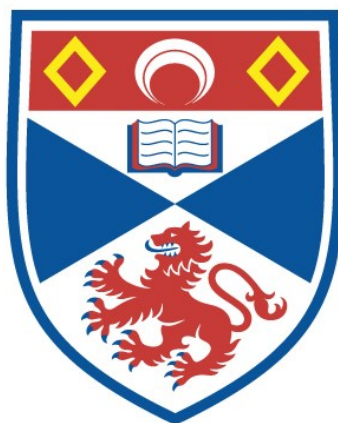


JESUS THE GALILEAN IN HIS FIRST CENTURY
CONTEXT : A LITTLE TRADITION PERSPECTIVE

Maureen Moran

A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD
at the
University of St Andrews



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**Jesus the Galilean in His First Century Context:
A Little Tradition Perspective**

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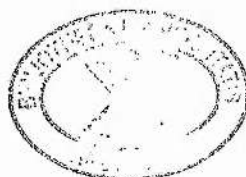
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IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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St. Andrews, Scotland, United Kingdom

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ABSTRACT

Jesus the Galilean in His First Century Context:

A Little Tradition Perspective

More than two thousand years after his death the words and deeds of Jesus of Nazareth are still proclaimed, listened to and believed in. They form a part of the Great Tradition of Christianity in which Jesus is perceived as both "fully human and fully divine". In first century CE Palestine, however, they functioned very differently. In this thesis we seek to re-root Jesus of Nazareth, his teachings and his actions, in his first century Galilean context. In Chapter One of this study, we therefore examine Galilee, its economic, political, religious and social makeup in order not merely to provide a framework for Jesus' ministry, but rather to determine the milieu in which he was socialised and formed. The Galilee into which Jesus was acculturated was not, we conclude, a Hellenised region of trading and opportunity, as some modern scholars have suggested, but a land in which the peasantry struggled to meet their subsistence needs and in which an increasing number were forced into the forfeiture of their patrimonial land. In this light, we turn our attention, in our second chapter, to forms of non-elite resistance to elite oppression. We describe five forms of non-elite response, Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance, Social Banditry, The City Mob, Prophecy and Prophet Led Movements and Messiah/Deliverer Led Movements, each of which, we argue, coheres with the values inherent in the little tradition of the peasantry. The Prophet and Messiah Led Movements prove particularly significant in so far as they also provide the categories within which Jesus' social identity could be understood. In Chapter Three we reconsider four of Jesus' parables illustrating the extent to which they reflect the little tradition themes of reversal, abundance and condemnation of an exploitative elite. Similarly, we present his healings as a challenge to the religious elites' manipulation of the purity and debt codes, and his exorcisms as a condemnation of a social system which leaves the marginalised more vulnerable to demon possession. His practice of table fellowship with tax collectors and sinners not only foreshadows the messianic banquet, it also demonstrates the little tradition value of reversal (Chapter Four). In Chapter Five we illustrate that through his action in the Jerusalem temple, Jesus condemns the oppressive behaviour of the socio-religious elite and offers a new vision of the temple as a 'house of prayer' built on the values of the kingdom of God. The trial and crucifixion of Jesus, we present as the elite response (Chapter Six). The words and deeds of Jesus of Nazareth and his identification by at least some of his followers with the social role of messiah provoked the ire of the Judean elite. They also, we contend, led the Roman authorities to crucify him as 'King of the Judeans'.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ABD	D. N. Freedman (ed) <i>The Anchor Bible Dictionary</i>
ANRW	<i>Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt</i>
ATR	<i>Anglican Theological Review</i>
BA	<i>Biblical Archaeologist</i>
BASOR	<i>Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research</i>
BTB	<i>Biblical Theology Bulletin</i>
Bib Zeit	<i>Biblische Zeitschrift</i>
CBQ	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
ETL	<i>Ephemerides theologicae lovaienses</i>
HTR	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
HUCA	<i>Hebrew Union College Annual</i>
IEJ	<i>Israel Exploration Journal</i>
JAAR	<i>Journal of the American Academy of Religion</i>
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JJS	<i>Journal of Jewish Studies</i>
JPS	<i>Journal of Peasant Studies</i>
JSJ	<i>Journal for the study of Judaism</i>
JSNT	<i>Journal for the study of the New Testament</i>
JSOT	<i>Journal for the study of the Old Testament</i>
JSP	<i>Journal for the study of the Pseudepigrapha</i>
JTS	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>

IBS	Irish Biblical Society
NTS	New Testament Studies
PEQ	Palestine Exploration Quarterly
REV QUM	Revue de Qumran
SJT	Scottish Journal of Theology
ZNW	Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft

INTRODUCTION

If Jesus of Nazareth had been Jesus of Hebron, raised in the shadow of the temple in Judea rather than in Galilee, subject to direct Roman rule rather than the client kingship of the Herodian dynasty, would his ministry and message have been significantly different? In other words, how significant is it for our understanding of the historical Jesus that his primary socialisation occurred within a Galilean context?¹ In the preface to his work, *Jesus and the Zealots*, S. G. F. Brandon writes, “For [many people]...the incarnated Son of God could never have taken part in Jewish-Roman politics. His mission to save mankind by his own vicarious death was part of a divine plan that transcended space and time, and it could not have become involved in, and conditioned by, the political relations of Jews and Romans in first-century Judea” (1967: xi). According to such a view, recorded little more than thirty years ago, social context had no bearing upon the life and works of Jesus of Nazareth. Whilst few scholars would adhere to such an extreme position today, the extent and nature of Galilean influence upon the words and deeds of Jesus remains a matter of contention. In this thesis we will seek to establish a position almost diametrically opposed to that cited by Brandon, namely that the social, political, economic and religious conditions of first century CE Galilee not only influenced the activities of Jesus of Nazareth but were an integral part of them. They were, we contend, formative of the person of Jesus, and thus of his words and deeds. In addition, we will also argue that his status within Galilean society as a member of the non-elite had a direct impact upon both the content of his message and the manner in which it was interpreted by his contemporaries, in particular in terms of the social roles with which they identified him. His parables, healings, exorcisms, table

¹The process of socialisation is dealt with by Berger and Luckmann 1969.

fellowship and his actions in the Jerusalem temple will all be located within, and interpreted from the perspective of, the little tradition² of Judeanism.³ The trial and crucifixion, we will argue, constitute the elite response.

Whilst the above brief outline attends to the what of this thesis, the why and the how remain to be addressed. The answer to the why is two-fold. The emphasis in Christian understanding of Jesus as “fully human, fully divine”⁴ has traditionally tended to fall upon the latter aspect of his being, his divinity. In this thesis we seek to redress the balance. We seek to present Jesus of Nazareth not simply as the Word, but as the Word made flesh; one who in dwelling amongst us was both influenced by, and in turn influenced, the society to which he belonged. The influence of Jesus of Nazareth, however, extends far beyond the historical constraints of first century CE Palestine, and it is this continuing influence which constitutes the second aspect of the why of this study. At the beginning of the third millennium oppression, exploitation and poverty remain the fate of much of the world’s population. A “fully human” Jesus who himself suffered at the hands of an oppressive elite constitutes a meaningful and relevant figure for the

²Redfield and Singer 1954 and Redfield 1959; this concept is explained below (pp 68 n 92, 74-78).

³Throughout this thesis we shall prefer the use of the of the terms ‘Judean’ and ‘Judeanism’ instead of what we consider to be anachronistic terms ‘Jew’ and ‘Judaism’.

⁴Ἰουδαῖος, Judean, shall be taken as applying to anyone connected to the land of Judea, the city of Jerusalem, and the Jerusalem temple, irrespective of where (s)he is resident (Esler 2000b: 329 n 9). Thus the term may be used of someone who resides in Galilee or in a city of the Diaspora just as readily as of an inhabitant of Judea itself. Justification for this view is found in the writings of Josephus. Prior to *Ant.* 11, the people of Galilee and Judea are generally referred to as Hebrews or Israelites. After *Ant.* 11, in which the return from the Babylonian exile is described, they are almost always referred to as Ἰουδαῖοι, Judeans. More specifically in *J.W.* 2.3.1 [43] the term Ἰουδαῖοι, is applied to pilgrims from Galilee and other regions with specific reference being made to ὁ γνήσιος ἐξ αὐτῆς Ἰουδαίας λαός, for an indigenous (i.e. geographically by birth) Judean.

⁴The issue of the humanity and the divinity of Christ was determined by the Council of Chalcedon in 451 CE.

marginalised and oppressed of today. His words and actions, moreover, provide a concrete mode of living through which the promises of the kingdom of God can be obtained by all. An understanding of a “fully human” Jesus has seldom been more needed.

The how of this thesis leads us into the sphere of the ‘Third Quest’ of the historical Jesus.⁵ This third quest which has been ongoing for the best part of the last three decades,⁶ marks the most recent development in a search to ‘recover’ Jesus of Nazareth which, including its two earlier manifestations, has endured over two hundred years.⁷ This latest phase of the search, however, has proven far from homogeneous. In addition

⁵The phrase ‘Quest of the Historical Jesus’ derives from the English title of Albert Schweitzer’s, *Von Reimarus zu Wrede*, published in England in 1910.

⁶It was Tom Wright who, in 1992, declared that the upsurge in writings in the field of the historical Jesus was sufficiently distinctive to merit being considered initiative of a ‘Third Quest’ (1992: 12). Despite Telford’s initial reservations (1994: 33-74) few scholars would question the ongoing nature of a ‘Third Quest’.

⁷The initial quest began in 1778 with the publication of Reimarus’ *The Goal of Jesus and His Disciples*, and concluded over one hundred years later in 1906 with the German publication of Schweitzer’s *Von Reimarus zu Wrede*. Schweitzer’s seminal work, which portrayed Jesus as a misguided apocalyptic who sought to force into being the Kingdom of God, cast a long and lasting shadow over Jesus scholarship. So much so indeed that interest in the field waned throughout the following decades. In this period known as the ‘No Quest’ the attitude towards Jesus research was typified by the approach of Rudolf Bultmann. Despite publishing a work on the teachings of Jesus called *Jesus and the Word*, Bultmann claimed that there was insufficient extant information to make possible a biography of Jesus of Nazareth. In 1953, however, Ernst Käsemann presented a paper to former students of Bultmann entitled ‘Das Problem des historischen Jesus’, in which he once again tried to relate the Christ of faith to the Jesus of history, and the ‘New Quest’ was underway. Whilst acknowledging the role of kerygma in the gospel traditions, Käsemann argued that, in some cases at least, the distinctive teaching of Jesus could be discerned behind the kerygma. Although he concurred with Bultmann that it was not possible to produce a ‘Life of Jesus’, he considered that it was possible to re-root some of the gospel traditions in the historical person of Jesus of Nazareth. For the most part, however, Käsemann, along with the other prime movers in the ‘New Quest’, Robinson (1959), Bornkamm (1960) and Fuchs (1964), continued to portray Jesus in the existentialist terms so favoured by Bultmann.

to the use of a proliferation of contextual sources, Judean, Hellenistic, Christian and archaeological, a number of differing methodological approaches have also been adopted. Thus, in one form or another, Brandon (1967), Vermes (1973b, 1983), Borg (1984), Chilton (1994a) and to a degree Crossan (1991) have all taken an historical or traditio-historical approach. Sanders (1985) establishes what he considers seven historically secure facts of the life of Jesus and, against a background of Judeanism, engages in a form of deductive analysis. Still others place the emphasis on the sayings of Jesus, locating these within a particular historical tradition or context and drawing their conclusions accordingly. In this study, we will adopt perhaps the most innovative, and possibly also the most criticised approach employed in the Third Quest, that is the application of social-scientific techniques to historical Jesus research. By making use of the social-sciences, scholars operating in this field, including Oakman (1986), Herzog (1994 and 2000), Hollenbach (1981) and to a lesser extent Theissen (1992), Freyne (1988 and 1995b) and Horsley (1987), seek to bring to Jesus studies the benefits of

research of other related disciplines, such as ethnology, history (economic, social, military, political, legal, and the like), economics (ancient economics, economic anthropology), classics, geography, archaeology, political science (and comparative politics), semiotics (perception and communication theory; sociolinguistics), sociology and its various orientations (structural functionalism, conflict theory, exchange theory, symbolic interactionism, phenomenological and ethnomethodological theory) and subdisciplines (the sociologies of language and literature, of knowledge, of religion, of sectarianism, and the like,) and finally theology and its subdisciplines (Elliott 1993: 15).⁸

⁸Elliott's description refers to social-scientific criticism of the New Testament in general but is equally applicable to the specific field of the historical Jesus.

Central also to the social-scientific approach is the use of models, defined by Elliott as “An abstract selective representation of the relationships among social phenomena used to conceptualise, analyse, and interpret patterns of social relations, and to compare and contrast one system of social relations with another”. “Models”, he continues, “are heuristic constructs that operationalise particular theories and that range in scope and complexity according to the phenomena to be analysed” (1993: 132). Models are also the target for much of the criticism directed at the social-scientific approach. They consist, it is argued, of often questionable modern data superimposed upon ancient texts. Comparisons are drawn with the application of social laws which it is claimed results in a predetermined interpretation of the textual evidence. Such a criticism has, however, been competently refuted by a number of scholars in particular Elliott (1993), Malina (1981) and Esler (1987). Far from being social laws, models serve simply as heuristic tools. Neither valid nor invalid of themselves they seek to open the texts to alternative interpretations. Rather than forcing the textual evidence to conform to the model, the model seeks to free ancient data from ethnocentric and anachronistic interpretations⁹ allowing it to speak in a manner which conveys not only the words from, but their meaning in, the text’s original context.

The use of models has, in recent times, also been the subject of criticism from scholars who otherwise seek to apply social-scientific techniques to biblical interpretation. Susan Garrett (1992), for example, advocates an ‘interpretive’ rather than a model-based method, arguing that the former serves better the emic perspective in cultural discourse. The positivism inherent in the model, she claims, makes this a less useful approach in the complex task of making the social script of one culture

⁹Many biblical scholars who criticise the use of models regularly fail to recognise the implicit presumptions and perspectives which they bring to textual criticism.

meaningful in another. As Esler indicates, however, excessive emphasis on “native viewpoints” leads not only to a “fundamental relativism” but also to an inability to successfully engage in the process of “cross-cultural translation” (1995a: 6). In practical terms, too, the interpretive approach runs into difficulty in the field of New Testament studies. Quite simply there is no extant culture into which an ethnographer can be fully immersed (1995a: 7). David Horrell, in a written debate with Philip Esler, also raises concerns about the use of models in the social-scientific approach to the New Testament. In particular he objects to the application of the term model to “every kind of presumption, theory, method and so on” (2000: 93). More significant, however, is his criticism that “models in the strict sense...are based on a philosophy of human action that regards such human behaviour as predictable and regular, presentable in generalized and typical patterns that occur cross-culturally, and that might albeit tentatively, enable the formulation of (social) laws, or at least generalizations, concerning human behaviour” (2000: 86). In a response to Horrell’s criticism, Esler acknowledges that he accepts culturally determined patterns of behaviour, but always with the proviso that “the unpredictability endemic to human affairs means that they do not acquire the status of social law...and people may always diverge from them if they choose” (2000c: 110). Crucially, this view is not held on the basis of a “philosophy of human action” but rather derives from the observation of human behaviour (2000c: 110). In other words, repeated patterns of behaviour do provide a legitimate basis upon which to construct models for use in the social-scientific interpretation of New Testament texts. Whilst still clearly a contentious issue amongst many New Testament scholars, the social-scientific approach opens up a variety of new avenues of exploration in biblical interpretation, as well as in the search for the historical Jesus. It will serve as an essential tool in this study’s attempt to uncover a non-elite perspective on the words and deeds of Jesus of Nazareth.

The general backdrop to this thesis is provided by a conflict model of society. Two theories dominate the sociological approach to society, (a) the order (structural-functionalist) theory and (b) the conflict theory. For structural-functionalists society is understood as “a relatively persistent, stable structure of elements” (Burrell and Morgan 1979: 12). Each element contributes towards the functioning and maintenance of society and each social structure operates on the basis of a consensus of values shared by its members. By contrast proponents of conflict theory argue that every society is constantly subject to change. “Dissensus and conflict” are its prominent features and coercion rather than consensus forms the basis upon which society functions. Whilst these two theories initially occasioned much debate between their respective adherents, the 1960s saw a move towards a reconciliation of the apparently opposed views. Conflict, it was argued,¹⁰ was merely a variable which could adequately be incorporated within a structuralist theory of social order. What appeared to be contrasting theories of society were simply different sides of the same coin (1979: 10-11).¹¹ Such a view, however, is not shared by all sociologists. According to Burrell and Morgan, it is based upon an inadequate treatment of conflict, “The fallacy of this position becomes clear if one considers certain extreme forms of conflict, such as class conflict, revolution and war, which can only be incorporated in the integrationist model by the wildest stretch of one’s imagination” (1979: 13). The conflict theory thus remains a valid alternative perception of society.

Although in its initial forms primarily concerned with the causes and consequences of conflict within society, conflict theory has developed into a means of explaining

¹⁰See for example Coser 1956 and Cohen 1968.

¹¹See also Craib who argues that conflict theory proves inadequate in terms of providing a theory of society, contending rather that it should be understood as a ‘fragment’ of the ‘structuralist-functionalist’ approach (1984: 59-70).

society itself. Thus it no longer simply focuses upon occasions of open conflict or instances of social change, but rather seeks to encompass society as a whole. In contrast to the structuralist-functionalist approach,

it sees social order as the product of contending interests and the resources groups have for dominating one another and negotiating alliances and coalitions. Its basic focus has become, not overt conflict but (in Dahrendorf's terms) *latent conflict*; it deals with social order as domination and negotiation" (Collins 1988: 118).

In effect 'latent conflict' lies at the heart of social order. For the most part conflict remains latent, only infrequently taking the more extreme form of revolution or rebellion. Even within the concept of latent conflict, however, it is not suggested that "everyone is in conflict with everyone else all the time" (1988: 118). As "a form of social organisation" conflict tends to occur between groups¹² rather than between individuals" (1988: 118).

In terms of the useful macrosociological models constructed by Lenski (1966) and Lenski and Lenski (1982), advanced agrarian society (where the use of the plough produces an agricultural surplus) consists of a number of groups. The ruling elite, their retainers, peasants, artisans, the unclean and degraded and the expendables all possess self-interests which, we contend, form the basis for the latent conflict upon which social

¹²Coser's 'pluralist theory' posits that where more than one conflict exists at any given time and the groups involved straddle the boundaries of the respective conflicts the net result will be a reduction in conflict intensity. He cites the example of black American workers who may side with white colleagues against capitalist employers but who in a racist conflict will oppose these same white colleagues. Collins describes this as the "grid-lock" model of conflict in which the volume of conflict reduces its intensity (1988: 123).

order is founded. The acquisitiveness of the elite, for example, is achieved at the expense of the subsistence of the peasantry; the needs of the non-elite subjected to the desires of the wealthy elite.¹³ These are the dynamics, we will argue, which informed the society of first century CE Galilee and which shall therefore shape our consideration of the words and deeds of Jesus of Nazareth.

Within this wider framework of social conflict, the economic, political, social and religious milieu of first century CE Galilee provides the more specific context essential for our understanding of the mission and ministry of Jesus of Nazareth. These factors, however, are not to be understood as merely providing background information. More significantly, they form an integral aspect of the socialisation process by means of which first century Galileans were acculturated. Recognition of this fact has led a number of scholars in recent years to attempt a reconstruction of first century CE Galilee and to portray Jesus of Nazareth in its light. Sean Freyne's seminal work on Galilee (1980), together with his many subsequent contributions (1988, 1992, 1994, 1995a, 1995b, 1997, 2000), have been followed by the significant efforts of Richard Horsley (1994, 1995, 1996). One group of scholars, in particular F. Gerald Downing (1992), Burton Mack (1988 and 1993) and to a lesser extent J. Dominic Crossan (1991), have sought to present Galilee as a Hellenised region considerably influenced by Greco-Roman culture. It is a Galilee which enjoyed extensive trading links throughout the Mediterranean,¹⁴ and a Galilee in which cynicism and cynic philosophers were readily found.¹⁵ As a consequence these scholars look to cynicism to provide the framework within which the teachings and actions of Jesus are to be understood. In so doing, however, they fail to

¹³Scott 1977: 16.

¹⁴Overman 1988 and Edwards 1992.

¹⁵Downing stresses the association of cynicism with the city of Gadara, a city whose trade route with the port of Ptolemais passed close to both Nazareth and Sepphoris.

recognise the extent to which the villages of Galilee were influenced by the little tradition of Judeanism. In Chapter One of this thesis we shall attempt to reclaim Galilee from the Hellenisers. We will argue that rather than engaging in market exchange and trading, reciprocal exchange provided the peasant non-elite with most of their subsistence requirements. And that rather than espousing the Greco-Roman values nascent in the cities of Sepphoris and Tiberias, the little tradition of the peasant villages of the Galilee took its lead from the propagators of the Great Tradition in Jerusalem, and reflected the values which emanated from that city. It is in the context of this Galilee that we will attempt to understand the words and deeds of Jesus of Nazareth.

In addition to the social, political, economic and religious context of first century CE Galilee, social roles are also essential to our understanding of the mission of Jesus. In other words, the perception of Jesus, of his teachings and actions, is conditioned by the social types available to his contemporaries. Thus for Downing (1992) and Crossan (1991) he is a cynic philosopher, for Vermes (1973b) a wisdom teacher, for Sanders (1985) an eschatological prophet, for Brandon (1967) a revolutionary and for Horsley (1987) and Herzog (2000) a social/prophetic reformer. For each of these scholars the words and deeds of Jesus are best understood in terms of their respective roles. In Chapter Two of this work we will attempt to illustrate that at least some of these social roles, in particular the revolutionary, the various types of prophet and also the role of messiah, are themselves products of the latent conflict which underpins social order. Thus, in addition to everyday forms of peasant resistance, social banditry and the actions of the 'city mob', the non-elite response to elite domination manifests itself in the form of prophets and messiahs. To the non-elite these prophets and messiahs were, for the most part, perceived as offering freedom from oppression and provision for all. To the elite, not surprisingly, they were something quite different.

In our third chapter we will reconsider four of the parables of Jesus of Nazareth, (a) The Parable of the Sower (Mk 4: 1-9//Mt 13: 1-9//Lk 8: 4-8//Thom 9), (b) The Parable of the Tenants in the Vineyard (Mk 12: 1-12//Mt 21: 33-46//Lk 20: 9-19//Thom 65), (c) The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant (Mt 18: 23-35) and (d) The Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard (Mt 20: 1-16). We will locate them within the context of non-elite resistance to elite oppression, arguing that the parabolic form allows Jesus to launch a scathing attack on the exploitative practices of the ruling elite. We will also illustrate the extent to which Jesus' parables are imbued with the values of the little tradition, such as the theme of reversal and the promise of abundance for all.

In Chapters Four and Five we turn our attention to the deeds of Jesus of Nazareth. In Chapter Four we consider his healings, exorcisms and his practice of table fellowship, and in Chapter Five we re-examine the 'incident in the temple'. At the root of these actions, we will argue, are the non-elite values of the peasants and their little tradition. When he heals the sick, casts out demons and eats with tax collectors and sinners, Jesus strikes at prevailing societal values. When he causes a disturbance in the Jerusalem temple, he challenges the ruling elite in the very seat of their power.

Our final chapter provides the elite response to Jesus' actions. Amongst his non-elite contemporaries the words and deeds of Jesus of Nazareth identified him with specific social roles. To some he was "John the Baptiser [to] others Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets".¹⁶ To Peter, one of the disciples belonging to his core group, he was the messiah.¹⁷ To the ruling elite, however, he was something different. He

¹⁶Mk 8: 28//Mt 16: 14//Lk 9: 19.

¹⁷Mk 8: 29//Lk 9: 20. In Mt 16: 16 Peter describes him as "the Messiah, the Son of the living God".

posed a challenge and a threat and, as we will illustrate in this chapter, they dealt with him accordingly.

CHAPTER ONE

GALILEE DURING THE HERODIAN DYNASTY

A Model of Agrarian Society

Gerhard and Jean Lenski (1982) provide us with the paradigmatic model of the development of human society from its pre-industrial beginnings through to the modern industrial age. Within the pre-industrial category they identify five stages of evolution (a) hunting and gathering, (b) simple horticultural, (c) advanced horticultural, (d) simple agrarian and (e) advanced agrarian. The progression from one category to another, they deduce, is dependent upon some form of technological advancement. Thus the introduction of the hoe in place of the plough distinguished agrarian societies from their horticultural counterparts, whilst the replacement of bronze and copper tools with those made of iron marked off the advanced agrarian society from its simple forerunner. The significance of these developments can hardly be overestimated for they enabled larger tracts of land to be cultivated and thus ensured, for the first time, that agriculturists were able to produce more crops than they required for purely subsistence purposes. The appropriation of this surplus by a tiny minority of the population proves central to our understanding of the economic, social and political make-up of the agrarian society.

The highly stratified nature of agrarian societies which is modelled in Lenski (1966)¹ is substantiated for Palestine by Oakman (1986), Fiensy (1991), Rohrbaugh (1991, 1996 and 2000), Duling and Perrin (1994) and Herzog (1994). The upper echelons of such societies consisted of the ruler, governing class, retainers and a few

¹Figure 1.

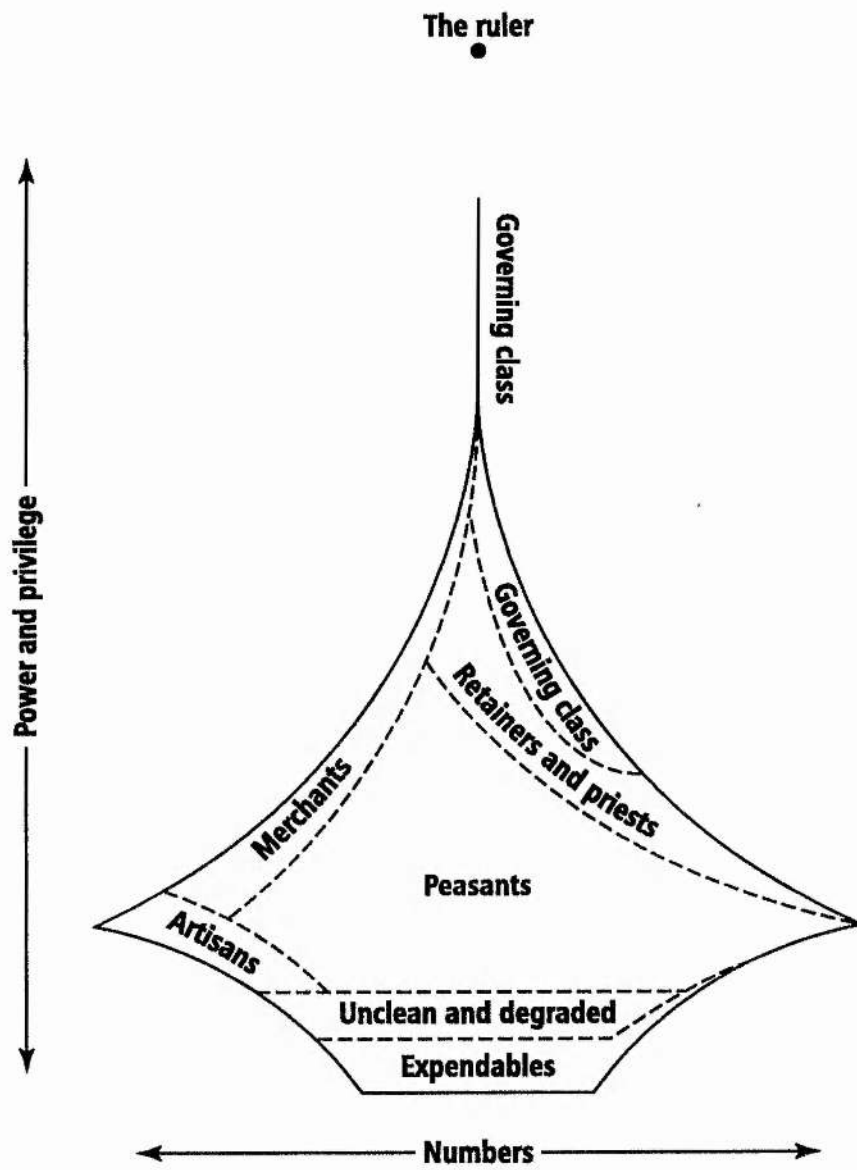


Figure 1

merchants whilst the lower stratum was populated by the peasants, artisans, the unclean and degraded and 'the expendables'. Although the ruler and ruling class combined constituted only one to two per cent of the total population, they nonetheless enjoyed between fifty and seventy per cent of the agrarian society's wealth and all of its political power (Lenski 1966: 219). That wealth was derived, if not exclusively, at least predominantly, from the ownership and control of land and from the peasants who worked it. This enabled the ruling elite, the only sector of the population in the agrarian society which of itself produced nothing, to enjoy a life of leisure and, in relative terms, of conspicuous consumption (Kautsky 1982: 187-197). Although the primary source of their wealth was located in the countryside, the elite more commonly resided in the cities² which afforded them both greater security in times of insurrection and easier communications in times of peace. Freyne (2000: 113-135), whilst acknowledging the general usefulness of Lenski's model, reasonably argues for a greater specificity in the context of first century CE Galilee. In particular he questions the identity of the elite. Was the Herodian client king Antipas a member of the elite or a retainer of his Roman overlords? And what was the role of the indigenous aristocracy? Lenski's model clearly operates at a high level of abstraction, but rather than undermining the model, the issues raised by Freyne serve to illustrate its function as a heuristic tool rather than a social law. As an 'ideal', the model can and should, be adapted to the conditions of particular societies. That the Herodian Antipas did belong to the elite seems almost certain allowing for the relative degree of independence afforded client kings by Rome (Braund 1988: 69-96).³ The role of the indigenous Galilean aristocracy was in turn dependent upon their relationship with the Herodian court.⁴

²Sjoberg 1961 provides an analysis of the pre-industrial city, whilst Rohrbaugh 1991 and 1996 considers the makeup and nature of the city within a Palestinian context.

³Whilst Antipas was a tetrarch rather than a king, this distinction would have mattered little to Rome (Braund 1988: 95).

⁴In addition to the ruler, Rohrbaugh includes "the highest ranking military officers,

To aid the ruling elite in the maintenance of their position and in their dealings with the non-elite, they employed what Lenski terms 'retainers'. Amongst these were functionaries such as scribes, magistrates and a few prominent tax-collectors. In percentage terms, retainers formed approximately five to seven per cent of the population, and combined with the ruling elite to form less than ten per cent of the people as a whole.⁵ Advancement into the higher strata of agrarian society was possible for at least one other grouping, the merchants who provided the elite with the luxury items they desired. Such access was limited, however, to a privileged few as the entry qualifications to the lower level of the Roman aristocracy clearly illustrates. Membership of the Equestrian Order necessitated a minimum wealth of some one hundred thousand denarii, whilst a provincial decurion required to have at his disposal at least twenty five thousand denarii (MacMullen 1974: 89-90). In reality most merchants remained little more than itinerant salesmen who peddled their wares around the many villages of the countryside.

The vast majority of the population in an agrarian society, approximately seventy per cent, were peasants. Unlike the ruling elite, these lived mainly in villages and towns, close to the land upon which they toiled. As we noted above, in such societies large tracts of land were owned by the ruler and ruling elite⁶ but along side these persisted the small family plots owned by the peasant freeholder. For the peasants there were basically three possibilities, they either worked the land they owned themselves, or they worked their own land whilst supplementing an inadequate income by means of

ranking priestly families, the Herodians and other aristocratic families" within the category of the ruling elite (2000: 203).

⁵But see Freyne 2000: 118 who argues that within the Judean context 'priestly retainers' may not always have operated in the interests of the elite.

⁶Fiensy 1991: 21-73 provides an analysis of such large estates in the Herodian period in Palestine.

additional work on a large estate, or they worked solely on the estates of the large landowners. The tenure and status of the peasants in these latter two categories was, however, subject to considerable variation. In the Palestinian context, Fiensy (1991: 164) identifies tenants, day-labourers and slaves as those who required to work the land of others, the slaves enduring the additional burden of being entirely the master's property.⁷ The peasants were engaged in the struggle to provide the necessities of life for themselves and their families, whilst at the same time meeting the burdens and obligations placed upon them by the ruling elite.⁸ When the harvest was good and the demands of the elite, in the form of taxation and tribute were reasonable, the peasant householder just about managed to meet his needs. But in times of insurrection, famine or when the levels of taxation and tribute became excessive, survival became his sole concern.

The remainder of the population consisted of the artisans, the unclean and degraded and 'the expendables'. Artisans were primarily, although not exclusively, urban based and counted amongst their number such manual workers as stone masons, toolmakers, carpenters and blacksmiths. Public projects such as the building of aqueducts, roads⁹ and temples¹⁰ provided the more fortunate artisans with a reasonable

⁷Slaves were never as significant a phenomenon in Palestine as they were in the rest of the Roman Empire, but where slavery was practised, as Fiensy 1991: 91 notes, the slaves were, in many instances, treated more favourably than day-labourers. Not only did they have a security which day-labourers never experienced, as the property of their masters and thus a part of his assets, slaves were often relieved of the more arduous tasks at the expense of the day-labourers, whose health and well-being were of no concern to the landowner. Esler also observes that at certain times of the year, peasants, tenants and day-labourers worked alongside slaves on *latifundia* in certain parts of the ancient Mediterranean (2000a: 13).

⁸See Oakman 1986: 49-77 for a detailed discussion of the demands made upon peasants and their land in first century CE Palestine.

⁹Although in the Roman Empire these were constructed primarily by the military.

¹⁰Jeremias 1969: 22 contends that, at its height, the restoration of the Jerusalem temple

income. Yet as any form of manual labour was anathema to the ruling elite (Kautsky 1982: 178)¹¹ artisans, more often than not, found themselves despised and living on the edge of destitution (Herzog 1994: 63). Ronald Hock, in his consideration of the significance of Paul's occupation as a tentmaker in his mission, provides a useful insight into the social standing of the artisan. He confirms that whilst a few fortunate artisans, such as Tryphon the weaver, succeeded in securing for themselves a relatively comfortable lifestyle, the majority, as Lucian's fictional character Micyllus illustrates, literally lived from day to day.¹² The deprivations and hardships Paul describes himself as suffering, "his being hungry and thirsty (1 Cor. 4: 11; 2 Cor. 6: 5; 11: 27), cold (2 Cor. 11: 27), 'naked' (1 Cor. 4: 11; 2 Cor. 11: 27), and tired (2 Cor. 6: 5; 11: 27)" are largely, Hock argues, attributable to his work as a tentmaker (1980: 35). Artisans were, for the most part, perceived as "slavish,¹³ uneducated,¹⁴ and often useless¹⁵... [they] were frequently reviled or abused, often victimized, seldom if ever invited to dinner, never accorded status..." (Hock 1980: 36). Whilst he may have enjoyed a more secure position than that of the unskilled day-labourer, the life of the artisan remained a struggle. The unclean and degraded were found in both the countryside and the cities, their lowly position in society being reflected in the location of their dwelling quarters in the latter. They, for the most part, lived at the very edge of the city,¹⁶ although the outcasts

engaged some eighteen thousand workmen. See pg 263 below.

¹¹But Applebaum contends that "the manual employment of the larger part of the Jewish intelligentsia which exercised the decisive social and moral influence on the Jewish community after 70 CE, was probably a unique phenomenon in the world of its time, and certainly in the Roman empire" (1976: 684).

¹²Hock 1980: 35.

¹³Most employees in artisans workshops were slaves. Moreover, the working position of the artisan bent over his work bench was also considered 'slavish' (Hock 1980: 35-36).

¹⁴The long hours worked by artisans left little opportunity for learning or study (Hock 1980: 36).

¹⁵Many trades, for example, perfumers, hairdressers etc., were deemed to pander to the desires of the elite (Hock 1980: 36).

¹⁶The inhabitants of the pre-industrial city decreased in status the further one removed

amongst them including the prostitutes, dung-collectors, usurers and tanners¹⁷ could be required to quit the city at night (Rohrbaugh 1996: 118, 2000: 206). According to Lenski, “agrarian societies usually produced more people than the dominant classes found it profitable to employ” (1966: 281-282), hence the term ‘expendables’ applied to the beggars, criminals and social bandits who found themselves at the very bottom of the social pile. This grouping constituted a not insignificant proportion of the agrarian society’s population, approximately five to ten per cent. This proportion probably remained constant despite the short life span endured by such persons- on average five to seven years- indicating their continuous replenishment from those immediately above them. That this should be so illustrates the oppressive nature of the hierarchical social structure which prevailed in agrarian societies.

Galilee During the Reign of Herod the Great¹⁸

At the time of the birth of Jesus of Nazareth, Herod the Great had ruled as client king over Palestine for almost forty years. A brief consideration of the rise of the Herodian dynasty will serve to shed some light both upon the events which led to the emergence of the Herodians, and also upon the social conditions which existed in the Galilee during that period. By the middle of the first century BCE the Roman empire had expanded eastwards. Syria, Egypt and Nabatea, as well as the independent Judean state had all fallen under Roman sway. In 63 BCE the Roman general Pompey, responding to the overtures of the feuding Hasmoneans, Hyrcanus II and Aristobulus II, marched into Judea purportedly to resolve their familial dispute. Having placed Aristobulus under arrest, Pompey restored Hyrcanus II to the high priesthood, although

from its centre.

¹⁷Jeremias 1969: 303-312.

¹⁸Schürer 1973: 267-329, Freyne 1980: 57-68 and Richardson 1996: 153-173.

not to the kingship,¹⁹ and made Jerusalem tributary to the Romans (*Ant.* 14.4.4 [73-74]). The effects of the civil war which erupted in Rome in the 40s, together with the continuous infighting of the Hasmoneans, were felt throughout the whole of Palestine including the Galilee. Josephus, for example, recounts the engagement between the Roman general Gabinius and Aristobulus' son, Alexander,²⁰ at Mount Tabor, in which ten thousand of Alexander's thirty thousand followers were massacred (*Ant.* 14.6.3 [102]).²¹ In addition, the increasing incidence of social banditry in the Galilee (*Ant.* 14.9.2 [159] and *Ant.* 14.15.4-5 [415-430]) serves to highlight not only the instability in the region, but also the hardships under which the peasantry laboured.²²

Whilst Hyrcanus retained his position as ruler, a more significant development saw the Idumean, Antipater, who had supported him in his feud with Aristobulus, grow in influence. In 47 BCE Julius Caesar not only granted him Roman citizenship, and a general exemption from taxes, he appointed him "procurator of Judea" (*Ant.* 14.8.3-5 [137-143]). On his return there from Rome, Antipater wasted little time in appointing his eldest son, Phasael, governor of the territory surrounding Jerusalem, and entrusted the Galilee to his second son, Herod. According to Josephus, Herod made an immediate impact upon the region as a result of his efforts to curb the recurring problem of banditry.

¹⁹The Hasmonean ruler Aristobulus I became the first Judean leader since the exile to take the title king (*Ant.* 13.11.1 [301]) an office which he held, along with the high priesthood, from 104-103 BCE. Despite the fact that Hyrcanus was denied the title of king, he was, in keeping with the Roman policy of appointing rulers from the local aristocracy of subject peoples, named ethnarch and remained *de facto* head of the country. See below for Udoh's contention that the appointment of Hyrcanus as ethnarch did not occur until a decree of Julius Caesar in 47 BCE.

²⁰Alexander had escaped at the time Aristobulus and the rest of his family had been placed under arrest and taken to Rome (*Ant.* 14.4.5 [79]).

²¹Almost invariably in agrarian societies the cost of these military incursions was borne by the peasantry.

²²Hobsbawm 1959 details the conditions in which the phenomena of social banditry flourishes.

In his first excursion against the bandits active on the Syrian border, he captured their chief, Ezekias, and had him and a number of his men put to death (*Ant.* 14.9.2 [159]).²³ Herod's zeal for his task was further revealed by his actions on the outbreak of the Roman civil war which ensued upon the death of Julius Caesar. Cassius, one of Caesar's murderers, took control of the armies in Syria and levied tribute of seven hundred talents on Judea and one hundred talents on Galilee (*J.W.* 1.11.2 [221]). Antipater apportioned the ingathering of the tribute to a number of his officials including his two sons. Herod was the first to deliver; he exacted the sum imposed on Galilee and remitted the same to Cassius, securing his favour as a result (*Ant.* 14.11.2 [271-274]). Herod increased his standing still further by repulsing the attempt of Antigonus, Aristobulus' son, to gain power, retaking in the process the three strongholds in the Galilee which Antigonus' ally Marion had previously captured (*Ant.* 14.12.1 [297-300]). His efforts were soon rewarded when Antony, who together with Gnaeus Octavius had defeated Cassius at Philippi, appointed both him and his brother Phasael tetrarchs, entrusting them with the governance of the Judeans (*Ant.* 14.13.1 [324-326]).²⁴ Their power was short lived, however, as Antigonus, with Parthian support, besieged Jerusalem and claimed the throne. Hyrcanus and Phasael were taken captive by the Parthians, but Herod fled and made his way to Rome where he sought the assistance of Antony. This he received in the form of the kingship (*Ant.* 14.14.3-5 [377-389]). On his return to Palestine, Herod commenced his campaign to depose Antigonus, and to assert his right to rule. The effects of the ensuing struggle were felt throughout the country. Setting out from

²³Although Josephus claims that "Antipater enjoyed the respect of the nation" as a result of the actions of his two sons, he also relates how, at the persuasion of the chief Judeans and the mothers of the men Herod had killed, Hyrcanus had Herod charged with killing Ezekias and his followers in violation of the law, as he had not first sought the approval of the Sanhedrin (*Ant.* 14.9.3-4 [163-169]).

²⁴The Loeb suggests that notwithstanding these appointments, the Romans probably still considered Hyrcanus, at least nominally, the head of the country.

Ptolemais on the coast, he marched, with his followers, through Galilee where, according to Josephus, “all Galilee, except for a few of its inhabitants, came over to his side” (*Ant.* 14.15.1 [395]). Prior to engaging Antigonus in Jerusalem, Herod captured the hostile Joppa, before going on to relieve his beleaguered family at Masada.²⁵ He then briefly besieged Jerusalem before dismissing his Roman army, given to him by Antony to aid his campaign, to their winter quarters in Idumea, Samaria and Galilee. Herod returned to Galilee where Antigonus’ garrison at Sepphoris had fled before him, leaving him free to flush out the bandits who were operating from the caves at Arbela. Once this had been successfully accomplished, Herod appointed Ptolemy general of that region, and left for Samaria. Shortly afterwards, however, the bandits obtained their revenge by killing Ptolemy and ravaging the surrounding countryside. Herod returned to Galilee and restored order, killing many of the rebels in the process; he also inflicted a penalty of one hundred talents upon the cities (*Ant.* 14.15.4-6 [413-433]). Whilst he undertook a brief excursion to visit Antony at Samasota, his brother Joseph was killed in battle at Jericho, and the Galileans rebelled against the elite, drowning Herod’s supporters in Lake Gennesaret (*Ant.* 14.15.8-10 [439-450]). Herod hastened to Jericho to exact his revenge, engaging his enemies as he traversed the Galilee. After defeating Antigonus’ army in Samaria, and being temporarily delayed by a storm, he moved on to Jerusalem setting up camp near the city, before returning to Samaria to marry his second wife Mariamme, the daughter of Alexander and granddaughter of Aristobulus II. On the completion of his marriage celebrations, Herod, with the support of Sossius, general of the Roman army in Syria, laid siege to Jerusalem, and captured Antigonus, who was then taken in chains to Rome by Sossius, and put to death at the command of Antony (*Ant.* 14.16.4 [487-490]). Herod’s rise to power was thus complete.²⁶

²⁵Herod had secured his family at his fortress at Masada before fleeing to seek Roman assistance.

²⁶Phasaël had killed himself whilst a prisoner of the Parthians and Herod disposed of

As we have noted above, this brief narrative of events also provides us with an insight into the social conditions in Galilee in the mid-first century BCE. The exaction of the one hundred talents tribute, the fine on the cities in the same amount, the expense incurred in the many military engagements, and the billeting of Roman troops in the region for the winter, must have all weighed heavily on the shoulders of the Galilean peasantry. That they did may be evidenced by two forms of peasant response described in the above account. Firstly, the actions of the social bandits. Reference to our model of the agrarian society illustrates that bandits were amongst the lowest ten per cent of the population, falling within that group known as 'the expendables'. The accounts of their activities provided by Josephus present them as criminal elements who are properly dealt with by the forces of law and order. Hobsbawm's studies of social banditry (1959 and 1969), however, afford us an alternative non-elite perspective. The bandits deemed outlaws by the ruling elite for committing acts which they consider to be criminal in nature, are not so construed by the bandits' peers. Thus they tend not only to be supported but also protected by the peasantry.²⁷ Significantly the phenomenon of social banditry thrives in times of socio-economic crisis similar to that which prevailed in first century BCE Palestine. Secondly, the drowning of the Herodian elite²⁸ in Lake Gennesaret may also represent peasant reaction to oppressive social conditions. This incident apparently contradicts the previous statement of Josephus that virtually all of the inhabitants of the Galilee went over to Herod. As Horsley (1981: 413-414) notes, the inhabitants to whom Josephus refers are the elite, previous supporters no doubt of the Hasmonean regime, who had switched allegiance to Herod in the attempt to preserve their position. The action of the peasants against these nobles, however, should not be interpreted merely as peasant support for the Hasmonean Antigonus, but rather as a

Hyrchanus some time after he returned to his homeland from exile in Babylon.

²⁷See pg 83 below.

²⁸Described by Josephus as δυνατῶν and τοὺς τὰ Ἡρώδου φρονοῦντας.

desperate measure by an exploited peasantry against a ruling elite, who were instrumental in ensuring Herod was supplied with sufficient resources to meet his and his armies' needs.

Having finally acquired the throne in 37 BCE, some three years after being appointed king by Antony, Herod set about securing his position. He built the Antonia fortress in Jerusalem, fortified Samaria, renaming it Sebaste, and constructed a fortress at Strato's tower on the coast, which he renamed Caesarea. At Gaba in Galilee he relocated some of his picked cavalymen, allocating them plots of land to be held under military tenure as cleruchs, and in Perea he rebuilt Esebonitis. In addition he stationed garrisons throughout the land as a preventative measure against rebellion (*Ant.* 15.8.5 [292-295]). That Herod reigned over Palestine for almost forty years, without any serious challenge to his authority, is not only a testimony to his good relations with Rome, but also to the ruthlessness with which he ruled the country. And yet Josephus describes on numerous occasions acts of what appear to be great magnanimity. For example, *en route* to assist Agrippa in his campaign in the Bosphorus in spring 14 BCE, he gave money to the people of Chios to aid in the rebuilding of the city's portico, and on his return journey, the cities of Paphlagonia, Cappadocia and Great Phrygia, amongst others, were all the recipients of the king's generosity (*Ant.* 16.2.2 [18; 23-24]). In light of these apparently contradictory characteristics, how are we to assess Herod's reign and its effect on the people in his land? According to Freyne, "it is a fairly widespread assumption that the long reign of Herod the Great was a particularly difficult time financially for the inhabitants of Palestine" (1980: 190).²⁹ This view has been challenged in two recent works by Udoh (1996) and Pastor (1997). Udoh considers in detail the question of whether the Romans

²⁹Freyne continues that whilst not seeking to minimise the burdens under which the peasantry toiled, the stability which Herod provided was beneficial to all those who acquiesced in his regime.

exacted tribute during Herod's reign, and concludes that the evidence, properly interpreted, suggests not. With the appointment of Herod as client king, the country, he claims, underwent a change of status. Hyrcanus was restored by Pompey solely to the high priesthood, not to the kingship, and was made ethnarch some considerable time later by Julius Caesar. During this period the Judean state was regarded as part of the province of Syria and was indeed subject to the tribute levied by Pompey in 63 BCE. Whilst the elevation of Hyrcanus to ethnarch effected the removal of Palestine from Syrian control, the significant change in its status occurred when Herod became king. For, according to Udoh, there is no evidence, during the Republic and early Principate, of any client king of Rome paying tribute. Pastor rehearses similar arguments to Udoh in this respect but proposes a 'middle ground' solution which sees Herod paying tribute to the notoriously greedy Antony but not to his successor Augustus. He continues, that the lavish spending occasioned by Herod on his numerous building projects, and indeed his many grants of aid to areas in the Roman empire outwith his immediate jurisdiction, may have been made in place of tribute (Pastor 1997: 110).

With regard to Herodian taxation, the conclusion that it was harsh and oppressive is rejected by both Udoh and Pastor. They agree that a tax rate on produce of approximately 12.5 per cent per annum is probably accurate, but Pastor also suggests that there are at least some indications that different crops may have been charged at different rates (1997: 106). 12.5 per cent appears to them, in comparative terms, to have been a reasonable rate which was neither unduly onerous nor particularly lenient. In addition to these direct taxes, a levy on the sale of goods and custom duties provided a further source of income. These were not, however, the only sources of income available to the king. He possessed vast tracts of land throughout his domain and considerable personal wealth. This factor alone, according to Udoh and Pastor, makes it impossible for us to determine with any certainty how much of the revenue necessary for his extensive building

programme was obtained from Herod's own personal resources and how much was attributable to oppressive levels of taxation.

Three issues raised by Udoh and Pastor require to be addressed, the first of which concerns tribute. Udoh's argument regarding the alleged change of status of the Judean state from an ethnarchy under the rule of Hyrcanus to a client kingdom during the reign of Herod, turning as it does on the question of when Hyrcanus was made ethnarch, is not particularly persuasive. Nor is Pastor's proposal that Herod's lavish spending and gift giving stood in lieu of tribute to Rome. Applebaum considers the notion that tribute previously imposed by Caesar would have been remitted during the reign of Augustus as "hardly credible" (1976: 661) and in the absence of specific evidence to the contrary, the most likely scenario must remain that Roman tribute continued to be exigible from the people of Palestine.³⁰ The second point concerns taxation. According to Kautsky (1982: 150), the two major functions of government in any agrarian society were warfare, when necessary, and taxation.³¹ That the rate of taxation levied by Herod did cause considerable hardship to his people can probably be deduced from two occasions, on which, according to Josephus, the king felt it necessary to remit taxation by one quarter and by one third. Josephus cites low yields as the reason for the reduction in 20 BCE (*Ant.* 15.10.4 [365]), and a similar reason can be inferred for the same action some six years later (*Ant.* 16.2.5 [64]). Although Josephus does not state how low the yields were it is probably reasonable to assume that they had fallen by approximately one quarter to one third on the basis of the resultant remissions. This suggests that whilst under ordinary circumstances, when the yield was good, the peasantry could just about meet the

³⁰Garnsey and Saller 1987: 87-88 consider Roman exploitation of provincial resources including the imposition of taxation and tribute.

³¹It must be noted that taxation in such societies was mostly levied on the non-elite and seldom on the ruling elite.

taxation charges Herod levied upon them, when the harvest fell below this level the peasants struggled, and no doubt many failed, to meet the demands. When the crop failure was extensive, taxation levels could not be met and occasionally the king was compelled to reduce them.

Finally, the assertion by Udoh and Pastor that we cannot determine what proportion of Herod's building costs were met from the king's own resources and what fell upon the peasantry is, to a large extent, true. Applebaum cites "the date plantations and balsam groves of Jericho...the copper mines of Cyprus", customs and excise duty and interest accrued on loans as alternative sources of income for the king (1976: 665). The fact remains, however, that despite these additional lucrative resources, in 25/24 BCE Herod's coffers had run dry (*Ant.* 15.9.1 [303]). His excessive expenditure and lavish lifestyle ensured that he required to exploit all of his available resources, and the peasantry were surely no exception.

In addition to the matters of taxation and tribute, the nature of land tenure may also indicate whether the reign of Herod was a particularly oppressive one. As in all agrarian societies land played a central role in the economic life of the people of Palestine. Its theological and ideological significance, however, was equally important (von Rad 1973: 296-305).³² According to the Hebrew scriptures, Palestine was the promised land given to the Israelites by Yahweh (Josh 1: 2f, 11, 15, 9: 24, 10: 42, 14: 9 and Deut 9: 24-29). However, although they were granted exclusive occupancy rights to the land, it was Yahweh who retained the title, "The land shall not be sold in perpetuity, for the land is mine", asserts Yahweh, "with me you are but aliens and tenants"³³ (Lev 25: 23) (von

³²Davies 1974: 15-53.

³³Throughout this thesis translations will be taken from the NRSV bible unless otherwise stated.

Rad 1973: 300). The practical consequences of this belief are to be found in a number of laws contained in the Hebrew scriptures such as the offering of annual tithes and first fruits to Yahweh (Lev 27: 30-32), and the provision of triennial tithes for the Levites and the poor (Deut 14: 28-29 and 26: 12-14) (Davies 1974: 28).³⁴ In addition to these provisions, were the regulations concerning the 'Seventh year' and the year of Jubilee. In the course of the sabbatical year, the land was to lie fallow (Lev 25: 2-7), debts of fellow Israelites, although not of foreigners, were to be cancelled (Deut 15: 1-11) and Israelite slaves were to be freed (Exod 21: 2-6 and Deut 15: 12-18). That these provisions may have been more observed in the breach may be shown by the lack of any extant evidence of the practice of the sabbatical release of Israelite slaves. Moreover, the introduction of the *prozbul* by Hillel in the first century BCE,³⁵ which facilitated the continuation of debts through and beyond the seventh year, ensured that at least by the time of the Herodian dynasty, this sabbatical provision too could be easily evaded (Fiensy 1991: 3-6). That the regulations concerning the setting aside of land appear to have been more readily observed is supported by reference to the lack of food and provisions held during the respective sieges of Jerusalem described in 1 Macc 6: 49, 53 and *Ant.* 13.8.1 [234] and 14.16.2 [475]. Additionally, m. Shebiith considers in great detail the use and exchange of produce acquired in the sabbatical year. According to Fiensy, however, some amongst the Israelites chose not to comply with this provision either (1991: 5).

³⁴de Vaux 1961: 165

³⁵M. Shebiith 10.3 narrates "[A loan secured by] a *prozbul* is not cancelled [by the Seventh Year]. This is one of the things that Hillel the Elder ordained. When he saw that the people refrained from giving loans one to another and transgressed what is written in the Law, *Beware that there be not a base thought in thine heart...*, Hillel ordained the *prozbul*" (Danby 1933: 51). According to Danby the term *prozbul* is an abbreviation of *πρὸς βουλῆν βουλευτῶν* (1933: 795). Both Goodman 1982: 417-427 and Oakman 1985: 57-73 consider the implications of the *prozbul* for the non-elite of first century Palestine.

The year of Jubilee occurred every fifty years and according to Lev 25: 25f land which had previously been sold was to be released in the jubilee and returned to its original owner (de Vaux 1961: 175-177). "The theology of the Jubilee is, since the land is the Lord's and the Israelites His tenant's or serfs, the land is not theirs to sell in perpetuity. The land is not a mere economic commodity but a sacred trust" (Fiensy 1991: 7). Clearly linked to this is the notion that each Israelite not only had a right to his patrimonial land but a duty to preserve the same for his descendants.³⁶ It is difficult to determine the extent to which this jubilee provision was ever extensively implemented, but, according to Fiensy (1991: 11), there is little evidence to suggest that it was observed during the period of the second temple.

If the concept of Yahweh as owner of the land and the Israelites as tenants was one which was shared equally by Israelites of all strata of society, then we would expect to see this reflected in the nature of land tenure. But it is apparent from the admittedly limited evidence available to us, even within the Hasmonean period, that this was not the case. The Hasmonean rulers, the creators of the first Judean state since the exile, appear only too willing to have availed themselves of the royal estates which had belonged to the Seleucid oppressors.³⁷ The "sixty thousand myriads of cities" that Alexander Jannaeus (103-76 BCE) was alleged to have owned in the Har Ha-melek, for example, may have been acquired in this manner. Some doubt exists as to the origins of this vast expanse of land,³⁸ but for our purposes the point remains the same, that the rulers of the Judean state were holders of large tracts of land apparently in contradiction to the

³⁶Note the unwillingness of Naboth to sell his vineyard, 'his ancestral inheritance', to King Ahab (1 Kgs 21: 3).

³⁷Fiensy 1991: 21-73 attempts to argue that the origins of many of the large estates in Palestine in the Herodian period can be traced back to the conquests of the Ptolemies and the Seleucids.

³⁸Fiensy 1991: 36-37 discusses the alternatives proposed.

express will of Yahweh. This developing conflict between the elite and non-elite regarding the economic use of and theological and ideological attitude towards the land was, as we shall see, to be a source of increasing hardship amongst the peasantry in the first century CE.

With regard to the lands held by Herod the Great, Pastor contends that Herod did little more than follow the usual Hellenistic land holding practices of his Ptolemaic, Seleucid and Hasmonean predecessors. He agrees that the king owned much personal and family land and that he acquired the royal lands of the Hasmoneans before him. Likewise he made gifts of land, probably that which had previously belonged to his opponents supporters, to his own family and 'Friends' and, as we noted above, resettled numerous veterans in Samaria and various border territories. The significant factor for Pastor, however, is that the land owned by Herod was not obtained at the expense of peasant freeholders. The royal lands, as we have noted, were inherited from the Hasmoneans. The veteran soldiers were by and large resettled on land which was previously uninhabited, and his followers were rewarded for their loyalty with the estates of defeated nobles. Whilst archaeological evidence does support the existence of large estates in the first century BCE "there is", according to Pastor, "no concrete proof that the number of estates burgeoned in Herod's time" (1997: 105). Accordingly, he contends that, as with taxation, there is no real evidence to support the view that the peasantry suffered excessively under Herod's regime.

A different perspective to the evidence regarding land tenure in Herod's time is presented by Fiensy (1991). He claims that the first century BCE did indeed see a new development in land holding practices. Commencing in the West,³⁹ but spreading

³⁹Rostovtzeff details the escalation of large landholdings in Italy (1957: 17-19).

throughout the whole of the Roman empire, large estates began to appear, estates which were owned by the elite few for the purposes of investment and profit making. Although none of the enormous estates attested to in Italy and North Africa were to be found in the Palestine of Herod's time, estates of some 100 acres have been uncovered by archaeologists. Like Pastor, Fiensy examines the royal land held by Herod and concludes that most of it was either acquired from the Hasmonians or was previously unsettled territory. Where Fiensy's analysis of the situation is superior to that of Pastor's is in his treatment of those large estates which did not belong to the king but to the elite landowners. Whilst Pastor may be correct in his assessment that there is no "conclusive proof" of the growth of large estates in the first century BCE, there is nonetheless sufficient cumulative evidence to suggest this as the most probable scenario. The literary sources for Galilee, for example, *Life* 11 [47] and *Ant.* 14.15.10 [450] confirm the presence of large estates in the region, a fact supported by the archaeological evidence in respect of Palestine as a whole. The uncovering by Avigad's excavations of a row of houses in Jerusalem which he attributes to wealthy Judeans of the Herodian period also provides further indirect evidence. As in an agrarian society wealth was almost invariably derived from the land, these householders in Jerusalem were very probably elite landowners who owned land in the surrounding areas of Judea, and possibly even as far afield as Galilee.⁴⁰ The presence of Roman *domus* type houses in Galilee also suggests an increase in the number of elite landowners. For each of these mansions uncovered at sites in Tel Auwaiad, Sepphoris, Magdala and probably Gamala an extensive area of land would have been required to meet its needs. The introduction of the *prozbul*, mentioned above, also points to increasing debts which, invariably secured over land, often led to the forfeiture of peasant smallholdings. Entrepreneurial

⁴⁰Ramsay MacMullen provides evidence of the growing trend of extensive land ownership amongst wealthy Romans and its spread throughout the Roman Provinces (1974: 4-6).

landowners were expanding throughout the Roman empire and during the course of the reign of Herod the Great they began to emerge in Palestine. The concentration of large tracts of land in the hands of a few elite landowners was to emerge as one of the causes of the revolt against Rome in the 60s CE. Its early beginnings, however, are rooted in Herodian Palestine.

A realistic assessment of how the majority of Galileans fared at the hands of Herod is, perhaps somewhat surprisingly, provided by Josephus "Herod", he says, "loved honours and was led to display generosity wherever he thought it would benefit him in the present or future, but since he spent more than he had, *he was compelled to be harsh towards his subjects*, for the great number of things on which he spent money as gifts to some, *caused him to be the source of harm to those from whom he took this money*" (*Ant.* 16.5.4 [153-155]). Additional confirmation of the oppressive nature of Herod's regime is provided by the numerous acts of insurrection which occurred after his death in 4 BCE. The demands of the Jerusalem crowd prove particularly revealing. Amongst the first of the requests directed at Herod's son, Archelaus, was a reduction in the yearly payments levied against some of those protesting and the removal of the tax on public purchases and sales (*Ant.* 17.8.4 [204-205]). Herod's reign may have been a time of peace, stability and prosperity for the elite few, but for the peasantry it was a time of oppression and hardship.

Galilee During the Reign of Herod Antipas⁴¹

On Herod's death, his surviving sons travelled to Rome to contest the provisions of his will concerning their rights of succession. The issue was resolved by Augustus as

⁴¹Schürer 1973: 340-353 and Freyne 1980: 68-71. For a consideration of the life of Herod Antipas see Hoehner 1972.

follows, Archelaus was appointed ethnarch of half of Herod's territory, incorporating Idumea, Judea, "the district of the Samaritans", and the cities of Strato's Tower, Sebaste, Joppa and Jerusalem. The remainder of the land was divided between Antipas and Philip, the former receiving Perea and Galilee, the latter Batanea, Trachonitis, Auranitis and part of the territory of Zenodorous (*Ant.* 17.11.4 [318-320]). Within ten years Archelaus had been deposed and Judea and the rest of his ethnarchy brought under the control of a Roman governor. Philip and Antipas, however, governed their lands for approximately thirty seven and forty three years⁴² respectively. It is the reign of the latter, Antipas, who ruled Perea and more significantly the Galilee throughout the life time of Jesus of Nazareth, which is our particular concern.

On succeeding his father, Antipas inherited in Galilee a region which contained a combination of large estates and peasant smallholders. It was also a region which had since the time of the Hasmoneans been ruled directly from Jerusalem. For the first ten years of his rule it would appear that Antipas continued this trend of governing from a distance, locating his court in the Peraean city of Betharamphtha⁴³ (Kokkinos 1998: 233). This location offered him the double advantage of close proximity to his brother Archelaus in Judea and to the Nabatean border, the homeland of his wife. It was not until the removal from office of Archelaus in 6 CE that Antipas sought to establish a capital city in Galilee itself. It was at this time that he set about restoring the fortress town of Sepphoris to perform this function and "to be the ornament of all Galilee" (*Ant.* 18.2.1 [27]). Sepphoris, renamed by Antipas Autocratoris,⁴⁴ maintained that position until circa 19 CE when the new capital city of Tiberias was built on the shore of Lake

⁴²Antipas was deposed and exiled by Gaius when he sought to have his status increased from tetrarch to king.

⁴³This city was variously known as Livias, Julias and Livias again during the first and second centuries CE.

⁴⁴*Ant.* 18.2.1 [27].

Gennesaret. The rebuilding of Sepphoris and the foundation of Tiberias were particularly significant developments in the region during the reign of Antipas, and are therefore of considerable importance for our understanding of Galilean society in the time of Jesus of Nazareth. An examination of these cities and their impact upon the economic, social, ideological and religious life of the region is therefore of central importance in our efforts to reconstruct the Galilee of Herod Antipas, and the environment in which Jesus of Nazareth lived his formative years.

The Pre-industrial City

According to Sjoberg (1961: 64-75), the two most important factors in the rise of the pre-industrial city were 'technology' and 'social power'. As we noted above, in our model of the agrarian society, these two factors are very closely related; it was technological advancement in agricultural practices which facilitated, for the first time, a crop surplus, a surplus which was acquired by a very small percentage of the population, who thus became the ruling elite. In order to maintain their position, members of this elite group resided together in cities which were very often fortified, and which allowed them easier communications not only within the city, but also with members of the ruling elite resident in other cities. The transportation network too was centred on these cities.

Within the cities themselves the elite, quite literally, took centre stage. Surrounding the public and religious buildings which formed the heart of the city,⁴⁵ their often luxurious residences were to be found.⁴⁶ Residing as they did in such close proximity to these buildings ensured ready access to the city's institutions of power

⁴⁵The city's market was often located alongside the public and religious buildings in the centre but was nonetheless subordinate to them. The role of markets in the ancient economy will be considered below.

⁴⁶The elite also owned residences on their estates in the countryside.

(1961: 99). In the ever narrowing streets flowing out from the city's centre,⁴⁷ the various groups of urban artisans lived and practised their crafts. Whilst the merchants who sold their wares around the city, also resided in these streets, those considered the unclean and degraded were consigned to the city's periphery. The beggars and other undesirables who in the day time frequented the religious buildings and the marketplace, were in the evening cast outside of the city walls (Rohrbaugh 1996: 118, 2000: 206). In addition to these external city walls, the larger pre-industrial city contained a number of internal walls, which served to divide the city into separate quarters, largely upon occupational and ethnic grounds.⁴⁸ In the evening the gates in these walls were locked confining the city's inhabitants to their respective quarters, and thus providing additional security against attack and theft etc. essentially for the elite. The spatial organisation of the pre-industrial city not only reflected but also reinforced the highly stratified nature of the agrarian society.

It is apparent from the above that the ruling elite stood at the centre of the pre-industrial city both in terms of function and of residence. What is less clear, however, is the nature of the city itself, and of its relations to its surrounding villages. In his study of the ancient city, Moses Finley reconsiders Max Weber's proposition that it was primarily a "centre of consumption" (1981: 125).⁴⁹ He examines the issue in terms of how the city paid for what it drew from the countryside. "The parasitical city paid

⁴⁷Unlike the spacious and paved thoroughfares of the elite central district, these narrower streets were unpaved, contained only shallow ditches for drainage which doubled up as sewers, and were often used as receptacles for refuse. In most cases they were wide enough only to be traversed by foot.

⁴⁸According to Sjoberg, "Walled cities have been the generalized pattern throughout the Middle East from North Africa to Central Asia, and in India and China during much of their history" (1961: 91).

⁴⁹Finley considers the ancient city to be a specialised sub-group of the pre-industrial city, thus his findings although not generally applicable to pre-industrial cities, are relevant to the cities of antiquity such as first century Palestine.

merely by returning all or part of the rents and taxes it took from the country in the first place; the fully symbiotic relationship would be represented by equal payment by urban production and services" (1981: 125). Four factors, he concludes, affected an ancient city's ability to pay for its necessities, firstly, the amount of agricultural produce acquired from land attached to the city; secondly the presence of special resources peculiar to the city; thirdly, trade and tourism; and finally, income derived from rent, taxes etc.... Significantly, Finley contends, "The contribution of manufacture was negligible" (1981: 139). In other words, for most of the cities of the ancient world which enjoyed few resources and little trade or tourism, their income derived from the rent and taxes of the inhabitants of the countryside. In effect they were "parasitic cities".

This view of urban/rural relations has by no means gone uncontested. As we shall illustrate in our analysis below, however, these alternative representations fail to successfully displace Finley's view. The most recent and perhaps the most radical challenge to Finley's position is that presented by Horden and Purcell (2000: 89-122). Too much emphasis, they argue, has traditionally been placed upon the distinction between city and countryside. Attempts to identify 'the urban variable', that which is distinctively characteristic of town', have for the most part proven fruitless. Thus, they contend, "[Towns] should not be presented as conceptually detachable from the remainder of the spectrum of settlement types" (2000: 100). The presence of "microecological interaction and overlap within major settlements", of 'agricultural sectors' within Mediterranean cities, of settlements which grow outwards from the major cities, and of the significant flow of goods, all contribute towards an understanding of town which sets it within rather than against its surrounding environment. The extensive and dispersed hinterlands, i.e. land not contiguous with the city itself, enjoyed by a number of major cities further diminish the distinction between city and countryside. Whilst Horden and Purcell may be correct to identify the town/city as of a type with

other settlements, such an identification need not preclude the ability of one settlement to either exploit or benefit another. In other words, even on a continuum of settlements, the nature of the relationship between settlements remains to be addressed. Horden and Purcell “prefer to conceive of settlements (rather than cities) as the sites of shifting overlapping ecologies” (2000: 108). Yet ecologies do not, for the most part, simply overlap. They do so at the instigation, and for the benefit, of the elite.

In addition to Horden and Purcell’s approach three further alternatives have been proposed to Finley’s hypothesis of the consumer city. Firstly, the city as “the organiser of the countryside”. In this approach, advocated primarily by Wachter and Leveau, the city is perceived as essential for its role in the redistribution of the agricultural surplus. As Whittaker notes, however, “Whilst it may be correct that the commercialisation of rural surpluses enriched the countryside overall, it does not follow that the *rustici* benefited” (1995: 15).⁵⁰ Indeed, elite exploitation of the land could lead, in some cases, to the diminution of the countryside by the driving of the peasantry either into the cities themselves or into banditry (Whittaker 1995: 16). Secondly, ‘the processor city’. According to this model, the inhabitants of the city paid the peasants for their provisions in coinage, coinage which the peasants then used to pay their taxes to Rome. This money, which the city dwellers also used to pay their taxes, derived, for the most part, from the city’s production and exporting of goods. The cities were in effect production as well as consumption centres.⁵¹ The value of the model is thus dependent upon the extent to which the payment of both rent and taxes was made in coinage rather than in produce, and the extensive nature of the cities’ productivity. The evidence in respect of both of these factors is, according to Whittaker (1995: 17), inconclusive. Both forms of

⁵⁰These ‘rural surpluses’, we contend, derive not so much from the peasant smallholders, but from the large estates of the elite landowners.

⁵¹Hopkins 1980.

payment of rent and taxes are referred to in the literary sources and supported by archaeological evidence. Whilst the limitations inherent in exporting goods in antiquity ensured that most goods produced in the cities were consumed in the cities.⁵² Thirdly, 'the service' city. This model, developed by Engels (1990) in respect of the Roman city of Corinth, attributes much of the city's income to shipment dues, and to the monies accrued from food surpluses sold to travellers and tourists. The volume of sea traffic required and the need for the countryside to produce a surplus of up to 50% in order to generate sufficient revenue for the city, however, make Engels' analysis difficult to sustain (Whittaker 1995: 12-14). Moreover, the atypical nature of the city of Corinth ensures that it serves as a particularly unsuitable basis for a model of general application.⁵³

Two final objections have been raised to Finley's 'consumer city' model. The first derives from the claim by some archaeologists that significant changes in the mode of production of certain forms of pottery, and its export, occurred at the same time as the growth in the number of towns and cities, around the second century BCE. Still others suggest, on the basis of inscriptions and reliefs, that the rural peasants benefited from the services of the city's fullers, smiths, etc. Most archaeological evidence, however, points in the other direction. Of the many excavations of Roman cities throughout Europe, none have revealed anything other than minor forms of production. With regard to the pottery industry Millett's remarks are particularly insightful, "If the towns were responsible for the marketing, one would expect rural locations to be disadvantageous, especially to large scale production. This is clearly not the case and there seems to be

⁵²According to Finley these consisted mainly of "petty commodity production" (1981: 20).

⁵³Alexandria and Ostia were amongst only a few entrepot type cities which displayed similar characteristics to those of Corinth.

good reason to suggest that these industries were seasonal and run by those involved in agriculture” (1982: 428). According to the second objection, the removal of cities and their inhabitants would not necessarily lead to increased prosperity for the neighbouring peasants.⁵⁴ There may in the short term be an improvement in living standards, but this would most probably lead to increased population growth and to a corresponding decline in standards, in real terms. The short term benefits would constitute no more than increased consumption in the form of more regular, and more lavish village festivals and celebrations. It would not, generally, improve the infra-structure of the village. In addition to the benefits of security, stability and possibly legal and religious services which the city provides for the countryside,⁵⁵ the city is itself a necessary factor in sustaining economic growth. Cities facilitate better communication and transport systems as well as providing markets that encourage specialisation in both agricultural produce and in manufactured goods. Referring to a town as a parasite, it is argued, implies not only “that it represents a drain upon the resources of the society”, but also, “that the host would be better off without the parasite” (Wrigley 1978: 307). Whilst accepting that the first premise of this statement may be at least partially true, the latter, he argues, need not follow. A more accurate description of the pre-industrial town, he concludes, would refer to it both as ‘parasite’ and ‘stimulus’. This argument enjoys a certain validity, if regarded from the perspective of the elite. From the viewpoint of the peasant, however, it is surely flawed. The conspicuous consumption of the peasantry at village festivals and celebrations may appear to the elite to confer only short term benefits, to the peasants, as we shall see below, it is the social glue which holds communities together. Whilst specialisation in agriculture may be advantageous to large landowners it regularly resulted in the loss of the patrimonial land of the peasantry.

