

**Torah Praxis after 70 C.E.:
Reading Matthew and Luke-Acts as Jewish Texts**

by

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To my Father, Benoni Batista de Oliveira ז"ר

Sou caipira, Pirapora

Nossa Senhora de Aparecida

Ilumina a mina escura

E funda o trem da minha vida

("Romaria" by Renato Teixeira de Oliveira)

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Chapter 1

Introduction

These are exciting times for exploring any topic that relates early Christianity to its original Jewish matrix. How fortunate we are to lie far away from those days when many Christian theologians and historians felt anxious about the Jewish heritage of their Christian tradition. From the historical Jesus to the apostle Paul, many are the scholars of Christian provenance who have affirmed in positive terms the Jewishness of these two foundational figures. This tendency has also been reciprocated among several Jewish scholars, first with the historical Jesus, and eventually even with Paul who had previously been viewed as a Jewish apostate and the first “Christian.”¹ Ever since the publication of E.P. Sander’s *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, many Christian scholars have embraced and reaffirmed George Foot Moore’s prophetic cry against Christian misrepresentations and stigmatizations of rabbinic Judaism.² The fascinating discoveries of the Dead Sea Scrolls and the new intellectual and ecumenical atmosphere reigning after World War II have only accelerated the process of recovering the diversity of Second Temple Judaism. These processes have in turn brought the early Jesus movement, at least some of it, back to its Jewish pastures.

¹ Jewish scholars who have affirmed the Jewishness of both Jesus and Paul include Claude G. Montefiore, Joseph Klausner, David Flusser, Samuel Sandmel, Alan F. Segal, Geza Vermes, Daniel Boyarin, Paula Fredriksen, and Mark Nanos, to name a few. Further references can be found in the ever expanding www.4enoch.org, created by Gabriele Boccaccini (2009). For the “older,” less favorable view of Paul as the inventor of Christianity, seen as a religion in radical discontinuity from Judaism, see Hyam Maccoby, *The Mythmaker, Paul and the Invention of Christianity* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1986).

² George Foot Moore, “Christian Writers on Judaism,” *HTR* 14 (1921): 197–254; E.P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (Philadelphia, Pa.: Fortress, 1977).

All of these commendable acts and formative events highlight the scholarly achievements made during the second half of the twentieth century in the field of biblical studies, ancient Judaism, and early Christianity. But new frontiers of exploration and methodological considerations are constantly emerging in the world of academia. The beginning of the third millennium has already generated its share of new proposals concerning Jewish-Christian relations in Late Antiquity that open fresh opportunities to revisit the documents now incorporated in the New Testament. Thus, the many articles now compiled in the volume, *The Ways That Never Parted*, propose moving away from pinpointing an early date when Judaism and Christianity became distinct, autonomous entities everywhere throughout the Greco-Roman and Near Eastern worlds of Late Antiquity.³ While popular opinion continues to imagine that Jesus almost immediately founded a new religion upon his arrival on the earthly scene, specialists of early Judaism and Christianity have traditionally issued the bill of divorce between Jews and Christians at a slightly later time. Paul, as mentioned above, has in the past been viewed as the primary culprit for initiating this process of separation. Others, however, turn their gaze toward 70 C.E. and consider this date as the watershed moment when Jews made their way to Yavneh and developed what eventually became “rabbinic Judaism,” while the last remnant of Christians attached to Judaism settled in Pella never again to reincorporate themselves into Jewish society.⁴ Until recently, the Second Jewish Revolt (c.132–35 C.E.)

³ Adam H. Becker and Annette Yoshiko Reed, eds., *The Ways That Never Parted* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress, 2007); cf. Daniel Boyarin, *Borderlines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity* (Philadelphia, Pa.: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004). “Late Antiquity” normally refers to the period after the composition of the documents included in the New Testament. My point is that if no definitive separation between the entities we are accustomed to calling “Judaism” and “Christianity” occurred everywhere during the third, fourth, or even fifth centuries of the Common Era, how much more for the first century of the existence of the nascent Jesus movement.

⁴ By no means does this constitute an antiquated view about the relations between Jews and Christians in antiquity. On the contrary, it is very much alive in the third millennium. See, for example, Donald A.

was considered the *terminus ad quem* for any ongoing and meaningful overlap between Jews and Christians.⁵

Now the paradigm offered in the *The Ways That Never Parted* heralds a new approach for understanding Jewish-Christian relations, denying any real and complete separation between Jews and Christians everywhere during the first three or four centuries of the Common Era.⁶ This new paradigm, despite its critics,⁷ invites scholars to

Hagner, “Paul as a Jewish Believer—According to His Letters,” in *Jewish Believers in Jesus: The Early Centuries* (eds. Oskar Skarsaune and Reidar Hvalvik; Peabody, Mass.; Hendrickson, 2007), 118–20: “Two questions are debated by scholars today. First, when can we speak of Christianity? And, second, when did the church break with the synagogue? As for the first, the answer depends on what we mean by the word. . . . As for the second question, it would seem wise not to think in terms of a specific date for the break of the church from the synagogue. We undoubtedly have to reckon with a process taking place in different locations at different rates of speed. Dating the supposed break circa 85–90 C.E., during the work of the Yavneh rabbis and the adding of the ‘benediction’ of the *minim* to the Eighteen Benedictions, to my mind is much too late. Tensions were great virtually from the start, and only increased with the passing of time. Paul knew the reality of Jewish opposition to the message he preached (cf. 2 Cor 11:23–25). There were clear points of vital importance, especially, the destruction of Jerusalem in 70, but it is likely, in my opinion, that the church and the synagogue were obviously separate entities before the end of the first century.” Even in the prestigious Hermeneia New Testament commentary series, similar perspectives on the breach between Judaism and Christianity continue to thrive. Thus, Richard I. Pervo, *Acts: A Commentary* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress, 2009), 685: “Judaism and Christianity began to emerge as clearly distinct entities c. 90 CE. A generation later, Luke was engaged in retrojecting this separation to the ‘primitive’ period. This is a normal tactic of an established body that wishes to maintain and protect its boundaries by dating its foundation as early as possible. The separation of ‘Christians’ from ‘Jews’ is an accomplished fact.” Menahem Mor, *The Bar-Kochba Revolt: Its Extent and Effect* [in Hebrew] (Israel Exploration Society; Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi, 1991), 187–90, says it all when he treats “Jewish Christians” as part of the *non-Jewish* population during the Second Revolt. His presupposition of Jewish-Christians as non-Jews (and hence already separated from Judaism) continues in his more recent article, “The Geographical Scope of the Bar Kokhba Revolt,” in *The Bar Kokhba War Reconsidered: New Perspectives on the Second Jewish Revolt against Rome* (ed. Peter Schäfer; TSAJ 100; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002), 108.

⁵ James D.G. Dunn in his *The Partings of the Ways between Christianity and Judaism and Their Significance for the Character of Christianity* (2d ed.; London: SCM, 2006), advocates this position, but the preface to the second edition of his book provides a corrective in response to the new paradigm proposed in the book, *The Ways That Never Parted*: “In short, then, in response to the question, When did the ways part?, the answer has to be: Over a lengthy period, at different times and places, and as judged by different people differently, depending on what was regarded as a non-negotiable boundary marker and by whom. So, early for some, or demanded by a leadership seeking clarity of self-definition, but for many ordinary believers and practitioners there was a long lingering embrace which was broken finally only after the Constantinian settlement” (xxii–xxiv).

⁶ From an intellectual point of view, one could argue that Christianity *never* parted from Judaism, since it represents up until this day one of the many possible outcomes and developments of the Jewish system in the aftermath of 70 C.E. Gabriele Boccaccini, *Middle Judaism: Jewish Thought, 300 B.C.E. to 200 C.E.* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress, 1991), 17–18, notes: “Among the many possible Judaisms, Christianity is one of those which has been realized in history. It did happen at the beginning of the Common Era that a particular multinational Judaism called Christianity—which through its faith in Jesus as the Messiah gave a

thoroughly reassess the relationship of the Jesus movement of the first century with its Jewish environment. If there was no complete and final separation between Jews and Christians before the fourth century C.E., then certainly the boundaries between both groups in the first century C.E. remained very fluid even after the destruction of the temple in 70 when Matthew and Luke most likely composed their works.⁸ It is therefore misleading and anachronistic to speak of the Jewish “background” or Jewish “roots” when relating early “Christian” (also an anachronism for the first century) texts of the New Testament to the Judaism of their time. There is no Jewish background to the New Testament because this literary corpus contains what were originally Jewish documents.

This is the assumption and experiment that run throughout this monograph, namely, to read three texts from the New Testament, the Gospel of Matthew along with the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles simply *as Jewish* texts. This experiment, although rather novel in the case of Luke, is not completely unprecedented in the history

different meaning to obeying the law—became highly successful among Gentiles, that the gentile members very soon composed the overwhelming majority of this community, and that the strong (and reciprocal) debate against other Jewish groups gradually turned, first into bitter hostility against all other Jews (that is, against all non-Christian Jews), and then against the Jews *tout court* (including the Christian Jews) in a sort of *damnatio memoria* of their own roots. However, neither a different way of understanding the law nor a claimed otherness nor the emergence of anti-Jewish attitudes does away with the Jewishness of Christianity. . . . For a historian of religion, Rabbinism and Christianity are simply different Judaisms.”

⁷ Marius Heemstra, *The Fiscus Judaicus and the Parting of the Ways* (WUNT 277; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), points to the important yet overlooked dimension in the discussion on the “parting of the ways,” that is, the Roman perspective on Jews and Christians. Heemstra looks at how the *fiscus Judaicus* played an integral role in the process of the formation of Jewish and Christian identities. I full heartedly agree with Heemstra’s call to pay closer attention to this third dimension. Nevertheless, I fear that he has carried himself away in his conclusions: “. . . the decisive separation between Judaism as we know it today and Christianity as we know it today, took place at the end of the first century, as the combined result of a decision by representatives of mainstream Judaism . . . and the Roman redefinition of the taxpayers to the *fiscus Judaicus*, excluding these same Jewish Christians” (189). Most conspicuous in Heemstra’s treatment is the absence of the gospel of Matthew, given the likely indications that the Matthean community did pay the *fiscus Judaicus*. See Anthony Saldarini, *Matthew’s Christian-Jewish Community* (Chicago Studies in the History of Judaism; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 144–45. Heemstra dismisses this possibility in a mere footnote with no argumentation (p. 63 n. 125).

⁸ By employing the names “Matthew” and “Luke” I do not imply that these figures actually wrote the (anonymous) documents attributed to them in subsequent Christian tradition. I simply use these names out of convenience.

of research. Moving well beyond the widespread, by now almost superfluous recognition of the Jewishness of the historical Jesus, Paul, or even Matthew, the latter so often perceived as the most “Jewish” of all gospels, I am wondering how far the boundaries of Jewishness can be pushed in order to include texts that have normally and normatively been considered to be “Gentile Christian” documents. Do the bounds of pluriform Early Judaism even need to be stretched so far to accommodate an author such as Luke, the Gentile Christian *par excellence* in Christian tradition, into the Jewish realm? Or have terminological epithets and conceptual presuppositions created an artificial embryo that enables Luke to subsist as a non-Jew in the Jewish hall of fame of New Testament writers, coloring and governing the interpretation of themes such as Torah observance in Luke-Acts? What will happen if we temporarily suspend ascribing terms such as “Gentile Christian” to Luke-Acts and begin with the assumption that these two works are just as Jewish as the gospel of Matthew?

Who was Jewish Anyway? Two Jews, Three Opinions

Ascribing the epithet “Jewish” to any ancient document or author requires clarifying what is meant by the very usage of such terminology. Just as in our day Jewishness remains a contested category, with various Jewish groups continually and vigorously debating over the definition(s) of Jewish identity, so in antiquity Jewishness could be perceived in a variety of ways by both outsiders (i.e., those non-Jews who did not belong to or identify with a particular Jewish community) and insiders (i.e., those Jews who were affiliated and remained attached to a local Jewish community). As Cohen in his work on Jewish identity claims, “uncertainty of Jewishness in antiquity curiously

prefigures the uncertainty of Jewishness in modern times.”⁹ Jewishness, then, was and will always remain, for better or for worst, a variable, non-constant category, open to different definitions and vulnerable to appropriations by various groups of people who wish to claim themselves in some sense as being legitimately “Jewish.”

We might begin with the “ethnic” criterion as a means of exploring Jewish identity in antiquity: “The Jews (Judaeans) of antiquity constituted an *ethnos*, an ethnic group. They were a named group, attached to a specific territory, whose members shared a sense of common origins, claimed a common and distinctive history and destiny, possessed one or more distinctive characteristics, and felt a sense of collective uniqueness and solidarity.”¹⁰ The ethnic criterion, however, immediately reveals the diverse opinions ancient Jews could hold concerning the importance of ethnic origins for defining Jewish identity. Special cases (e.g., Gentile converts, children of only one Jewish parent, etc.) required further clarification about Jewish origins and the (im)permeability of the Jewish-Gentile border. Hayes has highlighted the views shared by certain groups of the Second Temple period who held onto the notion of what she dubs “genealogical purity.” The authors of Ezra-Nehemiah, the book of *Jubilees*, and 4QMMT only recognized the Jewishness of those individuals whose parents were *both* Jewish (father and mother). For such Jews, to qualify as Jewish, a person had to stem from a pure genealogy undefiled by Gentile ancestry: “Groups that defined their Jewishness mostly or exclusively in genealogical terms established an impermeable boundary between Jews and Gentiles. Not only was it impossible for Gentiles to become Jews, but also violations of the

⁹ Shaye J.D. Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness: Boundaries, Varieties, Uncertainties* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1999), 346.

¹⁰ Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness*, 7.

genealogical distinction between the two groups (i.e., interethnic sexual unions) were anathema.”¹¹

Thiessen has recently pointed to the importance of genealogical purity in conjunction with *eighth-day* circumcision for Jewish male infants as a means for certain Jewish groups throughout the late Second Temple period to clearly demarcate their Jewish identity. Not only were Jews supposed to belong to a pure Jewish stock, but they also were to circumcise their sons on the eighth-day. The belief in and practice of eighth-day circumcision allowed these Jews to distinguish themselves from other non-Jewish peoples who also practiced circumcision. This belief also firmly denied the idea that Gentiles could ever convert to Judaism even if their males were willing to undergo circumcision.¹² Jewish circumcision had to occur on the eighth-day. Any other type of circumcision was deemed worthless for establishing Jewish identity.

Not all Jews of the Second Temple period held on to this stringent notion of genealogical purity and narrow chronological framework for performing circumcision. They allowed for a certain ethnic permeability that enabled Gentiles to cross over and become fully Jewish by converting to Judaism. They also accepted the Jewishness of persons who did not have an impeccable genealogical record, but were children of only one Jewish parent, either the mother (the matrilineal principle), or the father (the patrilineal principle), depending on the Jewish circle.¹³

¹¹ Christine E. Hayes, *Gentile Impurities and Jewish Identities: Inter-marriage and Conversion from the Bible to the Talmud* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 8–9.

¹² Matthew Thiessen, *Contesting Conversion: Genealogy, Circumcision, and Identity in Ancient Judaism and Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

¹³ The rabbis eventually championed the view that Jewishness was transmitted through the mother, while others believed it was transmitted through the father. More on this topic in chapter 12 of Part III dealing with circumcision, particularly the section on Timothy’s circumcision in Acts 16:1–3.

The ethnic criterion has recently been used as a means for discussing the Jewishness of members who belonged to the Jesus movement. This is essentially the path adopted in the volume, *Jewish Believers in Jesus*:

In this book, by the term “Jewish believers in Jesus” we mean “Jews by birth or conversion who in one way or another believed Jesus was their savior.” We have chosen to focus on the criterion of *ethnicity* rather than the criterion of *ideology*. Many, perhaps most, histories of “Jewish Christianity” or the like, have done the opposite. The basic definition of who is a Jewish Christian is derived from the definition of which theology and praxis the person in question embraces. One can then either disregard the question of ethnic origin completely, or restrict the term “Jewish Christian” to those Jews who believed in Jesus, *and at the same time continued a wholly Jewish way of life*.¹⁴

The application of the criterion of ethnicity allows Skarsaune and many of his colleagues to appreciate the Jewish provenance of a number of Christian authors and texts from antiquity. On the other hand, this approach completely diminishes the importance of Torah observance as a marker of Jewishness for “Christian” and non-Christian Jews alike. Moreover, many of the collaborators of this volume work under certain commonly held assumptions concerning the ethnic origins of a number of authors of the New Testament: Matthew and to a certain extent John are the only canonical gospels discussed in the volume as possibly written by ethnic Jews. Missing are treatments of Mark and Luke. Is this because most of the authors of this volume assume that these gospel writers were ethnically Gentile? In the same volume, the Acts of the Apostles is brought to the reader’s attention only in so far as it can provide information about the Jewishness of the historical Paul rather than Luke himself. In the end, despite

¹⁴ Oskar Skarsaune, “Jewish Believers in Jesus in Antiquity—Problems of Definition, Method, and Sources,” in *Jewish Believers in Jesus: The Early Centuries* (eds., Oskar Skarsaune and Reidar Hvalvik; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 2007), 3–4. Martin S. Jaffee, *Early Judaism* (Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1997), has also highlighted the ethnic dimension, the Jewish ideal of belonging to a people stemming from the same physical ancestors (at least in the Jewish imagination), as a meaningful criterion for defining Judaism.

its splendid resourcefulness, the volume perpetuates the traditional understanding about “Jewish Christians.” Authors and writings of the Jesus movement considered as probable Jewish candidates essentially and unsurprisingly amount to Paul, the Jerusalem Church, the gospel of Matthew, segments from the *Pseudo-Clementine* writings, Ebionites, Nazoreans, and other little, insignificant “heretical” sects.¹⁵

The importance of Jewish Law and its observance, therefore, cannot be underestimated in assessing the potential Jewishness of any author or text from antiquity. Of course, I wish not to reduce exploring or establishing Jewish identity according to the criterion of the observance of the Mosaic Torah. There were certain Jews, such as the so-called Hellenizers, who sought to break away from what was perceived by other Jews as the fundamentals of Jewish identity: Sabbath, food laws, and circumcision. Despite their break away from these practices, these Hellenizers, Maccabean propaganda notwithstanding, continued to view themselves as Jewish.¹⁶ Schäfer and others would have us think that such Jews did not evaporate once the Maccabean revolt was over, but survived well up until Bar Kokhba’s day and might have even triggered the Second Jewish Revolt against Hadrian.¹⁷ Boccaccini also notes that the Mosaic Torah is conspicuously absent from the earlier Enochic literature, although he acknowledges changes occurred in post-Maccabean times when, thanks to *Jubilees*, Moses became an

¹⁵ One of the exceptions and more interesting chapters in the book would be Torleif Elgvin’s consideration of many of the so-called Old Testament Pseudepigrapha as “Jewish Christian.” See his “Jewish Christian Editing of the Old Testament Pseudepigrapha,” in *Jewish Believers in Jesus*, 278–304.

¹⁶ Gabriele Boccaccini, *The Roots of Rabbinic Judaism* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2002), 162: “The Maccabean propaganda presents Antiochus’s measures in Judah not as the result of intra-Jewish conflicts but as the last chapter and inevitable outcome of the opposition between Hellenism and Judaism (1 Macc 1:1–10)”; Jaffee, *Early Judaism*, 40: “From the perspective of hindsight . . . it is clear that the debate was not between Judaism and Hellenism as opposed forces, but really over the degree to which an already hellenized Judaism would self-consciously conform even further to international cultural norms.”

¹⁷ Peter Schäfer, *Der Bar Kokhba-Aufstand: Studien zum zweiten jüdischen Krieg gegen Rom* (TSAJ 1; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1981).

important figure in the Enochic movement, and so in the end the “Enochians,” like the Essenes, would have observed the Torah, although they certainly would have felt that the Mosaic tradition needed a supplement both to understand and repair this world.¹⁸ In a similar vein, even *if* Paul did view the Torah as having in a real sense met its end after the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus, this would not imply that he ceased to view himself as a Jew.¹⁹ Other Jews, such as the so-called allegorizers, whom Philo condemns for abandoning the literal observance of Jewish customs, might have nonetheless viewed themselves as living out the true intent of the Torah and remaining in a real sense “Jewish.” We could also speculate with Kraemer and others about the archaeological evidence and to what extent Jews in Palestine and elsewhere had assimilated into their “pagan” environment and no longer observed some of the central tenets of the Mosaic Torah, although positing as Schwartz does that after 70 C.E. Judaism disappeared, only to reemerge some two centuries later, would be interpreting the archaeological evidence too tendentiously.²⁰

Despite these important caveats, the literary evidence available thus far shows that many Jews (and many non-Jews) considered the observance of central Mosaic commandments such as the Sabbath, kashrut, or circumcision as an expression of fidelity

¹⁸ Gabriele Boccaccini, *Beyond the Essene Hypothesis: The Parting of the Ways between Qumran and Enochic Judaism* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1998), 167.

¹⁹ Daniel Boyarin, *A Radical Jew: Paul and the Politics of Identity* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1994), 2.

²⁰ David Kraemer, “Food, Eating, and Meals,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Jewish Daily Life in Roman Palestine* (ed. Catherine Hezser; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 403–19; Seth Schwartz, *Imperialism and Jewish Society, 200 B.C.E. to 640 C.E.* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2001). For a review of Schwartz’s work, see Yaron Z. Eliav, review of Seth Schwartz, *Imperialism and Jewish Society*, *Prooftexts* 24 (2004): 116–28.

and affiliation to Judaism.²¹ In fact, even the *selective* or eclectic appropriation and observance of certain Jewish customs by Gentiles could in principle lead other Greeks and Romans to libeling such non-Jews as “Jewish.”²² Any affirmation, then, on the part of Christians of the observance of Jewish custom could at least insinuate to non-Jews their proximity or affiliation to Judaism. Consequently, it is through the lens of Torah practice that I have chosen to explore the Jewishness of both Matthew and Luke, even though there exist many other criteria, not discussed here, of assessing the Jewish character of an ancient author or text, including ideology (eschatology, messianic expectations, Apocalypticism, attitude toward Gentiles, etc.) or usage of Jewish scriptures (e.g., Luke’s appropriation of the Septuagint). Indeed, Matthew’s positive attitude toward the Torah (e.g., Matt 5:17–20) has often served as a cornerstone for establishing the Jewishness of his gospel. But if Luke affirms the observance of the Torah and displays an expertise in Jewish legal matters, does he not then provide a perspective that is just as Jewish as Matthew’s?

Terminological Considerations: Torah Practice and the Problem with “Jewish Christianity”

Any study of the history of research on “Jewish Christian(ity)” or “Jewish Christians” reveals a long and confusing debate about what is really meant by the usage of such terminology.²³ The label “Jewish Christian(ity)” has been ascribed to multiple

²¹ Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness*, 62: “The observance of Jewish laws was perhaps a somewhat more reliable indicator of Jewishness than presence in a Jewish neighborhood or association with known Jews, but it was hardly infallible.”

²² Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness*, 58–62.

²³ On the history of research and the terminological problems, see Daniel Boyarin, “Rethinking *Jewish Christianity*: An Argument for Dismantling a Dubious Category (To Which is Appended a Correction of My Borderlines),” *JQR* 99 (2009): 7–36; Matt Jackson-McCabe, “What’s in a Name? The Problem of ‘Jewish Christianity,’” in *Jewish Christianity Reconsidered: Rethinking Ancient Groups and Texts* (ed. Matt Jackson-McCabe; Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress, 2007), 7–38; James Carleton Paget, “The Definition

texts and groups, becoming a “rubber bag term, applied to a host of phenomena yet saying nothing with any clarity about the phenomena that would warrant this specific label.”²⁴ Like the terms “gnostic” or “Gnosticism,” the label “Jewish-Christian” has often been equated unfavorably with heresy, syncretism, or sectarianism in ancient heresiological discourse and even modern scholarship.²⁵ Mimouni’s description of German scholarship on “Jewish Christianity” during the nineteenth and much of the twentieth century is quite sobering:

Starting from the 19th century, Germany theology did not stop extracting Christianity from its Jewish roots, even throwing back all of the period of the emergence of the Christian movement to the fringes of heresy—except for Paul and the Pauline trend. The closure of this process, loaded with consequences at the epistemological and methodological level, would be the approach of W. Bauer, for whom heterodoxy precedes orthodoxy, this latter giving birth to *Frühkatholizismus* only toward the end of the 2nd century. As for Jesus, following Hegel, the German theologians of this period extracted him more and more from his Jewish world, along with R. Bultmann going as far as to make him a being almost completely ahistorical—the “Jesus of faith” in opposition to the “Jesus of history.” All of these historical constructions of Christianity in their beginnings rest essentially upon a negation of Judaism, on an extraction of the movement of the disciples of Jesus from its life setting, falling neither on Judaism nor paganism, but on a philosophy, the Christian philosophy, as if this latter had been a religion.²⁶

of the Terms Jewish Christian and Jewish Christianity in the History of Research,” in *Jewish Believers in Jesus*, 22–48; Simon Claude Mimouni, *Le judéo-christianisme ancien: essais historiques* (Paris: Cerf, 1998), 40–42; 68–71; 458–93; Carsten Colpe, *Das Siegel der Propheten: historische Beziehungen zwischen Judentum, Judenchristentum, Heidentum und frühem Islam* (Arbeiten zur neutestamentliche Theologie und Zeitgeschichte 3; Berlin: Institut Kirche und Judentum, 1990), 38–42.

²⁴ Bruce Malina, “Jewish Christianity or Christian Judaism: Toward a Hypothetical Definition,” *JSJ* 7 (1976): 46.

²⁵ See Karen L. King, *What is Gnosticism?* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003), who discusses the ways in which early Christian polemicists’ discourse of orthodoxy and heresy have been intertwined with twentieth-century scholarship on Gnosticism and distorted our understanding of ancient texts. The story of “Jewish-Christianity” seems painfully similar.

²⁶ My translation : “À partir du XIXe siècle, la théologie allemande n’a eu de cesse d’extraire le christianisme de ses origines juives, renvoyant même toute la période de l’émergence du mouvement chrétien aux franges de l’hérésie—à l’exception de Paul et du courant paulinien. L’aboutissement de ce procédé, lourd de conséquences sur le plan épistémologique et méthodologique, sera la démarche de W. Bauer, pour qui l’hétérodoxie est antérieure à l’orthodoxie, cette dernière ne donnant naissance au *Frühkatholizismus* que vers la fin du IIe siècle. Quant à Jésus, suivant Hegel, les théologiens allemands de cette époque l’ont de plus en plus extrait de son monde juif, allant jusqu’à en faire, avec R. Bultmann, un

Up until the second half of the twentieth century and even beyond, it was crucial for many to sanitize Paul from his Jewish element, to posit the Jewish-Christian ideology of Peter or James, the brother of Jesus, against the emerging (and superior) Greek-Christian and Hellenistic-universal branch of the church,²⁷ or, finally, to reduce the phenomenon of Torah observant Jewish Christians in the aftermath of 70 C.E. to the marginal and insignificant heretical pockets of “Ebionites” and “Nazoreans.”²⁸

However, the period after World War II witnessed important shifts in the study of Jewish Christianity, as many Christian specialists now seemed ready to firmly acknowledge the Jewish heritage of their Christian tradition. The cardinal Jean Daniélou went the furthest in this acclamation, placing all of Christianity until the middle of the second century C.E. under the rubric of Jewish Christianity.²⁹ In his loose usage of the

être presque totalement ahistorique—le “Jésus de la foi” en opposition au “Jésus de l’histoire.” Toutes ces constructions historiques du christianisme en ses débuts reposent essentiellement sur une négation du judaïsme, sur une extraction du mouvement des disciples de Jésus de son milieu de vie, ne reposant plus alors ni sur le judaïsme ni sur le paganisme, mais sur une philosophie, la philosophie chrétienne, comme si cette dernière avait été alors une religion” (Mimouni, *Le judéo-christianisme ancien*, 463. n.1).

²⁷ Ferdinand Christian Baur especially confronted Jewish Christianity with Pauline Christianity. For Baur, Pauline Christianity stood for the superior and universal, Christian ideals in contrast to the particularism of Jewish Christianity, imprisoned in its nationalism and legalism. True to his application of Hegelian philosophical principles to the study of church history, Baur believed that Christianity made its entrance into human history at a time when Judaism and “paganism” had long fallen into decay. His views on Judaism represent nothing more than what I call a refined Protestant “Hegelian supersessionism” of the traditional Christian teaching on replacement theology. Nevertheless, his serious appreciation of the phenomenon of Torah observant “Jewish Christians” cannot be underestimated in any historical inquiry on the history of the Jesus movement. See Ferdinand Christian Baur, *The Church History of the First Three Centuries* (trans. Allan Menzies; 2 vols.; London: Williams and Norgate, 1878), especially volume 1.

²⁸ These heretical groups are often presented as the official representatives of “Jewish Christians” in introductions to the New Testament. Thus, for example, Bart D. Ehrman’s introduction to the New Testament, *The New Testament: A Historical Introduction to the Early Christian Writings* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 205–8, includes under the rubric of “Jewish Christian Gospels,” only “The Gospel of the Nazareans,” “The Gospel of the Ebionites,” and “the Gospel of the Hebrews.” I argue that other gospels such as Matthew and Luke should also be labeled as such, if we mean by this term that they represent “Jews who had converted to belief in Jesus as the messiah but who nonetheless continued to maintain their Jewish identity, keeping kosher food laws, observing the sabbath, circumcising their baby boys, praying in the direction of Jerusalem, and engaging in a number of other Jewish practices” (Ehrman, *The New Testament*, 206). Since so many employ the term “Jewish Christian” in a way that excludes canonical authors such as Luke and even Matthew from this category, I prefer to discard the term altogether.

²⁹ Jean Daniélou, *Théologie du judéo-christianisme* (2d ed.; Histoire des doctrines chrétiennes avant Nicée 1; Tournai: Desclée, 1991).

concept and the term, Daniélou did not imply that all early Christians belonged to the Jewish community and observed the Torah. Rather, Christianity at this time expressed itself within a literary and ideological framework that borrowed from Jewish patterns of thought and expression. His rather vague definition of Jewish Christianity, therefore, was comprehensive enough to include virtually all Christian authors of the first one hundred years of Christian history, since most Christian writers of this period used Jewish categories and concepts to express their thoughts and beliefs.

In some ways, Daniélou anticipated the “The Ways That Never Parted” model by globally affirming the Jewish dimension of nascent Christianity, at least during the first century of its existence. Some, however, criticized the arbitrariness of his chronological schematization of church history, which he divided into three periods: Jewish, Greek, and Latin.³⁰ Why did the Jewish-Christian phase suddenly cease in the first half of the second century to make place for a Greek period of church history? What happened to the afterlife of Jewish Christianity in the subsequent centuries after Bar Kokhba until Constantine and beyond? Most strikingly, Daniélou omitted from his volume on Jewish Christianity the treatment of any New Testament text! These documents, after all, were all written during the timeframe he labeled as Jewish Christian. As Robert Murray astutely states, “the supreme monument of Jewish Christianity is the New Testament itself.”³¹

Nonetheless, we can retain from Daniélou’s research the desire to affirm in a comprehensive way the pervasive Jewish fabric that encompassed the formation and development of early Christianity in all of its branches. More than Daniélou, however, I

³⁰ The criticisms against Daniélou’s work are best summarized by Robert A. Kraft, “In Search of ‘Jewish Christianity’ and its ‘Theology’: Problems of Definition and Methodology,” *RSR* 60 (1972): 81–92.

³¹ Robert Murray, “Defining Judaeo-Christianity,” *HeyJ* 15 (1974): 308.

feel the need to signal the ongoing importance of the question of the Torah during the formative stages of the Jesus movement after 70 C.E. Torah praxis was not important only for James and the church of Jerusalem or, later on, the so-called Ebionites and Nazoreans, as Daniélou presumed, but to other members of the Jesus movement as well such as Matthew and Luke.³² On the other hand, like Daniélou, I fully agree that Jewishness should not be reduced to the criterion of Torah practice. Once again, there were Jews, whether followers of Jesus or not, who might not have viewed the observance of the Torah as the primary index for measuring their Jewishness. Nevertheless, employing the criterion of Torah observance remains an efficient and practical way for concretely assessing the Jewishness of many ancient authors and texts. It is no historical accident that with the decline of the observance of the Sabbath, kashrut, circumcision, and other Jewish customs, a visible, corporate body of Jewish followers of Jesus also vanished from the Christian scene.

The importance of the criterion of Torah praxis for the study of Jewish Christianity was brought about especially by the French historian Marcel Simon, who did his research around the same time as Daniélou, but described the phenomenon of Jewish Christianity in fundamentally different ways.³³ First of all, for Simon, it was possible to speak of several Jewish Christianities.³⁴ Simon categorized Jewish Christians (*judéo-chrétiens*) in at least two different ways: the ethnic and religious sense. The former sense designated ethnic Jews who converted to the Christian faith; the latter referred to Christians whose religion contained Jewish elements, particularly those related to Torah

³² Daniélou, *Théologie du judéo-christianisme*, 35–37.

³³ Marcel Simon, *Verus Israël. Étude sur les relations entre chrétiens et juifs dans l'empire romain (135-425)* (2d ed.; Paris: É. de Boccard, 1964).

³⁴ Thus anticipating Raymond Brown, "Not Jewish Christianity and Gentile Christianity but Types of Jewish/Gentile Christianity," *CBQ* 45 (1983): 74–79.

observance.³⁵ Simon did not agree in fusing the two criteria into one definition, finding it too restrictive and arguing that there were converted Jews, such as Paul, who had ceased practicing their ancestral customs but remained Jewish, just as there were non-Jews among the ranks of Judaizers who were not ethnically Jewish but observed numerous precepts of the Torah.³⁶ Simon even added a third category of people who could fit under the rubric of *judéo-christianisme*: “syncretizing” sects described by ancient heresiologists as not only Judaizing in their practice but also embracing doctrines radically different from orthodoxy.³⁷ Today, Simon’s usage and understanding of much of the terminology (“syncretistic,” “gnostic,” etc.) would be viewed as problematic, while the various groups he describes as “Jewish Christian” has assisted in generating the ongoing confusion about what phenomena this terminology actually circumscribes. Ultimately, however, Simon spelled out his preference for the criterion of Torah praxis for assessing Jewish Christianity.³⁸ Since he viewed ancient Judaism primarily as an “orthopraxy” rather than an “orthodoxy,” Simon envisaged Torah praxis as the best criterion for exploring the phenomenon of Jewish Christianity.³⁹

³⁵ Simon, *Verus Israël*, 277: “Il peut désigner, d’une part, les Juifs convertis à la foi chrétienne, les chrétiens issus d’Israël ; il s’applique, d’autre part, à ceux des chrétiens dont la religion reste mêlée d’éléments judaïques et qui, en particulier, continuent de se plier à tout ou partie des observances.”

³⁶ Ibid., 277. L. Marchal fused both criteria together in his definition of Jewish Christians. See his “Judéo-chrétiens,” in *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique* (eds. A. Vacant et al.; 15 vols.; Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1899–1950), 8.2.1681–1709. Marchal defined Jewish Christians as “les chrétiens d’origine juive qui associent les observances de la religion mosaïque aux croyances et aux pratiques chrétiennes.” More recently, Mimouni has readopted Marchal’s definition (see below).

³⁷ “Un troisième type de judéo-christianisme est représenté par l’ensemble de ces sectes syncrétisantes décrites par les hérésiologues et qui, non contentes de judaïser dans la pratique, professent en outre des doctrines radicalement et cette fois positivement différentes de celles de la grande Eglise” (Simon, *Verus Israël*, 280).

³⁸ Marcel Simon, “Problèmes du judéo-christianisme,” in *Aspects du judéo-christianisme: Colloque de Strasbourg 23–25 avril 1964* (Bibliothèque des centres d’études supérieures spécialisés: Travaux du centre d’études supérieures d’histoire des religions de Strasbourg; Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1965), 1–16.

³⁹ Simon, “Problèmes du judéo-christianisme,” 7. Also in his postscript to *Verus Israël*: “En fait le critère le plus sûr, sinon absolument le seul, dont nous disposons pour caractériser et délimiter le judéo-christianisme reste encore l’observance. Au même titre que le judaïsme, le judéo-christianisme est d’abord

One of the problems with employing the criterion of praxis involves *measuring* the degree of Torah observance to determine the Jewishness of a given text or group. Since practices will vary according to regional location, social conditions, and religious beliefs, where does the line of demarcation begin and end when employing this criterion to assess whether a text or group qualifies as Jewish Christian?⁴⁰ Simon pointed to chapter 15 of the Acts of the Apostles as a means for distinguishing Jewish Christians from the rest of Christianity: Jewish Christians went beyond the minimal requirements of the so-called Apostolic Decree, while Gentile Christians only observed the basic commandments of the decree. Simon's proposal brings us close to Boyarin's recent call to focus (without employing the problematic nomenclature of "Jewish Christian") on collecting and analyzing the "evidence for followers of Jesus who continued to observe the Torah or newly came to observe the Torah and the different varieties of such Christians at different times as well as those Christians who abandoned the Law, even the minimal requirements imposed, as it were, by the Gentile Christian author of Acts on his fellow gentiles. . . ."⁴¹

This is precisely the task set out in this monograph: to demonstrate that the authors of Matthew and Luke-Acts affirm the observance of the Mosaic Torah *in its totality*, a maximalist measurement and assessment of their Jewishness according to criterion of Torah praxis. The brief presentation about the tortuous history of the usage of the terms "Jewish Christian" and "Jewish Christianity" sufficiently warrants suspending

une orthopraxie. Il se distingue par une attitude fondamentalement légaliste et par son attachement à une observance non pas simplement apparentée dans son esprit, mais bien identique à celle du judaïsme et qu'il retient en totalité ou en partie" (p. 27).

⁴⁰ This question is well raised by Giovanni Filoramo and Claudio Gianotto, "Introduzione," in *Verus Israel: Nuove prospettive sul giudeocristianesimo. Atti del Colloquio di Torino (4-5 novembre 1999)* (eds. Giovanni Filoramo and Claudio Gianotto; Brescia: Paideia Editrice, 2001), 13–14.

⁴¹ Boyarin, "Rethinking Jewish Christianity," 33. I am delighted that after graciously agreeing to examine my research Boyarin no longer views Luke-Acts as Gentile Christian texts.

the usage of such confusing and problematic terminology for the time being. Its usage has been too intertwined with heresiological discourse, theological prejudice, and conceptual confusion.⁴² Even Daniélou, as we saw, who used the term Jewish-Christian in a very wide sense, left out from his *magnum opus* on Jewish Christianity the treatment of the entire New Testament. It is no surprise to also discover that not one of the recent conferences and edited volumes devoted to the subject of Jewish Christianity has included Luke into their discussions. The terminology continues to conceal traditional presuppositions that govern the scope of scholarly investigation.⁴³ It seems that whenever the term “Jewish Christian” pops up, it leads for the most part to a confined interest in Elkesaites, Ebionites, Nazoreans, the *Pseudo-Clementine* literature, the Jerusalem Church headed by James, or finally the gospel of Matthew, at the cost of ignoring other potential candidates such as Luke. For some, the term “Jewish *Christian*” also implies there is something non-Jewish about said documents that officially licenses omitting any real

⁴² These comments also apply to a lesser extent to the terms “Christian Jew” or “Christian Judaism.” For the time being, it seems better to set this jargon aside and focus on assessing the phenomenon of Torah observance in the Jesus movement.

⁴³ A treatment of Luke as a Jewish Christian is missing in Skarsaune and Hvalvik, eds., *Jewish Believers in Jesus*; McCabe, ed., *Jewish Christianity Reconsidered*; Simon Claude Mimouni, ed., *Le judéo-christianisme dans tous ses états: Actes du colloque de Jérusalem 6-10 1998* (Paris: Cerf, 2001). In Peter J. Tomson and Doris Lambers-Petry, eds., *The Image of the Judaeo-Christians in Ancient Jewish and Christian Literature* (WUNT 158; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), one will find the excellent article by Daniel Stökl Ben Ezra, “‘Christians’ Observing ‘Jewish’ Festivals of Autumn,” 53–73, which includes an interesting and convincing proposal (in my opinion) that the author of Acts observes Yom Kippur. Nevertheless, the article does not focus on Luke as a Jewish Christian. Likewise, Filoramo and Gianotto, *Verus Israel: Nuove prospettive sul giudeo cristianesimo*, includes no treatment of Luke as a Jewish Christian although there is one article (not dealing with Luke) in this volume by Jürgen Wehnert who has written an important monograph on the Apostolic Decree, arguing, among other things, that Luke affirms the observance of the Law. See his *Die Reinheit des “christlichen Gottesvolkes” aus Juden und Heiden* (FRLANT 173; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1997). A treatment of Luke as a Jewish Christian is also missing in the older volume dedicated to Jean Daniélou, *Judéo-Christianisme: Recherches historiques et théologiques offertes en hommage au Cardinal Jean Daniélou* (Recherches de science religieuse; Paris: Éditions Beauchesne, 1972).

engagement with ancient Jewish sources.⁴⁴ Consequently, I have also chosen to leave out of my research the very usage of the term “Christian,” even though it appears in Acts (11:26; 26:28). I have no problems employing the term “Christian”; it is the modern presuppositions often surrounding this epithet that concern me. For so many, the word “Christian,” like the term “church” (I used instead the Greek term *ekklesia* or speak simply of the “Jesus movement”), demarcates an autonomous group or space lying outside the Jewish realm. This assumption may accurately describe the contemporary situation where church and synagogue exist as two independent and autonomous entities, but this reality hardly reflects the social and historical circumstances in Luke’s time.⁴⁵

For the time being, then, I use the somewhat pedantic terminology of “Jewish followers of Jesus” and “Gentile followers of Jesus.” By “Jewish followers of Jesus,” I mean simply that such persons are Jewish in an ethnic sense: they were born of Jewish parents. Gentile followers of Jesus, on the other hand, are those members of the Jesus movement who do not have Jewish ancestry. Within both ethnic camps can be found a variety of persons who observe Jewish ritual commandments to varying degrees, ranging from a maximalist approach, which strives to keep the Torah as much as possible, to a

⁴⁴ Cf. John W. Marshall, “John’s Jewish (Christian?) Apocalypse?” in *Jewish Christianity Reconsidered*, 233–56, who, for similar reasons, prefers to qualify the Revelation of John simply as “Jewish” rather than “Jewish-Christian.”

⁴⁵ Contra Pervo, *Acts*, 294: “The advent of the adjective “Christian” (v.26d) marks the followers of Jesus as a body recognized by outsiders as distinct from Judaism.” But do the terms “Pharisees” or “Sadducees,” which also appear in Acts, refer to bodies outside of Judaism? What about Acts 24:5, where Luke refers to the Jesus movement as part of Judaism, as the “sect (*αἰρέσεως*) of the Nazarenes,” the very same kind of language his contemporary, Josephus, uses to describe the different Jewish “sects” (Sadducees, Pharisees, Essenes, and Zealots) of his time? Pervo, n. 46 p. 294, claims that since Luke is familiar with the word “Christian,” it is not anachronistic to use such terminology when commenting on Acts. I argue that it is indeed anachronistic to use this term, if we understand it in the sense Pervo suggests as referring to an entity distinct from Judaism. Luke’s usage of the term “Christian” need not refer to a group outside Judaism. Even outsiders who designated the followers of the Jesus movement as such may still have viewed them as belonging to a Jewish group of a certain (messianic) tendency. The term simply means “messianists.” Correctly, Hugh J. Schonfield, *Proclaiming the Messiah: The Life and Letters of Paul, Envoy to the Nations* (London: Open Gate, 1997), 37.

minimalist approach, which is highly selective or entirely dismissive of the rituals aspects of Jewish tradition.⁴⁶

Qualifying Matthew and Luke-Acts simply as “Jewish” will challenge specialists in ancient Judaism and Christianity to reconsider their understanding and configuration of Jewish and Christian texts alike, which are still compartmentalized according to academic fields of discipline and specialization such as “early Christian studies” and “early Judaism.” By proclaiming such literature as Jewish, it will bring much of this “Christian” literature back into its Jewish matrix, unveil more fully the pluriform nature of ancient Judaism, and radically challenge many cherished presuppositions about the Jesus movement and its relationship to Jewry.

The Judaization and Gentilization of Matthew and Luke among Scholars

Scholars agree that the period after 1945 marked an important transition in the study of both Matthew and Luke.⁴⁷ Ever since, many New Testament specialists have employed redaction criticism (the English rendition of *Redaktionsgeschichte*), which had

⁴⁶ I prefer the terms “follower” or “disciple” than “believer” (even if the latter appears frequently in the New Testament), which Skarsaune currently employs. See Skarsaune, “Jewish Believers in Jesus in Antiquity,” 3–21. Personally, I find the term too loaded with contemporary self-referential Christian overtones that risk reducing the essence of the identity of ancient followers of Jesus to confessional beliefs. The terms “follower” or “disciple” of Jesus signal not only adherence to theological beliefs, but also fidelity to a certain way of living, to ancestral customs so intimately tied to ethnicity.

⁴⁷ The discussion here on the history of research can only cover certain aspects related to the Jewish or Gentile nature of these writings as well as their relationship to the theme of the Jewish Law. For a general discussion on the history of research on Matthew until 1980, see Graham N. Stanton, “The Origin and Purpose of Matthew’s Gospel: Matthean Scholarship from 1945-1980,” *ANRW* 25.3: 1889–951. For Luke, see François Bovon, *Luke the Theologian: Fifty-five Years of Research (1950-2005)* (2d ed.; Waco, Tex.: Baylor University Press, 2006). For a discussion on the history of research on Luke in so far as his Gentile/Jewish identity and/or attitude toward the Law are concerned, see Matthias Klinghardt, *Gesetz und Volk Gottes* (WUNT 2.32; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1988), 1–9; Kalervo Salo, *Luke’s Treatment of the Law: A Redaction-Critical Investigation* (AASF.DHL 57; Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 1991), 13–41; William R.G. Loader, *Jesus’ Attitude towards the Law* (WUNT 2.97; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997), 137–54 (on Matthew); 273–300 (on Luke); Rick Strelan, *Luke the Priest: The Authority of the Author of the Third Gospel* (Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate, 2008), 26–30. Joseph B. Tyson, *Luke, Judaism, and the Scholars: Critical Approaches to Luke-Acts* (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina, 1999) is also very helpful.

evolved out of its parent, form criticism (*Formgeschichte*), in order to detect the intentions, ideology, and situation of the final authors of the canonical gospels. Whereas investigators had previously focused on the traditions in the synoptic gospels in order to unearth insights about the earliest *ekklesia* as well as the historical Jesus by breaking down these materials into their smaller units and reconstructing their supposed original *Sitz im Leben*, scholars in the aftermath of World War Two began to focus on the *final* stages of the literary development of these traditions, on the reworking and shaping of the literary sources and material available to the evangelists who gave the final shape to the texts as we now have them. By performing such an analysis, many hoped a history could be written about the later stages of the Jesus movement during the end of the first century, that they could more clearly appreciate the *Tendenz* of the redactors of the gospels.

Bornkamm was among the first to apply a thorough redaction-critical analysis to the Gospel of Matthew.⁴⁸ Initially, Bornkamm set the study of Matthew on its right track, emphasizing the redactor's allegiance to Judaism and engagement in an *intra muros* debate with other Jewish peers.⁴⁹ Unfortunately, Bornkamm seems to have subsequently backed away from his initial thesis, declaring that the Matthean community knew itself to have been cut off from the Jewish community and to have no longer gathered for the sake of the Torah but rather in the name of Jesus.⁵⁰ The tendency to view Matthew as separate

⁴⁸ Günther Bornkamm, Gerhard Barth, and Heinz Joachim Held, eds., *Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew* (trans. Percy Scott; Philadelphia, Pa.: Westminster Press, 1963).

⁴⁹ This is the position Bornkamm advocated in his article "End-Expectation and Church in Matthew," in *Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew*, 15–51. In this article Bornkamm argued that Matthew was still attached to the Law and Judaism (p. 22).

⁵⁰ Günther Bornkamm, "The Authority to 'Bind' and 'Loose' in the Church in Matthew's Gospel: The Problem of Sources in Matthew's Gospel," in *Jesus and Man's Hope* (ed. Donald G. Miller; 2 vols.; Pittsburgh, Pa.: Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, 1970), 1:41.

(*extra muros*) from Judaism became the dominant view for the next two decades.⁵¹ Not until the late eighties would the pendulum swing back and replace Matthew inside the parameters of pluriform Judaism.

With the momentum building in favor of viewing Matthew as a representative of *the* decisive rupture between Christians and Jews, it would not take long for redactional critics to relegate the more “Jewish” features of Matthew into their supposed earlier strata of tradition, hoping thereby to restrict the historical relevance of this material to a primitive “Jewish Christian” stage when the Jesus movement had not yet parted its way from the “synagogue across the street.” While many of these redaction critics assumed that the first apostolic generation of followers of Jesus was still Torah observant, they claimed that the author of Matthew had detached himself from the observance of the Law. The “‘Jewish’ material, judged antithetic to the gospel’s universalistic outlook,” was “viewed as old lace: still valued by the community that preserved them, but no longer of practical use.”⁵²

This bifurcation of Matthew into traditional (=Jewish-Christian) and redactional layers (=Gentile Christian) led some to go as far as dismissing the very Jewish identity of the author of the first canonical gospel. Ever since the days of Papias (Eusebius, *Church History* 3.39.16), it had become customary in Christian tradition to view the gospel of Matthew as written by a Jew who had penned his work for the “Hebrews.” But in the ecumenical climate of the post-World War Two era, when many scholars were trying to

⁵¹ According to Stanton, the position that views Matthew as having recently broken away from Judaism prevailed up until the time he wrote his review of the history of research on Matthew (early 1980s). See Graham N. Stanton, “The Origin and Purpose of Matthew’s Gospel,” 1914.

⁵² Amy-Jill Levine, *The Social and Ethnic Dimensions of Matthean Salvation History: “Go nowhere among the Gentiles. . .” (Matt. 10:5b)* (Studies in Bible and Early Christianity 14; Lewiston, N.Y.: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1988), 276.

deal with the anti-Semitic legacy of Christianity, the opinion that Matthew was a Jewish author came under serious attack.⁵³ Clark was one of the first to argue against the Jewish identity of Matthew. He believed that the rejection of Israel was a central theme in the gospel of Matthew and consequently had to be written by a Gentile.⁵⁴ Nepper-Christensen also denied that Matthew was a Jewish-Christian, distinguishing between traditions the evangelist received on the one hand and his own emphases on the other hand.⁵⁵ In a similar vein, Trilling claimed that the Matthean community had developed out of an earlier Jewish Christian base into a predominantly Gentile Christian stock. Accordingly, the final redactor of Matthew addresses Gentile Christian, universal concerns: “Matthäus als der Endredaktor denkt entschieden heidenchristlich-universal.”⁵⁶

During the first three decades after 1945, Luke underwent a remarkably similar experience as his sibling Matthew. Despite the dissident voice of Jervell, too prophetic to persuade the majority of his New Testament colleagues of that time, redaction critics went on restricting the more Jewish elements of Luke-Acts to the traditional strata Luke had inherited from his sources. Theological schemes of *Heilsgeschichte* (“salvation history”) also came to the forefront for those who needed to minimize the significance of favorable references in Luke-Acts toward Torah observance. These interpreters

⁵³ The “anti-Semitic” elements in Matthew have also led some Jewish scholars to question the Jewish origins of Matthew. So, for example, the late David Flusser, “Anti-Jewish Sentiment in the Gospel of Matthew,” in *Judaism of the Second Temple Period. Vol. 2: The Jewish Sages and Their Literature* (trans. Azzan Yadin; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2009), 351–53; Herbert W. Basser, *The Mind behind the Gospels: A Commentary to Matthew 1–14* (Boston, Mass.: Academic Studies Press, 2009), 7.

⁵⁴ Kenneth Willis Clark, “The Gentile Bias in Matthew,” *JBL* 66 (1947): 165–72.

⁵⁵ Poul Nepper-Christensen, *Das Matthäusevangelium, ein judenchristliches Evangelium?* (ATDan 1; Aarhus: Universitetsforlaget, 1958), especially pp. 202–7.

⁵⁶ Wolfgang Trilling, *Das wahre Israel: Studien zur Theologie des Matthäus-Evangeliums* (SANT 10; Munich: Kösel-Verlag, 1964), 215. More than Trilling, Georg Strecker drew the sharpest distinctions between a supposed “Jewish Christian” phase and a latter Gentile redactional stage in the Gospel of Matthew. See Georg Strecker, *Der Weg Gerechtigkeit: Untersuchung zur Theologie des Matthäus* (FRLANT 82; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1962), especially pp. 15–35. See also John P. Meier, *The Vision of Matthew: Christ, Church, and Morality in the First Gospel* (New York: Paulist, 1979), 22: “. . . a learned Gentile scholar, not a learned Jewish scholar.”

maintained that the positive descriptions concerning Torah observance in Luke-Acts could not inform the modern reader about Luke's own praxis, because Judaism and Jerusalem allegedly lay so far behind in the mind of the Gentile Christian author who concerned himself more about "universal" matters than petty halakic debates. For these interpreters and many today, Luke had given up on Judaism, gazing with admiration westward toward Rome with his back turned to Jerusalem.

Particularly the work of the late and influential Hans Conzelmann, the progenitor of the redaction-critical approach to Luke, has led many astray from appreciating Luke's special relationship to Judaism. Conzelmann, who argued that Luke should be viewed more as a "theologian" than a "historian," artificially divided Luke-Acts into three discrete epochs of salvation history: 1) the period of Israel 2) the period of Jesus 3) and the period of the church.⁵⁷ For Conzelmann, only the first period of salvation history belonged to the "time of the Law and prophecy."⁵⁸ By the third period of salvation history, the Law had lost its special footing and had been "given up on principle by the Church."⁵⁹ But Conzelmann's *Heilsgeschichte* scheme clashes with the consistent Lukan portrait of Jesus and his Jewish followers as faithful Torah observers *throughout* Luke-Acts. Even after the so-called Jerusalem Council, which Conzelmann curiously interpreted as marking the "actual separation of the Church from the Temple and the Law,"⁶⁰ Luke depicts Paul as continually observing the Torah, circumcising Timothy (!), visiting the temple, affirming his allegiance to the Pharisaic party as well as the

⁵⁷ Hans Conzelmann, *The Theology of St. Luke* (trans. Geoffrey Buswell; New York: Harper & Row, 1961), 16.

⁵⁸ Hans Conzelmann, *Acts of the Apostles* (Hermeneia; trans. James Limburg et al.; Philadelphia, Pa.: Fortress, 1987), xlv.

⁵⁹ Conzelmann, *The Theology of St. Luke*, 147.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

ancestral customs of the Jewish people. Conzelmann seemed dimly aware of this Achillean heel that could lead to the downfall of his entire *Heilsgeschichte* empire. He resorted to dismissing the significance of the presentation in Acts of Paul as Torah observant on the grounds that Luke was merely reminiscing about an earlier period of church history that necessitated a literary adjustment and fine-tuning of a Paul as a Law abiding Jew.⁶¹ In Luke's time though, the *ekklesia* had totally detached itself from the Law. The circular reasoning worked surprisingly well. It successfully won the hearts of many New Testament exegetes and still haunts contemporary scholarship.⁶²

In many ways, then, Matthew and Luke drew similar lots in the immediate post-war period: New Testament specialists generally applied redactional critical readings to the writings of both authors, often relegating the Jewish elements recorded therein to earlier strata of a fossilized period bearing no relevance for understanding the *Sitz im Leben* of the gospel authors. In Matthew's case, however, as we shall see, scholars from the last two decades of the twentieth century would refine their application of redaction criticism and raise social critical considerations that would in the end lead to a complete "rejudaization" of the first canonical gospel. Unfortunately, these methodological processes and considerations never fully revolutionized the classical perception on Luke, still viewed by many as an ignorant Gentile Christian, hostile to Judaism, despite the protests of certain specialists who state otherwise.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² It is regretful that in Pervo's otherwise excellent commentary on Acts, the treatment and understanding of Luke's attitude toward Judaism remains virtually identical to his predecessor Conzelmann. See Pervo, *Acts*, 283 (the Jewish Law is for Luke merely a "superstition"), 544 (projection of Justin Martyr's attitude toward Jewish Law onto Acts).

Present State of Research

That the Gospel of Matthew currently enjoys the status of being the most “Jewish” of all gospels can be easily verified through a quick scrutiny of various popular and academic works on the New Testament.⁶³ Those responsible for the decisive shift away from the Gentile Matthew of the 1960s and 1970s to the Jewish Matthew of our time, include, among others, Overman,⁶⁴ Jill-Levine, and Anthony J. Saldarini, the latter strongly emphasizing reading the gospel of Matthew as part of “the post-70 Jewish debate over how Judaism was to be lived and how that way of life was to be articulated in order to insure the survival of the Jewish community without the Temple and its related political institutions.”⁶⁵ For Saldarini and others it is imperative to read Matthew “with

⁶³ Craig A. Evans, “The Jewish Christian Gospel Tradition,” in *Jewish Believers in Jesus*, 242: “The Gospel of Matthew has been traditionally viewed as the most Jewish of the four New Testament Gospels. Whereas the Jewish authorship of Mark and John is disputed, almost everyone agrees that the Matthean Gospel was composed by a Jew.” Ehrman, *The New Testament*, 206: “. . . the Gospel of Matthew is in many respects the most Jewish of our Gospels”; L. Michael White, “The Gospel of Matthew: Jesus as the New Moses,” n.p. [cited on 13 February, 2012]. Online: <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/religion/story/matthew.html>: “Matthew is the most Jewish of all the gospels.”

⁶⁴ J. Andrew Overman, *Matthew’s Gospel and Formative Judaism: The Social World of the Matthean Community* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress, 1990).

⁶⁵ Anthony J. Saldarini, “The Gospel of Matthew and Jewish-Christian Conflict in Galilee,” in *The Galilee in Late Antiquity* (ed. L. Levine; New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1992), 24. See also Saldarini’s *Matthew’s Christian-Jewish Community* (Chicago Studies in the History of Judaism; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994); Overman, *Matthew’s Gospel and Formative Judaism*, 4 and much of the first two chapters of that work. We can add David C. Sim, *The Gospel of Matthew and Christian Judaism: The History and Social Setting of the Matthean Community* (Studies in the New Testament and Its World. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), within the same trajectory. Others, however, such as Hagner, have not followed this trend. Hagner’s attempt, however, to see Matthew as representing a Jewish form of Christianity rather than a Christian form of Judaism (two terms that for our purposes are misleading and have been discarded from this inquiry, although the term “Christian Judaism” is certainly preferable to “Jewish Christianity”) remains unconvincing. Hagner emphasizes the supposed “radical newness” of the Gospel of Matthew. He asserts that there were several “new things” in the Matthean air which Judaism could not handle: the eschatological announcement and arrival of the messiah and the kingdom; the belief in the messiah as a unique manifestation of God; the claim that the messiah must die a death of a criminal for the forgiveness of sins; obedience to God centered upon Jesus, not the law; the inclusion of Gentiles into the Jewish community, among other things. Equally problematic is his claim that the “high Christology” of Matthew was too much for Judaism to tolerate. In a recent assessment, Carter favors Saldarini’s approach. See Warren Carter, “Matthew’s Gospel: Jewish Christianity, Christian Judaism, or Neither?” in *Jewish Christianity Reconsidered*, 155–80; Donald A. Hagner, “Matthew: Apostate, Reformer, Revolutionary,” *NTS* 49 (2003): 193–209; “Matthew: Christian Judaism or Jewish Christianity?” in *The*

other Jewish post-destruction literature, such as the apocalyptic works 2 Baruch, 4 Ezra and Apocalypse of Abraham, early strata of the Mishnah, and Josephus,” works that “envision Judaism in new circumstances, reorganize its central symbols, determine the precise will of God, and propose a course of action for the faithful community.”⁶⁶

The author of Luke and Acts of the Apostles, on the other hand, has still not enjoyed an equal share with Matthew in this process of rejudaization. If Matthew is viewed as the most Jewish of all gospels, the two tomes penned by Luke are still regarded by conventional scholarship and certainly by most Christian clergy and lay members as the most “Greek” or “Hellenistic” documents within the New Testament corpus.⁶⁷ Because of the allegedly universal concepts and positive outlook toward the Gentile and Roman worlds appearing within his writings, many consider Luke to be the Gentile author *par excellence*, who, unlike Matthew, so the narrative goes, rejects the validity of Torah observance like his master Paul. In spite of the newest perspectives on Paul and his attitude toward the Jewish Law as well as fresh paradigms on the “parting of the ways,” Luke continues to be caricatured as ignorant of Jewish Law and categorically opposed to its observance even by the most prominent of scholars who adopt the latest trends on Jewish-Christian relations. Thus, in a stimulating and interesting article in *The Ways That Never Parted*, Gager unfortunately perpetuates the stereotyped picture of Luke as the

Face of the New Testament Studies: A Survey of Recent Research (Scot McKnight and Grant R. Osborne, eds.; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2004), 263–82.

⁶⁶ Saldarini, “The Gospel of Matthew and Jewish-Christian Conflict in Galilee,” 24.

⁶⁷ G.B. Caird, *The Gospel of St. Luke* (PNTC; Baltimore, Md.: Penguin Books, 1963), 105; Walter Schmithals, *Das Evangelium nach Lukas* (ZBK.NT 3.1; Zurich: Theologischer, 1980), 9: “zweifellos ein Heidenchrist, und er schreibt für Heidenchristen”; Bart J. Koet, *Five Studies on Interpretation of Scripture in Luke-Acts* (SNTA 14; Leuven: University Press, 1989), 22: “The *communis opinio* is that the theology of Luke-Acts is clearly Gentile Christian and that Luke-Acts has been written for a predominantly Gentile audience”; Raymond E. Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah: A Commentary on the Infancy Narratives in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke* (ABRL; New York: Doubleday, 1993), 235–39; Darrell L. Bock, *Luke* (2 vols.; Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament 3; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1994), 1:6. Even Anthony J. Saldarini, “Interpretation of Luke-Acts and Implications for Jewish-Christian Dialogue,” *Word & World* 12 (1992): 37–42, concludes that Luke is probably a Gentile, not an ethnic Jew.

abrogator of the Law and harbinger of Christian anti-Judaism. Gager rightly and commendably argues against the trend of seeing the phenomenon of “Jewish Christianity” as quickly disappearing from the historical scene. He also perspicaciously critiques the common misperception of a rapid and inevitable “parting of the ways” between Judaism and Christianity in Late Antiquity (not the historical period explored in this inquiry but still pertinent for my argument). Gager even goes as far as postulating that “Jewish Christianity” could well have survived into the Islamic period.⁶⁸ On the other hand, the scholar, well known for his thought provoking work on Paul,⁶⁹ deviates from his progressive trajectory of thinking when he starts blaming the author of Acts for generating misunderstandings concerning “Jewish Christianity” and the “parting of the ways.” Gager commences his attack against Luke, stating: “Contrary to the ideologically determined picture of Acts, early Christianity did not move uni-directionally toward Rome but multi-directionally into every corner of the Mediterranean world and beyond . . .”⁷⁰ He then adds:

Contrary to the portrait in Acts, Paul did not repudiate Judaism—or those whom we call Jewish Christians; instead, he focused entirely on his mission to Gentiles, insisting simply that Gentile believers had no need to observe the customs and practices of the Torah. The author of Acts has deliberately drafted Paul to serve for his own anti-Jewish and anti-Jewish-Christian message. Here it is worth noting that just as Paul advocates a “two-door” road to salvation, with different paths for Jews and Gentiles, so at least some Jewish-Christian groups advanced a similar “two-doors” scenario.⁷¹

⁶⁸ John G. Gager, “Did Jewish Christians See the Rise of Islam?” in *The Ways That Never Parted*, 361–72.

⁶⁹ John G. Gager, *Reinventing Paul* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000). Others who follow in Gager’s trajectory on Paul include Mark Nanos, *The Mystery of Romans: The Jewish Context of Paul’s Letter* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress, 1996); *The Irony of Galatians: Paul’s Letter in First-Century Context* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress, 2002); Pamela Michelle Eisenbaum, *Paul Was Not a Christian: The Real Message of a Misunderstood Apostle* (New York: HarperOne, 2009); previously, Lloyd Gaston (to whom Gager is indebted), *Paul and the Torah* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1987).

⁷⁰ Gager, “Did Jewish Christians See the Rise of Islam?” 367.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 367.

Gager also holds Luke responsible for depicting Peter as allegedly abandoning the Jewish Law (Acts 11), which would reflect Luke's own theological agenda rather than historical reality.⁷² If for Gager the ways never really parted between Judaism and Christianity, and "Jewish Christianity" enjoyed such longevity so as to see the dawn of Islam, the author of Luke-Acts, on the other hand, had already parted company from the Judaism of his time. My point is not to single out Gager nor downplay the significant contributions he has made to further our understanding of ancient Judaism and Christianity, only to highlight an unfortunate misunderstanding of Luke-Acts that underscores the need to revisit these issues in a manner that does justice to Luke's writings. To every assertion made recently by Gager and others, counter arguments can be offered that seriously question such claims. First of all, it is far from clear whether the author of Luke-Acts is moving "uni-directionally toward Rome" rather than "multi-directionally into every corner of the Mediterranean world and beyond." The opening of Acts (1:8) already contains a trajectory that is *multi*-directional: "You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." While Luke undeniably ends his narrative in Rome, he brings the reader along with Paul time and time again back to *Jerusalem*.⁷³ Luke regrets that the holy city of Jerusalem "is

⁷² Ibid., 368.

⁷³ Joseph Shulam, introduction to *A Commentary on the Jewish Roots of Acts*, by Hilary Le Cornu with Joseph Shulam (2 vols.; Jerusalem: Academon, 2003), 1:xxx: "While most Western scholars presume Luke wrote Acts for a predominantly gentile audience—the book being written in Greek and Paul, as Luke's mentor, being the Apostles [*sic*] to the Gentiles—it seems more likely to me that it was written for the Jewish community in Jerusalem. The general structure of the book places the story of the Jerusalem community, and Peter's annals, at the beginning of the account. The book opens with Peter's and the early Jerusalem community's faithfulness to Jesus and the community, and closes with Paul affirming his loyalty to the people of Israel and to the traditions of the fathers before the Jewish leadership in Rome. Paul's struggles with the Sanhedrin, Agrippa, and Festus over his faithfulness to the Law and the Prophets (cf. 22–26, 28) would not serve any understandable function for Gentiles in the diaspora. Since one third of the book of Acts is devoted to episodes in Jerusalem and Caesarea it seems likely that Luke was addressing an audience in Jerusalem rather than one in Rome." Cf. Strelan, *Luke the Priest*, 115, also suggesting a Palestinian locale for Luke. Although I am not convinced that Luke originally came from Palestine or wrote

trampled on by the Gentiles, *until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled*” (Luke 21:24; emphasis mine), and never denies the hope for the restoration of the kingdom of Israel (Acts 1:8), only postpones it until the unknown time of the Parousia.⁷⁴ In the meantime, Luke rejoices that the word of God and the good news about the Jewish messiah and king Jesus flow out of Zion to the rest of the world, conquering even Rome, which, vis-à-vis Jerusalem, lies at the extremities of the earth, not at the center.⁷⁵

As to the claim that Luke’s Paul repudiates Judaism, such an assertion is impossible to support when one looks more closely at Paul’s image in Acts. Luke repeatedly portrays Paul as faithfully attending the synagogue on the Sabbath (Acts 13:14–15; 14:1; 17:1, 10, 17; 18:4, 19, 26; 19:8), keeping Jewish festivals such as Shavuot (20:16) and Yom Kippur (27:9),⁷⁶ attending the temple in Jerusalem and partaking in its rituals (21:24), affirming his fidelity to the Torah and Jewish customs (28:17), and even circumcising Timothy (16:3)!⁷⁷ As for Peter’s supposed abandonment of Torah observance, Acts 11 does not claim that Peter entered the house of just any uncircumcised Gentile, but that of Cornelius said to be “a devout man who feared God” (10:2), well spoken of by the whole Jewish nation (10:22). In Acts 11, Peter never

to a Palestinian audience, I do find Shulam’s comments noteworthy for pointing out how Rome does *not* lie at the center of Luke’s worldview. Jerusalem is the navel of Luke’s universe, and Rome is only an object for Jewish evangelistic conquest via the proclamation of God’s word flowing out of Zion.

⁷⁴ Loader, *Jesus’ Attitude towards the Law*, 382: “For Luke Jerusalem remains the holy city and the place of hope. There is more going on here than can be explained by the valid observations about the role of Jerusalem in salvation historical terms as the goal of Jesus’ ministry and the beginning point of the church. Already Paul keeps coming back to Jerusalem. For Luke, Jesus will come to Jerusalem as its Messiah. It will be liberated from the Gentiles who in Luke’s time now desecrate it after the disaster of 70CE.”

⁷⁵ I hope to develop these thoughts in a subsequent work dealing with Luke’s attitude toward the Roman Empire from a Jewish and postcolonial perspective. At this stage, I remain content in proving Luke’s Jewishness by highlighting his affirmation of the Torah. For further secondary references to Acts 1:8, see the first section of chapter 7 of this monograph, which deals with traveling on the Sabbath in Acts 1:12.

⁷⁶ On the observance of Yom Kippur by the author of Acts see Stökl, *The Impact of Yom Kippur on Early Christianity*; “‘Christians’ Observing ‘Jewish’ Festivals of Autumn,” in *The Image of the Judaeo-Christians*, 53–73.

⁷⁷ On Timothy’s circumcision, see chapter 12 of this book.

acknowledges to have eaten anything forbidden in Cornelius' house (10:22). As I argue in chapter 10 of this book, the vision Peter sees at Joppa with the instruction to eat forbidden meats does not endorse abandoning kashrut observance. The point of the vision is that God-fearing Gentiles, who have now accepted the good news, are no longer considered to be morally impure since they too have received the sacred spirit like the Jewish followers of Jesus (11:17). In fact, the so-called Apostolic Decree in Acts 15 implies that Gentile followers of Jesus are obliged to keep a minimal set of Mosaic requirements, some of which overlap with Jewish food laws. As for Jewish followers of Jesus, Peter included, Luke assumes that they continue to bear the entire yoke of the Torah.

Several decades ago, before Sanders had even written his seminal *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* and before the so-called New Perspective on Paul had begun to fructify, Jervell had provided his own remarkable, new perspective on Luke-Acts, claiming that Luke was a Torah observant Jew.⁷⁸ The results of this original and seminal thinker, who argued on behalf of the Jewishness of what seemed at that time to be the most Gentile of New Testament candidates, are well worth quoting here at length:

The Jewishness of Acts, compared to all other New Testament writings, is conspicuous: in the pre-Pauline christology, in the ecclesiology; where the church is Israel; in the soteriology, with the promises of salvation given only to Israel; in the law, the Torah, with its full validity for all Jews in the church; in Paul being the missionary to Israel and the Dispersion. For years scholars were nearly unanimous in viewing Acts as a Gentile-Christian document, written by a Gentile Christian for Gentile Christians. This is not tenable any longer, as it is based to a great extent upon the idea that after 70 AD Jewish Christianity had disappeared, was of no importance, existing only as a marginal feature outside the church. And so no Jewish Christian

⁷⁸ Jacob Jervell, *Luke and the People of God: A New Look at Luke-Acts* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Augsburg, 1972); "The Mighty Minority," *ST* 34 (1980): 13–38; "The Church of the Jews and Godfearers," in *Luke-Acts and the Jewish People: Eight Critical Perspectives* (ed. Joseph B. Tyson; Minneapolis, Minn.: Augsburg, 1988), 11–20; *The Theology of the Acts of the Apostles* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

could have written a book like Acts after 70 AD. But Jewish Christianity was an important and widely spread part of the church throughout the first century. That Luke was able to write Greek in a good style does not show that he was a Gentile—many Jews did so. In spite of his ability to write decent Greek he does so only seldom and sporadically. Most of his work he presents in what may be called biblical Greek, clearly influenced by the Septuagint, a Jewish book, written for Jews and not for Gentiles. Luke's stylistic home was the synagogue. He was a Jewish Christian.⁷⁹

In the 1970s, the time was not yet ripe for New Testament scholarship to swallow the revolutionary perspective on Luke-Acts Jervell had to offer, although a number of specialists always sympathized with his views.⁸⁰ The study of the diversity of Second Temple Judaism was only burgeoning. Scholars were still uncovering the Jewishness of the historical Jesus and, to a lesser extent, that of Paul. Neusner was only beginning to talk about “formative Judaism” rather than “normative Judaism” to describe the Jewish history of post-70.⁸¹ Most scholars back then still held on to what are now outdated schemes about normative “Pharisaic-Rabbinic” Judaism and orthodox Christianity as the sole Second Temple survivors in the aftermath of 70 C.E. In such an intellectual environment, there was little room to accommodate for a Torah observant Jew such as Luke. One prominent interpreter of Luke-Acts would criticize Jervell for having judaized Luke “to the limit.”⁸²

⁷⁹ Jervell, *The Theology of the Acts of the Apostles*, 4–5.

⁸⁰ Some of those who would sympathize with *certain* aspects of Jervell's work include, among others, Donald Juel, *Luke-Acts: The Promise of History* (Atlanta, Ga.: John Knox, 1983), 101–12; Robert L. Brawley, *Luke-Acts and the Jews: Conflict, Apology, and Conciliation* (SBLMS 33; Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1987); Robert C. Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts: A Literary Interpretation. Vol. 1.: The Gospel according to Luke* (Foundations and Facets; Philadelphia, Pa.: Fortress, 1986); especially the overlooked article by Marilyn Salmon, “Insider or Outsider? Luke's Relationship with Judaism” in *Luke-Acts and the Jewish People*, 76–82; David L. Tiede, *Luke* (ACNT; Minneapolis, Minn.: Augsburg Publishing House, 1988), 20, claiming Luke was not a Gentile who was indifferent to the Law; he was more intent than Paul that Christians observe the Law. We cannot forget the works of Klinghardt, Wehnert, Loader, and more recently Thiessen, cited throughout this monograph.

⁸¹ Jacob Neusner, *From Politics to Piety: The Emergence of Pharisaic Judaism* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1973); *Rabbinic Traditions about the Pharisees before 70* (3 vols.; Leiden: Brill, 1973); “The Formation of Rabbinic Judaism: Yavneh from A.D. 70–100,” *ANRW* 19.2:3–42.

⁸² Bovon, *Luke the Theologian*, 406.

Our understanding of pluriform Judaism has dramatically changed since then. Now that the diversity of post-70 Judaism has been appreciated, ancient Jews of all colors and strands, including those who believed in Jesus, can be reincorporated into the diverse spectrum of ancient Jewry. The recent publication of *The Jewish Annotated New Testament* is only the latest manifestation of an ongoing affirmation to see the entire New Testament as a literary corpus of Jewish heritage.⁸³ What is more, some are moving beyond appreciating the Jewish “heritage” of the New Testament to viewing all of its writings as Jewish documents. Jervell, all of sudden, no longer seems so radical. Even German scholarship is beginning to appreciate his work.⁸⁴

⁸³ Amy-Jill Levine and Marc Zvi Brettler, eds., *The Jewish Annotated New Testament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011). This does not mean that the contributors of this volume believe that all of the New Testament documents were written by Jews, only that a firm knowledge of ancient Judaism is important for the elucidation of these Christian texts—common currency these days. The task now, in my opinion, is to move on and see what hermeneutical promise lies in reading these New Testament texts simply as Jewish documents. Unfortunately, even in this latest volume, Jill-Levine shares the *communis opinio* that the gospel of Luke is a Gentile writing (p. 97).

⁸⁴ Jervell complained that his work was neglected by German scholars. See Jacob Jervell, “Retrospect and Prospect in Luke-Acts Interpretation,” in *SBL Seminar Papers, 1991* (SBLSP 30; ed. Eugene H. Lovering; Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1991), 384: “The books have made almost no impact whatever on the German-European scene, at least until two years ago when M. Klinghardt’s monograph, *Gesetz und Volk Gottes* appeared. Dogmas in the history of exegesis are long-lived! It is a great mystery that I was asked to be the successor of E. Haenchen in writing the commentary on Acts for the Meyer Series.” Jervell adds: “It is perhaps no coincidence that of the reviews of my work, 90% have been in English and French, 10% in other languages, and none in German” (384 n. 8). Since his publication of his commentary on Acts in German for the Meyer Series, *Die Apostelgeschichte* (KEK; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998), German scholarship has begun to appreciate his work more fully. Positive treatments of Jervell’s works now include Andrea J. Mayer-Haas, “*Geschenk aus Gottes Schatzkammer (bSchab 10b)*”: *Jesus und der Sabbat im Spiegel der neutestamentlichen Schriften* (NTAbh 43; Münster: Aschendorff, 2003), 382: “Die andauernde Existenz von *gesetzesobservanten* Judenchristen—andere Judenchristen zeigt die Apostelgeschichte nicht—in der Kirche ist ein Zeichen für die Kontinuität von Kirche und Israel” (citing Jervell on p. 382 n. 522) and Jürgen Wehnert, *Die Reinheit*. Before the appearance of Jervell’s commentary in German, appreciative responses of Jervell’s work included: Klinghardt’s *Gesetz und Volk Gottes* and to a certain extent Gerhard Lohfink, *Die Sammlung Israels: Eine Untersuchung zur lukanischen Ekklesiologie* (München: Kösel, 1975). Even the attempt by Roland Deines, “Das Aposteldekret—Halacha für Heidenchristen oder christliche Rücksichtnahme auf jüdische Tabus?” in *Jewish Identity in the Greco-Roman World* (eds. Jörg Frey, Daniel R. Schwartz and Stepanie Gripenotrog; Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity 71; Leiden: Brill, 2007), 323–98, to refute Jervell and Wehnert shows that German scholarship is finally taking due notice of Jervell’s work.

In certain circles, the pendulum is indeed swinging to the other extreme. Strelan has recently gone as far as arguing that Luke was a Jewish priest!⁸⁵ Although I am not convinced that we can make such a precise derivation about Luke's professional background from his writings, I do find some of Strelan's comments regarding the relationship of authorship and authority quite instructive for affirming the Jewishness of Luke: "What authority would a Gentile have, in the years between 70 and 90 CE, to interpret the traditions of Israel in the way that Luke does? What authority would a god-fearer of that time have to interpret and to transmit the Jesus traditions? What authority would a Jew have to interpret Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles?"⁸⁶ These questions merit careful consideration. How credible would a Gentile author arguing on behalf of the continuity of the Jesus movement with its Jewish heritage appear to those Jews of the end of the first century C.E. who were suspicious of the apostasy of Jewish followers of Jesus from the foundational practices of Judaism? A Torah observant Jewish disciple of Jesus would certainly prove a more trustworthy and authoritative candidate than a law-free Gentile Christian ignorant about Judaism for composing a tractate arguing on behalf of Paul's Jewishness and fidelity to the Torah. My primary goal, however, throughout this monograph, is to demonstrate that Luke-Acts does embrace the observance of the Torah, without making positivistic claims about the identity of its author, a point I return to at the conclusion of this work.

⁸⁵ Strelan, *Luke the Priest*. I would like to thank Anthony Kent, student of Strelan, for drawing my attention to this work. There is truly some exciting research going on these days in Australia on Matthew and Luke. Besides Strelan, we note the works of Loader as well as Sim. I would like to thank Loader (not convinced by Strelan's thesis about Luke's priestly identity) for sharing his input on my research during my visit to Australia.

⁸⁶ Strelan, *Luke the Priest*, 103.

Matthew and Luke, Why not Mark?

As I have shared and discussed my project with various people at conferences, seminars, and other venues, many have asked why Mark has not been included into my inquiry. The initial answer I gave to this question was rather straightforward: Mark announces the abrogation of the ritual aspects of the Jewish Law, including kashrut. This can be clearly seen in the parenthetical phrase of Mark 7:19b, “thus he declared all foods clean.” At least according to the criterion of Torah praxis, Mark seems not as Jewish as Matthew and Luke. Then Boyarin kindly shared with me his now published book and views on the gospel of Mark.⁸⁷ At the very least, his work has demonstrated that we cannot too hastily rush to such conclusions concerning Mark and his attitude toward the Law. When the parenthetical statement is removed from Mark ch. 7, it becomes quite clear that Mark is only condemning the subordination of moral concerns to the practice of ritual purity. Mark 7 does not even mount a critique against kashrut, a different matter altogether, and even Mark 7:19b can be read in a way that does not declare the abrogation of kosher laws. Nevertheless, too much work had already been done to turn back and include a thorough analysis of Mark into this monograph. An inquiry into the attitude of Matthew and Luke toward Jewish Law, is, I suppose, already an ambitious project for any aspiring scholar! Mark, however, does provide an important platform for my research as a means for exploring Matthew and Luke’s perspectives on the Jewish Law, since I work under the reasonable assumption that both Matthew and Luke used a copy of Mark when composing their gospels. Suffice to state that I no longer work under my previous assumption concerning Mark’s dismantlement of the ritual aspects of the Torah when assessing how Matthew and Luke modified the Markan traditions they incorporated into

⁸⁷ Daniel Boyarin, *The Jewish Gospels: The Story of the Jewish Christ* (New York: New Press, 2012).

their gospels. But I do detect a mutual concern on the part of Matthew and Luke to eliminate certain misunderstandings the wording of the Markan gospel could generate concerning the abrogation of Torah observance (even if it is not Mark's intent to insinuate such interpretations). In other words, in their appropriation of the gospel of Mark, Matthew and Luke rewrite and modify some of the Markan materials in order to clarify that the Jewish Law has not been cancelled.

Methodological Considerations

Initially, I was set on applying a purely compositional critical approach to Matthew and Luke-Acts. Nevertheless, I inevitably found myself gravitating occasionally toward diachronic questions, wondering whether a tradition recorded in Matthew and Luke reflected their attitude toward a certain matter, or whether such material represented more a traditional view that the synoptic evangelists had chosen to preserve in their writings. My analysis, therefore, although primarily interested in analyzing Matthew and Luke-Acts synchronically, at times deviates from this trajectory when considering certain diachronic developments that might clarify Matthew and Luke's stance toward the Law. These occasional deviations force me to apply a redactional critical analysis to Matthew and Luke with the hope of better appreciating their attitude toward the Jewish Law. Overall, my interest lies primarily with the final layers of composition of Matthew and Luke, that is, with reading these texts in a holistic way, as literary products that inform us about the worldviews of their final authors. Therefore, I stray between composition criticism and redaction criticism even though I do not think that the redactional critical approach proves essential for defending my thesis. The redactional method only underscores and further clarifies what I see as a mutual concern on the part of Matthew

and Luke to affirm the perpetuation of Torah practice. My thesis, therefore, does not hinge entirely on accepting the so-called Two Source Hypothesis to the synoptic problem, although I assume Markan priority in my analysis of Matthew and Luke.

I still find Thompson's distinction between redaction and composition criticism quite helpful for clarifying what I am trying to do in this monograph:

I call myself a composition-critic rather than a redaction-critic. My basic methodological presupposition is that Matthew's editorial activity—whether it be called redaction or composition—was so thorough-going and proceeded out of such a unique vision that it transformed all that he touched. Hence, I am not so much interested in separating tradition from redaction, nor in confronting Matthew with his sources (Mark, Q, and *Sondergut*) in an effort to discover his uniqueness vis-à-vis the material he inherited. Instead, I will attempt to discover one of the evangelist's historical perspectives by accepting his final composition as an intelligible whole and by working with the end-product of his editorial activity.⁸⁸

More than Thompson though, I do confront Matthew and Luke with their sources even if I do not systematically strive to reconstruct a history about the sources and traditions handed down to the synoptic writers. Like Thomson and other composition critics, I view redactional activity primarily as an *authorial* and creative process. Modifying, deleting, and adding material to sources should not be viewed merely as a passive, editorial activity, but as a dynamic process that informs us about the perspectives of the final "redactors," in our case, Matthew and Luke.

I assume, like many, that both Matthew and Luke-Acts were written *after* 70 C.E. If we accept Markan priority, it seems to me that both Matthew and Luke rewrote Mark 13 in light of the destruction of the temple of Jerusalem. I hope that this post-70 interpretation of Mark 13 on the part of Matthew and Luke, in light of the destruction of the temple, becomes apparent in my chapter devoted to the question about traveling on

⁸⁸ William Thompson, "An Historical Perspective on the Gospel of Matthew," *JBL* 93 (1974): 244 n. 2.

the Sabbath in Matthew 24:20. Matthew and Luke, I claim, can tell us about the ongoing importance of the Torah for segments of the Jesus movement living after 70 C.E.

I also accept the authorial unity of Luke-Acts in spite of the recent attempt to question this long held and cherished thesis.⁸⁹ My work does not prove that the same author who wrote the gospel of Luke also composed the book of Acts. Nevertheless, the coherence and consistent affirmation in both works concerning the place of the Torah within the Jesus movement strikes me. If the author of Acts did not compose the gospel of Luke, he has certainly read and appropriated it in such a way that both volumes become the work of one writer.

My inquiry is historical because of my interest in exploring what Matthew and Luke-Acts could have meant to their original readers in light of what we know about ancient Judaism and the Greco-Roman world of that period. I am, therefore, not limiting myself to reading Matthew and Luke-Acts through literary methods that ignore the importance of seriously engaging with the cultural-historical context in which said texts were written. Many secondary works, primarily of exegetical and theological nature, approach Matthew and Luke-Acts using a variety of literary-critical tools, including what is called in biblical studies “narrative criticism.” Because these literary-critical approaches tend to prioritize an autonomous reading of ancient canonical texts without granting sufficient weight to historical-cultural considerations and their original Jewish contexts, they often arrive, in my opinion, to erroneous interpretations about the

⁸⁹ Patricia Walters, *The Assumed Authorial Unity of Luke and Acts: A Reassessment of the Evidence* (SNTSMS 145; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009). Some reviewers of this work express reservations about Walters’ revisionist thesis. More time and research are needed before making any hasty conclusions concerning her work. See, for the time being, Paul Foster, review of Patricia Walters, *The Assumed Authorial Unity of Luke and Acts*, *ExpTim* 121 (2010): 264–65; Joel B. Green, review of Patricia Walters, *The Assumed Authorial Unity of Luke and Acts*, *RBL* [<http://www.bookreviews.org>] (2009); Richard I. Pervo, review of Patricia Walters, *The Assumed Authorial Unity of Luke and Acts: A Reassessment of the Evidence*, *RBL* [<http://www.bookreviews.org>] (2009).

worldviews of these New Testament authors. This becomes quite apparent in various treatments by New Testament exegetes about the relationship and attitude of the Jesus movement to Judaism and the Torah. Often where some New Testament exegetes think Matthew and Luke are making a “radical” statement about Jewish practice that would mark a supposed shift away from its observance, it becomes apparent, after a careful assessment of ancient halakah, that these interpreters have overstated their cases, if not misread the primary texts themselves. For example, as I show in my chapter dealing with the Cornelius episode in Acts, there is nothing halakically significant about Luke’s reference to Peter’s stay at the house of Simon the Tanner. Charles H. Talbert erroneously assumes that tanning was viewed as ritually defiling among ancient Jews. When he does cite rabbinic evidence to back his case, it becomes apparent, after a closer look of these texts and a careful appreciation of the Jewish purity system, that none of the cited rabbinic passages views tanners as ritually impure.⁹⁰ The reference, therefore, in Acts to Simon Peter’s stay at Simon the Tanner’s house bears no significance for understanding Luke’s attitude to purity laws, let alone kashrut.

I do my best, then, to draw from the ancient Jewish sources as well as the best of secondary scholarship on the topic of ancient Jewish Law. For the section on Sabbath keeping, Doering’s monumental work in German on Sabbath halakot has been very informative.⁹¹ For matters related to purity laws and kashrut, two systems that must be properly distinguished from one another, I recognize my indebtedness to the works of

⁹⁰ See chapter 10 of this monograph and my forthcoming article in *New Testament Studies*, “Simon Peter Meets Simon the Tanner: The Ritual Insignificance of Tanning in Ancient Judaism.”

⁹¹ Lutz Doering, *Sabbat: Sabbathhalacha und –praxis im antiken Judentum und Urchristentum* (TSAJ 78; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999). I also interact extensively with Andrea Mayer-Haas, *Geschenk aus Gottes Schatzkammer*.

Hayes, Klawans, Maccoby, Milgrom, and Sanders, among others.⁹² For circumcision, I have found the works of Cohen, Rubin, and Thiessen very instructive.⁹³ There are of course many other important secondary works, references of which can be found in the pertinent chapters and bibliography of this book.

One final note should be made concerning the usage of rabbinic sources in this work. I am quite aware of the historical and methodological problems involved in using rabbinic texts written “much after” the time of Matthew and Luke by a group of (elite?) Jews representing only *one* (insignificant?) stream of Judaism in Late Antiquity who frequently engage in theoretical debates that do not necessarily reflect the halakic and social reality of other non-rabbinic Jews living in Palestine, let alone the Diaspora. Nevertheless, I do not belong to the school of persuasion that describes rabbinic literature as “too late, therefore, irrelevant for the study of the New Testament.” First of all, the chronological gap that divides the earliest rabbinic document, that is, the Mishnah, from Matthew and Luke is not so great as some suggest, particularly since Matthew, Luke, and Acts may have been written as late as the first quarter of the second century C.E., that is, about *less than a century* before the Mishnah reached its *final* form.⁹⁴ The Mishnah and

⁹² Hayes, *Gentile Impurities*; Jonathan Klawans, *Impurity and Sin in Ancient Judaism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); Hyam Maccoby, *Ritual and Morality: The Ritual Purity System and Its Place in Judaism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus* (3 vols.; AB 3–3B; New York: Doubleday, 1991–2001); E.P. Sanders, *Jewish Law from Jesus to the Mishnah* (Philadelphia, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 1990); “Jewish Association with Gentiles and Galatians 2:11–14,” in *The Conversation Continues: Essays on Paul and John Presented to J. Louis Martyn* (eds. Robert Fortna and Beverly Gaventa; Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon, 1990), 170–88; *Judaism: Practice and Belief 63 BCE–66 CE* (Philadelphia, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 1992).

⁹³ Shaye Cohen, *Why Aren't Jewish Women Circumcised?* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 2005); Nissan Rubin, *Beginning of Life; Rites of Birth, Circumcision, and Redemption of the First-Born in the Talmud and Midrash* [in Hebrew] (Tel Aviv: Ha-Kibbutz Ha-Meuhad, 1995); Thiessen, *Contesting Conversion*.

⁹⁴ On the late dating of Matthew, see David C. Sim, “Reconstructing the Social and Religious Milieu of Matthew: Methods, Sources, and Possible Results,” in *Matthew, James, and Didache: Three Related Documents in their Jewish and Christian Settings* (eds. Huub van de Sandt and Jürgen K. Zangenberg; SBLSymS 45; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2008), 13–41; On the late dating of Luke and Acts

other Tannaitic texts contain earlier materials, which, of course, must be verified on an individual basis. In my opinion, the tremendous interest on the part of the rabbinic sages in halakic matters is too significant to be overlooked for an inquiry on Matthew and Luke-Acts that focuses on matters related to Torah observance.⁹⁵ At times, the rabbinic documents provide the only literary evidence, admittedly from a later date and particular provenance, for discussing certain halakic issues in Matthew and Luke-Acts. Besides the gospels, only the rabbinic literature records reservations about performing healings of minor illnesses on the Sabbath (the entire Second Temple literary corpus is silent on this topic). I treat this problem in the introduction to Part I dealing with the Sabbath, and find it impossible to overlook the rabbinic evidence, which can only enhance our discussion on this matter. In my chapter on burial and Sabbath keeping in Matthew and Luke, I point to the halakic dilemma embedded in the synoptic portrayal of Jesus' burial: although Joseph of Arimathea rushes to bury Jesus before sunset in order to avoid desecrating the Sabbath, the synoptic narratives imply that Jesus was buried on another holy day, Passover! How would Jews deal with the issue of burying a corpse when a holy day fell

see J.C. O'Neill, *The Theology of Acts in its Historical Setting* (2d ed; London: 1970); Richard Pervo, *Dating Acts: Between the Evangelists and the Apologists* (Santa Rosa, Calif.: Polebridge, 2006).

⁹⁵ Why then not also consult patristic and classical ("pagan") sources of a later time? My answer to this question is equally positive, albeit advising careful and critical scrutiny of these materials. Nevertheless, because my project experiments reading Matthew and Luke-Acts as *Jewish* texts and focuses on *halakic* issues and the question of the observance of the Mosaic Torah, the patristic and classical sources carry limited weight for the purposes of this inquiry. First, the patristic authors mainly arrived to the conclusion that the Torah no longer carried any relevance for the *ekklesia* in so far as the "ceremonial" (a term I dislike) aspects were concerned. Sabbath, kashrut, and circumcision lost their place in the early church either being replaced with other customs (e.g., Sunday worship), discarded altogether, or allegorized into spiritual metaphor and ethics. Occasionally, I point out this process in works such as *Pseudo-Barnabas* to illustrate precisely what Luke and Matthew are *not* stating. As for the classical sources, I do briefly try to show at the introduction of each major part of this monograph how Greeks and Romans perceived Jewish custom. Nevertheless, these sources only provide an outsider's (and at times polemical) look into the world of Jewish praxis, and often do not assist in shedding light on the halakic intricacies and debates recorded in Matthew and Luke-Acts. I hope these considerations and the other reasons cited throughout this work account for my main focus on and usage of Jewish sources from the Second Temple and rabbinic periods for the execution of the Jewish experiment outlined in this project.

before or after a Sabbath? To my knowledge, no Second Temple Jewish source deals with this halakic matter besides some later (Amoraic) rabbinic texts. This should not, of course, entail treating the rabbinic corpus as a timeless, monolithic entity, as if chronology and historical-critical (as well as other) considerations do not apply to these texts! Obviously, it is always preferable to refer to Tannaitic traditions when they prove pertinent, but even then, methodological and historical issues abound (reliability of the attribution of sayings, reflection of actual praxis, pertinence for the analysis of non-rabbinic Jewish texts, diachronic issues, etc.). Nevertheless, I still maintain that the rabbinic literature should at least be consulted as a *heuristic* device to explore how other Jews dealt with halakic questions that confronted Matthew and Luke, and this is the way I often solicit the rabbinic documents as a means for *imagining* and *exploring* halakic scenarios embedded within these New Testament documents. At times I even cite Rashi and Maimonides in my research! But I do not do so acritically *à la* Strack and Billerbeck. Rather, citing Rashi or Maimonides for me is just like citing Neusner or Sanders. They are *secondary* sources that can enlighten certain halakic problems that arise in my treatments of Sabbath keeping, purity laws, kashrut, and circumcision. As the rabbinic saying goes, “Who is wise? He that learns from all men, as it is written, *From all my teachers have I got understanding*” (Avot 4:1).⁹⁶

Thesis and Summary of Chapters

Luke, just as much as his counterpart Matthew, affirms the observance of the Torah. Both authors, living in the tumultuous aftermath of 70 C.E., expect other Jewish followers of Jesus to continue observing the Jewish Law *in toto* and Gentiles to keep

⁹⁶ All translations from the Mishnah, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from Herbert Danby, *The Mishnah* (London: Humphrey Milford, 1938).

moral or ethical commandments and even certain purity and dietary laws from the Mosaic Torah so as to enable Jewish-Gentile fellowship within the *ekklesia*. According to the criterion of Torah praxis, Luke proves to be just as Jewish as Matthew. The evidence in both Matthew and Luke-Acts shows that the question of Torah practice continued to play an important role in the Jesus movement and that there was still a significant body of Jewish followers of Jesus who were Torah observant even after 70 C.E. In the conclusion to this monograph, I propose we move on and beyond the question of the “parting of the ways” (did Matthew and Luke still belong to Judaism?) and imagine Matthew and Luke as representing two different strands of Judaism, one more akin to but in bitter conflict with Palestinian, Pharisaic Judaism, the other reflecting a Diasporan and Hellenistic form of Judaism, albeit indebted to Jewish tradition and thought stemming from Palestine. Both Matthew and Luke-Acts (and by extension many other early “Christian” writings) are like *Jewish* prisms dispersing light on the ongoing diversity of post-70 Judaism we discover in other writings from this period.

Part I sets out proving this thesis by exploring the question of Sabbath keeping in Matthew and Luke-Acts. Neither Matthew nor Luke declares the abrogation of the Sabbath. Instead, they only argue about *how* the Sabbath should be observed, not about the legitimacy of the Sabbath institution all together. The Introduction to Part I provides an overview of the Sabbath and its treatment in Matthew and Luke-Acts. Chapter 2 contains an analysis of the passages on the Sabbath in Matthew and Luke where no controversy about the Sabbath institution is recorded. Chapters 3 and 4 assess the controversies in Matthew and Luke about plucking grain and healing on the Sabbath. These controversy stories do not point to an abrogation of Sabbath keeping; they only

seek to justify the Sabbath praxis of Jesus and his first followers when it deviates from “normative” conventions. Chapter 5 deals with Jesus’ burial and the depiction of the Sabbath keeping of Joseph of Arimathea and the disciples of Jesus. Here, I explore the halakic dilemma mentioned earlier regarding the burial of Jesus on a holy day (Passover) that falls next to a Sabbath. Chapter 6 treats the topic of traveling on the Sabbath in Matthew. In this chapter, I seek to strengthen the thesis made by others that Matthew refrains from traveling on the Sabbath. In fact, I argue that Matt 24:20, when read in its literary, eschatological, and halakic contexts, marks an important shift within the narration that directly addresses Matthew’s readers and informs us about their attitude toward Sabbath keeping. The Conclusion of Part I provides a detailed summary and synthesis of my analysis of Sabbath keeping in Matthew and Luke. Finally, I dedicate chapter 7 to the question of Sabbath keeping in the book of Acts. Whereas the gospel of Luke contains several controversies about the Sabbath keeping of Jesus and his first disciples, in Acts, no debate whatsoever about Sabbath keeping arises. The contrast between the gospel of Luke, which reports the highest number of Sabbath controversies of all gospels, and Acts, which records none at all, is striking and must be accounted for. I suggest that the Sabbath controversies in the synoptics, particularly in Luke’s case, tell us more about the authority of Jesus than they do about the Sabbath praxis of the gospel writers. We should avoid accepting simplistic, linear, and teleological constructions positing that the Jesus movement inevitably moved away from the Jewish Law as time passed by. On the contrary, I propose that the Sabbath praxis of certain followers of Jesus, Matthew and even Luke, could have been more “conservative” than the historical Jesus himself.⁹⁷

⁹⁷ In the case of Matthew, however, I do suggest in the conclusion of this work that the Sabbath

Part II covers another important marker of Jewish identity: kashrut or what is sometimes called dietary laws. In this section, I find myself inevitably dealing with purity laws as well, but the main focus remains in assessing Matthew and Luke's attitude toward kosher food laws. While many Jews of the Second Temple period argued about how the purity system should be observed (e.g., washing hands before eating), it seems that most, or at least many, Jews agreed on the basic and fundamental necessity to observe kashrut (e.g., refraining from eating forbidden foods such as pork).⁹⁸ Matthew and Luke belong to this "mainstream" Jewish consensus toward the question of kashrut. The Introduction to Part II presents the topic of kashrut, distinguishing it from the Jewish system of purity laws. I find it important to appreciate the distinctions between both systems, for many have made conclusions concerning kashrut in passages of the New Testament that really deal with the domain of ritual (im)purity. Chapter 8 surveys Jewish food laws in Matthew, while chapter 9 covers the same topic in the gospel of Luke. I find nothing in either of the two gospels that speaks against the observance of kashrut. Chapters 10 and 11 deal with the Cornelius episode and the Apostolic Decree in Acts, respectively. These two important chapters show that Luke is really arguing on behalf of the moral purification of Gentile followers of Jesus, not the abrogation of kashrut. In fact, through his affirmation of the Apostolic Decree Luke presupposes that Jewish followers of Jesus will continue to observe the Jewish Law in its entirety and even expects Gentiles to observe some of the Mosaic legislation that enables them to preserve their moral purity and honor the ritual concerns of their Jewish comrades.

controversies recorded in his gospel do reflect a Matthean form of Sabbath praxis, whereas Luke seems more willing to accommodate to "normative" Sabbath keeping conventions, provided that the Jews finally recognize the messianic authority of Jesus.

⁹⁸ But see Kraemer, "Food, Eating, and Meals," 403–19; *Jewish Eating and Identity through the Ages* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 123–37, for a discussion about Jews who disregarded kashrut.

Part III, which looks at the question of circumcision, is the shortest of all three sections. Although Matthew does not explicitly refer to this topic, I suggest that his position on the matter would probably have been similar to that of Luke's: Jewish (male) followers of Jesus should continue to observe circumcision, while Gentile followers of Jesus need not undergo circumcision. Especially in this section of my research, I discover an intimate and thorough knowledge on the part of Luke about Jewish tradition and halakah.

With these three markers of Jewish identity, Sabbath, kashrut, and circumcision, I hope to have sufficiently highlighted the mutual appreciation of Matthew and Luke for the perpetuation of Torah observance. Other aspects of Torah praxis could have been covered, but they go well beyond the limits possible for this inquiry. Nevertheless, many other important issues concerning Torah praxis are dealt with along the way (purity, redemption of the first born, etc.), particularly in Parts II and III, and I hope that the concluding chapter to this work provides a synthesis and sense of closure that ties some of the loose ends for comprehending the complex topic of Torah praxis and the Jewishness of Matthew and Luke-Acts.

Part I

Sabbath Keeping in Matthew and Luke-Acts

*“An entire cessation of all the affairs of life
on each seventh day is a Jewish institution,
and is not prescribed by the laws of any other people.”*
(Isaac DiIsraeli)⁹⁹

For generations the Sabbath has shaped Jewish culture, functioning as one of the distinctive markers of identity that sets the Jewish people apart from other cultures. Many Jews in ancient and modern times have viewed the Sabbath as an exclusive and perpetual, covenantal sign between God and the people of Israel (Exod 31:17).¹⁰⁰ One popular saying, penned by the famous Israeli writer Ahad Haam, captures the traditional Jewish esteem for the Sabbath as an institution that has served to guarantee the survival and flourishing of the Jewish commonwealth throughout its long and perilous history: “more than the Jews have kept the Sabbath, the Sabbath has kept them.”¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ Isaac Disraeli, *The Genius of Judaism* (London: Edward Moxon, 1833), 126.

¹⁰⁰ Some Jews in antiquity, however, such as Philo, understood the Sabbath in broader, cosmic terms, as a “day of festival for all people, and the birthday of the world” (*Opif.* 89), and did not restrict the Sabbath in covenantal terms as other ancient Jews did (e.g., the book of *Jubilees* 2:19–21). For Philo’s view on the Sabbath, see Herold Weiss, *A Day of Gladness: The Sabbath among Jews and Christians in Antiquity* (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 2003), 32–51. Translation of Philo, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from *The Works of Philo: New Updated Edition* (trans. C. D. Yonge; n.p.: Hendrickson, 1993).

¹⁰¹ Translation mine. Ahad Haam, *Kol Kitve Ahad Haam* (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1965), 286: יותר משישראל שמרו את השבת שמרה השבת אותם.

For outsiders, more precisely, of Greco-Roman provenance, “the observance of the Sabbath was one of the best known Jewish customs.”¹⁰² Judging from the ancient classical sources, the Sabbath seems to have been popular among many non-Jews as well. Juvenal (c. 60–130 C.E.), in addition to singling out the Jewish abstention from eating pork and the practice of circumcision, mockingly bemoans the infiltration of Sabbath keeping into Roman society:

Some who have had a father who reveres the Sabbath, worship nothing but the clouds, and the divinity of the heavens, and see no difference between eating swine’s flesh, from which their father abstained, and that of man; and in time they take to circumcision (*Saturae* XIV, 96–99).¹⁰³

Juvenal further blames this fictional paternal character, representative of Gentiles attracted to Judaism, for giving up “every seventh day to idleness, keeping it apart from all the concerns of life” (*Saturae* XIV, 105–104). Seneca (end of first century B.C.E. to 65 C.E.), in his work *De Superstitione*, also expresses similar disdain over the diffusion of Jewish customs throughout the Roman Empire, declaring that “by introducing one day of rest in every seven they lose in idleness almost a seventh of their life, and by failing to act in times of urgency they often suffer loss.”¹⁰⁴ The stoic philosopher proceeds indulging in his lamentation, complaining about the widespread approval of Jewish customs

¹⁰² Harry Joshua Leon, *The Jews of Ancient Rome* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1960), 3. For a list of Greco-Roman references to the Sabbath see the index of Menahem Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism* (3 vols.; Jerusalem: The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1984), 3:146. All translations of Greek and Latin authors on Jews are taken from those citations appearing in Stern’s edition. For further discussion on the Sabbath in ancient non-Jewish sources, see Klinghardt, *Gesetz und Volkes Gottes*, 244–52; Heather A. McKay, *Sabbath and Synagogue: The Question of Sabbath Worship in Ancient Judaism* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 89–131.

¹⁰³ The full passage with further comments can be found in Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors*, 2:102–7.

¹⁰⁴ *De Superstitione*, apud: Augustine, *De Civitate Dei* VI, 11.

throughout the Greco-Roman world, famously and hyperbolically declaring that “the vanquished have given laws to their victors.”¹⁰⁵

Given the prominent profile of the Sabbath as evidenced in the Jewish and non-Jewish sources, it only seems natural to start this inquiry with an assessment of the Sabbath in the gospels of Matthew and Luke as well as the Acts of the Apostles. However, before engaging in this endeavor, a central aspect regarding Sabbath keeping, which appears prominently throughout Matthew and Luke, needs to be dealt with in this introduction.¹⁰⁶ In the fourth volume of his gigantic project on the historical Jesus, John P. Meier has highlighted the absence in the Second Temple sources of any passage forbidding healing on the Sabbath. Meier fully exploits this absence in order to paint a picture of the historical Jesus (not the object of this study) in total harmony with the non-sectarian halakic practices of his day. After surveying the pertinent sources, from the Jewish scriptures all the way to the early rabbinic literature, Meier concludes:

The overall impression one gets from these and other rabbinic texts, when viewed in the context of the total absence of any prohibition of healing on the sabbath in the pre-70 period (notably in *Jubilees* and the *Damascus Document*), is that the post-70 rabbis had developed a new type of sabbath prohibition concerning healing, enshrined literarily for the first time in the Mishna. From the start, the newly formulated prohibition was not without its inconsistencies and disputed points, and further wiggle room continued to be created in later stages of rabbinic writings.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.: “*victi victoribus leges dederunt.*” Such vilification, however, usually proceeds from a selective group of Roman elitist writings and does not represent the views of all ancient non-Jews, many of who were curious about and drawn to Jewish tradition. See Doering, *Schabbat*, 286–89, for a brief discussion of primary evidence for Gentile attraction toward the Sabbath.

¹⁰⁶ There is no need here to provide a survey on Sabbath halakah during the Second Temple period, since other specialists have already performed this work. Instead, I will cite the pertinent primary and secondary sources at various points throughout Part I. The reference work for any aspect of Sabbath halakah in ancient Judaism is now Doering’s *Schabbat*. Other (less exhaustive) surveys can be found in the works of Mayer-Haas, *Geschenk*, 32–80; John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus. Volume Four: Law and Love* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 234–52; Weiss, *A Day of Gladness*, 10–31; Yong-Eui Yang, *Jesus and the Sabbath in Matthew’s Gospel* (JSNTSup 139; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 21–99.

¹⁰⁷ Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 4:251. Before Meier, others who already pointed to the absence of pre-Tannaitic (besides the gospels) objections to healings on the Sabbath include Doering, *Schabbat*, 566–78; Mayer-Haas, *Geschenk*, 214.

Meier thinks that the gospel texts reporting controversies over Jesus' Sabbath healings reveal a "disconnect" with Jewish views on this matter. Their alleged ignorance about Jewish halakah encourages Meier to reaffirm his premonition regarding such pericopes, dubbed "controversy stories" or "dispute stories" (*Streitgespräche*) by form critics: their meaning remains unclear.¹⁰⁸ Meier's thesis implies that the Jewish followers of Jesus living in Palestine prior to 70 C.E. would have been responsible for creating such "senseless" stories either for polemical, apologetic reasons or for internal consumption.¹⁰⁹

Meier's thesis regarding the issue of Sabbath healings during the first century proves unconvincing on several grounds despite his noble and welcomed effort to place the historical Jesus within his original Jewish halakic framework. First, it seems very unlikely that all of the first *Jewish* followers of Jesus, who were responsible for the generation of such stories, should be so ignorant of Jewish custom as to conjure up such halakic phantoms. However idealized, polemical, or apologetic such stories may be—and they certainly are, as the traditional studies of form criticism have amply demonstrated—for them to make any sense, a real objection to Sabbath healings of *non-life threatening conditions* needs to be heard in the voice of the opponents, almost always Pharisees. Surely, somewhere during the development of such stories, a member of the Jesus movement could have pointed out and erased their incongruities if Sabbath healings were indeed acceptable among all Jews in the pre-70 era. Unless one imagines a sudden widespread prohibition against healing, emerging only and immediately after 70 C.E., the same charge of logical absurdity and ignorance regarding Jewish custom would also have to be held against the redactors of Mark, Matthew (certainly no ignoramus of Jewish

¹⁰⁸ Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 4:254.

¹⁰⁹ Cf. Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 4:279.

affairs), Luke, and John, since none of these gospel writers corrects the supposedly blatant halakic errors regarding Sabbath healings in the traditions handed down to them.

The manifold repetitions and widespread agreement among all four gospels make it more than likely that certain ancient Jews felt uncomfortable with the execution of such therapeutic acts on the Sabbath. In my opinion, the gospel literature should be taken more seriously as evidence for Jewish halakic practices otherwise unattested for in the first century even while undergoing the *same* rigorous historical-critical inquiry any other Second Temple Jewish text would receive at the hands of modern scholars. Obviously, we should not expect to find complete accuracy or unbiased portrayals in the canonical gospels regarding the halakic practices of other Jewish groups, but to deny such accounts any historical basis regarding halakic matters before taking them seriously encourages a skepticism beyond reasonable proportion. Hence one of the many reasons for my preference for qualifying such literature simply as *Jewish* rather than “Christian.” The latter label can easily lead one to set this literature completely aside from the inquiry of Second Temple Judaism. In our justified efforts to recover the Jewish Jesus, we should not forget the very Jewish nature and provenance of much of the primary evidence used to reconstruct the historical portrait of this enigmatic figure. Especially in the eyes of the *synoptic* writers, Jesus is the *Jewish* Jesus. “The Synoptic Jesus lived as a law-abiding Jew.”¹¹⁰ Doering’s comments are right on mark regarding the usage of early “Christian” literature for inquiring into ancient Jewish halakah:

The rabbis did not invent halakhah, it was in various forms already quite developed in the first century. But early Jewish halakhic texts tend to cover only selected aspects of

¹¹⁰ Sanders, *Jewish Law from Jesus to the Mishnah*, 90. Sanders makes this pronouncement but does not perceive its implications for understanding the perspectives of the *synoptic authors*. Instead, like Meier, he only emphasizes the Jewishness and Torah observance of the historical Jesus, but overlooks the very Jewish provenance of the synoptic writings which have preserved the Torah abiding Jewish Jesus for us.

legally structured life. At times, when we ask for halakah and practice in the New Testament we cannot simply take a Jewish source and “adduce” it for comparison. *Sometimes the New Testament is the earliest evidence for a certain regulation.*”¹¹¹

In addition to the gospel texts, the admittedly later rabbinic literature also reveals a certain reticence among some (rabbinic) Jews toward healing minor diseases on the Sabbath.¹¹² To further illustrate this point, Doering discusses the issue of *piquah nefesh* (פיקוח נפש)—a rabbinic term and concept that is rooted in the halakic developments of the Second Temple Period. Briefly stated, the ancient rabbis grant license for suspending the Sabbath when human life is in danger. This concept seems to have developed in tandem with the question of engaging in warfare on the Sabbath—an issue that acutely arose during the Maccabean wars. For obvious strategic and pragmatic reasons, the Maccabeans eventually decreed that fighting was permissible on the Sabbath (1 Macc 2:39–41; *Ant.* 12:276).¹¹³ Besides justifying warfare on the Sabbath, some Jews also devised ways for saving human life on the Sabbath in other more “normal” circumstances.¹¹⁴ For example, what should be done if a person falls into a well or body of water on the Sabbath? According to the stringent opinions voiced in certain texts from the Dead Sea Scrolls, Jews cannot *break* the Sabbath in order to save a human. This strict position on the matter maintains that a Jewish person should in this scenario try to pull the endangered human out of the water with bare hands or clothes, but not use instruments, which Jews are forbidden to carry on the Sabbath (CD 11:16–17; 4Q265 6:6–7). This stringent view attempts to uphold two fundamental values when they clash

¹¹¹ Lutz Doering, “Much Ado about Nothing? Jesus’ Sabbath Healings and their Halakic Implications Revisited,” in *Judaistik und neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* (ed. Lutz Doering et al.; FRLANT 226; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008), 229 (italics mine).

¹¹² On this matter, see much of Doering’s “Much Ado about Nothing?” 215–41.

¹¹³ Doering, *Schabbat*, 547–54. A tradition recorded in *Jubilees* 50:12 still holds on to the older, more stringent practice of not engaging in battle on the Sabbath. See Doering, *Schabbat*, 107–8.

¹¹⁴ See Doering, *Schabbat*, 201–4; 232–35.

with each other: preserving human life while simultaneously honoring the sanctity of the Sabbath.¹¹⁵

However, alternative halakic routes exist to deal with this problem. For example, rabbinic halakah allows suspending the Sabbath in almost any way in order to save someone's life.¹¹⁶ Doering points to one text in which certain rabbis even permit Jews to save life without seeking permission from the *Beit Din* (*t. Shabb.* 15[16]:11). These rabbinic sages may have made this qualification because some Jews were still reluctant in their own day to save human life out of concern for respecting the Sabbath. Hence the rabbinic effort to devise ways of encouraging Jews to save life even without their "official consent."¹¹⁷ Given the reluctance among certain Jews to even save life on the Sabbath (e.g., Qumranic sect), one wonders how first century Jews would have responded to less mitigating conditions (chronic diseases, minor illnesses, etc.) that were not life-threatening. At least the later rabbinic evidence expresses substantial reservation toward caring about less serious conditions on the Sabbath.¹¹⁸ Passages such as *m. Shabb.* 14:3 (one may not consume hyssop on the Sabbath since it is not food for healthy people), *m. Shabb.* 14:4 (prohibition against sucking vinegar out of concern for one's teeth; prohibition against applying wine or vinegar on the body to relieve one's loins), and *m. Shabb.* 22:6 (e.g., one may not induce vomiting, nor straighten the limb of a child, nor pour cold water on a dislocated hand or foot, and so on) attest to the opposition among

¹¹⁵ Doering, *Schabbat*, 566–68.

¹¹⁶ *T. Shabb.* 15[16]:17: one can break the Sabbath to save life in any circumstance, save for idolatry, sexual immorality, and bloodshed (כל דבר עומד בפני פקוח נפש חוץ מע"ז וגלוי עריות ושפיכות דמים). Cf. *m. Yoma* 8:6; *t. Shabb.* 9[10]:22; 15[16]:11, 15.

¹¹⁷ Doering, *Schabbat*, 230. I do *not* take this injunction as evidence that "common" Jews would have felt a need to consult with rabbinic authorities on such matters. Nevertheless, I do think that such rabbinic passages, along with the evidence from the gospels, point toward a hesitation on the part of some ancient Jews to break the Sabbath in order to save human life.

¹¹⁸ The evidence is discussed by Doering, "Much Ado about Nothing?" 232–35.

certain rabbinic sages against intentionally performing healings of minor conditions on the Sabbath. Meier, following Sanders, would contend that such rabbinic positions prohibit performing healings that involve *physical* labor. But Jesus often heals the sick merely through *oral* pronouncement:

Indeed, more than any other sabbath dispute story, Mark 3:1–6 is a glaring example of this difficulty [i.e., determining how a 1st century Jew would object to such a Sabbath healing]. For, in the healing of the man with the withered hand, Jesus literally *does nothing*. He simply issues two brief, simple commands to the afflicted man. . . .¹¹⁹

However, lest we suddenly forget the *ideal*, generalizing composure of such pericopes, which do not report history *wie es eigentlich gewesen*, it could well be that during his healing performances Jesus “used some form of ‘physical action’ which is not recorded.”¹²⁰ In any case, other passages in the gospels do record physical applications. One readily thinks of John 9:6: “he spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva and spread the mud on the man’s eyes.”¹²¹ In the gospels of Mark and Luke, some passages describe physical gestures such as holding the hand, laying hands, or helping someone stand up (Mark 1:31; Luke 13:13; 14:4).¹²² None of the gospels, however, really concerns itself with the *mode* of Jesus’ healings. They provide the reader with generalizing, concise stories that conceal a halakic debate concerning intentional healings of minor diseases on the Sabbath. Read against this halakic backdrop, such stories become

¹¹⁹ Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 4:254, following E.P. Sanders, *Jewish Law from Jesus to the Mishnah*, 21. See already, Geza Vermes, *Jesus the Jew: A Historian’s Reading of the Gospels* (Philadelphia, Pa.: Fortress, 1981), 25.

¹²⁰ Graham Stanton, *The Gospels and Jesus* (2d ed.; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 228. Cf. Doering, “Much Ado about Nothing?” 229.

¹²¹ For the purposes of this inquiry, I do not deal with the gospel of John and its (ir?)relevance for reconstructing the historical Jesus. My goal is to illustrate how intentional healings of minor diseases, whether through physical or oral means, were objectionable to certain Jews—the gospels serving as the primary evidence to prove this point.

¹²² Luke, however, primarily focuses on testifying to the power and authority of Jesus’ *word* as I argue in the subsequent chapters.

comprehensible despite their inaccuracies and biases: when Jesus performs minor cures on the Sabbath, controversy arises.

Doering also brings to the foreground the prohibition against *talking* about work in certain passages from the Dead Sea Scrolls and rabbinic literature (e.g., CD 10:19; 4Q264a 1:5–8; *b. Shabb.* 113b; 150a).¹²³ Apparently, the House of Shammai might have even forbidden praying for the sick on the Sabbath (*t. Shabb.* 16[17]:22). If any overlap can be imagined between Pharisees and the Tannaim—a supposition I find by no means absurd, if not, by any means, assured—then it certainly seems possible that some Pharisees and maybe even some other Jews (e.g., Essenes, Qumranites, etc.) would have objected to caring for minor diseases on the Sabbath.¹²⁴ Doering concludes that “*first century Pharisees are likely to have considered an immediate therapy of a non-life threatening disease unlawful, even if effected by mere word.*”¹²⁵

¹²³ Doering, “Much Ado about Nothing?” 234. Even the very thought of work is proscribed in certain texts (Philo, *Mos.* 2:21; *Lev. Rab.* 34:16 on Lev 25:35; *y. Shabb.* 15:3 15 a–b, etc.). See Doering, *Schabbat*, 348–352. Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 4:254, to bolster his thesis, brings up the incident in the prayer house of Tiberias during which a debate occurred on the Sabbath regarding political affairs (Josephus, *Vita* 276–79): “Apparently, forceful speech exhorting or ordering others to undertake forceful action was not considered by any Jew present in the ‘prayer house’ to be a violation of the sabbath rest. Why should Jesus’ two short commands, which do not urge any action that would be illicit on the sabbath, constitute such a violation?” The reference to Josephus carries limited weight. The debate takes place during a time of war (First Jewish Revolt). Consequently, such an occurrence may have been exceptional one, deviating from normal convention. Moreover, these Jewish members of Tiberias *debate* about what to do (after the Sabbath), while Jesus *pronounces* words that generate a change in the human’s condition on the Sabbath. Cf. There is also the further possibility that in this pericope Josephus tries to carefully observe the Sabbath limits despite the pressing circumstances. On this point, see Doering, *Schabbat*, 494–95.

¹²⁴ This observation should not encourage a return to the romantic, outdated narrative that sees the Pharisees and then the rabbis as the leaders of a “normative” Judaism in post-70 Palestine, let alone the Diaspora!

¹²⁵ Doering, “Much Ado about Nothing?” 235. Perhaps, the Pharisaic objection to performing minor cures on the Sabbath stems from a desire to refrain from creating “change” or altering natural circumstances through such actions on this holy day. In other words, some Jews of the Second Temple period and beyond object to healing on the Sabbath because they view such an act as a “creative” performance that transforms the condition of the human from one state (sick) to another (healed). Such a transformative, creative act may have been viewed as unnecessary “work” that could be postponed until after the Sabbath. Cf. Peter J. Tomson, *‘If this be from Heaven. . .’: Jesus and the New Testament Authors in Their Relationship to Judaism* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 154: “Not one of the synoptic accounts reports that Jesus prepares a medicine: he does not execute a single ‘work’ that is forbidden on the Sabbath, as that was

The position advocated by Meier in the end also results to an *argumentum e silentio*, since to the best of my knowledge *no pre-Gospel Jewish document ever records a healing episode occurring during the Sabbath*. Could such a remarkable silence in the sources indicate that many first-century Jews did indeed avoid treating minor diseases on the Sabbath? When such scenarios finally do emerge, some Jews either contest (the gospel evidence) or strongly discourage, if not forbid (the rabbinic evidence), such transactions. Moreover, Meier's thesis raises the question why healings of minor conditions suddenly became an issue in the post-70 era. Why were rabbinic sages making such qualifications on this issue, if no real reluctance or debate existed prior to 70? To see the rabbinic evidence as collectively representing a sudden and more stringent position on the matter, even stricter than their Qumranic and Essenic counterparts, seems unlikely.¹²⁶ Rather, one might tentatively suggest that prior to 70 certain Jews (e.g., Qumranites, Essenes, some Pharisees, etc.) objected to treating minor diseases on the Sabbath and that later on the rabbinic sages allowed for some "wobble room" in this domain even if they preferred to postpone performing Sabbath healings to normal weekdays. To be sure, many "common" Jews would probably have ignored the injunctions of rabbis, Essenes, Pharisees, and the like, and probably cared for their sick on the Sabbath at their own discretion. In chapter 5, I argue that it is precisely this

later summarized in a rabbinic formulation (*m. Šab. 7.2*). Healing, however, entails a change in circumstances and the issue is how this is viewed."

¹²⁶ In many instances, rabbinic halakah tends to be more lenient than sectarian positions from the pre-70 era (e.g., the sect of Qumran). For example, *Jub. 50:12* prohibits one from being on a ship on the Sabbath, while rabbinic tradition allows for such a possibility in certain conditions (e.g., *Sifre Deut Pisqa 203; Midr. Tann. to Deut 20:20; m. Shabb. 16:8*). See Doering, *Schabbat*, 99–100 and chapter 7 in this monograph dealing with Sabbath traveling in Acts. *Jub. 50:12* prohibits fighting on the Sabbath; rabbinic tradition permits (*t. Eruv. 3[4]:7*). While CD 11:16–17 and 4Q265 6:6–7 prohibit using instruments to draw a human from the water on the Sabbath, many rabbis would certainly not object to this act. The list could be easily multiplied (e.g., saving an animal from a well on the Sabbath: Qumran forbids; rabbis allow at least for one to provide the animal with food; see chapter 5 of this monograph). Is it not better to posit that the rabbis loosened the legislation against healings of minor diseases on the Sabbath, which some Jews of the Second Temple period categorically prohibited?

segment of the Jewish people, the so-called “people of the land,” that Matthew could have been seeking to win over by appealing to their customs and “common sense.”¹²⁷

Throughout this section, then, I work under the assumption that certain Jews of the first century C.E. objected to performing minor cures on the Sabbath. This approach best accounts for the presence of reports on controversies over Sabbath healings in the synoptic gospels.

¹²⁷ In anticipation of potential criticism, let me state that I do not wish to revive an older scholarly (often Christian) dichotomy that ties the emergence of “Christianity” with the *Am Haarets* (“people of the land”) and completely opposes these against the Pharisees/rabbinic sages. Many “normal” Jews may have been equally attracted to Pharisaic practice. Consequently, it seems better to see both the Matthean followers of Jesus and the Pharisees as competing with another to gain control over the masses of “common” Jews who lived throughout Galilee. See already Aharon Oppenheimer, *The 'Am Ha-Aretz: A Study in the Social History of the Jewish People in the Hellenistic-Roman Period* (ALGHJ 8; Leiden: Brill, 1977), 1–22.

Chapter 2

Non-Controversial Sabbath Episodes

“Two ministering angels accompany man on the eve of the Sabbath from the synagogue to his home, one a good [angel] and one an evil [one]. And when he arrives home and finds the lamp burning, the table laid and the couch [bed] covered with a spread, the good angel exclaims, ‘May it be even thus on another Sabbath [too],’ and the evil angel unwillingly responds ‘amen.’ But if not, the evil angel exclaims, ‘May it be even thus on another Sabbath [too],’ and the good angel unwillingly responds, ‘amen.’”
(*B. Shabb. 119b*)¹²⁸

Introduction

The following episodes in Matthew and Luke occur in Sabbath settings that do not deal with the question of Sabbath keeping. In other words, these stories happen *on* the Sabbath but are not really *about* the Sabbath.¹²⁹ Nevertheless, even if these passages do not deal directly with Sabbath keeping, it is important to carefully analyze them in order to obtain a global perspective on Matthew and Luke’s attitude toward the Sabbath institution. First of all, these passages can illustrate how Matthew and Luke (as well as Mark) are not always set on reporting controversies about Sabbath keeping when they refer to this holy day in their writings. In fact, these episodes show that the synoptic authors can often depict the Sabbath in positive terms, free from polemics. This is especially true of Luke, as he highlights Jesus’ attendance of the synagogue on the Sabbath more than any other gospel writer does. In Luke’s case, we also discover a great

¹²⁸ All translations of the Bavli, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the Soncino edition.

¹²⁹ Mayer-Haas, *Geschenk*, 136 n. 2: “Bei den Textanalysen wird unterschieden zwischen den beiden Texten, die *am* Sabbat handeln . . . und den Texten, die *vom* Sabbat handeln.” Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 4:252, includes such stories under the rubric of “miracles on the Sabbath that do not provoke a dispute.”

deal about what happens on the Sabbath in a synagogue setting. Can this information tell us anything about Luke and his readers? To answer this question, I begin by analyzing those Markan passages that both Matthew and Luke have reworked, appropriated, and at times even eliminated. I then conclude with an assessment of a pericope unique to Luke's gospel (Luke 4:16–31) that also contains no disputes about Sabbath keeping.

An Unclean Spirit in the Synagogue of Capernaum on the Sabbath

*Synoptic Window*¹³⁰

Table 2-1

Matt 7:28–29	Mark 1:21–28	Luke 4:31–37
<p>²⁸ Now when Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were astounded at his teaching, ²⁹ for he taught them as one having authority, and not as <u>their</u> scribes.</p>	<p>²¹ They went to Capernaum; and when the sabbath came, he entered the synagogue and taught. ²² They were astounded at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority, <u>and not as the scribes</u>. ²³ Just then there was in <u>their</u>¹³¹ synagogue a man with an unclean spirit, ²⁴ and he cried out, “What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God.” ²⁵ But Jesus rebuked him, saying, “Be silent, and come out of him!” ²⁶ And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying with a loud voice, came out of him. ²⁷ They were all amazed, and they kept on asking one another, “What is this? <u>A new teaching</u>—with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him.”</p>	<p>³¹ He went down to Capernaum, a city in Galilee, and was teaching them on the sabbath. ³² They were astounded at his teaching, because he spoke with authority. ³³ In the synagogue there was a man who had the spirit of an unclean demon, and he cried out with a loud voice, ³⁴ “Let us alone! What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God.” ³⁵ But Jesus rebuked him, saying, “Be silent, and come out of him!” When the demon had thrown him down before them, he came out of him without having done him any harm. ³⁶ They were all amazed and kept saying to one another, “What kind of <u>utterance</u> (ὁ λόγος) is this? For with authority and power he commands the unclean spirits, and out they come!”</p>

¹³⁰ All citations from the New Testament (and the Hebrew Bible) are taken from the New Revised Standard Version. I critique the NRSV and other versions of the Bible at different junctures where I believe my analysis can improve or correct the modern translations.

¹³¹ Mayer-Haas, *Geschenk*, 148, sees the intrusion of the possessive pronoun “their” as indicative of a distance between the addressees of the Markan gospel and the wider, Jewish synagogue environment, although she thinks that this reality did not prevent them from enjoying limited contact with the synagogue and does not preclude their own private gatherings on the Sabbath for worship.

²⁸ At once his fame began to spread throughout the surrounding region of Galilee.

³⁷ And a report about him began to reach every place in the region.

Literary Context

The first reference in Mark to the Sabbath appears within a larger literary unit (1:21–39).¹³² In its first subunit (vv. 21–28), Mark depicts Jesus teaching with authority on the Sabbath in the synagogue of one of his favorite Galilean towns, Capernaum. According to Mark, Jesus succeeds in winning the admiration of the local crowd thanks to his authoritative manner of teaching in the synagogue. It is during this visit on the Sabbath to the synagogue that Jesus also expels an evil spirit from one of the congregants. After this exorcism, Mark has Jesus heal on the same day the mother-in-law of Simon Peter during a visit to the latter's house (vv. 29–31), thereby implying that the latter episode also takes place on the Sabbath.

Matthew does not follow Mark's narration of the events, leaving out the story about the man tormented by an unclean spirit in the synagogue of Capernaum, while placing the material found in Mark 1:22, which describes the amazement of the crowds at Jesus' authority, at the conclusion to the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 7:28–29). As a result, the crowds marvel at Jesus' teaching and authority, but, unlike Mark (1:21–22), there is no hint in Matthew that this event occurs on the Sabbath day.¹³³

¹³² Mayer-Haas, *Geschenk*, 139, views Mark 1:21–39 as one unit, but, of course, within this segment of Mark the Sabbath day ends in v. 34, since according to v. 3 Jesus goes out to pray in a deserted place “in the morning, while it was still very dark.” This chronological reference clearly marks a transition into the following day of the new week.

¹³³ Matthew relocates the reference in Mark 1:21a to Jesus' departure from Nazareth to Capernaum to Matt 4:13. Traces of Mark 1:28 appear in Matt 4:24a: “So his fame spread throughout all Syria, and they brought to him all the sick, those who were afflicted with various diseases and pains, demoniacs, epileptics, and paralytics, and he cured them.” Cf. also Mark 1:24 (“What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God.”) with Matt 8:29b (“What have you to do with us, Son of God? Have you come here to torment us before the time?”). The material introducing the

This leaves us with the assessment of Luke's version of the episode, which, unlike Matthew, does retain the Markan material within its Sabbath setting. Luke, however, has placed the Markan material within a different sequential framework. Unlike Mark, who places Jesus' visit to the synagogue of Capernaum after the calling of the first disciples (1:16–20), Luke reverses the order of events: the calling of the disciples appears only after Jesus' visit to the synagogue of Capernaum on the Sabbath (5:1–11).¹³⁴ In addition, before visiting Capernaum the Lukan Jesus experiences rejection in Nazareth, his hometown (4:16–30). According to Luke, this event also occurs on a Sabbath. Luke's relocation of Jesus' visit to Capernaum immediately after his rejection in Nazareth is by no means accidental.¹³⁵ During this marking event, the Lukan Jesus delivers on the Sabbath in the synagogue a programmatic message closely linked to the reading from the Isaiah scroll (Isa 61:1,2; 58:6), announcing release and freedom to those captive and suffering oppression (4:18–19). Immediately after his departure from Nazareth, the readers of Luke witness the very concretization of that prophetic announcement when Jesus releases a man from an unclean spirit in the synagogue of Capernaum (4:31–37)—an event that also occurs on a Sabbath. In this way, Luke situates on the Sabbath day both the proclamation and the materialization of the theme of release from captivity promised and fulfilled by Jesus.

Sermon on the Mount in Matt 5:1 is based in part on Mark 1:21. See Ulrich Luz, *Matthew* (3 vols.; Hermeneia; Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress, 2001–2007), 1:182.

¹³⁴ Hence the different singular and plural verbs in Mark and Luke: in Mark 1:21, *they* (i.e., Jesus and his first disciples) enter into the synagogue of Capernaum on the Sabbath (εἰσπορεύονται), while Luke 4:31 naturally only mentions Jesus' arrival into Capernaum (κατῆλθεν), since he does not yet have any disciples (who only appear later on in 5:1–11).

¹³⁵ Correctly, George E. Rice, "Luke 4:31–44: Release for the Captives," *AUSS* 20 (1982): 23–28. Cf. Ulrich Busse, *Die Wunder des Propheten Jesus: Die Rezeption, Komposition und Interpretation der Wundertradition im Evangelium des Lukas* (Forschung zur Bibel 24; Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1977), 58.

Analysis

As noted earlier, Luke follows Mark in situating Jesus' teaching in the synagogue on the Sabbath day (Mark 1:21: "τοῖς σάββασιν εἰσελθὼν εἰς τὴν συναγωγὴν ἐδίδασκεν"; Luke 4:31: "καὶ ἦν διδάσκων αὐτοὺς ἐν τοῖς σάββασιν"). The word for "Sabbath" appears in Mark 1:21 and Luke 4:31 in the plural. Mark employs the plural form to mean that Jesus entered into the synagogue of Capernaum and taught there (εἰσελθὼν εἰς τὴν συναγωγὴν ἐδίδασκεν) on a *single Sabbath day* (τοῖς σάββασιν). The usage of the plural in the singular sense is not uncommon in "Jewish Greek": it appears elsewhere in the synoptic tradition (e.g., Matt 12:1; 28:1) as well as in the Septuagint (τὰ σάββατα: Exod 16:29; 31:14, 16 or τὴν ἡμέραν τῶν σαββάτων: Exod 20:8; Deut 5:12; Jer 17:21). Luke, however, probably uses the plural dative τοῖς σάββασιν here to mean that Jesus taught in Capernaum during *several Sabbaths*. This becomes more apparent when we observe how Luke has reworked Mark's text. According to Luke, Jesus "entered" (κατήλθεν: in the aorist, signaling a simple aspect occurring in the past once and for all) into the city of Capernaum and "was teaching" (ἦν διδάσκων)—the periphrastic construction suggesting in this instance the continuous, repeated force of an action—"on the *Sabbaths*" (ἐν τοῖς σάββασιν). In this way, Luke insinuates that Jesus traveled once to Capernaum but spent several Sabbaths teaching in the local synagogue during his visit. This particular usage of the plural corresponds to Luke's intention elsewhere to underline Jesus' *habitual* attendance of the synagogue on the Sabbath day.¹³⁶

¹³⁶ Luke 13:10, Ἦν δὲ διδάσκων ἐν μιᾷ τῶν συναγωγῶν ἐν τοῖς σάββασιν, can also be translated as: "and he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the *Sabbaths* (or on each Sabbath)." When Luke wants to signal that an act occurred only on one Sabbath he does so by employing various other constructions such as τῇ

Besides retaining Mark's Sabbath setting, Luke also preserves much of the Markan wording, albeit with some modifications in style and language, eliminating, for example, the characteristic Markan usage of εὐθύς (“immediately”; cf. Mark 1:21, 23 and Luke 4:31,33).¹³⁷ Luke also makes some significant changes to Mark's pericope. For example, Luke prefers to highlight the verbal aspect of Jesus' teaching, referring to it as “this word” (Luke 4:36: τίς ὁ λόγος οὗτος; instead of Mark 1:27: τί ἐστὶν τοῦτο;), and eliminates Mark's description of Jesus' instruction in terms of its *novelty* (διδαχὴ καινῆ; 1:27), emphasizing in this way, as elsewhere, the continuity of Jesus' message with the Jewish tradition.¹³⁸ In addition, Luke eliminates Mark's polemical rhetoric: whereas Mark's Jesus “taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes” (Mark 1:22), Luke's Jesus simply “spoke with authority” (4:32).¹³⁹ By contrast, Matthew's wording of the crowd's reaction to Jesus' teaching, which concludes the Sermon on the Mount, seems more alienated from and antagonistic toward the scribal establishment, since it directly contrasts Jesus' authority with the instruction of “*their* scribes” (7:29).¹⁴⁰

ἡμέρα τῶν σαββάτων (Luke 4:16; Acts 13:14; 16:13); ἐν σαββάτῳ (Luke 6:1); ἐν ἐτέρῳ σαββάτῳ (Luke 6:6); σαββάτῳ (Luke 14:1); τῷ ἐρχομένῳ σαββάτῳ (Acts 13:44).

¹³⁷ As is well known, the Greek word εὐθύς appears only once in Luke (6:49), five times in Matthew, but no less than forty times in Mark. See Mayer-Haas, *Geschenk*, 296–97, for a more detailed redactional discussion of all the linguistic modifications and improvements of this Markan passage by Luke.

¹³⁸ Cf. François Bovon, *Luke 1* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress, 2002), 159, who views the omission as revealing Luke's concern over new, deceptive teachings; Mayer-Haas, *Geschenk*, 298; Helmut Merkel, “Israel im lukanischen Werk,” *NTS* 40 (1994): 371–98.

¹³⁹ This aligns with Luke's more nuanced portrayal of the conflicts between Jesus and his disciples and the scribes and Pharisees (“scribes” in Luke should not always be equated with Pharisees). Mayer-Haas, *Geschenk*, 298, claims Luke has deleted the polemical rhetoric in Mark 1:22 because it deters from his intent to emphasize the authority of Jesus' λόγος. While this deletion may serve that immediate function in the context of this pericope, overall, it underscores Luke's less hostile portrait of the scribes and particularly the Pharisees.

¹⁴⁰ Much has been made of the presence of the distancing pronoun in Matthew (cf. Matt 4:23; 9:35; 10:17; 13:54) by New Testament scholars in an ongoing debate about whether Matthew and his presumed community should be located *intra muros* or *extra muros* with respect to the wider Jewish society. Luz, *Matthew*, 1:390, commenting on Matt 7:29, sides with the *extra muros* camp: “With the possessive pronoun ‘their’ Matthew indicates that the separation between the Jesus community and Judaism has already taken place. The Jewish scribes are on the ‘other’ side. The people who are astonished stand in the middle

Both Mark and Luke report the intrusion of an individual possessed by an unclean clean spirit (Mark 1:23: ἄνθρωπος ἐν πνεύματι ἀκαθάρτῳ; Luke 4:33: ἄνθρωπος ἔχων πνεῦμα δαιμονίου ἀκαθάρτου) into the synagogue where Jesus teaches. Jesus, however, is able to neutralize the spirit without any major difficulties, which only excites further amazement among the members of the synagogue of Capernaum. Neither of the two gospel narrators seems concerned about the timing of Jesus' act, which occurs on a Sabbath. Because of their apparent nonchalance over the timing of Jesus' exorcism, some commentators have argued in Mark's case that Sabbath keeping was no longer an issue of interest.¹⁴¹ However, this argument from silence can actually be read in the opposite direction. Mayer-Haas has argued that the gospel of Mark never makes any depreciating remarks against the Sabbath itself. She goes as far as suggesting that Mark 1:21–28 (as well as 3:1–6; 6:1–6) may even contain hints of a Christian Sabbath observance, which may have included scriptural readings accompanied by christo-centric teachings.¹⁴² In Luke's case, it seems very unlikely that he intends to downgrade the importance of the Sabbath to the level of irrelevance, given his strong interest elsewhere in this topic and

between 'their' scribes and Jesus." In my opinion, this position remains unconvincing and ultimately proves less fruitful for examining the gospel of Matthew within its Jewish milieu. Cf. Sim's excellent retort to the *extra muros* view: "Once we understand Matthew's community as a sectarian group in conflict with a Jewish body, then it seems more appropriate to speak of a Jewish sect within Judaism than of a Christian sect outside Judaism. The important sociological evidence Stanton compiles from Qumran in fact points precisely in this direction. The Qumran community, which bears all the hallmarks of a sectarian group, completely renounced mainstream Jewish society by moving to the shores of the Dead Sea and living in isolation from it. But no-one would contend that its considerable differences with and rejection of the remainder of Jewish society entailed that it no longer considered itself to be Jewish. The evidence for the sectarian nature of the Matthean community should not be interpreted any differently" (David Sim, *The Gospel of Matthew and Christian Judaism*, 5). See also, Christopher Runesson, "Rethinking Early Jewish-Christian Relations: Matthean Community History as Pharisaic Intragroup Conflict," *JBL* 127 (2008): 95–132, who proposes reading some of the pronominal references to "their synagogues" in Matthew in a more restrictive way, as referring to synagogues of Pharisaic association.

¹⁴¹ Dieter Lührmann, *Das Markusevangelium* (HNT 3; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1987), 49, 65; Heikki Sariola, *Markus und das Gesetz: Eine redaktionskritische Untersuchung* (AASF.DHL 56; Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 1990), 113.

¹⁴² Mayer-Haas, *Geschenk*, 148–49.

his desire to highlight the composition of the *ekklesia* as Israel. In several other passages, Luke provides numerous justifications for Jesus' attitude toward the Sabbath, suggesting an ongoing concern on his part for the legitimacy and preservation of the Sabbath institution.

Moreover, no explicit prohibition against the performance of exorcisms on the Sabbath appears in early Jewish literature.¹⁴³ Could this silence account for the absence of any rationalization in the pericopes of Mark and Luke on behalf of Jesus' performance of an exorcism on the Sabbath?¹⁴⁴ The absence of any objection against Sabbath exorcisms even within the gospel literature calls for some necessary caution before making any wide-sweeping conclusions. Based on the evidence available to us, it is nearly impossible to determine whether ancient Jews would have halakically distinguished between the performance of exorcisms and healings of minor diseases on the Sabbath. To further complicate the problem, Luke, in particular, blurs the lines between what we would call "exorcism" and "healing." Western readers should not neatly divide these two categories, since Luke (and probably other ancient people) would have perceived the source of many of the physical ailments affecting human beings as ultimately stemming from demonic forces.¹⁴⁵ Luke may have viewed Jesus' healings of physical ailments on the Sabbath as all the more justifiable, almost on par with life-threatening conditions, because of their demonic origination. In the subsequent sections and chapters on the Sabbath, I will explore this theme in Luke more closely.

¹⁴³ Mayer-Haas, *Geschenk* 418, following Yang, *Jesus and the Sabbath*, 246.

¹⁴⁴ This silence would also suggest that Matthew did not delete this episode because of his uneasiness with its occurrence on the Sabbath. But see Bornkamm, "End-Expectation and Church in Matthew," 31 n. 2.

¹⁴⁵ For example, Luke makes little distinction between exorcism and healing when depicting Jesus rebuking (*ἐπετίμησεν*) an unclean spirit (4:35) and right after a physical ailment (e.g., the fever of Simon Peter's mother-in-law, 4:39).

Regardless, the problem of Mark and Luke's "nonchalance" remains, since they also have Jesus *heal* on the Sabbath in the same section without providing any immediate justification for such an act (Luke 4:38–39). In Luke's case, the absence of any apologia on behalf of Jesus' Sabbath exorcism and healing may simply stem from his eagerness to signal how the eschatological and prophetic message announced by Jesus in Nazareth (4:16–30) immediately and concretely plays out in his itinerant ministry. The time for apologetics will come shortly in the subsequent narration of events, but first Luke is determined to flesh out Jesus' eschatological portfolio and to highlight his authority.¹⁴⁶

In Matthew's case, other reasons for his deletion of this episode have been proposed, including his reservation toward the question of exorcism in general.¹⁴⁷ While this proposal may suffice to explain Matthew's deletion of Mark's episode on exorcism, it does not account for his relocation of the other healing events from the same Markan pericope. As will be shown, by reconfiguring all of these Markan episodes into non-Sabbath settings, Matthew provides a narrative that always contains a defense for Jesus' Sabbath keeping whenever such an issue arises.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁶ Some of these comments are true for Mark as well who also focuses at this point in exalting Jesus' authority. See Loader, *Jesus' Attitude towards the Law*, 16, 307.

¹⁴⁷ See discussion in Mayer-Haas, *Geschenk*, 417–18, with bibliographical references on the topic. According to Mayer-Haas, in Mark 1:23–28, the features describing this exorcism episode that bother Matthew the most include: the demonic, the demon's resistance to the exorcist by openly identifying Jesus by name, the command silencing the demon, as well as the graphic description of the demon's withdrawal.

¹⁴⁸ The suggestion provided by Yang, *Jesus and the Sabbath*, 246, for Matthew's deletion of the Sabbath settings for said episodes is based on a problematic, misguided projection of Jewish "legalism" that did not bother most Jews in antiquity: "He [i.e., Matthew] may well have refrained intentionally from using the phrase in order to avoid an unnecessary misunderstanding by the members in his community who had a legalistic tendency—a misunderstanding that they were to worship on the sabbath after the example of Jesus." Robert Banks, *Jesus and the Law in the Synoptic Tradition* (SNTSMS 28; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 127, actually argues that the Matthean elimination of Sabbath settings to such episodes may stem from literary preferences rather than theological factors. While this suggestion may certainly be correct, the end-result is that Matthew produces a gospel in which Jesus' Sabbath keeping appears only in controversial settings necessitating clarification.

Going out of the Law for an In-Law? Healing Peter's Mother-in-Law

Synoptic Window

Table 2-2

Matt 8:14–15

¹⁴ When Jesus entered Peter's house, he saw his mother-in-law lying in bed with a fever; ¹⁵ he touched her hand, and the fever left her, and she got up and began to serve him.

Mark 1:29–31

²⁹ As soon as they left the synagogue, they entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. ³⁰ Now Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told him about her at once. ³¹ He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up. Then the fever left her, and she began to serve them.

Luke 4:38–39

³⁸ After leaving the synagogue he entered Simon's house. Now Simon's mother-in-law was suffering from a high fever, and they asked him about her. ³⁹ Then he stood over her and rebuked (ἐπετίμησεν) the fever, and it left her. Immediately she got up and began to serve them.

Literary Context

After reporting the exorcism in the synagogue of Capernaum, Mark has Jesus immediately (εὐθὺς) leave the synagogue and enter into the house of Simon and Andrew where he heals their mother-in-law. This would mean that for Mark this healing occurs on the same day, that is, on a Sabbath (1:29–31), especially since he explicitly refers to sunset in the subsequent verse after the healing episode (1:32). Luke also assumes that the healing takes place on the Sabbath: “After leaving the synagogue he entered Simon's house” (Luke 4:38). Together, the two episodes reporting the exorcism of the man in the synagogue and the healing of Peter's in-law point back to Jesus' eschatological message announced in the synagogue of Nazareth (4:16–30). They demonstrate how the oppressed among Israel are experiencing in concrete terms liberation from their suffering and sickness thanks to Jesus' ministry of healing.

Matthew preserves this episode but places it in a setting completely divorced from the Sabbath. In its Matthean context, the episode occurs in the midst of a series of

healings (after the cleansing of a leper and the healing of the centurion's servant, Matt 8:1–13, and before the healing of the masses in 8:16–17). Since Matthew locates this episode outside its Sabbath environment, I will only carefully analyze Luke's account.

Analysis

Luke describes the physical condition of Peter's mother-in-law in slightly more severe terms than Mark. While Mark states that the mother-in-law lay in bed with a fever ("κατέκειτο πυρέσσουσα," 1:30), Luke augments the gravity of her condition by claiming that she suffered from a *high* fever ("ἦν συνεχομένη πυρετῷ μεγάλῳ"; 4:38).¹⁴⁹ Luke also describes the administration of the healing with significantly different verbal features. In Mark, Jesus takes the woman by the hand and lifts her up (1:31), but Luke makes no reference to physical contact, instead Jesus merely stands over her and rebukes (ἐπετίμησεν) the fever (4:39). With the verbal reference to "rebuking," Luke sends the reader's attention back to the preceding pericope where Jesus also "rebukes" (ἐπετίμησεν) the evil spirit tormenting the man at the synagogue of Capernaum (4:35). Physical sickness and demonic possession are closely related.¹⁵⁰ This depiction in turn accentuates the authority of Jesus' verbal utterance: standing with authority over Peter's mother-in-law, Jesus only needs to summon the power of his word in order to repudiate her (demonic) fever (v.39). Luke's stress on Jesus' verbal utterance also recalls the reaction of the crowd at the synagogue of Capernaum: "What kind of utterance is this (τίς ὁ λόγος

¹⁴⁹ Cf. Mayer-Haas, *Geschenk*, 299, who also thinks that the Lukan usage of the periphrastic conjugation presents the fever in stronger terms. See also Bovon, *Luke 1*, 163.

¹⁵⁰ Loader, *Jesus' Attitude towards the Law*, 307: "In 4:38–39 Luke rewrites Mark's account of the healing of Peter's mother-in-law (1:29–31) turning it into an exorcism." Mayer-Haas, *Geschenk*, 300: "Die von Markus vorgegebene Heilungserzählung wird im Lukasevangelium zu einem Exorzismus, der die Vollmacht und Kraft Jesu, die in seinem Wort zum Ausdruck kommen, demonstriert."

οὔτος)? For with authority and power he commands the unclean spirits, and out they come” (4:36).¹⁵¹

After the healing, according to both Mark and Luke, Peter’s mother-in-law rises and serves (διηκόνει) Jesus as well as those present with him. Mark and Luke provide no indication that they view such activity as infringing on the sanctity of the Sabbath. Here the verb “διακονέω” means simply to “perform duties,” to “render assistance” or to “serve someone” by waiting at the table and offering food and drink, services the mother-in-law previously was unable to perform because of her condition.¹⁵² Luke does not define what kind of “work” was involved in performing this hospitable service. Like Mark, his text remains extremely terse.¹⁵³ The mother-in-law’s prompt attendance to the guests and household members proves the efficacy of Jesus’ healing powers and also confirms his authority.¹⁵⁴

As in the preceding episode on exorcism, Luke reveals no concern over possible reproaches Jesus’ act could have raised among his Jewish peers as far as Sabbath observance is concerned. Some scholars even wonder whether such a report contains any act that goes against Jewish codes of Sabbath conduct. After all, certain halakic discussions within early rabbinic literature, admittedly written after the time of Luke, grant license for treating any illness deemed to be life-threatening. According to *m. Yoma* 8:6, R. Mattyah b. Heresh even allows one to administer healing herbs on the Sabbath to an individual with a sore throat if there is doubt concerning the person’s ability to survive (ספק נפשות). R. Mattyah b. Heresh’s lenient position fully stretches the application of the

¹⁵¹ Mayer-Haas, *Geschenk*, 302.

¹⁵² See Mayer-Haas, *Geschenk*, 150 n. 74.

¹⁵³ Mayer-Haas, *Geschenk*, 150: “die kürzeste neutestamentliche Wundergeschichte.”

¹⁵⁴ Wolter, *Das Lukasevangelium* (HNT 5; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 204–5.

dictum that calls for suspending the Sabbath when even the doubtful risk of losing life is involved: “Whenever there is doubt whether life is in danger this overrides the Sabbath” (וכל ספק נפשות דוחה את השבת; *m. Yoma* 8:6). Jacob Nahum Epstein also points to a rabbinic halakah that even permits healing through “whispering,”—that is, pronouncing through incantation—on the Sabbath of cases not viewed as life threatening.¹⁵⁵ Of course, the rabbinic evidence stems from a later period and a particular Jewish circle. Does it suggest that Luke could have heightened the diagnosis of Peter’s mother-in-law’s condition (“a *high fever*”) and highlighted Jesus’ *verbal rebuke* (in contrast to Mark’s reference to the physical act of lifting her hands) in order to conform Jesus’ actions to Jewish practice?¹⁵⁶ We recall furthermore the demonic dimension Luke ascribes to the mother-in-law’s illness: Jesus has to “reprimand” her fever.¹⁵⁷ Does Luke underline the supernatural severity of her psychosomatic condition, interpreting Jesus’ response more as a rescue act (i.e., an exorcism) than as a healing in order to present this episode in terms that are more palatable to other Jews? Throughout his gospel, Luke consistently points to the demonic dimension of the physical ailments assailing Jesus’ “patients.” As

¹⁵⁵ Jacob Nahum Epstein, *Introduction to Tannaitic Literature: Mishna, Tosephta and Halakhic Midrashim* [in Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1957), 280–281, citing *t. Shabb.* 7[8]:23, *y. Shabb.* 14:3 [14c], *b. Sanh.* 101a as examples. Epstein’s remarks on this matter have directly or indirectly influenced the positions of prominent scholars regarding the historical Jesus’ Sabbath healings, including David Flusser, *The Sage from Galilee: Rediscovering Jesus’ Genius* (4th ed.; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2007), 39; E.P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (London: SCM Press, 1985), 266; *Jewish Law from Jesus to the Mishnah*, 21; Vermes, *Jesus the Jew*, 25, and most recently (and indirectly via Sanders) Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 4:254. I find the usage of these particular rabbinic passage for the interpretation of the synoptic pericopes on the Sabbath proves problematic on several grounds (see my introduction to Part I as well the ensuing discussion in this chapter and chapters 3 and 4).

¹⁵⁶ Even in Mark’s case, some commentators like Robert Horton Gundry, *Mark: A Commentary on His Apology for the Cross* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1993), 286 and Joachim Gnilka, *Das Evangelium nach Markus* (2 vols.; EKKNT 2; Zurich: Neukirchener Verlag, 1978), 1:84, claim that Mark emphasizes the severity of the mother-in-law’s condition.

¹⁵⁷ Some have detected in Mark an overlap between “exorcism” and “healing” as well, since the mother-in-law’s fever is said to have “left her” (ἀφῆκεν αὐτὴν ὁ πυρετός), suggesting that fever, like an unclean spirit, can leave the body. See Adela Yarbro Collins, *Mark* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress, 2007), 174. Luke, however, makes the link between the two conditions more explicit.

we shall see, this regular reference to demonic origins, which are responsible for human suffering, plays an integral role in Luke's justification of Jesus' immediate intervention on the Sabbath on behalf of such oppressed people. Demonic cruelty requires divine intervention, making it lawful for Jesus to do good and save life on the Sabbath (Luke 6:9).

