

JESUS, A JEWISH GALILEAN EXORCIST

JESUS, A JEWISH GALILEAN EXORCIST:
A SOCIO-POLITICAL AND ANTHROPOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION

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Abstract

This study is a broad based investigation of exorcism in the activities of the historical Jesus, particularly the connection between spirit possession and exorcism on the one hand and the socio-political context of first-century Galilee on the other. As such, it draws on research from the areas of sociology, anthropology, archaeology and biblical studies to illuminate this aspect of Jesus' career, as well as the broader social implications of spirit possession in those he treated and the exorcisms themselves. Evidence found in the Synoptic Gospels is evaluated using the criteria of authenticity and comparative analysis in order to establish early and historical material. Questions posed and answered concern the historical plausibility of Jesus' role as exorcist, the possibility that his own career began with a period of spirit possession, and the meaning that his exorcisms conveyed to his first-century audience. Thus, the methodology includes textual analysis, sociological analysis of general cultural patterns within which first-century Palestine can be fitted, and anthropological analysis of the plausible functions of both spirit possession and exorcism in agrarian societies.

Jesus' role as exorcist, his own experience of spirit possession, and the fact that he was accused of being possessed by the demon Beelzebul are attested across all strands of the tradition, with the exception of the Gospel of John. This aspect of his career also finds support in the criteria of authenticity, particularly embarrassment, is coherent with his role as healer and prophet and also fits the general pattern of healers and exorcists across cultures, particularly in agrarian societies.

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Abbreviations

<i>ANRW</i>	<i>Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt</i>
<i>Ann Rev Anth.</i>	<i>Annual Review of Anthropology</i>
<i>AA</i>	<i>American Anthropologist</i>
<i>ASR</i>	<i>American Sociological Review</i>
<i>AIM</i>	<i>Annals of Internal Medicine</i>
<i>BAR</i>	<i>Biblical Archaeology Review</i>
<i>BTB</i>	<i>Biblical Theology Bulletin</i>
<i>CBQ</i>	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
<i>CSR</i>	<i>Christian Scholars Review</i>
<i>CMP</i>	<i>Culture, Medicine and Psychiatry</i>
<i>CSRB</i>	<i>Council on the Study of Religion: Bulletin</i>
<i>CurAnt</i>	<i>Current Anthropology</i>
<i>HTR</i>	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
<i>HUCA</i>	<i>Hebrew Union College Annual</i>
<i>ICC</i>	<i>International Critical Commentary</i>
<i>IEJ</i>	<i>Israel Exploration Journal</i>
<i>JAAR</i>	<i>Journal of the American Academy of Religion</i>
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JSHJ</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus</i>
<i>JSJ</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic and Roman Periods</i>
<i>JSNT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
<i>JSNTSup</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series</i>
<i>JSP</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha</i>
<i>JSPSup</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha: Supplement Series</i>
<i>JSSSup</i>	<i>Journal of Semitic Studies Supplement</i>

<i>NovT</i>	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
<i>NTS</i>	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
NTTS	New Testament Tools and Studies
<i>PEQ</i>	<i>Palestine Exploration Quarterly</i>
<i>PGM</i>	<i>Greek Magical Papyri</i>
<i>RB</i>	<i>Revue biblique</i>
<i>REJ</i>	<i>Revue des études juives</i>
<i>RevQ</i>	<i>Revue de Qumrân</i>
<i>RSR</i>	<i>Religious Studies Review</i>
<i>SBL</i>	Society of Biblical Literature
<i>ScEs</i>	<i>Science et esprit</i>
<i>TDNT</i>	Theological Dictionary of the New Testament
VTSup	Vetus Testamentum Supplements
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
<i>ZNW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche</i>

All Scripture quotations will be from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) with the exception of those direct quotations from the Q source. In that case I will be using James M. Robinson, Paul Hoffman, and John S. Kloppenborg, (eds). *The Critical Edition of Q* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000).

Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose and Scope of Inquiry

The curious upshot of our investigation is that, viewed globally, the tradition of Jesus' miracles is more firmly supported by the criteria of historicity than are a number of other well-known and often readily accepted traditions about his life and ministry (e.g., his status as a carpenter, his use of 'abbā' in prayer, his own prayer in Gethsemane before his arrest). Put dramatically, but with not too much exaggeration: if the miracle tradition from Jesus' public ministry were to be rejected *in toto* as unhistorical, so should every other Gospel tradition about him.¹

Interest in Jesus' healings and exorcisms has been reignited recently, due in part to a change in the scholarly climate. While the first half of the 20th century was dominated by skepticism regarding our ability to know anything historical about Jesus, more recent scholarship has expressed renewed confidence in the possibility of identifying core information about Jesus and his historical context, especially the socio-political aspects of it. Thus, Bultmann's insistence on the need for the "demythologizing" of miracle traditions,² and his statement, "we can know almost nothing concerning the life and personality of Jesus, since the early Christian sources show no interest in either, are moreover fragmentary and often legendary,"³ while convincing to a previous generation of scholars, no longer dominates the field. The level of interest in this topic is evident

¹ John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus vol. 2: Mentor, Message and Miracles* (New York: Doubleday, 1994), 630.

² See esp. Rudolf Bultmann, *Jesus and the Word* (New York: C. Scribner's Sons: 1934); idem, *History of the Synoptic Tradition* (New York: Harper & Row, 1963). Bultmann stressed the difference in world view between ancient people and the modern enlightenment mind, and argued for a reinterpretation of their understandings of miracles. The miracles described in the New Testament were, according to Bultmann, based in a cosmology which the modern person could no longer accept, and as a result they should be studied from a rationalistic perspective, since it was thought that they were either fabricated or reported by pre-modern persons who were gullible and believed in miracles.

³ Bultmann, *Jesus and the Word*, 4.

from the 2009 SBL conference where several articles on exorcism appear in the session on “Jesus as Healer” within the Historical Jesus section.⁴

Since the 1970s especially, there has been more openness to the miracle tradition, with the result that, just as many scholars are now less convinced than in the past that the early church freely invented sayings and attributed them to Jesus, it is now also widely accepted that Jesus was known as a healer and exorcist in the earliest traditions, and that these activities comprised one of the central features of his historical movement.⁵ As Ben Meyer aptly says, “Jesus thus epitomized his public career not as words but as exorcisms and cures.”⁶

Exorcisms, the focus of this study, are presented in the synoptic tradition as inextricably tied to Jesus’ mission and understanding of the kingdom of God. They are also linked both explicitly and implicitly to the controversy he evoked from the Jewish leadership and the Roman rulers of Judea and Galilee.⁷ In other words, Jesus’ exorcisms—and not only his message—were political.⁸ The results of both archaeological

⁴ The Historical Jesus Section is found in 23-124 in the program booklet.

⁵ So Geza Vermes, *Jesus the Jew: A Historian’s Reading of the Gospels* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1973), 22; James D. G. Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit: The Study of the Religious and Charismatic Experience of Jesus and the First Christians as Reflected in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI.: Eerdmans, 1975); Morton Smith, *Jesus the Magician* (New York: Harper & Row, 1978); Ben F. Meyer, *The Aims of Jesus* (London: SCM Press, 1979); David E. Aune, “Magic in Early Christianity,” *ANRW* 23.2: 1507-57; E.P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985); Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, vol. 2: John Dominic Crossan, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (San Francisco: Harper, 1992), esp. 303-53.

⁶ Meyer, *The Aims of Jesus*, 154.

⁷ See e.g., Mark 3:20-23; Q 11:14-20 [Luke 11:1-20; Matt 12:25-28]; L [Luke] 13:31-33; John 11:47-48.

⁸ When we say that Jesus’ exorcisms were political, we do not intend by this the more narrow understanding that Jesus sought to overthrow the Roman government or to enact direct changes in government policy. Rather, as Warren Carter (*Matthew and Empire: Initial Explorations* [Harrisburg, PA.: Trinity Publications, 2001]) has argued, the NT gospels emerge out of and speak to a world that was dominated by the Roman Empire; it provides the implicit backdrop for the events of Jesus’ historical activities. Marcus Borg (*Jesus in Contemporary Scholarship* [Valley Forge: Trinity Press International,

excavations and the application of the social sciences to biblical texts over the past thirty years have made the link between politics and religion in the ancient world abundantly clear, so that it is no longer possible to avoid the implications of this connection.⁹ In addition, sociological and anthropological studies have demonstrated that healers and exorcists often provoke controversy from those in power.¹⁰

It is on this basis that I will argue in this study that both incidents of spirit possession portrayed in the synoptic tradition and Jesus' exorcisms can be understood not only from a theological perspective, but also from a socio-political one. In other words, they can be seen as part of broader Judean and Galilean responses to the politically charged and socially oppressive situation of first-century Roman Palestine. As the title of our study suggests, Jesus' identity as Jew and as Galilean contributed to the way in which he and his exorcisms were interpreted by his supporters, and perhaps more importantly,

1994] 98-100) argues that by political we mean that Jesus in his actions and words challenged and critiqued the existing social order, and that this in itself was seen to be political, because it threatened the status quo; or as John Howard Yoder (*The Politics of Jesus* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972], 12, 23) has suggested, Jesus was "a model of radical political action," and that both the public activity and claims of Jesus are most properly understood as a call to a particular "socio-political-ethical option"; finally, Martin Hengel (*The Charismatic Leader and His Followers* [New York: Crossroad, 1981], 39) suggests that even if Jesus' execution was based on a misunderstanding of the intention of his activities, there must have been something in his message and actions which made this interpretation possible.

⁹ The following represent only a sample of recent studies that acknowledge and explore this connection: Craig Evans, *Jesus and His Contemporaries: Comparative Studies* (AGJU 25; Leiden: Brill, 1995), 2-6; Richard Horsley, *Galilee: History, Politics, People* (Valley Forge, PA.: Trinity, 1995); idem, *Archaeology, History and Society in Galilee: The Social Context of Jesus and the Rabbis* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press, 1996); idem, "Abandoning the Unhistorical Quest for an Apolitical Jesus," in *The Historical Jesus in Recent Research* (ed. James D. G. Dunn and Scot McKnight; Winona Lake, WN.: Eisenbrauns, 2005), 288-301; Jonathan Z. Smith, "Religion, Religions, Religious," in *Critical Terms for Religious Studies* (ed. Mark C. Taylor; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 269-84; Gerd Theissen, "The Political Dimension of Jesus' Activities," in *The Social Setting of Jesus and the Gospels* (ed. Wolfgang Stegemann, Bruce J. Malina and Gerd Theissen; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002), 225-50; John S. Kloppenborg, *The Tenants in the Vineyard: Ideology, Economics, and Agrarian Conflict in Jewish Palestine* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006).

¹⁰ So I. M. Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion* 2d ed. (London: Routledge, 1989), 23, 109; Stephen J. Pfohl, *Images of Deviance and Social Control: A Sociological History* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1985), 37-9; Mary Douglas, *Natural Symbols*, vol. 3 of *Mary Douglas: Collected Works* (London: Routledge, 2003), 73-4, 77-9.

by his opponents. I will suggest, in fact, that Jesus' activities as exorcist and healer were one of the major reasons for opposition to him from some of the Jewish leadership, Pontius Pilate and Herod Antipas.

The overarching question we shall address is this: What did incidents of spirit possession and Jesus' exorcisms mean within the specific socio-political situations in Galilee and Judea at the end of the first third of the first-century? In order to answer this question, it will be necessary to reconstruct the socio-economic, cultural, and political milieu in which Jesus lived, as well as appreciate more generally how spirit possession and exorcism were understood in ancient Mediterranean societies. Such an approach will enable us to show that Jesus' exorcisms played a major role, equal to that of his teaching, in the unfolding events that led to his arrest and execution at the hands of Roman imperial officials. While this connection is perhaps most evident in the synoptic gospels, which include exorcism, John's gospel (although it does not include exorcisms) also links Jesus' miraculous activities and the crowds he drew to the Jewish leaders' fear of reprisal by the Romans.¹¹ Thus, as we shall see, the socio-political connection to Jesus' healings is present in all strands of the tradition (Mark, Q, L, M and John).

Reports of controversies in both the synoptic gospels and John, as well as extra-biblical evidence, both Jewish and Greco-Roman, suggest that exorcisms, like other religious phenomena, were understood not only from what we would call a religious perspective, but were also viewed as socio-political acts. In a cultural milieu which links the religious with the political, any "religious" phenomena not only can but should be

¹¹ See John 11:47-48.

analyzed from a socio-economic and political perspective if what we seek is historical understanding. Thus, although more traditional theological questions relating to spirit possession and exorcisms are valid and interesting, it is crucial that we ask how we may understand the phenomena in question within the cultural context reported in the gospel accounts. Although the study is situated within historical Jesus studies, it will thus draw on sociological and anthropological approaches in order to more fully grasp the implications of Jesus' exorcisms within their socio-historical context.

It should be stressed at the outset that my intention is not to assess the ontological reality of spirit possession or exorcism. Rather, as Bruce Chilton has observed, "The historical question centers fundamentally on what people perceived and how they acted on their perception; the question of how ancient experience relates to modern experience is a distinct interpretive matter."¹² In other words, the questions I am interested in within the traditions are, first, whether there is reason to think spirit possession and exorcism belong to the earliest strata of material that circulated about Jesus, and second, what their social meaning was in relation to the general religio-cultural and political context.

The issue of whether early equals historical is complex. The two are not necessarily equivalent. However, determining the earliest layers of material does move us closer to oral traditions and to what may therefore be historical. Beyond this, there is the difficulty of assessing the phenomena themselves. Obviously it is not possible from a historical perspective to discern whether those Jesus encountered were actually possessed by spirits, and whether or not an exorcism occurred. However, it is possible to ascertain

¹² Bruce Chilton, "An Exorcism of History: Mark 1:21-28." in *Authenticating the Activities of Jesus* (B. D. Chilton and C. A. Evans; NTTS 28.2 Leiden: Brill, 1998), 215-45 (233).

the impact of these events on those who experienced them. As a result, we will focus here on the social nature of spirit possession and exorcism and the impact they had in this particular setting.

In this vein, I wish also to highlight my assumptions around the project of interpreting biblical texts as well as spirit possession and exorcism. While I am committed to approaching the texts with a clear awareness of my own modern, western, literate and female perspective, I am also aware that we all bring cultural baggage and blind spots to our studies. This is inevitable. I am also aware, in this particular case, of the great distance in time, cultural context and geography between text and reader, but also between modern anthropological studies of spirit possession and exorcism within contemporary cultures done by eye witnesses, and exorcisms reported in texts written approximately two thousand years ago.

While acknowledging this interpretive challenge, and the fact that this study involves some reaching, our investigation deals with issues which are not limited to the first-century Palestinian context, and which have been observed in the modern context. Beyond this, even in ethnographic studies where the interpreter is dealing with live data, the issue of interpretation is never completely resolved. The ethnographer too is dependent on the accuracy of what she/he is told and on the fragmentary nature of the information provided, and must also wrestle with the impact of personal bias in the way data is interpreted.¹³

¹³ On issues in ethnographic studies see Robert Auger, "On Ethnography: Storytelling or Science?" *Current Anthropology* 36 (1995): 97-130.

