# Jesus, Paul and Matthew, Volume One

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*Discontinuity in Content, Continuity in Substance*

By

Andries Van Aarde

Cover image: *Cristo abrazado a la cruz*
'*Christ Carrying the Cross* is an oil painting (105x79 cm) by El Greco, produced early in his Toledo period circa 1580. The picture depicts Christ in a moment of personal reflection as he carries the cross to his death, therefore committing the ultimate sacrifice for humankind. In the painting, Christ's eyes are lifted up to the heavens as he begins his walk towards his crucifixion. His gentle hands wrap around the cross as a stormy night floods the background. The painting is currently in the El Greco room of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York' (https://commons. wikimedia.org › wiki › File:Cristo_abrazado_a_la_cruz_El Greco).

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Dedicated to Gideon and Lynelle van Aarde

# Justification Report

This scholarly book is a scientific contribution to the field of first-century Graeco-Roman literature. The target audience would be specialists in the field of New Testament scholarship as well as academics in the fields of ancient languages. This includes scholars and theologians with an interest in the Hebrew Scriptures of the Old Testament, the Septuagint, Rabbinic literature, the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, Qumran literature, Josephus, Second Baruch, Joseph and Aseneth, Epictet, Plutarch, Seneca and Ovid. The methodology is that of hermeneutics of suspicion, utilising insights from memory studies, narratology and social-scientific criticism. This complements a historical-critical investigation of the multi-layered evolutionary stratification of New Testament documents. The existing research by the author, published over a period of three decades, has been substantially reworked and updated. This substantial reworking represents more than seventy percent of the contents. The book could therefore be regarded as original innovative research. The similarity report of an iThenticate analysis confirms that the work contains no plagiarism. Innovative contribution to scholarship is the concept that kingdom ethics is the common substance of the gospel of Jesus, and it is articulated differently by Jesus, Paul and Matthew. The book demonstrates that this ethos originated in Stoic philosophy and became the popular ethos of the first-century Graeco-Roman world of Jesus, Paul, and Matthew. Previous scholars have argued that there is a radical breach between Jesus' kingdom ethics and Paul's ecclesial theology. This means that the work of Paul and the Gospels in the New Testament could be regarded as irreconcilable. This also signifies that the perspectives of the Gospels are alien to the message of the historical Jesus. This book focuses on the Gospel of Matthew and demonstrates continuity in substance between Jesus, Paul and Matthew. The substance (essence) is that the kingdom ethos of Jesus witnesses to radical inclusivity with regard to age, race, gender and class. However, the book also illustrates discontinuity in content – the kingdom ethos of Jesus is represented differently in the various locations, for diverse audiences and cultural contexts.

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## 1.1 A new perspective

### Hermeneutical lens

The first of these two volumes argues that kingdom ethics is the common substance (intent / essence) of the gospel of Jesus, articulated differently by Jesus, Paul and Matthew. A second aim is to demonstrate that this ethos originated in Stoic philosophy and became the popular ethos of the first-century Graeco-Roman world of Jesus, Paul, and Matthew. This notion of discontinuity in content and continuity in substance features in the scholarly discourse of various exegetes, making the history of biblical interpretation rather complicated, to say the least (see esp. Michael Wolter 2013, with the essay entitled 'Jesus bei Paulus', pp. 207-231).

According to Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900), Paul replaced the 'gentle' gospel of Jesus with an ideology of punishment and reward. Others see Paul as mythmaker who deviated from the gospel of Jesus. Paul, not Jesus, is considered to be the founder of Christendom. Throughout my career I have argued the opposite. My exegetical approach has been traditional historical criticism, the investigation of the different strata or layers of the transmission of the Jesus tradition. Of course, this begins with the quest for the historical Jesus. It also includes the writings of the early Jesus-followers in which the Jesus tradition is embedded, such as Paul and the gospels, including Sayings Source Q.

This work is not restricted to the Christian canon. It draws on traditions from cultural and religious contexts and documentation of the Graeco-Roman and Hellenistic-Semitic worlds. This includes the Hebrew Scriptures of the Old Testament, the Septuagint, the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, Qumran literature, Josephus, Second Baruch, Joseph and Aseneth, Epictetus, Plutarch, Seneca and Ovid. To the traditional approach I brought a hermeneutical lens (see Bultmann [1968] 1993) and also utilised insights from memory studies, narratology, social-psychology, sociology, anthropology, philosophy, and bio-politics.

Because of Nietzschean and Freudian critique on the influence of Paul, theologians have tended to contrast Jesus and Paul. For instance, Jesus' ethos