⁵⁴Wrigley 1978: 295-309.

⁵⁵Horden and Purcell 2000: 108.

Economic growth may well be stimulated by the presence of the pre-industrial city, for the peasant, however, loss of land and community was a high price to pay. Whilst the nature of ancient cities is clearly a contentious and complex issue, it remains our view that none of the arguments presented above succeeds in seriously undermining Finley's position. In most instances ancient cities were primarily 'parasitic' cities.

Manufacture/Trade in the Ancient Economy

To fully appreciate the role and the significance of the pre-industrial city in an agrarian society it is necessary to locate it within the larger framework of the ancient economy as a whole. It has long been recognised that the role of 'economics' in antiquity was vastly different from the economics of Western industrialised society. Economics, quite simply, did not stand as an independent entity; it was embedded in the more significant concepts of family, religion and politics. That is not to say that decisions which had economic consequences were not taken, nor indeed that such consequences were unexpected; rather it means that purely economic issues were never the sole motivating factor in decision making.

In pre-industrial society, according to Polanyi (1957: 250-256), three forms of exchange mechanism existed (a) Reciprocity- distribution on a reciprocal basis, (b) Redistribution- redistribution through a central institution, and (c) Exchange- distribution by means of the market. In recent years reciprocity has been re-examined by Marshall Sahlins (1988) in the context of exchange within primitive societies. Building upon the groundwork of early economic anthropologists such as Malinowski (1922) and Mauss (1990), Sahlins contends that "primitive economic behaviour is largely an aspect of kinship behaviour" (Firth 1967: 78). Sahlins highlights three points on what he terms a continuum of reciprocity, generalised reciprocity, balanced reciprocity and negative reciprocity. "Generalised reciprocity", he asserts, "refers to transactions that are

putatively altruistic, transactions on the line of assistance given and, if possible and necessary, assistance returned" (1988: 193-194). It is not the case that there is no obligation on the part of the person receiving the gift to reciprocate, but rather that "the counter is not stipulated by time, quantity or quality: the expectation of reciprocity is indefinite" (1988: 194). The centre point on the continuum is termed balanced reciprocity. In this instance both parties to an exchange are expected to give and receive goods of comparable value, and that within a limited time period. Whereas in the case of generalised reciprocity the emphasis lay on the social aspect of the exchange, in balanced reciprocity it falls more on the material. The final of the three points on the continuum is negative reciprocity. This, according to Sahlins, "is the attempt to get something for nothing with impunity..." (1988: 195). In these transactions each party seeks to attain as much advantage as possible at the expense of the other. Included within the scope of such actions are "haggling" and "barter" and even on occasion theft. The applicability of any of these forms in a given situation, however, is dependent upon the consideration of social distance, in particular kinship distance.⁵⁶ Sahlins continues,

close kin tend to share, to enter into generalised exchanges, and distant and nonkin to deal in equivalents or in guile. Equivalence becomes compulsory in proportion to kinship distance lest relations break off entirely, for with distance there can be little tolerance of gain and loss even as there is little inclination to extend oneself. To nonkin- 'other people', perhaps not even 'people'- no quarter must needs be given: the manifest inclination may well be 'devil take the hindmost' (1988: 196).

⁵⁶Sahlins acknowledges that what constitutes kinship distance may vary amongst communities.

In Sahlins' model⁵⁷ a series of circles represent sectors of social distance which expand out from the centre. Beginning with the household unit kinship relations are traced outwards through the lineage, village, tribal and intertribal sectors respectively. By superimposing these sectors upon the reciprocity continuum, the prevalent or characteristic form of reciprocity for each sector is revealed. The final aspect of the model, which Sahlins contends is embedded within the others, is morality. Thus actions are not judged to be either good or bad in and of themselves, but rather are assessed in relation to the status of the individual subjected to any particular action. What may be considered unacceptable behaviour within a kinship group, for example theft, may be deemed honourable when perpetrated against a stranger.

Two recent works by James C. Scott (1976) and (1985) concerning peasant communities in South East Asia, illustrate the continued significance of reciprocity in the approach of modern peasantry to economic and social issues. According to Scott,

the distinctive economic behaviour of the subsistence-oriented peasant family results from the fact that, unlike a capitalist enterprise, it is a unit of consumption as well as a unit of production. The family begins with a more or less irreducible subsistence consumer demand, based on its size, which it must meet in order to continue as a unit. Meeting those minimal human needs in a reliable and safe way is the central criterion which knits together choices of seed, technique, timing, rotation, and so forth. The cost of failure for those near the subsistence margin is such that safety and reliability take precedence over long-run profit (1976: 13).

⁵⁷Figure 2.

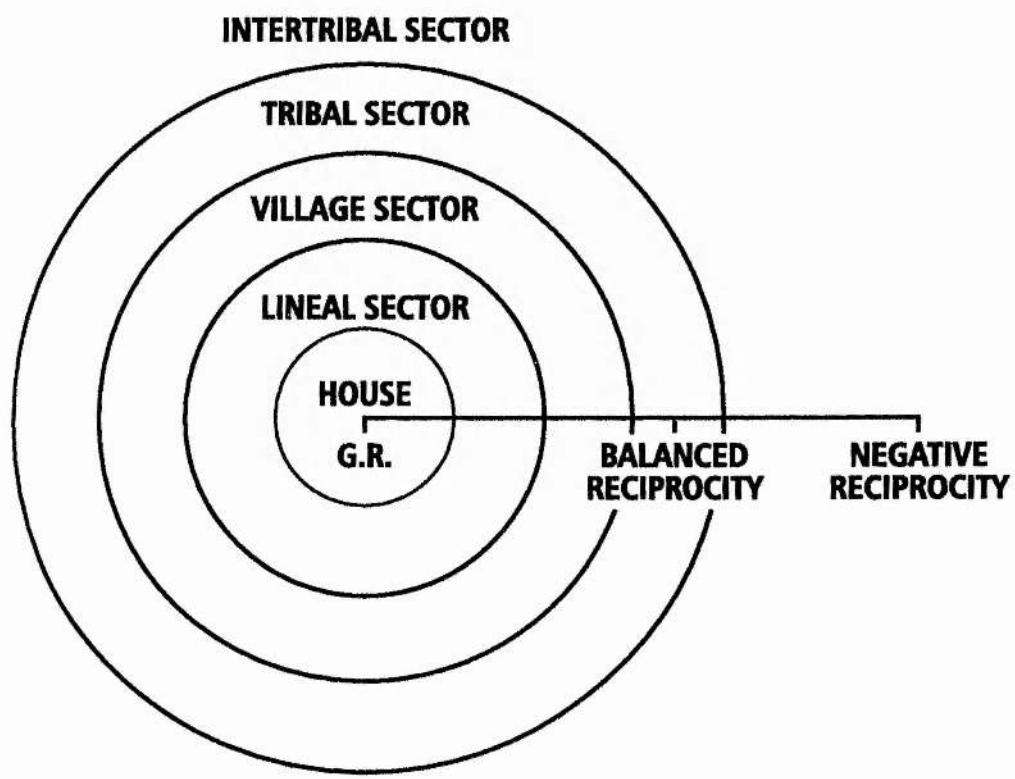


Figure 2

It is the fear of this failure that results in what Scott terms the 'subsistence ethic'. The peasant free holder is only too aware of his small surplus levels and his consequent vulnerability to the vagaries of the weather, and to government and religious demands. That this should be reflected not only in the manner in which he cultivates his land but also in his approach to social relationships should occasion no surprise. His primary concern in both is to ensure that the minimum subsistence demands of his family unit are met. In terms of land cultivation this leads to a 'risk aversion' policy. That is to say, the peasant will generally continue with tried and tested techniques and crops, rather than adopting new potentially higher yielding, but also high risk ventures.⁵⁸ His goal is security, not profit. Experience, however, tells the peasant that despite his best practice occasions may arise when his yield will fall below the level necessary to meet his subsistence needs. It is with this in mind that a network of social relationships are formed. The most reliable source of aid outwith the immediate family is more distant kin.⁵⁹ In many cases, however, the resources available to them will also be severely limited. Beyond kinship relations the peasant may look to fellow villagers amongst whom "shared values and social controls combine to reinforce mutual assistance" (Scott 1976: 27). Evidence of this kind of 'risk insurance' is provided by Robert Townsend (1994: 539-591) in his analysis of the three villages of Aurepalle, Shirapur and Kanzara in southern India. Factors such as ill health, unemployment or other unexpected occurrences do not adversely affect individual 'household consumption' in the villages as significantly as might have been anticipated. This 'consumption smoothing' is, Townsend concludes, a result of the existence of a number of forms of 'risk insurance' significant amongst which is the provision by villagers of gifts and loans (1994: 587).

⁵⁸Should a situation arise, however, where substantial gains can be made with little or no risk involved then the peasant will be only too willing to employ new methods and crops.
⁵⁹Walker and Ryan 1990. The more distant the kin relationship is, however, the weaker the moral obligation becomes to respond.

Townsend's finding that the landless peasants, at least in the village of Aurepalle, appeared more susceptible to risk is perhaps not surprising. Their inability to reciprocate when necessary would make them a less than attractive 'insurance partner'.

Further removed still, in the peasant's social network, are patron-client relations. This relationship may or may not be established with a member of the village, but in either case the patron is invariably a landowner, trader or bureaucrat- in other words, someone with considerably more resources than the peasant who is therefore able to lend assistance when it is needed. Finally, in certain circumstances the peasant may expect to receive some form of relief from the state. All of these relationships can be placed at varying points on Sahlins' continuum of reciprocity, and all are directed towards ensuring that the peasant small holder meets his minimum subsistence needs. Thus, when a villager helps his neighbour harvest his crop, he expects that his actions will be reciprocated as and when required. Likewise when he receives aid from his patron, he knows that it comes with strings attached. These reciprocal relations are sustained by shared values and social controls. Amongst these social controls local opinion is of particular importance influencing significantly, as it does, a person's standing in the peasant community. The basic concept of reciprocity which Sahlins develops in the context of primitive societies thus manifests itself in a very similar manner in the modern peasant communities that form the basis of Scott's studies.

The second exchange mechanism identified by Polanyi, redistribution through a central institution, originated in the early civilisations of Mesopotamia and Egypt, both of whom operated central storehouse economies. The priestly overlords collected the fruits of the labour of the temple slaves and redistributed them to the temple workers, agricultural and non-agricultural alike (Carney 1975: 141). The tributes, taxes, tithes and rents imposed on the non-elite of antiquity by central institutions, such as the government

and the temple priesthood, worked to similar effect. The agricultural surplus produced by the peasantry was transferred to the cities, temple complexes and the state treasuries, from whence it was disbursed for purposes which, more often than not, bore little upon the lives of the original producers.⁶⁰

Polanyi's final and most advanced mechanism is exchange, distribution through the market. "What is involved in this case is a physical location, a marketplace, and an institutionally protected arena wherein goods and services are bartered to maximise the returns to buyers and sellers" (Carney 1975: 141). The market was also dependent upon two further criteria, "openness and competitiveness". Increased monetarisation and some improvement in transportation systems saw the growth of the market exchange mechanism in antiquity. Nonetheless, to attribute to any ancient society a thorough going 'market economy' would be unjustifiable. Reciprocity, for the most part, persisted amongst the peasantry, and, while market exchange grew in significance, redistribution through central institutions continued to dominate the social and political structures. It is in this context that trade and manufacture in the ancient economy must be understood.

As we have noted above on a number of occasions, land was the primary source of wealth in the agrarian society. Yet it is nowhere disputed that trade and manufacture also had a role to play. What is much debated is the extent and nature of that role. Two related factors, we contend, restricted the potential development of trade and manufacture in antiquity, firstly, transportation and secondly, the extent of the internal and external 'market'. Transportation of products overland, particularly bulky products, was always problematic in ancient society, since it was both slow and extremely

⁶⁰It was, of course, also used to finance the campaigns undertaken by the state's armies and to the extent that these provided peace and security it is arguable that the peasantry did benefit.

expensive.⁶¹ Even the improvement of the road network, particularly within the Roman empire, could have only a limited effect. The actual haulage of the goods remained the task of the ox, mule or donkey and only very occasionally of the speedier horse. The heaviest loads were transported by ox-wagons which according to varying estimates could travel anywhere between 25 and 40 kilometres per day (Frayn 1993: 78). In the hill-country, however, terrain unsuitable for wagons ensured that pack carrying mules were the most effective mode of transport. These restrictions and the resultant high costs involved in the haulage of goods lead Finley to conclude that the transportation of large quantities of bulk items such as wheat, cereals etc. were carried out primarily under the auspices of centralised institutions (1985: 126).⁶² It is freely acknowledged that a large variety of goods were transported considerable distances over land and sea. The spice trade⁶³ and known sea and caravan routes prove this to be so.⁶⁴ It is our contention, however, that outwith the transportation of wheat and grain, these consisted, for the most part, of expensive/luxury items destined ultimately for the homes of the elite and their retainers.⁶⁵ Their significance in the lives of the majority peasant non-elite was negligible.

⁶¹Finley 1985: 126 cites two examples inferred from Diocletian's edict concerning maximum prices, (a) the cost of a 1200-pound wagon-load of wheat doubling as a result of its being transported three hundred miles, and (b) a shipment of grain across the Mediterranean costing less than transporting the same seventy five miles overland.

⁶²In terms of Polanyi's typology of exchange mechanisms, these would have been acquired through the levying of tributes and taxation rather than by means of market exchange.

⁶³Miller details the various spices transported throughout the Roman Empire between 29 BCE and 641 CE. In total he describes eighty four spices of which three, Balsam, Mustard and Shallot originated in Judea (1969: 110-118).

⁶⁴See Miller for details of the trade routes which extended throughout the Roman Empire and beyond to Arabia, India and China (1969: 119-152).

⁶⁵Miller analyses the goods imported by the Roman Empire under six headings; "Foodstuffs (including Animals for Food), Raw Materials and Semi-Manufactured Goods, Manufactured Goods, Perfumery, Gems and Ornaments, Animals not for Food, Human personnel...and finally Bullion and Coin". He concludes that spices made up

The second prohibitive factor is the extent of the market. Having discussed above the difficulties involved with the mass transportation of bulky products it becomes clear that the 'export/import' market in antiquity was limited. As we have noted, only the elite, and possibly some of their more prosperous retainers, had the wealth necessary to meet the expense of luxurious items purchased from abroad, and these make up little more than between two to ten per cent of the population as a whole. Most goods, then, were both produced and sold at home. Even within the context of the home market, however, the problem of "inelasticity of demand" persisted. Finley (1985: 135), quoting the Greek Xenophon, illustrates this in connection with the work of the rural and urban artisans. The artisan operative in the small town or village required to turn his hand to all trades, producing whatever was necessary, yet still he was fortunate to earn enough just to survive. And whilst the larger numbers in the city resulted in a greater division of labour among the artisans,⁶⁶ more carpenters or coppersmiths etc. led only to cheaper products and ultimately to unemployed craftsmen. The point is clearly made, demand was limited and there was little means of expanding it. In the home market, too, the elite were the primary consumers.

The more problematic question, however, is the extent to which the non-elite, both peasants and artisans, also participated in market exchange. That the urban artisans did

more than half of all imports and "having regard to the great importance and high cost of silk, it was as a whole a general trade of the luxury type.." (1969: 196, 201).

⁶⁶Archaeological excavations at Pompeii and Ostia have uncovered evidence of small rooms which open onto the street and which in some cases have another small room adjoining at the rear. The front rooms are generally regarded as being the 'shops' and workshops of artisans, with the backroom serving as living accommodation (Frayn 1993: 35). According to Hock, artisans' workshops came in a variety of sizes and locations. They could indeed consist of the front room or ground floor of the artisan's dwelling, but they could also be located in separate buildings. In terms of size they varied from accommodation sufficient for one tradesman to that necessary for up to one hundred slaves (1980: 32-33).

engage in trade within the confines of their towns or cities is clear, but so limited were their means that demand was small and restricted to necessities, and thus their overall contribution was not significant. The impact of the peasantry on market trading, constituting as they did at least seventy per cent of the population, was, on the other hand, potentially considerable. Yet a number of factors ensured that this potential was never fully realised. In addition to the subsistence ethic, the attitude to time of the peasantry in antiquity bore significantly on their approach to market exchange.⁶⁷ In contrast to the future oriented perspective of modern US and Western societies, the outlook of the peasants of the ancient Mediterranean was rooted almost entirely in the present.⁶⁸ This concept of the present, however, extended well beyond the 'now moment' of North Atlantic thought. According to Bourdieu,

The lapse of time which constitutes the present is the whole of an action seen in the unity of a perception including both the retained past and the anticipated future. The 'present' of the action embraces, over and above the perceived present, an horizon of the past and of the future tied to the present because they both belong to the same context of meaning (1963: 59-60).

Therefore 'forthcoming' events such as the birth of a child or the sowing and reaping of the ensuing harvest are experienced as occurring in the present. The past is consigned to those events which are no longer capable of being verified by actual witnesses, whilst the future consists of any number of potentialities or possibilities which

⁶⁷The concept of time has spawned a large and complex body of literature in the field of cultural anthropology. Whilst an examination of 'time' falls beyond the parameters of this work a brief consideration of the main theories, including those espoused by Durkheim, Evans-Pritchard, Geertz and Bloch, is provided in Munn 1992: 93-123.

⁶⁸Malina 1996a: 179-214. See also Howell 1992: 124-137 for contrasting approaches to time past, future and present in two Southeast Asian societies.

may or may not occur. Both the past and the future exist outwith the 'experienced world' and form part of what Malina terms "imaginary time" (1996a: 192-193). Amongst the Kabyle peasantry of Algeria undue concern with the future is frowned upon. "To predict is presumptuous; also one should avoid framing projects too far in advance, considering that the act of prediction itself is an act of insolence to God" (Bourdieu 1963: 63).⁶⁹ The future lies in the hand of God, the peasant operates in the 'experienced world' of the present. Within this realm the emphasis is placed upon the satisfaction of the peasants' immediate needs. "Thus future production is sacrificed to future consumption, potential goods to goods in hand, forecast to cautious foresight, and the future to the 'forthcoming'" (1963: 63). One consequence of this attitude to time manifests itself in the preference of the peasantry for goods for goods exchange rather than monetary exchange. The immediate value of such items as wheat, barley etc. obtained through acts of reciprocity appeals more readily to the present oriented peasantry than the future possibilities offered by monetary transactions. Moreover, as the example of the Tiv people of the Benue valley in central Nigeria illustrates, monetarisation and market exchange can and do impact negatively upon community life.⁷⁰ Initially a reciprocity based economy and lifestyle, the introduction of money in the form of coinage⁷¹ was perceived adversely to affect two specific areas of the community. In the sphere of marriage the acceptance of money as bridewealth, rather than the traditional exchange of one woman for another, was considered a negative transaction by the woman's guardian. In other words, the money itself was of less value and accorded less status than the acquisition of a wife. And secondly, indebtedness,

⁶⁹Interestingly the Nigerian professional football player Austin 'Jay Jay' Okocha is quoted in the Sunday Observer Sport 2 April 2000: 2 bemoaning his country's lack of organisation in the following terms "There is lack of thinking ahead.....We only live for the moment".

⁷⁰Bohannon 1959: 491-503.

⁷¹Brass rods had previously operated only as a measure of exchange.

previously unknown outwith kinship relations, became an increasing problem within the essential area of meeting basic subsistence needs. The social bonds which had traditionally held the community together were being slowly loosened. It is little wonder that the tribal elders cursed both money itself and the Europeans who brought it.

Market exchange clearly operated within the cities and towns of the ancient Mediterranean. There is little evidence to suggest, however, that it was a development welcomed by the peasantry. When all of the above factors are considered along with the basic nature of agricultural implements, and the limited long term storage facilities, it becomes apparent that, for the most part, the primary concern of the majority of the peasantry in antiquity was not the opportunities afforded by market exchange but rather their struggle for subsistence and survival.

One other factor which must also be taken into consideration is the "Image of Limited Good" (Foster 1967: 304).⁷² According to Foster this notion of limited good forms a significant part of the peasant's view of his world. The peasant believes that all things which he values, including land, honour, wealth etc. are available only in finite quantities. These items are "always in short supply", and cannot be increased by any means over which the peasant has control. Thus the acquisition of more land, or an increase in one's honour rating, can only be attained at the expense of another, whether that other realises it or not. Whilst it is deemed honourable for a family unit to seek to maintain its standing in the community, any improvement in that position is perceived as having a deleterious affect not only on the person losing out, but on the community as a whole. In order to preserve stable social relations within the community, moral pressure is exerted upon the person whose position has improved to share the material benefits

⁷²Malina 1981: 94-116.

with his village.⁷³ This he does in the form of a lavish celebration. Such celebrations and festivals in addition to preserving stability within the village community also illustrate another occasion on which the peasantry appear to ignore the opportunity to profit from their surplus through market exchange by preferring to adhere to their traditional values.

Money and Monetisation in the Ancient Economy⁷⁴

In order to understand the role of money in the ancient economy two extremely important factors must be recognised, firstly, money was not the pivotal value in ancient societies, honour and shame performed that role. And secondly, not only were the functions of money considerably more limited than those of its modern day counterpart, but a significant difference existed between the basic forms of its usage by the elite and by the non-elite. Hanson and Oakman (1998: 121) develop this aspect of ancient money in their "Functional Model for Understanding Ancient Money" in which they list five functions money performed in the ancient economy; storage (F1), measurement (F2), standard of payment (F3), exchange value (F4) and use value/money barter (F5). Of these five functions Oakman (1999b) concludes that F1 and F3 were the most commonplace in antiquity. The Babatha Archives, for example, contain the records of a rich woman residing in En-gedi in the second century CE which reveal transactions falling primarily into categories F1 and F3. F4 occurs only rarely, according to Oakman, and F5 only marginally more often. "The rare appearance of a money of 'general utility' and the heavy use of money for value storage (hoarding) and payment standards (taxes and debts) implies a monetary functionality in Jesus' day notably different from our

⁷³Where a person has benefited from a generous patron who does not belong to the village community, or fortuitously comes upon treasure, this is not perceived as a threat to community stability as no villager has lost out. This is simply termed 'good luck'.

⁷⁴For an examination of the evolution of the roles and purpose of money from Ancient to Modern times see Davies 1994.

experience” (Oakman 1999b: 2). This difference is amply illustrated in the gospels wherein of the twenty-one references to money only three record its use for the purchase of an item (Hanson and Oakman 1998: 123). Of the five functions described by Hanson and Oakman they conclude that F1, F3 and F4 were largely limited to the elite and to their retainers. The majority non-elite may have used F2 to ascertain the value of specific goods but money as it primarily related to them was restricted to “money barter”; in other words to the use of bronze coinage (the least valuable of the three metallic bases, gold, silver and bronze) for the payment of debts and taxes. In order to obtain this money the peasantry⁷⁵ required to exchange goods for currency, rather than the traditional goods for goods exchange which had previously prevailed at village markets. The extent of this, however, should not be exaggerated. While taxes and outstanding debts may indeed have demanded that the peasantry acquire and use coinage,⁷⁶ it need not follow that the transactions in which the peasants engaged to procure the necessities which they did not provide for themselves also entailed the use of money. According to Freyne, who takes a different view, “The Synoptic Gospels testify, in their different ways, to the fact that money was widely used in every day transactions, even by the poor. This would point to the fact that the use of money had penetrated right through the society and was now the standard form of exchange even among the day-labourers, widows and other marginalized people” (1995a: 41). On closer inspection of the synoptics, however, only three instances attest to the purchase of goods with money, Mt 27:10 and Lk 10: 35; 12: 6, and of these only Lk 12: 6 pertains to the non-elite. Those described by Freyne as engaging in monetary transactions, “the day-labourers, widows and other marginalized people” are precisely those who, for one

⁷⁵The urban artisans would have been paid in bronze coins in the first instance and would thus have had no need to convert to coinage for tax purposes.

⁷⁶The temple tax paid by all Judean males, for example, required to be paid in Tyrian currency, see pg 280 below.

reason or another, are dispossessed of land and are no longer in a position to engage in reciprocal exchange. Their necessary use of money, however, ought not be interpreted as implying 'standard' usage by the peasantry *en masse*. The subsistence ethic, reciprocal relations and approach to time all point to a reluctance on the part of the peasantry to embrace monetary exchange. Such an approach and attitude towards the use of money remains evident amongst many peasants in the twentieth century. In a climate in which the use and functions of money far exceed anything which was conceivable in the ancient world, a number of recent studies of contemporary peasant communities illustrate the antipathy with which money is regarded. Amongst the Kabyle peasantry of Algeria the preference for goods rather than money is reflected in the two sayings, "A product.. is worth more than its equivalent in money" and "Gather goods rather than money" (Bourdieu 1963: 68). In their description of a peasant community in Poland, W. I. Thomas and F. Znaniecki claim that money was considered to be "a form of property" rather than a medium of exchange (1958: 184). In his account of two Turkish villages, Paul Stirling noted that gold coins given as part of a woman's dowry were worn as adornments rather than used in exchange transactions. "On the whole", he continues, "most villagers marketed little direct, and most of what they did market was bartered with visiting traders for various necessities..." (1965: 73). Similarly, the villagers of the Greek mountain community visited by Juliet Du Boulay (1974) wore the coins given in dowry and stored up their money. For their day to day living they relied upon the produce of the land, not on money. Most peasants in the ancient world would almost undoubtedly have possessed a small sum of money, like their modern counterparts, however, it would have been of marginal significance to them; their lifeblood remained the land.

The Impact of Sepphoris and Tiberias on Antipas' Galilee⁷⁷

According to Josephus, Galilee was divided into two areas, upper and lower Galilee (*J.W.* 3.3.1 [35-39]). The Mishnah makes an additional distinction naming the region around Tiberias as 'the valley', (*m. Seb* 9:2) and also identifies the dividing line between the upper and lower areas of the region as the village of Kefar Hananiah. The distinguishing characteristic between the two areas, according to the Mishnah, was the growth of the sycamore tree in the lower Galilee and its absence from upper Galilee.

Freyne (1980: 12-14) describes a number of other differences between upper and lower Galilee. In particular, he cites the rugged terrain which dominated upper Galilee and made transportation and communication more difficult there than in the lower part of the region. The soil, however, was fertile, benefiting as it did from the high rainfall in the area, and thus allowed good crop and olive oil production (Freyne 2000: 122). In addition to these natural differences between the two areas, the policy of urbanisation promoted by the Romans is generally considered to have made less impact in the upper than in the lower Galilee (Meyers 1976: 95).⁷⁸ Although it now appears that the villages of Meiron and Khirbet Shema were larger than had previously been believed, both literary and archaeological evidence confirm that rural villages continued to dominate the region (Overman 1988: 161).

The nature of the coins uncovered in the upper Galilee⁷⁹ suggests that trading was conducted primarily with Tyre and Sidon in the North and with the Golan, rather than with the cities of the lower Galilee (Freyne 2000: 124-126). But how extensive was this

⁷⁷Hoehner 1972: 84-102.

⁷⁸The phrase "Galilean regionalism" is often used to describe the different conditions and influences which existed in upper and lower Galilee respectively.

⁷⁹Freyne 1995a: 40.

trading? According to Meyers, Strange and Meyers, “the villagers of upper Galilee were marketing their oil and other products in the direction of Tyre and receiving Tyrian money in return” (cited in Horsley 1994: 105). In support of this contention they cite a combination of literary and archaeological evidence. Firstly, the Josephan narrative recounting John of Gischala’s monopoly on olive oil in the Galilee and of its supply to the Judeans in Caesarea Philippi (*J.W.* 2.21.2 [591-92]// *Life* 13 [74]). Secondly, the recovery at Meiron of what the excavators considered was a “large domestic-industrial complex” for producing barrels used in the transporting of oil. And finally, the predominance of Tyrian coinage also uncovered at Meiron and other villages of the upper Galilee. This cumulative evidence, however, is not quite so conclusive as its proponents suggest. John of Gischala’s supply of olive oil to the Judeans of Caesarea Philippi is more appropriately interpreted as a single occurrence rather than the basis upon which to build a pattern of trade. And more importantly, Tyrian coins are predominant not only in the finds of the upper Galilee but also in the lower Galilee (Barag 1982-83 cited in Freyne 1997: 124) and indeed throughout the whole of the Eastern Mediterranean (Horsley 1994: 106). Horsley and Freyne both acknowledge the likelihood of Tyre being granted special license by Rome to mint coins in much greater number than was permitted at either Sepphoris or Tiberias. This leads Horsley to conclude that the recovery of a disproportionate number of Tyrian coins is neither particularly surprising nor necessarily evidence of direct trade with Tyre. It simply reflects the dominance of the mint at Tyre and the prevalence of its coinage. Freyne contends otherwise; the volume of coins found, in particular the hoard of some 5000 Tyrian tetradrachmas and diadrachmas at Carmel, is, he claims, best accounted for by “serious trading links” between the two regions. He recognises the additional significance of Tyrian coinage as the currency of the temple tax but argues that this does not of itself provide a satisfactory explanation for either its presence in such large quantities or its method of acquisition (1997: 125). As Freyne himself acknowledges,

however, the origin of coinage tells us little about its trading history (2000: 124-125). The prevalence of Tyrian coins throughout Galilee at least raises the possibility of trade within the region being conducted in this currency. Another potential source of Tyrian coins in the Galilee were the money changers who set up their tables in the Provinces one month before the Feast of Passover. Trading links between Tyre and the upper Galilee were already well established by the time of the prophet Ezekiel and undoubtedly continued throughout the first century CE (Freyne 2000: 125). Transportation costs, custom duties etc. would have ensured, however, that such trade, for the most part, was effected under the auspices of the elite and a few wealthy merchants operating in each country. The suggestion that the peasant villagers of the upper Galilee were engaged in trade for profit and on a regular basis with the inhabitants of Tyre is improbable. The peasants of the upper Galilee may indeed have taken advantage of natural conditions to produce surplus olive crops, which when converted into olive oil found its way into the market places of Tyre, but only in addition to providing the necessary staples for family life. To what extent trading links directly with Tyre are responsible for the presence of large quantities of Tyrian currency in the upper Galilee is difficult to determine. What is almost certain, however, is that such trade remained very largely the preserve of the elite and their retainers.

According to Overman "Lower Galilee was a centre for commerce and benefited from extensive trade" (1988: 161). The main road through the region which linked Ptolemais on the coast with Tiberias and the cities of the Decapolis, and which passed in close proximity to Sepphoris would, he contends, have facilitated trade both to and from the region. Meyers likewise claims that "Lower Galilee was closely tied to the busy trade of both the Mediterranean and the sea of Galilee" (1976: 95). Commercial/trading relations between the cities and villages of the region were also deemed to be extensive with the often considered case of the Kefar Hananiah pottery cited as evidence of

positive “reciprocal economic relations” between the two (Edwards 1988: 173). Utilising the results of Adan-Bayewitz’s neutron analysis of the Kefar Hananiah pottery, Edwards presents a scenario in which the village of Kefar Hananiah stands at the centre of pottery making in the region, supplying its wares to cities and villages both near and far. He further suggests that the market place of Sepphoris may have served as a base for the sale of pottery to neighbouring villagers. Edwards’ presentation, however, overstates the results of Adan-Bayewitz’s analysis. Firstly, in what sense are we to understand this village as a ‘manufacturing centre’? According to Freyne, “..it is important to avoid modern ideas about both manufacture and market, given the nature and scale of the operations which were very much rooted in local needs and were small-scale and family based in terms of production and distribution” (1997: 126). Likewise Millet claims that ‘industries’ such as pottery manufacturing were seasonal and carried out by those otherwise engaged in agriculture. The succinct summing up by Delplace (1978: 3) of the situation in Roman France, “..pauvre poitier, pauvre paysan..” is surely just as applicable to the villager of Kefar Hananiah. Very probably the primary source of subsistence in Kefar Hananiah was agriculture, pottery making was an additional activity. Secondly, the further removed one becomes from Kefar Hananiah itself the less pottery produced there is found. Thus the claim that Sepphoris (located approximately twenty seven kilometres from Kefar Hananiah) functioned as a distribution point is seriously undermined.⁸⁰ Similarly the fact that Kefar Hananiah cooking ware predominated in Sepphoris does not necessarily imply, Horsley suggests, that the surrounding villages acquired their pottery from that city’s market (1996: 71). In support of this contention, Horsley cites rabbinic evidence suggesting that either the buyer purchased directly from the potter at his place of work or the potter himself delivered the vessel to the

⁸⁰This is not to say that pottery from Kefar Hananiah was not sold in the market at Sepphoris, only that it was not a specifically designated outlet for its sale.

purchaser's village or city (1996: 71-72). He also cites texts including t. B. Mes 6.3, as proof of such vessels being made to order. Horsley concludes that the evidence does not support the marketing of the pottery in Sepphoris or Tiberias, or indeed inter village relations between Kefar Hananiah and neighbouring Galilean villages. Most of the transactions, he claims, took place directly between the potter and the purchaser. Whilst we agree with Horsley that systematic marketisation of the goods in the cities did not occur, and also accept that pottery was made to order, we nonetheless consider that exchange of goods at village markets remains the most likely explanation for the high incidence of Kefar Hananiah pottery uncovered in the villages closest to it. The peasantry continued to engage in reciprocal exchange to acquire those necessities they did not produce for themselves,⁸¹ and amongst these they would have included their earthen ware.⁸²

Whilst acknowledging that the peasantry "exchanged local goods and crafts" (1988: 174) at village markets, Edwards, citing Goodman, contends that the Galilean villagers post 135 CE also had occasion to frequent the city markets. They did so, he claims, for three purposes, (i) to obtain coins to pay Roman taxes, (ii) to purchase goods they could not obtain elsewhere and (iii) to sell any surplus produce. Edwards presents this as further evidence of positive reciprocal relations between city and country, and suggests that such practices were also commonplace in the first century CE. The need to obtain coinage to meet Roman (in our case Herodian) taxes begs the question of the extent to which these taxes or indeed tribute were paid in cash or in kind. Whittaker (1991: 111) provides examples of reliefs and inscriptions indicating the latter and in the

⁸¹According to Bourdieu amongst the Kabyle peasants of Algeria, "Pottery is still often exchanged for its capacity in figs or grain" (1963: 68).

⁸²For similar arguments in respect of the pottery produced at the village of Shikhin near Sepphoris see Horsley 1996 and Freyne 1997.

Galilean context Josephus supplies literary evidence of the same practice. In *Life* 13 [71-73] he refers to “the imperial grain stored in the villages of upper Galilee”, and similar stores are found in the village of Besara in the Great plain to the south of lower Galilee. The extent to which tax and tribute continued to be paid in kind necessarily reduced the amount of coinage the peasantry needed to acquire.⁸³ As we have attempted to illustrate above, reciprocal exchange remained the primary process by which the peasantry obtained the necessities which they did not produce for themselves. They entered the city markets only occasionally. This may be the situation to which Edwards alludes, but the examples he cites of the goods available to the peasants in the city markets suggest otherwise. His contention that the average Galilean peasant would have had at his disposal the resources to allow him to purchase such luxury goods as “gold, glass, pearls, wood products” is, at the very least, highly improbable. Subsistence was his aim, not profit or luxury. Edwards’ final point that surplus produce was sold in the city’s market may hold some truth, but the extent to which this occurred ought not be exaggerated. Surplus produce was utilised primarily in exchange transactions, it was also gifted and loaned to family members and to fellow villagers, and thereafter it may have been committed to village celebrations and festivals. Only then could any remaining surplus be sold in the city market.⁸⁴

In addition to trade within Galilee, Edwards argues that “vigorous international commerce in lower Galilee occurred as well” (1988: 175). He refers to the discovery at

⁸³The payment of tithes to local priests in kind rather than in coin evidenced in *Ant.* 20. 8.8.1 [101] and 20.9.2 [206-207] tends to support this view. Moreover, this claim by Edwards appears implicitly to acknowledge the fact that the peasantry otherwise made little use of coinage in their daily lives.

⁸⁴See Libanius *Or.* 11. 230 in which the limited need for peasants to frequent city markets is described in connection with a Syrian village of the fourth century CE (MacMullen 1976: 335).

numerous sites throughout Palestine of imported containers which appear to have held expensive eye ointment, most of which, he claims, have been found in household settings. These household settings, however, have been located primarily in sites with Hellenistic connections, rather than being spread throughout the villages of the Galilee. Moreover, the "local imitation" vessels uncovered in the region point towards the use of local ointment, such as Balsam, rather than to the extensive importing of expensive ointment from other parts of the Mediterranean (Hershkovitz 1986: 50-51). Edwards cites examples of further imports including "asses from Lydia, purple dye from Tyre, jewelry from Egypt (as well as parchment and papyrus)". Far, however, from illustrating the extensive nature of international trade in lower Galilee, this list of items confirms just how limited that trade was. Allowing for the additional costs of transportation, what proportion of peasants would be likely to purchase "asses from Lydia" in preference to local beasts? And how extensive would the market for parchment from Egypt have been amongst a largely illiterate peasantry? These goods may very well have been imported to Galilee, but the nature of these items indicates that they were acquired almost exclusively for the benefit of the elite and their more prosperous retainers. In short, trading in these goods was, for the most part, restricted to between two and ten per cent of the population, confirming the very limited extent to which the lower Galilee was engaged in "international commerce".

Exports from Galilee, on the other hand, consisted primarily of agricultural products, grain, olive oil etc. These commercial activities, as in the case of the Upper Galilee, were conducted almost entirely by the elite and a few wealthy merchants, with little or no involvement from the peasant smallholders. Increasing land holdings accompanied by possession of the most fertile land ensured cost effective production by the elite of a variety of goods for the export market. The profits they enjoyed allowed them in return to acquire imported luxury items such as purple dye and jewellery.

Trade in the Galilee, both upper and lower, was very far from extensive and vigorous. It was limited by a number of factors including high transportation costs, and more significantly, the peasants' subsistence ethic and the resultant limited demand. Only the ruling elite were engaged in market exchange to any significant extent. The redistribution mechanism still operated in respect of at least some tribute and taxation, whilst the peasantry continued to acquire necessities mainly through reciprocal exchange, entering 'the market' only on occasion. The links of the upper Galilee with Tyre ensured that it was primarily trade within the lower Galilee and 'international trade' which was centred around Sepphoris and Tiberias. The bustling marketplaces of these cities and the foreign merchants catering to the needs of the Herodian elite served only a fraction of the Galilean population. Sepphoris and Tiberias may have formed the hub of trade in the lower Galilee but the extent of that trade ought not be exaggerated.

Whilst the reluctance of the peasant small holders to embrace money and monetarisation ensured that they had little direct involvement with market trading in Sepphoris and Tiberias, the cities nonetheless impacted quite considerably upon the neighbouring villages and their communities (Freyne 1994, 1995b). The construction costs of rebuilding Sepphoris were undoubtedly considerable and were, for the most part, probably borne by those who worked the land. On completion the city was home to approximately ten thousand people⁸⁵ including members of the elite and their retainers, the artisans, and on the periphery the beggars and criminals who frequented such urban settlements. The taxation and tribute which had previously been gathered by tax officials on behalf of distant rulers, was now acquired by the retainers of the Herodian

⁸⁵We find more convincing Horsley's assessment of the size of the city's population (1996: 45) to the twenty four thousand proposed by Reed 1994: 203-219 or the twenty five to thirty thousand suggested by Batey 1991: 136. Reed himself acknowledges the difficulty of supplying grain, from local sources, to a Sepphoris containing twenty four thousand people.

elite, resident in the nearby city of Sepphoris. Although marketisation and monetarisation increased throughout the region as a result of the rebuilding of Sepphoris, the most significant effect of the city's presence upon the peasantry was felt in respect of their land.⁸⁶ The ideological conflict between the use of land for profit making and its value as patrimonial land was heightened considerably in the lower Galilee with the establishment of a wealthy elite in the reconstructed city. The limited commercial opportunities available in agrarian societies ensured that the vast majority of the wealth enjoyed by the elite derived from the land, and that surplus capital was almost invariably employed in the purchase of additional land holdings. However, as we have noted, the peasant's approach to his land stood in stark contrast to that of the elite: it was his means of subsistence and in terms of the Torah it was held in sacred trust (Fiensy 1991: 7). One of the very few occurrences which caused a peasant to part with his land was foreclosure on a debt he was unable to repay. Such debts could be incurred for a number of reasons, primary amongst which were poor harvests, excessive taxation and ill health. When these conditions were combined with a wealthy local elite eager to increase their estates, the peasants almost invariably suffered. The pressure placed on the local peasantry on the reconstruction of Sepphoris facilitated the emergence of just these conditions. High levels of taxation to meet the initial building costs and the subsequent maintenance of the Herodian court in the city ensured that peasants who had previously succeeded in securing their subsistence needs now found themselves struggling to do so. For some, acquiring a loan from an only too willing member of the elite enabled them to continue working their land. It was almost inevitably, however, a temporary reprieve. Once

⁸⁶This is certainly the most significant aspect of the conflict between the value systems of the elite and non-elite which Freyne argues emerged in the Galilee as a consequence of the (re)construction of Sepphoris and Tiberias. Although Freyne accepts a more extensive degree of monetarisation than argued for above, he also acknowledges its deleterious effect on family and community life (1995a: 23-46).

enmeshed in the web of debt the peasant seldom had the means to escape.⁸⁷ Foreclosure eventually resulted and the peasant and his family became tenants on their own land, or worse still day-labourers. Freyne (1980: 165) and Fiensy (1991: 55) both recognise that the area surrounding Sepphoris consisted of large estates. They cite the examples of the wealthy High Priest Joseph ben Illem (*Ant.* 17.6.4 [166]) who originated from Sepphoris and Eleazar ben Harsom, also a High Priest, who owned the village of Asochis (Shichin) in the Beth Netofa valley. Neither of these are to be dated to the time of Antipas, but they remain nonetheless helpful examples. Joseph ben Illem illustrates the fact that large landowners were operating in the region from the time of Herod the Great and, in competition with the new elite of Antipas' court, would no doubt have seized the opportunity to extend their property that the re-establishment of Sepphoris offered. The example of Eleazar ben Harsom confirms that this was a trend which continued through the reign of Antipas beyond 70 CE. The rebuilding of Sepphoris did not afford the local peasantry the opportunity to avail of services provided by the city. Nor did it result in them changing from subsistence crops to luxury produce in order to take advantage of market opportunities. It led to increasing pressure to meet subsistence requirements, an increasing spiral of debt exacerbated by the presence of an elite with wealth to invest and ultimately to the loss of patrimonial land.

The foundation of Tiberias further served to increase the pressure on the agricultural output of the peasantry in the lower Galilee. Now the villages of the region were required not only to meet the additional building costs incurred, but also to provide a second city with adequate supplies and provisions. Whilst the relocation of the

⁸⁷Loans from fellow villagers, unlike those from the elite, served to protect the village community by ensuring that all were provided for. A lender on one occasion may, for example, be a borrower on the next. For this reason loans between villagers very seldom resulted in forfeiture of land.

Herodian court to Tiberias would have led to increased marketisation in that area, a corresponding decrease in the influence and at least the international trading significance of Sepphoris can reasonably be presumed. In other respects the effects of the city's foundation were similar to those of the restoration of Sepphoris. The same conflict of values concerning the nature of the land occurred. Wealthy elites took advantage of peasant difficulties to increase their landholdings, and the peasant smallholders struggled to maintain their way of life. That large estates already existed in the vicinity of the Lake of Tiberias prior to the city's foundation is attested to by Josephus (*Ant.* 14.15.10 [450]). These landowners too, would no doubt have sought to exploit the city market in Tiberias and to increase their landholdings whenever possible. Once again the presence of a city brought little in the way of benefits and much in the way of hardship to the surrounding Galilean peasants.

In neither the upper nor the lower regions of Antipas' Galilee were trade and manufacture as vigorous or extensive as many modern scholars attempt to suggest. Although trading with Tyre, for geographical reasons, was greater in the upper Galilee than the lower, in both parts of the region international and domestic trade was restricted by transportation expenses and limited demand. Redistribution through a centralised institution accounted for a large proportion of the movement of agricultural surplus within the region. Market exchange was practised primarily by the elite, with a minimal participation by the urban artisans, whilst the peasantry for the most part endeavoured to be self-sufficient and obtained whatever essentials they required mainly through the process of reciprocal exchange. Although the rebuilding of Sepphoris and the foundation of Tiberias did have the effect of increasing both monetarisation and marketisation in Galilee, of greater concern to the local peasantry was the presence of a wealthy elite whose ideological approach to the use and nature of land stood in stark contrast to their own. The excessive demands placed upon the peasantry to meet both the initial building

costs of the cities and their continuous supply with adequate provisions, ensured that many who had previously struggled to meet their subsistence needs were no longer able to do so. In an effort to retain their patrimonial land they secured loans over their property which on the failure of the peasants to meet their repayments resulted in foreclosure and the transfer of ownership of the land to the elite lender. The consequences for the peasantry could hardly have been more severe, not only had they become tenants on their own land, or possibly even day-labourers, they had forfeited their patrimonial inheritance.

The Culture and Ethos of Antipas' Galilee.

The results of recent excavations carried out at Sepphoris and other sites in the Galilee have led a number of scholars to speculate upon the 'cultural ethos' of that city and of the region as a whole. Common amongst their conclusions is a depiction of lower Galilee during the Herodian period as a highly urbanised and Hellenised region of the Roman empire (Overman 1988, Edwards 1988, 1992, Crossan 1991 and Downing 1992). But how accurate an interpretation of the evidence is this, and how closely does it represent Antipas' Galilee? Of the many "symbols of specifically Roman culture" described by Strange (1992b: 33) only the theatre appears in Sepphoris and the dating of this remains inconclusive.⁸⁸ A careful reading of the various strata identified in the archaeological reports reveals that the most significant findings attributable to the first century CE include the *miqvaot* and the numerous cisterns and cavities which served as stores for water and grain respectively (Meyers, Netzer and Meyers 1986: 13-18). The Roman villa and its Dionysos mosaic floor, the tiny figures of the gods Pan and

⁸⁸Whilst Strange 1992a: 343 contends that at least the initial construction of the theatre was undertaken during Antipas' reign, Meyers, Netzer and Meyers 1992: 33 favour a date either after Sepphoris had been restored as the capital city (under Felix in 52 CE) or possibly even into the second century CE.

Prometheus, indicators of pagan worship in the city and many of the oil lamps depicting erotic figures were all the products of later centuries (Meyers 1992: 329). A comparison with the coastal city of Caesarea established by Herod the Great also proves insightful. Amongst the many symbols of Roman culture to be found there are the theatre, amphitheatre, temple and statues, together with the imported marble columns and Roman artwork, all of which indicate the high level of Roman culture which dominated that city. From the archaeological evidence there is little to suggest that Sepphoris during the reign of Antipas was significantly influenced by the cultural ethos of Rome.

In addition to the archaeological findings, however, the literary evidence must also be considered. For much of its history Sepphoris appears to have served as an administrative outpost for successive foreign rulers. As a consequence of this role, the city was inevitably subject to many cultural influences. On the death of Herod the Great, however, in response to the uprising of the brigand, Judas, son of Ezekias, Josephus relates that the son of Varus, the legate of Syria, at the head of a faction of his father's army, burned the city and enslaved its inhabitants (*Ant.* 17.10.9 [289]; *J.W.* 2.5.1 [68]).⁸⁹ There is conflicting archaeological evidence regarding the level of destruction the city suffered. According to Meyers, "no trace of violent destruction in the Herodian period" was uncovered during his excavations (1992: 323). Strange (1992a: 339-355) on the other hand, found little in the way of floors or walls that could be attributed to the period prior to Antipas' restoration of the city. Whatever the extent of previous cultural influences remaining in Sepphoris after Varus' action, the primary cultural ethos of Antipas' city was that espoused by the Herodians. The Idumean origins of the Herodian dynasty may have some bearing on the religious and cultural values to which the

⁸⁹According to the *Jewish War* the raising of Sepphoris was carried out not by Varus' son but rather by his friend Gaius.

Herodian elite in Sepphoris adhered. In his recent work on the Herodian dynasty Nikos Kokkinos (1998) claims that their origins are to be found in the Phoenecian city of Ascalon. They were converted to Judeanism either whilst resident in Judea, or more probably under the enforced circumcision initiated by John Hyrcanus in Idumea in 127 BCE. The expedient nature of the Herodian commitment to Judeanism and its values is apparent not only from their public actions but also in their private lives. Thus of Herod's ten wives only two were known to be definitely Judean and political pragmatism appears to have been of greater concern in establishing these relationships than Judean sensibilities. Likewise Herod's love of learning and his fondness for games owed more to a Greco-Roman than a Judean background. An education in Rome ensured that Herod's son Antipas was fully exposed to the cultural values which dominated the Empire, and his putting aside of his Nabatean wife in favour of marriage to his sister-in-law Herodias suggests that Antipas shared the same expedient approach to Judeanism as his father.⁹⁰ The archaeological and literary evidence presents us with a reasonably consistent portrayal of Antipas' Sepphoris as a city in which Roman influence was more latent than explicit. The two most significant manifestations in Sepphoris of Greco-Roman culture were the theatre and the Herodian court. Although the Herodians were adherents of Judeanism they held power at the command of Rome and were only too willing to absorb Roman values.

Far less in the way of archaeological evidence is available with regard to Tiberias. Founded by Antipas circa 19 CE as his capital city, the only symbols of Roman culture uncovered there were the mounted columns set astride the street leading into the city, and the street itself which was paved in Roman style. Neither the royal palace, decorated with animal motifs, nor the stadium, both referred to in the literary sources have thus far

⁹⁰Hoehner 1972.

been recovered. It is, therefore, the writings of Josephus which provide us with most of our information regarding the city. Located on the shore of Lake Gennesaret, Tiberias was constructed upon the site of tombs and thus stood in violation of Judean law. This may explain, at least in part, why Josephus describes those who settled in the city as “a promiscuous rabble” who had been coerced into residing there (*Ant.* 18.2.3-4 [36-38]).⁹¹ The preponderance of Roman names listed amongst the Herodian officials resident in Tiberias at the outbreak of the Judean revolt in 66 CE leads Horsley to suggest that Antipas’ officials were likewise either Roman, or Judeans with Roman or Hellenised names (1996: 52). Such appointments would have been very much in keeping with the attitude of the Herodian dynasty previously described. From the limited extant evidence there is nothing to suggest that the cultural ethos of Tiberias differed in any marked way from that which prevailed in Sepphoris.

To what extent had this incipient Roman cultural ethos present in both cities permeated the villages of lower Galilee? To assist in answering this question it may be helpful to consider Sepphoris and Tiberias in terms of what Redfield and Singer (1954: 53-73) refer to as orthogenetic and heterogenetic characteristics. These terms arise out of an examination of “the roles of cities in effecting change in the content and integration of ideas, interests and ideals” (1954: 56). Thus an orthogenetic city is one which “..[carries] forward into systematic and reflective dimensions an old culture” (1954: 58) whereas in a heterogenetic city, “local cultures are disintegrated and new integrations of mind and society are developed” (1954: 59). In addition to this distinction between orthogenetic and heterogenetic cities, Redfield and Singer further distinguish between primary and secondary urbanisation. The former is characterised by the transformation

⁹¹Freyne also suggests that the Galileans may simply have preferred to live in villages rather than in the city (1980: 129).

of local culture into a Great Tradition by the literati,⁹² whilst the latter occurs when differing, and usually hostile, cultures come into contact. The most important aspects of each type of city are succinctly summarised by Freyne in his examination of urban-rural relations in first century CE Galilee (1992: 77). He lists four elements which are reflected differently with regard to each city type. Dominant social types within orthogenetic cities tend to be the literati, kings or scribes. In heterogenetic cities, however, they are primarily foreign bureaucrats or local bureaucrats imbued with foreign cultural influences. Whilst "a shared worldview" forms the basis for the relationship between the countryside and orthogenetic cities, mutual interest veiled with a developing myth serves the same function for heterogenetic cities. In economic terms both cities display basic inequalities. The orthogenetic city explains these either as an aspect of divine order or as "social necessity", for the heterogenetic city, on the other hand, they are perceived purely as exploitation. The final aspect described by Freyne is the manner by which each city type achieves "social unity". For the orthogenetic city this is attained by "consensus", in contrast to the heterogenetic city which resorts to "coercion". Freyne proceeds to utilise this typology in his interpretation of Josephus' *Life* and the New Testament gospels. Of particular interest to us is his consideration of Justus of Tiberias. Justus was a member of the Galilean elite, a product of the Herodian bureaucracy who was well versed in the Greek language and Greco-Roman culture. He was in terms of Redfield's and Singer's typology an example of secondary urbanisation. On the outbreak

⁹²According to Redfield, "In a civilization there is a great tradition of the reflective few, and there is a little tradition of the largely unreflective many. The great tradition is cultivated in schools or temples; the little tradition works itself out and keeps itself going in the lives of the unlettered in their village communities. The tradition of the philosopher, theologian, and literary man is a tradition cultivated and handed down; that of the little people is for the most part taken for granted and not submitted to much scrutiny or considered improvement or refinement" (1956: 41-42). In effect the literati transform a local culture into a Great Tradition which is then in turn reinterpreted by the peasantry.

of the Judean revolt, however, neither he, nor his counterpart from the upper Galilee, John of Gischala, had sufficient backing from the Galilean peasantry to enable either of them to oust the Jerusalem appointed Josephus as governor (*Life* 16-21 [84-103]). This loyalty which Josephus enjoyed from the Galilean peasantry was very probably attributable to his priestly background and the continuing significance of Jerusalem for the Galileans. By contrast “the unpopularity of Justus must have been directly related to the hostility of Galileans to his native place, which was regarded as alien and unfriendly to deep-seated Jewish sensibilities from the outset...” (Freyne 1992: 80). If some forty years after its construction the cultural values which emanated from Tiberias were rejected by the Galilean peasantry, they could hardly have been accepted in the time of Antipas. This rejection of the cultural ethos of both Tiberias and Sepphoris does not of itself, according to Freyne, provide an adequate explanation of the negative relationship between these cities and the Galilean peasantry. Of equal significance was their loyalty to Jerusalem.⁹³ Whilst this loyalty was based upon consensus and a shared tradition, the frailty of a social unity built upon coercion is evident in the action taken against Sepphoris and Tiberias at the outbreak of the Judean revolt. In terms of the typology Sepphoris and Tiberias display the characteristics which prevail in heterogenetic cities, whilst Jerusalem possesses those of an orthogenetic city. Given that these are merely typologies it would be wrong to suggest that the cultural ethos of these Herodian cities had no influence whatsoever on the Galilee. The fact remains, however, that the dominating myth which prevailed in the villages of the region emanated from Jerusalem.⁹⁴

⁹³This loyalty, as we illustrate in Chapter Five below, manifests itself particularly in Galilean attitudes to the Jerusalem temple. Despite differing historical experiences there is no evidence of the antipathy between Judea and Galilee which both of these territories display towards Samaria. See pp 251-261 below.

⁹⁴In support of this are the numerous references in the gospels, in particular John, and in Acts to the presence of Jesus and his disciples in Jerusalem, and, despite Jesus' extensive

The presence of Greek inscriptions particularly in the lower Galilee has also been cited as evidence of a pervading Greco-Roman culture in the region. Meyers, for example, relates that “of all sites [in the lower Galilee] with epigraphic remains, about 40% report Greek, 40% report Hebrew, and more than 50 % report Aramaic” (1976: 97). Such a statement requires careful interpretation, however, as it reveals neither the specific location of the inscriptions nor their date of origin. The recovery of Greek epigraphic remains in and around Caesarea and Scythopolis, for example, may reveal nothing more than the Greco-Roman urban culture known to exist in these two cities.⁹⁵ Further, the lack of precision with respect to the dating of the inscriptions makes it difficult to situate them with any certainty within the first century CE, and thus reduces their value as evidence of the nature of Antipas’ Galilee. The claim that the presence amongst the epigraphic remains of the three languages Greek, Hebrew and Aramaic supports the notion of a multilingual Galilee is also questionable. Porter’s assertion that because certain inscriptions were written in Greek it is reasonable to presume that “a significant proportion of the population” (1994: 128) would be capable of reading them is simply a fallacy. Almost certainly the vast majority of the population were illiterate and, very probably, the posting of the inscriptions in Greek reflects the importance of their subject matter rather than the ability of the people to read them. The inscriptions would readily be translated into Aramaic and their contents spread by word of mouth.⁹⁶ Harris surely more accurately reflects the situation in Palestine when he notes the surprise of the Roman soldier questioned by Paul in Acts 21: 37. According to Harris “..he expected to hear Aramaic around him most of the time” (1989: 188). Horsley (1996: 158-159) likewise rejects Porter’s portrayal of a multilingual Galilee,

activities in the Galilee, to the corresponding omission of any mention of either Sepphoris or Tiberias.

⁹⁵Horsley 1996: 164.

⁹⁶Malina and Rohrbaugh 1992: 45-46 outline the importance of the ‘gossip network’ in oral cultures.

distinguishing between multi/bilingualism and what he terms diglossia, a situation in which one language is used for formal and official matters, and may not be known to everyone, and a second language which is used in daily discourse. This second language, in Galilee Aramaic, although spoken by the vast majority of the population on most occasions may not be reflected in the archaeological evidence. In other words, the high percentage of Greek and Hebrew inscriptions reflects little more than the official and prestigious standing of these languages. In addition, it is probable that the urban artisans located in close proximity to the elite would have at least a smattering of colloquial Greek as may some of the peasants in the villages near to Sepphoris and Tiberias. But to suggest that the lower Galilee was multi/bilingual surely misinterprets the evidence.

The ethos of Sepphoris and Tiberias bears the hallmarks of an emerging rather than a dominant Roman culture. The villages of the lower Galilee appear to have been less influenced still. In cultural terms the peasantry took their lead not from the elite Herodian dynasty living in the neighbouring cities but from the propagators of the Great Tradition which emanated from Jerusalem. It was from the dominant myth provided by that city that the Galilean peasantry derived the little tradition by which they lived.

Conclusion

The Galilee of Herod Antipas, the Galilee of Jesus of Nazareth, was not a haven of Greco-Roman culture and a centre of vigorous international and domestic trade. It was a region which consisted of only two major cities whose combined population probably amounted to somewhere between 20,000-25,000 people. Of that number only a small percentage were engaged in market trading with redistribution and reciprocity also continuing to operate as mechanisms of exchange. The major consequence of the (re)construction of these two cities was the ideological conflict between the wealthy elite and the peasantry regarding the land. A conflict which the peasantry almost inevitably

lost. This dichotomy between the elite and the peasantry was also, to a limited extent, reflected in the cultural ethos of the region. Whilst both Sepphoris and Tiberias exhibited the signs of a nascent Roman culture, Roman values made little impression on the villages of the lower Galilee. In these villages it was the little tradition which expressed the culture and values of the peasantry; a little tradition which had its roots in the Judean Great Tradition emanating from Jerusalem. It is within this social context that the life Jesus of Nazareth must be understood.

CHAPTER TWO

PEASANT RESPONSE TO ELITE OPPRESSION IN GALILEE

In the previous chapter we sought to illustrate the extent to which the socio-economic conditions in Antipas' Galilee favoured the elite. In particular we argued that the (re)construction of Sepphoris and Tiberias caused significant hardship to the peasant smallholders of the lower Galilee culminating in many cases in the loss of their patrimonial land. It is our purpose in this chapter to examine what forms of response, if any, were available to the peasantry in the face of such oppressive conditions. Such a task, however, proves both difficult and complex. Inevitably, our primary source of information is the Judean historian Josephus. But as has been recognised in many recent works,¹ Josephus neither provides, nor indeed does he seek to provide, an objective narrative of events. His elite background² influences both the nature of the information he relates, and the manner in which it is presented.³ As Neyrey's insightful analysis of *Josephus' Vita and the Encomium* illustrates, Josephus' writings are a product of social conditioning and literary training which perceives and

¹For example Rajak 1983, Bilde 1988 and Mason 1992.

²In *Life* 1-2 [1-9] Josephus himself advises us of his Hasmonean descent, his upbringing in Jerusalem and his superior intellect. He also relates how aged twenty six he undertook a diplomatic mission to Rome to secure the release of a number of priests who had been sent there by Felix the then procurator of Judea. With the assistance of Nero's wife, Poppea, he successfully completed his mission before returning to find his homeland on the brink of revolt (*Life* 3-4 [13-19]). During the course of the revolt Josephus was appointed Governor of the Galilee by the anti-war faction in Jerusalem. Neyrey explains these and other apparently personal details in terms of the encomium genre of ancient literature (1994: 177-206).

³In referring to Josephus' elite perspective we do not suggest that he approves of every action carried out by the elite, only that he interprets events from the view point of one who belongs to that social category.

presents people in “culturally defined categories” (1994: 178). Thus a person is understood not in terms of his/her personal characteristics but rather by means of his/her “origin and birth”, “nurture and training”, “accomplishments and deeds”, and “comparison” (with others). Inevitably, in the writings of Josephus, as in most ancient literature, it is to members of the elite that these attributes, or the lack of them, are applied. Thus we are regaled with much information concerning the magnificent nature of Herod the Great’s building programme (accomplishments and deeds) but little of its impact upon the peasantry. And, whilst the intrigue of the Herodian court is laid out before us in some detail (origin and birth) we read nothing of the daily routine of the Palestinian smallholders. Josephus displays little explicit interest in the lives of the peasant majority and recounts their actions only in so far as they impact upon the elite. This notwithstanding it remains possible, with a careful and nuanced approach, and with the aid of social-scientific techniques, to re-read the limited evidence available to us with a view to extrapolating instances of non-elite resistance to elite domination and oppression. For the most part, these forms of resistance cohere with the values espoused by the little tradition of the peasantry. Before examining in some detail the various forms of non-elite resistance, it will therefore prove helpful to consider briefly Scott’s analysis of the little tradition of peasant communities in order to provide an insight into little tradition values, and also to illustrate the manner in which the little tradition differs from its Great Tradition progenitor.⁴

There is, Scott contends, “something which could be described as a distinct ‘folk’ or ‘little tradition’ perspective that is more than simply a parochial version of cosmopolitan forms and values.” In certain conditions, he continues, “one can often discern within the peasantry’s little tradition, what amounts to a ‘shadow society’ - a

⁴See pg 68 n 92 above.

pattern of structural, stylistic, and normative opposition to the politico-religious tradition of ruling elites" (1977: 4). Within this 'shadow society' "many of the central values of the elite culture are symbolically rejected or stood on their head" (1977: 16-17). Scott examines three features which he considers prominent within little tradition religion, localism, syncretism and profanation. The first of these emphasises the significance of the worship of local spirits and deities for individual villages and regions. These often stand in stark contrast to the centralised forms of worship which emanate from the cities. Secondly, the religion of the little tradition, Scott claims, is by its nature syncretistic. It insinuates elements of its own local culture and tradition into the Great Tradition creating in turn something resembling but unique to both. That the little tradition constitutes more than merely a vulgarised version of the Great Tradition is apparent from the profanation of elements of the latter and its elite originators evident in 'folk' religion. Role reversal in which the hierarchy are ridiculed, black masses and carnival within the Christian tradition all indicate a less than total acceptance amongst the peasantry of the ruling elite and their Great Tradition. Egalitarianism arising from notions of a "Golden Age" underpin many of these reversal rituals. It is with these expressions of the profane that the 'shadow society' of the little tradition manifests itself most clearly. In other words, the profanations of the little tradition illustrate "that any moral order is bound to engender its own antithesis, at least ritually, within folk culture" (1977: 33). In a similar vein, Michel Foucault argues that the discourse often used by the ruling elite to affirm their domination and power, can itself form the basis of a subversive counter discourse. The rules of the ruling elite, he argues, can be inverted and turned against those who seek to impose them.⁵

⁵See Esler 1995b: 239-240.

The dualistic nature of little tradition religion, evident in its acceptance of the Great Tradition whilst at the same time subverting many of its core values, is still more pronounced in little tradition politics. The more demanding nature of political obligations results in a more radical response to Great Tradition values. Scott again considers the three themes of localism, syncretism and profanation.

Of particular significance within the sphere of localism is the village approach to economic subsistence. It is accepted amongst the peasantry that, given adequate resources, all villagers are entitled to meet their basic subsistence requirements. In relation to outsiders, in particular to the elite, resources can only be claimed after the subsistence needs of the villagers have first been satisfied. Thus, whilst the peasantry may grudgingly comply with tax and tithing obligations in years of plenty, excessive elite demands in lean times lead to peasant opposition. One further consequence of localism is a lack of cohesion in any form of potential peasant resistance to a centrally controlled and powerful elite. Syncretism within a political context tends to result in a transformation of elite ideals to reflect the concrete needs of the local peasants. Thus, whilst the Huk leadership of the Hukbalahap rebellion in the Philippines sought the installation of a socialist government, the peasants' primary concern was the improvement of the land tenancy system. Little tradition political profanation is closely related to its religious counterpart.⁶ Just as religious domination produced reversal rituals so, according to Scott, "A real pattern of exploitation dialectically produces its own symbolic mirror image within folk culture" (1977: 224). Such profanations were not restricted to comments on the present, however, many included a vision of a radically

⁶In a situation where the ruling elite are also the religious elite, religious and political profanation may amount to one and the same thing.

changed future. The words of the following Vietnamese lyric typify the almost universal aspirations of the peasantry and urban non-elite,

Would that no-one were hungry

Would that joy was in the hearts of all...

Would that no more unjust taxes were paid

Would that ancient customs were restored... (1977: 224).

This "alternative symbolic universe" latent for the most part within little tradition culture contains a number of recurring elements. The theme of "brotherhood", and of the absence of distinctions based on wealth and status. The call for the removal of religious institutions and hierarchical structures which are perceived as legitimating elite oppression, in many cases in favour of property, in particular land, being held in common. And an abundance of resources which will be shared and enjoyed by all, rather than exploited for the benefit of a few. Underpinning each of these elements, Scott continues, is the central tenet of reversal that "the last shall be first". Significantly these features recur in peasant cultures irrespective of the nature of the dominating elite. Thus in the religious context whether the Great Tradition is Christian, Islamic or Buddhist or in political terms communist, socialist or fascist, the prominent features of the peasant response remain the same. The only explanation for these "remarkable resemblances", according to Scott, are "the similarities in circumstances which peasants face as a class, as an occupational group, and as a social status" (1977: 226).

On occasion these values present in the "alternative symbolic universe" manifest themselves openly in millennial movements and peasant rebellions. The causes underlying such movements are many and varied, earthquakes and wars are only two of the more extreme. The common feature of the event(s) which transforms otherwise

latent cultural traditions into active participation in millennial movements or rebellion is an overriding perception by the peasantry of a significant threat to their ability to meet their subsistence requirements and thus to their lives. According to Scott, "New economic forces and their attendant disasters might also provide the stimulus" (1977: 232). Increased monetarisation and marketisation, for example, were perceived by many peasant communities to result in "the growth of disparities in wealth, concentration of land ownership, moneylending, wage labour and the elimination of customary economic rights" (1977: 231). In such circumstances it is hardly surprising that prominent amongst their aspirations for the future was a return to a society in which buying and selling had no role to play. Although there are many similarities in the forms of peasant response to the various crises, inevitably particular forms of oppression influenced the priorities of the movements they inspired. As we noted above, the nature of these peasant movements, although they may reflect the terminology of their respective Great Traditions, are not dependent upon them. They consist rather of a radical core which promotes reversal of the existing order and which originates within the peasant communities themselves. For the most part this theme of reversal remains latent, expressed in satire and in carnival. When, however, circumstances change, when disaster strikes or economic 'progress' threatens to destroy the very basis of peasant life, then reversal is transformed into a central tenet of millennial movements and peasant rebellions seeking to revive a "Golden Age", to (re)create a utopia in which abundant resources are shared fairly by all. Thus, although not of itself an active form of peasant resistance to elite oppression, the subversive nature of the little tradition, its inversion of elite values, is reflected in the various forms of non-elite resistance described below.

Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance

The subversive values inherent in the little tradition only occasionally spill over into open revolt or rebellion. For the most part, peasant response to elite oppression

consists of what Scott terms "everyday forms of resistance". Within this category he includes activities such as "foot dragging, dissimulation, false compliance, feigned ignorance, desertion, pilfering, smuggling, poaching, arson, slander, sabotage, surreptitious assault and murder, anonymous threats and so on" (1989: 5). These are covert actions, carried out under the veil of secrecy necessary in a climate where open resistance may be either impossible or punishable by death. They are also actions which, whilst requiring no formal organisation, necessitate the tacit compliance of the peasantry as a whole. Thus, the underpayment of taxes⁷ and tithes, stealing from the landowners fields or barns, or poaching on his land, although the actions of specific individuals, have proven an effective means of peasant response to an oppressive elite because of the "complicitous silence" of the peasant community. Nathan Brown (1989: 93-121) provides a number of examples of such peasant activities in Egypt between 1882 and 1952. These range from the deliberate "slacking off" of day-labourers in the field⁸ and the sabotaging of the landowners' crops, to the evasion of the payment of taxes and state requisitions (1989: 105-107). They culminate in the murder of landowners, state officials and their representatives (1989: 93, 102-103). Moreover, the cumulative effect of these individual actions can, on occasion, lead to a change in government policy.⁹

⁷Note the high proportion of tax collected in third world countries obtained from export and import duties, reflecting the success of the people in tax avoidance (1986: 7).

⁸Jacek Kochanowicz finds similar examples of Polish peasant resistance in the eighteenth century, "Instructions for overseers are full of remarks concerning the need for constant supervision of peasants working on estate land. The mere fact that they are sometimes extremely detailed shows how much of a problem was created by foot-dragging villagers...Contemporary observers often noted that the labour intensity of peasants working estate fields was much lower than when they worked on their own fields. They brought the worst tools and weakest animals to work. They resisted, often successfully, the introduction of more efficient, but more intensive tools, for example, scythes instead of sickles for harvest" (1989: 49).

⁹The social and economic reforms in Hungary in the 1950s arose primarily from the peasant resistance of the previous decade to state forced crop deliveries (Scott 1989: 17-18).

That this may not be the direct intention of the peasant engaged in an act, for example, of petty larceny, hardly reduces the significance of these subversive forms of resistance in the peasants' struggle for survival against a dominant and oppressive elite.

The inherent secrecy and anonymity attached to these actions ensure that there is little mention of them in official records.¹⁰ The elite Josephus, not surprisingly, omits any reference to them. Nonetheless, there is some evidence that such practices were known in the ancient Mediterranean. The Egyptian papyrus SB XIV 12089, for example, contains evidence of the theft of fourteen artabae of wheat from the royal threshing floor (Llewelyn 1994: 115-116), whilst Oxyrhynchus Papyrus XII 1465 similarly narrates a petition in which the petitioner claims that there was

...thievishly carried off from the threshing-floor, which I own near Iseum Pekusios, as much as four artabae of wheat, and likewise from another threshing floor, which I own near the same Iseum for the Crown-land cultivated by me, as much as four more artabae of wheat. I have suspicions against Sarapion, guard of the threshing-floors and the others who sleep there.....

P. Oxy. I 69 also contains a petition seeking restitution in respect of a theft, on this occasion of ten artabae of barley. In addition to theft the Oxyrhynchus Papyri also provide evidence of adulteration of grain. According to P. Oxy. 1V 708, the *sitologoi* responsible for the delivery of a shipment of adulterated grain were required to make recompense. In a Palestinian context cave hideouts may have served as secret grain stores.¹¹ With

¹⁰Also rulers were reluctant to acknowledge such deviant activities which were, in effect, indicators of the underlying discontent in their oppressive regimes.

¹¹I am grateful to both Philip Esler and Douglas Oakman for bringing this to my attention. Mordechai Aviam (1996) provides a list of underground tunnels found at Galilean sites at the time of the first Judean revolt. In the course of a personal

regard to the actions of the peasants of the lower Galilee and, in particular, those who had borne the brunt of the (re)construction of Sepphoris and Tiberias, little direct evidence is available. However the "parable of the weeds" (Mt 13: 24-30) may include an indirect reference to the type of peasant resistance described above.¹² According to the parable "a man sowed good seed in his field. One night when everyone was asleep, an enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat and went away". Subsequently, when the crop began to grow and the man's servants discovered what had happened, they went to him, told him what "some enemy" had done and asked if they should remove the weeds. The master replied that no action should be taken until harvest time when the wheat and weeds would be separated out. Most scholars interpret the parable in eschatological terms with the emphasis falling on the separating out of the wheat from the weeds.¹³ Oakman, however, suggests that Jesus may have been presenting the elite landowner's action as a model of imprudence and bad practice. His delay in separating the wheat from the weeds stemmed from greed and his hope of maximising profit (1986: 114-123). Such an interpretation may be strengthened by a consideration of the identity of the landowner's potential enemies. Certainly a rival landowner attempting to gain material advantage may have been responsible.¹⁴ A more probable scenario, however, is that of a peasant, perhaps even one who had recently lost his patrimonial land, planting the weeds as an act of sabotage. In the villages of the lower Galilee, in particular those neighbouring Sepphoris and Tiberias, such a scenario would have been readily

conversation with Douglas Oakman in 1993, Aviam raised the possibility that the caves may have served as secret grain stores. Further archaeological evidence, however, is necessary to confirm this thesis.

