CHAPTER 3
THE EARLY JESUS-MOVEMENT AND THE TEMPLE

1. Introduction

1.1 Problems of historical criticism

This chapter will explore the traditions about and attitudes to the Temple which can be connected to the early Jesus-movement prior to the Jewish War (66-70 CE). In the decades from Jesus’ ministry up to the eve of the Jewish War, the early Jesus-movement developed into a manifold missionary movement which spread from Israel to the Diaspora. This development has to be taken into account when we deal with the issue of the earliest Christian traditions about the Temple. The historical problem of identifying such early traditions is twofold.

First, except for Paul’s letters, our earliest Christian sources about Jesus and his first followers are of a later date. The canonical Gospels as well as other canonical and apocryphal early Christian texts were presumably written between the last years of the Jewish War and several decades afterwards.¹ These texts primarily reflect the communal concerns and standpoints of their audiences with regard to the preaching of the gospel of Christ.² Since the texts which have come down to us mainly address congregations in the Diaspora, they are in various ways at a distance from the historical milieu of Jesus, that is, Israel and Palestinian Judaism.³ In order to reconstruct pre-70 CE Christian perspectives on the Temple, we therefore have to deal with the difficult question of which sources from the historical milieu of Jesus, both written and oral, underlie the earliest Christian writings.

Second, the vast difference between the pre-70 CE and the post-70 CE situation poses a further problem of historical criticism which is also a basic concern of the present chapter. After all, the Romans captured Jerusalem and destroyed the Temple in 70 CE at the end of the Jewish War. The majority of the earliest Christian writings which refer to the ministry of Jesus and to the social setting of the early Jesus-movement were written down after 70 CE. The destruction of the Jerusalem Temple coloured post-70 CE Christian polemics against Judaism, because Christianity separated its ways from Judaism.⁴ It may reasonably be wondered whether these changed historical circumstances after 70 CE also coloured the perspective on the Temple.

² Cf. Theißen & Merz, Der historische Jesus, 25 about this point of the primary kerygmatic character of Jesus-tradition made by form-critical studies of M. Dibelius, K.L. Schmidt, R. Bultmann and others.
³ Cf. e.g. passages in Mark (7:3-4) and John (5:1, 6:4) which reflect a distance to the Jews and their religious practices. Schnelle, Einleitung. 262 refers to scholarly studies about the idea that ‘your/their synagogues’ in Matt 4:23, 9:35, 10:17, 12:9, 13:54, 23:34 implies a distance. Cf. G. Theißen, Lokalkolorit und Zeitgeschichte. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der synoptischen Tradition (Freiburg Switzerland / Göttingen 1992) 264-270 about textual evidence in Luke which suggests that the author of this Gospel would have a foreigner’s perspective on the geography of Israel. Cf. Theißen & Merz, Der historische Jesus, 51-69.
⁴ Cf. e.g. Ignatius, To the Magnesians 8-10; Letter of Barnabas 4, 9-10, 15-16; Justin, Dialogue with Trypho 22:11, 40:2; Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History II, 6, 23.
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An important example of the question whether post-70 CE circumstances have coloured the picture of Jesus’ ministry in the Gospels is the synoptic tradition about Jesus’ prophecy of the destruction of the Temple. This prophecy stands at the beginning of an eschatological passage (Mark 13:1-2.3-37, Matt 24:1-2.3-36, Luke 21:5-6.7-36). This eschatological passage concerns the interpretation of signs about events in the future and the expected end of the age. Certain ‘future events’, like persecution and the flight of followers of Jesus from Judaea, concern contemporary experiences of the early Jesus-movement. However, do they directly relate to Jesus’ words or rather to an interpretation of Jesus’ words in light of later events? What part of the passage can be isolated as an early tradition which relates to the historical milieu of Jesus, and what part consists of elaborations by the evangelist in his editorial framework? This is a methodical problem which we need to deal with in order to identify pre-70 CE levels of Gospel tradition.

In our search of pre-70 CE traditions, we need to distinguish between different levels of tradition which may all be important for our understanding of the Jesus-movement contemporary to Paul. One level of tradition centralises the words and deeds of Jesus with regard to the Temple as they were remembered by the direct environment of his followers. A second level of tradition emphasises interpretations of Jesus’ words by his followers in light of later, but still pre-70 CE, experiences and circumstances. An important example of this is the witness to and preaching of the resurrection of Jesus Christ (cf. e.g. John 2:21-22). A third level of tradition concerns the attitudes of Jesus’ followers to the Temple and may in some way be related to their gospel preaching (cf. e.g. Luke 24:52-53, Acts 3:1.11, 7:44-50f.). In our analysis of the different sources about the early Jesus-movement we will need to distinguish between these levels of tradition.

1.2 The conceptual starting point: the early Jesus-movement before 70 CE

An important aspect of the historical analysis of pre-70 CE traditions is the way in which we conceptualise the early Jesus-movement. The term ‘Christians’ (Χριστιανοί) is a relatively late marker for the collective identity of the early Jesus-movement. According to several scholars it originates from a negative, external way of designating the earliest followers of Jesus as a political threat to the status quo. The term Χριστιανοί only appears in three passages of the canonical New Testament (Acts 11:26, 26:28, 1 Pet 4:16). The earliest documents of the canonical New Testament, that is, Paul’s Letters which are dated between ca. 49 and 61 CE, do not comprise the term ‘Christians’ at all. Paul instead refers to believers in Christ, addressing both Jews and Greeks (cf. e.g. Rom 1:16, 1 Cor 1:21-24). In Galatians 2:15-16, Paul calls himself and possibly to other co-workers ‘we Jews by birth’, ἡμεῖς φύλακε Ιουδαίοι, who know that they are justified through faith in Jesus Christ. Co-workers of Paul, like Prisca, Aquila and Apollos, are each individually described as Jews (Ἰουδαῖος) in the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 18:2.24).


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The early Jesus-movement started as a Jewish movement in Israel. Terms such as ‘Galileans’ for the apostles in Jerusalem (e.g. Acts 1:11, 2:7) and ‘the sect of the Nazoreans’ (e.g. in Acts 24:5) attest to this beginning of the missionary Jesus-movement as a Jewish movement. Although the Jesus-movement eventually attracted both Jewish and Gentile converts, the spreading of the mission initially depended on the first followers of Jesus, who were most of all Jewish.

In my view the traditional scholarly construct ‘Jewish Christianity’ is problematic as a descriptive term for the early Jesus-movement. For this term has the disadvantage that it is indistinctly used for certain texts within the New Testament and for groups branded as heretical sects in patristic literature. ‘Jewish Christianity’ suggests that one branch of Christianity is concerned, whereas it appears to apply only to a later situation in which the churches outside Israel had become more dominant than the Jerusalem church. Because of our focus on the early Jesus-movement, we should think in terms of ‘Christian Jews’ and ‘early Christian-Jewish traditions’. This terminology underlines the fact that the first followers of Jesus were and saw themselves as Jews who had embraced the faith in Jesus Christ.

1.3 The historical framework for our approach to the early Jesus-movement

My primary concern in this chapter consists of the identification of different levels of Gospel tradition about the early Jesus-movement and the Temple and of a reconstructed image of the ways in which gospel traditions about the Temple were spread to the Diaspora. In order to identify different levels of pre-70 CE tradition about the early Jesus-movement and the Temple, I will proceed with my discussion according to the following subdivision of issues.

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7 Cf. Taylor, ‘Why were the disciples first called ‘Christians’ at Antioch’, 90 n. 46 refers to a statement in the 10th century Byzantine Suidae Lexicon, X 523 (ἐν ἀντιοχείᾳ μετανοοῦσαν οἱ πάλαι λεγόμενοι Ναζαρεῖοι καὶ Γαλιλαίοι Χριστιανοί) of which the ‘former names’ seem to correspond to e.g. Acts 1:11, 2:7 (Γαλιλαίοι) and 24:5 (ἡ τῶν Ναζαρηνῶν αἵματι).


9 Note the mediatory role of Jesus’ disciples Philip and Andrew between certain curious ‘Greeks’ (Ἐλληνίζεις πιστεύεις), perhaps godfearers among those who went up to worship, and Jesus himself in John 12:20-22f.

10 Cf. e.g. the recent survey by J. Carleton Paget, ‘Jewish Christianity’, in CHJ III The Early Roman period, 731-775, which also deals with problems of definition of the neologism of ‘Jewish Christians’ at length; cf. 733 where Carleton Paget applies the term to certain groups of Christians like the Ebionites, Nazarenes and Elchasaites as described by Christian writers from the late second century CE onwards. Further on, however, on page 742, Carleton Paget applies the term also to the early Jesus-movement: “In the beginning of all Christianity was Jewish Christianity. The first Christians were practising Jews operating within the sphere of Judaism”.

First, I will survey the prophetic and post-biblical traditions of cult criticism and the use by Jesus and the early Jesus-movement of such traditions. The question emerges how to separate post-70 CE circumstances of compilation or even redaction from an accurate historical picture of the attitudes of Jesus and his earliest followers towards the Temple in our interpretation of passages like Mark 11:15-19 (par.), Matthew 12:1-8 (par.), and Acts 7:48-50. Prophetic inspiration is, however, a prominent element in traditions about the beginning of the Jesus-movement (cf. Mark 1:1-3, Matt 1:22-23, 3:1-3, Luke 4:16-21, Gospel of Thomas logion 52). Thus, the question of a Jewish framework for cult criticism within the early Jesus-movement must be considered seriously.

Second, the sources about the historical Jesus and their problems will be discussed. The importance of the apocryphal and non-Christian sources next to the traditional, canonical New Testament writings is the starting-point for our discussion. In view of the pluriformity of the early Jesus-movement, we would present an incomplete picture of the historical Jesus if we were to exclude the non-canonical and non-Christian texts from our discussion by dismissing it a priori as secondary or unreliable information.12

Third, I will discuss the historical background and milieu of Jesus. That is, I will refer to important aspects of first century CE Galilee and survey how recent scholarly studies, textual as well as archaeological, have modified the picture of the Galilean milieu of the historical Jesus. I will subsequently examine whether and to what extent we can get a notion of contemporary Galilean attitudes to the Temple. Then I will explore what Jesus’ Galilean origin and the contemporary Jewish attitudes to the Temple may contribute to our understanding of Jesus’ attitude to the Temple.

Fourth, the question about the relation between Jesus and his followers on the one hand and John the Baptist and his baptist movement on the other will be the focus of our attention. I will evaluate the significance of connections as well as differences between Jesus’ socio-religious position and that of John the Baptist. With regard to the subject of attitudes to the Temple, a comparison between the socio-religious role of John’s baptism and the socio-religious significance of the Temple may be illustrative. In this connection, I will examine how Jesus’ appeal to John’s baptism in the synoptic tradition should be understood.

Fifth, I will turn to a discussion of individual Gospel traditions about Jesus’ attitude to the religious practices of the Temple cult and his deeds and words related to the Temple. At the level of the interpretation of Jesus’ words by his followers, I will discuss the subject of the Temple as a metaphor in Jesus-traditions. My discussion intends to distinguish clearly between verbal transmission, later interpretation, and redaction to the extent that this is possible in studying the Gospel traditions.

Eventually, I will consider the pre-70 CE perspectives of the early followers of Jesus on the Temple. In this connection, my study focuses on the encounters of the early Jesus-movement with Jewish movements, such as the priestly establishment and the Pharisees, with regard to their attitudes to the Temple. I will further address the question about the possible relations between the early Christian-Jewish attitudes to the Temple and Essene views about the Temple. The tradition in the Acts of the Apostles about Stephen’s polemic against the Temple is a specific case for our discussion, since it sets the scene for a transition to missionary activity beyond Israel into the Diaspora in the agenda of the author of Luke-Acts. The transition from Israel to the Diaspora is treated by way of epilogue to this chapter, as I focus on Temple traditions related to Jesus and the early Jesus-movement in Israel.

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12 Cf. Theißen & Merz, Der historische Jesus, 36-41; H. Koester, Ancient Christian Gospels. Their History and Development (SCM: London / Trinity Press International: Philadelphia, 1990) 43-48 at 44 about the ‘prevailing prejudice’: “Even in recent times, scholars have characterized the apocryphal gospels as secondary, derivative, speculative, and merely concerned with the edification and entertainment of their readers, while the canonical gospels are routinely seen as original, historical, and replete with theological insight”. 

2. Prophetic traditions of cult criticism

2.1 Prophetic traditions: the priority of morality above ritual

The prophetic traditions of cult criticism are mainly found in the books of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Amos, Hosea, and Micah. They stress the moral outrage against the corruption of the Temple worship by practices of unrighteousness and godlessness in which the people of Israel engage, even though Israel is considered holy by God (cf. Lev 19). The prophetic cult criticism usually applies to Israel, but may also concern Judah and Jerusalem in particular.

Isaiah 1:11-13 voices the moral outrage as follows: “1:11 For what purpose to me is there a multitude of sacrifices, says the Lord. I have become weary of the whole burnt-offerings of rams, the fat of the bullocks, the blood of young bulls, young rams, and full-grown rams. I do not desire them. 12 When you enter to appear before me, who requires this trampling of my courts by you? 13 You shall not bring any vain offering any more; the smoke of the sacrifice is an abomination to me. There are new moon, Sabbath, and the convocation of an assembly, but I cannot endure wickedness together with solemn assembly”. Similarly, Jeremiah’s cult criticism occurs in the context of an admonition against the people of Judah and Jerusalem that they have disobeyed God’s words and law (Jer 6:19): “Your whole burnt-offerings are not desired, and your sacrifices do not please me”. The priority of righteousness above ritual pervades the prophetic traditions of cult criticism. Thus, Jeremiah 7:21-23 conveys the idea that a way of life in accordance with God’s commandments is more important than the ritual cult of burnt offerings and sacrifices. Amos 5:21-24 voices a similar priority by saying that justice and righteousness should be established before Israel’s cult of sacrifices and offerings can be acceptable to God. Amos 5:25-27 even juxtaposes Israel’s period in the wilderness without a sacrificial cult to the contemporary situation which is associated with idolatrous practices and impending exile. Hosea 6:6 conveys the prophetic message of cult criticism as follows: “For I desire loyalty, not sacrifice, and knowledge of God rather than whole burnt-offerings”. Prophetic criticism of the Temple cult is finally expressed in Micah 6:6-8.

The universalising message about the Temple cult, found in the post-restoration oracles in Isaiah 56:6-8 and 60:1-14, further raises the idea that only God’s righteousness and glory are of transcending significance. Thus, in Isaiah 56:7 we read that the Temple shall be called “a house of prayer for all peoples”, thereby including foreigners (cf. Isa 56:3-6). The moral precondition is conveyed in the preceding verses (Isa 56:1-2) which stress the need to do righteousness and keep God’s commandments. Isaiah 60:8-14 envisages how foreigners add to the glorification of Israel and the Jerusalem Temple. At the same time, God’s transcending glory is expressed in Isaiah 60:13. In this verse, the ‘place of my Temple’ is paralleled by ‘the place of my feet’. This image of the ‘place of my feet’ appears to correspond to Isaiah 66:1: “Thus says the Lord: ‘The heavens are my throne and the earth is my footstool. Where then is this house which you will build for me, and where is this resting-place for me?’. The passage of Isaiah 66:1-6 supports the idea that the ritual of Temple cult without obedience to God’s words is just idolatry.

13 My translations of passages from the Prophets are based on the MT. The LXX has a slightly different text for the first part of Isa 1:13; whereas the MT reads ἀφετέρους τε καὶ ἀνθρώπους, the LXX reads ὅπου τὸ προσφέροντος εἶδος ἐσφέραντο χρήστον, μὴ συμβαίνειν, which seems to concretise the general term ‘vain offering’, ἄφετέρους ἀνθρώπους, of the MT.

14 Note the equivalent terms for ‘solemn assembly’ in the passages from Isaiah and Amos concerning cult criticism; קָרָאתָם in MT Isa 1:13; קָרָאתָם in MT Amos 5:21. Cf. 1 Samuel 15:22.

15 This thematic contrast between original devotion in the wilderness and idolatry in a cultivated state is also found in Jeremiah 2:2-3 and Hosea 2:14-20 and 9:10.
2.2 The impact and use of prophetic traditions

a. Prophetic cult criticism in other biblical and apocryphal texts

Certain biblical and apocryphal texts have incorporated the prophetic theme that obedience to God’s words should precondition ritual commitment to the Temple cult. The general influence of prophetic traditions in the Second Temple period is further expressed by the inclusion of the prophets into the contemporary Jewish liturgy of scriptural readings and by references to the prophets in contemporary Jewish literature.

MT Psalm 40:6-9 (= LXX Ps 39:6-9) introduces the idea that God requires the wholehearted observance of his will and his law rather than offerings and sacrifices. MT Psalm 50:7-15 (= LXX Ps 49:7-15) and MT Psalm 51:17-19 (= LXX Ps 50:17-19) likewise present a juxtaposition between the external aspect of ritual services and the intrinsic, unconditional worship of God. The influence of prophetic ideas in the Psalter is even more important since some Psalms were apparently used to accompany the Temple service.

In the Septuagint text of Sirach we also encounter the influence of the prophetic tradition. Thus, the statement in LXX Sirach 34:19, “The most High does not delight in offerings of godless people, nor is He appeased for sins by a multitude of sacrifices”, could echo Isaiah 1:11. Sirach 34:19 constitutes part of an exhortation against social injustice which blemishes sacrifices and offerings. The importance accorded to Sirach during the late Second Temple period is shown by manuscripts of a Hebrew text of Sirach discovered at Qumran, Masada and in the Cairo Genizah (cf. 2Q18, 11Q5 cols. XXI-XXII, MasSir).

b. Universalism vs. exclusivism

In the Hellenistic and early Roman periods, conflicting ideas emerged about the significance of the Temple as a ‘house of prayer’. The Maccabees apparently rejected the universalistic idea of the Temple as a ‘house of prayer for all peoples’ which is voiced in Isaiah 56:7. 1 Maccabees 7:37 represents the Jerusalem Temple as a ‘house of prayer and supplication for your people’, ὁ λαὸς τῶν λαῶν σου. This Maccabean idea of a ‘house of prayer’ excluded a constructive foreign part in the Temple cult, since the direct context of the narrative concerns the defilement of the Temple by the Hellenistic Seleucid rulers.

The negative attitude to “Hellenisation and the influx of foreign ways”, Ἐλληνισμός καὶ πρὸσβασις ἔλλογκα αὐτοῦ (2 Macc 4:13) may have sprung from the context of the Maccabean war against foreign oppression and the profanation of the Temple (1 Macc 1:36-40, 2:7-13, 3:45, 50-53; 2 Macc 4:13, 6:1-6). Even if this specific negative attitude could be played down as an exceptional case of war propaganda, there are other indications about the problematic relation between prophetic universalism and the exclusivism of the Temple cult.

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17 Cf. references to the Prophets in Philo’s treatises, catalogued in E. Junod et al., Biblia Patristica, Supplément: Philon d’Alexandrie (Éd. du CNRS: Paris, 1982) 89; Josephus’ Biblical Antiquities (Ant. 1 - 11.296), Ag. Ap. 1.41, and applications of prophecy to later events in Ant. 13.64, 68, 71; LXX Psalms and the Psalms of the Prophets: 4Q1Ps; 4QPs; 1QpMic; 1QpNah; 1QpHab; 1QpHab; 4QpZeph; 5QapocMal.
18 Cf. LXX Sir 50:18 mentions υἱὸς τῆς δόξας in the Temple service led by Simon the high priest; mTamid 6:4 mentions Levites in the Temple as the singers of certain Psalms (Ps. 24, 48, 82, 94, 81, 93, 92).
19 Cf. the recent focus on interaction against the supposed general background of Hellenism rather than on opposition and conflict in Collins & Sterling (eds.), Hellenism in the Land of Israel. See also L.H. Feldman’s review article, ‘How much Hellenism in the Land of Israel?’, JSJ 33 (2002) 290-313.
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Revolutionary, exclusivist ideas about the Temple cult were influential during the early Roman period (J.W. 2.320, 409-414; Ant. 18.9). Josephus also records an exemplary case in which foreigners (Ἀλλόφυλοι) were expected to keep apart from the purification rituals of the Jewish people during a religious festival (J.W. 1. 229). The extent to which foreigners were permitted access to the Jerusalem Temple precincts was even a negative concern for the Jewish people. However, the priestly establishment upheld the part of foreigners in the ritual of the Temple cult as an ancestral tradition (J.W. 2.412-413).

c. Contemporary Jewish perspectives on the corruption of the Temple cult

Various Palestinian Jewish groups apparently perceived the danger of corruption of the Temple cult. The revolutionary movement called the ‘fourth philosophy’ held that the corruption of Jewish ancestral tradition was mainly caused by foreign dominion (Ant. 18.4-10). Popular movements of protest expressed common concerns against the corruption of the ancestral laws by the introduction of foreign images in Jerusalem and in the Temple precincts (J.W. 1.648-655; 2.5-7, 170-171, 184-185, 192-198). Significantly, one such a popular uprising at the time of Herod I’s impending death (4 BCE) was in fact led by two highly esteemed teachers of the ancestral laws (J.W. 1.648).

The priestly establishment was also under fire. Josephus’ implicit criticism of the early Roman practice of appointing high priests who were merely of priestly descent (Ant. 20.247-249), and his account of cases of outrage against certain high priests (cf. J.W. 2.5-7; Ant. 20.199-203) attest to this fact. Josephus also refers to the ‘writings of the ancient prophets’ as an oracle on the bad fate of Jerusalem and its Temple (J.W. 6.109-110) in a situation of slaughter of Jews by other Jews, usurpation of the priesthood and pollution of the Temple by the revolutionaries (cf. J.W. 4.147-154, 159, 163).

The sectarian communities of the Essenes and the community of Qumran perceived the corruption of the contemporary Temple cult in the early Roman period as an accomplished fact. The Essenes had their own partial alternative to the Temple cult (cf. chapter 1). The Damascus Document expresses its polemic against the contemporary Temple cult with a reference to, among other prooftexts, Malachi 1:10 (CD-A VI, 13-14). Certain Qumran commentaries on the prophets are also very polemical in their viewpoint on the defilement of the contemporary Temple cult and the corruption of the priestly establishment (1QpHab VIII, 8-13, IX, 3-7, XII, 7-9; cf. 4QPsIa II, 6-10; 4QpHos II, 14-17). The Qumranite view was determined by separation from the regular Temple cult. The Qumran community underpinned its self-definition as a holy community in Israel (1QS VIII, 4-12) separated from the ‘dwellings of the men of injustice’, מושב אנשי זעם (1QS VIII, 13) with words from Isaiah 40:3 (in 1 QS VIII, 14f.) about the preparation for the way of the Lord in the desert (cf. chapter 2).


22 Cf. J.W. 1.152, about Pompey’s entering the Holy of Holies: “Of the misfortunes (ὁ συμφόρας) of that time nothing seized the people so much as the fact that the sanctuary hitherto kept out of sight was disclosed by foreigners (ὁ ἀλλόφυλος)”. Other negative examples about foreign infringement on the Temple concern Pontius Pilate and Caligula (J.W. 2.169-177, 184-187, 192-203; Ant. 18.55-62, 261-309). Cf. my chap. 1.

See also Ant. 15.417 about an inscription (γραφή) at the entrance of the second court of the Temple forbidding any foreigner to enter, threatening with the penalty of death, καὶ ἐπινέγχα τὸν ἀλλόφυλον, ἡσυχαστής ἡ τῆς Ἰουδαίας (Ant. 15.417). Cf. the parallel account in J.W. 5.194 about several tablets, στῆλη, in Greek and Latin. A Greek inscription comparable to Josephus’ description was published by M. Clermont-Ganneau in PEFQS VIII, 187) p. 132; its Greek text (quoted from R. Marcus & A. Wikgren, Josephus in nine volumes VIII, 202-203 n. d) reads: Μηθέναι ἄλλοις θεαστέοις ἑνεπιδείδα τὸ τις ὕπαρξις τε χρυσάπτου καὶ περιβόλου. ὡς δ’ ἐν λιθήν ἑαυτῷ ἀνίσιος ἑσταίδαι τὸ ἔξοχολυθένθαι θάνατον.
d. The early Jesus-movement and prophetic traditions of cult criticism

How can references to prophetic cult criticism in the New Testament inform our historical perspective on Jesus and his earliest followers? The prophetic inspiration is a main thread in the Gospel narratives about the beginning of the Jesus-movement and passages about Jesus’ attitude to the Temple. The question is whether this main thread is a redactional product originating from apologetic, missionary concerns to relate Jesus’ ministry to the fulfilment of prophecy, or to what extent it applies to the historical milieu of Jesus’ earliest followers.

The four canonical Gospels relate the beginning of the Jesus-movement to the precursory activity of John the Baptist and refer to Isaiah 40:3 as a prooftext (Mark 1:2-4; Matt 3:3-4; Luke 3:1-6; John 1:23). It should, however, be noted that this ‘prooftext’ is cited in different ways and only John 1:23 suggests that Isaiah 40:3 are the direct words of John the Baptist himself. Notwithstanding the variations, the prophetic character of John’s baptism is a common theme in the canonical Gospels. The Synoptic Gospels even suggest that Jewish people viewed John the Baptist as a prophet (Mark 11:32, Matt 14:5, 11:26, Luke 20:6); an idea confirmed by Jesus (Matt 11:9-10, Luke 7:26-27). Thus, the prophetic inspiration probably was an important element at the beginning of the Jesus-movement.

The issue of Jesus’ affiliation with the role of a prophet or his use of prophetic traditions is more complicated. For the prophetic role is one among many roles accorded to Jesus, and the question of tradition or redaction is imperative for the case of prophetic words concerning the Temple attributed to Jesus. According to scattered Gospel traditions, Jesus was considered a prophet among the Jewish people (Matt 21:46; John 6:14), among his followers (Luke 24:19) and among those healed by Jesus (John 9:17). According to Luke 4:17-21, Jesus refers to the fulfilment of the prophecy from Isaiah implying his own ministry. Jesus’ proverb about a prophet who is not honoured in his home town is more common in the Gospels (Mark 6:4; Matt 13:57; Luke 13:33; John 4:44; GTh 31, 52). Even though the association of Jesus’ ministry with aspects of prophetic activity is widespread in the Gospel traditions, the historicity of separate elements of Jesus’ prophetic message is disputable.

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23 Matt 2:15, 17, 4:14, 13:35, 21:4, 27:9 are examples of Matthew’s characteristic language about the ‘fulfilment’ of prophetic words (γνώριμος τοῦ μεθ’ αυτοῦ προφήτου λέγοντος). Cf. John 2:17 and 12:37-43 as about words from Scripture applied to Jesus by his disciples and redactional use of Isaiah respectively.


25 Mark 1:2-3 begins with words from Exod 23:20 or Mal 3:1 (Mark 1:2) and then turns to Isa 40:3 (Mark 1:3); Matt 3:3 cites Isa 40:3; Luke 3:4-6 cites a larger portion, that is, Isa 40:3-5; John 1:23 only cites Isa 40:3a-b.

26 Note that in Matt 11:10 / Luke 7:26-27 Jesus cites Exod 23:20 / Mal 3:1 concerning John the Baptist as a precursor, while the same ‘quotation’ figures in Mark 1:2 to introduce the preaching of John the Baptist. Cf. the Gospel of Thomas (GTh) logia 78 and 46 which partly correspond with Matt 11:7b-8/Luke 7:24b-25 and Matt 11:11/Luke 7:28 respectively; GTh, however, does not include the tradition that Jesus affirms John as prophet.