In addition, it is clear that it is no longer possible simply to discount the supernatural aspect of the Jesus traditions since healings and exorcisms are situated within what is widely accepted as some of the earliest and most authentic material in the gospels. As a consequence, while it is important to recognize the differences between the language and belief systems represented in the biblical texts and our modern understandings of spirit possession and exorcism, it is also crucial to attempt to link ancient understandings of these ideas to their particular religious and cultural context. This means that instead of dismissing the preternatural (in this case spirit possession and exorcisms) as a misunderstanding of people who did not have the ability to think critically about such phenomena, we shall attempt to understand the way in which this symbolic universe is reflected in accounts of exorcisms and what this tells us about the political context.

The implications of this for our study are clear. In first-century Galilee both illness and spirit possession were understood as expressions of the larger social context and were intimately connected to the interplay between cosmological forces and social and political events occurring on the ground.¹⁴ Thus, it is crucial in approaching spirit possession and exorcism in this context that we understand how spirits were viewed within the larger system of thought (which was both religious and cultural), as well as the

¹⁴ This issue will be addressed more fully in chapters 2 and 5. See Ched Meyers, *Binding the Strong Man: A Political Reading of Mark's Story of Jesus* (Maryknoll, NY.: Orbis Books, 1988), 17; Robert Hahn, *Sickness and Healing: An Anthropological Perspective* (New Haven, CT.: Yale University Press, 1995), 24; Douglas, *Natural Symbols*; Erica Bourguignon, *Possession* (San Francisco: Chandler and Sharp, 1976); Vincent Crapanzano, ed., *Case Studies in Spirit Possession* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1977); Celia Rothenberg, *Spirits of Palestine: Gender, Society, and Stories of the Jinn* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2004).

way this view contributed to interpretations of the political situation. This will enable us more accurately to assess the connection between them in the texts.

Although there is presently a renewed interest among scholars in studying exorcisms and healings on the one hand, and the socio-political context of Galilee on the other, to date no one has attempted a full investigation of our topic, which attempts to link the two phenomena. The present thesis will thus fill a lacuna within historical Jesus studies which will contribute to the ongoing quest by drawing on insights and tools from anthropology and sociology in order to demonstrate this connection. As will be shown, this approach will lead to results that will both challenge earlier assumptions about the historical Jesus and contribute new knowledge. Before beginning our own study, it is important to sketch briefly the scholarly context into which the study fits. We begin with a broad outline of historical Jesus research, followed by an evaluation of more recent work on healing and exorcism.

1.2 Previous Scholarship on Jesus

The First Quest

The aim of historical Jesus research is to distinguish between the Jesus of history¹⁵ and [later] theological constructions of him by early Christ-believing communities.¹⁶ The so-called Quest may be divided into four historical periods: The First Quest (1778-1906),

¹⁵ In this study, following Meier (*A Marginal Jew*, 1: 34), I have chosen to use the terms “the Jesus of history” and “the historical Jesus” interchangeably. It is important to keep in mind that the historical Jesus is, and always will be, to some degree a construct since we can never fully recover the ‘real’ Jesus.

¹⁶ So Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, 1: 21-40; Gerd Theissen and Annette Merz, *The Historical Jesus: A Comprehensive Guide* (trans. J. Bowden from the German *Der historische Jesus; Ein Lehrbuch*; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996); ET, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998), 1-12; John Miller, *Jesus at Thirty: A Psychological and Historical Portrait* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997), 6.

the No Quest (1906-1953), the Second Quest (1953-1985), and the Third Quest (1985 and continuing).¹⁷ The First Quest began with the publication of the work of Herman Samuel Reimarus (1694-1768) posthumously.¹⁸ Reimarus was the first to distinguish between the message of Jesus and that of his disciples.¹⁹ His work was part of a broader response to the growing skepticism of the enlightenment age, in which a more rationalistic approach to biblical texts was beginning to emerge. This general skepticism in biblical studies had begun even earlier with the work of Benedict (Baruch) Spinoza (1632-1677) who began to apply critical thinking to the miracle traditions in the Hebrew Bible.²⁰

Later D. F. Strauss moved beyond both Reimarus and Spinoza by suggesting the necessity of having criteria for evaluating the historicity of individual traditions within the New Testament gospels.²¹ He rejected both the traditional super naturalist understanding

¹⁷ These dates are approximate, especially for the third quest. For two recent discussions of the quest see Gregory Dawes, *The Historical Jesus Quest: Landmarks in the Search for the Jesus of History* (Leiderdorp, The Netherlands: Deo, 1999); and Lee Martin McDonald and Stanley E. Porter, *Early Christianity and its Sacred Literature* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 2000), 101-15.

¹⁸ Reimarus' work was discovered by Gotthold Lessing, and first appeared under the German title, *Fragmente des Wolfen Buttelschen ungenanntem ein Anhang zu dem Fragment vom Zweck Jesu und seiner Junger* between 1774 and 1778. In order to protect Reimarus' reputation, Lessing chose not to name Reimarus, claiming instead to have found the work in the library at Wolfenbüttel, hence the title *Unknown Fragments of the Wolfenbüttel*. However the actual title of his work was *Apology or Defence of the Rational Worshippers of God*.

¹⁹ Reimarus' (*Reimarus: Fragments* [ed. Charles H. Talbert; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1990]) argument that the gospels were deliberate fabrications by Jesus' disciples was not generally accepted. However, three of his other ideas proved to be more significant contributions to historical Jesus studies. These were: 1) his attempt to distinguish between Jesus' own message and that of his followers, 2) his insistence that Jesus was not trying to establish a new religion, but was deeply rooted in the Judaism of his time, and 3) the centrality of both the proclamation of repentance and the kingdom of God in Jesus' teaching.

²⁰ Baruch Spinoza, ("Of Miracles," in *A Theological and Political Treatise* [Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007], originally published in 1670 in Latin as *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*) argued that this was possible through studying the original languages, careful analysis of the texts, and examining authorship, context, and the history of transmissions.

²¹ D. F. Strauss (1808-1874), *The Life of Jesus Critically Examined* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1972). First published in 1835 as *Leben Jesu kritisch untersucht*; Strauss stressed the necessity of interpreting scripture from a mythological perspective rather than a historical one, because of the difference between the modern and ancient mindset, which understood these events as divine intervention.

of the gospel miracles (as Spinoza had), and its opposite, rationalism. Instead, Strauss proposed that stories about Jesus were mythological tales constructed by his disciples as part of their unconscious response to his messianic identity. Unlike Reimarus, who saw the claims of Jesus' followers as intentional deceptions, Strauss viewed the gospels as a reflection of the religious imagination of the time and thus saw the role of the exegete as that of distinguishing between Jesus' actual message and the mythical overlay represented in the gospel tradition. Interestingly, although he rejected much of the miracle tradition, he saw exorcisms as the one tradition that was likely historically authentic.²²

Over time, the distinctions made by Reimarus and Strauss have become more sophisticated, and currently one can talk about a scholarly attempt to distinguish between three stages of development: material coming directly from Jesus (stage 1, from the period c. 28-30 CE), material deriving from the oral traditions of the early church (stage 2, approximately c. 30-70 CE), and editorial work by the evangelists (stage 3, c. 70-100 CE).²³ In this study, we are looking for evidence that can reasonably be assigned to stage 1, the period of Jesus' lifetime, or in some cases, stage 2.

By the 19th century, the “history of Religions school,” under such scholars as William Wrede (1901), began to emphasize the distinction between history and the genre of writing displayed in the New Testament gospels, which they saw as documents of faith heavily influenced by a supernatural worldview.²⁴ Historians such as Johannes Weiss

²² Strauss, *Life of Jesus*, 92-3.

²³ See John P. Meier (“How Do We Decide What Comes from Jesus?” in *The Historical Jesus in Recent Research*. SBTS vol. 10. [ed. James D. G. Dunn and Scot McKnight; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2005], 123-44), who also notes that there will never be complete certainty with any criteria, only probabilities, but these can help us to move from the possible to the probable.

²⁴ William Wrede, *The Messianic Secret* (James Clarke and Co. Ltd. 1971).

(1863-1914) and Ernst Troeltsch (1865-1923) began to study Christianity as a social phenomenon using the tools of historical criticism, and argued for the relative nature of all knowledge, including religious knowledge.²⁵ It was also at this time that the “lives of Jesus” began to appear. Written for the most part by liberal German scholars, they tended to emphasize Jesus’ human qualities and were widely criticized for reflecting 19th century German liberalism rather than the first-century Jewish world Jesus lived in.²⁶

The “No Quest” (1906-1953)

Partly in response to these “lives,” historical investigation into Jesus was stalled for a period, now known as the No Quest (1906-1953). This phase of the quest was inaugurated by the publication of Albert Schweitzer’s *The Quest for the Historical Jesus* which appeared in 1906 in German, and in 1910 in English. Schweitzer (1874-1965) stressed the apocalyptic aspect of Jesus’ life and mission, particularly in relation to his understanding of the kingdom of God, and emphasized the “Christ of faith” (available to all) over against the “Jesus of history,” which he argued was virtually unknowable. For Schweitzer, what was essential and universal in Jesus’ message was repentance in

²⁵ The following are two examples: Johannes Weiss, *Jesus’ Proclamation of the Kingdom of God* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971; originally published in 1892 in German); Ernst Troeltsch, *Christianity and the World Religions* (Mohr, 1929; trans. of German *Die Absolutheit des Christentums und die Religionsgeschichte Vortrag gehalten auf der Versammlung der Freunde der Christlichen Welt die Mühlacker, am 3 Oktober 1901* erweitert und mit einem vorwort versehen).

²⁶ Examples of these lives of Jesus include: Adolf Harnack (1851-1930), *Die christliche Welt* (1923); Theodor Keim (1825-1878), *Geschichte Jesu von Nazara in ihrer Verkettung mit dem Gesamtleben seines Volkes* (Orell: Füssli, 1967); H. J. Holtzmann (1832-1910), *Das messianische Bewusstsein Jesu: ein Beitrag zur Leben-Jesu-Forschung* (1907).

preparation for the kingdom,²⁷ which should be distinguished from the “historically-conditioned” form in which it was found (first-century Jewish Palestine). This was equally true for miracles.²⁸

In a similar vein, Martin Kähler (1835-1912), Karl Barth (1886-1968), and Rudolf Bultmann (1884-1976) protested against the notion that historical research could provide a basis for faith.²⁹ Acting partly out of a deep sense of unease within the Christian churches at the implications of the lives of Jesus biographies, and partly from concern that these biographies were inaccurate, they, like Schweitzer, stressed the timeless nature of the existential encounter with the Christ of faith over historical knowledge.³⁰

The Second Quest and Third Quest

The Second Quest (1953-1985) was inaugurated by two of Rudolf Bultmann’s students, Ernst Käsemann and Günther Bornkamm. In contrast to their teacher, they began to express cautious optimism concerning the possibility of knowing something concrete about the historical Jesus, and began to explore anew the question of Jesus’

²⁷ Other scholars of the period, such as Albert Ritschl (1822-1889) and Johannes Weiss (1863-1914) had also focussed on the nature of the kingdom of God in the teaching of Jesus, but from a very different perspective.

²⁸ Albert Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus: A Critical Study of its Progress from Reimarus to Wrede* (London: A. C. Black, 1963); trans. by W. Montgomery. The original German title, *Von Reimarus zu Wrede* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1906; ET *From Reimarus to Wrede*-1910) was changed to *Geschichte der Leben-Jesu-Forschung* in 1913. Although this is by far the most famous of his works, Dawes (*The Historical Jesus Quest*, 186) has pointed out that it is in another of his works (*The Mystery of the Kingdom of God*, 1914) that Schweitzer outlines most clearly his ‘eschatological-historical’ reconstruction of Jesus.

²⁹ As Richard Horsley (*Sociology and the Jesus Movement* [New York: Crossroad, 1989], 3) notes, this focus is somewhat strange considering the fact that the synoptic gospels deal with a highly political context and end with a political execution.

³⁰ See, e.g., Rudolf Bultmann, *Faith and Understanding*, v. 1: (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), esp. 145-64; Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, vol. 1: 2 (T & T Clark, 1956), esp. “The Doctrine of the Word of God,” sec. 19.

identity. Scholars of the Second Quest did not attempt to replace the kerygmatic element in the tradition with a historical portrait. Instead, they attempted to link the historical man with the proclamation of the early church.³¹ The Third Quest, which began in 1985 and corresponded with the publication of E. P. Sander's book *Jesus and Judaism*, and the first meeting of the Jesus Seminar, led by Robert Funk,³² has been characterized by a de-emphasis on the theological or Christological elements of Jesus' life and a focus on the his Jewishness, as well as the use of social scientific methods to illuminate biblical texts and bring to light the social and political dimensions present in the first-century Galilean context.³³ This resurgence was made possible because of the increase in both archaeological evidence and textual data made available from discoveries such as the Dead Sea Scrolls in Palestine and the Nag Hammadi collection in Egypt in the mid-1940s.

In combination with the wider availability of other ancient texts such as the pseudepigraphical and apocryphal material, these discoveries brought to light more concrete information about the day-to-day lives of people living in the ancient world and

³¹ See, e.g., Ernst Käsemann, "The Problem of the Historical Jesus," in *Essays on New Testament Themes* (trans. W. J. Montague SBT 41; London: SCM Press, 1964), 15-47; Günther Bornkamm, *Jesus of Nazareth* (trans. I. F. McLuskey, with J. M. Robinson; London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1960).

³² The Jesus Seminar included prominent Jesus scholars who met twice annually to assess the historicity of particular words attributed to Jesus. They voted by dropping coloured beads into a box based on the level of likelihood that a particular saying could be attributed to Jesus (red=highly probable; pink=probable; gray=possible; black=improbable). Some of the publications that emerged out of this seminar include: Robert W. Funk, Bernard Brandon Scott, and James R. Butts, *The Parables of Jesus: Red Letter Edition. A Report of the Jesus Seminar* (Sonoma, CA.: Polebridge Press, 1988); Robert W. Funk, Roy W. Hoover, and The Jesus Seminar, *The Five Gospels: The Search for the Authentic Words of Jesus* (New York: Macmillan, 1993).

³³ As David S. du Toit, ("Redefining Jesus: Current Trends in Jesus Research," in *Jesus, Mark and Q: The Teaching of Jesus and its Earliest Records* JSNTS 214 [ed. Michael Labahn and Andreas Schmidt; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001], 82-124) notes, it is this focus on understanding Jesus within his social context as opposed to over against it that characterizes the third quest. In contrast, during the Second Quest (1950-1985) the focus was much more on the uniqueness of Jesus' teachings and sayings.

shed light on the diverse nature of both Jewish and gentile Christ-believing communities in the first century. The result of this has been a growing consensus among Jesus scholars that the most credible basis for understanding Jesus as a historical figure is to grasp more fully the social, political, religious and topographic context of first-century Galilee and to take more seriously these aspects of Jesus' teaching and activities.³⁴ One of the additional benefits of this research is that there is more material available than ever before on Jewish understandings of the spirit world, which, along with better understandings of first-century Jewish culture, forms the basis of our investigation into his activities as exorcist.

