Jesus, Israel and the Cross

(Originally published in *SBL 1985 Seminar Papers*, ed. K.H. Richards. Chico, California: Scholars Press. Pp. 75–95. Reproduced by permission of the author.)

N.T. Wright
McGill University

Like naughty children whispering after a command to silence, and then, greatly daring, talking openly and with increasing volume, New Testament scholars, so long forbidden to talk about Jesus of Nazareth, have begun in the last decade to do so with renewed vigour. Twenty or so years ago the late Bishop Stephen Neill could write, "It is just the fact that the historical reconstruction of the life and history of Jesus has as yet hardly begun":[1] those words, true at the time, are now quite out of date. Neill went on to say that "The materials for further work are all there. What we need now is historians." They have duly appeared: Caird (1965), Bowker (1973), Vermes (1973, 1984), Meyer (1979), Riches (1980), Hengel (1981; German original, 1968), Harvey (1982) and now Borg (1984[2]) and Sanders (1985), sharing (despite their wide differences of approach and results) the conviction that it is possible to know quite a lot about Jesus of Nazareth and that to discuss him as a figure of history is worthwhile.[3] There is space here neither to review this "third quest" nor to justify it theologically.[4] My intention, in response to the suggestion of the Historical Jesus Consultation in the 1984 SBL meeting, is simply to attempt an answer to the question: if it is true that Jesus' life and ministry are to be understood within the framework of Judaism, and in particular if it is true that his aims and intentions were bound up with the fate of the Jewish nation (this loose way of putting it is designed to cover the positions of most of the above writers: in what follows, however, there will be space only for limited interaction with others, with the exception of Borg and Sanders), what sense can be made of his suffering and death?

A few words about the background and nature of this question will be in order before we can begin to look at it for itself. There is, for a start, the problem of the "if" in the question as formulated. It was axiomatic for some previous generations of scholars that Jesus' life and ministry had to be divorced from their Jewish setting: at best it provided the dark backcloth against which the sparkling jewel could better be seen.[5] Jesus, it was thought, taught a lofty message of universal significance: interest in his own Jewish people, their problems and the politics, would stand awkwardly from virtually all other situations. Worse (for the line of thought we are describing), it would have tied him not just to a particular historical situation but to a Jewish frame of thought, which was just the sort of thing that much post-Enlightenment religion regarded with distaste or worse. Thus, in order to make Jesus not only theologically relevant but theologically correct, he must be universalized, and with him his background. Judaism becomes a typical example of the wrong sort of religion: Jesus, the announcer of the right sort.

It is without a doubt the problems that this view poses for anyone wishing to make sense of the history of first-century Palestine that have caused people acting (no doubt) with the highest of motives to argue that the "Jesus of history" is more or less irrelevant for Christian faith, and to retroject that argument, too, into the first century by claiming that the evangelists were no more interested in him than a good neo-Kantian or

Heideggerian ought to be. But the historical problems will not go away. As F. C. Burkitt pointed out in his preface to the first edition of Schweitzer's Quest, "the true view of the Gospel [by which he meant, of course, the accounts of Jesus' life in the Gospels] will be that which explains the course of events in the first century and the second century, rather than that which seems to have spiritual and imaginative value for the twentieth century."[6] And what is to be explained is just what the view I have criticized cannot explain: why Jesus of Nazareth, who began his ministry in close association with a preacher of repentance to Israel, and whose followers, after his death, still shared in some ways the apocalyptic hope of their Jewish contemporaries, should have met his death on a Roman cross outside the gates of Jerusalem. Just as it makes sense to ask why the Peloponnesian war occurred, and why Athens eventually lost it (not to mention whether Thucydides, the first to raise the questions, got the answers right), it makes sense to ask why Jesus did what he did during his evidently brief ministry, and why he met the death he did—and whether the evangelists, who may have been the first to raise these questions, got the answers (historically) right.

It is, of course, possible to suggest an answer to this question without leaving the usual framework of thought: Jesus offended the religious beliefs and vested interests of his contemporaries, and died (in effect) as a martyr for the right sort of religion. But this view, too, has large problems to surmount. First, the evidence of the gospels themselves does not suggest that the opposition which eventually led to Jesus' death was what (in this view) would usually count as specifically religious, or theologically motivated. The trial narratives do not obviously go back to Jesus' reported attacks on Torah, his Sabbath violations, his rude remarks about the food laws. However the charge of blasphemy is to be interpreted, it is only connected by the occasional and slender thread (e.g. Mark 2:7 and pars.) to the controversies which surrounded Jesus during his ministry. Second, this view has great difficulty in explaining how Jesus' death as a martyr to the cause of universal spiritual religion could be seen, within a decade or two at least, as possessing atoning significance: this point could be sharpened by asking how it was that Paul could write, about twenty years later, that "the Son of God loved me and gave himself for me" (Gal 2:20). This second problem, however, is shared by some at least of the works represented in the newest Quest, and it is the task of this paper to show how, within the parameters set by the current discussion, a satisfactory answer may be found.

The alternative approach offered by writers in the Reimarus-Brandon line[7] has of course had its own solution to the problem: Jesus was a Jewish freedom-fighter who suffered, predictably, the punishment which the Romans characteristically meted out to revolutionary leaders. This view, though not (as we will see) without strengths which must be taken into account in any eventual hypothesis, runs into problems of its own. The actual evidence we have makes it extremely unlikely that Jesus was an advocate of revolutionary violence,[8] and this view, too, fails to explain either why Jesus' death was regarded so soon as atoning or, as Sanders has pointed out (1985, 226, 228, 231, 295, 318, 329) why his disciples were not at once rounded up and rooted out.[9] Nevertheless, the reaction to Brandon has too often been of the form: Jesus was not a violent revolutionary, therefore (or is it "because"?) his message is apolitical, spiritual, timeless, universal. I regard it as one of the many great strengths of Borg's book that he attacks

this standard view and suggests that there are more than two possible positions here.[10] To split "religion" and "politics" as neatly and apparently self-evidently as post-Enlightenment Western thought does is one thing: to project that view into the first century (or even, for that matter, the sixteenth) is to commit gross anachronism, especially when what is at stake is the historical understanding of a people who were committed, for reasons we would today call "religious," to a particular territory and social lifestyle. There is, then, more than meets the eye to the *titulus* on the cross: Jesus' death may after all have had something to do with the hope of Israel, though not perhaps in the way Brandon thought.[11] But this is to run ahead of the argument.

It is, happily, less incumbent on a writer today than it was ten years ago to write a massive section of his treatment of Jesus explaining and justifying his method.[12] One or two remarks, however, are in order at this stage. Like Sanders (1985, 47), I agree whole-heartedly with Meyer in his argument that, as historians, we must proceed on the assumption that historical knowledge is real knowledge, and that the route by which it is to be reached is that of hypothesis and verification. Insofar as some of the much-vaunted "criteria" for adjudging synoptic authenticity lend themselves to use within this scheme, they are to be valued: but they are not of very much value even there, as will be readily apparent from the constant disagreements even among those who agree in theory on the tools they are using. The much-vaunted "criterion of dissimilarity," in particular, was never really a critical tool in the first place, however "objective" it may have appeared to the outsider. It was designed as a blunt instrument for implementing a double theological programme: Jesus is to be divorced from his Jewish context, and the early church is to have no interest in the historical Jesus. This is actually an odd combination, since if Jesus really was separate from Judaism, the teacher who challenged people to existentialist decision, it should have been quite safe for the early church, or indeed the modern one, to be interested in him: hence Bultmann's *Jesus*. The idea that ancient and modern Christians are better off with the Christ of faith than with the Jesus of history offers tacit recognition that Jesus cannot, after all, be divorced from his Jewish matrix. Hence the need for the other blunt instrument: demythologisation.

