The Palestinian Background for a Life of Jesus

By Marcus J. Borg

I want to begin with a couple of brief thank-yous and a word of introduction before I turn to my topic, the Palestinian background for a life of Jesus. I thank Hershel Shanks for pulling this event together and for inviting me to be part of this. It is, quite frankly, an honor for a small-town boy from North Dakota to be here. I also want to thank all of you for being here this morning.

I love doing this. My wife tells me I'm always at my best in front of a large group of people—which has always seemed somewhat of a double-edged remark. But, so it goes ...

I live in two different professional worlds. On the one hand, I live in the world of the secular academy. My teaching position is at a state university supported by public funds, and the professional organizations in which I am most active are all committed to the nonsectarian study of Jesus and Christian origins. In those settings, it is inappropriate to approach the study of Jesus with specifically Christian presuppositions or with his significance for Christian faith in mind.

I also live in the world of the church. I grew up in the church, and I am actively involved in church life and worship. My wife is an Episcopal priest, so I am even married to a priest, which, I must admit, was not one of my childhood fantasies.

I mention the fact that I live in two different worlds so that you will know that it's possible to combine the two—the academic study of Jesus and being a Christian. What I will be presenting to you today will flow from the first of those worlds, although I would be happy to respond to questions that also have to do with the second.

As you have already heard from Hershel Shanks and Steve Patterson, this is an exciting time in historical Jesus research. There is a renaissance going on, and it's a very rich time to be a Jesus scholar. Part of that renaissance is a much greater knowledge of the social world of first-century Jewish Palestine, my topic in this lecture—the Palestinian background for a life of Jesus, or as I would subtitle it, the social world of Jesus. The main portion of my talk will concern what we know about that social world, but I want to

begin with a brief prologue in which I will speak about two things—how and why we know more and the highly useful notion of social world.

How and why do we know so much more about the social world of Jesus than we did 50 years ago? There are primarily two reasons. We have new data, and we have new lenses. Our new data comes primarily from two sources. Some of it comes from ongoing archaeological research, which I won't say anything more about at this point, except that it continues to increase enormously our knowledge of that world. Some of our new data comes from manuscript discoveries during the past 50 years, the most important of which for a Palestinian environment are the Dead Sea Scrolls. And your host today, Hershel Shanks, as I think most of you know, has been instrumental in bringing about the publication of the remainder of these. He's been courageous, even heroic, in doing that, and we are grateful to him.

Minimally, these scrolls tell us firsthand about the beliefs and practices of a Jewish sectarian movement, the Essenes. Maximally, these scrolls may be a library containing documents from a number of different Jewish groups, though I am skeptical about this myself. But the point is that we have an enormous amount of new data.

Now, in addition to all of this new data, we also have new lenses for seeing or viewing that data. These lenses come from the emerging interdisciplinary character of historical Jesus research. We increasingly make use of insights and models drawn from cultural anthropology, sociology, psychology, the history of religion and so forth. Using these disciplines, we have produced models and insights that greatly illuminate our texts by illuminating that world. Models of religious protest movements, of pre-industrial agrarian societies, of purity societies, of honor-shame societies and more enable us to see the data in new ways. They enable us to constellate the data into meaningful patterns, a *Gestalt*, that we otherwise would not see. So we have new data, and we have new lenses; that's the how and the why of our new knowledge.

My second prologue remark is to provide you with a definition of the highly useful notion of social world. I begin by quoting the opening of British novelist L. P. Hartley's novel *The Go-Between*.[(1)] It is a great line: "The past is a foreign country. They do things differently there." The point of the quote is that there is an enormous distance between us and the world of the past. The distance between us and that world is not just temporal (not simply that it was a long time ago) or conceptual (they thought

differently). It is also social, and the social distance means differences in social structures, social roles, social values and general cultural features. As Bruce Malina and Richard Rohrbaugh, in their recent book *Social Science Commentary on the Synoptic Gospels*,[(2)] suggest, the social distance may be the most fundamental distance of all between us and the world of the distant past.

A useful way to highlight that social distance is with the notion of "social world." Social world means the total social environment in which people live. That social environment has both material and nonmaterial elements. The material elements, which are basically the visible elements, include such things as population density, degree of urbanization, level of technology, distribution of wealth and so forth. The nonmaterial elements may be even more important. The nonmaterial elements of social world include a society's shared understandings, meanings, values and laws and the institutions that embody them. Social world is basically a culture's social construction of reality. Or to put it slightly differently, social world is what makes a particular culture what it is.