Nevertheless, such observations should not invite over-interpreting a passage that contains no deliberate concern for Sabbath controversies or interest in sophisticated, halakic debates about Sabbath keeping. First, Epstein's remarks on rabbinic halakah for the understanding of the Sabbath healing and exorcism episodes in the gospel accounts prove inadequate. The key passage mentioned by Epstein (*t. Shabb. 7[8]:23*) refers to "whispering," a particular type of utterance, which never appears in any passage reporting one of Jesus' healings or exorcisms. According to the synoptic gospels, Jesus never whispers over his subjects or pronounces incantations, as the Toseftan passage presumes, but openly proclaims his healings and exorcisms in the public domain. Second, as Doering points out, the usage of whispering in these rabbinic passages is restricted to particular cases: whispering over the (evil?) eye¹⁵⁸ and over snake or scorpion bites. Some of these conditions certainly can be life-threatening (e.g., poisonous snakebites) or may at least seriously jeopardize a person's health, if not remove life altogether (scorpion bites can be fatal for children and frail people).¹⁵⁹ By contrast, Luke has Jesus heal

¹⁵⁸ For the textual problems regarding the reference to either the "eye" or the "evil eye," in *t. Shabb. 7[8]:23*, see Doering, "Much Ado about Nothing?" 220–22. The evil eye was viewed as a very dangerous threat, potentially leading to fatality. Cf. Rivka Ulmer, *The Evil Eye in the Bible and in Rabbinic Literature* (Hoboken, N.J.: Ktav, 1994), 26: "In the rabbinic mind, the evil eye was the cause of inexplicable deaths."

¹⁵⁹ Some commentators even assume that only life-threatening conditions are presupposed in this passage. So Berndt Schaller, "Jesus und der Sabbat. Franz-Delitzsch-Vorlesung 1992," in *Fundamenta Judaica: Studien zum antiken Judentum und zum Neuen Testament* (eds. Lutz Doering and Annette Steudel; SUNT 25; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2001), 133; Michael Becker, *Wunder und Wundertäter im früh-rabbinischen Judentum: Studien zum Phänomen und seiner Überlieferung im Horizont von Magie und*

persons suffering from less acute conditions (a man with a withered hand, a “bent” woman, and a person with “dropsy”). But, once again, Luke deems these conditions serious enough to demand immediate attention and treatment partly because of the demonic dimension he attributes to the generation of physical ailments.¹⁶⁰

Fitzmyer’s comments on the Lukan reference to “high fever” are probably closer to the mark: Luke wants his readers to understand that it will take a very powerful deed to remove the fever.¹⁶¹ Furthermore, at the narrative level, this healing occurs in the intimate realm of “insiders,” away from the immediate sight of potential opponents and within the home of Simon Peter, for Luke, a soon-to-be disciple of Jesus (Luke 5:1–11).¹⁶² At this point of his narrative, Luke remains more interested in showing off Jesus’ messianic credentials and abilities, in affirming the fulfillment of Jesus’ eschatological program announced in Nazareth, rather than in engaging in Sabbath polemics, which will receive their ample share of attention in subsequent sections of his gospel.

Dämonismus (WUNT 2.144; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002), 180. However, Doering, “Much Ado about Nothing?” 221–22, concedes that acute conditions are also envisioned in *t. Shabb.* 7[8]:23. A further problem, which Doering points out, involves the ambiguity over the *curative* or *preventive* nature of such acts.

¹⁶⁰ This ambiguity, I will continually argue, is purposefully used by Luke to increase the level of gravity of Jesus’ “customers” in order to downplay the trespassing of the Sabbath and simultaneously underline Jesus’ authority. I hesitate to embark with the point made by Doering, “Much Ado about Nothing?” 224, who attempts to fully contrast the *magical dimension* in the rabbinic passages solicited by Epstein with the *therapeutic* practices (or simply “healings”) of Jesus as they appear in the canonical gospels: “*There is no way from the conceded magical ‘whispering’ on certain severe wounds or threats to Jesus’ acts of healing on the Sabbath.*” Being ignorant on how ancients would have conceptually distinguished both acts, and wishing to avoid ancient and modern polemics regarding Jesus’ status as magician vs. healer, I happily leave the question open to discussion.

¹⁶¹ Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel according to Luke* (2 vols.; AB 28–28A; Garden City: Doubleday, 1981–1985), 1:550.

¹⁶² Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, 4:253, states: “The reasons for the absence of a dispute here are patent: the healing occurs in a private house, the people in the house are disciples of Jesus along with (presumably) their relatives or friends, and it is precisely this group of people who speak to Jesus about the afflicted woman.”

Healing the Masses after Sunset

Synoptic Window

Table 2-3

Matt 8:16–17

¹⁶ That evening they brought to him many who were possessed with demons; and he cast out the spirits with a word, and cured all who were sick.

¹⁷ This was to fulfill what had been spoken through the prophet Isaiah, “He took our infirmities and bore our diseases.”

Mark 1:32–34

³² That evening, at sundown, they *brought* (ἔφερον) to him all who were sick or possessed with demons.

³³ And the whole city was gathered around the door.

³⁴ And he cured many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him.

Luke 4:40–41

⁴⁰ As the sun was setting, all those who had any who were sick with various kinds of diseases *brought* (ἤγαγον) them to him; and *he laid his hands* (τὰς χεῖρας ἐπιτιθεῖς) on each of them and cured them.

⁴¹ Demons also came out of many, shouting, “You are the Son of God!” But he *rebuked* (ἐπιτιμῶν)¹⁶³ them and would not allow them to speak, because they knew that he was the Messiah.

Literary Context

After healing Peter’s mother-in-law, according to Mark and Luke, Jesus proceeds to care for people *en masse*, but this episode presumably takes place *after* the Sabbath.¹⁶⁴

For Matthew, once again, this event, like the preceding one, does not occur on the Sabbath. Matthew, however, does retain and place this episode immediately after the healing of Peter’s in-law, but both incidents occur within a different narrative setting,

¹⁶³ Notice again the apparent overlap between demonic possession and other sicknesses: the demonically possessed in 4:41 seem to be part of the “sick” in v. 40. Jesus first heals the “sick with various kinds of diseases” (v.40) and (as a result?) “demons also came out of many” (v.41) whom Jesus rebukes (ἐπιτιμῶν). Cf. the similar overlap in Luke 9:2, 6.

¹⁶⁴ Mark 1:32: “that evening, at sundown” (ὁψίας δὲ γενομένης ὅτε ἔδυ ὁ ἥλιος). Luke 4:40 is less cumbersome than Mark’s “doublet,” reading simply “as the sun was setting” (δύνοντος δὲ τοῦ ἡλίου). Luke’s abbreviation need not be interpreted as “obscuring Mark’s attention to the sabbath observance of these people” (John Nolland, *Luke* [2 vols.; WBC 35A–C; Dallas: Word Books, 1989–1993], 1:213), but simply as a stylistic improvement of Mark’s superfluous language.

completely divorced from the Sabbath, in a so-called “miracle-cycle” (the *Wunderzyklus* in Matt 8:1–9:35), which immediately follows the Sermon on the Mount.¹⁶⁵

Analysis

Is the chronological reference in Luke (following Mark) insignificant or does it signal that mass healings should wait until after the Sabbath, even if treatments of individuals in exceptional cases are allowed for on the seventh day? Once again, such an inquiry may be demanding too much from the text and even be raising the wrong questions. Mayer-Haas provides an intriguing suggestion concerning the timing of this episode in the gospel of Mark: Mark does not object to performing healings on the Sabbath (1:21–31), he is worried about *bearing* (ἔφερον, v. 32) sick people on the Sabbath, perhaps even concerned about trespassing the travel limits imposed on the Sabbath (תחום שבת).¹⁶⁶ With respect to Luke, she even sees a more heightened concern to remove any suspicion about Jesus breaking the Sabbath. Thus, she claims that Luke

¹⁶⁵ Mayer-Haas, *Geschenk*, 418. Notice again the tendentious speculations of Yang, *Jesus and the Sabbath*, 250: “. . . Matthew misses Mark’s witness . . . that the ordinary Jews in the time of Jesus observed at least some of the sabbath regulations (e.g. carrying, travelling, healing) quite faithfully. . . he may . . . have thought of the possibility that such a witness could have encouraged some members of his community to be legalistically bound to the rabbinic sabbath regulations—a tendency which probably was a real threat to his community.”

¹⁶⁶ Mayer-Haas, *Geschenk*, 156: “Nicht die Heilungen am Sabbat sind für den Evangelisten verboten, sondern das Tragen der Kranken!” Mark 1:32–34, in Mayer-Haas’ opinion, is entirely redactional (p. 155). Cf. Alfred E. J. Rawlinson, *The Gospel according St Mark* (6th ed.; WC; London: Methuen, 1925), 18; Vincent Taylor, *The Gospel according to St Mark* (London: Macmillan, 1935), 180; Collins, *Mark*, 175–76: “The fact that the people of Capernaum waited until the sun had gone down to bring the sick and possessed to Jesus implies that either the activity of bringing them or healing them, or perhaps both, is unlawful on the Sabbath. If such is indeed implied, then it is noteworthy that Mark’s Jesus nevertheless exorcises (vv. 21–28) and heals (vv. 29–31) on the Sabbath.” See also Morna D. Hooker, *A Commentary on the Gospel according to St Mark* (BNTC; London: A & C Black, 1991), 71. Daniel A. Carson, “Jesus and the Sabbath in the Four Gospels,” in *From Sabbath to Lord’s Day: A Biblical, Historical and Theological Investigation* (ed. Daniel A. Carson; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1982), 60, following Caird, *The Gospel of Luke*, 89, claims that Mark and Luke seek to portray the crowd as more scrupulous in their Sabbath keeping than Jesus. This is probably the wrong way of treating the issue. Gundry, *Mark*, 87, is closer to the mark when he states that the scene stresses “the alacrity with which the people bring their sick and demon-possessed once the Sabbath has ended.”

employs the verb ἤγαγον (“led” or “brought”) instead of Mark’s ἔφερον (“bore” or “carried”) in order to show that the people living in the more distant places around Capernaum led out their sick right before the Sabbath ended, though waiting until sunset before traveling beyond the Sabbath limits (2000 cubits = c. 1 km). Mayer-Haas also claims that Luke removes the verb φέρω because it refers to the idea of “carrying” from one domain to the other, an act that is forbidden on the Sabbath. Finally, Mayer-Haas points out that Luke’s Jesus *lays hands* on the sick (v.40) only after the Sabbath is over, while during the Sabbath proper he simply emits verbal utterances when performing miracles (in contrast to the Markan Jesus who grabs the mother-in-law *by the hand*; Mark 1:31).¹⁶⁷

Doering dismisses Mayer-Haas’ reading of Luke’s substitution of ἤγαγον for ἔφερον as purely “imaginative and speculative.”¹⁶⁸ He also questions whether φέρειν in Mark 1:32 should be understood in the technical sense Mayer-Haas restricts it to, arguing that it could simply mean “to bring.” At least in Mark 2:3, Mark does clarify when the verb φέρειν denotes “carrying” by providing additional qualifiers: “some people came, bringing (φέροντες) to him a paralyzed man, *carried* (αἰρόμενον) by four of them.”¹⁶⁹

While in this pericope Luke’s Jesus only employs his speech to heal or exorcise on the

¹⁶⁷ Mayer-Haas, *Geschenk*, 301. Fitzmyer claims that the imposition of hands as a physical gesture for healing is unknown in the Hebrew Bible and rabbinic literature, although it does appear in 1Qap Gen^{af} 20:28–29 where Abram prays for Pharaoh, laying his hands on his head to exorcise the evil spirit tormenting him. See Fitzmyer, *The Gospel according to Luke*, 1:553.

¹⁶⁸ Lutz Doering, “Sabbath Laws in the New Testament,” in *The New Testament and Rabbinic Literature* (eds. Reimund Bieringer et al.; Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism 136; Leiden: Brill, 2010), 251 n. 187.

¹⁶⁹ Doering, “Sabbath Laws,” 187. Doering also refers to certain rabbinic texts such as *m. Shabb.* 10:5 and *t. Shabb.* 8 [9]:18 that do not condemn carrying a living person on a bed on the Sabbath. See Doering, “Sabbath Laws,” 187 n. 188. But cf. CD 11:11.

Sabbath, elsewhere in the gospel of Luke Jesus does lay hands on the Sabbath (13:13).¹⁷⁰ Consequently, the Lukan switch from verbal pronouncement on the Sabbath to physical action after sunset should not be overstated.

In any case, the cumulative effect of Luke's portrayal of the three episodes assessed thus far (the exorcism in the synagogue of Capernaum, the healing of Peter's mother-in-law, and the healings of the masses after sunset) proves not to be dramatically offensive from a halakic point of view: Jesus only utters words to repel a demon and a fever (of demonic origin) on the Sabbath, while caring for the sick people *en masse* only after sunset. In reporting all of these incidents, Luke feels no need to justify Jesus' actions to his readers. Probably some ancient Jews would have been displeased with the Lukan presentation of Jesus' actions on the Sabbath, claiming that the treatment of non-life-threatening conditions could have waited until after the Sabbath was over (cf. Luke 13:14). One of Luke's answers to such objections, as we will see, is to point to the demonic origins of the ailments afflicting the children of Israel: they are "semi-life-threatening" conditions due to satanic oppression that allow, if not require, Jesus to intervene and do good on the Sabbath day in order to save Jews from the bonds of Satan (cf. 6:9; 13:16). Nevertheless, Luke does not make this argument explicit at this juncture of his narrative. More importantly, he does not take advantage in these episodes to polemicize against the institution of the Sabbath. Instead, he uses Mark's material primarily to showcase Jesus' authority, to demonstrate how his therapeutic abilities fulfill the programmatic speech delivered one Sabbath in the synagogue of Nazareth.

¹⁷⁰ Although even in Luke 13:13, as will be shown, it is not entirely clear whether the laying of hands actually generates the healing.

Quite significantly, Luke does not feel a need to elucidate the terms related to the Sabbath institution that appear in these episodes. These features include chronological terms such as “on the Sabbath” (τοῖς σάββασι, Luke 4:31), the announcement of the arrival of sunset (δύνοντος δὲ τοῦ ἡλίου, Luke 4:40)—the latter phrase possibly pointing toward a Jewish demarcation of time in which the new halakic day begins at sunset—as well as the reference to the Jewish custom of attending and teaching in the synagogue on the Sabbath (4:31). Luke’s readers are sufficiently acquainted with the Jewish institution of Sabbath to be able to understand these terms without further explanation. Luke’s description of the Sabbath in these episodes may not provide us with any extensive information about the Sabbath praxis of Luke and his readers; they also do not furnish much material to fuel a Christian protest against Sabbath keeping. At this point, all that may be said with certainty is that Luke assumes his readers are familiar with the Sabbath and the environment of the synagogue, and that the Lukan portrayal in these three episodes of Jesus’ Sabbath praxis is compatible with the Lukan Torah observant Jesus we discover elsewhere. As for Matthew, by relocating all three episodes in non-Sabbath settings, he avoids portraying Jesus engaging in questionable Sabbath activities without providing justification on his behalf.¹⁷¹

¹⁷¹ So Mayer-Haas, *Geschenk*, 421. Contra Yang, *Jesus and the Sabbath*, 251: “Matthew’s probable omissions of and modifications . . . may perhaps rather indicate that Matthew is more concerned about the legalistic tendency of his community—that is why he sometimes modifies the co-texts of and sometimes even omits certain passages/phrases which he thinks might unnecessarily encourage a legalistic observance of the sabbath.”

Rejection in Nazareth

Synoptic Window

Table 2-4

Matt 13:53–58

⁵³ When Jesus had finished these parables, he left that place.

⁵⁴ He came to his hometown and began to teach the people in their synagogue, so that they were astounded and said, “Where did this man get this wisdom and these deeds of power?”

⁵⁵ Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary? And are not his brothers James and Joseph and Simon and Judas?

⁵⁶ And are not all his sisters with us? Where then did this man get all this?”

⁵⁷ And they took offense at him. But Jesus said to them, “Prophets are not without honor except in their own country and in their own house.”

⁵⁸ And he did not do many deeds of power there, because of their unbelief.

Mark 6:1–6

He left that place and came to his hometown, and his disciples followed him.

² On the sabbath he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were astounded. They said, “Where did this man get all this? What is this wisdom that has been given to him? What deeds of power are being done by his hands!”

³ Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon, and are not his sisters here with us?” And they took offense at him.

⁴ Then Jesus said to them, “Prophets are not without honor, except in their hometown, and among their own kin, and in their own house.”

⁵ And he could do no deed of power there, except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and cured them.

⁶ And he was amazed at their unbelief. Then he went about among the villages teaching.

Luke 4:16–30

When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his

custom. He stood up to read, ¹⁷ and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

¹⁸ “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free,

¹⁹ to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”

²⁰ And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him.

²¹ Then he began to say to them, “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.”

²² All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth. They said, “Is not this Joseph's son?”

²³ He said to them, “Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb, ‘Doctor, cure yourself!’ And you will say, ‘Do here also in your hometown the things that we have heard you did at Capernaum.’”

²⁴ And he said, “Truly I tell you, no prophet is accepted in

the prophet's hometown.

²⁵ But the truth is, there were many widows in Israel in the time of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, and there was a severe famine over all the land;

²⁶ yet Elijah was sent to none of them except to a widow at Zarephath in Sidon.

²⁷ There were also many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian.”

²⁸ When they heard this, all in the synagogue were filled with rage.

²⁹ They got up, drove him out of the town, and led him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they might hurl him off the cliff.

³⁰ But he passed through the midst of them and went on his way.

Literary Context

Mark 6:1–6 reports no debate about Sabbath keeping but centers on the rejection of Jesus by the inhabitants of Nazareth during his hometown visit to the synagogue on the Sabbath. As usual, Matthew eliminates Mark’s reference to the Sabbath (cf. Mark 6:2 with Matt 13:54).¹⁷² This leaves us with Luke, who, once again, follows Mark in explicitly situating this event on a Sabbath. Luke, however, places this episode *before*

¹⁷² Nevertheless, Matthew might still assume a Sabbath setting for this episode, since Jesus teaches in the synagogue. Cf., once again, the problematic statement in Yang, *Jesus and the Sabbath*, 256, claiming that Matthew omits the reference to the Sabbath “in order not to cause any unnecessary misunderstanding that one must visit the synagogue and worship on the sabbath after the example of Jesus.”

Jesus' visit to Capernaum, which was assessed in the previous sections.¹⁷³ In addition, Luke significantly augments this section with material unattested in any of the other gospels.¹⁷⁴

Analysis

The opening of the Lukan scene, which is based on Mark 6:1–2, contains several Lukan style and features: “When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day (ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῶν σαββάτων εἰς τὴν συναγωγὴν), as was his custom (κατὰ τὸ εἰωθὸς)” (4:16). The phrases ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῶν σαββάτων as well as κατὰ τὸ εἰωθὸς are Lukan constructions, appearing with similar wording elsewhere in Luke as well as the book of Acts.¹⁷⁵

Upon his entry into the synagogue, Luke's Jesus reads and expounds the Jewish scriptures in ways that point toward his mission to fulfill God's grander design of redemption for Israel and the Gentiles. Teaching accompanied by readings and messianic interpretations of scripture is a Lukan leitmotif appearing throughout Luke and Acts, one of the main tasks Luke has Jesus and his Jewish followers perform in the synagogue and

¹⁷³ Luke 4:31–37 (visit at Capernaum synagogue, exorcism); 4:38–39 (healing of Peter's mother-in-law); 4:40–41 (healing of the masses after sunset) all take place *after* Jesus' visit to Nazareth (4:16–30; Mark 6:1–6), while in Mark they take place before (1:21–34).

¹⁷⁴ Scholars continue to debate about the sources as well as the amount of redaction activity exerted in crafting this section of Luke. I sympathize with those scholars who posit a great proportion of redaction for this section. In this avenue, Busse maintains that Luke has composed the episode in 4:16–30 basing himself on Q, Mark 1:14f. and 6:1–6. See Ulrich Busse, *Das Nazareth-Manifest: Eine Einführung in das lukanische Jesusbild nach Lk 4, 16–30* (SBS 91; Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1978), 5. See also Bovon's discussion in *Luke 1*, 150. Some, however, think that Luke has employed another *Vorlage* because his version of the story deviates so much from Mark 6:1–6 and 1:14f. For an overview of the discussion, see Mayer-Haas, *Geschenk*, 285–89. Regardless of the sources lurking behind 4:16–30, there can be no doubt regarding Luke's appropriation of this section, given the strong presence of Lukan style and literary creativity as well as central themes compatible with his worldview.

¹⁷⁵ Cf. Luke 14:5: “ἐν ἡμέρᾳ τοῦ σαββάτου”; Luke 2:42: “And when he was twelve years old, they went up as usual (κατὰ τὸ ἔθος) for the festival.” Acts 13:4: “εἰς τὴν συναγωγὴν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῶν σαββάτων”; Acts 16:13: “τῇ τε ἡμέρᾳ τῶν σαββάτων”; Acts 17:2: “And Paul went in, *as was his custom* (κατὰ δὲ τὸ εἰωθὸς), and on three sabbath days argued with them from the scriptures.”

in other private and public domains.¹⁷⁶ The detailed description of the ritual of reading from the scrolls on the Sabbath in the synagogue reveals Luke's own acquaintance with such settings. Quite significantly, Luke feels no need to elaborate nor elucidate the following features to his readers: the act of rising to read the scriptures (*ἀνέστη ἀναγνῶναι*), the procedure of unrolling a scroll and locating the proper section for reading (*ἐπεδόθη αὐτῷ βιβλίον τοῦ προφήτου Ἡσαΐου καὶ ἀναπτύξας τὸ βιβλίον εὗρεν τὸν τόπον οὗ ἦν γεγραμμένον*), the removal of the scroll and its transferal to the synagogue attendant (*ὑπηρέτης*; 4:20), as well as the ensuing exposition of the Jewish scriptures (4:21f.). All of these elements are taken for granted and require no clarification for the audience reading or listening to Luke's narration.

These observations may shed some light on the *Sitz im Leben* of Luke and his audience. Some think the episode recalls a historical event that occurred in the synagogue of Nazareth.¹⁷⁷ Its current form though is certainly shaped by Lukan factors and interests. For example, the citation and reworking of the passages from Isaiah 61:1–2 and 58:6, which Luke's Jesus reads, presuppose a text resembling the Greek Septuagint, not a Hebrew *Vorlage*.¹⁷⁸ Luke also treasures tying Jesus' ministry with the fulfillment of

¹⁷⁶ Luke 24:27; Acts 8:28–30; 13:15, 16, 27; 15:21; 17:2–3, 11.

¹⁷⁷ For discussions on the supposed historicity of the events reported in Luke ch. 4, see Hugh Anderson, "Broadening Horizons: the Rejection at Nazareth Pericope of Luke 4.16–30 in Light of Recent Critical Trends," *Int* 18 (1964): 259–75; Bruce Chilton, "Announcement in Nazareth: An Analysis of Luke 4.16–21," in *Gospel Perspectives: Studies of History and Tradition in the Four Gospels*, Vol. 2 (eds. R.T. France and David Wenham; Sheffield: JSOT, 1981), 147–72; David Hill, "The Rejection of Jesus at Nazareth (Luke iv 16–30)," *NovT* 13 (1971): 161–80.

¹⁷⁸ Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 532; Mayer-Haas, *Geschenk*, 270, 292 n. 200. On the other hand, the content of the Isaian reading in Luke 4:18–19 resembles the messianic proclamation found in the Messianic Apocalypse (4Q521). See ensuing discussion below. It cannot be ruled out, therefore, that while Luke definitely colors this pericope with contours stemming from his own experience with the Hellenistic-Diasporan synagogue, he also solicits passages from Isaiah that would resonate with the messianic expectations of certain Jews living in Palestine, such as those who composed 4Q521. Luke knows a great deal about Jewish life in the Diaspora as well as Jewish tradition from Palestine. See the conclusion to this monograph where I develop this point.

prophecies from the Jewish scriptures. Consequently, he has Jesus or his followers read or expound from scriptures throughout Luke-Acts, often within synagogue settings on the Sabbath. These depictions, then, may mirror Luke's acquaintance and experience with Diasporan synagogues where it was customary to read and expound upon portions of the Septuagint every Sabbath.¹⁷⁹ Finally, the stories of Elijah and Elisha, which anticipate the mission to the Gentiles, also reveal Lukan interests even if some of this material may be traditional.¹⁸⁰

What can such features and observations tell us about Luke's attitude toward the Sabbath? Many have rightly detected Luke's desire to portray Jesus as a pious Jew who regularly attends the synagogue on the Sabbath.¹⁸¹ The prepositional phrase "according to his custom" only underscores this motif. Nevertheless, some have dismissed this explanation, preferring instead to portray Luke's Jesus as a "missionary opportunist."

Rordorf summarizes this position well:

¹⁷⁹ This is not to deny the importance the reading of scripture could have enjoyed even in synagogues in Palestine, especially in a post-70 setting, although we cannot underestimate the *oral* culture and pervasive illiteracy of that time. In addition, if Luke is a Diasporan Jew, as I believe, and since the many features in this scene are unattested in any other gospel, it becomes likely that Diasporan experience of Jewish life has largely shaped the narrative at this point. Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 1:526–27: “. . . vv. 17–21, suits a distinctive Lukan concern, and is probably better ascribed to Luke's own pen.” Would a humble town like Nazareth would have a scroll of Isaiah as Luke presumes? Luke describes Jesus' hometown as a *πόλις* thereby (?) revealing his projection of a Diasporan urban Jewish setting upon the more rural environment of Nazareth. The synagogue atmosphere described in this Lukan pericope also recalls scenes described by Philo about the public reading of scriptures in Diasporan synagogues. See Philo, *Somn.* 2:127; *Prob.* 1:81–83; *Legat.* 1:156–57, 311–13. Cf. Josephus, *Ant.* 16:43 and *C. Ap.* 2:175 as well as Acts 13:14–15. Cf. McKay, *Sabbath and Synagogue*, 164: “It seems to me that Luke's stories involving ‘synagogues’ can tell us little or nothing about synagogues in Galilee at the time of Jesus, but rather describe later synagogues elsewhere.”

¹⁸⁰ Klinghardt, *Gesetz und Volkes Gottes*, 236–37, sees the theme of a Gentile mission as reflecting an ongoing controversy between Luke and the rest of Jewish society regarding the proclamation of the gospel to non-Jews. This problem reemerges in some key passages from Acts (see chapter 7).

¹⁸¹ Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 1:530; Loader, *Jesus' Attitude towards the Law*, 305; I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Exeter: Pater Noster, 1978), 181; Samuele Bacchiocchi, *Divine Rest for Human Restlessness* (Rome: Pontifical Gregorian University Press, 1980), 145–46, maintains that the evangelist sets the Sabbath practice of Jesus as a model for the readers to follow. Cf. Mayer-Haas, *Geschenk*, 267–68, 294–95.

This behaviour does not necessarily mean that Jesus was a zealous observer of the Jewish law or that he was very strict about the sabbath commandment. It stands to reason that Jesus used the opportunity to deliver his message in the synagogue where people were assembled on the sabbath.¹⁸²

For Rordorf and others, Luke's main aim is to highlight the custom of Jesus' *teaching* rather than his Sabbath keeping. Mimicking modern Christian evangelistic tactics, the Lukan Jesus, like the Lukan Paul (e.g., Acts 17:1–2), would be momentarily adapting to the local culture, “playing the Jew,” in order to convince his compatriots about the more important theological issues. This anachronistic missiological projection proves unconvincing on several grounds. First, the preposition *κατά* followed by a noun in the accusative appears frequently in Luke-Acts in contexts that have nothing to do with missionary activity but emphasize the fidelity of Jesus and his followers to Jewish custom.¹⁸³ Salo rightly dismisses the missiological interpretation by pointing out that *κατά τὸ εἰωθὸς* appears within the phrase *εἰσηλθεν . . . ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῶν σαββάτων εἰς τὴν συναγωγὴν*: “It is much easier to assume that the phrase *κατά τὸ εἰωθὸς* is linked to the

¹⁸² Willy Rordorf, *Sunday: The History of the Day of Rest and Worship in the Earliest Centuries of the Christian Church* (trans. A.A.K. Graham; London: SCM Press, 1968), 67–68. Others who embrace this position include Max M. B. Turner, “The Sabbath, Sunday, and the Law in Luke/Acts,” in *From Sabbath to Lord's Day*, 101–2; Yang, *Jesus and the Sabbath*, 244, who imposes the not very helpful distinction between “tradition” and Torah. Both items were quite important for Jews—the concept of tradition not enjoying the subordinate, even at times, negative status it carries in certain Christian circles today.

¹⁸³ “He was chosen by lot, according to the custom of the priesthood (*κατά τὸ ἔθος*)” (1:9); “When the time came for their purification according to the law of Moses (*κατά τὸν νόμον Μωϋσέως*), they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord” (2:22); “and they offered a sacrifice according to what is stated in the law of the Lord (*κατά τὸ εἰρημένον ἐν τῷ νόμῳ κυρίου*)” (2:24); “and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him what was customary under the law (*κατά τὸ εἰθισμένον τοῦ νόμου*)” (2:27); “When they had finished everything required by the law of the Lord (*πάντα τὰ κατά τὸν νόμον κυρίου*)” (2:39); “And when he was twelve years old, they went up as usual (*κατά τὸ ἔθος*) for the festival” (2:42); “He came out and went, as was his custom (*κατά τὸ ἔθος*), to the Mount of Olives; and the disciples followed him” (22:39); Then they returned, and prepared spices and ointments. On the sabbath they rested according to the commandment (*κατά τὴν ἐντολήν*)” (23:56); “And Paul went in, as was his custom (*κατά τὸ εἰωθὸς*), and on three sabbath days argued with them from the scriptures” (Acts 17:2); “A certain Ananias, who was a devout man according to the law (*κατά τὸν νόμον*) and well spoken of by all the Jews living there” (Acts 22:12); “I have belonged to the strictest sect of our religion (*κατά τὴν ἀκριβεστάτην αἵρεσιν τῆς ἡμετέρας θρησκείας*) and lived as a Pharisee (Acts 26:5).

clause where it is found and not the next one (*καὶ ἀνέστη ἀναγνῶναι*).¹⁸⁴ Finally, the reductionist and missiological reading of Luke 4:16 does not do justice to the wider theological concern of Luke to depict Jesus, Peter, Paul and his other central Jewish protagonists as faithful guardians of the Torah. Luke's wider portrait makes it clear that his Jewish protagonists are not simply masquerading as Jews in order to gain converts, *but observing Torah in its own right, "Torah lishmah,"* as the rabbis would put it.

Mayer-Haas suggests that the description of synagogue life in Luke 4 as well as in Acts reflects the Sabbath worship practiced by Luke and his circle(s). On the Sabbath day, Luke and his circle apply christological readings to the Jewish scriptures.¹⁸⁵ Mayer-Haas' interpretation largely depends on how one reconstructs the historical framework and social dynamics governing the relations between Luke and his followers and the wider Jewish community. Are "Lukan followers of Jesus" still attending the synagogue, *partly* in an attempt to win over other Jews to their movement? Do some of them attend the synagogue and then christologically elucidate the scriptures in their private homes? Given the state of the evidence, it is difficult to answer these concrete questions with exactitude and full confidence. It is becoming more apparent though that Luke is thoroughly familiar with synagogue life—a sure indication of his own interaction with such settings on the Sabbath. Luke's knowledge about Judaism is not solely "bookish," derived from a private, individualistic reading of the Septuagint, but stems from his own

¹⁸⁴ Salo, *Luke's Treatment of the Law*, 68.

¹⁸⁵ Mayer-Haas, *Geschenk*, 295: "Daß der Sabbat als typischer Zeitpunkt des jüdischen Synagogengottesdienstes mit Schriftlesung in den lukanischen Erzählungen nicht verschwiegen, sondern eigens hervorgehoben wird, ist ein Hinweis auf den Zeitpunkt, an dem die gemeinschaftliche christliche Schriftauslegung im Umkreis des Evangelisten stattfand."

organic connection with the Jewish community in which he was raised.¹⁸⁶ Through his depiction of Jesus' (and later Paul's) attendance of the synagogue on the Sabbath, we learn especially about Luke's own experience with this Jewish environment.

A Sabbath Theology and Praxis in the Sermon Delivered in Nazareth?

One other main element in this pericope, important for our assessment of Luke's understanding of the Sabbath, concerns the actual timing and content of the reading and sermon delivered in the synagogue of Nazareth, particularly the substance of 4:18–21. Many scholars agree that Luke 4:16–30 serves as a programmatic preface to Jesus' public mission throughout the gospel of Luke.¹⁸⁷ But should we ascribe any particular importance to the fact that Luke's Jesus delivers the sermon on the Sabbath itself? Moreover, could the choice of the scripture reading mentioned in 4:18–21, with its eschatological language related to the sabbatical-jubilee year, inform the modern reader about a particular Lukan theology of the Sabbath?

The scriptural passages that the Lukan Jesus reads are taken from Isaiah 61:1–2 and part of 58:6. They are fused together in Luke 4:18–19 in the following way:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim *release* (ἀφῆσιν) to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind (Luke 4:18a=Isa 61:1a),
to let the oppressed go *free* (ἐν ἀφῆσει) (Luke 4:18b=Isa 58:6),
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor (Luke 4:19=Isa 61:2).

The phrase from Isa 58:6, "to let the oppressed go free," has been incorporated into Luke 4:18–19 with Isa 61:1–2 to form one Isaian reading. As an ensemble, the Isaian verses promise comfort to the oppressed who comprise, among others, the poor

¹⁸⁶ Contra Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah*, 449 n. 14. In chapter 12, I further critique this Western notion that Luke has solely derived his knowledge of Judaism from an autonomous and private reading of the LXX.

¹⁸⁷ See Yang, *Jesus and the Sabbath*, 251 n. 34, for secondary references.

(πτωχοῖς)—a group dear to Luke’s heart—as well as the sick and other suffering persons.

¹⁸⁸ Luke views Jesus as the one anointed and appointed by the spirit of God to carry out this program. More importantly for our analysis, Luke believes that Jesus has been chosen to “proclaim” (LXX: κηρύξαι; MT: לקרא) “release” (ἄφεσις) to the “captives” (αἰχμαλώτοις). The reference to “release” appears several times in Luke, mostly in connection to the announcement of forgiveness of sins.¹⁸⁹ By inserting the phrase from Isa 58:6, “to let the oppressed go free” (ἀποστεῖλαι τεθραυσμένους ἐν ἀφέσει), Luke repeats the theme of release twice within the short span of one verse. Interestingly enough, the Lukan Paul also uses this word in a sermon delivered in a synagogue on the Sabbath.¹⁹⁰ The Septuagint employs the word ἄφεσις in Isa 61:1 to translate the Hebrew דרור, which along with the verb לקרא recalls Lev 25:10: “And you shall hallow the fiftieth year and you shall proclaim (וקראתם) liberty (דרור/ ἄφεσις) throughout the land to all its inhabitants” Ideally, the establishment of the sabbatical year of the jubilee was designed to guarantee the emancipation of slaves and those covered in debt. Some of its language and themes were readapted for newer purposes in Isaiah 61. Luke has in turn interpreted Isaiah 61:1–2 and its jubilar language in an eschatological way, centering its fulfillment on the ministry of Jesus. By Luke’s time, an eschatological interpretation had already been applied to Isa 61:1–2. Thus, 11Q13 (Melchizedek) eschatologically appropriates Isa 61, although the beneficiaries of the Isaian prophecies belong solely to

¹⁸⁸ The word πτωχός appears in Luke more than in any other gospel. See Luke 6:20; 7:22; 14:13, 21; 16:20, 22; 18:22; 19:8.

¹⁸⁹ Luke 1:77; 3:3; 24:27; Acts 2:38; 5:31; 10:43; 13:38; 26:18.

¹⁹⁰ Acts 13:38: “Let it be known to you therefore, my brothers, that through this man forgiveness (ἄφεσις) of sins is proclaimed to you.” Here, however, the word is used in the sense of “release” (i.e., forgiveness) from sins, whereas Luke 4:18–19 refers to the theme of release or delivery from oppression and captivity.

the Qumranite sect, who are promised, among other things, freedom from the oppression of the evil spirits of Belial (11Q13 2:12–25).¹⁹¹ Luke’s eschatological-social horizon, however, is broader. He does not restrict the benefits promised in Isa 61 to one elected group, but envisions its blessings as contagiously affecting the poor and afflicted.

Significant for our discussion is the reference to the theme of release, which appears here and elsewhere in Luke. For example, in Luke 13:16, Jesus “releases” on the Sabbath day a crippled woman who had been bound by Satan for eighteen years.¹⁹² As noted earlier in this chapter, Luke frequently connects the contraction of physical ailments with evil, demonic forces. Interestingly, Luke often has Jesus release such persons from their sufferings on the Sabbath.¹⁹³ In fact, Luke contains more healings occurring on the Sabbath than any other gospel.¹⁹⁴ Are there enough clues and cues in Luke to warrant reading Luke 14:18–21 as containing a particular theology of the Sabbath, viewed as a day *especially meant for* healing and assisting the poor, hungry, and oppressed? Does Luke conceive of the Sabbath as a particularly opportune and appropriate moment for performing healings of non-life-threatening conditions or does he

¹⁹¹ Similarly, 4Q521 2ii+4:15–13: “[For the hea]vens and the earth shall listen to His Messiah. . . . For the Lord seeks the pious and calls the righteous by name. Over the humble His spirit hovers, and He renews the faithful in His strength. For He will honour the pious upon the th[ro]ne of His eternal kingdom, ‘*setting prisoners free, opening the eyes of the blind, raising up those who are bo[w]ed down*’ (Ps 146:7-8). And for [ev]er (?) I (?) shall hold fast [to] the [ho]peful and pious []. A man’s rewa[rd for]good [wor]k[s] shall not be delayed and the Lord shall do glorious things which have not been done, just as He s[aid.] For He shall heal the critically wounded, He shall revive the dead, ‘*He shall send good news to the afflicted,*’ (Isa 61:1) He shall sati[sfy] the [poo]r, He shall lead the uprooted, and the hungry He shall enrich (?). All translations of the Dead Sea Scrolls are taken from Donald W. Perry and Emmanuel Tov, eds., *The Dead Sea Scrolls Reader* (6 vols.; Leiden: Brill, 2004–2005).

¹⁹² “And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for eighteen long years, be set free (λυθῆναι) from this bondage on the sabbath day?” The passage receives its full treatment in chapter 4 of this monograph.

¹⁹³ We have already noted the examples in Luke 4:31–37 and vv. 38–39.

¹⁹⁴ Luke 13:10–17 and 14:1–6 contain two additional Sabbath episodes that appear only in Luke. The multiplication of Sabbath pericopes in which healings occur hardly translates into a Lukan disconnect with Sabbath keeping. On the contrary, as will be shown, this Lukan multiplication reveals an ongoing pertinence of the issue for the author of Luke-Acts.

view it as a major halakic obstacle that has to be creatively bypassed in order to make such healings appear justifiable? In other words, does Luke develop a theology of the Sabbath as a day fitting for and symbolic of healing, a time when followers of Jesus are to *especially* perform healings? Or does he justify Jesus' Sabbath performances as occurring *in spite of* the institution of the Sabbath? I offer here a preliminary answer to this question, which are further addressed in other sections and the conclusion of Part I.

The late Samuel Bacchiocchi is probably best known as the main proponent of the former possibility. He goes as far as proclaiming that the Sabbath functioned in the early stages of the Jesus movement as a sort of memorial for recalling Jesus' redemptive activity, since Jesus, at least according to Luke, essentially begins his ministry on a Sabbath, delivers his inaugural address in the language of the eschatological sabbatical jubilee, and performs healings on the Sabbath. In practical terms, Bacchiocchi thinks that early followers of Jesus viewed the Sabbath as a particularly appropriate day for performing healings, a sabbatical commemoration of redemption and rest.¹⁹⁵

Unfortunately, Bacchiocchi never applies a historical-critical reading to canonical literature, indiscriminately ascribing his wide sweeping claims to the New Testament as a whole. The fact that his reading coincides with his own confessional standing has also generated further suspicion.¹⁹⁶ But more recently Mayer-Haas, who certainly does apply

¹⁹⁵ Bacchiocchi, *From Sabbath to Sunday: A Historical Investigation of the Rise of Sunday Observance in Early Christianity* (Rome: Pontifical Gregorian University, 1977), 37–38; Cf. Paul K. Jewett, *Lord's Day: A Theological Guide to the Christian Day of Worship* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1971), 42: "Hence we have in Jesus' healings on the Sabbath, not only acts of love, compassion and mercy, but true 'sabbatical acts,' acts which show that the Messianic Sabbath, the fulfillment of the Sabbath rest of the Old Testament, has broken into our world. Therefore the Sabbath, of all days, is the most appropriate for healing."

¹⁹⁶ Many of the articles compiled by Carson in *From Sabbath to Lord's Day* seek to refute Bacchiocchi's main claims. Unfortunately, some of the authors of this compilation also apply a non-critical reading of canonical literature that in the end defends a certain confessional orientation. On this problem, see the preface in Weiss, *A Day of Gladness*, 4–6.

a rigorous historical-critical analysis to canonical literature, also maintains that the redactional placement of the motif of release and the healing of the crippled women on the Sabbath marks the beginning of the development of a Christian Sabbath theology that combines a Jewish understanding of the Sabbath with the concept of eschatological redemption.¹⁹⁷

Several observations, however, call for further refinement of this thesis, lest we overstate Luke's claims about *Jesus'* healings on the Sabbath. As has been noted, Luke employs *jubilary* language in Jesus' inaugural address, expressive of a sabbatical *year*, which remains connected to the concept of the *weekly* Sabbath only in an indirect way. On the other hand, one may argue that Luke leaves certain traces for the development of a Sabbath theology, since he intentionally includes the word "release" no fewer than three times in sermons delivered on the Sabbath by two of his major protagonists (twice in Luke 4:18 and once by Paul in Acts 13:38) and explicitly describes the condition of the crippled woman in terms of bondage and release (Luke 13:1–7). Surely, Luke must have perceived such textual and thematic interconnections, since they were generated by the compositional creativity of his own pen. Nevertheless, Luke seems to have only left the seeds for a Sabbath theology that did not fully germinate in the longer course of early Christian history. In addition, it should be pointed out that Luke's Jesus does not carry out his programmatic message delivered in Luke 4:18–21 solely on the Sabbath but on other days as well. This becomes very clear in Luke 7:21–22 where Jesus apologetically reminds the disciples of John the Baptist how he is curing "many people of diseases, plagues, and evil spirits" as well as restoring the sight of the blind (v.21). Jesus orders John's disciples to report back to their master what they have witnessed: "the blind

¹⁹⁷ Mayer-Haas, *Geschenk*, 295–96.

receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have good news brought to them” (v. 22). There is no chronological restriction mentioned in this section of Luke that would limit bestowing such blessings only on the Sabbath day. The recipients who benefit from Jesus’ marvelous ministry receive such blessings on any given day. For Luke, the programmatic mission as foretold in Isa 61:1–2 and 58:6 and announced in Luke 4:18 takes place not only on the Sabbath but also on a daily and uninterrupted basis.

These observations show that Luke does not restrict Jesus’ healing ministry to the weekly Sabbath to claim this day as *the* particular, commemorative moment, most suitable for such actions. On the other hand, Luke seems to have laid some seeds that suggest interpreting the Sabbath as a day symbolizing eschatological rest and liberation from demonic oppression and physical suffering. The other extreme that posits viewing the Lukan Jesus as either healing on the Sabbath *despite* its sanctity, or, even worse, claims that Sabbath keeping is no longer a relevant issue for Luke is even less convincing.¹⁹⁸ The Sabbath may not be *the most* or *only* appropriate day for Luke’s Jesus to carry out his liberating ministry, but it certainly is an *appropriate* time for him to accomplish his eschatological mission. Jewish tradition attributes various motifs and theological themes to the Sabbath, and Luke connects the commemoration of eschatological redemption and liberation from demonic oppression, human suffering and captivity with the Sabbath institution. By positing such a link, Luke can justify the aptness of Jesus’ healings without implying that the institution of the Sabbath has been abrogated.

¹⁹⁸ Contra Turner, “The Sabbath, Sunday, and the Law in Luke/Acts,” 101–2, 107; Yang, *Jesus and the Sabbath*, 253–55.

Conclusion

The episodes assessed above relate nothing about a supposed abrogation of the Sabbath. Neither do they present the Sabbath in a negative light. While some Jews would have objected to the synoptic presentation of Jesus healing non-life-threatening conditions on the Sabbath, none of the synoptic authors, save possibly for Matthew, seem concerned by this matter at this juncture of their narration. Matthew, as we saw, removes all of Mark's explicit references to the Sabbath in these episodes. By doing so, Matthew has Jesus perform questionable acts (from a halakic point of view) on the Sabbath only in episodes where controversies arise and where Jesus can defend himself against the criticism of his opponents. Luke, by contrast, retains the Sabbath settings, which Mark uses to frame his stories. He even highlights in positive terms Jesus' regular attendance of the synagogue on the Sabbath. In 4:16–31, Luke showcases his acquaintance with the world of the ancient synagogue, which, remarkably, he feels no need to explicate to his readers who seem equally informed about the rituals performed therein during the Sabbath. Luke also ties the programmatic speech delivered in 4:16–31 with the healings and exorcisms that occur immediately after in the narrative on another Sabbath in Capernaum. In this way, Luke's readers witness the beginning of the fulfillment of Jesus' ministry, summarized in his reading and exposition of Isaiah 61:1–2 and 58:6, when he delivers one man from demonic oppression, another woman from her fever (Peter's mother-in-law), and many other people afflicted by disease and evil spirits. For Luke, physical ailment stems from demonic forces. As we will see in chapter 4, the supernatural dimension Luke ascribes to the generation of physical disease allows him to underscore the urgency and need for Jesus to combat such evil forces on the Sabbath. For Luke, the

Sabbath day is *an* appropriate time (but not the only) for Jesus to proclaim eschatological liberation *and* to free the children of Israel from their oppression. Whether Luke actually thinks that his readers should emulate Jesus' Sabbath praxis is another question we shall return to at the conclusion of Part I and chapter 7.

Chapter 3

Plucking Grain on the Sabbath

“And Moses said: ‘Eat it [i.e., the manna] today for the Sabbath is the day for the Lord. Today you will not find it in the field.’ R. Zeriqah says: From here [i.e., Exod 16:25], we learn that there are three meals on the Sabbath.”
(*Mekilta Beshalah-Vayassa Parashah 4 on Exod 16:25*)

“Said Rabbi Shimon in the name of Rabbi Simeon Hasida: ‘In this world a person goes to pick figs [on the Sabbath], the fig doesn’t say anything; but in the world to come a person goes to pick a fig on the Sabbath, and she cries and says: It is the Sabbath!’”
(*Midrash Psalms 73:4*)¹⁹⁹

Introduction

The first controversy over Sabbath keeping in the synoptic tradition focuses on the question of plucking grain on the Sabbath. The nature of the controversy is rather unique, since all other disputes about Sabbath keeping in the synoptic gospels handle the issue of healing non-life-threatening conditions on the Sabbath day.²⁰⁰ As always, I begin

¹⁹⁹ Translation of both rabbinic texts mine.

²⁰⁰ Form critics classify this story as a controversy dialogue, occasioned by either the conduct of Jesus or that of his disciples. So Rudolf Bultmann, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition* (trans. John Marsh; Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1963), 16–17, 39. Robert C. Tannehill, “Varieties of Synoptic Pronouncement Stories,” *Semeia* 20 (1981): 107, labels the episode an “objection story.” For Bultmann, the story was composed by the *ekklesia* as a means of defending their own Sabbath praxis by projecting it onto the persona of Jesus—a questionable point we shall deal with later. The results yielded by form criticism show that such stories do not accurately report historical incidents. Those who attempt to defend the historicity of this particular story should appreciate more carefully its form, its polemical and one-sided nature, its generalizing tendencies, its pre-redactional developments, and its variants, depending on which synoptic gospel is consulted. These stories may be “based on a true story,” but they do not give us the full picture nor inform us about how an event “really happened.” Like movie directors, the followers of Jesus felt free to replace and refurbish these stories into ever newer narrated contexts according to their liking. The following scene is no less different. Opponents are depicted in a rather stereotypical fashion. In this case, the Pharisees stand in as the typical antagonists, keeping watch and preying over Jesus and his disciples. Note Sanders’ cynicism: “Pharisees did not actually spend their sabbaths patrolling cornfields” (“Jesus and the Constraint of the Law,” *JSNT* 17 [1983], 20). However, the scene is “believable,” since Jews could walk on the Sabbath up to a certain distance, and so it is possible to imagine a controversy spontaneously

my analysis with Matthew’s version of the story and then move to Luke’s. Nothing in either Matthew or Luke’s account suggests that the Sabbath has been abrogated. Rather, the discussion revolves around *how* the disciples of Jesus should observe the Sabbath in the presence of their master Jesus and in light of his teachings and authority. Both Matthew and Luke report the episode especially to highlight Jesus lordship, not to announce the abrogation of the Sabbath.

Synoptic Window

Table 3-1

Matt 12:1–8	Mark 2:23–28	Luke 6:1–5
<p>At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the sabbath; his disciples were <i>hungry</i>, and they began to pluck heads of grain and <i>to eat</i>.</p> <p>² When the Pharisees saw it, they said to him, “Look, <i>your disciples</i> are doing what is not lawful to do on the sabbath.”</p> <p>³ He said to them, “Have you not read what David did when he and his companions were <i>hungry</i>?”</p> <p>⁴ He entered the house of God and <i>ate</i> the bread of the Presence, which it was not lawful for him or his companions to eat, but only for the priests.</p> <p>⁵ <i>Or have you not read in the law that on the sabbath the priests in the temple break the sabbath and yet are guiltless?</i></p>	<p>²³ One sabbath he was going through the grainfields; and as they <i>made their way</i> his disciples began to pluck heads of grain.</p> <p>²⁴ The Pharisees said to him, “Look, why are <i>they</i> doing what is not lawful on the sabbath?”</p> <p>²⁵ And he said to them, “Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry and in need of food?”</p> <p>²⁶ He entered the house of God, when Abiathar was high priest, and ate the bread of the Presence, which it is not lawful for any but the priests to eat, and he gave some to his companions.”</p> <p>²⁷ Then he said to them, “<i>The sabbath was made for humankind, and not</i></p>	<p>One sabbath while Jesus was going through the grainfields, his disciples plucked some heads of grain, <i>rubbed them in their hands</i>, and <i>ate</i> them.</p> <p>² But some of the Pharisees said, “Why are <i>you</i> [ποιεῖτε] doing what is not lawful on the sabbath?”</p> <p>³ Jesus answered, “Have you not read what David did when he and his companions were hungry?”</p> <p>⁴ He entered the house of God and took and <i>ate</i> the bread of the Presence, which it is not lawful for any but the priests to eat, and gave some to his companions?”</p> <p>⁵ Then he said to them, “The Son of Man is lord of the sabbath.”</p>

arising on the Sabbath in the fields adjacent to a Galilean town. Nevertheless, the portrayal here remains highly idealized. For one thing, the Pharisaic opponents *never* get to voice their counter arguments. Sven-Olav Back, *Jesus of Nazareth and the Sabbath Commandment* (Åbo: Åbo Akademi University Press, 1995), 90, holds onto the basic authenticity of the setting of the story. Cf. also W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *The Gospel according to Saint Matthew* (3 vols.; ICC; London: T&T Clark, 1988–1997), 2:304, who defend the historicity of this episode, which they see as based on a tradition stemming from the life of Jesus.

⁶ I tell you, something greater than the temple is here. humankind for the sabbath;
⁷ But if you had known what this means, ‘I desire mercy and not sacrifice,’ you would not have condemned the guiltless. ²⁸ so the Son of Man is lord even of the sabbath.”
⁸ For the Son of Man is lord of the sabbath.”

Matthew 12:1–8

Literary Context

It is especially important to note the wider literary context in which this Matthean pericope appears. The division of canonical literature into chapters and verses should not deter us from reading Matt 12:1–8 (as well as the following Sabbath pericope in 12:9–14) in light of the immediate preceding verses (11:25–30), which serve as a sort of introduction to the theme of Sabbath keeping in Matthew.²⁰¹

Matt 11:25–30 can be divided into two major units: vv. 25–27 and vv. 28–30.²⁰²

In the first part, Jesus thanks the Father, using rather vague language susceptible to different interpretations,²⁰³ for having “hidden” (ἐκρυψας) certain “things” (ταῦτα)²⁰⁴

²⁰¹ Matt 12:1–8 is closely linked to the next Sabbath controversy pericope (12:9–14). The latter will be discussed in the following chapter. Within its broader literary context, Matt 12:1–8 probably belongs to the larger narrative block of Matt chs. 11–12. Here I will focus on the immediate literary context. See discussion in Yang, *Jesus and the Sabbath*, 141–61. Unlike Yang, I am not as confident in reading Matt 12:1–8/9–14 so tightly with 12:15–21. The thematic and linguistic connectors between Matt 12:15–21 and the preceding two Sabbath controversies (12:1–14) do not seem so prominent as those in Matt 11:25–30, which may indeed be read as an opening to these Sabbath stories. Matt 12:15–21 should probably be read in its own right and then more broadly with the rest of the gospel.

²⁰² Many scholars divide 11:25–30 into three subunits (vv. 25–26; v. 27; vv. 28–30). So Bultmann, *History of the Synoptic Tradition*, 159–60; Davies and Allison, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, 2:271–72; Joachim Gnilka, *Das Matthäusevangelium* (2 vols.; HTKNT; Freiburg: Herder, 1986), 1:432. For reasons of simplification and since Matt 11:25–27 is paralleled in Luke 10:21–22, I cut Matt 11:25–30 into two sections. Matt 11:28–30 is also partly matched by *Gos. Thom.* 90.

²⁰³ Hubert Frankemölle, *Matthäus: Kommentar* (2 vols.; Düsseldorf: Patmos, 1997), 2:122.

²⁰⁴ The nebulous reference to “these things” (ταῦτα) may be connected to the “mysteries of the kingdom of heaven” (Matt 13:11), including the secret messiahship of Jesus. So Charles H. Talbert, *Matthew* (Paideia Commentaries on the New Testament; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2010), 149. Perhaps,

from the “wise and the intelligent” (σοφῶν καὶ συνετῶν), and for having “revealed” (ἀπεκάλυψας) them to “infants” (νηπίοις). In v. 27, Matthew’s Jesus affirms that “all things” (πάντα)²⁰⁵ have been “handed down” (παρεδόθη) to him directly from the Father. No one except the Father’s son and those who receive revelation (ἀποκαλύψαι) through the son can actually “know” (ἐπιγινώσκει) the Father. The language is purposefully cryptic throughout. In the second part, Jesus promises in the first person to give *rest* (ἀναπαύσω) to those who are “weary and carrying heavy burdens” (οἱ κοπιῶντες καὶ πεφορτισμένοι). Finally, Jesus invites his addressees to bear his “yoke” (ζυγός) and learn from him, promising that they will find “rest” (ἀνάπαυσιν) for their souls, as his yoke is “easy” (χρηστὸς) and his “burden” (φορτίον) “light” (ἐλαφρόν).

Whatever may have been the meaning of such esoteric statements in their pre-redactional stages, they do have some bearing for the interpretation of the subsequent two Sabbath dispute stories: they not only precede the two Sabbath disputes recorded in Matthew, but also contain vocabulary connected to the themes of rest and work that conceptually and semantically overlap with the institution of the Sabbath day (ἀναπαύσω; ἀνάπαυσιν; κοπιῶντες). Furthermore, Matthew links 11:25–30 with the Sabbath dispute stories through the repetition of the prepositional phrase “at that time” (ἐν ἐκείνῳ τῷ

Matthew also thinks here of the words and works of Jesus (11:2, 19). So Yang, *Jesus and the Sabbath*, 154–55.

²⁰⁵ The ambiguous “all things” probably points back to the preceding ταῦτα. See Davies and Allison, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, 2:279.

καὶ ῥῶ; Matt 11:25 and 12:1).²⁰⁶ Matthew intends with the repetition of the prepositional phrase to connect both sections thematically,²⁰⁷ if not also chronologically.²⁰⁸

It is possible that Matthew understands the labels of “wise and intelligent” as representing the Pharisees and scribes who oppose Jesus’ disciples (i.e., the “infants”),²⁰⁹ objecting to their manner of observing the Sabbath and imposing unnecessary burdens (explicitly held against the Pharisees in Matt 23:4, φορτία βαρέα) that interfere with the full enjoyment of the eschatological rest promised by Jesus.²¹⁰ According to Matthew, these Pharisees boast about the *traditions* of the elders (τὴν παράδοσιν τῶν πρεσβυτέρων; Matt 15:2) but remain ignorant about God’s will. To emphasize this point, Matthew contrasts pharisaic tradition (referred to in Matthew as παράδοσιν τῶν πρεσβυτέρων) with

²⁰⁶ This prepositional phrase is redactional (appearing again only in 14:1).

²⁰⁷ Davies and Allison, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, 2:305: “The phrase is not intended to supply chronological information but to serve as a thematic bridge.” Cf. Frankemölle, *Matthäus*, 2:129–30.

²⁰⁸ Cf. Carson, “Jesus and the Sabbath in the Four Gospels,” 75; Yang, *Jesus and the Sabbath*, 143.

²⁰⁹ The “infants” probably represent the followers of Jesus. Luz, *Matthew*, 2:163, identifies them with the *Am Haarets*. He points to the usage of ἡπίος in the LXX, which translates the Hebrew לולע (“infant”) or פתוי (“simple”). He also cites 4QpNah 3–4 iii:5 where the פתוי אפרים (“simple ones of Ephraim”) represent people who do not belong to the Qumran sect and are led astray by the Pharisees. While Luz’s interpretation may be correct, it requires some qualification. Arguably, Matthew may be in competition with the Pharisees in influencing the “crowds” (i.e., other “ordinary” non-Pharisaic Jews), but one must remember that the “common people” (= *Am Haarets* for much of New Testament scholarship) were not in constant conflict with the Pharisees or later rabbis. See corrective already in Oppenheimer, *The ‘Am Ha-aretz*, 2–9.

²¹⁰ So Davies and Allison, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, 2:275; Mayer-Haas, *Geschenk*, 437–38; Yang, *Jesus and the Sabbath*, 144. Since Matt 11:25–30 is also partly attested in Luke 10:21–22 and *Gos. Thom.* 90, we must not assume that this material was originally formulated against Pharisees. Nevertheless, at the Matthean level, this reading seems quite justified, given the pronounced polemics against Pharisees as well as the immediate juxtaposition of 11:25–30 to disputes between Jesus and Pharisees about Sabbath keeping. See Gnllka, *Das Matthäusevangelium*, 1:433–34, for a brief discussion on the history of tradition. In contradistinction to Yang, I wish to point out that *Matthew* contrasts the imposition of “heavy” traditions of the Pharisees with the “easy” and “light” yoke/burden of Jesus. This does not mean that *Pharisees* (or other non-Pharisaic Jews for that matter) viewed their traditions as “burdensome,” a problematic assumption that appears throughout Yang’s work. If anything, the Pharisees could have objected that Jesus’ yoke was heavier, since it theoretically required exceeding their own righteousness (5:20)! Yang states the like (more than once): “Nevertheless too many rules which were extremely meticulous regarding trivial areas of everyday life without emphasizing the fundamental significance of the sabbath would have inevitably caused extreme inconvenience, trouble, and sometimes even danger, and become burdensome” (96–97).

the divine revelation that has been *transmitted* (παρεδόθη) and revealed (ἀποκαλύψαι) to the son and his inner circle of followers.²¹¹

Matthew's Jesus invites *all* (πάντες) those who are weary (κοπιῶντες) and carrying heavy burdens (πεφορτισμένοι) to enter into his rest. The general form of this invitation welcoming all people to partake in this rest suggests that Matthew targets a larger audience of potential beneficiaries than a narrow, inner circle of disciples.²¹² These weary and laden people belong neither to the class of the “wise” nor to healthy who stand in no need of a physician, but to the sick (Matt 9:12) and the “poor who have good news brought to them” (Matt 11:5).²¹³ All of these persons can enter into Jesus' rest if they chose to embrace his call. They are, at least in Matthew's eyes, wearied and overburdened (πεφορτισμένοι) by the Pharisaic interpretations of Torah praxis and the so-called traditions of the elders.²¹⁴ Matthew further alludes to this negative correlation between Pharisaic tradition and halakic encumbrance through the rare usage of the verb φορτίζω in the participial form, πεφορτισμένοι (“burdened”; 11:28). This verb appears only twice in the synoptic writings (once in Matthew and once in Luke), although Matthew describes the traditions of the Pharisees with the related noun “burdens” (φορτία 23:4).²¹⁵

²¹¹ Davies and Allison, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, 2:275.

²¹² Jon Laansma, *I Will Give You Rest: The Rest Motif in the New Testament with Special Reference to Mt 11 and Heb 3–4* (WUNT 2.98; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997), 241: “. . . a call to discipleship more than to disciples.” Cf. Daniel J. Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew* (SP 1; Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical, 1991), 167.

²¹³ On the correlation between the “poor” in 11:5 with 11:25–30, see Laansma, *I Will Give You Rest*, 242.

²¹⁴ According to Yang, *Jesus and the Sabbath*, 157, many New Testament interpreters follow this line of interpretation.

²¹⁵ Cf. Luke 11:46, which appears closely to materials criticizing the Pharisees, but really only condemns the so-called “lawyers”: “Woe also to you lawyers! For you load (φορτίζετε) people with burdens (φορτία) hard to bear, and you yourselves do not lift a finger to ease them.” Cf. Gal 6:5; Acts 27:10; Herm. *Sim.* 9.2.4.

Scholarly attention has centered on the paradoxical usage of the terms “yoke” (ζυγός) and “burden” (φορτίον), surprisingly described as “easy” (χρηστός) and “light” (ἐλαφρόν) to carry. How can a yoke be “easy” and a burden “light”? Perhaps, part of the problem lies in our Western presuppositions and understandings of terms that did not sound entirely pejorative to ancient Jewish readers. True, words such as “yoke” and “burden” can often carry a negative connotation even in ancient Jewish literature, but at least the term “yoke” (Hebrew: עֹל; Aramaic: נִיר; Greek: ζυγός) appears in positive light in various Jewish texts. Thus, in the book of Jeremiah (2:20, 5:5), Israel is rebuked for walking away from God’s Law, for “breaking the yoke.” Presumably, the author of this book believes that remaining under God’s yoke will guarantee a more positive outcome for Israel. The book of Lamentations, a work ascribed to the prophet Jeremiah, declares in quite favorable terms that “it is good for one to bear the yoke in youth” (3:27). In *Pss. Sol.* 7:9, the people of Israel deliberately take it upon themselves to remain under God’s yoke.²¹⁶ Finally, Sir 51:26 in many ways resembles Matt 11:29 when it admonishes its audience to put its neck under the yoke of wisdom (cf. Sir 6:30).²¹⁷

Many ancient Jews would not find the imagery of submitting to a “yoke” offensive or repulsive. As a chosen people, they willingly committed themselves to their special calling to serve the God of Israel. The real concern involves assessing the administration and demands of the authority controlling a given “yoke.” Are they

²¹⁶ Cf. *Pss. Sol.* 17:30, declaring that the nations will be under the yoke of the messiah. Zeph 3:9 (LXX) prophesizes about the day when all will be under God’s yoke.

²¹⁷ Many commentators posit a relationship between Sir 51 and Matt 11:25–30. See Frankemölle, *Matthäus*, 125–29; Gnllka, *Das Matthäusevangelium*, 439; Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 169–70; Yang, *Jesus and the Sabbath*, 153–54, for further references and discussion. For an alternative view, see Laansma, *I Will Give You Rest*, 250. Cf. the cautionary comments of Loader, *Jesus’ Attitude towards the Law*, 200: “Matthew will have understood the allusion to wisdom in similar terms to the way it is used in Sirach, where wisdom is identified with Torah. It remains, however, at the level of occasional imagery, rather than of fundamental theology; otherwise its absence elsewhere is too difficult to explain.”

reasonable and fair? When Rehoboam rises to the throne of his father Solomon, the Israelite people beg him to “lighten the hard service of your father and his heavy yoke” (עֲלוּ הַכֶּבֶד; LXX: ζυγοῦ αὐτοῦ τοῦ βαρέος) and promise to serve the new king should his demands prove reasonable (2 Chron 10:4).²¹⁸ The Israelites object not to the idea of subservience, but voice their concern about overwhelming and unjust stipulations that might overburden their energy and resources. This is certainly how Josephus (*Ant.* 8:213) understands and rewrites this episode, claiming that the people requested from Rehoboam to be *easier* (χρηστότερον) on them than his father Solomon, whose yoke was heavy (βαρὺν ζυγόν), while reaffirming their willingness to embrace servitude (ἀγαπήσειν τὴν δουλείαν) should the new king rule with kindness rather than fear (διὰ τὴν ἐπιείκειαν ἢ διὰ τὸν φόβον). The overlap between the Josephan passage and Matt 11:29–30 strikes the eye: Jesus’ claims that his yoke (ζυγός) is *easy* (χρηστός), not heavy, and promises to be a “gentle and humble” (πραῦς καὶ ταπεινός) ruler (11:29).²¹⁹ Matthew envisages Jesus as harnessing his yoke with clemency, applying the principle of mercy in the administration of the kingdom of heaven (Matt 9:13; 12:7; 23:23). In this way, Matthew claims that living under Jesus proves ultimately to be “lighter” and “easier” than bearing the supposedly unreasonable demands of the Pharisees.

A number of exegetes think that the Matthean yoke imagery refers primarily to Jesus’ teachings and interpretation of the Torah.²²⁰ Jesus’ followers submit to his yoke through discipleship, by learning about his interpretation of the Torah (μάθετε ἀπ’ ἐμοῦ;

²¹⁸ See also 2 Chron 10: 9, 10, 11, and 14.

²¹⁹ Cf. Matt 21:5 where Jesus compares himself to a humble king: “Tell the daughter of Zion, Look, your king is coming to you, humble (πραῦς), and mounted on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.”

²²⁰ Celia Deutsch, *Hidden Wisdom and the Easy Yoke: Wisdom, Torah, and Discipleship in Matthew 11.25–30* (JSNTSup 18; Sheffield: JSOT, 1987), 42; Gnllka, *Das Matthäusevangelium*, 439–40; Hagner, *Matthew*, 1:324; Yang, *Jesus and the Sabbath*, 158.

v. 29).²²¹ Later rabbinic passages employ terms such as עול תורה (“the yoke of the Torah”) or עול מצוה (“the yoke of the commandment”) to denote voluntary submission to the observance of the Torah.²²² In fact, *m. Avot* 3:5 reveals remarkable similarities with Matt 11:28–30, promising compensation to those who follow the Torah: “He that takes upon himself the yoke of the Law (עול תורה), from him shall be taken away the yoke of the kingdom and the yoke of worldly care.” Like Matt 11:28–30, this rabbinic saying guarantees a certain refuge from oppression and daily struggles to those who attach themselves to the Torah. Matthew “commercially” competes with the Pharisaic school(s) by promoting an alternative, comprehensive package centered on the instructions and persona of Jesus in whom the weary and heavy laden can find rest thanks to his clement rulership, a deficiency Matthew holds against the Pharisees in the subsequent Sabbath pericope (12:7).

Undoubtedly, Matthew also ascribes an eschatological dimension to the notion of rest announced in 11:25–30.²²³ This should come as no surprise since several Second Temple sources express a yearning for collective eschatological restoration couched in primordial language stemming from the establishment of the Sabbath at creation.²²⁴

Because the reference to eschatological rest in Matt 11:27 appears right before two

²²¹ Cf. *Did.* 6:2: “the yoke of the Lord.” Some understand “the yoke of the Lord” in the *Didache* as a technical term designating obedience to the Torah. See Jonathan A. Draper, “The Holy Vine of David Made Known to the Gentiles through God’s Servant Jesus: ‘Christian Judaism’ in the *Didache*,” in *Jewish Christianity Reconsidered*, 261–63.

²²² *M. Ber.* 2:2; *Sifre Deut* Pisqa 344.

²²³ Davies and Allison, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, 2:298: “. . . Jesus, the Messiah and bringer of the kingdom, offers eschatological rest to those who join him and his cause. This rest is not idleness but the peace and contentment and fullness of life that come with knowing and doing the truth as revealed by God’s Son, who is always with his people.”

²²⁴ 2 *En.* 33:1–2 (this book is textually attested only in medieval sources), *L.A.E.* 51:2; Heb ch. 4; cf. Isa 66:23.

episodes reporting disputes about Sabbath keeping, both sections might symbiotically illuminate one another: the idea of eschatological rest in Matt 11:25–30 conceptually sheds light on the subsequent Sabbath stories in Matt 12:1–14 just as the Sabbath stories themselves exemplify in concrete circumstances how the notion of eschatological rest plays out in the daily lives of Jesus and his followers. However, over-relating Matthew’s concept of eschatological rest with the institution and observance of the weekly Sabbath should be avoided. Bacchiocchi essentially reduces Matthew’s idea of eschatological rest to the notion of weekly Sabbath keeping.²²⁵ But for Matthew, the reality of eschatological rest constitutes a much broader category and experience that can be enjoyed through communion with the teachings and the persona of Jesus *throughout the week*, not just on the Sabbath. Matthean disciples of Jesus do not enter into eschatological rest only when they observe the weekly Sabbath according to Jesus’ halakah. Rather, the application of Jesus’ teachings and communion with his persona activate and guarantee continual access into an eschatological state of rest that also affects the very way in which the weekly Sabbath is kept, without, of course, abrogating its observance.²²⁶ The subsequent two Sabbath pericopes (Matt 12:1–8 and 9–14) demonstrate how Matthew’s concept of eschatological rest invades the human sphere and affects the Sabbath keeping of Jesus and his disciples.²²⁷

²²⁵ See his once popular *From Sabbath to Sunday*, 62. Notice there his triumphal and supersessionist contrast between the “rabbinical” mode of Sabbath keeping and “Christian” Sabbath observance.

²²⁶ According some later rabbinic traditions, the eschaton will be like a day that is always the Sabbath. See, for example, *b. Ber. 57b* (the pleasures of the Sabbath are one-sixtieth of the delights of the world to come). This does not mean that Matthew believes it is no longer necessary to keep the Sabbath, as if every day is now a Sabbath. Jesus has not yet returned in his full power. The eschatological era is *entering* into human history but not fully realized until the Parousia. In this interim period, the Torah continues to be observed albeit in light of Jesus’ teachings and ministry.

²²⁷ Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 171, claims that Matt 12:1–8 and 9–14 are put forward as examples of the “light burden” imposed by Jesus.

Determining the Controversy

Determining what the controversy in the story on plucking grain actually involves from a halakic point of view is not such a simple matter. Solving this problem is of primary importance, since it would allow for a more precise assessment of the synoptic authors' attitudes toward Sabbath observance. What are the Pharisees in the synoptic gospels really complaining about? Is it the disciples' alleged traveling on the Sabbath, the actual plucking of grains, both deeds, or something else? The Markan formulation of the opening of this scene is quite ambiguous and curiously phrased: "as they made their way his disciples began to pluck heads of grain" (οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ ἤρξαντο ὄδον ποιεῖν τίλλοντες τοὺς στάχους; Mark 2:23). Some interpreters interpret the Greek participial phrase τίλλοντες τοὺς στάχους, circumstantially, viewing the main problem as involving the disciples' treading through the field. "To make way" (ὄδον ποιεῖν) would refer quite literally to "making way through the standing crop."²²⁸ Some Jews would have allegedly objected to this act, because it would involve treading down furrows, analogous in some ways to performing agricultural operations, and could also cause unnecessary loss to the owners of the fields.²²⁹ Alternatively, some exegetes see the reference to "making way" as a royal act forbidden for ordinary people to perform, but permissible for a king (*m. Sanh.* 2:4). This view maintains that no infringement of a particular Sabbath law occurred

²²⁸ J. Duncan M. Derrett, *Studies in the New Testament Vol. I: Glimpses of the Legal and Social Presuppositions of the Author* (Leiden: Brill, 1977), 91.

²²⁹ Derrett, *Studies in the New Testament*, 90–91, suggests that Jesus and his disciples were making a path in order to avoid the Sabbath limits. Many fields had pathways that ran through them, and one could use these paths to travel between villages without violating (at least, according to rabbinic halakah) the Sabbath limit of 2000 cubits. See Phillip Sigal, *The Halakhah of Jesus of Nazareth according to the Gospel of Matthew* (SBL 18; Leiden: Brill, 2007), 157 n. 44, for a brief discussion of the rabbinic evidence on this matter.

in this instance, but rather the transgression of a norm forbidden *on any day* to the *common people*, which so happens to occur in this episode on a Sabbath.²³⁰

Others rightly dismiss this kind of atomistic reading, arguing that ὁδὸν ποιεῖν can simply mean “to make a journey” rather than “to build a path,” either reflecting a Latinism (*iter facere*) or a variation of ὁδὸν ποιεῖσθαι in the active voice (cf. LXX Judg 17:8), with the participial construction representing the main idea of the clause.²³¹ The most likely infringement, then, concerns the act of plucking grain (τίλλοντες τοὺς στάχυας), not the movement of Jesus and his disciples through the fields.²³² Both Matthew and Luke clarify this halakic matter by deleting Mark’s clumsy ὁδὸν ποιεῖσθαι, retaining and juxtaposing the act of plucking with the explicit reference to *eating* (Matt 12:1; Luke 6:1). The fact that in both Matthew and Luke the Pharisees’ reproach immediately follows the reference to plucking and eating implies that both gospel authors understand the controversy as involving the act of harvesting food on the Sabbath rather than some other halakic issue. This interpretation becomes even more evident when one notices that the Pharisees rebuke the behavior of Jesus’ *disciples*: “Look, your disciples do what is not lawful to do on a Sabbath” (Matt 12:2)/ “Why are you doing (ποιεῖτε) what is not lawful on the sabbath?” (Luke 6:2) Since both Matthew and Luke only explicitly portray Jesus as going through (Matt 12:1: ἐπορεύθη ὁ Ἰησοῦς/Luke 6:1: διαπορεύεσθαι αὐτὸν) the fields (although the movement of his disciples is surely implied), the reproach of the Pharisees, couched in the plural form, refers primarily to the action committed by

²³⁰ Benjamin Marmorstein, “Jesu Gang durch die Saatfelder,” *Angelos* 3 (1930): 118; Pierre Benoît, *Exégèse et théologie III* (Cogitatio fidei 30; Paris: Cerf, 1968), 236–37; Derrett, *Studies in the New Testament*, 94.

²³¹ Doering, “Sabbath Laws,” 208–9; Gnllka, *Das Evangelium nach Markus*, 1:21 n. 16.

²³² See also discussion in Édouard Delebecque, “Les épis ‘égrenés’ dans les synoptiques,” *REG* 88 (1975): 134–35.

his disciples (Matt 12:1: “they began to pluck heads of grain and to eat”/Luke 6:1: “his disciples plucked some heads of grain, rubbed them in their hands, and ate them”). This is certainly how Matthew understands the Pharisaic rebuke, since in 12:1 he underlines the hunger Jesus’ disciples experience (οἱ δὲ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ ἐπείνασαν).

This interpretation rules out appending a second Sabbath infringement to the story, namely, that Jesus and his disciples travel beyond the distance prescribed for the Sabbath (2000 cubits = c. 1 km).²³³ First, as the subsequent analysis demonstrates, the rebuke of the Pharisees in both Matthew and Luke is best understood as a statement condemning the harvesting and eating of food that has not been set aside and prepared before the Sabbath. Second, a travel infringement would clash with the narrated coherence of the text: if Jesus and his disciples travel beyond the limited distance imposed on the Sabbath, then so do the Pharisees! Moreover, walking in itself is not forbidden on the Sabbath, provided Jews do not go beyond the Sabbath limits.²³⁴ Finally, agricultural fields were often located adjacent to towns so as to prevent Jews from transgressing the Sabbath limits.²³⁵

Having dismissed these alternative explanations, how may one understand the issue of plucking itself? The Mosaic Torah allows for those in need to glean with their hands grain from the fields owned by others in order to alleviate their hunger (Deut 23:35). If the disciples of Jesus were gleaning from other people’s fields, the controversy

²³³ Luke is well informed about the halakah on the Sabbath limits (תְּחוּם שַׁבָּת), since in Acts 1:12 he refers to the matter (σαββάτου ἔχον ὀδόν). By deleting Mark’s awkward ὀδὸν ποιεῖν, Luke makes it clear that Jesus and his disciples did not trespass the Sabbath limits. This deletion of Mark’s phrase, along with other remarkable features in Acts, suggests that *Luke* refrains from traveling on the Sabbath (see my chapter on the Sabbath in Acts).

²³⁴ Doering, “Sabbath Laws,” 214, citing *b. Eruv.* 30a–b; *m. Yoma* 6:4f.; *m. Rosh Hash.* 2:5 for the limit of 2000 cubits, while pointing to the Qumranic distinction between 1000 cubits for normal walking and 2000 cubits for pasturing animals: CD 10:21; 4Q421 13:1; 4Q264a 1:1 (1000 cubits); CD 11:5; 4Q265 7:4 (2000 cubits). See also Doering, *Schabbat*, 145–54, 175f., 228.

²³⁵ See Doering, “Sabbath Laws,” 214 n. 34 for references in ancient Jewish sources.

could have centered on the performance of such an act on the Sabbath, since the Torah neither explicitly permits nor condemns performing such an act on the Sabbath. A few exegetes fancy that the phrase *τίλλειν στάχους* refers not to the plucking of the *stalks* of grain but to the actual removal of grains from the ears of the plant.²³⁶ The evidence brought forth, however, is ambiguous and inconclusive as Doering points out: “*τίλλειν* is used with the direct object denoting either the matter *being* plucked off or the matter *from which* things are plucked off.”²³⁷

In any case, this philological hairsplitting would be of relevance only if the synoptic authors assume that Jesus’ disciples pluck grain from ears of corn that have *already fallen on the ground*.²³⁸ Such a scenario is envisaged in *m. Pesah. 3:8* where some rabbinic sages rebuke the people of Jericho for eating on the Sabbath fruit that had fallen under a tree (cf. *t. Pesah. 3[2]:19, 21*). The rabbis object to eating such food because the fruit may have fallen on the Sabbath itself and so be forbidden.²³⁹ A non-rabbinic text, Damascus Document (CD 10:22–23), grants permission to eat on the

²³⁶ Édouard Delebecque, “Les épis ‘égrenés’ dans les synoptiques,” 135–42; Derrett, “Judaica in Mark,” 90; Ceslas Spicq, “τίλλω,” *TLNT* 3:380.

²³⁷ Doering, “Sabbath Laws,” 210. As Doering points out, if *τίλλειν* refers strictly to pulling grain from the ears of the plant, it would be tautological for Luke (6:1) to claim that the disciples also rub the ears of grain with their hands (*ψάχοντες ταῖς χερσίν*).

²³⁸ Even Delebecque, “Les épis,” 138–40, claims that neither Matthew nor Mark are interested in describing how the disciples acquired the ears of grain to begin with. He theorizes that the disciples either plucked the entire stalk with the ear, or they stopped along their way in order to shear off with their fingers the ears on the stalks. According to Delebecque, Luke provides an answer to this question by adding the participial phrase “rubbing with their hands” (Luke 6:1). This participial phrase allegedly presupposes that the whole stalks had been taken out, and that they were hanging outside of the disciples’ hands as they rubbed the ears. But once again, how did the stalks end up in their hands to begin with?

²³⁹ See Lawrence H. Schiffman, *The Halakhah at Qumran* (SJLA 16; Leiden: Brill, 1975), 100; Doering, *Schabbat*, 155–57.

Sabbath from “that which is spoiling in the field” (האובד בשדה), a practice that would align itself closer to the custom of the people of Jericho than the halakah of the rabbis.²⁴⁰

Do the synoptic accounts refer to a scenario where Jesus’ disciples only eat ears of grain *already lying on the ground*, an act similar to the practice of the people of Jericho and the position advocated in CD? In other words, the Pharisaic reproach in the synoptic gospels simply consists in specifying that such food items may have fallen on the Sabbath itself. Such a reading demands too fine a halakic analysis from polemical episodes originally created as idealized scenes probably envisaging a more deliberate rupture with traditional Sabbath keeping. Positing that the synoptic Pharisees object to the act of plucking *fresh* grain would fit better with the general tendency of such controversy stories. If we read this episode with this point in mind, it is easy to see how some Jews would have found this practice unacceptable. As noted above, CD 10:22 permits eating on the Sabbath only from what has been prepared beforehand or from “what perishes from the field,” but certainly not from fresh grain plucked from a plant on the Sabbath. Philo (*Mos.* 2:22) also claims that Jews should not cut any shoot, twig, leaf, or pluck fruit on the Sabbath day.²⁴¹ The evidence from Second Temple sources prohibiting the plucking of grain on the Sabbath, while slim, is further attested in later

²⁴⁰ Probably, this phrase should be understood as referring to food that was spoiling *on the ground*, not to fruit or vegetables that were still hanging on a tree or a plant as Louis Ginzberg, *An Unknown Jewish Sect* (Moreshet Series 1; New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1970), 59–60 assumes. See Schiffman, *The Halakhah*, 100; Doering, *Schabbat*, 156. Schiffman, *The Halakhah*, 100, views CD as mediating between the views of the Tannaim and the people of Jericho: “Apparently, the men of Jericho were not willing to abstain from eating these fruits on the mere possibility (*safeq*) that they had fallen off on the Sabbath. The sect [i.e., CD] took a midway position. It allowed the eating of the fruit if it had started to decay.” Doering, *Schabbat*, 156–57, however, thinks Schiffman overinterprets the position advocated in CD: “Der Text läßt nicht erkennen daß die Früchte *bereits vor Sabbat* untergefallen sein müssen. Damit steht er der Position der ‘Leute von Jericho’ nahe, die am Sabbat die heruntergefallenen Früchte aßen.”

²⁴¹ Some like Mayer-Haas, *Geschenk*, 159 n. 115, view Philo’s statement as merely ideal and not indicative of actual Jewish praxis: for Philo, any human interference with creation on the Sabbath, including the removal of plants is theoretically forbidden. On the other hand, Doering believes that some kind of halakic practice among Diasporan Jews is reflected in Philo’s statement. See Doering, “Sabbath Laws,” 212.

rabbinic material.²⁴² Even if significant challenges persist for the modern interpreter in determining to what extent “ordinary” Jews would have agreed or disagreed with the retort of the Pharisees as voiced in the synoptic gospels, it seems reasonable to posit that at least some Jews would have objected to plucking grain on the Sabbath.²⁴³

²⁴² See Doering, “Sabbath Laws,” 213, for pertinent rabbinic passages.

²⁴³ Doering, “Sabbath Laws,” 213, favors viewing the rebuke of the Pharisees as representing a broadly shared opinion among many Jews, not just strict Pharisees: “If these considerations are correct, the ‘Pharisees’ position in Mark 2:24 will certainly be conceivable of historical Pharisees; but, as the other references show, it would not, in any way, be a distinctively Pharisaic rule, and, contrary to much that is stated in modern commentaries on Mark, it would not imply a classification in terms of the later rabbinic system (‘plucking’ as a sub-category of ‘harvesting’).” Nevertheless, Doering admits that not every Jew would have agreed with such a position. On the other hand, Mayer-Haas, *Geschenk*, 159 thinks it unlikely that the majority of the Jews of Jesus’ time and environment would have maintained such a strict observance so as to forbid hungry travelers from plucking and rubbing grain on the Sabbath. Citing *m. Pesah*. 4:8, she thinks that the Mishnah reveals a difference between the practice of the simple people and the pious sages. She also claims that the rabbis themselves permitted reaping dry herbs for consumption as long as bare hands were used or only a small amount was reaped (*b. Shabb*. 128a). The latter passage, however, does not concern itself with reaping or plucking grain, but with plants that have *previously* (before the Sabbath) been set aside as animal feed (למאכל בהבמה). This point has been misunderstood in many commentaries such as Pierre Bonnard, *L’évangile selon saint Matthieu* (CNT 1; Neuchâtel: Delachaux & Niestlé, 1963), 172; Luz, *Matthew*, 2:181; Yang, *Jesus and the Sabbath*, 170 n. 133, among others. Neither the verb to “pluck” (תלש) nor “harvest” (קצר) appear in this rabbinic text, but the verb קטם, which means to “cut,” “chop,” or “lop,” not “pluck.” See Jastrow, “קטם,” 1349. The verb קטם does not appear as one of the 39 forbidden works in *m. Shabb*. 7:2. Actually, the *Gemara* in *b. Shabb*. 128a comments on *Mishnayot* that have nothing to do with harvesting or plucking, but with the usage and movement of objects on the Sabbath that have already been set aside or stored. See Doering, *Sabbat*, 426–27. Doering is correct in refuting the attempts of Sigal, *The Halakhah of Jesus of Nazareth*, 157–59 as well as of M. Casey, “Culture and Historicity: The Plucking of the Grain (Mark 2:23–28),” *NTS* 34 (1988):1–23, in exonerating the disciples of Jesus from any Sabbath violation (according to rabbinic standards). Sigal claims that since “plucking” (תולש) is not named as one of the forbidden labors (אבות מלאכות) in *m. Shabb*. 7:2, and even allowed for with qualification in *m. Shabb*. 10:6, the disciples’ action of plucking a small amount of grain on the Sabbath, performed in order to relieve their hunger, would not have been viewed as forbidden (by later rabbis), and is similar to permitted acts such as peeling an apple on the Sabbath. But according to *m. Shabb*. 7:2, “harvesting” (קוצר) is one of the 39 labors forbidden on the Sabbath, which in *t. Shabb*. 9 [10]:17 is assigned with “plucking” (תולש) as one kind of labor, while in *y. Shabb*. 7:2 9c, 10a, it is classified as a sub-category of harvesting. According to *m. Shabb*. 10:6, “plucking” from plants in pots without holes dug in the ground is allowed by the sages, while R. Shimon permits plucking from plants in pots with or without holes. This debate, however, is restricted to a discussion concerning whether such pots are viewed as belonging to the soil in which they are placed. It presupposes the prohibition of plucking or harvesting food on the Sabbath that grows directly from the earth. Finally, peeling an apple, as Doering notes, concerns a fruit that has already been reaped, while the ears of grain in the synoptic pericope were presumably still bound to plants rooted under the ground. The Pharisaic reproach in the synoptics is best understood as an objection toward harvesting on the Sabbath.

The Nob Incident

In defense of his disciples' behavior, Jesus refers to a biblical precedent involving David's flight from king Saul to the city of Nob where he obtains holy bread normally set aside for priestly consumption. Some modern commentators have made much, perhaps too much, of the exegetical and logical inconsistencies in the brief synoptic retelling and appropriation of the original story as reported in 1 Sam 21.²⁴⁴ One of the incongruities concerns the time setting in both episodes: there is no explicit reference in 1 Samuel that David comes to Nob *on the Sabbath*, raising questions about the solicitation of this biblical story as an appropriate precedent for the argumentation of Jesus in the synoptic episode. A few commentators, however, find hints in 1 Samuel that may suggest a

²⁴⁴ Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 4:276–79, is one of the most recent exegetes who exaggerates the significance of the supposed incongruities between 1 Sam 21:2–10 and Mark's usage of the story, which to a large extent would apply to Matthew and Luke as well. One of the conspicuous "contradictions" singled out by Western scholars involves the contrast between David's apparent *solitary* flight in 1 Sam 21 with the claim in the synoptics that other people accompanied David. Nevertheless, this problem is not as great as some imagine, since in one Sam 21:3 David speaks of other men whom he had hidden in a safe place. True, in 1 Sam David provides this information to evade Ahimelech's inquiry. However, the synoptic authors may not have viewed David's reply as a complete ruse, but believed that he did indeed secure some other men during his flight even while concealing from Ahimelech the true reason for his journey. According to 1 Sam 21:3, David asks for five loaves of bread which he could have carried with him to give to his companions, at least from the synoptic point of view. Furthermore, all three synoptic authors explicitly state that *only David entered the sanctuary* (εἰσῆλθεν εἰς τὸν οἶκον τοῦ θεοῦ). The terse rendition of the episode allows the synoptic authors to envisage David giving the bread to his companions once he has left the sanctuary precincts. But the synoptic writers do not reveal precise and detailed information about this episode. They hardly care to do so. Their primary goal is to make an analogy between both episodes, not to provide a coherent and exhaustive retelling of the David story that will satisfy and entertain the critical acumens of modern scholarship. Yang, *Jesus and the Sabbath*, 172, rightly argues that the episode in 1 Sam neither denies nor confirms the presence of David's companions. Meier charges the "Christian Jews" of Palestine for failing to read the David episode properly. But this approach only transfers ignorance about the Jewish scriptures from the historical Jesus to the followers of Jesus without trying to understand the synoptic episodes on their own terms. Should all the first "Christian Jews," responsible for this tradition, along with Mark, Matthew, and Luke be charged with ignorance about the Jewish scriptures as Meier implies? Many also single out the error Mark commits by confusing Abiathar (Mark 2:26) for his father, Ahimelech (1 Sam 21:1). Mark also mistakenly refers to Abiathar as a "high priest." John P. Meier, "The Historical Jesus and the Plucking of Grain on the Sabbath," *CBQ* 66 (2004): 577, views this outcome as stemming from Mark's ignorance of the "Old Testament." Nevertheless, as Doering notes, the epithet "high priest" in the Nob incident is found in Josephus, *Ant.* 6.242; *L.A.B.* 63.2; and manuscript C of *Tg. Jon.* on 1 Sam 21:1. Regarding the name Ahimelech, this name is rendered "Abimelech" in the LXX and Josephus, making it more understandable how Mark could have confused the two. See Doering, "Sabbath Laws in the New Testament Gospels," 215 n. 38. Matthew and Luke, for their part, have eliminated the name Abiathar from their gospels, demonstrating thereby their intimate familiarity with 1 Sam 21.

Sabbath setting for the story.²⁴⁵ Thus, 1 Sam 21:6 reads: “So the priest gave him [i.e., David] the holy bread; for there was no bread there except the bread of the Presence, which is removed from before the LORD, to be replaced by hot bread on the day it is taken away” (המוסרים מלפני יהוה לשום לחם חם ביום הלקחו). According to Lev 24:8, the showbread was replaced on the Sabbath. Later on, certain rabbinic sages posited a connection between Lev 24:8 and 1 Sam 21:6, proposing a Sabbath setting for the Nob incident (*b. Menah.* 95b; *Yalq.* §130 on 1 Sam 21:5). Nevertheless, this exegetical link only appears in much later rabbinic texts, while no synoptic author, including Matthew, singles out this element for comparative purposes when they could have readily done so.²⁴⁶

What analogy then is Matthew trying to highlight between the two situations in order to justify the halakic “misdemeanor” committed by Jesus’ disciples? First of all, Matthew adds to the Markan text that the disciples were *hungry* (12:1; ἐπείνασαν), thus solidifying the link between David’s hunger (ἐπείνασεν) and that of Jesus’ followers.²⁴⁷ This connection also assists Matthew in relieving the disciples of Jesus from the charge that they capriciously pluck grain on the Sabbath simply to delight their greedy appetites, a possible misunderstanding of the episode that the Markan version could have generated.²⁴⁸ Mayer-Haas thinks that already in Mark’s version of the story an urgent

²⁴⁵ See already Marmorstein, “Jesu Gang durch die Saatfelder,” 116.

²⁴⁶ Even if such an inter-textual connection is visualized, the analogy would still prove somewhat deficient, as it would compare the infringement of consuming holy food assigned to priests with the transgression of a Sabbath regulation. See Doering, “Sabbath Laws,” 215; D. M. Cohn-Sherbok, “An Analysis of Jesus’ Arguments concerning the Plucking of Grain on the Sabbath,” *JSNT* 1 (1979): 39.

²⁴⁷ The analogy does not meet later *rabbinic* criteria to constitute a valid *gezerah shavah*. See Cohn-Sherbok, “An Analysis of Jesus’ Arguments,” 34–36.

²⁴⁸ See Alberto Mello, *Evangelo secondo Matteo* (Magnano: Edizioni Qiqajon, 1995), 210; Juan L. Segundo, *El Caso Mateo: Los comienzos de una ética judeo-cristiana* (Colección “Presencia Teológica” 74; Santander: Editorial Sal Terrae, 1994), 161. I take Matthew’s explicit reference to hunger as an

situation, which would correspond in part to the precedent in 1 Sam 21, is presupposed.²⁴⁹ A correspondence between David and Jesus' disciples' situations, however, is appropriate only to a certain point. The scenario Jesus and his disciples find themselves in, as presented in all three synoptics, does not appear to be life-threatening. If human life were indeed at stake, the disciples' action would constitute a harmless misdemeanor even to many Jews who were more stringent in their Sabbath praxis. In addition, if Jesus and the disciples were fleeing for their lives, they could hardly have paused their activity and afforded the luxury of engaging with the Pharisees in a halakic debate over which kinds of works were permitted or forbidden on the Sabbath. For the episode to become more credible at the narrative level, we must assume that Jesus and his followers were not facing any *imminent* danger.²⁵⁰ Consequently, it seems preferable to view Matthew's position in a certain sense as an extension (rather than an equation) of the principle known in rabbinic parlance as פיקוח נפש ("saving a life"): a rule allowing for the temporary suspension of the Sabbath in life-threatening situations. Matthew expands this principle to include less mitigating circumstances.

While Matthew underlines the connection between David's hunger and that of Jesus' disciples more strongly than Mark,²⁵¹ finding other parallels between both

indication of the special circumstances the disciples find themselves in. Contra Yang, *Jesus and the Sabbath*, 174–77, who does not think Jesus expects his disciples to fulfill the literal regulations of the Sabbath, and views the reference to hunger only as a "surface" analogy.

²⁴⁹ Mayer-Haas, *Geschenk*, 162. But see Doering, "Sabbath Laws," 215.

²⁵⁰ Mello, *Evangelo*, 210, however, thinks that for Matthew the hunger of the disciples falls under the category of פיקוח נפש. Luz, *Matthew*, 2:181, also leans in this direction, claiming that the "rabbis regard hunger as life-threatening, and a life-threatening situation had always taken precedence over keeping the Sabbath commandment." True, life-threatening situations override the Sabbath, but hunger in itself does not. The rabbinic text (*m. Yoma* 8.6) cited by Luz does not support his point. The satiation of hunger in that passage is qualified, referring to בולמוס (in Greek βούλιμος, Latin, *bulimus*), a fierce, ravenous hunger, which presumably could be viewed as life-threatening.

²⁵¹ Doering, *Schabbat*, 432.

incidents proves more challenging.²⁵² Mathew employs the Nob incident only in the most general sense: David and his followers in a certain instance (flight from Saul) experience hunger and break a regulation from the Torah (i.e., they consume consecrated food); in a similar yet different instance, Jesus' disciples also experience hunger and transgress a Sabbath regulation (plucking grain). The synoptic authors, however, probably perceive one other important connection between both stories: the relationship between the figures of David and Jesus. As noted above, Matthew and Luke only explicitly refer to Jesus going through the fields, while claiming his disciples perform the actual plucking and eating of the grain. Nevertheless, the Pharisees in Matthew call upon Jesus to answer on behalf of his disciples: "Look, your disciples are doing what is not lawful ($\delta\ \text{οὐκ}\ \xi\xi\epsilon\sigma\tau\iota\nu$) to do on the sabbath." (Matt 12:1).²⁵³ Although Jesus is not directly complicit in the act of plucking, he remains complacent, and ultimately his authority is called into question. It is the master who must ultimately clarify and justify the halakic orientation of his disciples. Probably, the synoptic authors wish to enhance Jesus' authority by correlating his figure with the greatest monarch of Israel. If David can consume and provide bread for his men, then Jesus too, by virtue of the christological credentials invested to him, can permit his disciples to pluck from the fields on the Sabbath.²⁵⁴

Additional Matthean Arguments

Matthew strengthens his portfolio by bringing another argument to the table: the ministry the priests perform every Sabbath in the temple. Since 1 Samuel does not

²⁵² Bonnard, *L'évangile*, 172: ". . . le point de comparaison avec le geste des disciples est très lointain. . . ."

²⁵³ The phrase $\delta\ \text{οὐκ}\ \xi\xi\epsilon\sigma\tau\iota\nu$ appears in other Jewish legal contexts discussing which deeds are allowed or prohibited to perform on the Sabbath. See Doering, *Schabbat*, 450 n. 297, for references.

²⁵⁴ For a christological correlation between David and Jesus, see Bonnard, *L'évangile*, 172; Boyarin, *The Jewish Gospels*, 60–70 and Yang, *Jesus and the Sabbath*, 176.

explicitly claim that David entered into the sanctuary on a Sabbath day, Matthew summons another analogy that relates more closely to the question of Sabbath keeping: the priests work on the Sabbath yet are not held guilty for profaning (βεβηλοῦσιν) its sanctity (Matt 12:5). *Prima facie*, the reference to the priestly administration in the temple seems more appropriate than the Nob incident to bolster Matthew's Jesus' argument: the priests, like the disciples of Jesus, "work" on the Sabbath. In addition, the analogy of the priests stems from the Mosaic Torah (Matt 12:5: ἐν τῷ νόμῳ), not the books of the prophets.²⁵⁵ Nevertheless, the comparison between both scenarios is not entirely apt: whereas the priests *minister* on the Sabbath *within the temple* because they are *commanded* to do so, Jesus' disciples do not officiate as priests in any sanctuary, they simply consume food in broad daylight in the open fields!²⁵⁶ The author of *Jubilees* would certainly not have agreed with the rationale of Matthew's argument:

On the sabbath day do not do any work which you have not prepared for yourself on the sixth day so that you may eat, drink, rest, keep sabbath on this day from all work. . . . For great is the honor which the Lord has given Israel to eat, drink, and be filled on this festal day; and to rest on it from any work that belongs to the work of mankind except to burn incense and to bring before the Lord offerings and sacrifices for the

²⁵⁵ See Davies and Allison, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, 2:313, who claim that the David story belongs more to the realm of haggadah rather than halakah. Only the latter could be used in a legal dispute (according to rabbinic standards). The reference to the ministry of the priests would have presumably proved more appropriate to Pharisaic thinking since it derived from the Torah. Other ancient Jews, however, may have taken the prophetic writings more seriously as sources for deriving halakah. See CD 7:17.

²⁵⁶ But see Loader, *Jesus Attitude towards the Law*, 203: "It is the particular relation to the temple which makes priests' work on the sabbath appropriate. It is the particular relation to Jesus which, according to Matthew, makes what the disciples are doing on the sabbath appropriate." Cf. Klinghardt, *Gesetz und Volk Gottes*, 228–29, who suggests that both Matthew and Luke's reworking of Mark's pericope brings the discussion back to its supposed original discussion (found in Mark 2:23–26, before the alleged additions of Mark 2:27–28) that defended the right for missionaries to feed themselves on the Sabbath (through analogy with the ministry of the priests). The debate in Luke 6:1–5 would have more to do with the early mission of the *ekklesia* than the problem of Sabbath rest. This hypothesis is attractive, since it accounts for the unique nature of the debate involved (all other Sabbath controversies besides this one deal with healing on the Sabbath). Etan Levine, "The Sabbath Controversy according to Matthew," *NTS* 22 (1975/76): 480–83, unconvincingly attempts to show that Jesus appeals to the practice of reaping the *Omer* offering (first sheaves of barley), which was allowed by the rabbis on the Sabbath (see *m. Menah.* 10:1f.). If this were true, why does Matthew (or any other gospel author) not explicitly refer to this matter?

days and the sabbaths. Only this (kind of) work is to be done on the sabbath days in the sanctuary of the Lord. . . . (*Jub.* 50:9–11)²⁵⁷

For the author of *Jubilees*, offering sacrifices in the temple on the Sabbath would surely not sanction plucking or cooking food that had not been set aside or prepared before the Sabbath. But against this potential counter argument, Matthew has Jesus retort that “something greater than the temple is here” (12:6). As some commentators point out, the Greek term for “greater” appears in this verse in the *neuter* singular (μείζον), not the masculine. The neuter form allows interpreting this verse as pointing to the deeds and words of Jesus rather than his figure or persona.²⁵⁸ Such a reading enjoys the benefit of agreeing in gender with the neuter noun ἔλεος (“mercy”),²⁵⁹ which appears right after in v. 7.²⁶⁰ “But if you had known what this means, ‘I desire mercy and not sacrifice,’ you would not have condemned the guiltless.” Here Matthew refers to Hos 6:6 in order to boost his case by connecting the concept of mercy with the message and mission of Jesus.²⁶¹ If the temple service overrides the Sabbath, how much more should “something greater,” that is, the arrival of the messianic rule of clemency, justify Jesus’ disciples’

²⁵⁷ All translations of *Jubilees* are taken from James C. VanderKam, *The Book of Jubilees* (2 vols. Corpus scriptorum christianorum orientaliu 510–511; Scriptorum Aethiopicu 87–88; Leuven: Peeters, 1989).

²⁵⁸ Doering, *Schabbat*, 434; Luz, *Matthew*, 2:181; Frankmölle, *Matthäus*, 2:133; Saldarini, *Matthew’s Jewish-Christian Community*, 129–31; Sigal, *The Halakhah of Jesus of Nazareth*, 161. Many commentators, however, applying a christological reading, tie “μείζον” with the figure of Jesus. This christological reading connects v. 6 with v.8 (“the Son of Man is lord of the sabbath”). So Banks, *Jesus and the Law*, 117; Antonio Rodríguez Carmona, *Evangelio de Mateo* (Bilbao: Desclée De Brouwer, 2006), 123; Yang, *Jesus and the Sabbath*, 179–82.

²⁵⁹ See Doering, “Sabbath Laws,” 223 n. 72.

²⁶⁰ See Frankmölle, *Matthäus*, 2:132–33, who suggests tying “something” with “these things” and “all things” (also in the neuter in Greek) mentioned in 11:27 and 27. It is undeniable that the christological argument eventually appears in this pericope, but in a clear way only at its very end when Jesus claims to be lord of the Sabbath (v.8).

²⁶¹ Hos 6:6 is an important verse for Matthew. See Matt 9:13 where it is used in order to justify Jesus’ commensality with sinners. Cf. Matt 23:23. On this matter, see David Hill, “On the Use of and Meaning of Hosea VI. 6 in Matthew’s Gospel,” *NTS* 24 (1978): 107–19; Mayer-Haas, *Geschenk*, 445–48. Hos 6:6 is also used in rabbinic literature (e.g., *Avot R. Nat.* 4 A) to show how works based on love rather than sacrifice atone for the sins of Israel. Whether the “historical Yohanan b. Zakkai” actually emphasized this ethical dimension, as some assume, is another matter. See Luz, *Matthew*, 2:34, 183.

temporary breach of the Sabbath, especially since God desires mercy, not sacrifice. The argument resembles roughly the rabbinic rule of *qal vahomer* although Matthew remains more interested in making general analogies rather than establishing rigorous and precise points of correspondence between both situations.²⁶²

Just as the book of Hosea does not abolish sacrifices, but begs Israel to demonstrate a different *état d'esprit* when fulfilling her cultic duties, so does Matthew encourage a different attitude toward Sabbath keeping without calling for its abrogation.²⁶³ The application of the principle of mercy becomes for Matthew the central hermeneutic consideration for assessing any halakic dilemma in which human needs such as hunger collide with Sabbath regulations. Matthew pleads, in the name of mercy, for a more compassionate consideration of basic human needs, for an expression of greater sensibility and a more lenient application of halakah than the one allegedly practiced by his Pharisaic detractors.²⁶⁴

Matthew's claim that something greater than the temple had arrived must have resounded with particular reverberation in the aftermath of 70 C.E. Confronted with the cultic and cultural vacuum left by the desolation of the temple, the rabbinic sages devised way to fill this void, employing Hos 6:6 to establish the study of the Torah and acts of charity as more meritorious acts than the offering of sacrifices. According to rabbinic tradition, R. Yohanan b. Zakkai employed Hos 6:6 in order to comfort those mourning the destruction of the temple, claiming that a means of atonement had become available in

²⁶² The Matthean *a minori ad maius* argument would not constitute a valid *qal vahomer* argument according to rabbinic logic. See Cohn-Sherbok, "An Analysis of Jesus' Arguments," 36–40.

²⁶³ Luz, *Matthew*, 2:182: "God wants mercy *more* than sacrifice. Jesus does not intend to abolish the laws of sacrifice."

²⁶⁴ Cf. Saldarini, *Matthew's Jewish-Christian Community*, 129.

lieu of the temple, namely, “acts of charity” (גמילות חסדים).²⁶⁵ Although Matthew cites Hos 6:6 in order to justify a temporary breach of the Sabbath,²⁶⁶ this statement may have assisted his readers in coping with the void left after 70 C.E. Matthew’s consolation is that something, indeed someone, greater than the temple has arrived to rule Jewish society with clemency. His reference and usage of Hos 6:6 to justify a particular halakic orientation that looks back to and beyond the temple fits perfectly within the spectrum of Jewish expressions and discourses we would expect to find at that time.²⁶⁷

Matthew wraps up this Sabbath episode with a final claim that certainly would have stirred the hearts of those already inside his circle, but hardly convinced those outside the Jesus movement: “the Son of Man is lord of the sabbath” (12:8). Undoubtedly, this phrase means for Matthew that ultimately Jesus’ lordship as the Son of Man determines the halakic orientation of his community toward Sabbath keeping.²⁶⁸ In this way, Matthew also seeks to draw the reader’s attention to the question of Jesus’ messiahship. Matthew credits Jesus, as the Son of Man, for initiating the inauguration of the eschatological age in which mercy becomes the ideal measure of judgment applied to assist those living under *distress* within the commonwealth of Israel. This point brings us

²⁶⁵ *Avot R. Nat.* A 4. Cf. *Avot R. Nat.* B 8–9; *Midr. Pss.* 9:89; *Pirqe R. El.* “Horev,” ch. 11, 16; *Yal.* on Jeremiah 33 and Hosea 6. The noun for mercy (חסד) used in Hos 6:6 semantically overlaps with the rabbinic term for acts of charity (גמילות חסדים). By no means am I trying to demonstrate that the historical R. Yohanan b. Zakkai uttered these words. See already Neusner and his earlier work *The Development of a Legend: Studies on the Tradition concerning Yohanan ben Zakkai* (StPB 16; Leiden: Brill, 1970), 113.

²⁶⁶ Gnllka, *Das Matthäusevangelium*, 445: “Nicht der Tempel ist das eigentliche Thema der Perikope, sondern das Verhalten des Menschen am Sabbat.”

²⁶⁷ Cf. Reinhart Hummel, *Die Auseinandersetzung zwischen Kirche und Judentum im Matthäusevangelium* (BEvT 33; München: Chr. Kaiser, 1966), 97.

²⁶⁸ The christological overtones of the title “Son of Man” can no longer be underestimated, certainly at the Matthean level, given the current consensus among many Second Temple Jewish specialists concerning the dating of the *Parables of Enoch* to the first century B.C.E. New Testament experts would do well to notice this shift away from Milik and Sanders’ post-Christian dating of the work. See now Gabriele Boccaccini, ed., *Enoch the Messiah Son of Man: Revisiting the Book of Parables* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2007).

back to the eschatological prelude in Matt 11:25–30. The weary and heavily laden are now concretely experiencing on the Sabbath day the eschatological alleviation promised by Jesus. Among Jesus’ followers, can be found the needy and poor residents of the land of Israel, who on a regular basis, whether it be on a Sabbath or a normal weekday, experience hunger and other physical ordeals. These hardships reduce and even impede their ability to procure and prepare food before the Sabbath. Consequently, these have-nots can rightfully glean from the fields of others (Deut 23:25–26) even on the Sabbath. In the dawning of a new eschatological age, it would be unfitting for anyone to suffer from hunger on the Sabbath day. Failure to reveal compassionate understanding in such circumstances lies in the hearts of those (Pharisaic) opponents, the “wise and intelligent,” who wrongfully blame Matthew and his needy compatriots for their act.²⁶⁹

All of the previous observations should make it clear that Matthew is not interested in demonstrating that the eschatological transition announced by Jesus cancels Sabbath keeping altogether. Matthew’s effort in multiplying justifications for this “transgressive” act (in the eyes of his opponents) reveals his ongoing concern for Sabbath keeping.²⁷⁰ Matthew does not call for the abrogation of the Sabbath but for a

²⁶⁹ Segundo, *El caso Mateo*, 164–69, presents Matthew’s argumentation as an attempt to solve an ethical dilemma in which one must choose to perform one of two noble tasks, knowing that it is impossible to accomplish both simultaneously. Whether it be David, who must choose between saving his life or profaning the showbread, or the priests who must serve in the temple and “violate” the Sabbath, or finally the disciples of Jesus who must choose between resting on the Sabbath or suffering from hunger on a day designed for blessing and joy, Matthew employs all of these cases to demonstrate that the disciples are justified in their ethical choice to embrace the “lesser evil” (i.e., temporarily suspending the Sabbath to relieve hunger).

²⁷⁰ Doering, *Schabbat*, 435–36; Saldarini, *Matthew’s Christian-Jewish Community*, 131: “Matthew does not abolish or sweep aside Sabbath law as some kind of legalism. Rather he affirms the binding force of Jewish law and then argues for a modified interpretation consistent with the teachings of Jesus. He gives the principle of mercy in response to human need a higher priority than his opponents do and thus authorizes assuaging hunger on the Sabbath even if the food has not been previously prepared.” Cf. Davies and Allison, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, 2:307. Contra Bonnard, *L’évangile*, 173: “Jésus . . . confirme la valeur du sabbat avant de le rendre caduc”; Juan Mateos and Fernando Camacho, *El Evangelio de Mateo*

reassessment of its (original) *raison d'être*, for a more gracious disposition toward the physical needs of the poor, the weary and heavy-laden, and ultimately for a recognition of Jesus' messianic authority.

Luke 6:1-5

Literary Context

Before reporting about the dispute over plucking grain on the Sabbath, Luke deals with the issue of fasting (5:33–39). The followers of John the Baptist as well as the Pharisees practice fasting on a regular basis, but Jesus' followers do not. Jesus' defends the practice of his disciples by claiming that the time is not appropriate for fasting because the bridegroom is present with his guests for a wedding celebration (vv. 34–35). Luke's Jesus elaborates on this point with a "parable": no one would sew a piece of new cloth onto an old garment; otherwise, the new patch would tear and not match the old garment (v.36). Similarly, no one would put new wine into old wineskins; otherwise, the new wine would burst the old wine skins (v.37). The appropriate place for storing new wine belongs in new wine skins (v.38). Up until this point, Jesus' reply in Luke seems straightforward (cf. Matt 9:14–17; Mark 2:18–22). However, Luke 5:39, which is unattested in Mark and Matthew, complicates matters when it states: "And no one after drinking old wine desires new wine, but says, 'The old is good.'"²⁷¹ It is right after this verse that Luke recounts the story about plucking grain on the Sabbath.

The final statement in 5:39 has puzzled many commentators. Why would Luke include such a saying at the end of Jesus' reply to the question on fasting? *Prima facie*,

lectura comentada (Lectura del Nuevo Testamento; Madrid: Cristiandad, 1981), 119: "Jesús suprime la carga insostenible de la observancia del sábado y la Ley misma del descanso festivo."

²⁷¹ A parallel to Luke's statement appears in *Gosp. Thom.* 47, but is placed at the beginning of the argumentation.

the saying would seem to deter from Luke's main argument. Ancient cultures, after all, generally valued any custom or belief that was rooted in antiquity, while disapproving all novel phenomena and practices. Jesus' opponents could have regarded the abstinence of his disciples from fasting as an innovation. Not surprisingly, many commentators resort to interpreting Luke 5:39 as a sort of rebuke toward those who hold on to older (read "Jewish") practices and fail to appreciate the truly new element in Jesus' teachings.²⁷² According to this understanding, Luke, in contradistinction to the rest of his peers from antiquity, whether Jewish or Greek, would be underscoring the novel element in Jesus' message rather than seeking to root it in ancient times. Bovon understands the parable in this way, claiming that Luke deems the new element in Jesus' message to be irreconcilable with ancient Judaism: "Probably for Luke, the way of life introduced by Jesus is so new that one cannot simultaneously live as a Jew and as a Christian."²⁷³ Bovon constructs a false dichotomy. Luke is not opposing a Jewish way of living against a Christian lifestyle.²⁷⁴ This is pure anachronism. Luke and the other synoptic gospels present this debate as an *intra-Jewish* affair between different *Jewish* groups, whether disciples of John the Baptist, Pharisees, or followers of Jesus. "The issue is not about the gospel and the Law," as Loader astutely notes, "but about the way of Jesus and the ways

²⁷² Alfred Plummer, *The Gospel According to Luke* (5th ed.; ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1989), 164–65: "while the first two (parables) show how fatal it would be to couple the new spirit of the Gospel with the worn out forms of Judaism, the third shows how natural it is that those who have been brought up under these forms would be unwilling to abandon them for something untried."

²⁷³ *Luke I*, 193. Bovon also understands Luke's reference to old wine in a dual sense: in a negative way to symbolize the Jewish practice of fasting; in a positive way as representing a Christian lifestyle.

²⁷⁴ The same criticism applies to a lesser extent to Salo, *Luke's Treatment of the Law*, 85: "The whole section also has the purpose of showing the impossibility of changing the direction of influences between Judaism and Christianity. Although some habits or ideas of the old may be part of the new, the reverse is inconceivable: Christianity will be destroyed if one attempts to bring its elements or cast it as a whole in the form of Judaism."

of the scribes and the Pharisees.”²⁷⁵ I would also add, “about the way of the disciples of John the Baptist.” Some commentators like Flusser,²⁷⁶ Good,²⁷⁷ and Mayer-Haas²⁷⁸ even read Luke 5:33–39 in a way that is diametrically opposed to that of Bovon and others: Luke claims that the frequent fasts of the Pharisees and the disciples of John constitute the real innovation!²⁷⁹ This interpretation certainly fits better with Luke’s overall theological scheme to describe the Jesus movement in terms of continuity with Judaism, indeed as the true bearer and fulfiller of its original, one might say, “ancient,” mission and purpose. According to this understanding of the parable, Luke views the imposition of habitual weekly fasts, unattested in the Torah, as constituting innovative practice.

Luke is either labeling the practice of the Pharisees and John’s disciples as innovative, or ironically contrasting their ancient way of living against the new praxis of Jesus’ followers,²⁸⁰ but certainly not condemning the observance of the Law or denying the compatibility of Jesus’ teachings with a Jewish lifestyle. Consequently, the subsequent pericope on plucking grain should not be viewed as a Lukan attempt to illustrate how Jesus’ Sabbath praxis is in radical disjunction with the older Jewish Law. In fact, Luke might think that the attitude of Jesus and his disciples corresponds more closely to the original intent and function of the Sabbath institution designed to be a day of festive commemoration and enjoyment.

²⁷⁵ Loader, *Jesus’ Attitude towards the Law*, 311.

²⁷⁶ David Flusser, “Do You Prefer New Wine?” *Immanuel* 9 (1979): 26–31.

²⁷⁷ R. S. Good, “Jesus Protagonist of the Old, in Lk 5:33–39,” *NovT* 25 (1983): 19–36.

²⁷⁸ Mayer-Haas, *Geschenk*, 303.

²⁷⁹ See Good, “Jesus Protagonist of the Old,” 35.

²⁸⁰ Loader, *Jesus’ Attitude towards the Law*, 311: “Luke adds to the wine image the comment that no one drinking the old wine will want the new, because the old wine is better. This is good wine wisdom, but appears to be used ironically to explain the resistance of the Pharisees.”

Analysis

Luke presents the briefest account of the episode, with approximately 92 words, shorter than the corresponding versions in Mark (108 words) and Matthew (136 words).²⁸¹ Luke's version reveals remarkable similarities with its Markan counterpart, yet contains several modifications, some the result of stylistic improvements, others more significant for assessing his attitude toward Sabbath praxis.²⁸² Because of its brevity, Flusser argues that the Lukan version contains the more primitive form of the event.²⁸³ Flusser also points to Luke's supposed halakic precision concerning Jesus disciples' act on the Sabbath: they *rub* the heads of grain with their *hands* (6:1: τοὺς στάχους ψάχοντες ταῖς χερσίν). Flusser claims that the prevailing Jewish opinion of the time allowed for picking up fallen heads of grain and rubbing them between the *fingers* on the Sabbath. Citing a tradition from the Babylonian Talmud (*b. Shabb.* 128a), which allegedly refers to a Galilean tradition allowing for rubbing grain on the Sabbath even with one's *hands*, Flusser argues that some of the Pharisees blame Jesus' disciples for behaving like Galileans.²⁸⁴ The Greek translator of the supposed original account (which, according to

²⁸¹ Following the text of the *Novum Testamentum Graece* (Nestle-Aland 27th edition).

²⁸² See Mayer-Haas, *Geschenk*, 303–4 for a more detailed redactional analysis. One important difference, which Mayer-Haas and others have captured, is Luke's precision that only *some* of the Pharisees (τινὲς δὲ τῶν Φαρισαίων) confront Jesus' disciples. This nuanced portrayal of the Pharisees differs from the generalizations found in Mark and Matthew. See Klinghardt, *Gesetz und Volk Gottes*, 228 and especially John A. Ziesler, "Luke and the Pharisees," *NTS* 25 (1978/79): 146–57.

²⁸³ Flusser, *The Sage from Galilee*, 35. Flusser, like Robert Lindsey, often favors the wording in Luke over the other two synoptic gospels. He even posits an original proto-gospel written in *Hebrew*, which was subsequently translated into Greek and underwent further modifications. According to Flusser, Luke often preserves the Hebraic flavor of this original gospel. See Flusser, "Do You Want New Wine," 26; Robert L. Lindsey, *A Hebrew Translation of the Gospel of Mark* (Jerusalem: Dugith Publishers, 1973), 9–84. At other times, Flusser seems to have promoted a modified thesis of the synoptic problem that occasionally favors Matthean priority. See the discussion in Malcolm Lowe and David Flusser, "Evidence Corroborating a Modified Proto-Matthean Synoptic Theory," *NTS* 29 (1983): 25–47.

²⁸⁴ A key passage for elucidating *b. Shabb.* 128a is *t. Shabb.* 14[15]: 11. Saul Lieberman has argued that the original debate in *t. Shabb.* 14[15]:11, fraught with its textual-critical problems, concerned not the alternatives of "hands" vs. "fingers" but "fingers and hands" vs. "utensils," suggesting that all rabbinic sages agreed that grain could be rubbed with either hands or fingers on the Sabbath. See Lieberman,

Flusser, was written in Hebrew) was unacquainted with these customs and added the statement about *plucking* grain on the Sabbath in order to make the scene more vivid. By doing so, the Greek translator “introduced the one and only act of transgression of the law recorded in the Synoptic tradition.”²⁸⁵

Unfortunately, Flusser’s argument is not convincing on several grounds. Few have found Flusser’s solution to the synoptic problem, namely that there was an original Hebrew biography of Jesus’ life subsequently translated into Greek, convincing. Doering also notes that no evidence exists positing an early Galilean custom of rubbing ears with the hand from grain that was *not gathered as fodder before the Sabbath*.²⁸⁶ The Talmudic passage, then, carries little weight for elucidating Luke’s account of the Sabbath controversy. Although Flusser presupposes that the Lukan account refers to the rubbing of grain that has fallen on the ground either before or during the Sabbath, Luke never explicitly presents the readers with such a halakic scenario. The best proposition, therefore, for understanding the Lukan phrase, “rubbed them in their hands,” is to view it simply as a literary production penned and inserted by Luke to provide a more “realistic” account to the episode.²⁸⁷

Luke, unlike Matthew, does not explicitly note the hunger of Jesus’ disciples. But he does state that the disciples “ate” (ἤσθιον) the grains after plucking them. This explicit

Tosefta ki-Fshutah [in Hebrew] (10 vols.; 2d ed.; Jerusalem: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America/The Maxwell Abbell Publication Fund, 1992), 3:237.

²⁸⁵ Flusser, *The Sage from Galilee*, 35.

²⁸⁶ See previous discussion on this matter in the section on Matthew’s version of the story; Doering, “Sabbath Laws,” 225–26; *Schabbat*, 426–27. As noted earlier, R. Judah discusses rubbing food that has been collected beforehand as *animal fodder* (*b. Shabb. 128a*). As Doering points out, in later rabbinic texts even the crushing of cereal on the Sabbath falls under the forbidden work of “threshing” (*y. Shabb. 7:2 [10a]*).

²⁸⁷ So Doering, *Schabbat*, 437; Mayer-Haas, *Geschenk*, 304, refuting Hermann Aichinger, “Quellenkritische Untersuchung der Perikope vom Ährenraufen am Sabbat. Mk 2,23–28 par Mt 12, 1–8 par Lk 6, 1–5,” in *Jesus in der Verkündigung der Kirche* (ed. Albert Fuchs; SNTU A1; Linz: A. Fuchs, 1976), 134, who thinks Luke is trying to highlight a further violation of the Sabbath.

reference to eating, which is lacking in Mark, finds its parallel in the story of David, the king of Israel, who also “ate” (ἔφαγεν) from the showbread of the sanctuary (6:4). A direct connection, therefore, between David’s hunger and that of the disciples of Jesus also appears in Luke: just as David was hungry when he entered the house of God and ate the bread of the Presence (6:3–4), so too Jesus’ disciples one Sabbath experienced hunger and consumed some grain. Luke, therefore, does present a motive for Jesus’ disciples’ action on the Sabbath: they experienced a hunger that was in some way analogous to that of a most prominent figure from the Hebrew Bible, King David.²⁸⁸ Doering claims that Luke’s deletion of the Markan phrase, “David was in need” (χρείαν ἔσχεν, Mark 2:25), means that Luke views *any* hunger as legitimately displacing the Sabbath.²⁸⁹ But Matthew has also left out Mark’s phrase without leading Doering to make the same inference about Matthew’s Sabbath praxis.²⁹⁰ Moreover, Luke portrays this incident as a one-time event. He describes its one-time occurrence through the usage of the singular ἐν σαββάτῳ, instead of Mark and Matthew’s plural τοῖς σάββασιν,²⁹¹ as well as through the substitution of Markan imperfects and presents with aorists (εἶπαν instead of ἔλεγον in Luke 6:2; ἀποκριθεὶς and εἶπεν instead of λέγει in 6:3). In this way, the Lukan narration reports a single event rather than a reoccurring habit that could be misused to legitimize the satiation of greedy appetites under any circumstances on the Sabbath. Luke justifies the exceptional suspension of the Sabbath by Jesus’ disciples by anchoring it into a

²⁸⁸ So Mayer-Haas, *Geschenk*, 304.

²⁸⁹ Doering, *Schabbat*, 436.

²⁹⁰ Mayer-Haas, *Geschenk*, 306, views *χρείαν ἔσχεν* as a superfluous element which both Matthew and Luke choose to delete for stylistic reasons.

²⁹¹ Obviously the plural *τοῖς σάββασιν* can refer to a single Sabbath (see *BDAG* 909), but Luke has intentionally placed this phrase in the singular to signal its one-time occurrence. Elsewhere, Luke employs the plural form when he wishes to emphasize a recurring habit (e.g., Jesus going to the synagogue on the Sabbath according to his custom; Luke 4:31 and 13:10).

biblical precedent, David's flight from Saul, an incident that also occurred under unique and demanding circumstances. As Loader points out, by summoning the story about David, Luke seems to combine three arguments to justify the Sabbath praxis of Jesus' disciples: "appeal to scripture or scriptural precedent, appeal to the moral claim of human need and appeal to the example of an authority figure."²⁹²

After citing the David incident, Luke immediately proceeds to the christological argument: the Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath (v.6). With this statement, Luke does not claim that the Sabbath has been abrogated. Rather, Jesus, as the Son of Man, has the authority to determine *how* the Sabbath is to be observed in his presence. In the Lukan horizon, the question about recognizing Jesus' lordship always stands more in the foreground than the question of Sabbath keeping, because Luke presupposes and affirms the ongoing observance of the Sabbath among Jewish followers of Jesus. The main reproach Luke tosses at non-believing Jews, in this case, *some* (not all!) Pharisees, concerns their failure to recognize the messianic authority of Jesus and the right of his first disciples—those in the *physical* presence of their master—to exceptionally suspend conventional Sabbath norms during a moment of dire physical need. To refuse alleviating such hunger may even constitute for Luke a "fast"—an unacceptable physical state to experience on the Sabbath, especially in the presence of the messianic bridegroom.²⁹³ As long as the bridegroom is present, it is unfitting for Jesus' followers to experience any hunger or physical suffering, especially on the Sabbath day. "The days will come" though "when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast in those

²⁹² Loader, *Jesus' Attitude towards the Law*, 312.

²⁹³ Fasting on the Sabbath is already forbidden in the book of *Jubilees* 50:13. Jodi Magness, *Stone and Dung, Oil and Spit: Jewish Daily Life in the Time of Jesus* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2011), 90–96, however, argues that some Jews fasted on the Sabbath during the Second Temple period.

days” (5:35). After the death of Jesus, we know that some disciples of Jesus began to fast on a weekly basis (*Did.* 8:1). In the physical absence of their lord, Jesus’ disciples “reverted” to practicing more conventional customs also observed by their Jewish compatriots. We should be careful, therefore, not to overinterpret this unique episode in Luke concerning a one-time Sabbath incident that occurred in Jesus’ physical presence as reflecting *Luke’s* Sabbath praxis. It could well be that Luke’s reader understood this story more as an “anecdote” about Jesus’ authority during his earthly ministry rather than an example to be emulated as far as Sabbath keeping is concerned. But even if this text does inform us about Luke’s manner of keeping the Sabbath, at best, it only reveals a license to bypass the Sabbath in exceptional cases such as alleviating human hunger.²⁹⁴

Excursus: Why Is Mark 2:27 Missing in Matthew and Luke?

Up until now, the most conspicuous variation to Mark’s version on the plucking controversy, the Matthean and Lukan deletion (?) of Mark 2:27, has not been addressed. Mark 2:27 declares: “the sabbath was made for humankind, and not humankind for the sabbath” (τὸ σάββατον διὰ τὸν ἄνθρωπον ἐγένετο καὶ οὐχ ὁ ἄνθρωπος διὰ τὸ σάββατον). The first part of this logion makes a positive statement, which is followed by an antithetical phrase in the second part of the sentence. A host of scholars accepts this logion as an authentic saying going back to the historical Jesus.²⁹⁵ Originally, the saying appears to have emphasized not the abrogation of the Sabbath but its subordination as a

²⁹⁴ In the conclusion to Part III, I develop this idea further, suggesting that Luke may not have recommended contemporary Jewish followers of Jesus, in the physical absence of their master, to deviate from “normative” Sabbath praxis. Luke is more concerned in polishing and boosting the image of Jesus (because of rumors circulating in his own day about the apostasy of the Jesus movement from Torah observance) than arguing for a manner of keeping the Sabbath that would deviate from conventional practice.

²⁹⁵ See Doering, *Schabbat*, 414–16 and especially F. Neiryck, “Jesus and the Sabbath. Some Observations on Mk II, 27,” in *Jésus aux origines de la christologie* (ed. Jacques Dupont; BETL 40; Leuven/Louvain: Leuven University Press, 1975), 227–70, for references.

tool to benefit human welfare.²⁹⁶ As an authentic Jesus saying, its primary addressees would have been Jews, not Gentiles, since Jesus' ministry was mainly directed to the house of Israel. The usage of terms such as “ἐγένετο” (“was made” or “became”) and “ἄνθρωπος” (“human”)²⁹⁷ may echo the language of creation found in Genesis,²⁹⁸ but they were not originally employed by Jesus to formulate a universal statement about Sabbath keeping for Gentiles à la Philo (*Opif.* 89). The usage of the term “humankind” or “any human” in connection with the Sabbath can appear even in the most exclusive works such as the book of *Jubilees* without addressing Gentiles in any way.²⁹⁹ It is possible, however, that at the Markan level Gentile followers of Jesus applied this verse universally, viewing the institution of the Sabbath as beneficial for all of humankind, not just Jews.³⁰⁰

Statements bearing a similar syntactic structure appear in Jewish literature such as 2 Macc 5:19: “But the Lord did not choose the nation for the sake of the holy place, but the place for the sake of the nation.”³⁰¹ A remarkably similar claim to Mark 2:27 appears

²⁹⁶ Doering, *Schabbat*, 416 refers to it as a “Vorordnung des Menschen vor den Sabbat und Einordnung des Sabbat als eine dem Menschen dienende Institution.” Back, *Jesus of Nazareth and the Sabbath Commandment*, 96–101, remains very pessimistic regarding the actual meaning of the dictum as we do not have the original context necessary for interpreting this “free-floating logion.”

²⁹⁷ Following the NRSV, I translate the Greek noun ἄνθρωπος with the gender inclusive “human” although the English word is misleading since it conveys a universal notion to the saying that is foreign to its original, exclusive Jewish thrust and context.

²⁹⁸ Cf. John 1:3, 10; Heb 1:2; 11:3; Col 1:16. See also the LXX of Gen 2:4; Exod 34:20; Isa 48:7.

²⁹⁹ See Doering, *Schabbat*, 418 n. 117: “Auch im Jub, das die Exklusivität der Sabbatbeobachtung Israels hervorhebt, gibt es Formulierungen wie ‘Mensch’ oder ‘alles Fleisch,’ wobei stets die Zugehörigkeit zum Volk Israel vorausgesetzt wird. Eine universalistische Interpretation des Sabbats ist für Jesus nicht erkennbar.” See also Doering, *Schabbat*, 64 n. 104, commenting on Jub2:28 (“every man”) and 2:30 (“any human”), which appear in reference to the Sabbath but clearly envisage its observance as relevant only for *Israelites*.

³⁰⁰ Weiss, *A Day of Gladness*, 95, jumps too swiftly to a universal interpretation without distinguishing the redactional interpretation of the saying from its original Palestinian setting.

³⁰¹ “ἀλλ’ οὐ διὰ τὸν τόπον τὸ ἔθνος ἀλλὰ διὰ τὸ ἔθνος τὸν τόπον ὁ κύριος ἐξελέξατο.” 2 Bar. 14:18: “And you said that you would make a man for this world as a guardian over your works that it should be known that *he was not created for the world, but the world for him.*” 1 Cor 11:8–9: “Indeed, man was not made from woman, but woman from man. Neither was man created for the sake of woman, but woman for the sake of man” (οὐ γὰρ ἐστὶν ἀνὴρ ἐκ γυναικὸς ἀλλὰ γυνὴ ἐξ ἀνδρός· καὶ γὰρ οὐκ ἐκτίσθη ἀνὴρ διὰ τὴν γυναῖκα ἀλλὰ γυνὴ διὰ τὸν ἄνδρα).

in rabbinic literature: “To you the Sabbath is handed over, and you are not handed over to the Sabbath.”³⁰² As with the Markan logion, the rabbinic saying also deals with Sabbath praxis, and was used by the rabbis to provide room for breaking the Sabbath under special circumstances such as circumcision or saving human life. But, unlike Mark, the rabbinic passage does not state that the Sabbath was *made* (ἐγένετο)³⁰³ for (Jewish) *humans*, but *handed to Israel*: “[the Sabbath] is committed (from מסר) to your hands [i.e., to Israel], not you to its hands.” The rabbinic logion, at least as it appears in this section of the *Mekilta*, is exegetically connected to Exod 31:13 and 14, which explicitly refer to the Sabbath as a covenantal sign between Israel and God, taking the reader back to Sinai rather than creation.³⁰⁴ Thus, the dictum in Mark points back to (restored) creation, while the rabbinic saying echoes Sinai. Nevertheless, both sayings, within their original respective horizons, share the same presupposition regarding Sabbath observance as being incumbent upon the Jewish people only.³⁰⁵ Finally, both sayings naturally

³⁰² *Mek. Ki Tissa-Shabbeta Parashah 1*: לכם שבת מסורה ואי אתם מסורין לשבת. Translation mine. Cf. *b. Yoma* 85b.

³⁰³ Mayer-Haas, *Geschenk*, 167, states that despite the reference in Mark 2:27 to Gen 1, the verb ἐγένετο should not be translated here as “created,” since references to the *creation* of the Sabbath are fairly rare in Jewish literature. The verb γίγνεσθαι is occasionally used in the LXX as one of the verbs to express creation, although ποιεῖν and κτίζειν are more common. In Mark 2:27, ἐγένετο refers in general terms to the emergence of humanity and the Sabbath upon the cosmic scene. Mark 2:27 uses neither κτίζειν nor ποιεῖν in reference to the creation of the Sabbath, even though it alludes to the Genesis creation account(s). See, however, *Midr. Psalms* 92 where the Sabbath is said to have been created (נברא).

³⁰⁴ Doering, “Sabbath Laws,” 217 n. 46 is unsure whether the saying as it appears in the *Mekilta* (attributed there to R. Shimon) refers to the revelation of the Torah on Mount Sinai, since there are other instances within the *Mekilta* where מסר appears with the Sabbath without relating it to the bestowal of the Torah at Sinai (e.g., *Mek. Ki Tissa-Shabbeta Parashah 1* on Exod 31:15).

³⁰⁵ Doering, *Sabbat*, 418. As in the case with the logion found in Mark 2:27, Doering points out that the rabbinic language of the dictum “the Sabbath is committed to your hands, not you to its hands” was not coined originally out of concern for Gentiles encroaching upon the sacred established relationship between Israel and Sabbath. Instead it stresses the priority of the people of Israel over the Sabbath. Nevertheless, the rabbinic formulation of the saying seems to presuppose the exclusive relevance of Sabbath keeping for Israel alone. Thus, in *Mek. Ki Tissa-Shabbeta Parashah 1*, commenting upon the phrase in Exodus 31:13 (“it is a sign between you and me”), the *Mekilta* adds “and not between me and the nations of the world.”

assume an ongoing obligation toward Sabbath keeping (by Jews); neither statement calls for a Jewish cessation of its observance. Rather, both sayings plea to show compassion when the Sabbath needs to be temporarily suspended for various understandable reasons.³⁰⁶

Certain Gentiles, however, with little knowledge about the original Jewish background to such a saying could have easily misunderstood its intent and interpreted it to mean that humans can override the Sabbath in any circumstances, *à volonté*. By applying a Greek, “humanistic” reading to the Markan logion, humankind becomes the sovereign measuring yardstick for determining how the Sabbath should be observed. In fact, such a humanistic perspective might in the end call for the complete dismantlement of the Sabbath institution. The *Homo-Mensura* saying, ascribed to the pre-Socratic philosopher Protagoras, expresses this anthropocentric prioritization: “πάντων χρημάτων μέτρον ἐστὶν ἄνθρωπος, τῶν μὲν ὄντων ὡς ἔστιν, τῶν δὲ οὐκ ὄντων ὡς οὐκ ἔστιν” (“Of all things the measure is man, of the things that are, that they are, and of the things that are not, that they are not”).³⁰⁷ In addition to transforming humans into the measure of all things, another saying, also ascribed to Protagoras, tends to relativize ethical situations, submitting them to further subjective, human interpretations: “Although no one opinion is truer than another, one opinion may be better than another.”³⁰⁸ Such a relativistic,

For a further discussion on Sabbath keeping and Gentiles in Second Temple and rabbinic passages, see my forthcoming article, “Forming Jewish Identity by Formulating Legislation for Gentiles,” *JAJ*.

³⁰⁶ Mayer-Haas, *Geschenk*, 169: “Mk 2,27 selbst hat wie die Mekhilta zu Ex 31, 14 die Funktion, für eine sehr liberale Auslegung des Sabbatruhegebotes zu plädieren: Es handelt sich hier nicht um Halacha, sondern um ein Plädoyer.” Doering, “Sabbath Laws,” 217: “. . . both the rabbinic saying and Jesus’ logion have the quality of an appeal, not of a legal ruling.”

³⁰⁷ *Sextus Empiricus Adv. math.* 7.60; see also Plato’s *Theaetetus* 152a. Cf. Francis Wright Beare, “The Sabbath Was Made for Man?” *JBL* 79 (1960): 32, Mark 2:27 “sounds more like Protagoras of Abdera.” See also Félix Gils, “Le sabbat a été fait pour l’homme,” *RB* 69 (1962): 516–21.

³⁰⁸ See W. K. C. Guthrie, *The Greek Philosophers from Thales to Aristotle* (New York: Harper & Row, 1975), 69.

anthropocentric worldview, which grants humans ultimate authority, could displace the theocentric orientation of Jesus' saying and promote an uncontrolled laxity toward Sabbath keeping that could eventually lead to its complete abandonment.³⁰⁹

Both Matthew and Luke may have deleted the saying in Mark in order to avoid such misinterpretations.³¹⁰ Numerous alternative proposals, however, abound to account for the mysterious absence of the Markan logion in the gospels of Matthew and Luke. Some commentators resort to the textual-critical argument: the absence of the saying in Matthew and Luke belongs to a number of so-called "minor agreements" between both gospels, demonstrating that both synoptic authors either used two different sources when composing this section³¹¹ or had a different version of Mark at their disposal.³¹² The former proposal, however, may prove to be superfluous, as many of the minor agreements between Matthew and Luke in this pericope and elsewhere can be accounted for as the result of independent redaction, designed to improve the language and thread of Mark's prose.³¹³ We also wonder why both Matthew and Luke would prefer the version

³⁰⁹ Mayer-Haas, *Geschenk*, 165.

³¹⁰ Mayer-Haas, *Geschenk*, 171, thinks that already Mark tried to avoid this anthropocentric, lax reading of the saying by including the christological statement in 2:28: The Son of Man, that is Christ, becomes the final authority for determining Sabbath observance, while the Sabbath itself remains in full force. Cf. Davies and Allison, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, 2:315.

³¹¹ Hans Hübner, *Das Gesetz in der synoptischen Tradition: Studien zur These einer progressiven Qumranisierung und Judaisierung innerhalb der synoptischen Tradition* (2d ed.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1986), 117–19. The two sources could have been Mark and Q (the latter containing a version different than that of Mark's). According to Back, *Jesus of Nazareth and the Sabbath Commandment*, 73, Matthew and Luke used a parallel tradition (not necessarily Q).

³¹² Hermann Aichinger, "Quellenkritische Untersuchung der Perikope vom Ährenraufen am Sabbat," 141–53; Andreas Ennulat, *Die "Minor Agreements": Untersuchungen zu einer offenen Frage des synoptischen Problems* (WUNT 62; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1994), 84.

³¹³ Some of the salient minor agreements between Matt and Luke in this pericope include: the absence of Mark's ὁδὸν ποιεῖν (Mark 2:23); the inclusion of ἐσθίειν (Matt 12:1) or ἤσθιον (Luke 6:1), εἶπαν and εἶπεν (Matt 12:2,3; Luke 6:2,3); ὁ οὐκ ἐξέστειν (Matt 12:2; Luke 6:2) is placed before the word "Sabbath," unlike Mark, who places it afterward; χρεῖαν ἔσχευ (Mark 2:25) is lacking in both Matthew and Luke; so also the erroneous name and designation of Abiathar as high priest (Mark 2:26); ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου is placed at the end of the sentence in Matt 12:8 and Luke 6:5. But Mayer-Haas, *Geschenk*, 306–7, adequately explains how both Matthew and Luke, independent from one another, could have arrived to similar results in their reworking of Mark. For example, as noted earlier, the difficult "ὁδὸν ποιεῖν" has been erased because it

of the hypothetical second source (which would not have contained the saying found in Mark 2:27) to the Markan one. Finally, a Deutero-Markan hypothesis raises several perplexing questions regarding the development and formation of the Markan pericope.³¹⁴

In the case of the Gospel of Matthew, some suggest that Matthew prefers to appeal to Hos 6:6 (the argument of mercy) rather than the saying found in Mark because the former finds its basis in the Jewish scriptures.³¹⁵ Others opine that Matthew and Luke sense a strange *non sequitur* in Mark's text: the proclamation of human sovereignty over the Sabbath could potentially detract from the unique claim of authority over this institution ascribed to the Son of Man.³¹⁶ After all, it does not logically follow that Jesus, as Son of Man, is the lord of the Sabbath, if the preceding verse in Mark already announces its subordination to all of humanity. This supposed incoherence in Mark—

complicates the interpretation of the text and is superfluous. Moreover, both Matthew and Luke want to avoid the impression that Jesus and his followers were travelling on the Sabbath. The common replacement of the aorist for the imperfect is also understandable from a narrative standpoint, given the one-time occurrence of the event. Matt and Luke also remove the superfluous *χρείαν ἔσχεν* for stylistic reasons. The repositioning of *ὁ οὐκ ἔξεστιν* before “the Sabbath” clarifies the issue at stake: the Pharisees do not point to the violation of a general commandment, but to a transgression committed *on the Sabbath*, thereby eliminating the potential misunderstanding that the disciples committed an act forbidden on any weekday (see introduction above to section on Matt 12). The joint deletion of Abiathar is completely explainable: both Matthew and Luke know that this was not the correct priest for the Nob story. Finally, the repositioning of “the Son of Man” at the beginning of the final sentence stresses the christological dimension so dear to both Matthew and Luke.

³¹⁴ The present form of the story in Mark 2:23–28 is widely viewed as a multilayered pericope. One model suggests that Mark 2:25f. and v. 28 are secondary additions, while 2:23, 24, 27 (sometimes v.28) are seen as traditional. So, Mayer-Haas, *Geschenk*, 307, 173–75. If so, Mark 2:27 could not have been added later into the Markan text, but would have been known to Matthew and Luke. A second model views 2:23–26 as traditional, while vv. 27–28 were added later since they focus more on the person of Jesus and his role in a post-Easter context. So, for example, Collins, *Mark*, 201. The logion of 2:27, however, is not christological in itself and even enjoys Jewish parallels in its form and content. Moreover, we wonder how Matthew and Luke would have included Mark 2:28 without 2:27 if these two sayings were already closely combined as a couplet by Mark. We would have to assume then that the redactor of the alleged deutero-Markan text deleted v. 27 before it became available to Matthew and Luke. Such a variant, however, is not attested in any of the extant textual witnesses to Mark.

³¹⁵ Mello, *Evangelo secondo Matteo*, 221–22. Cf. John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2005), 485.

³¹⁶ R.T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew* (NICNT; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2007), 462.

humans rule over the Sabbath, “therefore” (“ὥστε”) the Son of Man is also lord of the Sabbath—may have bothered both Matthew and Luke, leading them to remove the saying in Mark 2:27 from their texts. This suggestion, however, seems unlikely. The ὥστε and the καὶ in Mark 2:28 can point back to 2:10 to show that the Son of Man has authority to forgive sins on earth and is *also* lord of the Sabbath.³¹⁷

Still others point to the christological dimension both Matthew and Luke seek to highlight in this pericope: Jesus’ authority as Son of Man ultimately determines how his followers observe the Sabbath in his presence. Both Matthew and Luke deem the christological argument as the final and decisive criterion for dealing with controversies about Sabbath keeping. They, therefore, leave out the saying in Mark 2:27 to underline this christological dimension. There is, of course, no denying the centrality Jesus’ messianic authority plays in *all* three synoptic writings. Consequently, the christological dimension Matthew and Luke wish to ascribe to this episode hardly accounts for their deletion of Mark 2:27. In his version of the Sabbath dispute over plucking grain, Matthew inserts other arguments besides the christological one to strengthen his case, while even Luke supplies in his numerous episodes about Jesus’ Sabbath keeping rationalizations of a halakic and ethical type that have nothing to do with christological authority in order to justify Jesus’ orientation toward Sabbath keeping.

Weiss has suggested yet another possibility for the deletion of the Markan saying.

First of all, he understands the Mark 2:27 in universal terms:

It stresses the gift of the Sabbath to humanity. Given the general openness to the Gentiles in the Gospel of Mark, it is quite possible that the author fully intended the universalistic thrust of the saying. This would indicate that the Jewish disagreements as to whether or not a Gentile could keep the Sabbath were somewhat familiar to the

³¹⁷ Correctly, Boyarin, *The Jewish Gospels*, 68; Loader, *Jesus’ Attitude towards the Law*, 35.

Christians. Here Mark is making a strong statement in favor of the universality of the Sabbath as a gift of God. It is clearly intended against those who would restrict its benefits exclusively to the Jews.³¹⁸

Weiss suggests the universalistic thrust of the logion in Mark may have prevented both Matthew and Luke from reproducing it.³¹⁹ Weiss' proposal is intriguing, but why would an author like Luke, or even Matthew, with his so-called Great Commission to the Gentiles, discourage or even oppose Gentile observance of the Sabbath? Did the synoptic authors expect Gentiles to keep the Sabbath? I return to this matter later on in the conclusion to Part I and in my chapter on the Sabbath in the book of Acts. In short, I believe that Matthew and Luke are not opposed to the idea of Gentile followers of Jesus freely and spontaneously adopting Jewish customs such as the Sabbath, but they also do not *require* them to do so. They leave this matter up to Gentile followers of Jesus to freely decide. It is questionable, therefore, whether the universal applicability of Sabbath keeping supposedly lurking behind the saying in Mark 2:27 led Matthew and Luke to omit it from their gospels.

Finally, other commentators, such as Saldarini, point in the direction hinted at in the beginning of this section. In the case of Matthew, Saldarini believes that he has removed the Markan logion because of the potential laxity it could have promoted vis-à-vis Sabbath keeping: "Readers of Matthew might subordinate Sabbath observance to a variety of human needs and desires, and that would undermine its status as a divine commandment incumbent on Israel."³²⁰ Why can this suggestion not also be made for the gospel of Luke? The current dichotomy that still reigns and transforms Matthew into the faithful "Jewish Christian" who observes the Law and Luke into the Gentile universalist

³¹⁸ Weiss, *A Day of Gladness*, 95.

³¹⁹ Weiss, *A Day of Gladness*, 95.

³²⁰ Saldarini, *Matthew's Christian-Jewish Community*, 131.

for whom Torah observance belongs to previous eons of *Heilsgeschichte* should not deter us from seriously considering this possibility.³²¹ Luke, just as much as Matthew, may have sensed the potential misunderstandings about the Sabbath the Markan saying could engender.³²²

In the end though, absolute certainty concerning the reason for the absence of the Markan logion in Matthew and Luke cannot be firmly established. All of the various suggestions outlined above rely ultimately upon arguments *ex silentio*. Admittedly, for both Matthew and Luke, the christological dimension constitutes the final and definitive justification for the behavior of Jesus' (Jewish) disciples on the Sabbath. Yet the appeal to the christological credentials of Jesus cannot be taken as evidence for the abrogation of the Sabbath on the part of either gospel author.³²³ While it is impossible to prove beyond doubt that both synoptic cousins "corrected" their "younger" Markan peer for the potential slippery slope he may have left in his text, in the end, both Matthew and Luke have crafted their texts in ways that avoid warranting breaking the Sabbath out of any human fancy.³²⁴

³²¹ F. Vouga, *Jésus et la Loi selon la tradition synoptique* (Le Monde de la Bible; Genève: Labor et Fides, 1988), 50–52, suggests that Luke omits Mark 2:27 because the Law is no longer a live issue for him. Why then does Luke have the more disputes about the Sabbath than any other gospel? I find Vouga's position untenable because of the strong interest Luke shows in the Law throughout both of his writings, including issues related to purity, dietary laws, and circumcision.

³²² So Bear, "The Sabbath Was Made for Man?" 134, who, nevertheless, proceeds to state that the followers of Jesus did not keep the Sabbath; Klinghardt, *Gesetz und Volk Gottes*, 228; Mayer-Haas, *Geschenk*, 307–8. See Neiryck, "Jesus and the Sabbath. Some Observations on Mk II, 27," 241 n. 48, for further references. Wolter, *Das Lukasevangelium*, 235, however, prefers the christological argument, and rejects Mayer-Haas' reading as well as the deutero-Markan hypothesis. The immediate juxtaposition of David and Jesus creates an *argumentum a comparatione* ("if David . . . how much more Jesus").

³²³ Wolter, *Das Lukasevangelium*, 235: "Dass der Sabbat vom Menschensohn 'abgeschafft' ist, sagt Lukas nicht."

³²⁴ Boyarin, *The Jewish Gospels*, 66, links Mark 2:27 with the David story in the following way to account for Matthew and Luke's deletion of the verse: "In short my suggestion is that a set of controversy arguments in favor of allowing violation of the Sabbath for healing (now an accepted practice) has been overlaid with and radicalized by a further apocalyptic moment suggested by the very connection with David's behavior. The David story itself can go either way. Just as the Rabbis chose to emphasize David's

Conclusion

We have appreciated Matthew's rich repertoire of arguments on behalf of the Sabbath praxis of Jesus and his first followers. When citing the biblical precedent about David's consumption of forbidden bread, Matthew, more than Mark, highlights the disciples' hunger. He also brings into consideration the analogy of the priests who serve in the temple on the Sabbath in order to justify the conduct of Jesus' disciples who abide in a reality greater than the temple itself. Finally, he quotes an additional verse from scripture (Hos 6:6) to plea with his opponents to show mercy on the Sabbath in light of the extreme circumstances affecting Jesus' disciples. A rich and robust portfolio indeed, composed of halakic and christological argumentation.

Some take Luke's terse pericope as an indication that he is no longer interested in the question of Torah observance. But this is far from being true. Luke still has three more disputes about the Sabbath to report in his gospel—more Sabbath controversies than any other gospel. He saves his ammunition for subsequent episodes in his narrative. His arsenal on behalf of Jesus' Sabbath praxis is just as rich and well equipped as Matthew's. Even his terse retelling about the plucking of grain controversy proves to be remarkably dense. The citation of the precedent involving David substantiates the action of Jesus' disciples in a threefold way: it points back to scripture; it singles out the exceptional circumstances affecting both parties (hunger); it solicits a great figure from Israel's past, King David. In fact, by leaving out Mark 2:27 from his narrative, Luke encourages drawing a closer correlation between King David and Jesus the messiah. The

hunger and thus the life-saving aspect of the story, justifying other breaches of the law if a life can be saved (Palestinian Talmud Yoma 8:6, 45b), so did Matthew; Mark, by contrast, understanding the story as being about the special privileges of the Messiah, pushed it in the direction that he did. On this account, the reason for the absence of v. 27 in Matthew (and Luke) is that Mark's messianic theology was a bit too radical for the later evangelists."

christological argument, however, does not make a generalizing claim announcing the abrogation of the Sabbath. The authority of Jesus is called upon only to advocate a temporary breach with the Sabbath for the sake of alleviating human hunger, not to announce the end of Sabbath keeping altogether! Finally, as I will suggest later, it is not entirely clear whether this episode really reflects the Sabbath practice of Luke and his readers. The story really seeks to augment the status of Jesus' authority and to polish his image in light of the disciples' halakic misdemeanor. The methodological issues about viewing such episodes as windows into Matthew or Luke's halakic worlds will be addressed again at the end of our analysis of Matthew and Luke as well as the Acts of the Apostles.

Chapter 4

Healing on the Sabbath

“And so Rabban Shimon ben Gamaliel would say: ‘The House of Shammai says that one does not provide charity to the poor on the Sabbath in the synagogue even to marry an orphan boy and an orphan girl, and one does not negotiate a marriage between a husband and a wife, and one does not pray for the sick on the Sabbath. And the House of Hillel permits.’”
(*T. Shabb. 16 [17]:22*)³²⁵

Introduction

This chapter analyses all of the remaining episodes in Matthew and Luke where a controversy arises over Jesus’ Sabbath keeping. All the disputes assessed here concern the issue of performing healings on the Sabbath. The ailments Jesus cures, as I will argue throughout this chapter, are of a non-fatal type. Matthew and Luke do not view them as life-threatening. The aim of this chapter, therefore, will be to assess how both synoptic authors go about justifying Jesus’ actions. I maintain that Luke offers an argumentation on behalf of Jesus’ Sabbath praxis that is just as sustained, sophisticated, and Jewish as Matthew’s. The fact that Luke reports no less than three disputes about Jesus’ healings, compared to Matthew’s sole story taken from Mark about the healing of a man suffering from a withered hand, shows that the third evangelist remains interested in the question about Sabbath keeping and the Jewish Law in general.

³²⁵ Translation mine.

Healing the Withered Hand

Synoptic Window

Table 4-1

Matt 12:9–14

⁹ He left that place and entered *their* synagogue; ¹⁰ a man was there with a withered hand, and they asked him, “Is it lawful to cure on the sabbath?” so that they might accuse him.

¹¹ He said to them, “Suppose one of you has only one sheep and it falls into a pit on the sabbath; will you not lay hold of it and lift it out?

¹² How much more valuable is a human being than a sheep! So it is lawful to do good on the sabbath.”

¹³ Then he said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” He stretched it out, and it was restored, as sound as the other.

¹⁴ But the Pharisees went out and conspired against him, how to destroy him.

Mark 3:1–6

Again he entered the synagogue, and a man was there who had a withered hand.

² They watched him to see whether he would cure him on the sabbath, so that they might accuse him.

³ And he said to the man who had the withered hand, “Come forward.”

⁴ Then he said to them, “Is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the sabbath, to save life or to kill?” But they were silent.

⁵ He looked around at them with anger; he was grieved at their hardness of heart and said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” He stretched it out, and his hand was restored.

⁶ The Pharisees went out and immediately conspired with the Herodians against him, how to destroy him.

Luke 6:6–11

⁶ On another sabbath he entered the synagogue and *taught*, and there was a man there whose *right hand* was withered.

⁷ The scribes and the Pharisees watched him to see whether he would cure on the sabbath, so that they might find an accusation against him.

⁸ Even though he knew what they were thinking, he said to the man who had the withered hand, “Come and stand here.” He got up and stood there.

⁹ Then Jesus said to them, “I ask you, is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the sabbath, to save life or to destroy it?”

¹⁰ After looking around at all of them, he said to him, “Stretch out your hand.” He did so, and his hand was restored.

¹¹ But they were filled with *fury*³²⁶ (ἀνοίας) and discussed with one another what they might do to Jesus.