27 See Theißen & Merz, Der historische Jesus, 175-492 at 221-253 with bibliography about Jesus as prophet of the eschatological kingdom of God. M. Öhler, ‘Jesus as Prophet: Remarks on Terminology’, in M. Labahn & A. Schmidt (eds.), Jesus, Mark and Q. The Teaching of Jesus and its Earliest Records (JSNTSup 214; Sheffield: Sheffield AP, 2001) 125-142 notes problems with defining Jesus’ prophetic features as based on words (Theißen & Merz, J. Becker) or on deeds (E.P. Sanders, J.D. Crossan) respectively.


29 Cf. Theißen & Merz, Der historische Jesus, 245 refer to the warnings against ‘this generation’ about eschatological judgement in Luke 11:49-51 par. and in Luke 11:29 par. as a possible example of the influence of a secondary “reaction to negative experiences with the mission in Israel”, that is, a later addition.
Was Jesus’ attitude to the Temple connected to prophetic traditions of cult criticism? All four canonical Gospels include the event of Jesus’ clearing of the Temple precincts which brought him into conflict with the priestly establishment (Mark 11:15-17, Matt 21:12-17, Luke 19:45-46, John 2:14-17). These Gospel narratives give the unmistakable impression that the objective of Jesus’ action was to denounce the corruption of the Temple cult. Jesus’ critical attitude to the contemporary state of the Temple and the priestly leadership appears to be affirmed also by the Gospel of Thomas (cf. logia 66, 71). In view of Jesus’ denouncement of corruption, his actual teachings probably did contain allusions to traditional Jewish teachings of the prophets.

In the synoptic tradition (Mark 11:17, Matt 21:13, Luke 19:46), Jesus juxtaposes the ideal of the Temple as a ‘house of prayer’ (Isa 56:7) to the perceived reality of the Temple as a ‘hideout of robbers’ (Jer 7:11). John 2:14-16 has in common with the Synoptic tradition that Jesus’ action focuses on money-changers and traders. However, the words ‘you shall not make the house of my Father a house of trade’ (John 2:16) appear to be an allusion to Zechariah 14:21. With regard to allusions to prophetic cult criticism, the Synoptic Gospels and John comprise divergent versions. This divergence, together with other points of comparison and contrast, will be discussed in a subsequent section.

At this point, we may at least infer from the Gospel narratives that Jesus’ action was inspired by prophetic concerns for proper worship uncorrupted by money interests. Even though the commerce in the Temple precincts was related to customary ritual practices, Jesus took offence at it. Jesus’ denouncement of the corrupted state of the Temple may have a parallel in sectarian polemic against the wealth of the Temple (cf. 1QpHab IX, 3-7; CD-A VI, 15-16). The polemic against unjust gain as applied to the context of the Temple cult also corresponds with prophetic traditions (cf. e.g. MT Jer 8:10; Mic 3:11).

The canonical Gospel traditions about Jesus’ contacts with scribes and Pharisees also comprise references to prophetic cult criticism. The impression which arises from these Gospel traditions is ambiguous, as there are examples of positive relations and agreements between Jesus and certain scribes and Pharisees (Luke 7:36, 11:17, 13:31, 14:1; John 3:1f.) as well as instances of disputes and polemic (Mark 2:23-28 par., Mark 8:15 par.). This divided picture complicates the task of separating redaction from tradition. Below, I will discuss the main examples of references to prophetic cult criticism in the setting of debates and disputes.

The pericope of Mark 12:28-34, a conversation between Jesus and a scribe about the first of all commandments, voices the influence of prophetic tradition. Thus, according to Mark 12:32-33, a scribe believed that the observance of the first of all commandments (Deut 6:5, Lev 19:18) is more relevant than “all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices”. These words, which express the priority of love of one’s neighbour above ritual, probably are a paraphrase of Hosea 6:6. This view could be more widespread among the moderate part of the Pharisaic movement and its scribes, because of a number of sayings from the early Pharisaic-rabbinic

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31 Note the significant difference between the citation of Isa 56:7 in Mark 11:17 (οἶκος προσευχῆς πήν τοῦ θόντος) and that in Matt 21:13 / Luke 19:46 (οἶκος προσευχῆς), which I will discuss in a subsequent section.


Mark’s version, compared to parallel accounts in Matthew and Luke, conveys the only positive reference to one of the scribes, ἔλεγεν γραμματέαν, in this context. This positive reference probably serves a didactic purpose of showing that the essence of Jesus’ teachings could be grasped even by people among Jesus’ opponents.

Although the scribe’s words suit a didactic purpose, it does not fit Mark’s agenda of describing Jesus’ opponents, the scribes among others, in a negative way (cf. Mark 3:22, 11:27, 12:38). The scribe’s allusion to Hosea 6:6 rather provokes the idea that he implicitly attacked the casuistic position of the Sadducees who had priestly affiliations; another thing which he would have in common with Jesus (cf. Mark 12:18-27). Even if the scribe’s reaction “fits the Markan context well, underscoring the rightness of Jesus’ message, even in the face of priestly criticism and opposition”, it also accords with Josephus’ evidence of tensions between the Pharisees (with their scribes) and the Sadducees (cf. my chap. 1). Thus, in my view Mark probably fitted a piece of authentic Jesus-tradition about a particular context of debate and dialogue into his own narrative framework.


The quotations from Hosea 6:6 in Matthew 9:13 and 12:7 may well be the product of Matthean addition, for it puts the Pharisees on the defence concerning a subject, prophetic cult criticism, which does not occur in the other canonical Gospels. Instead, the Pharisees are rather criticised for hypocrisy in their teachings of the traditions of the elders, in particular the purity regulations in the public domain, in other Gospel traditions (cf. Mark 7:1-23; Matt 15:1-20; Luke 11:37-41f.). Even though the idea of the Pharisees applying the priestly rules of ritual purity to the public domain is influential, it is a matter of debate whether the Pharisees’ purity regulations derived from their interpretation of biblical purity laws or constituted a broadened reapplication of priestly purity rules.37

34 Cf. mAboth 1:12 about a saying attributed to Hillel that associates the discipleship of Aaron (the priesthood) with humanity and observance of the Law; Abot R.Nat. B 8.11b where Yohanan ben Zakkai refers to Hosea 6:6.

35 Note the contrast with the negative references to νομικός τις ἔσπευδον αὐτῶν and to εἶς ἔξ οὐκ αὖτῶν [νομικός] περιποίησιν αὐτῶν in the parallel pericopes of Luke 10:25-29 at v. 25, and Matt 22:33-40 respectively. Evans, WBC 34B Mark 8:27-16:20, 262 explains for differences between Mark 12:28-34 and parallel Synoptic accounts on the basis of the circulation of variant forms of the dialogue in the “oral dominical tradition” and of Mark and Luke reflecting a “different occasion” respectively.

36 In favour of the idea of reapplication of ritual, priestly purity by the Pharisees are e.g. D.A. Hagner, WBC 33B Matthew 14-28 (Word Books: Dallas, Tex., 1995) 430-431 interpreting Matt 15:1-11, with reference to mBer 8:2-4, ySaibb 1.3d, Mark 7:3-4 and K. Berger, Wer war Jesus wirklich? (Quell Verlag: Stuttgart, 1995; pagination from the Dutch translation by F. Hijszele published at Kok: Kampen, 1996) 39, 60.

37 Note the recent discussion by J.C. Poirier, ‘Why Did the Pharisees Wash their Hands?’, JJS 47 (1996) 217-233 at 217-218 about the opposed positions of the “majority view (=Neusner) of the Pharisees as priestly imitators” and of E.P. Sanders who relates the Pharisaic regulations to (interpretation of) biblical purity laws. Poirier proposes a middle ground position of Pharaiaic pietistic practices; in view of the same debate, J.D.G. Dunn, ‘Jesus and Purity: An Ongoing Debate’, 454 notes purity concerns as a defining characteristic of the Pharisees, but also an ‘exaggerated expression’ by them of ‘common Judaism’’s concerns.
We may use the special material in Matthew 12:5-7 to illustrate the point of Matthean redaction in view of post-70 CE circumstances. In the pericope of Matthew 12:1-8, the words “something greater than the Temple is here” (Matt 12:6) articulate an idea of cult criticism which is not found in the parallel passages of the other synoptic Gospels. Matthew 12:5-7 draws the subject of the Temple further into this argument. This Matthean elaboration could be seen as an attempt to polemicise against a post-70 CE concern of the Pharisaic-rabbinic tradition with purity regulations which substituted the purity system of the destroyed Temple.

The additional Matthean material may reflect the polemical accents of the author in light of the post-70 CE situation, when the Pharisees had become the dominant, ‘normative’ movement in Israel. Polemic against the Pharisees is most explicit in the typical Matthean diatribe against the scribes and the Pharisees in Matthew 23. As they have apparently become the main opponents to the Jesus-movement in the Matthean perspective, the prophetic cult criticism in Matthew 9:13 and 12:7 addresses the Pharisees and not the priestly establishment. A reversal of positions of authority attributed to the Pharisees and the priestly establishment is also reflected in John 1:19.24, and illustrates post-70 CE circumstances.

The use of prophetic traditions of cult criticism is finally discernable in the account of Acts about the speech of Stephen (Acts 7:2-53). This speech with its consequences forms the ideological breaking point for the author of Luke-Acts to turn from the centrality of the Jerusalem church to the increasing importance of the gospel mission in the Diaspora. The speech of Stephen (Acts 7:2-53) voices a severe polemic against the contemporary state of the Jerusalem Temple cult. This polemic is underpinned by references to prophetic cult criticism from Amos 5:25-27 and Isaiah 66:1-2 in Acts 7:42-43 and 7:49-50 respectively. The speech of Stephen includes an interpretation of prophetic cult criticism to the effect of associating the building of the Temple with idolatry (cf. Acts 7:45-48).

Even though we may find certain biblical and post-biblical parallels to the vocabulary of polemic as a possible historical setting, the speech of Stephen is first of all a Lukan composition, if not a Lukan interpretation of a breaking point in the history of the missionary Jesus-movement. Thus, the question is whether, within this post-70 CE Lukan framework, any pre-70 CE elements of tradition from the early Jesus-movement can be distilled from the interpretive use of prophetic cult criticism in the speech of Stephen. I will further discuss this issue in the section at the end of this chapter.

In the course of the above discussion, we have touched on the complications of determining pre-70 CE and post-70 CE levels of tradition concerning the use of prophetic cult criticism. The distinction which can nevertheless be made between clear redaction and possible tradition may provide us with a vantage point from which to study the attitude(s) of the early Jesus-movement toward the Temple before 70 CE in greater detail.

38 Schnelle, Einleitung, 262 points to the picture of scribes and Pharisees as hypocrites in Matthew in relation to the question about the addressees of Matthew, the Matthean congregation; cf. Tomson, ‘If this be from Heaven …’, 263-267, 272-276.

39 E.g. the phrase “stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in hearts and ears” in Acts 7:51, which supposedly addresses the council presided by the high priest (Acts 6:12.15, 7:1) may echo biblical tradition (cf. Exod 33:3, 34:9, Jer 9:25-26), but it also has a parallel in Qumran polemic against the Temple and the ‘Wicked Priest’ being ‘uncircumcised in the foreskin of his heart’, in 1QpHab XI.12-13 (ךָפָר תָּא חָלָל שִׁפְתָּא עָלָי נָפָר כֶּלֶּה מַבָּדֶד) ḫaf tar. Habakkuk 2:19-20 where the lifeless state of adornments of gold and silver appears to be juxtaposed to the presence of God in his holy Temple, implying a juxtaposition between temptations to idolatry and true worship of God.

3. Sources about Jesus

In the previous discussion, I have mainly referred to the canonical Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles, since they contain the most elaborate narrative frameworks about the beginning of the Jesus-movement. I will now discuss the sources about the historical Jesus for a refinement of the distinction between pre-70 CE and post-70 CE levels of Jesus-tradition.

3.1 Christian literary sources about Jesus

3.1.1 The Canonical Gospels

a. The Synoptic Gospels and the ‘two-sources hypothesis’

The ‘two-sources hypothesis’ has become relatively established as a scholarly explanation for the literary relations between the three Synoptic Gospels Mark, Matthew, and Luke.\(^\text{41}\) According to this hypothesis, the overlap between the narratives of the Synoptic Gospels points to common source material reducible to two main sources. The first source which Matthew and Luke have in common is Mark or a ‘Vorlage’ of Mark, depending on the way minor correspondences between Matthew and Luke, as opposed to Mark, are evaluated.\(^\text{42}\) The second source shared by Matthew and Luke concerns material which is not found in Mark and which, apart from a few possible exceptions,\(^\text{43}\) mainly consists of sayings. For this reason it is designated as ‘Logienquelle’ or ‘Synoptic Sayings Source’ and often referred to as Q (for ‘Quelle’).

There are certain problems with the two-sources hypothesis. One problem, the fact that Matthew and Luke still comprise passages peculiar to these respective Gospels, can be solved by presenting a slightly modified form of the two-sources hypothesis. This modified form of the hypothesis presupposes four sources: Mark, Q, additional material of Matthew (M), and additional material of Luke (L).\(^\text{44}\)

A more persistent problem concerns the room which the textual evidence of the Synoptic Gospels could still leave for an alternative hypothesis. David J. Neville has recently challenged the priority of Mark presupposed by the ‘two-sources hypothesis’. He discusses the possibility that the ‘two-gospels hypothesis’ (Mark’s dependence on Matthew and Luke), also known as the ‘Griesbach hypothesis’, may equally well or even better explain the literary relations between the Synoptic Gospels.\(^\text{45}\) However, Neville builds his alternative case only on three direct examples from Mark (1:21-22, 3:7-12, 6:1-13 in his chapter 8, 268-333), so that the impression remains that these examples are the few lacunas in the dominant ‘two-source hypothesis’. Therefore, Markan priority should still be our working hypothesis.

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\(^{42}\) Cf. Theissen & Merz, *op.cit.*, 42 about a ‘Vorlage’ of Mark; Koester, *op.cit.*, 128-130. 275-289 refutes the ‘Urmarkus hypothesis’, explaining the minor agreements instead as “due to common stylistic and grammatical corrections of the sometimes awkward Markan text or (being) caused by accidental common omissions” (275).


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Mark

As the supposedly oldest written Gospel among the Synoptic Gospels,⁴⁶ Mark is also the briefest Gospel whose ending is not even sure (according to certain manuscripts running up to Mark 16:8, but according to others up to Mark 16:20). Although the author of Mark does not make an explicit statement about his sources (in contrast with e.g. Luke 1:1-4), he probably relied on pre-70 CE tradition related to the historical milieu of the early followers of Jesus.

The written composition of Mark is usually dated to the end of the Jewish War (66-70 CE) or its aftermath (70-74 CE), depending on the interpretation of Mark 13:2.¹⁴ A much earlier dating of the composition of Mark to 40 CE, as has been suggested by some scholars,⁴⁸ must be excluded because the picture of apocalyptic circumstances in Mark 13:7-8 cannot be related to the reign of Caligula (37-41 CE).⁴⁹ Instead, the references to the emergence of a plurality of false prophets in Mark 13:5-6.21-23 appear to reflect the circumstances from the mid-50s CE to the end of the Jewish War, as described by Josephus (cf. J.W. 2.258-263, 6.285-288).⁵⁰

It is further significant that Josephus calls the outcome of the Jewish War as a ‘desolation’, ἔρημότης (J.W. 6.288; cf. §§ 7-8, 296) in a digression about manifest signs concerning the destruction of the Temple of Jerusalem. Josephus also refers to the Roman sacrifice to their standards in the Temple court (J.W. VI, § 316). This picture of Josephus bears a striking resemblance to the idea of the ‘desolating sacrilege’, τὸ βασιλεία τῆς ἔρημοστειος, in Mark 13:14. Thus, the evidence strongly suggests a date in the aftermath of the Jewish War for the written composition of Mark.

The Sayings Source (Q)

The presumed existence of an early Sayings Source Q has gained further credibility in light of the discovery and study of the Gospel of Thomas (GTh), a collection of sayings of Jesus, which I will further discuss in the next section.⁵¹ According to many scholars, the early Sayings Source Q which is lost formed the foundation of Matthew and Luke as written composition, although the question of its original language, Greek or Aramaic, is disputed.⁵²

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⁴⁷ E.g. Theißen & Merz, Der historische Jesus, 43; Schnelle, Einleitung, 238-239; Marcus, Mark 1-8, 37-39 argues for 69 CE as the earliest possible date of composition, “allowing for a bit of time after the flight from Jerusalem in 67-68 for the re-formation of the Markan community”.

⁴⁸ Cf. Schnelle, Einleitung, 238-239 for bibliographical references.

⁴⁹ Mark 13:7-8 (‘nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom’) reflects a picture of the outbreak of war; Mark 13:14 further mentions the ‘desolating sacrilege’ as an accomplished fact. By contrast, Josephus’ account of Caligula’s reign (37-41 CE) is determined by embassies and petitions because of the impending but unfulfilled plan to have Caligula’s image set up in the Jerusalem Temple (Ant. 18.257-309). Caligula’s terror has instead been related by various scholars (Theißen & Merz, Der historische Jesus, 45; D.C. Allison, Jr. The Jesus Tradition in Q, Trinity Press International: Harrisburg, Pa., 1997, 50-51) to Jesus’ temptation to worship Satan in Matt 4:1-11 / Luke 4:1-13 as a conflict between idolatry and the worship of God.

⁵⁰ The ‘signs and wonders’, σημεῖα καὶ ἐρήμωσις, of the false Christs and prophets in Mark 13:22 resemble the ‘signs of delivery’, τὰ σημεῖα τῆς σωτηρίας, of a false prophet mentioned in Josephus (J.W. 6.285).

⁵¹ Koester, Ancient Christian Gospels, 86-99 states about GTh and Q that “both documents presuppose that Jesus’ significance lay in his words, and in his words alone” (86).

⁵² Cf. e.g. Theißen & Merz, Der historische Jesus, 44 n. 25; Schnelle, Einleitung, 222-223; Conzelmann & Lindemann, Arbeitsbuch, 78-80; Allison, The Jesus Tradition in Q, 1-66.
Scholars have inferred from the representation of the proclamation of Jesus as the Christ and the portrayal of the opponents of Jesus in this sayings material that the traditions contained in Q can be dated between the 40s and early 50s of the first century CE.\(^{53}\) The Jesus-traditions in Q are commonly related to the historical milieu of the early followers of Jesus who preached his gospel, Israel.\(^{54}\) Recently, Jonathan L. Reed has undertaken a substantial analysis on the basis of place names in the sayings (e.g. Capernaum, Chorazin, Bethsaida), spatial imagery, themes, and theology in order to locate Q’s provenance more precisely in Galilee.\(^{55}\) According to Dale C. Allison, Jr., the evidence of Q at least reflects the perspective of a group with ties to Galilee, such as Jesus’ earliest Galilean disciples.\(^{56}\) We will come to the subject of Jesus and his Galilean background in a subsequent section.

With regard to the composition of Q, there are divergent opinions about the question whether it is possible to discern different stages in this composition. The scholarly positions on this matter depend on, among other things, the supposed accuracy of the reconstruction of Q\(^{57}\) and the supposed validity of a comparison with other texts (like, for example, GTh and Paul’s Letters).\(^{58}\) The relation between sapiental, prophetic and apocalyptic elements in Q is a matter of contention between those who advocate a reconstruction of different stages in the composition of Q.\(^{59}\) Even though the composition history of Q is highly disputed, an analysis of the Q material may at least provide us interpretive clues about stages in the history of the early Jesus-movement.

The relation between Mark and Q is complicated by the occurrence of overlaps. Nevertheless, these overlaps are usually viewed as so sparse that the theory of Mark and the early sayings source Q as two independent sources can still be sustained.\(^{60}\) Moreover, the overlap may just be the product of Matthean and Lucan redaction which blended separate traditions into one composition.

\(^{53}\) Theissen & Merz, *Der historische Jesus*, 45; Schnelle, *Einleitung*, 221; cf. Koester, *Ancient Christian Gospels*, 162: “Q was composed at a time when the controversy of the law had not yet emerged, and when the question of observance of the Law had not yet been used as a criterion in order to decide whether or not the followers of Jesus were within or outside of Israel”; Allison, *The Jesus Tradition in Q*, 49-54, 60.

\(^{54}\) Cf. e.g. Theissen & Merz, *Der historische Jesus*, 45; Schnelle, *Einleitung*, 220: “Die Logienquelle entstand vermutlich in (Nord-)Palästina, denn sie ist theologisch primär auf Israel ausgerichtet”; Allison, *The Jesus Tradition in Q*, 52-54 about its “Palestinian origin”.


\(^{56}\) Allison, *The Jesus Tradition in Q*, 53 hesitates to draw Galilean provenance for Q as a firm conclusion. Cf. Conzelmann & Lindemann, *Arbeitsbuch*, 82 about the possibility of Q’s provenance from Galilee, the area to the north of the lake of Gennesaret in particular.

\(^{57}\) Theissen & Merz, *Der historische Jesus*, 44-45 are very sceptical about the hypothetical reconstruction of anything beyond the ‘final redaction’ of Q; Schnelle, *Einleitung*, 223-226 notes a relative consensus about the development of Q from separate blocks of sayings material; Conzelmann & Lindemann, *Arbeitsbuch*, 80-82 plead for caution in the reconstruction of compositional stages mainly on the basis of Luke.


\(^{59}\) Cf. Koester, *Ancient Christian Gospels*, 149-150, following previous analyses by D. Lührmann and J. Kloppenborg, distinguishes between an original version of Q with wisdom sayings and eschatological sayings and the redaction version of Q with an apocalyptic perspective. Allison, *The Jesus Tradition in Q*, 7-8 criticises Kloppenborg’s “reconstruction of an early wisdom document” and focuses instead on the social setting of separate sayings groups.

\(^{60}\) Cf. e.g. Schnelle, *Einleitung*, 231; Conzelmann & Lindemann, *Arbeitsbuch*, 83.
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Additional material in Matthew and Luke

Apart from the two sources, Mark and Q, which Matthew and Luke share both, Matthew and Luke also contain different traditions. The traditions peculiar to Matthew have been described as rather heterogeneous, while the traditions peculiar to Luke appear to be more thematically arranged. Helmut Koester has pointed to a number of the additional traditions in Matthew, mainly parables, which are paralleled by sayings in the Gospel of Thomas. These parallels show that, also in the case of additional materials which are not commonly shared among the Synoptic Gospels, we may suppose a broad and independent tradition of various pieces of information relating to the historical milieu of Jesus.

b. John

The scholarly consensus generally supports the idea that the composition of the Synoptic Gospels dates from an earlier period than John. Nevertheless, John presents distinct evidence about Jesus which probably also goes back to very early traditions. John has a different narrative framework than the Synoptic Gospels. Its literary structure, with apparently disjointed transitions and a double close (John 20:30-31 and 21:24-25), has led scholars to suppose a development of the text in stages, before the final text of John was composed. The composition of the final text is usually dated around the turn of the first century CE in view of the interpretation of John 21:20-25 as a mirror of the later standpoint of the Johannine community on the witness of the ‘beloved disciple’. An early dating is usually countered by the argument that John 11:48 discusses the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple in 70 CE.

The variegated sources of John are usually categorised by themes such as ‘Semeia’ or signs source, dialogue and discourse source, and a source for the Passion narrative. John’s relation to the synoptic tradition has been differently interpreted in terms of literary dependence or the independent use of traditions which underly the synoptic tradition. Jesus-traditions in John unparelleled in the synoptic tradition do sometimes add significant details to our picture of the historical milieu of Jesus (cf. e.g. John 1:35.40.43-44, 3:1f.22-30, 4:1-3, 5:2). Parallels between independent Johannine tradition and the Gospel of Thomas may

61 Cf. Theißen & Merz, Der historische Jesus, 44-48; U. Schnelle, Einleitung, 206-209, there 207-208 for a survey of the passages of ‘Matthäus-Sondergut’ and ‘Lukas-Sondergut’ respectively.
63 Cf. e.g. Theißen & Merz, Der historische Jesus, 42.
64 Cf. Theißen & Merz, Der historische Jesus, 49; Koester, Ancient Christian Gospels, 250-251.
65 Another argument for dating John around the turn of the first century CE, and not much later, based on the early attestation of John by P52 in the manuscript tradition, is supported by Theißen & Merz, Der historische Jesus, 50 and by Schnelle, Einleitung, 540-541 dating John between 100 and 110 CE with reference to the dating of P52 to ca. 125 CE as a terminus ad quem, but countered by Conzelmann & Lindemann, Arbeitsbuch, 373: “eine genauere Aussage als “2. Jahrhundert” ist nicht möglich”. This scholarly debate affirms the impression that the dating of John has to depend on traditio-historical and literary arguments rather than on dating manuscripts.
66 Cf. e.g. Schnelle, Einleitung, 540.
68 Cf. Theißen & Merz, Der historische Jesus, 51.
further point to the antiquity and historical value of Jesus-traditions in John. John also contains later interpretations of older traditions (e.g. John 2:17, 22, 12:16).

### 3.1.2 Extra-canonical Gospels

Early Christian writings outside the canon of the New Testament are increasingly recognised as an important source of pre-70 CE traditions about the historical Jesus. Since the monumental study of Walter Bauer on orthodoxy and heresy in earliest Christianity in 1934 and the initial publication of texts discovered at Nag Hammadi by the 1950s, the traditional standpoint of the inauthentic, or derivative character of non-canonical texts has become historically questionable. Nevertheless, not all non-canonical texts are equally useful for the study of the historical Jesus.

The recent critical surveys by Gerd Theißen and Annette Merz and by James H. Charlesworth and Craig A. Evans respectively show that a number of texts are considered particularly important for historical Jesus-research in the present state of scholarship. My own survey will generally follow their list of those non-canonical texts whose importance for historical Jesus-research is at least considered an issue. In this way, I will endeavour to sort out the main arguments for and against the idea that these non-canonical texts comprise pre-70 CE Jesus-traditions. I will further consider the relevance of these texts for the subject of traditions about the Temple.

#### The Gospel of Thomas

An important, if not the most important example of a non-canonical Gospel, which is occasionally even drawn into the debate about the composition of Q, is the *Gospel of Thomas* (GTh). This Gospel has been preserved in a Coptic manuscript of Nag Hammadi Codex II and three Greek papyri from Oxyrhynchus (P.Oxy. 1, 654, 655), and was first published by Pahor Labib in 1956. It should be noted that the divergence of the parallel Greek papyrus fragments from the main Coptic text might also be instructive about the composition history of Gospel texts.

The Coptic text of *Thomas*, which has been subdivided into 114 logia in scholarly editions, provides an extensive body of Jesus-traditions, usually introduced by the phrase ‘Jesus says/said’. In contrast to the canonical Gospels, however, the sayings of Jesus in

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Thomas are not situated in a general narrative framework, even though several sayings do figure in a dialogical setting, usually with his disciples (GTh 6, 12, 13, 18, 20-22, 24, 37, 43, 51-53, 60, 61, 72, 79, 99, 100, 104, 113, 114). In spite of the absence of a general narrative framework, the arrangement of sayings of Jesus in Thomas may represent a thematic or interpretive framework.76

The value of Thomas for Historical Jesus research depends partly on the perspective taken to the theology conveyed by this non-canonical Gospel. If the gnostic features of Thomas are viewed as underlying this entire Gospel, this could lead to a late dating of its final redaction. Nevertheless, Thomas can be contrasted to other clearly ‘gnostic’ texts from the Nag Hammadi Codices, because it does not contain digressions on gnostic themes and, as has been noted by Stephen J. Patterson, because its gnostic features still accord with the socially radical ethos known from other early Jesus traditions.78

For our dating of Thomas we depend on literary and manuscript evidence. Since logion 71 of Thomas is usually interpreted as a saying about the destruction of the Temple, 70 CE may be regarded as terminus post quem for Thomas. The Greek papyri P. Oxy. 1, 654 and 655, on the other hand, provide evidence for the (mid-)second century CE as terminus ante quem for the composition of Thomas.79

Scholars have disputed whether or not Thomas comprises pre-70 CE Jesus-traditions independent from the (sources of the) Synoptic Gospels.80 If Thomas is, however, compared with the Synoptic Gospels, the similarities should not only be analysed as a confirmation of the Synoptic tradition, for the differences are at least as important.81 An important difference with the Synoptic tradition is, for example, the fact that the Synoptic Gospels attribute a leading role to Peter, among the disciples (Mark 3:16, 8:29, 16:7; Matt 16:16-19; Luke 9:20, 24:34), whereas logion 12 of Thomas attributes a leading role to James after Jesus’ departure. The reference to ‘James the righteous’ in GTh 12 most probably denotes James the brother of Jesus, and this accords with the dominant role of James in the Jerusalem church as reflected in

75 Other people than ‘the disciples’ in dialogue with Jesus are Simon Peter, Matthew and Thomas (GTh 13), Mary (GTh 21), Salome (GTh 61), a man (GTh 72), a woman from the multitude (GTh 79), ‘they’, in differing degrees of probability Jesus’ opponents (GTh 91, 100, 104), and Simon Peter (GTh 114).

