Spanish. Inevitably, even with command of an expansive Spanish vocabulary and grammar, these speakers will nonetheless speak Spanish like an English-speaker. English grammar and syntax will serve as the default template in the brain, and even as one learns to adopt different linguistic structures and new vocabulary, it is difficult if not impossible to move away from this default tendency. In Palestine and the eastern Mediterranean in general, local languages (usually Semitic languages) tended to exercise a lot of influence over how Greek was used. Scholars often call this "Semitic interference," and this interference affects how the language of the New Testament is both understood and translated. For example, the disturbing command to "hate" one's parents in Luke 14:26 can be attributed to the Semitic idiom where the word *hate* is used to express preference ("I like this more than that" would be rendered "I hate this and love that"); see Matthew 10:37 for an improved rendering of the verse.

Greek culture exerted influence on first-century Judaism in only a few areas, and any remotely adequate account of its influence is well beyond the scope of this chapter and this text. Readers should be aware, however, that some New Testament scholars will go so far as to argue that Greek culture and thought were more decisive in the formation of early Christianity than was Judaism.[2] These scholars remain in the minority, however, and their position is not adopted in this text.

The Roman Presence in Palestine

Greek cultural and political dominance continued for more than two centuries, abating only with the emergence of the Roman Empire, which came to control Palestine in the first century BCE. In fact, the Roman presence in Palestine initially resulted from an invitation from Jewish revolutionaries in the second century BCE. During the Maccabean revolt against the last Greek ruler of Palestine (the Seleucid king Antiochus IV Epiphanes), leaders of the revolt solicited support from Rome, and Rome was only too happy to oblige given that it shared a common enemy (i.e., the Seleucids) with the Jewish revolutionaries. Eventually the Romans began to assert control over the region, and with Pompey's arrival in 63 BCE, Romans occupied Palestine and controlled its affairs for the next several centuries.

The lifetime of Jesus spanned the reigns of two emperors: Octavian (Caesar Augustus; 27 BCE–14 CE) and Tiberius (14 CE–37 CE). While neither emperor ever came in direct contact with Jesus or even traveled to Palestine, they both decisively influenced the circumstances of Jesus' life and that of the early Christian community. Octavian, for his part, was viewed as the author of the great *Pax romana augusta*: "The Roman Peace of Augustus." This period of time marked the end of the civil wars that had dominated the empire for years, and decisive victories effectively brought an end to open competition for control of Rome and the incessant desire for further expansion of the empire through military victories (though in reality, both struggles continued). This peace of Rome proved to be a propaganda tool introduced by Octavian, and it was used to give the Roman populace a sense of prosperity and contentment. The British historian Edward Gibbon, who first coined the phrase *Pax Romana*, alleged that this "Roman peace" lasted until the death of Marcus Aurelius (c. 180 CE),[3] but this peace was significantly disturbed on several occasions. For example, a time of struggle followed the death of the last emperor from the household of Julius Caesar, a man named Nero (c. 67 CE). While the *Pax Romana* was a powerful propaganda tool, the subjugated people of Palestine could only see such a "peace" as ironic if not oxymoronic. The evangelist Luke makes use of this notion of a *Pax Romana* by contrasting the birth of Jesus, the real prince of peace (Luke 2:14; 19:38), with the violent "peace" of Rome. The "peace" the inhabitants of Palestine enjoyed came at the edge of a Roman sword wielded by one of Rome's client kings—a dubious peace indeed.

One of these client kings casts a particularly long and ominous shadow over the New Testament—Herod the Great. Herod was the heir to the Maccabean family's claim on Palestine, but throughout the decades following the revolt, the religious character of the Maccabean revolution deteriorated significantly. The descendants of the Maccabees had controlled the office of high priest and had considerably expanded their power as virtual kings of Palestine. These descendants were often called the Hasmonean family after the name of one of their ancestors, a certain Asamōnaios, the great grandfather of Mattathias, the patriarch of the Maccabee family. Herod was actually not a direct descendant of the Maccabees. In fact, he was from the neighboring country of Edom, but he was from a closely allied family and had secured the hand of one of the Hasmonean daughters as his wife. Herod ingratiated himself with the Roman emperor, Octavian, even after he had supported one of Octavian's rivals, Marc Antony, prior to the Battle of Actium (c. 31 CE). Such maneuvering is no doubt a testimony to Herod's skill as a politician and ruler. In fact, Rome had such confidence in Herod that they granted him the power to rule his subjects directly so that only the emperor himself could hold Herod accountable.

Even though the opening chapters of Matthew and Luke only mention Herod the Great in conjunction with the birth of Jesus (Herod had died around 6–4 BCE), one can discern Herod's presence in the life and ministry of Jesus. Herod expanded and embellished the Jerusalem Temple, and he also helped to entrench his allies in the Sanhedrin and in the office of high priest. Herod's son, Herod Antipas, became the ruler of Galilee after the death of his father, and it was the ineptitude of another son, Herod Archelaeus, that had the latter recalled to Rome and that required the installation of a prefect who could govern Jerusalem and the surrounding area directly.

