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THE CIRCLE OF THE TWELVE: DID IT EXIST DURING JESUS' PUBLIC MINISTRY?

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In present-day debates about the historical Jesus (dubbed by some “the third quest”),¹ scholars have argued repeatedly and at length over a small group of central questions: for example, who Jesus thought he was, how we should classify him according to religious types, and what sort of eschatology he proclaimed. Yet other key questions that have a notable impact on how we decide these central ones have received only scant attention.

One such question is the existence of the circle of the Twelve during Jesus' public ministry. If such a circle did exist, it would indicate a great deal about Jesus' view of his mission and of his eschatological hope for the restoration of Israel. Hence, it is not surprising that scholars like E. P. Sanders, who sees Jesus very much in terms of an eschatological prophet concerned with restoration eschatology, argue for the existence of the Twelve.² Correspondingly, scholars who think of Jesus in terms of a wandering Cynic philosopher espousing a first-century version of egalitarianism and feminism tend to deny the existence of the circle of the Twelve during Jesus' lifetime.³

¹ Two helpful reviews of the literature, the first favorable to the Jesus Seminar, the second unfavorable, can be found in Marcus J. Borg, *Jesus in Contemporary Scholarship* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1994); and Ben Witherington III, *The Jesus Quest* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1995). For a large collection of articles on the subject, see *Studying the Historical Jesus: Evaluations of the State of Current Research* (ed. Bruce D. Chilton and Craig A. Evans; NTTS 19; Leiden: Brill, 1994). An updated annotated bibliography can be found in Craig A. Evans, *Life of Jesus Research* (NTTS 24; rev. ed.; Leiden: Brill, 1996).

² E. P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985) 61–119, esp. 98–106; idem, *The Historical Figure of Jesus* (London: Penguin, 1993) 169–95.

³ For Jesus understood in terms of “Jewish and rural Cynicism,” see John Dominic Crossan, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (San Francisco: Harper, 1991) 72–90, 338–41. For Crossan's denial of the existence of the Twelve during Jesus' lifetime, see his *Who Killed Jesus?* (San Francisco: Harper, 1995) 75. For a critique of the Cynic interpretation of Jesus, see Paul Rhodes Eddy, “Jesus as Diogenes? Reflections on the Cynic Jesus Thesis,” *JBL* 115 (1996) 449–69.

What is noteworthy is that most of the scholars who take the latter position, including those associated with the Jesus Seminar, tend either to pass over the Twelve in silence or to dismiss summarily with a few sentences the group's existence during Jesus' ministry. In a sense, there is nothing new here. From the beginning of the twentieth century, a number of prominent German exegetes, notably Julius Wellhausen, Rudolf Bultmann, Philipp Vielhauer, Walter Schmithals, and Günter Klein have taken the negative position without thrashing out the arguments in great detail. Rarely, if ever, are the criteria of historicity applied with rigor.

This article seeks to address this lack and to show in the process that the more probable opinion is that the circle of the Twelve did exist during Jesus' ministry. However, before the case for this position can be argued, one must first clear up the confusion often encountered even in scholarly literature concerning three distinct but partially overlapping terms: disciples, apostles, and the Twelve.⁴

I. The Problem of Terminology: Disciples, Apostles, and the Twelve

1. Of the three terms, the most general is "disciple."⁵ If we sift the traditions of the Gospels for material going back to the historical Jesus, it appears that a disciple was a person called directly by Jesus to follow him. This call came from Jesus' initiative alone. In this strict sense, discipleship meant following Jesus literally, physically. It therefore involved leaving home, family, and work, and exposing oneself to possible hardships and opposition from others, including one's own family. Clearly, not every adherent of Jesus counted as a disciple. People who supported his movement but who apparently stayed in their homes and offered hospitality when he visited—such as Mary, Martha, or Zacchaeus—

⁴ One finds this confusion even in scholars who elsewhere observe the proper distinctions: e.g., Crossan says that "Mark criticizes the *Twelve Apostles* [emphasis mine]" (*Who Killed Jesus?* 18), although that set phrase—to say nothing of the later concept connected with the phrase—does not occur in Mark.

⁵ The statements made here about discipleship are commonplaces and need not be belabored. For standard treatments, see Martin Hengel, *Nachfolge und Charisma* (BZNW 34; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1968) = *The Charismatic Leader and His Followers* (New York: Crossroad, 1981); Rainer Riesner, *Jesus als Lehrer* (WUNT 2/7; Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1981) 408–98; Michael J. Wilkins, *The Concept of Disciple in Matthew's Gospel as Reflected in the Use of the Term Mathētēs* (NovTSup 59; Leiden: Brill, 1988); Ben Witherington III, *The Christology of Jesus* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990) 118–43; Joachim Gnllka, *Jesus von Nazaret: Botschaft und Geschichte* (HTKNT Sup 3; Freiburg/Basel/Vienna: Herder, 1990) 166–93; Hans Weder, "Disciple, Discipleship," *ABD* 2.207–10; James D. G. Dunn, *Jesus' Call to Discipleship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Stephen C. Barton, *Discipleship and Family Ties in Mark and Matthew* (SNTSMS 80; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Whitney Taylor Shiner, *Follow Me! Disciples in Markan Rhetoric* (SBLDS 145; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995).

may have been devoted adherents of Jesus, but they were not in the strict sense disciples.

2. Much more narrow in scope is the phrase “the Twelve,” which indicates a special group of twelve men who were not only disciples of Jesus but also formed an inner circle around him.⁶ In employing this terminology, I imitate the usage of Mark and John, who always speak of “the Twelve” absolutely (e.g.,

⁶ For basic orientation and further bibliography, see J. B. Lightfoot, “The Name and Office of an Apostle,” in *Epistle of St. Paul to the Galatians* (1865; reprint, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1957) 92–101; Julius Wellhausen, *Einleitung in den drei ersten Evangelien* (Berlin: Reimer, 1905) 112; Julius Wagenmann, *Die Stellung des Apostels Paulus neben den Zwölf in den ersten zwei Jahrhunderten* (BZNW 3; Giessen: Töpelmann, 1926); Kirsopp Lake, “The Twelve and the Apostles,” in *The Beginnings of Christianity, Part I, The Acts of the Apostles, Volume V* (1933; reprint, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979) 37–59; Nils Alstrup Dahl, *Das Volk Gottes* (1941; reprint, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1963) 158–59; Werner Georg Kümmel, *Kirchenbegriff und Geschichtsbewusstsein in der Urgemeinde und bei Jesus* (SymBU 1; Zurich: Niehans, 1943) 3–7, 30–32; Hans von Campenhausen, “Der urchristliche Apostelbegriff,” *ST* 1 (1947) 96–130; Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament* (2 vols.; London: SCM, 1962) 462–86; Innozenz Dausmoser, *Berufung und Erwählung bei den Synoptikern* (Meisenheim am Glan: Hain, 1954) 74–82; Philipp Vielhauer, “Gottesreich und Menschensohn in der Verkündigung Jesu,” in *Aufsätze zum Neuen Testament* (TBü 31; Munich: Kaiser, 1965) 55–91; Günther Bornkamm, *Jesus of Nazareth* (New York: Harper & Row, 1960) 150; Günter Klein, *Die zwölf Apostel: Ursprung und Gehalt einer Idee* (FRLANT 77; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1961); Bédá Rigaux, “Die ‘Zwölf’ in Geschichte und Kerygma,” in *Der historische Jesus und der kerygmatische Christus* (ed. Helmut Ristow and Karl Matthiae; Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1962) 462–86; idem, “The Twelve Apostles,” *Concilium* 34 (1968) 5–15; M. H. Shepherd, Jr., “Twelve, The,” *IDB* 4.719; Karl Heinrich Rengstorff, “*dōdeka*, etc.,” *TDNT* 2.321–28; Jürgen Roloff, *Apostolat—Verkündigung—Kirche* (Gütersloh: Mohn, 1965); Jean Giblest, “Les Douze: Histoire et théologie,” in *Aux origines de l’église* (RechBib 7; Bruges: Desclée, 1965) 51–64; Gottfried Schille, *Die urchristliche Kollegialmission* (ATANT 48; Zurich/Stuttgart: Zwingli, 1967); Robert P. Meyer, *Jesus and the Twelve* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968); Sean Freyne, *The Twelve: Disciples and Apostles* (London/Sydney: Sheed & Ward, 1968); Walter Schmithals, *The Office of Apostle in the Early Church* (Nashville/New York: Abingdon, 1969) 67–95, 231–88; Karl Kertelge, “Die Funktion der ‘Zwölf’ im Markusevangelium,” *TTZ* 78 (1969) 193–206; Rudolf Schnackenburg, “Apostel vor und neben Paulus,” in *Schriften zum Neuen Testament* (Munich: Kösel, 1971) 338–58; Günther Schmah, “Die Berufung der Zwölf im Markusevangelium,” *TTZ* 81 (1972) 203–13; idem, *Die Zwölf im Markusevangelium: Eine redaktionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung* (Trier Theologische Studien 30; Trier: Paulinus, 1974); Klemens Stock, *Boten aus dem Mit-Ihm-Sein: Das Verhältnis zwischen Jesus und den Zwölf nach Markus* (AnBib 70; Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1975); Wolfgang Trilling, “Zur Entstehung des Zwölferkreises: Eine geschichtskritische Überlegung,” in *Die Kirche des Anfangs* (Heinz Schürmann Festschrift; ed. Rudolf Schnackenburg, Josef Ernst, and Joachim Wanke; Leipzig: St. Benno, 1977) 201–22; Ernest Best, “Mark’s Use of the Twelve,” *ZNW* 69 (1978) 11–35; Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 98–106; Jacques Dupont, “Le nom d’Apôtres: a-t-il été donné aux Douze par Jésus?” in *Etudes sur les évangiles synoptiques* (ed. Frans Neirynck; 2 vols.; BETL 70; Leuven: Leuven University Press/Peeters, 1985; original, 1956) 2.976–1018; Francis H. Agnew, “The Origin of the NT Apostle-Concept: A Review of Research,” *JBL* 105 (1986) 75–96; W. Horbury, “The Twelve and the Phylarchs,” *NTS* 32 (1986) 503–27; Raymond E. Brown, “The Twelve and the Apostolate,” *NJBC*, 1377–81 (§§ 135–57); Raymond F. Collins, “Twelve, The,” *ABD* 6.670–71.

Mark 6:7; John 6:67). They never use phrases such as “the twelve disciples” or “the twelve apostles.”⁷

It is in Matthew that we come across the phrase “the twelve disciples” (Matt 10:1; 11:1; possibly 20:17). The problem with “the twelve disciples” is that it might be interpreted to mean that the group called the Twelve was coterminous with the group called disciples. In fact, Matthew, unlike Mark, may intend such an identification when he speaks of “the twelve disciples.”⁸ Needless to say, the use of “the Twelve” as completely equivalent to “the disciples” does not reflect the earliest strata of Gospel traditions or the historical situation of Jesus’ ministry. For example, the toll collector Levi is called to be a disciple (Mark 2:13–15) but never appears in the list of the Twelve (Mark 3:16–19). Likewise, John’s model “disciple whom Jesus loved”—who most probably is an idealized presentation of some historical follower of Jesus in or around Jerusalem⁹—does not seem to have belonged to the Twelve. Hence, in this survey

⁷ Strictly speaking, this is also true of Luke, who follows Mark in speaking of “the Twelve.” However, as we shall see below, Luke seems to identify “the Twelve” with “the apostles,” though he does not use “the twelve apostles” as a fixed formula.

⁸ Meye claims that, in Mark’s redactional view, the Twelve and the disciples are coterminous groups (*Jesus and the Twelve*, 110–15). However, his thesis fails because (1) Levi the toll collector is explicitly called by Jesus to discipleship (Mark 2:13–15) but is not numbered among the Twelve, and (2) we are told as early as 2:15 (in the most probable interpretation of the Greek) that the disciples were many—at a time when, of the Twelve, only Peter, Andrew, James, and John have been mentioned; the Twelve are not selected and named until 3:13–19. Given this larger context, when Mark says in 3:13 that Jesus “himself summoned whom he wished, and they went to him,” the natural sense (especially after the sharp distinction between Jesus’ disciples and the large crowd in 3:7) is that Jesus chose the Twelve out of a larger group of disciples. Luke thus interprets Mark correctly when he rewrites Mark 3:13 in Luke 6:13: “And he [Jesus] called his disciples, and chose from them twelve. . . .” (3) One might also note that, while the rich man in Mark 10:17–22 refuses Jesus’ call to discipleship, Mark has no problem presenting Jesus as earnestly calling someone outside the Twelve to discipleship. Meye’s contorted attempts (pp. 140–45, 157–59) to explain away the Levi incident, the many disciples in Mark 2:15, and the call of the rich man fail to convince.

In contrast to Mark, a number of Matthean redactional traits suggest that Matthew does equate the Twelve with the whole group of disciples. (1) This is probably why Matthew the Evangelist changes Levi’s name to Matthew (Matt 9:9; contrast Mark 2:14), that is, so that everyone who is called by Jesus to discipleship winds up in the list of the Twelve (“Matthew the toll collector” in Matt 10:3). (2) Thus, with no Levi as in Mark and no “disciple whom Jesus loved” as in John, no individual disciple is named or highlighted in Matthew who does not appear in his list of the Twelve. (3) By omitting any separate story of the selection of the Twelve (as found in Mark 3:13–19 // Luke 6:12–16), Matthew avoids having to present Jesus calling the Twelve out of a larger group, presumably of disciples. Still, Matthew does retain Mark’s story of the aborted call of the rich man; hence, the picture in Matthew is not absolutely clear. Perhaps one can say that Matthew presents the circle of the Twelve as de facto coterminous with the circle of disciples. On the whole question, see Stock, *Boten aus dem Mit-Ihm-Sein*, 199–203.

⁹ For a defense of the position that some historical figure stands behind John’s “disciple whom Jesus loved,” see Oscar Cullmann, *Der johanneische Kreis* (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1975) 67–88; Raymond E. Brown, *The Community of the Beloved Disciple* (New York/Ramsey, NJ/

of the data, I regularly avoid Matthew's "the twelve disciples" as open to misunderstanding.

3. Even more do I avoid the traditional Christian phrase "the twelve apostles," which is open to both conceptual and historical confusion.¹⁰ During Jesus' public ministry, "apostle" (Aramaic *šēlīah*; Greek ἀπόστολος) was probably not used by him or his disciples as a fixed term for a particular group of his followers. At most, an Aramaic word like *šēlīhīn* ("messengers," "envoys") may have been used in an ad hoc sense when Jesus sent some disciples out on a temporary mission. This is probably the sense of the word in its rare occurrences in Mark and Matthew (Mark 6:30; Matt 10:2). It is only when the Twelve return from the temporary mission on which Jesus has sent them that, for the one time in his Gospel, Mark uses the word: "And the *apostles* rejoined Jesus" (6:30).¹¹ The sense of "apostles" here is simply "those sent out on mission and now returning from that mission." Once the mission is over, the term disappears from Mark. Similarly, the only time Matthew uses the term in his Gospel is at the beginning of the missionary discourse, as Jesus prepares to send the Twelve out on their limited mission to Israel (10:2).¹² Thus, in both Gospels "apostle" is

Toronto: Paulist, 1979) 31–34; James H. Charlesworth, *The Beloved Disciple: Whose Witness Validates the Gospel of John?* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1995).