I sometimes try to explain this to my students by telling them that social world is what makes Oregon Oregon and not, for example, Pakistan. Certainly there are geographical, climatic and topographical differences between Oregon and Pakistan, but the really huge differences between Oregon and Pakistan are social, the very different social constructions of reality operative in each place.

That's what I want to talk about this morning, the social world of first-century Jewish Palestine, the canopy of shared meanings and understandings within which that culture lived.

I note at the outset what a small-scale social world we are talking about, how compact the social world of first-century Jewish Palestine was. First-century Jewish Palestine was approximately 150 miles long from north to south, with an average width of 50 miles. That's 7,500 square miles, which is one-thirteenth the size of the state of Oregon, or to choose an example closer at hand, five-sixths the size of the state of Maryland. The Sea of Galilee, in fact, is really a freshwater lake approximately twelve miles by seven miles. The Jordan River, one of the most famous rivers in the world, is only 100 miles long.

Population centers were also small. Jerusalem, the major city, had about 40,000 people. Sepphoris, the largest city in Galilee, also had about 40,000 people. And the village of Nazareth has been variously estimated from about 200 people to 1,500 people. The point is we are talking about a small-scale social world.

As I describe that social world, I will emphasize two things. The first is that it was a deeply Jewish social world, and the second is that the central cultural characteristics were also deeply Jewish.

It's important to emphasize the deeply Jewish character for at least two reasons. One, it enables us to see that world. If we don't see the Jewishness, we don't see that social world. And two, it's important because it is easy to forget the Jewish character of Jesus and the early Jesus movement and, for that matter, early Christianity throughout much of the first century. Not only were Jesus and the disciples Jewish, but the authors of all the New Testament books, with the possible exception of Luke-Acts, were also Jewish. In the church in particular, this sometimes slips from our awareness, and we think of Jesus primarily as the founder of Christianity.

Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza of Harvard Divinity School tells a great story about one of her colleagues doing an adult education class in a local church. The church happened to be Catholic, which matters for the end of the story. Schüssler Fiorenza says this colleague of hers worked very hard to convince her audience that Jesus was really Jewish and that his disciples were Jewish. The audience finally accepted that, and then a voice came from the back of the room, "But surely his mother wasn't Jewish."[(3)]

When I say Jesus' world was a deeply Jewish social world, one of the things I mean is that it was grounded in the Scriptures of ancient Israel, basically the Law and the Prophets at the time of Jesus, so that the canopy under which that social world lived was a sacred canopy.

That world had two primary pillars, two centers, to change the image slightly. The two pillars were Torah and Temple. The Torah—by which I mean the Pentateuch, the five books of Moses, the first five books of the Hebrew Bible—was the foundation of Israel's world view and ethos, the foundation of its image of reality and its way of life. The Pentateuch contained the stories that shaped their way of seeing as well as their sense of identity. It was what the Old Testament scholar Walter Brueggemann calls "Israel's

primal narrative, the most important narrative they knew and the narrative they believed was decisively true about them."[4] The Torah contained their stories of creation, of God entering into a covenant with Abraham and the promises attached to it, of the liberation from slavery in Egypt, of the giving of the law at Mount Sinai, the wandering in the wilderness and the gift of the land.

In addition to that identity-shaping story, the Torah was also the source of the laws and, in a sense, of the whole legal system of first-century Jewish Palestine. It contained not just what we would think of as religious or moral laws, but also criminal laws, civil laws, domestic laws. It was the law of the culture. There was no religious law separate from secular law. The Torah was the source of all laws. Thus both world view and ethos were grounded in the first pillar of the Jewish social world.

The second pillar, or center, was the Temple in Jerusalem. The importance of the Temple can be described this way. Rather than saying the Temple was in Jerusalem, we should say Jerusalem was a small city built around the Temple. The Temple was the symbolic and cosmological center of the Jewish universe. It was God's dwelling place on earth, the point of contact between this world and the other world, the world of spirit. As such, the Temple was the navel of the earth, the umbilical cord connecting this world to the world that gave birth to it. As the place of God's presence, the Temple was the center of both worship and devotion. Only there could sacrifices be offered, and it was the destination of pilgrimages.