Matthew 12:9–14

Literary Context

Both Matthew and Luke follow Mark in including another clash over Sabbath keeping between Jesus and the Pharisees right after the plucking grain incident. Matthew

³²⁶ The Greek word ἀνοία as it appears in Luke has been mistranslated with terms such as “wrath” or “fury” by most modern translations and is discussed below.

links both episodes more closely than Mark by indicating that Jesus entered into a synagogue straight after leaving the grainfields: “he left that place (i.e., the grainfields) and entered their synagogue” (12:9).³²⁷ In this way, Matthew conveys the impression that this new episode takes place on the same Sabbath as a sequel to the previous controversy over plucking grain.³²⁸ By more tightly relating both pericopes, Matthew encourages reading the second incident in similar ways to the preceding one: the second episode builds upon the former, further demonstrating Jesus’ application of the programmatic statement on rest announced in 11:25–30. Like the preceding Sabbath controversy, the following episode does not deal with a life-threatening situation but further develops the rationale for a particular orientation that warrants temporarily suspending the Sabbath in order to relieve human suffering.³²⁹

Analysis

Whereas Mark states that Jesus “entered the synagogue,” Matthew specifies, once again, that Jesus entered *their* synagogue, revealing his sustained effort to demarcate and

³²⁷ As noted in the previous chapter, all Sabbath controversies in the synoptic gospels focus on Jesus’ healings with the exception of the incident of the plucking of grain. In the field of form critical studies, the story has been classified by Theissen as a “rule miracle,” that is, a miracle story used to reinforce sacred prescriptions, in this case, the justification of the divine prescription to do good on the Sabbath. See Gerhard Theissen, *The Miracle Stories of the Early Christian Tradition* (trans. Francis McDonagh; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1983), 106. Tannehill, “Varieties of Synoptic Pronouncement Stories,” 107, classifies the healing of the withered hand under the rubric of “objection stories,” which brings it close to Bultmann’s “controversy stories.” Bultmann places the story in his section of apophthegms containing a conflict/didactic saying occasioned by Jesus’ healing. See Bultmann, *History of the Synoptic Tradition*, 12, 48. Bultmann firmly believes that the formation of such material took place in the “Palestinian Church,” which formulated these healing stories in order to defend its Sabbath conduct. Bultmann maintains this is true even if the criticism is launched at Jesus, not his followers, for the healing stories at the same time are meant to glorify him (48).

³²⁸ In Mark 3:1, it only states that Jesus went “again” into the synagogue. This takes the reader’s attention all the way back to Mark 1:21 where Jesus is said to have entered the synagogue of Capernaum on a previous Sabbath. Likewise, Mark 3:1 states “and a man was there” (καὶ ἦν ἐκεῖ ἄνθρωπος), which is matched by Mark 1:23 (καὶ εὐθὺς ἦν ἐν τῇ συναγωγῇ αὐτῶν ἄνθρωπος). These features are the result of redactional activity. So Collins, *Mark*, 206.

³²⁹ Cf. Frankemölle, *Matthäus*, 2:134.

set himself outside Pharisaic parameters.³³⁰ In Matthew, the Pharisees immediately confront Jesus with their halakic questioning about the legitimacy of healing minor diseases on the Sabbath. Initially, their inquiry seems to provide a scholastic-legal flair to the entire pericope, as if the entire Matthean episode was merely recounting a halakic debate about a particular legal matter from the Torah, in this case healing on the Sabbath.³³¹ But little room for a fair debate between both parties is left in such stories that were primarily designed to exalt the authority of one particular figure above the caricatured and vilified attitude of the other. Matthew never grants the Pharisees an opportunity to voice their opinion about Jesus' reasoning and actions. A hostile atmosphere reigning over both parties persists throughout the pericope: the Pharisees supposedly raise their question only in order to find a way of accusing Jesus (κατηγορήσωσιν; v.10). The evil motives lurking behind their inquiry anticipates the end of the episode where Matthew, following Mark, claims that the Pharisees conspire together to get rid of Jesus (v.14).³³²

³³⁰ Luz, *Matthew*, 2:187, sees here a reference not to the synagogue of the Pharisees, but of the Jews in general. Frankmölle, *Matthäus*, 2:135, argues in this case for a synagogue of the Pharisees. France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 463, while admitting that the possessive pronoun hints at the rift between Pharisees and Jesus, suggests that in this case "their synagogue" refers to the synagogue in Capernaum. Runesson, "Rethinking early Jewish Christian Relations," 95–132, consistently maintains that Matthews refers to the synagogues of Pharisaic association.

³³¹ Davies and Allison, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, 2:328; Hummel, *Auseinandersetzung*, 44–45; Loader, *Jesus' Attitude towards the Law*, 205; Saldarini, *Matthew's Christian-Jewish Community*, 132. In Mark 3:2, the opponents watch to see if Jesus will do something wrong. In Matt 12:10, the Pharisees ask whether it is lawful (ἐξεστίν) to heal on the Sabbath. This formulation further links both Sabbath dispute stories in Matthew, since in Matt 12:2 the Pharisees also inquire about the disciples' unlawful (οὐκ ἐξεστίν) conduct on the Sabbath.

³³² See Davies and Allison, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, 2:318–19. Neither Matthew nor Luke contains the curious Markan reference to Pharisees and *Herodians* conspiring with each other against Jesus (Mark 3:6). At the narrative level, their conspiracy anticipates the passion of Jesus. Accusations, however, against Jesus' alleged Sabbath violations do not rise during his final trial in the synoptic tradition. Likewise, Pharisees are completely absent in the passion narratives, save for one incident in Matthew (27:62–66; to be discussed later in Part I), which was surely generated by post-paschal polemics. The chief priests, Sadducees and Jerusalem authorities, along with the Romans, appear in the synoptics as the culprits responsible for Jesus' death, not the Pharisees. Yang, *Jesus and the Sabbath*, 209–14, conveys the

As in the previous dispute over plucking grain, Matthew seems unsatisfied with the rationale provided by Mark for Jesus' Sabbath healing. After healing the man with a withered hand in the synagogue, Mark's Jesus simply asks his opponents whether it is "lawful to do good or to do harm on the sabbath, to save life or to kill" (Mark 3:4). Matthew, however, has Jesus present a different type of question and argument: "Suppose one of you has only one sheep and it falls into a pit on the sabbath; will you not lay hold of it and lift it out?" (Matt 12:11) Matthew's Jesus then appends an *a fortiori* argument to his rhetorical question: "How much more valuable is a human being than a sheep! So it is lawful to do good on the sabbath" (12:12).³³³ Only the last statement of Matt 12:12, "it is lawful to do good on the sabbath" (ἐξεστὶν τοῖς σάββασιν καλῶς ποιεῖν), parallels Mark's ἐξεστὶν τοῖς σάββασιν ἀγαθὸν ποιῆσαι, although Matthew's statement appears postpositively as a conclusion to an argument (introduced by ὥστε), while Mark employs similar wording to initiate Jesus' rhetorical question.³³⁴ Matthew's deployment of the *a fortiori* argument was already noted in the previous pericope when Jesus states that

impression that the Pharisees truly did conspire against Jesus' life because of his Sabbath keeping. From a historical point of view, such a position is untenable.

³³³ This saying appears in a different form and context in Luke 14:5, which is discussed later on in this chapter.

³³⁴ The phrase καλῶς ποιεῖν should not be translated as "do good" but "do well," since καλῶς is adverbial. This phrase appears in the LXX as a translation for לְהַיְטִיב. See Mayer-Haas, *Geschenk*, 452 n. 203; Doering, "Sabbath Laws," 236. Eric Ottenhejm, "Genezen als goed doen. Halachische logica in Mt 12, 9–14," *Bijdr* 63.3 (2002): 356–65, ties this adverbial phrase with the rabbinic rubric of מַעֲשֵׂים טוֹבִים ("good deeds"). For Ottenhejm, the Matthean approach follows the ethos of the House of Hillel: whereas the House of Shammai would prohibit giving alms to the poor in the synagogue, matchmaking, and praying for the sick on the Sabbath, the House of Hillel would approve these practices (*t. Shabb.* 16 [17]:22). In a parallel passage, *b. Shabb.* 12a, such acts are known as "deeds of loving kindness" (גְּמִילוּת חַסִּדִּים) and belong to the category of "good deeds." Ottenhejm sees the Matthean healing as relieving the man with the withered hand from his poverty and misery thereby unveiling how Jesus' act exemplifies the application of "good deeds" and is justifiable on the Sabbath. Even if Matthew does not couch Jesus' healing in nominal terms of "good deeds," he probably relates the adverbial καλῶς ποιεῖν with the concept of mercy previously mentioned in Matt 12:7. Therefore, the healing of the sick represents for Matthew an instantiation of Jesus' compassion that is legitimate and even appropriate for him to perform on the Sabbath. Ottenhejm's thesis is original and quite compelling.

“something” truly greater than the Temple has crystallized within the historical-social scene of Israel (12:6). The repetition of the *a fortiori* argument provides further symmetry between both pericopes and becomes the favorite form of argumentation deployed by Matthew in such settings.

The “medical” diagnosis provided in Matt 12:10 describes the disabled person as suffering from a “withered hand” (χειρα ξηράν). The adjective ξηρός (“dry”) can be used to refer to physical conditions affecting humans and is translated in English with such terms as “withered,” “lean,” “haggard,” “shrunk,” or “paralyzed.”³³⁵ In this instance, “hand” probably denotes *pars pro toto* “arm.”³³⁶ In the LXX to 1 Kgs 13:4, Jeroboam’s hand temporarily dried up (ἐξηράνθη) when he stretched it out (ἐξέτεινεν) to harm one of God’s prophets. As a result of divine punishment, Jeroboam was unable to move his hand (οὐκ ἠδυνήθη ἐπιστρέψαι αὐτήν πρὸς ἑαυτόν).³³⁷ In Matt 12:13, divine action reverses the paralyzing effects of such a condition. Jesus commands the affected person to stretch out his hand (ἔκτεινόν σου τὴν χεῖρα). By immediately and obediently responding (καὶ ἐξέτεινεν), the man publicly reveals his full recovery, thereby confirming the efficacy of Jesus’ healing powers.

No literary feature in the synoptic gospels describing the physical ailment afflicting the man suggests that his life is in jeopardy.³³⁸ His disability, which impedes

³³⁵ See “ξηρός,” in *BDAG* and *LSJ*.

³³⁶ So Doering, “Sabbath Laws,” 227; Mateos and Camacho, *El Evangelio*, 121: “En este contexto, donde el hombre ha de extenderlo (13), ha de interpretarse como “brazo,” símbolo de la actividad.”

³³⁷ Cf. *T. Sim.* 2:12 where Simeon’s “right hand was half withered for seven days” (ἡ χεῖρ μου ἡ δεξιὰ ἡμίξηρος ἦν ἐπὶ ἡμέρας ἑπτα) because of his anger toward his younger brother Joseph. Cf. LXX Hos 9:14; Zech 11:17; Mark 9:18; John 5:3.

³³⁸ So Doering, “Sabbath Laws,” 227; France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 464; Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 487.

proper mobility, affects only *one* of the members of his body.³³⁹ Presumably, from the perspective of the synoptic Pharisees, care for the man's hand can wait until another day, since it is a chronic condition presenting no imminent health risks against his life. Only this reading of the pericope, which presupposes the abstinence among certain Jews from healing "minor" ailments on the Sabbath, adequately accounts for the Pharisees' objection in the synoptics to Jesus' action.³⁴⁰ Despite the idealization of such stories, in my opinion, some historical and halakic credibility should be allotted to the opposition voiced in the synoptic records. Some, however, could argue that the *a fortiori* statement in Matthew would in fact point to a life-threatening situation. Does not the *a fortiori* argument construe an analogy between the life-threatening situation of the sheep with the supposedly and equally dangerous condition of the person suffering from a withered hand? For several reasons, this sort of analogical deliberation does not convince. First, the inference produced by the *a fortiori* reasoning in Matthew justifies in *broad* terms to

³³⁹ Mello, *Evangelo*, 220, cites the version of this story as found in *Gospel of the Hebrews*, which refers to the profession of the sick man (stoneworker) to show how he is unable to make a living due to his condition. Regardless of the historical veracity of such a statement, Mello argues that the condition afflicting this person affects not only his health but also his ability to bring bread to his house. The man is therefore unable to observe the positive aspect of Ex 20: 9–10 ("*six days* you shall *labor*") and enjoy the second part of the fourth commandment, namely, to rest on the seventh day. On this point, see also Luz, *Matthew*, 2:188–89.

³⁴⁰ As noted in the introduction to Part I, an intimidating number of prominent scholars (to whom I owe a great deal of learning and respect) argue that Jesus did not perform any forbidden act according to the Judaic conventions of his time. Thus, Flusser, *The Sage from Galilee*, 39, sweepingly claims that "Jesus is never shown in conflict with current practice of the law." Similarly, E.P. Sanders and Margaret Davies, *Studying the Synoptic Gospels* (London: SCM, 1989), 157, conclude that the healing (at least in its Markan version) is superficial and artificial because saving human life would have been accepted among Pharisees. But does Mark view the situation of the man suffering from a withered hand as life-threatening? Similarly, Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 266, states: "The Stories of healing on the Sabbath . . . also reveal no instance in which Jesus transgressed the Sabbath law." True, Jesus did not go against anything prohibited in the (written) Torah. But what about contemporary halakah from the Second Temple Period? Cf. Sanders, *Jewish Law from Jesus to the Mishnah*; Vermes, *Jesus the Jew*, 25; Hyam Maccoby, *Early Rabbinic Writings* (vol. 3; Cambridge Commentaries on Writings of the Jewish and Christian World, 200 B.C. to A.D. 200; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 171, unconvincingly tries to show that such Sabbath controversies originally posited Jesus against the Sadducees, and later the *ekklesia* replaced the Sadducees with the Pharisees as the main opponents of Jesus. While most of these authors are more concerned with the historical Jesus, their comments are equally pertinent for the understanding of the gospels at the redactional level.

“do good” rather than confining compassionate intervention on the Sabbath only to scenarios where human life is under danger. Matthew does not retain the Markan phrase ψυχὴν σῶσαι (“to save a life”; Mark 3:4), perhaps because he does not view the disability of the man as life-threatening. In any case, an argument by Matthew on behalf of saving life would have proven superfluous for many Jews who accepted the priority of human survival over against a strict observance of the Sabbath. Like the David story in the previous Sabbath controversy (Matt 12:3–4), Matthew’s aim here is not to construct an analogy of life-threatening proportions. The logic of Matthew’s analogy becomes clearer when we realize that he is not really comparing the life-threatening *situation* of a sheep with the chronic condition of a human suffering from a withered hand, just as he does not equate the life-threatening position David finds himself in with the circumstances of Jesus’ disciples who are not trapped in a deadly situation. Matthew, instead, is making an analogy between how the sheep and the man should be *treated*. If certain Jews are willing to save creatures that are inferior to humans on the Sabbath, then they should deal with humans on the Sabbath with even greater care and sensibility. In other words, they should recognize Jesus’ right to care for less mitigating cases such as curing chronic illnesses, or, if we may draw from the previous pericope, alleviating other physical needs such as human hunger.³⁴¹

Alternatively, Matthew may not have even viewed the situation of the sheep as imminently life-threatening. In contrast to Luke’s version of the logion (14:5), which describes an animal trapped in a *well* (φρέαρ)—a life-threatening scenario for the creature

³⁴¹ Saldarini, *Matthew’s Christian-Jewish Community*, 132, argues that Matthew deems Mark’s rhetorical question to be far too broad and imprecise. Since the crippled man is under no threat of dying, the principle of saving a life would not apply here. Rather we are dealing with conflict between two principles of the Law: keeping the Sabbath and healing those in need. Cf. Segundo, *El Caso Mateo*, 66f., for the development of Matthew’s ethics regarding this halakic dilemma.

depending on the depth of the waters in the well—Matthew’s saying states that the sheep is caught in a *pit* (βόθυσον). Matthew’s version of the saying could suggest that the sheep’s life is not imminently at risk; it is simply trapped and distressed.³⁴² Consequently, some Jews could maintain that the sheep can be rescued after the Sabbath is over. Nevertheless, the sheep’s owner might be worried about the *damage* incurred upon his domestic property, and Matthew equates this concern for the sheep’s welfare with Jesus’ effort to relieve humans from their physical *affliction*. If this suggestion is correct, the *a fortiori* argumentation in Matthew conveys the following lesson: if some Jews are ready to succor an animal on the Sabbath in order to relieve it from its distress, how much more should they find Jesus’ relief of human suffering appropriate acts for the Sabbath.

Surprisingly, no Jewish text known to us from antiquity allows for lifting an animal out of a pit or well on the Sabbath.³⁴³ Matthew, however, seems to take this practice for granted, since he has Jesus rhetorically address the issue to his opponents as if they would agree with his premises.³⁴⁴ Were there Jews in antiquity who would help animals come out of a well or a pit on the Sabbath? Certainly, the author(s) of the Damascus Document would have disapproved: “No one should help an animal give birth on the Sabbath; and if it falls into a well or a pit, he may not lift it out on the Sabbath” (CD 11:13–14).³⁴⁵ A similar prohibition appears in 4Q265 (4QMisc Rules) 6:5–6: “Let no one raise up an animal which has fallen into the water on the Sabbath day” (cf. 4Q251

³⁴² Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 488.

³⁴³ Doering, *Sabbat*, 459; “Sabbath Laws,” 231f. There appears, however, a Roman ruling by Q. Mucius Scaevola the Pontifex which allows for one to save an ox from a pit on a holy day without thereby desecrating the sanctity of said *feriae* (“holidays” or “festival days”). See Macrobius, *Saturn* 1.16.11.

³⁴⁴ Or is Matthew addressing the crowd in the synagogue, who, unlike the Pharisees, share Jesus’ assumption?

³⁴⁵ ואם תפיל <תפול> אל בור ואל פחת אל יקימה בשבת.

2:5–6).³⁴⁶ Rabbinic tradition makes certain concessions on this issue. According to *t. Shabb.* 14[15]:3, one can provide food for a domestic animal which has fallen into a well but may not actively lift it out.³⁴⁷ A similar and slightly more lenient view, which nevertheless falls short of permitting the direct hauling up of an animal on the Sabbath, appears in the Bavli: “If an animal falls into a dyke, one brings pillows and bedding and places [them] under it, and if it ascends it ascends.”³⁴⁸

Because no known parallel from the extant sources fully matches the presupposition voiced in Matthew, some try to read Matt 12:11 in such a way so as to conform it to rabbinic halakah. For example, Tomson claims that Matthew is not referring to the action of *lifting up* an animal out of a well, but is using “the exact halakhic expression that the animal may be *raised up*.”³⁴⁹ In other words, Matthew refers to the act of raising the animal to a *standing position*, or even placing some pillows and bedding under the animal to assist it in standing up, without going as far as pulling it out of the well. This is a clever reading, but applies a laser precise halakic reading of the highest rabbinic standards to a Matthean verse that seems rather raw and generalizing in

³⁴⁶ אל יעל איש בהמה אשר תפול אל המים ביום שבת.

³⁴⁷ בהמה שנפלה לתוך הבור עושין לה פרנסה במקומה בשביל שלא תמות.

³⁴⁸ The fuller passage in *b. Shabb.* 128b reads: “Rab Judah said in Rab’s name: If an animal falls into a dyke, one brings pillows and bedding and places [them] under it, and if it ascends it ascends. An objection is raised: If an animal falls into a dyke, provisions are made for it where it lies so that it should not perish. Thus, only provisions, but not pillows and bedding? — There is no difficulty: here it means where provisions are possible; there, where provisions are impossible. If provisions are possible, well and good; but if not, one brings pillows and bedding and places them under it. But he robs a utensil of its readiness [for use]? — [The avoidance of] suffering of dumb animals is a Biblical [law], so the Biblical law comes and supersedes the [interdict] of the Rabbis.” As Doering points out, both the aforementioned passage from the Tosefta as well as the text from the Bavli advise the avoidance of actively hauling up a domestic animal on the Sabbath. See Doering, *Schabbat*, 459. Saldarini, *Matthew’s Christian-Jewish Community*, 132–33, points to *t. Yom Tov* 3:2, which allows for raising an animal on a festival day, as evidence that the matter of raising animals was not solved even one hundred years after Matthew. But the passage in the Tosefta discusses what one may do on *festival day*, a *Yom Tov*, not the Sabbath proper. Festival days were generally treated more lightly than the Sabbath (see fuller discussion in my chapter treating the halakic problem of Jesus’ burial supposedly occurring on a Passover falling right before a Sabbath).

³⁴⁹ Tomson, *If This Be from Heaven*, 220; so also Eric Ottenhejm, “Genezen,” 356.

its halakic deliberation.³⁵⁰ Such an interpretation of Matthew also grants too much credit to rabbinic sources and sectarian documents as representing *all* of Jewish practice in Palestine during the first century C.E. Moreover, the parallel saying to Matthew in Luke 14:5 does refer to the *lifting up* of an animal out of a well since it uses the verb ἀνασπάσει (“draw” or “pull up”) instead of Matthew’s ἐγερῆ.³⁵¹ Luke’s choice of vocabulary does not reveal an ignorance about halakah because of his supposed Gentile background,³⁵² since 4Q265 7:6–7, which deals with the same scenario, also refers to the action of lifting an animal (אֵל יַעַל) that has fallen into the water.³⁵³ Therefore, there is no need to view Luke’s rendition as a mistranslation or manifestation of halakic ignorance given the attestation from 4Q265. Luke’s verbal choice is perfectly understandable: he refers to an animal that falls into a *well* (φρέαρ) rather than a (dry) pit (βόθυσον). It would only be

³⁵⁰ Actually, as Doering notes, even the language in CD 11:13–14 אֵל יַקִּימָה (“he shall not lift it up”) can be equally ambiguous: does יַקִּימָה (*hifil* 3rd pers.) refer to “lifting out of” or only to “raising” an animal? Alternatively, should we read the verb in the *piel* form and translate it as “sustain,” in conformance with the halakah in the *Tosefta* that allows one to supply food for the endangered animal without lifting it out of the well? See Doering, “Sabbath Laws,” 233–34.

³⁵¹ See “ἀνασπάω,” in *BDAG* and *LSJ*. The verb can be used to denote drawing water *out* of a well (Josephus, *Ant.* 2:259); to draw up with a hook (LXX Hab 1:15); to bring up and out of a den (LXX Dan 6:18); to draw one’s sword *out* or *forth* (ἐκ χειρὸς ἔγχεος ἀνεσπάσατο; see *LSJ*). In Acts 11:10, the sheet Peter sees in his vision is drawn up to the sky (ἀνεσπάσθη εἰς τὸν οὐρανόν).

³⁵² Contra Tomson, *If This Be from Heaven*, 220, commenting on Luke 14:5: “Pulling up an animal is not, however, in keeping with the Jewish law, not even in the opinion of the later rabbis. On the other hand, in Matthew Jesus uses the exact halakhic expression that the animal may be *raised up* (Mt. 12.11). In comparison to this, ‘Luke’ betrays a lack of practical knowledge of the Jewish law, in striking contrast to his otherwise so sympathetic attitude towards Jewry. *The author of Luke and Acts apparently did not have Pharisaic schooling and was probably not a Jew himself*” (emphasis Tomson’s).

³⁵³ The *hifil* of the verb עלה can be used to denote bringing someone/something up and out of a lower place. In Jud 5:13, some people from Judah bring Samson up from the rock (ויעלוהו מן־הסלע). Most unequivocal is the reference in Gen 37:28: “they drew Joseph up, *lifting him out of the pit*” (ויעלו את־יוסף מן־הבור). So too, Ps 40:3; Jer 38:10, 13. See “עלה” in *HALOT* and *BDB*. In the LXX, the verb ἀνασπάω, which appears in Luke 14:5, can translate the *hifil* of the verb עלה. See, for example, Hab 1:15.

natural for him to describe the action of lifting an animal *out* of the well, rather than merely raising it to a standing position, lest the creature drown in the water.³⁵⁴

In conformance to the trajectory taken throughout this monograph, I suggest taking Matthew and Luke more seriously as an alternative *Jewish* view regarding such matters, one that did not conform to rabbinic or Qumranic practice.³⁵⁵ Indeed, some suggest that Matt 12:14 reflects Palestinian rural custom: poor Jewish farmers would save their animals on the Sabbath to prevent economic loss.³⁵⁶ In line with this understanding, certain commentators favor reading “*πρόβατον ἓν*” in Matt 12:11 as “*one* sheep” rather than simply “*a* sheep,” reflecting once again the poor economic conditions of Galilean farmers who for pragmatic reasons would have been more lax in in this aspect of their

³⁵⁴ Another attempt to fully conform Matthew’s position with rabbinic halakah appears in Jan Joosten and Menahem Kister, “The New Testament and Rabbinic Hebrew,” in *The New Testament and Rabbinic Literature*, 340–45, who suggest the Greek verb ἐγερῆ in Matthew 12:11 would represent a mistranslation of a Hebrew *Vorlage* that contained the verb יקום, originally understood as a *piel* stem, meaning to “sustain,” but misunderstood by the more commonly used *hifil* stem. This conjecture, however, reminiscent of the so-called Jerusalem School’s preference for a Hebrew *Vorlage* to the synoptic tradition, goes against the “mainstream” assumption of positing an Aramaic substratum behind such sayings. Joosten and Kister also argue that in CD 11:14 אֵל יְקִימָה (normally, translated as “he shall not lift it up”) should be rendered “he should not sustain it.” Most scholars, however, have understood יקום in CD 11:14 as a reference to lifting the animal out of the well. So Doering, *Sabbat*, 193–95; Florentino García Martínez and Eibert J.C. Tigchelaar, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition* (2 vols.; Brill: Leiden, 1997–1998), 1:569; Schiffman, *Halakhah*, 121f.; Geza Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls in English* (5th ed.; London: Penguin, 1997), 140. Is the rabbinic evidence affecting too much our understanding of the regulations in the Qumran and Gospel literature?

³⁵⁵ Cf. Frankemölle, *Matthäus*, 2:135: “Der mit Jesus beteiligt sich nicht an der Diskussion über die totale Ablehnung einer solchen Möglichkeit (wie sie die Essener vertraten: CD 11,13f), auch nicht an der rabbinischen Diskussion, ob man dem Tier mit Futter oder als Hilfsmittel, damit es selbst herausklettern kann, zu Hilfe eilen dürfe.”

³⁵⁶ Doering, *Sabbat*, 460; “Sabbath Laws,” 234. Doering suggests that the argument in Matt 12:11 was directed at “Jewish Christians” in an inner-community debate over Sabbath practice, rather than at Pharisees, who, as far as the limited evidence allows, would not have consented with the presupposition voiced by Jesus in this passage. See Doering, *Sabbat*, 461. See also Luz, *Matthew*, 2:187, who makes a connection with the single sheep of the poor man in the Nathan story (2 Sam 12:3). Matthew is not condemning the Pharisees or the Jews for their supposed materialism (being willing to save an animal to prevent economic loss) and failure to value humanity as some patristic authors claimed (e.g., Jerome). Unfortunately, this misguided prejudice has sneaked into some of the modern commentaries of the twentieth century. So Mateos and Camacho, *El Evangelio*, 121 as well as Bonnard, *L’Évangile*, 176, following Adolf Schlatter, *Der Evangelist Matthäus* (2d ed.; Stuttgart: Calwer Verlag, 1933), 400: “Die traditionelle Ethik schätzte das Eigentum hoch, versagte dagegen dem Menschen die Liebe. Jesus dagegen schätzt den Menschen, nicht das Eigentum.”

Sabbath keeping.³⁵⁷ There may even have been a biblical basis to such a practice, since passages such as Exod 23:5 and Deut 22:4 ordain helping an animal that is lying under a burden.³⁵⁸

These observations fit well with the overall concern Matthew shows for the “poor” (11:5), the “sick” (9:12; 11:5), and the “weary and heavy laden” (11:28). Mathew’s Jesus’ healing of one sick and needy person becomes yet a further manifestation and exemplification of the rest promised to the weary and overburdened in 11:25–30.³⁵⁹ It constitutes a compassionate act according to the measure of mercy announced in 12:7. As in the case of the plucking of grain, Matthew’s justification for healing on the Sabbath hardly translates into a full revoking of Sabbath observance. He only defends Jesus’ right on the Sabbath to intervene on behalf of the oppressed and

³⁵⁷ Doering *Schabbat*, 461; Luz, *Matthew*, 187, claims that ἐν in Matthew is rarely used as an indefinite article, especially when placed *after* the noun as in Matt 12:14. Since Matthew refers to “seizing” (κρατῆσαι) one *sheep* (a small animal) rather than raising larger creatures such as cattle (בהמה; so CD; 4Q265, and rabbinic texts) with *instruments*, Martin Vahrenhorst, “*Ihr sollt überhaupt nicht schwören.*” *Matthäus im halachischen Diskurs* (WMANT 95; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2002), 388 n. 33, suggests that Matthew thinks of seizing a sheep with one’s *hands*, an act that would presumably be permissible on the Sabbath. Once again, I remain skeptical about this proposal, since I wonder whether Matthew is making such nuances when he seems to me to be justifying a more “aggressive” breach with halakic practice. Unlike the rabbinic texts or CD, the phrasing in Matthew 12:11 seems to presuppose that “one *actively* takes the sheep out, i.e., that one does more than put padding and cushions under him” (Luz, *Matthew*, 187 n. 15).

³⁵⁸ The basis of these verses is presupposed in the aforementioned rabbinic passage from *b. Shabb.* 128b. See also *m. Shabb.* 18:2.

³⁵⁹ Of course, we are still left wondering how Jesus’ argument would have satisfied Pharisaic ears if they did not share the practice of the “common” rural people. Yang, *Jesus and the Sabbath*, 203, with his tendency to take the historicity of such controversy stories at face value, suggests that Galilean Pharisees may have shared a more lenient view toward lifting animals out of wells/pits on the Sabbath, or that they did not object to other people performing such acts. If, however, the findings of form criticism are taking more seriously, it is understandable how such a logion may have loosely been reinserted into new and different contexts without a concern for depicting accurately the views of the opponents. It is possible that most Pharisees would have objected to lifting an animal out of a well on the Sabbath. Gnlika, *Das Matthäusevangelium*, 1:448, suggests that Jesus’ debate may be with more stringent Shammaites, but to the best of my knowledge no rabbinic passage alludes to a more lenient Hillelite position on this matter.

suffering by combining an *a fortiori* argument with a plea for showing mercy.³⁶⁰ Matthew seems to expand the boundaries of the concept known as פיקוח נפש to encompass the treatment of non-fatal illnesses.³⁶¹ But despite his halakic expansion of the notion of פיקוח נפש, Matthew is not announcing a full revocation of the Sabbath. Matthew, for example, does not encourage Jews to go ahead and earn their living or travel and take a cruise along the Mediterranean on the Sabbath (cf. Matt 24:20). Matthew's Jesus only loosens some aspects of Sabbath halakah in order to legitimize his right to fulfill his mission to bring eschatological rest by “doing well” (καλῶς ποιεῖν) and showing mercy (Matt 12:7) to the oppressed children of Israel.³⁶²

Luke 6:6–11

Analysis

Unlike Matthew and possibly Mark, Luke situates the healing incident on “another Sabbath” (ἐν ἑτέρῳ σαββάτῳ) instead of placing this event on the same Sabbath that the controversy on the plucking of grain occurs. This Lukan feature provides a greater sense of realism to the narrative, while simultaneously preserving a thematic link between both Sabbath pericopes. In general, Luke follows Mark's depiction of this incident, providing no further justification for Jesus' actions. Luke, however, opens the

³⁶⁰ See Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 488, pointing to the comparison of humans with birds in Matt 6:26 (“Are you not of more value than they?”) and Matt 10:31 (“you are of more value than many sparrows”). See also Mayer-Haas, *Geschenk*, 451.

³⁶¹ Doering, *Schabbat*, 453.

³⁶² Matthew's concept of “doing well,” however, remains dramatically vague in its formulation and application. How does one concretely define and apply this category in other cases? See Bonnard, *L'Évangile*, 175: “. . . l'instruction du Christ matthéen apparaît à la fois libératrice et inquiétante; libératrice parce qu'elle subordonne toute pratique religieuse au service concret de l'homme dans la détresse; inquiétante car, généralisée, elle rendrait impossible toute vie d'Eglise organisée: il y a toujours un “bien” plutôt qu'un devoir religieux à accomplir.” Cf. Loader, *Jesus' Attitude towards the Law*, 205.

scene with Jesus *teaching* (διδάσκειν) in the synagogue, a pedagogical activity he enjoys mentioning when depicting the Sabbath praxis of the main protagonists in his two works, Jesus and Paul.³⁶³ Luke also retains with some modification Mark's rhetorical question: "Is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the sabbath, to save life or to destroy it?" (Luke 6:9) Unlike Mark, Luke does not have Jesus belligerently look at the surrounding Pharisees and scribes "with anger" because "he was grieved at their hardness of heart" (so Mark 3:5). In harmony with his more gentle approach to the Pharisees and the(ir) scribes, Luke has Jesus simply gaze "around them all" (Luke 6:10). Luke makes no mention of Jesus' anger (Mark 3:5: μετ' ὀργῆς) and grief over his adversaries' stubbornness and opposition (cf. Mark: συλλυπούμενος ἐπὶ τῇ πωρώσει τῆς καρδίας). Furthermore, Luke's Pharisees, though lacking *understanding* (ἀνοίας), do not conspire with each other in order to *kill* Jesus (so Mark 3:6; Matt 12:14), but consider among themselves "what they *might do with* Jesus" (6:11).³⁶⁴

Like the other synoptic accounts, Luke does not claim that the life of the man suffering from a withered hand is at risk. In 6:1, however, Luke specifies that the afflicted man suffers from a disability on his *right* hand (ἡ χεὶρ αὐτοῦ ἡ δεξιά). In my opinion, this anatomical precision constitutes more than a mere literary element purportedly furnishing greater plausibility to the narrated scene.³⁶⁵ Luke wants to demonstrate that Jesus heals not just *any* random member of the body, but the right hand, a bodily part essential for economic survival, particularly in an ancient society where most people earned their

³⁶³ This leads Klinghardt, *Gesetz und Volkes Gottes*, 230, to suggest that the pericope is more concerned with Jesus' act of teaching than his healing activity. This is an exaggeration. But as I suggest at the conclusion to Part I, Luke may not have overtly encouraged Sabbath healings despite the multiple occurrences of such acts by Jesus in his gospel.

³⁶⁴ My translation of the phrase "τί ἂν ποιήσαιεν τῷ Ἰησοῦ," which is further discussed in the excursus below.

³⁶⁵ So Doering, "Sabbath Laws," 237.

living through manual labor. In this way, Luke heightens the urgency and need for Jesus' intervention, wishing to present this Sabbath healing in more acceptable terms to those who might question its legitimacy.³⁶⁶

As noted above, Luke also preserves the central argument made by Mark's Jesus in the form of a rhetorical question:

Luke 6:9:

ἔξεστιν τῷ σαββάτῳ
ἀγαθοποιῆσαι ἢ κακοποιῆσαι,
ψυχὴν σῶσαι ἢ ἀπολέσαι;

Mark 3:4:

ἔξεστιν τοῖς σάββασιν
ἀγαθὸν ποιῆσαι ἢ κακοποιῆσαι,
ψυχὴν σῶσαι ἢ ἀποκτεῖναι;

The Lukan and Markan formulations of the saying are quite similar: the only changes involve Luke's shift of τοῖς σάββασιν to the singular τῷ σαββάτῳ, the "fusion" of ἀγαθὸν ποιῆσαι into ἀγαθοποιῆσαι, and the replacement of ἀποκτεῖναι ("to kill") with ἀπολέσαι ("to destroy"). The verb ἀπολέσαι, however, can also mean "to kill" or "to put to death."³⁶⁷ The structure of the sentence resembles a *parallelismus membrorum*, in this case, a synonymous parallelism, characteristic of Hebrew poetry, though found sometimes in Jewish texts written in Greek and influenced by Semitic idiom. In this case, the idea expressed in the first phrase is repeated in the second. The first phrase ἀγαθοποιῆσαι ἢ κακοποιῆσαι is paralleled by the second phrase ψυχὴν σῶσαι ἢ ἀπολέσαι. Each verbal member shares its equivalent in the sister phrase. Thus, "doing good" is matched by "saving life," while "doing evil" is connected to "destroying" or "killing."

³⁶⁶ Wolter, *Das Lukasevangelium*, 237.

³⁶⁷ "ἀπόλλυμι," *BDAG*. Mayer-Haas, *Geschenk*, 310, accounts for the switch of ἀποκτεῖναι to ἀπολέσαι as Luke's desire to create better correspondence with the antonym σῶσαι.

Within each phrase, there appears an antithetical formulation (*ἀγαθοποιῆσαι* is contrasted with its antonym *κακοποιῆσαι*; *ψυχὴν σῶσαι* with *ἀπολέσαι*). This structure presents the addressee with an absurd alternation between good and evil: no one of course would actually want to do evil on the Sabbath, let alone kill! The whole sentence is introduced by the phrase *ἔξεστιν τῷ σαββάτῳ*, which appears in other Jewish passages dealing with halakic issues.³⁶⁸

The verb *ψυχὴν σῶσαι* recalls the rabbinic concept of *פיקוח נפש*, the license for overriding the Sabbath in cases where the risk of losing human life is involved.³⁶⁹ The parallel structure of the saying equates saving human life with “doing good.” The actual placement of the saying within an episode about the healing of a non-life-threatening condition means that Luke views Jesus healing acts as embodying and expanding the principle of saving a human life on the Sabbath. Jesus’ healing of the man’s withered hand, like saving a human from a fatal danger on the Sabbath, represents an instantiation of “doing good.” Not only the deliverance of humans from immanent life-threatening situations, but also the healing of less grave ailments which impede and even threaten a person’s economic survival, in this case, the restoration of an important member of the human body, the right hand, are appropriate for Jesus to perform on the Sabbath.³⁷⁰

³⁶⁸ Cf., for example, Josephus, *Ant.* 13:252 (*οὐκ ἔξεστι δ’ ἡμῖν οὔτε τοῖς σαββάτοις οὔτ’ ἐν τῇ ἑορτῇ ὀδεύειν*); Mark 2:24; John 5:10. For rabbinic parallels, see Doering, *Schabbat*, 450; Levy, *WTM*, “מותר” 3:303 and “נתר” 3:460.

³⁶⁹ Since in Mark 8:35 *ψυχὴν σῶσαι* appears with the definite article (“For those who want to save their life will lose it”/ὅς γὰρ ἐὰν θέλῃ τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ σῶσαι ἀπολέσει αὐτήν), it does not militate against reading Luke 6:9 (or Mark 3:4) within the halakic background suggested by the Hebrew equivalents of *פיקוח נפש* and *ספק נפשות*. See Doering, “Sabbath Laws,” 230. There is no need to read this verse soteriologically as Bovon, *Luke 1*, 203, does. Cf. Nolland, *Luke*, 1:261: “. . . σῶσαι is here not at all theological.”

³⁷⁰ See Doering, *Schabbat*, 451–53, who argues that the saying contains no neutral ground: not doing good is like doing evil, not saving a soul is like killing. There is no room for a middle position. The antonym to “doing good” (e.g., healing) is “doing harm,” just as the opposite of “saving a life” is “destroying” it.

While in the previous pericope Luke highlights the christological authority of Jesus (6:5), leading some to erroneously insinuate that the Sabbath is no longer of any importance for the third evangelist,³⁷¹ it is noteworthy that in this instance other arguments besides the christological criterion appear on behalf of Jesus' Sabbath praxis. Luke signals how Jesus heals the *right* hand of the man, enabling this Israelite not only to recover his physical health but also his social dignity and professional ability to earn his own living. Luke's Jesus also appeals to the principle of doing good on the Sabbath by expanding the category of פִּיקוּחַ נֶפֶשׁ. Luke, therefore, is not only set on reciting Jesus' messianic credentials, as if the Sabbath bears no meaning or ongoing value for him. Rather, he polishes and magnifies the figure of Jesus in such a way that makes his messiah appear more acceptable and sensitive to Jews who hold on to high standards of Sabbath keeping.

Excursus: The Mistranslation of Luke 6:11

The mistranslation of Luke 6:11 is too conspicuous not to warrant a momentary excursus and deviation from our inquiry on the Sabbath. This survey, in the end, will

Therefore, one may heal on the Sabbath (=doing good), since the failure to do otherwise results in doing harm, and one would hardly want to perform evil on the holy day of the Sabbath. However, see Mayer-Haas, *Geschenk*, 196, who reads the saying along soteriological lines.

³⁷¹ In his otherwise fine commentary, Wolter, *Das Lukasevangelium*, 238–39, is one of the latest to fall into this trap. First, Wolter thinks that the statement in Luke 6:9 no longer focuses on the *manner* of observing the Sabbath. Next, Wolter leaps to the conclusion that the statement is interested in making a universal declaration in which the specialness of the Sabbath is *de facto* suspended, since the content of Jesus' question can apply to any day of the week. Finally, Wolter places his interpretation of the saying within the wider so-called "parting of the ways" process: the saying replaces an exclusive Jewish ethos with an inclusive ethic in which the differentiation between Jew and Gentile is abrogated. First of all, I would maintain that Wolter underestimates the halakic form of the saying Luke has chosen to preserve in this pericope. Second, at least at the level of the narrative, the person who is healed on the Sabbath is presumably a Jew, not a Gentile. Finally, the newer models that suggest an ongoing interaction and overlap between Jews and Christians throughout Late Antiquity encourage reconsidering Luke's relationship with Jewry.

hopefully prove to be of some importance when I try to situate Luke and Matthew within their respective historical-social horizons in the concluding chapter of this book.

Most modern English translations render Luke 6:11 along the following lines:

“But they were filled with *fury* (ἀνοίας) and discussed with one another what they might do *to* Jesus” (NRSV; emphasis mine). For several reasons, however, the following

translation of the verse captures more accurately Luke’s perspective on the Pharisees:

“And they were filled with *want of understanding* and discussed with one another what they *might* do *with* Jesus.”³⁷² My translation highlights the usage of the *potential* optative

(ἀν ποιήσαιεν), which can connote the *contemplation* of what one *might* or *may* do rather than describe the actual fulfillment or execution of such intentions. In harmony with this

rendering, I interpret the usage of the dative τῷ Ἰησοῦ not in a purely adversative way

(“against/to Jesus”), preferring instead to employ the prepositions “with” or “about.”³⁷³

For Luke, *some* of the Pharisees (cf. 6:1; 13:31; 19:39) fail to recognize Jesus’ messianic credentials and continue to discuss among themselves what they ought to do about him—

the debate remains open, and, unlike the other synoptic gospels, the Pharisees are not

depicted in this instance as set on eliminating Jesus. Luke knows very well that the

Pharisees have nothing to do with Jesus’ execution; when the opportunity arises, some of

them even protect him and his disciples (Luke 13:31; Acts 5:34; 23:9)! In Luke’s eyes,

the Pharisees’ initial attempt to find a way of accusing Jesus (6:7: ἵνα εὕρωσιν κατηγορεῖν

αὐτοῦ) fails: they are unable to contest with him. As they continue to refuse to recognize

his authority, they are left bewildered and full of thoughtlessness as to what to do about

³⁷² Author’s translation.

³⁷³ Loader, *Jesus’ Attitude towards the Law*, 313: “Luke omits Jesus’ anger at the hardness of his opponents’ hearts and the severity of their response. Instead of plotting to kill, they are portrayed as asking the question: ‘What are we going to do with Jesus?’”

him. Only the *New Jerusalem Bible* and the *New Living Translation* convey this meaning somewhat in the English language: “the best way of dealing *with* Jesus” (NJB) or “what to do *with* him” (NLT).

Unfortunately, both of these versions mistranslate *ἀνοία* with terms such as “furious” or “wild of rage.” Other inappropriate translations in English of this term include: “angry,”³⁷⁴ “fury,”³⁷⁵ “wrath,”³⁷⁶ “rage,”³⁷⁷ or “mindless rage.”³⁷⁸ The same tendency occurs in French translations with renderings such as “fureur”³⁷⁹ or “rage.”³⁸⁰ Other Latin-based languages follow the same trajectory: Italian (“rabbia,”³⁸¹ or “furore”³⁸²); Portuguese (“furor”³⁸³); Spanish (“furiosos”³⁸⁴ or “furor”³⁸⁵). Delitzsch’s translation of the New Testament into Hebrew and the Salkinson-Ginsburg Hebrew edition fall short as well with their employment of the term “חמה” (“anger”). Some German translations also misrender the Greek term with “sinnloser Wut” (“senseless rage”)³⁸⁶ or “blinder Wut” (“blind rage”),³⁸⁷ although a few German translations

³⁷⁴ *The New Revised Standard Version Bible.*

³⁷⁵ *New Revised Standard Version; English Standard Version; New International Version; New Jerusalem Bible; Today’s New International Version.*

³⁷⁶ *The Bible in Basic English.*

³⁷⁷ *Holman Christian Standard Bible; The New American Bible; The New American Standard Bible; New English Translation.*

³⁷⁸ *New King James Version; New Living Translation.*

³⁷⁹ *Bible en Français Courant; Louis Segond; Traduction Œcuménique de la Bible.*

³⁸⁰ *La Bible de Jérusalem.*

³⁸¹ *Nuovissima Versione della Bibbia; La Nuova Diodati.*

³⁸² *La Sacra Bibbia.*

³⁸³ *João Ferreira de Almeida, Revista e Atualizada.*

³⁸⁴ *La Biblia de Nuestro Pueblo.*

³⁸⁵ *Reina Valera (1995).*

³⁸⁶ *Einheitsübersetzung der Heiligen Schrift.*

³⁸⁷ *Die Bibel: Die Heilige Schrift des Alten und Neuen Bundes.*

correctly capture the meaning with “Unverstand” (“lack of judgment”).³⁸⁸ Many modern commentators also mistranslate this verse, but can hardly be cited here in any detail.³⁸⁹

This consensus among modern translations stands not on solid philological grounds, but stems perhaps from a harmonizing tendency to read into Luke stereotyped and negative attitudes about the Pharisees that in fact belong more to Mark and especially Matthew. The Liddell-Scott-Jones lexicon does not provide a single entry or passage where *ἄνοια* means “fury,” “rage,” “madness,” or the like. The *BDAG* lexicon translates *ἄνοια* in Luke 6:11 as “fury,” but provides no evidence to back this point save for a reference in *Papyrus Egerton 2* line 51 where it states that Jesus “perceived their [i.e., of his opponents] *purpose*,” (εἰδὼς τὴν [δι]άνοια [αὐτῶν]). The Greek word *διάνοια*, however, simply means, “purpose,” “disposition,” or “mind,” not fury or anger.

To justify this mistranslation, Bovon and others point to Plato, *Tim.* 86B where the Greek philosopher refers to two types of *ἄνοια*: “madness” (*μανία*) and “ignorance” (*ἀμαθία*).³⁹⁰ However, there is no evidence to posit that Luke is thinking along platonic semantics in this pericope. The fact that Luke uses elsewhere the term *ἄγνοια* (“ignorance”; Acts 3:17; 17:30) hardly proves that he intends with *ἄνοια* to denote “madness.” In Acts, the term *ἄγνοια* refers to the ignorance on the part of individuals who are yet uninformed about a certain matter,³⁹¹ while *ἄνοια* in Luke refers to a persistent senselessness or lack of understanding *even after* knowledge or proof is provided to a

³⁸⁸ *Elberfelder Bibel revidierte Fassung; Münchener Neues Testament; Schlachter, Die Bibel.* Cf. *Lutherbibel* (1545): “ganz unsinnig.”

³⁸⁹ See, for example, Bovon, *Luke 1*, 204: “blind fury”!

³⁹⁰ Bovon, *Luke 1*, 204; Fitzmyer, *The Gospel according to Luke*, 1:611.

³⁹¹ For example, the “Jews” in Jerusalem and from the Diaspora are unaware in Acts 3:17 of their supposed responsibility for the death of Jesus; the Gentiles of Athens in Acts 17:30 are ignorant about the true God of Israel.

certain party regarding a particular issue (e.g., the messiahship of Jesus). Folly perhaps, but not furor. In any case, as Wolter correctly points out, the correlation between Luke's *ἄνοια* and Plato's *μανία* is unfounded, since the Hellenistic literature written around the time of Luke normally use *ἄνοια* in the sense of *ἀμαθία* ("ignorance").³⁹²

Admittedly, some Pharisees are occasionally portrayed in a negative light in Luke's gospel as well as the Acts of the Apostles, but they are criticized for their lack of understanding rather than their involvement in the deaths of Jesus and his disciples. In this respect, Flusser is certainly right in critiquing the traditional translation of *ἄνοια* in Luke 6:11, although unlike Flusser I perceive the Lukan wording as evidence for the *redactor's* attitude toward the Pharisees rather than reflecting a more primitive form of the episode stemming from tradition.³⁹³ Luke's nuanced portrait of the Pharisees is more credible but not necessarily historical. His more balanced description of the Pharisaic party, in comparison to Matthew, might offer us a glimpse into his social world. I return to this point at the end of this monograph, suggesting that the differences between Matthew and Luke should be assessed more along the social-historical contexts they find themselves in rather than along theological lines, at least in so far as the inquiry into the theme of Torah praxis is concerned, since I think they both would have largely agreed on the necessity for Jewish followers of Jesus to continue observing the Jewish Law.

³⁹² See Wolter, *Das Lukasevangelium*, 239, for references in Philo, Josephus, and other authors. See also J. Behm, "*ἄνοια*," 4:962–63.

³⁹³ Flusser, *The Sage from Galilee*, 17 n. 41. Tomson, *If This Be From Heaven*, 155, 226, seems to follow Flusser in deeming the Lukan version of the episode as more primitive and original. But cf. Doering, "Sabbath Laws," 237 and Mayer-Haas, *Geschenk*, 311.

Healing the Crippled Woman on the Sabbath

Luke 13:10–17: “Now he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the sabbath.

¹¹ And just then there appeared a woman with a spirit that had crippled her for eighteen years. She was bent over and was quite unable to stand up straight.

¹² When Jesus saw her, he called her over and said, ‘Woman, you are set free from your ailment.’

¹³ When he laid his hands on her, immediately she stood up straight and began praising God.

¹⁴ But the leader of the synagogue, indignant because Jesus had cured on the sabbath, kept saying to the crowd, ‘There are six days on which work ought to be done; come on those days and be cured, and not on the sabbath day.’

¹⁵ But the Lord answered him and said, ‘You hypocrites! Does not each of you on the sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from the manger, and lead it away to give it water?’

¹⁶ And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for eighteen long years, be set free from this bondage on the sabbath day?’

¹⁷ When he said this, all his opponents were put to shame; and the entire crowd was rejoicing at all the wonderful things that he was doing.”

Literary Context

Luke includes two additional Sabbath controversies, unattested in any other gospel (13:10–21; 14:1–6). Both episodes are set within Luke’s report about Jesus’ itinerary (9:51–19:27) through Palestine and pilgrimage up to Jerusalem. Mayer-Haas thinks this block of material relating Jesus’ itinerary functions more intensely than other sections of Luke’s gospel as a model of behavior for his readers to emulate.³⁹⁴ Presumably, one of the central aspects of Jesus’ ministry Luke’s circle should follow would include replicating his pedagogical and kerygmatic activities in the synagogue on the Sabbath (13:10).³⁹⁵ Indeed the healing that takes place in this episode is bracketed by Jesus’ teaching:

³⁹⁴ Mayer-Haas, *Geschenk*, 313. However, in the conclusions to Part I on the Sabbath, I argue that the Sabbath healings of Jesus as reported in the gospel of Luke do not necessarily reflect a Lukan Sabbath praxis.

³⁹⁵ Loader, *Jesus’ Attitude towards the Law*, 313, however, finds it unlikely that such stories in Luke reflect the worship practices on the Sabbath of Luke and his readers. But see Klinghardt, *Gesetz und Volkes Gottes*, 230–31. Cf. Luke 4:31 (Jesus teaching on the Sabbath in the synagogue of Nazareth); 6:6 (teaching in the synagogue of Capernaum) as well as 13:10; 19:47; 20:1; 21:37; 23:5 where Jesus teaches in Galilee, Judea, and especially in the temple. The disciples of Jesus in Acts 5:25, 28, 42; 15:35; 18:11; 21:21; 21:28; 28:31 also follow Jesus’ example. Why should this not reflect Luke’s Sabbath praxis as well? Moreover, Luke 13:10 is largely redactional. Notice the periphrastic construction (Ἔην δὲ διδάσκων) and the plural

- A. Jesus teaches in the synagogue (v.10)
- B. Healing of a woman (vv.11–17)
- C. Jesus teaches in parables (vv.18–21)

Section A introduces the healing story in section B, which together constitute a self-contained unit. Luke appends Section C to the healing story, the particle *οὖν* in v. 18 resuming or continuing a subject (in the sense of “so” or “as had been said”)³⁹⁶ rather than marking a transition signaling a new setting in the narrative.³⁹⁷ On the other hand, Luke does not tightly and thematically connect the teachings of Jesus in vv. 18–21 about the parables on the mustard seed and the leaven with the healing episode in vv. 11–17. If there is a thematic connection, it should only be viewed in the most general terms to mean that the healing of the crippled woman manifests how Jesus’ teaching about the kingdom of God is breaking through into the sphere and daily life of Israel.³⁹⁸ Here, Luke simply takes the opportunity to include some pedagogical materials on the kingdom of God into his narrative. For Luke, it is important to record the actual content of his

reference to the Sabbath (*ἐν τοῖς σάββασι*), highlighting the frequency of such occurrences. Neiryck, “Jesus and the Sabbath. Some Observations on Mk II, 27,” 230, thinks the whole pericope of Luke 13:10–17 is almost entirely redactional. Bultmann, *History of the Synoptic Tradition*, 12–13, who classifies this story as a controversy dialogue, claims that the pericope was built (in its pre-redactional stages) around the isolated saying of v. 15, while 17b stems from the editor, Luke. Bultmann’s reconstruction has been rejected by a number of scholars. See, for example, Fitzmyer, *The Gospel according to Luke*, 2:1010–11, who sees the story as deriving from “L.” In any case, some redactional activity is surely detectable (e.g., some of the elements in v.10). Contra Yang, *Jesus and the Sabbath*, 257, who claims it impossible to distinguish between redactional and traditional features within this pericope.

³⁹⁶ Luke uses *οὖν* in this sense in 3:7 in order to connect it with v. 3. See “*οὖν*,” *BDAG*.

³⁹⁷ Neither should *οὖν* be understood here in a causal way, “therefore,” as in the NRSV. Cf. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel according to Luke*, 2:1016, commenting on 13:18: “The Lucan setting for this comment of Jesus is still that of the synagogue of v. 10.” Wolter, *Das Lukasevangelium*, 480, includes vv. 18–21 with vv. 10–17.

³⁹⁸ Claiming that the parables in vv.18–21 provide “an interpretative key” to the healing episode is an exaggeration. Contra Robert F. O’Toole, “Some Exegetical Reflections on Luke 13, 10–17,” *Bib* 73 (1992): 91. This sort of hermeneutics can lead to the claim that the kingdom of God is in fact the only theme in the Sabbath pericope, and that consequently the “sabbath observance was no longer a real issue for Luke and his readers,” Yang, *Jesus and the Sabbath*, 259, following Stephen G. Wilson, *Luke and the Law* (SNTSMS 50; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 38–39.

master's teachings and to insert its delivery within synagogue space and sacred time. He has gone beyond any gospel writer in this endeavor (cf. Luke 4:16). Luke's resumption of Jesus' pedagogical and kerygmatic activity also highlights his master's complete control and authority over the situation: even after the controversial healing of the woman and heated exchange with his opponents, Jesus is able to confidently continue his instruction in the synagogue.

Analysis

The crippled woman in this episode suffers from a chronic illness that has lasted for eighteen years (v.11). Her prolonged affliction stems from the effects of a nefarious "spirit" (*πνεῦμα*), an oppressive agent Luke explicitly ties to the realm of Satan: "a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for eighteen long years" (v.17).³⁹⁹ After acknowledging her presence, Jesus calls the woman and proclaims her freedom from her weakness. Jesus' pronouncement appears in the perfect passive in Greek: ἀπολέλυσαι τῆς ἀσθενείας σου (v. 12), "you are set free from your ailment." The impersonal form of this statement suggests that Luke views God as the true subject and source of the healing.⁴⁰⁰ The perfect form could also indicate that the healing has been accomplished even before Jesus lays his hands on the woman (v.13).⁴⁰¹ The laying of the hands might only represent a physical gesture confirming what God has already accomplished. In other

³⁹⁹ The overlap in Luke's "diagnosis" between physical ailment and demonic oppression has already been noted in previous chapters. In 4:39, Luke's Jesus "rebuked" (*ἐπετίμησεν*) the fever of the mother-in-law of Peter, the same verb used for rebuking people possessed by evil spirits (cf. 4:35). This overlap appears also in passages such as Luke 6:18 and 7:21 where people affected by diseases, plagues, blindness, or spirits are all said to have been "cured" (*ἐθεραπεύοντο* in 6:18). See also Acts 10:38: "he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil." Cf. Acts 16:16: "spirit of divination" (*πνεῦμα πύθωνα*).

⁴⁰⁰ Bovon, *Luc*, 2:347, 356; Nolland, *Luke*, 2:724.

⁴⁰¹ Wolter, *Das Lukasevangelium*, 482: "Mit dem resultativen Perfekt . . . kündigt Jesus die Heilung nicht erst an . . . sondern er stellt fest, dass sie bereits geschehen ist." Similarly, Plummer, *The Gospel according to Luke*, 342.

words, the woman already has the ability to stand on her own as Jesus announces her healing.

Some might argue that Luke's depiction contains nothing scandalous from a halakic point of view about Jesus' comportment on the Sabbath: Jesus merely announces the healing, but does not perform any *physical* labor forbidden on the Sabbath. I find this sort of halakic hairsplitting, which tries to present a synoptic Jesus who conforms to the standards of Sabbath observance of all Jews, unconvincing.⁴⁰² Luke's main goal is to emphasize the authority and power Jesus' word possesses to heal and exorcize the sick as well as captivate the hearts of the audiences he addresses in the synagogues on the Sabbath. Luke is not concerned here in showing that the *manner* in which Jesus performs his healings on the Sabbath fully conforms to the halakic standards of his time, because, some ancient Jews contended with the very attempt, whether through verbal or physical means, to attend to non-life-threatening conditions on the Sabbath. Luke argues that the execution of healings *tout court* is permissible for Jesus to perform on the Sabbath.

This interpretation accounts for the rebuke voiced by the leader of the synagogue (ἀρχισυνάγωγος)⁴⁰³ who cares less about the halakic hairsplitting presented above, namely, that Jesus' only *utters* but does not actually perform a healing. His objection carries a strong critical tone, condemning Jesus for what he has *de facto* performed, that is, a healing of a minor ailment on the Sabbath: "There are six days on which *work* (ἐργάζεσθαι) ought to be done; come on those days and be cured, and not on the sabbath

⁴⁰² Cf. the reservations of Sanders, *Jewish Law from Jesus to the Mishnah*, 20: "I somewhat doubt that Luke was aware of this fine legal distinction—that the laying of hands was work—though in an actual debate in Palestine it would have been an important issue."

⁴⁰³ The term appears in Luke 8:49; Acts 13:15; 18:8, 17.

day” (v.14).⁴⁰⁴ The complaint of the head of the synagogue reflects not a Lukan aberration or creation of a halakic strawman, but a genuine Jewish objection to attending to minor diseases on the Sabbath.⁴⁰⁵

In his response to such criticism, Luke’s Jesus does not content himself in regurgitating his christological credentials, which could run along the following lines: “the Son of Man (i.e., Jesus) does whatever he pleases on the Sabbath because he is lord of the Sabbath” (cf. Luke 6:5).⁴⁰⁶ Instead, Luke has Jesus point to the chronic condition of the lady and employs an argument formulated in a way to compel and persuade Jewish reasoning: just as anyone (at least from the Luke’s perspective) would “on the sabbath *untie* (λύει) his ox or his donkey from the manger, and lead it away to give it water” (v.15), so may a woman, a daughter of Abraham for that matter, whom Satan has bound for eighteen years, be “*set free*” (λυθῆναι) from her oppression on the Sabbath day (v.16).⁴⁰⁷ The analogy Luke construes here is more “logical” in its nature than literary or

⁴⁰⁴ Surprisingly, the head of the synagogue addresses and reproaches the crowd, not only Jesus (v.14). On this feature, see Klinghardt, *Gesetz und Volkes Gottes*, 231, 239.

⁴⁰⁵ Cf. Doering, “Sabbath Laws,” 240; Klinghardt, *Gesetz und Volkes Gottes*, 231–32.

⁴⁰⁶ Klinghardt, *Gesetz und Volkes*, 231, correctly notes that Luke’s Jesus does not resort to a christological argumentation here.

⁴⁰⁷ According to *m. Shabb. 7:2*, “untying” (המתיר) belongs to one of the 39 works prohibited on the Sabbath. Further discussions appear elsewhere in the Mishnah. For example, *m. Shabb. 15:1* (prohibition against tying or untying camel-drivers’ knots and sailors’ knots; R. Meir allowing any knot to be untied with *one* hand); *m. Shabb. 15:2* (“A woman may tie up the slit of her shift, or the strings of a hair-net or belt . . .”). R. Eliezer b. Jacob, however, allows one to tie up a cattle lest they stray away (*m. Shabb. 15:2*). See further *t. Shabb. 18:1* [17:20]. As Doering points out, since texts from Qumran do not deal with tying knots on the Sabbath but allow for one to lead an animal to pasture up to 2000 cubits (CD 11:5f.; 4Q265 7:4f.), it seems unlikely that such people would leave their cattle untied on the Sabbath. Neither do these passages appear to indicate a more lenient position toward “tying.” Alternatively, tying/untying was not yet understood as a prohibited labor on the Sabbath. The rabbinic texts would reflect a further systematization incorporating tying into its taxonomy of prohibited works. As far as giving an animal water, Doering points to a baraita in *b. Eruv. 20b, 21a* that allows for pouring water in front of an animal so that it can drink on its own, although it forbids offering drawn water directly to the animal. See Doering, “Sabbath Laws,” 241–42. Luke does not engage in the technicalities and halakic preciseness of the rabbis. He simply employs a general term, ποτίζει (“to give water”), assuming that Jews would relieve the thirst of their domestic animals on the Sabbath. This does not mean that Luke knows nothing about halakah. The Qumranic evidence is also silent on the matter, and Jews may very well have untied their animals on the Sabbath in order to provide them with food and drink.

exegetical. Jesus is not quoting a verse from scripture in rabbinic fashion, following the hermeneutical principle known as *gezerah shavah* (גזרה שווה).⁴⁰⁸ No verse from the Pentateuch declares that one may untie an animal in order to feed or provide it with drink on the Sabbath. Rather, the repetition of the verb λύω establishes an analogy arguing that one accepted practice (untying domestic animals to provide them with drink on the Sabbath) justifies the application of a similar yet different “untying” (freeing humans from their sicknesses/demonic oppressions on the Sabbath).

Besides employing an analogical device, Luke also resorts to a *qal vahomer*-like argument: if one may untie an ox or a donkey on the Sabbath in order to relieve it from its thirst, how much more should a daughter of Abraham experience freedom from her physical distress and satanic torment.⁴⁰⁹ God certainly cares for a daughter of Israel as much as God cares for animals (cf. Luke 12:6–7, 27). Furthermore, Luke’s Jesus presents the condition of the Israelite woman in far graver terms than a thirsty ox or donkey: the daughter of Abraham has been waiting for *eighteen* years to be relieved from the *bondage of Satan*, the ox or donkey, mere domestic animals, only suffer from *thirst* during one *day*, yet certain Jews would still be willing on the Sabbath to untie and lead them somewhere to drink! The length and severity of the ailment affecting the daughter of

⁴⁰⁸ See Louis Jacobs and David Derovan, “Hermeneutics,” *EJ* 9:25–27; Cohn-Sherbok, “An Analysis of Jesus’ Arguments,” 34–36. A prime rabbinic example of *gezerah shavah* involves the timing of the Passover offering. Should it be offered on the Sabbath (a day when work should be avoided)? The rabbis point to the usage of the word במועדו (“in its appointed time”) both in regard to the Paschal lamb (Num 9:2) and to the daily offering (Num 28:2), the latter being offered on the Sabbath as well. The terminological correspondence leads the rabbinic sages to infer that the Paschal offering may be offered even on the Sabbath even if work is normally forbidden on that day (*b. Pesah.* 66a). The Bavli provides several qualifications for deploying *gezerah shavah* in an attempt to control its subjective usage. For example, one cannot make a *gezerah shavah* independently, but must receive it from tradition (*b. Pesah.* 66a); both passages must be from the Pentateuch (*b. Qam.* 2b); the words must not only be similar but also superfluous in the context in which they appear (*b. Shabb.* 64a).

⁴⁰⁹ Doering, “Sabbath Laws,” 241, speaks of a *tertium comparationis* (“to release”) that was added to the initial implicit *argumentum a fortiori* in Luke 13:15–16.

Abraham completely outrival the mere thirst of a domestic cattle, and justify Jesus' right to intervene on her behalf.

In highlighting the severity of the woman's condition, Luke also emphasizes the necessity, if not the obligation, for performing such a healing on the Sabbath thanks to a wordplay with the Greek impersonal verb $\delta\epsilon\acute{\iota}$: the head of the synagogue states that "there are six days on which work *ought* ($\delta\epsilon\acute{\iota}$ ἐργάζεσθαι) to be done" (v.14), to which Luke's Jesus replies that the woman certainly "*ought* to be freed" ($\acute{\epsilon}\delta\epsilon\iota$ λυθῆναι) from her bondage on the Sabbath day (v.16).⁴¹⁰ Here, the head of the synagogue alludes to the commandment of the Sabbath in the Torah that orders Israel not only to rest on the Sabbath but also to work six days a week (Exod 20:9; Deut 5:13). Since six days are allocated for performing work, it is a Jew's duty to care for non life-threatening ailments on those days. Nevertheless, for the many reasons presented above (e.g., the superiority of humans over animals, the severity and duration of the condition) Luke's Jesus maintains that it is his duty to heal on the Sabbath day.

There may be yet another dimension to Luke's argumentation: by highlighting the length of the woman's condition, nothing less than eighteen years, the *Sabbath day* marks the *end* of this painful and prolonged process. Luke incorporates the Sabbath day into the theme of eschatological liberation and redemption proclaimed by Jesus during his inaugural address on the Sabbath in the synagogue of his hometown Nazareth (Luke 4:16–21). If for Philo the Sabbath is "the birthday of the world" (Philo, *Opif.* 89), for Luke it is a day celebrating rebirth for those children of Israel who experience through Jesus liberation from satanic oppression and physical suffering. Luke does not go so far

⁴¹⁰ Wolter, *Das Lukasevangelium*, 484. Mayer-Haas, *Geschenk*, 320, also notes a further wordplay in the usage of $\acute{\epsilon}\delta\eta\sigma\epsilon\nu$ and $\acute{\epsilon}\delta\epsilon\iota$ in v.16.

as to state that the Sabbath is the only or even the best day for Jesus to perform his healings and exorcisms, since Jesus carries out his healing ministry throughout the week. But Luke certainly stresses that the Sabbath constitutes an appropriate time for Jesus to proclaim *and* bring liberation to the children of Israel. After all, the Torah itself portrays the Sabbath as a memorial commemorating Israel's redemption from her servitude to Egypt (Deut 5:15; cf. Exod 20:2). Luke, of course, does not explicitly cite this verse, nor does he fully tap on the scriptural resources at his disposal for developing a stronger symbolic and theological link between eschatological redemption and the weekly Sabbath.⁴¹¹ Nevertheless, Luke leaves several traces for the construction of a particular Sabbath theology by having Jesus deliver his inaugural address on eschatological release *on the Sabbath* (4:16–30), by immediately describing in concrete terms how Jesus provides these eschatological benefits to Jews *on the Sabbath* through healings and exorcisms (4:31–39; cf. 6:1–11), and now by adding a subsequent healing episode, which is unparalleled in any other gospel, in which a woman encounters *on the Sabbath* her long awaited and desired *freedom* from her demonic oppressors.⁴¹²

Finally, the Sabbath finds itself caught in the arena of an ongoing *cosmic warfare* between the invasive kingdom of God and the opposing forces of Satan. If satanic powers do not cease attacking Israel on the Sabbath, neither can God's incoming empire resist striking back. Ever since Maccabean times, certain Jews had acknowledged the necessity of suspending the Sabbath during human warfare. By analogy, we might add that Jesus' healings, which for Luke are really just a manifestation of divine power, must also go on

⁴¹¹ See François Bovon, *L'Évangile selon saint Luc* (4 vols; CNT. Deuxième série; Genève: Labor et Fides, 1991–2009), 2:351, who refers to the redefinition of the Sabbath here in terms of liberation, echoing the tradition about the Exodus from Egypt.

⁴¹² Cf. Back, *Jesus of Nazareth and the Sabbath Commandment*, 137; Mayer-Haas, *Geschenk*, 321.

the Sabbath. It is a matter of a cosmic controversy between good and evil, a story about God's reign overcoming Satan's rule, not only a question of human welfare. Luke nowhere openly develops such an analogy between Sabbath halakah about human warfare and an eschatological theology about cosmic battle, but insinuates at several points through the usage of the passive voice that God is indeed acting through Jesus to overcome ailments generated by satanic forces. For example, in vv. 12 and 16, the usage of the passive voice ("you are set free"/ ἀπολέλυσαι and "be set free"/ λυθῆναι) vv. 12, 16) point in this direction.⁴¹³ Read in this light, for Luke, the core of the controversy in such episodes lies in properly recognizing a state of (cosmic) affairs rather than in questioning the ongoing validity of the institution of the Sabbath: will Jesus' opponents interpret his healing of ailments caused by satanic forces merely as human performances or as miraculous deeds originating from above, legitimate acts, because of their divine mandate, for Jesus to carry out on the Sabbath?⁴¹⁴ Luke rebukes his opponents (embodied here by the leader of the synagogue) mainly for failing to recognize the divine authority granted to Jesus to execute such actions, not for their insistence in keeping the Sabbath—a Jewish value Luke does not condemn but firmly upholds.

The case Luke makes in 13:15–16 on behalf of Jesus' Sabbath praxis is so rich and dense in its argumentation and logic.⁴¹⁵ Much of its line of reasoning stands independently from the question of recognizing Jesus' messianic credentials: theoretically, part of its argumentation could be sustained (in order to justify a certain Jewish praxis) without believing in Jesus as the messiah. If Jews are willing to satiate the

⁴¹³ Cf. also ἀνωρθώθη (v. 13), implying that God restored the woman's posture.

⁴¹⁴ Mayer-Haas, *Geschenk*, 321, 330–31.

⁴¹⁵ The richness of this argumentation is largely ignored by a strong segment of Lukan scholarship. Wilson, *Luke and the Law*, 37, dedicates a mere paragraph to this episode.

thirst of their domestic beasts, then they should tolerate Jesus' healing and liberation of their Jewish kin from sickness and suffering, especially if the source of such distress stems from satanic forces. Moreover, in this particular case, a precious daughter of Israel has experienced a prolonged process of suffering, lasting several years, almost two decades. Luke contrasts her special status as a daughter of Abraham and her psychosomatic distress with the mere physical needs of domestic animals in order to justify Jesus' Sabbath praxis. All of this shows that Luke is not content in simply presenting Jesus' christological portfolio as the sole means for justifying his lord's behavior on the Sabbath. Even the messiah must account for his comportment when it deviates from normal conventions! The christological argument is only the cherry on a pie composed of several additional ingredients brought to the defense of Jesus. Luke, therefore, amplifies Mark's repertoire on behalf of Jesus' Sabbath praxis just as much as Matthew. In fact, Luke's argumentation, I would argue, in this instance is just as "proto-rabbinic" in its halakic deliberation as Matthew's. Part of Luke's reasoning employs arguments that resemble the *qal vahomer* and *gezerah shavah* principles found in later rabbinic debates, albeit in a more primitive and less sophisticated form than what one usually would find in a talmudic sugyah. Like Matthew, Luke also solicits the practice of rural Jews in Palestine and elsewhere, who would come to the rescue of their domestic animals if they were trapped in pits or even if they needed to be fed and given water, in order to justify Jesus' Sabbath healings. Luke's defense of Jesus' Sabbath praxis is just as halakic and robust as Matthew's.

Healing on the Sabbath in Pharisaic Space

Passage

Luke 14:1–6: “On one occasion when Jesus was going to the house of a leader of the Pharisees to eat a meal on the sabbath, they were watching him closely.² Just then, in front of him, there was a man who had dropsy.³ And Jesus asked the lawyers and Pharisees, ‘Is it lawful to cure people on the sabbath, or not?’⁴ But they were silent. So Jesus took him and healed him, and sent him away.⁵ Then he said to them, ‘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?’⁶ And they could not reply to this.”

Literary Context

This final Lukan episode reporting a controversy about Jesus’ Sabbath praxis appears not long after the previous Sabbath incident on the healing of the crippled woman (13:10–17). After freeing that daughter of Abraham from her chronic condition, Luke’s Jesus continues to deliver his instruction in the synagogue on the Sabbath, relating two parables about the kingdom of God (parable of the mustard seed, 13:18–19; parable of the leaven, 13:20–21). In 13:22–30, Luke’s Jesus resumes his journey up to Jerusalem, teaching along the way in the neighboring towns and villages. Luke then reports how some Pharisees warn Jesus about Herod’s plot to remove his life. This remarkable gesture on their part appears only in Luke and conforms to the larger portrait of the Pharisees in Luke-Acts. One hardly needs, therefore, to interpret their act mischievously to mean that Luke’s Pharisees were not intent on saving Jesus’ life, but only cunningly executing a plan to rid themselves of his presence.⁴¹⁶ Luke’s Jesus does not read any ulterior motives behind the Pharisees’ warning, but solely condemns Herod.

⁴¹⁶ Contra Adelbert Denaux, “L’hypocrisie des Pharisiens et le dessein de Dieu. Analyse de Lc. XIII, 31–33,” in *L’évangile de Luc/The Gospel of Luke* (ed. F. Neiryck; 2d ed.; BETL 32; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1989), 155–95; 316–21; Burton Scott Easton, *The Gospel according to St. Luke* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1926), 221. Later on, Denaux humbly acknowledges his overly negative portrayal of the Pharisees in Luke-Acts, but still holds on to the core of his thesis as far as Luke 13:31–33 is concerned. See “L’hypocrisie des Pharisiens,” 316–21. Similarly, Plummer, *The Gospel according to St. Luke*, 348: “The Pharisees wanted to frighten Jesus into Judaea, where He would be more in the power of

Despite this warning, Luke's Jesus reaffirms his intent to make it to Jerusalem, delivering a solemn prophecy against Jerusalem in anticipation of the fate awaiting him (vv. 32–35).⁴¹⁷ Finally, our Sabbath pericope begins in 14:1 where Jesus finds himself dining on the Sabbath in the house of a leader of the Pharisees, signaling once again the social proximity Luke is willing to entertain between both parties. In the house of this prominent Pharisee, Jesus daringly proceeds to healing a man suffering from dropsy. The narrative ideally portrays Jesus defending his act in a way that the Pharisees are unable to argue against (vv. 2–6). After the healing, Jesus nonchalantly continues his teaching, presumably within the same Pharisaic hospices where he has been welcomed as a guest (vv. 7–24). The content of his teaching, however, is not intricately tied to the healing episode. In many ways, the structure of this portion resembles the previous Sabbath pericope. In 13:10, Jesus enters a synagogue on the Sabbath (13:10); here, he finds himself in a Pharisee's house (14:1). In the synagogue, he heals a crippled woman (13:11: introduced by *καὶ ἰδοὺ* and a diagnosis of her condition) and then responds to his opponents; here, he heals a man suffering from dropsy (14:2: also introduced by *καὶ ἰδοὺ* accompanied by a description of the ailment) and anticipates his adversaries' objections. After healing the woman, Jesus resumes his instruction in the synagogue, teaching in

the Sanhedrin . . ."; Wolter, *Das Lukasevangelium*, 495, who first dismisses a "hypocritical" portrayal of the Pharisees, but nevertheless concludes that they are negatively portrayed because they fail to understand the true motive of Jesus' journey up to Jerusalem: "Lukas will die Pharisäer hier nicht als um Jesu Überleben Besorgte; sondern als Ignoranten charakterisieren." The same reproach would have to be applied to Jesus' disciples who equally fail to understand the true design of Jesus' ascent to Jerusalem even after his death (cf. Luke ch. 24). Correctly, Fitzmyer, *The Gospel according to Luke*, 2:1030; Tomson, *If this be from Heaven . . .*, 223; Ziesler, "Luke and the Pharisees," 149–50.

⁴¹⁷ But even 13:35 contains hope for the restoration of Jerusalem: "you will not see me *until* the time comes when you say, 'Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.'" Luke does not add the qualification that when this time comes it will be too late for Israel to repent. Luke has not given up on Jerusalem, but looks forward to the time when it will no longer be trampled upon by the Gentiles (cf. Luke 21:24; Acts 1:6). Correctly, Bovon, *Luc*, 2:406–7.

parables (13:18–21); here, Jesus also teaches in parables after curing the man’s dropsy (14:7–24).⁴¹⁸

Analysis

As noted throughout this chapter, Luke, in contrast to Matthew, is willing to present a more amicable disposition and even a shared commensality between Jesus and certain Pharisees.⁴¹⁹ In this passage, Jesus’ host appears to be a prominent Pharisee, one who enjoys some kind of leadership role within his sphere of influence (“τινος τῶν ἀρχόντων [τῶν] Φαρισαίων,” “one of the leaders of the Pharisees,” v. 1).⁴²⁰ Despite the honorable reception on behalf of Jesus, Luke depicts an ambivalent tension underlying the host-guest relationship: as Jesus breaks bread with his Pharisaic hosts, they simultaneously keep close watch over him (αὐτοὶ ἤσαν παρατηρούμενοι αὐτόν; v.1b).⁴²¹

The sudden entrance of a new character interrupts the flow of the opening scene: “Just then (καὶ ἰδοὺ) in front of him, there was a man who had dropsy (ὕδρωπικός)” (v.2). Luke does not present the condition of the man as life-threatening. Dropsy, also known as edema, refers generally to the abnormal accumulation of fluids beneath the skin or in the cavities of the body. This disease is well attested in classical medical literature as well as

⁴¹⁸ Luke 14:1–6 also shares a number of resemblances with Luke 6:6–11 (the healing of the man with a withered hand), which Luke uses to compose this last Sabbath pericope. Both share similar openings (Semitic-like use of ἐγένετο followed by infinitive in 14:1/6:1; a reference to the entrance [ἐλθεῖν/εἰσελθεῖν] into the house of a Pharisee/synagogue on the Sabbath). In both episodes, Jesus is observed carefully by the Pharisees (αὐτοὶ ἤσαν παρατηρούμενοι αὐτόν/παρετηροῦντο δὲ αὐτόν). Likewise, the saying in 14:3 may be based on 6:9.

⁴¹⁹ Cf. Lk 7:36; 11:37. The Pharisees are the hosts throughout Luke 14:1–24 (see vv. 7, 12, 15). While such portrayals may have coincided with the historical Jesus’ attitude toward the Pharisees, I take them to be redactional constructions.

⁴²⁰ Klinghardt, *Gesetz und Volkes Gottes*, 232–33, sees here a correspondence with the ἀρχισυνάγωγος of Luke 13:10–17.

⁴²¹ Cf. Luke 6:7: “The scribes and the Pharisees watched (παρετηροῦντο) him to see whether he would cure on the sabbath.” Cf. Luke 20:20; Acts 9:24.

ancient Jewish texts.⁴²² While some ancient authors viewed dropsy as life-threatening,⁴²³ Luke provides no indication in this case that the man's life is *imminently* at risk. The man's condition should be likened to previous non-fatal ailments affecting people whom Jesus heals on the Sabbath (i.e., the crippled woman and the man suffering from a withered hand). These people suffer from chronic, harmful conditions, which in due time might threaten the life of the person, were sudden deteriorating complications to present themselves. But by no means are they imminently life-threatening so as to legitimize an immediate intervention in order to save a human life on the Sabbath. As in previous incidents, Luke simply presents his readers with another Sabbath healing of a non-life-threatening condition.

Before performing the healing, Jesus preemptively deploys a rhetorical question, asking the legal specialists (νομικοὺς)⁴²⁴ present as well as the Pharisees whether it is lawful to cure on the Sabbath (ἔξεστιν τῷ σαββάτῳ θεραπεῦσαι ἢ οὐ;).⁴²⁵ The question resembles Luke 6:9 in its rationale and structure:

Luke 6:9

ἔξεστιν τῷ σαββάτῳ ἀγαθοποιῆσαι ἢ κακοποιῆσαι, ψυχὴν σῶσαι ἢ ἀπολέσαι;
(Is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the sabbath, to save life or to destroy it?)

Luke 14:3

ἔξεστιν τῷ σαββάτῳ θεραπεῦσαι ἢ οὐ;
(Is it lawful to cure people on the sabbath, or not?)

⁴²² See Bovon, *Luc*, 2:417–18, for references.

⁴²³ For example, Diogenes Laertius 4:27.

⁴²⁴ The term is used by Luke interchangeably with γραμματεῖς to refer to an expert in Jewish law. Cf. Luke 7:30; 10:25; 11:45, 52. See Mayer-Haas, *Geschenk*, 333 n. 350.

⁴²⁵ The formulation of the question is paralleled in other Jewish passages dealing with legal issues related to Sabbath keeping. See Doering, *Schabbat*, 450 n. 297. Some examples in Greek include *Ant.* 13.252: “Nor is it lawful for us to journey, either on the Sabbath day, or on a festival day” (οὐκ ἔξεστι δ’ ἡμῖν οὔτε τοῖς σαββάτοις οὔτ’ ἐν τῇ ἑορτῇ ὀδεύειν); Mark 2:24: “Look, why are they doing what is not lawful on the sabbath?” (Ἴδε τί ποιοῦσιν τοῖς σάββασιν ὃ οὐκ ἔξεστιν); “Is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the sabbath, to save life or to kill?” (ἔξεστιν τοῖς σάββασιν ἀγαθὸν ποιῆσαι ἢ κακοποιῆσαι, ψυχὴν σῶσαι ἢ ἀποκτείνειν). See also *Ant.* 3.251; 15.259; 20.268 and *J.W.* 6.423.

The saying in Luke 6:9 (analyzed above) is taken from Mark 3:4,⁴²⁶ while the question in 14:3 may have been penned entirely by Luke who relied on Luke 6:9 for its composition. Both sayings open with the same verb (ἔξεστιν) and include the same temporal reference (τῷ σαββάτῳ) accompanied by the juxtaposition of an infinitive construction (ἀγαθοποιῆσαι/ψυχὴν σῶσαι/θεραπεῦσαι) and the conjunction ἢ. On the other hand, Luke 14:3 does not include an infinitive verb after the conjunction ἢ, but simply contains the negative particle οὐ. In Luke 14:3, the conjunction ἢ is sharply disjunctive.⁴²⁷ The particle οὐ does not normally precede an infinitive even in Koine Greek, and, in any case, no infinitive verb appears in the second clause of this verse.⁴²⁸ Luke 14:3, therefore, should be translated as: “Is it lawful on the Sabbath to heal or not [i.e., is it not lawful]?”

The question in 14:3 presents the reader not so much with a new argument as a final recapitulation of Jesus’ Sabbath praxis (Luke 6:1–11; 13:10–17). The question seems more confrontational than argumentative, more preemptive in its reaffirmation of what has already been proven than novel and substantial in its logic. Since it has already been shown to the Pharisees in previous episodes that Jesus can do good on the Sabbath, Luke has Jesus confront his Pharisaic interlocutors one last time about his healing ministry on the Sabbath. This will be the final appearance in Luke where Jesus performs a controversial act on the Sabbath. Now it is time for a final application and review of Jesus’ message, a last opportunity to verify whether the Pharisaic adversaries have

⁴²⁶ Mark 3:4: ἔξεστιν τοῖς σάββασις ἀγαθὸν ποιῆσαι ἢ κακοποιῆσαι, ψυχὴν σῶσαι ἢ ἀποκτεῖναι;

⁴²⁷ BDF §446; Wolter, *Das Lukasevangelium*, 502.

⁴²⁸ A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in Light of Historical Research* (Leicester: Hodder & Stoughton, 1919), 1162.

learned their lesson from previous incidents in order to illustrate once and for all that Jesus' actions do not go against the Sabbath and its *raison d'être*.

The Pharisees neither conspire to kill Jesus nor argue with him despite his audacious provocation. Instead, they remain speechless (οἱ δὲ ἤσυχασαν; v.4). Their silence, however, hardly means that actual, historical Pharisees would have consented to Jesus' actions. Luke's Pharisees have already been confronted with such a situation in previous episodes. Lost in their lack of understanding (ἄνοια; Luke 6:11), they are unable to figure out what to do with this Jesus. Now they recognize, at least silently, their inability to counter Jesus. Their silence implies a grudging consent or an irritated recognition of their failure to refute Jesus on this point.⁴²⁹ Of course, this idealized portrayal of muted and defeated Pharisees only reveals *Luke's* belief in Jesus' successful rebuttal of his adversaries—not an actual report about events as they really happened. The silence of the Pharisees provides the Lukan Jesus with a *laissez-passer* for performing another healing on the Sabbath. Beyond all chutzpah, Luke's Jesus can now proceed to heal an individual on the Sabbath day within the house of a prominent Pharisee! A rather rude guest! Surprisingly, the Pharisees' emotional reaction to this instigation within their own space remains remarkably subdued. It is certainly hard to imagine Matthew ever portraying them in such a mellow manner!

Luke describes the performance of the healing in three simple acts: Jesus takes (ἐπιλαμβάνω), heals (ιάσασθε), and releases (ἀπέλυσεν) the sick person. The first verb, ἐπιλαμβάνω, is rather general in its thrust, conveying the impression that Jesus simply takes the man, perhaps by the hand, in order to heal him. As in the previous Sabbath

⁴²⁹ Cf. Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 2:1041: "But to be silent is to agree (especially when legal matters are the issue)."

pericope, where one woman bound by Satan is “released” (cf. ἀπολέλυσαι in 13:12; λύει and λυθῆναι in 13:15–16) from her suffering, here too, Jesus “releases” the man from his dropsy. Because of this parallelism, it seems unlikely that the verb ἀπέλυσεν should in this case solely be taken in a general sense to mean that Jesus sends the man away once he accomplishes the healing.⁴³⁰ The man has also been literally released from his suffering, from the (demonic) source of torment that has kept him captive until now. A *double entendre* is at play here: Jesus both liberates and dismisses the man.⁴³¹ Thus, the “release” motif appears once again in the gospel of Luke: yet another member of the house of Israel experiences on the Sabbath the benefits of eschatological liberation announced by Jesus one Sabbath in the synagogue of Nazareth (4:16–21).

Up until this very final episode dealing with a Sabbath healing, Luke seeks to defend Jesus’ actions. To fulfill that aim, Luke brings an argument similar in some respects to Luke 13:15 where Jesus asks his audience whether they would not untie their ox or donkey on the Sabbath and lead it out somewhere to give it water. Here Luke’s Jesus states: “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?” (14:5). A parallel form of this statement appears in Matt 12:11. The following window presents the contents of Matt 12:11, Luke 13:15 and 14:5 next to each other for the purpose of comparison:

Table 4-2

Matt 12:11	Luke 13:15	Luke 14:5
τίς ἔσται ἐξ ὑμῶν ἄνθρωπος ὃς ἔξει πρόβατον ἓν καὶ ἐὰν ἐμπέσῃ τοῦτο τοῖς σάββασιν εἰς βόθυνον, οὐχὶ κρατήσει αὐτὸ καὶ ἐγερεῖ;	ἕκαστος ὑμῶν τῶ σαββάτῳ οὐ λύει τὸν βοῦν αὐτοῦ ἢ τὸν ὄνον ἀπὸ τῆς φάτνης καὶ ἀπαγαγὼν ποτίζει;	τίνος ὑμῶν υἱὸς ἢ βοῦς εἰς φρέαρ πεσεῖται, καὶ οὐκ εὐθέως ἀνασπάσει αὐτὸν ἐν ἡμέρᾳ τοῦ σαββάτου;

⁴³⁰ So Wolter, *Das Lukasevangelium*, 502, pointing to Luke 8:38 and Acts 19:40.

⁴³¹ Cf. Bovon, *Luc*, 2:421; Mayer-Haas, *Geschenk*, 338.

“Suppose one of you has only one sheep and it falls into a pit on the sabbath; will you not lay hold of it and lift it out?”	“Does not each of you on the sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from the manger, and lead it away to give it water?”	“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?”
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All three sayings mention animals, although Luke 14:5 also contains the word “son” (υἱός). Matt 12:11 refers to a pit (βόθρον), while Luke 14:15 mentions the word well (φρέαρ) and Luke 13:15 may also imply the presence of a well (or another source of water). Conceptually, the saying in Luke 14:5 resembles mostly Matt 12:11, since both of these verses refer to a creature that has fallen into a pit/well, while Luke 13:15 only deals with the alleviation of an animal’s thirst by untying and leading it to a source of water. More than Matt 12:11, Luke 14:5 contains a ring of heightened urgency: a person would *immediately* (εὐθέως) draw up (ἀνασπάσει)⁴³² a son or an ox from a *well*. The usage of the word “well”, instead of “pit” as in Matthew, further accentuates the predicament of the animal: the drowning waters threaten its life. Immediate action is required.⁴³³

In Matt 12:11, Jesus concludes the saying with a *minori ad maius* argument: “How much more valuable is a human being than a sheep!” (Matt 12:12a). The current Lukan version of the dictum, however, cannot employ a *qal vahomer*-like argument, since it also contains the word “son,” which eliminates the contrast between animals and humans.⁴³⁴ Some scribes already noticed this problem and tried to replace the word “son” with “donkey” (ὄνος) or “sheep” (πρόβατον).⁴³⁵ From a textual critical perspective,

⁴³² The verb ἀνασπάσει implies that the person will indeed draw the creature out of the well, not just lift it up to a standing position as the verb in Matthew may imply. This reading of Matthew, however, was rejected. See section above on Matt 12:11.

⁴³³ Mayer-Haas, *Geschenk*, 348. However, I do not believe that Luke is arguing through this analogy that the man’s condition is life-threatening.

⁴³⁴ Contra Mayer-Haas, *Geschenk*, 344–45, 354, who speaks of Luke 14:5 as containing a *qal vahomer* argument.

⁴³⁵ ὄνος: Ⳑ K L Ψ, etc.; πρόβατον: D. The similarities between Matt 12:11 and Luke 14:5 have led some to posit a common source for both sayings, for example, Q. So, Back, *Jesus of Nazareth and the Sabbath*

however, the reading of “son” is to be preferred: it is the *lectio difficilior* and enjoys a better textual attestation.⁴³⁶ The particular usage of the word “son,” instead of “man” or “human,” also heightens the empathy particularly felt by a parent for a child in danger. As in the previous case on the *daughter* of Abraham, crippled because of a nefarious spirit (13:16), Luke’s Jesus maintains that he must go about healing on the Sabbath other children of Israel afflicted by the evil powers of Satan.

The usage of the word “son” also furnishes the saying with a greater degree of halakic legitimacy based on what is known so far from the extant sources about Jewish praxis on this matter. As noted earlier,⁴³⁷ the ancient halakic texts that do tackle the problem envisaged in Luke 14:5, assume, contrary to Jesus’ rhetorical question, that one should *not* actively save an *animal* that has fallen into a pit or water on the Sabbath (e.g., CD 11:14; 4Q265 6:5–6). Other Jews, at least in later times, devised ways to bypass this problem by providing the animal with food or other implements that would enable the animal to survive that day or come out on its own (*t. Shabb.* 14[15]:3; *b. Shabb.* 128b). But in cases involving a *human* who falls into a body of water or a cistern, even the more

Commandment, 137; Neiryneck, “Jesus and the Sabbath. Some Observations on Mk II, 27,” 227. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel according to Luke*, 2:1039, maintains that “the wording is so different that v. 5 is better ascribed to ‘L.’” Mayer-Haas, *Geschenk*, 351–53, argues against Q as being the source for Luke 14:5 and Matt 12:11. It is not essential for our purposes to determine the source of neither the saying nor its oldest form. An Aramaic *Vorlage* has also been proposed for this saying. Doering, *Schabbat*, 458, thinks that the sayings in both Matthew and Luke represent two different translations of an Aramaic *Vorlage*, since the differences between both versions seem so great. Many exegetes view Matt 12:11/Luke 14:5 as containing an authentic saying of the historical Jesus. For a discussion of this issue, see Doering, *Schabbat*, 457–62. Joachim Jeremias and Matthew Black discuss the potential wordplay going on in the supposedly original Aramaic between the words ברא (“son”), בעירא (“cattle”), and בירא (“well” or “pit”). See Matthew Black, *An Aramaic Approach to the Gospels and Acts* (3d ed.; Oxford: Clarendon, 1967), 168–71; Joachim Jeremias, review of Matthew Black, *An Aramaic Approach to the Gospels and Acts*, *GGA* 210 (1956): 1–12.

⁴³⁶ The word “son” may have been added to the saying sometime during its pre-Lukan transmission. See Wolter, *Das Lukasevangelium*, 503. Doering, *Schabbat*, 458–59, explains the intrusion of the word “son” by pointing to its supposed Aramaic *Vorlage*: originally, there would have been only the mention of an ox (בעירא) and a well (בירא) to which was added later the phonetically similar ברא (“son”).

⁴³⁷ See section dealing with Matt 12:11.

stringent texts of Qumran allow for one to draw a person out, provided instruments are not used (presumably, because their usage would constitute “work”): “Any living human who falls into a body of water or a cistern shall not be helped out with ladder, rope, or tool” (CD 11:15–17).⁴³⁸ The additional reference to a “son” in the Lukan saying could potentially appeal to the even more stringent wings of Jewish society: if one is not ready to save an animal on the Sabbath, then at least a human. It creates an *a pari* rather than an *a fortiori* argument: just as one would save an animal, or at least a child, on the Sabbath, so also can one heal a person on the Sabbath.⁴³⁹ The analogy, however, is “quasi-logical,” as a correlation exists only between the status of the creatures (i.e., humans) but not their corresponding situations. Luke’s opponents could in principle still argue that the necessity for healing a man suffering from dropsy does not prove as urgent as saving someone whose life is truly and imminently in danger. Consequently, the proposal to see here an extension of the principle of saving life on the Sabbath (פיקוח נפש) becomes once again attractive: if one would draw a human or even an ox out of a well, why is it unlawful to heal non-life-threatening diseases of humans on the Sabbath day?

Once again, the Pharisees are supposedly “unable” to object to Jesus’ argument and prevent him from acting. Luke plays with his words in this one-sided and idealized portrait: in v. 4, the Pharisees “were silent” (ἡσύχασαν), here they are “unable” (ἴσχυσαν) to answer back (v.6). Since in Luke’s eyes Jesus’ Sabbath healings are perfectly legitimate, his lord can continue, according to his custom, to teach (in parables) with full confidence even within the home of a Pharisee where he has performed a questionable

⁴³⁸ Similarly, 4Q265 6:6–8: “But if it is a man who falls into the water [on] the Sabbath [day], one shall extend his garment to him to pull him out with it, but he shall not carry an implement [to pull him out on the] Sabbath [day].”

⁴³⁹ Cf. Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 2:1041.

healing. This is how Luke chooses to end his saga on the question of Jesus and his Sabbath keeping. The only other time Jesus appears again in the third gospel in a Sabbath setting occurs during his burial, “resting,” as it were, in a tomb on that holy day, while his disciples faithfully observe the Sabbath according to the Law of Moses (23:56).

Conclusion

None of the controversy stories assessed in this chapter announces the abrogation of the Sabbath. The dispute centers always on the interpretation of the Law, on how to keep the Sabbath when human need conflicts with its sanctity and observance. But in reality, Matthew and especially Luke seem more interested in exalting the image of their central figure, in justifying Jesus’ right to perform his healing ministry on the Sabbath in conformance with his call to fulfill his messianic duty during the dawn of the new eschatological age unfolding before Israel’s eyes. If these stories do reflect the Sabbath practices of Matthew and Luke, at best, they only show how both of them would not have objected to curing minor illnesses on the Sabbath. Regardless of what one makes of this matter, it cannot be maintained that Luke is not interested in the Law when he recounts such stories. Luke reports more Sabbath healings than any other author but never presents in these episodes a presumptuous Jesus who stands aloof from halakic and Jewish sensibilities, sweepingly announcing the abolition of a central commandment of the Torah. Instead, Luke, like Matthew, combines eschatological-christological statements with halakic-ethical considerations in order to bolster Jesus’ Sabbath praxis in ways that comply with the ethos of the Torah and imply its ongoing observance for Jewish followers of Jesus.

Chapter 5

Burying and the Sabbath

“As Busy as a Jew on a Friday”
(Ladino Proverb)

Introduction

The synoptic portrayals of Jesus’ burial contain interesting information about the care for his body *before* and *after* the Sabbath.⁴⁴⁰ Joseph of Arimathea, who graciously volunteers to attend to Jesus’ burial, hurries to perform this duty before the arrival of the Sabbath. All three synoptic writers portray Joseph in a commendable way, as a pious Jew who simultaneously seeks to care for a corpse and respect the sanctity of the Sabbath. Likewise, all three synoptics authors, especially Luke, underscore the Sabbath observance of Jesus’ female disciples who note the location of Jesus’ burial but wait until after the Sabbath before visiting his tomb. This section of the so-called passion narrative contains nothing controversial about the Sabbath keeping of Jesus’ disciples. Both Matthew and Luke approve of Joseph and Jesus’ followers’ pious efforts to keep the Sabbath even while endeavoring to care for Jesus’ body. This portrait confirms the impression highlighted throughout this book that both Matthew and Luke continue to respect and observe the Sabbath as a holy day. It is easy to overlook the significance of

⁴⁴⁰ I would like to thank professor Richard Kalmin for his input on my usage and treatment of some of the rabbinic passages cited in my paper, “Breaking Passover to Keep the Sabbath: The Burial of Jesus and the Halakic Dilemma as Embedded within the Synoptic Narratives,” (paper presented at the annual meeting of the Midwest Region of the SBL, Bourbonnais, Ill., February 12, 2011), upon which this chapter is partly based.

these materials for discussing the synoptic perspectives on the Sabbath. Such a neglect can create an unbalanced portrait about the topic by focusing only on the controversial episodes about Sabbath keeping. To counterbalance this possibility, I take the opportunity to closely assess these materials, tackling along the way some of the historical and halakic conundrums surrounding Jesus' burial, which, from the synoptic point of view, seems to have occurred on a Passover falling right before a Sabbath.

Synoptic Window

Table 5-1

Matt 27:57–28:1

⁵⁷ When it was evening (Ὁψίας δὲ γενομένης), there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who was also a disciple of Jesus.

⁵⁸ He went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus; then Pilate ordered it to be given to him.

⁵⁹ So Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen cloth

⁶⁰ and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn in the rock. He then rolled a great stone to the door of the tomb and went away.

⁶¹ Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were there, sitting opposite the tomb.

⁶² The next day, that is, after the day of Preparation (Τῆ δὲ ἐπαύριον, ἣτις ἐστὶν μετὰ τὴν παρασκευὴν), the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered before Pilate

⁶³ and said, “Sir, we remember what that impostor said while he was still alive, ‘After three days I will rise

Mark 15:42–16:2

⁴² When evening had come, and since it was the day of Preparation, that is, the day before the sabbath (ἤδη ὁψίας γενομένης, ἐπεὶ ἦν παρασκευὴ ὅ ἐστιν προσάββατον),

⁴³ Joseph of Arimathea, a respected member of the council, who was also himself waiting expectantly for the kingdom of God, went boldly to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus.

⁴⁴ Then Pilate wondered if he were already dead; and summoning the centurion, he asked him whether he had been dead for some time.

⁴⁵ When he learned from the centurion that he was dead, he granted the body to Joseph.

⁴⁶ Then Joseph bought a linen cloth, and taking down the body, wrapped it in the linen cloth, and laid it in a tomb that had been hewn out of the rock. He then rolled a stone against the door of the tomb.

⁴⁷ Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses saw where the body was laid.

Luke 23:50–24:1

⁵⁰ Now there was a good and righteous man named Joseph, who, though a member of the council,

⁵¹ had not agreed to their plan and action. He came from the Jewish town of Arimathea, and he was waiting expectantly for the kingdom of God.

⁵² This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus.

⁵³ Then he took it down, wrapped it in a linen cloth, and laid it in a rock-hewn tomb where no one had ever been laid.

⁵⁴ It was the day of Preparation, and the sabbath was beginning (ἡμέρα ἦν παρασκευῆς καὶ σάββατον ἐπέφωσκεν).

⁵⁵ The women who had come with him from Galilee followed, and they saw the tomb and how his body was laid.

⁵⁶ Then they returned, and prepared spices and ointments. On the sabbath they rested according to the

again.’

⁶⁴ Therefore command the tomb to be made secure until the third day; otherwise his disciples may go and steal him away, and tell the people, ‘He has been raised from the dead,’ and the last deception would be worse than the first.”

⁶⁵ Pilate said to them, “You have a guard of soldiers; go, make it as secure as you can.”

⁶⁶ So they went with the guard and made the tomb secure by sealing the stone.

After the sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning (Ὁψέ δὲ σαββάτων, τῇ ἐπιφωσκούσῃ εἰς μίαν σαββάτων), Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb.

When the sabbath was over (Καὶ διαγενομένου τοῦ σαββάτου), Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him.

² And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb (καὶ λίαν πρωτὶ τῇ μιᾷ τῶν σαββάτων ἔρχονται ἐπὶ τὸ μνημεῖον ἀνατείλαντος τοῦ ἡλίου).

commandment (καὶ τὸ μὲν σάββατον ἡσύχασαν κατὰ τὴν ἐντολήν).

But on the first day of the week, at early dawn (Τῇ δὲ μιᾷ τῶν σαββάτων ὄρθρου βαθέως), they came to the tomb, taking the spices that they had prepared.

Breaking Passover to Keep the Sabbath? Chronological and Halakic Dilemmas

According to the synoptics, Joseph of Arimathea hurries to bury Jesus *before* the arrival of the Sabbath.⁴⁴¹ During a subsequent visit *after* the Sabbath, some of Jesus’

⁴⁴¹ Mark describes Joseph of Arimathea as a “respected member of the council (εὐσχήμων βουλευτής),” “also himself looking for the kingdom of God.” The label “respected member of the council” is ambiguous, implying either membership with the local council in the otherwise unknown town of Arimathea or with the Judean council of Jerusalem. See Collins, *Mark*, 777. Luke seems to infer that Joseph belongs to the Jerusalem council although he makes sure to clarify that he is a “good and righteous man” who has nothing to do with their evil purposes and deeds (23:50–51). Luke does not view Joseph as a disciple of Jesus but as a friendly outsider, in some ways similar to certain Pharisees favorably disposed toward Jesus. This portrait reflects once again Luke’s more nuanced attitude toward certain Jews (so often members of the Pharisaic camp) who speak and act on behalf of Jesus and his followers. Even if Luke does not explicitly designate Joseph as a Pharisee, he may have viewed him as such, since, according to Luke, Joseph is a member of the council and described in positive terms, acting on behalf of Jesus, much like the Pharisees who warn Jesus to be aware of Herod’s evil intentions (13:31–35), or Gamaliel, another Pharisee, who convinces the Sanhedrin to release the apostles from custody (Acts 5:33–39), or finally the Pharisees who side with Paul against the Sadducees during his trial in Jerusalem (Acts 23:6–10). Cf. Nolland, *Luke*, 3:1163; Ziesler, “Luke and the Pharisees,” 153–54. Going against a Lukan Pharisaic identification of Joseph is the fact that Luke (as well as the other synoptic authors) does not describe Pharisaic involvement during the arrest and trial of Jesus (neither explicit Sadducean involvement for that matter, as Ziesler notes, suggesting that the trial had less to do with party affiliations than individuals presiding in their official, judicial functions). Consequently, Luke may think that no Pharisees presided during Jesus’ trial or that some were present in

female disciples seek to provide further care for his body through anointment with spices. These chronological brackets reveal an acute awareness on the part of all three synoptic gospel authors that according to Jewish practice burials and purchases are not to be pursued on the Sabbath.⁴⁴² Nevertheless, some chronological and terminological terms used by the synoptic authors prove confusing and at times contradictory. The problem begins in Mark 14:12 where Jesus and his disciples are said to have made the necessary preparations for the Passover meal, presumably on a Thursday, before the arrival of Friday at sunset (the weekday when Passover supposedly began that year): “On the first day of Unleavened Bread, when the Passover lamb is sacrificed, his disciples said to him, ‘Where do you want us to go and make the preparations for you to eat the Passover?’”⁴⁴³ (14:12) The preparation for the Passover meal occurs before Jesus’ arrest. At some point after the meal, which presumably takes place on a Thursday night, that is, at the

the Sanhedrin but were favorably disposed towards Jesus. In Acts, Luke does view the Sanhedrin of Jerusalem as composed of Pharisees and Sadducees (5:34; 23:6). Therefore, the possibility is not entirely ruled out that Luke imagines Joseph to be a good Pharisee. It certainly seems unlikely that Luke would have thought of Joseph as a chief priest (i.e., a Sadducee), given his portrayal of the (high) priests’ (presumably Sadducees) involvement in the arrest and trial of Jesus and his followers (Luke 9:22; 19:47; 20:1; 20:19; 22:2,4; 22:52; 22:66; 23:4, 10, 13; 24:20; Acts 4:1–23; 5:17, 21, 24, 27, 33; 9:14, 21; 22:30, 23:1–5, 14; 25:2, 15; 26:10,12). Cf. also *Ant.* 20:200–203 where Josephus claims that the high priest Ananus had James, the brother of Jesus, stoned, prompting criticism against the priest by certain Jews who were very *scrupulous* in their law observance (περὶ τοὺς νόμους ἀκριβεῖς)—an epithet ascribed to the sect of the Pharisees in Acts 26:5. Cf. also the infancy narratives in Luke regarding Simon, also said to be “righteous and devout,” and awaiting the consolation of Israel (2:25). Matthew, unlike Mark and Luke, does not claim that Joseph of Arimathea is a respectable member of the council, but rather “a disciple of Jesus.” This correction corresponds to Matthew’s adamant opposition to the Pharisees and other Jewish members holding positions of leadership. Matthew cannot admit that Joseph of Arimathea is a Pharisee or a member of the Jewish council, and therefore transforms him into a follower of Jesus. See Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 3:649; Luz, *Matthew*, 3:577; Mello, *Evangelo*, 485.

⁴⁴² Doering, “Sabbath Laws,” 252; Mayer-Haas, *Geschenk*, 228–31; Weiss, *A Day of Gladness*, 89–90.

⁴⁴³ This time reference in itself seems somewhat awkward. The disciples inquire about preparations for Passover on the first day of Unleavened Bread, which technically would be the 15th of Nisan, already the beginning of Passover! Nevertheless, Mark 14:12 states that this was the day on which the Passover lamb was sacrificed, which must mean the 14th of Nisan (cf. Exod 12:6). Josephus, *J.W.* 5:99, also refers to the feast of Unleavened Bread as having arrived on the fourteenth month of Xanthicus (τῆς τῶν ἀζύμων ἐνστάσης ἡμέρας τεσσαρεσκαίδεκάτη Ξανθικοῦ μηνός). As France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 981 n. 5, suggests, this linguistic usage may stem from the practice of removing leaven from houses on the evening that *began* the 14th of Nisan, that is, one day ahead of the official beginning of the feast (the 15th of Nisan). See, for example, *m. Pesah.* 1:1–3.

beginning of Friday according to Jewish reckoning, Jesus is arrested, tried, and eventually executed (on Friday during daytime). Matthew and Luke follow Mark's timeframe, meaning that all three synoptic authors assume that Jesus was crucified *during* Passover, on the fifteenth of Nisan. All of this seems puzzling for it would mean that Joseph of Arimathea requests from Pilate Jesus' body *on Passover* in order to bury it as "evening had come (*ἤδη ὄψις γενομένης*),⁴⁴⁴ and since it was the day of Preparation (*παρασκευῆ*),⁴⁴⁵ that is, the day before the sabbath" (15:42). Apparently, Mark wants to underscore Joseph of Arimathea's concern to bury Jesus before the Sabbath begins. The synoptic description accords with what we know about Sabbath keeping as well as the Jewish preference for promptly burying a body, typically on the same day death is ascertained. However, the synoptic portrayal would imply that Jesus' burial takes place on Passover, also a holy day. Hooker phrases the problem succinctly: "it makes little sense for Joseph to avoid desecration of the sabbath by burying Jesus on another holy day."⁴⁴⁶ Mark even claims that Joseph purchases a linen cloth, has Jesus' body brought down from the cross, wrapped, and then placed in a tomb, all of this presumably taking place on Passover (15:46). Ancient Jewish texts and archaeological sources confirm

⁴⁴⁴ *ἤδη ὄψις γενομένης* could possibly be translated as "when evening was coming." This translation would cohere with Joseph's intent to bury Jesus before the arrival of the Sabbath. Elsewhere, however, Mark uses *γενομένης* to refer to the "arrival of a point in time rather than its approach" (Joel Marcus, *Mark* [AB 27–27A; New York: Doubleday, 2000–2009], 2:1070). See Mark 1:32; 4:17; 6:2, 21, 35, 47; 15:33. Nevertheless, Marcus and others point out that this word could refer not only to the time after sunset but also to the late afternoon. In other words, for Mark, the Sabbath had not yet begun. See also, Gundry, *Mark*, 983; Mayer-Haas, *Geschenk*, 228–29.

⁴⁴⁵ The word *παρασκευῆ* can refer either to the day of preparation before the Sabbath, that is, Friday (e.g., Josephus, *Ant.* 16:163; Mark 15:42; Luke 23:54), or the day of preparation before Passover (e.g., John 19:14).

⁴⁴⁶ Hooker, *A Commentary on the Gospel according to St Mark*, 380. The problem is also pointed out by Doering, "Sabbath Laws in the New Testament Gospels," 252–53, but without providing any solution.

Mark's description about the practice of wrapping a body in cloth,⁴⁴⁷ but the Markan timing of this action on a Passover, especially the reference to the unnecessary *purchase* of linen on a holy day is perplexing.

Some commentators such as Joel Marcus account for this dilemma by maintaining that the pre-Markan tradition situated Jesus' crucifixion on the day before Passover. In the pre-Markan tradition, the expression "the day of preparation" referred to the day of preparation *for Passover* (rather than the Sabbath), while the introduction of the temporal phrase "the day before Sabbath" in Mark 15:42 would stem from Mark's (clumsy) effort to bring the tradition into line with his own chronology.⁴⁴⁸ This suggestion, however, does not explore or solve the halakic dilemma outlined above; it only assesses how Mark unsatisfactorily (at least from our perspective) sought to chronologically harmonize his pre-Markan materials with his own narrative.

Prima facie, it could be tempting to dismiss this problem by embracing harmonizing schemes such as Jaubert's ingenious theory about the supposed usage in the synoptic tradition of an Essene 364-day calendar according to which Jesus would have held Passover on Tuesday evening/beginning of Wednesday (Passover always falls on a Wednesday according to this calendar) and would have then been crucified on a Friday before the official Passover feast, which that year would have fallen on a Sabbath according to the lunar-solar calendar used by the temple authorities (as attested in the Johannine tradition).⁴⁴⁹ Unfortunately, her theory seems almost too good to be true, and

⁴⁴⁷ Linen textiles found in the tombs of Ein Gedi from the Second Temple period have been identified as burial shrouds. See Rachel Hachlili, *Jewish Funerary Customs, Practices and Rites in the Second Temple Period* (Supplements to JSJ 94; Leiden: Brill, 2005), 466–67, 480–8. Wrapping the body in a shroud is also mentioned in John 11:44; *m. Kil.* 9:4; *m. Ma'as.* 5:12; *t. Ned.* 2:7.

⁴⁴⁸ Marcus, *Mark*, 2:1070.

⁴⁴⁹ Annie Jaubert, *La date de la Cène. Calendrier biblique et liturgie chrétienne* (Paris, Gabalda, 1957).

as Fitzmyer points out “rides roughshod over the long-accepted analyses of so many of the passage involved according to form-critical methods that it cannot be taken seriously.”⁴⁵⁰

We might have to leave some of the chronological contradictions in the pre-Markan, Johannine, and synoptic traditions forever unsolved. But the halakic dilemma discussed above still itches: were *all* of the synoptic authors so ignorant of Jewish custom so as to portray Joseph of Arimathea and the female disciples of Jesus rushing to keep the Sabbath, only to paradoxically break Passover? It could well be, as the pre-Markan and Johannine traditions attest, that Jesus was crucified on a Friday, the day before Passover, which that year fell on a Sabbath, but a tendency had evolved in certain circles by the time of the composition of the synoptic gospels to date Jesus’ last supper during Passover. This development in the tradition may have created the following halakic dilemma, a contradiction in the synoptic narrative, which the synoptic authors did not fully anticipate, or were inadvertently “trapped” into, once they affirmed that Jesus’ last meal had occurred on the eve of Passover: how does one care for the body of a person who dies on a holy festival followed by a Sabbath, that is during two successive holy days?⁴⁵¹

⁴⁵⁰ Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 2:1379. France, *Matthew*, 981–85, also proposes a harmonizing scheme in which Jesus would have actually held an *anticipatory* Passover meal on the evening that began the 14th of Nisan (rather than at the official date, the evening beginning the 15th of Nisan). Jesus organized this Passover meal because he knew he would not make it to the official date when Passover would be celebrated. With France and others, we can at least agree that the synoptic description of Jesus’ burial as well as the Johannine tradition (cf. also *Gos. Pet.* 2:5, which also states that Jesus was crucified before the first day of Unleavened Bread) attest to a pre-gospel tradition that placed Jesus’ crucifixion before Passover, making the Johannine account more historically reliable, or at least credible, *in this aspect* regarding the dating of events. Why else would the synoptic authors portray Joseph and the women as faithful Sabbath keepers, only to have them theoretically desecrate Passover? France’s harmonizing proposal is also more appealing than Jaubert’s in another regard: it at least derives from the text, while Jaubert imposes a foreign scheme upon the gospels for which no internal textual evidence exists.

⁴⁵¹ Hooker, *A Commentary on the Gospel according to St Mark*, 380: “Once again, it seems that Mark’s narrative supports the Johannine dating of the crucifixion (according to which Passover coincided with the

According to Hooker, the Mishnah does not discuss what should be done with a corpse when two holy days fall on subsequent days.⁴⁵² Neither does tractate *Semahot*, also known as *Ebel Rabbati*, which describes halakot and customs related to mourning and burial, deal with the problem. The dating of this small tractate, which does not appear in the Mishnah, is contested. In his edition and translation of *Semahot*, Zlotnick argues for an early dating, toward the end of the third century C.E.⁴⁵³ Other rabbinic specialists, however, reject this early dating.⁴⁵⁴ But given the paucity of ancient literary sources dealing with the topic of Jewish burial, it would be better to consider all of the potential evidence at our disposal, even those of a later rabbinic provenance.⁴⁵⁵ The potentially late date of the *final* composition of *Semahot* does not exclude the possibility that it contains earlier traditions. As McCane notes, burial customs change very slowly over time:

The important point here is only that *when it comes to the specific topic of death ritual*, the rabbinic sources—even though they are later than the early Roman period—have been shown to record information that generally conforms with the patterns evident in the material remains of early Roman Jewish burial customs. In addition, it is something of an anthropological commonplace that burial practices typically change only in response to significant alternations in the social structure. Theological ideas about death and the afterlife often are quite vague and fluid, but the public ritual process of death has a weight and mass all its own.⁴⁵⁶

sabbath) rather than his own. It is true that he refers here to the following day as the sabbath, not as the Passover, but obviously he could not make the latter identification in view of his interpretation of the Last Supper.”

⁴⁵² Hooker, *A Commentary on the Gospel according to St Mark*, 380.

⁴⁵³ Dov Zlotnick, *The Tractate “Mourning”* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966), 4–9.

⁴⁵⁴ David Kraemer, *The Meanings of Death in Rabbinic Judaism* (London: Routledge, 2000), 9–10.

⁴⁵⁵ Besides a few references in Josephus (*J.W.* 1:673, 3:437; *Ant.* 15.196–200; *Ag. Ap.* 2:205) and early Christian literature, the rabbinic documents constitute the only other main *literary* source describing Jewish burial and mourning customs. From the Qumran literature, the Temple Scroll deals briefly with certain burial issues and purity concerns. See 11QT^a 48:11–14; 49:5–21; 50: 5–9. The book of Sirach (22: 11–12; 38:16–23), Tobit (chs. 2, 4, and 14), and the Epistle of Jeremiah (vv. 27, 32) also contain some brief references to mourning and burial customs. See Kraemer, *The Meanings of Death*, 14–22, for a discussion on these texts and some other sporadic references in the Second Temple literature.

⁴⁵⁶ Byron McCane, *Roll Back the Stone: Death and Burial in the World of Jesus* (Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 2003), 30–31.

Of course, McCane’s statement carries weight only when extra-rabbinic evidence corroborates the reliability of a particular rabbinic description on Jewish burial. In addition, the rabbinic descriptions and prescriptions about burial—some of which may reflect rabbinic fantasy rather than actual praxis—need not represent the customs of *all* ancient Jews, which could have varied regionally. Nevertheless, some of the rabbinic descriptions about burial and mourning have been shown to overlap with the practice of other ancient Jews. Each rabbinic tradition, then, should be assessed on an individual basis instead of being discarded because of *a priori* academic prejudices. Tractate *Semahot* does indeed contain material pertinent, at least as a heuristic device, for exploring the halakic dilemma involved in burying Jesus on a Passover that falls before a Sabbath:

Whosoever has buried his dead two days before the end of a festival must suspend mourning during the entire festival and then count seven days, the public paying their respects to him for five days after the festival. *If seven days before the end of a festival*, he should suspend mourning during the entire festival and then count seven days, the public not attending him at all after the festival (*Sem.* 7:5; emphasis added).⁴⁵⁷

This passage assumes that Jews could bury a corpse “seven days before the end of a festival” (שבעה ימים בתוך הרגל). The Hebrew word for festival here, רגל, can refer to the three major pilgrimage festivals, which Jews ideally attempted to celebrate in Jerusalem, namely, Passover, Pentecost, and the Feast of Tabernacles. Both Passover and the Feast of Tabernacles run for seven days.⁴⁵⁸ Both the first (15th of Nisan) and seventh day (21st of Nisan) of Passover are considered days of “holy convocation” (מקרא קודש; Num 28:18), in rabbinic parlance, a *Yom Tov*, a day in which work is prohibited, save for the

⁴⁵⁷ English Translations of *Semahot* are taken from Zlotnick’s edition.

⁴⁵⁸ The Feast of Tabernacles would also include an “eighth day of solemn assembly” (Shemini Atseret).

preparation of food (Exod 12:16). According to Zlotnick and Lieberman, the Hebrew *בתוך*, which literally means “in the midst,” should be understood here as “before the end of,” referring to the *beginning* of a festival period.⁴⁵⁹ Thus, were we to count back “seven days before the end of Passover,” it would bring us back to the 15th of Nisan.⁴⁶⁰ A similar rabbinic assumption about burying a corpse on a festival day appears in the Babylonian Talmud:

Abaye enquired of Rabbah: “What if one buried his dead during the festival (קברו ברגל)? Does the festival enter into his counting of the thirty days, or does the festival not enter into his counting of the thirty days?” He [Rabbah] replied: “The [days of the] festival do not enter into the counting” (*b. Mo’ed Qat.* 19b).

Here Abaye, a fourth generation Babylonian Amora (c. 280–339 C.E.), inquires from his teacher Rabbah about a case where someone is buried on a festival day. Should that day be counted as one of the thirty days of mourning, known in Hebrew as *Sheloshim*, or should it not, since a festival day is normally not included in the counting of the first seven days of mourning (in Hebrew, *Shiva*)? One could argue that the chronological terminology used here is ambiguous: the talmudic passage only speaks of the possibility of burying someone *during* a festival (ברגל). Perhaps, the *intermediate* days of a festival are meant here. Rabbinic halakah treats intermediate festival days more loosely than holy days of convocation (e.g., the first or last days of Passover). The

⁴⁵⁹ Zlotnick, *The Tractate “Mourning,”* 128 n. 5. Zlotnick renders *בתוך* with the awkward English phrase “before the end of” (a festival) because of the linguistic parallelism with the previous Halakot in *Semahot*. According to Lieberman, *Tosefta Ki-Fshutah*, 5:1252, *בתוך* should be *מתוך*, meaning here that they buried the person on the first day of the feast.

⁴⁶⁰ And not the 14th of Nisan, which would be *eight* days before the end of the festival, that is, one day before the *beginning* of the festival. Cf. *Sem.* 7:4: “If he has buried his dead eight days before the festival, he may, if he wishes, cut his hair and wash his clothes on the eve of the festival. If he did not do so on the eve of the festival, he may not do so until the *šelošim* are completed.”

following baraita, however, appearing in the same section of the Babylonian Talmud, refers in unequivocal terms to a burial occurring on a festival day:

If one buried his dead at the beginning of the festival (קברו בתחילת הרגל) he counts seven days [of mourning] after the festival and his work is done by others (*b. Mo'ed Qat.* 20a)

The reference to the *beginning* of a festival day, coupled by the command to count *seven* days of mourning after the festival, makes it clear that the scenario envisaged here involves burying a corpse on a festival day, for example, on the 15th of Nisan, the first day of Passover. Another passage from the same section of the Bavli reports that Rabin (fourth generation Palestinian Amora) claimed in the name of R. Johanan (second generation Palestinian Amora, died c. 279) that if one buried a dead person during the festival (קברו ברגל), that part of the festival should be counted into the first thirty days of mourning. The Bavli maintains that R. Eleazar (third generation Amora) held the same position on the matter, instructing his son R. Pedath to count the festival as part of the thirty days, “even if one buried his dead during the festival” (*b. Mo'ed Qat.* 20a). As noted above, the phrase “during the festival” remains somewhat ambiguous. Are only intermediate days of a festival assumed here? Probably not, since Shavuot, which is also a רגל, does not have any intermediate days. Non-intermediate days, then, are also probably presupposed in the usage of the prepositional phrase “during the festival.”⁴⁶¹

⁴⁶¹ *Sem.* 4:6 is very interesting: even a priest must become defiled on the *eve of Passover* (ערב פסחים) if one of his close relatives passes away. The text does not indicate, however, whether such rabbis think a priest should actually bury their relative on the eve of Passover. This passage recalls in some ways John 19:31 where the priests allegedly avoid entering Pilate's headquarters in order to avoid contracting ritual defilement that disqualify them from eating the Passover meal. Presumably, a similar concern is imagined in this rabbinic passage. *Sem.* 4:6 continues: “In the case of all those of whom it is said that for them a priest should defile himself, it is not a matter of choice—it is mandatory. Rabbi Simeon says: ‘It is a matter of choice.’ Rabbi Judah says: ‘It is mandatory.’ It happened that the wife of Joseph the Priest died on Passover Eve, and he did not want to defile himself for her. The Sages thereupon pushed him down and

These rabbinic injunctions are striking since a halakah from the Mishnah clearly states that the Sabbath differs from a festival day *only with regard to the preparation of food* (*m. Yom Tov* 5:2; *m. Meg.* 1:5). The rabbinic sages allowed certain foods to be prepared on a festival day, but in many other aspects treated the festivals in the same way as a Sabbath. Perhaps, the aforementioned passages from the Bavli and *Semahot* attest to a yet another example of rabbinic laxity toward festival days in comparison to the weekly Sabbath.⁴⁶²

Some important qualifications are of order though. First, it should be noted that the rabbinic passages discussed above focus on how festival observance cuts off the mourning period.⁴⁶³ Moreover, in his monumental commentary on the Tosefta, Lieberman provides a gloss *en passant* about the aforementioned passage from *Semahot*, claiming that *Gentiles* would bury the bodies of Jews on a festival day. Lieberman, however, does not include any references in rabbinic literature where such a qualification is made.⁴⁶⁴ So far, I have come across three passages in the Bavli that do refer to such a scenario. In *b. Yom Tov* 6a (also mentioned in *b. Yom Tov* 22a), Rava (fourth generation

defiled him against his will, while they said to him: ‘It is not a matter of choice—it is mandatory.’” *Sem.* 4:7 continues its discussion regarding the priestly obligation towards funeral preparations and attendance: “How long does he defile himself for her? Rabbi Meir says: ‘All that day.’ Rabbi Simeon says: ‘Up to three days.’ Rabbi Judah in the name of Rabbi Tarfon says: ‘Until the tomb is sealed.’” If we should read *Sem.* 4:7 in light of *Sem.* 4:6, it would mean that contact or at least proximity with a dead body is assumed well into Passover, since at least R. Simeon agrees that that a priest must defile himself up to three days after the person died, which inevitably encompasses the first day of Passover, as said person died on the eve of that holy day. Does this passage assume that the body could be buried on Passover? One cannot confidently derive that much information from this passage. The text may assume that Jews bury the person on the same eve death is determined, as prompt burial before nightfall was the preferred practice among Jews. Alternatively, the passage might assume that *Gentiles* would take care of burying a Jew on a festival day (to be discussed below).

⁴⁶² Previously, I pointed out another lenient attitude of the rabbis with regard to lifting an animal out of a trap on a festival day (*m. Yom Tov* 3:2)—an act that the rabbis forbid on the Sabbath (see section above dealing with Matt 12:9–14).

⁴⁶³ See also *b. Sanh.* 35a–36a, which discusses the impossibility of burying an executed man on the Sabbath and may treat festival days in the same way (see beginning of 36a).

⁴⁶⁴ See Lieberman, *Tosefta Ki-Fshutah*, 5:1252 n. 26.

Babylonian Amora) states that “on the first day of a Festival, [only] Gentiles may busy themselves with a corpse, [but] on the second day, Israelites may busy themselves with a corpse” This statement, ascribed to Rava, stimulates further talmudic discussion. Mar Zutra (Babylonian Amora, died c. 417) argues that such a practice should occur only if the person has been dead for some time, presumably because of body decay and the call to respect the dead through prompt burial. Otherwise, the corpse should be left alone until the festival has passed. R. Ashi (Babylonian Amora, died c. 427), however, maintains that even if the body has not been lying around for a long time, burial should be performed immediately. This debate is interesting and comes closer to the scenario presumed in the synoptic gospels: here some Babylonian sages discuss what should be done to a corpse that could potentially remain unburied for two festival days, generating at least two differing positions, one preferring postponement (Mar Zutra), the other advocating prompt burial (R. Ashi).

Finally, in *b. Shabb.* 139a–b, a rabbinic parallel more analogous to the halakic problem embedded in the synoptic narrative emerges:

The citizens of Bashkar sent [a question] to Levi: “What about . . . a dead man on a Festival?” By the time he [the messenger] arrived [at Levi’s home] Levi had died. Said Samuel to R. Menashia: “If you are wise, send them [an answer].” [So] he sent [word] to them. . . . “Neither Jews nor Syrians [non-Jews] may occupy themselves with a corpse, neither on the first day of a Festival nor on the second.” But that is not so? For R. Judah b. Shilath said in R. Assi’s name: “Such a case happened in the synagogue of Ma’on on a Festival near the Sabbath, though I do not know whether it preceded or followed it, and when they went before R. Johanan, he said to them: ‘Let Gentiles occupy themselves with him [the dead].’” Raba too said: “As for a corpse, on the first day of Festivals Gentiles should occupy themselves with him; on the second day of Festivals Israelites may occupy themselves with him. . . .”⁴⁶⁵

⁴⁶⁵ Cf. the follow passage from Yerushalmi, although it deals with the issue of burying someone on the eve of the Sabbath, not on a festival proper: “R. Helbo, R. Huna in the name of Rab: ‘If the eighth day [after burial] coincided with the Sabbath, one gets a haircut on the eve of the Sabbath.’ How is such a thing possible? [Was the deceased buried on the Sabbath? Surely not.] . . . R. Abun, ‘Interpret [the earlier statement to deal with a case in which] the grave was sealed on the eve of the Sabbath at sunset.’ How is

In this passage, some people from Bashkar (i.e., Caskar, the chief town in the Mesene region on the right bank of the old Tigris) inquire about burying someone on a festival day. At first, the rabbinic reply categorically forbids this act as a preventive measure out of fear that the inhabitants of Bashkar will break a festival day in other aspects as well. Neither Jews nor Gentiles, therefore, may busy themselves with a corpse during the first and second days of a festival. Nevertheless, R. Judah b. Shilath reports a case that happened in the synagogue of Ma'on (a town near Tiberias) when a festival fell before a Sabbath. During that incident, R. Johanan instructed that Gentiles could occupy themselves with the burial of the dead person on the first day of a festival, while Jews could do so only on the second day.

Since these passages clearly indicate that Gentiles should perform burials for Jews in such circumstances, perhaps, following Lieberman, we should presuppose that all other pertinent rabbinic passages (e.g., the text from *Semahot* and the baraita in the Bavli) assume non-Jews as carrying out burials on festival days. Nevertheless, my main goal in soliciting later rabbinic passages lies not in proving the antiquity or popularity of the practices they mention as in illustrating how burials on festival days were at least conceivable to other ancient Jews, admittedly from a period after the final composition of the synoptic gospels.

How might these findings assist in assessing the halakic dilemma within the synoptic gospels? First of all, we should not assume that rabbinic practice reflected the customs of all Jews living in antiquity, especially those in the Diaspora—the milieu in

such a thing possible? Said R. Aha, 'Interpret the case to speak of a burial in which Gentiles sealed the grave'" (y. *Mo'ed Qat.* 3:5 82a). Translation taken and adapted from Neusner's preliminary translation of the Yerushalmi.

which some of the synoptic gospels probably reached their final shape. It could be that some Diasporan Jews, during unusual circumstances, buried their dead on festival days even without the assistance of Gentiles. However, in the absence of literary and archaeological attestations, such remarks remain purely speculative.⁴⁶⁶ Is it possible that Matthew and Luke assume that *Gentiles* take care of Jesus' burial? Few clues point in this direction, although such a possibility remains open. The synoptic gospels (Matt 27:58–60; Mark 15:43–46; Luke 23:52–53) describe Jesus' burial in the singular, crediting Joseph of Arimathea for its execution. Nevertheless, a person of such rank would not have been willing or even capable on his own of performing all the physical actions required to properly dispose of a body (removing the body from the cross, wrapping it in cloth, transporting it to the tomb, rolling the stone on the tomb, etc.).⁴⁶⁷ Probably, the synoptic authors imagine Joseph as *supervising* the burial process. None of

⁴⁶⁶ An epitaph from Hierapolis (Asia Minor), dated to the end of the second century or beginning of the third century C.E., from the family tomb of a said P. Aelius Glykon and Aurelia Amia, contains an interesting reference to the donation of money for annual grave ceremonies that apparently were to be celebrated on the Jewish festivals of Unleavened Bread and Pentecost. The full translation with Greek text and discussion of the epitaph can be found in Philip A. Harland, "Acculturation and Identity in the Diaspora: A Jewish Family and 'Pagan' Guilds at Hierapolis," *JJS* 57 (2006): 222–44. It reads: "This grave and the burial ground beneath it together with the surrounding place belong to Publius Aelius Glykon Zeuxianos Aelianus and to Aurelia Amia, daughter of Amianos Seleukos. In it he will bury himself, his wife, and his children, but no one else is permitted to be buried here. He left behind 200 denaria for the grave-crowning ceremony to the most holy presidency of the purple-dyers, so that it would produce from the interest enough for each to take a share in the seventh month during the festival of Unleavened Bread. Likewise he also left behind 150 denaria for the grave-crowning ceremony to the association of carpet-weavers, so that the revenues from the interest should be distributed, half during the festival of Kalends on eighth day of the fourth month and half during the festival of Pentecost. A copy of this inscription was put into the archives." Perhaps, this epitaph shows that certain Jews would have no problem with either collections of donations or grave ceremonies occurring on Jewish festival days such as the feast of Unleavened Bread. Unfortunately, the inscription does not allow to further infer whether Jews themselves would carry out such activities on festival days, let alone perform burials, a different matter altogether, although it might place them near grave sites at such sacred times (if the celebrations occurred within the vicinity of the cemetery).

⁴⁶⁷ Acts 13:29 states in the plural that "they took him down (καθελόντες) from the tree and laid (ἔθηκαν) him in a tomb," whereas Luke 23:53 reads in the singular: "he [i.e., Joseph of Arimathea] took it down (καθελών), wrapped it in a linen cloth, and laid (ἔθηκεν) it in a rock-hewn tomb." The plural usage in Acts 13:29 might show that Luke believes other people assist burying Jesus.

the synoptic authors, however, indicates whether Jews or Gentiles participate in these actions.

More importantly, the exceptional circumstances surrounding Jesus' death should be duly noted in order to account for the "inadvertent" halakic dilemma in the synoptic burial accounts. Many Jews may have well approved of the synoptic description of Joseph's behavior, given the less than ideal circumstances in which he has to act: which Jew in his or her good mind would want to leave a Jewish corpse hanging on a Roman cross during Passover as well as Sabbath in the environs of the holy city of Jerusalem? The act of Joseph may have appeared commendable to Matthew and Luke's Jewish readers in yet another way. Deut 21:22–23 states:

When someone is convicted of a crime punishable by death and is executed, and you hang him on a tree, his corpse must not remain all night upon the tree; you shall bury him that same day, for anyone hung on a tree is under God's curse. You must not defile the land that the LORD your God is giving you for possession.

To leave a corpse exposed on a cross for more than one day would lie in tension with the Mosaic command to promptly remove and bury it. Presumably, this injunction would be valid for *any* day of the week, not just Friday.⁴⁶⁸ Joseph's piety, then, becomes all the more noteworthy when we fully realize the halakic, ethical, and political complexity confronting him: he wishes to remove the body on the very same day in order to avoid defiling the land and the unbearable shame of seeing a Jewish corpse hanging on a cross during a high holy day carrying strong "national" overtones; he also seeks to perform this duty before the arrival of the Sabbath, which would postpone prompt burial for even a longer time. In either case, a halakic-ethical dilemma emerges forcing a

⁴⁶⁸ Collins, *Mark*, 777. Cf. Josephus, *J.W.* 4:317: ". . . the Jews used to take so much care of the burial of men, that they took down those who were condemned and crucified, and buried them before the going down of the sun."

decision to either desecrate the holy land or a holy day. The latter option carries certain advantages: by exceptionally breaking Passover, Joseph can then properly observe the upcoming Sabbath and prevent the land from being desecrated. Furthermore, the rest of the many Jews gathered in Jerusalem can resume their Passover and Sabbath keeping without enduring the shame of seeing of one of their fellow compatriots hanging dishonorably on the cross.

To what extent the synoptic authors seem aware or even perturbed by this hypothetical scheme—one based on a contemporary reading of the synoptic tradition as the byproduct of an inconsistent meshing of divergent traditions—remains uncertain. If Mark does indeed think that Jesus’ burial occurs on a Passover, he seems to have clumsily arranged his narrative in one regard, namely, by having Joseph purchase a linen cloth on a holy day: theoretically, Joseph could have found a way to acquire a linen garment without buying it, regardless of the pressing circumstances or the hypothetical involvement of Gentiles.⁴⁶⁹ This *may* explain why both Matthew and Luke have deleted Mark’s reference to purchasing: in their narratives, Joseph simply wraps Jesus in a linen cloth.⁴⁷⁰ Likewise, the unique timing of Jesus’ burial (on a Passover falling right before the weekly Sabbath) may have led both Matthew and Luke to delete any reference to the washing of Jesus’ body, which, according to Jewish custom, is one of the most important

⁴⁶⁹ Even Strack and Billerbeck, 2:834, in their tendentious dismissal of the halakic problems involved in dating Jesus’ trial, execution, and burial on a Passover, admit that Mark’s reference to Joseph’s purchase remains puzzling. Joachim Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus* (trans. Norman Perrin; New York: Scribner, 1966), 74–79, attempts to read this passage in light of Mishnaic passages that allow for purchases of food on festivals (through pledged transactions that are then completed after the festival), speculating that items for burial, like food, would have been viewed as “items of necessity.” Jeremias, however, might be reading too much into the synoptic accounts. Cf. the reservations of Derrett, *Studies in the New Testament*, 97.

⁴⁷⁰ Some commentators like Collins, *Mark*, 778, think that Matthew and Luke have deleted this detail simply because it was superfluous. Cf. Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 3:650, with regard to Matthew: “. . . it is no surprise that ‘having bought’ is absent: not only is the detail superfluous, but one might ask how Joseph can, if it is by now the Sabbath, buy anything.” True, but what about buying a cloth and burying a body on Passover?

acts to be performed on behalf of a dead person before burial. The pressing circumstances do not allow for anyone to perform such actions on Jesus' behalf.⁴⁷¹ Matthew also says nothing about the anointing of Jesus' body (even after the Sabbath).⁴⁷² Quite interestingly, *m. Shabb. 23:5* allows Jews on the Sabbath to "make ready all that is needful for the dead, and anoint it and wash it, provided that they do not move any member of it." Nevertheless, Matthew and Luke are aware of the exceptional and pressing circumstances of this case (two successive holy days during which the body would be exposed if not buried immediately). A logical outcome would be to describe the burial of Jesus in the most speedily manner without mentioning washing and anointing, because of Passover and the fast approach of the Sabbath.⁴⁷³

⁴⁷¹ Cf. Magness' remarks in *Stone and Dung*, 170 about the rush to bury Jesus: "When the Gospels tell us that Joseph of Arimathea offered Jesus a spot in his tomb, it is because Jesus' family did not own a rock-cut tomb and there was no time to prepare a grave—that is, there was no time to *dig* a grave, *not* hew a rock-cut tomb (!)—before the Sabbath."

⁴⁷² Mark and Luke, however, mention the intent on the part of the women to anoint Jesus' body on the third day. The *Gospel of Peter* does explicitly refer to the washing of Jesus' body (*Gos. Pet.* 6:24), while the gospel of John (19:39–40) claims his body was anointed with spices, but does not mention washing. For Mayer-Haas, *Geschenk*, 228 n. 467, 233, the washing of Jesus' body is implied in the Markan narrative: since Joseph of Arimathea provides Jesus with a dignified burial, he would have had his body washed. Supposedly, Mark fails to mention the anointing of Jesus' corpse in order to highlight the previous scene in Mark 14:3–8. For further descriptions of Jewish burial practices, see Luz, *Matthew*, 3:578, referencing Samuel Klein, *Tod und Begräbnis in Palästina zur Zeit der Tannaiten* (Berlin: Itzkowski, 1908), 41–100. See also Gnilka, *Markus*, 2:334–37; Samuel Krauss, *Talmudische Archäologie* (Hildesheim: Olms, 1966), 2:54–82; Hachlili, *Jewish Funerary Customs*; Magness, *Stone and Dung*, 145–80; McCane, *Roll Back the Stone*.

⁴⁷³ So Nolland, *Matthew*, 1231: "The burial account will combine minimal preparation of the body with a most dignified resting place. This is consonant with Joseph's making the most of a very limited window of opportunity." Shmuel Safrai, "Home and Family," in *The Jewish People in the First Century* (eds. Shmuel Safrai and Menahem Stern; 2 vols.; *Compendia rerum iudaicarum ad Novum Testamentum*; Amsterdam: Van Gorcum, 1976), 2:776 n. 3: "It [i.e., the washing of the body] is possible that it was omitted because of the imminent approach of the Sabbath." See also the interesting point made by Kraemer (citing rabbinic sources) that until the third day Jews thought an individual could come back to life. On the third day, the soul would be struggling in its final distressful attempt to leave the body. Oil would have been applied to sooth the body of the anguished corpse up until the third day so as to ease this painful process. See Kraemer, *The Meanings of Death in Rabbinic Judaism*, 21, 84.

Do Joseph and the Women Perform Work on the Sabbath?

A cursory reading of Mark could lead to the conclusion that Joseph buries Jesus on the Sabbath, since it is already evening (ἤδη ὀψίας γενομένης) when he requests permission for burial from Pilate (15:42). Matthew, however, deletes the word ἤδη, while the remaining words ὀψίας δὲ γενομένης (Matt 27:57) can be understood as referring to the late afternoon.⁴⁷⁴ Matthew also omits Mark's explanatory phrase "it was the day of Preparation, that is, it was before the Sabbath" (ἐπεὶ ἦν παρασκευὴ ὅ ἐστιν προσάββατον), presumably because his readers would not need such clarification (unlike some of Mark's Gentile readers). Matthew's audience already knows that in a case where the Sabbath is fast approaching prompt action is required to guarantee proper burial.⁴⁷⁵

Unlike Matthew and Mark, Luke does not open his narration of Jesus' burial with chronological markers.⁴⁷⁶ Instead, he simply states that Joseph of Arimathea approaches Pilate to request for Jesus' body, probably sometime on Friday afternoon. Only *after* Joseph performs these actions, does Luke refer to the approaching of the Sabbath: "it was the day of Preparation, and the sabbath was beginning" (ἡμέρα ἦν παρασκευῆς καὶ σάββατον ἐπέφωσκεν; 23:54). This Lukan literary postponement, which mentions the day of Preparation and the incoming Sabbath only after Joseph buries Jesus, may actually serve as an opening for the subsequent unit describing the presence and actions of the women from Galilee (v. 55–56) rather than as a conclusion to the preceding scene

⁴⁷⁴ See note above on its usage in Mark. Cf. Nolland, *Matthew*, 1227.

⁴⁷⁵ So Mayer-Haas, *Geschenk*, 460.

⁴⁷⁶ The Lukan precision, absent in Mark, that Arimathea is a "city of the Jews," does not prove that Luke is a Gentile. Contra Bovon, *Luc*, 3:395. Arimathea is an obscure name, its precise identification remaining unknown even to scholars. Because of its obscurity, Luke clarifies for his audience (Gentiles but also Diasporan Jews ignorant of its location) that this town is located in Judea and inhabited by Jews.

reporting Joseph’s activities.⁴⁷⁷ In other words, Luke’s Joseph buries Jesus “well” before the beginning of the Sabbath, while the women who follow Jesus manage to prepare their spices right before the arrival of the Sabbath (23:56). Further proof for this interpretation might lie in Luke’s employment of the verb ἐπιφώσκω in the imperfect rather than in the aorist or perfect, suggesting that when the women prepare the spices for Jesus’ body, the Sabbath has not yet begun, but is *in transit, in the process of arriving*.⁴⁷⁸ A compelling argument for this understanding of Luke appears in the *Gospel of Peter*. There, Joseph of Arimathea asks permission for burial from Pilate *before* the execution of Jesus. Pilate proceeds to request Jesus’ body from Herod. The latter, however, assures Pilate that “even if no one had requested him, we would have buried him, since indeed Sabbath is dawning (ἐπεὶ καὶ σάββατον ἐπιφώσκει). For in the Law it has been written: The sun is not to set on one put to death” (*Gos. Pet.* 2:5). Here the verb ἐπιφώσκει describes the imminent *approach* of the Sabbath, not its arrival. Luke, then, may have envisaged the following scenario: as the Sabbath approaches, the female disciples of Jesus witness the location where Jesus rests and then return to prepare spices and ointments, whereupon Luke explicitly declares—he is the only gospel writer to do so—that “*on the sabbath they rested according to the commandment*” (τὸ μὲν σάββατον ἡσύχασαν κατὰ τὴν ἐντολήν; 23:56).⁴⁷⁹ Luke’s retention (or composition?) of this phrase highlights his eagerness to

⁴⁷⁷ So Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 2:1524.

⁴⁷⁸ Similarly, Mayer-Haas, *Geschenk*, 363: “Luke 23, 54b weist auf den kurz bevorstehenden Beginn des Sabbats . . . das heißt, die Zeit der letzten Vorbereitungen war gekommen, der eigentliche Beginn des Sabbats stand aber noch bevor.”

⁴⁷⁹ Daniel Boyarin, “‘After the Sabbath’ (Matt 28:1)—Once More into the Crux,” *JTS* 52 (2001): 678–88, suggests Luke has gotten himself into a muddle here, since in v. 54 he refers to the beginning of the Sabbath, while in v. 56 he mentions the preparation of spices as presumably taking place on the Sabbath (or at least at the beginning of the Sabbath). But does Luke see a narrow timeframe in which the women prepare the spices during the “gray” area of transition from Friday to the Sabbath? The reading of ἐπιφώσκω suggested above could allow for this interpretation. There would be no need, then, to follow Klinghardt’s proposal that Luke has suddenly shifted from a Jewish to a Roman reckoning of time,

illustrate how the Jewish followers of Jesus remain faithful in their observance of the Sabbath and the Torah in general.⁴⁸⁰

When Do the Women Visit Jesus' Tomb?

Considerable debate has centered on the timing of the women's visit to Jesus' tomb. Mark contains a twofold description in which the women first purchase their spices for anointing Jesus' body, once the Sabbath is over (καὶ διαγενομένου τοῦ σαββάτου; 16:1),⁴⁸¹ and then walk to Jesus' tomb "very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen" (λίαν πρωὶ τῆ μιᾶ τῶν σαββάτων . . . ἀνατείλαντος τοῦ ἡλίου; 16:2). Matt 28:1 frames the visit of Mary Magdalene and Mary to the tomb with a phrase that has generated a long debate: ὀψέ δὲ σαββάτων τῆ ἐπιφωσκούσῃ εἰς μίαν σαββάτων.⁴⁸² The problems concern the meaning of ὀψέ, which in theory can mean "late" or "after" (when functioning as a preposition followed by a genitive), as well as the unusual ἐπιφωσκούσῃ, which *BDAG* translates as "to grow towards or become daylight, shine forth, dawn,

meaning that the Sabbath for Luke starts only in the morning rather than the evening. Why should a sudden transition in reckoning abruptly occur within a pericope in which Luke is eager to portray the disciples of Jesus as Torah observant? See Klinghardt, *Gesetz und Volk Gottes*, 263–64. Alternatively, preparing spices for a corpse on Passover may have been viewed as permissible, since it was allowed for (by rabbinic halakah) even on the Sabbath. The Mishnah states, "they may make ready [on the Sabbath] all that is needful for the dead, and anoint it and wash it" (*m. Shabb. 23:5*). Why not also prepare spices even if they will be applied only after the Sabbath, as Jesus' body had to be rushed to Joseph's tomb? This matter may not have been viewed as such a big deal, given the less than favorable circumstances surrounding Jesus' death.

⁴⁸⁰ Weiss, *A Day of Gladness*, 89, finds the appearance of the Lukan phrase "according to the commandment" surprising, "since usually he [i.e., Luke] is reluctant to mention the law and the commandments." Perhaps, the phraseology here stems from a tradition that emphasized the women's Torah piety. In any case, Luke finds it useful to retain this traditional formulation; it fits with his larger portrait of Jesus and his followers as faithful to the Torah and its stipulations. Even Weiss acknowledges later in his book that the "author of Luke/Acts repeatedly brings Jesus and Paul to the synagogue on the Sabbath and makes the point that attending the synagogue was their custom . . . This author clearly wishes to make the point, in particular about Paul, that he was an observant Jew" (171). Part of the problem probably lies in scholarly attempts to distinguish too neatly between "custom" and "law/commandment."

⁴⁸¹ J. Michael Winger, "When Did the Women Visit the Tomb?" *NTS* 40 (1994): 287, suggests that διαγενομένου τοῦ σαββάτου reflects a Semitic phrase, either the Aramaic בגבחה נגהי חד or the Hebrew אור לאחד בשבת.

⁴⁸² μίαν σαββάτων (literally, "first of the Sabbaths") is a Semitism, and refers to the first day of the week.

break, perhaps draw on.”⁴⁸³ If ὀψέ means “late,” and ἐπιφωσκούση refers to the dawn, then an inconsistency occurs in the chronology: it cannot be late in the Sabbath, if it is already Sunday morning.

Building on the work of the late scholar George Foot Moore, Boyarin has recently solved the problem in a convincing way by pointing back to similar Hebrew and Aramaic formulations presumably standing behind the Judeo-Greek of Matthew’s gospel.⁴⁸⁴ A long time ago, Moore supposed Matt 28:1 contained a literal reproduction in Greek of Jewish idiom that could be translated back either into Aramaic as באפוקי שבתא נגהי חד or into Hebrew as במוצאי שבת אור לאחד בשבת.⁴⁸⁵ Accordingly, the Judeo-Greek phrase in Matthew should be translated as “at the end of the Sabbath, at the beginning of the first day.”⁴⁸⁶ The Greek verb ἐπιφώσσω would be the rendition of the Hebrew אור ל or the Aramaic נגהי, which refer to “light,” but point not to the dawning light of early sunrise, but to the beginning of the day at sunset (following Jewish reckoning of time).⁴⁸⁷ These formulations are well attested in rabbinic literature, and can be translated rather smoothly from the Greek back into their original Semitic idiom.⁴⁸⁸ This would mean that for Matthew Mary Magdalene and Mary visit the tomb after the end of the Sabbath, that

⁴⁸³ *LSJ* points to only one Greek papyrus (*Plond* 1.130.39 from the first century C.E.) where the verb ἐπιφώσσω would carry this meaning of growing toward daylight, that is, dawn. Many of the other references cited therein come from the gospels.

⁴⁸⁴ Boyarin, “After the Sabbath,” 678–88.

⁴⁸⁵ George F. Moore, “Conjectanea Talmudica,” *JAOS* 26 (1905): 328.

⁴⁸⁶ Boyarin, “After the Sabbath,” 688.

⁴⁸⁷ Boyarin, “After the Sabbath,” 685; Moore, “Conjectanea Talmudica,” 327.

⁴⁸⁸ According to Moore, “Conjectanea Talmudica,” 325, the phrases במוצאי שבת or באפוקי שבתא always denote a time period occurring after the end of the Sabbath.

is, after sunset, in our modern parlance, on a Saturday night, and not early Sunday morning.⁴⁸⁹

Such phraseology leads Mayer-Haas to suggest a possible weekly memorial commemorating the death and resurrection of Jesus on the part of the Matthean community that would have taken place immediately after sunset on the Sabbath instead of in the early hours of Sunday morning.⁴⁹⁰ While such a practice is certainly conceivable, especially when viewed as an extension to the Sabbath keeping of the Matthean community, insufficient evidence prevents building a solid case on behalf of this thesis. In any case, the essential goal for this inquiry lies in stressing the timing of the women's visit: it occurs *after* the Sabbath, underscoring the respect of Jesus' followers for that holy day. Doering points out that even if we translate ὀψὲ σαββάτων as "late on the Sabbath," meaning that the women set out to Jesus' tomb when it is still the Sabbath, it would be problematic from a halakic point of view only if the women would exceed the Sabbath limit (2000 cubits) before sunset.⁴⁹¹ Matthew, then, projects an image of the followers of Jesus that strictly complies with Jewish practice: they refrain from traveling, purchasing, and burying a body on the Sabbath day.⁴⁹²

⁴⁸⁹ Those who want to translate ἐπιφωσκούση as "dawning," that is, as a reference to Sunday morning, usually do so in order to harmonize Matthew with the other gospel accounts. To resort to a Hebrew or Aramaic background is not an act of despair as Luz, *Matthew*, 3:594 n. 39, maintains. Matthew's wording is quite unique and translates rather easily back into Semitic idiom.

⁴⁹⁰ *Geschenk*, 468.

⁴⁹¹ Doering, "Sabbath Laws in the New Testament Gospels," 252 n. 192. See *b. Shabb.* 150b–151b.

⁴⁹² Writing decades after the Holocaust, it is incredible to still see Mateos and Camacho, *El Evangelio*, 282, state that "las dos mujeres . . . han observado el descanso judío; no han roto aún con la institución que ha crucificado a Jesús."

Luke essentially follows Mark's chronology,⁴⁹³ stating: "on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb, taking the spices that they had prepared" (Τῆ δὲ μιᾷ τῶν σαββάτων ὄρθρου βαθέως ἐπὶ τὸ μνήμα ἦλθον φέρουσαι ἃ ἠτοίμασαν ἀρώματα; 24:1). With the words ὄρθρου βαθέως (literally, "at deep dawn"), Luke means that the women arrive to the tomb very early Sunday morning, just before daybreak.⁴⁹⁴ Thus, like Matthew (and Mark), Luke depicts the women as faithfully observing the Sabbath, waiting until that sacred day is over before making their way to the tomb.

Matthew's Polemics against the Sabbath Keeping of the Pharisees

Right after recounting Jesus' burial, Matthew refers to a unique incident regarding the Pharisees that surely reflects the polemics of his own day.⁴⁹⁵ The episode begins in 27:62 when the chief priests and the Pharisees allegedly approach Pilate out of concern that Jesus' body might be stolen, imploring the Roman official to place a guard at the tomb. This episode takes place the day after Jesus' crucifixion, in Matthean terms, "on the next day, that is, after the day of Preparation" (Mat 27:62; Τῆ δὲ ἐπαύριον, ἣτις ἐστὶν μετὰ τὴν παρασκευὴν). Here, Matthew uses a circumlocution for the Sabbath, referring to it as the "next day," perhaps because even he knows that his polemical portrait is not entirely credible: would the Pharisees and the chief priests really be busying themselves on the Sabbath with the supervision of Jesus' body?⁴⁹⁶ Matthew may also be insinuating that the Pharisees and the chief priests not only request a guard (i.e., a group of soldiers,

⁴⁹³ Luke, of course, does not, like Mark, have the woman purchase spices right after the Sabbath, because they have already prepared them right before the Sabbath. Mark's *λίαν πρωῖ* is replaced in Luke by *ὄρθρου βαθέως*, while Mark's *ἀνατείλαντος τοῦ ἡλίου* is left out.

⁴⁹⁴ ὄρθρος βαθύς means early "dawn, just before daybreak." See "ὄρθρος," *LSJ*.

⁴⁹⁵ The incident is recorded only in Matthew. The sudden intrusion of the Pharisees, who, otherwise, remain absent from the passion narrative, stems from Mathew's wider polemics with that particular group. See Davies and Allison, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, 3:652–53.

⁴⁹⁶ See Davies and Allison, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, 3:653 n. 54.