In practice, writers of all stripes this century have in fact used the hypothesis-model: sayings and incidents which would be suspect on strict application of the criteria are retained because they are close to the heart of what the writer assumes to be bedrock in our knowledge of Jesus, and the criteria are often wheeled in only as convenient ways of eliminating those bits of evidence which do not fit the hypothesis.[13] This has resulted in the strange situation that one of the age-old criteria for a good *hypothesis*—in any field of enquiry from a police investigation to a metaphysical conundrum—has been quietly set aside; one must "save the appearances," must include as far as possible all the evidence. The "criteria" have provided a convenient waste-basket where "appearances" that the hypothesis cannot "save" may be deposited without anyone feeling guilty about it. The strength of Harvey's argument, and, *mutatis mutandis*, those also of Meyer, Borg and Sanders is that they provide hypotheses in which significantly more of the "appearances" are "saved" than in many previous treatments: and by "appearances" I mean the texts of the synoptic gospels.[14] We need, then, hypotheses, and these recent works suggest some; I shall offer my own, or rather a summary outline of that part of my

own which bears on the specific topic in hand. The strength of a hypothesis is its essential simplicity, its "saving" of the "appearances," and its ability to make sense of data not part of the present puzzle. I regard all the works already cited as possessing these strengths in varying degrees over against the main line of writing about Jesus which preceded them in the present (or, for that matter, the last) century: and this paper is an attempt to modify and re-present part, at least, of the overall hypothesis which seems to be emerging.

II

The case I wish to advance has three stages, almost syllogistic in overall form. The first may be stated, in advance, as follows: *Jesus warned his contemporaries of imminent divine judgment*. This is in some ways the required starting-point for this paper, since it was requested as a sequel to a discussion of Borg's book, where the point is made central, and established at some length.[15] But just here there is a conflict with most of the other recent writers about Jesus. Meyer and Sanders, for instance, regard a message of judgment as almost peripheral in Jesus' ministry. The point must therefore be set out in some detail.

We may begin on solid ground.[16] (1) Jesus' ministry took its historical origin from that of John the Baptist, who, as is widely agreed, warned Israel of "the wrath to come" and urged her to turn while there was time. He can be safely located on the map of Jewish apocalyptic expectation, as can the early church, whose half-misunderstandings (e.g. Acts 1:6) are still recorded at a time when such issues had lost their immediate relevance. Paul, too, shows constant signs of being grounded in the Jewish apocalyptic expectation, whether we judge such signs to be indications of his major theological emphases or whether, with Käsemann, we place them at the periphery. If Jesus had not shared these expectations, he would have been more than an historical oddity: he would have been incomprehensible and irrelevant in the eyes of his contemporaries. This, which is similar to Harvey's overall thesis (though he does not develop it in relation to the hope of Israel), amounts to the simple argument: Jesus must have taught and lived in this context, otherwise he would not have made sense. More: he would not have been crucified. A nineteenth-century moralist or teacher of pure, spiritual religion, or a man who proclaimed that God was "near" as opposed to remote (a fact of which many Jews were already well aware), would not, it is safe to say, have ended up on a cross.[17] Jesus lived, taught and died in a context of what Sanders calls "Jewish restoration eschatology."

(2) But in what did this "apocalyptic hope" consist? Space forbids the detailed discussion this question warrants. Perhaps the best that can be done is to register my agreement with the line taken by Caird (1965, 1976, 1980) and Borg (as above), following the interpretation of apocalyptic given by S. B. Frost in particular: the "apocalyptic" hope of Israel was not an expectation that God would soon end the entire space-time order, but was the hope that he would soon, within the continuing course of history, act to vindicate his own name by delivering his covenant people from their current political and social predicaments. The language used by many writers (though by no means all) as the vehicle of this hope has systematically misled generations of scholars

into imagining that the referent is "the end of the world," whereas its purpose is rather to invest the future space-time events which are the actual referents with their true theological significance. The classic example of a scholar thus misled is of course Albert Schweitzer, who was so right in his insistence that Jesus is to be seen in the context of Jewish eschatology and so wrong in his interpretation of it, just as Reimarus and Brandon were right to make politics the setting and wrong to make Jesus an armed revolutionary.[18] *When* God acts in this way, he will be ushering in *ha'olam haba'*, the new age. This is akin to Jeremiah's prophecy that "the Day of the Lord" was soon to break on the people of Israel: the Babylonian invasion was to be identified as the coming of that Day. The historical and political events were invested with theological significance. This point is particularly striking in the interpretation of Daniel 7. No one imagines that the beasts are to be taken as actual animals, but many assume that the figure like a son of man is to be taken as just that, a human figure. It is hard to maintain the symbolic interpretation, and the consequent this-worldly reference, of the New Testament apocalyptic language when faced with an overwhelming tradition which insists on taking it literally, but I believe this is the only way forward if justice is to be done to the literature itself, let alone its relevance to the New Testament. Even Borg (e.g. 212) stops short of Caird's position (1965, 18-22) when it comes to the "Son of Man" sayings.

(3) Jesus warned, then, of the approach, not of "the end of the world" in the sense of the cessation of the present space-time continuum, but of *the end of the present socio-political state of affairs*.[19] (I used to use the phrase "the end of the present world order," but in his new book Sanders has used it with a different sense, and I therefore avoid it for the sake of clarity. Sanders, it seems to me, never quite grasps the nettle. He sees that will constitute God's action in history to fulfill the covenant and bring in at last the new age when God's people will be vindicated after their long desolation. It is this which gives to his preaching its characteristic urgency, so rightly noted and so wrongly interpreted by both Schweitzer and Bultmann. It is this, too, that gave him relevance to his contemporary situation: the smouldering conflicts between Jew and Gentile, and between Jew and Jew, which characterized the outwardly peaceful society of Palestine in the first thirty years of the era,[20] were directly addressed by one who claimed, and put his claim into action, that God was about to act to set things right. Only in this context can we understand how his message—especially his language about the Kingdom—could have been more than the timeless philosophy to which scholarship still so often reduces it.

(4) If Jesus' language about the Kingdom thus resonated with the expectation of his contemporaries that God would act in history to vindicate his name and his people, it is also clear that what he said about the Kingdom challenged and disturbed those current expectations. His message is, to that extent, like that of Amos 5:18: Why do you desire the Day of Yahweh? It is a day of darkness, and not of light. A good many of the parables are devoted to saying: *this*, and not that, is what the Kingdom (for which you have longed) is like. It is like a net full of fish, good and bad together: like wheat mingled with tares: like a man sowing seed in his field. It is a time of judgment for Israel, not deliverance merely. Many will come from East and West, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the Kingdom, while the children of the Kingdom are cast out. If these statements and others like them are read simply as retrojections of the later church into

the ministry of Jesus, it will be impossible (I believe) to understand that ministry in its true colours.

(5) In particular, it will be impossible to understand why Jesus was referred to as a *prophet*. This attribution should be distinguished from the frequently discussed question of whether Jesus was thought of, or thought of himself as, "the eschatological prophet": there is, in fact, comparatively little evidence for that reference to Deut 18:15-22 in the gospels, John 6:14 and one or two other passages being exceptions. There is plenty of evidence that the primary category seized on by Jesus' contemporaries to explain who he was was "prophet" in the sense not of national leader but of national disturber; John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah were the models chosen, according to Matt 16:14 pars. Good evidence, too: the great majority of references come very definitely into the "dissimilarity" test, since Judaism was not noticeably expecting a prophet who, like Elijah and Jeremiah, would warn that the covenant God had a quarrel with his people, and the early church very quickly abandoned the category in favour of others more clearly honorific. Matt 16:14 itself might be held to be an exception, since the passage is clearly leading up; to a statement of Jesus Messiahship, and the references to the prophets might be held to be introduced simply for the sake of contrast. But this will not do in the light of the other evidence. Herod apparently put Jesus into the category of "prophet": so did the disciples: and so did Jesus himself—"it is impossible that a prophet should perish outside Jerusalem"; "a prophet is not without honour except in his own country." Even when the context cries out for at least a Messianic statement, Matthew has the crowds at the Entry announce "This is the prophet, Jesus, from Nazareth in Galilee." And the characteristic message of the prophet is to warn the people of God that they are off course, and that God will shortly act to punish them, and to deliver those who (in this sense) mend their ways.