would be seen as based on the metaphor, kingdom of God, whereas Paul's focus would be on divine grace and the believer's acceptance of grace through faith. This led to some extreme opinions. One example is that Paul, in his post-Easter ecclesial conceptualisation of it, failed to remain true to Jesus' ethics (e.g. Robert Funk). Another is that Matthew deliberately transformed the law-free Pauline gospel again to adhere to Judaic conventions (e.g. David Sim).[1] These interpretations amount to discontinuity in both content (articulation) and substance (intent). Where the development of Jesus' ethos is described as a 'movement' from Jesus to Paul to the gospels as canonical collection, with the death and resurrection narratives as underlying theme, this would amount to discontinuity in content, but continuity in substance (e.g. Rudolf Bultmann 1930:1019-1045). This book explores the dialectic (see Bultmann [1993a] 1993:114-135) discontinuity–continuity, while taking into account the anti-empire trend (e.g. Warren Carter) in both the gospel of Jesus and the Jesus tradition in the gospel material (e.g. John Dominic Crossan and Richard Horsley). It narrows the dialectic discontinuity–continuity down to the historical Jesus, Paul (not including the inauthentic Pauline letters in the canon), and specifically, Matthew (not the gospels as collection). My contention is that kingdom ethics, which originated in Stoic philosophy and became the popular ethos of the people, forms the common substance that was articulated differently by Jesus, Paul and Matthew. Transformation of cultural conventions by Jesus, Paul and Matthew, also with regard to reinterpretation of the Torah, supports the view of discontinuity in content, but continuity in substance. The first volume explores this dialectic. The second volume takes Jerusalem as focal point. Though Jerusalem is regarded as the 'mother of early Christianity' (cf. Ernst Käsemann and Martin Hengel), Jesus-followers also depart from this 'motherly domestication'. The cause of Jesus developed from an apocalyptic movement to inclusive and syncretistic Jesus-communities (cf. Bultmann [1949] 1992). However, in the New Testament and postapostolic literature, this continuity in substance was jeopardised by renewed institutionalising of male domination (patriarchy), disguised as 'love-patriarchalism, in the veneer of male-dominated institutionalism (Gerd Theissen). This ignited a new surge of apocalypticsm and exclusivism.

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[1]    Sim's (2008:155-172; 2017:96 n60) view that Matthew represents a closer relatedness to the historical Jesus than Mark is valid only in the sense of Mark's concurrence with Paul regarding the dialectic 'continuity in substance – discontinuity in content' between Jesus and Paul. However, with regard to this 'continuity in substance', I am in agreement with Sim's (2017:94) 'speculation' that 'for Mark it was Paul who, having been visited by the risen Christ, *fully understood and appreciated* the significance of Jesus' resurrection' (my emphasis).

## A way forward

The historical Jesus did not intend to establish the church as an institution with official teachings and credos. Today the church as institution has lost much of its significance for people, including practising Christian believers. Many Christians do not feel at home in the church. In order to remain relevant to the lives of people today, the church will have to adapt to an ever changing world, but in such a way that it remains true to the gospel message of the historical Jesus.

Decline in membership of mainline churches indicates that the church is a dying institution. Emperor Constantine (272–337 CE ) gave Christianity the status of *religio licita*; under emperor Theodosius in 380 CE Christianity became state religion. The ecumenical credos date from this era. Their function was to reconcile differences between the Eastern and Western Church on the issue of the deity of Jesus and also to broker peace in the Roman Empire. The biblical canon of the Western Church was finalised in 382 CE in Rome. Much later, in 1672 in Jerusalem, the Eastern Church came to a 'final' decision regarding the scope of their canon. This was a reflective response to changes stimulated by the Protestant reformation (see Van Aarde 2012:5 of 8). The quest for the Christian canon is 'a problem of no small significance' (Cain Hope Felder [1989] 1992:146). In his book with the title, *Troubling biblical waters: Race, class and family*, Felder (1992:14-16) points out that Western scholars 'have paid scant attention to the origin and development of Christianity in Greater Ethiopia (including Nubia) and the formation of the ancient Ethiopian canon. Worse still, when we find Western studies on these topics, they are frequently patronising and negatively biased.'[2]

Subsequent to the church reformation of Martin Luther, the Protestant church was established as separate from the state. It did not function under control of the Holy Roman Empire. Recent trends include secularism, postsecular spirituality, pentecostalism, prosperity theology,[3] postdenomi-

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[2]    Cain Hope Felder is Professor Emeritus of New Testament language and literature at the Howard University School of Divinity, Washington DC. He served as chair of the implementation panel for the National Center for African American Heritage & Culture at Howard University. He taught in the Department of Biblical Studies (1978–1981) at Princeton Theological Seminary (viewed on 26 January 2019: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cain_Hope_Felder, edited on 25 September 2017).

[3]    John Milbank (2010:29) describes 'prosperity theology' as follows: '[T]he church becomes perversely that place where egotism is diverted from criminal recourse into subtle modes of spiritual pride, the place where both excessive emotional drives and excessive accumulated capital can be redirected toward the recruitment of new souls for heaven in the world to come.'

national Christianity, interreligious alliances, religious intolerance, civil religion and creationism. The spiritual revival that is taking place outside of the institutional church is an even greater revolution than the reformation. Changes are also taking place within the church. The environment in which the church wants to make its contribution is subject to a variety of natural and political influences. These include climate change, over-population, disruption of eco-systems, industrial-technological globalisation and demographic shifts (informal settlements, migrants and homelessness), unemployment and poverty, homophobia with regard to LGBTQI persons, an increasing gap between the wealthy and the poor, populism, the resurgence of political dictatorships and scientific racism, tenacious patriarchy and male dominance, as well as increasing frustration among the millennials (youth born between 1981 and 1996).

Thinkers who have changed the course of things include Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900), Sigmund Freud (1856–1939) and Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) with their perspectivism. Perspectivism has disclosed the utopian naïveté of so-called objective scientism (see Bultmann [1961b] 1993:142-150; 1967a:47-71).

## Pre-church Jesus-followers

Mainly three 'Christian' movements predate the establishment of the canonical church. From its inception theirs was an oral tradition, since Jesus and his disciples left no written documents. Adherents of the movements later impressed either the respective oral tradition or became creative writers themselves by fostering growth of the tradition.

The first group is the so-called 'Gnostics'. Gnostic Christianity with its disdain for earthly matters saw Jesus as a wisdom teacher. That God became human in Jesus ran contrary to Gnostic ideas.

