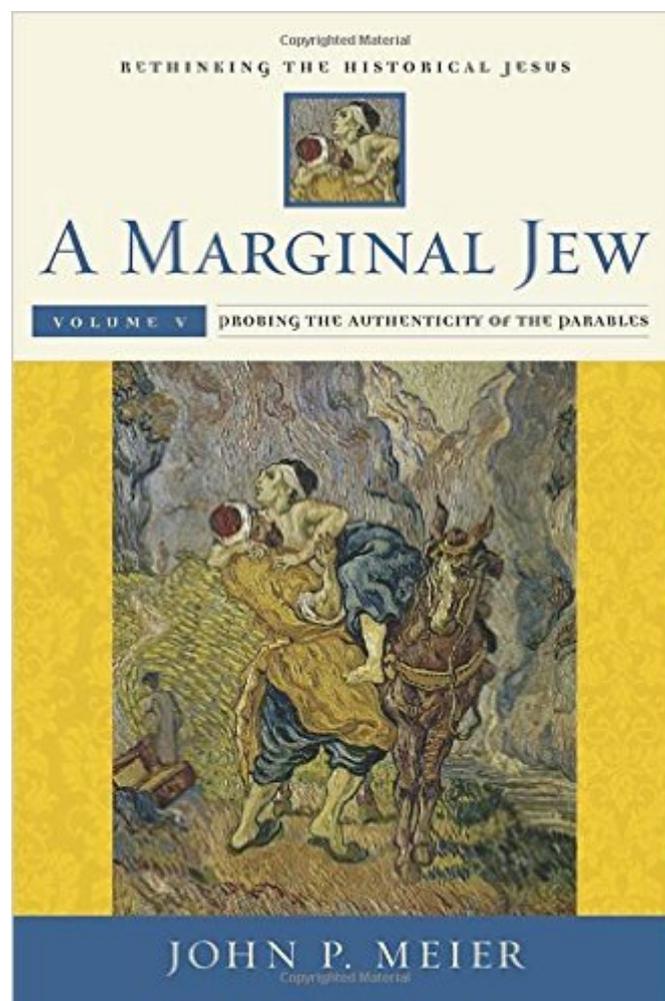


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# A Marginal Jew: Rethinking The Historical Jesus, Volume V: Probing The Authenticity Of The Parables (The Anchor Yale Bible Reference Library)



## Synopsis

Since the late nineteenth century, New Testament scholars have operated on the belief that most, if not all, of the narrative parables in the Synoptic Gospels can be attributed to the historical Jesus. This book challenges that consensus and argues instead that only four parables—those of the Mustard Seed, the Evil Tenants, the Talents, and the Great Supper—can be attributed to the historical Jesus with fair certitude. In this eagerly anticipated fifth volume of *A Marginal Jew*, John Meier approaches this controversial subject with the same rigor and insight that garnered his earlier volumes praise from such publications as the *New York Times* and *Christianity Today*. This seminal volume pushes forward his masterful body of work in his ongoing quest for the historical Jesus.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I was very pleased to see the fifth volume of "A Marginal Jew" published this year, particularly on such an interesting topic as the parables. I have read and poured over the four previous volumes and found them ALL to be of top-notch writing and reasoning. I eagerly churned through vol. 5. These books are quite literally master works, and result from years and years of Meier's™s impressive and painstaking care, rigor, and analyses. What a lens to try to see history from 2,000 years ago! Working your way through vol.5 will remind you of the vast grasp of knowledge that Meier possesses on New Testament writings, prophetic Old Testament passages, early turn of the Common Era history, non-Canonical writings, other scholarship / scholars and Church history / Theology / Christology--- There's even a brief, pertinent discussion on Orwell's "Animal Farm." It is

precisely Meier's strong intellect, keen judgement, and dedication to historical critical analyses -- regardless of where the findings may lead him -- that make these books so valuable and separate him (at a great distance) from the rest of the pack of Bible scholars and historians. Vol. 5 is in keeping with all that has gone before it in Vols. 1-4 and involves particularly sensitive (because it is beloved) but murky material -- the historicity of the parables. Meier bravely blazes forward, anticipating and addressing in several places those readers that may grow increasingly uncomfortable with the slim number of "authentic" determinations as Meier shifts through the Gospel material. WARNING to readers of faith: Make every effort to carefully take in and then understand Meier's points on the Historical Jesus, the "Real" Jesus and the Jesus of Christology and what his methodology yields and doesn't yield.

No one familiar with John Meier's work would be surprised that this volume is comprehensively researched and cogently argued. It is a pleasure to watch a master plying his trade. One would have to say that he does well what he sets out to do. Was it worth doing? Another novelist (H.G. Wells, perhaps) once observed that reading a Henry James novel was like watching a hippo pick up a pea. The effort was out of all proportion to the result. The first volume in this series saw print in 1991. This fifth volume is not the last. Meier's meticulously reasoned conclusion is that only four of the parables probably stem from "the historical Jesus." One must note that the "probability" here is nowhere near so high as the probability that Jesus spoke his troubling divorce logion. The argument in favor of the parable of the Mustard Seed depends on Meier's having discovered Q and Mark versions of the parable. The argument in favor of the parables of the Great Supper and the Servants Entrusted with Money depends on his having teased out M and L versions. The argument in favor of the Vineyard Tenants is that the original form (ending with the murder of the son) is discontinuous with anything the Church might have fabricated. These are reasonable rather than overwhelming arguments. It is undeniable, in Meier's view, that Jesus was a famous teller of parables; yet we have at most four parables that he probably told. Had Oscar Wilde made only four witty remarks, would people remember him as a great wit? Has the tradition exaggerated Jesus' fondness for parables? Or did he tell lots of parables, but parables so unmemorable that within a generation his followers had forgotten all but four?

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