¹⁰ What follows is not intended to be a complete survey of the use of "apostle" in the NT; it merely serves to explain why I choose to speak of "the Twelve" and not of "the twelve apostles." Defenders of the position that, during his earthly ministry, Jesus did not give the Twelve the title "apostles," understood as a fixed designation proper to them, include Dupont, "Le nom," 1017–18; Roloff, *Apostolat*, 144–45; Rigaux, "Twelve Apostles," 8. For the somewhat ambiguous position of Karl Heinrich Rengstorff, see his article "*apostellō*, etc.," *TDNT* 1.429.

¹¹ In my view, the phrase "whom he also named apostles," which some important manuscripts (Sinaiticus, Vaticanus, Koridethi) read in Mark 3:14 after "and he appointed twelve," is not original; rather, it represents a harmonization with Luke 6:13, where the disputed phrase is found word for word (apart from 3:14, the verb for "named" [ὀνομάζω] never occurs in Mark, while Luke uses it three times in his two volumes). This harmonization, highlighted by the awkward position of the phrase in Mark 3:14, is hardly surprising since the Greek manuscript tradition evinces various attempts to harmonize Mark's story of the selection of the Twelve with Matt 10:1–4 and Luke 6:12–16. Here I agree with Vincent Taylor (*The Gospel according to St. Mark* [2d ed.; London: Macmillan, 1966] 230), Meye (*Jesus and the Twelve*, 190), Rudolf Pesch (*Das Markusevangelium* [2 vols.; HTKNT 2; Freiburg/Basel/Vienna: Herder, 1976, 1977] 1.203), and Morna D. Hooker (*The Gospel According to Saint Mark* [Black NT Commentary; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991] 110–11) and disagree with Metzger (*TCGNT* [2d ed.], 69), who thinks that the external evidence is too strong to warrant the disputed phrase's omission. However, even he and his committee admit the shaky status of the phrase by putting it in brackets and assigning it a C rating, which indicates that the committee composing the text of the *UBSGNT* had difficulty deciding which variant to place in the text. The position of Robert A. Guelich (*Mark 1–8:26* [WBC 34A; Dallas: Word, 1989] 154) is similar to that of Metzger; definitely in favor of reading the disputed phrase is Robert H. Gundry (*Mark* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993] 164).

¹² Curiously, it is in Matt 10:2, and not in Luke's Gospel, that we find the extremely rare NT locution, "the twelve apostles." The viewpoint of the late-first-century church may be reflected ever so fleetingly here.

purely an ad hoc term indicating a temporary function that the Twelve discharge; they are apostles only when actually out on mission.

It was in the early church that “apostle” was first used as a set designation for a specific group—though different authors used the designation in different ways. What is beyond doubt is that in the first Christian decades “apostle” had a range of meanings that extended far beyond the Twelve. The pre-Pauline creed that Paul quotes in 1 Cor 15:3–7 creates a list of various persons who experienced appearances of the risen Jesus: “Cephas, then the Twelve, then . . . more than five hundred brothers . . . then James, then all the apostles”—*all* the apostles being obviously a wider category than the Twelve.

This was the mode of speaking of the primitive pre-Pauline church, and basically Paul adopted it as his own.¹³ Though clearly not one of the Twelve, Paul fiercely vindicated his right to the title apostle (e.g., Gal 1:1, 17; 2:8; 1 Cor 9:1–2; 15:9; 2 Cor 1:1; 11:5; 12:11–12; Rom 1:1, 5). Ironically, it is uncertain whether Paul considered all the Twelve to be apostles.¹⁴ He explicitly attributes apostleship to only one member of the Twelve, Peter (Gal 1:17–19; 2:8), though, in the context of Gal 2:1–10, John (the son of Zebedee) may also be understood to be one. Paul may also have considered James the brother of Jesus an apostle, but the key text (Gal 1:19) is ambiguous.¹⁵ Two people who are

¹³ There is no need to engage in highly speculative theories about the Christian term “apostle” arising either from the rabbinic institution of the *šāliah* (a legal agent sent out on a mission with the full authority of the sender)—an institution not documented before the time of Jesus—or from supposed gnostic apostles in Syria (a scholarly construct of Schmithals that is not witnessed in the early first century CE). The general OT concept of God sending certain messengers (especially the prophets) to Israel with authority, Jesus’ sending of his disciples (especially the Twelve) on a limited mission to Israel during his public ministry, and the experience of appearances of the risen Jesus by the disciples (however one evaluates such claims) form a much more intelligible background and catalyst for the apostolate in the first days of the early church. Contrary to the theory of Klein, Paul the apostle did not invent the concept or institution of the apostolate; he found the apostolate present in the early church and sought to claim the same status for himself (see, e.g., Gal 1:17–19; 2:8; 1 Cor 9:1–6; 15:7–9). On all this, see Brown, “Twelve and the Apostolate,” 1380–81.

¹⁴ For the opinion (contrary to that of Klein or Schmithals) that the Twelve did count as apostles in the earliest days of the church, see Roloff, *Apostolat*, 57–60; Brown, “Twelve and the Apostolate,” 1381. An initial methodological problem is hidden in the word “count”—in whose eyes? Another problem, more properly exegetical, is that the key text in 1 Cor 15:3–8 is open to more than one interpretation: (1) On the one hand, “all the apostles” in v. 7, Paul’s self-designation as “the least of the apostles” in v. 9, and his claim that he has labored more than “all of them” in v. 10 are taken by some to mean that Paul understands the Twelve in v. 5 to be apostles. (2) On the other hand, since the “five hundred brethren” in v. 6 probably did not all count in Paul’s eyes as apostles, at least some persons or groups in the list were not automatically regarded as apostles simply because they witnessed a resurrection appearance. How, then, can we be sure that the Twelve counted as apostles simply because they are in the list as witnesses of the resurrection?

¹⁵ Gal 1:19 may be read either as “I did not see any other of the apostles except [εἰ μὴ] James” or as “I did not see any other of the apostles, but [εἰ μὴ] (I did see) James.” On this see Max Zerwick, *Graecitas Biblica* (5th ed.; Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1966) 158 (§470).

not members of the Twelve are mentioned by Paul as being eminent apostles and Christians before Paul became one: a man named Andronicus and a woman named Junia (Rom 16:7).¹⁶ Paul also knows of “apostles of the churches,” possibly envoys or missionaries sent out by local churches for particular tasks (2 Cor 8:23; Phil 2:25).¹⁷

The close connection, if not total identification, between the Twelve and the apostles in later Christian thought is due mainly to the theology of Luke. In Luke’s version of Jesus’ selection of the Twelve (Luke 6:13), Jesus “summoned his *disciples* [the larger group], and *from them* he chose *twelve*, whom he also named *apostles*.” While this text does not prove that Luke thought that only the Twelve were apostles, the title “apostle” obviously does not extend indiscriminately to all of Jesus’ disciples and is attached in a special way to the Twelve.¹⁸ In the story of the mission of the Twelve, Luke introduces the missionary discourse by stating that Jesus called together the Twelve (9:1); when these same people come back to Jesus to report on their mission, Luke says that “the apostles” returned (9:10). At the beginning of Acts, Luke stresses the need to fill the position in the Twelve vacated by the apostate Judas (Acts 1:12–26). Matthias is then chosen by lot to take up the apostolate (*ἀποστολή*) abandoned by Judas, and so he is numbered “with the *eleven apostles*.” That Matthias was already a witness of both the public ministry of Jesus and of Jesus’ resurrection (Acts

¹⁶ See the philological discussion by Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Romans* (AB 33; New York: Doubleday, 1992) 737–38. As James D. G. Dunn (*Romans* [2 vols.; WBC 38 and 38A; Dallas: Word, 1988] 2.894–95) and many other recent commentators point out, (1) the Greek *Ἰουνιᾶν* in Rom 16:7 is to be taken as a woman’s name and (2) the clause *οὐτινὲς εἰσὶν ἐπίσημοι ἐν τοῖς ἀποστόλοις* almost certainly means in this context “who are outstanding among the apostles,” not “outstanding in the eyes of the apostles.” Others mentioned by Paul who may rank in his mind as apostles include Barnabas (if we may read together passages like 1 Cor 4:9; 9:6; Gal 2:9 and understand Paul’s “we” to include Barnabas in the apostolate). The apostolic “we” may include Sylvanus and Timothy in 1 Thess 2:6–7 and Apollos in 1 Cor 4:6 (+ 9), but this is less likely.

¹⁷ On 2 Cor 8:23, see Victor Paul Furnish, who prefers to translate the phrase as “representatives of the churches” to avoid the impression that these people are apostles in the same sense that Paul is (*II Corinthians* [AB 32A; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1984] 425). On Phil 2:25, see J. L. Houlden, who holds that here Epaphroditus is called an “apostle” in the sense of a messenger of the Philippian church sent on Christian business (*Paul’s Letters from Prison* [Westminster Pelican Commentaries; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1970] 93).

¹⁸ For a careful exegesis of Luke 6:12–16, see Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke* (2 vols.; AB 28A, B; New York: Doubleday, 1981, 1985) 1.613–20. Fitzmyer’s judgment is that “this episode in the Lucan Gospel . . . equates with them [the Twelve] the apostles, ascribing even this title to Jesus himself” (p. 616). On p. 618, Fitzmyer states that Luke restricts the title “apostle” to the Twelve. For the same opinion, see Hans Conzelmann, *The Theology of St Luke* (New York: Harper & Row, 1961; German original, 1953) 216 n. 1; Heinz Schürmann, *Das Lukasevangelium* (HTKNT 3; Freiburg/Basel/Vienna: Herder, 1969) 1.314–15; Josef Ernst, *Das Evangelium nach Lukas* (RNT; Regensburg: Pustet, 1977) 207–8; Eduard Schweizer, *The Good News According to Luke* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1984) 115; Peter K. Nelson, *Leadership and Discipleship: A Study of Luke 22:24–30* (SBLDS 138; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1994) 44–45.

1:21–22) and yet did not possess “apostleship” (ἀποστολή, v. 25) until he was chosen to be numbered with the “eleven apostles” (v. 26) argues for the view that Luke makes the group called the Twelve and the group called the apostles coterminous.¹⁹

Yet the matter is not absolutely clear. Contrary to the striking but exceptional usage in Matt 10:2 (“the twelve apostles”) and Rev 21:14 (“the twelve apostles of the Lamb”), Luke-Acts never employs the set phrase “the twelve apostles,” which was to become a fixed formula in the later church. Moreover, while Luke’s Gospel never clearly identifies anyone outside the Twelve as an apostle, Acts does depart from the customary Lukan way of speaking in Acts 14:4 + 14, where Barnabas and Paul are called “the apostles.” Whether this divergence from ordinary Lukan usage is due to a source Luke is using, whether “apostles” carries here the special sense of Christian missionaries sent out on a temporary mission by the local church of Antioch, or whether Luke’s concept of apostle is not so completely identified with the Twelve as many critics claim is unclear.²⁰ Suffice it to say that Luke is the NT author who most consistently uses the labels “the Twelve” (or “the Eleven”) and “the apostles” interchangeably or in close association. He is thus the main NT catalyst for the later Christian custom of speaking of “the twelve apostles.”

From this quick survey, one can appreciate the varied and sometimes confusing uses of “Twelve,” “disciples,” and “apostles” in the NT. To avoid this terminological confusion, in the following survey I will follow Mark and John in speaking simply of the Twelve.²¹

¹⁹ On the passage, see Gerhard Schneider, *Die Apostelgeschichte* (2 vols.; HTKNT 5; Freiburg/Basel/Vienna: Herder, 1980, 1982) 1.212–32; on p. 222, Schneider asserts that, in Luke-Acts, the Twelve and the apostles coincide; similarly, von Campenhausen, “Der urchristliche Apostelbegriff,” 104, 115. This, in fact, is the major thesis of Klein in *Die zwölf Apostel*, 202–16.

²⁰ Schneider (*Die Apostelgeschichte*, 2.152, 159) thinks that “the apostles” in 14:14 stood in Luke’s source and that Luke himself has introduced it in 14:4; so also Ernst Haenchen, *Die Apostelgeschichte* (MeyerK 3; 6th ed.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1968) 362 n. 5; Hans Conzelmann, *Acts of the Apostles* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987; German original, 1963) 108, 111; cf. Klein, *Die zwölf Apostel*, 211–13. Possibly the source used the term in the sense of the authorized messengers of the church at Antioch. Schneider speculates that Luke was willing to use the title in Acts 14 in order to create a parallel (with regard to preaching the faith and working miracles) between Paul and Barnabas on the one hand and the twelve apostles on the other. The attempt to claim that “the apostles” in 14:4, 14 is not the original reading in the Greek text of Acts is a solution born of desperation (*contra* Klein, pp. 212–13); Codex Bezae is the only significant witness to omit “the apostles” in v. 14. In “The Apostles According to Luke,” chap. 8 of her *Human Agents of Cosmic Power in Hellenistic Judaism and the Synoptic Tradition* (JSNTSup 41; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990) 109–23, Mary E. Mills apparently thinks that, in Acts, Luke presents Paul as an apostle parallel to the apostle Peter. This identification seems to stem from her emphasis on Luke’s view of the apostles as disciples who, in Acts, perform wonders in the name of, and by the power of the name of, Jesus. Her treatment does not distinguish carefully enough among various terms like “disciples,” “apostles,” and “the Twelve.”

²¹ The independent agreement of Mark and John in speaking simply of “the Twelve” indi-

II. The Existence of the Twelve during Jesus' Ministry

That I should have to argue that there was a special group of twelve followers around Jesus during his public ministry may strike some readers as strange. Yet, as I mentioned above, a number of distinguished critics throughout the twentieth century have considered it probable or certain that the group called the Twelve actually arose in the early church and was later retrojected into the ministry of Jesus.²² Hence, there is a need to apply the criteria of historicity to the NT data to ascertain whether the Twelve existed as a group during Jesus' lifetime.

A. In the first place, the existence of the Twelve during Jesus' ministry is supported by the criterion of *multiple attestation of sources and forms*.²³

1. Mark mentions the Twelve ten or eleven times in his Gospel: 3:14 (and possibly v. 16); 4:10; 6:7; 9:35; 10:32; 11:11; 14:10, 17, 20, 43. In recent decades, NT exegetes have paid a great deal of attention to Mark's redactional portrait of the Twelve—a portrait that some critics judge to be unrelievedly negative.²⁴

cates, in my view, that this was the earliest form of expression, going back to Jesus; see Rigaux, "Die 'Zwölf,'" 472. That Matthew at times (26:14, 20, 47) and Luke always speak simply of "the Twelve"—Luke never uses the fixed designations "the twelve disciples" or "the twelve apostles"—supports this view. Matthew's "twelve disciples" and Luke's identification (or at the very least close association) of "the Twelve" with "the apostles" both betray signs of secondary developments that culminate, as far as Christian tradition history is concerned, in Revelation's "the twelve apostles of the Lamb" and in the title of the *Didache*, "The Lord's Teaching through the Twelve Apostles to the Nations" (cf. *Barn* 8:3).