If a kind of characteristic 'typology' of the many-coloured 'Gnosticism' during the period of formative Christianity can be given, it is that the concept of 'gnosis' relates to insight coming from God in (a) the 'nature' of God, (b) the origins of a variety of 'spiritual powers', (c) the origins of creation, (d) the purpose of existence on earth, and (e) the way in which 'spiritual redemption' can be obtained (Roukema 1998:13). The assumption of this 'gnosis' is that being human has in itself a latent/hidden divine/eternal/heavenly core of which the origin lies with 'God Almighty', that the purpose of life on earth is to become aware of this origin and that some people are in fact reconciled with 'God Almighty' through 'true gnosis'. This redemption takes place as a process in nature, and not only when the earthly life is laid down upon death.

The second group is the so-called 'Ebionites'. Ebionite Christianity focused on the biological Israelite ancestry of Joseph and Mary, the alleged parents of Jesus.

The origin of the name 'the Ebionites' is not quite clear. Tertullian (160–220 CE), an author of Berber origin who worked in Carthage in the Roman province of Africa, and Hippolytus of Rome (*c.* 170 – *c.* 235 CE) thought that a person called Ebion was the 'founder' of a faction of Jesus-followers that acquired the name, 'Ebionites'. However, it seems more likely that the opinions of both Irenaeus (*c.* 130/140 – *c.* 200/203 CE), bishop of Lyon renowned for his writing, *Adversus Haereses*, and Origen (184–253 CE), an ascetic from Alexandria, known for his producing the *Hexapla* (a synopsis of six versions of the Old Testament) that the name 'Ebionites' should be traced to the Hebraic derivation from the Hebrew word for 'the poor', אֶבְיוֹן (*ʾebyôn*). Similarities between Ebionite thinking and Pseudo-Clement, an unknown author whose work was fictitiously ascribed to Clement of Rome (88–97 CE), suggest that this group was active in the territory east of the Jordan. Jerusalem and the central position that the temple in Jerusalem fulfilled in Israelite society were important to the 'Ebionites', also after the destruction of the city by the Romans. The main characteristic of this group of early Jesus-followers was the particularly high value, with soteriological implications, that they attached to the ties between Jesus and his biological relatives and with Israel as extended family. Traces of their existence were not only discernible in Trans-Jordan. They extended to a variety of locations in Asia Minor. Without elaboration, David Sim (2017:85-94), in his reflection on Mark's unambiguous resentment towards the role that James, the brother of Jesus, played together with the Jesus-faction affiliated as they were to their biological attachment to Jesus, probably implies the so-called 'Ebionitism'. I am fully in concurrence with Sim's subsequent remarks: 'Whatever other traditions about these figures [Ebionites?] were circulating throughout the early Christian churches, Mark wanted his readers to share his understanding of the family and the disciples of Jesus, the two groups that formed the power *bloc* in the primitive Christian movement and which Paul regarded with so much opposition' (Sim 2017:95).

The third group is the so-called 'New Testament Christianity', represented by the Jesus tradition that resulted into orthodox (creedal) Christianity. Paul and the author(s) of the Gospel of John are significant witnesses among this group of New Testament Jesus-followers. In creedal Christianity the crucifixion and resurrection were regarded as central to the 'gospel of Jesus' (see Volume 2, Chapter 7.1). Jesus and the Spirit were

seen as one with the Creator in wisdom and compassion. This wisdom made it possible for Jesus-followers to be one with Jesus, the Spirit and the Creator. This unity manifested in inclusive love and compassion for all people.

## Rejection and suspicion

Various scholars and 'schools' deny the historical existence of a Jesus of Nazareth, for example Willem van Manen, Arthur Drews, Earl Doherty, Robert Price and Richard Carrier. They base their arguments on the differences among the four gospels, the fact that Paul's letters do not refer to detailed narratives about Jesus' birth, crucifixion, resurrection and ascension, and that Paul's letters and the Gospel of John differ with regard to the ἀποθέωσις (divinisation) of Jesus. A further argument is that each detail about Jesus' trial and crucifixion in the New Testament gospels was taken from motifs in the Hebrew Scriptures.

Friedrich Nietzsche ([1918] 2010:54), in his work, *The Anti-Christ*, argues that Christianity represents the 'low-mark in the ebbing evolution of the god-type' and in his *Ecce homo: How to become what you are* (Duncan Large's 'Introduction', in Nietzsche [1888] 2007:xxiv), call it 'the most pernicious form of idealism to have devalued life thus far'. This bitter criticism of Christianity contributed to the development of secularism. According to Nietzsche, Christianity is a 'way of life' rather than a redemptive religion. Paul transforms the gospel into a 'dogma of redemption' but Christians' way of life bears no witness to their redemption by God. For Nietzsche, 'guilty Paul of the established church' is the opposite of 'innocent Jesus of the gospel'. A.D. Howell Smith (1942)[4] and Mark A. Powell (2013),[5] amongst others, have already refuted these allegations. The connection between Jesus and Paul is elucidated in my book on the historical Jesus, *Fatherless in Galilee: Jesus child of God* (Van Aarde 2001). These two volumes further illustrate this bond.

The abuse of power is a significant negative consequence of the misunderstanding and misappropriation of the New Testament witness. This includes abuse of power with regard to gender, race, political ideology, culture and the church as institution. Other than ecclesial institutions, there is also public interest in Jesus. This is expressed through the fine

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4    Howell Smith, A.D., 1842, *Jesus not a myth*.
5    See Powell, M.A., 1998, *Jesus as a figure in history: How modern historians view the man from Galilee*.

arts, politics, film, theatre and literature. The veracity of the 'gospel of Jesus' is often to be heard in the protest of 'public theologians' who are active in the modern-day agora – the public market of film and theatre. However, if such voices give expression to populist anti-intellectualism, it could lead to a distorted 'proclamation' of the gospel. Today unlimited internet access to religious opinions abound. These opinions often have no solid theological foundation. And finally, interreligious contact in a globalised world leads to the question whether Jesus could really be the 'only' saviour.