(6) Into this developing picture the numerous explicit warnings of the synoptic gospels fit comfortably. The fig tree has one more year to bear fruit, and "if not, then you can cut it down"; those who perished in one of Pilate's characteristically provocative suppressions of Jewish feeling will set the pattern for all—unless they repent. There will be a separation of righteous and unrighteous, of wheat and chaff. Israel will be like a steward about to be put out of service for mismanagement, and unless she makes alternative provisions quickly her plight will be sorry. If Sanders is right—and I think he is—then the action in the Temple can be seen within exactly the same context: not basically as a cleansing, as though Jesus thought either to make it fit for continuing use or to register a protest against the "materialistic" concerns of Judaism (again, anachronism has made nonsense of the setting), but as a symbolic act of destruction.[21] Here the theme which we are observing in the sayings material finds a grounding in indisputable fact.[22] But, against Sanders' repeated assertions, I believe (a) that there is no good reason to deny that Jesus preached, repeatedly and centrally, the warning of impending judgment which the action in the temple symbolized; and (b) that there is nothing in the synoptic tradition (and only John 2:18-22 outside it) to warrant the assertion that the main thing in Jesus' mind in the temple incident was not judgment but restoration. (It is ironic how one of the few "sayings" attributed to Jesus which Sanders allows to become part of his "bedrock" is that put into his mouth by the false witnesses in the trial—and even they

could not agree on it. It could of course be said that the setting reflects the embarrassment of the evangelists, but that is odd, since (a) they happily "report" several other predictions of the temple's destruction and (b) the Johannine explanation of the "rebuilding" idea was ready to hand.) The fig-tree incident, which clearly goes with the Temple incident and interprets it, suggests that Luke 13:35 is closer to the mark: the temple is abandoned by God, as in Ezekiel 10, and is therefore defenceless against the enemy.[23] One of the great advantages—if it is an advantage—of this view is that Mark 13 and pars. no longer stand out like a sore thumb from the rest of the tradition, but fit comfortably within it and indeed draw it to a climax; Jesus' whole ministry is one of apocalyptic warning of the immediately future judgment which will come upon Israel unless she repents.

(7) The warnings appear to have a definite and concrete referent. Just as Babylon, and Assyria before her, were seen by the prophets as God's instruments for purging his sinful people, so Rome will be God's means of bringing judgment on those who refuse to heed the warnings of Jesus (or, for that matter, of John the Baptist). The axe is laid to the roots of the tree: Rome, with her blasphemous standards and coinage, already pollutes the holy land, and the pollution will be complete—"unless you repent." It is at this point that the extraordinariness of Jesus' message becomes fully apparent. The Jewish hope, in a nutshell, was that God would act to save his people *from* Rome (as the concrete historical manifestation of his faithfulness to the covenant). Where Messianic expectations existed, as we shall see, they functioned within that wider, and more widespread, national hope. Jesus, however, while declaring that the Kingdom of God is imminent, stands the concrete form of the hope on its head. Hope lies, not in large-scale national deliverance from an enemy without, but in a national turning to a new form of aspiration—which is already appearing *entos hymon*, "in your midst," as a grain of mustard seed, small but growing. The paradox of Jesus' ministry is this: that, in claiming to herald the fulfillment of Israel's hope, he radically redefines that hope. Caird and Borg both make the point that, for Jesus, the referent of the warnings is specific and concrete: if you persist in nationalist ambition, sooner or later Rome will crush you. Left in that form, it may be said (and Sanders does say it) that it did not take much political astuteness to make such a prediction. True: but what the synoptic writers assert is that Jesus did not leave it in that form. He warned that the "national hope," followed in the way it was being followed, would lead to the wrath of Rome, *and that in that wrath was to be seen the wrath of God*. That is the point at which the political and historical referent of the warning is invested with theological significance, the insight which went beyond mere political or historical shrewdness.

(8) The (so-called) ethical teaching of Jesus is to be seen, in this light, not in terms of a mere interiorisation of "external" Torah, nor indeed as a new Torah, but as the summons to Israel to be Israel—under Jesus' guidance. The Torah means what is says, that the very ideas of murder and adultery are hateful to God. God means what he says that he is a Father to Israel, but to treat him as such will involve rethinking many practices of current piety. Here Borg makes one of his most important contributions to the discussion: Jesus offers Israel an alternative paradigm, the "mercy code" (Luke 6:36 summarizing 6:27-36 and its Matthaean parallel) instead of the "holiness code." Instead

of conceiving her national task as a holiness which involved separation, Jesus invites Israel to find her vocation in a different sort of *imitatio Dei*,[24] which will mean forgiving enemies instead of vengeance against them, going the second mile on behalf of the hated Roman soldier, taking the pain and anger of the present situation and offering love in return. The table-fellowship with sinners is not merely the acting out of grace to sinners: it is an acted parable of what Israel should be like, a welcoming, mercy-offering community, rather than an exclusivist company concerned with separation from defilement and hence always likely to run into conflict with Rome (so Borg, ch. 4 and frequently). This is a revolutionary Jesus of a rather different sort to Brandon's, but, as Borg so clearly shows, one who was making a definite political statement nonetheless. He who is not with the national hope is against it; he who announces that it is fulfilled, and yet systematically undermines it, is a traitor. The parallel with Elijah, and particularly with Jeremiah, could hardly be clearer. [25]

Each of these eight points is of course controversial in its own right in terms of present scholarship, and I do not suppose for a moment that I have here presented a complete, let alone a convincing, case for them. My intention is merely to suggest the outline of what I believe to be a comprehensible and coherent picture, as far as it goes, of Jesus: as "a prophet mighty in word and deed," announcing like John the Baptist a message of imminent judgment upon the people of God. The judgment will be an historical event, a fall of Jerusalem in history like that predicted by Jeremiah, but, also like that event, it must be understood as God's judgment on his people and, particularly, on the holy city and the temple.

III

The second point of the syllogism has the effect of restoring the balance that some may feel is lost in the presentation of the first. Jesus did not merely proclaim judgment against the people of God: *he identified himself with Israel*. His summons, his welcome, his offer form the positive side of the ministry which, as we shall see, dovetails exactly into the negative side outlined above. This is, if anything, a more controversial claim than the first, and must likewise be presented step by step.[26]

(1) In a *prima facie* reading of the synoptics, it appears that, when Jesus warned of judgment to come he also invited his hearers to follow him and so become part of the incipient new people of God that he was summoning into being. There is now growing agreement that the category of "the twelve" goes back to Jesus himself, and that it signifies his intention to remake the people of God:[27] this is just one of many symptoms of his underlying aim. Those who followed him were those who had heeded the warning, and who were, in principle at least, prepared to forswear the outlook and aspirations of their contemporaries, though the muddles they retained, preserved against the natural tendency in the synoptic tradition, are evidence that they were still fairly unclear as to precise implications. But the fact of their being twelve carries an implicit meaning about the place of Jesus himself in the whole scheme. He is not himself one of the twelve, not even *primus inter pares*. He stands over against them, calling them into being; they are the beginnings of the reconstituted Israel insofar as they are his followers. It is important

not to read too much into this, but equally important not to read too little. I suggest that the natural implication is that they are "Israel" *because he is Israel*.[28]

(2) This interpretation is reinforced by a consideration of other actions which are now almost universally acknowledged as historical: Jesus welcomed "sinners" and ate with them, and he healed those afflicted with a variety of physical and mental ailments. Jesus restores to membership in Israel those who had been on the margins of the holy society, whether through physical defects (compare 1QSa 2:4-9) or moral or social blemishes. The healing miracles and the table-fellowship with sinners are, in fact, all of a piece, and very instructive for the hypothesis I am developing. Jesus' physical contact with lepers, with the woman suffering from the haemorrhage, with corpses, and so on, render him unclean just as did his eating with Matthew, or with Zacchaeus. Those two stories, in fact, could be seen as paradigmatic for this aspect of the ministry. Jesus *identifies himself with sinful Israel*, and thus contracts her uncleanness: nevertheless, when he emerges from Zacchaeus' house to face the accusing crowd, it is not he who is unclean but Zacchaeus who is "a son of Abraham." The miracles and the welcome to outcasts thus invite the same interpretation as I have given to the call of the "twelve": they only make sense if Jesus, who eats with the sinners, is himself the centre-point of the reconstituted Israel that is being called into existence. Unless this nexus between Jesus and the people of God is clearly seen, the welcome becomes vacuous: who is he, to "welcome" anyone?[29]