²² Adelbert Denaux gives a convenient list of major critics (predominantly German) on both sides of the question ("Did Jesus Found the Church?" *LS* 21 [1996] 25–45). (In what follows, I add a few more scholars to his list.) Those who affirm the existence of the Twelve during Jesus' ministry include Julius Wagenmann, Werner Georg Kümmel, Lucien Cerfaux, Hans von Campenhausen, Jacques Dupont, Birger Gerhardsson, Béda Rigaux, Günther Bornkamm, Ulrich Wilckens, Jürgen Roloff, Anton Vögtle, Heinz Schürmann, Rudolf Schnackenburg, Martin Hengel, Helmut Merklein, E. P. Sanders, Joachim Gnllka, Raymond E. Brown, and Joseph A. Fitzmyer. Those who (with varying degrees of probability) deny it include Julius Wellhausen (taking up a suggestion from Friedrich Schleiermacher), Johannes Weiss, Emmanuel Hirsch, Philipp Vielhauer, Günter Klein, Walter Schmithals, Herbert Braun, Gottfried Schille, Siegfried Schulz, Hans Conzelmann, and John Dominic Crossan. Extensive bibliography, mostly on German authors on both sides of the issue, can be found in the notes of Klein's *Die zwölf Apostel*, 34–37. For a brief summary of the arguments that many critics use to support the existence of the Twelve during Jesus' ministry, see Kümmel, *Kirchenbegriff*, 30–32; the summary is echoed by Klein in his rebuttal in *Die zwölf Apostel*, 35. It is astonishing that, although Klein's denial of the origin of the Twelve in Jesus' ministry is basic to his larger thesis about "the twelve apostles," he almost disdains to argue the point, giving only a cursory summary of the arguments of Vielhauer and like-minded scholars (pp. 35–37).

²³ Throughout this article I presuppose both the two-source theory of Synoptic relationships and the literary independence of the Fourth Gospel from the Synoptics.

²⁴ Examples of studies on the Twelve (some of which do not always distinguish carefully between "disciples" and "the Twelve") include Theodore J. Weeden, Sr., *Mark—Traditions in Conflict* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971); Rigaux, "Die 'Zwölf'"; Meye, *Jesus and the Twelve*;

Granted Mark's theological focus on the Twelve, it is sometimes supposed that most if not all of his references to the Twelve come from his own redactional activity.²⁵ This conclusion, however, does not necessarily follow. For one thing, as Ernest Best points out, "disciples," not "the Twelve," is by far Mark's favorite designation for committed followers of Jesus.²⁶ Most critics would not want to argue that therefore the disciples are purely a redactional creation of Mark.

Moreover, there are positive reasons for thinking that at least some of Mark's references to the Twelve come to him from his tradition. Basing himself on the detailed analyses of Karl Kertelge and Günther Schmahl, Wolfgang Trilling argues that, while many of the Markan references to the Twelve may well be redactional, at least two references seem firmly embedded in the pre-Markan tradition.²⁷

a. The first reference comes in the introduction to the list of the twelve names in Mark 3:16–19, material that most critics recognize as pre-Markan tradition.²⁸ To be sure, Mark 3:13–19 (the choice of the Twelve and the listing of

Kertelge, "Die Funktion"; Schmahl, *Die Zwölf*; Klemens Stock, *Boten aus dem Mit-Ihm-Sein*; Augustine Stock, *Call to Discipleship* (GNS 1; Wilmington, DE: Glazier, 1982); Ernest Best, *Mark: The Gospel as Story* (Edinburgh: Clark, 1983); idem, "Mark's Use of the Twelve"; Vernon K. Robbins, *Jesus the Teacher* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984); Shiner, *Follow Me!*

²⁵ So Siegfried Schulz, *Q: Die Spruchquelle der Evangelisten* (Zurich: Theologischer Verlag, 1972) 335 n. 92.

²⁶ Best, "Mark's Use of the Twelve," 11–35. Vielhauer uses Mark's redaction in a different way to argue against the existence of the Twelve during Jesus' ministry ("Gottesreich," 69): the historical existence of the Twelve is dubious because, from a literary point of view, the Twelve are only loosely connected with the narrative of Mark's Gospel. I find this a strange argument; the strict logical nexus between the historical existence of the Twelve and the way Mark works references to them into the redactional structure of his Gospel is difficult to grasp. Mark's literary structure is often loose and episodic. In fact, the same point could be made in regard to "the disciples" in Mark; yet hardly anyone would want to use this point to argue against the historical existence of Jesus' disciples.

²⁷ Trilling, "Zur Entstehung," 204–6; cf. Kertelge, "Die Funktion," 196–97. For a similar judgment, see Rigaux, "Die 'Zwölf,'" 470–82. One might ask whether even these authors too quickly assign most of the references to the Twelve to Mark's redaction. For one thing, the mere presence of the phrase "the Twelve" in sentences that introduce sayings of Jesus does not automatically prove that, in such instances, "the Twelve" has been introduced redactionally by Mark. If one should take, for example, Pesch's view of Mark as a conservative redactor of large blocks of traditional material (especially in the passion narrative broadly understood), then, even in verses introducing sayings of Jesus, various references to the Twelve might belong to pre-Markan tradition.

²⁸ Guelich sums up the matter well (*Mark 1–8:26*, 155): "With few exceptions (e.g., Klein . . . and Schmithals . . .), the common consensus accepts the appointment of the Twelve (3:16–19) as a pre-Markan tradition. The Semitism behind 'to appoint' (*epoiēsen*), the names of many who never appear again in Mark, the use of patronyms and surnames like Peter, Boanerges and Iscariot, and the presence of similar lists in Matt 10:2–4; Luke 6:14–16; Acts 1:13 support this consensus. The extent of Mark's redaction in 3:13–15, however, is more debatable." Guelich goes on to argue that even 3:13–15 evidences an underlying tradition. See also Karl-Georg Reploh, *Markus—Lehrer der Gemeinde* (SBM 9; Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1969) 43–50; Pesch, *Das Markusevangelium*, 1.202–3.

their names) is, as it now stands, a product of Markan composition. Nevertheless, the various repetitions, parenthetical explanations, and disruptions of syntax in Mark 3:13–19 create the overall impression that Mark is reworking and explaining an earlier tradition—a position that most commentators accept. In addition, as we shall see below, Luke has an independent tradition of the twelve names; therefore the list of the twelve names is not a Markan creation out of thin air. Hence, the introductory clause in Mark 3:14 (“and he made [= created, appointed] twelve”)—or something similar to it—would have stood in the tradition as the title or introduction of the list.²⁹ Mark 3:16a (“and he made the Twelve”) might represent a possible alternate form of the traditional introduction to the list, but unfortunately whether v. 16a is part of the original Markan text or a later gloss is uncertain.³⁰

b. The designation “the Twelve” was also embedded in the pre-Markan passion tradition, specifically in reference to Judas as “one of the Twelve” (εἰς τῶν δώδεκα)—notably in 14:43, when Judas “hands over” Jesus at the arrest in Gethsemane.³¹ This set phrase, “one of the Twelve” is used also of Judas in 14:10, 20, though some would see these cases as Markan redaction. In any event, the designation of Judas as “one of the Twelve” precisely when reference is made to his act of betrayal is clearly not a Markan invention; for, as we shall see below, the independent tradition of John uses the same designation when speaking of Judas’s act of betrayal (“Judas . . . was going to hand him over, [though Judas was] one of the Twelve,” 6:71). In sum, the group called the Twelve is not a pure Markan creation, but already existed in the tradition(s) he inherited, notably in the list of the Twelve and the tradition about Judas.

2. The lists of the Twelve can shed further light on the question. While Matthew and Luke are almost entirely dependent on Mark for their references to the Twelve,³² the slightly different lists of the names of the Twelve that they record (Mark 3:16–19 // Matt 10:2–4 // Luke 6:14–16 // Acts 1:13) may indicate

²⁹ On this, see Schmahl, *Die Zwölf*, 64–65. The absence of the definite article before “twelve” in Mark 3:14 (“and he made [i.e., appointed] twelve”) does not militate against the basic point that the pre-Markan tradition knows of a special group of twelve followers.

³⁰ For the arguments pro and con, see Metzger, *TCGNT* (2d ed.), 69. Guelich argues in favor of 3:16a being original in Mark’s text: its function is to resume the thought “after the parenthesis of 3:14b–15” (*Mark 1–8:26*, 154).

³¹ That Trilling reflects the consensus of Markan redaction critics on this point can be seen from the chart (drawn up by Marion L. Soards) in Raymond E. Brown, *The Death of the Messiah* (2 vols.; Anchor Bible Reference Library; New York: Doubleday, 1994) 2.1504–5. The vast majority of redaction critics listed in this chart who have examined Mark 14:43 consider it a part of the pre-Markan passion narrative. The relation of the Judas tradition to the criterion of embarrassment will be treated below.

³² As Kertelge notes (“Die Funktion, 196), the one great exception is the indirect reference to the Twelve in Matt 19:28 par. (from Q).

that in this material Matthew and/or Luke represents an independent tradition about the Twelve. If this be the case, then the commonly held view that the list of the Twelve in Mark 3:13–19 comes from pre-Markan tradition would be confirmed by the independent parallels in M and/or L.

A quick overview of the four different lists of the Twelve seems to argue for more than one form of the early Christian tradition that passed down the names of the Twelve:³³

| Mark 3:16–19 | Matthew 10:2–4 | Luke 6:14–16 | Acts 1:13 |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|
| <i>First Group of Four</i> | | | |
| Simon Peter | Simon Peter | Simon Peter | Peter |
| James [son of] Zebedee | Andrew his brother | Andrew his brother | John |
| John brother of James | James [son of] Zebedee | James | James |
| Andrew | John his brother | John | Andrew |
| <i>Second Group of Four</i> | | | |
| Philip | Philip | Philip | Philip |
| Bartholomew | Bartholomew | Bartholomew | Thomas |
| Matthew | Thomas | Matthew | Bartholomew |
| Thomas | Matthew the toll collector | Thomas | Matthew |
| <i>Third Group of Four</i> | | | |
| James [son of] Alphaeus | James [son of] Alphaeus | James [of] Alphaeus | James [of] Alphaeus |
| Thaddeus ³⁴ | Thaddeus | Simon the Zealot | Simon the Zealot |
| Simon the Cananean | Simon the Cananean | Jude [of] James | Jude [of] James |
| Judas Iscariot | Judas Iscariot | Judas Iscariot | ——— |

³³ For basic exegesis and further bibliography, see the standard commentaries, including Pesch, *Das Markusevangelium*, 1.202–9; Guelich, *Mark 1–8:26*, 153–66; Gundry, *Mark*, 163–70; Fitzmyer, *Gospel According to Luke*, 1.613–21; also Stock, *Boten aus dem Mit-Ihm-Sein*, 7–53.

³⁴ Much is made by some critics of the name “Lebbaeus,” which is found in some manuscripts of Mark and Matthew in place of or along with “Thaddeus.” All sorts of theories of equivalencies or substitutions (either merely of the names or of actual historical persons) are suggested; see, e.g., Taylor, *Gospel According to St. Mark*, 233–34; W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew* (3 vols.; ICC; Edinburgh: Clark, 1988, 1991, —) 2.156; JoAnn Ford Watson, “Thaddeus (Person),” *ABD* 6.435. In my view, “Thaddeus” (by itself) is the original reading in both Mark and Matthew. (1) In Mark 3:18, “Lebbaeus” is found only in Codex Bezae and

Far from the variations in the lists of the Twelve disproving the group's existence during Jesus' lifetime, the Synoptists' disagreements within the basic agreement of their lists argue for a primitive oral tradition that underwent some changes before the Gospels were written.³⁵ Actually, the variations are hardly massive. Despite some commentators' sweeping statements about discrepancies in the lists, there is only one basic difference in the names: for the "Thaddeus" mentioned in tenth place in Mark and Matthew, Luke (in both Luke 6:16 and Acts 1:13) has "Jude [or Judas] of James" in eleventh place. Otherwise, not only are the other eleven names the same, but even the basic order of the names (three major blocks of four names each) is the same.

The first block of four names always begins with Peter and always continues (in varying order) with James and John (the sons of Zebedee), plus Andrew, the brother of Peter. The second block of four names always begins with Philip and always continues (in varying order) with Bartholomew, Matthew, and Thomas. The third block of four names always begins with James [the son] of Alphaeus and always continues with Simon the Cananean [= the Zealot] and Judas Iscariot (always at the end of the list). The one variation in names, Thaddeus or Jude of James, is found, not surprisingly, in the third block of names. Understandably, the least known and most easily forgotten individuals were relegated to the third block—the one glaring exception being the notorious Judas, who is put at the end of the entire list for obvious reasons. If one considers that this list of twelve men (many of whom were otherwise unknown individuals) was handed down orally during the first and possibly second Christian genera-

a number of the Old Latin manuscripts; it is therefore restricted to only a part of the so-called Western textual tradition. Quite rightly, the *UBSGNT* (4th ed.) assigns the reading "Thaddeus" an A (certain) status. (2) In Matt 10:3, the readings are more varied: "Thaddeus," "Thaddeus who is called Lebbaeus," "Lebbaeus who is called Thaddeus," etc. While the testimony of the textual witnesses is more confused, the *UBSGNT* (4th ed.) rightly prefers "Thaddeus" and assigns it a B (almost certain) rating. In favor of the unadorned "Thaddeus" in Matt 10:3, I think an argument can be mounted from the conclusions we reached about the sources of the lists of the Twelve: apart from the present case, there is no reason to suppose that the Matthean list of the Twelve is derived from any source beyond the Markan list. Consequently, once one decides in favor of the simple "Thaddeus" in Mark, it is difficult to see what redactional reason would have led Matthew, with no other source in front of him, to change "Thaddeus" to "Lebbaeus." Whether "Lebbaeus" arises merely out of scribal confusion in the copying of certain manuscripts or whether exegetical difficulties in reconciling the various NT lists of the Twelve led some Christian scribes to change the name on purpose is hard to say. For the theory that "Lebbaeus" arose from an effort to introduce Levi into the list of the Twelve ("Lebbaeus" being a Latinism for "Levi"), see Barnabas Lindars, "Matthew, Levi, Lebbaeus and the Value of the Western Text," *NTS* 4 (1957–58) 220–22. In any event, "Lebbaeus" is not original in the text of either Mark or Matthew; hence it has no relevance to our treatment of the historical existence of the Twelve during the ministry of Jesus. The confusion over Lebbaeus arose among Christian scribes, not among Jews following Jesus or even among the earliest Palestinian Jewish Christians.

³⁵ On this point, see Meye, *Jesus and the Twelve*, 200–201.

tion, the surprising fact is that only one name varies in all four lists: Thaddeus versus Jude of James.

