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MISHKAN

A FORUM ON THE GOSPEL AND THE JEWISH PEOPLE

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MISHKAN

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Editorial – Jesus as Seen from within the Land of Israel

Torleif Elgvin

{Inside front cover}

Israel is an exciting place for biblical scholarship. For the first time in modern history Jewish and Christian scholars can interact in an open atmosphere and in dialogue with ever new archeological facts surfacing from the land, illuminating Israel's and the Church's history in the land of their common roots.

The last two generations have seen two new trends surfacing in the Land of Israel. Critical biblical scholarship now has a central place in Israeli universities, and Israeli scholars have provided important contributions to scholarship and understanding of the Hebrew Bible worldwide.

The same period has seen a Jewish reclamation of Jesus which began with Joseph Klausner's *Jesus of Nazareth,* first published in Hebrew in 1922. This reclamation is seen both on the academic and popular levels. Israelis can be seen coming to Christian holy places to seek their roots and reclaim Nazareth's rabbi, liberating Him from Christian captivity.

The presuppositions of the academic Jewish reclamation of Jesus are analyzed by Walter Riggans, on the background of Jewish views of Jesus through the ages. He rejoices over Jewish contributions to New Testament scholarship, but also urges caution.

In the Jerusalem School of Synoptic Research (JSSR) the two above mentioned trends are combined. Critical scholarship with Hebrew and Aramaic roots is applied to the Gospels by Jewish and Christian researchers alike, all of whom reside in the land of the Bible.

We welcome the fact that such a co-venture is possible in contemporary Israel. It indicates a cooperative future for Christian-Jewish dialogue and biblical scholarship. MISHKAN is convinced that the work of JSSR needs more attention. Gospel scholars need to interact with the school's synoptic theories. The evangelical world should rejoice over the fact that evangelical and Jewish scholars work closely together in researching the Gospels. They should also carefully evaluate the presuppositions both of these Jewish scholars and those of our evangelical brethren.

As a forum, MISHKAN is happy to have the JSSR present its basic views and methodology as well as interact with critical articles by Michael Brown and Jostein Ådna.

Other voices are also brought to the debate. Among them, Jerome Lund updates us on scholarship on the language(s) of Jesus, **{160}** and Kai Kjær-Hansen assesses Jewish appellations of Jesus.

Although we decided to dedicate a double issue to these topics, we realize that the final word has not been said. We have achieved our goal if this issue stimulates further discussion. In our next issue we will bring an article by Avner Boskey, in which he deals with a topic of primary importance to us: "The Implications of the Jerusalem School for Jewish Evangelism."

This issue concentrates on Jewish scholarship on the Gospels and Jesus. On another occasion MISHKAN will analyze the more recent Jewish `reclamation' of Paul.

A Jesus-book of a different kind, *With Jesus through Galilee according to the Fifth Gospel*, is reviewed in this issue. By bringing together the geography and milieu of the land with New Testament and early Christian sources, Bargil Pixner tries to reconstruct the ministry of the historical Jesus in Galilee.

May we be granted that this land will not only be the place for scholarship and dialogue, but that the character of the God of Israel and His Messiah will be reflected through the lives of His followers.

- Torleif Elgvin

{1} Jewish Views of Jesus through the Ages

The Jewish Reclamation of Jesus and Its Implications for Jewish-Christian Relations

Walter Riggans

- Rev. Dr. Walter Riggans *is lecturer in Biblical and Jewish Studies at All Nations Christian College, England. His Ph.D. thesis was on the Christology of the modern Messianic Jewish movement.*

One of the most significant aspects of modern "Jesus research" is the participation and contribution of Jewish scholars in the whole enterprise. The purpose of this paper is to outline the history of this Jewish movement towards a new appreciation of Jesus, draw out some of the main issues involved in the contemporary debate, and suggest some of the major challenges to the Church in terms of the broader issue of Jewish-Christian relations. The subtitle of this article was inspired by a 1984 book written by Donald Hagner, then a professor of New Testament at Fuller Theological Seminary. He attempted to exhibit that Jewish interest in Jesus was in fact being pursued at the expense of His true identity, viz. the Son of God and Saviour of the world.[1] We shall attempt to evaluate this claim as part of the present study.

The Quest for the Historical Jesus

Our particular interest lies with the increased Jewish participation in Jesus research after World War Two. Jewish scholars form part of what Tom Wright refers to as a new phase of the quest for the historical Jesus.[2] This search was based on a general consensus that Jesus can only be recovered and reclaimed, both as historical person and God-with-us, as we recover and reclaim His own historical context -the cultural, political and religious reality of first-century Jewish society.[3]

Just as the new "realistic quest" is not monolithic with respect to the images of Jesus produced by its scholars, neither is there a common portrayal of Jesus by Jewish scholars. From Christian participants have come images of Jesus **{2}** by Jewish scholars. From Christian participants have

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1 Donald A. Hagner, The Jewish Reclamation of Jesus: An Analysis and Critique of the Modern Jewish Study of Jesus, Grand Rapids, 1984.

[2] The "Quest for the historical Jesus" has moved in three phases since the publication in 1778 of Hermann Reimarus' *Fragments* (English translation by C.H. Talbert, *Reimarus: Fragments,* Philadelphia, 1970); cf. Craig A. Evans, "Jesus of Nazareth: Who Do Scholars Say That He Is?", *Crux, vol.* 23, no. 4, 1987, pp. 15-19: The "Old Quest," 1778-1906, which presupposed that the historical figure of Jesus was not supernatural, the "No Quest," 1906-1953, which had the conviction that Jesus' historical figure was lost to history-only the Christ of faith matters, and the "New Quest," from 1953, that combines the search for the historical Jesus and the Christ of faith.

On the central contributions in the debate, see Albert Schweitzer, *Von Reimarus zu Wrede: Eine Geschichte des Leben-Jesu-Forschung,* Tübingen, 1906. The English Translation of 1910 by James M. Robinson was entitled, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus: A Critical Study of its Progress from Reimarus to Wrede,* London, 1910. Within the middle period, Evans cites as an exponent of the "No Quest," Rudolf Bultmann's *Jesus,* Berlin, 1926; transl. *Jesus and the Word,* New York, 1958. Ernst Käsemann's 1953 paper was entitled, "Das Problem des historischen Jesus", later published in 1954 in ZTK 51, pp. 125-153. Its translation, "The Problem of the Historical Jesus", was published in Käsemann' s book, *Essays on New Testament Themes,* London, 1964, pp. 15-47. James M. Robinson's famous review of the whole movement was called, *A New Quest o f the Historical Jesus,* London, SCM, 1959. Further criticism of this "New Quest" is given by the Jewish scholar, B.F. Meyer: *The Aims of Jesus,* London, 1979.

[3] N.T. Wright, "Constraints and the Jesus of History," *Scottish Journal of Theology, vol.* 39, no. 2, 1986, pp. 189-210. He cites as examples of this new phase, B.F. Meyer, op. *cit.;* M.J. Borg, *Conflict, Holiness and Politics in* the *Teachings of Jesus,* New York, 1984; E.P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism,* London, 1973; John K. Riches, *Jesus and the Transformation of Judaism,* London, 1980.

come images of Jesus including aggressive political revolutionary, social and political anarchist, committed advocate for the poor, eschatological prophet and magician.[4] Examples of Jewish images of Jesus include political revolutionary, Essene Torah-purist of the Hillelite stream and Galilean charismatic leader.[5] Christian scholars, on the whole, are convinced that the contribution of Jewish expertise vis-à-vis the Second Temple period is proving to be invaluable.

We can date the real impetus and momentum in contemporary Jewish research on Jesus to the turn of the century, when the German non-Jewish scholar Wellhausen wrote a statement which changed the face of New Testament scholarship, not simply for specialists, but also for Christian and Jewish religious leaders. In his introduction to the synoptics he stated: "Jesus war kein Christ sondern Jude" (Jesus was not a Christian, but a Jew).[6] These words have driven and haunted Jesus research since then. Never again could the Jewishness of Jesus be ignored or undervalued. Eighty years after Wellhausen another non-Jewish scholar, James Charlesworth, could write authoritatively that Jesus' Jewishness was not simply a matter of interesting background to His life, but rather part of the indispensable foreground for coming to terms with him.[7] A significant contribution to the work done in those eighty years has been offered by Jewish scholars.

There have been some particular landmarks along the way. In 1922 Joseph Klausner wrote the ground-breaking book on Jesus by a Jewish scholar. His Hebrew original was translated into English in 1925 by Herbert Danby, and it took the Jewish world by storm. At one summary point he wrote:

> *Jesus is a great teacher of morality and an artist in parable. He is the moralist for whom, in the religious light, morality counts as everything: in his ethical code there is a sublimity, a distinctiveness and an originality in form unparalleled in any other Hebrew ethical code*[8].

Then in 1930 Martin Buber wrote:

> *From my youth onwards 1 have found in Jesus my great brother ... I am more than certain that a great place belongs to him in Israel's history of faith and that this place cannot be described by any of the usual categories* .[9]

By 1973 Geza Vermes was able to say:

> *... no objective and enlightened student of the gospels can help but be struck by the incomparable superiority of Jesus ... Second to none in profundity of insight and grandeur of character.*[10]

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[4] Representative examples are, S.G.F. Brandon, *Jesus and the Zealots: A Study of the Political Factor in Primitive Christianity,* New York, 1967; G.R. Edwards, *Jesus and the Politics of Violence,* New York, 1972; Elbert Hubbard, *Jesus Was An Anarchist,* New York, 1974; Luise Schottroff/Wolfgang Stegeman, *Jesus von Nazareth - Hoffnung der Armen,* Stuttgart, 1978; Leonardo Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator: A Critical Christology for Our Time,* Maryknoll, 1978; Jane Schaberg, *The Illegitimacy of Jesus: A Feminist Theological Interpretation,* San Francisco, 1985; E.P. Sanders: *Jesus and Judaism, op.* cit.; Morton Smith, *Jesus the Magician,* New York, 1978.

[5] See, respectively, Hyam Maccoby, *Revolution in Judaea: Jesus and the Jewish Resistance,* London, Orbach and Chambers, 1973; Harvey Falk, *Jesus the Pharisee: A New Look at the Jewishness of Jesus,* Mahwah, New Jersey, Paulist Press, 1985; Geza Vermes, *Jesus the Jew: A Historian's Reading of the Gospels, op.* cit.

[6] Julius Wellhausen, *Einleitung in die drei ersten Evangelien,* Berlin, 1905, p. 113.

[7] James H. Charlesworth, *Jesus Within Judaism: New Light from Exciting Archeological Discoveries,* London, 1989, p. 5 and passim.

[8] Joseph Klausner, *Jesus of Nazareth: His Life, Times and Teaching,* New York, Macmillan, 1925, p. 414.

[9] Martin Buber, *Two Types* of *Faith,* (Engl.transl.), New York, 1961, p. 81.

[10] Geza Vermes, *Jesus the Jew,* op. cit., p. 224.

Finally, one could mention Pinchas Lapide, who declared in 1981 that at the end of the 1970s,

> **{3}** *Jesus is no longer the central figure in the discussion between church and synagogue. Thanks to the current surge of interest in Jesus within the State of Israel, the Nazarene, long shrouded in silence, is beginning to be acknowledged among his own people and in his own land.*[11]

These kinds of statements would have been unthinkable for Jewish people before the modern period. Even now most Jewish people advise a more cautious appreciation of Jesus, lest the Jewish community develop the wrong attitude to Christianity, viz. that it too is acceptable for Jewish people. However, Jesus is definitely back on the agenda in Jewish-Christian relations, and this is of paramount significance for the Church.

The Jewishness of Jesus is beginning to feature more prominently in contemporary documents published by church authorities, such as diocesan statements, synodal statements, World Council of Churches statements, and the like. One might cite the progress in Roman Catholic documents from the 1965 publication of Vatican Two's influential *Nostra Aetate,* through the 1975 *Guidelines and Suggestions for Implementing the Conciliar Declaration Nostra Aetate,* to the 1985 *Notes on the Correct Way to Present the Jews and Judaism in Preaching and Catechesis in the Roman Catholic Church.* Section Three of the *Notes* of 1985 is devoted to "Jewish Roots of Christianity," and its opening words are, in their own way, as significant and unexpected as were Wellhausen's some eighty years earlier: "Jesus was, and always remained, a Jew." What role, then, have Jewish scholars played in the eight decades between those two programmatic Gentile Christian statements? And what are the implications for Jewish-Christian relations?

Pre-Modern Jewish Views of Jesus

There is hardly any actual reference to Jesus in the literature of Talmudic times, the first six centuries of the Common Era. The lack of reference to Jesus and the birth and growth of the Church must be the result of a conscious decision to avoid and prevent discussions of Jesus in the Jewish community. What mention there is of Jesus, or even of those Jewish people who became His followers, is usually ascribed to the period of the Amoraim (ca. 200-500) rather than the Tannaim (first and second centuries). In other words, the Gospels are the only first-century documents which give us accounts of the early Jewish reaction to Jesus. When He is spoken of in the Rabbinic literature, He is regularly referred to as "that man," or some form of symbolic name, such as *ben Pandera.* Occasionally we find Him called *Yeshu,* a term which soon became known as an acronym for the Hebrew curse, *Yimach Shemo Uzikhro* (May his name and memory be blotted out).[12]

{4} Two important points need to be made about the presentation of Jesus in these texts. a) There is no denial that Jesus was an historical person, though there is some confusion about His exact dates. b) Jesus is denigrated as a blasphemer and heretic who tried to exploit the divine Name in order to aggrandize power to Himself and lead the Jewish people away from their true path of faithfulness to God.

By the ninth century a whole series of calumnies of Jesus were being crystallized into various recensions of a popular piece which came to be known as *Toldot Yeshu.* This purports to be an account of the life of Jesus, but it is clearly apologetic and polemic in tone and intention. Jewish scholars today consistently maintain that it has no historical value whatsoever for the life of Jesus, though it remains important for study of the attitudes of Jewish communities to Jesus and

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[11] Pinchas Lapide and Peter Stuhlmacher, *Paul, Rabbi and Apostle* (Engl. transl.), Minneapolis, 1984, p. 31 in 1981 original.

[12] Of immediate interest in the Talmudic material are the following passages: Yeb. 4:13, 49b; Sanh. 43a, 106a, 107b; Gitt. 56b, 57a. Basic research work has been done by Gustav Dalman, *Jesus Christ in Talmud, Midrash, Zohar and the Liturgy of the Synagogue,* (Engl. transl.), Cambridge, 1893. Reprinted New York, 1973; R. Travers Herford, *Christianity in Talmud and Midrash,* London, 1903. Reprinted Clifton, New Jersey, 1966; Johann Maier, *Jesus von Nazareth in der Talmudischen Überlieferung,* Darmstadt, 1978.

the Church, and particularly to Jewish believers. *Toldot Yeshu* became the prime source of the Jewish community's knowledge of Jesus from the early Middle Ages to the early twentieth century in Eastern Europe. The narrative is made up of stories of Jesus' illegitimacy, blasphemy, immorality and hubris, presenting Him as a thoroughly reprobate Jewish man, one of whom the Jewish community should be ashamed, and at whose actions and attitudes it should be outraged.[13]

The Middle Ages saw another source of information about Jesus develop as the Church began to see religious capital in imposing formal controversies on the Jewish communities of Europe. These *disputations* were structured like an open dialogue between Christian theologians (often converts from Judaism) and Jewish religious leaders, but in reality the Jewish participants were placed in a situation in which it was impossible for them to win. The Jewish spokesmen knew that it might be better for their community were they to "lose" the debate, and so there was also a great deal of political retreat on behalf of the Jewish religious leadership. As Hagner summarized: "We encounter here, by way both of reaction and self-protection, at worst a wholly negative, destructive attitude to Jesus, and at best a cold neutrality."[14]

Because of the anti-Semitism of the Church, expressed in contemptuous attitudes, social marginalisation, theological demonisation and outright persecution and murder, Jewish people came to fear and hate Jesus. Not only was there the push away from Jesus due to the attitudes and behaviour of **{5}** the Church, but there was also the constant pulling back by the rabbis, who developed their own theological system for interpreting history and redemption for the Jewish people. As a result of both discourse contexts, the Jewish people did not consider Jesus a subject worthy of discussion.

Enlightenment and Emancipation

The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries saw the gradual opening of the West to Jewish involvement, participation and even influence. The European Enlightenment of the eighteenth century had its impact on the Jewish communities of Europe and the West. Also there we find increased questioning of authority and tradition, increasing faith in the supremacy of reason, open enquiry and experiment, a determination to foster tolerance and priority of morality over theology, and a commitment to the separation of Church and State.

When we speak of the Emancipation of the Jews, the reference is to the gradual abolition of those disqualifications and inequities which had been meted out specifically to Jewish people. Citizenship was granted; admission to politics, higher education and arts was given. Nothing was ever to be the same again in any sphere of Jewish intellectual, aesthetic or religious life. In 1925 Rabbi Stephen S. Wise said about the translation into English of Joseph Klausner's *Life of Jesus:*

> *It marks the first chapter in a new literature. Such a book could never have been written years ago.... Thank God the time has come when men are allowed to be frank, sincere and truthful in their beliefs.*[15]

The context for the writing of this new chapter was a momentum of political freedom in which Jewish people could develop confidence in speaking publicly about Jesus. This relative freedom within the Christian society of Europe led to an increased willingness to consider Jesus within the Jewish community itself. Above all, the new cultural context allowed the traditional Christian views of Jesus to be challenged.

Until the late eighteenth century, Jews and Christians only encountered each other as adversaries, the whole process being under the domination and control of the theological dogmas which informed and established each community's definition in opposition to the other. The Enlightenment and the rise of nineteenth century historicism, made it possible for liberal Jews

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[13] An English translation of *Toldot Yeshu is* readily available in H.J. Schonfield's book, *According To The Hebrews,* London, 1937.

[14] *Op. cit.,* p. 53.

[15] Quoted in David Novak, *Jewish-Christian Dialogue: A Jewish Justification,* Oxford, 1989, p. 78.

and Christians to side-step dogma, whether about Christ or Torah, and begin to examine one another's faith, ethics and community life matrix more openly, objectively, and generously.[16] **{6}**

Liberal Christians began to look at Jesus in a new, non-Christological light. Liberal Jews, already working out a life no longer dominated by the Torah as defined by the Orthodox rabbis, began to question whether such a "de-dogmatized Jesus" could be a suitable person for Jewish people to investigate. One must not forget that anti-Semitism was alive and well throughout this entire period. There was no hidden agenda among the liberal Christian scholars who sought to enable a rapprochement with the Jewish people. Judaism was still denigrated as legalistic, in contrast with Jesus' gracious ethics of love. The Jewish spokesmen were well aware of the continuing negative attitude towards them, but they began to gauge the spirit of the times as allowing them at last to counter the claims of Christianity publicly, as well as within their own walls. The most celebrated such exchange of opinions remains the response of Leo Baeck in his 1905 book, *Das Wesen des Judentums,* to Adolph Harnack's 1900 book, *Das Wesen des Christenthums!*

Jewish and Christian thinkers came increasingly under the influence of Kant's rationalizing of religion, whereby it was held that if ideals were to be considered valid, they had to be of universal significance. Jesus was therefore increasingly presented as a paradigm of the universal ethical ideals of civilized, rational humanity, these being simultaneously presented by Jewish thinkers as the heart of Judaism. These liberal scholars were determined to be emancipated from the prisons of their respective Orthodoxies, and both groups, as part of their own agendas, wanted to emancipate Jesus from the dogma of the Church's Christology. Buber, in his 1930 book, showed a certain desire to see this development accelerate. As Novak perceptively states: "Buber wants to release Jesus from the confines of both Christian and Jewish dogma. The former makes too much of him, and the latter too little."[17]

Charlesworth stresses this very point in his work on modern Jesus Research. In his opinion, it only became possible to search realistically for the historical Jesus once Jesus had been freed from the traditional Christological dogma of the Church, which prevented even an attitude of open enquiry into these matters, let alone the development of alternative reconstructions of Jesus. He argues in *Jesus Within Judaism* that having come through the turmoil of the years of so-called critical scholarship of the Bible, we are now in the position of proclaiming, Jew and Christian together, that all theological truth about **{7}** Jesus *must* be based squarely upon what he calls "free historical inquiry."[18] In his other major work in this area, he comments that the new situation has helped both Jewish and Christian communities in coming to a more mature appreciation of the Jewishness of Jesus. Jewish people are learning that they need to escape the caricature of Jesus as a confused, deluded, probably illegitimate person, and Christians are realizing the error of seeing Jesus as either not really Jewish at all, or else as unique -having nothing in common with other Jews, then or now.[19]

This movement towards a new appreciation of Jesus in the Jewish community has only involved those Jewish people who are true children of the Enlightenment and the Emancipation. The traditional, Orthodox communities, as a rule, have continued to resist this change. To this day they generally continue to operate on the level of avoiding all conversation about "that man" of the Talmud. Largely, this reflects a reaction against what they see as the widespread assimilation of the Jewish people in the modern period, and is thus much more a negative response to the Enlightenment with its drive for the supremacy of free enquiry and reason, than specifically a reaction against the purported Jewishness of Jesus. Relatively few Orthodox Jews are involved in

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[16] See Novak, op. *cit., p.* 73.

[17] Op. cit., p. 84.

[18] *Op. cit., p.* 198.

[19] James H. Charlesworth (ed.), *Jews and Christians: Exploring the Past, Present, and Future,* New York, 1990, p. 46.

the Jewish reclamation of Jesus, and those who are do not really represent mainstream Orthodoxy.[20]

These Reform Jews were essentially setting out to challenge the Jewish community's traditional self-understanding and its role in the modern world. Their investigation of Jesus must be seen as part of this particular quest for self-identity. Post-Enlightenment Jewish thinkers wanted Judaism with less dogma, ritual and superstition and a life-style liberated from the domination of Halakah. Jesus was therefore viewed primarily as an important representative of the universal ethic of the undogmatic Judaism. In a 1901 book written by the reform rabbi Joseph Krauskopf, the following words are to be found; words which capture the motivating agenda of the Jewish reclamation of Jesus: "When the Jew shall have completely cast away his obstructive exclusiveness and ceremonialism, and the Christian his Christology, Jew and Gentile will be one."[21]

It has never been part of the Jewish agenda to have their faith in any way "fulfilled" by their participation in the quest for the historical Jesus. As Samuel Sandmel, one of the most influential Jewish students of New Testament studies has put it:

> *I neither feel nor understand that my Judaism is in any way incomplete.... I do not discern any religious incompleteness which the figure of Jesus would fill in, just as I see no incompleteness which a Mohammed or a Confucius would fill in.*[22]

{8} Much of the early Jewish optimism and enthusiasm faded during the pogroms in Russia in the 1880s, and then also during the Hitler years in Europe. Nonetheless, the overall momentum has never been lost. Indeed, since the Holocaust, many Jewish people see a special need to find the real Jesus of history, and thus expose the awful sham and shame of the Church's Christ. Be that as it may, Christian biblical scholarship has been enormously enriched by the participation of Jewish scholars of the Second Temple period and of the various Judaisms of that period; and to this subject we now turn our attention.

Major Issues in Modern Jewish Scholarship

There are five significant issues which will be dealt with here. I will discuss the main issues involved, and review the implications for Jewish-Christian dialogue that arise from them.

The real Jesus can be recovered

For most Jewish people it is experienced as an actual discovery that this real Jesus is not only Jewish, but also a Jewish man of his own time and place. From the beginning there was a definite tendency to see Jesus as in need of rescue from the Christian theological constructions of Him. Already in 1888 an American Reform rabbi, Isaac Mayer Wise, was dismissing Christian biographies of Jesus in no uncertain terms: "All so-called lives of Christ or biographies of Jesus are works of fiction, erected by imagination of the shifting foundation of meagre and unreliable records."[23]

David Flusser, in his 1969 book, *Jesus,* and Geza Vermes, in his 1973 book, *Jesus the Jew,* try to minimize the importance of the fact that they are Jewish. They stress that the Jewish Jesus is in fact the only Jesus there is, the only Jesus that historical research can recover for us. For them, the faith or heritage of the historian is actually irrelevant. Vermes went so far as to give to his book the sub-title *A Historian's Reading of the Gospels.* He wrote in the opening pages of that work that his

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[20]In 1966 an eminent orthodox Jewish philosopher, Eliezer Berkovits, wrote an influential article called "Judaism in the Post-Christian Era," in which he listed five clusters of reasons why Jewish people should not become involved in dialogue with Christians. These reasons came under the headings Emotional, Philosophical, Theological, Practical, and Ethical. See *Judaism* 15, 1966, pp. 76-84.

[21] This is quoted in Novak, *op. cit., p.* 80.

[22] Samuel Sandmel, *We Jews and Jesus,* New York, 1965, p. 111. See also pp. 44,46f.

[23] Isaac Mayer Wise, *The Martyrdom of Jesus of Nazareth,* New York, 1888, p. 132.

intention was "to discover the authentic, original, historical meaning of the words and events reported in the Gospels."[24]

Clemens Thoma, a Catholic scholar who specializes in the issues of Jewish-Christian relations, accepts this view that Christian piety has blurred the historical Jesus from our sight, welcoming Jewish clarification of the situation. It is to the Jewish people that we must turn for proper knowledge of the Israel of Jesus' day, and therefore of Jesus himself:

> *Christians have torn Jesus from the soil of Israel. They have de-Judaised, uprooted, alienated, Hellenized, and Europeanized him. The consequences of these manipulations and whitewashings are hopeless confusion* **{9}** *about the person of Jesus, the nature and tasks of Christianity, and the meaning* of *Judaism in religious history.*[25]

The particular advantages accorded to Jewish scholarship are, on the one hand, non-contact with the Christian traditions of Christological faith, and on the other hand, familiarity with the prime sources of Jewish history and religious thought from the early centuries of the Common Era. The first matter is rather complex, since Jewish scholars will nonetheless be coming from a position of contact with Jewish traditions of *a priori* reductionism vis-à-vis Jesus.

As to the second point, we are now far more aware of the methodological problems involved in trying to use critically the Jewish sources which are regarded as throwing light on Jesus the Jew. The dating and establishing of provenance for the various sayings and traditions in the literature (whether Rabbinic, from Josephus or from the pseudepigraphical materials) is notoriously complicated. The severe rejection by the Orthodox communities of any attempts to apply modern critical methods to the rabbinic sources has made progress in this discipline slow and difficult for Jewish scholars. One simply cannot, as many Jewish writers still presume, use sources from the third century onwards to establish the beliefs and practices of the first century.

The Talmuds and the Midrashim are every bit as much confessional documents as are the Gospels. Daniel Harrington puts it this way:

> *There is greater appreciation of the creativity and coherent vision of the rabbis as they worked out their vision of Jewish life in the second and third centuries, and more than a little doubt whether it is proper to look upon them as the lineal continuation* of *the Pharisaic movement.*[26]

Just as gospel specialists insist on the need to sift through the material in order to retrieve the authentic Jesus from the various presentations of him, so the specialists in later Jewish literature are learning the tools for sifting through that material. We are still at the early stages of this research, and must beware the positivist presupposition of those who believe that the real Jesus can be recovered from the rabbinic literature rather than from the Gospels.

The historical value of the Gospels

We are now dealing with Jewish scholars who regard the Gospels as valuable first century works which faithfully reflect the actual beliefs, customs and practices of the different Jewish communities of the first century Palestine, and which probably reflect much of the actual historical context of Jesus' life (notably not the accounts of the trial of Jesus). It is striking how Jewish **{10}** scholars often take liberal Christians to task for not crediting enough historical credibility to the Gospels, at least to the synoptics. In 1977 Trude Weiss-Rosmarin was able to state that as a rule Jewish students of Jesus gave more credence to the Gospels than their Christian counterparts.

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[24] Op. *cit.,* p. 16. He closes the book by summing it up as a "first step in what seems to be the direction of the real man," p. 224.

[25] Clemens Thoma, *A Christian Theology* of *Judaism,* New York, 1980, p. 107.

[26] Daniel J. Harrington, "The Jewishness of Jesus: Facing Some Problems," *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 49, 1987, p. 7.

Jewish students of nascent and early Christianity tend to be more "gospel true" than modern and contemporary Christian New Testament scholars, who are in agreement that the "historical Jesus" is beyond recovery .... [27]

Vermes took the same line in his 1973 book, in which he quoted Bultmann's famous words that, "We can now know almost nothing concerning the life and personality of Jesus." In response to this Vermes said: "My guarded optimism concerning a possible recovery of the genuine features of Jesus is in sharp contrast with Rudolf Bultmann's historical agnosticism."[28]

Vermes states that so long as one is aware of one's theological interest, and allows for it, then one can do responsible history as well as responsible theology.[29] David Flusser, of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, opened his book, *Jesus,* with the words: "The main purpose of this book is to show that it is possible to write the story of Jesus' life."[30]

E.P. Sanders acknowledges the contribution of Jewish New Testament scholarship as well as that of various Christian scholars (not uninfluenced themselves by Jewish work on Jesus) when he says in his 1985 book:

> *The dominant view today seems to be that we can know pretty well what Jesus was out to accomplish, that we can know a lot about what he said, and that those two things make sense within the world of first-century Judaism.*[31]

Sandmel is quite atypical of Jewish scholars in this regard, perhaps because he is so influenced by liberal protestant gospel research. In the years when so much solid work was being done by others, he wrote, "We can know what the Gospels say, but we cannot know Jesus," maintaining that the Gospels obscure the story of Jesus' life rather than clarify it.[32]

Christians have much to be grateful for in this overall Jewish conviction that the synoptic Gospels deserve a high "historicity quotient." The fourth **{11}** Gospel is more problematic, but even here there has been a reclamation of its essentially Jewish provenance and pedigree. The way is opening up for all non-Jewish students to reap the rewards of this increased attention to Jewish texts, as well as to the traditional worlds of the Greek poets and the Roman legislators.

Jesus should be rooted in the Judaism of His day

Leo Baeck, the great German statesman of Reform Judaism, opened this century with an influential remark:

> *Most portrayers of the life of Jesus neglect to point out that Jesus is in every characteristic a genuinely Jewish character, that a man like him could have grown only in the soil of Judaism, only there and nowhere else.*[33]

In 1913, Rabbi Stephen S. Wise wrote with considerable rhetorical power that Jesus should never have been removed from His only rightful context: "Jesus should not so much be appreciated by us as assigned to the place in Jewish life and Jewish history which is rightfully his own."[34]

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[27] Trude Weiss-Rosmarin (ed.), *Jewish Expressions on Jesus: An Anthology,* New York,

[28] *Op.cit., p.* 235, note 1.

[29] Geza Vermes, *The Gospel of Jesus the Jew*, Newcastle, 1981, p. 4.

[30] David Flusser, *Jesus*, New York, 1969, p. 7.

[31] EE.P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, op. cit., p. 2.

[32] Sandmel, *We Jews and Jesus*, op. cit., p. 124.

[33] As quoted by Shalom Ben-Chorin in, "The Image of Jesus in Modern Judaism;" *Journal of Ecumenical Studies, Vol.* 11, no. 3, Summer 1974, p. 408.

[34] Wise wrote in the June 7th edition of the magazine, *The Outlook*.

Sadly, there has been no shortage of Christian reductionism which has tried to deny the significance of the context of Jesus' life and faith within first-century Judaism. Jewish scholars are certainly forcing this issue back onto the agenda, insisting that Jesus cannot be alienated from the Hebrew Bible or the Judaism of His day. If one attempts to de-Judaize Jesus by making him an "everyman" in his relationship to the Divine Being, rather than a Jewish worshipper of Israel's God, then one commits theological suicide, losing not only the *Jesus of history,* but also the theologically unique *Christ of faith.* A non-Jewish Messiah is a contradiction in terms!

There is certainly another danger involved in deciding *a priori* that Jesus could in no way have transcended the norms of His day. Hagner draws attention to what he calls the hidden agenda of Jewish scholarship at this point:

> *In demonstrating the Jewishness of Jesus, Jewish scholars thus have an unavoidable interest in vindicating the Judaism of His day. While the methods may vary, the interest is a common one. For these scholars it is impossible that Jesus the Jew could truly have spoken against the Judaism in whose name he is being reclaimed in their writings.*[35]

Hagner has been accused of cynicism by some, and of paranoia by others, but the general point he makes is valid. We must beware of artificially restricting Jesus to being merely one among many. But on the other hand we have the equally artificial construct of the so-called criterion of dissimilarity, restricting authenticity to those sayings of Jesus which are judged to be **{12}** dissimilar to Judaism (and Christianity). Käsemann, for instance, concluded: "Only in a few instances are we standing on more or less firm ground; that is, where the tradition, for whatever reason, can be neither inferred from Judaism nor attributed to earliest Christianity."[36]

Both groups of scholars claim to be able to find the real Jesus by means of exploiting our increasing knowledge about the Judaism(s) of His day- Jewish scholarship tending to collapse Him into that Judaism, and critical Christian scholarship tending to disassociate the real Jesus from that Judaism. Jewish scholars rightly highlight the unacceptability of the presupposition that Jesus' religious self-definition is to be determined primarily, if not solely, by what are perceived to be the *differences* between Him and Judaism.

Another quite basic problem in this area of research is the overall methodological problem of determining the nature of Palestinian Judaism in Jesus' day. We are now more aware than at any time since the beginnings of the quest for the historical Jesus of the complexity and creativity of Jewish religious life in Jesus' day. Perhaps more caution is needed, then, in trying to assess the confidence with which some Jewish scholars tell us the kind of Jew Jesus was.

Reduction of Jesus to being simply a great Jewish figure of His time

Zwi Werblowski, one of the leading proponents of Jewish-Christian dialogue in Israel, and a professor at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, said in 1978 that "the activity of Jesus himself and of his disciples is regarded today by most Jewish researchers as being a part, not of the history of Christianity, but that of Judaism."[37]

This is a significant statement. Equally important is the confident assertion of Pinchas Lapide:

> *... since Jesus of Nazareth during his entire life on earth was a pious Jew, and not a Christian -much less a Paulinist- we Jews ought to be allowed to determine for ourselves what this rabbi of Galilee means for us.*[38]

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[35] *Op. cit*.,p. 39.

[36] Ernst Käsemann, exegetische Versuche und Besinnungen, Göttingen, 1965, pp. 206f

[37] "Jesus devant la Pensee Juive Contemporaine," in *Les Grand Religions,* 1978, p. 36.

[38] Lapide and Stuhlmacher, *Paul: Rabbi and Apostle, op.* cit., p. 50.

The momentum lying behind confidence such as this can be traced back to the pioneering work of Klausner, who was bold enough already in the early 1920s to state that Jesus was "wholly explainable" by the Judaism of his day.[39] This has gained such currency within the Jewish communities of the west that it is taught almost as commonplace in school textbooks. Here are two typical examples from North American materials: "Jesus was a Jew and taught the best and noblest that was in the Jewish tradition" "Throughout, we observe that, though somewhat of a mystic, Jesus was nonetheless a loyal Jew."[40]

{13} As far as the Jewish community at large is concerned, the most influential Jewish scholar after Klausner has been Martin Buber. He presented Jesus as his "brother" and as a uniquely important Jewish figure. Vis-à-vis traditional Judaism, Buber elevated Jesus to the level of great brother; vis-à-vis traditional Christianity, he reduced Jesus to the level of the Jewish people's great brother. Buber saw messianic import in the teaching and life-style of Jesus, but he did not regard Jesus as Israel's Messiah. He was a paradigm of Buber's I-Thou relationship with God, but fell far short of being the supernatural Son of God of Christian theology.

The issue, then, is whether or not there is in fact a Jewish hidden agenda, setting out to strip Jesus of what is seen by Christians as His full and universal significance. A number of comments seem to represent such a Jewish apologetic position. Two examples:

> *There is a profound difference between a prophet and a teacher. A prophet is an innovative genius who discovers or expresses a spiritual truth above and beyond any that existed previously. A teacher transmits such truth to others. It has already been agreed that Jesus was a great teacher. In our judgement he was not a prophet. Insofar as his teachings were authentically Jewish, they were enunciated eight centuries earlier by Hosea, six hundred years before by Isaiah. His teaching, where good, was not original, and where original, was not Jewish or good.*[41]

Most clearly, the theological impasse occurs at the consideration of the resurrection of Jesus. For Jewish scholars (with one notable exception) this is simply not acceptable as part of the authentic life of Jesus the Jew. In Klausner's programmatic work he comes to the end of his chapter on the death of Jesus with the famous words: "Here ends the life of Jesus, and here begins the history of Christianity."[42] David Flusser closed his book on Jesus with the very words: "And Jesus died."[43] Shalom Ben-Chorin states unequivocally that in his opinion the Jewish image of Jesus quite naturally comes to a close with the death of Jesus on the cross: "The Jewish Jesus-image thus recognizes neither Christmas with the crib and the star of Bethlehem nor Easter with the open grave and the resurrection."[44]

{14} The exception to this Jewish consensus is Pinchas Lapide, already referred to several times in this paper. He asserts that it is quite possible for an Orthodox Jew to accept in principle that God raised Jesus from the dead, since Judaism affirms God as the One who can, in fact, raise the

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[39] Klausner, *Jesus of Nazareth, op.* cit., p. 363.

[40] William B. Silverman, *Judaism and Christianity: What We Believe,* 1968, p. 93; Milton G. Miller, *Our Religion and Our Neighbours,* rev. ed., 1971, p. 59.

[41] Rabbi Roland B. Gittelson, "Jews for Jesus -Are They Real?" in Gary D. Eisenberg (ed.), *Smashing The Idols,* London, 1988, p. 167; C.G. Montefiore, "Jewish Conceptions of Christianity," in *The Hibbert journal* 28, 1929-30, p. 249. See also Gerald Friedlander, *The Jewish Sources of the Sermon on the Mount,* New York, 1969, pp. 226-238, esp. pp. 237f.; Klausner, op. *cit.,* p.127; David Flusser: "Jesus", in the *Encyclopaedia Judaica, vol.* 10, 1972, p. 10; Rabbi Randall M. Falk in the recently published, *Jews and Christians: A Troubled Family,* Nashville, 1990, p. 103.

[42] Klausner, op. *cit., p.* 355. Klausner deals with the New Testament account of the Resurrection in only four pages.

[43] Flusser, *Jesus, op.* cit., p.132.

[44] Shalom Ben-Chorin, op. cit., p. 427.

dead back to life. However, this would not of itself constitute proof of Jesus' Messiahship, let alone His divinity, since the Bible itself relates other accounts of mortal men being brought back to life by the power of God. But Lapide's view has not won general acclaim within the Jewish community.[45]

This issue remains: Can the Jewish reclamation of Jesus be shared only by Christians willing to compromise His divinity, disallowing Jesus to transcend the context, normal boundaries and constraints of history?

Are history and theology being hijacked?

Not only is this the conviction of Christians like Hagner, arguing from a distinctly evangelical basis, but it is also the opinion of the Jewish scholar of the origins of Rabbinic Judaism, Jacob Neusner. Throughout his career he has maintained that Judaism and Christianity always were, and still are, different religions: "The two faiths stand for different people talking about different things to different people."[46]

Neusner criticizes the misguided attempt to blur the differences between Judaism and Christianity, an attempt which implicates both faith communities. He sees the reason for this undisciplined interpretation as a desire to reconcile the two faith communities of today: If Jews and Christians could only come to accept each other as different incarnations of the one faith, inviting the other to continue in its own distinct path, then there would at last be peace between them. Therefore,

> *Our century has witnessed a fundamental theological error which has, as a matter of fact, also yielded an erroneous hermeneutics ... The theological error was the representation of Christianity as a kind of Judaism, the appeal to Judaism for validation and judgement of Christianity - these familiar traits of contemporary biblical and theological studies obscure that simple fact.*[47]

Neusner is especially contemptuous of the idea that Christianity is best seen as the daughter religion of Judaism.

> *Christianity came into being as a surprising, unexpected and entirely autonomous religious system and structure, not as a child, whether legitimate or otherwise, of Judaism.*[48]

He is, therefore, a severe critic of Jewish scholars like Vermes and Hyam Maccoby, who present Jesus in complete continuity with his Jewish context.

> **{15}** *The characterization of Jesus as a Galilean wonder worker like Honi the Circle Drawer, for example, is a total fabrication, a deliberate misreading of the gospels, and a distortion of the very character of the rabbinic evidence adduced on behalf of that proposition.*[49]

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[45] For Lapide's views see Hans Kung and Pinchas Lapide, "Is Jesus a Bond or Barrier?: A Jewish-Christian Dialogue," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 14,1977; Pinchas Lapide, *Au ferstehung: Ein Jüdisches Glaubensverlebnis,* 2nd. ed., Stuttgart and Munich, 1978. See also Randall Falk, op. *cit., pp.* 111f.

[46] Jacob Neusner, *Jews and Christians: The Myth of a Common Tradition,* London, 1991, p. 1 and passim. For a refutation of Neusner's basic postulate, see Oskar Skarsaune, "Salvation in Judaism and Christianity," *MISHKAN* 1/1992, pp.l-9.

[47] Neusner, op. *cit., pp.* 18, 94.

[48] *Op, cit., p.* 120. For other contemporary rejections of this simplistic model, see Charlesworth, *Jews and Christians, op.* cit., pp. 36-43; A.F. Segal, *Rebecca's Children: Judaism and Christianity in the Roman World,* London, 1986, pp. 1f., 179ff.; Norman Solomon, *Division and Reconciliation,* London, 1980, pp. 2f.

[49] *Ibid.*

This is a major theological and moral issue which we must take seriously. What is the relationship between Christianity and Judaism? Christian tradition cannot accept that the two are completely autonomous, just as the Church maintains that the two testaments belong together. On the other hand, the traditional Christian theology of replacement, or supercession, is no longer acceptable. Jesus was, in one sense, a product of His time and place. Therefore the search for a more thorough understanding of the Jewishness of Jesus, a search in which Jewish scholarship is proving to be of increasing importance, should be encouraged.

Implications

Let us then review the main issues and their implications for the urgent matter of Jewish-Christian relations today and tomorrow.

Regaining Jesus' continuity with his Jewish matrix

The Church has tended to (over)stress both Jesus' discontinuity with His Jewish matrix and His universal humanity at the expense of his Jewishness. And yet, if Jesus has nothing to say directly to Jewish people, then how can He have anything to say directly to anyone else? It easily degenerates into the creation of more than one Jesus, each in a different culture's or scholar's image. Jewish research into the historical Jesus is helping us to redress the balance with proper regard for Jesus' continuity with, and particular identity with, His own and his community's Jewishness.

It is to be hoped that evangelical Christian scholars will be at the heart of this new synthesis. How many of us, therefore, and how many of our students, are involved in disciplined study of the Jewish sources, or in substantial dialogue with Jewish scholars, or are even *au fait* with the Jewish works being published today on Jesus research? One implication of all this is that we *must* be involved in the debate with Jewish scholars.

Evaluating the historicity of the Gospels

The Church has cause to be grateful to Jewish scholarship for introducing a new confidence in the historical reliability of the overall presentation of early Jewish life given in the (synoptic) Gospels. What one might call creedal conflict is obvious when it comes to the accounts of the virgin birth and the resurrection of Jesus, and considerable mistrust is evident as regards the trial **{16}** narratives, these three issues being predictably the most sensitive. There is also a different interpretation given to the issue of Jesus' attitude toward the Torah, both Oral and Written, than that commonly found among Christian exegetes, but this tends to be disagreement of a useful nature. The point to be stressed at this juncture is that the historicity of the bulk of the Gospel material is being defended on a non-Christian basis by Jewish scholars.

Jewish scholars claim that Christians are being introduced to the life and times of Jesus through the use of Jewish religious and historical sources, and through Jewish familiarity with those sources. The methodological problems associated with this approach can be briefly summarized: The sources come from communities writing generations after the time of Jesus' life, and therefore writing for their own purposes, purposes which by definition sometimes run counter to those of the "Jesus Movement." This methodological debate must therefore be enjoined between Jewish and Christian scholars.

Recovering the real Jesus

It has been refreshing to find Jewish scholars expressing confidence that Jesus of Nazareth can be sufficiently recovered from the Gospel accounts, that it is possible for us today to encounter Him. New life has come into the debate, and we are indebted to the Jewish contribution. Is this to be desired unreservedly, or do we, like Hagner, detect hidden pitfalls?

One cannot separate the knower from the known, or in this case, the seeker from what is sought. Jewish people are looking for a different Jesus, a Jesus who will vindicate the Judaism of first-century Israel. The possibility of Jesus being a divine figure as well as a human personality is denied a priori by Jewish scholarship, whereas traditional Christianity refuses to depart from this fundamental tenet of faith.

Here lies an important issue for us: can one suspend judgement on the divinity of Jesus, or at the very least relegate that conviction to the side-lines for a time, until work is done on His life as a Jewish human being in the Land of Israel? Or does His divinity influence the kind of Jewish person He was? Did the society in which He grew up, and particularly the synagogue in which He learned the Scriptures and the traditions, actually contribute to His development as a person, in relationship to His Father as well as to others? If the answer to these questions is yes, then we have much to learn about Him from the new realistic quest.

