Introduction

The Problem of the Framework of the Story of Jesus

Historical and Methodological Issues

Upon what stage—or rather, upon what stages—did the public ministry of Jesus play out, and how long did that ministry last? Questions about the topography and chronology of the story of Jesus are inseparable from each other and mutually condition each other, and although they have been vigorously debated since the days of Christian antiquity, they are still largely unanswered. Every conceivable solution has been offered: Jesus' ministry lasted for one year, two years, three years or longer. The question of location is closely correlated: except for the final days in Jerusalem, Jesus carried out his public activity only in Galilee (one year), or he spent much of his time in Jerusalem and southern Palestine (two years or more). The difficulty of this problem stems from the differing outlines of the story of Jesus in John and the Synoptics. The Synoptics mention only one Passover—and thus leave room for a ministry of one year at the most—while John, with its various feasts and pilgrimages to Jerusalem, allows for at least two years and perhaps three. The theory of an even longer ministry of Jesus, at least as it was advocated in the early church, builds on some rather unconventional data. It owes its existence to two passages in the Gospel of John (2:20: "it took forty-six years to build this temple"; and 8:57: "you are not yet fifty years old"), as well as to the kind of offbeat speculations that surface in the *Kerygma Petri*,[1] in the so-called *Second Book of Jehu*,[2] and in Irenaeus.[3]

Except for these idiosyncratic traditions, according to which we can reckon with a forty- or fifty-year-old Jesus who began his ministry at

1. Von Dobschütz, *Das Kerygma Petri*, 136ff.

2. Schmidt, *Gnostiche Schirften*, 196: "Jesus, however, had compassion upon his disciples, because they . . . had followed him for twelve years." Cf. also Resch, "Mitteilung eines apokryphen Jesuswortes, in dem von dem 12. Jahre nach der ἀνάλημψις des Herrn die Rede ist."

3. Irenaeus, *Adv. haer*. II.22.5 (Migne *PG* VII, 785–86).

about age thirty, scholars in the early church generally argued over one, two, or three years, and the real battle was between one and three. Oddly enough, in this early Christian controversy the Gospel chronology was never subjected to careful scrutiny; it was simply presumed that certain details (which by our lights actually say nothing about chronology) had to be interpreted as hidden evidence for the length of Jesus' ministry. The starting point for advocates of the one-year theory, for example, was the saying in Luke 4:19 about ἐνιαυτὸ κυρίου δέκτος, "the acceptable year of the Lord." This verse was seen as clandestine proof for a one-year ministry of Jesus. Apparently it was on the basis of this phrase, which was taken as an assertion about astronomy, that many gnostic groups conceived of the public activity of Jesus within a framework of one year. The root of this idea is anchored in gnostic speculations about the role of the number twelve in the life of Jesus (especially the selection of the twelve apostles). On this basis they inferred that twelve months = one year, and that the thirty aeons were related to the thirty-year life of the Lord.[4] Even prominent representatives of the great church were not totally free from this kind of allegorical artistry. Clement of Alexandria, a leading proponent of the one-year theory, based his argument on Luke 4:29 (ἐνιαυτὸν μόνον) and interpreted the 360 bells on the high priest's ephod as a representation of the year-long preaching of Christ.[5] Origen, who declared that "Jesus taught for a year and a few months,"[6] also delighted in this kind of allegorization, as for example when he interpreted the thirty pieces of silver given to Judas as a symbol for the thirty years of Jesus' life. In the West, Tertullian and Hippolytus were the leading voices, and their outlook held sway throughout almost all of western Christianity. Advocates for the three-year theory, on the other hand, attempted to deflect the force of the ἐνιαυτός quotation. No one did more in this regard than Irenaeus, who introduced a counter-argument based on the sequence of feasts in the Gospel of John. What Irenaeus began, i.e., the triumph of the Johannine chronology, Eusebius finished. He summarized the length of Jesus' ministry this way: τριέτης χρόνος; χρόνος τριῶν ἥμισυ ἐτῶν; μέχρι δὲ τῆς ἀρχῆς τοῦ Καϊάφα παραμείναντος οὐδ' ὅλος ὁ μεταξὺ τετραέτης παρίσταται χρόνος.[7] This statement from Eusebius, the founder of church history, was determinative for the East, and eventually for the West as well, particularly after Jerome translated Eusebius' *Chronicle* into Latin in the year 380. The Johannine chronology, which works out to three years