## The 'quest' continues

Professor Alfred Loisy's (1857–1940) idea that 'Jesus came proclaiming the Kingdom, and what arrived was the Church' (Loisy 1902:152), led to his excommunication from the Roman Catholic Church. Many other theologians have since suffered by disciplinary actions by their respective ecclesial institutions to which they have been attached, because of the results of their historical Jesus research. I myself am one of them (see the last section of Volume Two).

Though Jesus did not have the orthodox credo in mind, he could probably have agreed with the idea that he and the Spirit are 'one with the Creator'. Broadly speaking, the quest for the historical Jesus has found that some deeds and teachings can be attributed to Jesus. These traditions were transmitted orally and through written documents. The aim was to explain Jesus' vision to various communities in the first two centuries.

In Christology, this research utilises three modes:

- Jesus investigated 'from above': Jesus, as portrayed by orthodox creedal Christianity, in continuity with the historical Jesus.
- Jesus investigated 'from below': the historical Jesus in continuity with the proclaimed Jesus of the New Testament.
- Jesus investigated 'from the side': over and above traditional theological premises also meticulous historical analysis in conjunction with the social sciences and humanities. This is a culturally sensitive and multidisciplinary approach.

The first volume of this work corresponds with the third 'mode', while acknowledging valuable elements of the first two.

Contemporary approaches to historical Jesus research could be explained by means of four focal points:

- Harmonising textual evidence according to the 'analogy/correlation principle' (the so-called Pope Benedict XV1 school).[6]
- Historical-critical stratification of texts combined with historical criteria (the Bultmann school and the work of the Jesus Seminar).
- Social-scientific critical analysis of texts (socio-psychological, socio-political, culturally sensitive investigation).
- Intergenerational trajectories of 'transformation agents' (The impact of oral transmission and text interpretation on subsequent texts in the sequence: Jesus – apostolic oral tradition – Paul – Pauline school and post-Pauline generations.)

In these two volumes I combine all of the above, excluding the Ratzinger school. In scientific research all sources, including the Apocrypha and historical manuscripts, should be investigated. Sources are grouped in strata according to age in order to avoid anachronism and to identify influences of earlier sources on later ones. The strata are: 30–60 CE, 60–80 CE, 80–120 CE and 120–150 CE (cf. Crossan 1991:457-466).

## Variety of Jesus profiles

The dissension among scholars as to who the historical Jesus really was, has often been seen as a 'scientific weakness'. However, such a perception can only be an opinion of someone who is still chained to the naïveté of outdated objective scientism, in other words, someone who cannot embrace Kantian perspectivism. I am not one of them. A summary of perspectives of a few among many historical Jesus scholars – also from those rooted in non-European centrism – is an indication of the high-mark of recent biblical scholarship.[7]

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6    Wim Weren (2011) describes Joseph Ratzinger's (2007) approach to historical Jesus research as the product of 'canonical exegesis', 'the Jesus of the gospels as the true Jesus, as the real "historical Jesus".' Joseph Ratzinger thinks that exactly this Jesus is 'historically a more meaningful and convincing figure than the reconstructions we were confronted with in the past centuries' (Weren 2011:2 of 6; cf. Ratzinger 2007:20-21). 'That Biblical texts have an intrinsically consistent message in fact appears to mean, in Ratzinger's book, that they can be read from a Christological perspective [esp. that of John's Gospel, which allegedly complies with the concept of the "Triune God" constructed by creedal Orthodox Christianity]' (Weren 2011:2 of 6). 'Canonical exegesis reads the Bible and the gospels therefore as a coherent unity that has an intrinsically consistent message, despite all its historical stratifications' (Weren 2011:2 of 6; cf. Ratzinger 2007:230).
7    For an overview about 'Jewish Jesus research', see Walter Homolka's chapter with the title 'Jewish quests and Christian problems', in W. Homolka, 2016, *Jesus*

The 'Jesus' of the Jesus Seminar is a teacher of alternative (subversive) wisdom with a message about a kingdom that differs radically from the Roman Empire.

The 'Jesus' of N.T. (Tom) Wright[8] is a prophet of the end times who aims to restore a 'legalistic Israel' again to being a 'spiritual Israel'.

The 'Jesus' of John Meier[9] is a 'marginalized Jew' in whose miracles and parables the kingdom of God has already come.

The 'Jesus' of Gerd Theissen[10] is a social and political 'agent of the God of the Judeans' for ethical transformation of the oppressed.

The 'Jesus' of Marcus Borg[11] is a spirit-filled mystic (Borg 2015:110) who teaches those who regard him as a 'godly person' and are critical of 'conventional culture'. His teaching is about what a spirit-filled ethical life should entail.

The 'Jesus' of John Dominic Crossan[12] is a revolutionary teacher and healer from the Galilean peasantry who endorses God's justice towards the downtrodden hounded by imperial might.

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*research and its challenge to Christology today,* pp. 105-131.

[8]   Nicholas Thomas (Tom) Wright, Bishop of Durham (2003–2010) and Research Professor of New Testament and Early Christianity at St Mary's College, University of St Andrews, Scotland (viewed on 26 January 2019: (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/N.T. Wright, last edited on 20 December 2018). Regarding the historical Jesus, see *inter alia* N.T. Wright (1996; 2011).