This brings us back to the issue at stake here. If one is able to distinguish clearly between the aspects of Jesus research in which Jewish scholars can help, and those subsequent aspects in which they cannot, then does it follow that Christians will simply have to accept that Jesus will remain only as an **{17}** important Jewish teacher for the Jewish community? Can Jesus be, at one and the same time, the Christ of the Church and a rabbi of the Jewish people? Are evangelicals compromising their faith by being involved in such interfaith projects?

Separating Jesus from His disciples

This is another major issue facing the Church in its Jesus research. Evangelicals have a particular concern to preserve a relationship of continuity between Jesus and the nascent and emerging church. However, it has become a bit commonplace to find Jewish scholars driving a wedge between Jesus and Paul. They wish to differentiate clearly between the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith, an attitude and approach not unfamiliar to those who are *au fait* with recent New Testament scholarship. Hagner sums up this aspect of Jewish scholarship in the following way:

> *This Christ- indeed Christianity itself - is regarded as largely the creation of the apostle Paul, who by importing Hellenistic ideas, subverted the message of Jesus, and so brought a new religion into existence.*[50]

This kind of wedge can be seen consistently in the relevant works by Jewish scholars, for example, Klausner, Buber, Sandmel and Vermes.[51] Indeed the very title of one of Hyam Maccoby's books tells the story well: *The Mythmaker: Paul and the Invention of Christianity.*[52] Is Jesus to be reclaimed at the expense of Paul? Few issues can have more serious implications for Jewish-Christian relations.

Appreciation of the Jewish agenda

Jewish people pursue their own agenda. The status and role of Jesus is an issue for them from their own context of concerns and perspectives. Judaism's engagement with Jesus is in fact part of the movement toward its own self-confident taking of a rightful place in the modern world as a major world religion in its own right. Rabbi Alan Mittleman has put it this way:

> *The "homecoming of Jesus", therefore, is an aspect of the modern Jew's act of historically oriented self-discovery, or of self-recovery. It is an aspect of the modern Jew's search for essence and definition.*[53]

To this way of thinking, Christianity has been guilty of deifying and institutionalizing a loyal son of Judaism, and consequently condemning Judaism as it has developed without Jesus to, at best, the status of a failed, unfulfilled, and barren religion, and, at worst, a sentence of death and destruction. And so Christians must accept that Jewish people are working with an agenda quite different from their own.

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[50] *Op. cit., p. 26.*

[51] Joseph Klausner, *From Jesus to Paul,* (Engl. transl. by W.F. Stinespring), New York, *1943, of* the *1939* original, pp. *580f.;* Martin Buber, Two *Types of Faith, op.* cit., p. *55;* Samuel Sandmel, *Anti-Semitism in the New Testament?,* Philadelphia, *1978, p. 161;* Geza Vermes, *The Gospel o* f *Jesus the Jew,* op. cit., p. *45.*

[52] Hyam Maccoby, *The Myth-Maker: Paul and the Invention of Christianity,* New York, *1986.*

[53] Quoted in Harvey *Cox, Many Mansions: A Christian's Encounter with Other Faiths,* Boston, *1988, p. 111.*

{18} Is the Church secure enough and humble enough to acknowledge the help it needs from Jewish scholarship, and, what is more, to accept it on the Jewish community's terms? Hagner comments:

> *Jewish scholars are in a particularly advantageous situation to understand the teaching of Jesus. Familiar with the Old Testament, the development of early Judaism, the Jewish background of the Gospels, and often learned in the difficult world of rabbinic literature, they are often able not only to place Jesus in historical context, but also to enter the mental world of Jesus, and to capture every Jewish nuance in his words. For this, Christian scholars, though sensing an incompleteness in the Jewish approach, continue to be grateful.*[54]

Perhaps the issue is most controversially presented by the Roman Catholic theologian, Clemens Thoma, who argues that in fact Christians positively need to hear Jewish theological critiques of the Church's Christology. In 1980 he wrote:

> *Christian theologians would be well advised ... to consider Jewish exceptions to their theological and Christological statements. Taken altogether, Jewish ideas are not mere negations, opposition for opposition's sake, but warnings of potential perversions of faith in the God of Israel.*[55]

Can the Church accept such a perspective on contemporary Jewish-Christian relations?

Identification with Jewish believers in Jesus

As far as I am concerned, the most tragic aspect of modern Jewish-Christian relations is the fringing of those Jewish people who are our brothers and sisters in the faith. Through the centuries the Synagogue has told Jewish believers they are no longer Jewish, having betrayed the Jewish people to join the gentiles and their religion. This was all based on the presumption that Jewish people could not come to faith in Jesus from conviction alone, reflecting also the Jewish community's terrible treatment at the hands of Christians. For its part, the Church has also demanded that Jews reject their Jewishness if and when they become baptized members of the Church. Its agenda has been dominated by varieties of anti-Judaism and anti-Semitism.

However, can Christians today do other than affirm Jewish faith in the Jesus of history, the faith that He is indeed Israel's Messiah and the Saviour of the world? The Jewish scholarship which we are examining here denies the possibility, viability, and integrity of such faith. Will the Church compromise its commitment to these brothers and sisters to save the dialogue?

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[54] *Op. cit., p. 27.*

[55] Clemens Thoma, op. *cit., p. 131.*

{23} Yehoshua, Yeshua, Jesus and Yeshu

An Introduction to the Names

Kai Kjær-Hansen

- Dr. Kai Kjær-Hansen *earned his Ph.D. from Lund University, Sweden, on Studies in the Name of Jesus (1982). He is presently International Coordinator of the Lausanne Consultation on Jewish Evangelism and editor of the LCJE Bulletin.*

My interest in the name of Jesus dates back to 1976-78, when I lived in Jerusalem. A Danish pastor in Jerusalem in those years, I tried to read up on modern Jewish research on Jesus. My attention was caught by various derogatory epithets which were used in diverse Jewish contexts, either in connection with the name of Jesus or as a substitute for it. This in combination with my interest in New Testament Christology made me turn my attention towards the name of Jesus in a Jewish and Hebrew context.

In conversations and sermons in Hebrew a choice had to be made between *Yeshu* and *Yeshua. I* had become used to the former form through Hebrew studies and lectures at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. I met the latter form in Hebrew-speaking Messianic congregations.

An experience at the Western Wall in the autumn of 1976 whetted my curiosity about the problem. Here I witnessed an episode involving a man with an American accent and dressed like a "John the Baptist" who was in a heated argument with some Orthodox Jews about Jesus. This person not only possessed the ability to spit-he also exercised it when he, in English, said "Jesus." Nevertheless, he defended *Yeshua* energetically. Unfortunately, from my position on the fringe of the debating crowd, I was unable to make out what this person thought of this *Yeshua,* except that he strongly emphasized the difference between the English and the Hebrew forms of the name.

Although preliminary inquiries with competent Jewish scholars concerning the relationship in Hebrew between *Yeshu* and *Yeshua* did not cause me to pursue the matter further, my suspicion had been aroused that at least there was a problem. For I did not find their answer very satisfactory: "Jews say *Yeshu,* Hebrew-speaking Christians say *Yeshua.* That's it!"

{24} In this essay I shall begin by sketching the name forms of Jesus of Nazareth which are relevant in a Hebrew-speaking context in Israel today. After that I am going to deal with the question: What was the Hebrew name for Jesus of Nazareth? Finally I shall describe the change from *Yeshua* to *Yeshu.*

But before that, a few theoretical observations about names and our attitude to names.

What's in a Name?

Modern onomastics warns against an approach to this subject which is only interested in the meaning and the etymology of a name. The meaning of a name is conditioned by a number of factors- historical, religious, cultural, sociological, political and social. This applies to the name-giver's motive as well as to the surrounding community's response to the name. Add to this a number of collective and individual emotional, psychological and aesthetic factors, as well as local naming traditions.

We must assume that the same factors were in force in a Jewish context when Jesus was born. While etymology, in a modern context, often plays a very secondary part, there can be no doubt that it was much more important in a Jewish context around the beginning of our era. The rabbis have much to say about this. And yet the etymological and lexical approaches must be supplemented by other approaches.

The name-bearer's history is one of these. The response to a given name is definitely determined by the history of the name-bearer. In May 1945 no child was named "Adolf"! In the case of Jesus, we may assume that His disciples' relationship to him influenced their relationship to His name. It is difficult to argue about emotions, but there is no reason to consider the people of the first Christian Church to be more blunted than others. It is difficult to imagine that the name of Jesus

should have been a neutral name to those who came to faith in him as the resurrected Lord. V. Taylor is undoubtedly right in the point he makes in his book *The Names of Jesus*[56]

> *From a very early point, a religious quality attached itself to the name, just as in later Christianity it belongs even to the pronouns "He" and "His." In many eases we cannot fail to be conscious of this nuance, even though proof is not possible.*

There are two points to consider:

1) The Christological titles may be said to answer the more or less conscious question: Who is *(was) Jesus?* While it is possible that the name of Jesus is "neutral" for the questioner, the name may have a specific value in the answer, whether or not it is mentioned directly. So when Christians have answered **{25}** the *Who is Jesus* question, the accompanying designations of highness or titles may very well have stressed the name of Jesus.

2) But a *Who is Jesus* question is only one aspect of the Christological issue. When Christians at an early time, like Paul in his letters, spoke about *t h e Lord, Christ, the Son of God,* etc. other questions may have suggested themselves: "Who is *the Lord?" "Who is Christ?" "Who is the Son of God?"*

While the name of Jesus is implicit but not always explicit in the answer mentioned under 1), the question asked under 2) implies one or more designations of highness; but the name of Jesus acquires a decisive function in the answer.

Although it is difficult to imagine that the name of Jesus should have been "neutral" to a Christian in the first century AD, these observations may serve to focus attention on some aspects of the name of Jesus which have sometimes been ignored in theological research.

Also, the context plays an important part. If it is possible, in the New Testament, to find semantic fields and compounds where the name Jesus appears in a position which, according to the Old Testament's linguistic pattern, is reserved for YHWH, it becomes possible to understand the theological value of the name of Jesus, the Christological overtones which are associated with it in the New Testament, and the connotations in the minds of first-century Christians.

To demonstrate this falls beyond the scope of this essay. The issue to be dealt with here is what Jesus is called in an Israeli context today.

What is Jesus of Nazareth Called Today in Hebrew?

The answer to that question depends on whom you ask. This already suggests that there may be a problem and that there are several current forms of the name. This is first and foremost a problem to non-Messianic Jews. Most Messianic Jews use the form *Yeshua,* and if there are individuals who use the form *Yeshu,* they are the exceptions that prove the rule.

If one takes the lexicographical approach and consults easily accessible dictionaries, the tendency is the following: If one looks up "Jesus" in a non-Hebrew language, the Hebrew definition is *Yeshu.* If one chooses the opposite approach, i.e. from Hebrew to another language, some dictionaries refer the reader from *Yeshua to Yeshu,* others from *Yeshu* to *Yeshua.* An example is in the appendix to *Milon Hadash.*[57]

When it comes to school books, the answer depends on whether one settles for Pinchas Lapide's article "Jesus in Israeli School Books"[58] or whether one **{26}** examines the school books oneself. Lapide says:

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[56] Lord V. Taylor, *The Names* of *Jesus,* London, 1953, p. 8.

[57] Under the heading "Names and their Meaning", Jerusalem, 1958, p.182, A. Even-Shosan writes: "Yeshua, that is Yeshu HaNotzri ..." Then follows an explanation of the name of Jesuits here spelled with an ayin: "Jeshuai'im."

[58] Pinchas Lapide, "Jesus in Israeli School Books," In *Journal of Ecumenical Studies,* 1973, pp. 515-531.

> *Seven books call the Nazarene "Jeshu," which is both historically and philologically correct and also corresponds to the contemporary usage in Israel for the name Jesus. The effect is to "associate" Jesus with, and place him on the edge of, Judaism. Only three books call him "Jeshua," which not only corresponds to the then current biblical name of "Josua," but also is as good as identical with "Jehoshua," a popular name in Israel today.*[59]

A first-hand examination of the material does not give the result 7-3, which Lapide maintains, but rather 10-0-for *Yeshu.* The form of *Yeshua is* mentioned in five books, but in none of them is it used generally -*Yeshu* is. It is not clear what Lapide means when he says that *Yeshu is* "both historically and philologically correct." In practice the form *Yeshu* dominates the school books, even if it is mentioned that there is another form, *Yeshua.*

Yeshu is not written with abbreviation signs: it is not regarded as a *Roshei Tevot* word, where the three consonants are meant to form the formula: *Yimach Shemo Uzikhro,* i.e. "May his name and memory be blotted out" - a curse known from, for example, the so-called *Toledoth Yeshu* literature. This spelling (with abbreviation signs) is still found in some but not all Ultra Orthodox newspapers. Generally speaking this explanation is not known in Israel and does not appear in school books. The form *Yeshu is* not in itself negative. According to an Israeli statistics of names, which I consulted in 1979, no one bore the name of *Yeshu,* which was hardly to be expected, but 29 persons were called *Yeshua!*

It can be noted that in New Testament quotations, either from Delitzsch's translation or from translations which rely on it, the school book material has examples of *Yeshua* being replaced with *Yeshu.*

The same is often the case in David Flusser's work in Hebrew when he quotes from the New Testament, although the form *Yeshua* does appear. The difference does not seem intended. But it does not change the fact that *Yeshu* is the preferred form in Flusser's work in Hebrew. When Flusser writes in a non-Hebrew language - or is translated into one - that language's form of Jesus is used, of course. In his *Jesus in Selbstzeugnissen und Bilddokumenten,*[60] Flusser says about the name that "Jesus" is the common Greek form of the name Joshua, and that in Jesus' time the name was pronounced *Yeshua,* and so we often find Jesus of Nazareth named in ancient Jewish literature. There He is also often named *Yeshu.* That, almost certainly, was the Galilean pronunciation, according to Flusser. We shall return to this later. The English translation by Ronald Walls' has a blatant mistake. The sentence, "There (i.e. in ancient Jewish literature) he is also often named *Yeshu,"* has **{27}** disappeared. Consequently, Ronald Walls[61] translation says that *Yeshua* was the Galilean pronunciation! Which is nonsense. And which was not what Flusser wrote.

When Joseph Klausner wrote in Hebrew, he also used the form *Yeshu.* Considering the influence of Klausner's book *Yeshu HaNotzri,*[62] it is hardly going too far to say that if Klausner had dared to restore the form of *Yeshua* -which he did not do-today, the form of *Yeshu* would only be used by some of the Ultra-Orthodox.

In his prolegomena to *Thesaurus Totius Hebraitatis,*[63] Eliezer Ben-Yehuda, the father of Hebrew, deals with the name of Jesus. Here the name of Jesus is mentioned explicitly at least eight times, and every time the form *Yeshua is* used.

So generally speaking, *Yeshu* - the historically incorrect form of Jesus put forward by Klausner, the historian and theologian-defeated Yeshua-the correct form of Jesus, supported by Ben-Yehuda, the linguist.

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[59] *Op. cit., pp.* 516-517.
[60] David Flusser, *Selbstzeugnissen und Bilddokumenten,* Reinbeck bei Hamburg, 1968, p. 13-14.
[61] David Flusser, *Jesus,* New York, 1969, p. 13.
[62] Joseph Klausner, *Yeshua HaNotzri,* 1922, Ramat Gan, 1969.
[63] Elizer BenYehuda, *Thesaurus Totius Hebraitatis,* Jerusalem, 1940, pp. 215-216.

With names there are always exceptions, but generally speaking the form *Yeshu* is the one used in Hebrew today. And that leads to another observation, namely that the so-called Jewish *Heimholung* of Jesus, the scientific attempt to bring Jesus back to the Jewish people, does not generally include a reclamation of the name of *Yeshua*. But as already mentioned there are exceptions where Hebrew-writing Jewish scholars use the form *Yeshua,* e.g. Joseph Hagar[64] and Zalman Heyn.[65] Jewish scholars affiliated to the Jerusalem School of Synoptic Research do not appear, however, to have restored the Hebrew name of Jesus, *Yeshua,* when they write about Him in Hebrew.

Let us leave the historians and theologians for a moment. Without going into details it is possible for us to demonstrate that several Jewish novelists use different forms -*Yehoshua, Yeshu, Yeshua*-to indicate the attitude of their characters to Jesus of Nazareth. This is the case of the following novelists who all write in languages other than Hebrew: Franz Werfel,[66] Max Brod;[67] and Louis de Wohl.[68] Among those who write in Hebrew, some use *Yeshu* (e.g., A. Hameiri, Ch. Hasas, J. Mosinson), others use *Yeshua* (e.g., N. Bistritzki). In Scholem Asch's *The Nazarene,* both in the Yiddish original and the Hebrew translation,[69] the form *Yeshua* is used. *Yeshu* does not occur. **{28}** However, in Asch's introductory reflections another form is used: "If you insist on knowing the name, I will pronounce it: Yeshua of Nazareth, he who is called Jesus Christ" (in Hebrew transcribed "Yezus Kristos").[70] In translations into other languages the Hebraicized form *Yeshua* is kept. It may be noted that Chaim Lieverman's refutation of Asch's book uses "Jesus" in the English original,[71] while the Hebrew translation[72] has *Yeshu*. In a New Testament quotation, verbatim after Delitzsch's translation, *Yeshua* has been replaced by *Yeshu*. Technically this is no different from what, for example, David Flusser sometimes does and what happens in schoolbooks. But since one's response to a name to a very large degree depends on the context of that name, we have to consider this when we want to appraise the change from *Yeshua* to *Yeshu*.

However, it would be jumping to conclusions if we simply said that the more polemic the text, the greater are the efforts to hide the fact that Jesus' original Hebrew name was *Yeshua*. An example of this can be found in Jakob Zurischadaj's *Habrit*[73] from the traditional Jewish refutation literature. The procedure in this book is first to adduce a New Testament quotation and then to refute it. In the quotations from the New Testament the form *Yeshua* occurs about fifty times, and only once the form *Yeshu* occurs, which may be a lapse. Zurischadaj himself uses *Yeshu*. The play on words in Matthew 1:21 is rendered correctly: "Yeshua ... yoshia" (Jesus ... will save). M. Bazes' book *Jesus the Jew-The Historical Jesus: The True Story of Jesus*[74]*,* written in English, also belongs in the refutation group. He concedes that Jesus' historical name was *Yeshuah*. But Christianity's "deification of Jesus"[75] influenced the relationship of Jews to the name of Jesus. Bazes writes: "It is no wonder that Jews considered the Christian belief as simple idolatry and felt obligated to apply the Law in Exodus 23:13 ("Make no mention of the name of other gods") to the name, Jesus. Naturally, the name of one of the truest and best Jewish teachers had to be shunned."[76]

On the basis of this - as well as other circumstances - one may infer that Jewish refutation literature today, and down through the ages, has helped to preserve, among Jews, the memory that Christianity's Saviour was called *Yeshua*. While the polemic literature has primarily used the form

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[64] Joseph Hagar, *Behinot Historiot,* Tel-Aviv, 1951.
[65] Zalman Heyn, *Drahim LeShamayim,* Tel-Aviv, 1972.
[66] Franz Werfel, *Paulus unter den Juden,* Berlin, Wien, Leipzig, 1929.
[67] Max Brod, *Der Meister,* Gütersloh, 1952.
[68] Louis de Wohl, *Longinus der Zeuge,* Olten und Freiburg im Breisgau, 1978.
[69] Scholem Asch, *The Nazarene,* translated by David Zion, Jerusalem, 1953.
[70] *Op. cit.,* p. 25.
[71] Chaim Lieverman, *The Christianity* of *Sholem Asch,* New York, 1953.
[72] Chaim Lieverman, *Natzruto Shel Shalom Asch,* Tel-Aviv, 1954.
[73] Jakob Zurischadaj, *Habrit,* Jerusalem, 1970.
[74] M Bazes, *Jesus the Jew - The Historical Jesus: The True Story of Jesus,* Jerusalem, 1976.
[75] *Op. cit.,* p. 46.
[76] Op. cit., p. 47.

Yeshu, there has all along been an awareness that this was not Jesus' original Hebrew name. Maimonides appears to have used the form *Yeshua* in several writings, e.g., in his *Epistle to Yemen,* even if the tradition of the text also has the form *Yeshu,* which has to be regarded as the secondary form.[77] Subsequent Jewish authorities refer specifically to Maimonides and claim that Jesus' original name was *Yeshua,* and then go on to explain why they, none the less, do not use it. Whatever reservations one might have towards J.A. Eisenmenger's book *Entdecktes Judenthum* from the beginning of the eighteenth **{29}** century, it cannot be denied that he gives a good summary of the reasons why Jews do not use *Yeshua* but have cut off the letter *ayin* and call him *Yeshu* instead. This does not imply that all Jews always and everywhere thought that they smeared the name of Jesus by using the form *Yeshu.* In different Jewish sources, there is evidence for Eisenmenger's assertions.[78] He adduces five explanations:

1. Jews do not recognize that Jesus is *Moshia* (Saviour); therefore they do not say *Yeshua* but *Yeshu.*
2. Jesus was not able to save Himself; therefore the *ayin* is left out.
3. Jews are not only permitted to mock false gods; they are commanded to change and defame their names.
4. With a reference to Exodus 23:13 Jews are forbidden to mention the names of other gods.
5. With a reference to the *Toledoth Yeshu* literature, *Yeshu is* interpreted as *Yimach Shemo Uzikhro.* The pronunciation Yi instead of the expected *Ye(shu) is* designed to clarify the connection to *Yimach.*

If again we turn to Israel and examine the forms of the name in newspapers, we shall see that *Yeshu is* the most commonly used form, but *Yeshua* does appear. Occasionally Messianic Jews are quoted for having used the form *Yeshu,* but that should be taken with a grain of salt-it may be a reflection of the interviewer's terminology. In articles written in Hebrew by Christians there are a few examples of *Yeshu.* In sections of the Orthodox press *Yeshu* without abbreviation signs is used. The organization Jews for Jesus is normally referred to as *Yehudim Lema'an Yeshu.* On television *Yeshu is* most often used but *Yeshua* does appear. In concert programmes for Christian classics there is the same alternation between *Yeshu* and *Yeshua-* sometimes both forms can be found in the same programme. And if the name of the conductor happens to be Jesus Lopez-Cobos, his name is not transcribed with *Yehoshua,* not with *Yeshua* and not with *Yeshu,* but with *chet* as the initial letter *Chesus* -which gives it the right Spanish pronunciation. The examples are legion.

In summary, the form *Yeshu,* rather than *Yeshua,* enjoys a special position in Israel today. To non-specialists, i.e. to the Israeli in the street, *Yeshu is* the name of the founder of Christianity. Most people do not know the imprecation formula *Yimach Sherno Uzikhro.* In various ways the awareness that Jesus of Nazareth has a name other than Yeshu is kept alive. Also modern Hebrew refutation literature keeps it alive. One's response to the name can at best be described as a negation: It is the absence of the potentially positive overtones of the form *Yeshua.* The response to the name-be it *Yeshu* or *Yeshua-*is usually determined by the context in which it appears, whether negative or positive.

{30} As mentioned before, it is noteworthy that the section of Israeli research which attempts to reclaim Jesus has not reclaimed Jesus' Hebrew name, *Yeshua.* In this respect they generally follow the Jewish tradition and use the form *Yeshu.*

Yehoshua/Yoshua - Yeshua - Yeshu

The following is a brief sketch of the relationship between the forms *Yehoshua/Yoshua* and *Yeshua,* and after that the relationship between *Yeshua* and *Yeshu* in the centuries before and after the beginning of our era.

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[77] Cf. A.S. Halkin (ed.), *Moses Maimonides' Epistle to Yemen,* New York, 1952, p. 12.
[78] J.A. Eisenmenger, *Entdecktes Judenthum,* Königsberg, 1711, Vol. I, pp. 64-67.

Yehoshua/Joshua vis-à-vis Yeshua

Yehoshua is formally a theoforic name with the abbreviated tetragrammaton YHW as its first element. The first man to bear the name is ben Nun, who was first called *Hoshea*. The change from *Hoshea* to *Yehoshua* (Num. 13:16) was easily effected; it only took the prefixing of the little *yod*. With a stroke, the letter *yod* was given satisfaction: When the name Abram became Abra*h*am (Gen. 17:5) and Sarai became Sara*h* (Gen. 17:15), the letter *yod,*10 in the Hebrew numerical system, was split up into two *he's* (fives), about which the letter *yod* complains to God (according to Midr Gen R XLVII, 1). But with the name *Yehoshua, yod* gets satisfaction: "Hitherto thou wast in a woman's name and the last of its letters; now I will set thee free in a man's name and at the beginning of its letters." The story is sweet and gives us an example of the rabbis' work with and interest in names. Apart from ben Nun, a few others in the biblical tradition bear the name of *Yehoshua*, among them Jozadak's son who, together with Zerubbabel, returned to Judah from Babylon. Both are positive figures in the biblical tradition-and therefore their names are also "good." Both these *Yehoshuas* are mentioned by the long forms of the name, *Yehoshua,* in the prophets Haggai and Zechariah, while Ezra and Nehemiah use a short form, namely *Yeshua;* and what is most remarkable is that in Nehemiah 8:17 the short form *Yeshua* is used about ben Nun, which is clear evidence that the long form *Yehoshua is* being replaced by the short form *Yeshua.* In times to come this short form was to become the dominant one.

In my judgment we have reason to believe that in New Testament times the short form *Yeshua* replaced the long form *Yehoshua.* I dare not claim that the long form cannot have been in use as a personal name in New Testament times. Inscriptions and discoveries of ossuaries from Palestine show that the form *Yeshua* was a common personal name, and that this *Yeshua* corresponds to the Greek *Iesous.* Philo is familiar with the factual meaning of the Greek form, which he renders soteria kyriou (the Lord's salvation). In Josephus this Greek form is used about ben Nun as well as about 20 people from the end **{31}** of the era of the Second Temple. I have not been able to trace an inscription from New Testament times which has the long form *Yehoshua*.

The literary name *Yehoshua* was not forgotten by those who were familiar with the biblical scriptures. But in this connection it may also be mentioned that the Qumran scrolls have examples of ben Nun's name being rendered *Yeshua* (e.g. 4QT Testimonium 21). If we move on to the time of Bar Kokhba, the rediscovered correspondence material shows that several of the leading people among Bar Kokhba's followers bore the name of *Yeshua.* One of the less known is *Yeshua ben Yeshua.*[79]

Taken together, our evidence clearly indicates that the name of Jesus of Nazareth was *Yeshua* and not *Yehoshua.* The name had an *ayin* at the end. Further, it is worth noticing that over the first hundred years after Yeshua of Nazareth it is not possible to demonstrate any significant change of the Jewish nomenclature as to the use of *Yeshua* and the corresponding Greek *Iesous*. Later, after the middle of the second century AD, a change occurred resulting in a return to the long form *Yehoshua-but* that is a matter which cannot be dealt with here. But the return to a situation when Jews begin to use the long form *Yehoshua* again might be explained by the fact that Christianity's Saviour was called *Yeshua,* though other factors may also have been relevant. If these suppositions are right, it follows that there may be doubts whether those people mentioned in Mishnah and Talmud whose names are written *Yehoshua* and who lived before the time of Bar Kokhba, were really called by that name by their contemporaries, or if it is not more probable that their name was *Yeshua*.

Yeshua vis-à-vis Yeshu

A very hypothetical possibility that the form *Yeshu* existed as a personal name in the first century can be supported by an inscription published by E.L. Sukenik in 1931.[80] The missing *ayin* may be explained through lack of space, a hypothesis mentioned by Sukenik himself, although he also says that perhaps this is an instance of the short form which is otherwise found in talmudic literature. Side by side with this uncertain *Yeshu is* the name *Yeshua* -with an *ayin*.

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[79] Y. Yadin, *Bar Kokhba: The rediscovery of the legendary hero ...,* Jerusalem, 1971, pp. 270-271; 222-253.
[80] E. L. Sukenik, *Jüdische Gräber Jerusalems um Christi Geburt,* Jerusalem, 1931, p.19.

Yerushalmi Fragments from the Genizah[81] mentions a few unique examples of the disappearance of the final *ayin,* referring to one "R[abbi] Yeshu, the southerner." E.Y. Kutscher[82] tries to explain this as a linguistic weakening of *ayin*. But then it is interesting that the form *Yehoshua* with the *ayin is* found in the same context.

Various explanations have been offered as to why Jesus is called *Yeshu* in the rabbinic tradition. In passing it may be mentioned that *Yeshu is* not the sole form: Tosefta Hullin 2,22.24, for example, has *Yeshua*. Also D. Rokeah **{32}** thinks that the original version of bSanh 43a reads *Yeshua,* which he bases on the fact that MS Temani has *Yeshua.*[83]

It is characteristic of most of the modern solutions offered in explanation of the development from *Yeshua* to *Yeshu* that they are of a philological nature. S. Krauss says that *Yeshu* instead of *Yeshua* is an example of the most natural development in the world.[84] Often the development from *Josef* to *Jose is* mentioned as an example that illustrates the development from *Yeshua* to *Yeshu.* In J.Z. Lauterbach's work *Jesus in the Talmud,* however, there are nuances of meaning. He does not commit himself on the issue, but his comments on it are valuable.[85]

Among the different hypotheses which have been put forward, only one will be mentioned, and probably the one which has met with most sympathy as an explanation of the development from *Yeshua* to *Yeshu.* It is connected to David Flusser's name, but A. Neubauer[86] is entertaining the same idea when he says that the orthography of *Yeshu* in the Talmud and early rabbinical writings is according to the pronunciation, in which the guttural *ayin* was not pronounced. Hugh J. Schonfield is expressing something similar when he says that *Yeshu is* actually the north-Palestinian contraction of the Hebrew *Yeshua,* where the letter *ayin* was not sounded.[87] J. Jeremias[88] is among those who agree with Flusser that *Yeshu is* the Galilean pronunciation of *Yeshua.* This is the explanation in Flusser's *Jesus.*[89] In *Jewish Sources in Early Christianity*[90] he writes the following:

> *The Hebrew name for Jesus, Yeshu, is evidence for the Galilean pronunciation of the period, and is in no way abusive. Jesus was a Galilean, and therefore the* a *at the end of his name, Yeshua, was not pronounced. His full name was thus Yeshua. In the Talmudic sources, which are from a later period, there is reference to a Rabbi Yeshu, who is not to be confused with Jesus.*

Flusser's hypothesis is that the final *ayin* was not pronounced in Galilee. E.Y. Kutscher draws attention to the fact that in most places in Galilee and the rest of Palestine Jews were able to pronounce the gutturals even if these gutturals, in a few places such as Haifa, Beisan and Tibon, were not pronounced.[91] Thus Flusser may be right but his hypothesis should not be put forward as

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[81] Edited by L. Ginzberg, New York, 1909.
[82] E. Y. Kutscher, *Studies in Galilean Aramaic,* Jerusalem, 1976, pp. 80-81. D. Rokeah, *Tarbiz,* 1969-70, p. 11.
[83] D. Rokeah, *Tarbiz,* 1969-70, p. 11.
[84] S. Krauss, *Das Leben Jesu nach Jüdischen Quellen,* Berlin, 1902, p. 250.
[85] L. Z. Lauterbach, "Jesus in the Talmud;" *Rabbinic Essays,* Cincinnati, 1951, pp. 473-570. In a comment on the baraita Sanh.107b he says (p. 482):
"The name *Yeshu* by which Jesus is here mentioned is probably merely a shortened form of the name *Yeshua* (the abbreviation sign on top is a later addition). But since such an abbreviated form of the name is not used in any other case of a person named *Yeshua* or *Yehoshua,* but persistently and consistently used when the name refers to Jesus, it may be assumed that this shortening of the name was probably an intentional mutilation by cutting off part of it. The rabbis mention other instances of the names of persons being shortened because of their misconduct, but here in the case of the name *Jeshua* there may have been an additional special reason for shortening it into *Jeshu."*
[86] A. Neubauer, "Jewish Controversy and the 'Pugio Fidei ," in *The Expositor,* no. 7, 1888, p. 24.
[87] Hugh J. Schonfiled, *According to the Hebrews. A New Translation of the Jewish Life of Jesus (The Toldot Jeshu), with Inquiry into the Nature of its Sources and Special Relationship to the Lost Gospel according to the Hebrews,* London, 1937.
[88] J. Jeremias, *Neutestamentliche Theologie,* Gütersloh, 1973, vol. I, p. 13.
[89] David Flusser, *Jesus,* English translation, p. 13.
[90] David Flusser, *Jewish Sources in Early Christianity,* Tel-Aviv, 1989, p.15.
[91] E. Y. Kutscher, *op.cit.,* pp. 67-70; 80; 89-96.

self-evident. He does not place this question in a larger context, e.g. Christians' interpretations of the name of Jesus and speculations over it. Such interpretations and speculations appear as early as in the Epistle of Barnabas, and there are many instances of them in early Christian writings. The form *Yeshu* might be a reaction to such speculation.

Flusser does not comment on the relationship between pronounciation and written fixation. In my opinion this is the greatest weakness of Flusser's **{33}** hypothesis. Irrespective of what was pronounced, it may be assumed that what is not pronounced is still written - at any rate in the initial phase. Add to this the observation that the names *Yeshua* and *Yehoshua* in contemporary sources were written with the final *ayin* in contemporary sources when the names referred to everybody else but Jesus. Thus Flusser's hypothesis seems to crumble.

My own hypothesis is not indisputable.[92] The issue is far too complex for that, and we lack some historical data before we can draw a conclusion.

I do not imagine, of course, that the rabbis should have dictated the spelling for the name of Jesus of Nazareth-not because the rabbis were not interested in Jesus, but because other mechanisms are at work. Nor do I imagine that a written change of name should have taken place already at the time of the New Testament. In any case, there are no sources to support an understanding like this. It is, however, not impossible that the beginning of the name change, which was not effectuated in writing until later, may have been there already at the time of the New Testament. This means that we shall have to consider a rather long process.

By using *Yeshu* it became possible to stamp out some soteriological connotations of the form *Yeshua.*

In the first oral phase of this process I assume that some sneered at the name of *Yeshua.* Such sneer is in itself a common phenomenon which cannot be ignored even if it is difficult to prove on the basis of written material. This sneer was not registered in writing at once. It may have been there already at Jesus' time and may have accelerated concurrently with the Christians' emphasis of the meaning of the name of Jesus. Furthermore, it is possible that some of Jesus' Galilean followers did not pronounce the name *Yeshua* with an "a," i.e. they pronounced it *Yeshu,* but none the less wrote it with an *ayin.* When religious leaders who did not believe in Jesus sneered at His name, it is natural to imagine that they used exactly this form. By using a dialectal pronunciation like *Yeshu,* the religious leaders and others who did not themselves have difficulties with the gutturals were able, thanks to a discreet psychological device, to distance themselves from the Galilean Messiah pretender: *Yeshu -just a man from Galilee.*

By using *Yeshu* it became possible, at the same time, to stamp out some soteriological connotations of the form *Yeshua.* Matthew 1:21 is evidence that there were such connotations. It is a generally accepted assumption that **{34}** underlying the Greek text there is a Hebrew play on words which does not come out in the Greek rendering.

It is difficult to say when this alleged oral sneer was fixed in writing. If I am right in presuming that we are dealing with a process, it is quite probable that both spellings -with and without the *ayin*- existed side by side. As mentioned earlier *Yeshua* is used in *Tosefta Hullin.* In Talmud it is most often written *Yeshu.* I therefore assume that the oldest written fixation of the name for Jesus of Nazareth, in the rabbinic material, was *Yeshua* and that the written form of *Yeshu* is later. Later on the form *Yeshu* became the dominating one.

On the basis of such and other observations I conclude that generally speaking the *Yeshu* form is not a good Jewish name and that it can hardly be considered a neutral name in a Jewish context in its written form. While the oral form may have been the normal pronunciation of *Yeshua* in a few places in Galilee, the form *Yeshu* did not only undergo a change of value in its written form but also in its oral form, if, as I presume, non-Galileans sneered at it. Furthermore, when the Tosefta material uses the form *Yeshua* and when the major part of the manuscript tradition and the printed editions of Talmud passages which contain the name of

[92] See Kai Kjaer-Hansen, *Studier i Navnet Jesus,* Aarhus, 1982, pp. 152-173.

Jesus evidence the form *Yeshu,* then the attentive Jewish reader has been informed, in his own scriptures about Jesus' original Hebrew name. This may have influenced his response to the form *Yeshu* even if it has not been accompanied by a negative explanation like the one which is found in certain *Toledoth Yeshu* versions.

It is beyond the scope of this paper to deal with the *Toledoth Yeshu* literature. Suffice it here to say that in several versions Jesus is given the name *Yeshua* or *Yehoshua* at His birth. After His mother has declared Him a bastard, the rabbis, according to this literature, dictate a change of name to *Yeshu* and let the following explanation accompany it: *Yimach Shemo Uzikhro.* In other words: Even this polemic genre preserves the memory of Jesus' historical name *Yeshua.*

What Does all This Have to Do with Jewish Evangelism?

Since Jesus has quite a lot to do with Jewish evangelism (sic), I suppose His name also has!

Matthew 1:21 and the nature of the salvation Jesus brings

Above I have referred to Matthew 1:21 a couple of times and to the underlying play on words: *Yeshua … yoshia* (Jesus ... will save) This verse is crucial to an understanding of who Jesus is and what His work is. To Matthew the name of *Jesus* remains a personal name, but it is a personal name with **{35}** soteriological connotations. Therefore, I think, it must be included in the New Testament Christology, although it is not a Christological term as such.

Here I just want to make the following observation: Matthew's interpretation of the name of Emmanuel (Matt. 1:23) is, philologically and etymologically, more accurate than his interpretation of the name of Jesus. He does not just say: Jesus will save, or: Yeshua means the one through whom the Lord saves. He makes an important addition. Yeshua is going to save His people from their sins. It is my belief that the interpretation of the name of Jesus is superior to the interpretation of Emmanuel. When Matthew does not restrict himself to giving an etymological or philological interpretation of the name *Yeshua,* but makes an addition, this must be considered important. By his addition Matthew defines the nature of the salvation which Jesus brings. From the very beginning of his Gospel Matthew makes it clear that as the Lord in the past took away the sins of His people and through the forgiveness of sins created a new relationship between Himself and the people through the covenant, so will Jesus realize this in the new era.

This has something to do with Jewish evangelism!

Communication

The wish to have a historical basis for what one says has also got something to do with Jewish evangelism. Irrespective of what one might think of the hypotheses about the development from *Yeshua* to *Yeshu*- my own included -it is reassuring to know that there are good arguments for the form *Yeshua* being the Hebrew name for Jesus of Nazareth. It is not those who use the form *Yeshua* who have a problem. Problems arise when one attempts to describe the change from *Yeshua* to *Yesh*u, not when it comes to determining what was His Hebrew name.

In a Hebrew context, where the name *Yeshu* is dominant, a believer who uses the form *Yeshua,* in conversation with a non-believer is faced with a choice. Should the believer oblige the other person- and if so, how much? I am sure there is much to say about this question. Allow me to give a few key words. I can see no reason why the Jewish believer in Jesus should renounce the form of *Yeshua.* It carries wit it good connotations of salvation. But an analysis like the one above gives an insight which forbids him to claim that the other person's use of the form *Yeshu* should contain the imprecation formula *Yimach Shemo Uzikhro.* The fact that the two of them use different names about the same person provides the Jewish believer with a fine opportunity to explain, in a natural way, why he uses *Yeshua* and not *Yeshu.* In that way it becomes relatively easy to tell him what is central in our faith in Jesus. I have a personal experience of how a person I talked to, in the course of the **{36}** conversation, changed from *Yeshu to Yeshua* without the other person coming to faith in Him. Let that serve as a reminder that faith is something different and more than being able to say the name of Jesus in Hebrew!

As will be generally known, it has become more and more common for Jesus-believing Jews in a diaspora context to use a Hebraicized form such as *Y'shua* or *Yeshua* in one's diaspora language. There are many good -and understandable -reasons for that. And if Jesus-believing Jews are attacked for this, I am going to defend them. But I would like to add two things. I fear that an exaggerated use of this and similar terms towards gentile believers and the Church may be counter-productive, or perhaps seen as a linguistic abnormity. I call in question whether Jewish believers using Hebraicized terms when addressing gentile believers succeed in communicating what they intend.

My second addition is that the use of the form of *Yeshua is* no guarantee that what is said about Him is biblically sound and that it is understood correctly. One example is Morris de Jonge's book, *Jeschuah, der klassische Jüdische Mann,* in which there is a description of a Jewish writer who rediscovers the Jewish form of the name, which he writes *Jeschuah,* and where he contrasts "the classical Jewish man" with "Kirche-Jesus" ("Church Jesus"). Having given a caricature of various people's views of Jesus, Morris de Jonge says:

> *Jesus? What does that mean? John, the apostle, might have asked these confessors. Was my dear master Jeschuah a Roman whose name was declined according to the fourth declension: Jesus, Jesu, Jesum, Jesu? No! He was a Jew! Jeschuah was his name! And as certainly as the first Jeschuah, little Jeschuah ben Nun, was honoured, loved and respected as the leader of his people and therefore was able to lead his people into the Promised Land, as certainly also Jeschuah the Great, the Only One, will be recognized as the Master and the One who leads into the Promised Land of recognition of God, if he is introduced to his people as a Jew!*[93]

Although his book is a curiosity, it does remind us that the correct Hebrew form for the name of our Saviour is no guarantee that what is said about His person is biblically sound.

The other example is taken from Moishe Rosen. The example is not only a humorous one, it also shows that the use of *Yeshua* can lead to problems:

> *The fallacy of using a formula was brought home to me early in my ministry. I was then always careful to use only the prescribed language I had been taught in a certain Jewish evangelism class. I always referred to the Saviour as Yeshua Hamashiach (the Hebrew translation) rather than "Jesus Christ", and the hymnal we used in our meetings was in Yiddish, with English translations on the opposite pages. One lady was very faithful in attending our weekly meetings over a period of six months.* **{37}** *She loved singing the Yiddish songs, but I don't think she ever read the English translations. She even stood up in the meeting and told how much she loved Yeshua. Then one day she found out that Yeshua meant Jesus, and she never came back! Now, 1 am not against using the name* Yeshua *as a missionary technique, but the Jewish person must understand that we are talking about Jesus!*[94]

Exactly! In Jewish evangelism we are talking about Jesus of Nazareth-the friend and Saviour of sinners. That is what his name -*Yeshua*-means, and that meaning- when explained- can become clear even if one uses *Jesus* in a diaspora language. Anyway, *this is what* Matthew believed.

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[93] Morris de Jonge, *Jeschuah, der klassische jüdische Mann,* Berlin, 1904, p. 441.
[94] Moishe Rosen and W. Proctor, *Jews for Jesus,* Bristol, 1974, p. 30.

{39} Recovering the 'Inspired Text'?

An Assessment of the Work of the Jerusalem School in Light of *Understanding the Difficult Words of Jesus*

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Understanding the Difficult Words of Jesus by David Bivin and Roy B. Blizzard, Jr. is a unique book.[95] While receiving the approbation of Jewish and Christian scholars,[96] it has enjoyed much popularity among non-scholarly readers and thus has been a most effective tool in disseminating the basic views of the Jerusalem School. There are several important factors which have contributed to the book's relatively wide distribution: It is forcefully and concisely written; the authors present an impressive array of scholarly material in a readable and engaging way; the premise of the book is intriguing, viz., that our current Greek Gospels often obscure and distort the *original* Hebrew teaching of Jesus; and it offers the inviting promise that the reader will gain remarkable new insights into the Scriptures. In fact, without these insights, the authors believe that "one can keep reading the Bible until the day he dies, and the Bible will not tell him the meaning of these difficult Hebrew passages (in the New Testament). They can be understood only when translated back into Hebrew" (p. 21). Moreover, "had the Church been provided with a proper Hebraic understanding of the words of Jesus, *most theological controversies* would never have arisen in the first place" (p. 105, my italics). These are strong claims!

Unfortunately, those readers for whom *Difficult Words* is intended lack the proper tools with which to evaluate the scholarly information presented, and they may not fully realize the implications of Bivin and Blizzard's study: If *Difficult Words* is correct, then we must accept the fact that at present, *we have no inspired New Testament text* and not even a reasonably well preserved copy! On this point, the authors have made themselves abundantly clear: "The (Greek) Gospels are rife with mistranslations"; indeed, some passages "have been misinterpreted to such an extent that they **{40}** are potentially damaging to us spiritually.... Many Gospel expressions are not just poor Greek, but actually meaningless Greek" (pp.105 and 37). In light of statements like these, it is no exaggeration to say that if Bivin and Blizzard (and the Jerusalem School) are essentially correct in their overall thesis, the Church as a whole could be in serious error on numerous fundamental points of faith and practice. It will be the purpose of this review to examine critically the scholarly underpinnings of *Difficult Words*. In so doing, we will be able to assess whether this book's impact has been primarily positive or negative, and whether its hermeneutical presuppositions are helpful or potentially dangerous.

