

4.2 Crossan & Reed (2001, 2nd edition 2003) *Excavating Jesus: Beneath the Stones, Behind the Texts*

Detailed Review

(This particular review was specifically designed for participants in the class I taught Sept/Oct, 2013 at First United Methodist Church in Boulder, Colorado, to help them prepare for a trip to Israel/Palestine.)

Participants, I would like all of us to imagine we are going to Israel/Palestine at the end of next month and decided to participate in this class to learn more about the historical Jesus and his world before we go (in fact, a number of us actually are going on such a trip). Before attending each session of the class, please to do a little “before and after” exercise. As you read the text and/or online summaries, note how your image of both Jesus and his world may be changing with what you’re learning from our experts--the archaeologist and the biblical exegete. How do you feel about that? And how do you think it might change your experience of actually “walking in the footsteps of Jesus” on your trip?

We’ll take a little time in each session for some sharing about that “before and after” exercise as well as some sharing about what we’re learning about Jesus and his movement in his day means for injustices in our world, especially in the U.S. and Israel/Palestine.

This text contains some quite detailed and scholarly segments that build to the authors’ conclusions about some aspect of Jesus and/or his world. Unless you’re really interested in the details, I suggest you read through them quickly looking for the bottom-line conclusions that are important for our purposes. In the online summaries, I’ll be pointing primarily to the most important of those conclusions, with the page numbers where you can find them in the text. We won’t have a lot of time in class to talk about the details, but feel free to contact me outside the sessions with questions you may have.

A new online summary will be added to this document each week. By the end it will cover the entire text. My plan is to have the summary for the next class available by the preceding Saturday, and at the very latest the Monday evening before class. I will email you when a new posting is available.

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Foreword to New Edition (a totally new addition to the 1st edition)

This section begins with a description of the authors’ visit in 2002 to a world premiere exhibit in Toronto’s Royal Ontario Museum of a new, important artifact--the James ossuary (a burial bone box). (xiii-xiv) Those who put it on display claimed it was the first authentic artifact to confirm Jesus’ existence by name--its inscription read “James, son of Joseph, brother of Jesus.” Was this indeed the ossuary of Jesus’ brother, James? It was causing much controversy.

This was enough to make Crossan and Reed (hereafter C&R) revise their 2001 book, *Excavating Jesus*. It did not change the unique structure or most of the content of that edition co-authored by the archaeologist and the biblical scholar. As the title suggests, their goal was **to discover the best possible reconstruction of the historical Jesus and his world** by (1) archaeological excavation down through the layers of ground on biblical sites that obscure what the sites looked like in Jesus’ time, uniquely combined with (2) exegetical “excavation” (metaphorically) down through

See color picture #1
 which shows the James ossuary

later layers of biblical and other texts that obscure the life and teachings of Jesus as described in the deepest independent literary layers.

For the authors this artifact was a such a rich positive as well as a strikingly negative example of their joint project that they placed it first on their top ten list of archeological discoveries (see Introduction, below). (xiv) It was positive because it reopened for the world important questions about Jesus' brother and what he meant to Jesus' legacy. C&R provide some hints that they discovered a surprising result--that **James was actually more important than Paul, who is the one we recognize as the victor in their struggles to define the unity of Christian Jews and non-Christian Jews. It turns out that James, not Paul, "represented an ecumenical hope" that these two Jewish groups might not split, with Christianity becoming a separate religion.** The ossuary was a major negative for the authors because it is a high profile example of the difference between scientific archaeology and unethical cultural looting. It is precisely not the way to do archaeology that really adds to our knowledge of ancient worlds. (xv-xvi) The possibility that it is a forgery "will always haunt it." (xv)

As we'll see, this is the most important point that C&R want to make about James in this book.

Prologue: Stones and Texts *(some text is substituted for part of the 1st edition on pp. xviii-ix)*

The first paragraph of this section gives us part of C&R's historical matrix within which their search will proceed. **"Why did two popular movements, the Baptism movement of John and the Kingdom movement of Jesus, happen in territories ruled by Herod Antipas in the 20s of that first common-era century?"** (xvii, my emphasis)

They will attempt to answer this question by exploring material remains and scribal remains. "Words talk. Stones talk, too. Neither talks from the past without interpretive dialogue with the present." (xviii, my emphasis) C&R have a paragraph on the owner of the ossuary, Oden Golan, and the fact that it "comes to us without specific site, definite source, or certain history." (xviii) Then, they contrast the method with which it was presented with sound archaeological method (xviii), and also give an important example of exegetical layering--when Matthew absorbs the gospel of Mark almost totally inside his gospel, resulting in layers that must be interpreted. Some New Testament texts--like most of Paul's letters--possess a single layer. However, the gospels are all layered; although unlike archaeological layering, this is disputed by some scholars. So for the authors, **again and again, the biblical scholar faces the "absolutely fundamental" challenge of multiple layering.** (xix)

(If you have a text, it would be good for you to read this brief summary carefully, probably more than once.)

The last one and a half pages of this section give a very brief and dense summary of the results of their work of the entire book. This is what's coming in future chapters. Key points are:

- In the generation before Jesus, Herod the Great brought the injustices of Romanization by urbanization by commercialization to the Jewish homeland--except for Galilee--with his monumental building projects
- In the generation of Jesus, Herod the Great's son Herod Antipas stuck Lower Galilee with the Kingdom of Rome for the first time by rebuilding Sepphoris as his first capital in 4 BCE and building Tiberias as its replacement in 19 CE
- The injustices that resulted were countered by the Jesus movement in the name of the Jewish God "who always acts from what is just" and who the Torah says owns the land and desires its just distribution to all, rather than "the distributive injustice of Roman-Herodian commercialization"
- The Jesus movement was not violently resistant, but its non-violent resistance was quite effective (xx-xxi)

Introduction: The Top Ten Discoveries for Excavating Jesus (a few additions and revisions to the 1st edition)

C&R reemphasize that **both archaeological and exegetical excavating require "reconstruction and interpretation," especially the latter.** (1)

Here are the two top ten lists--first the archaeological and then the exegetical:

1. The ossuary of James, the brother of Jesus (new in the 2nd edition)
 2. The ossuary of the high priest Joseph Caiaphas
 3. The inscription of the prefect Pontius Pilate
 4. The skeleton of the crucified Yehochanan
 5. The Lake of Tiberias: Peter's House and Galilee Boat (combined in this 2nd edition)
 6. Caesarea and Jerusalem: cities of Herod the Great
(The former was the eastern Mediterranean's busiest and most modern port, and in the latter the Temple Mount was the largest monumental platform in the Roman Empire.)
 7. Sepphoris and Tiberias: cities of Herod Antipas
(Herod Antipas urbanized Galilee with these cities, the former was only 4 miles from Jesus' hometown, Nazareth)
 8. Masada and Qumran: monuments of Jewish resistance
 9. Gamal and Jodefat: first-century Jewish villages in Galilee
 10. Stone vessels and stepped pools: Jewish religion (2-5)
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1. The Dead Sea Scrolls
 2. The Nag Hammadi Codices
(These are extremely important as an indication of pre-Christian Gnosticism and the diversity within Christianity itself.)
 3. The dependence of Matthew and Luke on Mark
 4. The dependence of Matthew and Luke on the *Q Gospel*
(Another written source needed to be postulated, because of similarities beyond Mark's gospel.)
 5. The dependence of John on Mark, Matthew, and Luke
 6. The independence of the *Gospel of Thomas* from the canonical gospels
(“There is probably a consensus for independence among *Thomas* experts in this country, but much less so in Europe or among New Testament gospel scholars.”)
 7. The common sayings tradition in the *Q Gospel* and the *Gospel of Thomas*
 8. The independence of *The Teaching (Didache)* from the gospels
 9. The existence of an independent source in the *Gospel of Peter*
(Many scholars question whether this gospel contains a canonically independent story of the resurrection.)
 10. The clash between James and Paul as reflected back on the historical Jesus (added in 2nd edition)
(The conflict was over whether Jewish kosher traditions should apply when Christian Jews and Christian pagans ate together-- James said yes and Paul said no. “Since Jesus did not decide such purity questions by the year 30, it was still being debated in the year 50.”) (7-10)

These dependencies are what justifies the use of “excavation” for exegesis as well as archaeology.

These last sentences capture C&R's understanding of the core issue in the clash between James and Paul.

These items on these two top ten lists play major roles throughout the book.

In the last part of this section, C&R discuss how crucial it is to see multiple layers in the gospels. For most people the assumption is that all we have to do is harmonize the existing gospels--seen as independent of each other--to get an accurate picture of Jesus and his world. They point out the scholarly consensus that, in fact, the gospels have a complex dependent relationship with each other--overlaid layers that must be excavated to get at the reality of Jesus and his movement in the 20s CE, because each layer partially obscures as it adds to the original layer. (12-14)

These are the most important sentences in the first sections of the text:

“Two tendencies are at work in both those stratigraphies (exegetical and archaeological), whether building stories atop Jesus' life or in building structures atop Jesus' place. One tendency is to decrease his Jewish identity; the other, to increase his social status.” (14, my emphasis)

Exegetically, the later layers make Jesus more Christian, e.g. John distances him from “the Jews” and Matthew reinvents Judaism as Christianity. Archaeologically, the later layers replace the Jewish character of the sites with features

This is why it's absolutely necessary to “excavate” down through the more recent layers to reconstruct the historical Jesus' life and teaching.

from Rome and Byzantium. At the same time later textual layers make Jesus more elite--John portrays him as “a leisurely philosopher” and Luke portrays him as “a literate interpreter of scrolls and an erudite partner at banquets.” Similarly the archaeological layers “efface his humble peasant beginnings...and replace them with imperial and monumental architecture.” (14)

Chapter One: Jesus Carved in Stone *(This chapter is totally new in the 2nd edition.)*

This chapter is the most important addition to the 1st edition. It is entirely devoted to the James ossuary and some of the key scriptural texts about James. Another key text is dealt with in the next chapter, but there are no more major additions about James to the 1st edition until an important conclusion about him and Paul in the Epilogue.

The first of this chapter is a detailed examination of various aspects of the evaluation of the James ossuary. C&R begin by explaining why many scholars greeted the authenticity of this ossuary with skepticism. Numerous times in the past such finds turn out to be irrelevant more than inauthentic. (16-20) **There is no doubt about the authenticity of the James ossuary box itself. But there are lots of doubts about the inscription.** (20-1) And even if the inscription is authentic, it would still be only a one in twenty chance statistically to be the box of the brother of Jesus because of the estimated number of these names at that time and place. (25-6)

C&R contrast this ossuary with two others on their top ten list that are judged authentic largely because they were discovered and processed by sound archaeological methods--(from 1968) the box that held the skeleton of the crucified Yehochanan and (from 1990) the ossuary of the high priest Joseph Caiaphas. (27-8) They also provide a detailed description of the “meticulous, cooperative, and careful” work of scientific archaeology, which is precisely what was missing from the James ossuary process. (31) Their conclusion: **“The intellectual problem we have with the James box and its ‘discovery’ is that the archaeological process has been circumvented while its presentation to the public has reduced it to an arbiter of faith over unbelief.”** (32)

The latter part of this chapter is a detailed exegetical exploration of the identity of Jesus’ brother James the Just and his significance for early Christian Judaism. For the authors, James’ greatest significance was his opposition to the apostle Paul. (37)

As C&R stated in #10 of their exegetical top ten list (above), the most important disagreement between James and Paul concerned Jewish kosher food regulations. **And contrary to centuries of Christian interpretation that Paul was obviously right, they flatly state “he was not.”** (40) However, it’s also important to note what they agreed on and why.