Jesus in Context

By the 1970s scholars began to use this information to try to situate Jesus within the broader social and cultural context in relation to other contemporary figures, including healers, miracle workers, holy men and sages described in both Jewish and Greco-Roman texts. One of the earliest studies to appear was Geza Vermes's study *Jesus the Jew: A Historian's Reading of the Gospels* (1973), which stressed the importance of Jesus' Jewishness, and argued that he could be best understood as a Galilean *Hasid* (holy man)

³⁴ So Marcus Borg, *Jesus in Contemporary Scholarship* (Valley Forge, PA.: Trinity, 1994), 10-11, 18-19; Sean Freyne, *Jesus: A Jewish Galilean: New Reading of the Jesus-Story* (London: T & T Clark, 2004); Horsley, *Archaeology, History and Society*; Jonathan Reed, *Archaeology and the Galilean Jesus: A Re-examination of the Evidence* (Harrisburg: Trinity, 2000); Crossan, *The Historical Jesus*. One of the results of this kind of study is that several assumptions about Jesus, first proposed by Sanders (*Jesus and Judaism*, 11) are now widely accepted: 1) Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist; 2) Jesus was a Galilean who preached and healed; 3) Jesus called disciples and spoke of there being twelve; 4) Jesus confined his activity to Israel; 5) Jesus engaged in a controversy about the Temple; 6) Jesus was crucified outside Jerusalem by the Roman authorities; 7) After his death, Jesus' followers continued as an identifiable movement; and 8) At least some Jews persecuted parts of the new movement. There are other features of Jesus' life which might also be added with a high degree of probability. These include the report that Jesus was viewed as a prophet by the public and perhaps that he avoided cities. See Craig Evans, "Authenticating the Activities of Jesus," in *Authenticating the Activities of Jesus* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 3-30; idem, *Jesus and his Contemporaries*, 15.

in the tradition of charismatic Judaism.³⁵ E. P. Sanders claimed that the Jewish prophetic tradition provided the most appropriate context for comparison and saw Jesus as an eschatological prophet.³⁶ Similarly, Ben Meyer's study *The Aims of Jesus* (1979) emphasized the eschatological reign of God as the context and focal point of Jesus' public proclamation, and saw healings and exorcisms as expressions of this larger vision.³⁷

In contrast, Morton Smith's *Jesus the Magician* (1978) drew on polemical traditions in both Jewish and Greek magical texts to compare Jesus' role as exorcist and healer with other similar figures, and argued that Jesus should be seen as a magician.³⁸ J. D. Crossan (*The Historical Jesus: the Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant*) compared Jesus with wandering Hellenistic cynic philosophers.³⁹ Sanders and Crossan in particular represent strikingly different views of Jesus, a Jewish eschatological prophet on the one hand, and a Galilean peasant cynic sage on the other, reflecting the diversity of present views of Jesus that have emerged out of this most recent phase of the quest.

More recently, scholars such as Sean Freyne, Richard Horsley, Jonathan Reed, and Morten Hørning Jensen have focused on the importance of Galilee itself for understanding Jesus, by assessing the contributions of recent archaeological and historical evidence to the debate.⁴⁰ Other studies such as Ekkehard and Wolfgang Stegemann's *The Jesus Movement* (1999) have used sociological analysis to reconstruct the larger

³⁵ See note 4.

³⁶ Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*.

³⁷ Meyer, *The Aims of Jesus*, 154-7; 220-21.

³⁸ Smith, *Jesus the Magician*.

³⁹ Crossan, *The Historical Jesus*.

⁴⁰ Freyne, *A Jewish Galilean*; Horsley, *Archaeology, History and Society*; Reed, *Archaeology and the Galilean Jesus*; Morten Hørning Jensen, *Herod Antipas in Galilee: The Literary and Archaeological Sources on the Reign of Herod Antipas and its Socio-economic Impact on Galilee* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006); cf. Horsley, *Sociology and the Jesus Movement*, which looks at some of the issues surrounding the use of sociology in interpreting the early Jesus movement.

Mediterranean context and agrarian economies, and to examine the social makeup of the early followers of Jesus and of the Pauline communities as a way of better understanding both Jesus and the early Christian movement.⁴¹

In a similar vein, my research will address the issue of situating Jesus by addressing the connection between the specific social, political, religious and economic crises that were occurring during the early Roman period in Galilee and Judea on the one hand, and the presence of spirit possession and exorcism among the population on the other. These crises included virtually continuous instability resulting from periodic wars and invasions, a heavy tax burden on the populace, a decrease in relative wealth, loss of land and access to produce, and a generalized sense of frustration and political impotence among the people.

Jesus Research and Exorcism

Surprisingly, however, until recently, very little extensive work has been done on Jesus' role as exorcist. As Paul Hollenbach has observed, scholarship on Jesus' exorcisms is the most neglected aspect of his career.⁴² Although a number of studies have recently appeared on exorcism, they have focused mainly on the historical and textual issues. For instance, Eric Sorensen's study, *Possession and Exorcism in the New Testament and Early Christianity*,⁴³ surveys ideas about possession and exorcism from the early

⁴¹ Ekkehard Stegemann and Wolfgang Stegemann, *The Jesus Movement: A Social History of its First Century* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999).

⁴² Paul Hollenbach, "Jesus, Demoniacs, and Public Authorities: A Socio-Historical Study," *JAAR* 49: 4 (1981): 565-88.

⁴³ Eric Sorensen, *Possession and Exorcism in the New Testament and Early Christianity* (WUNT 2.157; Tübingen; Mohr [Siebeck], 2002).

Mesopotamian period to Second Temple Judaism and early Christianity. In a similar vein, Eric Eve's study, *The Jewish Context of Jesus' Miracles*, examines Jesus' healing and exorcisms along with other miracles recorded in the gospels within the broader Jewish context.⁴⁴ Eve's study is extremely helpful in assessing the context of Jesus' miracles through a thorough discussion of the Jewish literature of the second Temple period. In addition, he does discuss some of the implications of anthropological and sociological research on both spirit possession and exorcism in relation to Jesus' role as exorcist.⁴⁵

Graham Twelftree's *Jesus the Exorcist*,⁴⁶ which limits its focus to textual and theological issues around Jesus' exorcisms, is the study which is closest in genre to my own work. Twelftree's study is thorough and informative. However, while it examines evidence for Jesus' role as exorcist through textual analysis of both canonical and extra-canonical Jewish and early Christian evidence, the study does not attempt to link socio-economic and political conditions with spirit possession and exorcism. As such, it fails to reach the fuller understanding which emerges when the impact of these activities on the Jewish and Roman leadership is properly assessed.

Only a few scholars have attempted to extend the results of social-scientific studies to the phenomenon of spirit possession and to Jesus' role as exorcist.⁴⁷ Some have begun using anthropological studies to illuminate the role and activities of Jesus. Marcus Borg, Stevan Davies, and more recently, Pieter Craffert, for example, have compared Jesus with spirit-filled shamans and healers across cultures and have explored some of the

⁴⁴ Eric Eve, *The Jewish Context of Jesus' Miracles* (London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002).

⁴⁵ Eve, *Jewish Context*; see esp. ch. 13, "Healers, Magicians and Spirits."

⁴⁶ Graham Twelftree, *Jesus the Exorcist* (WUNT 2.54; Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1993).

⁴⁷ Notable exceptions include Paul Hollenbach, Marcus Borg, John Dominic Crossan, Stevan Davies, and John Pilch.

implications of this comparison.⁴⁸ Borg stresses the deeply spiritual nature of Jesus' connection to both Judaism and to God.⁴⁹ Davies compares Jesus' experiences of spirit possession and ability to heal and exorcise spirits with those of mediums cross-culturally. However, he focuses almost exclusively on the connections between modern understandings of mental illness and spirit possession in shamanic traditions.⁵⁰

John Pilch has also applied anthropological methods to healings described in the gospel tradition and has done some work on altered states of consciousness. In his most recent work, *Healing in the New Testament: Insights from Mediterranean Anthropology*, he uses cultural anthropology as a way of understanding the views of illness and healing of the individual gospel writers, the communities they represented, and their readers.⁵¹

Most recently, Pieter Craffert's 2008 study, *The Life of a Galilean Shaman: Jesus of Nazareth in Anthropological-Historical Perspective*,⁵² uses an anthropological approach to argue that Jesus can be best understood from the perspective of the social type shaman. He challenges the traditional approach to historical Jesus research—sifting through layers of historical data to get to the earliest level of tradition—which he argues is inadequate for recovering either the historical figure of Jesus or other evidence related

⁴⁸ Marcus Borg, *Jesus, A New Vision: Spirit, Culture and the Life of Discipleship* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987); idem, *Jesus in Contemporary Scholarship*; idem "The Spirit-Filled Experience of Jesus," in *The Historical Jesus in Recent Research* (ed. James D. G. Dunn and Scot McKnight; Winona Lake, IN.: Eisenbrauns, 2005), 302-14; Pieter Craffert, *The Life of a Galilean Shaman: Jesus of Nazareth in Anthropological-Historical Perspective* (Eugene, OR.: Cascade Books, 2008); Stevan L. Davies, *Jesus the Healer: Possession, Trance and the Origins of Christianity* (New York, NY.: Continuum Books, 1995).

⁴⁹ See Borg, *Jesus: A New Vision*; idem, "The Spirit-Filled Experience," 302-14.

⁵⁰ Davies' (*Jesus the Healer*) description of Jesus as medium is based on Winkelman's assessment of different types of healers. I agree with Davies' placement of Jesus in the category of *medium* based on Winkelman's criteria. I will be discussing Winkelman's work in chapter 3

⁵¹ John Pilch, *Healing in the New Testament: Insights from Mediterranean Anthropology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000).

⁵² See note 48.

to him. Instead, he proposes that the canonical gospels contain information in the form of “cultural residue” about Jesus as a Galilean shaman who did in fact perform healings and exorcisms, along with other acts, and that this cultural residue is no more accurately reflected in the earliest layers than in the later ones.⁵³

The present study is somewhat different from all of those just mentioned. Like Twelftree I will be focussing closely on textual traditions related to exorcism. In addition, like Borg, Davies, Pilch and Craffert, I will be using comparative anthropological analysis. However, my focus will be on reconstructing the historical Jesus as exorcist using a combination of anthropological and textual analysis. Like Craffert, I will use an anthropological framework for understanding Jesus as a social type. However, I will not rely on this portrait alone. Instead, I will combine the isolation and analysis of early traditions with the application of sociological and anthropological analysis to these traditions. This multifaceted approach will help to address the limitations of using only social scientific approaches.⁵⁴

⁵³ This is similar to what James D. G. Dunn, (“The Tradition,” in *The Historical Jesus in Recent Research* [ed. James D. G. Dunn and Scott McKnight; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2001], 167-84) argues. Dunn contends that the traditional view of layers of material that must be sifted through is inaccurate. Rather, he suggests that in oral transmission, traditions are continually performed and contain stable core material as well as variability of details, which is immediately present in the preserved texts rather than remote from the original event.

⁵⁴ The issue of how biblical scholars can best use sociology and anthropology to interpret biblical texts is a significant one, which is currently being debated, and can be seen in two fairly recent discussions. Esler (along with Malina and others) maintains that the use of sociological models, though limited, offer the best way of crossing the cultural distance between modern scholarly work and ancient writings. In contrast, Horrell (and others) is concerned that models impose a particular interpretation on the text. He prefers the use of “theoretical framework” whereby one works out from the text itself rather than imposing models from outside. See extended discussion in Philip F. Esler, “Models in New Testament Interpretation: a Reply to David Horrell,” *JSNT* 78 (2000): 107-113; David G. Horrell, “Models and Methods in Social-Scientific Interpretation: A Response to Philip Esler,” *JSNT* 78 (2000): 83-105.

This is significant because I am not trying to discover something about the community behind individual gospels (Pilch). Neither am I limiting myself to a comparison of Jesus' experience of the spirit with that of other healers cross-culturally (Borg, Davies, Craffert). Instead, my aims are twofold; first, to isolate early and authentic exorcism traditions and establish a link between these early reports of exorcism found in Mark, Q, L and M and the historical Jesus, and second to apply sociological and anthropological insights to the portrait that emerges from this pattern in order to reconstruct the historical figure of Jesus as exorcist.

There are obvious limitations to the study of the historical Jesus. Virtually all scholars acknowledge that any historical reconstruction of Jesus is far from certain, and that we can never hope to recover completely the "real" Jesus who walked the earth.⁵⁵ As Christopher Tuckett notes, "The 'historical Jesus' will in one sense only be 'the Jesus whom our sources enable us to reconstruct.' But that is one of the limitations within which all historical study must work."⁵⁶ However, this does not mean that our task will not bring results, even if only proximate. It is still possible to establish early traditions and to find patterns in these traditions by using the criteria of authenticity and textual comparison and analysis. Although caution is always in order, I am optimistic about the possibility of recovering a portrait of Jesus as exorcist based in the textual evidence and

⁵⁵ This is partly due to the nature of our sources, which were generally not written for the purpose of providing historical details. In addition, the New Testament gospels, our main source of information about Jesus, are coloured by the faith perspective of those who have mediated them to us. It is simply not possible to distinguish absolutely between the perspectives of early witnesses and redactors and what "actually happened." At the same time, this is as true for any historical figure as it is for Jesus. See Meier's discussion of these issues in *A Marginal Jew*, 1: 21-4.

⁵⁶ Christopher Tuckett, "Sources and Methods" in *The Cambridge Companion to Jesus* (ed. Markus Bockmuehl; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 121-37.

filling this portrait in further by applying anthropological and sociological insights to it.

What we will come away with is a clearer sense of the interconnectedness in Jesus' world between the social, the political and the spiritual.

1.3 Materials

Our main sources for traditions about Jesus' exorcisms are the New Testament synoptic gospels (John does not record any exorcisms).⁵⁷ In terms of the non-canonical gospels, the only relevant evidence is found in the *Gospel of Thomas*,⁵⁸ where Jesus' role as healer is linked with his role as prophet. As a result, it plays only a minor role in reconstructing Jesus' exorcisms. There are a few references to Jesus in Roman sources, but they provide no information about his exorcisms.⁵⁹

Josephus, one of the only non-canonical sources on Palestinian Judaism in the first century, mentions Jesus twice. The first time is in reference to James' execution, where

⁵⁷ Although there are some traditions about Jesus in the Pauline corpus that are early and useful for reconstructing material that may go back to the earliest stratum of tradition, unfortunately these do not include references to exorcism.