This one variation has been explained by some commentators in terms of alternate names for the same person, but this solution smacks of harmonization.³⁶ The variation may simply reflect the fact that the Twelve as a group quickly lost importance in the early church, and so the church's collective memory of them was not perfectly preserved. Another possible reason for the variation may lie in the fact that Jesus' ministry lasted for two years and some months. Considering Jesus' stringent demands on the Twelve to leave family, home, and possessions to be his permanent entourage on his preaching tours through Galilee and Judea, we should not be astonished that, sometime during the two years of the ministry, at least one member left the group. Any number of reasons might be suggested for the departure: voluntary leave taking, dismissal by Jesus, illness, or even death. Whatever the cause, it may well be that one member of the Twelve departed and was replaced by another disciple. That Jesus would provide a replacement is itself significant. As Sanders has stressed, the Twelve were important precisely because their number symbolized and embodied the eschatological hopes of Israel and the eschatological message of Jesus: the restoration and salvation of all Israel, of all twelve tribes, in the last days.³⁷

Granted the relatively minor variations in the twelve names within a context of overall agreement, is there sufficient reason to think that Matthew and/or Luke knew a list other than the one they received from Mark's Gospel?

³⁶ So, rightly, Fitzmyer, *Gospel According to Luke*, 1.619–20. On p. 614, he points to the variations in the lists of the names of the twelve tribes (or twelve patriarchs) in the OT as a similar phenomenon. For a full study of these variations, see Phillip J. Rask, "The Lists of the Twelve Tribes of Israel" (Ph.D. diss., The Catholic University of America, 1990). Actually, compared with the many variations in the names of the twelve tribes found in the OT, the pseudepigrapha, Qumran, Philo, Josephus, and the book of Revelation, the variations in the four lists of the Twelve in the NT are relatively minor.

³⁷ While I agree with Sanders on this main point, I disagree with him on a subsidiary point. Sanders thinks that Jesus was indeed interested in the symbolism of the number twelve, but not especially in always having exactly twelve men in the group designated as "the Twelve": "Jesus used the number 'twelve' symbolically, without anyone then, any more than later, being able to count precisely twelve [individual men in the group]" (*Jesus and Judaism*, 102). As a matter of fact, Mark, Matthew, and Luke do count precisely twelve men in the group, though Luke differs from the other two Synoptists with respect to one person's name. I do not understand how this particular group of men could symbolize the eschatological hopes connected with the number twelve and even be called by the set term "the Twelve" unless in fact during Jesus' ministry the members of the group were—at least most of the time—twelve in number. To be sure, one must allow for the possibility of a short hiatus, when one member left the Twelve and was replaced by someone else. This may have happened during Jesus' ministry in the case of Thaddeus and Jude of James and after Jesus' ministry with Judas Iscariot and Matthias. But brief gaps do not amount to the conclusion that the number of disciples in the Twelve did not matter; the apparently historical phenomenon of replacement argues in the opposite direction.

Or can the variations in Matthew and Luke/Acts be best explained simply by Matthew's and Luke's redactional changes in Mark's list? The answer may differ depending on whether we look at Matthew or Luke.

a. Matthew's two notable divergences from Mark may be explainable simply from Matthew's editorial activity and theological viewpoint:

i. As his whole Gospel shows, Matthew loves neat patterns; he will often reorder Mark and Q to create numerically arranged blocks of material. Hence it is hardly surprising that he reorders Mark's first block of four names; he elevates Andrew from fourth to second place to create two pairs of two brothers.³⁸ Having created pairs in the first block, Matthew continues the pattern throughout the list of the Twelve: for example, "Philip *and* Bartholomew, Thomas *and* Matthew." Perhaps in this way he compensates for not taking over Mark's statement that Jesus sent out the Twelve "two by two" (Mark 6:7).

ii. The variations in the second block of four names are likewise due to the First Evangelist's redactional activity: he changes the name of Levi the toll collector in Mark 2:14 to that of Matthew the toll collector in Matt 9:9. He thus assures that every named individual who is directly called to discipleship by Jesus winds up in the list of the Twelve.³⁹ The First Evangelist hammers home the identification by appending the designation "the toll collector" (ὁ τελώνης) to the name of Matthew in the list of the Twelve. But why is the name of Matthew placed last in the second block? Since no one else in the second block of names has a description attached to his name, the evangelist may have felt that the list would flow more smoothly if the lengthier phrase "Matthew the toll collector" was placed at the end of the second block.

In sum, it seems likely that the First Evangelist's list of the Twelve can be explained simply as his redactional reworking of Mark's list. Yet one cannot be absolutely sure of this. The list of the Twelve in Acts also puts Matthew at the end of the second block of names; only these two lists agree on this point. I tend to think that this correspondence is pure coincidence, but it warns us not to be too certain in our judgments.⁴⁰

³⁸ Like Luke-Acts, Matthew drops the Markan parenthetical reference to the nickname that Jesus gave the sons of Zebedee ("Boanerges," which, Mark 3:17 claims, means "sons of thunder"). Matthew and Luke probably dropped the reference because (1) it disturbs the flow of the list, and/or (2) it may have been as puzzling to the later evangelists as it is to modern exegetes.

³⁹ One problem remains: Why did the First Evangelist choose Matthew in the list of the Twelve to be the person who is identified with Levi? Various suggestions can be found in Rudolf Pesch, "Levi—Matthäus (Mc 2.14/Mt 9.9; 10.3): Ein Beitrag zur Lösung eines alten Problems," *ZNW* 59 (1968) 40–56; Mark Kiley, "Why 'Matthew' in Matt 9,9–13?" *Bib* 65 (1984) 347–51.

⁴⁰ Davies and Allison point out further minor agreements between the Matthean and Lukan lists vis-à-vis Mark (*Gospel According to Matthew*, 2.144–45). They leave open the possibility that Matthew and Luke reflect here a Q tradition, though for the most part they explain Matthew's list

b. The case of Luke-Acts is different and more complicated. To take Luke's Gospel first: some of the divergences from Mark can be explained, as in Matthew's list, by stylistic improvements. For instance, Luke as well as Matthew probably thought that putting Andrew right after Peter to create two pairs of two brothers produced a neater pattern.⁴¹ Luke tends to avoid Hebrew and Aramaic words in his Gospel, so it is not surprising that he gives a translation of Simon the Cananean: Simon the Zealot.

However, there is a puzzling variation in Luke that is not paralleled in Matthew. Instead of Thaddeus, mentioned by Mark and Matthew in the second place of the third block of names, Luke has "Jude [i.e., Judas] of James" in the third place, Simon having been moved up to second place. This same "Jude of James" is found in the same place in the list of Acts. Stylistic reasons obviously do not explain the change, nor apparently do theological agendas. Luke never mentions Jude of James outside his two lists; Jude of James is neither better known nor more theologically significant than Thaddeus, whom he replaces. That another Jude/Judas (in addition to Judas Iscariot) existed among Jesus' most intimate disciples is independently supported by a stray tradition in the Fourth Gospel's account of the Last Supper: "Jude [Judas], not the Iscariot," who is never mentioned elsewhere in the Fourth Gospel, suddenly appears to ask Jesus a question (John 14:22).⁴² Thus, since the replacement of Thaddeus by Jude of James cannot be attributed to Luke's redactional activity, and since

as his redaction of Mark; cf. Gundry, *Matthew*, 182–83 (who takes the view that Luke used Matthew).

⁴¹ Here is a prime example of a "minor agreement" of Matthew and Luke against Mark arising out of the coincidental desire of both writers to improve Mark's text. Similarly, that Luke, like Matthew, adds "his brother" after Andrew's name may be an accidental agreement and probably should not be used to argue for a Q list of the twelve names. Matthew may add "his brother" after Andrew's name to balance the same phrase used after the name of John, the brother of James. Perhaps Luke does not fully employ this balancing procedure (i.e., he does not append "his brother" after John's name) because James and John are treated differently than Andrew in Luke's Gospel. James and John have already been introduced as the sons of Zebedee (and hence brothers) back in Luke 5:10. But Andrew is absent from this Lukan version of the initial call of Peter, James, and John after the miraculous catch of fish (Luke 5:1–11). Therefore, as Luke mentions Andrew for the first and only time in his Gospel in the list of the Twelve (6:14), he supplies the explanation that he necessarily omitted when he dropped the Markan version of the call of the first *four* disciples (Mark 1:16–20): Andrew was Peter's brother.

⁴² On this text and the various changes made in the ancient versions to clarify the identity of this person, see Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John* (2 vols.; AB 29, 29A; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966, 1970) 2.641. Rudolf Schnackenburg thinks that the Jude mentioned in John 14:22 surely belongs, in the mind of the evangelist, to the Twelve (*Das Johannesevangelium* [4 vols.; HTKNT 4; Freiburg/Basel/Vienna: Herder, 1965, 1971, 1975, 1984] 3.92). While I do not think that this can be established with certainty, it is noteworthy that all the other *named* disciples who interact with Jesus during the Johannine Last Supper (Peter, Judas Iscariot, Thomas, and Philip) appear in the Synoptic lists of the Twelve. Hence I consider it possible that the Jude in John 14:22 is the Jude of James mentioned in Luke 6:16 // Acts 1:13.

the existence of another Jude is independently witnessed by the Fourth Gospel, the most natural explanation is that Luke found this name in a list he inherited from his L tradition. In short, Luke rather than Matthew gives us solid evidence for a list of the Twelve independent of Mark's list.⁴³

c. Whether the Acts of the Apostles supplies us with still another independent tradition is doubtful. As was the case with Matthew, I think that the notable differences from Mark can be explained on redactional grounds.⁴⁴ In Acts 1:13, Luke seems to be meshing his Markan tradition with his own special tradition (L); the conflated list seems further modified by Luke's redactional concerns in Acts. However, as we shall see, one divergence is difficult to explain on any grounds and leaves us unsure.

The most significant differences in the list of Acts 1:13 as compared with Luke 6:14–16 are as follows:

i. In the first block of names, Luke follows Mark in keeping Andrew fourth.

ii. With an eye to what will happen in Acts, Luke, for the sole time in any of the lists, reorders the two sons of Zebedee by putting John before James in Acts 1:13. This change probably reflects two aspects of the story of the Twelve in the early chapters of Acts: John is the regular "sidekick" of Peter, and James is the first of the Twelve to die and so to drop out of the story of Acts.

iii. The second block of names in Acts is somewhat puzzling in that the order is unique among the four lists: Philip, Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew. There is no discernible reason for this change, since both the list in Mark 3:18 and the list in Luke 6:14–15 read Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, and Thomas. This divergence in order is the only serious argument in favor of seeing an independent tradition in Acts 1:13.

iv. The final difference is in the third block of names: the omission of Judas Iscariot. This is readily explained both by Judas's betrayal of Jesus, which has already been recounted in the Gospel (Luke 22:3–5, 22–23, 47–48), and by Judas's untimely death, which is about to be narrated in Acts (1:16–26).

In sum, the results of our survey are mixed. In my opinion, Matthew's list is purely a product of his redaction of Mark's list; no independent tradition is visible. The case of the list in Acts is more difficult, though I tend to think that it

⁴³ Schürmann argues strongly for a non-Markan source at Luke's disposal (*Das Lukasevangelium*, 1.318–19); he suggests, however, that this list of names had already been joined to the material behind Luke 6:12–13a in Q. Also in favor of Q is Schneider, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, 1.206.

⁴⁴ Schneider rightly claims that Luke reaches back to the material in his Gospel (*Die Apostelgeschichte*, 1.199); see also Haenchen, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, 120; Conzelmann, *Acts of the Apostles*, 9.

can be explained simply as a conflation of the lists found in Mark's and Luke's Gospels, with further modifications due to Luke's program in Acts. Admittedly, the change of order in the second block of names is difficult to explain; one might perhaps appeal to a desire for variety on purely stylistic grounds. In contrast to Matthew's Gospel, though, the list Luke presents in his Gospel (6:14–16) does not seem explicable simply as a redaction of Mark for stylistic or theological reasons. The replacement of Thaddeus by Jude of James finds no explanation in the theological program or stylistic preferences of Luke. Hence, I think it most likely that Luke 6:14–16 represents a tradition of the names of the Twelve that is independent of that in Mark 3:16–19. Therefore, the L tradition as well as the Markan tradition witnesses both to the existence of the Twelve during the life of Jesus and to the names of the individuals who made up the Twelve.

3. Besides tradition in Mark, and probably in L, the Johannine tradition gives independent attestation of the Twelve during Jesus' ministry. The fact that the Twelve are mentioned in John is all the more weighty because John has no special interest in the group called the Twelve. The Johannine tradition names important disciples or supporters of Jesus (e.g., Nathanael and Lazarus) who are not listed in the Synoptic catalogues of the Twelve; and the anonymous "disciple whom Jesus loved," the model of all discipleship, does not apparently belong to the Twelve. The few references to the Twelve that occur in John thus have the air of being relics or fossils embedded in primitive Johannine tradition.

In John's account of the public ministry, references to the Twelve are clustered—and, indeed, isolated—at the end of the Bread of Life discourse in John 6. Faced with desertion by many of his disciples, Jesus asks the Twelve whether they will leave him as well (6:67). Peter, acting as spokesman, proclaims his faith in Jesus as the Holy One of God (vv. 68–69). Almost in a tone of sad musing, Jesus replies with a rhetorical question (v. 70): "Have I not chosen you, the Twelve, and [yet] one of you is a devil?" In a characteristic aside, the evangelist explains Jesus' terse prophecy to the reader (v. 71): "He spoke of Judas, [the son] of Simon Iscariot; for he was going to hand him over, [although] he was one of the Twelve."⁴⁵ Remarkably, this exhausts the direct references to the Twelve in John's account of the public ministry. Perhaps it is not accidental that these references are clustered at the end of John 6, the only chapter of John's Gospel that parallels the account of the Galilean ministry in the Synoptics,

⁴⁵ On the exegetical problems involved here, see Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, 1. 298; on pp. 301–2 he lists the parallels between John 6:67–71 and the various versions of the Synoptic scene of Peter's confession at Caesarea Philippi. The mention of Judas' father, Simon, and the attribution of "Iscariot" to Simon rather than to Judas (this is the reading of the best manuscripts in John 6:71) are unparalleled anywhere in the Synoptic tradition—another sign that John represents an independent tradition here.

especially the “bread cycle” in Mark 6–8, which culminates in Peter’s confession of faith at Caesarea Philippi.

There is one other reference to the Twelve, but it is only indirectly connected with the public ministry. In John 11:16, as Jesus prepares to go to Bethany to raise Lazarus from the dead, Thomas, “who is called Didymus [the Twin],” glumly remarks “to his fellow disciples”: “Let us also go that we may die with him.” In 14:5, Thomas reappears briefly at the Last Supper, asking querulously: “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?” It is, however, only in one of the resurrection appearances that Thomas is introduced with the specific identification, “Thomas, one of the Twelve, called Didymus . . .” (20:24).