76 GTh logion 1 sets the stage for the entire Gospel through the emphasis on the interpretation of Jesus’ sayings.


80 Cf. e.g. Theißen & Merz, Der historische Jesus, 52-55 refer to two possible examples, GTh 31 and 65, of Jesus-tradition in Thomas which could antedate parallel passages in Mark par. (6:1-6 and 12:1-12), while they also mention an argument against Thomas’ independence (possible gnostic elaboration of the synoptic tradition).

81 Cf. Theißen & Merz, Der historische Jesus, 55 about this necessity in the interest of “neue Einsichten in den Prozeß der Traditionsbildung”; Patterson, The Gospel of Thomas and Jesus, 241 about the use of Thomas as confirmation of the synoptic tradition: “such a limited approach does not tap the full potential of the Gospel of Thomas for the question of the historical Jesus”.

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Paul’s Letter to the Galatians (Gal 2:1-14). This may speak for an independent, pre-70 CE Jesus-tradition in Thomas, since the dominant role of James apparently receded to the background with the destruction of Jerusalem under post-70 CE circumstances.\(^{82}\)

F. Neirynck has further pointed to the lack of evidence for Thomas’ dependence on Mark,\(^{83}\) which may count as another argument against the refutation of Thomas’ value for Historical Jesus research. Arguments in favour of independent, pre-70 CE levels of tradition in Thomas have to depend on a comparative analysis of individual traditions.

The ‘Jewish-Christian’ Gospels and Christian Judaism

The so-called ‘Jewish-Christian’ Gospels of the Nazoraeans, Ebionites and Hebrews have only been fragmentarily preserved in patristic literature.\(^{84}\) From the perspective of the church fathers in late antiquity, such Gospels could indeed be viewed as marginal products of ‘Jewish-Christian’ groups on the fringes of the orthodox church. The question is, however, whether and how these Gospels could relate to the Jewish beginnings of the Jesus-movement.

The Gospel of the Nazoraeans (Gos.Naz.), purportedly written in Hebrew characters according to Jerome and Eusebius, contains readings of Matthew which diverge from the canonical version of Matthew. Simon C. Mimouni has explained the term ‘Nazoraeans’ in the early Christian writings pertaining to Historical Jesus research as designating the Law-observing group of Christian Jews among whom James played a leading role.\(^{85}\) The fact that Gos.Naz. apparently comprised its own version of Matthew is significant: Matthew also includes the Jesus-tradition that ‘before heaven and earth have passed away, not one iota or serif from the Law will lose validity, until all things have come to pass’ (Matt 5:18).

The Gospel of the Ebionites (Gos.Eb.), which has been preserved through quotations in Epiphanius’ Panarion, contains traditions about the baptism of John, the first disciples of Jesus and words spoken by Jesus. An example of the orientation of this Gospel on Israel is provided by a fragment in Epiphanius about the commission of the twelve apostles ‘for a testimony to Israel’, εἰς μαρτύριον τοῦ Ἰσραήλ.\(^{86}\) In this respect the Gospel is unparalleled by the canonical commission narratives.

The Gospel of the Hebrews (Gos.Heb.), mainly extant through quotations by Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and Jerome, contains traditions about the beginning of Jesus’ mission, Jesus’ teachings and the appearance of the risen Lord to James. This latter tradition about the resurrection is only generically paralleled in 1 Corinthians 15:7. Significantly, this fragment of the Gospel of the Hebrews has the same epithet as GTh 12 with regard to the name of Jesus’ brother, namely ‘James the just’.\(^{87}\) The tradition about the resurrection witnessed by James further refers to the role of a ‘servant of the priest’ (seruus sacerdotis ὁ δούλος τοῦ

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82 Cf. Josephus, Ant. 20.200ff. about the execution of James and “certain others” in Jerusalem in ca. 62 CE.
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ζηρος) who received a linen cloth from the risen Lord. This detail provides evidence about the possible significance of the Temple cult within circles of the early Jesus-movement.88

Non-canonical Gospel fragments on papyrus

In the late 19th and early 20th century, several finds of non-canonical Gospels were made among papyrus-collections. Important examples of substantial fragments are the so-called Fayyum fragment (= P.Vindob. G 2325; published in 1887), Papyrus Oxyrhynchus 840 (published in 1908), Papyrus Oxyrhynchus 1224 (published in 1914), and the Egerton Gospel (published in 1935).89

The Fayyum fragment90 contains seven lines of Greek text concerning the Last Supper and Jesus’ words addressing Peter. Wilhelm Schneemelcher has considered it a “secondary, indeed an abridged, rendering of the synoptic material” and dated it to the 3rd century CE.91

Papyrus Oxyrhynchus 1224, dated to the beginning of the fourth century CE, consists of a number of Greek fragments comparable to synoptic traditions. P.Oxy. 1224 may be more interesting for our search: one restored fragment conveys a question which presents an analogy between the instruction of a ‘new teaching’, διδασκη λαεινη, and the proclamation of a ‘new baptism’, βαπτισμα καινον.92 This analogy may add something to our understanding of the relation between Jesus and John the Baptist.

The Egerton Gospel (Papyrus Egerton 2)93 is of particular interest, since one fragment (1 recto) describes a scene about Jesus’ healing of a leper which could display Jesus’ attitude to purity regulations related to the healed leper. P.Eg. 2 is currently dated around 200 CE and it comprises four fragments.94 F. Neirynck has argued that the version of P.Eg. 2 about Jesus’ cleansing of the leper is closely connected to Luke 17:14 and depends on the Synoptic tradition.95 On the other hand, J.D. Crossan leaves the possibility open that P.Eg. 2 is rooted in an oral tradition underlying the Synoptic Gospels.96

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89 Apart from the editions of the texts cited in the subsequent notes, the more comprehensive critical edition of Greek and Latin texts by Aurelio de Santos Otero, Los Evangelios Apocrifos (Editorial Catolica: Madrid, 1956) may still be noted here.


92 Fragment 2v col. I in Klostermann, Apocrypha II, 26 presenting Greek fragments up to 7 lines with many reconstructions; ed. pr. by B.P. Grenfell & A.S. Hunt, The Oxyrhynchus Papyri X (1914) 1-10.


96 Crossan, Four Other Gospels, 63-87 at 74.
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*Papyrus Oxyrhynchus 840 (P.Oxy. 840)*\(^{97}\) is important for our subject, since it describes a scene which suggests Jesus’ attitude to purity regulations and the ritual of the Temple cult. The general framework of Jesus’ confrontation with a Pharisaic chief priest is unique for *P.Oxy. 840*. Nevertheless, parts of the account of this confrontation may have parallels in other Gospel traditions. J. Jeremias and W. Schneemelcher have argued that, because of the parallels with Jesus’ polemic against Pharisaic hypocrisy about ritual cleanliness in the Synoptic Gospels, the *Oxyrhynchus Papyrus 840* presents “an unknown gospel of Synoptic type”.\(^{98}\) Even though the account of *P.Oxy. 840* may have parallels in the synoptic Gospels, these parallels are partial and at times only based on a few catchwords. The detailed information about the rites of purification related to the Jerusalem Temple cult\(^{99}\) strengthens the idea that the *Oxyrhynchus Papyrus 840* may present an authentic tradition which is at least as old as the Synoptic tradition. The tradition forming the basis of *P.Oxy. 840* is, therefore, sometimes dated to the first century CE.\(^{100}\)

The anomalous idea of the Pharisaic chief priest may, however, cast doubt on an early dating of *P.Oxy. 840*. A recent study by François Bovon proposes to identify *P.Oxy. 840* with an inner-Christian ‘controversy over purity’, situating it in a Gnostic or Manichaean milieu of the second or third century. Starting from the observation that the designation ‘saviour’, ὁ σωτήρ, for Jesus in *P.Oxy. 840* is very comparable to gnostic texts, Bovon proceeds to interpret the purity terminology instead as polemical “prefiguration” to Jewish-Christian practices and institutions.\(^{101}\) Even though such a literary reading of *P.Oxy. 840* may indeed have accorded with the ideology of certain heterodox milieus, the parallels with canonical Jesus-traditions which Bovon also acknowledges, attest to the limitations of reading *P.Oxy. 840* as an exclusively Gnostic or Manichaean text.\(^{102}\)

In view of their potential significance for the subject of Jesus’ attitude to the purity of the Temple and related purity regulations, I will further discuss *P.Eg. 2* and *P.Oxy. 840* when dealing with individual Gospel traditions about Jesus’ attitude to the Temple.

**Non-canonical Gospels under canonical names**

Important non-canonical Gospels under canonical names, of which fragments have come down to us, are the ‘Secret Gospel of Mark’ (*Sec.Gos.Mk.*)\(^{103}\) and the *Gospel of Peter* (*Gos.Pet.*).\(^{104}\)

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\(^{98}\) Jeremias & Schneemelcher, ‘Oxyrhynchus Papyrus 840’, in Schneemelcher (ed.), *NTApo* I (²1991) 94.

\(^{99}\) Cf. the separation between a stair down for those undergoing purification and a stair up for those purified in the ‘pool of David’, the place of the chief priest’s own purification; this separation could be characteristic of contemporary ritual baths, *miqvaoth* (cf. *mSheqalim* 8.2) The ‘pool of David’ in the chief priest’s words according to *P.Oxy. 840*, may be compared with Neh 2:14 which refers to the ‘King’s Pool’ in Jerusalem; Josephus, *J.W.* 5.145 refers, however, to Solomon’s pool.

\(^{100}\) Theissen & Merz, *Der historische Jesus*, 62.


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The *Secret Gospel of Mark* is preserved through quotations from a supposed letter of Clement of Alexandria, which Morton Smith found as a Greek manuscript insertion of three leaves in a 17th century book in 1958. The quotations mainly concern a passage about a young man who was raised and taught about the mysteries of the kingdom of God by Jesus in Bethany. The scholarly reception of the *Secret Gospel of Mark* diverges between scepticism about its authenticity, its more positive evaluation as a composition from the second century CE, and its exceptional consideration as a pre-70 CE Jesus-tradition which effects the scholar’s perspective on early versions of Mark. In view of its highly disputed literary status, *Secret Mark* may at most only concern us indirectly when a comparison with traditions in the canonical Gospels is applicable.

The *Gospel of Peter*, as it appears in the Akhmim fragment, contains a particular version of the Passion-resurrection narrative. There is an ongoing debate on the question whether this version of the Passion narrative is literarily dependent on the canonical Gospels or whether it constitutes an independent tradition which contains primitive material. Since the Jews lament the end of Jerusalem according to the version of the *Gospel of Peter* (τὸ τέλος Ἰερουσαλήμ in Gos.Pet. 7:25), an explicit feature not paralleled in the canonical Passion narratives, we may presume a post-70 CE setting for the composition of Gos.Pet.

In my view, the *Gospel of Peter* may be more interesting for its subsequent elaboration on pre-existing gospel traditions within the Jesus-movement than for Historical Jesus research. Thus, at the level of encounters between the missionary Jesus-movement and Jewish groups, and the priestly establishment in particular, certain details in Gos.Pet. call for attention. One example is the reference to a perception by the priestly establishment of the circle around Peter as “evildoers and persons who wanted to set the Temple on fire”.

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104 The Gos.Pet. is to different extents mentioned and cited in the testimonia of Eusebius (Hist.eccl. III, 3, 1-2; VI, 12, 1-6) and Théodore (Phil.hist. II 2) and the Akhmîm fragment; cf. the edition of M.G. Mara, *L’Évangile de Pierre* (SC 201; Paris, 1973) 39-69 of which the Greek text is reproduced in Neirynek, *The Apocryphal Gospels and the Gospel of Mark*, 171-175.


107 Cf. Crosssan, *Four Other Gospels*, 89-121 at 108-110 uses the working hypothesis that “canonical Mark is a very deliberate revision of Secret Mark” and postis the dependence of John 11 and Mark 10:46 on Sec.Gos.Mk. 2 and 5 respectively; Koester, *Ancient Christian Gospels*, 293-303 states that “scepticism [about the relation between Secret Mark and Clement’s genuine writings] is hard to justify” (294).

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ως κακούργοι καὶ ως τὸν ναὸν θέλοντες ἐμπρήσας (Gos.Pet. 7:26). I will turn to this subject in more detail in my section on the encounters between the missionary Jesus-movement and Jewish movements concerning the Temple.

Gnostic ‘Dialogue Gospels’

Another category of extra-canonical texts which is given consideration in Historical Jesus research concerns the gnostic ‘Dialogue Gospels’, as they have been termed by Helmut Koester. Dialogue Gospels include two Nag Hammadi texts, the Apocryphon of James (Ap.Jas.; also known as the Epistula Iacobi) and the Dialogue of the Saviour (Dial.Sav.), but also the Gospel of the Egyptians (Gos.Eg.). Only Greek fragments have been preserved of Gos.Eg. through quotations in the Stromata of Clement of Alexandria.

The Apocryphon of James contains a secret teaching of the risen Lord revealed to James together with Peter in the form of a dialogue. The reference to parables in the synoptic tradition and the presence of sayings not found in the canonical Gospels has led scholars to consider the Apocryphon of James as an important text for Historical Jesus research. Interestingly, the end of the text of the Apocryphon of James attests to the centrality of Jerusalem for James who went there in order to pray. The Dialogue of the Saviour conveys a conversation with questions from the disciples, mainly Judas, Matthew and Mary, and answers from Jesus. The fragments of the Gospel of the Egyptians contain questions by Salome and answers by Jesus as well as a number of sayings.

Apart from the non-canonical texts considered here, other apocrypha are in many cases determined by later theological elaboration in different directions. In my view, the Gospel of Thomas has strong potential significance for Historical Jesus research. P.Oxy. 840 and P.Eg. 2 are of further interest for our investigation of the historical Jesus, since they may contain elements of early Jesus-tradition which should be evaluated in the discussion about Jesus’ attitude to the purity of the Temple. The ‘Jewish-Christian’ Gospels, the Gospel of Peter, and the Apocryphon of James, convey traditions which may provide additional clues for the retrieval of a picture of the missionary Jesus-movement before 70 CE.
3.2 Non-Christian literary sources about Jesus

3.2.1 Early Jewish literature

A first-century CE Jewish source which may convey information about the historical Jesus and the early Jesus-movement, is Flavius Josephus’ *Jewish Antiquities*. The *Jewish Antiquities* contain three passages concerning this subject: a passage about Jesus, the so-called ‘Testimonium Flavianum’ (*Ant.* 18.63-64); a passage about John the Baptist (*Ant.* 18.116-119), and a passage about James the brother of Jesus (*Ant.* 20.200-201). Josephus’ passages about John the Baptist and James are usually recognised as authentic. The ‘Testimonium Flavianum’, however, is perceived by many scholars as the product of a Christian reworking of an original text which may be reconstructed to a larger or lesser extent.  

Recently, Serge Bardet has attempted to take the interpretation of the ‘Testimonium Flavianum’ beyond the question of interpolation by proposing to read it not in traditional terms as Jewish evidence about the beginnings of Christianity, but as Jewish evidence about a messianising movement within Judaism. According to Bardet, the ‘Testimonium Flavianum’ tells us more about the movement which Jesus started rather than adding new details for Historical Jesus research, the value of the ‘Testimonium Flavianum’ may mainly lie in the contextual information which it provides about the early Jesus-movement before 70 CE. Other traditions surrounding Josephus’ work, like the ‘Slavonic additions’ and the Hebrew version called Josippon, are given little credit in recent scholarship on the historical Jesus in view of their disputed authenticity and the perceived agenda of a much later period.

Possible traditions about Jesus in early rabbinic literature have received scholarly attention in view of parallels with Gospel traditions about Jesus’ death. The identification of many such passages with the historical Jesus is, however, problematical. Frequently discussed passages, *bSanh.* 43a and 107b, refer to ‘Yeshu the Nazarene’, as a person who practised magic, allured and led Israel astray. The description of his death “on the eve of Passover” is compared with the Gospel tradition in John by scholars. The viewpoint of Jesus leading Israel astray is attributed to the Pharisees in John 7:47-49. The present perfect of the rhetorical question in John 7:48, “has anyone of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed in him?” may, however, point to later circumstances. Thus, rabbinic traditions about ‘Yeshu the Nazarene’ may also reflect a fixed standpoint which had taken shape after 70 CE. They inform us about a negative rabbinic perspective concerning Jesus, but not about the attitude(s) of Jesus and the movement of his early followers to the Temple.

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118 Theißen & Merz, *Der historische Jesus*, 82-84; Evans, ‘Jesus in Non-Christian Sources’, 443-449 (with bibl.).

3.2.2 Graeco-Roman literature

The passages in Graeco-Roman literature which concern Christianity represent more often contemporary pagan attitudes to the Christians rather than a picture of the historical Jesus and the early Jesus-movement before 70 CE. The Roman historian Tacitus directly refers to Jesus Christ and the early movement of his followers. Tacitus mentions Jesus’ execution under Pontius Pilate in the context of his report about the persecution of Christians in Rome under Nero: “Christ(us), the originator of that name, had been executed by the procurator Pontius Pilate. The pernicious superstition, checked for the moment, was bursting out again not only throughout Judaea, the birthplace of the plague, but also throughout the city into which all that is horrible and shameful streams from every quarter and is constantly practised”.

With regard to Tacitus’ report, Craig A. Evans has pointed to the anachronism of the reference to Pontius Pilate as a procurator in view of epigraphic evidence which assigns Pontius Pilate as the function of prefect of Judaea. Apart from this, Tacitus’ version of Judaea as the ‘birthplace of this plague’, Iudaea origo eius mali, further attests to the derivative character of his information. Iudaea may geographically refer to Israel at large. However, in Tacitus’ Roman perspective (cf. Tacitus’ Historiae V, 1-6,1), the term indicates the general rather than detailed character of Tacitus’ information on the origins of Christianity, for the early Jesus-movement started in Galilee (cf. Acts 10:37 ἀρχηγός Ἱσσαύς ἀπὸ τῆς Γαλιλαίας).

3.3 Epigraphical evidence

At the end of 2002, the epigrapher André Lemaire published an article in the Biblical Archaeology Review about an ossuary with an Aramaic inscription which according to him provides the earliest historical reference to Jesus. The type of ossuary with its inscription is dated by Lemaire between 20 BCE and 70 CE, and, in his view, situated in Jerusalem and identified as the ossuary of James, the brother of Jesus. Lemaire comes to this conclusion on the basis of comparative evidence and a scientific examination in the laboratory of the Geological Survey of Israel. The inscription reads as follows: יְמַשְׁלָה בֵּין נִיסְקָף אֱוָהוֹד דֶּשֶׁא, “James (Ya’akov/Jakob), son of Joseph (Yosef), brother of Jesus (Yeshua)”.

There are, however, several problems which complicate the issue whether this inscription could provide reliable evidence for historical Jesus research. First, the ossuary was not unearthed in the course of excavations by archaeologists, but has come to light through Lemaire’s contacts with a collector. This deprives scholars of reliable and invaluable information about the historical context and original location of the ossuary. Second, the supposition that ‘Jesus’ in this inscription can indeed be identified with Jesus of Nazareth

120 Cf. e.g. W. den Boer, Scriptorum paganorum I-IV saec. de Christianis testimonia (Leiden: Brill, 1965) for a survey of Greek and Latin texts from pagan authors of antiquity about Christianity.

121 Evans, ‘Jesus in Non-Christian Sources’, 454-462 considers the writings of Thallus (apud Julius Africanus), Mara bar Sarapion (a Syrian Stoic of the late first century CE), Suetonius, Pliny the Younger, Celsus (apud Origen), and Lucian of Samosata as ‘sources of minimal value’; Theissen & Merz, Der historische Jesus, 86-91.


worshipped by his followers as Jesus Christ has not been proved sufficiently. Third, in a brief reaction to Lemaire’s publication, Paul Flesher has noted the possibility that the Aramaic inscription may as well fit into Galilee of later centuries. Since the scholarly debate about this inscription has yet to start, the potential significance of this epigraphical evidence can only be noted without definite conclusions about its authenticity and provenance.

4. The historical Jesus and his Galilean background

4.1 The importance of Galilee in the Gospel traditions about Jesus

How did Jesus’ attitude to the Temple relate to other positions in contemporary Israelite society? In order to gain further insight into the historical background to Jesus’ attitude to the Temple, it may be helpful to begin with the evidence about Jesus’ milieu, which at the beginning of his ministry was Galilee (cf. Mark 1:14-20f.; Matt 3:13, 4:12-23f.; Luke 4:14-15; John 1:43, 2:11; Acts 10:36-37). This search for Jesus’ contemporary milieu is important, not in order to reduce the quest for the historical Jesus to a question about his social milieu, but to unearth a relatively neglected aspect of how Jesus’ words may have appealed to contemporary issues which were central to life in Galilean communities.

The manifold references to Jesus’ Galilean descent in the early Christian writings attest to the fact that this identification of Jesus was highly important in the oldest Gospel traditions. Jesus is designated as a Galilean in Matthew 26:69 and in Luke 23:6. Jesus’ Galilean background apparently provided an argument for certain Jewish opponents to undermine any prophetic or messianic claim of Jesus from the outset (John 7:41, 52). From Matthew’s hindsight perspective, however, Jesus’ descent from Nazareth rather formed the fulfillment of prophetic words (Matt 2:23; cf. Gos.Naz as quoted by Jerome, vir.ill. 3). The designation ‘Jesus of Nazareth’ frequently occurs in the four canonical Gospels. Bystanders, followers, and opponents of Jesus’ ministry alike use this expression (cf. e.g. Mark 1:24, 10:47, 16:6 and Luke 4:34, 24:19 (‘Ἰησοῦς ὁ Ναζαρηνός’); Matt 21:11 (‘Ἰησοῦς ὁ ἀπὸ Ναζαρῆ τῆς Γαλατίας’); John 1:45 (‘Ἰησοῦς υἱος τοῦ Ἰσαήν ὁ ἐπὶ Ναζαρέτ’). Other passages in the canonical New Testament writings, however, refer to Ἰησοῦς ὁ Ναζαρηνός (cf. Matt. 26:71; Luke 18:37; John 18:5, 19; Acts 2:22, 3:6, 4:10, 6:14, 22:8, 26:9). This designation appears more difficult to relate to Nazareth etymologically. The manuscript evidence of the canonical New Testament comprises the variant reading Ἰησοῦς ὁ Ναζαρηνός for Ἰησοῦς ὁ Ναζαρηνός and vice versa in a number of cases (e.g. Mark 10:47; Luke 18:37, 24:19; John 18:5). The answer to the question whether or not this evidence indicates that these two terms are interchangeable as variant Greek spellings for descent from Nazareth depends on the context in which the term occurs.


127 Cf. Lev 21:12, Judg 13:5, Isa 11:1, 53:2 as prooftexts to the (root of the Semitic) word or the idea which the author of Matthew may have had in mind.

If the term Ναζιρατός is used in the plural form, it could be related to the group of Christian Jews (cf. Acts 24:5) which observed the Jewish law, in particular certain practices of purification according to the Nazirite vow (Acts 21:18-26; cf. notes 7 and 85 above). Can Ἰησοῦς ὁ Ναζιρατός also stand for Jesus’ observance of particular practices of purification, that is, for Jesus the Nazirite? According to Klaus Berger, the term Ναζιρατός could be a later reinterpretation by non-Jewish Christians of Jesus as ναζιρατός, a Nazirite, in view of traditions about Jesus’ affiliation with John the Baptist in the early stages of his ministry. The New Testament writings which comprise the designation Ἰησοῦς ὁ Ναζιρατός do, however, also figure in the context of the later stages of Jesus’ ministry and even the gospel mission after Jesus. Unless the context strongly suggests a link between the term Ναζιρατός and the religious practice of the Nazirites, the designation Ἰησοῦς ὁ Ναζιρατός may probably indeed apply to Jesus’ Galilean background.

Jesus’ first disciples are also associated with the Galilean environment in various Gospel traditions which deal with the beginning of Jesus’ ministry in Galilee. The synoptic Gospels and the Gospel of the Ebionites provide the clearest evidence that Jesus gathered his first disciples in Galilee (cf. Mark 1:16-20; Matt 4:18-22; Luke 5:1-11; Gos.Eb. apud Epiphanius, Pan. 30.13.2f.). John 1:35-51 provides a testimony of Jesus’ first disciples which appears to emphasise the idea that some of the first followers of Jesus had also been disciples of John the Baptist. John 1:43-51, 2:11 further confirms the important place of Galilee at the beginning of Jesus’ ministry. John adds information about the descent of Philip, Andrew and Peter from Bethsaida (John 1:44; cf. 12:21), a place north of the Sea of Galilee. Acts 10:36-38 attest to the Galilean beginnings of Jesus’ ministry. Acts 1:11 address Jesus’ disciples as ‘men of Galilee’, ἄνδρες Γαλιλαίου, in the context of the revelation about Jesus’ ascension to heaven.

Galilee also has an important place in Gospel traditions about the appearances of the risen Lord to his disciples and their subsequent gospel mission. In three of the four canonical Gospel narratives about Jesus’ resurrection, Jesus promises to go before his disciples to Galilee to reveal himself there (Mark 14:28, 16:7; Matthew 26:32, 28:7.10.16-20; John 21:1-23). The Gospel of Peter gives an additional account of the departure of Peter and Andrew to the sea, probably the Sea of Galilee, after the news of the empty grave (Gos.Pet. 14.58-60).


In view of the Jerusalem-centered perspective of Luke-Acts, the evidence in Luke-Acts which does refer to the Galilean origins of the Jesus-movement is the more significant. In the context of the passion narrative, Luke 23:5 remarks on these Galilean origins: “He stirs up the people, teaching throughout all Judea, from Galilee even to this place”. The context of the passion narrative, Luke 23:5 remarks on these Galilean origins: “He stirs up the people, teaching throughout all Judea, from Galilee even to this place”.

Luke shares with the other Synoptic Gospels the tradition about Peter’s renouncement of Jesus when confronted with the question whether he was a disciple of Jesus, a view in which the bystanders were apparently confirmed because of Peter’s Galilean descent (Mark 129 K. Berger, Wer war Jesus wirklich? (pagination from the Dutch translation, 1996; Quell Verlag: Stuttgart, 1995) 29-33 at 31-32 notes the Nazirite characteristics of John the Baptist in Luke 1:15 as compared with Judges 13:4-5, and the parallel between Jesus’ words in Matt 8:22 / Luke 9:60 and Num 6:6.

