Jesus Remembered\(^1\) was the product and climax of some thirty years of engagement with what is almost universally known as ‘the Quest of the Historical Jesus.’ During the course of the research for the book itself I became increasingly dissatisfied with three key methodological presuppositions which have determined the course of the Quest, all three of them more or less from its inception. In reaction I found it necessary to engage in the Quest from a different starting point, with a different perspective on the source material, and with a different objective in analysing that material. These three protests and proposals are somewhat scattered and easily missed or lost to view in the scope and detail of the volume (900 pages!). In this essay I will attempt to bring them to clearer view, though it will be understood that the relative brevity of the essay permits neither the detail nor the nuance of the larger volume. Nevertheless, the attempt to focus more sharply on the three protests and proposals may help to make the methodological issues clearer and to highlight their importance. Each of my protests is double-barreled. My proposals do not fall into such a neat repeating pattern.

**Protest One**

My first protest is directed in the first place against the assumption that ‘the Christ of faith’ is a perversion of ‘the historical Jesus’; that faith is something which prevents a clear historical view of Jesus. The objective of the first phase of the Quest was to find the man behind the dogma, the historical Jesus, the real Jesus. The assumption was that the real Jesus must have been different from the Christ of faith. The real Jesus was obscured by layers of faith and dogma, hidden behind the Christ of the

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\(^1\) J. D. G. Dunn, *Christianity in the Making*, vol. 1, *Jesus Remembered* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003). This chapter summarizes the main points of the three lectures published as *A New Perspective on Jesus: What the Quest for the Historical Jesus Missed* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker; London: SPCK, 2005).
creeds, the God-man, the second person of the Trinity, the Pantocrator, like an original masterpiece obscured by layers of later ‘improvements’ and centuries of pollution. The Quest was motivated by the conviction that these layers of dogma could be stripped away to reveal a more human Jesus, a Jesus more believable by ‘modern man.’

The first to pose the antithesis between the historical Jesus and the Christ of faith in these terms was D. F. Strauss in his sharp critique of Schleiermacher’s *Life of Jesus.* Schleiermacher’s lectures had been based primarily on John’s Gospel, particularly the discourses of Jesus in that Gospel, and had been delivered thirty-two years earlier, prior to Strauss’s own *Life of Jesus* in which Strauss had seriously questioned the historical value of the Johannine discourses. So Strauss’s reaction to the publication of Schleiermacher’s lectures was predictable.

Schleiermacher’s Christology is a last attempt to make the churchly Christ acceptable to the modern world…. Schleiermacher’s Christ is as little a real man as is the Christ of the church.

The illusion… that Jesus could have been a man in the full sense and still as a single person stand above the whole of humanity, is the chain which still blocks the harbour of Christian theology against the open sea of rational science.

The ideal of the dogmatic Christ on the one hand and the historical Jesus of Nazareth on the other are separated forever.

Strauss, then, marks the beginning of the devaluation of the historical value of John’s gospel which has been a principal feature of the Quest for well over a century. And the critical determinant was that John’s gospel expressed so clearly the developed faith of the early church: John presents the Christ of faith rather than the Jesus of history.

If Strauss insisted that John should be placed on the faith side of the history/faith divide, the later nineteenth-century liberals were equally insistent that Paul should be placed on the same side. According to Adolf Harnack, Jesus had preached a simple gospel centered on the

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4 D. F. Strauss, *The Life of Jesus Critically Examined* (1835–1836; 1846; ET: 1846, Philadelphia: Fortress, 1972), 365–386. The decisive consideration for Strauss was the fact that the style of speech in the gospel was everywhere the same, whether that of the Baptist, or of Jesus, or of the evangelist himself, pointing to the conclusion that the style, both of speech and thought, was that of the evangelist (385).