

2008

## Jesús y sus primeros discípulos [Review]

Rubén R. Dupertuis

Trinity University, rdupertu@trinity.edu

Follow this and additional works at: [http://digitalcommons.trinity.edu/relig\\_faculty](http://digitalcommons.trinity.edu/relig_faculty)



Part of the [Religion Commons](#)

---

### Repository Citation

Dupertuis, R. (2008). [Review of the book *Jesús y sus primeros discípulos*, by S. Guijarro Oporto]. *Review of Biblical Literature*, 10, 385-387.

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the Religion Department at Digital Commons @ Trinity. It has been accepted for inclusion in Religion Faculty Research by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Trinity. For more information, please contact [jcostanz@trinity.edu](mailto:jcostanz@trinity.edu).

appealing; others will find it off-putting. And some of his claims in the final chapter (especially on the influence, not always for good, of the Enlightenment) are a little startling.

There is much food for thought here. Undoubtedly Bauckham's theories will generate much debate. Certainly many of the issues he raises are among the most important in Gospel studies today.



*Jesús y sus primeros discípulos*, by Santiago Guijarro Oporto. Asociación Bíblica Española, Institución San Jerónimo 46. Estella: Verbo Divino, 2007. Pp. 288. Paper. €21.63. ISBN 8481697148.

Ruben Dupertuis, Trinity University, San Antonio, Texas

This book collects nine studies by the author, each of which addresses slightly different aspects of the study of earliest Christianity in Palestine. All but one of the essays have been previously published between the years 2000 and 2006. As such, the book does not systematically work toward a single argument; nonetheless, the various chapters display a remarkable unity by virtue of addressing aspects of the study of the Synoptic Gospels and by means of a largely consistent methodological approach that can be described as a combination of typical New Testament methods and approaches, such as form and redaction criticism, with insights derived from social-scientific studies.

Most of the chapters are concerned, in one way or another, with reconstructing an accurate historical portrait of Jesus and his earliest followers in Palestine. Given this historical interest, the first chapter examines the question of the oral stage of transmission, with an interest in the degree to which oral traditions can be considered reliable (Guijarro uses the term *fiabilidad*). After reviewing several prominent proposals for understanding the oral stage of transmission, all of which present themselves as mutually exclusive, Guijarro argues that the increasing awareness of the diversity of early Christianities should suggest that the process of oral transmission could have occurred differently in different communities. He then adopts a model of types of oral transmission in which three possibilities exist: (1) uncontrolled oral tradition; (2) informally controlled oral tradition; (3) and formally controlled oral tradition. The final section of this chapter tests the model by examining several instances of Jesus' saying about the temple (including Mark 13:2; 14:58; Matt 26:61; John 2:19; and Heb 6:14).

Chapter 2 addresses the significance and usefulness of Q in reconstructions of the historical Jesus. Guijarro is interested principally in two questions: (1) What type of information about Jesus can we find in Q? (2) What can Q tell us about the historical Jesus? In order to address the first question, Guijarro briefly addresses the reconstruction of the text, the process of composition, and the genre of the document, concluding that, like the Gospel of Mark, Q reflects a theologically elaborated portrait of Jesus. The value of Q for historical Jesus studies, however, is that it represents a stage of composition that is closer to Jesus. To

answer the second question, Guijarro examines Q for the type of information it reveals about Jesus, including what Q offers regarding the geographical and temporal frame of Jesus' activity, his relationship to other characters in the text, and the types of activities and sayings attributed to Jesus. Although not groundbreaking, the essay offers a thoughtful examination of both the usefulness and the limits of Q as a resource for the historical Jesus.

Chapter 3 addresses the much-studied question of Jesus' relationship to God in the light of the father/son language in the Gospels. Guijarro differs from typical treatments of this question by focusing on Jesus' activity rather than his sayings and by placing the father/son language in the context of first-century family relationships. Drawing on studies of traditional Mediterranean culture, Guijarro first outlines the typical obligations that marked the father/son relationship, then insightfully places several aspects of Jesus activity, including Jesus' baptism and temptations (Mark 1:9–11 and parallels), in this context.