Responsibility for collecting taxes, administering Roman law, and keeping order fell to the *praefecti* (or prefects; after c. 40 CE they were called *procuratores*), Roman administrators drawn from the lower Roman nobility (the so-called equestrian order, analogous, in some sense, to the cavalry or the knights of medieval Europe). While their resources were rather sparse compared to those of the legate in nearby Damascus, the Roman prefects in Palestine did have the authority to execute criminals and could call upon the Roman legate in Damascus for assistance should the need arise (Roman legions were stationed there).

The prefects were equipped with local troops, sometimes mercenaries or even conscripts, who were always available, but these soldiers were not the elite legionnaires. The low quality of these forces and perhaps their lack of what today might be called "professionalism" paved the way for abuse and corresponding resentment in Judea and Jerusalem. And yet these forces were crucial to the maintenance of Roman authority and the authority of the religious establishment; leaders tolerated these troops because their own power and indeed their well-being rested on the protection the troops could afford.

Although the center of Roman administration in the region was Caesarea Maritima, a seaside-port city northwest of Jerusalem, control of Jerusalem, especially during the great pilgrimage feasts, became a priority for the Roman prefects as they worked to bolster their allies within the religious leadership of Jerusalem and thereby maintain their own power. The arrest and execution of Jesus recorded in all four canonical Gospels supports this picture of the relationship between Roman prefects and the religious establishment. Jesus' provocative speech

ROMAN PREFECTS AND JEWISH HIGH PRIESTS IN THE EARLY FIRST CENTURY

ROMAN PREFECTS	HIGH PRIESTS
Coponius (6 ce–9 ce)	Annas, son of Seth (6 ce–15 ce)
M. Ambivius (9 ce–13 ce)	
Annius Rufus (12 ce–15 ce)	
	Ishmael, son of Phiabi (15 ce)
Valerius Gratus (15 ce–26 ce)	Eleazar, son of Annas (16 ce–17 ce)
	Caiaphas, son of Annas (18 ce–36 ce)
Pontius Pilatus (26 ce–36 ce)	
Marcellus (36 ce–37 ce)	
Marullus (37 ce–41 ce)	Jonathan, son of Annas (37 ce–41 ce)

and actions during a pilgrimage feast would have been quite dangerous from the standpoint of the Roman administrators.

The Roman authorities managed to integrate themselves with the religious establishment in Jerusalem because Rome appointed the high priest, just as the Persian governors and the Greek kings did before them. Of course, imperial administrators needed support among the local leadership, and they always sought to establish a symbiotic relationship with local leaders. Among the families eligible for the office of high priest, one emerged that seemed to be uniquely able to sustain an agreeable relationship with Roman prefects. As prefects moved in and out of power, Annas and his son-in-law, Caiaphas, were able to maintain power for a long time, probably because they had established a working rapport with the Roman prefects.[4] Notice that the longest serving perfects coincide with the long terms of both Annas and Caiaphas, the two high priests mentioned in connection with the trial and execution of Jesus in the Gospels.

The Social System of First-Century Palestine

Much like the world today, obscene disparities between the wealthy and the poor deeply marked the Roman world. The vast majority of the population was poor and barely survived on their meager earnings. Some segments of the peasantry, however, were more fortunate insofar as they learned a trade and were thus able to withstand the effects of natural disasters and political upheavals that often cost others their lives.

Patriarchy characterized all of the social systems of first-century Palestine; in other words, the social system generally revolved around men. Yet, one must be cautious in characterizing the place of women within this society. Facile assumptions about the marginalization of women leave little room for the complexity of the historical data on this question. No doubt, in many places the status of women reflected the worst stereotypes: women were treated as property with no real freedom and were constantly subject to the wishes and plans of their husbands and other male relatives. While there is evidence that such attitudes toward women existed in first-century Palestine, historians also find many examples of strong, powerful, and relatively independent women in the New Testament. These examples should come as no surprise since within Greco-Roman society women often enjoyed greater power and a measure of independence in comparison to conservative urban Jewish society.[5] Given that first-century Palestine was a crossroads of both Jewish and Greco-Roman cultures, the status of women cannot be easily fixed, and readers should be prepared to find disturbing examples of radically marginalized women as well as positive examples of powerful, influential, and relatively independent women.

Slavery was a universal social institution in the empire and neighboring territories. Unlike the chattel slavery found in the Americas in the early modern period, in which race was the decisive factor, slavery in the Roman world was based on social status and fortune or circumstances. Particularly in the border regions of the empire, raiding parties would abduct people and enslave them. The recovery of a lost loved one, therefore, required either a counterraid or some form of payment whereby the slave might be "redeemed." Individuals from the peasant class were often tempted to sell themselves into slavery to avoid the very real possibility of starvation. The majority of the population in Roman Palestine lived on the edge of ruin and disaster, conditions that made slavery an appealing option. Slaves (*douloi*, often translated as "servants" in modern New Testament translations) were the property of

their master and had no rights whatsoever—not even the right to a family (a slave's children were the property of the slave's master). Moreover, slaves (both male and female) were subject to the sexual demands of their masters and had no recourse in Greco-Roman society. The lot of a slave in the first century was dreadful, yet the notion of freedom or autonomy as modern North Americans understand it was surely a distant fantasy for most of those who lived in first-century Palestine, whether Jew or Gentile, slave or free.