130 Translation from RSV. This verse has no parallel in the other Synoptic Gospels.
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The first disciples of Jesus who preached the gospel were apparently perceived first and foremost as Galileans by other Jews in Jerusalem according to Acts 2:7. The evidence of the Acts of the Apostles further reveals that the earliest missionaries of the gospel of their teacher Jesus carried their mission out in the name of ‘Jesus Christ of Nazareth’ (Acts 3:6, 4:8-12). Paul’s persecution of the church before his conversion to the faith in Christ is described as ‘opposing the name of Jesus of Nazareth’ in Acts 26:9.

The evidence of Luke may further pertain to Jesus’ relation to other Galileans and to Judaeans and Jerusalem respectively. In Luke 13:1-5, Jesus’ reaction to the event that Pilate had ‘mixed the blood of Galileans with their sacrifices’ amounts to an exhortation to repentance and implicates those who dwell in Jerusalem. Although there is no parallel narrative other Gospels, Luke 13:1-5 could be historically credible.

At the time of Jesus’ ministry, Jews were massacred by Pilate in Jerusalem in the course of their demonstrations against his subversion of the Jewish ancestral laws concerning Jerusalem and the Temple (J.W. 2.169-177; Ant. 18.55-62). Among the massacred Jews were probably many ‘from the countryside’, ὁ ἐκ τῆς χώρας λαός (J.W. 2.170). It may further be assumed that the Galileans had their share in these sufferings which Josephus describes as sufferings of the multitude (J.W. 2.177). Josephus does not attribute any role to the priestly establishment in joining the demonstrations. Perhaps the priestly establishment, in its uneasy compromise with Roman rule, only had something to lose in view of the damage to the Temple precincts at the time of a previous revolt (ca. 6-4 BCE; Ant. 17.250-298).


Note that Paul, who had not known Jesus personally (cf. 1 Cor 15:3-8), writes about ‘Jesus Christ’ or ‘Christ Jesus’ on the basis of revelation (1 Cor 15:8; 2 Cor 12:1; Gal 1:11-12) but never about ‘Jesus of Nazareth’.


Cf. Ant. 17.250-298, there 288, about the Galilean share in the sufferings due to the suppression of a previous revolt at the time of Varus’ governorship of Syria (ca. 6-4 BCE). Ant. 20.118-124 even attributes a main role to the leaders of the Galileans in inciting the masses to struggle for liberty after a conflict between Galilean Jews and Samaritans was left unsettled.
to court. In the same way, Jesus’ reaction in Luke 13:1-5 appears to call for repentance of sins rather than political involvement for the cause of religious tradition.\(^{136}\)

Apart from this exhortation about repentance aimed at all those who took part in Israel’s worship cult, Jesus’ words for Jerusalem itself in Luke 13:34-35 are very negative. They express a prophetic woe against Jerusalem which is held responsible for the killing of the prophets (Luke 13:34) and against the priestly establishment which appears to be implied in the words ‘behold, your house is forsaken’ (Luke 13:35).\(^{137}\) These words in Luke 13:34-35 are only paralleled in Matthew 23:37-39 and thereby constitute a Jesus-tradition in Q. This Jesus-tradition in its present form, in particular in Luke 13:35b, has been interpreted as a later addition by the composers of Q.\(^{138}\) Nevertheless, the prophetic woe in Luke 13:34-35a / Matt 23:37-38 does not necessarily form a hindsight or post-70 CE perspective. In fact, Jesus’ criticism of the Temple and the priestly establishment as a ‘forsaken house’ may be consistent with Jesus’ clearing of the Temple precincts in view of corruption.

The interpretation of ‘your house’, ὁ οἶκος ὑμῶν, as referring to the Jerusalem Temple and its priestly establishment may be supported by echoes from Scripture\(^{139}\) and the immediate context of Jesus’ words about Jerusalem. The ‘house’ which is mentioned in relation to Jerusalem could only be the Temple. The term ‘your house’ probably expresses Jesus’ polemical distance from the priestly establishment. Another Jesus-tradition (Luke 11:49-51 / Matt 23:34-36) also includes elements of a polemic which contrasted the righteousness of the prophets with the bloodshed in the Temple precincts. The Galilean social environment of Jesus’ early ministry may be important in this connection, since Jesus’ teachings addressed many followers from Galilee who went up to Jerusalem with him.

Thomas 60, which is about a Samaritan carrying a lamb on his way to Judaea, may also provide a contemporary context of the danger of bloodshed. Jesus apppears to warn his disciples that they must take care not to be killed themselves instead of the sacrificial animal. The fact that Jesus takes the case of a Samaritan as an example here may express a polemical distance from the priestly establishment, since Samaritans together with the Gentiles were considered to be on the fringes of acceptable contributions to the Temple cult (m. Sheq. 1:5).

Finally, two passages in John may point to a contrast between the Galilean social environment and Judaea and Jerusalem with regard to the way Jesus’ message was received during his early ministry. In John 4:45 we read: “So when he came to Galilee, the Galileans welcomed him, having seen all that he had done in Jerusalem at the feast, for they too had gone to the feast”.\(^{140}\) As for the preceding narrative of John, Jesus’ presence in Jerusalem at the occasion of a feast is only mentioned in John 2:13-25, which deals with Jesus’ clearing of the Temple precincts and other signs at the time of Passover. It is therefore logical to assume

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\(^{137}\) Translation from RSV. Luke 13:35 reads ἰδοὺ ἀφίεται ὑμῖν ὁ οἶκος ὑμῶν; Matt 23:38 reads ἰδοὺ ἀφίεται ὑμῖν ὁ οἶκος ὑμῶν ἐρήμου.

\(^{138}\) Cf. Allison, *The Jesus Tradition in Q*, 192-204 at 204 about a later conviction that “when Jerusalem repents, the end will come” expressed by Luke 13:35b.


\(^{140}\) Trans. from RSV. The Greek text reads: δέ οὖν ἦλθεν εἰς τὴν Γαλαλαίαν, ἐδέξαντο αὐτὸν οἱ Γαλαλαίοι πάντα ἐνωρικότες διὰ ἐποίησεν ἐν Ἰεροσολύμωι ἐν τῇ ἐορτῇ, καὶ αὐτοὶ γὰρ ἦλθον εἰς τὴν ἐορτήν.
that John 4:45 refers back to these events, for there is no other occasion of Jesus’ deeds in Jerusalem in the sequence of the narrative before John 4:45.\footnote{Cf. F.J. Moloney, S.D.B., \textit{The Gospel of John} (Sacra Pagina Series vol. 4; Liturgical Press: Collegeville, Minnesota, 1998) 160: “a link with 2:23-25, where the last reference to a feast is found, is clearly intended”.
}

The Galileans welcomed Jesus, according to John 4:45, because of his teachings and deeds in Jerusalem of which they had been witnesses themselves: they had also gone up to Jerusalem to celebrate Passover. Jesus’ Galilean followers apparently supported the prophetic message behind their teacher’s confrontation with the priestly establishment in Jerusalem wholeheartedly.

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on the other hand, are described in John 7:1 as being very hostile to Jesus. Thus, we read: “And after this, Jesus went about in Galilee, for he did not want to go about in Judea because the Judaeans sought to kill him”. The contrast between the Galilean and Judaean attitudes to Jesus which appears from reading John 4:45 and John 7:1 respectively attests to the Galilean support base of the early Jesus-movement. Above all, however, this contrast may point to a Galilean social setting for Jesus’ attitude to the Temple.

\section*{4.2 The socio-religious geography of Galilee in relation to Judea}

\subsection*{4.2.1 ‘Galilee of the Gentiles’ and Jewish Galilee}

The relations between Galilee and Judea, and Galilee and Jerusalem in particular, provide the general context with which Jesus’ attitude to the contemporary Temple cult interacted. Although the sources about Galilee and Judea in the Hellenistic and early Roman periods are heavily determined by a Judaean perspective,\footnote{Josephus wrote as a native from Jerusalem about Galilee. The recent study of S. Freyne, ‘Galilee-Jerusalem Relations According to Josephus’ Life’, in idem, \textit{Galilee and Gospel. Collected Essays} (Mohr Siebeck: Tübingen, 2000) 73-85 focuses on Josephus’ Judaean perspective. 1 Maccabees conveys the Judaean perspective of the Maccabees (1 Macc 2:1-6f.) in their revolt against the Hellenistic oppression by Antiochus IV Epiphanes.
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I will aim to emphasise the Galilean part of the picture. For a better understanding of the socio-religious geography may illuminate the way in which Jesus, as a Galilean, could have perceived Jerusalem and the Temple. Although it would probably be wrong to suppose a disjunction between Galilean Judaism and Judaean Judaism,\footnote{Cf. M. Goodman, ‘Galilean Judaism and Judaean Judaism’, in \textit{CHJ III The early Roman period}, 596-617.
}

as we will also see in the discussion of historical evidence, it is a fact that Galilee had a history different from that of Judea in the Hellenistic period.

Galilee is described by Josephus as a region lying at the northern periphery of the Jewish Holy Land, subdivided into an Upper and Lower Galilee which were “surrounded by many foreign nations”, τοιούτως ἐδέσειν ἄλλοφύλος ἐκείνης (\textit{J.W.} 3.35-43, there § 41). In Isaiah 8:23-9:1 we come across the form “Galilee of the Gentiles”,\footnote{MT \textit{Isa} 8:23; LXX \textit{Isa} 8:23 adds after Γαλάλαξα τῶν ἔθνων the phrase τα μέρη τῆς Ἰουδαίας.} which is also quoted in Matthew 4:15-16 in relation to Jesus’ early ministry in Galilee. The idea that Galilee was surrounded by the Gentile nations is further substantiated by references in both Josephus’ \textit{Jewish Antiquities} and 1 Maccabees: “Tyre and Sidon and the other nations of Galilee” (\textit{Ant.} 12.331; cf. 1 Macc 5:15).
Galilee was a scene of battle between the forces of Seleucid rulers and the Judaea-based Maccabees in the Maccabean era (cf. Ant. 12.332-334, 350 and 13.191-193; 1 Macc 5:9-20). Apart from the struggle against foreign oppression and the profanation of Jewish ancestral customs, the annexation of the districts of Samaria and of Galilee to Judaea was probably in the interest of the Maccabees (cf. Ant. 13.50 and 125-127, cf. 1 Macc 10:30.38, 11:34). This annexation was imposed on the Seleucid ruler, king Demetrius, by the Maccabean leader Jonathan by ca. 150 BCE. Galilee, though bordering on foreign nations, was, however, not a foreign region to the religious traditions of Israel.

Seán Freyne has rightly pointed out that the designation ‘Galilee of the Gentiles’ should not be interpreted as an ethnic description of Galilee at the first century CE, as though it were predominantly Gentile and Hellenistic and had only recently been judaised. In this connection, Freyne refers to the influence of the History of Religions approach, which emphasised the Hellenistic component in the early Jesus-movement, “ultimately leading to the assertion that ‘in all probability Jesus was not a Jew’, since Galilee was pagan”. The influence of this History of Religions approach on the negative interpretation of Jesus’ attitude to the Jewish law has further been noted and rejected in recent scholarly work on the historical Jesus.

Archaeological evidence provides information about the typical existence of a Jewish Galilee in the Hellenistic and early Roman periods. In his survey on archaeology and Galilee, Freyne has pointed to the need to identify the material culture which is related to the Jewish way of life, such as ritual baths (miqwaoth) and burial customs. In his view, the fact that the archaeological evidence of synagogues in Galilee before 70 CE is sparse and hard to identify, has to do with the fact that the post-70 CE evidence of synagogues in Galilee in certain cases constitutes a continuation of earlier existing places of Jewish worship. Jonathan L. Reed has further noted that even in the case of the more Hellenised cities like Sepphoris and Tiberias the evidence of first century CE material culture indicates that these were predominantly Jewish cities.

The works of Josephus and the books of the Maccabees further illustrate the life of Jewish Galilee in the Hellenistic period. 1 Maccabees 5:14-23 refers to the ‘brethren in Galilee’ whose situation led the Maccabees to fight many battles against ‘all Galilee of the Gentiles’, that is, those parts of the territory where the Gentiles had made their inroads in addition to Ptolemais, Tyre, and Sidon. Galilee was apparently viewed as an ‘ally’, σύμμαχος, of the Maccabees from the perspective of the Seleucid rulership (Josephus, Ant. 13.154). Even if our picture may be coloured by Maccabean war propaganda, Jewish Galilee was a historical reality in the Hellenistic period.

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146 Freyne, Galilee and Gospel, 8.

147 Cf. Tomson, ‘If this be from Heaven …’, 144-159 refers to the position of Rudolf Bultmann that Jesus would have fundamentally rejected the Jewish law and discusses instead how Jesus’ attitude to the Law concurs in certain points with the positions of different Jewish movements. Cf. P.J. Tomson, ‘Jesus and his Judaism’, in M. Bockmuehl (ed.), The Cambridge Companion to Jesus (Cambridge UP: Cambridge, 2001) 25-40.

148 S. Freyne, Galilee and Gospel, 179-180 refers to the sites of Meiron, Khrbet Shema and Gush ha-Lab in upper Galilee, where this assumption is confirmed by stratified digs. Freyne also discusses the numismatic evidence of Hasmonaean coins found in many sites of Jewish settlements in Galilee. Cf. J.F. Strange, ‘First Century Galilee from Archaeology and from the Texts’, in D.R. Edwards & C.T. McCullough (eds.), Archaeology and the Galilee (Scholars Press: Atlanta, Ga., 1997) 39-48 at 44 about the architectural feature of “re-presentation of the sacred space of the Temple” in ancient synagogues also found in the “putative first-century synagogues of Magdala-Taricheae, Capernaum, and Gamla”.

149 Reed, Archaeology and the Galilean Jesus, 212-220 at 217 refers to “many features of the Judean material culture in the same period, notably stone vessels, miqvaoth or ritual baths, burial in kokhim shafts with ossuaries, and a diet absent of pork”.

126
It should also be noted that Josephus’ reports about the Judaisation of certain regions under Hasmonean rulers do not apply to Galilee. Josephus does mention the fact that Alexander Jannaeus, Hasmonean ruler from 103 to 76 BCE, was brought up in Galilee (Ant. 13.322) and implies the presence of a Jewish population in Galilean cities like Asochis and Sepphoris (Ant. 13.337-338). The inclusion of Galilee, in the Qumran text 4QProphecy of Joshua (4Q522 frag. 9, col. I + 10, line 10) concerning territories for the Israelites may further corroborate the existence of Jewish Galilee in the Hellenistic period. This evidence in my view undermines Richard A. Horsley’s conclusion about the “historical reality and effectiveness of conversion of the Idumeans and the Galileans”.

These two ethnic groups cannot be compared, since the Idumaeans were judaised, whereas the Galileans were already perceived as ‘brethren’ from the beginning of the Maccabean revolt (1 Macc 5:14-23).

### 4.2.2 Galilee and the Pharisees

The question about the presence of the Pharisees and the influence of their teachings in Galilee is important for our understanding of Jewish Galilee during the early Roman period. In his *Jewish Antiquities* (Ant. 18.15), Josephus discusses the influence of the Pharisaic teachings among the people (δῆμοι), and a passage from his *Life* (§ 197) further attests to the popular commitment to the Pharisaiic party, since certain Pharisees were of common descent (δῆμοτιχοί). How did the popular influence of the Pharisees extend to Galilee and Judaea?

Since Josephus’ first digression about the Jewish schools in his *Jewish Antiquities* (Ant. 13.171-173) stands in the midst of his historical narrative of events related to Judaea and the Maccabean campaigns, it may be assumed that the three Jewish schools, including that of the Pharisees, started as Judaean movements. The supposed Judaean social setting of the Sadducees and the Essenes is corroborated by evidence from the New Testament (e.g. Acts 4:1, 5:17) and from Philo (*Hypothetica* 11.1) respectively. Josephus’ account of his training in the courses of the three Jewish schools in his *Life* (§§ 9-12) presupposes an educational setting in Jerusalem. The interrelationships between the leading Pharisees and the priestly establishment, presumed in Josephus’ works (*J.W.* 2.411; *Life* 190-194, 197-198), suggest that the Pharisees had an established position, not so much in Galilee but rather in Jerusalem and Judaea.

Richard A. Horsley has pointed to the implicit correlation between the Pharisaic conflict with John Hyrcanus and the revolt of the Judaean people against John Hyrcanus. Josephus writes about the growing influence of the Pharisees by the time of Alexandra’s rule from 78 to 69 BCE (*J.W.* 1.110). Therefore, it may be argued that the Pharisaic influence could have begun to spread into Galilee from this period at the earliest. Freyne notes a

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150 Josephus suggests that John Hyrcanus I (134-104 BCE) captured Samaria, destroyed the Samaritan temple at Garizim and judaised the Idumaeans (Ant. 13.254-258, 275-283; Aristobulus I (104-103) judaised the Ituraeans according to Josephus (Ant. 13.318). Horsley, *Galilee. History, Politics, People* (Trinity Press International: Valley Forge, Pa., 1995), 37-38 infers from Josephus’ evidence about Aristobulus’ campaign against the Ituraeans (*J.W.* 1.76; *Ant.* 13.318-319) that Hasmonean power had come to extend into Galilee, even though a campaign against Galilee is not explicitly mentioned.


152 R.A. Horsley, *Galilee. History, Politics, People*, 135; cf. 129, 147-152 for the argument about the Pharisees’ “mediating political-economic-religious function in that Judean temple-state” (129): they implemented regulations from the priestly ruling circles of Jerusalem under the later Hasmoneans and Herod. This argument is, however, complicated by Josephus’ evidence of tensions between Pharisees and Sadducees.

“special concern with the purity regulations” on the basis of recent archaeological evidence from Sephoris, Iotapata and Gamala.\textsuperscript{154} On the basis of this evidence, Freyne argues in favour of some Pharisaic presence in Galilee, but agrees with Shaye D. Cohen about the limited extent to which the Pharisees established their position in Galilee before 70 CE.\textsuperscript{155}

The Gospel traditions about the Pharisees provide a historically problematic picture, because the Gospel texts reflect a later perspective on conflicts between the respective early Christian communities and the Pharisaic leadership in Israel.\textsuperscript{156} This later perspective, however, concerns the categorical polemic against the Pharisees. In his recent study on ancient Christian Gospels, Helmut Koester has shown a number of cases in which the same sayings of Jesus figure within (Synoptic tradition) and without (\textit{Thomas}) a context of polemic against the Pharisees respectively.\textsuperscript{157} This contrast between different settings for the same sayings-tradition may suggest that the polemical setting was edited in view of later conflict with the Pharisees. The geographical information concerning the Pharisees in the Gospel texts may, however, be related to the pre-70 CE situation, as I will explain below.

The Synoptic Gospel narratives contain passages referring to the Pharisaic presence and activity in Galilee at the time of Jesus’ ministry.\textsuperscript{158} The Synoptic Gospels, however, also imply a concentration of Pharisaic activity in Judaea and Jerusalem. This creates the impression that Jewish religious movements in Judaea and Galilee were to some extent interwoven.\textsuperscript{159} A number of disputes of the Pharisees and the Sadducees with Jesus is situated in Judaea and Jerusalem in the synoptic Gospels.\textsuperscript{160} Matthew 3:1-7 appears to suggest that the Pharisees and the Sadducees came to John the Baptist in the wake of a multitude which had come from Jerusalem, all of Judaea and the entire region around the Jordan. The tradition about John’s baptism in a fragment from the \textit{Gospel of the Ebionites}, which runs parallel to the Synoptic Gospel narratives implicitly links the Pharisees to Jerusalem (\textit{Gos. Eb.} preserved in Epiphanius, \textit{Pan.} 30.13.4f.).

Certain passages in the synoptic Gospels about the presence of the Pharisees in Galilee explicitly refer to their provenance from Jerusalem. Thus, Matthew 15:1 mentions Pharisees

\textsuperscript{154} Freyne, \textit{Galilee and Gospel}, 9-13, 83 n. 24; cf. his chapter 8, ‘Archaeology and the Historical Jesus’, 160-182 at 174 about pre-70 evidence of \textit{mikwaoth} or ritual baths in Gamala, Khirbet Shema, Sephoris and Iotapata, and a presumed synagogue in Magdala. Dunn, ‘Jesus and Purity: An Ongoing Debate’, 453 n. 16 notes a few disputed identifications of \textit{miqwaoth}, which do not preclude his conclusion that “the evidence of an attentive practice of purity in the Galilee of Jesus’ time remains substantial” (453).


\textsuperscript{156} Cf. Freyne, \textit{Galilee from Alexander the Great to Hadrian}, 319-320 about the general recognition that the synoptic tradition was coloured by later experiences of conflict with Judaism: “In particular the sharp polemic of \textit{Mt.} is considered to reflect the tensions of the Jamnia period, but to some degree these same tendencies can be detected in the other three gospels also” (320).


\textsuperscript{159} Cf. M. Goodman, ‘Galilean Judaism and Judaean Judaism’, 596-617 concludes that there was a common ground between Galileans and Judaeans, whereas, in the case divergent cultural and religious practices found in rabbinic texts but not in Josephus, the theological significance of the divergences cannot be ascertained.

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and scribes from Jerusalem. Luke 5:17 talks about the Pharisees and teachers of the law “who had come from every village of Galilee and Judea and from Jerusalem”. 161 The special mentioning of Jerusalem further suggests a significant concentration of Pharisees there, which cannot be just as easily assumed for other cities in Judaea and Galilee. Although the picture of John reflects certain anachronisms probably coloured by the post-70 CE situation, 162 there are also passages which imply a concentration of Pharisaic influence in Judaea and Jerusalem in Jesus’ time (cf. John 3:1, 4:1-3, 7:45-52, 9:8-13f., 11:45-48, 18:3).

The idea that the most prominent and leading Pharisees were to be found in Jerusalem figures in both the New Testament (cf. e.g. Acts 5:34, 23:1-7-9; John 7:45-48) and Josephus’ works (J.W. 2.411; Life 21). This presence of leading Pharisees in Jerusalem may have contributed to the Judaean attitude of superiority toward Galilee. The Judaean and, more specifically, Jerusalemite superiority was effected by the system of Temple taxation and dynastic rule over Galilee in the Hellenistic and early Roman periods, as Richard A. Horsley and Seán Freyne have pointed out. 163

We may summarily conclude that the Jewish character of Galilee in Jesus’ time corresponds with Pharisaic presence in Galilee. Josephus’ evidence (Life 190-198) suggests that the authority of the priestly establishment weighed most heavily in Galilee, followed by the popular influence of the Pharisees.

4.2.3 Galilean attitudes to the Herodian dynasty

Another important dimension of Galilee at the time of Jesus’ ministry concerns the political circumstances of its subjection to the rulers of the Herodian dynasty and Galilean attitudes to this rule. The beginning of the rule by Herod I (37-4 BCE) was characterised by exploitation and repression. Herod’s exploitation was effected through his severe taxes (Ant. 15.365) which was one of the reasons which provoked opposition. Herod I repressed his opponents violently, as is evident from Josephus’ accounts of Herod’s persecution of Antigonus’ party (Ant. 15.5-6f.), Herod’s execution of conspirators (Ant. 15.277-291), and general measures to quell each potential revolt by means of bloodshed (Ant. 15.366f.).

Herod’s tyrannical rule was probably hated much by the Galileans, and his measures, perceived as a subversion of Jewish tradition, incited general Jewish hatred. Thus, Herod I met general Jewish opposition to his plans to introduce foreign practices in Jerusalem (Ant. 15. 267-279). Josephus further writes that Herod I abandoned the practice of appointing high-priests from the Hasmonean lineage (Ant. 14.490-491; 20.247, 249).

Josephus also points at the hostility of the Galileans to Herod I, and Herod’s measures to prevent revolts against him from succeeding. Josephus attributes a revolt against the pro-Roman forces of Herod I first of all to the Galileans (Ant. 14.450). Although Josephus adds that a good part of Judaea also revolted, the prominent place of Samaria and Galilee in Herod’s establishment of military colonies (Ant. 15.292-296) indicates the latent opposition to Herod I in the northern part of Israel. It is further significant that Josephus claims that only the Pharisaic and Essene movements in Judaea were excused from persecution when refusing to

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162 Cf. e.g. John 1:19-24 about priests and Levites from Jerusalem sent from the Pharisees. This description seems to reverse the order which would be in accordance with the historical situation before 70 CE, when the priestly establishment was invested with the most authority. After 70 CE, however, the Pharisaic movement became the dominant representatives of Palestinian Jewish leadership.

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take the oath of loyalty (Ant. 15.365-371). Galileans apparently enjoyed no such privilege of excuse.

Herod’s cruelty probably became part of the collective memory of the Galileans. As Herod I was also the initiator of the expansion of the Jerusalem Temple (Ant. 15.380-425), the political circumstances of exploitation and repression may have coloured Galilean perceptions of the Temple. William Horbury has argued that Herod’s Temple was political by itself because of its function as a ‘royal sanctuary’ in a ‘Herodian form of ruler-cult’.164

Josephus writes negatively about the establishment of Tiberias in Galilee by Herod the tetrarch (4 BCE – 39 CE), the son of Herod I, during the reign of the Roman emperor Tiberius, as being contrary to the ancestral laws of the Jews. Josephus describes its new settlers, among which were many Galileans, pejoratively as a ‘mob’ (Ant. 18.36-38 at §37).165 The Galilean anticipation on the plan of the Jerusalem assembly to demolish the palace of Herod the tetrarch at Tiberias was occasioned by the depictions of animals in this palace, which were in contradiction with the ancestral laws (Life 65-67). This incident exhibits the negative Galilean attitude towards the Hellenising tendency of the Herodian dynasty at the time of the Jewish war.

Josephus’ portrayal of king Agrippa II (28-92/93 CE), the great-grandson of Herod I, and his family as thoroughly Hellenised (Life 359) may be contrasted to his information about the Galilean susceptibility to disparaging remarks about Agrippa II (Life 38-39). This evidence indicates a gulf between Galilee and the Herods in an atmosphere of growing anti-Roman sentiment.

4.2.4 Jesus and Galilean attitudes to the Jerusalem Temple

a. Galilean attitudes to Jerusalem and the Temple

The Galilean background of the Jesus-movement has been interpreted in different ways in the context of Josephus’ evidence. Richard A. Horsley has maintained that the Galileans in the first century CE were potentially revolutionary because of the pressure of social and economic conditions. Horsley argues that the Galileans were negatively disposed to the expansion of the Jerusalemite temple-state with its ‘laws of the Judeans’.166

Concomitantly, Horsley attributes to the early Jesus-movement a radical social renewal of Israelite traditions and a negative ambivalence towards the Temple and the ‘laws of the Judeans’. The Israelite traditions presupposed basic covenantal relations and emphasised the mediatory role of prophets to implement God’s salvation. According to Horsley Jesus’ mediatory role consisted in the renewal of the social roles of families and villages.167

There is, however, a problem with this interpretation of the Jesus-movement in its Galilean context, for Horsley tends to minimise the evidence of Galilean adherence to the

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165 Ant. 18.37 σύρχλεδες δε ὄρασαν, ὅτι ἄλγον δὲ καὶ τὸ Γαλατιῶν ἦν; Greek text from L.H. Feldman, Josephus in nine volumes IX, 30 based on critical editions of B. Niese and Th. Reinach. Feldman’s reading σύρχλεδες, ‘rabble’ is to be preferred to L. Dindorf’s reading συνήληδες, ‘those assembled’, because of the overall pejorative context of this passage in Josephus’ narrative (cf. § 38).

166 This is Horsley’s interpretation of Josephus’ evidence. Thus Horsley, Galilee. History, Politics, People, 42 translates οἱ Ἰουδαίων νόμων (Ant. 13.257-258) as “the laws of the Judeans” and τῆς Ἰουδαίων ἔθη κατά νόμων (Ant. 15.254) as the “customs and laws of the Judeans”.