κουστωδίαν) to watch over Jesus' body, but also accompany them to the tomb on the Sabbath: "So they went with the guard and made the tomb secure by sealing the stone" (οἱ δὲ πορευθέντες ἠσφαλίσαντο τὸν τάφον σφραγίσαντες τὸν λίθον μετὰ τῆς κουστωδίας; 27:66). In the Greek, the verbs "went" (πορευθέντες), "secured" (ἠσφαλίσαντο) and "sealed" (σφραγίσαντες) all appear in the plural form. The prepositional phrase μετὰ τῆς κουστωδίας suggests some people accompany the guard. Possible candidates for this escort could be the chief priests and Pharisees mentioned in the preceding verse. The prepositional phrase μετὰ τῆς κουστωδίας appears at the end of the sentence, after the participial verb σφραγίσαντες, possibly indicating that the chief priests and Pharisees even assist with the sealing of the tomb. Like the circumlocution around the Sabbath, Matthew employs ambiguous language, subtly depreciating the Sabbath practice of his opponents.⁴⁹⁷

Conclusion

Both Matthew and Luke portray Joseph of Arimathea and the women from Galilee as pious Jews attentively caring for Jesus' body while simultaneously seeking to honor the Sabbath: Joseph ensures that Jesus is properly buried before the Sabbath; the female disciples rest on the Sabbath and wait until sunset before visiting the tomb. Luke is most eager to point out the Torah observance of the female disciples. He, above all

⁴⁹⁷ But see Mayer-Haas, *Geschenk*, 462–63, for an alternative view. Cf. *y. Mo'ed Qat.* 3:5 82 where the act of sealing a tomb is presumed to be forbidden on the eve of the Sabbath: "R. Abun, 'Interpret [the earlier statement to deal with a case in which] the grave was sealed on the eve of the Sabbath at sunset.' How is such a thing possible? Said R. Aha, 'Interpret the case to speak of a burial in which Gentiles sealed the grave.'"

other gospel writers, underscores this theme by explicitly referring to their Sabbath keeping (23:56).⁴⁹⁸

Are Matthew and Luke cognizant of the halakic dilemma embedded in their narratives, namely, that by painting Jesus' admirers as pious Sabbath keepers, they also indirectly present them as transgressors of Passover? It might be telling that they both leave out Mark's reference to Joseph purchasing a garment for Jesus' body. Perhaps, they believe Joseph could avoid buying such an item on a holy day despite the pressing circumstances. I pointed to several rabbinic traditions envisaging the possibility of performing burials on Passover, although the assumption throughout these passages may be that Gentiles should always be the ones fulfilling this work. The rabbinic evidence suggests that many Jews may well have approved of the synoptic portrait of Joseph, knowing well that, for various halakic and ethical reasons, there were times when a burial had to be carried out even on a festival day like Passover, particularly if it happened to fall right before a Sabbath. We cannot, therefore, charge the synoptic writers for being ignorant about halakic matters simply because their narratives locate Jesus' burial on a Passover. The social-political circumstances surrounding Jesus' death were sufficiently drastic, at least in the eyes of Jesus' admirers, to call for a momentary suspension of the Law in order to guarantee his proper burial.

There is so little we will ever know about the last hours of Jesus' life partly because the complex traditions that evolved over time and came to be included into the canonical gospels may have suppressed some embarrassing features surrounding his

⁴⁹⁸ Loader, *Jesus' Attitude towards the Law*, 357: "Luke alone, among the evangelists, makes a point of emphasising their Torah observance (23:56). It is as relevant to emphasise this at the end of Jesus' life as it was at it the beginning, because obedience to Torah and sharing Israel's hopes are fundamental values which Luke's Jesus and Luke assume."

death. Undoubtedly, scholars will continue to debate about the factors leading to Jesus' arrest and eventual death. Were the Roman authorities the sole ones who wished to have Jesus executed because they viewed him as a political threat? Or did some of the Jewish authorities (not the Jewish people!) of Jerusalem, namely the priestly elite and members of the Sanhedrin of that time, in conjunction with Pilate, seek to have Jesus' life removed? According to *m. Sanh.* 11:4, in certain circumstances someone sentenced to death could be brought to the Great Court in Jerusalem (בית דין הגדול שבירושלים) and be executed even on a festival day. *M. Sanh.* 6:5 also states that the Sanhedrin excluded those executed for violating Jewish Law from being buried in family tombs or burial grounds. Did the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem, with the assistance of the Romans, condemn Jesus to death and have him executed on Passover? And did Jesus' disciples try to hide some of the shameful features about their master's death, seeking, for example, to grant him a noble burial by claiming that a prominent Jew of the Sanhedrin had him placed in his own tomb? Perhaps, some of these questions could explain why the synoptic writers leave traces in their writings that suggest Jesus was crucified and buried on a Passover: he was viewed by the priestly elite as having acted in some way against the temple and consequently they had him executed on Passover with the assistance of the Romans who also perceived his act as a political threat to the maintenance of Roman rule and order. In response to these charges, the followers of Jesus would have sought to highlight Jesus' innocence and to develop a narrative that awarded him a burial worthy of the devotion they thought all should pay to him.⁴⁹⁹ But these are difficult, delicate and controversial

⁴⁹⁹ See John Dominic Crossan, *Who Killed Jesus? Exposing the Roots of Anti-Semitism in the Gospel Story of the Death of Jesus* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1995), 160–63; Martin Hengel, *Crucifixion in the Ancient World and the Folly of the Message of the Cross* (trans. John Bowden; Philadelphia, Minn.:

questions that cannot receive their proper treatment in this monograph.⁵⁰⁰ On the other hand, Matthew and even Luke could be portraying the Jerusalem authorities in a negative light by emphasizing their involvement in the arrest and trial of Jesus *on a Passover*.⁵⁰¹ This process comes to the foreground in Matthew with regard to the Sabbath, as the Pharisees, along with the chief priests, dishonor the sanctity of this holy day by occupying themselves with the supervision of Jesus' body (27:62). By contrast, according

Fortress, 1977), 19, 83, 90; McCane, *Roll Back the Stone*, 89. Magness, *Stone and Dung*, 164–72, however, argues against this position, maintaining that the “Gospel accounts of Jesus’ burial appear to be largely consistent with the archaeological evidence” and that the “source(s) of these accounts were familiar with the manner in which wealthy Jews living in Jerusalem during the time of Jesus disposed of their dead.” I full heartedly agree with Magness that the sources (I would add the authors) of the synoptic gospels reveal an accurate understanding about halakah related to burial and Sabbath keeping. Accurate knowledge about Jewish customs, however, as Magness herself acknowledges, does not demonstrate historicity. Furthermore, Magness seems unaware of the halakic problem involved with burying Jesus on a Passover. So I still wonder whether the synoptic writings (and/or the sources behind such materials) are not hiding something embarrassing about Jesus’ death, namely, that because he was tried (on a Passover?) by the Sanhedrin for “violating” Jewish Law by attacking the temple establishment, he was not allowed to be buried in a family tomb or burial ground. Magness (p. 165–66) thinks that Jesus was crucified for crimes committed against the Roman Empire, not by the Sanhedrin for violating Jewish Law. She claims Romans used crucifixion as a means for punishing rebellious provincials, while the Mishnah speaks of four modes of execution (stoning, burning, decapitation, and strangulation), none of which include crucifixion. But even she indirectly admits (p. 167) that some scholars view the meaning of “strangulation” (and “hanging”) in some ancient Jewish sources as referring to the usage by Jews of crucifixion as a means of execution. Furthermore, I am not at all certain that we can too neatly divorce any involvement on the part of the temple authorities in the crucifixion of Jesus. True, they needed Roman consent, and the Roman authorities themselves may have perceived Jesus as a political threat, but this does not rule out the possibility that the priests viewed him as in some sense defying their authority and meriting the punishment of “strangulation” or “hanging” (=crucifixion with the assistance of the Romans). It is difficult indeed to know what really happened, but I am confident that the *synoptic* portrayal is accurate in its description of Jesus’ burial *from a halakic perspective*.

⁵⁰⁰ The Johannine portrait positing that Jesus died on a Friday that was *not* a Passover may in this instance prove more credible from a historical point of view than the synoptic presentation of the events. Some, however, place Jesus’ trial on Passover. So, for example, Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus*, 74–79; John J. Hamilton, “The Chronology of the Crucifixion and the Passover,” *Churchman* 106.4 (1992): 334–35; Str-B, 2:822–34. Speaking against such a position are the following arguments: 1) The priests, along with the Roman authorities, could have very well postponed their decisions regarding Jesus’ fate until *after* Passover had passed, just as Herod had Peter arrested but intended to wait until *after* Passover before decreeing his sentence (Acts 12:4). 2) Josephus speaks of the exemption accorded by Romans to Jews from appearing before Gentile courts on the Sabbath (*Ant.* 16:163). Does it not seem even more unlikely that *Jews* would require their compatriots to appear before a Jewish court on a festival day? 3) Other passages from early rabbinic literature prohibit trials from being conducted on the Sabbath or a festival (even on the eve of a festival, see, e.g., *m. Sanh.* 4:1). 4) Even in *m. Sanh.* 11:4, R. Judah disagrees with R. Akiba about whether a criminal should be brought to Jerusalem to be executed on a festival day.

⁵⁰¹ Luke’s critique would only concern the chief priests, not the Pharisees, who remain completely absent from his passion narrative.

to Matthew and Luke, the disciples of Jesus desist from any attempt to take care of his body during the Sabbath.⁵⁰²

In conclusion, to this chapter, I find little to object with in Weiss' remarks concerning the presentation of the Sabbath in the synoptic narratives about Jesus' burial:

Taken together, these three reports of the burial show no awareness of any Sabbath controversies. They reflect the views of Christians who are unaware that Sabbath observance is a questionable practice. It would seem, therefore, that when the story of the Sunday morning anointing became part of the Passion Narrative, and as such became part of the gospel story, the Christian communities that embedded them in the tradition saw no problem with Sabbath observance. In fact, it could be argued that these Christians wished to show the women (and themselves) as observant of the Sabbath. In the Matthean account, the redactional elaboration argues that Christians are better Sabbath keepers than the Pharisees.

⁵⁰² So Weiss, *A Day of Gladness*, 89: "By this means, he shows the Pharisees to be in flagrant violation of the Sabbath while, by contrast, the Christian women, who were rather anxious to anoint Jesus' body, wait until after the Sabbath to go about their business (28:1). This is a common device, used repeatedly by Josephus, by means of which the observance of those not expected to be observant is highlighted against the nonobservance of those who are presumed to be observant in order to show the piety of the former group."

Chapter 6

Traveling on the Sabbath in Matthew

“So they made this decision that day: ‘Let us fight against anyone who comes to attack us on the sabbath day; let us not all die as our kindred died in their hiding places.’”
(1Maccabees 2:41)

Introduction

This chapter deals exclusively with the question of traveling on the Sabbath in the gospel of Matthew. Matt 24:20 contains an intriguing statement, absent in Mark and Luke, about fleeing on the Sabbath: “Pray that your flight may not be in winter or on a sabbath.” This verse, which is based on Mark 13:18, clearly contains some redactional elements penned by Matthew himself, including the reference to the Sabbath day. In fact, I will argue that 24:20 marks an important and sudden shift in the eschatological discourse and sequences of events outlined in Matthew’s “Little Apocalypse” that directly addresses and exhorts the Matthean community. This reading will strengthen the thesis upheld by others that Matthew objects to traveling on the Sabbath and is only open to this possibility under extreme circumstances when human life is at risk.

Synoptic Window

Table 6-1

Matthew 24:15–20

¹⁵ So when you see the desolating sacrilege standing in the holy place, as was spoken of by the prophet Daniel (let the reader understand),

Mark 13:14–18

¹⁴ But when you see the desolating sacrilege set up where it ought not to be (let the reader understand), then those in Judea must flee to the mountains;

Luke 21:20–23a

²⁰ When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation has come near.
²¹ Then those in Judea must flee to the mountains, and

¹⁶ then those in Judea must flee to the mountains;

¹⁷ the one on the housetop must not go down to take what is in the house;

¹⁸ the one in the field must not turn back to get a coat.

¹⁹ Woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing infants in those days!

²⁰ Pray that *your flight* may not be in winter *or on a sabbath*.

²¹ For at that time there will be great suffering, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be.

²² And if those days had not been cut short, no one would be saved; but for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short. . . .

¹⁵ the one on the housetop must not go down or enter the house to take anything away;

¹⁶ the one in the field must not turn back to get a coat.

¹⁷ Woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing infants in those days!

¹⁸ Pray that it may not be in winter.

⁹ For in those days there will be suffering, such as has not been from the beginning of the creation that God created until now, no, and never will be.

²⁰ And if the Lord had not cut short those days, no one would be saved; but for the sake of the elect, whom he chose, he has cut short those days. . . .

those inside the city must leave it, and those out in the country must not enter it;

²² for these are days of vengeance, as a fulfillment of all that is written.

²³ Woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing infants in those days!

Literary Context and Analysis

It is absolutely vital for the analysis of Matthew 24:20 to briefly delineate the eschatological events “foretold” in the rest of Matt ch. 24 so as to gain a proper understanding of how Matthew’s readers would have understood these contents in a post-70 context. Matt 24:1 opens with Jesus’ disciples glamorously expressing their admiration over the monumental splendor and structure of the temple in Jerusalem. With prophetic doom, however, Jesus warns them that “not one stone will be left here upon another; all will be thrown down” (24:2). Jesus’ disciples express their interest in hearing more about their master’s message of fire and brimstone, wondering “when will this be” (πότε ταῦτα ἔσται) and inquiring about the sign of his coming (τὸ σημεῖον τῆς σῆς παρουσίας) as well as “the end of the age” (συντελείας τοῦ αἰῶνος; v.3). Matthew’s formulation of the disciples’ question is expressly different from its Markan counterpart.

In Mark 13:4, the disciples ask: “When will this be, and what will be the sign that all these things are about to be accomplished?” The Markan version is more tightly focused on the immediate statement pronounced by Jesus concerning the doom foretold against the temple. Matthew, on the other hand, reformulates the question in a more general way that prophetically gazes beyond the immediate horizons of the destruction of the temple. He is not only interested in the foretelling of the downfall of the temple (by his time, a fulfilled event) but also in the end-time events immediately preceding the Parousia.

The different formulations between Matthew and Mark may be accounted for when we date the gospel of Matthew after 70 while locating Mark within a time-span running during or immediately after the first revolt (c. 66–70 C.E.). In response to the destruction of the temple, Matthew’s eschatological scope focuses ever more on the latter day events preceding the Parousia as his hope for the return of Jesus intensifies.⁵⁰³ From Matthew’s post-70 perspective and experience, the prophecies delivered by Jesus in chapter 24 must refer to events that encompass *both* the destruction of the temple as well as the subsequent end-time Parousia. Some of the contents in Matt 24 would have been understood by Matthew and his readers as fulfilled prophecy, providing them with firm assurance that the remaining unfulfilled events would surely crystallize just as the former did. This observation is significant, since verse 20 with its reference to the Sabbath, so I argue, belongs for Matthew in the realm of *unfulfilled prophecy*, yet to materialize in the days immediately before the Parousia.

⁵⁰³ Despite the delay of the Parousia, Matthew still expects the end to come quickly. Scholars who think Matthew has de-eschatologized his gospel because of the delay of Jesus’ return (some fifty decades or so, assuming Matthean composition toward the end of the first century) as well as his “developed” ecclesiology, simply overlook the fact that religious movements can be structured and still remain apocalyptic for sustained periods. The Qumran community provides a nice equivalent (organized community but intensely apocalyptic). I side with scholars like David Sim, *Apocalyptic Eschatology in the Gospel of Matthew* (SNTSMS 88; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), who rightly see Matthew’s worldview as imminently eschatological.

A brief outline of the remaining contents leading to v. 20 can further illustrate this point. After delivering his sober warning about the demise of the temple, Jesus predicts the arrival of false christs (vv. 4–5) and the increased occurrence of wars (v. 6). The clarification made at the end of v. 6, namely, that such things must indeed take place but do not in themselves mark the actual end of time, might indicate that for Matthew the events announced in vv. 4–6 have already begun to take place.⁵⁰⁴ In v. 7, the prophetic forecast on the violent confrontations between foreign nations and kingdoms as well as the increase in natural disasters only signals “the beginning of birth pangs” (v.8). This eschatological gloss suggests that Matthew also views the events prophesied in v. 7 as unfolding in his own day.⁵⁰⁵ Verses 9–13 address the internal experience of Jesus’ followers, which Matthew probably views as partly fulfilled prophecy still reeling out in his own time. According to these verses, Jesus’ followers (will continue to) experience suffering, persecution, even death, and hatred at the hands of the Gentiles (v.9).⁵⁰⁶ Many false prophets (will) lead others astray in an age of degeneration in which lawlessness flourishes and love declines.⁵⁰⁷ The promise of salvation extended to those who remain faithful until the end (v.13) exhorts Matthew’s readers to remain steadfast in their loyalty to their lord as the end continues to draw nearer (v.13). In the meantime, Matthew’s Jesus

⁵⁰⁴ Sim, *Apocalyptic Eschatology*, 162; Thompson, “An Historical Perspective on the Gospel of Matthew,” 248–49.

⁵⁰⁵ Sim, *Apocalyptic Eschatology*, 162; Thompson, “An Historical Perspective on the Gospel of Matthew,” 248–49.

⁵⁰⁶ Matthew’s phrase, “you will be hated by all the nations (ὅτι πάντων τῶν ἐθνῶν) because of my name,” which is unattested in Mark, draws attention to his Jewish outlook toward the world in which there exist two kinds of people, Jews and Gentiles, the latter often hostile to the Jewish people with whom Matthew identifies himself. Incidentally, Luke’s apocalyptic discourse proves equally Jewish in this respect. Luke is the only gospel author who states that “Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles, *until* the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled” (21:24). I take this verse to mean that Luke blames the Romans for destroying the temple and looks forward to the restoration of Israel after the cup of the Gentiles is filled.

⁵⁰⁷ Certain exegetes tie these false prophets of “lawlessness” with those announced in Matt 7:15–23. See Sim, *Apocalyptic Eschatology*, 164–65.

claims that the gospel of the kingdom “will be being preached” (κηρυχθήσεται) in the whole world as a witness to the Gentiles. Then the end will finally come (v.14).

Undoubtedly, Matthew thinks that the worldwide proclamation of the gospel has already begun in his own day but has not yet been completed.⁵⁰⁸

Matt 24:15 is most significant for this investigation. Here Jesus warns his followers of the “desolating sacrilege standing in the holy place” (τὸ βδέλυγμα τῆς ἐρημώσεως ἐστὸς ἐν τόπῳ ἁγίῳ) recorded in the book of Daniel. Matthew must have understood this verse as referring to the destruction of the temple in 70 C.E.⁵⁰⁹ In other

⁵⁰⁸ Hence, my preference for translating κηρυχθήσεται with the unaesthetic “will be being preached,” rather than “will be preached.” Matthew is obviously not saying that the disciples will first experience persecution and deception by false prophet and *then* proceed to preach the gospel to the nations. Rather, both processes overlap and exist next to each other until the end of time. The preaching of the gospel, like many other events in Matt 24, is an ongoing process.

⁵⁰⁹ Markan specialists debate about the identification of the historical referents in the parallel statement found in Mark 13:14. Some who view Mark as written shortly after 70 read 13:14 as referring to the destruction of the temple in 70. So Timothy J. Geddert, *Watchwords: Mark 13 in Markan Eschatology* (JSNTSup 26; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989), 206–7; Rudolf Pesch, *Das Markusevangelium* (2 vols.; Wege der Forschung 411; Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1979), 2:291–92. Others suggest a different scenario: the ungrammatical correlation of the masculine participle ἐστηκότα (“set up”) with the neuter βδέλυγμα (“abomination”) is taken as evidence for a Markan equation of the “abomination” with a person, that is, the antichrist. In this case, the gospel is read as a pre-70 text. See Lloyd Gaston, *No Stone on Another: Studies in the Significance of the Fall of Jerusalem in the Synoptic Gospels* (NovTSup 23; Leiden: Brill, 1970), 27–28; Willi Marxsen, *Mark the Evangelist: Studies on the Redaction History of the Gospel* (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon, 1969), 180–82; B.H. Streeter, *The Four Gospels* (London: Macmillan, 1924), 492–93. Other interpretations certainly exist. See discussion in Collins, *Mark*, 608–12; Marcus, *Mark*, 889–91.

As far as Matthew is concerned, I cannot agree with those commentators who do not see Matt 24:15 as referring to the destruction of the temple. Matthew’s correction of Mark’s ungrammatical masculine participle into the neuter (ἐστὸς) strongly suggests that he views the “abomination” as referring to an *event* or place, mainly the destruction of the temple in 70, rather than a *person*, that is, the antichrist. Luke certainly ties Mark’s reference to the abomination of the temple with the destruction of the temple (Luke 21:20). Contra Gnllka, *Das Matthäusevangelium*, 2:322 and Sim, *Apocalyptic Eschatology*, 158, who deny reading Matt 24:15 as a reference to the destruction of the temple. I think the destruction of the temple was too great an event for Matthew to gloss over. Sim suggests that Matt 24:6–7a alludes to the events of the Jewish war of 66–70 C.E. I find this very unlikely. The verses are so terse and general to be taken as such. Furthermore, I see no explicit evidence in Matt 24 regarding an antichrist figure. Matthew only talks of false *prophets* and false *christs* (in the plural), not of one single figure who opposes the true Christ. The main problem with Sim’s reading is that he seeks to read Matt 24:15–28 as pointing only to future events, while the previous verses (4–14) speak of events that have already been or were in the process of being accomplished. I suggest, however, that Matthew refers primarily to fulfilled and unfolding events up until verse 19. Only in verse 20 does Matthew really shift his attention to future time. The strength of this

words, for Matthew, this verse describes fulfilled prophecy. Likewise, the warnings in vv. 16–19 address the first generation of Jesus’ followers, those who either knew him personally or lived in pre-70 times. Here Jesus warns his first followers who are in *Judea* to flee to the mountains (v. 16).⁵¹⁰ “The one on the housetop must not go down to take what is in the house,” (v. 17), while “the one in the field must not turn back to get his coat” (v. 18). Matthew’s Jesus pities the plight of those living in *that time*, for Matthew, the *past* events of 66–70 C.E.: “Woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing infants *in those days* (ἐν ἐκείναις ταῖς ἡμέραις)!” (24:19)

However, for Matthew, v. 20 would no longer refer to the days when the temple stood in Jerusalem, but to the great(est) tribulation (θλίψις μεγάλη) yet to occur *after* 70 C.E. and immediately before the eschaton.⁵¹¹ Here, Matthew’s Jesus advises his, or better, *Matthew’s* audience to “pray that *your flight* (ἡ φυγὴ ὑμῶν) may not be in winter *or on a sabbath* (μηδὲ σαββάτῳ)” (v. 20), “*for* (γὰρ) *then* (τότε) there *will be* (ἔσται) great suffering, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be” (v. 21). I suggest that Matthew’s audience would have detected a shift at verse 20, reading it along with the following verses as referring to an event in the (near) future concerning *their own flight*. In other words, they would have understood the preceding vv. 15–19 as addressing Jesus’ first circle of disciples, the first wave of followers who experienced the dreadful events of 66–70, while v. 20 would address their own situation.

reading lies in its ability to answer the double question raised by Jesus’ disciple in Matt 24:3 about the destruction of the temple *and* the Parousia.

⁵¹⁰ The geographical specification of Judea as the site of exodus signals the limited territorial reach of the danger foretold here, which corresponds roughly to the circumstances of 66–70 C.E., a revolt that affected mainly Palestine and particularly Judea and Jerusalem. Contra Gnilka, *Das Matthäusevangelium*, 2:323, who wants to read the flight from Judea to the mountains as a generalizing motif (i.e., unrestricted to Judea), since he views 24:15–20 as primarily referring to *future* events.

⁵¹¹ Matthew has added to Mark’s statement the adjective *μεγάλη* to signal the unique and dreadful tribulation yet to occur whose terror will outmatch the dreadful events of 66–70 C.E. and all previous trials.

The NSRV renders the beginning of v. 21 as “for *at that time* there will be great suffering,” interpreting the keyword τότε as relating itself to the events narrated previously in vv. 15–19. Nevertheless, τότε can also be translated as “then,” or better, as “thereupon” or “thereafter,” introducing a subsequent event, in this case, events occurring after the destruction of the Temple.⁵¹² This understanding of τότε seems more accurate not only because of its juxtaposition with a verb in the future, ἔσται, but especially because of the linkage provided by the postpositive γὰρ in v. 21. Read in this way, v. 20 reports not a *fait accompli* but functions as an exhortation addressing directly the Matthean situation, a trial yet to happen in the not too distant future. For Matthew’s readers, the conjunction “δέ” in v. 20, read disjunctively (“but”), could have also subtly signaled such a transition. But it is especially the inclusion of “your flight,” with its switch from the third to the second person,⁵¹³ that would have alerted their attention.⁵¹⁴ As they recalled the distress of their predecessors (maybe even some of them had lived through the events of 66–70 C.E.), they were to hope that during the great tribulation their

⁵¹² See “τότε,” in *BDAG*. English translations that render τότε as “then” include the *English Standard Version*; *New American Standard Bible*; *New English Translation*; *New International Version*, *New Jerusalem Bible*. *The New Living Translation* curiously leaves out the translation of τότε. Matthew’s substitution of Mark’s αἱ ἡμέραι ἐκείναι (Mark 13:19) with τότε not only eliminates the awkward Markan phrase “those days will be a tribulation,” but may also suggest a shift in time. If Matthew wanted to retain Mark’s timeframe, he could have rephrased Mark’s αἱ ἡμέραι ἐκείναι simply into ἐν ἐκείναις ταῖς ἡμέραις. Nevertheless, Matthew opts using his favorite adverb τότε (appearing 90 times in Matthew), which here marks a transition to a subsequent event.

⁵¹³ Verses 16–19 speak in the third person, “those in Judea must flee,” “the one on the roof,” and so on (the previous usage of the second person in v.15 should be understood as addressing Jesus’ first disciples, *the audience in the narrative*, not Matthew’s readers).

⁵¹⁴ The NRSV does not even translate the adversative particle δέ. The *New American Standard Bible* rightly renders the conjunction: “*But* pray that your flight will not be in the winter, or on a Sabbath”

flight would not be further disrupted by the inconvenient timing of the winter season or the weekly Sabbath.⁵¹⁵

This proposed reading fits nicely with the subsequent material in vv. 22–31, which all make pronouncements about future events to occur during the great days of tribulation. Thus, v. 22, with its chilling remark that “if those days had not been cut short, no one would be saved” could point to a series of event yet to happen during the end of time. Jesus’ first followers and some members of Matthew’s community had survived the aftermath of 70, but an even worst tribulation was yet to come which God would mercifully cut short.⁵¹⁶ In other words, if some believed that the destruction of temple marked the final tribulation and wondered why the Parousia had not yet occurred, they were mistaken in their prophetic interpretation: the greatest tribulation was still to come. In this way, Matthew could reread Mark and contemporary events in such a way that made Jesus’ prophecy sound coherent and relevant, while still affirming the promise and imminence of the second coming.

Verses 24–26 repeat some of the motifs announced earlier in vv. 4–5: false christs and prophets will arise in those (final) days seeking to mislead even the elect. Some of the events announced earlier in vv. 4–5, therefore, repeat themselves: the destruction of the temple was preceded by the appearance of false prophets and christs; this phenomenon will persist and occur again prior to the final, greater tribulation. In v. 27, the announcement of the Parousia finally appears. Jesus’ disciples should know that the

⁵¹⁵ David Sim, *Apocalyptic Eschatology*, 157: “The addition of the sabbath reference makes no sense at all if the flight is an event of the past and the day of flight is already established; clearly here Matthew is thinking of an event which has yet to take place. This means that all the material in the immediate context of this verse, Matthew 24:15–28, seems to pertain to the future and not to the past.” As noted earlier, I doubt whether for Matthew future predictions begin in v. 15. Nevertheless, both Sim and I understand the key verse 20 as referring to the future.

⁵¹⁶ Alternatively, those who prefer to read v. 22 as pointing to the past events of 66–70 C.E. could argue that Matthew thinks God shortened the time-span of those days to guarantee the survival of Jesus’ followers.

return of the Son of Man will be like lightning in the sky, flashing from east to west. After the tribulation of those days (μετὰ τὴν θλίψιν τῶν ἡμερῶν ἐκείνων; v.29), “the sun will be darkened, the moon will not give its light, the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of heaven will be shaken” (v.29). In the midst of these cosmic wonders and natural disasters, the sign of the Son of Man will finally appear: “Then (τότε) the sign of the Son of Man will appear (φανήσεται) in heaven, and then (τότε) all the tribes of the earth will mourn (κόψονται), and they will see ‘the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven’ with power and great glory.” The NRSV has suddenly switched its translation of τότε to “then” instead of “at that time,” perhaps because its translators view this verse, in contradistinction to v. 20, as pointing to a subsequent, future event. The literary symmetry, however, between v. 20 and v.29 should not be overlooked: in both cases, τότε is followed by a verb in the future and points to a future, unfulfilled event.

With reasonable confidence, then, we may view v.20 as marking the beginning of material describing Matthew’s outlook about the eschatological future, when the great tribulation will occur and the Parousia will finally crystallize. This reading of Matt 24 would further strengthen the thesis positing that the phrases “your flight” (ἡ φυγὴ ὑμῶν) and “or on a Sabbath” (μηδὲ σαββάτῳ), which are unique to Matthew, are redactional.⁵¹⁷ Matthew uses the particle μηδὲ no less than eleven times⁵¹⁸ and enjoys forming pairs with conjunctions.⁵¹⁹ The supplemental possessive phrase “your flight” provides direct and contemporary relevance to Matthew’s audience. Finally, the explicit reference to the

⁵¹⁷ Cf. Doering, *Schabbat*, 402; Gnllka, *Matthäus*, 2:320, 323; Mayer-Haas, *Geschenk*, 455.

⁵¹⁸ 7x in Luke, 6x in Mark.

⁵¹⁹ Banks, *Jesus and the Law*, 103 n. 1.

Sabbath shows that even Matthew's followers would have wished to avoid fleeing on the Sabbath, presumably because they continue to observe this day and honor its sanctity.

Matt 24:20 in Secondary Scholarship

The plethora of modern interpretations on Matt 24:20 will surely impress any contemporary reader. It is hard to resist stating that part of the reason for the generation of so many takes on Matt 24:20 has been due to a Christian malaise with the idea that Matthew and other Jesus followers would have remained committed to the Torah, feeling uncomfortable with the idea of traveling on the Sabbath. Not surprisingly, some have sought to downplay the very likely redactional components of Matt 24:20 by shifting the creation of such material back to prehistoric "Jewish Christian" stages addressing Torah observant followers of Jesus who stood at the fringes of the Jesus movement.

One position contends that the reference to the Sabbath underscores a fear on the part of Matthew of antagonizing other Jews (i.e., non-followers of Jesus) who might persecute his community were they to flee on the Sabbath. For example, the late Matthean scholar Graham Stanton maintained that the Matthean community did not keep the Sabbath strictly and therefore "would not have hesitated to escape on the Sabbath; however, it knows that in so doing they would antagonize still further some of its persecutors."⁵²⁰ There is nothing, however, in the immediate literary context and even in

⁵²⁰ Graham Stanton, *A Gospel for a New People* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1992), 205. Before Stanton, but with unfortunate racist language, see Gerhard Barth, who followed in the footsteps of Emanuel Hirsch, *Die Frühgeschichte des Evangeliums* (2 vols.; Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1941), 2:313, blissfully speaking (despite the recent Holocaust) of the "dangers from the side of the hate-charged Jews; 'a Christian congregation fleeing on the Sabbath would have been as recognisable in Palestine as a spotted dog.' The severe tension between Church and Judaism in Matthew's Gospel would make this addition intelligible" (Gerhard Barth, "Matthew's Understanding of the Law," in *Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew*, 92). Similarly, Walter Grundmann, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus* (THKNT; Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1968), 506; Matteos and Camacho, *El Evangelio*, 237; Leon Morris, *The Gospel according*

the rest of Matt 24 that could legitimate such a reading. Overall, Matt 24 does not reveal a concern for a persecution on the part of the Jews because of differing halakic practices, focusing more often on Gentile persecution and the wars between the nations (24:6, 7, 9, etc.). Moreover, Stanton's conception of a milder Matthean attitude toward the issue of traveling on the Sabbath may be dismissed, since many other ancient Jews would have fled on the Sabbath were their lives under threat.⁵²¹

Others argue that the reluctance to flee on the Sabbath stems from the more challenging logistics presented on that particular day, since the gates, stores, and other services would have been shut on the Sabbath, thus complicating access to provisions and other necessary items for immediate departure.⁵²² This view is problematic for several reasons. Luz even finds it amusing: "Of course: on the Sabbath the stores are closed and the busses are not running!"⁵²³ In times of war and tribulation, conditions might prove difficult and chaotic on any given day. Moreover, if many Jews would be willing to flee on the Sabbath to save their lives, what would prevent them from exceptionally opening services in order to facilitate imminent withdrawal? In any case, during times of war and extreme distress, people can hardly afford the luxury to delay in collecting provisions for

to *Matthew* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1992), 605. For a critique of Stanton's position, see E.K.C. Wong, "The Matthean Understanding of the Sabbath: A Response to G.N. Stanton," *JSNT* 44 (1991): 3–18.

⁵²¹ Doering, *Schabbat*, 402 n. 25.

⁵²² Banks, *Jesus and the Law*, 102; Craig L. Blomberg, *Matthew* (NAC; Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman, 1992), 358; Carson, "Jesus and the Sabbath in the Four Gospels," 74; Robert Horton Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on His Handbook for a Mixed Church under Persecution* (2nd ed.; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1994), 483; John P. Meier, *Matthew* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1990), 284; Yang, *Jesus and the Sabbath*, 238–41. Some of these interpreters, such as Carson (and to some extent Yang) make no diachronic distinction between the historical Jesus, traditional material, and the redactional layers of the gospels. Yang's reasoning is circular: since he thinks his reading of Matt 12:1–14 shows that Matthew cares little for the Sabbath, Matt 24:20 cannot be taken as evidence to the contrary. He claims that "it is not right to argue that Matthew's community observed the sabbath simply on the grounds of 24.20, and to interpret 12.1–14 in the light of such understanding," and then conversely commits the same exegetical mistake. The real point is that neither Matt 12:1–14 nor 24:20 support Yang's thesis even when read independently from each other.

⁵²³ Luz, *Matthew*, 3:197 n. 131.

traveling.⁵²⁴ The flight from Judea described in the preceding verses certainly does not envisage time for “packing suitcases”: “the one on the housetop must not go down to take what is in the house; the one in the field must not turn back to get a coat” (Matt 24:17–18).

The presence of redactional features in Matt 24:20 particularly challenges those who have argued (more in the past) for a “Gentile Christian” authorship and audience for Matthew. If the Sabbath is no longer of any relevance and Matthew’s gospel is written for Gentiles, why is Matthew still reminiscing about Sabbath keeping?⁵²⁵ For this reason, some try to unnecessarily bifurcate the gospel of Matthew into a pre-“Jewish Christian” layer and the actual Matthean community. Luz is one prominent exegete who favors this approaching, reading Matt 24:20 as pertinent for earlier “Jewish-Christian churches” but not the Matthean community. But even Luz struggles with this saying and only transfers the halakic and exegetical problems involved to an earlier period without properly addressing them:

Whether we assume that problem for the Matthean churches or for Jewish Christian churches that earlier had expanded the Markan text must remain an open question. For me the latter, even though it involves taking refuge in a pre-Matthean tradition, is more easily understandable than is a summons from Matthew to his own church, for based on what Jesus (or Matthew) taught the church quite openly about the Sabbath in 12:1–14, it really had no need to be anxious about violating the Sabbath commandment in emergencies.⁵²⁶

⁵²⁴ Cf. Davies and Allison, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, 3:350: “Surely one could flee for a day without provisions; and v. 16 implies distance from cities.”

⁵²⁵ See Georg Strecker, *Weg*, 32, who argued that v. 20 was originally part of “Jewish Christian” apocalyptic; Rolf Walker, *Heilsgeschichte im ersten Evangelium* (FRLANT 91; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1967), 86, as an irrelevant anachronism. Some like Yang, *Jesus and the Sabbath*, 235, even speculate (without providing any proof) that the saying in its Matthean form goes back to the historical Jesus. This position is untenable in light of the discussion above on the historical dating, literary context, and redactional elements in Matt 24.

⁵²⁶ Luz, *Matthew*, 3:198.

We should note, however, that while Matthew's Jesus justifies in 12:1–14 the momentary suspension of the Sabbath in instances where human welfare is at stake (e.g., hunger or illnesses), the concern to keep the Sabbath in all its other aspects, for example, as a day of rest and cessation from weekly labor, remains in full force for Matthew. Matthew's desire to honor the sanctity of the Sabbath even by respecting its traveling restrictions constitutes a *separate* halakic issue from healing or alleviating hunger on the Sabbath. If there were no pressing need to travel on the Sabbath, Matthew would have refrained from such practice. Obviously, in life-threatening circumstances Matthew would not oppose traveling on the Sabbath in order to save human life, but he would still wish that such a scenario could take place on another day because it would be particularly unfitting to undergo emotional distress and physical hardship on a day meant to experience rest and peace. The Sabbath should be a "palace in time," to solicit Abraham Joshua Heschel's imagery, a refuge in time from danger, not a day when Jews desperately flee for their lives.⁵²⁷

On the other end of the scholarly spectrum exists a tendency to portray Matthew as being more zealous in his Sabbath keeping than his Jewish contemporaries! Saldarini declares that Matthew and his community take their Sabbath observance so seriously to the point that their commitment to the Torah would not "allow them to flee the dangers and horrors of the end of the world because journeys are not allowed on the Sabbath."⁵²⁸ Along similar yet different lines, Mayer-Haas, following Wong, thinks that Matt 24:20 addresses the conservative wing of the Matthean community who observe the Sabbath

⁵²⁷ Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Sabbath: Its Meaning for Modern Man* (New York: Noonday, 1997), 12.

⁵²⁸ Saldarini, *Matthew's Christian-Jewish Community*, 126. So too Mello, *Evangelo*, 420.

even more stringently than their Pharisaic competitors.⁵²⁹ She thinks evidence for the existence of such strict observers can be deduced from the materials Matthew draws from Q (e.g., Matt 23:23 concerning the practice of tithing in a meticulous way analogous to Pharisaic observance). Matthew's prayer, therefore, is that these conservative followers of Jesus will not find themselves in an end-time scenario where they will have to decide between keeping the Sabbath (by not fleeing) or remaining part of the rest of the Matthean community on flight during the final tribulation. Mayer-Haas takes the preceding section (24:9–14) as evidence for inner-community schism, particularly v. 12: "And because of the increase of lawlessness (*ἀνομίαν*), the love of many will grow cold."⁵³⁰

But while Matt 24:9–14 may hint at inner-community tensions, it seems to be attacking a *liberal*, if not antinomian stance toward the Law, not a strict, meticulous approach to Torah observance. In 24:12, Matthew's Jesus describes and condemns a situation of *lawlessness*. The intrusion of lawlessness seems to be tied with the false prophets who are misleading many astray (v.11). Not a few scholars have tied these false prophets with those found in Matt 7:15–23.⁵³¹ There Matthew's Jesus describes the false prophets as ravenous wolves wearing sheep's clothing, warning his audience to test them by their fruits (vv. 16–20). One day these false prophets, along with other sinners, will face judgment: "On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many deeds of power in your

⁵²⁹ Wong, "The Matthean Understanding of the Sabbath," 17: "To 'pray that your flight may not be . . . on a Sabbath' implies that at least some of the members of the Matthean community (probably some of the conservative Jewish Christians who still behave according to their tradition) would hesitate to flee on a Sabbath, even though their lives were thus in increased danger."

⁵³⁰ Mayer-Haas, *Geschenk*, 458.

⁵³¹ See references in Sim, *Apocalyptic Eschatology*, 164–67.

name?’ Then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; go away from me, you evildoers (οἱ ἐργαζόμενοι τὴν ἀνομίαν; Matt 7:22–23).’” The NRSV hardly does justice to the phrase οἱ ἐργαζόμενοι τὴν ἀνομίαν by translating it simply as “evildoers.” A literal rendition of the Greek would be “workers of lawlessness,” which would link Matt 7:15–23 with Matt 24:11–12 more closely where the theme of false prophecy and lawlessness reappears. In my opinion, such false prophets cannot represent strict Torah observant Jews. They perform deeds of *lawlessness*! In other words, while Matt 7:15–23 and 24:11–12 may reflect intra or inter-polemics occurring in Matthew’s time and milieu, these passages do not inform us about “conservative” and “liberal” branches of the Matthean community that differ in their halakic stringency toward the Sabbath and other Mosaic commandments.⁵³² In 24:20, Matthew does not address a more conservative wing of the Jesus movement, but reveals his own attitude about the Sabbath.

Conclusion

The literary, eschatological, and halakic contexts of Matt 24:20 show that Matthew addresses readers from his own day when he exhorts them to pray that their flight during the end of times not take place on a Sabbath. Like most of his Jewish contemporaries, Matthew would have aspired to honor the sanctity of the Sabbath under normal circumstances. But the preservation of human life momentarily supersedes the Sabbath during times of war and other deadly disasters. In such circumstances, Matthew would have agreed to flee on the Sabbath in order to save human life. This does not mean

⁵³² I do not deny the possibility of inner-polemics in Matthew. I only fail to see how the reference to “lawlessness” points to more conservative Matthean Torah observers. If anything, the lawless ones may represent other followers of Jesus who do not belong to Matthew’s community and do not observe the ritual aspects of the Torah at all—a stance Matthew would have surely condemned.

that Matthew *welcomes* such a scenario. He would rather observe the Sabbath in full peace and serenity.⁵³³

⁵³³ By comparing the Sabbath with the winter season, Matthew intends to show that both periods are unfavorable moments for fleeing from danger, albeit for different reasons: fleeing in the winter poses several environmental threats and physical hardships; fleeing on the Sabbath psychologically and spiritually unsettles the plight of those would have wished to observe this day properly. Cf. Doering, *Schabbat*, 402 n. 25.

Conclusion on Sabbath Keeping in Matthew and Luke

Matthew's Sabbath Repertoire

In the two main pericopes (plucking of grain and healing of the withered hand) that do deal with disputes over Sabbath keeping, Matthew reworks and enlarges Mark's repertoire of arguments on behalf of Jesus' actions. First, Matthew prefaces both episodes with the theme of eschatological rest (11:25–30). This organization of the narrative material can engender a particular theology of the Sabbath that interprets it in symbolic, eschatological terms. Nevertheless, I have warned against overinterpreting Matt 11:25–30 in light of the weekly institution of the Sabbath. Matt 11:25–30 refers to a state of eschatological rest that can be accessed not only on the Sabbath but also throughout the week. It is primarily because of his messianic duty to fulfill eschatological promises and expectations that Matthew's Jesus relates differently to certain aspects of Sabbath keeping. In order to accomplish his mission to bring the kingdom of heaven down on earth, Matthew's Jesus must cure the sick and assist the weary even on the Sabbath day.

In order to defend his particular orientation toward the Sabbath, the Matthean Jesus appeals to the principle of mercy (Matt 12:7), a prominent theme in the gospel of Matthew (cf. 9:13; 23:23). Mercy and leniency must be shown to the poor and the suffering on the Sabbath day. In addition, Matthew cites scriptural antecedents to justify Jesus' exceptional behavior, including the David story (12:3–4; also found in Mark and Luke) and more particularly the service of the priests in the temple on the Sabbath (12:4–6). Matthew enjoys employing the *a fortiori* argument: "How much more valuable is a human being than a sheep!" (12:12) But Matthew uses the *a fortiori* argument only in the most general way, loosely comparing biblical precedents and other scenarios with the

situation of Jesus and his disciples. He seems to also extend the application of the principle of פיקוח נפש (saving human life on the Sabbath) to justify the healing of less serious conditions such as chronic illnesses.

Matthew's Jesus, however, does not go so far as to justify *any* breach with the Sabbath. Matthew only presents two kinds of departures from conventional Sabbath keeping: plucking grain to alleviate human hunger and healing chronic, non-life-threatening diseases. In Matthew's Jesus' eyes, these two deviations from conventional standards of observance are completely legitimate since they ameliorate the condition of the weary and overburdened, acts that are intimately linked with his mission to bring eschatological rest to Israel. In the presence of their master, the hungry and needy followers of Jesus cannot experience want or suffering, but must enjoy eschatological satisfaction and restoration, particularly on the Sabbath, a day designed for all of Israel to partake in such blessings.

Matthew's own way of keeping the Sabbath, however, would not have radically differed from the rest of Jewry in all other respects. This point becomes evident when Matt 24:20 is fully appreciated within its literary, eschatological, and redactional framework. In the previous section, I argued that this text addresses the situation of Matthew's readers rather than the first generation of Jesus' followers. This finding shows that Matthew and his readers, like many Jews in antiquity, refrained from traveling on the Sabbath unless it would have been absolutely necessary. The depiction of Joseph of Arimathea (for Matthew, a disciple of Jesus) as well as of Mary Magdalene and Mary as faithful Sabbath keepers (Matt 27:57–28:1) strengthens the supposition that in most

aspects Matthew's manner of observing the Sabbath would have been similar to that of his Jewish contemporaries.

Luke's Sabbath Repertoire

In his narration, Luke retains the Sabbath settings Mark attributes to various episodes on Jesus' healings and exorcisms, but repositions them in his narrative in ways that serve his theological purposes. Thus, Luke has Jesus perform the exorcism in the synagogue of Capernaum (4:31–37) as well as the healing of Peter's mother-in-law (4:38–39) and the masses (4:40–41) only after Jesus has delivered his ambitious sermon in the synagogue of Nazareth on a Sabbath (4:16–30). Luke composes new material and reorganizes events in Mark's gospel in order to illustrate how the marvelous deeds accomplished in 4:31–41 embody the eschatological manifesto proclaimed by Jesus in 4:16–30. At this juncture of his narrative, Luke sees no need to distract his readers with polemics regarding Sabbath keeping. He is most set on illustrating the outpouring of Jesus' ministry upon Israel rather than entangling himself in halakic controversy. The initial absence of reports about Sabbath disputes in his narrative hardly means that the question of Sabbath keeping is no longer of any relevance for Luke, given the numerous passages elsewhere in his gospel where controversies on this topic abound.

Luke's repertoire on behalf of Jesus' Sabbath praxis is just as rich as Matthew's. Ultimately, for Luke, as for Matthew, the christological criterion and recognition of Jesus' heavenly authority constitute the final word in any debate about Sabbath keeping. Even so, Luke, like Matthew, solicits arguments of a semi or non-christological texture to justify his messiah's approach to the Sabbath. Like Matthew and Mark, he cites the David story (6:3–4) and appeals to the principle of doing good and saving life on the Sabbath

(6:9). In addition, he removes (so does Matthew) the logion found in Mark 2:27 (“the sabbath was made for humankind, and not humankind for the sabbath”) in order to avoid the misunderstandings this statement could engender about a human subjective laxity toward Sabbath keeping. The two special Sabbath pericopes in the gospel of Luke (13:10–17 and 14:1–6) contain a host of additional arguments on behalf of Jesus’ praxis, showing that the Sabbath remains a pressing concern for its author.⁵³⁴ Here, Luke imports a rich cluster of ethical, halakic, and eschatological arguments to defend a Sabbath praxis that could almost stand on its own apart from the question of Jesus’ messiahship. In both episodes, the Lukan Jesus appeals to contemporary Jewish practice (e.g., the custom on the Sabbath of untying an animal to relieve it from its thirst; lifting an animal out of a well to save its life) to justify the treatment of chronic diseases on the Sabbath (13:15; 14:5). Luke also accentuates the gravity of human ailments (without unequivocally equating them with life-threatening conditions) in order to legitimize Jesus’ healings. Children of Israel who suffer from long-term conditions that affect their lives on a daily basis, sometimes for years, can surely partake of divine, restorative blessings on the Sabbath day, especially if Jewish practice allows for the physical alleviation and deliverance of mere animals. Luke further stresses this point by drawing attention to the satanic source responsible for such conditions (4:35, 39, 13:16; 14:4). In such circumstances, Jesus cannot passively stand on the sidelines during the Sabbath while Satan’s powers continue to afflict God’s people. In the dawning of God’s reign, the children of Israel must immediately experience complete liberation from demonic oppression, even if it requires intervening on the Sabbath.

⁵³⁴ Klinghardt, *Gesetz und Volk Gottes*, 225: “Hier zeigt sich bereits, daß Lk nicht *nolens volens* traditionelles Material nur einfach übernimmt, sondern daß er an diesem Problem ein eigenes Interesse hatte.”

Besides these justifiable suspensions of the Sabbath, Luke argues nowhere else for a comprehensive and lawless approach toward the Sabbath that would dismiss its observance altogether. In this respect, it is vital to notice what Luke is *not* saying in his gospel. Luke does not roundly declare that Jewish followers of Jesus may now completely abandon Sabbath observance because of the dawning of a new era of *Heilsgeschichte*. For Luke, Jewish followers of Jesus are not free to earn their wages on the Sabbath, to build or repair their houses, plant and water their gardens, or engage in any other unnecessary exertion unrelated to Jesus' ministry of healing and restoration as announced in Luke 4:18–21. A tradition found in Codex Bezae, which is inserted after Luke 6:4, could be making such sweeping claims: "On the same day, having seen someone working on the Sabbath, he said to him: 'Human, if you know what you are doing, you are blessed; if you do not know, you are cursed and a transgressor of the Law.'"⁵³⁵ A certain interpretation of this passage could infer that *any* type of work is permitted on the Sabbath, provided one "knows" what he or she is doing. But Luke does not make such generalizing statements about a human right to abolish the Sabbath, restricting Jesus' Sabbath transgressions to acts of healing and alleviation that exalt his authority and confirm his lordship over the Sabbath.

Thus, in most aspects, it is possible that Luke's Sabbath praxis, like Matthew's, would have appeared quite ordinary to the eyes of other Jews. Quite significantly, in his account of Jesus' burial, Luke is even more concerned than Matthew in portraying the

⁵³⁵ Author's translation. On this passage, see Back, *Jesus of Nazareth and the Sabbath Commandment*, 145–47; Ernst Bammel, "The Cambridge Pericope: The Addition to Luke 6:4 in Codex Bezae," *NTS* 32 (1986): 404–26; Joël Delobel, "Luke 6,5 in Codex Bezae: The Man Who worked on Sabbath," in *À cause de l'évangile. Études sur les synoptiques et les Actes offertes au P. Jacques Dupont, O.S.B., à l'occasion de son 70e anniversaire* (Lection divina 23; Paris: Cerf, 1985), 453–77; J. Duncan M. Derrett, "Luke 6:5D Reexamined," *NovT* 37.3 (1995): 232–48; Doering, *Schabbat*, 438–40; Nicklas Tobias, "Das Agraphon vom 'Sabbatarbeiter' und sein Kontext: Lk 6:1–11 in der Textform des Codex Bezae Cantabrigiensis (D)," *NovT* 44.2 (2002): 160–75.

women who followed Jesus from Galilee to Jerusalem as faithful Sabbath keepers. Luke is the only gospel to state explicitly that the women rested on the Sabbath “according to the commandment” (23:56). Luke also enjoys highlighting Jesus’ regular attendance and teaching in the synagogue on the Sabbath (4:16, 31; 6:6; 13:10). Luke is not simply portraying Jesus as a “missionary” or evangelist when he states that Jesus attended the synagogue on the Sabbath “according to his custom” (κατὰ τὸ εἰωθὸς; 4:16).⁵³⁶ It would be a grave mistake to take this phrase as an indication that Luke is interested in attending the synagogue only to evangelize the Jews, while Sabbath keeping in itself no longer holds any intrinsic value. A preemptive citation of Luke’s Paul, who also regularly attends the synagogue on the Sabbath, will illustrate my point: “I [i.e., Paul] have done nothing against our people or the customs of our ancestors” (Acts 28:17). If Luke does not believe in the necessity for Jewish followers of Jesus to observe the customs of their ancestors, including the Sabbath, in other words, if there is no intrinsic value in Torah observance other than to initially entice Jews to “Christianity,” then Luke can be charged with the most blatant of evangelistic hypocrisy. How could he with a straight face claim that his Paul, or any of the other Jewish followers of Jesus for that matter, had done nothing against the customs of their ancestors if they were teaching “all the Jews living among the Gentiles to forsake Moses,” and persuading them “not to circumcise their children or observe the customs [e.g., the Sabbath]”? (Acts 21:21) The most natural and coherent reading of this statement shows that Luke wishes to dismiss such accusations and affirm the centrality of Torah observance for Jewish followers of Jesus. Luke is concerned with the preservation of Jewish identity through the perpetuation of Torah

⁵³⁶ See further arguments in chapter 2.

observance, and hardly teaches his audience to be “Jewish” merely for the sake of proselytizing other Jews.

Matthean and Lukan Sabbath Theologies Compared

Like Matthew who inserts a cardinal speech of Jesus (Matt 11:25–30) before two Sabbath pericopes (12:1–14), Luke also places in his narrative an important sermon delivered by Jesus (4:16–30) right before its concrete application during (and beyond) the Sabbath (4:31–41). While Matthew expresses Jesus’ pivotal message in terms of “rest” for the weary and overburdened, Luke’s favorite concept is the theme of “release” or liberation:

Table 6-2

Matt 11:25–30	Luke 4:16–30
Literary setting: before the Sabbath controversies on the plucking of grain (12:1–8) and the healing of the withered hand (12:9–14).	Literary setting: before two miracles performed on the Sabbath, an exorcism in Capernaum (4:31–37) and the healing of Peter’s mother-in-law (4:38–39).
Key Word: “Rest”	Key Word: “Release”
Beneficiaries: Weary and Overburdened	Beneficiaries: Captives

Both Matthew and Luke organize their narratives in such a way that Jesus ministers on the Sabbath immediately after delivering a programmatic message about his distinctive mission. Each author further connects the Sabbath with Jesus’ mission by employing vocabulary that recalls some of the rich symbols and messages associated with the Sabbath. Thus, Matthew chooses the motif of “rest” (*ἀνάπαυσις*), which naturally connects itself with the concept of Sabbath rest found in the Jewish scriptures (cf. LXX of Gen 2:1–3; Exod 16:23; 20:11; 23:12; 31:15, 17; 35:2; Lev 16:31; 23:3, etc.). Luke prefers the language of “release” (*ἄφεσις*), which announces the eschatological arrival of the sabbatical year of the jubilee (cf. Lev 25:10). The concept of liberation from captivity

is also related to the institution of the weekly Sabbath, since it commemorates, among other things, Israel’s freedom from her captivity in Egypt (cf. Deut 5:15). Luke highlights the motif of release in his Sabbath pericopes, demonstrating how Jesus’ healings and exorcisms constitute powerful acts of liberation from Satan’s captivity. A table recording these instances further illustrates this point:

Table 6-3

Luke 4:18 (citing Isa 61:1): “to proclaim <i>release</i> (ἄφεσιν) to the captives”
Luke 4:18 (citing Isa 58:6): “to let the oppressed <i>go free</i> ” (ἐν ἀφέσει)
Luke 13:12: “Woman you are <i>set free</i> (ἀπολέλυσαι) from your ailment”
Luke 13:15–16: “Does not each of you on the sabbath <i>untie</i> (λύει) his ox or his donkey from the manger, and lead it away to give it water? And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan <i>bound</i> (ἔδησεν) for eighteen long years, be <i>set free</i> (λυθῆναι) from this bondage on the sabbath day?”
Luke 14:4: “So Jesus took him and healed him, and <i>sent him away</i> ” (ἀπέλυσεν).
Acts 13:38: “Let it be known to you therefore, my brothers, that through this man <i>forgiveness</i> (ἄφεσις) of sins is proclaimed to you”

Luke uses a number of words (ἄφεσις, λύω, ἀπολύω) expressing the ideas of liberation and forgiveness from sins that can highlight the dimension of the Sabbath as a day commemorative of Israel’s freedom from captivity. He reinterprets and connects this theme with Jesus’ redemptive work to announce Israel’s liberation from satanic oppression as well as her release from sins. The composition and rearrangement of his narrative, the repetition of pertinent vocabulary and particular motifs, as well as the multiplication of Sabbath pericopes about Jesus’ healings provide a rich cluster of material that could produce a particular Lukan theology and understanding of the Sabbath. But obviously for Luke (and Matthew), the Sabbath is not the *only* day when Jesus’ ministry affects and blesses the children of Israel, since such dynamic activity persists and permeates Israel’s organism throughout the week without interruption. Nevertheless, both Matthew and Luke connect Jesus’ ministry to theological themes

related to the institution of the Sabbath that further develop its rich symbolism and legitimate Jesus' Sabbath praxis.

Matthean and Lukan Sabbath Praxis

Can anything else be inferred in further detail about Matthew and Luke's attitude toward and manner of observing the Sabbath? I have already argued that neither of the two announces the abrogation of the Sabbath and that their Sabbath keeping would have largely resembled the ways in which many other "ordinary" Jews would have observed this holy day. These observations should not be underestimated. In contrast to other (nearly) contemporaneous authors, neither Matthew nor Luke argues *against* the observance of the Sabbath. Comparing Matthew and Luke with the works of the *Epistle of Barnabas* or the letters of Ignatius can illustrate this point. When *Barnabas* states that Jewish practices such as the Sabbath have indeed been abolished (2:5–6), and then tries to dissuade his audience from observing the Sabbath in favor of commemorating the eighth day (15:9), he goes well beyond what Matthew or Luke ever say in any part of their works. Similarly, Ignatius' dismissal of Sabbath keeping in favor of the observance of the Lord's day (*Magn.* 9:1) will not be found in either Matthew or Luke.⁵³⁷

⁵³⁷ Some, however, date the letters of Ignatius toward the 140s or the latter half of the second century C.E. See Timothy David Barnes, "The Date of Ignatius," *ExpTim* 120 (2008): 119–30; Reinhard Hübner, "Thesen zur Echtheit und Datierung der sieben Briefe des Ignatius von Antiochen," *ZAC* (1997): 44–72; Thomas Lechner, *Ignatius Adversus Valentinianos? Chronologische und theologiegeschichtliche Studien zu den Briefen des Ignatius von Antiochen* (Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae 47; Leiden: Brill, 1999). With the majority of scholars, I assume that Ignatius contrasts the Lord's day (*κυριακήν*), that is Sunday, with the Sabbath keeping (*σαββατίζοντες*) of Jews on *Saturday*. Some interpreters (all of a particular confessional background), in an attempt to eliminate any trace of Christian Sunday worship from the first century (and beginning of the second century C.E.), argue that Ignatius is contrasting a certain way of observing the Sabbath (i.e., the supposedly "legalistic" Jewish manner) with the Christian way of keeping the *same* day. See, for example, Bacchiocchi, *From Sabbath to Sunday*, 213–17; Fritz Guy, "The Lord's Day in the Letter of Ignatius to the Magnesians," *AUSS* 2 (1964): 1–17; Richard B. Lewis, "Ignatius and the Lord's Day," *AUSS* 6 (1968): 46–59; Kenneth Strand, "Another Look at 'Lord's Day' in the Early Church and in Rev. 1:10," *NTS* 13 (1965): 174–81. Given Ignatius' penchant for clearly constructing and

Beyond the reasonable assumption that Matthew and Luke affirm Sabbath keeping and observe that day much like their fellow Jews (e.g., refraining from traveling, from earning their living, from burying their dead, etc.), it is difficult to make any further precisions about their Sabbath praxis, given the genre and state of the literary evidence at our disposal. A methodological fallacy to be avoided would consist in naively reading every Sabbath tradition within Matthew and Luke as a clear mirror into their world even though the compositional-critical approach, adopted in this book, embraces viewing such literature as products of their final authors. To put it bluntly, a gospel text *can* contain passages that report about a *prior* event that does *not* reflect contemporary practice. After all, the gospels do purportedly contain traditions, however theologized and modified, about a certain historical figure who *precedes* the period in which such documents received their final shape. During their sustained periods of transmission and development, spanning roughly from the historical Jesus to the final gospel redactors, certain materials may have no longer come to play an integral role in informing a particular kind of praxis, even if the gospel writers chose to retain these traditions in their writings for diverse reasons.

Probably, only *repeated* motifs and features, unique to either gospel, can more firmly inform contemporary readers about a distinctive perspective on or way of observing the Sabbath (e.g., healing minor diseases). In all other aspects, given the early historical period dealt with here (end of first century/beginning of second century C.E.) in which the so-called “parting of the ways” had not yet fully occurred, it seems reasonable

contrasting his version of Christianity from Judaism (*Phld.* 6:1; *Magn.* 8:1; 10:3), I find this position unconvincing. Cf. Richard Bauckham, “The Lord’s Day,” Pages 221–50 in *From Sabbath to Lord’s Day*.

to assume that Matthew and Luke would have observed the Sabbath day in the same way as many other Jews did.

Some time ago, Bultmann had suggested that already in their pre-redactional stages the controversy Sabbath dialogues were formulated in order to defend the Sabbath practice of the *ekklesia* in Palestine.⁵³⁸ After all, the Pharisees in such traditions occasionally question Jesus for the practice of *his disciples*, wondering, for example, why *they* pluck grain on the Sabbath (Matt 12:2; Luke 6:2). With respect to healings, however, opponents always launch their accusations directly at Jesus in the synoptic traditions. Bultmann accounts for this feature by stating that the Sabbath healings “make it necessary for the attack to be directed against Jesus himself, for the healings are at the same time miracles meant to glorify him.”⁵³⁹ If Bultmann’s thesis is correct, it would mean that certain followers of Jesus in Palestine practiced healings on the Sabbath and developed these idealized stories in order to defend themselves against the accusations of their opponents.

Bultmann’s very assertion that such stories reflect a community practice has been called into question by certain scholars. As Back forthrightly observes: “there is no methodological necessity to assume that the Sabbath practice of a community must be reflected in Sabbath stories which are transmitted by that community.”⁵⁴⁰ In other words, even if Jesus performed healings on the Sabbath, it does not necessarily follow that the first post-Easter disciples, the *Urgemeinde* that developed such stories about Jesus’ acts,

⁵³⁸ Bultmann, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition*, 16; 48; Tannehill, “Varieties of Synoptic Pronouncement Stories,” 102, 107, 111; Maria Trautmann, *Zeichenhafte Handlungen Jesu. Ein Beitrag zur Frage nach dem geschichtlichen Jesus* (FB 37; Würzburg: Echter, 1980), 280, detects three interests the community held in relating such stories: the justification of Jesus’ transgressive acts, the legitimization of Christian practice, and the affirmation of Jesus’ authority.

⁵³⁹ Bultmann, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition*, 48.

⁵⁴⁰ Back, *Jesus of Nazareth and the Sabbath Commandment*, 64.

continued such practice in the physical absence of their master. To further illustrate his point, Back points to the controversy about fasting during which the disciples of John the Baptist and the Pharisees inquire with Jesus about why *his disciples* do not regularly fast (Matt 9:14–17; Mark 2:18–20; Luke 5:33–39). It seems unlikely that the non-fasting of a post-Easter community is reflected in such passages, since the abstinence from fasting is justified by an appeal to the physical presence of Jesus, the bridegroom.⁵⁴¹ In addition, evidence from the early *Didache* points to the subsequent practice or resumption of regular fasting among certain followers of Jesus, confirming the picture that once the bridegroom had indeed left (Matt 9:15; Mark 2:20; Luke 5:35), the praxis of Jesus’ disciples could revert to forms that resembled more or less other Jewish groups: “And let not your fasts be with the hypocrites, for they fast on the second day (i.e., Monday) and the fifth day (i.e., Thursday) of the week (σαββάτων). But fast on the fourth day (i.e., Wednesday) and on the day of preparation (παρασκευήν; i.e., Friday)” (*Did.* 8:1).⁵⁴² Some scholars tie the reference in the *Didache* to the “hypocrites” with Matthew’s Pharisees, since the same epithet appears in Matthew as well to describe such people.⁵⁴³

Naturally, these observations regarding the pre-redactional stages of the tradition could be transposed to the time and realms of Matthew and Luke. More specifically, this would mean that the Sabbath pericopes in both gospels need not mirror the actual practice of their final authors. For a variety of reasons, some of Matthew and Luke’s readers could

⁵⁴¹ Back, *Jesus of Nazareth and the Sabbath Commandment*, 64.

⁵⁴² Author’s translation.

⁵⁴³ If this passage from the *Didache* can be linked to Pharisees, it is interesting to note that the proper way of fasting outlined here sets itself apart from the practice of other Jewish groups only in *chronological* terms. Interestingly enough, rabbinic traditions prescribe fasting on the second and fifth days of the week during times of drought (*m. Ta’an.* 1:4; 2:9; cf. Luke 18:12). Relationships between the traditions and milieux of the *Didache* and of Matthew have often been posited. Many scholars equate the “hypocrites” of the *Didache* with the Pharisees of Matthew. For a different opinion, see Aaron Milavec, *The Didache: Faith, Hope, and Life of the Earliest Christian Communities, 50–70 C.E.* (Mahwah, N.J.: Newman, 2003), 301–4.

have even refrained from performing Sabbath healings (of minor diseases), either because they were no longer in the physical presence of their master or wanted to avoid causing further conflicts with their fellow Jews. The absence of any Sabbath healings in the book of Acts could be taken in this direction, highlighting Luke's primary interest in magnifying the image of Jesus rather than justifying a contemporary Sabbath praxis that would depart from the prevailing Jewish conventions. Luke is more set on justifying Jesus' deeds on the Sabbath in the context of his eschatological-christological mission rather than encouraging contemporary healings of minor diseases (or acts such as plucking grain) on the Sabbath.

An important ecclesiological question about Sabbath keeping and Jewish-Gentile relations also requires some consideration. I believe Matthew and Luke only expected *Jewish* followers of Jesus to observe the Sabbath, although they allowed but did not demand Gentiles to observe this day. Some could argue that the distinctions between Jew and Gentile within the Jesus movement, in so far as Torah praxis is concerned, would no longer apply for Matthew and Luke, meaning that they required Jew and Gentile alike to keep the same amount of Mosaic stipulations. However, in the Acts of the Apostles, Luke clearly presupposes a distinction between Gentiles and Jews as far as Torah praxis is concerned: Jewish followers of Jesus are expected to keep the Torah in its entirety, while Gentiles are only required to observe certain Mosaic commandments—the Sabbath not being incumbent upon them. I further develop this thesis in the following chapters dealing with food laws and circumcision. In the case of Matthew, the question proves much harder to settle, since he did not write a second volume to his gospel equivalent to Luke's Acts where we could have gathered more information about his expectations of

Gentile followers of Jesus.⁵⁴⁴ But given his openness to the Gentile mission and the absence of any explicit requirement for Gentiles to observe circumcision, Matthew, like many other Jews, probably would have welcomed the *voluntary* observance of the Sabbath among non-Jews.⁵⁴⁵

⁵⁴⁴ Unless some of the traditions in the *Didache* can complement our understanding of Matthew's position on this matter. Cf. *Did.* 6:3.

⁵⁴⁵ See chapter 12 on circumcision where I further develop this point. In contradistinction to the *book of Jubilees* (2:19–21) or *certain* (often later) rabbinic traditions (*b. Sanh.* 58b; *Gen. Rab.* 11:8; *Exod. Rab.* 25:11; *Deut. Rab.* 1:21; cf. *Mek. Shabbeta-Ki Tissa Parashah 1* on Ex 31:12f.; *b. Yoma* 85b) that argue that Sabbath keeping is *only* for Jews, Josephus (*C. Ap.* 2:282–284) and Philo (*Opif.* 1:89) actually boast of its universality and have no qualms with Gentiles attending the synagogue on the Sabbath. Even in the case of rabbinic tradition, Marc Hirshman has suggested identifying a “universalist” stream within the Tannaitic literature, which he ascribes to the school of R. Ishmael. This school of thought viewed the whole Torah as available to the nations of the world, saw the conversion of Gentiles to Judaism in a positive way, and even encouraged non-Jews to observe Jewish ritual without converting. Overall, I find Hirshman's thesis convincing except for his claim that this school of Tannaim was *actively* proselytizing non-Jews. See Marc G. Hirshman, “Rabbinic Universalism in the Second and Third Centuries,” *Harvard Theological Review* 93 no.2 (2000): 101–15; *Torah for the Entire World* [in Hebrew] (Tel Aviv: Ha-Kibbutz ha-Me'uhad, 1999) as well as my forthcoming “Forming Jewish Identity by Formulating Legislation for Gentiles.”

Chapter 7

The Sabbath in the Acts of the Apostles

“Now these laws they are taught at other times, indeed, but most especially on the seventh day, for the seventh day is accounted sacred, on which they abstain from all other employments, and frequent the sacred places which are called synagogues, and there they sit according to their age in classes, the younger sitting under the elder, and listening with eager attention in becoming order.”

(Philo, *Prob.* 81)

Introduction

I have resisted the temptation thus far to read Luke in light of Acts, or vice-versa, and have striven instead to assess each work in its own right before making some final observations about Luke’s overall attitude toward the Sabbath. The book of Acts contains some precious jewels of information that can complement our appreciation of Luke’s perspective on the Sabbath. Quite significantly, Luke records no controversy in Acts over Jesus’ disciples’ observance of the Sabbath. This “discrepancy” with the gospel of Luke, which contains the *greatest* amount of controversial stories about Jesus’ Sabbath praxis, is accounted for at the end of this chapter. Along the way, I also highlight the remarkable usage of Jewish idiom on the part of Luke to describe and organize his narrative that reveals not only his own familiarity with the world of the synagogue but also his respect for the institution of the Sabbath.

Respecting the Sabbath Limits

Passage

1:12: “Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a sabbath day's journey away.”

Literary Context

Often, some of the most significant aspects concerning a writer's background and audience can appear in the most casual of comments. The first reference to the Sabbath in the book of the Acts seems to represent such a case. It appears at the beginning of the book, in the prologue to Acts, which recalls in many ways the opening of the third gospel.⁵⁴⁶ The numerous literary problems that plague the prologue of Acts cannot be discussed here. The primary goal in this section is to rehearse its main features in order to demonstrate where v.12 actually fits within the opening of Acts.

Luke opens Acts by referring to his first work, the gospel he had previously written, and then briefly summarizes the last days of Jesus on earth from his resurrection until his final “take off” to heaven (v.2).⁵⁴⁷ In v.3, Luke refers to multiple post-crucifixion epiphanies of Jesus to his disciples that last for forty days. Upon his departure, Jesus commands his disciples to remain in Jerusalem in anticipation of the baptism of the spirit

⁵⁴⁶ In Acts 1:1, Luke refers to the first work he composed (Τὸν πρῶτον λόγον) and addresses the same Theophilus (mentioned in Luke 1:3). Scholars continue to debate about the actual ending of the prologue. Pervo, *Acts*, 34, favors viewing all of 1:1–14 as constituting the prologue, since technically only v.15 contains new material, while the previous verses partly overlap with the end of the gospel of Luke. I. Howard Marshall, *The Acts of the Apostles: An Introduction and Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1980), 55, sees v.5 as marking the end of the prologue, since after this a new set of questions is raised. C.K. Barrett, *The Acts of the Apostles* (ICC; 2 vols.; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994), 1:61–62, at first seems to suggest v.8 as the ending of the introduction, but then opts for v. 14. Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles* (AB 31; New York: Doubleday, 1998), 191, considers only the first two verses as part of the prologue.

⁵⁴⁷ Verse 2 presupposes an ascension, which is also repeated in vv. 9–11. These repetitions create some confusion with Luke 24:50–53 where apparently Jesus' ascension happens on the same evening when the empty tomb is discovered. All sorts of complicated theses, which can be found in the standard commentaries, arise in order to account for this problem and will not deter us here.

(v.4–5). The disciples of Jesus then ask a question that has startled much of secondary scholarship so accustomed to viewing Luke as a Roman friendly Gentile Christian.⁵⁴⁸

“Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?” (1:6). Here, the disciples of Jesus wonder whether the time has finally arrived for *Israel’s* restoration (1:6).⁵⁴⁹ Their question has rightly been interpreted as expressing hope over Israel’s national liberation (from the yoke of Rome).⁵⁵⁰ On the other hand, the prevailing judgment among many scholars that views the question of disciples as representing a *misunderstanding* of the gospel message is hardly hinted at by Luke.⁵⁵¹ The oblique

⁵⁴⁸ Franz Mussner, *Apostelgeschichte* (NEBNT 5; Würzburg: Echter, 1984), 16: “klingt überraschend und fast seltsam.”

⁵⁴⁹ Jervell, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, 113–14, ties the disciples’ question with the previous promise of the spirit. After the baptism of the spirit, the disciples wonder whether the restoration of Israel will finally occur. Luke’s answer is that the outpouring comes first and then the full restoration of Israel.

⁵⁵⁰ Frederick F. Bruce, *Commentary on the Book of Acts* (NICNT; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1968), 38: “The apostles maintained their interest in the hope of seeing the kingdom of God realized in the restoration of Israel’s national independence.”

⁵⁵¹ Contra Barrett, *Acts*, 1:76: “It is nearer to the truth to say that Luke uses the question to underline the non-nationalist character of the Christian movement. . . .”; Bruce, *Commentary on the Book of Acts*, 38: “Instead of the political power which had formerly been the object of their ambitions, a power far greater and nobler would be theirs”; Hans Conzelmann, *Acts of the Apostles* (trans. James Limburg et al; Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 7: “The question about the ‘restoration’ of the kingdom to ‘Israel’ provides the foil for both the promise of the Spirit and the universalism announced in vs 8.” But in what way is the question misguided? If there is an implicit rebuke to the disciples’ question, it has nothing to do with their concern regarding the restoration of Israel, but *its timing*. In Luke, Jesus and his disciples are on the same page regarding the restoration of Israel. In the meantime, they should not ask *when*, but focus on *how* this process will play out. Marshall, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 60, bifurcates a single Jewish-Lukan agenda into two separated issues that are actually interrelated: “This [i.e., the disciples’ question] may reflect the Jewish hope that God would establish his rule in such a way that the people of Israel would be freed from their enemies (especially the Romans) and established as a nation to which other peoples would be subservient. If so, the disciples would appear here as representatives of those of Luke’s readers who had not yet realized that Jesus had transformed the Jewish hope of the kingdom of God by purging it of its nationalistic political elements. Another possibility is that Luke’s readers might think that the ‘times of the Gentiles’, during which Jerusalem was to be desolate, ought now to be coming to an end and giving place to the coming of the kingdom. . . .” Correctly, LeCornu and Shulam, *A Commentary on the Jewish Roots of Acts*, 1:15: “Jesus’ answer to the Apostles does not delegitimize their question but merely places it beyond the scope of human knowledge”; Jervell, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, 114, “Es wird nicht danach gefragt, ob das Reich für Israel wiederhergestellt werden soll, denn das ist selbstverständlich. Dies wird ja auch in der Antwort Jesu nicht korrigiert”; Loader, *Jesus’ Attitude towards the Law*, 381–82. Cf. Serge Ruzer, “Jesus’ Crucifixion in Luke and Acts: The Search for a Meaning vis-à-vis the Biblical Pattern of Persecuted Prophet,” in *Judaistik und neutestamentliche Wissenschaft*, 174: “This passage . . . clearly indicates that the author does not wish to abrogate the hope for Israel’s redemption, which seems to be presented as having also political overtones.” The question in v. 6 and the subsequent answer are entirely compatible with expectations voiced *only* in Luke concerning the restoration of Israel: “They [those in

answer provided in Acts simply advises the disciples not to worry about calculating “the times or periods (χρόνους ἢ καιρούς) that the Father has set by his own authority” (1:7). In the meantime, they are supposed to serve as Jesus’ witnesses, setting out from Jerusalem to Judea, Samaria, and beyond. In this way, Jesus turns their attention away from the end of time “to the end of the earth” (ἕως ἐσχάτου τῆς γῆς; 1:8).⁵⁵²

After this final commission, the disciples witness the “rapture” of their master (v.9–11). The author of Acts then reports how the disciples of Jesus “returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, *a sabbath day’s*

Judea] will fall by the edge of the sword and be taken away as captives among all nations; and Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles, *until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled* (ἄχρι οὗ πληρωθῶσιν καιροὶ ἐθνῶν; Luke 21:24).” The end of Jewish suffering will come after the time of the Gentiles, some of whom are now beginning to join the cause initiated by a band of Jewish followers emanating from Jerusalem, the very target and victim of Gentile oppression and trampling. Other similar hopes of restoration for Israel are also voiced in Luke: “Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has looked favorably on his people and *redeemed them*” (ἐποίησεν λύτρωσιν τῷ λαῷ αὐτοῦ; Luke 1:68); “At that moment she came, and began to praise God and to speak about the child to all who were looking for the *redemption of Jerusalem*” (λύτρωσιν Ἰερουσαλήμ; Luke 2:38). Cf. Luke 1:16 and 1:54–55; 2:25 (the “consolation of Israel”); 24:21 (“we had hoped that he was the one to redeem [λυτροῦσθαι] Israel”). The Hebrew equivalents לְיִשְׂרָאֵל and לְיִשְׂרָאֵל תּוֹרָה to the term λύτρωσις (“redemption”) appear on Jewish coins from the two Jewish revolts against Rome, testifying to the aspirations that many Jews in Palestine held in those times of political tension with Rome. While Luke was certainly no Zealot calling for followers of Jesus to *bear arms* against Rome, there is no need to exclude from the generic term λύτρωσις a hope for the eventual dismantlement of Rome and the restoration of Israel. See Flusser, *The Sage from Galilee*, 126–27.

⁵⁵² The author of Acts assumes that the commission to go to the “ends of the earth” includes *Gentiles*. Contra Daniel R. Schwartz, “The end of the GH (Acts 1:8): Beginning or End of the Christian Vision?” *JBL* 105.4 (1986): 669–76, who thinks “earth” here means “land of Israel.” There is no need to see a semitism here, but simply Luke’s mimicking of the LXX. The phrase echoes the LXX of Isa 49:6, which speaks of God’s servant as being a light to the *nations*, as salvation to “the ends of the earth” (ἕως ἐσχάτου τῆς γῆς). The eschatological vision in Luke-Acts includes not only the gathering of the exiles scattered from Zion, but also the Gentiles who are expected to come from their countries to Jerusalem in order to worship the God of Israel. See LeCornu and Shulam, *Jewish Roots of Acts*, 1:23. I suggest that it is along these lines that we should understand Luke’s vision for Israel’s restoration. It is subversive in that it seeks to conquer Rome through “proselytizing,” convincing as many Gentiles to serve the God of Israel and the true lord Jesus in a reconstituted Israel that will eventually take over the world. Cf. *Pss. Sol.* 8.15 where Rome comes from the end of the earth (ἀπ’ ἐσχάτου τῆς γῆς), to conquer Jerusalem. In Acts, the disciples go forth from Jerusalem and “attack” Rome, thereby reversing the axis of conquest, threatening through the dissemination of its gospel to take over the very last frontiers of the Roman Empire itself. Contrary to what many New Testament exegetes assert, Rome is *not* the center of the world for Luke. The word of God goes out of Zion to the ends of earth. Jerusalem is the center to which Luke is also pointing back to. Jerusalem strives to surpass the feats of Rome itself, striking at its capital, and reaching horizons (e.g., Ethiopia, the eunuch’s conversion in Acts 8:26–40) Rome could never fathom to conquer.

journey away” (σαββάτου ἔχον ὁδόν). Verses 13–14 signal a new unit in the narrative that describes the constant prayer and vigil of the disciples upon their return to Jerusalem. Acts 1:12 serves as a transitional verse to open this new section, linking the previous unit (vv. 9–11) to the next one (vv. 13–14):

- I. Ascension of Jesus (1:9–11)
- II. Return of disciples to Jerusalem (1:12)
- III. The *Ekklesia* in Jerusalem (12–14)

Redactional Analysis

Many scholars of Acts have correctly pointed to the redactional character of v.12.⁵⁵³ Luke has composed this verse in order to tie the previous section, vv. 9–11, which possibly contains some traditional material,⁵⁵⁴ with the following section (vv.13–14). Most of the words and constructions in v.12 are well attested in other passages from the gospel of Luke:

τότε: The adverb of time occurs no less than 21 times in Acts, 15 times in Luke. Only the gospel of Matthew (90x) surpasses Luke in its usage (cf. *Barn.*: 13x; *Herm. Sim.*: 10x; *Herm. Vis.*: 3x; *Herm. Mand.*: 3x; *John*: 10x; *Diog.*: 7x; *Mark*: 6x; *1 Cor*: 6x; *Did.*: 4x; *Gal*: 3x; *Heb*: 3x; *Ign. Rom.*: 2x; *Ign. Eph.*: 1x; *1 Clem.*: 1x; *2 Clem.*: 1x; *Pol. Phil.*: 1x; *Mart. Pol.*: 1x; *Rom*: 1; *2 Cor*: 1x; *Col*: 1x; *1 Thess*: 1x; *2 Thess*: 1x; *2 Pet*: 1x).

ὑπέστρεψαν εἰς Ἱερουσαλήμ: All three words appear verbatim in Luke 2:45 (καὶ μὴ εὐρόντες ὑπέστρεψαν εἰς Ἱερουσαλήμ ἀναζητοῦντες αὐτόν). The indicative aorist active third person plural ὑπέστρεψαν (from ὑποστρέφω) appears rarely in early Christian literature, attested in Luke (5x) and Acts (5x). Likewise, Luke prefers the Hebraicizing form of Jerusalem (Ἱερουσαλήμ; Luke:

⁵⁵³ So Conzelmann, *Acts of the Apostles*, 7, who, nevertheless wonders whether the reference to “a Sabbath day’s journey” stems from traditional data. The reference, however, to “a Sabbath’s day journey” is clearly redactional as demonstrated below.

⁵⁵⁴ Barrett, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 1:62, who acknowledges traces of Lukan style.

27x; Acts: 37x; Matt: 2x; Pauline writings: 7x; Revelation: 3x; Hebrews:1x; *1 Clem.*: 1x) to the traditional Hellenistic form Ἱεροσόλυμα (Luke: 3x: Acts:11x, compared to Matt: 9x; Mark: 7x; John: 4x; Gal: 3x). In this instance, Ἱερουσαλήμ is to be considered redactional.⁵⁵⁵

ἀπὸ ὄρους τοῦ καλουμένου Ἐλαιῶνος: the prepositional phrase is almost completely paralleled in Luke 19:29 (πρὸς τὸ ὄρος τὸ καλούμενον Ἐλαιῶν) and Luke 21:37 (εἰς τὸ ὄρος τὸ καλούμενον Ἐλαιῶν). The differences between both examples result from the usage of different prepositions and cases (genitive vs. accusative), while the noun ὄρος is anarthrous in Acts 1:12.⁵⁵⁶ Luke 21:37 is especially interesting: it refers to Jesus' customary teaching in the temple (a leitmotif in Luke) and his subsequent, periodical withdrawals to the Mount of Olives. In Acts 1:12, the disciples “mimic” this movement: they descend to Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives, and eventually find themselves praying and teaching in the temple. Its juxtaposition with the attributive τοῦ καλουμένου/τὸ καλούμενον is also found only in Luke (but paralleled in Josephus).

ὃ ἐστὶν ἐγγὺς Ἱερουσαλήμ: The Hebraicizing Ἱερουσαλήμ, which Luke prefers, appears again. The remaining words (ὃ ἐστὶν ἐγγὺς) are too common to designate them with any particular, redactional labels. Nevertheless, they seem to have been composed by the author to inform his (Diasporan) audience about the local topography of the area.

σαββάτου ἔχον ὁδόν: The phrase is unattested anywhere else in early “Christian” literature now found in the New Testament and Apostolic Fathers. Nevertheless, Luke employs similar language

⁵⁵⁵ According to Wehnert, *Die Reinheit*, 34–35, the shift in usage of both forms for Jerusalem in Luke-Acts is not random. Luke always uses Ἱερουσαλήμ in direct speeches that are delivered by Jews, followers of Jesus or so-called God-fearers. By contrast, the pagan Festus uses the profane form Ἱεροσόλυμα. In indirect speech, Ἱερουσαλήμ also prevails. In the narrative parts, the distribution of both forms is not equal: the Hebraicizing Ἱερουσαλήμ appears 14x between 1:12 and 12:25, while the other form, Ἱεροσόλυμα, appears 13x between 8:1 and 25:7. Especially noteworthy is the consistent usage of Ἱεροσόλυμα in the geographical descriptions of Paul's journeys. Since the descriptions of the missionary itinerary for the most part go back to tradition, this observation raises the suspicion that Luke uses the term Ἱεροσόλυμα (which he rather avoids) predominantly as a part of the consulted tradition, while Ἱερουσαλήμ is redactional.

⁵⁵⁶ A similar anarthrous formulation appears in Josephus, *Ant.* 20:169: πρὸς ὄρος τὸ προσαγορευόμενον ἐλαιῶν; εἰς τὸ ἐλαιῶν καλούμενον ὄρος (*J.W.* 2.262; JOS); κατὰ τὸ Ἐλαιῶν καλούμενον ὄρος (*J.W.* 5.70).

elsewhere to describe geographical distances: “Assuming that he was in the group of travelers, they went a day’s journey (ἡμέρας ὁδόν)” (Luke 2:44).⁵⁵⁷

In conclusion, the numerous Lukan traits noted above strengthens the proposal to see Acts 1:12 as entirely redactional, including the last phrase referring to the distance traveled by the disciples, a Sabbath’s walk.⁵⁵⁸ Although the reference to the Mt. of Olives may reflect some sort of recollection of a tradition that located the ascension of Jesus at such a spot, its composition, including the clarification regarding its distance from Jerusalem, is thoroughly Lukan in its style. Even if one would argue that the topographical clarification (“a Sabbath day’s journey”) is traditional, rather than redactional, which seems very unlikely, it is quite remarkable that the author retains this language and feels no need to clarify its meaning to his readers.

Interpretation

The redactional analysis demonstrates how the author of Acts has composed this verse through the casual usage of Jewish chronological and geographical terms to describe the topography of Jerusalem. Quite significantly, Luke feels no need to clarify this Jewish jargon for his readers. This observation indicates that Luke’s audience is sufficiently familiar with Jewish terminology and halakah about the Sabbath limits (תחום שבת), but not intimately acquainted with the topography of Jerusalem and its

⁵⁵⁷ Luke uses the unusual ἔχον where one would have expected ἀπέχειν to describe the distance between Jerusalem and the Mt. of Olives Cf. Luke 24:13: “Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem (ἀπέχουσαν σταδίου ἐξήκοντα ἀπὸ Ἱερουσαλήμ).” Luke uses the conventional measurement of stadia here because the journey from Jerusalem to Emmaus is longer than the limit allowed for on the Sabbath. The usage of ἔχον is not unprecedented though, as it appears in this sense in *Periplus Mar. Erythr.* 37. Cf. Barrett, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 86.

⁵⁵⁸ Josef Zmijewski, *Die Apostelgeschichte* (RNT; Regensburg: Friedrich Pustet, 1994), 73; Mayer-Haas, *Geschenk*, 378.

surroundings, since Luke has to inform them about the distance between the Mount of Olives and Jerusalem.

Luke's phrase *σαββάτου ἔχον ὁδόν* refers to the limit set by Jews for traveling on the Sabbath. According to Exod 16:29 (cf. Jer 17:21–27), during the Sabbath each Israelite was supposed to remain in his or her “place” and not leave it (אל יצא איש ממקומו). Early rabbinic halakah interprets the Hebrew מקום (“place”) as a reference to the city or settlement where one lives, allowing for one to walk up to 2000 cubits (c. 1km) beyond the city limits on the Sabbath, while Qumranic halakah permits a journey of only 1000 cubits.⁵⁵⁹ Josephus declares that Jews would not travel on the Sabbath, but does not provide any measurement regarding a fixed limit in distance (*Ant.* 13:252; 14:226). Nevertheless, Luke's casual reference to the distance of the Sabbath limits in Acts 1:12 might indicate that by the end of the first century C.E. the limit of 2000 cubits was well known among many Jews.⁵⁶⁰

It is worthwhile noting that in both the *Jewish Wars* and *Antiquities* Josephus also refers to the distance between Jerusalem and the Mount of Olives. However, unlike Luke, Josephus does not employ Jewish measurements in order to explain the topography of Jerusalem to his Greco-Roman readers. Thus, in *J. W.* 5:70, Josephus refers to the Roman

⁵⁵⁹ *m. Eruv.* 4:3, 7; 5:7; *b. Eruv.* 51a; CD 10:21, 11:5; Cf. *Tg. Ps.-J.* on Exod 16:29. Qumran texts do allow for grazing animals up to 2000 cubits. See the thorough discussion on the Sabbath limits in Doering, *Schabbat*, 87–94; 145–54; 228; 270; 295–99; 353; 376; 429; 493; 532; 569. There are different ways of measuring 2000 cubits. They all approximate 1 km. For references and discussion of different measurements of the “cubit,” see Arye Ben David, *Talmudische Ökonomie: Die Wirtschaft des jüdischen Palästina zur Zeit der Mischna und des Talmud Vol. 1* (Hildesheim: Olms, 1974), 344; Doering, *Schabbat*, 146, 154; Asher S. Kaufmann, “Determining the Length of the Medium Cubit,” *PEQ* 116 (1984): 120–32; Rudolf Pesch, *Die Apostelgeschichte* (2 vols.; EKKNT 5; Zürich: Benziger, 1986), 1:80; Gerhard Schneider, *Die Apostelgeschichte* (2 vols.; HTKNT 5; Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1980–1982), 1:205 n. 59; Str-B 2:590–94.

⁵⁶⁰ Doering, *Schabbat*, 154. Modern researchers measure a distance of about 1 km between the Mount of Olives and Jerusalem, which roughly corresponds to the distance of 2000 cubits, regardless of which standard of measurement is employed (see previous footnote).

legions who encamped during the first Jewish Revolt at the distance of *six stadia* from Jerusalem (ἐξ τῶν Ἱεροσολύμων σταδίου) somewhere along the Mount of Olives (κατὰ τὸ Ἐλαιῶν καλούμενον ὄρος). In his later *Jewish Antiquities*, Josephus uses the same terminology claiming that the Mount of Olives lies about five stadia away from Jerusalem (*Ant.* 20.169).⁵⁶¹ The similarities and significant differences in terminological usage between Josephus and Luke are remarkable. Both authors, who are Jewish, so I argue, write in Greek somewhere along the Mediterranean basin and probably have Gentiles in mind (but also Jews) as forming part of their readership. Likewise, both authors write to an audience that does not enjoy a firsthand knowledge of the topography of Jerusalem, although one employs language understandable to an “international” audience, while the other uses Jewish idiom for describing time and space.

The particular measurement employed in Acts means that its author and audience understand such Jewish parameters and find them meaningful to describe their surroundings. Luke’s usage of Jewish idiom does not mean that he “is concerned to depict the apostles as Christians still observant of their Jewish obligations,” if we mean by this that Luke thinks Jesus’ disciples witnessed their lord’s ascension on a Sabbath.⁵⁶² There is no indication, either explicit or implied, that Jesus’ ascension occurred on a Sabbath in Acts. Luke claims in Acts 1:3 that Jesus showed himself to his disciples

⁵⁶¹ The different measurements in Josephus, five vs. six stadia, can be explained in the following manner: *Ant.* 20:169 refers not to the distance between Jerusalem and the Mount of Olives proper, but to the *location* of the Roman encampment, while the *J.W.* 5:70 describes the distance between the mount and the city. See Conzelmann, *Acts of the Apostles*, 9; Doering, *Schabbat*, 154; Eb. Nestle, “Zu Acta 1:12,” *ZNW* 3 (1902): 247–49.

⁵⁶² So Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 213. Of course, I agree with Fitzmyer that Luke is generally concerned in portraying the followers of Jesus as Torah observant, but in this passage there is no indication that he thinks the disciples’ walk from the Mt. of Olives to Jerusalem took place on a Sabbath.

“during forty days” (δι’ ἡμερῶν τεσσαράκοντα).⁵⁶³ If we read this verse in light of Luke 24:1, which states that Jesus rose early on the first day of the week, a forty-day count until Jesus’ final “rapture” would not fall on a Sabbath as the following table reveals:⁵⁶⁴

Table 7-1

Sunday: Resurrection (day 1)	Monday (day 2)	Tuesday (day 3)	Wednesday (day 4)	Thursday (day 5)	Friday (day 6)	Sabbath (day 7)
Sunday (day 8)	Monday (day 9)	Tuesday (day 10)	Wednesday (day 11)	Thursday (day 12)	Friday (day 13)	Sabbath (day 14)
Sunday (day 15)	Monday (day 16)	Tuesday (day 17)	Wednesday (day 18)	Thursday (day 19)	Friday (day 20)	Sabbath (day 21)
Sunday (day 22)	Monday (day 23)	Tuesday (day 24)	Wednesday (day 25)	Thursday (day 26)	Friday (day 27)	Sabbath (day 28)
Sunday (day 29)	Monday (day 30)	Tuesday (day 31)	Wednesday (day 32)	Thursday (day 33)	Friday (day 34)	Sabbath (day 35)
Sunday (day 36)	Monday (day 37)	Tuesday (day 38)	Wednesday (day 39)	Thursday: Ascension (day 40)	Friday (day 41)	Sabbath (day 42)

According to this chart, which places Luke 24:1 and Acts 1:3 next to each other (whether Luke would have read his narrative in such a rigid sequence is another question), Jesus’ departure would have taken place on a Thursday, not on a Sabbath. As Pervo notes, the reference to a Sabbath journey in Acts 1:12 is “merely a rough measure of distance, not an indication that the incident occurred on a Saturday.”⁵⁶⁵ Pervo adds that through the employment of Jewish measurement the “characters and narrative are firmly located in a world of Torah observance.”⁵⁶⁶ This statement, while true, can in my opinion

⁵⁶³ The use of *διά* with the genitive of time describes “time within which.” See Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 203; BDF § 223.1.

⁵⁶⁴ Cf. Barrett, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 1:86.

⁵⁶⁵ Richard I. Pervo, *Acts*, 46 n. 51. See Mayer-Haas, *Geschenk*, 379 n. 506.

⁵⁶⁶ Pervo, *Acts*, 46. Zmijewski, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, 75, sees the reference to the Sabbath limits only as an attempt by Luke to underline in a solemn way the return of the disciples to Jerusalem, which marks the beginning of the “age of the church.”

be further exploited. The “holy measurement”⁵⁶⁷ used in Acts 1:12 provides more than just a literary “background” describing Jewish scenery for a Gentile audience. Not only are the characters and narrative inscribed within a world of Torah observance, but also *the author and the readers* of Acts are familiar with these Jewish landmarks and find these categories meaningful for dividing and describing their space and time.

These observations could possibly be taken one step further, once the custom of over reading Luke-Acts in a purely Greek and Gentile Christian environment is set aside: could this description indicate that *Luke* respects the Sabbath limits?⁵⁶⁸ Hopefully in our age, such a suggestion should no longer seem so outrageous, especially when serious attention is given to Luke’s thorough usage of Jewish chronological and geographical measurements elsewhere in Acts, particularly in his report of Paul’s itinerary. Recently, Stökl Ben Ezra has pointed to an important feature concerning Luke’s usage of the Jewish calendric system, arguing that Luke observes Yom Kippur.⁵⁶⁹ During Paul’s final journey to Rome, the author of Acts refers to Yom Kippur in order to chronologically situate the itinerary of the apostle to the Gentiles: “. . . we came to a place called Fair Havens, near the city of Lasea. Since much time had been lost and sailing was now dangerous, because even *the Fast* had already gone by, Paul advised them” (Act 27:8–9). Scholars largely agree that the Fast (τὴν νηστείαν) mentioned here refers to Yom

⁵⁶⁷ Otto Bauernfeind, *Die Apostelgeschichte* (THKNT 5; Leipzig: A. Deichert, 1939), 23: “heiligen Maßes.”

⁵⁶⁸ Contra Turner, “The Sabbath, Sunday, and the Law in Luke/Acts,” in *From Sabbath to Lord’s Day*, 124: “From 1:12 we may deduce nothing about early church Sabbath theology and little more about their Sabbath practice.”

⁵⁶⁹ Stökl Ben Ezra, “‘Christians’ Observing ‘Jewish’ Festivals of Autumn,” in *The Image of the Judaeo-Christians in Ancient Jewish and Christian Literature*, 53–73; *The Impact of Yom Kippur on Early Christianity: The Day of Atonement from Second Temple Judaism to the Fifth Century* (WUNT 163; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003).

Kippur.⁵⁷⁰ The casual manner in which Yom Kippur appears in this passage is quite striking, leading some commentators to even deduce that Paul observes Yom Kippur, since they see a close relationship between the author of Luke-Acts and Paul.⁵⁷¹ But this reading of Acts, as is often the case, looks back into the pre-70 era in order to gather whatever precious kernel may be found about the first generation of Jesus' followers, while overlooking what a casual reference could also mean to Luke. Given the employment here, or at least retention, of a Jewish calendric reference for describing a secular problem, one natural, exegetical reflex would be to posit that Luke observes the Day of Atonement.⁵⁷²

This hardly constitutes the only instance in Acts where Luke brackets Paul's traveling with Jewish chronological parameters. In Acts 20:6, Luke reports that Paul and his companions set sail from Philippi only *after* the end of the *festival of Unleavened*

⁵⁷⁰ Stökl Ben Ezra, *The Impact of Yom Kippur on Early Christianity*, 215: "Commentators are unanimous in interpreting ἡ νηστεία as referring to the fast of Yom Kippur. The word νηστεία appears with complete neutrality in the context, without polemical or pejorative accretions. In the same way, a modern Jew would understand a friend saying in late summer that he will return 'after the holidays' as meaning at the end of Sukkot. We can therefore assume that the attitude of Luke and his addressees to the fast of the Day of Atonement was to that of a revered and observed festival." Earlier on in the history of research, the reference to Yom Kippur in Acts 27:9 led Edward Carus Selwyn, *St. Luke the Prophet* (London: Macmillan, 1901), 37 n. 1, to consider its author a Jew: "None but a Jew would use this expression."

⁵⁷¹ Conzelmann, *Acts of the Apostles*, 216; James D.G. Dunn, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Narrative Commentaries; Valley Forge, Penn.: Trinity Press International, 1996), 338; R.P.C. Hanson, *The Acts in the Revised Standard Version* (The New Clarendon Bible; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), 245; Eugène Jacquier, *Les Actes des apôtres* (EBib 18; Paris: J. Gabalda, 1926), 726; LeCornu and Shulam, *The Jewish Roots of Acts*, 2:1443.

⁵⁷² Stökl Ben Ezra, "'Christians' Observing 'Jewish' Festivals of Autumn," 62. The fact that Acts 27:9 is located within the so-called "we-sections" of the book does not deter from this argument. Stökl Ben Ezra points to the weakness of this counterargument: it would mean that the author blindly copied from his source without modifying it for his audience. Contra Reidar Hvalvik, "Paul as a Jewish Believer—According to the Book of Acts," in *Jewish Believers in Jesus: The Early Centuries* (ed. Oskar Skarsaune and Reidar Hvalvik; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 2007), 143. n.115, who thinks Stökl Ben Ezra over interprets Acts 27:9. Hvalvik mentions three possible readings for Acts 27:9: 1) it was taken from a tradition with no special interest for Luke; 2) it is editorial and shows Luke's interest in depicting Paul as a pious Jew; 3) it is historical. The first suggestion is hardly convincing, since Luke could have easily edited his material if such a chronological parameter was meaningless. The second suggestion fails to properly address *why* Luke is portraying Paul in such a manner. Even if the third suggestion were correct, we would still have to discern why Luke retains such a reference in such a casual way. Even Hvalvik wonders why Luke uses Jewish feasts to date important events but provides an unsatisfying answer: they indicate in Luke's view their importance for Paul.

Bread.⁵⁷³ In Acts 20:16, Luke's Paul decides to sail past Ephesus, because of his concern to arrive in Jerusalem in time for *Pentecost*. In fact, the whole book of Acts is permeated with Jewish chronology, referring multiple times to Paul's visits to various synagogues throughout the Diaspora on the Sabbath. Quite significantly, Luke *never* portrays Paul as setting out to travel on the Sabbath or on other Jewish festivals; neither does he ever speak of such events in pejorative terms when employing them to organize his narrative. These observations may indeed support the claim that Luke himself also honors the Sabbath limits. Hopefully, this point will become more apparent to the reader in the subsequent sections of this chapter.⁵⁷⁴

Visiting the Synagogue at Antioch of Pisidia

Passage

13:14: “. . . but they went on from Perga and came to Antioch in Pisidia. And on the sabbath day they went into the synagogue and sat down.”

13:27: “Because the residents of Jerusalem and their leaders did not recognize him or understand the words of the prophets that are read every sabbath, they fulfilled those words by condemning him.”

13:42: “As Paul and Barnabas were going out, the people urged them to speak about these things again the next sabbath.”

13:44: “The next sabbath almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord.”

⁵⁷³ Following Jervell, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, 499, such time references constitute more than a mere dating of events. Luke does not just enjoy outlining his narrative according to Jewish feasts, but ties them to the central character of his work, Paul. This certainly means that Luke sees Paul as a Passover keeper but it also could indicate that he (i.e., the redactor) keeps the festival. Moreover, if Luke is indeed the author of the “we passages,” as some continue to argue (see, e.g., Wolter, *Das Lukasevangelium*, 8), it seems even more likely that he would have kept Passover with Paul during their mutual excursions (to the extent that such reports reflect historical reality).

⁵⁷⁴ In addition to these references, we should notice Luke's depiction of Jesus' submission to Jewish rhythms of life: Luke 2:41–42: “Now every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the festival of the Passover. And when he was twelve years old, they went up as usual for *the festival*”; 2:21–22: “*After eight days* had passed, it was time to circumcise the child; and he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb. When *the time came for their purification* according to the law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord” (2:22). Cf. the circumcision of John the Baptist: “*On the eighth day* they came to circumcise the child, and they were going to name him Zechariah after his father” (1:59). Cf. Luke 4:16; 23:56.

Literary Context

In the following verses, Luke makes his first explicit reference to Paul's entrance into a synagogue on the Sabbath, although previous passages in Acts already place the apostle in synagogue space (9:20; 13:5). While these earlier sections do not explicitly refer to the Sabbath, Luke most likely presupposes such a timeframe for them, given his penchant elsewhere for timing Paul's delivery of the gospel at such a suitable moment as the Sabbath when the largest crowd would be present to hear the reading and exposition of scriptures in the synagogue.⁵⁷⁵

Acts 13:14, 27, 42, and 44 appear within a much larger section, beginning in v. 13 and ending in v. 52. Verses 13–52 in turn belong to an even larger account reporting Paul's "first missionary journey." Beginning in 13:1, Paul and Barnabas are dispatched on their first mission by the *ekklesia* of Antioch (Syria) and travel first to the island of Cyprus (13:4–12). After their stay in Cyprus, Paul and Barnabas sail to Perge, in the province of Pamphylia (Asia Minor), and eventually arrive to Pisidian Antioch (v.14a). Upon their arrival, they visit the local synagogue on the Sabbath day. Next follows a lengthy description of Paul's preaching and interaction with the local synagogue and populace, which can be roughly outlined in the following way:

Arrival in Pisidian Antioch (v.14)

First Sabbath Reference (14b)

Synagogue Service (15–16a)

Reading of the Law and the Prophets (15a)

Call for Exhortation (15b)

Paul's Initiative (16a)

Paul's Sermon (16b–41)

History of Israel from the Exodus to David (17–23)

Ministry of John the Baptist (24–25)

Death and Resurrection of Jesus (26–31)

⁵⁷⁵ A Sabbath setting should also be presupposed in the subsequent chapter (14:1), when Paul enters the synagogue of Iconium and delivers his gospel message.

- Second Sabbath Reference* (27)
- Announcement of the Fulfillment of the Gospel in Scripture (32–37)
- Proclamation of Israel’s *Release* from Sins (38–39)
- Solemn Warning (40–41)
- Reception and Rejection of Paul and Barnabas in Antioch (42–52)
 - Third Sabbath Reference*: Invitation to Preach on the Following Sabbath (42)
 - Jews and Proselytes Becomes Followers (43)
 - Fourth Sabbath Reference*: Second Sabbath Visit to the Synagogue (44)
 - Confrontation with the “Jews” (45–51)
 - Joy of the Disciples (52)

The sermon (according to v. 15, a “word of exhortation”), purportedly delivered by Paul, is not historical.⁵⁷⁶ It shares many parallels with the sermons of Peter (Acts chs. 2, 3, and 10), Stephen (ch.7), but especially for our purposes with the sermon of Jesus delivered on the Sabbath in the synagogue of Nazareth (Luke 4:16–31).⁵⁷⁷ Paul’s sermon begins with a brief recounting of Israel’s history (17–23) from the Exodus to king David (according to Luke, an ancestor of Jesus) as well as the ministry of John the Baptist (24–25). Paradoxically according to Luke, Jesus has brought about deliverance to Israel through his unexpected death, but the Lukan Paul claims this tragic event conforms to the divine plan outlined in scripture. Moreover, the resurrection of Jesus shows that he had indeed been entrusted with a special mission of redemption in the grand scheme of divine will (vv. 26–31). Within this unit appears the second Sabbath reference: Luke’s Paul claims that those living in Jerusalem and their rulers, not recognizing Jesus nor the words of the prophets, *which are read every Sabbath* (τὰς φωνὰς τῶν προφητῶν τὰς κατὰ πᾶν σάββατον ἀναγιγνωσκομένας), fulfilled divine will despite themselves by condemning

⁵⁷⁶ Pervo, *Acts*, 334: “The speech fully exposes the unhistorical character of the missionary speeches in Acts. Although it purports to be a speech of Paul in a Diaspora synagogue, even a superficial reading indicates that the sermon is directed to the readers of the book rather than to the dramatic audience, which would have found much of it confusing and/or unintelligible.”

⁵⁷⁷ Pervo, *Acts*, 334.

Jesus to death (v.27). The following verses (32–37) point to a series of proof texts that seek to attribute these events to prophetic fulfillment and divine providence.⁵⁷⁸

In vv. 38–39, Paul announces the “release” (ἄφεσις) of Israel from her sins (ἁμαρτιῶν): Israel can now be “made right”/“released” from all she was unable to rightly fulfill in the Law of Moses (ἀπὸ πάντων ὧν οὐκ ἠδυνήθητε ἐν νόμῳ Μωϋσέως δικαιωθῆναι), if she collectively recognizes the messiahship of Jesus (v.39). The very brief language employed here echoes some of the themes found in Pauline theology. Luke tersely ties the Jesus event to the announcement of forgiveness/release from sins but does not further elaborate on this topic.⁵⁷⁹ On the other hand, the reference to ἄφεσις picks up a favorite theme of Luke already announced during Jesus’ “inaugural address” in Nazareth (Luke 4:18–21). Here, as in Luke ch. 4, the Sabbath day and the synagogue space become vehicles for announcing the jubilarious age of freedom and deliverance from sin and suffering. The final two verses of Paul’s sermon (v.40–41) end with a solemn warning to heed to the proclamation of his message.

After the homily, the synagogue members entreat Paul and Barnabas to return the following Sabbath (εἰς τὸ μεταξὺ σάββατον; v.42) for a further presentation. Once they leave the synagogue, a train of many Jews and devout proselytes (πολλοὶ τῶν Ἰουδαίων καὶ τῶν σεβομένων προσηλύτων)⁵⁸⁰ follows Paul and Barnabas. From Luke’s perspective,

⁵⁷⁸ Ps 2:7; 16:10; Isa 55:3.

⁵⁷⁹ LeCornu and Shulam, *Jewish Roots of Acts*, 1:739–743, who read v. 38–39 in light of 11Q Melchizedek, a text announcing the release from bondage to sin. See Jervell, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, 361, who links the forgiveness of sins with the enthronement of Jesus. Verses 38–39 cannot be taken as evidence that for Luke the Law is no longer necessary to keep. The Jewish Law is still necessary among other things to signal and preserve Israel’s identity. So Jervell *Die Apostelgeschichte*, 361; Klinghardt, *Gesetz und Volk Gottes*, 108.

⁵⁸⁰ Perhaps, in this instance σεβομένων προσηλύτων refers to full converts (involving circumcision in the case of males), given the juxtaposition here of the participle with the noun. These people appear to constitute part of the addressees in vv. 16 and 26. There the terms φοβούμενοι τὸν θεόν probably refer to full

these individuals have become followers of Jesus, because Paul and Barnabas persuade them to remain in the grace of God (ἔπειθον αὐτοὺς προσμένειν τῇ χάριτι τοῦ θεοῦ).⁵⁸¹ Up until this point, no controversy over Paul’s message and activity emerges. Only on the following Sabbath (τῷ δὲ ἐρχομένῳ σαββάτῳ), when Luke hyperbolically claims that almost the whole city gathered at the synagogue, do “the Jews,”⁵⁸² allegedly out of jealousy over the size of the Gentile crowds, interrupt and confront Paul and Barnabas.⁵⁸³ In reply to such opposition, the two ambassadors of Jesus announce their intent to bring their message to the Gentiles (v.46–47).⁵⁸⁴ While this declaration enralls the Gentiles

converts as well, since they are addressed as belonging to the brothers and descendants of Abraham (Ἄνδρες ἀδελφοί, υἱοὶ γένους Ἀβραάμ καὶ οἱ ἐν ὑμῖν φοβούμενοι τὸν θεόν; 13:26). On the following Sabbath, Luke claims synagogue attendance had reached its full capacity (13:44). This time Luke surely envisions the presence of Gentiles (v.48). Elsewhere (16:14, 17:4, 17 and 18:7), *σεβόμενοι* probably refers to Gentiles. The other term *φοβούμενος* can refer to non-Jews who sympathize with Judaism and Jewish society (10:22; 10:35; 13:16; 13:26; 27:17). Following Robert S. MacLennan and A. Thomas Kraabel, “The God-Fearers—A literary and Theological Invention,” *BAR* 12 (1986): 47–53, these terms should not be understood in a rigid, technical sense (depending on the literature or inscription, they may refer at times to Jews or even pagans who have nothing to do with Judaism). In addition, their sympathy to Jewish society should not always be reduced to religious interests. At times, their support for the local Jewish community may stem from economic, civic, political, and social interests. Nevertheless, it is undeniable that a number of non-Jews felt attracted to the customs and beliefs of Jews throughout the Roman Empire as evidenced in both Greco-Roman and Jewish literature.

⁵⁸¹ Cf. Acts 11:23: “When he came and saw the grace of God (τὴν χάριν τοῦ θεοῦ), he rejoiced, and he exhorted them all to remain faithful to the Lord (προσμένειν τῷ κυρίῳ) with steadfast devotion”; 14:22: “There they strengthened the souls of the disciples and encouraged them to continue in the faith” (ἐμμένειν τῇ πίστει). The usage of the verb *πειθω* in the sense of persuading appears prominently in Acts (13:43, 18:4; 19:8, 26; 26:28; 28:23).

⁵⁸² I hope address the problematic usage of “the Jews” in a second book I would like to write on Luke-Acts. Needless to say, “the Jews” cannot refer here to all the Jewish populace of Pisidian Antioch, since Paul and Barnabas have already gained many Jews along with their devout proselytes to their cause. Luke presents here a division among the Jewish people over the issue of the gospel message: some side with Paul and Barnabas; others oppose them.

⁵⁸³ This phenomenon, which is repeated in 17:1–5, shows that many Jews in the Diaspora were concerned with the social-political repercussions upon their communities the public success of the gospel among Gentiles could bring. Cf. Klinghardt, *Gesetz und Volkes Gottes*, 235. Wolfgang Stegemann, *Zwischen Synagoge und Obrigkeit: Zur historischen Situation der lukanischen Christen* (FRLANT 152; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1991), 97–110.

⁵⁸⁴ This declaration does not mean that Paul and Barnabas will no longer preach to Jews, since immediately after their departure from Pisidian Antioch, they enter into another synagogue in Iconium and speak to both Jews and Greeks (presumably occurring on the Sabbath as well; see 14:1). The same comments apply to the Gentiles: Paul has already received his call to preach to the Gentile prior to this occasion (9:15), and certain Gentiles have already heard the good news (e.g., Cornelius). No radical transition occurs here whereby Luke fully gives up on the Jews and now only gazes at the Gentile horizon. Actually, the preaching to the

(v.48),⁵⁸⁵ “the Jews,” according to Luke, succeed in convincing the “devout women of high standing” (τὰς σεβομένας γυναῖκας τὰς εὐσχήμονας)⁵⁸⁶ and the leaders of the city (τοὺς πρώτους τῆς πόλεως) to drive Paul and Barnabas out of the city (v.50).⁵⁸⁷ Paul and Barnabas are now forced to move out of Antioch and subsequently make their way to

Gentiles does not occur because of the Jewish rejection of the Gospel, which is already anticipated in 1:8—it only induces God’s predetermined design that had been set from the beginning. Cf. Mayer-Haas, *Geschenk*, 381–82; Pesch, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, 2:47: “keine Absage an die Judenmission.”

⁵⁸⁵ 13:47–48 indicate that ἕως ἑσχάτου τῆς γῆς in Acts 1:8 should probably be understood as a reference to Gentile outreach.

⁵⁸⁶ These women are probably not of Jewish origin, since “the Jews” incite them. So Barrett, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 1:659. On other prominent women joining the Jesus movement in Acts, see 16:14; 17:4, 12, 34. See also Shelly Matthews, *First Converts: Rich Pagan Women and the Rhetoric of Mission in Early Judaism and Christianity* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2001).

⁵⁸⁷ Luke’s reference to the alleged “jealousy” of the “Jews” is charged with polemical texture and obviously only conveys *his* subjective perspective on a delicate and complicated issue concerning Jewish-Gentile relations in the Roman Empire. From a historical perspective, I find helpful for the elucidation of the conflicts between Luke’s disciples and other Jews in the Diaspora to adapt and adopt some of the ideas presented by Paula Fredriksen, “What ‘Parting of the Ways’?: Jews, Gentiles, and the Ancient Mediterranean City,” in *The Ways That Never Parted*, 35–63. Briefly stated, the Romans had granted certain privileges to the Jewish people, among others, the right to practice their customs without having to fully participate in the polytheistic and imperial cults (e.g., by offering sacrifices) of the mainstream culture. However, these privileges were contingent on the care of the Jews not to offend the customs of the other surrounding peoples whose limited tolerance could disintegrate if Jews successfully and visibly turned Gentiles into exclusive monotheists. Many of the so-called God-fearers in the first century continued to participate in local polytheistic cults and other idolatrous acts that were forbidden to Jews. It was in the interest of the Jews, therefore, not to demand that these Gentiles give up those practices. By contrast, the radical Jewish Jesus movement demanded that non-Jews fully give up idolatry and become exclusive monotheists. This act provoked many non-Jews and subverted the delicate social status quo existing between Jews and Gentiles, particularly in times of conflict (e.g., during and after the first Jewish Revolt, the time when Luke-Acts was written). This explains why said Jews in Acts repeatedly attempt to clarify their position to the local civil authorities by distancing themselves from the Jesus movement and claiming that they do not endorse the subversive actions generated by such zealous messianism. This model also accounts for Luke’s resentment toward other Jews for not fully embarking on his project. He is bewildered by the fact that “the Jews” are not rejoicing at the good news announced by the Jesus movement: despite the Roman occupation, Israel still has a Davidic king who is enthroned in heaven. Moreover, God has demonstrated his faithfulness to Israel by raising Jesus from the dead. A new era is proclaimed under the heavenly reign of Jesus granting Israel release from her sins. Finally, Israel is going to re-achieve its supremacy as many Gentiles gradually free themselves from the yoke of idolatry and their wicked ways and join Israel in serving the one true God. In a sense, Luke is disappointed that his form of Judaism is more zealous and “Jewish” than that of his compatriots. Too many of them, from his perspective, have become complacent with the status quo with Rome and are “jealous” at the success of the Jesus message among Gentiles.

Iconium. Nevertheless, Luke, true to his optimistic spirit, ends this section with a triumphant note: “the disciples were filled with joy and the Holy Spirit” (v.52).⁵⁸⁸

Interpretation

In this large pericope, the author of Acts reveals his remarkable familiarity with the Sabbath program held in the Diasporan synagogue by describing many of its features including the customary “reading of the law and the prophets” (τὴν ἀνάγνωσιν τοῦ νόμου καὶ τῶν προφητῶν), the presence of the synagogue officials (οἱ ἀρχισυναγωγοί), as well as the delivery of a word of exhortation (λόγος παρακλήσεως). The practice of reading the Jewish scriptures on the Sabbath is well attested in Philo (*Somn.* 2:127; *Prob.* 81–83; *Legat.* 156–57, 311–13) and Josephus (*Ant.* 16:43 and *Ag. Ap.* 2:175). In *Somn.* 2:127, Philo refers to acts that parallel many of the features in Acts 13: sitting down in the synagogue (Philo: καθεδεῖσθε ἐν τοῖς συναγωγαῖς; Acts 13:14: ἐλθόντες εἰς τὴν συναγωγὴν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῶν σαββάτων ἐκάθισαν); the reading of scriptures (Philo: τὰς ἱερὰς βίβλους ἀναγινώσκοντες; Acts 13:15: τὴν ἀνάγνωσιν τοῦ νόμου καὶ τῶν προφητῶν); a message of exposition or exhortation (Philo, in terms of philosophical exposition of scripture: διαπτύσσοντες καὶ τῇ πατρίῳ φιλοσοφίᾳ διὰ μακρηγορίας ἐνευκαιροῦντές τε καὶ ἐνσχολάζοντες; Acts 13:15, in terms of exhortation for the Jewish people: λόγος παρακλήσεως πρὸς τὸν λαόν).⁵⁸⁹ The term used for designating the synagogue officials (οἱ ἀρχισυναγωγοί) appears in Acts 18:8, 17; Luke 8:49; 13:14 (in the singular) and is also

⁵⁸⁸ This is the positive way in which the author of Acts will also choose to end his entire work, claiming that Paul, despite his ejection from Jerusalem and imprisonment in Rome, continued without hindrance to proclaim the gospel in all openness and confidence (28:31).

⁵⁸⁹ *Prob.* 81–83, referring to the gathering, sitting, reading, and allegorical teaching of scripture in the synagogues every seventh day.

attested in inscriptions.⁵⁹⁰ It seems to correspond to the Hebrew term *שַׁבָּת הַכְּנָסָה* (e.g., *m. Sotah* 7:7, 8). Luke's rich description of the synagogue habitat provides precious information on first century synagogue life.⁵⁹¹

More significantly for this analysis, Luke's descriptions of Sabbath synagogue services reveal his own interest and interaction with this environment. This becomes apparent through Luke's sustained portraits of Jesus and Paul's visits to synagogues on the Sabbath in which literary parallels and structural patterns may be discerned. Thus Acts 13:13–52 matches in many ways Luke 4:16–30. Both passages begin with similar openings. In Luke 4:16, Jesus comes to Nazareth (*ἦλθεν εἰς Ναζαρά*) and enters the synagogue on the Sabbath according to his custom (*εἰσῆλθεν κατὰ τὸ εἰωθὸς αὐτῷ ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῶν σαββάτων εἰς τὴν συναγωγὴν*); in Acts 13:14, Paul and Barnabas arrive in Antioch of Pisidia (*παρεγένοντο εἰς Ἀντιόχειαν*) and visit the local synagogue (*ελθόντες εἰς τὴν συναγωγὴν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῶν σαββάτων ἐκάθισαν*). Both passages refer to the reading of the scriptures. In Luke 4:16–17, Jesus stands and reads from the book of Isaiah (*ἀνέστη ἀναγνῶναι καὶ ἐπεδόθη αὐτῷ βιβλίον τοῦ προφήτου Ἡσαΐου . . .*), while in Acts apparently the local members, perhaps, the *ἀρχισυναγωγοί*, read from the Law and the Prophets (*τὴν ἀνάγνωσιν τοῦ νόμου καὶ τῶν προφητῶν*; v.15). In Acts 13:27, Luke refers again to the reading of the scriptures on the Sabbath (*τὰς φωνὰς τῶν προφητῶν τὰς κατὰ πᾶν*

⁵⁹⁰ Lee Levine, *The Ancient Synagogue: The First Thousand Years* (2d ed.; New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2005), 415–27.

⁵⁹¹ Levine, *The Ancient Synagogue*, 116: “Much has been written about the historical reliability of Acts—from the more skeptical to the largely accepting. Theological agendas aside, one may assume that the specific events reported, especially those relating to the synagogue, are largely credible. The author was certainly familiar with the Jewish Diaspora and wrote for Christian Diaspora communities. It is hard to imagine that he would invent accounts for a population that knew a great deal about the synagogue, its workings, and Paul's activities.” The main force of Levine's statement lies in underscoring the familiarity of Luke with the synagogue world, not the historical reliability of his depiction of Paul's visits, speeches, and interaction with such an environment, which must be confirmed on an individual basis.

σάββατον ἀναγινωσκομένης).⁵⁹² Finally, both Luke’s Jesus and Paul anticipate their rejection when delivering their sermons (Luke 4:23–27/Acts 13:40–41) which they ultimately experience at the local synagogue. In light of these literary correspondences, it seems safe to infer that all of the verses in Acts 13 referring to the Sabbath (13:14, 27, 42, and 44) are redactional. They may indeed open a window onto the redactor’s own horizon and experience: Luke has regularly attended the synagogue, knows of the customary readings and exposition of scripture, and interprets them christologically for his readers. Equally remarkable is the assumption on Luke’s part that his readers also know a great deal about synagogue life, as he feels no need to explain such features to them.

Finally, in contradistinction to the portrayal of Jesus’ Sabbath practice in the gospel of Luke, no controversy arises here over the Sabbath practice of the Jewish disciples of Jesus (i.e., Paul and Barnabas). While the Lukan Jesus announces the “release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind” (Luke 4:18), and then immediately proceeds to perform healings and exorcisms on the Sabbath (Luke 4:31–39; cf. 6:1–11; 13:10–17; 14:1–6), Luke’s Paul only proclaims Israel’s release from her sins (Acts 13:38–39) and refrains throughout Acts from performing any controversial act on the Sabbath. This dissonance between Luke and Acts discourages too hastily equating Jesus’ Sabbath praxis as portrayed in the gospel of Luke with the current Sabbath praxis advocated by the same redactor. In Acts, the controversy between followers of Jesus and other Jews focuses on the apparent success of the gospel, particularly among Gentiles, not the question of Sabbath keeping. By contrast, in the gospel of Luke, controversy

⁵⁹² This motif appears at several important junctures throughout Luke’s two works. Cf. Acts 15:21; Acts 8:30 (the Ethiopian eunuch reads the scriptures but is unable to understand its prophetic fulfillment until Philip unveils it for him); Luke 24:27, and so on.

centers on Jesus' unique authority and how this affects his manner of observing the Law. But as the center of narration gradually shifts from the persona of Jesus in the gospel of Luke to his followers in Acts, polemics regarding Sabbath practice completely disappear. In Acts, the Jewish followers of Jesus appear simply as characters who are thoroughly familiar with the normal protocols carried out on a regular Sabbath day in the synagogue realm. From Luke's perspective, the only reproach that can be held against them is their persistent endorsement of the gospel, a message entirely rooted in the Torah and the Prophets that announces the fulfillment of the divine promises made to the people of Israel.

Reading Moses on the Sabbath

Passage

15:21: "For in every city, for generations past, Moses has had those who proclaim him, for he has been read aloud every sabbath in the synagogues."

Literary Context

Acts 15:21, purportedly "one of the most difficult verses in the New Testament,"⁵⁹³ appears at the heart of Acts, in a chapter reporting the so-called Jerusalem Council, a gathering brought to order (at least according to Luke) because of the controversy regarding the circumcision of Gentiles (15:1). The matter is fully resolved among the apostles, so Luke would have his readers believe, once James, the brother of Jesus and head of the *ekklesia* in Jerusalem, delivers his approval in a speech that has been dubbed in German a *Miniaturrede* (15:41–21).⁵⁹⁴ The speech itself, characterized

⁵⁹³ Martin Dibelius, *Studies in the Acts of the Apostles* (trans. Mary Ling; London: SCM Press, 1956), 97.

⁵⁹⁴ Eckhard Plümacher, *Lukas als hellenistischer Schriftsteller. Studien zur Apostelgeschichte* (SUNT 9; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1972), 47.

(with the exception of v. 20b) by a strong usage and mimesis of the Septuagint language that appears so prominently in the gospel of Luke and Acts, is thoroughly redactional.⁵⁹⁵

The intriguing statement about the Sabbath appears at the end of James' discourse on the "Apostolic Decree." This decree proclaims that Gentiles should abstain only "from things polluted by idols and from fornication and from whatever has been strangled and from blood" (15:19–20).

Redactional Analysis

Μωϋσῆς: The proper noun appears 10 times in Luke, 20 times in Acts. It is used in this passage in reference to the Torah (cf. Luke 16:29, 31).⁵⁹⁶

ἐκ γενεῶν ἀρχαίων: Probably the entire prepositional phrase is redactional as γενεά is frequently used by Luke (10 times in Luke, 5 times in Acts), while ἀρχαῖος also appears in the genitive plural in Luke 9:8 (προφήτης τις τῶν ἀρχαίων), which itself is a Lukan rewording of Mark 6:15 (προφήτης ὡς εἷς τῶν προφητῶν). This same construction appears again in Luke 9:19 (cf. Mark 8:27/Matt 16:14 where ἀρχαίων is absent). Earlier in Acts 15:7, the construction ἀφ' ἡμερῶν ἀρχαίων appears in the mouth of Peter, also a Lukan composition.

κατὰ πόλιν: The usage of the preposition κατὰ plus the accusative reflects Lukan style (Luke: 37x; Acts: 74x). Besides a few attestations in Titus 1:5; Ign. *Rom.* 9:3 and *Mart. Pol.* 5:1, the combination of κατὰ with the noun πόλις in the accusative appears meanly in Luke and Acts

⁵⁹⁵ The very citation of the Gentile friendly LXX version of Amos 9:11–12, which is placed in the mouth of James, makes it more than likely that the speech has been largely redacted by Luke. Amos 9:12/Acts 15:17 refer to Gentiles in a positive way, prophesying how many of them will one day seek the God of Israel. The MT of Amos 9:12, however, contains a rather hostile reference concerning the nations, which the LXX has euphemized. It seems very unlikely that James, an Aramaic speaking Jew, would have recited the LXX in Greek at a gathering in Jerusalem. The whole harmonizing tendency of the speech as well as its Septuagintal style, so characteristic of Luke, point towards redaction (save for 15:20). See Wehnert, *Die Reinheit*, 41.

⁵⁹⁶ There is hardly any need to interpret Luke's reference to "Moses" as Daniel Schwartz, "The Futility of Preaching Moses (Acts 15, 21)," *Bib* 67 (1986): 280–81, does, claiming that Luke is relativizing the divine origin of the Law with the usage of this nomenclature.

(Luke 8:1, 4; Acts 15:36; 20:23; 24:12; *κατὰ πόλεις* also only in Luke 13:22). Thus, in Luke 8:1, Jesus goes through cities and villages *proclaiming* and announcing the kingdom of God (*κατὰ πόλιν καὶ κώμην κηρύσσω καὶ εὐαγγελιζόμενος τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ*). In Acts 15:21, it is Moses who is *proclaimed* in every city (*κατὰ πόλιν τοὺς κηρύσσοντας αὐτὸν*).⁵⁹⁷ In Acts 15:36, after the conclusion of the so-called Jerusalem Council, Paul and Barnabas decide to go through every city in which they had announced the word of the lord (*κατὰ πόλιν πᾶσαν ἐν αἷς κατηγγείλαμεν τὸν λόγον τοῦ κυρίου*).

ἐν ταῖς συναγωγαῖς: The synagogue is a favorite locale for Luke. The prepositional phrase *ἐν ταῖς συναγωγαῖς* appears four times in Acts (9:20; 13:5; 15:21; 24:12) and three times in Luke (4:15; 11:43; 20:46).

κατὰ πᾶν σάββατον: This construction appears only in Acts (13:27; 18:24). As noted earlier, Acts 13:27 is also redactional (see previous section).

ἀναγινωσκόμενος: a favorite Lukan term referring to the reading of the Jewish scriptures (cf. Luke 10:26; Acts 8:30; 13:27). 15:21b largely resembles a phrase from Acts 13:27:

τὰς φωνὰς τῶν προφητῶν τὰς κατὰ πᾶν σάββατον ἀναγινωσκομένας (13:27).

κατὰ πᾶν σάββατον ἀναγινωσκόμενος (15:21b).

Conclusion: the number of salient Lukan features points to the largely, if not entirely, redactional character of 15:21.

Interpretation

One of the major challenges lies in determining in what sense the conjunction *γὰρ* links v.21 with its previous statements (probably v.19 or v. 20). What does James, or

⁵⁹⁷ Wehnert, *Die Reinheit*, 46, suggests that the usage of *κηρύσσοντας* may in this instance be traditional, since normally Luke uses it as term denoting the proclamation of Jesus or the Christ, whereas here it refers to instruction from Jewish tradition (cf. Gal 5:11).

better, the author of Acts, mean with his declaration that Gentiles should not be troubled (v.19), but only avoid the pollution of idols, sexual immorality, strangled meat, and blood (v.20), “since” (γὰρ) Moses has (ἔχει)⁵⁹⁸ those who proclaim him every Sabbath in the synagogues? Trocmé suggests connecting v.21 exclusively with v.19 (“Therefore I have reached the decision that we should not trouble those Gentiles who are turning to God.”), maintaining that both verses stem from a same source, while v. 20 is a Lukan addition.⁵⁹⁹ This suggestion seems unlikely, since James’s *Miniature* is so thoroughly marked by Lukan composition. As Pervo correctly notes, “nothing from v. 16 through v. 20 makes a satisfactory link. Verse 20 wins by default.”⁶⁰⁰

Following, then, the many interpreters who tie v. 21 with its immediate antecedents in v. 20, I suggest, among the plethora of proposals, to highlight the apologetic dimension inherent in this connection.⁶⁰¹ Luke’s composition of v. 21 shows not only his concern for the problem of Torah praxis, but also reveals his concrete experience with the synagogue atmosphere of the Mediterranean basin. He has several fronts in mind when composing v. 21 (and much of Acts for that matter): 1) Gentile and

⁵⁹⁸ The translation of ἔχει in the present (so *The New American Standard Bible*) is to be preferred to the NRSV, which reads, “Moses has had those who proclaim him.” For Luke, the reading of the scriptures in the synagogue is as an *ongoing* and *present* reality.

⁵⁹⁹ Etienne Trocmé, *Le livre des Actes et l’histoire* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1957), 160–61.

⁶⁰⁰ Pervo, *Acts*, 378. The objection of Schwartz, “The Futility of Preaching Moses (Acts 15, 21),” 276–81, against reading Acts 15:21 as explaining v. 20 carries little weight. He points to the difficulty among commentators in explaining why only some Mosaic requirements are adopted and not others. Actually, many commentators have pointed to Lev 17–18 as the proper background for understanding the Apostolic Decree in Acts 15:20. Wehnert has recently solidified this proposal by pointing to the Targumic evidence (this is fully addressed in Part II of this monograph). Schwartz’s own proposal is not satisfactory: “James means only that since long and widespread Jewish experience shows that Gentiles will not (by and large) accept Mosaic law, a Christian attempt to impose it upon Gentiles (whether already converted or contemplating it) would be futile” (279). I do not think that “James” (which, in this case, really means Luke) has given up on the Gentiles because of previous, experimental failures. If we accept this argument, Luke should also give up requesting Gentiles to fully abandon idolatry and polytheism, since Jewish experience has equally demonstrated failure in this area.

⁶⁰¹ Vaguely formulated by Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 450: “It gives the justification for the immediately preceding verse 20. . . .” Similarly, Conzelmann, *Acts of the Apostles*, 120: “Perhaps the verse intends to substantiate the *decree*.” A concise summary of a number of proposals can be found in Schwartz, “The Futility of Preaching Moses,” 276–81.

Jewish followers of Jesus who have nearly or completely abandoned observing the ritual aspects of Torah; 2) Jewish followers of Jesus (and maybe some other Jews) who are demanding that Gentiles observe all of the Torah (including circumcision); 3) non-Christian Jews and certain Jewish followers of Jesus who not only suspect but also accuse segments within the Jesus movement of misleading their Jewish compatriots from observing the Torah (Acts 21:21; 28:17). Part of this suspicion arises from the extensive fellowship occurring in certain contexts between Jewish and Gentile followers of Jesus. In his three-frontline defense, Luke composes v. 21 and ties it with the so-called Apostolic Decree (part of his solution to this complicated problem) in order demonstrate how the apostolic decision is firmly grounded in the Torah of Moses. The Apostolic Decree is necessary to follow because it is anchored in the Torah of Moses, which is read aloud every week in the synagogue.⁶⁰² Gentile followers of Jesus are to follow this rigorous set of demands (e.g., to completely abandon idolatry)—they are not entirely dispensed from the Torah—that go well beyond what other (non-Christian) Diasporan Jews really expect from Gentile God-fearers, who for understandable social, economic, and political reasons continue to engage in idolatrous activity even while attending the synagogue.

Unfortunately, besides revealing his full acquaintance with the Sabbath services of the average Diasporan synagogue, Luke provides no other information in Acts 15:21 on the question of Sabbath observance proper. Perhaps, he even assumes with this verse that Jewish and Gentile followers of Jesus can readily and easily attend their local synagogue and listen to the reading of the Law of Moses every Sabbath. However, even

⁶⁰² Jervell, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, 399: “Nicht nur Jakobus, sondern vor allem Mose verbürgt die Autorität des Dekrets.”

with this assumption at hand, Acts 15:21 cannot be used to show that Luke *requires* Gentile followers of Jesus to keep the Sabbath.⁶⁰³ According to the Apostolic Decree, the laws incumbent upon non-Jews concern moral issues, some purity laws, as well as dietary practices that can allow for Jews and Gentiles to freely and extensively interact with each other. Sabbath keeping does not fall within the immediate circumference of Luke's concern for improving Jewish-Gentile relations, because a Gentile neglect of Sabbath observance need not in theory deter a practicing Jewish follower of Jesus from continuing to honor that day.⁶⁰⁴ Nevertheless, given the willingness and great sacrifice on the part of Gentile followers of Jesus to abandon idolatry and worship the one God of Israel, it seems likely that some might have voluntarily observed the Sabbath.⁶⁰⁵ Such spontaneous embrace would not be surprising, since Sabbath keeping was popular among Gentiles at

⁶⁰³ This is the direction that Bacchiocchi, *From Sabbath to Sunday*, 145–48, leans toward, but even he seems to acknowledge at this point that the evidence (albeit without distinguishing redactional and traditional features) speaks primarily in favor of Jewish followers of Jesus keeping the Sabbath. Of course, from Luke's perspective, the question of whether *Jews* should keep the Sabbath is entirely affirmative, since he assumes that they will keep the Torah *in toto*.

⁶⁰⁴ The absence of the Sabbath within the Apostolic Decree can hardly be taken as evidence for Sunday observance. Rordorf, *Sunday*, 219, interprets the silence of the Sabbath with the Apostolic Decree as "the most eloquent proof that the observance of Sunday had been recognized by the entire apostolic Church and had been adopted by the Pauline Churches." Similarly, Jewett, *The Lord's Day*, 56–57: "The fact that we find no hint of such [i.e., debate over the Sabbath], especially at the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15), indicates that in this matter the entire apostolic church, including the Jewish party, was in agreement. First-day worship, then, was not a Pauline invention." These observations are all beside the point. Luke needs to be replaced in his Second Temple Jewish context and compared with other Jewish authors who deal with the question of which Torah commandments are incumbent upon Gentiles and which ones only concern Jews. Like many other Jews, Luke assumes a distinction in Mosaic requirements for both groups.

⁶⁰⁵ Mayer-Haas, *Geschenk*, 368, sees Sabbath keeping as presupposed by Luke (presumably for Jew and Gentile), since it belongs to the legislation of the Ten Commandments: "Für den Autor der Apostelgeschichte ist die christliche Sabbatobservanz offensichtlich kein Thema, wobei er aber nirgendwo durchblicken läßt, daß Christen das Dekaloggebot der Sabbatruhe nicht praktizieren (sollen), so daß die Schlußfolgerung, für seine Adressaten sei dieses Gebot längst in Vergessenheit geraten, auf keinen Fall die Sachlage trifft. Eher handelt es sich bei dem Schweigen der Apostelgeschichte um die stillschweigende Anerkennung des hohen Stellenwertes, den das Sabbatgebot als Identitätszeichen des Judentums auch unter den Heidenchristen der lukanischen Gemeinde noch besaß." My unease with this proposal concerns the singling out of the Ten Commandments as a distinctive corpus of legislation enjoying a higher degree of authority and pertinence among Jews and Gentiles for which the evidence in Luke-Acts does not speak. Luke only signals the importance of the "moral" commandments contained in the the Decalogue; but there again in a Jewish context seeking to define the essence of the Torah without discarding its ritual components, which remain in force for Jews (Luke 18:20).

this juncture of history.⁶⁰⁶ Luke may have even encouraged such a behavior among non-Jews, calling them to embrace the fourth commandment as an expression of their release from idolatry and commitment to the service of the one true living God “who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them” (Acts 14:15).⁶⁰⁷ In any case, Acts 15:21 may at least indicate that that Luke does not *oppose* Gentile followers of Jesus (and certainly not Jewish followers of Jesus!) from keeping the Sabbath.⁶⁰⁸

Worshipping Outdoors on the Sabbath

Passage

16:12–15: “. . . and from there to Philippi, which is a leading city of the district of Macedonia and a Roman colony. We remained in this city for some days.

¹³ On the sabbath day we went outside the gate by the river, where we supposed there was a place of prayer; and we sat down and spoke to the women who had gathered there.

¹⁴ A certain woman named Lydia, a worshiper of God, was listening to us; she was from the city of Thyatira and a dealer in purple cloth. The Lord opened her heart to listen eagerly to what was said by Paul. ¹⁵ When she and her household were baptized, she urged us, saying, ‘If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come and stay at my home.’ And she prevailed upon us.”

Literary Context

This passage, which belongs to the so-called “we sections,” appears within a wider unit (16:11–40) reporting Paul’s missionary trip to Philippi. During their visit, Paul and his crew make contact on the Sabbath (τῆ τε ἡμέρα τῶν σαββάτων) with a local group of women at a place of prayer (προσευχήν). One of these women, Lydia, described as a

⁶⁰⁶ See Introduction to Part I of this monograph for a brief discussion and references in ancient and secondary sources.

⁶⁰⁷ This phrase, which appears in Acts 14:15, where Paul and Barnabas attempt to dissuade the non-Jews of Lystra from worshipping them as gods, is taken from the fourth commandment on the Sabbath as it appears in the LXX (Exod 20:11) although it might also have been inspired by LXX Ps 145:6 (the whole Psalm with its promise of healing and restoration for the blind and oppressed would have particularly pleased Luke). Luke has Paul and Barnabas recite a part of the Sabbath commandment to non-Jews in order to dissuade them from practicing idolatry (cf. Acts 4:24; 17:24) although he never explicitly calls upon Gentiles to observe the Sabbath as a universal celebration of creation. I would like to thank Anthony Kent for pointing my attention to these passages.

⁶⁰⁸ For more on Jewish attitudes toward Gentiles keeping the Sabbath, see my “Forming Jewish Identity by Formulating Legislation for Gentiles.”

worshiper of God and a dealer of purple cloth, becomes a follower of Jesus and is baptized along with the rest of her household. Later on during his extended stay in Philippi, Paul expels a spirit of divination (*πνεῦμα πύθωνα*) from a slave-girl (16:16–18). This exorcism does not seem to take place on a Sabbath even though v.16 indicates that Paul first encounters this girl on his way to the *προσευχήν*, the same place where he meets Lydia on a previous Sabbath. Ancient Jews, however, did not attend their places of prayer or synagogues only on the Sabbath. Furthermore, according to v.18, Paul frees the slave-girl from demonic possession only after she hassles him “for many days” (*ἐπὶ πολλὰς ἡμέρας*). The vague allure of this timeframe does not unequivocally reveal whether Paul performs this exorcism on a Sabbath or on some other day of the week, though the complete absence of any reference to healings or exorcisms occurring on the Sabbath throughout Acts probably speaks in favor of the latter option.

Analysis

Luke repeats the motif of introducing Paul (and his entourage) into a synagogue of the Diaspora on the Sabbath day. However, a slight variation to this literary pattern catches the reader’s attention: instead of entering a synagogue (*συναγωγή*), the locale Luke normally mentions in Acts, Paul searches for a “place of prayer” (*προσευχήν*) outside the gates of the city, somewhere near the river. The word *προσευχήν* can be used as a designation for a place of gathering for Jews. Thus, 3 Macc 7:20 refers to the dedication of a site as a place of prayer (*τόπον προσευχῆς*). Likewise, in his *Life* (280), Josephus refers to assembling in a place of prayer (*συναγόμενον ἤδη τὸ πλῆθος εἰς τὴν*

προσευχήν).⁶⁰⁹ Epigraphical and papyrological documents also attest to the usage of *proseuche* in reference to a synagogue building, particularly in the region of Egypt.⁶¹⁰ Some ancient sources indicate a preference among Jews in the Diaspora for building their synagogues near the sea.⁶¹¹ Josephus (*Ant.* 14.258) records the following decree made on behalf of the Jews of Halicarnassus: “We have decreed, that as many men and women of the Jews as are willing so to do, may celebrate their Sabbaths, and perform their holy offices, according to Jewish laws; and may make their places of prayer at the seaside” (τὰς προσευχὰς ποιεῖσθαι πρὸς τῇ θαλάττῃ). The reason for setting up prayer sites along the seaside is not entirely clear. Some scholars suggest Jews viewed the sea as a suitable location for performing purification rites.⁶¹² Others opine that certain Jews met outside the city gates in order to avoid confrontations with non-Jews.⁶¹³ Also unclear is whether the term *proseuche* refers in this instance to an actual building or to a more informal place of gathering, perhaps in the open air.⁶¹⁴ In the absence of any reference to the

⁶⁰⁹ Cf. Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 2.10; Philo, *Flacc.* 41, 45, 122; *Legat.* 152.

⁶¹⁰ Levine, *The Ancient Synagogue*, 127: 53% of the fifty-nine occurrences concerning Diaspora synagogues refer to a *proseuche*. The term is almost exclusively used in Hellenistic Egypt, the Bosphorus, and Delos, which account for almost all of the first century C.E. Diasporan evidence. For further discussions on the *proseuche*, see Levine, *The Ancient Synagogue*, 151–59.

⁶¹¹ Levine, *The Ancient Synagogue*, 106.

⁶¹² Cf. *Letter of Aristeas* 305, which speaks of the custom of all the Jews to wash their hands in the sea and pray to God; *Sib. Or.* 3:591–93: “For on the contrary, at dawn they lift up holy arms toward heaven, from their beds, always sanctifying their flesh [or “hands” depending on the manuscript] with water. . . .” Cf. *Sib. Or.* 4:165: “wash your whole bodies in perennial rivers.” The smaller number of ritual baths (*miqvaot*) discovered in Galilee than in Judea may be due to the presence of the Sea of Galilee, which served as a site for ritual immersion. See Magness, *Stone and Dung*, 16–17. For the practice of hand washing before praying as evidenced in the archaeological finds of Diasporan synagogues, see Anders Runesson, “Water and Worship: Ostia and the Ritual Bath in the Diaspora Synagogue,” in *The Synagogue of Ancient Ostia and the Jews of Rome* (eds. Birger Olsson et al.; Stockholm: P. Astroem, 2001), 115–29.

⁶¹³ Zmijewski, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, 607, who thinks that the Jews in Philippi constituted a small group seeking to avoid confrontation because of the supposed anti-Jewish sentiment prevalent in that city.

⁶¹⁴ Tertullian, *Ad nationes* 1.13, mentions the *orationes litorales* of the Jews. In his *De jejuniis adversus psychios* 16, he talks of Jews praying in the open air after the destruction of their temple. Mayer-Haas, *Geschenk*, 376, following Wolfgang Stegemann, *Zwischen Synagoge und Obrigkeit*, 211–14, thinks that in this instance the term does not refer to an established building, but to a secret site, since the ambassadors of Jesus have to look for a place outside the city gates and only find women gathered there.

reading of scriptures on the Sabbath, which Luke loves to highlight, probably an informal gathering in the outdoors should be envisioned here.

Luke claims that Paul and his comrades exit from the city gate and go to the river (ἔξω τῆς πύλης παρὰ ποταμὸν; Acts 16:13). Many commentators identify this river as the Gangites, which lies at about 2.4 km from Philippi.⁶¹⁵ The distance covered during a roundtrip to the river and back to the city would be about five kilometers, going well beyond the Sabbath journey limits (c. 1 km).⁶¹⁶ Because of this halakic dilemma, Lemerle and Festugière suggest the nearer creek, Crenides, which is located right next to the occidental gate, to be the location for the gathering.⁶¹⁷ This proposal is appealing, as it would provide greater consistency to Luke’s intention to portray Jewish followers of Jesus as respecting the Sabbath, in this case, the Sabbath limits.⁶¹⁸ As noted above in the analysis of Acts 1:12, Luke clearly knows about the Sabbath limits, which he measures as roughly corresponding to the distance between Jerusalem and the Mount of Olives (c. 1 km).⁶¹⁹

⁶¹⁵ See Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 585.

⁶¹⁶ Noted by LeCornu and Shulam, *Jewish Roots of Acts*, 2:879, but with the mere remark that its location “may reflect the importance of washing in relation to prayer.”

⁶¹⁷ Paul Lemerle, *Philippes et la Macédoine orientale à l’époque chrétienne et byzantine* (Bibliothèque des Écoles françaises d’Athènes et de Rome 158; Paris : É. de Boccard, 1945), 23–27, adding another argument against identifying the river as the Gangites: “il est inutile de supposer que la proseque était à une si grande distance, quand les Juifs de Philippes, qui habitaient la ville même (c’étaient des commerçants ou des artisans, non des agriculteurs ou des propriétaires terriens), trouvaient beaucoup plus près ce qu’ils cherchaient” (25). See also A.J. Festugière, review of Paul Lemerle, *Philippes et la Macédoine orientale à l’époque chrétienne et byzantine*, *RB* 54 (1947): 132–33.

⁶¹⁸ Or should we assume Luke’s ignorance of the topography of Philippi? This suggestion seems unlikely especially if Luke is the author of the “we sections,” meaning that he has visited Philippi. On the other hand, the Greek παρὰ ποταμὸν could mean that the place of prayer lies somewhere near the river, but within the Sabbath limits. This reading, however, could be ruled out by v.15, if Lydia’s baptism occurs on the same day, implying that the location of the prayer site lies next to a body of fresh water, in this case, a river. Nevertheless, v. 15 is rather ambiguous. It does not clearly indicate when and where the baptism takes place. Luke is simply not interested in providing such details.

⁶¹⁹ Is it possible that some Jews did not respect the Sabbath limits? In two passages (*Ant.* 13:252: οὐκ ἔξεστι δ’ ἡμῖν οὔτε τοῖς σαββάτοις οὔτ’ ἐν τῇ ἑορτῇ ὀδεύειν; *Ant.* 14:226: μήτε ὀδοιπορεῖν ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις τῶν σαββάτων), Josephus refers to the prohibition of traveling on the Sabbath, but does not mention the Sabbath

Luke ascribes to Lydia the label “worshiper of God” (σεβομένη τὸν θεόν), which on its own may not be taken as decisive evidence for her Gentile background, since elsewhere in Acts the term σεβόμενοι seems to refer to Jews or proselytes (those who have undergone full conversion into Judaism).⁶²⁰ But probably Lydia should be considered a Gentile since other pious non-Jews, affiliated in various ways to their local Jewish communities, appear prominently throughout Acts and often join the Jesus movement. The Roman centurion Cornelius, “a devout man who feared God” (εὐσεβῆς καὶ φοβούμενος τὸν θεόν; 10:2; cf. 10:22, 35), best exemplifies such Gentiles who gravitate toward the Jewish people and their customs.⁶²¹ Since Luke refers elsewhere to Greek women who join Paul’s movement (17:12; cf. 13:50), it is quite possible that Lydia is a Gentile sympathizer of Judaism.⁶²²

Like many other Gentiles in Acts, Lydia regularly attends the synagogue/prayer place on the Sabbath without hesitation (cf. 14:1; 18:4). Admittedly, Luke portrays Lydia’s custom of attending the Jewish prayer site of Philippi on the Sabbath as occurring

limits. In *Mos.* 2:214, Philo assumes that Jews may go out on the Sabbath from “the gates to some quiet spot, that they might pray in some retired and peaceful place” (φυλῶν γὰρ ἔξω προελθόντες τινὲς εἰς ἐρημίαν, ἵν’ ἐν τῷ καθαρῳτάτῳ καὶ ἡσυχάζοντι εὕξωνται). Like Josephus, he makes no reference to the Sabbath limits. Quite interestingly, Philo’s description would seem to corroborate the scenario envisaged in Acts 16:13: Some Jews in the Diaspora did seek places for prayer outside the city gates. How far though? Philo’s assumption should not be taken as evidence that Diasporan Jews did not refrain at all from traveling on the Sabbath. Even the pagan sources reveal that Jews did not travel long distances on the Sabbath (Tibullus, *Carmina*, I, 3:15–18; Ovid, *Remedia Amoris* 219; see Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors*, 1:319, 349). Doering, *Sabbat*, 354, 570, cautiously leaves the question open.

⁶²⁰ See section above discussing its usage in Acts 13. Probably in Acts 13:43, σεβομένων προσηλύτων refers to full converts (involving circumcision in the case of males). In 13:16 and 26, φοβούμενοι τὸν θεόν quite possibly refers to full converts as well. In 16:14, 17:4, 17 and 18:7, σεβόμενοι most likely designates Gentiles, while the term φοβούμενος is also employed in reference to non-Jews who sympathize with Judaism and Jewish society (10:22; 10:35; 13:16; 13:26; 27:17).

⁶²¹ Cf. Acts 17:4 where Luke mentions “a great many of the devout Greeks” (τῶν σεβομένων Ἑλλήνων πλῆθος πολυ) in the synagogue of Thessalonica, whom Paul eventually wins over to his cause.

⁶²² Jervell, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, 422, describes her status in purposefully ambiguous terms: she belongs to the so-called God-fearers, but was not a Jewess from birth. Circumcision was not applicable in her case for marking full transition into Judaism. In Acts, the first non-Jewess convert to the Jesus movement is not a “fresh” Gentile with no previous knowledge of Judaism, recruited directly from the streets of the Mediterranean.

before her baptism and entrance into the Jesus movement. Regardless, the passage may still reflect Luke's own openness to the possibility for Gentile sympathizers to attend the synagogue on the Sabbath even after their incorporation into the Jesus movement.

Nowhere does Luke hint that after their baptism Gentiles are forbidden to voluntarily and spontaneously observe Jewish customs such as the Sabbath. As for Luke's Paul, a Jewish follower of Jesus, he appears once again in the traditional pattern found elsewhere in Acts, searching, as many other Jews would probably do upon their arrival in a new town in the Diaspora, for a local Jewish synagogue.

More Sabbath Services in the Synagogue

17:2: "And Paul went in, as was his custom, and on three sabbath days argued with them from the scriptures."

18:4: "Every sabbath he would argue in the synagogue and would try to convince Jews and Greeks."

Literary Context

The following two verses repeat a pattern that should by now be rather familiar to the reader (cf. Luke 4:16–30; Acts 13:14, 27, 42, 44; 16:12). They add little new information about Luke's attitude toward the question of Sabbath keeping, although they do underscore his desire to portray Paul as a pious Jew interacting with the world of the synagogue on the Sabbath.⁶²³ Within the narrative, only the geographical settings shift, while the normal outline emphasizing Paul's habitual visit to the synagogue on the Sabbath (as well as his eventual ejection) remains intact. Thus, in Acts 17:1, Paul finds

⁶²³ To these two verses, may be added Acts 18:24–28 as well as 19:1–20 (see especially v. 8), which also presume synagogue attendance on the Sabbath, although the seventh day is not explicitly mentioned. In the former passage, a Jew named Apollos as well as two other Jewish followers of Jesus, Priscilla and Aquila attend the synagogue and preach about Jesus. In Acts 19:8, Paul spends three months at the synagogue of Ephesus, reasoning with the local members about the kingdom of God. Probably Acts 17:17 (visit to the synagogue of Athens) also presupposes a Sabbath setting.

himself in Thessalonica where he preaches for three consecutive Sabbaths in the local synagogue (v. 2). The same routine occurs as elsewhere: initial success on the part of Paul followed by Jewish opposition (v. 4). The “Jews,” for understandable social-political reasons, accuse Paul of “turning the world upside down” and of acting against Caesar’s decree by claiming no other king but Jesus (vv. 6–7). Behind this polemical description probably lurks a historical reflection of a complex social-political dynamic that persists up to Luke’s day: Jews, as a minority group in the wider Greco-Roman Diaspora, fear the potential repercussions the burgeoning Jesus movement might bring upon themselves partly because of the visible and popular gravitation of non-Jews away from their ancestral polytheistic practices to the core monotheistic beliefs and practices of Judaism. Understandably, the local Jews seek to dissociate themselves from this radical messianic movement. This historical reconstruction accounts for the expulsion of Paul and Silas (v. 10). In Acts 18:1, the pattern repeats itself again: Paul visits the synagogue of Corinth on the Sabbath (v. 4), enjoys initial success (in this case, even the head of the synagogue, Crispus, becomes a follower), and encounters eventual opposition (vv. 12–17).⁶²⁴

Redactional Analysis

Part of the language of Acts 17:2 repeats verbatim the wording in Luke 4:16, thereby creating a parallelism between Jesus and Paul that was already detected and appreciated in the section on Acts 13 (see above):

κατὰ δὲ τὸ εἰωθὸς τῷ Παύλῳ εἰσῆλθεν πρὸς αὐτοὺς καὶ ἐπὶ σάββατα τρία διελέξατο αὐτοῖς ἀπὸ τῶν γραφῶν (Acts 17:2)

⁶²⁴ In verses 12–17, Paul is brought before the proconsul of Achaia, Gallio, before whom the “Jews” present their case against him. Most interesting is Luke’s portrayal of the issue from the Roman perspective: Gallio remains indifferent toward the controversy, pointing to the intra-Jewish nature of the debate, which he claims should be solved among the Jews themselves.

