ARMAND PUIG i TÀRRECH

Jesus: An Uncommon Journey

Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 2. Reihe 288

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zum Neuen Testament · 2. Reihe

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Jesus: An Uncommon Journey

Studies on the Historical Jesus

Mohr Siebeck

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e-ISBN PDF 978-3-16-151631-3
ISBN 978-3-16-150504-1
ISSN 0340-9570 (Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament, 2. Reihe)

Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliographie; detailed bibliographic data are available on the Internet at *http://dnb.d-nb.de*.

The book was printed by Laupp & Göbel in Nehren on non-aging paper and bound by Buchbinderei Nädele in Nehren.

Printed in Germany.

À la mémoire du P. Jacques Dupont (1915 – 1998),
moine et bibliste, disciple de Jésus

Preface

The nine studies on the historical Jesus that appear in this book are a reflection of the research that I have carried out on the topic over the past ten years. This research also led to the publication of a book destined for a popular readership, which seeks to present an overall picture of Jesus of Nazareth: *Jesús. Un perfil biogràfic* (Perfils 50; Barcelona, 2004). The book is now in its sixth Catalan printing and there have been four translations of it into Spanish, Italian, Portuguese and Romanian. Editions in German and French are in preparation.

Eight of the studies in this present book have previously appeared in print or are in the process of being published, as follows:

Chapter 1, "The Search for the Historical Jesus" – "La recherche du Jésus historique", *Bib.* 81 (2000), pp. 179-201

Chaper 2, "The Birth of Jesus" – "El naixement de Jesús", *Revista Catalana de Teologia* 30 (2005), pp. 289-329

Chapter 3, "The Family of Jesus 'according to the Flesh'" – "La família de Jesús 'segons la carn'", *Revista Catalana de Teologia* 31 (2006), pp. 297-335

Chapter 4, "Why Was Jesus Baptized by John?" – "Pourquoi Jésus a-t-il reçu le baptême de Jean?", *NTS* 54 (2008), pp. 355-374

Chapter 5, "Jesus and the Commandment Not to Steal" – "Jesús i el manament de no robar", in *El matrimoni i l'ús dels béns en la Bíblia* (A. PUIG I TÀRRECH [ed.]; Scripta Biblica 8; Barcelona 2008), pp. 185-201

Chapter 6, "Violence and Jesus of Nazareth" – "La violència i Jesús de Natzaret", in *La violència en la Bíblia* (A. PUIG I TÀRRECH [ed.]; Scripta Biblica 9; Barcelona 2009), pp. 151-192

Chapter 7, "Jesus: Prophecy and Wisdom" – "Jesús: profecia i saviesa", *Revista Catalana de Teologia* 33 (2008), pp. 477-502

Chapter 8, "Was Jesus a Mystic?" – "Era Jesús un místic?", to be published in *La Bíblia i la mística* (A. PUIG I TÀRRECH [ed.]; Scripta Biblica 11; Barcelona 2010).

I would like to express here my gratitude to the teaching staff and students of the Facultat de Teologia de Catalunya (Barcelona), whose observations have helped me to clarify key points of my research. It is well known that reconstructing the historical Jesus is a subject as fascinating as it is open-ended. The possibilities of interpretation are numerous and reaching agreement is something that can be achieved only gradually, and by means of careful rigour and academic exchange. Indeed, the rabbi of Nazareth, more than any other historical figure, seems to resist a definitive understanding of

his identity. And yet, since the very beginning of Christian history, the question of this identity has demanded an answer; it is a question that led to the creation of the New Testament, which is in itself a collection of answers and the clearest example of the immeasurable richness of both a person and a message that changed dramatically the history of humankind. It is, therefore, no wonder that each new generation seeks to understand, and to contemplate, an event firmly situated in time but also limitless in its density and timeless in its relevance. Indeed, successive generations of scholars, drawing on earlier research, take up the same basic questions about Jesus and formulate them afresh within the framework of an ever-changing social, cultural and religious context. In the case of this book, that context is a Mediterranean, Latin one, and the heuristic framework to which it belongs is the so-called Third Quest for the Historical Jesus.

In bringing this work to publication, I am indebted to the skilful and sensitive contribution of Dr Jenny Read-Heimerdinger who has undertaken the English translation and copy-editing of the articles included in the book; to her I express my deepest gratitude. Able assistance with the indices was provided by Mrs Penny Newton, to whom I express my thanks. I am also grateful to Cambridge University Press and to the Pontifical Biblical Institute of Rome for permission to reproduce articles previously published in *New Testament Studies* and *Biblica* respectively. Finally, I extend my thanks to Professor Jörg Frey and the other editors of the WUNT II series, and to Dr. Henning Ziebritzki, editorial director of Mohr Siebeck, for accepting to include this work in their prestigious list of publications.

Barcelona – la Selva del Camp — Armand Puig i Tàrrech
30th November, 2009,
Feast of St Andrew the Apostle, the First-Called

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Introduction

The Jesus Tradition

1. Oral Tradition and Paul

The title chosen for this collection of articles on the subject of the historical Jesus is an indication of the heuristic perspective that the author seeks to underline. Jesus can only be reached through the witnesses who set in motion a process of transmission that had its origin in the life and preaching of Jesus. Indeed, the person of Jesus, in all his breadth and complexity, was the focus of interest of the first Christian communities, even of Paul, the first known Christian writer. Even though the Pauline writings display a surprising lack of references to the words and deeds of Jesus, the apostle nevertheless drew on the oral – and maybe the written – tradition shaped by the early community. Paul brings together the basic elements of that tradition – the confession of faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus (1 Cor. 15.3-5), the Eucharistic practice derived from the words of Jesus at the last supper (1 Cor. 11.23-25), the return of the Lord in the end times and his remaining for ever (1 Thess. 4.15-17) – but he also includes more specific elements – the refusal of divorce (1 Cor. 7.10-11), the reward of those who proclaim the gospel (1 Cor. 9.14).[1]

It is, furthermore, clear from the network of implicit allusions that the Pauline kerygma presupposes and is founded upon a wealth of traditions concerning Jesus that were circulating among the Christian communities during the first decades, and that were more interrelated than at first sight appears. Thus, there is a certain number of allusions to the Jesus tradition found in Q, Mark, special Matthew and special Luke, as much concerning the teachings as