(3) Putting this point together with the first part of the syllogism, I therefore prefer to speak not of Israel's "restoration," as does Sanders, but of her "reconstitution." Sanders (it seems to me) is absolutely right to draw attention to the Israel-dimension of the ministry of Jesus, and this marks him out from many other writers even in what I have called the "third Quest."[30] But his suggestion, both explicitly and by implication, is that Jesus' primary aim is to restore Israel, with judgment only as an ancillary warning. My suggestion is that Jesus sees Israel passing into a crisis—her last crisis: this generation will see the end of the present situation of the people of God. Like Jonah at Nineveh, his message could be summarized as "yet forty years, and Jerusalem shall be overthrown." Yet, like Isaiah gathering a remnant around him, his message is also one of salvation through the judgment: and this salvation is already inaugurated in the course of his ministry: "today salvation has come to this house." The announcement of the Kingdom has therefore a present as well as a future sense, which seems to me a better way of putting it than to sit on the fence by calling it "imminent."[31] It is as though the Kingdom—God's sovereign rule put into effect over Israel and, through Israel, over the world[32]—is present where Jesus is, because he is identified with, and indeed identified as, God's people. Where he is, God is ruling the world as he always intended. The hope of Israel is fulfilled in the present, in him, and when the future event occur to which his warnings and promises refer they will be seen as the outworking of what has already begun in the course of the ministry.

(4) It is thus that we should, I believe, make sense of the "Son of Man" problem which still causes so much vexation. There is no difficulty in granting that the phrase, whatever its original Aramaic form, could have meant "one" or "someone like me."[33]

But there should also be no difficulty in granting that Jesus, in whose ministry the themes that characterize Daniel 1-7 were prominent (the Kingdom of God and its vindication, together with the vindication of the faithful people of God, over all idolatry), should have used the symbol which occurs at the climax of the book (in the canonical form in which it will have been as familiar to him as to us) to express both the hope of Israel and his own identification with that hope. In the chapter as a whole, whatever the original intent of its component parts, the figure of the Son of Man clearly represents those who are vindicated by God after their suffering at the hands of the "beasts": the picture, as has often been pointed out, is drawn from the mythological scheme in which, as in Genesis 1-2, Adam is given dominion over the animals. In the context of the Jewish expectations of the last two centuries B.C.E. and the early years of the common era, the entire first seven chapters of Daniel would have the obvious message; remain true to God, and he will vindicate you over those idolaters who are at present oppressing you. This clarifies still further what is to be understood by "the kingdom of God" at this point in Jewish history: God's rule, and the vindication of his true people, over the pagan nations. Jesus, in using the term "Son of Man" with at least characteristic ambiguity, leaves open the possibility of interpreting his sayings to mean that he identified himself, and his ministry, as the fulfillment of that national hope. It is through him that God is setting up the Kingdom that cannot be shaken; he is the one in whom Israel is to find her redemption.[34]

(5) It is in this light, too, that some of the other Christological titles may be more clearly understood. Harvey[35] pointed out that Messianic expectations, which were not as widespread as Is sometimes thought, were not free-standing, but were a function of the national hope:

> As sociologists would be quick to tell us, it would be rare for beliefs about a coming deliverer to be anything but secondary to a general belief in the coming deliverance. It may of course happen that a particular individual, by the performance of notable exploits, comes to be recognised as a messianic figure. But this will be the case only if there is already a powerful expectation of a new age to come. . . .

He goes on to suggest that Jesus regarded himself as Messiah, and was so regarded by his followers during his lifetime, a conclusion which (due to the anachronistic impression which still persists among scholars that "Christ" is a "divine" title) is resisted by many others. Contrary to much repeated assertion, it is quite comprehensible, historically and psychologically, that a human being growing up in a situation charged with national expectation should come to believe that he or she is the one through whom that expectation is to be realised. The particular features of the situation in first-century Palestine which sharpen this general statement into a specific one result in the suggestion that it is quite comprehensible that Jesus, growing up with the expectation that God would bring in his Kingdom and vindicate Israel over her enemies, should come to believe that God would accomplish this through him: and an individual who believed that he was the Messiah, the representative of Israel as David was the representative of the people of God.[36] The phrase "Son of God" is likewise to be understood, without the anachronism of later Christological terminology, as Messianic and, like "Messiah" and

"Son of Man," as capable of carrying the overtones of "Israel's representative"—Israel herself being seen as God's Son in several biblical and post-biblical passages.[37]

It is historically probable, then, that Jesus not only proclaimed the judgment of God against Israel, but also, in summoning men and women to follow him and in his healing miracles and table-fellowship with outcasts, enacted the inauguration of the reconstituted Israel of the new age, an idea and an entity which only attains coherence if he in some sense represents or embodies Israel in himself. This latter point, incidentally, is where I begin to go beyond the argument of Borg's book, which however is (I believe) thereby strengthened.[38] These two basic features of Jesus' ministry, each of which could be set out, established and illustrated at much greater length than is possible here, invite us to complete the syllogism as follows.

IV

The question with which we began, which we saw to be among the most pressing questions facing historians of the ministry of Jesus, was: what was the connection between Jesus' ministry and his death? This is one form of the deceptively ambiguous question, Why did Jesus die? To Illustrate the ambiguities, and the nature of the problem that confronts us, I cite the two quite different answers given to the question by a grade 6 Sunday School class: some, reaching for the security of the tradition, said "Jesus died because of our sins," whereas others, attempting to think historically, produced various hypotheses about Jesus' running foul of the Jewish and/or Roman authorities. The division between the two answers is instructive. Both are clearly present in a variety of forms in the New Testament. It would, I think, be claimed by many scholars that they have nothing to do with each other (Lessing's ugly ditch separates them, after all, into the eternal truth of atonement and the contingent historical fact of Jesus' execution). But this is not, I think, the view of the New Testament writers themselves.

My suggestion is that *Jesus, as Israel's representative, took upon himself the judgment which he pronounced against the nation*. This is, obviously, the result of putting together my two earlier suggestions: and I believe that, while each part of the syllogism can be supported individually, the combination of all three produces a coherence which gives it the force of a cumulative case. It must be emphasized that this is, at the moment, an historical hypothesis, not a theological construct. I am suggesting that Jesus saw Israel as courting political and historical disaster by that national ambition which would lead Rome to crush her, as so many other peoples had been crushed; and that he identified himself, as a matter of vocation, with Israel. In that context it would be a matter of logic, not of "supernatural" prophecy (and hence not, either, of a *vaticinium* after the event) that would lead him to say that the Son of man had to be crucified by the Romans. He was to suffer the characteristic fate of those who rebelled against Rome. He was in fact, to die Israel's death.

The central evidence for this suggestion is found in the most controversial section of the synoptic gospels, i.e. the trial narratives. (It is perhaps necessary to say at this stage that, though one cannot ignore questions of modern relevance, not least questions of

Jewish-Christian relations, it is quite out of the question to let the historical enquiry be predetermined by such considerations. At the same time it is interesting to note that Sanders, the last person one would accuse of a lack of sympathy towards the Jewish position, is compelled by the evidence to take a different line from that of, say, Winter or Rivkin, and to conclude that the Jewish leaders, representing the interests of mainline Judaism as a whole, acted to have Jesus put to death by the Romans.)

We may begin with the clearest point. Luke leaves us in no doubt that, for him at least, Jesus died because of charges that amounted to *sedition*: he was forbidding people to pay taxes to Caesar, and giving himself out to be King of the Jews. The *titulus* renders the latter part of the charge extremely likely; and whether or not the former admits of an historian's verdict "probable" it is clear that the force of the charge is that Jesus dies as an apparent martyr for the Jewish hope of liberation from the Romans.