καὶ εἰσῆλθεν κατὰ τὸ εἰωθὸς αὐτῷ ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῶν σαββάτων εἰς τὴν συναγωγὴν καὶ ἀνέστη ἀναγνῶναι (Luke 4:16).

Luke has surely redacted the underlined words to create literary symmetry between Jesus and Paul's actions. These include the usage of the verb εἰσῆλθεν, the construction κατὰ τὸ εἰωθὸς, followed by the dative (τῷ Παύλῳ/ αὐτῷ). Just as Jesus "according to his custom" (κατὰ τὸ εἰωθὸς) "entered" (εἰσῆλθεν) the synagogue of Nazareth "on the Sabbath day" (ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῶν σαββάτων), so also, Luke claims, Paul "entered" (εἰσῆλθεν) the synagogue in Thessalonica "according to his custom" (κατὰ τὸ εἰωθὸς). Likewise, just as Jesus read and preached from the prophet Isaiah (4:16–21), in a similar way, Paul reasoned from the Jewish scriptures with the synagogue members of Thessalonica for three Sabbaths (ἐπὶ σάββατα τρία διελέξατο αὐτοῖς ἀπὸ τῶν γραφῶν).⁶²⁵

In Acts 18:4, Luke repeats this motif, having Paul argue every Sabbath in a local synagogue of Corinth in an attempt to convince both Jews and Greeks alike (διελέγετο δὲ ἐν τῇ συναγωγῇ κατὰ πᾶν σάββατον ἔπειθὲν τε Ἰουδαίους καὶ Ἑλληνας). The prepositional phrase κατὰ πᾶν σάββατον is a Lukan composition, appearing only in Acts (13:27/18:4). The reference to Paul's discussion in the synagogue (διελέγετο δὲ ἐν τῇ συναγωγῇ) matches the previous depiction in 17:2 where the same apostle also discusses with the Jews through the usage of scripture (τρία διελέξατο αὐτοῖς ἀπὸ τῶν γραφῶν).

Both Acts 18:4 and 17:2, then, are literary Lukan products *par excellence*.

Besides providing a setting for Paul's engagement with Jewish communities, these verses

⁶²⁵ ἐπὶ σάββατα τρία should be translated here as "on three Sabbaths," and not "for three weeks." Even though the latter translation is a possible one, it seems less likely, given the recurring pattern of Paul's preaching in synagogues on the Sabbath. Correctly, Barrett, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 2:809; Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 507.

portray him once again as a Jew thoroughly comfortable with the synagogue habitat, intimately dedicated to spreading the gospel message among Jewish compatriots and Gentile sympathizers alike.⁶²⁶

When Do the Followers of Jesus “Break Bread”? Acts 20:7

Passage

20:7–12: “On the first day of the week, when we met to break bread, Paul was holding a discussion with them; since he intended to leave the next day, he continued speaking until midnight.⁸ There were many lamps in the room upstairs where we were meeting.⁹ A young man named Eutychus, who was sitting in the window, began to sink off into a deep sleep while Paul talked still longer. Overcome by sleep, he fell to the ground three floors below and was picked up dead.¹⁰ But Paul went down, and bending over him took him in his arms, and said, ‘Do not be alarmed, for his life is in him.’¹¹ Then Paul went upstairs, and after he had broken bread and eaten, he continued to converse with them until dawn; then he left.¹² Meanwhile they had taken the boy away alive and were not a little comforted.”

Literary Context

The final passage in Acts pertinent to the question of the Sabbath is set within Troas, a city in the northwest corner of Asia Minor (v. 6). The wider literary setting, which belongs to the so-called “we sections,” describes Paul’s itinerary and eventual return to Palestine and contains a number of important chronological features, the subject of careful analysis below. These include the reference to Paul’s departure from Philippi to Troas *after the feast of Unleavened bread* (20:6), the setting of the Eucharist in Troas *on the first day of the week* (20:7), and the apostle’s intent on arriving in Jerusalem *before Pentecost* (20:16). In the midst of this report on Paul’s itinerary, a miracle story about the “resuscitation” of a certain Eutychus, which Luke apparently inserts into this “we

⁶²⁶ Jervell, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, 433: “als Jude und Missionar.”

section,”⁶²⁷ momentarily interrupts the literary flow of the narrative (vv. 7–12). After this miraculous feat, Paul resumes his journey toward Jerusalem (v. 12).

Analysis

The main item of interest in this section concerns the chronological framework in which the miracle story appears: ἐν δὲ τῇ μιᾷ τῶν σαββάτων,⁶²⁸ literally, “on the one of the Sabbaths,” that is, on a Sunday.⁶²⁹ Such language would be comprehensible only to individuals with at least some acquaintance with the Jewish system of enumerating and dividing time.⁶³⁰ The whole phrase corresponds to the Hebrew usage of באחד בשבת.

Luke’s manner of dividing time would certainly have earned him the commendation of the Tanna R. Isaac who purportedly said: “Do not count in the way that others count, but count for the sake of/in reference to (שֶׁמֶל) the Sabbath.”⁶³¹

Because of the Jewish flavor of the opening to this section, some scholars posit that Luke depicts Paul and the disciples in Troas as breaking bread on the evening/night

⁶²⁷ Some commentators like, Pervo, *Acts*, 506, view vv. 7–12 as Lukan creations, inspired by the LXX. Others, like Barrett, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 2:943–44, see traces of tradition here, albeit with some redactional touches: “It gives the impression of being a free piece of tradition which Luke had some reason to connect with Troas (perhaps he heard it there) and interpolated into the record of the journey.”

⁶²⁸ Cf. Luke 24:1; Mark 16:2; John 20:1, 19. See also Luke 18:12: “I fast twice a week (δὶς τοῦ σαββάτου); I give a tenth of all my income.”

⁶²⁹ Some view the chronological introduction in Acts 20:7 as traditional and intrinsically tied to the narrative. See Zmijewski, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, 725. Given Luke’s ample usage of such chronological terms to divide his narrative, a strong case for its redactional status could also be made. In either case, the usage of this chronological designation perfectly suits Luke’s taste and preference for using Jewish idiom to structure his narrative.

⁶³⁰ This usage of a Jewish system of enumeration to count the days of the week was preserved for a while in certain Christian circles. See Eduard Lohse, “σάββατον,” *TDNT* 7:32, for references. Lohse’s dated treatment contains some problematic comments including his interpretation of *Did.* 8:1 (Αἱ δὲ νηστεῖαι ὑμῶν μὴ ἔστωσαν μετὰ τῶν ὑποκριτῶν νηστεύουσι γὰρ δευτέρα σαββάτων καὶ πέμπτη ὑμεῖς δὲ νηστεύσατε τετράδα καὶ παρασκευήν), which he categorically qualifies as a contrast between “Christian” and “Jewish” fasts. I would say it (only chronologically) contrasts a Jewish fast with a Jewish (-Christian) one.

⁶³¹ *Mek.* Yitro-BaHodesh Parashah 7. Author’s translation. In the same passage from the *Mekilta*, R. Eleazar ben Hanina ben Hezekiah, commenting on the command in the Torah, “Remember the Sabbath to keep it holy,” declares that one should start remembering the Sabbath day already from the “first day of the week” (באחד בשבת) onward.

of Saturday, since according to Jewish reckoning the day begins in the evening rather than the morning (Gen 1:5; Exod 12:18; Lev 23:32, etc.).⁶³² If the words “to break bread” (κλάσαι ἄρτον) are technical terms designating the celebration of the Eucharist,⁶³³ this would mean that Paul and the disciples at Troas observed this rite immediately after the Sabbath, as an extension to their Sabbath keeping.

Other commentators, however, who favor a Roman chronological system, argue that the narrative describes a Sunday service extending well into Monday morning.⁶³⁴ In support of their thesis, some of these interpreters point to the usage of the Greek ἐπαύριον (translated by them as “tomorrow”) in 20:7 and compare it with such passages as Acts 4:3 and 23:31–32. Since in the latter two passages the terms ἐπαύριον/αὔριον appear in conjunction with the evening or the night, they argue that Luke conceives of time in Roman fashion. Such language otherwise would seem redundant: the evening or nighttime according to Jewish tradition would already mark the arrival of a new day and consequently there would be no need to mention ἐπαύριον/αὔριον.

This argument, however, carries limited weight once we realize that ἐπαύριον/αὔριον can also mean “on the next morrow,” that is, the next *morning* rather

⁶³² Bacchiocchi, *From Sabbath to Sunday*, 101–111; Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 668–69; LeCornu and Shulam, *The Jewish Roots of Acts*, 2:1105–7; Mayer-Haas, *Geschenk*, 379–80; H. Riesenfeld, “Sabbat et jour du Seigneur,” in *New Testament Essays. Studies in Memory of Thomas Walter Manson* (ed. A. J. B. Higgins; Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1959), 210–18; Reinhart Staats, “Die Sonntagnachmittagsgottesdienste der christlichen Frühzeit,” *ZNW* 66 (1975): 224–63.

⁶³³ Bacchiocchi, *From Sabbath to Sunday*, 101–11, tries to argue against this technical understanding of the terms κλάσαι ἄρτον. But his systematic attempt to sanitize the New Testament from any reference to Sunday commemorations raises suspicion. His position seems untenable, since *Did.* 14:1 as well as Ignatius, *Ephesians* 20:2 (assuming that it is not pseudepigraphic and from the beginning of the second century) appear to employ the verb as a technical term for the Eucharist. If Acts is a work written by the end of the first century, there is no great gap in time between the former and the latter works. Nevertheless, see J. Behm, “κλάω,” *TDNT* 3:728–29.

⁶³⁴ Klinghardt, *Das Gesetz und Volk Gottes*, 261–64; Rordorf, *Sunday*, 196–205, allows for both possibilities but then prefers a Sunday evening setting because of his reading of the evidence from Pliny (*Ep.* 10.96). On the problematic usage of Pliny’s letter for elucidating Acts 20:7, see Klinghardt, *Gesetz und Volk Gottes*, 262 n. 12.

than the next day.⁶³⁵ This translation can also readily elucidate the aforementioned passages. Thus, in Acts 4:3, when Luke states that the chief priests had Peter and John arrested and placed in custody “until the next day” (εἰς τὴν αὐριον), it is perfectly reasonable to understand this temporal phrase as meaning “until the next morning,” “since it was already evening” (ἦν γὰρ ἑσπέρα ἤδη). The same applies for Acts 20:31–32: the Roman soldiers accompany Paul during the night to Antipatris (v.31), while the horsemen travel on with him on the next morning (τῇ δὲ ἐπαύριον).

This interpretation can also make good sense of the events related in 20:7–12. The followers of Jesus could have gathered (συνηγμένων, semantically overlapping with the noun “synagogue”) on a Saturday evening/night, that is, the beginning of Sunday according to Jewish reckoning. In pragmatic terms, this could have been a convenient time for Jesus’ followers to meet together (συνηγμένων), especially if they were already enjoying each other’s company on the Sabbath day itself, perhaps, first in the synagogue (συναγωγή) and then in their private homes (20:7).⁶³⁶ With the arrival of sunset, Sabbath traveling restrictions would no longer impede the Lukan Paul, a Torah observant Jew, from parting to his next destination.⁶³⁷ Consequently, he would have taken one last

⁶³⁵ Bacchiocchi, *From Sabbath to Sunday*, 103–4; Klinghardt, *Gesetz und Volk Gottes*, 262 n. 14: “Gemeint ist hier: nächster Lichttag (nicht Kalendartage); ἐπαύριον ist der folgende Tag im Gegensatz zur Nacht.” Louis Pirot and Albert Clamer, *La Sainte Bible: Texte latin et traduction française d’après les textes originaux avec un commentaire exégétique et théologique* (12 vols.; Paris: Letouzey, 1946), 11:276. Cf. Liddell-Scott, “αὐριον,” claiming it akin to ἠώς (“morning” or “dawn”) and pointing to ἐξ αὐριον as “on the morrow or till morning.”

⁶³⁶ Or maybe only in their private homes because of the tensions between Jews and followers of Jesus.

⁶³⁷ Bacchiocchi, *From Sabbath to Sunday*, 106, citing F. J. Foakes-Jackson: “Paul and his friends could not as good Jews start on a journey on a Sabbath; they did so as soon after it as was possible, v. 12 at dawn on the ‘first day’—the Sabbath having ended at sunset.” Note Bacchiocchi’s subsequent triumphalistic and anti-Judaic twist on this matter: “The restraints of the Sabbath did no longer apply and both Jewish (as Paul and Timothy) and Gentile Christians could freely engage in social and spiritual activities. The weakness of this observation is that it implies that Christians observed the Sabbath according to restrictive rabbinical conceptions. Such a view hardly harmonizes with the positive and spiritual understanding of the Sabbath we find in the Gospels” (*From Sabbath to Sunday*, 106). Another problem with Bacchiocchi’s portrait lies

opportunity to speak extensively with those assembled in Troas until midnight (μέχρι μεσονυκτίου) before his departure the next morning (τῆ ἑπαύριον). Understanding ἑπαύριον in 20:7 as a reference to the “following morning” would also grant a certain symmetry and continuous flow to the timeline of the pericope. In 20:11, Luke states that Paul “continued to converse with them until dawn (ἄχρι αὐγῆς); then he left.”⁶³⁸ We could tentatively take the prepositional phrase ἄχρι αὐγῆς to mean that Paul did indeed fulfill his initial intention mentioned earlier in v. 7 to leave the following morning (μέλλων ἐξιέναι τῆ ἑπαύριον) rather than the following calendar day.

Klinghardt, however, views the usage of μέχρι μεσονυκτίου in Acts 20:7 as proof that Luke conceives of time according to the Roman mode of reckoning, since the prepositional phrase would signal a point in time rather than a time span. While Jewish reckoning traditionally divides the night into three parts or “watches” (6–9; 10–2; 2–6), Roman time separates it into four night watches (6–9; 9–12; 12–3; 3–6).⁶³⁹ Consequently, Klinghardt believes that the reference to midnight in Acts 20:7 represents the start of the *custodia tertia* (“third watch”), which begins at midnight.⁶⁴⁰ It remains uncertain,

in his presupposition that both Jewish and Gentile followers of Jesus were under the same Sabbath restraints. By contrast, I opine that Luke assumes such an obligation only for the former, but leaves the question open for the latter.

⁶³⁸ The hapax legomenon αὐγή (“light,” “light of the sun,” or “daylight”) probably acquired the meaning of “dawn” in later times, overlapping with ἔως/ἠώς in Koine Greek. It is still used with the meaning of “dawn” in Modern Greek. See Carl Darling Buck, *A Dictionary of Selected Synonyms in the Principal Indo-European Languages* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949), 993; Pierre Chantraine, *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue grecque*, (Klincksieck, 2009), 131. A similar usage appears in *PMag. Leid. W.* 11.35.

⁶³⁹ See Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke*, 2:988. Lam 2:19 mentions a first watch (ראש אשמרת), Judg 7:19 a middle watch (האשמרת התיכונה), Exod 14:24 and 1 Sam 11:11 a morning watch (אשמרת הבקר). Apparently, the division of the night into three parts was standard in Mesopotamia. See A. Stiglmair, “לילה לילי,” *TDOT* 7:533–42.

⁶⁴⁰ *Gesetz und Volk Gottes*, 263–64, citing the grammarian from the third century C.E. Censorinus, *De Die Natali* 24, who divides time preceding midnight in the following manner: after the evening (*vesperum*) and twilight (*crepusculum*) follow the time of lighting the lamps (*luminibus accensis*), bedtime (*concupium*),

however, whether we can make such specific inferences from the few time referents available in this passage. On its own, the usage of *μεσονύκτιον* may not demonstrate a Roman division of time, since the term also appears in Luke’s beloved LXX to translate the Hebrew *לילה/לילה חצי*, “midnight”—a Hebrew construct well attested in the Jewish scriptures.⁶⁴¹ In addition, it is possible that with the term *μεσονύκτιον* Luke does not envisage a specific night “watch” but a more fluid time span, “sometime in the middle of the night” (as in Acts 27:27: *μέσον τῆς νυκτός*).⁶⁴²

Actually, if a specific timeline should be sought for in Acts 20:7, its structure might look tripartite and conform better to a traditional Jewish reckoning of time:

Ἐν δὲ τῇ μιᾷ τῶν σαββάτων (v.7a) → μέχρι μεσονυκτίου (v.7c) → τῇ ἐπαύριον
(v.7b)/ἄχρι αὐγῆς (v. 11)

[Sometime] on the first day of the week (c. 6–9?) → until sometime in the middle of the night (c. 9–2?) → until dawn (c. 2–6?)⁶⁴³

Elsewhere Luke clearly refers to the tripartite Jewish way of dividing the night:

Be like those who are waiting for their master to return from the wedding banquet, so that they may open the door for him as soon as he comes and knocks. Blessed are those slaves whom the master finds alert when he comes; truly I tell you, he will fasten his belt and have them sit down to eat, and he will come and serve them. If he comes during the middle of the night (*ἐν τῇ δευτέρᾳ*), or near dawn (*ἐν τῇ τρίτῃ φυλακῇ*), and finds them so, blessed are those slaves. But know this: if the owner of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have let his

the “dead of night” (*nox intempesta*), the time before midnight (*ad mediam noctem*), and midnight (*media nox*).

⁶⁴¹ LXX Judg (A) 16:3 (2x); Judg (B) 16:3; Isa 59:10; Ps 118 (119): 62.

⁶⁴² Possibly, *μεσονύκτιον* is used in Luke 11:5 to mean loosely the “middle of the night,” rather than a specific Roman watch occurring at 12:00. This is how *The English Bible in Basic English* and *The New Jerusalem Bible* render the term (“middle of the night,” instead of “midnight”). So too, the French *Louis Segond* and the *Traduction Œcuménique de la Bible* (“au milieu de la nuit”); German: “mitten in der Nacht” (*Herder*). Cf. Exod 11:4 (“About midnight [כַּחצַת הַלַּיְלָה] I will go out through Egypt”); Acts 16:25 (“About midnight [Κατὰ δὲ τὸ μεσονύκτιον] Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God”).

⁶⁴³ Alternatively, following the Roman model, the timeline of the pericope would look like this: sometime on Sunday (v. 7a) → until midnight on Sunday (v. 7c) → until Monday morning (vv. 7b and 11).

house be broken into. You also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour. (Luke 12:36–40)

A literal translation of the Greek terms ἐν τῇ δευτέρᾳ and ἐν τῇ τρίτῃ φυλακῇ would be “in the second and in the third watch” and surely points to a tripartite division of the night, since the parable warns its audience to remain faithful to the very last hours of the night even if the Son of Man tarries. A Roman reckoning of time would have necessitated mentioning the *fourth* watch in order to emphasize the need for extended vigilance during the delay of the Parousia.⁶⁴⁴ Luke, however, feels no need to modify this tradition to confirm it to the Roman chronological system of enumeration. Furthermore, in an earlier chapter, I underscore Luke’s description of Jesus’ burial in terms of Jewish reckoning: with the Sabbath fast approaching (ἐπέφωσκεν), Joseph of Arimathea hastens to have Jesus’ body buried before sunset (Luke 23:54). Following Jewish reckoning, Luke clearly sees the Sabbath day in this instance as beginning in the evening. In the case of Acts 20:7, might we not equally assume that Luke conceives of Saturday evening as marking the beginning of Sunday?⁶⁴⁵

In a few other places, Luke also ties *daylight* hours with the daily rhythms of Jewish life. Thus in Acts 3:1, Luke states that “Peter and John were going up to the

⁶⁴⁴ Wolter, *Das Lukasevangelium*, 426; cf. Bovon, *Luc*, 2:294; Nolland, *Luke*, 702; Plummer, *The Gospel according to St. Luke*, 331. Contra Str-B 1:689.

⁶⁴⁵ Staats, “Die Sonntagnachmittagsgottesdienste der christlichen Frühzeit,” 247, even argues that the start of the day in the evening should be presupposed in Luke-Acts because of the clear Jewish reckoning in Luke 23:54. Klinghardt, *Gesetz und Volk Gottes*, 263, however, argues that both Jewish and non-Jewish reckonings appear in Luke 23:54–57: the switch from the Jewish reckoning of the day in 23:54 suddenly occurs in 23:55–56 when Luke describes the women’s preparation of spices (a form of “work” happening on the Sabbath, since sunset has already arrived) and then explicitly mentions their Sabbath observance. In order to solve this inconsistency, Klinghardt suggests that Luke depicts the women as beginning to keep the Sabbath only in the morning (according to Roman reckoning). This reading, however, was rejected in the previous chapter. The manifold weaknesses with this explanation include: a sudden unexpected shift from Jewish to Roman reckoning of time within the same pericope, the failure to account for the possible halakic dilemma embedded with this episode (the women, in any case, perform work on Passover, also a holy day), and the absence of external evidence positing the start of the Sabbath at sunrise rather than sunset. Staats’ argument, then, has indeed recovered its former weight.

temple at the hour of prayer, at three o'clock in the afternoon (ἐπὶ τὴν ὥραν τῆς προσευχῆς τὴν ἐνάτην)" (Acts 3:1). The Greek literally reads "at the hour of prayer, the ninth [hour]." With daylight time divided into twelve parts or hours (more than 60 minutes each in the summer, less than 60 minutes in the winter) from sunrise to sunset (from 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.),⁶⁴⁶ the ninth hour would correspond roughly to 3:00 p.m., the time at which the *Tamid* offering was offered in the temple.⁶⁴⁷ At this time of the afternoon, certain Jews would also make their daily prayers (Dan 9:21; Jud. 9:1).⁶⁴⁸ A similar phenomenon probably occurs in Acts 10:2–4 where Luke portrays the Gentile Cornelius as a man of prayer (v. 2) who receives a vision at the ninth hour of the day (i.e., c. 3:00 p.m.) as an answer to his petitions to the God of Israel (vv. 3–4). Quite possibly, Luke intentionally portrays Cornelius offering his prayers in synchrony with the temple services, the normal time when other Jews would have also taken the same opportunity to do so.⁶⁴⁹ By employing such time references, Luke not only shows his ability to match specific Jewish events (daily prayer services, sacrifices, etc.) with their corresponding "secular" timetables, but ultimately reveals his penchant for stamping his literary work with Jewish chronological signposts.

On the other hand, a couple of passages in Acts do manifestly point to a Roman division of nighttime. This includes Acts 12:4 where King Herod has Peter imprisoned,

⁶⁴⁶ See "ὥρα," *BGAD*.

⁶⁴⁷ Josephus, *Ant.* 14:65; 3:237; *m. Ber.* 4:1; cf. Exod 29:39; Num 28:3–4, 8; Ezek 46:13–15.

⁶⁴⁸ Barrett, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 1:178; Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 277; Marguerat, *Les Actes des apôtres*, 117; Pervo, *Acts*, 99.

⁶⁴⁹ Marguerat, *Les Actes des apôtres*, 374. Cf. Luke 23:44–46 where Jesus' death occurs at around 3:00 p.m., also coinciding with the daily *Minhah* service in the temple. But see Acts 10:9 (Peter praying at the sixth hour of the day, not a normal time for Jewish prayer). Barrett, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 1:505: "Probably we should be content with the thought that for Luke apostles were men who prayed more frequently than most." Henry J. Cadbury, "Some Lukan Expressions of Time (Lexical Notes on Luke-Acts VII)," *JBL* 82 (1963): 272–78, opines that some of these time references simply coincide with the ways ancient people, who did not have clocks, loosely divided their time according to the most general parameters ("morning," "midday," "mid-afternoon," etc.).

appointing “four squads of four soldiers to guard him” (τέσσαρσιν τετραδίοις στρατιωτῶν φυλάσσειν αὐτόν). The placement of four distinct squads, each containing four guards, corresponds to the Roman practice of assigning each squad with one of the four “watches” of the night. With this system of rotation, the constant vigil over the prisoner during the late hours of the night was guaranteed through the replenishment (every three hours) of a fresh new squad of guards.⁶⁵⁰ In Acts 23:23, Luke might equally presuppose a Roman division of nighttime when he refers to a Roman tribune ordering two centurions to “leave by nine o’clock tonight (ἀπὸ τρίτης ὥρας τῆς νυκτός) for Caesarea with two hundred soldiers, seventy horsemen, and two hundred spearmen.” The reference to nine o’clock (i.e., the third hour of the night) would correspond to the beginning of the second Roman watch of the night (9–12). But in both of these instances, Roman watches are in play, so they hardly prove to be counterexamples to the thesis suggesting that Luke tends to use Jewish reckoning to divide time and organize his narrative.

The interplay between Roman and Jewish chronological systems is clarified when we notice that Luke employs Jewish schematization for the description of Jewish events (daily prayers, temple sacrifices, Sabbath, etc.) and even “secular” time (e.g., the call for vigilance in Luke 12:38; Paul’s itinerary), while he reserves the usage of Roman reckoning for the depiction of Roman customs and personalities (e.g., the Roman-like night watch of the Herodian guards, the Roman soldiers accompanying Paul to Caesarea). Such an interchange between Jewish and Roman ways of dividing time should not seem so striking, since by the first century C.E. the Roman chronological schematization had penetrated Jewish society. Thus, with no trouble, Josephus inserts into his narrative a

⁶⁵⁰ Haenchen, *Acts of the Apostles*, 382; Wolter, *Das Lukasevangelium*, 462.

reference about the Roman fourth night watch even when retelling stories from the biblical account (*Ant.* 5:223; cf. *Ant.* 18:356). On the other hand, Josephus seems to assume a traditional Jewish tripartite of time, quite surprisingly, when he describes the Roman siege of Jerusalem (*J.W.* 5:510). Philo indirectly alludes to the quadruple Roman division of the night when he describes the encounter between the Roman centurion Bassus and “one belonging to the squad of four guards” (τινα τῶν ἐν τοῖς τετραδίοις φυλάκων; *Flacc.* 111). Even Matthew, viewed as the most Jewish gospel by much of secondary scholarship, also employs the Roman four-watch scheme: “And early in the morning (τετάρτη δὲ φυλακῆ τῆς νυκτός) he came walking toward them on the sea” (Matt 14:25).

Such knowledge and appropriation of Roman chronology should not mislead the contemporary reader into thinking that Jews such as Josephus, Philo, and Matthew did not reckon the beginning of *sacred* Jewish days and festivals (e.g., Sabbath, Passover, etc.) in the evening toward sunset (Josephus, *J.W.* 4:582; Matt 28:1). In later rabbinic passages, the sages also discuss among themselves whether the night is divided into three or four watches (*t. Ber.* 1:1; *b. Ber.* 3a; *p. Ber.* 1:9 2d) even while counting the beginning of a sacred day, such as the Sabbath, in the evening. Probably the most striking rabbinic “parallel” to our passage in Acts appears at the very beginning of the first tractate of the Mishnah:

Whence do they read the *Shema* in the evening (בערבית)? From the hour when the priests enter to eat their *Terumah* until the end of the first watch (אשמורה הראשנה)—the words of R. Eliezer. But the sages say: until midnight (עד חצות). Rabban Gamaliel says: until the pillar of dawn rises (עד שיעלה עמוד השחר) (*m. Ber.* 1:1).

Like the pericope in Acts 20:6–12 (Ἐν δὲ τῇ μιᾷ τῶν σαββάτων → μέχρι μεσονυκτίου → τῇ ἐπαύριον / ἄχρι αὐγῆς), three time referents appears in this discussion regarding the proper timing for reciting the *Shema* during the evening: evening/first watch → midnight (עד הצות = μέχρι μεσονυκτίου) → dawn (עד עמוד השחר = ἄχρι αὐγῆς).

The Mishnah first opens with a discussion on the timing of the *evening* recitation of the *Shema* (rather than the morning), working under the assumption that a halakic day begins at sunset, not sunrise.⁶⁵¹ This view about the evening-morning sequence of a halakic day does not prevent the Mishnah from employing the referent “midnight” in its discussion, regardless of whether three (Jewish) or four (Roman) night watches are to be presupposed in *m. Ber.* 1:1.⁶⁵² The rabbinic evidence illustrates how ancient Jews could view the evening as marking the debut of a halakic day even while dividing the night according to Roman chronological parameters.⁶⁵³

All of these findings show that even if certain scholars are correct in their assertion regarding a Roman division of nighttime in Acts 20:7, they have only demonstrated that point, nothing more. Luke, like other Jews, could still have conceived

⁶⁵¹ The biblical source governing the organization of the Mishnah is Deut 6:7: “Recite them . . . when you lie down (בשכבך) and when you rise.” In this verse, the act of lying down (from the evening onward) precedes rising (morning), implying that the day begins in the evening, not the morning. Consequently, the Mishnah begins by discussing the recital of the *Shema* in the evening and then proceeds in the following halakah (*m. Ber.* 1:2) to discuss when the *Shema* should be recited in the morning.

⁶⁵² The *Gemara* in the *Bavli* (*b. Ber.* 3a–b) on this portion of the Mishnah discusses whether there are three or four watches in a night. The rabbinic argument, however, stemming from scripture on behalf of four watches is rather tenuous.

⁶⁵³ Cf. comments on Mishnah *Nedarim* made by Solomon Zeitlin, “The Beginning of the Jewish Day during the Second Commonwealth,” *JQR* 36 (1946): 410: “. . . Rabbi Jochanan lived in Palestine where the Graeco-Roman civilization prevailed. In the Roman calendar the day began with mid-night and the Jews who spoke Greek followed the Roman custom, just as Jews today, who speak the vernacular language of the countries where they live use the general calendar. Although Sabbath begins with the preceding evening, nevertheless in the vernacular language of the Jews they speak of Friday night. . . . The sages in the Talmud when the referred to the “day” as a standard of time measurement put the night before the day. When they spoke of a day of importance, as one for work, study, etc. they put the day first, since in actual life the day takes precedence over the night as regards activity.”

of Sunday as beginning once the sun had set on Sabbath evening even while referring to the division of the night according to Roman standards. The chronological proximity of Sunday to the Sabbath, a sacred day in the Jewish rhythm of life, as well as its Jewish formulation (ἐν δὲ τῇ μιᾷ τῶν σαββάτων) suggest that Luke conceives of Sunday as halakically beginning right after sunset on Sabbath.

This reading fits better with Luke's manner of framing Paul's itinerary, which is particularly marked by a Jewish timeline: Paul travels *after* the feast of Unleavened Bread (20:6), attempts to reach Jerusalem *before* Pentecost (20:16), and later on continues his final voyage to Rome *after* Yom Kippur (21:9).⁶⁵⁴ Quite significantly, Paul is *never* portrayed in Acts as setting sail *on* the Sabbath—his itinerary seems to be planned as best as possible around this sacred day.⁶⁵⁵ A closer look at Luke's portrayal of

⁶⁵⁴ Acts 21:9, of course, cannot be taken to mean that Paul in this instance avoids traveling on Yom Kippur, since he is a prisoner awaiting trial in Rome and traveling on a Roman vessel that has just been shipwrecked. Rather, the time reference is used to frame the narrative, showing how the festival still holds meaning for Luke. See section above dealing with the analysis of Acts 1:12.

⁶⁵⁵ Doering, *Schabbat*, 99–101, provides a halakic analysis of the matter of traveling by sea on the Sabbath. *Jub.* 50:12 prohibits *any* traveling on the sea that might extend into the Sabbath, thereby implying that certain Jews did indeed undertake long sea journeys potentially overlapping with the Sabbath. The rabbinic literature reveals a more flexible position than *Jubilees*. For example, *m. Shabb.* 16:8 and *m. Eruv.* 4:1–2 assume the presence of Jews on ships during the Sabbath. The real question for the rabbis concerns how many days *before* the Sabbath one may embark on a sea journey that could potentially extend into the Sabbath. In *Sifre Deut* Pisqa 203, Shammai the Elder declares that one should set sail for a long journey on the Mediterranean at least three days before the Sabbath. If the journey is a short one, one may set sail in even less than three days before the Sabbath. *Midr. Tann.* 123 to Deut 20:20; *y. Shabb.* 1:8 4a; *t. Shabb.* 13 [14]: 13 and *b. Shabb.* 19a grant even greater leniency: for legal reasons, one may undertake a long journey on the sea even in less than three days before the Sabbath. These statements obviously reflect rabbinic opinions on the matter. It is uncertain how other Jews would have acted in such scenarios. One thinks of the journey of Philo to Rome from Alexandria reported in his *Legatio ad Gaium* (180) or even of Josephus' journey to Rome as described in his *Life* (13–16). Unfortunately, neither of these texts provides relevant halakic features. But traveling on the sea during the Sabbath inevitably occurred. Josephus does refer to the prohibition of traveling on the Sabbath (*Ant.* 13:252; 14:226), but perhaps his statements might be taken as evidence that Jews were not to *set out* on sea journeys on the Sabbath. Pagan sources also confirm a Jewish reluctance in the Diaspora to travel on the Sabbath (Tibullus, *Carmina*, I, 3:15–18; Ovid, *Remedia Amoris* 219; see Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors*, 1:319, 349). However, the question of whether one happened already to be on a ship on the Sabbath is a different matter. A safe assumption might be to posit that Diasporan Jews would have tried to plan their trips around the Sabbath in varying degrees whenever possible, with many avoiding embarking on a long journey at least by Friday afternoon as well as on the Sabbath proper. The book of Acts might provide indirect evidence for such practice. See further Doering, *Schabbat*, 101, for the positions of Samaritans, Karaites, and Falashas.

Paul’s voyage from Philippi to Troas may further prove this point. As Paul sails from Philippi after the feast of Unleavened Bread (20:6), he reaches Troas in five days (ἄχρη ἡμερῶν πέντε). Upon his arrival, he spends seven days in Troas (ἡμέρας ἑπτά). If we assume that Paul partakes of the Eucharist with the congregation of Troas on a Saturday evening/Sunday morning and count back seven days, the count reaches back to a Sunday. As Paul is said to have arrived to Troas after a five-day journey from Philippi, a further five-day count backwards would bring us to a Wednesday. The following chart illustrates this hypothetical (and artificial) reconstruction of Paul’s itinerary:⁶⁵⁶

Table 7-2

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday (End of Unleavened Bread) (Acts 20:6a)	Wednesday Departure from Philippi: 1 st day of journey (Acts 20:6b)	Thursday 2 nd day of journey	Friday 3 rd day of journey	Saturday 4 th day of journey
Sunday 5 th day of journey: arrival and 1 st day in Troas (Acts 20:6b)	Monday 2 nd day in Troas	Tuesday 3 rd day in Troas	Wednesday 4 th day in Troas	Thursday 5 th day in Troas	Friday 6 th day in Troas	Saturday 7 th day in Troas: departure right after the Sabbath (20:6c, 7, 11)
Sunday Departure from Troas	Monday					

This table only illustrates how Luke *may* have envisioned the timetable of Paul’s journey, since accuracy in the dating of such events should not be expected, while loose indicators such as “after the Feast of Unleavened Bread” need not imply that Paul

⁶⁵⁶ It is doubtful that Luke would have ever wanted us to read his narrative in the “accurate” way suggested in the timetable above. Acts 21:4 also says Paul spent seven days in Tyre with the local followers of Jesus. In 28:14, Paul also spends seven days with local members in Puteoli. This conspicuous repetition of a stock number should deter us from looking for accurate itinerary reports within Acts. Luke uses chronological figures in a very fluid way to tie the loose ends of his narrative.

actually leaves Philippi on the very next day after the festival.⁶⁵⁷ Even with these observations in mind, Luke's consistent portrayal of Paul and possibly of himself (depending on whether he is the author of the "we-passages") as never setting out to travel on the Sabbath remains noteworthy. In the broadest reading possible, Luke's Paul only sails from Philippi after Passover and from Troas after the Sabbath, regardless of what we make about the timing of his celebration of the Eucharist in Troas.⁶⁵⁸

Conclusion

Three important findings about Luke's Sabbath praxis arise from the analysis of this matter in the book of Acts: 1) Luke knows about and probably even respects the Sabbath travel limits 2) he is familiar with the *déroulement* of Sabbath services in the

⁶⁵⁷ LeCornu and Shulam, *Jewish Roots of Acts*, 2:1103; Bruce, *The Book of Acts*, 424; Barrett, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 2:952. The alternative attempt to posit Paul's departure from Troas on a Monday (meaning he celebrates the Eucharist on a Sunday), has Paul arriving at that same city on a Tuesday. The preceding five-day journey from Philippi would have begun on a Friday. In any case, Paul does not set sail on a Sabbath (even if we do not count these days inclusively). Nevertheless, all such calculations remain conjectural even if they are based on chronological features contained within the we-source.

⁶⁵⁸ In favor of Klinghardt's thesis for a Roman division of the night, should we understand the reference in 20:8 to the lighting of lamps as well as Eutychus' drowsiness as pointing to the Roman time referents of lighting the lamps (*luminibus accensis*) and bedtime (*concupium*)? Still, this would only prove that Luke divides nighttime in this instance according to Roman standards. The question whether he conceives of Saturday evening as marking the commencement of Sunday is another matter. Luke 24:30 with its reference to Jesus breaking bread with the disciples of Emmaus, presumably on a Sunday evening, might strengthen the thesis that Paul also celebrates the Eucharist in Troas at the same time on another Sunday. Commentators, however, seem divided over this issue. Some detect Eucharistic hints in Luke 24:30; others see parallels with Jesus' last meal but think Luke 24:30 lacks some key Eucharistic terms. For a eucharistic reading: Bovon, *Luc*, 4:447; Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 2:1559. Cf. Nolland, *Luke*, 3:1206 and Wolter, *Das Lukasevangelium*, 785. In the case of the gospel of John, a Sunday evening setting for the Eucharist has also been suggested, given the double repetition of post-resurrection appearances to the disciples on a Sunday, one in the evening (20:19–23), the other not specified (20:26). See discussion in Raymond Brown, *The Gospel according to John* (2 vols.; AB 29–29A; Garden City: Doubleday, 1966–1970), 2:1019–20. On the other hand, in Matt 28:1 Mary Magdalene and Mary visit Jesus' tomb on a *Saturday night* (see section in chapter 5). Does this reference point to a Eucharistic celebration among Matthew's circle on a Saturday night? In any case, even if Luke thinks that Paul celebrated the Eucharist on a Sunday evening, it would not detract from the main argument of this section, namely that Luke normally conceives of time according to Jewish reckoning (besides those clear instances where Roman figures are involved) and portrays Paul as honoring the travel restrictions of the Sabbath. Even while arguing for a Sunday-Monday setting for Acts 20:7, Klinghardt suggests that the Sabbath remains relevant for Luke and his readers. Klinghardt believes that the Sabbath continues to be a day of worship for Luke in which his circle partakes of the synagogue service, while Sunday provides an occasion for more intimate communion. See Klinghardt, *Gesetz und Volk Gottes*, 264.

synagogue 3) he avoids portraying Paul and other Jesus followers as performing questionable acts (e.g., healings) on the Sabbath.

Regarding the first point, Luke reveals his firm halakic knowledge about the Sabbath limits through his composition of Acts 1:12. This verse, penned entirely by Luke, hangs not merely as a literary ornament conferring a Septuagint-like flavor or Torah observant “background” to the narration of Acts, but illustrates how meaningful the usage of Jewish terminology remains for Luke and his readers.⁶⁵⁹ Luke’s superimposition of Jewish chronography upon his narrative might suggest that he himself refrains from traveling on the Sabbath. Not only does Luke employ a host of Jewish chronological signposts at various junctures of his narrative (e.g., references to daily sacrifices in the temple, the time of daily prayers, Jewish festivals such as Passover, Pentecost, the Day of Atonement, etc.), but he also depicts his prime protagonist in Acts, Paul, as an observant Jew who refrains from undertaking journeys during sacred Jewish time (travels after the feast of Unleavened Bread; leaves Troas after the Sabbath; attempts to arrive to Jerusalem in time for Pentecost). Luke’s deletion (Luke 6:1) of Mark’s awkward ὁδὸν ποιεῖν (Mark 2:23) in the Sabbath pericope dealing with the issue of plucking grain might also confirm this impression: Luke removes Mark’s gloss not only for stylistic reasons but also in order to clarify that Jesus and his disciples do not travel on the Sabbath.⁶⁶⁰ All of these findings might suggest that Luke himself remains faithful to the Sabbath, refraining like many other ancient Jews from traveling on that holy day.

⁶⁵⁹ The reference to the Sabbath limits (2000 cubits) does not appear in the Septuagint, neither in Exod 16:29 nor in Num 35:4–5 where one might have expected to detect its intrusion. Luke, therefore, is not simply mimicking Septuagintal style when composing Acts 1:12, but revealing his knowledge of *contemporary* or, anachronistically speaking, *extra-biblical* Jewish praxis on the matter.

⁶⁶⁰ See chapter 3 for further discussion about this Markan gloss and its elimination in both Matthew and Luke.

The second finding confirms a picture already anticipated in the first chapter: Luke's thorough acquaintance with the Sabbath atmosphere of the Diasporan synagogues. Like Luke's Jesus (Luke 4:16–30; cf. Luke 4:31), the Lukan Paul invades the space of the synagogue on a customary basis each Sabbath to proclaim the good news that can be found in the Jewish scriptures (Acts 13:14, 27, 42, 44; 15:21; 16:13; 17:12; 18:4). It would be a mistake to reduce Luke's depiction of Paul's synagogue attendance on the Sabbath as a mere evangelistic device. This reductionist reading seems unlikely given the absence in Acts of any negative statement about Sabbath keeping. The controversies that inevitably arise on the Sabbath between Luke's Paul and the local Jewish members of the various synagogues dispersed throughout the Mediterranean regions concern not Sabbath observance but the acceptance of the messianic core of the gospel message with all of its unsettling social-political ramifications for Jew and Gentile alike living in the Roman Empire.

Because of Luke's sustained depictions of visits to the synagogue on the Sabbath as occasions for proclaiming and encountering the gospel, commentators such as Klinghardt even suggest an ongoing practice among Luke's circle of attending their local synagogue(s) on the Sabbath. For Luke, the synagogue is the locale *par excellence* for the reading of Jewish scripture, accompanied by christological interpretation. On the other hand, the synagogue also turns into an unfortunate arena of contention where followers of Jesus clash with other Jews and eventually experience rejection from this familiar environment. We might say that Luke and his circle would have definitely continued attending the synagogue each Sabbath without any qualms were the rest of the Jews more favorably disposed toward their message. For understandable reasons, however,

especially in a post-70 atmosphere of ongoing political tensions between Jews and Romans, many Jews living as a minority culture within the wider Greco-Roman world find themselves unable to embrace the radical messianism the followers of Jesus proclaim. This social-political reality leads me to conjecture that some of Luke's readers may have resorted to meeting on the Sabbath in their own private settings, also celebrating the Eucharist either on Saturday evening, as an extension to their Sabbath worship, or on the following Sunday.⁶⁶¹ Others still might have continued to attend their local synagogue (responses may have varied depending on regional location) in their ongoing desire to belong to their local Jewish communities and to win their Jewish fellows to the cause of the gospel.⁶⁶²

Remarkably, Luke does not attempt to dissuade his audience from keeping the Sabbath or attending the synagogue. In contradistinction to (Pseudo?) Ignatius and Pseudo-Barnabas, Luke does not accuse his Gentile readers for Judaizing, let alone blame Jewish followers of Jesus for holding onto their Sabbath observance. On the other hand, Luke does not *require Gentile* followers of Jesus to keep the Sabbath. The Sabbath simply does not figure in the set of apostolic demands Luke expects non-Jews to observe

⁶⁶¹ Cf. Klinghardt, *Gesetz und Volk Gottes*, 266: "Bei Lk existieren beide Veranstaltungen nebeneinander her und haben jeder seine eigene Funktion. Der sonntägliche Gottesdienst findet 'im Haus' statt, Teilnehmer sind Glieder der Gemeinde. Der synagogale Gottesdienst dagegen besaß eine größere Öffentlichkeit. Die hier stattfindende christliche Missionspredigt erreicht nichtchristliche Juden und wohl auch Heiden."

⁶⁶² Given Luke's accentuation of synagogue attendance, the Sabbath day may have been observed more as a day of *worship* rather than a day of *rest* (cessation from labor) among Lukan *Gentile* followers of Jesus. On the other hand, Luke would have encouraged *Jewish* followers of Jesus to continue observing the Sabbath as a day of rest. McKay, *Sabbath and Synagogue*, 13–14; 18–19; 24; 41–42, is determined (perhaps too much) to make a firm distinction between Sabbath observance and Sabbath worship. Stronger evidence exists in the Jewish sources for viewing the Sabbath as a day of rest rather than a day of worship at the turn of the era. However, after 70 C.E. firm evidence does appear for Sabbath worship (a day set aside for the reading of scripture and prayer in the synagogue)—Acts, among other books, providing documentation for such a phenomenon. Cf. Pieter W. van der Horst, "Was the Synagogue a Place of Sabbath Worship before 70 C.E.?" in *Jews, Christians, and Polytheists in the Ancient Synagogue* (ed. Steven Fine; Baltimore Studies in the History of Judaism; London: Routledge, 1999), 18–43.

(see section above on Acts 15:21) even if he presupposes and depicts his *Jewish* protagonists as remaining thoroughly Torah observant.⁶⁶³

The third and final point concerning the absence of Sabbath controversies in Acts, while constituting an argument *e silentio*, fills this writer with confidence that Luke does not oppose Sabbath observance among followers of Jesus and even affirms its perpetuation. In Acts, none of the central protagonists performs healings or exorcisms on the Sabbath. Only two of the pericopes assessed above refer to miraculous performances, but these occur outside a Sabbath timeframe (Acts 16:18; 21:7–12). This portrayal stands in conspicuous contrast to the numerous Sabbath healing-exorcism episodes in Luke's gospel, which holds the record among all gospels for reporting such occurrences. It would seem that the Sabbath dispute stories in Luke seek more to justify *Jesus'* right to heal and do right on the Sabbath because of his eschatological mission and messianic credentials rather than promote a particular Lukan Sabbath praxis. In any case, the Sabbath dispute stories in the gospel of Luke at most contain an argument about *how* the Sabbath should be observed, not a debate about its abrogation.

These observations raise important methodological questions for compositional-critical approaches that might too hastily read the gospel literature as a transparent window reflecting from every angle the world and practice of the gospel authors. Historians should always remain open to all possible historical developments, including the possibility that certain followers of Jesus "reverted" to more traditional practices that conformed to "normative" Jewish praxis. A teleological tendency to posit simple, linear developments that depict the Jesus movement as always and everywhere moving

⁶⁶³ The ongoing Lukan ecclesiological distinction between Jew and Gentile in so far as their Torah obligations are concerned will become more apparent in Parts II and III of this monograph where the Apostolic Decree and the issue of circumcision receive their proper treatments.

inevitably away from Judaism and its practices should be avoided.⁶⁶⁴ The fact that neither Paul, Peter, James, nor any other character in Acts performs healings of minor diseases or any other objectionable act on the Sabbath might illustrate how earnestly Luke strives to accommodate to contemporary Jewish sensibilities for the sake of the gospel and the preservation of Jewish identity within the *ekklesia*.

⁶⁶⁴ Cf. the criticism made by Klinghardt, *Gesetz und Volkes Gottes*, 241 n. 1, against a simple, inevitable, and linear development from a strict Sabbath observance to its complete disintegration among early Christians.

Part II

Food Laws in Matthew and Luke-Acts

Kashrut, that body of legislation regulating Jewish dietary practices, was another major, distinctive marker of Jewish identity that could (and still can) regulate Jewish-Gentile relations even more restrictively than the Sabbath.⁶⁶⁵ The origins and rationale behind the Jewish food laws will probably remain obscure forever, although this reality will certainly not dissuade scholars from continually providing diverse and creative theories about their genesis.⁶⁶⁶ In any case, it is unquestionable that by the Second Temple period such legislation came to play an integral role in signaling and setting the Jewish people apart from other ethnic groups. By the first century C.E., probably many Jews were following the injunctions found in Lev 11 and Deut 14, refraining from eating

⁶⁶⁵ Technically, the term kosher, which literally means, “fit” or “appropriate” can encompass a wider set of issues unrelated to food. In this chapter, the focus is on the dietary dimension of kashrut. The noun derives from the Hebrew root כָּשַׁר, which appears only three times in the Hebrew scriptures (Esth 8:5; Qoh 10:10; 11:6), and even then with no connection whatsoever to food. See Gene Schramm, “Meals Customs,” *ABD* 4:648–50; Harry Rabinowicz and Rela Mintz Geffen, “Dietary Laws,” *EJ* 5:650–59. But see Magness, *Stone and Dung*, 19–20, for the discussion of four ostraca from Masada bearing the inscription “fit (כָּשַׁר) for the purity of hallowed things.” For this inquiry, I use the terms “food laws,” “kashrut” and “dietary laws” interchangeably. The term “dietary laws” should not mislead into anachronistically seeing the primary function of this legislation as “medical” or hygienic prescriptions seeking to promote a healthy and balanced diet. Mary Douglas, “Impurity of Land Animals,” in *Purity and Holiness: The Heritage of Leviticus* (eds. Marcel J.H.M. Poorthuis and Joshua Schwartz; Jewish and Christian Perspectives Series 2; Brill: Leiden, 2000), 45: “The text itself specifically says that the rules are made for the people of Israel; what is designated as unclean for them is not unclean for the whole of humanity. Thus the rules of impurity are not a way of promoting a universal hygienic principle or pronouncing a general health warning. Nowhere in either book [i.e., Leviticus and Deuteronomy] is it ever said that the foods that are forbidden are bad for the health.”

⁶⁶⁶ For a structuralist approach to the question, see Jean Soler, *Sacrifices et interdits alimentaires dans la Bible. Aux origines du Dieu unique* (Paris: Hachette, 2004), 13–29. For a summary of various proposals, see Milgrom, *Leviticus*, 1:718–36.

animals deemed “impure,” or better, non-kosher or forbidden.⁶⁶⁷ Creatures prohibited for Jews to eat include, among others, camels, pigs, and hares (Lev 11:5–7), but also fish with no fins or scales (Lev 11:9), birds of prey, such as the eagle and the vulture (Lev 11:13), all reptiles and insects, save for certain locusts (Lev 11:20–23). The legislation in Leviticus designates some of these forbidden creatures as “impure” (טמא) and dubs others as “detestable” or “abominable” (קשׁוּׁ; Lev 11:11, 13, 20). Leviticus attributes קשׁוּׁ to certain marine creatures (v.10), birds (v. 13), flying insects (v. 23), and reptiles (vv. 41–44), but not to quadrupeds and the eight vermin creatures (vv. 29–38) described instead as טמא.

The term “impure,” when used in reference to non-kosher creatures, carries a special connotation: it refers to a *perpetual* or permanent type of “impurity.” Contrary to other temporal forms of ritual impurity, which can be reversed, the “impurity” of non-kosher animals cannot be removed. These creatures remain impure *forever*.⁶⁶⁸ Baptizing a pig will never make it kosher! Consequently, it might be preferable to describe non-kosher animals as *forbidden*, rather than “impure,” and kosher animals as *permitted*, rather than “pure,” to avoid misunderstandings and mixtures of two different halakic

⁶⁶⁷ But see Kraemer, “Food, Eating, and Meals,” 403–19; *Jewish Eating and Identity through the Ages*, 123–37, who suggests that some Jews may have disregarded kashrut. I prefer using the pair pure/impure rather than clean/unclean, once again, to avoid the impression that such practices were observed by ancient Jews merely for the purpose of preserving hygiene and health. Following Milgrom, *Leviticus*, 1:732, the terms pure/purity are defined negatively: they refer to the absence of impurity, however defined. Cf. Sanders, *Jewish Law from Jesus to the Mishnah*, 137: “I shall not attempt a positive definition of ‘purity’. It is simple to define ‘impurity,’ and so we shall proceed by the *via negativa*: purity is the absence of impurity.” The usage of the pair pure/impure to describe the permitted and forbidden foods in Lev 11/Deut 14 carries a whole set of other problems, however, generating an unfortunate confusion between kashrut and purity laws. It is absolutely imperative though to conceptually and halakically distinguish these two realms. More on this below.

⁶⁶⁸ Milgrom, *Leviticus*, 1:648.

systems (i.e., kashrut and purity).⁶⁶⁹ Indeed, touching the dead bodies or even consuming those non-kosher animals that are dubbed “detestable” (שקץ) does not render a Jew ritually impure.⁶⁷⁰ For example, touching or even eating a fish without scales would not defile a Jew, although such an act would certainly be frowned upon, for, according to Lev 11, forbidden fish are “detestable” (though not “impure”).⁶⁷¹

⁶⁶⁹ Boyarin, *The Jewish Gospels*, 113: “While all Jews are forbidden always to eat pork, lobster, milk and meat together, and meat that has not been properly slaughtered, only some Jews, some of the time, are forbidden to eat kosher food that has become contaminated with ritual impurity. While in English they are sometimes confused, the system of purity and impurity laws and the system of dietary laws (kashrut) are two different systems within the Torah’s rules for eating, and Mark and Jesus knew the difference. One of the biggest obstacles to this understanding has been in the use of the English words ‘clean’ and ‘unclean’ to refer both to the laws of permitted and forbidden foods and to the laws of pollution or impurity and purity. These translate two entirely different sets of Hebrew words [*muttar* vs. *tahor*]. It would be better to translate the first by permitted and forbidden and use clean and unclean or pure and impure only for the latter set.”

⁶⁷⁰ Maccoby, *Ritual and Morality*, 69: “Only the carcasses of land animals cause impurity. Creatures of the sea and the air even when forbidden for food do not cause impurity. Even among land creatures, there are some categories of forbidden food that do not cause impurity, notably insects.” Similarly, Milgrom, *Leviticus*, 1:656, claims that שקץ refers to animals whose ingestion is forbidden but do not defile through contact or consumption, whereas טמא refers to animals that in addition to being forbidden to eat also defile through contact (when dead). Mary Douglas, “Impurity of Land Animals,” 33–45, argues that Deuteronomy, unlike Leviticus, no longer makes a difference between the two terms, at least terminologically: what is unclean is abominable and what is abominable is unclean.

⁶⁷¹ On the other hand, eating certain forbidden animals that are labeled as “impure” or touching their carcasses can defile. See, for example, Lev 11:8 (“Of their flesh you shall not eat, and their carcasses you shall not touch; they are *unclean* unto you), in reference to forbidden quadrupeds (camels, pigs, etc.). See also Lev 11:39–40 with respect to impurity conveyed by touching or consuming the carcasses of *permitted* quadrupeds. The eight vermin (when dead) are notoriously known for their capacity to convey impurity (Lev 11:29–38), but these are exceptional critters among the “swarming creatures” (שרץ), since they are considered as טמא (Lev 11:29). On the other hand, *living* non-kosher animals, such as a live pig, do not convey impurity. To touch a live pig does not convey impurity. See Maccoby, *Ritual and Morality*, 67. Yair Furstenberg, “Defilement Penetrating the Body: A New Understanding of Contamination in Mark 7.15,” *NTS* (2008): 195, states: “The only biblical case in which impurity is transmitted solely through ingestion is the consumption of ‘swarming creatures’ in Lev 11.43–44. However, since these creatures do not otherwise convey impurity, it seems that the impurity attributed to them is only an expression of the fact that they are considered abominable and that their consumption is prohibited. Furthermore, unlike in Lev 17.15, there are no purification procedures that ameliorate the defilement.” This is not entirely true. Furstenberg does not note that even forbidden land creatures that do not “swarm” such as camels convey impurity if their dead bodies are touched or consumed. Nevertheless, he rightly notes, as others have done before him, that the Torah provides no method to remove this kind of impurity. It seems, then, that we are dealing with a different form of impurity, more akin to “moral impurity,” as Klawans, *Impurity and Sin*, 31, classifies it, following David Z. Hoffmann, *Das Buch Leviticus* (2 vols.; Berlin: Poppelauer, 1905), 1:303–5. Eating a forbidden animal is a form of impurity related to sin. Accordingly, Israel must avoid this defilement by maintaining her sanctification.

It should also be noted that Jews did (still do) not expect Gentiles to observe such legislation. Most of the Jewish food laws, save for the abstinence from consuming blood, were never viewed as *universally* binding, both in the Torah and in subsequent Jewish history. The end of Lev 11 only exhorts the *people of Israel* to keep kosher for only they are a *holy* nation (vv. 44–45; cf. Deut 14:2).⁶⁷² Maccoby nicely summarizes the matter with respect to kosher laws and other Mosaic commandments that are solely incumbent upon Jews:

What the dietary laws and the ritual purity laws have in common is that they form part of the priestly code laid down in the Torah for the Israelites as a priest-nation. It is significant that none of these laws is included in the Ten Commandments, or in any of the lists which were made from time to time (notably the rabbinic Seven Noahide Laws) to express basic human morality. Neither the dietary laws (*kashrut*) nor the purity laws were regarded as obligatory for non-Israelites. Nations or peoples castigated in the Bible for immorality (the generation of the Flood, the people of Sodom, the Canaanites) were never accused of breaches of purity, but only of basic morality.⁶⁷³

The Mosaic injunction against the consumption of blood is an exception, since Noah and his descendants received the commandment to “not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood” (Gen 9:4).⁶⁷⁴ This commandment appears again in Lev 17, where Moses instructs both the house of Israel and resident aliens to refrain from eating blood, “for the

⁶⁷² Contra Jiri Moskala, *The Laws of Clean and Unclean Animals of Leviticus 11: Their Nature, Theology, and Rationale (an Intertextual Study)* (Adventist Theological Dissertation Series 4; Berrien Springs, Mich.: Adventist Theological Society Publications, 2000), who ahistorically reads Lev 11 in light of the Genesis creation narratives to posit that *kashrut* is universal, when in reality both Lev 11 and the Genesis creation account(s) assume that this legislation applies only to Israel. The main value of Moskala’s inquiry lies in its summary of the history of interpretation of Lev 11/Deut 14 (pp. 15–111).

⁶⁷³ Maccoby, *Ritual and Morality*, viii.

⁶⁷⁴ Milgrom, *Leviticus*, 1:705: “God’s command to Noah and his sons takes the form of a law—the first in the Bible, the first to humanity. And the blood prohibition is the quintessential component of this law. It is the divine remedy for human sinfulness, which hitherto has polluted the earth and necessitated its purgation by blood. . . . Man’s nature will not change; he shall continue sinful (Gen 8:22), but his violence need no longer pollute the earth if he will but heed one law: abstain from blood. . . . Man must abstain from blood: human blood must not be shed and animal blood must not be ingested. In the Priestly scale of values, the prohibition actually stands higher than the Ten Commandments. The Decalogue was given solely to Israel, but the blood prohibition was enjoined upon all humankind; it alone is the basis for a viable human society.”

life of the flesh is in the blood” (vv.10–11; cf. vv. 12, 14). Instead, before consuming meat, both the Israelite and the foreigner abiding in the holy land must “pour out its blood and cover it with earth” (Lev 17:13; cf. Deut 12:16, 23). According to Lev 17:10, the God of Israel will cut off any person who consumes blood. Jews from the Second Temple period onwards continued to show interest in these regulations, some, like the author of *Jubilees* (7:28–33), becoming increasingly obsessed with carefully abstaining from and handling blood (cf. CD 3:6; 12:14). In fact, as many have correctly argued, the prohibition against consuming blood, which appears in the so-called Apostolic Decree as universally binding, bases itself largely on Lev 17.⁶⁷⁵

The centrality kashrut played in shaping Jewish identity during the Second Temple period cannot be underestimated.⁶⁷⁶ This becomes most apparent already by the Maccabean period when Jews in Palestine were compelled “to sacrifice swine and other unclean animals . . . to make themselves abominable by everything unclean and profane” (1 Macc 1:47–48; cf. 1Macc 1:62). The book of 4 Maccabees relates graphic stories glorifying those Jewish men and women who courageously endured torture rather than

⁶⁷⁵ More on this matter in my chapter dealing with Acts 15. In the rabbinic discussion on Noahide Laws (laws incumbent upon all of humanity), the rabbis interpret the command against eating blood given to Noah, as far as its application for Gentiles is concerned, as a call for them not to eat an animal *while it is still alive*, in rabbinic terminology, אבר מן החי (“a limb from a live creature”). In other words, from the rabbinic perspective, Gentiles *can* consume meat with its blood, as long as the animal is already dead prior to consumption. They are not obliged to ritually slaughter the animal (as Jews are supposed to) in such a way so as to drain the blood sufficiently, following the laws of *shehitah*. See Klaus Müller, *Tora für die Völker: Die noachidischen Gebote und Ansätze zu ihrer Rezeption im Christentum* (Studien zu Kirche und Israel 15; Berlin: Institut Kirche und Judentum, 1994), 131 as well as further discussion in chapter 11.

⁶⁷⁶ Other dietary regulations include the prohibition against eating certain kinds of fat of kosher animals (Lev 3:17; 7:23–25) as well as the sciatic nerve (Gen 32:33). The threefold repetition to “not boil a kid in its mother’s milk” (Exod 23:19; 34:26; Deut 14:21) was taken by the rabbis to mean that Jews could not eat dairy products with meat at the same meal. While these rabbinic discussions are very early, going back to the debates between the Houses of Shammai and Hillel (e.g., *m. Hul.* 8:1), it remains uncertain whether all Jews in antiquity, especially those living in the Diaspora, observed this custom. So, Kraemer, “Food, Eating, and Meals,” 408–9. But see Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief*, 217.

submit to the temptation of eating pork (4 Macc 5:2, 6; 6:15).⁶⁷⁷ Even many Hellenistic Jews, like the author of the *Letter of Aristeas* or Philo, who applied an allegorizing hermeneutic to their scriptures, affirmed the importance of observing kashrut and appreciated the great task it served in forming and preserving a distinctive Jewish identity (*Let. Arist.* 151).

The observance of kashrut did indeed govern to a large extent the nature of Jewish-Gentile interaction in antiquity. As Gene Schramm points out, “the effects of practicing kashruth, from a socioreligious standpoint, are clear: the strictures of kashruth make social intercourse between the practicing Jew and the outside world possible only on the basis of a one-sided relationship, and that is on the terms of the one who observes kashruth.” Classical authors from antiquity reveal their awareness, sometimes in a hostile manner, about the social barriers such dietary practices could create between Jews and non-Jews. In hyperbolic fashion, Tacitus blames the Jews for regarding “as profane all that we hold sacred; on the other hand, they permit all that we abhor” (*Historiae* V, 4). In this same section, Tacitus, who explicitly refers to the Jewish abstention from pork, claims that “the Jews are extremely loyal toward one another,” and “sit apart at meals” (V, 5).⁶⁷⁸ Likewise, Apollonius Molon (first century B.C.E.) labels Jews as misanthropes, accusing them for their unwillingness to associate with others (Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 2:148, 258).

⁶⁷⁷ Cf. the story in Daniel 1:5–20 (maybe not dealing so much with the issue of kashrut as with food and wine offered to idols) which surely served as a paradigm for Jews in the Diaspora. See also Philo, *In Flaccum* 96.

⁶⁷⁸ In his *Legatio ad Gaium* (1:360), Philo recalls the embarrassing situation he found himself in, along with a Jewish delegation from Alexandria, when they were questioned by the Roman emperor regarding the reason for the Jewish abstention from pork. The very question is said to have raised the mocking laughter of Philo’s adversaries present during this exchange.

These Greco-Roman reports should not be taken at face value, given their polemical tendencies, even if they do indirectly confirm the role kashrut played in forming and preserving Jewish identity in antiquity. The classical sources should also not nourish the modern misconception that ancient Jews did not interact at all with non-Jews because of an allegedly widespread, extreme exclusiveness and phobia of contracting ritual impurity from Gentiles. Many Jews did indeed interact in various degrees and avenues with non-Jews, and occasionally, under the proper conditions, were even willing to *dine* with Gentiles.⁶⁷⁹ This point cannot be underestimated, as it has often been and still is misunderstood in secondary scholarship.⁶⁸⁰ The whole issue is connected to the debate about Jewish purity laws in general. Sanders has correctly argued that most Jews generally did not dissociate themselves from Gentiles because they supposedly viewed them as intrinsically impure.⁶⁸¹ Maccoby,⁶⁸² Klawans,⁶⁸³ and Hayes⁶⁸⁴ have further developed and strengthened this thesis.⁶⁸⁵ These scholars make the important distinction between what may be called, for lack of better terms, “moral impurity” and “ritual impurity.”⁶⁸⁶ According to Hayes, moral impurity “arises from the commission of certain

⁶⁷⁹ So already Yehezkel Cohen, “Attitude to the Gentile in the Halacha and in Reality in the Tannaitic Period,” [in Hebrew] (Ph.D. diss., Hebrew University, Jerusalem, 1975); Peter J. Tomson, *Paul and the Jewish Law: Halakha in the Letters of the Apostle to the Gentiles* (CRINT 3; Jewish Traditions in Early Christian Literature 1; Assen, Netherlands: Van Gorcum, 1990), 230–36.

⁶⁸⁰ See especially Sanders, “Jewish Association with Gentiles and Galatians 2:11–14,” in *The Conversation Continues: Essays on Paul and John Presented to J. Louis Martyn* (eds. Robert Fortna and Beverly Gaventa; Nashville: Abingdon, 1990), 177–88; *Jewish Law from Jesus to the Mishnah*, 282; *Judaism: Practice and Belief*, 75, 216.

⁶⁸¹ See for example, Sanders, “Jewish Association with Gentiles,” 185.

⁶⁸² *Ritual and Morality*, especially pp. 8–12.

⁶⁸³ Klawans, *Impurity and Sin*.

⁶⁸⁴ Hayes, *Gentile Impurities and Jewish Identities*.

⁶⁸⁵ For an alternative view seeking to uphold Alon Gedalyahu’s thesis about intrinsic Gentile impurity, see Vered Noam, “The Gentileness of the Gentiles”: Two Approaches to the Impurity of non-Jews,” in *Halakhah in Light of Epigraphy* (eds. Albert I. Baumgarten et al.; Journal of Ancient Judaism Supplements 3; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2011), 27–42.

⁶⁸⁶ Hayes, *Gentile Impurities and Jewish Identities*, 27, adds yet a third category, “genealogical impurity.” A thorough discussion of the usage and signification of the terms “moral” and “ritual” *tout court* is a desideratum. I do not wish through this terminological usage to unwittingly perpetuate the tendency to

heinous sins (murder, idolatry and specified sexual sins). This impurity is not conveyed to others, nor is it subject to rites of purification. It does, however, defile the sinner himself, the land, and the sanctuary and incurs severe punishment.”⁶⁸⁷ Ritual impurity, on the other hand, “is a highly contagious, generally impermanent condition, resulting from primary or secondary contact with certain natural and often unavoidable processes and substances (e.g., corpses, genital flux, and scale disease).”⁶⁸⁸ As Hayes notes, contracting ritual impurity is *not* viewed as *sinful*: “The primary consequence of ritual impurity is that the defiled person or object is disqualified from contact with sancta. Ritual impurity, which is not in itself sinful, can be conveyed to persons and is removed by rituals of purification.”⁶⁸⁹

According to these experts, ancient Jews did not think that Gentiles had to observe the ritual system of purity/impurity as outlined in Lev 12–15. These regulations only concern(ed) the holy people of Israel. On the other hand, Gentiles could acquire moral impurity because the Mosaic Torah held them accountable for committing

artificially bifurcate the Law of Moses, subordinating its “ceremonial” or “ritual” to its supposed greater and loftier “moral” dimension (often equated or reduced in Christianity to the Ten Commandments). See brief discussion of the traditionally pejorative use of the term “ritual purity” among New Testament scholars in Sanders, *Jewish Law from Jesus to the Mishnah*, 137. The *Mekilta* captures the important value, held by many Jews of the Second Temple period onwards, to observe the Torah in its *totality*. Commenting on Exod 21:1 (“*And these are the ordinances . . .*”), the *Mekilta* (Mishpatim Parashah 1) wonders why the Torah states here “*And these*” (ואלה) instead of simply stating “*these*” (אלה). The answer given is that the conjunctive *vav* connects what precedes (the Ten Commandments and the altar) with what follows (civil ordinances): both set of laws were given at Sinai. While the Ten Commandments enjoyed a certain prominence in ancient Judaism, Jews certainly did not neglect observing the “lesser,” ritual commandments. A similar perspective can be found in both Matthew and Luke. In Matthew, Jesus condemns the Pharisees for tithing mint, dill, and cummin, while neglecting the “weightier matters of the law” (justice, mercy and faith). Jesus, nevertheless, adds a caveat often overlooked: “It is these you ought to have practiced *without* neglecting the others.” Similarly, Luke 11:42. Nevertheless, the Torah makes a conceptual distinction between two kinds of impurity, one “moral,” the other “ritual.” For lack of better terms, then, I reluctantly use, for the time being, the categories “moral” and “ritual” when discussing purity matters.

⁶⁸⁷ Hayes, *Gentile Impurities and Jewish Identities*, 5.

⁶⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

fundamental sins such as murder, idolatry, and sexual immorality.⁶⁹⁰ It is absolutely vital to fully appreciate this distinction between moral and ritual impurity and its pertinence for assessing Jewish-Gentiles relations in antiquity, for many New Testament exegetes mistakenly mix the two. In addition, the dietary system of *kashrut* should not be confused with the laws of ritual and moral (im)purity. Just one quotation from Hayes will suffice at this stage to capture the importance of this point:

Some scholars cite texts that refer to Jewish abstention from Gentile foods as evidence of a Gentile ritual impurity. However, the biblical laws of *kashrut* (and their postbiblical development) are sufficient to explain this abstention, and one need not resort to a theory of Gentile impurity. In other words, Jews most likely objected to Gentile food on the grounds that it was nonkosher rather than on the grounds that it was ritually defiled by contact with Gentiles.⁶⁹¹

Many have confused the two issues, *kashrut* and purity, partly because the Torah occasionally employs the same terminology of (im)purity to describe both systems: “The food laws may be considered to be purity laws, since forbidden food is called ‘impure’ (e.g. Lev. 11:4). They deserve separate treatment, however, because impure foods are strictly prohibited; they are not only ‘impure’, they are ‘abominable’ (e.g. Lev. 11:10), and there is no rite of purification in the Bible, either for impure food or for the person who eats it.”⁶⁹² Only by correctly distinguishing and understanding both questions can a more precise and nuanced understanding about Matthew and Luke’s stance on the issue of food laws be obtained.

⁶⁹⁰ Ibid., 22–23.

⁶⁹¹ Ibid., 49.

⁶⁹² Sanders, *Jewish Law from Jesus to the Mishnah*, 24.

Throughout Part II of this monograph, I focus more on Matthew and Luke's attitude toward the dietary laws, viewed as a salient marker of Jewish identity,⁶⁹³ than on other issues related to purity, although it is impossible to fully ignore such matters, for many passages that have previously been taken as evidence for a supposed abrogation of kashrut in reality only inform us about the opinions of the gospel writers on ritual purity.⁶⁹⁴ To put it bluntly, I am more interested in asking such concrete questions as the following: did Matthew and Luke instruct their Jewish and/or Gentile readers to consume pork? Did they think that Jewish and Gentile followers of Jesus could consume meat with its blood in it? How did their views on Jewish food laws affect the interaction between the Jewish and Gentile segments of the *ekklesia*? Finally, did their opinions and practices on such matters seem or mark them as Jewish to other Jews and non-Jews (Greeks, Romans, etc.)? I maintain throughout this inquiry that neither Matthew nor Luke announces the end of the Jewish dietary system. Their concern lies mainly with dealing with the problem of the *moral* impurity of Gentiles and how this issue affects Jewish-Gentile relations and commensality. This is especially true in the case of Luke. The observance of kashrut is presumed throughout Matthew and Luke-Acts, although I suggest that both authors, while of course expecting Jews to continue observing their

⁶⁹³ This is how Deines, "Das Aposteldekret—Halacha für Heidenchristen oder christliche Rücksichtnahme auf jüdische Tabus?" 323–98, tackles the issue of the Apostolic Decree. But given Deines' commitment to downplay the importance of the law for both Matthew and Luke, our conclusions are very different indeed.

⁶⁹⁴ On other purity concerns in Luke-Acts, see Bart J. Koet, "Purity and Impurity of the Body in Luke-Acts," in *Purity and Holiness: The Heritage of Leviticus* (eds. Marcel J.H.M. Poorthuis and Joshua Schwartz; Jewish and Christian Perspectives Series 2; Brill: Leiden, 2000), 93–106, who argues that Luke depicts Jesus and other figures in Luke-Acts as law-abiding and conscious of purity regulations. See also Eric Ottenheim, "Impurity between Intention and Deed: Purity Disputes in First Century Judaism and in the New Testament," in *Purity and Holiness: The Heritage of Leviticus*, 105: "It seems to us that Luke depicts Jesus as even more attuned to purity than the other Gospels. Maybe this reflects a different attitude towards purity in the community for which he writes." For an alternative view on Jesus' attitude toward purity see Christian Grappe, "Jésus et l'impureté," *RHPR* 84 (2004): 393–417, building on the work of Klaus Berger, "Jesus als Pharisäer und frühe Christen als Pharisäer," *NovT* 30 (1988): 231–62.

dietary laws *in toto* only require Gentiles to do so in a limited way and under certain qualifications for the sake of maintaining a Jewish-Gentile *koinōnia*.

A note should be made here about the selection of passages analyzed in this section. Those passages dealing with the miraculous feeding of the multitudes, which appear in all four canonical gospels, have been left out of this study. The symbolic nature and form of such stories invite so many interpretations that impede deriving any concrete information about the question of kashrut. In Matt 14:13–21, appears an account relating a feeding of five thousand men (besides women and children according to Matthew’s “counting”), while Matt 15:29–39 refers to a second feeding of four thousand (following Mark 6:30–44 and 8:1–10, which also mention two feedings). In the first feeding reported by Matthew, *five* loaves of bread and two fish are multiplied to nourish the populace (14:17), with *twelve* extra baskets of food miraculously remaining after the feeding (v.20). But in the second feeding, which in many ways resembles the first one, Matthew speaks of *seven* loaves and a few fish (15:34) as well as *seven* remaining baskets (v.37). By contrast, Luke only reports one feeding (9:10–17: five loaves, two fish, five thousand people, and twelve remaining baskets).⁶⁹⁵

The Jewish numerology (e.g., seven and twelve) and the different number of feedings (two in Matthew and Mark, one in Luke) have led scholars to conjure up a host of interpretations about their possible symbolical meanings. According to Davies and Allison, many allegorically equate the five loaves with the five books of Moses, while the two fish are thought to stand for the psalms and the prophets or the apostles and the

⁶⁹⁵ The gospel of John (6:1–15) also reports only one feeding (five loaves, two fish, five thousand fed, and twelve baskets).

gospel.⁶⁹⁶ For some, the twelve baskets represent either the twelve tribes or the twelve apostles.⁶⁹⁷ The seven baskets have at times been associated with the Gentiles (cf. the seven Noahide Laws; the seven men appointed to take care of the Hellenists in Acts 6:3).⁶⁹⁸ If we were to further encourage this allegorizing approach, could the two Matthean feedings and Luke's sole account about the same matter mean that Matthew believes in separate table fellowships (whether for the Eucharist or other meals), one for Jews (symbolized by the twelve baskets), the other for Gentiles (symbolized by seven baskets), while Luke advocates only one table fellowship where both Jews and Gentiles commune together eating non-kosher food?⁶⁹⁹ This is demanding too much from such texts. Because of the references to seven loaves and seven baskets, Deines suggests that the second feeding in Matthew creates a "kind of table fellowship between Jews and Gentiles, with the disciples serving the tables (cf. Acts 6:2)."⁷⁰⁰ But even if Deines'

⁶⁹⁶ Davies and Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, 2:489.

⁶⁹⁷ See already Origen, *Comm. Matt.* 11:3.

⁶⁹⁸ But the basis in Jewish tradition for attaching the number seven with the Gentiles is rather weak. The seven men appointed to take care of the Hellenists in Acts 6:3 do not represent Gentiles, but simply the Hellenist yet Jewish (in contrast to the Hebrew) contingent of the early *ekklesia*. On the other hand, the *twelve* apostles (οἱ δώδεκα) propose appointing *seven* men to take care of the Hellenists and the daily distribution of food, claiming that "it is not right that we should neglect the word of God in order to wait on tables" (Act 6:2). In Luke's sole feeding account, the *twelve* (9:12: οἱ δώδεκα), instead of Matthew and Mark's οἱ μαθηταί ("the disciples) assist Jesus in distributing the food to the multitude. Is there any significance to these parallels? In other words, could Luke be trying to use the *one* miraculous feeding account to state that all members in the *ekklesia* are entitled to the same physical rights, for example, equal distribution of bread? On the one hand, there are numeric correspondences between Luke and Acts, on the other hand, occupational discrepancies (in Luke, the twelve occupy themselves with feeding the crowd; in Acts, they appoint other people to busy themselves with serving tables). In any case, it matters not for the topic of this chapter, which position one adopts concerning the potential symbolism involved here, since a serving of *kosher* food can surely be envisioned in Luke's report about Jesus' feeding of the crowds as well as the distribution of food to the Hellenists in Acts.

⁶⁹⁹ The Lukan deletion of the doublet may simply stem from stylistic reasons: why repeat a feeding story twice, if they resemble each other so much? Fitzmyer, *The Gospel according to Luke*, 2:762. The absence of the second feeding in Luke also stems from his "great omission" of a block of Markan materials. Bovon, *Luke 1*, 353, is surprised at the Lukan absence of the second feeding found in Mark, "since both the setting and this version in a Gentile region and the symbolic number of seven baskets of left-over pieces point to the Gentile church, which is a special concern of Luke." But if we do not begin with the assumption that Luke-Acts is a Gentile Christian writing, then this omission does not seem surprising.

⁷⁰⁰ Roland Deines, "Not the Law but the Messiah," in *Built upon the Rock: Studies in the Gospel of Matthew* (eds. Daniel M. Gurtner & John Nolland; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2008), 69.

suggestion were true, such a social phenomenon should not prove so astonishing, since non-Christian Jews certainly could devise ways for dining with non-Jews, and the menu of the miraculous feeding only mentions bread and fish, hardly items that go against a kosher diet (provided the fish have fins and scales). Even if eucharistic features are embedded within the feeding accounts of Matthew and Luke, we cannot infer from this that both gospel authors dismiss the importance of observing Jewish food laws.⁷⁰¹ Jewish and Gentile followers of Jesus could very well have celebrated the Eucharist together even while respecting kashrut.

Consequently, in my treatment of the gospel of Matthew, I deal mainly with the analysis of one key passage in Matthew, 15:1–20, although I do search for traces of kashrut in other Matthean passages. In reality, Matt 15:1–20 only reports a debate between Jesus and the Pharisees about washing hands before eating, that is, about purity issues rather than the question of food laws, which is never condemned throughout Matthew’s gospel. In Luke’s case, he does not even retain Mark’s story about the controversy of washing hands before meals, although he does refer elsewhere to a quite similar incident in which he nevertheless does not oppose the observance of kashrut or even the maintenance of ritual purity (11:37–41). In Luke’s case, I also show that his account about the commission of the seventy-two disciples (10:1ff.) does not contain “proof” about a supposed abrogation of Jewish food laws, contrary to what some New Testament commentators have said recently. Finally, I assess two major sections in Acts,

⁷⁰¹ The eucharistic dimension has been ascribed to the feeding pericopes, a possibility surely to be reckoned with at least in the case of Matt 14:13–21. Scholars, however, also detect spiritual, moral, soteriological, eschatological, social, and ecclesiological dimensions in these stories. The multiplicity of interpretations and allegorizations speaks for itself, showing how difficult it is to extract from these passages precise information about Matthew and Luke’s views on kashrut and table fellowship between Jews and Gentiles. For a summary of the history of interpretation on these feedings stories, see Dale and Allison, *The Gospel according to Saint Matthew*, 2:480–85; Luz, *Matthew*, 2:312–13.

Peter's vision of the impure animals and his encounter with Cornelius (chs. 10 and 11) as well as the much-debated Apostolic Decree (Acts 15). Both of these passages, I argue, address especially the question of the moral impurity of Gentiles, while presupposing the observance of kashrut on the part of Jesus' Jewish followers and even to a certain degree of Gentile disciples of Jesus, particularly when these seek communion with the Jewish branch of the *ekklesia*.

Chapter 8

Food Laws in Matthew

“R. Hisda said to R. Huna, There is [a Baraitha] taught that supports your contention: [The verse,] ‘And every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth [is a detestable thing; it shall not be eaten],’ includes insects found in liquids that have been passed through a strainer. The reason [then that they are forbidden] is because they had passed through a strainer, but had they not passed through a strainer they would be permitted.”
(Babylonian Talmud, *Hullin* 67a)

Introduction

There is no passage in Matthew that deals directly and extensively with the question of kashrut. In the past and even in the present, many have claimed that the controversy about hand washing in Matt 15, as well as in Mark 7, announces the end of the Jewish dietary system. In reality, it is becoming clearer that this controversy deals not with kashrut at all but with a question about ritual impurity. I will try to strengthen this thesis by first investigating the question of hand washing and distinguishing this practice from the observance of kashrut proper. Next, I hunt for traces of kashrut that might be embedded in other verses in Matthew often analyzed for other (theological) reasons, but not sufficiently appreciated for their halakic substance. Matthew employs a remarkable set of images, metaphors, proverbs and the like that draw from the realms of kashrut and purity in order to make theological points. But the very usage of such language and lore shows how intimately acquainted Matthew and his readers are with Jewish culture. In fact, for this language to enjoy its full rhetorical effect upon its readers, an observance of kashrut on the part of Matthew and his audience should be presupposed.

Hand Washing before Meals

Synoptic Window

Table 8-1

Matt 15:1–23

Then Pharisees and scribes came to Jesus from Jerusalem and said,

² “Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands before they eat.”

³ He answered them, “And why do you break the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition?”

⁴ For God said, ‘Honor your father and your mother,’ and, ‘Whoever speaks evil of father or mother must surely die.’

⁵ But you say that whoever tells father or mother, ‘Whatever support you might have had from me is given to God,’ then that person need not honor the father.

⁶ So, for the sake of your tradition, you make void the word of God.

⁷ You hypocrites! Isaiah prophesied rightly about you when he said:

⁸ ‘This people honors me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me;

⁹ in vain do they worship me, teaching human precepts as doctrines.’”

¹⁰ Then he called the crowd to him and said to them, “Listen and understand:

¹¹ it is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person, but it is what comes out of the mouth that defiles.”

¹² Then the disciples approached and said to him, “Do you know that the Pharisees took offense when they heard what you said?”

¹³ He answered, “Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted.

¹⁴ Let them alone; they are blind guides of the blind. And if one blind person guides another, both will fall into a pit.”

¹⁵ But Peter said to him, “Explain this parable to us.”

¹⁶ Then he said, “Are you also still without understanding?

¹⁷ Do you not see that whatever goes into the mouth enters the stomach, and goes out into the sewer?

¹⁸ But what comes out of the mouth proceeds

Mark 7:1–23

Now when the Pharisees and some of the scribes who had come from Jerusalem gathered around him,

² they noticed that some of his disciples were eating with defiled hands, that is, without washing them.

³ (For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, do not eat unless they thoroughly wash their hands, thus observing the tradition of the elders;

⁴ and they do not eat anything from the market unless they wash it; and there are also many other traditions that they observe, the washing of cups, pots, and bronze kettles.)

⁵ So the Pharisees and the scribes asked him, “Why do your disciples not live according to the tradition of the elders, but eat with defiled hands?”

⁶ He said to them, “Isaiah prophesied rightly about you hypocrites, as it is written, ‘This people honors me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me;

⁷ in vain do they worship me, teaching human precepts as doctrines.’

⁸ You abandon the commandment of God and hold to human tradition.”

⁹ Then he said to them, “You have a fine way of rejecting the commandment of God in order to keep your tradition!

¹⁰ For Moses said, ‘Honor your father and your mother’; and, ‘Whoever speaks evil of father or mother must surely die.’

¹¹ But you say that if anyone tells father or mother, ‘Whatever support you might have had from me is Corban’ (that is, an offering to God)—

¹² then you no longer permit doing anything for a father or mother,

¹³ thus making void the word of God through your tradition that you have handed on. And you do many things like this.”

¹⁴ Then he called the crowd again and said to them, “Listen to me, all of you, and understand:

¹⁵ there is nothing outside a person that by going in can defile, but the things that come out

from the heart, and this is what defiles.

¹⁹ For out of the heart come evil intentions, murder, adultery, fornication, theft, false witness, slander.

²⁰ These are what defile a person, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile.”

are what defile.”

¹⁶
¹⁷ When he had left the crowd and entered the house, his disciples asked him about the parable.

¹⁸ He said to them, “Then do you also fail to understand? Do you not see that whatever goes into a person from outside cannot defile, ¹⁹ since it enters, not the heart but the stomach, and goes out into the sewer?” (Thus he declared all foods clean.)

²⁰ And he said, “It is what comes out of a person that defiles.

²¹ For it is from within, from the human heart, that evil intentions come: fornication, theft, murder,

²² adultery, avarice, wickedness, deceit, licentiousness, envy, slander, pride, folly.

²³ All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person.”

Literary Context

Matthew essentially follows Mark’s order of narration as the following table illustrates:

Table 8-2

Mark	Matthew
6:30–44: First feeding of the crowds (5 loaves/2 fish/12 baskets)	14:13–21: First feeding of the crowds (5 loaves/2 fish/12 baskets)
6:45–52: Jesus walks on water	14:22–33: Jesus walks on water
6:53–56: Healing in Gennesaret	14:34–36: Healing in Gennesaret
7:1–23: Hand washing before meals	15:1–20: Hand washing before meals
7:24–30: Syrophenician Woman (Tyre)	15:21–28: Syrophenician Woman (Tyre)
7:31–37: Healing of deaf-mute person	15:29–31: Mass healings ⁷⁰²
8:1–10: Second feeding (7 loaves/7 baskets)	15:32–39: Second feeding (7 loaves/some fish/7 baskets)

In both Matthew and Mark, the controversy on hand washing is preceded and followed by feeding stories (as well as other miraculous accounts). Furthermore, the story of Jesus’ encounter with a Gentile woman from Tyre occurs immediately after the

⁷⁰² Matthew replaces Mark’s story on the healing of a deaf mute with the report about Jesus healing many sick people. This substitution has nothing to do with Matthew’s desire to highlight Jesus’ ministry to the Gentiles. Contra Gundry, *Matthew*, 317. Matthew’s distaste for some of the “magic” features and the messianic secret in Mark is well known (see my chapter on the Sabbath and Matthew’s deletion of Mark’s episode on exorcism). See further Allison and Davies, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, 2:561.

controversy on hand washing. Noteworthy, is the verbal exchange employing food imagery between Jesus and the Syrophenician woman to describe Jewish-Gentile relations: Jesus expresses his initial reluctance to act on behalf of a non-Jew, claiming it unfair that children's food be given to dogs; the woman responds by arguing that even dogs may eat from the crumbs that fall under the table (Matt 15:26–27; Mark 7:27–28). Joel Marcus has argued that in the gospel of Mark the first multiplication of food represents a feeding to a Jewish populace (five loaves representing the Torah of Moses; twelve baskets, the twelve tribes of Israel), while the second multiplication represents a feeding to Gentiles, which occurs in the environs of the Gentile populated region of Decapolis; 8:31.⁷⁰³ Marcus believes that Mark's literary placement of the hand washing controversy in the midst of such materials is not accidental, and that the sweeping statement allegedly abolishing Jewish food laws in Mark 7:19b means that Jews and Gentiles in the *ekklesia* may now freely eat together unimpeded by such exclusionary measures.⁷⁰⁴

However, these observations certainly prove inapplicable for Matthew, while scholars will now have to contend with the possibility that even Mark 7:19b does not declare the end of kashrut.⁷⁰⁵ First, Matthew has removed the generalizing statement in

⁷⁰³ Marcus, *Mark*, 1:458.

⁷⁰⁴ Marcus, *Mark*, 1:458.

⁷⁰⁵ Boyarin, *The Jewish Gospels*, 121, provides an interesting and alternative reading to Mark 7:19b interpreting it not as a declaration announcing that all foods are *permitted* (i.e., kosher), but as rejecting a Pharisaic extension of purity laws beyond their original biblical foundations. See also Mark Kinzer, *Postmissionary Messianic Judaism: Redefining Christian Engagement with the Jewish People* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Brazos Press, 2005), 54–58, who notes the heuristic import of *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 4:7 (cf. *Num. Rab.* 19:8) for the understanding of Mark 7:19b and suggests that Mark 7:19b applies to the *Gentile* audience Mark addresses in his gospel, not Jewish followers of Jesus. Cf. James Dunn, *Jesus, Paul and the Law* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1990), 45, viewing Mark 7:19b as “designed to point out or serve as a reassurance to Gentile believers that the Jewish food laws were not obligatory for them” (but see Dunn on p. 38).

Mark 7:19b.⁷⁰⁶ Second, it is unlikely that the second multiplication in Matthew symbolizes a feeding to the Gentiles.⁷⁰⁷ Even if this were true, a feeding to the Gentiles need not be interpreted as a Matthean abolishment of the Jewish food laws. In terms of *Heilsgeschichte*, it could simply symbolize a new phase of divine interaction within human history in which Gentiles are fed with the message of the good news once the Jews have received their opportunity to partake of such spiritual nourishment, in Pauline jargon, “to the Jew first and then to the Gentile.” Even as the Gentiles are now provided with the opportunity to receive the gospel, the Jewish followers of Jesus of Matthew’s milieu could very well have persisted in their faithful observance of their food practices as outlined in the Torah of Moses.⁷⁰⁸

Literary Structure

Matt 15:1–20 can be separated into two major parts, which are really three:⁷⁰⁹

- I. 15:1–9
- II. 15:10–20
 - A. 10–11
 - B. 12–20

The shifting audiences within this pericope have governed to a large extent my decision to separate it into two (or three) sections. In section I, Jesus addresses *Pharisees and scribes* from Jerusalem who question Jesus regarding his disciples’ neglect of the “traditions of the elders,” since they do not wash their hands before eating (v. 1). The reply given in vv. 2–9 to the Pharisees and scribes’ objection does not touch on the

⁷⁰⁶ Or did Matthew have another version of Mark that did not contain this statement?

⁷⁰⁷ See Dale and Allison, *The Gospel according to Saint Matthew*, 2:563–64; Luz, *Matthew*, 2:344–46. Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew* (WBC 33A–B; Dallas, Tex.: Word Books, 1993–1994), 2: 419, 452, however, views the second feeding as pointing to the blessing of the Gentiles.

⁷⁰⁸ Davies and Allison, *The Gospel according to Saint Matthew*, 2:517, conclude that there is no obvious thematic link between 15:1–20 and the surrounding material.

⁷⁰⁹ So Davies and Allison, *The Gospel according to Saint Matthew*, 2:516: “drawn-out objection story with three scenes.”

particular issue of washing hands, but deals with the larger issue of the so-called “traditions of the elders.” In the first part of section II (vv. 10–11), the Matthean Jesus briefly addresses the *crowds* (v. 10) before interacting with *his disciples* (vv. 12–20). In section II, Matthew’s Jesus finally addresses the question of washing hands before eating (vv. 11 and 17–20). In fact, in the entire pericope, only the content in vv. 2, 11, and 17–20 treats more closely the issue of washing hands before eating, while the rest of the pericope relays polemical material directed against the teachings and behavior of the Pharisees in general.

Halakic Analysis: Hand Washing before Meals

Before assessing the (ir)relevance of this pericope for comprehending Matthew’s attitude toward kashrut, it might be helpful to discuss briefly some of the halakic issues concerning hand washing before meals. The terse formulation of the question voiced by the Pharisees as well as the rest of the pericope in Matt ch. 15 appear to contain several assumptions about this custom: (1) impure hands can carry impurity separately from the rest of the body; (2) impure hands can defile (kosher) food; (3) such food can in turn defile the rest of the body upon ingestion; (4) hand washing should be performed before *any* meal (not just on special and festive occasions or when setting food aside for priests); (5) Pharisees wash their hands before eating; (6) Pharisees expect other Jews (in this case, the followers of Jesus) to uphold this practice, which belongs to the halakic corpus known as the “traditions of the elders.”

Unfortunately, when we turn to the relevant, extant sources on the topic, whether from the Second Temple or rabbinic corpora, the picture becomes very complicated at several levels. First of all, the Mosaic Torah only calls for *priests* to wash their hands and

feet before offering *sacrifices* (Exod 30:18–21; 40:31). Lev 15:11, however, records a special injunction for persons suffering from an abnormal discharge (זָהַב): “All those whom the one with the discharge touches without his having rinsed his hands in water shall wash their clothes, and bathe in water, and be unclean until the evening.” This passage assumes that a person suffering from an abnormal discharge can indeed defile other people by touching them with his or her unwashed hands. But besides these meagre references, the question of hand washing remains conspicuously absent in the Torah and even in the rest of the books now contained in the Hebrew Bible.

In non-canonical sources, some passages point to the custom of hand washing among Jews in the *Diaspora*. But this evidence does not explicitly tie hand washing with eating food.⁷¹⁰ Thus, the *Letter of Aristeas* (305) claims that it is the custom of all Jews to wash their hands in the sea (ἔθος ἐστὶ πᾶσι τοῖς Ἰουδαίοις ἀπονιψάμενοι τῇ θαλάσῃ τὰς χεῖρας), but this act precedes prayer (ὡς ἂν εὐξωνται πρὸς τὸν θεόν) and the reading of scripture, not eating.⁷¹¹ Similarly, the *Sibylline Oracles* 3:591–93 indicates that Jews wash their hands before praying.⁷¹²

⁷¹⁰ Eyal Regev, “Non-Priestly Purity and its Religious Aspects according to Historical Sources and Archaeological Findings,” in *Purity and Holiness*, 225–29, claims that Diasporan Jews ate *common* food in purity (229). The evidence he adduces, however, is not conclusive. The Book of Tobit 2:9 and the passages from Philo point only to bathing after corpse impurity and sexual relations, but do not discuss hand washing before eating ordinary food. In *Let. Aris.* 306, the author provides a rationale for this practice in the Diaspora: “What is their purpose in washing their hands while saying their prayers? They explained that it is evidence that they have done no evil, for all activity takes place by means of the hands.” Commenting on this passage, the late Susan Haber, “*They Shall Purify Themselves*”: *Essays on Purity in Early Judaism* (ed. Adele Reinhartz; SBLEJL 24; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2008), 174, claims that the purported reason given here for hand washing concerns not ritual purification, but moral purity. She holds that since sin is regarded as ritually defiling, it may be removed through the ceremony of hand washing. I am not sure, however, whether this passage makes such a statement. It only declares that hand washing is (symbolic) evidence or *testimony* (μαρτύριον) that such persons are indeed morally upright before God when they engage in prayer and the reading of scripture. Whether the rite itself of hand washing plays a role in removing moral sin remains open to interpretation.

⁷¹¹ See chapter 7 dealing with Acts 16:12–16 for references on synagogues built next to rivers or seas, possibly because of their location near natural water which Jews used for ablutions. Sanders, *Jewish Law*

For the practice of hand washing in Palestine, Qumranic evidence actually refers to the immersion of the entire body before eating (1QS 5:16; 4Q514).⁷¹³ Some of the earliest rabbinic traditions (purportedly between Shammaites and Hillelites) contain halakic debates about hand washing for the preparation and setting aside of food for *priests*.⁷¹⁴ According to the Mosaic Torah, the priests were supposed to consume their food in purity in the temple. No Mosaic commandment, however, explicitly demands that food offered by lay people to the priests remain in constant purity until its conferral to priestly hands. On the other hand, certain rabbinic discussions reveal a concern for harvesting and transporting such food with pure hands. Because these rabbinic debates question the very need for preserving the purity of food harvested and set apart by lay people for priests, Sanders wonders whether Pharisees (insofar as such rabbinic discussions between the two Houses can be taken as representing Pharisaic views) would have washed their hands before eating their own *common* food.⁷¹⁵ Many of these rabbinic passages, of course, imagine a pre-70 setting when the temple in Jerusalem was still in operation. But what about post-70 Pharisaic practice? Sanders claims that even in the

from Jesus to the Mishnah, 270, proposes that Philo believed Jews could carry out certain non-biblical rites in the Diaspora and really become pure from certain impurities (e.g., corpse impurity) in spite of their distance from the temple.

⁷¹² Perhaps, the practice of hand washing in the Jewish Diaspora may have originally stemmed from surrounding non-Jewish custom. See Furstenberg, “Defilement Penetrating the Body,” 193–94; Haber, *They Shall Purify Themselves*, 174; Walter Burkert, *Greek Religion* (trans. John Raffan; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1985), 75–84.

⁷¹³ See Roger P. Booth, *Jesus and the Laws of Purity: Tradition History and Legal History* (JSNTSup 13; Sheffield: University of Sheffield, 1986), 161.

⁷¹⁴ For example, *m. Tehar.* 9:5 (preparation of olives of priestly due: if one crushes olives with impure hands, the olives are defiled); cf. *m. Tehar.* 10:4 (the two Houses debate when to wash hands in connection to producing wine, whether before putting grapes in the press, so Shammaites, or only when actually separating the priestly portion of the wine). See Sanders, *Jewish Law from Jesus to the Mishnah*, 228. But see Furstenberg, “Defilement Penetrating the Body,” 185–86.

⁷¹⁵ Cf., for example, *m. Bik.* 2:1, stating that hand washing should be performed for all heave offerings and first fruits, presuming this halakah applies only to food offered to priests. *M. Hal* 1:9 also seems to presuppose that hand washing before common meals is not required. See further Chaim Milikowsky, “Reflections on Hand-Washing, Hand-Purity and Holy Scripture in Rabbinic Literature,” in *Purity and Holiness*, 149–62. Furstenberg, “Defilement Penetrating the Body,” 176–200, however, argues throughout for an expansionist practice among Pharisees (and other Jews) of hand washing before common meals.

rabbinic traditions of the post-70 era complete uniformity on this matter did not exist.⁷¹⁶

Consequently, he suggests that some Pharisees might have washed their hands only during sacred meals, held on the Sabbath and festivals, but not before common meals.⁷¹⁷

To further complicate the picture, we should note that hands can only acquire a second degree impurity, at least according to rabbinic halakah, meaning that impure hands cannot *directly* defile common food, since secular (dry) food items also can only acquire an impurity of a second degree.⁷¹⁸ According to this perspective, the discussion in Matt ch. 15 could *prima facie* almost seem meaningless, if Matthew does indeed assume that common meals must be ingested with pure hands.⁷¹⁹ Nevertheless, Furstenberg and

⁷¹⁶ For example, Sanders points to *t. Ber.* 5:13[14], which states that washing hands before a meal is optional, but after a meal mandatory. Cf. *T. Ber.* 5:26 [27]. Nevertheless, Sanders, *Jewish Law from Jesus to the Mishnah*, 230, acknowledges that *t. Ber.* 5:13[14] only records a discussion concerning the *timing* of the hand washing (before or after a meal), not about the necessity of observing such a rite.

⁷¹⁷ Sanders, *Jewish Law from Jesus to the Mishnah*, 248.

⁷¹⁸ Cf. Friedrich Avemarie, “Jesus and Purity,” in *The New Testament and Rabbinic Literature*, 267–68. A handy summary of the rabbinic differentiation of degrees of impurities is available in Booth, *Jesus and the Laws of Purity*, 186–87. Briefly stated, impure hands, which can only contract second degree impurity apart from the rest of the body, cannot *directly* defile solid *Hullin* (common food) because such food is only susceptible to first or second degree impurity. According to this systematization, an object acquires an impurity one degree lower than the source of its impurity. For example, a source carrying a second degree impurity makes another object impure only to a third or fourth degree (or “remove”). Since hands can only contract an impurity (independently from the rest of the body) of a second degree it cannot make another object also only susceptible to a second degree impurity, impure. Instead, the second degree impure hands render such an object (in Matthew’s case, common food) “unfit” (פסול). An unfit object, however, cannot defile another object. In other words, some ancient rabbis would not hold that common food rendered unfit by impure hands of a second degree could in turn defile the rest of the body of a person who ingested such food. On the other hand, second degree impure hands can directly defile *liquid Hullin* (liquids such as water and oil, מכשירין, become impure to the first degree after entering into contact with second degree impurity). But, as Booth points out, the question of the Pharisees in Matthew refers to washing before *eating*, not drinking. Nevertheless, impure hands can defile solid *Hullin indirectly* if the hands enter into contact with liquid that subsequently touches solid *Hullin*. Since, as Furstenberg, “Defilement Penetrating the Body,” 184, notes, most people in antiquity ate without cutlery, wet impure hands may indeed have been a real problem during the consumption of common meals. To what degree this complex and systematized gradation of impurity applies to the halakic scenario envisaged in Matthew remains open to debate.

⁷¹⁹ We might further note that if the whole body were impure, hand washing would not remove the impurity of the rest of the body, since the hands, along with rest of the body would carry a first-degree impurity, which is only removable through bodily immersion. Booth, *Jesus and the Laws of Purity*, 187: “. . . the Pharisaic question urging handwashing is not credible on this basis, because there was no reason to wash the hands when the whole body was presumptively defiled with a more serious impurity.” Booth, however, might be relying too heavily on the rabbinic evidence to reconstruct the practices of Pharisees and other Jews living during the first century. Cf. John C. Poirier, “Why Did the Pharisees Wash their Hands?”

others before him have noted that liquids, when coming into contact with a second-degree impurity, enter themselves in a state of first-degree impurity. In turn, anything that comes into contact with the liquids, in our case common food, then becomes ritually impure to the second degree. Most importantly, a person who would eat that contaminated food would become impure to the same level, and not to a degree below, as is normally the case.⁷²⁰ Alternatively, Deines posits that Pharisees during the first century viewed hands as susceptible to first-degree impurity, meaning that they could make common food impure, which in turn could defile the rest of the human body. Later on, the Tannaim would have decreed a more lenient halakic notion claiming that hands could only acquire second-degree impurity.⁷²¹ Finally, it could be that the complex system of graded purity, as attested later in the rabbinic literature, did not exist in the first century, so that hands could directly defile food, especially if they were moist.⁷²²

Despite Sanders' reservations about the matter, many New Testament commentators have assumed that Pharisees did strive to eat all of their meals in a state of

Journal of Jewish Studies 47 (1996): 226: "If we approach the pericope, however, without any preconceived notions about what handwashing ultimately signifies, the natural link between handwashing and the concern for the food purity reappears. The Pharisees washed their hands in order to maintain the purity of their food, so that impure food not enter their body. While this simple dynamic has not eluded all scholars, some write as if the pericope's connection between handwashing and food concerns requires special pleading. I must admit, this sounds strange to someone who was reared always to wash before eating."

⁷²⁰ Furstenberg, "Defilement Penetrating the Body," 185 n. 22, citing *m. Tehar.* 2.2, which states that eating food that is impure in the second degree makes a person impure to the same degree.

⁷²¹ Roland Deines, *Jüdische Steingefäße und pharisäische Frömmigkeit: Ein archäologische-historischer Beitrag zum Verständnis von Joh 2,6 und der jüdischen Reinheitshalacha zur Zeit Jesu* (WUNT 2.52; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1993), 299 n. 474.

⁷²² Furstenberg, "Defilement Penetrating the Body," 185: "An early source (from the Second Temple Period) describes this same result without articulating the system of degrees of impurity. In *m. Taharoth* 9.5 we read: 'He who crushes olives with impure hands defiles them.' The liquid on the crushed olives transfers impurity from the hands to the olives. *MTaharoth* 10.4 also connects hand impurity with the susceptibility of liquids to defilement." Cf. Jacob Neusner, *History of the Mishnaic Law of Purities* (22 vols; SJLA 6; Leiden: Brill, 1976), 13:144, 202–5, pointing out that the complex system of grades of impurity is known to us only in post-Temple sources from Yavne. See also Thomas Kazen, *Issues of Impurity in Early Judaism* (ConBNT 45; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2010), 115–16, who shows that there was some degree of differentiation and gradation in the purity system during the Second Temple period albeit not as clean and neat as later systematizations.

purity, in priestly imitation of the temple service.⁷²³ Today experts on ancient Judaism are also affirming the widespread Jewish practice of washing hands before meals, but for different reasons.⁷²⁴ Archaeological evidence seems to confirm the impression that hand washing was widely practiced in Palestine, or at least Judea. Deines even tries to make a case for a widespread practice of hand washing among Jews of Palestine before common meals, spearheaded by none other than the Pharisees. The material data he singles out includes a number of stone vessels, including pitchers with handles, which were possibly used for hand washing.⁷²⁵ Some Jews viewed stone vessels as impermeable to impurity (e.g., *m. Kel.* 10:1).⁷²⁶ Deines is also highly critical of Sanders' interpretation and usage of the rabbinic evidence, pointing to mishnaic passages where hand washing before common meals is presupposed (e.g., anonymous halakah in *m. Hag.* 2:5; cf. *m. Yad.* chs. 1–2).⁷²⁷ Apparently, for Deines, there would have been a widespread practice of hand

⁷²³ Partly under the influence of Jacob Neusner, *The Idea of Purity in Ancient Judaism* (SJLA 1; Brill: Leiden, 1973). Neusner has been criticized by Sanders and others for over-relating purity practices with the temple. See Haber, *They Shall Purify Themselves*, 164 n. 14; John C. Poirier, "Purity beyond the Temple in the Second Temple Era," *JBL* 122 (2003): 247–65; Sanders, *Jewish Law from Jesus to the Mishnah*, 232. See especially Furstenberg, "Defilement Penetrating the Body," 193–94 and Kazen, *Issues of Impurity*, 117–19 for a critique against the notion that hand washing originated as an endeavor to emulate the priests in the temple.

⁷²⁴ Furstenberg, "Defilement Penetrating the Body," 194, thinks Jews appropriated this practice from foreign custom and observed it out of hygienic and ritual concerns.

⁷²⁵ For a discussion of the archaeological findings, see Deines, *Jüdische Steingefäße*, 39–165, especially p. 52 (illustration of a pitcher with handle, possibly used for ritual of hand washing), pp. 161–64, and p. 180. See also Magness, *Stone and Dung*, 17–21. Such archaeological findings are taken by some as evidence that Jews washed their hands before consuming common meals. So James H. Charlesworth, *The Historical Jesus* (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon, 2008), 88; Regev, "Non-Priestly Purity and its Religious Aspects," 232 n. 25; Avemarie, "Jesus and Purity," 265. Regev thinks that the sheer size of the archaeological findings points toward a general use of these vessels, not only for handling sacred food (e.g., heave offerings), but also ordinary food (pp. 232–33). But see the reasonable qualifications made by Kazen, *Issues of Impurity*, 114–15, on the interpretation of the archaeological evidence. See also Jonathan L. Reed, "Stone Vessels and Gospel Texts: Purity and Socio-Economics in John 2," in *Zeichen aus Text und Stein: Studien auf dem Weg zu einer Archäologie des Neuen Testaments* (eds. Stefan Alkier and Jürgen Zangenberg; Texte und Arbeiten zum neutestamentlichen Zeitalter 42; Tübingen: Francke Verlag, 2003), 381–401.

⁷²⁶ Although Dead Sea sectarians appear to have viewed stone implements as permeable to impurity. See Milgrom, *Leviticus*, 1:674, referencing CD 12:15–18; 11QT^a 49:13–16; 50:16–17. For further discussion of pertinent Jewish passages, see Deines, *Jüdische Steingefäße*, 168–246; Magness, *Stone and Dung*, 70–74.

⁷²⁷ See his criticism of Sanders in *Jüdische Steingefäße*, 269–74. Here the thorny problem of methodological approaches to rabbinic evidence fully emerges. Whereas Sanders, following Neusner,

washing before common meals in the first century C.E., later attenuated by the rabbinic sages.⁷²⁸

In light of these findings, at least three possible scenarios on the issue can be imagined for elucidating the controversy in Matthew: (1) Matthew, like Mark, depicts a controversy that reflects more Diasporan practice;⁷²⁹ (2) First century Jews from Palestine generally washed their hands before handling food; (3) Only particular groups (e.g., certain Pharisees) sought to handle their food in constant purity. Out of the three possibilities, the first option seems the least likely, while an intermediate scenario lying somewhere between the second and third options proves the most likely. Speaking against option one, is the complete absence of any evidence directly associating the Diasporan practice of hand washing with eating.⁷³⁰ Although the Jewish practice of hand washing may find its origins in Greco-Roman custom, there is no need to posit a Diasporan provenance for such a practice—Greeks and Romans also lived in Palestine—let alone that Mark and Matthew are merely inventing a story reflecting the habits of the Diaspora rather than Palestinian halakah. Mark and Matthew, for one thing, do explicitly tie hand washing with eating, and while Mark may have colored his pericope with Diasporan pastels, this process seems less likely for Matthew who probably writes his

ignores the relevance of many of the anonymous material in the Mishnah, finding their dating elusive, Deines, like Epstein, is willing to entertain the notion that these anonymous passages retain older traditions. For Epstein's historical reconstruction of the earliest strata of the Mishnah, see his *Introduction to Tannaitic Literature*, 377–78.

⁷²⁸ Deines, *Jüdische Steingefäße*, 272 n. 567 and 569; 299 n. 474.

⁷²⁹ So Sanders, *Jewish Law from Jesus to the Mishnah*, 261–62; Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 4:402: “In fact, it is possible (though hardly provable) that the practice of handwashing before meals, along with certain other purity practices, first arose in the Diaspora, perhaps as a compensatory or substitutive observance for Jews who would not have had ready access to the Jerusalem temple and its purificatory rituals for lengthy periods. Since it is likely that Mark and Matthew composed their Gospels outside Palestine in the post-70 period, their portraits of Judaism may well have been influenced by Diaspora practices with which they were acquainted.” Poirier, “Why Did the Pharisees Wash their Hands?” 217–33, suggests that the Diasporan custom of hand washing may have influenced Palestinian Jewish practice.

⁷³⁰ But cf. Marcus, *Mark*, 1:441: “And if Jews washed their hands before or during prayer, and prayed before eating, then they would have washed their hands before eating.”

gospel in a milieu more affiliated with and attuned to Palestinian praxis. The advantage with options two and three is the serious consideration (which certainly must be qualified) it grants to Matthew and Mark as real sources of information about Jewish halakah. Furthermore, the archaeological evidence brought to the forefront by Deines and others, which speaks on behalf of a Palestinian custom of washing hands before meals, cannot be underestimated although it should not be overstated either.⁷³¹

Fortunately, for the inquiry of this chapter, which is more devoted to the question of kashrut, the tortuous subject of hand washing before meals need not be fully resolved here.⁷³² Only sufficient acquaintance with the matter and its problems is necessary when assessing statements in Matt 15 that could potentially have bearings not only for the question of impurity but also for the issue of consuming forbidden meats or blood. It should be noted, however, that the custom of hand washing before meals by no means enjoyed the same status as the repeated injunctions in the Mosaic Torah against ingesting

⁷³¹ I do not adhere to Deines' disproportionate claims regarding Pharisaic normative authority in the Second Temple period. Also, I am not sure that the archaeological evidence can confirm that all or even most Jews, especially those from Galilee, practiced hand washing before meals. It seems like much of the archaeological evidence stems from *Jerusalem and Judea*. Shimon Gibson, "Stone Vessels of the Early Roman Period from Jerusalem and Palestine: A Reassessment," in *One Land—Many Cultures: Archaeological Studies in Honour of Stanislaw Loffreda* (eds. G. Claudio Bottini, Leah Di Segni, and L. Daniel Chrupcala; Jerusalem: Franciscan, 2003), 302, states: "The widespread distribution of these vessels, however, in so many different contexts, both urban and rural, supports the notion that they were not actually used by any one particular socio-economic or religious group within Judaism." But Magness, *Stone and Dung*, 70, notes that "the largest number of stone vessels seem to come from sites in Jerusalem, and most of the workshops found so far are located in Jerusalem's environs." How might Magness' observations affect our understanding of Jesus' attitude toward hand washing? Could it be that in Galilee, Jesus' "home state," the concern for ritual purity was not as intense as in Judea? See Vermes, *Jesus the Jew*, 52–57.

⁷³² Compare the resignation of Milikowsky, "Reflections on Hand-Washing, Hand-Purity and Holy Scripture in Rabbinic Literature," 149: "The questions relating to purity of the hands in rabbinic literature are manifold, and many of them are probably insoluble . . ." On the other hand, I wonder whether Milikowsky's suggestion on separating hand washing from ritual impurity is helpful. Even less convincing is the attempt by Maccoby, *Ritual and Morality*, 155–61, to see Jesus and the Pharisees as purely arguing over hygiene.

non-kosher food, which most Jews observed in antiquity and did not argue about.⁷³³

Many Jews would have probably viewed the breach with hand washing before eating common meals as a minor halakic offense in comparison to the much weightier issue of ingesting forbidden meats such as pork—a true test of fidelity to Jewish identity.⁷³⁴

Finally, as the following analysis of the pericope will hopefully show, Matthew, more clearly than Mark, distinguishes the issue of hand washing before meals from the topic of forbidden meats.

Redactional Analysis

In the opening to his pericope, Matthew follows Mark, albeit with some stylistic differences, providing a setting in which Pharisees and scribes come from Jerusalem to question Jesus.⁷³⁵ The opening to this setting, of course, hardly reports a historical event involving Jesus and Pharisees as it really happened. But at least in Matthew's day the story may have been used in a polemic against Pharisees of the post-70 era, even if the latter were not centered in Jerusalem at that time.⁷³⁶

⁷³³ Even later rabbinic passages recognize this subordination: “washing of hands for non-sacred food is not prescribed by the Torah” (*b. Shabb. 52b*).

⁷³⁴ I do not think that 1 and 2 Maccabees refer to the question of consuming ritually impure foods, but to a persecution against Jews who refused to eat non-kosher meat. More on this in my chapter dealing with the Cornelius episode.

⁷³⁵ Stylistic differences in v.1 include Matthew's frequent usage of τότε (Matt: 90x; Mark: 6x; Luke: 15x); προσέρχονται (also a Matthean favorite: 52 x in Matt; 6x in Mark; 10x in Luke) instead of Mark's συνάγονται (see already Willoughby C. Allen *The Gospel according to S. Matthew* [3rd ed.; ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1977], 31, 163); τῷ Ἰησοῦ for Mark's πρὸς αὐτόν; Mark's qualified τινες τῶν γραμματέων has been generalized into γραμματεῖς, possibly to identify them more closely with the Pharisees (so Hagner, *Matthew*, 2:430); deletion of Mark's ἐλθόντες; addition of λέγοντες. The whole reshaped sentence in 15:1 bears the stamp of Matthew's pen. Cf. Matt 9:14 (Τότε προσέρχονται αὐτῷ οἱ μαθηταὶ Ἰωάννου λέγοντες) with Matt 15:1 (Τότε προσέρχονται τῷ Ἰησοῦ ἀπὸ Ἱεροσολύμων Φαρισαῖοι καὶ γραμματεῖς λέγοντες).

⁷³⁶ The opening to this scene is not entirely reliable from a historical point of view. Would Pharisees in a pre-70 setting really bother traveling all the way from Jerusalem to Galilee in order to inspect on Jesus and his followers' hand washing? What authority, in any case, would such Pharisees have in a pre-70 setting? Bultmann, *History of the Synoptic Tradition*, 39–40, reminds us that such stories contain ideal constructions. They may reflect historical reminiscence involving the first followers of Jesus (even Jesus

Matthew immediately jumps into the controversy between the Pharisees and Jesus over the issue of washing hands before eating food.⁷³⁷ He completely leaves out Mark's "elucidation" concerning Pharisaic and Jewish purity practices (Mark 7:2–4), because they would prove superfluous for his more informed Jewish audience, perhaps even a bit disproportionate, for Mark claims that *all Jews* do not eat meals unless they wash their hands beforehand.⁷³⁸

Matthew phrases the breach with Pharisaic practice in stronger terms than Mark. Instead of being accused of not "walking according to the traditions of the elders" (Mark 7:5),⁷³⁹ in Matthew, the Pharisees and scribes blame Jesus' disciples for *transgressing*

himself) but retell these happenings in an ideal way in which Jesus triumphantly refutes the Pharisees who are never given the opportunity to voice a counterargument. As soon as these Pharisees from Jerusalem appear on the literary scene (v.1), they immediately vanish from the narration. Cf. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 265: "The extraordinarily unrealistic settings of many of the conflict stories should be realized: Pharisees did not organize themselves into groups to spend their Sabbaths in Galilean cornfields in the hopes of catching someone transgressing (Mark 2.23f.), nor is it credible that scribes and Pharisees made a special trip to Galilee from Jerusalem to inspect Jesus' disciples' hands (Mark 7.1f.)." But cf. Back, *Jesus of Nazareth and the Sabbath Commandment*, 55, who finds it unlikely that the Pharisees' presence in such stories is the result of Markan redaction, since Pharisees were not contemporary adversaries of Mark. Rather, Back correctly maintains that the Pharisees were present in the pre-Markan tradition, since there is very little evidence for a strong presence of Pharisees in the Diaspora. These historical problems, of course, are not the focus of this analysis. It is possible, however, that at the redactional level Matthew's report of such a debate reflects an actual *Auseinandersetzung* with the Pharisees of his own day. Cf. Eduard Schweizer, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus* (NTD 2; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1981), 212: "Er gestaltet das Ganze formal stärker zu einem Streitgespräch um, wie es nach 70 n. Chr. sicher oft zwischen pharisäischen und christlichen Schriftgelehrten geführt wurde."

⁷³⁷ Literally, the Pharisees and scribes ask why Jesus' disciples do not wash before eating *bread* (ἄρτον). The Greek noun can mean either "bread" or "food" in general. See "ἄρτος," *BDAG*. There is late evidence suggesting that bread occupied a special position in relation to hand washing (*b. Hag.* 18b). But given the general presentation of Matthew's pericope (as well as Mark's), it seems unlikely that he intends with this noun a restrictive (only bread) rather than general connotation (food in general). On this question, see Booth, *Jesus and the Laws of Purity*, 121–22.

⁷³⁸ Mark's parenthetical explanation stems from his need to explain Jewish (or Judean) praxis to a Gentile audience. Sanders, *Jewish Law from Jesus to the Mishnah*, 261–62, claims that Mark is exaggerating the prevalence of hand washing among Jews, that he is a Gentile from the Diaspora who only has outside knowledge about Judaism. Nevertheless, we have noted that many scholars have recently affirmed the popularity of hand washing at the time of Jesus. Mark's "exaggeration" certainly does not reflect a faulty knowledge about Judaism. Cf. Marcus, *Mark*, 1:440–41 and especially Boyarin, *The Jewish Gospels*, 111–17, who affirms that Mark in fact displays a very accurate knowledge about Jewish halakah.

⁷³⁹ οὐ περιπατοῦσιν κατὰ (Mark 7:5) may reflect a Semitism (תלך, whence the noun halakah finds its derivation). So already P. M.–J. Lagrange, *Évangile selon saint Matthieu* (4th ed.; Paris: Librairie Lecoffre, 1927), 301.

(*παραβαίνουσιν*) such traditions. This transgressive language also allows Matthew’s Jesus to later accuse the Pharisees for *transgressing* (*παραβαίνετε*) the “commandment of God” (*τὴν ἐντολὴν τοῦ θεοῦ*; v.3).⁷⁴⁰

The reply given by Matthew’s Jesus in vv. 3–9 focuses not on the specific question of hand washing but on a wider set of issues involving the observance of the so-called “traditions of the elders” (*παράδοσιν τῶν πρεσβυτέρων*). In this section, Matthew significantly reorganizes and modifies Mark’s material in order to form a double antithesis (cf. v. 2 with v.3) whose climax erupts in vv. 7–9.⁷⁴¹ Instead of beginning with the citation from the book of Isaiah, as Mark does, Matthew has Jesus first point out some of the inconsistencies and skewed prioritizations supposedly embedded within Pharisaic tradition. Seemingly annoyed at their inquiry, Matthew’s Jesus retorts by throwing the blame back at the Pharisees: “And why do you break (*παραβαίνετε*) the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition?” (15:3) The formulation of the question essentially resembles that of the Pharisees, except Matthew’s Jesus accuses his opponents in stronger terms: the Pharisees transgress the *commandment of God* for the sake of *their* traditions (*τὴν παράδοσιν ὑμῶν*). If the Pharisees uphold the *antiquity* of their traditions (they originate from the *elders*) and seek to promote and impose their observance beyond the Pharisaic sphere, Matthew’s Jesus restricts their importance by subtly denying their

⁷⁴⁰ Matthew also describes the impurity of the hands with the adjective *ἀνίπτος* (*ἀνίπτοις χερσίν*; v. 21; cf. *m. Hul.* 2:4: *יְדֵי מְסֻבָּוֹת*) instead of Mark’s *κοιναῖς χερσίν*, possibly for stylistic reasons, since in v. 2, Jesus’ disciples are said to not wash (*νίπτονται*) their hands before eating. Or does he deliberately avoid Mark’s technical expression to soften the clash with the Jewish purity system? Cf. Peter Fiedler, *Das Matthäusevangelium* (Theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament 1; Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 2006), 278 n. 28.

⁷⁴¹ Allen, *Gospel According to S. Matthew*, 163–64.

ancestral origins, insinuating that they are merely Pharisaic inventions or innovations (“your” traditions instead of traditions of the “elders”).⁷⁴²

However, Matthew’s main objection with Pharisaic praxis involves what he sees as a misplaced prioritization of values. In his opinion, the Pharisaic teaching can lead others to transgress the commandments found in the Mosaic Torah. The Pharisees, of course, would have viewed this matter quite differently. Probably, they would have seen their traditions as properly applying the real substance and intent of the Torah, functioning, to use rabbinic imagery, as a protective fence against unwanted transgression (cf. *Avot* 1:1). Matthew, nonetheless, insists that the Pharisees disregard *divine* mandate: “For *God* said, ‘Honor your father and your mother,’ and, ‘Whoever speaks evil of father or mother must surely die’” (15:4). Here, Matthew’s Jesus recalls two important commandments related to honoring one’s parents found in the Torah (one from the Decalogue: Exod 20:12/Deut 5:16; the other from Exod 21:17, the transgression of which technically leads to the death penalty). Whereas Mark describes *Moses* as the announcer of such commandments (Μωϋσῆς γὰρ εἶπεν), Matthew substitutes the subject with *God* (ὁ γὰρ θεὸς εἶπεν) only to further highlight the clash between Pharisaic precepts and divine imperative (v. 4).

In concrete terms, the Pharisees allegedly disregard divine commandments because they teach (ὕμεις δὲ λέγετε; v. 5) their comrades to withhold from their parents whatever possession has been previously set aside as an offering for God. Whereas Mark

⁷⁴² Cf. Albert I. Baumgarten, “The Pharisaic Paradosis,” *HTR* 80 (1987): 74, 77, who suggests that the Pharisees would have ascribed great antiquity to their traditions. In Mark, Jesus refers to the traditions of the elders as the “traditions of humans” (τὴν παράδοσιν τῶν ἀνθρώπων). This appellation blends with the previous citation in Mark from Isaiah with its reference to “human precepts” (ἐντάλματα ἀνθρώπων). Matthew instead seeks to create an immediate and direct correspondence between the question of the Pharisees and the opening to Jesus’ reply.

uses the Hebrew term “Qorban” (κορβάν from קרבן), “that is an offering to God” (ὁ ἔστιν δῶρον; Mark 7:11), Matthew speaks simply of δῶρον (Mat 15:5).⁷⁴³ This halakic matter can hardly receive its appropriate treatment here,⁷⁴⁴ but contrary to the custom of hand washing by laypeople, the practice of vows does enjoy a much stronger Mosaic foundation.⁷⁴⁵ Briefly stated, Matthew seems to refer to the practice of setting aside through a vow a profane object, property, or other possession as (or as if it were) an offering to the temple or God. Apparently, once the vow had been made, a person was obliged to fulfill his or her resolution as the following commandment in Deut 23:21–23 illustrates: “If you make a vow to the LORD your God, do not postpone fulfilling it; for the LORD your God will surely require it of you, and you would incur guilt. . . . Whatever your lips utter you must diligently perform, just as you have freely vowed to the LORD your God with your own mouth.”⁷⁴⁶

Given the scrupulous Mosaic prescriptions concerning the fulfillment of vows (e.g., Num 30), Baumgarten suggests that the historical Pharisees would have released persons from vows in only very limited circumstances. The Jesus of Matthew and Mark rebukes Pharisees for requiring a son to fulfill his vow even at the cost of depriving his

⁷⁴³ The term δῶρον is regularly used in the LXX to translate the Hebrew קרבן.

⁷⁴⁴ See Albert I. Baumgarten, “*Korban* and the Pharisaic *Paradosis*,” *JANES* 16–17 (1984–85): 5–17; Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 4:378–84.

⁷⁴⁵ Cf. already Gen 28:20–22 (Jacob vows to tithe his belongings if God will bless him); Lev 27:2, 8; Num 30; Judg 11:30 (tragic story of Jephthah), and so on.

⁷⁴⁶ Second Temple sources relevant for the discussion of such vows include, among others, CD 16:14–20; Philo, *Hypoth.* 7:358 (who knows of the institution even if he doesn’t use the term); Josephus, *Ant.* 4:73; *Ag. Ap.* 1.167; tractate *Nedarim* (e.g., *m. Ned.* 1:4; 2:5; 4:6; 5:6, etc.). An important inscription from an ossuary dating from the first cent. B.C.E. from Jebel Hallet et-Turi bears the word “Qorban”: “Everything that a person will find to his profit in this ossuary is an offering (Qorban) to God from the one within it.” See Baumgarten, “*Korban* and the Pharisaic *Paradosis*,” 6, 17, 16; Joseph Fitzmyer, “The Aramaic Qorban Inscription from Jebel Hallet et-Tur and Mark 7:11/Mt 15:5,” *JBL* 78 (1959): 60–65. Baumgarten interprets this ossuary inscription to mean that the items within it are to be treated as if they were an offering to God, not that they actually belong to God. Marcus, *Mark*, 1:445, thinks that a similar understanding should be presumed in Mark 7:11: the person declaring an item as Qorban means not that he or she intends to offer it to God, only that such a person wishes to remove such an item from secular use.

parents from material welfare. In the eyes of Matthew's Jesus, such vows should be considered invalid *ab initio*.⁷⁴⁷ In this case, Matthew seems to accuse the Pharisees for teaching people to uphold one commandment of the Torah at the cost of breaking another, probably more cardinal, commandment stemming from the same source of divine legislation: honoring one's parents.⁷⁴⁸ In this way, so Matthew argues, the Pharisees, on account of their traditions (διὰ τὴν παράδοσιν ὑμῶν), invalidate the word of God (τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ; v.6).⁷⁴⁹ They focus on the elaboration of the system of ritual purity, but overlook how their traditions lead to far greater transgressions such as dishonoring one's parents.⁷⁵⁰

Matthew saves the last three verses of this first section (vv. 7–9; in Mark they appear at the beginning of Jesus' discourse) for the end of Jesus' speech, probably as his

⁷⁴⁷ Baumgarten, "Korban and the Pharisaic Paradosis," 16. Perhaps, from Matthew's viewpoint, undertaking vows should be avoided all together, since swearing oaths is completely discouraged (5:33–37, cf. 23:16–22). So France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 581.

⁷⁴⁸ Cf. Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 4:379, with respect to the stance of the historical Jesus: "Apparently Jesus operated at least implicitly with the conviction that there were certain fundamental commandments and institutions in the Mosaic Torah that overrode or annulled any secondary obligations or institutions that came into conflict with them." In their defense, perhaps the Pharisees could have legitimately argued that the fulfillment of a vow is more important than honoring one's parents, since the vow is made to *God*. Fulfilling divine will supersedes even temporal obligations toward family members.

⁷⁴⁹ Matthew's rephrasing in 15:6 of Mark's language brings greater symmetry with his previous statement in 15:3. Matthew's διὰ τὴν παράδοσιν ὑμῶν in 15:6 (instead of Mark's superfluous τῇ παραδόσει ὑμῶν ἣ παρεδώκατε) corresponds to 15:3. Both verses highlight the antithesis Matthew wishes to signal: διὰ τί καὶ ὑμεῖς παραβαίνετε τὴν ἐντολὴν τοῦ θεοῦ διὰ τὴν παράδοσιν ὑμῶν; (Mat 15:3)/ καὶ ἠκυρώσατε τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ διὰ τὴν παράδοσιν ὑμῶν (15:6). Surprisingly, Matthew does not retain Mark's καὶ παρόμοια τοιαῦτα πολλὰ ποιεῖτε ("And you do many things like this"; Mark 7:13), which surely could have served his polemical interests. Fiedler, *Das Matthäusevangelium*, 279, following Hummel, *Auseinandersetzung*, 47, thinks that this elimination of Mark's phrase allows Matthew to focus exclusively on the Pharisaic approach to vows thereby indirectly recognizing the wider authority of the Pharisees in other matters of Torah interpretation (cf. Matt 23:2–3, 23).

⁷⁵⁰ Matthew seems to reproach the Pharisees for *insufficiently* releasing people from observing vows when these clash with other, greater ethical considerations, not for their abuse in finding legal loopholes to rid themselves from observing vows. Contra H. Lesêtre, "Vœu," *DB* 5:2445: "En cas de nécessité, on en était quitte pour faire accomplir par un ou autre la chose qu'on s'était interdite. *Nedarim*, v, 6. C'est contre ces abus que Notre-Seigneur protesta, en déclarant que la loi de Dieu devait avoir le pas sur les traditions humaines." The Pharisaic approach to the matter should not be completely assimilated into the more "liberal" rabbinic stance on vows, one that sought to invalidate immoral vows in various ways. Unfortunately, this passage in Matthew (and Mark) has generated Christian anti-Jewish sentiments. See discussion in Luz, *Matthew*, 2:331.

“punch line,” since their content derives from scripture (Isa 29:13). Matthew opens this portion with an epithet he employs no less than eleven times in his gospel in the vocative plural, “hypocrites” (ὕποκριται), always in reference to the Pharisees and the scribes.⁷⁵¹ Apparently, Matthew thinks Isa 29:13 actually contains a prophecy against the Pharisees: “Isaiah prophesied rightly about you when he said” (15:7).⁷⁵² The citation of the text, which faithfully follows Mark’s wording (7:6–7),⁷⁵³ is based on the LXX.⁷⁵⁴ Matthew brings this Isaian passage to the foreground in order to complete his antithetical discourse. Within this scriptural citation appears the key word καρδία (“heart”), which shows up two more times in Matt 15:18–19. The noun χεῖλος (“lip”), also from Isa 29:13, finds its equivalent in the subsequent section of the Matthean pericope where the word “mouth” (στόμα) appears no less than four times (vv. 11, 17, and 18). The passage from Isaiah highlights a point that will be elaborated later on in this analysis: the Pharisees concern themselves with honoring God with their “lips” (v. 8), in this incident, with food that enters their mouth (vv. 11 and 17), at the cost of neglecting and controlling the more important bodily organ, the heart, from which all kinds of evil and immoral thoughts emanate and materialize once they are vocally pronounced through the mouth (cf. v. 19). From Matthew’s perspective, the Pharisees’ hearts remain far from God, as they focus on teaching “human precepts” (ἐντάλματα ἀνθρώπων; v. 9) rather than uplifting “the commandment of God,” τὴν ἐντολὴν τοῦ θεοῦ (15:3).

⁷⁵¹ Cf. Mark 7:6: περὶ ὑμῶν τῶν ὑποκριτῶν, the only appearance of the word hypocrite in that entire gospel. In Luke, the epithet appears three times, *never* as an adjectival reference to the Pharisees (Luke 6:42; 12:56; 13:15), although Luke 12:1 does warn about the hypocrisy (ὕποκρισις as an abstract noun) of the Pharisees.

⁷⁵² Cf. 1QpHab 10:6–11:2.

⁷⁵³ Save for the slight emendation of οὗτος ὁ λαὸς (Mark 7:6) to ὁ λαὸς οὗτος (Matt 15:8).

⁷⁵⁴ See Krister Stendahl, *The School of St. Matthew* (ASNU 20; Uppsala: C. W. K. Gleerup, Lund, 1954), 56–58. See also Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 4:369–76.

Up until this point, the lengthy discourse delivered by Matthew's Jesus concerns itself not with the specific issue of hand washing, let alone with eating forbidden meats, but with contrasting the traditions of the Pharisees with the word or commandment of God (τὴν ἐντολὴν τοῦ θεοῦ/τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ) inscribed in the Torah.⁷⁵⁵ Were we to infer Matthew's position on the issue of food laws, based solely on this speech, a logical conclusion would be to posit the ongoing necessity of observing such practices, since, like the commandments concerning honoring one's parents (Exod 20:12, Deut 5:16, and Exod 21:17), the prohibition against eating impure meats and blood finds its basis from the same source of divine legislation, that is, the Torah. Theoretically, Matthew would only suspend the observance of kashrut in very extreme circumstances where serious ethical considerations would be involved. But the discussion in Matthew, so far, has concerned itself more with critiquing Pharisaic approaches to the Law of Moses that lead to transgressing its cardinal commandments, with pointing out the inconsistencies allegedly inherent within Pharisaic tradition as well as the supposedly distorted Pharisaic prioritization for ritual concerns at the cost of neglecting the weightier matters of the Torah.

The second major section (vv. 10–20) begins with Matthew's Jesus summoning the crowd for a special address (vv. 10–11).⁷⁵⁶ Matthew signals the importance the words

⁷⁵⁵ In Matthew, ἐντολή refers to commandments found within the Law of Moses. Cf. Matt 19:17; 22:36, 38, 40, possibly 5:19. Deciphering the meaning of τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ proves more challenging, since it appears only in this instance within the entire gospel of Matthew. Here it seems to be used interchangeably with τὴν ἐντολὴν τοῦ θεοῦ, since the Pharisees are accused of nullifying a commandment (to honor one's parents) written in the Torah. Elsewhere, λόγος can be used to refer to the teachings of Jesus on the Torah. Thus, in 15:12, the disciples warn Jesus that the Pharisees might be offended with his "word" (τὸν λόγον), which is closely related to the "word of God."

⁷⁵⁶ Matthew reworks Mark's description of Jesus' summoning the crowd. He deletes Mark's πάλιν (in Mark 26x; Matt: 16x, of which only four of them come from Mark; see Allen, *Gospel according to S. Matthew*, xx); replaces ἔλεγεν with εἶπεν; shortens Mark's ἀκούσατέ μου πάντες καὶ σύνετε το ἀκούετε καὶ συνίετε.

about to be delivered by Jesus through the call to “listen and understand” (*ἀκούετε καὶ συνίετε*). The crowd hears a saying that more specifically addresses the question raised by the Pharisees at the beginning of the pericope regarding hand washing before meals, although only the disciples of Jesus will have the opportunity to understand its meaning more fully, once they deliberate with their master (vv. 12–20): “It is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person, but it is what comes out of the mouth that defiles” (15:11). Mark’s version of the saying reads: “There is *nothing outside* a person that by going in can defile, but the things that come out are what defile” (7:15; emphasis mine). In order to minimize the potentially radical ramifications such a saying could generate, Matthew first denies Mark’s claim that *nothing* (*οὐδέν*) coming from the outside may defile a person. He also restricts the application of the saying to matters strictly related to the consumption of ritually contaminated (kosher) food by eliminating Mark’s *ἐξωθεν* (“from outside”), which potentially could be taken to refer to other external impurities that can “enter” a person (e.g., corpse impurity).⁷⁵⁷ Instead, Matthew narrows the focus of the saying by referring to things that enter a person through *the mouth* (*εἰς τὸ στόμα*). The focus in Matthew is about contaminated kosher food throughout. And perhaps he also deletes both *οὐδέν* and *ἐξωθεν* because he knows that were a Jew to do the unthinkable,

⁷⁵⁷ In Matt 23:27, Matthew’s Jesus presupposes the defiling force of corpse impurity. Also in 23:25–26, Matthew thinks that internal purity takes *precedence* over external purity. See Luz, *Matthew*, 2:332. Of course, corpse impurity does not literally “enter” a person in the same sense that food would penetrate the human body through digestion, although it is telling that corpse impurity can enter uncovered vessels (Num 19:5). This might explain why Matthew has deleted Mark’s generalizing *ἐξωθεν*, although even the Markan formulation focuses on food entering the body. According to Maccoby, *Ritual and Purity*, 158, not even ritual impurity conveyed through ingestion of contaminated foods actually “enters” the body: “No one ever claimed that the purpose of ritual purity was to prevent impurities from entering the body. On the contrary, it was held that ritual impurity never penetrates beyond the surface of the body. Even impurities incurred through eating forbidden food do not cause impurity to the interior of the body, only to the exterior.” But the Markan and Matthean sayings do presume that purity can indeed penetrate the body. Cf. Furstenberg, “Defilement Penetrating the Body,” 189 n. 33.

that is, consume a *forbidden* animal, such as pork or one of the forbidden eight vermin (both labeled “impure” in Lev 11), that person would become defiled in a *moral* sense.

Some, however, argue that Matthew’s “anatomical” precision, τὸ στόμα, implies that even forbidden food such as pork, seafood, or blood are now permitted, since Matthew claims that what enters the mouth cannot defile.⁷⁵⁸ Matthew, however, is hardly embarking on such a radical project. He knows that the legislation prohibiting the consumption of forbidden meats and blood belongs to the “commandment/word of God,” which is found in the Torah. He crafts the saying within a context that is confined in its opening and conclusion to the issue of washing hands before the consumption of common meals—a practice that is not mandated by the Torah. The inclusion of the word “mouth” also enables Matthew to highlight this organ not only as a physical passageway for food but especially as a vocal tunnel leading from the heart, the seat of potential evil thoughts and emotions, to the external world where such wicked inclinations materialize into sinful utterances and acts, thereby morally defiling the person (cf. vv. 17–19). The content coming out of the mouth, *this* (τοῦτο), so Matthew emphasizes, is what (really) defiles a person.⁷⁵⁹

⁷⁵⁸ So France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 583: “But the principle of externally contracted defilement is well illustrated by the Levitical food laws (Lev 11; cf. also 17:10–16), and it is this principle which Jesus is here setting aside, no less explicitly in Matthew’s rather smoother version than in Mark’s”; Grundmann, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus*, 372: “. . . es gibt keine unreine speise. . . . Damit gewinnt der Mensch Freiheit im Umgang mit der Natur und im Verkehr mit anderen Menschen. Die Israel von seiner Umwelt trennende Verfassung . . . ist aufgehoben”; Gundry, *Matthew*, 305–6; Meier, *The Vision of Matthew*, 100–104; Schweizer, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus*, 211: “Dennoch hätte er V. 11 nicht schreiben könnten, wenn er die alttestamentlichen Speisegebote noch als verbindlich angesehen hätte.”

⁷⁵⁹ Cf. the discussion in Davies-Allison, *Gospel according to Matthew*, 2:527–31, arguing essentially that Matthew’s form of the saying is close to what would have been Jesus’ view. What matters above all is the heart, even though such a hyperbolic statement does not set aside the food laws. Just as the prophetic tradition could state “I desire mercy, not sacrifice” without seeking to set aside the cultic system, so the statement in Matthew highlights the priority of ethical matters over against the application of ritual commandments at the cost of neglecting the former. Commenting on a passage from the *Mekilta*, which states, “It is not the place that honors the person but the person who honors the place,” Davies and Allison add (2:531): “If this were found not in a rabbinic document but in the gospels and regarded as an isolated

In the last part of the pericope (vv. 12–20), Jesus exchanges his thoughts with his narrower circle of disciples. Unlike Mark, the disciples in Matthew do not first inquire about the meaning of Jesus’ provocative saying, but express their worry over the offense it could create for Pharisaic ears.⁷⁶⁰ This concern with Pharisaic sensibilities is completely absent in Mark. Its exclusive manifestation within Matthew may point to a more acute friction sensed by the author and his circles with contemporary Pharisees actively present in their own locale. The reply given by Matthew’s Jesus is also missing in Mark. Its content contains a general polemic exclusively launched against Pharisaic leadership (vv. 13–14). Theoretically, it could have been interpolated into almost any other section in Matthew where Jesus clashes with Pharisees. Here, Matthew’s Jesus reassures his disciples not to worry about the Pharisees’ reaction. They are foreign plants that will one day be uprooted (v.13), the “blind leading the blind,” guiding others into peril (v.14).⁷⁶¹

Peter’s request that Jesus clarify his “parable” brings the discussion in Matthew back to the topic of impurity.⁷⁶² Mark does not single out Peter from the rest of the disciples; Matthew presents him as the inquirer.⁷⁶³ Matthew’s Jesus seems annoyed at

saying of Jesus, would some scholars not consider it a radical attack on the temple and OT conceptions of sacred space? The lesion is obvious.” Cf. Fiedler, *Das Matthäusevangelium*, 279–80.

⁷⁶⁰ In Mark 7:17, the setting shifts when Jesus leaves the crowd and enters a house (*καὶ ὅτε εἰσῆλθεν εἰς οἶκον ἀπὸ τοῦ ὄχλου*); in Matt 15:12, no reference is made to such movement. Rather, Matthew introduces his transition with his favorite *τότε* (“then”), whereupon the disciples approach Jesus and express their concern about the potential reaction of the Pharisees.

⁷⁶¹ Cf. Matt 23:16, 17, 19, 24, 26. The supersessionist attempt by Schweizer, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus*, 212–13, to interpret this content as a reference to the rejection of all of Israel is unconvincing. The blame is exclusively cast against the *Pharisees*—not all of Israel—for their alleged failure in properly leading the Jewish people.

⁷⁶² The word “parable” refers to the saying pronounced to the crowd in 15:12, not to the preceding polemical words against the Pharisees vv. 13–14, since Jesus’ answer to Peter further clarifies the question regarding hand washing and impurity (vv. 16–20). Contra Schweizer, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus*, 212–13.

⁷⁶³ Is he simply representative of the disciples as a whole? I cannot avoid noting that in Gal 2 as well as in Acts chs. 10, 11, and 15, Peter is most often singled out in matters dealing with purity laws, either to be

Peter and, by extension, at all of the disciples for their inaptitude in comprehending his message: “Are you also still without understanding?” (v. 16).⁷⁶⁴ He adds a “physiological” clarification to the previous statement made in v. 12: “Do you not see that whatever goes into the *mouth* enters the *stomach*, and goes out into the sewer?” (v. 17)⁷⁶⁵ By contrast, “what comes out of the *mouth* proceeds from the *heart*, and this is what defiles” (v.18). The point of origination and final destination are contrasted in these two verses. The mouth functions as a common passageway, a two-way street, whereby material and immaterial objects enter and exit. What enters the mouth only passes through the stomach and eventually ends up in the latrine;⁷⁶⁶ what exits the mouth originates from the heart and defiles the person. More than that, it can harmfully affect other humans, since “out of the heart come evil intentions, murder, adultery, fornication, theft, false witness, slander” (v.19).⁷⁶⁷

reprimanded (by Paul in Galatians) or properly instructed on such issues (as in Acts). Could Matthew have intentionally inserted Peter into this pericope because of the prominence and usage of his figure in such discussions? On the figure of Peter and the Torah in Matthew, see Sim, *The Gospel of Matthew and Christian Judaism*, 200–12.

⁷⁶⁴ In 15:16, Matthew replaces Mark’s οὕτως (“in this manner,” “so”) with ἀκόμη (“still”), perhaps signaling an ongoing debate in his own time regarding such matters.

⁷⁶⁵ Once again, Matthew deletes Mark’s ἐξῶθεν in order to demarcate the discussion more clearly around impurity in so far as it affects kosher food, in this case, eating such food with impure hands.

⁷⁶⁶ Instead of Mark’s ἐκπορεύεται, Matthew has the verb ἐκβάλλεται to describe the exit of food into the sewer. The verbal replacement probably has to do with Matthew’s intent to highlight the dimension of speech as Gundry, *Matthew*, 308, suggests.

⁷⁶⁷ Matthew’s list of vices (15:19) is shorter than Mark’s (7:21–22; 12 items) counting only six or seven (if the first item is to be considered as standing on its own) items: διαλογισμοὶ πονηροί, φόνοι, μοιχεῖαι, πορνεῖαι, κλοπαί, ψευδομαρτυρίαι, βλασφημίαι. By reducing Mark’s more extensive list, Matthew is hardly claiming that *only* the Ten Commandments are the mandatory portion of the Torah even though his list of vices approximates the contents of the second tablet of the Decalogue. Contra Schweizer, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus*, 212. Obviously, not all of the commandments from the Decalogue are included in this list (e.g., idolatry, Sabbath, and covetousness). Moreover, some of the items do not correspond to the Decalogue: neither πορνεῖαι nor βλασφημίαι appear in the LXX of Exod 20 and Deut 5. Rudolf Schnackenburg, *Matthäusevangelium* (2 vols; Die Neue Echter Bibel; Würzburg: Echter, 1985–1987), 1:143, ties βλασφημίαι with 12:31, 34, 36. Francis Wright Beare, *The Gospel according to Matthew* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1981), 339, sees Matthew’s list as a result of scribal activity whereby the list of vices is reduced to the symbolic number of seven.

As stated earlier, Matthew's usage of the mouth in this pericope as an orifice transporting both food and verbal utterance should not fool the modern interpreter into thinking that the observance of food laws has been forsaken. Here, the mouth is especially and literally viewed as an *oral* cavity tightly related to another key organ that has nothing to do with food, the heart. It is particularly the moral dimension of impurity that Matthew seeks to highlight when he brings such anatomical imagery to the foreground, not to daringly suggest that kashrut no longer enjoys a place within the Jesus movement. For Matthew, both organs, the mouth (Matt: 11x; Mark: 0x; Luke: 9x) and the heart (Matt: 16x; Mark: 11x; Luke: 22x), carry rich symbolism and perform important pedagogical and kerygmatic functions. Thus, during his temptation, Matthew's Jesus cites from Deut 8:3: "One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God (ἀλλ' ἐπὶ παντὶ ῥήματι ἐκπορευομένῳ διὰ στόματος θεοῦ)" (Matt 4:4). This citation is completely missing in Mark, while Luke (4:4) only cites the first phrase of the Deuteronomic saying, not including the second phrase with its key references to "coming out" (ἐκπορευομένῳ) and "mouth" (στόματος), both of which appear in Matt 15:11, 18. Matthew thereby emphasizes the need to not only occupy oneself with physical needs, but particularly with the word of God (cf. Matt 15:6: τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ). Similarly, before delivering the so-called beatitudes, Matthew's Jesus open his *mouth* to teach (ἀνοίξας τὸ στόμα αὐτοῦ ἐδίδασκεν; Matt 5:2) his audience about his message. By contrast, in his version of the beatitudes, Luke does not refer to the delivery of Jesus' speech in such terms (6:20). Quite significantly, Matthew's Jesus accuses the Pharisees elsewhere for their supposed hypocrisy when he polemically attacks them, stating: "You brood of vipers! How can you speak good things, when you

are evil? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks” (Matt 12:34; cf. Luke 6:45). Matthew, then, repeatedly reveals an anthropological interest that perceives the mouth not merely as a physical organ but as an oral cavity of communication.⁷⁶⁸

Conspicuously missing from Matthew’s pericope is Mark’s sweeping claim that Jesus “declared all foods clean” (*καθαρίζων πάντα τὰ βρώματα*; Mark 7:19b). Instead, Matthew chooses to restrict the application of Jesus’ saying to hand washing before eating: “but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile” (15:20). In this way, Matthew begins and closes this extended pericope with a focus on the topic of hand washing before meals. Matthew limits the relevance of the saying pronounced by Jesus in v. 12, which is repeated and elaborated in vv. 17–20, to a discussion on a particular issue of Pharisaic provenance rather than on a commandment of Mosaic (or divine) legislation. As noted above, Matthew further subdues the radicalizing force of Jesus’ saying as found in Mark by eliminating the latter’s claim that *nothing* that enters a person can defile (Matt 15:12). Even though Matthew adds to this saying the word “mouth,” which in isolation from its qualified context, could be mistaken to encourage the consumption of such forbidden meats as pork, the observations made above suggest he does so more in order to highlight the immoral functionality such an organ can play in concert with the heart, the germinating point of all wicked thoughts. Read in its ensemble, nothing in this pericope suggests that Matthew abrogates the observance of the food stipulations

⁷⁶⁸ Other significant verses could be pointed out, including Matthew’s citation of Psa 78:2 (unattested in the other gospels): “I will open my *mouth* to speak in parables; I will proclaim what has been hidden from the foundation of the world” (13:34). Cf. Matt 18:16; 21:16. Pertinent verses describing the heart include: “Blessed are the pure in *heart*, for they will see God” (Matt 5:8; missing in Luke); “But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his *heart*” (Mat 5:28); “Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in *heart*, and you will find rest for your souls” (Matt 11:29); Cf. Matt 6:21; 9:4; 13:15, 19; 18:35; 22:37; 24:48.

enounced in Lev 11/Deut 14 (list of forbidden meats) or Gen 9, Lev 17, and Deut 12 (prohibition against eating blood).⁷⁶⁹

Pigs, Dogs, Gnats, and Camels: The Halakic Substance behind a Jewish Metaphor

7:6: “Do not give what is holy to dogs; and do not throw your pearls before swine, or they will trample them under foot and turn and maul you.”

23:24: “You blind guides! You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel!”

Literary Context

Both sayings appear in different literary settings within Matthew but are analyzed together because of their mutual usage of imagery of non-kosher animals. The first saying

⁷⁶⁹ Correctly, Davies and Allison, *The Gospel according to Saint Matthew*, 2:517; Fiedler, *Das Matthäusevangelium*, 278 (boldly argues that Matthew has Jesus clash with Pharisaic interpretation only on this point even while affirming their authority to interpret in other matters [cf. Matt 23:2–3]); Frankemölle, *Matthäus*, 2:201–2; Gnilka, *Das Matthäusevangelium*, 26–27; even Hagner, *Matthew*, 2:432; Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 231; Marcus, *Mark*, 1:446; Saldarini, *Matthew’s Christian-Jewish Community*, Sim, *The Gospel of Matthew and Christian Judaism*, 135; Wolfgang Wiefel, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus* (THKNT; Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1998), 284: “von Speise ist nicht die rede!” Even if Matthew, following Mark, no longer views forbidden meats as intrinsically “impure,” this need not mean that he no longer observes the Jewish food laws? After all, other Jews could reach the same conclusion even while upholding the observance of such Jewish practices. The discussion between R. Yohanan b. Zakkai and a non-Jew regarding the red heifer (from admittedly much later rabbinic sources: *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 4:7; *Num. Rab.* 19:8) illustrates this point: A Gentile accuses Jews of sorcery because they perform the rite of the red heifer, which involves burning the animal, pounding it into ashes, and sprinkling some of its ashes with water upon an impure person, magically thinking that purification acquired from corpse impurity will be brought about. R. Yohanan points out that non-Jews practice similar rites such as the burning of roots that are sprinkled upon a person affected by an evil spirit. By analogy, R. Yohanan b. Zakkai argues that a Jewish person can be delivered from the “spirit of impurity” acquired through contact with a corpse. Apparently, this answer satisfies the inquiry of the non-Jew, but R. Yohanan’s own disciples demand a better reply. Surprisingly, R. Yohanan declares that a corpse does not have the power in itself to defile, nor does the mixture of water with the ashes of the red heifer carry the ability to purify, rather, citing Num 19:2, the commandment regarding this purification rite is viewed as a “a statute of the law that the LORD has commanded” (אֲשֶׁר־צִוָּה יְהוָה חֻקַּת הַתּוֹרָה). In other words, Jews should still observe purity laws even if impurity is technically bereft of its inherent ability to defile a person. Interestingly enough, according to the rabbinic mindset, the commandments governing forbidden meats belong to the category of “statutes” (חֻקִּים) ordained by God: they are to be kept regardless of their rationale (cf. *b. Yoma* 67b). In the writings of Philo and *Aristeas*, a process of ethical allegorization of such laws that might implicitly deny the intrinsic impurity of such meats even while upholding their observance emerges. Contrary to the extreme allegorizers Philo condemns as well as the author of the *Letter of Barnabas* who in fact did take the next logical step in their allegorizing tendencies to abandon such dietary practices all together (see further my discussion on Peter’s vision of impure meats in chs. Acts 10–11), neither Philo nor the author of *Aristeas* makes such a claim.

(7:6) belongs to the larger blocks of teachings delivered by Matthew's Jesus during the so-called Sermon on the Mount (chs. 5–7). In its more immediate literary setting, the saying appears right after a set of material warning against judging others (7:1–5). Right after the saying, Matthew's Jesus exhorts his audience to trust in divine provision (7:7–11). The saying is sandwiched, therefore, by two rather straightforward themes: judging others (7:1: “Do not judge so that you may not be judged”) and trusting God (7:7: “Ask, and it will be given to you. . . .”). The reason for placing v. 6 at such a juncture eludes us and hardly assists in deciphering its content.⁷⁷⁰ The symbolic content of this independent saying could have stimulated a variety of interpretations among Matthew's readers. A precise meaning and usage of this saying, therefore, evades us.⁷⁷¹

As for the second saying, it appears within a notoriously antagonistic chapter penned by Matthew, unequaled in its invective against the Pharisees by any other gospel. Ironically, Matt 23 commences with a recognition of Pharisaic authority (v. 2: “The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses' seat”) and a call to observe whatever they teach (v. 3a), only to then accuse them for failing to live up to their own teachings (v. 3b), pointing out their supposed hypocritical tendencies (vv. 4–7), and exhorting a more honest and humble attitude on the part of Jesus' followers (vv. 8–12).⁷⁷² The invective

⁷⁷⁰ But see M.D. Goulder, *Midrash and Lection in Matthew* (London: SPCK, 1974), 265–66, who argues for linking v. 6 directly with the previous vv. 1–5. So too, Davies and Allison, *Gospel according to Matthew*, 2:674: “Having warned his audience about judging others, Matthew now adds a ‘gemara’ in order to counteract an extreme interpretation of 7.1–5: if there must not be too much severity (vv. 1–5), there must at the same time not be too much laxity (v. 6).” These are possible interpretations, but somewhat imaginative. Cf. Bonnard, *L'Évangile*, 97, who refers to the saying as a “parole énigmatique” that is linked neither to what it precedes or follows. Similarly, Luz, *Matthew*, 1:354: “This logion is a puzzle. Even its symbolic meaning is uncertain; its application and its sense in the Matthean context are a complete mystery.”