The basic premise of *Difficult Words is* expressed in the Introduction:

> *The original gospel that formed the basis for the Synoptic Gospels was first communicated, not in Greek, but in the* Hebrew *language. ...Our reasons for writing the book are not only to show that the original gospel was communicated in the* Hebrew *language; but to show that the entire New Testament can only be understood from a* Hebrew *perspective (pp.* 19f., 22, my emphases).

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[95] Understanding the Difficult Words of Jesus was first published in 1983 by the Makor Foundation (Arcadia, CA), and was still in print at the time of this writing.

[96] Robert Lindsey wrote the book's foreword, and the back cover carries positive comments from Marvin R. Wilson (Gordon College), David Flusser and Amihai Mazar (Hebrew University), William Sanford LaSor (Fuller Theological Seminary), and W.T. Purkiser (Point Loma College). It was favorably received in a well documented review article by Weston W. Fields, "Understanding the Difficult Words of Jesus," Grace Theological journal 5.2 (1984), 271-288.

This emphasis on Hebrew is critically important, since the authors are careful to discredit any notion that the teachings of Jesus were originally transmitted in *Aramaic.* For Bivin and Blizzard, a *Semitic* understanding of the New Testament is not sufficient, nor is it adequate to refer to its *Jewish* background. It must be Hebrew![97] "The writers [of the New Testament] are Hebrew, the culture is Hebrew, the religion is Hebrew, the traditions are Hebrew, and the concepts are Hebrew" (p. 22).[98] Thus the authors criticize "The Assumptions of Liberal Scholarship" (Chapter Two, pp. 25-27), finding fault with the "many Christians (who) still cling to the outmoded Aramaic hypothesis as if their faith depended on it" (p. 33); yet Bivin and Blizzard present their own case quite dogmatically: "It can be stated unequivocally that the original *Life of Jesus* was also communicated in Hebrew" (p. 27).[99] It is *this* "Life of Jesus"- not simply an alleged Hebrew original of any of the current synoptic Gospels - that the authors seek to uncover. (This crucial point, which greatly colors the hermeneutics of the Jerusalem School, will be treated in greater detail below.)

In Chapter Three, Bivin and Blizzard seek to refute the alleged Aramaic or Greek origin of the Synoptic Gospels. They dismiss "The Greek Theory" in short order (pp. 36-38), finding fault with the scholars who claim that the Semitisms of the synoptic Gospels are primarily due to the influence of the Septuagint, rather than to a supposed Semitic undertext which lies behind the Synoptics. It is axiomatic for Bivin and Blizzard that the "poor Greek of the Synoptics is found only in literary works that are translations from Semitic originals, such as the Septuagint" (p. 36). Yet the opposite conclusion can just **{41}** as easily be reached, viz., that it was the Greek of the Septuagint that heavily colored the Greek of the Synoptics.[100] Moreover, Bivin and Blizzard fail to account adequately for the fact that a Semitic author whose second (or third?) language was Greek would likely *write* in a Semitized Greek style, explaining away some of the alleged indicators of "translation Greek."[101]

Robert Gordis has also raised a "fundamental objection ... to the widely-held theory that a difficult text ipso *facto* presupposes a translation from another language." Rather, according to Gordis, when a translator comes across a difficult passage in the original:

> *[he] may misread it ... [he] may tacitly emend the text, read irrelevant matters into it and generally fail to penetrate its meaning. But ultimately he decides upon some view of the passage, which he then expresses in his idiom. His version may be incorrect, but it will be clear and intelligible, far more so than the original, all the difficulties and alternatives of which will have been ignored or obscured in*

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[97] Bivin and Blizzard echo the claim of David Flusser, that "there are hundreds of Semitisms (Semitic idioms) in the Synoptic Gospels which could only be Hebrew, but there are no Semitisms which could only be Aramaic without also being good Hebrew" (40). This runs contrary to the general scholarly consensus.

[98] I call this peculiar emphasis that pervades the book "linguistic Zionism." Wouldn't it have been more natural for the authors to use the word "Jewish" in the sentence quoted? Why the tremendous stress on Hebrew?

[99] In contrast to the authors' dogmatism on the question of the alleged original, written Hebrew Gospel, they are more moderate regarding the spoken language of Jesus, stating that "Hebrew was also, very likely, the spoken language of Jesus" (27, my italics).

[100] Cf. the representative conclusions of Elliot C. Maloney, Semitic Interference in Marcan Syntax, Chico, CA, 1981, who notes that Mark's gospel evidences a large number of Hebraisms and Aramaisms, as well as Semitic features to be traced to the influence of the Septuagint, noting that "syntactical Semitic interference (from either Hebrew, Aramaic, or the Septuagint) permeates every page of the gospel" (p. 245). See also below, n.12.

[101] R.H. Charles claimed that the Greek of the Book of Revelation is "unlike any Greek that was ever penned by mortal man" (The Revelation of Saint John, ICC, Edinburgh, 1920, Vol. 1, xliv). Yet Revelation is not a translation; it is rather an example of a Semitic author with an intimate knowledge of the Hebrew Scriptures writing in Greek; cf. Steven Thompson, The Apocalypse and Semitic Syntax, SNTSMS 52, Cambridge, 1985; and note G. Mussies, The Morphology of Koine Greek as used in the Apocalypse of St. John: a Study in Bilingualism, NT Sup. 27, Leiden, 1971.

the process.... Other things being equal, it may therefore be maintained that a difficult text may be presumed to be the original rather than a translation.[102]

This observation provides a healthy caution to those who are zealous to find a "Hebrew" solution to every alleged difficulty in the Greek Synoptics.

In their rejection of "The Greek Theory," Bivin and Blizzard criticize scholars like Nigel Turner who explain almost every lexical and grammatical Semitism in the New Testament as being due to the influence of the Septuagint.[103] This of course represents the exact opposite position to that of Bivin and Blizzard, who immediately translate every New Testament Greek word directly back into Hebrew, with no recourse to the Septuagint. Yet this procedure, not infrequent in the Jerusalem School, fails to take advantage of the very repository that would have most colored the thinking of a first century, biblically-oriented Jew translating a religious Hebrew document into Greek. It is true that Robert Lindsey could refer to his "tedious studies of word usage in the Septuagint and investigation of biblical and mishnaic Hebrew models"[104] when analyzing parallel passages in the Synoptics. Yet this utilization of the Septuagint is nowhere reflected in *Difficult Words,* nor is it generally found in popularizations of the Jerusalem School's findings.[105] Thus, while Bivin and Blizzard seek to recapture the first century Jewish/Hebrew background to our (current) Greek Gospels, they fail to adequately exploit one of the most important resources available: the Septuagint![106]

The arguments of Bivin and Blizzard against "The Aramaic Theory" are: 1) the references in the Greek New Testament to "The Hebrew language" do, in **{42}** fact, mean Hebrew, *not* Aramaic, as rendered in most modern versions; 2) The few Aramaic words found in the Gospels are in keeping with the occasional Aramaic words found in contemporary Hebrew literature; 3) There are far more Hebrew words in the Gospels than Aramaic; 4) Many of the alleged Aramaic words are actually Hebrew; 5) Many modern scholars recognize that Hebrew, not Aramaic, was the spoken and written language of the Jews in Israel in the time of Jesus.[107] *None of these arguments, however, is either decisive or entirely correct.*

1) The Greek expressions "Hebrew" *(hebraisti*) and "Hebrew language" *(hebraidi dialekto)* can definitely be used with reference to Aramaic; cf., e.g., John 19:17, where the *Aramaic* place name *golgotha is* identified as "Hebrew" (the Hebrew would have been *gulgolet);*[108] and note

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[102] "The Original Language of Qohelet," repr. in his The Word and the Book: Studies in Biblical Literature and Language,New York, 1976, p. 233f. He aptly points out that, "One has only to compare a difficult verse in the Hebrew of Hosea, Ezekiel or job with any English version to see how the manifold difficulties of the Hebrew 'disappear' in the smooth English renderings" *(ibid., p.* 234). Several of Gordis' other articles reprinted in *The Word and the Book* are germane to the discussion at hand; see, "The Translation Theory of Qohelet Re-examined," 249-262; "Qohelet-Hebrew or Aramaic; " pp.263-279; "Was Qohelet a Phoenician?", pp. 280-291; and "Qoheleth and Qumran - A Study in Style," 292-307.

[103] Cf. Turner's *Christian Words,* Nashville, 1982. While Turner's Greek scholarship is not disputed, most scholars would not agree with the extent of his dependence on the Septuagint.

[104] Robert Lisle Lindsey, *A Hebrew Translation of the Gospel of Mark,* 2nd. ed., Jerusalem, 1973, p. 50.

[105] As represented in, e.g. Roy Blizzard's *Yavo Digest* or David Bivin's *Jerusalem Perspective.*

[106] Cf. also Moises Silva, *Biblical Words and their Meaning: An Introduction to Lexical Semantics,* Grand Rapids, 1983, pp. 52-73. A careful reading of Silva's chapter, "Semantic Change and the Role of the Septuagint," would bring a needed corrective to the theories discussed in the present article. (It should be noted here that I do not for a moment question the great learning of men like Robert Lindsey or David Flusser; it is with some of their methodology that I differ.)

[107] This last point is summarily stated in Chapter Four, "Recent Linguistic Research," pp. 38-43.

[108] Cf. also John 5:2,19:13, and 20:17, all of which are either definitely Aramaic *(Bethzatha* and *Gabbatha)* or probably Aramaic *(rabbouni);* yet john refers to all of them as "Hebrew" *(hebraisti).* The counter-arguments of Fields, *"Difficult Words," pp.* 274-75, are not persuasive. Note also that *ibrit* ("Hebrew") in bMegillah 18a may mean Aramaic; cf. Rashi, *ad* loc; Marcus Jastrow, *A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midraschic Literature,* repr., New York, 1975, p. 1040; Abraham Even-Shoshan, *HaMilon*

that Philo (and probably also Josephus) can use the Greek term *hebraisti* ("Hebrew") to refer to Aramaic.[109] In fact, when Philo means Hebrew-including the Hebrew of the Tanakh - as opposed to Aramaic, he sometimes speaks of it as *cha1daisti,* i.e. Chaldaic! It is clear, therefore, that first century Jewish authors could speak of either Hebrew or Aramaic as "Hebrew" in the sense of "the language of the Hebrews."[110]

2) Bivin and Blizzard are correct in noting that Aramaic words may appear in Hebrew documents; however, they fail to observe that in the case of the Gospels, these expressions, like *talitha kumi,* indicate that at the very least, on certain occasions *Jesus spoke Aramaic.*[111]

3) Bivin and Blizzard exaggerate the number of Hebrew words found in the Greek text of the Gospels and down play the number of Aramaic words. Of course, Greek scholars have long recognized the presence of both Hebrew and Aramaic words in the New Testament;[112] no one would argue with this. But what is interesting is that all the words in Bivin and Blizzard's own list of Hebrew lexemes found in the Gospels can be explained just as plausibly as being either Aramaic,[113] borrowings from the Septuagint,[114] and/or common Semitic loan words.[115]

4) Although Bivin and Blizzard attempt to demonstrate that Jesus' words on the cross ("My God, my God, why have You forsaken Me?") should be seen as Hebrew, not Aramaic,[116] noting that

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HaHadash, Jerusalem, 1986, vol. 3:952. While other interpretations of *ibrit* in Meg. 18a are possible, it certainly cannot mean "Hebrew" in that context.

[109] See Emil Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ (175* BC-AD *135), rev. Eng. vers. by* Geza Vermes, Fergus Millar, and Matthew Black, Edinburgh, 1979, vol. 2 p. :22, and p. 28, n. 118. Bivin and Blizzard follow the important study of Jehoshua M. Grintz, "Hebrew as the Spoken and Written Language in the Last Days of the Second Temple," *JBL* 79 (1960), pp. 32-47 (esp. pp. 42-45), and deny that Josephus ever used *hebraisti,* etc., to mean anything but Aramaic. But the arguments of Grintz can be controverted; for a brief discussion, cf. J.A. Emerton; "Did Jesus Speak Hebrew?", *Journal* of *Theological Studies N.S.,* 12 (1961), pp. 193-94 and pp. 201-02.

[110] Cf. John 19:20, where *romaisti* (lit., "Roman") means "Latin" (the language of the Romans).

[111] As to the question of why only certain Semitic words of Jesus have been preserved in our Greek texts, as well as whether these words reflect important Hebrew expressions (possibly *ephphatha?)* transmitted in an original Aramaic (or Greek text), or important

Aramaic expressions (e.g., *talitha kumi)* transmitted in an original Hebrew (or Greek text), see J.A. Emerton, "Did Jesus Speak Hebrew?", pp. 197-98 (refuting Harris Birkeland, *The Language of Jesus); idem.,* "The Problem of Vernacular Hebrew in the First Century AD and the Language of Jesus;" *JTS* N.S. 24 (1973), pp. 19-20; Isaac Rabinowitz, "'Be Opened' = *ephphatha* (Mark 7: 34): Did Jesus Speak Hebrew?", ZNW 53 (1962), pp. 237-38.

[112] See A.T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek Language in the Light of Historical Research,* 4°' ed., Nashville, 1934, for a list of words in the Greek New Testament considered to be of Hebrew (pp. 95-96) and Aramaic (pp. 105-06) origin.

[113] This would include *mammonas, rabbi, Beelzeboub, korban(as), satanas, raca, batos, koros, Boanerges,* and *more.* (Of course, *more* may simply be Greek; see the standard lexicons and commentaries for discussion.)

[114] That is, although originally Hebrew, they were already borrowed into Greek by the time of the Septuagint, and through that medium, made their way into the Greek New Testament. This would include *libanos, ouai, sukaminos* (listed incorrectly in *Difficult Words,* 33, as occurring in Luke 12:5; the correct reference is Luke 17:6), and *amen.*

[115] "Common Semitic" refers to words which are common to the various Semitic languages, and thus may have entered Greek (including the Septuagint) through Aramaic just as easily (probably more easily) as through Hebrew. Here would be included *kuminon, zizanion,* and *muron.*

[116] See *Difficult Words, p.* 32. Bivin and Blizzard present the common argument that Jesus must have said *Eli, Eli,* not *Eloi, Eloi,* since "the people hearing the words thought Jesus was calling Elijah" *('eliyahu* in Hebrew). But the explanation of Geza Vermes, *Jesus the Jew: A Historian's Reading of the Gospels,* Philadelphia, 1973, p. 54, is sufficient: "Clarity cannot be expected of the cry of a crucified man at the point of death:" Moreover, as has often been noted, the presence of Hebrew *'el* in an Aramaic sentence is not exceptional; cf. Joseph A.

even the Aramaic verb *shabaq is* found **{43}** in mishnaic Hebrew, they fail to answer why, if Jesus was quoting the Scriptures in Hebrew, He said *shabaqtani* (reflected also in the targumic tradition) and not *azabtani* (as per the Hebrew text).[117] The authors also deny that Greek words like *sikera, Sabbata,* and *Pascha* are Aramaic loanwords, arguing instead they simply reflect the Greek neuter ending, *not* a transliteration from Aramaic.[118] Once again, however, Bivin and Blizzard have not correctly stated the facts: While *Sabbata* (from *Sabbaton) is* neuter, it is clear that, e.g., *Pascha* is indeclinable- i.e., it is *not* neuter -thereby substantiating the claim for the Aramaic origin of this word.[119]

5) While scholars in recent decades have made a general correction by recognizing Hebrew as a living language in the time of Jesus, the consensus among most of the world's leading Semitists is still that Aramaic was the primary spoken language of the Jewish people in the Land of Israel in the first century of this era. This is the verdict of recognized scholars like Geza Vermes (Oxford University's expert in the Dead Sea Scrolls and early Judaica)[120] Joseph Fitzmyer (an American Catholic professor regarded as an authority in Aramaic and Gospel studies)[121] and Klaus Beyer (the learned German author of the most comprehensive modern study (779 pages!) of Aramaic texts and dialects),[122] to mention just a few. The only scholarly monograph in the last 30 years devoted primarily to the subject of the spoken language of Jesus, viz., the German work of Gunther Schwarz, *"Und Jesu Sprach,"* categorically argues *for* Aramaic and *against* Hebrew;[123] and a recent article by Johannes C. de Moor, a leading Semitic scholar in the Netherlands, claims that only when the words of Jesus are retroverted to literary Aramaic (i.e., borrowing extensively from early Targumic traditions), does the full force and beauty of the Lord's teachings emerge.[124] Chaim Rabin, a noted Israeli Semitist, does believe that "in Jerusalem

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Fitzmyer, S.J., *A Wandering Aramean: Collected Aramaic Essays,* Missoula, MT, 1979, p.103, for evidence from Qumran.

[117] Cf. Emerton, "Did Jesus Speak Hebrew?", pp. 199f.

[118] The definite article in Aramaic is expressed by the final a'; hence scholars have associated these Greek words containing final *a'* with Aramaic. Thus, Greek *sikera is* thought to derive from Aramaic *sikra',* not Hebrew *sekar.*

[119] It should be pointed out here that the presence of even dozens of Aramaic loan words in the Greek New Testament would not necessarily demonstrate that the words of Jesus were originally spoken or written in Aramaic. Even Bivin and Blizzard would fully accept the pervasive influence of Aramaic on both Hebrew and Semitized Greek. Thus there is no reason for them to make such strenuous attempts to downplay or deny the presence of Aramaic place names, loan words, or the like. I only take the time to refute their claims so as to expose the tenuous nature of some of their statements.

[120] "... there can be little doubt that Jesus himself spoke Galilean Aramaic" *(Jesus the Jew, pp.* 53f.); cf. also Schurer, Vermes, *et al., History of the Jewish People, Vol. II, pp.* 20-28.

[121] "I should maintain that the most commonly used language of Palestine in the first century AD was Aramaic, but that many Palestinian Jews, not only those in Hellenistic towns, but farmers and craftsmen of less obviously Hellenized areas used Greek, at least as a second language. ... But pockets of Palestinian Jews also used Hebrew, even though its use was not widespread" *(Wandering Aramean, p.* 46); for full discussion, see *ibid.,* 'The Study of the Aramaic Background of the New Testament," pp. 1-27, and ""The Languages of Palestine in the First Century AD.," pp. 29-56.

[122] Cf. *Die aramaische Texte vom Toten Meer,* Göttingen, 1984, pp. 55-58, where Beyer deals with the cessation (!) of Hebrew as a colloquial language by the time of Jesus (p. 55: "Bedenkt man, dass in den grosseren Stadten auch das Griechische gebraucht wurde, so ist es schwierig, eine Gegend zu finden, wo zur Zeit Jesus noch hebraisch gesprochen worden sein konnte.") In my judgment, Beyer has overstated his case; but his densely argued lines of reasoning (pages 56-58 are virtually one extended footnote) deserve careful attention; cf. also *idem, Semitische Syntax in Neuen Testament,* Gottingen, 1962.

[123] "Und Jesu sprach," *Untersuchungen zur aramaischen Urgestalt der Worte Jesu,* BWANT 118; Stuttgart, 1987[Z]. While many of Schwarz' arguments are not convincing, his book is a mine of useful information.

[124] "The Reconstruction of the Aramaic Original of the Lord's Prayer," pp. 397-422, in Willem van der Meer & Johannes C. de Moor, eds., *The Structural Analysis of Biblical and Canaanite Poetry,* JSOT Suppl. Series 74;

and Judaea mishnaic Hebrew was still the ruling language (during the time of Jesus), and Aramaic took second place." Yet, he continues, "the situation must have been reversed in areas such as the coastal plain and Galilee."[125]

Pro-Hebrew Arguments - How Decisive?

Bivin and Blizzard quote Pinchas E. Lapide in support of their position regarding an original Hebrew Gospel (pp. 41f.). However, his fully articulated position largely accords with what has been stated above:

> *In the days of Jesus the common language of most Palestinian Jews was Aramaic, ... and [it] was the source of most of the semiticisms in the New Testament. But Hebrew remained the language of worship, of the Bible, and of religious discourse; in a word, it remained the sacred language (leshon haqodesh) well into the period of the early Church. Otherwise* ***{44}*** *it would be impossible to account for the great number of hebraisms in the New Testament....*[126]

Remarks like this are much more in keeping with the current state of scholarly opinion. Thus James Barr, a sober philologian of international stature, could say concisely: "On the question, in what language the teaching of Jesus was given, an increasing number of scholars in recent years has considered Hebrew as a responsible hypothesis, though the evidence for Aramaic continues to be rather stronger."[127] More negatively, regarding the question of the language which most probably underlies the Gospels, D.A. Carson, Douglas J. Moo, and Leon Morris - respected evangelical New Testament scholars - state: "In very recent times, a small number have argued that Hebrew (not Aramaic) underlies the canonical gospels, but this proposal has been rightly dismissed by the overwhelming majority of those who have looked into the matter."[128]

Sheffield, 1988. On p. 397 de Moor states: "Of course nobody (!) doubts that Jesus will have spoken the Palestinian-Aramaic vernacular in daily life." Rather, de Moor's question has to do with the language Jesus used in his *teaching:* Although "very few people still spoke and understood Hebrew," Jesus could have chosen "Hebrew when he was discoursing upon religious matters," just as "the learned scribes of his time" did (ibid.) De Moor, however, rejects this possibility in favor of Literary Aramaic.

[125] "Hebrew and Aramaic in the First Century," in S. Safrai and M. Stern, eds., *Compendia Rerum Iudaicarum ad Novum Testamentum. The Jewish People in the First Century, Vol.* Two, Philadelphia, 1976, p. 1036. Rabin's important chapter, pp. 1007-1039, highlights the difficulties involved in determining the precise extent of *oral* bilingualism in first century Palestine. The linguistic situation posited by him (along with other contemporary scholars), viz., that Jesus would have used Mishnaic Hebrew in synagogical and legal discussions, but that His "home language" in Galilee would have been Aramaic seems plausible. Of course, this does not indicate whether His teachings would have been recorded in Hebrew, Aramaic or Greek (or all three! On this cf. Robert H. Gundry, "The Language Milieu of First Century Palestine. Its Bearing on the Authenticity of the Gospel Tradition," *JBL* 83 [1964], pp. 404-408.). Rabin's conclusions, however, are colored by the fact that he believes "that the authors and redactors of the Gospels unwittingly described, in the few references to language in their account, conditions of the post-70 period rather than those of the time of the events" (p. 1037), i.e., conditions which, according to Rabin, reflect the ascendancy of Aramaic over against Hebrew.

[126] *Hebrew in the Church, ET* Errol F. Rhodes, Grand Rapids, 1984, p. 1. Cf. also Max Wilcox, "Semitisms in the New Testament," in W. Haase, ed., *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt,* II.25.2, Berlin, 1984, pp. 978-1029.

[127] "Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek in the Hellenistic Age," in W.D. Davies and Louis Finkelstein, eds., *The Cambridge History of Judaism,* Cambridge, 1989, p. 83. See more fully, *idem,* "Which Language did Jesus speak? - Some remarks of a Semitist," *BJRL* 53 (1970-71), pp. 9-29. For a summary of scholarship through 1967, cf. also H. Ott, "Um die Muttersprach Jesu Forschungen seit Gustaf Dalman," *NT* 9 (1967), pp. 1-25.

[128] *An Introduction to the New Testament,* Grand Rapids, 1991, p. 68, n. 13. (My colleague, Stephen Homcy, provided me with this reference.) Note also the assessment of the Catholic biblical scholar John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus, Volume One: The Roots of the Problem and the Person,* New York, 1991, p. 266: the "clear presence of an Aramaic substratum in many of Jesus' sayings stands in stark contrast to the relative absence of Hebrew words and constructions (Hebraisms)."

Of course, the views expressed by these and other scholars do not constitute proof. Yet they do raise an important question: How decisive can the "pro-Hebrew" arguments presented by Bivin and Blizzard possibly be? And, if there is abundant data which supports the Aramaic theory, is it right to disparage and belittle those who hold to it (see *Difficult Words, p. 33)?*

There is, in fact, much evidence which can be marshalled in favor of "The Aramaic Theory," as the following divergent examples will illustrate:

1) Acts 1:19 makes reference to the toponym Akeldama, noting that the people of Jerusalem "called that field *in their language* Akeldama, that is, Field of Blood." Of course, it is only in Aramaic that Akeldama *(hakel dama)* means "field of blood." Thus, in a most casual way, the reader is informed that Aramaic was commonly spoken in Jerusalem.[129]

2) Mark 4:12, citing Isaiah 6:9, does not follow the Masoretic Text, nor is it in harmony with the Septuagint (or even the citations of Isa. 6:9 elsewhere in the Synoptics); rather, the rendering of Isaiah 6:9 in Mark 4:12 agrees closely with the reading preserved in the Aramaic Targum.[130] This is only one of many examples where it is Aramaic, Targumic traditions which elucidate the meaning and/or background of specific verses in the Greek New Testament[131] (not to mention the contribution to New Testament studies which has been made by the discovery of Qumran Aramaic).[132]

3) The meaning of the Greek verb *eurisko,* "to find," may occasionally point back to an idiomatic usage (technically, a verbal calque) of Aramaic *ashkah,* "to find > to be able." Thus, Luke 6:7[b], which is literally, "so that they might *find* an accusation against him," would better be rendered, "so that they might *be able* to accuse him."[133] If accepted, this could be explained only as an Aramaism, not a Hebraism. Unfortunately, the reader of *Difficult* **{45}** *Words* would be led to believe that such examples - which could easily be multiplied - do not even exist.

The strongest and most useful section of *Difficult Words is* Chapter Five, "Extra-Biblical Evidence for Hebrew" (p. 45-78), where Bivin and Blizzard present their case for Hebrew as *the* literary language of first century Jews living in the Land. Yet, because of their polemical tone, they often overstate their case, leaving the reader with erroneous impressions regarding the current scholarly consensus. This is a constant fault of Bivin and Blizzard's book: *Any positive*

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[129] The usage of the Aramaic term *Maranatha* by the first believers would indicate that Aramaic was also their common Semitic language; cf. C.C. Torrey, "The Aramaic Period of the Nascent Christian Church," *ZNW 44,* 1952/53, pp. 205-223.

[130] Not only is Heb. *rapa* rendered as "forgive" - in harmony with Targum Jonathan - but as Robert Guelich, observes, "The Hebrew and Greek (i.e. Septuagint) text have the verbs in the second person; Mark and the Targum have the third person. And only the Targum has the participial equivalents of *blepontes* (seeing) and *akouontes* (hearing)," *Mark* l-8:26, WBC, Waco, TX,1989, p. 210. Cf. also Matthew Black, *An Aramaic Approach to the Gospels,* Oxford, 1967, pp. 211-12. This is one of three instances in Targum Jonathan to Isa. where *rapa is* rendered with *savaq* as opposed to *asiy* (the other w. being 53:5 and 57:18).

[131] For additional examples, see J.T. Forestell, C.S.B., *Targumic Traditions and the New Testament: An Annotated Bibliography with a New Testament Index,* Chico, CA, 1979, who provides an annotated bibliography of 362 books and articles written from 19301978, almost all of which touch on the relationship between Targumic and/or Aramaic research and New Testament studies, as well as a 53 page listing (keyed to the bibliography) of almost 800 New Testament verses which have been studied in the light of various Targumic traditions. For a standard (though flawed) discussion, cf. Black, *Aramaic Approach;* for a different methodology, cf. Bruce Chilton, *Targumic Approaches to the Gospels: Essays in the Mutual Definition of Judaism and Christianity,* Lanham, MD, 1986.

[132] Cf. Fitzmyer, "The Contribution of Qumran Aramaic to the New Testament," in *Wandering Aramean, pp.* 85-113.

[133] Cf. Fitzmyer, *ibid.,* l2f.. John Nolland, *Luke 1-9:20,* WBC; Waco, TX, 1989, p.260, does not agree, arguing instead that the opponents of Jesus were literally on a "fact-finding mission ... seeking out a basis on which to accuse him."

contribution that could have been made to Gospel scholarship is vitiated by the authors' polemics. For this same reason, *Difficult Words* cannot serve as a reliable guide - or even helpful resource - for the untrained pastor, teacher, or layman.

At the beginning of Chapter Five, Bivin and Blizzard state: "An impressive amount of extra-biblical evidence points to the use of Hebrew in first-century Israel: the testimony of the church fathers, the Dead Sea Scrolls, coins, and inscriptions from the first centuries BC-AD, the writings of Josephus, and Rabbinic Literature" (p. 45). Once again, however, these broad, sweeping statements need correction. With regard to "the testimony of the church fathers," it should be noted that virtually all of the fathers cited (Irenaeus, Origen, Eusebius, Epiphanius; *Difficult Words, pp.* 46-48) were apparently following the *single testimony of* Papias (60-130 CE?), bishop of Hierapolis in Asia Minor, whom Eusebius quoted as writing: "Matthew put down the words of the Lord in the Hebrew language *(hebraidi dialekto),* and others have translated (or interpreted) them, each as best he could." With the exception of Jerome, none of the other church fathers seemed to have any first hand knowledge of Matthew's "original" gospel; they were simply repeating what they had heard.[134] Moreover, the statement of Papias is open to widely divergent interpretations,[135] and Jerome's own testimony is difficult to evaluate, since he makes reference to either *t*wo or *three* different gospels, called by various names, which he either saw, translated, or transcribed, and apparently *none* of these gospels is our canonical Matthew![136] In addition to this, one of the gospels which he saw was actually written in *Aramaic,* not Hebrew.[137]

{46} As far as the Dead Sea Scrolls are concerned, the fact that Hebrew documents at Qumran and Wadi Murabbaat far outnumber Aramaic documents does not indicate that most original (Jewish) writing of the day was carried out in Hebrew. This phenomenon could just as well be explained by remembering that the Qumran sectarians saw themselves, sui *generis,* as the rightful heirs of Moses and the Prophets (cf. especially the Temple Scroll!); hence Hebrew, the sacred tongue, would be their primary literary language.[138] In spite of this, the Scrolls serve as a remarkable repository of ancient Palestinian *Aramaic,* and they can be used to argue for extensive first century literary output in *either* Hebrew or Aramaic:[139] As for the inscriptional evidence, recent studies indicate a preponderance of Aramaic over both Hebrew and Greek, especially in

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[134] 40 Cf. the relevant discussion in A.F.J. Klijn and G.J. Reinink, *Patristic Evidence for Jewish-Christian Sects,* Leiden, 1973.

[135] *Hebraidi dialekto* has been understood to mean Hebrew, Aramaic, and even heavily Semitized Greek; cf. George Howard, *The Gospel of Matthew according to a Primitive Hebrew Text,* Macon,1987, p. 155 (with literature); and W.D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *Matthew 1, ICC;* Edinburgh, 1988, pp. 8-17, for a summary of recent scholarship; cf. also Carson, Moo, Morris, *Introduction, p.* 68.

[136] On Jerome's testimony, see Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence, pp.* 46-50 (with primary sources and translations, pp. 198-229); and Howard, *Gospel of Matthew, pp.* 158-160; as to the question of whether or not the gospels referred to by Jerome were apocryphal or canonical, see the works cited in Howard's lengthy bibliographical note, *ibid., pp.* 158-59, n. 10.

[137] Cf. Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence, pp.* 27-28, p. 48, p. 50, p. 68, and note that an Aramaic gospel is also attested by Hegessipus (second century CE). This evidence refutes the statement of Bivin and Blizzard that, "There exists no early church tradition whatsoever for a primitive Aramaic gospel" (p. 48).

[138] While the authors of the Synoptics doubtless saw *themselves* as the rightful heirs of Moses and the Prophets, it can be argued that, by and large, their impetus in composing their texts was to disseminate the message of Jesus as widely as possible. Thus, Greek (or, in the first stage, Aramaic) would have been the most likely literary vehicle. This would parallel the literary history of Josephus' *Jewish War:* It was written first in Aramaic, *not* Hebrew (this is almost certain) and then adapted into Greek; cf. A. Schalit, *Encyclopedia Judaica,* 10:254-55, cited in Barr, "Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek," p. 113 (cf. also *ibid., p.* 112); and note the similar arguments of P. Nepper-Christensen, cited in Emerton, "Did Jesus Speak Hebrew?", p.193.

[139] Fitzmyer, *Wandering Aramean, pp.* 101f., lists 59 Aramaic fragments and compositions so far identified among the scrolls.

Galilee.[140] With regard to the writings of Josephus, it has been previously noted that they provide no conclusive data.[141] In fact, as noted immediately above (end of note 44), when Josephus referred to his "vernacular tongue" in the introduction to his *Jewish War (L3),* it is almost certain that he meant Aramaic.[142]

Evidence of Rabbinic Literature

More important to Bivin and Blizzard, however, is the evidence of the rabbinic literature, which is of paramount concern to their case. According to the authors:

> *The largest and most significant body of written [sic!] material from the time of Jesus is known as 'Rabbinic Literature.' Except for isolated words or sentences, it is written entirely in Hebrew. ... It may come as a surprise to some, but* most of *the difficult passages or problems confronted in New Testament studies could be solved through a knowledge of Rabbinic Literature. Many of Jesus' sayings have their* parallels *in Rabbinic Literature* (pp. 69f., my emphasis).

Yet most of what is commonly known as "rabbinic literature" received its primary shaping in the centuries after Jesus,[143] and the Mishnah - composed almost entirely in Hebrew, and representing some of the earliest strata of rabbinic literature[144] - does not reflect the general linguistic situation of Palestinian Jews in the first two centuries of this era, since it presents a picture almost diametrically opposed to that which is provided by almost all other contemporary literary and epigraphic sources. In other words, *in no contiguous inscriptions, ossuaries, letters, or other literary productions was Hebrew used to the virtual exclusion of Aramaic or Greek* (as is the case in the Mishnah and early halakhic midrashim).[145]

Of course, almost no one today would deny that Hebrew was a living language in Jesus' day, nor would many deny that Jesus Himself knew and used Hebrew.

{47} And there is certainly nothing wrong with arguing for either a Hebrew original to our canonical Gospel of Matthew, or an original Hebrew "Life of Jesus" (a central thesis of the

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[140] Cf. John McRay, *Archaeology and the New Testament,* Grand Rapids, 1991, p. 380, n. 13 (with reference to Joseph Naveh and Eric Meyers). My colleague, Stephen Homcy, provided me with this reference.

[141] They simply indicate that "Josephus sometimes refers to Hebrew and that he knows the differences between Hebrew and Aramaic" (Emerton, "Did Jesus Speak Hebrew?", p. 202; cf. above, nn. 15 and 44).

[142] Cf. H. St. John Thackeray's note to that effect in the Loeb edition of Josephus, and, more recently, the remark of Gaalya Cornfeld, ed., *Josephus: Jewish War,* Grand Rapids, 1982, p. 8, n. 3[c]: "The work was written in Aramaic for the benefit of the Jewish communities in Parthia...." Does anyone hold that Josephus would have written in Hebrew for Jews in the Diaspora?

[143] For an excellent introduction, see H.L. Strack and G. Stemberger, *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash,* ET Markus Bockmuehl, Edinburgh, 1991. Of course, most of the discussion in both of the Talmud s is carried out in Jewish-Aramaic dialects.

[144] It should be pointed out that Bivin and Blizzard fail to mention that the earliest recorded "rabbinic" document, *Megillat Taanit* (first century CE?), along with important early prayers, like the Kaddish, were written in Aramaic. In favor of the authors' position, however, is the fact that virtually all rabbinic *parables* were delivered in Hebrew, suggesting that Jesus, as a typical Jewish teacher of the day, would have followed suit (see *Difficult Words, pp.* 73ff.). For an in depth study by an American representative of the Jerusalem School, see Brad H. Young, *Jesus and His Jewish Parables: Rediscovering the Roots of Jesus' Teaching,* New York/Mahwah, 1989.

[145] Cf. above, n. 27. It goes without saying that I am not returning to the (rightly abandoned) view that Mishnaic Hebrew was merely the scholastic language of the sages. I am only stating that the evidence at hand makes it highly doubtful that it was the *primary* language of the Jewish people in first-second century Palestine.

authors). Scholars have been debating these and similar issues for decades - if not centuries.[146] None of these points is new or problematic.

What is problematic is this: Bivin and Blizzard seem to put far more confidence in the veracity and accuracy of the rabbinic texts than they do in the veracity and accuracy of the Greek New Testament. They put more stock in the alleged words of, e.g., a second-century Palestinian rabbi (like Rabbi Akiva), as quoted by a fifth-century Babylonian sage (like Rav Ashi), than they do in the words of a first-century Palestinian rabbi (Jesus!) as quoted by a first-century Palestinian disciple (like Mark). This is not only unscientific;[147] it is positively unsound, inevitably leading to a subservience of the message of the New Testament to that of the later rabbis.[148] Moreover, incredulous leaps of logic are sometimes called for, illustrated by Bivin's treatment of Matthew 11:12 (admittedly a difficult passage). He states that the "key to its understanding turns out to be an old rabbinic interpretation (*midrash)* of Micah 2:13 discovered by Professor Flusser," wherein the "'breach-maker' (of Mic. 2:13) is interpreted as being Elijah, and "Their king' as the Messiah, the Branch of the Son of David" (pp. 123f.). From this Bivin deduces that, although "Jesus does not refer directly to his own role as the shepherd leading the sheep out, *no listener could possibly misunderstand* Jesus' stunning assertion - I am the LORD" (p. 125, my italics).

Aside from the fact that it is misleading to say that Flusser "discovered" this "old rabbinic interpretation" - it is found in Radak's 12th century commentary to Micah (as noted by the authors), and was widely discussed more than 100 years ago by Christian scholars[149] -there is no attempt to *date* this scant and unattributed midrashic comment. For all we know, it could postdate Matthew by 500 years! How then can it possibly be used with any certainty to elucidate the words of Jesus,[150] especially when the new interpretation that emerges - viz., an unqualified assertion by Jesus that He is Yahweh - is so far from the text and foreign to the context? This is hardly an example of careful exegesis.

{48} Bivin and Blizzard also give the largely false impression that New Testament scholars have barely begun to utilize the abundant rabbinic data at their disposal. On the contrary, having used rabbinic texts quite freely for well over a century,[151] New Testament scholars are now becoming aware of the *difficulties* involved in the utilization of this material in the elucidation of the New

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[146] See the reference to the 1555 work of Johann Albert Widmanstadt, in Jean Carmignac, "Hebrew Translations of the Lord's Prayer: An Historical Survey," in Gary A. Tuttle, ed., *Biblical and Near Eastern Studies: Esssays in Honor of William Sanford LaSor,* Grand Rapids, 1978, p. 71, n. 5.

[147] Cf. e.g. Phillip S. Alexander, "Rabbinic Judaism and the New Testament," *ZNW* 74 (1983), pp. 237-246; and Samuel Sandmel, "Parallelomania," *JBL* 81 (1962), pp. 1-13.

[148] The view of David Flusser, viz., that Christianity today "can renew itself out of Judaism and with the help of Judaism. Then it will become a humane religion" is somewhat progammatic. See "The Jewish-Christian Schism," reprinted in his *Judaism and the Origins* of *Christianity,* Jerusalem, 1988, p. 644.

[149] Cf. Leslie C. Allen, *The Books of Joel, Obadiah, Jonah, and Micah,* NICOT; Grand Rapids, 1976, p. 303, n. 96.

[150] According to Bivin, the sole author of the Appendix (pp. 119-169), Jesus "is not only hinting at Micah 2:13, but also at a well-known [sic!] rabbinic interpretation of it" (p. 124).

[151] Culminating in Billerbeck's massive *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch, I-IV* (1922-1928); but cf. this remarkable quote from John Lightfoot's *Horae Hebraicae et Talmudicae* (1658-1674!): "... I have ... concluded without the slightest hesitation that the best method to unravel the meaning of the many obscure passages of the New Testament is through research into the significance of the sayings in question in the ordinary dialect and way of thinking of the Jews. ... And this can be investigated only by means of consulting the authors of the Talmud" (quoted in Vermes, *Jesus and the World of Judaism,* Philadelphia, 1983, p. 60. The well known comment of Martin Luther (fifteenth century!) on the importance of the study of Hebrew for an adequate understanding of the New Testament is quoted in the front of both Lapide's *Hebrew in the Church,* as well as in Scwharz' "Und Jesu Sprach."

Testament.[152] In fact, of the non-controversial, New Testament exegetical examples offered by Bivin and Blizzard in Chapters Six, Eight,[153] and the Appendix, similar interpretations can readily be found in standard New Testament commentaries and scholarly works.[154]

Accuracy of the Gospel Transmission

Yet these methodological concerns pale when compared to the fundamental thesis of the authors, as presented in Chapter Seven, "Recovering the Original Hebrew Gospel" (pp. 93-103).[155] Following Lindsey, who along with David Flusser is the doyen of the Jerusalem School, Bivin and Blizzard posit a novel sequence of gospel transmission:[156]

STEP ONE - "Within five years of the death and resurrection of Jesus, his words were recorded in Hebrew (tradition states by the Apostle Matthew)."[157] This was "a simple and straightforward Hebrew biography ... approximately 30-35 chapters in length."

STEP TWO - "Almost immediately," so as to meet the need of the Greek-speaking churches outside the Land of Israel, a "slavishly literal" (yet greatly lengthened) translation of the Hebrew *Life o f Jesus* was made.

STEP THREE - "Within a few years, very probably at Antioch, the stories, and frequently elements within the stories, found in this Greek translation were separated from one another, and then these fragments were rearranged topically ... (What remained were fragments that were often divorced from their original and more meaningful contexts.)"

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[152] It is true that most New Testament scholars have *not* also been competent Semitists; cf. Geza Vermes, *ibid., pp.* 58-73. Nonetheless, the problem with regard to the rabbinic literature has not so much been its lack of use, but rather its *misuse;* cf. *ibid., pp.* 74-88, and above, n. 53.

[153] Dwight Pryor, director of the Center for Judaic-Christian Studies, informed me that Chapter Eight, "Theological Error Due to Mistranslation," was deleted entirely from the Spanish translation.

[154] E.g., "single/sound/good eye" _ "generous" and "not sound/evil eye" _ "stingy" (Matt. 6:22-23; see *Difficult Words, pp.* 36-37, and pp. 144-45), has been the subject of lively discussion for decades, and it can be readily adduced from Septuagintal usage (cf. Prov. 22:9) or even from the Greek New Testament itself (cf. Rom. 12:8; 2 Cor. 8:2, 9:11, 13; James 1:5; and Matt. 20:15) without any recourse to rabbinic literature. It should be

noted, however, that many scholars who are intimately acquainted with the common arguments set forth by Bivin and Blizzard do *not* wholly concur with the renderings "generous/ stingy" (cf. recently Robert A. Guelich, *The Sermon on the Mount: A Foundation for Understanding,* Waco, TX, 1982, p. 329ff.; Davies and Allison, *Matthew 1,* pp. 635-641, with bibliography on pp. 665-66).

[155] Even Fields, who was generally impressed with *Difficult Words* (see above, n. 2), could say: "Of all the innovations in the book, this is the one which may be hardest to accept. In fact, the entire chapter would probably have been better left out of the book" ("Difficult Words," p. 284; cf. above, n. 59, regarding Chapter Eight of *Difficult Words).* Fields tellingly adds: "there is still a lingering feeling that what we have is what we have, and that we should leave it as it is."

[156] Cf. Robert Lisle Lindsey, "A Modified Two-Document Theory of the Synoptic Dependence and Interdependence," NT 6 (1963), pp. 239-263; and *idem,Hebrew Translation of Mark,* 9-84. In spite of Lindsey's detailed argumentation, his theories have not received much attention from New Testament scholars; cf. Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke* X-XXIV, AB; Garden City, NY, 1985, p. 1278, who quickly dismissed the work of, *inter alios,* Lindsey and Flusser, stating that it called for "all sorts of questionable analyses of Synoptic relations." C.S. Mann, *Mark,* AB, Garden City, NY, 1985, pp. 61-63, reviewed Lindsey's views (along with the divergent theory of W.R. Farmer) more fully; yet, while he found their hypotheses to be "persuasive," he concluded that they were both "inconclusive, and ... attended with considerable difficulty" (p. 63).

[157] As to the traditions concerning an early Hebrew gospel of Matthew, see above nn. 40-43 and accompanying text. The recent study of Randall Buth, *"EDAYIN/TOTE* -Anatomy of a Semitism in Jewish Greek," *Maarav* 5-6 (Spring, 1990 = *Stanislav Segert Festschrift), pp.* 33-48, is much more nuanced in its approach, although one might question whether the conclusions arrived at go beyond the somewhat limited evidence surveyed. Buth acknowledges David Bivin's s "helpful comments" on p. 33, n. 1.

STEP FOUR - "Shortly thereafter, a fluent Greek author, using this topically arranged text, attempted to reconstruct its fragmented elements and stories in order to produce a gospel with some chronological order ... In the process of reconstruction, he improved its [Step Three's] grammatically poor Greek, as well as shortening it considerably" (pp.94-95).