James and Paul were not divided over the question of whether Gentile converts needed to be circumcised--it was not necessary. This was because **they both had faith in a strand of the Jewish tradition about how God, in a final utopian moment, would end earthy injustice. It is not the “Great Final War” strand where at the battle of Armageddon all evildoers will be slaughtered (so commonly thought of today as the only biblical strand). Rather it is the strand of the “Great Final Banquet” on Mount Zion in which evildoers will be peacefully converted, not to Judaism--with its requirement of circumcision, etc.--but to faith in the just and righteous God of all creation. In technical terms, C&R call this the “irenic tradition of eschatological apocalypticism.”** (38-39)

As we shall see, this kind of apocalyptic vision is also crucial for understanding the historical Jesus.

C&R also believe that for James faith and works “are like two sides of the same coin, distinguishable but not separable, a dialectic, not a dichotomy.” With respect to this theological topic, the authors stand closer to James than to Paul’s stance of justification by faith alone. *(I also would like you to note that this was the case with John Wesley as well.)*

In a closing section, the authors emphasize a matrix within which it is extremely important to place Jesus: **“Jesus within Judaism and Judaism within the Roman Empire.”** (47) Their concluding question is **“How do we see the historical Jesus when James rather than Paul is considered to be his better continuation?”** (48)

Chapter Two: Layers upon Layers upon Layers (one new section--pp. 73-76--and a few substitutions in the 2nd edition.)

In this chapter C&R do two things: (1) they provide descriptions of the archaeological and exegetical layers relevant to the search for the historical Jesus and his world that they will be using throughout the book and (2) they will excavate through those layers to move (a) from the modern city of Nazareth to the village of Jesus' time and (b) from the N.T. gospel stories about Jesus, Mary and James in Nazareth to the reconstruction of the original historical level of Jesus in the 20's CE.

The authors give an overview of several historical periods relevant to archaeology (51-52):

1. The Byzantine Period (mid-fourth to seventh century C.E.) after Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire **when the Jewish homeland was changed into the Christian Holy Land through the building of churches, shrines, and monasteries**
2. The Middle and Late Roman Period (second to mid-fourth century C.E.) after the first Jewish war with Rome when there was significant population growth in Galilee and **synagogue buildings first became the primary religious focal points after the Temple in Jerusalem was destroyed**
3. The Early Roman Period (mid-first century B.C.E. to first century C.E.) when Herod the Great undertook his massive building program (except in Galilee) and **his son Antipas introduced Greco-Roman architecture into Galilee for the first time; while at the same time the general population maintained their Jewish identity**
4. The Late Hellenistic Period (second to mid-first century B.C.E.) when Galilee had a small, isolated population which had occupied many of the sites for the first time

C&R also give an overview of the relevant exegetical layers (71-73):

1. The First or Original Layer contains **narratives going back to the historical Jesus in the 20s**; arrived at by scholarly reconstruction presupposing theory, disciplined method and public debate
2. The Second or Traditional Layer either adopted material from the first layer and/or created new material for the first time in the 30s and 40s; also arrived at by scholarly reconstruction
3. The Third or Evangelical Layer has three sub-layers (a) the *Q Gospel* and Mark (late 50s to early 70s), (b) Matthew and Luke (80s) which are dependent on *Q* and Mark and (c) John (90's or later) possibly dependent on Mark, Matthew and Luke; while this layer contains material going back to the earlier layers, **it also contains fictional narratives created by their authors themselves which convey their unique interpretations of Jesus and his movement**

C&R point out that beneath those distinct layers is a **historical "matrix,"** the knowledge of which is necessary to understand fully the material in the layers. It is made up of **the ancient tradition of Judaism dialectically struggling with "the overweening pride of Greek cultural internationalism and the overwhelming arrogance of Roman military imperialism."** (73) To grasp the historical Jesus we must place what we learn about the Original Layer within what we know about that historical matrix (in short, **Jesus must be seen as a 1st century Galilean Jew within the Roman Empire**).

Early in this chapter, the authors give a brief summary of the results of their excavations. **Nazareth was a small, peasant Jewish village in Jesus' time "adhering to Temple-oriented Judaism."** And therefore, **"Jesus was a Jewish peasant."** (52)

The peasant nature of the world of Jesus is described in some detail, including:

- Nazareth was **"absolutely insignificant"**
- Little time to learn to read and write
- A meager diet

See color picture #2 for a painting of 21st century Nazareth and the black and white copy of it with numbers showing the major sites (53)

- Average life expectancy only about 30
- Life was basically local; travel was dangerous
- Seen from the perspective of the emperor--they had no cash, little land, barely eked out a living, and were **despised**
- Galilee was somewhat removed from the Temple and was suspect by Judeans (52-57)
- The type of subsistence agriculture is described in detail (67-68)
- However, it's important to note that **Nazareth was only 4 miles from Sepphoris with its Roman architecture and culture** (67)

See color picture #3 for a reconstruction of 1st century Nazareth and the black and white copy of it with numbers showing the major sites (71)

C&R describe the archaeological layers underneath the Church of the Annunciation from Crusader to Byzantine to Roman. There may be the remains of a synagogue; however it would be of the 3rd century C.E. **There are no synagogue buildings in all of Galilee in the 1st century.** In that time "synagogue" denoted a religious gathering of the community, not a building in which the gathering was held. (57-60)

The first exegetical excavation starts with the story in Luke 4:16-30 about Jesus' rejection at Nazareth. It follows a pattern Luke also uses to describe Paul's rejections in Acts--"synagogue situation, scriptural fulfillment, initial acceptance, eventual rejection, and finally, lethal attack." (61)

The authors conclude that this is a fictional narrative created by Luke at the Third/Evangelical Level and is not an event of the historical Jesus on the First/Original Level. They see it as a programmatic overture to Luke's two-volume story, structured by his version of the Good News--that the Holy Spirit had moved the center of Christianity from Jerusalem in the east (the focus of the gospel of Luke) to Rome in the west (the focus of Acts). **It's a story about Christianity turning to the pagans because the Jews rejected Jesus.** (In their Epilogue, the authors give their very different interpretation of the reason for the Jewish/Christian split.)

C&R reject several elements of Luke's story, including **Jesus was not only literate, but learned** (as was Luke) and **all the people of Jesus' hometown would actually have tried to murder him.** They call the latter part of the narrative "**a very dangerous parable,**" because it was not long until "all Nazareth" easily became "all Israel" and lethal anti-Judaism entered into Christianity. (61-5)

The authors excavate two other scriptural cases involving the Nazareth of Jesus. The first comes from Mark where **Jesus' entire family, including his brother James, does not believe in him.** After detailed exegesis of the relevant passages (Mark 6:1-6 and 3:19-35), C&R come to the conclusion that these stories don't come from the First/Original Layer, but rather from the Third/Evangelical Layer where **Mark creates them himself as part of his version of the Good News which relies partly on the disbelief of all those closest to Jesus.** C&R focus on Jesus' brother James in these stories as part of their attempts to help the world better understand this one who has been so largely ignored. **James was very much a believer in his brother from the beginning, and became a leader of the movement in Jerusalem soon after his death.** (73-76)

The second case comes from Matthew's account of Jesus' conception by the virgin Mary. (77-88) This is a much longer and more involved excavation. C&R title this section "**A Mother in Adultery?**" They begin with an account of the charges leveled at Christianity by a Greek philosopher named Celsus in the 2nd century C.E. Celsus countered the Christian claim (as he found it in Matthew's gospel) that Mary was a virgin who conceived Jesus through God's Holy Spirit. Celsus claimed this was just a cover-up for the truth--Mary conceived Jesus through adultery with a Roman soldier. For C&R, this is what we recognize today as character assassination. (78)

However, the authors point out that Matthew himself was the first to raise the issue of adultery in his narrative where Joseph initially had this suspicion. **Why did Matthew (and Luke) write virgin birth stories when no one else in the N.T., before or after them, knows any such story?**

Through very detailed exegesis of biblical and other texts, the authors come to the conclusion that since Matthew and Luke wrote independently of each other and both had virgin birth stories, this kind of story had to come from the Second/Traditional Level (even though they created their own modifications related to their versions of the Good News on the Third/Evangelical Level).

Matthew's version was part of his overall interpretation of Jesus as the new and better Moses. For example, Matthew constructs his story of the Sermon on the Mount from the standpoint of "Jesus as a new and even more ethically intransigent Moses atop a new and even more morally demanding Mount Sinai." (80) **So Matthew himself created a fictional account of Jesus' birth as an overture to his overall story of Jesus as the divinely destined fulfillment of Moses.** (80)

C&R see the emphasis on Mary as a virgin as very strange in the context of biblical stories about miraculous birth narratives which always used the model of parents who were aged and infertile. They say this story of a young and virginal mother is instead modeled on pagan birth narratives. They point to the one about Augustus Caesar where his mother, Atia (who was not a virgin at the time) was overcome by a pagan god and conceived him. Here the authors make their final point--the fictional narrative about Jesus' birth really derives from a viewpoint that sees him as greater, not just than Moses, but greater than Augustus Caesar, because his mother, Mary, was a virgin. (87) **Thus, early on in the 30's and 40's Christians were creating stories which emphasized the Kingdom of God as proclaimed by Jesus and his movement was in direct and public opposition to the kingdom of Caesar.** (88) This is the subject of the next chapter.

As we imagine standing in 1st century Nazareth, can we see the young, betrothed Mary (if there is anything to the story of her conceiving between the time of her engagement and the time of finally having a home with her husband) in a way that honors her more by honoring her humanity? Here's how C&R put it: "But even in Galilee, villagers would have presumed that Mary's pregnancy came not from fornication or adultery, but from a slightly ahead-of-time marital consummation." (79) No literal angel, no Holy Spirit mixing with human biology to create a god-man who performs supernatural miracles, but rather the birth of the one Christians honor as the decisive revelation in his life and teaching of the character and purposes of God.