[9]   John Paul Meier is Emeritus Professor of Theology, University of Notre Dame, Indiana, previously New Testament professor at the Catholic University of America (viewed on 26 January 2019: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_P._Meier, last edited on 22 November 2018). Regarding the historical Jesus, see *inter alia* J.P. Meier, 1991–2016, *A marginal Jew, Vol. 1-5.*

[10]  Gerd Theissen is Emeritus Professor of New Testament of the University of Heidelberg, Germany. Regarding the historical Jesus, see *inter alia* Gerd Theissen and Annette Merz, 1998, *Historical Jesus: A comprehensive guide.*

[11]  Marcus J. Borg (1942–2015), was the Hundere Distinguished Professor of Religion and Culture, Oregon State University and canon theologian, Trinity Cathedral in Portland, OR. Regarding the historical Jesus, see *inter alia* Marcus J. Borg, 2015, *Jesus: The life, teachings, and relevance of a religious revolutionary.*

[12]  John Dominic Crossan is Emeritus Professor in Comparative Religion at the DePaul University, Chicago. With Robert W. Funk, Crossan served as co-chair of the Jesus Seminar. He served as president of the Chicago Society of Biblical Research 1978–1979, and president of the Society of Biblical Literature in 2012 (viewed on 26 January 2019: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Dominic_Crossan, last edited on 26 October 2018), Regarding the historical Jesus, see *inter alia* J. D. Crossan, 1991, *The historical Jesus: The life of a Mediterranean Jewish peasant*; J.D. Crossan, 1994, *In search of Paul. How Jesus's Apostle opposed Rome's Empire with God's Kingdom*; J.D. Crossan:2007.

The Jesus of Allan Boesak[13] is a 'Black Messiah' whose first-century Roman Empire is in many ways parallel to the present-day imperial environment. Boesak regards it as betrayal to the cause of Jesus to think 'that journey can even continue with integrity without the confrontation with the victims of such imperial thinking and the consequences of it in the communities of the victimized' (Boesak 2017:116).

The Jesus of Obery Hendricks[14] is not the founder of a 'bureaucratic institution, weekly social gatherings, or houses of religious entertainment', but a political revolutionary with seven strategies: to (1) 'treat people's need as holy', (2) 'give a voice to the voiceless', (3) 'expose the workings of oppression', (4) 'call the demon by the name', (5) 'save your anger for the mistreatment of others', (6) 'take blows without returning them' and to (7) 'not just explain the alternative but show it' (Hendricks 2007).

The 'Jesus' of Andries van Aarde is a 'peasant boy, probably a carpenter, and definitely a revolutionary teacher' (Van Aarde 2001:73) – a fatherless child of God who cares for marginalised children without a father, for women without a husband, and the destitute who has no family. He shows them the way to God who welcomes them with open arms, gives them 'their daily bread' and blesses them with the peace that surpasses all understanding.

In spite of the variations in the Jesus profiles of scholars, a 'minimum consensus' with regard to the 'gospel of Jesus' could be:

- Unrestricted access to God is open to all.
- No mediation to God is needed.
- Justice and unconditional love are required by the gospel, and for those who are in need of more love, love should be intensified.
- Life in God's presence signifies the absorption of the divine into human existence and this transcendence in everydayness makes 'life-and-death' in this transient reality meaningful.

My perspective on Jesus is as follows: Jesus was the 'son of Mary' who lived among poor rural people in the Galilean village of Nazareth. There

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[13] Allan Aubrey Boesak is an anti-apartheid activist, patron of the United Democratic Front (UDF) and a leader in the South African resistance movement 1976–1990, black liberation theologian and Emeritus Desmond Tutu Professor for Peace, Global Justice, and Reconciliation Studies, Christian Theological Seminary and Butler University, Indianapolis, Indiana (viewed on 26 January 2019: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Allan_Boesak; last edited on 15 November 2018). Regarding the historical Jesus, see *inter alia* Allan A. Boesak, 2017:86-116.

[14] Obery Hendricks Jr. is Professor of Biblical Interpretation, New York Theological Seminary and ordained minister in the African Methodist Episcopal Church.

was no father figure in his life. He did not get married. He was probably an artisan who did wood or stone work. His relationship with his family and the people of Nazareth was strained. He found an ally in John the Baptist.

After his baptism by John, Jesus left the Baptist's circle and built up his own circle of followers. He played a meaningful role in their lives. His own life was characterised by absolute dependence on God, his father. The 'little ones' and marginalised of Galilee were his audience. He explained God's compassion to them in the language of peasants. Jesus' wisdom was expressed in the form of memorable stories.

God was a kind of *paterfamilias* (head of an extensive household), as Jesus explained to a village of people who all had access to a *paterfamilias*. To peasants, Jesus was a Spirit-filled messiah, a wisdom teacher and a healer, a prophet who criticised kings. Jesus was a popular messianic king. Because of his popularity, he was regarded as a threat to the Galilean king, Herod Antipas, and the temple leadership in Jerusalem.

Everything Jesus did, especially his healings, were aimed at making people acceptable to God and one another. For Jesus, the kingdom of God was not a future catastrophic event that would replace life in this world with another life and give those who had suffered, a military-style victory over their evil enemy. His unconventional wisdom went against the grain of the purity ideology of the institutionalised Jerusalem temple. His words and deeds were so radical that even his disciples did not fully understand them. However, Paul, who never knew him personally, did understand his message.