The Temple was not only the religious center, but also the economic and political center of the Jewish social world. It was the central bank in Jewish Palestine, and to it flowed the tithes commanded by the Torah, for tithing was basically taxation. The Temple was also the center of the native Jewish aristocracy, the high priestly families who ruled in collaboration with Rome.

This social world was maintained or sustained by various practices. There were three major annual festivals, the festival of Passover, which remembered the Exodus, the festival of Pentecost, which remembered the giving of the law on Mount Sinai, and the festival of Tabernacles, which recalled the years of wandering in the wilderness.

In addition to these annual festivals, there was the Sabbath, a weekly remembrance and celebration of the reality of God. And, of course, there was Torah observance,

which covered all aspects of life. All of these sustained the social world.

It is important to recognize that there was also diversity within Judaism, so that scholars appropriately speak of a variety of Judaisms in the first century. Nevertheless, amongst all those varieties of Judaisms, there was unanimity about the importance of the two institutions, Torah and Temple. Indeed, the differences among various Jewish groups might best be seen as differences about how to understand Torah and Temple.

Now I move to my second main point, the central cultural dynamics of Jesus' social world. I will identify five cultural dynamics that enable us to see what was going on in that world. After I have identified each one, I will in most cases provide an illustration or two from the Gospels to suggest why an awareness of this cultural dynamic is illuminating in order to suggest something about its explanatory power. I have condensed this—not the whole thing but the subheads—into five words. Three of them start with P, and I worked very hard to make the other two start with P, for alliterative purposes, but finally gave up. I could do so only by putting the emphasis on the second or third syllable, which gets weird. So there are two C's and three P's as central cultural dynamics of Jesus' social world: colonial, cosmopolitan, peasant, purity and patriarchal.

To begin with the first one, Jesus lived in a colonial society. The P word here was im-Perial. (We'll let that go!) Jewish Palestine was a colony of the Roman Empire and had been since 63 B.C.E. Palestine was important to Roman imperial policy for at least two reasons. It was the land bridge to Egypt, the breadbasket of the empire; and it was a buffer against the Parthian empire to the east, Rome's only serious rival in that part of the world. Rome ruled Palestine sometimes through client kings, such as the Herods, and sometimes directly through Roman governors in cooperation with the native Jewish aristocracy.

Economically, Roman rule brought another layer of taxation to Palestine. Religiously and politically, Roman rule conflicted with the Jewish vision of Israel as a free people living in their own land. Roman rule also brought a stronger gentile presence and a proliferation of gentile practices. Roman governors were often insensitive to Jewish religious beliefs and practices and were sometimes brutal.

Thus the two centuries from 63 B.C.E. to the time of the Second Jewish Revolt (132 to 135 C.E.) were marked by unrest and turmoil. There were spontaneous popular

demonstrations, nonviolent social protests, social banditry, popular prophetic movements, armed uprisings and wars. The most catastrophic of these upheavals was the Great Jewish Revolt from 66 to 70, which climaxed in the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple, probably the most disastrous event experienced by the Jewish people in their ancient history, paralleled only by the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple some 600 years earlier.

This whole period of time (from the beginning of Roman rule to the suppression of the Second Jewish Revolt) was marked by what Richard Horsley has called "the spiral of violence,"[(5)] a spiral that begins with the violence of systemic injustice (the violence built into the system itself) and moves to protest against that injustice, then to repressive countermeasures to put down the protests and finally to open revolt against the establishment. Jesus lived in a colonial society and in a generation headed toward war.

Second, Jesus lived in a cosmopolitan society, a society that was in contact with other cultures, especially Hellenism, and was affected by them. Cultural contact with Hellenism began in the fourth century B.C.E., at the time of Alexander the Great's conquests. To some extent, all of Judaism had been Hellenized by the first century with, of course, important differences of degree.

This means that Galilee was more pluralistic and perhaps more urbanized than most of us have commonly imagined. Let me give you a few examples of this from Galilee. First is the use of Greek. Recent archaeological finds suggest that the use of Greek was much more widespread than we thought, and this creates the very real possibility that Jesus, and perhaps the disciples, were bilingual. And maybe not just touristically bilingual but functionally bilingual. If that's the case, though we still whisper about this in scholarly circles, it's even conceivable that Jesus may sometimes have taught in Greek and not just in Aramaic.