Chapter Three: How to Build a Kingdom *(Same as 1st edition.)*

C&R begin this chapter questioning whether there are different "kinds" of kingdoms. While it's customary to think there are only kingdoms of power and violence, **they ask if there's any such thing as a kingdom of justice and non-violence.** (89)

In the first section the authors contrast two different ideal kinds of clashing kingdoms--commercial and covenantal. Each had a long history prior to the 1st century C.E. As an example they cite the 8th century B.C.E. Kingdom of Israel under King Jeroboam II and the kingdom challenging it, represented by the prophet Amos. The commercial kingdom was criticized by Amos on four fronts: (1) oppressing the poor, especially through excessive commercialization, (2) **the type of justice** called for was "**systemic**" (not just personal) and "**distributive**" in an economic sense (not just retributive, as in judicial punishment), (3) the unjust could not hide behind faithful worship and (4) not only the king but the collaborating religious establishment had to be challenged. (90-92)

Can you hear clear echoes of our situation today in the U.S. where inequality is at historic levels?

The content of the two types rests on how they deal with the question of who owns and runs the material bases of life. One of the constitutive ideas of Israelite and Jewish history is that God, who is just and righteous, created and owns the land. As the authors say, "**In a commercial kingdom the land that belongs to humanity must be exploited as fully as possible. In a covenantal kingdom the land that belongs to divinity must be distributed as justly as possible.**" (92, my emphases) C&R realize that they are defining the two ideal extremes on the spectrum of a kingdom typology with many types in between. For example, in reality there's always some commerce within the covenant type. **To understand the historical Jesus, one must know about how Herod the Great built a small version of Roman commercial kingdom in the Jewish homeland and how after his death his son Herod Antipas imitated him in building a smaller version in Galilee.**

The authors go into some detail describing the sites built by Herod the Great in the generation before Jesus, especially the city of Caesarea and the Temple Mount in Jerusalem (the latter will be dealt with later). **Herod established a lavish commercialization by urbanization at Caesarea, which “transformed the Jewish homeland into a commercial kingdom”** primarily through the Roman pattern of the taxation of agricultural products which flowed from the country to the city. The mixed forms of agriculture and the self-sufficiency it made possible for the small land owner was transformed into estates and royal lands that specialized in a single crop to maximize profits for the kingdom. Herod also imposed a new rigorous order on the landscape and society. He constructed an artificial harbor, which opened up his territory out to the sea and the Roman world for an increase in trade and security. He also built an aqueduct to supply ample water for the new city. The layout of the streets and the type of buildings were on the Roman model. Herod reinforced social hierarchy through the type and location of monumental buildings. The temple to the goddess Roma and Caesar Augustus dominated the city from above, clearly placing the city under the Roman religious and political hierarchy. The amphitheater faced out toward the royal palace. The Pilate inscription discovered in 1962--the first written confirmation of Pilate’s rule in the time of Jesus--places the city within the literate society of the Greco-Roman world. Its use of Latin, which few could understand, shouted out **“Rome rules!”** (see picture of the inscription on p. 98)

See color picture #4 for a reconstruction of 1st century Caesarea Maritime and the black and white copy of it with numbers showing the major sites (101)

Herod Antipas had to scale down his version of the commercial kingdom established by his father, because after Herod the Great’s death in 4 B.C.E. Caesar Augustus made him only a tetrarch (ruler of a quarter-kingdom) of Galilee and Perea. (62-70) Perhaps he is best known as the ruler who beheaded John the Baptist because of John’s criticism of his unethical marriage arrangement to gain more popular support for his rule.

First, while Augustus was alive, Antipas urbanized Sepphoris (only four miles from Nazareth) in Galilee as his capital city on the Roman model. However, archaeology has shown that he had to be much more careful than his father not to alienate the religious sensibilities of his subjects. The inhabitants of the new cities he built were almost totally Jewish, unlike Caesarea built by his father. Therefore, there were not pagan temples or statues or iconography in his building program.

The buildings in Sepphoris with their white plastered walls, frescoes, mosaics, and red roof tiles were certainly far beyond the typical Galilean villages. The many columns were of made of local limestone or granite, not expensive imported marble. The theatre imposed a rigid class inequality on the populace--a system that Jesus would challenge. And all the new construction was financed by changes in agricultural production, which led to greater inequality, although Sepphoris was not on the international trade route like Caesarea and this placed additional burdens on the system.

After Augustus died in 14 C.E. Antipas felt free to pursue his goal of becoming king of all the Jewish homeland. He imitated his father by building a new capital port city in Galilee named after the new emperor Tiberias. This new city on the west side of what is commonly called the Sea of Galilee was a much smaller version of Caesarea without the pagan elements. **The bottom line of this urban construction of the two cities by Antipas was that Galilee for the first time was being commercialized. “Architectural grandeur increased at one end of Galilean society by making poverty increase at the other.”** (108) The Jesus movement was one of the reactions to the resulting devastation of Galilee.

See color picture #5 for a reconstruction of 1st century Tiberias and the black and white copy of it with numbers showing the major sites (109)

C&R then turn to a description of the Jewish covenantal type of kingdom. They ground it in two passages from Hebrew scripture, one from the Law and the other from the Prophets: Leviticus 25:23--“the land shall not be sold in perpetuity, for the land is mine; with me you are but aliens and tenants”--and Isaiah 5:8 where a woe is announced against those--“who join house to house, who add field to field, until there is room for no one but you, and you are left to live alone in the midst of the land!” **The authors say there are four presuppositions underlying the two passages: God is just; the land of Israel belongs to that just God; the land was originally distributed equitably among the people of Israel; and the Law and Prophets stand over against the inevitable human drive for the rich to become richer while the poor become poorer.** This all is put forth as an ideal to strive for, not a naive dream about Israel’s ability to really totally achieve it. **It’s about always striving to curtail the inevitable steady growth in inequality.** C&R go into some detail about all the specifics of the buying and selling of land as well as the mortgaging and losing of land in Jewish scripture. (70-73)

C&R then deal with **the very important questions of how and when Israel expects this ideal will be achieved.**

(112-117) It's crucial for such hopes--often called "*eschatological*"--to not be understood from later Christian models in which the earthly world is to be replaced by a spiritual, heavenly one above.

Rather it is about God's bringing about an earthly world of justice here below. "It does not repeal creation by cosmic destruction, but destroys evil by cosmic transformation."

The authors coin a distinctive turn of phrase, calling this divinely established

kingdom a "Eutopia" (from the Greek "good place") rather than the typical "Utopia" (from the Greek "no place").

(112-113) Another important point--the timing of this consummation is vague, but its content is certain. It's like our contemporary phrase "we shall overcome."

Caution: this is not how the "end times" tend to be understood today.

A major question was **what will happen to the pagans who belonged to the nations that had destroyed Israel so many times?** C&R point out that **two very different answers are left side by side within Jewish tradition: peaceful conversion and violent extermination.** Also, there existed an apocalyptic tradition alongside the the eschatological tradition with its indefinite time of consummation. An apocalypse is a revelation about the ending of evil and injustice very soon, in fact right now almost. This tradition also had forms of peaceful conversion and violent extermination. **The conversion understanding contained some radical egalitarian social justice elements.** This will play a role in the authors' understanding of the historical Jesus.

The long last section of this chapter begins with C&R's archaeological description of the 1st century covenant kingdom at Capernaum, which differed radically from the commercial kingdom of Antipas and was a challenge to it. (118-125) They then describe and evaluate how it was transformed in later times. (125-135)

It's a category mistake to think that archaeologists can "unearth," so to speak, a socio-economic-political-religious movement. However, the authors claim that archaeologists can help us understand such a movement by examining the context as, indeed, unearthed by their discipline. In this case, they can compare their results with those places in the gospels where Capernaum is mentioned. More importantly, they may be able to provide some keys to understanding why the Baptism movement of John and the Kingdom movement of Jesus happened when and where they did--one of the chief goals of this book.

The 1st century village of Capernaum is the one place besides Nazareth most closely associated with Jesus. It was a modest Jewish village of about one thousand inhabitants on the periphery of Antipas's territory, closer actually to the territory of Herod Philip, who was far more moderate than his half-brother, Antipas. Its focus was agriculture and fishing. The authors describe it as a step up from Nazareth, but many steps down from Sepphoris or Tiberias, and a world away from Caesarea. It lacked Greco-Roman-type civic buildings, and no overtly pagan artifacts have been discovered. It lacked any central planning and building materials associated with urbanism and wealth. No inscriptions have been found, possibly leading to conclusions of illiteracy (like at Nazareth). The quality and type of the housing was far lower than its urban counterparts.

See color picture #6 for a picture of the 1st century boat and also color picture #7 for a reconstruction of 1st century Capernaum and the black and white copy of it with numbers pointing to various aspects of this fishing village (126)

Note: a color picture and its black and white copy representing the typical house in Capernaum is located in the next chapter. See p. 12 of this summary, below.

No luxury items and only locally-made pottery speak to its lower economic level. In 1986 there was a discovery of a 1st century fishing boat, which was painstakingly restored and is now in a museum. The makeup of its materials shows how hard the fishermen on the Sea of Galilee had to work to keep their vessels afloat with their meager economic

resources.

In the last ten pages of this chapter C&R show how Capernaum was transformed after the 2nd Jewish War (132-135 C.E.) when the Jewish homeland was more fully integrated into the Roman empire. They give a few examples of Roman military occupation sites in the following century. Then the authors turn to the major changes brought about in Capernaum after Christianity became the official religion of the empire in the 4th century--many imperially sponsored Christian structures from this Byzantine Period were built throughout the "Holy Land," as it was then called.

The 5th century ruins of a church and a synagogue in Capernaum testify to a competition between the two faiths at that time. The synagogue, just a block from the church, was one of the largest and best constructed of this period. The church was built on top of a 4th century building centering on one room in an earlier private house of the 1st century B.C.E. It has been presumed to be the house of Peter's family (where his mother-in-law was healed in Mark 1:29-31). **Actually, this happens to be one of the very few credible locations said to be grounded in a New Testament story** (see the diagram of the archaeological layers on p. 131), although many think it's probably more likely Peter's wife's home. (129-30)

An important question for the authors is whether Jesus made this house in Capernaum his "base" of operations. They say any Mediterranean reader would have expected Jesus to settle down in one particular village and have his followers "broker" him to those in the surrounding countryside. However, they point out **this would have been against "the geography of the Kingdom of God."** That kingdom, as embodied by the Jesus movement, could not have a home base as a dominant center to which all had to come like the commercial kingdoms of the Romans and Herodians. **The Kingdom of God only had a moving center that went out to all alike.** (133)

This is an important characteristic of the Jesus movement.