[1] There are four occasions on which Paul explicitly quotes Jesus: three in 1 Cor. (7.10: the charge of the Lord; 9.14: "the Lord commanded"; 11.23: "I received from the Lord") and one in 1 Thess. (4.15: "the word of the Lord"), to which could perhaps be added Rom. 14.14 ("I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus"), a text where it is affirmed that nothing is unclean. As for 1 Thess. 4.15, it is not clear if the "word" of the Lord means the fact that the living will not precede those who have already died when Jesus returns *or* the fact of his coming again and that those who are alive and the resurrected will meet him and be with him for ever – the latter option is to be preferred. The argument of the authority of Jesus thus constitutes the background to Paul's quotations. However, the source that conveys this authority is tradition, which is presented as having been received through the community (1 Cor. 15.3: "I delivered to you … what I also received").

concerning the life of the Lord.[2] However, the underlying reason for which Paul probably did not refer more to the Jesus tradition is that he was not a direct witness ("eyewitness") of the deeds and words of the Lord and therefore he did not feel authorized to place himself within the chain of oral transmission that was set up by the Twelve and by the others who had known the earthly Jesus. Paul knew the Jesus of glory, dead and resurrected, whom God chose to reveal to him (Gal. 1.16) and whom he was to announce to the Gentiles; that is why he was considered to be an apostle. He says, though, that he was an apostle "untimely born" (1 Cor. 15.8: ὡσπερεὶ τῷ ἐκτρώματι), that is, not in the time when Jesus lived and died. Paul sought only to testify to what he had received directly from God: the revelation of his Son. So the kerygma of Paul was what had been transmitted to him by means of a revelation and what had been transmitted by the instruction of the community (*traditum*): he, in turn, would transmit all aspects through his apostolic proclamation (*tradendum*). In this way, tradition functioned as a basic category with a dual register: the direct one (the Son of God preached to all peoples, the object of the personal revelation Paul received) and the indirect one (Jesus Christ who died and was resurrected, the core of the tradition and confession of faith of the community who passed it on to him, see Rom. 10.9). Of course, the two levels are combined and operate in association with one another in such a way that the Pauline proclamation in no way excludes the earthly or historical Jesus: he is an integral component of the confession of the Christ.[3]

2. Oral Tradition as Remembrance and Memory

The example of Paul illustrates the central character of the tradition as one attempts to understand the paths opened up by the words and deeds attributed to Jesus, paths to which access is achieved through the written materials that

[2] See a list of quotations and allusions in F. SIEGERT, "Jésus et Paul: une relation contestée", in D. MARGUERAT – E. NORELLI – J.-M. POFFET (eds), *Jésus de Nazareth. Nouvelles approches d'une énigme* (Le Monde de la Bible 38; Geneva, 1998), pp. 439-457. A shorter list, with some differences is found in J.D.G. DUNN, *Jesus Remembered* (Christianity in the Making 1; Grand Rapids, MI – Cambridge, 2003), p. 182, n. 48. Note that Paul's quotations or allusions to the words or deeds of "the Lord" refer to material already gathered in the synoptic tradition: 1 Cor. 7.10-11 (Mk 10.6-9.11-12 and par.); 1 Cor. 9.14 (Mt. 10.10 par. Lk. 10.7); 1 Cor. 11.23-25 (Lk. 22.19-20); Rom. 14.14 (Mk 7.15.20). The only relatively new theme is found in 1 Thess. 4.15(-17) (cf., though, Mt. 24.30-31).

[3] It should be noted in this connection that the object of the confession of faith is Jesus who "died" (earthly and historical) *and* who was resurrected (heavenly and glorious). The continuity between the two is indicated by the use of the same kerygmatic formula. A similar thing happens in the statement "Jesus is the Lord", where the verb "is" functions as a marker of identity and, as such, of continuity.

have come down to us. These paths are notoriously complex. The Jesus tradition was not handed down in a linear fashion nor was it strictly controlled. Jesus, in whom the tradition originated, showed no particular interest in establishing the memory of himself by fixing, for example, what could have been sure channels of transmission: neither familiar channels (explicitly ordering his disciples, always present around the Master, to remember his teaching), nor channels less familiar in the Palestinian context (making sure that the disciples set down in writing what he said and did). Apart from a few exceptions, the most important of which is the sending out of the Twelve (Mk 6.7-13 and par.), Jesus did not show a formal concern to ensure an 'authorized' transmission of his words or even of his actions. There is no trace in the traditions handed down of a formal charge entrusted, for example, to any of his more notable followers – whether literate or illiterate.

Nonetheless, there seems to have been a deliberate intention on Jesus' part not to act alone, always to surround himself with the presence, more or less intimate, of some disciple or other (episodes such as the healing of the deaf-mute in Mk 7.32-35 should not be seen as an exception). The process of transmission was thus made possible at any given moment in the activity of Jesus.[4] It is worthy of note that Jesus gave a special role to three disciples (Peter and the two sons of Zebedee) as witnesses of the critical moments in his life, especially the transfiguration on the mountain and the prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane. It should also be noted that at those particular times Jesus addressed no specific teaching to his three chosen disciples; he simply asked them to actively participate in a unique event in his life.

In addition, there are scattered indications that show that the message of Jesus could not remain hidden or forgotten. In a logion of Q (Mt. 10.27 par. Lk. 12.3), which is also found in the *Gospel of Thomas* (33.1), Jesus himself (Matthew, *Gospel of Thomas*) or his followers (Luke) exhorted people to announce to the four winds things that had been heard in the depths of secrecy.[5] The reason for the spreading of the message is seen in the previous

[4] It could be thought that the Gospels *want* to present Jesus as accompanied by the disciples in order to make sure that they are the trustworthy transmitters of what happened. In fact, there is no text before the passion that states that Jesus was alone with anyone apart from the disciples (the only exception would be the Samaritan woman, Jn 4.8.27). Another possibility, a preferable one, would be to see in Mk 3.14 ("he appointed twelve, to be with him") a decision taken by Jesus himself at the point when he offered the Twelve the choice to follow him.

[5] The hyperbole poses no problem: there is an absolute contrast between the way things are heard ("in the dark", "whispered") and the way things are passed on ("in the light", "on the housetops").

sentence in Q (Mt. 10.26 par. Lk. 12.2), in the form of a proverb: "nothing is covered that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known".[6]

The transmission of some events in Jesus' life are given a temporal setting in some missionary texts, with the idea of legitimizing the divulgation of the event based on the prophetic words of Jesus. This is the case with the universal proclamation of the gospel that is found at the end of the anointing in Bethany (Mk 14.9 par. Mt. 26.13) and in the middle of the eschatological discourse (Mk 13.10; cf. Mt. 24.14). The post-Easter stamp on the theme of the proclamation of the gospel in Mk 14.9 is clear,[7] but it is difficult not to see in the beginning of the tradition the use of the category of 'memory', reinforced by the insistent formula "in truth I say to you" (ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν). To the spectacular and controversial action of the woman in Bethany Jesus attached the memory of what she did as a gesture of anticipation and preparation for his burial. While it is true that in Jn 12.7-8 the explicit reference to the memory of the anointing has disappeared, the temporal link between this anointing and "the day (ἡμέραν) of my burial" is maintained, and is seen here, just as in Mark and Matthew, as a moment when Jesus ceased to be physically present with his own: "you do not always have me" (ἐμὲ δὲ οὐ πάντοτε ἔχετε – an identical sentence is found in Mk 14.7 par. Mt. 26.11; Jn 12.8!). As a result, the use of the category of 'memory' or 'remembrance', which has recurred frequently in the research concerning the historical Jesus in recent years,[8] has strong roots in the episode of the anointing at Bethany, where Jesus himself seems to have interpreted the woman's action in connection with the imminent facts of his death and burial but also in connection with the time that would begin with his absence, the time of the 'memory' of the woman's gesture.