4. Irenaeus, *Adv. haer* I.1.3 (Migne *PG* VII, 449–50).
5. Clement of Alexandria, *Strom*. V.6 (Migne *PG* IX, 63–64).
6. Origen, *de Princ*. IV.5 (Migne PG XI, 349).
7. Eusebius, *Demonstr. Evangelica* VIII.2.108 (Migne *PG* XXII, 595ff).

(or at least two), was accepted right down the line. Even in the earlier period, when the one-year theory had held sway, the Johannine sequence of festivals had always made a strong impression, influencing Origen, whom we have already cited as a proponent of the one-year view. On the basis of his comprehensive study of John he seems to have changed his mind and abandoned his earlier position.[8]

In this controversy, described here only in broad strokes,[9] one assumption is unquestioned: there is no chronological contradiction between John and the Synoptics. The exact manner in which advocates of the one-year theory manage to reconcile themselves to the Johannine outline is not especially important. Either the contradictions are ignored, or an effort is made to fit the Johannine account into one year. Origen appears to have done this when he maintained that the feast in John 5:1 was not a Passover. Those who adopt the Johannine chronology manage to fit the Synoptics into it. Only the "Alogoi" asserted that there was a contradiction between the Gospels, because for them the sequence of festivals in John contradicted the Synoptics, a fact that they used as the basis for their rejection of the fourth gospel.[10] The degree of certainty in the assertions and conclusions in this debate is striking. Only a few participants exercise the kind of restraint we find in Augustine, who said that (as we know from the Gospels) the Lord was baptized at about the age of thirty years. How many more years he may have lived thereafter can perhaps be detected *textu ipso actionum*, but it is better to work by inference from a comparison of the Gospel with secular history, in order to avoid questions and mistakes.[11]

The Middle Ages and later periods added no new momentum to the discussion, but in the last two decades an extensive controversy has arisen within the literature of Catholic scholarship. It was kicked off in 1898 with J. van Bebber's *Zur Chronologie des Lebens Jesu: Eine exegetische Studie*. This book, along with several supplemental and controversial essays, sought to revive the one-year theory.[12] Van Bebber quickly found a spirited advocate

8. This set of circumstances explains why Origen is sometimes described by modern Catholic scholars as holding the one-year theory, and sometimes as holding the three-year theory. Other early church leaders also appear to have changed their minds.

9. This brief introductory sketch cites only those figures whose writings most clearly show the problem in the early church. In the literature produced by Catholic controversies on the subject, these things are dealt with more specifically, but probably not quite fully and completely.