The irony of the present-day Peter's house (a primary Christian pilgrimage location) is that the simple 1st century house was radically transformed by later buildings into its exact opposite. **"What was once the setting for menial work, family activities, and simple meals was, under Christian imperial sponsorship, absorbed into the civic life that the social elites dominated through financial patronage and priestly hierarchy."** (135)

Chapter Four: Putting Jesus in His Place (one addition in the 2nd edition on pp. 171-73)

In the previous chapter C&R spelled out the difference between two ideal kingdom types--the imperial commercial type and Jewish covenantal type--both of which had long histories. This provided us with an essential part of the historical/cultural/political/economic/religious "matrix" necessary for grasping the basic nature of Jesus and his movement and why it was a challenge to Roman/Herodian imperialism in the 20s C.E. This chapter begins to explain how this movement did so. In the introductory paragraph, the authors give us **a major clue about what the Jesus movement was actually doing to help bring about the Kingdom of God on earth. It was related to how people were eating in the two kingdoms--more egalitarian vs. more hierarchical.** (136)

C&R begin by showing us an example of how an ancient pagan shrine was transformed by the Herodians. It was a shrine to the god Pan in a cave near one of the sources of the Jordan River, 30 miles north of Capernaum. Part of religious ceremonies at such a sacred site was having a meal with the god honored there. Herod the Great built a temple in front of this site dedicated to Caesar Augustus. His son Philip expanded it and founded his capital city Caesarea Philippi on that site. **Archaeological excavations have shown how the style of eating changed from very rustic and simple to quite elaborate and hierarchical.** This initially rural religious site in a natural setting ended up becoming a shrine in a Greco-Roman city where the wealthy could show "their munificence and generosity" in a very public way. (136-41)

The authors then show how this kind of display of hierarchical order through a style of eating was also part of the private world of wealthy and powerful citizens throughout the Roman empire. They built formal dining rooms called *triclinia* in their luxury residences. These dining areas were characterized by three elements: they created the illusion of nature brought inside, adopted public styles of architecture for this private space and clearly displayed the host's position in the social hierarchy. (141-42)

For example, such *triclinia* were an important part of all Herod the Great's palaces throughout the Jewish homeland.

See color picture #10
which shows the Masada fortress

C&R describe two in some detail: the one at Masada's northern edge and the one at Caesarea Maritime. They were constructed with the best available materials, imported as well as local. They provided stunning views of the natural elements surrounding them--the Dead Sea and Judean desert, and the Mediterranean Sea, respectively. Exotic food was served on expensive fine wares to guests whose places were determined by their position in the social hierarchy. All this was constructed with an open form of architecture, so that

those excluded could see in, reinforcing their lower social status. (142-46)

C&R next turn to Herod Antipas and his building program in Galilee. Since there's no archeological evidence of his palaces and their presumed *triclinia* from the 1st century C.E., the authors describe the houses of three elite families in

Sepphoris--two from the first century C.E. (149-51) and one from the late 2nd or early 3rd century C.E. (146-48) They describe the latter in detail and provide a picture of a reconstruction of it to help us visualize the private Roman-style villas of the wealthy in the Jewish homeland before, during and after the time of Jesus. The authors conclude these sections by noting that it was only in the time of Antipas that a wealthy upper class developed in Galilee (to the great detriment of ordinary Galileans) which was “ready to accept and able to afford the Roman system of openly flaunting one’s social rank.” (151)

See color picture #9 for a reconstruction of this late Roman villa and the black and white copy of it with numbers showing its major features (150)

C&R transition to the long, 23-page last section of this chapter by providing their answer to one of the key questions driving the entire book (as stated in the first paragraph of the Prologue [xvii]). They imply, in the form of rhetorical questions, that **the new Romanization of Galilee in the 20s was the reason why two popular movements--the Baptism movement of John and the Kingdom movement of Jesus--came into being to challenge the radical injustices of this commercial kingdom with the Jewish covenantal kingdom.** (152-53)

C&R begin this section, entitled “In the Kingdom of God,” with the surprising declaration that the character assassination charges made against both John and Jesus for their stances toward food and eating actually provide important clues to the nature of their movements and why they were so challenging to the new existing order. The twin accusations against John and Jesus come from the *Q Gospel* (Matthew 11:16-19 = Luke 7:31-35). Jesus describes his opponents as charging that “John the Baptist has come eating no bread and drinking no wine, and you say, ‘He has a demon.’” and that “the Son of Man has come eating and drinking, and you say, ‘Look a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!’”

The authors say seeing John the Baptist as an ascetic is quite believable. However, the part of the charge about being a demon is slander. There are two main sources for information about John the Baptist, the historian Josephus and the New Testament accounts. As it turns out, examination shows both belong to layers which conceal more than clarify his Baptism movement. Josephus describes him as being concerned about the individual spiritual purification of his followers. This provides no reasonable account of why Herod Antipas would have him beheaded. There must have been some political challenge that justifies that action. The New Testament does show John as an apocalyptic prophet proclaiming the imminent arrival of God to destroy evil. However, the N.T. also transforms this primary mission of John into preparing the way for Jesus. **Both mischaracterize him in their different ways as “religio-spiritual” rather than “religio-political.” Josephus sanitized John for his Roman audience, and the gospels sanitized him for their Christian readers.**

The most accurate way to understand John is to see that his movement was focused on his baptizing followers in the Jordan, and then having them cross over that historic river into the Promised Land, reenacting the Exodus. **He believed that when a critical mass of Jews were so purified, God would finally come and in a flash destroy evil not only in the Jewish homeland but in the entire world.** That was the religio-political cause that led to his execution, precipitated by his effective criticism of Antipas’ arrangement of an immoral marriage for political purposes. It’s important to note: Jesus was one of John’s followers before the Baptist was arrested and beheaded.

Most Christians have never had the opportunity to hear this very different interpretation of John the Baptist, long accepted by modern scholarship. This easily understood example shows how important exegetical excavation is for Christians who urgently need what one scholar calls “adult theological reeducation.” Our best scholars are challenging the overall sanitized version to the faith, which has turned most of its social justice dimensions into apolitical, individual morality. Whenever this happens, those who are behind the worst social injustices have nothing to fear from Christian churches.

The criticism of Jesus as a glutton was also, in an opposite way from the accusation about John, a slander. However, to call him “a friend of tax collectors and sinners,” C&R point out, was like the charge of being “fellow travelers, pinkos, and commies” in the Red scare of the 1950s in the U.S. While it was used to denigrate Jesus completely, it provides a clue to the actual eating practices of his movement which led to the charge.

A picture of a page from the *Gospel of Thomas* is found on p. 169, and a picture of the Nag Hammadi Codices which contain this gospel is on p. 161. These codices were discovered in 1945 in Egypt.

These codices are #6 on C&R's top 10 exegetical discoveries list (7); they are briefly described (9).

The independence of *Thomas* is debated, as described on p. 3 of this summary, above.

The authors then probe whether there is anything from the original 1st century level of the historical Jesus that helps us see what was actually going on to account for the accusations about improper eating and use of food. They claim we must work back beneath what we find in Paul's letters of the 50s, because he refers to an earlier Jesus tradition to justify his commitment to a radical egalitarianism with respect to food and eating in the communities he founded. **C&R find what they call the "Common Sayings Tradition" in three independent sources--Mark, the *Q Gospel* and the *Gospel of Thomas*--** which make up the most reliable texts pointing back to oral traditions in the 2nd layer of the 30s and 40s. They, in turn, are the best sources we have for seeing what Jesus and his movement were all about in the original layer of the 20s.

The most important texts in the Common Sayings Tradition are the specific directions Jesus gave to his followers about what they were being sent out to do. The authors call this cluster of common texts found in the three independent sources "*Mission and Message*." They begin with the *Gospel of Thomas* 14 (see quote, 160) and ask the reader to notice its reference to **(1) a rural rather than urban setting, (2) the possibility that those receiving the message would reject it and (3) the focus on the reciprocity of eating and healing.** They then quote the more extensive passages from Mark and the *Q Gospel*. (see quotes, 160-161) These passages contain a key distinction between the Jesus movement and the Baptism movement of John. On the one hand, John was the only one doing the baptisms, so his death effectively doomed the future of the movement. On the other hand, Jesus told his companions to go out and do everything he did and, thus, his movement could survive his personal elimination. Crossan's catchy way of describing this difference is to say "**John created a Baptist monopoly, but Jesus created a Kingdom franchise.**" (162)

See color picture #8 for a reconstruction of a typical house in rural Galilee and the black and white copy of it with numbers showing its essential features, modeled on Peter's house (164)

The key to what the Jesus movement consisted of was the reciprocity of healing and eating between two groups in rural Galilee--the itinerants who were destitute, and the householders who were poor. Each had something significant to offer the other. The former had the "spiritual" gifts of healing, the latter the "material" gifts of food to eat. It was this mutuality at the peasants' level of society that led to its reconstitution.

For C&R this was the "program" of Jesus and his movement, which will be further explained in the following chapters.

That which Antipas' Romanization was destroying, the Jesus movement was restoring from the bottom up at the village level.

This is what it meant when they proclaimed the Kingdom of God is among us, here and now. Itinerancy was not about begging or a voluntary abandonment of normal family homes, and commensality (the term used for the egalitarian sharing of food) was not about charity or a handout at the door--common misunderstandings today. Rather, this itinerancy was "making a virtue of necessity" because families were already broken apart, leaving many members in a state of destitution. In fact, C&R say, the well known Lukan beatitude "Blessed are the poor" is better translated as "Blessed are the destitute." (162-66)

As C&R point out, one dimension of this movement--the place of Jewish purity rules related to food--was not definitively settled by the original layer of the historical Jesus. This led to later disputes even up to Paul and James in the 50s and Matthew and Mark in the 70s and 80s. The authors' conclusion is that **Jesus probably observed the very same rules about food purity as all other Galilean peasants of his time.** (170)

The only 2nd edition addition to this chapter is a few pages dealing with how James' Christian Jewish community in Jerusalem lived out the early Jesus movement's reciprocity of healing and eating. (171-73) A familiar passage in Luke's Acts describes this community as radically egalitarian. There was no private property; everything was held in common and distributed equally. Also, Paul in Galatians affirms James' location and authority. C&R conclude that **this community "practiced voluntary communalism in a share-community that programmatically resisted the normalcy of greed-community in its contemporary incarnation as Sadducean collaboration with Roman imperialism"** and was "an

absolutely valid continuation of his brother's vision and program for the Kingdom of God." (172, 173, my emphasis)

C&R end this chapter with a reminder about how in Chapter 3 they described the significance of God's desire for the radical egalitarian distribution of land in the Jewish tradition. They say this quite distinctive understanding of Jewish "land" could be expanded to "world" and contracted to "food." With respect to the former, they point to Psalm 82 (*Crossan's favorite biblical passage*) and the way it lays out the centrality of justice for the whole world in Jewish tradition. It's important to note that this psalm goes far beyond our usual ways of understanding it--as a human ideal or even a divine commandment.

Justice is "that alone on which and by which the world moves in security as the just possession of a just God." (174, my

emphasis) This psalm explains why the gods of ancient empires die when the unjust dominating imperial powers which upheld them go out of existence. This understanding of justice also explains why the divinity of the Jewish tradition is still alive today, thousands of years later. As the authors put it, **"can a God of justice ever die?"** (174) They also claim that since the New Testament Greek word "*agape*"--usually translated as "love"--is more precisely translated "to share," justice in the Christian Old Testament "is exactly the same as *agape*/love in the Christian New Testament." (174-75)

This truly radical, theological idea of justice is fundamental for the Jewish tradition of Jesus.