Thus, directly or indirectly, the Fourth Gospel, which has no formal list of the Twelve, identifies Peter, Thomas, and Judas as members of the group. Though Andrew and Philip are never so identified, their prominence throughout the public ministry as a *pair* of disciples close to Jesus (1:35–46; 6:5–8; 12:21–22; cf. 14:8–9) may perhaps be taken as a hint that they were also known in the Johannine tradition as members of the Twelve. What is telling, though, is that we must piece this information together from fragments of a tradition about the Twelve that may have had some importance in the early Johannine community but apparently holds no great interest for the Fourth Evangelist. We are dealing with a tradition very different from the one we find in the Synoptics, with its precise enumeration of the names of the Twelve and its emphasis on the Twelve in the early part of passion tradition.

4. Besides Mark, John, and probably L, there may be an indirect reference to the Twelve⁴⁶ in the Q tradition, though this judgment depends on how we reconstruct the tradition underlying Matt 19:28 // Luke 22:30. This Q logion has been placed by the two evangelists in strikingly different contexts; neither context can claim to be the original setting of the saying.⁴⁷ Matthew inserts the

⁴⁶ I purposely use the phrase “an indirect reference to the Twelve in the Q tradition” because Matt 19:28 par. does not directly name “the Twelve” with the fixed formula (οἱ δώδεκα) found elsewhere in the Gospels; we have here instead a reference to the Twelve by way of the image of “twelve thrones” (presuming for the moment the Matthean wording to be original). Nevertheless, Jesus speaks to certain close followers and promises them that at the last judgment they shall sit on *twelve* thrones judging (or ruling) the *twelve* tribes of Israel. Granted the knowledge of a leadership group called the Twelve in the early church, not only the Matthean and Lukan texts in their redactional contexts but also the traditional logion circulating in the early church could hardly refer to any group of persons except the Twelve.

⁴⁷ On this point, and on the logion in general, see Jacques Dupont, “Le logion des douze trônes (Mt 19,28; Lc 22,28–30),” in *Etudes sur les évangiles synoptiques* (ed. Frans Neirynck; 2 vols.; BETL 70; Leuven: Leuven University Press/Peeters, 1985; original, 1964) 706–43; Ingo Broer, “Das Ringen der Gemeinde um Israel: Exegetischer Versuch über Mt 19,28,” in *Jesus und der Menschensohn* (Anton Vögtle Festschrift; ed. Rudolf Pesch, Rudolf Schnackenburg, and Odilo Kaiser; Freiburg/Basel/Vienna: Herder, 1975) 148–65; Walter Grundmann, *Das Evangelium nach*

logion into Jesus' teaching on the dangers of wealth and on the reward awaiting disciples who leave family and home for his sake (Matt 19:23–30; cf. Mark 10:23–31); the larger context is Jesus' journey up to Jerusalem for the Passover and his passion. Luke instead places the Q logion in the mini-discourse Jesus delivers at the Last Supper. The need to adapt the saying to each context may help explain why the first part of the saying is so different in Matthew and Luke and reflects the redactional concerns of the respective evangelist.⁴⁸ However, the final words of the saying are basically the same in both Gospels, as Jesus makes an eschatological promise to certain disciples:⁴⁹

Matthäus (THKNT 1; 3d ed.; Berlin: Theologische Verlagsanstalt, 1972) 435; Fitzmyer, *Gospel According to Luke*, 2.1411–19. That the final part of the saying, which is under discussion here, comes from Q is admitted by most scholars (e.g., Siegfried Schulz, Paul Hoffmann, Dieter Lührmann, Athanasius Polag, Ivan Havener, John S. Kloppenborg, M. Eugene Boring, and David Catchpole). Some critics, however, prefer to see two independent traditions that have been preserved in M and L; so T. W. Manson, *The Sayings of Jesus* (1937; reprint, London: SCM, 1949) 216–17. Migaku Sato remains dubious about the existence of the saying in Q (*Q und Prophetie* [WUNT 2/29; Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1988] 2, 23). For a survey of views, see John S. Kloppenborg, *Q Parallels* (Sonoma, CA: Polebridge, 1988) 202. For a somewhat different approach, maintaining that Luke 22:30 is part of a pre-Lukan (and non-Markan) tradition of the Last Supper, possibly even part of a special Lukan passion narrative, see Heinz Schürmann, *Jesu Abschiedsrede Lk 22,21–38, III. Teil, Einer quellenkritischen Untersuchung des lukanischen Abendmahlsberichtes Lk 22,7–38* (1957; NTAbh 20/5; 2d ed.; Münster: Aschendorff, 1977) 36–63, 139–42; Schürmann feels less certain about some of his views in his “Afterword” to the second edition (pp. 168–70). Daniel Marguerat goes too far when he claims that Rev 3:20–21 is another version of this logion (*Le jugement dans l'évangile de Matthieu* [Le Monde de la Bible 6; 2d ed.; Geneva: Labor et Fides, 1995] 462). Rather, it displays some of the same apocalyptic motifs, but it does not use them in the same way or say the same thing.

⁴⁸ On the one hand, Matthew must try to insert the material into his larger teaching on the demands and rewards of discipleship in Matthew 19; the introduction of the theme of the Son of Man at the final judgment, a favorite theme of Matthew's, may be redactional in 19:28. On the other hand, Luke is obviously stitching together various disparate logia. Indeed, Luke 22:29–30a, with the themes of kingdom, covenant, and eating and drinking at Jesus' table fit awkwardly (with respect to both content and syntax) with v. 30b (sitting on thrones and judging the twelve tribes of Israel). The composite nature of Luke 22:28–30 is examined by Broer (“Das Ringen,” 149–50). Along with a number of other critics, Schulz thinks that Luke 22:30a is probably redactional (*Q: Die Spruchquelle der Evangelisten*, 332). For the larger theological context of the Lukan form of the saying within Luke-Acts, see Jacob Jervell, “The Twelve on Israel's Thrones,” in *Luke and the People of God* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1972) 75–112. For various critics who champion Matthew's or Luke's form of the saying as more original, see Broer, “Das Ringen,” 148 n. 2 (continued on p. 149).

⁴⁹ It is surprising that Klein (*Die zwölf Apostel*, 36) thinks that he can dismiss the question of the Q logion simply by noting that the word “regeneration” (παλιγγενεσία) in Matt 19:28 makes the saying “suspect.” This ignores the key point that likely Q material can be found only in the final words of Matt 19:28 // Luke 22:30: “you shall sit on (twelve) thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.” Quite properly, this is the part of the text that is put in bold print and underlined by Kloppenborg (*Q Parallels*, 202; cf. Rigaux, “Die ‘Zwölf,’” 476). Q research, by definition, focuses on the material Matthew and Luke have in common, while omitting the material that is likely to come from Matthean or Lukan redaction—which is probably the case with Matthew's παλιγγενεσία.

Matt 19:28

you⁵⁰ shall sit
 on *twelve* thrones
 judging the twelve tribes
 of Israel

Luke 22:30

you shall sit
 on thrones
 judging the twelve tribes
 of Israel

Even if we had only the Lukan form of the saying, Luke's context of Jesus addressing his closest disciples at the Last Supper with the promise that they would "judge" (= rule? obtain justice for? pass judicial sentence on?)⁵¹ the *twelve* tribes of Israel might imply that the addressees are the Twelve. However, only the Matthean form of the saying makes this explicit. We must therefore face the problem of whether Luke has dropped the adjective "twelve" before "thrones" or whether Matthew has added it. Arguments can be mounted for either position, but I think it more likely that Luke has dropped the adjective "twelve" before "thrones."

First, Luke has made it clear from the larger context that he is thinking of the Twelve, "whom Jesus named apostles" (Luke 6:13). Luke alone states at the beginning of the Last Supper that "the *apostles* reclined at table" with Jesus (22:14; Luke's source, Mark 14:17, speaks of "the Twelve"). The addressees of the Q logion in v. 30 are described by Jesus in v. 28 as "you . . . who have

⁵⁰ For all the differences in the introductions to this logion in Matthew ("you who have followed me") and Luke ("you are the ones who have persevered with me in my trials"), there is an underlying similarity: Jesus is speaking not to the crowds in general but to followers who are especially close to him. *Contra* Broer ("Das Ringen," 163), there is no reason to doubt that the second person plural ("you shall sit") is original in the saying.

⁵¹ For the different meanings of κρινω that are possible here, see Dupont, "Le logion," 721–32. The two basic possibilities are (1) "to judge," namely, at the last judgment, with (a) either the positive nuance of "obtain justice for," "see justice done for," (b) or the negative nuance of "condemn" (a likely sense in Matthew's redactional theology); or (2) "govern," "rule," "exercise sovereignty over" (not the usual sense in the NT, but a sense witnessed in the OT and pseudepigrapha, and a possible sense in Luke's redactional context and theology). Needless to say, one meaning does not necessarily exclude the other; moreover, in light of the saying's strong OT and Jewish eschatological flavor, one must allow for a Semitism in the use of the verb. (Broer's strange interpretation of κρινω ["Das Ringen," 162–63] in terms of the followers of Jesus engaging in a judgment that annihilates Israel on the last day finds no basis in the Q saying taken by itself, apart from its redactional context in Matthew.) In any event, the reference to the twelve tribes of Israel, which did not exist as an empirical reality in Jesus' day but which were expected by at least some Jews to be regathered or reconstituted in the end-time (see John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus* [3 vols.; Anchor Bible Reference Library; New York: Doubleday, 1991, 1994, —] 2.237–88), points forward to some eschatological event (the final judgment) or situation (the kingdom of God fully come). Dupont suggests that the curious mention of "thrones" in the plural in the scene of judgment in Dan 7:9 (while the Ancient of Days has a "throne" in the singular) may lie behind Jesus' promise to the Twelve ("Le logion," 732–37). While the plural did provoke later rabbinic speculation and thoughts about the great ones or princes of Israel sharing in God's judgment, we cannot be sure that such speculation circulated in Jesus' day.

remained with me in my trials," a good description, in Luke's mind, of those who belonged to the Twelve (cf. Acts 1:21–22). Thus, unlike Matthew's context in Matthew 19, which speaks only of "disciples," Luke's context already makes it fairly clear that the audience addressed is the Twelve—an inference that then receives reinforcement from the mention of the *twelve* tribes in the saying. Indeed, granted Luke's characteristic care for style and his desire to avoid needless repetition, it is quite understandable why he would want to avoid the repetition of the word "twelve" within the space of three words.⁵²

Second, Luke's chosen context—namely, the Last Supper—may have prompted him to drop the explicit reference to the *twelve* thrones at the final judgment. In Luke's ordering of the Last Supper material, Jesus has just predicted his betrayal by Judas, "one of the Twelve" (cf. Luke 22:3, 47). Obviously, then, Judas, though one of the Twelve at the time of the Last Supper, will not persevere to be one of those seated on the thrones on judgment day; Matthias will take his place (Acts 1:15–26). Understandably, Luke wishes to soften an apparent clash between a prophecy of doom and a prophecy of reward for the same person (Judas). Or, to put the point more bluntly, he wishes to circumvent the embarrassment of having Jesus issue a prophecy about the Twelve that is not verified of one of their number. Accordingly, he drops the reference to the *twelve* thrones.⁵³

In contrast, since Matthew inserts the Q saying into an instruction on discipleship during the journey to Jerusalem, and since Judas is not mentioned or even thought of in the larger Matthean context, Matthew naturally does not feel Luke's problem of clash or embarrassment. Indeed, since the preceding context in Matthew speaks only of "disciples" following Jesus (e.g., 19:10, 13, 23, 25), *not* "the Twelve" or "the twelve disciples," the retention of "twelve" before "thrones" in the saying is necessary if the persons to whom the promise refers are to be made absolutely clear. On the whole, therefore, it seems more likely that the reference to "*twelve* thrones" and therefore to the circle of the Twelve is original in the Q saying.⁵⁴

⁵² Dupont notes that in this same verse Luke apparently makes another change for the sake of style: Matthew's more natural κρῖνοντες τὰς δώδεκα φυλάς τοῦ Ἰσραὴλ (probably reflecting Q) receives an unusual inversion (seen elsewhere in Luke's Greek style) in Luke's τὰς δώδεκα φυλάς κρῖνοντες τοῦ Ἰσραὴλ ("Le logion," 721). Working with his theory of a pre-Lukan Last Supper tradition, Schürmann suggests that "twelve" before "thrones" was dropped in the pre-Lukan tradition to make possible a more general application of a saying that originally referred only to the Twelve (*Jesu Abschiedsrede Lk 22,21–38, III. Teil, 52*).

⁵³ So Dupont, "Le logion," 720; Witherington, *Christology of Jesus*, 141.

⁵⁴ So, among others, Roloff, *Apostolat*, 148–49; Trilling, "Zur Entstehung," 215; Fitzmyer, *Gospel According to Luke*, 2.1419; Witherington, *Christology of Jesus*, 141; Schulz, *Q: Die Spruchquelle der Evangelisten*, 332; Marguerat, *Le jugement*, 462 n. 45 (though Schulz and Marguerat do not think that the saying goes back to the historical Jesus; so also Rudolf Bultmann, *Die Geschichte der synoptischen Tradition* [1921; FRLANT 29; 8th ed.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck &

This promise to the Twelve makes perfect sense within the larger context of Jewish eschatological hopes in general and Jesus' eschatological proclamation in particular.⁵⁵ In other words, the core promise in Matt 19:28 par. meets the criterion of coherence. Even in OT and pseudepigraphic literature that is not itself apocalyptic (e.g., Tobit 13; Sir 36:1-17), the hope for the regathering or reconstituting of the tribes of Israel in the end-time is expressed.⁵⁶ Such a hope fit perfectly into Jesus' proclamation of the coming of God's kingly rule, for Jesus addressed his proclamation not to the world indiscriminately but to Israel in its promised land. Reflecting his mission to all Israel in the end-time, Jesus created the group called the Twelve, whose very number symbolized, promised, and (granted the dynamic power thought to be present in the symbolic actions of prophets) began the regathering of the twelve tribes. Accordingly, within his larger prophetic vision of God coming to rule Israel as king in the end-time, Jesus promised in Matt 19:28 par. that his inner circle of the Twelve, the prophetic sign and beginning of the regathering of the twelve tribes, would share in the governance (or judgment?) of the reconstituted

Ruprecht, 1970] 170–71). It is interesting to note that Vielhauer, who rejects both the authenticity of Matt 19:28 par. and the existence of the Twelve during the ministry of Jesus, nevertheless states that, although the original form of the logion cannot be determined, the saying does refer to a promise Jesus makes to the Twelve about ruling the twelve tribes of Israel ("Gottesreich," 67). It might also be noted that, if one were to suppose that the original Q saying did not refer to the Twelve, the mere presence of the "twelve tribes" in the logion would not have given rise automatically or naturally to the numeral "twelve" before "thrones" in a secondary stage of the tradition. In the OT, the intertestamental literature, and the NT, we find many passages that speak of or depict the regathering or the judging of *all* Israel (sometimes the point of *all* the tribes is stressed), yet none of these depictions generates the idea of twelve thrones corresponding to the twelve tribes being judged or ruled. The twelve thrones in Matt 19:28 is most naturally explained as a correlative of the Twelve who are addressed.