In chapter 4 Guijarro starts by reconstructing what he considers to be early traditions of Jesus' exorcisms in Mark 3:22–30 and Luke 11:14–26. He then turns to the social sciences, more specifically labeling theory, to examine the function that accusations against Jesus' exorcising activities by his opponents might have had. Guijarro also locates exorcism as a countercultural activity most likely understood by the dominant elite of Roman Galilee as a threat to the existing social order. Jesus' response to his accusers does not deny the activity of exorcism but rejects the interpretation attached to such activity by his opponents.

The following chapter also draws on insights from the social sciences, as Guijarro uses medical anthropology to place accounts of Jesus' healing miracles in the context of first-century Mediterranean healing activities. After identifying three sectors in which healing activity took place—popular, professional, and folk—and a brief description of the differences between first-century illness and modern understandings, Guijarro provides a brief reading of Jesus' healing of Bartimaeus (Mark 10:46–52) to suggest that Jesus' activity is best understood in the “folk sector” of healing activity that, within a Jewish context, can be identified with the healing activity of prophets.

Chapter 6 takes up the question of Jesus' attitude toward family, especially the issue of whether entrance into the Jesus movement required renouncing one's family. Here again Guijarro addresses a question on which much has been written but does so in a way that is suggestive and carefully considered. He begins by classifying the movement during Jesus' lifetime as a “mass peasant movement.” He also agrees with those who argue that Jesus' demands to renounce family are aimed at the inner group of disciples or co-leaders and suggests that this is part of an intentional strategy. In a society where Herodian policy had resulted in the loss of land for many, Jesus' demand of his disciples to take on a lifestyle of poverty, rootlessness, and separation from family was a way of identifying with the masses. After Jesus' death, the nature of early Christian groups changed, so we no longer find instances of “antifamily” language.

The final three chapters can be taken together, as each tries to identify the sources and materials available for a reconstruction of early Christianity in Palestine in the two or three decades after Jesus' death. Chapter 7 begins with a proposed reconstruction of a pre-Markan passion narrative, the text of which is printed in Greek and in Spanish translation. While Guijarro recognizes the limits of such a reconstruction, calling it an approximation (185), he then examines the narrative for indications of the community that produced it, finding signs of it having been composed in Jerusalem in the late 40s of the first century C.E., since the twelve disciples are portrayed negatively in the narrative, suggesting that the Jerusalem community was by this point under James's leadership. The eighth chapter identifies a pre-Markan version of the "Galilee controversies" (Mark 2:1–3:6) for signs of a different early Christian community. He identifies such a group of followers of Jesus in Galilee who remained together after Jesus' death, forming a voluntary association that included local scribes. The group preserved sayings of Jesus that served to define the group's identity and behaviors. The final chapter is interested in the different groups of earliest Christians that can be identified in Palestine, adding the community responsible for the Q sayings document to the two identified in the preceding two chapters.

All of the essays in this book are clearly argued and well supported. In fact, the breadth of the secondary literature with which Guijarro engages is one of the book's clear strengths. The application of social-science approaches to some of the issues that have long been debated in New Testament studies yields interesting, insightful, and, although not always convincing, certainly suggestive results. One of the limits of the studies, as Guijarro himself acknowledges several times, is the paucity of sources and information for the period in which he is interested. He is able to do much with very little, but the cost is that many crucial points of his arguments rest on reconstructions, assumptions, and, at times, conjecture. And in this there is occasional unevenness, as some chapters are more explicit about the difficulties of tracing information in the Gospels back to Jesus while others move rather freely from Gospel traditions to assumptions that they reflect the historical Jesus. Nonetheless, readers interested in the study of the historical Jesus and of Christianity in Palestine in the first few decades after Jesus will find this collection worth engaging and rewarding.

## SYNOPTIC GOSPELS

*The Gospel Hoax: Morton Smith's Invention of Secret Mark*, by Stephen C. Carlson. Waco, Tex.: Baylor University Press, 2005. Pp. xx + 151. Paper. \$24.95. ISBN 1932792481.

Craig L. Blomberg, Denver Seminary, Littleton, Colorado

In 1958 Columbia University professor of biblical studies Morton Smith returned from a trip to the Mar Saba Orthodox monastery near Jerusalem with