⁷⁷¹ H. D. Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount: A Commentary on the Sermon on the Mount, Including the Sermon on the Plain (Matthew 5:3–7:27 and Luke 6:20–49)* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress, 1995), 494–96.

⁷⁷² Matt 23:2–3 has generated a plethora of interpretations. See Mark Allan Powell, “Do and Keep What Moses Says (Matthew 23:2–7),” *JBL* 114 (1995): 419–35, for a useful summary and critique of various

against the scribes and the Pharisees reaches its climax in the subsequent “seven woes” pronounced by Matthew’s Jesus (vv. 13–33):

1. First Woe: Closing the kingdom of heaven (v. 13)
2. Second Woe: Making Pharisaic “proselytes” (v. 15)
3. Third Woe: Misusage of oaths (vv. 16–22)
4. Fourth Woe: Neglect of the weightier matters of the Law (vv. 23)
Gnat-Camel saying (v. 24)
5. Fifth Woe: Purifying the outside, neglecting the inside (vv. 25–26)
6. Sixth Woe: Whitewashed Tombs (vv. 27–28)
7. Seventh Woe: Murders of the Prophets (vv. 29–33)

The saying about the gnat and the camel appears in between the fourth and fifth woes, at the heart of this dire diatribe against the Pharisees. The saying either concludes the fourth woe or begins the fifth one, or better, it serves as a transitory verse thematically linking both woes and vividly illustrating how the Pharisees allegedly overlook more important issues because of their obsession with ritual matters of the Torah. The fourth woe deals with the question of tithing mint, dill, and cumin (23:23), while the previous third woe comments on the Pharisaic approach to the question of oaths. Immediately after the fourth woe, Matthew’s Jesus condemns the Pharisees for washing the outside of vessels while failing to clean the inside. In the sixth woe, Matthew’s Jesus attaches Pharisaic immorality with the chief of impurities, that is, corpse impurity. The saying about the gnat and the camel, then, is surrounded by a treatment of a variety of matters stemming from what may be called, for lack of a better word, the “ritual” dimension of the Torah. This material, I suggest, while deployed to condemn the moral attitude and

positions. Powell’s own suggestion that Matthew’s Jesus only recognizes dependency on the Pharisees for information regarding the *contents* of scripture proves equally unconvincing. Matthew himself evinces his literary capabilities and knowledge of scriptures throughout his compositional enterprise, perhaps he is even a scribe. Furthermore, it remains questionable to what extent the Pharisees would have complete monopoly over the reading and exposition of the Jewish scriptures in the synagogues of Palestine.

outlook of the Pharisees, presupposes the importance of observing the dietary and purity systems of the Jewish Law.

Analysis

My goal here is not to determine the precise theological meaning of the enigmatic saying in Matt 7:6, which continually intrigues but ultimately eludes modern scholarship, but to highlight the very selection by Matthew of a saying couched in Jewish terms and symbols, rich in its associations with the halakic practices of his time, as a meaningful way to state an important belief, whatever it may have originally meant for Matthew.⁷⁷³

First, we should note the attempts to translate the saying back into Aramaic.⁷⁷⁴ The probable Semitic background to the saying underscores its original provenance from a Jewish stock of images and metaphors that were used in a variety of settings to express particular lessons and moral values.⁷⁷⁵

⁷⁷³ Besides the attempt to tie it to its immediate literary context, a host of other suggestions exists (anti-Gentile statement; general proverb; pronouncement against Christian apostates, and so on). See standard commentaries. I completely fail to see how with this saying “Jesus transcends the old Rabbinic restriction in Mt 7:6 and describes the majesty of the Gospel in a new way” (Otto Michel, “*κύων*,” *TDNT* 3:1102). A variant form of the first saying (7:6) is attested for the most part in the *Gospel of Thomas* 93: “Don’t give what is holy to dogs, for they might throw them upon the manure pile. Don’t throw pearls [to] pigs, or they might ... it [...]” (translation of *Thomas* taken from Patterson-Meyer in Robert J. Miller, ed., *The Complete Gospels* [rev. and enl. ed.; San Francisco, Calif.: HarperSanFrancisco, 1994]). The concluding phrase in Matthew, “or they will trample them under foot and turn and maul you,” is lacking in Thomas. Consequently, the possible chiasm in the Matthean form of the saying is eliminated (pigs trample pearls; dogs trample you to pieces). Luz, *Matthew*, 2:354, thinks Matthew’s version of the saying is the oldest. Davies and Allison, *Gospel according to Matthew*, 1:674, think the *Gos. Thom.* preserves a version independent of Matthew. Gundry, *Matthew*, 123, sees the saying in Matthew as entirely redactional, working under the assumption that the *Gos. Thom.* is secondary.

⁷⁷⁴ Nevertheless, a retroversion back to Aramaic hardly assists in pinpointing the meaning of the metaphors embedded in this saying within its actual Matthean setting. Equally unfruitful has been the attempt to posit a supposed Greek mistranslation of the Aramaic terms קדיש (ring) misunderstood as קדיש (“what is holy”) thereby rendering the Greek τὸ ἅγιον. See discussion in Luz, *Matthew*, 1:354.

⁷⁷⁵ Cf. Wiefel, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus*, 145, who considers the saying “als selbständig umlaufendes Weisheitswort jüdischer Provenienz”; Gnlika, *Matthäusevangelium*, 1:258: “einen sehr jüdisch geprägten Satz.” See also Bultmann, *Synoptic Tradition*, 107. Huub van de Sandt, “‘Do Not Give What Is Holy to the Dogs’ (Did 9:5D and Matt 7:6A): The Eucharistic Food of the Didache in Its Jewish Purity Setting,” *VC* 56.3 (2002): 223–46, argues that Did 9:5d, which only contains the reference to

The saying in Matt 7:6 also echoes a halakic concern that scavenger animals such as dogs might eat sacred food or sacrificial offerings.⁷⁷⁶ A rabbinic halakah, largely corresponding to the first part of the logion in Matthew, states: “All animal-offerings that have been rendered *terefah* may not be redeemed, since animal-offerings may not be redeemed in order to give them as food to the dogs” (*m. Tem.* 6:5; cf. *b. Bek.* 151; *b. Tem.* 30b).⁷⁷⁷ Equally interesting is the following rabbinic prohibition: “They may not rear fowls in Jerusalem because of the Hallowed Things None may rear swine anywhere. A man may not rear a dog unless it is kept bound by a chain” (*m. B. Qam.* 7:7). The command to keep the dog bound by a chain appears closely to the halakah forbidding the raising of chickens in Jerusalem on account of the “Holy Things” (הקשדים; cf. τὸ ἅγιον in Matt 7:6), that is, sacrificial food.⁷⁷⁸ Apparently, the ban against raising chickens, which are after all kosher animals, reflects a similar preoccupation as in the case of dogs over their scavenging and eating of sacrificial remains.⁷⁷⁹ A fragment from the Dead Sea Scrolls (11QT^c 3:2–5), which also forbids people from raising a chicken in Jerusalem, confirms this impression.⁷⁸⁰ Indeed, 4QMMT^d 2:2–3 declares that “[one should not let] dogs [enter the ho]ly [camp] [because they might eat some of the b]ones from the te[m]ple with] the flesh on [them].”

throwing holy things to dogs, is more primitive than Matthew and reflects a Jewish expression from the time.

⁷⁷⁶ Magness, *Stone and Dung*, 51–52.

⁷⁷⁷ See Gnllka, *Das Matthäusevangelium*, 1:258.

⁷⁷⁸ Sandt, ““Do Not Give What Is Holy to the Dogs,”” 231.

⁷⁷⁹ Chickens, like dogs, could also transmit impurity by running into contact with other impure items. See Danby, *The Mishnah*, 342 n. 2, commenting on *m. B. Qam.* 7:7 and its ban on raising chickens in Jerusalem because they were “liable to pick out a lentil’s bulk of a dead creeping thing, so conveying uncleanness to houses.”

⁷⁸⁰ See Elisha Qimron, “Chickens in the Temple Scroll (11QTc),” [in Hebrew] *Tarbiz* 54 (1995): 473–76. Cf. Magness, *Stone and Dung*, 47.

Interestingly, the Matthean logion mentions two impure and very reprehensible animals, at least according to Jewish tastes. While Mesopotamian and especially Greco-Roman cultures appreciated dogs,⁷⁸¹ ancient Jewish tradition reserves a predominantly negative portrait for the canine species, especially for ownerless dogs (e.g., Ps 59:7, 15).⁷⁸² Thus, dogs feed off animal carcasses and human corpses (1 Kgs 14:11; 16:4; 21:19, 23; 23:38, etc.) and even attack passersby (Ps 22:17). Goodfriend notes that because “canines were associated in the Israelite mind with the indiscriminate consumption of blood (a forbidden substance even if its source was a permitted animal),” they were expelled from anything related to sacrifice and sancta.⁷⁸³ The term dog is often employed as a derogatory term of insult, particularly in the saga-like literature covering the lives of Israelite monarchs (1 Sam 17:43; 24:14; 2 Sam 9:8; cf. 2 Sam 3:8; 16:9; 2 Kgs 8:13). Quite interestingly, the term is often employed against Gentiles, the most pertinent passage appearing nowhere else than in Matt 15:26 (and Mark 7:27) where Jesus disparagingly replies to the Syrophenician woman “it is not fair to take the children’s food and throw it to the dogs” (cf. Phil 3:2; Rev 22:15). Sim even interprets

⁷⁸¹ For discussion of Greco-Roman sources, see Christian Hüsemörder, “Hund,” *DNP* 5:755–58: dogs represent faithfulness (Homer, *Od.* 17.291; Pliny, *Nat.* 8.143, etc.), intelligence/wisdom (Xen. *Oik.* 13.8; Aristotle, *Hist. an.* 8(9), I, 608a 27; Theokr. 21, 15; Pliny, *Nat.* 8.147; Plutarch, etc.). Loyal people can be positively compared to dogs (Aischyl. *Ag.* 607; 896; Aristoph. *Equ.* 1023). Dogs were used for medicinal-magical purposes (Plin. *Nat.* 29.99–101). For Mesopotamia, see Edwin Firmage, “Zoology,” *ABD* 6:1143–44: dogs played a role in rituals performed for the removal of impurity and disease in both Anatolia and Mesopotamia. Often in these rites, dogs were frequently associated with young pigs. Dogs along with pigs were also used in the ritual of Lamaštu-exorcisms; images of dogs were used in Hittite rituals designed to exorcise evil spirits from royal palaces. One thinks also of the canine representation of the Egyptian god Anubis. See also Joshua Schwartz, “Dogs in Jewish Society in the Second Temple Period and in the Time of the Mishnah and Talmud,” *JJS* 55 (2004): 250: “Dogs were quite popular in the Graeco-Roman world.” On p. 251, Schwartz claims that Romans were “mad” about dogs. But those most fond of dogs were the Persians who even venerated such animals (Schwartz, pp. 252–53).

⁷⁸² See already Cf. Alfred Ely Day, “Dog,” *ISBE* 1:980–81; Jehuda Feliks, “Dog,” *EJ* 5:733. For domestic dogs, see Tob 5:16; 11:4. The Hebrew Bible, however, does not always portray dogs in negative light. See Geoffrey D. Miller, “Attitudes towards Dogs in Ancient Israel,” *JSOT* 32 (2008): 487–500.

⁷⁸³ Elaine Adler Goodfriend, “Could *Keleb* in Deuteronomy 23:19 Actually Refer to a Canine?” in *Pomegranates and Golden Bells: Studies in Biblical, Jewish, and Near Eastern Ritual, Law, and Literature in Honor of Jacob Milgrom* (eds. David P. Wright et al.; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1995), 395–96

Matt 7:6 along with 15:26 as well as 13:45–46 (kingdom of heaven likened to pearls) as evidence that Matthew was not involved in a Gentile mission.⁷⁸⁴

The derogatory reference to the filthy and non-kosher dog appears in Matt 7:6 in conjunction with another most nefarious among impure animals, the pig. This is not the only passage where dogs and pigs appear next to each in negative light in Jewish tradition. In fact, Schwartz maintains that there is a patent connection between dogs and pigs within certain rabbinic texts as exemplified in the saying attributed to R. Eleazar: “the one who raises dogs is tantamount to the one who raises pigs.”⁷⁸⁵ Matthew contrasts the filth and disgust attributed to these animals with antithetical partners conveying the notions of purity, “holy” (τὸ ἅγιον), and beauty, “pearls” (μαργαρίτας).⁷⁸⁶ Above all animals, the classical sources single the Jewish abstention from eating pork.⁷⁸⁷ This abstention stands in stark contrast to the widespread consumption and appreciation of pork among Greeks and Romans, particularly in Rome.⁷⁸⁸ Pigs were also one of the most commonly sacrificed animals in the Roman Empire.⁷⁸⁹ On the other hand, ancient Jewish literature views the abstention from consuming or sacrificing pigs as a true expression of

⁷⁸⁴ Sim, *The Gospel of Matthew and Christian Judaism*, 237–39. Reservations toward sharing the Torah with Gentiles occasionally appear in rabbinic literature (e.g., *b. Hag.* 13a; *b. Ketub.* 111a). Occasionally, the term dog is also used in a derogative way to describe Gentiles (*b. Avod. Zar.* 46a; *b. Meg.* 7b, etc.). Such rabbinic attestations can hardly be translated into a systematic reluctance on their part to share words of Torah with non-Jews. Hirshman, “Rabbinic Universalism in the Second and Third Centuries,” 101–15; *Torah for the Entire World*, identifies a “universalist” stream within the Tannaitic literature, which he ascribes to the school of R. Ishmael. This school of thought viewed the whole Torah as available to the nations of the world and welcomed the conversion of Gentiles to Judaism.

⁷⁸⁵ *T. B. Qam.* 8:17, translation from Schwartz, “Dogs in Jewish Society,” 269. See his comments on the passage and other pertinent rabbinic references on p. 269 n. 125.

⁷⁸⁶ Pearls often symbolize wisdom and instruction. See Davies-Allison, *The Gospel according to Saint Matthew*, 1:677, for references in Jewish literature.

⁷⁸⁷ Jordan D. Rosenblum, “‘Why Do You Refuse to Eat Pork?’ Jews, Food, and Identity in Roman Palestine,” *JQR* 100 (2010): 95–110.

⁷⁸⁸ Thus, Varro (c. 30 B.C.E.) wonders: “Who of our people [i.e., Romans] cultivates a farm without keeping swine? (*On Agriculture* 2.4.3)” (translation taken from Rosenblum). Contrast the antonymous rabbinic repugnance: “None may rear swine anywhere” (*m. B. Qam.* 7:7).

⁷⁸⁹ Rosenblum, “‘Why Do You Refuse to Eat Pork?’” 97.

loyalty to Judaism,⁷⁹⁰ and the rabbinic sages eventually associated the very image of the pig with Rome herself.⁷⁹¹

Could the very solicitation of such animal imagery, so repulsive to Jewish taste, be taken as evidence that Matthew observes kashrut? It is quite possible that if Matthew finds such creatures disgusting, he would not eat them.⁷⁹² Presumably, the Matthean logion would carry its fullest rhetorical power for readers who keep kosher, although, taken by itself, the saying cannot be used to prove that Matthew keeps the Jewish dietary laws. After all, other “Christian” documents also employ such imagery for various purposes. I have already pointed to *Did.* 9:5 where part of this saying appears in a eucharistic setting in order to forbid certain persons from participating in this rite.⁷⁹³ In its current setting within the *Gospel of Thomas* (93), the logion might simply articulate in some allegorizing way how the mysteries of the kingdom must remain hidden from outsiders, without implying for the author of this document that the observance of food laws is still in force.⁷⁹⁴ The author of *Barnabas* (ch. 10) even allegorizes the impurity of the forbidden animals in Lev 11 to convince his readers that they should not observe kashrut at all. Nevertheless, we notice the complete absence of such abrogating intentions in Matthew, while even the allegorizing process in *Barnabas* evinces an effort on the part

⁷⁹⁰ 1 Macc 1:44–50; 2 Macc 6:18–7:42; 4 Macc 5; Philo, *Flacc.* 95–96; Josephus, *Ant.* 12:253; 13:243.

⁷⁹¹ *Avot R. Nat.* A 34:100; *Lev. Rab.* 13:5; *Eccl. Rab.* 1:9, and so on. See Str-B 1:449–50 and especially, Rosenblum, “Why Do You Refuse to Eat Pork?” 100–110.

⁷⁹² Davies and Allison, *The Gospel according to Saint Matthew*, 1:675, capture the significance of the language while failing to signal its potential relevance for the question of Jewish food laws: “In Mat 7.6 this rule, by virtue of its new context, becomes a comprehensive statement about the necessity to keep distinct the realms of clean and unclean.” 1:675

⁷⁹³ Nevertheless, an affirmation of the observance of kashrut may even find some indirect support in *Did.* 6:2–3. See Draper, “The Holy Vine of David Made Known to the Gentiles through God’s Servant Jesus: ‘Christian Judaism’ in the *Didache*,” 257–84.

⁷⁹⁴ Cf. 2 Pet 2:22: “It has happened to them according to the true proverb, ‘The dog turns back to its own vomit,’ and, ‘The sow is washed only to wallow in the mud.’” See also Oxyrhynchus papyrus 840: “You have washed yourself in these running waters where dogs and pigs have wallowed day and night” (2:7). See François Bovon, “Fragment Oxyrhynchus 840, Fragment of a Lost Gospel, Witness of an Early Christian Controversy over Purity,” *JBL* 119 (2000): 705–28.

of its author to dissuade other followers of Jesus who persist in the literal observance of the Mosaic legislation.⁷⁹⁵

In addition, the saying in Matt 23:24, which also contains its pair of non-kosher animals, a gnat and a camel, might speak on behalf of Matthew's observance of kashrut. As noted above, this logion appears right after Matthew's Jesus' denunciation of Pharisaic scruples over tithing the mint, dill, and cumin (23:23). The criticism in Matthew, however, concerns not so much the tithing of such plants but an over-preoccupation with such matters at the cost of neglecting more important issues, "the weightier matters of the law" (τὰ βαρύτερα τοῦ νόμου), such as justice, mercy, and faithfulness: "It is these you ought to have practiced *without neglecting the others*" (Mat 23:23b; emphasis mine). The value of this latter phrase as a hermeneutical key for understanding Matthew's overall perspective on matters of the Torah qualified as "ritual" cannot be underestimated.⁷⁹⁶ Its import applies not solely to the question of tithing, but guides Matthew's approach to the question of the Jewish Law in all of its aspects, ethical and ritual.⁷⁹⁷ Matthew does not oppose here in absolute terms the observance of commandments so often labeled (with negative overtones) as "ceremonial," "cultic," or

⁷⁹⁵ See, for example, Mimouni, *Le judéo-christianisme ancien*, 191, who thinks that *Barnabas* was written to a "Jewish Christian" audience.

⁷⁹⁶ Cf. Kinzer, *Postmissionary*, 59–60, who ties the significance of this verse with Matt 5:19 ("whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, will be called least in the kingdom of heaven"): "What is most remarkable about Matthew 5:19 and 23:23, however, is that both texts affirm that attentive obedience to the weightier/greater commandments should not lead to violation or neglect of the lighter/lesser commandments."

⁷⁹⁷ Hagner, *Matthew*, 2:670, seems to restrict the import of the phrase, "not forsaking the others," to the question of upholding tithing, not the observance of other "ritual" aspects of the Torah. David E. Garland, *The Intention of Matthew 23* (NovTSup 52; Leiden: Brill, 1979), 140, represses the significance of this statement to "an earlier tradition which cannot be pressed too far theologically." Correctly, Loader, *Jesus' Attitude towards the Law*, 241: "This confirms the impression that Matthew assumes the validity of Torah and its application, even in areas such as tithing."

“ritual,” with the “moral law.” *Au contraire*, he affirms their observance so long as they do not take precedence over ethical concerns.⁷⁹⁸

No Mosaic legislation explicitly requires Jews to tithe herbs such as mint, dill, and cumin.⁷⁹⁹ In Deut 14:23, only grain, wine, oil, and flocks are explicitly mentioned. However, Lev 27:30 (“All tithes from the land, whether the seed from the ground or the fruit from the tree”) and Deut 14:22 (“a tithe of all the yield of your seed that is brought in yearly from the field”) could lead to the inference that even herbs should be tithed.⁸⁰⁰ The Pharisaic concern to tithe such herbs reflects an effort to meticulously carry out the commandment of tithing all agricultural products, even if they do not clearly fall under the category of “produce.” But despite their commendable efforts, the Pharisees, so Matthew claims, overlook the weightier matters of the law. In the words of a catchy, proverbial saying, they “strain out a gnat but swallow a camel!” Has Matthew penned this dictum, drawn it from a source (e.g., Q), or borrowed it from a thesaurus of Jewish proverbs? A wordplay in its probable Aramaic *Vorlage* exists between the words “gnat”

⁷⁹⁸ The same holds true for Luke, who chooses to retain similar language in his woe regarding tithing: “But woe to you Pharisees! For you tithe mint and rue and herbs of all kinds, and neglect justice and the love of God; *it is these you ought to have practiced, without neglecting the others.*” (11:41). I see no basis for the dichotomy, which I precisely challenge throughout this work, Luz creates between Matthew and Luke: “The next step is taken then by Luke for whom in all probability the commandment to tithe has become obsolete along with all ritual commandments (Acts 10). For his Gentile Christian readers—and for almost all Gentile Christian readers of the later centuries—the commandment to tithe cooking herbs becomes something strange and bizarre, and the scribes and Pharisees become its representatives” (*Matthew*, 2:125). Why then did Luke, like Matthew, retain this logion? Why is the same attestation read in one gospel as an affirmation of the practice of tithing and ritual commandments, while understood in another in the opposite way?

⁷⁹⁹ For tithing in the Second Temple period, see Sanders, *Jewish Law from Jesus to the Mishnah*, 44–48; Schürer-Vermes, 2:263–65.

⁸⁰⁰ See *m. Ma’as.* 1:1. In *m. Ma’as.* 4:5, dill is specifically mentioned along with other herbs. Cumin appears as tithable in *m. Dem.* 2:1, although some rabbinic sages treat certain herbs as “wild” and consequently non-tithable. Cf. *m. Hul.* 1:6 with respect to the tithing of sweet and bitter almonds.

(קלמא) and “camel” (גמלא).⁸⁰¹ Matthew has introduced the saying with his polemical vocative, ὄδῃγοι τυφλοί (“blind guides”), in order to condemn Pharisees for misleading others into transgressing the Torah.⁸⁰² However, the logion could be easily used or inserted in a variety of settings to illustrate or make a (moral) point: focusing on “petty” matters while neglecting the essentials. In Luke’s diatribe and list of woeful sayings against the Pharisees and lawyers (11:39–52), this logion is missing entirely. Perhaps, then, its origin stems not from “Q,” but from a “lexicon” of Jewish sayings that was added by Matthew himself in order to illustrate his point more vividly.⁸⁰³

In any case, Matthew employs the saying to denounce the allegedly misguided superimposition of the Pharisees of the “ritual” over against the “moral.” But once again, for the proverb to carry its full weight, an ongoing abhorrence toward consuming forbidden creatures should be presupposed not only on the part of the Pharisees, the target of criticism, but also on the part of Matthew and his readers. According to the Jewish dietary system, both the gnat and the camel are considered non-kosher animals. Thus, Lev 11:20 states: “All winged insects that walk upon all fours are detestable to you.” In Lev 11:4/Deut 14:7, the camel is explicitly singled out as one of the quadrupeds forbidden for consumption. It is the largest impure animal living in the region of Palestine. The gnat, on the other hand, represents the smallest impure creature. Pharisees,

⁸⁰¹ Cf. saying in *b. Shabb.* 12a, “If one kills vermin on the Sabbath, it is as though he killed a camel” (הורג הורג).
(בינה בשבת כאילו הורג גמל).

⁸⁰² Cf. Luz, *Matthew*, 2:125.

⁸⁰³ Luz, *Matthew*, 2:122, seems certain that the saying (apart from the address of “blind leaders”) is pre-Matthean, going back to Q(Mt), but provides no argument. Nevertheless, he acknowledges that the saying was not originally part of the fourth woe but was inserted into Q. We both agree, then, that the core of the saying is non-Matthean. The question is whether such a saying goes back to the historical Jesus (or the earliest *ekklesia* of Palestine) or whether it simply derives from a more common stock of Jewish tradition recycled with the aim of condemning Pharisees. It could be both, probably the latter.

like some other Jews, would have strained out gnats from their drinks (e.g., wine) with a sieve or other device in order to avoid consuming such forbidden insects.⁸⁰⁴ Surprisingly, some rabbinic passages actually allow the consumption of gnats found in liquids. In fact, some of these passages even condemn the practice of straining out gnats as heresy.

[And as to] gnats which are [found] in wine and vinegar, lo, these are permitted. [If] he strained them [out of the wine or vinegar], lo, these are forbidden. R. Judah says, “One who strains wine and vinegar, and one who recites a blessing for the sun [*t. Ber.* 6:6]—lo, this is heresy.”⁸⁰⁵

Similarly, in *b. Hul.* 67a, a baraita forbids eating “every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth” (Lev 11:41), including “insects found in liquids that have been passed through a strainer,” the reason being that during the straining the creeping creature (either insects or worms) might have “crept,” that is, “crawled” on the strainer (e.g., twigs used to filter the liquid) and then qualify as a “creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth” (before that the insect or worm is viewed by the rabbis as having always lived in the liquid and having never crept on the earth, and therefore permitted).⁸⁰⁶ On the other hand, as Magness notes, whereas Lev 11:41–44 forbids the consumption of creatures that creep (or “swarm”) on the earth, the *Damascus Document* seems to prohibit even land-based creatures that swarm *in the water*: “No one may defile himself (שקץ) with any creature or creeping thing by eating them: from the larvae of bees to any living creature that crawls in the water” (CD 12:11–13).⁸⁰⁷ “Apparently, some Jewish groups of the late Second Temple period, including the Qumran sect, understood the legislation in Leviticus

⁸⁰⁴ Maccoby, *Ritual and Morality*, 71. On filtering wine, see, for example, *m. Shabb.* 20:2; *b. Hul.* 67a.

⁸⁰⁵ *T. Ter.* 7:11[12]. Translation taken from Magness, *Stone and Dung*, 35–36.

⁸⁰⁶ See notes on *b. Hul.* 67a in the Soncino edition.

⁸⁰⁷ This passage in CD has its textual difficulties, see Lawrence Schiffman, “Laws Pertaining to Forbidden Foods in the Dead Sea Scrolls,” in *Halakah in Light of Epigraphy*, 66–67.

as prohibiting the consumption of all swarming creatures in water—not just fish without fins and scales but land-based swarming creatures such as insects and larvae as well.”⁸⁰⁸

In Lev 11, among the swarming creatures only the eight vermin listed in Lev 11:29–30 are deemed “impure” (זזה לכם הטמא בשרץ השרץ). This is how the rabbis also understood the matter, not viewing insects or worms as impure but merely “detestable” (שקץ). Magness, however, argues that the Qumran sect took a more stringent position, viewing all swarming creatures that were forbidden for consumption as “impure.”⁸⁰⁹ Sanders, had also initially misunderstood Lev 11:33–36 to refer primarily to insects, implying that insects could transmit impurity to vessels and liquids and were one of the primary sources of preoccupation for ancient Jews in so far as ritual impurity was concerned.⁸¹⁰ Nevertheless, Maccoby has provided a corrective to this matter, stating that Lev 11:33–36 refers (at least according to the rabbinic understanding) only to the eight categories of vermin singled out in Lev 11:29–30. In other words, dead insects do *not* render vessels, moist food and liquids impure; only the eight vermin do.⁸¹¹ Indeed, Sanders later admitted his mistake in his subsequent book on Jewish halakah.⁸¹²

Is it likely that the Qumran sect would have viewed all swarming creatures as ritually defiling? If this were true, then all the vessels and liquids of the Qumran sect would acquire impurity on a regular basis because of the many (dead) insects (“swarming creatures of the air”) that would inevitably invade their residences in ancient, hot

⁸⁰⁸ Magness, *Stone and Dung*, 35, also pointing to the remains of ancient food items infested with insects and their larvae that were found in excavations at Masada, illustrating that this was a common problem for Jews during the Second Temple period.

⁸⁰⁹ Magness, *Stone and Dung*, 34.

⁸¹⁰ Sanders, *Jewish Law from Jesus to the Mishnah*, 138.

⁸¹¹ *Ritual and Morality*, 69.

⁸¹² *Judaism: Practice and Belief*, 520 n. 17.

Palestine. Might it not have been more practical for the Qumran sect to declare all swarming creatures, including land-based swarming creatures such as worms and larvae (frequently found in foodstuffs such as fruit) as well as gnats (technically not a creature that “swarms in the water,” but nevertheless found in liquids such as wine) as *forbidden* for consumption rather than *defiling* (i.e., rendering something or someone ritually impure)? I believe the passage Magness cites (CD 12:11–13, 19–20) is open to such an interpretation. CD 12:11, following the language of Lev 11:44, only states that a person should not make his or her soul *detestable* (אל תשקצו איש את נפשו), but Magness seems to understand the verb תשקצו in the sense of *defiling*, that is, to render impure. Magness correctly argues that the Qumran sect would have objected to the consumption of gnats found in liquids, unlike some of the rabbinic sages. But if the Qumranites considered insects found in water to be defiling, would they not have to discard the entire drink (along with the vessel containing it, depending on what material it was made out of) rather than simply strain the gnats and then drink the liquid? As Magness correctly argues, the saying in Matt 23:24, with its critique against the Pharisees for straining gnats out of liquids but swallowing camels, reflects a halakic controversy over the issue of consuming small insects that inevitably found their way into liquids such as wine and vinegar. In my opinion, however, the Matthean saying makes better sense against a halakic backdrop that views gnats in liquids simply as *forbidden* rather than *impure*. Otherwise, straining would be a futile exercise, since, so I suppose, the gnats (and other insects), if some of them were dead, would render the liquids impure as well. The saying in Matthew, therefore, really revolves around the issue of *kashrut* rather than the question

of the ritually defiling force of certain non-kosher food items.⁸¹³ In other words, some ancient Jews would strain gnats from their drinks because these creatures were not kosher.⁸¹⁴

The hyperbolic (and unfair) statement in Matthew accuses Pharisees, as they busy themselves in filtering out insects from their drinks, for eating camels, the largest forbidden animal in the region of Palestine. In another analogous halakic scenario, it would amount to tithing herbs while failing to tithe more obvious food items such as cereal. Once again, Matthew employs the proverb to critique the Pharisaic (over-?) preoccupation with ritual matters and their neglect for practicing justice, mercy and faithfulness (metaphorically comparable to eating a camel). But the very usage of the Jewish saying, I argue, hermeneutically governed by the immediate preceding phrase—“these you ought to have practiced without neglecting the others”—not only (concededly?) recognizes the scrupulous effort on the part of Pharisees to strain out insects from drinks but definitely presupposes the mandatory necessity to avoid eating non-kosher meats such as camels. While Matthew may not have condemned Jews for failing to exert themselves rigorously in tithing all agricultural item (herbs) and consistently refraining from consuming tiny little insects, he would certainly have upheld the Jewish devotion to tithing produce and observing the general stipulations of kashrut (avoiding eating pork, camel, etc.).

As an ensemble, then, these two most Jewish sayings that refer to impure animals, ranging from dogs to pigs and gnats to camels, not only reveals Matthew’s acquaintance

⁸¹³ Unless we are to understand that the Qumran sect viewed the consumption of insects in liquids as conveying a more serious type of impurity akin to “moral impurity,” because they thought that other Jews were seriously compromising with the observance of kashrut by eating little bugs found in liquids. I would like to thank Jodi Magness for kindly sharing her thoughts with me on this whole issue.

⁸¹⁴ Correctly, Maccoby, *Ritual and Morality*, 71.

with a repertoire of Jewish proverbs and lore, but his very affirmation of the Jewish food system. Much of secondary scholarship, obsessed with determining the precise theological meaning of such sayings, has forgotten to assess the significance of the very appropriation of such Jewish metaphors and symbols. Camels, dogs, gnats, or pigs represent not just allegorized species used by Matthew to make a theological point. The shadows of these animals also point to a real disgust on the part of Matthew toward such creatures, which he meaningfully employs to make moral analogies for an audience that may also refrain from consuming non-kosher food.

Inside Out: Non-Kosher Food in Impure Vessels

Synoptic Window

Table 8-3

Matt 23:25–26

“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and of the plate, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence.

²⁶ You blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup, so that the outside also may become clean.”

Luke 11:39–40

³⁹ Then the Lord said to him, “Now you Pharisees clean the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside you are full of greed and wickedness.

⁴⁰ You fools! Did not the one who made the outside make the inside also?⁸¹⁵

Matt 23:25–26

Literary Context

The final passage in Matthew, dealing in part with food laws, appears in the same literary context as the previous woe (assessed above) against the Pharisees. As the fifth woe in Matthew’s anti-Pharisaic diatribe, it shows up right after the proverbial saying on the gnat and the camel. It is, therefore, also surrounded by material dealing with ritual aspects of Torah praxis: oaths, tithing, food laws, and corpse impurity. These

⁸¹⁵ Further attention is given to the Lukan passage in the subsequent chapter.

observations on the literary context should already deter from viewing the contents of the fifth woe as merely reflecting hygienic concerns rather than ritual matters from the Torah.⁸¹⁶

Interpretation

The passage is of some (but limited) relevance for the discussion of kashrut as it contains a reference to the purification of utensils, drinking vessels and dishes that were used for the consumption of food and liquids. Indeed, this passage highlights a “borderline” case between the systems of ritual impurity and kashrut that should warn us against being too orthodox in our taxonomic categorizations of the Torah into ritual, moral, and dietary realms, when in reality there is the occasional terminological and conceptual overlap between these halakic spheres.⁸¹⁷ Thus, in the midst of a chapter dealing with forbidden, non-kosher animals, Lev 11:29–35 treats the topic of impurity that people or objects can acquire through contact with the dead bodies of certain creatures:

These are unclean for you among the creatures that swarm upon the earth: the weasel, the mouse, the great lizard according to its kind, the gecko, the land crocodile, the lizard, the sand lizard, and the chameleon. These are unclean for you among all that swarm; whoever touches one of them when they are dead shall be unclean until the evening. And anything upon which any of them falls when they are dead shall be unclean, whether an article of wood or cloth or skin or sacking, any article that is used for any purpose; it shall be dipped into water, and it shall be unclean until the evening, and then it shall be clean. And if any of them falls into any earthen vessel, all that is in it shall be unclean, and you shall break the vessel. Any food that could be eaten shall be unclean if water from any such vessel comes upon it; and any liquid that could be drunk shall be unclean if it was in any such vessel. Everything on which any part of the carcass falls shall be unclean; whether an oven or stove, it shall be broken in pieces; they are unclean, and shall remain unclean for you.

⁸¹⁶ Contra Hyam Maccoby, “The Washing of Cups,” *JSNT* 14 (1982): 3–15.

⁸¹⁷ Kazen, *Issues of Impurity in Early Judaism*, 153–56.

The first part of this lengthy passage lists the eight “swarming” (שרץ)⁸¹⁸ creatures (mice, lizards, etc.) that convey impurity not only through ingestion but also through touch (when dead). These eight creatures would often find their way into houses and, because of their rather small size, could frequently end up inside vessels.⁸¹⁹ Their corpses could render vessels impure, but also wet foodstuffs. Vessels and food were more likely to incur impurity from such swarming things than any other source.⁸²⁰ The rabbis frequently discuss scenarios where vessels acquire impurity through such contact (e.g., *m. Kel.* 8:18; 9:3; 10:9). Hence the utility of stone vessels, at least for those who considered them immune to impurity, for preventing such contamination.⁸²¹ Vessels could also contract impurity from non-animal sources, including a human corpse (Num 19:14–15; 31:19–23) and a person suffering from a genital discharge (Lev 15:4, 12).

The major exegetical difficulty with this passages lies in the apparent distinction made between the “inside” (τὸ ἔξωθεν/τὸ ἐκτὸς) and “outside” (ἔσωθεν/τὸ ἐντὸς) of a vessel. Such a distinction is also presupposed in *m. Kel.* 25:1 (cf. *m. Kel.* 25:7): “In all vessels an outer part and an inner part are distinguished.” The saying in Matthew, however, further assumes that the inner and outer parts of vessels enjoy some kind of autonomy when it comes to the *contraction* of impurity: apparently, the outside of a vessel can become impure without necessarily defiling its inside (or vice versa). Yet

⁸¹⁸ According to Milgrom, *Leviticus*, 1:655, שרץ includes more generally all small creatures that go about in shoals and swarms, insects that fly in clouds, such as gnats and flies, and small creatures such as weasels, mice, and lizard that are low on the ground. Only the corpses of the eight swarming creatures, however, convey impurity.

⁸¹⁹ See Milgrom, *Leviticus*, 1:671.

⁸²⁰ Maccoby, *Ritual and Morality*, 74: “The ‘creeping things’ are animals that were often found in houses, and their dead bodies were not infrequently found inside vessels. Impurity was incurred by humans and vessels more often from ‘creeping things’ than from any other source. This accounts for the fact that in the rabbinic literature the ‘creeping thing’ or *sheretz* is regarded as the paradigm case or archetype of impurity.”

⁸²¹ Deines, *Jüdische Steingefäße*, 180.

(what came to be) the predominant rabbinic perspective views the *interior* part of a vessel as determinative with respect to impurity: “If a vessel’s outer part was rendered unclean by [unclean] liquid, its inner part, rims, hangers, and handles remain clean. But if its inner part becomes unclean the whole is unclean” (*m. Kel. 25:6*). At least in the eyes of the final redactors of the Mishnah, the saying in Matthew (and Luke) would prove meaningless: if the inside is impure and viewed as affecting the condition of the whole vessel, meaning that the outside automatically becomes impure as well, the inside will always be washed “first”!⁸²²

In response to this problem, Neusner suggests that prior to 70 C.E. the Shammaite position maintained that the outer part of a vessel could remain pure even if its interior was impure. For Neusner, the saying in *m. Kel. 25:1, 7*, “in all utensils an outer and an inner part are distinguished,” does not explicitly declare that the impurity of the inside automatically affects the status of the outside, implying that before the completion of the Mishnah the inner and outer sides of a vessel were viewed as autonomous parts. In the post-70 developments of rabbinic Judaism, the Hillelite position solidified, claiming the inside as determinative for establishing the impurity of a vessel as a whole. Only from this perspective, does the saying in Matthew and Luke become meaningful. Neusner not only seriously takes the gospel literature into consideration as sources about Jewish halakah but also adequately explicates the halakic substance undergirding the metaphor

⁸²² Actually, in many cases, such vessels would undergo complete immersion, making the distinctions between inside and outside, in so far as purification is concerned, pointless. See *m. Mikw. 5:6; 6:2*. Cf. Maccoby, “The Washing of Cups,” 5, who, failing to discuss *m. Kel. 25:6*, probably exaggerates his point: “It is unquestionable that there was only one way of washing ritually-unclean vessels, whether wholly or partly unclean: to immerse them totally in the water of the *Miqveh*.” On p. 12 n. 2, he cites Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah, Mikw. 1:1*, but what about *m. Kel. 25:6*: “If [unclean] liquid fell on to the bases, rims, hangers, or handles of vessels that have a receptacle, they need but *to be dried* (מגנבך) and they are clean” (emphasis mine)?

of the saying.⁸²³ The opinion voiced by Jesus in Matthew and Luke, then, would seem to presuppose the ritual priority of the interior of a vessel over against its exterior, positioning itself thereby more closely to the Hillelite view. At the core of the gospel statement would lie a denunciation of a Shammaite prioritization of the outer parts of the vessels, which Matthew uses primarily to condemn Pharisaic moral behavior.⁸²⁴

The statement in Matthew is not denying that the eight vermin cannot render the interior of a vessel impure. It is only denouncing *priorities* and comes very close to the point made earlier about hand washing before meals (Matt 15:11, 17–20), thematically distinguishing between the internal/moral and external/ritual realms: in 15:11, 17–20, Matthew emphasizes the defiling force of the evil thoughts coming from the *inside* of a person’s heart over against the external contamination of impure hands; in 23:25–26, the inner parts of vessels become a symbol of the Pharisees’ hearts, which are allegedly filled with greed and self-indulgence.

Quite remarkably, the subsequent verses (vv. 23:27–28) to 23:25 also express this theme in a similar way:

καθαρίζετε τὸ ἔξωθεν τοῦ ποτηρίου καὶ τῆς παροψίδος, ἔσωθεν δὲ γέμουσιν ἐξ ἀρπαγῆς καὶ ἀκρασίας. (v.25)

⁸²³ Jacob Neusner, “First Cleanse the Inside: The ‘Halakhic’ Background of a Controversy-Saying,” *NTS* 22 (1976): 487–88: “Now when we are told, ‘First cleanse the inside,’ what can be the state of the law? Granted, we have a moral teaching about the priority of the inner condition of a person. Yet for that teaching to be tied to the metaphor of the purity-rule about the distinction between the inside and the outside of a cup as determinative of the condition, as to purity, of the cup as a whole, what shall we make of the instruction first to clean the inside of the cup? . . . For the metaphor to be useful, therefore, it must be addressed to people who either do not first of all clean the inside, or for whom the priority of the inside of the utensil is moot.”

⁸²⁴ Maccoby, “The Washing of Cups,” 12, has tried to refute Neusner’s diachronic reconstruction, arguing that the statement in the gospel of Matthew (and Luke) merely connotes hygienic concerns and is brought forth to talk “about clean and dirty cups as a straightforward metaphor for clean and dirty personalities.” However, a sudden shift from ritual to hygienic metaphor would mark an unexpected transition in a section of Matthew so condensed with analogies drawn from the ritual realm of Jewish praxis.

ἔξωθεν μὲν φαίνονται ὠραῖοι, ἔσωθεν δὲ γέμουσιν ὀστέων νεκρῶν καὶ πάσης ἀκαθαρσίας (v.27).

ἔξωθεν μὲν φαίνεσθε τοῖς ἀνθρώποις δίκαιοι, ἔσωθεν δὲ ἐστε μεστοὶ ὑποκρίσεως καὶ ἀνομίας (v. 28).

Both verses employ the same distinctive language that separates the outer from the inner (*ἔξωθεν/ἔσωθεν*). In both cases, the outside appears welcoming and clean. In both passages, Matthew claims that the Pharisees are full (*γέμουσιν*) of moral impurities on the inside: in v. 26, they are filled with greed and self-indulgence, in v. 27–28, with hypocrisy and lawlessness, symbolized by “the bones of the dead and of all kinds of filth.” According to Jewish standards, defilement contracted from a dead human corpse represents the highest degree of ritual impurity possible (lasting seven days), requiring the sprinkling of water mixed with the ashes of the Red Heifer as a procedure for purification (Num 19:11–22) no longer executable after the destruction of the temple.

The polemical declarations in 23:27–28 comparing Pharisees with impure tombs and bones, like so many of the Jewish metaphors singled out in this chapter, become rhetorically pertinent only to readers who accept such halakic categories and observe ritual purity.⁸²⁵ Modern readers should not forget that the spirit of this metaphor was originally linked with the flesh and bones of a concrete Jewish system of praxis appropriated by Matthew to ridicule his opponents in sarcastic and polemical ways. But this derision of Pharisaic praxis could imply an ongoing appreciation and concern on Matthew’s part to properly observe the Torah in its totality. At the very least, Matthew is not refuting the necessity to purify vessels defiled by the dead bodies of impure vermin.

⁸²⁵ Of course, it was no “sin” for Jews to contract such impurity when the inevitable care and burial for a corpse was called for. Jews from pre-70 Palestine routinely found themselves acquiring such impurity. Nevertheless, ancient Jews did distinguish between degrees of ritual impurity (already established in the Mosaic Torah) and would have avoided contracting corpse impurity when possible.

He deploys such imagery only to blame his opponents for focusing on external (ritual) matters while overlooking the weightier (moral) commandments. Nothing in this passage, however, speaks against the continual observance of kashrut, which like other purity matters (e.g., corpse impurity), remains in full force for Matthew.

Conclusion

No passage surveyed in this chapter suggests a Matthean abrogation of kashrut. The controversy in Matt 15:1–20 about hand washing before meals is nothing more than that, a debate about ritual purity, not dietary laws, even if Matthew adds the word “mouth” into the key statement of 15:11, 17:

When Jesus says there that it is not “what goes into the mouth that defiles a man, but what comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man” (11), he is not deprecating the laws of kashrut and abrogating them but resisting the halakhic innovations of the Pharisees, which these wish to impose as traditions of the elders. With respect to the hand-washing ritual before eating, the Evangelist surely has the upper hand historically. Rabbinic literature is still at some pains hundreds of years later to justify this relatively new (and apparently sectarian) practice.⁸²⁶

Elsewhere in this chapter (Matt 7:6, 23:24, 25–26), I have searched for traces that might indirectly affirm Matthew’s observance of kashrut.⁸²⁷ The evidence, while

⁸²⁶ Boyarin, *Borderlines*, 251–52 n. 125.

⁸²⁷ The only other passage that could possibly have some bearing on our understanding of kashrut in Matthew would be the description of John the Baptist’s diet of wild honey and locusts (Matt 3:4; cf. Mark 1:6). While sectarian law mandated that locusts be cooked alive (either with fire or water) before being eaten (CD 12:14–15), rabbinic halakah allowed Jews to eat live or dead locusts (*t. Ter.* 9:6). As Magness, *Stone and Dung*, 39, correctly notes: “It seems unlikely that John followed sectarian law and ate only locusts that he caught alive and then cooked, as such an exceptional practice presumably would have been noticed and mentioned in the Gospel accounts.” Consequently, James A. Kelhoffer, “Did John the Baptist Eat like a Former Essene? Locust-Eating in the Ancient Near East and at Qumran,” *DSD* 11 (2004): 293–314, exaggerates in his assertion that the gospel accounts do not describe John eating specific types of locusts because they “were not intended primarily for an audience that was concerned with the finer details of kashrut. Especially in light of Mark 7:1–23/Matt. 15:1–20, which dispense with such requirements, this observation may come as no surprise” (p. 314). This certainly cannot be maintained for the gospel of Matthew. The absence of any reference to the types of locusts and their preparation before consumption stems simply from the non-Qumranite provenance of the gospel literature. Remarkably, both Mark and Matthew claim that John ate *wild* honey. As Magness remarks, this description reflect his ascetic lifestyle and his concern for *purity*, since he only consumed wild, not processed food (pp. 39–40). Cf. 2 Macc 5:27:

suggestive, at the very least shows how meaningful and useful the usage and appropriation of imagery from the worlds of kashrut and purity remain for Matthew and his readers. For this material to function at its highest rhetorical level, I suggest that Matthew and his audience would have honored the halakic substance undergirding it. If Matthew proverbially mocks Pharisees for swallowing camels, he probably also refrains from eating such forbidden animals. If he believes that pigs and dogs symbolize filth and immorality, it is likely that he also finds them disgusting as food for consumption. If he metaphorically condemns Pharisees for cleaning the outside of their vessels, while neglecting their inside, he also probably thinks that impure creatures such as the eight vermin can defile bowls and other containers if their dead bodies fall into them. Matthew's rich and consistent solicitation of categories he finds meaningful from the world of Jewish praxis for the development of theological reflection may also inform us about his own acquaintance with and observance of the Torah.

“But Judas Maccabeus, with about nine others, got away to the wilderness, and kept himself and his companions alive in the mountains as wild animals do; they continued to live on what grew wild, so that they might not share in the defilement.” John’s lifestyle has been compared to Bannus’ (Josephus, *Life* 11). See Hermann Lichtenberger, “The Dead Sea Scrolls and John the Baptist: Reflections on Josephus’ Account of John the Baptist,” in *The Dead Sea Scrolls: Forty Years of Research* (eds. Devorah Dimant and Uriel Rappaport; STDJ 10; Leiden: Brill, 1992), 340–46.

Chapter 9

Food Laws in Luke

“Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it.”

(Hebrews 13:11)

Introduction

Only two pericopes in the gospel of Luke necessitate some analysis for the investigation of the question of kashrut: Luke 11:37–41, a pericope that really deals with purity matters, not kashrut, and Luke 10:1–11, reporting the commission of the seventy-two, which has been understood by some as granting the right for Jewish followers of Jesus to eat *whatever* their Gentile hosts serve them, including non-kosher food. In reality, as I will argue, in 11:37–41, Luke, even more consistently and clearly than Matthew, only argues against a misguided prioritization of ritual matters over against ethical concerns while presupposing the ongoing observance of kashrut and even approving the Jewish endeavor to keep purity laws. The commission to the seventy-two, while admittedly contains a (secondary) universal dimension to it, does not license Jews to eat forbidden food. Luke’s emphasis throughout this pericope centers on the right for Jesus’ itinerant messengers to receive their pay when they visit a home or town. This includes accepting the food and lodging offered to them by their hosts, but Luke’s point is not to declare that Jewish followers of Jesus may eat *anything* their hosts serve them.

Perfecting Pharisaic Purity

Passage

11:37–41: While he was speaking, a Pharisee invited him to dine with him; so he went in and took his place at the table.³⁸ The Pharisee was amazed to see that he did not first wash before dinner.³⁹ Then the Lord said to him, “Now you Pharisees clean the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside you are full of greed and wickedness.⁴⁰ You fools! Did not the one who made the outside make the inside also?⁴¹ So give for alms those things that are within; and see, everything will be clean for you.”

Literary Context

Luke does not retain Mark’s story about the controversy of hand washing, but he does report an incident that is quite similar, albeit without retaining most of the materials and argumentation found in Mark 7:1–23.⁸²⁸ Luke places his story within a reoccurring setting so peculiar to his gospel: during a meal at the house of a Pharisee (cf. Luke 7:36; 14:1–6). Potential for constructive dialogue between both parties, however, quickly vanishes in a pericope that contains some of the direst statements in Luke against (some) Pharisees (vv. 39–52; cf. 12:1). After Jesus’ deliberates on the washing of vessels, he delivers no less than six curses, three curses against Pharisees (vv. 42–44), three (harsher) curses against the lawyers (vv. 46–52). Admittedly, Luke does not portray a one-sided

⁸²⁸ The Lukan deletion of Mark 7:1–23 belongs to the so-called “Great Omission” of a whole block of Markan material from Mark 6:45–8:26. The reasons proposed for this omission are legion. Some suggest Luke has a different version of Mark (unlikely). Others claim Luke chooses to omit this material for his gospel for a variety of reasons, including among others: 1) stylistic (Luke finds Mark’s gospel too lengthy, wishes to avoid doublets, etc.); 2) Luke believes the mission to the Gentiles belongs to the time of the church, not Jesus; 3) Luke transposes some of the themes of this Markan material to Acts; 4) Luke disagrees with Mark’s supposed abrogation of the Law (this view is especially endorsed by Jervell). For a summary of the discussion, see Michael Pettem, “Luke’s Great Omission and His View of the Law,” *NTS* 42 (1996): 35–54. Pettem essentially develops Jervell’s thesis (*Luke and the People of God*, 145) that Luke holds God’s Law for Jews in effect. While I am highly sympathetic to both Pettem and Jervell’s thesis, I find reason number 2 more likely: Luke is fairly consistent about postponing encounters with Gentiles until the book of Acts. While he does not retain Mark 7:1–23, he includes a very similar story that almost makes the same point as Mark (and Matthew). Finally, it is not entirely evident that Mark abrogates the dietary laws in the controversy story about hand washing. Therefore, we cannot automatically operate under this assumption as the reason for the Luke’s Great Omission although it could be that Luke remains unsatisfied with the way Mark presents the whole matter, fearing misunderstandings about the Law Mark’s gospel could potentially generate.

rosy picture of the Pharisees as the following material amply demonstrates. But, overall, his portrait of the Pharisees still remains more balanced and favorable than that of any other gospel writer. In addition, it should be noted that Luke does not go out of his way to compose this material because of an acute Matthean-like anger against the Pharisees. Some of the content mentioned here overlaps with Matt 23 but was probably taken and readapted from Q.⁸²⁹ Indeed, already in its pre-redactional stages, some of this polemical material was probably crafted and directed against Pharisees.⁸³⁰ So Luke has retained this anti-Pharisaic material rather than composed it. And even at this climax of Luke's anti-Pharisaism, I suggest that he critiques not so much the Pharisees as a collective group, but certain Pharisees, including *Pharisaic followers of Jesus*, the "Christian Pharisees" we discover later in Acts who wish to compel Gentiles to become circumcised.⁸³¹

Given the rather exceptional outburst of Luke's Jesus against the Pharisees, it is not surprising to see the latter at the end of this chapter seeking to challenge him to a debate in an attempt to find something reprehensible they can hold against him (11:53–54). Here too, modern scholarship and translations have misrendered, in my opinion, Luke's portrait of the Pharisees.⁸³² For Luke, the Pharisees are not set on *eliminating* Jesus, even though they do aggressively try "to press exceedingly and question him concerning many things" (δεινῶς ἐνέχειν καὶ ἀποστοματίζειν αὐτὸν περὶ πλείονων), "lying

⁸²⁹ I will hardly engage here in the tedious task of determining the original listing and wording of the woes as found within the hypothetical Q, only point out some of the redactional Lukan features that are embedded within Luke 11:37–41.

⁸³⁰ Baumgarten, "The Pharisaic *Paradosis*," 72, has even suggested that some of the anti-Pharisaic materials in the gospels (e.g., in Matt 15 and Mark 7) are of pre-Christian origin.

⁸³¹ Here I find myself (rarely) agreeing with Jack T. Sanders, *The Jews in Luke-Acts* (Philadelphia, Pa.: Fortress, 1987), 179–80, who claims that the Pharisees in Luke are surrogates for Torah observing Jewish followers of Jesus of his own day. I believe this can *occasionally* be the case as in Luke 11:37–41. See Ziesler, "Luke and the Pharisees," 147–48, who underlines the significance of "Christian Pharisees" in Acts.

⁸³² See especially my section in chapter 4 dealing with the mistranslation of Luke 6:11.

in wait for him to catch *something* out of his mouth” (ἐνεδρεύοντες αὐτὸν θηρεῦσαι τι ἐκ τοῦ στόματος αὐτοῦ).⁸³³ In the end though, just as in Luke 6:11 and 14:6, the Pharisees are unable to reprove Jesus or find anything objectionable in his teachings and behavior. Instead in the end, they remain speechless and unable to answer back (14:1–6), thereby confirming, at least in Luke’s eyes, the legitimacy and authority of Jesus’ teachings and ministry.⁸³⁴

Redactional Analysis

Luke has penned the opening to this scene.⁸³⁵ The Semitic, or better, Septuagint-like style employing ἐν τῷ followed by the infinitive is surely compositional (cf. 2:27; 3:21; 9:34, 36; 14:1; 19:15; 24:30; Acts 11:15). Furthermore, commensality between Pharisees and Jesus appears only in Luke. Thus, in Luke 7:36, a member of the Pharisees (τις τῶν Φαρισαίων) asks Jesus to eat with him (ἐρώτα αὐτὸν ἵνα φάγη μετ’ αὐτοῦ); here, a Pharisee also asks Jesus to dine with him (ἐρωτᾷ αὐτὸν Φαρισαῖος ὅπως ἀριστήσῃ παρ’ αὐτῷ). In v. 38, Luke highlights the surprise of the Pharisaic host who witnesses (ιδὼν ἐθαύμασεν) before him in his own house Jesus’ disregard for washing before eating. The usage of ἐβαπτίσθη is ambiguous. Does Luke draw this from tradition or compose it himself? Furthermore, what does he mean with this verb? Does it refer to hand washing

⁸³³ Translation mine. According to my translation, the pronoun indefinite accusative neuter singular τι is the object of the infinitive θηρεῦσαι. The object of the Pharisees is not *Jesus* but something he says. This is quite understandable since Jesus has just reproved them regarding their teachings and behavior. Consequently, they must seek out something objectionable in his own teachings in response to his argumentation. Many translations render δεινῶς ἐνέχεται as “furious attack on him” (*New Jerusalem Bible*) or “to be very hostile toward him” (NRSV). But in reality Luke wants to show that the Pharisees are pressing Jesus for further answers they can then use against him. Cf. LXX Ezek 14:7 (ἐγὼ κύριος ἀποκριθήσομαι αὐτῷ ἐν ᾧ ἐνέχεται ἐν αὐτῷ). See “ἐνέχω,” *TLNT* 2:3–5; Wolter, *Das Lukasevangelium*, 437.

⁸³⁴ See Part I of this book where I deal with Luke 6:11 and 14:5.

⁸³⁵ Josef Ernst, *Das Evangelium nach Lukas* (RNT; Regensburg: Friedrich Pustet, 1993), 286; Nolland, *Luke*, 2:663. Thomas Kazen, *Jesus and Purity Halakhah: Was Jesus Indifferent to Impurity?* (ConBNT 38; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2010), 277, however, thinks the setting is traditional.

or to full immersion before eating? I return to this issue below. In any case, it is likely that Luke has composed this verse in its entirety, partly basing himself on the opening in Mark 7 to the controversy on hand washing.⁸³⁶

The reply provided by Jesus (vv. 39–41), for Luke, “the Lord” (ὁ κύριος), finds its direct parallel in Matt 23:25–26. Notable is Luke’s elimination of the woe formula (Ὁὐαὶ ὑμῖν), which introduces this same saying in Matt 23:25. That the saying originally did contain a woe formula (in Q) seems likely, since it is not only attested in Matt 23, but also in the other six woes appearing in Luke 11:42, 43, 44, 46, 47, and 52. Luke has deleted this opening formula so he can append it to the controversy story he has composed in which Jesus shares a meal with a Pharisee. Besides the deletion of the curse formula, Luke 11:39 bears great resemblance with Matt 23:25.⁸³⁷

In the following two verses, however, the compositional creativity of Luke reemerges. The epithet, ἄφρονες (“foolish,” or more properly, “without reason”), which opens v. 40, reflects more properly what Luke holds against some Pharisees: their (supposed) senseless inability in comprehending what truly matters.⁸³⁸ It is quite tempting to see all of the rhetorical question in v. 40 as stemming from Lukan composition, but the

⁸³⁶ Besides Luke 11:38, within the New Testament *ιδῶν ἐθαύμασεν* appears only here and in Acts 7:32 (*ιδῶν ἐθαύμαζεν*; cf. Rev 17:6: *ἐθαύμασα ἰδῶν*). Remarkably, the Pharisee is only “surprised” at Jesus’ neglect for washing before meals, not angry or furious at Jesus for such apathy. Cf. Wolter, *Das Lukasevangelium*, 431.

⁸³⁷ Absent in Luke is Matthew’s epithet *ὑποκριταί*, which the latter uses so often against the Pharisees. The epithet was probably absent in Q. What about *πινακος* and *πονηρίας* (in Matt, *παροψιδος* and *ἀκρασίας*)? Do they stem from a different version of Q available to Luke?

⁸³⁸ Besides Luke 11:40, the epithet appears in 12:20, but nowhere else in the synoptic gospels (cf. Rom 2:20; 1 Cor 15:36; 2 Cor 11:16, 19; 12:6, 11; Eph. 5:17; 1 Pet 2:15). It is used in the Jewish sapiential tradition (e.g., Prov 1:22; 10:21; 14:18; 17:12; 21:20; 22:3; 27:12; Job 34:36; Wis 3:12; 5:4) as well as in classical literature (e.g., Epictetus, *Discourses* 3.22.85; 4.10.23). Luke’s selection of this epithet conforms to his usage of *ἀνοίας* (“without understanding”) in Luke 6:11 to describe the Pharisees’ lack of understanding.

saying is also attested in the *Gos. Thom.* 89,⁸³⁹ although missing in Matthew, so it must be traditional. Still, the usage of the verb ποιέω in the forms of ποιήσας (among the synoptics, attested in this form only in Luke) and ἐποίησεν, which echo the language of creation, would certainly have suited Luke’s interests regarding the discussion of purity issues between Jews and Gentiles as reflected later in Acts (see interpretation below).

Compositional activity is also perceptible in the concluding remarks made in v. 41.⁸⁴⁰ The coordinating conjunction, πλὴν (here bearing the meaning of “but”), appears no less than fifteen times in Luke and four times in Acts (Matt: 5x; Mark: 1x). The reference to “charity” (ἐλεημοσύνην) carries special significance for Luke (cf. Luke 12:33; Acts 3:2, 3, 10; 9:36; 10:2, 4, 31; 24:17).⁸⁴¹ In Acts, Cornelius, a Jewish friendly Gentile, stands out for his charitable acts toward the Jewish community (Acts 10:2, 4, 31). With the (dis?)advantage of hindsight, we could read the final phrase in Luke 11:41—“and see, everything will be clean for you (καὶ ἰδοὺ πάντα καθαρὰ ὑμῖν ἐστίν)” — in light of the concerns voiced later by Luke in Acts. Quite remarkably, the Cornelius episode is embedded within a larger discourse on the impurity of Gentiles during which Peter receives a troubling vision regarding the impure animals who allegorically represent Gentile followers of Jesus. God commands Peter (in a vision, not in reality!) to

⁸³⁹ “Don’t you understand that the one who made the inside is also the one who made the outside?” (*Gosp. Thom.* 89) In the contrast to Luke, the *Gospel of Thomas* reverses the inside-outside contrast.

⁸⁴⁰ Nolland, *Luke*, 2:664, views Luke 11:41 and Matt 23:26 as variants of a single tradition, although he acknowledges the Lukan recasting of the saying in light of his own interests.

⁸⁴¹ True, as Kazen, *Jesus and Purity Halakah*, 226 n. 109, points out, the word “charity” also appears in *Gosp. Thom.* 6 and 14. But its practice appears there in a negative light: “and if you give to charity, you will harm your spirits” (14). Consequently, it is not certain that its occurrence in *Gosp. Thom.* proves the traditional status of Luke 11:41 as Kazen argues (pointing also to Matt 6:1–4, which is not attested in Luke). I tend to favor seeing Luke 11:41 as entirely redactional, although Matt 6:1–4, shows that there were other traditions criticizing the “hypocrites” for not properly practicing charity. For Luke, almsgiving has a purifying power to it.

eat impure animals now deemed pure (Acts 10:15: ἀ ὁ θεὸς ἐκαθάρισεν . . .).⁸⁴² In my opinion the references to commensality (here, between Jesus and Pharisees; in Acts, between Gentile and Jewish followers of Jesus), purity (here, the moral impurity of the Pharisees, in Acts, the moral impurity of Gentiles), and charity (here, the neglect of the Pharisees to do so; in Acts, the praise for Cornelius' charitable deeds) justify reading Luke 11:37–41 in light of Acts. Consequently, in the following analysis, I offer a preemptive interpretation that will receive further clarification in my treatment on the question of food laws in the book of Acts.

Interpretation

As noted above, the controversy story in Luke occurs in a setting where *one* (not all) Pharisee(s) (ὁ Φαρισαῖος) and Jesus argue about Torah matters as they partake in the same table fellowship. Once again, it should be stressed that Luke does not view the Pharisees as a monolithic group who have nothing to do with the Jesus movement. For Luke, scores of Pharisees belong to the Jesus movement, including none other than Paul himself, whom Luke portrays as an *ongoing* Pharisee even after his “conversion” experience: “Brothers, I *am* a Pharisee (ἐγὼ Φαρισαῖός εἰμι), a son of Pharisees. I am on trial concerning the hope of the resurrection of the dead” (Acts 23:6).⁸⁴³ In addition, Luke refers to members of the “sect” of the Pharisees who are believers in Jesus (τινες τῶν ἀπὸ

⁸⁴² As I will argue below, for Luke, the vision is really about Jews and Gentiles, *not* Jewish food laws.

⁸⁴³ I do not read this statement as a mere opportunistic declaration on the part of Luke's Paul to avoid punishment during his hearing before the Sanhedrin. Rather, Luke consciously portrays Paul in Pharisaic colors because he wants to show how the apostle to the Gentiles continues to remain a pious Jew who identifies with the most remarkable of Jewish parties. This reading fully conforms to some of the final words voiced by Luke's Paul at the end of Acts: “Brothers, though *I had done nothing against our people or the customs of our ancestors*, yet I was arrested in Jerusalem and handed over to the Romans” (28:17; emphasis mine). This declaration is not made just for rhetorical effect. Rather, it belongs to Luke's systematic program to reinscribe Paul as a Pharisaic Jew who remains faithful to the customs of the elders.

τῆς αἰρέσεως τῶν Φαρισαίων πεπιστευκότες) and demand that Gentiles become circumcised in order to be saved (15:5).⁸⁴⁴ The so-called Apostolic Decree, which, according to Luke, is drafted in response to this controversy and is intimately intertwined with the issue of Gentile impurity, contains a legislation proposing an acceptable manner of table fellowship between Jewish and Gentile followers of Jesus in which the practice of kashrut and purity is not discarded. Consequently, it should come as no surprise to imagine Luke pondering about this ongoing *intra*-ecclesiological debate as he composes this section of his gospel.

The individual Pharisee seems surprised at Jesus' disregard for washing (ἐβαπτίσθη) before eating.⁸⁴⁵ In the controversy on hand washing, Matthew does not employ the verb βαπτίζω, which literally means to "immerse" or "dip" and often refers to the ritual of baptism practiced by John the Baptist and the followers of Jesus. The verb, however, does appear in Mark 7:4 (καὶ ἀπ' ἀγορᾶς ἐὰν μὴ βαπτίσωνται οὐκ ἐσθίουσιν) either implying that certain Jews immersed themselves or dipped their hands in water before eating, or that they washed the food they purchased from the market prior to consumption.⁸⁴⁶ In *J.W.* 2:129, Josephus claims that Essenes washed their entire bodies before eating. Qumranic texts also refer to this practice (1QS 5:16; 4Q514), but there is no direct evidence confirming that Pharisees did the same. The gospel of Matthew suggests that certain Pharisees normally only washed their hands right before eating. But

⁸⁴⁴ The term "sect" is not entirely appropriate to describe the party of the Pharisees. Yet I do not want to get lost in this technical conversation about terminology. See, among others, Sanders, *Jewish Law from Jesus to the Mishnah*, 241, who reserves the term "sect" for groups that cut themselves off from mainline Jewish society.

⁸⁴⁵ In contrast to Matthew's controversy on hand washing, Luke depicts *Jesus*, not his disciples, as disregarding this practice. The focus in Luke is always more upon the persona and authority of Jesus.

⁸⁴⁶ This is how the NRSV understands the Greek: "and they do not eat *anything* from the market unless they wash *it*."

is remains possible that some Pharisees, upon returning from the market or another crowded public place, might have completely immersed themselves in water as Mark's gospel seems to indicate.⁸⁴⁷ *M. Hag.* 2:5 claims that “for [the eating of food that is] unconsecrated or [Second] Tithes or Heave-offering, the hands need but to be rinsed; and for Hallowed Things they need to be immersed” (מטבילין; cf. Mark 7:4: βαπτίζονται).

This halakah refers to the practice of dipping the hands, perhaps in valid immersion pools or basins. Some scholars identify water basins at Masada and Jerusalem as *mikvaot* used for immersing hands.⁸⁴⁸ Luke's usage of the verb βαπτίζω, then, refers either to the dipping of hands into a basin or vessel of water or to the immersion of the entire body in a ritual pool. Maybe Luke knows of a branch of Pharisees who immerse themselves before eating, much like the Essenes.⁸⁴⁹

The reply given by Luke's Jesus does not address the specific issue of washing before meals but the cleansing of cups and plates. Nonetheless, as I noted in my analysis of Matt 23:25–26, the cleansing of vessels appears in the legislation about kashrut in Lev 11. Thus, Lev 11:32 states: “And anything upon which any of them [i.e., the eight vermin] falls when they are dead shall be unclean, whether an article of wood or cloth or skin or sacking, any article that is used for any purpose; it shall be dipped into water, and

⁸⁴⁷ See Booth, *Jesus and the Laws of Impurity*, 200. Cf. *M. Hag.* 2:7 and especially *y. Shev.* 6:1 36c and Albert I. Baumgarten's comments on this latter passage in “Graeco-Roman Associations and Jewish Sects,” in *Jews in a Graeco-Roman World* (ed. Martin Goodman; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 93–111 (pp. 103–5).

⁸⁴⁸ Asher Grossberg, “The *Miqva'ot* (Ritual Baths) at Masada,” in *Masada VIII: The Yigael Yadin Excavations 1963–1965* (eds. J. Aviram et al.; Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 2007), 118–21. Cf. Yoel Elitzur, “Ritual Pools for Immersion of Hands,” [in Hebrew] *Cathedra* 91 (1991): 169–72.

⁸⁴⁹ Baumgarten, “Graeco-Roman Associations and Jewish Sects,” 103, favors reading Luke 11:38 as a reference to full body immersion and takes this statement as evidence of Pharisaic practice. The singular and passive form of ἐβαπτίσθη, coupled by the absence of any reference to the noun “hands,” speak on behalf of his thesis. Perhaps, Luke envisions here a case where Jesus arrives from a public setting. After all, Luke's Jesus *enters* into the Pharisee's house, implying that he could have acquired impurity beforehand in the public sphere.

it shall be unclean until the evening, and then it shall be clean.” The significance of Luke’s statement, as far as the observance of Jewish food laws is concerned, shows itself to be no less different from Matthew’s perspective. Luke, like Matthew, makes no sweeping declaration here against the observance of Jewish food laws proper. He only criticizes some Pharisees for their allegedly misplaced priorities, employing the inner-outer antithetical contrast also present within Matthew. In Luke, however, the antithetical attack is aimed more directly at the Pharisees: “Now you Pharisees clean the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside *you* (ὕμῶν) are full of greed and wickedness” (Luke 11:39). The Lukan switch to direct discourse in the second phrase of this statement marks the transition more directly than in Matthew from ritual praxis to the supposedly immoral behavior of the Pharisees. The reference to greed (ἀρπαγή) coincides with Luke’s claim elsewhere concerning the Pharisees’ supposed love of money (16:14). But nowhere in this pericope does Luke try to dissuade Jews from honoring their ancestral traditions.

These comments also apply to the subsequent reply provided in vv. 40–41. Luke is not quarreling here with the Pharisees over their devotion to ritual matters, but blaming them for failing to care for the inner purity of their hearts. The same one who *made* the “outside” *also* (καί) made the “inside” (v.40). The subject of the verb ποιήσας/ἐποίησεν should be understood here, as elsewhere in Luke-Acts, in reference to the divine creator, the one “who made (ὁ ποιήσας) the heaven and the earth, the sea, and everything in them” (Acts 4:24).⁸⁵⁰ “From one ancestor he made (ἐποίησέν) all nations to inhabit the whole

⁸⁵⁰ Cf. Acts 17:24: “The God who made (ὁ ποιήσας) the world and everything in it”; Acts 7:50: “Did not my hand make (ἐποίησεν) all these things?”; Acts 14:15: “the living God, who made (ἐποίησεν) the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them”; Luke 1:49: “For the Mighty One has done (ἐποίησέν) great things for me, and holy is his name”; Luke 1:51: “He has shown (ἐποίησεν) strength with his arm”; Luke 1:68: “for he has looked favorably on his people and redeemed (ἐποίησεν λύτρωσιν) them”; Luke 8:39:

earth” (Act 17:26). I suggest that Luke is simultaneously looking back to creation and pondering about the purity issues that continue to cause friction between Gentile followers of Jesus, certain Jewish disciples of Jesus, and even non-“Christian” Jews of his time. Those who continually refuse to dine or interact with Gentile believers because of their alleged moral impurity, fail to perceive “all the signs and wonders that God has done (ἐποίησέν) . . . among the Gentiles” (Acts 15:12; cf. 15:4; 21:19). These Pharisaic followers of Jesus (and perhaps even non-“Christian” Pharisees) fail to recognize that God has indeed purified the inner beings of such Gentiles, granting them the sacred spirit as an attestation of their purification and reward for their acceptance of Jesus’ lordship and renunciation of morally defiling practices associated with the nations (idolatry, sexual immorality, etc.), which inhibit Jews from freely interacting with non-Jews (cf. Acts chs. 10–11). Luke, as will hopefully become clearer, is frustrated with a *certain* Jewish contingent within and also perhaps outside the *ekklesia* that refuses to interact with Gentile followers of Jesus.⁸⁵¹

Quite cleverly and daringly, Luke transfers the moral impurity, normally attributed to Gentiles, back on to such Jews: these Pharisaic followers of Jesus are the ones full of “greed and wickedness” (Luke 11:39), not Gentile disciples of Jesus such as Cornelius who practices charity. Many texts from the Dead Sea Scrolls associate the love and misuse of wealth with moral defilement.⁸⁵² Luke contrasts the moral defilement of the Pharisees acquired through their supposed misuse and love for money with the

“Return to your home, and declare how much God has done (ἐποίησεν) for you.” See also Acts 2:22, 36; 14:27.

⁸⁵¹ Luke, as I argue, in the next chapter, is *not* arguing that *all* Gentiles are morally pure, only those who have become followers of Jesus, for only these have truly abandoned idolatry and other immoralities and have received the sacred spirit. The categories of pure and impure still remain in force for Luke, even if he rejects an intrinsic (rather than imputed) conception of impurity.

⁸⁵² CD 6:15; 8:5; 1QS 4:19; 1QpHab 8:10–13 and 12:7–10.

charitable practices of Gentile followers of Jesus as exemplified through the archetypical Cornelius (Acts 10:2, 4, 31). Once said Pharisees will fully recognize the marvelous acts of the creator (on behalf of the nations) and practice charity (ἐλεημοσύνην), then indeed all things (πάντα) will be pure for them (Luke 11:41). Of course, Luke cannot explicitly introduce here the theme of the moral purification of the Gentile followers of Jesus. He, more than any other gospel author, is careful to keep the theme of the mission to the Gentiles out of his gospel narrative. But what Luke is subtly doing here is attempting to reverse the status of *certain* Jews (those who exemplify the attitude of the “extreme” Pharisee) and *certain* Gentiles (those who have fully abandoned idolatry and follow Jesus): the former stand in need of the same purification the latter have experienced. In Luke’s eyes, such Pharisees, who are champions in ritual matters, fall short in the realm of moral purity. Once they devote their attention to moral purity, then their purity will truly become complete.

My reading of 11:41—“and see, everything will be clean for you”—goes against the common perception of this verse that sees it as no longer affirming the observance of the Jewish purity system and even the practice of Jewish food laws.⁸⁵³ This Lukan pericope does not go the extra-mile beyond anything Matthew claims in his own work to

⁸⁵³ Recently, Pervo, *Acts*, 269–70, 283 (contrary to Pervo, I see no dissonance whatsoever between Luke and Acts on purity and dietary matters); Previously, Blomberg, “The Law in Luke-Acts,” 60; Turner, “The Sabbath, Sunday and the Law in Luke/Acts.” 111. If Klawans, Hayes, and Maccoby are right in their assertion that Jews did not view Gentiles as intrinsically and ritually impure, then Nolland, *Luke*, 2:665, who does rightly point out that in this pericope Luke thinks more about Gentile (and I would add Jewish) followers of Jesus than actual (non-“Christian”) Pharisees, misunderstands the issue when he states that because “of his right relationship to God . . . Cornelius could not be contaminated by his disregard of Jewish ritual purity requirements and, therefore, in turn could not contaminate Jewish Christians who shared table fellowship with him.” The point is that Cornelius, or any other Gentile for that matter, could not become ritually contaminated nor contaminate other Jews because of a disregard for the Jewish ritual purity system, since most Jews understood such legislation to be binding only upon themselves, not Gentiles. Rather, Jews (to varying degrees) were mainly concerned with the *moral* impurity of Gentiles, because of their association with idolatry, polytheism, and other “immoral” ways, and the potential apostasy from Judaism extensive interaction with non-Jews could generate. More on this in the two subsequent chapters.

claim that kashrut has been abrogated. Luke only criticizes a Pharisaic *neglect* of attending to moral issues, in this case almsgiving, not their devotion to the Torah. Like Matthew, Luke has Jesus note: “it is these you ought to have practiced [i.e., justice and love], *without neglecting the others*” (Luke 11:42; emphasis mine). Like Matthew, there is no need to restrict the application of such a statement as only upholding the observance of *tithing*.⁸⁵⁴ Finally, like Matthew, Luke assumes in his critique of Pharisaic praxis that one should avoid, when possible, the “father of impurities” stemming from the human dead: “Woe to you! For you are like unmarked graves, and people walk over them without realizing it” (11:44). The implied appreciation for the ritual dimension of Judaism runs throughout this Lukan pericope.

In addition, when we place the saying in Luke regarding charity and purity within its wider Jewish matrix, its content sounds far less radical than previously thought. Thus, in Tob 12:9, the author makes a no less “radical” statement regarding the far-reaching effects of almsgiving: “For almsgiving (ἐλεημοσύνη) saves from death and *purges* away (ἀποκαθαριεῖ) every sin. Those who give alms will enjoy a full life” (emphasis mine). Like Luke, the book of Tobit promises full *purity* from all sins to those who practice charity. The overlap in terminology between both passages is quite striking, and several other ancient Jewish texts encourage the practice of almsgiving, promising similar rewards and atonement from all sins.⁸⁵⁵ For Luke, almsgiving is an antidote to (his reified) Pharisaic greed and evil propensities. There is absolutely no need, therefore, to view Luke here as opposing the practice of kashrut or even ritual purity. His main

⁸⁵⁴ Because of its moralizing tendency, Codex Bezae has left the saying out, presumably because of an unease with the implications this statement holds for the ongoing relevance of ritual Jewish laws.

⁸⁵⁵ “As water extinguishes a blazing fire, so almsgiving atones for sin” (Sir 3:30). Cf. Sir 29:12; 40:24; Tob 4:10; *b. B. Bat.* 9a, 10a, 19b; *b. Sukkah* 49b; *b. Ketub.* 68a; *Lev. Rab.* 34:8.

critique against certain Pharisees centers on the themes of moral corruption, the neglect of inner contemplation and the practice of justice and love, the hunger for power and material blessings, and the obsession with ritual matters.

The Commission of the Seventy-Two

Passage

10:1–11: After this the Lord appointed seventy⁸⁵⁶ others and sent them on ahead of him in pairs to every town and place where he himself intended to go.² He said to them, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.³ Go on your way. See, I am sending you out like lambs into the midst of wolves.⁴ Carry no purse, no bag, no sandals; and greet no one on the road.⁵ Whatever house you enter, first say, ‘Peace to this house!’⁶ And if anyone is there who shares in peace, your peace will rest on that person; but if not, it will return to you.⁷ Remain in the same house, eating and drinking whatever they provide, for the laborer deserves to be paid. Do not move about from house to house.⁸ Whenever you enter a town and its people welcome you, eat what is set before you;⁹ cure the sick who are there, and say to them, ‘The kingdom of God has come near to you.’¹⁰ But whenever you enter a town and they do not welcome you, go out into its streets and say,¹¹ ‘Even the dust of your town that clings to our feet, we wipe off in protest against you. Yet know this: the kingdom of God has come near.’”

Literary Context

The opening prepositional phrase, *μετὰ δὲ ταῦτα* (“after these things”), in 10:1, ties this pericope with the preceding materials in 9:51–56 and vv. 57–62. The majority of scholars view 9:51 as marking a new stage in the macrostructure of Luke’s gospel. Now Luke’s Jesus begins his journey to Jerusalem, which will span over several chapters.⁸⁵⁷ Discussions about the literary macrostructures of Luke cannot occupy the center of attention here, but looking at the more immediate literary vicinity we can notice several ways in which Luke has tied the first section (9:51–55) of this new block of material with 10:1–11. In both pericopes, Jesus sends out messengers before him as he heads toward

⁸⁵⁶ I favor the textual tradition that reads “seventy-two” not “seventy.” See discussion below.

⁸⁵⁷ Charles H. Talbert, *Reading Luke: A Literary and Theological Commentary on the Third Gospel* (Reading the New Testament Series; New York: Crossroad, 1986), 114–19, sees 19:44 as marking the end of this major unit. Wolter, *Das Lukasevangelium*, 364–68, brackets 9:51–18:34 as one literary unit.

Jerusalem: in 9:52, he sends some out who travel to Samaria; in 10:1, to towns and other places of Jewish provenance.⁸⁵⁸ When visiting Samaritan territory, Jesus' emissaries experience rejection, and in 10:1–11 Luke further develops this theme of rejection, particularly in vv. 10–11 and later on in vv. 12–16 where the resistance of the Galilean towns toward the gospel are contrasted with the potentially more open attitude of non-Jewish cities such as Sodom, Tyre, and Sidon.⁸⁵⁹ The more positive attitude Luke attributes to the inhabitants of these Gentile cities should not be exaggerated though, since the same material also appears in Matthew and probably originates from Q. The Gentile-Jewish contrast serves to heighten the condemnation of certain Jewish segments that remain closed to the cause of the gospel while indirectly hinting at a future Gentile mission the reader fully discovers only in the book of Acts.

Luke has also connected the pericope in 9:57–62, which revolves around the theme of discipleship through three short anecdotes, with 10:1–11. In the first short story (9:57–58), a certain person approaches Jesus expressing his desire to become a disciple. The sober response Jesus delivers to that person highlights the material forfeits demanded by such discipleship: “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head” (v. 58). In the second incident, Jesus invites someone else to become his disciple. In response to this offer, this person first requests permission to bury his father before becoming his follower. Jesus, however, categorically denies him

⁸⁵⁸ In the Greek text, the link between 9:52 and 10:1 is more evident through the repetition of *καὶ ἀπέστειλεν . . . πρὸ προσώπου αὐτοῦ* (“and he sent . . . before his face”).

⁸⁵⁹ The reference to Sodom also recalls the theme of hospitality in Luke 10:1–11: when the angels visited Sodom (Gen 19) they were received only by Lot, while the rest of the city mistreated them. Those who do not welcome Jesus' messengers emulate the attitude of Sodom and therefore resist divine will. See Wolter, *Das Lukasevangelium*, 381.

this request, famously declaring: “Let the dead bury their own dead” (v. 60).⁸⁶⁰ Finally, a third person asks for permission to bid his household farewell before becoming Jesus’ disciple, but Luke’s Jesus remains equally uncompromising: “No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God” (v. 62). Quite possibly, these anecdotes on discipleship also contain links with 10:1–11, since the seventy-two messengers adopt a life of simplicity and utter commitment to the cause of the kingdom of heaven. As they embark on their missionary journey, they are to “carry no purse, no bag, no sandals” (10:4), but to depend on the hospitality offered to them in the houses and towns that welcome them (10:7, 8). In this way, they replicate the itinerant, homeless lifestyle of Jesus, the Son of Man, who also has no house or dwelling.

Besides the connections singled out above with the two immediate preceding pericopes (9:51–56, 57–62), much of the theme, structure, and wording of the commission to the seventy-two resembles the first commission to the twelve in 9:1–6, 10. Most obvious connectors include terminology used to describe the commission (καὶ ἀπέστειλεν αὐτοὺς in 9:2/10:1) and the proclamation of the kingdom of God (9:2/10:9, 11) as well as the salient and symbolic numerology present within both passages (twelve vs. seventy-two). By referring to *other* (ἑτέροις) individuals in the second commission, Luke may also be hinting at the first commission to the twelve—there were “others” besides these whom Luke’s Jesus commissions—although this gloss may also be pointing back to the more immediate literary context discussed above in which Jesus sends out messengers before him who enter Samaria (9:52). In the first commission, Jesus grants

⁸⁶⁰ Perhaps, Jesus refers to the *second* burial (ליקוח עצמות) of a deceased person, when Jews of the Second Temple period would gather the bones of their beloved and place them in ossuaries for reburial. See Craig A. Evans, *Jesus and the Ossuaries* (Waco, Tex.: Baylor University Press, 2003), 13.

power to the twelve to expel demons and heal the sick (9:1). Even if in his second commissioning Jesus does not explicitly grant such “superpowers” to the seventy-two, these phenomenal abilities are clearly presupposed in 10:9 as well as in the report the latter boastfully provide concerning their success in casting out demons (10:17–20). In the first commission, the twelve also report back to their master about their sojourn, although Luke does not contain (or compose) a record of their testimony. In both commissions, Jesus forbids his disciples to travel with any luggage or unnecessary belongings (9:3/10:4). Both commissions also appear to presuppose the mandate to abide in the same dwelling place during a visit in a given town or village (implied in 9:4; explicitly commanded and elaborated in 10:7). Finally, both commissions contain materials instructing the disciples how to handle acceptance and rejection in towns where the gospel is announced (e.g., the symbolic act of shaking the dust off one’s feet in 9:5/10:11).

These literary correspondences between various sections within the gospel of Luke, both in their more immediate and larger settings, mirror a progression delineated in further detail in the book of Acts. The commission Luke’s Jesus makes in Acts 1:8 outlines a mission that begins in Jerusalem and Judea, spreading into Samaria and eventually the very ends of the earth. Working under the assumption that the same author composed both Luke and Acts, it would be perfectly reasonable to posit that the first commission of the twelve in Luke symbolizes the mission to the Jews living in Palestine, while the scavenging into Samaritan territory in Luke 9:51–56 hints at the mission to the Samaritans in Acts 8,⁸⁶¹ and the final commission to the seventy-two, with its contrast

⁸⁶¹ Jonathan Bourgel, “‘On both sides of the borderline’: The portrayal of the Samaritans in the Third Gospel,” (paper presented at The Eighth Congress of the Société d’Études Samaritaines, Erfurt, Germany,

between Galilean-Jewish and Gentile towns (Luke 10:12–16), points to the eventual proclamation of the gospel to the nations.

Redactional Features

As the previous analysis of the literary context to this pericope already suggests, Luke has composed the opening prepositional phrase to v. 1, “after these things” (μετὰ δὲ ταῦτα), in order to link it with the previous two sections of his narrative (9:51–56 and vv. 57–62).⁸⁶² Other distinctive Lukan features within v. 1 include Luke’s employment of the title “κύριος,” which he uses more than any other synoptic writer (Luke: 70x; Acts: 81x; Matt: 42x; Mark: 16x), particularly in reference to Jesus. Luke has also inserted the number “seventy/seventy-two,” which originates not from a source such as Q, but is probably inspired by the story of the seventy-two translators of the Septuagint.⁸⁶³ Not only is such numbering entirely absent in both Mark 6:6b–13 and Matt 10:1–14, who know only about the commission to the twelve, but also no other gospel writer besides Luke narrates two commissions. The fact that Luke avoids doublets elsewhere in his gospel makes the repetition of two commissions all the more conspicuous. It seems

July 15–20, 2012), makes a compelling argument that Luke’s perspective on the Samaritans is entirely Jewish, marked by a positive yet ambivalent attitude toward this group, which reflects a transition occurring after 70 in the Jewish outlook toward the Samaritan people (from a purely negative to a more favorable perspective).

⁸⁶² Luke uses the prepositional phrase μετὰ δὲ as a transitional signpost throughout Luke-Acts (with the demonstrative pronoun οὗτος: Luke 1:24; 9:28; 18:4; Acts 15:36; 21:15; without the demonstrative: Acts 13:15; 15:13, 36; 20:1, 6; 24:1; 24:24; 28:11, 17). Cf. also Luke 5:27; 12:4; 17:8; Acts 7:7; 13:20; 15:16; 18:1: “μετὰ ταῦτα.” Fitzmyer, *The Gospel according to Luke*, 2:845, calls it “a stereotyped Lukan transitional phrase.” Cf. Bovon, *Luc*, 2:51.

⁸⁶³ Some entertain the possibility that the number was present in Q. See Hans Klein, *Das Lukasevangelium* (KEK 1.3; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005), 372.

reasonable, then, to view all of v. 1 as a Lukan composition introducing the entire pericope.⁸⁶⁴

Scholars generally view the statements within 11:2–11 (as well as vv. 12–16) as containing traditional material, at times even preserving its content in better sequence than Matthew.⁸⁶⁵ Consequently, distinguishing redactional activity from traditional material proves more difficult in this case than in v.1. In v. 7, appears the first command of key interest with its reference to eating and drinking (ἐσθίοντες καὶ πίνοντες τὰ παρ’ αὐτῶν) the food a host offers in the house (ἐν τῇ οἰκίᾳ) where the itinerant preacher temporarily resides. Many see this material as traditional, meaning that the command to eat and drink probably stems from Q.⁸⁶⁶ In v. 8, the text shifts its interest to the *city* (εἰς ἣν ἂν πόλιν) and the command to eat appears once again in slightly different wording: ἐσθίετε τὰ παρατιθέμενα ὑμῖν (v. 8b). Some scholars view the phrase in v. 8b as redactional, while others opt for a traditional ascription.⁸⁶⁷ The parallel saying in *Gosp.*

⁸⁶⁴ In greater redactional detail: ἀνέδειξεν is rare (among synoptic writers, used only here and in Acts 1:24 in this form); Luke includes ἐτέρους (“others”), probably to show that other laborer besides the twelve were and are still needed to finish the harvest (10:2); καὶ ἀπέστειλεν αὐτούς is found in 9:1, creating further symmetry between both commissions; ἀνὰ δύο (or the redundant ἀνὰ δύο δύο, depending on the textual witnesses) is probably based on Mark 6:7 (there: δύο δύο), which Luke leaves out from the first commission; for πᾶσαν πόλιν, cf. Acts 15:36; τόπον might stem from Mark 6:11; πρὸ προσώπου αὐτοῦ sends the reader back to 9:52; the usage of ἤμελλεν is quite common in Luke (7:2; 9:31; 19:4; Acts 12:6; 16:27; 27:33); the whole phrase οὗ ἤμελλεν αὐτὸς ἔρχεσθαι also points back to 9:51.

⁸⁶⁵ Bovon, *Luc*, 2:51; Fitzmyer, *The Gospel according to Luke*, 2:842; Klein, *Das Lukasevangelium*, 373.

⁸⁶⁶ Bovon, *Luc*, 2:51, views the phrase, “eating and drinking what they provide,” as traditional since it provides a necessary gloss for the verb “remain” at the beginning of v. 7, justifying the salary rights of the itinerant preacher as outlined in v. 7b.

⁸⁶⁷ For further discussions see Klein, *Das Lukasevangelium*, 373 n. 17; Paul Hoffmann, *Studien zur Theologie der Logienquelle* (2d ed.; NTA 8; Münster: Aschendorff, 1972), 281: a Lukan composition. Jens Schröter, *Erinnerung an Worte Jesu: Studien zur Rezeption der Logienüberlieferung in Markus, Q und Thomas* (WMANT 76; Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1997), 187–92, provides a very useful summary on the different positions concerning the origins of 10:8. He provides an excellent discussion on sources, tradition, and redaction, but the weakness of his argument (overly interested in questions of origins and redaction at the cost of overlooking the pertinent Jewish sources and matrices involved) lies in his disinterest in interpreting the saying in Luke (as well as 1 Cor 10:27, critical for his evaluation of the matter) in light of halakic considerations. This leads him to view Luke 10:8 as a Lukan “Aufhebung der Speisevorschriften” (p. 187) without further qualification (see also p. 192 where he speaks of an “Aufhebung der trennenden Wirkung

Thom. 14 could suggest that Luke 10:8 is traditional, unless dependency on Luke is to be suspected in this case on the part of the *Gospel of Thomas*.⁸⁶⁸ The phrase also bears great resemblance with 1 Cor 10:27 (πᾶν τὸ παρατιθέμενον ὑμῖν ἐσθίετε), save for the key adjective πᾶν (“all” or “every”), which is missing in Luke and of some significance for assessing the question of food laws in this pericope.

Regardless of whether Luke has composed this phrase or simply copied it from a source, the twofold repetition in vv. 7 and 8b to accept food offered by the welcoming host must be accounted for. Even if redactional, this hardly provides clear evidence for Luke’s dismissal of Jewish food laws. Nolland, for one thing, suggests the repetition of the phrase in v.8b could simply be stylistic: “In Luke’s source, the juxtaposition of what to do in connection with houses was probably abruptly juxtaposed with the material on

jüdischer Vorschriften” for Luke). In my opinion, Schröter presents some important arguments that slightly favor viewing Luke 10:8 as a Lukan insertion (whether it is a Lukan redaction remains open though, given the parallel in *Gosp. Thom.* 14), but need not be interpreted as an abrogation of kashrut, let alone purity laws. Rather, Jewish disciples of Jesus in Luke’s day are to eat the *kosher* food presented to them without questioning its provenance. By doing so, they do not *consciously* eat food offered to idols. This interpretation would align itself with Tomson’s view on 1 Cor 10:27 in his book *Paul and the Jewish Law*, which unfortunately Schröter does not interact with. Risto Uro, *Sheep among the Wolves: A Study of the Mission Instructions of Q* (AASF.DHL 47; Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 1987), 69, on the other hand, claims: “In general, Luke takes a respectful attitude towards Jewish ritual law, and a statement like 10.8b would be easier to understand as a saying deriving from the source of the evangelist than as his own formulation.” I definitely agree with Uro’s view on Luke’s attitude toward the Law. Nevertheless, I think that even if we posit Luke 10:8 as Lukan, it can still be integrated into his quite positive stance towards the Jewish Law.

⁸⁶⁸ The saying in the *Gosp. Thom.* reads: “When you go into any region and walk about in the countryside, when people take you in, eat what they serve you and heal the sick among them.” The resemblances with Luke 10:8 and 9a are quite obvious: the hospitality of the people, the reference to eating what is offered, and the call to heal the sick. A noticeable difference includes the reference to visiting a region and any of its districts in the *Gosp. Thom.* rather than a “town” in Luke’s version of the saying. More conspicuous is the additional statement attached in *Gosp. Thom.* declaring, “after all, what goes into your mouth will not defile you; rather, it’s what comes out of your mouth that will defile you.” But the link between both statements in *Gosp. Thom.* might simply be mnemonic device as Kazen, *Jesus and Purity Halakhah*, 228, readily admits. In any case, Luke does not tie these two statements together. In fact, Luke does not even retain Mark’s statement about the inability of foods to ritually contaminate. Luke’s rationale for accepting food offered by a host is tied to the right for the preacher to receive his/her *salary*, as he explicitly states in 10:7. More on this below.

towns. Luke provides a bridge with his repetitive ‘eat what is put before you.’”⁸⁶⁹ Nevertheless, I tend to accept the view that Luke 10:8b indirectly calls for Jesus’ disciples of Luke’s day to accept food offered to them in Gentile homes, but, as I argue below, this statement does not call for Jews to forsake kashrut.

Interpretation

Many New Testament scholars take the reference to the number seventy or seventy-two, understood as an allusion to Gentiles, coupled by the twofold repetition to eat the food served by (potentially Gentile) hosts as evidence that Luke has indeed discarded Jewish food laws.⁸⁷⁰ Several observations, however, will seriously question the weight of such wide sweeping remarks on a pericope whose thematic focus and horizon certainly lie elsewhere.

First, the universal thrust so often attributed to this pericope, based in part on the symbolism presumed to lie behind the numbers “seventy” or “seventy-two,” is not so evident and prominent as we might first think. Textual considerations complicate the matter: variant readings in manuscripts and fragments are divided, some favoring “seventy” (ἑβδομήκοντα), others “seventy-two” (ἑβδομήκοντα δύο) as the original reading.⁸⁷¹ Scholars, therefore, turn to the internal evidence in an attempt to determine the original reading. Wolter, for example, reasonably argues for an original reading that

⁸⁶⁹ Nolland, *Luke*, 2:553.

⁸⁷⁰ Deines, “Das Aposteldekret,” 332; Georges Gander, *L’Évangile pour les étrangers du monde: Commentaire de l’Évangile selon Luc* (Lausanne: 1986), 514; Pervo, *Acts*, 269–70; Talbert, *Reading Luke*, 117; Cf. Ernst, *Das Evangelium nach Lukas*, 253: “In der Wiederholung der Essenanweisung spiegeln sich die Schwierigkeiten, die sich für die judenchristlichen Missionare an den Tischen der Heiden oder Heidenchristen ergaben. Der beherrschende Gedanke liegt jedoch in dem Fortschreiten der Verkündigung vom Haus zur Stadt, die im Verständnis des Lk den Öffentlichkeitscharakter der missionarischen Verkündigung verdeutlicht.”

⁸⁷¹ ἑβδομήκοντα δύο (℞⁷⁵ B D 0181, etc.); ἑβδομήκοντα (⋈ A C D L W Θ Ξ Ψ, etc.).

contained ἑβδομήκοντα δύο, which was subsequently changed to ἑβδομήκοντα. The digit δύο was dropped either because of scribal oversight or in an attempt to link the pericope with Jewish traditions that viewed the number seventy as representing the nations (*I En.* 89:59; 90:22, 25; *Jub.* 44:34, etc.).⁸⁷² This process more readily explains the textual process of mutation, although it remains possible, though less likely, that the original reading contained “seventy” and was subsequently altered to “seventy-two” in order to confirm it with the list of the nations as found in the Septuagint text of Gen 10 (depending on how one counts the number of nations enlisted therein) or the number of translators of the Septuagint, according to the *Let. Arist.* 50 and 307, seventy-two.⁸⁷³ This latter scenario seems less likely though, given the symbolic prominence of the number seventy already deeply enrooted in Jewish tradition by the time of Luke (*I En.* 10:12; *Jub.* 11:20; 2 *Esd.* 4:46, etc.).

Many have precipitatedly identified either textual reading with the Table of Nations as listed in Gen 10. Supposedly, the lists in the Masoretic text and Septuagint refer to seventy and seventy-two nations, respectively. But according to Wolter’s counting, the Masoretic and Septuagint texts actually contain seventy-*one* and seventy-*three* nations.⁸⁷⁴ In reality, much depends on how one counts the list of names in Gen 10.

The Masoretic text enumerates seventy-one descendants of Shem, Ham, and Japheth,

⁸⁷² Wolter, *Das Lukasevangelium*, 376–77; Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke* (NICNT; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1997), 409 n. 28. Jozef Verheyden, “How Many Were Sent according to Lk 10,1?” in *Luke and His Readers: Festschrift A. Denaux* (eds. Adelbert Denaux et al.; BETL 182; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2005), 193–238, points to Greco-Roman literature that often employs the number seventy to refer to a closed, complete group or entity. Nevertheless, as Wolter correctly argues, this observation does not prove that Luke originally included the number seventy in his pericope. If anything, it might explain how in the process of transmission the number seventy-two was changed by (non-Jewish) scribes so as to conform it to this Greco-Roman usage. Bruce Metzger, “Seventy or Seventy-Two Disciples?” *NTS* 5 (1959): 299–306, remains uncertain about the original reading, leaving the question open to either possibility.

⁸⁷³ Cf. Klein, *Das Lukasevangelium*, 375 n. 30.

⁸⁷⁴ Wolter, *Das Lukasevangelium*, 376.

perhaps even seventy-two, if one views the Asshur mentioned in Gen 10:11 as a descendant of Nimrod and as a separate individual from the Asshur appearing in Gen 10:22 who is a son of Shem.⁸⁷⁵ The much later post-Talmudic work, *Halakot Gedolot* (c. 8th cent. C.E.), contains a list and computation of the Table of Nations with a sum adding up to seventy: not only the Asshur of Gen 10:11 (understood as the son of Nimrod) but also the Philistines (10:14) are left out from its reckoning, possibly to conform the list with the Jewish tradition that views the number seventy as a fixed quantity identified with the nations of the world.⁸⁷⁶ Concerning the list in LXX, seventy-three names are indeed recorded therein albeit with the repetition of Cainan (unattested in the MT) in 10:22 (as a son of Shem) and in 10:24 (as a son of Arpachshad and consequently a *grandson* of Shem).⁸⁷⁷ Could this repetition of the same name have been viewed as superfluous by ancient Jews, leading them to a total computation of seventy-two instead of seventy-three nations? Much later Christian authors such as Augustine counted seventy-three names in Gen 10 but nevertheless concluded that these persons only represented seventy-two nations in order to conform it to tradition.⁸⁷⁸ Unfortunately, it is not possible at this stage to know exactly how first-century Jewish readers would have dealt with numbering the named descendants in Gen 10.

⁸⁷⁵ The NRSV translates the first Asshur in Gen 10:11 not as a reference to an individual but to the *land of Assyria*: “From that land he [i.e., Nimrod] went into Assyria.” Other translations (*Jewish Publication Society; New Jerusalem Bible*), however, understand Asshur as a person: “out of the land went forth Asshur.” The Hebrew text (מְהַרְרֵץ הָהוּא יֵצֵא אַשּׁוּר) invites both readings. Ancient Jewish translations (see Targumim and LXX) offer both possibilities.

⁸⁷⁶ See discussion of text in Samuel Krauss, “Die Zahl der biblischen Völkerschaften,” *ZAW* 19 (1899): 5–7. Krauss suggests that *Halakot Gedolot* chooses to include Nimrod in the reckoning, but not Asshur since he is a descendant of the latter, while the Philistines are subsumed to the Caphtorim of Gen 10:14 (cf. Deut 2:23; Amos 9:7), leading to the rounded total of seventy. Krauss thinks the computation of Gen 10 in *Halakot Gedolot* stems from earlier times.

⁸⁷⁷ Incidentally, Cainan, as a son of Arphachshad, appears in the genealogy of Luke (3:36).

⁸⁷⁸ *De civitate Dei* 16.3. See discussion of text and other medieval Christian reckonings in Krauss, “Die Zahl der biblischen Völkerschaften,” 7–11.

Because Wolter opts for the textual variant of “seventy-two” as the original reading and since the version of the Table of the Nations in the LXX technically contains seventy-three names, he concludes that Luke does not conceive of a universal proclamation at all in this pericope about the second commission. Wolter claims that Luke only looks back to the first commission of the twelve when writing this section. After all, seventy-two is a divisible of twelve, and Luke’s Jesus does send out his disciples in pairs (thirty-six pairs in total). Consequently, Wolter dismisses any particular symbolism normally assigned in this Lukan pericope to the number seventy-two, which, as he points out, is explicitly tied for the first time with the nations only by Irenaeus (*Haer.* 3.22.3) at the end of the second century C.E.⁸⁷⁹

Wolter’s thesis is extremely enticing, since it would eliminate all objections to the thesis proposed in this chapter, by restricting the second commission to a Jewish context and region. Luke 10:1–11 would prove itself irrelevant for the discussion on Jewish food laws since only a mission to Jews in Jewish territory would be envisioned. Wolter’s restrictive reading of Luke 10:1–11 does not fully convince though. When the second commission is read in light of the stories in Acts regarding the proclamation of the gospel to Jews, Samaritans, and Gentiles, it becomes likely that Luke already envisages, however timidly, a mission to the Gentiles when composing this section of his gospel. This stands true regardless of which textual reading one opts for, “seventy” or “seventy-two,” and despite the fact that both the MT and the LXX might technically contain

⁸⁷⁹ Wolter, *Das Lukasevangelium*, 377. Cf. Uro, *Sheep among the Wolves*, 64: “It is not impossible that Luke tied no specific reference or symbolic meaning to ‘seventy (two) [and simply chose the number as a suitable ‘round’ number between twelve and the 120 brethren of Acts 1.15. The difference between 120 and 70 (72) gave room enough for the rest of Jesus’ followers and relatives who did not take part in the mission of Lk 10 or joined his circle after that. If Luke, nevertheless, thought symbolically in Lk 10.1, the most obvious association would be with the figures 12 and 120, both determined by the notion of the twelve tribes of Israel. This could be the case, especially if the reading “seventy-two” is more original.”

seventy-one and seventy-three names, respectively. As noted earlier, the tradition of seventy as representative of the nations was already well attested in Luke's day. Thus, in *I En.* 89:59, seventy shepherds are assigned to care for seventy sheep which represent the nations (cf. *I En.* 90:22, 25). In the book of *Jubilees*, the author explicitly refers to the seventy Gentile nations (44:34). Later rabbinic and targumic passages, some possibly deriving from earlier sources, also retain this tradition in various forms.⁸⁸⁰ The number seventy, therefore, could symbolize the nations regardless of the various possible computations of the Table of the Nations in Gen 10.

Concerning the possible, if not plausible, original reading of seventy-two, the evidence from the *Letter of Aristeas*, which Wolter does not discuss, cannot be ignored, particularly for an author like Luke who loves to read and cite the Septuagint.⁸⁸¹ Luke probably knows about the legend concerning the origins of the LXX, that seventy-two elders contributed to the rendition of the Hebrew scriptures into Greek.⁸⁸² In *Let. Arist.* 46–50, six elders from each of the twelve tribes of Israel are commissioned to translate the Hebrew scriptures into Greek. To the author's delight, these seventy-two linguists succeed in completing their translation in the serendipitous span of seventy-two days (*Let. Arist.* 307). While the author of the *Let. Arist.* does not explicitly tie this number with the nations (neither does Luke), he evinces throughout his work a concern for presenting Judaism in ways more palatable to Greek tastes and interests. Finally, despite the mechanical computations of the Table of Nations offered by Wolter for the MT and

⁸⁸⁰ *M. Sheqal.* 5:1; *Midr. Tann.* on Deut 32 (seventy nations equated with the seventy members of Jacob's household); *Lev. Rab.* 2:4; *Yal.* §376 on Exodus; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 16b, 17a (seventy nations which God created); *B. Sukkah* 55b (seventy bulls offered representing the nations); *Tg. Ps.-J.* on Deut 32:8.

⁸⁸¹ On Luke and the *Letter of Aristeas* see especially Sidney Jellicoe, "St. Luke and the Seventy-Two," *NTS* 6 (1960): 319–21 as well as his subsequent article "St. Luke and the Letter of Aristeas," *JBL* 80 (1961): 149–55.

⁸⁸² That Josephus paraphrases extensively from *Let. Arist.* (see his *Ant.* 12:11–118) shows that the work, or at least the story regarding the translation of the LXX, was well known in Luke's age.

LXX, we could imagine, though it is impossible to prove, first century Jews rounding off their reckoning of the names contained in Gen 10 to either seventy or seventy-two, depending on the version of the list lying before them.⁸⁸³

A universal thrust to Luke 10:1–11 (and vv. 12–24), therefore, seems probable, and Luke most likely views its contents as a guide instructing his readers on how to carry out such work and deal with itinerant preachers even among non-Jews in Gentile territory.⁸⁸⁴ Some have pointed out that Luke avoids retaining doublets in his narrative (e.g., the elimination of the two feeding accounts in Mark), unless he sees a good reason to do so. His unique repetition of two commissions, therefore, unattested in any other gospel, must be accounted for. Reading the number “seventy-two” as hinting toward a Gentile mission, or at least an expedition into the Jewish Greek speaking Diaspora, best accounts for Luke’s indulgence in “doubling” the missionary theme.⁸⁸⁵ This interpretation stands true even if at the narrative level Jesus sends the seventy-two only into *Jewish territory*. Luke knows well that Jesus did not extensively interact with Gentiles during his earthly ministry. Therefore, Luke chooses to only hint at this Gentile

⁸⁸³ We should note that in his report about the translation of the Septuagint, Josephus switches between the usage of “seventy” and “seventy-two” (*Ant.* 12:57, 86, 107). It is not surprising, therefore, to see this same confusion occurring within the textual tradition of Luke.

⁸⁸⁴ Talbert, *Reading Luke*, 117: “From such a survey we can see the evangelist has used this section not only to foreshadow the Gentile mission of the church, but also to give certain instructions and guidance that would be needed at the time the gospel was written (e.g., payment of missionaries; eating of any food set before them; balance in one’s concern for power in ministry and for one’s own relationship with God).” Luke 22:35–36 does not deter from this reading. In that passage, Jesus delivers his “correction” only in a dire situation right before his incumbent death. Contra France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 386.

⁸⁸⁵ The numbers seventy and seventy-two are associated with other entities besides the nations of the world. In the MT of the Pentateuch, Jacob’s household contains seventy members (Gen 46:27; Exod 1:5; Deut 10:22); in the LXX and Acts 7:14, seventy-five (save for LXX Deut 10:22: seventy members). In Num 11:25, God sends his spirit upon seventy elders of Israel. Interestingly enough, two additional men, Eldad and Medad, also receive this spirit (Num 11:26), adding to a grand total of seventy-two persons who are spiritually endowed. Does Luke make such a connection between the commission of the seventy-two disciples of Jesus and the seventy-plus-two individuals who receive the spirit in Numbers in order to relate Jesus with the greatest prophet of Jewish tradition, Moses? Luke also shows great interest in the theme of the baptism of the spirit. Some like Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke* (Sacra pagina Series 3; Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical, 1991), 170, favor this interpretation and see the Gentile allusion only as secondary.

dimension in his gospel narrative, while fully deliberating on the topic in his second book.

How then do vv. 7 and 8 affect the discussion on Jewish food practices if they (indirectly) address non-Jewish settings? First of all, we should note that Luke hardly concerns himself with the issue of kashrut when he has Jesus first announce in v. 7 that his emissaries are to accept the food and drink offered to them by their welcoming hosts. The rationale given for this injunction focuses on the *right of the worker to receive his or her salary*: “for (γὰρ) the laborer deserves to be paid” (10:7).⁸⁸⁶ The postpositive conjunction γὰρ might connect itself not only with the immediate preceding command to eat and drink but equally with the preceding order to *remain* in the house where the itinerant preacher is welcomed. In other words, the “salary” (μισθός), the term Luke chooses to employ here, encompasses both “room and boarding,” to use modern nomenclature.⁸⁸⁷ The gospel worker is worthy of remuneration and should not hesitate to enjoy the hospitality offered by his/her host. On the other hand, the gospel laborer should not hop from house to house, abusing and disrespecting the generosity of a household like a *pique-assiette*, but remain in the same abode where (s)he first obtains lodging. Jesus’ laborers are to embrace a simple and undemanding lifestyle through their humble and grateful acceptance of the food and drink offered to them.⁸⁸⁸ The core of the

⁸⁸⁶ Cf. Loader, *Jesus’ Attitude towards the Law*, 326: “10.7 justifies the instruction by arguing that a labourer deserves to be paid. That is the focus, not food purity issues.”

⁸⁸⁷ In the commission to the twelve, Matt 10:10 (cf. *Did.* 13:2) states: “for laborers deserve their *food*” (τροφῆς). Probably, the term implies entitlement to other benefits as well, including lodging. Cf. 1 Cor 9:14–18; 2 Cor 11:7–11. 1 Tim 5:18 contains the same wording as Luke: ἄξιός ὁ ἐργάτης τοῦ μισθοῦ αὐτοῦ.

⁸⁸⁸ Ernst, *Das Evangelium nach Lukas*, 253: “Der Bote soll nicht über Gebühr fordern, sondern mit dem zufrieden sein, was ihm vorgesetzt wird.” Cf. Gander, *L’Évangile pour les nations du monde*, 527: “. . . en orient, l’hospitalité est sacrée, et l’on n’y admettrait pas que l’on méprise l’hospitalité d’une demeure pour lui en préférer une autre, après avoir usé de la première.” Wolter, *Das Lukasevangelium*, 379: “Die zweite Weisung in 7b . . . kann für sich genommen als Aufforderung verstanden werden, sich den jeweiligen

instruction in 10:7, then, focuses on house-guest protocols, on the proper comportment a true laborer of Jesus is to exemplify as well as the rightful salary such a person is entitled to.⁸⁸⁹

What about the repetition of this injunction in 10:8? At the *narrative* level, we could interpret it to mean that the messengers of Jesus who visit *Jewish* homes should not worry whether the food or drink served before them surpasses all halakic reproach. For example, they might overlook whether the food offered by the Jewish host has been properly tithed⁸⁹⁰ or prepared in a vigorous state of ritual purity (e.g., washing hands beforehand).⁸⁹¹ On the other hand, we should naturally presuppose at the narrative and historical level that the Jewish hosts would not serve forbidden meats (e.g., pork), since most Jews in Palestine would have presumably honored the fundamentals of kashrut.

When assessing how Luke would apply this text in his own day within a Diaspora setting, we should not hastily jump to the conclusion that he thinks Jews may eat of *any* food offered to them by a Gentile host. This certainly might be the impression gained when consulting certain modern mistranslations of both vv. 7 and 8. For example, the NRSV translates v. 7 (ἐν αὐτῇ δὲ τῇ οἰκίᾳ μένετε ἐσθίοντες καὶ πίνοντες τὰ παρ' αὐτῶν) in the following way: “Remain in the same house, eating and drinking *whatever* they

häuslichen Möglichkeiten anzupassen (im Sinne von: ‘stellt keine Ansprüche, sondern begnügt euch mit dem, was man euch gibt’).”

⁸⁸⁹ The material in this section of Luke should be compared with *Did.* 11–13, which deals extensively with itinerant apostles, prophets, and the like, as well as the host-guest issues involved.

⁸⁹⁰ Although see Luke 11:42. The rabbinic tractate *Demai* deals with the topic of foods whose tithing remains doubtful.

⁸⁹¹ Loader, *Jesus' Attitude towards the Law*, 326: “In 10:8 food purity issues may be in mind. Here the instruction would not be permission to eat non kosher foods, since the setting is within Israel. Luke will deal with food issues in Acts. The injunction here in a Jewish setting does, however, reflect a setting of priorities which could come into conflict with any requirement not to eat untithed food or wrongly prepared food. As such it probably reflects a contrast with Pharisaic interpretation, rather than with the Law itself.”

provide” (emphasis mine).⁸⁹² The Greek text, however, does not justify such an interpretation. As Nolland remarks, the “Lukan statement lacks the vital *πάν*, ‘everything,’ which would justify comparison with 1 Cor 10:27.”⁸⁹³ Luke’s Jesus is more circumspect in the formulation of his pronouncements than Paul, but in the end I would suggest that even if Luke 10:8b bears any relationship with 1 Cor 10:27, it does not concern itself with kashrut, but with food offered to idols: followers of Jesus who enter Gentile homes should not ask about the provenance of the *kosher* food set before them. By doing so, they neither *consciously* compromise with the Apostolic Decree (to refrain from food offered to idols) nor unnecessarily offend their guests.

As outlined in the introduction to Part II, many Jews were ready to eat with non-Jews, provided the latter respected the basics of kashrut. The *Letter of Aristeas*, with its reference to the seventy-two translators and outlook toward the non-Jewish world, envisages such a scenario by depicting the king in Alexandria hosting a banquet in which both Jews and Gentiles participate, albeit with respect for the dietary restrictions of the Jews (181–188). Other Jewish works, such as the book of Judith (12:19), also presuppose commensality between Jews and Gentiles without implying in any way a departure from observing kashrut.⁸⁹⁴ Sanders has perspicaciously argued that many Jews in the Diaspora did not even worry about Gentiles *handling* their meat, oil, and wine.⁸⁹⁵ The idea,

⁸⁹² Similarly, the *New International Reader’s Version* translates v. 7 as “eat and drink *anything* they give you” (emphasis mine). Likewise, the New Living Translation renders v. 8 (ἐσθίετε τὰ παρατιθέμενα ὑμῖν) as “eat whatever is set before you.”

⁸⁹³ Nolland, *Luke*, 2:553.

⁸⁹⁴ Cf. *M. Avod. Zar.* 5:5.

⁸⁹⁵ Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief*, 216; 520 n. 216. See also Magness, *Stone and Dung*, 39, for the discussion on imported amphoras and fish bones in Herodian palaces of Jerusalem, Masada, Jericho, and the Herodium. These findings show that Roman fish sauces were popular among some Jews (e.g., the Jerusalem elite) in Palestine who were willing to consume *Gentile* products imported from as far as Spain. See also her discussion on p. 57 on a wide range of imported wares such as jars (containing Gentile wine!) in Jewish Quarter Mansions of Jerusalem from the Herod Period, showing that some Jews of Palestine, at

therefore, of a Jewish messenger of Jesus eating at the house of a Gentile even while respecting the main scruples of kashrut should be seriously considered as the halakic scenario Luke envisages and embraces.

If we can momentarily survey the reports in the Book of Acts of visits by Jewish followers of Jesus into non-Jewish houses, we can find further substantiation to back this point. Remarkably, the Gentiles houses Jewish disciples of Jesus visit in Acts are usually composed of non-Jews who are already affiliated in some way with their local Jewish communities or at least share some knowledge about the beliefs and practices of the Jewish people. The episode reporting Peter's visit to Cornelius' house can serve as a prime example to illustrate this point. As a devout Gentile who fears the deity of the Jews, Cornelius, even before joining the Jesus movement, supports his local Jewish community (through charity) and embraces certain Jewish practices and beliefs (e.g., prayer to the God of Israel; Acts 10:2). Given Cornelius' more than favorable disposition toward Judaism, it seems more than likely that Luke envisions such a Gentile accommodating to Jewish customs and sensibilities, in the case of Peter's visit to his household, having kosher food made ready and available to the Jewish apostle. Quite significantly, Luke never claims that Peter eats forbidden food when he visits the Roman centurion, and the episode, as I argue in the next chapter, shares intimate thematic and literary links with the so-called Apostolic Decree—a legislation that does contain important instructions for a administering a proper Jewish-Gentile *Tischgemeinschaft*.

least among the Judean elites, were willing to consume imported goods produced by Gentiles. On the other hand, other Jews objected not only to consuming such products but also handling Gentile vessels (unless they underwent purification) because of their contact with non-kosher food and association with idolatry. See Noam, "The Gentileness of Gentiles," 33–41, for a discussion on גיעולי גוים.

The same observations apply to Paul's visits to non-Jewish homes elsewhere in the book of Acts. Thus, in 16:15, Paul stays in Lydia's household, but Luke describes her status vis-à-vis Judaism as a "worshiper of God" (σεβομένη τὸν θεόν). She is, therefore, already acquainted and sensitive toward Jewish mores of Judaism and would be more than able to accommodate to the special needs of a Jewish guest. Interestingly enough, she bids Paul and his entourage to remain in her house only *after* she receives baptism. This pattern corresponds to the sequence of events reporting Peter's encounter with Cornelius: the Jewish apostle also resides in his house for a few days only after the Roman centurion receives the sacred spirit and baptism through water—a confirmation for Luke that the morally impure status of Gentile followers of Jesus has indeed been totally eradicated. In Acts 16:34, Paul and Silas spend one night and share a meal in Philippi at the house of the local jailer who apparently did not share any prior affiliation with the local Jewish community (at least Luke does not describe any such relation). However, in this case as well Paul and Barnabas share a meal with his family only after his household receives baptism. Even here, Luke in all probability presupposes that Paul and Silas respect the basics of kashrut during their table fellowship with their newly purified Gentile pupil.

In 17:5, Paul and Silas spend time in the house of a certain Jason who suddenly and abruptly appears in the narrative. Nothing is known about this character, although some try to tie him with the Jason mentioned in Rom 16:21. The latter Jason was a Jew, since Paul describes him as a "fellow countryman" (συγγενής). In any case, the Jason of Acts enjoys some kind of affiliation with the Jewish community of Thessalonica: it is in the the synagogue of that city where Paul and Silas succeed in attracting initial interest

among the local Jews and especially the Gentiles sympathetic toward Judaism (17:4). Later on in 18:7, when Paul visits Corinth, he enters into the house of a certain Titius Justus, a “worshiper of God,” whose house lies right next to a synagogue. During Paul’s time in Corinth, even Crispus, the head of the synagogue, becomes a follower of Jesus (18:8).⁸⁹⁶ Certainly, Luke would not imagine such a prominent Jewish “convert” eating pork and lobster with Paul and another God-fearer whose house lies right next to a local synagogue of Corinth!⁸⁹⁷ Overall, it is quite impressive that Luke never declares anywhere that, during their commensality with non-Jews, Peter, Paul, Barnabas, Silas, or any other Jewish member of the *ekklesia* for that matter consumed forbidden meats. This absence can be fully accounted for when we realize that for Luke Gentiles who are sympathetic to Judaism and the Jesus movement, in line with the spirit and ethos embedded within the Apostolic Decree, accommodate to the dietary restrictions of Jewish followers of Jesus who all continue to observe their beloved ancestral customs.

Very little indeed in Luke 10:1–11 speaks on behalf an abrogation of kashrut. At the narrative level, the pericope describes a commission within Jewish borders whose contents focus on the formation of and travel guidelines for emissaries of Jesus, not food laws. Even when conceding the secondary, universal dimension hinted at within the

⁸⁹⁶ Right before entering Titius Justus’ house, Paul shakes (*ἐκτινάσσω*) off the dust from his clothes in response to Jewish opposition from that locale. This action echoes the command in Luke 9:5 and 10:11 to shake the dust off from one’s feet when a town rejects Jesus’ emissaries. The passages in Luke, however, refer to wiping dust off one’s *feet*, while Luke 10:11 employs a different Greek verb to describe the action (*ἀπομάσσω*), although Luke 9:5 uses *ἀποτινάσσω*, which is not far from *ἐκτινάσσω*. Cf. Acts 13:51; Mark 6:11.

⁸⁹⁷ In 20:7, 21:4, and 28:14, Paul fellowships with individuals who are already believers, and so we might equally imagine (from Luke’s perspective) such people as accommodating to the Jewish piety Luke so prominently awards the apostle of the Gentiles with. In 21:8, 16, Paul spends time in the houses of Jewish followers of Jesus who live in Jewish territory (Paul of Caesarea, one of the “seven” from Acts 6:5; Mnason, probably also a Jewish disciple) and most likely observe kashrut. As a prisoner awaiting trial before Caesar, Paul boards a ship, guarded by Roman soldiers, and partakes of bread: “he took bread; and giving thanks to God in the presence of all, he broke it and began to eat” (27:35). Even in such unique circumstances, nothing is said regarding Paul indulging in eating forbidden meats (cf. 27:38, which refers to wheat onboard the ship).

opening to this Lukan pericope, nothing suggests a dismantlement of kashrut. There were a variety of ways in which Jewish-Gentile relations and interaction in the Diaspora could occur, and Luke seeks elsewhere to outline a *modus operandi* between both parties that does not lead Jews to forsake their ancestral customs. The strength of the reading of Luke 10:1–12 suggested above lies in its serious consideration of the various manners in which Jews could interact with their non-Jewish interlocutors, its full compliance with the wider Lukan perspective about the ongoing importance of the observance of the Torah for Jewish followers of Jesus, and its ability to elucidate Luke’s vision of Jewish-Gentile relations within the *ekklesia*.⁸⁹⁸

Conclusion

Where some have discovered confirmation that Luke no longer cares about the observance of dietary laws, I have found none. Instead, Luke draws similar conclusions as Matthew, not even condemning the Pharisees for maintaining ritual purity, probably even affirming their stance on such matters, but criticizing them for neglecting ethical issues, particularly the observance of almsgiving. I suggest there is an interplay in the gospel of Luke with an important theme in the book of Acts where Luke praises Gentile followers of Jesus for their practice of charity, a confirmation of their newly acquired moral purification. Indeed, the Pharisees Luke condemns in 11:37–41 may be surrogates for certain Jewish followers of Jesus of his own day who refuse to interact with Gentile

⁸⁹⁸ We might further speculate about the following: did Luke restrict the application of the second commission for *Gentile* preachers, meaning that they could eat whatever they desired when entering a non-Jewish home? Throughout this monograph, I work under the assumption that Luke distinguishes between Jews and Gentiles in so far as their obligations vis-à-vis the Mosaic traditions are concerned. Luke certainly presupposes that Jewish followers of Jesus will continue faithfully observing their customs, while Gentiles do not have to meet the same standards of Mosaic requirements. Interestingly enough, the first commission to the twelve (understood as only addressing Jewish emissaries?) contains no command to eat what a host makes available. It is difficult, however, to know precisely how each commission would have applied to Luke’s own *Sitz im Leben*.

believers because of purity concerns. Luke condemns these “Christian Pharisees” (cf. Acts 15:5) for their exclusive attitude and even daringly throws the impurity they ascribe to Gentile believers back on them! Once they will practice almsgiving and be more considerate of the moral purification they stand in need of, then their purity will be complete (Luke 11:41). As for the other main pericope analyzed in this chapter (10:1–12), there is little indeed that could speak on behalf of an abrogation of *kashrut*. At best, it might suggest that followers of Jesus are to momentarily overlook the provenance of *kosher* food offered to them in the houses they reside, in so far as purity matters are concerned, but the main point Luke makes, at least in 10:7, is to justify the right for Jesus’ emissaries to receive their salary in exchange for their ministry.

Chapter 10

The Cornelius Incident

“A gentile once brought fish to Rabban Gamaliel. He said, ‘They are permitted but I have no wish to accept them from him.’”

(Mishnah, *Yom Tov* 3:2)

Introduction

For many New Testament scholars, the extended pericope, covering almost two chapters of Acts (10:1–11:18), which reports Peter’s vision and his encounter with Cornelius, constitutes *the* proof text for Luke’s abrogation of kosher regulations. Tyson speaks on behalf of a whole history of tradition shared by virtually all Christian laypeople and many clergy members as well as scholars, when he roundly states that Peter’s vision “effectively marks the end of dietary regulations for Christians.”⁸⁹⁹ This perspective runs deep in the history of scholarly research and is rooted in patristic literature.⁹⁰⁰ Others, however, have not been persuaded by this traditional perspective and have argued that the vision for Luke really concerns Gentiles, not food. In the following chapter, I will try to solidify this position by drawing from the best of secondary scholarship on the question of kashrut and purity regulations, carefully distinguishing as always between both issues in order to demonstrate that Luke only announces here the moral purification of Gentile

⁸⁹⁹ Joseph B. Tyson, “Acts 6:1–7 and Dietary Regulations in Early Christianity,” *PRSt* 10 (1983): 146. Similarly Bruce, *The Book of the Acts*, 218–19. Marguerat, *Les Actes des apôtres*, 406: Jewish food laws are abolished, but Luke partially holds onto these ideals in Acts 15. Nevertheless, I will argue that Acts 15 presupposes the ongoing observance of kashrut *in toto* (at least for Jewish followers of Jesus). Pervo, *Acts*, 269, treats kashrut and Jewish purity regulations indiscriminately.

⁹⁰⁰ Cf. Cyril of Alexandria, *Against Julian* 9.318–319.

followers of Jesus, not the euthanization of keeping kosher. I will continue here to read Acts as a Jewish text, placing it next to other Jewish documents that speak of food laws (*Letter of Aristeas*, Philo, 1 Macc, 4 Macc, rabbinic literature) in order to illustrate how Luke has not announced the end of the kosher regime. In fact, I will argue that Luke does not even deny the validity of the Jewish purity system in general, only that he seeks to reformulate some of its regulations in order to accommodate for the Gentile influx into the *ekklesia*. He does so by declaring the moral purification of Gentile believers and rejecting the inherent profaneness ascribed to them by other Jews.

Literary Context

Luke's description of the encounter between Peter and Cornelius appears at a logical and critical point within the intended sequence of his narrative. The missiological program, outlined in the commission of Acts 1:8 (from Jerusalem to Judea, Samaria, and eventually the ends of the earth) and already hinted at in Luke's gospel,⁹⁰¹ so far, has been carefully executed by his major protagonists. After Jesus' ascension to his royal, heavenly headquarters, the disciples faithfully follow their master's orders, first testifying to those many Jews gathered in Jerusalem during the festival of Pentecost (2:1–42) and then gradually moving beyond this geographical perimeter, reaching Samaria (8:5–25) where Philip preaches to the Samaritans, many of whom favorably accept his message. Luke justifies this novel and questionable (for certain Jews) outreach toward Samaritans by having Peter and John lay hands upon the Samaritan disciples in order that they might receive the spirit (8:14–17)—a gift thus far granted solely to Jews within the narration of events in Acts.

⁹⁰¹ See previous chapter dealing with the commission of the seventy-two (Luke 10:1–11).

Luke continues to stretch the regional borders where the gospel message reaches through his description of a curious encounter between Philip and an Ethiopian eunuch who had come to worship in Jerusalem (8:26). The eunuch's relationship to Judaism remains unclear. Luke does not refer to him as a Jew by birth, and his status as a eunuch would have technically excluded him from the "assembly of the LORD" (Deut 23:1). But Luke certainly knows the prophetic verses from the book of Isaiah (56:3–7) that promise fuller integration to foreigners and eunuchs into Israel and the temple cult.⁹⁰² When read within the ensemble of the narration in Acts, it becomes clear that this story serves Luke's theological and teleological mission to inscribe a process of gradual dissemination of the gospel into the history of the *ekklesia* that will eventually reach the Gentiles *en masse*. In some ways, the episode recounting the Ethiopian's conversion seems even more audacious than the Cornelius episode, especially if Luke views the former as a castrated non-Jew! The key difference, however, between both stories lies in the *continuous interaction* accorded to Cornelius with Jewish followers of Jesus. By contrast, Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch *instantly* depart and return to their respective homelands.⁹⁰³ Moreover, the encounter between Philip and the eunuch occurs privately with no one to witness the event, whereas Cornelius' baptism enjoys a public audience, witnessed by several Jews and Gentiles. Finally, Philip does not *enter* the house of a non-

⁹⁰² Although Luke does not explicitly make reference to Isa 56:3–7 in this pericope, the eunuch does read a passage from Isaiah that is not too far away from this passage (53:7, 8). Furthermore, Luke certainly knows the last phrase of Isa 56:7, which he cites in part in his gospel (19:46). Luke also claims that the eunuch went to Jerusalem in order to worship there (ὅς ἐηλύθει προσκυνήσων εἰς Ἱερουσαλήμ; Acts 8:27). I suggest Luke claims, in line with the ethos of Isa 56:3–7, that non-Jews do indeed have the right to *fully* participate as Jews in the temple cult. Later in Acts 21:28 and 24:6, Luke's Paul is accused of having profaned the temple by alleged bringing a Gentile into premises presumably forbidden to them. True, there was a Gentile court accessible to non-Jews, but the charge insinuates that Paul had brought a Gentile beyond this space into the court reserved for Jews only. Luke never fully denies that Paul committed this controversial act because he believes Gentiles are not inherently profane (see discussion below).

⁹⁰³ Cf. Barrett, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 2:421.

Jew. Rather, the encounter occurs outdoors, in a deserted place, somewhere on a dirt road lying between Jerusalem and Gaza (8:26). Luke, therefore, presents a sort of precedent to a Gentile conversion before relating the Cornelius episode, but waits before further addressing the ramifications conversions of Gentiles would bring for Jewish-Gentile relations within the Jesus movement. He treads a path but develops its theme only when he presents his readers with the story about Peter's extensive stay in a Gentile home—a public encounter unique enough to arouse suspicion among certain other Jews.⁹⁰⁴

Luke, then, has gone through considerable efforts in shaping his narrative so as to prepare his readers for what he sees as a monumental transition in the thus far, short-lived history of the earliest *ekklesia*: the proclamation of the gospel to non-Jews. Henceforth, contact with Gentiles will become commonplace within the narrative, and Luke will continuously clarify how such an opening toward the non-Jewish world by no means calls for a Jewish desertion of Torah observance (see especially 21:21; 25:8,10; 28:17). In fact, Luke has intimately tied the Cornelius incident with central questions related to Torah praxis: he will have Peter refer to the Cornelius episode as a precedent when the apostles meet in Jerusalem to discuss the question of Gentile circumcision and the eventual proclamation of the so-called Apostolic Decree (15:7–11). Furthermore, as will be shown, questions related to Torah praxis lurk behind Luke's extensive narration of the Peter-Cornelius encounter. To appreciate the compatibility Luke sees between Gentile outreach and Jewish observance of the Law is to comprehend his joint concern not only to justify a mission to the Gentiles, but also to align it as far as possible with Jewish demands and halakah.

⁹⁰⁴ The story of the eunuch and Philip may stem from a source, and Luke deems it appropriate to insert this event at this stage of his narrative, although he gives thematic primacy to Peter's encounter with Cornelius. See Barrett, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 2:421–22.

Literary Structure

- I. Cornelius Vision (10:1–8)
 - A. Cornelius, the Pious Gentile (vv. 1–2)
 - B. Cornelius' Vision (vv. 3–6)
 - C. Cornelius' Compliance (vv. 7–8)
- II. Peter's Vision (10:9–16)
 - A. Peter, the Pious Jew (vv. 9–10)
 - B. Peter's Vision (vv. 11–12)
 - C. Peter's Non-Compliance (vv. 13–16)
- III. Encounter between Peter and Cornelius' Embassy (10:17–23)
 - A. Arrival of Cornelius' Embassy (vv. 17–18)
 - B. Peter's Compliance (vv. 19–20)
 - C. Hosting Cornelius' Embassy (vv. 21–23a)
- IV. Encounter between Cornelius and Peter (10:23b–43)
 - A. Cornelius and Peter Meet (vv. 23b–27)
 - 1. Journey to Caesarea (v. 23b)
 - 2. Entrance into Caesarea (vv. 24–26)
 - 3. Entrance into Cornelius' house (v. 27)
 - B. Cornelius and Peter Talk (vv. 28–43)
 - 1. Peter's Pronouncement (vv. 28–29)
 - 2. Cornelius' Report (vv. 30–33)
 - 3. Peter's "Sermon" (vv. 34–43)
- V. Baptism of Cornelius' Household (10:44–48)
 - A. Baptism of the Spirit (vv. 44–46a)
 - B. Baptism with Water (vv. 46b–48a)
 - C. Hosting Peter (v. 48b)
- VI. The Jerusalem Report (11:1–18)
 - A. Judean Inquiry (vv. 1–3)
 - B. Peter's Report (vv. 4–17)
 - C. Judean Jubilation (v. 18)⁹⁰⁵

There are direct correspondences between parts I and II. In both parts, Luke describes Cornelius and Peter in pious terms: Cornelius is a particularly devout man who fears God, gives alms to the people of Israel, and prays (*δεόμενος*) constantly; Peter, for his part, goes up on a rooftop to pray (*προσεύξασθαι*). As a recompense for their pious

⁹⁰⁵ Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 358–59, neatly divides this extended pericope into seven scenes. I prefer to combine scenes four and five (10:23b–33 and 10:34–43) into one unit.

efforts, both Cornelius and Peter receive visions. Cornelius immediately obeys the orders given to him by an angel, sending out emissaries to Joppa in the search of Peter. But the symmetry between both episodes suddenly ceases: Peter, unlike Cornelius, refuses to comply with the orders he receives in his vision. Even though a heavenly voice commands him thrice to eat from the animals set before him, Peter refuses to obey. Deines concludes that the threefold command to eat what is impure implies that Luke no longer expects purity and kosher laws to be kept. Why else would Luke allow such a pointed repetition to subsist within his narrative?⁹⁰⁶ This claim may be dismissed with the equal observation that Peter's persistently refuses to obey the command no less than three times, making his abstinence from eating forbidden foods all the more striking. Peter daringly refutes the heavenly voice—no small feat—and *never* partakes of the food presented before him, even though he hungers on top of a roof in hot Palestine at the hour of lunchtime. Instead, the rupture in literary symmetry and Peter's repeated refusal to obey the heavenly voice stimulate the reader to seek for a meaning of the vision that lies elsewhere than in the literal realm of kashrut. Like any other prophetic or apocalyptic vision recorded in the Hebrew Bible and the Jewish tradition, Luke's Peter's vision is *symbolic* and requires further interpretation. It should not be taken at face value.

In part III, Cornelius' scouts finally arrive in Joppa and succeed in finding Peter's location. Only now as the perplexed Peter deliberates over the meaning of the vision he has just witnessed, does he comply with a different order given by the spirit, namely, to welcome Cornelius' men without passing judgment upon them. Accordingly, Peter invites Cornelius' men to enter (*εἰσκαλεσάμενος*) into the house where he is temporarily

⁹⁰⁶ Deines, "Das Aposteldekret," 331 n. 26.

residing, entertaining them as his guests (ἐξέτισεν). Thus, for the first time in Acts, Gentiles enter into a Jewish home and enjoy table fellowship with Jews as the verb ἐξέτισεν implies. In addition, it seems like these Gentiles spend the night in the Jewish home where Peter temporarily resides, since only on the following day do they set out with the apostle on their journey to Caesarea. In this way, Luke subtly introduces the first step toward a Jewish-Gentile encounter that will shortly repeat itself within a non-Jewish home.

This progression continues in part IV as Cornelius' servants and Peter travel toward Caesarea. When Peter enters (εἰσελθεῖν) into Caesarea (vv. 24–26), he first meets an eager and humble Cornelius outside of his house. Proximity and intimacy with non-Jewish space increase as Peter continues to approach non-Jewish space (εἰσῆλθεν; v. 27), this time the very house of Cornelius where he will stay for several days (v. 48). More intimate and substantial exchange now occurs between both parties within the house of the Roman centurion, with Peter delivering his first pronouncement regarding the new anthropological understanding he has acquired concerning non-Jews. This statement, like the command previously delivered to him through the spirit (10:20), clarifies the true meaning of the vision he has seen earlier: it concerns humans, specifically Gentile followers of Jesus and their former impurity (10:29). Cornelius in turn delivers his report about his “supernatural” encounter with an angel, leading Peter to affirm the moral of the vision a second time (vv. 34–35) and to deliver his testimony about Jesus (vv. 36–43).

In part V, the exceptional happens: Gentiles for the first time receive the gift of the spirit—an endowment exclusively reserved up until this point in Acts for Jews and certain “semi-Jews” such as the Samaritans. Not even the pious Ethiopian eunuch will

have benefited from this spiritual privilege. After the spirit falls freely and generously upon the Gentile household, Peter proposes to commemorate this unique event through the baptism of water (vv. 46b–48a). Thereafter, Luke timidly insinuates that Peter spends several days within the house of the Gentile follower of Jesus (v. 48b).

Finally, Peter must confront his Judean compatriots from the Jerusalem headquarters, who hear rumors about his extensive stay in a Gentile household (11:1–3). Luke has Peter repeat in briefer terms the events already narrated for the reader in ch. 10 (11:4–17). The retelling of the Jewish-Gentile encounter signals the fundamental importance Luke ascribes to this formative event. Luke’s Peter will briefly refer to it again during the Jerusalem council (15:7–9). Like Paul’s “conversion,” related no less than three times in the book of Acts (ch. 9; 22:6–21; 26:9–20), Luke recounts thrice Peter’s own “conversion,” that is, his adoption of a new perspective vis-à-vis Gentiles (ch. 10; 11:4–17; 15:7–9).⁹⁰⁷ This threefold repetition, *during which kashrut is never explicitly denied*, underscores the theological importance the Cornelius episode holds for Luke, an author who often avoids redundancy.

Redactional Analysis

Many posit at least two pre-Lukan sources employed by the author of Acts in his retelling of the Cornelius incident. Thus, Dibelius distinguished long ago between an original narration reporting the conversion of Cornelius and a separate account recounting Peter’s vision. For Dibelius the latter account announced the abrogation of Jewish food laws, while the former in its original, pristine form simply reported the

⁹⁰⁷ Cf. Barrett, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 1:491.

conversion of a Gentile household.⁹⁰⁸ Many have followed in Dibelius' footsteps, viewing Luke as an author who has ably fused two different traditions together to form one meta-story regarding the mission to the Gentiles and their incorporation into the *ekklesia*. For example, after his detailed redactional analysis, Weise concludes that Luke has reworked a written tradition whose content included Cornelius' vision, the commission of his messengers, the instruction of the spirit to Peter, the encounter between Peter and the centurion, Cornelius' vision report, and the spirit falling on Cornelius' household as well as their baptism through water. Luke would have introduced from another source of traditional material the vision of Peter (10:9–16) along with 10:28, 29a; 11:2f. He would also have composed the speeches in 10:34–43; 11:5–17, the related declarations in 10:22, 24b, 33b; 11:4, the pious characterizations of Cornelius (10:2, 4, 22, 31), the reference to Peter's companions (10:23b, 45; 11:12b), and the transitional and concluding verses in 11:1; 10:48b, and 11:18. Finally, he would have thoroughly reworked those parts reproduced from the traditional materials at hand.⁹⁰⁹

Wehnert, who roughly follows such a reconfiguration of sources, thinks that the traditional material recounting Peter's vision originally justified the abrogation of the food laws as found in Lev 11 and Deut 14:3–20 by seeking to eliminate the distinctions between pure and impure animals, either by alluding to the creation account (Gen 1:20–25) or the animals kept by Noah in the ark (Gen 6:20). Luke, however, would have allegorized this vision and shifted the focus away from kashrut and animals to the purification of human beings. The Lukan interpretation of Peter's vision and the Cornelius episode, therefore, would not have affirmed the abrogation of food laws, but

⁹⁰⁸ Dibelius, *Studies in the Acts of the Apostles*, 109–22.

⁹⁰⁹ Alfons Weiser, *Die Apostelgeschichte* (2 vols.; Oekumenischer Taschenbuch-Kommentar zum Neuen Testament 5.1–2; Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlaghaus Gerd Mohn, 1982–1985), 1:262.

only focused on the purity of Jews and Gentiles.⁹¹⁰ Others, however, who employ a structural analytical approach, resist dissecting the narration in Acts chs. 10–11 into distinct sources, criticizing the conclusions reached through traditional usages of form criticism.⁹¹¹ Thus for Klinghardt, Acts 10 and 11 are to be viewed as a consistent and unified entity that cannot be divided into different sources or traditions.⁹¹² But in any case, concerning Luke’s understanding of the pericope, Klinghardt in the end reaches the same conclusion as Wehnert, declaring that Jewish food regulations have not been abolished in Acts.⁹¹³

In many ways, the analysis of sources and diachronic developments proves not so vital for this inquiry, which is more set on the outlook of the author of Acts in a post-70 setting. It would be tempting to embrace Wehnert’s thesis regarding Luke’s allegorization of a vision that originally abrogated Jewish food laws, since it would show all the more how far Luke is willing to reverse a process of de-Judaization within the *ekklesia*, in so far as Torah praxis is concerned. Nevertheless, perhaps even the pre-Lukan traditions recounting Peter’s vision the thematic focused involved Jewish-Gentile fellowship (with *whom* one might eat) rather than kosher food (*what* one might eat).⁹¹⁴

Given the complexity of the issue regarding the sources Luke uses, it might be wiser and more economic to focus on chs. 10–11:18 as a whole, highlighting Luke’s view on food laws in what has been dubbed “the largest narrated unit of the Acts of the Apostles.”⁹¹⁵ What the preceding analysis of the literary context and structure of Acts 10–

⁹¹⁰ Wehnert, *Die Reinheit*, 75–76; see especially 75–76 n. 85.

⁹¹¹ See brief discussion and references in Klinghardt, *Gesetz und Volk Gottes*, 211–13.

⁹¹² Klinghardt, *Gesetz und Volk Gottes*, 211: “konsistente Größe . . . die nicht in verschiedene Quellen oder Traditionen aufgeteilt werden kann.”

⁹¹³ Klinghardt, *Gesetz und Volk Gottes*, 212.

⁹¹⁴ Cf. Schneider, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, 2:62.

⁹¹⁵ Weiser, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, 2:251: “der längsten Erzähleinheit in der Apg.”

11:18 shows is Luke's undeniable appropriation of the Cornelius episode, which he has placed at a critical juncture within his narrative, tied with other key events in his book (e.g., the Jerusalem Council), and developed its narration (by repeating its contents).⁹¹⁶

All of these findings underline Luke's continual and profound interest in the contents and subject matter embedded in this pericope.

The Insignificance of Simon the Tanner

For many New Testament commentators, the reference in Acts to Peter's temporary lodging in Joppa with a certain Simon, a tanner by profession (9:43; cf. 10:6, 32), points toward a dismissal of matters related to Jewish purity in the book of Acts. Those who embrace such a view incorporate this rather casual statement into a wider meta-narrative that announces in Acts not only the end of the Jewish purity system but also the abrogation of Jewish food laws (i.e., kosher laws). Thus, the reference to Simon Peter's stay in the house of Simon the tanner would subtly pave the way in the narrative of Acts for the end of Jewish purity and dietary regulations supposedly announced in the subsequent pericope reporting Peter's vision and his encounter with the Gentile Cornelius. Essential to this thesis is the claim that ancient Jews despised the occupation of tanning because of the ritual impurity allegedly contracted through this trade. Although Strack and Billerbeck did not declare that tanning was ritually defiling, their biased observations against Judaism led other scholars to think so, once they claimed that the reference to Peter's stay in the house of Simon the tanner revealed his "inner freedom

⁹¹⁶ Even Klinghardt, *Gesetz und Volk Gottes*, 211 n. 13, who otherwise resists discerning between tradition and redaction, recognizes that the repetition in Acts 11:1–18 must be redactional.

from Pharisaic regulations.”⁹¹⁷ In any case, many commentaries on Acts and entries in biblical dictionaries and encyclopedias describe the profession of the tanner as ritually defiling.⁹¹⁸ A recent commentary on Acts perpetuates this traditional understanding, claiming that Peter’s stay in the residence of a Jewish tanner anticipates the “revolution” about to occur in Cornelius’ house: the end of all separations imposed by Jewish purity regulations in the Christian regime.⁹¹⁹ Charles Talbert’s comments on the matter will suffice to summarize this point of view before providing an alternative reading to the rabbinic passages cited by him:

On the other hand, that Peter resides “a long time in Joppa with Simon, a tanner” (v. 43), is very significant. Because Lev 11:39–40 pronounces unclean anyone who touches the carcass of even a clean animal, a tanner (even a Jewish one) would be

⁹¹⁷ Str-B 2:695: “seine innere Freiheit von den pharisäischen Satzungen.” Cf. Martin Hengel, *Acts and the History of Earliest Christianity* (trans. John Bowden; London: SCM Press, 1979), 93: “The fact that in Joppa he stayed with a tanner who was despised because of his unclean trade (9.43) is another indication of Peter’s broad-mindedness.” I do not know if Hengel drew his ideas about the supposed impurity of Jewish tanning and Peter’s “liberalism” (as he states on p. 93) directly from Strack and Billerbeck, but at least Weiser, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, 1:245, does reveal his indebtedness to them when he states: “Da das Gerberhandwerk bei den Rabbinen als unrein galt, sehen *Bill.* II 695; Stählin: Apg 146 u.a. im Aufenthalt des Petrus beim Gerber Simon bereits die freiere Haltung des Petrus vorbereitet, von der in Kap. 10f. die Rede sein wird.” Weiser assumes that the rabbis deemed tanners impure. Does he misunderstand Strack and Billerbeck or is he primarily under the influence of Stählin? Weiser immediately proceeds to dismiss the relevance of Peter’s sojourn in Simon the Tanner’s house for the interpretation of Acts 10. Nevertheless, his statement shows that he thinks tanning was ritually defiling. Gustav Stählin, *Die Apostelgeschichte* (NTD 5; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1980), 146, declares: “Sein Gastgeber (vgl. zu 21,16f.) ist wieder ein Simon, ‘Simon der Gerber’ genannt . . . vielleicht soll aber mit der Erwähnung seines, von allen in der Apg. genannten Gewerben (vgl. 16, 14; 18, 3; 19, 24) am wenigsten geachteten Handwerks, der als unrein geltenden Gerberei, auf die folgende Geschichte (10, 14!) vorausgewiesen werden.”

⁹¹⁸ So Adolf von Harnack, *The Acts of the Apostles* (trans. John Richard Wilkinson; Crown Theological Library 27; London: Williams & Norgate, 1909), 85: “tanning was an uncleanly trade”; Bruce, *Commentary on the Book of Acts*, 213 n. 68: “Peter’s lodging with such a man was a mark of his increasing emancipation from ceremonial traditions.” Similarly, William Neil, *Acts* (NCBC; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1981), 316; John Philipps, *Exploring Acts: Volume One Acts 1–12* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1986), 193; J. C. Trever, “Tanned, Tanner,” *ISBE* 4:726: “The NT story of Peter’s sojourn in Joppa with Simon, the tanner (Acts 9–10), implies that Peter had taken a step beyond the Jewish community with the Christian Gospel”; S. A. Cartledge, “Tanner, Tanning,” *IDB* 4:516: “The fact that Peter was willing to stay with Simon was an indication of at least the beginning of a more liberal attitude on the part of Peter toward such ceremonial matters”; Kenneth D. Litwak, “Tanner, Tanning” *The New Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible* (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 2006–2009), 5:470, who states without further qualification that under “the Mosaic law, touching a dead thing made one unclean. Therefore, a tanner would have been almost perpetually unclean.”

⁹¹⁹ Marguerat, *Les Actes des apôtres*, 357.

perpetually unclean.⁹²⁰ Being a tanner, therefore, was one of the trades a father should not teach his son (*m. Ketubim* 7:10; *b. Kiddushin* 82a Bar.). The rabbis said that tanneries could not be within fifty cubits of a town (*m. Baba Bathra* 2:9); that even if a tanner's wife agreed before marriage to live with him, he must put her away if she could not stand her circumstances after marriage (*m. Ketuboth* 7:10); that a synagogue building could not be sold for use as a tannery (*m. Megillah* 3:2). If Peter lives with a Jewish tanner over a period of time, it means that he has already come to the position that the cleanliness laws do not apply to Jews and to those who associate with them.⁹²¹

A closer examination of the ancient Jewish sources and a proper understanding of the Jewish purity system, however, do not support this view. As long as a Jewish tanner could refrain from handling *carcasses* of kosher animals, contraction of ritual impurity—certainly no crime for ancient Jews—could be avoided. The Mosaic Torah describes at least two types of carcasses: the *nevelah* (often translated as “an animal that has died on its own”) and the *terefah* (an animal torn by a wild beast). Contact with such carcasses of kosher animals could transmit ritual impurity but contact with dead bodies of kosher animals that were ritually slaughtered would *not* transmit ritual impurity. Otherwise, as Miller points out, even priests would be more (ritually) impure than normal Jews because of their continual contact with slaughtered animals for the temple sacrifices!⁹²² But even with respect to the handling of carcasses of pure animals, rabbinic traditions, at least, maintain that only their *flesh* could transmit ritual impurity. Thus, *Sifra* Shemini Parashah

⁹²⁰ Here Talbert assumes that Gentiles were bound by the ritual purity laws of Judaism and could become ritually defiled. However, as pointed out in the introduction to Part II of this monograph, many specialists on ancient Judaism have persuasively argued against this understanding. See Hayes, *Gentile Impurities and Jewish Identities*, 19–22; 66–7, 142–44; Klawans, *Impurity and Sin*, 43–44, 48, 97; Maccoby, *Ritual and Morality*, 8–12.

⁹²¹ Charles H. Talbert, *Reading Acts: A Literary and Theological Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles* (Reading the New Testament Series; New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1997), 104.

⁹²² Chris A. Miller, “Did Peter’s Vision in Acts 10 Pertain to Men or the Menu?” *BSac* 159 (2002): 304. Cf. the statement made by Philo (*Spec. Laws* 1:151) in *positive terms* regarding the priests who receive as a compensation for their priestly service the *skins* of the burnt offerings brought to them in the temple of Jerusalem.

10:3–6 (cf. *m. Hul.* 9:1, 4), commenting on Lev 11:39 (“If an animal of which you may eat dies, anyone who touches *its carcass* shall be unclean until the evening”), states:

“Its carcass” (בגבלתה): Not the bones and not the sinews and not the horns and not the hooves. . . . [These parts of the carcass do not convey impurity when they are detached from the carcass]

“Its carcass”: Not hides (עור) that do not have on them flesh the size of an olive.⁹²³

This Tannaitic text claims that bones, sinews, horns, and hooves, when detached from a carcass, do not convey ritual impurity. It then goes on to discuss the case of hides, claiming that as long as it does not contain flesh attached to it that exceeds the size of an olive, no carrion impurity is conveyed to the one who handles it.⁹²⁴ This rabbinic concession stems from the failure within the Mosaic Torah itself to tie in unequivocal terms the contraction of ritual impurity with the handling of carcasses of pure (i.e., kosher) animals.⁹²⁵ In fact, certain rabbinic passages go as far as allowing Jews to handle the carcasses of *non-kosher* animals, provided this occurs not on a festival day when a

⁹²³ Author’s translation. A baraita in *b. Hul.* 117b makes the same declaration: בגבלתה ולא בעור שאין עליו בשר. See further Rashi on Lev 11:39; Milgrom, *Leviticus*, 1:682.

⁹²⁴ Cf. *M. Hul.* 9:4: “If there remained an olive’s bulk of flesh [of a carcass] on the hide and a man touched a shred of it that jutted forth, or a hair on the opposite side, he becomes unclean.”

⁹²⁵ As Milgrom acutely observes, certain regulations within the Pentateuch originally only forbade contact with carcasses of *impure* (i.e., non-kosher) animals (e.g., the carcass of a pig). Thus, Lev 5:2 states: “Or when any of you touch any *unclean* thing—whether the carcass of an *unclean* beast or the carcass of *unclean* livestock or the carcass of an *unclean* swarming thing—and are unaware of it, you have become unclean, and are guilty” (NRSV; emphasis mine). In this passage, the prohibition of touching carcasses only applies to animals that are by definition perpetually impure, that is, forbidden for consumption (cf. Lev 7:21). Interestingly enough, Lev 7:24 forbids the *consumption* of the *nevelah* or *terefah* of a pure animal, but allows Israelites to use their fat for any other purpose. Deut 14:21 even assumes that a Jew can touch a *nevelah* of a kosher animal (without contracting ritual impurity?): “You shall not eat anything that dies of itself; you may give it to aliens residing in your towns for them to eat, or you may sell it to a foreigner” (Deut 14:21). How does a Jew give or sell an animal that dies of itself to a Gentile without touching it? See Milgrom, *Leviticus*, 1:703. On the other hand, passages in the Mosaic Torah reveal that an Israelite could contract ritual impurity through contact with a carcass of either kosher or non-kosher animals (Lev 11:8, 39–40), although even such contraction of impurity was not viewed by many Jews as a terrible, sinful act but a reality of daily life.