Social status in the Roman Empire, and especially in the eastern Mediterranean, revolved around the values of honor and shame. These values are understood differently today and are even somewhat alien to the sensibilities of modern North American readers. In the world of the New Testament, one's honor centered on how one was understood and valued by others. As such, relationships in an honor-shame culture were dyadic; identity came through relationship to others and not through introspection, unlike in contemporary American culture where it is often said that "you know in your heart" who you really are.

A slave, for example, had little honor in Roman society because his or her relationships were quite limited and unidirectional (i.e., the master directed the slave at all times), while the wife of a Roman senator, for example, could enjoy great honor. Factors beyond one's control—like age, gender, health, and wealth—played a major role in allowing one to accrue honor and, conversely, to lose it. Additionally, physical space and appearance were often crucial in maintaining honor, and any attempt to challenge one's honor often came in the form of compromised space: physical proximity, a touch or bump, striking someone, or even wearing inappropriate clothing. Exactly how or to what extent one's honor was compromised depended on the audience that witnessed such actions. Affronts to one's honor in private could be handled in one manner, while public affronts had to be handled differently. Moreover, the connection between physical boundaries and honor was more pronounced when women were involved, for a woman's honor was connected to her discretion and her avoidance of even the remotest possibility that her sexual exclusivity or purity could be compromised.

Throughout the Roman Empire, the wealthy dominated and determined the social order. A system of patronage came to define politics, economics, and social life in general. In the patronage system, the wealthy became the benefactors of those without financial or political resources. At the simplest level, there existed a prefeudal system of tenant farming and other agricultural operations where the landowner would allow peasants to work the land. Benefactors, or patrons as they are sometimes called, did not receive payment for their deeds. Rather, their clients, or those who benefitted from the good graces of the patron, were expected to show loyalty and gratitude to their patrons, to speak well of them and to proclaim their good character. While these relationships were not legal agreements, they were the stuff upon which Roman society was built, and the New Testament bears the marks of the patron-client system in several areas. For example, the New Testament language of faith and grace comes from the system of patronage. *Faith* (*pistis* in Greek) at a basic level simply means "to trust." The client was supposed to trust the goodwill of the patron (in the context of Christian theology, faith is more complex than "trust"). Additionally, *grace* (*charis* in Greek) was often used to describe the benefits that the patron would give to clients. These parallels are notable, and the New Testament writings seem to make use of the patronage system as an analog for the relationship between God and humanity.

PURITY AND DEFILEMENT IN JUDAISM

Purity was a major issue for first-century Jews. Purity and cleanliness require a world of order, everything in its place and a place for everything. The ultimate place was Yahweh's dwelling with Israel, the holy of holies, or the inner sanctuary of the Temple. The purity of human beings and animals can be measured in relation to the Temple.

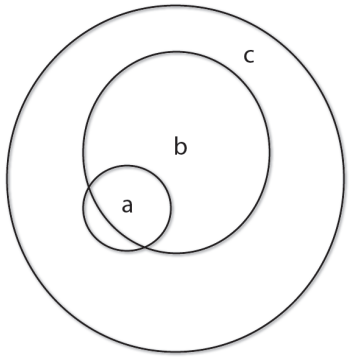
People

Gentiles, or non-Jews, were unclean. While contact with Gentiles was often unavoidable, it was actively discouraged. Israelite males were more "clean" than were females in general, and they could access the inner Temple precincts. Only priests and Levites, a selective subset of Israelite men, were authorized to make sacrifice and perform rituals in the Temple, and only the high priest could enter the inner sanctuary of the Temple.

Animals

Some animals were considered innately unclean when it came to the scale of purity. For example, any land animal that swarmed was an abomination. Other animals were always unclean and could not be eaten because they were perceived to be disordered, especially animals without cloven hoofs and those that did not chew the cud (i.e., regurgitate their food in the process of digesting it), such as carrion eaters, dogs, bears, and foxes. Animals that were suitable for the meal table had cloven hoofs and chewed the cud. Within this last category of animals were those suitable for sacrifice, namely domesticated animals without blemish.

Mary Douglas has noted a parallel between people, animals, and purity in Judaism illustrated in the following diagram.[6]



c– all who are under the covenant, both clean and unclean

b– the clean without blemish, (i.e., those fit for Temple use)

a– the firstborn without blemish and therefore consecrated to the Temple; some of those consecrated to the Temple *may subsequently become unclean*, however, making them ineligible to work in or approach the Temple

Things

Corpses, blood, and other items that come into contact with unclean individuals or animals were also unclean. Stone, however, never transmitted uncleanness, so one did not need to worry about whom or what had been traveling on a particular road or leaned against a certain rock. In other words, while purity was a big concern among first-century Jews, such concerns did not paralyze the community. One simply tried to avoid that which was unclean, and when one encountered that which was unclean, one did what was necessary to remove the impurity (e.g., one could find a purification pool, or *mikveh*, just about anywhere there was a Jewish population in the first century).

Theological Developments within Judaism

Students of the Old Testament quickly learn to recognize that Scripture reflects significant developments in Israelite religion over the course of centuries. The religious outlook of the patriarchs, that of Moses, of the eighth-century prophets, and the religious concerns of priestly traditions of the postexilic period, all mark significant changes in the religious worldview of Judaism and its corresponding practices. The centuries between the close of the Old Testament and the writing of the New Testament texts, often called the intertestamental period, witnessed ongoing developments in the Jewish religion, developments that form the backdrop for the ministry of Jesus and the theology of the early Christian church.