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Seán Freyne has further raised objections against Horsley’s position which distinguishes between a Judaean ruling class and a Galilean peasant class with distinctive ways of life opposed to each other in a history of ongoing conflict. According to Freyne, this view is “open to question in the case of Palestinian Jewish society”. In a discussion of the question whether the Galileans were revolutionaries, Freyne has argued that this is not the case and that the primary meaning of the term Γαλιλαῖοι is geographical. Freyne has emphasised the connections and kinship (δομοφωνία) between Judaea and Galilee, as expressed in Josephus’ works.

The debate between Horsley and Freyne, who have interpreted the evidence of Josephus’ works about Galilee-Jerusalem relations very differently, involves the question to what extent Josephus presents a historical picture and to what extent his Judaean attitude to Galilee distorts this picture. Martin Goodman has pointed to the possibility that the picture of Galileans as revolutionaries “may be no more than a Judaean stereotype”.

An example of Josephus’ negative Judaean perspective on the Galileans may be his description of Galilean settlers in Tiberias as a ‘mob’ (mentioned in the previous section). A Jerusalemite perspective may further underlie Josephus’ description of the escalation of violence between the Galileans and the Samaritans during Cumanus’ governorship of Judaea (48-52 CE) in his *Jewish Antiquities* 20.118-124. Josephus writes mainly from the perspective of the Jerusalem leadership whose primary concern it was to counter the greater danger of the outbreak of war which would endanger the Temple.

Josephus describes how bands of robbers arose throughout Judaea in the wake of this conflict which was barely contained by the Jerusalem leadership (Ant. 20.124). This description of Josephus suggests an implicit link between the robbers and the leaders of the Galileans. For his account begins with the Galilean incitement to the masses to fight for liberty (§§ 119-120) and shifts to the argument of the Jerusalemite leaders against ‘rebels’, οἱ ἄφεστοτερες, and ‘robbers’, οἱ λῃσται (§§ 123-124). This implies a Jerusalemite perspective which readily equated a Galilean protest movement with potential revolutionary activity, even if the Galileans had a right cause to protest against an intolerable situation.

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168 Cf. e.g. Horsley, *Galilee. History, Politics, People*, 146 states with regard to Josephus’ account in Ant. 20.118 about pilgrimage to Jerusalem as custom of the Galileans that “there was some Galilean pilgrimage to Jerusalem for the major festivals”; Josephus, however, refers to a whole battle between Galileans and Samaritans while the former were on their way to Jerusalem passing through Samaria.


170 Freyne, *Galilee and Gospel*, 35-44, 80-85, cf. 82 n.22 for criticism of M. Hengel’s characterisation of the Galileans as Zealots, as “the identification of the Fourth Philosophy [of which Judas the Galilean was the founder] with the Zealots has been seriously challenged in more recent scholarship”.

171 Freyne, *Galilee and Gospel*, 84-85, 108-111, 114-131, at 84 about a “shared symbolic world-view” with the Jerusalem temple as the “central focal point” for both Galileans and Jews as a mitigating factor for alienation from the religious leadership otherwise experienced by Galileans. Cf. Freyne, ‘How Revolutionary was Galilee?’; in idem, *Galilee from Alexander the Great to Hadrian*, 208-255 at 228 concludes that the “predominantly peasant ethos for Galilee” could not be the typical environment for a large-scale movement of revolutionaries (246-247).


173 Cf. L.H. Feldman, *Josephus in nine volumes* IX, 451 note e for critical discussion and bibliography about the divergent reading in the parallel passage of J.W. 2.232 according to certain mss. Feldman defends the authenticity of the version in *Jewish Antiquities*.

As opposed to the Jerusalemite perspective on Galilean revolutionary activity which would endanger the Temple, Josephus’ account of the Galilean-Samaritan conflict does, however, attest to the Galileans’ traditional attachment to the Jerusalem Temple. Josephus notes that it was the custom of the Galileans, ἐθὸς ἦν τοῖς Ἐγγελικοῖς Ἐνταξεῖται, to make their way to Jerusalem at the occasion of a Jewish festival (Ant. 20.118). Josephus gives a picture of an intolerable situation, in which Galileans on their way to Jerusalem at the occasion of a festival having to pass through Samaritan territory were slain by Samaritans. A Gospel tradition in Luke also points to a continuous tension between the Galileans and the Samaritans with regard to the Jewish pilgrimage to Jerusalem passing through Samaritan territory. Thus, we read in Luke 9:53 about a village of the Samaritans: “but the people would not receive him, because his face was set toward Jerusalem”.

The traditional attachment of the Galileans to the Jerusalem Temple was part of the larger social world of Jewish Temple religiosity. As becomes clear from Philo (Spec.Laws 1.66-70) and the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 2:1.5-11), pilgrimage to Jerusalem was also a custom in the diaspora. Freyne has pointed to the fact that, in the context of a system of tithes and pilgrimage related to the Jerusalem Temple cult, Jerusalem could profit directly from the revenues, while Galilee would benefit indirectly from the pilgrimage from the east. Freyne has argued in favour of the traditional attachment of the Galileans to the Jerusalem Temple cult on the basis of an analysis of Josephus’ Life.

Nevertheless, Freyne also claims that the challenge of Jesus’ prophetic message for the priestly establishment consisted in the fact that it undermined the “centrality of Jerusalem and the unqualified loyalty that it was able to foster among its rural adherents”. Why would a message which undermined the centrality of Jerusalem attract the Galileans if they were undivided in their loyalty to the Jerusalem Temple cult? How can it be assumed that Jesus would aim to undermine the centrality of Jerusalem? This is a problem with Freyne’s position. For Jesus’ criticism of the priestly establishment, even if it amounted to apocalyptic prophecy concerning the threat of war and destruction, does not necessarily entail a challenge to the centrality of the Jerusalem Temple cult.

At the level of criticism against the priestly establishment, the pre-70 CE Galilean context may provide information about the grievances of Jesus’ Galilean contemporaries. The contemporary Galilean perspective on the Jerusalem leadership was probably determined by the fact that it was tied to a power constellation dominated by the Romans. Josephus states that people from, among other regions, Galilee gathered in Jerusalem not only for religious observances but also for an anti-Roman protest at the time of Varus’ governorship from 6 to 4 BCE (Ant. 17.254-268).

As the cruel regime of Herod I was probably part of the Galileans’ collective memory, the fact that the Jerusalem Temple became identified with Herod’s ambitious rebuilding plan may have alienated the Galileans to some extent from this ‘Herodian’ Temple. Josephus’ digression about Herod’s expansions on the Jerusalem Temple (Ant. 15.380-425, there §§ 388-391) does in fact convey negative overtones about Herod’s plans. The sceptical expectation of the bystanders that Herod would rather destroy the whole edifice, καταλύσατι

175 Translation from RSV.
176 S. Freyne, Galilee and Gospel, 105.
178 Freyne, Galilee and Gospel, 112.
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tὸ παῦσι ἕργον (§ 388), corresponds with Josephus’ description of the instability of the Herodian foundations for the Temple which replaced the old foundations (§ 391).

Josephus’ critical description may be about more than only the architectural flaws. His picture of Herod’s merciless cruelty and his description of Herod in another passage as a tyrant rather than a king (Ant. 16.4) throws a different light on Herod’s speech about his rebuilding plans as an ‘act of piety in return for God’s gift of this kingdom’ (Ant. 15.387). As the subject of the holy Temple was concerned, Josephus probably criticised Herod implicitly with his comments on the instability of the new Herodian foundations because of which part of the Temple had to be raised again by Nero’s time (Ant. 15.391). These comments may convey nothing less than a sarcastic attack on Herod’s pseudo-piety.

The negative Galilean sentiments on the Herodian dynasty and the Herodian Temple may have been mistaken for revolutionary Galilean tendencies by the Jerusalemite establishment because of certain precedents. The Galilean resentment was probably determined by the political circumstances which were viewed as corrupting the ancestral traditions of temple religiosity.

b. Jesus’ Galilean attitude to the Jerusalem Temple


Certain passages in the synoptic Gospels reflect Jesus’ animosity against the Herodian sphere of influence. In Mark 8:15, Jesus warns against ‘the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod’. Other passages, like Mark 3:6, 12:13 and Matthew 22:16, refer to the deliberations of the Pharisees together with the ‘Herodians’, apparently partisans of the Herodian dynasty, against Jesus. Jerusalem testified to the building and fortification programs of the Herods (cf. J.W. 5.148, 152, 161-183, 238-245). At the time of Jesus’ ministry, the actual political influence of the Herodian dynasty was limited to the rule over Galilee and Perea by Herod Antipas (4 BCE – 39 CE). Since these regions were the areas of activity of the John the Baptist and his followers and of the early Jesus-movement, confrontation with Herodian power appeared inevitable.

The Galilean Jesus-movement apparently posed a challenge to the pro-Roman establishment. In this connection, the question about paying taxes to Caesar, which was posed in the presence of some of the Herodians according to the version of Mark 12:13-17, apparently served to check possible revolutionary tendencies within the Galilean Jesus-movement. According to Luke 13:31, the tetrarch Herod Antipas, who had John the Baptist executed, had plans to kill Jesus. In his reaction in Luke 13:32-35, Jesus’ words start to address Jerusalem: “it cannot be that a prophet should perish away from Jerusalem” (Luke 13:33).

179 Translation based on R. Marcus, Josephus in nine volumes VIII, 188-189.

180 Cf. the negative connotation to the ‘innovation’, κατόνωσις, of ancestral traditions in Josephus, Ant. 18.9.

181 Cf. Ant. 18.4-10, 23; J.W. 2.118; Acts 5:36-37. Cf. the negative sceptis attributed to the Jerusalem leadership about Jesus’ messiahship because of his Galilean descent in John 7:40-52.

182 ὀρέστε, βλέπετε ἀπὸ τῆς ζύμης τῶν Φαρισαίων καὶ τῆς ζύμης Ἡρῴδου. A variant reading has τῶν Ἡρῴδιανων instead of Ἡρῴδου.
13:33b). Jesus’ words in Luke 13:33-35 voice a prophetic polemic against Jerusalem and its ‘house’ which could well be the Herodian Temple. Jesus’ words strongly express the idea that his destiny was not in the hands of Herod, whereas Jesus’ prophetic message severely criticised the priestly establishment.

The early Jesus-movement was apparently perceived negatively as a Galilean subversive movement by the Jerusalemite authorities, as we may infer from the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles (cf. Acts 5:34-39; 24:5 about the ‘sect of the Nazarenes’). According to the canonical Gospels, Jesus was arrested as though he were a robber and the leader of a rebellious movement (Mark 14:43-50; Matt 26:47-56; Luke 22:47-53; John 18:2-12).

According to the Synoptic tradition, the conflict between Jesus and the priestly establishment arose over the authority which determined what was (il)legitimate practice in the Temple precincts. Jesus’ action probably appealed to his Galilean followers because he gave a new impetus to popular piety and denounced practices on the fringes of the Temple worship which could corrupt the Temple cult. Jesus’ criticism of the contemporary state of the Temple cult may have generated expectations among the Galilean followers that he would also act against the political situation, which in their view corrupted the Temple.

5. John the Baptist and Jesus

The relation between John the Baptist and Jesus of Nazareth may further add to our understanding of the early Jesus-movement and the Temple. John’s baptism was a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, βάπτισμα μετανοιας εἰς ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν, according to the Synoptic Gospel tradition (Mark 1:4, Matt 3:1-6, Luke 3:3; cf. Ant. 18.118). Compared to contemporary Jewish bathing rituals and baptist sects, John the Baptist had set a precedent with this baptism. Since John the Baptist figures as precursor to Jesus in the canonical Gospels, it should be noted that a central element in Jesus’ message also concerned the forgiveness of sins (Mark 2:10, 11:25; Matt 6:14-15, 9:6, 18:21-35; Luke 5:24, 17:3-4) and that baptism played a part in the early stages of Jesus’ ministry.

Robert L. Webb has pointed to the contrast between the self-administered character of Jewish ritual bathing practices in the Second Temple period and the mediatory function of John’s baptism. The most interesting function of John’s baptism for our perspective on the early Jesus-movement and the Temple is the one described by Webb as an ‘alternative to atoning sacrifices of the Temple cult’. John’s supposed priestly descent, as we learn from Luke 1:5-13, may be significant in this respect. The beginning of the Gospel of the Ebionites (in Epiphanius, Pan. 30.13.6 and 30.14.3) likewise points to the priestly descent of John the Baptist, and adds the massive appeal of John’s baptism in a very explicit way: καὶ ἐξήρξαντο πρὸς αὐτὸν πάντες, “and all went out to him” (cf. Mark 1:5). The attention which John the

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183 Translation from RSV.
184 See the previous discussion in section 4.1.
185 Cf. K. Rudolph, ‘The baptist sects’, in CHJ III The early Roman period, 471-500 for a survey of baptist sects from the second century BCE to the third century CE. R.L. Webb, ‘John the Baptist and His Relationship to Jesus’, in Chilton & Evans (eds.), Studying the historical Jesus, 187-197 categorises six functions expressed by John’s baptism: conversionary repentance, the mediation of divine forgiveness, purification from uncleanness, the eschatological announcement of the expected figure, initiation into the “true Israel” and protest against the Temple establishment.
187 Webb, ‘John the Baptist and His Relationship to Jesus’, 192 and 197.
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Baptist apparently also received from priestly circles according to certain Gospel traditions (Matt 3:7; John 1:19f.), may further attest to the challenging function of John’s baptism.\(^{188}\)

John the Baptist was active in the area around the Jordan, and in the Gospels there are many traditions which relate John the Baptist and Jesus to each other.\(^{189}\) All four canonical Gospels contain the tradition that Jesus was baptised by John (Mark 1:9-11; Matt 3:13-17; Luke 3:21-22; John 1:29-34). In addition to this, the *Gospel of the Ebionites* (apud Epiphanius, *Panarion* 30.13.7) also contains this tradition.\(^{190}\) John 3:22-24 provides evidence about the common ground of Jesus and John the Baptist as leaders of a baptist movement in the early stages of Jesus’ ministry, before John’s imprisonment.

The parallel development of the initial circles of disciples of John and Jesus is substantiated most of all in John. Thus, John 1:35-42 includes a tradition about two disciples of John who started to follow Jesus. One of these two disciples was Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, a native of Galilee (cf. John 1:44). John 4:1-3 suggests that the appeal of Jesus’ baptism even came to overshadow that of John the Baptist. The Synoptic tradition also conveys information about the extent to which the early Jesus-movement was initially connected with the group of disciples led by John the Baptist. The fact that Herod Antipas’ alarm about the activity of Jesus is related to the fact that Jesus was taken for John the Baptist raised from the dead (Mark 6:14; Matt 14:2; Luke 9:7-9) is highly relevant. The impression of Jesus’ role as the leader of a baptist movement during his early ministry is endorsed by the fragment from *P.Oxy. 1224*. This fragment presents Jesus’ ministry as a ‘new teaching’ and a ‘new baptism’, perhaps in contrast to the teachings of the scribes (cf. Mark 1:22.27 par.) and the baptism of John.\(^{191}\)

The evidence for divergence between Jesus and John the Baptist in a later stage, when Jesus had departed to Galilee,\(^{192}\) however, came to determine Jesus’ ministry as distinguished from John’s baptism of repentance for forgiveness of sins. A Jesus-tradition in Q (Luke 7:18-35 / Matt 11:2-19) illustrates the complicated relation between John the Baptist and Jesus, starting with the question from John the Baptist whether Jesus was the one to come or that one should look for another Messiah. Jesus’ reaction typifies John as a messenger, a prophet who prepares the way for the kingdom of God. Interestingly, the saying of Jesus that ‘among those born of women none is greater than John; yet he who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he’ (Luke 7:28 / Matt 11:11)\(^{193}\) also figures in *Thomas* 46. Yet *Thomas* 46 introduces a somewhat different version of this saying, which may point to its independence from Q. Among other differences, the version of *Thomas* 46 refers to a timescale from Adam until John the Baptist and stresses a child’s acquaintance with the kingdom and its superiority to John. This overlap of Q material with a saying in *Thomas* strengthens the idea that this evidence in Q comprises a pre-70 CE tradition.

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\(^{188}\) B.D. Chilton, ‘John the Purifier’, in idem & C.A. Evans, *Jesus in Context. Temple Purity, and Restoration* (AGJU 39; Brill: Leiden [etc.]: 1997) 203-220 denies such a challenging role to John’s baptism, but bases this position partly on the assumption that the circumscription εἰς δέφος νεκροτοῦν is an “anachronistic assignment to John of an element of the language of catechesis within early Christianity” (215).

\(^{189}\) Cf. Webb, ‘John the Baptist and His Relationship to Jesus’, 185-186 and 214-229.

\(^{190}\) Tomson, *If this be from Heaven …*, 129-132 refers to the idea that Jesus had been a disciple and participant in the movement of John before he started his own mission.

\(^{191}\) We may infer from the context of this fragment – 2v col. 1 followed by 2 v col. 2 – that it concerns Jesus’ ministry. Note that Mark 1:27 also relates a ‘new teaching’, διδασκαλίαν ἔχωμι, to Jesus.

\(^{192}\) The canonical Gospel accounts of the beginning of Jesus’ ministry in Galilee are very different. Mark 1:14 and Matt 4:12-17 refer to John’s imprisonment as the point after which Jesus went into Galilee. Luke 4:14 relates the beginning of Jesus’ ministry in Galilee after Jesus’ temptation in the wilderness. John 4:1-3 suggests caution against the Pharisees’ attention for John the Baptist and Jesus as reason for Jesus to depart to Galilee.

\(^{193}\) Translation from RSV.
The difference between John the Baptist and Jesus is put in Jesus’ own words, according to Luke 7:33-35 / Matt 11:18-19, as a difference from John who did not eat bread nor drink wine. People said that John had a demon, while they argued about the son of man that he was “glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.” The description of the John the Baptist in contrast to Jesus conveys a difference between the observance and non-observance of rites of fasting. A key to understanding this difference may be Jesus’ understanding of the kingdom of God and his own Messianic role in it, which cannot be tied to unaltered perspectives on ritual customs.

The issue of rites of fasting also figures in other Jesus-traditions which articulate the difference between Jesus’ disciples and John’s disciples. According to the Synoptic Gospels, the disciples of John the Baptist agreed with the Pharisees and their disciples in their observance of customs of fasting which the disciples of Jesus did not observe (Mark 2:18, Matt 9:14, Luke 5:33). Luke 5:33 adds the offering of prayers, δεήσεις, to the observance of fasting. Jesus’ reaction to the issue of fasting and prayers in Luke 5:34-35 is partly corroborated in GTh 104. In both passages, Jesus refers to the figure of the bridegroom whose departure marks the time to fast and to pray. Although GTh 104 does not make the context of disagreement between Jesus and John the Baptist explicit, Jesus’ answer “what is then the sin which I have committed?” in GTh 104 suggests a difference in perspective.

John 3:25 mentions a controversy between the disciples of John and a Judean about purification (καθαρισμός). Purification was an issue which related to baptism. Thus, purification of the body is implied in Josephus’ description of John’s baptism (Ant. XVIII, § 117). As John 3:26 concerns the comparison between John’s and Jesus’ baptism, the controversy about purification in John 3:25 should probably also be seen in the light of the differing appeal of the baptist rites of purification of John and Jesus respectively.

Logia 6, 14, and 27 in Thomas further mention fasting as an issue in the conversations between the disciples and Jesus. These logia, however, do not share with the Synoptic Gospels the context of disagreement between the disciples of John the Baptist and those of Jesus. Nevertheless, Jesus’ sayings in GTh 6 and 14 are critical about the external, ritualised context of rites of fasting, praying and giving alms. Jesus’ saying in GTh 27 appears to confirm the intrinsic value of fasting and observing the Sabbath. Thus, the above mentioned sayings of Jesus may also reflect a discussion between Jesus and his disciples occasioned by the disagreement with John the Baptist and his disciples.

The divergence between Jesus and his disciples on the one hand and John the Baptist and his disciples on the other has implications for the subject of attitudes to the Temple. If we take the synoptic tradition about the agreement between John’s disciples and the Pharisees as a point of departure, we may infer that John the Baptist and his followers indirectly expressed their adherence to the Temple cult through the rites of fasting and prayer. These rites corresponded at least in part to the religious festivals of the Temple and the sacrificial cult.

194 Translation from RSV.

195 Cf. R.E. Brown, The Gospel according to John (i-xii) (Doubleday: Garden City, 1966) 150-156 has pointed to the difficulties of the sequence in John 3:22-30 in view of different alternative readings in John 3:25. If the reading “the Jews” in John 3:25 is adopted, John’s version starts to run parallel with the synoptic tradition about the matter of fasting on which the Pharisees and the disciples of John agreed. If the reading “Jesus” in John 3:25 is adopted, this turns the passage into a direct controversy between Jesus and the disciples of John.

196 Sayings 6, 14 and 27 are in the Coptic Gospel according to Thomas; sayings 6 and 27 have also been preserved in the Greek fragments of P.Oxy. 654. 32-40 (saying 6) and P.Oxy. 1. 4-11.

197 Cf. Josephus, Ant. 14.65-66; 17.165; 18.94 about the ‘fast day’, Ṿησσαρίων, next to the three festivals each year; Ag. Ap. 2.282; m. Ta’an. 4:2 about a ‘division’ (ἡμερήσιον) in Jerusalem, made up of priests, Levites and Israelites, of which the popular representatives gathered in the country towns to engage in Scripture reading and fasting parallel to the daily services in the Temple.
While the religious observance of fasting and prayer tied John and his followers to the Temple, John’s idea of baptism still suggested a renewal of the religious tradition of mediating repentance from sins and divine forgiveness of sins. With this precedent of religious renewal, John prepared the way for Jesus’ ministry.

Since certain Gospel traditions (Matthew 3:5-10 and John 1:19-28) attest to the watchful attention paid to John the Baptist by the Jerusalem leadership, we may consider the question whether John’s baptism posed a challenge to the established socio-religious and political order. This idea is confirmed by Josephus’ account of the execution of John the Baptist. Josephus relates the motivation behind Herod Antipas’ execution of John the Baptist to the former’s fear for sedition (ἀπόστασις or στάσις): the eloquence and charismatic appearance of John had a great appeal to the Jewish people. This fear for sedition was linked to John’s baptism which by itself was a socio-religious phenomenon. It would not be unlikely to assume common interests of the Herodian dynasty and the priestly establishment to suppress any challenge to the traditional religious order expressed by the contemporary state of the Jerusalem Temple cult.

Significantly, Jesus appropriated John’s baptism for his purpose of criticising the contemporary state of the Temple cult. This criticism does not necessarily entail that Jesus aimed to undermine the centrality of the Temple, since his view about fasting and praying did not preclude the value of these religious customs as such. In the Synoptic version of Jesus’ clearing of the Temple precincts from commerce, Jesus referred to John’s baptism in the light of a dispute with the priestly authorities. In reaction to the question about authority posed by the priestly leadership, Jesus poses the provocative counterquestion ‘was the baptism of John from heaven or from men’ (Mark 11:30, Matt 21:25, Luke 20:4). Jesus implicitly contrasts John’s baptism to the contemporary Temple cult.

6. Individual Gospel traditions about Jesus and the Temple

6.1 Jesus and the religious practices of the Temple

a. The healed leper in the Synoptic tradition and P.Eg. 2

The Synoptic Gospels contain a number of individual traditions in which Jesus adhered to or reacted to certain religious practices of the Temple. Thus, according to the first story of a healing by Jesus in Mark, the healing of a leper, Jesus urges the man whom he has cured to show himself to the priest and to make an offering for his purification according to that which ‘Moses commanded’ as a testimony for them (Mark 1:43-44). The reference to that which is commanded by Moses relates to the elaborate levitical laws concerning the diagnosis and cleansing of leprosy in which the priest was involved (cf. Lev 13-14). In the case of leprosy, the Mosaic laws prescribed the priestly role as the examination and the healing of the disease (Lev 13-14; cf. Josephus, Ag. Ap. 1.281-282). Scholarly opinions differ about the question whether Jesus’ exhortation to the healed leper not to say anything about his healing to others

198 Cf. Webb, ‘John the Baptist and His Relationship to Jesus’, 197 referring to the close connection between the Sadducees, in Matt 3:7, and the Temple. The parallel passage in Luke 3:7-9, which refers instead to ‘multitudes’, appears to correspond with the longer quotation of Isa 40:3-5 which ends on the salvation of God for all flesh.

199 Cf. L.H. Feldman, Josephus in nine volumes IX, 82-83, 82 n. 4, 83 n. f.

200 Cf. Hagner, WBC 33A Matthew 1-13, 196-199 at 198 noting Jesus’ unconventional healing of the leper, since, in the contemporary Jewish perspective, “touching the unclean violates the law” (cf. Lev 5:3).
in Mark 1:44a.45 was a later Markan edition related to the messianic secret motif or pre-Markan Jesus-tradition.\textsuperscript{201}

Similarly, in Matthew 8:3-4 and Luke 5:14, Jesus sends a healed leper to a priest in order to observe the rulings of Scripture. Luke 17:11-19 further contains a tradition about Jesus’ healing of ten lepers whom he directed to the priests.

\textit{Papyrus Egerton} 2 likewise incorporates a tradition about Jesus’ healing of a leper whom he sends to the priests (fragment 1 recto, lines 32-41).\textsuperscript{202} F. Neirynck has compared this reference to priests (in the plural form) to Luke 17:14 (cf. section 3.1.2 note 95). Although this papyrus fragment does not convey significantly new details in comparison with the synoptic tradition about Jesus’ direction of a healed leper to the priests, it at least constitutes a very early witness to the synoptic version of events.

Jesus’ sending of a healed leper to the priest to bring an offering for his purification ‘as testimony for them’, εἰς μαρτύριον αὐτοῖς, in Mark 1:44 raises questions. What testimony does Mark have in mind here and for whom? E.P. Sanders has commented about Mark 1:40-45 that “here Jesus acts in general conformity with the law”.\textsuperscript{203} Mark’s description of Jesus’ healing of the leper is, however, analysed in a different way by Thomas Kazen, who concludes that Jesus, though “aware of Jewish conditions, is not operating within a Jewish frame of reference”.\textsuperscript{204}

If Jesus’ healing of the leper conflicted with contemporary Jewish perceptions about the necessity to keep away from lepers and their contamination, Mark 1:40-45 corresponds with other healing stories, like healing on the Sabbath (Mark 3:1-5), as an example of Jesus’ transgressive act of ignoring prescriptions from contemporary legal interpretations. The way Mark has fitted the account of the healed leper into his narrative may reflect his editorial concern of countering the Pharisaic position in a polemical way.

Nevertheless, Jesus’ direction of the healed leper to the priest still reflects Jesus’ concern for traditional regulations of the Mosaic Law. The fact that Mark 1:44 refers to a ‘testimony for them’ does not necessarily contradict the reference to ‘the priest’, if the term is read as a collective noun, standing for the priestly authorities.\textsuperscript{205}

b. \textit{Purification and the inner Temple court in P.Oxy. 840}

Jesus’ conflict with the priestly establishment is mentioned very explicitly in the \textit{Oxyrhynchus Papyrus} 840.\textsuperscript{206} This papyrus text contains a dispute in the Temple court, τὸ ἱερὸν, between a Pharisaic chief priest and Jesus about purification. The reference to a Pharisaic chief priest, Φαρισαῖος τις ἰερέας, not attested in the canonical Gospels, suggests a link between the

\textsuperscript{201} R.A. Guelich, \textit{WBC} 34A \textit{Mark 1-8}:26 (Word Books: Dallas, Tex., 1989) 75-76 notes that Mark 1:44a may reflect Mark’s understanding of a silence command which formed an original part of healing accounts; Joel Marcus, \textit{Mark 1-8} (AB 27; Doubleday: New York, 2000) 208 defends the view that Mark 1:44a is “an original part of the tradition”; cf. T. Kazen, \textit{Jesus and Purity Halakhah. Was Jesus Indifferent to Impurity?} (ConBNT 38; Almqvist & Wiksell International: Stockholm, 2002) 100: “if the silencing command is not taken as intrinsic to a Markan messianic secret, it could just as well be seen as belonging to tradition”.