10. Cf. Zahn, *Geschichte des neutestamentlichen Kanons*, 1021.

11. Augustine, *de Doctr. Christiana* II.28 (Migne *PL* XXXIV, 55).

12. Cf. van Bebber, "Zur Frage nach der Dauer"; and van Bebber, "Zur neuesten Datierung des Karfreitags."

in the learned exegete J. Belser, who had at first spoken out against van Bebber, but then (until his death a short time ago) argued for a one-year ministry of Jesus with great acumen in numerous studies and commentaries. He defended this view against the most common objections, first in an essay on the hypothesis of a one-year ministry in *Biblische Zeitschrift* (1903), and then in further studies, most of which were printed in the *Theologische Quartalschrift* (1907, 1911, 1913, 1914, and 1916). His paper on the problem of the Gospels (1913) is especially comprehensive. Belser's thesis quickly attracted attention and provoked a great deal of opposition from his colleagues. After E. Nagl objected to it in *Biblische Zeitschrift* (1904) 373ff, the Catholic theological faculty of Munich made "The Length of the Public Ministry of Jesus" the theme for the essay competition of the academic year 1904/05. Three contributors appeared in print: Fendt[13] argued for one year, Zellinger[14] for two years, and Homanner[15] for three. Since Belser had not fallen silent, and indeed now had found an ally in Fendt, the strongest polemic was directed against the two of them. C. Mommert, a good scholar of Palestine, wrote an unusually harsh study, *Zur Chronologie des Lebens Jesu*, in 1909. J. M. Pfättisch took his side in 1911 with *Die Dauer der Lehrtätigkeit Jesu nach dem Ev. des hl. Johannes*, as did the French Jesuit scholar F. Prat in 1912 with "La date de la passion et de la durée de la vie publique de Jésus Christ."[16] Other French scholars expressed their opinions as well. The Jesuit J. B. Nisius discussed the various works in a rather calm, substantial, and long essay, "Zur Kontroverse über die Dauer der öffentlichen Wirksamkeit Jesu," which appeared in *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie* (1913) 457–503. P. Dausch, who had already produced "Bedenken gegen die Hypothese von der bloss einjährigen öffentliche Wirksamkeit Jesu" (*BZ* [1906] 49–60), now offered a new study of the question that was in the main an argument against Belser and Nisius (*BZ* 12 [1914] 158ff). The most recent summation was provided by M. Meinertz in the 2nd (1916, pp. 19ff) and 3rd (1917, pp. 236ff) volumes of *BZ*, titled "Methodisches und Sachliches über die Dauer der öffentlichen Wirksamkeit Jesu." In addition to this discussion, there is also another conversation about specific problems, especially those having to do with the early church. In *BZ* (1905), H. Klug wrote on the length of the public ministry of Jesus according to Daniel and Luke, and F. Schubert analyzed Tertullian's view of the year of Jesus' baptism. In 1906 all of the following essays appeared: F. Schubert, "Das Zeugnis des Irenaeus"; J. van

13. Fendt, *Die Dauer*.
14. Zellinger, *Die Dauer*.
15. Homanner, *Die Dauer*.
16. Prat, "La date de la passion."

Bebber, "Zur Berechnung der 70 Wochen Daniels"; H. Klug, "Das Osterfest nach Jo 6,4"; P. Heinisch, "Clement von Alexandria und die einjährige Lehrtätigkeit des Herrn."

Even a cursory reading of this literature will show that we are dealing here with a problem of the first order for Catholic biblical scholarship. Belser never tires of pointing out the great significance of the problem: it would be an important advance if—*contra* the opinions of the critics—it could be shown that there is harmony among the Gospels with regard to the length of Jesus' ministry. In his most recent article, "Abriss des Lebens Jesus: Von der Taufe bis zum Tod" (1916), Belser believes that he is "acting as secretary in the interest of an important and difficult question." Fendt writes almost with resignation on the first page of his book: "If we ask those who are in a position to know about the length of the public ministry of Jesus, we receive contradictory answers. Humankind gathers from the fields of that incarnate life sheaves with kernels of pure gold, but how long the official public period lasted is disputed. And that has been the case not only in the twentieth century, but also in the nineteenth and eighteenth and all the way back to the time when gray-haired old men who had known the departed disciples could still tell stories about the miracles they themselves had seen during the days of Jesus." The fervor on both sides is commensurate with how high they imagine the stakes to be. Belser wrote angrily in the *Tübinger Theologischen Quartalschrift* of 1911 (p. 625): "The one-year theory, recently attacked by Pfättisch and condemned as 'unscientific' in the exegetical lecture hall at Munich, will come back to triumph over Pfättisch, over Homanner, Zellinger, and their masters. Resistance is futile." Mommert, by contrast, whose support for the three-year theory is quite spirited, has turned not against Belser but the lesser lights van Bebber and Fendt. In his book he describes the one-year theory as a "fable produced by ancient heretics and then dragged along." On page 9 he dismisses Fendt's critical observations as "tasteless and stale suppositions that any decent person would prefer not to touch." On page 26 he asserts that van Bebber makes up for what he lacks in real knowledge with "high-browed audacity and fancy vocabulary." He calls down upon his opponents the promise of the Lord: "The gates of hell will not prevail against it." Homanner expresses himself somewhat more mildly on page 88 (footnote 2) in his book about Fendt (whose intelligent study may have been, in my judgment, more deserving of the prize than Zellinger's was): "Infected by the rationalistic ideas of a Loisy or Harnack, he rejects all the chronological material in the Gospels and treats it as simply the higgledy-piggledy of the Jesus tradition." To a disinterested observer this argument may look like a tempest in a teapot. But if we look closer and survey not only (as I have done here) the various

journal articles but also examine their proposals, we will find that we are in fact dealing with a difficult and contested issue. And in this regard Catholic scholarship is a model of how individual scholars do not have to work side by side and ignore each other, but can have regard for each other.