The linking of the future as a time of remembrance of the deeds and words of Jesus with the past as the time in which the remembrance has its origin, defines – and to a certain extent justifies – the Gospel texts themselves. The fact of the resurrection turns the texture of the 'memory of Jesus' upside

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[6] In contrast, this proverbial saying appears on its own in Mk 4.22 (cf. Lk. 8.17) and in a slightly re-worked form in *GThom* 6.5-6 (NHC). In the Coptic version of *GThom* 5 (NHC), the saying has been turned around and in the Greek version (*POxy* 654) it has been expanded. This saying has also been reversed in the Greek version of *GThom* 6 (POxy 654).

[7] See J. GNILKA, *Das Evangelium nach Markus (Mk 8.27-16.20)* (EKK II/2; Zürich – Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1979), p. 222: "Der *hôpou*-Satz markinisch ist. Der Rest ist wahrscheinlich vorgegeben, wie besonders des Gedenken nahelegt".

[8] Significantly, the term "remembrance" or "memory" figures in the title of works by J. Schröter (*Erinnerung an Jesu Worte. Studien zur Rezeption der Logienüberlieferung in Markus, Q und Thomas* [WMANT 76; Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1997) and J.D.G. Dunn (*Jesus Remembered*). G. Segalla has made it the key category in his work on the theology of the New Testament (*Teologia biblica del Nuovo Testamento. Tra memoria escatologica di Gesù e promessa del futuro regno di Dio* [Logos 8/2; Turin, 2006]).

down, in such a way that the first note of this remembrance is no longer the absence of one on his way to his death ("you will not always have me") but the uninterrupted presence of the resurrected one ("I am with you to the end of the world", Mt. 28.20). In fact, Matthew's Gospel closes with the solemn missionary commission that the Kyrios gives to the Eleven when they have gathered together, in which the future universal proclamation is linked to the past of the historical proclamation conceived as a *regula vitae* for the present ("teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you", Mt. 28.20).

In contrast, Luke's Gospel presents the connection with the past from the very opening pages of his text. The soul of the historian is expressed through the authorial first person who addresses a specific person, Theophilus; this contributes to making the link with the past the primary question considered in the document.[9] Indeed, the prologue to the Gospel (Lk. 1.1-4) has as its goal to underline for the reader/hearer the merit and the truth of the writing that follows.[10] The recipient needs to be reassured that the story of the things that have happened are historically grounded in the accounts of "eyewitnesses" who were faithful transmitters of the facts. Not only that, but the account was written by someone who possessed exhaustive information concerning everything that had taken place. In other words, Luke, the author of Luke – Acts, stresses that the truth of the remembrance of the past is preserved. The transmission will be made with total clarity and with a full knowledge of "everything Jesus did and taught" (Acts 1.1).

In the case of John's Gospel, the desire to give a guarantee to the reader/hearer that the account is highly trustworthy is seen in a clever literary device: the amount of information supplied by the author. In the epilogue to the Gospel (Jn 20.30) and also in the close of the Appendix that follows (21.25), the fact that a great deal of material has been omitted is underlined – the Appendix even says that there is so much that it would make a whole library! The result is obvious: the memory of Jesus that the document conveys is as solid as stone. If there is much that has been left out, the little that remains must be of true value!

In summary, the true transmission of the words and deeds of Jesus and, as a result, the memory of him are the principal goal of the prologues, endings and epilogues of the majority of the gospels written before the year 100 CE,

[9] On the identity of Theophilus, see the recent work by J. RIUS-CAMPS – J. READ-HEIMERDINGER, *Lluc. Demostració a Teòfil. Evangeli i Fets dels Apòstols segons el Còdex Beza* (Barcelona, 2009, pp. 22-23).

[10] See L.A. ALEXANDER, *Preface to Luke's Gospel. Literary Convention and Social Context in Luke 1:1-4* (SNTSMS 78; Cambridge, 1993). According to Alexander, parallels with the Lukan prologue are found in scientific, especially medical, works, which are by definition works that make the highest claim to be truthful.

especially in the case of Luke.[11] Mark is the only one not to explicitly mention this common concern, although his text is presented as a "gospel" (Mk 1.1), that is, as a narrative that is a remembrance of the words and deeds of Jesus, which now become the object of proclamation (1.14). So it can be said that the term 'gospel' includes everything that is denoted by the category of 'memory': the truthful transmission of a meaningful past that determines the present.

In this sense, tradition is both remembrance and memory. It is remembrance because the past is brought into the present by means of a process of transmission, whose truth is constantly posited. The past has to be legitimized as true, in such a way that the tradition could not be thought to be an invention nor could it be accused of containing false or incomplete information about the past: tradition has to emerge from the critical judgement of the reader/hearer with its honour intact. In addition, tradition is memory, in so far as the present has to be legitimized as the continuation of a fundamental and foundational past. A present that is not a living memory of the preaching of Jesus, of his deeds and words, of his actions and his teachings, that is, of all that leads to a confession of faith, would be cut off from tradition and would lose its irreplaceable point of reference. In short, the Jesus tradition is believable in so far as the past is legitimized in the present and the present finds its legitimization in the reference to the past.[12]

3. The Jesus Tradition as Impact and Stimulus

If, in the Jesus tradition, the past is of interest in relation to the present, it is clear that the past is not reduced to a fossilized truth, a sort of archaeological remains that has to be dug up, classified and put in a museum. The Gospels are not the debris of a transmission that failed to be properly received and left many important pieces behind. Obviously, it is possible to suppose that only a part of the Jesus tradition, whether great or small, has been preserved, the part that is found in the canonical Gospels or else in the non-canonical writings (known as "apocryphal") or even in non-Christian materials. It could be imagined that if the *Gospel of the Hebrews* or the *Gospel of Peter* or some other "unknown gospel" (like *Egerton* 2, for example), or else the five books

[11] It should be stressed that tradition demands for itself the truth of what it transmits and, in the reader, an absolute confidence in what it transmits. It is a fundamental rule of historiography, which Josephus, for example, makes explicit at the beginning of his work *Contra Apionem*: "I was so convinced of their truth [of the events related]" (1.50).