\textsuperscript{203} E.P. Sanders, \textit{Jewish Law from Jesus to the Mishnah: Five Studies} (SCM: London, 1990) 2.

\textsuperscript{204} T. Kazen, \textit{Jesus and Purity Halakhah}, 106; cf. 107-117 about the first-century CE Jewish context of the perception of lepers conveying contamination which should be avoided by keeping a distance from them.

\textsuperscript{205} Cf. Josephus, \textit{Ant.} 18.17 for ὁ Φαρισαῖος λέγει as an example of the singular as a collective noun. See also Blass/Debrunner/Rehkopf, \textit{Grammatik des neutestamentlichen Griechisch}, § 139.

\textsuperscript{206} Grenfell & Hunt, \textit{The Oxyrhynchus Papyri} V, no. 840; cf. Stroker, \textit{Extracanonical Sayings of Jesus}, 22-23.
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Pharisees and the Jerusalemite priesthood in the late Second Temple period. The idea of a Pharisaic chief priest is unparalleled. Josephus provides evidence about a Pharisee of priestly descent, Ἰεριστήριος ἧνους, Φαρισαῖος καὶ αὐτός, in Life 197. Nevertheless, the idea of a Pharisaic chief priest remains anomalous if not suspect. The dispute about purification reportedly took place in the “place of purity” or sanctuary, τὸ ἁγνευτήριον, and begins with the chief priest’s reproach that Jesus had not immersed himself and that his disciples had not even washed their feet.

The fact that the chief priest presupposed purification indicates the place in the Temple complex where Jesus and his disciples found themselves. Josephus describes four Temple courts: the outer court open to all people, the second court for all Jews who were undefiled, the third court for male Jews who were ritually purified and the fourth court for the officiating priests only (Ag. Ap. 2.103-104; cf. Ant. 15.417-419 and J.W. 5.184-227).

The chief priest’s emphasis on purification in the Oxyrhynchus Papyrus fragment suggests that Jesus and his disciples were in the third court. The comments of the chief priest about his own purification correspond closely to the prescribed situation in the inner Temple court according to Josephus: “Men not thoroughly clean were debarred from admission to the inner court, from which even priests were excluded when undergoing purification” (J.W. 5.227).

The ‘place of purity’ or sanctuary is also specified by the presence of the ‘holy utensils’, τὰ ἁγία σκεύη, which probably concerned the cult of public worship (cf. J.W. 5.562).

Jesus’ answer to the chief priest in the Oxyrhynchus Papyrus fragment is very polemical in that the chief priest’s perspective on purity is associated with all kinds of badness. Significantly, the fragment ends on Jesus’ perspective on cleanliness which juxtaposes the ritual immersion of the purification rites of the Temple with the immersion of Jesus and his disciples “in the living water”, ἐν ὧδεσσα ζω[ῆς]. The immersion in the “living water” could well be related to the baptism of the early baptist movement. This would imply a contrast between the priestly authority and the authority of John’s baptism, invoked by Jesus in a way which could correspond with the synoptic account about Jesus’ dispute with the priestly leadership about authority.

The common ground between P.Oxy. 840 and other Gospel traditions concerning disputes about purity has been described by T. Kazen as a motivation to give “more weight to inner purity than outer purification”. This common ground may constitute the historical core of the pre-70 CE tradition represented by P.Oxy. 840. The way P.Oxy. 840 conveys this dispute could partly reflect a changed post-70 CE perspective to the extent of considering ritual purity polemically as something past and gone. This polemic would then specifically address the Pharisaic-rabbinic movement.

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207 Josephus, J.W. 2.411-417 mentions priestly experts on the ancestral traditions who came from the midst of the chief priests and the leading Pharisees; cf. Life 21, 197.

208 This Greek noun, derived from the verb ἁγνεύω (‘to be pure, to keep oneself pure’), does not occur in the New Testament, the Septuagint or in Josephus’ works. The LXX has ἁγεστήριον as a term for the Temple.

209 Cf. BDAG, 12 referring to an identification of τὸ ἁγνευτήριον with the ‘inner court, court of the Israelites’.

210 Translation from H.St.J. Thackeray, Josephus in nine volumes III, 271.

211 The Greek verb used to signify immersion in this part of Oxyrhynchus Papyrus 840 may be derived from βαπτίζω and/or βάπτισμα. Theissen & Merz, Der historische Jesus, 62 have noted parallels with Matthew 23 and John 4:10f. and 7:37 for this dispute between Jesus and the chief priest about purification.

212 Kazen, Jesus and Purity Halakah, 260.
c. Matthean traditions about Jesus and the practices related to the Temple

Matthew comprises certain singular traditions which are related to the cult of the Jerusalem Temple. Below, I will evaluate this Matthean material and deal with the question whether this material constitutes a later transformation of an early tradition.

The Temple Tax

Matthew 17:24-27 highlights Jesus’ perspective on the religious obligation to pay the temple tax, τὸ δίδραχμον.213 The collection of this tax by the collectors, οἱ τὰ δίδραχμα λαμβάνοντες, is situated in Capernaum (Matt 17:24).

Jesus is loyal to the payment of the temple tax according to this pericope. This point has provided Donald A. Hagner the argument that Matt 17:24-27 comprises pre-70 CE tradition.214 Jesus’ comparison of the disciples with the sons of the kings of the earth puts the temple tax in a perspective of freedom without giving offence. Instead of an absolute obligation, Jesus perceives payment of the temple tax as an act of goodwill related to people’s means, which in the case of his disciples was their sustenance as fishermen (cf. Matt 17:27).

The priority of moral obligations to cultic offerings

In Matthew 5:22-24, a prophetic message of Jesus stresses the fact that the reconciliation with one’s brother is more important than the offering of a gift at the altar. Jesus’ emphasis on social justice implies a judgment of transgressors of the commandment ‘you shall not kill’ as a starting point, and proceeds to a much stricter standpoint with regard to judgment: “But I say to you that every one who is angry with his brother shall be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother shall be liable to the council, and whoever says, ‘You fool!’ shall be liable to the hell of fire” (Matt 5:22).215

This strict standpoint with regard to the imperative of a peaceful way of living together with one’s brother could have affinities with legal passages in the sectarian thought of the Qumran community (cf. 1QS VII, VIII, IX, 19). Thus, we read for example in 1QS VII, 8-9: “And whoever feels animosity towards his fellow for no cause will be punished for (six months) one year. And likewise for anyone retaliating for any reason”.216

In Matthew 5:23-24, Jesus makes the moral point that a gift, δῶρον, should be left at the altar in the case of a grudge to a brother, because reconciliation to one’s brother has a priority over the offering of a gift. This teaching of Jesus can be related to the prophetic tradition voiced in Hosea 6:6 about the priority of steadfast love to sacrifices and of the knowledge of God to whole burnt offerings.

The theme of the priority of reconciliation above offerings in this Matthean material corresponds with the emphasis on reconciliation and forgiveness of sins in other Jesus-traditions (cf. e.g. Luke 11:2-4; Matt 6:9-15). In my view, the Matthean reference to the priority of reconciliation to offerings in the Temple may reflect authentic pre-70 CE tradition.

213 Ant. 18.312 mentions the custom of Diaspora Jews to pay the temple tax, τὸ δίδραχμον; BDAG, 241 notes the equivalence between the two-drachma piece and the half shekel; cf. Hagner, WBC 33B Matthew 14-28, 508.

214 Hagner, WBC 33B Matthew 14-28, 510-511.

215 Translation from RSV.

216 Translation from García Martínez & Tigchelaar, The Dead Sea Scrolls. Study Edition I, 87. Cf. Charlesworth et al. (eds.), The Dead Sea Scrolls: Rule of the Community (1996), 44-45 concerning ‘(six months) one year’, ששה ימים instead of (six months) one year, being written on the line and ששה ימים above the line as a possible correction of the scribe.
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Korban

Another tradition related to the Temple cult in Matthew is partly paralleled in Mark. This tradition concerns korban, a Hebrew word for a gift to God as substitution for another obligation, which figures literally in Mark 7:11. In the context of the passage, Mark 7:9-13, korban – the Greek ἴσορβάν here is a transliteration of the Hebrew בְּרָשָׁפ - is the subject of Jesus’ polemic. The parallel passage in Matthew 15:3-6 also contains this polemic of Jesus, but only has the Greek rendering of korban, namely δὸρον in Matthew 15:5. An alternative reading of Matt 15:5, according to the Gospel of the Nazoraeans, however, has korban.217

Jesus’ polemic forms a reply to the question of the Pharisees why his disciples do not observe the ‘tradition of the elders’ about washing hands before a meal (Mark 7:5; Matt 15:1-2). Jesus’ polemic undermines the authority of the tradition of the elders, ἵ παράδοσις τῶν πραξευτέρων, to which the Pharisees appeal. Jesus contrasts this tradition, as a ‘tradition of men’, ἵ παράδοσις τῶν ἀνθρώπων, to the commandment of God (Mark 7:8).218

The parallel traditions in Matt 15:3-6 and Mark 7:9-13 give the impression that korban was apparently interpreted in contemporary Pharisaic tradition as a substitution for the capital punishment of transgression of the commandment to ‘honour your father and your mother’. Although this representation of korban may be part of a polemical hyperbole, contemporary Jewish evidence corroborates the idea that korban could replace a religious obligation.

In a biblical context, many references to offerings to the Lord, expressed by the term בְּרָשָׁפ, occur in Leviticus and Numbers (Lev 1:2-27:11; Num 5:15 – 31:50). Josephus mentions κορβάν as a uniquely Jewish oath (δραχος), which is listed by the Tyrians among the prohibited foreign oaths. He translates the term korban as ‘God’s gift’, δὸρον θεοῦ (Ag. Ap. 1.167). The oath called korban was apparently validated through a cultic offering in the Jerusalem Temple. Josephus further mentions the custom of korban as a substitute for a religious obligation related to the Nazirite vow (Ant. 4.73). In his discussion of evidence from inscriptions related to the issue of korban, Joseph A. Fitzmyer has argued that “we have to do with a dedicatory formula in common use among the Jews of the last few centuries B.C. and well into Christian times”.219 Early rabbinic literature also provides evidence about the usage of korban and refers to disputes between the schools of Hillel and Shammai in the Second Temple period about the question what vows are binding, and under which conditions (m. Ma’as.Š. 4:10; m. Ned. 1:2-4, 2:2.5, 3:2.5, 9:7, 11:5; m. Naz. 2:1-3).

In Matthew 23:16-22, Jesus reproves the custom of oaths by the Temple, which are equally related to a cultic gift, δὸρον (cf. Matt 23:18-19). In Matt 23:16, Jesus criticises people whose moral blindness sets a double standard. They claim that an oath by the Temple is nothing and at the same time assign a binding character to an oath by the gold of the Temple.220 In Matt 23:21-22, Jesus emphasises the binding character of oaths by the Temple: “and he who swears by the Temple, swears by it and by him who dwells in it, and he who swears by heaven, swears by the throne of God and by him who sits upon it”.221

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218 Matt 15:3 contrasts ἵ παράδοσις ὡμῶν to the commandment of God, more directly addressing the Pharisees.
220 Cf. Hagner, WBC 33B Matthew 14-28, 669 about Jesus’ point “that an oath must in every case be regarded as binding (for a similar perspective, see m. Ned. 1:1)”.
221 Translation from RSV.
Because of the implicit recognition of the indwelling presence of God in his Temple in the above quoted passage, Jesus’ teaching appears to focus on the heavy consequence of oaths by the Temple which are in fact equated with oaths by God. Jesus’ emphasis on the heavy consequence of such oaths could have affinities with Essene thought. Thus, we read in Josephus’ description of the Essenes: “Any word of theirs has more force than an oath; swearing they avoid, regarding it as worse than perjury, for they say that one who is not believed without an appeal to God stands condemned already” (J.W. 2.135).

Jesus’ polemic against the double standards for oaths by the altar and the Temple further illustrates Jesus’ negative perspective on the contemporary priestly establishment rather than on the scribes and Pharisees, as the latter is an element of Matthean edition in Matthew 23. Jesus’ polemic against the oaths by the Temple implicitly denounces the pseudo-piety and the hypocrisy of the priestly establishment, which let the double standards untouched.

d. Purity regulations applied outside the Temple cult

Finally, the issue of purity laws should be added to our discussion concerning Jesus and the religious practices of the Temple. As we have seen in one example above, Jesus reacted polemically to the Pharisees who urged him about the custom of the washing of hands (Mark 7:1-5; Matt 15:1-2; cf. Luke 11:38). This custom is called a ‘tradition of the elders’ which the Pharisees observed according to Mark and Matthew.

Jesus’ answer to the Pharisaic requirements of ritual purity focuses on the idea that moral issues instead of ritual custom determine purity or impurity. Thus, we read in Matthew 15:10-11, 17-20 and Mark 7:14-15, 18-23 about Jesus’ teaching that whatever goes into the mouth does not defile: by contrast what comes out of the mouth defiles a man. This rule about defilement is explained by Jesus on moral grounds in Matthew 15:18-20: “But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this defiles a person. For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, fornication, theft, false witness, slander. These are what defile a man; but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile a person”.

Jesus’ moral perspective on purity and impurity implies a rejection of the customs of ritual purity of the Pharisees along with the hypocrisy of double standards in the contemporary Temple cult.

6.2 Jesus’ clearing of the Temple precincts from commerce

Jesus’ clearing of the Temple precincts is reported in all four canonical Gospels (Mark 11:15-18, Matthew 21:12-17, Luke 19:45-46; John 2:13-25). This event is situated in the synoptic Gospel narratives soon after Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem which is accompanied by a crowd which acclaims Jesus as the Messiah (Mark 11:1-11, Matthew 21:1-11, Luke 19:28-44). John

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222 Translation from Thackeray, *Josephus in nine volumes* II, 375.
223 Cf. Hagner, *WBC 33B Matthew 14-28*, 429-437 at 430, who identifies this Pharisaic custom as part of “the reapplication of the ritual purity of priests in connection with their temple duties to the table conduct of the ordinary family at home”, referring to Exod 30:17-21, Lev 15:11, m. Ber. 8:2-4, y. Šabb. 1.3d and Mark 7:3-4.
224 Cf. P.J. Tomson, ‘*If this be from Heaven …*’, 259-263, 271-272 about the difference between Matt 15:17b and Mark 7:19b, arguing that the phrase ‘thus he declared all foods to be clean’ in Mark 7:19b, which amounts to a rejection of the biblical dietary laws, is a later anti-Jewish insertion in Mark.
225 Translation from RSV. The parallel passage in Mark 7:20-23 does not refer to the washing of hands anymore. *GTh* 14 mentions this general rule in connection with the idea of the apostolic mission, after a negative perspective on the rites of fasting and praying and on giving alms.
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2:13-25, however, renders an account of Jesus’ clearing of the Temple precincts at the beginning of the Gospel narrative, followed by various other occasions on which Jesus went up to Jerusalem (e.g. John 5:1, 7:10, 12:12). The event of Jesus’ messianic entry into Jerusalem is described in John 12:12-19, apart from Jesus’ clearing of the Temple precincts in John 2:13-25.

A comparison between the Synoptic chronology and the Johannine chronology poses problems concerning literary criticism. Many scholars have observed tensions in the arrangement of the narrative in John which could suggest a late collection of unfinished blocks of Johanne material by an editor. On the other hand, the idea in John that Jesus went up to Jerusalem more than once during his ministry is quite probable, and the Synoptic Gospels present a stylised chronology in order to give a central place to the passion narrative. Nevertheless, many commentators assign Jesus’ clearing of the Temple precincts a late stage in the chronology of Jesus’ ministry, just before the Passion, thereby giving precedence to the Synoptic version.

The relative priority granted to the Synoptic chronology, as indicated above, may be justified by a number of reasons. John’s narrative contains such large digressions of teachings of Jesus (e.g. John 14-17) that the chronology seems to recede to a secondary level of importance. John 11:48-53 mentions deliberations by the Jerusalem leadership about the threat to the Temple which Jesus’ ministry posed, and the resolution to have Jesus put to death. These deliberations could be related to Jesus’ clearing of the Temple precincts, since John 2:19-20 comprises a Jesus-tradition about the destruction of the Temple.

The Synoptic tradition conveys a recurring contrast between the expectation of the Temple as a place of the worship of God on the one hand, and the perceived reality of the treacherous abuses of the priestly establishment which sealed the fate of Jesus on the other (Mark 11:17, 14:48-49; Matt 21:13, 26:55; Luke 19:46, 22:52-53). This literary motif is part of the narrative structure of the Synoptic Gospels, unparalleled by John. For a historical understanding of Jesus’ clearing of the Temple precincts, I will give a critical survey of the main Gospel traditions, that is Mark (on which Matt and Luke depended) and John.

6.2.1 Mark 11:15-18

In Mark’s version, the clearing of the Temple precincts is directly related to Jesus’ teaching which appears to identify the commerce surrounding the Temple cult with unlawful gain, and even robbery. The association of the Temple establishment with illegitimate wealth was a common polemical theme in Essene sectarian circles. Although the clearing of the Temple precincts was a single event, Jesus’ teaching in the Temple, mentioned in Mark 11:17, may


227 Cf. Brown, The Gospel according to John (i-xii), 116-118 for a comparison between the Johanne and Synoptic accounts with arguments for and against the precedence of the chronology in the respective accounts; Schnelle, Einleitung, 567 notes the presence of central elements of the synoptic Passion tradition in John 2:14-22 as an example of analogies between the composition of Mark and John, suggesting John’s dependence on Markan traditions.

228 J.W. 2.122 about the Essene contempt for riches and their community of goods, and Ant. 18.19 about their exclusion from the regular Temple cult; cf. 1QpHab IX, 4-7 about the condemnation of the accumulation of riches by the last priests of Jerusalem through plunder; CD-A VI, 15-16 about sectarian abstinence from ‘wicked wealth which defiles’ and the ‘wealth of the Temple’. See C.A. Evans, ‘Jesus’ Action in the Temple: Cleansing or Portent of Destruction’, in Chilton & Evans, Jesus in Context, 395-439 for a survey of ‘tradition-critical considerations’ and of biblical and contemporary Jewish expectations about the Jerusalem Temple and its priesthood. I agree with Evans’ objections against the thesis of E.P. Sanders, Jesus and Judaism (Fortress: Philadelphia, 1985) 61-76 that Jesus’ action in the Temple would symbolise the destruction of the Temple and as such be understood as portent.
well have been a prolonged activity. That is, Mark probably gives a condensed version, which
presents the essence of Jesus’ prophetic message.

The narrative of Mark about Jesus’ clearing of the Temple precincts has been taken as
point of departure in many scholarly discussions of the historical Jesus and the Temple. Jesus’
clearing of the Temple precincts is usually situated in the Court of the Gentiles, that is, the
outer Court of the Temple. Many commentators have pointed to the fact that the
practices of commerce were necessarily related to the conduct of the Temple cult, especially
in times of religious festivals. Scholarly interpretations of the purpose of Jesus’ clearing of
the Temple precincts diverge, depending on the way in which Jesus’ action is related to his
message.

Ernst Lohmeyer, in his study about the relation between cult and Gospel, has called
Mark’s narrative of Jesus’ clearing of the Temple a “mirror of all the cult questions”. Lohmeyer
has interpreted Jesus’ action in the light of a prophetic purpose. Lohmeyer
connects Jesus’ words about the Temple as a ‘house of prayer for all the nations’ in Mark
11:17 to a prophetic message of eschatological salvation for the nations of the earth.

In fact, only Mark 11:17 contains the part of the quotation from Isaiah 56:7 which
refers to “all the nations”; a part which is absent in the other Synoptic Gospels. This implies
that the Markan tradition allowed more room for the universalistic message of the prophet
Isaiah. Kurt Paesler has, however, questioned the idea that this quotation from Isaiah 56:7
would be part of the message of the historical Jesus, and argues that it must be an editorial
addition of a Christian-Jewish community which reinterpreted Jesus’ teachings. Paesler’s
main argument for Mark 11:17c as a pre-70 CE editorial addition consists in his perception
that Isa 56:7 does not fully correspond to Markan theology, but rather to a reinterpretation by
Christian Jews; they reinterpreted Jesus’ action in the light of the early Gentile mission.

Craig A. Evans contrasts the suggestion of Mark 11:17 that Gentiles have a place in
Jesus’ mission to passages in Matthew (Matt 10:5-7; 15:24) and Mark 7:24-30. After a
discussion of early Jewish traditions concerning the significance of the Temple for the Gentile
world, Evans concludes that the inclusion of Gentiles in Jesus’ Messianic mission may have a

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229 Cf. W.D. Davies & D.C. Allison, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to Saint Matthew II Commentary on Matthew XIX-XXVIII (T&T Clark: Edinburgh 1997) 133; Paesler, Das Tempelwort Jesu, 234 regards the Markan pericope about Jesus’ clearing of the Temple as the oldest tradition and thereby as historically more interesting than John 2:13-17.


232 Lohmeyer, Lord of the Temple, 36.

233 Lohmeyer, Lord of the Temple, 39-41.

234 Paesler, Das Tempelwort Jesu, 238-243 calls Mark 11:16,17a*b a “judenchristliche Neuinterpretation” (242) referring to previous scholarship, 239 n. 51. Paesler observes a tension between the quotation from Isa 56:7 in Mark 11:17b and Markan theology in Mark 13, relying on a previous study by T. Söding (239 nn. 49, 50). Paesler appears to leave two options open with regard to the Christian-Jewish “Neuinterpretation”: he refers to the ‘reform of the Temple cult’ on the one hand (239) and to the ‘cleansing of the cult’ on the other (241).
background in Jewish traditions. He argues in favour of the authenticity of the Markan tradition.  

Hans Dieter Betz has pointed to the moral aspect of the Markan tradition in which the purity of the heart with regard to true worship has a priority over the purity of the Temple. Betz further points to the political and commercial compromise to which Herod subjected the Temple; a compromise against which Jesus’ action was aimed. Betz makes an interesting point concerning Jesus’ opposition against the perceived perversion of the Herodian Temple, drawing on the contrast between the service of God and Mammon. However, his emphasis on the interpretation of Jesus’ message concerning the purity of the heart in contrast with the priestly concern for ritual purity may be too much an extrapolation from the prophetic tradition about moral purity. If the priestly concern about purity were totally beyond the concern of Jesus, it would not be understandable why Jesus directs healed lepers to the priest (Mark 1:43-44 par.).

Even if the quotation from Isaiah 56:7 about the Temple as a ‘house of prayer for all nations’ in Mark 11:17b is a later textual revision, Jesus’ clearing of the Temple precincts may be explained in relation to the broader context of his teachings. Mark 11:15 and 11:17c provide us some clues about the reason for Jesus’ fury about the state of the Temple. As Ezra P. Gould has noted about Mark 11:15, “doves were for the offering of the poor, who were not able to offer sheep and oxen”. It is relevant that the traders of doves are specified here. Perhaps Jesus’ denouncement of the Temple as a ‘hideout for robbers’ in Mark 11:17c implied a sharp criticism against the social hierarchy expressed by the commerce of the Temple cult which the priestly establishment apparently allowed to exist. The differentiation of offerings, depending on people’s means, marked a social hierarchy. This social hierarchy expressed by the commerce, not the commerce in itself, is also at stake in Mark 12:41-44. Significantly, this pericope is situated in the ‘treasury’, τὸ γαζοφυλάκιον, of the Temple. At this place, Jesus stressed the priority of the contribution of a poor widow above the lavish contributions of rich people. The inversion of the social hierarchy is also the subject of other sayings of Jesus (cf. e.g. Mark 10:42-45).

Returning to Mark 11:15-17, it should be noted that those who followed Jesus and who probably supported Jesus’ clearing of the Temple precincts could be people of the lower classes themselves. This idea is strengthened by the references in Mark 11:18 and 12:12 to the tension between the priestly establishment and the crowds which they feared in the event of taking measures against Jesus. Jesus did not only proclaim a message of social justice and religious renewal, but in fact brought about a polarisation between the crowds which had previously been attracted to John’s baptism of repentance and the priestly establishment.

Matthean and Lucan revision of Mark’s account

Matthew adds to the account of Jesus’ clearing of the Temple precincts miracles of healing by Jesus in the Temple and the glorification of Jesus as the ‘Son of David’. In Mark 11:9-10 this glorification is only related to Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem. Matthew 21:9-11 and 21:14-16


237 E.P. Gould, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to St. Mark (1896), 212.

238 Mark 11:18 refers to ὁδὸς, which according to BDAG, p. 745 may denote “a large number of people of relatively low status in contrast to the rulers”.

239 Mark 11:18 refers to ὁδὸς, which according to BDAG, p. 745 may denote “a large number of people of relatively low status in contrast to the rulers”.

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repeat the theme of Jesus’ glorification, which make the idea of a Messianic movement more explicit. Matthew further surrounds the narrative of Jesus’ clearing of the Temple precincts (Matt 21:12-13) with the account of his healing of the blind and the lame (Matt 21:14f.). Matthew 21:14-17 appears to be focused on the proclamation of Jesus as the son of David, that is, the Messiah as the chief reason why the priestly establishment took offence at him. W.D. Davies and Dale C. Allison have, however, noted that this Matthean focus on Jesus as the Messiah in this context reflects the hostility of contemporary Judaism to the “proclamation of Jesus as the Messiah” which the author of Matthew experienced. Jesus’ healing of the blind and the lame in the Temple court may further be a Matthean insertion, as healing narratives are unrelated to the Temple in all other Gospel traditions.

In Luke’s version, Jesus’ action of clearing the Temple precincts from commerce (Luke 19:45-46) is followed by an account of Jesus’ daily teaching in the Temple (Luke 19:47f.). Luke’s version contains a terse version of Jesus’ action, without the circumstantial details about those who were engaged in the Temple commerce, which we find in Mark and Matthew. The Lucan picture of Jesus’ popular influence as he was teaching daily in the Temple court is corroborated by and may be derived from references at different places in the narratives of the other canonical Gospels (cf. Mark 14:49a, Matt 26:55c, John 18:20-21).

6.2.2 John 2:13-22

John’s version of Jesus’ clearing of the Temple creates the impression that the Jesus-tradition was independent from the Synoptic tradition, and focuses explicitly on the disciples’ remembrance of Jesus’ ministry. John brings up Jesus’ clearing of the Temple precincts and Jesus’ allusion to the destruction of the Temple just after each other. The Johannine tradition about Jesus’ words addresses the Jews as the destroyers of the Temple. Since the Jews’ answer in John 2:20 implies the physical Temple of Jerusalem, we may compare this tradition with the prophecy about the destruction of the Temple in the Synoptic Gospels. However, this prophecy is found in a very different place in the narrative structures of the Synoptic Gospels (cf. Mark 13:1-2, 14:58, 15:29; Matt 24:1-2, 26:61, 27:40; Luke 21:5-6).

R.E. Brown has proposed to situate the statement about the destruction of the Temple at the beginning of Jesus’ ministry, and to assign the clearing of the Temple precincts a place according to the sequence of the Synoptic narratives. J.A. Fitzmyer has, however, argued that an early dating of Jesus’ clearing of the Temple precincts is in accordance with the Synoptic tradition about John the Baptist who depicted Jesus as a ‘fiery reformer’.

