

Spring Meeting 2007

Report from the Jesus Seminar on Christian Origins

Stephen J. Patterson

In Miami the Jesus Seminar on Christian Origins (JSXnO) began its work in earnest. Over the next years the JSXnO will explore how Christianity emerged in specific places, and in diverse and distinctive ways. The sessions in Miami got the ball rolling by focusing on the nature of the Jesus movements in the Galilee.

One of the priorities of the seminar will be to integrate the work of archaeologists and interpreters of material culture into its deliberations. To that end the meeting began by turning things over to Mordechai Aviam, the former District Archaeologist for the Western Galilee for the Israel Antiquities Authority, and current direc-

Explanation of colors used in voting

R true
P probably true
G probably not true
B not true

tor of the University of Rochester's Institute for Galilean Archaeology. Aviam's presentation set the stage for future discussions with a summary of twenty-five years of archaeological work in the Galilee. His survey made clear the ethnic diversity of the Galilee, with predominantly Jewish settlements south and east, and more Gentile settlements in the north and west—upper Galilee. Aviam also underscored the importance of the large towns of Sepphoris and Tiberius and the changing economic situation signaled by their appearance in the first century C.E. The traditional peasant farming past was giving way to a monetized, commercialized, and more centralized economic pattern. But Aviam also emphasized the limits of archaeological work: it provides valuable information, but it cannot tell us everything we might want to know.

Ballot Two Jesus Seminar on Christian Origins Marianne Sawicki Post-Colonial Issues		Vote	%R	%P	%G	%B
Q1 When it was annexed to Judea, Galilee had indigenous Israelite and other non-Greek inhabitants who were non-Judean.	Fellows	.80 Red	55	30	15	0
	Associates	.93 Red	83	13	3	0
Q2 Most residents of Galilee considered themselves Jewish/Ioudaios in the mid first century CE.	Fellows	.42 Gray	15	15	47	21
	Associates	.29 Gray	4	18	39	39
Q3 Judaism was still under construction in Galilee post-Calvary.	Fellows	.95 Red	85	15	0	0
	Associates	.89 Red	69	28	3	0
Q4 Judean-style architecture (domestic and industrial <i>miqva'ot</i> , <i>kokhim</i> tomb, synagogue hall) reflects the lifestyle of expatriate Judeans.	Fellows	.61 Pink	22	44	28	6
	Associates	.76 Red	50	33	13	4
Q5 Q-1 has a halachic interest: a concern with [comparative?] jurisprudence.	Fellows	.24 Black	6	6	44	44
	Associates	.54 Pink	29	19	38	14
Q6 Some Q-1 material was developed and circulated before Jesus began to perform it.	Fellows	.35 Gray	5	16	58	21
	Associates	.54 Pink	33	19	26	22

Archaeology was the focus of attention for the entire first day of the JSXnO. In the afternoon the seminar considered papers from Daniel Schowalter of Carthage College, co-director of excavations at Omrit, and Marianne Sawicki, author of *Crossing Galilee*. Schowalter put to the group the fundamental question of how to make use of archaeology in our work. Fellows expressed wide assent to his contention that archaeology is most useful when it serves the broad discussion of the cultural world of antiquity (red). “Text-proofing” is almost always misleading and often just a waste of time. Schowalter’s own work at Omrit, the site of a major temple complex, is a case in point. Located not far from the traditional location of Peter’s confession (Mark 8:27-30), Omrit could become a popular tourist destination, like the nearby Pan sanctuary at Banias. But far more significant for our understanding of Christian origins is the possibility that the Omrit temple was a major center of the Roman imperial cult in the Upper Galilee. To understand that Galilee was not a political or cultural backwater (red), but occupied a place of strategic importance on the empire’s eastern frontier (red), casts many texts and traditions in a new light.