⁵⁸ See *Gos. Thom.* 31. The dating of GTh is debated, but since it does not play a major role in reconstructing Jesus' identity as exorcist, we will not focus on these questions here. While Crossan argues that GTh predates the canonical gospels, this is based on the priority he assigns to multiple attestation in establishing early material within the gospels, and also on his argument that both Q and *Gos. Thom.* contain within them earlier documents). See Tuckett ("Sources and Methods", 135). If Crossan and others are correct in their assessment that GTh predates the synoptic gospels, then GTh would provide another attestation that Jesus was known as a healer and prophet in the earliest traditions, but would provide no information about his role as exorcist

⁵⁹ Tacitus (*Ann.* 15.44), ca. 110-120 CE, mentions Jesus' (*Christus*) execution by Pontius Pilate during the reign of Tiberius. Similarly, Suetonius, *Claud.* 25.4, (ca. 110-120 CE) refers to the expelling of Jews from Rome because of their constant disturbances which were instigated by one *Chrestus*; Pliny the Younger (*Ep. Tra.* 10.96), 110 CE, mentions the Christians and Christ in a letter to the emperor Trajan. The negative assessment of Christians and Christianity in these texts tells against Christian influence. As a result, they can be accepted as non-Christian evidence for Jesus' existence and execution. In addition, Tacitus' reference narrows the date of Jesus' execution to the reign of Tiberius (14-37 CE) and to the governorship of Pontius Pilate (26-36 CE), and so between the years 26 and 36 CE.

James is referred to as the brother of the one who was called the Christ (τὸν ἀδελφὸν Ἰησοῦ τοῦ λεγομένου χριστοῦ).⁶⁰ The second reference is widely believed to contain some Christian interpolation. However, if these passages are removed, we are left with a statement that can plausibly be attributed to Josephus. The following is Meier's reconstruction:

At this time there appeared Jesus, a wise man. For he was a doer of amazing deeds, a teacher of people who receive the truth with pleasure. And he gained a following both among many Jews and among many of Greek origin. And when Pilate, because of an accusation made by the leading men among us, condemned him to the cross, those who had loved him previously did not cease to do so. And up until this very day the tribe of Christians (named after him) has not died out.⁶¹

Although the passage tells us that Jesus was known as a “doer of amazing deeds” (παραδόξων ἔργων ποιητής), which provides important confirmation of the tradition that Jesus performed supernatural acts, unfortunately there is no mention of exorcisms.⁶²

There are only a handful of references to Jesus being known as an exorcist (or magician) in the broader Jewish and Greco-Roman source material, and these are generally of little help in providing historically accurate information. They are typically very late (as with references in the rabbinic material), highly polemical, or apologetic, and

⁶⁰ Josephus, *Ant.* 20.200; the genuineness of this reference is not seriously questioned by any scholar.

⁶¹ Josephus, *Ant.* 18.63-4. See Meyer, *A Marginal Jew*, 1: 59-69.

⁶² Josephus, *Ant.* 18.63-4. A brief note is necessary on Josephus. Although he is generally viewed by scholars as accurate, at times he is clearly biased or mistaken. In most cases, this involves exaggerating numbers either to make himself or the Jewish people appear in a better light, which reflects his overall purpose, to portray Judaism and the Jewish people in a positive light for his Roman audience. He also tends to present the Jewish war from his upper class perspective, which means that he blames the war generally on disruptive forces within Judaism, rather than for instance on Roman aggression, and portrays his own role in the events leading up to the war as beyond reproach. This should have little effect on his descriptions of the general social climate of first-century Palestine or his discussions of prophetic and messianic figures, except in the sense that his upper class position would presumably tend to bias him against them. Cf. Steve Mason (ed.), *Life of Josephus*, vol. 9 (Leiden: Brill, 2001), xix, xxi; Jensen, *Herod Antipas in Galilee*, 54-68, 89-90; Martin Goodman, *The Ruling Class of Judaea: The Origins of the Jewish Revolt Against Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 6.

offer few historical details.⁶³ The view that Jesus was a magician, for instance, is described in the 2nd century Christian text *Dialogue with Trypho*,⁶⁴ as well as in Origen's (245 CE), refutation of Celsus' comments.⁶⁵ Both Origen and Justin also mention Jesus' exorcisms, which we will address in more detail in chapter 2.

The indirect evidence—epigraphic, archaeological and textual data that provides evidence about the first-century context—includes evidence of both spirit possession and exorcism, and reports of exorcists in Greco-Roman and Jewish texts from the Second Temple period, which will be helpful in reconstructing both the broader cultural milieu and the social, religious and political context of Galilee.

Returning then to the synoptic gospels, exorcisms in the synoptic tradition are attested in multiple forms (sayings, narratives and controversies) and multiple independent sources (Mark, Q, M, L),⁶⁶ and there is coherence in the gospel accounts between first-hand reports of exorcisms and healings and other traditions that refer to them indirectly. We can, therefore, be fairly certain that exorcism, as well as healing, belongs to the earliest traditions about Jesus.⁶⁷ As Morton Smith has said, “Whatever

⁶³ No references to Jesus are found in the Mishnah, the earliest writing in the rabbinic corpus (ca. 200-220 CE). However, the Tosefta (ca. 220-230 CE) reports in one story (*t. Hul* 2:20f) in which R. Eleazar b. Dama is bitten by a snake, that he is prohibited from being healed in the name of Jesus. Similarly, the Palestinian Talmud (ca. 400-425 CE), reports that when the grandson of R. Yehoshua b. Levi swallowed something dangerous and someone attempts to whisper to him in the name of Jesus, Yehoshua responds that it would have been better for the child to die than to have heard this. The Babylonian Talmud (ca. 500-550 CE), a much later document, refers to Jesus as a magician who led Israel astray (*b. Sanh* 43a); cf. *y. Sabb* 14.4; *y. Abod. Zar.* 2.2; *b. Abod. Zar.* 22b. Cf. Peter Schäfer, *Jesus in the Talmud* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), esp. pgs 52-62.

⁶⁴ Justin, *Dial.* 69.

⁶⁵ Origen, *Cels.* 1.6; 1.28.

⁶⁶ I also agree with Meier that M and L can be problematic and should thus be used with caution; cf. Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, 1: 44-5; B. L. Blackburn, “The Miracles of Jesus,” in *Studying the Historical Jesus* (ed. Bruce Chilton and Craig A. Evans; Grand Rapids, MI.: Eerdmans, 1996), 356-7.

⁶⁷ In the study of the historical Jesus, as in historical studies generally, we are not aiming for certainty, but rather for probability. See Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, 1: 167-68.

their individual historicity, they prove that Jesus was remembered as a miracle worker in the earliest Palestinian churches.”⁶⁸

What is remarkable in all this is how deeds and sayings cut across different sources and form-critical categories to create a meaningful whole. This neat, elegant, and unforced “fit” of the deeds and sayings of Jesus, coming from many different sources, argues eloquently for a basic historical fact: Jesus did perform deeds that he and some of his contemporaries considered miracles.⁶⁹

While the authenticity of the tradition that Jesus was known as an exorcist can be assumed with a high degree of certainty, the association of any particular account with the earliest level of the tradition is more difficult to establish. Our task will be to attempt to distinguish authentic material within these texts which represent the earliest historical traditions regarding Jesus’ exorcisms, and based on this, reconstruct a pattern of Jesus the exorcist. We will do this using two main tools: 1) a comparison of accounts found in the synoptic gospels to determine the earliest level of tradition (Mark, Q, M, and L), and to see what kinds of changes were made to this material by the other writers, and 2) the application of the five primary criteria of authenticity, embarrassment, multiple attestation, coherence, discontinuity, and rejection and execution.⁷⁰ Sociological and anthropological analysis will then be applied to the pattern we have established to provide a fuller picture of Jesus’ role as a Galilean exorcist.

⁶⁸ Smith, *Jesus the Magician*, 14.

⁶⁹ Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, 2: 623.

⁷⁰ For this study, we will not generally be using the secondary criteria since they are not considered entirely reliable and many scholars dispute them.

1.4 Methodology and Mode of Procedure

As has been noted, although a few scholars have focused on either anthropological or historical aspects of Jesus as exorcist, no one has yet attempted a full study which links the phenomena of spirit possession and exorcism in the early Jesus traditions with the socio-political context.⁷¹ As a result, it will be important for this study to use a methodology that combines several types of critical assessment and evaluation. The first is an examination of cross-cultural anthropological research on spirit possession and exorcism with the aim of understanding the links that exist between the presence of particular characteristics within a culture and the incidence of spirit possession and exorcism. Ethnographic studies from a variety of cultural contexts will be consulted to determine the patterns that coincide with spirit possession and exorcism.

Drawing on anthropological studies will also enable us to compare Jesus with other healers and exorcists operating in and around the first century and assess beliefs expressed in Jewish texts from the late second temple period (appr. 250 BCE-70 CE) and Greco-Roman texts from the early Roman period (37 BCE-132 CE). We are particularly interested in the way religious expressions and understandings of evil spirits are connected with social and political events occurring on the ground. Obviously, a thorough examination of all material relevant to spirit possession and exorcism in the ancient world

⁷¹ Some work has been done on this issue, but to date no full treatment has appeared; see, for example, Gerd Theissen, "The Political Dimension of Jesus' Activities," in Stegemann, Malina and Theissen, 225-50; Hollenbach, "Jesus, Demoniacs, and Public Authorities," 565-88; Santiago Guijarro, "The Politics of Exorcism: Jesus' Reaction to Negative Labels in the Beelzebul Controversy," *BTB* 29 (1997): 118-29; Douglas E. Oakman, "Rulers' Houses, Thieves, and Usurpers. The Beelzebul Pericope," *Forum* 4 no. 3 (1988): 109-23; Crossan (*The Historical Jesus*, 313-20) also addresses briefly this connection between oppressive political context and spirit possession and exorcism in his discussion of the Gerasene Demoniac and the Beelzebul controversy.

is not possible in a study of this kind as it would constitute a thesis in itself. Instead, our focus will be on the particular way in which understandings of the spirit world represented in these texts reflect a marginal socio-political and religious perspective and a dualistic worldview. Social scientific analysis will also be necessary in order to establish the particular context in which Jesus lived and operated.

Obviously there are inherent limitations in attempting to apply social scientific analysis to ancient texts and archaeological data. These include the scarcity of first-century evidence, its fragmentary nature, and the fact that the evidence we have does not provide much information of a sociological nature. Perhaps more important is the issue of the appropriateness of using this approach, since social scientific studies lend themselves much more readily to live data.⁷²

However, there are also important reasons for using the social sciences in biblical studies. These include the limited ability of textual analysis alone to provide historical information, and the sociological nature of the New Testament gospels themselves. All four gospels indicate clearly the centrality of social relationships in Jesus' mission. They also suggest the significant role that politics and economic matters played in shaping the lives of the people behind the biblical texts.⁷³ In addition, although these texts are written for a different purpose than sociological investigation, this does not mean that data cannot

⁷² Holmberg, Bengt. *Sociology and the New Testament*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 1-17; Horsley, *Sociology and the Jesus Movement*, 4-6

⁷³ As Horsley (*Sociology and the Jesus Movement*, 3) notes, the initial intent behind form criticism was to understand the social context behind the text. Gunkel's use of *Sitz im Leben* was an attempt to link the situation behind the text with the text itself, or, as was sometimes the case, a way of creating a context that might explain a particular saying.

be found. As it happens, the gospels and other extra-canonical material do provide information about the social and economic conditions of first-century Galilee.

While sociological tools will clarify the broader context, anthropology can help to establish the culturally constructed nature of spirit possession and exorcism, and the particular way in which these phenomena may be related to the situation of first-century Galilee and Judea. By using these approaches, it will be possible better to locate the figure of Jesus and the phenomena of spirit possession and exorcism within the larger historical and political context than would be the case with textual analysis alone.

The application of anthropological approaches to biblical texts is a fairly recent, but important move in Jesus studies. Its significance lies in the fact that it offers scholars another way to situate Jesus and his exorcisms within his Jewish culture and first-century context. Although the value of applying sociological and anthropological insights to biblical texts has already been amply demonstrated by others,⁷⁴ their use is especially pertinent for this study. Because anthropology offers a unique perspective on spirit possession and exorcism and the interdependence between culture and these kinds of

⁷⁴ See, e.g., David Kinsley, *Health, Healing, and Religion: A Cross-Cultural Perspective* (Upper Saddle River, N. J.: Prentice Hall, 1996); K. C. Hanson and Douglas E. Oakman, *Palestine in the Time of Jesus: Social Structures and Social Conflicts* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998); Carmen Bernabé Ubieta, “Mary Magdalene and the Seven Demons in Social-Scientific Perspective,” in *Transformative Encounters: Jesus & Women Re-viewed* (ed. Ingrid Rosa Kitzberger; Leiden: Brill, 2000), 203-23; Stuart L. Love, “Jesus, Healer of the Canaanite Woman’s Daughter in Matthew’s Gospel: A Social-Scientific Inquiry,” *BTB* (2001): 13-20; Crossan, *The Historical Jesus*; Wolfgang Stegemann, Bruce J. Malina and Gerd Theissen (eds.) *The Social Setting of Jesus and the Gospels* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002); Peter Richardson, and Douglas Edwards, “Jesus and Palestinian Social Protest: Archaeological and Literary Perspectives,” in *Handbook of Early Christianity: Social Science Approaches* (ed. Anthony J. Blasi, Jean Duhaime and Paul-André Turcotte; Walnut Creek, CA.: Altamira Press, 2002), 247-66; Louise Lawrence and Mario Aguilar (eds.) *Anthropology and Biblical Studies: Avenues of Approach* (Brill: Leiden, 2004); Milton Moreland, “The Galilean Response to Earliest Christianity: A Cross-Cultural Study of the Subsistence Ethic,” in *Religion and Society in Roman Palestine: Old Questions, New Approaches*. (ed. Douglas R. Edwards; New York: Routledge, 2004), 37-48.

expressions within it, it allows us to answer questions that traditional exegetical methods cannot, such as how being religious is embodied in a particular culture, and more importantly, how the phenomena of spirit possession and exorcism can mediate the experience of political and social oppression that existed in first-century Jewish Palestine and why this evoked opposition from the political and religious authorities.