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239 Both Davies & Allison, The Gospel according to Saint Matthew III, 140 and Hagner, WBC 33B Matthew 14-28 (1995) 601 have noted that the access of the blind and the lame to the Temple was probably restricted to the outer Temple court only.


242 Cf. e.g. Conzelmann & Lindemann, Arbeitsbuch, 366: “keines der synoptischen Evangelien hat Joh im eigentlichen Sinne als “Quelle” gedient”; Moloney, The Gospel of John, 75: “The author of the Fourth Gospel has used a unique version of the tradition at the beginning, rather than at the end of the story of Jesus”.

243 Brown, The Gospel according to John (i-xii), 118 has explained the transposition of the account of Jesus’ clearing of the Temple precincts in John in light of the story of Lazarus as the chief motive for Jesus’ arrest, “displacing all the other factors that contributed to the tragedy”.

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On the other hand, the Synoptic tradition of Jesus’ question about the baptism of John in reply to the priestly establishment which questioned Jesus’ authority (Mark 11:27-33, Matt 21:23-27, Luke 20:1-8) could point to a later dating of Jesus’ clearing of the Temple precincts. For Jesus’ question, “was the baptism of John from heaven or from men”, was the more provocative, since the execution of John the Baptist had already taken place. This implies that the clearing of the Temple precincts should be contextualised at a later stage of Jesus’ ministry.

The perspective of John on Jesus and the Temple is very explicitly determined by a later reinterpretation of Jesus’ action and sayings (cf. section 6.7.2). The importance of a later reinterpretation seems to account for the rather thematic presentation of the subject of Jesus and the Temple, and the lack of concern for chronology in this respect. In John 2:13-17, Jesus’ clearing of the Temple precincts is accompanied by the words μη πουείτε των οίκων τοι πατρος μου οίκων εμπορίου, ‘do no make my Father’s house a house of trade’ (John 2:16). Jesus’ disciples relate this saying to Psalm 69:10, according to John 2:17. In John 2:18-22, Jesus answers the question about a sign to confirm the authority of his ministry with the statement that he will re-erect the Temple in three days when it has been destroyed; a statement which is interpreted by the disciples as signifying Jesus’ death and resurrection.

6.3 Jesus’ teachings in the Temple

In the four canonical Gospels, certain of Jesus’ teachings are set in the Temple court. Mark 11:17, 12:35 and Matthew 21:23 refer to the fact that Jesus taught in the Temple complex. Luke 19:47 even mentions Jesus’ daily teachings in the Temple, and this idea is corroborated by the other canonical Gospels (Mark 14:49a, Matt 26:55c, John 18:20-21). The Synoptic chronology suggests a period extending at least to the seven days of the feast of unleavened bread and Passover for Jesus’ daily teachings. However, the contrast between the stylised Synoptic account on Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem, exclusively in connection with the Passion narrative and John’s narrative of several occasions on which Jesus went up to Jerusalem, allows for the possibility that Jesus taught in the Temple for longer periods of time. John 8:20 mentions a specific location in the Temple complex, that is, the treasury (το γαζωρυλατον), as the place where Jesus taught in the Temple.


Certain of Jesus’ teachings in the Temple may also have related to the subject of the Temple cult and the priestly establishment. Jesus’ words about the widow’s offering to the temple treasury in Mark 12:41-44 serve to denounce the hypocrisy of the rich. Just before this, in Mark 12:38-40, Jesus says that the scribes devour widows’ houses.

6.4 Parables of Jesus and polemic against the priestly establishment

The genre of Jesus-traditions for which the question to separate tradition from edition is particularly complicated, is that of parables. Parables of Jesus are frequently assigned an allegorical meaning, and may apply to a particular situation and group of addressees in the

[245 In the Synoptic sequence of events, John’s execution (Mark 6:14-29; Matt 14:1-12; Luke 3:19-20, 9:7-9) is mentioned earlier than Jesus’ clearing of the Temple precincts. Cf. Josephus, Ant. 18.116-119.]
context of the Synoptic Gospels, as they have come down to us. Certain parables are also presented without further explanation, while the Gospel narratives also provide evidence that the meaning of the parables was not always immediately clear to Jesus’ disciples. In fact, *Thomas* posits the issue of interpretation (ἡμερήσια) of Jesus’ sayings as a starting point.

Thus, the question arises to what extent the framework in which Jesus’ parables figure in the Synoptic Gospels convey Jesus’ message, a later interpretation by Jesus’ disciples, or a reinterpretation in the light of post-70 CE circumstances. I will apply this question to the parables of the vineyard and the good Samaritan which in their present context do relate to or address the priestly authorities.

### 6.4.1 The parable of the vineyard

After the narrative about Jesus’ clearing of the Temple precincts, the Synoptic Gospels relate of a number of confrontations between Jesus and various Jewish movements. Some of Jesus’ teachings, including a parable, are sandwiched between the accounts of such confrontations. These events may be situated in the Temple court because of references to Jesus’ entering and leaving the Temple (cf. Mark 11:27-13:1; Matt 21:23-24:1; Luke 20:1-21:38).

One of Jesus’ teachings concerns the parable about the vineyard and the wicked tenants (Mark 12:1-12; Matt 21:33-46; Luke 20:9-19). According to the Synoptic tradition, the Jerusalemite leadership took offence at this parable, as becomes clear from the phrase ‘for they knew that he told the parable aiming at them (πρός εὐφροσύνης)’ in Mark 12:12 and Luke 20:19. Matthew 21:45, referring back to two parables about a vineyard, reads somewhat differently: ‘And when the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they knew that he spoke about them (περί εὐφροσύνης).’ Mark 12:12 implies that the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders, previously mentioned in Mark 11:27, were the ones who took offence. Luke 20:19 refers to the scribes and the chief priests as the offended party.

The parable of the vineyard in Mark 12:1-9 and in Matthew 21:33-41 unfolds a perspective on the owner of a vineyard who let it out to tenants. The tenants owed a portion of the produce of fruit to the owner, but instead of giving this to the servants which the owner sent, they maltreated and even killed some of the servants. When the owner sent his own son, the tenants killed him, arguing that the inheritance would then be theirs. Luke 20:9-16 presents the same version except for the fact that it omits the killing of some of the servants.

Since the Synoptic Gospels report that the Jerusalem leadership took offence at this parable, the symbolic meaning which the Synoptic tradition intended to convey should

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246 J.R. Donahue, S.J., *The Gospel in Parable* (Fortress: Philadelphia, 1988) 40-46 refers to the ‘enigma of Mark 4:10-12’, which alludes to the disciples’ questions about Jesus’ parables and which has been interpreted as a mistranslation in the case of Mark 4:12b, as a saying of the early church, as Markan redaction and by Donahue himself as originating “in the prophetic consciousness of Jesus”. Cf. Theissen & Merz, *Der historische Jesus*, 285-309 at 287-292 pointing to different interpretations (didactic, historicising, figurative, aesthetic, socio-historical, homiletical) of parables of Jesus in past scholarship.

247 In Matthew 23 we find the Matthean diatribe against ‘scribes and Pharisees’ which, in this form, has no parallel in the other synoptic Gospels. Parts of this diatribe are related to the subject of the Temple.

248 Matthew 20:1 and 21:37-38 stress that Jesus was teaching daily in the Temple.

249 Note that the Matthean version, Matt 21:33-46, relates this as ‘another parable’, ἔνα παράβολα, as it is preceded by a parable in Matt 21:28-32 which also mentions a vineyard. Matthew’s addition does not necessarily contradict Mark, since the plural ἐν παράβολαις λαλοῦν in Mark 12:1 may suggest that Mark cites only one example out of several parables spoken by Jesus at this occasion.

250 D.A. Hagner, *WBC 33B Matthew 14-28* (1995) 623 has noted about the Matthean reference to the Pharisees here that it “seems to have been added to intensify their culpability as the religious leaders of the Jewish people”.

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perhaps be sought in relation to Jerusalem. There are, however, a number of reasons to assume that the Synoptic narrative framework to the parable reflects later reinterpretations and concerns.

First, the conclusion to the parable appears to present a polemical, missionary perspective on the spreading of the gospel mission beyond Israel. Mark 12:9 and Luke 20:16 both conclude that the owner of the vineyard will come to destroy the tenants and give the vineyard to others. The notion of being an inherant, ἄλλος, which is important in this parable, was in fact applied to the mission outside Israel to include Gentile converts into the promises of the covenant of God with his people (cf. Rom 4:13-14, 8:17, 9-11). The version of Matthew 21:43, the conclusion of this parable, reveals the context of the mission beyond Israel in an even more explicit way: ‘Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a nation (ἔθνος) producing the fruits of it’.

Second, the image of the rejected cornerstone (Mark 12:10-11; Matt 21:42-43; Luke 20:17-18), which echoes Psalm 118:22 and figures at the end of the parable, may further reflect the later perspective of the missionary Jesus-movement. Mark 12:10-11 may in fact be read as an editorial addition which forms the Markan conclusion to this parable in the light of later experiences of the rejection of the gospel by the Jerusalem leadership. In the Matthean version, the reference to the rejected stone is interwoven with the conclusion about inheritance for another nation (Matt 21:42-43). Luke 20:17-18 identifies the rejected stone as a type of stumbling block. The idea that the later missionary perspective underlies the conclusion to this parable here may further be substantiated by an example from the Acts of the Apostles. The speech of Peter in Acts 4:8-12, addressing the ‘rulers of the people and elders’, comprises the image of the ‘stone rejected by the builders which has become the cornerstone’. The cornerstone signifies Jesus Christ in Acts 4:10, and Acts 4:11 states his rejection by the Jerusalem leadership: “this is the stone which was rejected by you builders”. This later perspective on Jesus Christ as the rejected stone, which has become the cornerstone, may nevertheless still be a pre-70 CE perspective.

Third, the parable of the vineyard figures in logion 65 of Thomas without the narrative framework or setting suggested by the Synoptic Gospels. The subsequent saying in GTh 66 concerns the imagery of the rejected cornerstone. Thus, the narrative setting for the parable of the vineyard in the Synoptic Gospels, of which Mark is presumably the oldest source, becomes subject to the question whether it reflects Markan revision or an earlier pre-Markan tradition.

Taking into account the additions which have already been mentioned above, the idea that the Jerusalem leadership took offence at Jesus’ parable of the vineyard is not unlikely. For the parable of the vineyard echoes elements of the song of the vineyard in Isaiah 5:1-7 (cf.

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251 Cf. the comment of Donahue, The gospel in parable, 56 about redaction in Mark 12:9: “When the vineyard is given “to others” in 12:9, Mark had in mind the early Christian community”.

252 Translation from RSV. Cf. Donahue, The gospel in parable, 89-91 at 91: “Writing after the period when the temple and the city are destroyed, and when his own community is the nation (with the overtone of “Gentile”, the object of the mission in Matt 28:16-20), Matthew simultaneously warns his community that their status as tenants of God’s vineyard should not be a source of presumption”.

253 Contra C.A. Evans, ‘Are the Wicked Tenant Farmers “Peasants”? Jesus’ Parable and Lease Agreements in Antiquity’, in Chilton & Evans, Jesus in Context, 231-250 who favours the antiquity of the entire context and form of the parable as it is preserved in the Synoptic tradition.

Hos 10:1; Jer 2:21; Ezek 19:10-14), where it stands for the house of Israel. The religious authorities in Jerusalem probably recognised such echoes and the transformation of the theme in this parable as polemic. As the rejected servants are often taken to stand for the rejected prophets, the Jerusalem leadership was by implication associated with imposture and murder (in the version of Mark and Matthew). This polemic against Jerusalem concurs with other Jesus-traditions in Q, like Luke 13:34-35/Matt 23:37-39.

As much as the parable addressed the Jerusalem leadership, it could have conveyed an implicit polemic by Jesus against the priestly establishment. The regular Temple cult was sustained by offerings from agriculture and was thereby in every way related to the produce of Israel, symbolised as a vineyard. In the parable of the vineyard, Jesus therefore appears to reverse the perspective: the tenants, expected to set apart a portion of their produce for the owner, may here stand for the Jerusalemite authorities. The polemical idea thus voiced could have the purpose of denouncing the corruption of the priestly establishment which represented a wicked stewardship only concerned with its own inheritance even at the cost of bloodshed.

6.4.2 The parable of the Good Samaritan

The parable of the ‘good Samaritan’ is only found in Luke 10:29-37. It forms part of the larger travel narrative of Luke (Luke 9:51-19:27), and it has been noted that the parable may fit specifically into Luke’s theology. It is a disputed question whether or not Luke’s parable of the good Samaritan comprises a pre-70 CE Jesus-tradition.

In Luke’s parable, the good Samaritan is the only one to come to the aid of the victim of a robber band, while a priest and a Levite are said to pass on the other side of the road. The parable forms Jesus’ answer to the question by a person learned in the Law about who should be considered as one’s neighbour. Jesus’ parable implies a very negative, polemical picture of priests and Levites who were traditionally considered with high esteem in Israelite society, but who did not come to the assistance of the victim to act as a neighbour. In contrast to this, the Samaritan shows compassion and mercy for the victim.

Joseph A. Fitzmyer has noted the liability of priests and Levites to remain undefiled from contact with an (apparently) dead body, and the hostile schism between Jews and Samaritans. In light of these historical circumstances, Jesus’ polemic appears to focus on

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255 Cf. Davies & Allison, The Gospel According to Saint Matthew III, 176 n. 9 have noted that the symbolism of the vineyard, standing for Israel, Jerusalem or the kingdom respectively, is fluid. The wicked tenant farmers are, however, invariably interpreted as standing for the contemporary Jewish religious establishment in the commentaries of W.D. Davies / D.C. Allison (176) and D.A. Hagner (624).

256 Davies & Allison, The Gospel According to Saint Matthew III, 176 n. 12 mention biblical and post-biblical texts in which prophets are represented as ‘servants’. Cf. the parallels between the treatment of the servants in the parable of the vineyard and the treatment of prophets, wise men and scribes in Matt 23:34.


258 Cf. e.g. Donahue, The gospel in parable, 129-134 about the parable’s relation to the theme of ‘seeing-having compassion’ (cf. Luke 7:13, 15:20).


the heartlessness of the socio-religious reality which the priestly establishment perpetuated. This parable thereby conveys a very sharp polemic against the priestly establishment of the Jerusalem Temple.

Since the canonical Gospels appear to contain conflicting traditions about Jesus’ attitude to Samaritans (cf. e.g. Matt 10:5; John 4:1-42), it is difficult to ascertain whether this form of the polemic against the priestly establishment reflects Jesus’ words or later tradition in light of later gospel mission in Samaria. Nevertheless, the polemic against the ritual purity concerns as overriding moral obligations may correspond with what we otherwise know of Jesus’ polemical criticism against the priestly establishment.

6.5 Synoptic traditions about Jesus’ prophecy of the destruction of the Temple

In the Synoptic Gospels, the saying of Jesus about the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple forms part of the narrative of events in Jerusalem leading up to the Passion (Mark 13:1-2; Matthew 24:1-2; Luke 21:5-9). Jesus’ statement about the destruction of the Temple is also part of the Passion narrative in Mark and Matthew, as part of the testimonies used in order to convict Jesus guilty (Mark 14:57-58, Matthew 26:60-61). The very fragmentarily preserved logion 71 of Thomas could further be related to the theme of the destruction of the Temple.

Can the Synoptic tradition about Jesus’ prophecy of the destruction of the Temple be counted among the pre-70 CE Jesus-traditions or should it be considered as an anachronism, an example of vaticinium ex eventu? The information at the end of the age in Mark 13:3-37 does not only relate to the destruction of the Temple but also to the situation in which people are urged to flee from Judaea to the mountains (Mark 13:14). This passage in Mark does in fact provide the evidence on the basis of which many scholars have dated this Gospel to the aftermath of the Jewish War. It appears unlikely that the tradition about Jesus’ prophecy, as it has been recorded in Mark and other synoptic Gospels, is wholly derived from Jesus’ sayings without containing elements informed by the situation after 70 CE.

Apart from the narrative context in which we find the saying about the destruction of the Temple, we have to deal with the question of whether the prophecy about the destruction of the Temple can be connected to the historical Jesus. Kurt Paesler has discerned three scholarly positions with regard to the historical interpretation of the Temple saying in Mark 13:2: an underlying apocalyptic tradition of Israel, a vaticinium ex eventu, and an authentic saying of Jesus respectively.262

Paesler has refuted the position about the saying in Mark 13:2 as a vaticinium ex eventu because of the, in his view, implausibly narrow time span between the dating of the written composition of Mark and the vaticinium ex eventu as well as the pre-existence of the motif of the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple.263 E.P. Sanders has further opposed to the idea of Mark 13:2 as a vaticinium ex eventu that ‘prophecy’ written after the event would then have to agree perfectly with the event. This is not the case with Mark 13:2, for it does not refer to the destruction of the Temple by fire.264 These arguments against a vaticinium ex eventu are in my view not completely convincing, since the exact distance in time between 70

261 Nolland, WBC 35B Luke 9:21-18:34, 597 defends the idea that Luke 10:29-37 represents Jesus-tradition: “there is still every reason for thinking that the historical Jesus is the creative source of the parable”.

262 Paesler, Das Tempelwort Jesu, 76-79.

263 Paesler, Das Tempelwort Jesu, 84-87 mentions Jer 7:14, 26:6.18; Mic 3:12 and especially Hag 2:15 and LXX 2 Kgs 23:15 about the stones of the Temple in the context of the destruction of the First Temple. Cf. 89 and 256 for Paesler’s supposition of an Aramaic apophthegm which underlies the Marcan text.

264 E.P. Sanders, The Historical Figure of Jesus (Penguin: London [etc.], 1993) 256-257 at 257, concludes: “This prophecy, then, is probably pre-70, and it may be Jesus’ own”. Cf. idem, Jesus and Judaism, 71-76.
CE and the date of composition of Mark is hard to determine, and since a *vaticinium ex eventu* need not reveal the event in every detail as long as there is no contradiction.

Attempts to rule out a *vaticinium ex eventu* on the basis of a discussion of pre-70 CE Jewish traditions, which supposedly comprise predictions of the destruction of the Temple, are not convincing in my view either. The dating of certain pseudepigrapha, for instance, is a debatable matter, while certain other cases of predictions are not even clear-cut predictions of the destruction of the Temple. It is in my view cautious not to presuppose predictions about the destruction of the Temple as a self-evident historical context for the saying of Jesus.

If there is an authentic, historical core underlying the saying about the destruction of the Temple in Mark 13:2 and parallel passages, how does this correspond with other Jesus-traditions, such as that of the healed leper, which suggest Jesus’ respect for the traditional Temple cult? E.P. Sanders has interpreted the prophecy in Mark 13:2 as the saying of Jesus in the role of an eschatological prophet.

The other possibility for an underlying apocalyptic tradition, as categorised above, may still be examined in search of the connection between Mark 13:1-2 and 13:3-37. If Jesus uttered apocalyptic words against the Temple, Jesus’ followers may have reinterpreted them and elaborated on the apocalyptic perspective. We have evidence for the reinterpretation of Temple sayings in John 2:18-22. The reinterpretation which came to surround Jesus’ words about the Temple appears to determine the narrative context more heavily. The presence of the Temple motif in the Passion narratives of Mark and Matthew (Mark 14:58; Matt 26:61) may further be evidence of an elaboration on and reinterpretation of Jesus’ words in light of his death and resurrection.

With regard to the historical context for Jesus’ words about the Herodian Temple, a passage in Josephus’ works may be of interest for reading Jesus’ words about the destruction of the Temple. Herod’s expansion of the Temple did in fact leave no stone upon another of the old foundations which he replaced by new foundations. These foundations, however, subsided and had to be raised again in the time of Nero according to Josephus (*Ant.* 15.391). Jesus’ words about the Temple could originally have concerned this situation of the Temple which Herod’s expansion program had brought about. Since Jesus polemicised against the lack of social justice even in the place of worship, that is, the Temple cult, his polemic may also have extended to the architectural legacy of a cruel and merciless king whose adornments may have been perceived as pseudo-piety.

The reinterpretation of Jesus’ words about the Temple by his followers took the destruction of the Temple and subsequent events into account, as is revealed by the entire range of apocalyptic events described in Mark 13:1-37. Nevertheless, the traditions about Jesus’ polemic against the priestly establishment, which can be related to the milieu of the historical Jesus, were transmitted in the decades before 70 CE.

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265 Cf. e.g. C.A. Evans, ‘Predictions of the Destruction of the Herodian Temple in the Pseudepigrapha, Qumran Scrolls, and Related Texts’, *JSP* 10 (1992) 89-147, who notes the possibility of interpolations in the *Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs* (92-93), the fact that “it is unclear if the Temple itself was expected to be destroyed” in Qumran texts (96), and different dates (before 70 or 80 CE) for the *Lives of the Prophets* (98).

266 Sanders, *The Historical Figure of Jesus*, 256 considers “the few passages in the synoptics that deal with [Jesus attitude to] the Temple and priestly prerogatives” as “favourable”.

267 Sanders, *The Historical Figure of Jesus*, 261: “Jesus probably thought that in the new age, when the twelve tribes of Israel were again assembled, there would be a new and perfect Temple, built by God himself”.
6.6 Jesus about true worship in John 4:19-26

John 4:19-26 comprises a saying of Jesus concerning true worship in the narrative context of Jesus’ conversation with a Samaritan woman. This woman raises the issue of the competing claims of Jerusalem and Mount Gerizim as the true place of worship. Jesus’ reaction describes true worship as worship ‘of the Father in spirit and truth’ (John 4:23-24). Although the anachronistic influence of the post-70 CE context is possible, as in the passages in the Synoptic Gospels which convey Jesus’ prophecy of the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple, the focus in this passage in John may be in accordance with Jesus’ general prophetic message. Jesus’ polemic against the contemporary priestly establishment makes it probable that his emphasis is on true worship rather than on the place of worship.

6.7 The Temple as a metaphor in Jesus-traditions

In some metaphorical ways, the image of the Temple also occurs in Gospel traditions related to Jesus. This usage does, however, reflect the remembrance and reinterpretation by Jesus’ followers of the sayings of Jesus rather than a transmission of Jesus’ sayings from the milieu of Jesus. We will survey two cases here - Mark 14:58 and John 2:18-22 - which clearly reflect the reinterpretation of Jesus’ words in the light of later circumstances.

6.7.1 Mark 14:58

Mark 14:58 points to a charge against Jesus for having said that he would destroy the Temple ‘which is made with hands’ and build up another, ‘not made with hands’ in three days. This passage is not paralleled in the other Gospels. The contrast between a Temple ‘not made with hands’ and the actual Temple which was made with hands appears enigmatic. The temple imagery ‘not made with hands’ may, however, be related to Jesus’ body of resurrection, for the time span of three days also occurs in the Gospel narrative about the death and resurrection of Jesus.

Does Mark 14:58 comprise a post-resurrection tradition of Jesus’ followers who reinterpreted apocalyptic words of Jesus about the Temple? Or rather does Mark 14:58 constitute a redactional element which fits as a literary motif in the narrative about the Passion and the Resurrection?

The image of another Temple ‘not made with hands’ in Mark 14:58 is not unparalleled in other New Testament writings concerning the early Jesus-movement. The idea of a heavenly Temple, a ‘house not made with hands’, as opposed to the contemporary Temple of Jerusalem, made with hands, figures in the speech of Stephen (Acts 7:48-50). The polemical

268 Note that Moloney, The Gospel of John, 128, 132 considers the statement in John 4:22 that ‘salvation is from the Jews’ as evidence of an early Jesus-tradition underlying John 4:19-26, presupposing that the “words of Jesus reflect his support of Jewish traditions over against Samaritan traditions” (132).

269 Brown, The Gospel According to John (i-xii), 175-176 writes that the evidence of John 4:4-42 is not supported by the rest of the NT, and addresses the problem of the historicity of John 4:19-26, attributing the composition of this passage to the “Johannine technique of misunderstanding, plays on words, etc.”.

270 ἤμεις ἤκούσαμεν αὐτοῦ λέγοντος ὅτι ἐγώ καταλύσω τὸν ναὸν τοῦτον τῶν χειροποίητων καὶ διὰ τριάδος ἤμερῶν ἀναλύσω χειροποίητον οἰκοδομήμου. A minor variant reading of Mark 14:58 has ἀναστήσομαι χειροποίητον (‘I will raise up [another one] not made with hands’) for the last part of the verse in stead of χειροποίητον οἰκοδομήμου.

271 Cf. Paesler, Das Tempelwort Jesu, 203-227 at 224, who reads Mark 14:58 as a christological reinterpretation of Jesus’ cult criticism by the Hellenists; a criticism which was originally inspired by apocalyptic motifs.
contrast between the heavenly Temple and the earthly Temple of Jerusalem is an important theme in Stephen’s speech. This speech probably is a Lucan composition, as is revealed by the narrative framework and parallels with other speeches in Acts.\textsuperscript{272} This does not preclude the possibility that pre-70 CE traditions underlie Stephen’s speech. The Lucan author may have drawn on traditions of the Jesus-movement and their attitude(s) to the Temple.

Since the image of a ‘house not made with hands’ echoes prophetic tradition of cult criticism (cf. Isa 66:1 quoted in Acts 7:49-50), Jesus’ words about another Temple ‘not made with hands’ in Mark 14:58 could perhaps be related to eschatological prophecy. Jesus’ criticism of the contemporary state of the Temple and the priestly establishment was motivated by issues of social justice and moral purity, as we have seen. The prophetic message about God’s omnipresence as the Creator instead of a limited presence in the earthly Temple served as an exhortation about proper worship. Since Jesus taught about the coming kingdom of God, his perspective on the Temple was probably also influenced by eschatology.

Jesus’ followers reinterpreted Jesus’ words in the light of his death and resurrection. Jesus’ statement about the destruction of the Temple has a prominent place in the accusation of the false witnesses in the Marcan Passion narrative. The evidence of Acts 7:48-50, whose criticism of the Jerusalem Temple as a house ‘made with hands’ associates it with idolatry, reflects very different concerns, possibly those of Hellenistic circles of believers in Christ.\textsuperscript{273}

\textbf{6.7.2 John 2:18-22}

The Temple as a metaphor of Jesus’ body in relation to Jesus’ death and resurrection is most explicitly found in John 2:18-22. In this passage from John, the emphasis is laid on what Jesus’ disciples remembered about Jesus as he spoke of the “Temple of his body”, περὶ τοῦ ναοῦ τοῦ σώματος αὐτοῦ (John 2:21-22). Thus, John 2:18-22 presents itself as an early Christian-Jewish tradition which was remembered and passed on by the disciples. Jesus’ saying about the destruction and rebuilding of the Temple in three days is interpreted in light of Jesus’ death and resurrection.