Sawicki’s paper addressed a basic question of place: who lived in this place? Who were the Galileans? Following

Aviam’s presentation from the morning, almost all agreed with Sawicki’s characterization of the Galilee as mixed, including indigenous Israelite populations, some expatriate Judeans, as well as non-Judean Gentiles (red). The Fellows also agreed that in such a mixed environment, “Judaism” was still under construction in the early years of the Jesus movement (red). But they rejected Sawicki’s thesis that the earliest document of Galilean Christianity, Q, shows considerable interest in *halacha*—how to understand the Jewish tradition in light of new realities (black). As Kloppenborg would argue the next day, whatever “Judaism” was in the Galilee, it was not identical to the religion of Judea, with its focus on the Temple, purity distinctions, and tithing (red).

Reading Q as a document of the Galilean Jesus movement was the subject of much of the second day’s conversation, with major papers by James M. Robinson, John Kloppenborg, and Ted Weeden. Robinson described the primary problem with understanding Galilean Christianity: no Christian sources from that time and place survive. Q must be reconstructed from sources more reflective of early gentile Christianity. This means we must reckon with the fact that much of the Jewish character of early Galilean Christianity might well have been effaced and otherwise

Ballot Three Jesus Seminar on Christian Origins Daniel Schowalter The Empire in Galilee		Vote	%R	%P	%G	%B
Q1 For archaeological work to be fruitful for historical study it needs to be freed from a simple “Reference Approach” (text-proofing), to serve rather to deepen our understanding of world in which Christianity emerged.	Fellows	1.00 Red	100	0	0	0
	Associates	.97 Red	90	10	0	0
Q2 When Mark composed the scene at Caesarea Philippi (8:27-9:1) there was a well-known imperial cult center located in the region of Banias, ancient Caesarea Philippi.	Fellows	.89 Red	75	17	8	0
	Associates	.75 Pink	44	38	19	0
Q3 When Mark wrote the Caesarea Philippi scene, Titus was, or would soon celebrate there the sacking of Jerusalem by retreating to this area and holding games, which included the torture and execution of Jewish prisoners.	Fellows	.85 Red	62	31	8	0
	Associates	.71 Pink	40	33	27	0
Q4 The northern Galilee held geopolitical importance for Rome as a key link in the defenses against feared Parthian incursion.	Fellows	.96 Red	89	11	0	0
	Associates	.88 Red	64	36	0	0
Q5 The northern region of Galilee was not a pastoral backwater, but fully integrated into the larger play of regional and imperial geopolitical events unfolding during the late Republic and early imperial periods of Roman history.	Fellows	.98 Red	94	6	0	0
	Associates	.86 Red	62	33	5	0

Ballot Four Jesus Seminar on Christian Origins James M. Robinson First-Century Christianities		Vote	%R	%P	%G	%B
Q1 No first-century Christian artifacts, excavated ruins, or manuscripts survive.	Fellows	.94 Red	91	4	0	4
	Associates	.91 Red	79	16	5	0
Q2 First-century Christianity is not fully lost, since it is present in harmonized form in the New Testament.	Fellows	.89 Red	73	23	5	0
	Associates	.92 Red	80	18	2	0
Q3 Much can be inferred from the New Testament about distinctive characteristics of first-century Christian writing.	Fellows	.92 Red	79	17	4	0
	Associates	.86 Red	61	36	2	0
Q4 Gentile Christian bias obscured Jewish Christianity in Galilee.	Fellows	.81 Red	52	38	10	0
	Associates	.91 Red	75	23	2	0
Q5 The earliest collections of Q sayings were made in Galilee, in view of the absence from them of traits ascribed to the Jerusalem church.	Fellows	.80 Red	50	45	0	5
	Associates	.82 Red	52	41	7	0
Q6 The scorched earth Roman invasion from the north to the south 65-70 CE must have scattered Jews, including Jewish Christians, in all directions, making a certain location of any surviving Q people unlikely.	Fellows	.60 Pink	17	50	29	4
	Associates	.74 Pink	36	52	9	2
Q7 Since the sharply divergent, judgmental redaction of Q presupposes a distancing from the early Q collections as well as the fall of Jerusalem (Q 11:49-51; 13:35), the redaction was composed by émigrés/refugees in Transjordan.	Fellows	.46 Gray	0	43	52	4
	Associates	.56 Pink	2	64	33	0

obscured in the sources (red). What is more, Robinson argued, most of the Jesus band in Galilee would have been scattered by the events of the Jewish war, so that there is little hope of ever identifying the actual location of their activities—there will be no Corinth or Ephesus in Galilee (pink). But Aviam interjected at this point that the effects of the Jewish War may have been much less in the Galilee than further south in Jerusalem. This may account for the diminished interest in martyrdom in Q, as compared with Mark or the other synoptic texts.