When the question is raised about why Jesus emphasized food rather than land, C&R point to two things. First, a superabundance of food--not land--is the main focus of most Jewish eschatological visions. Second, the emphasis on food was a "present necessity" for the Jesus movement, because the unjust transfer of land had already gone too far by the late 20s and thus, that injustice would have needed violent revolution to change

it. **The only thing possible for a non-violent movement at the time was a bottom-up redistribution of healing and eating--the spiritual and material bases of life--understood as the Kingdom of God on earth.** When excavated down to the

original historical Jesus layer, the fully Jewish vision and program of the Jesus movement was **"land as food and justice as *agape*."** (175-76)

This is C&R's best reconstruction of what the Jesus movement was out there doing as they went from village to village; it would eventually transform the world.

Chapter Five: Jewish Resistance to Roman Domination *(one addition in the 2nd edition on pp. 183-84)*

This chapter deals with the question of where Jesus and his movement belong on the spectrum of Jewish resistance to the Romans, a spectrum with overt resistance, on one end, and covert resistance, on the other. The former was just the tip of the iceberg of the latter. To emphasize the price paid for overt resistance, C&R point out that they are dealing with the years in between the Jewish rebellions of 4 B.C.E. when 2,000 rebels were crucified in Jerusalem and 70 C.E. when 500/day were crucified there. (177)

The authors reemphasize their earlier point that religion and politics could not be separated in the ancient world. **The Jewish homeland in Jesus' day was dominated by the "overweening cultural imperialism" of Greeks established three centuries before and the "overwhelming military imperialism" of the Romans established in the 1st century B.C.E., both of which had strong theological support from their religious traditions.** They also explain

why the Romans had a hard time understanding why anybody would want to

rebel. After all, they had established peace throughout the empire and were protecting the borders from foreign invasion as well as providing many more benefits--material and moral--in the *Pax Romana*. The Romans also knew the Jews had been occupied by foreign empires for 500 years before the Romans and had only rebelled once when there was extreme religious persecution. Yet in the first 200 years of Roman occupation they rebelled four times--in 4 B.C.E., in 66-74 C.E., in 115-17 C.E. and in 132-35 C.E. One of this book's goals is to answer the question of why this was the case. (177-79)

We moderns rarely think about the intimate connection between politics and theology in the Greek and Roman empires.

C&R distinguish two kinds of nonresistance--traitors and collaborators--the former gave up their religious tradition as well as their political allegiance, while the latter retained their Jewish religious traditions (especially purity rituals, as will be explained later in the chapter). (179-81)

The authors distinguish various kinds of resistance--(1) **bandits**, (2) **apocalypticists (of three kinds)** and (3) **protesters**. (1) Some bandits were merely criminals. However, during times of imperial oppression, others were involved in guerrilla war against the Romans. (2) Apocalypticists proclaimed an imminent act of God to transform--not destroy--the earth. Some (2a) believed in human military violence. Others (2b) used archetypal symbolism (like John the Baptist). And yet others, perhaps most significantly, (2c) formed covenantal communities--in “**a deliberate attempt to resist the normalcy of imperial greed by creating intense share-communities attempting to live a covenantal holiness that would actively initiate or proleptically institute that apocalyptic consummation.**” (183) C&R insert one new page to this chapter in the 2nd edition which gives James’ community in Jerusalem as an example of this kind of covenant community, also indicating it was committed to non-violence. (183-84)

This careful differentiation of various kinds of apocalypticists is precisely what is missing in the work of most biblical scholars.

C&R go into more detail about **the final option for resistance--(3) protesters**. They were the ones involved in **non-violent resistance**. Since they were willing to die for the cause of their resistance, the authors suggest that perhaps their category deserves a special name, “*martyrological protest*.” (184) Two examples are provided, one from the late 20s against Pilate and one from the early 40s against Petronius. The former was in response to Pilate’s carrying standards with images of the emperor into Jerusalem; the latter in response to the emperor Caligula attempted to erect his statue in the Temple. In both instances the Roman officials backed down in the face of these large-scale non-violent protests, probably not wanting to cause major riots if they slaughtered that many unarmed resisters. (184-86)

Scholars think the leaders of these protests were probably Hillelite Pharisees, one of the two major schools of these widely popular Jews. C&R respond to those who claim the use of the term “non-violent resistance” for 1st century behavior is an invalid anachronism, merely retrojecting modern figures like Gandhi and King back to that time. They counter charge that this objection is essentially based on a condescending presumption that only modernity could have invented non-violent resistance. (186-88)

The authors spend the next fifteen pages showing how archeological excavations have provided us with a great deal of information about different kinds of Jewish resistance during this time period. First they give us a detailed account of what has been unearthed at the fortress of Masada in the South which confirms some but not all of the written accounts of the last holdouts of violent resistance in Jewish revolt of 66-74 C.E. Later (pp. 201-03) they briefly examine the excavation results at two sites in the North--Jodfat and Gamla--also destroyed as a result of the Roman suppression of their violent resistance. They also give a detailed account of the extensive digs at Qumran in the South which provide information about a very different kind of resistance.

The excavations at Masada, next to the Dead Sea, have provided general confirmation of the stories about the long Roman siege that ended that revolt, which also resulted in the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem (see the picture of the massive Roman siege ramp on p. 191). **However, they call into question the very widespread understanding that the Jewish resisters and their families committed mass suicide rather than surrender. It looks like this part of the story, as told by Josephus, is not historically true.** The archeological results, especially the existence of ritual baths (*miqwaoth*) and a synagogue, confirm that the resisters were faithful Jews. Most significant for this book, C&R conclude that the apparent lack of social hierarchy and luxury eating styles shows a clash of kingdom types atop Masada. The Jewish resisters were giving their form of rebuttal to Herod the Great’s extensive display of wealth in his commercial kingdom in the original building of Masada. Their ideals belonged to the traditional Jewish covenantal kingdom.

Most of us who have heard of Masada immediately think of it in these mistaken terms.

The results of the digs at Qumran, just north of Masada, and the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in the nearby cliffs show an alternative to violent resistance (see a picture of one page of a scroll on p. 200). They have exposed the sectarian communal center of the Essenes, known from contemporaneous literary accounts. It had very unusual architecture, including a scriptorium for the writing of scrolls which links this site with the hidden scrolls nearby. C&R say the lives of the Essenes were “austere and communal, and even if wealth was at hand, they had renounced any ostentatious display as evil...theirs was a simple life with egalitarian meals.” (199) Ritual baths were very important for them. They had withdrawn to the desert location long before the Roman occupation, because of their opposition to the Hasmonean combination of king and priest in one person. Their scrolls reveal they were expecting God to come soon and put things right. In 68 C.E. the Romans destroyed their community, but not before they could hide their precious scrolls. (195-201)

Jodefat and Gamal in the North embodied the same violent option of resistance as the resisters at Masada, but their walled fortifications were easily breached by the Roman legions. (201-03)

See color picture #11 for a reconstruction of the destroyed town of Gamla and the black and white copy of it with numbers showing its features (215)

C&R have described two extreme kinds of resistance, violent revolt and withdrawal. Now, they point to **an alternative kind of resistance in between those extremes and practiced by most of the Galilean Jewish population--identity maintenance through purity practices.**

Two parts of this alternative are connected to stone vessels and ritual baths. Stone vessels, unlike ceramic ones, are impervious to ritual defilement and so are an important part of the Jewish purity system.

Archaeologists have found them throughout Galilee (see a picture pg. 208). This is also the case with ritual baths (see the picture pg. 210). Use of both of these was a daily reminder of Jewish tradition and identity and thus, forms of covert resistance. **Once again, our modern sensibilities get in the way of understanding and appreciating these purity practices. Christians often see them as merely legalistic, and when added to other unjust stereotypes, this can lead to anti-Semitism.** In fact, purity is a crucial part of Jewish theology. The human body is an important part of their spirituality, so how one presents one's body before the daily presence of God's holiness is essential to their faith identity. Understood in this context, purity not only makes sense but can be appreciated by different faiths. Of course, this always needs to be seen as intimately connected to acting in accordance with God's righteousness and justice by keeping the covenant and standing up for social justice. (203-13)

C&R use the last large section of this chapter (214-23) to expand what they have already said about the nonviolent nature of Jesus and his movement. **It provides the justification for calling it "radical nonviolent resistance."** However, one thing needed to be cleared up first. There has been for some time a debate between biblical scholars about whether Jesus was an apocalyptic or nonapocalyptic figure. It usually has gotten nowhere, and the authors think it's because neither side has done the necessary detailed analysis of those categories. Even if one locates Jesus as an apocalyptic figure, that doesn't necessarily mean he believed in a violent God, as many scholars have assumed. As we have seen previously, there were nonviolent options. **C&R end up locating Jesus on the "interface between what they have described as covenantal community and martyrological protest."** (216)

The authors take a detailed look at the six linked sayings in the so-called Common Sayings Cluster found independently in the *Q Gospel* and the *Didache*. They find that when The Golden Rule is placed in the context of the other five--Love Your Enemies, Better Than Sinners, The Other Cheek, Give Without Return and As Your Father (see the details of their content on pg. 217) **the result is a radicalization of The Golden Rule which**

governed the self-understanding of this radical nonviolent

resistance movement. Radical because the kind of nonviolence to be employed (imitating the nonviolent character of God) was defensive as well as offensive; one was not to use violence even in self-defense when attacked violently. And strongly resistant to the empire because of the nature of what they were accomplishing in share

communities as described previously. It's also important to say again that the

Jesus movement was not Christianity against Judaism, but Christian Judaism against Greco-Roman paganism. C&R acknowledge that much of this radical resistance faded rather quickly as evidenced in other biblical texts. They also needed to deal with the few N.T. sayings which suggest Jesus was promoting violence, on the one hand, and both Jesus and Paul seeming to urge obedience to Roman governing authority, on the other. The problems these few sayings seem to present fade away when seen in context.

This is the final piece of C&R's best reconstruction of the program of Jesus and his movement.