What then were the sources for our canonical gospels?

> *It was only ... the 'topical' text [Step Three], and the 'reconstructed' text [Step Four], that were the sources used by our writer Luke. Mark followed Luke's work and Matthew utilized Mark's ... However, the texts of Matthew, Mark, and Luke show they did not have access to the original Hebrew Life of Jesus [Step One], or to the first Greek translation of the Life [Step Two]. The Hebrew Life was lost ...(p.* 95).

{49} The implications of this theory of the Jerusalem School are far reaching in the extreme. In fact, they cause the problems which surround Lindsey's argument for the priority of Luke,[158] as well as questions regarding the Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek *Urtext* of the gospels, to fade into insignificance. Let it be stated clearly: The theories of gospel transmission presented in *Difficult Words* do not belong to what is commonly called "lower criticism" (i.e., textual criticism), but rather are part of a radical form of "higher criticism."[159] They do not simply seek to uncover the literary, oral or editorial history which might underlie the Synoptics. Rather, they posit that the Greek text of the Synoptics is often misleading and incomplete, and it is the alleged Hebrew original that is most truthful and trustworthy. *These theories, if carried to their logical conclusions, would absolutely undercut the authority of the Greek New Testament, since according to Bivin and Blizzard, our canonical (Synoptic) gospels are uninspired reconstructions based on other reconstructions of translations which are themselves reconstructions.*[160]

In light of this, one can only wonder how accurate our Synoptic gospels could possibly be. In what sense could they be an "infallible rule of faith and life"?[161] It is one thing to point out that behind our current Greek Synoptics there are widely varied source materials.[162] It is another thing entirely to follow Bivin and Blizzard and argue that the *source materials alone* are accurate (and hence, authoritative), and that Matthew, Mark, and Luke are error-filled, often chronologically-incorrect, texts. Although evangelical textual critics hold only to the complete inspiration of the so-called original autographs, they also believe in God's providential oversight in the process of transmission and canonization. In other words, while there may be some minor errors of textual transmission in our current manuscripts, these manuscripts provide accurate and trustworthy copies of the original "Word." What scholars of the Jerusalem School imply is that even the original autographs of the Greek Synoptics are faulty!

For example, Brad Young, a professor at Oral Roberts University and one of David Flusser's top students, argues that Matthew 21:43 is a late redactional insertion which "distorts" the meaning of the preceding parable, contradicting Matthew's generally positive attitude "toward the Jewish people as well as the law." Young adds, "Certainly, Paul would not have accepted this radical

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[158] See above, n. 62.

[159] For the differences between lower and higher criticism in the context of New Testament studies, see conveniently Gordon D. Fee, "The Textual Criticism of the New Testament," and Donald Guthrie, "The Historical and Literary Criticism of the New Testament," in Frank E. Gaebelein, ed., *The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Vol. 1, Introductory Articles* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979), pp. 419-433, and pp. 437-456.

[160] As stated by Bivin and Blizzard: "Our canonical Gospels are based on Greek texts derived from the Greek translation of the original Hebrew story of the life of Jesus" (p. 37).

[161] These words function almost as a "minimum credal confession" among evangelicals. In a candid and warm telephone conversation with Dr. Brad Young in November of 1991, he informed me that in his view our Greek New Testament is "the inspired rule of faith and life ... the Word." For a comparison of these oral statements with Young's written work, cf. immediately below.

[162] Cf. Luke 1:1-4! And is there any study of the Synoptics today that does not deal with "Q"?

approach (Rom. 9:4-5)."[163] Taking this a step further, Flusser, detecting an anti-Jewish bias in the final redaction of Matthew, could state that, "Matthew's *fabrication (i.e.,* the alleged addition of Matthew 8:11f.) is so *subtle* and *clever* that his bias is not obvious..."[164] According to Flusser, Matthew (i.e., the final redactor of that gospel) was "evidently a gentile and is the oldest witness of a vulgar approach which caused much harm to the Jews and did not promote a true understanding of the very essence of the **{50}** Christian message." In fact, all passages in the Synoptics "where tension against Jews and Judaism is felt ... were introduced only at the Greek stage of its development."[165] It is "practically certain," argues Flusser, that Matthew, along with these other late, Greek redactors, was part of a "pseudo-Christian group" whose ideology was "only loosely connected with the gist of Christian belief and in many ways contradicts genuine Christian values."[166] And what is the source for determining true Christian beliefs and values? The reconstructed Synoptics of the Jerusalem School!

What then can be made of the exhortation of Bivin and Blizzard, urging that "no effort should be spared in correcting every mistranslation and in clarifying every misinterpretation of *the inspired text" (p.* 117, my italics)?[167] Which "inspired text" are they referring to? Is it the alleged original "Life of Jesus" (a text which exists with certainty only in the minds of those who are attempting to reconstruct it)? Or is it our Greek New Testament which is the "inspired text"? If so, how can it be rife with mistranslations and misinterpretations? Bivin and Blizzard - along with "evangelical" scholars of a similar ilk - owe it to their constituency to clarify where they stand on these critical issues.[168] Are our Greek Synoptics authoritative and trustworthy or not?[169]

According to Lindsey's reconstruction, the Greek Synoptics are *not* primarily based on eye-witness testimonies or first-hand records; with rare exception, they do *not* have access to the *ipsissima verba* of Jesus (in Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek); and the Gospel of Mark - generally considered by New Testament scholars to be the earliest of the Synoptics - is actually *five steps* removed from the original Hebrew "Life of Jesus" (p. 97). Yet Bivin and Blizzard note that when Lindsey began his translation of Mark into modern Hebrew, he was surprised to discover "that the Greek word order and idiom [of Mark] was more like Hebrew than literary Greek" (pp. 93f.).[170] In fact, the authors confidently assert that, "Often whole sentences, even whole passages, of our

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[163] *Jesus and His Jewish Parables, p. 292:* "Matthew allegorically connected the vineyard to the kingdom of God and thus distorted the message of the parable:"

[164] "Two Anti-Jewish Montages," reprinted in his *Judaism and the Origins of Christianity, p. 557* (my italics).

[165] *Ibid., p. 560.*

[166] "Matthew's 'Verus Israel'," in *ibid., p. 573.* Flusser encourages Christian readers who accept his arguments "to renounce these prejudices that belonged to the Matthean redactor." Young noted Flusser' s study in his discussion of Matt. *21:43 (Jesus and His Jewish Parables, p. 292).*

[167] This is from Chapter Eight of *Difficult Words,* for which see above, n. *59,* where reference is made to the fact that this chapter was deleted from the Spanish translation of the book.

[168] In view of the fact that Dr. Blizzard is a popular teacher on Paul Crouch's international Trinity Broadcasting Network, and that David Bivin is a regular contributor to the widely read *Ministries Today* magazine, some simple, clarifying, public statements from these authors would be of great value.

[169] Roy Blizzard's negative views on evangelical concepts of inspiration and the canon (see, e.g., "The Hebrew View of the Bible and Inspiration," *Yavo Digest, 4/2 [1990], pp.* 1ff.) suggest that he might even have a problem with the words "trustworthy" and "authoritative" in reference to the Greek New Testament. Again, his response is welcomed.

[170] Interestingly enough, j. Grintz, whose *1961* study on "Hebrew as the Spoken and Written Language in the Last Days of the Second Temple" (see above, n. *15) is* often utilized by the Jerusalem School, believed that Mark's Gospel "rests on an *Aramaic* background," and that it was written in Greek (i.e., *not* translated into Greek) "by one versed in Aramaic" (p. *33,* n. *3,* my italics).

Gospels translate *word for word* right back into the *original* Hebrew" (p. 83, my italics). What an amazing claim![171]

Almost 100 years ago, the Jewish Semitic scholar D.S. Margoliouth attempted to translate the Greek text of Ecclesiasticus (Ben Sira) back into Hebrew. He **{51}** knew for a fact from the prologue to Ben Sira that it had been translated into Greek directly from a Hebrew original, and he had at his disposal not only the Greek text, but Syriac and Latin translations as well. Yet when sizable portions of a Hebrew Ben Sira were discovered in the Cairo Geniza, it was found that he *did not correctly translate even one single verse!*[172]

Back-translation *(Rückübersetzung)* is extremely touchy business, even when we are dealing with sources that are only *one step* removed from the original.[173] But to postulate that accurate *Rückübersetzung* can be carried out from sources *four* or fi*ve* steps removed from the alleged original is almost unthinkable.[174] And it is entirely out of the question to suggest that wholesale *reconstruction* - not just retranslation - of an alleged original text (here, the "Life of Jesus") can be carried out from such a distance.[175] Such an effort can only be viewed as *pure conjecture. To* reconstruct the original Hebrew or Aramaic text of even the Lord's Prayer - based on the extant witness of Matthew and Luke - is fraught with difficulty.[176] To attempt to reconstruct the *entire* (alleged) *original Hebrew gospel* - without access to even the supposed primary Greek sources - is nothing more than a counsel of despair.

Bivin and Blizzard supply an example of Lindsey's alleged original "Life of Jesus" (pp. 98-101 – "The Mary and Martha Story Reconstructed"). Yet it not only involves a totally theoretical rearranging of texts that goes far beyond a Synoptic harmony; it asserts that without this

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[171] Even more amazing is the comment of Bivin and Blizzard on Luke *12:49-50:* "These verses are not English, nor Greek; but pure, undisguised Hebrew" (p. *127).* Their own interpretation of this passage, spelled out in considerable detail (pp. *126-142), is* farfetched, to say the least.

[172] Cf. Robert Gordis, *The Word and the Book, p. 231.*

[173] On the difficulties of recovering the "original" text of Ecclus.-in spite of the important Hebrew manuscript of Ecclus. found at Masada - cf. Benjamin S. Wright, No *Small Difference: Sirach's Relationship to its Hebrew Parent Text,* Septuagint and Cognate Studies *26;* Atlanta, *1989.* Wright's book, along with the articles of Gordis (cf. above, n. 8), should be read by all those interested in the theories of the Jerusalem School. Bivin and Blizzard's claim that it is "relatively easy to put the Greek (of the Synoptics) back into Hebrew" (p. *143)* may be true; but it is not true that it is "relatively easy" to put the Greek back into the *exact original wording* of the alleged Hebrew (or, Aramaic) *Urtext.*

[174] The problems involved in such an undertaking can be well illustrated by means of the children's game called "telephone" - but played with the following rules: The first player speaks several sentences in German into the ear of the player to his right; that player then translates the words into Arabic and passes them on secretly to the next player, who puts the Arabic sentences into a non-chronological, topical order and passes them on. The next player, who knows Arabic very well, improves the grammar of the previous player, shortens the sentences, attempts to put them back in their original order, and then whispers them into your ear. Now it's your turn: Translate these Arabic sentences back into the original German, *word for word. You will* need more than good luck to succeed in this endeavor! And playing this game with *written sources* would not make the task any easier, since the difficulties are created by the *distance* from the original source -be it oral or written.

[175] The efforts of, *inter alios, C.C.* Torrey, C.F. Burney, and F. Zimmermann to translate the Gospels (including the Gospel of John!) back into Aramaic have not met with much success either, although their primary goal was not *reconstruction.* Their work should not be confused with the writings of George Lamsa, more popular in nature, who claimed that the Peshitta, being the earliest extant Semitic witness to the Gospels, most accurately perserved the idiomatic understanding of the words of Jesus. Lamsa too has gained few scholarly followers.

[176] Carmignac, "Hebrew Translations of the Lord's Prayer," pp. 18-79, provides 68 different Hebrew versions, dating from the ninth century to 1976; one can also compare the Aramaic reconstructions of the Lord's Prayer by Fitzmyer *(Luke,* 901) and Schwarz ("Und Jesu Sprach," pp. 209-226). R.M. Grant, in expressing skepticism regarding the ability of Aramaic scholars to reconstruct the alleged original wording of parts of the Gospels remarked that, "experts in Aramaic have a tendency to disagree as to what the original was" (A *Historical Introduction to the New Testament,* New York, 1963, p. 41). The same can be said of experts in Hebrew!

rearrangement, we would not even know what Jesus often meant.[177] I fail to see how the Jerusalem School can claim that the results of its research "are confirming the authenticity of the Gospel texts."[178] Rather, its research seems to lead to a very different conclusion than that expressed many years ago by the great Aramaic scholar, Gustaf Dalman. Based on the very probable fact that Jesus and His disciples were quite familiar with Greek, Dalman asserted that "we gain the confident certainty that the Gospels present an essentially faithful reproduction of the genuine thoughts of Jesus. There is no necessity for conjecture concerning their original form, possessing, as we do, in the Greek text a sound bridge over the gap between us and it."[179] Readers of *Difficult Words* would be left with a quite different impression, viz., that the current Greek text is anything but a "sound bridge" to the original words of the Lord.

It is impossible to interact here with all the examples of supposed mistranslations and misinterpretations offered by Bivin and Blizzard. Let it simply be reiterated that Chapter Eight, "Theological Error Due to Mistranslation," was removed in its entirety from the Spanish version of *Difficult Words,* and that almost all of the novel interpretations proposed by Bivin and Blizzard are based on either: 1) faulty treatment of the Greek;[180] 2) exaggeration of the alleged difficulty of the extant Greek text;[181] 3) problems arising because of King James English;[182] 4) overly

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[177] To cite just two examples, it is claimed that the "one thing" Jesus urged upon Martha as being all important was "to seek or desire above all else God's rule and salvation in our lives and in the lives of those around us," as taught in Matt. 6:33 and Luke 12:31, texts supplied in Lindsey's "longer context" (103). Then, in treating Matt. 5:20, the authors retrovert Greek *dikaisune* to Hebrew *sedaqah,* in the sense of "almsgiving:" They justify this by noting that, "Matt. 5:20 fits naturally after Matthew 6:1. That must have been its location in the original Hebrew Gospel" (pp. 150ff.).

[178] This is stated in the brochure, "The Jerusalem School for the Study of the Synoptic Gospels." While Flusser wrote that "the historical accuracy of our Synoptic materials is on the whole very much greater than modern scholarship has tended to assert" (Foreword to Lindsey's *Hebrew Translation o f Mark, p. 7),* he freely made reference to "dozens" of dramatizations in (e.g.) Mark "that we cannot make careful history out of" *(ibid.).* It seems, therefore, that his statements must be explained as meaning this: The Synoptics are more accurate than most *liberal* scholars have believed (but less accurate than most *evangelical* scholars have believed)!

[179] *Jesus-Jeschua: Studies in the Gospels, ET* Paul P. Levertoff; repr. New York, 1971, p. 7. On the pervasive influence of the Greek language and culture on first century Judaea, see Martin Hengel (in collaboration with Christoph Markschies), *The 'Hellenization' of Judaea in the First Century after Christ, ET* John Bowden, Philadelphia, 1989.

[180] In this category could be listed the treatment of Matt. 5:10 (pp. 113-116), where: 1) the authors adduce from the Greek text that believers are to seek persecution; 2) no mention is made of the fact that Greek *dioko* is semantically equivalent to Hebrew *radap* (both can mean either "pursue" or "persecute"); 3) a passive form in Greek is retroverted into an active form in Hebrew ("persecuted for righteousness' sake" becomes "pursue righteousness").

[181] Cf. the treatments of Matt. 5:20 (pp. 150-152); Matt. 5:17-18 (note especially pp. 153-154: "Like so many other verses in our English Gospels it is incomprehensible. Nor are we any better off with the 'original' Greek of this verse. The Greek is just as impenetrable. As usual, the only solution is to put the Greek back into Hebrew."); Luke 9:51 (pp. 163-167). Note the strictures of R.M. Grant, *Historical Introduction,* 41, regarding Aramaic reconstructions of the Gospels; as summarized by Fitzmyer *(Wandering Aramean,* p. 15), Grant "claimed that one had to show that the existing Greek is bad Greek, a feature which might not appear in the work of a 'really good translator,' that the alleged bad Greek could not be accepted as Hellenistic Greek of the time, that the existing Greek did not make sense, and lastly that the passage if retranslated into Aramaic does make sense." Once again, these strictures are equally applicable to Hebrew retroversions.

[182] Cf. the treatments of Matt. 5:21 (pp. 106ff.); Luke 6:22 (p. 156f.); Luke 9:29 (pp. 158f.). Fields, "Difficult Words," p. 285, noted "the use of the King James Version instead of the Greek text" as a flaw in Chapter Eight and the Appendix. Nonetheless, he believed that "almost anyone can find help here with some of the most impenetrable sayings of Jesus." In my judgment, popular studies such as F.F. Bruce, *The Hard Sayings of Jesus,* Downers Grove, IL, 1983 and Robert H. Stein, *Difficult Passages in the New Testament,* Grand Rapids, 1990, would prove more useful.

simplistic usage of rabbinic **{52}** texts;[183] or 5) failure to reckon with other, more satisfactory interpretations of the text.[184]

Conclusion

This is not to say that no positive contributions have been made by the authors, nor is it to deny their scholarly credentials nor their evident zeal for their task. And it is to be hoped that, in spite of Bivin and Blizzard's polemical style, some of their arguments would help the educated readership to look into the question of the possible Hebrew substratum of the Synoptics. But one cannot overlook the massive flaws of the book (and with it, some of the weaknesses inherent in the approach of the Jerusalem School):

1) Any serious study of the Semitic background to the Greek New Testament *must* take into account the pervasive influence of the Septuagint, both syntactically as well as lexicographically.[185] This the authors have not done. They have also grossly exaggerated the translation technique of the Septuagint, claiming that Greek translators "in those days" would always use the same Greek word to translate a given Hebrew word, even when contextually inappropriate.[186]

2) The failure of Bivin and Blizzard to incorporate the rich results of Aramaic studies for the elucidation of New Testament texts seriously mars their approach. This is part of what I term "linguistic Zionism."

3) The confidence with which whole verses - not to mention entire texts - are retroverted into Hebrew is unacceptable.[187]

4) In keeping with this, the cavalier method with which the Greek New Testament is handled is to be deplored.[188]

5) The authors' simplistic usage of rabbinic parallels must be rejected as unscientific, since it fails to account for the varieties of Judaism which existed in the time of Jesus,[189] nor does it take seriously the difficult nature of determining the date, accuracy, and provenance of any given rabbinic saying.[190]

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[183] See above, nn. 55 and 56 with accompanying text, on the interpretation of Matt. 11:12 based on an undated midrash to Mic. 2:13.

[184] Cf. the treatment of Luke 23:31 (pp. 120-123) against other interpretations of this verse in the standard commentaries.

[185] Cf. above, nn. 7 and 12.

[186] See, e.g., *Difficult Words,* 36ff. and 143ff. These statements are untrue of the Septuagint (which was produced by several *different* hands, each with their own style). The reader need only peruse one page of the Hatch-Redpath *Concordance to the Septuagint* (repr., Grand Rapids: Baker, 1983) in order to see how varied the Greek translators sometimes were. In fact, it was the second century CE translation of Aquila, the proselyte of Rabbi Akiva, that distinguished itself *because* of its hyper-literality.

[187] On the difficulty of simply determining whether a text had been translated from either Mishnaic Hebrew or Aramaic, see Stanislav Segert, "Zur Verbreitung des Aramaischen in Palastina zur Zeit Jesu," *Archiv Orientalni* 25 (1957), pp. 21-37; cf. also Klaus Beyer, "Woran erkennt man, dass ein griechischer Text aus dem Hebraischen oder Aramaischen ubersetz ist?", in M. Macuch, C. Muller-Kessler, and B.G. Franger, eds., *Studia Semitica necnon Iranica. Rudolpho Macuch Septuagentario ab Amicis et Discipulis Dedicata,* Wiesbaden, 1989, pp. 21-31.

[188] The authors' treatment of Matt. 5:10, noted above (n. 86), is typical. They state that, "There are actually four mistranslations in this one verse;" and then claim that the "sudden shift in the pronoun (in verses 11 and 12) ... is a clear indication that these verses were not originally part of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, but a part of another context or story" (pp. 114-116).

[189] For a basic overview, see Shaye J.D. Cohen, *From the Maccabees to the Mishnah,* Philadelphia, 1987.

[190] Cf. Strack-Stemberger, *Introduction,* 50-61 (with full bibliography, 50f.); and above, n. 53. The work of Shmuel Safrai, the leading rabbinic scholar associated with the Jerusalem School, has been faulted for an

6) The overall thesis of Bivin and Blizzard, viz., that *the* authoritative record of the life of Jesus is to be found in a (presently) non-existent Hebrew text which must be reconstructed from relatively distant sources threatens to undermine the authority of the Greek New Testament.[191]

For all these reasons, *Understanding the Difficult Words of Jesus is* to be most seriously discommended. To the extent that it accurately represents the hermeneutical approach and overall methodology of the Jerusalem School, the constructive nature of the School's work must also be questioned. In fact, a word of warning is in order: It has often been demonstrated that once belief in the reliability of the biblical text has been surrendered, within one generation, established tenets of the faith also begin to be surrendered, **{53}** notwithstanding the disclaimers of those of the first generation.[192] Will a similar scenario be repeated here? Will fundamental beliefs in, e.g., the person and work of Jesus, the teaching of Paul, or the message of John soon be questioned? There is some disquieting evidence which suggests that this scenario is already unfolding. It is hoped that evangelicals interested in the work of the Jerusalem School would be wise - and beware.[193]

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uncritical use of the rabbinic sources; cf. Jacob Neusner's review of *The Literature of the Sages. First Part: Oral Tora, Halakha, Mishna, Tosefta, Talmud, External Tractates,* ed. S. Safrai, Philadelphia, 1987 in *JBL* 107 (1983), pp. 565-567.

[191] Even if fragments of a primitive Hebrew gospel were unearthed, they would carry weight only to the extent that they provided an *Urtext* of our canonical Synoptics. Otherwise, if they were filled with non-canonical sayings, they would be similar to the Nag Hammadi Gospels - i.e., useful for purposes of comparison only - although, admittedly, of much greater interest and import! On the all important subject of the canon, cf. F.F. Bruce, *The Canon of Scripture,* Donwners Grove, IL, 1988.

[192] For a trenchant expression of this position (in the context of strict biblical inerrancy), cf. Harold Lindsell, *The Battle for the Bible,* Grand Rapids, 1976 pp. 141-160. Thus the fact that Bivin, Blizzard, Young, and others strongly affirm their commitment to Jesus does not vouchsafe the evangelical "orthodoxy" of the next generation of their followers.

[193] The important sociolinguistic survey of the "Languages of Palestine" by Michael O. Wise, an Aramaic scholar at the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago (see Joel B. Green and Scot McKnight, eds., *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels,* Downers Grove, IL, 1992, pp. 434-444), reached me too late to be incorporated into the main body of discussion. Wise's relevant- although not dogmatic-conclusions are as follows: Jesus spoke an Aramaic dialect, He knew both biblical Hebrew and mishnaic Hebrew (the latter likely being utilized in halakhic discussions), and at least some Greek. If the early believers in Jerusalem wrote about Jesus' life and ministry in a Semitic language for other Palestinian Jews, they would have written in late biblical, or, mishnaic Hebrew. (This is the theory favored by the Jerusalem School). However, "given the rather widespread knowledge and use of Greek in all levels of Palestinian Jewry, *it may well be that no Semitic sources ever existed.* (This would be diametrically opposed to the view of the Jerusalem School.) The earliest tradition may have been in Greek all along, particularly if such written materials were intended to be read by Gentiles and/or Jews outside of Palestine" (p. 444, my emphasis).

{65} The Attitude of Jesus to the Temple

A critical examination of how Jesus' relationship to the Temple is evaluated within Israeli scholarship, with particular regard to the Jerusalem School

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Robert Lindsey will respond to this article in a later issue of MISHKAN.

Evidence in the Gospels concerning Jesus' attitude to the temple in Jerusalem is somewhat ambiguous. On the one hand, it includes utterances which presuppose an acceptance of traditional theology and practice (e.g. Matt. 5:23f.; 8:4). On the other hand, we find that outstanding passages like the accounts of the "cleansing of the temple" (Matt. 21:12-17; Mark 11:15-19; Luke 19:45-48; John 2:13-22) and the saying about the destruction and the (re-)building of the temple in three days (referred to throughout this article as the temple *logion* (Matt. 26:61; Mark 14:58; cf. Matt. 27:40; Mark 15:29; John 2:19)), are, in one way or another, wholly critical of that theology and practice. Is there a tension in the gospel material concerning Jesus' attitude to the temple? If so, is this tension a result of conflicting perspectives between the historical Jesus, who lived and preached while the temple stood, and the later gospel tradition? A study of how Israeli scholars evaluate Jesus' relationship to the temple can be both interesting and profitable.

Our examination will concentrate on those texts which represent a critical attitude, particularly those mentioned above. The decision to emphasize these texts finds welcome support in the approach chosen for one of the most extensive investigations in recent years on Jesus' relationship to his religious and political environment, namely E.P. Sanders' monograph *Jesus and Judaism,* (first published in 1985, in which these texts serve as the point of departure).[194] In consequence, this article is more than a survey of certain aspects of research history. It seeks to contribute to the renewed discussion on Jesus' relationship to the temple, which Sanders' book has initiated.

{66} The Synoptic Theory of the Jerusalem School

One of the most conspicuous features of the so-called Jerusalem School is their peculiar synoptic theory. Lindsey has delivered a fascinating description of how his effort to translate the Gospel of Mark into Hebrew, and the comparative study of all the synoptic Gospels related to this project, gradually forced him to realize the invalidity of one of the basic assumptions in the widely-accepted two-document theory of synoptic criticism. The theory of Markan priority is thought invalid.[195] Whereas the language of the Gospel of Mark contains many "non-Hebraisms," the other synoptic Gospels, particularly Luke, are generally closer to a Hebraic syntactical structure.

According to Lindsey, the explanation for this linguistic evidence is that behind our extant synoptic Gospels lies not only the one source ("Q," Logienquelle), as the two-document theory presumes, but a second one, which Lindsey calls the "Proto-Narrative" (PN), which "apparently preserves within it a highly literal Greek translation of a Hebrew original."[196] Among our extant Gospels, Luke turns out to be the oldest. PN and Q are its main sources. The Gospel of Mark is later and is the result of extensive redactic combinations. "Mark mixes PN, Luke, Q, Pauline

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[194] E.P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism,* London, 1985, pp. 61-76.

[195] See in particular the introduction in R.L. Lindsey, *A Hebrew Translation of the Gospel of Mark* (abbr. *A Hebrew Translation),* Jerusalem, 1969, pp. 9-84; but also *idem, "A* Modified Two-Document Theory of the Synoptic Dependence and Interdependence" (abbr. *A Modified Two-Document Theory), Novum Testamentum* 6, 1963, pp. 239-263.

[196] Idem, *A Hebrew Translation,* p.18.

expressions, and other "pickups" as one would sift ingredients into a cake mixture."[197] Matthew is the latest Synoptic writer. He also uses PN, Mark and Q, but not Luke. Further research has led Lindsey to the conviction that Matthew had an earlier version of PN at his disposal than did Luke.[198] David Flusser and Malcolm Lowe have therefore argued that PN should be called "proto-Matthean."[199] The synoptic theory of the Jerusalem School leads to some rather remarkable conclusions with regard to the accounts of the cleansing of the temple and the temple logion.

The Markan version of the account of Jesus' action in the temple is the longest. Jesus began to drive both the vendors and buyers from the temple market. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those selling doves. He did not allow anybody to carry a vessel *(skeuos)* through the temple area (cf. Mark 11:15-16). Luke presents the shortest version, stating merely that Jesus began to drive out the sellers from the temple market (Luke 19:45). According to the Jerusalem School's synoptic theory, one must expect this short Lukan version to be the original account. Flusser states this explicitly.[200] A further consequence seems to be that all additional information offered by Mark is due to his literary redactic activity because, according to Lindsey, "Even redactic additions of Mark must be largely traced to literary rather than to oral influences."[201]

The temple logion is, as a matter of fact, transmitted by the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, John (cf. paragraph 1) and even by the apocryphal Gospel **{67}** of Thomas (Thomas 71), but not by the Gospel of Luke! It appears, admittedly, in a shortened version in the writings of the third evangelist, but only in the second part of his work (Acts 6:13-14) in which it is attributed to Stephen, the leader of the Greek speaking Hellenists within the early Christian community in Jerusalem. His adversaries accused him in front of the Sanhedrin: "We have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and will change the customs that Moses handed on to us." According to the logic of the Jerusalem School's synoptic theory, one should in this case conclude the literary source for all Gospel descriptions is the saying as it appears in Acts 6:14, and that the occurrence in Mark 14:58 is taken from there. Finally, we should conclude that Matthew took the account from Mark. This presupposed deduction turns out to be the exact opinion of Lindsey who maintains that the idea of a temple "not made with hands," which replaces the old hand-made temple (Mark 14:58) originated in post-Easter Christian theology (Stephen and Paul).[202]

Flusser disagrees. He is unwilling to give in to the simple logic of the Jerusalem School's synoptic theory. Instead he concludes that the temple logion originated with Jesus Himself and that the Gospel of John is correct in relating it to the "cleansing" episode in the temple.[203]

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[197] Idem, *A Modified Two-Document Theory, pp.* 258f.; cf. *idem, A Hebrew Translation,* pp. 49ff.

[198] This I have learned from D. Flusser, "Die literarischen Beziehungen zwischen den synoptischen Evangelien" (abbr. *Die literarischen Beziehungen), Entdeckungen im Neuen Testament. Bd.I: Jesus worte und ihre Überlieferung,* Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1987, (pp. 40-67) p. 41, note 3.

[199] M. Lowe and D. Flusser, "Evidence Corroborating A Modified Proto-Matthean Synoptic Theory" (abbr. *Proto-Matthean Synoptic Theory), New Testament Studies* 29, 1983, pp. 25-47.

[200] D. Flusser, "Jesu Prozess und Tod" (abbr. *Jesu Prozess), Entdeckungen* (cf. note 5), (pp. 130 -163) p. 141: "Luke has preserved the earliest form of this passage (Luke 19:4546)." Here and in the following quotes from works in German are rendered in English (ed. note). Cf. *idem, Jesus,* New York, 1969, p. 146, note 191; and idem, *Die letzten Tage Jesu in Jerusalem: Das Passionsgeschehen aus jüdischer Sicht: Bericht über neueste Forschungsergebnisse* (abbr. *Die letzten Tage),* Stuttgart, 1982, pp. 46f.

[201] R.L. Lindsey, *A Hebrew Translation,* p.13 (italics by Lindsey); cf. also p. 65.

[202] Lindsey's evaluation is quoted in Flusser, *Die letzten Tage, pp.* 48f. Lindsey sounds like a captive of his own theory when he states with regret: "Unfortunately I cannot agree with the opinion that the Markan story of the 'temple made with hands' is authentic."

[203] D. Flusser, *Jesus, p.* 146, note 191; idem, *Die letzten Tage, pp.* 47f.; idem, *Jesu Prozess,* pp. 143f.

In my opinion, certain very questionable implications of this synoptic theory stand out when it is related to the accounts of the cleansing of the temple and to the temple logion. Flusser's opinion with regard to the latter comes from his sound historical judgment that this tradition must be traced back to Jesus Himself. Flusser's willingness to draw this conclusion is laudable, but it is clearly a weak point in the synoptic theory of the Jerusalem School that this conclusion is not reached by the help of that theory, but in spite of it.[204]

An evaluation of the gospel accounts of the cleansing of the temple raises even stronger doubts with regard to the synoptic theory under discussion. To presume that Mark has invented exaggerated details in order to make a good story out of a short notice which he found in found PN and Luke[205] is unconvincing, to say the least. In my opinion, a comparison between the parallel version of Mark 11:15-19 and Luke 19:45-48 (particularly the verses describing the reaction to Jesus' action in Mark 11:18 and Luke 19:47f.) leads inevitably to the conclusion that it is more probable that Luke was acquainted **{68}** with the Markan version than that Mark knew Luke's.[206] It is easy to give reasons as to why Luke might have *shortened* the account of the clash in the temple,[207] whereas it is hardly possible to explain why Mark would have expanded his description with fabricated information of such a puzzling character that most commentators capitulate in offering a plausible interpretation.[208] Moreover, the fact that Flusser's historical reconstruction of the episode in the temple goes beyond the sparse information in Luke and draws upon the other gospels (cf. paragraph 3), is yet another indication of an inconsistent approach, which undermines the synoptic theory of the Jerusalem School.

The Historicity of the "Cleansing" Incident in the Temple

The most important Israeli contribution to the evaluation of the historical background of the so-called temple cleansing episode has been made in the realm of archaeology. Extensive excavations under the direction of Professor Benjamin Mazar of the Hebrew University, which were carried out during 1968 to 1977 in the south, south-west and west of the Temple Mount, have yielded much information on the Herodian temple and its environment.[209] Particularly

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[204] Lowe and Flusser, *(Proto-Matthean Synoptic Theory, p.* 42, note 22), admit that a strong negative bias against Mark is present in Lindsey's work: "His work also sometimes gives the impression that he enthrones Luke in place of Mark." To pick some examples, Lindsey traces in the Markan order of pericopes a redactic "manipulation"; specifically "the famously difficult summary" of Mark 3:7-12 he takes as evidence that the deletion of the story transmitted in Luke 5:1-11 "apparently left him with some feeling of guilt" *(A Modified Two-Document Theory, p.* 260). Further, Lindsey characterizes Mark as "a kind of word magician;" *(A Hebrew Translation, p.* 64) only "interested in the mechanical details of writing" *(ibid., p.* 36) when re-writing and combining the materials at his disposal (Cf. *ibid., pp.* 40f.). Lindsey even states that "it is certainly doubtful if his book would have found its way into the New Testament canon had his methods been known better" *(ibid., p.* 64).

[205] D. Flusser, *Jesu Prozess,* p.141: "Mark elaborated his source and changed what was told there into a real dramatical story."

[206] Cf., for example, how Luke (in 19:47), unlike Mark, adds a third subject, "the principal men of the people" *(hoi protoi tou laou), after* the predicate, to the two preceding, "the high priests and the scribes." This difference is much more likely due to an addition on the part of Luke than to a shortening by Mark.

[207] Luke emphasizes that the temple is where the *teaching activity* of Jesus took place for a fairly long, unspecified period. It started immediately after his criticism of the vendors (19:45f.): 19:47 ("he was teaching daily in the temple"); 20:1; 21:37; 22:53. For this reason Luke may have deleted any features which could mislead his readers to perceive Jesus in another way, for example as a political opponent.

[208] I am thinking of the prohibition against carrying vessels through the temple, (Mark 11:16), which does not have a parallel in Matthew. Many commentators allow themselves to ignore it (for example E.P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism, p.* 364, note 1); others content themselves with the "traditional" reference to *Mishnah Berakhot* 9:5, which in my opinion, is not relevant to the case. This kind of enigmatic information cannot be a late redactional addition. More likely, it is an early tradition, already unintelligible to Matthew.

[209] A good popular presentation of the newly won insights is offered by Kathleen and Leen Ritmeyer, "Reconstructing Herod's Temple Mount in Jerusalem," *Biblical Archaeology Review* 15/6, 1989, pp. 23-42.

relevant to our subject is the insight by Mazar that the enormous Herodian expansion of the second temple took as its model the famous Caesareum structures of the Hellenistic city centre(s) of Alexandria (and Antioch), and that these new-built parts of the complex, surrounding the earlier temple square and the sanctuary, were integrated into the area around the temple.[210] Along the southern wall of the Herodian temple complex there was a basilica-like hall with four rows of columns, wider and higher than the double porticoes along the three other walls. This southern hall was called the Royal *Stoa* and is described in detail by the Jewish first century historian Josephus (Ant. 15:411-416). Two archaeological factors lead to the conclusion that the temple market was inside the Royal *Stoa,* not spread over the court of the gentiles. These factors are: 1) similarities with the Caesareum structures and 2) the direct access from the Royal *Stoa* to the market quarter below (in the main street and around the corner) via the steps leading down from Robinson's Arch.[211]

A further corroborating fact supporting this notion of a smaller market inside the temple walls than traditionally presumed is the assertion by Professor Shmuel Safrai, based on evidence in the Mishna, that cattle and sheep were not sold on the temple mount itself.[212] It thus becomes possible to substantiate the frequent assumption that the clash between Jesus and the servants of the temple market was a fairly modest incident. Grasping these physical conditions, we are able to refute the argument against the historicity of the cleansing episode, which maintains that if anything like the Gospels' accounts **{69}** took place, it must have been such a violent upheaval that the Romans would have necessarily interfered.

With regard to the Gospel accounts of the cleansing incident, Safrai, in concurrence with his statement that cattle and sheep could not be purchased inside the temple walls, evaluates John's version of the incident. John says that Jesus made a whip of cords and drove out oxen and sheep (John 2:15). Safrai considers this highly exaggerated.[213] He does not distinguish between the synoptic versions, though he seems to accept the report in Mark 11:15 (par. Matt. 21:12) that Jesus overturned tables of money-changers and the seats of dove-purveyors as historically accurate.

Flusser, on his part, blames Mark and Matthew for embellishing the incident. According to him, only Luke 19:45-46 offers a precise description of this event. Flusser interprets these two verses as saying that Jesus made an attempt to persuade the vendors to leave the temple area, without resorting to any violent measures. He restricted Himself to quoting the Scripture as a justification of His case. It is not stated whether Jesus was successful in achieving this goal; most likely He was not.[214]

A critical examination of Flusser's comparative synoptic analysis and historical judgment exposes inconsistencies. On the one hand, it is hardly conceivable that the identical wording in Luke and

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[210] Cf. in particular B. Mazar, "The Royal *Stoa* in the Southern Part of the Temple Mount" (abbr. *The Royal Stoa), Recent Archaeology in the Land of Israel,* H. Shanks, ed., Washington/ Jerusalem, 1984, pp. 141-147; and *idem,* "The Temple Mount," *Biblical Archaeology Today: Proceedings of the International Congress on Biblical Archaeology,* April 1984, Jerusalem, 1985, pp. 463-468.

[211] B. Mazar, *The Royal Stoa, p.* 146: "The *stoa* served primarily for commerce in cultic provisions for the Temple." He states explicitly that, conclusively, the clash between Jesus and the servants of the temple market took place in the Royal *Stoa, pp.* 146f., cf. also *idem, The Mountain of the Lord,* Gordon City/New York, 1975, p.126; *idem,* "Neue archäologische Entdeckungen in Jerusalem," Excursus I in D. Flusser, *Die letzten Tage Jesu in Jerusalem, (pp.* 143-148) p. 146. Cf. also K. and L. Ritmeyer, *Reconstructing Herod's Temple Mount in Jerusalem, p.* 29.

[212] S. Safrai, *Die Wallfahrt im Zeitalter des Zweiten Tempels* (abbr. *Wallfahrt),* Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1981, p.185; cf. D. Flusser, *Die letzten Taqe, p.* 47.

[213] S. Safrai, *Wallfahrt, p.* 185: "The author of the Gospel of John has arranged the transmitted material on the ejection of the money changers and dove vendors as a dramatical scene, and added details which contradict the historical reality, as the cattle vendors were not situated on the temple mount."

[214] D. Flusser, *Jesu Prozess,* pp.141 f.

Mark *(erksato ekballein polountas* - "He began to drive out those selling.") means only in Luke a persuasive attempt, but in the case of Mark a violent measure. On the other hand, how can Flusser in one instance restrict the historical kernel of the accounts to an (unsuccessful) oral persuasion[215] and in others express himself as if the money-changers and the dove-purveyors were really driven out?[216] These inconsistencies are additional indications of inherent flaws in the synoptic theory of the Jerusalem School.

The Interpretation of the Incident

Flusser takes it for granted that Jesus' provocative action was not addressed against the temple as such.[217] He interprets it, as do Safrai and Mazar, as directed against the intrusion of the market onto the temple precincts.[218] Safrai maintains that in this respect Jesus was a typical representative of a broad tradition in ancient Judaism, reflected already in Zechariah 14:21, and which was concerned to protect the holiness of the temple against violations through secular trade affairs. The contemporary Pharisaic scribes were as opposed to the market in the temple as was Jesus. Some time after Jesus' death they were successful in barring this practice from the temple precincts.[219]

In my opinion, there is no conclusive evidence that the temple market was ever removed from the Royal *Stoa*.[220] The notion that the changing of money **{70}** and purchasing of sacrificial objects represented a threat to the holiness of the temple is anachronistic. It was hardly held by those scribes whom some modern scholars cite as holding to the same view that Jesus espoused.[221] If Jesus and the Pharisaic scribes really shared a common view of the temple market, these must have had to do with corruption and malpractices on the part of the temple authorities (e.g., charging high prices for sacrificial objects).[222]

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[215] *Ibid.,* p.142: "The dramatically arranged story of Mark and then also by Matthew is historically little probable: How could Jesus enter the temple and implement his intentions without anybody laying hands on him."

[216] Cf. two pages further down, *ibid., p.* 144, where Flusser speaks of Jesus' driving the vendors and money changers out of the temple precincts as a real historical event: "Jesus uttered the temple logion when he started to eject the vendors from the temple, as John testifies." Similarly in *idem, Jesus, pp. 109-111,* and *idem, Die letzten Tage, p.* 68.

[217] Idem., *Jesu Prozess,* p.145.

[218] *Ibid.,* p.141: "The importance ... is Jesus' opposition against the practice that goods were sold on the temple precincts." Cf. S. Safrai, *Wallfahrt, pp.* 185ff.; B. Mazar, *The Mountain o f the Lord, p. 126.*

[219] Safrai interprets the Mishnah tractate *Sheqalim* as describing this state of affairs. He further deduces that such must also have been the situation toward the very end of the second temple period, thanks to the efforts of the Scribes *(Wallfahrt, p.186).* Cf. also D. Flusser, *Jesus, p.108:* "Jesus was not the only one whose displeasure had been aroused by the tables of the money-changers, and the stalls of the dove-sellers at the place of sanctification; but it was not until after Jesus' death that the scribes found practical measures to keep the trade necessary for the temple sacrifices out of the temple precincts."

[220] Safrai's interpretation that this state of affairs is presupposed in *mSheqalim* is very dubious.

[221] Cf. astonishing remarks like S. Safrai, *Wallfahrt, p. 186: "...* it must naturally have appeared repulsive to the enthusiastic pilgrim when he saw that all kind of profane businesses were done on the sacred precincts. Jesus' action is portrayed on this background;' and B. *Mazar,The Mountain of the Lord, p.126:* "Jesus, like other puritanical Jews, might have taken the attitude that the spirit of worship and reverence was undermined by the intrusion of such dealings." Cf. e.g., S. Safrai, *Wallfahrt, p. 186.* By restricting the temple market to the Royal *Stoa* (cf. paragraph *3)* outside the old sacred inner square, the holiness of the temple was in no way endangered.

[222] C.A. Evans, who so far has delivered the most extensive critique of Sanders' treatment (cf. note 1) in his articles "Jesus' Action in the Temple: Cleansing or Portent of Destruction?," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 51, *1989, pp. 237-270,* and "Jesus' Action in the Temple and Evidence of Corruption in the First-Century Temple," *Society of Biblical Literature, 1989 Seminar Papers, pp. 522-539.* He interprets Jesus' action along these lines. His view is supported by extensive evidence of harsh criticism of the high-priestly families for immoral exploitation, by Pharisees and other groups within Ancient Judaism. Although the anachronistic "puritan"

It is far more likely that Jesus' criticism was of a more fundamental character.[223] E. P. Sanders proposes that the so-called cleansing incident was a symbolic demonstration of the impending destruction of the temple, implying that it was to be replaced by a new one.[224] In this context, Sanders describes the consequences such a symbolic action must have had with regard to the sacrificial cult.[225] This aspect is, interestingly, even more strongly emphasized by the Jewish scholar, Jacob Neusner, who regards it as the direct focus of Jesus' action.[226] According to Neusner, the impact of Jesus' action can only be discovered by due attention to the indispensable position of the moneychangers within the sacrificial system. Tyrian currency was the only currency accepted as the temple tax for both the yearly half-shekel temple tax and sacrificial objects.[227]

The temple tax, among other things, served to provide the public daily whole offerings in the name of the nation. These sacrifices "serve all Israelites individually and collectively, as atonement for sin."[228] Thus, the act of overturning the money-changers' tables was an attempt to stop an activity indispensable for both the public sacrifices (provided by the temple tax) and for individual compulsory and voluntary sacrifices (e.g. doves, which had to be purchased with Tyrian currency). Jesus' act cannot be regarded as merely a fervent act of a pious and puritanical Jew who was concerned to protect the holiness of the temple and its atoning service. It was a direct attack on the sacrificial institution as such. In the words of Neusner:

> *Such an action will have provoked astonishment, since it will have called into question the very simple fact that the daily whole offering effected atonement and brought about expiation for sin, and God had so instructed Moses in the Torah. Accordingly, only someone who rejected the Torah's explicit teaching concerning the daily whole offering could have overturned the tables - or, as I shall suggest, someone who had in mind setting up a different table, and for a different purpose: for the action carries the entire message, both negative and positive. (Indeed, the money-changers' presence made possible the cultic participation of every Israelite, and it was not only not a blemish on the cult but part of its perfection).*[229]

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interpretation of Jesus' concern prevails among Israeli scholars, the emphasis put on the anti-priestly aspect of the temple *logion* (cf. paragraph *5)* concurs with this understanding of the cleansing incident.