Paul and other Christ-followers discussed the implications of the gospel: what an ethical life, commitment to God and righteousness to *all* people, would mean in practice. *Radical commitment* could result in martyrdom. An ethics of *radical inclusivity* would mean the absence of discrimination with regard to gender, ethnicity, nationality or age.

His unconventional approach brought Jesus into conflict with village leaders in Galilee and Pharisees visiting from Jerusalem. In Jerusalem, Sadducee high priests, heads of households and priestly élites regarded Jesus as a threat. After a provocation in the outer court of the temple, Jesus was crucified as an insurgent by Roman soldiers. He was not buried in a family grave by family and friends.

The earliest Christ-followers formed a 'tomb cult' in Jerusalem, 'the place where Jesus was buried'. There they gathered for liturgical worship. During this time, the emperor cult ('emperor as son of god') in the Roman Empire also had institutionalised gatherings on market days and the emperor's birthday. Both followers of monotheistic Judaism and

Egyptian-Greek-Roman religions saw Christ-followers as threat to the emperor cult. This opposition prompted Christ-followers to write treatises – offensive and defensive – explaining Jesus' 'status'. This is how some New Testament traditions and early Christian apologetic writings of patristic fathers originated. In this post-Easter cultic context, followers began to express Jesus' messianic exaltation to power as the reason for him to be worshipped. Proof of his exaltation was found in the holy (Hebrew) scriptures (Old Testament). References from these scriptures were combined with vocabulary from the Graeco-Roman emperor cult. Jesus was honoured with titles (see Hahn 1974b) such as Christ, Son of David, Son of man, Son of God, Lord (*Kyrios*), the Alpha and the Omega, Lamb of God, Rider on the white horse and Morning-Star.

The last Section of Chapter 5 in Volume One concludes with comments on Jesus as the 'Morning-Star', the 'son of Dawn'.

The kerygma of Jesus' death and resurrection and their cultic participation in it, helped his followers to cope in a hostile world. This formed part of the martyr tradition.

In 'Constantinian Christendom' the church became an institution of power. The detrimental effect of this power included discrimination and the marginalisation of people. This constitutes betrayal of Jesus and his gospel. Yet, the 'orthodoxy' of creedal Christianity does not have hegemony as its intent. It rather promotes the notion of the sameness of 'substance' between Jesus and the Godhead. From this perspective, Jesus, Paul and Matthew, as well as post-New Testament Jesus-followers are in unison with God's wisdom, justice and mercy (see Volume 2, Chapters 6 and 7).

However, the discussion on continuity and discontinuity between Jesus, Paul, and Matthew in these two volumes will not ignore the 'problems' that scholars have identified in the past. To summarise:

It is the gospel of Jesus rather than the historical Jesus that is fundamental to being church and Christian, today (see Bultmann [1929] [1933b] 1993:82-213; [1933c] 1993:245-267). That is because the historical basis of the gospel is not readily available to us today. However, the scientific quest for the historical Jesus is necessary. In the transmission, evolution and reinterpretation of earlier traditions and in the evolutionary development of the New Testament, the pre-Easter Jesus period was projected onto the post-Easter period of Jesus-communities – two historical worlds that merged to form a gospel narrative. A gospel narrates the story from the pre-Easter period. In the development of the narration, 'registers of memories' were absorbed into written narratives. Though the world in which the narration

took its final form, the post-Easter period is detectable in the story, the world of the proclaiming pre-Easter Jesus is generally the most visible. Sometimes the world of the post-Easter community becomes more clearly discernible in the narrative. The post-Easter world of the proclaimed Christ is never separate from the pre-Easter proclaiming Jesus.

The crucifixion of Jesus was the consequence of his revolutionary words and deeds. The question is: What did Jesus say and do to prompt the Romans and Sadducees to use his death as a deterrent for others?

Despite the discontinuity in content between Jesus, Paul, and Matthew, continuity in substance remains. This is the core supposition of these two volumes. The historical Jesus is God-with-us. Jesus' teachings and deeds point the way to deepening our spiritual life and living in the right relationship with God and others in a spirit of radical inclusivity. This is what can render life and death existentially meaningful in our transient human condition.

## 1.2    Jesus' kingdom ethics in context

### A parabolic twist

In Stoic philosophy, at the turn of the pre- and first-century Christian eras, the notion 'divine economy', in Greek: διοίκησης θεία του κόσμου (see Brent Shaw 1985:29), signifies a parabolic speech-act, which expresses one of the greatest epistemological transformations in history. It was concurrent with and even prepared for the contextualisation of Jesus' kingdom ethics, brought about by the earliest Christ-followers. In the past there were scholars who thought that Christianity earns merit for this transformation (cf. *inter al.* Ernst Troeltsch [1912] 1992:66-67). However, it is not so, as credit belongs to Stoic metaphysics, logic and ethics, specifically advocated by the physically disabled Epictetus from Hierapolis in Phrygia (cf. A.A. Long 2002:8), 'a slave woman's son' and for many years himself the slave of Epaphroditus, the 'freedman and administrative secretary of Nero' (William Oldfather [1925] 1998a:vii-viii).