The intertestamental period saw the culmination of trends that had defined Second Temple Judaism for almost five hundred years. Following the Babylonian exile, the Jewish religion began to take on a different hue. Scholars have identified certain distinctive features of Judaism in this period:

- The Temple and its cult assumed major importance for all forms of Judaism in the Second Temple period. Yet there was also a growing awareness that a life of prayer and study must accompany the cultic activity of the Temple. As a result, synagogues began to appear. In synagogues people would gather, usually on the Sabbath, to pray and study the Torah. No cultic activity (i.e., sacrifices) took place in synagogues.
- The Torah, along with the Prophets, became central to Israel's understanding of itself and its covenantal relationship with Yahweh. In the Second Temple period there was a growing emphasis on the observance of the statutes found in the Torah. The emergence of Scripture coincided with the so-called end of prophecy after the Babylonian exile, where over several centuries, the figure of the prophet slowly diminished as a lived reality in Jewish society and became instead merely a literary figure within the authoritative texts (i.e., biblical texts).
- Israel became more concerned with itself (exclusivism) and less connected to the outside world. Israel was no longer an autonomous political entity, and so it did not have to deal with the great questions of international relations (i.e., war and peace, national policies, etc.). In conjunction with this development, however, Judaism was still conscious of its universalistic vocation to be a "light to the nations" so that all people would be brought together to worship Yahweh, the true God.
- The exclusivism of the Second Temple period also coincided with the emergence of apocalyptic eschatology as a major theological factor.

Each of these features helped to contribute to the distinctive theology and practice of Judaism in the first century. As such, they also became decisive in the story of Jesus and the emergence of the Christian community.

The Temple, Torah, and Exclusivism

The destruction of the Jewish Temple in 587 BCE brought the era of the first Temple, Solomon's Temple, to a close. The Second Temple was initially completed around 515 BCE amid great controversy. Some Israelites from the northern kingdom of Israel had stayed on in the region south of Galilee and north of Jerusalem following the Babylonian conquest and had intermarried with other nationalities that had been settled there after the destruction of the

northern kingdom of Israel by the Assyrians in 722 BCE.[7] Known as the Samaritans, they developed their own worship on Mount Gerazim and opposed the rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem following the return of exiles from Babylon (see Ezra 4:4–24). Their opposition created animosity that persisted for centuries, as is evident in the pages of the Gospels. The rebuilding and embellishment of the Temple was not finally completed until the time of Herod the Great, who died around 6 BCE.

In the two centuries that followed the initial rebuilding of the Jerusalem Temple (c. 515 BCE–330 BCE), there was a great push toward consolidation, and a form of Judaism began to emerge that was far more normative than it had been in the period before the exile. Except for the relatively small number of Samaritans, the new Temple was the center of worship and the focal point of Yahweh's presence with Israel, even for the thousands of Jews who now lived in other lands in what is called the Diaspora. Even during the Babylonian exile one can see in the work of the prophet Ezekiel an emerging priestly and cultic focus in the theology of Israel. In fact, Ezekiel spends several chapters outlining the dimensions of a future rebuilt Temple and emphasizes its importance in the life of Israel (see Ezekiel, chapters 40–48). With the rebuilding of the Temple, the priestly class, and not the warrior-king, would dictate how the religious life of Israel would unfold. It was at this time that the high priest emerged as the ruler of Jerusalem, the theocrat to govern the Jewish people in Jerusalem under the watchful eye of the foreign government that controlled the region.

Around the year 400 BCE, two men emerged to lead Israel in its religious reformation: Nehemiah and Ezra.[8] There is some confusion over where to place Ezra in relation to Nehemiah (scholars dispute whether the two were contemporaries or whether Ezra was active several decades after Nehemiah), but both men exerted a strong influence over the shape of Second Temple Judaism. First, a kind of covenantal exclusivism began to emerge within Judaism. Prior to the exile, one reads of alliances and intermarriages between Israelites and various foreigners. With the reforms of Nehemiah and Ezra, Jews were forbidden from intermarrying with non-Jews (i.e., Gentiles), and the whole tenor of the faith seems to have moved sharply in the direction of purity and exclusivism, a movement that is exacerbated or furthered by the emergence of Scripture at this time (Nehemiah 13:23–30).

Before Nehemiah and Ezra, there was no such thing as "scripture" per se. In other words, although certainly ancient texts generally were regarded as important, those texts had not been enumerated, separated, and canonized until approximately 400 BCE when the "book of the Law," or the Torah, began to be recognized as the definitive collection of narratives and statutes for Israel. With the emergence of canonical texts that enumerated quite specifically the parameters of the covenantal relationship between Yahweh and Israel, there was a corresponding attentiveness to the specific demands of legal observance. In other words, now that a definitive set of texts could tell one how to live the covenant faithfully, people generally became more attentive to those demands. In the Second Temple period, one begins to find an emphasis on purity and defilement in Jewish life that does not appear to have been as evident in the preexilic period. To be sure, Israel had its cult prior to the exile, and it clearly had a developed sense of purity and defilement. Yet with the emergence of the Torah, the demands of covenantal observance could be more scrupulously observed, and an entire class of people emerged at this time—the scribes—to help discern these demands.