This is extremely important because anthropological studies on spirit possession and exorcism have generally not been appropriated by biblical scholars in relation to the historical Jesus. Yet these studies have demonstrated that spirit possession is a widespread phenomenon which has been documented across cultures, and has been linked particularly with agrarian societies and with social and political oppression.⁷⁵

Our study begins in chapter 2, with an assessment of the prevailing beliefs about spirits and spirit possession in the Greco-Roman world and within the Palestinian Jewish context. As we shall see, the belief that evil spirits could afflict or possess human beings, and that they could be removed by particular prayers, hymns, incantations, binding and by exorcism was widespread. With this task completed, chapter 3 will provide a reconstruction of Galilee in 30 CE using sociological analysis of both textual and

⁷⁵ By the early 1970s, sociologists and anthropologists were beginning to make links between social context, particularly oppression, and spirit possession. So Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion* (1st ed. published 1971); Erika Bourguignon, ed., *Religion, Altered States of Consciousness, and Social Change* (Columbus, OH.: Ohio State University Press, 1973), idem, *Possession*, (1976) 43-8; Crapanzano, ed., *Case Studies*; Mark Nichter, "Idioms of Distress: Alternatives in the Expression of Psychosocial Distress: A Case Study from South India," *Culture, Medicine, and Psychiatry* 5 (1981): 379-408; Felicitas D. Goodman, ed., *Ecstasy, Ritual, and Alternate Reality: Religion in a Pluralistic World* (Bloomington; Indiana University Press, 1988); Colleen A. Ward (ed.), *Altered States of Consciousness and Mental Health: A Cross-Cultural Perspective* (Newbury Park, Ca.: Sage Publications, 1989); Michael Winkelman, "Shamans and Other 'Magico-Religious' Healers: A Cross-Cultural Study of Their Origins, Nature, and Social Transformations," *Ethos* 18 (1990): 308-52; Lila Shaara, and Andrew Strathern, "A Preliminary Analysis of the Relationship between Altered States of Consciousness, Healing and Social Structure," *American Anthropologist* 94 (1992): 145-60.

archaeological evidence. Chapters 4 and 5 will provide an evaluation of the evidence associated with Jesus' exorcisms. In chapter 4 we will look at a wide spectrum of indirect evidence found in Mark, Q, L and M for its possible contribution to a portrait of Jesus as exorcist, and in chapter 5 we will examine the exorcisms attributed to Jesus.

While several structures are possible in a study of this nature, I have chosen to organize the thesis on the following basis. Chapters 2 and 3 provide the context, both religious and socio-political, which it was important to establish before introducing Jesus and his exorcisms in chapters 4 and 5. Within the chapters on Jesus I have decided to combine textual, anthropological and political analysis. While this system has the unfortunate result of two very long chapters, it has an important advantage. It allows an integrated approach to the material which in my view is necessary for the fullest understanding. In many cases it is also difficult to separate in a clear way the political and the anthropological from the textual. In addition, because there are so many texts to examine, especially in chapter 4, to separate the textual analysis from the sociological would necessitate revisiting multiple texts twice.

It is important at the outset to make some basic assumptions clear. In regard to the Synoptic Problem,⁷⁶ I accept the two-source hypothesis, which assumes Markan priority and a double tradition found in Matthew and Luke deriving from a common sayings source, Q.⁷⁷ Mark and Q thus provide two independent sources for comparison and

⁷⁶ For further discussion of this issue see C. M. Tuckett, "Synoptic Problem," in *Anchor Bible Dictionary* vol. 6 (ed. David N. Freedman; New York: Doubleday, 1992), 263-70; Arthur J. Bellinzoni, Jr. (ed.) *The Two Source Hypothesis: A Critical Appraisal* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1985); Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, 1:41-8.

⁷⁷ I assume that Q was a single document, written in Greek, containing mostly sayings, with some narrative. For more discussion on Q, see Frans Nierynck, "Recent Developments in the Study of Q," in

verification of early traditions about Jesus. I also assume that Matthew and Luke each had access to their own unique sources, M and L respectively, although I am aware that distinguishing between these hypothetical sources and the redactors' activities is at times difficult.⁷⁸ The issue of whether John should be seen as dependent on the synoptic gospels or as an independent witness drawing on some of the same traditions is still debated, but I agree with Meier that John provides an independent source of information about Jesus based on the fact that his presentation of the material is too different from that in the synoptic gospels to have been dependent on them.⁷⁹ In addition, more recently there has been a shift in scholarly thinking that sees John as providing some historical information, even though his gospel is more theologically oriented than the synoptic gospels.⁸⁰

Logia: Les Paroles de Jésus—the Sayings of Jesus (ed. Jöel Delobel; Louvain: Leuven University Press, 1982), 29-75; and John S. Kloppenborg, *Excavating Q: The History and Setting of the Sayings Gospel* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2000); Ronald A. Piper (ed.) *The Gospel Behind the Gospels: Current Studies on Q* (Leiden: Brill, 1995); Christopher M. Tuckett, *Q and the History of Early Christianity: Studies on Q* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996). But see Mark Goodacre, *The Case Against Q* (Harrisburg, PA.: TPI, 2002) for a critique of the Q hypothesis. Goodacre, subscribing to the Farrer hypothesis, argues for Markan priority without Q. In this view, Mark wrote first, Matthew drew on Mark, and Luke, having access to both Mark and Matthew, wrote his own gospel which drew heavily on both Mark and Matthew.

⁷⁸ Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, 1: 44-5.

⁷⁹ Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, 1: 44; 2: 619-21. But see Tuckett ("Sources and Methods," 125-7), who argues that it is difficult to accept both the synoptic tradition and John as historically reliable sources. However, my thesis does not stand or fall on this issue. Even if John were to be shown to be dependent on the synoptic tradition, it would not have a major effect on my argument.

⁸⁰ A good example of this are the recent papers presented by Warren Carter and Donald Senior at the Society of Biblical Literature Conference in Boston, Nov 21-25, 2008. Carter ("Jesus and Pilate [John 18:28-19:16])" noted that some of the Johannine depictions of the power dynamics described in chapters 18 and 19 may offer access to pre-gospel memories. Senior's paper ("It is Better for you that One Man should Die Instead of the People: History and Theology in the Johannine Portrayal of the Passion of Jesus") argued that John's portrait supports the general picture we have in the synoptic gospels of a link between Jesus' activities and crowds. However, John links this more directly with a fear of Roman intervention. In addition, John's portrayal, though permeated by theological material, actually indicates, even more clearly than the synoptics, the threats against Jesus by the authorities. Senior argues that John 11:45-53 in particular has as much historical value as other 'historical' texts in the synoptic tradition.

Textual assessment—using the criteria of authenticity⁸¹ and comparative analysis, will be applied to material found in all strands of the tradition (Mark, Q, M and L) in order to establish early and authentic material. Since the criteria of authenticity will play a significant role in this analysis, it is important to say a little more about them. The criterion of embarrassment asserts that certain traditions, because they could potentially either embarrass the early church or show Jesus in a negative light, are unlikely to have been invented by the early Christ-believing community, giving them a higher claim to historical authenticity.⁸² Multiple attestation asserts that the more sources or forms in which a saying or action of Jesus is attested, the stronger its claim to authenticity. If a tradition is found in both multiple forms and multiple sources as exorcisms are, its credibility is further strengthened.⁸³

⁸¹ I have chosen to use the term “criteria,” although I am aware that some scholars use ‘indices’. Cf. C.A. Evans, “Authenticity Criteria in Life of Jesus Research,” *CSR* 19 (1989) 3-31; Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, vol 1, 167-77; idem, “Criteria: How Do We Decide?” 123-144.

⁸² The most important example of a widely accepted application of this criterion is the baptism of Jesus by John. Although Mark, the earliest writer, mentions this fact with no explanation or editorial comment (1:9), the other Gospels have either subordinated John to Jesus (Matt 3:13-15) or skipped over the event altogether. Luke has John already in prison when Jesus is baptized (3:18-20), and John avoids mentioning Jesus’ baptism at all. One of the main difficulties the early Church had with this event was that it exposed a tension between the idea of Jesus being sinless and the memory within the church that he had, in fact, been baptized by John, whose baptism was associated with repentance and the forgiveness of sins (Mk 1:4). The Jesus tradition also contains other embarrassing information, such as the fact that he was a carpenter (Matthew has changed this to “carpenter’s son”), and that he did not fast, even though the disciples of John apparently did (Mark 2:18-22; Matt 9:14-17; Luke 5:33-39). Thus, the criterion of embarrassment can also act as an antidote to the assumption that the early church simply invented material without any concern for reliability. In other words, the fact that the early Church chose to retain embarrassing material rather than simply invent new, less embarrassing traditions, shows that there was an attempt to remain faithful to the historical essence of Jesus’ life, even when this proved uncomfortable. There are some important limitations to this criterion. Meier (“How Do We Decide,” 126-29) notes two: The first is that there are not enough of these “embarrassing” elements to construct an accurate portrait of the historical Jesus. The second is that material we may assume was embarrassing to the early church may in fact not have been.

⁸³ This does not mean that any tradition that has few attestations should automatically be assumed to be inauthentic. Neither should one that has multiple attestations automatically be assumed to be authentic. However, it does suggest that it was not invented by one of the evangelists and that it is early. See Evans, “Authenticity Criteria,” 8; Meier, “How Do We Decide?” 132-4.

The third criterion, dissimilarity, asserts that material which cannot be clearly derived from either the Judaism of Jesus' lifetime or from the early Church after his lifetime has a greater claim to authenticity. Traditionally, this criterion was used to argue for Jesus' uniqueness. However, it has recently come under criticism and is increasingly seen as problematic.⁸⁴ As a result, dissimilarity will be used very cautiously in this study.

The fourth criterion, known as the criterion of coherence, claims that material within the Jesus tradition which has already been accepted as authentic can help to establish the authenticity of other traditions.⁸⁵ In the case of our study, material on Jesus' exorcisms which has already been established as early can help us to assess other material referring to exorcism. For instance, Jesus' exorcisms generally cohere with and help to explain why he attracted crowds, which was part of the reason he was arrested and executed. Both the crowds he drew and his execution are already established.⁸⁶

As a holy man his sayings and actions will be remembered, and men will follow him to benefit from his holy power, hear his sayings, and imitate his way of life. If his followers begin to think him the Messiah, and if they become so numerous and enthusiastic as to frighten the civil authorities, he will soon be in serious trouble. Thus, the rest of the tradition about Jesus can be understood if we begin with the

⁸⁴ Two problems are especially noteworthy. First, it can create too much of a disconnect between Jesus and his context. For example, since Jesus was in fact a Jew, his life, sayings and behaviours will have reflected this fact, at least to some degree. No person can be entirely divorced from his or her historical context. Thus, the danger exists that we may create a caricature that cuts Jesus off from his Jewish context and the church he influenced, rather than a portrait which accurately reflects his distinctiveness. Second, we do not have a clear sense of what either Judaism or the early Church looked like and so we are limited in our ability to ascertain in every case whether something does or does not reflect either Judaism or Christianity of the first century. As a result, material which may actually be authentic may be discarded too quickly. See discussion Gerd Theissen and Annette Merz, *The Historical Jesus: A Comprehensive Guide* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998), 115-18.

⁸⁵ Meier, "How Do We Decide?" 134-6; Evans (*Jesus and His Contemporaries*, 13) has divided this criterion into two; historical coherence and general coherence and has argued that historical coherence should be the most important of the five criteria.

⁸⁶ So Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 7, 14-15; Smith, *Jesus the Magician*, 16; But, see Meier (*A Marginal Jew*, 2: 623-626), who cautions that this connection should not be pressed, especially given the fact that none of the traditions of Jesus' trial mention either exorcisms or healings as the reason for his arrest or the charges brought against him.

miracles. But the miracles cannot be understood if we begin with a purely didactic tradition.⁸⁷

The fifth criterion, rejection and execution, refers to the fact that certain actions of Jesus must have contributed to his rejection and execution as a perceived threat to Rome.⁸⁸ This criterion is more general and relates to our understanding of the disturbing nature of Jesus' words and actions in the context of first-century Roman Palestine. If we accept the fact that Jesus was executed under Pontius Pilate, for example, and that this was at least partly due to the crowds he attracted, his activities as exorcist and healer were at the very least an "aggravating circumstance"⁸⁹ in his eventual arrest, trial and execution under Pilate.

One of the benefits of using multiple approaches in this task is that it provides an opportunity for testing hypotheses against each other, and thus providing more possibilities for extracting historical information. Our approach will attempt to demonstrate three significant patterns in the gospel record of Jesus' activities as exorcist. First, there is a connection between spirit possession in the individuals Jesus encountered and social disparity, marginality and oppression. When we use the term marginality, we refer to the human experience of existing on the periphery of a society, either socially,

⁸⁷ Smith, *Jesus the Magician*, 16.

⁸⁸ Meier (*A Marginal Jew*, 2: 626-27) notes, it is somewhat surprising that neither healings nor exorcisms are mentioned in the charges against him. The criterion of rejection and execution is similar to the fourth criterion, coherence, in that material which helps to explain (coheres with) Jesus' rejection and execution has a higher likelihood of being authentic; Evans (*Jesus and His Contemporaries*, 223-4) argues that the fifth criterion should be Semitisms and Palestinian background. This criterion is based on assumption that although the Gospels were written in Greek, Jesus more than likely spoke Aramaic. As a result, we may, where we find traces of a Semitic language, postulate Aramaic behind the Greek, and a Palestinian origin. However, caution is necessary when applying this criterion, For one thing, while the presence of Aramaic may indicate Palestinian origin, this does not prove association with Jesus (although, it probably does indicate that the tradition is early). Some of the Gospels (particularly Matthew) were likely written in Syria, and so would naturally reflect a Semitic context, so caution must be exercised.

⁸⁹ I have borrowed this assessment and term from Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, 2: 627-8.

religiously or culturally in relation to the cultural centre or mainstream. Second, cases of spirit possession in the synoptic gospels, and the exorcisms performed by Jesus are reported to have occurred in public locations, either the synagogue or in the open where a crowd has gathered. This is significant because the crowds Jesus drew were one of the reasons the Jewish and Roman authorities became concerned about his movement.

Third, Jesus' exorcisms provoked controversy, both from the Jewish religious authorities and eventually from Herod Antipas, the Roman client ruler. The accusations made against Jesus by his opponents in connection with his exorcisms correspond to those described by sociological and anthropological studies on deviance, whereby those in power attempt to discredit an opponent by applying negative labels. Thus, opposition to Jesus' exorcisms as reported in both Mark and Q in the Beelzebul Controversy is connected to the crowds that formed around Jesus. The negative response from some of the Jewish leadership was partly related to the crowds he drew and partly to the fact that Jesus was operating in a way that challenged the status quo. From the Roman perspective, crowds and those who fomented them threatened the *pax romana*, which was one of the reasons for Jesus' eventual execution.

1.5 Use of Significant Terms

In terms of geographic and ethnic designations, for the general area corresponding to present day Israel and the Palestinian territories, I have chosen to use "Palestine".⁹⁰

⁹⁰ I am aware that the term "Palestine" has the disadvantage of being anachronistic when applied to this period, since the region was only given this name by the Romans in 135 CE. Before this, it was known

Following Cohen, I will use “Judea” when referring to the province rather than the larger geographic area, and “Judean” for those living in that region. When referring to those who live according to the Jewish way of life, corresponding to the way the sources use the term *Ioudaios/Ioudaioi* after the late second century BCE, I will normally use “Jew/Jews”.⁹¹ The term “Judean” will generally be reserved for those actually living in the province of Judea.

as either “Judaea” or “Land of Israel” (see Matt 2:20). The use of “Land of Israel” tends to evoke images of the pre-Roman period, and “Judaea” is problematic because it can easily be confused with the province of Judaea. Although Josephus at times uses the term “Judaea” to refer to the larger geographic area, including Idumea, Judaea, Samaria, Galilee and Perea (*Ant.* 11.173), this can be confusing. Thus, for reasons of clarity and convenience, I have chosen to use “Palestine.” Cf. Shaye J. D. Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness: Boundaries, Varieties, Uncertainties* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 72.