Chapter Six: Beauty and Ambiguity in Jerusalem (exactly the same as the 1st edition)

C&R's purpose in this chapter is to explain the complex historical/socio-economic/theological matrix which is necessary to understand two things: (1) **"the beauty and the ambiguity" of the pilgrimage city of Jerusalem in the 1st century C.E., especially the vital roles played by the Temple and priesthood, and (2) provide their "best historical reconstruction of what actually happened long ago in Jerusalem" during the last week of Jesus' life as narrated in the gospels.** (271) They emphasize they are not doing this only from either ecumenical courtesy or post-Holocaust sensitivity, but rather in the interest of historical accuracy. Also, as Christians, they felt especially responsible to expose the unfair attacks on the Temple and the high-priesthood in and of themselves, from several sources, including the N.T. gospels, which have led to the evils of theological anti-Judaism and racial anti-Semitism. (225-26)

The authors begin with some essential historical background about the Temple and the priesthood. Before the Babylonian Empire destroyed the First Temple in 686 B.C.E., there were separate kings and priests, both stable hierarchical institutions since ancient times. After the exile that went with that crushing defeat, the priesthood was reestablished and the Second Temple built, but there were no kings. Israel was led by a priestly theocracy as a colony of successive empires--the Persian, Greek, Egyptian, and Syrian. Israel revolted against the Syrians and achieved independence for about 100 years ruled by the Hasmonean Maccabees, who established a new priestly line which was combined for the first time with kingship. (224)

In response, the Qumran Essenes, who considered this new priestly line illegitimate (thus making the sacred Temple impure) withdrew to the desert and established their own priestly community according to their notions of purity (as described in Chapter 5). When the Roman Empire conquered the Jewish homeland and established the Herodians as client rulers, the status of the high priests took a severe blow. First, during the reign of Herod the Great, and then direct Roman rule, several high-priestly families were played off each other, being appointed and dismissed at will. (224-25)

While all the major Jewish groups, Essenes, Pharisees, etc., were seriously at odds with each other, **it was the priestly aristocracy, Sadducean Judaism, they all criticized the most, because it held a monopoly on power through collaboration with Rome.** Each of the other groups was critical of these aristocrats for a variety of reasons, including their excessive wealth, controlling violence, and questionable legitimacy and Jewish loyalty. This history of change, instability and power-grabbing in this crucial institution of the priesthood was the major source of what the authors call the “ambiguity” about the Temple and priesthood before, during and after the time of Jesus. Of course, these internal divisions suited the Romans. As C&R say, **“empires conquer and divide while colonies bicker and lose.”** (226)

The authors give us a good, concise summary of what we learned about Jesus and his movement in Galilee in Chapter 3. It ends with the important reminder that **the Kingdom of God was already powerfully present in the exchange of spiritual and material gifts in peasant villages. The movement was not a means to another end, the future coming of the Kingdom. It was an end in itself, right then and there.** Because this movement was a serious form of nonviolent resistance, Jesus and his movement were constantly in danger of being crushed by Herod Antipas. But now in this chapter, Jesus is moving into Jerusalem, territory controlled not by a Herodian tetrarch but by both a Sadducean high priest and a Roman prefect. **This was a much more dangerous place for any openly operating resistance movement, even if nonviolent.** The authors warn against two misunderstandings related to what follows--to see Jesus as attacking Judaism itself or as not attacking anything. (226-27)

Early in this chapter C&R refer to the discussion in Chapter 2 about the major source of conflict between the Romans and Jews which eventually led to colonial revolts: the difference between their understanding of who owned the land--the God of Israel or the conquering empire. The authors then briefly introduce **an additional source of the escalating tensions--internal socio-economic class warfare.** (225) This leads to the first large section of the chapter--“Colonial Revolt and Class Warfare.” While archaeology can play a major role in discoveries about the former because of the physical nature of the remains of warfare, the latter requires interpretation of written resources.

C&R describe the brutal destruction of Jerusalem in 70 C.E. which occurred roughly in the middle of the eight-year 1st Jewish Revolt, 66-74. They list some of the most famous archaeological excavations from the late 19th century to the present which basically back up what is described in written sources. The authors also describe the fate of Jerusalem in later times. **It ceased to be a Jewish pilgrimage city, and was somewhat of a backwater until Constantine the Great made Christianity the official religion of the empire in the early 4th century.** It then became a vibrant Christian pilgrimage destination with the Church of the Holy Sepulcher as the center, not the Temple. After the Six-Day War (20th century), archaeological excavations south and west of the Temple Mount yielded major discoveries, which will be discussed later. (227-230)

C&R turn to **“class warfare,” which in this case they define as “a class-based resistance against internal aristocratic power.”** (230) As this resistance interacted with colonial rebellion it heightened the “ambiguity” of the priesthood and the Temple in the 1st century. While the authors do not deny the many other forms of intra-Jewish tensions in the 1st war, they focus on this one socio-economic instance of class warfare.

The authors describe how Josephus, when he was a Jewish general, succeeded in preventing class warfare in Galilee at the beginning of the war. However, it arose full-blown during the siege of Jerusalem as the so-called “Zealots,” a loose collection of peasant fighters with grudges against wealthy aristocrats, especially the aristocratic priesthood, exacted bloody revenge until they were thrown out. C&R close this section **by emphasizing that any opposition to the Temple and priesthood by Christian Judaism must be seen in the same intra-Jewish context as the criticisms of the other**

The authors think this point is one of the most important results of modern biblical scholarship.

Jewish groups--Essenes, Pharisees, Zealots, etc. From whatever Jewish group, they were not attacks on sacrifice, purity, sanctuary or the priesthood themselves, but rather on the injustices and/or impurities brought about by the Temple's institutional leadership--the present empire-collaborating, power-grabbing aristocratic priesthood. **Unfortunately, the attacks of Christian Judaism on those injustices have all too often been misportrayed as attacks by "Christians" on "Judaism," which has led to terrible consequences over the centuries.**

C&R help us to see why the Jerusalem Temple Mount was renowned for its beauty all over the Roman world. It was the crowning achievement of Herod the Great's building program. The first two of the three projects have already been described--Caesarea Maritime in Chapter 2 and Masada in Chapter 4. Since Herod could not do a great deal to improve the Temple itself, he concentrated on doubling the size of the platform, the Temple Mount--an extremely difficult feat. What follows are merely the highlights of the authors detailed, eight-page description.

The size is gigantic--more than three football fields in a slightly trapezoidal shape. The stones are huge--ranging from 3-5 tons to 500 tons each. Its supporting walls were more than 100 feet above street level. The stones were set in such a way that the shadows of the offsets changed throughout the day, and at sunrise and sunset they had a pinkish hue, while at other times shone brilliantly as if they were marble. The facade of the Temple itself was composed of fired limestone without plaster, creating its own unique aesthetic, and making it require very few repairs over the ages. The Mount was divided up hierarchically (according to purity, not wealth) into several sections: two-thirds open to all, Jew and Gentile alike; inside that space was one exclusively for Jews, men and women; another inside that was reserved for Jewish males; another inside that for priests only (this is where the animal sacrifice was done); and lastly the Holy of Holies in the Temple, where only the High Priest could go once a year on the Day of Atonement by going behind the curtains that hid God's presence. On one end of the whole plaza stood the Royal Stoa which housed the commercial operations required for the Temple's financial and sacrificial systems. On the other stood the Antonia Fortress, where the Romans kept close watch for possible trouble, especially on feast days. Its very location spoke to their knowledge that controlling this area was crucial for the maintenance of the dominating power in the Jewish homeland. When he built the Temple Mount, Herod the Great was careful not to offend Jewish sensibilities by placing any images in this sacred space, with one exception. He felt obliged to place a golden eagle over one gate as an unambiguous symbol of submission to Rome (just as he had done in Caesarea with the pagan Augustan Temple). This was to reassure the Romans that he was building a magnificent shrine, not an impregnable fortress. (235-43)

See color picture #13 for a reconstruction of the Temple Mount and the black and white copy of it with numbers showing its features (243) and color picture #16 for a picture of the Temple Mount today

C&R then describe the luxury of the high-priestly houses in Jerusalem. Whereas the last section dealt with the physical "beauty" of the Temple, this section lays out part of the physical "ambiguity." The authors first say they do not presume these priestly aristocrats were any more evil than any other colonial aristocracy. The beauty and wealth of their homes are of a similar quality as some of the best in other parts of the empire. The authors describe in detail a palatial mansion in the upper city. It's over 6,000 square feet with architectural style that blended the private, the sacred and the profane space to create "a sophisticated ambiguity." There were colorful frescoes, detailed ceilings and mosaic floors, all aniconic according to Jewish norms. The various artifacts were a mixture of luxurious imported items and the best of local craftsmanship. The *miqwaoth* (ritual baths) were elaborate and provided the wealthy owners a way of avoiding having to mix with the lower classes in public baths. Ironically, the wealthy modified all the typical items of purity to show social status. (243-49)

See color picture #12 for a composite reconstruction of a wealthy priest's house and the black and white copy of it with numbers showing its features (255)

The authors want to clarify how the priests got their excessive wealth. The Torah specified that each of the 12 tribes of Israel was to receive land except for the priestly tribe of Levi. Its inheritance was "not land, but God." They were to receive land only indirectly through the taxes, tithes, and sacrifices from the others. The common presumption that those latter sources of income account for the opulent lives of the wealthy priests in Jerusalem is false. **It was not from their participation in the work of priests in the temple that they gained their excessive wealth, but rather from their**

collaboration with the Roman empire. The other Jewish groups, including Christian Judaism, did not begrudge them the former. It was the latter that caused the “ambiguity” and indignation with respect to their priesthood. (249-53)

C&R give a vivid account of what it must have been like for Galilean peasants to come up to Jerusalem during a time of festival. **These four pages show the “beauty” of this pilgrimage city not only from the standpoint of the awe produced by the majestic structures, but also from the joy generated by participating in worship centered on animal sacrifice--a practice foreign to us today, but quite normal not only for them but also all the other cultures around them.** The Passover ritual was especially meaningful. It celebrated how God had liberated them in the past as well as creating the expectation that God would do the same for them in their own day and for all future time. The Romans were quite aware of the implications; it was a **“dangerous ambiguity of celebrating liberation in an occupied country.”** Hence, they were always on special alert during this tinderbox atmosphere. In fact, the authors give two examples when things did explode--one around the time of Jesus’ birth and the other about 20 years after his death--and bloody force was used to quell them. Of course, it was precisely during a Passover festival that Jesus made his fateful journey to Jerusalem that led to his execution. (256-59)

Our modern negative viewpoint against animal sacrifice makes it easy for us to assume that Jesus must have been against it. In fact, there is no biblical evidence for this. (See the interpretation of “Cleansing” the Temple, below.)

At this point, the authors turn to biblical exegesis. Jesus was not executed by Antipas in Galilee. C&R suggest this was the case, even though Jesus’ actions were no less subversive than John the Baptist’s, because Antipas didn’t believe he could execute more than one popular prophet in the same decade without incurring serious protests. However, Jerusalem was another thing. There he would have to deal with both the Sadducean high priest Caiaphas and the Roman Pilate. **And since both the Roman historian Tacitus and Josephus record that Jesus was executed by Pilate during a Passover festival, it’s one of the most reliable historical facts we have about Jesus.** Their accounts place his crucifixion within this sequence of events: “movement-execution-continuation-expansion.” Antipas and Pilate had not seen Jesus as a military danger, but they clearly saw him as a social one. So they thought eliminating him would eliminate his movement, as had happened to the Baptist movement when John the Baptist was eliminated. **However, the Jesus movement not only continued, it expanded. This happened because its members had experienced the empowering presence of God through their own actions in creating share communities of nonviolent resistance even when Jesus was not present during his life, and they continued to experience it after his execution.**

The gospel stories of Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem and the so-called “cleansing” of the Temple are compatible with his Galilean nonviolent resistance movement as described in Chapters 2 and 4. They also appear to be from the traditional layer before Mark, because it seems he is modifying both of them. The authors show how this is the case with the entry story on what Christians call Palm Sunday. While this story could be grounded in the original layer of the historical Jesus, they think **it probably was a fictional story symbolically capturing his early followers’ understanding of his unique kind of “nonviolent antikingship,” ironically the exact opposite of what the usual title--“the Triumphal Entry”--implies.**

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This story has not only been one of the most puzzling to readers but has caused some very significant misunderstandings of Jesus.