In the same session the seminar gave attention to John Kloppenborg's highly-regarded volume, *Excavating Q*, focusing in particular on chapter 5: "Reading Q in the Galilee." In response to Kloppenborg's work, the seminar reiterated its view that the Galilee, while in large measure Jewish, would not necessarily have shared a distinctly Judean view of Torah observance, the centrality of the Temple, and the practices of kashruth, tithing, circumci-

sion, and purity. (Thus, in the debate over the religio-ethnic character of Galilee, the seminar showed a preference for Richard Horsley's position, over against, say, that of E. P. Sanders.) This attitude is reflected in Q's negative evaluation of the Herodian Temple, its critique of tithing, purity distinctions, and its championing of the (Israelite) prophetic traditions (red). In this sense the Galilean Jesus movements emerged as a distinctly Galilean movement of local renewal (pink), though the *modus operandi* of the movement is not yet clear. To the proposition that "the Jesus movements represented by Q should be treated as a cynic-like reaction to the major institutions of Judea," the seminar concurred with Kloppenborg's recommended vote: black. This probably represents a cooling of the seminar's earlier embrace of the Cynic analogy for understanding Jesus and the movements deriving from him.

Ted Weeden tried to flesh out the earliest known strains in the Q community by focusing on texts that (by

Ballot Five Jesus Seminar on Christian Origins John S. Kloppenborg Reading Q in the Galilee		Vote	%R	%P	%G	%B
Q1 Galilee should be treated as distinct from Judea from the point of view of ethnography (as Horsley has argued).	Fellows	.72 Pink	28	64	4	4
	Associates	.76 Red	31	67	2	0
Q2 The 'Judeanism' of Galilee should be treated as essentially the same as that of Judea from the point of view of acceptance of the Judean Torah, recognition of the Temple as the central cultic institution, and acceptance of the practices of Sabbath observance, kashruth, tithing, circumcision, and purity (Sanders; Meyer).	Fellows	.14 Black	4	4	22	70
	Associates	.13 Black	0	2	34	63
Q3 While Q never challenges or contests the importance of Sabbath (unlike Mark) or circumcision and kashruth (unlike Paul), it displays a negative evaluation of the Herodian Temple in its comments on the relationship of the Temple to the deaths of the prophets, purity distinctions, and tithing.	Fellows	.93 Red	78	22	0	0
	Associates	.90 Red	71	29	0	0
Q4 The Galilean Jesus movements represented by Q should be treated as a cynic-like reaction to the major institutions of Judea	Fellows	.25 Black	0	8	58	33
	Associates	.34 Gray	2	17	62	19
Q5 The Galilean Jesus movement represented by Q should be treated as a movement of local renewal.	Fellows	.71 Pink	35	48	13	4
	Associates	.75 Red	36	55	10	0

Kloppenborg's analysis) belong to the earliest stratum of Q. Weeden argued, and the seminar agreed, that in these texts the Kingdom of God, as message, and Jesus, as messenger, are the two unifying factors (red). In this early form of the Jesus movement it was the Kingdom of God that held salvific value, not the death of Jesus (pink). On some points, however, the seminar was more skeptical of Weeden's views. For example, to his assertion that the

Q folk would have been destitute, landless peasants, the seminar voted gray, probably on the grounds that Q, as a literary document, presupposes at least some who were of a more elevated social status. To the earlier suggestion of Sawicki, however, that the "Jesus band" would have revolved around a group of wealthy women, the seminar proved equally skeptical. The social location of the Jesus movements associated with Q remains a matter of dispute.