This is the point at which the Reimarus-Brandon thesis is both right and wrong. (a) Jesus dies because of the (national, political) hope of Israel. It is nationalist Messiahs who end up getting crucified. Had he given in to pressure (from proto-"zealot" factions—or quite possibly from inside himself, as he identified with his helpless people, overrun by harsh, provocative and pagan Roman rule) and become the sort of Messiah that would fit with the hope for a national political liberation, it is extremely likely that he would have been crucified on the same charge. (b) Luke's readers, however, know that the charge is (in the sense Pilate must have heard it and implemented it) exactly false. Jesus is innocent of the charges laid against him (it is in this precise sense that we should take, for instance, Luke 23:41b). Hence the irony, unperceived in the literalness of the Brandon thesis: Jesus dies on charges of which, while he is innocent, (many at least of) those with whom he identified himself were guilty. On the cross Jesus "becomes" a zealot, just as he "became" unclean when touching a leper, or "became" a sinner by sitting down to eat with Zacchaeus. At last, when there is no risk of misunderstanding, he can identify himself fully with the national aspirations of his people. He cannot preach Israel's national hope, but he can die for it.

Before taking this line of thought further, we must examine more closely the trial narrative in Mark and Matthew. It is commonly said that it contains inconsistencies both with itself and with historical probability. While it is impossible here to go into the details of the discussion, several important points may be made.

First, it is historically likely that Jesus said, perhaps more than once, things which are more or less reflected in the charge laid by the "false witnesses": "This fellow said, 'I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days'" (Matt 26:61), or "We heard him say, 'I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and in three days I will build another, not made with hands'" (Mark 14:58). Jesus' prediction of God's judgment against Israel found, as we saw (in agreement with Sanders), a natural centre in the temple. I regard the so-called apocalyptic discourse (Mark 13 and pars.), which is given such prominence in all three synoptics, as of great importance not only as part of the apocalyptic preaching of Jesus but also within the historical explanation offered by the evangelists for Jesus' death. Jesus predicts the destruction of the temple; he warns the

disciples about false national leaders ("Messiahs") who will arise: and he predicts, absolutely in line with standard Jewish hope as expressed in, for instance, Daniel 1-7, that God will vindicate "the Son of Man." That, at least, is how I would interpret Mark 13:26—though I am of course aware that most scholars still attempt to take it literally, and either use it as part of the "end-of-the-world Jesus," the Jesus who expected a "heavenly" event, the "coming" from heaven to earth either of himself or of another as "Son of Man," or reject its authenticity because that Jesus is incredible or undesirable. As it stands, read in the way I have suggested, the apocalyptic discourse joins very closely the three themes which often appear so disparate in the trial narrative of the next chapter: the destruction of the temple, the identity of the Messiah, and the vindication of the Son of Man.[38]

They are joined, in any case, by their actual significance. As is clear from the cryptic answer given to the question about authority (Mark 11:27-33 and pars.), that which gives Jesus his authority over the temple is the status he possesses in virtue of his baptism by John—which, as the reader of any one of the synoptics already knows, is the status of "Son of God," i.e. Messiah; the heavenly voice, and the echoes of Davidic theology (cp. 1 Sam 16:13), indicate that the baptism is to be understood as the anointing of Jesus as Messiah, the time when he is identified with the people of God and equipped for the task thereby entailed. As has been recently argued,[39] it is the coming King who has authority over the temple. This reinforces the "Messianic" overtones of the whole Triumphal Entry sequence: to put it negatively, if Jesus did *not* want to be thought of in any way as Messiah, the Entry and the action in the temple were extremely unwise things to undertake. When, therefore, the question about the destruction of the temple (Mark 4:57-60 and par.) is at once followed by the question "Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" (14:61 and par.), It should not be supposed that the two form a *non sequitur*. To claim that one has the right to overthrow the temple is to make a Messianic claim, and Jesus will not respond to the charge in which this is implicit he must be made to face the question direct.

This is not, as it stands, an argument that the "trial" must have actually happened like this, only that the sequence is natural and comprehensible. But the larger claim, that something like this took place between Jesus' arrest and his death, becomes considerably less difficult to entertain once this point is grasped. And the further question, concerning the relevance of Jesus' reported answer to the High Priest, is also comprehensible. He has acted and spoken in such a way as to claim an identification with the people of God: their destiny in the purposes of God is bound up with his. Now, in response to the question, he replies not with a qualified affirmative (if you must call me "Messiah," I will accept the term, but insist that you understand it in terms of "Son of Man") as much conservative scholarship has thought, but with the double affirmation: yes—and you will; see that God will vindicate me as the true representative of his people. The discussion is hereby tied in to the Jewish idea of martyrdom, of God's vindication of the righteous Israelite(s) who maintain(s) fidelity to the covenant in the face of threats, persecution and death.[40] Daniel 7 belongs in the centre of this theme; so, if my argument is correct, does the trial. Jesus is claiming to be the true Israelite, the nation's representative, and is asserting that God will vindicate him as such.[41] If the referent of Mark 14:62, as of:) 13:26, is understood not as

the parousia, but as the vindication of Israel's representative, then several of the arguments against its'authenticity, e.g. those of Vermes, are undermined. It may be that this gives the real reason for the charge of "blasphemy." It is not that Jesus was claiming identity with "the Son of man" as a well-known "heavenly figure" who was to come to earth at the end of time. Two other possibilities are open. Either his identification of his own cause with that of the true people of God was felt to be a direct affront to God's honour, or his combination of Daniel 7 and Psalm 110 came close to the "two powers" heresy.[42]

What is the result of this line of thought for the question: why did Jesus die? The answer is very close to that which was reached more simply through Luke 23:2: he died because he, the one who was reputed to be announcing Israel's imminent overthrow, claimed to be the royal representative of the people of God. There is another irony in the account at this point. It is customarily said that the Jewish "trial" was a religious one, that before Pilate a political one, and that the charges in the former were simply framed in such a way as to be easily translatable into terms of the latter. But such a distinction, as we saw earlier, is totally anachronistic in terms of first-century Palestine. For Jesus to claim the status of Messiah, or to be the representative of the true people of God, or to have authority over the temple, was to make at the same time a statement of the greatest possible political and religious significance. It was to claim that God's plans, and Israel's national destiny, revolved around him and his fate. There were only two courses open to his hearers: either believe him and accept the consequences, or get rid of him—both courses involving, again, theological belief and "political" action. It is therefore possible, taking the accounts of the trial as they stand, to say that, according to the evangelists, *both* the Jewish "court"[43] and the Roman one condemned Jesus for claiming to be the King of the Jews, in each case for reasons which can be described as "political" without denying the constant theological overtones. The matter is summed up in the parable of the Wicked Tenants: when the son comes to claim the inheritance, the tenants say "come, let us kill him, *and the inheritance will be ours*." Whether this represents Jesus' interpretation of his death or that of Mark and the others, it fits very closely with the rest of the narrative. The role assigned to Jesus is that of Israel: those who themselves claim to represent Israel are naturally offended.

It is Luke, once more, who highlights this interpretation in his account of the Barabbas incident. In 23:25 he writes: "He [Pilate] released the man who had been thrown into prison for insurrection and murder, whom they asked for; but Jesus he delivered up to their will." Jesus dies, quite literally, the death meant for Barabbas (the point is repeated in the narrative of the two thieves, to which we referred earlier); and Barabbas is the one "whom they asked for," the one whose acts of violent rebellion are taken by Luke as expressing the secret desires of the people. Jesus receives the punishment the Romans characteristically meted out to rebels. As if to emphasize the point, Luke follows this with the warning to the daughters of Jerusalem (23:27-31), in which Jesus identifies himself explicitly with the national aspiration: if they do this when the wood is green, what will happen when it is dry? This is what the Romans do even to one not guilty of rebellion; how much more when the sons of the women at present bewailing him take up actual arms and fight for God and country.