With respect to the second story, the authors seek to correct a widespread misunderstanding. **When Jesus went into the Temple and angrily turned over the tables of those dealing with the normal financial transactions related to sacrifice, he was not “cleansing” the Temple of financial transactions and animal sacrifice, but “symbolically destroying it.”** They show how Mark uses (1) his typical framing device (in this case the two fig tree stories, one before and one after) as well as (2) a quote from Jeremiah’s prophetic charge that God would destroy the Temple if it did not stop being a “den” (hideaway or

safe house) of thieves, both of which refer to destruction, not cleansing. It was a symbolic action (like a minister pouring red paint on draft-office files during the Vietnam War) but serious enough, if it actually happened, to be the specific act that led to his crucifixion. C&R think it’s the most likely recoverable historical incident we have that could have been the cause. If neither of these events is historical, they don’t think we can determine what specific action led to it. They note one other thing: **the common understanding of “cleansing” the Temple has often had a subtle anti-Jewish or anti-Semitic effect, since it focuses on the overturning of the “money changers” tables.** (259-64)

The last section of this chapter tackles the question of whether the trials of Jesus in the gospels took place at all or whether execution happened through the lower level of normal policing policies for Passover crowd control. The authors end up

deciding for the latter. They show how as one proceeds from the earliest gospel Mark to the last John the anti-Jewish characterizations in the stories escalate. They explain how **the general process of “narrative actualization” is well known--one makes a past story fit present reality.** In this case, the friends and enemies of the gospel writers become the friends and enemies of Jesus and his movement, until by the time of John the enemies are “the Jews” as if Jesus wasn’t one. **In Mark’s case, the authors think he created the character of the violent Zealot Barabbas his trial narrative, written soon after the Romans destroyed Jerusalem in 70, as a way of charging the Jewish leaders with making the terrible mistake of choosing violent revolt in 66 rather than the way of the nonviolent Jesus movement.** (264-67)

This is one of the most important insights of modern biblical scholarship, which is used by scholars to excavate down through the layers of biblical texts.

C&R also argue that Mark’s depiction of Pontius Pilate as being reluctant to crucify an innocent Jesus is fiction, not history. His actions and character are portrayed quite the opposite in all of the non-biblical sources. The scholars who think this part of the Passion story was created by Mark usually describe his purpose as “playing the Roman card.” This means shifting the blame for Jesus’ crucifixion from the Romans to the Jewish leaders (which by the time of Matthew and John became the entire Jewish people) to make new Christian Judaism more palatable to imperial power. The authors have a very different interpretation. **They think a better explanation is that Mark’s basic story was taken from the earlier layer of tradition in the 40s, because it reflects the dangerous situation for Christian Judaism at that time.** The Jewish homeland was ruled by a Jewish monarch, Herod Agrippa I as “King of the Jews,” who appointed a high priest of the house of Annas. Both were very hostile to what they considered a dissident Christian Judaism. From that point of view, the purpose of the created story was not to placate the Romans, but to reflect the current situation of the writer and his community. The authors believe the fragmented remains of the so-called *Gospel of Peter* from the 40s is actually the first written source we have with this version of the story (not Mark soon after 70). (See p. 270 for a picture of a page from *the Gospel of Peter*.) **The authors point out that the widespread practice of taking the gospel accounts of Pilate as literal historical truth bears a great deal of responsibility for encouraging Christian anti-Judaism and racial anti-Semitism. For them, strongly challenging this is a crucial task for biblical scholarship.**

Chapter Seven: How to Bury a King (there are only a few additions or substitutions in the 2nd edition)

C&R are focused on two things in this chapter: examining the nature of both aristocratic sepulchers and Jesus’ sepulcher. With respect to the former, they answer the questions of how an emperor, a king and a high priest wanted to be buried and what that tells us about their kingdoms (putting aside what it says about their views of the afterlife). With respect to the latter, the authors note the surprising, sometimes ugly, tensions and fighting among the six groups of Christians who control the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem, a church built and rebuilt since the emperor Constantine designed it to be the spiritual capital of Christianity in the early 4th century. However, they think **it’s even more striking that it’s called the Church of the Holy Sepulcher rather than the Church of the Holy Resurrection**, even though it also clearly celebrates the location of Jesus’ resurrection. For C&R this puzzle leads them to the question: “how do you bury a crucified criminal and celebrate his resurrection.” (my emphasis) (272-3)

Soon after Augustus became emperor in 31 B.C.E. he commissioned the building of his mausoleum. It was a magnificent structure designed to reinforce his status on top of the Roman social pyramid. C&R take several pages to describe it, focusing on its large, elaborate rotunda modeled after ancient Etruscan mound sites around Rome. By placing it next to the Pantheon, a pagan temple, Augustus elevated himself to divine status. The mausoleum was a family tomb, emphasizing the fact that Augustus was a proponent of traditional Roman family values. The authors close this section by saying Augustus used inscriptions in his mausoleum to spell out how he wanted his kingdom and rule to be remembered--his military victories, his establishment of law and order and his benevolence. **However, those descriptions of his accomplishments were “sanitized” to soften the greedy brutality he used to gain them.** This elaborate project was Augustus’ way of trying “to control the future even in death,” and was an excellent example of how to bury a king. (273-76)

Disinformation, so prevalent in today’s politics, is not a modern invention.

Herod the Great’s desert tomb is described as a miniaturized version of Augustus’ mausoleum, but with a Jewish slant. It was constructed to have multiple functions--a tomb, a fortress and a pleasure palace--yet another example of his large building projects. C&R describe its elements in some detail, especially its rotunda-like fortress. Like Augustus, Herod

used his tomb to establish a lasting memory of his kingdom and show his elevated social status in it. Unlike Augustus, Herod was buried alone. Out of his paranoia he had many of his family killed, and his two most powerful sons were eventually stripped of their partial kingdoms and exiled by the Romans for the rest of their lives, Archelaus to Gaul and Antipas to Spain. (276-79) The Herodian is another example of how to bury a king.

See color picture #14 for a reconstruction of the Herodian and the black and white copy of it with numbers showing its features (280)

After a few pages of explaining Jewish burial practices, which by the 1st century included ossuaries as described in Chapter 1, C&R consider the spectacular discovery in Jerusalem in 1990 of the Caiaphas ossuary. This is without a doubt the ossuary of the high priest Caiaphas, who had a role in Jesus' crucifixion, and it is thought to contain the bones of Caiaphas himself. In a sentence added in the 2nd edition of the book, C&R comment that this wide acceptance of the interpretive results of this discovery sets it apart from the controversies surrounding the James ossuary discussed in Chapter 1, because the latter lacked any evidence that standard archaeological methods were used in its discovery. (See p. 285 for a picture of the Caiaphas ossuary.) While the burial location of this ossuary doesn't begin to compare with the elaborate tombs of Augustus or Herod the Great, it does show **the distinct social hierarchy in burial practices in Jerusalem during Jesus' lifetime**. Only the very wealthy could afford expensive ossuaries like this one, expertly cut and decorated. There have been many other lower quality ossuaries found around Jerusalem. However, even they would have required a level of wealth acquired by only a few families. So the Caiaphas ossuary deserves to be included in this section of the chapter dealing with aristocratic sepulchers. It's how to bury a high priest. (283-87)

In stark contrast to aristocratic burial, ordinary people were often buried in shallow pits in which they simply disintegrated without a trace. Some lower class graves containing remains have been discovered by accident, but they were quite simple and not designed to last past the present generations. **Crucified criminals**--by definition, not Roman citizens or aristocrats, but rather slaves, peasants and bandits--**were disposed of in ways that left no trace**. The general rule was to let them rot on the crosses or be cast off to be eaten by carrion. This was done to deter lower-class violations of Roman law and order. The shame of non-burial was almost as terrible for a Jew as the horrible death on the cross itself. It's important to note: **this is how Jesus died**. However, in 1968 there was an archaeological discovery of the heel bone of a crucified man, which changed several commonly accepted views of the details of crucifixion. (See p. 290 for a picture of a copy of the crucified ankle.) This is the only piece of evidence to date of burial for someone who was crucified. He was probably from a wealthy family, well-connected enough for his relatives to be allowed to take his body and bury it in the family tomb. (288-91)

As C&R turn to the subject of Jesus' burial, they begin with **the account in John's gospel which is "appropriate not only for a royal funeral, but even for a divine one."** This story comes from the creative imagination of its author written late in the 1st century, dating from the third level of the third layer of gospel texts. Next, they point out that twelve years after Constantine became the Roman emperor, he sent an archaeological expedition to find the site of Jesus's resurrection. They were directed to a pagan temple honoring Aphrodite, which they tore down and dug down through to expose layers, believing what was found to be what they were seeking. The authors think they may have been correct. They judge the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem to be one of only a few Christian holy sites with any authenticity, along with Peter's House in Capernaum. However, they are not interested in that issue, but rather with what was built on that site.

The authors describe in depth the four interconnected structural elements of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. One of the major elements was a large, elaborate basilica. In 320 Constantine had completed the Lateran Basilica in Rome (today

See color picture #15 for a reconstruction of the the Church of the Holy Sepulcher and the black and white copy of it with numbers showing its features (296)

called San Giovanni), which became the throne hall for Christ *basileus*, Christ the King. Then, in 325-26 he began the construction of a new basilica as part of the Jerusalem resurrection site. This form of architecture was chosen because it had developed from a simple place for public gatherings into "a powerful instrument of imperial politico-architectural propaganda" to show the glory of Rome and the divinity of its emperors. It combined religious, political, judicial and commercial functions. The rotunda was another major element; it resembled the rotunda of Augustus' mausoleum. So centuries after the account of Jesus' burial in John's gospel, Constantine's marble church in Jerusalem effectively fulfilled John's story by concretely showing

how one not only buries Jesus like a king but also celebrates his resurrection. But again, the fact that it was named the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, not the Church of the Holy Resurrection, raises the question: what does resurrection mean? (291-97)

In a section entitled “The Jewish Resurrection of Jesus” C&R first want readers to be aware of the great diversity in the gospel stories of Jesus’ resurrection--diversity of the number, place, time, and content of risen apparitions--written in the 70s, 80s and 90s. They also say that before all the gospel accounts, Paul wrote in the 50s about Jesus’ resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15 saying that he was relying on what he had received from an earlier tradition. Hence, the first account of Jesus’ resurrection was probably from the 30s. However, the authors bracketed all the usual historical debates about the burial and resurrection to focus instead on two deeper historical questions: first, what did 1st century Jews mean when they used the term “resurrection?” and second, within that background, what did Christian Jews mean when they announced that God had raised Jesus from the dead? Better understanding of these two things about the meaning of the biblical accounts of Jesus’ resurrection will dramatically affect how we then understand their content, below. (297-99)

It’s important to note that Israel did not believe in an afterlife for about the first thousand years of their history--neither the immortality of the soul nor the resurrection of the body. The dead simply went down to Sheol into a kind of shadowy non-existence. All the grandeur of the Jewish traditions of the Law, Prophets and Psalms was about the life we experience on this earth in the here and now. All sanctions for good and evil were this-worldly and--according to their Deuteronomic theology--if you obey the commandments God will bless you, and your enemies will be crushed.