THE GREAT JEWISH FEASTS

The Jewish calendar is based on the phases of the moon. The day begins at sunset and concludes with the following sunset. The following list includes the months of the Jewish calendar with the corresponding months in the common modern-day calendar in parentheses:

Nisan (March–April)
Iyyar (April–May)
Sivan (May–June)
Tammuz (June–July)
Ab (July–August)
Elul (August–September)
Tishri (September–October)
Marheshvan (October–November)
Kislev (November–December)
Tebeth (December–January)
Shebat (January–February)
Adar (February–March)

The older calendar in the preexilic period (i.e., prior to the Babylonian exile) used the Canaanite names for the months. Additionally, the New Year is reckoned in the spring in some Old Testament passages whereas autumn is held as the beginning of the New Year in other Old Testament texts. In the Mishnah, the early rabbis designated four New Year's observances: (1) the first of *Nisan* was the New Year for kings and feasts; (2) the first of *Elul* was the New Year for tithes on cattle; (3) the first of *Tishri* was the New Year for foreign kings; (4) the first of *Shebat* was the New Year for fruit trees.[9] To complicate matters even further, the solar year (i.e., twelve lunar months) is approximately eleven days longer than the twelve lunar months that comprise the Jewish calendar. To keep the feasts within their appropriate seasons, every three years is a leap year in which an extra month is added to the end of the calendar year. During these leap years, there are two months named *Adar*: *Adar Aleph* and *Adar Beth*. The first *Adar* serves as a "spacer" month and no major feasts are celebrated during this month. With the second *Adar*, the feasts of the calendar are observed.

Sabbath—The seventh day of the week, corresponding to Saturday in the modern calendar, was set apart as a day of rest and prayer. The Sabbath observance emerged early in Israel's history, but the theological rationale for the observance is ambiguous. In Exodus 20:8–11, the six-day creation of the world followed by Yahweh's rest (see Genesis, chapter 1) is the reason for observing the Sabbath: "In six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them; but on the seventh day he rested. That is why the Lord has blessed the sabbath day and made it holy" (Exodus 20:11). In Deuteronomy 5:12–15, the Israelites are reminded of their former status as slaves in Egypt. The Israelites must not work nor may any of their slaves or animals, because it all belongs to God, and the Sabbath is the ritual whereby Israel acknowledges this basic tenet. The Sabbath was an enduring symbol of Yahweh's covenant with Israel, and violations of the Sabbath rest were punishable with death (Exodus 31:15–17). Yet later rabbinic literature makes it clear that exactly what kind of work was prohibited on the Sabbath was a matter of great debate. Additionally, it was acknowledged that in matters of life and death one might technically violate the Sabbath without incurring guilt or blame. In the Mishnah there are thirty-nine examples of work that may not be done on the Sabbath, but there are also numerous documents that describe work that may be done on the Sabbath as well as exceptions to the rules regarding work.[10]

continued

THE GREAT JEWISH FEASTS *continued*

Passover (*Pesach*—14 of *Nisan*)—Many scholars believe that this first great pilgrimage feast originated from the blending of two ancient feasts: one commemorating the Exodus from Egypt and another celebrating a new cycle of planting and harvesting—Unleavened Bread (15 of *Nisan*).

Pentecost (*Shavuot*; also called "the Festival of Weeks"—6 of *Sivan*)—This feast has its origins as the conclusion of the grain season, but it took on greater significance as it was tied to the events of the Exodus and more specifically to the giving of the Law on Mount Sinai. Pentecost is one of the great pilgrimage feasts in Second Temple Judaism.

Day of Atonement (*Yom Kippur*—10 of *Tishri*)—This is a late feast, even though the scapegoat ritual and the pouring of the blood over the mercy seat (*kapporet* in Hebrew) are both prescribed rituals in Leviticus, chapter 16. The feast became extremely important in the Second Temple period as it was the principal celebration of Israel's purification and cleansing from sin.

Booths (*Succoth*—15 of *Tishri*)—The third of the great pilgrimage feasts in Second Temple Judaism marked the fall harvest as well as the time of the wilderness wandering. As a commemoration of Israel's time of wandering after the Exodus, Jewish families would erect tents and spend the week living in them as an act of recollection, as a memorial.

Dedication (*Hanukkah*—25 of *Kislev*)—This feast developed late in Israel's history, though it has great significance in the context of Jewish nationalism. The feast celebrates the purification and rededication of the Jerusalem Temple following the defeat of the Seleucid king Antiochus IV Epiphanes. Antiochus had erected a statue of Zeus in the Temple precincts and had Greek sacrifices offered there while observance of Jewish Law and the cult of Yahweh were prohibited under pain of death (see 1 and 2 Maccabees). During the rededication of the Temple, legend says that despite insufficient oil to keep the menorah lit for the eight-day celebration, the menorah did not go out.