¹²We do not suggest that the parable is necessarily an authentic saying of the historical Jesus, or that it is specifically located in the Galilee, only that the type of action referred to therein is credible in the social context of the hearer.

¹³See for example Dodd 1961: 136-138 and Jeremias 1963: 224-227.

¹⁴In eschatological readings of the parable the enemy is inevitably interpreted as the devil.

recognisable. In the context of the parable the greed of the landowner makes the peasant's action more effective still.

Far from being "quiescent and passive" the peasantry continuously employed covert methods in their struggle against the ruling elite. When a crisis, in the form of a revolt or a rebellion, arose, it was often a sign that everyday forms of resistance were failing. Thus "the French peasantry who burned chateaux and abbeys in 1789 were presumably not perfectly allegiant retainers to their kings and lords in 1788" (Scott 1989: 29). Similarly the discontent which fermented in Palestine in the 60s CE and which culminated in the Judean revolt¹⁵ most surely built upon decades of just those forms of peasant resistance described above.

It is conceded that direct evidence of everyday forms of resistance amongst the peasantry of Galilee is negligible, but this is precisely what we would expect. That our primary literary source, Josephus, offers little assistance in our quest for confirmation of such acts, reflects not their non-occurrence, but rather his elite background and perspective. Silence in this instance is not quite so damning. The limited indirect evidence which is available, however, the references in the Egyptian papyri, and the parable of the weeds in Matthew 13, certainly provides for the possibility of covert forms of resistance, such as pilfering, footdragging, dissimulation and sabotage being effected by the peasants of the lower Galilee. When this is combined with the oppressive socio-economic conditions, and in particular with the threat to the smallholders land, that possibility becomes almost an inevitability.

¹⁵Significantly in the early stages of the Judean revolt the rebels targeted the house of the high priest Ananias, the palaces of Agrippa and Bernice and the temple archives which housed the record of debts (*J.W.* 2.17.6 [426-428]).

Social Banditry

One alternative response to the oppression faced by the peasantry takes the form of social banditry. According to Josephus, bandits were simply outlaws; criminals who belonged to the social category, termed by Lenski, expendables.¹⁶ Hobsbawm (1959 and 1969), however, provides a different perspective. Collating examples of social banditry which occurred in agrarian societies in Europe between the eighteenth and twentieth centuries, he attempts to present us with the 'ideal type' of bandit. The term bandit is applied to an individual, according to Hobsbawm's analysis, who carries out an act which the elite deem to be criminal in nature, but which is not so construed by the bandit's peers. Thus both Pancho Villa in Mexico and Labareda in Brazil were drawn into social banditry as a result of defending their family honour (Hobsbawm 1969: 30). Whilst the bandit technically stands outside of the law, he nonetheless retains the support, and importantly the protection, of the peasant community.¹⁷ The stereotypical perception of the social bandit as one who fights injustice, who steals only from the rich and who if not always sharing his booty with the poor at least champions their cause, receives some support from the extant evidence. Thus Zelim Khan, a twentieth century bandit from Daghestan is reported to have offered to give himself up in exchange for the removal of all fines levied against "innocents" and the freedom of all those who had supported him, whilst Pancho Villa is said to have distributed the booty of his first major haul amongst his family and others (1969: 37).¹⁸ Many of these features of social banditry clearly reflect the values inherent in the little tradition of the peasantry. Hobsbawm concludes, social banditry is primarily a rural phenomena which occurs

¹⁶Note his presentation of Herod's treatment of the bandits in the caves at Arbela (*Ant.* 14.15. 4-5 [413-430]).

¹⁷See, for example, the prayer of protection offered by the women of San Stefano in Aspromonte for the Calabrian bandit Musolino (Hobsbawm 1969: 41).

¹⁸Note also the tradition of giving to the poor which attaches to the legendary figure of Robin Hood.

particularly in times of socio-economic crises, including famine, war and 'modernisation'.

Unlike everyday forms of peasant resistance, social banditry is an overt, provocative action. It openly challenges the elite and may, in certain conditions, lead to anarchy and possibly rebellion.¹⁹ Josephus cites a number of instances of social banditry which occurred in the Galilee.²⁰ From his elite perspective, he reports approvingly of Herod the Great's suppression of the bandits at Arbela shortly after his appointment as king, and he recounts other acts of banditry in a similar vein. The opposition, led by Judas from Gamala and a Pharisee named Saddok, to the assessment of property for tax purposes, undertaken by Quirinius, the Governor of Syria, in 6 CE is denounced by Josephus in the following terms; "when raids are made by great hordes of brigands and men of the highest standing [i.e. the elite] are assassinated it is supposed to be the common welfare that is upheld, but the truth is that in such cases the motive is private gain" (*Ant.* 18.1.1 [7-8]).²¹ Again, he asserts in his *Jewish War* that the bandits were occupying a large swathe of Galilee and were subjecting its "inhabitants" to "evils no less than those of war" (*J.W.* 1.16.2 [304]).

¹⁹Kautsky 1982 argues that in the ancient world social banditry was not a precursor of rebellion or revolt.

²⁰Ramsay MacMullen in Appendix B (1966: 255-268) describes numerous acts of brigandage perpetrated throughout the Roman Empire.

²¹The elite perspective of Josephus resonates throughout this passage. He refers to those who object to the decisions of the ruling elite as 'brigands' and attributes ill motives to their actions. The non-elite claim that they seek to uphold the common good is rejected and their actions denounced as motivated by greed and self-interest. Failure to conform to the edicts of the elite is for Josephus sufficient evidence of the character and motive of those who protest.

To the bandits, and indeed to the peasantry as a whole, however, these events would have appeared very differently.²² They occurred, as in Hobsbawm's analysis, in times of significant social and economic upheaval. The Arbela bandits were active in a time of uncertainty operating after the civil strife initiated by Aristobulus II and Hyrcanus II and continuing until Herod's assumption of the throne. The census in Judea, authorised by Quirinius, was carried out shortly after the deposition of Archelaus and, by its nature, threatened economic hardship to those required to comply. In both of these circumstances everyday forms of resistance proved inadequate for considerable numbers of the population who were forced to take to the hills. They did not, however, perceive themselves to be, nor were they considered by the peasantry as, mere criminals and outlaws. This perception appears to be confirmed by the presence of whole families, including women and children, amongst the bandits operating from the Arbela caves (*Ant.* 14.15.4-5 [414-430]). These incidents were evidence not of criminality but rather of a desperate attempt at survival in a harsh and oppressive society.

Under the various Roman procurators in the 50s and 60s of the first century CE, prior to the outbreak of the Judean war, banditry in Palestine, according to Josephus, became endemic. Whilst the procurator Festus (58-62 CE) captured a large number of brigands and had many of them put to death, the problem had already escalated beyond his control. Albinus (62-64 CE), Festus' successor tried a different approach; he accepted payments from the brigands' families and released them. Such an action in Josephus' eyes was itself complicit to banditry (*Ant.* 20.9.5 [215]), and only succeeded in exacerbating the problem. The role of social banditry in the course of the Judean revolt

²²That the peasants did provide protection for the bandits is suggested by *J.W.* 2.12.2 [228-229]. Stephen, one of Caesar's slaves, was attacked by bandits on the road to Bethhoron. Cummanus, the governor of Judea, responded to the failure of the inhabitants of the neighbouring villages to pursue and hand over the robbers by having them brought to him in chains.

is a contentious one, but it is important that the bandits are distinguished from the Sicarii and the Zealot movement. Confusion of these disparate groups is probably attributable in large part to Josephus, who in a summary statement accuses the “impostors and brigands” of murder, looting and arson (*J.W.* 2.13.6 [264]). Significantly this statement follows on from a resumé of the rise of the Sicarii and a description of the prophetic movements, leading many scholars to conclude that the bandits and the Sicarii were one and the same group. However, as Horsley (1981: 424) notes, these precise charges of murder, looting and arson are elsewhere specifically posited against the Sicarii, for example, *Ant.* 20.8.10 [186-187] and *J.W.* 7.8.1 [253-254]. Moreover, Josephus actually refers to the Sicarii as a different type of brigand in *J.W.* 2.13.3 [254]. Unlike the bandits, the Sicarii²³ were primarily an urban based movement. Originating in Jerusalem in the 50s their *modus operandi* consisted of the murder and kidnap of prominent members of the Judean elite and the destruction of the estates of pro-Roman landowners in the countryside (*J.W.* 2.13.3 [254-256], *J.W.* 2.13.6 [264-266], *Ant.* 20.8.6 [172] and *Ant.* 20.9.3 [208-209]). Although very different in approach, they appear to have shared very similar beliefs to those held by the teachers of the Fourth Philosophy, in particular their commitment to the ideal of “No Lord but God”.²⁴ Whilst the Sicarii, under the leadership of Menahem, were prominent in the early stages of the Judean revolt, their participation was short lived and it was they rather than the Zealots who retreated to the fortress of Masada where they remained until their mass suicide in 73 CE.²⁵ Although Josephus acknowledges differences between bandits, the Sicarii and the Zealots he willingly categorises them all as brigands. From the viewpoint of the

²³The name derives from the use by the group of curved daggers known to the Romans as *sicae*.

²⁴Menahem and Eleazar son of Ja'ir, leaders of the Sicarii movement during its short history, both appear to have been related to Judas the Galilean the founder of the Fourth Philosophy (Duling and Perrin 1994: 58).

²⁵Horsley and Hanson 1985: 200-216.

peasantry, however, they were completely distinct entities. Whilst they may have flourished in similar socio-economic conditions, their aims and intentions were, at least within the context of the ancient world, quite different. For the social bandit the primary purpose of his actions was survival. The political and revolutionary aspirations of movements such as the Sicarii and the Zealots were far removed from the bandits' concerns.

Josephus makes no mention of bandits operating in the Galilee during the reign of Herod Antipas, but similarly the only references to banditry during the rule of Herod the Great concern the beginning and end of his reign. Long periods of oppressive stability tend to render social banditry less effective. That is not to say that individual groups of bandits did not persist,²⁶ they almost certainly did, only that banditry, as a form of peasant response to oppression, was less significant in Antipas' Galilee than it was in Palestine as a whole in the late 50s and 60s CE.

The City Mob

Both of the above forms of resistance relate to the actions of the peasantry who constituted the vast majority of the population, and who are the main focus of our concern. It is worth noting, however, that rural social banditry had an urban counterpart. According to Hobsbawm 'the city mob' was a "...movement of all classes of the urban poor for the achievement of economic or political changes by direct action- that is by riot or rebellion- but a movement which was as yet inspired by no specific ideology" (1959: 110).²⁷ It was not simply a random gathering of people for some "ad hoc purpose" but a

²⁶The well known fear of travelling in the ancient world, particularly at night and in the hill country testifies to this fact. Note, for example, the parable of the good Samaritan, Lk 10: 25-37.

²⁷Donaldson 1990 also provides an insightful analysis of the role of the city mob.

well established body of the urban non-elite engaged in what they deemed legitimate and necessary action in order to address a specific grievance. In such circumstances the focus of the mob's activities was inevitably the ruling elite. Whilst criminal elements undeniably took advantage of mob action to loot and steal, this was not the function of the mob and should not detract from our understanding of it as a significant social phenomena. Although the mob had the potential to become, and in fact on occasion became, revolutionary, it served primarily as a means of expressing urban unrest and flourished, as in the case of social banditry, in times of socio-economic upheaval.

Josephus recounts a number of mob uprisings primarily, although not exclusively, in Jerusalem.²⁸ He portrays them as the actions of rioters or rebels, whereas in the eyes of the participants the uprisings were designed to achieve relatively limited and usually quite specific goals.²⁹ The mob's response to the death of Herod the Great is a case in point. According to Josephus a large number of rebellious fanatics gathered together in Jerusalem. There they sought the punishment of the Herodian favourites implicated in the killing of those involved in the cutting down of the Golden eagle erected above the temple gates by Herod. Archelaus, Herod's son and successor, attempted to reason with the mob but his general, and the other officers, he sent to speak to them were stoned before they could fully present their case. At the time of Passover the numbers of the mob were greatly increased by people entering Jerusalem from the countryside. Alarmed by this development, Archelaus sent a cohort to suppress the violence and take the leaders of the mob by force, but the people responded by throwing stones and killing a number of the soldiers. At this time Archelaus vented his wrath by sending his army

²⁸*J.W.* 2.9.4 [175-177], *J.W.* 2.12.1 [224-227], *Ant.* 20.9.1 [119], and *J.W.* 2.14.2 [280-281]

²⁹But see Donaldson who argues that mob action in Jerusalem was a significant factor in the Judean revolt against Rome (1990: 30-40).

against them, killing approximately three thousand and dispersing the others to the hills (*Ant.* 17.9.1-3 [206-218]). There is no evidence to suggest from Josephus' account that those participating in the uprising were either seeking power for themselves or were attempting to oust Archelaus. Their actions stand readily within the social phenomena of a city mob who, encouraged by the acquiescence of the ruler designate in its initial demands, took the opportunity to seek redress for further grievances. The increase in its number, due to the Passover festival, clearly caused Archelaus alarm, but in truth the stoning of his messengers and killing of his cohort was more akin to the type of violence that accompanies mob protest, as explained by Hobsbawm, than a serious attempt to revolt.

Prophecy and Prophet Led Movements

The concern of all three forms of non-elite resistance considered above is survival within the existing oppressive regime. They may chip away at the power and wealth of the ruling elite, but they do not seek to overthrow that elite; they have no aspirations to attain political power for themselves. This is not, we contend, the case with the remaining two forms of non-elite response. Rather by means of both prophecy, and prophet and messiah-led movements, a far more radical solution is sought to alleviate the hardships of the non-elite.

We shall consider firstly prophecy and prophet-led movements. According to Aune, 'prophecy', "Defined as intelligible messages from God in human language through inspired human mediums, can assume a wide variety of forms" (1983: 103). This diversity also applies to prophet-led movements. Wilson identifies seven, what he terms, 'responses to the world', movements which are rooted in the religious and socio-economic consequences of the clash between the culture of the foreign colonial oppressor and local indigenous culture (1975: 18-30). Many of these movements are

either inspired or led by prophet figures.³⁰ Wilson's typology consists of the following responses, conversionist, revolutionist, introversionist, manipulationist, thaumaturgical, reformist and utopian. Of these seven responses the most significant for our purposes is the revolutionist response. Within this response type the belief persists that

only the destruction of the world, of the natural, but more specifically of the social order, will suffice to save men. This process of destruction must be supernaturally wrought, for men lack the power if not to destroy the world then certainly to re-create it. Believers may themselves feel called upon to participate in the process of overturning the world, but they know that they do no more than put a shoulder to an already turning wheel and give an earnest of faith: the working of the prophesied cataclysm and subsequent restoration is essentially the doing of supernatural agencies. Men have no hope except from a new dispensation, and the creation of such a new order is the intention of the god or the gods (1975: 23).

One example of this type of response is provided by the movement which emerged amongst the Xhosa tribe of South Africa. The Xhosa people suffered much at the hands of the British colonists in the mid nineteenth century particularly in respect of the loss of their land (1975: 238-240). A young girl by the name of Nongqause claimed to have prophetic and visionary powers. She declared that she had received messages from the spirits of the dead who had ordered that all cattle should be killed,³¹ all corn was to be eaten and no more corn was to be planted. These ancestors would then return, "in invincible power, to drive the English beyond the seas" (1975: 239) and would also bring

³⁰Dependent upon the circumstances and the self claims of a given movement's leader some of the movements within these responses are messiah-led rather than prophet-led movements.

³¹The killing of at least some cattle was a traditional practice before going to war as it released some men for the battle.

back with them cattle, no doubt to replace that which had been destroyed. In the new order the Xhosa believers would enjoy the possessions which had previously been the property only of the whites. In her prophecy, Nongquase combined the tribal traditions of the past with a vision for the future. In effect she created a new myth relevant to the changing situation of her tribe. As Esler observes futurist myths “are generated in the midst of societies undergoing such radical transformation that traditional mythic self-understandings can no longer be synchronized with the current situation” (1993: 187). The reference to the defeating of the colonial power by the ancestors is not only a clear rejection of the foreign oppressor and his values, but also an acknowledgement of the need for supernatural assistance to expel the enemy. Although no detail is provided regarding the political makeup and structure of the new order, it is clearly one in which tribal authorities rule and prosperity abounds. Whilst the events prophesied by Nongquase failed to materialise and many of the Xhosa people suffered death and hardship as a consequence, the prophecy, for our purposes, remains enlightening. Its two central elements consist of a reference to an ancestral past which influences the future and a future itself which is prosperous and bountiful. These are not features which are peculiar to the prophecy of Naongquase but rather are common to virtually all prophet-led movements which fall within Wilson’s revolutionist world response.

Prophecy and Prophet led Movements in Second Temple Judeanism

According to Aune (1983: 103), the once widely held belief that Josephus and the rabbis considered prophecy to have ceased in Israel after the death of Ezra in the fifth century BCE is no longer sustainable.³² Both Tosefta Sotah 13: 2 and Seder Olam Rabbah 30, are often cited in support of the traditional view as claiming the cessation of

³²Amongst scholars who argue that prophecy had ceased are Barrett 1947, Jeremias 1971, Hill 1979, Dunn 1980, and Sommer 1996. Those taking the opposite view are represented by Overholt 1988, Greenspahn 1989 and Levison 1997.

prophecy. The former text, however, although appearing to describe the demise of prophecy through the withdrawal of the holy spirit, also indicates the continuing nature of divine revelation, albeit in a different form. Moreover, Aune claims, these texts reflect the views of only one branch of rabbinic Judeanism; others amongst the rabbis and within the various Judean factions appear not to have shared this view. Citing S. Sandmel, Aune contends, "Outside the circle of the Rabbinic Sages the view that prophecy had ended simply did not exist" (1983: 104).

In addition to these later rabbinic texts, three passages from 1 Maccabees are commonly cited in support of the notion that prophets were no longer to be found within second temple Judeanism, 1 Macc 4: 45b-46, 9: 27 and 14: 41. Aune considers that the first and last of these texts refer to what he terms 'clerical prophecy', " i.e. a type of early Jewish prophecy which assumes that prophetic gifts are coextensive with the priestly-political leadership of the nation" (1983: 105). The second passage, 9: 27, describes the absence of the type of prophet who appeared in Israelite history in times of crises and whose word was directed to the people as a whole. It functions, Aune claims, to draw back from portraying Hasmonean rule in completely 'ideal' terms. In other words, only certain types of prophecy/prophet were deemed inoperative in the Hasmonean period. Allowing for the theocratic perspective of the writer of 1 Macabees, Aune concludes, that those he terms 'eschatological prophets' were not included amongst the prophets whose activities were deemed to have ceased. In second temple Judeanism, and especially for our purposes in first century CE Palestine, prophecy and prophets were a known and recognised phenomenon. In order to facilitate the interpretation of these phenomena, Aune has constructed a typology of prophecy in early Judeanism.³³ His typology consists of four categories (a) Apocalyptic literature, (b)

³³See Becker 1972, Horsley 1986b and Webb 1991 for a detailed consideration of

Eschatological prophecy which he divides into two sub-groups (i) eschatological prophecy out with the strictures of a "millenarian movement" and (b) eschatological prophecy as the central element of a "millenarian movement", (c) Clerical prophecy and (d) Sapiential prophecy (1983: 107). The most significant of these types for our study is that described by Aune as Eschatological prophecy. Within this category he includes the prophecies and actions of many of those whom Josephus describes as appearing in Palestine and Samaria throughout the first century CE. The use of the term 'eschatological', however, is not without its difficulties and alternative frameworks of interpretation have been proposed by various scholars. Horsley and Hanson (1985: 160-188), for example, designate these individuals 'Popular Prophets' and divide them into two subgroups: action³⁴ and oracular prophets. Robert Webb (1991) follows a similar approach but labels his two sub-groups, 'Leadership popular prophets' and 'Solitary popular prophets'. Significantly the description of these individuals as 'popular prophets' recognises the non-elite origins of both the prophets themselves³⁵ and of those who either acted upon or simply listened to their message. The further distinction between action/oracular and leadership/solitary popular prophets is of less importance in so far as it reflects more a difference in emphasis rather than one of substance. We will, for the most part, adopt here Horsley and Hanson's categorisation, whilst at the same time acknowledging that these categories consist of ideal types and that 'real' prophets may exhibit characteristics which make it difficult to locate them within one particular group or another. Such an approach has in recent times been questioned by Rebecca Gray (1993) who, using the label first applied by Barnett (1981), describes and

alternative typologies, some of which also have a wider application within Israelite tradition than merely the first century CE.

³⁴This category approximates closely to P.W. Barnett's 'Jewish Sign Prophets' (1981: 679-697).

³⁵In contrast to the 'Classical prophets' some at least of whom appear to have been attached to the royal courts.

categorises these prophets as ‘sign prophets’.³⁶ Her treatment focuses upon the nature and function of the signs and miracles promised by the prophets, down playing the socio-economic conditions out of which the prophets and their movements arose. Gray’s emphasis on the significance of the signs and miracles promised by the prophets, however, leads her to significantly underestimate the importance of the social, economic and political factors in which many of the signs and promises were rooted. As a consequence, we contend, she fails to adequately represent the nature and function of popular prophets and prophet-led movements.

Action Prophets

According to Horsley and Hanson, “The action prophets led movements of peasants in active anticipation of divine acts of deliverance” (1985: 161). Whilst Moses and Joshua were the paradigmatic action prophets in Israelite history, Josephus identifies a number of such individuals who appeared during the first century CE.³⁷ The two most significant, for our purposes, are the ‘Samaritan’ and ‘Theudas’. The former of these two action prophets was active at the time of Herod Antipas’ rule over the Galilee, whilst the latter engaged in his prophetic activities some years after Antipas’ demise.

The ‘Samaritan’, appeared in Samaria during the prefecture of Pontius Pilate (26-36 CE). This man, who, according to Josephus, “[had no qualms about deceit]³⁸ and in all his designs catered to the mob” called his people to follow him to the Samaritan holy place of Mount Gerizim. There he promised to show to them the sacred vessels

³⁶Barnett’s appellation ‘sign prophets’ derives from Josephus’ use of the Greek term σημεῖον. Each of the prophets identified by Barnett promised to perform such a sign.

³⁷*Ant.* 18.4.1 [85-87], *Ant.* 20.5.1 [97-98], *Ant.* 20.8.6 [167-168], *Ant.* 20.8.6 [169-172], *J.W.* 2.13.5 [261-263], *Ant.* 20.8.10 [188].

³⁸Horsley and Hanson 1985: 163. Throughout this thesis, unless otherwise stated, we use the Loeb translation of the writings of Josephus.

allegedly deposited by Moses. Encouraged by his words his followers took up arms and relocated to the village of Tirathana, where a stream of arrivals joined them. Pilate, however, prevented their ascending the holy mountain by placing cavalry and heavy-armed infantry in the path of their intended route. Some of the Samaritan's followers were killed, others fled, and still others were taken prisoner. Of this latter group those deemed to be among the movement's leaders were put to death (*Ant.* 18.4.1 [85-87]). Josephus portrays this as one more example of unrest and disorder in the region, but is it possible to determine how the Samaritan's followers perceived the events? In order to determine this, two outstanding issues require to be addressed. Firstly the tradition concerning the depositing of the sacred vessels by Moses. Marilyn Collins (1972: 97-116) traces the development of the tradition through Apocryphal, Rabbinic and Samaritan literature.³⁹ According to the apocryphal literature, the sacred vessels of the wilderness period,⁴⁰ which initially had been associated with the burial place of Moses, were transferred to the Jerusalem temple. The prophecy of the first temple's destruction by Jeremiah appears to have resulted in a link between the fate of the vessels and the role of the prophet himself. Thus it is variously recorded that Jeremiah hid the vessels in a cave, on a rocky cliff or in the earth (1972: 101-104). Significantly no such link between the hidden vessels and Jeremiah is made in the rabbinic literature. For the rabbis the important association was with the destruction of the temple. Thus it was, according to one account, that King Josiah was responsible for hiding the vessels (1972: 104-106). Finally, in the Samaritan literature a connection is made between the interment of Moses in a cave on Mount Nebo and the hiding of the sacred vessels by Jeremiah in a cave on the same mountain. The latter tradition, Collins contends, was influenced by the former.

³⁹She excludes Samaritan writings from medieval and modern times from her analysis (1972: 99).

⁴⁰Collins identifies these as the "anointing oil", "incense", "the ark", "the jar of mana", and "Aaron's staff" (1972: 101).

In the Samaritan tradition, however, the concealment of the vessels occurs not as a result of the temple's destruction, but as a consequence of the initiation of the *Fanuta*, the era of Divine Disfavour.⁴¹ The second outstanding issue concerns the restoration of the vessels and the role of the *Taheb*.⁴² Although the identification of the *Taheb* with Moses *redivivus* did not occur until around the fourth century CE,⁴³ Collins argues that as early as the first century CE there existed in Samaritan tradition the expectation of an eschatological prophet like Moses⁴⁴ who would restore the hidden vessels (1972: 110-112).⁴⁵ In so doing he would initiate the eschatological age and restore true worship on Mount Gerizim. It is in these terms, we contend, that the Samaritan would have been perceived by the non-elite; as a prophet claiming to usher in a new age, by reference to their past traditions. Josephus gives us little information regarding the general socio-economic conditions prevailing in Samaria at that time, nor the particular socio-economic status of those who responded to the Samaritan's call. He states only that "in all his designs [the Samaritan] catered to the mob".⁴⁶ One factor which is known to us and which is undoubtedly significant for our understanding of the Samaritan's movement is the Roman occupation and governance of Samaria. Rome was an oppressive occupying force whose cultural and religious values differed significantly from those of the Samaritans. That the Samaritan prophet and his followers should seek liberation from foreign domination by evoking past traditions is entirely in keeping with

⁴¹Two conflicting reasons are provided for the inauguration of this era, the death of Moses, or the sins of the sons of Eli (Collins 1972: 108-109).

⁴²Literally meaning "the restorer" or "returning one" (Collins 1972: 112).

⁴³See Meeks and in particular his interpretation of the *Memar Maqar* (1967: 246-254).

⁴⁴Collins cites "4Q Testimonia, 4Q Biblical Paraphrase 158, and 1QS IX, 11" as evidence of a similar expectation at Qumran (1972: 110).

⁴⁵Weeks acknowledges that the incident related in Josephus indicates such a belief, but adduces no further evidence of it (1967: 250).

⁴⁶Josephus uses the Greek term *πλῆθος* which is translated as 'mob' but means simply crowd or gathering of people and should not be confused with the technical term city 'mob' as used by Hobsbawm above.

the actions of the revolutionist movements of Wilson's 'response to the world' typology. The reference to the revelation of the vessels deposited by Moses on the sacred Mount Gerizim, for example, compares in both function and nature with the appeal to the 'the spirits of the dead' and 'the ancestors' in the prophecies of the Xhosa tribe girl Nongquase. And whilst, unlike the abundant new age promised to the people of the Xhosa tribe, no mention is made of a specific expectation of a new order, the followers of the Samaritan clearly anticipate something of that nature occurring. An abundance of provisions to be shared by all is a recurring theme within the little tradition. The actions of the Samaritan and his followers may, to the ruling Roman elite, have been simply another occasion of provincial disorder which required to be quelled, to the prophet and those who believed in him, however, it was a radical attempt to change the present by evoking the past.

Within ten to fifteen years of the crushing of the Samaritan and his movement another prophet appeared this time, during the procuratorship of Fadus (44-46 CE), in Judea.⁴⁷ According to Josephus,

..a certain impostor named Theudas persuaded the majority of the masses to take up their possessions and to follow him to the Jordan River.⁴⁸ He stated that he was a prophet and that at his command the river would be parted and would provide them an easy passage. With this talk he deceived many. Fadus, however, did not

⁴⁷After the death of Agrippa I in 44 CE Judea had again come under direct Roman control, whilst Galilee was also annexed for the first time.

⁴⁸Acts 5: 36-37 also recounts the uprising initiated by Theudas, but dates it, almost certainly erroneously, before the revolt led by Judas the Galilean to Quirinius' census in 6 CE. Additionally, Acts numbers Theudas' followers at approximately 400, considerably less than the clearly exaggerated "majority of the masses" cited by Josephus.

permit them to reap the fruit of their folly, but sent against them a squadron of cavalry. These fell upon them unexpectedly, slew many of them and took many prisoners. Theudas himself was captured whereupon they cut off his head and brought it to Jerusalem (*Ant.* 20.5.1 [97-98]).

Josephus portrays Theudas as an impostor who is rightly executed for deceiving the people. But how did Theudas' followers understand their actions? Horsley and Hanson (1985: 161) suggest two possible interpretations of the proposed crossing of the river Jordan. Either we see it as a "reverse conquest" whereby Theudas led his followers into the wilderness in preparation for a new conquest, or it is a "new Exodus and /or Conquest" fashioned on those traditionally effected by Moses and Joshua. Barnett agrees that the proposed division of the Jordan "is clearly [a] reference to Moses' division of the Red Sea and/or Joshua's division of the Jordan", but also understands it within the wider framework of his sign typology (1981: 681). Whatever the interpretation, it is clear that the action of Theudas and his followers is rooted in the experiences of Moses and Joshua and their deliverance of the Israelites from captivity in Egypt to liberation in the 'Promised Land'. Again Josephus fails to discuss what the participants expected when they had crossed through the Jordan, but it is notable by Fadus' response that he perceived the movement as a threat to Roman law and order. As with the Samaritan movement, the non-elite followers of Theudas were rejecting oppressive Roman occupation, its values and its socio-economic consequences.⁴⁹ They did this by responding to the call of a prophet, whom they may even have believed was the 'prophet like Moses' promised by Yahweh, and who, by recalling Yahweh's divine intervention in

⁴⁹The tension between oppressor and oppressed may have been significantly heightened during Fadus' procuratorship as it saw the reintroduction of direct Roman rule to Judea after a brief interlude in which Agrippa reigned as client king over both Judea and Galilee.

Israel's cause in the past, sought to invoke a new age in which they would all enjoy Yahweh's blessings.

Josephus also provides a summary of general prophetic activity, some time later, during the procuratorship of Felix (52-60 CE). "Impostors and deceivers called upon the mob to follow them into the desert. For they said that they would show them unmistakable marvels and signs that would be wrought in harmony with God's design. Many were in fact persuaded and paid the penalty of their folly, for they were brought before Felix and he punished them" (*Ant.* 20.8.6 [167-168]).⁵⁰ Our analysis of the Samaritan and Theudas movements enables us to draw a number of inferences from Josephus' summary. Firstly, the reference to 'the mob' as the followers of the unnamed prophets confirms that their constituency was amongst the non-elite, most probably the peasantry. Secondly, and contrary to the view expressed by Gray (1993: 137), their retreat into the desert is an allusion, in some form, to the Exodus/Conquest traditions of Moses and Joshua. Gray questions the validity of relating every reference to 'the wilderness' to the Exodus/Conquest traditions, arguing that the wilderness contained many other connotations in first century CE Palestine. Whilst it is readily acknowledged that the wilderness was a harsh and dangerous place,⁵¹ the home of bandits and criminals, in our context of prophet-led movements claiming divine inspiration surely the most probable allusion remains to the central act of Israelite deliverance, the journey from Egypt through the wilderness to the promised land. Throughout the book of Exodus the wilderness⁵² is the place where the people of Israel are gathered in response to the call of their God. There Yahweh guides, cares and provides for them.⁵³ That the

⁵⁰A similar account occurs in *J.W.* 2.13.4 [258-260].

⁵¹Brown, Driver and Briggs 1977: 184-184.

⁵²The wilderness is mentioned on no less than 22 occasions in Exodus.

⁵³See the 'theology of the wilderness' considered by Davies in ABD 1992: 912-914.

actions of the first century prophets were influenced by this central tradition of Israelite history seems almost certain.⁵⁴ Finally, the “marvels and signs...wrought in harmony with God’s design” most probably relate to the new age of which the prophets’ actions are a precursor.

A pattern emerges from the above accounts of action prophets and their movements in first century CE Palestine. The prophets and their followers were members of the non-elite. The action inspired by the prophet almost invariably had its roots in the Exodus/Conquest symbolism of the Israelite deliverance tradition. This reference to indigenous traditions contained both a rejection of Roman values and their socio-economic consequences, and an acknowledgement of the need for divine assistance to defeat the foreign oppressor.⁵⁵ On the day promised by the prophet, Yahweh would again intervene on behalf of the Israelites, and the new age of blessing would begin.

John the Baptiser and the Oracular Prophets

The second sub-group of Horsley and Hanson’s classification consists of the oracular prophets. Unlike the action prophets described above, the oracular prophets appear not to have called others to follow them nor did they effect any specific action as a precursor to the initiation of the new age. Rather they either “preached repentance and pronounced judgment” or they “announced God’s impending deliverance” (1985: 173).⁵⁶

⁵⁴Longenecker, in the context of a written debate with Schwartz and Marcus, contends that the wilderness actions of the prophets referred to by Josephus are influenced by the Exodus/Conquest tradition rather than by Isa 40: 3 (1998: 322-336).

⁵⁵Although Barnett, citing the *Assumption of Moses* contends that in first century CE Judeanism it was believed that the Kingdom of God could be “forced” into being by the actions of a prophet, it nonetheless remained to Yahweh to actually bring the Kingdom into existence (1981: 688).

⁵⁶Just as Moses and Joshua are the paradigms for the action prophets, so a precedent also

The most significant, for our purposes, of Horsley and Hanson's oracular prophets, John the Baptist, appeared in the region surrounding the river Jordan during the late 20s to early 30s of the first century CE. The classification of John as such an oracular prophet, however, is not without its difficulties.⁵⁷ Two factors in particular suggest the inadequacy of such a categorisation. Firstly, from the information available to us from Josephus, John appears to be the only one of these prophets who engages in any form of action. None of the others is attributed with anything comparable to John's act of baptism. Webb attempts to argue that in the case of John his baptism performs the same function as the acts of the Samaritan and Theudas etc. (1991: 360-366).⁵⁸ In the gospel traditions John is almost invariably found preaching in the wilderness⁵⁹ and baptising in the Jordan. More specifically he appears, for some of the time at least, to be situated on the eastern side of the Jordan in Perea. Webb thus proposes a scenario in which the people of Judea (and we presume other areas of Palestine) when seeking out John travelled across the wilderness as far as the river Jordan. In so doing they re-enacted the sojourn of the Israelites through the wilderness under the guidance of Moses. Once at the Jordan the people either simply entered it or crossed to the other side, evoking

exists for oracular prophets within the Israelite tradition. The prophet Amos, for example, was a shepherd, a member of the non-elite, who, although born in Judea, was active in the Northern Kingdom of Israel about the middle of the eighth century BCE. He prophesied Yahweh's judgement on Israel, condemning her rulers for their oppression and exploitation of the non-elite. He speaks of Israel's destruction but nonetheless concludes with an oracle proclaiming a future restoration in which "...the one who plows shall overtake the one who reaps, and the treader of grapes the one who sows the seed; the mountains shall drip sweet wine, and all the hills shall flow with it" 9: 13. The classical prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah also proclaimed oracles of judgement and restoration, although they both had their origins amongst the elite.

⁵⁷Chilton, challenging the historical accuracy of much of the New Testament writings on John, questions the appropriateness of the term prophet at all (1997a: 203-220).

⁵⁸Thus Webb identifies John the Baptist as a Leadership rather than a Solitary Popular Prophet.

⁵⁹For a discussion on the historicity of John's operating in the wilderness see Webb (1991: 362-363).

memories of the crossings of both the Red Sea and the Jordan itself, in the Exodus and Conquest traditions respectively. They thereafter emerged from the Jordan baptised into the group which constituted the true remnant of Israel. They returned to their homes in a symbolic gesture of reclaiming their land and awaited the arrival of the divinely initiated new age.⁶⁰ Whilst we agree with Webb to the extent that John's baptism was both intended and perceived as an initiation into the true remnant of Israel,⁶¹ there is nothing, we contend, in this act which contains the immediacy of divine action which clearly forms a part of the expectation of the action prophets and their followers described above.⁶² The act of baptism may distinguish John from the remainder of the oracular prophets, it falls short, however, of establishing him as an action prophet.

Secondly, again in contrast to the other oracular prophets whose proclamations are recounted in Josephus, John appears to be the only one who not only has a core group of disciples⁶³ but who whether intentionally or not was responsible for a movement⁶⁴ which continued to follow his teaching and practise his baptism for some time after his death.⁶⁵ John's baptism was significant therefore not only as an initiatory rite into the

⁶⁰Webb acknowledges that John very probably baptised elsewhere and that in those instances this symbolism would not be appropriate (1991: 365).

⁶¹This is also recognised by Horsley and Hanson 1985: 178.

⁶²Barnett likewise does not consider John's baptism a 'sign' within the terms of his 'sign typology' (1981: 689).

⁶³Mt 11: 2//Lk 7: 18 and Jn 1: 35 refer to the disciples of John.

⁶⁴We use the term movement as it is defined by McCarthy and Zald, "A social movement is a set of opinions and beliefs in a population representing preferences for changing some elements of the social structure or reward distribution, or both, of a society. Persons who embrace the opinions and beliefs of a social movement and guide their lives accordingly form a social movement group or organisation" (cited in Malina 1995: 106-107).

⁶⁵Acts 18: 25 and 19: 3 both describe believers who had been baptised only in the baptism of John. There is insufficient evidence to determine whether the nature of these groups changed on the death of John in the same manner as the Christian groups differed from the Jesus movement groups, see Malina 1995: 96-113. According to tradition, the

remnant of Israel, but also “as the means whereby the group [which John is calling] is gathered.....it was John who made the proclamation which called the people to repentance and baptised those who responded” (Webb 1991: 353). Additionally, Josephus relates that not only did John attract large audiences but that “..they looked as if they would be guided by John in everything they did” (*Ant.* 18.5.2 [118]). John’s followers may not all have followed him out into the wilderness, nor formed a tightly knit community, but they appear nonetheless to have perceived themselves to be members of a “social movement group or organisation” of which John was the leader/founder. Classifying John the Baptist as an oracular prophet highlights the limitations of Horsley and Hanson’s typology. Clearly much of his teaching and preaching falls readily within this category, yet it is a category which fails to treat adequately the action for which his nomenclature would suggest he was most noted. John’s baptism into the true remnant of Israel created a perceived change of status amongst his followers. It was a change that was central to their living out his message of repentance. In this respect he goes further than an oracular prophet whilst stopping short of the eschatological immediacy demanded of an action prophet. For this reason we prefer to consider John within the general context of popular prophets, without restricting him to one or other of Horsley and Hanson’s sub-divisions.⁶⁶

Josephus provides the following relatively detailed narrative of John the Baptist’s life and death,

Mandean sect which still exists in present day Iraq are descendants of disciples of John (Foerster 1974: 140-141).

⁶⁶The significance of this distinction is almost entirely academic. Within the context of first century CE Palestine John appears to have been recognised simply as a prophet.

But to some Judeans⁶⁷ the destruction of Herod's [Antipas] army seemed to be divine vengeance, and certainly a just vengeance, for his treatment of John surnamed the Baptist. For Herod had put him to death although he was a good man and had exhorted the Judeans to lead righteous lives, to practise justice towards their fellows, and piety towards God, and so doing to join in baptism. In his view this was a necessary preliminary if baptism was to be acceptable to God. They must not employ it to gain pardon for whatever sins they committed, but as a consecration of the body implying that the soul was already thoroughly cleansed by right behaviour. When others too joined the crowds about him, because they were aroused to the highest degree by his sermons, Herod became alarmed. Eloquence that had so great an effect on mankind might lead to some form of sedition, for it looked as if they would be guided by John in everything they did. Herod decided therefore that it would be much better to strike first and be rid of him before his work led to an uprising, rather than to wait for an upheaval, get involved in a difficult situation and see his mistake. Though John, because of Herod's suspicions, was brought in chains to Machaerus...and there put to death; yet the verdict of the Judeans was that the destruction visited upon Herod's army was a vindication of John, since God saw fit to inflict such a blow on Herod" (*Ant.* 18.5.2 [116-119]).⁶⁸

A number of references to John's activities are also to be found in the gospels, both canonical and non-canonical.⁶⁹ For our purposes we shall consider only those passages which recount John's message and ministry, rather than those concerned with his

⁶⁷We have amended the Loeb translation here to read Judean rather than, what we consider to be, the anachronistic term Jew.

⁶⁸Loeb 1965: 81-85. See Webb 1991: 39-41 for a consideration of the arguments in favour of the authenticity of Josephus' account.

⁶⁹Webb 1991: 47-91 contains a detailed analysis of these sources.

relationship to Jesus of Nazareth. In the first of these Mark describes John's appearance in the wilderness proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. Clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist and fasting on a diet of locusts and wild honey, John baptised in the river Jordan all of those who had come out to him from Jerusalem and from throughout Judea. He announced the coming of one more powerful than himself and proclaimed, "I have baptised you with water; but he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit" (Mk 1: 4-8). The Matthean and Lukan accounts continue with a condemnation of the Pharisees and Sadducees who had gone out to see John and a warning that "Even now the axe is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire" (Mt 3: 7-10// Lk 3: 7-9). In a similar vein, John pronounced of the one to come "His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and will gather his wheat into the granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire" (Mt 3: 12//Lk 3: 17).

The final passage concerns the Baptist's death. According to the synoptic accounts, Herod had John arrested for condemning as unlawful his marriage to his brother Philip's wife. He nonetheless considered John a "righteous and holy man" and afforded him his protection. During a birthday celebration held in the presence of his courtiers and the leading officials of Galilee he was, however, so moved by his daughter's dancing that he offered to grant her whatever she desired. Prompted by her mother she requested "the head of John the Baptist on a platter." Unable to lose honour before those attending the banquet, Herod despatched a soldier of the guard with orders to have John beheaded and to have his head brought to him on a platter. This he did and the head was given to Herod's daughter who then gave it to her mother (Mk 6: 14-28//Mt 14: 1-12).

What then can we determine, from the above accounts, of the message and ministry of John the Baptist? Josephus narrates that John, “..exhorted the Judeans to lead righteous lives, to practise justice towards their fellows, and piety towards God..”.⁷⁰ On the surface this appears to be a commendable ethical teaching, and not the type of proclamation for which a prophet would be put to death. An integral aspect of the activities of popular prophets, however, is a rejection of the prevailing political, religious, social and economic conditions. Interpreted in this light, John and his message may quite readily have been perceived by Herod Antipas as a destabilising influence amongst the non-elite of his domain. The call to practise justice towards one’s neighbours would have been particularly unpalatable to the elite, since, as we have noted from our study of the Galilee, exploitation of the peasantry and usurpation of their land were the primary means by which the elite accumulated their wealth. In addition, John’s demand for “piety towards God” would also have caused concern to the Roman tetrarch Antipas, who, although he was a nominal adherent of Judeanism, did not hesitate to offend Judean sensibilities if necessity dictated.⁷¹ Moreover, increased piety towards Yahweh may well have hardened the attitude of John’s followers not only against Antipas, but also against his Roman overseers. That John’s message was understood by his followers in these terms appears to be confirmed by their enthusiastic response to his words; they were willing it seems to do anything he requested of them. In return they must have anticipated some form of radical change in the situation of their daily lives.

⁷⁰Lk 3: 10-14 contains a number of concrete examples of how this teaching should be put into practice in first century CE Palestine. That is not to say that this passage contains the *ipsissima verba* of John, only that its sentiments are in keeping with the teaching expressed in *Antiquities*.

⁷¹Note, for example, his first marriage to the non-Judean daughter of the king of Nabatea (*Ant.* 18.5.1 [109-112]). Also his construction of Tiberias on a Judean burial site and the adornment with animal motifs of the palace built there (*Life* 12 [65-67]). The coins minted by Antipas, however, remained free of any offensive imagery consisting rather of palm branches and wreaths (Madden 1967: 95-99).

This interpretation of John's teaching is further strengthened by the proclamation attributed to him by the gospel writers. John calls on his followers to "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near" (Mt 3: 2). The ethical teaching described in the *Antiquities* has an eschatological edge. Repentance is a necessary prerequisite in preparing for the coming of the Kingdom, the imminent inbreaking of the new age. But it is a repentance which evidences itself in righteous living, in treating others with justice, and in being pious towards God. It is a repentance which must "bear good fruit". This ethical content of John's message must therefore be interpreted within the wider framework of his ministry, a ministry in which he seeks society's radical transformation.

The final aspect of our consideration of John the Baptist concerns his execution. Josephus attributes this to Antipas' anxiety at the influential and persuasive nature of John's message, and, most significantly, its potential for inspiring the non-elite to rebel. Taking pre-emptive action, Antipas had John arrested, taken to Machareus and executed. The gospels, however, appear to tell a slightly different story. According to the writers of the synoptics, John was arrested for condemning the marriage of Antipas to Herodias, his brother's wife.⁷² Whilst Lev 18: 16 prohibits such a relationship, Lev 20: 21 says that such a union is impure and will remain childless. John thus accuses Antipas both of being in breach of the Torah, and of being in a state of impurity- a charge which would have been particularly pointed in the context of his message that only those who had been made pure by baptism would stand ready for the imminent coming of the Kingdom. In terms of the political situation there is a further aspect to his condemnation. In order to marry Herodias, Antipas had divorced his then wife, the daughter of the Nabatean king, Aretas. Aretas was outraged at this insult and awaited his opportunity for revenge.

⁷²Lk 3: 19 adds the catchall that John further condemned Herod for "all the evil things [he] had done".

Given that John spent a large amount of his time baptising on the eastern side of the Jordan in Perea, and that Perea was located within 20 kilometres of the Nabatean border, John's rebuke of Herod Antipas was potentially devastating. "It meant aligning the pious [Judean] inhabitants of Perea with those of Arabic stock against their sovereign and thus fomenting sedition and encouraging insurrection" (Kraeling 1951: 90-91). The differences between Josephus' account of John's arrest and execution, and those of the gospels may therefore reflect little more than the two sides of one coin. Josephus highlighted the political implications of John's message, whilst the evangelists stressed its religious significance. The net result was the same, John was perceived as a threat to the stability of Antipas' tetrarchy and was put to death.

The activities of the remaining prophets, classified by Horsley and Hanson as oracular prophets, are once again described by Josephus. For the most part these individuals appear at or around the time of the Judean revolt. Jesus ben Hananiah, for example, makes his pronouncements against the temple during the feast of Tabernacles four years prior to the outbreak of war,⁷³ whilst the unnamed prophets of two Josephan summary accounts are operative towards the end of the Judean revolt.⁷⁴ On one other occasion, however, Josephus describes the emergence of oracular prophets. Not surprisingly this also occurs at a time of crisis when, in 37 BCE, Jerusalem was besieged by Herod the Great. Josephus narrates, "throughout the city the agitation of the Judean populace showed itself in various forms. The feebler folk, congregating around the temple, indulged in transports of frenzy and fabricated oracular utterances to fit the crisis" (*J.W.* 1.18.1 [347]). Josephus' disparagement is obvious; his reference to "the feebler folk" almost certainly means the non-elite. And although he makes no mention

⁷³*J.W.* 6.5.3 [300-305].

⁷⁴*J.W.* 6.5.2 [283-285], *J.W.* 6.5.2-3 [286-288].

of the content of the oracular utterances, the fact that they “fit the crisis” indicates that they are either oracles of doom or salvation, or possibly both.

Central to our interpretation of the popular prophets who appeared in Palestine in the first century CE is a recognition of the extent to which they functioned as a response to oppressive socio-economic and political conditions. Whilst Gray may be correct in suggesting that “scholars have so far been unable to trace any specific connections between the origin of these [prophet-led] movements and particular events or forces in the social-economic realm” (1993: 135) her assessment that “It is reasonable to suppose that any social or economic pressures bearing on the common people in this period would have contributed to the rise of [such] movements” seriously underestimates the significance of their role. Socio-economic conditions are not merely a factor in the rise of prophets and prophet-led movements, they lie at the very root of them. Prophetic condemnation of the exploitative practices of the elite has, throughout Israelite tradition, had its origins in the hardship and suffering of the peasantry.⁷⁵ The primary reason that members of the non-elite, surviving at a subsistence level, give up what little they have to respond to the words or deeds of a prophet is that the promised new age will not only lead to the end of Roman rule, it will initiate a time of blessing; it will replace the daily struggle for survival with abundance.

Although none of the popular prophets considered above either originated⁷⁶ or were active in Antipas’ Galilee, they nonetheless remain a significant factor in our examination of peasant response to elite oppression in that region. For they present

⁷⁵Chaney observes that as early as the eighth century BCE prophetic condemnation of Israel and Judea was rooted in the oppressive conditions endured by the non-elite (1989: 15-30).

⁷⁶The origins of a number of the prophets remains unstated, but there is no evidence to suggest that any of them emanated from the Galilee.

evidence of a social type which, as Jesus' response to the activities of John the Baptist indicates, was meaningful to the non-elite of the Galilee.

Millenarianism and Messiah/Deliverer Led Movements.

In a manner similar to prophet-led movements, messiah/deliverer-led movements also function as a form of peasant response to oppressive and exploitative regimes. The term messiah applies to a specific social role within the traditions of Judeanism and of Christianity.⁷⁷ It is also a role we suggest which, in functional terms at least, enjoys parallels within the deliverer tradition of Buddhism and in Islam.

Hobsbawm considers messiah-led movements within the broader category of millenarianism,⁷⁸ and attributes to them three main features (a) a rejection of this world as evil and the desire for its replacement with a radically different alternative, (b) some form of messianic ideology and (c) an uncertainty as to how this new world is to come into being (1959). The first and last of these characteristics are readily discernible in many prophet-led movements,⁷⁹ the second, however, messianic ideology, as the name suggests, is peculiar to messiah-led movements alone. One such movement discussed by Hobsbawm (1959: 65-73) concerns the Lazzarettists who emerged in the Monte Amiata

⁷⁷The nature and function of the messiah varied both between and at differing historical time periods within the traditions of Judeanism and Christianity (W. S. Green 1987: 1-13). See Neusner (1984) for a consideration of messianic expectations within "formative Judaism". Note also how the role of the Christian messiah was adapted by Johannes Galilee Shembe, a messianic claimant of the Zulu tribe, and likewise by Edward Lekganyene who proclaimed himself messiah amongst the people of the North Transvaal (Wilson 1975: 136-143).

⁷⁸Although focusing on messiah-led movements Hobsbawm does recognise the existence of millenarian movements within Hinduism and Buddhism (1959: 57).

⁷⁹See pp 92-93 above for Aune's typology in which the movements led by individuals we consider in terms of Horsley and Hanson's category as action prophets are specifically referred to as "millenarian movements".

region of Tuscany in the mid-nineteenth century. The Monte Amiata was a poor backward region in the far south-east of Tuscany, whose population consisted mainly of peasant smallholders and share-croppers. At the time of the unification of the Italian states a new social system was introduced and was imposed upon the region. The most far reaching consequence of this new system for the inhabitants of the Monte Amiata was the high level of taxation which was now being demanded of them. Additionally, however, central government introduced regulations which affected long established customary practices such as "common pasture" and "firewood collecting" upon which the peasantry were heavily dependent. In 1867, a year of bad harvest, the government further introduced a milling tax which had the effect of increasing food prices. The result was peasant riots.⁸⁰ By 1868, David Lazzaretti, a carter from the region, had gained a reputation as a holy man, and had begun expounding his ideology. Some three years later in his pamphlet *The Awakening of the Peoples* he spoke of "a new pastor from Sinai, who was to arise and liberate the people now groaning 'as slaves under the despotism of the monster of ambition, hypocrisy, heresy and pride'" (Hobsbawm 1959: 69). In the final version of his teaching he, Lazzaretti, was to become both king and messiah. The present age, the "Kingdom of Grace" was to be succeeded by the "Kingdom of Justice" and finally the "Reform of the Holy Ghost". In this last age Lazzaretti himself would die. In 1878, whilst Italy was in an agricultural depression, Victor Emmanuel, the king of Italy, and Pope Pius IX both died. Lazzaretti returned from his residence in France and declared himself the messiah. He was excommunicated by the Vatican, but the people of Monte Amiata continued to support him in considerable numbers. On the eighteenth of August he descended from a mountain on Arcidosso, with his followers, to be confronted by the *carabinieri*. After an exchange in which Lazzaretti

⁸⁰The supporters of the papacy were also encouraging unrest against a 'godless government'.

refused to turn back, the *carabinieri* opened fire killing a number of the marchers including Lazzaretti himself. The remaining leaders of the movement were brought to trial, accused amongst other things of attempting to incite a revolution. This marked the end of the Lazzarettist movement as such, although followers of Lazzaretti were still to be found within small peasant communities in Tuscany as recently as 1965. This brief account of the Lazzarettist movement illustrates clearly the influence of social, political and economic factors in the emergence of messiahs and their movements. They are a social phenomenon not simply a religious aberration. Although Lazzaretti had been excommunicated by the Catholic Church, it is clear that Catholic and Christian dogma informed his ideology and doctrine. And whilst Lazzaretti provides no detail of his role as messiah, this too was, no doubt, dependent upon Christian teaching.

As we noted above the role of messiah finds a parallel in other cultures and belief systems. Thus in Burma "a belief in the return of a just king (*setkya min*) who will set things right exists side by side with a belief in a Buddha-Deliverer (*Buddha Yaza*) who will usher in the Buddhist millennium" (Scott 1977: 233). Whilst in Indonesia there persists both "the older idea of a returning saviour-monarch (*Ratu Adil*) and that of an Islamic conqueror (*Mahdi*) who will sweep away the heathen and restore justice" (1977: 233).

As with the case of the Lazzaretists the largest and most noted of the millennial movements in Burma, the Saya San rebellion of 1930, occurred at a time of considerable social and economic upheaval. Scott narrates,

The movement began in lower Burma where a frontier-capitalist, agrarian economy had run its full course and where many indebted Burmese tenants and small holders had been ruined by the world economic crisis. Its nominal leader, Saya San, was a

prominent Buddhist monk, widely known throughout the countryside for his traditional medical skills and his alchemy. The grid of extra-local coordination for the revolt was provided by many local monks who accepted Saya San as the *Setkya Min* [the just king] and the new utopia which he proclaimed. As in other such movements, the utopia in question was largely a negation of the oppressions under which the Burmese peasantry labored. Private property was to be abolished; tenants would once again have free access to the land; there would be no taxes or debts to pay; forests would be open to the villagers; there would be no need to sell rice. To this end, Saya San's followers, believing themselves invulnerable, burned tax rolls and attacked loyalist headmen, forest officials, Indian landowners, moneylenders, and laborers (1977: 238).

Whilst the concept of the *Setkya Min*, the just king, did not originate with Saya San, he sought by his words and actions to portray himself as the fulfilment of it. Thus, Scott continues, "When he built a replica of the Mandalay palace for his coronation, when he announced that he was the king of the old prophecies, when he dispensed protective amulets to his men, when he invoked the *nats* on his behalf, he was enacting a scenario which had been culturally prepared within popular religion and made appealing by the plight of the rural population" (1977: 238).⁸¹

⁸¹Thus although many of its activities appear to be similar, the movement is distinguished from a prophet-led movement by the deliberate adoption by Saya San of the social role of the just king and of his acceptance as such by his followers. This latter element of peer recognition emphasises the significance of the emic distinction between prophets and messiahs. Whilst, from an etic perspective, leaders and their movements may appear to display similar characteristics, to the insider the role and function of the leader is clear. In the case of Jesus, for example, whilst others debated the nature of his social role, Peter readily identified him as the messiah (Mk 8: 27-30//Mt 16: 21-28//Lk 9: 22-27).

In Indonesia amongst the adherents of local religions the leaders of millennial movements tend either to portray themselves as, or are perceived by their followers to be, a just king or a *Ratu Adil*. Amongst the Islamic believers the concept is rather that of an avenging warrior, in Muslim terms a *Madhi*. Significantly, in both forms of movement, “The themes of taxes, autonomy, land, and food, however, remained remarkably constant” (1977: 240). Thus the aspirations of those involved in the Islamic revolt in Baten in 1888 included “the return of a just Sultan, a state with no taxes and the elimination of hated officials” (1977: 240). Approximately forty years later in 1926 the Sarekat Islam revolt promised amongst other things “freedom from taxes [and] the restoration of a just sultanate” (1977: 240).

The most striking feature of the above accounts is that despite the very different religious traditions to which these movements belong, the demands and aspirations of their members, primarily the peasant non-elite, remain remarkably consistent. Thus irrespective of whether the movement’s leader is termed a messiah, deliverer, just king, or avenging warrior he is expected to rule with justice which, within the context of the peasant little tradition, almost invariably includes reducing or abolishing taxation, redistributing land and restoring customary rights and practises. In effect, the peasantry mould a concept inherited from their respective Great Traditions, in accordance with the prevailing social conditions, in order to make it meaningful within their peasant contexts.

The Messiah in Second Temple Judeanism

Within Judeanism the concept of messiah is a complex one.⁸² The term itself derives from the Hebrew verb מָשַׁח , meaning to anoint. In the Old Testament the verb

⁸²For a discussion of ‘messiah’ in this context see Klausner 1956, Vermes 1973b, Schurer 1979, Neusner, Green and Frerichs 1987 and Charlesworth 1992.

occurs primarily in connection with the anointing of kings,⁸³ but is also used on occasion in the anointing of high priests⁸⁴ and prophets.⁸⁵ The derivative noun, מָשִׁחַ , means the anointed one and is applied to individuals understood to be especially favoured by Yahweh. Such individuals tend to be predominantly kingly figures, although certain high priests⁸⁶ are also referred to in these terms. The relationship between Yahweh and his anointed features prominently in many of the Royal Psalms,⁸⁷ in particular the relationship between Yahweh and his rulers from the house of David. Psalm 89, for example, refers to the anointing of David and to Yahweh's covenant with him to establish his dynasty forever. In making use of Nathan's prophecy to David, in 2 Sam 7: 14-17, the Psalmist places his emphasis on the continuing validity of Davidic succession rather than its initial fulfilment by Solomon. The same theme of unconditional covenant occurs in Ps 18: 50 in which it is proclaimed "Great triumphs [Yahweh] gives to his king, and shows steadfast love to his anointed, to David and his descendants forever".⁸⁸ In Ps 132: 11-12, however, the succession of the house of David appears less secure; its continued rule, according to the Psalmist, is conditional upon its faithfulness to the commandments of Yahweh.⁸⁹

Although in the writings of the prophets,⁹⁰ the term 'anointed' occurs only rarely,⁹¹ reference to and prophecies about the Davidic dynasty are more frequently

⁸³See for example 2 Sam 2: 4-7 and 5: 3 for David's anointing as king of Judea and Israel respectively.

⁸⁴Exod 29: 7 and Lev 8: 12 refer to the anointing of Aaron as (high) priest.

⁸⁵Elijah is instructed to anoint Elisha his successor in 1 Kgs 19: 16.

⁸⁶Lev 4: 3, 5 and 16, and possibly Dan 9: 25 and 26. See Roberts 1992: 39-51.

⁸⁷Psalms 2, 18, 20, 21, 45, 72, 89, 101, 110, 132, and 144.

⁸⁸Unconditional Davidic succession is also either referred to or presupposed in the following texts, 1 Kgs 11: 12, 13, 32, 34-36, 15: 4 and 2 Kgs 8: 19.

⁸⁹1 Kgs 2: 1-4 also describes a covenant dependent upon commitment to the statutes and commands of Yahweh.

⁹⁰We have not attempted here to distinguish between authentic prophecies and those

found. In addition to the covenantal tradition of Davidic succession, Hos 3: 5 provides us with evidence for the alternative concept of an 'ideal type' of Davidic king: "Afterward the Israelites shall return and seek their God, and David their king". This concept recurs in both Jer 30: 9⁹² and Ezek 34: 23f and 37: 24f.⁹³ and refers not to an heir from the house of David but rather to a king who will rule in the manner and mode of David. Pomykala interprets the foretelling in Mic 5: 1-5a of the emergence of a future king from David's village of Bethlehem in like fashion (1995: 18). The figure prophesied by Micah, he claims, is not a David *redivivus*, but rather in the same manner as that prophesied by Hosea, Jeremiah and Ezekiel of a type with David, in effect a new David.

Prophecies about and references to the Davidic dynastic tradition also appear in a number of passages in Isaiah, 9: 1-7, 10: 33-11: 10 and 32: 1-8. Isa 9: 1-7 may, Freyne suggests, have enjoyed particular resonance within a Galilean context in as much as it combines a reference to the lands of Zebulun and Naphtali with a description of the attributes of a future Davidic king.⁹⁴ Thus the peoples of the North were also, it would appear, to experience the justice and righteousness which were to characterise the rule of the "Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father [and] Prince of Peace" who was to sit upon the throne of David. Righteousness, power, wisdom and justice also feature as characteristics of the future Davidic ruler described in Isa 10: 33-11: 10. In

attributed to the prophets at a subsequent time.

⁹¹In Isa 45: 1 the term is applied uniquely to a non-Israelite king in the person of Cyrus the king of Persia. It also occurs in Hab 3: 13.

⁹²See also Roberts 1992: 46-49. Jer 22: 1-9, 24-30, 23: 5-6, 33: 14-26 also pertain to the Davidic dynasty.

⁹³Pomykala also considers the following three passages, Ezek 17: 22-24, 34: 23-24, 37: 24-25 to relate to Davidic typology, but rejects the notion of a Davidic figure in respect of chapters 40-48. But note Roberts 1992: 49-50.

⁹⁴Isa 9: 1-7 is one of a number of passages which Freyne suggests may have had a particular relevance for Galilean messianism, Gunning Lectures, University of Edinburgh, March 2000.

addition he was to rule over a land in which all sentient beings would live in peace and harmony with one another. The attributes of righteousness and justice are not, however, Pomykala contends, peculiar to a future Davidic king. In Isa 32: 1 the prophet proclaims only that “a king will reign in righteousness, and princes will rule with justice”. There is nothing, he claims, in this passage which demands its interpretation in support of the Davidic dynasty tradition. On the contrary it is best understood as a wisdom text which “illustrates that the Judean royal ideology was not the only model of kingship known to ancient Israel” (1995: 21).⁹⁵ Pomykala cites a number of other texts including Deut 17: 14-20, Gen 49: 8-12 and Num 24: 17-19 all of which, he suggests, are at least sufficiently ambiguous to allow for the possibility of a non-Davidic kingly tradition. Whilst the ‘anointed of the Lord’ may belong to the Davidic dynasty, Pomykala illustrates that other notions of anointed kingship existed within the Israelite tradition.

The use of the term מָשִׁיחַ as a title, a designation for an eschatological figure, did not occur in Judeanism until the intertestamental period. The study of messianic figures who appear in the literature of this time is a complex one. For our purposes it is necessary to consider briefly only those texts which contain a reference to the מָשִׁיחַ , and which are believed to have been current during the reign of Herod Antipas. In so

⁹⁵Although Isa 55: 3-5 does make reference to Yahweh’s promise to David, following Eissfeldt’s lead, Pomykala argues, that by the time of third Isaiah, the promise had been transferred from the monarchy to the people of Israel. Three other texts are commonly cited as evidence from post-exilic times of the Davidic dynasty tradition, Hag 2: 20-23, Zech 1-8, and Amos 9: 11-15 (deemed a later interpolation to the original text). Each of these texts is considered in detail by Pomykala and each rejected on the grounds that the evidence does not support the conclusions drawn, or, at the least, need not do so (1995: 45-63).

doing we will seek to determine what functions, if any, were attributed to the messianic figure.⁹⁶

Much has been written in recent years about the messianology which emanated from the community at Qumran.⁹⁷ It is neither possible nor necessary to reprise here all that has been written, rather we shall focus upon a number of the most significant texts which contain references to a coming messiah. 1 QS 9: 9b-11 describes the appearance of three individuals anticipated by the community namely, the prophet and the messiahs of Aaron and Israel.⁹⁸ These latter two figures are commonly interpreted as referring to a priestly and lay messiah respectively. In 1 QSa 2: 11b-22 the seating arrangements for the hoped for eschatological banquet illustrate the Qumran community's perception of the comparative standings of the two messiahs. The messiah of Aaron, the priestly messiah was seated at the head of the banquet reflecting his superior position to the messiah of Israel who was relegated to a more subordinate role. In addition to 1 QS 9: 9b-11 and 1 QSa 2: 11b-22 four passages in the Damascus Document, CD 12: 23-13: 1, 14: 19, 19: 9-11 and 20: 1, refer to the messiah of Aaron and Israel.⁹⁹ None of these texts, however, provide us with any specific information regarding their roles, other than

⁹⁶Thus writings such as the 4 Ezra, 2 Baruch, the Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah, 2 Enoch, the Apocalypse of Abraham and the Testament of Adam fall out with our terms of reference.

⁹⁷For detailed bibliographies on Qumran messianism see Jongeling 1971 and Fitzmyer 1977. Note also Brown 1957, Vermes 1982 and Schiffman 1992.

⁹⁸Charlesworth 1992 referring to 4 QS, an earlier version of the community rule in which no mention is made of the two messiahs, contends that the reference in 1 QS 9b-11 must be regarded as a later addition. Whether this is the case or not, he makes the valid point that as the community at Qumran evolved over three centuries, care should be taken not to presume a single consistent set of beliefs. Nonetheless, the expectation of the two messiahs does appear to be the prevailing conviction amongst those at Qumran and the Essenes in general.

⁹⁹For a consideration of the messiah or messiahs of Aaron and Israel see Brown 1957: 55-66, Vermes 1982: 195-196, Schiffman 1992: 116-121, Kuhn 1957: 54-64 and Abegg 1995: 125-144.

that their appearance is understood to be eschatologically significant. One text which does appear to describe at least some of the characteristics of the messiah and his reign is the "Messianic Apocalypse" 4Q521.¹⁰⁰ Unlike the previous texts mentioned above 4Q521 refers to only one messiah. He is a messiah who will be just and merciful, who will restore sight to the blind, heal the wounded and raise the dead.¹⁰¹ The content of the concept of the messiah at Qumran almost certainly evolved and developed during the course of the community's existence. Yet whilst the precedence of the priestly messiah over the lay messiah appears undisputed, the functions of the respective messiahs remain at best uncertain.

The term messiah also occurs in a number of the eighteen Psalms of Solomon¹⁰² which were written in approximately the mid first century BCE.¹⁰³ Their immediate social context is readily discernible from the Psalms themselves as they recall many of the events of the General Pompey's career including his march through Palestine, his capture of Jerusalem in 63 BCE, and also his death in Egypt in 48 BCE. Although traditionally regarded as being the work of the Pharisees, many modern scholars question the sustainability of this view.¹⁰⁴ They were written, they contend, by a group opposed to Hasmonean rule who had a wider audience in mind (Esler 1995c: 10). The most relevant of the Psalms for our purposes is Psalm 17. According to Esler (1995c: 3) this Psalm can be dated to the years between 63 and 57 BCE. The Psalm begins with a

¹⁰⁰Puech 1992: 475-519 and 1997: 255-298. But note Becker 1997: 73-96 who argues that the references to $\eta\psi\chi$ are best understood in prophetic terms. Collins also argues "that the messiah...is an anointed eschatological prophet, either Elijah or a prophet like Elijah" (1994: 102).

¹⁰¹Tabor and Wise 1992: 1491-62 examine the significance of resurrection as a messianic activity.

¹⁰²For a survey of recent research on the Psalms of Solomon see Trafton 1994: 3-13.

¹⁰³Wright 1985: 640-641 and de Jonge 1985: 160-161.

¹⁰⁴Klausner, for example, refers to it as "This marvelous Pharisaic book" (1956: 317). But note Wright 1985: 642.

reference to the Davidic promise, v4, and continues with a condemnation of the Hasmonean usurpers of the throne vv5-6. The Hasmoneans will be removed from power by a foreign oppressor, an unquestionable reference to Pompey vv 7-14. However, the real salvation will come, not at the hand of a foreign general, but when Yahweh will “raise up for them their king, the son of David” v21. He will reign with righteousness, wisdom and justice, destroying the unrighteous and sinners, and purifying Jerusalem of the Gentiles vv22-25. He will gather together a holy people, and redistribute the land to the tribes of Israel vv26-29.¹⁰⁵ And most significantly for our purposes, “..their king will be the Lord Messiah” v32. A messiah who “will not hope in horse or rider or bow” v33, but “will strike the earth with the word of his mouth forever” v35. A messiah made powerful in the Holy Spirit by God v37. The messiah envisaged by Psalm of Solomon 17 is not only a Davidic king, but the ideal Davidic king. He will rule not by power and might, but with wisdom and justice, and he will defeat the foreign oppressor not with military force, but by the strength of his word (Wright 1985: 645).

There is a general consensus amongst scholars that 1 Enoch 37-71 was written in Palestine prior to 70 CE, and possibly as early as the first century BCE.¹⁰⁶ The term messiah occurs only twice in the text at 48: 10 and 52: 4 and neither passage gives any clear indication of what the functions of the messiah may be. Various other titles, such as the Son of Man, the Righteous One and the Chosen One,¹⁰⁷ are also used by the author and each appears to refer to the same figure. From the context of 1 Enoch 37-71 it is possible that these titles can also be equated with the messiah, but this should not be

¹⁰⁵Freyne again suggests that the combination of the Davidic king with the tribes of Israel may have afforded this text particular significance in the Galilee.

¹⁰⁶Isaac 1983: 7.

¹⁰⁷For a consideration of these figures within 1 Enoch 37-71 see Vanderkam 1992: 169-191.

interpreted as meaning that the attributes and functions of these other titles are automatically applicable to the messiah.

Each of the above texts illustrates how the concept of messiah was understood by particular groups in Palestine during the first century CE. They also confirm that whilst the prevailing expectation within the Great Tradition of Judeanism may have been of an ideal Davidic king, this was not the sole concept of messianic ideology. Different factions clearly felt justified in adapting the concept in order to meet their own needs. Whilst these disparate messianic ideologies reflect the understanding of the circles from which they emanated,¹⁰⁸ their influence on the non-elite is less certain. The so called 'Blessing Concerning David' in the eighteen benedictions, if prayed in this form in first century Palestine may indicate the expectation of a Davidic messiah amongst the peasantry (Vermees 1983: 129-159).¹⁰⁹ Perhaps a more telling insight, however, is provided by the emergence of a number of individuals apparently hailed as kingly messiahs by, at least some of, the non-elite in or around that period.

According to Josephus, on the death of Herod the Great numerous uprisings erupted throughout his kingdom. Judas, the son of the brigand chief Ezekias, gathered together his followers, stormed the royal palace at Sepphoris and seized the weapons and bounty stored there. Having armed his followers he plundered those he met "in his

¹⁰⁸Clearly the community at Qumran was more than simply a literary circle; nonetheless, the community writings would have been the responsibility of a literate group of its members.

¹⁰⁹But note Pomykala who argues that the uncertainty of date and wording of the Eighteen Benedictions make them unreliable evidence of the nature of messianic expectations in the first century CE (1995: 7). On the other hand, the notion of the Davidic messiah relates to the perceived 'Golden Age' of the Israelite tradition experienced during the reign of King David. In this sense it may have been meaningful to the peasantry in terms of the 'recreated utopia' hoped for within the little tradition.

desire for great possessions and his ambition for royal rank". This he expected to attain by force rather than virtue (*Ant.* 17.10.5 [271-272]// *J.W.* 2.4.1 [56]). Josephus follows this account in *Antiquities* by narrating the events surrounding the rise of Simon, a servant of King Herod. Despite his lowly origins, Josephus recounts that Simon was of impressive appearance and confident demeanour. "Elated by the unsettled conditions of affairs, he was bold enough to place the diadem upon his head". In this he had the support of his followers who proclaimed him king. He plundered the royal palace at Jericho after setting fire to it, and looted and destroyed many of the royal palaces throughout the country. Gratus, the leader of the royal troops joined forces with the Romans and engaged Simon and his men in battle. As Simon attempted to flee, he was apprehended by Gratus and beheaded (*Ant.* 17.10.6 [273-276]). Finally Josephus narrates the rise of the "obscure shepherd" Athronges. Josephus emphasises Athronges' lowly origins, but again, as with Simon, notes his "stature and strength". Athronges also "put on the diadem" and ruled with the assistance of his four brothers each of whom commanded a band of armed men. Athronges ruled for quite some time and during the course of his reign, he and his brothers, attacked both the Herodian troops and the Romans alike. After a considerable period of 'guerilla warfare' during which the brothers "caused the Romans no little trouble while also inflicting much damage on their own nation", they were each either captured or surrendered (*Ant.* 17.10.7 [278-284]). According to Josephus in the chaos and confusion which prevailed, "Anyone might make himself king as the head of a band of rebels whom he fell in with" (*Ant.* 17.10.8 [285]).