[12] See W.H. KEBLER, "Der historische Jesus", in J. SCHRÖTER – R. BRUCKER (eds), *Der historische Jesus. Tendenzen und Perspektiven der gegenwärtigen Forschung* (BZNW 114; Berlin – New York, 2002), pp. 15-66, here 56.

of Papias of Hierapolis mentioned in his work *Expositions of the Oracles of the Lord*, had been fully preserved, our knowledge of the Jesus tradition would be much more complete. However, the small amount of material in the fragmentary documents listed above that has survived shows that the transmission of the Jesus tradition was reasonably successful and that the most important channel was, and remains, the four common or canonical Gospels together with, to a lesser degree and generally of a dependent nature, the *Gospel of Thomas*. Apart from the four Gospels (including Q that can only be identified through them), and a few logions from the *Gospel of Thomas* (between seven and nine) and some scattered agrapha, it is difficult to identify clearly other material that dates from the beginnings of the Jesus tradition.[13]

However, the question that we wish to deal with in this *Introduction* is not the matter of the sources – a topic outlined in Chapter 1[14] – but rather the question of access to Jesus or, better, the tradition that is rooted in him and that consists in what he said and did. It seems clear enough that the activity of Jesus in Jewish Palestine of his time had such an impact that it led to the start of a process of oral transmission concerning his life. This process already started while Jesus was still preaching. There was no need to wait till after his death to see the impact of his words and deeds. Despite the generic and sometimes laudatory character that they take, the references to the 'success' of Jesus such as are found in the Synoptic Gospels are sufficiently frequent to imply that his activity made an immediate impact. Rabbi Jesus was unique in the eyes of the people and even of their leaders on account of the authority (ἐξουσία) with which he spoke (Mk 1.22), the claims he made (to be able to forgive sins, something that only God could do, Mk 2.5) and his determined resolution to oppose the kingdom of Satan through his exorcisms (Mk 1.25). It is no surprise, therefore, that Jesus was a character who should have aroused controversy around him. Some people – simple folk from Galilee – exclaimed that they had never seen the like (Mk 2.12) while others – the Teachers of the Law sent from Jerusalem – decreed that he was in collusion with Satan (Mk 3.22). The immediate impact of his activity is undeniable. In no time, he had his supporters and opponents. Luke appropriately qualified Jesus as "a sign that is spoken against" (Lk. 2.34).

The impact made by Jesus was founded above all on the singular nature of his activity. Jesus was no conventional rabbi, the disciple of a more or less

[13] The contribution of the agrapha, the fragments of unknown gospels (esp. *PEger* 2, *POxy* 840, *POxy* 1224, *PBerol* 22220, *PEstr*) and the fragments of the *Gospel of the Hebrews* do not alter the picture of Jesus provided by the canonical gospel tradition (or the oldest material of the *Gospel of Thomas*). On the *Gospel of Thomas*, see my book *Un Jesús desconocido. Las claves del evangelio gnóstico de Tomás* (Barcelona, 2008). On the rest of the aforementioned material, see PUIG I TÀRRECH, *Els evangelis apòcrifs*, vol. I (Barcelona, 2008), pp. 63-179.

[14] See pp. 45-57, in Chapter 1 on "The Search for the Historical Jesus".

well known master, but rather a *freelance* rabbi, viewed with some mistrust by the experts of the Law of his time.[15] In addition, Jesus did not attract great crowds who followed him, in the way that the claimants to the royal throne who arose after the death of Herod did (as Josephus relates, *AJ* 17.271-281). Only occasionally, such as at the time of the feeding of the multitude by the Sea of Galilee involving the multiplication of the loaves and the fishes, do the numbers in the Gospel sources ("5,000" according to Mk 6.44; Jn 6.10; "4,000" people according to Mk 8.9) resemble the figures given for the Egyptian "sicarius" who led a group of "4,000" men (Acts 21.38; "30,000" according to Josephus in *BJ* 2.258). So the core of the Jesus tradition has to be looked for among the small groups of disciples, men and women and in particular the Twelve, who moved around him. These are the people who felt the direct impact of his activity on a regular basis and passed on their experience. That does not mean to say that a more extensive impact was not felt in possibly wider circles as, for example, would be the case in the feeding of the 5,000.[16] It is significant that the episode in the ministry of Jesus that was witnessed by the greatest number of people (several thousand) is attested the most number of times by the gospel tradition (six passages in all).[17]

The impact of Jesus was in direct relation to the nature of what he said and did, the meaning he gave and the following of the individuals he attracted. The following of larger groups was much less frequent, happening only occasionally. Jesus' activity overall was recorded by the memory of the few who could attest to it in a more or less constant fashion. We know by name just a few of the disciples who accompanied Jesus as he travelled around during the time that his activity lasted: the Twelve (presented as his permanent followers),[18] Levi, the tax collector (according to Mk 2.13-17 par. Lk. 5.27-32, although Mt. 9.9-13 identifies him with Matthew, one of the Twelve), Joseph

[15] The relationship between Jesus and the Decalogue is discussed in two chapters in the present book: "Jesus and the Command Not to Steal" (pp. 163-177) and "Violence and Jesus of Nazareth" (pp. 178-218). The Jewishness of Jesus is particularly stressed in the exegetical work of the Italian scholar Giuseppe Barbaglio, unfortunately no longer with us. See G. BARBAGLIO, *Gesù ebreo di Galilea. Indagine storica* (Bologna, 2002).

[16] Jesus was known in all of Galilee, as can be inferred from such passages as Jn 6.42 among others.

[17] In my opinion, there was only one miracle of the loaves and the fishes, the one attested by the four common or canonical gospels (Mt. 14.13-21 par. Mk 6.32-44 par. Lk. 9.10-17; Jn 6.1-13), which is repeated in two of them (Mk 8.1-10 par. Mt. 15.32-39). The feeding of the crowd by the Sea of Galilee becomes the great messianic sign of Jesus. See PUIG I TÀRRECH, *Jesús. Un perfil biogràfic* (Perfils 50; Barcelona, [5]2004), pp. 393-396 (German translation forthcoming).

[18] Four lists of the Twelve have been preserved: Mt. 10.24; Mk 3.16-19; Lk. 6.14-16; Acts 1.13.