The metaphor 'divine economy' symbolises a situational and con-textual change with subsequent existential consequences that caused transformation in peoples' ethos and their ethical outlook on metaphysical and physical relations. It represents, in the words of Monroe Beardsley (1958:138), a 'metaphorical twist' in the sense that the hegemony of the previous paradigm of the polis-state became deconstructed. The brutality of an exclusive domination with particularistically inclined nepotism and exploitation of outsiders was displaced by the concept *basileia* (βασιλεία) over against *polis* (πόλις). Epictetus still uses the term *polis*, for example as the translation of the Latin *res publica*, meaning 'society' (Shaw 1985:29). However, Epictetus (*Discourses*, 1.23; 4.11)[15] uses this concept in a radically different way than Aristoteles (*Politica*, 1253a) who regards a human being as 'by nature a political being' who exists in terms of the *polis*:

> For why do you call yourself an Athenian instead of saying merely that it was that corner into which your paltry body was cast at birth? … Anyone

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[15]    Sellars, J., 2003. Epictetus' philosophy is described as 'an art of living as an activity directed toward the transformation of one's way of life' (βίος). In contrast to the conception of philosophy as *logos* (λόγος), the conception is explicitly concerned with the way in which one lives. The function of philosophy, for Epictetus, is to transform one's behaviour, and any development in genuine philosophical understanding will, in his view, always be expressed in one's actions (ἔργα).

who has contemplated the divine economy (διοίκησης θεία του κόσμου) and who has learnt that the greatest, most authoritative, and most comprehensive of all things is the system of man and god … why should not such a man and god call himself 'cosmic' (κόσμιος)?

(Epictetus, *Discourses* 1.9.3-6; transl. Brent Shaw 1985:29)

In God's οἰκείωσις (*oikeiōsis*) humankind does not rule in terms of a selfish hierarchical ideology. The 'divine economy' is rather a βασιλεία (*basileia*), according to the Stoic philosophers Persaios, Kleanthes and Sphairos (Shaw 1985:28 note 23). In the βασιλεία, that is where God rules, the οἰκείωσις (= διοίκησης θεία) people are not any longer exclusively defined by citizenship or membership in a *polis*. The νόμος (*nomos*) and φύσις (*phusis*) of the 'divine economy' is that the βασιλεία is 'co-extensive' with all human beings (H.C. Baldry 1965:151-166, 177-194). According to Epictetus (*Discourses,* 1.23.1), this 'norm' and this 'nature', metaphorically seen, forms a kind of covering κάλυψις (*kalupsis*), in the sense of protection and care – a husk which forms the outer pod covering seed or fruit – rather than being dominating, exploitative and marginalising. In the βασιλεία (*basileia*), which was reigned over by the *dogmata* according to 'divine nature', humankind 'is once and for all set in a framework [κάλυψις]' of mutual care. Shaw (1985) summarises the essence of Epictetus' vision on such a 'divine economy' as follows (emphasis and gender exclusive formulation original):

To Epictetus the essence of the whole new order in which man is to be situated in short, the very essence of Stoicism itself, was encapsulated in his summation: 'The *divine economy*, and how and what sort of rule a *reasoning being* has in it.' [Epictetus] further specifies the superimposed layers of social roles that constitute the hierarchy of the Divine Economy. In one of his most explicit statements [*Discourses*, 1.10; 2.10], he claims that every man has a 'cosmic' vocation, namely that of being a human (ἐπαγγελία ἀνθρώπου) but that this *grande profession* is composed of a subordinate subset of 'vocations', an overarching order of things in which 'all men are brothers'. A person is:

1.  a human being (τὸ πρῶτον ἄνθρωπος)
2.  a citizen of the world (πολίτης του κόσμου)
3.  an active, not just a passive or servile, part of the world
4.  one who can comprehend the divine economy (διοίκησης θεία)
5.  one who has the vocation of citizen of a state (ἐπαγγελία πολίτου)

6.  one who shares given genetic roles (e.g. son, brother) and given social
    roles (e.g. town councillor, soldier).

<div align="right">(Shaw 1985:29-30)</div>

His Stoic vision is ethically universal in outlook with an inclusive pro-
pensity and an ethos conducive to a social cohesion never known before (cf.
David Konstan 2010:233-248). Oldfather ([1925] 1998a; gender exclusivity
original) describes this vision as follows:

> [Epictetus] is concerned principally with those of social character. Nature
> places us in certain relations to other persons, and these determine our
> obligations to parents, brothers, children, kinsmen, friends, fellow-citizens
> and mankind in general. We ought to have the sense of fellowship and
> partnership (κοινωνικοι / social creatures), that is, in thought and in action
> we ought to remember the social organization in which we have been placed
> by the divine order. The shortcomings of our fellow-men are to be met with
> patience and charity, and we should not allow ourselves to grow indignant
> over them, for they are a necessary element in the universal plan.
>
> <div align="right">(Oldfather ([1925] 1998a:xxiii)</div>

In other words, in the divine βασιλεία those social roles that were
previously considered to be effectively outside the πόλις have become part
of the moral duty of humankind that is called to live in accordance with
Nature. They are (Shaw 1985:35): the 'extremely poor, slaves, defeated
political subjects and women' (cf. A.R. Hands 1968:70-72). Inclusivity
presumes the acknowledgement of dignity and being free of any other
person, except free of God's natural order. It is thus not a surprise that
words related to personal freedom appear in Epictetus' discourses six time
more than in the New Testament, namely 130 times, and twice more than
in his Stoic contemporary, Marcus Aurelius (Eduard Zeller 1909:776;
[1925] 1998a:xvii). Geert Roskam (2005:110) says '[for Epictetus] freedom
consists in wishing what actually happens … having the possibility to
choose what is … .'