[223] It seems that S. Safrai at some time changed his mind. In Flusser, *Die letzten Tage, p. 39,* he advocates a different attitude: "... by all probability his view on temple and sacrifices was different from that of the faithful Jews who kept the commandments and did not seek a religious way of their own."

[224] E.P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism, pp. 69-71.*

[225] *Ibid., p. 70:* "The import to those who saw or heard of it was almost surely, at least in part, that Jesus was attacking the temple service which was commanded by God. Not just priests would have been offended, but all those who believed that the temple was the place at which Israel and individual Israelites had been commanded to offer sacrifice, to make atonement for their sins. Further, it is hard to imagine how Jesus himself could have seen it if not in these terms."

[226] J. Neusner, *Money-Changers in the Temple: The Mishnah's Explanation* (abbr. *Money-Changers),* New Testament Studies 35, 1989, pp. 287-290. This short study is wholly integrated into another article by Neusner, "The Absoluteness of Christianity and the Uniqueness of Judaism" (abbr. *Absoluteness and Uniqueness), Interpretation* 43, 1989, (pp. 18-31) PP. 22-26.

[227] Cf. A. Ben-David, *Jerusalem und Tyros: Ein Beitrag zur palästinensischen Münz-und Wirtschaftsgeschichte* (126 a.C.-57 p.C.), Basel/ Tübingen, 1969.

[228] J. Neusner, *Money-Changers, pp.* 288f.; cf. *Absoluteness and Uniqueness, p.* 24.

[229] Idem, *Money-Changers, p.* 289; cf. *Absoluteness and Uniqueness, p.* 25. The sentence put in brackets appears only in the latter.

{71} With the expression "setting up a different table" Neusner is referring to Jesus' institution of the Eucharist during the Last Supper, which he considers historical.[230] The message thus conveyed by Jesus' symbolic action in the temple is that the sacrificial cult has come to an end. His imminent death will replace it as the sole means and ground for atonement for Israel.

I agree with this interpretation by Neusner. Consequently, it should be noted, the theological message of Jesus' action in the temple is seen to be analogous to those sayings in the Gospels which denote an expiatory understanding of His death (Mark 10:45 par. Matt. 20:28 and Mark 14:24 par. Matt. 26:28). With these sayings, we are once more confronted with far-reaching implications of the Jerusalem School synoptic theory. Flusser presumes that Jesus foresaw His violent death[231] but rejects the possibility that He interpreted it in expiatory terms.[232] This rejection is primarily based on the Lukan evidence, because the closest Lukan parallel to the "ransom" saying (i.e. Mark 10:45) in Luke 22:27 does not refer to Jesus' death, and because the Lukan version of the Last Supper (according to Flusser) did not originally include an expiatory interpretation of the wine.[233]

The validity of this argument depends, however, on the assumption that the so-called "shorter" text of the Lukan version of the Eucharist (represented by the Greek uncial *Codex Bezae Cantabrigiensis* from the fifth century and by most Old Latin manuscripts, and which omit Luke 22:19b-20) is the original one. This is a very bold supposition, in no way justified by modern text research.[234] With regard to the Eucharist, even adherents to the Jerusalem School can hardly deny that the interpretation of Jesus' death as an atoning sacrifice is present in the earliest extant gospel. As already noted, Flusser often shows a sound historical judgment, even when it contradicts the synoptic theory of the Jerusalem School. This seems to be the case also with regard to the origin of the expiatory interpretation of Jesus' death. In his introductory remark to *Die letzten Tage Jesu in Jerusalem,* he states that his opinion on "Jesus' self-understanding as an expiatory sacrifice" has changed after the symposium on which this book is based, and that "this motif in the thinking of Jesus must be more profoundly reckoned with" than he had been able to do so far.[235] I have only come across these rather vague formulations and do not **{72}** know whether Flusser draws any new conclusions concerning Jesus' attitude to the temple on the basis of this reassessment of the expiatory element in Jesus' self-understanding.

The Interpretation of the Temple *Logion*

As set out in paragraph 2, Lindsey and Flusser disagree with regard to the origin of the temple *logion*. Flusser holds it to be authentic, uttered by Jesus at the occasion of the cleansing episode, as John (2:19) presents it. In Mark and Matthew, this saying is cited by two witnesses during the

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[230] 37 Idem, *Money-Changers, p.* 290: "The negative is that the atonement for sin achieved by the daily whole offering is null, and the positive, that atonement for sin is achieved by the Eucharist: one table overturned, another table set up in place, and both for the same purpose of atonement and expiation of sin." (Cf. *Absoluteness and Uniqueness,* p. 26.)

[231] D. Flusser, *Die letzten Tage, pp.* 40f., 68f.

[232] *Ibid., p.* 59: "Jesus did certainly not look upon his death as an atonement for many"; cf. also pp. 67 and 84.

[233] Idem, *Die literarischen Beziehungen, pp.* 43-46.

[234] Neither in *Die literarischen Beziehungen, p.* 44, nor in *Die letzten Tage, pp.* 64f., does Flusser make an attempt to argue in favour of the originality of the "shorter" text. He contents himself with a mere statement. For an extensive discussion, which concludes that Luke 22:19b-20 is original, cf. J. Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus,* London 1976, pp. 139-159. According to the leading introductory monograph on text criticism today, K. and B. Aland, *The Text of the New Testament,* Grand Rapids/ Leiden, 1987, p. 306, there can be no doubt as to the authenticity of the longer' text.

[235] The full quotation runs as follows: "If I had run this discussion today I would probably have modified some of my statements, or have substantiated them better. This concerns e.g. Jesus self-consciousness as an atonement sacrifice. This motif in his thinking must be seen more thoroughly than I then was able to do." *(Die letzten Tage, p.* 14). The most recent more positive statement on this question by Flusser known to me is to be found in *idem, Das Christen tum--eine jüdische Religion,* München, 1990, pp. 51f.

interrogation before the high priest. Whereas Mark characterizes all testimonies brought forward at this occasion as false (Mark 14:55-57), Matthew seems to distinguish between all earlier testimonies during the interrogation, as being false, and the last one, referring to the temple *logion* (Matt. 26:59-61). Flusser regards this Matthean version to be an affirmation of the saying's authenticity and of John's combination of it with the cleansing incident.[236]

With regard to the actual wording, Flusser takes the reference to "three days" as referring to the period of time during which the temple will lie in ruins. He further believes these words are a later addition, influenced by the Christian belief that the body of Christ, risen on the third day, is the new temple.[237]

Despite this interpretation, Flusser accepts as original the distinction made in the Markan version (14:58) between the present temple, made with hands *(cheiropoieton),* and the new temple that is not made with hands *(acheiropoieton).* Most scholars consider this reference to be a further reflection on the concept of the body of Christ as the new temple. According to Flusser, this distinction is not exclusively Christological. It expresses the notion that God will replace the present temple with a new one - a notion held by various groups in first century Judaism critical of the order and the priesthood of the temple.[238] The boldest aspect of the saying is that it was spoken in the first person: Jesus claims to represent God while threatening the temple.[239] This was a blunt attack on the Sadducean high-priesthood that controlled the temple and was responsible for the abuses.[240]

Flusser is definitely right in accepting the temple *logion* as authentic. Although it is not possible within the scope of this article to discuss the original wording of the passage,[241] a critical evaluation of Flusser's interpretation is in order. His assertion that the destruction saying was particularly provocative to the Sadducean high-priests, and that as a result of their strong enmity to Jesus and their influential position, they played the leading role in handing Him over to the Romans for execution,[242] is undoubtedly historically correct. However, his view that the temple *logion* **{73}** was intended by Jesus to be an attack against the high-priests rather than the temple institution as such, is an underestimation of its import. Flusser's interpretation concurs with his understanding of the cleansing incident as the result of a puritanical longing for the purification of the temple from the unholy intrusions of market activities. It is also beyond dispute that the temple authorities - the priests - were responsible for these activities.

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[236] Idem, *Jesu Prozess, p.* 143; *idem, Die letzten Tage, p.* 48.

[237] Idem, *Jesus, p.* 109; *idem, Jesu Prozess, p.* 143.

[238] Idem, *Jesu Prozess,* p.144; idem, *Die letzten Tage, p.* 48. Flusser is probably thinking particularly of 1 Enoch 90:28f.; 91:13; 11 Q Temple 29:9f.; cf. also Jub. 1:17,29.

[239] Idem, *Jesus,* p.109: "...the saying really was expressed originally in the first person. Jesus spoke in the name of God in the spirit of Jewish apocalyptism. The present temple would be destroyed and another would then be raised up by the hand of God."

[240] Idem, *Jesu Prozess,* p.145: "From the parable of the vine gardeners and Jesus' rejection

of the trade in the temple court one can draw the conclusion that his prophesy on the destruction of the temple primarily is related to his opposition to the ruling Sadducean group."

[241] Sanders' reconstruction of this saying comes close to that of Flusser: "We should probably think that his expectation was that a new temple would be given by God from heaven, an expectation which is not otherwise unknown during the period, even if it may not have been universal. In this case the characterization of the temple as 'made without hands' could be original, rather than a spiritualizing interpretation" *(Jesus and Judaism, p.* 73). Even if the exact components of the original saying are disputed, it can easily be traced back to a Semitic wording; cf. the Aramaic reconstruction in G. Dalman, *Orte und Wege Jesu,* Gütersloh, 1924, p. 324, taken up by J. Jeremias, *New Testament Theology. VoI.I: The Proclamation of Jesus,* London, 1975, p. 22. Representatives of the Jerusalem School would probably favour a reconstruction into Hebrew, which can also easily be realized.

[242] D. Flusser, *Jesu Prozess, pp.* 144-149; *idem, Die letzten Tage, pp.* 49f., 88ff.

Of course, a viable interpretation must bring the cleansing episode and the destruction logion into concurrence with each other. That Flusser is able to do this might be regarded as adding strength to his case. However, E.P. Sanders, to cite one example, also succeeds in this respect, interpreting both the act and the saying as directed against the temple and its cultic order as such.[243] There can be no doubt that this understanding is more justified in claiming to take the actual wording of the destruction logion at face value.

It might appear as if the interpretation of the cleansing incident which I have advocated, in agreement with Jacob Neusner, does not so easily concur with that destruction saying. A possible objection might run as follows: "Why is there to be a new temple if the very substance of the temple as the place for the sacrificial cult is made obsolete through the imminent death of Jesus?" Possible answers would be either that Jesus Himself had a spiritualized understanding in mind when he spoke of a temple "not made with hands."[244] More likely, Jesus could imagine other functions for the temple apart from the sacrifices. These would constitute the basis for a new eschatological temple and for worship in the fulfilled *basi1eia.*[245] As a matter of fact, the notion of God *asking* is closely related to the temple.[246] As to the fact "that the central theme of the public proclamation of Jesus was the kingly reign of God,"[247] it ought not surprise us if Jesus, in spite of His fundamental criticism of the contemporary cultic order, ascribed a positive function to a new, God-made temple in the *basileia tou theou.* Anna Maria Schwemer has proposed that we understand the second part of the temple logion as Jesus' exposition of the Scriptural prophecy in Exodus 15:17b-18: "the sanctuary, O Lord, that your hands have established. The Lord will reign forever and ever. "[248]

{74} Conclusion

Our investigation of how Israeli scholars look at Jesus' relationship to the temple in Jerusalem, shows that they do not offer a unanimous answer to the questions posed in the introduction. The tension in the Gospels' evidence concerning Jesus' attitude to the temple, is recognized to be such

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[243] "We should suppose that Jesus *knew what he was doing:* like others, he regarded the sacrifices as commanded by God, he knew that they required a certain amount of trade, and he knew that making a gesture towards disrupting the trade represented an attack on the divinely ordained sacrifices" (E.P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism, p.* 70; italics by Sanders). "The saying and the deed ... correspond. Both point towards the destruction of the present order and the appearance of the new" (*ibid., p.* 73).

[244] Cf. for this interpretation O. Betz, "Probleme des Prozesses Jesu", *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt II,* 25/1, Berlin/New York, 1982, (pp. 565-647) pp. 630632.

[245] All the synoptists explain Jesus' action by the statement that God's house was to be "called a house of prayer" (Matt. 21:13, par. Is. 56:7). This explicit mention of another function of the temple, in no way to be abandoned (cf. Luke 18:9-14; Acts 3:1; 22:17), might point in this direction.

[246] Cf. Is. 6:1-5; Ps. 96:7-10; 98:4-6; 99:1-3.

[247] J. Jeremias, *New Testament Theology, Vol.I, p.* 96.

[248] A.M. Schwemer, "Irdischer und himmlischer König: Beobachtungen zur sogenannten David -Apokalypse in Hekhalot Rabbati §§ 122-126," in: M. Hengel/A.M. Schwemer (Hrsg.), *Königsherrschaft Gottes und himmlischer Kult im Judentum, Urchristentum und in der hellenistischen Welt,* Tübingen 1991, (pp.309-359) p.356: "If one omits the antithetic pair 'made with hands'- 'not made with hands', as is often done, then one bars oneself for the view of the OT prophecy, which here is new-interpreted with Messianic authority: The song of Exod. 15:17f.... Hands of men have built the earthly temple, God's hands will establish the eschatological one, and then will the Kingdom of God dawn." The first mention in Scripture of God's kingly reign (Exod. 15:17) has a decisive note in shaping the conviction among certain groups within Ancient Judaism and Rabbinic Judaism that God himself will build a new eschatological temple on Mt. Zion. This factor is convincingly demonstrated in this book. On the role of Exod. 15:17f. in Qumran (in particular 4QFlorilegium 1:2-5) cf. A.M. Schwemer, "Gott als König und seine

Königsherrschaft in den Sabbatliedern aus Qumran," (pp. 45-118) pp. 74f. On its exposition in *Mekilta de Rabbi Ishmael, B.* Ego, "Gottes Weltherrschaft und die Einzigkeit seines Namens, Eine Untersuchung zur Rezeption der Königsmetapher in der Mekhilta de R. Yishma'el," (pp. 257-283) pp. 265-272.

only to a very limited degree. It is explained as being due to different perspectives of Jesus, on the one hand, and of post-Easter Christians, on the other (cf. Robert L. Lindsey on the temple *logion)*. The predominant line of interpretation is represented by David Flusser, Shmuel Safrai and Benjamin Mazar, who regard the cleansing incident as an attempt to protect the integrity of the temple and, therefore, not being in conflict with sayings of Jesus which denote a positive attitude to the traditional functions of the temple. If the temple *logion is* understood as an attack on the contemporary Sadducean high-priests, as is the case with Flusser, its goal might also be regarded as advocating the holiness of the temple. Even then, this saying is seen to concur with the others. Although the contributions of the Israeli scholars surveyed in this essay contain many valuable observations with regard to the historical circumstances of the cleansing incident, they are still altogether marked by inner inconsistencies and unacceptable interpretations.

I am much more inclined to assume a real tension between sayings like Matthew 8:4 (encouraging a healed leper to show himself to the priests and to offer the gift prescribed in the Law) on the one hand, and the cleansing episode and the temple *logion* (cf. the predictions about its destruction in Matthew 24:1 f.; Mark 13:1f.; Luke 21:5f.) on the other. However, it would be superficial and anachronistic to interpret this tension as a conflict between pro-cultic and anti-cultic sentiments. Jesus did not become opposed to the sacrificial cult in the temple because He suddenly realized that it was primitive and obsolete, as modern enlightened man would like to have it. On the contrary, *He shared the basic conviction of the temple theology that atonement for sins is only available through vicarious, sacrificial death.*

Confronted with increasing opposition and rejection, Jesus went up to Jerusalem for the Passover festival to challenge Israel to decide regarding His mission. Foreseeing that His provocative demonstrations would bring about His death, He gave expression to the theological meaning of that death in advance. The sacrificial cult in the temple is declared to be void, not because the notion of atoning death is rejected, but because Jesus interprets His death in expiatory terms, as does the early church. Consequently, it replaces the sacrificial cult in the temple as the ground for atonement.[249]

[249] In my treatment of Israeli scholars I have decided to ignore G. Cornfeld, *The Historical Jesus. A Scholarly View of the Man and His World,* New York/London, 1982. This book is full of inconsistencies, inaccuracies and baseless speculative hypotheses. For example, Cornfeld includes in the temple market the so-called "Solomon's Stables," i.e., the vaulted halls under the southern part of the temple esplanade (p. 149), and states that "tens of thousands of sacrificial lambs were penned and traded in the lower areas of the Temple Mount (sc. in Solomon's Stables) for the benefit of the pilgrims" (p. 142). Among the gospel accounts of the clash in the temple Cornfeld takes the Johannine version to be more historical than the others (p. 157), fitting into the scene at Solomon's Stables (p. 151), where "sheep, cattle and birds" (p.98) were vended. Accordingly, the cleansing incident was a major event, causing a "really riotous commotion at all levels of the *Hanuyot* (sc. the temple market)" (p.155) and shaking Jerusalem to its foundations because Jesus was joined by "many willing helpers from among the populace" (p. 157), who agreed to his "puritan" and "radical" protest (p. 125) against the "desecration" of the temple (p.157).

The Jerusalem School of Synoptic Research

An Introduction to the School, Its Objectives and Origins

David Bivin

MISHKAN ***has asked the Jerusalem School of Synoptic Research to present their work and to respond to challenges raised by Ådna and Brown in this issue. Copyright to the articles by Bivin, Lindsey, Ronning and Safrai remain with*** **JERUSALEM PERSPECTIVE. MISHKAN** ***1/1994 will be open for further discussion and responses.***

{81} We are grateful to the editorial board of MISHKAN for an opportunity to explain the work of the Jerusalem School of Synoptic Research. We hope our contribution to this issue will help clarify our methodology and give new impetus to the pursuit of a better understanding of the life and words of Jesus.

The Jerusalem School (JSSR) is a consortium of Jewish and Christian scholars examining the synoptic Gospels within the context of the language and culture in which Jesus lived. Their work confirms that Jesus, like the Jewish sages, taught in Hebrew and used rabbinic teaching methods.

The School's central objective is to produce the *Jerusalem Synoptic Commentary,* a multivolume work which will reflect the insights provided by the School's research. Jerusalem School scholars believe the first narrative of Jesus' life was written in Hebrew, as early Church tradition states, and that much of it can be recovered from the Greek texts of the synoptic Gospels. The School hopes to reconstruct as much as possible of that conjectured Hebrew narrative.

JSSR was registered in Israel as a nonprofit research institute in 1985. Its members are David Flusser, Robert L. Lindsey, Shmuel Safrai, David Bivin, Randall J. Buth, Weston W. Fields, R. Steven Notley, Dwight A. Pryor, Halvor Ronning, Mirja Ronning, Chana Safrai and Bradford H. Young.

The Jerusalem School's real beginning was a meeting in 1961 between David Flusser, a Jewish professor at the Hebrew University, and Robert Lindsey, a Christian pastor at the Narkis Street Baptist congregation in Jerusalem. Both were studying the synoptic Gospels, and when they compared notes, they found that their research had led them to many similar conclusions. They shared the conviction that a knowledge of Hebrew and first-century Jewish culture was essential to a full understanding of the life of Jesus.

The Jerusalem School's work is a unique cooperative effort which marks possibly the first time in history that Christian scholars, fluent in Hebrew and living in Israel, have collaborated with Jewish scholars in Gospel studies.

Why I am a Member of the Jerusalem School

Halvor Ronning

- Halvor Ronning *is interim director of the Institute of Holy Land Studies on Mount Zion and current director of the Jerusalem School of Synoptic Research. A twenty-seven year resident of Israel, Ronning is also a licensed Israeli tour guide.*

{82} The appeal of the Jerusalem School of Synoptic Research lies in the potential of its research methodologies to make the words and claims of Jesus clearer.

Synoptic Gospel Methodology

What first caught my attention was that Robert Lindsey, the original inspiration of the Jerusalem School, had no specific interest in theories about the synoptic Gospels; he arrived at his theory totally as a by-product of another concern. He was simply a Baptist pastor, with a pastor's heart toward his congregation, who had been taught and had accepted Markan priority in seminary. But his mind was changed because of his work in New Testament translation.

What decades later became known as the Jerusalem School began with the translation work of Lindsey in the 1950s. He hoped to provide a more helpful translation of the New Testament than the hundred-year-old Delitzsch translation used at that time by most of the Hebrew-speaking Christians in Israel.

Believing in the priority of Mark, he began translating that Gospel into Hebrew. His observations eventually led him to the theory of the existence of an early Hebrew gospel and the priority of Luke and that the order in which the synoptic Gospels were written is Luke, Mark, Matthew. In 1962, when I first arrived in Jerusalem, this was for me nothing but an interesting theory. Over the years I have come to trust its reliability from my own observations.

{83} Methodology with Texts

I am a member of the Jerusalem School because I believe in the importance of proper methodology when studying ancient texts.

1. No text will be fully understood unless one knows the original language in which it was composed. The Jerusalem School conducts its research with a knowledge of the local Hebrew and Aramaic languages of that time - as well as Greek, the *lingua franca.*

2. No text will be fully understood unless one knows the historical context of the writing. The Jerusalem School aims to know the Jewish world in which Jesus and His followers lived so as to determine where the New Testament message is agreeing, disagreeing or innovating in relationship to that world.

3. No text will be fully understood unless one knows the norms of writing during the period in which the text was written. The Jerusalem School aims to see the writing styles of the Gospel writers in relationship to others of the time. This protects against modern psychologizing in an attempt to explain intersynoptic dependencies.

In summary, a consistent philological methodology is required, one that is consistent with Jesus' time in terms of 1) language, 2) thought patterns and 3) literary styles.

Methodology of Cooperation

I also enjoy being a member of the Jerusalem School because of the expertise and love for careful scholarship contributed by our Jewish colleagues. Many Jewish scholars are greatly interested in Jewish life in the Second Temple period. They are particularly interested in the late Second Temple period when Jesus lived because that is also the period of the origin of orthodox rabbinic Judaism.

David Flusser was born in Vienna in 1917 and immigrated to Israel as a young scholar. He had been a professor of classical Greek philology at the University of Vienna and he wanted to study everything ever written in ancient Greek by Jewish authors. This meant that his interest included the Greek New Testament. Since 1962 he has been professor of Early Christianity and Judaism of the Second Temple Period at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. The *Encyclopaedia Judaica (vol.* 16, p.1325) states:

> *Flusser's researches have been devoted to Christianity, with a special interest in the New Testament; to Judaism of the Second Temple Period, and in particular to the Dead Sea Scrolls.... Of great prominence have been his researches into the Dead Sea Scrolls and the sect which produced* **{84}** *them, especially as the Scrolls relate to the New Testament. His article, "The Dead Sea Sect and Pre-Pauline Christianity"* (Scripta Hierosolymitana, 1958), is *central to any consideration of these problems. He has published numerous articles in Hebrew, German, and other languages, distinguished by a great sensitivity to currents and types of religious thought as well as by their philological analyses.*

Flusser is a member of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities. He was awarded the Israel Prize in 1980 by the state of Israel. His publications include Jesus (German edition 1968, English edition 1970) and *Judaism and the Origins of Christianity* (1988).

Shmuel Safrai, another of the senior members of the Jerusalem School, is professor of Jewish History of the Mishnaic and Talmudic Period at the Hebrew University. He wants to understand the historical context of Jewish life in the time period when rabbinic literature was being composed. This means that he studies all the evidence of that period including the New Testament. Safrai was born in Warsaw in 1919, and at the age of three immigrated to Palestine with his family. He was ordained as a rabbi at age twenty at the prestigious Mercaz Harav Yeshivah in Jerusalem, and later received his M.A. and Ph.D. from the Hebrew University in the fields of Jewish History, Talmud and Bible. He has written twelve books, more than eighty articles and has received many literary prizes for his research, including the 1986 Jerusalem Prize. His publications include *Pilgrimage in the Period of the Second Temple* (1965, in Hebrew), *Rabbi Akiba ben Yosef. His Life and Teachings* (1970, in Hebrew), *The Jewish People in the First Century,* co-editor (2 vols., 1976) and *The Literature of the Sages,* Part I, editor (1987).

Chana Safrai, an orthodox Jewish *sabra* (native-born Israeli), interested in the status of women in the Second Temple period, studies the Jewish historical sources including the New Testament. But as a gifted teacher in both Jewish and Christian circles her interest goes deeper-into those creative formative days of rabbinic Judaism. Past director of the Jerusalem School of Synoptic Research, Chana Safrai is currently the Docent of Talmudica at the Catholic Theological University in Utrecht, Holland, and a member of that University's Jewish-Christian Relations Research Center. She received her B.A. and M.A. from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem in Jewish and Hellenistic History and the History of Jewish Thought, and her Ph.D. on *Women and Temple* from the Catholic Theological University. She is coauthor [with Samuel Belkin] of *The Midrash of Philo* (1989).

{85} Jewish Reasons for Interest in the Gospels

New Testament events bear witness to the spiritual struggles of the Jewish people during the days of terrible oppression by the pagan Romans. This period is as significant for the formation of rabbinic Judaism as for the formation of the Messianic Judaism which developed into Christianity. In the Jerusalem School, Christians and Jews look back together to this period.

Jewish participation is particularly profitable in this scholarly pursuit. Just as some Christians are waking up to the wealth of information available in non-biblical Jewish documents, so Jewish scholars utilize the valuable information contained in the New Testament.

How did people live out their daily lives? What were their religious practices? How did they talk and write about these practices? What languages and what idioms did they use, and what did they mean by them?

What did Jesus say in Hebrew? What was the thought world in which Jesus and his audience lived? What realities of Jewish community life are reflected in the New Testament? What were the student/teacher relationships? What were the issues in that world of oppression and longing for deliverance through a Messiah?

These questions we ask in order to better understand the New Testament.

Conclusion

The work of the Jerusalem School is largely a linguistic and philological task - as is evident from the above questions. We are devoted to getting a clearer understanding of the words of Jesus.

We do not agree with each other about how to interpret the theological significance of our findings. Three of our members are orthodox Jews and the rest of us are personal believers in Jesus. But all of us are agreed on the importance of reliable research methodology aimed at obtaining trustworthy historical evidence for the meaning of Jesus' words.

Postscript

There is a fourth reason I am a member of the Jerusalem School. It relates to *methodology in theology.*

We Christians need to recover balance in our New Testament theology. We have studied the Greek world. We need to study the Jewish world. Since the oldest copies of the New Testament are in Greek, theological scholarship has studied the Greek world. This has been important in the effort to understand the target audience of the Gospel. However, now is the time to **{86}** create a balance which has been lacking in our century. We need a new concentration on the study of the sources. The origin of the sources is not in the pagan world but in the Jewish world of the people of the Bible.

The notion that God chose one man, Abraham, and his descendants, was a notion foreign to the pagan Greek universalism of Jesus' day. This notion is still rejected by most of the world. But God's choice was not a call to status, but to participation in His plan -to use the Jewish people to reveal Himself and to be a blessing to all people.

It has been amazing to us, trained as we were in Greek ways, to discover the Jewish world of Jesus. It is disturbing to realize that we could have drifted so far away from this world. Understanding the Jewish background to the life and words of Jesus helps us focus on what is significantly crucial to His identity. Already present in the Jewish world long before Jesus was born, were biblical Jewish concepts such as "Son of Man," "Messiah," "Suffering Servant" and "Son of God"; but never had they all been united into one figure and lived out in one person. Over many centuries God Himself revealed to the prophets of Israel many new concepts and images. In the person of Jesus these images were focused and fulfilled in one historical figure.

To us Christians both the divine and human sides of Jesus have become clearer. Using Jewish terminology, Jesus shocked His audience: "your sins are forgiven;" "he who does my words," "the Son of Man," "take my yoke," etc. All reveal Jesus' divine nature and the bankruptcy of "humanistic Christianity" which pretends that Jesus never claimed to be divine.

In contrast to Jesus' divinity, "New Age" pantheism teaches the inner divinity of everyone. This is because the world resents the particularity of Jesus as much as it resents the particularity of the Jewish people. This is an ungodly resentment against God's chosen way of salvation.

But this ungodly resentment dissolves when people realize that it is precisely God's great universal love which reaches out to every individual through these individual particularistic choices. The God of Israel has chosen to prove His love in a particularistic way as Immanuel, who reaches out to us all.

Focusing on Jesus' Jewish heritage is what restores balance to New Testament theology. The clearer our perception of the biblical and early rabbinic Jewish heritage of Jesus, the brighter our theological clarity about His identity becomes.

{87} A New Approach to the Synoptic Gospels

Robert L. Lindsey

- Dr. Robert L. Lindsey *concentrated in classical languages and biblical studies at Princeton School of Divinity and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Lindsey's discoveries became the foundation for the Jerusalem School of Synoptic Research. He is a retired Baptist pastor who first came to Israel in 1939.*

{87} It is easy to claim new solutions and new approaches. In the field of New Testament it is much harder to make these claims stick. Some years ago I wrote an article in which I tried to correct the popular view that Mark was the first of our Gospels.[250] When the article was discussed in a seminar at Cambridge, the objection was raised that there was nothing new in my contentions or approach. Perhaps not. Perhaps I am like the ditch digger who took his first look at the Grand Canyon, sighed, and said, "I'm certainly glad I did not see this ditch before I began my work!" Perhaps I am simply unable to find in the enormous mountain of scholarly contributions to our knowledge of the synoptic Gospels the special line of solution and methodology to which I found myself driven as early as 1962. In any case let me set down here, as simply as I can, my reasons for calling the approach new.

New or Modified Observations

I shall start by listing several observations or conclusions arrived at through the past thirty years of my study of the Gospels and their relationships.

1. Extensive parts of our synoptic material show strong evidence of having descended from literal Greek translations of some Hebrew document which included many stories of Jesus' life and sayings. These have been beautifully preserved in much of Luke in particular, but also in parts of Matthew uninfluenced by Mark.

2. There is no evidence that the story and sayings units of our Gospels circulated independently before being written down in a continuous Greek story such as we have in each of our synoptic Gospels. Supposed evidence **{88}** to the contrary is built on careful but much too limited observation of the ever-present factor of verbal disparity.

3. The line of interdependence between our synoptic works runs from Luke to Mark to Matthew. It is not true that Matthew and Luke equally depend upon Mark as a central source.

4. Matthew and Luke were unacquainted with the writings of each other but both knew a source other than Mark and this source included most of the Markan pericopae as well as much other material.

5. Luke does not know the text of Mark, but Mark normally follows Luke in pericope order and just as normally changes more than fifty percent of Luke's wording. Luke uses two sources. The first is an anthologically rearranged document that is sometimes labeled Q, but which I call the Anthology, or Reorganized Scroll. It is best seen in the units Matthew and Luke show that are not parallel to Mark, and in their unique sections. Someone condensed a number of the anthological stories into a short document which gave Luke his basic unit outline. Mark, who can detect in Luke this chronologically arranged short text, follows this Lukan source

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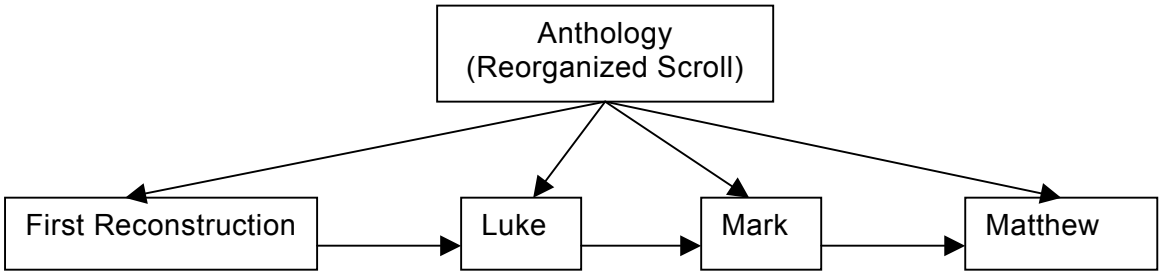
[250] R.L. Lindsey, "A Modified Two-Document Theory of the Synoptic Dependence and Interdependence," *Novum Testamentum* 6, 1963, pp. 239-263.

Influence of the Reorganized Scroll



Although there exists internal evidence within the synoptic Gospels for an earlier Hebrew biography and its Greek translation, the immediate sources of the Synoptics are: 1) the Anthology; and 2) the First Reconstruction. The Anthology is a revision made by dividing the story units of the Greek translation into (1) narrative incidents, (2) Jesus' discourses, and (3) his parables. The First Reconstruction is a short compilation of excerpts from the Anthology. It displays its units chronologically.

Luke is the only synoptist who knows the First Reconstruction directly. Mark, knowing both the Anthology and Luke, is able to ferret out the chronological passages in Luke and thus preserves much of Luke's skeleton of stories. Matthew also knows the Anthology and, like Luke, takes large sections from it, inserting them into the pericope order he borrows from Mark.

Thus, from this standpoint, the three synoptic Gospels point back to only one basic source.

{89} mostly. This condensation I call the First Reconstruction. All the basic synoptic material is derived from the Anthology, which in turn goes farther back to a first Hebrew-Greek source.

6. As a rule Matthew closely follows the pericope order of Mark, but uses the same written source material known to Luke in making minor corrections of Mark's highly redacted text, in recording non-Markan parallels to Luke, and in copying down most of his special or unique passages.

7. The generally common pericope order of our Synoptics is not due to the independent and common use of Mark by Matthew and Luke, but to the fact that Mark broke with Luke's order rarely and Matthew, although acquainted with another unit arrangement through his second source, opted to follow Mark's order in most instances.

8. The real "synoptic problem" is the meaning to be given to the intense verbal disparity running though all the triple material. This disparity has been inadequately assessed. When the full picture is obtained it is clear that one writer only can be responsible for the kind of deliberate, often seemingly capricious, change and rewriting everywhere present.

9. When the literary habits of Mark are examined in isolation from Matthew and Luke it is readily seen that the writer's style includes constant repetition of stereotypic terminology, frequent redundancy, homilizing, dramatizations, and other editorial methods which suggest that the author may well be the evangelist responsible for the unceasing and deliberate verbal change mentioned above.

10. When the hundreds of Mark-Luke synonyms (used in parallel) are examined it becomes clear that Mark first studied the text of Luke before rewriting each pericope, searched for word and subject parallels in other written texts, and finally used these "pick-ups" in writing his own version. By careful concordance studies it is possible to discover the sources of a great many of these "pick-ups." These sources include at least the non-Markan portions of Luke, Acts, the first five epistles of Paul, and the epistle of James.

11. This source analysis is confirmed by the remarkable fact that much of the text of Luke can be translated word by word to idiomatic Hebrew and that the same is true for the non-

Markan portions of Matthew. From the standpoint of this Hebrew translation control it is now clear why the whole text of Mark and most of the materials in Matthew parallel to Mark present much greater difficulties to the Hebrew translator than so many sections of Luke and Matthew. Matthew and Luke copy excellent **{90}** Hebraic-Greek sources wherever they can. It is Matthew's dependence on Mark which causes the essential difficulty in Matthean materials and this difficulty is confined almost totally to the pericopae parallels opposite Mark.

12. By following much of the text of Luke and the non-Markan portions of Matthew the Hebrew translator is able to reconstruct most of the details of the Hebrew text from which our earliest Greek sources were derived. This means that the basic story in our Gospels is textually sound and that there is no reason to deny its essential historicity.

Now it may be that the critic of my earlier article felt I had produced no new evidence for a better approach to the Gospels, but I believe even he would have to admit that the conclusions so baldly stated above are very much unlike most of the things usually said and written about this subject. In order to draw out these differences a little better, it may be helpful to mention some of the principal kinds of criticism scholars have applied to our Gospels and the points at which my suggestions differ with the results of many of these disciplines.

Textual Criticism

Textual criticism has to do with the discovery and establishment of the earliest text of each of our Gospels. It is still an elemental science of great importance in defining our written sources and sometimes in interpreting them.

However, most of the problems in the field of textual criticism may be considered solved. Our Gospels, especially since they are like all ancient works in having been transmitted in manuscript form, have been beautifully preserved.

Source Criticism

This discipline has to do with the delineation of the sources and relationships of our Gospels. It tries to answer questions like the following: Have our evangelists used oral or written sources? What can we surmise about these sources? Are the authors dependent upon the writings of each other? If so, what is the pattern of dependency? If it is true that one writer has used the writings of another how does this affect our knowledge of the earliest forms of Gospel traditions?

A few students continue to devise new source theories, and I am one of them. But, as we know so well, it is usually taken for granted today that Mark wrote our first Gospel. According to this view Matthew and Luke, quite independently, used Mark as a principal source. These writers also used a **{91}** second source called Q. (This is the simplest form of the theory of Markan priority.)[251] Whether Mark knew Q is a question for debate. Both Matthew and Luke have extensive passages which do not parallel each other. Where these come from, various researchers have long suggested, may simply be from a document like Q or Q itself. There is no reason not to posit the anthological "Q" as a source for (1) Matthean-Lukan "Double Tradition," (2) Matthean-Lukan agreements against Mark, and (3) Matthew's and Luke's unique materials.

The division of the synoptic sources into two principal ones is actually based on the observation that Matthew and Luke share with each other and with Mark some 78 recognizable pericope divisions, on the one hand, and, on the other, that Matthew and Luke share a further 36 story or sayings units which may be described as parallel.

In other words, scholars long ago noted that our Gospels share many common stories and that it is possible to divide these into two kinds: those found in all three synoptic Gospels (the 78) and those found only in Matthew and Luke (the 36). The groupings are, respectively, called the Triple and Double Traditions.

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[251] Cf. L. Vaganay, *Le Problème synoptique,* Tournai, 1954, P. 10.

Now, from this fact alone, there is no necessity for supposing that our writers, or at least Matthew and Luke, used two different sources. Indeed the simplest theory would be that Matthew, Mark, and Luke copied from the same source their 78 common pericopae, and that Matthew and Luke then went on to copy 36 more from the same source. Theoretically there is no reason to assume an interrelationship of some kind.

What changes the scene is the addition of two further facts about the 78 and the 36.

If we number the 78 pericopae from 1 to 78, we find that it is possible to say that sixty-one of these appear in the same general order in all three Gospels. We can now talk about a "common pericope skeleton."

On the other hand, if we follow the same procedure with our 36 common Matthean-Lukan pericopae we arrive at the amazing conclusion that only one of these can be said to be given the same place in pericope sequence.

This suggests that Matthew and Luke do not by themselves know where (or at least care where) they place the Double materials but are influenced by Mark in placing many of the Triple pericopae. We must now suppose that our synoptic Gospels are interrelated. Probably Matthew and Luke do not influence the writings of each other, but it seems certain that Mark is somehow in between these works causing a distinct common order.

{92} If we ask how Mark can cause order in this fashion, we can easily arrive at the conclusion that Matthew and Luke have copied from him. They have then copied also from some other source, but, perhaps, due to Mark, they do not follow the order of the second source, but attempt to fit its stories into their borrowed outline from Mark.

This is exactly the way the theory of Markan Priority, otherwise known as the Two-Document Hypothesis, came into being. The document lying behind the Triple material is none other than Mark. The Double material derives from a document which came to be called Q. Almost all New Testament students had accepted this basic division of two sources by the turn of the past century.

Personal Encounter with the Problem

In 1959, taking for granted this accepted conclusion of scholarship, I began a translation of the Gospel of Mark from the Greek text to Hebrew. At first it seemed to me that Mark's Greek was more like Hebrew than Greek. It was relatively easy to translate it by simply establishing the Greek-Hebrew equivalents and then translating word by word from the original. I wondered if Mark had translated his text from some written Hebrew story.

But I soon ran into a strange phenomenon which would not fit such a theory. Mark's Greek text had quite a good number of words which kept appearing and reappearing for which I could find no easy Hebrew equivalent. For instance, I was unable to find a suitable equivalent for the expression "and immediately" which Mark uses over and over again.

This made me wonder if there was any textual evidence that Mark's Gospel may once have existed in a more Hebriac form -one unaccompanied by these odd stereotypes I could not easily translate. I could find no such evidence in the manuscript tradition.

However, I did find an interesting clue when I finally decided to compare the exact wording of Mark, Matthew and Luke. I found that Luke's text showed almost no suggestion of the Markan oddities. For example, the Greek phrase behind Mark's "and immediately" appeared only once in all of Luke's Gospel and this instance occurred in a passage completely unknown in Mark!

Now, Luke has parallels to not less than 82 of Mark's pericopae. If Luke is copying from Mark, I reasoned, how did he know he must leave out exactly those Markan expressions I was having trouble with? And why was he able to avoid more than forty occurrences of "immediately" while using Mark, only to turn around and use this expression once in a passage he could not have copied from Mark?

{93} On the other hand, when I checked the parallels in Matthew, I noticed that he sometimes used Mark's word for "immediately" in exactly the way Mark did or placed another word meaning "immediately" parallel to Mark's use of this word.

It thus looked very much as if Matthew had indeed followed Mark, although for some reason had often refused to copy Mark's stereotypic non-Hebraisms.

But Luke either had not copied Mark or had for some strange reason deliberately rejected each Markan use of certain words. Yet he seemingly had not objected to these words on principle, for he had sometimes used them in passages he could not have copied from Mark.

Checking other Markan expressions which had seemed odd to me as a Hebrew translator, I sometimes found the same pattern.

For instance, Mark began his Gospel with the sentence: "The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." Mark used the word *euangelion,* the Gospel, seven times. Early in his first chapter (verses 14, 15), at a place where Luke simply says that Jesus went to Galilee and taught in the synagogues, Mark writes: "And Jesus went into Galilee and preached the Gospel of God and said ... repent and believe in the Gospel."

Hebrew translators of the New Testament have perhaps always given as the equivalent of *euangelion* the Hebrew *besorah.* Yet in non-Christian Hebrew texts *besorah* never bears the specific kind of meaning Mark intends. *Besorah is* "message" or "good message" but if we translate *euangelion* as *besorah* in the above passage, we leave the Hebrew reader who is not acquainted with New Testament phraseology wondering what this undefined "message" can have been. Nor does Mark ever bother to define *euangelion.*

The epistles of Paul are full of this specific term, but the rest of the New Testament, except for those to be mentioned now, is strangely silent at the places we might expect such a rich expression to appear. Revelation once uses it. Peter's first epistle once employs it. But the Johannine literature, the Epistle of James, Hebrews, and the Gospel of Luke never give it even once. Yet Luke uses it twice in Acts. It appears once in the mouth of Paul and once in the mouth of Peter.

Why did Luke not use *euangeIion* in his Gospel? From Acts we can see clearly that he knew Paul or Peter had used the term. Indeed, all the evidence suggests that Paul coined the word and, at least in our documents, it had not in the early period become a general Christian nomination. But if Luke's sources, including, supposedly, the Gospel of Mark, had borne the term, would Luke have rejected it out of hand? There seems no reason to suppose that he would have done so.

{94} Fascinatingly enough, Matthew, as so often, appears to pick up the term from Mark, using it four times, and usually in the longer phrase "the Gospel of the Kingdom."

Once again a "non-Hebraism" is located in Mark. Checked in Luke, it does not appear. Checked in Acts, it is confined to a two-man usage. Checked in Matthew, it is not rejected completely but is modified, as if the author is not quite sure Mark had a right to use the word.

Clearly, this kind of evidence suggests that Luke has not used Mark. But Matthew has done so. Can it be possible that Luke writes first, using excellent early sources, that Mark copies from him, and that Matthew in turn copies from Mark while perhaps copying also from other materials which make him hesitate to accept every usage of the Markan stereotype?

Mark Secondary to Luke

I now consider that this solution of the interrelationship of our Gospels is the only possible one. The evidence points clearly to the existence of an early Hebrew story of the life of Jesus, from which at least one very literal Greek translation had been made. This Greek document had been copied and spread abroad. At least one version (the Anthology) had appeared which separated many of the more narrative parts of the earlier stories from the teachings of Jesus on this or that occasion and from His supplementary parables given on the same occasion. This new arrangement of the materials on Jesus' life and teaching prompted still another writer to suggest a

shorter and more chronological version (the First Reconstruction). Luke used the First Reconstruction along with the Anthology. Because Mark knew the Anthology he was able to see in Luke's Gospel the chronologically arranged units and separate them from the units of the Anthology. He copied from Luke but constantly changed the wording of Luke's text by the insertion of certain expressions, some of which, like *euangelion,* he picked up from Acts and the Pauline epistles.

Matthew knew the same basic anthological material we see in Luke. He did not know Luke's Gospel except as hints of it came through Mark. He also did not know the short First Reconstruction Luke knew, except as he saw it in Mark. He was much influenced by Mark but knew from his parallels that many of Mark's stereotypes were not quite original. He therefore adopted a method of weaving together the wording of Mark and that of his other source. This resulted in the interesting phenomenon (which we cannot here explore) that in Markan contexts Matthew constantly preserved little phrases and words which match the parallel text of Luke but not that of Mark.