⁹¹ According to this understanding, *Ioudaioi* generally referred to those who lived by a set of ancestral laws and customs and worshipped at Jerusalem (or at least identified with it), whatever their place of origin, as well as the inhabitants of the province of Judea, and Galilee, but not Samaria, since Samaritans worshipped at Mt. Gerizim and followed somewhat different traditions than the Jews. The problem of how to translate this term is complex and is partly related to the fact that the category that we moderns would describe as ‘religion’ did not exist in the ancient world. As a result it becomes problematic to speak of ‘Judaism’ in relation to the *Ioudaioi*, as if it could be identified as a separate category from ethnicity or nationality. While Cohen (*The Beginnings of Jewishness*, 69-106) argues that the shift within Judaism from an ethnos to a religion occurred during the Hasmonean period, Steve Mason (“Jews, Judaeans, Judaizing, Judaism: Problems of Categorization in Ancient History,” *JSJ* 38 [2007]: 457-512) asserts that this shift occurred much later, in the 3rd century CE. Previous to that time, the term *Ioudaioi* carried ethnic rather than religious connotations. Thus, he contends that *Ioudaioi* should be translated as ‘Judaeans’ rather than as ‘Jews’ for the first century. However, Anders Runesson (“Inventing Christian Identity: Paul, Ignatius and Theodosius I,” in *Exploring Early Christian Identity* [ed. Bengt Holmberg; WUNT 226. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008], 59-92) in his response to Mason’s article, notes that the Jews themselves would not have accepted this distinction between ethnos and religion since there were actually more *Ioudaioi* living outside Judea than inside it in the first century. At that time, the *Ioudaioi* were identified with various homelands, languages and ethnic groups, yet remained *Ioudaioi*. In addition, he notes that in antiquity, as today, various terms were used to designate both the geographic location (the province of Judea or the entire area, including Galilee) and *ethnos*, and these terms could be used in different ways. In fact, he notes that modern Jews still do not accept this distinction. It is for this reason that a change of translation to ‘Judeans,’ which no Jews use today, would introduce a separation between ancient and modern Jews, which is unwarranted. The hermeneutics of translation has to take into account both original language and target language (in this case English). If we translate ‘Judeans’ for ancient Jews, we imply that Jews since that time have accepted a distinction between ethnos and land, which they have not. Therefore, we need to use one single term, ‘Jew’ for both modern and ancient Jews. Cf. discussion in Sean Freyne, “Behind the Names: Samaritans, Ioudaioi, Galileans,” in *Text and Artifact in the Religions of Mediterranean Antiquity* (eds. Stephen G. Wilson and Michel Desjardins; Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2000), 389-401; and Philip F. Esler, “Palestinian Judaism in the First Century,” in *Religious Diversity in the Graeco-Roman World. A Survey of Recent Scholarship* (ed., Dan Cohn-Sherbok and John M. Court; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 27-8.

The terms “Galilee/Galileans,” can also be problematic since many Galileans were Jews but also constituted a distinct geographic grouping. Josephus, for instance, includes the Galileans among the *Ioudaioi*, but is careful not to include the Samaritans in this group. Galileans play a large role especially in Josephus’ *Life*, since it focuses almost entirely on his term as commander in Galilee during the Jewish war. Here he often refers to “the Galileans” as residents of smaller villages who did not like their urban counterparts, and who were not citizens of a *polis*.⁹² However, for the sake of simplicity, I have chosen to maintain a geographic definition of “Galilean” referring primarily to those who reside within the borders of the Galilee.

The terms “Hellenistic,” “Hellenism,” and “Hellenization” will be used to refer to the general influence of the Greek culture in the eastern Mediterranean with the understanding that Jews, like other ethnic and religious groups, were acculturated to varying degrees, depending on their wealth, education, location and preferences, and that the influence of Greek culture continued and even accelerated in the eastern part of the Mediterranean during the early Roman period.⁹³ Finally, for designations for historical periods I follow NEAEHL.⁹⁴

⁹² Josephus *Life* 30, 36-42. Steve Mason ed., *Life of Josephus Flavius* (vol. 9 of *Josephus, Translation and Commentary*; ed. Steve Mason; Leiden: Brill, 2001), note 186, p. 38; Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness*, 73; Hørning Jensen (*Herod Antipas*, 89), argues that the ‘*Galilaios*’ should be understood “as patriotic rural inhabitants of Galilee distinct from the inhabitants of the large cities of Galilee with whom tensions became obvious during the war.”

⁹³ Since to be Hellenized literally meant ‘to speak Greek,’ to a large degree the level of Hellenization was related to the amount of Greek education a person received; Philo *Legat.* 147. See Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness*, 132-35; Martin Hengel, *Jews, Greeks and Barbarians: Aspects of the Hellenization of Judaism in the pre-Christian Period* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980), 51-4.

⁹⁴ E. Stern (ed.) *The New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land*. 4 vols. (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1993) vol. 4, p. 1529ff.

Chapter 2: Spirit Possession and Exorcism in the Ancient World

2.1 Introduction

Since the earliest strata of Jesus traditions present Jesus as a healer-exorcist and more generally as a human agent of cosmic power,¹ it is important to situate his activities within the larger Hellenistic and Jewish contexts and in this way attempt to understand how both he and his exorcisms would have been understood by his first-century Jewish and Roman contemporaries. Thus, the focus of this chapter will be on establishing the belief system in the first century Greco-Roman and Jewish world, with the aim of discovering whether a correlation can be found between oppressive political contexts and spirit affliction or spirit possession.

This question will be addressed from six perspectives. First, spirit possession and exorcism will be defined and discussed from the perspective of anthropology and sociology. Second, we will assess briefly the way evil spirits were understood in the ancient world generally. Third, we will examine the link between evil spirits and illness. Fourth, the connection between marginality and dualistic belief systems on the one hand and socio-political oppression on the other will be addressed. Fifth, examples of spirit possession, exorcism, and exorcists in both Jewish and Greco-Roman texts will be evaluated. Finally, we will explore the relationship between spirit possession and the Jewish prophetic tradition.

¹ I have borrowed this term from Mary Mills, *Human Agents of Cosmic Power in Hellenistic Judaism and the Synoptic Tradition* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990), 13.

While spirit possession, exorcism and exorcists are attested in texts from as early as the third millennium BCE in Mesopotamia,² and these were obviously influential in later understandings of spirit possession and exorcism, the focus of this study, the main purpose of which is to bring further clarity to the historical figure of Jesus and his exorcisms within the social, political and religious context of first-century Jewish Palestine, will be on material written from approximately the 3rd century BCE to the 2nd century CE and on sources originating from either Palestine or its environs. In terms of cultural and religious influences, it will be important to focus primarily on Greco-Roman and Jewish texts.

2.2 Sociological and Anthropological Insights into Spirit Possession

From an anthropological perspective, spirit possession is a neutral term describing a physiological and psychological expression of a broader set of phenomena known as altered states of consciousness (hereafter ASCs).³ Numerous studies have demonstrated the universal aspect of both ASCs and spirit possession.⁴ For spirit possession to exist in a

² See Sorensen, *Possession and Exorcism*, 18-29; Douglas L. Penney and Michael O. Wise, “By the Power of Beelzebul: An Aramaic Incantation Formula from Qumran,” *JBL* 113/4 (1994): 627-50.

³ ASCs are described by Vincent Crapanzano (“Spirit Possession,” in *Encyclopedia of Religion*, vol. 13 (Ed. Lindsay Jones; [Detroit: Thomson/Gale, 2005], 8687-8694) as “any mental state subjectively recognized or objectively observed as a significant deviation from ‘normal waking consciousness’”; similarly, Crapanzano, (ed.), *Case Studies*, 8), and Lewis (*Ecstatic Religion*, 40) have defined spirit possession as a widely distributed manifestation of altered states of consciousness.

⁴ Erika Bourguignon (*Religion, Altered States of Consciousness and Social Change* [ed. Erika Bourguignon; Columbus, OH.: Ohio State University Press, 1973], 9-24. See esp. tables, p. 10, 16, 18; idem, “World Distribution and Patterns of Possession States,” in *Trance and Possession States* [ed. Raymond Prince; Montreal: Bucke (R.M.) Memorial Society, 1968] 3-32) has demonstrated that 92% of societies exhibit some form of ASCs, and fully 52% of these displayed evidence of spirit possession, including cultures of the Middle East and Mediterranean area. Crapanzano (*Case Studies*, 8) suggests that ASCs can involve alterations in concentration, attention, memory and judgment, perception of time, body image, emotional expression and the loss of control. Cf. Felicitas Goodman, *Ecstasy, Ritual and Alternate Reality: Religion in a Pluralistic World* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), 43; idem, “Experimental Induction of Altered States of Consciousness,” Paper presented to the 85th Annual Meeting

society there must be both a belief in spirits, and a belief that the boundaries between the human and the spiritual are permeable to these entities and can be penetrated by them.⁵

The fact that these kinds of beliefs were common in the ancient world is clear from the amount of evidence throughout the ancient Near East and Mediterranean area of curse tablets, binding spells and incantation bowls from various dates and locations, which were used to put spells on people and to offer protection from those who invoked these spells or curses.⁶

Spirit possession will generally be suspected when an individual's behaviour, voice or personality is thought to be temporarily or permanently altered, and when the spirit is thought to speak through the person while the self remains in abeyance.⁷ The nature of the force understood to possess an individual will depend on the particular

of the Ohio Academy of Science, Miami University, Oxford, Ohio, April 23, 1976 and in *Ecstasy, Ritual and Alternate Reality*, 37-9; Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion*, 33-58.

⁵ Bourguignon (*Possession*, 7) has observed that one can only speak of possession when a culture understands its experiences in this way, since it reflects the worldview of a society and thus helps to interpret behaviour; Lewis (*Ecstatic Religion*, 40) contrasts spirit possession with shamanism, which he argues is associated with the absence of the subject's soul. This understanding is very different from the view in western societies that equates spirit possession with mental illness and sees, for example, multiple personality disorder as a projection outward of internal problems. In pre-modern and non-western cultures, spirit possession is viewed as the entering in from the outside of a foreign agent; cf. Crapanzano, "Introduction," *Case Studies*, 12-13;

⁶ See, e.g., John Gager, ed. *Curse Tablets and Binding Spells from the Ancient World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 3-30.

⁷ The experience of being possessed is described in several ways including being worn, mounted, ridden, pounced upon, played (as one would an instrument) or entered. Sometimes possession may take the form of a relationship between the spirit and their human host, such as friendship or marriage. The following studies discuss the different forms spirit possession may take: Erika Bourguignon, "Introduction," in *Religion, Altered States of Consciousness and Social Change*, 3-35, 12-13; idem, "Suffering and Healing, Subordination and Power: Women and Possession Trance," *Ethos* 32 4 (2004): 557-74; idem, *Possession*, 23-4; Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion*, 35, 52-55; Crapanzano, "Introduction," *Case Studies*, 9; idem, "Spirit Possession," 8687-8694; Rothenberg, *Spirits of Palestine*, 2, 35; Mary Keller, *The Hammer and the Flute: Women, Power and Spirit Possession* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 78.

cultural context, and can be identified with ancestors, divinities, ghosts or spirits of foreign origin.⁸ In the ancient world, it seems that all of these were possibilities.

Spirit possession can refer to a spectrum of experiences in which the person involved negotiates with or is overcome by a force such as an ancestor, deity, or spirit that employs the human body to be its vehicle for communicating to human communities.⁹

In terms of the possible societal responses to spirit possession, Erika Bourguignon has identified three. In the first, possession may be welcomed, and may even be voluntarily initiated, and spirits are generally accommodated rather than expelled. In contemporary Haiti, for instance, among members of the Voodoo cult, spirits are seen as powerful allies that offer advice, curing, or magic.¹⁰ Similarly, in the New Testament, we find positive references to members of the early church being “filled with the Holy Spirit.”¹¹ Although the experiences of the early church have not generally been understood as a form of spirit possession, from an anthropological perspective, this is what is occurring.¹² In other words, the experience of the first Christ-believers, which are often described as “speaking in tongues”, can also be understood as a form of spirit possession.

In the second type of response, spirit possession is evaluated negatively and treatment generally involves attempts to expel the invading spirit. This is the perspective described in reports of Jesus’ exorcisms, where spirits are assumed to be harmful and are

⁸ Janice Boddy, “Spirit Possession Revisited: Beyond Instrumentality,” in *Ann Rev Anth* 23 (1994): 407-34, 407; Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion*, 40; Bourguignon, *Possession*, 7; Arthur Kleinman, *Patients and Healers in the Context of Culture: An Exploration of the Borderland Between Anthropology, Medicine and Psychiatry* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 217.

⁹ Crapanzano, “Spirit Possession,” 8694.

¹⁰ Bourguignon, *Possession*, 24.

¹¹ Among early Christ believers possession could be a positive experience when the spirit was “holy.” Some groups in the early church associated possession by or coming upon of the Holy Spirit with baptism. See, for example, 1 Cor 6:11; 12:13; 2 Cor 1:21-22; Acts 2:13-15, 38; 2 Pet 1:21.

¹² So Bourguignon, *Possession*, 55-8.

removed by exorcism. The third option combines the two previous ones. In this case, possession may initially be viewed negatively, but if the spirit can be brought under control, both the individual and the spirit will be accommodated. In these cases, a period of illness or withdrawal may be the first indication of spirit possession, and in some individuals, this initial experience may develop into the ability to control the spirits, and to exorcise them from others.¹³ As we will see in chapter 4, this is very likely the kind of experience which is attributed to Jesus during his baptism and trials.