For the moment the three-year theory is the more powerful: the chronology of feasts in the Gospel of John (and the outline that goes with it) is determinative, and individual stories from the Synoptics are then worked in. Defenders of the one-year theory (few as they are) do not reject the Johannine account, but rather set out to connect it with the Synoptics or to prove that the fourth evangelist actually describes a one-year ministry of Jesus. To that end it is necessary, along with some pretty complicated treatments of place-and-time designations in the Gospel of John, to delete τε πάσχα from John 6:4 and to interpret the phrase ἑορτὴ Ἰουδαίων as referring to the Feast of Tabernacles. We can see that the premises shared by all the proponents of modern Catholic scholarship rest on the same foundation as the ancient Christian tradition. In keeping with Catholicism's principled commitment to the importance of tradition, the church fathers are adduced as star witnesses. On the whole, however, current scholars have managed to extricate themselves from the chronological games of the ancients and are now occupying themselves instead with detailed exegesis of specific data from John and the Synoptics. The basic method is harmonization. In order to put together a potentially comprehensive sketch of the activity of the Lord, statements that are scattered throughout the Gospels must be collected and arranged in the proper sequence. Modern critical scholars will object to that kind of method, rejecting it at the outset, because all harmonizations are destructive, for they treat all the material equally. Such a method precludes a truly literary evaluation of the individual Gospels, which is in fact what is most necessary. Yet there is still much to be learned from the work of the Catholic scholars; there are positive contributions of genuine value here. That is due to the following circumstance: since Catholic harmonizers largely seek to compare John with the Synoptics (or, more often, the Synoptics with John), they often subject the Gospels to a first-rate pure literary criticism. Nagl, for example, who regards the Gospel of John as an authentic continuous report, wrote the following judgment of the Synoptics on page 494 of *Katholik* (1900): "The gaps which have been detected cannot have any special significance, because the evangelists were not pursuing a purely historical agenda, and in any event they betray an awareness of the gaps in their reports. What else are general phrases like Luke 4:15; Mark 1:39; Luke 8:1; and 9:6 (cf. Matt 4:23 and 9:35) supposed to indicate? Luke appears to intentionally organize his narrative around stopgap measures like these." With these words this Catholic scholar has appraised the character of the

framework of the story of Jesus, at least with regard to the Synoptics, more correctly than most Protestant scholars do. He evaluates the properties of the Synoptics' (especially Luke's) collected reports and sequential connections quite rightly, and he expresses himself in good style. When Zellinger, another defender of the Johannine chronology, asserts that the Synoptics allow the presupposition that the ministry of Jesus lasted several years, but that they have merely described a single year, this too must be regarded as sound literary judgment. But these scholars, who offer such good observations on the Synoptics, generally let us down when it comes to characterizing the Gospel of John. We do find well-founded statements about the fourth gospel in the work of Fendt, who defends the one-year theory. He occupies a very unusual position within the world of Catholic scholarship, and he has been strongly resisted by his co-religionists, and we can see why. Not only is he "infected by Loisy and Harnack," but he has also formulated some substantial literary judgments of those two scholars, both of whom clung very closely to the Synoptic outline. In a special section of his article under the interesting heading, "Investigation of the Value of the Chronological Principle in the Composition of the Gospels" (129ff), he offers a number of excellent observations with regard to the framework of the Gospel of John and the Synoptics. The following sentence shows the clarity of his literary insight: "With regard to the sayings of the Lord . . . the Synoptics exhibit the character of a careful, primitive systematic representation, and the same conclusion is justified about their arrangement of events" (135). Or: "None of the Synoptics can be privileged simply because the broad outline of a historical course of events can be better maintained in one than in the others" (ibid.). Luke's καθεξῆς offers no support for the view that he actually achieved his goal of writing a coherent sequence of events. The chronological framework, in other words, may be only partially successful. Sayings and events may be compiled from the same material: ministry of Jesus *before* the imprisonment of the Baptist! Material that belongs in that time period is readily at hand, "because even an event that appears (on the basis of other internal considerations) to have taken place after the imprisonment of John, may actually go back to the beginning of the Synoptic account" (137). According to Fendt, the evangelists display a great deal of freedom in the matter of chronology. He also gives a very good answer to the question of John and the Synoptics when he writes that a chronology of the Synoptics cannot be fetched from the outline of John.