{95} An Early Hebrew Gospel Story

I am often amused today when I begin to think back over my first questions about Mark. I felt the tension between what seemed to be a basically Hebraic-Greek text and the non-Hebraic, repetitious, added, stereotypes. This led me to look for a proto-Mark of some kind. I supposed this proto-text might be found in the history of the textual transmission. But it was not there.

Instead, it lay at my fingertips in Luke, though in two forms: the Anthology and the First Reconstruction.

Yet not in Luke only. Matthew had clearly known materials Luke knew, even when these were parallel to Mark and he was using Mark. Thus Matthew, although later than Mark, was also an important gold mine from which nuggets of early wording could be gathered!

With such a view we are delivered from the closed circle of textual tradition and chronology set up by the Markan hypothesis. The essential source picture is not that of two independent texts - Mark and Q - from which Matthew and Luke have descended (and radically departed in some ways). We are not obliged to talk about a special "theology of Q" which differs from the "theology of Mark." Even more importantly, we are not allowed to see in each Lukan and Matthean divergence from Mark's wording a "theological" break from Markan construction. (If Matthew and Luke deviate in even the slightest way from Mark in Markan contexts, the modern school of "redaction criticism" suspects theological motivation.)[252]

The situation is very different. Luke, and very often Matthew, have preserved remarkable, beautifully-Hebraic texts which can often be translated word by word to elegant Hebrew. These texts clearly antedate Mark's redaction. It is thus our writer Mark who brought about the intense problem of disparity (mainly word disparity) so ever-present in our synoptic comparisons. His methods, which I have discussed elsewhere at length,[253] throw great light on the freedom and value of this fascinating author but are ultimately unimportant in our excavation of the earliest written tradition. It is in Matthew and Luke that we must mainly dig for hidden treasures.

Nor do these Gospels disappoint the researcher. Let him lay the parallel texts of Matthew, Mark, and Luke in front of him. First translate Luke's version to Hebrew, then that of Matthew, and at last that of Mark. Now note whether Mark's special wording has been copied by Matthew. Finally check for Matthean-Lukan agreements in words against Mark, for in them he has clear evidence of the ancient wording.

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[252] Cf. G. Bornkamm, G. Barth and H.J. Held, *Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew,* Philadelphia, 1963; H. Conzelmann, *The Theology of St. Luke,* Philadelphia,1982.

[253] R.L. Lindsey, *A Hebrew Translation of the Gospel of Mark,* 2nd ed., Jerusalem, 1973, pp. 39-56.

In the end, if the student duplicates my own experience, he will find that, as a rule, Luke's text has preserved best the older version. But sometimes

{96} Lindsey's Synoptic Theory

David Bivin

In 1922 William Lockton suggested a theory of Lukan priority. According to his hypothesis Luke was written first, copied by Mark, who was in turn copied by Matthew who copied from Luke as well.'

Forty years later Robert L. Lindsey independently reached a similar solution to the synoptic problem. He proposed a theory of Lukan priority which argues that Luke was written first and was used by Mark, who in turn was used by Matthew who did not know Luke's Gospel.' This theory postulates two non-canonical documents that were unknown to the synoptists - a Hebrew biography of Jesus and a literal Greek translation of that original-and two other non-canonical sources known to one or more of the synoptists.

According to Lindsey, Matthew and Luke, and probably Mark as well, were acquainted with an anthology of Jesus' words and deeds taken from the Greek translation of the Hebrew biography. Luke alone was acquainted with a second source, a Greek biography which attempted to reconstruct the story order of the original Hebrew text and its Greek translation. Mark used Luke while only rarely, if at all, referring to the anthology, while Matthew used Mark and the anthology. Luke and Matthew did not know each other's Gospels, but independently used the anthology. As in the more popular Two-Document Hypothesis, Mark is the middle term between Matthew and Luke.

Lindsey arrived at his theory unintentionally. Attempting to replace an outdated Hebrew translation of the New Testament, he began by translating

the Gospel of Mark, assuming it to be the earliest of the synoptic Gospels. Although Mark's text is relatively Semitic, it contains hundreds of non-Semitisms, such as the oft-repeated "and immediately," which are not present in Lukan parallels. This suggested to Lindsey the possibility that Mark was copying Luke and not vice versa; with further research Lindsey came to his solution to the synoptic problem.

Lindsey's research not only emphasizes the priority of Luke and/or Matthew when using their shared source (the anthology), it draws particular attention to the Hebraic nature of the Greek text of the synoptic Gospels and the importance of translating that text into Hebrew before evaluating it. The recognition of the importance of Hebrew in understanding the Gospels is a new contribution to grappling with the synoptic problem, and is a harbinger of much fruitful research.

1. William Lockton, "The Origin of the Gospels," *Church Quarterly Review 94 (1922), 216-239.* Lockton subsequently wrote three books to substantiate his theory, all published by Longmans, Green and Co. of London: *The Resurrection and Other Gospel Narratives and The Narratives of the Virgin Birth (1924), The Three Traditions in the Gospels (1926),* and *Certain Alleged Gospel Sources: A Study of Q, Proto-Luke and M (1927).*

2. R.L. Lindsey, "A Modified Two-Document Theory of the Synoptic Dependence and Interdependence," *Novum Testamentum 6 (1963), 239-263.*

{97} Matthew will display a word or phrase or whole story unit which is clearly the original. Even Mark will occasionally have hints of an earlier text than Luke, and sometimes Matthew will confirm Mark in this rather neatly. The method is not easy, but it is rewarding.

Form Criticism

Just as the Markan priority theory threw its stifling source blanket over the essential Semitic exploration of our synoptic Gospels, so the emergence of form criticism (some 70 years ago) has brought intelligent Gospel criticism to a grinding halt. New Testament scholars, almost without exception, no longer suppose that we have in our Gospels Semitic materials which take us back to the earliest Jewish-Christian community, but take it for granted that the stories in our documents evolved slowly and orally over several decades before being written down by Mark, then Matthew, and finally Luke.

No scholar today dares open his mouth in agnosticism at this picture. It is said that the early church remembered for a period some of the more famous sayings Jesus uttered. Around these the early catechists and preachers constructed short stories which were used for instructional purposes. In this way a series of short doctrinal and homiletic narratives came into being. These

units were told and retold so often that they took on certain definable "forms" (miracle-stories, announcement-stories, etc.). And all this was done, of course, in Greek.

Finally, around 70 AD, various writers, including our own evangelists, put these floating, oral traditions into writing. In order to make a continued story, say the form critics, our writers were obliged to add to each little narrative unit or saying an historical note of time or place.

It thus results that our Gospels cannot be trusted as real historical material. The only elements which may go back to Jesus Himself are a few of the sayings attributed to Him. Even these have been stamped with the "faith" of the later church and we cannot easily restore their original meaning.[254]

Even scholars who timidly record occasional suspicions that some tiny part of this overwhelming explanation may be in error approach the Gospels as modified form critics. One reads everywhere that the Gospels are a "unique and different form of literature" never known to antiquity. They are "not biography." They are supposed to be expanded sermons, the enlarged and enriched *kerygma* which the apostles and early believers in Jesus had used in calling upon Jews and gentiles to repent and to accept God's new way. "In the beginning was the sermon," one early form critic used to say.[255]

{98} It goes without saying that I cannot fit the results of my own study of the Gospels into this picture.

Take, for example, the insistent evidence that only a theory of written tradition can explain the similarities in pericopae and wording in any justifiable analysis of the interrelations of our Gospels. Before Mark stands Luke, but after Mark, Matthew confirms much of Luke. Mark modifies and redacts Luke and other written sources, but he does so by inserting phrases and words from written sources still discernible. Luke's text, when translated to Hebrew, produces materials which show Hebrew idiom and verbalism and rabbinic sophistication. Matthew's text does so too, both in parallel to Luke and in his special materials.

Why is Luke so often easy to translate to Hebrew, despite a few very dramatic exceptions? Why does Matthew show remarkably Hebraic materials precisely in the passages he gives which are not from Mark?

This evidence and these questions cannot be explained or answered by the theory that our Gospels are compilations of pericope units which developed orally and independently through the telling of them by Greek-speaking teachers. There is no way in which a series of Greek-speaking story-tellers could create, repeat, interpret, modify and retell our Greek stories in such a fashion that, when written down, they can then be translated to the kind of sophisticated Hebrew text we can derive today simply by finding the right Hebrew equivalents and writing them down in the order of the Greek text.

Greek word order is not Hebrew word order. Greek words which are normally used to translate Hebrew words do not bear the same range of meaning when used by a Greek writer as their Hebrew equivalents bear when in use by a Hebrew writer. Anyone who will trouble himself long enough to examine such words as wisdom, behold, brother, son, age, ear, amen, see, sit, stand, man, mouth, all, and dozens of others, will find our Gospels loaded with words which are used with idiomatic Hebrew meanings unknown to ordinary Greek literature of any kind. To suppose that a long line of Greek story-tellers could have produced this Hebrew sophistication is clearly absurd.

The evidence suggests something quite different. Back of our Gospels lie Greek texts which have been literally translated from Hebrew. Our writers have not always preserved the wording of

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[254] For an excellent, short summary of the assumptions of form criticism, see R.C. Briggs, *Interpreting the Gospels,* Nashville, 1969, pp. 74-76.

[255] Lindsey, *ibid., pp.* 19-22, 41.

these documents, Mark being the one author who radically changes wording most; but most of Luke and very much of Matthew can be retranslated to Hebrew with great ease. Moreover, to the extent that we can recover the sources through our Gospels, there is the strongest evidence that the original materials represented a continued story modeled linguistically and literarily on the lines of normal Old Testament narrative.

{99} Like Moses or Saul or Elijah, the story begins either as in Mark, with the advent of Jesus in the shadow of John the Baptist, or as in Matthew and Luke, with stories of His birth and childhood. Events are then recorded, sometimes with notes of place and time and sometimes without these. Direct conversations occur and are recorded. The story moves on with emphasis on things done and said. There is the arrest, the interrogation, the crucifixion, the resurrection, the last instructions of Jesus.

All this is valid Hebrew biography even if we sometimes find we need to join two units (such as the two parables on prayer found respectively in the 11th and 18th chapters of Luke) to get an earlier, obviously connected story. There is no need to apologize for the Gospels as lengthened sermons. That is exactly what they are not.

Basic Errors of Scholarship

The first error of all modern New Testament research is the acceptance of Markan priority. The essential mistake of the Markan hypothesis lies in the naive conclusion that by studying the facts related to pericope order alone it is possible to determine the interdependence of our Gospels.

Pericope order facts are important. But they are of such a nature that we cannot tell from them whether Mark is in the middle because Matthew and Luke independently use his Gospel, or whether Mark has depended upon one of the other synoptic works only to be followed by the third evangelist.

Is the relationship Mark-Matthew-Luke, Matthew-Mark-Luke, or Luke-Mark-Matthew? The common story skeleton could have arisen under any of these solutions.

To settle this question one must add to his observations of pericope order the facts of verbal identity and disparity. Scholarship failed at this point, not so much because it did not notice that there was a problem but because it failed to line up these facts with those of pericope order before arriving at a basic solution to the synoptic question.

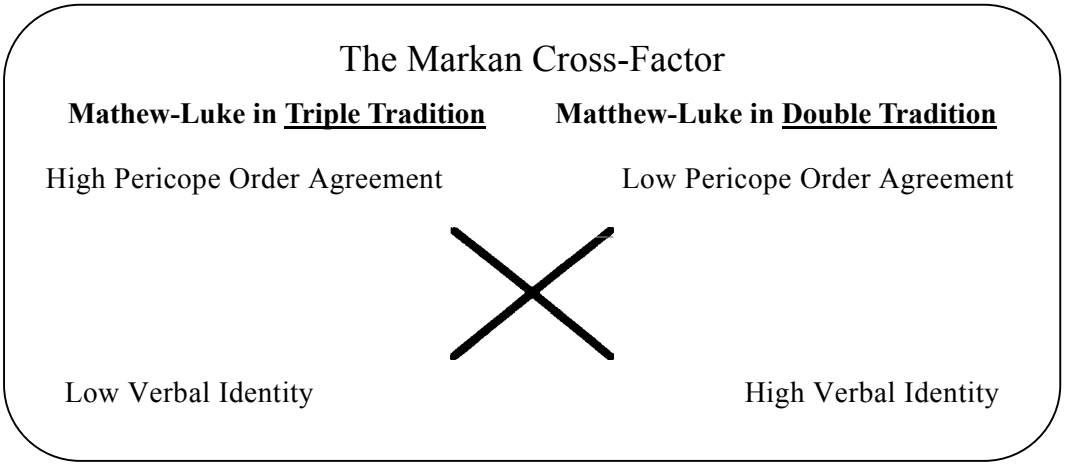
The ghost of this failure lifts its pale face each time a modern scholar learns, to his amazement, that Matthew and Luke appear to be heavily dependent upon Mark's pericope order but radically divergent from Mark's exact wording. The same ghost rises silently in condemnation when scholars habitually and shortsightedly sweep under the rug the Matthean-Lukan agreements in Markan context. Markan priority cannot explain these facts.

In other words, if we study the 36 pericopae that Matthew and Luke share without Mark, we find that their wording is often exact for whole sentences and even paragraphs. But if we study the 78 stories they share with each **{100}** other and with Mark, we find that Matthew and Luke occasionally agree on small words against Mark but never agree for more than a few words with each other, even when Mark has the same wording.

To put it another way, Matthew and Luke are able to copy the words of one of their sources (Q, according to Markan priority) with great exactitude. They cannot copy the other source (Mark, according to Markan priority) without making vast verbal changes! We can call this phenomenon the Markan CrossFactor (as I have suggested in A *Hebrew Translation of the Gospel of Mark),*[256] for it seems clear that Mark stands chronologically between the 78 pericopae of Matthew and Luke, causing both the common pericope order of the Synoptic materials and the severe verbal disparity between Luke and Matthew. It is also observable that in at least 19 of the 36 pericopae Matthew and Luke share from the anthological text (so-called Q), verbal identity is almost exact,

[256] Cf. M. Dibelius, *Die Formgeschichte des Evangeliums,* 1933, pp. 8-34.

whereas with one or two exceptions these 36 do not appear in the same pericope order in Matthew and Luke. Put again, Luke and Matthew share common story-order, normally in common with Mark, but differ verbally with each other rather severely opposite Mark; they agree closely with each other in verbal matters when transcribing their non-Markan parallels, yet disagree in pericope order in these materials. This is the Markan Cross-Factor.



Why do Matthew and Luke show such love for one source and such dislike for another, especially when the second source supposedly provides them with their common order? And how can they independently agree to use many small phrases and words against Mark?

The answer to these questions cannot proceed along the usual lines of the Markan hypothesis. It cannot be true that Matthew and Luke often agree with each other verbally against Mark in Markan contexts if they are only using Mark's text at these points. It is also highly improbable that they could independently come to the exact way of treating one source with verbal respect and the other with verbal disrespect.

Much the simplest answer, if we are to retain any of the insights of Markan priority at all, is to suggest that it is the redactic character of Mark's text **{101}** which brought about the Matthean-Lukan verbal distance in Markan contexts. This will mean that Mark copied from Luke or Matthew, but was followed by one of the other authors, whose work he did not use. This point of view will confirm the Markan priority contention that Matthew and Luke indeed do not know each other. But it will also insist that Matthew and Luke have not equally followed Mark. Instead, Mark has depended upon one and has radically reworded its text in his own version. This rewording has disturbed the third writer and caused the Matthean-Lukan verbal disparity in Triple Tradition material which is so serious.

And how have Matthew and Luke managed to agree in many words with each other against Mark in Markan contexts? Quite simply. One of these writers is using a text known to the other (a document I call the Anthology), but the writer who is chronologically third has also known Mark's divergent text. He has had to try to put Mark's redacted wording together with the earlier form of text which he sees in the Anthology.

Which Gospel, Matthew or Luke, has Mark used?

It is just at this point that, once again, the intense verbal differences must be measured. If we do so, we find that it is between Luke and Mark that the greatest amount of verbal disparity exists.

Indeed this word-divergence is phenomenal. Mark and Luke give story after story in the same order (as a rule), yet they cannot manage to agree on more than 50 percent of the actual words in a story. One is using the text of the other. Yet he is deliberately refusing to copy it word by word.

This verbal divergence is so great that it is even amusing. If Mark uses *ek* (out of), Luke will use apo (from). If Luke uses *ek,* Mark will use apo. If Mark uses "how," Luke will often use "what." If Luke uses "how;" Mark will use "what." If Luke gives "teaches," Mark will use a synonym; yet

Mark uses "teaches" opposite Luke's synonym. There are dozens of examples of this kind of synonymic exchange.

Obviously, the only explanation of this phenomenon is that one writer is changing the text of the other. The modern habit of tracing synoptic divergences to "theological" reasons is an almost hopelessly misleading philological method as applied by many New Testament students today.

It is Mark who fills the bill as the author who deliberately changes the work of another. It is Mark who is constantly editing, homilizing, stereotyping and generally rewriting. Luke is decidedly not this kind of writer, as, of course, neither is Matthew.

{102} Conjectured Process of Gospel Transmission

Outlined by Robert Lindsey

1. *Hebrew Life of Jesus (36-37 AD)* Jesus' words were recorded in Hebrew within about five years of his death. This was a straight-forward Hebrew story, about thirty to thirty-five chapters long, similar to the simple biographies of Elijah and Elisha in the Bible.

2. *Greek Life of Jesus (41-42 AD)* Within the next five years, Greek-speaking congregations outside the land of Israel demanded a Greek translation of this biography. As was typical of the period, the translation was generally slavishly literal. Also, Greek being a less concise language than Hebrew,' the translation was ten to twelve chapters longer than the original.

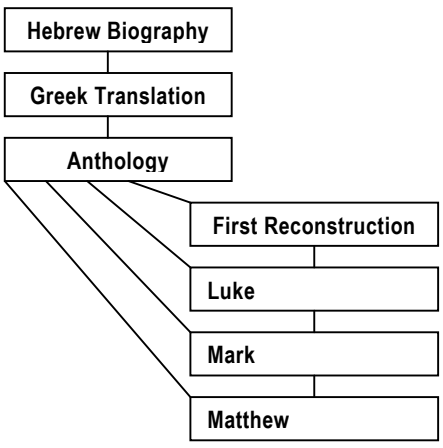
3. *Anthology (Reorganized Scroll) (43-44 AD)* Before the Greek *Life of Jesus* was widely circulated, its contents were reorganized: opening incidents from teaching-context stories were collected and, together with miracle and healing stories, placed at the beginning of the new scroll; discourses from teaching-context stories were collected (often grouped on the basis of common key words) and placed in the second section of the scroll; twin parables, normally the conclusion to teaching-context stories, were collected and placed in the third and final section of the scroll. Thus, parts of the Greek translation were divorced from their original contexts and the original story outline was lost.

4. *First Reconstruction (55-56 AD)* Not long before Luke was written, an attempt was made to reconstruct from the Anthology a chronological record. This resulted in a much shorter version of Jesus' biography (about eighteen chapters), as well as a significant improvement in its quality of Greek. Only Luke of the synoptists seems to have known the First Reconstruction.

5. *Gospel of Luke (58-60 AD)* The author of Luke used both the Anthology and the First Reconstruction in writing his Gospel. As specifically stated in its prologue, Luke's author desired to present an "orderly account" of Jesus' life, and took his cue for much of his story outline (chapters 3-9 and 18-24) from the First Reconstruction.

6. *Gospel of Mark (65-66 AD)* The author of Mark basically reworded Luke's Gospel. He took phrases from Acts, Romans, I & II Corinthians, Colossians, I & II Thessalonians, James and Luke; therefore Mark's Gospel must postdate these books.

7. *Gospel of Matthew (68-69 AD)* The author of Matthew used both Mark's Gospel and the Anthology, trying to be faithful to both when the two sources differed. He did not know the Gospel of Luke.



{103} Quite simply, then, it is Mark who stands chronologically between Luke and Matthew. He is the author who is making constant, radical and deliberate changes of the Lukan text. Matthew, though not completely dependent upon Mark, is much influenced by him. For this reason, where Mark is present, Matthew and Luke can never give many words in common. On the other hand, Matthew and Luke, when not in Markan context, often agree at length on exact wordings.

K.L. Schmidt and Form Criticism

It was, then, the failure to settle the problem of verbal divergence before accepting a final solution of the "synoptic problem" which set all of modern research on the wrong trail. The next wrong turning of great moment came in its wake. In 1919 a German scholar, K.L. Schmidt, published his findings on the *Rahmen,* or framework, of the synoptic Gospels and the world of New Testament scholarship has never been the same since.

Schmidt, in a book of over three hundred pages entitled *Der Rahmen der Geschichte Jesu,* explored the geographical and chronological notations of the common synoptic pericopae and noted their wide divergence. He labeled these and other words of introduction and ending to the pericopae the "framework" of the Gospels. His book followed years of intensive study and proved beyond doubt that the disparity was radical.

His next step, however, was disastrous. Schmidt concluded from the discrepancies in the "framework" that our writers actually knew nothing about the placing and timing of events in Jesus' life. On the whole, therefore, said Schmidt,

> *... there is no such thing as the Life of Jesus in the sense of an unfolding life's story; there is no chronological outline of the story* of *Jesus; there are only individual stories, pericopae, which have been inserted into a framework.*[257]

How did he arrive at such a conclusion? The reasoning is not hard to follow and sounds impressive. Schmidt noted the usual fact that the synoptic Gospels show many parallel stories. Usually (in 61 contexts) these pericopae show the same order. Such a factor can be explained as due to Mark's prior ordering of the stories, Schmidt thought. Sometimes, however (in 17 instances), the order differs. This difference of order can be said to have been caused by the independent decisions of Matthew and Luke to break occasionally from Markan order. But this must then mean that each writer felt free to shift the position of a pericope more or less at will. Probably, therefore, the evangelists did not really know where each pericope belonged historically.

{104} If all this is true, we can think of each pericope as a fixed, independent unit, a kind of page to be used in a loose-leaf notebook. Somehow these units had developed, probably by a long process of oral telling and retelling. Perhaps they were written down now and then as separate little narrative sheets. In any case, by the time our Gospel writers used them they had become the "fixed" tradition which the Greek Church knew by heart.

Now, said Schmidt, how do you make a book out of a series of anecdotes? You lay them out in front of you on separate sheets (or do the same in your memory), decide which ones come first, second, etc., and then proceed to add "connecting-links" which mention place or time according to your own ideas of the general story you wish to tell.

On the basis of this hypothesis, Schmidt then said to himself, "If I investigate these connecting notes and they turn out to differ radically in the Gospel parallels that will no doubt prove that the loose-leaf theory is correct."

The important contribution Schmidt is considered to have made was indeed the investigation of the supposed geographical and chronological "added" notes. He easily showed that the parallel versions of these connecting-links differ greatly. By doing so with the usual

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[257] K.L. Schmidt, *Der Rahmen der Geschichte Jesu,* Berlin, 1919, p. 317.

thoroughness of German scholarship, Schmidt is almost universally supposed to have proven the entire rationality of the form criticism position. But such is not the case.

Schmidt's error lay in treating his "framework" as separate from his "units of tradition." In concentrating on the framework disparity he failed to take account of the much larger problem of total disparity. It does not matter where you start comparing the common pericopae of Matthew, Mark, and Luke: each verse, each phrase, each word must be studied and the same radical verbal divergence is soon seen to be as ubiquitous as cats in Jerusalem. There is no justification at all in pleading that framework disparity is some special kind of disparity. If this is true, Schmidt's careful analysis cannot be used to prop up the theory that our Gospel materials developed as oral units before being written down.

We must say a loud, clear, "No!" to the hypotheses of form criticism. They remain unproven and cannot be proven until the prior problems connected with the verbal dissonance of our Gospels are solved.

The problems of pericope and verbal disparity largely revolve around the presence of Mark. Take Mark out, and Matthew and Luke show unity of approach. Put Mark in, and the whole picture changes. The clue to the synoptic problem lies in Mark's redactic activity as the middle man between Matthew and Luke. We can add that, with Schmidt, we must recognize the possibility that units can be shifted from location to location. The Anthology was not **{105}** itself a narrative, chronological document but presented only parts of earlier, more complete stories.

Markan priorists were on the right track when they saw some of the difference Mark was making in pericope order. They jumped the track when they did not go on to study the pattern of difference Mark was making in verbal order and identity.

In Conclusion

My suggested solution of the synoptic question leads to a very different assessment of the Gospels than is common to scholarship today. One of the results of this new way of looking at the story is the anachronous fact that we can see far more divergence between Matthew, Mark and Luke (but especially between Mark and Luke) than ever before, yet this disparity is of much less serious a nature than scholars have heretofore supposed.

Only one writer is the principal cause of the divergence and his literary method of dramatizing, replacing and exchanging words and expressions does not suggest that he has special "theological" interests. We see more disparity but it means less. Mark's methods may be very foreign to us, but they are common in the Jewish literary *genre* know as Midrash.

When we comprehend the synoptic relationships in this way, we have no further need to apologize for the seeming shakiness of the basic Gospel account. The story is sound. We have nearly two hundred excellent story and sayings units, and these cover all but about five percent of our total synoptic material. The historical character of the earliest account is assured by the remarkable Hebraic-Greek materials of Luke and Matthew. Even the minor agreements of Matthew and Luke against Mark demonstrate the value of the earlier sources.

In the original story there is theology. There is eschatology. There is Christology. It rings with the sonnance of Hebrew. Jesus' teaching, translated to Hebrew, takes on new meaning as tiny hints of Old Testament contexts are revived. His conversations teem with terminology taken from the rabbis and, sometimes, Qumran. Jesus himself heals like Elisha but forgives like the Son of God. He exorcises demons, treading on the head of the serpent. He searches for the sinner and the outcast as the God of Ezekiel sought for and delivered the lost sheep of Israel. He prophesies, challenges, preaches and exhorts as did the God of the prophets.

The story is laconic, brief, non-dramatic, like all Hebrew narrative, and cannot therefore be understood completely in Greek or in any later translation; but it is basically sound. Jesus is from Nazareth but comes to the Jordan and Judea **{106}** to identify with John's baptism of repentance. He goes back to Galilee, as Luke says, alone, to teach and heal in the little

blackstone synagogues. His fame spreads and He returns to Judea for a teaching period. When He arrives again in Galilee, He begins to call for those who will itinerate with Him and later chooses twelve from them. He sends them out to preach that the Kingdom has come with his appearance, to heal and to exorcise demons. He teaches his disciples and begins to prophesy of His own rejection in Jerusalem. Finally He makes a last journey to Jerusalem; the things that happen in this city are given in much detail. He is crucified and buried, but is resurrected. After his resurrection, He talks to these who "have been with him in His trials" (Lk. 22:28), warns them, bids them farewell, tells them to wait for God's coming new direction. He ultimately leaves them as He ascends to heaven from the Mount of Olives.

This is the story that still is a story. It is Hebrew biography at its best despite the obvious apocopation and pericope realignment our writers have been forced to make. If we study it sufficiently and use the right tools as we do so, it will yield its treasures like a rediscovered cave full of scrolls in a dry wadi.

"Recovering the 'Inspired Text'?"

A Response

David Bivin

- David Bivin *is editor and publisher of* JERUSALEM PERSPECTIVE*, and past director of the Jerusalem School of Synoptic Research. Bivin has lived in Israel for twenty-nine years.*

{107} In his article, Michael Brown calls *Understanding the Difficult Words of Jesus* "a unique book:" Although Brown did not intend this as a compliment, his words are a fitting tribute. The appearance of *Understanding the Difficult Words of Jesus* provided the momentum which led, three years later, to the Jerusalem School's creation as a legal entity. Thus, despite its imperfections, many of us are delighted the book was written.

Understanding the Difficult Words of Jesus is privileged to have received two extensive, scholarly reviews. This in itself is an accomplishment for an unpretentious book written for lay audiences. The first was written by Dr. Weston W. Fields (now a member of the Jerusalem School) and published in 1984 in *Grace Theological Journal (Vol.* 5, No. 2). The second was written by Brown and appears in this issue of *MISHKAN.*

A Vacuum Filled

When the book was written, in 1982, almost nothing of the Jerusalem School's scholarship was available for the non-specialist. *Understanding the Difficult Words of Jesus* was a hurried attempt to fill that vacuum. The book was written during a two-month period and did not receive proper editing. This partially explains its occasional lapses into polemic (especially in Chapter Two, pp. 25-27, titled "The Assumptions of Liberal Scholarship" in which we attacked a 1974 survey of the New Testament). I apologize for this lack of sensitivity. The polemical passages have been deleted from the recently published Spanish edition of *Understanding the Difficult Words of Jesus*, and will also be deleted from the next edition of the English version.

For a more adequate general introduction to the School's research than that provided by *Understanding the Difficult Words of Jesus*, readers can now **{108}** refer to the many articles by Jerusalem School members which have appeared since 1987 in the bimonthly journal JERUSALEM PERSPECTIVE.

No Contest

Brown sidesteps the issues raised in *Understanding the Difficult Words of Jesus*. His decision not to "interact here with all the examples of supposed mistranslations and misinterpretations" (p. 51) perhaps demonstrates his inability to argue effectively against the suggestions proposed by the authors. This decision is unfortunate since mistranslation and misinterpretation is mainly what the book is all about, as its title implies.

When Brown does mention one of our interpretations, it is easily dismissed as "farfetched" (note 77), or as being already known for decades and "readily adduced from Septuagintal usage ... or even from the Greek New Testament itself" (note 60). If Brown is right, one might ask why, for instance, the understanding of Matthew 6:22-23 advocated by the authors, "If your eye is good /bad [i.e., generous, stingy];" is not reflected in English versions of the Bible? Only James Moffatt translates "good eye" as "generous." Other versions translate using the adjective "good," "single," "sound," "clear," or "pure." Weymouth's otherwise fine translation has the absurd "If your eyesight is good."

On the other hand, in defending his own position, Brown relies on the opinions of others such as Neusner's view that rabbinic literature should be discounted, those of scholars who favor an Aramaic or Greek *Vorlage* as opposed to Hebrew, and of the advocates of Markan priority. He does not counter the interpretations suggested in *Understanding the Difficult Words of Jesus,* interpretations which show how helpful a knowledge of Hebrew and

rabbinic literature can be in understanding the sayings of Jesus. Brown challenges our interpretations in only one instance (see discussion below).

Inspiration of Scripture

Brown artificially introduces a theological controversy - the doctrine of inspiration of Scripture. This may be seen as yet another attempt to avoid the real debate. A word of caution to the reader: the Jerusalem School of Synoptic Research is not a Christian organization; its membership includes both Jewish and Christian scholars. The School's Jewish members do not view the New Testament as canonical or inspired. We hope that Christian readers can understand this and that they, like the Christian members of the Jerusalem School, can still benefit from the vast resources and insights that our Jewish colleagues bring to Gospel research.

{109}We Christian members of the Jerusalem School certainly do believe the canon of Scripture is complete. The School's Jewish members also think it is complete, but completed long before the books of the New Testament were written.

None of the School's members would want to suggest that the Hebrew gospel, which according to church tradition was written by the apostle Matthew, should be added to the canon. In any event, this book is not extant. Although one occasionally hears rumours of the discovery of a portion of the New Testament written in Hebrew or Aramaic, there is not a single extant Hebrew language manuscript from the early Christian era of any of the New Testament books. The Hebrew gospel that Matthew is reported to have written is apparently another of the many Jewish books that were lost in the destruction of the Second Jewish Commonwealth.

While scholars of the Jerusalem School have concluded that the first account of Jesus' life was written in Hebrew, probably by one of Jesus' original disciples, they recognize that all the books of the canonical New Testament, including the synoptic Gospels, were written in Greek. The existence of an early Hebrew life of Jesus can at this time be nothing more than conjecture. On the other hand, study has consistently shown the importance of recognizing the Hebraic background of the Gospels, and the Jerusalem School firmly believes that a Hebraic perspective is a key to better understanding these documents.

The scholars of the Jerusalem School do not believe that the conjectured Hebrew gospel of Matthew can ever be fully and accurately reconstructed. Probably none of the canonical Gospels has preserved all the stories that were in Matthew's Hebrew biography. For example, the parable of the prodigal son appears only in Luke's Gospel. If we assume that this parable was part of the original Hebrew composition and that all or some of the other authors of the New Testament Gospels knew a Greek form of it, then these other writers have chosen to omit the parable from their accounts.

Nor is it likely that Luke copied all the stories he found in his sources. Luke's Gospel does not contain stories such as Matthew's parables of the hidden treasure, the pearl, the dragnet, the unmerciful servant, the labourers in the vineyard, the two sons, the marriage feast and the ten maidens. Thus, a good **{110}** possibility exists that there were a number of stories in the first Hebrew gospel which were omitted by all the canonical Gospel writers.

These stories have been lost, while those preserved in one or more of the canonical Gospels cannot usually be reconstructed in Hebrew with perfect confidence. Because our present knowledge of first-century Hebrew and Greek is defective, the task of retranslating the Greek of the Gospels to Hebrew is not easy.

There is no reason to doubt that the canonical writers used sources. We have biblical evidence that they did. The author of Chronicles, for instance, took approximately half of his work from the books of Samuel and Kings. Other writers used non-canonical works, some extant and some not (I Kings 11:41; 14:19, 29). If any of these lost sources were to come to light, they would be helpful in better understanding the canonical text.

Even without new manuscript discoveries scholars sometimes are able to identify the lost sources used by a canonical author by analyzing existing manuscripts. Lindsey has been able, for instance, to isolate two hypothetical sources used by the author of Luke, and to further delineate an even earlier Greek ancestor of the Gospel of Luke, the Greek translation of the Hebrew life of Jesus.

Pursuing Righteousness

Brown contests the authors' interpretations just once, when he claims that we have proposed interpretations based on "faulty treatment of the Greek" (p. 51, note 86). He gives, however, only one example of such faulty treatment: Matthew 5:10, "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (KJV). The authors suggested that this beatitude should be translated "Blessed are those who pursue righteousness" echoing the fourth beatitude which speaks of those who "hunger and thirst for righteousness." We also suggested that it is a mistake to translate this beatitude using the word "persecute," just as it would be a mistake to translate Isaiah 51:1 as "Listen to me, you who persecute righteousness...." Brown criticizes our exegesis of this verse on three counts: we "adduce from the Greek text that believers are to seek persecution"; we do not mention "the fact that Greek *dioko is* semantically equivalent to Hebrew *radap*"; we retrovert a Greek passive form into a Hebrew active form.

The first criticism is completely inaccurate. Nowhere did we suggest that believers are to seek persecution. We suggested the opposite. We also suggested that a misunderstanding of this beatitude has caused many Christians to see religious merit in suffering persecution.

{111} The second criticism is related to a very technical discussion which is best omitted from a popular book. Brown's statement that Greek *dioko* is semantically equivalent to Hebrew *radap* is simplistic. Liddell and Scott's *A Greek-English Lexicon* does not show the meaning "persecute" for this Greek word except in citations from the Gospels. Moulton and Milligan *(The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament Illustrated from the Papyri and Other Non-Literary Sources)* cannot illustrate it from the hundreds of thousands of Koine Greek papyri discovered in Egypt. A cursory examination of Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich (*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*) will not do. Most of Bauer's examples of *dioko* = "persecute" come from the New Testament, and those he cites from outside the New Testament are mistakes: 1 Maccabees 5:22 ("he pursued them to the gate of Ptolemais"); 1 Enoch 99:14 ("shall pursue after the wind); Antiquities 12:272 ("pursued the Jews into the wilderness"). Apparently, instances of this usage usually come from Jewish Greek or translation Greek, that is, Greek written for Greek-speaking Jews or Greek translated from Hebrew or Aramaic. For a thorough treatment of this suggested mistranslation (originally put forward by Flusser and Lindsey), see the article "Pursuing Righteousness" by Jerusalem School member and United Bible Societies consultant, Randall Buth, in the May/June 1991 issue of JERUSALEM PERSPECTIVE.

Brown's third criticism, which assumes that a Greek passive form should never be translated into an active Hebrew form, shows insufficient knowledge of Greek and Hebrew. Our suggestion that the Greek word normally translated "persecuted" be here understood as active in meaning is perfectly legitimate. As Buth points out *(ibid., p.* 11), the Greek οι δεδιωγμένοι not only can be passive (those pursued/ persecuted), it also can be reflexive (those pursuing/ persecuting [for themselves]).

Misleading Statements

Brown's article is characterized by misleading statements. Brown seems to be guilty of the very offenses of which he accuses us: overstatement and exaggeration. His suggestion that the authors put more stock in the words of Rabbi Akiva than in those of Jesus (p. 47) is preposterous. Nowhere in the book is such an idea stated or implied. This fallacy of *argumentum ad populum,* employed to discredit the authors in the eyes of Christian readers, is a further attempt to evade the issues.

Brown sometimes misleads the reader by making statements which he then later contradicts. He states in one place, "It is true that most New Testament scholars have not also been competent Semitists" (note 58). In another place, however, he argues that New Testament scholars have "used rabbinic texts quite freely -for well over a century" (p. 48). If the first statement is true, the **{112}** second cannot be. It is simply not possible to use rabbinic texts without a high degree of fluency in both Hebrew and Aramaic. Many of the sources which make up the "sea" of rabbinic literature have still not been translated to English. Many still have no printed concordance. Most have not been produced in a critical edition, making it necessary for scholars to use photographs of handwritten manuscripts.

Two Central Assumptions

While Brown endeavours to counter two central assumptions of the Jerusalem School - the language used in writing the original biography of Jesus was Hebrew and rabbinic literature provides important background to the Gospels - he introduces into his article quotations which undercut his position. For instance, in the final endnote of his article (note 99), Brown quotes Michael O. Wise of the University of Chicago's Oriental Institute: "If the early believers in Jerusalem wrote about Jesus' life and ministry in a Semitic language for other Palestinian Jews, they would have written in late biblical, or, mishnaic Hebrew." When Brown refers to rabbinic literature, he quotes the marvelous statement John Lightfoot penned in 1658 (note 57):

> *I have ... concluded without the slightest hesitation that the best method to unravel the meaning of the many obscure passages of the New Testament is through research into the significance of the sayings in question in the ordinary dialect and way of thinking of the Jews ... And this can be investigated only by means of consulting the authors of the Talmud.*

This is also the view of the Jerusalem School and an excellent description of much of its methodology.

Which Chapter Was Deleted?

Brown repeatedly states that Chapter 8 of *Understanding the Difficult Words of Jesus* was deleted from the book's Spanish edition (p. 51; notes 59, 73). This assertion is incorrect. It is apparently repeated because it can be used as proof that the interpretations put forward in Chapter 8 are incorrect and have perhaps been retracted. However, the section deleted from the book's Spanish edition was not Chapter 8, "Theological Error Due to Mistranslation," but Chapter 7, "Recovering the Original Hebrew Gospel" (pp. 93-103). The authors felt that Chapter 7, which deals with synoptic theory and textual transmission, was too technical for the general reader.

Conclusion

Brown has failed to show that the examples of mistranslation and misinterpretation presented in *Understanding the Difficult Words of Jesus* **{113}** are incorrect. He also has failed to do what he set out to do as suggested by his title - assess the work of the Jerusalem School. This failure is due to the fact that he has critiqued a popularly written book rather than the scholarly writings of the School. It is inexplicable that Brown would choose to evaluate the School's research on the basis of an early attempt at popularization rather than on the basis of the technical writings of the School's members, especially of its senior members. This reveals the tendentious nature of Brown's article.

{115} "It Is Said to the Elders"

On the Interpretation of the So-Called Antitheses in the Sermon on the Mount

David Flusser

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This article is translated from "'Den Alten ist gesagt': Zur Interpretation der sog. Antithesen der Bergpredigt," which appeared in Judaica 14/1 (1992).

One cannot discuss the Sermon on the Mount often enough.[258] The more one studies the Jewish sources, the clearer the meaning of these words of Jesus becomes.

The central passage of Jesus in Matthew 5:17-48 gives, even at first glance, a very Jewish impression. At the same time, however, the external form of this sermon can give the dangerous and deceiving impression that it sharply opposes the spirit of Judaism. Some time ago a critical voice sent me his thesis in which he concluded that the only original material in this exegetical homily was exactly the antitheses. Recently, we could read in a New Testament commentary that in this pericope Jesus is contrasting not the interpretation of Scripture in his days, but the Torah itself.[259] This by no means indicates that Jesus opposed the Torah, but rather that the Torah is suspended by him. We will here shortly treat this matter more carefully and fairly than many unconcerned exegetes do when they analyze Jesus' words.

There exists a strange contrast between the Jewish contents of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount and its antithetic form. The main reason for this is the repeated use of the term "But I say to you!" I will not in apology decontaminate this term. It existed in Greek form already in Matthew's source. We also find it in Luke 6:27 before the command to love one's enemies. There it expresses the contrast between those addressed by Jesus' cries of woe and his listeners: "But to you that listen, I say...." It is noteworthy that the emphatic "I" is missing in the text of Luke, as this word is not separately needed in Greek. The same **{116}** "I" is also missing in the Sermon on the Baptist (Matt. 3:9; Luke 3:8) and even in Matthew 5:20. Only in our pericope do we find this additional "I" (Matt. 5:22, 28, 32, 34, 44).[260] One can therefore suppose that Matthew has inserted this emphatic "I" in these verses, in order to call special attention to the antitheses.

In my article on the Torah in the Sermon on the Mount (note 1), I discussed the method of Jesus in the "exegetical homily". Jesus here uses the rabbinical rule *qal wahomer,* where one concludes from the lighter to the heavier, from the small and lesser to the more important, or also the other way around from the important to the lesser.[261] The last two sections of this homily represent an exception. Instead of making a saying ethically sharper, Jesus objects to

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[258] Cf. D. Flusser, "Die Tora in der Bergpredigt," *Entdeckungen im Neuen Testament,* Bd. 1, Neukirchen, 1987, pp. 21-31.

[259] W.D. Davies and D.C. Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew,* ICC, Edinburgh, 1988, pp. 505-509.

[260] Matt. 16:18; Luke 11:9; 16:9 as well as Matt. 21:27 (= Matt. 11:33, Luke 20:8) have nothing to do with our subject.

[261] W. Bacher, *Die exegetische Terminologie der jüdischen Traditionsliteratur,* Darmstadt, 1965, vol. I, pp. 172-174; vol. II, pp. 189-190.

inhuman interpretation of two biblical sayings. In both cases the scribes could not have been Jesus' opponents.

In the first case (Matt. 5:39-42) Jesus, together with the Pharisees, objects to a too literal understanding of Exodus 21:24 ("an eye for an eye"). The opponents are probably represented by the Boethusians, an offshoot of the Sadducees. The second case is the last part of this teaching passage (Matt. 5:43-48), an abstruse paraphrase of the command of love in Leviticus 19:18. This would have been an abomination to any scribe, because it does not express the intention of the Jewish message; it rather represents the vulgar teaching of retaliation. In the Greek text of Matthew 5:43 it is written "You have heard that it is said: love your neighbour and hate your enemy." Such an inhuman command of love is not to be found in the Hebrew Bible. How then did this coarse paraphrase of Leviticus 19:18 originate? Leviticus 19:18 only says "Love your neighbour as yourself." The word *neighbour* in biblical Hebrew also has the meaning *friend.* Thus the Hebrew source was thought by many to mean "Love your friend and hate your enemy." The translator of the Hebrew source of Matthew has obviously taken this Greek saying from the Septuagint of Leviticus 19:18 without any serious reflection.

The opinion that one should love one's friend and hate one's enemy is still with us today. It was a common ethical rule among the early Greeks. Socrates unsuccessfully opposed it. The closest parallel to the pseudo-quotation in **{117}** Matthew 5:43 is a saying by the Greek Archilochos (650 BO: "I know to love the friend and hate the enemy."[262] Although today the command to love the friend and hate the enemy seems non-Jewish, this understanding of Leviticus 19:18 does represent one exegetical method of those days. It was evidently a group of Sadducees with whom Jesus disputed, who held that the Bible said: "You shall love your friend as yourself. You shall love him who is close to you, as your friend." Or rather: "Treat the other as he treats you-the friend with love, the enemy with hate."

Shortly, the following theory was postulated:[263] As the antitheses contrast the Torah of Moses, we do not need contemporary Jewish sources to understand this controversy. Against this we have to counter that in the Sermon on the Mount Jesus explicitly mentioned the opinion of the "elders" (Matt. 5:21, 33).

The first case is especially important and instructive:[264] "You have heard that it is said to the elders: You shall not kill! And if anyone does kill he must answer for it before the court" (Matt.5:21-22). Jesus regards this as unsatisfactory. He wants to direct this rule against the person who is angry with his brother. Similarly, we read in a Jewish passage in the Gospel of Matthew's contemporary, the Didache: "My child, flee from every evil man and from all like him. Be not proud, for pride leads to murder..." (Did. 3,1-2). The opinion of Jesus, which already existed in Jewish circles, is thus a sharpening of the Torah against the attitude of the "elders."