Ballot Eight Jesus Seminar on Christian Origins Kathleen E. Corley Women in Galilean Jesus Movements		Vote	%R	%P	%G	%B
Q1 Women were participants in many religious movements in Palestine in the first century.	Fellows	.87 Red	60	40	0	0
	Associates	.97 Red	91	9	0	0
Q2 Women were participants in the Galilean Jesus Movements.	Fellows	.98 Red	93	7	0	0
	Associates	.98 Red	94	6	0	0
Q3 The negotiation over the presence of women in the Galilean Jesus Movements took place after Jesus' death.	Fellows	.76 Red	36	57	7	0
	Associates	.80 Red	51	40	6	3
Q4 The negotiation of the presence of women in the meals of the Jesus Movements took place after the death of Jesus.	Fellows	.76 Red	43	43	14	0
	Associates	.83 Red	57	37	3	3
Q5 The empty tomb story is fictional.	Fellows	.93 Red	93	0	0	7
	Associates	.88 Red	74	14	11	0
Q6 Visions of the resurrected Jesus took place in Galilee.	Fellows	.42 Gray	13	27	33	27
	Associates	.22 Black	0	12	41	47
Q7 Visions of the resurrected Jesus took place in the environs of Jerusalem.	Fellows	.49 Gray	13	40	27	20
	Associates	.64 Pink	35	29	26	9

In the final paper of the conference the seminar took up a question that will form a recurring theme in all the places the seminar chooses to explore: the presence and role of women in the early Jesus movements. Kathleen Corley initiated this discussion with an extensive survey of the evidence for the place and role of women in the Galilee generally speaking, and for women in the Jesus movements in particular. Drawing on traditions in both Mark and Q—especially stories of Jesus at table and stories Jesus might have told at table (parables)—Corley follows many historians of earliest Christianity in finding many women in the followership of Jesus (red). But she raised the question of how distinctive this would have been. If women's life in the Galilee was anything like the lives of Jewish women in the diaspora (it was—Corley), then we have every reason to see women's participation in the Jesus movements as of a piece with the role of women generally in religious life. The seminar agreed

(red). Corley also avers, however, that following the death of Jesus the role and place of women at the tables of the Jesus movement came under discussion and re-negotiation. The seminar also agreed to this (red). Clearly this discussion will continue to unfold in the months and years ahead.

The JSXnO will stay with the question of Galilean Christianity for at least one more session. In the fall it will explore more thoroughly the question of Q's social location, and possible models for understanding the social formation that defined early Christian groups. It will also ask how the parables of the Jesus tradition might be used to describe the lives of those who first heard them, but also the issues and situations the early Jesus movements wished to examine and comment on. It will also resume the discussion of the role of women, and will turn to the question of slaves and slavery in the utopian vision of the Jesus movements. The discussion continues. **4R**

Ballot Nine
Jesus Seminar on Christian Origins
Theodore J. Weeden
Excavating the Galilean Jesus Movement

	Vote	%R	%P	%G	%B
Q1 The kingdom of God, as message, and Jesus, as messenger, are the two unifying factors of Q1.	Fellows .88 Red	69	25	6	0
	Associates .92 Red	78	19	3	0
Q2 According to Q1, Jesus derives his vision of the kingdom of God for the human world from his observation of God's reign in the world of nature.	Fellows .60 Pink	25	38	31	6
	Associates .70 Pink	36	47	8	8
Q3 As projected by Q1, Q people are destitute, landless peasants, who barely exist at subsistence level, and often are dependent upon the charity of others.	Fellows .38 Gray	0	27	60	13
	Associates .47 Gray	6	42	42	11
Q4 Q1 people have embraced Jesus' vision of the kingdom of God as their own and image themselves as included in God's kingdom-family.	Fellows .71 Pink	31	56	6	6
	Associates .87 Red	61	39	0	0
Q5 For Q1 people, it is Jesus' vision of the kingdom of God that has "salvific value," and not his death.	Fellows .75 Pink	56	25	6	13
	Associates .90 Red	69	31	0	0
Q6 The cause for Q1 people's loss of dignity is the Temple cult's public transcript avowal that their destitution was due to God's punishment for their sins.	Fellows .35 Gray	0	31	44	25
	Associates .56 Pink	6	59	32	3
Q7 Q1 is the formative "hidden transcript" of the Q people.	Fellows .46 Gray	0	50	38	13
	Associates .63 Pink	6	78	17	0