The terrible event that challenged these long-held beliefs about the afterlife came in the 160s B.C.E. when the Syrian monarch Antiochus IV Epiphanes afflicted them in a radically new way--religious persecution. They had to publicly deny their religion or be tortured and killed, and many were martyred. **This forced the Jews to ask where the justice of God was “when obedience to God meant death and disobedience meant life.” How were the brutalized bodies of the martyrs ever to receive the justice they deserved?** Four different theological answers were developed.

It’s important to note briefly one of the answers--vicarious atonement--where the martyrs freely offered their lives up to God so that others would not have to be martyred. Unfortunately, later some Christians would twist this voluntary gift lifted up to, and accepted by, God into a downward demand of God required for sins to be forgiven. C&R flatly declare that **this “divinely demanded vicarious atonement is a theology obscenity.”** (my emphasis) (299-300)

The one kind of new theology relevant to the authors’ purpose is bodily resurrection--justice will come in the future when God will restore, “publicly and visibly, the bodies of the martyrs.” Note that this is **“a general bodily resurrection,”** and it is connected with what was said in Chapter 3 about Israel’s eschatological and apocalyptic visions of God’s final victory over evil. Resurrection now becomes the finale of that hope. **It’s crucial to see this as “not about the survival of us, but about the justice of God. Its question is not: am I eternal? But: is God just? Its chant is: God will overcome, someday.”** (my emphasis) (301-02)

This is perhaps the most crucial point in the authors’ interpretation of resurrection; it radically challenges the way most Christians see it.

Personally, I would not state this in either/or terms. I would say rather resurrection is “primarily” about the justice of God.

Then C&R turn to the question of what it meant when someone within Christian Judaism proclaimed that God had raised Jesus from the dead. Again, not a question about agreeing or disagreeing, but about meaning. First of all, with respect to the content of the resurrection claim, they clarify that it did not mean three things it’s sometimes mistaken for--resuscitation, apparition or exaltation. Its actual meaning is found within the options chosen by various Jewish groups. Christian Judaism had a new, very original idea. It can be seen in what Paul said in I Corinthians 15, a commentary on what had already been proclaimed in the earlier second textual layer. Jesus’ resurrection **meant that the general resurrection had thereby begun.** For Paul, the general resurrection and Jesus’ resurrection stand or fall together; you can’t have one without the other. (302-04)

C&R think the claim that the general resurrection had already begun is “stunningly creative and profoundly original on four counts, each involving a crucial choice between alternatives.” The first choice: rather than general imminence--the notion that apocalypse will happen in some near future--they chose the idea of general resurrection as the specific finale of the apocalypse which has already begun. The second choice: what they chose was within Judaism rather than against Judaism. It was an absolutely original move within the possibilities of Judaism itself. It was quite possible to imagine the apocalypse being brought about by God alone, without any messianic leader. Essene Jews proclaimed a single coming of a double messiah, one priestly and one royal. **Christian Jews proclaimed a double coming of a single messiah.** The third choice: rather than instantive moment--a terminal flash of time when apocalypse was completely present--they chose a durative process--an ongoing process in time moving toward completion. The fourth choice: rather than passive non-participation--not allowing for human assistance of any kind in the apocalyptic consummation--they chose active participation--primarily by everyone participating in the share communities of the mutual reciprocity of the spiritual gift of healing and material gift of food to eat as found in Chapters 3 and 4. (303-06)

The authors then turn to discuss the evidence of the resurrection claim. How could Paul argue to a pagan and James to a Pharisee that the divine Eutopia on earth was indeed already present and not just something in the future? Paul could argue that God had already begun to transform an unjust world into a just one. **He could invite a pagan to come and see one of the Christian Jewish share communities he was establishing all over the empire. If the pagan did not see God's transformation of the world there "right under the very noses and against the very plans of Rome," they could leave. But if they indeed saw it, they had a choice to make--to choose "divinity incarnate as violent power or divinity incarnate as distributive justice."** (my emphasis) James could offer the same kind of invitation to a Pharisee--come see our share community. **However, it was not enough to speak of the individual resurrection of Jesus as the soon-to-be-consummated general resurrection, like Paul could to a pagan. A Jew needed to see a corporate resurrection of the Jewish martyrs right along with Jesus' resurrection.** (306-08)

Such a corporate resurrection is absent in Paul's theology. C&R point out that one can see it in the Apostles' Creed as "he descended into Hell" in which Jesus descends into Sheol to liberate all those who had also suffered and died unjustly. It is noted that this phrase is not present in the Nicene Creed. **Unfortunately the idea of corporate resurrection is almost entirely lost in the New Testament.** It's found in Matthew 27:51b-53--at the time of the crucifixion "the earth shook, and the rocks were split. The tombs also were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised. After his resurrection they came out of the tombs and entered the holy city and appeared to many." (*When have you seen that scene in a Jesus film?*) It can also be found in the non-biblical *Gospel of Peter* 10:39-42 and the *Odes of Solomon* 42:10-20 from the end of the 1st century. It seems that corporate resurrection was eliminated early, only barely surviving

in some hymns and prayers. The more Christian Judaism was Jewish, like in James' community, the more it would have been spoken of. **But, C&R lament, as Christianity ceased to speak about corporate resurrection "something profoundly important was lost. The resurrection was no longer primarily about the justice of God, but about the survival of us."** (my emphasis) (309-10)

It's fair to say that the vast majority of Christians today have this individualized, otherworldly understanding of resurrection, which often leads to a lack of concern for systemic social injustice in this world.

In the final section of this chapter the authors return full circle to the questions surrounding the Church of the Holy Sepulcher.

This time they bring along a better understanding of both the Jewish concept of resurrection in general and also Christian Judaism's unique way of understanding it, which distinguished them from the other major Jewish groups of the day. C&R note that the Jesus movement's moving center that went out to all had radically changed; it was now a central location to which all must come. The Kingdom of God now had a marble facade on a building fit for a king. For the authors this was a great irony and tragedy. **"The one who rebelled in every way against a Roman-backed commercial kingdom in Galilee, Jesus the Jewish Peasant, was now Christ the imperial king."** (my emphasis)

The authors then engage in a detailed theological argument challenging some significant Christian beliefs related to Jesus' resurrection. It is often said that only the miracles of the empty tomb and risen apparitions can explain historically two things: (1) how the companions of Jesus regained their faith after losing it at the crucifixion and (2) how others came to have faith in Jesus in spite of his crucifixion. C&R challenge the first by saying **losing one's nerve is not at all like losing one's faith**, which is the much better way of interpreting the biblical accounts. They challenge the second by claiming that **it totally misunderstands the first century context within which people would come to have Christian Judaism's faith.** Nobody in that time would be convinced of the truth of their proclamations merely because of those miracles. Every other religion of the day had them, too. **They needed concrete evidence that supported the radical claim of the new presence of God's justice in their quite unjust world, and they had to be challenged to make the choice to join it and stand over against Roman imperial injustice.** Where and how, they needed to know, was their world being transformed? Paul's way of witnessing to pagans was different from James' way of witnessing to fellow Jews, but **both basically had their communal lives to show, and it worked as new collaborators joined the others who were experiencing the empowerment of that kind of life as described above.**

How would Christian community be different, if this challenge changed more and more minds about these crucial subjects?

The Church of the Holy Sepulcher was not named the Church of the Holy Resurrection for a good reason, C&R conclude.

A fitting witness to the risen presence of Jesus and his Kingdom of God movement could never be a building. **It could then, and can now, only be seen in "a world under transformation by Christian cooperation with divine justice and by Christian participation in it."** (my emphasis) (310-14)

Are you a part of Jesus' justice basilica?

This is the authors' answer to the rhetorical question they asked on p. 298-- "Are Christians right not to call that church by its obviously more important name [Holy Resurrection]?" (*You bet!*)

Epilogue: Ground and Gospel (*additional opening paragraph and five-page ending section added in the 2nd edition*)

C&R restructured the Epilogue in the 2nd edition. In addition to the review of the book's major findings contained in the 1st addition, they added a new section dealing with questions surrounding the separation of Christianity and Judaism given the results of their reconstructions of the historical Jesus and his brother James (the latter stimulated by the discovery of the James ossuary as described in Chapter 1). In a new opening paragraph they note that in general we often see historical events as inevitable, when in fact there were always other possible outcomes to preceding situations. In the particular case of the historical Jesus, the authors explore other possible outcomes than the one that actually happened--the coming into being of "two separate and even inimical worldwide religions." (315)

The first section presents a good review of the book's findings, well worth a close reading. A particularly important reminder is this one-sentence summary of some key elements of the Jesus movement's unique understanding of the Kingdom of God: **it "was not just a vision but a program, not just an idea but a lifestyle, not just about heaven hereafter but about earth here and now, and not just about one person but about many others as well."** (319) There is also a reminder that it was not the exceptional cruelty of the Roman Empire that cost Jesus his life, but its normalcy. It was "simply the normalcy of civilization in that time and place." **The evils of dominating power and wealth are major factors in all times and places, including our own.** (320)

In the new second section, C&R concentrate on three essential, but not inevitable, decisions which were pivotal in the eventual "*parting of the ways*" between Christianity and Judaism. First, soon after Jesus was crucified, the key leaders of Christian Judaism left rural Galilee and moved to Jerusalem. Had they not done so, the Jesus movement would have died out within a few generations and there would have been no Christian Judaism to become Christianity. Second, while all groups in Christian Judaism accepted uncircumcised pagans into the movement, they were divided over whether the unity of the movement depended on both Jews and pagans observing kosher requirements in their eating practices--James said yes and Paul no. The authors think, contrary to the usual Christian position, it was James who was right. In any case, Paul's choice was one of the factors leading to the possibility of a separate Christian religion. Third, and most important, were the three Roman wars against Judaism in less than a century. C&R say that this is the key to the answer to **the only proper question about the separation**--not the two commonly asked questions: why did Christians break away? and how did the two religions spring from a common root?--but rather "**Why did all other Jewish groups slowly but surely reject the Christian Jewish option?**" The authors' answer is **the Christian Jewish commitment (in both James' faction and Paul's faction) to include Christian pagans, even after the Roman wars.** After all the devastation of Judaism by those wars, all other Jewish groups found that inclusion incredible. It was not differing theology, ritual or tradition that caused the separation, as is commonly believed. It was war. Both James and Paul wanted unity between Christian Jews and Christian pagans. What would our world be like today, if they had succeeded? It's hard to imagine, because their hopes were dashed by the Roman wars; by history, not theology. C&R think **it would be good for us to rethink that fact and even mourn it, because the "historical Jesus who lived, died and rose as a Jew would surely have done so."** (320-24)