Barsabbas and Matthias (according to Acts 1.21-23).[19] In other cases, the memory of Jesus seems to have been selective. This is the case with the five women from Galilee (see Lk. 8.1-3; Mk 15.40-41 and par.): Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joseph, Salome (the mother of the sons of Zebedee?), Joanna the wife of Cuza and Susannah. Mary Magdalen played a significant role at the time of the crucifixion and burial and in the days following the death of Jesus. The memory of the women connected with Jerusalem, specifically with the neighbouring village of Bethany (Martha and Mary, the sisters of Lazarus, see Lk. 10.38-42; Jn 11.1-45; 12.1-8), seems to have been even more restricted. Beyond these, there were a good number of men around Jesus who came from the Jerusalem area and who were close to him but whose encounters with him were punctual. The memory of Jesus in their case is limited to one meeting: people from Jericho (Zaccheus, Bartimeus), Bethany (Lazarus, Simon the Leper), Bethphage (the owner of the donkey which Jesus rode to enter the city), Arimathea (Joseph, who had a house and tomb in Jerusalem) and Jerusalem itself (Nicodemus?; the man blind from birth in Jn 9? Simon who had imigrated from Cyrene and settled in Jerusalem; the owner of the house of the city where Jesus ate the last supper). Oddly, apart from the Twelve, more people who are known to have been close to Jesus were from Judaea than Galilee.

The memory of Jesus among members of his family, who appear in passing during the Galilean ministry with a somewhat distant attitude towards him, was also punctual (see Mk 3.20-21; 3.31-35 and par.; 6.1-6 and par.). In contrast, a significant number of his family moved to Jerusalem at the time of the Passover in 30 CE and would have witnessed directly the last days of Jesus and his tragic death (Mk 15.41b; Acts 1.14). Among the female family members there stand out Mary the mother of Jesus, another Mary who was his paternal aunt and the wife of Cleophas, and his maternal aunt, unnamed (see Jn 19.25). The male members were, notably, the four brothers of Jesus (James, Joseph, Judas and Simon, see Mk 6.3 par. Mt. 13.55) – his sisters, at least two in number, are not named – and Cleophas, his paternal uncle (see Lk. 24.18; Jn 19.25).[20] In point of fact, in so far as it is possible to speak of the memories of the infancy of Jesus, these would have been passed on by his family in particular (his mother, and his older brothers and sisters).[21] As a result, as Chapters 2 and 3 of this book seek to demonstrate, Matthew 1–2 and

[19] Lk. 7.36-50 places in Galilee a feast held by Simon the Pharisee to which Jesus was invited. There is no reason, however, to think that this Simon was a disciple or even a sympathiser.

[20] Joseph, the spouse of Mary, only plays an active role in the infancy narratives. Everything suggests that by the time Jesus was preaching Joseph was already dead, although his memory was maintained (cf. Lk. 4.22; Jn 1.45; 6.42).

[21] See Chapter 3 of this book on "The Family of Jesus 'according to the Flesh'" (pp. 105-142).

Luke 1–2 cannot be overlooked when asking historical questions about Jesus, which, in the case of his infancy, come up against a set of complex, though not fruitless, issues. The infancy narratives do not exclude historical data, although it must be said that their information has a somewhat tenuous relationship with the text as it stands now. Nevertheless, even though the memory is rather sketchy and noticeably re-worked, it is not inexistent and needs to be taken account of in dealing with the Jesus tradition.[22]

The preceding list, which includes around 40 names, shows that the activity of Jesus took place before a good number of individual and direct witnesses who, to varying degrees, were eyewitnesses of the events that occurred and, as such, have to be viewed as the first links in a multilateral chain of transmission. There is too much evidence to leave out the role played by the "eyewitnesses" (Lk. 1.2) in the transmission of the deeds and words of Jesus.[23] The so-called "first orality" was made possible by the direct and constant witnesses of the preaching of the rabbi from Nazareth, people who felt the impact of his message and began to transmit it. This transmission, however, was prompted by Jesus himself, especially within the context of his activity in Galilee. Indeed, it seems to be an undeniable fact that after a certain length of time spent travelling around Galilee with the Twelve, Jesus decided to send them out to preach.[24]

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[22] See Chapter 2 on the subject of "The Birth of Jesus" (pp. 63-104). The themes associated with the birth and childhood of Jesus are particularly uncomfortable ones for the Third Quest. G. Theissen uses the term "Unsicherheit" ("Vom historischen Jesus zum kerygmatischen Gottessohn. Soziologische Rollenanalyse als Beitrag zum Verständnis neutestamentlicher Christologie", *EvTh* 68/4 [2008], pp. 285-304, here n. 1). In my opinion, progress could also be made in research into the undoubtedly difficult area of the childhood of Jesus.

[23] In this sense, acknowledgement should be made of a growing number of authors who have recently explored the function of the eyewitnesses in the Jesus tradition. Special mention may be made of the outstanding work of S. BYRSKOG (*Story as History – History as Story. The Gospel Tradition in the Context of Ancient Oral History* [WUNT 123; Tübingen, 2000]); M. HENGEL ("Eyewitness Memory and the Writing of the Gospels", in M. BOCKMUEHL – D. A. HAGNER [eds], *The Written Gospel* [FS G. N. Stanton; Cambridge, 2005], pp. 70-96) and above all, R. BAUCKHAM (*Jesus and the Eyewitnesses. The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony* [Grand Rapids – Cambridge, 2006]). For the Bauckham's own summary of his position, see his contribution, "The Transmission of the Gospel Traditions", *RCatT* 38 (2009), pp. 377-394. Bauckham interprets the phrase of Jn 15.27 ("from the beginning") in line with Lk. 1.2 ("from the beginning") and Acts 1.21-22 (which mentions those who were witnesses "during all the time that he lived among us"; see *ibid*., pp. 388-390).

[24] The fact has been transmitted by Mark and Q. See Mk 6.7-13; Mt. 9.37-10.1, 7-16; Lk. 9.1-6; 10.1-16. It is obvious, as stated by J. Dunn (*Jesus Remembered*, p. 247), that the texts present a re-working based on the early Christian mission This does not cast doubt, however, on the sending out of the disciples by Jesus but rather confirms it. Indeed, Mk 6.8-9 says that those sent out could carry sticks and wear sandals whereas Mt. 10.10 goes so far as to forbid them (cf. Lk. 9.3; 10.4). The equipment permitted in Mark seems to correspond to a long and difficult mission (such as the early community would have undertaken) while the lack of

