

A Few Good References on Historical Jesus Studies for adult inquirers

St. Bernardine of Siena, AFE. October 20, 2011. P.N.

Fr. John P. Meier, Notre Dame University, previously Catholic University

A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus, Doubleday

1991 V. 1 **The Roots of the Problem and the Person**

1994 V. 2 **Mentor, Message and Miracles**

2001 V. 3 **Companions and Competitors**

2009 V. 4. **Law and Love**

Meier's is **the most thorough and extensive** study of the issues surrounding the "historical Jesus." Scholarly, balanced, stunningly comprehensive on contemporary historical and anthropological approaches to Jesus studies. **(see pages 2 and 3 below for more on Meier)**

Daniel J. Harrington, S.J., **Historical Dictionary of Jesus**. Scarecrow Press, 2010. Father Harrington is always reliable, erudite and up to date.

Paula Fredriksen, Boston University, ***From Jesus to Christ: The Origins of the New Testament Images of Jesus***, Yale University Press, 2nd edition, 2000.

On The Passion of the Christ: Exploring the Issues Raised by the Controversial Movie, University of California Press, 2006. She was an outspoken critic of [Mel Gibson's The Passion of the Christ](#), and edited this full-length book anthology of essays critiquing the film.

Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews: A Jewish Life and the Emergence of Christianity, Vintage Press, 2000

Fr. Raymond E. Brown, Union Theological Seminary, died 1998.

[Cardinal Roger Mahony](#) hailed Brown as "the most distinguished and renowned Catholic biblical scholar to emerge in this country ever" and his death, the cardinal said, was "a great loss to the Church."

(Brown) *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 1997

Birth of the Messiah, 1998, with a reappraisal of the infancy gospels

The Gospel According to John, in *Anchor Bible/Doubleday*, 1966 and 1970 (this two-volume work established Brown as the pre-eminent scholar on John in the English speaking world.)

Pope Benedict XVI (Josef Ratzinger), Jesus of Nazareth: From His Transfiguration Through His Death and Resurrection, 2007 Doubleday; **Jesus of Nazareth Part Two, Holy Week: From the Entrance Into Jerusalem To The Resurrection**, 2011 Ignatius Press. A scholarly European-Catholic voice on the historical Jesus questions. Scholarly and beautifully written; for your education and meditation.

Fr. Marcus Borg and Bishop N.T. Wright, The Meaning of Jesus: Two Visions, Harper San Francisco, 2000
A dialogue between an Episcopal priest and an Anglican Bishop, both renowned scripture scholars, on the Historical Jesus. Borg is more expansive about what we may know historically about Jesus aside from faith, Wright more cautious. Bishop Wright argues that what we know is the Jesus of the Bible, the Jesus of faith. An informative and respectful conversation between two professional bible scholars.

A helpful Note on Father Meier, from *Wikipedia* (October 2011):

A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus

Fr. John Meier's series *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus* begins by invoking the methods of modern [historical research](#) to "recover, recapture, or reconstruct" the "historical Jesus." **Meier suggests that such research might admit agreement of [Catholic](#), [Protestant](#), [Jewish](#), and [agnostic](#) scholars as to "who [Jesus of Nazareth](#) was and what he intended"** (v. 1, 1991, p. 1).[3]

Meier Volume 1

- Volume 1 (1991) differentiates the [historical Jesus](#) from the [Biblical Jesus](#). It analyzes sources, including the [New Testament](#) and [non-canonical](#) works. The latter include the [agrapha](#), the [apocryphal gospels](#) (such as the [Gospel of Thomas](#)), [Josephus](#), and other Jewish and second-century Roman works. For deciding what comes from Jesus as distinct from early Christian tradition it proposes these *primary criteria* (pp. 168-77):

1. The [criterion of embarrassment](#): Why invent what would invite difficulty for the early church?
2. The criterion of discontinuity: Why reject as words or deeds of Jesus what cannot be derived from the Judaism of Jesus' time or the early church?
3. The [criterion of multiple attestation](#): Is it more plausible to deny words, sayings, or deeds attributed to Jesus in more than one independent literary source (e.g., [Mark](#), [Q](#), [Paul](#), and [John](#)) or literary genre (e.g., parable, miracle story, or prophecy)?
4. The criterion of coherence: Given the claims to historicity from any of the above criteria, are different sayings or deeds evidently inconsistent?
5. The criterion of rejection and execution: If Jesus' ministry came to a violent, public end, what of Jesus' words or deeds could have alienated people, especially powerful people?

The criteria are to be used in concert for mutual correction. Still, any claim is only to the probable, not the certain. The rest of Volume 1 discusses the origins of [Jesus](#) as to formative years, "external" influences (language, education, and socioeconomic status), and "internal" influences (family ties and marital and lay status). The volume concludes with a survey of [Jesus' life chronology](#).^[4]