⁵⁵ For a defense of the position that Jesus' proclamation was eschatological in both a future and a realized sense, see Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 2.237–506.

⁵⁶ That the idea of the regathering of the twelve tribes of Israel in the end-time (or in the days of the Messiah) was a living hope in the time of Jesus is shown by many Jewish works, both OT and pseudepigrapha, which either were composed or continued to be read around the time of Jesus: e.g., Tobit (fragments of which have been found at Qumran; see Joseph A. Fitzmyer, "The Aramaic and Hebrew Fragments of Tobit from Qumran Cave 4," *CBQ* 57 [1995] 655–75); Baruch 4–5; Sir 36:10–13; 48:10; 2 Macc 1:27–29; 2:17–18; *Pss. Sol.* 11; 17:26–32, 40–46; 1QM 2:1–3, 7–8; 3:13–14; 5:1–2; 11QTemple 18:14–16. On these texts and their relation to the eschatological hopes connected with the idea of the Twelve, see Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 95–106. More specifically, that the symbolism of the twelve patriarchs of Israel, instructing the twelve tribes and foreshadowing their history, was alive at the time of Jesus is shown by the basic form of the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*. While the *Testaments* in their present state display Christian redaction (the precise extent of which is still debated among critics), their roots reach back to the pre-Christian period in Palestine—witness the fragments of *Testaments* of some of the patriarchs at Qumran. On this point, see Howard Clark Kee, "Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs," *OTP* 1.775–80—though Kee minimizes Christian influence and pushes the date of the *Testaments* back farther (second century BCE) than I would.

Israel. Matt 19:28 par. thus gives us much more than a bare indication of the historical existence of the Twelve. It gives us an important statement of Jesus' eschatological vision and his intention in creating the Twelve as part of that vision.

Indeed, it is a vision that makes much more sense in the context of Jesus' ministry than in the context of the first generation of the early church, where the Twelve as an eschatological group (especially in relation to the idea of reconstituting the twelve tribes of Israel) disappear with surprising rapidity. In light of the quick demise of the Twelve as a visible and influential group in the early church (as distinct from some prominent individual members, such as Peter), one might mount a type of argument from dissimilarity or discontinuity. In the OT, intertestamental literature, and the NT, there is much talk about and many verbal pictures of the judgment of Israel, including scenes of courts and thrones, with various individuals on the thrones. Yet nowhere else in Jewish literature before or during the time of Jesus do we find the picture of twelve men sitting on twelve thrones sharing in God's prerogative of passing judgment on (or ruling?) eschatological Israel. In the NT, the Twelve are assigned various roles and are portrayed in various ways, both positive and negative. But nowhere else in the NT do we find the Twelve sitting on thrones and judging or ruling Israel in the end-time.

Thus, compared with pre-Christian Judaism and with the rest of the NT, the picture Jesus paints and the function he ascribes to the Twelve in Matt 19:28 par. are unique to this logion.⁵⁷ Being discontinuous on this point with both Judaism and early Christianity, the saying is best ascribed to the historical Jesus. Indeed, if one wants to claim that the saying was instead created by the early church, one must face a difficult question: Why would the early church have created a saying (attributed to the earthly Jesus during his public ministry) that in effect promised a heavenly throne and power at the last judgment to the traitor Judas Iscariot?⁵⁸ In the end, the criteria of coherence, discontinuity, and embarrassment all argue for the saying's origin in the public ministry.⁵⁹

One minor objection to my whole argument, however, needs to be addressed. Even if we grant a reference to the Twelve in Matt 19:28 par., the Twelve appear only this one time in Q. Some critics, such as Vielhauer, use this as an argument against the existence of the Twelve during the life of Jesus.⁶⁰ Yet

⁵⁷ So Trilling, "Zur Entstehung," 216. The partial parallels brought forward by Dupont and others come from the later rabbinic literature.

⁵⁸ This point is made by Manson, *Sayings of Jesus*, 217; similarly, Witherington, *Christology of Jesus*, 141.

⁵⁹ For a list of critics maintaining or denying the saying's authenticity, see Schulz, *Q: Die Spruchquelle der Evangelisten*, 333 n. 80.

⁶⁰ Vielhauer, "Gottesreich," 69. In a curious variation on this argument, Sato uses the absence

this is a very curious argument, since the word “disciple” (μαθητής) is almost as rare in Q as is the reference to the Twelve. There are only two absolutely clear cases of “disciple” in Q (Matt 10:24 // Luke 6:40; Matt 11:2 // Luke 7:18); all other suggested cases occur in either Matthew or Luke but not in both Gospels.⁶¹

Even more surprising is the fact that neither Q passage speaks directly of *Jesus’* disciples. In Matt 10:24 par., Jesus utters what seems to have been a general truth or proverb: “No disciple is above [his] teacher.” The present contexts created by Matthew and Luke make clear that the reference is to the disciples of Jesus (see, e.g., Matt 10:25), but such an explicit reference does not exist in the saying taken by itself. In Matt 11:2 par., the word “disciples” is used of the disciples of John the Baptist, not those of Jesus.

Hence, strictly speaking, *no* Q text, taken by itself, speaks directly and unequivocally of the disciples of Jesus. Yet this does not cause NT critics to deny the existence of the historical disciples of the historical Jesus. The situation with the Twelve is somewhat similar. There is only one reference in Q; and, as is the case with “disciples,” the reference to the Twelve is indirect rather than direct. Certain followers addressed by Jesus in Matt 19:28 will sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel—a promise that makes no sense unless it is addressed to the Twelve.

In short, since the scarcity—or even absence!—of references to the disciples of Jesus in Q leads no one to deny the existence of such a group, the same should hold true of the one reference to the Twelve. All this simply reminds us of the fragmentary and random nature of the material preserved in Q. More particularly, it reminds us that Q is made up mostly of sayings, many of which would have been directed to Jesus’ disciples or more specifically to the Twelve. There was no reason for Jesus to be constantly mentioning the identity of his audience in the sayings he was patently addressing to them.

5. The final independent source to be investigated is, from the viewpoint of both literary composition and tradition history, the earliest: Paul’s passing mention of the Twelve in 1 Cor 15:5. However, the special problems this text involves lead me to consider it last.

What is especially noteworthy in 1 Cor 15:5 is that the mention of the Twelve comes, in a sense, not from Paul’s own mouth or mind. The reference to the Twelve is rather embedded in an early pre-Pauline formula of faith (1 Cor 15:3–5), of which Paul is now reminding the Corinthians.⁶² He says that it is a

of the concept of the Twelve elsewhere in Q to deny that Matt 19:28 par. is a Q saying (*Q und Prophetie*, 23). As I point out in the main text, the almost complete absence of μαθητής (referring to a disciple of Jesus) in Q shows, by way of analogy, how fragile such an argument is.

⁶¹ For a list of all the passages, see Kloppenborg, *Q Parallels*, 224.

⁶² A précis of the various reasons that lead to this judgment—a commonplace among NT

formula that he taught them when he converted them to Christianity; in fact, it is a formula that he himself learned when he became a Christian. This is the point of his somewhat convoluted introduction to the creedal formula: “I make known to you [i.e., I remind you], brothers, of the gospel that I announced to you, the gospel that you received [παρέλαβετε]. . . . For I handed on [παρέδωκα] to you, first of all, what I myself received [παρέλαβον]” (vv. 1 + 3). The vocabulary of handing on and receiving was used in the ancient world by philosophical schools, Gnostic literature, and rabbinic circles (e.g., *m. ’Abot* 1:1) to designate important traditions that were carefully passed down from teacher to student.⁶³ Paul uses the same terminology to introduce his narrative of the institution of the Eucharist at the Last Supper (1 Cor 11:23–25).

Since Paul is writing to the Corinthians ca. 55–56 CE, since he converted them ca. 50–51, and since he himself became a Christian and learned this primitive creed from other believers in Jesus somewhere around 31–34, we have here one of the earliest creedal statements of the church, a creed that was formulated only a few years after the events narrated (ca. 30).⁶⁴ The creedal formula probably underwent expansion over the years, with further recipients of resurrection appearances being added. But an early, if not the earliest, version had a basic four-part structure (1 Cor 15:3–5):

Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures,
and was buried,
and was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,
and appeared to Cephas [i.e., Peter] and then to the Twelve.

Now, practically no one has ever denied that Cephas (i.e., Peter) was a disciple of Jesus during the public ministry, and most critics would admit that he already had the name Cephas/Peter (“Rock”) during that time.⁶⁵ Accordingly, I

exegetes—is given by Rigaux, “Die ‘Zwölf,’” 469. Gordon D. Fee sums up the reasons quite well: (1) the fact that Paul says that this summary of “the gospel” is something he both “received” and “passed along” to the Corinthians; (2) the stylized form of the four statements in 1 Cor 15:3–5 in two balanced sets; (3) the repeated ὅτι (“that”) before each clause, which implies a kind of quotation, and (4) the appearance of several non-Pauline words in such a short compass (*The First Epistle to the Corinthians* [NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987] 718). On this, see Joachim Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus* (London: SCM, 1966) 101–3. On specific questions concerning 1 Cor 15:3–5, see John Kloppenborg, “An Analysis of the Pre-Pauline Formula in 1 Cor 15:3b–5 in Light of Some Recent Literature,” *CBQ* 40 (1978) 351–67; Jerome Murphy-O’Connor, “Tradition and Redaction in 1 Cor 15:3–7,” *CBQ* 43 (1981) 582–89.

⁶³ For relevant texts, see Hans Conzelmann, *Der erste Brief an die Korinther* (MeyerK 5; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1969) 230.

⁶⁴ For these and other questions of Pauline chronology, see Robert Jewett, *A Chronology of Paul’s Life* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979) 29–38; Jerome Murphy-O’Connor, *St. Paul’s Corinth* (Wilmington, DE: Glazier, 1983) 129–52; Gerd Luedemann, *Paul Apostle to the Gentiles: Studies in Chronology* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984) 262–63; Joseph A. Fitzmyer, “Paul,” *NJBC*, 1330–32 (§ 9).

⁶⁵ We have multiple attestation of sources for the claim that Jesus himself gave Simon the

think that it goes against the natural thrust of the text to argue, as Vielhauer does, that the Twelve did not exist as such during the public ministry but were rather called into existence in the postresurrection period, indeed precisely by a resurrection appearance. To support this view, Vielhauer lays great stress on the contradiction he sees between (1) the mention of the “Twelve” (not “Eleven”) who are said to receive a resurrection appearance in 1 Cor 15:5 and (2) the tradition in all four Gospels that Judas betrayed Jesus—thus leaving only a circle of eleven men to receive a resurrection appearance.⁶⁶

I think Vielhauer sets up a false dichotomy between two different literary forms (creedal formula and Gospel narrative), which come from different “settings in life” (*Sitze im Leben*) in the early church, and which moreover function differently in their respective contexts.⁶⁷ The presence of “the Twelve” in the early and terse creedal formula of 1 Cor 15:5 simply underlines the essential symbolic significance of the Twelve, which would have been especially important to the earliest Christian Jews of Palestine: the Twelve represented the twelve tribes of Israel, which many Jews expected to be restored in the last days. This interpretation of the Twelve is supported by the Q logion (Matt 19:28 par.) that we have already examined. The symbolism of the number twelve was thus all-important. Not surprisingly, the number quickly became the very name of the group, a set designation or stereotyped formula that could be used of this eschatological group even when membership changed or when—for a relatively brief time after Judas’s defection—it lacked one member.⁶⁸ In a way, this

name Cephas (= Peter) during the public ministry: Mark 3:16; John 1:42; and probably the L list of the Twelve in Luke 6:12–16 (v. 14). (Some might want to add the special M tradition in Matt 16:18.) There is no rival NT tradition that asserts that Simon’s second name was conferred after Easter. Moreover, if one wanted to argue that Simon received the name Cephas/Peter only in the early days of the church, one would have to explain why and how a name given Simon (by whom?) so relatively late became the standard way of referring to him in so many different streams of NT tradition in the first, second, and third Christian generations (Paul, Mark, M, L, John, and the Petrine epistles). In all this, I take for granted the position espoused by the vast majority of NT critics, namely, that Simon Peter and Cephas are the same person. For a critique of this position, see Bart D. Ehrman, “Cephas and Peter,” *JBL* 109 (1990) 463–74; for a defense of the majority position, see Dale C. Allison, “Peter and Cephas: One and the Same,” *JBL* 111 (1992) 489–95.

⁶⁶ Vielhauer, “Gottesreich,” 69–71.

⁶⁷ In addition, Vielhauer employs a facile distinction between a fixed group of twelve men who constituted a perduring institution and a group of twelve men who simply existed as a circle of persons at a particular point of time in the past (“Gottesreich,” 69). This is to set up a questionable dichotomy, especially for the fluid situation during the ministry of Jesus and the earliest days of the church.

⁶⁸ On this, see Joachim Jeremias, *New Testament Theology*, Part 1, *The Proclamation of Jesus* (NTL; London: SCM, 1971) 233–34. While I readily admit that the present form of the story of the choice of Matthias in Acts 1:15–26 displays both legendary traits and Lukan redaction, I would not so quickly dismiss the underlying idea that, amid the eschatological fervor of the disciples’ initial proclamation of Jesus’ resurrection to their fellow Israelites, they selected (by whatever means) a disciple to replace Judas—the restored circle of the Twelve thus perfectly mirroring the eschato-

fixed usage of “the Twelve” is intimated by the very wording of 1 Cor 15:5: first Cephas is mentioned alone, and then we hear of the Twelve, with no attempt to adjust or clarify the wording to indicate that, in the initial resurrection appearances, Cephas both stood apart from and yet was a member of the Twelve.

One might add here an observation about the way in which the nomenclature of the Twelve developed in the early church. As we can see from the independent witness of Paul, Mark, and John, “the Twelve,” used absolutely as a substantive and not as an adjective modifying “disciples” or “apostles,” was the earliest designation of this inner circle. Far from “the Eleven” being the early and natural way of referring to the circle when one member was missing, the phrase “the Eleven” occurs only in the second-generation stage of the Gospel tradition. Fittingly, it is Matthew and Luke, the two evangelists who supply detailed stories of Judas’ death, who, out of their historicizing impulse for numerical exactitude, use the phrases “the eleven disciples” (Matt 28:16), “the eleven apostles” (Acts 1:26), or simply “the Eleven” (Luke 24:9, 33).⁶⁹ This accountant-like precision is the sign of a late, not an early, stratum of the tradition. Not surprisingly, such precision is found in secondary, expansive narratives, not in an early, terse creedal formula that says only the essential. In brief, when one attends to the different literary forms of 1 Cor 15:3–5 and the Gospel narratives, coming as they do from different *Sitze im Leben* and having different functions, I think Vielhauer’s supposed contradiction, on which he bases his denial of the Twelve’s existence during Jesus’ lifetime, evaporates.

logical promise of a restored twelve tribes of Israel. To dismiss the entire tradition of the choice of Matthias as legendary or “secondary” with an apodictic statement (so Klein, *Die zwölf Apostel*, 36) instead of a detailed argument will not do. It is interesting to note that Schmithals (*Office of Apostle*, 70) dismisses the selection of Matthias as legend in his main text, but then he apparently hesitates in n. 58: “The account of the later choice of Matthias, may, of course, go back to early traditions which told of a filling out of the circle of the twelve after Judas’ apostasy.” Haenchen allows that the assertion that Matthias and not Barsabbas became an apostle by casting lots goes back to tradition and is not a Lukan invention (*Die Apostelgeschichte*, 128). In favor of a historical core to the Matthias tradition is Rigaux, “Die ‘Zwölf,’” 479.