Epictetus became attached to Stoic philosophy while he was still a
slave. It was in the time when he was a slave in Nero's household that he
became a student of one of the great Stoics, Musonius Rufus (*c*. 30–100 CE;
transl. Cynthia King [2010] 2011). After he was set free he founded his own
school of philosophy in Nicopolis in Epirus, opposite Actium (Oldfather
[1925] 1998a: x-xi). In Socratic style he never wrote, just as Jesus of
Nazareth never did. In circa 108 CE, Epictetus' student Flavius Arrianus

(see Philip A. Stadter 1967) put his mentor's narrative-like aphoristic and metaphorical teachings in a collection of eight discourses (four survived) and a compendium, the *Encheiridion* (Manual). His radical inclusivity was memorised as sayables expressed in assertibles, including a parabolic discourse based on Aristoteles' heritage.

Focusing on the dialectic discontinuity–continuity from Jesus to Paul to Matthew, requires clarity with regard to the concept 'kingdom of God'. First of all, one should acknowledge the metaphoricity of the concept. The aim is to understand the kind of parabolic discourse articulated from an epistemological, metaphysical and ethical perspective, representing an ideology that is transformative in contextual effect. The argument posed is that identifying the pragmatic dimensions in parable research provides cues to explain the notion 'divine economy' of a divine βασιλεία. Thus the act of 'kingdom-speech' influenced the authors of New Testament writings and early Christian literature immensely. In the same vein the Stoics created a transformation in words and deeds that can be called a profound epistemological shift. I will illustrate the shift by using examples from Epictetus' dissertations (meal parable), Paul's comments on marriage (1 Corinthians 7), and from the Jesus tradition (parable of the pearl).

## Aristotelian heritage

Despite Jacques Derrida's ([1972] 1982a:178, 280; 1982b:23-26; 1978:5-33) critique against the logocentric way of Aristotelian thinking,[16] Aristoteles' (384–322 BCE) definition of metaphor formed the basis for a reflection on the relationship between 'metaphor' and 'discourse'. In his *Poetics* (1457b.6-9) Aristoteles defines metaphor as follows: 'Metaphor consists in giving the thing a name that belongs to somebody else; the transference being either from genus to species to genus, or from species to species, or otherwise on grounds of analogy.' Paul Gordon (1990:85), referring to

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16  Similar to Paul Ricoeur's (see later) disposition of a 'reanimation of dead metaphor', one should simultaneously acknowledge and criticise Derrida (1982b:26) who is perceptive of the ambiguity in the *pharmakeia* (φαρμακεία) of metaphysics that 'can neither kill nor cure', and therefore to his 'attention to the profound ambiguities of language' so that we could find ourselves in a 'state of non-committed polymorphous exploration': 'Thus we have virtual metaphors of metaphors, traces of traces, repeating themselves ad infinitum, ad nauseam, in divergent, discordant variations on a theme' (Derrida 1982b:23-24) (see Morny Joy's [1988] article with the title 'Derrida and Ricoeur: A case of mistaken identity (and difference)'.

W.H. Fyfer's (1973:81) translation of the *Poetics*, explains Aristoteles' definition in a less complicated manner: 'Metaphor is the introduction of a word which belongs to something else (ὀνόματος ἀλλότριος)' (*Poetics*, xxi.7). In Paul Ricoeur's (1974:96) opinion, 'the metaphor [defined] by Aristoteles – as a transposition of an alien *name* (or word) (ὄνομα) – is not cancelled by a theory which lays the stress on the contextual action which creates the shift of meaning in the word.' The expression 'contextual action' assumes *situation* and *discourse*.

It is clear that the essence of a 'metaphor' is the principle of analogy, *ana-logia*, that is *comparison*. In parable research the German terms *Ähnlichkeitsrelation* (comparison/similarity) and *Anschaulichkeit* (similarity/comparison) have been used since the work of Adolf Jülicher (1888) to express the kind of *ana-logia* that is a relationship between two *lekta*,[17] which enclose elements with similar traits to such an extent that they are comparable. Scholarly elaboration on Jülicher's (1888:24-121) reflection on the 'Wesen der Gleichnisreden' has produced a typology of several categories among which 'metaphor' is only one of these multiple forms. The others are proverb, simile, similitude, and parable (Charles Hedrick 2004:6-9; Andries van Aarde 1994:231-235). Dominic Crossan (1992:148-150) categorises the parabolic discourse of Jesus as aphoristic parables, extended parables and narrative parables. Aphorism, according to Hedrick (2004:8), refers to non-referential community wisdom.[18] My attention is not only on the parabolic discourse in the Jesus tradition,[19] but

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[17]  In the history of Stoic grammar and logic the term *lekton* (λεκτόν) refers to a kind of 'preposition' (see Blank & Atherton 2003:323) and forms a 'part of speech' (τα μέρη του λόγου) (Blank & Atherton 2003:114). The term 'logos' constitutes a 'word-complex' and is distinguishable from *lekton*, which refers to a sayable that can include, among others, an assertible, an inquiry, an imperatival, a question, et cetera (see Bobzien 2003:85-86). Assertibles 'can be stated, but they are not themselves statements' (Bobzien 2003:86). 'Statability' presumes a 'truth-value' (Bobzien 2003:87). Truth and falsehood are temporal properties of assertibles: 'This "temporality" of the [truth-values of] assertibles has a number of consequences for Stoic logic. In particular, assertibles can in principle change their truth-value: the assertible "It is day" is true now, false later, and true again tomorrow. The Stoics called assertibles that (can) change their truth-value "changing assertibles" (*metapiptonta*). Most Stoic examples belong to this kind' (Susanne Bobzien 2003:87-88; cf. David Blank & Catherine Atherton 2003:310-327).

[18]  The expression 'non-referential' does not rule out either figurative significance or metaphor.

[19]  Among the many recent publications regarding the Jesus tradition, two comprehensive studies could be mentioned, the first in terms of categorisation and