Apocalyptic Eschatology

Following the Babylonian exile (587–539 BCE), the Persians incorporated Palestine into one of their imperial subdivisions known as Satrapies, bringing to an end Israel's (or more precisely, Judah's) status as an independent nation. This development had a decisive impact on the shape of Second Temple Judaism because without the ability or the need to conduct foreign affairs, establish trade policies, and form alliances, the Jewish people were left in a position to develop what might be called a subculture or a counterculture within the larger Persian Empire. As an empire of diverse peoples and beliefs, the Persians were relatively content to allow this development, so long as it did not compromise the power and integrity of the empire itself.

When Alexander (the Great) of Macedonia launched his campaign to spread the influence of Hellenistic culture throughout the world (c. 335 BCE), his brand of cultural imperialism eventually led to significant changes in the political and religious situation of the Jewish people. While the immediate aftermath of Alexander's conquests did little to change the status quo, the rise of the Seleucid Empire (one of the empires to emerge from the breakup of Alexander's short-lived empire) and its control of Jerusalem beginning in c. 200 BCE posed one

of the most serious challenges to Jewish identity and practice. The Seleucid King Antiochus IV Epiphanes (215–164 BCE) wanted to homogenize and hellenize his empire, and this meant the obliteration of all distinctively Jewish practices and customs. Antiochus plundered the Temple to finance his military exploits, and he outlawed the observance of the Mosaic Law under pain of death (see 2 Maccabees 6:1—7:42). Yet Antiochus was still able to garnish support from some sectors of Jewish society, including some important aristocratic families. These families and their allies actively supported the hellenization of the region, and this development created deep divisions within Judaism that lasted up to the first century.

APOCALYPTIC

Apocalyptic is defined as a genre of revelatory literature with a narrative framework in which a revelation from God is given to a human being, usually through an intermediary. The revelation makes known a transcendent reality that envisages eschatological salvation and the existence of another, supernatural world, and it is usually intended for a group in crisis with the purpose of exhortation or consolation by means of divine authority.[11]

In response to the outrageous behavior and policies of Antiochus, a group of Jewish nationalists who were zealous for the Mosaic Law launched a revolt. They were led by a family eventually known as the Maccabees. Judas, the eldest of several brothers, initially led the revolt, and he was able to win a level of independence for the Jewish people after defeating the Seleucid armies. This hard-won independence, however, would be relatively short lived given that the Maccabean victories were the result of, among other factors, an alliance with Rome against the Seleucids. Yet the political victories and compromises also contributed to important theological developments, not the least of which was the emergence of a form of apocalyptic Judaism.

Apocalyptic Judaism, or more generically, apocalyptic eschatology (*apokalypsis* means "revelation"; *eschatos* means "last" or "end"), refers to a theological movement that exercised considerable influence within Judaism in the years before and after the time of Jesus. Apocalyptic theology had its roots in the eschatology of the prophets. They had long looked to a future when Yahweh would enter history in an act of salvation and establish a new covenant that would enable the world to be drawn to Yahweh through the witness of Israel. A righteous king would rise up to rule the people, ushering in peace, prosperity, and security. This event was thought to be imminent; hence the term *eschatology*, meaning the current age is the last age before Yahweh's decisive intervention in history. While such hope may have dimmed early in the Second Temple period, the persecution of the Seleucids and prophetic eschatology provided the foundation for a new, urgent, and dramatic eschatology.

Conservative voices in the prophetic and Deuteronomistic traditions had long contended that covenantal fidelity would be rewarded with long life and prosperity for the nation (e.g., Deuteronomy, chapter 30). While there were various attempts to qualify that position, the fundamental outlook of the tradition permeated a large swath of Second Temple Judaism. Yet with the Seleucid persecution, the inadequacies of the Deuteronomistic position became increasingly apparent. During the persecution, those Jews who chose to remain faithful to the covenant were made to suffer or were killed, and the Deuteronomistic tradition could not adequately address this situation. Thus, the tradition began

to shift emphasis toward the nearness of Yahweh's future vindication of Israel. Special concern to defend Yahweh's righteousness and *chesed* (covenantal love and fidelity) became necessary, particularly when understood in light of the righteous suffering of the Maccabean martyrs and others.

At this time, a more fully developed understanding of an afterlife, articulated in terms of a general resurrection of the dead, emerged within Second Temple Judaism. This move afforded theologians the opportunity to, among other things, make sense of righteous suffering. Evil forces, led by the devil and his allies on earth, were trying to destroy the righteous, but in the near future, Yahweh would intervene and bring an end to the evil designs of demonic forces and the human empires they controlled. Given all of this emphasis on suffering and future vindication, it is no wonder that apocalyptic literature always addressed people in crisis and those suffering persecution. After all, if one were invested in the established social and political orders, there would be no need to hope and pray for an immediate (or imminent) end to that order.