In Jesus’ saying about the Temple in John 2:18-22, the Jewish reaction to Jesus’ words is the following rhetorical question: “It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?” (John 2:20). The architectural temple which is implied in the Jewish reaction was the Temple as it had been expanded by king Herod I.\textsuperscript{274} Many of Jesus’ teachings had also taken place in the Temple. According to Acts, the apostles of the Jerusalem church assembled in the Temple precincts to proclaim Jesus’ resurrection from the dead.\textsuperscript{275}

Francis Moloney has noted the possibility that John 2:18-22 was read by its original addressees in light of a post-70 CE context, which would by implication also indicate the possibility of a post-70 CE revision in John 2:18-22.\textsuperscript{276} Johanna Rahmer has interpreted the

\begin{footnotes}
\item[272] The narrative framework relates the threat that Jesus of Nazareth ‘will destroy this place’ (Acts 6:14). Note the parallel opening of a speech in Acts 7:2 and 22:1, the parallel between 7:52 and 3:14 with regard to Jesus as ‘the Righteous one’. See Fitzmyer, \textit{The Acts of the Apostles}, 103-113 on the speeches in Acts with bibliography, noting the speeches are introduced at points in the narrative where they serve Luke’s “own theological and missionary aims” (107), to which Stephen’s speech is not an exception (108). Cf. my section 7.5 below.
\item[273] Cf. 2 Cor 5:1 where Paul also refers to a ‘house not made with hands’, though in the context of the faith in the resurrection, without suggesting a polemical contrast with the Temple as a house ‘made with hands’.
\item[274] \textit{Ant.} 15.380-425 (speech of Herod in §§ 382-387). §380 calls the Herodian Temple ὁ ναὸς τοῦ θεοῦ.
\item[276] Moloney, \textit{The Gospel of John}, 79: “At a time when there is no longer a Temple in Jerusalem, believing readers of the Fourth Gospel will experience the presence of the crucified yet risen Jesus as their ‘Temple’”.
\end{footnotes}
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The retrospective narrative style of John as comprisingly authentic, and even as ‘autobiographical’ features of christology. This christology is characterised by the idea that Jesus’ body incarnated the resurrection of the Temple, according to Rahmer. This explicit idea in John 2:18-22 appears to be conveyed implicitly already in Mark 14:58. The relation between Mark 14:58 and John 2:18-22 may point to a connection of Jesus-traditions at an pre-70 CE stage.

7. Early Christian-Jewish encounters with Jewish movements concerning the Temple

7.1 The historicity of Acts

The foregoing sections have mainly dealt with Jesus’ relation to the Temple and the reinterpretation of sayings of Jesus by his early followers. From the historical Jesus and the interpretation of his words by his early followers my discussion will now turn to the attitudes of the early followers of Jesus to the Temple in the decades before 70 CE when the gospel spread from Israel to the diaspora.

For a picture of early Christian-Jewish encounters with Jewish movements concerning the Temple, the Acts of the Apostles may yield important information, provided that the account of Acts is carefully evaluated concerning its historicity. The Acts of the Apostles do not present the only picture of such confrontations: we may also glean some indirect information about the controversies between the early Jesus-movement and other Jewish movements from the canonical Gospels, as we have seen in our analysis of the image of the ‘rejected stone’ in relation to the parable of the vineyard.

The Book of Acts has received divergent evaluations with regard to its historicity. Acts convey a perspective on both the Palestinian and the Graeco-Roman settings of the growing church and survey the missionary work of the apostles after Pentecost to some extent. Thus, we may agree with the perception of Colin J. Hemer that the Book of Acts “is in some respects the book central to the historical problem of the entire New Testament”.

Hemer has proposed that Luke’s use of sources consisted of, among other things, contact with surviving witnesses of the Jesus-tradition whose accounts may have led Luke to revise ‘older traditions’, which “accounts for some of the significant ‘L-nuances’ in the Third Gospel”. With regard to the Lucan picture of the Jerusalemite authorities in Luke-Acts, Steve Mason

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280 Cf. Fitzmyer, The Acts of the Apostles, 124-128 with bibliography about the historicity of Acts, there p. 124 noting: “The issue of the historical character of the Lucan account in Acts has been well studied, and it is clear today that a middle ground has to be sought between the skeptical approach and a conservative reaction to it”.
281 Cf. e.g. Mark 3:7-8; Matt 10:2-6f. (with reference to apostles); Luke 10:1-16 (mission of the seventy); John 4:39-42 (Samaritan followers of Jesus), 12:20-26f. (Gentiles who approached Philip for their desire to see Jesus).

For a better judgement of a particular passage in Acts with regard to its historicity, we need to examine the relation between the parts and the whole. For this purpose it is useful to focus on the narrative strategy of Luke-Acts. This narrative strategy uniquely focuses on the transition from Jerusalem to Rome, and it therefore reflects a later perspective of the spreading of the gospel mission beyond Israel. In Luke’s words, the gospel mission aimed to spread ‘to the end of the earth’ (Acts 1:8).\footnote{The explicit reference to the use of sources in Luke 1:1-4 has led Fitzmyer, The Acts of the Apostles, 80 to infer about the author of Luke-Acts that he “considered himself a third-generation Christian who inherited a preexisting tradition about the Christ-event itself”.} The important place of Rome as a counterpart to Jerusalem in the account of Acts about Paul’s mission (cf. Acts 19:21, 23:11) may further point to a post-70 CE perspective when Roman christianity became more influential, whereas Jerusalem had been destroyed. The reason for Luke’s interest in the history of the Jerusalem church (cf. Luke 24; Acts 1-8:1) may have been his ambition to anchor Christian identity in a sense of continuity with the early Jesus-movement in Israel since the crucifixion of Jesus in Jerusalem.

### 7.2 The early Jesus-movement and the priestly establishment

The first quarter of the Acts of the Apostles focuses on the growth of the early Jesus-movement in Jerusalem from the gathering of the Twelve (Acts 1:12-26) to the persecution of the Jerusalem church (Acts 8:1). This part of the Acts frequently relates the socio-religious significance of the Temple for the early followers of Jesus (cf. Acts 3:1-10, 11; 5:12, 42). In the context of this narrative, Acts 4:1-7 mentions the several confrontations of the early Jesus-movement led by the apostles in Jerusalem with the priestly establishment. At the time of this confrontation, the early Jesus-movement in Jerusalem numbered about five thousand followers according to Acts 4:4.\footnote{Compare to this Josephus’ number of over six thousand Pharisees during the reign of Herod I, 37-4 BCE (Ant. 17.42), and Josephus’ and Philo’s equal numbers of over four thousand Essenes in the early first century CE (Ant. 18.20; Good Person 75). The size of the Jesus-movement according to Acts 4:4 is therefore considerable.}

In spite of the confrontation with the priestly establishment, the evidence from the Acts of the Apostles suggests a customary attendance of Christian Jews in the Temple (e.g. Acts 2:46, 3:1-3.8-10, 5:20). The Christian-Jewish adherence to the Temple cult is further corroborated by Acts 21:17-25, which refer to the insistence of the Jerusalem church, represented by James and the elders, on the observance of the customary purification rites of the Jerusalem Temple. James’ loyalty to the Temple is also revealed at the end of the Apocryphon of James, which reports that James went up to Jerusalem to pray. Yet this adherence to the Temple cult may have been perceived quite differently by the priestly establishment, as becomes clear from a tradition in the Akhmim fragment of the Gospel of Peter 7:26. This tradition portrays the perception by the Jerusalemite leadership of Peter and his fellows as evildoers who might endanger the Temple by setting it on fire. The hostile perception of Peter and his fellows may correspond with canonical Gospel traditions about Peter’s identification as a follower of Jesus through his Galilean accent in the Passion
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narrative. Our sources therefore create the impression of an antagonism between the early Jesus-movement in Jerusalem and the Jerusalemite priestly establishment.287

According to Acts 5:17-42, the confrontation with the priestly establishment is alleviated through Pharisaic influence, attributed to the eminent figure of Gamaliel. According to Acts 6:7, many priests in Jerusalem even adhered to the faith in Jesus Christ and thereby added to the growth of the early Christian-Jewish movement. The idea that priests were converted to the faith in Christ does not necessarily mean that they abandoned the priestly services. Converts from the Pharisees probably also continued to belong to the Pharisaic party and its legal views, as Acts 15:5 testify. The analogy of Acts 15:5 may also apply to the case of the converted priests in Acts 6:7.

The reference to priests who embraced the faith in Jesus Christ figures in the narrative context of events at the eve of the persecution of the Jerusalem church. After the episode of the persecution of the Jerusalem church, the Acts of the Apostles hint no further about the possible role of priests in the growth of the early Jesus-movement. Perhaps their role was limited to Jerusalem for a certain period of time, before the missionary Jesus-movement became more and more oriented towards the Diaspora.

7.3 The early Jesus-movement and the Pharisees

Of the three Jewish schools mentioned by Josephus, the Pharisees and the Sadducees are found in the New Testament. The Pharisees figure most prominently in the Gospels and Acts. According to a tradition in the Synoptic Gospels, the disciples of John the Baptist and those of the Pharisees shared certain customs of fasting which were not practised by the disciples of Jesus (see the section about ‘John the Baptist and Jesus’ in this chapter).288

Indeed, the Pharisees may have been divided in their attitudes to the early Jesus-movement, varying from hostile opposition to sympathy and perhaps even conversion (cf. Acts 15:5).289 Paul the apostle, whose testimony about his previous life in Judaism is unique, may not have been the only former Pharisee who converted to the Christian faith. Matthew 8:19 mentions a case of a scribe, possibly belonging to the party of the Pharisees, who became a follower of Jesus. The division and gradation of attitudes of the Pharisees may correspond in a logical way with the divergence within Pharisaism between moderate and radical wings, associated with the schools of Hillel and Shammai respectively in the early Pharisaic-rabbinic tradition.

The Jesus-movement was not isolated from the surrounding religious culture. It may be inferred from Josephus’ exemplary account in his Life 7-12 that the education of the three Jewish schools was concentrated in Jerusalem to an important extent. Certain encounters of Jesus with the Pharisees and Sadducees are described in the Synoptic Gospels. Jesus’ sharp criticism of the Sadducees for not knowing the scriptures nor the power of God (Matt 22:29; Mark 12:24) seems to put Jesus’ reaction on the Pharisaic side of the Pharisaic-Sadducean controversy.

287 Cf. L. Gaston, No Stone on Another. Studies in the Significance of the Fall of Jerusalem in the Synoptic Gospels (NovTSup 23; Brill: Leiden [etc.], 1970) 365-369, 368 about Jerusalem and the Temple in the Lucan writings, noting that “predictions of the destruction of Jerusalem are found in this context [i.e. Jewish rejection of the preaching of the church] only”, not in the context of Jesus’ death.

288 Matt 9:14-17; Mark 2:18-22; Luke 5:33-38. Cf. John 4:1-3 where it is related that the Pharisees were attentive to the fact that Jesus made more disciples than John.

The polemic against the Pharisees in the canonical Gospels may partly have been the product of the clash between the early Jesus-movement and the Pharisees. Certain traditions in the synoptic Gospels mention disputes between Jesus and the Pharisees. According to Matthew 23:16-22, Jesus denounced the hypocrisy of the scribes and Pharisees in relation to their Temple religiosity. In this passage a sharp criticism is voiced against the dedication formulas and oaths of the Pharisees in their temple religiosity. Albert I. Baumgarten has pointed to the fact that the case of κορβαν (κορβαν) – the formula of dedication to the Temple – “occupies a crucial place in the debates between Jesus and the Pharisees”. In certain Gospel traditions about the teachings of Jesus, the Temple figures in connection to Jesus’ denouncement of the hypocrisy of the Pharisees.

In view of other Gospel traditions about friendly relations between Jesus and the Pharisees, we may suspect that the traditions about the denouncement of the Pharisees may at least in part be coloured by later developments and encounters between the early Jesus-movement and the Pharisees. These later developments do not only concern the post-70 CE situation. In this connection, it should be noted that the insistence on a Jewish way of life in relation to the Christian mission to the Gentiles in Acts 15:5 is attributed to the party of Pharisaic believers. This insistence would probably be even stronger among the Pharisees who did not become part of the early Jesus-movement.

7.4 The early Jesus-movement and the Essenes

7.4.1 Commonalities in traditions of cult criticism

Polemic against the contemporary Temple cult and the priestly establishment was not a new, Christian phenomenon, as we have seen. There is a broader Jewish background, both to the criticism of the Temple cult and to the concern about what constitutes worship and idolatry, than what we find in the New Testament. The contemporary Jewish criticism of the Temple cult was not restricted to the ritual purity of the Temple. The fact that Christian-Jewish attitudes to the Temple cannot be understood separately from the (re-)interpretation of Scripture in light of the prophetic traditions is implicit evidence of such a broader background.

A broader corpus of texts can be consulted in relation to the temple-theological ideas which pertain to the divergent attitudes to the worship of God. According to Josephus, the Essenes were barred from the regular Temple cult, due to their divergent views on the performance of purification rites (Ant. 18.19). Furthermore, in the literature of Qumran, the idea of the defilement of the Temple is connected to the figure of the so-called Wicked Priest. This Wicked Priest is accused of betrayal of the laws for the sake of wealth and of repulsive acts of every kind of impurity (1QpHab VIII, 8-13). The criticism of the Temple in the literature of Qumran is therefore not restricted to ritual matters but also applies to moral issues.

291 Matt 23:16-22 (denouncement of scribes and Pharisees with regard to their oaths by the temple, the altar and heaven); Luke 18:9-14 (a parable about the prayers of a Pharisee and a tax collector in the temple).
293 Cf. 1QpHab XII, 7-8 expressing this sectarian view in a commentary on Hab 2:17a: מפורש הערים הם ירושלים, איהו מקדש האל, “its interpretation is: the city is Jerusalem in which the Wicked Priest did abominable deeds and he defiled the temple of God”.

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7.4.2 The silence about the Essenes in the New Testament

The encounters of Jesus with the Pharisees and the Sadducees are recorded in the Gospels. However, there is no reference to the Essenes in the New Testament. Nevertheless, the question of a possible relationship or common ground in religious culture between the Essenes and the early Jesus-movement has interested scholars since the nineteenth century. The ‘nickname hypothesis’ of Constantin Daniel supposes that the term ‘Herodians’ was the polemical term for the Essenes because of their favoured status under Herod. However, Willi Braun has rightly stated that the evidence from Gospels, Josephus’ works and the literature of Qumran presented by C. Daniel in favour of his hypothesis is too ambiguous and scant to constitute a sound basis for substantiating the idea.

Many scholarly studies have been devoted to the subject of the Jerusalem church and the literature of Qumran. In recent literature about archaeological finds in Jerusalem, Bargil Pixner and Rainer Riesner have argued for a connection between the Essene quarter of Jerusalem and the first Christian community in terms of their neighbourhood, but Pixner and Riesner also suggest contacts and influence. Jörg Frey has questioned the idea that the archaeological evidence firmly points to an Essene quarter in Jerusalem. Notwithstanding his caution about direct connections between the Essenes and the early Jesus-movement, Frey refers to the important place of the Essene and Qumran sectarian traditions in the broader Palestinian-Jewish matrix for a historical understanding of the early Jesus-movement.


299 Frey, ‘Die Bedeutung der Qumranfunde für das Verständnis des Neuen Testaments’, 133-152 categorises the thesis of a connection with the Jerusalem church on the basis of an Essene quarter in Jerusalem among four ‘problematic models’.

In connection with the contemporary Jewish background to a Christian-Jewish perspective on the holiness of the religious community, it is important to note the Essene concept of holiness as described by Philo. In his treatise *That Every Good Person Is Free* § 75 he writes about them: “Their name which is, I think, a variation, though the form of the Greek is inexact, of ὑπόστησις (holiness), is given them, because they have shown themselves especially devout in the service of God, not by offering sacrifices of animals, but by resolving to sanctify their minds.”

The emphasis on the sanctification of the mind attributed to the Essenes is another indication of the existence of a more widespread notion of moral purity and sanctification next to the idea of ritual purity within Second Temple Judaism.

In spite of the silence of the New Testament in general on them, the Essenes were part of the religious culture of Palestinian Judaism before 70 CE. The overlap between apocryphal and pseudepigraphical texts preserved in certain manuscript traditions and non-sectarian texts in the literature of Qumran underpins this idea. Commonalities in Essene traditions and traditions of the early Jesus-movement may point to a common ground in certain strands of Palestinian Judaism. Even if references to the part of priests in the growth of the Jerusalem church, as in Acts 6:7, may not provide evidence on which a theory of influences can be built, these allusions do suggest a social setting of intra-Jewish contacts. The Essenes also were part of this social setting. The social setting of pre-70 CE Palestinian Judaism provides the historical context with which the early Jesus-movement was in dialogue.

### 7.5 Stephen and the Hellenists

According to Acts 6:1-8:3, the conflict between the ‘Hebrews’ and the ‘Hellenists’ in Jerusalem formed the impetus for the persecution of the Jerusalem church. More specifically, the polemic against the Jerusalem Temple cult and the priestly establishment conveyed by the speech of Stephen (Acts 7:2-53) led to the persecution.

The speech of Stephen is a Lucan composition, if not a Lucan interpretation of that which occasioned the persecution of the Jerusalem church. Nevertheless, a historical source may underlie this composition and interpretation. Colin J. Hemer has pointed out that the source for the speech of Stephen could be from the “disciples, or from any of the Seven, among whom the prior position of Philip’s name (after Stephen himself) may be noted.”

We may infer from Acts 6:1-6 that Stephen was among the Hellenists who ministered the Jerusalem church. The radical polemic against the Temple cult in Stephen’s speech consists in the fact that, on the basis of scriptural interpretation, the very building of the

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303 Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 86 has suggested about the speech of Stephen in Acts 7:2-53 that it is a “Lucan composition, using some inherited Antiochene tradition”.

304 Cf. e.g. the recent study on citations from Amos in Acts and in the literature of Qumran by M. Stowasser, ‘Am 5,25-27; 9,11 f. in der Qumranüberlieferung und in der Apostelgeschichte. Text- und traditionsgeschichtliche Überlegungen zu 4Q171 (Florilegium) III 12/CD VII 16/Apg 7,42b-43; 15,16-18’, ZNW 92 (2001) 47-63 concluding that a pre-Lucan Testimonia collection probably underlies Acts 7:42b-43 and 15:16-18.

305 Hemer, *The Book of Acts*, 343-344, 415-443 at 427: “the question of the reliability and source of the material in the speeches is far from settled. There remain good reasons for taking them as abstracts of real addresses rather than fabrications”.

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Temple is implicitly associated with idolatry. The addressees of the speech are further charged with the persecution and killing of the prophets. This accusation may, however, be a theological topos rather than having a connection with historical reality.\textsuperscript{306}

Should this radical way of polemicising against the Temple and the priestly establishment be attributed to the party of the Hellenists, as the account of Acts appears to suggest? In certain older scholarly literature, this polemic against the Temple per se as idolatrous is indeed associated with the Hellenists.\textsuperscript{307} In other literature, the hypothesis of Stephen’s supposed Samaritan background has been put forward to account for the radical polemic.\textsuperscript{308} The problem with these older hypotheses is the fact that they extrapolate the attitude to the Temple from the speech of Stephen in order to apply it to a broader historical context.

In a more recent study, Craig C. Hill has argued that the division between ‘Hebrews’ and ‘Hellenists’ is the product of Luke’s schematical and ideological presentation.\textsuperscript{309} According to Hill the ideological presentation of the conflict through the speech of Stephen consists in the fact that “to Luke, Judaism is inherently good but also inherently not good enough” (italics of Hill).\textsuperscript{310} Hill finds a historical core in Stephen’s polemic against the Jerusalemite leadership to the extent that it corresponds with Jesus’ polemic about Jerusalem’s killing of the prophets in Luke 13:34-35, if we suppose that this passage comprises early Jesus-tradition.\textsuperscript{311}

In her recent study on the use of the Temple concept in early Christianity, Gabriele Faßbeck has also expressed reservations about the idea that the speech of Stephen would reflect the theological views of the Hellenists at large. Faßbeck expresses her reservations on the basis of parallels with other speeches in Acts, in particular parallels in temple polemic between Acts 7 and the speech on the Areopagus in Acts 17:22-31.\textsuperscript{312} However, in spite of the very comparable choice of words in Acts 7:48-50 and 17:24-25, the purpose of temple polemic in the Areopagus speech is very different. The Areopagus speech serves to make the audience aware of the fundamental difference between idolatry and belief in the one God rather than attacking the idea of an altar devoted to God per se. The speech of Stephen, on the other hand, does attack the institution of the Jerusalem Temple per se, thereby aiming to undermine the authority claimed by the Jerusalemite establishment.


\textsuperscript{307} M. Simon, \textit{St. Stephen and the Hellenists} (Haskell Lectures 1956; Longmans, Green, and Company: London, 1958) supports this idea, p. 14 suggesting that the Hellenists were the “disciples of Stephen”.

\textsuperscript{308} Cf. J. Munck, ‘Stephen’s Samaritan background’, in idem, \textit{The Acts of the Apostles} (Doubleday: Garden City, N.Y., 1967) 285-304 elaborating this hypothesis on the basis of the supposed dependence of Acts 7:2-50 on the Samaritan Pentateuch. Gaston, \textit{No Stone on Another}, 159 supposes that Stephen may have belonged to a ‘Samaritan baptist sect’ (that of the Nasarenes) and that “the Hellenists in general were the first evangelists of Samaria”.

\textsuperscript{309} Craig C. Hill, \textit{Hellenists and Hebrews: reappraising division within the earliest church} (Fortress: Minneapolis 1992).

\textsuperscript{310} Hill, \textit{Hellenists and Hebrews}, 76.

\textsuperscript{311} Hill, \textit{Hellenists and Hebrews}, 77-78.

\textsuperscript{312} G. Faßbeck, \textit{Der Tempel der Christen. Traditionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen zur Aufnahme des Tempelkonzepts im frühen Christentum} (TANZ 33; Francke Verlag: Tübingen & Basel, 2000) 90-110 at 91 notes about the supposition that Stephen’s speech reflects the Hellenist view about the Temple: “sofern die Rede wirklich diese widerspiegelt”; on page 109 she repeats this reservation, stressing the Lucan character of the composition of Stephen’s speech.
There is, however, another argument against generalising about the speech of Stephen to the extent of assuming that it reflects the Hellenists’ attitude to the Temple. If the term ‘Hellenists’ is taken to mean a Greek-speaking Jew, the evidence of Acts rather points to disputes and opposition between ‘Hellenists’ and Stephen (Acts 6:9-11) as well as between ‘Hellenists’ and Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles (Acts 9:28-29).

The persecution of the Jerusalem church is a turning point in the narrative of Luke-Acts, after which Luke increasingly focuses on the mission beyond Judaea into the Diaspora, notwithstanding the continuing centrality of the Jerusalem church. In the narrative strategy of Luke-Acts, this turning point also conveys a polemic against the growing dominance of anti-Hellenistic sentiments in Jerusalem and Judaea which appears to be held accountable for the transition of early Christianity beyond Jerusalem and Israel into the Diaspora.

The polemic against the Temple in the speech of Stephen may partly reflect a hindsight topos after 70 CE. Thus, the passage leading up to this speech comprises the literary topos of false witnesses who attribute the threat of destruction of the Temple to Jesus of Nazareth (Acts 6:13-14). This may be compared to evidence in the Gospels (Mark 14:56-58; Matt 26:59-61; cf. John 2:19-20, 11:48). Nevertheless, the persistent polemic against the Temple per se in Acts 7:44-53 may reflect the historical reality of a radical confrontation between certain segments of the Jerusalem church on the one hand and the priestly establishment on the other.

8. Summary

Our perspective on the early Jesus-movement and the Temple has led us to distinguish three levels of pre-70 CE tradition: the sayings and actions of Jesus, the reinterpretation of Jesus’ sayings by his early followers, and the divergent attitudes to the Temple within the early Jesus-movement apart from Jesus-traditions.

Since our starting point is the textual evidence of early Christian writings as they have come down to us, my historical analysis has been grounded in distinctions between the edited, post-70 CE level of traditions and the possibility of reconstructing earlier (stages of) traditions from the start. At the post-70 CE level, the apocalyptic information surrounding the prophecy of the destruction of the Temple certainly intimates a later perspective on the aftermath of the Jewish War. Polemic which rejects the issue of ritual purity altogether, like P.Oxy. 840, appears to identify the Pharisaic-rabbinic movement after 70 CE with the Pharisaic chief priest, that is, with the closed past. This kind of absolute polemic cannot be related to the historical Jesus, in view of other evidence (e.g. the tradition about the healed leper) which attests to Jesus’ respect for traditional regulations on purification offerings. I agree with P.J. Tomson that the phrase unique to Mark 7:19b may be a later, Markan addition. Mark 7:19b, Jesus’ declaration that all food is clean, may thus constitute another example of the rejection of ritual purity in a post-70 CE context.

At the post-70 CE level, later additions to the parable of the vineyard (Mark 12:1-12; Matt 21:33-46; Luke 20:9-19) should also be mentioned. These additions reflect confrontations with the Jerusalemites authorities who rejected the gospel. Since the ‘vineyard’ may stand theologically for Israel, the parable of the vineyard probably reflects the idea that

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the Christian congregations addressed by the Synoptic Gospels inherited the ‘vineyard’, that is, that they were included in God’s covenant of salvation for Israel.

The polemic against the Temple in Stephen’s speech in its present ideological context probably also mirrors the post-70 CE perspective of the Lucan author. This becomes clear most of all from Acts 6:13-14 which shares the literary topos of false witnesses who accuse Jesus of Nazareth of the destruction of the Temple with Gospel traditions. A historical pre-70 CE core to this polemic may be identified in that it reflects the agonised conflict between certain segments of the Jerusalem church and the priestly establishment.

The retrieval of pre-70 CE levels of tradition depends on a careful weighing of canonical and non-canonical early Christian writings. Some of the non-canonical Gospel traditions add to a fuller comprehension of the historical Jesus and provide details about the Palestinian Jewish matrix of Jesus’ attitude to the Temple. This is in my view particularly the case with the Jewish-Christian Gospels and the Gospel of Thomas which challenge readers of the canonical Gospels to rethink this Palestinian Jewish matrix of Jesus and the early Jesus-movement. The example of the parable of the vineyard and its narrative setting in the Synoptic Gospels, as compared to Thomas 65 & 66, shows that the polemic in the Synoptic tradition against the priestly establishment may well reflect later concerns and experiences of the early Jesus-movement concerning the rejection of the gospel by Jerusalemite authorities.

The Gospel traditions about the Temple as a metaphor mirror later interpretations of Jesus’ words by those who proclaimed the gospel of Jesus Christ in the subsequent decades. Apart from the christological intent of these interpretations, the concept of the Temple as a metaphor may have also been related to the background of Jewish culture.

At the oldest level of Gospel traditions, the question of the ‘Umwelt’ of Jesus’ early ministry is highly important. Jesus’ Galilean background has been discussed in scholarship with a view to constructing a Galilean revolutionary ethos against the Judaean Temple establishment or a Galilean peasant ethos with a traditional loyalty to the Temple. Depending on the interpretation of the ‘Umwelt’ with which Jesus was presumably in dialogue, Jesus’ attitude to the Temple has also been interpreted differently. Although the evidence of Josephus suggests no revolutionary hostility of the Galileans to the Judaean religious institutions per se, the indications about Galilean hostility to the Herodian dynasty provide a clue to Jesus’ Galilean background. Josephus’ description of the building of the Herodian Temple further attests to an implicit polemic against the pseudo-piety which Herod I added to his cruelty. Jesus’ polemic against the Temple and Jerusalem may be related to his hostility towards the Herodian dynasty in the light of the prophecy of the destruction of the Temple.

John the Baptist set the precedent for the renewal of religious traditions by mediating forgiveness of sins through his baptism. Jesus appropriated John’s baptism for his purpose of challenging the priestly establishment, but at the same time he moved away from the rites of fasting still observed by John’s disciples because of his Messianic understanding of God’s kingdom. The common ground between the baptist movement and the Pharisees in rites of fasting reveals indirect links which tied the baptist movement to the traditions of Jewish Temple religiosity, since fasting was also regulated in the Temple cult (cf. Ant. 14.65-66; 17.165; 18.94; Ag.Ap. 2.282; m. Ta’an. 4:2).

With regard to Jesus’ attitude to the Temple, I have discerned a polemical perspective of Jesus against the priestly establishment. This perspective was rooted in prophetic traditions of cult criticism. Jesus’ perspective on the Temple was, however, not exclusively concerned with moral purity at the expense of every concern with ritual, as the Gospel traditions about his reference of a healed leper to a priest testify. The occasional indications in our sources about the earliest Jewish followers of Jesus also suggest the strength of a traditional adherence to the Temple cult in the direct milieu of Jesus.