There was international trade. We know that beer was imported into Galilee from both Egypt and Babylon. The city of Sepphoris, which I mentioned briefly earlier, was the largest city in Galilee and was located only four miles from Nazareth. Sepphoris was destroyed by the Romans in 4 B.C.E. when a rebellion at the time of the death of Herod the Great was put down. The city was rebuilt during the childhood and young adulthood of Jesus.

If the tradition that Jesus was a *tekton*, a worker in wood, is correct, it is possible that Jesus may even have been involved in the reconstruction of Sepphoris. We don't know that, but it's an interesting speculation. Sepphoris was cosmopolitan. With its large population, it probably attracted healers and, perhaps, some cynic sages. It's hard to know what Jesus may have seen when he went to Sepphoris. It's reasonable to suppose that a bright Jewish boy like Jesus would have gone there a number of times.

A theater has even been discovered in Sepphoris, a Greco-Roman style theater, seating about 3,000 people. There is some uncertainty about whether this theater was built during the lifetime of Jesus or later. But if it was there during his lifetime, he may very well have gone to the theater. If he did go to the theater, he would have seen actors wearing masks, as they did in Greco-Roman theaters everywhere. The word for an actor performing behind a mask is *hypocrite*. Thus the word *hypocrite* could come from Jesus' experience of the theater. In short, our image of Galilee as a rural backwater isolated from the rest of the world has changed.

A third characteristic of the social world of Jesus is that it was a peasant society. By this I do not simply mean that there were a lot of peasants, although there were. Rather, peasant society is a shorthand phrase for a particular type of society, namely "pre-industrial agrarian society" as described by Gerhard Lenski.[(6)] These societies are known widely throughout the premodern world.

The defining characteristic of a pre-industrial agrarian society is that it's a two-class society. On the one hand, there are urban ruling elites, and on the other hand, there are rural peasants. The rural peasants typically comprise approximately 90 percent of the population. To flesh out that grand contrast just a bit, the urban ruling elites consist of five groups: the ruler; the governing class; the retainers (retainers are basically employees of the ruler and the governing class); the well-to-do merchants; and the upper echelon of the priesthood. The ruler and governing class are about one percent of the population and typically receive about half of the income. The elites together (ten percent of the population) typically receive two-thirds of the income. The rural peasants include small landholders as well as sharecroppers, day laborers, unclean and degraded classes and expendables.

There's a huge gulf between these two classes. Peasant societies are marked by sharp social and economic inequalities. There is no middle class. To try to illustrate that with

two contrasting diagrams, all of us are familiar with the pyramid diagram of modern societies—a fairly small upper class, a larger middle class and an even larger lower class. A peasant society would not be diagrammed as a pyramid. The best analogy I can think of is one of those old-fashioned oilcans with a broad bottom and a long narrow spout coming up out of it. The vast majority of people are represented by that broad bottom and the urban ruling elites by the needlelike spout rising vertically from the base.

Where do the urban ruling elites (not just in first-century Jewish Palestine but generally in societies like this) get their wealth? They don't manufacture anything. They don't produce anything. They don't grow anything. I'm not even sure they provide any services. They get their wealth, of course, from the peasants, and they get it in two forms—rent for land and taxation. Peasant societies are thus economically oppressive and exploitative.

This awareness illuminates the Gospels and what the Gospels say about Jesus in a number of ways. I'll mention just a couple for illustrative purposes. When Jesus speaks about his message being "good news to the poor" or when he says "blessed are the poor," it's pretty clear, I think, that he's talking about real poor people. This is not a metaphor. He is talking about the oppressed group in a peasant society.

The teaching of Jesus also includes a number of indictments. The indictments are not of society as a whole but of the elites. Jesus' primary social conflict was with the elites. This is illuminating when we think about the causes of the death of Jesus. In all likelihood, a combination of Roman authority and a narrow circle of the Jewish ruling elites was responsible for his arrest and execution. Very importantly, rather than Jesus being rejected, arrested and executed by "the Jews" or the Jewish people, the final and fatal conflict was with urban ruling elites who, rather than representing the Jewish people, were in fact oppressors of most Jewish people.