At the time of Jesus the ten commandments, or at least Exodus 20:12, taught the basic regulations without giving concrete instruction as to their implementation. An early rabbinic commentary on Exodus 20:12 ("you shall not kill, you shall not commit adultery, you shall

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[262] Archilochos Pap. Ox. 22,2310 in A. Diehle, *Die Goldene Regel,* Göttingen,1962, pp. 32-33. Diehle also gives other important references. This harsh ethic can also be documented in the early period of ancient Israel. When David mourned over his son Absalom, Joab walked into the house of the king and reproached David: he had dishonoured those who had saved his life, "You love those who hate you and hate those who love you. You have made it clear today that the commanders and their men mean nothing to you" (2 Sam. 19:7). The Qumranic parallel to Matt. 5:43, to love the neighbour and hate the enemy (1QS I,3-4 and 9-11; cf. also Josephus, Bell. 2, 139), has another presupposition, the ethical dualism of the Essenes.

[263] See note 2.

[264] For this and the following I thank my student Sergeij Ruzer. To Matt. 5:21 see especially McNamara, *The New Testament and the Palestinian Targum to the Pentateuch,* Analecta Biblica 27, Rome, 1966, pp. 126-131.

not steal") states that this passage is a general warning against these offences. On the commandment "You shall not kill," the commentary says:

> *Why was this said? Because it was said: "Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed" (Gen. 9:6). Consequently, in Genesis 9:6 we have perceived the punishment, but not heard the warning that is expressed in Exodus 20:12 in the words "You shall not kill".* [265]

Genesis 9:6 is interpreted in the same way in the Targumim. *Targum Onkelos* to this Genesis passage runs,

> *Whoever sheds the blood of man -and this is confirmed by witnesses- is deemed guilty by the judges. And whoever sheds the blood of man without witnesses, the Lord himself will punish him at the last judgment.*

With the support of Genesis 9:6 the warning against manslaughter is made into a general law: He who kills, shall be deemed guilty by the court.

{118} The "elders" are therefore justifiably mentioned in Matthew 5:21. Jesus here reviews the rabbinic opinion: Exodus 20:12a should be interpreted together with Genesis 9:6. Does the same hold true for the second mention of the "elders": "You have heard that it is said to the elders, do not break your oath, but keep the oaths you have made to the Lord?" Here it is stated that we should keep our oaths, that they will not be false oaths. The saying is therefore directed against making an oath hastily. In contrast, Jesus holds -like the Essenes (Josephus, Ant. 2:195)- that one should never utter an oath, because this so easily leads to a false oath. The ruling of Jesus is consequently a sharpening. It neither abolishes the opinion of the elders cited by Jesus nor the biblical commandment itself.

The fact that the "elders" are mentioned only in Matthew 5:21 and 33 points to the reliability of what is transmitted. Redactional changes in the text are not excluded. Indeed, the opposite occurs. Because the word "elders" correctly appears in both cases, the difficult phrase "You have heard that it is said to the elders" (which is hardly comprehensible in its Hebrew context) can be traced to its original meaning. "It is said" is in rabbinic literature the most commonly used quotation formula in referring to the Hebrew Bible.[266] The formula "It is said" is placed before the biblical quotations in Matthew 5:27, 31, 38, 43. The "elders" would in those places be a disturbing element.[267] The phrase "You have heard that it is said to the elders" is not clear. The suggested translation, "You have heard that it is said by the elders" cannot be the correct solution, neither from the standpoint of content nor from a linguistic point of view. If, by the "elders," Moses or his contemporaries or the rabbis were intended, then Matthew would have expressed this explicitly. One may possibly suppose that this phrase in Matthew 5:21 and 33 originated through a combining of two previously independent formulas, namely the quotation formula "It is said" and the introductory formula "You have heard from the elders."[268]

Concerning the formula "But I say to you," one need hardly say more than the above. As we have seen (especially in the context of Luke 6:27), this formula is, in Greek, not so emphatic and antithetic as most translations suggest. With the Vulgate one should render it "Yet I say to you." The emphatic "I" in the formula has been demonstrated as secondary.

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[265] *Sifra* to Lev. 15:33.

[266] See *Mechilta to Exodus* 20:12, ed. S.H. Horovitz/I.A. Rabin, Jerusalem, 1960, pp. 232-233.

[267] See W. Bacher, *Die exegetische Terminologie,* 1,6 and 2,11-12. Already Bacher (1,6; note 1) perceived that this rabbinic formula appears in Greek in our passages.

[268] In the case of Matt. 5:43 we have a pseudo-quotation, originating through a combination of Lev.19:18 and its barbarian interpretation. I cannot see how one could have inserted "the elders" here. Furthermore, the inhumane interpreters are not "the elders," that is, not the representatives of rabbinic Judaism, but certain Sadducees who have been influenced by the vulgar Greek ethics.

{119} Thus we see that the full meaning of the words of Jesus can be attained only through the method of consequent philology, not through critical realism.

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{121} Talmudic Literature as an Historical Source for the Second Temple Period

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A major issue in New Testament scholarship has been the relevance of talmudic literature to New Testament Studies. The "sceptics" hold that the words of the sages usually must be dated so late (third-sixth centuries) that they cannot cast light on gospels and epistles from the first century. Those sceptics who agree that some (or many) rabbinic traditions go back to the time of Jesus, argue that it is impossible to prove which are the traditions that have such early roots. Consequently, we are unable to use them with any certainty in New Testament exegesis. And it is risky to state that this or that saying of Jesus (or some New Testament writer) presupposes a Jewish tradition that we know from the later rabbinic literature.

The Jerusalem School of Synoptic Research belongs to the other trend, which is confident that rabbinic literature must be used in order to enhance our understanding of the New Testament. The New Testament is very much a Jewish book of the first century. It would be irresponsible to interpret it without using every Jewish source available.

The thesis of this article is that talmudic literature, used in a careful way, can provide trustworthy historical material pertaining to the Second Temple Period. If we can prove this general thesis, the consequences for New Testament scholarship are obvious.

Characteristics of Talmudic Literature

Talmudic literature contains extensive facets of Jewish life from the Second Temple Period until the Byzantine and shortly thereafter. It includes **{122}** halakhic (legal) and aggadic (non-legal, ethical and narrative) passages, homilies and homiletic fragments, biblical exegesis, debates between sages themselves and debates between sages and laymen, sectarians or gentiles. It also includes a certain number of historical traditions. The talmudic tradition has come down in nearly every literary form: direct sayings, stories, homilies, parables, poetic fragments, pure fiction, folk sayings and many more. Obviously one cannot construct a continuous historical framework for the Second Temple Period or the period after the destruction of the Temple on the basis of talmudic sources. Talmudic literature did not intend to relate the history of the Jews in an orderly fashion. Many of the decisive events in Jewish history appear in the literature in the form of homiletical narrative, merging events that took place at different times such as during the destruction of the First Temple and the Second and even during the Trajanic Revolt (112-115 CE) and the Bar Kochba Revolt (132-135 CE). Also, halakhic pronouncements have often come down in the form of combinations of different levels and different periods, and sometimes from different and even conflicting schools. Obviously the tradition often relates aggadic passages and prayers in a fused form, combining different levels of traditions from many generations.

The Oral Law is just that - an oral tradition - a tradition that was alive and taught in the various study houses and transmitted with additions and changes from the teachings of sages of later generations. The products of the editing of the collections of talmudic literature have not reached us in the form they were given by the sage or school which produced them. These collections- starting with the editing of the Mishna in the third century CE and the other collections that were edited afterwards-remained in principle oral literature throughout the talmudic Period; and the transmitters did not refrain on occasion from adding or detracting

elements in the course of teaching and passing on the tradition - or even changing and replacing the ancient sages in whose names the traditions were given. The literature does not include political history or geographical, socio-cultural history of the kind found in Greco-Roman histories or that written by the early church fathers or even of the kind that was written in the historical literature of ancient Israel, in biblical books such as Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings or in the apocryphal Books of Maccabees. Such books may have been written by writers who were close to the world of the sages, much like the apocryphal books of the Vision of Ezra and the Syriac Baruch, which were preserved only in the tradition of the Christian church and not through the Jewish tradition. If not for the tradition of the church we would not even know that these books existed. However we have no historical books in the extensive tradition of talmudic literature. The closest thing we have are the works *Seder Olam Rabba* and *Seder Olam Zuta,* which, as important as they are, constitute no more than chronicles providing names and certain details in a chronological order.

{123} There are no complete historical books in the talmudic tradition, but there is a wealth of varied information from all facets of public and private social life and spiritual life in the Temple, the synagogue and the house of study. Likewise we can glean facts from talmudic literature regarding trade and economics, agriculture, craftsmanship, the life of the sages and of the common man, urban-rural relations and relations between Eretz Israel and the Diaspora. The halakhot, aggadot, dialogues and debates reflect both the home and the marketplace, the wealthy and the poor, weekdays, sabbaths and festivals-in fact every aspect of human life in all its variety and forms of expression.

Similarly the aggadic literature refers to all the aspects of life. The great wealth of talmudic literature sometimes enables us to reconstruct the reality of the period in all its sociopolitical, sociospiritual and personal complexities and struggles. There are certain issues which are arranged in an orderly fashion in one work, such as the Temple in Mishna Middot and Tamid in Yoma (relating the service of the Day of Atonement in great detail). Information on other subjects, such as charity, education and the teaching of Torah to children, are scattered throughout the literature and interspersed in various contexts in halakhic collections and in aggadot, stories, homilies, introductory homilies, sayings and parables.

Talmudic literature as an Historical Source

How can talmudic literature be used as a source to describe the historical reality of the Second Temple period, which preceded the first redaction of this literature by 150 years? Perhaps talmudic literature cannot be used as a relevant source for the Second Temple period?

In the writing of Jewish history since the Middle Ages, many writers accept every tradition, no matter how exegetical or homiletical, as a genuine historical fact and incorporate the talmudic source verbatim or in rewritten form. To this day many writers who received traditional education continue in the same fashion. But not only these traditional scholars retain these methods. There are also scholars who have received philological and historical-critical training, but when they encounter traditional Jewish sources they tend to accept them en bloc or nearly so and treat them as reliable evidence for a concrete socio-intellectual world, preferring them to Josephus or other sources.

These are relatively few, but on the other hand there are many more scholars today who tend to minimize or negate entirely the importance of talmudic sources for the period after the Temple and even more so for the Second Temple period. Attempts have been made to argue that sources which were redacted **{124}** no earlier than the beginning of the third century, and in most cases later on, cannot be reliable testimony for the historical reality of the Second Temple period. Therefore many scholars claim that the later rabbinic material cannot be used to illuminate New Testament texts and theological/ halakhic material contained in the New Testament writings.

Similar to this approach is the practice of treating every stratum of talmudic literature separately, i.e. a subject or a personality is selected and everything reported about him in the

Mishna is examined first, and then whatever is found about him in later collections is analyzed. Even in mishnaic sources an attempt is made to distinguish between reports by ancient sages and those of later sages, earlier traditions and later traditions. If this analysis is done for the purpose of reducing the historical value of earlier or later sources, then the effort tends to legitimize those who do not have the skills, the capacity or the initiative to examine talmudic sources themselves. This approach allows researchers to avoid using talmudic sources. Such attitudes release scholars from the obligation to come to terms with problems of knowledge and familiarity with the world of halakha and aggada, by arguing that there is no way to evaluate the history of halakha or aggada and their historical value or their chronological and geographical application.

The failure to exploit the wealth of talmudic sources has resulted in casting Jewish and early Christian reality in an increasingly Hellenistic mold. Non-Jewish scholars, and to a degree even Jewish scholars educated in Europe and America, have found it convenient to work with the rich Greek sources that have been published in reliable scholarly editions and excellent translations. These scholars were raised on a culture that is derived from the Greek and has an affinity for it. Books in Greek and Latin generally stem from one author or one redactor whose time and milieu are usually defined - as opposed to the talmudic tradition in which it is not always clear to what period a book belongs or what stands behind a saying, act or debate. Translations of talmudic literature in the last generation, regrettably, are in part erroneous, and it is sad to read how entire theories have been developed on the basis of erroneous translations. Anyone who reads the sources encounters this phenomenon with unfortunately great frequency. Noted scholars have pointed out some of the glowing errors, but far more remain in translations of Talmudic **{125}** literature and in the notes and commentaries that accompany these translations.[269]

Talmudic research is in great need of scholarly critical editions. Only a part of the talmudic literature has appeared in quality editions. Auxiliary studies are lacking both for literary research and historical research. Many problematic grammatical forms have not been resolved and many questions of literary content have not been clarified or have been only partially clarified. Nevertheless a great deal is available to anyone wishing to examine or study literary or historical issues. Talmudic research since the last century has adopted the techniques of modern historical philological research, and scholars, outstanding talmudists themselves, not only applied philological methods to talmudic literature, but also adapted them to the unique requirements of the talmudic tradition. This phenomenon may be observed in the works of the pioneers of literary talmudic research, such as Zechariah Fraenkel, Isaac Hirsch Weiss and Meir Ish Shalom, and even more so in the writings of other scholars such as Wilhelm Bacher, Abraham Buchler and others. In the last generation and in our own generation such scholars as Epstein, Ginzburg, Alon and Lieberman, among others, have laid solid foundations for scientific research and philological interpretation. Some of the most notable scholars went to great efforts in order to use the literature and reality of the classical and early Christian world in order to arrive at responsible philological and historical explanations of the talmudic tradition. These comparisons deciphered many inexplicable passages and expanded and enriched our understanding.

These distinctions, as general as they may be, enable us to answer the question we posed at the beginning of this article, even if only partially. Clearly there are many questions in Jewish history and the history of Jewish literature and faith, that seem to get definitive answers in these sources. But after a number of generations of scientific research, we cannot see in them satisfactory solutions. Many great scholars from the Middle Ages until contemporary times have regarded these answers as sufficient. Scholars who have been trained even moderately in the critical method cannot accept these answers uncritically and

[269] In this article I summarize what I perceive as the correct way to deal with Talmudic sources and do not engage in a controversy or polemic with any particular scholar or other. Consequently I have not given bibliographical references to specific translations and editions, but only references to original sources.

we have to explain the answer supplied by the sources. Our solution may be better or worse, but we cannot rely on the answer that the tradition gives to the question. One or two examples will suffice to illustrate this point.

{126} One of the outstanding phenomena in the entire corpus of talmudic literature is the controversy, a predominant form in tannaitic and amoraic literature alike.[270] It is to be found in all the strata of halakhic literature and also in the entire aggadic literature. Tosefta Sanhedrin at the beginning of chapter 7 (and parallel passages in the Tosefta and the Talmuds) provides an explanation for this literary and historical phenomenon. According to this baraita, originally there were no controversies in Israel and any question that arose would be referred to the local court. If the local court could not solve the issue, they would refer to a nearby court, and if they could not answer, to the courts on the Temple Mount until they reached the High Court where a vote would be taken, and "halakha would go forth from there and be accepted in all of Israel." The baraita continues: "When the students of Beit Shammai and Beit Hillel who did not attend their rabbi enough became numerous, controversies multiplied in Israel."

According to this baraita, originally there were no controversies or, according to parallel passages, there were only a few controversies. However, when students of Beit Shammai and Beit Hillel who had not learned the Torah sufficiently became numerous, controversies resulted. Even though this tradition appears in the tannaitic tradition in several places and in the two Talmudim as well and its text is substantially reliable, it is difficult to regard it as an historical testimony on the history of the Oral Law. In fact, all the halakhot reported in tannaitic sources until the period of Hillel and Shammai are reported in the form of controversies. Moreover, all the halakhot reported in the names of Hillel and Shammai themselves are in the form of controversies. There are also cases of sages who disagreed with both Hillel and Shammai (Mishna Eduyot 1:1-2). There are even cases in which Shammai disagrees with Beit Shammai and Beit Hillel (ibid. 7-8). The sages see the controversies of Beit Shammai and Beit Hillel as "the living words of God" (J.T. Berakhot Ch. 1 f.3b and parallel passages) and that the words of both houses were "given from one shepherd" (Tosefta Sota 7:12 and parallel passages). A different tannaitic tradition describes the controversies between these two schools as "a controversy for the sake of heaven" which is "destined to sustain" (Mishna Avot 5:17). Whatever the meaning of the passage in Tosefta Sanhedrin, it is not historical and its perception does not suit other tannaitic traditions.

For a second example we suggest the Mishna in Hagiga (2:2) which reports a famous controversy that went on for generations: May one lay hands on **{127}** sacrifices on festival days? The Mishna and tannaitic literature relate that "the couples" disagreed on this question generation after generation and our Mishna adds: "The first were נשיאים (patriarchs) and the second were אבות בית דין (heads of the court)." Most scholars agree, and I concur, that in the time of the couples and the period of the Temple the title נשיא (patriarch) was not in use; in fact neither was אב בית דין. The title *nasi* appended to the name of the head of the Sanhedrin or the head of the בית ועד does not appear in talmudic sources before the time of Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel II, in the generation after the Bar Kochba Revolt. The Mishna in Hagiga simply describes the reality of the couples, from the end of the Hellenistic period, in the light of the reality of the second half of the second century CE.

Careful Scrutiny Will Provide Historical Information

However, by cautious analysis it is possible to clarify to a certain degree when one tradition or another may be accepted. Often one can determine with great likelihood what part of a tradition may be accepted entirely, what part is historical and what may be taken historically only as interpretation reflecting the understanding of later generations. Not everything that is

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[270] Editor's note: The Tannaim are the sages from Hillel until the codification of the Mishna, early third century. The Amoraim are the post-mishnaic scribes of the Talmud. A baraita is a tannaitic statement preserved outside the Mishna.

attributed to the Temple Period is in fact really from the Temple Period, but in many cases one can say with certainty or near certainty what part of words from early generations is reliable and what part should be regarded with skepticism. In some cases, it is clear that the tradition as it appears is undoubtedly late and entirely aggadic. At any rate, in many cases it is possible to draw certain historical conclusions. Sometimes these conclusions are partial and sometimes they are extensive. The traditions in talmudic literature appear in a variety of places, in various contexts and in a great variety of forms. Traditions regarding a certain subject, literary or historical, may reappear and be discussed in many places, in early and late sources, in various compositions. These parallel passages may be either complementary or contradictory. The problem in evaluating a talmudic tradition as an historical source is not, as some scholars say, that a particular scholar accepts the talmudic tradition and another rejects it, but *the degree of understanding, analysis and integration brought into the discussion of talmudic sources.*

One might also question the degree of creativity in the discussion of a particular scholar. Let us not forget that creativity should be a part of every study of every historical source-that the value of an historical source is not only in collecting the texts and their appropriate analyses, but also in the creativity of the analysis.

There is one additional criterion which is common to every type of source and every historical period (general and Jewish alike), but this one is particularly noteworthy regarding the study of talmudic literature. This literature reflects **{128}** a culture and a heritage that evolved orally from generation to generation and when it was written down it was not recorded systematically in either the halakhic or aggadic spheres. Whatever was clear to everyone who studied was deemed unnecessary to summarize either orally or in writing. That was only done later, in the Middle Ages. Maimonides, in his summations of the halakha and his summations of thought, tried to edit them systematically; but talmudic literature presumes that many things are understood and only adds what the teachers felt obliged to emphasize and add. Often, particularly in aggadic contexts, the words preserved in the sources are only the top of an iceberg which contains a vast world of thought and practice. A study of these sources from the philosophical point of view or from the historical point of view should reveal, by use of fragmentary sources, the intellectual and real world that exists in the background and is reflected in a particular saying or aggadic description.

Ways of Expressing Historical Reality

Once again we return to our premise that the problem is the degree of analysis, the ability to combine different sources creatively and the awareness of the limits of creative interpretation. Two relatively simple examples will illustrate this premise.

According to the Babylonian Talmud (Yoma 69b) the members of the Great Assembly at the beginning of the Second Temple Period fasted for three days and three nights and observed a kind of fire going out from the Holy of Holies, and the prophet explained to them that this was the inclination for idolatry departing from Israel. This is a late legend phrased in a literary fashion, but it expresses the reality that from the earliest days of the Second Temple period the Jews did not stream after idolatry. This sense is expressed in various sayings and metaphors in amoraic literature. As early as the description of the festivities of drawing water during the Tabernacle festival in the Temple in Jerusalem, the Mishna reports that participants in the celebration would go out to draw water from the Shiloah spring and when they reached the eastern gate "would turn their faces towards the West and say: our fathers who were in this place (i.e. during the First Temple Period), their backs were towards the sanctuary and their faces toward the East and they would bow to the sun; but as for us, our eyes are turned toward the Lord" (Sukka 5:4). Many generations before the Mishna the Book of Judith says: "There does not rise in our generations and there is no tribe or house or family or town from which they bow to man-made gods" (8:18)

In all the books written after the first wave of exiles returning from Babylonia at the time of Cyrus the Great, there are no books in the Bible or in the Apocrypha in which there is any

mention of chastisement for idolatry. Even **{129}** the Book of Jubilees and the entire literature of Qumran, which criticize Hellenists and Pharisees very harshly, do not accuse them of the sin of idolatry.

A second example: In the Babylonian Talmud (Baba Batra 21a) the Amora Rav relates that Joshua ben Gamla, the High Priest in 63-65 CE, established a regulation "that they would set up teachers for small children in every city and every town and bring them in at the age of six or seven." In the Jerusalem Talmud (Ketubot end of Chapter 8), however, one of the regulations of Shimon ben Shatah, a contemporary of Alexander Yannai and Shlomzion in the first half of the first century BCE, was "that the small children should go to school." One scholar detected here a contradiction between the two traditions and consequently concluded that neither is historical testimony. However, it is doubtful whether there is a contradiction since one could argue that the regulation of Shimon ben Shatah established the duty to go to school and the second reinforced the establishment of schools in every community. However, even if there is a contradiction, one should accept the tradition that from Temple times there was an organization of schools since the very framework of socio-religious life, for example the recitation of grace after meals and the synagogue which revolved around the reading of the Torah, presumes that all those assembled knew how to repeat blessings by heart and even to read the Torah.

Josephus also emphasizes that study of the Torah was widespread and that all children receive education: "And in our midst there is not one man who does not find it easier to tell all the laws (by heart) than to explain his own name since we all learn them from our first admission until they are inscribed in our heart" *(Contra Apion* 2:18 and cf. 1:12). Specific evidence regarding public supervision of the establishment of schools everywhere exists only from the middle of the third century CE, but in the light of the general ability to read the Torah during the Second Temple period, which is clearly demonstrable from a variety of sources, there is no reason to doubt the traditions regarding the requirement that small children go to school or the concern later on that there be schools everywhere.

Historical Information in Aggadic Traditions

We would like to add a few more examples of aggadic traditions, some of them exaggerated and consequently of no historical value; but a careful analysis of them in the context of all the sources teaches us how to arrive at historical conclusions. The first two examples are from the Temple Period and the third from the time of the destruction of the Temple.

{130} Trustworthy talmudic information on the Pharisees

Three sayings are transmitted in the name of the Men of the Great Assembly in the first Mishna in Avot. These are in effect the earliest traditions in talmudic literature or in the Oral Law. The three sayings are:

(a) הוו מתונים בדין (Be deliberate in judgement).
(b) העמידו תלמידים הרבה (Raise up many disciples).
(c) עשו סייג לתורה (Make a fence around the Torah).

These three sayings are the essence of the tradition of the Oral Law in its approach to biblical exegesis and its perception of society. That these attitudes constitute a realistic description of the point of view of the Pharisees and later sages may be demonstrated not only from the vast sources within the Oral Law, but also from Second Temple reality as revealed in Philo, Josephus, the New Testament and even the literature of the opponents to the Pharisees, the Essenes. In this context we shall limit ourselves to a discussion of the first of these three sayings.

It is customary to interpret the term מתונים as "cautious," that is do not give judgement hastily. This interpretation may be found in quite early sources, but the verb מתן appears in the Mishna with the meaning "soft, moderate, easy" and the like. In the tractate Tohorot (9:5) we read: "He who puts olives in a press after they have softened so as to be easy to press...". This term is used in the Mishna only for softening. In other words the members of the Great

Assembly taught that one should be soft, i.e. humane, in giving judgement. And indeed if we survey the halakhic interpretations in Pharisaic and rabbinic tradition, particularly with regard to capital crimes throughout the generations, we will find that they tried to be gentle. This contrasts with the halakhot we find in the Book of Jubilees, which is close, if not identical, to the Qumran literature.

The Torah says frequently: ונכרתה האיש ההוא (Lev.17:4 and 9) which is translated "And that man will be cut off," or ונכרת מעמיו (Exodus 30:33 and 38) and other similar expressions. All of these expressions were understood by the halakha as punishment from heaven (Mishna Yebamot 4:13). Josephus says regarding the Pharisees that they "by nature are lenient regarding capital crimes" *(Antiquities* XIII:299) as opposed to the Sadducees of whom he says elsewhere, regarding the execution of James the brother of Jesus by the Sadducean High Priest Hanan, "and he is one of the Sadducean sect who are the most severe of all the Jews as we have already said" (Antiquities XX:199). We do not claim that the three sayings were literally stated by the members of the Great Assembly as other sayings reported in the same chapter were stated by later sages; but they are a realistic, stylized expression of fundamentals of the interpretation of the Torah, on the one hand, and the life of action, on **{131}** the other, which developed in the early days of the Second Temple, and which the Pharisees and other sages after them continued -examples of which abound in talmudic literature.

Talmudic information on the Temple

The second example takes into account a great number of chapters in tannaitic literature and many sayings and passages in the various books that comprise amoraic literature. The Second Temple, its structure, regulations and place in public life feature prominently in both tannaitic and amoraic literature. Two tractates, Middot and Tamid, are devoted in their entirety to a description of the physical structure of the Temple and how it functioned. Many chapters in the Mishna, and in some cases entire tractates, describe certain topics pertaining to the Temple during festivals and holy days. Nearly all of the tractate Sheqalim concerns the half-sheqel donation to the Temple. Nearly all of Yoma contains a description of the Temple service on the Day of Atonement; similarly, chapters in Sukka, Pesahim and many other tractates detail Temple ritual and observance.

In the Mishna, including the tractate Tamid, one of the oldest collections of mishnaic redaction, there are legendary traditions and legends that contain exaggeration. It goes without saying that the later sayings in the Talmuds and Midrash include interpretation and tend to glorify the past with legends that have a lyric character and a longing for redemption and the restoration of the Temple; these may not be regarded as history in the confined sense. However, comparison and analysis of the sources enable us to establish historical reality in a relatively broad area and with a reasonable degree of likelihood. In fact, we can determine the physical dimensions of the Temple, its courts, halls, gates and many other details by analysis of the sources and their order.

As is well known, Josephus also provided detailed descriptions of the Temple, particularly in *The Jewish War;* and, in effect, the picture that emerges from the talmudic sources is the same picture that emerges from Josephus' descriptions. Indeed, there are certain contradictions between the mishnaic description and Josephus', but these are not greater than the internal contradictions within the writings of Josephus himself or within the talmudic literature. Some of the differences in detail between Josephus and talmudic literature depend perhaps on the manner of description (e.g. it may be that Josephus counts the central gate but not the smaller appended gates on its sides) or that the contradictions reflect different periods. There may be some genuine contradictions, but in general the descriptions do conform. The east-west orientation of the Temple is the same in both sources. The division of the Sanctuary and the courts is the same and the proportions are the same.

{132} The Temple vessels and altars are located in the same places and their use is identical. Furthermore, archaeological excavation carried out on the Temple mount and its

surroundings during the last generation has reinforced some of the literary talmudic data, and so far has not contradicted any talmudic traditions.

The same applies with even greater conformity regarding the Temple service and its place in the life of the people. The Temple sacrifices on weekdays and festivals are prescribed in the Torah and, of course, the talmudic sources are identical to Josephus regarding them. However, even pertaining to regulations that are not written in the Torah, there is a great degree of conformity between the talmudic sources and that which may be gleaned from other Second Temple sources, such as Josephus, Philo, the New Testament - both canonical and apocryphal gospels - Roman legal and administrative documents and archaeological findings. As to New Testament scholarship, our discussion has demonstrated that talmudic information does provide essential background for the right understanding of New Testament passages relating to the Temple.

A survey of all the details and their precise clarification would require several chapters and far too many pages for this presentation, so we shall limit ourselves to a brief mention of some of the most prominent phenomena.

One prominent feature regarding the organization of the Second Temple is the collection of the half-sheqel donation for the maintenance of the Temple and the city of Jerusalem. As is well known, making the donation an annual obligation was a Pharisaic innovation. The biblical injunction (Ex. 30:12-16) prescribes a one-time donation for the erection of the Tabernacle and not an annual donation. From talmudic sources it is clear that the Sadducees strongly objected to this innovation and insisted that the public sacrifices be financed by private donations (see the beginning of Megilat Ta'anit). From the literature of Qumran it is clear that the Essenes taught that the half-sheqel "should only be given once" and not annually *(Discoveries in the Judaean Desert V, p. 7)*.

From talmudic sources we may learn that the half-sheqel was collected from all the Jews in Eretz Israel and the Diaspora (Mishna and Tosefta Sheqalim chapter. 1) and this conclusion is confirmed by extra-talmudic literature. That is the picture depicted in Matthew 17:24-27. Josephus reports that the towns of Nahardea and Nisibis served as centers for the collection of the half-sheqel *(Antiquities* XVIII:312). Philo tells about the collection of the half-sheqel in Egypt and in Rome (On *The Embassy to Gaius,* chapters. XXIII and XLII). After the destruction of the Temple, Vespasian levied a tax of two dinars on all the Jews in Eretz Israel and the Diaspora for the benefit of the Temple of **{133}** Jupiter in Rome instead of the two dinars (half a sheqel) that the Jews had customarily sent to the Temple in Jerusalem. This fact, confirmed in many Jewish, Christian and Roman sources and documented in receipts from Egypt, testifies to the widespread observance of the half-sheqel donation.

From numerous passages in talmudic literature it is evident that the administration of the Temple, that is the High Priesthood, was in the hands of the Sadducees, but that pressure on the part of the sages and the people who supported the sages forced the High Priests to give in often and to carry out the Temple service according to the instructions of the Pharisees (Mishna Yoma 1:5-6; Tosefta Sukka 5:1; Tosefta Para 3:8; and many more). This picture also emerges from various descriptions by Josephus who says: "And all the religious matters concerning prayers and the offering of sacrifices are carried out according to the interpretations of these [the Pharisees]" *(Antiquities* XVIII:15).

From here we may proceed to take a look at examples from details dispersed throughout tannaitic literature.

In Tosefta Yoma (Chapter. 1) and in the same chapter in the Mishna, we find a detailed description of Temple activity on the night of the Day of Atonement. In Halakha 4, Rabbi Yose (second century CE) adds that on one occasion a High Priest experienced nocturnal pollution on that night (according to the primary texts of the Tosefta and parallel passages) and Joseph son of Alim from Sepphoris took his place. Josephus mentions the same event in *Antiquities* XVII:165, which reports that Mattithias son of Theophilus, who served as High

Priest between 5 and 4 BCE, experienced nocturnal pollution on the night before the fast and Joseph son of Alim his relative took his place.

The Mishna in several places reports individuals who contributed to the Temple or brought donations and tithes, but their gifts created halakhic problems. The list is brief and all the examples belong to the last generations before the destruction of the Temple. It is remarkable that the tombs of two of the donors have been discovered in the vicinity of Jerusalem. The tomb of Niqanor, who made one of the gates of the Temple has been known for decades. The Mishna (Yoma 3:6) says: "Miracles happened to Niqanor's doors and he was remembered with praise." The Tosefta and the Talmuds report the miracles that happened to his doors when he brought them from Alexandria as a donation to the Temple (Tosefta Yoma 2:4 and parallel passages). A burial cave was discovered on Mount Scopus with a Greek and Hebrew inscription testifying that here were located the remains of Niqanor of Alexandria who made the gates *(Corpus Inscriptionum Iudaicarum* 1256).

At the end of the Mishna Halla, three individuals are described as having brought offerings to the Temple-offerings that raised the halakhic questions: **{134}** brought offerings to the Temple-offerings that raised the halakhic questions: (1) whether first fruits could be brought from Babylonia; (2) whether first fruits could be brought in the form of wine and oil; (3) whether first fruits could be brought from Syria. The Mishna says: "Ariston brought first fruits from Apimea." This Ariston is mentioned in a recently published inscription in Hebrew and Greek: Ariston Afme (Scripta Classica Israelitica XI [1991 /2], p. 150).

Yohanan ben Zakkai's departure from Jerusalem

The third and final example is from the period of the Great Rebellion. In the talmudic tradition there are numerous versions of the story of Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai's departure from Jerusalem to Yavne and the privileges under which the Romans allowed him to operate. According to the Babylonian Talmud (Gittin 56:1-2), the dispensations he received were quite extensive. According to the versions from Eretz Israel, such as Avot de Rabbi Nathan (Ver. I, Ch. 4; Ver. II, Ch. 6), the dispensations were far more limited. The fourth version in Midrash Eikha Rabba (1:31) is similar to the latter. The various passages also differ in the historical background they portray.

However, these traditions should not be discussed only from the literary point of view. If we take the various accounts regarding Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai and his sayings, from both before the destruction of the Temple and after, in conjunction, we can suggest a certain picture of his actions. He was not one of the Zealots and may have opposed the rebellion. He left Jerusalem in order to rebuild Judaism after the fall of the city and the Temple, gave himself up to the Romans and was arrested like everyone who departed from the besieged city and turned themselves over to the Romans. He reached Yavne because it served as a place where people who left Jerusalem were concentrated. He received only limited recognition and began to operate in difficult external and internal conditions, and only in the course of years did Yavne become a center for the study of Torah and leadership and took its important position in the building of Judaism without Jerusalem and the Temple.

Qumran and the Antiquity of Halachic Terms

Finally, let us take a look at halakhic terms in talmudic literature that appear in traditions ascribed to the Temple period and that pertain to the reality of the Temple. Many of these traditions relate to controversies with Sadducees. These traditions mention terms that are idiomatic in the language of the sages. They pertain to biblical injunctions, but they occur in the language of the sages, not in the language of the Bible. One might argue that the terms do not date from the Second Temple Period, but were coined during the **{135}** earlier sages or personalities who lived in the period of the Temple. However since the discovery of the Qumran library, scholars have pointed out dozens of these terms and expressions found in this literature, proving that these terms were current during the Temple Period. Let us discuss a few that have been clarified by scholarship.

We shall start with an halakhic homily that is not attributed to an early period.

(1) In Exodus (22:15-16) and in Deuteronomy (22:28-29) it says that he who seduces or rapes a virgin is obliged to marry her and "she will be his wife." This obligation is discussed in an halakhic homily (Mekhilta Mishpatim 17:308) and in the Mishna (Ketubbot 3:6). In these two texts it is stated that the seducer is required to marry her only if she is suitable for marriage to him (אשה הראויה לו, if she befits him), i.e. it is not a forbidden relation or the like. The language of the addition to the Biblical verse in the Temple Scroll (p. 66, 11. 8-11) is identical: והיא רויה לו לפי החוק (and she befits him according to the law). The Mishna and the Temple Scroll do not agree regarding every detail of this law, but the expression "and she will be his wife -a wife that befits him" is the same even though the time gap between the Temple Scroll and the Mishna is several hundred years.

(2) The day on which the *omer* (measure of barley from the new crop) is waved, as prescribed in Leviticus 23:12: "On the day of your waving the *omer",* is called יום הנף (the day of waving) in rabbinic literature (Mishna Sukka 3:12; Rosh Hashana 4:3). This expression is a condensed form of יום הנף העומר (the day of waving the *omer)* or in one place הנפת העמר (the waving of the *omer)* (Pesikta Rabbati no. 41). The same form occurs several times in the Temple Scroll: וביום הנף העומר (11:10); ביום הניפת העומר (18:10) and elsewhere.

(3) According to the Torah, one who undergoes purification does not become purified on the same day but only after sunset: "And the sun will set and he will be pure" (Lev. 22:7); "And when the sun sets he will enter the camp" (Deut. 23:12). In rabbinic language this waiting period is called מעורב שמש (setting of the sun) (Mishna Para 3:7 and elsewhere) and the completion of the period is called העריב שמשו (his sun has set). This language appears often in tannaitic literature, in some cases regarding traditions and events from the time of the Temple, such as the altercation between Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai with the Sadducean High Priest (Tosefta Para 3:6-10). This language also appears several times in Qumran literature that has not been officially published. In M.M.T. (Miqtsat Ma'ase Torah - Qumran regulations in the form of a letter) 1.15 we read: להעריב השמש להיות טהורים (the sun to set to be pure) and in a hitherto unpublished fragment of the Damascus Covenant we read: יעריב שמשו וטהר אשר (and pure whose sun has set).

{136} (4) The final example we shall present is that of the halakhic concept of הנצוק -a term that the sages use to describe liquid being poured from a pure vessel into an empty vessel or into one containing impure food or drink. The term appears in several halakhot regarding the impurity of vessels or the impurity of idolatry. It recurs a significant number of times in both tannaitic sources and amoraic sources. According to the halakha, such a fluid is pure and does not constitute a carrier of impurity. In other words as soon as one stops pouring, naturally the liquid that has entered the impure vessel is impure, but the liquid in the pure vessel retains its state of purity undisturbed. A term that appears in tannaitic literature cannot be presumed to have come into being before the time of the Tannaim, i.e. the generation of Yavne (70-132 CE) or later, but this term appears also in a controversy between Pharisees and Sadducees, since the Pharisees declared this fluid pure and the Sadducees declared it impure and a carrier of impurity. In Mishna Yadaim 4:7 we read: "The Sadducees say: We complain about you Pharisees who purify the נצוק." We could argue that the language of the Sadducees was changed by later editors for whom the term נצוק was common, but a similar controversy appears in M.M.T. and its similarity is not only in content, but also in form and terminology. This work is a kind of anti-Pharisaic polemic or propaganda tract in which the writer presents the preferred views of the sect as opposed to the inferior views of his Pharisaic opponents. In lines 55-58 we read: "And also regarding the מוצקות we say that those which have no purity and also the מוצקות do not differentiate between impure and pure for the giver of the מוצקות and the receiver from it like the giver are one."

We should not rush to conclude that the halakha of Qumran is the Sadducean halakha or even resembles it. We know very little about Sadducean halakha; and the few Sadducean halakhot which we do find similar to those of Qumran do not testify to more than a factor common to both of them - a conservative tendency in the interpretation of the law, which opposed the interpretations and the traditions of the Pharisees. However, a comparison with Qumran

literature does reinforce the view of scholars who attributed some halakhot to the period of the Temple on the basis of an analysis of talmudic sources. We may reach the same conclusion if we compare many examples in the Septuagint, Josephus and apocryphal literature with early Christian literature - i.e. the New Testament and the apostolic Church fathers - regardless of whether the laws are accepted in this literature or whether they are added to or polemicized against - such as strictures regarding idolatry, prayer and the like. We selected a few examples of comparison with Qumran literature not only because they predate the other literary collections by several generations, but also because of their linguistic **{137}** similarity and because no one can claim that they have undergone later rewriting and changes.

Conclusion

Our analysis has shown that rabbinic literature can be used to illuminate New Testament passages.

Obviously there can be no general consensus on the extent of the historical value of rabbinic sayings. To one scholar a testimony, saying or tradition (anonymous or ascribed to a certain sage) may seem to be unimpeachable historical evidence, and to another scholar nothing more than a literary tradition; and even the same scholar may not always take the same position. There are cases in which he changes his mind, and there are examples that he once regarded as definite and later on finds less so. Nevertheless, in many passages one may reach conclusions as to what degree a tradition can be accepted as totally reliable or as only a likely presumption, but only if the conclusions are drawn on the basis of a serious analysis of text and context, taking into account the whole picture as it fits into the entire mosaic of the tradition, from both a literary and historical point of view.

{139} The Language of Jesus

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From the time of the Renaissance until the present day, the view that the language of Jesus was Aramaic, not Hebrew, has been broadly championed in New Testament circles.[1] It is commonly assumed that the Jewish people as a whole began using Aramaic during the Babylonian captivity and subsequently forgot Hebrew. While the Jewish people could have used Hebrew in the synagogue at the time of Jesus as the upper language of an Aramaic/Hebrew diglossia, so the common opinion goes, they used Aramaic in everyday life. While this may not have been completely true of Judea, it certainly was true of the Galilee according to the prevailing theory. To recover the *ipssisima verba* of Jesus, therefore, retroversion of his sayings to Aramaic is necessary. Support for this view is based on: a) the purported *raison d'etre* of the targums which states that the targums were created in pre-Christian times for the common folk who could not understand Hebrew and needed a translation to the vernacular (Aramaic) and b) from Aramaic words found in the New Testament, most notably the two sayings of Jesus found in Mark: *talitha kumi* (Mark 5:41) and *effata* (Matt. 7:34).

By contrast, principals of the Jerusalem School of Synoptic Research (JSSR), namely Robert L. Lindsey,[2] David Flusser[3] and Brad H. Young,[4] argue that the genuine sayings of Jesus in the synoptic Gospels were spoken in Hebrew, not Aramaic. They claim that their methodological approach, including the Hebrew (versus Aramaic) background to the Gospels, allows them to recapture much of the synoptic tradition as genuine against those who would allege that it is the product of the Hellenistic church, and so bring Jesus back to the Jewish people where He belongs.[5] It is the purpose of this essay to evaluate the question of Hebrew versus Aramaic as the language of Jesus, at least from a general language point of view.[6]

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[1] It is possible to mention only a few of the more influential studies here: Joseph A. Fitzmyer, S.J., 'The Study of the Aramaic Background of the New Testament" and "The Languages of Palestine in the First Century AD" in *A Wandering Aramean,* Missoula, Montana, 1979, pp. 1-27 and pp. 29-56 respectively; Joachim Jeremias, *New Testament Theology, Part One: The Proclamation of Jesus,* London, 1971, and *The Parables of Jesus,* Revised Edition, New York, 1963, p. 25; Matthew Black, *An Aramaic Approach to the Gospels and Acts,* who treats the history of research on pp. 1-14; third Edition, Oxford, 1967; Gustaf Dalman, *Jesus-Jeshua: Studies in the Gospels* (transl. Paul P. Levertoff), New York, reprinted 1971, first published 1929. Franz Delitzsch was a notable exception.

[2] Robert L. Lindsey, *A Hebrew Translation of the Gospel of Mark,* Jerusalem, 1969, pp. 62-63; and *Jesus, Rabbi & Lord: The Hebrew Story of Jesus behind our Gospels,* Oak Creek, Wisconsin, 1990, pp. 15-22.

[3] David Flusser, *Jewish Sources in Early Christianity,* Tel Aviv, 1980, p. 11 [Hebrew]. Since this small volume is designed as a textbook for adult education, it offers a concise overview of Flusser's approach, which is not always apparent in his articles or thicker volumes.

[4] Brad H. Young, *Jesus and His Jewish Parables: Rediscovering the Roots of Jesus' Teaching,* New York and Mahwah, 1989, pp. 40-42 and 144.

[5] JSSR holds that there was a proto-gospel written in Hebrew, which contained stories and sayings of Jesus (Young, 144). This Hebrew proto-gospel was translated literally into Greek. Thereafter, that literal Greek translation was reorganized so that "the story units, discourses, parables and narratives were somehow detached and removed from their original context" (145). "This reorganized source underwent redaction and abridgement" (146). The resulting "first reconstruction of the life of Jesus ... provided Luke with his basic outline" (146). JSSR holds that Luke was the first of the synoptic Gospels to appear, not Mark. Since none of the gospel writers knew the original Hebrew proto-gospel, it is necessary to employ redactional criticism in dealing with the sayings of Jesus found in the synoptic tradition in order to recover them.

[6] Instructive contributions include: James Barr, "Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek in the Hellenistic Age," *The Cambridge History of Judaism,* ed. W.D. Davies and Louis Finkelstein, Volume Two: *The Hellenistic Age,*

{140} From a sociolinguistic point of view the language used by Jesus could have been different in different social settings.[7] His home language or mother tongue could have been one language, while that of his teaching could have been another, while that of his dealing with governmental authorities could have been yet another.[8] The Gospels record Jesus speaking in various ways (parables, prayers, discussions of Jewish law, sermons, casual conversation) and to various groups (His mother, the disciples, the masses, the Pharisees and scribes, a Samaritan woman, Pilate) in various localities (Galilee, the Decapolis, Samaria, Judea). And even though He grew up in Nazareth we do not know what language or dialect was spoken in the home of His parents, or whether Joseph and Mary spoke the same language or dialect. His immediate family could have been Judean instead of long-time Galileans in view of the fact that Joseph had to go "to his own town" to register for the census (Luke 2:3-4), namely to Bethlehem of Judea, and the fact that Mary had a cousin of the priestly line who lived in the hill country of Judea (Luke 1:5, 39). His family went to Jerusalem every year to celebrate Passover, so as a child Jesus was exposed to a wider language geography than just the Galilee (Luke 2:41). The first time we find Jesus talking, he is a twelve-year-old posing questions to the sages in the temple in Jerusalem (Mark 2:46-47).