A number of common factors recur in the accounts of these aspirants to the throne. Firstly, in each instance the leader of the movement seeks to be king, and is recognised as such by his followers. None of the royal pretenders, however, makes any claim to Davidic lineage, indeed Josephus emphasises their humble origins as the son of a

brigand chief, a servant and a shepherd¹¹⁰ respectively. Josephus does nonetheless, in respect of Simon and Athronges, recognise their impressive physical strength and power. We have noted above that Davidic lineage informed one current of messianic thought, but was not a necessary prerequisite in all messianic expectation. That the followers of these royal claimants perceived them as messianic figures, very probably in terms of 'popular kingship', seems not unlikely. In addition to their military qualities, an often repeated characteristic of the messiah, the description of their physical attributes recalls the description of the first Israelite king Saul who "stood head and shoulders above everyone else" (1 Sam 9: 2). Secondly, these kings of lowly birth appealed to the non-elite from amongst whom their followers came. Their aim was to remove both the Herodian elite and the Romans, and thus to alleviate the crushing economic burdens under which they were toiling. Whilst these 'kings' would undoubtedly have claimed, and would have been understood by their followers, to enjoy Yahweh's favour, Josephus provides little evidence to suggest that they expected a specific act of divine intervention in their cause.¹¹¹ The messianic claimants who appeared on the death of Herod the Great in 4 BCE, were warrior kings who, with Yahweh's blessing, would rid Palestine of the Romans and the illegitimate Herodian dynasty by force.

Josephus also narrates the emergence of two royal pretenders, Menahem¹¹² and Simon bar Giora,¹¹³ during the course of the Judean revolt. A number of interesting parallels exist between the second of these royal aspirants, Simon, and the young David.

¹¹⁰Although note here the similarity with David.

¹¹¹It remains entirely plausible, nonetheless, that peasant followers of the messiahs may indeed have harboured such hopes.

¹¹²*J.W.* 2.17.8 [433-434]. Allowing for Menahem's involvement with the Sicarii, Horsley and Hanson term this a messianic incident, rather than a messianic movement (1985: 118).

¹¹³*J.W.* 4.9.3-4 [508-510].

Both were popular leaders of rebel bands whose military acumen brought them material success, and a considerable following. Both were heralded as kings by their followers, and Simon in his conquest of Idumea captured the city of Hebron, as David had done one thousand years previously. In such circumstances, it is tempting to suggest that Simon sought to present himself as a Davidic type messiah, although not of the Davidic dynasty.¹¹⁴

Of the various understandings of the role and function of messiah which existed in first century Palestine, the notion of a kingly messiah appeared particularly attractive to the non-elite: a messiah who sought to overthrow the Romans and their Herodian collaborators, and to remove the oppressive economic conditions under which the non-elite struggled. Whether the messianic claimant belonged to the house of David, was of a type with David, or conformed to the notion of a 'popular king' seems less significant to his non-elite followers than his ability to acquire power and to challenge the Romans. Whilst none of these messiah-led movements were current around the time of the (re)construction of Sepphoris and Tiberias, the fact that Judas, the son of Ezekias, had been operative in the lower Galilee only ten to fifteen years earlier suggests that the possibility of messianic activity, as a response to elite exploitation, remained a very real one.

Conclusion

At the beginning of this chapter we sought to determine what forms of peasant response were available to the oppressed peasantry of the lower Galilee during the reign of Herod Antipas. We noted the coherence between the values inherent in the peasant little tradition and the various forms of response to elite oppression, the most common of

¹¹⁴See pg 121 n 109.

which was the everyday forms of peasant resistance such as sabotage, theft and underpayment of taxes. These actions were carried out in secret and thus ensured that the peasantry incurred the minimum of risks. For some peasants, however, these forms of resistance proved inadequate, and they were forced to flee to the hills where they survived as social bandits. The available evidence suggests that this phenomenon was not as prevalent during the course of Antipas' reign, as it was at other times in the Galilee, but undoubtedly groups of bandits continued to operate in the region. The final two responses offer a more radical solution to the problems of the non-elite, both seeking the downfall of the ruling elite. The action prophets called their followers to re-enact some aspect of the Israelite deliverance tradition, in anticipation of a divine act of intervention which would initiate a new age of blessing. The hardships and struggles of the peasantry would be brought to an end. The oracular prophets, similarly prophesied divine intervention, and that that intervention was imminent. Whilst none of the prophets considered operated specifically in the Galilee during the reign of Antipas, the fact that Jesus of Nazareth followed John the Baptist to the Jordan indicates the significance of prophets and their movements amongst the non-elite. The messianic claimants who appeared in Palestine after the death of Herod the Great and also during the Judean revolt provide the final form of peasant response. These kingly messiahs were warriors who, if they anticipated divine intervention on their behalf, also made every effort to obtain their aims by military action. The willingness of at least some of the peasantry to accept these messianic figures illustrates the extent to which the role of messiah within the little tradition served to meet the peasants' needs. That one such messiah led movement occurred around Sepphoris as recently as 4 BCE almost certainly ensured that messianic expectation as a form of peasant response remained high in the region during Antipas' reign. For the most part the peasantry sought to survive within the existing oppressive framework. On occasion, however, when socio-economic,

religious and political factors all combined they sought a more radical solution; through prophetic and messianic led movements they sought freedom from their slavery.

CHAPTER THREE

WORD AND DEED PART ONE: JESUS AND THE PARABLES

For most of his ministry, according to the synoptic gospels, Jesus of Nazareth operated in and around the villages and countryside of the Galilee. It was from the villages and towns of that region that he called his disciples and it was there, for the most part, that he taught, preached, healed and cast out demons. Presuming a degree of consistency throughout Jesus' ministry, it seems probable that these words and deeds, spoken and effected initially in Galilee and continued later in Judea, cohered significantly with his action in the Jerusalem temple; an action which, we contend, was ultimately to lead to his crucifixion. If so, the parables and 'miracles' should therefore prove a valuable source of information for our understanding of the social role of Jesus of Nazareth. It is our intention in this chapter to reconsider four of Jesus' parables in order to demonstrate this view, (a) The Parable of the Sower (Mk 4: 1-9//Mt 13: 1-9//Lk 8: 4-8//Thom 9), (b) The Parable of the Tenants in the Vineyard (Mk 12: 1-12//Mt 21: 33-46//Lk 20: 9-19//Thom 65), (c) The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant (Mt 18: 23-35) and (d) The parable of the Workers in the Vineyard (Mt 20: 1-16). Our purpose, therefore, is not only to uncover new insights into the parables themselves, but also to seek to determine how and in what social context Jesus may have been perceived by his listeners.

In their recent work, Theissen and Merz (1998: 319-324) summarise the development of the interpretation of the parables of Jesus in modern New Testament research commencing with the seminal work of Adolf Julicher. They classify the phases

of development under six headings, (a) Julicher's contention that each parable contains a "universal truth", (b) the historicisation of interpretation, exemplified by C. H. Dodd's locating of the parables in an eschatological context and Joachim Jeremias' contextualisation in terms of the "biographical situation" of the historical Jesus, (c) a hermeneutical approach interpreting the parables as "speech-event", (d) the parables perceived as "autonomous aesthetic objects", (e) the application of sociological theory¹ in the reconstruction of the social context of Jesus of Nazareth and thus of his parables, and (f) the parables understood as a newly emergent form of poetry traditional within Judeanism. Each of these approaches contributes towards a greater understanding of the parables. For our purposes, however, category (e) proves the most useful. The social-scientific theory applied in the study of the parables can take a variety of forms. Luise Schottroff, for example, makes use of feminist sociological theory in her reinterpretation of the parables in *Lydia's Impatient Sisters*. William Herzog, on the other hand, applies insights derived from the experiences of educator Paulo Freire,² whilst Richard Rohrbaugh (1991) and Willi Braun (1995) also use social-scientific techniques in their respective approaches to the parable of the Great Supper in Lk 14. Although differing in major aspects of their studies, all of the above scholars recognise certain core elements in their approach to the parables, namely that the parables are rooted in the socio-economic, political and religious realities of first century CE Palestinian life. The imagery that they use is derived from that social and cultural context, and the message contained in the parables is directed specifically to the people

¹Termed in this thesis social-scientific theory.

²Freire worked on literacy programmes with the illiterate urban dwellers and rural peasants of Brasil and Chile between the 1950s and 1970s seeking to provide them with a language and means of expression which reflected their reality not the reality enforced upon them from above, but that which emerged from their own little tradition. Herzog (1994) similarly perceives Jesus of Nazareth in his parables as attempting to give a voice to the concerns of the peasant non-elite and terms both Freire and Jesus 'Pedagogues of the Oppressed'.

who live in that social and cultural milieu. In addition to these core elements, the fact that Jesus of Nazareth chose for much of the time to speak to those outside of his core group in the form of parables itself reflects significantly upon the socio-political conditions of his day.

In all societies, according to Scott (1990), there exists, what he terms, both public and hidden transcripts.³ He uses “the term public transcript as a shorthand way of describing the open interaction between subordinates and those who dominate. The public transcript, where it is not positively misleading, is unlikely to tell the whole story about power relations. It is frequently in the interest of both parties to tacitly conspire in misrepresentation” (1990: 2). Hidden transcript is used “to characterize discourse that takes place ‘offstage’, beyond direct observation by powerholders. The hidden transcript is thus derivative in the sense that it consists of those offstage speeches, gestures and practices that confirm, contradict or inflect what appears in the public transcript” (1990: 4). Typical of the behaviour of subordinates in the public transcript is deference and apparent consent to and conformity with the ruling order. Thus Scott describes the response of a French tenant farmer in the nineteenth century to a meeting with his landlord in the following terms, “When he [the landlord who had dismissed his father] crossed from Le Craux, going to Meillers, he would stop and speak to me, and I forced myself to appear amiable, in spite of the contempt I felt for him” (1990: 2). The hidden transcript, however, reveals a different attitude. In the privacy of their homes, or amongst a gathering of trusted companions the subordinates give vent to expressions of anger and frustration. Often in its cruder forms, according to Scott, the hidden transcript consists of “fantasies of retaliation and revenge” (1990: 39). He cites examples from the

³The every day forms of peasant resistance described in Chapter Two above also form a part of the hidden transcript.

prebellum Southern States of America including, "Yeah, if they have a race riot around here, I'm gonna kill all the white folks with poison" (1990: 39). Alternatively they may wish the dominant elite ill fortune or seek to evoke a curse against them; inevitably the characteristics of the subordinate response reflect a negation of specific oppressive features of the dominating power.

Rather, however, than reflecting the most common modes of expression, extreme deference and 'off-stage' fantasies of rage represent the opposite ends of an extensive spectrum. The vast majority of intercourse in the public and hidden transcripts falls between these two parameters. This, what Scott terms, "political space" (1990: 137), enables the subordinates to introduce into the public transcript an element of "self-assertion" and "resistance". Scott continues,

The undeclared ideological guerrilla war that rages in this political space requires that we enter the world of rumour, gossip, disguises, linguistic tricks, metaphors, euphemisms, folktales, rituals, gestures, anonymity. For good reason, nothing is entirely straightforward here; the realities of power for subordinate groups mean that much of their political action requires interpretation precisely because it is intended to be cryptic and opaque. Before the recent development of institutionalized democratic norms, this ambiguous realm of political conflict was short of rebellion- *the* site of public political discourse (1990: 137).

Each of these forms of "ideological resistance", as Scott describes, operates to a greater or lesser degree at the boundaries of what is acceptable within the realm of the public transcript. The element of ambiguity which is inherent in the various levels of meaning present, for example, in folktales enables the subordinate both to present and

conceal his message at one and the same time. The parables of Jesus of Nazareth, we suggest, functioned in a similar fashion. That the climate in first century Palestine was such that open criticism of the ruling elite was harshly dealt with is evident in the execution of John the Baptist. The *agents provocateur* known to have operated during the regime of Herod the Great, and almost certainly employed by his son Herod Antipas,⁴ indicate that any explicit criticism expressed in the company of strangers was a risky business. The parabolic form, we contend, offered Jesus of Nazareth the opportunity to get his message across to a large audience, a message which we will illustrate was on occasion severely critical of the ruling elite, without incurring the full wrath of that elite (Oakman 1988: 112).⁵

In our reconsideration of the parables we shall attempt to illustrate not only the extent to which they reflect the socio-economic, political and religious conditions prevalent in first century CE Galilee, but also how these conditions impacted upon the various social strata of that society. We shall also show that the parabolic form allowed Jesus of Nazareth a means of condemning the exploitative behaviour of the elite without courting the danger inherent in open criticism.

⁴In Theissen's fictional work *The Shadow of the Galilean*, the book's main character is a Galilean recruited by the Roman Prefect Pilate to report on potential trouble makers in the Galilee.

⁵We are not suggesting that parables always operated as a form of "ideological resistance"; clearly, as in the case of euphemisms, they did not. Nor are we suggesting that every parable spoken by Jesus could be interpreted by the elite as potentially threatening. Rather we are claiming that Jesus used the ambiguous nature of parables to criticise elite behaviour in a manner which would otherwise have placed him in danger. In this sense some, at least, of his parables do function as "ideological resistance".

Criteria of Historicity

In any discussion of the parables an essential distinction is drawn between their possible form and use by Jesus of Nazareth, and their subsequent form and use by the authors of the gospels. It is universally acknowledged that the two are seldom on all fours. Whilst it is now almost impossible to recover the specific historical contexts in which particular parables may have been spoken, various criteria have been established which assist uncover earlier versions of the parables than those related by the evangelists. Dennis Polkow (1987: 338) presents in tabular form a list of the differing criteria described by five scholars namely, Walker (1969), McEleny (1972), Stein (1980), Breech (1983) and Boring (1985). In total they provide twenty five possible criteria⁶ which theoretically may be applied to each parable. Polkow, however, questions the admissibility of a number of the criteria, and declares others so similar in nature as to be capable of consideration under one heading. Thus he dismisses factors such as Environment, Birth of Christianity and Vividness as invalid and combines still others; Multiple Source Attestation and Multiple Form Attestation are considered simply as Multiple Attestation, whilst Modification, Execution, Embarrassment, Incongruity, Theological Diversity and Hermeneutic Potential are all subsumed under the criteria of Dissimilarity. Similarly Coherence accounts for Contradiction, and Style incorporates Form, Content and Function. Finally, Plausible Transmission is assimilated into both Discounting Redaction⁷ and Discounting Tradition.⁸ In addition to this rationalisation of criteria, Polkow restructures them into three categories, Preliminary Criteria, Primary Criteria and Secondary Criteria. The first category, Preliminary Criteria, consists of

⁶Although each scholar lists either only ten or eleven.

⁷Discounting redaction refers to the process of identifying material introduced to the parable by the evangelist and therefore not original to Jesus of Nazareth.

⁸Discounting tradition consists of identifying material which already formed a part of the parable prior to its use by the evangelist, but which nonetheless appears not to have been attributable to Jesus.

Discounting Redaction and Discounting Tradition. Included in the second, Primary Criteria, are Dissimilarity, Coherence and Multiple Attestation. And in the third, Secondary Criteria, are Palestinian Context, Style and Scholarly Consensus. This restructuring by Polkow also serves to highlight the fact that not all criteria are of equal importance. Clearly not all of the criteria are applicable to every parable, but just as significantly not all of the criteria which do apply carry equal weight. Multiple Attestation, for example, is of much greater importance than Style. Polkow's approach to the Criteria is far from definitive however. In recent years J. P. Meier (1991),⁹ J. D. Crossan (1991) and Theissen and Merz (1998) have all addressed the issue. Meier, like Polkow, distinguishes between Primary and Secondary Criteria¹⁰ and in the case of the former category covers more or less the same ground. Amongst the Secondary Criteria, however, he includes Vividness of Narration and Historical Presumption both previously rejected by Polkow. And he makes no reference to Scholarly Consensus.¹¹ The inexact nature of the science is all too evident. J. D. Crossan has perhaps provided the most innovative approach to Criteria in recent years with his 'Triple Triadic Process'. This complex system interweaves anthropological insights with historical and anecdotal evidence, but reserves its main concern for the stratification and attestation of intra- and extra-canonical texts. Whilst the above brief reprise illustrates the differing approaches to the Criteria of Historicity, it also confirms the recurrence of certain core elements which are acknowledged by virtually all scholars. It is therefore these Preliminary and Primary Criteria which feature most readily in efforts to rediscover the parables of Jesus of Nazareth.

⁹Meier 1991: 186-187 provides a detailed list of bibliographical references in respect of this topic.

¹⁰Meier has no Preliminary Classification.

¹¹This must surely be one of the weakest of Polkow's Criteria as evidenced by the numerous occasions in New Testament scholarship when a position previously held by a consensus of scholars has been overturned.

The Parable of the Sower

The parable of the sower as it appears in the synoptic gospels¹² consists of two parts, the parable itself and its subsequent allegorical interpretation. Whilst, on the basis of the criteria mentioned above, in particular double attestation, most scholars consider the core of the parable to be historical,¹³ the allegorical interpretation is generally recognised to be a later composition (Jeremias 1963: 13).¹⁴ The main features of the parable are therefore considered to be the sowing of the seed and its seemingly excessive growth.

According to Mk 4: 4 a sower sowed some seed which fell upon a path and was eaten up by birds. The independent tradition represented in the gospel of Thomas saying 9 presents a similar narrative, confirming this as the most likely form of the original parable.¹⁵ More seed was sown which fell upon rocky ground and where, according to Mark, it sprouted up quickly. Due, however, to a lack of soil, the seed was unable to establish roots of adequate depth. When the sun rose the crop was scorched and withered away. Crossan (1973: 40-41) indicates a number of difficulties with this account, the most significant of which concerns the contradiction inherent in vv 4: 6a and 4: 5, 6b. In the former the seed is immediately scorched by the rising sun, whilst in the latter it appears to have been growing for a period of time before withering away. This

¹²Mk 4: 1-9//Mt 13: 1-9//Lk 8: 4-8. Contrary to Scott 1989: 350 we do not consider Luke to reflect an independent tradition, but rather as with the Matthean account, regard it as being dependent upon Mark. It will be presumed in the chapter that where the synoptics each recount a parable, Matthew and Luke use Mark as their source. The gospel of Thomas, on the other hand, will be deemed to represent an independent tradition.

¹³See for example Dodd 1961, Jeremias 1963, Crossan 1973, Oakman 1986 and Scott 1989.

¹⁴This view is reinforced by the absence of the allegorical interpretation from the equivalent saying in the gospel of Thomas. For a brief consideration of the arguments against the historicity of the Markan interpretation see Crossan 1973: 41-42.

¹⁵On this view Luke's reference to the trampling of the seed is Lukan emendation.

contradiction, Crossan contends, arises from Mark's attempt to relate the original parable to the social context of his community. The sun, he suggests, was introduced to mirror the sudden impact of the trials and persecutions being experienced by the community, thus rendering the seed's demise more directly relevant than its gradual withering away might otherwise have appeared.¹⁶ In the gospel of Thomas it is narrated only that the seed failed to take root and produced no grain; no mention is made of the sun. Whether Crossan's analysis is correct or not, it does appear that the more original form of the parable referred only to the seed falling upon rocky ground and its failure to take root.

Still more seed is described as having fallen amongst thorns. According to Mk 4: 7 the thorns grew up and choked the plant preventing it from producing any grain.¹⁷ In the gospel of Thomas the seeds are not only choked by the thorn bush but also devoured by worms. Crossan (1973: 39-40) suggests this reference to the worms eating the seed is secondary, but Scott contends that there is "no compelling reason" to consider this so (1989: 351). It is impossible to say with certainty whether Mark or Thomas reflects the more original tradition, the significant factor remains, however, that the seed sown in the thorn bush was prevented from developing.

Finally, Mk 4: 8 narrates that the seed is sown in good soil where it "brought forth grain, growing up and increasing and yielding thirty and sixty and a hundred fold".¹⁸

¹⁶Luke either recognises the difficulties posed by his Markan source or he simply chooses to abbreviate it, in either event the reference to the scorching sun is omitted from the Lukan account. Like Crossan, Breech contends that vv 5-6 reflect Markan redaction and address the issue of persecution being suffered by the evangelist's community (1983: 82).

¹⁷The crop's lack of productivity is omitted in both the Matthean and Lukan accounts.

¹⁸The Matthean and Lukan emendations of their Markan source appear to reflect more a matter of style than of substance. The omission of the phrase "growing up and increasing", the Matthean reversal of the order of crop yield and the Lukan description of

According to Crossan, the phrase “growing up and increasing” is a Markan addition intended to exhort the evangelist’s community to continued perseverance in the face of enduring hardship. The phrase’s absence from the gospel of Thomas in which it is related only that the seed sown in good soil produced a good crop, some “sixty per measure and one hundred and twenty per measure” tends to support its Markan origins. Both Crossan (1973: 43-44) and Scott (1989: 352) agree that the threefold structure of the crop yield in the Markan account is probably closer to the original form of the parable.¹⁹ Not only does it conform to the triadic structure of the lost seed on the path and in the rocky ground and thorn bushes, it also lacks the mathematical symmetry found in the gospel of Thomas. Moreover, in poetic terms the use of one hundred rather than one hundred and twenty fold is indicative of the breaking of a sequence and thus of the closure of the parable.

The core of the original parable, we suggest, would therefore have taken the following form,

A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed some seed fell on the path and the birds came and ate it up. Other seed fell on rocky ground where it did not have much soil, and it sprang up quickly since it had no depth of soil. And since it had no roots it withered away. Other seed fell among thorns and the thorns grew up and choked it [and worms devoured it]. Other seed fell into good soil and brought forth grain yielding thirty and sixty and a hundred fold.²⁰

a yield of only one hundred fold all fall into this category.

¹⁹See also Oakman 1986: 104.

²⁰Breech using ‘stylistic criteria’ produces a core parable which makes no reference to the birds devouring the seed, the seeds’ failure to take root when it fell on the rocky ground, the thorns choking the seed, or the yields produced by the seeds. Each of these, he argues, are ‘explanatory phrases’ inserted by early Christian teachers to clarify the

How might this parable have been understood by those listening to Jesus of Nazareth? Most interpretations of the parable focus upon the seeds and their growth, or lack of it²¹ By widening our perspective to incorporate all aspects of the parable, the sower, the land and the seed it is possible to uncover an alternative understanding. The parable refers to the individual sowing the seed simply as the sower. No indication is given of whether he is a peasant smallholder, tenant or a casual day-labourer; whether he is sowing his own land or that of a landowner. It may be possible, however, to determine which of these situations applies by considering the type of land sown and the manner in which the sower sows it. The parable describes a number of locations where the seed, when scattered by the sower, falls. Two possibilities occur in terms of our understanding the sower and the land he sows. Firstly, he may be a tenant or day-labourer who carelessly sows seed on his master's land. In these circumstances his actions may amount to more than mere carelessness; they may, in the form of petty sabotage, constitute an act of peasant resistance to elite oppression. This seems the less likely scenario, however, when we allow for the nature of the land described. The elite invariably owned the best and most productive land in any agrarian society. Thus, whilst it is entirely possible that a large landed estate contained paths, rocky ground and thorn bushes, these were far more commonplace amongst the smallholdings of the peasant non-elite. If this is so then how are we to understand the sowing technique of the peasant smallholder? Does, for example, the loss of seed scattered alongside a path reflect carelessness or incompetence on the part of the sower? Jeremias (1963: 11-12) contends that it was the usual practice in Palestine to first sow and then plough the land. In

parable for their listeners (1983: 81-85). That the same 'explanatory phrases' should appear in the independent traditions reflected in Mark and Thomas is, however, highly unlikely.

²¹See for example Scott 1989: 355-362.

support of this procedure he cites b. Shab 73b, m. Shab 7.2 and Jer 4: 3.²² Thus, he argues, the manner in which the sower scattered the seed alongside the path²³ was entirely in keeping with acceptable cultivation practices. Once the seed was sown the peasant would return and plough up the path. White rejects Jeremias' contention, arguing that the normal practice was to plough first and then to sow (1964: 303-305).²⁴ The mishnaic text b. Shab. 7. 2, he contends, is sufficiently ambiguous to allow for either prior sowing or ploughing, whilst b. Shab 73b may be as late in origin as the fifth century CE. Moreover, the hardened nature of Palestinian soil would ensure that such a practice would render inefficient yield production. Scott (1989: 353) proposes a third possibility. Relying on Payne's analysis he suggests that although sowing was most commonly preceded by ploughing this was not always so. The second planting, in autumn, for example, did not always require the land to be ploughed prior to sowing, nor was it unknown on occasion for a second ploughing to bury seed after it had been sown. Whilst White provides the most probable scenario for the practice employed by the sower in the parable, he also recognises that there is nothing in the technique of the sower which suggests incompetence or carelessness. According to the parable, the seed which was scattered alongside the path was devoured by the birds. As Oakman (1986:105) correctly notes, the loss of seed to birds was a recurring problem with which the peasantry of first century CE Palestine were readily familiar.²⁵ It is therefore apparent that there is

²²Dalman 1926: 120-132.

²³Taylor 1952: 253 following Torrey, and Black, suggests that the Greek *παρὰ τὴν ὁδόν* is dependent upon the original Aramaic, 'al 'urha, which may more appropriately be translated 'upon the path'. But note Hooker 1991: 123.

²⁴According to Applebaum, "the first breaking of the stubble after the harvest took the form of furrows opened with broad bands between them to facilitate the absorption of the rains. In the ploughing after the first rain, closer furrows divided by ridges were opened for drainage; only at the third ploughing, before sowing, were the furrows close-set without intervening bands. The final working was to cover the seed" (1976: 651-652).

²⁵The loss of seed to birds was obviously not peculiar to Palestine. The old Scottish hand-sower's rhyme 'One for the sparrow, one for the crow, one to rot and one to grow'

nothing either in the manner in which the sower scattered the seed alongside the path, nor in its loss to the birds which would have inferred, to the listeners of Jesus of Nazareth, negligence or disregard on the part of the peasant. On the contrary, they would have recognised only too clearly the nature of the difficulties with which he was confronted in his daily struggle for survival.

Similarly the problem with seed sown on rocky ground. Whilst Scott (1989: 354) is probably correct in his assertion that the use of the term 'rock' evoked connotations of barrenness in Israelite tradition, its significance in the context of the parable is, we suggest, subordinate to the actual geographical conditions of Palestine. As Oakman correctly states, the prevalence of rocky ground in the Galilee, Samaria and notably in Judea is evidenced by the considerable amount of terracing uncovered in archaeological excavations. According to Applebaum, whilst the "volcanic basalts of eastern Galilee" were conducive to the growing of grain, the soil was littered with fragments of rock which required considerable effort to clear (1976: 639).²⁶ The terracing of the land illustrates just how hard the peasants were required and indeed prepared to work to provide themselves with the necessities of life. Likewise, rather than interpreting the sowing of seed on rocky ground as evidence of laziness, or a lack of willingness to adequately prepare the soil, it can again be perceived as an illustration of the harsh conditions the peasants faced. Despite their best endeavours to clear the soil for planting, it was inevitable that some rocky ground would remain and that seed planted in that area would be lost.

illustrates the universal nature of the problem faced by peasants/farmers. I am grateful to Philip Esler for bringing this rhyme to my attention.

²⁶Freyne 1980, 1994 and 1995b considers in detail the geographical makeup of the Galilee.

Finally, some of the seed sown by the sower fell amongst thorns and as they grew were choked by thorn bushes. Scott (1989: 354) considers the thorns' significance in terms of metaphor, citing the example of Jer 4: 3 to illustrate how thorns and thorn bushes are used to represent the wicked in both Hebrew and biblical tradition. Oakman (1986: 106), on the other hand, suggests that the presence of the thorns, which he tentatively identifies as "*acanthus spinosa*", could, in the agrarian society of first century CE Palestine, be indicative of a lack of proper soil management by the peasant smallholder. But, he continues, it may also be a reflection of the 'marginal' nature of the land the peasant was obliged to work. If, as we consider likely, the sower of the seed was a peasant smallholder then it becomes apparent that in the context of the parable the scattering of the seed and the areas where it falls are intended to illustrate not only the lack of growth in the seed, but, just as significantly, the variety of difficulties and hardships a peasant might suffer in the daily struggle to provide the necessities of life for himself and his family.

In contrast to these difficulties are the projected yields for the seed that is sown in good soil. Each plant will produce thirty, sixty even one hundred fold of grain. Scholars have traditionally interpreted these figures as indicating an unnatural abundance. Allowing for average yields in Palestine of seven and one half fold and good yields of ten fold²⁷ Jeremias claims that "The abnormal tripling, presented in true oriental fashion, of the harvest's yield (thirty, sixty, a hundredfold) symbolises the eschatological overflowing of the divine fullness, surpassing all human measure"(1963: 150). Whilst Crossan suggests that the parable moves beyond growth to miracle, the yields indicate "...not organic and biological development but the gift-like nature, the graciousness and

²⁷Dalman 1933: 153-165. See also Oakman 1986: 63 and Fiensy 1991: 103 who both regard a yield of five fold as average.

the surprise of the ordinary, the advent of bountiful harvest despite the losses of sowing..." (1973: 51). Jeremias' reading, however, is flawed in so far as it is based upon a failure to recognise that the reference to yields is not to average yields per field but rather to "returns of *seeds reaped for seeds sown*" (White 1964: 301).²⁸ On this basis ought the yields be understood in terms of miracle and eschatology? Scott contends not. On the contrary, he cites evidence to suggest that whilst the yields may be good, they were far from extraordinary. Pliny's *Natural History* describes the growth from a single seed of 360 and 400 grains respectively in the Byzacium region of Africa. Whilst these yields were recognised as overly abundant, yields of one hundred fold, he claims, were commonly produced in a number of regions in Sicily, in Andalusia and in Egypt. Similarly Herodotus describes yields of two hundred fold of corn as commonplace in Babylonia with an additional one hundred fold possible when conditions were favourable (1989: 357). In terms of eschatological expectation within Judeanism, Scott continues, although a super abundance was anticipated, in very few texts do figures actually appear. In the two examples Scott cites, b. Ketub. 111b and *Adversus Haereses*, 5.33.3-4 the exaggerated nature of the yield is self-evident. The yields of thirty, sixty and one hundred fold described in the parable, Scott concludes, are little more than average to good, hardly the unnatural abundance of eschatological expectation. Significantly Scott provides no statistics for seed yields in Palestine. Those yields he does relate derive from the most fertile regions of the ancient world. That they were not reproduced in other countries is acknowledged by Herodotus in his disclaimer "I am well aware that even what I have said respecting the corn is wholly disbelieved by those who have never

²⁸According to White, "it is...well known that in the drier winter rain areas of the Mediterranean region it is necessary to make rather thin sowings of wheat if a good crop is to be reaped. The autumn-sown plant then has sufficient room to bush out...at the base during the winter, and to send up numerous side-shoots, each of which, may head, if conditions are favourable; in certain areas this process will yield as many as 300 seeds from a single plant" (1964: 302).

visited Babylonia” (Scott 1989: 357). On occasion then, in the very best of conditions,²⁹ such yields may have been produced, but to the peasant of Palestine, working on marginal land, they remained beyond his expectations. How then would the thirty, sixty and one hundred fold of the parable have been understood by those listening to Jesus? Firstly, it remains just about conceivable that they may have been perceived in terms of the supra-abundance of eschatological expectation. In the new age the Lord will provide abundantly for all. Such a notion of divine or supernatural provision is of course not peculiar to the traditions of Judeanism or Christianity. As we have noted it formed a part of the indigenous belief system of the Xhosa tribe of South Africa. In response to the prophecy that the return of the “ancestors” was imminent and that they would bring cattle with them, Wilson notes that “New barns and kraals were made to receive the corn and cattle from the ancestors, and skin sacks for the milk that was to be so abundant” (1975: 240). Secondly, and more likely, they may have been understood in terms of the peasant little tradition in which abundant resources were to be available and shared by all.³⁰ According to Oakman, in the little tradition of Judeanism these abundant resources were to be provided by Yahweh. In support of this he cites the version of the sower scattering the seed contained in 1 Clement 24: 5, “The sower went forth and cast into the earth each of the seeds....Then out of the decay, the sublimity of the Master’s providence raises them up, and out of the one, much will grow and bear fruit” (1986: 108). Similarly, Oakman continues, the Papyrus Egerton 2 and Infancy Gospel of Thomas both recount instances of Jesus being responsible for the unnatural growth of seed. In particular the latter narrates how the child Jesus supposedly obtains a yield of one hundred fold from one grain of wheat with which he fed the poor of the village (1986: 109).

²⁹Irrigation was also a significant factor in ensuring high crop production in the ancient world (Heichelheim 1938: 127).

³⁰See pp 74-78 above.

In the parable of the sower scattering the seed, Jesus of Nazareth paints two pictures for his listeners. Firstly, the all too familiar scene of the difficulties and hardships facing the peasantry in their daily struggle to procure the necessities of life from at best marginal land. And secondly, the contrasting abundance which he associates with the kingdom of God. Implicit in the second scenario, however is a rejection of the first and more importantly of the hierarchical structure and the social values of the society which underpin it. As we observed in Chapter One, the basic premise of agrarian societies is that any surplus created by the peasantry is acquired by the elite in the form of taxes, rent, etc. This ensures that the elite enjoy a prosperous life style whilst the non-elite continue to exist at subsistence level. The thirty, sixty and one hundred fold of the parable reflects not only the abundance of the little tradition but also the theme of reversal which is inherent in it. Indeed it is this theme of reversal, in which the removal of oppressive elite practices is called for, which provides the most subversive aspect of the parable. The notion of abundance is the direct corollary of the daily hardships endured by the non-elite, hardships which themselves were a consequence of the oppressive and exploitative behaviour of the elite. In the parable of the sower the promise of abundance is inextricably linked to the theme of reversal and thus to a condemnation of the elite and their exploitative society. It is little wonder that Jesus of Nazareth chose to present such a message in parabolic form.

The Parable of the Tenants in the Vineyard

The parable of the tenants in the vineyard occurs in the three synoptic gospels, Mk 12: 1-12, Mt 21: 33-46, Lk 20: 9-19 and in the extra-canonical gospel of Thomas saying 65. As in the parable of the sower the accounts in the gospels of Matthew and Luke are dependent upon Mark as their source, whilst the gospel of Thomas again reflects an independent tradition. In other words, the parable's claim to authenticity is supported by

double attestation.³¹ From these two traditions we must seek to uncover the parable in its most original form. Mk 12: 1 relates the following, "A man planted a vineyard, put a fence around it, dug a pit for the wine press and built a watchtower; then he leased it to the tenants and went to another country".³² The gospel of Thomas on the other hand states only that "A [] person owned a vineyard and rented it to some farmers so that they might work it.". Which of these two narratives represents most closely the parable as it was told by Jesus of Nazareth has occasioned considerable scholarly debate, the crux of which concerns the place of Isa 5: 1-2 in the Markan account. It is generally acknowledged that Mk 12: 1 borrows heavily from Isa 5.³³ What is less certain is whether Isa 5 was original to the parable or was a later pre-Markan or Markan addition. Evans (1996) and Brooke (1995) both argue persuasively in favour of the authenticity of Isa 5. The former cites, in particular, the evidence of the Aramaic Tradition, the Targums,³⁴ in which Isaiah's condemnation of the Israelites as a whole is specifically directed at the temple and its cult. Brooke presents a similar argument based on his interpretation of fragment 1 4Q500 from Qumran in which he links the image of the vineyard with the temple. Reading Tg. Jon, Isa 5: 2 in this light he concludes "It seems as if it is clear that the tower of the Isaianic allegory refers to the sanctuary and the winepress to the altar, the blood from which may be envisaged as flowing like wine out

³¹Dodd 1961, Taylor 1952 and Jeremias 1963 are amongst many scholars who consider the parable to originate with Jesus of Nazareth.

³²Mt 21: 33 makes no significant alterations, although see Weren 1998: 18-26 for a detailed consideration of Matthew's use of Isa 5: 1-7. Lk 20: 9, however, makes no mention of the fence, the pit for the wine press or the watch tower.

³³See, for example, Dodd 1961: 94, Jeremias 1963: 70-71, Taylor 1952: 473 and Hooker 1991: 275. Most scholars concur that Mk 12: 1-12 is dependent upon the LXX version of Isa 5: 1-7, but see Weren 1998 who contends that affinities with the Hebrew account can also be detected in the parable.

³⁴Evans acknowledges that the Targumim are to be dated approximately three to four centuries after the New Testament but cites Chilton 1982 to confirm the view that many of the "interpretive traditions" contained therein were current in the time of Jesus of Nazareth.

from the temple” (1995: 271). This association with the temple is further enhanced, Evans claims, by the appearance of the parable, in its earliest known literary context, namely the Markan account, shortly after Jesus’ action in the temple and in the course of his disputes with the Judean elite. Finally, Evans notes the occurrence of the term “inheritance” in the Aramaic Tradition of Isa 5 and highlights the connection between this and the role of inheritance in the latter stages of the parable. Persuasive as these arguments may appear, they are not entirely convincing. Firstly, whilst it may well be correct that Judean exegetical tradition identifies the images of vineyard and temple, Evans produces no evidence to confirm that it was Jesus rather than Mark who made this connection. Moreover, it was commonplace for the early church to refer to Hebrew scripture in order to explicate the role and identity of Jesus of Nazareth. It would, therefore, hardly be surprising if Mark has done likewise in his presentation of an allegorical interpretation of the parable. The allegory introduced by Isa 5 itself, however, runs into difficulties in the course of the parable. Whilst these inconsistencies, as Crossan (1973: 86-91) correctly states, would not of themselves, allowing for the nature of allegory, be fatal, the fact that a logically coherent version of the parable exists in the form of Thomas 65, in which Isa 5 does not occur, favours the view that Isa 5 should be seen as a Markan addition. Evans concedes that it is entirely plausible that an original form of the parable could have existed in which Isa 5, together with a number of other elements considered below, do not occur, but contends that the number of deletions is problematic. Luke, however, apparently had little problem in deleting the obviously Isaianic references inherited from Mark, and more significantly, as we have noted above, the logical consistency of the independent tradition reflected in Thomas 65 indicates that precisely the non-Isaianic form of the parable allowed by Evans, does in fact exist.³⁵

³⁵This presupposes, contrary to Evans’ view, that the gospel of Thomas reflects an independent tradition.

In addition to the role of Isa 5, a number of other elements of the parable also require to be considered. After a period of time had elapsed, the owner of the vineyard sent a number of his servants to collect his share of the vineyard's produce. According to Mk 12: 2-5, he sent one servant whom the tenants seized, beat and sent away empty handed, another whom they beat over the head and insulted and a third whom they killed. Insistent upon receiving his due, however, the vineyard owner dispatched yet further servants some of whom were beaten, others of whom were killed. The Matthean and Lukan accounts both display a number of differences from their Markan source. Matthew, for example, condenses the sending of the servants into two groups. The first group contained three servants, the first of which the tenants beat, the second they killed and the third they stoned. The second group, he relates, were treated similarly. Luke, on the other hand, repeats the sending of the individual servants but makes no reference to a blow to the head being inflicted upon the second servant and the third servant is merely wounded rather than killed. He also omits any mention of the final group of servants dispatched in the Markan account. The independent gospel of Thomas narrates the sending of only two servants both of whom, although severely beaten by the tenants, escape with their lives. How many servants were sent, and to what extent is this significant? According to Scott, "The simple sending of a single servant, twice, argues for the originality of *Thomas*. With the sending of the son, there are three sendings. The single servant is more realistic, and the three sendings follow the law of three common to parables" (1989: 247). A brief analysis of the Markan account tends to support this view. The continuous sending of servants described by Mark in the face of the progressively violent behaviour of the tenants, violence which culminates in the killing of some of the servants, in non-allegorical terms, makes little sense. It is only when we recognise that Mark is identifying the servants with the rejected prophets of Hebrew tradition that the

vineyard owner's actions become more comprehensible (Jeremias 1963: 71).³⁶ Crossan sees in the reference to the second servant being beaten about the head an allusion to the beheading of John the Baptist (1973: 87-88), although such a comparison may have been more convincing had the second servant been one of those killed. Whilst in the Matthean account the servants are likewise represented as the rejected prophets,³⁷ Luke appears to omit this association from his Markan source. The evangelist narrates rather that three single servants are dispatched all of whom are beaten, none more significantly so than the others, and none of whom are killed. By omitting various elements of what appears to be Markan redaction, it is probable that Luke relates reasonably closely the substance of the tradition inherited by Mark. If this is so, then the only difference remaining between the tradition reflected in the synoptics and that of the gospel of Thomas concerns whether the vineyard owner sent two servants or three. Whilst it is impossible to know this with certainty, Scott is probably correct in his assertion that the 'law of three' so favoured in Hebrew parables is formulated by the sending of the son, rather than the third servant.³⁸ It is therefore likely that the form of the parable most closely resembling that spoken by Jesus of Nazareth referred to the sending of two servants, both of whom were beaten by the tenants, neither of whom were killed.

³⁶The theme of Israel's rejection and persecution of the prophets sent by Yahweh is reflected in a number of Old Testament texts including 2 Chr 24: 19; 36: 14-16 and Neh 9: 26. It also occurs in Q 11: 47-50. Interestingly in the pseudepigraphic *Lives of the Prophets*, which, according to Hare (1985: 381), was probably written in the early decades of the first century CE, only Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Zechariah son of Jehoiada are martyred at the hands of the people or rulers of Israel.

³⁷Matthew divides the servants into two groups, representing the early and later prophets respectively. It is for this reason that both groups are treated in the same manner (Jeremias 1963: 72 and Crossan 1973: 88).

³⁸Dodd 1961: 96 and Hooker 1991: 276. But note Taylor who argues that "the reference to three slaves (rather than two and the son) is more characteristic of the folk tale" (1952: 475).

It is at this point, in both independent traditions, that the vineyard owner sends his son to complete the task unsuccessfully undertaken by the servants. According to Mk 12: 6-8, "He had still one other, a beloved son. Finally, he sent him to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.' But those tenants said to one another, 'This is the heir; come let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours. So they seized him, killed him, and threw him out of the vineyard". The reference to the 'beloved son', repeated by Luke, but omitted by Matthew, serves to emphasise the identification of the son in the parable with Jesus of Nazareth.³⁹ But the allegory of which the vineyard, the servants and now the son all form a part, is as Crossan correctly indicates, becoming increasingly difficult to sustain. Is Jesus as the Son of God only to be respected? And in what sense can those who kill the Son of God hope to acquire his divine inheritance (Crossan 1973: 88)? In a non-allegorical sense, it is also problematic that the vineyard owner should send his son into what is clearly a dangerous situation. Crossan attempts to explain this in terms of the excuse offered in the gospel of Thomas for the maltreatment of the first servant by the tenants (1973: 93-94). In Thomas alone is it suggested that the tenants did not recognise the servants; in other words, that they failed to acknowledge their authority as agents of their master. Thus he deemed it necessary to send his son whose authority and power were without question. A more convincing explanation, however, is provided by Hester (1992: 42). It is only by the sending of the son and *heir* that the vitally important theme of inheritance, and the right to the land and its produce, can be introduced into the parable. The killing of the son in such a context is entirely predictable. The influence of the fate of Jesus can be detected in the Matthean and Lukan accounts, both of which reverse the Markan order and have the son thrown out of the vineyard before he is killed. This, notwithstanding, the sending and killing of the son and its relation to the notion of inheritance were clearly integral elements of the original parable.

³⁹In Mk 1:11 and 9: 7 Jesus is described as the 'beloved son'.

According to Mk 12: 9-10, Jesus then asks what course of action the vineyard owner will take. The response is obvious to all, "he will come and destroy the tenants and give the vineyard to others". Matthew and Luke both embellish this basic Markan reply. In Matthew's account the hearers of the parable answer Jesus in vitriolic terms "He will put those wretches to a miserable death and lease the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the produce at the harvest time". Luke repeats the Markan account adding only the ejaculation "heaven forbid!" by those listening to Jesus. But to what extent does this question/answer scenario belong to a possible core parable? The similarities between Mk 12: 9 and Isa 5: 4a and 7 highlighted by Weren (1998: 11) could be cited by those who contend that Isa 5: 2 underpins the original form of the parable, in support of the originality of the question/answer scene. On the other hand, if Isa 5: 2 came later to the parable, it is probable that Isa 5: 4a and 7 did likewise and that the question and answer should be seen as subsequent additions (Jeremias 1963: 74). This latter view is also supported by the absence of the question and answer from the gospel of Thomas.

It is accepted by most modern scholars that the quotation of Ps 118: 22-23 does not belong to the original parable.⁴⁰ Its early origins in Christian tradition, however, are readily confirmed by its presence in the gospel of Thomas. Although the parable clearly ends in Saying 65 with the call that "Whoever has ears should hear",⁴¹ it is immediately followed by Saying 66 in which Jesus says, "Show me the stone that the builders rejected; that is the cornerstone". Most scholars acknowledge the identification of Jesus, the son, with the 'cornerstone' of Ps 118 which allows the glory of the resurrection to overshadow the death of the son in the parable. Hester (1992: 32), however, posits

⁴⁰See for example Jeremias 1963: 73-74 and Hooker 1991: 276-277. But note Brooke 1995: 287-289 and Evans 1996: 71-73.

⁴¹The gospel of Thomas translation used throughout this thesis is that of Cameron 1982.

another possibility, which we will develop below, namely that the 'cornerstone' is the tenants who are rejected by the vineyard owner.

The pericope ends in the tradition reflected in the synoptic gospels with the recognition by the Judean elite, the chief priests, the scribes and the elders, that it is they who are being criticised and condemned by Jesus in the parable. They are prevented, however, from taking any action against him because of his popularity amongst the people.⁴²

In the form most closely resembling the original parable the story is recounted of a man who prepared a vineyard and leased it to tenants. At the appropriate time he sent his servants to claim his share of the produce but these were beaten and sent away empty-handed. Finally he sent his son whom he hoped the tenants would respect. Recognising the son as heir, however, they killed him in an attempt to claim the inheritance. The quotation from Ps 118, the question/answer scenario, the Isaianic references and related allegorical interpretation all belong to later tradition.⁴³ How then would this parable have been understood by Jesus' listeners in first century CE Palestine?

As we noted above the term vineyard evoked certain religious associations in the minds of first century CE Judeans. The economic implications of the growing and tending of vines were also well known, however, amongst the population. As early as the eighth century BCE members of elite families began to acquire vineyards to increase wine and oil production.⁴⁴ According to Chaney,

⁴²According to the Matthean account Jesus is regarded by the crowds as a prophet.

⁴³Via 1967: 134.

⁴⁴In Amos 5: 11 the prophet denounces the house of Israel for its exploitation of the poor and proclaims that its people shall not drink from the vineyards they have planted.

Upland fields previously intercropped to provide a mixed subsistence for peasant families were combined into large and “efficient” vineyards and olive orchards producing a single crop for market. The increased production of wine and oil resulting from the formation of these plantations or *latifundia* played at least two roles in the new scheme of things. On the one hand, wine and oil were central to the increasingly consumptive lifestyle of the local elite, epitomized in a sodality called the *marzeah*. On the other, since wine and oil were more valuable than most agricultural commodities per unit of weight or volume, they made ideal exports to exchange for the luxury and strategic imports coveted by members of the ruling classes. But the “efficiency” of these cash crops came at a brutal cost to the sufficiency of the livelihood which they afforded the peasants who actually produced them (1989: 16-17).

On average vines took approximately five years from the time of planting before they reached their full grape bearing potential. And whilst they required more attention, effort, and knowledge to cultivate than many of the other crops grown within the Roman empire, they remained nonetheless a very popular cash crop amongst the Roman elite (Oakman 1986: 28). Within Palestine itself favourable climatic and soil conditions led to the planting of many vineyards. According to the Tosefta Menahoth 8 :3,⁴⁵ these were to be found primarily in Samaria and the Judean hills (Applebaum (1976: 646-647). But sources from the Talmud confirm that wines, liquors and raisins were also products of the Galilee, and in particular of the territory surrounding the Sea of Galilee, Maaseroth 1: 6. Vineyards then were an economic reality well known to the hearers of Jesus’ parable.

⁴⁵The list of produce and its place of origin contained therein derives from the first century BCE.

The significant players in the parable are the vineyard owner, his servants and son, and the tenants. Each of these performs a social role which is readily recognisable by those listening to the parable. The owner having planted his vineyard, leased it to tenants and journeyed to another country. A number of factors identify him as a member of the elite. The initial capital expenditure involved in cultivating a vineyard demanded resources well beyond those available to the first century CE Palestinian peasant. Moreover, no substantial income would accrue from the vineyard for a period of up to five years, during which time significant outlays would be incurred in nurturing the vines. Also the retainers and tenants he has at his disposal are indicative of his considerable wealth (Herzog 1994: 102-103). It is sometimes suggested that because the vineyard owner, having leased the vineyard, travels to another country that he was very probably a Gentile. There are, however, no compelling reasons to commend this view. It is entirely probable that he was ethnically Judean, either from Galilee or Judea itself,⁴⁶ indeed as we shall see, in the context of the parable, it is almost certain.

According to both Hester (1992) and Herzog (1994), the tenants, to whom the vineyard was leased, were members of the Palestinian non-elite, that is, peasants who no longer owned their own land, but who had secured some form of tenancy agreement which was invariably drawn for the benefit of the elite landowner. Evans (1996: 73-83), however, suggests otherwise. Whilst conceding that "...many of the farmers who leased land were of humble means" (1996: 73) he attempts to prove, by an examination of the term 'farmer' as it occurs in lease agreements in the Zenon and other Papyri, that the tenants in the parable were actually farmers of some standing. He cites examples of contracts in which the lessees were clearly individuals of wealth rather than dispossessed

⁴⁶Josephus claims he was the owner of land in Jerusalem. On that city's capture by the Romans, Titus gave him instead a "parcel of ground on the plain" *Life* 76 [422].

peasant smallholders. And he relates a case in which the agents of a royal landowner were beaten and cast out of the village. Significantly, he suggests that the perpetrator of the assault, the lessee, a Judean named Jeddous, was a man of no little influence and means (1996: 78-79). Evans undeniably establishes the fact that wealthy lessees did exist, but he fails in his efforts to prove a link between these and the tenants of the parable.⁴⁷ Moreover, if Jeddous was a man of some wealth, a fact indicated more by the presumption of his literacy than by his capacity to have the royal retainers expelled from the village,⁴⁸ then it is precisely this which has resulted in the incident being recorded.⁴⁹ Such actions by the peasantry do not merit literary consideration, for they demand and receive summary 'justice'. Whilst it is not impossible that the tenants of the parable were well-to-do farmers, when we allow for the social context of first century CE Palestine, in which increasing indebtedness and forfeiture of land were notable features, it is not the most probable scenario. To the hearers of Jesus' parable the tenants would more obviously be identified as dispossessed smallholders, or otherwise non landholding members of the non-elite, a factor both Hester and Herzog regard as central to our understanding of the parable. In order to plant his vineyard, the wealthy member of the elite first required to appropriate the necessary suitable land. The most usual method of achieving this, other than the occasional grant of land from the ruler, was, as we noted in Chapter One, by the acquisition of the patrimonial land of the peasantry, commonly by foreclosing on a loan. In such circumstances it was commonplace for the smallholder to

⁴⁷The legal significance attached to the Greek terms ἐκδίδοναι and καρπός in the parable is not entirely convincing (1996: 74). The original parable would surely have been known in Aramaic.

⁴⁸In every day forms of peasant resistance the complicity of those peasants not physically engaged in the act was essential to its success. Thus even if Jeddous were a non-elite tenant he could still, with the tacit compliance of the remainder of the peasant villagers, have assaulted and expelled the royal agents.

⁴⁹Acts of peasant violence were deliberately omitted from official records, and would have no cause to appear in the literature of the elite.

remain on the land, paying rent in one form or another, and producing the benefits of the land for the large city-dwelling landowner. The tenants in the parable, Herzog concludes, may be the very peasants whose land the vineyard owner had acquired.

Into a situation which is fraught with a tension verging on hatred, the vineyard owner sends one of his servants to collect his share of the harvest. Whether this refers to a share of the vegetables and plants grown between the vines in their early years of development, or to a share of the grape crop some five years later, however, remains unclear. Derrett contends that the violent reaction of the tenants to the vineyard owner's servants constitutes their rejection of his legal ownership of the land (1970: 289-306). Based largely on rabbinic evidence,⁵⁰ he claims that if they can assert their right to the harvest for three consecutive years they can lay claim to the land not only as tenants, but as owners themselves.⁵¹ This situation is most likely to occur immediately after the planting of the vineyard and, therefore, by Derrett's reckoning, in the period prior to significant grape production. Herzog reaches the same conclusion but for different reasons. His argument turns on what he terms the spiral of violence visited by the tenants upon the vineyard owner's retainers. Having seized, beaten and sent away the first servant empty-handed, the tenants inflict still greater violence upon the two further servants dispatched by the vineyard owner.⁵² The second is not only beaten, but beaten about the head and insulted. This has obvious significance within the agonistic society

⁵⁰b. Bat. 3:1; b. Bat. 28a,35b,38a. He also refers to Maimonides 13.4.18, 6; 11.1.18; 14.2.21, 7.

⁵¹But see Snodgrass who argues that b. Bat 3.2-3 specifically denies the *usucapio libertatis* to tenants (1983: 38).

⁵²Note that the vineyard owner does not seek legal redress from the tenants, nor takes direct action against them, he simply sends further retainers. His primary interest is clearly not the well-being of his servants, but the collection of his rent.

which was first century CE Palestine.⁵³ The third suffered the ultimate punishment, death. According to Herzog, this spiral of violence occurs most readily in situations of deprivation, in this case the tenants having been deprived of their land. In this marginal situation, when both their social status and means of survival are threatened, peasants are most likely to rebel.

Neither of the above arguments is entirely persuasive, however. Derrett, whilst perhaps correct to claim that an absentee landlord could expect little assistance from a local judge,⁵⁴ probably overestimates the knowledge of complex legal technicalities possessed by non-elite tenants (Hester 1992: 42). More importantly, the rabbinic texts upon which he relies are of uncertain date and application (Snodgrass 1983: 38). Herzog's difficulties are twofold. Firstly, his conclusion that the action taken by the tenants against the vineyard owner's servants forms part of 'a spiral of violence' is dependent upon the Markan account of events. In the parable recounted by Jesus two servants were sent and both suffered similar fates. Secondly, even if we accept that the killing of the son indicates an increase in the level of violence, need it be understood in terms of a peasant rebellion or revolt? We suggest not, for extreme although it was, murder remained within the parameters of every day forms of peasant resistance. Nathan Brown (1989: 93-121) provides numerous instances of agents, officials and members of the elite being the subject of attack and indeed murder at the hands of the peasantry in Egypt between 1882 and 1952. In 1909, for example, "One of the overseers on Prince Hussein's estates was returning home in the evening at the head of over 100 cotton pickers when a man stepped into the middle of the road and shot him dead. No one made any attempt to seize the assassin" (1989: 93). And again, "In January 1950 a

⁵³Malina 1981.

⁵⁴Although bribery could always be relied upon to help secure a favourable decision!

group of 15 armed men stopped a car which belonged to a sugar estate near Al- Araki in Naj Hamadi district, Qina province. They robbed the passengers and kidnapped one of them who worked as a treasurer of the estate". On investigating the incident the authorities discovered that numerous kidnappings had occurred in the same area, none of which had been reported to the police (1989: 109). Brown also provides a table of statistics detailing incidents of attacks on persons and property for selected years between 1882 and 1952.⁵⁵ In the two most volatile years reported, 1931 and 1933, 11 and 28 attacks respectively were noted against the employees of an estate, his family or property. In virtually all instances the reasoning behind the attacks was either political or economic. "Those who evicted tenants, raised rents, confiscated crops, or acted in a high-handed manner generally had the law on their side. That did not protect them, however, from shootings, stabbings, beatings or vandalism" (1989: 101). Significantly, even in the most volatile of years, Brown does not consider these acts of the Egyptian peasantry, including even the instances of murder, anything more than, "atomistic actions".⁵⁶ It is probable then that the actions of the tenants in the parable of the vineyard should be interpreted similarly. They are neither an attempt to assert a legal right to the vineyard, nor an isolated peasant revolt. They fall comfortably within the parameters of peasant resistance to elite oppression.

Despite the beatings and murder of his servants the vineyard owner sends his son in a final attempt to collect the share of the harvest due to him. He does so apparently in the belief that the tenants will recognise the son's authority and defer to him. In the

⁵⁵The figures are derived from newspaper reports rather than official records.

⁵⁶Brown's claim that murder was never an "everyday occurrence" in Egypt and therefore goes beyond Scott's definition of everyday forms of peasant resistance can hardly be substantiated. Arson or assault could hardly have been "everyday occurrences" either but they along with murder did form the more extreme elements of anonymous peasant action against an oppressive elite.

context of the parable, however, his killing is not completely unpredictable. Brown (1989: 102-103) provides ample evidence in the context of the Egyptian peasantry 1882-1952, that the landowner and his family were just as vulnerable to attack as his retainers. According to Derrett, the murder of the son was inspired by the tenants' belief that they would strengthen their claim to ownership of the vineyard if there was no one to inherit. Herzog, on the other hand, interprets the reference to inheritance in terms of the rights of the tenants to their patrimonial land. The killing of the son, he suggests, is not so much intended to secure his inheritance but to reclaim what they perceive in terms of the Torah to be their own (1994: 112). The tenants, however, would be only too aware that the killing of the heir would result in neither their legal nor long-term tenure of the land. It is therefore improbable that this was the intention. According to Brown, the actions of the Egyptian peasantry "consisted of attempts by individuals or small groups to strike out at local manifestations (*and perceived injustice*)⁵⁷ of the prevailing order... The actions must also be seen in the context of a general atmosphere, a consensus that encouraged and supported those peasants defending themselves against perceived threats" (1989: 94). Almost certainly the tenants in the parable believed themselves to be the victims of elite oppression and understood their actions in terms of defending their legitimate rights. But what were these rights? Herzog is correct to the extent that he understands the tenants' action to be linked to the concept of their patrimonial land, but the point of killing the vineyard owner's son was not to assert an actual claim to that land in terms of the prevailing legal system. Rather, it reflected their understanding of the land as the "precondition of all life, the source of all production and not a commodity" (Fiensy 1991: 15). The land of Israel belonged to Yahweh, not to entrepreneurial landowners, and all were entitled to enjoy its fruits. In killing the son, the tenants used an everyday form of peasant resistance to undermine the oppressive behaviour of the

⁵⁷Our emphasis.

elite and their exploitation of the land. The resultant inheritance which the tenants claimed was not the land *per se* but the produce of the land. In other words, the tenants claimed the right of the peasantry to use the land as Yahweh had intended, as a means of providing the necessities of life for themselves and their families. Hester (1992: 48) must surely be correct in his contention that Jesus leaves his listeners with a contrast in approaches to the land, but a contrast which turns less on the tenure than the use of land. The subversive nature of the parable becomes evident; the vineyard owner and his son, honourable members of the elite, exploit the land for personal gain, whilst the tenants, dispossessed smallholders and killers, uphold the values of Yahweh in their use of the land for subsistence purposes.

As we noted above, the quotation of Ps 118, although not original to the parable, became attached to it early on in the tradition. Indeed Taylor suggests that its occurrence in the parable may derive from Jesus' own use of the quote (1952: 476-477). If this is so then it offers the alternative possibility of interpreting the quotation in a non-allegorical manner, and thus provides an insight into how the parable may have been interpreted at a very early stage in its history. With regard to the identity of those who have been rejected and have subsequently become the cornerstone, there are only two possibilities, the son or the tenants. But it is only the latter who can truly be perceived as "the cornerstone". It is the exploited non-elite, the dispossessed tenants, who lie at the heart of the message of Jesus of Nazareth; it is to them that the kingdom of God belongs. Rather than denouncing the tenants as murderers, Jesus bemoans the fate of the exploited non-elite of Palestine and condemns their elite oppressors.⁵⁸

⁵⁸The response of the chief priests, scribes and elders in the context of the synoptic gospels, namely seeking the arrest of Jesus, would be entirely in keeping with the above interpretation of the parable. For they, like the vineyard owner, were members of the elite who oppressed the peasantry and urban artisans and, who thus too stood

It must be conceded that if the hearers of Jesus of Nazareth understood the parable in this manner and if a non allegorical interpretation was known early in the Christian tradition, neither of these are reflected in the presentation of the parable in the gospel of Mark. Either Mark misses the point of the parable or he quite deliberately alters it for his own purposes. A number of possibilities occur. Firstly, parables are by design ambiguous and capable of more than one interpretation. Secondly, the social conditions faced by Mark's community differed considerably from those of Jesus of Nazareth. In such circumstances, it is not surprising that Mark should seek to make the parable more directly relevant to his community.⁵⁹ And thirdly, for Jesus of Nazareth the parables owed much to the little tradition of Judeanism. They condemned elite exploitation and contrasted it with the values of the kingdom of God. For Mark, and his community, however, the teaching, parables and deeds of Jesus of Nazareth were becoming the Great Tradition of an emerging Christianity. In this tradition the significance of the person of Jesus, as well as his message, required to be conveyed. That Mark should seek to achieve this by refocusing one of his parables onto Jesus himself seems, at the least, a very real possibility.

The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant

In the wider context of Matthew's gospel, the parable of the Unforgiving Servant, (Mt 18: 23-35) is situated at the end of a chapter in which the central concerns are the kingdom of heaven, and forgiveness and discipline in the Matthean community. These themes of kingdom and forgiveness provide the opening and closure of the parable in v23a and v35 respectively and serve to link it more closely to the remainder of the

condemned.

⁵⁹See pp 134 and 135 above for Crossan's proposals re Markan emendations to the parable of the sower, which show how easily Jesus' *ipsissima verba* could be re-applied to new situations.

chapter (Davies and Allison 1991: 794).⁶⁰ Although slightly problematic in the sense that it enjoys only single attestation, the core of the parable betrays little evidence of Matthean redaction and will, therefore, be considered to represent the most original form attributable to Jesus of Nazareth.⁶¹ A king wishing to settle accounts with his servants summons into his presence one such servant who owes him some ten thousand talents. As he is unable to pay, the king orders that he, his family and all his possessions are sold in order to meet the debt. The slave, however, pleads with the king, promising, in the fullness of time, to repay everything he owes. Moved with pity the king relents, not only releasing him but cancelling the outstanding debt. On leaving the king's presence the servant comes upon another of the king's servants, one who owes him one hundred denarii. He seizes the slave and demands that he pay all that he owes. This second slave pleads in identical terms to those used by the first slave before the king, begging for time to repay his debt. But the first servant refuses and has him imprisoned until he has paid the sum outstanding. Word of what has taken place spreads amongst the king's other servants who bring it to the attention of the king. Enraged by the actions of the first slave, the king recalls him and berates him for his lack of compassion. He then orders that the slave be given over to the torturers until his debt is paid in full.

In order to understand the parable it is again necessary to consider the social script which underpins it. The importance of the king in ancient societies would be difficult to overestimate. Even in the context of Palestine where the Herodian client kings ruled under the ultimate authority of Rome they still, within their own territory, enjoyed considerable power. Indeed, all power and privilege flowed from the king and through

⁶⁰See also Herzog 1994: 131-133.

⁶¹Whilst Gundry 1982: 371-372 considers the parable a Matthean composition, the vast majority of scholars deem it to have originated with Jesus of Nazareth.

the king. He owned vast tracts of his country's best land,⁶² enjoyed considerable wealth and surrounded himself with a court of loyal noblemen. More significant, however, than the rule of individual kings was the concept of kingship itself. For although many kings, as a consequence of their exploitation and oppression, were deeply unpopular amongst their people, the notion of a just king persisted.⁶³ The king, it was believed, was appointed by God and thus enjoyed the divine right to rule.⁶⁴ A given king may fall short of the standards expected of him but this did not invalidate kingship *per se*. In the context of Israelite history the notion of kingship, however, contained a still further dimension. As we have noted in Chapter Two above, in probably the most common strand of messianic thought, the anticipated messiah takes the form of a king. Whether that king is of Davidic descent or is a charismatic popular figure is incidental, the important point is that he is an 'ideal king', one who reigns with justice and compassion. Two possibilities occur therefore, when those listening to Jesus' parable hear mention of the king seeking to settle his accounts. They will expect his behaviour to conform either to that of the ruthless, oppressive kings of their experience, or to the stereotypical characteristics of the hoped for messiah. Scott posits a third option, however, namely that the king in the parable should be identified as a Gentile (1989: 271-280). He cites a number of factors in support of this contention. Firstly, the excessive sums involved are suggestive of the empire.⁶⁵ Secondly, whilst the sale of a debtor's wife and children to meet his debts was an acknowledged form of punishment in the Gentile world, it was

⁶²The rulers of Egypt traditionally believed that all of the country's land belonged to them (Fiensy 1991: 21). Although in Israel the land was believed to belong to Yahweh, the king still procured the best land for himself. See Chapter One above.

⁶³Pomykala 1995.

⁶⁴Until very recently the Emperor of Japan was considered by his subjects to be semi-divine.

⁶⁵According to Jeremias "The magnitude of the sum shows that the 'servant' is to be thought of as a satrap who was responsible for the revenue from his province" (1963: 210).

forbidden under Judean Law.⁶⁶ And thirdly, the term προσεκύνει in v26 is more appropriately translated “worshipped” than “prostrated himself”, and therefore could only apply in a Gentile context. Scott proceeds to interpret the parable as setting up a contrast between Gentile and Judean in which the certainties of Judean superiority, adhered to by Jesus’ audience, are called into question. How compelling are these arguments in favour of a Gentile context? Herzog must surely be correct when he asserts that certainly the later Hasmonean rulers and the Herodians were considerably influenced by Hellenistic and Roman culture and practices (1994: 138-139).⁶⁷ “It is certainly possible”, he claims, “that Jewish, Hellenistic and Roman rulers were all homogenised in the mind of the common people into some vague notion of powerful tyrants...”. Secondly, it is apparent from the gospel accounts of John the Baptist’s condemnation of the marriage of Antipas to his brother’s wife, that Judean rulers broke the Judean Law with impunity. The point, as we have noted above, is that the king stands above the Law, he can do whatever he chooses.⁶⁸ In the context of the parable this is illustrated by the total control he enjoys over every aspect of the servant’s life, his family, his possessions, his very person. Finally, the term προσεκύνει is ambivalent. It can indeed be interpreted as suggesting worship, but it can just as readily be understood as prostrating oneself in humility. Whilst Scott’s thesis is undeniably possible, we nonetheless contend that Judean tradition provides a more than adequate, and therefore more likely, social context for Jesus’ audience to both locate and interpret the parable.

⁶⁶Jeremias 1963: 211 and Schweizer 1980: 377-378.

⁶⁷Kokkinos 1998 provides a detailed treatise on the lives of the Herodians and in particular the Greco-Roman influence in their education and upbringing, often in Rome, and their many marriages to Gentile women. Note also Chapter Two above.

⁶⁸Always with the proviso that his actions do not cause offence to Rome.

The other major figure in the parable is the slave indebted to the king for the sum of ten thousand talents. The king's slave is clearly a valued retainer, most probably a part of the group of retainers who facilitated the king's rule, and therefore a member of the highest echelons of Palestinian society. Whether or not the sum of ten thousand talents reflects Matthean exaggeration as some scholars suggest,⁶⁹ a significant amount is clearly intended both to indicate the importance of the slave's role at the king's court and also to invite comparison between the respective debts of the greater and lesser slaves. Despite his standing at court, the slave, knowing that the king was seeking to settle his accounts and that he was unable to repay his debt, would have ventured into the king's presence in some trepidation. For he would be only too aware that his exalted position as a courtier was entirely dependent upon his retaining the king's favour. The status he enjoyed, the luxurious lifestyle, his own client base were all consequent upon his role at the court of the king. Such was the absolute power of the king, if the retainer lost his patronage then he effectively lost his life. So it was, that when the king ascertained that the retainer was unable to meet his obligations, he gave the order that the slave and all that he possessed, including his wife and family, be sold. According to Herzog, this was not a realistic attempt by the king to recover the outstanding sum, but rather the punishment meted out to a dissolute slave (1994: 139). The punishment was intended to speak to more than merely the retainer and his family, however, for its implications were apparent to all the king's slaves. The king ruled absolutely, his power was total, his word was law. By taking such action against one who had previously stood

⁶⁹For example Davies and Allison 1991: 796. In addition to the distribution of territory, *Ant.* 17.11.4-5 [318-323] records the amounts awarded by Caesar on the death of Herod the Great to his family as follows: to Archelaus 600 talents p.a., to Antipas 200 talents p.a., to Philip 100 talents p.a. and to Salome 60 talents p.a. An amount of ten thousand talents then, although beyond the comprehension of the non-elite, is just about conceivable amongst those in the very highest echelons of society.

so close to the throne, he was reminding the other slaves and retainers of their dependence upon and subservience to him.

Having been stripped of everything, the slave realised that he was no longer dependent upon the king's favour but upon his mercy. With no position left to maintain, no honour to uphold, he prostrated himself before the king and begged for the opportunity to make restitution. The king's response went beyond this, however, for "moved with compassion the lord of that slave released him and cancelled the debt". Derrett contends that the king's actions were inspired more by practicalities than by compassion (1970: 38-39). The particular abilities of the slave, his past successes and loyalty, his literacy and his standing amongst the other retainers emphasised his singular value to the king. The severe reprimand by the king and his subsequent act of generosity, even to the extent of cancelling the outstanding debt, would both have chastened the slave and heightened his sense of loyalty to his master, an outcome which would prove more beneficial to the king in the long term than having the slave and his possessions sold. Derrett's view, however, is not entirely convincing. The retainer may in the past have proven himself to have been of exceptional ability but no one is indispensable. Moreover, accumulating debts of ten thousand talents, at the very least, leaves the retainer open to charges of neglect of duty or even incompetence. In the extremely competitive world of the king's bureaucracy there would have been any number of able retainers willing to pledge their loyalty to the king in exchange for his favour and their advancement. Further, to remit a debt of ten thousand talents as an act of generosity designed to heighten the loyalty of a slave already deeply beholden to his king seems at the least improbable. The absolute power of the king to act as he chooses is again evident in response to the slave's pleading, but that response encompasses more than just power it shows compassion. Had the king merely released the slave and granted his

request for time to repay the amount he owed, then he may indeed be perceived as no more than an ordinary king acting to secure his own best interests. The cancelling of such a considerable debt, however, suggests something more. In Psalm of Solomon 17 we find a description of the nature of the reign of the messianic king,⁷⁰

See, Lord and raise up for them their king, the son of David,
in the time which you have chosen, to be king over your child, Israel. v 21

He will gather a holy people whom he will lead in righteousness,
and he will judge the tribes of the people which has been made
holy by the Lord its God. v 26.

He will not permit injustice ever to dwell in their midst,
and no one who knows evil will dwell with them. v27

He will judge the peoples and the Gentiles in the wisdom of
his righteousness. v29

He will be a righteous king over them, taught by God,
and there will be no injustice in his days in their midst,
because all will be holy, and their king will be,
the Lord Messiah. v 32⁷¹

For he will not hope in horse or rider or bow,
nor will he multiply for himself gold or silver for war,
nor concentrate hopes in a multitude for a day of war. v 33

The Lord himself is his king, the hope of the powerful one
by the hope of God.

⁷⁰See Chapter Two above.

⁷¹Wright similarly translates this as Lord Messiah arguing that there is sufficient evidence from Greek and Syrian manuscripts to render the common emendation to "the Lord's Messiah" unnecessary (1985: 667).