The fourth characteristic of Jesus' social world was purity. Purity societies are known in many cultures, both before and since the time of Jesus. Indeed, there are still residues of purity societies in our own time. A purity society is organized around the great contrast or polarity between pure and impure. Purity and impurity apply to persons, groups, places, things and times.

Most important for our purposes is the way that purity and impurity got attached to people and social groups. The pure, of course, were people who observed the purity laws. The impure were the nonobservant, and the worst of the nonobservant were outcasts or untouchables. The notion of an untouchable is only apropos in a purity system.

This contrast also got attached to other basic contrasts in the society. It got attached to the contrast between righteous people and sinners. The righteous were observant; sinners, generally speaking, were nonobservant. It's very interesting what happens to the notion of sin in a purity system. Sinners become untouchables. It became attached to the contrast between whole and not whole, in a physical sense. If you were chronically ill or maimed or had crushed testicles or something terrible like that, you were permanently impure. Wholeness, again, went with purity. It also got attached to the contrast between rich and poor. To be rich didn't automatically make you pure, but to be poor tended to put you on the impure side of the spectrum. It got attached to the contrast between male and female and the contrast between Jew and gentile.

All of this created a social world with sharp social boundaries. The usefulness of the concept of a purity society for understanding Jesus and early Christianity is pervasive, it seems to me. One of the central characteristics of Jesus' public activity was open-table fellowship, or what Dom Crossan calls "open commensality,"[(7)]eating meals with people of all sorts. A purity system creates closed-table fellowship, or "closed commensality." What was at stake in Jesus' open-table practice—and it's useful to remember that this is the ancestor of the Christian Eucharist or mass or Lord's Supper—was an alternative social vision that radically challenged the purity system.

The Gospels also report a number of purity disputes about the washing of hands and utensils and things like that. It's easy for us, from a modern point of view, to see these as trivial. But they weren't trivial; in that world, purity was political. It was embedded in the social system; it structured the society; and thus Jesus' table practices and the disputes about purity concerned the shape of his world.

The fifth and final central characteristic of Jesus' social world is that it was a patriarchal society. In this it was like most premodern cultures and, to some extent, contemporary cultures as well. The more complete formula is that it was an androcentric and patriarchal society. The word androcentric refers to a way of seeing, to a perspective,

namely seeing the world through male eyes. In this sense much of the biblical tradition is androcentric.

A quick illustration. Most of you are familiar with the Book of Proverbs and that there are a number of sayings about wives in it. There are sayings about difficult wives, fretful wives and a marvelous chapter about ideal wives. There are no sayings in the Book of Proverbs about difficult husbands, fretful husbands or, for that matter, about ideal husbands. Well, why not? Because the book was written by men and for men. It's androcentric.

Patriarchy, on the other hand, refers to a social system, and it refers specifically to a hierarchical social system in which some men rule over other men and over all women and children. Patriarchy refers both to the structure of the society as a whole and to the structure of the family. The patriarchal family structure was a microcosm of the social structure.

The system of patriarchy is not peculiar to Judaism. All the cultures surrounding Judaism were patriarchal as well. Patriarchy was typical in that part of the world, in all parts of the world, in fact.

This system radically affected how women were seen and what roles they played in society. Women were profoundly second-class citizens. They were separated from men in public life. They were veiled when they went out. They were not to be taught the Torah, incidentally. Let me explain that briefly. Everybody learned basic Torah practices just from growing up in the culture. It was part of socialization, just as we learn most of our cultural customs just from growing up. But women were not to be taught the Torah in the sense of being taught how to interpret the texts. Why not? Lots of reasons were given, but perhaps the most compelling one is that the ability to interpret Torah was a form of power, and if you let women start playing with those texts, there's no telling what they might come up with.

Again, I want to stress that this was not peculiar to Judaism. The usefulness of keeping this in mind is probably already apparent to you. All of the stories about Jesus and women in the Gospels constitute a radical challenge to patriarchy. But it goes beyond that. All of you are familiar with the anti-family sayings in the Gospels. (The Gospels are not in favor of family values.) The anti-family sayings in the Gospels need to be

understood in the context of the patriarchal family. They are invitations to leave the patriarchal family as the center of security and identity.