Finally, the scene of the cross itself is replete with the same irony. The mocking, both of the crowds and of the rulers, echoes the themes of the trial: if he is the Christ, if he is the one who was going to destroy the temple and rebuild It, he must demonstrate his claim by coming down from the cross. But, in the intention of the evangelists (signaled by the extra incidents, such as the two thieves or the remark of the centurion), this charge rebounds: it is precisely because he is Messiah that he must stay on the cross, must die Israel's death. The *titulus*, intended no doubt insultingly by Pilate and protested, for the same reason, by the Jewish leaders, is used by the evangelists to express their belief that Jesus, having announced the imminent downfall of Israel at the hands of the Romans, was taking Israel's fate upon himself as her representative king.

The train of thought we have been following leads to a conclusion which, though by now it may be obvious, needs nonetheless to be stated. Just as Jesus identified himself with Zacchaeus, becoming a "sinner" by eating with him in order that Zacchaeus might become "a son of Abraham": just as Jesus touched those from whom he ought to have contracted uncleanness, but instead healed them: so now he becomes a zealot, a rebel against Rome, identifying himself with the national disease he himself had diagnosed, in order that it may be healed. In doing so, it was inevitable that he should put himself outside the pale of Judaism, as he had done ritually by touching the leper and socially by eating with Zacchaeus and his like. In each case—and if this is a construction of the evangelists or their sources it is not only a very sophisticated one but one which has found its way into most types and layers of tradition—the drama plays itself out by Jesus apparently contracting the uncleanness (or whatever) and somehow exhausting its power. The stigma leaves the leper or the sinner upon contact with Jesus, though Jesus emerges at the end apparently unscathed. The thieves (or are they freedom-fighters?) on either side of him are thus the last in the long line of outcasts with whom he is associated and who, by this association, are invited into the Kingdom of God. On the cross it becomes clear that Israel's real problem is not external (the Roman occupation) merely, but internal also; he shares the ultimate form of her political and social predicament and hence reveals, in his last great symbolic act, that the nationalist rebellion whose bloody logical outcome he now shared was something for which Israel was being judged by God, and from which she needed to be saved—by him.

Hence, the irony; claiming to represent Israel, he is cast out by those who themselves claim to represent Israel; in urging Israel to forswear rebellion, he is himself executed as a rebel by the Romans. The death he dies is Israel's death, and the pattern of healings and welcomes which make up so much of the gospel narratives indicates the motive: he dies Israel's death in order that Israel may not die it. He takes the wrath of Rome (which is, like the wrath of Assyria or Babylon, the historical embodiment of the wrath of God) upon himself so that, in his vindication, Israel may find herself brought through the judgment and into the true Kingdom, may see at last the way to life and follow it while there is yet time. This, to my mind, is where the current "Quest," if it is followed to its logical conclusion, ought to lead.

V

The syllogism is complete, within the limits imposed by this paper—though each stage of the argument cries out for the further substantiation which space alone denies. But there are a few points which ought to be noted by way of conclusion.

First, it is high time that scholarship recognised that the theology of the evangelists is not something superimposed on to the history they narrate, but something to be discovered within it. This point applies at both the general and the specific levels. To imagine that, because Mark and the others were interested in theology (the much-vaunted "discovery" of redaction criticism) they were uninterested in history is to allow the anachronistic distinction of fact and value, of event and interpretation, of politics and theology, to determine historical enquiry. More to the point of this paper, it is absurd to imagine that Luke (for instance) has no theology of the cross just because he does not reproduce Mark 10:45 at the expected point. Luke's gospel is full of the *theologia crucis*; at every point Jesus is identified with sinners so that, in the purposes of God which are made explicit after the resurrection, he can open the way for Israel to become a world-wide family.

Second, and closely related, if this integration of theology and history is not taken into account there is a risk that a reaction will set in, which could undo the splendid work presently being done within what I have called the "Third Quest." Ironically, the earlier "quests" allied historical consciousness with idealism: we find out what happened in the past in order to be able properly to distance ourselves from it, retaining only the "real," i.e. the ideal, meaning or "message." I regard the present reaction against idealism, and the return to genuine realism in many matters philosophical, theological and historical, as a very positive development, but I am concerned lest the present swing become excessive, resulting in sheer materialism (which in this context would mean "mere history" without implications or interpretations: this, in fact, is a figment of over-realist imagination). What would be regrettable would be the provocation of another Kähler-like, reaction; if this is all that historical study of Jesus can provide, we must get away from history and rediscover the Christ of faith.[44] As I shall make clear below, this is not a plea to let theological interest or "relevance" become the yardstick for historical study, but simply a request that we not put asunder matters which are in fact inseparable.

Third, and again related to this, it should be clear that the hypothesis I have offered has an extra strength in addition to proposing an essentially simple account of the matter which manages to retain a good deal of the data: it provides an explanation, otherwise hard to come by, for why, within twenty years of Jesus' death, Paul could quote statements about "Christ dying for our sins" as already commonplace.[45] The theological interpretation is to be found within the historical events: it is because he died, quite literally, the death of rebellious Israel that his death could be seen as representative for the whole world. Underneath this sequence of thought, of course, we have to supply the characteristic Jewish presupposition that Israel is somehow paradigmatic or representative of the whole world:[46] Jesus, as Israel's representative, does for Israel and the world what Israel was called to do but could not do. From here there is a straight line

into Pauline theology, though that is another story. There is also a comprehensible link with the preaching put into the mouths of the early apostles in Acts: because of the death and resurrection of Jesus, not yet accredited with any sophisticated theological formulae, the people have a chance to "save themselves from this crooked generation," i.e. to take advantage of the breathing space thus offered to join the true family of God before the cataclysm comes in which Israel as then constituted would be swept away.

Fourth, and of considerable importance in the total historical reconstruction of the aims of Jesus, the line of thought I have suggested makes it possible to suggest that Jesus went to Jerusalem with the intention of doing and saying things which he knew were, even humanly speaking, likely to result in his own death. My position has some similarities (but only some) with that of Schweitzer,[47] who (as is well known) saw Jesus as trying to force God's hand, throwing himself onto the wheel of history and, though himself being broken by it, causing it to change direction. He too envisaged Jesus going deliberately to die in Jerusalem,[48] though his scheme rested (as Sanders has shown) on several points which can be quite easily challenged in terms of synoptic studies.

Fifth, and finally, Sanders (1985, 330-34) has criticized fairly devastatingly those who first set up their theology and then suggest that Jesus died for it. This is, of course, a dangerous card to play, and I am not entirely convinced that Sanders, despite his disclaimer, is not open to an analogous charge. In my own defence it should be said that I could not belong to a tradition which believes that Jesus died the death he had predicted for Israel, because as far as I know no such tradition has ever existed. I have come to this view after a fair amount of genuine puzzlement over the question of the connection between the historical circumstances and meaning of Jesus' ministry on the one hand and his death on the other, during which time I have frequently been asked, sometimes with some suspicion, what relevance this historical picture of Jesus might have for contemporary Christianity. This is the point I made above, that the demand for relevance may produce a Kähler-like reaction among the faithful. The question has not been an easy one to answer, though I think my present position offers at least some starting-points.[49] The clue which pointed me in (what I believe to be) the right direction was the following paragraph, which concludes Caird's brilliant lecture on "Jesus and the Jewish Nation":

> He goes to his death at the hands of a Roman judge on a charge of which he was innocent and his accusers, as the event proved, were guilty. And so, not only in theological truth but in historic fact, the one bore the sins of the many, confident that in him the whole Jewish nation was being nailed to the cross, only to come to life again In a better resurrection, and that the Day of the Son of Man which would see the end of the old Israel would see also the vindication of the new.[50]

I have indicated that I think this view opens up a way to the more usual "atonement" statements in the New Testament, but it cannot be reduced to "atonement theology" of a sort which would allow for the argument (Sanders 1985, 332) that it must therefore be a creation of the early church. On the contrary. It fits exactly with (my version of) what Sanders calls "Jewish restoration eschatology." It also has the support which Caird

claimed for his overall view, i.e. that of the faithful old criterion of dissimilarity, which (like Gollum) may yet after all have its uses. After the very early days of the church the question of Israel was not at issue in the way It clearly was in the ministry of Jesus; nor was the announcement (by a *soi-disant* faithful Jew) of Israel's imminent judgment exactly a commonplace In the last two centuries B.C.E.—until John the Baptist, which is the point at which we, and for that matter Jesus, came in. I am not, then, claiming that Jesus died for an abstract doctrine, whether of atonement, justification or whatever, but for a concrete reality: Israel.[51]

To sum up. The large historical question to be faced by all students of the life of Jesus is: why did Jesus die? My answer is that at the heart of his many controversies with his contemporaries stood his proclamation, and symbolic enactment, of God's imminent judgment against Israel, and that this precipitated his being handed over, by the Jewish leaders, for execution by the Romans. This answer, so far, is similar to, though in one respect more sharply defined than, that of Sanders. Mine, however, opens the way directly, and without a change of gear, to the "other" way of hearing the question "why did Jesus die," i.e. the "theological" way. And my suggestion is that the evangelists, wanting to give the "theological" answer, believed that the best way to do so was simply to tell the story and allow its overtones to ring for themselves.