The preaching of the Twelve was limited no doubt to a few villages in Galilee by the lake. It was a mission restricted in time and space, probably following itineraries already travelled in the past and therefore maybe involving prior contact with some people. The Twelve were sent out to reproduce what Jesus had been doing and saying. Their task was to heal the sick and the possessed and to announce the same message as Jesus: conversion (according to Mk 6.12) or the arrival of the kingdom of heaven (according to Q: Mt. 10.7 par. Lk. 10.9) – both themes are found together in Mk 1.15. So the disciples, who had listened many times to Jesus, were now ready to proclaim the same message as the Master, to pass it on without variation. Listening to Jesus had prepared them to repeat what they had heard, in accordance with the cultural patterns of an era characterized by the ability to memorize what had been carefully listened to. The Galilean mission of the Twelve, alone and without Jesus, can be explained by the fact that he believed them to be capable of taking an active role in the faithful transmission of his message – and then of reproducing his miraculous deeds (the healings!). As a result, if Jesus took the decision to send the Twelve out on mission, it can be said that he himself initiated the handing on of his own message. By the fact of their having been direct witnesses of the deeds and words of Jesus and of having lived their lives in close association with that of the Master, they were considered suitable channels to pass on his message. The impact of the teaching was accompanied by the stimulus to hand it on: receiving meant transmitting. In other words, it looks as if in this case Jesus sought a formal means to hand on his message (as, in fact, did the rabbis) but in a punctual and unusual, almost prophetic, fashion – which does not mean, as already suggested above, that he 'obliged' the Twelve to memorize beforehand his words.[25] It would have been more a matter of learning acquired from day to day rather than a formal and explicit order to learn from memory. The Jesus tradition began with Jesus himself.

In Mk 5.18-19, in contrast, we do have an example of an explicit order of Jesus, by which the man from Gerasa who had been possessed by demons – not a Jew – was encouraged to return home and explain his healing to his

protection required by Q tallies much more with the Galilean mission of Jesus' disciples, a mission that took place in his lifetime and was limited geographically and temporally. Note, however, that the disciples were allowed to carry money, food and two tunics. The rewording of the instructions for a longer mission (a stick to defend themselves and sandals for crossing difficult ground) does not go against Jesus' order not to take financial (money) or personal (food and clothing) provisions. The re-working of the tradition is not, therefore, arbitrary nor does it distort the *mens Jesu*.

[25] As claimed by B. Gerhardsson (*The Origins of the Gospel Tradition* [Philadelphia, 1979], pp. 19-20; 72-73). In this respect, it is worth saying that Jesus was an atypical rabbi and that his disciples were called to share the life of a person who preached and healed. That is why they also preached and healed.

friends and family, that is, tell them how God had had mercy on him and what he had done for him. This was apparently transmission of a memory restricted to a circle of friends, within the limited scope of a testimony. Nevertheless, the order to tell what had happened becomes an alternative to the initial wish expressed by the man who had been demon-possessed, which was to follow Jesus as his disciple. It is therefore difficult not to see in Jesus' command a mission given to the healed man: he did not just have to believe in what had happened to him but also explain it in terms of the divine compassion that had been shown to him through Jesus. The man had to explain the facts and add the interpretation of them, spreading the news among his own people without any apparent restriction.[26] Despite Mark's interest in the theme of the mission to the Gentiles, it is worth saying that Jesus' command to the man who had been possessed is seamlessly integrated into the account as a 'substitute' and an alternative solution to the man's desire to become his disciple; exceptionally, however, Jesus refused to accept him, something which makes the historicity of what is said in vv. 18-19 all the more credible. So it would seem that Jesus provided the stimulus for transmission by someone who could testify in the first person about the gift he had received, despite the circumstances of his not being Jewish and having to pass on what had happened outside the land of Israel.

[26] R. Bauckham says that usually the miracle stories are limited to a telling of the story, without any interpretation added by Jesus: "they were confined to telling the story in a fairly simple and memorable form" (*Eyewitnesses*, p. 354). However, the case of Mk 5.1-19 is not unique. The healing of the paralytic in Capernaum (Mk 2.1-12 and par.) is interpreted by Jesus as a story about the forgiveness of sins (v. 5). The healing of the man with the withered hand (Mk 3.1-6 and par.) is taken by Jesus as a critical evaluation of the Sabbath values (v. 4). Jesus expresses himself in similar terms on the occasion of the healing of the deformed woman (Lk. 13.10-17; see vv. 15-16) and the man with dropsy (Lk. 14.1-6; see v. 3). The healing of the Syrophoenician woman's daughter (Mk 7.24-30 and par.) is viewed by Jesus as an action in favour of non-Jews (v. 27: "food for the dogs"). The healing of the boy with a dumb spirit (Mk 9.14-29 and par.) includes a response on the part of Jesus to the failings of his contemporaries, among them his disciples who are castigated as a "faithless generation" (v. 19). The healing of the centurion's servant (Mt. 8.5-13 and par.) is interpreted by Jesus as an action associated with the faith of non-Jews (Mt. 8.10; Lk. 7.9; Jn 4.50.53). Again, the healing of the ten lepers (Lk. 17.11-19) includes an interpretation: the praise of a foreigner for his gratitude (vv. 17-18). I will not go into detail regarding the stories of miracles where Jesus praises the faith of those of the benefitting from them or criticizes their lack of faith (the calming of the storm, Jairus' daughter, walking on the water, the blind man of Jericho). In actual fact, that Jesus offered an interpretation of the healing of the man in Gerasa as a manifestation of divine mercy is nothing strange. Jesus did not simply heal but also gave a precise meaning to his healings.

4. The Shaping of Oral Tradition in the Pre-Easter Period

The First Quest insisted on identifying the sources of the existing documents, and it was thanks to this that it was possible to formulate the hypothesis of Q or of a collection of sayings that existed before Matthew and Luke. The same basic heuristic concern directs the research of more recent scholars such as J. D. Crossan or J. S. Kloppenborg Verbin.[27] However, looking for Jesus *behind* the sources implies at the outset a belief that it is possible to reconstruct accurately his original words (*ipsissima verba*) by means of a process of separating the documents into layers and retrieving the oldest material. This attempt, one that also fascinated J. Jeremias and other authors who rigidly applied the schema Jesus – tradition – redactors, needs two correctives: the consideration of the notion of impact, and the understanding of orality as the first phenomenon that carried forward the tradition of Jesus.[28] Actually, neither in their method nor in their results have the reconstructions of Crossan and the now distant *Jesus Seminar* withstood the passage of time, because of their methodological basis but also a certain ideological bias that governed their work. By this I mean Crossan's claim to portray a Jesus who was different from official teaching or dogma, one who was reconstructed by rigorous scientific research and who had to become the object of 'new' confession of faith.[29]

In point of fact, taking account of oral tradition was never totally abandoned, not even in the high days of *Formgeschichte*. Bultmann himself defined the purpose of form criticism as being "to study the history of the oral tradition behind the gospels".[30] However, the fascination with literary models of transmission was powerful and almost exclusive, and the tradition about Jesus was described as a development guided by strict literary rules, which favoured the superimposition of strata, whether oral or written. These layers, once identified and separated, were meant to make it possible to reach the

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[27] See J.D. CROSSAN, *The Historical Jesus. The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (San Francisco, 1991). According to Crossan, the goal is the sort out the layers of the Jesus tradition that are present in the Synoptic Gospels and the Apocrypha, especially the *Gospel of* Thomas and the *Gospel of Peter*: "to search back through those sedimented layers to find what Jesus actually did and said" (p. XXXI). Likewise, Kloppenborg sets out to retrieve the existing layers in Q (the wisdom layer would be the oldest and most authentic of the Jesus tradition, a thesis worked out by Koester). See J. S. KLOPPENBORG VERBIN, *Excavating Q. The History and Setting of the Sayings Gospel* (Minneapolis, 2000).