More recent Catholic scholarship has unfortunately lost its grip on the valuable critical achievements of its own greatest thinkers. Earlier I remarked that Augustine did an about-face on the question of the chronology of Jesus. He wrote a remarkable book, *de Consensu Evangelistarum*, in

which he offered some interesting thoughts about the outline of the story of Jesus.[17] On his view, the evangelists intended to arrange events by means of *anticipatio* and/or *recapitulatio*:

> If therefore one incident is narrated after another one, that does not necessarily mean they happened in that order . . . No human being, no matter how accurate or reliable his memory may be, has the ability to recall events in a specific sequence. For we remember some things sooner than others, depending on how they come back to us, not on how we want them to come back to us. Thus it is highly likely that each evangelist believed he had to relate the sequence of events just as God brought it back to his memory. But this applies only to those cases where it makes no difference to the standing and truthfulness of the Gospels whether the order was one way or the other. (*de Consensu Evangelistarum* 2.21.51)

In this vein, Augustine speaks of an *ordo rerum gestarum* and an *ordo recordationis*, paying close attention to the transitions and introductions to individual pericopes, with their chronological details. In 2.22.53 he discusses Mark 1:35 ("when evening had come") and asserts that it was not necessarily the evening of the same day. He remarks that Luke 7:1 does not explicitly state that Christ went straight to Capernaum after the end of his sermon. In Luke 10:1 the expression "after these things" (μετὰ δὲ ταῦτα) does not make explicit just what setting we should imagine, and Matt 12:9 does not indicate how long it may have been before Jesus came into their synagogue. Certainly Augustine is working here as a harmonizer, since he wants to fill in the gaps in the respective narratives from the other Gospels. But he consistently demonstrates the right feel for the project. Subsequent Catholic exegetes have completely lost that feel, and in so doing they have become even more papist than the Pope. But Augustine's outlook did exercise a powerful influence for a while. Zacharias of Chrysopolis, who wrote the first medieval harmony of the Gospels, was not too far off when he said: "Very often the Gospels summarize; very often they anticipate." Throughout the late Middle Ages the idea that none of the evangelists had written in chronological order was dominant. Johannes Gerson (d. 1429), for example, wrote: "According to Jerome, Mark is not comprised of the actual order of events, but an order based on Levitical priorities, and Luke is similar in many respects" (on p. 139, Vogels says of Gerson, "He cannot escape from the bonds that Augustine put on the harmony of the Gospels"). Gerson's remarks on the pericope of the healing of the lepers (Mark 1:40ff; Matt 8:1ff;

17. Vogels, *St Augustins Schrift de Consensu Evangelistarum*.

Luke 5:12ff) are especially instructive: "It is collected from several sources, because the evangelists did not always follow the actual order of events. Instead they used the rule of anticipation and recollection." Bishop Cornelius Jansen (d. 1576) asserted that the narratives of the first three evangelists clearly show a lack of concern for the sequence of events in the deeds of Christ; rather they wrote in random order (*miscellanea quaedam scripsisse*). Thus Bishop Jansen selected individual pieces from the Synoptics and fit them together, without touching the Gospel of John.