He will have mercy on all the Gentiles before him in fear. v 34
 For he will strike the earth with the word of his mouth forever,
 and he will bless the Lord's people with wisdom and happiness. v 35
 He himself will be free from sin so as to rule a great people,
 to condemn rulers and to drive out sinners by the strength of his word. v36
 He will not grow weak in his days, (in reliance) on his God,
 because God made him powerful in the Holy Spirit
 and wise in the counsel of understanding with strength and
 righteousness. v 37
 He will lead all of them with equality,
 and there will be no arrogance among them,
 so that any among them should be oppressed. v 41
 This is the beauty of the king of Israel, which God knew,
 to raise him up over the house of Israel to discipline it. v 42⁷²

The reign of the messianic king exhibits a number of characteristics which exalt it above the rule of ordinary kings; righteousness, justice, wisdom, mercy, lack of oppression and happiness all figure prominently in the messianic kingdom (Wright 1985: 643-646). And many of these features are reflected in the actions of the king in his dealings with the retainer in the parable. As a ruler he illustrated that he had the power to act as he chose, but as that power was based in the Holy Spirit he displayed his righteousness and wisdom by displaying mercy and compassion. Another possible indication that Matthew, and possibly Jesus, intended the king to be understood in messianic terms is the use of the word κύριος to describe the king in relation to the slave. It can certainly be argued that the term means no more than master, but it also

⁷²The translation of the Psalm is taken from Esler 1995c.

occurs in v 32 of Psalm of Solomon 17 in which, on either interpretation, it is obviously a reference to the messianic king.

On being dismissed from the king's presence the retainer immediately came upon one of his own clients, another slave of the king but one clearly of considerably less standing than himself. This lesser retainer owed the former the sum of one hundred denarii. Whilst this amount may have constituted half of one year's wages for a day-labourer,⁷³ it paled into insignificance when compared to the ten thousand talents the first retainer had previously owed. And yet in spite of his own reprieve at the hands of the king, he took hold of his fellow slave and, choking him, demanded repayment of the one hundred denarii. This fellow slave pleaded in almost identical terms to those used by the first retainer before the king, begging for time to repay his debt. But his petitions fell upon deaf ears and he was cast into prison until the debt was met. The behaviour of the former courtier conforms exactly with that which would be expected of a patron in agrarian society seeking to recover what he is owed. It jars in the context of the parable only because of the earlier compassion shown by the king. A number of factors would have contributed towards the patron-retainer's behaviour. His humiliation at the hands of the king would quickly become common knowledge at court. The altercation with the lesser slave offered him the opportunity to re-establish himself and to illustrate to the other retainers that he remained a force to be reckoned with. Any thoughts of a diminution of his power, of the opportunity to take advantage of any possible weakness in his position, would be banished by the ruthless manner in which he dealt with his fellow slave. It may also have engendered a fear amongst his other clients that they might suffer a similar fate. And according to Herzog, it was a consequence of

⁷³Herzog suggests 100 denarii was more than one year's wages for a day-labourer (1994: 143). As Fiensy notes, however, the minimum subsistence level for an average family of six was approximately 200 denarii per annum (1991: 87-90). See pg 176 below.

this fear that most probably led these clients to switch their allegiance to another of the king's retainers (1994: 145). Having done so they then conspired to ensure that the actions of their previous patron came to the attention of the king. Their apparent concern for their fellow slave masked their own self-interest. The subsequent actions of the king require some consideration. If, as Derrett suggests, the king after berating his slave had cancelled his debt and reinstated him in the belief that he would once again prove a loyal and effective retainer, then as Herzog notes, we would have expected praise for his treatment of his client not condemnation (1994: 146). Ruthlessly extracting tribute and other sums from the king's debtors, and in his own right as a patron himself, was an integral aspect of his remit. Why then would the king call him an "evil slave" and hand him over to the torturers until all his outstanding debt be repaid? Derrett's contention that the patron-retainer's action was unacceptable to the king because it was carried out against a fellow slave is clearly inadequate. Rivalries between courtiers and retainers of the king were commonplace and often initiated by the king to ensure his absolute control. Herzog likewise acknowledges the difficulty with the king's response and relates it to the values of honour and shame. The behaviour of the first retainer constituted a gross over reaction in relation to the one hundred denarii outstanding. As such, Herzog claims, it was an affront to the king bringing shame upon him. It was in order to counter this affront that he had the retainer handed over to the torturers. In the context of the parable, however, mercy and justice rather than honour and shame appear to lie behind the actions of the king. Herzog does nonetheless recognise the messianic overtones of the parable. The cancelling of the first retainer's debt he terms a "messianic moment" (1994: 147). But, he continues, the actions of the patron-retainer in relation to his client illustrated the inability of the king to suffuse his courtiers with this sense of the messianic age. Rather, the slave conforms to type and so affronts the king that he feels obliged to revert to his former means of government punishing the slave even more

severely than he had originally intended. The point of the parable, Herzog concludes, is that not even a messianic ruler can solve the problems faced by the non-elite. There are a number of flaws in Herzog's argument, however. In the first instance, either the king in the parable is portrayed as the messianic king or he is not. He cannot decide to be the messianic king at one moment and then revert to a popular type king at another when his retainer does not behave as he would have liked. The messianic king is very specifically God's anointed; he cannot simply assume the role himself. Secondly, Herzog displays a misunderstanding of what messianic rule entails. There are, as the Psalm of Solomon above highlights, a number of aspects to it. Two of the most significant of these are justice and mercy. According to the Psalm, the messianic king "will not permit injustice ever to dwell in their midst, and no one who knows evil will dwell with them" v 27. Again, "He will be a righteous king over them taught by God, and there will be no injustice in his days in their midst" v 32. "He will have mercy on all the Gentiles before him in fear". "He himself will be free from sin so as to rule a great people...and to drive out sinners by the strength of his word" v 36. And finally, "He will lead them all with equality and there will be no arrogance amongst them, so that any amongst them should be oppressed" v 41. The response of the king to the first retainer's treatment of his client is not, as Herzog claims, a reversion to the popular type of king, since, in terms of Psalm of Solomon 17, it remains an appropriate reaction of the messianic king. Having set the standard of mercy required by cancelling the debt of the first retainer, it becomes a matter of justice that the king's retainer acts likewise. Moreover, to the non-elite who constituted most of those listening to Jesus of Nazareth, exploitative loans and the debts which resulted from them were perceived in terms of oppression and injustice.⁷⁴ The

⁷⁴In the Old Testament justice is understood not simply by reference to a moral norm but also in terms of human rights. Injustice is the deprivation of these rights, including the right to subsistence. That the non-elite did perceive exploitative loans to be unjust is amply evidenced by the raising of the archives which held the records of debt at the

remission of such debts was therefore more a matter of justice than mercy.⁷⁵ The imprisoning of the client retainer until his debt is repaid is not therefore merely an exaggerated response to the 'crime', nor simply an affront to the king, it is an act of injustice and oppression, of arrogance and evil. In other words, it is behaviour which is unacceptable within the context of the messianic rule. If the sole characteristic of the messianic king was mercy then we could reasonably have expected him to forgive the retainer a second time. His mercy, however, was inextricably linked to justice.⁷⁶ As a result of the retainer's failure to act justly and mercifully towards his fellow slave, the messianic beneficence displayed in the cancelling of his debt is withdrawn from him. And the messianic king expels him from the kingdom "by the strength of his word".

Two petitions from the prayer taught by Jesus of Nazareth to his disciples, and which subsequently was to become enshrined in Christianity as the Our Father, appear to offer support to the above interpretation. In the first instance the disciples are instructed to pray for the coming of God's kingdom. Thereafter they are to petition God that God might "cancel our debts just as we have cancelled the debts of our debtors" (Mt 6: 12). In his social analysis of the Our Father, Oakman attributes to Jesus of Nazareth only the fourth, fifth and sixth petitions (1999a: 137-186). The prayers to sanctify God's name, for the coming of the kingdom and for God's will to be done, belong, he persuasively argues, to later tradition. The core of the Our Father is therefore rooted in the social realities of hunger (the provision of daily bread), debt (the remission of debt) and injustice (deliverance from corrupt courts and judges). Oakman acknowledges, however,

beginning of the Judean revolt (*J.W.* 2.17.6 [426-428]).

⁷⁵Contra Via 1967: 140. The recent call for the cancellation of the International debt of Third World countries is based not on mercy but rather on social justice, see *Caritas Internationalis* 1998.

⁷⁶The combination of mercy and justice is known in the Old Testament, see for example Micah 6: 8.

that in seeking a remedy for these problems the prayer looks “for ultimate and final changes in human affairs and conditions” (1999a: 181). In other words, although the petition for the coming of God’s kingdom is a later addition, the kingdom of God, which features prominently in the teaching of Jesus⁷⁷, is undoubtedly the context within which hunger will be eradicated, debts remitted and justice available to all. The parallel between the remittance of debt and the kingdom of God, and the cancelling of debt in the messianic kingdom in the above parable is notable. Moreover, in the Our Father, God’s cancelling of the petitioner’s debt is inextricably linked to the latter’s cancelling the debts of those indebted to him. Similarly the messianic king is moved to rescind his remittance of the retainer’s debt when he fails to cancel the debt of his client. The highly ranked retainer experienced the fullness of the messianic kingdom when his debt was cancelled. Yet only moments later he showed that he preferred the values of an exploitative agrarian society. And it is his actions, consequent upon these values, which see him condemned. By this parable Jesus of Nazareth provides a stark warning to the elite and their retainers, the values of greed and exploitation which stand behind their oppressive behaviour are not the values of the kingdom of God. If they persist in acting unjustly and unmercifully they will suffer the same fate as the highly ranked slave.

The Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard

Mt 20: 1-16 narrates a second parable concerning the relationship between the elite and non-elite in the setting of a vineyard. Although the parable occurs only in the gospel of Matthew, and therefore enjoys only single attestation, Jeremias 1963, Crossan 1973,

⁷⁷A vast literature exists on the nature of the kingdom of God in the teaching of Jesus. The main contributors to the debate on the subject include Schweitzer 1910, Bultmann 1935, 1954-55, Cadoux 1941, Manson 1948, 1957, Dodd 1961, Perrin 1963, 1976, Jeremias 1963 and Chilton 1984. For a consideration of recent discussion on the kingdom of God see Chilton 1994b.

Scott 1989 and Herzog 1994 all consider the parable to originate with Jesus.⁷⁸ A brief comparison of the Matthean narrative in which the parable is located with the corresponding narrative in Mark, proves helpful in identifying probable elements of Matthean redaction. Scott (1989: 284-285) highlights two elements of chapter 19 in which Matthew deviates significantly from his Markan source. Firstly, in the Markan account of the incident featuring the rich young man, Jesus is addressed as “Good Teacher” and asked “What must I do to receive eternal life?” (Mk 10: 17). He responds pointedly, “Why do you call me good?” “No one is good except God alone” (Mk 10: 18). In the Matthean narrative, however, Jesus is addressed simply as “Teacher” and asked “What good deed must I do to have eternal life?” He replies, “Why do you ask me about what is good? There is only one who is good” (Mt 19: 16-17). In Matthew’s account the exclusive identification of ‘good’ with God is quite intentionally dropped in order that the appellation of ‘good’ may be subsequently understood as applying to Jesus. Secondly, having explained to his disciples how difficult it will be for the rich to enter the kingdom of heaven, Jesus responds to Peter’s question concerning the fate of the disciples as follows, “Truly I tell you, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man is seated on the throne of his glory, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel” (Mt 19: 28). This verse is peculiarly Matthean having no parallel in Mark or Luke. Its purpose is to secure the position of the disciples on the day of judgement, and in the context of chapter 19, to contrast this with the fate of the Pharisees.⁷⁹ The chapter concludes with the logion “But many who are first will be last, and the last will be first” (Mt 19: 30). The referents in chapter 19 are obvious, the first who will be last are the Pharisees and the last who will be first, the

⁷⁸But note Grundy who “suggests that Matthew is adapting [the parable of the Workers in the Vineyard] to the saying about the first and last” (1982: 395).

⁷⁹In Mt 19: 3-9 Jesus is engaged in a dispute with the Pharisees concerning the law on divorce.

disciples. The same logion occurs at the end of the parable and, according to Scott, the same identification should be made, those who enter the vineyard first are the Pharisees, those who come at the end of the day are the disciples (1989: 285). The master in the parable is Jesus.⁸⁰ Matthew, it would appear, has adopted a recurring logion from the teaching of Jesus and attached it to the parable of the workers in the vineyard to strengthen the allegory he has created from the core parable.

In addition to v16,⁸¹ Crossan (1973: 112-113) questions the originality of vv 14 and 15. Verse 15, in particular, he argues, is a Matthean construction resonating with the contrast between good and evil.⁸² It is a contrast which ties in with the issue of 'who or what is good' considered above in connection with Mt 19: 17. Moreover, Crossan continues, the actions of the vineyard owner are sufficiently ambivalent to cause us to question the appropriateness of labelling them 'good'. Finally, he contends that not only does the rhetorical question of v13 provide a suitable conclusion to the parable, the content of the question, 'the paying of the denarius' and 'doing no wrong' form a connection with 'the paying of the denarius' in v2 and 'the giving of what is right' in v4. Verse 14, according to Crossan, does little more than prepare the ground for v15 and should also therefore be seen as Matthean creation. Whilst agreeing with Crossan with regard to the Matthean origin of v14b, both Via (1967: 125) and Scott (1989: 287) consider v14a to belong to the original structure of the parable. Herzog (1994: 82-83), on

⁸⁰But note Herzog who argues that those who entered the vineyard first were either the Judean people or the original disciples of Jesus. Those who entered last were either Gentiles or new members of Matthew's community, whilst the vineyard owner was a "God figure" (1994: 80).

⁸¹The saying in verse 16 occurs elsewhere in the gospels in Mk 10: 31//Mt 19: 30 and Lk 13: 30. It is not considered original to the parable. See for example Dodd 1961: 92.

⁸²Scott 1989: 285-286 emphasises the extent to which Matthew has developed this theme. He cites eight instances in which the contrast between good and evil occurs in Matthew's gospel and claims that only two of these find parallels in Luke.

the other hand, argues in favour of the authenticity of both vv 14 and 15. The formal grounds cited by Crossan for the omission of v14, and supported by Via in respect of v14a, are deemed inadequate by Herzog, as is Scott's reasoning that the expulsion from the vineyard of the worker who complained provides a conclusion more in keeping with the point of the parable. Herzog argues that the question in v15 "Or is your eye evil because I am good?" provides an entirely fitting and apposite closure of the parable.⁸³ Whilst Crossan and Scott are correct to note the significance of the contrast between good and evil in Matthew, the fact remains that it occurs twice in Luke⁸⁴ and clearly emanates from Jesus of Nazareth. In the absence of compelling evidence to the contrary, therefore, we will consider vv 14 and 15 to be original to the core parable.

Two other verses in the parable require to be mentioned briefly. Verse 1a contains a comparison of the kingdom of heaven to a landowner going out early one morning to employ workers for his vineyard. Whilst the association of the vineyard owner with the kingdom of heaven sits comfortably with the allegorical interpretation of the parable presented by Matthew, it proves problematic in a non-allegorical context. The reference to the kingdom of heaven, a recognised Matthean construction, is therefore, we contend, a later addition to the parable which originally commenced solely with the vineyard owner going out to hire labourers (Breech 1983: 142). Doubt has also been cast over the originality of v8c "beginning with the last and then going to the first" (Scott 1989: 287)⁸⁵ but, as with Herzog, we shall illustrate that this verse has an important role to play in the functioning of the parable.

⁸³Elliott interprets the entire parable in terms of verse 15 arguing that the envy and covetousness of the Evil Eye have no place in the kingdom of heaven (1992: 52-65).

⁸⁴Lk 6: 44-45 and 19: 11-27.

⁸⁵Breech also considers verse 8 to be a Matthean insertion, "The steward for Matthew, is the Son of Man or Jesus in his role as dispenser of justice at the last judgement" (1983: 142).

The scenario in which an elite landowner is presented actively seeking workers for his vineyard himself is an improbable one. This is a task which would unquestionably have fallen to his estate manager or another of his retainers. His appearance throughout the parable is therefore clearly significant. In contrast to the landowner stand the hired workers. It was usual for those seeking employment in first century CE Palestine to congregate in the market place in the hope of securing some form of casual work for the day. Amongst these were smallholders and tenants seeking to supplement their meagre incomes, but the majority were landless day-labourers (Fiensy 1991: 85). For the most part, these were the sons of peasant smallholders whose patrimony proved inadequate to sustain a large family, or which on the death of the head of the family passed to the eldest son. Additionally, throughout the first century CE their numbers were increased by smallholders whose land had been forfeited through default on a loan, and tenants who had been evicted for failure to pay rent. Potential workers for the vineyard were in plentiful supply.

A sound analysis of the role and work of the day-labourer is provided by Fiensy (1991: 85-90). Of the many tasks undertaken by the day-labourer, working in the fields was one of the most common. “..Ploughing, weeding, harvesting, threshing, picking fruit and other agricultural work” (1991: 86) were all jobs he would willingly turn his hand to. Whilst there was a degree of variation regarding the payment rates of skilled labourers,⁸⁶ most scholars accept that the average wage paid for an unskilled labourer was one denarius.⁸⁷ The relative value of this one denarius, however, is less certain. According

⁸⁶Fiensy 1991: 87 cites the example of the scribe or calligrapher who earned a daily wage of two denarii.

⁸⁷See for example Grant 1926, Jeremias 1969, Ben-David 1974 and Klausner 1975. Note also Tobit 5: 15. That day-labourers were also paid in agricultural produce is confirmed in b. Metzia 9: 12

to Scott, "A denarius a day would be sufficient to support a worker and his family at a subsistence level, that is, at the level of a peasant" (1989: 291). Herzog, on the other hand, considers the position of the day-labourer to be so precarious that not only would he be unable to provide for a family, but allowing for the uncertain nature of his employment he would barely be able to sustain himself (1994: 89-90). As a member of 'the expendables' he could expect his life to be "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short" (Hobbes cited in Herzog 1994: 88). Which of these presents the more accurate picture? Fiensy (1991: 87-90) attempts to ascertain the standard of living of the day-labourer by reference to the purchasing value of wheat per denarius, the amount of wheat consumed per person, family size, approximate amount of days worked per year and calorific intake.⁸⁸ He calculates that in a year of average yield, one denarius would purchase one seah of unground wheat. Allowing for a family size of six⁸⁹ consuming a daily ration of bread of approximately 400 grams costing 1/12th of a denarius each, a day-labourer would require to earn 182 denarii *per annum* to provide the minimum bread ration for his family.⁹⁰ Again using statistics provided by Ben-David, Fiensy concludes that after taking into consideration inclement weather and ill-health, the day-labourer would work on average 200 days per year. At a daily rate of one denarius he would, therefore, be able to supply his family with their basic bread provision but little more. Additional food requirements were probably obtained by eating some of the crops being harvested, gleaning the fields, and collecting wild berries and vegetables. Nonetheless, Fiensy's calculations suggest that the day-labourer and his family struggled to meet the most basic subsistence requirements. The situation for the day-labourer may not have been quite so

⁸⁸Oakman similarly, by reference to calorific intake, field size, average crop returns, and taxation and rent, attempts to determine the minimum subsistence levels of peasant small holders and tenants (1986: 57-72).

⁸⁹Fiensy derives his figures from work carried out by Ben-David 1974.

⁹⁰This appears to be supported by Mark's claim that 200 denarii would provide bread for 5000 men (Mk 6: 30-44).

bad as Herzog portrays it, in so far as he probably could just about sustain himself and a family, but nor was it as secure as Scott suggests. Moreover, Fiensy's calculations are based on an average case scenario, in times of dearth and famine the day-labourer was undoubtedly amongst the first to suffer.

The first of the vineyard owner's sojourns to the marketplace occurs early in the morning. Already congregating in the market square are labourers eagerly seeking work for the day. After agreeing the standard rate of one denarius for their day's work,⁹¹ the workers set off for the vineyard. Herzog correctly notes that this apparent negotiation is little more than a pretence, however, for in the prevailing situation of supply exceeding demand, the elite vineyard owner held all the cards. At approximately three hourly intervals throughout the day, the landowner returns to the marketplace and employs the labourers he finds still there. So desperate are these for work that they willingly go to the vineyard on the strength of what the owner promises will be a "right" amount. According to Scott, the term 'right', δίκαιος, in Israelite tradition, "involves not simply strict, legalistic justice but also liberality and charity" (1989: 291-292). This notwithstanding, the expectation of the labourers hired on this basis would very probably have been for a relative proportion of the denarius paid to those who had worked all day. One further point requires to be considered, why did the vineyard owner make so many trips to the marketplace? If, as we contend, casual labour was plentiful, why did he not engage sufficient workers to meet his needs in the first instance? Even if we allow that early in the morning too few workers were available, surely by noon he could have obtained as many as he required. A possible option, of course, is that rather than employing only the number of day-labourers necessary, he took pity on those during the

⁹¹The working day in first century CE Palestine commenced at sun rise and ended at sun set (b. Metzia 9: 11).

course of the day who had been unable to secure employment and for that reason sent them too to his vineyard. Although this is not explicitly stated in the parable, the vineyard owner's link with the kingdom of heaven, and also the allegorical interpretation in which the landowner is perceived as Yahweh, imply this to be so. This may well be the intent of the Matthean parable, but was it what Jesus of Nazareth intended?

At the end of the day the landowner directs his manager to pay the labourers their wages, specifically requiring that those who arrived last and had worked the shortest length of time be paid first, and no doubt in full view of the remainder of the workers. To each of these he gave one denarius. The others, whom he had also employed throughout the day, were summoned in order and were likewise rewarded with one denarius. Having witnessed this, those who had toiled in the vineyard for the full day arrived before the estate manager anticipating that they too might benefit from their employer's apparent 'generosity'. Instead they also received the standard one denarius. Perhaps not surprisingly these labourers felt aggrieved at their treatment and made their point to the landowner. He responded simply that they had received the amount that they had previously agreed upon and were due no more. He, the landowner, could dispense his wealth as he chose, to whom he chose. But as Herzog indicates, in a first century CE Palestinian context there is far more to it than just that!

If the parable simply presents a situation of a wealthy vineyard owner dispensing his largesse, why was it necessary to do so in such a manner as to cause offence to those who had worked hardest throughout the day on that very landowner's behalf? By pointedly directing his retainer to pay out the labourers in reverse order he clearly intends for those who had worked longest to realise that they had been paid only the same as the other workers. Herzog explains the dynamics behind this scene in terms of a

shame-honour challenge.⁹² By paying all the labourers the same amount, irrespective of their efforts, the elite landowner insults and shames those who have worked for the longest period of time in his vineyard. He continues by suggesting that the day-labourers, realising that the only thing of value which they possessed, namely their labour, was being disparaged, felt obliged to respond. Had they failed to do so they would have been perceived to have acquiesced in the vineyard owner's sense of their worth. Thus Herzog sees the response of the day-labourers in vv11-12 as a challenge to this claim by the landowner in vv 8-10. The challenge they make is a simple one, they have worked all day for the same recompense as that received by those who have toiled from only the eleventh hour. Thus, they suggest that the landowner's behaviour is unjust. The vineyard owner rebuffs the challenge with a riposte of his own; singling out one of the workers, he reminds them that he has done no more than adhere to the terms to which they themselves had previously agreed. He dismisses the labourers saying "Take what belongs to you and go". Whatever he chooses to do with his wealth, he asserts, is entirely his decision. Herzog suggests that such a comment may have particularly incensed those amongst the day-labourers who may have lost their land to the vineyard owner; what he was claiming as his own was by right their patrimonial land. The landowner concludes the shame-honour contest by accusing the labourers of possessing 'the evil eye' and declaring himself to be good.

Herzog is very probably correct in interpreting the dispute between the vineyard owner and those day-labourers who had worked longest in the vineyard in terms of shame and honour. But ought it really be understood as a 'full-blown' challenge and response scenario? Herzog himself indicates the difficulty with this when he notes that the insult, namely the paying out of the wages, was delivered not by the landowner but by

⁹²Contra Scott 1989: 294.

his retainer, because it was below the dignity of a member of the elite to act in such a fashion (1994: 92). A central aspect of the challenge-response contest is that both parties are on an equal footing. According to Malina, "Superiors cannot lose their honour to inferiors. Superiors cannot be challenged by inferiors" (1996b). Thus when the labourers respond to the payment of their one denarius, they do so not in the form of a formal challenge, since their lowly status in society would not allow this, but rather as an 'affront' to the landowner. Malina continues "whilst an inferior's affront is not a challenge, it is dishonouring and undermines the 'shame' (i.e. concern for honour) of the superior. Superiors must see to such affronts and insults in order to maintain prominence and respect for their office which is themselves". There were a number of ways in which a member of the elite could have attended to such an affront, in this instance the vineyard owner satisfies himself with a verbal riposte. The nature of the riposte, however, reveals much not only about the landowner but of the elite in general in first century CE Palestine. "Friend", the vineyard owner says, "I am doing you no wrong; did you not agree with me for a denarius". The use of the term ἑταῖρος, friend is not intended as a recognition of an equal, for the Greek φίλος would have been used in that context. Rather, it serves here as a means of condescension, of the landowner assuming the moral high ground. This is reinforced by his claim that he is doing no wrong, that the agreement reached between them was fair and that he is acting justly by adhering to it. In these words he encapsulates the attitude of the elite in their dealings with the peasants, tenants and day-labourers of Palestine. But are there other criteria by which the actions of the vineyard owner can be judged? As we noted above the daily wage of one denarius provided the day-labourer and his family with only the most basic of subsistence requirements. Yet with little or no other resources available to him, the day-labourer was obliged to undertake almost any task which came his way. In such circumstances to suggest that any form of wage negotiation was anything other than a diktat from the elite

simply is not credible. It is highly probable that the rate of one denarius evolved as the amount necessary to maintain the majority of the workforce in adequate condition to carry out the tasks required of them. Anything less and they would have been too undernourished to perform effectively, anything more and profits would have been squandered. In setting the rate at one denarius, the vineyard owner had no concern to act justly, rather he operated at the most effective level of exploitation. The claim that he had done no wrong may have sat well with his peers, but his behaviour typifies precisely that which is condemned by the prophets throughout Israel's history.⁹³

The final dismissal of the day-labourers exemplifies the arrogance and power of the elite. Sending them on their way, he leaves them in no doubt of their respective social positions, "I choose to give this last the same as I give to you. Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or is your eye evil because I am good". A number of points arise from these remarks. The emphasis on choice contrasts significantly with the lack of choice available to the non-elite; choice is clearly a perquisite of power. The charade of negotiation is exposed; to the elite all payment is gift and is in his power. In addition to his right to act as he pleases, the landowner asserts a possessory right over what he owns. As Herzog notes this may have been intended as a further slight against those who had lost their land, but there is also a wider context. The wealth enjoyed by the vineyard owner would almost exclusively have derived from the land. A central tenet of Judeanism was that the Israelites were but sojourners in the land, that it was given to them to occupy by Yahweh, but it was Yahweh who owned the land.⁹⁴ By asserting his right to the vineyard, and the wealth

⁹³Esler 1998a examines the attitudes of the eighth century BCE Israelite prophets to wealth and poverty.

⁹⁴As we noted in Chapter Two this is the theological concept reflected in the Year of Jubilee.

that derived therefrom, the elite not only over estimates his own position, he arrogates that of Yahweh.

The accusation of 'the evil eye' levelled against the day-labourers by the landowner in the Mediterranean cultural context constitutes a stinging insult. According to Elliott, "Evil Eye possessors were thought capable of damaging or destroying the life and health, means of sustenance and livelihood, familial honor and personal well-being of their unfortunate victims". He continues, "Foremost among the malevolent emotions associated with the Evil Eye is that of envy, which was also linked with feelings of resentment of another's health social standing or sudden good fortune, and stinginess or unwillingness to share one's possessions with others, especially those in need" (1992: 53). By means of his accusation the landowner publicly shames the day-labourer denouncing him not only as being consumed with envy, but more significantly as seeking to undermine the landowner's well-being and prosperity.⁹⁵ In contrast to the malice evinced by the day-labourer, the vineyard owner declares himself to be "good". This self perception of the elite is again revealing, for in a society in which the dyadic personality was the norm, his view of himself derived from the esteem or lack of it in which he was held by others. In other words, the elite's understanding of himself as "good" reflected society's value of him. And this is vital to our understanding of the parable, for it is

⁹⁵Derrett 1995: 65-72. Breech's failure to understand the practical consequences of the 'evil eye' leads him to interpret the response of the workers solely in terms of envy. Not so much envy of the landowner, however, but of their fellow workers who benefit from his generosity. This envy leads to a negative comparison by those who had worked all day with those who came later to the vineyard. Envy and negative comparison are two of the factors which ultimately lead to *ressentiment*. It is in these terms, he contends, that the reaction of the workers should be understood (1983: 142-156). Via similarly speaks of the workers' 'flawed self-understanding' (1967: 153). Such interpretations, however, betray a lack of comprehension of the agonistic society which first century CE Palestine was, and the concept of dyadic personality which informed it.

precisely the reason that the vineyard owner behaves as he does. Had he given to those who had worked only a proportion of the day in the vineyard the relative proportion of the denarius his behaviour would have occasioned no particular comment. He would have done exactly that which would have been expected of him as an elite, namely exploited all the day-labourers equally. But at very little cost, by paying all the workers one denarius and thus causing divisions amongst them, he achieves something far greater; he actually increases his honour rating and thus his status in society. Those day-labourers who had not worked the full day but had nonetheless been paid the full amount had reason to be grateful to the landowner. In first century CE Palestine it would not be uncommon for that gratitude to be expressed by their recounting of the landowner's 'generosity'. The landowner is clearly 'good', society confirms it. He has dealt comfortably with the 'affront' of the offended day-labourers and re-emphasised his superiority.

Whilst this perception of the vineyard owner as good sits comfortably with the allegorical interpretation of the Matthean parable in which he is understood to represent Yahweh, it is somewhat more problematic in a non-allegorical reading of the parable. Was Jesus of Nazareth commending the behaviour of the elite; did he genuinely believe him to be 'good'? Or is this another example of the subversive nature of Jesus' teaching? As we noted above the issues of what it is to be good and also of what constitutes 'generosity' in terms of the kingdom of God are revealed in the incident of the rich young man.⁹⁶ In both the Markan and Lukan pericopes Jesus responds to the young man by saying, "Why do you call me good. No-one is good except God" (Mk 10: 18//Lk 18: 19). By claiming to be 'good' the elite vineyard owner exposes his arrogance.

⁹⁶Note also Lk 18: 9-14 for Jesus' attitude to the Pharisee who considers himself to be righteous before God.

Not for the first time he has overstated his position and arrogated that which belongs to Yahweh alone. Similarly in terms of giving, Jesus' instruction to the rich young man "Go sell what you have and give to the destitute, and you will have treasure in heaven, and come follow me" contrasts starkly with the elite's payment of one denarius to each worker. Far from being generous and good, the parable of Jesus exposes the landowner as both arrogant and exploitative. In the Matthean beatitudes the evangelist freely amends the teaching of Jesus to make it more meaningful to his community.⁹⁷ Thus it is not the poor who will inherit the kingdom of heaven but the 'poor in spirit' and it is not the hungry who will be filled, but rather those who 'hunger and thirst for righteousness'. In the parable of the workers in the vineyard Matthew similarly theologises out the subversive edge of Jesus' message. Rather than a provocative parable in which the oppressive nature of elite behaviour is exposed, Matthew presents to his community an exhortative parable concerning the goodness of God and confirming the place of his community members in the kingdom of heaven.

Conclusion

Two contrasting, but interlinked, themes figure prominently in our consideration of the four parables described above. On the one hand the exploitative behaviour of the elite and their retainers, and on the other the values of the kingdom of God. Thus the allegedly 'good' vineyard owner is exposed as exploitative and arrogant, whilst the unforgiving servant, faced with messianic beneficence, prefers the oppressive values of elite agrarian society. Even in the parable of the sower, where the emphasis falls on Yahweh's provision for the struggling peasantry, there exists an implicit criticism of the oppressive behaviour of the elite and of the hierarchical structure of society. In the remaining parable it is the workers in the vineyard rather than the 'honourable'

⁹⁷We presume here that the Lukan beatitudes reflect more closely their original form.

landowner and his son who are shown to adhere to the values of Yahweh. Jesus of Nazareth made use of the ambiguous nature of the parabolic form to criticise severely the exploitative practices of the elite. In addition, however, the parables serve both as a source of 'good news' to the non elite and provide us with an indication of how he himself may have been perceived. Whilst the themes of abundance, reversal, justice and mercy within the context of the Judean little tradition may, for some, have raised messianic expectations, the most obvious social role remains that of a prophet. Throughout their history the prophets of Israel and Judea denounced elite exploitation of the poor. That Jesus of Nazareth by means of his parables does likewise would have led many to place him within the tradition of the prophets of old.

CHAPTER FOUR

WORD AND DEED PART TWO: HEALING, EXORCISM AND TABLE FELLOWSHIP

In addition to his preaching and teaching, the gospels narrate many of the deeds Jesus of Nazareth performed both in and around Galilee and in Judea. Three of his actions in particular, his healings, his exorcisms and his practice of engaging in table fellowship with 'tax collectors and sinners', appear to have occasioned controversy and opposition. In this chapter we shall re-examine a number of these incidents seeking to uncover both their significance within the wider context of Jesus' mission and also their contribution to our understanding of his social role.

The Miracles of Jesus of Nazareth¹

¹Attempts to distinguish between miracle and magic in the first century CE have generated considerable scholarly literature. Central to the debate is whether the healings and exorcisms of Jesus of Nazareth were manifestations of the miraculous, were the products of magical techniques practised throughout the ancient Mediterranean or whether they fell somewhere in between. Much of the complexity surrounding this issue relates to the question of definition. Thus Hull 1974, Aune 1980, Smith 1985, Kee 1986, Crossan 1991 and Meier 1994, all offer definitions of magic and seek to interpret Jesus and his actions in their light. For Smith and Hull the healings and exorcisms of Jesus exhibit many of the techniques employed by magicians, the use of touch and of spittle, and the stern commands, sighs, groans and prayer. The prevalence of these practices contribute towards Smith and Hull's presentation of Jesus as a magician of the type known throughout the ancient Mediterranean. Crossan also labels Jesus a magician but in a context in which he argues "Religion is official and approved magic; magic is unofficial and unapproved religion" (1991: 305). In other words, Jesus is a magician in the sense that his healings and exorcisms are conducted not only out with the auspices of the Judean temple hierarchy, but also in contravention of their authority. Aune also understands magic in terms of religion (1980: 1510-1523) and recognises Jesus' use of magical techniques. But he contends, "Sociologically...it would be problematic to

The casting out of demons and the healing of the sick have traditionally been considered within the broader category of 'miracle'.² In early Church tradition miracles were interpreted as evidence of the divine activity of Jesus and as confirmation of Christian truth. In modern times, however, their interpretation has proven problematic. In response to the post-Enlightenment undermining of 'miracle', scholars have, for the most part, sought to re-present the miracles of Jesus of Nazareth in a manner compatible with modern thinking. The first major exponent of this approach was the eighteenth century theologian H.E.G. Paulus. Paulus attempted to provide a rational explanation, which he claimed, although unstated in the gospels, lay behind each of Jesus' miracles (Theissen and Merz 1998: 286). In his work *The Life of Jesus Critically Examined*, published in 1835,³ David F. Strauss proposed an interpretation which understood the miracles in terms of myth. They were, he contends, a means of conveying the messianic identity of Jesus. Once this has been recognised it becomes necessary for Jesus to perform greater miracles than the prophets who had gone before, miracles which

categorize Jesus as a magician, since those magical activities which he used can be more appropriately subsumed under the role of messianic prophet" (1980: 1539). For Aune, the distinction which Meier draws between miracle and magic, in their purist forms, represents a false dichotomy in which the link between magic and religion is inadequately recognised. Vermes' representation of Jesus as a 'holy man' "whose supernatural abilities derive, not from secret powers, but from immediate contact with God" (1973b: 69) contains a similarly flawed distinction. Magical techniques may have been used by Jesus of Nazareth in his healings and exorcisms, but their significance lies more in their manifestation of 'social deviance' than in a purported distinction between magic and miracle.

²Rudolf Bultmann divides the miracles of Jesus into two categories, miracles of healing, a sub-group of which includes exorcisms, and miracles of nature (1963: 209-244).

Theissen and Merz, on the other hand, identify six categories of miracle, exorcisms, therapies and norm miracles which they contend have their roots in the life of Jesus of Nazareth, and deliverance and gift miracles and epiphanies which they attribute to the post-Easter Church (1998: 296). See also Theissen 1983.

³Volume 1 of Strauss' work was published in the spring of 1835 with volume 2 following in the autumn of the same year. A slightly amended second edition was published a year later in 1836.

allowing for the mindset of his contemporaries would have been experienced as efficacious (Theissen and Merz 1998: 286-287).

The major developments in interpretation in the first half of the twentieth century centred upon form criticism and the history of religions, and redaction criticism. In the first category the seminal work of Rudolf Bultmann, *History of the Synoptic Tradition* and Dibelius' *From Tradition to Gospel* both drew parallels between the miracles of Jesus and those miracles known within the Hellenistic world. For example, Bultmann (1963: 238-239) claims that the miracle performed by Jesus at Cana originally belonged to the Dionysus tradition and was attributed to Jesus by the writer of the fourth gospel. Other miracles were likewise either transferred from or assimilated to the miracle tradition of the Hellenistic world. Bieler (1936-37) takes this approach a step further with his thesis of 'The divine man'. There was in the ancient world, he claims, a particular type of miracle-worker identifiable as a Θεῖος ἄνθρωπος, a divine man. It is this concept, Bieler continues, which lies behind the early Church's representation of Jesus and his miracles (Theissen and Merz 1998: 287).

Redaction criticism reinforced the challenge to the historicity and significance of the miracles by identifying the evangelists' role in adapting them to meet the needs of their respective gospels. Mark, for example, counterbalances the "*theologia gloriae*" of the miracles with the "*theologia crucis*" of the cross, whilst Matthew, playing down the miraculous in favour of the theological, uses the miracles to identify the role of Jesus as messiah. The gospels of Luke and John similarly recast the miracles, the former in terms of salvation history, the latter as signs pointing to the true miracle, Jesus himself (Theissen and Merz 1998: 288).

In the past thirty years this theological reinterpretation of the miracles has been challenged by a number of scholars who have sought to reconsider both Jesus and his miracles within the context of the first century Mediterranean world. Thus Geza Vermes (1973a, b) identifies Jesus as a charismatic miracle-worker of a type with Honi the circle drawer and Hanina ben Dosa, two noted figures in Judeanism in the first centuries BCE and CE respectively. Whilst Morton Smith (1985) portrays him as a magician similar, he claims, to the many magicians operating in the Mediterranean world at that time (Theissen and Merz 1998: 289).

Another school of thought involves the application of insights derived from sociology and social anthropology, both of which seek to understand Jesus and his miracles in terms of their social world and of their function within it.⁴ In a sense, the interpretation of the miracles of Jesus of Nazareth has almost come full circle. As in the early Christian tradition in which the miracles were accepted as historical events, many modern scholars have begun to acknowledge that an historical core does exist amongst a number of the miracle stories.⁵ Unlike the early Church, however, this is explained in terms of the social reality of Jesus' world rather than as divine intervention. It is this approach which we shall follow in our consideration of the healings and exorcisms attributed to Jesus of Nazareth.

Healing and Exorcism

In the Western world an individual suffering from ill health seeks both diagnosis and treatment from a qualified medical practitioner. Such a course of action is recognised as both culturally and socially appropriate. In reaching his diagnosis the

⁴Hollenbach 1981, Pilch 1985, 1986, 1988, 1991, 2000 and Herzog 2000.

⁵For example Harvey 1982, Sanders 1985, Crossan 1991, Meier 1994 and Herzog 2000.

medical practitioner will focus almost exclusively upon the causes of the ailment as identified by scientific/laboratory tests and will rely upon these in prescribing the relevant treatment. According to Pilch, "The name given to this specific kind of therapy is *cure*, that is, the taking of effective control of a disordered biological and/or psychological process usually identified as a disease" (2000: 13). To the majority of the world's population, however, such a process is unfamiliar. In these cultures

therapies are symptomatic, that is, aimed at alleviating or managing symptoms....The name given to this kind of therapy is *healing*, namely a process by which (a) disease and certain other worrisome circumstances are made into illness (a cultural construction and therefore meaningful) and (b) the sufferer gains a degree of satisfaction through the reduction or even elimination of the psychological, sensory and experiential oppressiveness engendered by his medical circumstances (2000: 13-14).

These two approaches illustrate the different attitudes to health and sickness which exist in diverse cultures.⁶ They also reveal the fact that health and sickness are cultural constructs. In order to understand the method and efficacy of healings in any given context it is therefore essential to locate them within the appropriate cultural framework. One means of achieving this, and at the same time avoiding medicocentrism, is to make use of the insights provided by medical anthropology. Such is the approach taken by John Pilch in his application of a cultural model to the interpretation of illness as it is described in the bible and, in particular, to the case of biblical leprosy.⁷ Underlying this

⁶Malina and Rohrbaugh 1992 present a similar approach to illness and disease in the first century Mediterranean world.

⁷Pilch contrasts this model with a biomedical or empiricist model which although containing the same elements is restricted by biomedical principles and thus limited in its

approach are two basic premises, firstly “all illness realities are fundamentally semantic. Sickness becomes a human experience and an object of therapeutic attention when it becomes meaningful” (2000: 45). And secondly, “all healing is fundamentally hermeneutic or interpretive activity. The patient’s symptoms and identified illness represent personal and group values and conceptualizations and are not simply biological reality” (2000: 45-46). The model itself consists of six elements,⁸ (1) Pathological Entity Emerges, (2) Seek Relevant Data, (3) Elicitation Procedure, (4) The Interpretive Goal: Understanding, (5) The Interpretive Strategy and (6) The Therapeutic Goal. Applied to biblical leprosy the model works as follows. On discovery of the skin complaint, the sufferer refers to cultural norms in order to create a “meaningful illness”. The data which informs the meaning of the illness is clearly culture variable. In the case of biblical leprosy, Lev 13-14 defines the illness in terms of cleanliness; a person suffering from biblical leprosy is deemed unclean.⁹ As a consequence (s)he is required to reside outside of the Israelite camp and to cry out “Unclean, unclean” (Lev 13: 45-46).¹⁰ Restoration to the community is at the word of the priests who alone can examine the leper and declare him/her clean. In addition, the cleansed leper is required to make the appropriate sacrificial offering (Lev 14: 4-32). Under the heading Elicitation Procedure, Pilch provides a series of questions designed to determine how the sufferer understands his/her illness and how it impacts upon him/her and his/her family and wider community. Examples of these include what the sufferer names the illness, what (s)he believes the cause to be, what the effects of the illness are and what treatment the sufferer considers appropriate. From the answers to these questions, Pilch contends it is possible to shed

conclusions.

⁸For a more detailed presentation of the model see Pilch 2000: 46-51.

⁹No attempt is made to understand leprosy in terms of disease.

¹⁰The easy access which the gospels describe the lepers having to Jesus suggests that these restrictions were not, at least in the first century CE, rigidly adhered to.

new light upon biblical leprosy. His findings highlight, in particular, the significance of the social consequences to the sufferer of being labelled a leper. His/her categorisation as unclean and the resultant exclusion from the community was, in the context of a collectivistic society, especially problematic. Behind the actions of those lepers in the bible who sought to be cleansed undoubtedly lay the desire to be restored to their communities. Within his classification interpretive strategy, Pilch illustrates the connection between biblical leprosy and pollution; the leper is deemed unclean not because leprosy is extremely contagious,¹¹ but rather because it is perceived to pollute the holiness of the community of Israel.¹² According to Mary Douglas, minority groups place particular importance on boundaries in order to protect their own “political and cultural unity” (1966: 113). A similar attitude exists in relation to the boundaries of the body, the mouth, male and female genitals and the skin. In both cases the emphasis is on maintaining the purity of the community, the holiness of God’s people Israel. Such is the framework within which biblical leprosy must be interpreted. Pilch’s model concludes with the healer’s efforts to provide the sick person with an alternative “self-understanding”, a changed reality which, according to Pilch, “is in itself a powerful healing force” (2000: 53). It is this approach to ill health which shall inform our interpretation of the healing ‘miracles’ of Jesus of Nazareth.

The Healings of Jesus of Nazareth

The gospel of Mark recounts nine specific healings¹³ attributed to Jesus and a further four summary accounts¹⁴ of his general healing activity. In addition to these

¹¹Even Hansen’s disease is only mildly contagious (Pilch 2000: 52).

¹²Other pollutants include certain animals, menstruant women and those suffering from a variety of bodily discharges.

¹³Mk 1: 29-31, 40-45; 2: 1-12; 3: 1-6; 5: 21-43; 7: 31-37; 8: 22-26 and 10: 46-52.

¹⁴Mk 1: 32-34; 3: 10; 6: 5, 54-56.

Luke describes four other occasions on which Jesus heals the sick.¹⁵ Before we can attempt to determine the potential significance of such healings within the larger context of Jesus' mission, we must seek to uncover which, if any, of the healings have their roots in the actions of Jesus himself. In his analysis of the evolution of the synoptic tradition, Rudolf Bultmann reduces a number of the healing miracles attributed to Jesus to 'apophthegms'. Thus the healing of the man with the withered hand in Mk 3: 1-6 is considered a "complete apophthegm" created by the early Palestinian Church as an authority for its continuing dispute over the Sabbath. Lk 14: 1-6 is deemed a variant of Mk 3: 1-6 created around the saying contained in v5 "If one of you has a child or an ox that has fallen into a well, will you not immediately pull it out on a sabbath day?". Whilst v15 "You hypocrites! Does not each of you on the sabbath untie his ox or donkey from the manger, and lead it away to give it water?" is similarly considered to form the core around which the healing of the crippled woman in Lk 13: 10-17 is fashioned (1963: 12-13). The healing of the ten lepers in Lk 17: 11-19 is also deemed to be a variant of another of Jesus' miracles, namely the cleansing of the leper in Mk 1: 40-45 (1963: 33). Rather than belonging to the Jesus tradition it is a secondary composition of Hellenistic origin. Two other healings attributed in the gospels to Jesus are considered by Bultmann to be creations of the early Church. The healings of the Syro-Phoenician woman's daughter in Mk 7: 24-30 and of the centurion's son in Lk 7: 1-10 both reflect early Church concerns with Gentile believers and contain the seeds of their own historical dubiety by describing the almost otherwise unknown phenomenon of "telepathic healing" (1963: 38-39).¹⁶ Of the remaining healings, Bultmann sees in the healing of the blind man in Mk 8: 22-26 a variant of Mk 7: 31-37 and deems the restoration of sight to the blind beggar Bartimaeus in Mk 10: 46-52 a secondary composition (1963: 213).

¹⁵Lk 7: 1-10; 13: 10-17; 14: 1-6 and 17: 11-19.

¹⁶But note the healing from a distance attributed to Hanina ben Dosa in b. Ber. 34b and y Ber. 9d.

Crossan takes a similarly minimalist approach to the healings of Jesus accepting as historical only (a) the cleansing of the leper in Mk 1: 40-45//Egerton Papyrus, (b) the healing of the paralysed man in Mk 2: 1-12//Jn 5: 1-9 and (c) the healing of a blind man in Mk 8: 22-26//Jn 9: 1-41 (1991: 321-328). Like Bultmann, he identifies the “twin” healings of the Syrophenician woman’s daughter (Mk 7: 24-30//Mt 15: 21-28) with the centurion’s son (Lk 7: 1-10//Mt 8: 5-13//Jn 4: 46-54) and despite the latter’s plural attestation¹⁷ also discounts them from originating within the Jesus tradition. They provide us rather with examples of “early Christian communities symbolically [retrojecting] their own activities back into the life of Jesus” (1991: 328).

Meier’s attitude to the healings of Jesus of Nazareth is more expansive than that of either Bultmann or Crossan. He constructs a typology which consists of four categories of healings, healings of (a) the paralysed and the crippled, (b) the blind, (c) those suffering from “leprosy” and (d) those suffering from ailments mentioned on only one occasion. Within the first category he accepts an historical kernel lies behind (i) the healing of the paralysed man in Mk 2: 1-12 (1994: 679-680) and (ii) the similar healing of the ill man lying by the pool at Bethzatha (Jn 5: 1-9), which, unlike Crossan, he considers to reflect a tradition distinct from that found in Mk 2: 1-12 (1994: 680-681). The healing of the man with the withered hand in Mk 3: 1-6, and the healing of the woman who was bent over and unable to stand up straight in Lk 13: 10-17, whilst both

¹⁷For Crossan plural/multiple attestation is an essential element in establishing the historicity of Jesus’ healings. He cites the Egerton Papyrus as an independent witness to the cleansing of the leper in Mk 1: 40-45, a view disputed by Neiryneck who claims that there is nothing in the Papyrus fragments which suggest it is anything other than post-synoptic (1985: 153-160). The papyrus is variously dated from the beginning of the first to the middle of the second centuries CE. He also presupposes, in this case, the independence of John’s gospel citing Jn 5: 1-9 as independent attestation of the healing of the paralysed man in Mk 8: 22-26. See Smith 1984 and 1992 for a discussion of the relationship between John and the synoptic gospels.

containing elements which suggest historicity also allow for a sufficient degree of doubt leading Meier to conclude that a definitive judgement either in favour of or against their historicity is no longer possible (1994: 681-685). The second group in his typology consists of three purported healings of men who were blind. Of these, unlike Bultmann, he considers the healing of the blind beggar Bartimaeus (Mk 10: 46-52) and the restoration of the sight to the man at Bethsaida (Mk 8: 22-26) as having their roots in the activities of Jesus of Nazareth (1994: 686-694). The healing of the man born blind recounted in Jn 9: 1-41, however, he again deems inconclusive (1994: 694-698). The two apparent healings of leprosy (Mk 1: 40-45 and Lk 17: 11-19) which constitute Meier's third type also contain elements which militate against certainty. Nonetheless in both of these cases he is willing to posit some historical remembrance of the actions of Jesus as their original source (1994: 700-706). The final category of healings includes reports of the healing of those illnesses which occur only once in the gospel accounts. Of these Meier considers only the healing of the deaf man with the speech impediment in Mk 7: 31-37 to have its origins in the life of Jesus (1994: 711-714). The healings of Peter's mother-in-law (Mk 1: 29-31) of the woman who had suffered haemorrhages for twelve years (Mk 5: 24-34) and of the man with dropsy (Lk 14: 1-6) are all sufficiently doubtful for him to classify their status as inconclusive (1994: 707-711). The restoration of the ear of the high priest's slave which occurs solely in the gospel of Luke 22: 49-51 is, however, clearly attributable to the hand of the evangelist (1994: 714-718). Outwith his fourfold typology, Meier treats individually the healing from a distance of the Centurion/Official's child/servant in Mt 8: 5-13/Lk 7: 1-10 and Jn 4: 46-54. He examines in detail the differences which exist between the extant accounts and identifies those elements he considers may reflect developments from the original traditions. Unlike both Bultmann and Crossan, he finds in favour of two originally independent sources, reflected in Q and John respectively, both of which have their roots in an

incident in the life of Jesus. Of this incident all that can now be recovered are the bare bones, namely that in or around Capernaum Jesus was approached by an official, probably a member of Antipas' army, who requested that he heal a boy, either his servant or son,¹⁸ in his household. Jesus granted the request and healed the boy from a distance (1994: 718-726). Meier concludes that whilst it may now be impossible to recover either the methods of Jesus' healings, the words he may have used, or even on most occasions their original context, there remains sufficient evidence to claim with some certainty that during the course of his lifetime Jesus of Nazareth was believed to have healed the lame, restored sight to the blind, cleansed the lepers and made the deaf to hear and the dumb to speak. In support of this he also cites the response of Jesus to the question of John the Baptist's disciples concerning his identity which occurs in Q 7: 22.¹⁹ When asked whether he is the one to come, Jesus replies "Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised and the poor have the good news brought to them..". Each of the types of healing described in the gospel accounts above is therefore independently attested in the saying from the Q source.

Whilst the respective approaches of Bultmann, Crossan and Meier illustrate the lack of scholarly consensus concerning the historicity of the various healings of Jesus of Nazareth, they do nonetheless help identify those healings which are deemed most historically secure. For our purposes it will be sufficient to consider one example from each of the initial three categories of Meier's typology, namely (a) the cleansing of a leper, (b) the healing of a paralysed man and (c) the restoration of sight to a blind man.

¹⁸The Greek term *υἱός* does not allow us to be more specific.

¹⁹For a detailed consideration of the historicity of this pericope see Meier 1994 vol 2 Chapters 13 and 16.

Leprosy

The most historically secure of the narratives relating the healings of leprosy effected by Jesus is that contained in Mk 1: 40-45,

A leper came to him begging him, and kneeling he said to him, "If you choose, you can make me clean". Moved with pity, Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, and said to him, "I do choose. Be made clean!" Immediately the leprosy left him and he was made clean. After sternly warning him he sent him away at once, saying to him, "See that you say nothing to anyone; but go show yourself to the priest and offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded, as a testimony against (to) them." But he went out and began to proclaim it freely, and to spread the word, so that Jesus could no longer go into a town openly, but stayed out in the country; and people came to him from every quarter.²⁰

The Markan pericope, although containing the kernel of an historical healing also betrays signs of emendation and redaction. The most contentious elements of the narrative concern the use of the term *Σπλαγχνίζομαι* in v41 and also verses 43 and 44.²¹ The Greek term *Σπλαγχνίζομαι*, moved with pity, is for the most part in New Testament texts preferred to the more difficult *Ὀργισθεῖς* meaning moved with anger. Despite the greater textual evidence in support of *Σπλαγχνίζομαι*, many scholars favour

²⁰The parallel accounts in Mt 8: 1-4 and Lk 5: 12-16 are, despite minor differences, clearly dependent upon Mark as their source. Both gospels omit the reference to Jesus being "moved with pity" and to his charging the leper "sternly". Matthew in addition makes no mention of the leper spreading the news of his healing abroad and thus of Jesus' inability to move about freely. The Lukan account concludes with the obviously Lukan emendation of Jesus going into the wilderness to pray.

²¹Although see Wojciechowski who argues that the request of the leper as it appears in v41 may also be redactional in form (1988: 114).

the more difficult reading arguing that its replacement early in the tradition reflects a desire to eradicate anything which may present Jesus in a potentially negative light.²²

According to Bultmann, verses 43 and 44a are both instances of Markan redaction, the latter in particular having its origins in the messianic secret (1963: 212). More significant, however, is Crossan's claim that "The *original* story of the leper's cure involved only that...point, and it showed Jesus precisely as an authoritative healing and purifying alternative to the Temple" (1991: 322).²³ In other words, the command to the leper to show himself to the priest and to make the offering instructed by Moses, contained in v44, is a later addition specifically intended to portray Jesus as a faithful adherent of the Torah. That the same command is contained in what Crossan considers the independent witness of the Egerton Papyrus²⁴ illustrates, he argues, how early in the tradition it was deemed necessary to bring Jesus into line. Whilst the command may perform this function in the Egerton papyrus, the gospel of Mark, Crossan continues, retains the subversive nature of Jesus' action. The leper's witness to/against the priests is not, for Mark, intended to present Jesus as a dutiful observer of the law but rather is a means of revealing to the priests his power to cleanse the leper. The most problematic aspect of Crossan's view is that not only is there no textual evidence to support it, but that it reads against the best evidence available. Whilst, as is evident from our reinterpretation of the parables in Chapter Three above, we are only too willing to accept that, on occasion, the evangelists and the early Church amended the words and deeds of

²²See Metzger 1975 for a detailed consideration of the arguments.

²³Author's emphasis.

²⁴The relevant extant fragment of the papyrus reads as follows, "And behold a leper drew near [to him] and said "Master Jesus, wandering with lepers and eating with [them was I (?)] in the inn; I also [became] a le[per]. If [thou] therefore [wilt], I am made clean." Immediately the Lord [said to him]: I will, be thou made clean". [And thereupon] the leprosy departed from him. [And the Lord said to him]: "Go [thy way and show th]yself to the [priests]...(Cameron 1982: 74).

Jesus, we nonetheless contend that the witness to/against the priests belongs to the core healing of the leper.

The above analysis suggests that the original incident consisted of a confrontation in which Jesus was challenged by a leper to make him clean. Jesus responded by touching the leper and commanding that he be cleansed. The leprosy left him and Jesus ordered the leper to present himself to the priest and to make the appropriate offering in the temple. The stern warning and charge to say nothing, together with the leper's telling of his healing are almost certainly Markan redaction.

The significance of this incident within the social context of the first century Mediterranean world is two fold. In the first instance, the condition of leprosy is best understood in terms of the model provided by Pilch. Thus, the primary consequences experienced by the sufferer of the illness are social rather than medical/physical. The healing framework in which treatment for the illness is provided consists of three spheres, (a) the professional, (b) the popular and (c) the folk.²⁵ It is to this third category, as a folk-healer, that Pilch contends Jesus of Nazareth belongs. Along side his teaching/preaching in which he seeks to provide his listeners with a meaningful context, namely the kingdom of God, in which to live their lives, Pilch places the healing activities of Jesus. By means of these too "He provides social meaning for the life problems resulting from the sickness" (2000: 72).²⁶

²⁵Pilch 2000: 57-73.

²⁶Kazmierski argues that the cleansing of the leper, in human terms, left him in a worse position than previously. His healing lay in the fact that he now belonged to "the community which preaches the gospel" (1992: 37-50).

In the second instance, the subversive nature of Jesus' action is revealed in the manner in which he effects the cleansing of the leper and in his instruction to him to present himself to the priests. Jesus responds to the leper's challenge to cleanse him in both word and deed. Not only does he proclaim his willingness to cleanse the leper, he stretches out his hand and touches him. In so doing he leaves himself open to ritual defilement (Lev 5). According to Wojciechowski, "If Jesus voluntarily touched a leper, he had to feel that he would not contact any impurity. If he intended to cleanse him, he had to attribute an exceptional value to his own touch, to believe in its religious- *and not only medical*²⁷- healing effect (1988: 118). His analysis of the effect on persons/objects which have come into contact with anything pertaining to the cult leads him to conclude that the efficacy of touch derives from the power and holiness of God. When he touched the leper, Wojciechowski argues, "Jesus was conscious of his special holiness and power in the sacral sphere" (1988: 119). Such an interpretation is not only ethnocentric, it also, by theologising the incident, fails to recognise the radical significance of Jesus' action. In touching the leper Jesus performs an act of, what we have noted Scott terms, religious profanation.²⁸ In the peasant little tradition profanation serves as a means, usually implicit but on occasions explicit, of subverting the values of the elite Great Tradition. By stretching out his hand and touching the leper Jesus may have deliberately intended to profane the purity/pollution code.

In order to understand why he should act in such a manner it is necessary to consider briefly the role and significance of the purity code in first century CE Judeanism. Fernando Belo provides us with a model of the "symbolic order"²⁹ in

²⁷Our emphasis.

²⁸See pp 74-78 above.

²⁹Myers defines Belo's "symbolic order" as "the values and norms-in the language of social semiotics, "cultural codes"-both implicit and explicit, which regulated and

ancient Judeanism in which he contends two distinct systems are discernible, (a) a system of pollution or contagion and (b) a system of debt. The primary function of the pollution code was to preserve the 'holiness' of the people of Israel in the face of the idolatrous practises of their pagan neighbours. In other words, to maintain the identity and boundaries of God's chosen people. It also functioned internally, however, to ensure order in the social, political and economic realms. According to Belo, both the pollution and debt codes operated in three specific spheres, the table, the house and the sanctuary (temple). In terms of the Levitical provisions, the dietary regulations of Lev 11, 17 relate to the sphere of the table, whilst the bodily and sexual functions of Lev 12-15 pertain to the sphere of the house. The idolatrous and blasphemous matters dealt with in Lev 21-22, and the regulations concerning the priests in Lev 24 and 26, belong to the sphere of the sanctuary.³⁰ The vast and complex nature of the purity code ensured that many of the peasant non-elite found difficulty in complying with its provisions.³¹ According to Myers, "The major obstacles to religious conformity to the demands of the symbolic

represented social life and meaning" (1988: 70).

³⁰Myers 1988: 74 contains a tabular depiction of the Levitical provisions as they relate to both the pollution and debt codes.

³¹Sanders divides the purity provisions into four categories arguing that whilst it was forbidden to contract some forms of impurity, other forms although regrettable were unavoidable, and others still avoidable with care. Impurity contracted through sexual relations, childbirth etc. were, however, according to Sanders, "necessary and proper to incur" (1990: 140). His contention that purity was the concern of all and that the provisions were easily remembered (1990: 145-146) does not detract from the difficulties faced in attempting to comply with them. Jacob Neusner provides a scathing critique of Sanders approach to first century CE Judaism dedicating separate chapters to "Sanders' Misunderstanding of Purity" and to his two works *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* and *Judaism Practices and Beliefs 63 BCE-66CE*. With relation to purity, he particularly questions Sanders' understanding of uncleanness as a 'moral category'. According to Neusner, it should be seen in ontological terms as a matter of holiness. Moreover, Neusner is especially critical of Sanders' unitary approach to purity within Judaism, purity, he contends, meant different things to different groups at different times, it was not as Sanders implies a homogenous concept applicable throughout a unitary Judaism (1993: 205-295). Chilton, like Neusner, perceives purity in terms of holiness rather than morality and similarly critiques Sanders' treatment of the subject (1997b: 221-230).

system for ordinary persons were economic. The daily circumstances of their lives and trades, especially for the peasantry, continually exposed them to contagion, and they simply could not afford the outlay of either time or money/goods involved in ritual cleansing processes” (1988: 75-76).³² The purity code which originated to preserve the integrity of the people of Israel had become under the religious elite a source of division and marginalisation. It also served to create a form of religious indebtedness whereby those unable to meet the demands of ritual cleansing remained in a state of impurity until they were able to redeem the outstanding purity code provisions. When Jesus of Nazareth touched the leper, he profaned a system which in the hands of the religious elite had become divisive and oppressive.

The final aspect of the cleansing sees Jesus send the leper to present himself to the priest and to make the appropriate temple offering. For the most part, this action has been interpreted as evidence of Jesus’ compliance with the provisions of the Torah.³³ Broadhead, however, in the context of Mark’s gospel, presents an alternative reading in which the witness of the leper “is a thoroughly negative prophetic condemnation of the religious leaders of Israel, and” he notes, “this condemnation is already present in the ministry of Jesus” (1992: 260).³⁴ When Jesus of Nazareth sends the leper to show himself to the priest, he does so not to conform to the purity code but rather as a witness against it. As we noted in Chapter Three, ambiguity is a key element in non-elite response to oppression, the leper’s witness to or against the priest functions in just this

³²Whilst as Sanders correctly notes many forms of impurity could be purified by ritual bathing, others required the offering of sacrifice in the Jerusalem temple (1990: 151). It is this latter process which proved unduly onerous upon the non-elite, particularly those who resided outwith Judea.

³³For example Taylor 1952, Pesch 1976 and Schweizer 1980. But note also the argument of Lane 1974, amongst others, that whilst the actions of the leper serve as a witness to the priests, it may also serve to condemn them if they reject Jesus.

³⁴Myers 1988: 152-154.

manner. Ambiguous actions also serve as an indirect challenge in the honour contest of challenge and response (Malina 1981: 42). Having profaned the purity code by touching the leper, Jesus proceeds by means of the leper's witness to challenge those who operate it. In so doing he rejects a system which divides and marginalises God's people and which leaves many in a form of religious indebtedness.

The Paralysed and the Lame

Amongst the healings of those who were paralysed and lame, the incident related in Mk 2: 1-12 probably has the highest claim to historicity. According to Mark,

When he returned to Capernaum after some days, it was reported that he was at home. So many gathered around that there was no longer room for them, not even in front of the door; and he was speaking the word to them. Then some people came, bringing to him a paralyzed man, carried by four of them. And when they could not bring him to Jesus because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him; and after having dug through it, they let down the mat on which the paralytic lay. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son your sins are forgiven". Now some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts, "Why does this fellow speak in this way? It is blasphemy! Who can forgive sins but God alone? At once Jesus perceived in his spirit that they were discussing these questions among themselves; and he said to them, "Why do you raise such questions in your hearts? Which is easier to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven', or to say 'Stand up take your mat and walk'? But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"-he said to the paralytic-"I say to you, stand up, take your mat and go to your home." And he stood up and

immediately took the mat and went out before all of them; so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this".³⁵

According to Bultmann, the Markan narrative is composed of two elements (a) the healing and (b) the saying about forgiveness of sins (1963: 14-16). The latter, consisting of verses 5b-10, are, he considers, a "secondary interpolation" into the original story. In support of this view he cites the significance of faith in vv 3f and its absence from vv 5b-10, and the integrity of the concluding vv 11-12 with the original healing incident in vv 3-5a. The saying about forgiveness is a construction of the early Church arising from the issue of the right to forgive sins and the Church's desire to trace that right back to Jesus. In addition to these, the problematic structure of v10 in the Markan narrative has led most scholars to concur with Bultmann's form critical analysis of the pericope.³⁶ William Manson (1957) takes a similar approach to Bultmann but argues in favour of the integrity of vv 1-5 and 12, thus introducing the theme of forgiveness into the healing incident itself. Theissen, on the other hand, whilst not addressing the issue of historicity, provides a context for reading the pericope as a singular entity. It is, he contends, a "rule miracle" in which both the rule (the saying about forgiveness of sins) and the miracle function dialectically to legitimate one another (1983: 111). Herzog also supports the

³⁵Mt 9: 1-8 presents an abbreviated version of the incident omitting the initial reference to the presence of the crowd and the removal and lowering of the paralysed man through the roof. Matthew also changes the emotion displayed by the crowd at the end of the healing from amazement to fear. The most notable change effected in Lk 5: 17-26 is the introduction of the Pharisees and teachers of the law amongst the crowd. In addition, Crossan argues that the healing of the paralysed man at the pool recounted in Jn 5: 1-9 derives from the same incident as that described above. Whilst recognising the obvious differences between the two accounts, he contends that the basic similarities including, the same ailment suffered, the dependence of the paralysed person on others to put him forward for healing, the command by Jesus to stand up, take up his mat and walk, and the connection between illness and sin, are sufficient to link the two events (1991: 323-325).

³⁶For example Taylor 1952, Jeremias 1971 and Meier 1994.

integrity of the Markan narrative³⁷ but, unlike Theissen, does attempt to root the incident in the actions of Jesus of Nazareth (2000: 124-132). Like Herzog we shall seek to illustrate the link between Jesus' healing of the paralysed man and the forgiveness of sin, thus at least rendering possible the unity of the Markan pericope.

Again in terms of Pilch's model the primary significance of Jesus' healing for the paralysed man was social rather than medical/physical. As a folk healer Jesus addressed the entirety of the paralysed man's illness not simply his physical disability. It is in this wider sense of healing that the connection between sickness and sin is made. According to Malina and Rohrbaugh, "Because sin is a breach of interpersonal relationships, sin and sickness go together. Illness is not so much a medical matter as a matter of deviance from cultural norms" (1992: 71). That this link between sickness and sin was recognised in the ancient Mediterranean world is apparent from texts such as Num 12: 10-11, and 2 Kgs 15: 4-5. More significantly, that it was also the view held by others at the time of Jesus is indicated in Jn 5: 14 and 9: 2.³⁸ In the first instance Jesus approaches a man whom he has earlier healed and says to him "See you have been made well! Do not sin any more, so that nothing worse happens to you". And in Jn 9: 2, on seeing a man who had been blind from birth, the disciples ask, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" Jesus' response that the man's blindness was occasioned not by sin but rather was an opportunity for God's power to be shown in him, is not only typically Johannine,³⁹ it also contradicts his reproach to the man in Jn 5: 14. It is this

³⁷Morna Hooker argues that the complex nature of the pericope is paralleled in Mk 3: 1-6 in which the issue of Sabbath observance is considered within the context of a healing (1991: 84).

³⁸See Vermes 1983: 6-12.

³⁹In Jn 11: 4, for example, the illness of Lazarus is also described as being for the glory of God.

reproach, very probably a remnant of an older tradition,⁴⁰ which we suggest more accurately reflects the attitude of Jesus and his contemporaries to sickness and sin. It is also therefore entirely appropriate that in the context of his healing of the paralysed man, Jesus should address the issue of forgiveness of sin. In doing so, moreover, he invokes the language of, what we have noted Belo terms, the debt code.⁴¹ The system of debt is centred upon the “principle of extension”, a principle which effectively means whatever “Yahweh has given to human beings, they must in turn give to their fellow humans who lack it” (1981: 50). In other words, the debt code is intended to establish a community based on equality and social justice. As in the case of the purity/pollution code, the debt code operates in the spheres of table, house and sanctuary (temple). In terms of the Levitical regulations, the provisions concerning tithes of Lev 23 and the Jubilee and Sabbath provisions of Lev 25 and 27 all relate to the sphere of the table. The “socio-ethical statutes”⁴² of Lev 18-20 belong to the sphere of the house and the ordinances concerning sacrifice and the cult in Lev 1-10 pertain to the sphere of the sanctuary (temple). It is as a challenge to the debt code, as it operated within this latter sphere, that Jesus’ pronouncement on the forgiveness of sins should be understood. Rather than functioning as a means of preserving social justice, the debt code, operated by the religious elite, had become a source of division and exclusion. When Jesus healed the paralysed man and declared his sins forgiven he not only restored him to his place in his local community, by redeeming his religious indebtedness he pronounced him fit to belong to the wider community of God’s people Israel. In so doing, however, he challenged the religious elite who benefited from the debt code’s operation. That his

⁴⁰Crossan 1991: 324.

⁴¹Belo prefers the term debt rather than sin because, he argues “that is the meaning underlying the Aramaic word that New Testament Greek translates as ἄφεσις or ‘remission, cancellation (of sins)’” (1981: 39).

⁴²Myers 1988: 74.

admonition of the paralysed man's sin was perceived in such a manner is evident from the scribes response; by labelling Jesus a blasphemer they sought to shame him and so negate his challenge. Rather than engaging in a verbal contest with the scribes, Jesus sought to illustrate the validity of his claim by instructing the once paralysed man to take up his mat and walk. The scribes' lack of response, and the crowd's subsequent amazement and glorification of God, confirm that his challenge had been successful. When Jesus healed the paralysed man, and through the power of God, freed him from his sin,⁴³ he did more than restore an individual to his friends and community. By redeeming his religious indebtedness and declaring him free to enjoy full membership of the people of God, he successfully challenged the religious elite who operated an exclusive and indebting debt code .

The Blind

The final of Meier's three types of healing attributed to Jesus is the restoration of sight to the blind. According to Mk 8: 22-26,

They came to Bethsaida. Some people brought a blind man to him and begged him to touch him. He took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the village; and when he had put saliva on his eyes and laid his hands on him, he asked him, "Can you see anything?" And the man looked up and said, "I can see people but they look like trees walking." Then Jesus laid his hands on his eyes again; and he

⁴³It is unlikely that Jesus claimed to forgive sins himself, such an activity was the prerogative of God. He acts rather as a conduit of God's power, an interpretation supported by his use of the passive "your sins are forgiven". Note also Herzog, who argues that Jesus presents himself as an alternative broker of God's forgiveness to the temple institution (2000: 131-132).

looked intently and his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly. Then he sent him away to his home saying, "Do not even go into the village."⁴⁴

Neither Matthew nor Luke includes an account of this healing, an omission almost certainly due to the apparent failure of Jesus to heal the blind man at the first time of asking, and to the similarity of his methods with the techniques practised by contemporary magicians (Aune 1980: 1537).⁴⁵ According to Crossan, however, the same healing stands behind the restoration of sight to the blind beggar related in Jn 9: 1-41. In this narrative Jesus, rather than applying the spittle directly to the blind man's eyes, spits on the ground and forms a paste with the mud. He then places the mud on the man's eyes and sends him off to wash in the pool of Siloam. On his return his sight has been restored. There are, however, sufficient differences between these two accounts to render a common source improbable. In particular, the twofold nature of the healing in Mark has no parallel in the Johannine account, whilst the nature of the application of the spittle also differs in both. Finally, the pool of Siloam plays a significant role in John's version of the healing but does not feature at all in that recorded by Mark. On balance it seems more likely that these are two distinct healings.

The two most historically dubious elements of the Markan pericope consist of the introductory verse 22 and the considerably more problematic concluding verse 26. The locating of the healing at Bethsaida conflicts with the subsequent description of the blind man being led by Jesus out of a village and is thus almost certainly an example of Markan geographical redaction. The difficulties inherent in v26 are somewhat more

⁴⁴See pg 193 above in which it is noted that Bultmann considers this healing to be a variant of that described in Mk 7: 31-37.

⁴⁵For a consideration of magical techniques employed in the ancient Mediterranean see, for example, Betz 1986.

complex. A vast literature exists concerning the original form of the Markan text,⁴⁶ most of which turns on whether Jesus committed the blind man to silence as well as prohibiting his return to his village.⁴⁷ Significantly for our purposes, however, the textual difficulties relate to Markan redaction rather than the historical healing and therefore have little effect upon our interpretation of the incident. The core of the healing appears then to have consisted of Jesus leading the blind man out of a village and effecting a two fold process of restoring his sight.