Members of JSSR only briefly summarize their arguments in favor of Hebrew versus Aramaic in the context of their New Testament research. Reference is made to the writings of Harris Birkeland[9] and Jehoshua M. Grintz[10] among others. In evaluating the position of JSSR on this matter, we will review the evidence for spoken Middle Hebrew and for spoken Middle Aramaic in first century Palestine.[11] Finally, we will look at some New Testament particulars before drawing a conclusion. Since this discussion is within the context of a certain school of thought relating specifically to the synoptic Gospels, we will limit the discussion of particulars to these Gospels.

Cambridge, 1989, pp. 79-114; Paul Ellingworth, "Hebrew or Aramaic?", *The Bible Translator* 37, 1986, pp. 338-41; Max Wilcox, "Semitisms in the New Testament," *Aufsteig und Niedergang der romischen Welt,* II.25.2, ed. Wolfgang Haase, Berlin and New York, 1984, pp. 978-1029; J.A. Emerton, "The Problem of Vernacular Hebrew in the First Century AD and the Language of Jesus," ITS NS 24,1983, pp. 1-23; Chaim Rabin, "Hebrew and Aramaic in the First Century;" in *The Jewish People in the First Century,* Volume Two, ed. S. Safrai and M. Stern, Compendia Rerum Iudaicarum ad Novum Testamentum, Section One, Philadelphia, 1976, pp. 1007-1039; and Pinchas Lapide, "Insights from Qumran into the Language of Jesus," *Revue de Qumran* 8, 1975, pp. 483-501.

Cf. note 1 above. The first time we find Jesus talking in the synoptic Gospels is to the sages in the Temple in Jerusalem (Luke 2:46-47), with whom he probably spoke Hebrew.

[7] I thank my wife, Anne Margarethe Lund, cand. philol., and my colleague, Dr. Edward M. Cook, for their stimulating discussions of these issues.

[8] Jesus probably spoke Greek on a number of occasions: with Pilate (Matt. 27:11-14; Mark 15:2-5; Luke 23:3; John 18:33-38), with a centurion (Matt. 8:5-13; Luke 7:2-10; John 4:46-53), with a Syro-Phoenician woman (Mark 7:25-30) and with some "Greeks" (John 12:20-22). After all, he was a skilled craftsman raised in the Galilee, where there were a number of Greek speaking cities such as Sepphoris and Tiberias. However there is no reason to suppose that he taught or preached in Greek. Cf. Joseph A. Fitzmyer, "Did Jesus Speak Greek?," *BAR* 18/5, Sept./Oct. 1992, pp. 58-63, 76-77.

[9] Harris Birkeland, *The Language of Jesus, Avhandlinger utgitt av Det Norske Videnskaps-Akademi i Oslo, II. Hist.-Filos. Klasse*, 1954, No. 1, Oslo, 1954. Birkeland developed his model for Mishnaic Hebrew from nynorsk, a written standard of Norwegian based on local spoken dialects. In his understanding, Mishnaic Hebrew was a literary standard based on local spoken Hebrew dialects, which had been influenced by Aramaic, and on classical biblical Hebrew. He differed from Segal in that he believed that Hebrew was the vernacular of the common people not only in Judea, but also in the Galilee.

[10] Jehoshua M. Grintz, "Hebrew as the Spoken and Written Language in the Last Days of the Second Temple," *JBL* 79, 1960, pp. 32-47.

[11] The term "middle Hebrew" comes from James Barr, while "middle Aramaic" comes from J.A. Fitzmyer. "Middle Hebrew" includes proto-Mishnaic Hebrew, Mishnaic Hebrew and any other Hebrew dialect or dialects which date from roughly 200 BC to 200 AD. Some may prefer the terms "spoken Mishnaic Hebrew" and "literary Mishnaic Hebrew" to describe the Hebrew spoken by the Tannaim and that written in the Mishnah, Tosefta and Halakhic Midrashim respectively. Others use "Rabbinic Hebrew" or "Tannaitic Hebrew" as general designations to describe the Hebrew of the period.

Evidence for Spoken Middle Hebrew

During the past forty years in particular, the view that Middle Hebrew was a commonly spoken language in Judea (specifically the Judean countryside) in the first century AD has been gaining acceptance.[12] Several considerations support this theory.

First, evidence from the Bible itself indicates that Hebrew was not forgotten but used by post-exilic Jews. Post-exilic biblical books were written in Hebrew (e.g. Chronicles, Nehemiah-Ezra, Esther) as was the Book of Ben Sira (ca. 180 BC). Late Biblical Hebrew (LBH), however, appears to be an attempt to write classical Biblical Hebrew (BH) when that language was no longer spoken or was at least in transition. The vernacular Hebrew of the day appears to have influenced this literary dialect.[13]

{141} Thus the Chronicler uses the first person singular personal pronoun אני as a replacement for classical אנוכי found in his sources.[14] Other observable differences between the language of Chronicles and classical BH which demonstrate Hebrew language development include the use of the double plural אנושי השם (1 Chron 5:24) as over against classical אנשי השם (Gen 6:4), the use of active verbal constructions to replace passive ones, and the use of the perfect with אז instead of the shortened imperfect.[15] With regard to vocabulary, LBH substituted "modern" words for "unknown" words[16] and for words which had changed meaning.[17] With regard to Esther, Ron Bergey has shown five clear examples of language development, which are attested to in other LBH books, in the Dead Sea Scrolls (DSS) and in Tannaitic Hebrew, in contrast to Standard Biblical Hebrew (SBH):[18] 1) the use of אין + infinitive construct in place of לכלתי + infinitive construct; 2) the referential use of בו ("on it [the month]") in date formula; 3) the initial position of the יום element in the date formula; 4) the syntax of the measurement clause; and 5) the use of comparative יותר מ- in place of simple מ-.[19]

LBH represents the transitional stage of Hebrew between SBH and mishnaic Hebrew (MH).[20] Furthermore, although the books of Daniel and Ezra contain Aramaic, they also contain Hebrew. The Aramaic portion of Daniel (2:4b-7:28) certainly adds local colour to the events in Babylon under both the neo-Babylonian and Persian kings. But it is enclosed by Hebrew. The Aramaic of Ezra is limited to official correspondence with the Persian Empire (4:8-6:18; 7:12-26), which used Aramaic as the official language. While LBH says nothing about the situation in the Land of Israel in the first century AD, it demonstrates that Hebrew was not forgotten by the returning exiles in the fifth century BC and that a spoken Hebrew vernacular, different from SBH, was used by those writing LBH.[21]

Second, the Dead Sea Scrolls support the theory of a spoken vernacular Hebrew in first century Judea. Three items need comment here: the sectarian literature, 1QIsa[a] and the Hebrew Bar Kochba letters.

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[12] Eduard Yechezkel Kutscher, *A History of the Hebrew Language*, ed. Raphael Kutscher, Jerusalem, 1982, p. 115. E.Y. Kutscher, who died in 1971, has had the greatest influence in the scientific study of Middle Aramaic and Hebrew in Israeli universities in the past quarter century. Contrast Emerton's modified position of 1973 ("The Problem of Vernacular Hebrew" cited above) against his earlier view of 1961 ("Did Jesus Speak Hebrew?," *JTS* 12, pp. 189-202).

[13] Chaim Rabin, "Hebrew," *Current Trends in Linguistics,* ed. Thomas A. Sebeok, Volume 6: *Linguistics in South West Asia and North Africa*, The Hague and Paris, 1970, p. 316.

[14] Kutscher, *History*, 30.

[15] Kutscher, *History*, 82.

[16] Kutscher (*History*, 82-83) brings the instructive example of 1 Chron. 10:12 in contrast to 1 Sam. 31:12-13, where the Chronicler substitutes three "modern" lexemes for classical lexemes then forgotten.

[17] E.g. LBH uses **לקוח אשה** for SHB **נשוא אשה**, meaning "to take a wife" (Kutscher, *History,* 83).

[18] "Standard Biblical Hebrew" is a term used by Kutscher; we are using it as an equivalent of "classical BH" in this essay.

[19] Ron Bergey, "Late Linguistic Features in Esther," JQR NS 75, 1984-85, pp. 66-78.

[20] Kutscher, *History,* 84.

[21] I would be remiss if I did not mention the important works of Avi Hurvitz, *A Linguistic Study of the Relationship between the Priestly Source and the Book of Ezekiel,* Paris, 1982, and *The Transition Period in Biblical Hebrew, A study in Post-Exilic Hebrew and its Implications for the Dating of Psalms,* Jerusalem, 1972 [Hebrew].

All the sectarian literature from the DSS is written in Hebrew; none in Aramaic.[22] This literature can be dated with some degree of accuracy from about 150 BC to about 70 AD. While most of the sectarian literature is written in LBH (the Rule of the Community, the Damascus Document, the War Scroll, **{142}** the Temple Scroll, the Hodayot, the Pesharim, etc.), two sectarian documents are written in MH, namely the Copper Scroll (3Q15)[23] and Miqtsat Ma'aseh Torah (4QMMT).[24] It appears that BH was the literary language of the sect, while MH was its vernacular. While the Middle Hebrew (MH) scrolls point to a vernacular different from LBH, the LBH documents are by no means immune from MH influence. This is particularly noticeable in the Temple Scroll. According to Yigael Yadin, the author of the Temple Scroll "laboured to imitate the phraseology of the Bible," but "was not able to keep syntactical and linguistic usages in vogue at the time from infiltrating."[25] Specifically, the author was strongly influenced by MH in his vocabulary and in his use of the compound verbal syntagm היה + participle).[26] The sectarian documents from the DSS teach us, then, that a Hebrew dialect similar to but not identical with later literary mishnaic Hebrew, was spoken by people of the DSS sect. The biblical scroll 1QIsa[a] also supports the view of a popular Hebrew vernacular in Judea the century before the birth of Jesus.[27] From the language of the scroll, it appears that the scribe attempted to update the language of the book so as to make it understandable to his fellows. Thus, he substituted vocabulary known to his contemporaries for classical forms long forgotten:

He wrote לו יאירו אורם ("they will not shine their light") for Masoretic Text (MT) לו יהלו אורם, which was not understood.[28] He substituted an active plural indefinite construction for the third person singular indefinite construction. This is particularly observable in the substitution of the active יקראו for the passive יִקָּרֵא a number of times. E.g. in 1:26, 1QIsa[a] reads אחרי כן יקראו עיר הצדק for MT אחרי כן יִקָּרֵא עיר הצדק (cf.14:20; 32:5; 35:8; 62:4,12). Further, he solved the problem of the asyndetic relative clause (i.e. a relative clause without the marker אשר), found in BH, but not in MH, in various ways.[28] He added the relative marker אשר to introduce the relative clause in 48:17, writing בדרך אשר תלך to clarify MT בדרך תלך ("in the way you should go"). In 42:16, he converted the relative clause into an independent clause by adding a connective *waw*: והולכתי עורים בדרך ולוא ידעו ("and I shall lead the blind in a way and they know not") for MT והולכתי עורים בדרך לא ידעו ("and I shall lead the blind in a way that they know not"). In 62:1, he changed the subject of the verb בער("burn") from לפיד ("torch") to ישועתה ("her salvation") by changing its gender, writing וישועתה כלפיד תבער ("and her salvation will burn as a torch") for MT וישועתה כלפיד יבער ("and her salvation as a torch which burns").

Along with these indications of a popular dialect of Hebrew, 1QIsa[a] contains traces of Aramaic influence, which led E.Y. Kutscher to suggest that the scribe who produced it spoke a Hebrew-Aramaic *patois*.[28] On the one hand, the language of 1QIsa[a] affirms the theory of a spoken Hebrew vernacular in the late Second Temple period, yet on the other hand, it also testifies to the considerable influence of Aramaic on Hebrew, at least in the case of this scribe.

{143} The Hebrew Bar Kochba letters, dated to the early second century AD (specifically, 132-35 AD), share at least four isoglosses with the Hebrew of the sectarian literature of the DSS which set their common language apart from the Middle Hebrew of the Mishnah. Elisha Qimron has summed them up as follows: 1) the use of forms like גאוים for גויים, 2) the sound change *s* to *shin,* 3) the non-assimilation of *nun,* and 4) a pervasive weakening of the

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22 The sectarian view of Tg. Job has been rejected by the scholarly community.
23 Cf. A1 Wolters, "The Copper Scroll and the Vocabulary of Mishnaic Hebrew," *RQ* 14, 1990, pp. 483-95.
24 This is yet to be published by Elisha Qimron and John Strugnell.
25 Yigael Yadin, *The Temple Scroll,* Volume One: Introduction, Jerusalem, 1983, p. 33.
26 Yadin, 34-39.
27 E.Y. Kutscher *(The Language and Linguistic Background of the Isaiah Scroll (1 Q Isa[a]),* Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah, Volume VI, Leiden,1974, p. 73) dates it to the first or second centuries BC.
28 Kutscher, *Isaiah,* 61.

gutturals.[29] This fact points to a spoken dialect of Hebrew used both at Qumran and by Bar Kochba or his scribes.[30]

One of the letters contains the phrase אבית (pronounced: abbet), the equivalent of בבית, meaning "in the house," as in Samaritan Hebrew.[31] This colloquial-looking syntagm appears in the earlier sectarian literature as well, though rarely: אבית גלותו (= Tiberian בבית גלותו; 1QpHab XI,6) and אמקנה (= Tiberian במקנה; Thanksgiving Scroll X,25). The Bar Kochba letters also contain the colloquial appearing for את, as in שמים = Tiberian את שמים.[32]

Third, research into mishnaic Hebrew supports the view that Hebrew was spoken in the first century AD Judea.[33] MH as we know it is a literary language coming from the second to fifth centuries AD. Yet the tannaitic material contained therein covers the period 40-220 AD. At one time scholars considered MH an artificial language created by the rabbis for their theological discussions from BH (which then survived only as a literary language) and Aramaic (which was perceived as the vernacular). M.H. Segal, however, altered this idea by proving that MH grew out of BH naturally and, in fact, preserves some Hebrew forms older than those found in the Bible.[34] A number of considerations demonstrate that MH derived from a spoken, popular dialect or dialects[35] and not artificially from the frozen language of the Bible. Segal named three: 1) MH contains many Hebrew words not found in the Bible, which indicates that they were taken from speech, not from the literary monument of the Bible; 2) MH does not preserve poetic words and expressions of BH, which it should have, had it been consciously based on BH; 3) certain BH marginal features became the norm in MH, which could have happened only through a spoken Hebrew dialect.[36]

For example, the form of the first person plural personal pronoun in MH is אנו. The form appears only once in the Bible and that as the *ketiv* (Jer 42:6). The regular form in the Bible is of course אנחנו. The shorter form must have entered literary MH from a spoken dialect of Hebrew. Aramaic can not account for this feature, since Aramaic dialects contain only אנחנא, נחנא, אנחנן, אנן, חנן. As a further example, in MH the *nithpael* conjugation replaces the finite forms of the *pual.* Such a binyan is foreign to both BH and to Aramaic. It could have arisen only as a natural development within colloquial Hebrew, by analogy to the *niphal* as the passive of the *qal.* As the *niphal is* to the *qal, so* is the *nithpael* to the *piel.*

{144} The general thesis of Segal has been confirmed by subsequent research. However, he failed to recognize the extent of Aramaic influence on MH because of the texts he used. As MH texts were copied, their language was "corrected" toward the language of classical BH. As a result, many manuscripts and editions give a false picture[37] In his important study of "new" verbs in Tannaitic Hebrew, Menahem Moreshet has shown both the richness of MH to develop new vocabulary and the pervasive influence of Aramaic upon it[38] Fourth, Samaritan Hebrew reflects a colloquial dialect.[39] Since Aramaic is not apparent among the Samaritans until the second or third century AD (the

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[29] Elisha Qimron, *The Hebrew of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, Harvard Semitic Studies 29, Atlanta, 1986, p. 117.

[30] Qimron concludes that "DSS Hebrew is not merely a mixture of BH, MH and Aramaic, but also draws on a distinct spoken dialect" (117-18).

[31] Z. Ben-Hayim, "Traditions in the Hebrew Language, with Special Reference to the Dead Sea Scrolls," *Scripta Hierosolymitana* 4: *Aspects of the Dead Sea Scrolls,* ed. Chaim Rabin and Yigael Yadin, Jerusalem, 1958, p. 205.

[32] Cf. E.Y. Kutscher, "The Language of the Hebrew and Aramaic Letters of Bar-Koseva and his Contemporaries: b. The Hebrew Letters," *Leshonenu* 26, 1962, p. 18.

[33] For an up-to-date survey of Mishnaic Hebrew, see Moshe Bar-Asher, "L'Hebreu Mishnique: Esquisse d'une Description," *CRAIBL,* 1990, pp. 199-237.

[34] Like the pronoun זו as a replacement for זאת.

[35] Cf. Bar-Asher, 209-10, for examples of dialectical differences within tannaitic Hebrew, preserved in the Mishnah.

[36] M. H. Segal, *A Grammar of Mishnaic Hebrew,* Oxford, 1927, pp.1-20.

[37] For examples, see Bar-Asher, 212-13.

[38] Menahem Moreshet, *A Lexicon of the New Verbs in Tannaitic Hebrew,* Ramat-Gan, 1980.

[39] Ben-Hayim, "Traditions in the Hebrew Language," 200-14, esp. 207.

Samaritan Targum is the earliest literary document extant in Samaritan Aramaic), one can argue that they used Hebrew in the first century. Jesus could have spoken to the Samaritan woman in a dialect of Middle Hebrew.

Although the Rabbinic evidence begins in the second century, it is corroborative in proving that Jesus used the Hebrew language when He taught in parables.

Fifth, the later Western Aramaic dialects of Galilean Aramaic (GA), Christian Palestinian Aramaic (CPA) and Samaritan Aramaic (SA) demonstrate the direct influence of Hebrew.[40] For CPA at least, that influence could have come only through speech, since all extant material is translated from Greek.

For example, the use of inflected ית as a demonstrative pronoun in CPA comes from Middle Hebrew inflected את. Further, only these three Aramaic dialects share the Hebrew syntagm תלת מאון (= שלוש מאות) as over against all other Aramaic dialects which contain תלת מאה.[41] Spoken Hebrew surely accounts for this phenomenon at least in CPA.[42]

Sixth, Hebrew was the language of instruction among the Jews in the first centuries AD. Jesus used Hebrew in the synagogue in Nazareth where He read from the Isaiah scroll and commented on it without the use of a targum (Luke 4). Story-parables, a genre unique to the Gospels and Rabbinic literature, always appear in Hebrew, never in Aramaic. Although the Rabbinic evidence begins in the second century, it is corroborative, even though not conclusive, in proving that Jesus used the Hebrew language when He taught in parables. Tannaitic literature, based on the oral teaching of the rabbis, is almost exclusively in Hebrew with the rare exception of isolated Aramaic words **{145}** and phrases. This stands in contrast to later Amoraic literature, which contains more Aramaic.

Seventh, the sages used the maidservant of Rabbi (Judah) as an informant as to the meaning of both biblical and mishnaic Hebrew words that no one in the academy knew.[43] She certainly exemplifies the fact that Hebrew was spoken by the common folk and not only by the rabbis. This evidence is at least a century and a half after Jesus. Birkeland used it as support that Hebrew was the language of the poor. Others claim that it merely indicates that Hebrew was still spoken in out-of-the-way places.

These considerations support the view that Hebrew was spoken in Judea[44] in the first century AD, but say little about the language situation in the Galilee.[45] Jesus certainly could have spoken Hebrew and probably did, at least to the country folk of Judea. Yet the majority of His teaching was done in the Galilee, where the language situation could have been different. Admittedly, the rabbis of the second century taught their parables in Hebrew, but this does not mean that Jesus did more than 100 years earlier.

Evidence for Spoken Middle Aramaic

While it is admitted that Middle Hebrew was spoken in the Judean countryside, most still maintain that Jesus and the disciples normally spoke Aramaic since they were Galileans.[46] The following considerations are given as support for the Aramaic view:

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[40] Ze'ev Ben-Hayyim, "The Contribution of the Samaritan Inheritance to Research into the History of Hebrew," *Proceedings of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities* 3, 1969, p. 165, esp. n. l.

[41] Jerome A. Lund, "The Problem of Expressing 'Three Hundred' and the Like in the Language of Codex Neofiti 1," *Sefarad* 47, 1987, pp. 149-57.

[42] It is generally believed that CPA was the dialect spoken by Jewish farmers in Judea who became Christians as a result of the Justinian persecution (Kutscher, Isaiah, l5, n 1).

[43] bRosh Hashanna 26b.

[44] Jerusalem was a special case, since both Greek and Aramaic were spoken there by immigrants and pilgrims from the western and eastern diasporas respectively. It must have had a multilingual culture in the first century.

[45] Some rabbis who speak Hebrew in the Mishnah come from the Galilee.

[46] Barr, "Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek," 1989, pp. 83 and 112; Wilcox, "Semitisms," 1984, p. 1021; Fitzmyer, "Languages of Palestine," 1979, p. 38; Emerton, "Vernacular Hebrew," 1973, p. 21.

First, transliterations of Semitic words embedded in the text of the Gospels support the Aramaic view. In particular, the saying talita koumi, recorded in Mark 5:41, is incontrovertibly in Aramaic. With these words, Jesus addresses the daughter of Jairus who was a ruler of a synagogue somewhere in the Galilee. If this is a genuine saying, it reflects a colloquial dialect of Aramaic, where the final ן- has been dropped from the feminine singular imperative.[47] Members of JSSR consider this saying an Aramaic adaptation of the redactor of our gospel of Mark, who wished to add local coloring to his story:[48] They would especially point to Jesus' saying from the cross, elwi elwi lema sabacqani (Mark 15:34) to corroborate the artificial use of Aramaic by Mark. Since some people thought Jesus was calling for Elijah (Matt. 27:47), Jesus must have said hli hli, as in Matthew, as over against elwi elwi Mark (see discussion below). The version of the utterance in Mark, then, appears to have been editorially corrected to proper Aramaic. For elwi is the way of saying "my God" in Aramaic, hli is Hebrew.[49] Lindsey[50] apparently accepts the view that Mark or the redactor of Mark took his cue from Acts 9:40, where Peter raises a woman from the dead, by addressing her by her name tabiqa.[51]

{146} Other Semitic words quoted in the synoptic Gospels are open to debate, as whether or not they support an Aramaic background: 1) effata (Mark 7:34) certainly reflects a vernacular with the weakening of the final guttural, but the form may be either a Hebrew *niphal* or an Aramaic *ithpa'el*,[52] 2) abba in the prayer of Jesus (Mark 14:36) may be either MH or Aramaic,[53] 3) the technical term korban (Mark 7:11) could be either Hebrew or Aramaic,[54] but its use by Jesus reveals nothing about His home language nor about the language used in the discussion of it with the Pharisees and teachers who had come from Jerusalem (w. 5-16) - they could well have used MH in their discussion of halakha.[55] The language Jesus used with the crowd (vv. 14-16) and later with His disciples (vv. 17-23) could have been different.

Second, although the Dead Sea Scrolls contain only literary Aramaic documents like the Genesis Apocryphon, Targum Job and Visions of Amram, Fitzmyer argues that they, together with Aramaic inscriptions on ossuaries and tombs and Aramaic legal documents, point to a widespread use of spoken Aramaic in and around Jerusalem in the first century.[56] He views Qumran Aramaic as a testimony to a local Palestinian Aramaic dialect in a period of the breakdown of Imperial Aramaic into local dialects. Other local dialects known at the same time include Edessene, Hatran,

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[47] In light of the manuscript testimony and since it is the easier reading, the variant koumi appears to be secondary. Cf. Wilcox, 1000-2; and Rudolph Macuch, Grammatik *des samaritanischen* Aramaisch, Berlin and New York, 1982, pp. 63-64.

[48] Lindsey, *Mark,* p. 63. Cf. Grintz, p. 33, n. 3.

[49] The use of *E 1* in most of the DSS Aramaic texts is a borrowing from Hebrew, used in the expression *El Elyon* and in parallelism to *Elyon* (esp. in the so-called "Son of God" text). However, there does appear to be one clear case of independent use in a somewhat broken context, namely 11QJNar 1: קודם אל, "before God."

[50] Lindsey, *Mark,* 63.

[51] In light of Luke's h pai" egeire (8:54) and the poorly attested variant tabiqa here, it appears that Jesus really did say "maiden, arise" and did not address her by her purported name Tabitha, saying "Tabitha, arise."

[52] Of the verb פתח. For discussions and earlier references see Macuch, 64-65, and Wilcox, 999.

[53] Aramaic אבא meaning "my father" is attested in some Palestinian targumic traditions (e.g. Tg. Neophyti, Gen. 22:7), but the form could have entered Jewish Palestinian Aramaic from Hebrew. For it appears that Mishnaic Hebrew אבא arose from within the Hebrew language as a remnant of the old vocative case ending and was not a borrowing from Aramaic (Chaim Rabin, *Ancient West-Arabian,* London, 1951, p. 71). So far, the Aramaic of the Dead Sea scrolls attests only אבי as "my father" (1QapGen. 2:24), proceeded by the vocative particle יא אבי ויא מרי, "O my father and O my lord."

[54] It appears in BH and in targumic Aramaic with the meaning "offering." Cf. Wilcox, 1002-4.

[55] Cf. Rabin, 1036.

[56] Fitzmyer, "The Languages of Palestine," 39. A *Manual of Palestinian Aramaic Texts,* by Joseph A. Fitzmyer and Daniel J. Harrington, Rome, 1978, provides a convenient collection of the relevant Aramaic sources from the second century BC to the second century AD.

Palmyrene and Nabatean.[57] But, since the language of the DSS texts is literary, not vernacular, other advocates of the Aramaic view of the language of Jesus consider these texts to represent the literary register, while seeing the so-called Palestinian targums as representing the vernacular. In particular, the midrashic pluses are considered a valuable witness to the vernacular speech of the first century AD. It may be that the formulations of the legal documents go back to the Persian period, when Aramaic served as the administrative language in Palestine. Rabin considers all this material as evidence that Aramaic served as a *lingua franca* and not a home language in Judea at this time.[58] Of more direct consequence is the language of the Hebrew biblical scroll 1QIsa[a], which reveals that the scribe may have had an Aramaic dialect as his mother tongue.[59] The Aramaic Bar Kochba letters from the "Bar Kochba caves" demonstrate the importance of Aramaic as a vernacular in the early second century AD, but say nothing about the language of Jesus. The Babata Archive likewise comes from the post-destruction period[60] and may reflect a subgroup of Jews who spoke Aramaic.[61]

Third, some argue that the language of the targums supports the view of a spoken Middle Aramaic vernacular in the first century. The fact that the Dead Sea Scrolls contain targums to Leviticus and Job and the recognition that the extant targums had a long tradition of oral targum preceding their written record indicate that targums existed in the first century AD in some form or other. Further, it appears that the targum came into being to guide **{147}** the layman in his understanding of the sacred text written in the language of BH, which was then not fully understood by the masses. However, those masses may have spoken MH as their home language instead of Aramaic.[62] For MH, too, is significantly different from BH.[63] To make a Hebrew translation of the biblical text would have confused the ordinary congregant, who could have supposed that the new translation was itself the very word of God. To prevent this the teachers made a translation to a neutral language that every Jew could understand, whether his home language be MH or Aramaic. After all, MH has a great deal in common with Jewish Aramaic.

Two models of the language of Jesus have been offered on the basis of targumic texts, one based on the language of the Palestinian targumic texts[64] and the other on the language of Targumim Onqelos and Jonathan to the Prophets, supplemented by the language of the Palestinian Talmud and Midrashim (i.e. Galilean Aramaic). Paul Kahle and his students, especially Matthew Black and Alejandro Diez Macho, have argued for the first model, while Gustaf Dalman argued for the second.[65] The Kahle view argues that the language of the Palestinian targumic texts is a vernacular, by contrast to that of Onqelos and Jonathan which is clearly literary. Moreover, the origin of these

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[57] For a useful discussion, see Edward M. Cook, "Qumran Aramaic and Aramaic Dialectology," *Abr-Nahrain Supplement 3,*1992. Forthcoming.

[58] Rabin, 1028 and 1036.

[59] Kutscher, *lsaiah,* 23-29.

[60] The documents are dated from 93/94-132 AD.

[61] Note especially the use of Nabatean in the corpus.

[62] It should be remembered that the official targums at least were not written in the vernacular.

[63] In fact, MH shares a number of syntactic isoglosses with Aramaic, which fact makes it virtually impossible to differentiate between the two languages in retroversion from Greek. However, at least some of these common features may have arisen independently, such as the use of periphrastic tenses to express aspect. This feature may have developed under the influence of the prestige language, Greek (Rabin, 1024). Wilcox (993) conveniently summarizes seven common features.

[64] Especially the Cairo Geniza fragments and Targum Neophyti, to which may be added the Fragment Targums. Targum Pseudo-Jonathan, although it contains early Palestinian material, has a dialect all its own and in its present state must be dated after the Islamic conquests at least (see the important study of Edward M. Cook, *Rewriting the Bible: The Text and Language of the Pseudo-Jonathan Targum,* dissertation, UCLA, 1986). The following texts should be used today: Michael L. Klein, *Genizah Manuscripts of Palestinian Targum to the Pentateuch*, 2 vols.*,* Cincinnati, 1986*;* and *The Fragment-Targums of the Pentateuch,* 2 vols.*,* Rome, 1980; Alejandro Diez Macho, *Neophyti 1, Targum Palestinense ms. de la Biblioteca Vaticana,* 6 vols., Madrid, 1968-79. Cf. Michael Sokoloff, *A Dictionary of Jewish Palestinian Aramaic of the Byzantine Period,* Ramat-Gan, 1990*;* and Steven E. Fassberg, *A Grammar of the Palestinian Targum Fragments from the Cairo Geniza, Harvard Semitic Studies 38,* Atlanta, 1990.

[65] It should be remembered that neither the Cairo Geniza fragments nor Targum Neophyti were available to Dalman.

texts is definitely Palestine and probably the Galilee. By contrast, the provenance of Onqelos and Jonathan is disputed. It may be that they originated in Babylon or somewhere else (like Edessa) instead of in Palestine.[66] But even if they come from Palestine, they are a product of Judea not the Galilee. Further, since the Palestinian texts contain anti-mishnaic material, it is claimed that the texts must be pre-mishnaic.[67] This last argument has not found acceptance by Jewish scholars. The dating of these various targumic texts is disputed and it is doubtful whether we can claim that any of them represent the spoken Aramaic of first century Palestine, even if we admitted that the Palestinian texts reflected the vernacular.[68] It may be that the midrashic expansions of the Palestinian texts reflect a vernacular, but certainly the translated portions contain some artificial language.[69] This would make them invalid guides to the language of Jesus.

Fourth, the later Western Aramaic dialects (GA, CPA and SA) reflect spoken languages.[70] Although the written material comes from later periods, the **{148}** spoken dialects must have been in use earlier. As the center of Judaism moved from Yavneh to the Galilee, Aramaic progressively replaced Hebrew as the language of the people. This may reflect a situation where Aramaic was the vernacular in the Galilee already in the first century, while Hebrew was the vernacular of Judea.

Fifth, it is alleged that Josephus first composed the *Jewish* Wars in Aramaic; but others say in Hebrew.[71] We will probably never know for certain unless some early fragment written in a Semitic tongue is someday unearthed.

Sixth, the Aramaic Scroll of Fasts (Megillat Taanit), probably dating from the late first century AD in its present form, contains colloquial-looking forms of "fifteen" (חמיסר) and "seventeen" (שיבסר), despite the clear intention of its author to write in the literary language of Imperial Aramaic.[72] While this document comes from a time after the destruction of the second Temple, the colloquial forms may evidence a spoken dialect which was used earlier.[73]

To sum up this section, most of the arguments brought in favor of the Aramaic view prove that Aramaic was a literary language in first-century Palestine, but not necessarily a vernacular. Only the argument from transliterations of Semitic words in the speech of Jesus indicates that Aramaic was a vernacular, but then only in the Galilee, not in Judea. The argument on the basis of later Western dialects of Aramaic is compatible with such a conclusion, but in itself is non-conclusive. The argument from the fact of the targums is invalid, for many of those for whom they were guides spoke mishnaic Hebrew.

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66 The large number of isoglosses with Syriac in these targums speak against a Palestinian provenance. For a detailed defense of the Palestinian view, see Abraham Tal (Rosenthal), *The Language of the Targum of the Former Prophets and its Position within the Aramaic Dialects,* Tel-Aviv, 1975 [Hebrew].

67 Kahle alleged this on the basis of Geniza Fragment A to Exod. 22:4-5. Wilcox, writing in the tradition of Kahle, has expressed reservations about this point (p. 988).

68 Fitzmyer, 42. On the basis of nunation, Abraham Tal dates the Palestinian targums somewhere between the writing of the DSS documents, on the one hand, and the Palestinian Talmud and Midrashim, on the other. He places the language of Jonathan between the two Jewish revolts, but this is dubious.

69 Cf. Rabin, 1020.

70 Christa Muller-Kessler, *Grammatik des Christlich-Pahistinisch-Aramaischen Teil 1: Schriftlehre, Lautlehre, Formenlehre,* Hildesheim, Zurich and New York, 1991, p. 3.

71 Roger Le Deaut ("The Targumim," *The Cambridge History of Judaism,* ed. W.D. Davies and Louis Finkelstein, Volume Two: *The Hellenistic Age,* Cambridge, 1989, p. 573) and Rabin (1029) accept the Aramaic view. For bibliography on both opinions, see Louis H. Feldman, *Josephus and Modern Scholarship (1937-1980),* Berlin and New York, 1984, pp. 831-6.

72 *A Manual of Palestinian Aramaic Texts,* text 150. The scroll contains a list of days on which fasting is not permitted.

73 According to B.T. Shabbath 13b, it was compiled by Hananiah ben Garon, who lived before the destruction of the temple.

Some Particulars

1. The cry of Jesus on the cross, hli hli lema sabacqani (Matt. 27:46), could be either MH or Aramaic. It was certainly an utterance in the colloquial, probably in Jesus' mother tongue, and not a quotation of the targum, which may not have existed at that time.[74] While the form hli is Hebrew, it could have been borrowed by Jewish Aramaic.[75] And while the verb eya is Aramaic, it is also found in mishnaic Hebrew. So the saying could be either Hebrew or Aramaic.

2. The background of certain details of Luke's account of the triumphal entry apparently reflect Hebrew as over against Aramaic. It appears that oi kurioi autou, **{149}** referring to the kurioi of the colt is a reflex of Hebrew בעליו, meaning "owner" in the singular not the plural, which form is ubiquitous in BH.[76] This episode about the donkey's colt took place just outside of Jerusalem.

3. The expression ton arton hmwn ton epiousion of the Lord's prayer (Matt. 6:11) certainly has a Hebrew background (לחם חקנו) and should be rendered: "our necessary bread."[77] Jeremias' suggestion of the Aramaic background לחמן לדמחר, translated "our bread which is tomorrow's," with an eschatological connotation, is untenable.[78] Even if Jesus had Aramaic as His home language, He could have used Hebrew as the language of prayer, even of free prayer.

4. The hymns of Mary and Zechariah found in the birth accounts of Luke 1 may have been composed in BH.[79] As such they would reflect the literary use of that dialect, but indicate nothing about colloquial speech.

5. The asseverative use of amhn, "verily' in the sayings of Jesus may be Hebrew rather than the reflex of Aramaic.[80] Because of the normal use of Hebrew אמן as a response in prayer, Lindsey feels compelled to conform the New Testament evidence to this norm.[81] Whatever does not fit this pattern is explained as an error of the gospel writers.[82] Bruce Chilton, on the other hand, claims that asseverative amhn in the mouth of Jesus is the Greek reflex of Aramaic מן קושטא or בקושטא.[83] But Hebrew does use such asseverative particles in initial position (cf. Isa.37:18 where MT has אמנם). It may be that this use of the word is unique to Jesus, but the use of the cognate אמנם as an asseverative cautions against this.[84]

Conclusion

It appears that Jesus spoke both a dialect of Middle Hebrew and a dialect of Middle Aramaic. He undoubtedly was versed in biblical Hebrew as well. What His home language was is impossible to tell. However, His choice of language depended to a great extent upon His audience. To Judean and Samaritan farmers and villagers and to the Pharisees and sages of Jerusalem, He probably spoke Hebrew. Then, too, He probably spoke a dialect of Middle Aramaic to Eastern diaspora Jews and to Aramaic speaking Jews of the Galilee, like Jairus. He probably used Greek to speak to the Romans

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[74] The reference to Psalm 22 is unmistakable, however, and certainly intended.

[75] The literary text 1QJN points to this possibility.

[76] Randall Buth, "Luke 19:31-34, Mishnaic Hebrew, and Bible Translation: Is kurioi tou pwlou Singular?," *JBL* 104*,* 1985, pp. 680-85.

[77] Young, 33.

[78] Young, 31-33, offers a sound refutation. Cf. Jeremias, *New Testament Theology,* 199-201.

[79] Cf. Randall Buth, "Hebrew Poetic Tenses and the Magnificat," *JSNT* 21, 1984, pp. 67-83.

[80] Only the single "amen" occurs in the synoptic Gospels, while only the double "amen, amen" appears in John.

[81] Thus, as a response to the thief who said "Remember me when you come into your kingdom," Jesus answered, according to Lindsey, "Amen! I tell you that today you shall be with me in Paradise" (Lindsey, *Mark,* 75).

[82] Lindsey, *Mark,* 75.

[83] Bruce D. Chilton, *A Galilean Rabbi and His Bible, Good News Studies* 8, Wilmington, 1984, p. 202; and "'Amen': an Approach through Syriac Gospels," *ZNW* 69 (1978), pp. 203-11.

[84] The case of אמן in a 6th-7th century BC Hebrew letter from Yavneh-Yam is debated. See Dennis Pardee, *Handbook of Ancient Hebrew Letters,* Sources for Biblical Studies 15, Chico, California, 1982, p. 22, for a summary of the views.

and to Western diaspora Jews, but probably not in teaching. The issue of Hebrew versus Aramaic in the Galilee in the first century is far from settled. The thesis of JSSR that the sayings of Jesus contained in the synoptic Gospels have a Hebrew background rather than an Aramaic one is as responsible in light of current general knowledge as the contrary opinion. We can only hope that future discoveries will shed more light on the linguistic situation among indigenous Jews of the Galilee in the first century.

{156} With Jesus through Galilee According to the Fifth Gospel

Bargil Pixner
Corazin Publishing, Rosh Pina 1992, 136pp.

Reviewed by Torleif Elgvin

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Bargil Pixner has guided many of us through Galilee in the footsteps of Jesus. Through this book (hereafter *The Fifth Gospel)* others might follow the guiding of this Jesus-centered Benedictine brother, who has lived at the shores of the Sea of Galilee for twenty years.

Pixner's starting point in analyzing the New Testament is different from other scholars presented in this issue of MISHKAN. In order to reconstruct the historical and geographical framework of Jesus' Galilean ministry, he combines elements from three main sources:

1. The topography of Galilee and its socio-historical context (Pixner calls the geography of Galilee the fifth Gospel, which illuminates the four others).

2. The Gospels, which are treated as reliable historical sources.

3. Writings of the church fathers and early pilgrims, in which he finds valuable data as to events and customs recorded in the Gospels. Josephus and rabbinic writers are used for supplementary information. Pixner's mastery in the use of different sources is what makes his research unique and at the same time controversial.

When I first encountered his theories I was skeptical about Pixner's confidence in geographically locating the different events recorded in the gospels. With time I tend to see the probability of many of his proposals; often I am convinced. An example: on the western shores of the lake he finds only one bay with acoustic conditions which fit the description of Jesus preaching to the multitudes from the boat in Luke 5:1-3. This bay is located 2.5 kilometers **{157}** south of Jesus' Capernaum base, close to the well known fishing spots at Tabgha. Together this gives probability to Luke's account.

The scholar will have many question marks reading *The Fifth Gospel*. Where is the substantiation for these postulates? For the scholarly discussion he will have to turn to Pixner's recent collection of articles (*Wege des Messias und Statten der Urkirche*, published in German last year).

Different from the Jerusalem School, Pixner is convinced that Mark is the oldest Gospel, and also the most knowledgeable in matters of the geography of Galilee (with John as second). It is refreshing to read a New Testament scholar who works historical-critically and has a confidence in the reliability of both New Testament and early Christian sources. He is aware that the evangelist often interprets the event theologically, but this does not mean that he or his source invented the story. In spite of the editorial and stylistic work of the evangelists, it remains possible to try to reconstruct the ministry of the historical Jesus when we bring all the sources together and treat them critically.

The Jewish Christians who lived in Capernaum continuously until the late fourth century, are supposed to preserve the (historically correct) memory as to where the events recorded in the Gospels on and around the Sea of Galilee actually happened. Therefore Pixner finds that the reports of the early pilgrims (e.g. Egeria who wrote in 384 AD) and Byzantine writers preserve reliable traditions.

Pixner has contributed to our knowledge of New Testament archeology. His proposal as to the location of Bethsaida was confirmed by the excavations he initiated (as he also did with the Essene Gate and the supposed Essene Quarter in Jerusalem). His new proposals in biblical

geography include locating "Bethany on the other side of the Jordan" where John baptized (John 1:29; 10:40) in the Yarmuk region - later substantiated by R. Riesner - and the second miracle of feeding at Tel Hadar at the north-eastern shore of the lake.

Theologically Pixner goes his own distinctive ways. With John's Gospel, and contrary to the synoptics and most modern scholarship, he dates the cleansing of the temple to the beginning of Jesus' public ministry. In Mark he finds a clear succession of Jesus' various journeys through Galilee. As these journeys are unfolded, he detects in the texts an inner development in Jesus Himself and in His attitude to various social or religious groups (family, the Twelve, Pharisees, Essenes and pagans).

He argues convincingly that *Yeshua Hanotzri* does not mean *Jesus of Nazareth*, but *Jesus the Nazarene* (the descendant of David). Some New Testament **{158}** passages become more expressive in this light, e.g. Luke 18:37-38. More controversial is his assertion that the name of the village Nazareth stems from its resettlement by a Davidic clan immigrating from Babylon around 100 BC, and that this clan and Jesus' own family had Essene inclinations (pp. 21, 53). Pixner holds that Jesus soon freed Himself from this Essene influence and became closer to the Pharisees (see also his forthcoming article "Jesus and his Community. Between Essenes and Pharisees" in J. Charlesworth (ed.) *Jesus and Hillel*).

This reviewer tends to disagree with Pixner's assertion that Essene influence was not only felt in Nazareth, but that the Yarmuk region was an Essene stronghold, which has implications for his interpretation of Jesus' teaching on marriage, divorce and celibacy (Matt. 19:11f.) in these vicinities. The Copper Scroll from Qumran is a basic presupposition for this theory (pp.21, 26, 109-113), and the Copper Scroll's affiliation with the Qumran Community is today highly questionable.

Pixner has cast forward a number of daring proposals in his reconstructions of New Testament events and journeys, understanding of New Testament passages, and even more in early church history. Many of these remain hypothetical. Scholarship needs lone rangers that dare to combine the sources in radical new ways. Others will then have to test and evaluate their theses.

Pixner sticks his head out when he concludes this book with a comprehensive timetable of Jesus' ministry, with Mark as the basic historical source. Theologians will ask whether such a putting together of the "puzzle" of events recorded by the evangelists is at all possible. New Testament scholars should, however, not too easily discard proposals from a man with such superior knowledge of Galilean topography, flora, weather conditions, fishing habits etc.

The English version of *The Fifth Gospel* is marred by a number of spelling errors. A few other critical remarks: The reference in the chronological reconstruction to Jesus' *Bar-Mitzva* in Jerusalem at age 12 should be weeded out in future editions and translations. *Bar-Mitzva* is a much later invention in Jewish tradition - this custom can by no means go back to the time of Jesus. Pixner's use of the designation *Rabbi* (pp. 32, 98, 102) is not consistent with first century use. Neither is his assertion that first-century Pharisees ascribed Mosaic origin to their oral halakhic traditions (p.26). This is a common mistake in New Testament scholarship. The Pharisees had their distinctive *halakha* (as had the Sadducees and the Essenes), but J. Neusner has demonstrated that only late fourth century rabbinic sources ascribe this *ha1akha* to a divinely given oral Torah.

{159} Graphically this book is the most beautiful I have read for years. It is highly recommended for everyone preaching about the Nazarean who made Capernaum the center of his ministry. New Testament passages describing Jesus in His Galilean homeland will be much more alive after working with the book. *The Fifth Gospel* should be compulsory reading for tour leaders in Israel, who probably will conclude that there are more "evangelical" sites around the Sea of Galilee worth visiting than they previously thought.