If this argument is even more or less along the right lines, it suggests that, precisely because Jesus is (as Sanders, Borg and the others have argued so well) to be fitted in to his Jewish milieu and made comprehensible in terms of first-century history, theology and politics, his death, and his attitude to that death as he saw it approaching, can be understood in a way which does not make him "weird,"[52] but historically and theologically comprehensible. He did not have to force the authorities' hands: merely to bring his ministry of warning and invitation to a fitting climax in the Entry and the action against the Temple. If it is asked at this point whether Jesus regarded his death as the proper and intended climax to his ministry, it will now be apparent that this is a very similar question to the one we postponed earlier, whether he believed the judgment on Israel to be inevitable or merely contingent upon a failure to heed his message. Schweitzer answered both questions in the affirmative, rejecting the ever-popular idea of a "Galilean spring-time," an early period when it looked as though Jesus' mission would be a "success," followed by rejection, withdrawal from the crowds, and the embracing of a "plan B," i.e. the cross as a second best. This is certainly not how the evangelists see the matter. To what extent hindsight, and the desire to make it look as though Jesus, and perhaps God, had had the cross in mind all along, have influenced their presentation, it is unfortunately impossible to discuss here.

Jesus, then, believed himself called by God to announce Israel's imminent judgment and to inaugurate in and around himself Israel's reconstitution. He continued to pursue his vocation even when it was more than apparent where it would lead, believing that if Israel's death could be died by her representative she might not need to die it herself. This was not out of line, as we have seen, with the pattern of significant actions which marked his public career as a whole, in which he constantly shared the uncleanness or stigma of the physically or socially handicapped, in order to heal and restore (or, as the

evangelists often say, "save") them. Though this view cannot be subsumed within the pre-packaged theologies of atonement or justification normally on offer, It can take up their strong points up within itself, giving them back the flesh and blood of which, as abstract ideas, they are all too often bereft. By putting Jesus back into his social and political context we do not capitulate to Brandon's theory, any more than by suggesting that he may have had theological reasons for going to his death we make him historically incomprehensible. History is not the handmaid of theology, nor theology of history. If we understand Jesus in the way I have suggested, history and theology turn out to be mutually interdependent ways of talking about the same thing.

Bibliography

Bammel 1984: E. Bammel, 'The Revolution Theory from Reimarus to Brandon" in Bammel and Moule 1984, 11-68.

Bammel and Moule 1984: E. Bammel and C. F. D. Moule, eds. Jesus and the Politics of His Day. Cambridge: CUP.

Borg 1984: M. J. Borg, *Conflict, Holiness and Politics in the Teachings of Jesus*. New York and Toronto: Edwin Mellen Press.

Bowker 1973: J. W. Bowker, *Jesus and the Pharisees*. Cambridge: CUP.

Burkitt 1910: F. C. Burkitt, Preface to Schweitzer, *Quest* (reprinted in Schweitzer 1954 pp. xvii-xix).

Caird 1965: G. B. Caird, *Jesus and the Jewish Nation*. London: Athlone Press.

Caird 1976: G. B. Caird, "Eschatology and Politics; Some Misconceptions" in *Biblical Studies: Essays in Honour of William Barclay*, ed. J. R. McKay and J. F. Miller. London: Collins. Pp. 72-86.

Caird 1980: G. B. Caird, *The Language and Imagery of the Bible*. London: Duckworth.

Caird 1982: G. B. Caird, "Jesus and Israel: The Starting Point for New Testament Christology" in *Christological Perspectives*, ed. R. Berkey and S. Edwards. Pp. 58-68.

Caird 1983: G. B. Caird, 'The One and the Many in Mark and John," in *Studies of the Church in History: Essays Honoring Robert S. Paul on his Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, ed. Horton Davies. Allison Park, Pennsylvania: Pickwick. Pp. 39-54.

Goppelt 1981: L. Goppelt, *Theology of the New Testament*. Volume One; The Ministry of Jesus in its Theological Significance. Eng. trans. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

Harvey 1982: A. E. Harvey, *Jesus and the Constraints of History*. London: Duckworth.

Hengel 1981: M. Hengel, *The Charismatic Leader and His Followers*. Eng. trans. Edinburgh: Clark.

Hengel 1981: M. Hengel, *The Atonement: The Origins of the Doctrine in the New Testament*. Eng. trans. London: SCM.

Koch 1972: K. Koch, *The Rediscovery of Apocalyptic*. Eng. trans. London: SCM.

Lohfink 1984: G. Lohfink, *Jesus and Community*. Philadelphia and New York: Fortress and Paulist.

Meyer 1979: B. F. Meyer, *The Aims of Jesus*. London: SCM.

Neill 1964: S. C. Neill, *The Interpretation of the New Testament* 1861-1961. London: OUP.

Riches 1980: J. R. Riches, *Jesus and the Transformation of Judaism*. London: Darton, Longman and Todd.

Runnalls 1983: D. R. Runnalls, 'The King as Temple Builder: A Messianic Typology" in *Spirit Within Structure. Essays in Honor of George Johnston on the Occasion of his Seventieth Birthday*. Ed. E. J. Furcha. Allison Park, Pennsylvania: Pickwick. Pp. 15-37.

Sanders 1977: E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion*. Philadelphia and London: Fortress and SCM.

Sanders 1985: E. P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, Philadelphia and London: Fortress and SCM.

Schillebeeckx 1979: E. Schillebeeckx, *Jesus: An Experiment in Christology*. Eng. trans. London; Collins.

Schweitzer 1925: A. Schweitzer, *The Mystery of the Kingdom of God*. Eng. trans. London: Black.

Schweitzer 1954: A. Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus. A Critical Study of its Progress from Reimarus to Wrede*. Eng. trans. 3rd ed. London: Black.

Segal 1977: A. Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven: Early Rabbinic Reports About Christianity and Gnosticism*. Leiden: E. J. Brill.

Stanton 1974: G. N. Stanton, *Jesus of Nazareth in New Testament Preaching*. Cambridge: CUP.

Vermes 1973: G. Vermes, *Jesus the Jew*. London: Collins.

Vermes 1983: G. Vermes, *Jesus and the World of Judaism*. London: SCM.

Wright 1980: N. T. Wright, *The Messiah and the People of God. A Study in Pauline Theology with Particular Reference to the Argument of the Epistle to the Romans*. Oxford (unpublished D. Phil. Thesis).

Wright 1982: N. T. Wright, "Towards a Third 'Quest': Jesus Then and Now" in ARC 10, 1982, pp. 20-27.