The most commented upon aspect of the healing of the blind man is undoubtedly the apparent inability of Jesus to restore his sight fully at the first time of asking. Having placed saliva onto the blind man's eyes and then laid his hands on him, Jesus asks the man what he can see. His response, that he can see men who look like trees, leads Jesus to place his hands upon the blind man again, at which point his sight is fully restored. The two most common approaches to the healing seek either (a) to explain it in theological terms or (b) to focus on the medical condition from which the blind man suffered. In the first instance, the man's blindness is interpreted as symbolic of the disciples' inability to fully comprehend Jesus and his actions.⁴⁸ In the second, scholars attempt to identify a particular eye condition which might explain the gradual nature of

⁴⁶Miller 1986: 97-103 contains a brief discussion of the major views on the issue.

⁴⁷Ross 1987: 97-99 provides an outline of the eight alternative readings which are suggested.

⁴⁸Such an interpretation is certainly appropriate in the context of Mark's gospel. The disciples' lack of understanding with regard to Jesus' feeding of the crowds is highlighted in the pericopes leading up to the healing of the blind man. But just as the restoration of sight to the blind man is a gradual process, so too, according to Hooker, is the comprehension of the disciples. Although in Mk 8: 29 Peter declares Jesus to be the messiah, the disciples' inability to understand the suffering Jesus is to endure means that, for Mark, they remain in a state of 'semi-blindness' until after the resurrection (1991: 192-203).

the restoration of his sight.⁴⁹ Neither of these approaches, however, satisfactorily explains the healing in the wider context of the activities of Jesus of Nazareth. As in the cases of the cleansing of the leper and the healing of the paralysed man, the healing of the blind man has a significance beyond simply the healing of an individual. In terms of Pilch's model certainly Jesus effects a healing. But the link between illness and sin, which is made so explicit in the healing of the paralysed man, remains a major factor in the healing of the blind man. Just as the debt code had functioned to exclude the paralysed man from full membership of the people of God, so too it consigned the blind man to a potentially permanent state of religious indebtedness. When Jesus healed the blind man he not only restored his sight, he also redeemed his religious indebtedness. In so doing he once again struck at the elite and their oppressive use of the debt code.

In his analysis of the significance of Jesus' healings within the wider context of his mission, A. E. Harvey looks to the types of 'cures' that Jesus performed (1982: 98-119). Unlike Pilch, Harvey does not distinguish between the healing of illness and the curing of disease and accepts at face value the 'curing' of the medical conditions suffered by the leper, the paralytic and the blind man.⁵⁰ Moreover, such 'cures', he claims, were not effected by chance. On the contrary, they were precisely the ailments which, according to Isa 35: 5-6, were to be cured on the Day of the Lord.⁵¹ Harvey does not, however, simply equate the Isaianic text with the deeds of Jesus and conclude that the new age has begun. Rather, he identifies the nature of the diseases cured as marking Jesus' 'cures' as

⁴⁹For example Howard 1984: 163-170 and Marcus 1999: 250-256.

⁵⁰Although, somewhat ethnocentrically, he does allow that a psychological rather than physiological condition may stand behind some of the diseases Jesus cured.

⁵¹Harvey's claim that such cures were relatively scarce in contemporary Judean literature is effectively refuted by Sanders 1985: 161-165, who cites in evidence the 'cures' of the prophets Elijah and Elisha and the many alleged 'cures' effected at the various pagan shrines throughout the Mediterranean world.

qualitatively different from other healings being performed in his day. With the dawning of the new era an end to violence, war, sin and all the disease and illness which accompanies them would have been commonly expected. "But", he asks, "what about those ailments which we call congenital, which appeared to be nobody's fault and yet were part of every human scene- deafness, blindness, deformity, paralysis?" (1982: 117). These were conditions in the face of which human beings appeared powerless. By 'curing' these particular ailments, Harvey claims, Jesus transcended his own age and inaugurated the actuality of the kingdom of God.⁵²

At the heart of Harvey's thesis are two basic premises, (a) that Jesus actually cured rather than healed those who were sick and (b) that a distinction existed between fault based and non-fault based illnesses. Firstly, whilst Jesus may have cured "congenital diseases", this is neither a necessary nor indeed the most likely explanation of the healings considered above. And secondly, as we have illustrated, in first century CE Palestine all illness was fault based, all ailments related to impurity and sin. Whilst some amongst Jesus' contemporaries may have interpreted his healings as evidence of the presence of the Isaianic 'Day of the Lord' or of messianic pretensions,⁵³ they would not have done so on the basis that he cured so called congenital non-fault ailments. The significance of Jesus' healings remains better understood as a rebuke of the religious elite and their operation of purity and debt codes to exclude and at the same time religiously indebt some of the weakest of society's members.

⁵²But see Sanders, who rightly rejects the notion that he selected these particular healings from a range of alternative possibilities available to him, for the purpose of initiating the new age. It seems far more likely that blindness, paralysis etc. were simply the types of ailments presented to Jesus and which he had the most success in healing (1985: 161-165).

⁵³According to Wilson "Messiahs must be capable of wonder-working, even if this is not what is primarily stressed in their mission" (1975: 134).

Exorcism

The model applied by Pilch to the healings of Jesus is also applicable to his exorcisms. Of particular interest in the case of the latter, however, is the very visible role of the 'spirit world'.⁵⁴ In order to understand the significance of these spirits it is necessary to consider briefly the world view of first century CE Palestine. According to Malina and Rohrbaugh, central to this world view was a belief in the existence of what they term the "cosmic social hierarchy" (1992: 182).⁵⁵ This hierarchy consisted of both human and non-human persons who, in accordance with the concept of "personal causality", were deemed to influence everything that occurred within the social, natural and cosmic spheres.⁵⁶ Located at the head of this hierarchy was "Our" God, i.e., the "Most High God". Immediately below this were "Other" Gods or sons of God or archangels. Amongst these, according to Malina (1981: 111), was Satan/the devil. Whilst members of this category were capable of exerting power over all those below them, they themselves were subservient to, and in the control of, the "Most High" God. The next strata in the cosmic hierarchy consisted of "Lower non-human persons". These consisted of angels, spirits and demons who similarly could influence beings of a lower order, in particular humans,⁵⁷ but who themselves were subject to the authority of those

⁵⁴Pilch in his "taxonomy of illness" in Mark's gospel distinguishes between illnesses which involve unclean spirits or demons and those which do not. In his afterword to the same chapter, however, he suggests "that in the native view, the spirit world is involved in all of human experience whether recognized or not" (2000: 73). Dale Martin identifies two causes of illness in the ancient Mediterranean, (a) invasion from the outside by unclean spirits/demons and, (b) an internal imbalance within the body's makeup (1995: 143).

⁵⁵See also Vermes 1983: 27-28.

⁵⁶Whilst non-human persons were deemed capable of exerting influence in all three spheres, human influence was restricted to the social realm alone.

⁵⁷According to Vermes, "The idea that demons were responsible for all moral and physical evil had penetrated deeply into Jewish religious thought in the period following the Babylonian exile, no doubt as a result of Iranian influence on Judaism in the fifth and fourth centuries BC when Palestine as well as Jews from the eastern Diaspora were subject to direct Persian rule" (1973b: 61). See also Piper 2000.

above them and ultimately to God. The penultimate level of the hierarchy was filled by human beings. The internal structure of this level likewise consisted of a hierarchy as evidenced in Lenski and Lenski's (1982) model above. The lowest strata in the cosmic hierarchy belonged to creatures lower than human beings. These could only affect human beings in so far as they were doing the bidding of those forces higher up the cosmic scale. Evidence of the existence and activities of non-human persons occurs early in Israelite tradition, as in the account of Saul's madness in 1 Samuel,⁵⁸ and proliferates within later Judeanism. All of the misfortunes which befall Job, the loss of his possessions, his children, and his health are a consequence of the actions of Satan which God, in the presence of the heavenly court, permitted in order to prove Job's faithfulness. In the later parables of Enoch in 1 Enoch 37-71 a similar distinction is drawn between God and his forces for good and on this occasion Azazel, the chief demon, and his forces of evil.⁵⁹ The books of Tobit and Jubilees likewise display a world view in which demons and angels are common. More particularly, within the context of healing and exorcism, the very probably Christian⁶⁰ apocryphal text, the Testament of Solomon, contains an index of illnesses, of the demons believed to have caused them and of the angels/spirits who can overcome the demons and so restore the sufferer to health.⁶¹ The Apocryphon of John contains a similar index. Thus when the writers of the gospels provide us with various accounts of Jesus casting out demons, they

⁵⁸Saul's madness has been analysed by Esler using a social-scientific model similar to that of Pilch (1998b).

⁵⁹Nickelsburg 1981.

⁶⁰Duling 1983: 941-944. Although scholars tend to date the text itself to the third century CE, it is acknowledged that it contains materials from some two hundred years earlier.

⁶¹Included in Chapter 18 are the names of the demons considered responsible for, amongst others, sore throats, kidney problems, chills and fevers. Each of these ailments can be healed by the naming of the appropriate angel. Also, in Tobit 6: 8 the smoke created from the burning of a fish's heart and liver is reported to cause a demon or evil spirit to flee from the afflicted person.

do so within the context of a world view in which God, angels, spirits and demons were perceived as active participators.

The gospel of Mark contains four specific narratives of Jesus of Nazareth casting out unclean spirits/demons⁶² along with a further three summary accounts.⁶³ The gospels of Matthew and Luke each contain three of Mark's four exorcisms, the former omitting Jesus' casting out of the unclean spirit from the man in the synagogue (Mk 1: 23-27) the latter the casting out of the demon from the Syrophenician woman's daughter (Mk 7: 25-30). Both additionally contain a brief narrative account of the exorcism of a mute and, in Matthew's account, blind demoniac (Mt 12: 22-23//Lk 11: 14).⁶⁴ How many of these exorcisms are historically attributable to Jesus of Nazareth is far from certain. As in the case of the healings described above, Bultmann and Crossan allow only a very limited degree of historicity to Jesus' exorcisms. For the most part, Bultmann argues that as 'miracles' introduced into the tradition by the early Church, exorcisms enjoyed a particular significance as "proofs" of Jesus' messianic identity (1963: 226). For Crossan, only the casting out of the demon which led to the Beelzebul controversy of Mt 12: 22-26//Lk 11: 14-18 has any claims to historicity (1991: 318). Meier again is more expansive in his approach, assessing the historicity of the exorcisms to varying degrees of probability. The reference, for example, to Capernaum, a village which figures prominently in the gospel accounts of the activities of Jesus in Galilee, taken together with the significant number of exorcisms recorded amongst the miracles attributed to him, leads Meier to conclude that whilst the details of the exorcising of the unclean spirit in the synagogue at Capernaum in Mk 1: 23-27 cannot be verified, it is nonetheless typical of the activities Jesus performed in that region (1994: 648-650). In

⁶²Mk 1: 23-27; 5: 1-20; 7: 25-30 and 9: 17-29.

⁶³Mk 1: 32-34; 1: 39; 3:11-12

⁶⁴Mt 9: 32-34 is generally acknowledged as a duplication of this exorcism.

the case of the Gerasene Demoniac in Mk 5: 1-20, Meier contends that an actual exorcism by Jesus in the region of Gerasa lies at the root of the tradition (1994: 650-653). So many layers have been added to the historical core, however, including the unclean spirits entering the swine and their subsequent descent into the sea of Galilee, that little more than the occurrence of the exorcism in that place can now be recovered. Meier accepts a similar historical kernel lies behind the casting out of the demon of the possessed boy in Mk 9: 17-29. He points to a number of unusual features in the narrative, including the inability of the disciples to cast out the demons, Jesus' reference to the need for faith, and the lack of any christological title attributable to Jesus. These, he suggests, are indicative of an historical event, but he remains cautious with regard to the details of it (1994: 653-656). Despite the difficulties presented by the initially uncompromising manner in which Jesus responds to the request of the Syrophenician woman to cleanse her daughter (Mk 7: 25-30), Meier nonetheless considers this more probably than not a creation of the early Christian community. He sees behind the narrative not an historical core but rather the post Easter theological theme of mission to the Gentiles (1994: 659-660).⁶⁵ He also rejects as historical the casting out of the demon narrated in Mt 9: 32-33. This appears to be a duplication of the exorcism subsequently described in Mt 12: 22-23⁶⁶ the purpose of which, according to Meier, was to complete the Matthean structure of nine miracles, presented in that gospel in three groups of three (1994: 657). The exorcism narrated in Mt 12: 22-23//Lk 11: 14 appears to be the only such occurrence to be derived from the Q source. Meier acknowledges the possibility that the exorcism itself is the creation of the writer(s) of Q serving the purpose of introducing the Beelzebul controversy. The reference to the demoniac being mute,⁶⁷

⁶⁵But how probable is it that the early Christian community would have created *ex nihilo* a situation in which a Gentile woman gets the better of Jesus?

⁶⁶See pg 214 n 64 above.

⁶⁷The additional reference to the demoniac as blind in the gospel of Matthew is

however, may indicate an historical kernel, allowing that the inability of the demoniac to speak is neither necessary to, nor indeed plays any further role in, the narrative. On balance, Meier concludes in favour of the historicity of the Lukan version of the exorcism (1994: 656-657). One final incidence of exorcism considered by Meier concerns the reference in Lk 8: 2 to Mary Magdalene "from whom seven demons had gone out". Whilst accepting that Lk 8: 1-3 is no more than Lukan summary, the application of the criteria of embarrassment and coherence may suggest an underlying historical event. There is, he argues, no benefit to the early Christian community in casting the first person to whom the post resurrection Jesus appeared in such a dubious light. It is, however, entirely possible that a woman who had been cleansed in this manner by Jesus should thereafter become one of his most devoted disciples (1994: 657-658).

Finally at the opposite end of the scale from Bultmann and Crossan, Twelftree (1993: 70-126) argues in favour of the basic historicity of all of the exorcisms described in Mark's gospel.

It is apparent from the analyses of the above works, that whilst the principle of Jesus of Nazareth casting out unclean spirits is almost universally accepted, uncovering the details of his exorcisms proves a difficult task. Indeed one incident of exorcism accepted by the scholars noted above as having its origins in the life of Jesus provides no detail of the mechanics of the exorcism at all. It says only that once the demon had been cast out "the one who had been mute spoke and the crowds were amazed". Despite this lack of details, however, the fact that Jesus cast out demons was, within the context of the ancient Mediterranean world, hardly unique. The Hellenistic literature contains a

considered by most scholars to be attributable to the writer.

number of references to exorcisms. Philostratus, for example, describes the case of an Indian exorcist who furnished the mother of a demon possessed boy with a letter intended for the demon (*Vit. Apoll.*, 3. 38). He also narrates the casting out of a demon from a young boy by Apollonius (*Vit. Apoll.*, 4. 20).⁶⁸ More significantly, within Judeanism itself a number of instances of exorcism are also recounted. Josephus in his consideration of Solomon praises both his ability to cast out demons and “the forms of exorcisms” which he left behind. Josephus continues by narrating the example of Eleazar who, in the presence of the Roman emperor Vespasian, exorcised a demon by using a ring to pull it out through the possessed man’s nostrils. He ordered the demon never to return and recited both the name of Solomon and the incantations he had instructed. Finally in order to prove that the demon had left the man, Eleazar commanded the demon to overturn a bowl of water which he had placed on the ground. The demon duly complied (*Ant.* 8.2.5 [42-49]). A less spectacular exorcism is recounted in the apocryphal book of Tobit. The wicked demon Asmodeus, who was responsible for the deaths of Sarah’s seven husbands, was cast out by the angel Raphael. No description is given of the exorcism, rather we are told only that Sarah was “set free” from the demon (Tob 3: 17). Whilst exorcisms are also recounted in the book of Jubilees and in the Qumran scrolls,⁶⁹ perhaps the most significant for our purposes is that attributed in

⁶⁸Although the writings of Philostratus are datable to the beginning of the third century CE, Apollonius himself was a first century figure. We consider it improbable that Philostratus’ writings were influenced by early Christian texts and presume at least a degree of historicity in the exorcisms attributed to Apollonius. Exorcisms are also present in the writings of Lucian of Samosata although these are to be dated to the second century CE.

⁶⁹According to Vermes 1997: 573, The Prayer of Nabonidus (4QprNab/4Q242) recounts the tale of the last king of Babylon who had his ulcer healed and his sins forgiven by a Judean exorcist. Twelftree, however, argues that the term רַב־כֹּהֵן translated by Vermes as ‘exorcist’ is more naturally understood, and appears in the context of Dan 2: 27, as ‘diviner’. If interpreted in this manner in The Prayer of Nabonidus, the issue would be one of healing rather than exorcism (1993: 17-18).

the rabbinic literature to the 'charismatic miracle-worker' Hanina ben Dosa. According to Pes. 112b/113a, Hanina cast out the demon Agrath, the daughter of Mahlath, who appeared nightly, but he did nonetheless allow her to continue operating on the Sabbath and Wednesday nights.⁷⁰ Finally, in the Acts of the Apostles exorcisms are attributed not only to the followers of Jesus (Acts 8: 5-7, 16: 16-18), but to itinerant Judean exorcists who sought to use the name of 'the Lord Jesus' to cast out demons (Acts 19: 13-16). Rather than exorcisms being peculiar to Jesus of Nazareth then, his practice of casting out demons places him comfortably within the traditions of the Mediterranean and more specifically the Judean world. It is within this context that it falls to be determined what particular significance, if any, attached to Jesus' exorcisms.

The text most often cited and discussed by New Testament scholars seeking to uncover the meaning of Jesus' exorcisms is Mt 12: 22-23//Lk 11: 14. As we noted above, these narratives state simply that Jesus casts out a demon, restores speech, and in Matthew's case, sight, to the demoniac and that the crowd's response is one of amazement. It is, however, the so-called Beelzebul controversy which follows in the Matthean and Lukan accounts, and which occurs independently in Mk 3: 22-27,⁷¹ which yields the more significant information. The Beelzebul controversy in its Matthean and Lukan forms is generally accepted as having its origins in the Q source.⁷² According to

⁷⁰Vermes 1973a: 55-56.

⁷¹Manson argues that "There is enough agreement of Mt. and Lk. against Mk. in Mt 12: 25f and Lk 11: 17f to make it probable that this item stood in Q; and the Lukan version of the 'Strong man bound' is so completely different in wording from the Markan that the two must be independent" (1957: 84). Note also Twelftree 1993: 99-113 and Meier 1994: 407-423.

⁷²Kloppenborg 1988: 90-93 provides a list of those scholars who accept that the Matthean and Lukan versions of the Beelzebul controversy derive from the Q source. He also identifies those scholars who argue in favour of the presence of the parable of the strong man in Q and those who attribute it solely to Mark. On either interpretation it is recognised that the Matthean version of the parable has Mark as its source (1988: 92).

the consensus view the original form of the narrative as it appeared in Q is more accurately represented by the Lukan account. Thus the Q version of the controversy can be reconstructed as follows,

[Jesus] was casting out a demon that was mute; when the demon had gone out, the one who had been mute spoke, and the crowds were amazed. But some of them said, "He casts out demons by Beelzebul, the ruler of the demons"....But he knew what they were thinking and said to them "Every kingdom divided against itself becomes a desert, and house falls on house. If Satan also is divided against himself, how will his kingdom stand? For you say that I cast out the demons by Beelzebul. Now if I cast out the demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they will be your judges. But if it is by the finger of God that I cast out the demons then the kingdom of God has come to you.

When a strong man, fully armed, guards his castle his property is safe. But when one stronger than he attacks him and overpowers him, he takes away his armour in which he trusted and divides his plunder. Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters.⁷³

As early in the tradition as the Q version is, however, it already appears to have undergone emendation from its most original form. According to Q 11: 19, Jesus responds to the accusation levelled against him by claiming that if his exorcisms are considered to be the work of Satan, then the same must apply to those whose exorcisms

⁷³Lk 11: 16, "Others to test him kept demanding from him a sign from heaven", is not generally regarded as being original to Q (Kloppenborg 1988: 92). But note Manson, who contends that the response to the demand for a sign occurs in Lk 11: 29 and would not have been introduced some thirteen verses earlier had it not belonged to the original source (1957: 83).

his accusers approve.⁷⁴ There is, however, serious doubt as to whether this logion originated in the context in which it is now located in Q (Kloppenborg 1987: 122-124). The parallel Markan pericope contains the same riposte offered by Jesus regarding the divided nature of the house of Satan which occurs in Q 11: 18, and the same parable concerning the Strong Man which is narrated in Q 11: 21-22. No mention is made, however, of the exorcisms of the “sons” of Jesus’ opponents. In all probability, then, v19 originally existed as an independent saying.⁷⁵ A still greater problem arises in connection with the following verse, verse 20. Not only does it not appear in the Markan pericope, but, in its present context in Q, it seems that Jesus attributes to the exorcisms of the “sons” of his opponents the same significance which he claims in respect of his own exorcisms. Most scholars consider such an interpretation untenable and conclude that as with verse 19, verse 20 existed originally as an independent logion.⁷⁶ Allowing this to be so, it remains to be determined whether either or both of these sayings originated with Jesus of Nazareth, and thus whether they can contribute in a wider context to our understanding of his exorcisms.

Verses 21 and 22 of the Q narrative consist of the parable of the Strong Man. The parable’s presence in the independent Markan tradition immediately following Jesus’

⁷⁴But see Shirock, who attempts to argue against the consensus view that Jesus refers here to the exorcists of his opponents, contending rather that he is alluding to his own disciples (1992: 41-51).

⁷⁵Manson 1957 considers Lk 11: 17-26 to consist of a series of sayings which derived from the Q source. See Meier 1994: 409 for a discussion of the possibility that vv 19 and 20 originated together.

⁷⁶See, for example, Bultmann 1963: 14 and Manson 1957: 84. But note Twelftree 1993: 107-108, who argues for the authenticity of vv 19 and 20 on the basis that it is the source of Jesus’ power that is being compared with that of the other exorcists, not the exorcisms *per se*. In support of this he cites Mk 9: 40//Lk 9: 50. Nowhere else in contemporary Judean literature, he argues, do exorcists operate by the means of the Spirit of God, and it is this empowerment of Jesus by the Spirit that is not only unique to him, but which also identifies his exorcisms with the inbreaking of the kingdom of God.

comments on the division of Satan's kingdom confirms the possibility of both the saying and the parable having their roots in the same context.⁷⁷ In other words, the parable of the Strong Man should be interpreted in terms of Jesus' exorcisms. The Markan account of the parable is shorter and contains none of the embellishment which appears in the Lukan narrative and probably also in its Q source. For this reason it seems likely that the Markan tradition reflects the more authentic form of the parable.⁷⁸ According to Mk 3: 27, "...no-one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his property without first binding up the strong man; then indeed the house can be plundered". As with vv19 and 20, the final verse of the pericope as it is related in Q 11: 23 appears originally to have existed as an independent logion (Kloppenborg 1987: 125).⁷⁹ Although it does not occur in the Markan narrative, the phrase "Whoever is not with me is against me" does occur elsewhere, in a different context, in both Mark and Luke (Mk 9: 40//Lk 9: 50).

Having established the core tradition, it is now possible to attempt to determine the significance of exorcisms within the mission of Jesus of Nazareth. The Beelzebul controversy once again finds Jesus involved in a challenge/response situation. In addition to the amazement expressed by some of the crowd at Jesus' exorcism, others amongst them accused Jesus of deriving his power from "Beelzebul, the ruler of the demons". The context for this allegation/challenge is evident from the first century world view presented by Malina and Rohrbaugh and described above. The person of the demoniac was believed to have fallen under the influence and control of a demon, an

⁷⁷Twelftree 1993: 111-113. But see Manson 1957, Bultmann 1963 and Kloppenborg 1987 who argue that the parable was added to the Beelzebul controversy at an early stage of the tradition. According to Oakman, verses 21-22 may have originated as two separate sayings. "The conjunction of the scene of 'peace through strength' in the former verse and the scene of 'the triumph of the stronger' in the latter verse", he argues, "highlights two very different situations" (1988: 113).

⁷⁸Meier 1994: 418.

⁷⁹Oakman suggests it may have been a "court proverb" (1988: 114).

unclean spirit. "Since", according to Malina and Rohrbaugh, "evil always attacks good, people expected to be assaulted" (1992: 182). Many of those possessed by demons and who had no-one willing or able to look after them were consigned to the periphery of the community, unable to return until the demon was cast out. But, as we have noted, in the cosmic hierarchy whilst demons can affect and control human persons, the reverse does not apply. In other words, if a human person such as Jesus of Nazareth casts out a demon/unclean spirit, he necessarily does so at the bidding of a non-human person. In the Beelzebul Controversy, the accusation brought against Jesus is that he derives his power from a demonic source, Beelzebul.⁸⁰ That such a charge should be levelled against him by his opponents is readily understandable. In the cosmic hierarchy there were only two non human persons capable of empowering such an action, God and Satan. Jesus must, therefore, have acted under the control of one or other of these. The attribution of his deeds to the power of the "ruler of the demons" was a most effective means of bringing shame upon Jesus and of labelling him a deviant.⁸¹ Although the nature and intent of the accusation against Jesus is obvious, the identity of the accusers is less so. In the Q narrative the allegation is said to emanate from some amongst the crowd.⁸² In the parallel passage in Mk 3: 22, however, Jesus' opponents are identified as "the scribes who came down from Jerusalem". Whichever of these two sources reflect more accurately the identity of Jesus' accusers, the probability must remain that the charge was initiated not so much by those who had been attracted to Jesus as a consequence of his exorcisms, healings and preaching, but rather by those who would

⁸⁰Lewis (1992: 638-639) provides a brief exposition of the main views on the derivation of the term Beelzebul. The most frequently cited etymology relates to the epithet 'Prince Baal' present in the Ugaritic texts. Note also Twelftree 1993: 105-106 and Crossan 1991: 318-319.

⁸¹Malina and Neyrey 1988 contains a discussion of the process of labelling outsiders/deviants in Matthew's gospel.

⁸²The reference to the Pharisees in Matthew's gospel is regarded by most scholars as Matthean redaction.

have perceived these activities to be a threat. As we have seen from the parables, these are far more likely to be the elite and their retainers than the non-elite peasants and artisans. Moreover, the strategy of labelling an individual a deviant, although disseminated by the people, is almost invariably initiated by the rulers and their courtiers. Jesus responds to the challenge by highlighting the inconsistency inherent in the allegation. He stands accused of casting out demons through the power of the ruler of the demons. But this necessarily implies that Satan is divided and acting against himself. If this were so, Jesus contends, and he was the instrument of Satan, then the divided nature of Satan's kingdom, as evidenced by Jesus' exorcisms, would result in its destruction. He takes his response one step further by his telling of the parable of the strong man. If, by analogy, the strong man in the parable is Satan, the one who binds and plunders is Jesus, and the house plundered refers to the persons from whom Jesus has cast out demons, the implicit claim appears to be that Jesus holds the power to defeat Satan and thereby to cast out demons. The point at issue in the challenge is relatively straightforward- by whose authority does Jesus effect his exorcisms? His opponents, almost certainly the religious and political elite, or their retainers, attribute his power to Satan but Jesus refutes this by both illustrating the inadequacies of their argument, and by making the positive claim to hold the power to defeat Satan himself.

The independent logion in v19 appears to relate Jesus' response to a similar confrontation. Again the subject of dispute seems to be the nature of Jesus' authority to cast out demons. On this occasion he allows his exorcisms and their source of power to stand comparison with the exorcisms of those whom his adversaries approve. The more significant independent saying, however, is that contained in Q 11: 20. The logion's historicity is widely acknowledged by New Testament scholars.⁸³ The occurrence of the

⁸³For example Bultmann 1963: 13-14, Twelftree 1993: 106-110 and Meier 1994:

phrase "kingdom of God" is cited as evidence of the saying's authenticity. Although it is recognised that this terminology may not be absolutely unique to Jesus, it is certainly identifiable with him.⁸⁴ It figures prominently, indeed centrally in his teaching, and seldom appears in the synoptics other than on his lips. A more contentious element of the logion, also cited in support of its historicity, is the reference to Jesus casting out demons by means of the "finger of God". Nowhere else in the New Testament does this specific phrase occur; it is not used in connection with the exorcisms of Jesus himself, nor is it appealed to by the early Christians in the practice of their own exorcisms.⁸⁵ It has its origins, rather, in the Old Testament, where it occurs on a number of occasions, for example, Exod 8: 19⁸⁶, 31: 18, and Deut 9: 10. It also appears to be almost entirely lacking in the intertestamental literature. Some scholars, however, contend that the phrase "Spirit of God", as it occurs in the Matthean pericope⁸⁷ more accurately represents the words of Jesus of Nazareth. Dunn (1975: 45-46) recites a number of considerations which, he suggests, point towards the historicity of "Spirit of God". Chief amongst these are Matthew's use of the phrase kingdom of God and his Moses typology. On thirty three occasions throughout his gospel Matthew refers to the 'kingdom of heaven'. Only four times does he use the terminology 'kingdom of God'. For the most part, where the latter phrase occurs in his sources Matthew amends it to his preferred 'kingdom of heaven'. Mt 12: 28 is one of only two occasions where he fails to make this

413-417. On the other hand, whilst Sanders acknowledges that "There probably is no other verse in the Gospels about which there is so much unanimity" (1985: 136), he, on a scale which runs from probable through possible to conceivable attributes only 'conceivable' status to the logion.

⁸⁴References simply to 'the kingdom' occur more frequently, but the specific usage of the phrase kingdom of God, out with the writings of the New Testament, is relatively uncommon.

⁸⁵Meier 1994: 415-416.

⁸⁶Meier 1994: 415-416 contends that this usage is unique in the Old Testament in that it is the only occasion on which a miracle is effected by "the finger of God".

⁸⁷Mt 12: 28.

change.⁸⁸ Dunn infers from this that Matthew is unlikely to have altered the one phrase ‘Spirit of God’ but not the other ‘kingdom of God’. One of the most notable features of Matthew’s gospel is his comparison of Jesus with Moses. The phrase ‘finger of God’ occurring as it does in Exod 8: 19 would have afforded Matthew the opportunity to extend that comparison, an opportunity it would seem improbable he would not only omit, but deliberately amend. Additionally, it remains possible that despite his preference for the use of the term ‘Spirit’, Luke may have sought to strengthen his own Exodus typology by altering an original “Spirit of God” to the “finger of God”.⁸⁹ We shall also illustrate below that the terminology “Spirit of God” coheres significantly with the reference to the Spirit in Psalm of Solomon 17.

Accepting its historicity, how then are we to interpret Jesus’ proclamation, “..if it is by the spirit of God that I cast out the demons then the kingdom of God has come to you”? Central to our understanding is our interpretation of the aorist form of the Greek verb φθάνω. The most common translation given in respect of this term is “has come” or “has arrived”. Such a translation bears considerably upon our interpretation of the logion and thus of Jesus’ perception of his exorcisms. By using this form of the verb it appears that Jesus claims his exorcisms manifest the actual presence of the kingdom of God here and now. Sanders rejects such an interpretation claiming that it places too much weight upon the meaning of the Greek verb, φθάνω (1985: 133-141, 157). We simply cannot know, he contends, whether this term adequately conveys the meaning of the Aramaic originally used by Jesus of Nazareth. Moreover, the term itself “frequently

⁸⁸The other is Mt 19: 24.

⁸⁹Whilst both Dunn and Twelftree favour the authenticity of the “Spirit of God” they accept that there is little difference in meaning between the two variants (1993: 108). See also Wall who argues that Deut 9: 10 lies behind Luke’s use of ‘the finger of God’ (1987: 144-150).

means 'came' in the sense of 'the coming was determined' not 'the coming was accomplished'" (1985: 134). Nor, he continues, does the extant contemporary literature provide any evidence to support the general belief that the emergence of the kingdom of God was to be heralded by exorcisms. Finally, even if such an interpretation of the saying was genuinely to represent the belief of Jesus, Sanders argues, there is insufficient extant information regarding the views of his contemporaries to claim, with any certainty, that Jesus was unique in that belief. It is clear from the actions of many of the popular prophets, described in Chapter Two above, that they too believed themselves to have some significant role to play in impending eschatological events. Sanders concludes that whilst Jesus' exorcisms were a significant and important aspect of his ministry, one which initially at least served to attract people to him, there is nothing in either Q 11: 20, or any other New Testament texts, to justify the claim that either Jesus or his contemporaries interpreted these as evidence of the realisation of the kingdom of God.

None of these arguments presented by Sanders is particularly persuasive, however. As Maurice Casey (1998: 27) notes, the Greek verb φθάνω has an obvious Aramaic equivalent in the verb אָבַד, the piel perfect of which adequately expresses the sense of the aorist ἐφθασεν. Moreover, the most obvious interpretation of ἐφθασεν remains 'has come' in the sense that it is all ready here.⁹⁰ Nor does the fact that exorcisms were not a previously anticipated herald of the kingdom of God preclude Jesus from proclaiming them as such. Finally, his reference to the potential beliefs of contemporary prophets is little more than speculation based on an argument from silence.

⁹⁰It is clearly used in this sense in both 1 Thessalonians 2: 16 and 2 Corinthians 10: 14.

From the above then, we can say, with a reasonable degree of surety, that Jesus of Nazareth understood his exorcisms to manifest the actualisation of the kingdom of God. His power to exorcise, he acknowledges, however, derives not from himself, but from the 'Spirit of God'.⁹¹ This reference to empowerment by the 'Spirit of God' provides us with an interesting comparison with Psalm of Solomon 17: 37b. According to the Psalm "God made him [the messiah] powerful in the Holy Spirit". Whilst there is no mention of exorcisms in the Psalm, the fact remains that Jesus claims to be empowered to cast out demons by the same Spirit the Psalmist expects will be poured out upon the messiah. If, as we have suggested, the point at issue in both the Beelzebul controversy and the independent logion of Q 11: 19, concerned the nature of Jesus' authority to cast out demons, then this reference to the 'Spirit of God' may well be revealing. He may be claiming that his exorcisms manifest the reality of the kingdom of God, precisely because he performs them as the Messiah.⁹² Even if this is not his intention, it remains possible that some amongst the crowds which follow him may draw such a conclusion. In addition to the reference to the 'Spirit of God', a further connection between Psalm of Solomon 17 and the activities of Jesus of Nazareth can be made.⁹³ According to Esler (1995c: 17-18), vv35-37 contain an allusion to Isa 11: 2-5 in which the Spirit of the Lord will rest upon a branch of the root of Jesse. Infused with the Spirit this Davidic son will judge the poor with righteousness "*and decide with equity for the meek of the earth*". Esler continues, "there is a direct connection made in the Isaian passage between the Spirit of God and the rectification of prevailing patterns of social and economic

⁹¹Stevan Davies, using anthropological and psychological studies of 'spirit possession', argues that Jesus was possessed *by* rather than possessed *of* the spirit. In effect, whilst he was spirit-possessed, he ceased to be Jesus of Nazareth and became the Spirit of God (1995: 22-42).

⁹²But note Dunn, 1975: 48-49, who claims the significance is not with the person of Jesus but rather with the presence of the "eschatological Spirit".

⁹³See also Chapter Five below.

injustice” (1995c: 17). As we have noted, these are precisely the issues Jesus addresses in his parables. More directly, however, it is possible that they may also be implicit in his exorcisms.

As we have illustrated, demon possession was understood in the first century Mediterranean to occur as a result of the actions of a non-human person. What appears less certain is whether such demon possession could be influenced by specific religious, social or political conditions. Paul Hollenbach (1981: 565-588) attempts to answer this question by making use of modern “social-psychological theories of mental illness”. He contends that “situations of social tension such as the following are often indicated as the causal context of possession: class antagonisms rooted in economic exploitation, conflicts between traditions where revered traditions are eroded, colonial domination and revolution” (1981: 573). He cites the study of Franz Fanon concerning mental illness in the French-Algerian war arguing that demon possession was an indirect form of protest against “colonial oppression”. In first century CE Palestine, Hollenbach continues, it served a similar function in the face of Roman rule. Crossan takes the same approach citing the example of “*bindele*”, a form of non-ancestral spirit-possession, experienced by the Lunda-Luvale tribes of colonised Northern Rhodesia. “*Bindele*”, he claims, is equivalent to the *Legion*, the spirits who possessed the Gerasene demoniac,⁹⁴ in Roman Palestine (1991: 314-315). Crossan concludes, “colonial exorcisms...are, in fact, individuated symbolic revolution” (1991: 318). There is a problem with this view, however, and that is, as Stevan Davies highlights, as a client territory under Herodian rule there were no Roman troops stationed in Galilee during the lifetime of Jesus of Nazareth.⁹⁵ Nor, Davies continues, is there much in the way of evidence to suggest a

⁹⁴Mk 5: 1-17//Mt 8: 28-34//Lk 8: 26-39.

⁹⁵See also Freyne 1980: 69.

causal connection between taxation and indebtedness and demon-possession. On the contrary,

Many cross-cultural studies have made it abundantly clear that demon-possession is usually a means by which an individual in a socially subordinate role can respond to and cope with circumstances that cannot be effectively dealt with otherwise—most of the time, those circumstances arise from intrafamily conflicts (1995: 81).⁹⁶

In other words, it is position in society, rather than any specific economic or political occurrences, which tends to render an individual vulnerable to demon-possession; “The role of demoniac was most commonly adopted by individuals with little power or status, [who had] few sanctioned avenues for protesting the dissatisfactions that stemmed from their lowly status”.⁹⁷ Such behaviour is thus most prominent in highly stratified societies. In the context of Haiti, Bourguignon notes that “oppressive poverty, the domination of the masses by a small, centralized power group, frequent hunger and illness...are constant themes of a society organized in strict hierarchical arrangements, from top to bottom”.⁹⁸ So too in first century CE Palestine; demonic possession was not so much a consequence of Roman colonisation, rather it prospered in a rigid hierarchical society founded on elite exploitation and oppression. When Jesus of Nazareth cast out demons by the ‘Spirit of God’, he claimed that the kingdom of God had become a present reality. The cosmic and the social became one. For his contemporaries this appeared to mean the defeat of Satan and his agents; it also meant an end to the oppression of the lowly and marginalised which allowed Satan to

⁹⁶See for example, Shekar 1989: 87, Freed and Freed 1967: 317 and Spanos 1989: 106.

⁹⁷Spanos 1989: 106.

⁹⁸Bourguignon 1976: 32 cited in Hollenbach 1981: 576.

flourish. It is little wonder that his elite adversaries sought to brand him a deviant empowered by demons.

Table Fellowship

One further aspect of the activities of Jesus of Nazareth which provoked considerable antagonism was his practice of table fellowship. Two occasions are described in the gospel narratives where Jesus is criticised for sharing a meal with tax collectors and sinners. Firstly, in one of the most historically secure sayings recounted in the gospels, Jesus complains that he has been labelled “a glutton and a drunkard,⁹⁹ a friend of tax collectors and of sinners” (Mt 11: 19//Lk 7: 34). Although Bultmann argues that Mt 11: 18f is a “community product which owes its form to the Hellenistic Church” (1963: 165) most scholars including Manson (1957), Sanders (1985), Crossan (1991) and Meier (1991) all attribute a high level of authenticity, if not to the saying in its actual form, then at least to the sentiments expressed in it. It is almost inconceivable, they contend, that such a practice would be attributed to Jesus if he had not engaged in it. To present their Lord in such a potentially negative light was not in the interests of the early Church. The second occasion on which Jesus is described as eating with tax collectors and sinners is at the meal hosted by Levi (Mk 2: 13-17//Mt 9: 9-13//Lk 5: 27-32). Mark relates the events of the meal as follows,

And as he sat at dinner in his [Levi's] house many tax collectors and sinners were also sitting with Jesus and his disciples- for there were many who followed him. And the scribes of the Pharisees when they saw that he was eating with sinners and tax collectors said to his disciples, “Why does he eat with tax collectors and

⁹⁹This element of the phrase derives from Deut. 21: 20 and labels Jesus a ‘rebellious son’. The punishment for such behaviour is death by stoning (Jeremias 1963: 160).

sinner?”¹⁰⁰ When Jesus heard he said to them “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick; I came not to call the righteous but sinners”.

The pericope as it is narrated in Mark is problematic. The Pharisees, as in the case of the Sabbath controversy (Mk 2: 23-28) conveniently appear on the scene with the sole purpose of criticising Jesus’ actions.¹⁰¹ The historicity of their presence on such an occasion must therefore be doubtful. This, however, need not lead us to conclude that the Pharisees were not amongst those offended by Jesus’ table fellowship practices.¹⁰² Although Lk 15: 2, in which it is claimed that “all the tax collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to [Jesus]. And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, ‘This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them’” is probably no more than a Lukan summary statement,¹⁰³ it remains more likely than not that the Pharisees were amongst those who labelled Jesus “a glutton and a drunkard”. Whilst the canonical gospels may exaggerate the extent to which the Pharisees provided the main opposition to Jesus and his followers,¹⁰⁴ they were nonetheless, as we shall illustrate below, a reform movement whose interests differed from those of Jesus of Nazareth and with whom as a result they came into conflict.

Amongst the guests at the meal hosted by Levi were, Mark narrates, tax collectors and sinners many of whom were apparently also followers of Jesus. In the circumstances of Levi’s occupation as a tax collector it is hardly surprising, indeed in the Mediterranean

¹⁰⁰Note the similarity to the complaint made against Peter in Acts 11: 3.

¹⁰¹In the Sabbath controversy it is the disciples who are the subject of their wrath.

¹⁰²According to Taylor, “Mark knew that the reproaches of the scribes [of the Pharisees] were occasioned by a meal at which Jesus ate with taxgatherers and with people who sat loose to Law, but he knew little more” (1952: 203).

¹⁰³Manson, however, suggests that the verses belonged to the tradition taken over by Luke (1957: 283).

¹⁰⁴Sanders 1985: 270-293.

social world it is entirely predictable, that many of the guests attending the dinner would belong to the host's social peer group. But how then do we explain the attendance of 'the sinners'? And why should the partaking of Jesus in a meal with tax collectors and sinners cause offence to the Pharisees? In order to answer these questions we must first of all consider the socio-political roles of the tax-collectors, 'the sinners' and the Pharisees respectively.

Taxation in the first century CE consisted of two elements, direct and indirect taxation. Direct taxation took the form of poll and land tax and was collected by officials of the ruling elite.¹⁰⁵ Indirect taxation extended, amongst others, to tolls, customs and fishing tolls and was gathered by tax/toll collectors who had purchased the right to do so. In addition to the references in the New Testament a number of these tax/toll collectors appear in the writings of Josephus and the rabbinic literature.¹⁰⁶ Thus specific mention is made of John of Caesarea (*J.W.* 2.14.4 [287]), Zacchaeus a chief tax collector in the city of Jericho (Lk 19: 2) and Levi who conducted his operations from the shore of Lake Galilee (Mk 2: 14). In order to understand the social role and position of tax/toll collectors, however, it is necessary to adopt a nuanced approach. As Malina and Rohrbaugh correctly note, a distinction must be made between chief tax collectors such as Zacchaeus and toll collectors possibly including Levi and those described in Mk 2: 15. "The tax collectors familiar in the Synoptic tradition were for the most part employees of the chief tax collector and were often rootless persons unable to find other work" (1992: 190).¹⁰⁷ Many of these toll collectors, like Levi, operated from toll booths and collected

¹⁰⁵In Judea direct taxes were the responsibility of the Roman prefects/procurators and were collected by their officials. In Galilee the task was undertaken by appointees of Herod Antipas (Donahue 1971: 45).

¹⁰⁶b. Shebuoth 39a; b. Aboda Zara 39a; b. Ahabb.33b; b. Arakh.6a; b. Bekhor. 31a; and b. Baba Quamma 113a, 114a.

¹⁰⁷Note also Donahue who argues in the context of Lk 3: 12-13 that the toll collectors

duties on a wide variety of goods/services in transit including oil, corn, dried fish, fodder and the various products of the caravan trade to name but a few.¹⁰⁸ In addition to the standard duties, however, it was common practice for the toll collectors to extort additional sums usually for their own benefit.¹⁰⁹ It was largely this practice which led to the inclusion of tax/toll collecting amongst, what Jeremias terms, the “despised trades” of Judean society. Citing four lists from rabbinic literature, m. Kidd. 4.14, m. Ket. 7. 10, b. Kidd. 82a Bar. and b. Sanh. 25b, he describes those occupations which were regarded with various levels of disdain. Amongst these were dung collectors, tanners, herdsmen, peddlers, weavers, gamblers, usurers, tax collectors and publicans. Of these, members of the last four occupations including the tax collectors and publicans were held in the lowest esteem.¹¹⁰ In addition to societal disdain, according to Jeremias, tax collectors were barred from positions in the judiciary, “and deprived of civil and political rights to which every Israelite had claim..” (1969: 311). Significantly, although in terms of Lenski’s macro-sociological model Fiensy classifies dung collectors, prostitutes, gamblers, usurers and others amongst the unclean and degraded, he identifies the tax collectors as ‘retainers’; officials acting on behalf of the ruling elite who took advantage of their position to enhance their financial status (1991: 163-164). In support of this he cites the examples mentioned above of John of Caesarea, Zacchaeus and Levi. John and Zacchaeus are almost certainly chief tax collectors and therefore wealthy members of the

are “minor functionaries in the toll farming system, rather than prime contractors” (1971: 58).

¹⁰⁸Heichelheim 1938: 240.

¹⁰⁹Such a practice is implicit in the response attributed by Luke to John the Baptist when asked by the tax collectors what they should do. He answered “Collect no more than the amount prescribed for you” (Lk 3: 13). But note also Malina and Rohrbaugh, who claim evidence exists from the Roman Imperial period to suggest that it was their employers rather than the toll collectors themselves who benefited from such exploitation (1992: 190).

¹¹⁰This negative view of tax collectors and publicans is supported by their association with thieves and robbers in m. Toh. 7. 6 and b. 39a Bar. respectively.

'retainer' category, but there is no evidence to suggest the same of Levi. His call by Jesus from his toll booth suggests rather Levi's lowly status. The situation of the tax and toll collectors is in many respects similar to that of the merchants; a very small number accumulated significant amounts of money which they used to increase their honour status. The social position of the vast majority, however, like the itinerant peddlers, remained amongst the 'unclean and degraded'.

In addition to the tax collectors, the others described as attending Levi's meal are designated 'sinners'. To whom the label 'sinners' was intended to apply, however, is not entirely clear. Whilst Sanders persuasively refutes the contention that within first century Judeanism the צָרָעִים , the people of the land, were commonly identified as such, his equating of 'sinners' with 'the wicked' fails to convince (1985: 174-210). He bases his argument upon the claim that the Greek term $\acute{\alpha}\mu\alpha\rho\tau\omega\lambda\omicron\iota$ is represented most frequently in Hebrew in the form רָשָׁעִים , and continues, רָשָׁעִים is virtually a technical term best translated as 'the wicked'. It refers to those "who sinned wilfully and heinously and who did not repent" (1985: 177). Chilton, however, exposes the inadequacies in Sanders' approach (1997b: 225-227). The root רָשָׁע is only one of five Hebrew terms which occur in the Masoretic Text and which can be equated with the Greek $\acute{\alpha}\mu\alpha\rho\tau\omega\lambda\omicron\varsigma$. The Aramaic equivalent of רָשָׁע which corresponds most readily to $\acute{\alpha}\mu\alpha\rho\tau\omega\lambda\omicron\varsigma$ is a form of the root רָשָׁע . That this Aramaic term represents a number of other Hebrew roots as well as רָשָׁע must seriously undermine Sanders' claim to the latter's usage in a technical capacity. If 'the sinners' are not to be understood as 'the wicked' what possible alternatives are there? Many of those who contravened the purity/pollution and debt codes were technically in a state of sin and therefore liable to be labelled sinners. There were, however, two groups who found themselves in a state of almost permanent sinfulness. First amongst these, as we noted

above, were those who suffered from a disability or illness. The second were those termed 'professional sinners', people whose employment or lifestyle placed them outside of the law. Whilst it is possible that members of either or indeed both of these groups attended the meal hosted by Levi, the social context suggests that the 'professional sinners' were the more probable guests. According to Sanders, the common denominator between the tax collectors and 'sinners', and thus the reason that they appear together in various gospel passages is that both were identified as 'traitors', the tax collectors to their country, 'the sinners' to their God (1985: 178). Such a view, however, fails to take cognisance of the tax/toll collectors working in Galilee and the other territories under the rule of the Herodian dynasty.¹¹¹ If, rather, we allow for the identification of 'the sinners' with the 'professional sinners', their conjunction in the gospels with the tax collectors becomes more readily explained in terms of their social standing; they were both members of what Lenski terms 'the unclean and degraded'. In short, along with the tax collectors, the prostitutes, tanners, sailors and usurers etc., the 'professional sinners' held a marginalised position in the Judean social hierarchy.

The final group which features in the pericope are the Pharisees. In recent years both Jacob Neusner (1971, 1973b, 1993) and Marcus Borg (1984) have portrayed the Pharisees of the first century CE as primarily a "table fellowship sect". According to Neusner, although originally involved in political activities, the Pharisees, during the reign of Herod the Great, switched their attention from political to religious matters.¹¹² Prominent amongst their religious concerns, Neusner argues, were ritual purity, tithing, food regulations and observance of the Sabbath and ordained festivals (1993: 253-254).¹¹³ Significant in Borg's, if no longer in Neusner's, understanding of the

¹¹¹Donahue 1971: 45 and Freyne 1980: 192.

¹¹²Neusner 1993: 255.

¹¹³Sanders contests Neusner's portrayal of the Pharisees, questioning in particular his

Pharisees as a “table fellowship sect”¹¹⁴ is their association with the *haburot*, and, in particular, with the *haberim* referred to in the rabbinic texts m. Demai 2: 2-3 and t. Demai 2: 2-3: 9. The precise nature and function of the *haburot*, however, is elusive. They appear to have fulfilled a number of purposes, important amongst which were the implementation of burial rites. That they were one of many such groups in first century CE Palestine seems probable, to link them so specifically with the Pharisees appears unnecessary.¹¹⁵ The lack of historical context provided by the rabbinic texts for the *haberim* ensures that their association with the Pharisees is based solely upon their similar interests in tithing and purity. Such issues, however, as we shall illustrate below fail to exhaust the full range of Pharisaic concerns. If then the Pharisees of the first century CE are not to be considered primarily as a “table fellowship sect” how are we to understand them?

Information concerning the Pharisees is available to us from three extant sources, Josephus, the New Testament writings and rabbinic literature.¹¹⁶ In the first of these Josephus provides us with most of what we know about the political role of the Pharisees in the second temple period.¹¹⁷ Although initially favoured by John Hyrcanus (134-104 BCE), they lost their position at the Hasmonean Court to the Sadducees, and appear to

assessment of the proportion of the rabbinic texts which relate to ‘table-fellowship’- according to Neusner approximately 67%, but by Sanders’ reckoning only 0.8% (1990: 177).

¹¹⁴Neusner’s definition of a sect as “a group of people who interpreted and obeyed law in a way different from other groups or from society at large” (1993: 271) is inadequate in social-scientific terms. See Elliott 1995: 80-84.

¹¹⁵Saldarini 1988: 216-220.

¹¹⁶Unlike the community at Qumran and the early Christians the Pharisees have left no extant writings. The occasional attribution of Pharisaic authorship to various apocryphal and pseudepigraphical texts enjoys little historical value.

¹¹⁷As we noted in Chapter Two, Josephus writes from an elite perspective a fact we must recognise in his treatment of the Pharisees.

have exerted little in the way of influence until their re-emergence during the reign of Queen Alexandra (*Ant.* 13.16.2 [409]).¹¹⁸ This restoration to a position of power and influence was, however, short-lived, although in the early days of the Herodian dynasty the Pharisees did appear to enjoy the relative favour of Herod the Great. Involvement in the domestic intrigues of the Herodian court, however, brought them into conflict with their ruler and once again their standing at court began to wane. Josephus makes little mention of the political role of the Pharisees in the first half of the first century CE, and they appear only to have re-acquired a degree of prominence in the turmoil of the mid 60s prior to the outbreak of the Judean revolt (*J.W.* 2.17.2-4 [409-471]). It is this decline in their fortunes which leads Neusner to conclude that during the lifetime of Jesus of Nazareth the Pharisees were a non-political sect who enjoyed little power or influence and whose primary concerns were religious. A more accurate assessment of the socio-political role of the Pharisees during that period is however provided by Saldarini. Using the macro-sociological categories constructed by Lenski,¹¹⁹ Saldarini identifies the Pharisees as retainers to the elite, who, as a political group, sought to influence the government of the nation. That they should have a religious programme is entirely to be expected; as we have noted, in ancient society there was no dichotomy between politics and religion. Their intermittent falls from grace and restoration to favour are also in keeping with their status as retainers dependent for their position upon the goodwill of the ruler.¹²⁰ The first half of the first century CE almost certainly saw a decline in the fortunes of the Pharisees, but their re-emergence as a leading force in the 60s confirms their continued existence as a political as well as a religious body throughout that period.

¹¹⁸Even allowing for Josephan exaggeration, the Pharisees appear to have enjoyed a position of power beyond that which was customary to them.

¹¹⁹See Chapter One above.

¹²⁰John Hyrcanus and Herod the Great both assume the role of Patron to their clients the Pharisees.

In terms of their religious beliefs, which Josephus describes in a comparison with those beliefs held by the Sadducees and the Essenes, three convictions, in particular, are claimed to have been peculiar to the Pharisees namely, a belief in fate, in freewill and in the immortality of the soul (*Ant.* 13.5.9 [171-173], *J.W.* 2.8.14 [162-166]). Amongst the people, he continues, they were also regarded as the most accurate interpreters of the Judean laws.¹²¹ Describing their behaviour, he refers to the Pharisees as treating one another well and as enjoying cordial relations with the urban artisans in particular and with society in general. They also appear to have lived a lifestyle relatively free from luxury and conspicuous consumption (*Ant.* 18.1.3 [12-15]). These additional insights, limited although they inevitably are, do nothing to undermine Saldarini's assessment of the Pharisees as retainers dependent upon their patrons and their influence amongst the artisans for their position.

The Pharisees first appear in the New Testament in Phil 3: 5 where Paul claims membership of the group prior to his conversion. They recur regularly throughout the New Testament, in particular in the gospels and the Acts of the Apostles. For the most part, the Pharisees are portrayed as providing the main opposition to Jesus, although the emphasis alters slightly in each of the respective gospel/Acts accounts. Thus in Mark's gospel, whilst the Pharisees are identified as opponents of Jesus, they are occasionally to be found in alliance with other opposition factions such as the Herodians (Mk 3: 6) and the chief priests, scribes, elders and Sadducees (Mk 12: 13). In Matthew's gospel the opposition between Jesus and the Pharisees is intensified and correspondingly more direct.¹²² Significantly, however, it is the Judean elite and their Roman overseers, not the Pharisees, who figure in the narrative of Jesus' death; it is with the former that the

¹²¹Saldarini 1988: 109-111 provides a more detailed consideration of Josephus' comparison of the Pharisees with the Sadducees.

¹²²Note Matthew's tendency to replace the Markan scribes with the Pharisees.

real power lies. Whilst the Pharisees are treated somewhat more favourably in Luke-Acts,¹²³ the gospel of John portrays them as providing virtually the sole opposition to Jesus in Galilee,¹²⁴ in addition to enjoying an official capacity in Jerusalem. Again, however, their omission from the narratives of Jesus' trial and crucifixion is telling. In the gospel accounts the Pharisees are clearly portrayed as opponents of Jesus of Nazareth, but their actions identify them as retainers rather than as members of the ruling elite.

Our final source, the rabbinic literature, has been much referred to by scholars seeking to obtain an understanding of the Pharisees, not least because of the rabbis alleged descent from their Pharisaic predecessors. Interestingly, although the term Pharisee most probably derives from the Aramaic root פָּרַשׁ meaning 'separate'/'interpret',¹²⁵ the term most used by the rabbis to refer to their forebears is חֲכָמִים i.e., the Wise Ones.¹²⁶ This notwithstanding, that there was a link between the Pharisees and the rabbis is indicated by their mutual concern for ritual purity, tithing and food regulations.¹²⁷ This emphasis on what Saldarini terms 'domestic regulations' may on the face of it appear to support Neusner's representation of the Pharisees of the first century as a non-political table fellowship sect. In reality, according to Saldarini, such a concern with issues relating to food and purity are not so much the sign of a sect which

¹²³Jesus is reported as engaging in table fellowship with the Pharisees in Galilee on three occasions, Lk 7: 36, 11: 37 and 14: 1, and the Pharisees are alleged to have warned Jesus of Herod's unfavourable intentions towards him (Lk 13: 31).

¹²⁴The likelihood of a Pharisaic presence in Galilee in the early decades of the first century CE is considered by Freyne 1980: 309-323.

¹²⁵Although there is some disagreement as to who or what they were separated from (Saldarini 1988: 221). Additionally, the appellation 'interpreters' remains a possibility on the basis of the group's acknowledged expertise in matters of the law.

¹²⁶Note Esler who posits a link between the חֲכָמִים and the Pharisees as they are described by Josephus (2001: 14).

¹²⁷Saldarini 1988: 213.

has withdrawn from society as the creation of boundaries by a group existing within that society. In other words, rules which “..kept the inmates of the groups united to one another and distinct from gentiles and *even from other Jews with whom they constantly had to interact and with whom they competed*”¹²⁸ (1988: 215). Social conditions may have dictated that the Pharisees played a less influential role amongst the ruling elite in the first century CE, but at all times they retained social, political and religious concerns. The Pharisees’ ‘religious’ programme not only had but was intended to have social and political consequences.

The limited nature of the information available to us makes it difficult to determine with any possible precision the organisational structure, the social role or the belief system of the Pharisees in the first century CE. By making use of sociological models in his reading of the texts, however, Saldarini succeeds in presenting an historically credible portrayal of the Pharisees. Contrary to much of the New Testament evidence, the Pharisees were clearly not the only group operating within Judeanism in first century Palestine. The Essenes, the “fourth philosophy” and the various *haberim* all indicate the variegated nature of Judeanism in this period. Nor were the Pharisees an introverted sect who concerned themselves solely with religious matters such as purity regulations and table fellowship. These were undoubtedly issues of importance to the Pharisees, but they were nonetheless only a part of a wider Pharisaic programme. Other than in the Hasmonean period, there is no evidence to suggest that the Pharisees exercised real power and therefore as a group they did not form part of the ruling elite. Their most likely social standing therefore was as retainers to the elite, a fact supported by their need to form and maintain good social relations, and by their apparent lack of obvious wealth. The Pharisees, although diminished in power from previous times, remained a ‘political

¹²⁸Our emphasis.

interest group',¹²⁹ who, through their position as retainers, sought to influence the ruling elite to achieve their own ends. That these should include a 'religious' programme is entirely to be expected in a society in which the dichotomy between religion and politics was meaningless.

Having identified the social standing of the tax collectors and sinners, and the social, political and religious interests of the Pharisees, two issues remain to be addressed. Why did Jesus of Nazareth and his disciples sit at table with tax collectors and sinners? And why did this action cause the Pharisees in particular such offence?

In the parables considered in the previous chapter, Jesus of Nazareth challenges the behaviour and values of the elite and their retainers and presents a view of the kingdom of God which stands in stark contrast to existing Judean society. He condemns the exploitative practices of the elite and warns them of their fate should they reject the values of the kingdom. In the enacted parable which the table fellowship with the tax collectors and 'sinners' represents, Jesus, the tax collectors and the sinners boldly act out the reality of that kingdom. By sitting together at table with him, the tax collectors and sinners, those considered amongst the lowest in society, illustrate their recognition of the values of God's kingdom. By stepping beyond their own social peer groups,¹³⁰ they reject the divisive nature of Judean society in favour of the inclusive kingdom preached by Jesus. As in the parable of the 'supper' (Mt 22: 1-14//Lk 14: 15-24) where the host

¹²⁹Esler is probably correct in identifying the Pharisees as a "reform movement" i.e. "a group who stays within a parent religion but advocates the reform or intensification of its ideas and institutions" (2001:15). As Saldarini notes "groups often have several functions and roles at once and thus can legitimately be placed in several categories" (1988: 280).

¹³⁰Although they were all categorised amongst the unclean and degraded of society, tanners, usurers etc. would not ordinarily share a meal with tax collectors.

ultimately rejects the honour seeking ways of the originally invited guests from the elite and shares his food with those summoned from the city's streets,¹³¹ so Jesus renounces any claims to his society's perception of what is honourable and dines with those who are marginalised. By sharing such a meal he symbolically reverses the pivotal values of honour and shame. In so doing he reflects the "shadow society" of the little tradition in which "many of the central values of the elite culture are symbolically rejected or stood on their head" (Scott 1977: 4).¹³² He also illustrates the significance of domestic/kinship religion within his mission and his perception of the kingdom of God. According to Malina (1996c: 28), participation in a shared meal was the primary means of establishing and maintaining fictive kin relationships within the sphere of domestic religion. When Jesus of Nazareth ate with tax collectors and 'sinners', he not only foreshadowed the messianic banquet,¹³³ but also demonstrated the conduct necessary for those seeking the kingdom of God here and now. That conduct had its roots in the little rather than the Great tradition and in domestic rather than elite/political religion.

Why should this cause such offence to the Pharisees? The reason is twofold. Although we have rejected the contention that the Pharisees were a table fellowship sect, concerns for purity and holiness nonetheless remain a significant aspect of the Pharisaic programme. Their objection to Jesus' table fellowship was not so much based upon his breach of Pharisaic purity regulations, since as a non-Pharisee Jesus was not bound by them.¹³⁴ It was rather that he was presenting an alternative to their vision for the future of Israel. In the kingdom of God preached by Jesus of Nazareth the intensification of the purity code, in the form of the Pharisaic purity regulations, had no place. Purity

¹³¹Rohrbaugh 1991: 125-149 and Braun 1995.

¹³²See pp 74-78 above.

¹³³Note for example Lk 13: 28-30.

¹³⁴Neusner 1993: 259-260.

regulations, however, formed only one tranche of the Pharisees' wider concerns. They were, as Saldarini demonstrates, retainers seeking to influence the ruling elite. As such they were acutely aware of the importance of adhering to the overarching societal values of honour and shame. Thus when Jesus of Nazareth shared a meal with tax collectors and sinners, he not only challenged the Pharisees in respect of their views on purity and holiness, he also struck at the very values which were central to them in their role as retainers. In reversing these values he challenges the divisions in society necessary to sustain the role of retainer. By using the central occasion of Mediterranean life, the meal, Jesus of Nazareth presents an inclusive vision for Israel very different from that of the Pharisees. It is a vision which has its roots in the little tradition and domestic/kinship religion. It is also a vision which the Pharisees were quick to perceive had no place for their purity regulations, nor for their role as retainers.

Conclusion

The common feature which runs through the exorcisms, healings and table fellowship practices of Jesus of Nazareth is a rejection of the values and behaviour of the elite and their retainers. In his healings he not only restored the sick to health, he declared their sins forgiven and redeemed their religious indebtedness. In so doing, he denounced the religious elite and their exploitation of the purity and debt codes. By his exorcisms he claimed to manifest the actual presence of the kingdom of God, allowing also for the possibility of his own role as messiah. Implicit in his exorcisms was a condemnation of the oppressive social structure which enabled Satan to flourish, and of the elite who perpetuated it. Finally, by sharing a meal with the tax collectors and sinners he turned on their head the pivotal values of shame and honour, and rejected both the purity regulations of the Pharisees and their role as retainers. The values of the kingdom of God proclaimed and practised by Jesus of Nazareth, rooted as they were in

the little tradition and kinship religion of the peasantry, stood as a challenge to the ruling elite; their response was to deride and denounce him.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE JERUSALEM TEMPLE REVISITED

In the synoptic gospels two actions are ascribed to Jesus of Nazareth on his arrival in Jerusalem. Firstly, he enters the city astride a donkey and is greeted in proclamation by those gathered nearby, and secondly, he enters the temple and engages in what appears to be some form of symbolic gesture. Whilst his action in the temple is the more important of the two, Jesus' entry into Jerusalem is also a significant event.

The Markan pericope narrates Jesus' arrival at the villages of Bethpage and Bethany on his approach to Jerusalem. From there he sent out two of his disciples to the next village *en route* where he advised them they would find an unridden colt. They were instructed to untie the colt and bring it with them to Jesus.¹ Having done this,

[they] threw their cloaks on it; and he sat on it. Many people spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread leafy branches that they had cut in the fields. Then those who went ahead and those who followed were shouting, "Hosanna! Blessed

¹Mk 11: 1-8. Harvey 1982: 122-124 details the manner in which, according to the synoptics, Jesus secured the foal for his entry into the city. Two aspects of this action are deemed particularly significant in terms of understanding Jesus' identity. Firstly, his instructions for the acquisition of the foal displayed "a perfectly normal example of the right of a king, a ruler (or his official representative), a general, or even a respected rabbi, to requisition transport in advance" (1982: 123). And secondly, the reference to the foal being tied up alludes to Gen 49: 11 in which it is prophesied that the descendants of Judah would rule until "one should come who would have the respect of the nations and would 'tie his foal' to a vine" (1982: 124). The means of Jesus' entry itself, according to the writers of the synoptics, bespoke his importance.

is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the coming kingdom of our ancestor David! Hosanna in the highest heaven!" (Mk 11: 8-10)

The Matthean (Mt 21: 1-11) and Lukan (Lk 19: 28-40) narratives occur in the same context and apart from a few minor redactional emendations² take the same form. The triumphal entry into Jerusalem is also narrated in similar terms in the gospel of John (Jn 12: 12-15). Although unrelated to the temple incident in the Johannine tradition, it is set within the context of Jesus' final visit to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover festival.

According to Bultmann, the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem is either derived in its entirety from Zech 9: 9 or at best contains a remembrance of Jesus entering the city with a crowd of exuberant pilgrims "which became a Messianic legend under the influence of Zech 9: 9" (1963: 262). Catchpole likewise believes the entry as it appears in the gospels is unhistorical (1984: 319-334). For many scholars, however, the 'triumphal entry' does contain an historical core.³ Double attestation, allowing that Mark and John reflect independent traditions, is cited in the entry's favour, as are the Markan references to local Judean villages and the vivid nature of the gospel account (Taylor 1952: 452). One further factor may also be suggestive of an historical occurrence, namely Jesus' entry into the city astride an ass. This form of entry is peculiar for two reasons. Firstly, Jesus throughout his mission appears, for the most part, to have travelled on foot. And secondly, pilgrims invariably walked the final distance to the holy city. Jesus' departure from this custom, which would almost certainly have caused comment amongst his fellow pilgrims, may well have its roots in an historical

²In Matthew's gospel, for example, Jesus is reported to have entered Jerusalem astride both an ass and a colt to the proclamation "Hosanna to the Son of David". In the Lukan account "the whole multitude of the disciples" praise God omitting the ejaculation 'Hosanna' and inserting "the King" in "Blessed is [he] who comes".

³See, for example, Brandon 1967 and Wright 1996.

action (Harvey 1982: 129). For Sanders, on his scale of authenticity, Jesus' entry into Jerusalem is rated as "probable". It was not, however, a "triumphal" entry in the sense portrayed by the evangelists. Rather, Sanders continues, it was a small scale symbolic act based upon Zech 9: 9 which, in the context of his preaching of the kingdom of God, was understood by Jesus and his disciples to represent his 'kingly' entry into Jerusalem (1985: 306-308). Whilst Herzog also allows for the possibility of an historical core lying behind the entry, he rejects the notion of Jesus making any messianic or kingly claims. On the contrary, he suggests, the "triumphal entry" has an air of "political street theatre". "Jesus is lampooning...messianic expectations by riding a donkey into the city, rather than riding a war horse or driving a chariot like a Roman general enjoying a "triumph".." (2000: 239). Herzog may be right to the extent that Jesus rejects a particular type of militaristic type of king or messiah, but wrong, we suggest, in so far as he rejects the notion of messiah/kingship in its entirety.

A possible insight into the situation in which Jesus found himself prior to his entry into Jerusalem may be provided by an analogy with Prince Diponogoro, a leader in the Java War of 1825-30. Having rebelled against the government, the Prince was adopted by the peasants to fulfil the role of the "just king". He responded to their acclamation by saying "I can't act differently, the masses at large have taken possession of me" (Scott 1977: 227). In effect, he became that which others claimed him to be. Whilst we are not suggesting that the masses in Judea and Galilee had taken possession of Jesus, we do contend that his self understanding was in large part formed by who or what his contemporaries believed him to be. According to Malina, the dyadic personality of the first century CE "needs another continually in order to know who he really is. Such persons internalise and make their own what others say, do and think about them because they think it is necessary to live out the expectations of others" (1981: 67). Jesus' condemnation of the elite, his reversal of the pivotal values of shame and honour, and his

preaching of the imminent coming of the kingdom of God may have led at least some of those who heard and followed him to view him in messianic/kingly terms. That his disciples appear to have shared similar beliefs would only have served to affirm for Jesus the role expected of him. His words and actions led those closest to him to perceive him in messianic/kingly terms, a perception which in turn formed and affirmed his self-understanding.⁴ Unlike many of those with messianic pretensions,⁵ however, the words and deeds of Jesus of Nazareth contain no allusions to military power or might. Rather, he shares meals with tax collectors and sinners and turns on their head the values of honour and shame. In such circumstances, that Zech 9: 9 should stand behind his messianic/kingly entry into Jerusalem is entirely appropriate. Rather than lampooning the concept of messiah, Jesus reveals the nature of his messianic claims; he is a humble king, one who willingly rides on a donkey. His entry, however, is unlikely to have attracted the wholesale proclamations the gospel writers describe. It is the much more probable scenario that some of Jesus' close followers, those who had come up with him from Galilee, already believing him to be the messiah recognised the symbolic intent behind his entry and hailed him with palms and praise.⁶ Any larger a demonstration would, almost certainly, have resulted in his arrest long before he reached the temple.

⁴It is precisely this, we suggest, which is taking place in the question answer scene related in Mk 8: 27-30//Mt 16: 21-28//Lk 9: 22-27. When asking the disciples, "Who do you say I am?" Jesus was not probing their level of understanding, he was asking a genuine question. In this context, Peter's response that he was the messiah, and the same response by others, would have influenced significantly Jesus' self perception. It was this point that Richard Rohrbaugh made in a paper delivered at the Tutzing Symposium in June 1999. The question answer scene does not reflect Jesus' self understanding in terms of his internal consciousness, rather, he argues, it relates a typical example of a dyadic personality at work.

⁵See Chapter Two above.

⁶Note here the similarity of the actions of the crowd when Simon the Maccabee purified and rededicated the Jerusalem temple after the abomination of Antiochus IV Epiphanes.

The second of Jesus' actions on his arrival in Jerusalem is commonly termed 'the temple incident'. This and to a lesser degree his prediction of the temple's demise and restoration are regarded as amongst the most historically secure of the traditions concerning Jesus of Nazareth.⁷ The double attestation provided by the narratives in Mark and John, together with the lack of any obvious interest served by the early Church in creating such an incident, probably represent the strongest evidence of the incident's historicity. Although not evidence of itself, the fact that Jesus' action in the temple coheres with his previous activity, and would be sufficient to provoke the ruling elite to act against him, also supports the case for the incident having some basis in fact. In contrast to this relative consensus in respect of its occurrence, however, the interpretations of the 'temple incident' itself have been many and varied. The traditional Christian interpretation views Jesus' actions as a symbolic cleansing of the commercial activities conducted in the temple in favour of a more spiritual house of prayer. Such a view, however, betrays its post-Enlightenment origins. In the ancient world there was no dichotomy between the spiritual aspect of worship and the ritual aspect of which, in the Judean religion, trading in the temple courts was a necessary element.⁸ Alternatively, it has been suggested that Jesus was either condemning the practice of sacrifice or was seeking to open the temple to the gentiles.⁹ In the context of first century CE Palestine neither of these interpretations is particularly convincing. Much of recent scholarship has tended towards reading Jesus' actions in the temple as a prophetic gesture

⁷Bultmann 1963 and more recently Mack 1988, Miller 1991 and Seeley 1993 and 2000 however, all contest the incident's historicity.

⁸Roman political sacrifices took place only on certain festival dates and were conducted by state officials outside of the temple of the respective deities. Unlike in Palestine kinship sacrifices were also celebrated around the hearth at home. There was therefore no need for the trading of animals in the vicinity of temple buildings (Malina 1996c: 33-34).