[28] J.D.G. DUNN, "'All that Glistens is Not Gold'. In Quest of the Right Key to Unlock the Way to the Historical Jesus", in J. SCHRÖTER – R. BRUCKER (eds), *Der historische Jesus. Tendenzen und Perspektiven der gegenwärtigen Forschung* (BZNW 114; Berlin – New York, 2002), pp. 131-161, esp. 147-156.

[29] I sought to demonstrate the scope of Crossan's position in "Les quêtes récentes du Jésus historique", *RCatT* 25 (2000), pp. 95-120.

[30] Cited by DUNN, *Jesus Remembered*, p. 193.

oldest layer – which, however, for Bultmann and for the leading exegetes, could not automatically be identified with the historical Jesus! *Redaktionsgeschichte*, meanwhile, disregarded oral tradition as part of the process of transmission of the words and deeds of Jesus: it must be said that studying the synoptic texts from a literary and comparative point of view is much more precise and satisfactory than diving into the murky waters of orality.

It would appear, then, that one of the defining traits of the Third Quest is the retrieval of oral tradition or, better the history of oral tradition (*Mündlichkeitsgeschichte*), as the first chapter of a Jesus tradition that is understood in terms of remembrance (*Erinnerung*) and memory (*Gedächtnis*). This goal does not, however, avoid looking at various questions, ones that are currently being debated. One concerns the agents of the oral transmission. R. Riesner expresses the issue in simple terms: "who wanted to or could remember?"[31] The interesting pages in which J. Dunn examines the theme of oral tradition, stressing its community nature, do not provide an entirely satisfactory answer.[32] On the other hand, the notion of individuals authorized to hand on the tradition, as suggested by R. Bauckham, is worth taking seriously but it suffers from a certain one-sidedness.[33] In my view, an inter-connected association of the community model (a descendant of *Formgeschichte*) with the individual or group model (based on early testimonies, such as that of Papias), may well offer a satisfactory answer to the question of the nature of oral tradition.

Above all, it should be noted that, unlike contemporary rabbis, in particular Hillel, interest in the person of Jesus can be seen from the very beginning. There was interest in what he said and also in what he did, the way he lived and the network of relationships he created around him, in short, the biographical dimension of his person.[34] Jesus was not forgotten: there was too much power in his words, and his miracles awakened in people a universal stupefaction. His ministry can be defined as a combination of forceful impacts made in various times and places, of unequal intensity but none of them

[31] R. RIESNER, "Die Rückkehr der Augenzeugen. Eine neue Entwicklung in der Evangelienforschung", *ThBei* 38 (2007), pp. 337-352, here p. 352.

[32] DUNN, *Jesus Remembered*, pp. 173-254.

[33] BAUCKHAM, *Eyewitnesses*, pp. 240-357. In fact, Dunn himself writes that "the continuing role of eyewitness tradents... authoritative bearers of the Jesus tradition" should not be forgotten (*Jesus Remembered*, pp. 242-243).

[34] The expression ("biographical dimension") is taken from Dunn (*Jesus Remembered*, p. 242, n. 278). The treatise *Avot* (*Pirqué Avot*) of the Mishnah is nothing more than a collection of behavioural maxims and sayings about the Law attributed to rabbis earlier than or contemporary with Jesus (between 300 BCE and 200 CE), with no interest in the life of its authors. See J. NEUSNER, *Why No Gospels in Talmudic Judaism?* (Brown Judaic Studies 135; Atlanta, 1988); A. GOSHEN-GOTTSTEIN, "Hillel and Jesus: Are Comparisons Possible?", in J.H. CHARLESWORTH – L.L. JOHNSON (eds), *Hillel and Jesus* (Minneapolis, 1997), pp. 31-55.

arousing indifferent. His impact affected two types of hearers: the small groups of people who constantly accompanied him or who were close to him (though not always physically present), and scattered individuals or groups, often without any connection between them, who came into contact with Jesus at some point or other and remembered what they experienced.

This situation characterized Jesus' activity, whether in Galilee or Judaea (focused in Jerusalem). Apart from these two areas, Jesus acted briefly in the southern area of Philip's tetrarchy (historically viewed by Jews as part of Galilee) and in the region of Perea (Jewish territory belonging to the tetrarchy of Antipas); less often, in the territory of the Gentile towns of the Decapolis by the Sea of Galilee[35] and, more rarely still, in the Gentile areas far from the lake (Caesarea Philippi or the Phoenician cities of Tyre and Sidon).

Concerning Galilee, which was the base of his activity during the first part of his ministry, it is unknown whether Jesus established fixed itineraries that allowed him likewise to set up local groups of followers.[36] It is similarly unknown whether Jesus continually repeated his preaching so that, for example, the parable of the prodigal son was heard by different audiences, in different circumstances, and thus became part of what was 'received' and preserved by different groups. Similarly, it is unknown whether the disciples (both itinerant and fixed) constructed a kind of network of 'communities' of sympathisers, which were maintained after Jesus decided to reduce and finally abandon his activity in Galilee. In contrast, it is clear that, as suggested by H. Schürmann, that even in his lifetime it is possible to speak of a circle of committed disciples (a sort of *Bekenntnisgemeinschaft*) who recognized in him the plenipotentiary sent by God.[37] This permanent commitment to discipleship is attributed by the written sources essentially to the Twelve, who travelled throughout Galilee and beyond (see Mk 10.28 and par.; Jn 6.67-70, where it is Peter who speaks on behalf of the others). The importance of the group of women from Galilee is not negligible, either – those who, according to Mk

[35] Only Aenon and Salim (Jn 3.23) are villages of the Decapolis at a certain distance from the Sea of Galilee.