Jewish apocalyptic theology provides the New Testament and the message of Jesus with its basic footing. Readers should be aware of the novelty of Jewish apocalyptic theology in the context of the Old Testament canon. In fact, with the exception of the Book of Daniel (written in the second century BCE), there are no apocalyptic works per se in the Old Testament, and some of the most basic notions Christians take for granted in the New Testament are nowhere to be found in the Old (e.g., the devil, demonic possession, exorcisms, and resurrection). Some New Testament scholars, however, are somewhat uneasy with an interpretation of Jewish apocalyptic theology that emphasizes the ultimate "end of the world." Rather, they interpret apocalyptic theology and its corresponding worldview much more as a struggle between political and cultural forces. For example, N. T. Wright, the eminent Anglican bishop and New Testament scholar, summarizes first-century Jewish apocalyptic theology this way: Israel's election by Yahweh has come under threat, first by Israel's own infidelities and second by the corresponding domination from foreign powers allied with a Jewish leadership that has been compromised by those powers. The remedy to this situation will only come about when Yahweh intervenes and establishes his kingly rule.[12]

For Wright, the unfolding of the apocalyptic drama made Israel more keenly aware of Yahweh's identity and set the stage for the theological developments that took place as the early Christian community began to reflect on the identity of Jesus (i.e., New Testament Christology). According to Wright, the monotheism expressed in texts like the Shema (Deuteronomy 6:4–9) were not compromised or threatened, since some Jews of the late Second Temple period had begun to read texts such as Daniel, chapter 7 and its description of "one like a son of man," as suggesting that Yahweh encompassed a plurality of divine beings. In fact, the first-century Hellenistic Jewish philosopher Philo understood that God's word in Genesis, chapter 1 was "another God," yet such a statement did not violate the first commandment or the Shema.[13] In fact, Wright argues that following the Babylonian exile, there had emerged within Jewish thought significant speculation about God's wisdom and God's word, speculation that moved between two poles: (1) God must be understood as separate from the world where evil and sin reign, and (2) God is not remote but is active in the history of Israel and the world to combat and defeat the power of evil. Apocalyptic theology, then, revolves around the working out of these two convictions. Insofar as God had elected Israel, made a covenant with Israel, and continued to bless Israel in the course of history, God was now, in apocalyptic thought, entering

THE MAJOR SECTS WITHIN PALESTINIAN JUDAISM

SECT OR GROUP	DESCRIPTION	TORAH	POLITICS	APOCALYPTIC
Herodians	What many would today call secular Jews who had made significant compromises in their religious observances and who were invested in an alliance with Rome	Were very comfortable with playing down or ignoring many of the demands of the Torah, particularly if the demands conflicted with the dominant culture	Were allied with Rome and viewed devout Jews as potential revolutionaries	Were invested in the political and social status quo and therefore had no interest in apocalyptic theology
Sadducees	Priests associated with the Temple in Jerusalem	Strict adherence to the letter of the Torah, particularly as it applied to the Temple service; all theology was to be measured against the demands of the Torah; if it was not in the Torah, it was not theologically significant	Content with any alliance, including one with Rome or the Herodians, so long as it guaranteed the proper functioning of the Temple	Apocalyptic theology was not found in the Torah and did not pertain to the Temple; moreover, the Sadducees were heavily invested in the status quo and had no interest in apocalyptic theology
Pharisees	Laypeople who were regarded as teachers, they focused on extending the standards of Temple purity to the home and to daily life	In addition to the demands of the written Torah, Pharisees emphasized the role of an oral torah, or oral tradition, which was given to Moses on Mount Sinai	Longed for release from foreign oppression, and thus were anti-Rome and opposed to the Herodians, but were also willing to make some compromises and adopt a realpolitik when necessary	Not militaristic but generally embraced apocalyptic theology and its hopes and expectations for the overthrow of Roman rule and the advent of God's kingly reign

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THE MAJOR SECTS WITHIN PALESTINIAN JUDAISM *continued*

Essenes	Priests and their supporters who had become disenchanted with the high priests in Jerusalem and who retreated from public life to await the coming of a new Temple with a new priesthood	Shared Sadducees' concern for Torah instructions regarding the Temple, but sectarian literature (Dead Sea Scrolls) demonstrates their need to move beyond strict and exclusive adherence to Torah	Oppression was the result of an improper priesthood serving in the Temple; political forces allied in this profanation of the Temple must be judged by Yahweh	Highly invested in apocalyptic theology; a war between the forces of Yahweh and the forces of evil (sons of light vs. sons of darkness in the *War Scroll* [1QM]) will inaugurate God's kingly reign
Zealots	Militant revolutionaries who actively sought to overthrow Roman rule; they emerged after the lifetime of Jesus but had their roots in the Galilean countryside	Unknown	Violently opposed the Roman government of the region and all who were allied with it; sought to build an insurrection against Rome; active in the Jewish revolt of 66 ce	Unknown

into history at the *eschaton* as word (wisdom) or as "the son of man."

God's decisive entry into human history would not constitute the "end of the world," according to Wright. Rather, everything about Israel's beliefs and practices suggests that the *eschaton* should be seen an earthy, political event—similar in many ways to the prophetic eschatology that had emerged in the preexilic era. For many Jews of the first century, hope for resurrection was constitutive of the *eschaton*, but this hope did not represent a desire to flee from the world or to escape into some distant place. Resurrection was instead an important symbol of God's transformation of the world. Wright understands Jewish hope for resurrection as the indispensible way of expressing the hope of future vindication of the righteous amid the suffering that Israel had been undergoing since the time of the Babylonian exile.[14] Jewish apocalyptic theology, according to Wright, envisions a renewal of the created order established by God. This new order would supplant the existing order in which pagans dominated, and the true Israel would fulfill its vocation to bring Gentiles to the knowledge and worship of Yahweh. Hope for the resurrection became the primary means by which Israel expressed its hope for a "return from exile," the forgiveness of sins (the cause of its continuing exile), and the reestablishment of the true Israel, the symbol of the true humanity intended by God in creation.[15]