⁹See pg 284 below.

symbolising the temple's destruction.¹⁰ Sanders, for example, contends that, "The turning over of even one table points towards destruction" (1985: 12).¹¹ This symbolic destruction should not, however, be understood as containing an implicit judgement against either the temple system or the temple authorities, he claims, rather it is a necessary harbinger of the eschaton in which the old temple will be replaced by the new. The point of the action then is more restoration than destruction. Unfortunately for Sanders, there is nothing in the incident itself which actually suggests restoration. Moreover, in virtually all of the Judean literature in which the destruction of the temple is prophesied, divine judgement is a significant factor.¹² For Horsley (1987), destruction is very much the point of Jesus' symbolic act,¹³ destruction not only of the present temple and its authorities, but of the temple institution itself. "The kingdom of God", he claims, "apparently had no need of either a mediating hierocracy or a temple system" (1987: 325). Yahweh had passed a damning judgement on an exploitative temple institution.¹⁴ The prophecy by Jesus of the new temple should, he contends, be understood metaphorically. Similar to the understanding of temple within the community at Qumran, the new temple would take the form of a new community of people. But as is indicated by the Temple Scroll, the community at Qumran also appear to have expected a restored or rebuilt temple. According to 11Q Temple 29: 8-10 Yahweh says,

¹⁰According to Brandon (1967), far from being a symbolic gesture Jesus' actions in the temple were a part of a larger coup attempt against Rome. A significant aspect of Brandon's interpretation is the link posited between Jesus' supposed insurrection and the Zealot movement. This movement, however, did not emerge until the revolt in the 60s CE, see pg 324 below. Chilton (1994a), on the other hand, attempts to explain the incident in terms of an intra-Judean dispute over purity regulations.

¹¹Sanders considers the incident to have been of a relatively minor nature.

¹²Bauckham 1988: 72-89.

¹³Crossan 1991 also sees Jesus' action in terms of 'symbolic destruction'.

¹⁴Herzog 2000 draws a similar conclusion.

And (I) will sanctify my [sa]nctuary by my glory. I will cause my glory to rest on it until the day of creation on which I shall create my sanctuary, establishing it for myself for all time according to the covenant which I made with Jacob in Bethel (Vermes 1997: 200).

Whilst the possibility that Jesus referred to the new temple in metaphorical terms cannot be excluded, Horsley provides no compelling evidence to favour this view over the more obvious literal interpretation. In this chapter we shall attempt to re-present the incident in the temple as a symbolic cleansing. Not a cleansing, however, of inappropriate commercial activities, but a cleansing of the corrupt and exploitative practices of the religious elite and their temple operatives. A cleansing also which is so complete and entire that it includes the destruction of the present temple and its replacement with a new temple untainted by oppressive practices. With the aid of social-scientific techniques, in particular Scott's (1977) analysis of the peasant approach to the elite Great Tradition and its dominant structure and symbols, we shall revisit the Jerusalem Temple and consider again Jesus' actions there.

Galilee from Israelite Tribal Origins to the Hasmoneans.

The differing historical experiences endured by the peoples of the Northern territory of the Galilee and the Southern Judea, together with the former's geographical remove from the site of the Jerusalem temple, have led some modern scholars to question Galilean attitudes towards the temple.¹⁵ As an example of Galilean antipathy, or even hostility, Horsley cites the absenteeism of many Galileans from pilgrimages to the holy city. Of the tens of thousands¹⁶ who made the pilgrimage to Jerusalem for the

¹⁵For example Horsley 1995: 145-147, 1996 and Oakman 1993.

¹⁶Horsley, without doubt, correctly considers the figures of three and twelve million reported by Josephus in *J.W.* 6.9.3 [423-426] and *t. Pesah.* 4: 3 respectively as unrealistic.

festivals of Passover, Succoth and Hanukah, thousands, Horsley claims, would have come from the neighbouring districts of Judea whilst the Galileans travelling much greater distances would have journeyed only in their hundreds. He continues, "The paucity of direct evidence for pilgrimage from Galilee throws into question the previous claims of the "great devotion of Galileans in general to the Temple"" (1995: 145). There is, however, more evidence than Horsley appears to allow. Josephus, for example, describes the murder by the Samaritans of a Galilean, who with a large number of fellow pilgrims, was travelling through Samaria *en route* to festival celebrations in Jerusalem (*J.W.* 2.4.3 [232]). In the gospel of Luke the family of Jesus are described as going up to Jerusalem annually to celebrate the feast of Passover (Lk 2: 41).¹⁷ And whilst this may not be historical, it surely reflects a practice common in the Galilee. Moreover, although those who lived in close proximity to the temple would almost certainly have been the most frequent attendees of the festivals, both Josephus, *Ant.* 17.11.2 [313] and the mishnah, m. Bik 3.2-6 provide evidence of caravans travelling considerable distances on pilgrimage.¹⁸ Horsley's pilgrimage argument is thus less than convincing. This notwithstanding, the wider issue of Galilean attitudes still requires to be addressed. The starting point for such a consideration is the ethnic and religious makeup of the region. The historical development of the Galilee is undeniably complex but it is nonetheless important for our understanding of Galilean attitudes towards the temple.

According to Hebrew scripture, after their forty year sojourn in the wilderness Joshua led the Israelites into Canaan, the land promised to them by Yahweh. In the subsequent division of territory amongst the twelve Israelite tribes, the tribes of Issachar,

He also argues that the 100, 000 to 125, 000 suggested by Jeremias (1969: 77-84) is still too high (1995: 144).

¹⁷Luke also narrates that Mary and Joseph took the infant Jesus to the temple to comply with the provisions of the Law (Lk 2: 22-24).

¹⁸See also Jeremias 1969: 59 and Sanders 1992: 128-130.

Zebulun, and Naphtali were allotted the area of the Galilee (Judges 5).¹⁹ Whilst in the book of Joshua²⁰ it is claimed that “Joshua defeated the whole land.” and “..utterly destroyed all that breathed”, Judges 1: 30 and 33 state that neither Zebulun nor Naphtali drove out the Canaanites but rather subjected them to forced labour. This latter, more likely, scenario suggests that far from being the sole occupants of the Galilee the Israelites shared their territory with the people indigenous to the land of Canaan. The days of the tribal confederation were short lived as the Israelites, influenced by the surrounding states, moved away from their traditional ideal of Yahweh as king, towards the institution of their own monarchy. David, the Israelite king *par excellence*, ruled over the territory of Judea for seven years, before being anointed king over all Israel²¹ by the country’s elders. Once he had secured the throne, David and his band of mercenaries captured the Jebusite stronghold of Jerusalem, and established his capital city there (2 Sam 5: 6-9). In the course of his thirty three year reign he repulsed two attempted coups, the first led by Absalom, his son, who had garnered the support of ‘all the men of Israel’ (2 Sam 15-19), and the second by Sheba, son of Bichri, a Benjaminite, who once again secured the support of the Israelites, although on this occasion the sons of Judea remained loyal to their king (2 Sam 20). The tension between the Northern and Southern tribes which resulted in the break-up of the kingdom on the death of Solomon, David’s son and successor, was evident from even the earliest days of the short lived united monarchy. It was during the reign of Solomon, nonetheless, that the construction of the house of God, the Jerusalem temple, was undertaken. On its completion, Solomon had the ark of the covenant brought forth to Jerusalem where it was placed in the inner sanctuary of the temple, the holy of holies. The presence of Yahweh, who had guided

¹⁹Horsley 1996: 17-18 and n 8 considers alternatives to the biblical account of the Israelite presence in Canaan.

²⁰Josh 10: 40.

²¹2 Sam 5: 3.

the Israelites in the wilderness, now dwelled in the Jerusalem temple. The cost of the temple, and the contemporaneously constructed Solomon's palace,²² in both human and financial terms, however, was considerable. Taxes were levied on the people to meet the cost of building materials, whilst forced labour was used in their construction (1 Kgs 9: 15-23). Significantly, for some of the villages of the Galilee the price was higher still, for Solomon paid King Hiram of Tyre, in respect of the cedar and cypress timber and gold which he had supplied, with twenty villages of the land of Galilee and of course their people (1 Kgs 9: 10-11). The seeds of discontent, noted above in the reign of David, flourished in these circumstances, and when Rehoboam, on claiming succession to the throne of his father Solomon, rejected the entreaties of the assembly of Israel, and promised to treat the people still more harshly than had his father, Israel turned to Jeroboam son of Nebat and anointed him their king. Judea alone remained loyal to the house of David (1 Kgs 12: 20). After less than one hundred years of joint rule the kingdoms of Israel and Judea went their separate ways.

Whilst the dynastic succession of the house of David persisted in the South, the Israelite monarchs reverted to prophetic endorsement for their legitimation (1 Kgs 19: 16). This form of succession continued for a period of approximately forty six years before the dynasty of Omri was founded circa 876 BCE.²³ Omri purchased for himself the hill of Samaria and set about building a new capital city there, a project which was completed by Ahab his son. In so doing they not only established a readily defensible stronghold, but provided a centre in the Northern kingdom to rival Jerusalem in the South. Significantly, perhaps, they appear to have made no attempt to build a rival

²²The palace Solomon had built for himself was twice the size of the temple!

²³The Omri dynasty survived for thirty three years before succumbing to Jehu in 843/2 BCE.

temple.²⁴ The Galilee, however, was becoming increasingly marginalised. During the course of the following one hundred and thirty years, Galilean territory changed hands on an almost regular basis.²⁵ In 733-732 BCE King Tiglath-pileser of Assyria attacked the Galilee and subjected the territory to his rule. In the account of the events related in 2 Kgs 15: 29 Tiglath-pileser is alleged to have “.. carried the people captive to Assyria”. Just how extensive the Assyrian conquest of the Galilee was is uncertain. Both Alt and Horsley argue that far from depopulating the whole region only members of the elite, certain officials and skilled workers were taken captive into Assyria. In support of this Horsley refers to the Assyrian annals. ANET 284 in its treatment of the conquest of Samaria in 721 BCE describes the peoples of “Omri-lands” being carried off to Assyria. The same text, however, also details the excessive tribute levied by the Assyrians upon the defeated nation. In order to meet this tribute, Horsley contends, an adequate number of officials and peasants must have been left *in situ*.²⁶ In addition, the annals make reference to the state’s practice of incorporating foreign skilled workers into the Assyrian system. A similar scenario, it is contended, must have prevailed in the Galilee. That the region subsequently became the Assyrian province of Meggido is also cited in support of this view. From an ethnic and religious point of view then, Alt and Horsley contend that after the Assyrian conquest the region remained, for the most part, peopled by the Galilean peasantry who continued to adhere to their Israelite traditions.

Whilst Alt and Horsley’s position is certainly tenable in terms of the literary evidence, recent archaeological findings have cast doubt upon its sustainability. According to Gal’s survey of the lower Galilee (1992) there appears to have been, in the

²⁴Ahab did, however, “erect an altar for Baal in the house of Baal which he built in Samaria” (1 Kgs 16: 32).

²⁵2 Kgs 10: 32-33; 13: 3-5; 14: 25, 28.

²⁶But note also the relocation of peoples of other nations defeated by the Assyrians in Samaria referred to in 2 Kgs 17: 24 (Freyne 1980: 25).

years following the Assyrian conquest, a depopulation of Galilean territory. In the eighty three sites of the lower Galilee surveyed, no traces were found of four types of pottery which, on the basis of similar finds in Hazor and Samaria, were dated to the Iron Age III period (Freyne 1997: 133). Whilst the limitations of land surveys, which by their nature are superficial and lacking the detailed stratigraphic evidence provided by an in depth excavation, are acknowledged, Gal has, nonetheless, produced results which require to be explained. The most obvious explanation of such findings is either the decimation and/or deportation of a large proportion of the population to Assyria. In addition, those left behind may very well have come together in larger settlements giving the impression of still further depopulation. The consequences of the Assyrian conquest would therefore appear to have been more radical than either Alt or Horsley allow. This notwithstanding, whilst the Galilee may have been depopulated it was not unpopulated.²⁷ And amongst those left behind were undoubtedly descendants of the tribes of Israel of whom some at least, despite foreign domination, would have remained faithful to the God of their ancestors.

The Assyrian conquest marked the beginning of foreign domination over the Galilee, which was to continue until the territory was incorporated into an independent Judean state, by the Hasmoneans, in circa 104 BCE. The intervening period saw Galilee reflect the fortunes of the respective superpowers of the region, so that Assyria was superseded by Babylon which in turn fell to Persia. Persian rule, however, proffered a considerable change in fortunes for those previously exiled by the Assyrians and Babylonians, reversing the policy of his predecessors, Cyrus the Persian monarch, permitted the deportees to return to their homelands. The significance of this event is

²⁷Note the conflict in the book of Ezra between those returning from exile in Babylon and those who had remained in Judea as evidence that conquest in the ancient world seldom included the deportation of the entire peasantry.

widely recognised in respect of Judea and to some extent Samaria, although the available evidence concerning Galilee is limited. This may, in large part, be due to the fact that whilst both Judea and Samaria had an indigenous aristocracy who, on their return, made an impact upon their former lands, the same cannot be said of the Galilee.

Notwithstanding this development, however, all three territories remained under Persian control, forming a part of the Persian satrapy, 'Beyond the River', although significantly each formed a different province. Ultimately the Persian empire was unable to resist the inexorable rise of Hellenism under Alexander the Great, and was succeeded by the Macedonian empire, which itself, on the death of Alexander, was divided into two parts, ruled over by the Ptolemies and the Seleucids respectively. After much and prolonged warfare between these two rival factions, the Seleucids emerged as the rulers over Palestine, then part of the province of Coele-Syria and, according to Strabo, formed there four eparchies, Samaria, which included both Judea and Galilee, Idumaea, Paralia and Galaaditis (Freyne 1980: 33).

The extent of the influence of Hellenism in Palestine is the subject of intense debate.²⁸ Whether Hellenistic forms, thought and practices were largely restricted to the major cities such as Jerusalem and Sepphoris, or permeated even the many villages of the countryside, is highly disputed. It is evident from the attempts of certain members of the Judean elite, during the reign of Antiochus IV Epiphanes, to convert Jerusalem into a Hellenistic city that it had certainly penetrated the highest level of society. Nonetheless this action did evoke opposition, particularly amongst the Hasidim, an opposition, which, in part, led to the religious persecution which Antiochus initiated in 167 BCE. One consequence of this persecution was the rise in Judea of the Maccabees. Unwilling to

²⁸Prominent amongst the contributors to this debate are Lieberman 1942, 1962, Hengel 1974, 1989 and Porter 1994 who argue in favour of the extensive influence of Hellenism and Miller 1978 and Feldman 1986 who argue against.

comply with the legal requirements promulgated by Antiochus, Mattathias and his five sons fled to the Judean hills and conducted, what was in effect, a campaign of guerrilla warfare. It was a campaign which, as the Seleucid regime waned, proved remarkably successful. Whilst Judah the Maccabee and his brothers and successors, Jonathan and Simon, were primarily engaged in securing Judea, it was John Hyrcanus, who in approximately 129 BCE, began an expansionist programme which saw him incorporate Idumea, Samaria, Scythopolis and the Great Plain within the Hasmonean state (*Ant.* 13.9.1 [254-258]). It was not until 104 BCE that Aristobulus, Hyrcanus' son entered Galilee. The manner in which Galilee was brought into the Hasmonean fold is again uncertain. It is clear that the territory was treated very differently from that of Samaria, where a 'scorched earth policy' saw the destruction of the Samaritan Temple on Mount Gerizim and the levelling of the region's capital city. What is less obvious is whether the people of Galilee, like those of Idumea, were subject to enforced circumcision and conversion to Judeanism. Central to this issue is our interpretation of *Ant.* 13.11.3 [318-319]. According to Josephus, Aristobulus "...made war on the Itureans and acquired a good deal of their territory for Judea and compelled the inhabitants, if they wished to remain in the country, to be circumcised and to live in accordance with the law of the Judeans". The first issue to be resolved concerns the extent of the territory possessed by the Itureans. In particular, did it include the Galilee, or at least the upper part of the region? Schürer, for example, contends that on noting the decline in fortunes of the Seleucid overlords, the Itureans in the North began to make inroads into the territory of the upper Galilee. Thus when the Hasmoneans reached that region they were confronted by a predominantly Iturean population whom they determined to convert to Judeanism. Two factors make this an improbable scenario. Firstly, the Itureans were a semi-nomadic people who were unlikely to settle in great numbers in any given territory. And secondly, the available archaeological evidence does not support a large Iturean presence in the region. The artefacts discovered at the sites in the upper Galilee are indicative of a

settled agricultural society, different in nature from the semi-nomadic settlements occupied by the Itureans in the Golan.²⁹ The territory Josephus refers to as being acquired by the Hasmoneans in *Antiquities* 13 is not the upper Galilee, still less the whole of Galilee, rather it is that area beyond Galilee traditionally occupied by the Itureans.

Horsley (1995: 41-45) presents a more nuanced version of this position arguing that although the Itureans did not actually establish settlements in Galilee, they nonetheless exercised *de facto* control over the region. Thus the Josephan reference to “..their territory..” does indeed include the Galilee. Horsley’s argument also includes a distinction between the ‘Itureans’ and the ‘inhabitants’ of the land, the former of whom were defeated by Aristobulus, the latter, identified as the Galileans were not. This in turn brings into focus the question of the religious and ethnic make up of the people resident in the Galilee during the first century BCE. Horsley continues, if they were, for example, Judean colonisers there would be no need to enforce their circumcision and subjection to Judean law. If they were gentiles, forced conversion to Judeanism would result in a considerable change of status. If, however, they were, as Horsley suggests, descendants of the Galilean peasantry who survived the Assyrian conquest then they may well have been more readily amenable to Judean control. Horsley’s argument turns on his interpretation of Iturean sources (1995: 41n 8) and of *Ant.* 13.11.3 [317-318] neither of which is particularly convincing. Archaeology provides us with no evidence of Iturean control in Galilee, and once this has been conceded, there is no real basis upon which to argue for Galilee’s inclusion in the territory referred to in *Ant.* 13.11.3

²⁹ It should be noted, that potsherds similar in composition and style to Iturean pottery, have been found in upper Galilee and may suggest, at least, some Iturean influence in the area (Freyne 1997: 134-135). They may, on the other hand, evidence no more than basic trading arrangements.

[317-318]. That a number of scholars, of whom Horsley is but one, have sought to interpret *Antiquities* in this manner is due, in part, to the fact that Galilee is nowhere else considered in the Hasmonean conquests. The most probable explanation for this is simply that there was no such conquest. Amongst the inhabitants of the underpopulated Galilee remained the inheritors of the Israelite tradition who if not welcoming the Hasmoneans with open arms, would have at least preferred domination by them to subjugation to the hellenistic Seleucids. In addition, the increased number of settlements in the region during the period of Hasmonean expansion and rule may possibly be attributable to military and civilian colonisers from Judea.³⁰

From this brief consideration of Galilean history, from the region's inception to its inclusion within the Hasmonean Judean state, we can deduce a number of factors significant for our understanding of Galilean attitudes towards the Jerusalem temple. Firstly, despite the hardships suffered by many Galilean villagers at the time of the temple's construction, the early division of the united kingdom and the different historical experiences endured by the two states, no historical development specifically points to Galilean resentment or antipathy towards the temple. Unlike the Samaritan temple no rival temple is constructed in the Galilee. Secondly, whilst foreign influences were present in the region's history from the beginning³¹ and syncretism undoubtedly

³⁰Freyne argues that the presence of Hasmonean coins found at bedrock in these settlements, together with later synagogal evidence which, it is presumed, in some cases at least, is suggestive of earlier Judean settlements, points towards Judean colonisation (1997: 135-137).

³¹The local gods of the indigenous Canaanites and of the foreign wives of many of the Israelite kings were undoubtedly worshipped in the region. In 1 Samuel 7: 3, for example, Samuel says to the people of Israel "If you are returning to the Lord with all you heart, then put away the foreign gods and the Astartes from among you". King Solomon was also seduced by his foreign wives to the worship of pagan gods, 1 Kgs 11: 4-8 and the contest of the prophet Elijah with the prophets of Baal attest to the continuing significance of pagan worship (1 Kgs 18).

occurred, it is very probable that after the Assyrian conquest at least some amongst the remaining Galilean peasantry continued to adhere to Israelite traditions. Thirdly, a comparison between the respective treatments of the territories of Samaria and Galilee by the Hasmoneans proves enlightening. The violent destruction of the capital city of Samaria and its temple stands in stark contrast to the annexation of the Galilee. The long standing antipathy of Judea for Samaria, based as it was on the former's allegedly impure worship of Yahweh, was undoubtedly a major factor in the actions of the Hasmoneans.³² It also serves to emphasise the absence of any such bitter enmity between Judea and Galilee. This lack of historical enmity, the apparently unopposed annexation of the region by the Hasmoneans and the possible infiltration of Judean colonisers into the North all cohere with our findings in respect of the Galilean approach to pilgrimage. That is to say, there is little evidence to support the contention of Galilean opposition to the Jerusalem temple in the first century CE.³³

The Role of the Temple

Temples in the ancient world were commonplace. The Babylonians, Persians, Greeks and Romans all constructed temples in honour of their gods. Inevitably they combined religious and political functions.³⁴ Central temples in particular were of considerable political importance, for in these buildings sacrifices on behalf of a city or country were offered to the relevant deity or deities. It is important to note that the distinction being drawn here is not between religion and politics, a dichotomy we have observed above did not exist in the ancient world, but between political religion and domestic/kinship religion. The former was primarily the concern of the elite, the latter of

³²Note also the antagonism between Samaria and Galilee, discussed by Esler in relation to the Parable of the Good Samaritan (2000b: 329-332).

³³As we noted in Chapter One above, loyalty to the Jerusalem temple reflects Galilean adherence to the Great Tradition of Judeanism which emanates from that city.

³⁴Malina 1996c: 26-42.

the peasantry and non-elite. Temples along with “*roles* such as chief, king, lord...*obligations* such as civic duties, taxes, tithes, military service or corvee; and *expectations* such as covenant obligations, obedience...”(Malina 1996c: 29) all fell within the realm of political religion. In kinship religion, on the other hand, “*roles* such as ancestor, father and mother, obedient children or clients, brothers and sisters, slaves; *obligations* such as honour and obedience...and *expectations* such as debts of obligation (loving kindness, *hesed*), pity and group attachment, (*agape*)” (Malina 1996c: 28) were the norm. Also within the sphere of kinship religion were the important elements of domestic sacrifice and participation in the shared meal.³⁵ The latter was of particular significance in establishing and maintaining fictive kin relationships. Whilst conforming to this general pattern of political and kinship religion, Judeanism differed in two major respects from the religions of Greece and Rome. Firstly, there was only one temple in which the sole God Yahweh was deemed to dwell, and secondly, in terms of the Torah all sacrifice was to be offered within the confines of the temple. In other words, all sacrifice, including that which previously fell within the sphere of kinship religion, on the construction of the Jerusalem temple, became political.

The political implications of the Jerusalem temple extended beyond the realm of sacrifice, however. The Solomonic temple which was destroyed during the Babylonian conquest of 587 BCE was reconstructed on a considerably smaller scale after Cyrus, the Persian king, had permitted the return of the exiles. This second temple was lavishly expanded during the reign of Herod the Great commencing in approximately 20 BCE and continuing beyond the death of Herod almost until the temple's destruction in the 60s CE.³⁶ The presence of the Antonia Fortress at the northeast corner of the temple

³⁵Martin Nilsson provides a comparison of Greek and Roman domestic religion, including the role and significance of the meal in each (1954: 77-85).

³⁶Levine 1994: 223-246 provides a detailed consideration of the alterations carried out to

enclosure, illustrates both Roman recognition of the temple's importance and, the coincidence of interests of the Judean religious elite and their Roman overlords.

At the completion of the temple's reconstruction some eighteen thousand workmen were, according to Josephus, left without work.³⁷ More significant, however, than these 'temporary' workers were the personnel directly involved in the running of the temple itself.³⁸ At the pinnacle of the temple's hierarchy were the high priestly families and at the apex the high priest himself. It was the responsibility of the priestly elite to ensure the efficient functioning of all aspects of the temple. Below them in the pecking order as far as temple ritual was concerned were the ordinary priests and Levites. According to Applebaum, some seven thousand priests and Levites served the temple annually (1976: 631-700). The priests officiated at the daily sacrifices and at the numerous other offerings, such as purification, reparation and thanksgiving offerings, made on behalf of individuals on a daily basis at the temple. The Levites' primary concern was with liturgy and music.³⁹ Both the priests and Levites also served in an administrative capacity. The former were responsible for ensuring order in the temple precincts, although in practical terms it was the latter who, under the control of the temple prefect, made up the numbers of the temple police.⁴⁰ In addition to these ritual and administrative functions, temple operatives also acted in a juridical⁴¹ and economic capacity. The Jerusalem Sanhedrin

the temple during this period.

³⁷*Ant.* 20.9.7 [219]. Oakman's claim that no city in Roman Palestine exceeded a population of thirty five thousand, and only two or three exceeded ten thousand illustrates the massive scale of the temple's refurbishment (1986).

³⁸Hanson and Oakman 1998: 139-146.

³⁹1 Chronicles 25: 6. They also served as 'priests assistants', 1 Chronicles 23: 28, and as 'gate-keepers and guards' 1 Chronicles 26: 6ff.

⁴⁰Edersheim 1988: 87-89 and Hanson and Oakman 1998: 140.

⁴¹Although the Levites were designated 'officers and judges' in 1 Chronicles 23: 4, Edersheim notes that by the first century CE these functions fell within the remit of the Jerusalem Sanhedrin (1988: 88).

came under the auspices of the high priest and was served by various judges, lawyers and scribes. Those charged with the supervision of the economic affairs of the temple included accountants and treasurers, both with their respective remits concerning the financial aspects of the many sacrifices, and also the money changers necessary for the payment of the temple tax. Whilst these numerous functionaries constitute the personnel directly involved in the running of temple business many more, both in the surrounding environs of Judea and considerably further afield, were dependent upon it to earn their livelihoods. Butchers, weavers, incense-makers and bakers of shrew bread all supplied goods to the temple, whilst additional domestic cattle for sacrifice was imported from countries such as Arabia and Idumea.⁴² It is universally acknowledged that the Jerusalem temple was the central religious institution within Judeanism prior to its destruction in 70 CE. The above brief resumé of its personnel and their functions illustrates, however, the wider extent of the temple's socio-economic significance. In this respect it serves to confirm what the temple in its role as a debt record repository and as a centre for the collection of tithes, already reveals; that in first century CE Palestine, the temple was not merely a place of public worship and sacrifice, rather it operated at the very heart of social, political and economic life.

In addition to the temple, the other major feature prominent within the sphere of political elite religion in first century CE Judeanism was the Torah. The regulations governing sacrifice in the temple, in particular matters pertaining to purity, the obligation to tithe and the provisions concerning pilgrimage were all contained in the Torah. Perhaps not surprisingly the shadows cast by the temple and Torah extend over much of our understanding of Judeanism in the time of Jesus of Nazareth. Their prominence, although not questioned, reflects again the extent to which our sources are skewed by

⁴²Jeremias 1969, Applebaum 1976: 631-700 and Hanson and Oakman 1998: 150-151.

their elite perspective and also the degree to which scholars have been willing to accept the elite version as the complete version of Judeanism. There appears to be little in our extant sources and until recently⁴³ even less in scholarly works concerning the nature and extent of non-elite religion in first century CE Judeanism. To redress the balance, we turn once again to Scott's analysis of the little tradition of peasant communities outlined in Chapter Two. Central to the 'shadow society' of this little tradition were the subversive values inherent in the themes of reversal and abundance. Thus hierarchical structures and institutions which were perceived as affirming elite domination were denounced, as were distinctions based upon wealth and status. In their place was to be a society based on brotherhood, in which resources were to be shared by all. These little tradition values, which as we have noted form an integral part of non-elite religion, are, we contend, precisely the values which inform Jesus' action in the Jerusalem temple.

In this respect the 'temple incident' is merely the most obvious expression of a non-elite/kinship religion which permeates much of Jesus message and mission. The theme of brotherhood and fictive kin features prominently in the synoptic gospels with the promise of abundant reward in the present age and eternal life in the next for those who followed Jesus (Mk 3: 31-35//Mt 12: 46-50//Lk 8: 19-21; Mk 10: 29-30//Mt 19: 27-29//Lk 18: 28-30). The theme of abundance also occurs in the parable of the Sower discussed above (Mk 4: 1-9//Mt 13: 1-9//Lk 8: 4-8). Reversal, a central element of little tradition profanation, is also central to the message of Jesus. The originally independent logion, "the first shall be last and the last shall be first" is attached to a number of the pericopes presented in the synoptic gospels. It occurs, for example, in Mk 10: 31//Mt 19: 30,⁴⁴ at the conclusion of the parable of the workers in the vineyard (Mt 20: 16) and

⁴³See Horsley 1987 and Herzog 2000 both of whom in their works attempt to recover the perspective of the non-elite.

⁴⁴Luke, recognising the independence of the logion from its Markan context, omits it

again at the end of Jesus' teaching on the messianic banquet in Lk 13: 30. Further, when questioned by the disciples about which of them was the greatest, Jesus responds that it is the one who makes himself servant and takes the last place, and he continues by drawing a comparison with the status, or rather lack of status of a child (Mk 9: 33-37//Mt 18: 1-5//Lk 9: 46-48).⁴⁵ Similarly the dispute which arose amongst the disciples as a consequence of the request by James and John⁴⁶ to sit at the right and left hands of Jesus when he came into his Kingdom, again sees Jesus reiterating the theme of reversal. Unlike the leaders of the pagans who wielded power indiscriminately over their people, the disciples were to be servants and slaves to the followers of Jesus (Mk 10: 35-45//Mt 20: 20-28).⁴⁷ Similarities are also evident in the little tradition attitude to wealth and the approach to money and its uses as expressed by Jesus. The rich young man, for example, is told that in order to inherit eternal life he must give all that he has to the poor and then follow Jesus. That he proves unable to do so would come as little surprise to Jesus' non-elite audience (Mk 10: 17-22//Mt 19: 16-22//Lk 18: 18-23).⁴⁸ In the synoptic accounts, Jesus continues by proclaiming how difficult it will be for those who are rich to enter the kingdom of God, concluding that it would be easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle (Mk 10: 23-25//Mt 19: 23-24//Lk 18: 24-25). Wealth again

from his version of this pericope.

⁴⁵Note also Mk 10: 13-16//Mt 19: 13-15//Lk 18: 15-17 in which the statusless nature of the child is commended by Jesus as a prerequisite for the acceptance of the kingdom of God.

⁴⁶According to Matthew's gospel it is the mother of the brothers who makes the request on their behalf.

⁴⁷Lk 22: 24-28 also consists of a pericope in which a dispute arises amongst the disciples concerning which of them was the greatest, although on this occasion it was not instigated by any request of James and John. Jesus' response, however, is the same, in order to be considered the greatest one must make oneself like the youngest and become as the least of all. Greatness evidenced in servitude and humility also occurs in Mt 23: 11-12.

⁴⁸Whilst in Luke's gospel the young man does not leave Jesus, his reported sadness is more likely caused by his inability to follow Jesus' instructions rather than his intention to forfeit his riches.

features in two pericopes originating in the Q source. Firstly, Jesus advises his listeners not to store up treasures and riches in this life, but rather to seek the treasure necessary for the kingdom of heaven (Mt 6: 19-21//Lk 12: 33-34). And secondly, he claims that it is not possible to serve both wealth and God, one will inevitably be favoured over the other (Mt 6: 24//Lk 16: 13). The so-called beatitudes likewise reflect the theme of reversal. Honoured are those who are poor and hungry and also those who mourn; it is to such as those that the kingdom of God belongs. For the rich and satisfied there is no such consolation, for them there is only sorrow and woe (Mt 5: 1-12//Lk 6: 20-26). Condemnation of the exploitative practices of the religious/political hierarchy is a central tenet of the little tradition and, as we have illustrated in Chapters Three and Four above, features prominently in the message of Jesus of Nazareth. All of the above serves to illustrate how extensively the teaching of Jesus was influenced by the subversive 'shadow society' of the peasant little tradition. That his action in the temple should display similar traits seems more than likely.

The 'Incident in the Temple'

Before examining the 'temple incident' in detail we must again consider the issue of historicity. The Markan account situates the incident within the wider context of Jesus' journey to Jerusalem with his disciples to celebrate the feast of Passover. Arriving late in Jerusalem he briefly visited the temple before going on to Bethany to spend the evening there. The following day, Mark recounts, he and his disciples returned to the city,

And he entered the temple and began to drive out those who were selling and those who were buying in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold the doves; and he would not allow anyone to carry anything through the temple. He was teaching and saying, "Is it not written, 'My

house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations'? But you have made it a den of robbers" (Mk 11: 15-17).

Although a number of differences appear in the Matthean and Lukan versions of events, none of them is sufficient to question the dependence of these gospels upon the Markan account as their source. According to Matthew, Jesus carried out his actions immediately upon his arrival in Jerusalem. Whilst Matthew repeats Mark's account of Jesus' driving out those who were buying and selling, and overturning the tables of the money changers and the seats of those selling doves, he makes no mention of his preventing anything being carried through the temple. Again, although he repeats the quotation of scripture Matthew omits the words "for all the nations" (Mt 21: 12-13).

Luke, like Matthew, has Jesus enter the temple directly after arriving in Jerusalem. The Lukan version of events is the briefest presented in the gospels. Jesus' actions are restricted to the driving out of those selling in the temple. Also in his scriptural reference to the temple as a house of prayer, no mention is made of the phrase "for all nations" (Lk 19: 45-46).

Unlike the accounts of Matthew and Luke, the Johannine narrative may reflect an independent tradition.⁴⁹ Occurring as it does at the beginning of Jesus' ministry, although again within the context of a pilgrimage to Jerusalem at Passover, it has no direct bearing upon his ultimate crucifixion and death. It also presents the incident as a more violent occasion than its synoptic counterpart. According to John,

⁴⁹Bauckham 1988, Crossan 1991 and Matson 1992 support such a view. Casey, however, considers John's narrative to be a secondary construction (1997: 324).

In the temple he found those who were selling oxen and sheep and pigeons, and the money changers at their business. And making a whip of cords, he drove them all, with the sheep and oxen out of the temple; and he poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. And he told those who sold the doves, "Take these things away: you shall not make my Father's house a house of trade" (Jn 2: 14-16).

In addition to his actions in the temple, Jesus, in the course of his interrogation by the Judean elite, is alleged to have claimed, "I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and in three days I will build another, not made with hands" (Mk 14: 58). While difficult questions surround the historicity of this saying and its relationship to the temple incident, it may provide us with further evidence of Jesus' attitude to the temple and will therefore be taken into consideration below.

Although the 'temple incident' itself may be accepted by most scholars as historical, the precise nature of Jesus' action and the historicity of the saying in Mk 11: 17 are considerably less certain. For the most part, the actions attributed to Jesus in the Markan narrative appear to represent more closely the historical occurrence,⁵⁰ although it remains necessary to examine briefly those additional actions narrated in John's gospel. Whilst the description of Jesus making a whip and using it to drive out from the temple those whose activities he opposed can probably be attributed to John's use of dramatic license, the issue of the presence of oxen and sheep in the temple courts demands more careful consideration. Eppstein (1964: 42-58) and Jeremias (1969: 49) both cite rabbinic evidence in support of such trading in the temple precincts.⁵¹

⁵⁰Brandon 1967, Sanders 1985 and Wright 1996, for example, all give little consideration to John's account of the temple incident.

⁵¹Eppstein claims that in the spring of 30 CE the High Priest Caiaphas expelled the

According to Josephus, however, the trading of these animals was conducted not in the temple courts but rather in the place identified as Hanuth.⁵² Sanders supports the probable veracity of Josephus' claim by noting both the numerous impracticalities involved in such a venture, and the limited number of occasions on which the sacrifice of cattle was either necessary or affordable (1992: 85-92).⁵³ Whilst the possibility that Jesus drove sheep and cattle out from the temple cannot be excluded, it more probably falls into the category of Johannine embellishment of a less dramatic core tradition.

In further distinction from the Markan narrative, the quote from scripture related in John's account is attributed to the disciples rather than to Jesus himself; he simply orders the traders to stop turning the temple, "my Father's house", into a house of trade. A majority of scholars⁵⁴ argue against the historicity of the saying in Mark, claiming that the combined reference to the two Old Testament texts, Isa 56: 7 and Jer 7: 11, reflects more the interests, and thus the redactional hand, of the early Christians than the words of Jesus himself. This argument is flawed in two respects, however.⁵⁵ Firstly, the early Christian use of quotations from Hebrew scripture was quite specifically intended to

Sanhedrin from the Chamber of Hewn Stone to the place of Hanuth, whilst at the same time introducing traders into the courts of the temple. Jeremias interprets the rabbinic text j. Betz ii. 4,61c.13 likewise as confirmation of such trading.

⁵²Hanuth is the Aramaic term for a market.

⁵³According to the Torah, the offering of a bull was required on only four occasions (a) if the high priest brought guilt upon the people by sinning (Lev 4: 3) (b) if the whole people of Israel should sin unintentionally (Lev 4: 13-14) (3) on the Day of Atonement, and (4) at the Feast of Booths. On all other occasions less expensive alternatives would have satisfied the obligations of the offeror.

⁵⁴For example Bultmann 1963, Harvey 1982, Sanders 1985, and Crossan 1991.

⁵⁵Wright argues in favour of the saying's authenticity, contending that the whole temple incident reflects Jeremiah's prophecy of the temple's impending destruction (1996: 418-422). Casey also supports the historicity of the saying arguing that its *sitz im leben* is most appropriately found not in the early Church but in the lifetime of Jesus. In addition he attempts to reconstruct the original Aramaic which, he suggests, lay behind the Greek form of the saying present in Mark's gospel (1997: 306-332).

situate Jesus within a messianic and eschatological context. More particularly he was presented as the fulfilment of messianic prophecy. The quotation in Mk 11: 16-17 serves no such purpose.⁵⁶ And secondly, as we will illustrate below, the saying is entirely in keeping with peasant attitudes towards the temple hierarchy.⁵⁷ Additional support for the historicity of Mark 11: 17 may be found, according to Bauckham, in the saying attributed to Jesus in Jn 2: 16. John's omission of the quotation from Isa 56: 7 stems from the disregard in his gospel for the concept of an eschatological temple. More significant, however, is Bauckham's contention that Jn 2: 16 is almost a paraphrase of Mk 11: 17b. Jesus' condemnation of the temple as a house of trade is the Johannine equivalent of the Markan "den of robbers". The phrase "den of robbers" has itself led some scholars to question the authenticity of the plural references. The connotations of the term, λησται, extend beyond mere theft to include violent robbery, inappropriately, it is claimed in the context of the temple. In fact, from the perspective of the peasants, the term is only too accurate. In a limited good society in which all goods and services were perceived to be finite, the concern of the honourable person was not the accumulation of wealth but rather the maintenance of his status. Profit and gain were deemed to accrue from extortionate or fraudulent practices of which trading was considered one.⁵⁸ The condemnation of the temple by Jesus in John's gospel as a "house of trade" thus equates very closely with the Markan "den of robbers".⁵⁹ As Oakman

⁵⁶Bauckham 1988 suggests that had the reference to scripture been attributable to the early Christians more appropriate texts such as Mal 3: 1-3 or Zech 14: 21 would have been expected.

⁵⁷Herzog 2000: 132-143.

⁵⁸Malina 1981:104-105.

⁵⁹Wright contends that although inappropriate in the sense of "economic trickery", 'den of robbers' is a relevant charge against a temple which, in ideological terms, had become a symbol of the nationalist violence, he claims, Jesus opposed (1996: 420). That the temple should symbolise such 'nationalist violence' seems unlikely in a social context in which the religious elite benefited from their relationship with the Romans and thus from the maintenance of the status quo.

notes, the temple elite were effectively engaged in “reverse social banditry”, and that Jesus should label them λησται seems a very real probability (1993: 265).⁶⁰

To return to the saying in Mk 14: 58. This allegedly false accusation is repeated in substantially the same form by Matthew,⁶¹ but is omitted in this context by Luke. Luke transposes the tradition to the occasion of the stoning of Stephen in Acts 6: 13-14, where Stephen is also presented as being wrongly accused of speaking against the temple and against the law. False witnesses claim to “..have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place [the temple].”. The Johannine version of the saying is related in the words of Jesus himself and occurs in response to a request by ‘the Jews’ for a sign, following upon the temple incident. Jesus says, “Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up” (Jn 2: 19). And in the gospel of Thomas saying 71, Jesus is also reported to have said, “I shall destroy [this] house, and no one will be able to rebuild it”. The synoptic gospels narrate one further occasion on which Jesus speaks of the fate of the temple. In Mk 13: 2 he tells his disciples, “Not one stone will be left here upon another; all will be thrown down”. How are we to interpret this web of sayings? In the first instance, we appear to have three independent traditions represented in Mark, John and Thomas. In each of these, Jesus is held to herald the temple’s destruction. In Mk 14: 58 and in Thomas, Jesus himself is to be the one who destroys the temple, in Mk 13: 2 and in John, however, Jesus claims no part in the temple’s demise. A restored temple is a feature of Jesus’ prediction in Mk 14: 58 and in John; on both occasions it is Jesus who will restore it. For John alone, however, is this restoration interpreted in terms of Jesus’ resurrection (Jn 2: 21). Finally, neither Mk 13: 2 nor the gospel of Thomas make any mention of the temple’s restoration. The above analysis confirms that we have (a)

⁶⁰See also Theissen 1992: 94-114 for a consideration of peasant attitudes towards the temple and temple elite.

⁶¹Mt 26: 61.

triple attestation of the prediction of the temple's demise, (b) double attestation that Jesus would be the instrument of that destruction and (c) double attestation that Jesus himself would restore the temple. Two further factors favour the authenticity of a prediction concerning Jesus' involvement in the destruction and restoration of the temple. Firstly, such a saying clearly cannot be considered an early Christian prophecy *ex eventu* as the second temple was destroyed by the Romans, not by Jesus, and it was never restored, nor a new one constructed or eschatologically fashioned. And secondly, despite the embarrassment involved in the prophecy of the temple's renewal remaining unfulfilled, the saying was so embedded in the early traditions concerning Jesus that none of the writers of the four canonical gospels, nor the author of the gospel of Thomas, felt able to omit from their accounts, but in each case sought to disguise the fact of its non fulfilment.⁶² On balance, the evidence appears to favour the historicity of a prediction by Jesus that he, presumably as God's agent, would destroy the temple and would replace it with a new one.

The implications of this conclusion for Jesus' understanding of his role and mission are immense. In particular, it may be suggestive of messianic aspirations. In Psalm of Solomon 17, the messiah, it is claimed "will honour the Lord in a prominent place on the earth, and...will purify Jerusalem with holiness" (Esler 1995c: 26). On capturing the city of Jerusalem in 63 BCE, the Roman general, Pompey, entered the 'Holy of Holies' in the temple.⁶³ In the context of Psalm of Solomon 17, the reference to the purification of Jerusalem may well relate to a purification of the temple, profaned by Pompey's act. In this light, Jesus' claim that he will destroy and rebuild, i.e. 'purify', the temple may be seen to contain messianic connotations. Similarly, within the context of

⁶²See Theissen 1992: 94-114 for a concise presentation of the arguments in favour of the authenticity of the saying as it occurs in Mk 14: 58.

⁶³*Ant.* 14.4.4 [71].

Judeanism, the most 'prominent place on earth' was, almost certainly, the Jerusalem temple. Jesus' promise that he himself would fashion a new temple, may well conform to the messianic expectation of the worship of the Lord in a prominent place. On this reading it is difficult to overestimate the significance of Jesus' saying about the temple.

One further question remains, how does such a prediction relate to Jesus' action in the temple? As we have noted, only in John's gospel is the prediction of the temple's destruction and restoration uttered within the context of the temple incident. According to Crossan, the earliest tradition consisted of Jesus' action in the temple (Mk 11: 15-16) and an explanation of his action in terms of an announcement of the temple's destruction.⁶⁴ It was not until later that word and deed were separated. Crossan's view, however, presupposes that the biblical quotations in Mk 11: 17 are secondary interpolations, an interpretation which we have disputed above. Determining the historical context of a particular action or saying of Jesus of Nazareth is notoriously difficult, and so it proves in this case. What we can say with a high degree of probability is that, whatever the context of Jesus' saying about the temple, his prediction must have been consistent with his actions in it. In other words, Jesus' actions in the Jerusalem temple, ought to be interpreted in a manner which coheres significantly with his prediction of its destruction and restoration.

Accepting the version of events presented in Mark's gospel as reflecting most closely the core tradition, the first action attributed to Jesus is the driving out of those who were buying and selling. As trading was an accepted function within the temple courts, what in the nature of these transactions provoked such a response from Jesus?

⁶⁴According to Crossan, the saying in its original form referred only to the temple's destruction and not to its subsequent restoration (1991: 359).

According to Sanders, in and of themselves, nothing. The commercial activities conducted in the temple and the trading practises of the religious elite and their temple operatives were, he claims, above reproach.⁶⁵ The destruction symbolised by Jesus' action in the temple was not a judgement on the existing temple institution, but rather served as a necessary precursor to the new temple of the eschatological age (1985: 61-76).⁶⁶ As we noted above, however, much of the Judean literature which speaks of the temple's destruction does so in terms of divine judgement. Moreover, whilst Sanders is correct to the extent that trading activities were properly conducted in the temple courts, he seriously misrepresents, we suggest, the trading practices of the temple elite and their functionaries. It is just these practices which Jesus attacks when he drives out from the temple those who were buying and selling.

In first century CE Judeanism the temple served as the central institution in economic as well as religious terms. It stood at the apex of the redistribution mechanism legitimated by the Great Tradition Torah in which all sacrifice, both political and kinship was confined to the temple and in which the temple tax and tithes were, for the most part, similarly centralised. From the perspective of the Galilean peasant it was not only an impressive building⁶⁷, the house of God to which (s)he came on pilgrimage,⁶⁸ it was, under the control of the socio-religious elite, an oppressive economic force. As trading in the temple was almost exclusively an activity carried on under the control of the

⁶⁵Crossan likewise claims that "in general, there was absolutely nothing wrong with any of the buying, selling, or money-changing operations conducted in the outer courts of the temple. Nobody was stealing or defrauding or contaminating the sacred precincts" (1991: 357).

⁶⁶If the existing temple was functioning so well, it begs the question of why, even in the eschatological age a new temple would be necessary? How would it differ from the existing one?

⁶⁷Mk 13: 1//Mt 24: 1//Lk 21: 5.

⁶⁸See pp 251-252 above.

temple hierarchy, it seems most probable that those driven out by Jesus as they were buying and selling were temple operatives.⁶⁹ If this is the case, then they may have been engaged in the acquisition of temple supplies, possibly making use of the revenue acquired by means of the temple tax. Those engaged in selling may also have been disposing of items gifted to the temple.⁷⁰ As we have noted, however, in the limited good society of first century CE Palestine, trading was viewed by the honourable peasant in a negative light. Its focus on profit and gain led to its perception as a form of extortion and theft. The temple traders were therefore a very visible sign of the economic exploitation in which the temple hierarchy and their operatives were engaged. That the high priestly elite were perceived as both corrupt and exploitative is evidenced in a variety of sources. Both the writings of Josephus⁷¹ and the findings of Avigad's archaeological excavations⁷² confirm the considerable wealth of the temple and its high priestly elite.⁷³ Riches of themselves, of course, do not prove corruption⁷⁴ but they can support such a conclusion where additional evidence is available. In this respect Josephus again proves informative. In *Ant.* 20.8.8 [181] and 20.9.2 [206-207] he narrates how during the 50s and 60s CE the high priests' servants were sent directly to the threshing floors where they forcibly acquired the tithes due to the local priests, many of whom starved as a consequence. He also remarks that Ananias, the high priest during

⁶⁹Oakman, on the other hand, argues that the traders may have been involved in the purchase and sale of animals intended for sacrifice (1993: 265).

⁷⁰Bauckham 1988: 85.

⁷¹*Ant.* 15.11.3 [391-402] and *J.W.* 5.5.4 [207-214]; 5.5.6 [222-228].

⁷²Avigad 1984 uncovered luxurious residences in the upper area of Jerusalem which he identified as belonging to the high priestly families.

⁷³Greenbut (1992) suggests that the bones found in a particularly extravagant ossuary in Jerusalem may have belonged to the high priest Caiaphas. Horbury, however, finds the evidence less persuasive (1994: 32-48).

⁷⁴Although according to Malina, in a limited good society the perception existed that the rich became rich as a consequence of their own or their ancestors' greed, and that they acquired their wealth by means of fraudulent and dishonest practices (1987: 354-367).

that period, willingly engaged in violence and corruption in order to enhance his status (*Ant.* 20.9.4 [213-214]). Finally, in the course of the Judean revolt against Rome, Ananias' residence was burned down and he himself killed. More significantly, during the same insurrection the temple archives which housed the records of debts were also razed to the ground (*J.W.* 2.17.6 [427-428]). Whilst it is not being suggested that the temple elite were solely or even principally responsible for the indebtedness recorded in the archives, they undoubtedly acted as creditors on many occasions. The keeping of the records of debt in the temple, moreover, would only have served to confirm non-elite perception of priestly involvement in oppressive practices. Sanders legitimately counters that this evidence derives largely from the period immediately prior to the outbreak of the Judean revolt and therefore cannot be held representative of a more stable situation some twenty to thirty years earlier.⁷⁵ Whilst this is to some extent true, the wealth of the high priestly families was almost certainly a constant throughout the first century CE and, as Hillel's *prozbul*⁷⁶ indicates, indebtedness was a rapidly increasing phenomenon. It is probably also the case that Josephus relates the above instances of high priestly corruption and exploitation to illustrate the break down of law and order in Judea during the 60s CE. That he fails to describe similar practices in the 20s and 30s of the first century CE need not necessarily imply that they did not occur, but rather that they were further away from him in time, and that it was not in keeping with his purposes to narrate them. Other literature, besides that of Josephus, also contains descriptions of the oppressive and corrupt nature of the high priestly families. According to the Qumran text 4Q251 "They [the high priests] will rob their neighbours and oppress one another". Three passages in the Targum of Isaiah, Isa 5: 1-7; 28: 1-13 and 22: 20⁷⁷ also direct

⁷⁵See also Seeley 1993: 263-283.

⁷⁶See pg 27 above.

⁷⁷There are indications in this final passage which suggest it may have been rewritten sometime after the destruction of Jerusalem.

criticism at the first century CE priesthood, whilst in the Targum of Jeremiah 7: 9 the temple elite are referred to as “thieves” and at 8: 10 as “robbers of money”. In b. Pesharim 57a the well known ‘woes against the high priestly families’ are recorded; amongst the charges levelled against them are nepotism and violence.⁷⁸ Finally, the Testament of Moses refers to the first century priesthood as containing both “godless” and “deceitful” men who “consume the goods of the poor” and who are “guilty of criminal deeds” Test. of Moses 7: 3, 4, 6 and 7.⁷⁹ Both individually and cumulatively the above texts confirm the corrupt and exploitative nature of the high priestly elite. That these practices were reflected in the trading activities of the temple operative seems only too likely. When he cast out those buying and selling, Jesus of Nazareth condemned this form of exploitation and the temple elite and their retainers who benefited from it.

Having driven out the temple traders, Jesus turned his attention to the money changers. The function of the money changers within the temple system was to convert the various currencies held by the pilgrims and worshippers from Judea, Galilee and the Diaspora into the coinage of the temple, the Tyrian diadrachma. The appropriate currency was required not only for purchasing items in the temple, but more particularly for payment of the temple tax. According to m. Sheqalim 1: 3, money changers tables were set up throughout the provinces on the fifteenth day of the month of Adar. Ten days later, and three weeks before the feast of Passover, they were also established in the temple courts, where they remained throughout the festivities and for a further week beyond their conclusion. They were, no doubt, a prominent feature within the temple

⁷⁸The four families mentioned in this text provided between them most of the high priests who held office from the reign of Herod the Great to the fall of Jerusalem. See Bauckham 1988: 79. Seeley 1993 contends that the charges are stereotyped and thus historically unreliable, but this is persuasively refuted by Bauckham 1988: 79-80.

⁷⁹Evans 1992, 1995b provide a more detailed analysis of the above texts.

precincts during the Passover festival.⁸⁰ They were also a highly visible aspect of the temple's financial operations. As with the traders discussed above, they were an integral part of the temple system, in this instance operating under the auspices of the temple treasury.⁸¹ Once again we are faced with the problematic task of determining why Jesus attacks what appears to be an accepted function of the temple system. Neusner notes that the temple tax was used to finance the acquisition of the whole offerings made on behalf of the community, offerings which effected atonement and expiation for sin. By turning over the money changers' tables Jesus effectively pronounced atonement through the whole offering null. In its place was to stand the eucharist initiated by Jesus at the last supper. It was in effect "table for table, whole offering for whole offering" (1989: 290). This theologising of Jesus' actions in many ways typifies the traditional approach to the temple incident as a whole, in which Jesus is perceived as 'cleansing' the temple. It nonetheless provides a less than adequate explanation of the actions of a Galilean non-elite pilgrim within the Jerusalem temple in the first century CE.

More plausible within the historical context of Jesus of Nazareth are interpretations which focus upon the coinage or the nature of the temple tax itself. Thus it has been suggested that Jesus overturned the tables of the money changers because he objected to the iconic representations, namely of Baal, on the Tyrian diadrachma,⁸² or because he believed that the temple tax ought to be payable only once during the course of a

⁸⁰Bauckham 1988: 85.

⁸¹Bauckham's proposal that the money changers may have been priests or Levites (1988: 85) is less persuasive than Hanson and Oakman's analysis in which they are identified as a specific sub group within the category of economic personnel (1998: 141).

⁸²Whilst this may not of itself explain why Jesus over turned the tables of the money changers, it is indicative of the hypocritical nature of a religious elite who at the same time as condemning idolatry ensured best economic advantage for themselves by insisting payments to the temple be made in coins bearing the image of a foreign God.

person's lifetime.⁸³ Bauckham, likewise, contends that the primary target of Jesus' action was the temple tax, not on the basis, however, that it should only be paid once but rather that it should not be exigible at all (1988: 72-89). A "theocratic tax...levied in the name of God" is inherently wrong.⁸⁴ Put simply "God does not lay financial burdens on his people" (1988: 74). The temple tax, in the sum of a half shekel, was levied upon all adult Judean males resident anywhere in Palestine and the Diaspora.⁸⁵ Moreover, those unable to make the half shekel payment were required to undertake a pledge. Despite attempts in the rabbinic literature⁸⁶ to trace the origins of the tax back through Nehemiah (Neh 10: 32ff) to Moses (Exod 30: 11-16), the best evidence suggests that it was not until Roman times that the half shekel levy was imposed.⁸⁷ Almost certainly the peasantry and non-elite artisans would have been opposed to the imposition of a still further burden upon their already scarce resources. If, as seems probable, when Jesus overturned the tables of the money changers he expressed his opposition to the temple tax, he did so not on the basis of the tax's 'ungodly' nature, but rather with the natural contempt of the non-elite for a relatively new tax which exploited and indebted them still further.

Two further factors may also have figured in Jesus' action against the money changers. Firstly, the role of money itself, and its impact upon the peasant communities of the Galilee. As we illustrated in Chapter One, far from presenting an opportunity for growth and profit making, money and monetarisation not only had a deleterious effect on

⁸³Richardson 1992: 507-523. This latter view was held by the community at Qumran, 4 Q ordinances, but there is little evidence to support the contention that it featured prominently within other spheres of Judeanism.

⁸⁴Bauckham contends that Jesus' illustrates his opposition to the temple tax elsewhere in Mt 17: 24-27. Such an interpretation, however, of necessity demands acceptance of the historicity of the pericope (1986: 219-252).

⁸⁵M. Sheq 3:1 indicates that priests were exempt from payment of the tax.

⁸⁶M. Sheq 4: 1-4.

⁸⁷Freyne 1980: 278-281.

village life, but they were also perceived by the peasantry to have such an effect. Indebtedness and land loss, loss of family and community were the most obvious consequences of the increasing role of money in the region. That Jesus should upset the tables of the temple retainers who implemented a burdensome monetary tax and who benefited from its collection should not be surprising. The second, and related, factor concerns the collection of the tax itself. The money changers were temple functionaries who were accountable to the overseer of the temple treasury, who, in turn, was answerable to the high priest. In other words, money changing was under the control of the high priestly families. In such circumstances, an elite which continuously operated with a view to increasing both its wealth and its honour status would hardly have resisted the opportunity of setting an excessive rate of exchange.⁸⁸ Whilst there is no extant evidence concerning the elite/retainer manipulation of exchange rates, there is, as we have illustrated above, ample evidence to support the notion of high priestly corruption. That the temple elite and their retainers should therefore seek to accrue excessive financial gain by manipulating currency exchange rates seems a very real probability. The tables of the money changers were a focal point for much that Jesus opposed, exploitation of the peasantry, increasing monetarisation, and elite greed and corruption. When he overturned the tables, these were the oppressive forces he denounced.

In addition to the tables of the money changers, Jesus also overturned the seats of those who were selling doves. For the most part, doves were the offerings made by the non-elite.⁸⁹ As with all creatures to be offered for sacrifice, the doves required to be free from any form of defect or blemish. To ensure these exacting standards were met, the

⁸⁸Esler 1995c: 22.

⁸⁹Three exceptions to this rule were provided for in the Torah, namely the cleansing of either a man (Lev 15: 13) or a woman (Lev 15: 28) who had suffered from a discharge, or the cleansing of a Nazirite who had been defiled by the sudden death of a person in close proximity. In each of these instances the appropriate offering was two doves.

rearing and sale of the doves were also conducted under the auspices of the temple treasurer (m. Sheqalim 5: 1). In this respect too then, the temple elite enjoyed an oligopoly.⁹⁰ That they should seek to exploit it by setting excessively high prices seems more than likely, and would readily explain Jesus' actions in overturning the seats of the temple retainers selling the birds.

A more fundamental reason still may have lain behind Jesus actions, however. When he cleansed the leper and healed the sick, Jesus both profaned and challenged the operation of the purity and debt codes. When he turned over the seats of those selling doves, he acted, we contend, in like manner. The purity and debt codes prescribed a variety of impure conditions and sinful deeds which could only be redeemed by means of sacrifice in the temple. The codes which had initially served to preserve the purity of Israel from the contagion of foreign nations and to ensure social justice for all God's people had by the first century CE become tools of division and oppression. Perpetual religious indebtedness was the fate of those unable to comply with the appropriate regulations. The sacrifice of doves was the most common form of 'sin' or 'guilt'

⁹⁰The mishnaic tractate Kerithoth 1: 7, which narrates the actions of Simeon ben Gamaliel, an influential member of the Sanhedrin prior to the fall of Jerusalem, is occasionally cited in support of a temple monopoly. Simeon, it is alleged, on recognising the excessive price being charged by the temple authorities for two doves declared that a woman who had endured five miscarriages or five issues, need make only one offering not five. As a result the demand for doves was markedly reduced, and in order to sell the surplus birds, the temple elite required to lower the price. Rather than monopoly, however, this situation appears more suggestive of supply and demand. Had the temple authorities enjoyed a monopoly they would almost certainly have increased the price of doves to compensate for the reduction in numbers sold. The excess birds would simply have been destroyed. One possibility occurs, however. If an element of competition existed between the Judean high priestly families which constituted the temple authorities, whilst overall control remained with the group, thus allowing exploitation, the competition would ensure that they remained sensitive to market demands. In other words, the situation was one of oligopoly rather than monopoly.

offering made by the non-elite.⁹¹ As in all forms of sacrifice, the offering was made by the temple priest on behalf of the offeror. One of the two birds was burned whole, whilst the other was consumed by the priest. Not only did the temple elite benefit from their control of the sale of the doves, the temple priests even acquired the fruits of the offering itself! In turning over the dove sellers' seats, Jesus of Nazareth denounced not only the temple authorities' control and exploitation, he also struck at the operation of the purity and debt codes which, in the hands of the religious elite, had become a source of division and religious indebtedness.

The final, and perhaps least historically secure element of Jesus' actions concerns the prohibiting of the carrying of anything through the temple. The obscure nature of the prohibition is probably reflected in its early omission from both the Matthean and Lukan accounts of the incident. Interpretation of this event turns largely upon our understanding and translation of the Greek term *σκεῦος*. Massyngberd Ford proposes six types of item which she contends are covered by the term *σκεῦος*. Only two of these are relevant within the context of the temple, (a) cultic vessels and (b) luggage or baggage (1976: 249-253). By making further use of classical and Patristic Greek, together with the Hebrew of the Mishnah, and allowing for the commercial context of the Markan account, she concludes that *σκεῦος* should most appropriately be considered a receptacle for money. Massyngberd Ford's linguistic arguments are, however, less than persuasive⁹² and the most obvious application of the term *σκεῦος* is to a vessel or receptacle used to convey the supplies necessary for the functioning of the temple. According to Casey, "What is prohibited is taking, or causing to be taken, *any vessel*, through or across the temple" (1997: 310). Why would Jesus object to the delivery of

⁹¹Quadrupeds were the animals of sacrifice of the wealthy elite.

⁹²Bauckham 1988: 78.

these supplies? As with the doves mentioned above, items such as oil, flour and wine were sold to worshippers for use in their offerings, and no doubt as with the doves they would have been sold at excessive rates by the temple authorities. Similarly, as with the doves, their use in sacrifice indicates their connection with the religious indebtedness accruing from the debt code. By objecting to their conveyance through the temple, Jesus, albeit briefly, halted the exploitative economic and divisive religious practices being carried out in the temple.

Jesus rounded off his actions in the temple by quoting the prophets, "Is it not written", he said, "My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations? But you have made it a den of robbers". The first text is a quotation from Deutero-Isaiah 56: 7. In the context of that prophetic book it relates to the worship of foreigners and gentiles in the temple. Partly for this reason, and partly because of the subsequent spread of Christianity throughout the gentile world, the emphasis on interpreting this text in its present context most often falls on the phrase "for all nations". Thus it is suggested that Jesus both sought to open the temple to gentiles⁹³ and also prefigured the Christian mission amongst them.⁹⁴ Neither of these interpretations, however, corresponds closely to the immediately preceding actions of Jesus in the temple, nor are they particularly in keeping with Jesus' subsequent description of the temple as "a den of robbers". By turning our attention to the phrase "My house shall be called a house of prayer..", however, it is possible to uncover an interpretation consistent with both and with Jesus' general attitude towards the temple. As we noted above, in addition to the actual temple

⁹³In support of this view it has also been suggested that the temple incident took place within the Court of the Gentiles within the temple precinct. This however, is a modern name used to describe the temple's outer courts (Horsley 1987: 297).

⁹⁴It is perhaps significant that the reference to "for all the nations" is omitted from their Markan source by the writers of the gospels of both Matthew and Luke. For neither of these could it have been central to their understanding of Jesus' use of the text.

incident, Jesus prophesied both the temple's destruction and its restoration. Whilst his actions in the temple and the second scriptural quotation both relate to its destruction, the Isaianic reference stands to be interpreted in light of its restoration. When he refers to the temple as "a house of prayer", Jesus provides us with a brief insight into his perception of the new temple. That the temple should be, and no doubt for the most of its existence served as, a place of prayer is only to be expected, what is more insightful is Jesus description of it as οἶκος, "a house". The image of the temple as the house of God, and thus by extension God's household⁹⁵ is relatively common in the Old Testament. In 1 Kgs 5: 5 Solomon, for example, talks of building a house for the name of the Lord.⁹⁶ It is also, however, the language of domestic/kinship religion. The house and its household, made up of kin and fictive kin relationships, formed the heart of domestic religion. At the head of the house/household was the father whose duty it was to provide for the needs of his household. He in turn was due honour and deference. By referring to the temple as "a house/household of prayer" Jesus portrays Yahweh, not as a distant Lord or princely ruler but as a father.⁹⁷ That he should present Yahweh in this manner is hardly surprising, since he consistently speaks of God in these terms during the course of his ministry, even to the extent of using the more familiar and in relation to Yahweh the unique Αββα (Mk 14: 36). In the context of the elite/political religion temple, however, such terminology jars. It nonetheless illustrates the nature of the new temple envisaged by Jesus. It is a temple in which Yahweh, as father, is recognised as providing for the members of Yahweh's household. The image of Yahweh as father providing for his children occurs elsewhere in Jesus' teaching. In Mt 7: 7-11// Lk 11: 9-13, Jesus compares God's actions to those of a father providing for his son and concludes "If you

⁹⁵The Greek term οἶκος means household as well as house.

⁹⁶See also 2 Kgs and 1 and 2 Sam for frequent usage of the phrase "house of God".

⁹⁷That this is Jesus' intention appears to be supported by the Johannine tradition in which Jesus actually uses the phrase "My Father's house".

then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your father in heaven give good things to those who ask him!"⁹⁸ Similarly in Mt 6: 25-34// Lk 12: 22-31 Jesus warns against being preoccupied with the cares of this world and advises his listeners, "And do not keep striving for what you are to eat and what you are to drink and do not keep worrying. For it is the nations of the world that strives after all these things, and your father knows that you need them. Instead strive for his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well". Rather than being a centre of elite exploitation and religious indebtedness, the temple desired by Jesus was a temple in which the children of Israel honoured/worshipped Yahweh and praised the abundance he provided for them. Such a vision evokes the original intention behind the debt code,

The victims [sacrifices] and tithes given to Yahweh, the Sabbath and feasts on which people stop working so that they may give the time to Yahweh-these simply make evident the *gift* that lies behind people's work and their *abundance at table....To give what one has is the only means of continuing to have; people must lose if they are to receive...At the same time the giving of people helps them avoid coveting the abundance of others-their property, their lives, their blessings.*⁹⁹

Giving thus forestalls violence against the neighbour, the brother, the equal. This equality between people and "houses" is the purpose of the principle of extension: "Let there be no poor among you" (Deut 15: 4); "You must love your neighbour as yourself" (Lev 19: 18), (Belo 1981: 50).

One other aspect of the temple incident may also provide some insight into Jesus' perception of the new temple, namely the fact that it occurred during the feast of

⁹⁸Lk 11: 13 appears to spiritualise Jesus' teaching by identifying the gifts given by God with the Holy Spirit.

⁹⁹Our emphasis.

Passover. Passover was one of the three festivals which, according to the Torah, Judean male adults were to celebrate annually in the Jerusalem temple.¹⁰⁰ More significantly, it was the paradigmatic liberation event in Israelite history. It commemorated the occasion when Yahweh liberated the Israelites from the power of the Egyptians,¹⁰¹ when,

He brought [them] out from bondage to freedom, from sorrow to gladness, and from mourning to a festival day, and from darkness to a great light, and from servitude to redemption (m. Pes. 10: 5).

The contrast between the liberating and redeeming power of Yahweh and the oppressive nature of the temple under the ruling elite is obvious.¹⁰² In one other sense too the Passover festival proves relevant for Jesus' vision of the temple; it was one of the few occasions on which sacrifices offered in the temple were neither burned in their entirety nor consumed by the temple priests. Rather they were eaten as the Passover meal which was to be enjoyed by all God's people including the hungry and the needy. As such they were a very visible symbol of Yahweh's provision for his people.

The second text quoted by Jesus is from the prophet Jeremiah 7: 11, "But you have made it [the temple] a den of robbers". As we noted above, one of the objections cited against the historicity of this text concerns the inappropriate use of the term $\lambda\eta\sigma\tau\alpha\iota$, "robbers". But, as have we suggested, from the perspective of the peasantry, it very accurately described the temple elite and their retainers. The application of the term $\lambda\eta\sigma\tau\alpha\iota$ to the elite is an act of peasant profanation rooted in the 'shadow society' of the

¹⁰⁰Exod 23: 14, 17; 34: 23; Deut 16: 16.

¹⁰¹Deut 16: 1-8.

¹⁰²See Draper 1995: 183-203 for a reading of the sending out of the twelve in the light of the liberation event of the Passover. See also Horsley 1996 for a more wide ranging consideration of Passover and the Jesus tradition.

little tradition. By turning back against the elite the term used by them to label members of the non-elite deviants and criminals, Jesus affronts the honour of the temple authorities; it is little wonder that they sought to kill him.

Conclusion

When Jesus of Nazareth rode into Jerusalem at the feast of Passover astride a donkey his entrance was intended to establish his messianic claim. It also served to illustrate the nature of that claim and the extent to which it differed from contemporary messianic pretenders. His was not to be a military kingship based on might, but a humble kingship based on service. On entering the city Jesus approached the temple which stood, both religiously and economically, at the centre of first century CE Judean society. From the perspective of the peasantry, however, it was an institution which, under the control of the temple elite had become synonymous with exploitation and indebtedness. The actions of Jesus of Nazareth in the temple reflect just this peasant perspective. Rooted in the 'shadow society' of the little tradition, Jesus' casting out of those buying and selling, his turning over of the tables of the money changers and the seats of the dove sellers, and his prohibition on carrying anything through the temple, are all acts of condemnation of a temple elite operating an oppressive temple system. Likewise his vision of a new temple has as its source the themes of reversal and abundance of the little tradition, and the providential role of the father in domestic/kinship religion. Jesus of Nazareth did not so much oppose the Jerusalem temple because he was Galilean, rather as a member of the peasant non-elite he denounced an oppressive regime which reflected the concerns of elite political religion. In its place he advocated the values of the little tradition and of domestic/kinship religion.

CHAPTER SIX

THE TRIAL AND CRUCIFIXION OF JESUS OF NAZARETH: AN ELITE RESPONSE

In Chapter Two of this work we examined what we termed peasant response to elite oppression. We considered everyday forms of resistance, and prophet and messiah led movements, which sought in one form or another, either covertly or overtly, to challenge the ruling elite. In this chapter we will illustrate one example of elite response. In general terms the reaction of the ruling elite to subversive activities is reasonably predictable. A variety of punishments are meted out, for the most part, commensurate with the unlawful action committed by the 'criminal'. Thus, whilst the anonymous perpetrators of acts of petty theft or sabotage may hope to go undetected and so escape punishment, those who are caught could expect to be either flogged or imprisoned. Inevitably, the more serious the 'crime', the more severe the punishment. And the most serious 'crime' of all in the eyes of the elite is the challenge, potential, perceived, or real, to their rule. The 'disappeared' of Pinochet's Argentina, the millions in Stalin's work camps, Steve Biko in the Apartheid ruled South Africa and Ken Saro-Wiwa hanged under the brutal regime of General Sani Abacha in Nigeria, to name but a few, all provide testimony of the fate awaiting those who are perceived to present a challenge to the ruling elite. The significance of their fate, however, goes beyond the punishment of the individual. In the context of twentieth century Latin America, David Tombs argues that, such punishments "should be understood as intended to paralyse a society's willingness to resist". He continues, "In addition to targeting the victims themselves, disappearances, torture and executions were intended to terrorise a public audience"

(1999: 91).¹ In first century CE Palestine it was little different. Two examples of Herodian reaction to differing forms of challenge to their regimes will suffice to illustrate the point. On believing the terminally ill Herod had died, a number of young Judeans, incited by 'interpreters of the ancestral laws', pulled down the golden eagle which Herod had erected over the great gate of the temple. When brought before the king to be questioned, the youths claimed "that their acts had been motivated by a desire to observe the laws of Moses *which to them were more important than the laws of the king*".² The youths were despatched to Jericho where Matthias, one of the scholars who incited the action, and a number of those involved were burned alive (*Ant.* 17.6.2-4 [149]). The second example is that of John the Baptist. As we noted in Chapter Two, John preached a message which Herod Antipas feared would cause unrest amongst the people. It was also a message which, explicitly in the gospel narratives, and implicitly in the account of Josephus, contained a criticism of the behaviour of Antipas himself. The tetrarch responded in predictable fashion; he had John arrested and brought to his fortress at Machareus (*Ant.* 18.5.2 [116-119]). The gospel reports in which Antipas is reluctantly coerced into delivering up John's head on a dish to the daughter of Herodias almost certainly recount little more than a court tale.³ John may well have been decapitated, but without doubt he was executed on the command of an autocratic ruler who would tolerate no form of opposition within his territory. It is within this context of elite response to a perceived or potential challenge to their rule that we contend the arrest, 'trials' and crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth should be understood.

¹Tombs contends that in addition to force the authoritarian regimes of Latin America were based upon fear and terror. These were essential tools employed by the ruling elite to maintain their position of power and control.

²Our emphasis.

³Theissen 1991: 81-97.