[36] It is not, however, impossible that these groups existed especially in Capernaum, where Jesus preached and lived in a "house", and in the neighbouring areas of Corazin and Bethsaida which also witnessed the activity of Jesus (Mt. 11.20-24 par. Lk. 10.13-15). The latter place was the home-village of three of the Twelve (Peter, Andrew and Philip). To the list should probably be added Cana (Jn 2.1.11; 4.46; 21.2), in accordance with the study of P. Richardson ("Khirbet Qana [and Other Villages] as a Context for Jesus", in J. H. CHARLESWORTH [ed.], *Jesus and Archaeology* [Grand Rapids, MI – Cambridge, 2006], pp. 120-144). As for Bethsaida, see the study by R. Arav ("Bethsaida", in *ibid.*, pp. 145-166). Both Cana and Bethsaida are examples of the rural, and especially Jewish, context of the villages that Jesus visited.

[37] See H. SCHÜRMANN, *Jesus. Gestalt und Geheimnis* (Paderborn, 1994), p. 429. The author underlines the pre-Easter origin of the Jesus tradition.

15.41, "when he was in Galilee followed him, and ministered to him" and who, according to Lk. 8.3, "provided for them [Jesus and the itinerant disciples] out of their means". Thus, it is clear that there were basically two groups close to Jesus in Galilee: twelve men and maybe, five women, whose commitment was absolute in the first case and certainly strong in the second.[38] The Galilean oral tradition, then, must have depended primarily on those two groups. As for Judaea, the situation was not exactly the same but nor was it completely different.[39] The precise movements of Jesus are not known for this area, either, nor how often he went to each place. There is, however, an important difference between Galilee and Judaea. Whereas in the former, the setting for Jesus' activity was small rural villages, in Judaea it was *the* city, Jerusalem, the essential location of Jesus' activity, and in particular *the* Temple, as attested by the Synoptics and John. The other villages mentioned, apart from Ephraim (Jn 11.54) and Jericho (Mk 10.46 and par.; Lk. 19.1), belong to the region of Jerusalem. Jerusalem, the city, would come to represent Jesus' impossible dream, on account of the overall rejection of his urgent preaching (see Mt. 23.37-39 par. Lk. 13.34-35). Nevertheless, the rabbi who was raised and lived in Nazareth and who later moved to Capernaum managed to gather in Jerusalem and the surrounding area a group of sympathisers who were more or less regular witnesses of his preaching. Indeed, even before the crucifixion, the teaching activity of Jesus in the Temple precincts, and especially in the area known as the "Court of the Gentiles" (open to Jewish men and women but also to foreigners, whether proselytes or just visitors), drew an indeterminate number of people around him and his group of disciples.[40] It is not known if these people knew each other or formed a network, but the family of Lazarus and his two sisters could have played a key role.

In any case, what was hinted at above with regard to the crucifixion seems to be confirmed and consolidated after the resurrection. Thus, on his final journey to Jerusalem Jesus was accompanied by a considerable number of Galileans who were connected to him, people who were in the city for the occasion of the Passover and who, probably, all shared the same messianic expectations that had been created around the person of Jesus. On the one hand, there were the Twelve and other male disciples who had joined the

[38] In the previous section, evidence for the existence of the Twelve (men) and of the group of women (maybe five) has been presented.

[39] The presence of Jesus in Samaria is mentioned only in John 4, in an episode that took place while Jesus was going through the region (v. 4) before arriving at Sychar, a village not far from Sechem (vv. 5-6). The episode is not relevant for our subject, despite what is said in vv. 39-42.

[40] John additionally reports two healings in Jerusalem: that of the paralytic at the pool of Bethzatha (Bethesda), to the north of the Temple (Jn 5.1-18), and that of the man blind from birth, who was sent to the pool of Siloam to the south of the city (Jn 9.1-41). The third episode occurred at Bethany, 3 km from the city: the resurrection of Lazarus (Jn 11.1-45).

group of followers, also from Galilee and no doubt also from Judaea. Some of the Galilean women from among the regular followers of Jesus were also there (Mk 15.40-41). In addition – and this is what is surprising – a considerable part of Jesus' family, people who had until then been hesitant and even opposed to his preaching (Mk 3.21; Jn 7.5-10), also went up to Jerusalem. The most conspicuous of these was his mother Mary (Jn 19.25; Acts 1.13), and his older brother James to whom Jesus appeared after his resurrection (1 Cor. 15.5; *Gospel of the Hebrews*, cited by Jerome, *De viris illustribus* 2), but also (all) his other brothers (Acts 1.13) and close relatives from his father's side (Jn 19.25; Lk. 24.18) and his mother's (Jn 19.25). All these Galileans came together with the followers of Jesus who lived in Jerusalem and the surrounding area.

In short, the episodes that precede and follow the passion and death of Jesus (probably between the evening of 6th April and the day of 7th April in the year 30 CE) have in the background a nucleus of people, essentially from Galilee and Jerusalem, who were followers of Jesus of Nazareth – among them his closest family and the disciples, both men and women, who had accompanied him throughout the two years or so of his activity. Thus, for the last period of Jesus' life, the oral tradition of Jerusalem is sustained by the mass of almost *all* the principal witnesses of his life who had come together in Jerusalem.[41] It is not surprising that the account of the passion should contain the most detailed and homogenous material, in terms of volume and content, of all the Jesus tradition. The heterogeneity is significantly greater when it comes to the resurrection accounts.[42]

Having arrived at this point, some conclusions may be drawn. First, and despite attempts to prove the contrary, it would appear that the pre-Easter tradition of the words and deeds of Jesus was exclusively oral. It can be ruled out that there was any written record of Jesus during his lifetime. The reason is that not even from the point of view of oral tradition does Jesus seem to

[41] It is not without interest that Paul mentions an appearance of Jesus "to 500 brethren at one time, most of whom are still alive although some have died" (1 Cor. 15.6). According to the apostle, this would have been the third appearance of the resurrected Jesus, after the appearances to Cephas and the Twelve and before the appearances to James and "all the apostles". 500 is the possible, and plausible, number of followers of Jesus in Jerusalem at the time of his last visit to the city. The figure probably includes people from Galilee and others from Judaea.

[42] Two chapters are taken up in each of the common or canonical Gospels by the passion, albeit of varying lengths (Matthew 26–27; Mark 14–15; Luke 22–23; John 18–19). One is always devoted to the story of the empty tomb (Mt. 28.1-15; Mk 16.1-8; Lk 24.1-12; Jn 20.1-18) and the appearances (Mt. 28.16-20; Lk 24.13-53; Jn 20.19-29), with corresponding textual 'expansions': two appendices (Mk 16.9-20 and John 21) and a 'second book' (Acts 1.1-11, linked to Luke 24). The only gospel text that does not have any known expansion is that of Matthew.