One other quick illustration, from chapter *23* of Matthew, a short verse that Jesus may or may not have said: “Call no man on earth your father, for you have but one Father who is in heaven.” The analogy goes like this. Call no one on earth your lord, for you have but one Lord who is God. That is, just as the lordship of God rules out all earthly lords, so in this case, the fatherhood of God rules out all earthly fathers. It’s a fascinating instance of the fatherhood of God being used in a subversive and anti-patriarchal way.

That completes the list of central cultural dynamics operating in the social world of Jesus. There is more that could be said. For example, it was also a patronal society, in which patron-client relationships were central, an honor-shame society, in which the preservation of honor and the avoidance of shame were central concerns. But I hope I have shown how a better understanding of the social world of Jesus is useful (I would say indispensable) for understanding the traditions about Jesus.

As I move to my conclusion, I want to stress that we should not think of what I have just described as if it were Judaism itself, as if it were the Judaism of the first century. For there were many different Jewish voices in this society—reform and renewal movements, popular prophetic movements, individual Jewish saints, mystics and purveyors of peasant wisdom. Jesus and the Jesus movement were among those alternative voices.

What I have described was the climate, the social world, in which these various Jewish voices struggled, and to some extent competed, with each other. Their intention was to articulate and embody a vision of faithfulness to God and the traditions of Israel in that turbulent century. Eventually, out of that social world and the events of that century flowed the two streams of Judaism—rabbinic Judaism and early Christianity, both destined to become world religions persisting to this day. But that time had not yet come, and thus we see Jesus and the early Jesus movement most clearly when we see them as Jewish voices in the world of first-century Jewish Palestine.

Questions & Answers

Question: Has Geza Vermes’ understanding of Jesus the Jew held up?

Marcus J. Borg: What is central to Vermes' understanding of Jesus the Jew is that Jesus was a charismatic Galilean holy man. That means a man of deeds, a healer. Vermes claims there were a number of these people in first-century Jewish Palestine. He also complicates that a little bit by seeing them as prototypes of the Hasidim. My understanding of the scholarly discussion following the publication of Vermes' book of 20 years ago, *Jesus the Jew* (Collins, 1973; Fortress, 1981), is that there is agreement that there were Galilean charismatics, but the connection Vermes makes between them and the Hasidim is probably weak.

Q: Has Vermes' assertion that Jesus was part of the small middle class held up?

Borg: In that culture, artisans, like carpenters, were not above the landholding small peasant class but actually below. To be an artisan or a carpenter was to be from a family that had lost its land. That suggests that to be a carpenter is to be on the marginalized edge of the peasant class.

Q: In terms of social class, what do you make of the Gospel writers' emphasis on the education of Jesus? Several times, some of his opponents say he is a carpenter's son. Or of Luke's account of the young boy debating with the doctors of the law? Was this understood by the early Christian community as Jesus having a kind of supernatural knowledge of Torah, or would his knowledge have been the same as any adult Jew would have acquired, even an illiterate Jew?

Borg: The story of Jesus debating the law with the experts in the Temple at age 12 is almost certainly legendary. So we can let go of that right away as part of the evidential base.

Second, the comments about the adult Jesus in the Gospel have to do with his brightness and quickness, and they don't necessarily imply that he had a scribal awareness of the Torah or other sacred texts. Here I'll point out a possible area of disagreement, a minor one, between Dom Crossan and me. As I understand Dom, he doesn't think Jesus had a scribal awareness. I'm not so sure of that myself. But we don't need to go into that right now; I'll just note there is some difference there.

The other thing that I can say is that, as the tradition develops into the second and third centuries, in the post-canonical gospels, stories emerge of the very young Jesus having a supernatural kind of knowledge that he could not possibly have learned. So

there was a tendency in the early community in the post-Easter decades to begin to ascribe to Jesus qualities that went beyond human qualities. For example, there's this irritating story in the infancy gospel of Thomas about Jesus bamboozling the teachers of the law, I think, at age six. You would just want to hit this kid because he goes on and on uttering these nonsense questions, and this is supposed to show he's really bright. But the point is that he was increasingly said to have had this kind of supernatural ability.

Q: In response to your lighthearted humor, was Mary Jewish?

Borg: Well, I'll simply say yes. I don't know that I have any better response than that.

Marcus J. Borg (d. 2015) held the Hundere Chair in Religion and Culture in the Philosophy Department at Oregon State University. He was the author of many books, including the bestselling *Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time* (Harper San Francisco, 1994).

All work ›