---

[1] Neill 1964, 283.
[2] See too his article "The End-of-the-World Jesus" in the forthcoming Memorial Volume for G. B. Caird.
[3] I use the phrase "Jesus of Nazareth" in preference to "the historical Jesus" because of the overtones of earlier debates, and of unfortunate positions within them, carried by the latter. For other positions of importance within the present stage of debate, see Stanton 1975, Goppelt 1981 vol. 1, Lohfink 1984.
[4] For some reflections on this issue, see Wright 1982.
[5] See Sanders 1977, 1-59, for what must now be regarded as a standard refutation of this retrojection of the Protestant view of sixteenth-century church history—the dark Middle Ages, the bright jewel of Martin Luther—into the first century of the era. See Sanders' criticism of Käsemann (1985, 331 and elsewhere), and the chapter "The Agonized Attempt to Save Jesus from Apocalyptic; Continental New Testament Scholarship" in Koch 1972, ch. 6.
[6] Burkitt 1910, xix. See Sanders 1985, 333: history and exegesis are to be set free from being obligated to come to certain conclusions which are pre-determined by theological commitment."
[7] See Bammel 1984.
[8] Harvey 1982, ch. 1; Bammel and Moule 1984, passim. Sanders 1985, 326 claims that it is "certain or virtually certain" that neither Jesus nor his disciples "thought that the kingdom could be established by force of arms."
[9] The Domitianic persecution of the family of Jesus as though they belonged to a royal house with political aspirations (Eusebius, HE 3:19f., following Hegesippus) does not of course disprove this point, but rather highlights the fact that the earliest disciples did not suffer such persecution.
[10] 1984, 1-20; and such summaries as 235: "Jesus' attitude towards Rome was not based on an apolitical stance, but on the conviction that in the political affairs of the world the judging activity of God was at work."

[11] See Meyer 1979, 19f.: Reimarus was right to insist on the Jewish political context (which the nineteenth century promptly forgot), wrong in how he interpreted it. See below for an analogous analysis of Schweitzer.
[12] See Schillebeeckx 1979, 41-102; Meyer 1979, 23-110.
[13] See the comments of Caird (1965, 5) on Bultmann's actual practice; and of Borg (1984. 22) on Perrin's.
[14] Borg frequently (e.g. 132f., 142, 173) resorts to the argument that, even if a certain passage is not from Jesus, it Is from the early Palestinian church which shared his aims and outlook. This seems to me fine as far as it goes, though it is of course, open to the rejoinder that if the continuity is strong enough for the argument to stand it is hard to see why the passage cannot, at least hypothetically, be ascribed to Jesus himself.
[15] Borg 1984, 201-27, 265-76.
[16] See Sanders 1985, passim.
[17] So, rightly, Borg 319 n. 115.
[18] See especially Borg 1984, 216ff., and the references there, especially that (367 n. 45) to the work of Amos Wilder; also Caird 1976, and 1980 chs. 12-14.
[19] See Borg 202; "what faced the hearers of Jesus was not the imminent ... end of the world, but the imminent. . . destruction of Israel."
[20] For this view of the period see Borg 27-72.
[21] At the same time, Sanders' view needs to be put together with the brilliant suggestions made by Borg (1984, 170-77). If this is done the incident can be interpreted as an acted parable of judgment, and the saying that accompanies it fits perfectly. The temple, and its concern for "holiness" of the "separation" variety, is the actual centre of that Jewish resistance to Rome which Jesus sees as courting theological/political disaster. See too Meyer 1979, 198, explaining the incident by reference to the prophecy of Zech 14:21 (that there would, in the eschaton, be no traders in the temple).
[22] See Sanders 1985, 61-76.
[23] See Borg 1984, 181ff.
[24] Borg 1984, passim, and especially ch. 5.
[25] From this point it would be possible to suggest a new solution to the problem tackled so interestingly by Sanders on pp. 222ff., that the sayings material seems not to fit the overall "Jewish restoration eschatology" which he finds to be the correct matrix for understanding Jesus. This, of course, is why he spends so much time in the book arguing that the sayings are the wrong place to begin—a point with which, for my own reasons, I am in agreement. I think, in fact, that the sayings, understood as I have suggested, fit very well with the theme of Israel's reconstitution. The further question, whether Jesus thought the judgment inevitable (Schweitzer) or merely contingent (Borg, Caird and most others) is harder, and must be pursued at a later point.
[26] Among scholars who have pursued this line one thinks particularly of Caird (e.g. 1982), Manson and Moule.
[27] See now Sanders 1985, 95-106.
[28] See the careful, but ultimately inconclusive, discussions in Sanders 1985, 321 ff., 333, etc.
[29] We are here at the point argued forcefully by George Caird in some of his last articles (1982, 1983), picking up and developing hints from Moule and others. This paragraph deliberately leaves on one side the question, raised now sharply by Sanders 1985 ch. 6, as to who precisely the "outcasts" were.
[30] See particularly Harvey, whose argument would be strengthened and clarified at several points by the recognition of the significance of Israel in the ministry of Jesus.
[31] See Sanders 1985, 150ff., quoting Caird.
[32] I take this (which is close to the first meaning of "kingdom of God" listed by Sanders on pp. 141ff., though ironically it is closer to the meaning he identifies as the Rabbinic one than to that which he regards as the New Testament equivalent) to be the primary meaning of the phrase, though of course there is no room to argue the point here.
[33] See Vermes, Lindars, etc.
[34] See Caird 1965, 19-22.
[35] 1982, 77f.

[36] See Caird 1983, 43-46; Wright 1980, 12f. See too Sanders 234ff. for the reasons why the disciples understood Jesus to be the Messiah.
[37] E.g. Exod 4:22f.; Jer 31:9; Wis 9:7; 18:13; *Sib. Or.* 3:702; 4 Ezra 5:28; Jub. 1:25-28; 4QDibHam 3:4ff.
[38] See e.g. Borg 338 nn. 43, 47, where Borg seems to overlook the point that, precisely because of the David-Israel nexus, the ministry of Jesus as he (Borg) has described it carries implications which make Davidic overtones not “over-subtle” but almost predictable.
[38] It is at least clear that this is how Luke read Mark; Luke 21:7 makes the question of the disciples refer unambiguously to the destruction of the temple, and breaks off the discourse (21:33) at the point where, according to this interpretation, the break occurs (between Mark 13:31 and 32) between apocalyptic sayings about the temple and the vindication of the Son of Man and the warnings about being prepared in view of the disciples' ignorance of the “day.” Was Luke reacting, as in 19:1 If., to an over-literal reading of Mark in the early church.
[39] Runnalls 1983.
[40] See Sanders 412 n. 31.
[41] See too Caird 1965, 20-22.
[42] See Segal 1977; and on the Trial in general Meyer 1979, 179f.
[43] Begging, for the purpose of this paper, the question of the composition of the body that interrogated Jesus prior to his handing over to Pilate. That some interrogation by Jewish leaders took place I regard, in terms of historical arguments, as virtually certain.
[44] Not that Kähler himself would have said such a thing: see Meyer 1979, 48f.
[45] This question, though Sanders never raises it in this form, has an analogous importance to those he does raise frequently, the questions of how Jesus' attitude to the Law is related to that of the early church. Historical explanation requires that some account be given: my suggestion would supplement that given by (for instance) Hengel 1981, giving extra significance in particular to the idea of martyrdom.
[46] See Caird 1965, 22; Meyer 1979, 217.
[47] Especially 1925, 229ff., 234f.
[48] He even suggests that “one might use it as a principle of division by which to classify the lives of Jesus, whether they make Him go to Jerusalem to work or to die”: Schweitzer 1954, 389. His use of the “Messianic Woes” idea (1925, 265f.) is not easy to copy owing to the problem of the date of the emergence of this idea.
[49] Schweitzer (1925, 250f.) got around the equivalent problem, quite acute in his case, by making Jesus' “personality” the point of relevance (this, of course, was what Bultmann was reacting to in his polemic against that word. He faced the same problem himself, but found, as is well known, a different way: through demythologlsation), though by the third edition of the book Schweitzer was emphasizing “the Spirit of Jesus” as the universalizable factor (1954, xv).
[50] Caird 1965, 22. This point is not usually picked up by those who have discussed this work: I am not aware that Caird elaborated it anywhere else. I once had a brief exchange of letters with him on the subject, in which he indicated that he agreed entirely with the way I was developing his Idea.
[51] There is a brief statement of a similar-sounding point in Lohfink 1984, 25, and indeed Lohfink's book has several analogies to my case. He does not, however, develop this line of thought very far.
[52] So Sanders 333, as his summary of the view which suggests that “Jesus determined in his own mind to be killed and to have his death understood as sacrificial for others, and that he pulled this off by provoking the authorities.”