Quite naturally, little agreement exists within first-century Judaism on these matters, and who or what constituted the true Israel often became a matter of heated debate. After all, there was substantial room within first-century Judaism for great differences at the level of what one might call secondary beliefs, and these differences would create rival descriptions of who could be counted as part of the true Israel and, therefore, who would be saved from destruction.[16] The Pharisees, for example, saw the true Israel as those Jews who embraced a concern for purity and holiness in all aspects of daily life. For the Essenes, a group of somewhat reclusive priests and their supporters, the true Israel would be defined by those who followed "the teacher of righteousness" and abided by the rules of the community. For others, the true Israel was defined simply as those who were under the covenant and who participated faithfully in the Temple ceremonies. Throughout the first century, various movements sought to redefine the boundaries between the true Israel (those who would see resurrection) and God's enemies (those who would be destroyed), and the literature produced by these movements proves that this tendency was ubiquitous if not universal. The New Testament itself is rife with examples of redefining boundaries. Faithfulness to the covenant in the present, amid the persecutions and violence of foreign oppressors, would be rewarded in the future with resurrection and participation in a new world that God would soon inaugurate in the *eschaton*.

Conclusion

The world of Jesus and the early Christian writers was far more complex than this chapter might seem to suggest. While one must not get bogged down in the "world behind the text," failure to take this background into account also threatens to distort the text. When readers of the Gospels take the time to become familiar, even in a cursory way, with the complex world of the New Testament, their ability to appreciate the nuances and difficulties presented in the writings of the evangelists increases substantially. Moreover, when the biblical text is appropriately contextualized, the theological importance of the Christian understanding of revelation in history comes into bolder relief.

QUESTIONS FOR UNDERSTANDING

1. What was the impact of Greek philosophy on the world of the New Testament?
2. What was the patronage system, and how did it operate?
3. How did the values of honor and shame function in the world of the New Testament?
4. List and describe four distinctive features of Second Temple Judaism.
5. What were the specific historical circumstances that gave birth to Jewish apocalyptic eschatology?
6. Why should readers be cautious about characterizing the place of women in first-century Palestine?

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. Given the discussion of the historical, cultural, and theological background of the New Testament in this chapter, how might this information aid the interpretation of the Gospels? Can this information hinder the interpretation of the Gospels? Explain.
2. The hellenization of Palestine deeply divided Judaism, with some advocating accommodation to the dominant culture and others embracing an apocalyptic theology and resisting that culture even to the point of death. How does one's stance on accommodation to the dominant culture affect one's attitude toward apocalyptic theology? If one is rewarded or punished by the dominant culture, how does that relate to one's own approach to apocalyptic eschatology?
3. How do the values of honor and shame pertain to contemporary Western culture? Explain.

FOR FURTHER READING

Getty-Sullivan, Mary Ann. *Women in the New Testament*. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 2001.

Malina, Bruce J. *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology*. Rev. and enl. ed. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001.

Wright, N. T. *The New Testament and the People of God*. Christian Origins and the Question of God, vol. 1. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1992.

ENDNOTES

1. Philo, *On Dreams*, 1.

2. John Dominic Crossan and Burton Mack are two prominent proponents of this thesis. Together with other scholars they argue that the life and ministry of Jesus were essentially that of a peripatetic Cynic philosopher. Only the imposition of Jewish apocalyptic thought by subsequent generations of early Christian writers moved the account of Jesus' life and ministry away from its original focus.

3. Edward Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Penguin Classics abridged edition (New York: Penguin), 9–14.

4. See Joachim Gnilka, *Jesus of Nazareth* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1997), 34–41.

5. See Bonnie Thurston, *Women in the New Testament: Questions and Commentary* (New York: Crossroad, 1998), 8–28, for a brief but helpful overview.

6. See Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London: Rutledge, 1966), 51–71, and Bruce J. Malina, *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology*, revised edition (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1993), 165.

7. See the inscriptions of Sargon II related to the fall of Samaria in *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, ed. James B. Pritchard (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1955), 284–287.

8. The dating of both Ezra's and Nehemiah's careers is notoriously difficult. No clear consensus has emerged in the literature, but most of the proposed solutions concur that the careers of these two figures unfold at the close of the fifth century or perhaps at the start of the fourth. See Robert North, "The Chronicler: 1–2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah," in *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary* 23:82–83.

9. *m. Rosh. Hash.*, 1.1.

10. See *m. Sabb.* 7.2 for examples of the thirty-nine prohibited tasks. For examples of relaxed rules regarding the Sabbath rest, see *Jubilees*, 50:8–12, and the *Damascus Document*, 10–11.

11. This is the definition adopted by the Society of Biblical Literature, as emended by David Hellholm, "The Problem of Apocalyptic Genre and the Apocalypse of John," in A. Y. Collins, ed., *Early Christian Apocalypticism: Genre and Social Setting*, Semeia 36 (Decatur, GA: Scholars Press, 1986), 27.

12. N. T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 243.

13. Philo, *On Dreams*, 1:229.

14. Wright, *People of God*, 332.

15. Ibid.

16. Ibid., 336.