Whether a particular instance of possession is understood to be malevolent or benevolent will depend on the circumstances of the case, including the social status of the individual, his or her relationship to others in the community—especially those in power—and whether the possession is seen to be potentially beneficial to the community as a whole.¹⁴ Sorensen has argued convincingly that this was also the case in the Greco-Roman world; that is, spirit possession was viewed positively when it was seen to benefit the community, whereas spirits or possessions seen as hostile were normally treated by

¹³ Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion*, 25, 59-62; Crapanzano, “Introduction,” *Case Studies*, 14-16; Rothenberg, *Spirits of Palestine*, 38, 44; Colleen Ward, “Possession and Exorcism: Psychopathology and Psychotherapy in a Magico-Religious Context,” in *Altered States of Consciousness and Mental Health: A Cross-Cultural Perspective* (ed. Colleen A. Ward; Newbury Park, Ca.: Sage Publications, 1989), 125-44; Alice Morton, “*Dawit*: Competition and Integration in an Ethiopian Wuqabi Cult Group,” in Crapanzano, *Case Studies*, 193-233; Saunders, “Variants in Zar Experience,” 177; Bourguignon, *Possession*, 7; Nichter, “Idioms of Distress,” 379-408; Lawrence E. Sullivan, “Healing,” vol. 5 in *Encyclopedia of Religion*. 2^d ed. 15 vols, 2d. vol. 5, (ed. Lyndsay Jones; Detroit: Thomson/Gale, 2005), 226-34; Andras Zemplini, “From Symptom to Sacrifice: The Story of Khady Fall,” in Crapanzano, *Case Studies*, 103-4, 107, 109, 114-15, 118-19, 126; Bourguignon, *Possession*, 9, 34. Cf. Douglas (*Natural Symbols*, 96-7) who demonstrates a correlation between highly structured societies and spirit possession that is initially viewed as dangerous, but can become positive in its secondary phase, particularly if it produces specialists who are able to deal with the dangers they themselves have overcome.

¹⁴ Lewis (*Ecstatic Religion*, 27, 105-113) argues that there is a link between the character of the possessing spirit, the way the possession is evaluated, and the status of the possessed individual.

exorcism.¹⁵ Often within a given society, both a negative and a positive assessment will coexist.

Thus, in the case of first-century Galilee, Bourguignon's third type of society can be applied. That is, it appears that a belief in both malevolent and benevolent spirit possession was present, and that the response to possession varied. From a social perspective, Jesus' activities as exorcist were not regarded positively by all. While many welcomed his healings and exorcisms, accusations of malevolent demon possession were also leveled against him.¹⁶ In addition, it is possible that Jesus, like many healers, initially experienced involuntary spirit possession at his baptism, and during his trials, but having successfully brought the spirit(s) under control, went on to function as a healer and exorcist. This brings us to the distinction between spirit possession and demon possession.

'Spirit possession' is a category that encompasses demonic possession, but includes many other things besides. Demon possession is the form of spirit possession that a particular society regards as pathological, an illness that needs to be dealt with. But spirit possession can also include phenomena that particular societies evaluate positively, including shamanism (or more generally, spirit control) and spirit mediumship. In connexion with the New Testament the potential interest of spirit possession extends beyond demonic possession into fields such as glossolalia [speaking in tongues], inspirited prophecy and the ability to heal and work miracles.¹⁷

Thus, while we acknowledge the broader, more neutral definition of spirit possession cited above, as well as the presence of both malevolent and benevolent possession within first-century Palestinian society, in this study we will be focussing on cases presented in the NT gospels as malevolent or demonic possession, where spirit possession and exorcism

¹⁵ Sorensen, *Possession and Exorcism*, 75-99.

¹⁶ See pp. 175-81.

¹⁷ Eve, *Jewish Context*, 368.

represented the battle between the cosmic forces of good and evil fought in the human body.¹⁸

It is important then to define what we mean by exorcism. To exorcise (Greek, ἐξορκίζω) is to “adjure, compel, or put someone under oath”. According to the *Encyclopaedia of Religion*, exorcism “implies the driving out of evil powers or spirits by solemn adjuration or the performance of rituals.”¹⁹ It typically involves a combination of several of the following components: 1) a description of the nature of the condition; 2) recognition of the exorcist by the demon; 3) addressing the demon directly; 4) forcing the spirit to identify itself either by name, character, or by the manner in which it can be expelled;²⁰ 5) the use of some kind of spell or incantation, which often includes invoking the name of a divinity or special words (this part of the ritual sometimes includes the use of herbs, roots, smoke or music);²¹ 6) verbally ordering the demon or spirit to come out; and 7) a demonstration or proof that the demon has left; and 8) a description of the audience’s response.²² Campbell Bonner has suggested that an exorcism will be most effective when the exorcist compels the demon to do three things: 1) respond verbally to

¹⁸ Janowitz, *Magic in the Roman World*, 46.

¹⁹ Geoffrey Parrinder, “Exorcism,” in *Encyclopedia of Religion*, vol. 3, 15 vols. (ed. Lindsay Jones; Detroit: Thomson/Gale, 2005), 225-33.

²⁰ There may be negotiations with the possessing spirit that involve asking about the identity and number of spirits involved, followed by a request for the spirit(s) to leave and to give a sign as confirmation. In some cases, the spirit may even reveal to the exorcist the best way in which to expel it. See, e.g., Kleinman, *Patients and Healers*, 226-7; Obeyesekere, “Psychocultural Exegesis,” 272-76; Parrinder, “Exorcism,” 226; Sullivan, “Healing,” 232.

²¹ The use of herbs, oil, mud, roots, smoke, salt, water, strong smells or sounds, or magical words thought to possess special powers to draw out the spirits are understood to be effective against evil spirits cross-culturally. See Sullivan, “Healing,” 232; Parrinder, “Exorcism,” 230-33.

²² As we will see, all of these elements are found in Jesus’ exorcisms, although they do not all occur in every exorcism. They are also found in exorcisms in Greco-Roman texts. Cf. Bultmann, *History of the Synoptic Tradition*, 210.

the exorcist, 2) reveal his name or nature and the kind of trouble he causes, 3) provide proof of his departure.²³

Both spirit possession and exorcism are social events that often occur in the public arena and address concerns expressed by the possessed individual.²⁴ Cross-cultural anthropological studies have demonstrated that the demonic is also typically associated with what is marginal or “other” either geographically ethnically, or religiously,²⁵ and that negative labelling is generally used to define boundaries between cultural and religious identities, particularly within a context of oppression and stress.²⁶ For instance, the label “magician” is often used in a polemical way, is associated with the demonic, and is meant to discredit a person viewed as either a competitor or an enemy.²⁷ As Jonathan Smith has observed:

The demonic is a relational or labeling term which occurs only in certain culturally stipulated situations and is part of a complex system of boundaries and limits. In certain situations, the breaking of limits is creative; in others, it is perceived as leading to chaos. In some situations the fixing of boundaries is positive; in others, it leads to repression. A given society at a given moment may cherish the extraordinary at its center where it feels most secure and resist the anomalous at its borders, at those peripheral areas where it feels least secure and most vulnerable. A given society at a given time may value those who are strong enough to leave the ‘center’ and organize (or do battle with) the peripheral powers; at another time, such figures are considered

²³ Campbell Bonner, “The Technique of Exorcism,” *HTR* 36 (1943): 39-49.

²⁴ Sullivan, “Healing,” 232; Kleinman, *Patients and Healers*, 239; but see Rothenberg (*Spirits of Palestine*, 39), who has observed that among Palestinians in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, treatment is private rather than public and is not dramatic.

²⁵ Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion*, 27, 30, 78, 91, 98, 104; Rothenberg, *Spirits of Palestine*, 35, 38-39, 46; Clive Kessler, “Conflict and Sovereignty in Kelantanese Malay Spirit Séances,” in *Case Studies in Spirit Possession* (ed. Vincent Crapanzano; New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1977), 295-331; Levy, Mageo and Howard, “Gods, Spirits and History,” 11-27; Bourguignon, “Suffering and Healing,” 557, 564; Crapanzano, “Mohammed and Dawia,” 168; Boddy, “Spirit Possession Revisited,” 419.

²⁶ Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion*, 27, 30, 78, 91, 98, 104; Boddy, “Spirit Possession Revisited,” 407; Kessler, “Conflict and Sovereignty,” 295-331; Levy, Mageo and Howard, “Gods, Spirits and History,” 11-27.

²⁷ An example of this is the magic performed by Moses and Aaron and the Egyptian diviners (see Ex 7:8-22). While Moses’ powers are assumed to be legitimate and to originate from Yahweh, the Egyptian practitioners are called magicians. See also Cotter, *Miracles in Greco-Roman Antiquity*, 75; Janowitz, *Magic in the Roman World*, 28-31; Mills, *Human Agents of Cosmic Power*, 21-3.

to be polluted, dangerous or guilty of a sort of hybris. A given society at a given moment may conceive of law and order as a bulwark against the demonic; at another time, it may perceive law and order as a repressive imposition of the demonic.²⁸

Smith's identification of the relationship between a society's tolerance of marginality and its sense of safety or vulnerability echoes Mary Douglas' observations that pollution and danger are associated with crossing cultural and religious boundaries. In her study *Purity and Danger*, Douglas asserts that dangers thought to be present in the larger society are then reproduced in the human body on a smaller scale, and she asserts that all margins are dangerous since their shifting alters the shape of experience.²⁹

all margins are dangerous. If they are pulled this way or that the shape of fundamental experience is altered. Any structure of ideas is vulnerable at its margins. We should expect the orifices of the body to symbolize its especially vulnerable points. Any structure of ideas is vulnerable at its margins.³⁰

In *Natural Symbols*, she demonstrates this connection through the use of two criteria, "grid" and "group". "Grid" refers to the rules by which individuals relate to one another within a society, and "group" to the amount of influence the larger group has on the behaviour of the individual.³¹ The relative strength of grid and group in relation to one another corresponds to the level of order and constraint in social relations.³² The following characteristics correspond with societies reflecting both strong group and grid: 1) a strong sense of cultural, religious and social boundaries which are reflected in a view of the inside of the body as positive, but vulnerable to attack from outside forces. In this

²⁸ Jonathan Z. Smith, "Towards Interpreting Demonic Powers in Hellenistic and Roman Antiquity," *ANRW* 16.1: 425-39.

²⁹ See Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* vol. 2 of *Mary Douglas Collected Works* (London: Routledge, 2003), 114-39.

³⁰ Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, 121.

³¹ *Natural Symbols: Explorations in Cosmology* vol. 3 of *Mary Douglas Collected Works* (London: Routledge, 2003), viii-ix, 73-81, 99-105; see also charts, pp. 27-9; 35, 59-60, 87, 96, 105, 141-42.

³² Douglas, *Natural Symbols*, viii.

case, the body's orifices must then be carefully guarded from external invasion.³³ In first-century Jewish Galilee, purity regulations served as a grid or boundary that distinguished between those "outside" and those "inside" the group for both the larger Jewish population and the individual; 2) socialization for conformity; 3) a highly structured and stratified society with clearly defined social roles; 4) subordination of the personal to the public; 5) a dualistic belief system which includes the assertion that the cosmos is made up of both malevolent and benevolent forces; 6) the view that sin involves ritual or social transgression rather than personal intention; and 7) a negative assessment of loss of control as would be expressed in trance or spirit possession.³⁴

Douglas also sees a correlation between highly structured societies and the perception, at least initially, that spirit possession is dangerous, but can produce specialists in its secondary phase who are able to deal with the dangers they themselves have overcome.³⁵ Based on Douglas's findings, first-century Palestine would be a society high in both grid and group.³⁶ The opposite would be a culture which is low in both group and grid, and would therefore have few social constraints and would allow for much more individual autonomy.

³³ This also provides an explanation for the views expressed in Leviticus around the perceived danger of bodily fluids and of certain skin conditions (see esp. Lev 13-14), and in the gospels of the view that some kinds of diseases, such as leprosy rendered one "unclean" (see, e.g., Mark 1:40-42//Matt 8:1-3). What is described in the NT as leprosy is now thought to have been some kind of psoriasis or eczema rather than leprosy [Hansen's disease], since leprosy has very rarely been found in the bones of persons from the ancient Near East. For further discussion of this issue see Robert L. Webb, "Jesus Heals a Leper: Mark 1:40-45 and *Egerton Gospel* 35-47," *JSHJ* 4.2 (2006): 177-202, esp. 184-7.

³⁴ Douglas, *Natural Symbols*, viii-ix, 73-81, 99-105; See also charts, pp. 27-9; 35, 59-60, 87, 96, 105, 141-42.

³⁵ Douglas, *Natural Symbols*, 96-7; cf. discussion, pp. 41-2.

³⁶ Douglas, *Natural Symbols*, 73-4; 77-9.

In a group high in group and grid, the margins between the bounded group and the larger society (i.e., between the Jewish community and the broader Greco-Roman culture) are seen as dangerous and threatening. The necessary response to this is socialization for conformity along with a negative assessment of the loss of conscious control, which would challenge these boundaries. Thus, the experiences of spirit possession and Jesus' exorcisms which were occurring at the margins of Galilean society, would have challenged deeply held views about how Jewish Galileans could maintain cultural, religious and social separation from their gentile neighbours. How one lived out Torah within this context then was embedded in their political struggle against foreign domination.³⁷

It would be impossible for the leaders of an occupied but still resisting nation to adopt an effervescent [i.e. ecstatic] form of religion. To expect them to stop preaching a stern sexual morality, vigilant control of bodily boundaries, and a corresponding religious cult would be asking them to give up the political struggle.³⁸

At the same time, Douglas notes that within any dominant culture, sub-groups existing at the margins may hold views different from and marginal to the central position. Persons or groups at the periphery may feel less constrained by the dominant values of their society and thus be freer to hold and express views that may not be accepted at the centre. In the case of spirit possession, this means that there may have been groups within first-century Palestinian society which did not conform to the belief at the centre of Jewish society that loss of control was dangerous.³⁹

³⁷ See Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, 14, 114-25.

³⁸ Douglas, *Natural Symbols*, 82.

³⁹ Douglas, *Natural Symbols*, 83-4; cf. Lewis (*Ecstatic Religion*, 1-31), who has argued that central and peripheral cults are often present within the same society and that there is a correlation between social location and the type of spirits that possess people.

This would explain, in part, why Jesus' actions as an exorcist operating at the margins of society, were seen by the Jewish leadership as a threat. The Jewish population of Palestine already felt vulnerable under Roman rule. Thus, Jesus' work at the periphery of society, precisely where the Jews felt the least secure in relation to Roman power, may have brought resistance from the Jewish leadership because it was clear that his words and activities threatened their already tenuous position. The seriousness of this threat is indicated by John's account of the words spoken by some of the chief priests and Pharisees in an emergency meeting of the Sanhedrin: "What are we to do? This man is performing many signs. If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and destroy both our holy place [i.e. temple] and our nation"⁴⁰

The association of evil with what is marginal is also evident in Greco-Roman texts from the first through the third centuries. For example, in a report by Philostratus, Apollonius (an itinerant sage and exorcist)⁴¹ blames a plague ravaging the city of Ephesus on a demon, which he claims is disguised as an old and destitute visitor to the city. He thus instructs the crowd to stone the man.⁴² We will discuss Apollonius' role as exorcist in more detail below. My interest here is to note the connection in this story between the man's "otherness," the plague, and the demonic. In the account, Apollonius saves the city of Ephesus from plague by attaching the source of the evil behind it to an outsider and labeling him as demonic. This was a common tactic in the ancient world as is reflected in

⁴⁰ John 11:47-48.

⁴¹ We will say more about Apollonius under "Exorcists and Exorcisms".

⁴² Philostratus, *Life* 4.10.