As has already been noted, the Catholic Church has backed away from these harmonizers. An instructive essay by Christian Pesch, a Jesuit, clearly points out this fact.[18] Yet when it comes to the question of chronology, Pesch stops short of the Protestant view, as he says on p. 454: "Among the Protestants an exaggerated concept of inspiration led early on to the hypothesis that everything which is narrated in the Gospels must have happened exactly as it is narrated, and in the same sequence, right down to the last jot and tittle. Every saying must have been spoken word-for-word as it is reported: no anticipation, no recapitulation can be allowed, not even that the reproduction of Jesus' words was basically correct." The chief representative of the exegesis that Pesch so rightly criticizes was Andreas Osiander, who (like Gerson) spoke of a *confusio evangeliorum* and described his own work of 1537 in the following way:

> A harmony of the four Gospels, in which the Gospel histories of the four evangelists are woven together into one, so that not one word is omitted, nothing foreign is introduced, the order is undisturbed, and nothing is out of place: everything is made clear with symbols and markers, so that you can understand at a glance what is distinctive about each evangelist, as well as what they all have in common.

One of Osiander's students, Karl Molinaeus, went further than his teacher when he maintained that the narratives about plucking ears of grain and about the healing of a withered hand in Luke and Matthew are not the same. In the wake of Augustine, harmonizers tacitly assumed that the Gospels are completely without order, treating the Gospels (as one nineteenth-century Catholic scholar aptly put it) as a kind of curio cabinet that could be rearranged, or as a quarry from which choice material could be mined. Much of this was, in my judgment, extremely naive; but on the whole the harmonizers had a better feel for the Gospels than their Protestant opponents, and much better than their modern adversaries in their own Church, who

18. Pesch, "Über Evangelienharmonien," 225–41.

want to give a straight-from-the-shoulder answer based on a one- or two- or three-year ministry of Jesus.

Recent Protestant scholarship, by contrast, presents a completely different picture. As on the Catholic side, there has been an abundance of research into the absolute chronology of the story of Jesus. Scholars have been busily occupied in particular with questions about the date of Jesus' birth and death, based on highly complicated astronomical calculations. A book by F. Westberg, *Die biblische Chronologie nach Flavius Josephus and das Todesjahr Jesu* (1910) is a recent example. The results of this study turn out to be highly uncertain, and they do not advance our knowledge of the length of Jesus' ministry. Turning away, then, from the highly problematic idea of an absolute chronology, scholars have instead examined the chronological framework of the evangelists itself. Here a recent short article by J. Boehmer is noteworthy.[19] Hans Windisch has also undertaken a very energetic engagement with this problem.[20] He poses the question of the relationship of the narrative to the chronological framework, and he clearly states the literary and historical problem: "How much of it is the evangelists' own construction based on the course of Jesus' ministry, and how much can we, through careful examination, extract from their accounts?" After the designations of time in the individual stories are carefully added up, the length of Jesus' ministry turns out to be roughly 4-1/2 months in Mark, a little less than five months in Matthew, and 4-1/4 months in Luke. Thus the Synoptics describe a story that could have played out in four to six months, but that, based on its vague calendrical details, must have actually lasted more than a year (note especially the plucking of grain on the Sabbath, which had to take place between Easter and Pentecost). The Johannine narrative, by contrast, could have unfolded in as little as two months, except for the fact that the sequence of festivals would have to stretch out over a period of two years. The strain in this chronology would be relieved if the order of chapters five and six was reversed, and if the date of the festival in 6:4 was deleted. These "slight but well-grounded critical operations" would produce a one-year ministry in the Gospel of John. The Synoptics and John are put together as follows: "The main features of the combination consist of limiting the Galilean activity to the summer months, which is supported by John and can easily be maintained in the Synoptics, and at the same time stretching out the Jerusalem ministry through the fall, winter, and spring (indicated by John and hinted at by the Synoptics)." While this effort on Windisch's part is highly original with regard to the details,

19. Boehmer, "Die chronologische," 121–47.

20. Windisch, "Die Dauer," 141–42.

the manner in which he compares John and the Synoptics (cf. esp. how he strikes the place reference in 6:4!) is strongly reminiscent of Catholic scholarship, particularly the work of Belser. It is commendable that for once the individual indicators of time in the Gospels are characterized as if they make up a continuous report, without regard to long-held opinions about them, but the most important question is whether the Gospels really support such an analysis of the time indicators. At the end of the day, after Windisch has worked out all the time indicators—both those we have to infer and those made explicit by the narrator—his analysis still boils down to harmonization, albeit very artful harmonization. In addition it must be objected that specific features of the Gospels rule out any chronological determination *a priori*, as it were. The introductory phrases, which often include statements about time, and the summary statements, which suggest that Jesus was active on a grand scale, are in my opinion a long way from chronological calculations. It will not work for us to read the Gospels as if they are a continuous and contemporaneous report and then collect the time indicators; on the contrary, the form of these indicators of time must first be examined, before they can be evaluated. What is needed is a thorough literary criticism of the chronological and topographical details that make up the framework of the story of Jesus.