Jew would visit the temple.⁹²⁶ Even a work such as the Temple Scroll, with its extreme concern for preserving ritual purity, recognizes the right for Jews to handle hides of kosher animals (ritually slaughtered). It only forbids Jews to bring hides of animals into Jerusalem that have not been slaughtered in the holy city: “If you slaughter it in my temple, it (the skin) will be clean for my temple; but if you will slaughter it in your cities, it will be clean for your cities” (11QT^a 47:15–17).⁹²⁷

I have not come across one single rabbinic passage either from those cited in Strack-Billerbeck or from my own searches using the Bar Ilan Responsa database that views the profession of tanning as ritually defiling. Borrowing from the Greek language (*βυρσεύς*), rabbinic literature often employs the term *בורסי* for describing the trade, the same word that appears in Acts.⁹²⁸ The term *בורסקי* (from *βυρσα*), which refers to the tannery itself, is also attested (e.g., *m. Shabb.* 1:2). A closer examination of the rabbinic evidence shows that the rabbis generally despised this occupation because of the filth and

⁹²⁶ *Sifra* Shemini Pereq 4:8–9, commenting on the phrase “and their carcass you shall not touch” (ובגבלתם), which appears in Lev 11:8 in reference to the carcasses of forbidden animals such as pigs, maintains with a *qal vahomer* argument that lay Israelites can touch the carcasses of non-kosher creatures, since they are allowed to touch human corpses, which convey the highest degree of impurity. How much more then the carcasses of forbidden animals whose impurity is less severe. The rabbis, of course, are not denying that such carcasses do indeed defile. Nevertheless, they correctly understand that the Mosaic Torah does not view the contraction of ritual impurity as a sin in so far as the handling of *common* food and objects is concerned. On the other hand, the conscious interaction with holy realms and objects while ritually defiled is strongly denounced in the Torah. Consequently, the same passage in the *Sifra* makes the qualification that one should avoid contracting ritual impurity during festival times when ordinary Jews could find themselves in the holy space of Jerusalem and its temple. See Rashi and his commentary on Lev 11:8. Of equal relevance is the statement in *m. Hul.* 9:2 declaring that even the hides of forbidden animals such as pigs or the eight vermin (Lev 11:29–30), the latter notoriously known for their ability to defile, when tanned, become pure (ובולין שעובדן או שהילך בהן כדי עבודה טהורין).

⁹²⁷ Later, the Temple Scroll claims that the skin and bones of a carcass of a *forbidden* animal can transmit impurity (11QT^a 51:4–5). See further Magness, *Stone and Dung*, 42–43, for a discussion of this passage and other pertinent texts.

⁹²⁸ Other terms used in rabbinic literature to describe tanners include *עבדן* and the less common *צלעץ*. For references and discussion of these terms, see the still very useful Krauss, *Talmudische Archäologie*, 2:259–63.

strong stench associated with the work. Perhaps, they also looked down at this vocation because of its low social-economic standing. In other words, certain Jews found this vocation unattractive for *hygienic* reasons, because of its *uncleanliness*, that is, its filthiness or foul smell, not because of the ritual impurity allegedly involved. With these proper distinctions in mind, the reason for the rabbinic distaste toward tanning can be properly appreciated. When the rabbinic sages condemn tanning, they *never* point to ritual defilement as a reason for despising this trade.

For example, *m. Ketub. 7:10* rules that Jews may compel a male tanner to divorce his wife if the latter can no longer endure living with her husband, not because of the ritual impurity associated with this trade, but because of the *physical deformities* (מומים) the husband acquires through his rough work.⁹²⁹ Similarly, in *b. Hag 7b*, tanners, along with scrapers and coppersmiths, are exempted from appearing at the temple during pilgrimage festivals, not because of their ritual impurity, but because, as the Gemara explicitly states, of their unpleasant odor, which prevents them from going up with other persons (forming a separate group to go up to the temple is forbidden according to

⁹²⁹ Perhaps also because of the foul smell and the filth involved. In the same passage, coppersmiths, among others, are also compelled to divorce their wives, not because of their ritual impurity, but because of the nature of the coarse work involved. The passage also cites the “gatherer” (המקמץ) who presumably collected dog, pig, and even human feces for the treatment of hides. Nevertheless, many Jews did not view feces of humans as ritually defiling (Milgrom, *Leviticus*, 1:767; Christine Hayes, *The Emergence of Judaism: Classical Traditions in Contemporary Perspective* [Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress, 2011], 36; Maccoby, *Ritual and Morality*, 30), and Jews of the Second Temple period used vessels made out of animal dung, some considering such vessels to be even immune to ritual impurity. See Magness, *Stone and Dung*, 75–76, for a discussion of the archaeological findings and literary sources. As far as we know, no Jew viewed animal dung as impure. Essenes, however, considered human feces (but not urine) to be ritually defiling (Josephus, *J.W.* 2:147; 11QT^a 46:15). In *b. Ber. 25a*, a baraita states: “A man should not recite the Shema in front either of human excrement or excrement of pigs or excrement of dogs when he puts skins in them.” This halakah, however, does not claim that excrement (human or animal) is impure, as the Gemara to that section makes clear, only that it is *demeaning* or disrespectful to pray in such a setting. We should also note a late rabbinic text that acknowledges the usage of dog feces for tanning hides used for Torah Scrolls, tefillin, and mezuzot. See *Kallah Rabbati 7:1*. I would like to thank Jodi Magness for sharing some of her thoughts with me on this matter.

rabbinic halakah). In both of these passages, when the rabbis discriminate against tanners, they explicitly justify their halakic prejudices independent from considerations concerning ritual impurity.

Elsewhere, the rabbis reveal a *moral* disdain for tanners. Thus, a baraita cited in *b. Qidd.* 82a forbids tanners from becoming a high priest or a king. But tanners are not the only workers singled out in this passage. Several other professionals do not qualify, including goldsmiths, carders, handmill cleaners, peddlers, wool-dressers, barbers, launderers, and bath attendants. In this same baraita, the rabbis place all of these professions under one common denominator: any man who engages in any of these trades supposedly possesses an immoral character because of his extensive interaction with women during work hours. Hence, the rabbis explicitly state that such people are exempt from serving as a high priest or king *not* because they are *unfit* (לא משום דפסילי), but because their vocations are demeaning, literally “worthless” (זילי). In this passage, we learn about ancient patriarchal misogyny, not ritual impurity.

Regarding tanneries, one passage (*m. Meg.* 3:2) forbids a synagogue from being sold for use as a tannery. Once again, the concern here is not with the ritual impurity but with the need to honor the sanctity of the synagogue. In other words, it would be demeaning to sell a synagogue if it were known that it would subsequently be transformed into a tannery. Such an act would reveal a lack of respect on the part of Jews for the synagogue.⁹³⁰ Concerning the location of tanneries, some rabbis thought they

⁹³⁰ Pinhas Kehati, *The Mishnah* (23 vols.; Jerusalem: Department for Torah Education and Culture in the Diaspora of the World Zionist Organization, 1987–1996), 5:34: “so that it will not seem that they are belittling the sanctity of the synagogue, as if they do not desire it, for it is of no account in their eyes (*Rashi*)”; Chanoch Albeck, *Shishah Sidre Mishnah* (6 vols.; Jerusalem: Bialik, 1952–1959), 2:362. This

should lie fifty cubits outside a city on its eastern side (e.g., *m. B. Bat.* 2:9) only because of the unpleasant smells emitted from such working places, not their inherent impurity.⁹³¹ In any case, references to tanneries lying outside cities also appear in non-Jewish literature. Thus, Artemidorus (c. 2nd cent. C.E.; *Oneirocritica*, 1.51) says that dreaming of tanning hides “is ill-omened for all. For the tanner handles dead bodies and lives outside the city.”⁹³²

A passage like *b. B. Bat.* 21b does not view tanning as ritually defiling or even professionally reprehensible. In fact, this passage does not even concern itself with the halakic disrepute of tanners but with social-economic issues:

A man may open a shop next to another man’s shop or a bath next to another man’s bath, and the latter cannot object. Because he can say to him, “I do what I like in my property and you do what you like in yours?”— On this point there is a difference of opinion among Tannaim, as appears from the following Baraita: “The residents of an alley can prevent one another from bringing in a tailor or a tanner or a teacher or any other craftsman, but one cannot prevent another [from setting up in opposition].”

The baraita cited in this section of the Talmud allows local Jews to prevent tanners, or other craftsmen and professionals for that matter, from *another town* from moving into their neighborhoods in order to open businesses that already exist in the area. The preoccupation here seems to revolve around the social-economic unrest such commercial competition could bring to the local habitants. Nevertheless, the baraita and the ensuing discussion in the Gemara recognize the right for *local* residents to open up their businesses, including tanneries, even if such shops already exist in the

mishnah also forbids synagogues from being sold for use as bathhouses, as locales for immersion (טבילה), or as urinals (human urine, as pointed out earlier, was not viewed as ritually defiling).

⁹³¹ Because the prevailing winds in Palestine blow from the north-west, if a tannery was located on the westside its unbearable stench would make its way into a town lying eastward. See Albeck, *Shishah Sidre Mishnah*, 4:123.

⁹³² Translation taken from Robert J. White, *The Interpretation of Dreams: The Oneirocritica of Artemidorus* (Park Ridge, N.J.: Noyes, 1975), 43. For non-Jewish references on tanners, see E. Beurlier, “Corroyeur,” *DB* 2:1027–29.

neighborhoods they live in. This passage contains no negative pronouncement against the profession of tanning proper. If anything, it pragmatically recognizes the prevalence and need for tanners, given the useful and highly demanded products they manufacture.⁹³³ *M. Shabb.* 1:2 even assumes that Jews regularly enter tanneries without condemning them for undertaking such normal and necessary transactions.⁹³⁴ Indeed, the positive contributions of tanners should not be underestimated. They produced leather, which in turn was necessary for the production of harnesses, sandals, and even straps for tefillin, certainly no profane object! Furthermore, the preparation of animal skin was also essential for the production of parchment, the very surface upon which Jewish scribes inscribed the sacred letters of the Torah.⁹³⁵

Simon the tanner, therefore, probably did not find himself more often in a state of ritual impurity than other ordinary Jews. In any case, acquiring occasional ritual impurity, in the event that Jewish tanners would *sometimes* use hides that may have had some flesh

⁹³³ In *b. Pesah.* 65a, this social-economic reality is recognized: “The world cannot exist without a perfume maker and without a tanner.”

⁹³⁴ Krauss, *Talmudische Archäologie*, 2:626 n. 82, cites *m. Shabb.* 1:2, along with *Sifre Deut* Pisqa 258; *b. Ber.* 22b and 25b, as proof that tanneries were “unrein.” In reality, none of these passages makes such a claim. *M. Shabb.* 1:2 only states that one should not enter a tannery (or a bathhouse) if it is near the time of the afternoon prayer, presumably because transactions therein could delay the Jewish person from praying at the proper time. The same mishnah also commands Jews not to sit down before the barber nor to begin a meal or decide a legal suit near this time of prayer. None of this has to do with purity.

⁹³⁵ Indeed the processing of skin was important for the production of many other applications (*m. Kel.* 26:5). See further Krauss, *Talmudische Archäologie*, 2:259 and R. Reed, *Ancient Skins, Parchments and Leathers* (London: Seminar Press, 1972), 86–88. On p. 94, Reed highlights the honorable contribution on the part of Jewish tanners, but unfortunately thinks that the profession was ritually defiling (without citing one text to prove his point), and finally gets carried away when he states that “the New Testament statement that Peter was living with a tanner (Acts ix, 43) is probably an indication of how far, by aligning himself with the Gentiles and Christians, he had moved away from Jewish orthodoxy.” He is also mistaken in claiming that Jews generally avoided processing skins and preferred that Gentiles handle this work. At least during the Middle Ages many Jews worked as tanners. See M. Lamed, “Leather Industry and Trade,” *EJ* 12:574–77. We also know of at least one rabbinic sage who was a tanner (*b. Shabb.* 49 a–b; without any negative comments pronounced against the trade). The only passage Reed cites to justify his point is taken from *m. Shabb.* 1:8, which hardly speaks on behalf of a Jewish preference for Gentile handling of skins. The passage concerns itself with *Sabbath* halakah: a Jew may not give a hide to a Gentile tanner on a Friday (not on the Sabbath as Reed misinterprets this passage) if there is not enough time before sunset for the work to be completed. This halakah only forbids Jews to have Gentiles begin a work on a Friday that will continue into the Sabbath. Therefore, the passage tells us nothing about a general Jewish reluctance to engage in tanning.

from carcasses (animals not ritually slaughtered) of kosher animals attached to them, would not have been viewed as a sinful act among many ancient Jews, especially since they belonged to the poorer strata of society and would have understandably committed such acts in order to earn their living.⁹³⁶ A simple immersion in a body of fresh water would have sufficed to recover ritual purity. For Simon the tanner, this would merely require a short walk out of his house for the occasional dip in the Mediterranean Sea, since he lived in the coastal city of Joppa.⁹³⁷ Quite strikingly, *t. Ohal.* 18:2 theorizes about tanneries outside the land of Israel as shelters where purity can be more readily guaranteed because of their location near seas or rivers. Thus, R. Shimon states: “I can feed the priests pure food in the tannery of Sidon and those that are in the cities of

⁹³⁶ John Barclay raises a very important question when he asks me whether there is any information about who took the skin/hide off an animal in antiquity. Was it the job of a tanner or was it done before the hide arrived to a tannery? I can only offer some preliminary remarks on this issue based in part on Krauss’ observations (the recent *Oxford Handbook of Jewish Daily Life in Roman Palestine* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010], does not deal specifically with tanning). Krauss, *Talmudische Archäologie*, 2:259, first remarks that in peasant economies skins of animals, whether domestic or wild, must have been readily available to people who skinned them themselves for personal use as rugs, covers, and so on (see *m. Kel.* 26:8: hides belonging to a household; *b. Shabb.* 79a: distinguishing between dressed and undressed hides). Nevertheless, many of the local people would probably have handed their hides to tanners for further processing and resale. Some rabbinic passages presume this practice (e.g., *m. Shabb.* 1:8: handing a hide to a Gentile tanner). Most importantly, Krauss claims that it was the trade of professional *handlers*, who probably also flayed the animals, to provide tanners with hides: “Noch ehe das Fell zum Gerber kam, war es Gegenstand des Handels von Leuten (sie hießen גלדי), die mitunter so zahlreich in einem Orte ansässig waren, daß man eine Gasse nach ihnen benannte. Vielleicht haben wir die berufsmäßigen Abdecker oder Schinder in ihnen zu erkennen, die wegen des üblen Geruches, den ihre Ware verbreitete, nur unter sich und außerhalb der Stadt wohnen durften” (pp. 259–60). If Krauss is correct, it would mean that tanners would normally not have dealt with the process of slaughtering and flaying animals, which would have been done beforehand by either farmers, hunters, traders, or other people. This would mean that tanners would normally not have to handle *carcasses*, making the contraction of impurity even less likely. On the other hand, depending on the quality of the work of the flayer, some flesh could have still adhered to the hide and made it impure if the hide stemmed from a carcass (and the flesh exceeded the size of bulk of an olive, at least according to rabbinic standards). I imagine that tanners could also slaughter and flay the animals on certain occasions, but probably they focused on their professional specialization: dressing hides. On a rabbinic discussion about how much of the skin from a carcass must be flayed in order to not convey ritual impurity, see *m. Hul.* 9:3. In a personal communication, Michael Greene, from Bradley University, points out that the open air market of Madrid, called “El Rastro” (“the trail”), is located near the site of earlier abattoirs and tanneries (the “Ribera de Curtidores,” in English, the “Riverside of Tanneries”). Apparently, its name derives from the trail of blood that marked the path from the slaughter houses to the tanneries.

⁹³⁷ Cf. *m. Mikv.* 5:4: “All seas are valid as an Immersion-pool (*Mikweh*).”

Lebanon because they are near the sea or the river.”⁹³⁸ In light of this passage, Peter’s stay at a house near the sea could almost be taken as evidence of the Jewish apostle’s concern for maintaining ritual purity, the exact contrary of what has been affirmed by much of secondary scholarship!

But this is not the point the author of Acts seeks to make. At best, the reference to Simon’s vocation might show a willingness on the part of certain followers of Jesus to associate with people of a lower social standing.⁹³⁹ At the redactional level, the reference to Simon the tanner probably stems from tradition, as most New Testament commentators admit, the epithet, “tanner,” assisting in distinguishing one Simon from the other more significant Simon Peter.⁹⁴⁰ Finally, in the post-70 era when the author of Acts composed his writings, all Jews lived in a perpetual state of ritual defilement, making the

⁹³⁸ Authors translation: אמר ר' שמעון יכולני להאכיל את הכהנים טהרות בבורסקי שבצדון ושבעירות שבלבנוב מפני שסמוכין לים או לנהר. Krauss, *Talmudische Archäologie*, 2:260, refers to this passage as “eine alte positive Nachricht von einer Gerberei.” This intriguing passage has some textual problems. See Saul Lieberman, *Tosefeth Rishonim: A Commentary* [in Hebrew] (4 vols.; New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1999), 3:153–54. Although the discussion is purely theoretical, it is telling that this Toseftan passage initially considers tanneries as a convenient location for maintaining purity because of their location near bodies of natural water. Cf. *m. Ahil.* 18:6: “If a man went through the country of the gentiles in hilly or rocky country, he becomes unclean; but if by the sea or along the strand he remains clean. What is ‘the strand’? Any place over which the sea rolls during a storm.” It is surprising, therefore, to see in his translation of this Toseftan passage, Walter Windfuhr, *Die Tosefta: Band 6, Seder Toharot. 8. Heft, Ahilot/Negaim* (eds. Gerhard Kittel and Karl H. Rengstorff; Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1956), 327 n. 10, triumphantly declare (citing Rengstorff) that “Apg 9, 43 berichtet von einem längeren Aufenthalt des Petrus im Hause eines Gerbers Simon in Joppe (Jaffa)—ein angesichts der Reinheitsvorschriften offenbar für traditionell-fromme Juden höchst anstößiges Verhalten, deshalb aber nicht weniger bemerkenswert als Zeichen der Freiheit der jüdischen Christen von der Tradition!” Referencing *m. Shabb.* 1:2 and *m. B. Bat.* 2:9, Windfuhr claims that tanning was ritually defiling. But as I argued above neither of these two passages speaks of such a thing.

⁹³⁹ Because of the low status associated with the profession and their limited rights during the Middle Ages, many Jews worked as tanners. See Lamed, “Leather Industry and Trade,” 12:574–77.

⁹⁴⁰ Correctly, Schneider, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, 2:53 n. 67. Simon was one of the most common Jewish names in antiquity. See Margaret. H. Williams, “Palestinian Jewish Personal Names in Acts,” in *The Book of Acts in Its Palestinian Setting* (ed. R. Bauckham; vol. 4 of the *The Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting*, ed. B. W. Winter; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1995), 93. It would seem rather odd for Luke to simply invent this character out of thin air for no reason. Hence, most commentators view this reference as part of tradition, but as Barrett, *Acts of the Apostles*, 1:486, points out, the traditional status of the name and profession does not prove the historicity of the event.

alleged ritual impurity ascribed by many New Testament scholars to tanners a matter of even lesser halakic and theological significance.

The insignificance, then, of Simon's profession is twofold: it tells us nothing about a laxity on the part of Peter or the author of Acts toward ritual purity, let alone kashrut. On the other hand, it might inform us about the insignificant social-economic standing of certain Jewish members who joined the Jesus movement.

Cornelius: Righteous Gentile among the Nations

The Cornelius pericope opens with praise for the pious devotion of the Roman centurion toward the Jewish people and their ancestral ways. For Luke, Cornelius is not just any Gentile, but a “devout” man (εὐσεβής; cf. Acts 10:7) who fears the God of the Jews (φοβούμενος τὸν θεόν) with his *entire* household (σὺν παντὶ τῷ οἴκῳ αὐτοῦ). Cornelius is one of those sympathizing, God-fearing Gentiles who attend their local Jewish synagogue, to be numbered with the many non-Jews who worship the God of Israel among the nations (ἐν παντὶ ἔθνει ὁ φοβούμενος αὐτὸν; Acts 10:35). He and his “philosemitic” household are acquainted with the essential mores of Judaism. Consequently, Luke holds them in higher esteem than he does the average Gentile.⁹⁴¹ Already in the opening to this key story, Luke strives to show that the non-Jewish space Peter will enter into contains Gentile members who are entirely sympathetic towards and knowledgeable about Judaism.

With this aim in mind, Luke continues to praise the qualities of Cornelius by highlighting his generosity toward the Jewish people: the Roman centurion gives much alms to the Jewish community (ποιῶν ἐλεημοσύνας πολλὰς τῷ λαῷ). This description

⁹⁴¹ Cf. Loader, *Jesus' Attitude towards the Law*, 368.

recalls in many ways Luke’s portrayal in his gospel of another Roman centurion who also loves the people of Israel (ἀγαπᾷ τὸ ἔθνος ἡμῶν) and even assists with the edification of a synagogue (τὴν συναγωγὴν αὐτὸς ᾠκοδόμησεν), probably through monetary donations, much like the almsgiving of Cornelius (Luke 7:5).⁹⁴² It also points back to the immediate preceding pericope concerning Tabitha, a woman “full of good works and charity” (πλήρης ἔργων ἀγαθῶν καὶ ἐλεημοσυνῶν; Acts 9:36).⁹⁴³ In fact, this juxtaposition of “good works” with “charity” illustrates how the practice of the latter is really just the outer manifestation of a much broader devotion to the God of Israel.⁹⁴⁴ Luke’s reference to “almsgiving,” therefore, should not be reduced to the material dimension of philanthropy. It conceptually overlaps with the broader category and practice of “righteousness” (ἡρπυζ/δικαιοσύνη).⁹⁴⁵

The inclusion of almsgiving as one of Cornelius’ pious qualities in a pericope devoted to questions of purity and Jewish-Gentile contact is by no means accidental. As noted in the previous chapter, Luke has already inserted this feature into another debate about the ritual purity of vessels and washing before meals (Luke 11:37–41). Concerning that gospel passage, I argued that Luke might have had in mind contemporary “Christian

⁹⁴² Quite interestingly, this praise for the Roman centurion’s devotion to Jewish society is missing in Matthew (ch. 8). Moreover, Luke goes through great efforts to keep a certain distance between the Roman centurion and Jesus (the former sends out Jewish elders to request Jesus’ assistance), while in Matthew the centurion enters into direct contact with Jesus. One could say that Luke’s portrait is more “Jewish” than Matthew’s, since he goes through considerable efforts to justify this encounter.

⁹⁴³ Luke also singles out Paul for his efforts in delivering donations when visiting Jerusalem (24:17). Cf. Acts 3:2, 3, 10.

⁹⁴⁴ Cf. Klinghardt, *Gesetz und Volk Gottes*, 213.

⁹⁴⁵ LXX of Prov 21:21: ὁδὸς δικαιοσύνης (MT: ἡρπυζ) καὶ ἐλεημοσύνης (MT: ἔσπ) εὐρήσει ζωὴν καὶ δόξαν (“A way of righteousness and mercy [or almsgiving] will find life and glory”; translation mine). Tob 12:12: “Prayer with fasting is good, but better than both is almsgiving (ἐλεημοσύνης) with righteousness (δικαιοσύνης).” *B. B. Bat.* 10a: “Rabbi Eleazar used to give a *Perutah* [i.e., coin] to the poor and immediately pray. He said: “for it is written, ‘I will see your face in righteousness (ἡρπυζ) [Ps 17:15]” (translation mine).

Pharisees” of his own day, certain Jewish followers of Jesus similar to those who will shortly reprove Peter for entering into a Gentile house and dining with non-Jews (Acts 11:2). Luke is probably also concerned with certain non-“Christian” Jews, particularly those in the Diaspora (cf. Acts 21:21; 28:17), who are suspicious of Jewish-Gentile interaction among disciples of Jesus, precisely because they hear that some Jews have abandoned their ancestral traditions. As outsiders to the Jesus movement, these Diasporan Jews fail to appreciate the unique qualities Luke ascribes to the Gentile disciples who are flocking into the *ekklesia*: they are sympathetic toward Judaism and practice virtuous, charitable deeds. For Luke, their *moral* purity is irreproachable, since they are fully committed to the God of Israel and perform good deeds central to the ethos of Judaism. In fact, in Luke’s eyes, it is the purity of his Jewish adversaries that is found wanting, since they allegedly do not practice the ethical cardinals required by their own tradition: when they will finally practice almsgiving, that is, righteousness, then their purity will become complete—in both the ritual and moral domains “everything will be clean” for them (Luke 11:41).

Luke’s Cornelius also *prays* constantly to the God of Israel (δεόμενος τοῦ θεοῦ διὰ παντός). The theme of prayer appears so prominently in Acts that it would require a major deviation from the topic at hand in order to receive its full treatment.⁹⁴⁶ At several major crossroads within Acts, the disciples of Jesus receive a divine revelation, a wondrous sign or miracle in response to their constant prayers. Thus already at the beginning of Acts, the disciples in Jerusalem receive the gift of the spirit in response to their constant prayers (1:14–16). This phenomenon repeats itself in Acts 4:31: after the disciples pray,

⁹⁴⁶ The description of constant prayer recalls Anna’s practice in the temple where she prays night and day (Luke 2:37).

they receive the sacred spirit and begin to speak the word of God in all boldness. In 8:15, Peter and John pray for the spirit to come upon the Samaritans. There are several other pertinent references within Acts,⁹⁴⁷ but the novel element at this stage of the narrative consists in portraying a *Gentile* who prays and reaps heavenly benefits and shares the privilege normally accorded to other Jews of seeing a vision (*ὄραμα*), in Cornelius' case, an angelic apparition occurring around the ninth hour of the day.⁹⁴⁸ The noun *ὄραμα* appears ten other times in Acts, always in reference to a revelation transmitted to *Jews*.⁹⁴⁹ Cornelius is the only non-Jew in Acts privileged with such a heavenly encounter. Moreover, the angel who appears to him *enters* (*εἰσελθόντα πρὸς αὐτὸν*) into his house, anticipating and preparing the way for Peter to do likewise when he visits the Roman centurion on the following day (10:24, 27). If a holy and pure angel of God (*ἄγγελον τοῦ θεοῦ*) can visit the house of a righteous Gentile, why not also a Jew?

Throughout this pericope, Luke continues to underscore Cornelius' devotion to Jewish tradition (e.g., 10:22). The repetition of Cornelius' Judaic credentials constantly reminds the reader that Peter is not interacting with the average Gentile. Despite his contemptible profession in the eyes of some Jews, particularly after the devastation of 70 C.E., this Roman centurion proves to be righteous and God-fearing, appreciated by the

⁹⁴⁷ Acts 6:4, 6, 8:22, 24; 9:11, 40; 16:25, and so on.

⁹⁴⁸ The reference to the timing of the revelation may not be accidental as it coincides with the hour at which offerings were presented in the temple of Jerusalem. Cf. Jdt 9:1. For Daniel K. Falk, "Jewish Prayer Literature and the Jerusalem Church in Acts," in *The Book of Acts in Its Palestinian Setting* (ed. Richard Bauckham; vol. 4 of the *The Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting*, ed. Bruce W. Winter; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 274 and LeCornu and Shulam, *Jewish Roots of Acts*, 1:553, the declaration made by the angel concerning Cornelius' prayers (and charity) as having "ascended as a *memorial* (*μνημόσυνον*) before God" recalls the description of offerings in the temple (*אֲזַכְרָה*: Exod 28:29; Lev 2:2, 9, 16; 6:8).

⁹⁴⁹ Acts 7:31 (Moses); 9:10 (Ananias); 9:12 (Paul); 10:17, 19; 11:5; 12:9 (Peter); 16:9, 10; 18:9 (Paul). Cf. Matt 17:9 (Jewish disciples of Jesus); Gen 15:1 (Abraham); Gen 46:2 (Jacob); Exod 3:3 (Moses); Num 12:6 (prophet of Israel); Dan 1:17; 2:19; 7:1, 7, 13, 15; 8:2, 13, 15, 17, 26, 27; 10:1 (Daniel and three friends). The king Nebuchadnezzar represents an exception although the dreams he sees do not come as a *response* to his prayers (Dan 2:1, 7, 26, 28, 36).

entire Jewish *ethnos* (this is Lukan hyperbole). Luke also describes other members of Cornelius' entourage in similar terms: one of the messengers sent to Peter, also a soldier like Cornelius, is a devout (εὐσεβῆ) person (10:7). These positive traits, signaled by Luke, pave the way for Peter's eventual entry into Cornelius' house.

Peter's Vision: A Story about Gentiles, not Food

Like Cornelius, Simon Peter receives a vision in response to his prayers, albeit at a different hour of the day: around noontime, in the heat of the day.⁹⁵⁰ Not surprisingly, Peter is hungry at this hour and desires to eat (v.10). The knowledge that his hosts are preparing him a meal (παρασκευαζόντων δὲ αὐτῶν) downstairs almost conditions Luke's Peter to dream or fantasize about food. His resistance to indulge himself even in a vision proves all the more striking, given the hour and heat of the day as well as the hunger he is experiencing! Luke deploys these references to the timing and setting of Peter's vision to draw attention to the apostle's commendable abidance to kashrut, leaving the reader even more curious about the true meaning and import of the vision.

Before him, Luke's Peter beholds the sky opening and an "object" (σκεῦός) unfolding like a large linen cloth, lowered by its four corners upon the earth (τέσσαρσιν ἀρχαῖς καθιέμενον ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς). The reference to the four corners represents the world and already points toward the real application of this vision.⁹⁵¹ On the canopy, Peter finds *all*

⁹⁵⁰ Perhaps, we hear a distant echo of Abraham's own angelophany at the Oaks of Mamre, which occurs also around midday, "during the heat of the day" (MT Gen 18:1: כַּחַם הַיּוֹם), that is, around noontime (LXX Gen 18:1: μεσημβρίας). Incidentally, Paul's own epiphany on the road to Damascus occurs at midday (see Acts 22:6: μεσημβρίαν). There is no need here to conform the timing of Peter's prayer to later rabbinic rhythms of prayer. For Luke, the major protagonists in Acts pray constantly and spontaneously throughout the day, not only and always in conformance to a fixed timeframe. Contra Str-B 2:699: "So kann man das Gebet des Petrus um die sechste Stunde (= mittags 12 Uhr) als vorzeitiges Mincha gebet erklären"; Le Cornu and Shulam, *Jewish Roots of Acts*, 1:558.

⁹⁵¹ Rev 7:1; Isa 11:12; Job 37:3.

(πάντα) kinds of “quadrupeds” (τετράποδα), “reptiles” (έρπετὰ), and “birds” (πετεινὰ).

This enumeration recalls passages from the creation account such as Gen 1:24, but also the list of pure and impure animals as delineated in Lev 11 and Deut 14. The Greek noun τετράποδα corresponds to the Hebrew בהמה, four-footed land animals, some but not all of which were viewed as forbidden for consumption. Only those four-footed land animals who divide a hoof into split hooves and chew the cud are permitted for consumption (Lev 11:3), while other animals who lack both or even one of these characteristics are forbidden (Lev 11:4–7). The NRSV restricts too much the meaning of the Greek έρπετὰ by translating it as “reptiles.” In the context of kashrut, it should refer more broadly to all “swarming” creatures, since it renders the Hebrew שרץ, a term denoting small creatures that go about in shoals and swarms, including insects that fly in clouds, such as gnats and flies, as well as land creatures such as weasels, mice, and lizards that creep low on the ground.⁹⁵² According to Lev 11, almost all swarming creatures are forbidden for consumption. Eight particular types of swarming creatures are especially singled out, capable of conveying impurity by ingestion and touch when they are dead (11:29–38). On the other hand, four types of locusts/grasshoppers are permitted for eating (Lev 11:22). Concerning birds, the Mosaic legislation sets no clear, comprehensive parameters, although birds of prey are often singled out as impure.⁹⁵³

Before this astounding sight, Luke’s Peter hears a “voice” (φωνή) commanding him to “kill and eat.” The voice is of heavenly, if not divine provenance, as the answer of

⁹⁵² Milgrom, *Leviticus*, 1:655. Other versions such as the *New American Standard Bible* offer the more comprehensive term “crawling.” In Greek, έρπετόν usually refers to *creeping* animals such as reptiles and serpents. But in the LXX, the term also encompasses certain winged insects (Lev 11:20).

⁹⁵³ Already noted in the *Letter of Aristeeas* (145–47). According to the Mishnah (*m. Hul.* 3:6), pure birds must have a crop, a gizzard that can easily be peeled off, and an extra talon.

Peter implies 10:14 (“by no means, *Lord*”).⁹⁵⁴ In addition, Luke’s Peter understands the heavenly command in the most comprehensive terms, sanctioning the consumption of *any* animal standing on the canopy: “By no means (*μηδαμῶς*), Lord, for I have never eaten anything that is profane or unclean (*κοινὸν καὶ ἀκάθαρτον*)” (10:14). In Luke-Acts, the adverb *μηδαμῶς* appears only here and once again in Acts 11:8. In the LXX, it often (but not always) renders the Hebrew (*הִלֵּל*). One thinks of Gen 19:7, where Abraham “bargains” with God over the fate of Sodom and Gomorrah, stating: “Far be it from you (*μηδαμῶς/הִלֵּל*) to do such a thing, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous fare as the wicked! Far be that from you (*μηδαμῶς/הִלֵּל*)!” (Gen 18:25). It is Ezekiel’s reply, however, that bears the greatest similarity with the answer given by Peter in Acts.⁹⁵⁵ In Ezek 4:9–12, God orders Ezekiel to bake and eat some bread after cooking it over human dung as a symbolic act: “Thus shall the people of Israel eat their bread, unclean (*אֲנִי/ἀκάθαρτα*), among the nations to which I will drive them” (v. 13). Ezekiel categorically denies participating in such a disgusting act: “*By no means* (*μηδαμῶς*), *Lord* (*κύριε*) God of Israel, behold my soul has not been defiled with impurity and I have not eaten what has died of itself or what has been torn by a wild beast since my birth until now, nor has any stale flesh entered into my mouth.”⁹⁵⁶ In both scenarios, God orders a

⁹⁵⁴ Elsewhere Luke clearly refers to the heavenly/divine status of this voice, describing it as *φωνὴ κυρίου* (Acts 7:31) or *φωνὴ ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ* (11:9; cf. Acts 9:4; Luke 9:35). In Jewish tradition, God and voice are easily identifiable with each another: Gen 3:8 (*τὴν φωνὴν κυρίου τοῦ θεοῦ*), 10; *τὴν φωνὴν κυρίου τοῦ θεοῦ* (Deut 18:16); Ps ch. 29; Isa 66:6; Mic 6:9.

⁹⁵⁵ Cf. 1 Sam 12:23; 20:2, 9; 22:15; 24:7; 26:11; Jonah 1:14; Jdt 8:14; Tob 10:8; Macc 7:25; 15:2, 36.

⁹⁵⁶ My translation of the verse as it appears in the LXX. Apparently, Ezekiel refuses to use *human* refuse, but not animal dung, as Ezek 4:15 would represent an acceptable compromise: “See, I will let you have cow’s dung instead of human dung.” Cf. James A. Patch, “Dung; Dung Gate,” *ISBE* 1:996: “Ezek 4:12, 15 will be understood when it is known that the dung of animals is a common fuel throughout Palestine and

Jew to commit an act that is reprehensible and “impure.” Both denials are phrased in a similar tone, containing overlapping vocabulary (*μηδαμῶς/κύριε*) and thematic links (impurity, food), suggesting a dependence of the wording in Acts upon Ezekiel.

Peter’s response has confounded many scholars who rationalize how he should have simply selected for consumption a *pure* animal since *all* creatures were lying in front of him on the canopy.⁹⁵⁷ But Luke is not interested in engaging Peter and the heavens in a battle over semantics. Luke is more eager to move on to the moral of the vision, which really concerns people, rather than delay in portraying Peter trying to outwit a divine mandate that declares (in a vision) all foods to be pure.⁹⁵⁸ In this way, Luke chooses to present a Peter who refuses to imply in any way, even in a vision, that he would eat non-kosher animals.

This is not the first or last time in Jewish tradition that a human figure will resist a divine mandate to commit an act that presumably involves the transgression of a precept from the Mosaic Torah. The prime example in Ezekiel 4:14 has already been pointed, which might have even inspired the wording of Peter’s reply in Acts 10:14 and 11:8.

Syria, where other fuel is scarce. . . . There was no idea of uncleanness in Ezekiel's mind, associated with the use of animal dung as fuel (Ezek 4:15).” Cf. Emil G. Hirsch and Immanuel Benzinger, “Fuel,” *JE* 5:525–26; Luke 13:8. As noted earlier, *animal* dung was not viewed as impure in ancient Judaism.

⁹⁵⁷ See, for example, Barrett, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 1:508: “Again, why should Peter, with all living creatures before him, take for granted that he was being told to slaughter and eat an unclean animal? Why should he not pick out a clean, permitted one?”

⁹⁵⁸ One thinks of the rabbinic midrash (*Gen. Rab.* 55:7) on Gen 22:2 concerning an even more controversial divine command given to Abraham: “Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains that I shall show you.” The rabbinic midrash has Abraham engage in a debate of semantic “clarification” with God concerning this outrageous command: “And [God] said: ‘Please take your son.’ He [i.e., Abraham] said to him: ‘Two sons I have [Isaac and Ishmael]. Which son?’ He said to him: ‘Your only one.’ He said to him: ‘This one is an only one to his mother and this one is an only one to his mother.’ He said to him: ‘The one whom you love.’ He said to him: ‘Are there limits to the bowels’ [meaning: is there a limit to love, since I love both of my sons]?’ He said to him: ‘Isaac’” (translation mine; “God” has been masculinized in my translation only to replicate a literal rendition of the ancient text). Luke, of course, does not choose such a semantic route. Instead, he highlights Peter’s categorical *refusal* to comply with an even more ambiguous and less outrageous demand, that of eating forbidden food *in a vision*.

Deut 13:2–4 commands Israel to not listen to false prophets who have dreams claiming that one should worship false gods. While some (later) traditions concede that a heavenly voice (בת קול) may in certain instances establish a halakah,⁹⁵⁹ the rabbis remain wary of any prophetic appeal to revelation to establish legal decisions, let alone a deviation from the Torah.⁹⁶⁰ “It is not in the heavens” (לא בשמים היא), citing Deut 30:12, is the famous response given to R. Eliezer b. Hyrcanus who appeals to heavenly communication as a means for justifying his halakic decision during the famous rabbinic debate of over the impurity of the oven of Akhnai (*b. B. Metzi’a* 59b; *b. Pesah.* 114a). Of course, the historical contexts and social settings of Luke and the rabbis are “worlds apart.” Nevertheless, such traditions, whether from Second Temple or rabbinic sources, illustrate how “reasonable” Peter’s refusal to comply with a controversial command sent from above would appear to an audience familiar with Jewish tradition. After all, others prominent figures prior to Peter, such as Ezekiel or even Abraham, had bargained, questioned, or even refused to heed to divine commands they deemed questionable.

None of the subsequent interpretations of the visions made in this very extensive Lukan pericope ever claim that kashrut has been abrogated. Rather than providing an immediate and explicit interpretation of the vision, as attested in other contemporaneous (apocalyptic), Jewish literature of his time (e.g., *2 Bar.*; *4 Ezra*), Luke momentarily and

⁹⁵⁹ *Y. Ber.* 9a; *y. Qidd.* 4a; *b. Ber.* 51b; *b. Rosh. Hash.* 14b; *b. Eruv.* 6b–7a, 13b; *b. Pesah.* 114a; *b. Yevam.* 14a.

⁹⁶⁰ Louis Isaac Rabinowitz, “Prophets and Prophecy,” *EJ* 16:581–82: “The Talmud interprets the verse (Lev. 27:34) ‘these are the commandments which the Lord commanded Moses for the children of Israel in Mount Sinai,’ to mean that ‘henceforth a prophet may make no innovations’ (*Shab.* 104a). ‘The prophets neither took away from, nor added to, aught that is written in the Torah, save only the commandment to read the *megillah* and even for that they sought biblical sanction (*Meg.* 14a). In conformity with this view, in the chain of tradition with which tractate *Avot* opens, the prophets appear merely as the tradents of the Torah of Moses, the successors to the elders after Joshua, and the predecessors of the men of the Great Synagogue.”

skillfully delays this literary process. This artistic postponement allows Luke to augment the suspense for his readers, leaving them even more eager to discover the true significance of the vision.⁹⁶¹ Peter's bewilderment signals to Luke's readers that the meaning of the visions must lie elsewhere than in a literal application of its stipulations. Unlike some interpreters who easily conclude that the meaning of this vision clearly refers to eating non-kosher food, Luke's Peter remains "greatly puzzled," "completely at loss" (*διηπόρει*) at what to make about the sight he has just witnessed (10:17). But even while avoiding instantaneously revealing the true import of the vision, Luke already and cleverly points toward its proper comprehension by coinciding Peter's bafflement with the arrival of Cornelius' messengers: "suddenly the men sent by Cornelius appeared. They were asking for Simon's house and were standing by the gate" (10:17). Luke already hints here at the theme of Jewish-Gentiles relations, not the kosher industry: the hermeneutical key to unlocking the interpretation of the dream lies right at the doorsteps of Simon the tanner's house. As Luke continues to highlight Peter's puzzlement (repeated a second time in 10:19 with the verb *διενθυμέομαι*, "to ponder"), the "spirit" (*τὸ πνεῦμα*) guides the Jewish apostle in the right direction towards understanding the vision: "Look, three men are searching for you. Now get up, go down, and go with them without hesitation; for I have sent them" (vv. 19–20). As Luke's Peter draws nearer to Gentiles, he gradually draws nearer to a proper comprehension of the vision. It will only be in the house of Cornelius that he will finally understand its fuller significance: "God has shown me that I should not call anyone profane or unclean" (v. 28; cf. v. 34).

⁹⁶¹ On the rhetorical, literary skills used by Luke in this episode, see Miller, "Peter's Vision in Acts 10," 311.

Distinguishing between Gentile Impurity and Profaneness

A challenging exegetical question concerns the interpretation of the twofold description in 10:14 to eat what is “profane or unclean” (so NRSV), in Greek, *κοινὸν καὶ ἀκάθαρτον*. The NRSV has translated *καὶ* with the disjunctive “or,” and many commentators follow this trajectory.⁹⁶² Haenchen even understands the construction as a hendiadys to mean, “I have never eaten anything impure.”⁹⁶³ In other words, there would be little or no connotative distinction between *κοινὸν* and *ἀκάθαρτον*.⁹⁶⁴ Luke would have employed both adjectives simply for emphasis. This understanding of both terms is not without merit since by the Second Temple period the term *κοινός* had come to acquire in certain contexts a meaning synonymous with *ἀκάθαρτος*. In the LXX, the term *ἀκάθαρτος* translates the Hebrew *טמא* (“impure”), precisely the word used to describe forbidden meats in Lev 11/Deut 14 (Lev 11:4, 6, 7; Deut 14:7, 10, 19, etc.). *Κοινός*, on the other hand, which literally means “common” or “profane” is not used in the LXX in reference to forbidden meats. In addition, the LXX consistently uses the adjective *βέβηλος* or the

⁹⁶² Barrett, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 1:488; Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 453, 455; Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 181, 184.

⁹⁶³ Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 357–59.

⁹⁶⁴ Inspired by Ez 4:14, Delitzsch’s renders in his Hebrew translation of the New Testament *κοινὸν καὶ ἀκάθαρτον* as *טמא פגול*. The term *פגול*, however, in the Pentateuch refers to sacrificial meat that has become desecrated because it has not been eaten within a specified time (Lev 7:18; 19:7; translated in LXX as *μίασμα* and *ἄθυστόν*, respectively). See Milgrom, *Leviticus*, 1:422: “It [פגול] refers to sacred meat that has exceeded its prescribed time limit and thereby become desecrated.” Actually, in the LXX of Ezek 4:14, the Greek term *ἕωλον*, not *κοινὸν*, translates *פגול*. Quite interestingly, Delitzsch switches to the Hebrew *לח* when translating *κοινὸν* in Acts 10:28. Salkinson and Ginsburg’s Hebrew translation of *κοινὸν καὶ ἀκάθαρτον* in Acts 10:14 as *טמא או שוקק פגול* is pleonastic, if not erroneous (in the LXX, *βδέλυγμα* normally translates *שוקק*). The term *פגול* is used in a special sense in the Temple Scroll (11QT^a 47:17, 18; 52:18) to refer to pure animals slaughtered outside the temple city that cannot be brought or consumed in Jerusalem (it would seem that the Temple Scroll has shifted the meaning of the term as found in the Mosaic Torah from “improper time” to “improper place”).

verb βεβηλώω rather than κοινός or κοινόω to translate the Hebrew לָח (“common” or “profane”) and לָחַל.⁹⁶⁵

If in the Septuagint, the term ἀκάθαρτος is reserved for describing what is impure or forbidden, while βέβηλος refers to the profane, in the book of 1 Maccabees, κοινός suddenly emerges in certain passages in reference to forbidden, non-kosher foods. Thus, in 1 Macc 1:47, one learns about the nefarious attempt by King Antiochus IV “to sacrifice swine and other unclean animals (κτήνη κοινὰ)” in the temple of Jerusalem. The translators of the NRSV have sensed the need here to render κοινὰ as “unclean” (=ἀκάθαρτος) because the passage would seem to refer to other forbidden, non-kosher animals besides swine. While Goldstein suggests κτήνη κοινὰ represents kosher animals that were nevertheless unfit for sacrifices (either because of blemishes or because they were non-sacrificial animals), a more deliberate rupture with Mosaic legislation, that is, the offering of non-kosher animals on the altar, accounts better for the great distress voiced in 1 Macc over the general apostasy of Jews from the essentials of Judaism (as viewed by its author). Similarly, in 1 Macc 1:62, the author praises the faithfulness of those Jews who “stood firm and were resolved in their hearts not to eat unclean food (κοινὰ).” These Jews are commended for refusing to become defiled (μιανθῶσιν=אמט) through the consumption of such foods (1 Macc 1:63). If these food items were kosher and merely defiled ritually, it is questionable whether their consumption would have

⁹⁶⁵ LXX Exod 31:14: the sabbath is holy, the one who desecrates (ὁ βεβηλῶν) it shall die; Lev 10:10: “to distinguish between the holy and the common, and between the unclean and the clean” (διαστειλῆναι ἀνά μέσον τῶν ἁγίων καὶ τῶν βεβηλῶν καὶ ἀνά μέσον τῶν ἀκαθάρτων καὶ τῶν καθαρῶν/ להבדיל בין הקדש ובין החל/ ובין הטמא ובין הטהור); 1 Sam 21:5: “common bread” (ἄρτοι βέβηλοι/ לחם חל).

prompted such a scandal for the author, since acquiring temporary ritual defilement was not viewed as a major sin. It seems better, therefore, to view this passage as referring to non-kosher food.⁹⁶⁶ Such an understanding is quite clear in 4 Macc 7:6 where the priest Eleazar is praised for not defiling (ἐκοινώνησας) his stomach with forbidden foods such as pork.⁹⁶⁷ As noted earlier in this monograph, in Mark 7 and Matt 15, the adjective κοινὸν and the verb κοινῶ appear in reference to “impure hands” (Mark 7:2, 5: κοιναῖς χερσίν)

⁹⁶⁶ Cf. Thiessen, *Contesting Conversion*, 128.

⁹⁶⁷ The attempt by Clinton Wahlen, “Peter’s Vision and Conflicting Definitions of Purity,” *NTS* 51 (2005): 505–18, to see κοινὰ and ἐκοινώνησας in 1 Macc/4 Macc as referring to kosher food, the ritual purity of which was held in doubt is unconvincing. Wahlen claims that in 1 Macc 1:62 the word κοινὰ “cannot be taken to mean the eating of *unclean* animals because this has been clearly referred to already in v. 48” (p. 512). The reference in v. 48, however, by no means clearly refers to “unclean animals.” In fact, the thrust of v. 48 is far broader: Jews are commanded to no longer circumcise their children and “to make themselves abominable by everything unclean and profane.” The latter phrase probably includes other means of acquiring impurity and profanation besides eating non-kosher animals (food or animals are not even mentioned in v. 48). At stake in 1 Macc is not halakic hairsplitting over whether Jews can eat pure, common food that *might* have been ritually defiled, but far greater departures from the essence of “Judaism” posited over against “Hellenism” as the author sees it: Jews are being led away from the very observance of circumcision, Sabbath keeping, and kashrut, not simply from eating kosher food that has been unquestionably defiled. The same holds true for 4 Macc 7:6. Wahlen claims that Eleazar is commended not for his abstinence from defiling (ἐκοινώνησας) his body with pork, but for avoiding eating kosher food that might have become ritually defiled because Gentiles prepared it. True, in 4 Macc 6:15, Eleazar is even offered the opportunity (after explicitly refusing to eat pork) to *pretend* to eat pork: the king’s retinue offers to set before him some “cooked meat” (ἠψημένων βρωμάτων) that Eleazar can eat while pretending (ὑποκρινόμενος) that it’s flesh is of swine in order to save his life. According to Wahlen, Eleazar is commended for not even eating this kosher food (the king’s retinue would have presumably offered him pure meat to eat) because he wonders whether it might have been ritually defiled at some stage of its preparation. This is excessively fine a reading to apply to a work that is invested in proving how the abstinence from eat pork *tout court* (cf. 4 Macc 5:8) is noble in and of itself. Even Wahlen acknowledges that βρωμάτων is a neutral term, neither referring to pure or impure food. More importantly, he fails to pay attention to the term *μιαροφαγία* (which clearly refers to non-kosher meats such as pork or food offered to idols) in 4 Macc 7:6 (cf. 4 Macc 5:2–3, 19, 25, 27; 6:19; 8:2, 12, 29; 11:16, 25). If anything, the enticing compromise offered by the king’s retinue might suggest that the author of 4 Macc believes that *Gentiles can indeed prepare kosher food that is acceptable for Jewish consumption*. The test, then, for Eleazar involved fleeing away from *publicly* misleading the wider Jewish and non-Jewish communities into thinking that he had complied to the king’s coercion to eat pork (which, technically, he would have only “pretended” to eat, since he would have been eating kosher food, but this fact would have only been known to Eleazar and the king’s private retinue, not to the public who would have thought he really ate pork). I suggest that in 1 and 4 Macc κοινὸς and κοινῶ refer to the defilement acquired by eating forbidden, non-kosher animals. This impurity is not the same as ritual impurity. It stands more closely to moral impurity and breaches with the holiness Israel is suppose to preserve (Lev 11:44: “For I am the LORD your God; sanctify yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am holy. You shall not defile yourselves with any swarming creature that moves on the earth”). See Introduction to Part II as well as Jonathan Klawans, *Impurity and Sin*, 31 and Hoffmann, *Das Buch Leviticus*, 1:303–5, who qualifies this defilement as טומאת הקודש.

and food ritually defiled through such contact (Mark 7:15, 18, 20, 23; Matt 15:11, 18, 20). In Matt and Mark, κοινός/κοινόω are used to discuss not matters related to kashrut, but the rigorous maintenance of ritual purity through the washing of hands before meals.⁹⁶⁸

The semantic usage of κοινός, then, can at times semantically and conceptually overlap with its cousin ἀκάθαρτος, going beyond its literal sense of “common” or “profane” to also encompass the domains of impurity and kashrut. Brooks suggests that forbidden animals came to be called κοινά in 1 Maccabees because their edibility was viewed as “common” to surrounding nations, while such foods were deemed impure or forbidden for Jews. Brooks reasonably suggests that this new Jewish extension of κοινός from “profane” to “impure” eventually encompassed discussions dealing with forbidden meats as well as different types of ritual impurity (e.g., impure vessels, liquids, and so on).⁹⁶⁹ Such a semantic development seems quite understandable, since the associative dimension of *communion* (κοινωνία), which underlines the term κοινός, could have easily crossed into the realm of kashrut. After all, the very *raison d'être* for keeping kosher for many Jews in antiquity had come to mean *disassociating* themselves from other ethnic groups, preserving thereby the identity and collective *sanctity*—the very antonym of profaneness—of Israel secure and intact. As the Torah “repeats” in Deut the regulations of kashrut, it states: “For you are a *holy* (ἅγιος/שׁוֹדֵק) people to the LORD your God; and

⁹⁶⁸ Should a similar understanding be applied to Rom 14:14: “I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean (κοινόν) in itself; but it is unclean (κοινόν) for anyone who thinks it unclean (κοινόν)”? Or does this dictum refer to food offered to idols? I doubt whether this statement discusses kosher food. The issue in Romans seems to concern *purity*. Cf. Tomson, *Paul and the Jewish Law*, 247–54.

⁹⁶⁹ Booth, *Jesus and the Laws of Purity*, 120–21; cf. Wilfried Paschen, *Rein und Unrein: Untersuchung zur biblischen Wortgeschichte* (SANT 24; Munich: Kösel, 1970), 165–67. See also Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 4:427 n. 4.

the LORD has chosen you to be a people for His own possession *out of all the peoples* who are on the face of the earth” (Deut 14:2; emphasis mine). Prolonged association with other peoples could lead, so some Jews believed, to the abandonment of Jewish identity and transformation into the Gentile “other.” “Whoever associates (ὁ κοινωνῶν) with a proud person becomes like him,” warns Ben Sira (13:1). This statement, of course, does not deal with dietary laws, but instills in the mind of the reader the need to associate with proper people. In *Joseph and Aseneth* (7:6), Jacob beseeches Joseph and his other sons to keep themselves from foreign women, to not *associate* with them (τοῦ μὴ κοινωνῆσαι αὐτῇ). Not surprisingly, the author of this Diasporan work does not allow Joseph to eat on the same table with his future Egyptian wife so long as she has not converted (into Judaism). In his discussion and defense of the observance of kashrut, the author of the *Letter of Aristeas* provides a rationale for this legislation that is intertwined with the theme of (dis)association:

It is my opinion that mankind as a whole shows a certain amount of concern for the parts of their legislation concerning meats and drink and beasts considered to be unclean. For example, we inquired why, since there is one creation only, some things are considered unclean for eating, others for touching—legislation being scrupulous in most matters, but in these especially so. In reply, he began as follows: “You observe, he said “the important matter raised by modes of life and relationships, inasmuch as through bad relationships men become perverted, and are miserable their whole life long; if however they mix with wise and prudent companions, they rise above ignorance and achieve progress in life. (128–30)

The author of the *Let. Aris.* goes on to rationalize the practice of Jewish food laws by illustrating how it has kept the Jewish people away from idolatry and polytheism. The Law has “fenced us round with impregnable ramparts and walls of iron, that we might not mingle at all with any of the other nations, but remain pure in body and soul, free from all vain imaginations, worshiping the one Almighty God above the whole creation” (139).

Here the themes of association, kashrut, and purity intersect to describe the logic behind Jewish belief and practice.

It is quite understandable, therefore, for the NRSV and other commentators to have opted to translate *κοινὸν* and *ἀκάθαρτον* as virtual synonyms. Nevertheless, I suggest that Luke does indeed make a fine and important nuance between both terms, meaning that the “καὶ” in 10:14 should be rendered with its normal English equivalent “and” rather than “or.” By doing so, Luke conceptually distinguishes between the categories of “purity/impurity” and “holiness/profane” when employing the pair *κοινὸν καὶ ἀκάθαρτον*. It is critical for the modern reader to understand this distinction already present within the Mosaic Torah (e.g., Lev 10:10): “Separate from, but related to, the concept of purity is the concept of profaneness. While ‘impure’ (טמא) is the ontological opposite of ‘pure’ (טהור), ‘profane’ (חול) is the ontological opposite of ‘sacred’ (קדוש). . . . A ‘profanation’ (חלול) is a violation of the sacred that is not connected to purity per se.”⁹⁷⁰ Hayes phrases the distinction in the following way:

It will be recalled that profanation, or desecration, is simply the transformation of what is holy into what is common. The now common object is not necessarily impure unless the desecration was brought about by contact with a source of impurity. Defilement is the transformation of what is pure into that which is impure, and if the object was formerly holy it will be necessarily common, or profane upon defilement. Profanation of a sanctum, although serious, is not as grave as actual defilement of a sanctum.⁹⁷¹

Within the Jewish system of thought and practice, a hierarchy, extending from the most profane to the most holy, governs the ways Gentiles, female and male Jews, priests, and high-priests access the realm of the sacred, that is, the temple. According to

⁹⁷⁰ Jonathan Klawans, “Notions of Gentile Impurity in Ancient Judaism,” *AJSR* 20 (1995): 291–92.

⁹⁷¹ Hayes, *Gentile Impurities*, 230–31 n. 32

Josephus, during the Second Temple period, Gentiles could only access the outermost court of the temple where both pure Jewish women and men were also allowed to enter. In the second court, all pure Jews were admitted, whether male or female, while only pure male Jews could enter the third court. To the fourth court entered only the priests, while the sanctuary proper remained accessible only to the high priests (*Ag. Ap.* 2:103). As Hayes points out, pure Jewish women were obviously not excluded from the third court because of a supposed intrinsic ritual impurity, but because they were viewed as more profane than Jewish males. Likewise, a lay Jewish male could not access the fourth court because they were not holy to the same degree as priests. Finally, the high priests enjoyed the greatest degree of sanctity and therefore could access the holiest of holy realms. A spectrum of profaneness-sanctity, ranging from the most profane of persons, Gentiles, to the holiest of individuals, Jewish high priests, defined and governed relationships between Jews and Gentiles in such spaces and other venues.⁹⁷² Vis-à-vis the holy priests, lay Jews were viewed as common, but vis-à-vis Gentiles, the people of Israel as a collective entity represented a holy congregation. Accordingly, Gentiles were not excluded from the temple because of their intrinsic ritual impurity, but because of their inherent profaneness. They did not belong to the holy people of Israel; they were profane people.

Within the course of ancient Jewish history, Klawans argues that it was precisely the inherent profaneness ascribed to Gentiles that ultimately excluded them from the sanctuary.⁹⁷³ Ezekiel vividly illustrates this point: “O house of Israel, let there be an end to all your abominations in admitting foreigners, uncircumcised in heart and flesh, to be

⁹⁷² Hayes, *Gentile Impurities*, 60–61.

⁹⁷³ Klawans, “Notions of Gentile Impurity,” 292.

in my sanctuary, profaning (חֲבֵל/ἐβεβήλουν) my temple when you offer to me my food, the fat and the blood” (44:6–7). The author of Ezekiel opposes Gentile participation in the cult because of their inherent profaneness. On the other hand, Isa 56:2–7, whose content and message Luke knows of and embraces, presents an opposing view to Ezekiel’s when it recognizes the right for eunuchs and uncircumcised foreigners to participate in the temple cult. The distinction between profane and impure is useful, I would suggest, for understanding Acts 21 where Luke claims that certain Jews from Asia accused Paul for bringing non-Jews into the temple of Jerusalem, apparently beyond the court of the Gentiles, and consequently *profaned* (κεκοίνωκεν) “the *holy* place” (τὸν ἅγιον τόπον; Acts 21:28) of Jerusalem. Here the verb *κεκοίνωκεν*, related to its adjectival cousin *κοινός*, bears the meaning of making common or profane, not rendering impure,⁹⁷⁴ for a Gentile, in this case a God-fearing follower of Jesus (if the charges against Paul were true), could not *defile* the temple of Jerusalem, since Gentiles were not considered to be ritually impure nor in this case morally impure because Gentile followers of Jesus presumably had abandoned immorality and idolatry.⁹⁷⁵ This understanding of *κεκοίνωκεν* becomes clear when the same charge is brought up again against Paul during his hearing before the Roman procurator Felix: “He even tried to *profane* (βεβηλώσαι) the temple,

⁹⁷⁴ Quite possibly, *κοινός* in Rev 21:27 and Heb 10:29 also means “profane” rather than “impure.” In Rev 21:27, the adjective is used in reference to people who will not enter the *holy* city of Jerusalem. Furthermore, the author of Rev knows and employs the adjective *ἀκάθαρτος* (16:13; 17:4; 18:2), which means “impure,” suggesting that his usage of *κοινός* with reference to the holy city of the new Jerusalem should be understood in the sense of “profane.” Likewise, Heb 10:29 juxtaposes *κοινός* with the act of *sanctification* (ἡγιασθη). All of this to show that the term *κοινός* could be used by Jewish authors in the sense of “profane,” and not always with the meaning of “impure.”

⁹⁷⁵ This is where I differ with Thiessen, *Contesting Conversion*, 130, who understands *κεκοίνωκεν* in the sense of defilement, that is, rendering impure, instead of rendering profane: “According to his accusers in Acts 21, Paul has brought Gentiles into the temple, thus making it impure.” But how does a Gentile render the temple impure to begin with (if Klawans and Hayes are right about the point of Gentiles not being intrinsically impure), particularly a God-fearing Gentile follower of Jesus who does not even practice moral impurity?

and so we seized him” (24:6). Here the same charge appears but Luke employs a different yet in this case synonymous verb to *κεκοίνωκεν*. It is precisely *βεβηλώσαι*, which is related to the adjective *βέβηλος*, that the LXX consistently employs to translate the Hebrew equivalents *לח/ללח* (“profane”).⁹⁷⁶ Interestingly enough, Luke never firmly denies nor affirms that Paul had actually brought a non-Jew into the temple.⁹⁷⁷ If such a misdemeanor had occurred, it would mean that the temple had been profaned, not defiled, unless the Gentile, who after all was a follower of Jesus, had acted in a hostile manner within the temple precincts—a very unlikely scenario in this case.⁹⁷⁸

What Luke is subtly demonstrating in the Cornelius episode is that Gentile followers of Jesus—non-Jews who have abandoned idolatry and other immoral practices—are neither morally impure nor inherently profane. They now enjoy the same status as Jewish males and females, in so far as the cultic realm is concerned. Consequently, they cannot render the temple in Jerusalem or the sacred realm profane

⁹⁷⁶ Why the Lukan switch of verbs? I suggest because the speech is presented in the narrative to a *non-Jewish* listener, Felix the Roman governor. Luke avoids using the term *κεκοίνωκεν* because it would have been meaningless for non-Jews in any cultic sense (LSJ only provides Jewish and Christian passages where this verb bears a cultic sense). Hence, the usage of *βεβηλώσαι* (cf. Heliodorus, *Aethiopica* 2.25; 10.36; *βέβηλος* in this sense: Sophocles, Fr. 154; *Anthologia Palatina* 9.298, etc.). See further references in Friedrich Hauck, “βέβηλος,” *TDNT* 1:604.

⁹⁷⁷ In Acts 21:29, Luke seems to insinuate that the Jews of Asia mistakenly thought that Paul had brought in a certain Trophimus, a non-Jew, with him into the temple. Luke, however, only timidly denies that the Jews of Asia were indeed mistaken over their identification. Could it be that the historical Paul had indeed brought a non-Jew into the temple? Interestingly enough, Luke never has Paul refute this specific charge during his trials. Perhaps, he is avoiding controversy in order to depict Paul in more favorable terms towards a Jewish audience, even while indirectly acknowledging that Paul had indeed brought a non-Jew into the sacred precincts of the temple. We might never know.

⁹⁷⁸ As Hayes, *Gentile Impurities*, 35, points out, in the Hebrew scriptures, Gentile defilement of the temple is only described when *hostile* intentions are involved. So Ps 79:1: “O God, the nations have come into your inheritance; they have defiled your holy temple; they have laid Jerusalem in ruins.” On this passage Hayes comments: “The defilement spoken of here need not be a ritual impurity communicated by a ritually impure Gentile but rather the defilement resulting from the rapacious plundering and desecrations of a hostile encroacher of any description” (35). Cf. 1QpHab 12:8–9 (the Wicked Priest defiling the Temple of God, possibly through violent deeds). Otherwise, Gentiles are normally described as *profaning* the temple of Jerusalem (e.g., Ezek 44:5–9).

any more than a normal (non-priestly) Jew could.⁹⁷⁹ “What God has made clean (ἐκαθάρισεν), you must not call profane (μὴ κοίνου),” so the heavenly voice insists (10:15). Gentile followers of Jesus are no longer to be viewed as impure and profane, but pure *and* holy with the rest of the congregation of Israel.⁹⁸⁰

In light of such considerations, we can now fully appreciate the meaning and application of the vision: “God has shown me that I should not call anyone (μηδένα ἄνθρωπον) profane or unclean” (10:28b).⁹⁸¹ The vision is about the purification and sanctification of Gentile believers. But with this declaration, Luke is not completely deconstructing the Jewish categories of pure/impure and holy/profane. Neither is he claiming that the immoral practices of Gentiles in general are not morally defiling. Even after this critical turning point in the narrative of Acts, Luke still has Paul ritually purify himself when he comes to the temple of Jerusalem (21:24, 26). Luke also continues to underscore Paul’s moral purity: “I am not responsible (καθαρός, literally “pure”) for the blood of any of you” (20:26; cf. 18:6). In addition, the apostles of Jerusalem will issue

⁹⁷⁹ Mikeal C. Parsons, “‘Nothing Defiled AND Unclean’: The Conjunction’s Function in Acts 10:14,” *PRSt* 27.3 (2000): 263–74, makes an original and interesting distinction between κοινόν and ἀκάθαρτον in Acts 10:14, claiming that “Luke intends his audience to understand κοινός to refer to the Jew who is ritually defiled by association with a Gentile and ἀκάθαρτος to refer to Gentiles who are by nature unclean” (p. 264). One main problem is that Parsons assumes that Gentile can *ritually* defile other Jews. Even though he cites Klawans’ work in one footnote, he then fails to interact with the latter who makes the key distinction between moral and ritual impurity. Carlos R. Sosa, “Pureza e impureza en la narrativa de Pedro, Cornelio y el Espíritu Santo en Hechos 10,” *Kairós* 41 (2007): 55–78, also works under the assumption that Gentiles could acquire ritual impurity, although he provides a more nuanced description on the matter, highlighting three different aspects to the Jewish system of purity/impurity (the ethnic, geographical, and ritual dimensions).

⁹⁸⁰ Nevertheless, Luke still maintains practical and ecclesiological distinctions between Jews and non-Jews within Israel (see discussion below). In Luke’s day, the theme of the “deprofanization” of Gentiles might have lost some of its radical ring, the temple in Jerusalem no longer operating. However, Luke’s model could have been applied to the inner, ecclesiological life of the Jesus movement, granting Gentiles ritual rights and responsibilities normally administered by Jews in their synagogues and other settings.

⁹⁸¹ Here Luke uses the disjunctive ἢ (“or”) rather than the conjunction καί (“and”) in the pair “profane or unclean” (κοινόν ἢ ἀκάθαρτον). This shows that Luke is indeed able to differentiate conceptually between both terms. If anything, it should lead translators to render 10:14 as “profane *and* unclean,” since Luke alternates in his choice of conjunctives within the same pericope.

laws that forbid Gentiles from associating themselves with the morally impure ways of the nations, whether through sexual immorality or idolatry, while simultaneously prohibiting them from eating blood and strangled meat (Acts 15). Rather, Luke simply states that Gentile *followers of Jesus*—not all Gentiles—are no longer to be avoided out of concern for compromising with idolatry and immorality, for they have abandoned their sinful ways and now worship the God of Israel: “I truly understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone *who fears him and does what is right is acceptable* (δεκτὸς) to him” (vv. 34–35).⁹⁸² This declaration reveals Luke’s *restrictive* and qualified attribution of moral purification to non-Jews: it only concerns those Gentiles who fear (ὀφοβούμενος) the God of Israel and practice righteousness (δικαιοσύνην). Only such non-Jews prove “acceptable” (δεκτὸς)—a Greek term used in the LXX to describe sacrifices that are pleasing (נָחַד) before God⁹⁸³—while all other Gentiles, those who have not fully abandoned their polytheistic and immoral ways, remain morally impure and inherently profane. The God of Israel, who previously “overlooked the times of human ignorance,” now calls all Gentiles to repent from their sinful ways (17:30). Those Gentiles who heed to this call receive a cleansing of the heart (15:8–9), a spiritual transformation that downgrades their profaneness and removes their moral impurity.

Thus, Luke only contests with a worldview shared by certain Jews that might deny such a possible reversal in the immoral and profane status of the Gentile. He opposes those who view non-circumcised Gentiles as permanently and intrinsically

⁹⁸² Emphasis mine.

⁹⁸³ Lev 1:3; 19:5; Isa 56:7; 60:7. It is quite interesting to see the cultic dimension to this word in usage here, as it also appears in Isa 56:7 in reference to the acceptable offerings of Gentiles and eunuchs.

profane because of their non-Jewish origins.⁹⁸⁴ Instead, Luke recalls the common ancestral roots shared by both Jew and Gentile: “From one ancestor he made all nations to inhabit the whole earth” (17:26). For Luke, both Jews and Gentiles belong to the same offspring, implying that the latter can and must join the former in worshiping the same God: “Since we are God’s offspring (γένος), we ought not to think that the deity is like gold, or silver, or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of mortals” (Acts 17:29). Cornelius, who meets both requirements outlined in this previous verse, he stems from God’s “genus” and has fully abandoned idolatry, archetypically embodies the ideal Gentile followers of Jesus who can now rightfully and freely associate themselves with the rest of the commonwealth of Israel.⁹⁸⁵

Some of Luke’s perspective on Gentiles, purity, and kashrut side closely with the views of the author of the *Letter of Aristeas* as well as Philo. First of all, the author of the *Let. Arist.* acknowledges that those Gentiles who are favorably disposed toward the

⁹⁸⁴ Hayes, *Gentile Impurities and Jewish Identities*, 89, traces what she coins “genealogical impurity” to the time of Ezra-Nehemiah: “Ezra’s innovative holy seed rationale for the prohibition of intermarriage has two effects on the law: First, it renders the prohibition universal. Gentiles by definition and without exception are profane seed—permanently and irreparably—and marriage with them profanes the holy seed of Israel.” She locates *Jubilees* and 4QMMT in this trajectory: “Jubilees and 4QMMT can be located at the extreme end of a process that began in postbiblical times, when the geographically (or nationally) based definition of Jewish identity gave way to a religiomoral definition that enabled a higher degree of assimilation of interested foreigners. The extension of a requirement for genealogical purity (in the sense of unmixed lineage) to all Israelites reflects a desire to prevent the assimilation of foreigners, and it occurred in stages” (90).

⁹⁸⁵ Cf. Thiessen, *Contesting Conversion*, 138–39. Whereas Thiessen prefers to talk of the genealogical purification of Gentiles, I prefer to see it as a twofold process of moral purification and deprofanization. There is of course considerable overlap between genealogical impurity and profaneness, since Gentiles are profane because they do not have (pure) Jewish ancestry. But I think Luke is more set on stressing the common genealogical ancestry both Jews and Gentiles share, even though he preserves a *bilateral ecclesiology*, to borrow Kinzer’s terminology (*Postmissionary*, 151–79), in which Jews and Gentiles maintain their respective identities. The comparison Thiessen makes with the *Animal Apocalypse* is fascinating and illuminating: both Luke and the *Animal Apocalypse* believe in a restoration of (certain) Gentiles even while Jews continue to retain their particular identity. I would add that their views prove more optimistic, in so far as Gentiles are concerned, than the worldview in *Jubilees*, since the latter sees all Gentiles as permanently under the power of impure spirits and hopelessly doomed. See my forthcoming “Forming Jewish Identity by Formulating Legislation for Gentiles.” I would like to thank Thiessen for exchanging his thoughts with me on this matter. We both agree that that there is far more in common between our views on Luke than disagreement.

essentials of Judaism can enjoy moral purity, when he recognizes that Philocrates can acquire a *pure* disposition of the soul (ψυχῆς καθαρὰ διάθεσις; 2). The author again acknowledges this reality later on in his narrative when he praises the pious attitude and interest of the king of Egypt in the paideia Judaism has to offer—an attestation of the purity of his soul and holy conviction (ψυχῆς καθαρότητι καὶ διαλήψεως ὁσίας; *Let. Arist.* 234).⁹⁸⁶ In his treatment of kosher food, the author of the *Let. Arist.*, like Luke, reveals an awareness regarding the common origin of all of creation: “we inquired why, *since there is one creation only* (μιας καταβολῆς οὐσης), some things are considered unclean for eating, others for touching—legislation being scrupulous in most matters, but in these especially so” (129; emphasis mine). In this passage, a Gentile embassy inquires about the rationale behind kashrut, wondering why certain foods are deemed impure if all such substances in the end share the same (divine) origin. The author of this Jewish work from the Diaspora knows and believes that in the beginning God created “the wild animals of the earth of every kind, and the cattle of every kind, and everything that creeps upon the ground of every kind. And God saw that it was *good*” (Gen 1:25; emphasis mine). Instead of attributing an innate, ontological impurity to forbidden animals such as swine or camel, this Diasporan Jew finds refuge in the usage of allegory, highlighting moral etiquettes of kashrut *even while affirming the ongoing necessity of keeping kosher*: “By calling them [i.e., forbidden animals] impure, he has thereby indicated that it is the solemn binding duty of those for whom the legislation has been established to practice righteousness” (147). Here the author of the *Let. Arist.* sees the usage of (im)purity language in the Mosaic legislation more in a functional than ontological sense. Impurity

⁹⁸⁶ On the salvation of Jews and Gentiles in *Aristeas*, see Boccaccini, *Middle Judaism*, 176–79.

is imputed, not inherent. His perspective comes close to that of “R. Yohanan b. Zakkai,” as represented in a much later midrash, who discards the intrinsic nature of corpse impurity—and by extension all impurity:

By your life! It is not the dead that defiles nor the water that purifies! The Holy One, blessed be He, merely says: “I have laid down a statute, I have issued a decree. You are not allowed to transgress My decree,” as it is written, “This is the statute of the law (Num 19:2).”

Whereas the author of the *Let. Arist.* resorts to allegorization in the hope of adequately explaining the *raison d’être* of keeping kosher and purity laws, the rabbinic sages, at least as voiced in the aforementioned tradition, remain agnostic about their logic, denying the very innate impurity of any object or person, while nevertheless affirming, in a fideistic fashion, the need for Jews to observe such regulations: “God said so, so I do it.” Philo’s perspective should also be aligned with that of the *Let. Arist.*, since he also offers extensive allegorical rationalizations regarding kosher food, partly in response to those who claim swine as the finest of all meats (*Spec.* 4:101).⁹⁸⁷ All of this serves to show that even if Luke understands Peter’s vision to mean now that all creatures are to be viewed as intrinsically pure, this need not translate into a license allowing the consumption of any food. All foods may be intrinsically pure, but not necessarily *permitted*. Luke, like other Diasporan Jews such as Philo and the author of the *Let. Aris.*, does not roundly state that all meats, such as pork or shrimp, are no longer forbidden. In fact, he does not even seek to abolish the observance of Jewish purity laws. He only reforms such regulations in order to include Gentiles into Israel and the *ekklesia* in more

⁹⁸⁷ Cf. 4 Macc 5:8–9: “When nature has granted it to us, why should you abhor eating the very excellent meat of this animal [i.e., pork]? It is senseless not to enjoy delicious things that are not shameful, and wrong to spurn the gifts of nature.” The rabbis were also aware of this polemical critique directed against the practice of kashrut: “R. Eleazar b. Azariah says: Whence do we learn that one should not say, ‘It is not my desire to dress in mixed garments, it is not my desire to eat pork, it is not my desire to commit incest. But it is my desire. What shall I do? And my Father in heaven decreed [the prohibitions] on me thus’” (*Sifra Qedoshim Perek 11:22*; translation mine)

comprehensive terms. He does not align himself with the extreme Jewish allegorizers whom Philo critiques for having thrown the baby with the water by completely abandoning the observance of kashrut, only retaining the allegorical kernel while dismissing concrete Jewish practice. Neither does he appropriate a Jewish allegorizing hermeneutic *à la Pseudo-Barnabas* in order to conclude that God ordained such laws only for spiritual and ethical edification, while condemning the Jewish people for supposedly misunderstanding such legislation and holding onto the literal substance of the Mosaic legislation (*Barn.* 10:2, 9). Luke, like many other Diasporan Jews, tries to make sense of the Jewish tradition in light of the Greco-Roman environment he inhabits even while affirming the literal observance of the Torah.

Entering and Lodging in a Gentile House

As noted earlier, Luke has already prepared his audience through various literary cues for Peter's eventual entry and extensive stay in the house of the Roman centurion. The appearance of a holy angel in Cornelius' house already prefigures Peter's own entrance into the very same territory. Likewise, the stay of the Cornelius' emissaries with Peter in Simon the tanner's house serves as a precedent for what is to come: "So Peter invited them in (*εἰσκαλεσάμενος*) and gave them lodging (*ἐξένισεν*)" (v. 23). The usage of the composite verb *εἰσκαλεσάμενος*, which is rarely used in Jewish Greek sources, means that Peter invites these non-Jews to enter the Jewish house where he is staying.⁹⁸⁸ Moreover, Peter offers these Gentile visitors lodging—the verb *ἐξένισεν* stressing the hospitality reserved for guests in ancient society, including table fellowship. Once again,

⁹⁸⁸ The verb *εἰσκαλέομαι* appears once in Acts, in Josephus, at least five times (*Ant.* 11:252; 17:93; 18:213; 20:46; *J.W.* 1:620), all in reference to the entrance into a court or room.

such a scenario should not arouse drastic surprise among modern readers, as if Peter was the first Jew to host a Gentile in a Jewish house! I have already pointed to the evidence from the *Letter of Aristeas* as well as from the book of Judith regarding the possibility for Jews to devise ways of eating with non-Jews. In *m. Avod. Zar.* 5:5, the rabbinic sages presuppose that Jews and Gentiles can eat on the same table without assuming that Jews must thereby forsake eating kosher.⁹⁸⁹ Rather, the main concern in such scenarios involved associating with idolatry (cf. *m. Avod. Zar.* 4:6). But since these Gentiles belong to a “philosemitic” household, and since the encounter between Jew and Gentile occurs here within a controlled, *Jewish* space, there is little reason for Luke to defend Peter’s action. Hence his disinterest in deliberating or justifying this initial encounter. It serves rather as a literary device, much like the angel’s first visit into Cornelius’ house, in order to prepare for Peter’s eventual entrance and lodging within a Gentile home.

After a night in Joppa, Luke’s Peter, who is accompanied by some Jewish followers of Jesus, “brother/sisters (ἀδελφῶν)” from Joppa (10:23), and Cornelius’ messengers travel to Caesarea.⁹⁹⁰ In 11:12, Luke states that these Jewish companions were six in number, forming, along with Peter, a perfect number of seven witnesses. Previously in 9:41, Luke labels these followers as ἁγίους, “holy ones.” As *holy* agents they are about to enter into contact with what was normally considered a “profane” domain. As noted earlier, Luke gradually describes Peter’s approach into Gentile space: he has Peter first enter Caesarea (v.24), then Cornelius’ house (v. 25). This repetition continues to anticipate the apogee of Jewish-Gentile encounter in 10:48. Upon his arrival into Cornelius’ house, Peter openly addresses this controversial issue, declaring: “You

⁹⁸⁹ Cf. *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 6. Tomson, *Paul and the Jewish Law*, 231.

⁹⁹⁰ Luke surely views these followers as Jewish, since in 10:45 they are described as “the circumcised believers” (οἱ ἐκ περιτομῆς πιστοί).

yourselves know that it is unlawful (ἀθέμιτόν) for a Jew to associate (κολλᾶσθαι) with or to visit a Gentile (ἄλλοφύλῳ)” (10:28a). As Klawans argues, this statement does not imply that simple contact with Gentiles is forbidden, let alone that Gentiles and their homes are ritually impure.⁹⁹¹ Rather, Luke’s language betrays the Jewish concern over *extended, intimate* association and interaction with non-Jews. Thus, in Acts 5:13, Luke speaks of outsiders who did not dare *join* (κολλᾶσθαι) the Jesus movement in Jerusalem. Such an act would not only require nominal membership with the burgeoning movement, but also full integration and interaction with its members, including *daily* sharing of bread as well as the common distribution of goods (Acts 4:34–37; 5:1).⁹⁹² The verb denotes more the idea of “clinging” than simple contact with other individuals. Elsewhere, the verb is even used to describe the intimate relationship and bodily unification between husband and wife: “For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined (κολληθήσεται) to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh” (Matt 19:5; cf. Mark 10:7). Here the verb κολλάω obviously corresponds to the Hebrew קָבַד, “to stick,” “cling,” or “cleave,” used to describe the unification between Adam and Eve in Gen 2:24.⁹⁹³

⁹⁹¹ Klawans, “Notions of Gentile Impurity,” 300–1. I reject, of course, Klawans’ opinion (which represents the “classical” perspective) that the author of Acts was a Gentile “who was by no means sympathetic to Jews or Judaism. Thus one can assume that Luke is exaggerating in Acts 10:28” (301). Cf. Ben Witherington III, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1998), 353, suggests that ἀθέμιτόν “could be translated ‘unlawful,’ but it probably has its weaker sense of ‘taboo’ or ‘strongly frowned upon.’”

⁹⁹² In a similar vein, Paul, after his recent conversion, tries to join (κολλᾶσθαι) the disciples of Jerusalem (Acts 9:26). Cf. Luke 10:11; 15:15; Acts 8:29; 17:34; Dan 2:43 (LXX); Rev 18:5; *1 Clem.* 15:1; 19:2; 30:3; 31:1; 46:1, 2, 4; 49:5; 56:2; *2 Clem.* 14:5; *Barn.* 10:3, 4, 5, 8, 11; 19:2, 6; 20:2; *Did.* 3:9; 5:2; *Herm. Vis.* 3.6.2; *Herm. Mand.* 1:6; *T. Iss.* 6:1.

⁹⁹³ Cf. 1 Cor 6:16–17: “Do you not know that whoever is united (κολλώμενος) to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For it is said, ‘The two shall be one flesh. But anyone united (κολλώμενος) to the Lord becomes one spirit with him.’” Cf. Eph 5:31. Interestingly enough, the Salkinson-Ginsburg Hebrew translation of the New Testament uses the verb קָבַד to translate κολλᾶσθαι in Acts 10:28.

Perhaps Luke has in mind very “conservative” Jews, but not all Jews, who avoided as much as possible any contact with Gentiles. Josephus refers to Essenes who wash themselves even after touching junior members of their own clan, “as if they had intermixed with a foreigner” (καθάπερ ἄλλοφύλῳ συμφυρέντας). Klawans admits that this passage presents evidence that *some* Jews, rather rigorous ones in their observance, considered Gentiles to be ritually impure.⁹⁹⁴ In the very anti-Gentile book of *Jubilees*, Jews are strongly exhorted to separate themselves fully from Gentiles by not eating or associating with them (*Jub.* 22:16; Cf. CD 11:14–15). But even in this chauvinistic and “primitive” book, as Zeitlin once qualified it,⁹⁹⁵ the reason given for avoiding Gentile contact mainly involves their idolatrous and immoral ways, not their ritual impurity. *One* strand within the rabbinic movement, identified with the Shammaite school of thought, also embraced a distancing attitude toward Gentiles, particularly during the first Jewish Revolt and immediately after the defeat.⁹⁹⁶ Such passages illustrate how certain Jews might have avoided as much as possible contact with non-Jews, even if there was no legal justification for such withdrawal. It is not impossible to imagine that among such “extremist” Jews were also to be found Jewish followers of Jesus—even in Luke’s day. After all, Luke hyperbolically describes the *ekklesia* in Jerusalem as composed of several thousand Jewish believers, zealous for the Law (21:20). Of course, Luke’s exaggerated “census” should not be taken literally, but once the modern inquirer is ready to abandon the traditional portrait that views insignificant pockets of Ebionites and Nazarenes as the sole surviving representatives of a Torah observant “Jewish Christian” wing in the Jesus

⁹⁹⁴ Klawans, “Notions of Gentile Impurity,” 300.

⁹⁹⁵ Solomon Zeitlin, “The Book of Jubilees: Its Character and its Significance,” *JQR* 30.1 (1939): 30.

⁹⁹⁶ Although in the long run a more lenient attitude, representative of the Hillelite tradition, was embraced by prominent rabbinic sages such as Judah the Patriarch. See Tomson, *Paul and the Jewish Law*, 234–36.

movement of the post-70 era, then Luke's concern in addressing this "mighty minority" of Jewish believers, as Jervell puts it, can be fully appreciated. Such zealous Jewish followers of Jesus, Torah observant and secluded from Gentiles, were sufficiently visible even in the post-Bar Kokhba era for Justin Martyr to bother himself in describing and refuting their beliefs.⁹⁹⁷ They may not have been too different from the Essenes of Josephus or the author of *Jubilees* in so far as their interaction with Gentiles was concerned. In fact, the national defeat of the Jewish people during the first revolt would have certainly incited further resentment between Jews and Gentiles in the immediate aftermath of the war, and even certain Jewish and Gentile followers of Jesus would have been caught in this tension.⁹⁹⁸

On the other hand, Luke might also be thinking of (non-"Christian) Jews from the Diaspora who remain suspicious about the extensive Jewish-Gentile interaction within the *ekklesia*, especially if there were Jewish followers of Jesus who were abandoning Torah observance all together—a rumor, probably not without basis, floating around in Luke's day (e.g., Acts 21:21).

The Baptism of the Sacred Spirit

A *holy* angel (ἁγγέλου ἁγίου) and *holy* Jews have visited the home of a pious Gentile believer (10:22). The new anthropological nature Luke attributes to Gentile followers of Jesus, who are no longer to be viewed as morally impure or inherently profane, fully accounts for such encounters between holy angels, Jews, and sanctified

⁹⁹⁷ In *Dial.* ch. 47, Justin Martyr refers to Jewish followers of Jesus who continue to observe the Torah but refuse to fellowship with Gentile followers of Jesus unless the latter become circumcised.

⁹⁹⁸ So Tomson, *Paul and the Jewish Law*, 236, who addresses the pre-70 situation and aligns James and his followers more closely with Shammaite views, while placing Paul closer to the Hillelite perspective. I suggest such a polarization continued, perhaps even exacerbated after 70 within the *ekklesia* because of the political-nationalist aspirations and frustrations of that epoch.

Gentiles.⁹⁹⁹ Now an even more remarkable visitation occurs near the end of the Cornelius episode: “the sacred spirit” (τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον) falls upon Cornelius and all those non-Jews present with him (v. 44). I have chosen to translate τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον as “the sacred spirit,” rather than “the Holy Spirit.” Not only is the latter term entangled in later Trinitarian developments, but also it has become so familiar to the layperson and specialist alike that the epithet, “holy,” attached to the noun “spirit,” has lost its original *sacred* resonance. Recovering this ascription assists in appreciating the amazement the Jewish disciples express at the event occurring before their eyes: the sacred spirit, which up until this point has fallen only upon members of the holy people of Israel (Jews, but also certain Samaritans, viewed by Luke as “Israelites”), has now fallen upon (formerly) profane Gentiles. The baptism of the sacred spirit upon Gentile followers of Jesus constitutes definite proof in Luke’s eyes that their imputed profaneness no longer exists. *These* non-Jews can receive the sacred spirit, speak in tongues, and exalt the God of Israel much like the rest of the Jewish *ekklesia* of Jerusalem (2:4).

At such a sight, the Jewish disciples who are with Peter are “out of their wits” (ἐξέστησαν). This Greek verb appears quite frequently in Acts to describe marvelous expressions of wonder before a fabulous sign or miracle (cf. 2:7, 12). The Jewish astonishment at the baptism of the sacred spirit upon Gentiles can be fully appreciated when we remember that certain Jews believed non-Jews to be permanently under the control and curse of impure spirits. Such is the extreme view of the author of *Jubilees* who sees no collective hope for the Gentiles: “He made spirits rule over all [i.e., the nations] in order to lead them astray from following him. But over Israel he made no

⁹⁹⁹ Cf. 1QMilhamah 7:6: “Any man who is not ritually clean in respect to his genitals on the day of battle shall not go down with them into battle, for holy angels are present with their army.”

angel or spirit rule because he alone is their ruler” (15:31–32). In contrast to this exceptionally anti-Gentile perspective, Luke depicts Gentiles who are set free from such demonic control and can enjoy visitations of holy angels and the sacred spirit herself.

Only *after* this miraculous event, does Peter agree to stay at Cornelius’ house: “Then they asked him to stay on for a few days” (v. 48). This order of events (baptism followed by lodging in a Gentile house) also occurs in Acts 16:15 where another God-fearing Gentile, Lydia, invites Paul and his companions to lodge in her house after her baptism. By now it should have hopefully become clear that Peter’s residence and dining in a Gentile home need not be interpreted as abrogating in any radical sense Jewish praxis, whether in the realm of kashrut or purity matters in general. Peter’s acceptance of Cornelius’ invitation, which is only implied in the text, signifies that he, or better, Luke, accepts such Gentiles as morally pure. Luke *never* claims that Peter ate non-kosher food during his stay with Cornelius. He operates under the assumption that Jews and purified and sanctified Gentiles can enjoy fellowship together without leading the former to forsaking their kosher diet.

The Jerusalem Report

As rumor spreads regarding the unprecedented Jewish outreach of the *ekklesia* to the Gentiles, Peter becomes the target of criticism among Jewish believers in Jerusalem. Even here the manner in which their reprimanding question is formulated highlights not a concern with the transgression of kosher laws as with the extensive interaction within Gentiles: “Why did you go to *uncircumcised men* and eat *with them?*” (11:3; emphasis mine) The question the Jewish disciples raise concerns itself primarily with *whom* and *where* Peter ate rather than *what* was served to him on his tray, probably because it would

be unthinkable to their minds—and by extension to Luke—that the Jewish apostle would have eaten such reprehensible food items as pork or shrimp. If there is any apprehension regarding food in this question, it would probably concern the indirect compromise with idolatry through the consumption of (kosher) food previously offered to idols. In the subsequent section dealing with the “Jerusalem council,” I show how Luke specifically addresses this issue, requiring Gentiles to refrain from eating food offered to idols.

In any case, Luke never has Peter confirm any allegation over a compromise with kashrut. Neither does he allow Peter’s Jewish companions, those who traveled with him to Caesarea and witnessed the events, to turn against him by testifying that the Jewish apostle had indeed consumed forbidden food. On the contrary, as Luke’s Peter recounts the unique events he has just witnessed (11:4–17), he focuses on the marvelous incident of the sacred spirit falling upon the Gentiles believers. This unique phenomenon is sufficient in Luke’s eyes to justify Peter’s temporary residence with non-Jews (vv. 15–17). Thus, upon hearing this report, Luke claims that the Jewish followers in Jerusalem rejoiced (not because of Peter’s first taste of bacon!) but because “God has given even to the Gentiles the repentance that leads to life” (v. 18). If Luke wants to show clearly that Peter had consumed forbidden food, he has failed to do so. Despite the numerous opportunities offered to him in the narration of this extended pericope, Luke never claims that the Jewish apostle or those Jewish followers with him consumed the unthinkable. Instead, he briefly recounts the Peter-Cornelius encounter in order to reaffirm the purification and sanctification of certain Gentiles.

Conclusion

Far from ever abrogating kashrut or even purity regulations, Luke only argues for the moral purification and deprofanization of Gentile followers of Jesus. Pious Gentiles, who have abandoned their immoral practices and submitted themselves to the God of Israel and the lordship of Jesus, have been purified from their sins and have received an upgrade in their profane status. Luke implies that this metamorphosis of Gentile believers allows them to participate more fully in the ritual-cultic sphere of Judaism without profaning its sanctity. His view on Gentiles aligns itself with a passage from a favorite prophetic book of his: Isa 56:3–7. In the eschatological, redemptive spirit of this passage (cf. Isa 56:1: “soon my salvation will come”), Luke affirms the right for certain Gentiles and eunuchs alike (cf. Acts 8) to come and worship in the “house of prayer for all nations” (Isa 56:7; cf. Luke 19:46; Acts 8:27). Theoretically from Luke’s perspective, Gentile followers of Jesus (not all Gentiles!) could enter the courts reserved only for Jewish males and females to offer their sacrifices and offerings without desecrating such sacred space (Acts 21:28; 24:6). Thus, Luke supports the restoration of the status of the biblical *ger*, that is, the resident alien living among Israel, who once upon a time enjoyed the right to offer his or her burnt offering or sacrifice in the sanctuary (Lev 17:8–9).¹⁰⁰⁰

Of course, in Luke’s day, the temple lay in ruins, but Luke never gives up his hope for the eventual restoration of Jerusalem (Luke 21:24; Acts 1:8), and in the meantime his perspective on the profane and holy could be used for outlining Jewish and Gentile administration of rituals celebrated within the *ekklesia*, not least the celebration of the Eucharist and the fellowship (*κοινωνία*) to be enjoyed between Jewish and Gentile

¹⁰⁰⁰ In the next chapter, I show how Luke does embrace the model of the biblical *ger* as outlined in Lev 17–18 when dealing with the problem of table fellowship within the *ekklesia*.

followers of Jesus alike (cf. Acts 2:42). For Luke, a Gentile follower of Jesus is no longer to be viewed as *koinos* within the *koinonia* between Jews and Gentiles. Both are to share in the same communion wherein the lines between sacred and profane are realigned in new ways that allow for fuller Gentile participation *while ever presupposing the maintenance of a kosher diet on the part of the Jewish wing of the Jesus movement.*

Such a reformation does not imply that Luke completely eliminates the discriminating lines demarcating sacred and profane categories as outlined within the Jewish system of holiness. For Luke, Israel collectively continues to be a holy people vis-à-vis the unbelieving nations of the world. It is only *within* the people of Israel proper, that Luke realigns these borders in order to accommodate for the Gentile follower of Jesus, who, like the biblical *ger* from former times, becomes in a real sense *part* of the Jewish people. But even within Israel, or better, within the *ekklesia* seen as a miniature model of what the wider house of Israel ought to look like (in Luke's eyes), Luke recognizes the pragmatic, functional differences between Jews and Gentiles: Gentiles are not required to observe all of the stipulations outlined in the Torah. These are only and continually binding for Jews.

Chapter 11

The Apostolic Decree

[The law of] the covering up of the blood is binding both in the Land [of Israel] and outside the Land, both during the time of the Temple and after the time of the Temple (Mishnah, Hullin 6:1)

Introduction

The so-called Apostolic Decree appears in the very midst of Acts (ch. 15).¹⁰⁰¹ The attention and length Luke devotes in his narrative to this event signal its ongoing importance and relevance for him. Luke repeats the decree and its regulations no less than three times in Acts (15:20; 29; 21:25). The attention dedicated to this topic in secondary scholarship has been even greater.¹⁰⁰² Particularly in this case, the thorny questions concerning the relationship of Acts 15 with Galatians 2, the historicity and accuracy of Luke's portrait, and the relationship between the historical Paul, Peter, and James, on the one hand, and Luke's own depictions of these characters, on the other, will be avoided. The primary aim of this chapter lies in exploring the nature and scope of the halakic stipulations contained in the decree in order to assess Luke's attitude toward kashrut. The question of circumcision is treated in the following chapter, even though controversy over circumcising Gentiles erupts at the beginning of Acts 15 and triggers

¹⁰⁰¹ I try to avoid using the term "council" as it projects an anachronistic notion of higher ecclesiological structures and organization into the burgeoning Jesus movement of the first century. Even the term "Apostolic Decree" is problematic, as it tends to overemphasize universal agreement within the *ekklesia* and overlooks the major differences and tensions existing within the movement from day one. Nevertheless, the term "Apostolic Decree" is used here for the sake of convenience.

¹⁰⁰² The bibliography is endless. See the rich bibliography at the end of Wehnert, *Die Reinheit*, 285–302, particularly useful for its many references to works in German.

(according to Luke) an emergency meeting in Jerusalem. In this chapter, I hope to strengthen the thesis posited by a number of scholars who correctly view Lev 17–18 as part of the backdrop for understanding the contents and logic of the decree. In addition, I suggest that the decree and Luke’s understanding of this legislation presuppose the observance of kashrut *in its totality*—especially for Jewish and at times even Gentile followers of Jesus, depending on the circumstances. Luke’s understanding of the decree implies a certain halakic and ecclesiological discrimination: Jewish followers of Jesus keep kashrut, like the rest of the Mosaic Torah, in order to preserve their Jewish identity; Gentile followers of Jesus observe the stipulations outlined in the Apostolic decree, but in addition they respect kashrut in its entirety *when fellowshiping with other Jews*.

Literary Context of Acts 15

After the Cornelius incident (Acts 10–11:18), Jesus’ zealous disciples continue to disseminate their message, reaching as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch (11:19). In the great metropolis of Antioch, Luke subtly suggests that non-Jews also hear about the messianic proclamation regarding the risen Jesus (11:20).¹⁰⁰³ Henceforth, Antioch becomes a hub in Acts from which Paul and Barnabas go forth to preach the news to Jew and non-Jew alike throughout the Greco-Roman Diaspora (chs. 13 and 14). It is in the new and blossoming center of Antioch that “certain individuals from Judea,” as Luke vaguely puts it, proclaim circumcision as a prerequisite for the salvation of the Gentiles (15:1). This demand creates controversy and is only solved once all of the prominent leaders of the Jesus movement unanimously agree, so Luke claims, that non-Jews need not be circumcised but only observe the four commandments stipulated in the Apostolic

¹⁰⁰³ The problematic reference to “Hellenists” in 11:20 should be understood as including non-Jews who speak Greek. See Pervo, *Acts*, 291 and the many other commentators cited in n. 18 who hold this position.

Decree. After their assembling in Jerusalem, the apostles and elders decide to send emissaries in order to instruct those in Antioch about their decision and the contents of the decree (15:22–35). According to Luke, Paul and Barnabas participate in this endeavor, visiting every city where they previously proclaimed the gospel, instructing people in these places about the “the decisions that had been reached by the apostles and elders who were in Jerusalem” (16:4).¹⁰⁰⁴ In this way, Luke portrays a complacent Paul who adheres to the decision made in Jerusalem and commits himself to proclaiming and upholding its regulations.

In the book of Acts, the meeting in Jerusalem is brought about because of the *soteriological* question raised in Acts 15:1 concerning the salvation and circumcision of Gentiles. Because in Acts the Apostolic Decree is proclaimed in reaction to this controversy over soteriology, some commentators argue that its contents have little to do with addressing Jewish-Gentile table fellowship, but only touch upon the eschatological inclusion of Gentiles. According to this view, there would also be no connection between the decree and the laws of Leviticus chs. 17–18.¹⁰⁰⁵ This argument is shortsighted. In Acts 15 itself, Luke’s Peter refers back to the Cornelius incident during the Jerusalem meeting (15:7–11). Besides addressing the eschatological inclusion of Gentile believers into God’s people, the Cornelius episode, as I argued in the previous chapter, also presents the reader with material relevant for discussing the question of Jewish-Gentile fellowship and interaction. It is during his encounter with Cornelius that Luke’s Peter notifies the Roman centurion about a Jewish reservation toward entering Gentile homes

¹⁰⁰⁴ Immediately in Acts 16:1–3, Luke also refers not accidentally to the circumcision of Timothy by Paul, a rather striking act, given Paul’s reticence toward circumcising Gentiles. On this matter, see the next chapter.

¹⁰⁰⁵ See, for example, Deines, “Das Aposteldekret,” 355–56.

(10:28). It is also during this episode that Peter abides for several days in the house of the Roman centurion (10:48), leading some Jewish followers of Jesus to accuse him for dining with uncircumcised men (11:3). Furthermore, when Luke has James, the brother of Jesus, repeat the contents of the Apostolic Decree for yet a third time in Acts, this occurs in a context concerned with the perpetuation of Torah observance and Jewish identity (Acts 21:21–25).

Certainly, the decree, then, proves pertinent not only for the question of Gentile salvation but also for addressing concrete issues governing the daily interactions between Jews and Gentiles within the *ekklesia*. Indeed, the two issues cannot be fully divorced from each other. If a proselyte fully abides to the regulations of the Torah, he or she will obviously enjoy far greater contact and even complete integration into a Jewish community than a Gentile who remains indifferent or even hostile to Jewish life and practice. Naturally, Jews will relate more openly and favorably with Gentiles who admire and respect their customs, even if the latter do not observe the Torah in its entirety. Since Luke believes Gentile followers of Jesus enjoy a special status, similar in some ways to that of a full proselyte, he hopes that the attitude of other Jewish Torah observant followers of Jesus vis-à-vis such Gentiles will differ from their approach to the average non-Jew, particularly if these Gentile disciples of Jesus observe a body of legislation that removes the basic dietary, ethical, and ritual obstacles impeding Jewish-Gentile interaction. If *three out of four* of the regulations in the Apostolic Decree concern themselves in some way with *food*, as we will see, it should come as no surprise that they could assist Luke in addressing the issue of *Tischgemeinschaft* between Jew and Gentile and not only represent some kind of universal moral code (*à la* Noahide Laws) used to

justify the ecclesiological and eschatological incorporation of Gentile believers into the grander scheme of salvation-history.¹⁰⁰⁶

The Moral and Ritual Scope of the Decree

Repeatedly throughout the history of research on Luke-Acts, scholars of all stripes have attempted to fully moralize the contents of the Apostolic Decree, stripping it from its ritual components, often by resorting to textual critical arguments.¹⁰⁰⁷ The textual evidence, however, strongly supports a reading that originally contained an order to abstain from four items: 1) (food) polluted by idols (τῶν ἀλισγημάτων τῶν εἰδώλων) 2) sexual immorality (τῆς πορνείας) 3) what has been strangled (τοῦ πνικτοῦ) and 4) blood (τοῦ αἵματος).¹⁰⁰⁸ It is particularly the third item with its peculiar reference to strangled animals that has bothered those readers who would like to posit a list originally containing just three ethical commandments, namely to refrain from idolatry, sexual immorality, and blood(shed) (i.e., murder). However, others have convincingly refuted this reading on textual critical grounds, arguing for an original list in Acts that contained

¹⁰⁰⁶ Markus N. A. Bockmuehl, *Jewish Law in Gentile Churches: Halakhah and the Beginning of Christian Public Ethics* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000), 164: “Regardless of one’s perspective on the historicity of the account, Luke’s report pinpoints the central halakhic problem with great accuracy: should Gentiles who believe in Christ be treated as proselytes or as Noachides? It should be noted carefully that the primary point in this Lucan account is *not* that of table fellowship in mixed congregations (unlike Gal 2.12 and *pace* most commentators), but more generally the halakhic status of Gentiles believers: verse 1 clearly defines the question as being about what Gentiles must *do* to be saved.” Bockmuehl, however, goes on to acknowledge that the issues of *modus vivendi* with Gentiles and soteriology cannot be easily separated (see p. 164 n. 86). Even Deines, “Das Aposteldekret,” 356 must concede this point when he states: “In Apg 15 geht es vielmehr um die Zugehörigkeit von Nichtjuden zum eschatologischen Gottesvolk und die sich daraus ergebenden Konsequenzen in der Lebensführung.”

¹⁰⁰⁷ Among others, Thorleif Boman, “Das textkritische Problem des sogenannten Aposteldekrets,” *NovT* 7 (1964): 26–36; David Flusser and Shmuel Safrai, “Das Aposteldekret und die Noachitischen Gebote,” in “*Wer Tora vermehrt, mehrt Leben.*” *Festgabe für Heinz Kremers zum 60. Geburtstag* (eds. Edna Brocke and Hans-Joachim Barkenings; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1986), 173–92; Gotthold Resch, *Das Aposteldekret nach seiner außerkanonischen Textgestalt untersucht* (TUGAL 28.3; Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs, 1905); Harald Sahlin, “Die drei Kardinalsünden und das Neue Testament” *ST* 24 (1970): 93–112 (especially p. 109); surprisingly, Tomson, *Paul and the Jewish Law*, 179; Wilson, *Luke and the Law*, 79f.

¹⁰⁰⁸ This is the order and wording as found in 15:20. In 15:29, the order and wording are slightly different: εἰδωλοθύτων καὶ αἵματος καὶ πνικτῶν καὶ πορνείας (in 21:25 the order follows 15:29).

all four items, including “strangled.”¹⁰⁰⁹ In addition to the textual critical considerations, it is quite reasonable to posit that during the “Gentilizing” course of Christian history a list that originally contained ritual, halakic regulations could quite rapidly and fully be converted into a moral charter. On the other hand, theorizing about the reverse process (i.e., from an ethical to ritual legislation) is harder to rationalize.¹⁰¹⁰ Furthermore, if the decree in Acts originally contained only three cardinal, universal sins (idolatry, sexual immorality, and bloodshed), one wonders why Luke would bother to have all of the major protagonists of the Jesus movement decree the most obvious of expectations held by most Jews in antiquity. Which Jew would not agree in principle that ideally Gentiles should refrain from idolatry, sexual immorality, and violence? There would hardly be a need to summon a “Jerusalem Council” to enforce and inculcate the superfluous.

The ritual dimension of the decree, therefore, cannot be underestimated. Actually, some scholars have rightly sought to transcend the bifurcation of the decree into “moral” and “ritual” components by claiming that *both* dimensions are present within this apostolic legislation.¹⁰¹¹ I will try to highlight this dual dimension more fully in the ensuing discussion on each of the four commandments contained within the decree. This approach is very promising hermeneutically. For example, adopting such a position can assist in explicating the obscure usage of the term “ἀλισγημάτων” (“pollutions”), which

¹⁰⁰⁹ Bruce Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (London: United Bible Societies, 1975), 429–34 (many secondary references therein); Müller, *Tora für die Völker*, 140f.; Wehnert, *Die Reinheit*, 22–29.

¹⁰¹⁰ Flusser and Safrai, “Das Aposteldekret und die Noachitischen Gebote,” 173–92, never adequately explain how originally an ethical decree became ritualized. Positing that there were originally two forms of Noahide Laws, one ritual, the other ethical, does not satisfactorily account for the problem, for the Noahide Laws are an entirely moral legislation, even the command to refrain from eating a limb from a live animal. More on this below.

¹⁰¹¹ Bockmuehl, *Jewish Law in Gentile Churches*, 166; Barrett, “The Apostolic Decree of Acts 15.29,” *ABR* 35 (1987): 50–59. Also rightly noted by Tomson, *Paul and the Jewish Law*, 179, who, nevertheless, favors the Western text as authentic, while seeing the Eastern text as an alternative, stricter version issued shortly after in Asia Minor.

appears in Acts 15:20.¹⁰¹² Gentile followers of Jesus are to avoid idolatry, *porneia*, and bloodshed, because such acts are morally impure. On the other hand, the decree demands Gentile followers to move beyond these basic demands by abstaining from eating blood and serving strangled meat on their tables because these items can also transmit a ritual impurity to the Jewish followers of Jesus who might be willing to dine with their Gentile comrades but wish to faithfully observe their dietary and purity laws.¹⁰¹³

Lev 17–18 and the Apostolic Decree

A number of scholars have rightly argued that the Apostolic Decree should be understood in light of Leviticus chs. 17–18.¹⁰¹⁴ Such a correlation accounts for the *choice* and *number* of regulations outlined in the decree, four in total, as well as for their *function* and *audience*, namely, as a body of legislation governing Jewish-Gentile relations within the Jesus movement. In Lev chs. 17 and 18, appear commandments that *both* the Israelite and the resident alien (גר) dwelling among Israel must observe, commandments that readily offer themselves as a model for tackling the many problems

¹⁰¹² The noun is derived from the verb ἀλισγέω, which appears a few times in the LXX. Probably the most instructive reference appears in Dan 1:8, which describes Daniel and his friends' abstinence from defiling themselves with the food and wine of the king of Babylon (μη ἀλισγηθῆν ἐν τῷ δεῖπνῳ τοῦ βασιλέως καὶ ἐν ᾧ πίνει οἶνον), probably because of the association of such items with idolatry. Cf. 4 Bar. 7:32 where Jeremiah teaches his people to abstain from the pollutions of the Gentiles of Babylon (τοῦ ἀπέχεσθαι ἐκ τῶν ἀλισγημάτων τῶν ἐθνῶν τῆς Βαβυλῶνος)

¹⁰¹³ It is possible that in Luke's eyes the consumption of blood and carcasses also *ritually* defiles *Gentile* believers, since according to Lev 17, *both* the Israelite and the resident alien must wash themselves in the event of eating carrions. This would prove to be one of the exceptional arenas in which certain Jews believed that Gentiles could acquire a certain kind of ritual impurity. Although Jews generally thought that Gentiles were exempt from ritual impurity, the laws in Lev 17–18 were treated differently among certain Jewish followers of Jesus. In the *Pseudo Clementines*, particularly *Homilies* 7.8.1, there seems to be an expansion of the reach of ritual impurity into the Gentile realm, since it calls for Gentile women to keep the laws of menstruation (αὐτὰς μέντοι καὶ ἀφεδρον φυλάσσειν) and for Gentile couples to wash after sexual intercourse (ἀπὸ κοίτης γυναικὸς λούεσθαι). Interestingly enough, these regulations appear in a section of the *Pseudo-Clementine* containing several commandments that overlap with Luke's version of the Apostolic Decree. See discussion below.

¹⁰¹⁴ Barrett, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 2:734, views this position as the majority view. Nevertheless, many have repeatedly questioned and challenged this view.

involved in addressing Jewish-Gentiles relations within the *ekklesia*. The fact that parallels to all four commandments of the Apostolic Decree can be found within Lev 17–18 only further encourages drawing such a connection.

In my opinion, Wehnert has made an important contribution to the discussion by drawing upon the overlooked Targumic passages to Lev 17–18.¹⁰¹⁵ Surprisingly, the Targumim have been neglected in the investigation of the Apostolic Decree although they constitute a logical source for comparison, given the common language they share with the Aramaic speaking *ekklesia* of Jerusalem.¹⁰¹⁶ Despite the problems related to dating the traditions within the targumic sources, it is quite justifiable to at least consult such literature in order to enrich our discussion, since, unfortunately, few of the extant sources deal with some of the key components of the decree, especially the obscure Greek term, *πνικτός* (“strangled”). The heterogeneous character of the materials contained in the various Targumim indicates that this corpus of writings contains various traditions, some of which antedate the final forms of these Aramaic translations.¹⁰¹⁷ Thanks to the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, we now have very ancient evidence at our disposal attesting to the Jewish practice of translating the Hebrew scriptures into Aramaic during the Second Temple period.¹⁰¹⁸ Gleßmer, among others, who builds upon Schäfer’s work, has argued for an early provenance of the *halakic* materials (in contrast to the haggadic

¹⁰¹⁵ The recent attempt by Deines, “Das Aposteldekret,” 323–98 to refute Wehnert as well Jervell’s position on this matter is unconvincing. I have already critiqued Deines elsewhere for relativizing Luke (and Matthew’s) affirmation of purity laws and *kashrut*. In my opinion, he completely underestimates the halakic dimension to the decree.

¹⁰¹⁶ I assume with Wehnert that the so-called Apostolic Decree does go back to the Aramaic speaking *ekklesia* in Jerusalem and that Luke essentially reaffirms the premises of this legislation.

¹⁰¹⁷ Wehnert, *Die Reinheit*, 217.

¹⁰¹⁸ See the Targum of Job (11QtgJob).

ones) contained within the Targumim, including *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan*.¹⁰¹⁹ Obviously, this does not mean that all of the halakic traditions recorded within this literary corpus dates from earlier periods. Nevertheless, Wehnert's comparison of the targumic sources on Lev 17–18 with the Apostolic Decree reveals several interesting parallels between *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* and the Tannaitic works of the Mishnah, the Tosefta, and the halakic Midrash *Sifra*, strongly suggesting that some of the halakic contents in *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* stem at least from a period prior to the beginning of the third century C.E. His findings certainly merit greater attention and consideration than they have until this point.¹⁰²⁰

Idolatry

Lev 17:8–9 contains a solemn condemnation against the Israelite and the resident alien if they fail to bring their sacrifices and burnt offerings to the tent of meeting in order to sacrifice them before the God of Israel. Thus, this section of the Mosaic Torah explicitly forbids both the Israelite and the resident alien residing in the holy land from sacrificing to other gods.¹⁰²¹ Lev 17:7 presupposes this exclusive devotion to the deity of Israel by prohibiting sacrificing “to goat-demons” (שעירים). Interestingly enough, the

¹⁰¹⁹ See Uwe Gleßner, *Einleitung in die Targume zum Pentateuch* (TSAJ 48; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1995); Peter Schäfer, “Der Grundtext von Targum Pseudo-Jonathan: Eine synoptische Studie zu Gen 1,” in *Das Institutum Judaicum der Universität Tübingen in den Jahren 1971–1972* (Tübingen: n.p., 1972), 8–29. Cf. Robert Hayward, “The Date of Targum Pseudo-Jonathan: Some Comments,” *JJS* 40 (1989): 7–30, who also argues for early traditions contained with *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan*. For an early dating of *Targum Neofiti*, see Gabriele Boccaccini, “Targum Neofiti as a Proto-Rabbinic Document: A Systemic Analysis,” in *The Aramaic Bible: Targums in Their Historical Context* (eds. Derek Robert George Beattie and Martin McNamara; JSOTSup 165; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 260–69.

¹⁰²⁰ In the English speaking world, Wehnert's monograph is still neglected (missing altogether in Pervo's commentary on Acts) even though Wehnert offers the most recent and comprehensive analysis of the Apostolic Decree. See, however, Markus Bockmuehl, review of Jürgen Wehnert, *Die Reinheit des “christlichen Gottesvolkes” aus Juden und Heiden*, *JTS* 50 (1999): 260–68. In Italian speaking scholarship, see its recognition in Filoramo and Gianotto, *Verus Israel: Nuove prospettive sul giudeo cristianesimo*.

¹⁰²¹ Milgrom, *Leviticus*, 2:1463–9.

LXX translates שעירים with ματαίους, “idle” or “empty” things. In the LXX, the Greek μάταιος generally translates Hebrew terms such as הבל, הוא, or כזב. Particularly, the term הבל, sometimes juxtaposed with הוא, is used in reference to pagan deities and the vain devotion (in Jewish eyes) paid to them.¹⁰²² In Second Temple Jewish literature, μάταιος appears quite often in passages that reprimand Gentiles for their idolatrous worship of false gods.¹⁰²³ The usage of ματαίους in the LXX of Lev 17:7 to translate the narrower Hebrew term “goat demons” can be seen as a Second Temple “update” of the Mosaic legislation protesting cultic involvement in the idolatrous practices of the surrounding nations.

The targumic materials on Lev 17 testify to a similar trajectory as the LXX but emphasize the link between idolatry and *demon worship*. Thus, *Targum Neofiti* possibly translates שעירים with שדיה (“demons”), but also adds טעוותיה, “idols.” The same phenomenon occurs in *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan*: “and they shall not offer their sacrifices to idols that are like demons” (לטעוון דמתילין לשידי).¹⁰²⁴ As Wehnert observes, the worship of demons in Israelite times is understood here as an *Urbild* for an actual and ongoing problem of involvement with polytheistic cults (cf. *Tg. Ps-J* on Lev 19:4 and 20:5).¹⁰²⁵ The earliest rabbinic interpretations on the same verse in Leviticus point in the

¹⁰²² Often rendered in LXX with τὰ μάταια: Jer 2:5; 10:3; 1 Kgs 16:13, 26; 2 Kgs 17:15; Ps 31:6; Amos 2:4; Jon 2:8, etc.

¹⁰²³ Wis 15:8; 3 Macc 6:11; *Sib. Or.* 3:355; 5:83; 23:31; *Let. Aris.* 134, 136, 139, cf. Acts 14:15; Eph 4:17; 1 Pet 1:18.

¹⁰²⁴ Translations of targumic materials mine.

¹⁰²⁵ Wehnert, *Die Reinheit*, 220.

same direction, understanding שעירים more broadly as שדים and comprehensively tying the phrase in Lev 17:7 “to whom they prostitute themselves” to *all* idol worship.¹⁰²⁶

By the first century C.E., many Jews probably read Lev 17:7–10 as a blanket prohibition against idolatry. Already the Jewish thinker Paul, when addressing his Gentile readers, joins in this general and typical type of Jewish derision against idolatry, at times dismissing it as an empty, foolish practice (1 Cor 8:4; 10:19), in line with the “rationalist” perspective on idolatry attested in other Jewish-Diasporan sources written in Greek (LXX, Wis. 3 Macc; *Sib. Or.*; *Let. Aris.*, etc.), or explicitly connecting it with demon worship (Belial: 2 Cor 6:14–16; cf. *Jub.* 22:16; Targumim, *Sifra*, etc.).¹⁰²⁷ The aforementioned evidence demonstrates that the Aramaic speaking *ekklesia* in Palestine could have well applied the prohibitions against the worship of goat demons mentioned in Lev 17 to the current cults of idolatry reigning throughout Greco-Roman and Mesopotamian cultures, prohibiting even Gentile followers of Jesus from participating in these polytheistic practices.

In the realm of food consumption, the command in Acts 15:20 to abstain from “things polluted by idols” (τῶν ἀλισγημάτων τῶν εἰδώλων) would encompass not only *meat* but also others foods offered to idols such as wine, grain, and bread.¹⁰²⁸ For a long

¹⁰²⁶ *Sifra* Aharei Mot Perek 9:8: אין שעירים אלא שדים שנאמר ושעירים ירקדו שם, אשר הם זונים אחריהם לרבות שאר עבודה זרה.

¹⁰²⁷ Paul simultaneously displays a supernatural and rational view on idols, while the rabbinic perspective in general follows a rational trajectory (although the demonic dimension is noted at times). See Tomson, *Paul and the Jewish Law*, 156–57.

¹⁰²⁸ The more generalizing phrase τῶν ἀλισγημάτων τῶν εἰδώλων, which appears in Acts 15:20, covers not only a wide range of food items but the adoration of idols *tout court*. In Acts 15:29 and 21:25, a more restrictive term exclusively tied to food appears: εἰδωλοθύτων, “what has been sacrificed to idols” (NRSV). Tomson, *Paul and the Jewish Law*, 189, correctly argues that the verb θύω means not only “slaughter” but also “offer” or “celebrate,” thus encompassing bloodless food items such as bread or wine. Cf. “θυσία” and “θύω” in *BDAG*. Accordingly, τῶν ἀλισγημάτων τῶν εἰδώλων should be viewed as a comprehensive term

time, scholars have argued that the regular diet of the average Jew or Gentile could not include meat because of its high price.¹⁰²⁹ Hence, a command given to Gentiles to merely refrain from eating *meat* offered to idols would not prove a very substantial test of allegiance. Nevertheless, some recent studies are challenging this consensus, positing that at least in Palestine meat may have found its way more often into the average diet than previously thought.¹⁰³⁰ In any case, if Gentile followers of Jesus were expected to abstain from any food or drink offered to idols, this would considerably raise the test of fidelity and standards of expectations. Ancient Jewish sources reveal a particular concern with the consumption of Gentile wine. “You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons,” declares one radical Jewish thinker of the first century C.E. in a letter addressing Gentiles (1Cor 10:21; cf. Rom 14:21). Likewise, many passages in the mishnaic tractate *Avodah Zarah* focus on the problem of handling Gentile wine, often suspecting such liquid to have been used in a context related to idolatry (e.g., *m. Avod. Zar.* 2:3; 5:9–10).¹⁰³¹ Most illuminating is Daniel’s refusal to “defile (ἀλισγηθή/לֹאֵגַת) himself with the royal rations of food and wine” of king Nebuchadnezzar (Dan 1:8). Instead, Daniel and his three friends maintain a diet of vegetables and water, presumably because such products were not offered to idols.¹⁰³² As noted earlier, the verb used in the book of

encompassing food offered to idols as well as the homage paid to them in general through various cultic activities. Cf. Shulam and LeCornu, *Jewish Roots of Acts*, 1:836.

¹⁰²⁹ See Bockmuehl, *Jewish Law in Gentile Churches*, 170; Safrai, “Home and Family,” 747; Tomson, *Paul and the Jewish Law*, 189.

¹⁰³⁰ Shimon Dar, “Food and Archaeology in Romano-Byzantine Palestine,” in *Food in Antiquity* (eds. John Wilkins, F. D. Harvey, and Michael J. Dobson; Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1995), 326–35; Justin Lev-Tov, “‘Upon What Meat Doth This Our Caesar Feed . . . ?’ A Dietary Perspective on Hellenistic and Roman Influence in Palestine,” in *Zeichen aus Text und Stein*, 420–46; Schwartz, “Food, Eating, and Meals,” 406–7.

¹⁰³¹ On the other hand, certain Jews seem to not have been perturbed by purchasing wine produced by Gentiles. See Magness, *Stone and Dung*, 57, for a discussion of archaeological data from Palestine.

¹⁰³² Cf. Josephus’ reference to Jewish priests who only ate figs and nuts during their stay in Rome (*Life* 14); cf. 4 Bar 7:38; Jeremiah offers figs to his people and teaches them to avoid the pollutions of the Gentiles of

Daniel to describe defilement with Gentile food and wine, ἀλισγηθή, which is related to ἀλισγημάτων of Acts 15:20, possibly refers to moral pollution brought about through involvement with idolatrous practices.¹⁰³³

The demand, then, in the Apostolic Decree to refrain from “things polluted by idols” requires Gentile followers of Jesus to distance themselves from meat, wine, and other food items offered to idols, while also exhorting them to distance themselves from polytheistic rituals and practices in general. This no small demand could easily disrupt the intricate social, political, and economic ecosystem of delicate Jewish-Gentile coexistence in the Greco-Roman Diaspora, particularly in a post-70 C.E. environment where tension and suspicion between Jews and Romans would certainly not have entirely ceased after the failure of the First Jewish Revolt. While Romans and other non-Jews could tolerate the right *for Jews* to express their exclusive devotion to their deity and ancestral customs, any conspicuous attempt on the part of Jews to gain “converts” to their side by demanding them to fully distance themselves from the idolatrous and polytheistic practices so intimately tied with various daily cultic, civic, and family rites could provoke social strife and resentment. Hence, the understandable distancing of the wider Diasporan Jewish communities from messianic Jewish groups such as Luke’s because of the rather radical standards of discipleship expected from Gentiles.¹⁰³⁴

Babylon. Perhaps, Rom 14:2 with its reference to the “weak” who only eat vegetables should also be understood in this context of Jewish fear over eating food possibly offered to idols.

¹⁰³³ Other passages dealing with Gentile wine and idolatry: Jud 12:1, 13, 20; Bel 1:3, 11.

¹⁰³⁴ Paul’s repeated ejections from the synagogues in the Diaspora, which Luke extensively retells in Acts, occurs primarily because of the Gentile crowds he succeeds in drawing, and could possibly inform us about Luke’s own *Sitz im Leben*. For example, the riots in Ephesus occur because of Paul’s success in drawing local Gentiles away from the cult of Artemis. The local silversmiths, artisans, and other traders, who depend on the continual popularity of the goddess Artemis in order to earn their living, blame Paul for drawing away non-Jews from idolatry, failing to distinguish Paul’s messianic movement from the wider Jewish community of Ephesus (Acts 19:34). It was in the interest, therefore, of the wider Jewish community to distance itself from the Jesuian messianic sect in order secure its own welfare.

Porneia

The command to abstain from *πορνεία*, loosely translated here as “illicit sexual relations,” is the only injunction in the Apostolic Decree that does not concern itself with food. Nonetheless, its inclusion in this legislation is quite understandable in light of the moral dimension of impurity also underlining the decree. As in previous case on the prohibition against idolatry, Leviticus contains a list of forbidden sexual practices that concern both the Israelite and the resident alien (Lev 18:26). These include prohibitions against incest (18:6–18), sex with a menstruating woman (v. 19), adultery (v. 20), male sodomy (v. 22), and bestiality (v. 23). From the perspective of Leviticus, all of these sexual acts are viewed as morally defiling: “Do not defile yourselves in any of these ways, for by all these practices the nations I am casting out before you have defiled themselves” (Lev 18:24). Second Temple Jewish sources continue to stress the defiling force of sexual immorality.¹⁰³⁵ Thus, the Enochic tradition emphasizes the pollution arising from the copulation between the Watchers and the “daughters of men” (1 *En.* 10:22; 106:15; cf. *Jub.* 7:20–25). The book of *Jubilees* quite severely singles out the moral defilement of the Gentiles because of their sexual immorality.¹⁰³⁶ Denunciations of Gentile sexual immorality can also be found in Jewish sources from the Greek speaking Diaspora.¹⁰³⁷ According to Lev 18, the Canaanite engagement in illicit sexual practices ultimately led to their ultimate expulsion from the land of Canaan.¹⁰³⁸ While ritual

¹⁰³⁵ See Klawans, “Notions of Gentile Impurity,” 293–97; Hayes, *Gentile Impurities*, 55–58.

¹⁰³⁶ See the denunciation of Sodom and Gomorrah for their defilement and sexual immorality (16:5). Cf. *Jub.* 9:15; 1QS 4:10, 21.

¹⁰³⁷ *Sib. Or.* 3:492, 496–500; 5:168; Wis 14:31; *Let. Arist.* 152; 1 Cor 6:16–20; Rom 1:24, 26, 29.

¹⁰³⁸ Although punishment is reserved only for those Gentiles who inhabit the *land* of Canaan, by the Second Temple period, Jews had come to view such sexual practices as universally binding, regardless of geographical location. The Pauline literature is only another source of evidence for a Jewish contempt toward the sexual practices of their Greco-Roman surroundings. See Tomson, *Paul and the Jewish Law*, 97–102. The attempt, therefore, by Deines, “Das Aposteldekret,” 356, to dismiss Lev 17–18 as the basis

impurity can be removed through purification and atonement, Milgrom notes that “the sexual abominations of Lev 18 (and 20) are not expiable through ritual.”¹⁰³⁹ This reality makes the moral cleansing of Gentile believers announced in the Cornelius episode and repeated in Acts 15:9 all the more remarkable. For Luke, the moral purification of Gentile followers of Jesus represents a miraculous working on their behalf, and they are to maintain their newly acquired moral purity by avoiding the futility of idol worship as well as the sexual immoralities of the nations.¹⁰⁴⁰

Wehnert has sought to reinforce the exegetical link between Lev 18 and the command against *πορνεία* in the Apostolic Decree.¹⁰⁴¹ He argues that by the first century C.E. Lev 18:6–30 would have been viewed as one unit containing a catalogue of commandments prohibiting illicit sexual relations. Already the Damascus Document (5:9) discusses some of the laws from Lev 18 under the rubric of *משפט העריות* (“law of incest”).¹⁰⁴² Correspondingly, rabbinic tradition calls this section of Leviticus *ערוות* (“incest” or “forbidden relations”).¹⁰⁴³ *ערוות* is the plural form for the Hebrew noun *ערוה* (“nakedness”), which appears prominently in Lev 18, there always in the singular. In the Septuagint, *ἀσχημοσύνη* normally translates *ערוה*, not *πορνεία* (absent in the LXX to Lev

for understanding the Apostolic Decree because of the *original* confinement of the levitical legislation to the land of Israel is without basis. Jews from the Second Temple period onward refrained from idolatry, incest, consuming blood and carcasses *regardless of their geographical location*. In the classical rabbinic understanding, the laws in Lev 17–18 are not “commandments that are dependent on the land of Israel” (*מצות התלויות בארץ*). *Jubilees* also evinces this universal expansion and application of Lev 17–18 (more on this in the sections dealing with blood and strangled meat).

¹⁰³⁹ Milgrom, *Leviticus*, 2:1573.

¹⁰⁴⁰ Cf. Ezek 36:25f., which describes the purification of Israel by God from all of her impurities.

¹⁰⁴¹ Wehnert, *Die Reinheit*, 232–33.

¹⁰⁴² Cf. 4Q251 (4QHalakhah A) which also discusses laws of incest under the rubric “על העריות.” Cf.

11QT^a 66:11–17. For a discussion of these passages, see now Aharon Shemesh, “The Laws of Incest in the Dead Sea Scrolls and the History of Halakhah,” in *Halakhah in Light of Epigraphy*, 81–99.

¹⁰⁴³ *M. Hag.* 2:1; *Sifra* Aharei Mot Perek 13:1; *Lev Rab.* 24:6. See Tomson, *Paul and the Jewish Law*, 99; Wehnert, *Die Reinheit*, 232.

18). Rather, the Septuagint often employs *πορνεία* to translate the Hebrew זנות (“prostitution”), a term also missing in the Hebrew text of Lev 18.

Nevertheless, by the Second Temple period *πορνεία* was sometimes equated with ערוה in the narrower sense of “incest.” Thus, in 1 Cor 5:1 Paul states: “It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality (*πορνεία*) among you, and of a kind that is not found even among pagans; for a man is living with his father’s wife.” Here Paul’s usage of *πορνεία* corresponds more closely to the rabbinic concept of גילוי ערויות (in the restricted meaning of “incest”), since Paul condemns Gentiles from Corinth for engaging in incestuous relationships.¹⁰⁴⁴ Elsewhere (e.g., 1 Cor 7:2), Paul uses the term *πορνεία* in a wider sense to cover a variety of forbidden sexual practices (e.g., adultery). Given the wide semantic range of the Greek term, capable of covering incest but also and especially other sexual transgressions such as adultery, sodomy, and so on, it would have proven a most suitable term to summarize *all* of the forbidden relationships mentioned in Lev 18. A Jewish *ekklesia* concerned in establishing “sexual halakah” for Gentiles would presumably not focus only on laws forbidding “incest,” what the term ערויות covers in its restricted sense, but on other sexual practices forbidden by ancient Jews (e.g., sodomy and adultery as mentioned in Lev 18:20, 22).¹⁰⁴⁵ Even the rabbinic ערויות in its larger sense can refer more broadly to any prohibited sexual act, not just incest,¹⁰⁴⁶ while זנות,

¹⁰⁴⁴ Tomson, *Paul and the Jewish Law*, 98 n. 5.

¹⁰⁴⁵ Cf. Matt 5:32 (cf. Matt 19:19) which renders ערויות דבר (“something objectionable”) from Deut 24:1 (dealing with divorce) as λόγου πορνείας.

¹⁰⁴⁶ Cf. *m. Avod. Zar.* 2:1: “Cattle may not be left in the inns of the gentiles since they are suspected of bestiality; nor may a woman remain alone with them since they are suspected of lewdness (העריות).” Cf.

normally rendered by *πορνεία* in the LXX, also enjoys a semantic stretch sufficiently flexible to encompass various illicit practices, including incest, polygamy, prostitution and other sexual transgressions.¹⁰⁴⁷ Thus, עריות (גילוי) and זנות occasionally become synonymous when used in their broader sense.¹⁰⁴⁸ Interestingly enough, the term זנות (= *πορνεία*) appears in Targumim *Neofiti and Pseudo-Jonathan* of Lev 18:17 where it replaces the Hebrew זמה (“infamy” or “depravity”). This targumic reference suggests that certain Jews could have found the term *πορνεία* (= זנות) as quite appropriate for describing the illicit sexual practices mentioned in Lev 18, especially when addressing its application for Gentiles—the aim of the Apostolic Decree.¹⁰⁴⁹ Probably, the command in the Apostolic Decree to abstain from *πορνεία* would have meant that Gentile followers were to abstain from incest (Lev 18:6–18), adultery (18:20), sodomy (18:22), bestiality (18:23), and even sexual intercourse with a woman during her menstruation (18:19).¹⁰⁵⁰

Sifra Aharei Mot Pereq 13:1 on Lev 18:6, which understands all of the laws in Lev 18 as applying to both Jew and Gentile (שיהיו מוזהרים על העריות כישראל להביא את הגוים). Nevertheless, rabbinic sages disagree as to what extent Gentiles are held accountable to such prohibitions in comparison to Jews. See discussion in Müller, *Torah für die Völker*, 110–16; David Novak, *The Image of the Non-Jew in Judaism: An Historical and Constructive Study of the Noahide Laws* (Toronto Studies in Theology 14; New York: Edwin Mellen, 1983), 199–216. In his discussion of Noahide laws, Maimonides, *Hilkhot Melakhim* 9:5, quoting a baraita in *b. Sanh.* 58a, understands the rubric עריות quite broadly to include incest, adultery, sodomy, and bestiality. Not surprisingly, all of these prohibitions can be traced back to Lev 18.

¹⁰⁴⁷ In CD 4:20–5:11, the term זנות refers not in a restrictive sense to “harlotry” but polygamy (4:20–5:6), cohabitation with a menstruating woman (5:6), and laws of incest (5:7–11) as delineated in Lev 18. See Hans Kosmala, “The Three Nets of Belial: A Study in the Terminology of Qumran and the New Testament,” *ASTI* 4 (1965): 99. Cf. John C. Endres, *Biblical Interpretation in the Book of Jubilees* (CBQMS; Washington, D.C.: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1987), 138–39 and David W. Suter, “Fallen Angel, Fallen Priest: The Problem of Family Purity in 1 Enoch 6–16,” *HUCA* 50 (1979): 115–35.

¹⁰⁴⁸ Müller, *Torah für die Völker*, 159 n. 131.

¹⁰⁴⁹ Wehnert, *Die Reinheit*, 233.

¹⁰⁵⁰ Not necessarily (although possible) because Luke believes the blood of *Gentile* menstruating women was ritually defiling (cf. Lev 15:19–24), but simply because Lev 18 prohibits such intercourse along with other illicit sexual relations. See Klawans, *Impurity and Sin*, v–vi, 7, 107, 173 n. 33; Hayes, *Gentile*

Strangled Meat

For generations, the term *πνικτός*, commonly translated as “strangled,” has perplexed scholars and remains shrouded in mystery. Critics who deny seeing any correlation between Lev 17–18 and the Apostolic Decree point to the absence of the term *πνικτός* and its Hebrew equivalent, presumably *גְּחֹנֶק*, not only in Leviticus but also in the entire Pentateuch. Instead, Lev 17:15 refers only to *גְּבֵלָה* (*nevelah*), an animal that dies on its own, and *טֶרֶפָה* (*terefah*), an animal torn by a wild beast. Both types of dead animals are forbidden for consumption (cf. Exod 22:30; Lev 7:24; 22:8).¹⁰⁵¹ According to Lev 17:15, in the event that an Israelite or resident alien should eat a *nevelah* or a *terefah*, he or she must undergo purification. “If they do not wash themselves or bathe their body, they shall bear their guilt” (Lev 17:16). The LXX renders both *nevelah* and *terefah* with *θησιμαῖος* and *θηριάλωτος*, respectively, neither of which appear in Acts.

Nevertheless, Lev 17:15 still proves the best candidate for elucidating this particular item of the Apostolic Decree. True, *πνικτός* is absent from the LXX, but terms from the same word group appear elsewhere in the Septuagint and other ancient Jewish

Impurities, 22–23, 113, for discussion on this issue in Lev 18. Alternatively, the Apostolic Decree could be one of the first attestations of a limited extension of ritual impurity to Gentiles (who follow Jesus). *Ps. Clem. Hom.* 7.8.1 appears to view Gentile followers of Jesus as susceptible to ritual impurity, at least in a limited way, when it calls for Gentile women to keep the laws of menstruation (*αὐτάς μέντοι καὶ ἀφεδρον φυλάσσειν*) and for Gentile couples to wash after sexual intercourse (*ἀπὸ κοίτης γυναικὸς λούεσθαι*). These regulations appear in a section of the *Pseudo-Clementines* containing several commandments that overlap with Luke’s version of the Apostolic Decree.

¹⁰⁵¹ For the various and differing definitions of these terms in the Hebrew Bible and rabbinic sources, see Str-B 2:730–31. In the Hebrew Bible, the *nevelah* refers essentially to an animal that has died on its own through a natural death (cf. Josephus, *Ant.* 3:260: *κρέως τοῦ τεθνηκότος αὐτομάτως ζῶου*), while in rabbinic literature it may refer to any animal not properly slaughtered according to the laws of *shehitah*. In the Hebrew Bible, *terefah* refers to an animal that has been torn by a wild beast, whereas in rabbinic literature it describes either an animal afflicted by a mortal wound or one found to have such defects upon inspecting its body after death. See Milgrom, *Leviticus*, 1:653–54 and ensuing discussion of some of the technicalities involved in these definitions (which are not of major importance for the argument of this chapter).

literature written in Greek. Thus, the Massoretic text of Nah 2:13 states: “The lion has torn (טרף) enough for his whelps and strangled (מחנק) prey for his lionesses; he has filled his caves with prey (טרף) and his dens with torn flesh (טרפה).” The Septuagint renders מחנק (“strangled”) with ἀπέπνιξεν (from ἀποπνίγω), a compound verb composed of the preposition ἀπό and the stem πνίγω which is related to πνικτός.¹⁰⁵² Quite interestingly, מחנק stands closely in this passage to the verb טרף and the noun טרפה—one of the types of carcasses (besides *nevelah*) Israelites and resident aliens are to avoid eating according to Lev 17:15.¹⁰⁵³

More significantly, after highlighting the Mosaic prohibition against consuming what “has died on its own” (θνησιμαῖον = נבלה) or “been torn by wild beasts” (θηριάλωτον = טרפה), Philo immediately proceeds to denounce those who prepare meat not ritually slaughtered (ἄθυστα)¹⁰⁵⁴ by “strangling and throttling” (ἄγχοντες καὶ ἀποπνίγοντες) them instead of allowing the “essence of their soul” (τῆν οὐσίαν τῆς ψυχῆς), that is, their blood, to flow freely and unrestrained (ἐλεύθερον καὶ ἄφειτον), burying instead their blood in the body (τυμβεύοντες τῷ σώματι τὸ αἷμα).¹⁰⁵⁵ Of interest here is Philo’s reference to animals

¹⁰⁵² Cf. LXX to 2 Sam 17:23 translating “he hanged himself” (יחנק) with ἀπήγγαστο.

¹⁰⁵³ Nah 2:13, however, does not provide sufficient evidence for subsuming *terefah* (or *nevelah*) under πνικτός, as it renders טרף with ἤρπασεν, while using ἀρπαγῆς for טרפה. Nevertheless, this verse at least shows how a compound verb related to πνικτός appears with the meaning of “strangled” in reference to meat that has not been properly slaughtered but strangled and torn by a lion. Furthermore, at least in the Hebrew passage, the synonymous *parallelismus membrorum* between טרפה and מחנק might suggest some kind of conceptual correlation between the two.

¹⁰⁵⁴ This is certainly one way of understanding ἄθυστα to mean “not (ritually) slaughtered” in the sense that the animal was not slain in a proper manner so as to allow its blood to drain out. In the LXX, θύω can translate both זבח and שחט.

¹⁰⁵⁵ *Spec.* 4:119, 122.

that have not been properly slaughtered but strangled and throttled (*ἀποπνίγοντες*, compound verb related to *πνικτός*) prior to consumption. This comment appears immediately after Philo has condemned the consumption of *nevelah* and *terefah*, possibly even among Gentiles.¹⁰⁵⁶ More importantly, it is undeniable that Philo has in mind Lev 17:13–15, which discusses hunting and catching game, as he writes this section of his *De specialibus legibus*. Here Philo refers to the *hunting* practices of Greeks and other non-Jews in conjunction to his discussion on consuming blood, *nevelah*, and *terefah* (*Spec. Laws* 4:120). These three food items are also brought together in Lev 17:13–15 in the context of hunting: “And anyone of the people of Israel, or of the aliens who reside among them, who hunts down an animal. . . . shall pour out its blood. . . . All persons, citizens or aliens, who eat what dies of itself or what has been torn by wild animals, shall wash their clothes” Furthermore, Philo’s reference to the “essence of the soul” of an animal (*οὐσίαν τῆς ψυχῆς*) recalls the *ψυχὴ πάσης σαρκὸς* in the LXX of Lev 17:14, while Philo’s call to allow the blood to flow freely and unhindered (*ἐλεύθερον καὶ ἄφειτον*) matches the command in Lev 17:13 to pour out the blood of the captured animal.

Wilson has sought to downplay the connection between this Philonic passage and Lev 17 by introducing a very restrained meaning to Philo’s usage of the verb *ἀποπνίγοντες*. Since this verb appears in Philo’s text in conjunction with *ἄγροντες*, which also means to “strangle,” he suggests *ἀποπνίγοντες* refers to a particular method of preparing or cooking gourmet foods, a practice perhaps peculiar to the area of

¹⁰⁵⁶ “Now many of the lawgivers both among the *Greeks and barbarians*, praise those who are skillful in hunting, and who seldom fail in their pursuit or miss their aim, and who pride themselves on their successful hunts, especially when they divide the limbs of the animals which they have caught with the huntsmen and the hounds But anyone who was a sound interpreter of the sacred constitution and code of laws would very naturally blame them, since the lawgiver of that code has expressly forbidden any enjoyment of carcasses or of bodies torn by beasts for the reasons before mentioned” (*Spec.* 4:120; emphasis mine). But see Wehnert, *Die Reinheit*, 228.

Alexandria.¹⁰⁵⁷ There is some merit to his proposal, since in the same passage Philo condemns the gluttonous practices of “those like Sardanapalus” (Σαρδανάπαλλοι)—a character who symbolizes self-indulgence and greed.¹⁰⁵⁸ However, it is more likely that ἄγχοιτες and ἀποπνίγοντες function here simply as a hendiadys in literary symmetry with ἐλεύθερον καὶ ἄφετον, which also appear in the same Philonic paragraph.¹⁰⁵⁹ Philo is really thinking here about blood that has been trapped in the *corpse* of an animal (τυμβεύοντες τῷ σώματι τὸ αἷμα), which in a certain sense “strangles” or chokes the creature.¹⁰⁶⁰ By using two different verbs to describe the act of strangling, Philo stresses the terrible form (in Greek and Jewish eyes) of putting an animal (or a human) to death through strangulation. Herodotus highlights this awful form of killing animals allegedly practiced among the nomadic Scythians who would tie animals around the neck with a noose, thereby strangling (ἀποπνίγει) their victims (*Hist.* 4.60). Interestingly enough, in other Greek classical passages strangulation represents the worst type of death.¹⁰⁶¹ Philo appeals to these Greek sensibilities in order to highlight the virtues of Jewish dietary practices.

¹⁰⁵⁷ Wilson, *Luke and the Law*, 90–99. See, however, D. Hans Lietzmann, “Der Sinn des Aposteldekrets und seine Textwandlung,” in *Amicitiae Corolla: A Volume of Essays Presented to James Rendel Harris, D. Litt., on the Occasion of His Eightieth Birthday* (ed. H.G. Wood; London: University of London Press, 1933), 203–211, especially 205–206, as well as the further corrective and refutation of Wilson in Klinghardt, *Gesetz und Volk Gottes*, 202–3 n. 43 and 44.

¹⁰⁵⁸ See “Sardanapalus,” *Dictionary of Greek and Roman Biography and Mythology* (3 vols.; ed. William Smith; Boston: Charles C. Little and James Brown, 1849), 3:711–12.

¹⁰⁵⁹ So Wehnert, *Die Reinheit*, 229.

¹⁰⁶⁰ Lietzmann, “Der Sinn des Aposteldekrets,” 205–6: “Hier redet Philo von wirklichem ‘Erwürgen,’ und solches Fleisch ist verboten, weil das Blut darin geblieben ist. . . .” Alternatively, as Klinghardt, *Gesetz und Volk Gottes*, 202 n. 44, suggests, ἀποπνίγοντες may have a dual sense here, meaning that Philo is employing the term to denounce the consumption of blood products as well as lack of self-restraint in indulging in fancy, gourmet food.

¹⁰⁶¹ References can be found in François Hartog, “Self-cooking Beef and the Drinks of Ares,” in *The Cuisine of Sacrifice among the Greeks* (eds. Marcel Detienne and Jean-Pierre Vernant; trans. Paula Wissing; Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1989), 175. Cf. Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief*, 520 n. 11, who comments on the evidence from Herodotus on the Scythians as well as on our passage from Philo, *Spec.* 4:122, and concludes that “we must think that strangling animals with a noose, or garroting them, was practised outside of Scythia, and consequently that Acts 15:20 may refer to it.”

In addition, literary evidence from Alexandria itself suggests that the term ἀποπνίγοντες was not always understood in the limited sense Wilson seeks to restrict it. In *The Instructor (Paedagogus)* 2.17.2, Clement of Alexandria claims that Moses commanded the Jewish people to abstain from animals that “have died (θνηξιμαῖα), or were offered to idols (εἰδωλόθυτα), or have been strangled (ἀποπεπνιγμένα).” Although one could argue that Clement employs the term ἀποπεπνιγμένα in the very restricted sense suggest by Wilson, it seems more likely that he refers to a more general abstinence from a wide variety of foods improperly slaughtered or offered to idols, since he juxtaposes ἀποπεπνιγμένα with εἰδωλόθυτα and θνηξιμαῖα (= הָלַבַּי), and claims that the prohibition against consuming all of these three items derives from the Torah of Moses (2.17.1: διὰ Μωυσέως).¹⁰⁶² If this suggestion is correct, ἀποπεπνιγμένα would refer here to any “strangled” meat that had not been properly slaughtered. Its inclusion alongside εἰδωλόθυτα and θνηξιμαῖα would make sense in an environment where Jews no longer lived in rural areas but in urban towns of the Greco-Roman Diaspora where they would have to ascertain whether the meat they purchased had indeed been properly slaughtered with its blood drained.¹⁰⁶³ The book of *Joseph and Aseneth*, probably a work of Egyptian provenance, points in this direction as well when it refers to refraining from the “bread of strangulation” (ἄρτον ἀγχόνης) in conjunction to abstaining from idolatry and eating with

¹⁰⁶² Cf. Klinghardt, *Gesetz und Volk Gottes*, 203 and Wehnert, *Die Reinheit*, 228–29.

¹⁰⁶³ Wehnert, *Die Reinheit*, 230, suggests that ἀποπνίγοντες, as attested in Philo and Clement, is a traditional term, deriving from the Hebrew חֲנֹק, and that the compound form of the word (instead of πνικτός as found in Acts) reflects an alternative way of translating the same Hebrew term. He also suggests that εἰδωλόθυτων came to replace פֶּהֶרֶט in the tripartite list as attested in Clement (εἰδωλόθυτα, θνηξιμαῖα, and ἀποπεπνιγμένα) because the issue of eating an “animal torn by a wild beast” became less meaningful in urban areas such as Alexandria.

Gentiles, illustrating how “strangled meat” could indeed have proven to be a major obstacle impeding certain Jews from dining with Gentiles.

In any case, Wilson’s comments do little to elucidate *Luke’s* perception of the meaning of *πνικτός*. Does Luke (and the Aramaic speaking *ekklesia* presumably promulgating this decree) think that this term merely refers to gourmet foods prepared in Alexandria? This is most unlikely. Different forms of the so-called Apostolic Decree appear in other works that were surely not written in Egypt and show no sign of restricting the term *πνικτός* to the preparation of fine delicacies, but focus on how the animal is to be slaughtered. Certain interesting passages from the so-called *Pseudo-Clementine* literature are of some importance for the consideration of this matter. The version of the *Ps.-Clem.* known as the *Homilies* (7.4.1) contains three items followers of Jesus must avoid: the table of demons (*τραπέζης δαιμόνων*), dead flesh (*νεκρᾶς σαρκός*), and blood (*αἵματος*). In *Hom.* 7.8.2, a longer list of food items appear: the table of demons (*τραπέζης δαιμόνων*), food offered to idols (*εἰδωλοθύτων*), dead flesh (*νεκρῶν*), strangled meat (*πνικτῶν*), animals torn by a wild beast (*θηριαλώτων* = פהר), and blood (*αἵματος*). Equally interesting is *Hom.* 8.19.1 where a similar list appears with the following overlapping items: dead flesh (*σαρκῶν νεκρῶν*), an animal torn by a wild beast (*θηρίου λειψάνου*), an animal which is cut (*τμητοῦ*)¹⁰⁶⁴ or strangled (*πνικτοῦ*). Likewise, *Recognitions* 4.36.4 (a different version of the *Ps.-Clem.*) refers to the prohibition of participating in the table of demons (*participare daemonum mensae*), ordering Gentile

¹⁰⁶⁴ The term *τμητοῦ* appears neither in the LXX (but cf. Exod 20:25) nor in the New Testament. For classical references, see *LSJ*. See also Wehnert, *Die Reinheit*, 160: “. . . bezeichnet ein von einem Tier abgetrenntes oder abgeschnittenes Körperteil, dessen Genuß—im Anschluß an Gen 9, 4—verboten ist.” Should any connection be made with the rabbinic, Noahide command not to eat an אבר מן החי (a limb torn from a living animal)?

followers of Jesus to refrain from eating sacrifices (*immolata*), blood (*sanguinem*), or a carcass that is strangled (*morticinum quod est suffocatum*).

These passages from the *Ps.-Clem.*, which as far as we know do not emanate from Alexandria nor concern themselves with gourmet foods, share a certain affinity with the version of the Apostolic Decree recorded in the Acts of the Apostles.¹⁰⁶⁵ They also reveal a tighter connection with Lev 17, since the terms θηριαλώτων/θηρίου λειψάνου directly correspond to the Hebrew *terefah*, while the references to “dead flesh” (νεκρᾶς σαρκός/νεκρῶν/σαρκῶν νεκρῶν) match the Hebrew *nevelah*, “what has died on its own.” Remarkably, *Recognitions* tightly connects “dead flesh/carcass” (*morticinum* = *nevelah* in the Vulgate) with “strangled” meat: *morticinum quod est suffocatum* (“a carcass which is strangled”).¹⁰⁶⁶ These different lists clarify what kind of meat is prohibited by appending several items including carcasses, animals torn by wild beasts, cut or torn limbs of an animal, all of which suggest that with the term “strangled” the Apostolic Decree alludes

¹⁰⁶⁵ For historical discussion and reconstruction, see Wehnert, *Die Reinheit*, 145–86, who tends to view the lists in the *Ps.-Clem.* as reflecting an oral tradition independent from Acts. Cf. Klinghardt, *Gesetz und Volk Gottes*, 203–4.

¹⁰⁶⁶ In the Vulgate to Acts 15:20, πνικτοῦ is translated with *suffocatis*. Likewise, in the Syriac translation of Acts 15:20, 29 and 21:20, πνικτοῦ is rendered by כּוּנִיקָא suggesting that at least some Aramaic speaking Christians of a later time understood the term literally to mean “strangled,” and not in some special restrictive sense limited to fine delicacies. Equally remarkable is an admittedly late passage from *Apostolic Constitutions* 8.47.63: “If any bishop, or presbyter, or deacon, or indeed any one of the sacerdotal catalogue, eats flesh with the blood of its life, or that which is torn by beasts, or which died of itself, let him be deprived; for this the law (ὁ νόμος) itself has forbidden” (translation taken from *Ante-Nicene Fathers*) Wehnert, *Die Reinheit*, 179 n. 119, however, dismisses the relevance of this passage for elucidating the Apostolic Decree, deeming that the commandments reflect the Jewish prohibitions against consuming an אבר מן החי or טרפה or גבלה and are derived directly from the Law of Moses, especially Gen 9:4 and Lev 17:15. Nevertheless, it is questionable whether there is a connection between this passage and the Noahic law (אבר מן החי) of the rabbis, since the Christian text forbids Gentiles from eating two additional food items (rabbinic halakah allows for Gentiles, even Noahides, to eat carcasses; cf. Deut 14:21). Perhaps, we witness here to an ancient interpretation of the Apostolic Decree that (rightly) understood its connection with Lev 17–18 and by extension Gen 9:4. Cf. *Str.-B* 2:733–34; Barrett, “The Apostolic Decree of Acts 15:29,” *ABR* 35 (1987): 50–59.

to animals improperly slaughtered or carcasses that have “choked” in their own blood.¹⁰⁶⁷

Once again, Wehnert offers an interesting perspective on the term *πρωτόζ* by pointing to the overlooked evidence from *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan*. The Hebrew text of Lev 17:13 commands both Israelite and resident alien to pour out an animal’s blood and cover it with earth. *Tg. Ps.-J* adds “and he shall pour its blood in slaughtering (בניכסתא) and if its slaughtering is not ruined (ואין לא מתקלקלא ניכסתיה) he shall cover it with blood.” In *Tg. Ps.-J* on Lev 17:15, the topic of faulty slaughtering appears again: while the Masoretic Text commands all Israelites and resident aliens to wash themselves in the case of eating *nevelah* or *terefah*, *Tg. Ps.-J* replaces the Hebrew *nevelah* with בישרא דמטלק בקילקול ניכסתא (“flesh that has been thrown out because of a faulty action in slaughtering”).¹⁰⁶⁸

At the very least, these references show that at a later time, whenever *Tg. Ps.-J.* acquired its final form, certain Jews had updated the text of Lev 17 (and other pertinent passages in the Mosaic Torah) to forbid, in addition to *nevelah* and *terefah*, the consumption of *any* animal improperly slaughtered. Quite strikingly, Etheridge, in his

¹⁰⁶⁷ Cf. Tertullian, *Apology* 9: “Blush for your vile ways before the Christians, who have not even the blood of animals at their meals of simple and natural food; who abstain from things strangled (*propterea suffocatis*) and that die a natural death (*morticinis*), for no other reason than that they may not contract pollution, so much as from blood secreted in the viscera. To clench the matter with a single example, you tempt Christians with sausages of blood, just because you are perfectly aware that the thing by which you thus try to get them to transgress they hold unlawful” (Translation taken from *Ante-Nicene Fathers*). See discussion in Wehnert, *Die Reinheit*, 201–2; Müller, *Tora für die Völker*, 203 n. 21.

¹⁰⁶⁸ Of equal importance are the two references in *Tg. Ps.-J.* to Lev 7:24 and Deut 14:21. According to the Hebrew text of Lev 7:24, the flesh of any *nevelah* or *terefah* may be put to any use except for eating. *Tg. Ps.-J.* adds a third item: ותריב חיויא דמיקלקלא בשעת ניכסתא (“and the fat of an animal that is ruined at the moment of slaughtering”). In Deut 14:21, *Tg. Ps.-J.* replaces *nevelah* with דמיקלקלא בניכסא (“what is ruined through [faulty] slaughtering”).

translation of *Tg. Ps.-J.*, renders the Aramaic term מתקלקלא as *strangled*.¹⁰⁶⁹ Although this translation represents an interpretation of the term, not its literal rendition, Wehnert finds Etheridge’s interpretation appropriate and suggests that ancient Jews used terminology derived from both קלקל and חנק to designate meat (of kosher animals) that was not properly slaughtered.¹⁰⁷⁰ Both terms can be found in rabbinic literature, including *m. Hul.* 1:1 (יקלקלו בשחיטתן = מיקלקלא בניכסא) as well as *m. Hul.* 1:2, which forbids using a sickle, saw, teeth, or nails to slaughter an animal because these instruments “choke” (חונקין) the creature.¹⁰⁷¹

Although many of the passages solicited above derive from later sources, to this date, they constitute the only source material available for comparison and suggest that the term *πνατός* should either be taken as a term encompassing both *nevelah* and *terefah*,¹⁰⁷² or alternatively as a reference to any animal unfit for consumption because of improper slaughtering.¹⁰⁷³ Unfortunately, further precision remains impossible at this

¹⁰⁶⁹ John Wesley Etheridge, *The Targums of Onkelos and Jonathan ben Uzziel on the Pentateuch; With the Fragments of the Jerusalem Targum: From the Chaldee* (2 vols.; London: Longman, Green, Longman, and Roberts, 1862–1865), 2:200, 201.