⁶⁹ On this, see Rigaux, “Die ‘Zwölf,’” 480; Trilling, “Zur Entstehung,” 211. The second-century canonical ending of Mark’s Gospel, probably a pastiche of resurrection-appearance stories from Matthew and Luke, also uses the late choice of Matthias “the Eleven” (Mark 16:14). “The Eleven” also appears in Acts 2:14, but only because Peter is distinguished as leader and spokesman from the other eleven members of the recently reconstituted Twelve. Intriguingly, with that we exhaust all the occurrences of the word “eleven” (ἑνδεκά) in the NT. The word thus occurs only in stories contained in late NT writings, stories set in a postresurrection context. As we find in some other instances, the Fourth Evangelist retains the more primitive way of speaking. Although he knows that the Twelve existed during Jesus’ public ministry, that Thomas and Judas were both members of the Twelve, and that Judas apostatized by betraying Jesus, John nevertheless refers to Thomas after the resurrection as “one of the Twelve” (John 20:24). In this matter, instead of sharing the historicizing tendencies of Matthew and Luke, John retains the primitive way of speaking found in the confessional formula of 1 Cor 15:3–5.

Then, too, simply on a commonsense level, if one were to read a sentence like “President Smith appeared before Chairman Jones and the board of directors,” one would not naturally think that President Smith appointed the board of directors (or Jones as chairman) in the moment when (or even after) he appeared before them. The natural sense of “Christ . . . appeared to Cephas and then to the Twelve” is that both Cephas and the Twelve existed as such before Christ appeared to them. This natural reading of 1 Cor 15:5 is supported by what we have already seen in our survey: namely, that the independent sources of Mark, John, L, and Q all think of the Twelve as a group around Jesus during his public ministry. Granted this widespread understanding of the Twelve in various streams of NT tradition, one would have to put forward weighty evidence to counter the plain and unaffected sense of 1 Cor 15:5, and Vielhauer produces no such evidence. Hence, the pre-Pauline formula in 1 Cor 15:3–5 is rightly placed alongside the Gospel traditions already examined as an independent witness to the existence of the Twelve during Jesus’ ministry.

In sum, Mark, John, Paul, probably L, and probably Q give multiple attestation from independent sources that the Twelve existed as an identifiable group during the public ministry. A further point should now be noted. In addition to multiple attestation of *sources*, these texts also give us multiple attestation of *forms*: the Twelve are mentioned in narrative (Mark, John), sayings (Q, John), a catalogue-like list (Mark, probably L), and a creedal formula (1 Cor 15:3–5). In light of this broad spread of both sources and forms, suggestions that the Twelve arose only in the early days of the church must be judged pure conjecture with no real support in the NT texts.

B. Alongside the criterion of multiple attestation of sources and forms stands the criterion of *embarrassment*, a criterion already alluded to when we discussed Luke’s redaction of the Q saying in Luke 22:30. Next to the bare fact of Jesus’ death by crucifixion—one of the most horrific forms of execution in the ancient world—perhaps the most shocking event at the end of Jesus’ career was his being “handed over” or “betrayed”⁷⁰ by his intimate disciple Judas, who

⁷⁰ Treatments of Judas commonly speak of his “betraying” Jesus and of the “betrayal.” While I use this terminology at times for the sake of convenience and convention, “to betray” is not the most accurate translation for the NT verb *παράδωμι*, which is routinely connected with Judas’s name in the four Gospels. Strictly speaking, the verb means to “hand over” or “give over”; the verb is used in the NT narratives to affirm that Judas “handed over,” “gave over,” or “delivered” Jesus to the hostile authorities. To be sure, in the specific context of an intimate, trusted disciple handing over his supposedly revered teacher to authorities who may have him executed, the act of handing over may indeed constitute an act of betrayal, but that further meaning comes from the larger framework of the story, not from the particular verb employed. And what is the larger context in the various Gospels? Simply as a matter of fact, Luke explicitly names Judas the “betrayers” (*προδότης*, 6:16), thus making clear how at least one NT author understood the terminology of “handing over.” The woe Jesus speaks at the Last Supper (Mark 14:21 parr.) over the one who hands him over indi-

in all four Gospels bears the mournful tag “one of the Twelve.”⁷¹

Indeed, the parallel between the scandal of Jesus’ cross and the scandal of Jesus’ being handed over to the authorities by Judas—and the parallel ways in which these events were handled or explained by the church—is instructive. As for the cross, for two obvious reasons practically no one would deny the fact

cates that Mark—along with Matthew and Luke—and probably the pre-Markan tradition (so Pesch, *Das Markusevangelium*, 2.346–53) likewise saw the handing over in a negative light. Of Matthew’s and John’s evaluations of Judas’s action we are hardly in doubt. But why, then, do the evangelists, including Luke, as well as the tradition before them, favor the verb παραδίδωμι (“hand over”)? One possible answer is that the use of the verb παραδίδωμι allows the NT authors to interweave Judas’s action with those of other persons, human and divine, who are said in one sense or another to hand Jesus over—notably God the Father, who, in a soteriological sense, hands Jesus over to his death (though here the verb is regularly put into the passive voice and the agent is left unexpressed); on all this, see Brown, *Death of the Messiah*, 1.211–13. What exactly constituted Judas’s act of “handing over” is hotly debated among scholars; probably it was his cooperation in telling the authorities when and where they could most easily arrest Jesus without public notice or uproar (so Brown, “Overall View of Judas Iscariot,” in *Death of the Messiah*, 2.1401). Debates over Judas’s motives, intentions, and moral culpability, while of theological interest, are insoluble from a purely historical point of view since we lack any firm data on these matters; the relevant statements in the Gospels and Acts represent early Christian theology. For a fanciful reconstruction, see William Klassen, *Judas: Betrayer or Friend of Jesus?* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996) 73–74. One is not surprised to see that Klassen’s book ends on pp. 205–7 with “A Suicide Note from Judas Iscariot, ca. 30 C.E.” The quest for the historical Judas, like the quest for the historical Jesus, often ends up giving us a novel.

⁷¹ Trilling (“Zur Entstehung,” 208) considers the tradition of the betrayal of Jesus by Judas, “one of the Twelve,” the strongest argument in favor of the pre-Easter existence of the Twelve; see also Wagenmann, *Die Stellung*, 5. Quite rightly, Trilling thinks that the various attempts of critics to explain how Judas became a member of a post-Easter group of disciples called the Twelve (or was retrojected into a mythical pre-Easter group called the Twelve) fail to convince. In what follows in the main text, the sole focus is on Judas as an argument for the existence of the Twelve during the public ministry; no attempt is made to cover all the material or questions about Judas. For various approaches to Judas (sometimes with a great deal of novelistic and psychological tendencies), see Donatus Haugg, *Judas Iskarioth in den neutestamentlichen Berichten* (Freiburg: Herder, 1930); Roman B. Halas, *Judas Iscariot* (Studies in Sacred Theology 96; Washington, DC: Catholic University of America, 1946); K. Lüthi, *Judas Iskarioth in der Geschichte der Auslegung von der Reformation bis zur Gegenwart* (Zurich: Zwingli, 1955); Oscar Cullmann, “Der zwölfte Apostel,” in *Vorträge und Aufsätze 1925–1962* (ed. Karlfried Fröhlich; Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck; Zurich: Zwingli, 1966) 214–22; Wiard Popkes, *Christus Traditus: Eine Untersuchung zum Begriff der Dahingabe im Neuen Testament* (Stuttgart/Zurich: Zwingli, 1967) 174–81, 217–18; Bertil Gärtner, *Iscariot* (FBBS 29; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971); J.-Alfred Morin, “Les deux derniers des Douze: Simon le Zélote et Judas Iskariöth,” *RB* 80 (1973) 332–58, esp. 349–58; H. L. Goldschmidt and M. Limbeck, *Heilvoller Verrat? Judas im Neuen Testament* (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1976); W. Vogler, *Judas Iskarioth* (Theologische Arbeiten 42; 2d ed.; Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1985); H. Wagner, ed., *Judas Iskariot* (Frankfurt: Knecht, 1985); Hans-Josef Klauck, *Judas—Ein Jünger des Herrn* (QD 111; Freiburg/Basel/Vienna: Herder, 1987); Günther Schwarz, *Jesus und Judas* (BWANT 123; Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1988); Paul McGlasson, *Jesus and Judas: Biblical Exegesis in Barth* (AAR Academy Series 72; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1991) 135–47; William Klassen, “Judas Iscariot,” *ABD* 3.1091–96; idem, *Judas*; Brown, “Overall View of Judas Iscariot,” *Death of the Messiah*, 2.1394–1418.

that Jesus was executed by crucifixion: (1) This central event is reported or alluded to not only by the vast majority of NT authors but also by Josephus and Tacitus (criterion of multiple attestation of sources and forms). (2) Such an embarrassing event created a major obstacle to converting Jews and Gentiles alike (see, e.g., 1 Cor 1:23), an obstacle that the church struggled to overcome with various theological arguments. The last thing the church would have done would have been to create a monumental scandal for which it then had to invent a whole apologetic (criterion of embarrassment). Precisely because the undeniable fact of Jesus' execution was so shocking, precisely because it seemed to make faith in this type of Messiah preposterous, the early church felt a need from the beginning to insist that Jesus' scandalous death was "according to the Scriptures," that it had been proclaimed beforehand by the OT prophets, and that individual OT texts even spelled out details of Jesus' passion. That Jesus' death became increasingly surrounded by OT texts used apologetically has caused almost no one to deny the brute and brutal fact of Jesus' execution. Rather, it was precisely the disturbing fact of his crucifixion that called for an explanation and so called forth a flood of OT quotations and allusions.

My point is that, in this whole process, Jesus' crucifixion stands in clear parallel to Jesus' being handed over by Judas. The same two criteria, multiple attestation and embarrassment, may be invoked to establish the historicity of both events. That Judas handed Jesus over to the authorities is attested independently by Mark, by John, and by the stray tradition lying behind the very different accounts of Judas's death presented by Matthew and Luke (M in Matt 27:3–10 and L in Acts 1:16–20).⁷² The criterion of embarrassment clearly comes into play as well, for there is no cogent reason why the early church should have gone out of its way to invent such a troubling tradition as Jesus' betrayal by Judas, one of his chosen Twelve. Why the church should have expended so much effort to create a story that it immediately had to struggle to explain away defies all logic. Rather, just like Jesus' death, Jesus' betrayal by Judas, a member of the intimate circle of the Twelve, called for an explanation and so called forth OT texts to soften the shock.

Not unlike Jesus' death, the earliest explanation of the betrayal may well have been the generic one: this has been prophesied, this has been written, this is according to the Scriptures. Just as the creedal formula in 1 Cor 15:3–5 contents itself with a generic "according to the Scriptures," so Mark 14:21 *parr.* explains in vague fashion: "The Son of Man goes his way as it is written concerning him; but woe to that man through whom the Son of Man is handed over." A similar vague reference to the fulfillment of Scripture is found in John 17:12: "And not one of them [i.e., Jesus' disciples] was lost except the son of perdition [Judas], in order that the Scripture might be fulfilled."

⁷² On this, see Rigaux, "Die 'Zwölf,'" 479.

A second, more developed stage of explanation can also be discerned. Just as in the passion narratives (e.g., the dividing of Jesus' clothing in Mark 15:24; cf. LXX Ps 21:19), references to scripture passages are woven into the story of the betrayal without being explicitly cited. For example, indicating that one of the Twelve at the Last Supper will betray him, Jesus prophesies that "one of you will hand me over, the one who eats with me" (Mark 14:18, with a possible allusion to, but not a direct citation of, LXX Ps 40:10).

In a still further stage of theological explanation, John's Gospel (13:18) has Jesus cite LXX Ps 40:10 explicitly to show that the betrayal by Judas was prophesied: "but in order that the Scripture be fulfilled, 'He who ate my bread lifted up his heel against me.'" Similarly, in the stories of Judas's death, explicit citations of scripture are used to demonstrate that the tragedy had been prophesied (Matt 27:9–10; Acts 1:16, 20). Jesus' being handed over by Judas thus parallels Jesus' death in a basic way: the shocking fact calls forth the scripture texts—not vice versa. The betrayal by Judas is no more a creation of OT prophecy used apologetically than is Jesus' death. Indeed, in the case of Judas, one must admit that most of the scripture texts cited apply to Judas only by a broad stretch of the imagination. The church was evidently struggling with the scandalous fact of the betrayal and did the best it could to find some OT texts that could qualify as prophecies of the tragedy. None of the texts cited, taken by itself, could have given rise to the idea of the betrayal of Jesus by one of the Twelve.⁷³

We can therefore put together the following three points: (1) Judas was a

⁷³ The betrayal of Jesus by Judas, "one of the Twelve," is a major stumbling block for the position of Vielhauer; ironically, in this dilemma, he mirrors the early church. The contorted reasoning by which he tries to show how the church derived from OT texts the idea that one of the Twelve betrayed Jesus fails to convince ("Gottesreich," 70). He is willing to allow as historical fact that one of Jesus' disciples betrayed him (why this much of the Judas tradition is accepted but not the rest is never made clear). The early church then sought scripture texts (understood as prophecies) to explain this scandalous fact. The church invented the scene of Jesus' designation of the betrayer at the Last Supper, creating the allusion to MT Ps 41:10 or LXX Ps 40:10 (a trusted friend who shared meals with the psalmist then attacks him)—an allusion that was later made explicit in John 13:18. The idea of betrayal by a table companion who had been a long-term follower of Jesus gave rise in turn to the idea of betrayal by one of the Twelve, once the group of the Twelve had arisen in the early church and then been retrojected into the life of Jesus. Not only is this theory in general convoluted and gratuitous; it also fails specifically because (1) the supposedly pivotal Psalm verse is never explicitly cited prior to John's Gospel; (2) in any event, the Psalm verse says nothing about *handing over* one's table companion to his enemies, a key element of the Judas tradition; (3) the complicated, multistage tradition history Vielhauer postulates demands a fair amount of time for the idea of betrayal by one of the Twelve to develop in the church; yet the tradition of the betrayal by Judas is already embedded in both the pre-Markan and the pre-Johannine passion traditions; (4) finally, Vielhauer's theory never explains adequately why or how the same name (Judas Iscariot [or Judas son of Simon Iscariot]) arose independently in both the pre-Markan and pre-Johannine passion traditions as the name of the member of the Twelve who turned traitor. For a critique of Vielhauer's theory from a slightly different angle, see Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 99–101.

member of the Twelve; this historical fact is supported by multiple attestation of sources (the Markan and L lists of the Twelve; the pre-Markan passion narrative lying behind Mark 14:10, 20, 43; John 6:71; and the special L tradition lying behind Acts 1:15–26). (2) Jesus was handed over to the authorities by Judas; this historical fact is supported by multiple attestation, as we have just seen. (3) Finally, as we have also just seen, that Jesus was handed over by Judas is also supported by the criterion of embarrassment. Hence, the fact that Judas, one of the Twelve, handed Jesus over to the authorities is firmly rooted in the historical tradition and so too, by logical consequence, is the existence of the group called the Twelve, to which Judas belonged.⁷⁴

One regrets the need to plod through such detailed reasoning to prove what should be evident to anyone. But, by their strange denials of the obvious, critics like Vielhauer, Klein, Schmithals, and Crossan make it necessary to argue at length to demonstrate what most people have never doubted. The arguments these critics use to deny the betrayal by Judas vary, but they are all equally convoluted. To take the grand example: Vielhauer holds that Jesus was indeed handed over by one of his disciples. But, according to Vielhauer, it was the early church that used OT prophecies to create Judas, one of the Twelve, and to make him the one who handed Jesus over. Judas, like the Twelve, was retrojected by the church into the story of Jesus' passion and death.