Has this goal been successfully achieved (or even accurately understood) in recent scholarship? It can be said that Protestant scholars have not been particularly excited about the question of the length of Jesus' ministry. On the Catholic side all four Gospels have been treated equally, so that all the particular differences between the Gospels have been continually debated, but on the Protestant side our question has been regarded as a subset of the so-called "Johannine problem," with which it stands or falls. Put differently, a Protestant scholar who argues against the three-year theory will not try to overturn the individual pieces of that theory as they arise from the Gospel of John; instead the entire edifice of that Gospel will be attacked until the whole thing collapses. At this point there appears to be a broad agreement with the method used by Catholic exegetes. Scholars like H. J. Holtzmann, who deny any historical value to the Gospel of John, make no use at all of the chronology contained therein. Thus there is general acceptance of the idea that the Synoptics depict the ministry of Jesus as slightly more than one year long, while John has it as two or three years long, and "the question about the length of the public ministry of Jesus forces Protestant scholars to decide whether to adopt the Johannine or the Synoptic chronology."[21] The more scholars dispute the historical value of John, the more highly

21. So Windisch in "Leben und Lehre Jesu," 177.

they esteem the Synoptics. Th. Keim, for example, completely sets aside the Johannine account as unhistorical and plots the course of Jesus' story along the lines of the Synoptics, whose apparently historical outline seems to speak for a one-year ministry of Jesus (Jesus is active only in Galilee, right up to the trip to Jerusalem for the Passover).[22] It remains only to support this Synoptic outline with a little psychology, and then to elucidate its development. Keim, whose account of Jesus' development was very influential, realized in this way that the Gospel of Matthew is the oldest gospel document.[23] Confidence in the Synoptic tradition and its basic outline grew stronger as the Markan Hypothesis marched to victory thanks to the efforts of H. J. Holtzmann and J. Weiss. Even before Keim, Holtzmann had offered a highly influential picture of the life of Jesus based on the hypothesis of an "Ur-Mark."[24] Holtzmann was convinced that the outline of Mark rested on solid historical foundations. He went into the development of Jesus in great detail, believing that he could identify in the Gospel of Mark seven "stages in the public life of Jesus" in Galilee. In subsequent years there were some corrections to Holtzmann's presentation, but on the whole the course of Jesus' life as he laid it out remained determinative: the outline of the Gospel of John is historically worthless, but the Synoptic (i.e., the Markan) outline is of very high value. In his book *Jesus*, published in 1913, W. Heitmüller described the situation by saying that "we have to fall in line with the Gospel of Mark," since the journeys to Jerusalem in John are obviously schematic, while the Synoptics give the general impression of a story no longer than one year in duration.[25] Heitmüller fairly expressed the *communis opinio* among scholars, aside from those who still regarded the Gospel of John as a reliable historical source. Certainly we have since abandoned Holtzmann's confidence that the outline of the story of Jesus can be traced out right down to the last detail, but on the whole a one-year ministry of Jesus is now regarded as an assured result of scholarship.

In addition to the developments that I have sketched out briefly here, there was also an ongoing reappraisal of whether Mark was in fact such a highly valuable source document. The Markan Hypothesis was expanded into the Two-Source Hypothesis (i.e., Matthew and Luke had another source in addition to Mark, namely the so-called "Q" sayings collection).

22. Keim, *Die Geschichte Jesu von Nazara*.

23. Loofs, *Wer war Jesus Christus?*, said that the first sketch of "a liberal portrait of Jesus" appeared in Keim's 1861 inaugural address at Zurich, where these ideas were first set forth.

24. Holtzmann, *Die synoptischen Evangelien*.

25. Heitmüller, *Jesus*. Wernle's newest book on Jesus does not discuss these chronological issues.