According to S. G. F. Brandon “the most certain thing known about Jesus of Nazareth is that he was crucified by the Romans as a rebel against their government in Judea” (1967: 1). The nature of his death by crucifixion is almost beyond doubt. Paul’s references to the ‘folly of the cross’,⁴ and the shameful manner of such a death makes anything other than historicity almost inconceivable. Likewise, that the penalty was inflicted by the Romans is almost incontrovertible. The earliest of the gospel writers, Mark, despite probably writing in Rome for a community of Roman Christians, is unable to escape the fact that the responsibility for Jesus’ death lay with the Roman Prefect Pilate. And whilst the later gospel writers, in varying degrees, attempted to increase Judean, and reduce Roman, culpability, none of them could challenge the central fact of Jesus’ death by crucifixion at Roman hands. Indeed so rooted was it in Christian tradition that it was included in the early Church’s profession of faith, the Nicene creed.⁵ Two non-Christian sources also provide independent testimony to the event.⁶ According to Josephus, “..Pilate upon hearing him accused by men of the highest standing amongst us..condemned him to be crucified...”⁷ and similarly the Roman historian Tacitus narrates, “Christus....had undergone the death penalty in the reign of Tiberius, by sentence of the procurator Pontius Pilatus..”⁸ If the fact of his crucifixion at the hands of the Romans is almost without doubt, the events leading up to and surrounding the death of Jesus are considerably less certain. Whilst it is no longer seriously considered

⁴1 Corinthians 1: 18, 23. Justin Martyr also refers to a crucified Lord as *μανία*, madness (*Apology* 1. 13.4).

⁵Harvey 1982: 11.

⁶b. Sanhedrin 43a refers to the hanging of ‘Yeshu’ on the eve of Passover but makes no mention of the role of Pilate or the Romans.

⁷*Ant.* 18.3.3 [63]. Whilst the *Testimonium Flavianum* to which this reference belongs is clearly the subject of later Christian interpolation, there is nothing to suggest this detail is not original to the text.

⁸*Annals* 15.44.

that the Judean people as a whole played a significant role in the death of Jesus,⁹ other issues such as the extent of the involvement of the Judean elite, the nature of the so-called Judean and Roman 'trials' and the reason for his crucifixion remain matters of contention.

The Judean 'Trial' of Jesus and the Role of the Judean Elite.

In addition to the narratives in the canonical gospels, the gospel of Peter provides us with a fifth version of the Judean 'trial' of Jesus.¹⁰ In truth the version in the extant fragment of the gospel of Peter is hardly an account of a trial at all, nor is it specifically Judean. Rather it describes only one 'trial' at which the Judeans, Herod and Pilate are all reported to be present. Ultimately it is Herod, not Pilate, who commands that Jesus be taken away and crucified.¹¹ In contrast, each of the four canonical gospels distinguishes clearly between the Judean and the Roman 'trials' of Jesus. With regard to the former, the Markan narrative (Mk 14: 53-64, 15: 1) describes how following his arrest Jesus was taken before the high priest, the chief priests, the elders and the scribes. There, many gave false witness against him and he was accused, falsely Mark alleges, of having spoken against the temple. He was also questioned by the high priest and asked whether he was "the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?" His response, "I am", was construed by the high priest as blasphemous and all of those convened agreed that he deserved to die. After this 'trial' Jesus was insulted and beaten by some amongst those who condemned him, and by the guards. The following morning the chief priests met with the elders and scribes and with "the whole council" before binding Jesus and handing

⁹It is difficult to overestimate the importance of the historical implications arising, in part, from the attribution of blame by the gospel writers to the Judean people for the death of Jesus. See Brown 1994: 383-397 and Crossan 1996.

¹⁰The passion of Jesus is absent from both the gospel of Thomas and from Q.

¹¹Gospel of Peter 1: 1-2.

him over to Pilate. The Matthean narrative (Mt 26: 57-68, 27: 1-2) remains very close to its Markan source omitting only the chief priests' presence from amongst those gathered at the house of the high priest Caiaphas. Matthew also stresses the false nature of the testimony sought against Jesus, but makes no mention of his prophecy of the temple's destruction being false. In the interrogation by the high priest the "Son of the Blessed One" in Mark becomes the "Son of God" in the Matthean account and Jesus' response becomes the more ambiguous "You have said so". The Lukan narrative (Lk 22: 54, 63-71; 23: 1-2) differs in a number of respects from the account in Mark's gospel leading at least some scholars to argue that Luke had access to an additional non-Markan source.¹² Most significantly, the elders, chief priests and scribes meet on only one occasion, the morning after Jesus' arrest when they bring him before the Sanhedrin. Luke makes no reference to the allegation that Jesus predicted the temple's destruction and makes two separate questions of whether Jesus was the messiah, the Son of God. His response, however, elicits no charge of blasphemy. Nor does it see him condemned as deserving of death. On handing him over to Pilate, the Judean assembly outlines the charges which they bring against Jesus; he has perverted the nation, forbidden the payment of taxes to Caesar and claimed to be the messiah or king. Finally, in John's gospel (Jn 18: 12-14, 19-24, 28) Jesus is taken firstly to Annas the father-in-law of the then high priest Caiaphas where he is questioned about his disciples and his teaching. Once again Jesus is struck by a guard before being bound and handed over to Caiaphas. In the morning Jesus is taken from the house of the high priest to Pilate at the

¹²Amongst those scholars who argue in favour of a non-Markan source are Catchpole 1971: 174-203, Ernst 1977: 616-618, Marshall 1978: 846-851 and Grundmann 1981: 417-419. According to Fitzmyer, "Ascription of vv 66-71 to L seems to be a better solution than a mere redaction of a Markan parallel, though one cannot be apodictic about it" (1985: 1458). Taylor displays similar reservations concluding that "The character of the narrative is very difficult to determine. It is difficult to believe that it is based solely on Mark or that it is entirely independent of Mark (1972: 84).

Praetorium. When asked what the charges against Jesus are, they respond only that if Jesus were not a criminal they would not be bringing him before Pilate. On being told to try him themselves, they claim that they are unable to sentence anyone to death.

A number of issues arise from the 'trial' narratives, primary amongst which is the nature of the relationship between the various accounts and the source(s) which stand behind them. As we have noted above Matthew is almost certainly dependent upon Mark.¹³ Luke, whilst operating more freely with his material, probably displays enough similarities with the Markan account to make this too his most likely source.¹⁴ More difficult to discern, however, are the relationships between Mark, John and Peter. For many scholars,¹⁵ the two canonical gospels, Mark and John, reflect independent passion traditions. The similarities which exist in the structure and content of the Markan and Johannine narratives, they argue, derive from distinct pre-Gospel traditions rather than from some form of dependence or common source.¹⁶ The same issue of dependence arises in connection with the gospel of Peter. According to Brown, rather than representing an independent tradition, the gospel of Peter is a later writing wholly dependent upon the gospel accounts of Matthew, Luke and John (1994: 1317-1349). Koester (1980) and Crossan (1991, 1996), however, suggest otherwise.¹⁷ Far from being a later text, the gospel of Peter, they contend, contains a primitive passion narrative

¹³Senior 1975 and Brown 1994.

¹⁴Creed contends that "The dependence upon Mark is...unmistakable in the account of the Trial" (1930: 276). For Soards 1987 and Matera 1991: 5-16, Lukan redaction in conformity with the evangelist's theological interests accounts for the differences between the Markan and Lukan narratives. Whilst Brown considers the constituent elements of the Lukan narrative to consist of Mark, Lukan composition and oral tradition (1994: 67-75).

¹⁵For example Dodd 1965: 88-96, Smith 1984: 95-172 and Brown 1994: 75-85.

¹⁶But note Barrett 1978.

¹⁷For a list of scholars who argue in favour of an independent gospel of Peter tradition see Brown 1994: 1332 n 22.

which existed both earlier than, and independent of, the canonical gospels. Crossan identifies this passion narrative as the 'cross gospel', which he dates as early as the 40s CE. It is this 'cross gospel', he continues, which serves as the base for the passion narratives of the canonical gospels. In addition to the 'cross gospel', Crossan concludes, Mark also serves as a source for the gospel of John. In short, Mark makes use of the 'cross gospel' and Matthew, Luke and John have knowledge of the 'cross gospel' and of Mark (1996: 16-25). The evidence, however, weighs against both Koester and Crossan. In the first instance, the early dating of the passion narrative and in particular the 'cross gospel' proves unlikely. That the gospel of Peter was known to Bishop Serapion confirms that it was written before 200 CE. Its apparent ignorance, however, of the political make-up of Palestine in the 30s CE, together with its high christology and anti-Judean perspective point towards a date some time in the second century CE.¹⁸ Secondly, Crossan's view that the 'cross gospel' served as a source for the canonical gospels also runs into difficulties. The lack of significant coherence between the vocabulary and the word order of the gospel of Peter and the canonical gospels makes, at least, literary dependence problematic.¹⁹ Likewise, the lack of obvious agreement in the Matthean and Lukan use of the 'cross gospel' stands in stark contrast to their use of the Q source. And again, nowhere in the gospels of Matthew, Luke and John do they each agree with the gospel of Peter over against their supposed Markan source.²⁰ On the other hand, there is nothing in the extant fragment of the gospel of Peter which could not have been derived from a knowledge of the canonical gospels and an active imagination.²¹ On this basis then, we are left with the canonical gospels and in

¹⁸It was at this time that Tatian's *Diatessaron* was written. If, as we suggest, the gospel of Peter was effectively a synthesis of the canonical gospels, then the second century would seem the most probable date of its composition.

¹⁹Green 1987: 293-301, Neiryck 1989: 123-175 and Brown 1994: 1333.

²⁰Brown 1994: 1333.

²¹Green 1987: 301. Knowledge of the gospels does not necessitate literary dependence

particular the independent accounts provided by Mark and John. But how reliable are these accounts? According to a number of scholars, not very. In his analysis of the Judean 'trial', Bultmann argues that "the whole narrative in Mark is a secondary explanation of the brief statement in 15: 1" (1963: 270). In other words, all that is known of the Judean 'trial' is that after having met, the Judean leaders handed Jesus over to Pilate. The question of Jesus' messianic status belongs, he argues, to the tradition of the early Church who sought to portray his crucifixion in terms of his messianic claim. The reported abuse of Jesus also belongs to the tradition, although not originally set within this context. It appears, in addition, to have been influenced by the insults and assaults endured by the Suffering Servant in Isaiah 50: 6.

Sanders casts similar doubts upon the historicity of the Judean 'trial' in the manner in which it is reported in the synoptic gospels. He questions the nature of the charges laid against Jesus, in particular the combination of the terms 'messiah' and 'Son of God' which, he argues, displays more of a Christian than a Judean provenance. Other factors such as the improbability of the Sanhedrin convening on the eve of Passover, as Mark and Matthew, although not Luke and John relate, and the resultant description of two Judean 'trials', together with the overarching theme of Judean rather than Roman culpability, all serve to highlight the dubiety of the apparently historical nature of the passion accounts. Sanders concludes,

All we need to do is accept the obvious, that we do not have detailed knowledge of what happened when the high priest and possibly others questioned Jesus. We cannot even know that 'the Sanhedrin' met. Further, I doubt that the earliest

which, allowing for the significant differences in vocabulary and word order, in this case seems unlikely (Brown 1994: 1336).

followers of Jesus knew. They were not privy to the membership list; if people hurried into the high priest's house at night there was no one to identify them and tick their names off. I do not doubt that Jesus was arrested on the orders of the high priest and interrogated. But we cannot know much more (1985: 299).²²

William Herzog, amongst others,²³ however, presents a different view. The Judean 'trial' may not have been a trial in the sense that it was a legal hearing which adhered to the appropriate canons of justice, but it was a trial in one sense, namely that of a show trial. According to Herzog, "A show trial is a form of political theatre" (2000: 240). Citing Mary Boatwright he continues, "In addition to their use for plays and musical and athletic festivals, theatres also "were used as venues for public trials or meetings"" (2000: 240). More significantly Herzog claims,

In a show trial, the guilt of the person being "tried" has already been determined... Show trials are conducted under the firm control of the state; there is no independent judiciary. The procedure does not conform to laws but follows the expedient will of powerful elites.²⁴ Some ad hoc body of accusers stands in place of a jury, and its members belong to the same ruling class as the accusers. A show trial is not a legal process but a political process whose purpose is the public

²²There is, however, no reason to believe that the Sanhedrin met in such secrecy that the identity of at least some of those who attended would not have become known. Nor that something of what took place would not have found its way into the 'gossip network' (Malina and Rohrbaugh 1992: 45-46). Even the most clandestine of gatherings are subject to leaks!

²³Blinzler 1959, Sherwin-White 1963 and Catchpole 1971, for example, all argue in favour of the historicity of the Judean trial.

²⁴Whilst the Sanhedrin was largely composed of members of the Judean elite, Herzog considers it unlikely that the Sanhedrin either initiated or conducted the show trial (2000: 243-244).

degradation and humiliation of an enemy of the state before his foreordained execution (2000: 240-241).

The show trial was effectively the first element of a 'status degradation ritual'²⁵ which culminated in the most shameful of deaths, public crucifixion.

Such an interpretation whilst almost certainly an accurate representation of the gospels' portrayal of Jesus' arrest, interrogation and crucifixion,²⁶ balanced as it is by the 'status transformation ritual' of his resurrection, is surely doubtful in the historical context of Jesus of Nazareth. In the first instance, by definition a show trial demands a large and public audience. As Herzog himself notes, ancient theatres often provided the venues for such trials. A 'trial' possibly at night in the high priest's grounds hardly fulfils that criteria. Secondly, whilst arguing persuasively as to why Jesus may have been accused of (a) forbidding payment of tribute, (b) speaking against the temple and (c) claiming to be the messiah, Herzog makes no attempt to determine the historicity of the three charges within the context of a Judean 'trial'. Having concluded that a 'show trial' formed a part of a larger status degradation ritual, Herzog needs accusations to complete the process. He achieves this by combining charges from the Markan and Lukan narratives, but offers no arguments in support of their historicity. Thirdly, there is little evidence to suggest that either the Judean elite or the Roman governors of Judea engaged in the practice of show trials.²⁷ Public crucifixion was deemed a shameful enough penalty for most rebels.

²⁵The role of 'status transformation' within the context of ritual and symbol is discussed by Turner 1967 and 1969.

²⁶Malina and Neyrey 1988 present an excellent exposition of this in relation to the gospel of Matthew.

²⁷The parading of defeated rulers in triumphal procession in Rome was undoubtedly intended to both honour the victors and shame the vanquished (Esler 1995c: 3), but it

Although Herzog's representation of the events surrounding Jesus' interrogation by the Judean elite as a show trial is unlikely, must we necessarily conclude with Bultmann, Sanders, Crossan *et al* that there is nothing of historical value that we can say about the Judean 'trial' of Jesus? Probably not. The two major issues concerning this aspect of the passion narrative are the form of the 'trial' and the nature of the charges. According to the Markan account, Jesus is questioned in the presence of the high priest, chief priests, elders and scribes on the evening of his arrest, i.e. on the eve of Passover. The holding of a 'trial' at such a time, on such a date, is one of the factors which has led many to question the historicity of the account.²⁸ It only proves problematic, as we shall see, however, if the 'trial' is understood to be part of a formal legal process. In this vein attempts have been made to examine the 'trial' of Jesus in terms of the legal regulations contained in the mishnah. The first issue in this respect concerns the make up and functions of the Sanhedrin in the first century CE. All the evidence from Josephus²⁹ and the New Testament³⁰ points to a body made up of the high priest, chief priests, elders and scribes which enjoyed administrative and executive as well as judicial powers.³¹ For some scholars, however, such an interpretation falls to be modified in terms of the mishnaic tractate Sanhedrin. On this view, the Sanhedrin, or alternatively the Beth-Din, was primarily a legal body peopled by religious scholars, experts in the Mosaic law. These apparently conflicting portrayals have led a number of scholars to posit the existence of two Sanhedrins in the first century CE; one a political body which acted

was not a part of a putative legal process. It was also reserved to those deemed worthy of being displayed in such a manner.

²⁸Note Sanders pg 296 above.

²⁹For example *Ant.* 20.1.2 [11], *Ant.* 20.9.1 [200-203], *Ant.* 20.9.6 [216-217], *Ant.* 20.10.5 [251], *Life* 12 [62], *J.W.* 2.15.6 [331] and *J.W.* 2.16.2 [336]. Josephus' references to the Sanhedrin and to the Βουλή are taken here to apply to the same body.

³⁰Jn 11: 47-53, the trial narratives mentioned above, and Acts 4: 5-22, 5: 17-40, 6: 12-15, 22: 30, 23: 6-10, 28-29 and 24: 1.

³¹Winter 1974: 39.

more or less at the bidding of Rome, and another religious body which concerned itself primarily with matters of the law.³² It is the former of these institutions, it is argued, which was responsible for the 'trial' of Jesus and for handing him over to the Roman authorities. Against this view is the fact that nowhere in Josephus nor, more significantly, in the New Testament is there any indication of two separate councils operating in Judea.³³ Moreover, as McLaren observes, the Sanhedrin depicted in the mishnah was an ideal rather than an actual body, "It is now apparent that the institution depicted in Mishnah *Sanhedrin* did not exist during the period examined [100BCE-AD 70]. It remains debatable whether we should even attempt to associate this institution with any historical period" (1991: 217-218).³⁴ Such a finding begs the question of the extent to which the legal regulations specified in the mishnah would have applied to the procedures followed by the first century CE Sanhedrin. Thus, whether a trial could legally have been held on the eve of a major feast is dependent upon whether or not the prohibition contained in m. Sanhedrin 4.1 was operative in the first century CE. Issues of this nature,³⁵ however, can be, if not resolved, then at least reduced in significance if we recognise the political, as well as the judicial, functioning of the Sanhedrin. As we have noted, the Sanhedrin was made up primarily of the Judean elite, and it enjoyed executive as well as judicial powers. In these circumstances, Brown is surely correct to suggest, "that as a quasi-legislative and executive body with interests that we would call religious and political hopelessly intertwined, a Sanhedrin, when called, often acted according to what seems prudent and expeditious. Not all of those attending may have

³²For example Buchler 1902 and Mantel 1961.

³³Hooker considers it unlikely that the Romans would have tolerated a purely political Sanhedrin (1991: 355).

³⁴See also Brown 1994: 343-348.

³⁵Brown 1994: 358-359 contains a list of those areas in which scholars contend the gospel passion narratives fail to comply with mishnaic regulations pertaining to the Sanhedrin. Note also Hill 1985: 178.

worried about systems of legal interpretation, unless such a concern was opportune and advantageous” (1994: 351). In other words, when members of the Sanhedrin³⁶ met to consider the fate of Jesus they did so more in a political than a judicial capacity.³⁷ They met not so much to try the troublesome Galilean but to determine how best to deal with him. A careful re-reading of the Markan narrative may lend some support to this view. Firstly, in the Markan account of the Judean ‘trial’, the Sanhedrin are described as “looking for testimony against Jesus, εἰς τὸ θανατώσαι αὐτόν; but they found none” (Mk 14: 55). This Markan expression is as significant for what it does not say, as for what it does. It does not say that the Sanhedrin sought evidence in order that they might kill Jesus. Rather, the expression used can be translated to mean either “for killing him”, or even “to have him killed”. By comparison in Mk 15: 20 the Roman soldiers led Jesus out ἵνα σταυρώσωσιν αὐτόν. The two expressions need not be interpreted in the same manner, and may suggest that for Mark the Sanhedrin met not in a judicial capacity in order to pass sentence on Jesus, but rather they met simply to find sufficient evidence to hand him over to the Romans “to have him killed”.³⁸ Secondly, does Mark intend the phrase, κατέκριναν αὐτόν ἔνοχον εἶναι θανάτου, condemned him as deserving of death, to be interpreted as the passing of a judicial sentence?³⁹ Or does it simply reflect

³⁶With Taylor 1952: 565 and Herzog 2000 we consider it improbable that the entire Council was convened.

³⁷Whilst Winter argues that the ‘night trial’ of Jesus is not historical, he considers that the meeting of the Sanhedrin described in Mk 15: 1 does have a basis in fact. It was not, however, a judicial gathering but an administrative one arranged to secure the delivery of Jesus to the Roman authorities (1974: 39). In the Johannine tradition a meeting of this nature is described as taking place after the raising of Lazarus from the dead (Jn 11: 46-53).

³⁸Mt 20: 19 provides an example of the use of the articular infinitive of purpose in which the subject of the infinitive is not the same as the subject of the main verb of the sentence, “they (the high priests and scribes) will hand him over to the gentiles εἰς τὸ ἐμπαῖξαι καὶ μαστιγῶσαι καὶ σταυρῶσαι (in order that they [the gentiles] may mock and whip and crucify him).

³⁹The prophecy attributed to Jesus by Mark that “the Son of Man will be handed over to

the view of the Sanhedrin that what Jesus has said is sufficient to merit his being put to death, not by them, but rather at the hands of the Romans? If the former then it seems strange that they did not either put Jesus to death themselves, or if they were unable legally to carry out such a sentence, advise Pilate of their decision and seek his implementation of it. That they did neither, but simply handed him over for trial may suggest that for Mark the condemnation of the Sanhedrin was never intended to amount to a judicial declaration of Jesus' guilt. If the above analysis is correct, then it is quite possible that it was not Mark's intention to present the Judean interrogation of Jesus as a formal trial. And if this is the case, and the earliest of the canonical gospel writers did not consider Jesus to have been tried and convicted by the Sanhedrin, then it strengthens the argument for an historical Judean interrogation rather than a formal Judean trial.⁴⁰ Further evidence for this proposition is found in the manner in which "some of the leading citizens" acted against Jesus ben Hananiah some four years prior to the outbreak of the Judean revolt. As we noted in Chapter Two above, Jesus was a peasant/prophet who during the feast of Tabernacles pronounced woes upon Jerusalem and the temple. He was arrested at the behest of the Judean elite and was severely chastised. On his release he continued with his proclamations and was re-arrested and taken before the Roman governor (*J.W.* 6.5.3 [300-305]). The most significant point for our purposes is that Josephus makes no reference to the occurrence of a formal trial of Jesus before the Judean elite. In like manner, we contend, there was no formal trial before the Sanhedrin of Jesus of Nazareth either.⁴¹

the chief priests and the scribes καὶ κατακρινούσιν αὐτόν θανάτῳ; then they will hand him over to the Gentiles; they will...kill him" (Mk 10: 33-34) does not of itself undermine our argument. In neither case need κατακρινῶ be interpreted as a formal judicial declaration.

⁴⁰The issue of whether Mark intended to present a formal Judean trial was brought to my attention by Philip Esler.

⁴¹Matera 1991: 15. But note Sherwin-White 1963 and Hill 1985 both of whom argue in favour of a formal Judean trial. Wright 1996: 547-552 contends that the "real trial" took

How then are we to understand the charges which according to the Markan narrative were brought against Jesus? In the first instance, as there was no formal trial, there could have been no formal charges. The accusations contained in Mark, nonetheless, may well form the basis upon which the Judean elite determined to hand Jesus over to Pilate. If, as we suggest, Jesus' actions in the temple were the catalyst for his arrest, it should come as no surprise to find his attitude towards the temple figuring prominently in the motivation of the Judean elite against him. The historicity of the Markan narrative in terms of the 'trial' context and of the manner in which the testimony is provided may be negligible but this should not of itself preclude the likelihood of an historical remembrance lying at the root of the substantive tradition.⁴² That at least one of the grounds upon which "the leading citizens"⁴³ determined to take action against Jesus was his approach towards the Jerusalem temple seems entirely possible.⁴⁴

The second charge described in the Markan narrative concerns Jesus' identity. He is asked by the high priest, "Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?" He answers "I am" and expounds his future role in terms of the Son of Man. The high priest declares this response blasphemous and all of those present agree that Jesus deserves to die. Just how historical this scene is, is almost impossible to say. Certainly, the account contained in John's gospel also sees Jesus brought before the high priest, indeed before two high priests, Annas and Caiaphas, the former of whom questions him about his disciples and his teaching but significantly not about his identity. In addition to the pre-Gospel traditions of the Markan and Johannine narratives, the example of Jesus ben

place, as Jn 11: 46-53 describes, in the absence of Jesus. The purpose of the evening gathering was to secure a confession from Jesus.

⁴²For a consideration of the historicity of Jesus' alleged prophecy against the temple see pp 272-274 above.

⁴³*Ant.* 18.3.3 [63].

⁴⁴See amongst others Matera 1991: 12-15 and Brown 1994: 458-460.

Hananiah points to the probability of Jesus of Nazareth having been brought before “some of the leading citizens”. Whilst this meeting did not take the form of a trial it seems, at the least, probable that it would have incorporated some form of interrogation. That such an interrogation may have turned on the issue of whether or not Jesus was the messiah is possible.⁴⁵ Beyond this, however, little can be said. The Markan reference to the Son of the Blessed One and Jesus’ response which led to the high priest’s accusation of blasphemy betray signs of the theological development of the early Church.⁴⁶ Additionally, if, as we have concluded, there was no formal trial, those members of the Sanhedrin present at the interrogation could hardly have passed a death sentence upon Jesus.⁴⁷ Nonetheless, by handing him over to the Roman authorities on the grounds of his antipathy towards the existing temple and, possibly, on the messianic aspirations which attached to him, they very probably hoped to secure his death.

What then does the above analysis allow us to say about the nature of the Judean ‘trial’ and the role of the Judean elite in the death of Jesus? In the first instance, there was no formal trial. Whilst Jesus was almost certainly seized at the behest of the high priest and the elite, the latter commissioned this action in their political/executive rather than their judicial capacity. That he was interrogated by the high priest on the evening of his arrest remains probable, although it seems unlikely that the entire Sanhedrin was

⁴⁵The manner of his entry into Jerusalem, his saying about the temple and the conviction amongst some of his followers would almost certainly have reached the ears of the Judean elite and could have prompted such a line of questioning.

⁴⁶Hooker 1991: 360.

⁴⁷The claim made in Jn 18: 31 that the Judeans were unable to put a man to death has been the subject of exhaustive consideration. According to Winter, prior to 70 CE the Sanhedrin did have the power to execute those convicted of offences against the Judean religious law (1974: 97-109). Sherwin-White, however, takes the opposite view arguing that in normal circumstances Roman authorities would not concede such power to a local council (1963: 32-43). Barrett 1978: 533-536 and Brown 1994: 747-749 both provide a brief overview of the main positions held by scholars on the issue.

convened for the occasion.⁴⁸ The grounds upon which those present agreed to hand Jesus over to the Prefect Pilate were probably twofold, (a) his condemnation of the temple as it then existed and (b) possibly the messianic pretensions which some at least attributed to him.⁴⁹ Both of these factors contained a challenge to the ruling elite in their potential to cause unrest, particularly at the time of Passover. Of themselves, these would have provided more than adequate reasons for the Judean elite to hand Jesus over to the Roman authorities.⁵⁰

The Roman Trial of Jesus.

Immediately on being handed over by the Judean elite to Pilate, Jesus was interrogated by the Roman governor. "Are you the King of the Judeans?"⁵¹ he asked him. Jesus replied "You say so". To subsequent unspecified charges, Jesus, to Pilate's amazement, gave no answer. Then, Mark continues, following a tradition observed at times of festival, Pilate offered the crowd the release of one prisoner, Jesus or Barabbas, a rebel who had been arrested for murder during a recent insurrection. At the instigation of the chief priests, the crowd called for Barabbas. Pilate then asked what was to be done with Jesus and they shouted "Crucify him!" Pilate responded by asking what "evil" Jesus had done, but again the crowd shouted for his crucifixion. Acting in accordance with the crowd's wishes, Pilate released Barabbas, had Jesus flogged, and handed him

⁴⁸Whether the Council convened the morning after Jesus' arrest as the Markan, but not the Johannine, narrative relates bears little on our interpretation of the event as a political rather than a judicial one.

⁴⁹The raising of Lazarus from the dead cited in Jn 11: 53 as the motivational factor behind the decision to have Jesus put to death enjoys little historical value.

⁵⁰Those who attempt to argue against the involvement of the Judean elite in the death of Jesus on the basis that they would not have handed over a fellow Judean to a foreign oppressor for fear of creating a martyr, fail to recognise the close working relationship between the high priests and Pilate and the tight grip on power which they enjoyed.

⁵¹We amend the NRSV translation of the term 'Jews' to 'Judeans' throughout this chapter.

over to be crucified.⁵² According to Brandon, in the Roman trial of Jesus, “the Markan writer is concerned to show two things, namely that Pilate, recognising the innocence of Jesus, tried to save him, and that he was forced by the Jewish leaders to order his execution” (1967: 256). The first sign of Pilate’s reluctance to take action against Jesus is evident, Brandon argues, in his reported ‘amazement’ at Jesus’ failure to respond to his question. More significant still, however, is the incident concerning Barabbas. The issue of the historicity of the Barabbas episode has provoked much debate amongst New Testament scholars. Two main arguments are proposed by those who contest the episode’s historicity. Firstly, nowhere else in the extant literature is there any evidence of a Roman governor releasing a prisoner at festival time at the behest of the local population.⁵³ Neither Josephus, the rabbinic literature, nor any of the Roman historians provide examples of such a practice or even display a knowledge of its existence. Philo perhaps comes closest when he notes that the Roman governor Flaccus rather than handing over the bodies of those crucified on the eve of a holiday to their families “ordered the crucifixion of the living, to whom the season offered a short-lived, though not permanent, reprieve in order to postpone the punishment though not to remit it altogether”.⁵⁴ This potential temporary postponement nonetheless falls some way short of the freedom granted Barabbas. Secondly, the implications of such a custom for the maintenance of law and order in the provinces makes its acceptance by the Romans extremely improbable.⁵⁵ In support of the episode’s historicity,⁵⁶ on the other hand, it is

⁵²Mk 15: 1-15.

⁵³Brandon 1967: 258-259. According to Winter, “The *privilegium paschale* is nothing but a figment of the imagination. No such custom existed” (1974: 134).

⁵⁴In *Flaccum* 10.84.

⁵⁵Brandon 1967: 259. Josephus notes the negative effect on law and order in Judea during the procuratorship of Albinus (62-64 CE) when brigands were released from custody on payment of a sum of money (*Ant.* 20.9.5 [215]). That the Romans would leave themselves powerless to prevent the release of a potential insurgent seems almost inconceivable.

often cited that Mark was hardly likely to create a custom which could be easily refuted by those who heard his gospel. Such a view, however, surely attributes more knowledge of Judean customs than is reasonable to a primarily illiterate community of Roman Christians, if such was Mark's audience. Secondly, the release of a prisoner at Passover would be appropriate in the context of Israel's 'release' from Egypt (Bammel 1984: 427). But even if this was originally a prerogative of the Sanhedrin, as Bammel suggests, why would the Romans allow its continuation given its potential to cause unrest?

Recognising these difficulties, Brown suggests a compromise. Behind the Barabbas episode lies the legal pardoning of Barabbas by Pilate at the festival of Passover. There is no special custom, and no demand by the crowd for the release of one prisoner rather than another (1994: 819-820). If Brown's view does represent the historical core of the Barabbas episode, it only serves to illustrate the extent to which Mark distorts the incident in order to emphasise Judean culpability in calling for the release of a guilty insurgent, and for the crucifixion of the innocent Jesus. According to Mark, Pilate, hands Jesus over to be crucified not because he thinks Jesus guilty of the charges brought against him, but rather to satisfy the Judean crowd.

The Matthean account of the Roman trial (Mt 27: 11-26) embellishes the basic Markan narrative. In the first instance Matthew introduces the scene between Judas, the chief priests and elders in which Judas denounces his betrayal of Jesus, returns the thirty pieces of silver given in payment for his actions and hangs himself. Secondly, Pilate is increasingly exonerated from responsibility for Jesus' death. Whilst awaiting the crowd's decision whether to release Jesus or Barabbas, Pilate receives word from his wife who, on the strength of a troublesome dream, advises him to have nothing to do

⁵⁶Blinzler 1959: 205-218, 218-221. Both Harvey 1982: 18 and Wright 1996: 546 accept that there is as much likelihood of the episode being historical as not.

with “that innocent man” Jesus. As in Mark’s gospel, however, the crowd call for the release of Barabbas and the crucifixion of Jesus. Pilate’s response is provoked, Matthew claims, by the beginnings of unrest amongst the crowd. To distance himself from the decision of the Judeans, Pilate symbolically washes his hands and declares himself “innocent of this man’s blood”. The people respond with the now infamous “His blood be on us and on our children”. As in Mark, Pilate has Jesus flogged and delivers him up to be crucified. Both Josephus⁵⁷ and Philo⁵⁸ provide us with enough historical information about the character of Pilate to render improbable the qualms of conscience Matthew attributes to him. Nor is it likely that he perversely acted contrary to the wishes of the Judean elite.⁵⁹ The stability of the high priesthood during Pilate’s prefecture suggests a healthy working relationship between the two.⁶⁰ Both Senior (1975: 245, 255) and Brown (1994: 754-756), recognise that the Matthean emendations are linked by the theme of “innocent blood”. Judas is haunted by his betrayal of it; Pilate’s wife dreams of Jesus’ innocence and Pilate washes his hands and declares himself innocent of Jesus’ blood. In addition, Matthew repeats a number of the motifs which appeared in his infancy narrative. The use of dreams,⁶¹ the recognition of the truth by Gentiles⁶² and the

⁵⁷Josephus relates a number of occasions on which Pilate makes harsh and unpopular decisions without any apparent difficulty, *Ant.* 18.3.1-2 [55-62], *J.W.* 2.9.2-4 [169-177]. His removal from office and return to Rome in 36 CE arose from his unduly severe treatment of the Samaritans (*Ant.* 18.4.2 [89]).

⁵⁸Philo writing around 41 CE describes Pilate as “a man of inflexible, stubborn and cruel disposition”. He continues, “he was afraid that [the Judean elite]...would bring accusations against the rest of his administration as well, specifying in detail his venality, his violence his thefts, his assaults, his abusive behaviour, his frequent executions of untried prisoners and his endless savage ferocity” (*De Legatione ad Gaium*, 301, 302).

⁵⁹Wright 1996: 545.

⁶⁰Caiaphas held the office of high priest throughout Pilate’s ten year rule. Between 15 and 65 CE the average tenure was two years, Watson 1985: 107, Matera 1991: 13.

⁶¹Mt 1: 20-25, 2: 12, 13, 19-23. As in the infancy narrative, the dream of Pilate’s wife is divinely inspired and serves to determine the course of conduct of the dream’s recipient (Senior 1975: 247).

⁶²Mt 2: 1-12.

hostility of the Judean elite towards Jesus⁶³ all serve to link the beginning of his life with the end (Brown 1994: 756).

Luke exceeds both Mark and Matthew in his attempts to exculpate Pilate and place the blame for the death of Jesus firmly upon the Judean leaders and their people.⁶⁴ Unlike the Markan tradition, the Judean elite specify to Pilate the charges which they have levelled against Jesus. This notwithstanding, Pilate again questions Jesus on the matter of whether he is the King of the Judeans. Pilate finds the accusations against Jesus groundless, but is faced with the insistence of the chief priests and the crowds. On hearing that Jesus is from Galilee, Pilate sends him to Herod Antipas who is allegedly in Jerusalem presumably for the Passover festival. After questioning by the tetrarch and mocking by him and his soldiers, Jesus is returned to Pilate. For the second time Pilate tells the assembled chief priests, leaders and people that he finds Jesus not guilty of the charges brought against him. Strangely in those circumstances, he proposes to flog Jesus before letting him go. Such a course of action, however, meets with Judean disapproval and despite no mention of Barabbas having previously been made, the crowd call for his release and for the crucifixion of Jesus. Pilate again attempts to intervene seeking to have Jesus flogged and released but the crowd continue to call for his death. In the face of such opposition, Pilate accedes to their demands. The Lukan presentation of Pilate's action here is illuminating. In the Markan narrative Pilate hands Jesus over ἵνα σταυρωθῆ (Mk 15: 15). According to Luke, however, he hands Jesus over τῷ θελήματι αὐτῶν (Lk 23: 25). In other words, although Pilate allows Jesus to be killed, he is not directly responsible for it (Esler 1987: 203).⁶⁵

⁶³Mt 2: 3-4, 16-18.

⁶⁴Lk 23: 3-25.

⁶⁵According to Esler, Luke's concerns were not so much with apologetics, as with legitimating the faith of Roman Christians and, in particular, with confirming the

As in the case of the Judean 'trial' the differences in the Lukan and Markan narratives have led some scholars to suggest that the Lukan account is based on an alternative tradition.⁶⁶ Brown, however, argues persuasively to the contrary.⁶⁷ Rather than reflecting a different tradition, the itemising of the charges against Jesus and the sending of him to Herod both betray the influence of the trial of Paul in Acts 24-25. In Acts 24: 5-6 Paul is brought before the Roman governor and accused by the attorney of the high priest of agitating amongst the Judeans of the world, of being a leader of those known as the Nazarenes, and of attempting to profane against the temple. Some time later, whilst in custody in Caesarea, he is summoned to appear before King Agrippa, Bernice, and the newly appointed Roman governor Festus. After hearing Paul's plea in his defence, Agrippa concludes in favour of Paul's innocence and declares that had he not appealed to the emperor he should have been set free (Acts 25-26). This is the third of three occasions on which Paul is declared innocent, having previously been found not guilty by the tribune Claudius Lysius (Acts 23: 29) and also by Festus (Acts 25: 18-19, 25). A similar three fold exoneration of Jesus occurs in Luke's account of the Roman trial. On three occasions Pilate declares Jesus' innocence (Lk 23: 4, 14, 22).⁶⁸ It would

compatibility of their faith with their allegiance to Rome (1987: 217).

⁶⁶Taylor's analysis of the vocabulary used in the Lukan narrative leads him to conclude that vv 1-5, with the exception of v3, derive from a non-Markan source. Vv 6-16 are Lukan composition derived from tradition from the same source. And vv 18-25, although with less certainty, are also attributed to a non-Markan source (1972: 89).

Whilst Marshall allows that v3 is dependent upon Mk 15: 2, he claims that "this makes the non-Markan character of the surrounding narrative all the plainer and strongly suggests that Luke has used another source for his account of the proceedings before Pilate, although he has edited it in his own style" (1978: 852). See also Ernst 1977 and Grundmann 1981.

⁶⁷For Fitzmyer vv 1-5 contain nothing more than Mark, and Lukan redaction. He does, however, allow at least the possibility of an historical core in Pilate's sending of Jesus to Herod. Vv 13-16 Fitzmyer attributes to L and vv 18-25 he considers derives from Mk 15: 6-15 (1985: 1471-1493).

⁶⁸This three fold declaration also appears in John's gospel (Jn 18: 38; 19: 4, 6) raising the possibility of an independent source at the root of both.

thus appear that the Lukan Roman trial of Jesus has either been coloured by the evangelist's knowledge of the trial of Paul or both have been described in accordance with a basic knowledge of Roman legal procedure.

The final account of the Roman trial occurs in John's gospel (Jn 18: 28- 19: 16). The questioning of Jesus by Pilate takes the same basic form as narrated in the synoptics; Pilate asks Jesus if he is the "King of the Judeans". Jesus' response, however, is typically Johannine. In addition to the standard reply "You say so" Jesus gives a brief discourse on the nature of his kingship and on the significance of truth. Pilate then goes out from the *Praetorium*⁶⁹ to the crowd and tells them he finds no case against Jesus. In accordance with the custom of releasing one prisoner at Passover, Pilate offers to set Jesus free. The crowd, however, calls for the release of Barabbas. At this stage Pilate has Jesus flogged and he is mocked and beaten by the Roman soldiers who dress him in a purple robe and place a crown of thorns on his head.⁷⁰ Pilate again goes out to the crowd proclaiming Jesus' innocence and brings him out before them. The chief priests and police cry out for Jesus to be crucified, but once more Pilate declares that he finds nothing against Jesus and tells the Judeans to crucify him themselves. The Judeans continue that in terms of their law Jesus ought to die. Afraid now, Pilate returns to Jesus and questions him again. Refusing initially to answer, Jesus responds to Pilate's claim to hold his life in his hands by saying that Pilate holds only that power which has been given to him by God and that those who handed Jesus over to Pilate bear the greater responsibility. As a consequence of these remarks, Pilate determines to release Jesus but

⁶⁹The refusal of the Judeans to enter the Roman *Praetorium* for fear of ritual defilement whilst at the same time calling for the slaughter of the Johannine Lamb of God on the day of Passover is represented in John as a measure of their hypocrisy.

⁷⁰As we have noted Jesus is flogged in the synoptic accounts immediately before being handed over to be crucified. It is only after this that he is mocked and beaten by the Roman soldiers.

is opposed by the Judeans who question his loyalty to Caesar. Pilate goes forth and sits upon the judgement seat at Gabbatha and brings Jesus before the crowd saying "Here is your King", but again they demand his crucifixion. He asks "Shall I crucify your King?" and the Judeans respond by affirming their loyalty to the emperor. Pilate then hands Jesus over to be crucified. The Johannine dichotomy between Jesus and "the Judeans", truth and falsehood, and Jesus' kingdom and this world, all play their part in the Roman trial of John's gospel. Thus whilst the Judeans are very much held responsible for Jesus' crucifixion, to the extent that Pilate is reported to have sought to have released him, Pilate's ultimate failure to understand the truth of Jesus sees him side with the forces of darkness.

As in the case of the Judean 'trial', the Markan and Johannine narratives appear to represent two independent traditions.⁷¹ Our first concern again lies with the historicity of the narrative structure, in other words with whether in fact there was a formal Roman trial. The case of Jesus ben Hananiah once more proves illuminating. Having been severely chastised by the Judean elite, Jesus was released and continued to pronounce his proclamations of woe. He was subsequently re-arrested and brought before the Roman governor. After being scourged, he was questioned by Albinus but refused to answer saying only "woe to Jerusalem". Albinus concluded that Jesus was insane and let him go. There are therefore clear similarities between the treatment of Jesus ben Hananiah and that of Jesus of Nazareth. Both are initially brought before the Judean elite and, although Jesus ben Hananiah is released, he is soon re-arrested and like Jesus of

⁷¹Whilst recognising the complexities involved in analysing and comparing the various elements of the Markan and Johannine trial narratives, Dodd 1965: 96-120 and Brown 1994: 743-759 conclude that there is sufficient evidence to suggest that both accounts reflect independent traditions. But note Barrett 1978: 530-546 who argues to the contrary, contending that Mark appears to be the source of most of John's material.

Nazareth brought before the Roman governor. In both cases the prisoners are questioned and in both their responses are limited. In the case of the former, however, he is declared insane and released, in the latter he is sentenced to death. From this comparison it is possible to deduce that, as in the case of the Judean 'trial', the Roman 'trial' of Jesus of Nazareth constituted little more than a perfunctory appearance before the appropriate authorities. That such an action was in keeping with the behaviour of Pilate is evident from Philo's writings cited above in which he refers to Pilate's "frequent executions of untried prisoners" (*De Legatione ad Gaium* 301). Harvey's observation that the lack of any criticism directed by the gospel writers at a flawed legal procedure points to a properly conducted trial is not entirely persuasive (1982: 17). As we have noted, the gospel writers consistently attempt to portray the Roman governor in as favourable a light as they reasonably can. In such circumstances it is not impossible that they should overlook an abuse of legal procedure. More significant, however, is Sherwin-White's analysis that the trial of Jesus of Nazareth took the form of a *cognitio extra ordinem* (1963: 24-25).⁷² Although in status only a Prefect, the governor of Judea nonetheless enjoyed the same *imperium* granted to those of proconsular rank. In terms of the *cognitio*, it was required of Pilate only to decide upon the allegations made against Jesus and to pass the appropriate sentence. On this basis there seems little reason to doubt that some form of Roman trial did take place.

Allowing this to be so, what if anything can be said about the content of the trial. An analysis of the trial narratives in the gospel accounts of Mark and John proves revealing. Common to both is the question and answer scene in which Pilate asks Jesus,

⁷²By contrast the case of Jesus ben Hananiah appears to have amounted to little more than a 'magisterial warning' which did not require a formal *cognitio* (Sherwin-White 1963: 27).

“σὺ εἶ ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν Ἰουδαίων”, “Are you the King of the Judeans”⁷³ to which Jesus responds, “σὺ λέγεις”, “You say so”. It is this phrase “King of the Judeans” which, Brown argues, lies at the heart of the Roman trial. It is this, he contends, which “is the primary remembrance as the Roman political charge” (1994: 731).⁷⁴ The nature of Jesus’ response and his subsequent unwillingness to answer Pilate⁷⁵ also raises the interesting possibility of *contumacia*. *Contumacia*, or wilful defiance of a Roman governor, attracted whatever penalty the governor saw fit. Pliny, it seems, was only too willing to have Christians put to death, not on the basis of the charges brought against them, but rather on account of their *contumacia* (*Epistulae* 10.96.3). If Pilate interpreted Jesus’ silence as *contumacia* then this may, at the least, have contributed towards his decision to have Jesus crucified.

Although the trial narratives in both Mark and John contain the Barabbas episode, we have illustrated above that this incident enjoys little historical value. Finally, in each of the narratives Pilate hands Jesus over to be crucified. Only two elements of the Roman trial appear then to have a credible claim to historicity (a) Pilate’s sentencing of Jesus to death by means of crucifixion, which is almost without doubt and (b) the formal charge levelled against Jesus of “King of the Judeans”, which rates as extremely probable. Both of these factors, linked by the inscription on the cross, prove central to our understanding of the execution of Jesus of Nazareth.

⁷³Brown, probably rightly, dismisses the view that the term “you” is intended to be specifically derogatory in relation to Jesus implying that such as he could make this claim (1994: 733). cf Hooker 1991: 367.

⁷⁴See also Harvey 1982: 13-18, Matera 1991: 15, Wright 1996: 543-547. But note Dahl who argues that the phrase originated as the *titulus* on the cross and was later written back into the trial traditions (1974).

⁷⁵Whilst considerably more forthcoming in John’s trial scene, Jesus, when asked where he came from, refuses to answer Pilate (Jn 19: 9).

Crucifixion

In his article on *Judicial Savagery in the Roman Empire*, Ramsay MacMullen identifies approximately seventeen crimes which in Roman jurisdictions prior to 200 CE led to the death penalty. Included amongst these were,

Attacks on the emperor by magic or by physical means...arson, temple robbing, or actual or attempted murder of their masters on the part of slaves, for which they could be crucified (Mart., *Spect.* 7. 8-10)...Most cattle-rustlers were executed (*Dig.* 47.14.1); likewise brigands, some by crucifixion (*Jos.*, B.J. 2.75, 241, and 253; Philostr., *Vit. soph.* 541; and Petron. 111.5). To these categories we must add Jews and Christians dying for their faith in both the first and second centuries (1990: 205).⁷⁶

In addition to the nature of the crime committed, the social standing of the offender was a significant factor in determining the sentence to be imposed.⁷⁷ Those at the higher end of the social scale would expect to be treated leniently, those at the lower end would expect little in the way of compassion.⁷⁸ Roman citizens were for the most part exempt

⁷⁶The often cited *Pauli Sententiae* of approximately 300 CE repeats virtually all of the seventeen capital offences identified by MacMullen and includes an additional eleven. The forms of punishment identified for these offences consisted of crucifixion, burning, decapitation and being thrown to the beasts (MacMullen 1990: 209-210). See also Hengel 1977: 34.

⁷⁷Garnsey identifies a number of groups who were favoured by the Roman legal system (1970: 234-259). Amongst those who enjoyed varying degrees of privilege were senators, equestrians, decurions, veterans and soldiers and *magistratus*, *aedilis* and *iudex*. "To the Romans", Garnsey concludes, "the source of legal privilege was *dignitas* (honour, prestige). *Dignitas* was derived from political position or influence, style of life (character, moral values, education, etc.), and wealth" (1970: 258).

⁷⁸The capriciousness of Roman magistrates or more especially of Provincial governors is well known. MacMullen narrates, for example, the tale of the governor of Lyon who disregarded the instructions of Marcus Aurelius to crucify the Christians he had arrested and to behead one of their number who was a Roman citizen. Rather he had them

from the threat of death by crucifixion.⁷⁹ Theoretically this form of punishment, recognised both for its cruelty,⁸⁰ and for the shame to which it subjected the offender, remained a possibility in cases of serious crime, notably high treason, but in reality it was seldom imposed. The Roman attitude towards crucifixion of its citizens was concisely orated in 63 BCE by Cicero in his defence of the Roman senator C. Rabirius charged with the murder of a tribune some thirty seven years previously. Cicero argues, “the executioner, the veiling of the head and the very word ‘cross’ should be far removed not only from the person of a Roman citizen but from his thoughts, his eyes and his ears. For it is not only the actual occurrence or the endurance of them, but liability to them, the expectation, nay, the mere mention of them, that is unworthy of a Roman citizen and a free man”(Pro Rabirio Ch. 16).⁸¹ Such, an attitude, however, did not extend to those of lowly rank. On the contrary, rebellious foreigners, violent criminals, bandits and slaves found themselves only too liable to be nailed to the cross. Rebels from the provinces

thrown to the beasts for public entertainment. Similarly in the middle of the first century the Roman governor in Spain crucified a convicted criminal despite his claim to Roman citizenship (1990: 205-206).

⁷⁹Roman crucifixion was banned in the fourth century by Constantine I and was replaced by the *furca*, a form of hanging attached to a wooden fork.

⁸⁰Seneca, in a rare description of crucifixion in the ancient world, illustrates just how painful a death it was. “Can anyone be found who would prefer wasting away in pain dying limb by limb, or letting out his life drop by drop, rather than expiring once for all? Can any man be found willing to be fastened to the accursed tree, long sickly, already deformed swelling with ugly weals on shoulders and chest and drawing the breath of life amid long drawn out agony? He would have many excuses for dying even before mounting the cross” (*Dialogue* 3 cited in Hengel 1977: 30-31). Apuleius’ *Metamorphoses* I.15.5 and Cicero’s *In Verr* 2.5.162 both also provide examples of literature in which the cruelty of crucifixion is acknowledged (Hengel 1977: 36-37). One additional feature which heightened the cruelty of the punishment was the variety of ways in which crucifixion could be carried out (*J.W.* 5.11.1 [449-51]).

⁸¹Cicero expresses similar sentiments at the crucifixion of Gavius, a Roman citizen, by Gaius Verres, the proconsul of Sicily, 73-71 BCE, “To bind a Roman citizen is a crime, to flog him an abomination, to slay him is almost an act of murder: to crucify him is-what? There is no fitting word that can possibly describe so horrible a deed” (*In Verr* 2.5.169-170), see Hengel 1977: 40.

were treated not as enemies of the state, but rather as simple bandits and were punished either by crucifixion, or where the necessary infrastructure existed, by being thrown to the beasts. The justification for the imposition of such severe penalties was twofold (a) retribution, convicted criminals were wicked and deserved cruel punishments,⁸² and (b) deterrence, robbers, according to a number of Roman jurists, ought to be crucified at the site of their crimes.⁸³ Almost invariably crucifixion was a public spectacle carried out either in a theatre,⁸⁴ at a busy cross-roads or on a main public road.⁸⁵ A central element of this deterrence was the shame inflicted upon offenders who were, almost always, crucified naked and left exposed to their fate. The particular enthusiasm which the Romans displayed in their crucifixion of slaves is largely attributable to the extensive nature of slavery in Italy and to a corresponding fear, real or imagined, of slave rebellions. The most noted of all slave rebellions that led by Spartacus between 72 and 71BCE sheds light here. Prior to engaging in battle with the Roman forces, Spartacus had a Roman prisoner crucified in order to make clear to his followers the cruel and shameful fate which awaited them should they fail to defeat the enemy. His action was well informed. The victorious general Crassus had six thousand of the defeated slave army crucified along the *Via Appia* between Capua and Rome. Rebellion, however, was only one of many acts which could lead a slave to the cross.⁸⁶ As the property of his master he had little protection against whatever punishment was meted out to him.

⁸²Mart., *Spect.* 7 (Hengel 1977: 35-36). See also MacMullen 1990: 206.

⁸³*Digest.* 48.19.28. 15 (MacMullen 1990: 358 n12).

⁸⁴Philo describes as a form of entertainment the crucifixion of Judeans in Alexandria during the prefecture of Flaccus (*In Flaccum* 72: 84ff).

⁸⁵In *Declamationes* 274, Quintilian argues that the crucifixion of criminals was a positive action and one that should be implemented along the busiest of roads (Mac Mullen 1990: 358 n12).

⁸⁶The pervasive nature of crucifixion amongst slaves is exemplified by the remark of the slave Sceledrus in Plautus' play *Miles Gloriosus*, "I know the cross will be my grave: that is where my ancestors are, my father, grandfathers, great-grandfathers, great-great-grandfathers" (*Miles Gloriosus* 372-373 cited in Hengel 1977: 52).

Hengel relates the tale told by Juvenal of the mistress who called for her slave to be crucified providing no more evidence of his 'crime' than her own word. Likewise he notes Horace's criticism of the master who commanded his slave's crucifixion for tasting his fish soup.⁸⁷ Whilst these may be extreme examples, they do illustrate the extent to which masters enjoyed almost total control over the lives and deaths of their slaves. In the context of the Roman world then,⁸⁸ crucifixion was an acknowledgeably cruel and shameful punishment which for the most part was reserved for slaves and 'criminals'⁸⁹ who belonged to the non-elite.

Crucifixion as a punishment was already known in Palestine prior to the conquest of the Romans.⁹⁰ According to Josephus, the Syrian ruler, Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175-164 BCE) sacked the Jerusalem temple and had those Judeans who, in contravention of his commands, continued to adhere to their ancestral traditions beaten and crucified.⁹¹ He also narrates the fate of 800 Judeans⁹² who, having sought the support of Demetrius III, the king of Syria, in their rebellion against the Hasmonean ruler, Alexander Jannaeus, were crucified in Jerusalem as their wives and children were massacred before them (*Ant.* 13.14.2 [380-383]/*J.W.* 1.4.6 [97]). It is almost universally

⁸⁷Hengel 1977: 58.

⁸⁸Crucifixion was by no means an exclusively Roman punishment. It was also practised by the Greeks who were known to crucify generals who were defeated in battle. Crucifixion was also a feature of Greek 'romances' in which the hero, having been unjustly condemned, was saved from the horrors of the cross at the last moment (Hengel 1977: 69-83). Diodorus Siculus also tells of crucifixion amongst the Assyrians, Indians, Scythians, Taureans and Thracians, whilst Tacitus attributes the practice to the Germans and the Britons.

⁸⁹As we noted in Chapter Two what the elite deemed 'criminal' behaviour was not necessarily perceived as such by the non-elite.

⁹⁰The Old Testament contains no hard evidence of the practice of crucifixion.

⁹¹*Ant.* 12.5.4 [256].

⁹²These Judeans are usually identified as the Pharisaic opponents of the Sadducee favouring Jannaeus.

accepted that it is this latter incident which is alluded to in Qumran text 4Q169.⁹³ Significantly, for our purposes, in Yadin's translation of line 8 of the text, he refers to crucifixion as belonging to the law of Israel. The translation of the same sentence suggested by Fitzmyer makes no reference to the word "law" but otherwise expresses the same sentiments as Yadin (1978: 500-502).⁹⁴ Such a view, Fitzmyer claims, finds further support in the Temple Scroll also from Qumran.⁹⁵ The text which takes the form of a "halakic interpretation" of Deut 21: 22-23 identifies two crimes for which crucifixion is deemed the appropriate sentence, (a) delivering up one's people to a foreign nation, i.e. treason, and (b) fleeing to a foreign country to escape the death penalty. Both Yadin and Fitzmyer conclude that these crimes relate to the engagement between Demetrius III and Alexander Jannaues although both acknowledge a lack of conclusive evidence (1978: 504). In short, it seems reasonably certain that during the Hasmonean period crucifixion was a recognised form of capital punishment. Whether or not it remained as such during the Herodian period, it is surely significant that Josephus does not relate one single incident of the otherwise ruthless Herod the Great having anyone, friend or foe, nailed to a cross.⁹⁶ According to Hengel, the reason for this lay in the use of crucifixion by the Romans in their conquest of Palestine (1977: 85). Certainly in the lead up to, and during the course of, the Judean revolt it was a punishment regularly employed by the Romans. In the late 40s and 50s CE the Roman Procurators

⁹³The text itself is a commentary on Nah 2: 12-14 in which the sacking of Assyria is described (Vermes 1997: 473-477).

⁹⁴Vermes takes the same approach as Fitzmyer and translates "this concerns the furious young lion [who executes revenge] on those who seek smooth things and hangs men alive,...formerly in Israel" (1997: 474).

⁹⁵According to Vermes, crucifixion is also provided for in the Temple Scroll (LXIV 6-13) where it serves as the punishment for traitors (1997: 473).

⁹⁶The only incidence of crucifixion described by Josephus during the period of Herodian rule was perpetrated by the Syrian legate Varus whilst Archelaus was in Rome contesting his right to succession to Herod's throne. In the face of a Judean rebellion, Varus is alleged to have had some 2000 rebels crucified (*Ant.* 17.10.10 [295]).

Cumanus and Felix respectively had Judean rebels⁹⁷ and ‘robbers’⁹⁸ crucified. Florus, the governor of Judea at the outbreak of the revolt, is reported to have plummeted new depths when, in a massacre of some 3,600 men, women and children, he crucified Judeans of equestrian rank (*J.W.* 2.14.9 [306-308]). Vespasian whilst leading the Roman campaign in Palestine crucified a prisoner captured at Jotapata (*J.W.* 3.7.33 [321]) and his son, Titus, did likewise during the siege of Jerusalem (*J.W.* 5.6.5 [289] and 5.11.1 [449-51]). In a Judean context one other aspect of crucifixion must be mentioned namely the significance of Deut 21: 23.

Crucifixion, as we have illustrated, is and is intended to be both a painful and a shameful death. It is made all the more so by the terms of Judean law in which it is decreed “for anyone hung on a tree is under God’s curse”. The traditional interpretation of this verse has understood the curse as applying to the punishment of crucifixion itself.⁹⁹ More recently, however, Paula Fredriksen has argued that the curse attached to the executed individual not because of his crucifixion but rather as a consequence of the crime he committed. For this reason, she contends, crucifixion need not preclude a Judean rebel from being perceived as a martyr (1991: 552). The case of the young Judean, Eleazar, captured by the Romans during the siege of the rebel fortress Machaerus, shortly after the fall of Jerusalem in 70 CE suggests otherwise, however. Threatened with the cross, the young man pleaded with his townsmen to surrender to the Romans and so moved were they by his plight that they agreed (*J.W.* 7.6.4 [200-203]). As Finney correctly notes,¹⁰⁰ on Fredriksen’s interpretation, Eleazar would have

⁹⁷*Ant.* 20.6.2 [129]//*J.W.* 2.12.6 [241].

⁹⁸*J.W.* 2.13.2 [253].

⁹⁹Although the Hebrew text of the Old Testament $\text{לֹא יָשָׁר לְעֵץ} \text{לְעֵץ}$ is ambiguous, the LXX more clearly supports the traditional view.

¹⁰⁰Finney 2000: 103-104.

accepted his fate and would subsequently have been declared a martyr. That his townsmen sought rather to spare his life, at the price of their town's surrender, suggests that crucifixion did not enjoy the glorification of a martyr's death. From the above resumé it becomes obvious that in Roman terms the manner of Jesus' death identified him as a provincial rebel. Shamed on the cross at Golgotha, he was to serve as an example to others who sought to undermine the ruling elite. For the Judeans his death by crucifixion carried the additional burden of invoking the curse of God.

The King of the Judeans

The second element which helps illuminate our understanding of Jesus' arrest and death by crucifixion is the Roman charge and the inscription above the cross, "King of the Judeans". We have suggested above that the charge put by Pilate to Jesus belongs to the historical core of his trial before the Roman governor. Likewise, we contend that the inscription above the cross also has its origins in the crucifixion of Jesus. It appears in each of the four canonical gospels. The Markan narrative states simply, "The inscription of the charge against him read, 'The King of the Judeans'" (Mk 15: 26). In Matthew the charge reads, "This is Jesus, the King of the Judeans" (Mt 27: 37) and in Luke it says, "This is the King of the Judeans" (Lk 23: 38). The most elaborate form of the inscription is recounted in the gospel of John, it reads "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Judeans" and it was, according to the writer of the fourth gospel, written in Hebrew, Latin and Greek. John also describes a dispute between the chief priests and Pilate concerning the wording of the inscription with the former seeking to have it amended to read, "This man said, I am the King of the Judeans" but Pilate refused responding "What I have written, I have written (Jn 19: 19-22).

According to Winter, "That Jesus died by crucifixion, and that his cross bore an inscription stating the cause for which he had been sentenced, is the one stable and solid fact that should be made the starting point of any historical investigation dealing with the gospel accounts of his trial" (1974: 156). In similar vein Brandon contends, "that [Jesus] was condemned for sedition, and that the *titulus* on his cross read 'The King of the Jews'; must be accepted as authentic; for, in view of its embarrassing character, Christians would never have gratuitously invented such a condemnation" (1967: 328). Not all scholars, however, have been so enthusiastic. Bultmann argues that the inscription on the cross derives from Mk 15: 2, a passage which is itself secondary to Mk 15: 3-5 (Bammel 1984: 356). And Haenchen contests its historicity on the grounds that "it contains a Jewish-Christian confession of Jesus" (cited in Brown 1994: 967). A number of factors do, nonetheless, point towards the historicity of the *titulus*.¹⁰¹ In the first instance, there is ample evidence from Roman sources of the use of the *tabula*.¹⁰² This was a means of informing the general public of the nature of the crime committed by an offender who was about to be punished. Thus a tablet containing a description of the criminal's offence was carried either by the offender, or by someone walking in front of him,¹⁰³ to the place of execution (Bammel 1984: 353). Although the fixing of the *tabula* to the cross is less well attested, there is no reason to believe that the positioning of the inscription above the head of Jesus, as described by the evangelist's, is anything other than accurate. Secondly, as Brandon notes, there seems little reason for the early followers of Jesus to have invented such a title for him.¹⁰⁴ As his response to Pilate

¹⁰¹Sanders 1985, Wright 1996 and Herzog 2000 all accept the basic historicity of the *titulus*.

¹⁰²Suetonius, *Caligula* 32.2; *Domitian* 10: 1, Cassius Dio, *History* 54.3.7 (Brown 1994: 963).

¹⁰³It is partly this custom which is described in m. Sanhedrin 43a.

¹⁰⁴As Harvey observes "It was precisely the suggestion that Jesus represented some kind of political threat to the Roman authorities that Christians of the early centuries had most strenuously to deny. It is hard to believe that they would have fabricated a piece of

indicates, it is not a title he used of himself, nor does it enjoy any obvious confessional value (Brown 1994: 968). And thirdly, it is, on the other hand, in keeping with the type of charge which might have brought a troublesome peasant before a Roman governor, and it is precisely the type of charge which would see the offender crucified. That the wording of the inscription may have contained an element of sarcasm or mockery¹⁰⁵ only serves to strengthen its claims to historicity.

As we have noted above, whilst each of the gospel writers describes the inscription on the cross, they all do so in slightly different terms. In John's narrative the scene between the chief priests and Pilate, in which they dispute the wording of the inscription, is clearly a creation of the fourth evangelist. The reference to the trilingual nature of the inscription is also Johannine exaggeration. Whilst multilingual statements/inscriptions were not uncommon in the ancient Roman world, they were reserved for matters of some import (Brown 1994: 964-965). It is precisely this *gravitas* which John seeks to attribute to the crucifixion of the person of Jesus of Nazareth.¹⁰⁶ In historical terms, however, the crucifixion of a Galilean peasant would hardly have merited such excess. In the gospels of both Matthew and John the inscription itself refers to Jesus and Jesus of Nazareth respectively. In Mark and Luke it contains only the reference to "The King of the Judeans". The inclusion of the name Jesus of Nazareth by John once again serves to emphasise the true status of the one being crucified.¹⁰⁷ And whilst it is not impossible that the name Jesus was included in the inscription, the more likely trajectory of the

evidence which could so easily be turned against them" (1982: 13).

¹⁰⁵Bammel 1984: 354 and Brown 1994: 963. Herzog argues that the inscription on the cross is the final act of a "retrospective interpretation of Jesus' life" designed to identify him as a deviant (2000: 242).

¹⁰⁶Bammel 1984: 359.

¹⁰⁷Bammel 1984: 360 and Brown 1994: 966.

tradition would see the inscription repeating the wording of the charge upon which he was tried, and of Matthew's adding to it the name of Jesus.¹⁰⁸

If, as we contend, Jesus of Nazareth was seized on the orders of the Judean elite and sentenced by Pilate to death by crucifixion on the charge of being "The King of the Judeans", two further questions remain to be answered, (a) what did the title mean in the first century Palestinian context and (b) was it legitimately applied to Jesus? In the first instance, the title "King of the Judeans" should most probably be understood in terms of the popular/messianic kingship described in Chapter Two above. This form of kingship was represented by individuals such as Herod the Great's servant Simon, Athronges the shepherd and Judas son of Hezekias who, supported by their largely peasant followers, laid claim to the throne in the turmoil which followed the death of Herod. Individuals who also, without exception, attempted to validate their claims through violent revolt. That Jesus was seen to be as of a type with these rebels, in the sense that he was executed on the charge of rebellion, finds support amongst a number of older scholars.¹⁰⁹ The most prominent proponent of this view is, however, S. G. F. Brandon. According to Brandon, Jesus' action in the temple coincided with an insurrection in Jerusalem initiated by the Zealots. It is he claims, "difficult to believe" that the two events were unconnected (1967: 351). Moreover, the two *λησται*, between whom it is reported, Jesus was crucified, were, he claims, also "probably" Zealots, thus strengthening Jesus' links with the movement. It was as a rebel then, Brandon argues, that Jesus was justifiably crucified. Brandon's view is now recognised as being fatally flawed on the grounds that the Zealot movement as such only came into being some decades later in the years prior to the Judean revolt. More problematic for most scholars, however, is the

¹⁰⁸See Bammel 1984: 358 for a consideration of the secondary nature of Matthew's use of the name 'Jesus'.

¹⁰⁹For example Goguel 1933, Pickl 1946 and Farmer 1956.

lack of apparent coincidence between the words and deeds of Jesus, as they are presented by the gospel writers, and his crucifixion as a rebel. Whilst it is accepted that he was crucified on such a charge, it is argued that this misrepresents the nature of his teachings and his actions.¹¹⁰ But does it? As we have consistently attempted to illustrate, much in Jesus' words and actions are condemnatory of the ruling elite. The element of ambiguity inherent in the parables allows Jesus the opportunity to launch a stinging rebuke against the oppressive practices of the landowning elite. Likewise his healing and exorcising activities condemn the manner in which the purity and debt codes have been manipulated to their advantage. He preaches a kingdom in which Yahweh's abundance will be shared by all rather than acquired to fuel the extravagant consumption of the elite few. And he enacts the values of that kingdom by sitting at table with tax collectors and sinners. In all of these ways he espouses the values of the peasant little tradition and of domestic/kinship religion, and represents the values expected of the peasant 'just king' or messiah. That he was perceived as such by at least his closest followers seems almost certain.¹¹¹ That he also understood himself in kingly/messianic terms is suggested by both his saying about the temple and the manner of his entry into Jerusalem. But it is precisely this entry seated on a donkey as a "humble" king which demonstrates the nature of his kingship. It is not to be a kingship based on power and might, but one rather which values service and love. Up to the point of his entry into Jerusalem, Jesus of Nazareth had, for the most part, used the techniques of everyday resistance to challenge the oppression of the ruling elite. In the temple in Jerusalem he raised the stakes and challenged the Judean elite in the very seat of their power. Not surprisingly he lost. In the Jerusalem temple, during the Passover festival, Jesus of Nazareth again sought the liberation of the people of Israel, on this occasion from their own as well as

¹¹⁰Winter terms his arrest "senseless" and his sentence "cruel" (1974: 69).

¹¹¹Mk 8: 29//Mt 16: 15-16//Lk 9: 20 and Lk 24: 21.

foreign oppressors. For this the Judean elite and their Roman overlords, from their perspective, justifiably, had him crucified.

CONCLUSION

At the core of this thesis lies an attempt to locate Jesus of Nazareth within the context of the non-elite world of first century CE Galilee. In order to achieve this we have sought to address three major issues, (i) the nature and make up of the Galilee, (ii) forms of non-elite resistance to elite oppression, and (iii) the coherence between the values inherent in the little tradition of the peasantry and those which informed the mission and message of Jesus of Nazareth.

Our first concern was with the nature and make up of the Galilee. The particular importance of this issue turns on the fact that it was within this region that Jesus experienced his primary socialisation. The social, political, economic and religious conditions which existed within first century CE Galilee provided the milieu within which Jesus of Nazareth was formed. It is in this light that we have argued that Galilee was not an excessively Hellenised region in which the peasantry, as well as the elite, welcomed increasing monetarisation and sought to exploit market opportunities in order to maximise profits. But was, rather, a region in which the peasantry adhered to the little tradition values of Judeanism, and sought to meet their subsistence needs by means of reciprocal exchange. Further, we have shown that the (re)building of Sepphoris and Tiberias during the reign of Herod Antipas brought increasing pressure to bear upon the resources of the peasant smallholders of the region. When taken together with the presence in these cities of an entrepreneurial elite and their retainers, this additional burden forced an increasing number of the peasantry into the forfeiture of their patrimonial land. This conflict of values between the elite and the peasantry of the Galilee, resonates, we suggest, in a subsequent conflict between the values of an

exploitative elite and the values, proclaimed by Jesus of Nazareth, of the kingdom of God.

The second issue we sought to address was that of non-elite resistance to elite oppression. Against a general backdrop of a conflict model of society, we have argued that the non-elite engaged in a variety of forms of resistance to the domination of the ruling elite. These acts ranged from covert everyday forms of resistance, such as theft and sabotage, through the explicit acts of social banditry and the gathering of the city mob, to involvement in the activities of prophet and messiah-led movements. Whilst the effects of each of these various non-elite responses were known throughout the Galilee, the most significant, in the context of this study, were those attributable to the actions of prophets, messiahs and to the followers of their respective movements. Although differing in terms of the specifics of their claims, each of the leaders of these movements was identified in terms of recognised social roles as either a prophet or messiah. Thus John the Baptist, the Samaritan and Theudas all operated as prophets relatively contemporaneously with the activities of Jesus of Nazareth, whilst Judas the son of Ezekias, Simon and Athronges demonstrated their kingly/messianic aspirations more than thirty years earlier, on the death of Herod the Great. In addition to their importance as examples of non-elite resistance, these figures also provide concrete examples of social types familiar to the non-elite of first century Galilee. In other words, they exemplify the social roles in terms of which it was possible for Jesus of Nazareth to be understood.

In our consideration of the third issue, we have sought to illustrate the extent to which the values inherent in the little tradition of Judeanism are reflected in the words and deeds of Jesus of Nazareth. We have shown that by means of his parables he

condemns the exploitative behaviour of the landowning elite, whilst promising abundant crops to the peasant smallholders. In a similar vein, we have presented his healings as a challenge to the religious elite whose manipulation of the purity and debt codes leads to prolonged religious indebtedness. Whilst his exorcisms, we have argued, served to condemn a social system which leaves the marginalised more vulnerable to the possibility of demon possession. By engaging in table fellowship with tax collectors and sinners, Jesus, we suggested, not only foreshadowed the messianic banquet, he demonstrated the little tradition value of reversal. Ultimately through his actions in the Jerusalem temple, Jesus, we contended, struck at the heart of the socio-religious elite, condemning their oppressive practices and offering a new vision of the temple as a 'house of prayer', built upon the alternative values of the kingdom of God.

Having rooted the mission and message of Jesus of Nazareth firmly within the peasant little tradition, it thus became possible to address the question of Jesus' social identity. That his condemnation of the elite should lead some amongst his contemporaries to consider him a prophet is understandable,¹ since his parables, in particular, would point towards such an identification. Both his core group of disciples,² and Jesus himself, however, appear to have understood him in messianic/kingly terms. In addition to the messianic connotations contained in his saying about the temple, and to the manner of his entry into Jerusalem, the central themes of Jesus' teachings and actions, reversal, condemnation of the elite, promise of abundance, brotherhood/fictive kin and his attitude to wealth and exploitation, all conform to the values expected of the just king/messiah of the little tradition. Whilst the nature of his messianic kingship may have differed from that of the warrior kings described in Chapter Two above, the

¹Mk 8: 28//Mt 16: 14//Lk 9: 19

²Mk 8: 29//Mt 16: 16//Lk 9: 20.

kingdom values espoused in his words and deeds cohere sufficiently with those of the little tradition for at least some amongst his followers to perceive him in messianic terms. Inevitably, the words and deeds of Jesus of Nazareth, and his identification with the social role of messiah, provoked the ire of Judean elite. They also, we have shown, led the Roman authorities to crucify him as 'The King of the Judeans'.

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