Now, all this demands a very odd tradition history. On the one hand, the attempt of the early church to insert the Twelve (a group that supposedly arose only after Easter) back into the ministry of Jesus presupposes a desire to exalt the Twelve and magnify their status in the church. On the other hand, we are to suppose that, roughly around the same time, the church created the story that one of the Twelve was Jesus' betrayer. The two actions cancel each other out. Moreover, for the theory to work, one must suppose that, within a few years, the early church had totally forgotten the name of the disciple marked by the

⁷⁴ In his book *Who Killed Jesus?*, Crossan avoids the improbable hypotheses of Vielhauer and Klein by admitting that a disciple named Judas did actually betray the historical Jesus. But then Crossan proceeds to deny the natural inference that the circle of the Twelve, to whom Judas belonged, existed during Jesus' ministry. He does this by denying that Judas was a member of the Twelve. Judas could not have been a member of the Twelve since (claims Crossan) the Twelve as a fixed group did not exist during the ministry of Jesus. Instead of arguing this pivotal point at length, Crossan simply declares apodictically (p. 75): "I do not think he [Judas] was a member of the Twelve, because that symbolic grouping of Twelve new Christian patriarchs to replace the Twelve ancient Jewish patriarchs did not take place until after Jesus' death. There are, for example, whole sections of early Christianity that never heard of that institution. But different and independent early Christian traditions knew about him [Judas]. . . ." This is a strange type of reasoning; these same arguments, used in the same sweeping manner, could just as easily prove the opposite since (1) different and independent early Christian traditions knew about the Twelve and (2) whole sections of early Christianity never heard about Judas or at least never mention him in the NT. Much more careful application of the criteria of historicity to the data is required.

dubious distinction of having handed Jesus over to the authorities—hardly a likely lapse of memory for a religious movement that preserved lists of the names of the Twelve (Mark 3:16–19 parr.), of the four brothers of Jesus (Mark 6:3 par.), of the Seven Hellenists (Acts 6:5), of the earliest prophets and teachers at Antioch (Acts 13:1), and of various female followers of Jesus (Mark 15:40 parr.; Luke 8:2-3).⁷⁵

Taking a somewhat different tack from Vielhauer, Günter Klein and Walter Schmithals hold that the story of Judas reflects some notorious case of apostasy in the early church. Schmithals, for instance, claims that Judas, one of the Twelve who experienced a resurrection appearance (as stated in 1 Cor 15:5), later committed apostasy, denounced the Christian community to the authorities, and so in that sense “handed Jesus over.”⁷⁶ When the Twelve were retrojected into the life of Jesus, Judas the betrayer was likewise retrojected into the passion narrative.

Actually, an intriguing phenomenon can be detected as we watch Klein, Schmithals, Crossan, and other critics develop Vielhauer’s basic approach or provide variations thereof: the more one tries to explain away the NT testimony about Judas, the member of the Twelve who handed Jesus over, the more one begins to write a novel whose plot has no empirical basis in the data of the NT documents. Even more intriguingly, when we look at the various reconstructions of Vielhauer, Klein, Schmithals, and Crossan, we notice one key agreement amid all their disagreements:

1. According to Klein and Schmithals, Judas, a member of the post-Easter group called the Twelve, betrayed the early church; he, his betrayal, and the whole group of the Twelve were subsequently retrojected into the life of Jesus.

2. According to Vielhauer, instead, some disciple of Jesus did actually hand him over; it is the idea that the betrayer was one of the Twelve, along, of course, with the group called the Twelve, that was later retrojected into the life of Jesus.⁷⁷

3. Crossan goes the German skeptics one better by streamlining the whole approach. He maintains both that Judas was a historical follower of Jesus

⁷⁵ On this point, see Rigaux, “Die ‘Zwölf,’” 478.

⁷⁶ Schmithals, *Office of Apostle*, 69.

⁷⁷ Meye (*Jesus and the Twelve*, 208) rightly observes of Vielhauer’s approach: “Judas is first stolen away from Jesus’ company along with the whole pre-Easter circle of the Twelve . . . and then by a most intricate process returned to Jesus’ company, with the Twelve, as a theological postulate.” See also Eduard Schweizer, *Das Evangelium nach Markus* (NTD 1; 2d ed.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1968) 71–72. Schille thinks that the difficulty of explaining Judas’s position in the later tradition of the Twelve is eased if we suppose that Judas belonged to the group of Galilean pilgrims around Jesus who went up with him to Jerusalem for the final Passover (*Die urchristliche Kollegialmission*, 148). How this explains the inexplicable escapes me.

and that he did actually hand Jesus over. According to Crossan, it was simply the post-Easter group called the Twelve (and consequently Judas's membership in the Twelve) that was retrojected into the life of Jesus.

Amid all these disagreements among the critics, one espies the all-determining point of agreement: come what may, the Twelve *must* not exist during the life of Jesus, for this would contradict all the portraits these critics paint of Jesus—especially the popular American one of Jesus the egalitarian Cynic with no concern for the future eschatology of the people Israel. Since the betrayer Judas, as one of the Twelve, is a chief obstacle to the critics' denial of the Twelve's existence during Jesus' ministry⁷⁸—and of all that the Twelve imply for Jesus' mission and message—Judas must somehow be explained away. How exactly he is explained away is not all that important—witness the divergent theories of these critics.⁷⁹ What is determinative here is not historical data but the a priori decision that the Twelve did not—*must* not—exist during Jesus' ministry. From this one decision flow all the critics' convoluted and improbable tradition histories, created simply to avoid accepting a NT tradition that is supported by various criteria of historicity.⁸⁰

Going through these theories is tiresome, to be sure. But at the very least, such an exercise makes us reflectively aware of why we affirm the historicity of certain significant aspects of Jesus' life, including the key data that he created a circle called the Twelve, one of whom handed him over to the authorities. As an extra dividend, our brief study of the Judas tradition serves another purpose: it refutes any wholesale rejection of the historicity of the passion narratives. Our examination of the betrayal by Judas has demonstrated that a relatively minor event in the passion narratives is nevertheless factual. We are not left with massive agnosticism beyond the mere fact that Jesus was crucified under Pontius Pilate. Therefore, if a specific incident in the passion narratives is to be judged a creation of the early church—which is certainly the case at times—the spe-

⁷⁸ This point is stressed by Trilling, "Zur Entstehung," 208.

⁷⁹ Witness, indeed, the twists and turns of a single critic's position. In his article "Der Markusschluss, die Verklärungsgeschichte und die Aussendung der Zwölf," *ZTK* 69 (1972) 379–411, written after *The Office of Apostle*, Schmithals waffles on the question of whence and how Judas and the tradition about him arose. A number of suggestions are offered; their imaginative nature may be judged by the following: "It is also possible that Mark wished to discredit as the 'betrayer of Jesus' a former disciple of Jesus who was named Judas Iscariot and who was appealed to as a bearer of tradition by Christian circles that Mark is attacking in his Gospel." To make room for Judas in the list of the Twelve, Mark may have replaced Judas of James with Judas Iscariot.

⁸⁰ Perhaps the basic lack of cogency in the various attempts to deny the existence of the Twelve during Jesus' ministry is reflected in the hesitation of Wellhausen (*Einleitung*, 112), one of the earliest proponents of the theory. He thinks it probable that the Twelve did not belong to the life of Jesus but first appeared at the beginning of the apostolic period. Yet he adds that it is possible that they were Jesus' companions at the Last Supper and thus in a certain way were the "testamentary heirs of the Master."

cific arguments for that position must be spelled out. A sweeping, global argument about OT prophecies creating the whole passion narrative will not do.

C. In addition to the specific criteria of multiple attestation and embarrassment, we should ponder a final, more general consideration: the whole way in which the tradition about the Twelve crests and ebbs in the NT period argues in favor of the Twelve's origin in the life of the historical Jesus rather than in the first Christian generation.⁸¹ If the group of the Twelve had arisen in the early days of the church and, for whatever reason, reached such prominence that its presence, unlike that of other church leaders (e.g., the Seven Hellenists, Barnabas, the prophets and teachers at Antioch), was massively retrojected into the Gospel traditions, one would have expected that the history of the first Christian generation would be replete with examples of the Twelve's powerful presence and activity in the church.

The exact opposite is the case. As we have seen, the Twelve are mentioned in the four Gospels, in the pre-Pauline formula in 1 Cor 15:5, and in the early chapters of the Acts of the Apostles (the group called the Twelve is never mentioned after Acts 6:2, while even references to "the apostles" diminish notably after chap. 8, disappearing entirely after 16:4). This exhausts all purportedly historical reports of the Twelve in the NT. They are mentioned again only fleetingly in Rev 21:14, an apocalyptic vision of the heavenly Jerusalem at the end of time ("the twelve apostles of the Lamb").

What should strike us immediately in this list are the gaping holes. The only writer from the first Christian generation whom we know by name and of whom we know any detailed facts is Paul. In his epistles, Paul alludes to his interaction with or compares himself to other church leaders—notably James, Peter, and John, but also Barnabas, Apollos, the apostles, and the brothers of Jesus. In stark contrast, what is glaringly absent in Paul's letters is any mention of the Twelve, the fossil of a reference preserved in the primitive creed of 1 Cor 15:5 being the sole exception that proves the rule. When we stop to consider how Paul goes on at length about his relations or struggles with Peter, James, John, Barnabas, Apollos, and various apostles or "pseudo-apostles" in the churches of Jerusalem, Antioch, Galatia, and Corinth during the 30s, 40s, and 50s of the first century, it is astounding that Paul never mentions his relations or interaction with the Twelve as a group. Likewise surprising is that Luke, for all the emphasis he puts on the Twelve as a living link between the time of Jesus and the time of the church, has increasingly little to say about the Twelve as the chapters of Acts pass on. The total silence from the rest of the epistolary litera-

⁸¹ For this type of argument, see A. M. Farrer, "The Ministry in the New Testament," in *The Apostolic Ministry* (ed. Kenneth E. Kirk; London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1946) 113–82, esp. 119–20.

ture of the NT—deutero-Paul, James, Peter, John, Jude, and Hebrews—is equally deafening.⁸²

The only reasonable conclusion one can draw to explain the cresting and ebbing of references to the Twelve in the NT is the commonsense one: the Twelve are prominent in the story of Jesus because that is where they actually played a significant role. On the basis of their close relationship with Jesus, which they claimed had been restored and confirmed by a resurrection appearance, the role of the Twelve continued into the earliest days of the church; but it declined and disappeared with surprising rapidity.

The reasons for the swift disappearance or total absence of the Twelve from most of the NT are unclear. Perhaps some members of the Twelve, like the martyred James, the son of Zebedee, died in the first decade after the crucifixion; and no attempt was made to replenish a foundational group that was not viewed as ongoing in the church. Once this happened, it would make sense to speak of influential individuals like Peter, but it made little sense to continue to speak of the Twelve in regard to the present situation of the church, as opposed to remembering the Twelve's activity in the life of Jesus or in the earliest days of the church. Other explanations for the early disappearance of the Twelve are also possible: for example, the power of the Twelve as a group was eclipsed by the ascendancy of individual leaders like Peter or James, or some other members of the Twelve imitated Peter in undertaking a mission to Diaspora Jews in the East or the West—thus leaving no visible group of twelve leaders “on the scene” in Palestine.

Whatever the reason or reasons for their disappearance, clearly the Twelve were present and active during the life of Jesus and the earliest days of the church; and, just as clearly, their presence and activity soon waned. So quickly did they fade from the scene that the majority of the names in the lists of the Twelve are just that—names and little more. This hardly coheres with a revisionist theory that would want to deny the Twelve's existence as a group during the ministry of Jesus and to postulate a sudden, meteoric rise of influence in the early church.⁸³ This is a prime example of ignoring the simple and obvious

⁸² The same could be said for almost the entire corpus of the apostolic fathers. The use of “twelve” to mean the twelve apostles or disciples is limited to the title of the *Didache* (which is probably a secondary accretion to the body of the work; see Kurt Niederwimmer, *Die Didache* [Kommentar zu den Apostolischen Vätern 1; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1989] 81–82) and to an indirect reference within an allegory of *Herm. Sim.* 9.17.1 (the twelve mountains represent the twelve tribes to whom the apostles preached the Son of God).

⁸³ Schmithals mentions yet completely misunderstands this point in *Office of the Apostle*, 69–70. He constructs the highly unlikely scenario of (1) a life of Jesus without the Twelve, (2) the sudden creation of the Twelve after Easter as a result of a resurrection appearance, (3) the conferral of such an important and lofty status on the Twelve in the early church that the group was retrojected into various streams of NT tradition (Mark, Q, L, and John), (4) the disintegration of the Twelve quite early on, as early as the apostasy of Judas and not later than the martyrdom of James

explanation that arises naturally from the NT data in favor of a convoluted theory that is based on next to no evidence.

III. Conclusion

In brief, when one draws together the arguments from multiple attestation of sources and forms (Mark, L, John, Q, and pre-Pauline tradition), the argument from embarrassment, and the argument for the general flow of the NT traditions about the Twelve, and when one adds to these the grave difficulties under which alternative hypotheses labor, one position emerges as clearly the more probable: the circle of the Twelve did exist during Jesus' public ministry. The impact of this position on our view of the mission and eschatology of Jesus has already been intimated in this article. But a full consideration must await further work.

the son of Zebedee, and consequently (5) the almost total absence of the Twelve from the rest of the traditions and writings of the first-century church. (6) Things become more complicated if one adds refinements from his later article, "Der Markusschluss," 398–401 (e.g., Mark was the first to retroject the Twelve into the public ministry). Such a convoluted hypothesis, with a meteoric rise followed by a meteoric fall, strains credulity and in the end is totally unnecessary.