¹⁰⁷⁰ Wehnert, *Die Reinheit*, 231.

¹⁰⁷¹ Wehnert suggests that such terms eventually fell out of use. For the whole *Begriffsgeschichte*, see Wehnert’s extensive analysis in *Die Reinheit*, 221–31. Flusser and Safrai, “Das Aposteldekret und die Noachitischen Gebote,” 185–86, point to the overlooked passage *t. Avod. Zar.* 8:6, which allows a Gentile to strangle (חנקה) and eat a bird smaller than the size of an olive. This passage, which discusses the Noahide law against eating a limb from a live animal, however, does not forbid Gentiles from eating strangled meat (if anything, it allows them to do so). The discussion in the Toseftan passage implies that Gentiles must only refrain from eating blood from a *live* animal, whereas the Apostolic Decree goes further in its demands by requiring Gentiles to refrain from eating blood *tout court*.

¹⁰⁷² So already Str-B 2:730: “Gemeinsam haben נבלה u. טרפה im AT, daß der Tod des Tieres nicht dadurch eintritt, daß sein im Blut befindliches Leben zugleich mit dem aus dem Körper ausströmenden Blut entflieht—den ein wirkliches Ausströmen des Blutes erfolgt ja weder bei Nebela noch bei Terepha—sondern vielmehr dadurch, daß sein im Blut befindliches Leben im Körper selbst nämlich in dem hier verbleibenden Blut “erstickt.” Daher kommt es, daß der Ausdruck πνατός = “Ersticktes” im NT beides unter sich befassen kann. . . .”

¹⁰⁷³ Wehnert, *Die Reinheit*, 231 n. 61.

juncture, given the nature of the evidence. It should be noted, however, that there is no indication in Acts suggesting that in Luke's eyes followers of Jesus must procure their meat from a *Jewish* butcher. Although a halakah in *m. Hul.* 1:2 declares all animals slaughtered by a Gentile to be *nevelah*, Sanders has compellingly argued that Jews in the Greco-Roman Diaspora were ready to purchase meat prepared by non-Jews, provided the meat had been properly slaughtered (blood drained) and had not been offered to idols.¹⁰⁷⁴ Overall, "pagan" methods of slaughtering would have satisfied Jewish Diasporan demands: animals were bled to death.¹⁰⁷⁵ This is especially true of Greek techniques of slaughtering, and wherever they were practiced, we may assume that Jews were willing to purchase such meat.¹⁰⁷⁶ Like other Greco-Roman Jews living in the Diaspora, Luke would have probably acted likewise.¹⁰⁷⁷

Blood

The fourth and final item of the Apostolic Decree, blood, overlaps with the previous one, strangled meat. Because of its juxtaposition with "strangled," the term "blood" cannot be understood *only* in a moral sense as referring to "bloodshed"

¹⁰⁷⁴ Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief*, 216, 520 n. 12; *Jewish Law*, 278–82. Cf. Deines, "Das Aposteldekret," 387, although I strongly disagree with his attempt to detach the Apostolic Decree from Lev 17–18. Contrary to what Deines claim, there is no need to imagine *rabbinic* halakic standards lurking behind the term *πιικτός* in order to posit a link between the Apostolic Decree and Lev 17–18. Here, a distinction should be made between the application of the decree in the vicinity of Palestine and in the greater Diaspora. In the latter territory, where it might be harder to procure meat prepared only by Jews, greater leniency could have been applied to allow the purchase of meat handled by Gentiles, provided it was slaughtered in a way deemed acceptable to the local Jewish populaces.

¹⁰⁷⁵ Sanders, *Jewish Law*, 278; Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 90; Jean-Louis Durand, "Greek Animals: Toward a Topology of Edible Bodies," in *The Cuisine of Sacrifice*, 90–92: "The head, fallen backwards . . . displaying in full sight the location on the neck of the exact spot where the blade must enter to slit the animal's throat—that is, to cut at least the two carotid arteries if not the trachea. . . ."

¹⁰⁷⁶ See especially the discussion of Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief*, 216, on Josephus, *Ant.* 14:245.

¹⁰⁷⁷ Perhaps in Palestine, matters could have been observed more strictly, as Jews could presumably have procured meat from Jewish butchers more easily than in the Diaspora, although we know not to what extent the intricate and detailed injunctions for performing kosher slaughtering were in play as reflected in later rabbinic halakah. Cf. Sanders, *Jewish Law*, 278–79.

(slaughtering humans). Its juxtaposition with strangled meat as well as the reference in the decree to abstain from *food* offered to idols strongly suggests that Gentile followers of Jesus may not consume blood. Does the wording of the Apostolic Decree then seem superfluous, since the reference to strangled meat already addresses the issue of eating blood? If indeed the Apostolic Decree does derive from Lev 17–18 and if we also admit the moral dimension embedded in the decree, then this supposed pleonasm becomes understandable: both strangled meats (i.e., *nevelah* and *terefah*) as well as blood are singled out in Lev 17–18 as food items that Israelites and their Gentile associates must avoid eating. Furthermore, the call to refrain from blood also emphasizes the respect that all humans must show toward life, which appears prominently throughout the Pentateuch. Already the book of Genesis (9:4–6) commands Noah and his descendants, hence all humans, to refrain from eating blood. Milgrom comments on Gen 9 are worth quoting here at length:

God's command to Noah and his sons takes the form of a law—the first in the Bible, the first to humanity. And the blood prohibition is the quintessential component of this law. It is the divine remedy for human sinfulness, which hitherto has polluted the earth and necessitated its purgation by blood. . . . Man's nature will not change; he shall continue sinful (Gen 8:22), but his violence need no longer pollute the earth if he will but heed one law: abstain from blood. . . . Man must abstain from blood: human blood must not be shed and animal blood must not be ingested. In the Priestly scale of values, the prohibition actually stands higher than the Ten Commandments. The Decalogue was given solely to Israel, but the blood prohibition was enjoined upon all humankind; it alone is the basis for a viable human society.¹⁰⁷⁸

Werman suggests that in the course of Jewish history a shift took place in certain circles whereby the abominations that defiled the holy land of Israel, as outlined in Leviticus and elsewhere, were eventually applied worldwide: God did not reside simply in the holy land, but everywhere. This shift is already noticeable in the Deutero-Isaian

¹⁰⁷⁸ Milgrom, *Leviticus*, 1:705.

traditions so dear to Luke: “For Deutero-Isaiah, the purpose of being chosen is to bring the nations closer to Israel and its religion; that is, it serves a universal purpose. The prophecies even go so far as to envision the alien peoples worshipping in the Temple itself (Isa 61:5–6). The sanctity that the Priestly Code ascribed to the priests alone has now expanded beyond the priesthood to include not only the Israelite nations but the alien peoples as well.”¹⁰⁷⁹ In the book of *Jubilees* the link between the flood story in Genesis and the abominations that defile the holy land is explicit: the earth was covered by water because of sexual immorality that defiled the *entire world* (*Jub.* 7:20–21). According to Lev 18:25, the Canaanites defiled the holy land through illicit sexual intercourse, but now, according to *Jubilees*, these acts defile “the land in its broadest sense, that is, the soil of the earth.”¹⁰⁸⁰ *Jubilees* continues its expansive reading of holiness and purity to include the very consumption of blood. It reads Genesis ch. 9 in light of the legislation in Leviticus 17 concerning the handling of blood. Not only the consumption, but the very treatment of blood must be handled carefully by Noah and his offspring. They must be sure to cover blood that is poured out upon the face of the earth (*Jub.* 7:30 = Lev 17:13).¹⁰⁸¹ Whereas Lev 17 only forbids the Israelite and the resident alien residing in the holy land of Israel from eating blood, in *Jubilees* this prohibition applies to all of humanity everywhere. If Noah and his descendants fail to respect these injunctions, the land, understood here as the earth, will not be cleansed from its blood (*Jub.* 7:33). With respect to the Apostolic Decree, Werman declares that the prohibition against eating

¹⁰⁷⁹ Cana Werman, “The Concept of Holiness and the Requirements of Purity in Second Temple and Tannaic Literature,” in *Purity and Holiness*, 168.

¹⁰⁸⁰ Werman, “The Concept of Holiness,” 168–69.

¹⁰⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 170–71: “According to *Jubilees*, the prohibition given to the Israelites and the strangers in Leviticus 17 is given to all mankind anywhere in the world (even more so, since there is no warning against the appearance of blood on the cloak of the slaughtered in Leviticus 17). Moreover, in *Jubilees*, the punishment for this crime is death by human hands, a punishment not mentioned at all in Leviticus 17.”

blood is not “simply a literal repetition of Genesis 9; rather, it is an expansion of Genesis in light of Leviticus 17, which concludes with a warning against eating meat of an animal having been strangled. . . . In Christianity, as in *Jubilees*, the force of these prohibitions extends beyond the borders of the Land of Israel, concomitant with the belief in the universal divine presence.”¹⁰⁸²

Some evidence exists, therefore, of Jewish applications of the laws in Lev 17 and 18 to Gentiles.¹⁰⁸³ Besides *Jubilees*, Philo also possibly envisions these regulations as applying to non-Jews (*Spec.* 4:123). But Luke’s attitudes and hopes for Gentiles differ from that of *Jubilees*: whereas the book of *Jubilees* refers to such legislation only to further condemn Gentiles for their failure to observe these universal commandments and to declare their collective and perpetual bondage to impure demons (*Jub.* 15:30–32), Luke believes there are Gentiles out there who can acquire moral purification and sanctification and join Israel in observing these regulations.

Because the command to refrain from consuming blood appears in Genesis as a regulation given to Noah and his descendants, the rabbis would also eventually forbid the Noahides from eating a “limb from a live animal” (אֲבָר מִן הַחַי; *t. Avod. Zar.* 8:6; *b. Sanh.* 59a). Nevertheless, this injunction, as the rabbinic concept of the Noahide Laws in general, should not be equated with the Apostolic Decree. The rabbinic prohibition against eating a “limb from a live animal” should be taken *literally* and in an ethical sense to mean that Gentiles should not devour a *live* creature: to tear and eat a limb from a live animal would represent the cruelest attitude toward animals and eventually lead to the

¹⁰⁸² *Ibid.*, 174.

¹⁰⁸³ Wilson, *Luke and the Law*, 86, claims that “there is no evidence that first-century Judaism made Lev. 17–18 part of its demands for proselytes and or godfearers.” At least the evidence in *Jubilees* and possibly Philo suggests that there were Jews who would have viewed the laws in Lev 17–18 as incumbent upon Gentiles.

mistreatment and slaughtering of humans themselves.¹⁰⁸⁴ Apparently, the rabbis understood the Hebrew phrase in Gen 9:4, אֲדָבֶשֶׁר בְּנִפְשׁוֹ דָמוֹ לֹא תֹאכְלוּ, in a *functional* sense to mean that Noahides could not eat the flesh of an animal while its lifeblood was still pulsating in it.¹⁰⁸⁵ But the rabbis do permit blood as an *object* of consumption for Noahides. This is especially true with regard to consuming blood from a *dead* animal. While Lev 17:15 clearly forbids a Gentile residing among Israel to eat *nevelah*, Deut 14:21, by contrast, allows a Gentile resident to eat such food: “You shall not eat anything that dies of itself; you may give it to aliens residing in your towns for them to eat, or you may sell it to a foreigner.” The rabbis cleverly “resolve” this contradiction within the Mosaic Torah by claiming that Lev 17:15 refers to a Gentile covert to Judaism (גר צדק), while declaring that Deut 14:21 denotes Gentiles who are not converts (גר תושב)—an indirect indication that according to the rabbinic understanding Noahides can indeed eat meat with its blood (*Sifre Deut* 104; cf. *b. Avod. Zar.* 64b).¹⁰⁸⁶

Conclusion

It is regrettable that Luke does not further expound each item of the Apostolic Decree, which would have allowed for a more precise and nuanced assessment of this

¹⁰⁸⁴ According to *t. Avod. Zar.* 8:6 (cf. *b. Sanh.* 59a), R. Hananiah is said to have also forbidden Noahides from eating *blood* (instead of flesh cut off from an animal) from a *live* animal. But the sages disagree with this view. Later Maimonides (following the majority view), explicitly allows a Noahide to even eat blood from a live animal (*Hilkot Melakim* 9:10). See further Müller, *Tora für die Völker*, 128–30.

¹⁰⁸⁵ So Müller, *Tora für die Völker*, 129. Cf. the interpretation of Gen 9:4 by Claus Westermann, *Genesis* (3 vols.; trans. John J. Scullion S.J.; Minneapolis, Minn.: Augsburg, 1984–1986), 1:465, which coincides with the rabbinic understanding: “The commonly accepted explanation [of Gen 9:4], that the sentence forbids the partaking of blood, is not correct The sentence is stating rather that the eating of animal flesh is limited to such flesh as no longer has its life in it. . . . B. Jacob has noted correctly: ‘It is therefore the pulsating . . . life-blood of which it is forbidden to partake, immediately after wounding or killing.’ . . . Blood is understood here not in its objective but in its functional meaning.”

¹⁰⁸⁶ Cf. Müller, *Tora für die Völker*, 164–65; Maimonides, *Hilkhot Avodah Zarah* 10:6.

most intriguing body of halakic regulations for Gentiles. Nevertheless, positing a link between the decree and Lev 17–18 still proves the most attractive hermeneutical option for clarifying the rationale and function of the decree. Lev 17–18 contain laws relevant for both Israelites and residents aliens, and readily presents itself as a model that could be appropriated and adapted for solving Jewish-Gentile issues within the early *ekklesia*. All four items in Luke’s version of the decree can be paired with laws appearing in Lev 17–18. In fact, the “superfluous” listing of four rather than simply three regulations (idolatry, *porneia*, and blood) in the decree can be accounted for when the correlation with Lev 17 is fully appreciated: in Lev 17 both the blood and carcasses of animals are forbidden for consumption. In a similar fashion, the Apostolic Decree retains a twofold injunction that prohibits Gentiles from consuming blood and strangled meat.

Luke surely thinks that this legislation still carries great importance for governing the life of the *ekklesia* in his own day, given its threefold repetition in Acts (15:21, 29, 21:25). Indeed, the third and last repetition of the contents of the decree in 21:25 suggests that Luke believes its stipulations are relevant for addressing Jewish-Gentile relations and the question of Torah observance. Upon hearing Paul’s report about his ministry to the Gentiles, Luke’s James delivers the following words to him: “You see, brother, how many thousands of believers there are among the Jews, and they are all zealous for the law. They have been told about you that you teach all the Jews living among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, and that you tell them not to circumcise their children or observe the customs” (21:20–21). I would argue that the concern placed by Luke into James’ mouth reflects a *contemporary* and *ongoing* suspicion held by a wider group of Jews after 70 C.E. who distrust Pauline teaching, claiming it leads Jews away from observing the

Torah.¹⁰⁸⁷ Extended interaction and contact between Gentile and Jewish disciples of Jesus would have only accelerated the propagation of such rumors and further stir the apprehension of those Jews denouncing the apostasy from the Torah generated by a certain interpretation of Paul's teachings.¹⁰⁸⁸ Luke, of course, does everything possible in Acts to dispel such notions, presenting a complacent Paul in complete submission to Jewish custom, while having James, the brother of James, continually reaffirm the binding nature of the Apostolic Decree upon the Gentile branch of the *ekklesia*. By collating James' concern for maintaining Jewish identity with the reaffirmation of the Apostolic Decree, Luke reveals his own answer to an ongoing problem not only restricted to the Jesus movement but also pertinent for Jewry in general, particularly in the Diaspora: how should Jews as a minority community within the Greco-Roman world go about in their daily interactions with Gentiles without forsaking their identity?

Given the diversity of ancient Judaism, there would have naturally been different approaches and conclusions to this question. Much of the question would depend on the perception of the role and place of the Torah for Gentiles, but pragmatic considerations and the realities of daily life in the ancient world should not be overlooked in addressing this issue, lest our portrait of the matter become fully theoretical based on *literary* sources

¹⁰⁸⁷ It is here that I especially find the scholarly attempts to posit the Law as a "distant" issue for Luke most unconvincing. How can Luke "only" be concerned with rehabilitating the "historical" image of Paul as a Torah observant Jew, if there is not a *contemporary* criticism against the *effects* of (a misunderstood?) Pauline thought? The rumors floating around in Luke's day claim that Paul dissuaded Jews from circumcising their *children*. If there is no contemporary debate in Luke's day and context concerning the place of the Torah within the *ekklesia*, whence his need to emphasize Paul's fidelity to Torah *up to the very end of the narration in Acts even after the death and resurrection of Jesus and the promulgation of the Apostolic Decree*? Here the Conzelmannian tripartite scheme (Israel-Jesus-the church) artificially imposed upon Luke-Acts completely cracks and collapses upon itself, for the Law remains largely unaffected in all three periods of Conzelmann's supersessionist salvation history.

¹⁰⁸⁸ Whether the historical Paul himself taught that Jews should abandon the Torah is another question, which I happily decide to leave out of this discussion. Probably, it would be helpful to think of several "Pauline schools" in the post-70 era that interpreted Paul's statements regarding the Torah in a variety of ways, some thinking that the Jewish Law should be fully abandoned, others, like Luke, arguing that Paul had himself never ceased to be an observant Jew.

(often written by elites) that do not and cannot fully reflect the social circumstances and reality occurring on the ground. Which commandments from the Torah did non-Jews have to observe in order to be “saved” (to use Christian jargon) and intermingle with Jews? The halakic status of the Gentile (proselyte, sympathizer, follower of Jesus, etc.) as well as the degree to which he or she would be willing to heed to the observance of Mosaic legislation would dictate for many the amount of interaction possible between Jews and non-Jews. Obviously, most ancient Jews would interact more openly and freely with a Gentile proselyte or sympathizer than with a non-Jew who remained completely ignorant of, or worst, insensitive and hostile to Jewish custom. It is misguided, then, to argue that since Luke places the discussion about the Apostolic Decree in a wider debate about the “salvation” of Gentiles (15:1), its regulations prove irrelevant for addressing the question of a table fellowship between Jews and Gentiles within the Jesus movement.¹⁰⁸⁹ The two issues, salvation and fellowship, cannot be fully separated from each other. They are closely related. Becoming a “God-fearer” or a follower of Jesus would express a certain pledge or willingness on the part of that Gentile to accommodate to certain Jewish sensitivities. The measure and execution of that commitment would in turn govern the Gentile’s social access into the Jewish realm. Full conversion into Judaism would mean for many Jews full access into Jewish society; full aversion would naturally translate into a distancing between both parties. By embracing the Apostolic Decree, Luke’s solution lies somewhere in the middle of two extremes: Luke affirms that Gentiles can be saved without undergoing circumcision (in the case of males), but expects them to observe a certain number of regulations that allows for a Jewish-Gentile encounter in which Jews

¹⁰⁸⁹ Contra Deines, “Das Aposteldekret,” 355–56.

can faithfully maintain their distinctive identity. Luke neither calls for full assimilation nor complete separation between Jews and Gentiles, only for a reasonable (in his eyes) compromise that guarantees interaction between both entities yet does not eliminate the ethnic and halakic differences that continue exist within both branches of the *ekklesia*.

In any case, Luke does connect the question of salvation with the issue of fellowship between Jews and Gentiles, since in Acts 15 Peter's speech alludes to the Cornelius episode (15:8–10). In the previous chapter, I tried to signal the issue of table fellowship for comprehending Luke's narration of the Cornelius incident (cf. Acts 10:28, 48; 11:3). In addition, scenarios where Jewish and Gentile followers of Jesus dine and interact together appear prominently in Acts, suggesting that the Apostolic Decree did prove important for addressing Jewish-Gentile encounters.¹⁰⁹⁰ More importantly, three out of four of the items in the Apostolic Decree concern *food* (food offered to idols, strangled meat, and blood), not salvation. It is impossible, then, to ignore the import such legislation could carry for addressing Jewish-Gentile relationships. The Apostolic Decree is not simply a moral compilation of universal laws incumbent upon all Gentiles. Unlike the later rabbinic Noahide Laws, which are *entirely* ethical in their nature, the Apostolic Decree contains both moral and ritual-dietary components.¹⁰⁹¹ In Luke's eyes, Gentile

¹⁰⁹⁰ For example, Paul stays in Philippi at the house of Lydia (16:15). In Philippi, Paul also eats and lodges at the house of a Gentile jailer (16:34).

¹⁰⁹¹ As noted above, even the seventh Noahide law, to abstain from eating a "limb from a live animal" reflects a *moral* concern. Likewise, the remaining six Noahide laws are all ethical in their orientation: to maintain justice (דינין), refrain from idolatry (עבודה זרה), blasphemy (קיללת השם), sexual immorality (גילוי ערויות), bloodshed (שפיכות דמים), and robbery (גול). Although the rabbis (ideally) expected Noahides to refrain from idolatry, there is no evidence that this injunction included abstinence from eating food that was offered to idols. Furthermore, unlike the Apostolic Decree, the Noahide legislation seems not to concern itself with Jewish-Gentile *interaction*, but with maintaining clear boundaries between Jews and Gentiles, indeed explicitly forbidding non-Jews from observing any other Jewish custom (e.g., the Sabbath) than the seven Noahide Laws (cf. the rabbinic dictum in *b. Sanh.* 58b, שב ואל תעשה). By contrast, I have suggested in Part I that Luke would not have objected to Gentiles observing at their own "leisure" the Sabbath or other Jewish customs. Cf. Müller, *Tora für die Völker*, 165 ; Novak, "The Origin of Noahide Laws," 26.

followers are more than just “Noahides” (a terminological anachronism); they are more akin to the biblical *gerim* who reside *among* Israel. For Luke, the dual dimension embedded in the Apostolic Decree, its moral and ritual components, should eliminate Jewish qualms about interacting or accepting Gentile followers of Jesus. After all, Gentiles who embrace the Apostolic Decree commit themselves to fully abandoning idolatry: they neither worship idols nor consciously acquire and consume food offered to idols. This commitment in itself is no small feat, sufficiently conspicuous and unsettling to cause social, political and economic unrest among Jews, Greeks, and Romans, particularly in the tense atmosphere persisting after 70 between Jerusalem and Rome.¹⁰⁹² It is probable that non-Christian Jews would have refrained from making such uncompromising demands from Gentiles sympathetic to Judaism.¹⁰⁹³ But Luke’s ideal and more radical (than the average Gentile sympathizer of Judaism) Gentile follower of Jesus refrains not only from idolatry, but also from the other immoral (in Jewish eyes) illicit sexual practices of the Gentiles. In addition, Luke demands that Gentile followers of Jesus abstain from blood(shed) and strangled meat. Thus, Luke’s ideal Gentile follower of Jesus refrains from all the three of the cardinal sins held by Jews against the nations: idolatry, sexual immorality, and bloodshed. But in addition, they comply with the ritual-dietary concerns of Jews. What else could a “reasonable” Jew ask from a Gentile?

¹⁰⁹² See Acts 16:16–24; 19:19, 24–41, for examples of the social unrest caused by the boycott of idols by followers of Jesus. Saldarini, *Matthew's Christian-Jewish Community*, 158: “Refusal to participate in Greco-Roman worship separated Jews much more decisively from the rest of the Mediterranean world than dietary laws or circumcision.”

¹⁰⁹³ Paula Fredriksen, “What ‘Parting of the Ways’?” in *The Ways That Never Parted*, 55–56: “To have actively pursued a policy of alienating Gentile neighbors from their family gods and native, civic and imperial cults would only have put the minority Jewish community at risk.”

Some commentators note that the Apostolic Decree presents only a partial list of dietary laws. After all, no explicit prohibition against eating forbidden foods such as pork appears in Acts.¹⁰⁹⁴ But Luke, like other ancient Jews willing to dine with sympathizing Gentiles knowledgeable about kashrut, assumes that halakically informed Gentile followers of Jesus will not serve forbidden items such as pork to fellow Torah observant Jewish believers when they commune together. It is absurd to think that Luke envisions the ideal Gentile follower of Jesus (e.g., Cornelius, the friendly Gentile sympathizer toward Jewry *par excellence*) serving a pig that has been ritually slaughtered with its blood properly drained to a Torah observant Jew! Once a pig always a pig. Indeed, at least for Jewish consumption, all non-kosher animals remain *nevelah* even when slaughtered according to the laws of *shehitah*.¹⁰⁹⁵ Wehnert suggests that the Apostolic Decree was probably accompanied by further instruction elaborating the meaning and application of each item so that Gentile followers of Jesus would learn more fully about Jewish dietary and ritual sensibilities.¹⁰⁹⁶ The terse language of the Apostolic Decree, with its mere listing of four items, certainly calls for further elaboration and clarification. In addition, no explicit reference to any forbidden (i.e., non-kosher) animals appears in the decree probably because of the absence of such a discussion in Lev chs. 17–18. It could also be that Luke only expects Gentiles to refrain from eating forbidden animals

¹⁰⁹⁴ Pervo, *Acts*, 376 n. 89: “The decree falls short of *kashrut*, certainly of the sort advocated by the Pharisees. Pork, for example, is not mentioned, nor is there any attention to menstruants as a potential source of impurity or to other purity regulations regarding food.” It is debatable though whether *Gentile* menstruation was considered a source of impurity by ancient Jews (see references to Klawans, Hayes, Maccoby in introduction to Part II of this monograph). Of interest though, are the traditions in the *Ps. Clem.* literature mentioned earlier in this chapter that require Gentile women to honor the rules of menstruation and for Gentile couples to wash themselves after having sexual intercourse. These traditions merit further consideration and comparison with Second Temple and rabbinic texts dealing with Gentile impurity.

¹⁰⁹⁵ Milgrom, *Leviticus*, 1:654: “. . . carcasses of impure animals are always termed *něbēlā* no matter how they died—even if they were slaughtered ritually.” Cf. Hoffmann, *Das Buch Leviticus*, 1:352, 467.

¹⁰⁹⁶ Wehnert, *Die Reinheit*, 254.

when they commune with Jewish followers of Jesus. Otherwise, he only requires *Gentiles* to always avoid the four items outlined in the Apostolic Decree. Kashrut, in itself, only carries ongoing relevance for the Jewish wing of the *ekklesia*.¹⁰⁹⁷ This is a no small point that is not always fully appreciated, for regardless of what one makes of the link between the Apostolic Decree and Lev 17–18, it proves quite remarkable that the decree, and by extension, Luke, presupposes an *ongoing* abidance to the Torah *in its totality* by Jewish followers of Jesus. Luke always and only discusses the minimal requirements *Gentiles* should observe, while assuming and even affirming that Jewish followers of Jesus will keep observing their customs *in toto*.¹⁰⁹⁸

¹⁰⁹⁷ Or were there Jews of the Second Temple period onward who would have interpreted Lev 17–18 to include kashrut for Gentiles? Probably not. Particularly intriguing though is the phrase *אשר יאכל* in Lev 17:13: “And anyone of the people of Israel, or of the aliens who reside among them, who hunts down an animal or bird that *may be eaten* (*אשר יאכל*) shall pour out its blood and cover it with earth.” The later *Tg. Ps. J.* interprets the phrase as meaning “what is permitted [i.e., kosher] for eating” (*דמיכשרין למיכל*), assuming that the discussion throughout Leviticus 17 only concerns kosher animals. See too *Sifra* Parashah Aharei Mot Perek 11:3: *אשר יאכל יצא עוף טמא שאינו נאכל*. Milgrom, *Leviticus*, 2:1481, comments on Lev 17:13 in the following way: “Assumed is a knowledge of 11:13–19; 24–28 But what of the forbidden animals, those whose flesh may not be eaten? Is their blood to be drained and buried? A positive reply must be presumed The fact, however, that this phrase is used—despite the questions that may arise—indicates that the subject here and throughout the chapter is meat for the table. Indeed, the absence of any reference to predatory (hence, forbidden) animals shows that the notion of hunting as sport is not even envisaged—a far cry from the practices of Israel’s neighbors.” See also *Rashi* on Lev 17:13.

¹⁰⁹⁸ My presentation of Luke’s *favorable* outlook toward the Law is a far cry from Pervo’s recent portrait in his commentary on Acts where he projects Justin Martyr’s opinion about “Jewish Christians” and the Law back into Acts: “Luke, despite his insistence on continuity, is a product of the gentile mission who sees the peculiar features of Jewish life as a relic of the past, useful in their time, no doubt, but no longer required or desirable. Within Acts, Paul alone is portrayed as engaging in the temple cult. Despite his presentation of Paul as very observant and a card-carrying Pharisee, Luke is rather close to Paul on the value of Torah for followers of Jesus. His attitude may also be compared to that of Justin” (*Acts*, 544). I understand not how Pervo can state that only Paul is engaged in the temple cult in Acts, since other followers of Jesus throughout Luke and Acts at least attend and worship in the temple during times of sacrificial offerings and prayer. In fact, when Paul goes to the temple one final time in Acts he is *accompanied* by other Jewish followers of Jesus who are continually in touch with this realm (Acts 21:26).

Part III

Circumcision in Matthew and Luke-Acts

“*And please circumcise us too, so that we look like Jews. . . .*”
(Petronius, *Satyricon* 102:13–14)

Introduction

Although Jews were not the only people who practiced circumcision in antiquity, classical sources often single out this practice as a distinctive Jewish custom.¹⁰⁹⁹ For Petronius (first century C.E.), circumcision is a specifically Jewish trait: “and please circumcise us too, so that we look like Jews” (*Satyricon* 102:13–14).¹¹⁰⁰ Tacitus remarks that the Jewish people “adopted circumcision to distinguish themselves from other peoples by this difference” (*Historiae* V, 5:5). Besides Sabbath observance and dietary practices, Juvenal also singles out circumcision as a Jewish custom *par excellence* (*Saturae* XIV, 96–106). As Matthew and Luke composed their writings in the shadow of the destruction of the temple, some Jews were trying to evade paying the Roman levy known as the *fiscus Iudaicus*. According to Suetonius, Roman authorities even searched for marks of circumcision in order to identify Jewish evaders.¹¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁹⁹ Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors*, 1:444: “. . . for Greek and Latin writers the Jews were the circumcised *par excellence*.”

¹¹⁰⁰ Cf. further statement made in *Fragmenta* 37, also ascribed to Petronius: “The Jew may worship his pig-god and clamour in the ears of high heaven, but unless he also cuts back his foreskin with the knife, he shall go forth from the people and emigrate to Greek cities, and shall not tremble at the fasts of Sabbath imposed by the law.”

¹¹⁰¹ See Suetonius, *Domitianus* 12:2: “Besides other taxes, that on the Jews was levied with the utmost vigour, and those were prosecuted who without publicly acknowledging that faith yet lived as Jews, as well as those who concealed their origin and did not pay the tribute levied upon their people. I recall being

Circumcision, then, was in the opinion of many outsiders a quintessential marker of Jewish identity, and any affirmation of this practice on the part of Matthew or Luke would in Greco-Roman eyes place them in the Jewish camp. For Jews, however, simply bearing the marks of circumcision was not sufficient a criterion for establishing Jewish identity. After all, other peoples did (and still do) practice circumcision. Recently, Thiessen has made a coherent and compelling argument concerning the importance of the *timing* of circumcision on the eighth day as a means for Jews to differentiate themselves from other peoples who also practiced circumcision.¹¹⁰² He posits that already the narrator of Genesis 17 sought to differentiate Ishmael and those peoples represented by this literary figure vis-à-vis Israel by highlighting their non-eighth-day circumcision.¹¹⁰³ The book of *Jubilees* continues in this trajectory, reaffirming the need for all Jews to circumcise their sons on the eighth day.¹¹⁰⁴ It is quite telling that of all canonical gospel authors only Luke devotes attention to the question of circumcision.¹¹⁰⁵ Quite remarkably, he, like the author of *Jubilees*, highlights the timing of circumcision, reporting how both John the Baptist and Jesus entered into the covenant of Israel on the

present in my youth when the person of a man ninety years old was examined before the procurator and a very crossed court, to see whether he was circumcised.”

¹¹⁰² Besides Thiessen’s work, another recent monograph on circumcision in ancient Judaism and Christianity has appeared: Nina E. Livesey, *Circumcision as a Malleable Symbol* (WUNT 2. 295; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010). See also Simon Claude Mimouni, *La circoncision dans le monde judéen aux époques grecque et romaine: Histoire d’un conflit interne au judaïsme* (Collection de la Revue des études juives 42; Paris: Peeters, 2007); Shaye Cohen, *Why Aren’t Jewish Women Circumcised* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 2005); Andreas Blaschke, *Beschneidung: Zeugnisse der Bibel und verwandter Texte* (Texte und Arbeiten zum neutestamentlichen Zeitalter 28; Tübingen : Francke, 1998); and Nissan Rubin, *Beginning of Life; Rites of Birth, Circumcision, and Redemption of the First-Born in the Talmud and Midrash* [in Hebrew] (Tel Aviv: Ha-Kibbutz Ha-Meuahd, 1995).

¹¹⁰³ Thiessen, *Contesting Conversion*, 41.

¹¹⁰⁴ For discussion of possible historical context of *Jubilees* and its debate about circumcision, see my forthcoming “Forming Jewish Identity by Formulating Legislation for Gentiles.”

¹¹⁰⁵ The author of the gospel of John makes reference to circumcision *en passant*, but this occurs only as a secondary motif in a discussion that focuses more on Sabbath healing and the authority of Jesus (see John 7:22–23).

eighth day. Matthew, on the other hand, never explicitly refers to the rite of circumcision, although this certainly has not prevented scholars from speculating about the matter.

Since Matthew does not refer to circumcision in his gospel, I will resist overly speculating about this issue and focus more on Luke. Particularly in his discussion of the rite of circumcision, Luke displays a remarkable and accurate knowledge about Jewish halakah. Luke is not only well informed about Jewish circumcision and the many other rites and practices involved around the time of childbirth (parturient impurity, the naming of the child, redemption of the firstborn, etc.), but also affirmative of its observance: like most Jews of his time, Luke thinks that every Jewish male should undergo circumcision, including Jewish followers of Jesus.

Chapter 12

Circumcision in Matthew and Luke-Acts

“Paul wanted Timothy to accompany him; and he took him and had him circumcised because of the Jews who were in those places”
(Acts 16:3)

Matthew and the Circumcision Debate in Recent Scholarship

Recently, the question of circumcision in Matthew has acquired a certain profile despite the absence of any explicit reference to the topic in the entire gospel. In many ways, this discussion has not proved fruitful because the state of the evidence does not allow for making definite conclusions. Unfortunately, Matthew, unlike Luke, did not write his own version of the “Acts of the Apostles,” where he could have more clearly outlined his position on the matter. Consequently, all that can be said with reasonable confidence is that, in light of his favorable attitude toward the Torah, Matthew presumes that Jewish followers of Jesus will continue to observe the Mosaic Law in all of its aspects, including circumcision.

While the question concerning Gentile circumcision cannot be answered with any firm conviction, it is quite possible that Matthew does not believe such a practice should be imposed on Gentiles, since he makes no clear statement about such a requirement in his entire gospel. Looking momentarily at the matter through the prism of ancient Judaism might prove helpful here. To the best of my knowledge, it does not seem like many ancient Jews fantasized about a massive and collective circumcision of the Gentiles in the days of the eschaton. Instead, most Jews ideally hoped that the nations would

eventually abandon their futile devotion to idols and cease from practicing sexual immorality, bloodshed, and other disgraceful sins. Müller has done us a great service by amassing and analyzing a variety of ancient Jewish texts that condemn the nations for engaging in variety of “cardinal sins,” which usually can be subsumed under three categories: idolatry, murder, and sexual immorality. None of these texts calls for all Gentile males to undergo circumcision and become Jews.¹¹⁰⁶ These texts presuppose that Gentiles will live *as Gentiles* in a righteous way without fully converting to Judaism. This evidence at least suggests that Matthew could have held a similar view even if, like Luke, he conceives of Gentile followers of Jesus as acquiring a status of moral purification and sanctification that in a real sense allows them to be included within Israel and enjoy an equal soteriological footing with other Jews.

Sim, however, has taken Matthew’s silence on the matter as evidence for a Matthean mission that demands Gentiles to observe the Torah *in toto*, including circumcision:

There is no need to mention circumcision for (male) Gentile converts because Matthew was concerned not with the preliminary step of conversion to the Jewish people, but with the specifically Christian ritual which admitted all Jews, whether by birth or proselytism, to his sectarian Christian Jewish group. It is therefore presumed by author and reader alike that any Gentiles who wished to join their community must proselytise first in order to fulfil the basic requirements for admission We can illustrate this point by referring to the admission requirements of a contemporary Jewish sect, the Qumran community. This sectarian group counted proselytes among its members, even though they were ranked at the bottom of the hierarchy (CD 14:4–6). Yet the complex admission procedures of this community, which took years to complete (cf. 1QS 6:13–23), say nothing about circumcision. The reason for this is

¹¹⁰⁶ See Müller’s book *Tora für die Völker*; Flusser and Safrai, “Das Aposteldekret und die Noachitischen Gebote,” 173–92.

that the entry requirements of the Qumran community presumed that potential Gentile members would become Jews as a necessary first step.¹¹⁰⁷

Much of Sim's argumentation depends on how we envision Matthew's social-historical context (are there ethnic Gentiles in his community?) as well as his ecclesiological perspective (does Matthew view Israel solely as an ethnic category?). Furthermore, the analogy drawn by Sim with the Qumran community raises many questions that require further attention and clarification. First, we might wonder whether there really were any Gentiles that ever joined the Qumran sect. It should be recalled that the Damascus Document may refer to a larger group of (Essene?) Jews, while the Community Rule may contain the more restrictive views of a smaller (extreme Essene?) sect of Jews living near the Dead Sea.¹¹⁰⁸ 1QS 6:13–23, which Sim cites to bolster his argument about Gentile circumcision in Matthew, does not mention circumcision, not because it presumes Gentiles will undergo this procedure in order to join the *Yahad*, but because it only deals with membership requirements for *Jewish* persons who would like to join the community. Gentiles are out of the equation because 1QS would never fathom that they would join the Qumran community.

Likewise, it is possible that the Damascus Document does not refer to the concept of conversion, namely, that Gentiles can become Jews. The hierarchy listed in CD 14:4–6 (priests first, Levites second, Israelites third, proselytes fourth) implies that Gentiles

¹¹⁰⁷ Sim, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 253–54. See more recently his articles on the matter, especially: “Matthew, Paul and the Origin and Nature of the Gentile Mission: The Great Commission in Matthew 28:16–20 as an Anti-Pauline Tradition,” *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 64.1 (2008): 377–92. Cf. Levine, *The Social and Ethnic Dimensions*, 178–85, especially 185: “Matthew emphasizes the retention of the Law and continuity between the age of Israel and the age of the church. In this second period of salvation history, the gospel will be preached to the gentiles as well as to the Jews, and the rules for admission into the *Basileia* are extended rather than repealed. Thus it is likely that male gentile members of the church engaged in the rite of circumcision.”

¹¹⁰⁸ On this problem, see Boccaccini, *Beyond the Essene Hypothesis*, 21–49. On the problems with identifying Qumran as an Essene site and relating it with the Dead Sea Scrolls discovered in the caves nearby, see Wise, Abegg, and Cook, *The Dead Sea Scrolls*, 14–35.

cannot become Jews but remain Gentiles, much like the biblical *ger* (“sojourner”).¹¹⁰⁹

Probably, the Damascus Document views Gentile circumcision as an exceptional phenomenon that allows limited integration of certain non-Jews into Jewish society. This understanding corresponds to the wider reluctance we find elsewhere in the Damascus Document to even associate with Gentiles (CD 11:14–15).¹¹¹⁰ To discover such a denial in CD of the possibility for Gentiles to transform into Jews should come as no surprise. It is in harmony with what we find in other writings found near Qumran, including the books of *Jubilees* and 4QMMT. These writings deny the very possibility for Gentiles to become Jews, since Jewish membership according to such books is contingent on genealogical purity and circumcision *on the eighth day*. As Hayes states, for “*Jubilees*, the distinction between and separation of the profane seed of Gentiles and the holy seed of the Israelites is an unalterable fact of the natural order, immune to the remedy of circumcision.”¹¹¹¹

What especially sets Matthew aside from the Qumran sect is the idea of a *mission* to the Gentiles. While some Essenes may have been open to the possibility that some exceptional Gentile males could join their communities through circumcision, as far as we know, they, like so many other ancient Jews, did not actively engage in a mission to attract Gentiles to join their circles. At best, the evidence from Qumran may suggest that

¹¹⁰⁹ Thiessen, *Contesting Conversion*, 17–63, argues that no passage in the Hebrew Bible envisages circumcision as a rite that permits Gentiles to become Israelites. See also Solomon Zeitlin, “Proselytes and Proselytism during the Second Commonwealth and the Early Tannaitic Period,” in *Harry Austryn Wolfson Jubilee Volume: On the Occasion of his Seventy-Fifth Birthday* (2 vols.; Jerusalem: American Academy for Jewish Research, 1965), 2:871–82.

¹¹¹⁰ See discussion in Cana Werman, *Attitude towards Gentiles in the Book of Jubilees and Qumran Literature Compared with Early Tanaic Halakha and Contemporary Pseudepigrapha* [in Hebrew] (Ph.D. diss., The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1995), 258–79, 301–2 (on the Damascus Document); 317–19 (on the Temple Scroll and 4QFlorilegium). Werman concludes that both *Jubilees* and the Qumran sect were opposed to the idea of conversion.

¹¹¹¹ Hayes, *Gentile Impurities*, 77. Cf. Werman, *Attitude towards Gentiles*, 256. There is good evidence that such views, which negated the possibility of converting to Judaism, continued into the first century C.E. See, Thiessen, *Contesting Conversion*, 107–10.

Matthew is willing, in exceptional cases, to allow certain Gentiles to undergo circumcision if they wish to do so.¹¹¹² To claim, however, that Matthew's disciples would have gone out of their way to recruit Gentiles and force them to undergo circumcision goes beyond what the Qumranic evidence suggests. It could even be that Matthew does not mention circumcision in his gospel because he believes that even circumcised Gentiles cannot become Jews. Of course, this proposal cannot be confirmed with any firm evidence, given the silence of Matthew on the matter.¹¹¹³

In any case, Matthew certainly reveals a more positive outlook toward Gentiles than the Qumran sect, especially toward Gentiles who are sympathetic to Judaism and the teachings of Jesus. We cannot forget the positive statements made by the Matthean Jesus toward God-fearing Gentiles such as the Canaanite woman and the Roman Centurion. "Great is your faith," exclaims Matthew's Jesus toward the persisting Canaanite woman who humbly requests to eat from the crumbs that fall from her master's table (Matt 15:28). Matthew is even more praiseworthy of a Roman centurion's attitude and devotion to Jesus: "Truly I tell you, in no one in Israel have I found such faith" (8:10). Quite strikingly, Matthew's Jesus—unlike Luke's—continues to deliberate on this point, adding: "I tell you, many will come from east and west and will eat with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, while the heirs of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (8:10–12).

No reference is made here to the requirement of circumcision in order to partake in this

¹¹¹² The follow up question would be whether Matthew still regards such circumcised Gentiles as non-Jews, much like the biblical *ger*, or as proselytes in the full sense of the term, that is, as Jews.

¹¹¹³ What about the genealogy of Jesus in Matthew, which includes four women of non-Israelite background (Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and Bathsheba) who were integrated into the lineage of Israel? Then again, even a book like *Jubilees* rationalizes in its own way the inclusion of Tamar into the genealogy of Israel that still vouchsafes, at least to the author's satisfaction, the genealogical purity of Israel. On the concern for matrilineal purity in *Jubilees*, see Betsy Halpern-Amaru, *The Empowerment of Women in the Book of Jubilees* (JSJSup 60; Leiden: Brill, 1999).

eschatological table fellowship. It would not be surprising, therefore, to discover that Matthew could have held a similar view on the question of circumcision as Luke: Jews need to be circumcised; Gentiles do not. Davies and Allison's conclusion on the matter still proves the most reasonable: "Matthew, despite his insistence on upholding the Jewish law, never mentions circumcision. That he expected Jewish Christians to circumcise their male children is plausible; but he evidently did not think such necessary for Gentiles."¹¹¹⁴

Luke and Circumcision

In the first two chapters of his gospel, which cover the birth of John the Baptist and Jesus, Luke highlights the fidelity of several Jewish protagonists to the observance of the Torah.¹¹¹⁵ Ironically, Luke's reference in positive terms to the circumcision of the infant Jesus has become the *locus classicus* among a host of New Testament scholars to prove Luke's ignorance of Jewish Law and establish his Gentile background.¹¹¹⁶ These commentators point out that no pre-rabbinic Jewish source refers to the custom of naming a child on the eighth day. Instead of taking Luke more seriously as an ancient Jewish source that provides the first attestation of such a practice, his reliability is questioned.

¹¹¹⁴ Davies and Allison, *The Gospel according to Saint Matthew*, 3:685. Saldarini, *Matthew's Christian Jewish Community*, 156–60, leaves the question open. On the proposal that Matthew conceives of two separate missions, one to the Gentiles (with no requirement of circumcision), another to the Jews (which presupposes Torah observance), see Joel Willits, "The Friendship of Matthew and Paul: A Response to the Recent Trend in the Interpretation of Matthew's Gospel," *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 65.1 (2009): Art. #151, 8 pages. Cf. Axel von Dobbeler, "Die Restitution Israels und die Bekehrung der Heiden: Das Verhältnis von Mt 10,5b.6 und Mt 28,18–20 unter dem Aspekt der Komplementarität: Erwägungen zum Standort des Matthäusevangeliums," *ZNW* 91.1–2 (2000): 18–44. I would like to thank Brian Tucker for pointing out these references to me.

¹¹¹⁵ For a more detailed analysis of the Law in Luke's Infancy Narrative, see Salo, *Luke's Treatment of the Law*, 45–63.

¹¹¹⁶ As Salo, *Luke's Treatment of the Law*, 46 n. 11, correctly notes, the theme of Jewish Law in the Infancy Narrative of Luke has been largely ignored by New Testament specialists who have shown greater interest thus far in matters more central to contemporary Christian theology such as the virgin birth and the divinity of Jesus.

Were the practice of naming a Jewish new born on the eighth day to be found in a book like *Jubilees*, scholars would immediately judge matters differently. The presuppositions concerning Luke's Gentile background continue to hermeneutically govern the interpretation of his writings in so many ways: in the pericope describing Jesus' circumcision, Luke also describes Jesus' purification and presentation in the temple of Jerusalem. Since according to Leviticus 12 only the *mother* of a new born infant allegedly required purification after giving birth, many assert that Luke misinterprets the Mosaic Law: not only would an infant not require purification after birth, but, so some commentators claim, there would have been no need for Jesus' parents to bring their child to the temple in order to have him redeemed (for the sum of five shekels) as a firstborn Israelite. Brown's magisterial and influential commentary on the Infancy Narratives of Matthew and Luke is just one prominent work that embraces such a position. Brown believes that Luke probably was a Gentile proselyte before becoming a "Christian," because he reveals only a "bookish" knowledge of Judaism, acquired through his reading of the Septuagint, when he reports the circumcision, purification, and the redemption of Jesus as a firstborn son.¹¹¹⁷ I wonder, however, how a Gentile of the first century C.E. could become a proselyte to Judaism only through an individual and private reading of the LXX. Presumably, conversion into Judaism would involve a certain form of *integration* into and interaction with Jewish *society*. This process would entail acquiring membership with a certain *group* of Jews made of flesh and blood who could instruct their new devotee about the intricacies of Jewish belief and way of living. Therefore, even if Luke were a Gentile covert to Judaism, he could not have acquired his status as a proselyte and knowledge of Jewish life merely through a private reading of the

¹¹¹⁷ Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah*, 449 n. 14.

Septuagint. Conversion into Judaism was (and still is) as much, if not more, a social, communal phenomenon as it is a “religious” and individualized experience.

But the contemporary projection of Gentileness upon Luke goes even further: some see Luke’s narration about John the Baptist and Jesus’ circumcision as colored by “pagan” (if we may momentarily use such nomenclature) practices.¹¹¹⁸ Since no Second Temple Jewish source mentions the custom of naming a Jewish boy on the eighth day at the time of circumcision, though this is now the case among practicing Jews, this means that Luke must have imported his own non-Jewish baggage into a narrated scenery that in all other respects remains completely focused on conveying to its readers a sense and atmosphere of Jewish piety.¹¹¹⁹ All of these assertions, however, I fear, reveal a lack of halakic imagination and acquaintance with extra-biblical Jewish sources relevant for deciphering Luke’s intentions. In the following section, I will try to dismantle this final stronghold that has protected Luke’s Gentile identity for so long by arguing that, contrary to revealing ignorance on matters of Jewish practice, Luke betrays an intimate knowledge about halakah which he incorporates into his narrative in order to present the families of John the Baptist and Jesus as the most ideal of practicing Jews.

The Circumcision of John the Baptist and Jesus

Passage

1:59: “On the eighth day they came to circumcise the child [i.e., John the Baptist], and they were going to name him Zechariah after his father.”

¹¹¹⁸ It should be stressed that I do not deny the obvious Greco-Roman “influence” that has shaped Luke’s worldview, style, language, rhetoric, and so forth. Nevertheless, I find it most unlikely to discover an *intentional* intrusion of Gentile practices at a point of Luke’s narration where he is completely set on portraying Jesus and the John the Baptist as Jews *par excellence*.

¹¹¹⁹ On Greek and Roman customs of naming the child a few days after birth, see Wiefel, *Das Evangelium nach Lukas*, 61.

2:21–24: “After eight days had passed, it was time to circumcise the child; and he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb. When the time came for their purification according to the law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord (as it is written in the law of the Lord, ‘Every firstborn male shall be designated as holy to the Lord’), and they offered a sacrifice according to what is stated in the law of the Lord, ‘a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons.’”

Redactional Analysis

Luke probably had access to sources and/or traditions when composing his narrative about the births of John and Jesus.¹¹²⁰ The major challenge involves discerning how of much this section of Luke’s gospel is imbued with redactional activity and compositional creativity. It could be that Luke 1:59, which reports the circumcision and naming of John the Baptist on the eighth day, stems in part from a tradition or source. On the other hand, the literary parallelism, easily discernible between the births of John the Baptist and Jesus, suggest redactional activity at certain points. Undoubtedly, Luke has contributed to the enhancement of the literary symmetry between both reports about the circumcision and naming of John the Baptist and Jesus. Parallels between the birth stories of these two major protagonists abound in Luke’s narrative. For example, both Zechariah and Mary receive angelic visitations announcing the future birth and special calling assigned to both John and Jesus. Both births are made possible through divine will and intervention. John’s birth, according to Luke, is miraculous: his parents, like Abraham and Sarah, could not have children because of their elderly age. For Luke, like Matthew, Jesus’ conception is also out of the ordinary (1:35). Luke even claims that John the Baptist and Jesus are relatives, organically strengthening the link between both birth

¹¹²⁰ For a discussion on Luke’s usage of sources in the Infancy Narratives, see especially Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah*, 244–45.

episodes. Many of these connections undoubtedly stem from Luke's pen. Especially 2:21–24 contains many Lukan words and phrases, including:

ἐπλήσθησαν (2:21 and 22): “were fulfilled” or elsewhere in Luke “were filled.” This verb appears in the plural passive aorist form 7x in Luke (1:23; 2:6; 4:28; 5:26; 6:11) and 5x in Acts (2:4; 3:10; 4:31; 5:17; 13:45); only 2x in the LXX, there with the meaning of to be “filled” (2 Kgs 4:6 and Ps 37:8); 1x Herm. *Vis.* 2.2.2; 1x *Jos. Asen.* 8:8. In conjunction with ἡμέραι, ἐπλήσθησαν appears only in Luke (1:23; 2:6, 21, 22).

ὀκτῶ: The reference to eighth days in relation to circumcision is of importance for Luke (1:59; 2:21; Acts 7:8; ὀγδόη). Cf. Gen 17:12; 21:4; Lev 12:3; *Jub.* 15:12, 14, 25, 26; 16:14; Philo, *QG* 3:38, 49; 52; Phil 3:5; Josephus, *Ant.* 1:192, 214.

περιτεμεῖν: “To circumcise.” Not particularly Lukan, but the topic is of extreme interest for Luke (1:59; 2:21; Acts 15:5; 21:21; cf. Acts 7:8; 11:2; 16:3).

συλλημφθῆναι: “to become pregnant.” Luke uses this verb elsewhere to describe the pregnancy of Elizabeth (Luke 1:24, 31, 36). The verb is missing in Matthew's Infancy Narrative. In 2:21, Luke also employs the term κοιλία (so too in 1:15, 41, 42, 44; 2:21; cf. 11:27; 23:29; 3:2; 14:8), which Matthew does not use in his narrative of Jesus' birth (but see Matt 12:40; 15:17; 19:12).

καθαρισμοῦ: “purification.” This noun appears a few times in the LXX version of the Pentateuch (Lev 15:13; Num 14:18; cf. 1 Chr 23:28; Neh 12:45; Job 7:21; Prov 14:9; Sir 51:20; Dan 12:6). It appears frequently in 2 Macc (1:18; 1:36; 2:16; 2:19; 10:5; cf. 4 Macc 7:6), often in reference to the purification of the temple. Otherwise, the term is quite rare in early Jewish and Christian literature (Mark: 1x; John: 2x; Heb: 1x; 2 Pet: 1x; *I Clem.*: 1x; *T. Lev.* 14:6). In Luke, the term appears only twice: once in 2:22; the other in 5:14, the latter deriving from Mark 1:44.

κατὰ τὸν νόμον Μωϋσέως: “according to the Law of Moses.” In all of Luke-Acts, this cluster of words appears only here. However, Luke enjoys employing synonymous constructions using the preposition κατὰ followed by various nouns that refer in one way or another to Jewish laws and

customs: κατὰ τὸν νόμον κυρίου (Luke 2:39); κατὰ τὸ ἔθος τῆς ἱερατείας (Luke 1:9); κατὰ τὸ εἰθισμένον τοῦ νόμου (Luke 2:27); κατὰ τὸ ἔθος τῆς ἑορτῆς (Luke 2:42); κατὰ τὸ εἰωθὸς (Luke 4:16; Acts 17:2); κατὰ τὴν ἐντολὴν (Luke 23:56); κατὰ ἀκριβειαν τοῦ πατρῶου νόμου (Acts 22:3); κατὰ τὸν νόμον (Acts 22:12; 23:3); κατὰ τὴν ἀκριβεστάτην αἴρεσιν τῆς ἡμετέρας θρησκείας (Acts 26:5). Cf. 2 Kgs 23:25; 2 Chron 35:19; Sus 1:3, 62 (κατὰ τὸν νόμον Μωυσῆ); Tob 6:13; Heb 9:19.

ἀνήγαγον: literally, “they brought/led up.” Like other Jews, Luke knows well that, regardless of the geographical location, one always “goes up” to Jerusalem. The verb is too common to qualify as redactional. Nevertheless, the verb appears in this form (third personal plural aorist indicative active voice) three times in Luke-Acts (2:22, 7:41 and 9:39), while it is rarely attested elsewhere in early Jewish and Christian literature (a few times in the LXX; cf. *T. Gad* 8:5; *T. Benj.* 12:3; Josephus, *J.W.* 4:115).

Ἱεροσόλυμα: Surprisingly, Luke uses here the Hellenistic form for naming Jerusalem rather than the Hebraicizing Ἱερουσαλήμ, which he usually prefers (27x in Luke; 37x in Acts versus Ἱεροσόλυμα: only 3x in Luke; 11x in Acts). In 2:25, Luke reverts to the Hebraicizing Ἱερουσαλήμ. Luke is not entirely consistent in his usage of both forms.¹¹²¹

ἐν τῷ νόμῳ κυρίου: literally, “in the law of the Lord.” Since the term appears only in Luke 2:23 and 24, it is hard to determine whether this terminology stems from tradition or is redactional.

Luke 2:21–24 contains many unique literary features, although it is not always possible to distinguish with full confidence what is Lukan (in the sense of deriving from a special Lukan source or tradition) from what is properly redactional or compositional.

With Salo, I tend to favor viewing much of Luke 2:21–24 as redactional.¹¹²² Some of the unique literary elements highlighted above and the parallelism between 2:21 and 1:59

¹¹²¹ For a rationale accounting for Luke’s usage of both forms to describe the same city, see my redactional analysis of Acts 1:12 in Part I.

¹¹²² Salo, *Luke’s Treatment of the Law*, 49.

(Jesus and John's circumcision and naming) as well as Luke's deep interest in the temple point toward redactional activity. Indeed the interest in the temple of Jerusalem leads Luke to place the reference to Jesus' circumcision next to the pericope announcing his purification and redemption (2:22–24). The openings to both 2:21 and 2:22 resemble each other greatly:

Καὶ ὅτε ἐπλήσθησαν ἡμέραι ὀκτὼ τοῦ περιτεμεῖν αὐτὸν (2:21a)

Καὶ ὅτε ἐπλήσθησαν αἱ ἡμέραι τοῦ καθαρισμοῦ αὐτῶν (2:22a)

This literary parallelism points to the redactional composition of all of 2:21, revealing Luke's concern to portray Jesus as a circumcised Jew. By attaching v. 21 to 2:22–24, he also enhances the halakic dimension of a pericope, which we shall see, is rich in its references to Mosaic practices such as the purification of the parturient and her infant as well as the redemption of the firstborn.

Naming and Circumcising Jewish Boys

As noted earlier, no passage in any Jewish literature prior to Luke refers to the custom of naming a Jewish son on the eighth day. The first rabbinic attestation to this practice appears only in the late rabbinic work known as *Pirqa Rabbi Eliezer* (48). This silence in the ancient Jewish sources, coupled by the mainstream presupposition that Luke is not a Jew but a Gentile, has led many to conjecture that Luke has colored his narrative with Greco-Roman practices. But if we set this assumption about Luke's identity aside, then our perspective on his works can change dramatically, and suddenly his writings can be taken more seriously as possibly the first Jewish attestation to the

custom practiced till this very day of naming a Jewish child on the eighth day.¹¹²³

Obviously, there is no way of proving this statement, given the silence of the sources. But we can at least deploy our halakic and anthropological imagination to counteract the unconvincing conjectures made thus far concerning Luke's alleged ignorance of Judaism. First of all, it must be acknowledged that Greco-Roman custom may have led Jews to wait until the eighth day before naming their children. In this case, Luke would provide the first written attestation of the Jewish appropriation of this foreign custom. At what point in history did Jews begin to name their children on the eighth day remains unknown to us, but Luke could hypothetically serve as its *terminus ad quem*.

As Cohen and others note, biblical passages such as Gen 17 could have encouraged associating the naming of the child with the rite of circumcision, since both Abram and Sarai receive their new names, Abraham and Sarah, in the same pericope where God orders Abraham's household and descendants to undergo circumcision.¹¹²⁴ Likewise, the circumcision and naming of Isaac are placed next to each other in the same chapter of Genesis (21:2–4), inviting, once again, ancient Jews to infer that children should be named on the eighth day.¹¹²⁵ Although people of various cultures named their infants on the day of birth, some did so near the time of birth or even had names altered

¹¹²³ It is interesting to note that, contrary to many New Testament exegetes, some Jewish scholars do accept Luke's reference to the naming of a (male) child on the eighth day as the earliest attestation of this Jewish practice. So Cohen, *Why Aren't Jewish Women Circumcised*, 34 and Rubin, *The Beginning of Life*, 129–30.

¹¹²⁴ Cohen, *Why Aren't Jewish Women Circumcised*, 34; Léopold Sabourin, S. J., *L'Évangile de Luc: Introduction et commentaire* (Rome: Editrice Pontificia Università Gregoriana, 1985), 78 "Aux temps de Jésus, c'est au moment de la circoncision que l'enfant mâle recevait son nom. On pouvait appuyer cette coutume sur le fait que Dieu avait changé les noms d'Abram et de Sarai en relation avec la déclaration sur la loi de la circoncision (Gn 17,5.15)."

¹¹²⁵ Of course, this is not the "plain" sense of Gen 21:2–4, which reads more naturally as consisting of two consecutive steps: naming of Isaac at the time of birth (21:3), followed later by his circumcision on the eighth day. Nevertheless, in the absence of sources, the task of the historian of Second Temple Judaism consists in at least imagining how ancient Jewish readers could have understood and applied these texts, not to force our modern scientific readings upon their hermeneutics.

later in lifetime during significant events when a change in social status occurred.¹¹²⁶

Circumcision, which represents a change in status for the male Jewish infant who now officially enters into the covenant, would have proven a most appropriate time for announcing the name of child. These factors might have led Jews to eventually combine the rite of naming with eighth-day circumcision.

Some have tried to downplay the twofold repetition in Luke's Infancy Narrative concerning John and Jesus' circumcision by subordinating it to the allegedly more important theme, namely the ceremony of *naming* the child. In other words, Luke is primarily set in highlighting that both John and Jesus received their proper names at the time of their births as foretold by the angel Gabriel (1:13, 31), while circumcision only provides a decorative setting for announcing this fulfillment.¹¹²⁷ But who would claim that the reference to the circumcision of Isaac, which also appears right next to his naming (Gen 21:3,4), is only an incidental detail for the narrator of Genesis who remains more set on showing how Abraham and Sarah name their son Isaac in accordance to divine forecast (Gen 17:19; cf. Gen 18:12–15)? Undoubtedly, Luke wants to show that the angel's oracles are indeed fulfilled when both John the Baptist and Jesus officially receive their respective names. But Luke also goes out of his way to frame this event within another equally important Jewish rite: eighth-day circumcision. Luke could have simply included a statement such as: "And it came to pass that when the child was born, they named him John /Jesus." To mention circumcision twice in a narrative that

¹¹²⁶ See Rubin, *The Beginning of Life*, 110.

¹¹²⁷ So already Frédéric Louis Godet, *Commentaire sur l'évangile de saint Luc* (2 vols.; Neuchâtel: Librairie générale de Jules Sandoz; 1871), 1:184: "Le poids du récit porte-t-il non sur la circoncision qui, à proprement parler, n'est pas même mentionnée, mais sur le nom donné à l'enfant à cette occasion. . . ."; L. Legrand, "On l'appela du nom de Jésus," *RB* 89 (1982): 483; Schneider, *Das Evangelium nach Lukas*, 1:60: "Der Zug der Erzählung hebt aber plastisch die Besonderheit der gottverfügten Namengebung hervor"; Wiefel, *Das Evangelium nach Lukas*, 77; Wilson, *Luke and the Law*, 21: "They are incidental details, predictable within the thoroughly Jewish context of the narratives. . . ."

emphasizes in so many other respects the Jewishness of the “founders” of the Jesus movement certainly bears some significance, especially since Luke returns to the important topic of circumcision later on in Acts.¹¹²⁸

The Importance of Eighth-Day Circumcision

By pointing to their eighth-day circumcision, Luke shows that the Jewishness of John the Baptist and Jesus passes the highest and strictest standards of assessment. His depiction of John and Jesus’ birth and circumcision would appeal even to the most stringent of ancient Jews who only recognized the Jewishness of males who were genealogically pure and circumcised on the eight-day. As noted in the introduction to this chapter, certain Jews denied the possibility for Gentiles to become Jews because they were not of a “pure” Jewish stock. But Luke’s John and Jesus enjoy a remarkable Jewish pedigree. John the Baptist stems from priestly lineage, while both of Jesus’ human parents are both Jewish: Mary, in Luke’s eyes, possibly enjoying Levitic ancestry herself because of her relation to Elizabeth; Joseph belonging to the Davidic clan of the tribe of Judah.

For Luke, the circumcision of John the Baptist and Jesus might even serve as a model for all Jewish followers of Jesus to emulate. The polemical content embedded in Acts 21:21, which was circulating in Luke’s day, cannot be underestimated for evaluating

¹¹²⁸ Others wonder why during John the Baptist’s birth Luke refers to the custom of naming the child after the father’s name. There are, however, several references to such a phenomenon, including *t. Nid.* 5:15; *y. Naz.* 4:6, 53c (R. Haninah b. Haninah), Matt 16:17; 1 Esd 5:38; Neh 7:63; *Jub* 11:14 (Greek fragment); Josephus, *Life* 4; *Ant.* 14:10; *J.W.* 5:534. *Ant.* 20:197 and *J.W.* 4:160 are interesting, since they refer to a priestly family who also named the son after the father (Ananus). Cf. Sabourin, *L’Évangile de Luc*, 78: “C’était sûrement inusité de donner au fils le nom du père, car les Sémites, comme plusieurs peuples anciens, différenciaient les personnes d’un même clan en ajoutant le nom du père. . . .” See also Rubin, *The Beginning of Life*, 111–13, who concludes that it was customary in pre-exilic times to give a child a new name, but from the Second Temple period onward Jews would normally name the child after an ancestor, either the grandparent or parent.

Luke's concerns and motives.¹¹²⁹ Far from teaching "all the Jews living among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, and . . . not to circumcise their children or observe the customs" (Acts 21:21), it is Luke's contention throughout his writings that the *ekklesia* should uphold the practice of circumcision for its Jewish members. Read against this backdrop, the two pairs of parents, Zechariah-Elizabeth and Joseph-Mary, who faithfully guard and transmit Jewish identity to their progeny, become exemplary role models for Jewish followers of Jesus to imitate. Circumcising not only circumscribes John the Baptist and Jesus within the sphere of Torah practice and covenantal duties, but also serves as a model for the Jewish branch of the Jesus movement in Luke's day to follow: Jewish believers are not to leave their children uncircumcised but must uphold this ancient tradition by emulating the examples of the parents of John and Jesus.

The Purification of the Parturient and her Child

After mentioning the naming and circumcision of Jesus, Luke states that "when the time came for *their* purification according to the law of Moses," Joseph and Mary brought Jesus to Jerusalem "to present him to the Lord" (2:22). Although this verse does not deal with circumcision proper, it is important to deal briefly with this matter since it appears in the same pericope where Jesus' circumcision is mentioned and has been widely used to denounce Luke's alleged halakic ignorance.

Leviticus 12 states that a mother remains impure for forty days after giving birth to a boy (eighty days if she has a girl). During the first seven days after giving birth to a boy (or fourteen days for a girl), the mother's impurity is reckoned "as the days of the

¹¹²⁹ See especially Jacob Jervell, *The Unknown Paul: Essays on Luke-Acts and Early Christian History* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Augsburg, 1984), 138–45.

menstruation of her sickness” (כימי נדת דוּתָה).¹¹³⁰ The book of Leviticus equates in some way these first seven days after childbirth with the period of impurity acquired during menstruation. Pursuing this analogy, we could infer that once the first seven days after childbirth had been completed, the parturient would have to immerse herself in water in order to remove this form of impurity. She would remain, however, in a state of lesser impurity for the remaining thirty three days (or sixty six days in the case of an infant girl) vis-à-vis the sacred realm and all things holy. In other words, the parturient would not be able to access the sanctuary or touching any holy object, but could interact with the common realm and other routines of daily life (Lev 12:4).¹¹³¹ After the forty (or eighty) days were over, the parturient would then bring to the sanctuary a lamb as a burnt offering and a pigeon or turtledove as a sin offering (Lev 12:6). If she could not afford making such offerings, she could bring instead two pigeons or turtledoves (Lev 12:8).

As many have pointed out, the main problem in Luke’s description concerns his reference to the process of *their* purification (καθαρισμοῦ αὐτῶν) when both Mary and Joseph bring Jesus to the temple (2:22). The LXX to Leviticus 12:4 (cf. 12:2b) only explicitly speaks of the days of *her* purification (καθάρσεως αὐτῆς), that is, the mother’s, while never referring to the potential impurity the infant or the father could acquire during or after the infant’s birth.¹¹³² Does the usage of the plural possessive pronoun reveal Luke’s imprecise knowledge of Judaism? Recently, Thiessen has, in my opinion,

¹¹³⁰ See Milgrom, *Leviticus*, 1:749, for the elucidation of this phrase.

¹¹³¹ Although Leviticus 12 does not explicitly refer to immersion after the first seven days, Milgrom argues that this ritual is implied in the Torah. See Milgrom, *Leviticus*, 1:746.

¹¹³² Without the vocalization, the Massoretic Text of Lev 12:4 proves more ambiguous: both דמי טהרה and ימי טהרה could be read without the *mappiq* on the final *he* to mean “blood of purification” and “days of purification,” respectively, rather than the blood/days of *her* purification. The Massorettes add a *mappiq* to the second nominal construction to clarify that the text is speaking of “days of her purification.”

made a compelling argument that refutes such notions.¹¹³³ His main points are worth briefly summarizing here in order to strengthen the thesis advocated through this chapter.

Thiessen first shows how the silence of the text of Lev 12 does not necessarily preclude the possibility of viewing the infant as also being contaminated by the parturient's impurity. Scholars such as Milgrom have pointed out that the text of Leviticus is by no means exhaustive in its wording and does not outline its legislation in the fullest detail. Often the legislation appears in a terse and elliptical form, requiring further elucidation that is at times possible today only through analogy, inference, and acquaintance with the Levitical system of purity as a whole.¹¹³⁴ As noted earlier, Lev 12 does not even refer to the ablution of the parturient after the first seven/fourteen days, although this ritual is certainly implied, based on what is known from the rest of the purity system in Leviticus. It is possible, therefore, that Leviticus also leaves out the reference to the impurity of the infant. Thiessen also appeals to cross-cultural studies in order to strengthen his case. In other ancient cultures, including Egyptian, Hittite, and Greek, both the mother and the newborn were considered impure. Hittite law even distinguishes between the length of impurity depending on whether the child is male (three months) or female (four months).¹¹³⁵ Might not Israelite practice have resembled in this instance the customs of the surrounding nations, especially since Lev 12 also bases

¹¹³³ Matthew Thiessen, "Luke 2:22, Leviticus 12, and Parturient Impurity," *NovT* 54 (2012): 16–29. I would like to thank Thiessen for sharing this article with me before its publication.

¹¹³⁴ Thiessen, "Luke 2:22," 16–29, citing Mary Douglas, *Leviticus as Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 39; Milgrom, *Leviticus*, 1:976–1000; Erhard S. Gerstenberger, *Leviticus: A Commentary* (OTL; Louisville, Ky.: WJK, 1993), 147.

¹¹³⁵ See further, Aylward M. Black, "Purification: Egypt," *ERE* 10:476–482; Milgrom, *Leviticus*, 1:763–65; David P. Wright, *The Disposal of Impurity: Elimination Rites in the Bible and Hittite and Mesopotamian Literature* (SBLDS 101; Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars, 1987).

itself on the gender of the new born in order to determine the length of the parturient's impurity, suggesting that this form of impurity is in some way linked to the child?¹¹³⁶

There is more than silence, however, that could lead a Jewish reader of the Second Temple period to interpret Lev 12 as referring to the impurity of the mother as well as the infant. If the impurity of a parturient is comparable to the impurity of a menstruant, then it is reasonable to infer that both types of impurity are imparted in similar ways. Just as a husband who lies with her wife during her menstruation is defiled for seven days (Lev 15:24), so too, through analogy and inference we might conclude that the infant can acquire the impurity of her mother through contact with the blood emitted during childbirth.¹¹³⁷

Most importantly, Thiessen and others before him argue that *Jubilees* as well as 4Q265 and 4Q266 extend the impurity of the parturient to the infant.¹¹³⁸ *Jubilees* 3:8–13 refers to a curious story concerning the entry of Adam and Eve into the Garden of Eden. Adam has to wait until forty days are over before entering the Garden of Eden. Likewise, Eve waits until eighty days before making her entry. Elsewhere in *Jubilees*, the Garden of

¹¹³⁶ Cf. Milgrom, *Leviticus*, 1:746, who wonders: "In other cultures, the new born child is also impure, for instance, among the Hittites. What of the Israelite child? Is he (or she) rendered impure by contact with the mother? The text is silent. Nor is there even a hint from the laws of *niddâ*, or must we assume that the child's impurity is taken for granted, that the child is isolated with the mother during the seven (or fourteen) days, and that at the termination of this period it undergoes immersion with her? There is no clear answer." Unfortunately, Milgrom departs from his uncertainty and later confidently states that "Leviticus leaves no room for doubt that only one person needs be purified: the new mother" (1:762; cf. 1:746, 1750).

¹¹³⁷ See Thiessen, "Luke 2:22," 16–29, for further details.

¹¹³⁸ See already Joseph Baumgarten, *DJD* 35 (1999): 60–61 as well as William Loader, *The Dead Sea Scrolls on Sexuality* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2009), 229 n. 126. The evidence from *Jubilees* as well as 4Q265 has also convinced Loader that Luke cannot be charged with being ignorant about the Jewish Law for referring to the impurity of both Mary and Jesus. I would like to thank Loader for sharing these references and his thoughts on this matter during my visit to Australia. See further, Joseph M. Baumgarten, "Purification after Childbirth and the Sacred Garden in 4Q265 and *Jubilees*," in *New Qumran Texts and Studies: Proceedings of the First Meeting of the International Organization for Qumran Studies, Paris 1992* (ed. George J. Brooke with Florentino García-Martínez; STDJ 15; Leiden: Brill, 1994), 3–10 and Hannah K. Harrington, *The Purity Texts* (Companion to the Qumran Scrolls 5; London: T&T Clark, 2004), 62, 100.

Eden is likened to the temple (*Jub.* 8:19). The connections with the legislation of Lev 12 are obvious, and, as Thiessen suggests, the author of *Jubilees* probably would have viewed newborn children as impure, having to wait forty or eighty days before entering the sacred realm, just as Adam and Eve, “newborn” creatures, as it were, wait until the time of their impurity is fulfilled before entering the sanctuary of Eden.¹¹³⁹

After reconstructing 4Q265, Joseph Baumgarten concludes that, like *Jubilees*, this fragment links the legislation of the parturient in Lev 12 with the entry of Adam and Eve into Eden, viewing the primordial garden as a holy place that functions as a paradigm for the “acceptance of newly born infants of both sexes into the sacred sphere.”¹¹⁴⁰ Most interesting though is 4Q266 6 ii 10–11, which prohibits a mother from nursing her newborn child and requires instead the service of a wet nurse. Unlike *Jubilees* and 4Q265, this text denies that a newborn acquires impurity at the moment of childbirth but assumes that an infant can subsequently become impure through contact with the mother during her days of impurity.¹¹⁴¹ Basing herself on this Qumranic evidence, Himmelfarb concludes that “P must have shared the view that the parturient conveyed impurity to those who touched her during the first stages of impurity. Surely it would not have escaped P’s notice that the newborn baby could not avoid such contact.”¹¹⁴² She explains the silence of the issue in Leviticus 12 in the following way: “The consequences of impurity as specified in Leviticus 12 are hardly relevant to a newborn, who is most

¹¹³⁹ Thiessen, “Luke 2:22,” 16–29.

¹¹⁴⁰ Baumgarten, “Purification after Childbirth,” 5.

¹¹⁴¹ Thiessen, “Luke 2:22,” 11–12.

¹¹⁴² Martha Himmelfarb, “Impurity and Sin in 4QD, 1QS, and 4Q512,” *DSD* 8 (2001): 26.

unlikely to have the opportunity to enter the sanctuary or touch holy things and who is certainly incapable of eating sacrificial meat and other kinds of consecrated food.”¹¹⁴³

Luke, however, is set on presenting Jesus in the temple, but cannot do so before the days of impurity for *both* the mother and the infant are over. Otherwise, Luke would run the risk of implying that Jesus and his family defiled the temple of Jerusalem by being present therein before the days of purification were over.¹¹⁴⁴ Thankfully, Luke is familiar with all of these halakic intricacies to save himself such embarrassment, wisely choosing to have the baby Jesus presented in the temple only after the forty days of purification are over.

The Presentation and Redemption of the Firstborn

Having dismissed Luke’s ignorance about the laws of the impurity of the parturient, there still remains the issue concerning the redemption of Jesus as the firstborn son (פדיון הבן). Once again, many have unfairly blamed Luke for his supposed ignorance about the legislation of the redemption of the firstborn, claiming that it was unnecessary in the Second Temple period for Jews to bring their firstborn sons to the temple for redemption. They also criticize Luke for failing to mention the payment of five shekels necessary to perform this transaction. In fact, some go as far as claiming that Luke has confused two different practices: the purification of the parturient with the redemption of the firstborn:

¹¹⁴³ Himmelfarb, “Impurity and Sin,” 26.

¹¹⁴⁴ I believe that the reference to “their purification” in Luke 2:22 refers to that of the mother and the infant rather than the mother and the father, even if “their purification” is followed by ἀνήγαγον αὐτὸν (“they [i.e., Mary and Joseph] brought him up”), which might suggest that both parents were impure. However, as Salo, *Luke’s Treatment of the Law*, 52–53 and Sabourin, *L’Évangile de Luc*, 99 note, “their purification” lies closer to the previous verse describing *Jesus’* birth and circumcision, allowing, therefore, for a reading that interprets καθαρισμοῦ αὐτῶν as referring to Mary and Jesus—the central figure of this passage.

The Lucan combination of the two customs has often been thought to reflect popular practice in the Judaism of NT times, i.e., for the sake of convenience, the observance of two different religious duties at the same time. But that explanation does not cover the inaccuracies in the Lucan description of the combined customs. Luke seems to think that both parents needed to be purified, since in 22 he modifies Lev 12:6 to read “when the time came for *their* purification.” He seems to think that the reason for going to the Temple was the consecration or presentation of Jesus (vs. 27), when only the law concerning the purification of the mother mentions the custom of going to the sanctuary. (And it is dubious that a journey to the Temple was still practiced to any great extent in the Judaism of NT times.) He mentions nothing of the price (five shekels) required for redeeming the firstborn child from the service of the Lord; rather he connects with that event the sacrifice of the two doves or pigeons which was really related to the purification of the mother.¹¹⁴⁵

We already noted that Luke understands the intricacies related to the purification of the parturient and her infant better than many of his New Testament critics.

Furthermore, it is not so dubious, as Brown claims, that Jews could travel to the temple, even in the first century C.E., to perform such rituals as the redemption of the firstborn.

Alon has amassed a number of primary texts from the entire Second Temple period demonstrating that some Jews continued to bring their first fruits, tithes, and other offerings, money for the redemption of the firstborn included, directly to the temple rather than presenting these items to a local priest.¹¹⁴⁶

According to the Mosaic Torah, every firstborn male, whether from domestic animals or humans, was to be dedicated to the God of Israel: “You shall set apart to the LORD all that first opens the womb. All the firstborn of your livestock that are males shall be the LORD’s” (Exod 13:12). The rationale provided in the Torah for this practice draws directly from the Exodus story:

¹¹⁴⁵ Brown, *Birth of the Messiah*, 447.

¹¹⁴⁶ Gedalyahu Alon, *Jews, Judaism and the Classical World: Studies in Jewish History in the Times of the Second Temple and Talmud* (trans. Israel Abrahams; Jerusalem: Magnes, 1977), 91–93. See also Rubin, *The Beginning of Life*, 125–30, who concurs with Alon.

When in the future your child asks you, “What does this mean?” you shall answer, “By strength of hand the LORD brought us out of Egypt, from the house of slavery. When Pharaoh stubbornly refused to let us go, the LORD killed all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from human firstborn to the firstborn of animals. Therefore I sacrifice to the LORD every male that first opens the womb, but every firstborn of my sons I redeem” (Exod 13:14–15).

In earlier history all firstborn sons were dedicated to serve the God of Israel, but eventually the Levites replaced all firstborn Israelite males in assuming this priestly task (Num 3:11–13). Henceforth, a non-Levite firstborn son would be exempted or redeemed from his priestly duty to the God of Israel through the payment of five shekels (Num 18:15–16). Exodus 34:20 could imply that one of the parents had to redeem the firstborn son *in person at the sanctuary itself*: “All the firstborn of your sons you shall redeem. No one shall appear before me (פני) empty-handed” (Exod 34:20).¹¹⁴⁷ This verse presupposes that one of the parents (with the child?) had to be present at the sanctuary, the Hebrew noun פני implying that the rite was to take place in the sanctum where the God of Israel resided.

Such a procedure was possible as long as the Israelites and, later on, the Judeans resided near the sanctuary and could bring their first fruits, tithes, and other offerings in person or at least have them sent to Jerusalem (cf. Neh 12:44 and 2 Chr 31:5–6). Nehemiah 10:36 implies that Judeans living in the vicinity of Jerusalem would bring their firstborn sons to the temple for the purpose of redemption: “. . . also to bring to the house of our God, to the priests who minister in the house of our God, the firstborn of our sons and of our livestock, as it is written in the law, and the firstlings of our herds and of our flocks.” There is evidence that the practice of bringing tithes, first fruits, and other gifts to

¹¹⁴⁷ See Rubin, *The Beginning of Life*, 125, 128, for a discussion about the responsibility of the father, rather than the mother, for redeeming the firstborn son.

Jerusalem persisted among certain Jews of the Second Temple period. Thus, in 1 Macc 3:46–50, the Judeans who regather at Mizpah wonder whether they shall bring their first fruits and tithes once they lose control over the temple of Jerusalem (cf. Jdt 5:13).

Interestingly, the LXX of 1 Sam 1:21 states that, in addition to offering his yearly sacrifice and paying his vow, Elkanah, the father of Samuel, also brought the tithes of his land to the sanctuary rather than give them to a local Levite or priest (cf. *Jos. Ant.* 5:346).

Philo provides the most interesting reference to the ongoing practice of bringing money for the firstborn directly to the temple, since he lived during the first century C.E. in the Diaspora, far away from the temple. After extensively discussing the laws about the first fruits and firstborn males of animals and humans that the Jewish people must set apart for the priests (*Spec.* 1:131–151), Philo claims that in order to prevent the lay people from reproaching or embarrassing the priests, whose material subsistence depends on the generosity of lay people, the Torah commands that the first fruits (τὰς ἀπαρχὰς) first be brought *to the temple* (εἰς τὸ ἱερόν) and then that the priests at their own discretion should take these gifts for their own benefit:

For it was suitable to the nature of God, that those who had received kindness in all the circumstances of life, should bring (ἀνάγειν) the first fruits as a thank-offering, and then that he, as a being who was in want of nothing, should with all dignity and honor bestow them on the servants and ministers who attend on the service of the temple; for to appear to receive these things not from men, but from the great Benefactor of all men, appears to be receiving a gift which has in it no alloy of sadness (*Spec.* 1:152).¹¹⁴⁸

As Alon and Rubin correctly notice, Philo assumes here that Jews could bring their own tithes and offerings—including the money for redeeming the firstborn—

¹¹⁴⁸ Cf. *m. Sheqal.* 5:6 with its reference to a “chamber of secrets” in the temple filled with gifts for the needy who could help themselves privately without having to confront the donors.

directly to the temple.¹¹⁴⁹ Indeed some Tannaitic texts refer to Jews from the Diaspora who tried to bring their offerings from abroad to the temple only to have them be denied:

Nittai of Tekoa brought Dough-offerings from Be-ittur and they would not accept them. The men of Alexandria brought their Dough-offerings from Alexandria and they would not accept them. . . . Ben Antigonus brought up Firstlings from Babylon and they would not accept them. . . . Ariston brought his First-fruits from Apamia and they accepted them from him, for they said: He that owns [land] in Syria is as one that owns [land] in the outskirts of Jerusalem (*m. Hal.* 4:10–11)

Commenting on this passage from the Mishna, Alon states: “Although they did not accept the dough-offerings from them in these instances, yet there can be no doubt that it was the ancient custom to bring the dough-offering from outside Eretz-Israel to Jerusalem, only the later Halakha enacted not to accept the dough-offering nor the heave-offerings and tithes that came from outside Eretz-Israel.”¹¹⁵⁰ Eventually many Jews from the Second Temple period had to treat this matter with leniency because of the long distances involved in traveling to the temple. It became customary, therefore, to offer money for the redemption of the firstborn son to a local priest. Nevertheless, it could still have been considered an *ideal* to bring an offering or gift directly to the temple when this was possible. Any effort to perform a “hajj” to Jerusalem in order to make a personal offering would have certainly been viewed as a commendable, desirable, and pious act among Jews. All of this evidence leads Alon, who also seriously takes Luke’s reference into account, to conclude on the matter with the following words:

. . . during the greater part of the Second Temple era, the people were accustomed to bring the heave-offering and tithes to the Temple store-house, where they were distributed to the priests (and Levites) *pro rata*. And even at the end of the Temple period, when the Halakha permitted the gifts to be given to a priest or Levite anywhere and without the supervision of the central authority at Jerusalem, it was still

¹¹⁴⁹ Alon, *Jews, Judaism and the Classical World*, 102; Rubin, *The Beginning of Life*, 129–30.

¹¹⁵⁰ Alon, *Jews, Judaism and the Classical World*, 93–94.

apparently deemed the ideal way of fulfilling the commandment to bring the gifts up (if possible) to the Temple.¹¹⁵¹

All of this means that Luke seeks to present Jesus' parents as *ideal* Jews who not only carefully follow purity laws but also go up to the temple of Jerusalem in person in order to present their child in the temple. Luke wishes to show that Jesus' parents surpass the standard halakic expectations of their time.¹¹⁵²

Rubin suggests that Second Temple Jews who went up to Jerusalem may have taken advantage of this unique opportunity to perform several commandments at the same time in the temple.¹¹⁵³ This proposal could account for Luke's combination of two commandments that Jesus' parents simultaneously fulfill: purification and redemption. It is clear that Luke's main goal in this pericope is to have the infant Jesus brought to the temple. Luke loves the temple of Jerusalem. Nevertheless, this event could not occur before the forty days of purification for the parturient and her newborn were completed. Therefore, Luke takes advantage of this halakic issue to highlight the Torah observance of Jesus' family by indicating that they waited until the days of purification were over before redeeming their firstborn son at the temple. Num 18:16 declares that a firstborn male could be redeemed "*from* one month of age" (מבן־חדש). Rabbinic exegesis interpreted this phrase to mean that the firstborn male could be redeemed at the age of thirty-one days, but not before the age of thirty days.¹¹⁵⁴ Thirty-one days, of course, is too early a date to bring the infant Jesus into the temple since he would still be impure. The

¹¹⁵¹ Alon, *Jews, Judaism and the Classical World*, 91. So also, Rubin, *The Beginning of Life*, 129–30.

¹¹⁵² Of course, Luke's precise knowledge of Jewish practice does not prove the historicity of the events he relates in his Infancy Narrative. This is another matter altogether and is not the concern of this inquiry.

¹¹⁵³ Rubin, *The Beginning of Life*, 125.

¹¹⁵⁴ *Sifre* Num 118; cf. *b. Bek.* 10b; 12b: an infant cannot be redeemed before the age of thirty days. According to *t. Shabb.* 15[16]:7, an infant younger than thirty days was not considered a person (because of the high mortality rates of that time).

first opportunity to present Jesus in the temple would be after the completion of the forty days of impurity. Some of the rabbinic evidence suggests that a firstborn son could be redeemed either before or after the thirty-first day.¹¹⁵⁵ Indeed, the wording of Num 18:16 is sufficiently ambiguous and flexible to allow an interpretation that would grant the possibility of performing the redemption anytime *from* the age of thirty days onward.¹¹⁵⁶ Based on the evidence at our disposal, Luke's description and timing of the performance of the redemption of the firstborn make perfect halakic sense.

The only minor problem waiting to be solved involves the absence of any reference in Luke 2:22–24 to the *payment* of the five shekels for the redemption of Jesus. It should be pointed out, however, that the payment for the redemption may be implied in Luke 2:27: “the parents brought in the child Jesus, *to do for him* what was customary under the law.” But more importantly, Luke does not explicitly mention this financial transaction because he wants to emphasize the *presentation* and dedication of Jesus in the temple for a special purpose (2:22: *παραστήσαι τῷ κυρίῳ*). Luke wishes to portray Jesus as a child prodigy (2:47) dedicated and set apart for an important mission, not as an average firstborn son who is exempted from his priestly service to the God of Israel. In a certain sense, Luke is implying that Jesus never was redeemed from his obligation toward God to fulfill his special mission on behalf of Israel and the nations. This becomes clear later on in the infancy narrative when Luke presents Jesus once again in the temple, this

¹¹⁵⁵ *M. Bek.* 8:6; *b. bek.* 51b: a father must redeem a son who died after thirty days if he had not yet done so. See also *t. Bek.* 6:10, which allows for the postponement of the redemption in certain circumstances (cf. *b. Qidd.* 29b). According to *b. Bek.* 12b, if the father did not redeem his firstborn at the right time, he may do so “forever” (עד עולם). See Rubin, *The Beginning of Life*, 128–29.

¹¹⁵⁶ In Lev 27:6, a child from the age of thirty days to five years olds is evaluated at five shekels. Could this mean that a parent could redeem their child up until the age of five years old? We know too little about the ritual to make any definite conclusions, and, in any case, Lev 27:6 does not refer to the rite of redeeming the firstborn male, but to the funding of the sanctuary.

time at the age of twelve, “sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions” (2:46). Jesus’ bewildered parents, who search endlessly for him, fail to comprehend his retort when he is found by them in the temple: “Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house?” (2:49) The Greek phrase ἐν τοῖς τοῦ πατρὸς μου is ambiguous and could also be rendered as “about my Father’s work.” Regardless, the sentence proclaimed by Luke’s adolescent Jesus still implies a dedication to a particular mission that will often bring him into the realm of the temple in Jerusalem throughout the Lukan narrative.

The parallels between Luke’s presentation of Jesus and the story of Samuel’s birth should also be duly noted here. In my opinion, they are too conspicuous to be dismissed, even if they do not always perfectly align with each other.¹¹⁵⁷ Hannah, the future mother of Samuel, vows to dedicate her child to serve in the sanctuary should her barrenness be removed. Her miraculous impregnation recalls the Lukan episode relating the birth of John the Baptist whose parents were also unable to have children. Her journey also mirrors Mary’s story: both find favor from above; both offer hymns of praise for the divine intervention on their behalf; both give birth to child prodigies. However, unlike Joseph and Mary, Hannah does not immediately bring her newborn to the sanctuary, but waits until he is weaned (1 Sam 1:22). Only when the child becomes a lad (נער) does she bring him to the sanctuary to serve God. But like Samuel, Luke’s Jesus also finds himself at young age in the temple fulfilling his mission. And like Samuel, Luke’s Jesus’ ministry in the end bears more of a prophetic than a priestly stamp.¹¹⁵⁸ Quite interestingly,

¹¹⁵⁷ For a list of the many parallels, see Brown, *Birth of the Messiah*, 450–51.

¹¹⁵⁸ Luke claims that Mary was a cousin of Elizabeth who belongs to a priestly clan. But Luke does not exploit this motif. Instead he points to Joseph’s Judahite and Davidic origins.

Josephus claims that Samuel started his prophetic career at the age of twelve, the same age when the adolescent Jesus in Luke finds himself in the temple announcing the debut of his call to serve his Father (*Ant.* 5:348).

Did Luke Believe in Genealogical Impurity? Circumcision in Acts 7:8

Thiessen's thesis regarding Luke's perception of Gentiles as genealogically impure has already been appreciated in this work.¹¹⁵⁹ His argument is intertwined with the practice of eighth-day circumcision: Luke believes Gentile adult males cannot become Jews because they were not circumcised as infants on the eighth day and because of their non-Jewish origins. Thiessen leans on the references to the eighth-day circumcisions of John the Baptist and Jesus in Luke chs. 1–2 to make his argument. He also underscores another reference to eighth-day circumcision that appears in Stephen's speech in Acts 7. In a rather terse retelling of Israel's history, Luke's Stephen speaks of the "covenant of the circumcision" (*διαθήκην περιτομῆς*), how "Abraham became the father of Isaac and circumcised *him on the eighth day*" (*τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῇ ὀγδόῃ*; Acts 7:8). It is remarkable to see Luke highlight this "detail" in a speech that recounts in only a few verses several hundred years of Israelite history. All the more so, since, as is widely acknowledged, the speeches within Acts stem largely from the literary creativity of Luke, conveying his impression about the significance of the narrated events.¹¹⁶⁰

For Thiessen, the reference to eighth-day circumcision in Stephen's speech reveals Luke's concern over the proper timing of the rite and its connection with

¹¹⁵⁹ See my chapter dealing with the Cornelius episode.

¹¹⁶⁰ Stephen's speech, however, has proven to be one of the exceptions, with some scholars positing a source behind its formulation. Nevertheless, as Pervo, *Acts*, 178, remarks: "If he has not completely assimilated his source, Luke has shaped it to meet his goals." For a concise discussion on the redactional features and possible sources behind the speech, see Pervo, *Acts*, 174–80.

genealogy.¹¹⁶¹ Luke focuses on the patriarchal figure of *Isaac* who received the covenant of circumcision on the *eighth* day (καὶ ἔδωκεν αὐτῷ διαθήκην περιτομῆς), rather than Abraham, who was circumcised at an elderly age. Luke prefers to highlight Isaac's circumcision rather than Abraham's, because he believes Jews should be circumcised on the eighth-day.¹¹⁶² Highlighting Abraham's circumcision could potentially lead to the misunderstanding that (male) Gentiles could undergo full conversion into Judaism through circumcision. The fact that the prepositional phrase in Acts 7:8, "on the eighth day" (τῆ ἡμέρᾳ τῆ ὀγδόῃ), quite possibly derives from the LXX of Gen 17:14 and Lev 12:3, rather than Gen 21:4, would strengthen Thiessen's argument that Luke is not simply retelling Isaac's story but highlighting the importance of performing the most central of rituals for Jewish male infants at its proper time.¹¹⁶³

Thiessen has certainly come up with an original and intriguing thesis on the matter of circumcision in Luke-Acts. Nevertheless, his proposal raises several important issues that warrant further consideration. First, some might feel uncomfortable with the implication that Luke holds similar ideas about Gentile impurity as the extremely anti-

¹¹⁶¹ Thiessen, *Contesting Circumcision*, 117.

¹¹⁶² Ibid. Cf. *Songs of Songs Rab.* 1.2.5: "Abraham received the command of circumcision. Isaac inaugurated its performance on the eighth day" (cf. *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 12:1; *Midr. Proverbs* 31). See also Philo, *QG* 3:38.

¹¹⁶³ In addition, Thiessen proposes supplying the verb περιτέμνω to the rest of Acts 7:8, rather than γεννάω as most English translations do: "Then he gave him the covenant of circumcision. And so Abraham begot (ἐγέννησεν) Isaac and circumcised (περιτέμειν) him on the eighth day; and Isaac [circumcised] Jacob [on the eighth day], and Jacob [circumcised] the twelve patriarchs [on the eighth day]." The Greek text does not contain any verbs for the subjects Isaac and Jacob, reading simply καὶ Ἰσαὰκ τὸν Ἰακώβ, καὶ Ἰακώβ τοὺς δώδεκα πατριάρχας. Most English translations have understood the last part of this verse as referring to the "begetting" (γεννάω) of Jacob and the twelve patriarchs, but Thiessen thinks it more likely that περιτέμνω should be supplied instead, or better, that both verbs are implied in the text: "and Isaac [begot] Jacob [and circumcised] him [on the eighth day] . . ." In this way, Luke intertwines genealogy with circumcision. Thiessen, *Contesting Circumcision*, 117–18. Cf. Jürgen Roloff, *Die Apostelgeschichte übersetzt und erklärt* (17th ed.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1981), 120; Pervo, *Acts*, 181 n. 71.

Gentile author of *Jubilees*.¹¹⁶⁴ Further exploration is also of order for understanding the question of genealogical (im)purity in the Greek speaking Diaspora in which Luke most likely resides and composes his works. Even the LXX of Gen 17:14, unlike the Masoretic Text, emphasizes that circumcision should be performed on the eighth day. But does this mean that Greek speaking Jews of the Diaspora, who used a Greek translation of the Torah as their primary text, denied, like the author of *Jubilees*, the possibility that Gentiles could convert to Judaism? This question also applies to the writings of Philo who highlights eighth-day circumcision when he states that Isaac was “the first man who existed of our nation according to the law of circumcision, being circumcised on the eighth day” (*QG* 3:38). Despite this emphasis on eighth-day circumcision, Philo can speak elsewhere in positive terms of proselytes who have come (*προσεληλυθέναι*) “to a new and God-fearing constitution, learning to disregard the fabulous inventions of other nations, and clinging to unalloyed truth” (*Spec.* 1:51). Philo claims that such people should have “an equal share in all their [i.e., of Israel] laws, and privileges, and immunities, on their forsaking the pride of their fathers and forefathers” (*Spec.* 1:53; cf. *Spec.* 1:308; *Praem.* 152). The last statement could be taken as an indication that Philo believed in the possibility for proselytes to fully assimilate into Jewry, although the matter cannot be adequately addressed in this chapter.¹¹⁶⁵

¹¹⁶⁴ In a personal communication, Thiessen informs me that Luke’s perspective on the genealogical impurity of the Gentiles need not be understood in negative terms. The Mosaic Torah outlines a genealogical distinction between Israelite priests and Israelite laypeople. This discrimination is not negative. It only means that the Torah applies to both groups in different ways. In Luke’s case, the unbridgeable genealogical gap between Jew and Gentile could be viewed in a similar vein, as part of God’s created order. After all, impure animals, which, Thiessen argues, are analogous to Gentiles (Acts 10–11:18), were created by the God of Israel and therefore are good *in their place*. I would like to thank Thiessen for sharing his further thoughts with me on this matter, although I think Luke conceives of Gentile impurity more along *ethical* or moral lines, like other Greek-speaking Jews of the Diaspora.

¹¹⁶⁵ For Philo and conversion, see Ellen Birnbaum, *The Place of Judaism in Philo’s Thought: Israel, Jews, and Proselytes* (Brown Judaic Studies 290; Atlanta: Scholars, 1996).

Regardless of what we make of Philo's writings, other texts from the Greek Diaspora such as the *Letter of Aristeas*, whose traditions may indeed have partly shaped Luke's worldview,¹¹⁶⁶ do not refer to the genealogically impurity of Gentiles but point rather to the possibility for non-Jews to become *morally* pure (e.g., *Let. Aris.* 1:2). Indeed, the book of *Joseph and Aseneth* could prove quite relevant for the clarification of this issue. After undergoing a "mystical" transformation (chs. 14–18), equivalent in some sense to a moral purification, Aseneth is able to marry Joseph (chs. 19–21). Her condition as a Gentile, therefore, is not irreversible. She becomes a Jewess in the fullest sense of the term after her spiritual metamorphosis. I find this literary corpus important for discussing Luke's views on purity, since he lived and wrote in the Greek speaking Diaspora. Could Luke not have also believed in the possibility for some non-Jews to fully metamorphosize into Jews even though he was convinced that such a path was *unnecessary* for the Gentile masses? It is clear that Luke does not hold that Gentiles *should* convert to Judaism via circumcision. But does he think so because Gentiles simply *cannot* become Jews as a result of an irreversible and impermeable genealogical-ethnic gap persisting between both groups? Hopefully, the case of Timothy's circumcision can shed some further light on this discussion.

Paul's Circumcision of Timothy

Passage

16:1–3: Paul went on also to Derbe and to Lystra, where there was a disciple named Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer; but his father was a Greek. He was well spoken of by the believers in Lystra and Iconium. Paul wanted Timothy to accompany him; and he took him

¹¹⁶⁶ See chapter 9 on food laws in Luke where I analyze the Lukan pericope on the commission of the seventy-two, suggesting that Luke has drawn from the legendary story about the translation of the Septuagint.

and had him circumcised because of the Jews who were in those places, for they all knew that his father was a Greek.

Luke's reference to Paul's circumcision of Timothy has intrigued scholars for generations. How different Luke's compliant Paul appears to be from the adamant figure we discover in Paul's own letter to the Galatians! "Listen! I, Paul, am telling you that if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no benefit to you" (Gal 5:2). To those who demanded that Gentile followers of Jesus be circumcised, Paul reserved for them the following scathing words: "I wish those who unsettle you would castrate themselves!" (Gal 5:12; cf. 6:12, 13) The gap between the historical Paul and Luke's Paul seems so great at this juncture that it is understandable to see many scholars dismissing the historicity of the report about Timothy's circumcision in Acts.¹¹⁶⁷ But perhaps the abyss is not so deep in this instance as some have imagined, since in his letter to the Galatians Paul attacks those who were compelling *Gentiles* to be circumcised, whereas Luke refers here to a borderline case, someone whose multicultural "Jewish-Gentile" background defies classification. Unlike Titus, who "was not compelled to be circumcised, though he was a Greek" (Gal 2:3), Timothy, according to Luke, shares a dual background: his mother is Jewish; his father Greek. His ancestry is deemed problematic enough for Luke to claim that Paul needed to circumcise him in order to accommodate to local Jewish

¹¹⁶⁷ This was the position of the so-called Tübingen School. See W. Ward Gasque, *A History of the Criticism of the Acts of the Apostles* (BGBE 17; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1975), 66. However, some like Gerd Lüdemann, *The Acts of the Apostles: What Really Happened in the Earliest Days of the Church* (Amherst, N.Y.: Prometheus Books, 2005), 208–209; Blaschke, *Beschneidung*, 460–64, accept the historicity of the tradition. Others think that a rumor about Paul teaching circumcision (based on Gal 5:11) influenced Luke's composition or that he used an unreliable tradition. See Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 482. A redactional analysis hardly settles the issue. Weiser, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, 400, reaches the conclusion that Luke drew from a tradition, which is reflected in vv. 1b and 3a, but redacted vv. 1a, 2, 3bc, 4 and 5. I find it unlikely that Luke made up such a peculiar episode. The option remains open, therefore, that Luke drew from a tradition that related Timothy's circumcision. The historical reliability of the tradition though is another question.

sensibilities. How might this puzzling text compliment our understanding of Luke's attitude toward circumcision?

Any discussion of this passage must deal with the question of Jewish descent and identity in antiquity. It simply can no longer be assumed that, before the rise of the rabbis, Jewishness was determined across the spectrum according to the matrilineal principle. Cohen has argued extensively against this notion, claiming that, prior to the composition of the Mishnah, many Jews did not use the matrilineal principle as a meaningful criterion for establishing Jewish identity.¹¹⁶⁸ It remains unclear, therefore, whether Luke views Timothy as Jewish because his mother is a Jewess. Levinskaya, however, argues that Acts should be taken as evidence that Jews from Asia Minor did in fact use the matrilineal criterion for establishing whether a person was Jewish or not.¹¹⁶⁹ Her proposal is not completely without merit for it must be recognized that Luke does go out of his way to mention the Jewish origins of Timothy's mother.¹¹⁷⁰ Levinskaya also points to 2 Tim 3:15, which states that Timothy had been instructed in the holy scriptures since his childhood.¹¹⁷¹ If this statement is historically reliable, it would mean that Timothy had been brought up in a Jewish way despite his mother's marriage to a Greek husband. It could mean that some local Jews from Asia Minor might have considered

¹¹⁶⁸ Cohen, *Beginnings of Jewishness*, 273; See also Cohen's article, "Was Timothy Jewish? (Acts 16:1-3): Patristic Exegesis, Rabbinical Law, and Matrilineal Descent," *JBL* 105 (1986): 251-68.

¹¹⁶⁹ Irina Levinskaya, *The Book of Acts in Its Diaspora Setting* (vol. 5 of *The Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting*; ed. Bruce W. Winter; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1996), 12-17. Similarly, Christopher Bryan, "A Further Look at Acts 16:1-3," *JBL* 107 (1988): 292-94; Simon Claude Mimouni, *La Circoncision dans le monde judéen*, 208-10.

¹¹⁷⁰ Moreover, the earliest rabbinic evidence for a matrilineal principle is nearly contemporaneous with Acts, since Cohen concludes that it appears "in the first quarter of the second century C.E. at the latest" ("Was Timothy Jewish?" 266). *M. Bik.* 1:4, however, implies that in certain circumstances even a child of a Jewish mother had to convert: "These may bring the First-fruits but they may not make the Avowal: the proselyte may bring them but he may not make the Avowal since he cannot say, *Which the Lord swore unto our Fathers for to give us*. But if his mother was an Israelite he may bring them and make the Avowal." Like the case of Timothy in Acts, this mishnaic passage implies that there were individuals of Jewish descent through the mother who apparently in certain circumstances needed to convert to Judaism.

¹¹⁷¹ Levinskaya, *The Book of Acts*, 15-16.

Timothy Jewish because of his upbringing even though they knew he was not circumcised, possibly because of his father’s objection to such an undertaking. The Lukan Paul, therefore, would not have been compelling a “pure” Gentile to be circumcised—an act that the historical Paul would have certainly opposed—but selecting a “semi-Gentile,” someone who could arguably qualify as Jewish and as an appropriate companion to do “missionary work.” It is only because of Timothy’s dual heritage that Luke permits himself to depict Paul as a “mohel” without compromising his essential belief that Gentiles need not become circumcised.¹¹⁷² Timothy’s is a borderline case, lying somewhere between the Jewish-Gentile gulf. This exceptional incident proves Luke’s general rule: Gentiles do not have to be circumcised; Jews do.

Luke focuses not so much on the Jewish ancestry of Timothy’s mother but on his father’s Greek background.¹¹⁷³ Twice Luke refers to the Greek heritage of Timothy’s father (16:1, 3). The second reference to Timothy’s Greek father explains why the Lukan

¹¹⁷² The Greek text could suggest that Paul himself performed the circumcision: *καὶ λαβὼν περιέτεμεν αὐτόν*. The Hebrew Bible and to my knowledge all other Second Temple sources do not refer to specialists (mohels) or “doctors” who would perform this operation. Rubin, *The Beginning of Life*, 88–91, provides a useful discussion on the matter in biblical and rabbinic sources. He concludes that the Hebrew Bible holds the father responsible for guaranteeing that the circumcision is carried out, although he suggests there were already specialists at that time who performed the rite because of the dangers involved (87). 1 Macc 1:61 might point in this direction (“and their families and those who circumcised them”). In rabbinic literature, the father is responsible for assuring that the infant is circumcised: “All the obligations of a father towards his son enjoined in the Law are incumbent on men but not on women” (*m. Qidd.* 1:7). *T. Qidd.* 1:11 explicitly includes circumcision as one of the father’s obligations toward the son (cf. *y. Qidd.* 1:7 61a; *b. Qidd.* 29a). An uncircumcised Jewish male is responsible for his own circumcision once he becomes an adult. Amoraic sages debate whether women can be responsible for having their sons circumcised (e.g., *b. Avod. Zar.* 27a). Some rabbinic passages suggest that women did indeed assume this responsibility, including the passage about the woman from Cappadocia discussed below (see further references provided by Rubin). We should add 1 Macc 1:60 (“they put to death the women who had their children circumcised”). Rabbinic passages refer to specialists who perform circumcision (*Gen. Rab.* 46:9 and *y. Yevam.* 8:1 8d precise that the Jewish mohel should himself be circumcised). Often with disapproval, they refer to instances where a Gentile or Samaritan performed the circumcision, probably because no Jewish mohel was available (*t. Avod. Zar.* 3[4]:12–13; *b. Avod. Zar.* 26b; *b. Menah.* 42a).

¹¹⁷³ Commenting on the phrase in Acts 16:3 (“for they all knew that his father was Greek”), Conzelmann, *Acts of the Apostles*, 125, claims “. . . a reference to the mother—instead of the father—would have been better! Apparently, Luke does not have a precise understanding of Jewish law.” This statement no longer carries any basis. The matrilineal principle was not established throughout Jewry before at least the third century C.E.

Paul has the circumcision performed: he wants to take Timothy along with him as a fellow worker and has “him circumcised because of the Jews who were in those places, for they all knew that his father was a Greek” (16:3).¹¹⁷⁴ Luke’s Paul needs a colleague to accompany him as he goes about Asia Minor. Local Jews, however, allegedly know about Timothy’s origins and would have accused Paul for not having him circumcised. Luke, unfortunately, does not provide further details that could clarify the logic lying behind this localized Jewish objection.¹¹⁷⁵ The missiological dimension to this pericope might be of some service, although its import must not be overemphasized at the cost of overlooking Luke’s appreciation for the observance of the Law. Acts 16:1–3 appears in a wider section that reports Paul’s visit to communities he had previously established in Syria and Cilicia (15:36–40). More significantly, after having Timothy circumcised, Paul and his new circumcised disciple “went (διεπορεύοντο) from town to town” and “delivered (παρεδίδοσαν) to them for observance the decisions that had been reached by the apostles and elders who were in Jerusalem” (Acts 16:4). The verbs in the Greek appear in the plural and imply that Timothy participated in the proclamation of the Apostolic Decree. The major decision that had been reached in Jerusalem, according to Luke, was that Gentiles did not need to be circumcised but observe the commandments of the Apostolic Decree. Of course, in Luke’s eyes, this decision presupposes that Jewish followers of Jesus must continue to observe the Torah *in toto*, including circumcision. An

¹¹⁷⁴ As noted above, the twofold reference to Timothy’s Greek father might also explain why Timothy was not circumcised in the first place: his Greek father was opposed to such a gesture. Now that the father has possibly passed away (as suggested by the Greek verb ὑπῆρχεν in 16:3), and in order to avoid controversy, Luke’s Paul has Timothy circumcised.

¹¹⁷⁵ Would they have objected to the idea of a Gentile proclaiming a message in their synagogue or participating therein in tasks normally reserved for Jews? Of course, there were Gentiles (so-called God-fearers, proselytes, etc.) who attended synagogues. But to what extent were they allowed to participate in tasks that other Jews performed in this space? Since in Acts Paul addresses the gospel not only to Gentiles but also to Jews, it might have been viewed as inappropriate to have a non-Jewish ambassador instructing Jews. Cf. Jervell, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, 412–13: “. . . in der Apg gibt es nur jüdische Missionare. . . .”

uncircumcised follower of Jesus, whose mother was Jewish and father Greek, might not have proved the most adequate candidate for proclaiming the Apostolic Decree. On the contrary, Timothy's ambiguous background raises further halakic headaches: is he an uncircumcised Jew? And could his non-circumcised status imply that Jews need not circumcise their children, precisely the rumor spreading around in Luke's day about Paul's teachings (Acts 21:21)? Circumcision resolves Timothy's ambiguous identity and allows Luke to refute the allegations directed against Paul and by extension the Jesus movement concerning the alleged abrogation of the Law for Jews. If Luke's Paul is even willing to circumcise a "semi-Gentile," how much more would he affirm the circumcision of legitimate Jews.¹¹⁷⁶ Timothy's circumcision offers Luke an opportunity to rectify Paul's stance on the question of Torah observance.

Thiessen suggests that Luke is not in favor of Timothy's circumcision because he does not consider him Jewish. Only males of a pure Jewish genealogical stock who have been circumcised on the eighth day qualify as Jewish in Luke's eyes. Gentiles, therefore, should not and *cannot* become Jewish. "In Luke's eyes, non-eighth-day circumcision is as good as uncircumcision."¹¹⁷⁷ This interpretation, while attractive and ingenious, raises several questions, some of which have been already discussed above. Other Jews of the Greek speaking Diaspora certainly were open to the possibility that Gentiles or "semi-Jews" could become Jews, as the text of Acts 16:1–3 implies. It is of course possible that Luke holds a different view about the matter than his Jewish counterparts of the Diaspora. But the evidence is not conclusive, although *t. Shabb.* 15[16]:8 reports an interesting debate about the practice of eighth-day circumcision in Asia Minor:

¹¹⁷⁶ Cf. Jervell, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, 412; Wehnert, *Die Reinheit*, 88–89, 98.

¹¹⁷⁷ Thiessen, *Contesting Circumcision*, 122–23.

R. Nathan said: “When I was in Mazaca of Cappadocia one woman was there who would give birth to males and they would be circumcised and die. She circumcised the first one and he died; the second and he died; the third she brought him to me. I saw that he was green. I examined him and did not find in him the blood of the covenant. They said to me: ‘Are we to circumcise him?’ I said to them: ‘Wait for him until blood enters him.’ They waited for him and circumcised him and he lived. And they called him Nathan the Babylonian after my name.”¹¹⁷⁸

This passage from the Tosefta claims that there were some Jews in Cappadocia who would not wait beyond the eighth day to circumcise their sons. Only after a rabbinic sage intervened did they decide to postpone the time of circumcision. Nevertheless, the passage only reveals a concern to circumcise *Jewish* male *infants* on the eighth day in accordance with the mandate in the Mosaic Torah. Consequently, it explores the possibility of briefly postponing this surgical procedure should the Jewish infant prove too fragile.¹¹⁷⁹ The passage does not preclude the possibility that Gentile male adults can undergo circumcision and become Jewish.

Acts 16:1–3 does not indicate that Luke’s Paul disapproved of Timothy’s Jewishness, once he was circumcised. Rather, Luke suggests that Paul felt it unnecessary for Timothy to undergo this procedure in the first place, that it was performed to accommodate to local Jewish sensibilities. This Lukan portrait seems to match Paul’s own perspective on the matter: “. . . let each of you lead the life that the Lord has assigned, to which God called you. This is my rule in all the churches. Was anyone at the time of his call already circumcised? Let him not seek to remove the marks of circumcision. Was anyone at the time of his call uncircumcised? Let him not seek

¹¹⁷⁸ Translation mine. Cf. *b. Shabb.* 134a; *b. Hul.* 47b; *b. Yevam.* 64b. See Lieberman, *Tosefta Ki-Fshuta*, 3:250, for further parallels to this passage. See brief discussion of this passage in Cohen, *Why Aren’t Jewish Women Circumcised*, 23.

¹¹⁷⁹ Rashi, in his commentary on the story, as it appears in *b. Shabb.* 134a, adds that besides the health risks the very validity of the circumcision was under threat since the child was “green” and consequently the issuance of the “covenantal blood” (דם ברית) (citing *Zech* 9:11) required during the circumcision would by no means be guaranteed under such conditions.

circumcision” (1Cor 7:17–18). Luke might have imagined that Paul was reluctant to circumcise Timothy because he knew about Paul’s position on such matters: Jews were not to undergo epispasm in order to remove their marks in an attempt to free themselves from their Jewish identity and responsibilities, just as Gentiles (and maybe even non-circumcised Jews?) were not to undergo circumcision in order to become Jewish and become bound to the Law.¹¹⁸⁰ This statement could imply that Paul as well as Luke would have recognized the Jewishness of a Gentile male once he had undergone circumcision. Otherwise, how could Paul assert in his letter to the Galatians that every man who lets himself be circumcised is obliged to obey the entire Law (Gal 5:3)? And why did the historical Paul complain about being persecuted if he was “still preaching circumcision?” (Gal 5:11). Perhaps Paul meant by this latter statement that he still upheld circumcision for Jewish males, and Luke’s report about Timothy’s circumcision illustrates how this incident as well as Paul’s position on the matter were to no avail in eliminating the rumors continuously circulating about Paul’s abrogation of Jewish circumcision (Acts 21:21).¹¹⁸¹

Conclusion

There is little to say about Matthew’s opinion about the circumcision of Gentiles except to suggest, as I did above, that his approach to the issue might not have been very different from Luke’s: Matthew does not require Gentiles to undergo circumcision in order to join the Jesus movement, although he certainly expects Jews to continue

¹¹⁸⁰ On Paul’s views on such matters, see now David J. Rudolph, *A Jew to the Jews: Jewish Contours of Pauline Flexibility in 1 Corinthians 9:19–23* (WUNT 2.304; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011).

¹¹⁸¹ James Dunn, *The Epistle to the Galatians* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1993), 278–79: “Paul was accused by . . . other missionaries of being inconsistent: that although he preached a circumcision-free gospel to the Galatians, he continued to ‘preach circumcision’ among Jews.”

honoring this covenantal rite. With respect to Luke, I tried to show that, far from proving to be a Gentile ignorant about Jewish praxis, in his narrative about John and Jesus' birth he reveals a remarkable knowledge on halakah related to purity, circumcision, child naming, and the redemption of the firstborn. Luke relies on his expertise on the Jewish Law in order to depict his central protagonists as faithful members of the house of Israel who meet the highest and strictest standards of Jewish observance. In a pericope dense with halakic features and references to Mosaic legislation, Luke presents Jesus and his parents as the ideal type of Jews. Like John the Baptist, Jesus is circumcised on the *eighth* day and stems from a distinguished Jewish lineage (tribe of Judah, clan of David). In addition, Luke's Jesus is presented (and redeemed) *in person* at the temple *after* the forty days of his purification (and that of his mother's) are over. This is the appropriate time for Luke to mention Jesus' presentation in the temple. Placing the parturient and her infant inside the temple anytime before the completion of their impurity would imply that they defiled the temple.

If Luke bothers to describe the circumcision of John the Baptist and Jesus in such a remarkable way, he probably does so in order to present such characters as paradigms for Jewish followers of Jesus to emulate.¹¹⁸² Polemics over the question of circumcision continued to abound in the Jesus movement even after 70 C.E. We must abandon the notion that the importance of the Jewish Law for the *ekklesia* vanished after the first generation of Jewish followers of Jesus (Paul, Peter, James, etc.) passed away. On the contrary, Luke's writings show that the issue and place of circumcision within the Jesus movement had hardly been settled by the end of first century/beginning of second century C.E. There were probably several takes on this issue. On one extreme stood some Jewish

¹¹⁸² Cf. Jervell, *The Unknown Paul*, 141; Thiessen, *Contesting Conversion*, 115–16.

followers of Jesus who demanded that Gentiles become circumcised. At the other end of the spectrum could be found Jews who were abandoning the rite altogether. By presenting John the Baptist and Jesus as circumcised Jews, Luke places himself somewhere in between these two poles: he dismisses the notion that Gentiles must be circumcised, as the Apostolic Decree makes clear (Acts 15), but he refutes the notion that the *ekklesia* should “teach all the *Jews* living among the Gentiles to forsake Moses” and not “circumcise their children or observe the customs” (Acts 21:21).¹¹⁸³ Jesus—circumcised, purified, and “redeemed”—the Jew *par excellence*, discredits such rumors.

Making sense of Acts 16:1–3 is a challenging task because its terse language presents the modern reader with a character of liminal status. Does Luke believe that Timothy’s circumcision was unnecessary because his father was not Jewish (the patrilineal principle) or because he was genealogically impure (both parents needed to be Jewish) and not circumcised on the eighth day? Alternatively, like his predecessor Paul, does Luke believe that each person, whether circumcised or uncircumcised, should continue in that status unchanged? More than Paul, Luke is consistent and clear throughout his writings about the ongoing obligations of Jewish followers of Jesus vis-à-vis the Torah. Luke’s affirmation of Torah practice surpasses Paul’s eschatological pragmatism over the matter. If Paul believed that Jew and Gentile should not seek to alter their status, subsuming the relevance of this question to the primary importance of being prepared for the imminent arrival of the Parousia and withdrawal from this world, Luke, living a generation or two after Paul, could no longer postpone the resolution of this

¹¹⁸³ Might this proposal prove even more compelling if Luke wrote his Infancy Narrative after he had composed Luke-Acts? Brown, *Birth of the Messiah*, 239–40, suggests that Luke did indeed write this section of his narrative after he composed the rest of Luke and Acts. If this is true, it is noteworthy that Luke consciously chooses to portray the families of John the Baptist and Jesus as Torah observant Jews after considerably exerting himself in presenting Paul in similar light.

problem: Jews were not only to keep their acquired marks of circumcision intact, but were to *perpetuate* this practice by circumcising their children. Eschatological delay led Luke to affirm the halakic *prolongation* and maintenance of the ancestral customs preserved throughout the generations by the Jewish people. In the interim period between post-paschal resurrection and pre-parousian crystallization, Gentiles were to continue in their non-circumcised yet morally purified and sanctified status. Luke consistently and firmly holds on to this bilateral ecclesiological discrimination.

Luke, then, probably views Timothy as initially being a non-Jew: his father was a Greek (the patrilineal criterion). Nevertheless, other local Jews of his time think otherwise: not only is Timothy's mother Jewish (the matrilineal criterion), but he received a Jewish upbringing and education. In other words, there was a veritable "*mahloqet*," a halakic debate, pervading in Luke's day about the question of Jewish identity: was it through the father, the mother, or both? In such circumstances, Timothy's liminal status could not be suspended indefinitely. His identity crisis needed to be resolved. In order to proclaim the non-circumcision of Gentiles, Luke's Paul first needs to be clear and consistent about his support for the circumcision of Jewish children. Timothy's borderline case provides an opportunity for Luke to clarify this matter and ward off the accusations awaiting Paul during his final visit to Jerusalem (Acts 21:21).

Chapter 13

Conclusion

“I came to the research for this commentary fresh from a period of ten years in which the Gospel of Luke had dominated my horizons. The transition from the one to the other was initially quite a shock. After the urbane humanity of Luke, Matthew seemed very narrow and Jewish. And it was hard at first to find in Matthew the generosity of spirit that I had come to value so much in Luke. . . . Matthew may not have been the urbane world citizen that Luke was, but he shows the same generosity of spirit and he recognises the comprehensive significance of Jesus for the world every bit as much as Luke. . . . The shock of transition from Luke to Matthew was real enough. A major cultural adaptation is involved in moving from the one to the other.”
(John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew*, xvii)

My initial experience reading Matthew and Luke-Acts has been very different from Nolland’s, whose work I have found very useful and instructive, and ultimately Nolland himself detects certain commonalities between both gospel writers. I have always been struck by the remarkable Jewish overlap between Matthew and Luke and shocked by the dichotomies that continue to separate these two into “Jewish/particular” vs. “Gentile/universalist,” problematic terms to say the least. Matthew, for one thing, appears to me to be just as “universal,” if we may momentarily use such nomenclature, as Luke.¹¹⁸⁴ Already in his birth narrative, which in all respects proves to be quite Jewish,

¹¹⁸⁴ The usage of the terms “particularistic” and “universal” are problematic and misleading for several reasons. In a certain way, Christianity became a “particularistic” movement by denying salvation to anyone outside of its system, while Judaism became “universal” by recognizing the possibility for all humans to gain a legitimate standing before God without embracing Judaism but simply following the Noahide Laws. Boccaccini, *Middle Judaism*, 265: “. . . if universalism means the capacity of attaching value to being different, then its opposite is not particularism or nationalism, but dogmatism and intolerance, namely, the pretense of possessing the whole truth or of having the only key to salvation.” See also Robert Goldenberg, “The Place of Other Religions in Ancient Jewish Thought, with Particular Reference to Early Rabbinic Judaism,” in *Pushing the Faith: Proselytism and Civility in a Pluralistic World* (ed. Martin E. Marty and Frederick E. Greenspahn; New York: Crossroad, 1988), 40; Hirshman, “Rabbinic Universalism in the Second and Third Centuries,” 101–15; *Torah for the Entire World*, 40.

Matthew introduces elements that hint at the universal: he includes the names of four women who were all possibly not originally Israelites into a genealogy (Matt 1:1–17) that traces Jesus’ ancestry back to Abraham, the progenitor of Israel, but also, let us not forget, the “father of a multitude of nations” through whom “all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (Gen 12:3; 17:5). Only Matthew refers to the visit of the Gentile magi who travel from distant foreign lands to pay their devotion to Jesus (2:1–12). Matthew occasionally describes the attitudes of certain Gentiles in favorable terms (e.g., the Canaanite woman in 15:22–28; the Roman centurion in 8:5–13). He looks forward to the day when Jew and Gentile alike will share in the same eschatological banquet (8:11–12). Finally, after his resurrection Matthew’s Jesus exhorts his disciples to go forth and teach and baptize Gentiles among the nations (28:18–20).¹¹⁸⁵

Luke, for his part, constructs the most Jewish of infancy narratives. No Gentile characters figure prominently throughout Luke’s description of John the Baptist and Jesus’ births. Instead, Luke immerses his readers into the most Jewish atmosphere possible where priests, prophets, and Jewish shepherds celebrate the birth of these two prominent figures who are circumcised and, hence, fully circumscribed within Jewish parameters of halakic and covenantal duties. Throughout this portion of his narrative, Luke announces the salvation of *Israel* (1:68; 2:38). With the help of John’s prophetic

¹¹⁸⁵ For a further discussion of the universal themes in Matthew, See Luis Sánchez Navarro, “La Escritura para las naciones. Acerca del universalismo en Mateo” in *Palabra de Dios, Sagrada Escritura, Iglesia* (eds. Vicente Balaguer and Juan Luis Caballero; Pamplona: Ediciones Universidad de Navarra, 2008), 187–203. See also his *Testimonios del Reino: Evangelios Sinópticos y Hechos los Apóstoles* (Madrid: Ediciano Palabra, 2010). I agree with Navarro’s affirmation of the universal dimension in Matthew but do not accept his reduction of the Jewishness of Matthew to an “estilo semítico de composición” that denies Matthew’s “judaizing” tendencies (as Navarro puts it) and attachment to the Law of Moses (“La Escritura para las naciones,” 202). Navarro forgets that even the Hebrew prophets who proclaim light to the nations do not assume that Israel loses her unique identity by forsaking the observance of the Law. Gentiles can perfectly flock to Zion and the temple of Jerusalem without fully converting into Jews and without eliminating Israel’s particular duty and calling. I would like to thank prof. Juan Carlos Ossandón for informing me about Navarro’s work.

proclamation in the wilderness, but especially through Jesus' ministry, so Luke thinks, the Jewish people will finally experience spiritual redemption and deliverance from physical and demonic suffering as well as political and social oppression by their (Roman) foes (Luke 22:24; Acts 1:6). Admittedly, Luke also declares in his infancy narrative that Jesus will bring salvation to the nations (e.g., 2:32), but this process occurs via the circumcised messiah and his Jewish emissaries who invite Gentiles to ally themselves with Israel: *extra Israel nulla salus est*.¹¹⁸⁶

Many point to the universal composure of Jesus' genealogy in Luke, which goes all the way back to Adam, the son of God (3:23–38).¹¹⁸⁷ We cannot, however, overlook the *Enochic* provenance and very Jewish structure of this genealogy: for Luke, Jesus is the *seventy-seventh* descendant of Adam, the one destined to bring the eschaton and the final judgment during the seventh part of the eleventh week, that is, the seventy-seventh generation (cf. *1 En.* 10:12; *1 En.* 91:15–17).¹¹⁸⁸ Long ago according to the Enochic tradition, the mythical Enoch, the seventh descendant of Adam (*1 En.* 93:3; Luke 3:37), living around the time of Noah's flood had predicted that the final judgment would occur seventy generations after his departure. For Luke, the days of Noah prefigure the events

¹¹⁸⁶ Jacob Jervell, "The Future of the Past: Luke's Vision of Salvation History and Its Bearing on His Writings of History," in *History, Literature, and Society in the Book of Acts* (ed. Ben Witherington III; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 123.

¹¹⁸⁷ Bock, *Luke*, 1:360, overlooks the significant parallels with Jewish tradition, opining: "Jesus is not some isolated minister to Israel; he does not merely minister to a tiny nation of subjected people seeking political deliverance from a dominating Rome. . . . In him, as well, the fate of all divinely created humans is bound together." Bovon, *Luke 1*, 134–5, states that "Matthew's perspective is dominated by the privileged status of Abraham's descendants; Luke shows a universalistic tendency," but then goes on to recognize the apocalyptic dimension of Luke's genealogy; Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 189: "The reference to Adam as son of God presents the divine origin of the human race and indicates Jesus' solidarity with all humanity."

¹¹⁸⁸ According to the *Apocalypse of Weeks*, the final judgment occurs at the end of the *tenth* week, that is, during the seventieth generation (*1 En.* 93:3–10; 91:11–17). Nevertheless, *1 En.* 10:12 refers to seventy generations of history yet to occur *after* Enoch, the seventh descendant of Adam. The genealogy in Luke, therefore, reckons the end as occurring at the end of *eleven* weeks, namely, during the seventy-seventh generation. Cf. *4 Ezra* 14:11.

to come at the end of times before the return of the Son of Man (Luke 17:26–27).¹¹⁸⁹

Even Luke’s genealogy is as Jewish as Matthew’s.¹¹⁹⁰

Throughout his gospel, Luke, more than Matthew, carefully avoids having Jesus enter into contact with Gentiles. No encounter occurs between Luke’s Jesus and the Canaanite woman. When Jesus meets the Roman centurion, Luke is most cautious in his approach, stressing more than Matthew the social-halakhic gulf existing at that time between Jew and Gentile. It is almost as if Luke chooses to follow Matthew’s Jesus’ command to “go nowhere among the Gentiles, and enter no town of the Samaritans” but “rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Matt 10:5–6). Almost. For Luke’s Jesus does eventually send out emissaries to Samaria, but this happens only because these people qualify as Israelites in Luke’s eyes, and even then Luke’s attitude toward the Samaritans is marked by ambivalence (9:52; Acts 1:8; ch.8).¹¹⁹¹ On the other hand, only after his resurrection does the Lukan Jesus turn his attention to the Gentiles (Acts 1:8), much like the Matthean Jesus in his final commission after the resurrection. The *Heilsgeschichte* schemes of both Matthew and Luke prove quite similar as far as the proclamation of the gospel to the Gentiles is concerned, with the Jewish Law remaining in force throughout the history of Israel and now carried on by the *ekklesia*.

On three important accounts, I have found Luke to be as Jewish and affirmative as Matthew about the observance of the Law: Sabbath keeping, kashrut, and circumcision—three markers of Jewish identity *par excellence*. Along the way, I noted and discussed

¹¹⁸⁹ See especially Richard Bauckham, *Jude and the Relatives of Jesus in the Early Church* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1990), 320–26, for a discussion about the Enochic elements in the Lukan genealogy originating from Palestinian tradition. I think Bauckham underestimates the significance of his findings. Luke does not simply retain a genealogical tradition that goes back to Palestine, he is also aware of the eschatological overtones embedded within it even if he is also interested in tracing Jesus’ origins back to God.

¹¹⁹⁰ Even the Davidic messiahship, singled out by Matthew in his genealogy, is of special importance for Luke (1:27, 32; 3:31; 20:41–44; Acts 2:30; 13:23; 15:16).

¹¹⁹¹ See chapter 7 of this monograph.

other aspects of Jewish praxis, including matters related to purity (hand washing, impurity of the parturient, corpse impurity, moral impurity, etc.), burial, naming and redeeming Jewish children, in which I found nothing to substantiate the claims that either Matthew or Luke announces the abrogation of the Jewish Law. Some might get frustrated with this work for not finding in it a more “sophisticated” and nuanced differentiation between Matthew and Luke’s perspectives on the Law. But this project strives not to nuance false categories and dichotomies that continue to subsist and govern the ways in which we read and comprehend these texts, but to dismantle, destroy, upset and deconstruct them. Only in the aftermath of this ideological deconstruction, can we then refine our approaches and perspectives on these documents and understand their fuller significance within the Jewish matrices that were constantly shifting and realigning themselves partly in response to the traumatic destruction of the temple in 70 C.E.

In the meantime, I only offer some considerations for further investigation that move beyond the *intra/extra muros* debate (Was Matthew and/or Luke still part of Judaism?) and explore what types of strands of Judaism Matthew and Luke represent. First, as far as the question of the observance of the Law is concerned, I suggest the differences between Matthew and Luke might lie more in their respective social and regional settings than in their theological stances. This point is not made to embrace some kind of harmonizing agenda that rejects the undeniable theological diversity pervading the Jesus movement since day one, only to recognize and recover the strong Jewish element persisting within its veins that affirmed the pertinence of the Law even after 70 C.E. If Matthew includes the categorical statement, “do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfill. For truly I tell

you, until heaven and earth pass away, not one letter, not one stroke of a letter, will pass from the law until all is accomplished” (5:17–18), Luke can have his Jesus declare, “it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away, than for one stroke of a letter in the law to be dropped” (16:17). If Matthew’s Jesus can reprimand his Pharisaic opponents for not practicing justice, mercy, and faith, yet exhort them to not abandon the observance of “lighter” commandments such as the tithing of herbs, the Lukan Jesus can equally affirm this principle: “you tithe mint and rue and herbs of all kinds, and neglect justice and the love of God; it is these you ought to have practiced, without neglecting the others” (11:42).

Accordingly, I suggest we further explore the *Sitz im Leben* of both authors. Why does Matthew show such animosity toward the Pharisees when his Jesus clashes with them over halakic matters? Why, on the other hand, does Luke’s portrait of the Pharisees prove more subdued in these instances and elsewhere? And what leads Luke to portray Paul as a Pharisee? Does this discrepancy between the two gospel authors stem in part from Matthew’s ongoing clash with Pharisees in his regional locale, Syria or Palestine, where the Pharisaic sphere of influence and power affects them quite effectively? In such circumstances, Jesus readily becomes for Matthew and his readers the halakic model, the embodiment of Torah and normative pivot dictating how the Jewish life is to be observed. In this case, the retelling of Jesus’ Sabbath healings could well represent a contemporary Matthean position on this issue: Matthew’s followers, like Jesus, can indeed treat minor diseases on the Sabbath. Likewise, Jesus’ argument about hand washing before meals could justify Matthew’s own opposition, or at least indifference, toward such a practice: Jesus’ disciples need not observe this rite. It represents in

Matthew's eyes a Pharisaic innovation. In other words, as many suggest, Matthew's gospel reflects an ongoing debate between Pharisees and Matthean Jews (and some Gentiles), maybe even an intra-Pharisaic clash between Pharisees and former or "Christian" Pharisees who now belong to Matthew's circle.¹¹⁹²

Luke, on the other hand, gazes at the Pharisaic party from a certain *geographical* distance. He writes somewhere in the Greco-Roman Diaspora beyond the immediate grasp of Pharisaic power. He, like other Diasporan Jews, is aware, however, of the reputation of the Pharisees for being "accurate" in their approach to the Law and for their influence among the Judeans living in the area of Palestine. He also knows that Paul himself once belonged to the Pharisaic camp. He taps on this knowledge, depicting Paul as an *ongoing* Pharisee (Acts 23:6), in order to argue that the apostle of the Gentiles always remained faithful to the Law and this legislation continues to enjoy a special place within the Jesus movement, particularly for Jewish followers of Jesus. Luke can remain more nuanced than Matthew, occasionally even favorable about the Pharisees, for he is not caught in the same polemical dynamics as his synoptic cousin vis-à-vis this particular Jewish group. Consequently, he seems more willing to accommodate to Pharisaic halakic sensibilities: unlike Matthew, he does not seek to dissuade Jewish believers from washing before eating (11:38–41). He does not even disapprove of this pharisaic innovation. He only disagrees with "Christian Pharisees" (Acts 15:5) who refuse to interact with non-circumcised Gentile followers of Jesus, focusing so much on the preservation of their own ritual purity while failing to acknowledge the marvelous moral purification of

¹¹⁹² Anders Runesson, "Behind the Gospel of Matthew: Radical Pharisees in Post-War Galilee?" *CurTM* 37.6 (2010): 460–71; "Rethinking early Jewish Christian Relations," 95–132. I full heartedly agree with Runesson in moving beyond the *intra/extra muros* debate about Matthew and instead pinpoint his specific brand of Judaism, which is undeniably close yet firmly opposed to Pharisaic Judaism. Luke's brand of Judaism, I would argue resembles more a "Hellenistic-Diasporan" type.

Gentile followers of Jesus. Likewise, the Sabbath healing episodes in Luke function not so much to justify the administration of minor cures on the Sabbath, which they might have, but to exalt the character and authority of Jesus. It is quite telling that Luke never portrays any of Jesus' disciples in Acts as performing healings on the Sabbath, this despite the fact he includes more Sabbath healing episodes performed by Jesus than any other gospel. How far Luke is willing to accommodate to halakic sensibilities (as long as they do not exclude Jewish-Gentile fellowship) rather than argue about Pharisaic halakah. If Matthew is "anti-Pharisaic," Luke is "pro-Pharisaic" (these are hyperboles). Ultimately, Luke's social and theological concerns revolve around the "Jews" of Asia Minor and other synagogues of the Mediterranean basin. He struggles with the fact that many of these Diasporan Jews do not recognize the messianic credentials of Jesus. "Lukan Judaism" is more "Hellenistic" and Diasporan in its outlook; "Matthean Judaism" more Galilean, Palestinian, and (anti-)Pharisaic.

But all of this might be granting too much weight to external matters at the cost of overlooking the internal evidence. We are, of course, also aware of the methodological problems involved in identifying texts with groups. Even Luke betrays a remarkable dependence on Jewish traditions that ultimately stem from Palestine. Besides his genealogy on Jesus, which draws from the Enochic tradition, he emphasizes, like the author of *Jubilees*, the importance of eighth-day circumcision, extends the impurity of the parturient to the infant just as *Jubilees*, 4Q265, and 4Q266. He also upholds the Apostolic Decree, which also originates from Palestine, and, like *Jubilees*, views the prohibition against consuming blood as universally binding: failure to handle blood properly can defile not only the Land of Israel but also the whole earth. He might have even been to

Palestine, especially if he did indeed compose the so-called “we sections” in Acts. He enjoys a cosmopolitan experience similar to that of Paul of Tarsus, whom he does not follow blindly on every point, or of Flavius Josephus, familiar with Jewish life of Palestine and the Diaspora. He exemplifies a unique blend, a hybridization of Jewish and Greek culture—a consequence of his own experience and acquaintance with synagogue life in the Mediterranean context.

The *communis opinio* on Luke as a “Gentile Christian,” a God-fearer, or even a proselyte to Judaism operates under certain presuppositions about the author that select specific verses from Acts, particularly 15:10, read occasionally in conjunction with 13:38–39,¹¹⁹³ as the hermeneutical key governing the interpretations of Luke’s writings as a whole. For many, Acts 15:10 represents a Gentile perspective on the Law, written by someone “distant” from Judaism, a “pagan,” a “Gentile Christian” or the like.¹¹⁹⁴ But Acts 15:10 really betrays a Jewish perspective and close acquaintance with Israel’s corporate and historical failure to observe the Torah: “Now therefore why are you putting God to the test by placing on the neck of the disciples a yoke that neither our ancestors nor we have been able to bear?” Luke’s Peter’s reference to the Law as a yoke is not negative. He blames *Israel* for failing to fulfill the Law, not the supposedly unreasonable

¹¹⁹³ Schneider, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, 2:140: “Anders als Paulus selbst stellt Lukas das Ungenügen des Gesetzes so dar, daß seine Befolgung zu schwer war.”

¹¹⁹⁴ Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 446: “It would be more correct to say that the Gentile Christian Luke, who is speaking here, has lost sight of the continuing validity of the law for Jewish Christians . . . because all that matters to him is to demonstrate Gentile Christian freedom from the law.” On 446 n. 3, Haenchen adds: “Here however we have the law seen through Hellenistic Gentile Christian eyes, as a mass of commandments and prohibitions which no man can fulfil. Luke here is obviously speaking for himself and transmitting the view of his age and milieu.” Pervo, *Acts*, 374, follows and cites Conzelmann, *Acts*, 117: “It expresses the view of a Christian at a time when the separation from Judaism already lies in the past.” Conzelmann continues on the same page: “On this basis we can also understand why Luke does not draw the conclusion which logic demands, that this yoke should also be removed from Jewish Christians. For Luke Jewish Christianity no longer has any present significance, but it is of fundamental significance in terms of salvation history.” Schneider, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, 2:181, following Haenchen and Conzelmann, states “Lukas denkt dabei wohl an die Vielzahl der gesetzlichen Verpflichtungen.” Similarly, Weiser, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, 2:381.

stipulations contained in the Mosaic Torah.¹¹⁹⁵ This reference to the Law as a yoke is matched by a *contemporaneous* Jewish work, surprisingly overlooked, written after 70 C.E. in response to the tragic event of the destruction of the temple: “For behold, I see many of your people who separated themselves from your statutes and who have cast away from them the yoke of your Law. Further, I have seen others who left behind their vanity and who have fled under your wings” (2 *Baruch* 41:3–4).¹¹⁹⁶ The author of 2 *Baruch* is aware of the apostasy of some Jews from the Jewish Law and cognizant of the historical failure of Israel as whole in living up to the high covenantal standards expected from her as a chosen and holy people. Nevertheless, the author of 2 *Baruch* remains optimistic that by God’s grace a sufficient number of people among the Jewish people will eventually gather themselves and successfully carry the yoke of the Law: “In you we have put our trust, because, behold, your Law is with us, and we know that we do not fall as long as we keep your statutes. . . . And that Law that is among us will help us” (48:22–24).¹¹⁹⁷ By contrast, traditions within the book of 4 *Ezra* remain far less hopeful about this outcome, suspecting that only a select few will be saved and pass the final judgment: “The Most High made this world for the sake of many, but the world to come for the sake of few. . . . Many have been created, but few will be saved” (8:1–3).¹¹⁹⁸

¹¹⁹⁵ For a refreshing view on Acts 15:10, see John Nolland, “A Fresh Look at Acts 15.10,” *NTS* 27 (1980): 105–15.

¹¹⁹⁶ Translations of 2 *Baruch* and 4 *Ezra* taken from Charlesworth’s *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*. The references to leaving behind their vanity and fleeing under God’s wings point to proselytes. Cf. 2 *Bar* 1:4; 14:5; 42:5. Ruth 2:12; *b. Shabb.* 31a. See Mark F. Whitters, *The Epistle of Second Baruch: A Study in Form and Message* (JSPSup 42; London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2003).

¹¹⁹⁷ Cf. 44:2–8; 46:5–6; 51:3–4, 7; 54:5; 66:5–6; 77:15–17; 78:7; 79:2; 84:1–11; 85:3, etc.

¹¹⁹⁸ I hardly wish to get entangled here into the notorious discussion about whether the views of Uriel, Ezra, a conflation of both or neither, or the visions as reported in 4 *Ezra* represent the theological beliefs of its final author (although it is difficult to swallow the idea that Uriel, an angel of God, knows not what he is talking about). This matter has already received its ample share of attention in the history of research as well as at the Enoch Seminar in Milan (2011). For a summary of the discussion and the history of research, see Karina Hogan, *Theologies in Conflict in 4 Ezra: Wisdom, Debate, and Apocalyptic Solution* (Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism 130; Leiden: Brill, 2008), 1–40. Here I draw

Luke joins the authors of *2 Baruch* and *4 Ezra* in recognizing that history confirms Israel's overall failure to follow God's Law. "O look not upon the sins of your people, but at those who have served you in truth," is the (vain?) prayer of pseudepigraphic Ezra confronted by the theological turmoil and posttraumatic distress orders generated by the failure the First Jewish Revolt (*4 Ezra* 9:26). Luke prays his people look elsewhere to the risen Jesus, their heavenly and Davidic messiah reigning up high, announcing release to Israel and pious Gentiles, soon to return and pronounce his final judgment upon this world as the vindicated and victorious Son of Man. What Israel needs, in Luke's eyes, is a *supplement* (not a supplanter!) to the Torah to assist her in fulfilling her vocational destiny.

This inquiry began analyzing the *texts* of Matthew and Luke with the aim of demonstrating that Luke and Acts are just as Jewish as Matthew, in so far as their perspectives on the observance of the Law are concerned. But now as I conclude this chapter, I would like to go one step further in embracing my motto "Jewish till proven Gentile" to affirm the Jewishness of the very *authors* of these documents. However problematic it proves to make "positivistic" pronouncements about an author's identity based solely on a reading of their writings (what other evidence can we work with?), I find it urgent to question and challenge the current consensus about Luke's Gentile background and to operate under the assumption that the authors of Matthew and Luke were both born and raised in a Jewish environment. The alternative approach, particularly in the case of Luke, has led too many to view the canonical gospel authors as inaccurate

statements from *4 Ezra* to illustrate how certain Jews were doubting the adequacy of their covenantal and theological systems for addressing the terrible questions of theodicy and human suffering facing them in the post-70 era. Luke joins in this conversation to say that a solution to these problems must lie in part elsewhere, for Israel, as a collective entity, has historically failed to faithfully live up to her special calling.

and ignorant about Judaism. This assumption, which runs deep in the history of research, in turn, governs how the entire literary corpus is understood and placed within the mosaics of the burgeoning Jesus movement and early Judaism. Not surprisingly, these readers have “found” confirmation of the Gentile identity they posit as they set out reading these documents. I have tried to avoid this circular process, exploring first the perspectives of these writings on the Torah and halakah, and becoming increasingly impressed and surprised at the sight I was contemplating. An additional reward of my research has been the personal discovery of Luke’s accurate knowledge about halakah and Jewish tradition. It is so remarkable as to convince me that Luke could not have been a God-fearer (i.e., a Gentile who sympathized with certain precepts of Jewish teaching) or even a full convert (proselyte) to Judaism. Luke, like Matthew, was born and raised Jewish.¹¹⁹⁹ When I state, therefore, that both Matthew and Luke are Jewish, I now intend with that epithet to mean that they both observe the Torah completely and are of Jewish parentage. This understanding of Matthew and Luke’s Jewishness corresponds to Mimouni’s (older) definition of “Jewish Christians”:

Ancient Jewish Christianity is a recent formulation designating Christians of Jewish origin who have recognized the messiahship of Jesus, who have recognized or not recognized the divinity of Christ, but who all continue to observe the Torah.¹²⁰⁰

¹¹⁹⁹ Wolter, *Das Lukasevangelium*, 9–10, has come to the same conclusion about Luke’s Jewish origins, although he underestimates Luke’s affirmation of the Torah and his knowledge of halakah, which would only further undergird his thesis: “Seine ausgezeichnete Kenntnis der Septuaginta, die sogar so weit ging, dass er Septuaginta-Stil imitieren konnte, und die ihn in die Lage versetzte, seine Jesusgeschichte als Fortsetzung der Geschichte Israels zu erzählen, seine Kenntnis der Lehrdifferenzen zwischen Pharisäern und Sadduzäern (Apg 23,6–8), seine präzise Schilderung jüdischer Milieus in Lk 1–2 und vor allem das herausragende Interesse an der Israelfrage, das Lukas allererst veranlasst haben dürfte, die Geschichte der Trennung von Christentum und Judentum als Bestandteil der Geschichte Israels zu schreiben, sprechen dafür, dass der Verfasser der LkEv in einer jüdischen Familie aufgewachsen ist und wie Paulus nicht nur seine primäre, sondern auch seine sekundäre Sozialisation in einem jüdischen Milieu erfahren hat.”

¹²⁰⁰ My translation of Mimouni, *Le judéo-christianisme ancien*, 15: “Le judéo-christianisme ancien est une formulation récente désignant des chrétiens d’origine juive qui ont reconnu la messianité de Jésus, qui ont reconnu ou qui n’ont pas reconnu la divinité du Christ, mais qui tous continuent à observer la Torah.” In a more recent paper delivered at SBL in San Francisco, Mimouni slightly alters his definition of *judaisme chrétien* to include Gentiles who observe parts or all of the Torah: “Aujourd’hui, au regard des

By claiming that Luke is a Jew I am by no means denying the obvious impact of Greco-Roman thought and culture upon the shaping and molding of his worldview, which can be easily detected throughout his writings, just as I do not deny the same process of acculturation perceptible among other Jewish authors who wrote in Greek such as Aristobulus, the author of the *Letter to Aristeeas*, Philo, Paul, Matthew, Josephus, and so on. All Jews of the Greco-Roman world were to various degrees “Hellenized.” Even the most anti-Gentile Jew such as the author of the book of *Jubilees* could not avoid the inroads of Hellenization.¹²⁰¹ Positing the Jewishness of ancient authors or texts does not deny the Hellenistic and Greco-Roman elements embedded in their writings. I am mainly concerned with the neglect of seriously studying the ancient Jewish sources, with a misunderstanding of ancient Judaism that enables the Gentile Christian profile of Luke to continue to exist and distort the comprehension of central themes within Luke-Acts. Often when contemporary interpreters claim a Gentile Christian background for Luke, they then go on to search for elements in his writings that allegedly prove his “Mosaiphobia” and ignorance about halakah. In reality, as the following inquiry hopefully demonstrated, Luke reveals a very precise understanding of Jewish Law, as much as his cousin Matthew, making it unlikely that he stems from a Gentile background. So my aim is not to perpetuate false dichotomies such as “Jewish vs. Greek” or

changements de la recherche historique, j’ai tendance à reformuler ma définition de la manière suivante: ‘le judaïsme chrétien est une formulation désignant des chrétiens d’origine judéenne et d’origine non judéenne qui ont reconnu la messianité de Jésus, qui ont reconnu ou qui n’ont pas reconnu la divinité du Christ, mais qui tous continuent à observer en totalité ou en partie la Torah’” (“Christian Judaism: A Question Still Open for Discussion” [paper presented at the annual meeting of the SBL, San Francisco, Calif., 20 November 2011], 6).

¹²⁰¹ Several scholars have extensively studied the usage of Ionian geography in *Jubilees*’ description of “world” geography. For a summary of the various contributions on the topic by scholars such as Hölscher, Uhden, Schmidt, and VanderKam, see Isaac. W. Oliver and Veronika Bachmann, “The Book of Jubilees: An Annotated Bibliography from the First German Translation of 1850 to the Enoch Seminar of 2007,” *Henoch* 31.1 (2009): 123–64.

“Palestinian vs. Hellenistic,” nor even to downplay the significance of appreciating the classical Greco-Roman sources for the understanding of early “Christian” texts. Indeed, I find it hermeneutically helpful to imagine Luke as a Jew living in the Greco-Roman Diaspora, much like Philo or Josephus: Hellenized and rather comfortable in writing in Greek, though equally knowledgeable about and indebted to Jewish traditions of Palestinian and Diasporan provenance. And still Jewish!¹²⁰²

By also electing a different pair of verses to serve as a hermeneutical map guiding me through the halakic and theological forests of Luke-Acts, my conclusions proved radically different from others about his perspective on the Law. If we begin with the reasonable assumption that in Luke’s eyes Paul has indeed done nothing against the ancient customs of the Jewish people, as he claims at the very end of Acts in front of a Jewish delegation from Rome (Acts 28:17), and are able to detect a concern throughout Acts and even discover along the way a Torah observant Jew in the very figure of the Lukan Jesus, then we have succeeded, so I argue, to comprehend one of Luke’s main contentions, namely, that circumcision and the Mosaic package appended to this covenantal sign do enjoy ongoing relevance for the Jewish children of Israel, even those who have become followers of Jesus (Acts 21:21). Of course, the observance of the Law as such does not in itself possess soteriological powers. But then again how many ancient

¹²⁰² Perhaps, it was possible for a proselyte of that time to acquire the knowledge of Judaism Luke showcases in his own writings, but I hold onto my motto of “Jewish till proven Gentile” in my exploration of Christian literature stemming from the early periods when the parting of the ways between Judaism and Christianity had not fully germinated, especially since the image of Luke as a God-fearer or a proselyte has led many scholars to postulate that he is ignorant about Jewish halakah, when in fact, I find the opposite to be more likely. We could say that my affirmation of the author’s background is performed more for rhetorical effect than as a positivistic manifesto, more out of concern for a cherished tradition about Luke’s Gentile background that has hermeneutically governed the way we read and understand his writings.

Jews would have thought otherwise?¹²⁰³ We would do well to avoid diminishing the incentive for observing the Torah to soteriological compensation—this represents a certain Christian reduction and reading of the function of the Law of Moses. The Torah provides Jews with moral instruction, wisdom, a rich set of symbols, festivals, and rituals to be carried out, and much more. It furnishes the *ekklesia* with an ecclesiological identity to be lived out in distinctive ways within its respective Jewish and Gentile branches.

Luke refers repeatedly to Jews charging Christians with apostasy, with having abandoned the law . . . Luke rejects the accusations as baseless and false . . . This is something far more to Luke than a description of something which happened in the church long before his own time, a purely historical matter. The question of the law is a burning problem to him, and he returns to it again and again, for it has to do also with the identity of the church.¹²⁰⁴

In his argumentation on behalf of Luke's observance of Yom Kippur, Stökl points to the relevance of festivals and other rituals as cultural symbols that serve to forge collective identities. He cites Bell who states: "In [fasting and feasting rites] people are particularly concerned to express publicly—to themselves, each other, and sometimes outsiders—their commitment and adherence to basic religious values."¹²⁰⁵ For Luke, the rituals and commandments outlined in the Mosaic Torah continue to grant the *ekklesia* her unique identity and heritage that mark her off from the rest of the nations who stand in need of recognizing the lordship of Jesus and supreme sovereignty of the God of Israel. Luke's affirmation of the Law may not be grounded on soteriological foundations but they are built on solid ecclesiological and cultural considerations—no small endorsement for a follower of Jesus living after 70 C.E.

¹²⁰³ Matt 7:23, however, warns that "not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven."

¹²⁰⁴ Jervell, *The Theology of Acts*, 54.

¹²⁰⁵ Catherine Bell, *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 120, cited in Daniel Stökl Ben Ezra, "Whose Fast is It? The Ember Day of September and Yom Kippur," in *The Ways That Never Parted*, 261.

Luke the Gentile is dead. Today we can instead discover a remarkable Jewish writer who joins Matthew in affirming the ongoing relevance of the Torah after 70 C.E. Both gospels authors preserve and reflect the ongoing rich diversity of early Judaism that persisted after 70: “Matthean Judaism” more akin yet in conflict with Pharisaic Judaism; “Lukan Judaism” closer to the Hellenistic strands of Judaism we discover in the Greek speaking Diaspora yet deeply indebted to Jewish traditions emanating from Palestine and the *ekklesia* in Jerusalem. If my thesis is correct, we will have to reconsider the very nature and composition of the Jesus movement and early Judaism after 70. When scholars discuss about “Jewish Christianity/Christian Judaism,” they will no longer be able to focus only on the pockets or remnants of sectarian groups such as the so-called Ebionites and Elkasaites, on excavating and recovering the lost “Jewish Christian” gospels such as the “The Gospel according to the Hebrews” or “The Gospel of the Nazareans.” They will not be able to simply look back to the most primitive stage of the *ekklesia* of Jerusalem, spearheaded by James, the brother of Jesus. They will have to search for the “Jewish Christian” writings standing under their noses: Matthew, but also Luke and Acts.

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