Celsus' (177 CE) accusation that Jesus was a γόης, a sorcerer or magician.⁴³ That is, to label someone a magician was to place them in the category of a social deviant.

The connection between spirit possession and broader events is also assumed in an account found in Plutarch (45-125 CE), which provides evidence roughly contemporary with Jesus' lifetime. In the story, a man named Nicias is being watched because he has tried to induce the citizens of the city of Engyium (Macedonia) to go over to the Romans. He is in the middle of a speech when

[he] suddenly threw himself upon the ground, and after a little while, amid the silence and consternation which naturally prevailed, lifted his head, turned it about, and spoke in a low and trembling voice, little by little raising and sharpening its tones. And when he saw the whole audience struck dumb with horror, he tore off his mantle, rent his tunic, an leaping up half naked, ran towards the exit from the theatre, crying out that he was pursued by the mothers. No man venturing to lay hands on him or even to come in his way, out of superstitious fear, but all avoiding him, he ran out to the gate of the city, freely using all the cries and gestures that would become a man possessed (δαιμονώντι) and crazed.⁴⁴

The fact that Nicias was being watched by city officials indicates political tension. His decision to tear off his clothes, and his cries and gestures, are connected by Plutarch with madness and spirit possession. The phrase *freely using all the cries and gestures that would become a man possessed (δαιμονώντι)* suggests that the behavior of a person thought to be possessed by demons was commonly understood among Plutarch's readers (i.e. crying out, speaking in a strange voice, and taking off one's clothes). Of most importance for our study is that the symptoms of demon possession are implicitly linked to political events. The angry crowd has assembled in response to Nicias' attempts to shift the political alliances of the city to Rome, and his behavior (as one possessed) provides the escape valve needed to remove him from political danger.

⁴³ Origen, *Cels.* 1.28; 1.71

⁴⁴ Plutarch, *Lives: Marcellus* 20.5.

These two examples from the first and second century illustrate the difficulty of attempting to distinguish between the terms “miracle” and “magic,” in relation to either spirit possession or exorcism. As a result, the terms will be used sparingly in this study. These distinctions usually reflect the social perspective of the one doing the labeling. So, “magician,” “magic,” and “demon” are normally attributed to those persons and activities not sanctioned by the central religious structures of a society, and miracle is associated with those who are considered legitimate by these same standards. This is why Jesus was acclaimed a miracle worker by his supporters and was accused of being mad and possessed by a demon by his opponents in Mark, Q and John. It is also the reason why later opponents of Christianity, such as Celsus (177 CE), accused Jesus of being a magician and Christ-believers of reciting the names of demons in their incantations, and why Origen is so insistent that the power comes not from magic or from demons but is divine, and comes from the name of Jesus.⁴⁵

Whether a person is labeled a magician or miracle worker depends, then, on whether his or her action is considered legitimate or illegitimate *vis-à-vis* the accepted norms of the society or the particular religious perspective of the writer. John Gager has noted that although this kind of material has received little attention, due largely to the aristocratic biases of both ancient writers and modern scholars, there was a widespread belief in the power of both curses and spells in the ancient world and this belief crossed social, cultural, religious, geographical and linguistic barriers.⁴⁶

The demarcation of magic and miracle (or religion) involves social and cultural judgments, on the part of both ancients and moderns. This does not necessarily mean

⁴⁵ See Origen, *Cels.* 1.6; 1.24-25, 28, 38, 71.

⁴⁶ Gager, *Curse Tablets and Binding Spells*, 243-5.

there are no “objective” criteria, i.e. canons mutually agreed upon between social groupings or at least within such groupings. It does mean that attention to the social and cultural conditioning of the terminology and the way its referents are viewed cannot be ignored, and indeed, deserve more systematic treatment than has usually been given them.⁴⁷

There is enough evidence from both anthropological and sociological studies to demonstrate that such distinctions are artificial and ambiguous as well as misleading, as many biblical scholars have noted.⁴⁸ Although a number of biblical scholars have sought to distinguish miracle from magic, in attempting to clarify Jesus’ role as healer and exorcist, this has proved problematic. For example, Meier argues that Jesus’ healings were miracles,⁴⁹ while Smith and Crossan have chosen to use the term “magician” to describe Jesus.⁵⁰

There are problems with both evaluations. In the first case, the problem lies in arguing for Jesus’ uniqueness, and therefore not applying the same standards of social scientific criticism to his activities as those applied to other healers or exorcists. In the case

⁴⁷ Harold Remus, *Pagan-Christian Conflict Over Miracles in the Second Century* (Cambridge, MA.: Philadelphia Patristic Foundation, 1983), 54.

⁴⁸ David Aune, “Magic in Early Christianity.” *ANRW* 11.23.2 (1989): 1507-57 (esp. 1510-11); Janowitz, *Magic in the Roman World*, 175-200; Susan Garrett, *The Demise of the Devil: Magic and the Demonic in Luke’s Writings* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), 11-36; Herald Remus, “‘Magic,’ Method, Madness,” in *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion* 11 (Koninklijke: Brill; NV: Leiden, 1999), 258-98. Cf. E. E. Evans Pritchard, *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic among the Azande* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1937); Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion*, 105-113; Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, 58-72; Goodman, *Ecstasy, Ritual, and Alternate Reality*, 3-5.

⁴⁹ So, Meyer, *The Aims of Jesus*, 158; and Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, 2: 538-52 who argue that Jesus’ activities should be called miracles and should be distinguished from the magical activities of others.

⁵⁰ Smith, *Jesus the Magician*, 81-93; Crossan, *The Historical Jesus*, 137-67; 303-32. One of the problems with Smith’s assessment of Jesus is that he uses evidence that is at least a century later than Jesus’ lifetime and so may well represent later polemical arguments between Christ believers and their detractors. I agree with Meier (*A Marginal Jew*, 2: 539) that calling Jesus a magician, becomes problematic because the polemical rather than the positive interpretation is intimated, even when attempts are made to stress the neutral nature of the term ‘magic’. However, the answer is not to call Jesus’ healings ‘miracles’ in contrast to other non-Christian or non-Jewish healers. As David Aune (“Magic in Early Christianity, 1539) observes, Jesus was not a magician even though his exorcisms contain elements common with those of Greco-Roman magic. From a social perspective, his exorcisms can be understood as magical, but only in the sense that they were accomplished in a context of social deviance.

of Crossan and Smith, the issue is that the terms “magic” and “magician” do not capture the full range of Jesus’ activities as healer and exorcist, let alone his other activities and sayings.

So, while Smith and Crossan are correct in identifying Jesus as someone whose healings and exorcisms provoked controversy, and as a result was labeled a magician by some of his opponents, the term “exorcist” is preferable because it is descriptive rather than polemical, is found in the references themselves, and is specific to what we will be analyzing. As a result, in this study, I will use more specific and descriptive terms such as “spirit possession,” “exorcism,” and “healing” which are less closely associated with polemical or apologetic positions.

2.3 Evil Spirits and Spirit Possession in the Ancient World

Throughout the ancient world, belief in supernatural forces that could cause both good and evil was assumed, and is evident in both Greco-Roman and Jewish writings.⁵¹ In fact, this worldview has been common to virtually all non-industrialized cultures up to the modern period, and is still evident today, particularly but not only, in non-western cultures.⁵² During the late Hellenistic (167-37 BCE) and early Roman period (37 BCE-70 CE), the focus of our study, the universe was seen as a many-layered cosmos, populated by

⁵¹ See Diogenes Laertius, *Vit Philos.* 7. 151; Pythagoras, *The Lives of Eminent Philosophers* 8.32; Plutarch, *Def. Orac.* 417B; *1 En.* 15:11; 1QS 3.13-4.1. Cf. discussion of this issue in Naomi Janowitz, *Magic in the Roman World: Pagans, Jews and Christians* (London: Routledge, 2001), 28-31; Sorenson, *Possession and Exorcism*, 46; Penney and Wise, “By the Power of Beelzebub,” 627-29.

⁵² Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion*; Bourguignon, *Possession*; Crapanzano, (ed.) *Case Studies*; Rothenberg, *Spirits of Palestine*; Winkelmann, “Magico-Religious’ Healers,”; Geoffrey Parrinder, “Exorcism,” in *Encyclopedia of Religion*. 2d ed. 15 vols. Edited by Lindsay Jones. Detroit: Thomson/Gale, 2005), 225-33.

supernatural beings (angels and demons).⁵³ Among these were τὰ δαιμόνια (demons), spiritual entities that were thought to be endowed with either good or evil natures, and to function as intermediaries between the human and divine realms.⁵⁴

I believe Plato when he asserts that there are certain divine powers holding a position and possessing a character mid-way between gods and men, and that all divination and the miracles of magicians are controlled by them.⁵⁵

Demons were also thought to possess human characteristics such as “gender, personalities, special interests and abilities,” and to exhibit human passions.⁵⁶ Within Greco-Roman literature, they are described as acting in both helpful and harmful ways towards human beings and playing a central role in the performance of miracles or magic.⁵⁷

The whole air is full of souls which are called genii [*daimones*] or heroes; these are they who send men dreams and signs of future disease and health, and not to men alone, but to sheep also and cattle as well; and it is to them that purifications and lustrations, all divination, omens and the like, have reference.⁵⁸

⁵³ Janowitz, *Magic in the Roman World*, 28-31.

⁵⁴ See, e.g., Plato (*Symp.* 202d-203) who asserts that every demon is between a god and a mortal; cf. Philo, *Giants* 7-8, 16. There is a range of understanding in Greek writings regarding the nature of δαιμόνια. They are described at times as the souls of dead persons, as heroes that watch over human beings (Diogenes Laertius, [*Vit Philos.* 7. 151] describes this as the stoic view), or as muses. They could also be seen as household gods. They appear to form a category of being somewhere between the human and divine which could at times intervene on behalf of persons or at other times cause them trouble, depending on their character or the moral character of their intended human target. Frederick E. Brenk, SJ, “In the Light of the Moon: Demonology in the Early Imperial Period,” *ANRW* 16.3: 2068-2145; Wendy Cotter, *Miracles in Greco-Roman Antiquity: A Sourcebook* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 76; Janowitz, *Magic in the Roman World*, 27-28; Mills, *Human Agents of Cosmic Power*, 13-14; Sorensen, *Possession and Exorcism*, 80-95.

⁵⁵ Apuleius (123-190 CE), *Apol.* 43.

⁵⁶ So Janowitz, *Magic in the Roman World*, 34-5.

⁵⁷ As L. T. Stuckenbruck (“Pleas for Deliverance from the Demonic in Early Jewish Texts,” in *Studies in Jewish Prayer* JSSS 17 [ed. Robert Hayward and Brad Emby; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005], 55-73) notes in relation to Jewish prayers for deliverance in the Second Temple period, “human and spiritual beings share social space”; Huston Smith (*Forgotten Truth: The Primordial Tradition* [New York: Harper & Row, 1976], 43-6, 2-20) argues that the modern scientific perspective of the world is actually limiting because it perceives and studies reality as existing only on the physical plane. In contrast, the ancient view was that the spiritual reality was a very real part of human existence.

⁵⁸ Diogenes Laertius (Dates are uncertain, but are estimated to be circa 250 CE), *Vit. Philos.* 8.32.

While the more perfect souls might attain divine status, others, unable to control their lower natures, might pass into a more negative category of being, one that had evil motivations and could be potentially harmful to human beings.⁵⁹

For just as among men, so also among the demigods [*daimones*], there are different degrees of excellence, and in some there is a weak and dim remainder of the emotional and irrational, a survival, as it were, while in others this is excessive and hard to stifle.⁶⁰

In fact, most of the representations of demons in the Homeric material, particularly in the *Odyssey*, are negative.⁶¹ However, they could also function as muses who inspired creativity in writers or artists or prophetic utterances.⁶² The notion that evil spirits might take possession of human beings appears to have developed during the second temple period within Judaism, along with the corresponding shift from monism to dualism.⁶³ In monism both good and evil are attributed to one divine source, while in dualism, the universe is understood to be divided into two opposing principles, good, which is associated with God, and evil, which is linked with a supernatural opponent. In Judaism

⁵⁹ Plutarch, *Def. Orac.* 415B-415C; 415E-F; 417B.

⁶⁰ Plutarch, *Def. Orac.* 417B.

⁶¹ Brenk (“In the Light of the Moon,” 2073-4, 2077-79) notes that 24 out of 30 cases where *daimon* is used in the Homeric corpus are associated with evil, although they are also associated with inspiration at times.

⁶² Philo describes these kinds of experiences for himself and also attributes them to both Moses and Abraham. See Philo, *Mig.* 34-35 on Philo’s own experience. In regard to the oracles communicated through Moses to the Israelite people, he notes (Philo, *Vit Mos.* 2.188) that Moses was “possessed by God and carried away out of himself” (Μωυσέως ἐπιθειάσαντος καὶ ἔξ αὐτοῦ κατασχεθέντος). In describing Abraham’s experience (Philo, *Her.* 258) of the divine in Genesis 15, he observes that an ecstasy fell on him (ἔκστασις ἐπέπεσεν τῷ Ἀβραάμ).

⁶³ In Judaism, this shift begins to appear with *1 Enoch* and *Jubilees* the shift is has moved further. This is evident from the way particular events described earlier in Genesis and Exodus are reinterpreted in *Jubilees*. For example, while Exodus attributes the hardening of Pharaoh’s heart and the slaying of the first-born sons of the Egyptians to God, *Jubilees* (49:2) ascribes these actions to Mastema, the leader of the demons. Similarly, in *Jubilees*, it is Mastema rather than God who is responsible for Abraham nearly sacrificing his son, Isaac (17:16). Although Mastema is understood to be acting under God’s orders, he is nevertheless the one who carries out the actions. In the New Testament gospel accounts (last third of the 1st c.) the satanic figure has become the opponent of God. See Brenk (“In the Light of the Moon,” 2088-2091), who attributes this shift at least partly to Plato’s ideas, which increasingly link the *daimones* with the human soul; cf. Stuckenbruck, “Pleas for Deliverance,” 55, 73.

by the late Second Temple period, and also within Christianity, this opponent was often Satan, but there were others as well. In Hebrew, the word for demon, *מַזְיִק* comes from the root *נזק* meaning to hurt, injure or damage.⁶⁴ Similarly, the Hebrew/Aramaic root *סָטָן* (satan) means to be hostile to, to hinder, or to accuse.⁶⁵

2.4 Spirit Affliction, Sin and Illness in Jewish Texts

One of the effects of evil spirits described in many Jewish texts from the Second Temple period is spirit affliction. This condition is often linked to sin or to the onset of illness. It is important then to define what we mean by illness and healing and to make a few comments about the connection between evil spirits on the one hand and spirit affliction, possession, sin or illness on the other.

From an anthropological perspective, both sickness and healing are culturally constructed concepts, meaning that they are determined in large part by a culture's way of understanding the world.⁶⁶ Sickness itself is “an unwanted condition in one's person or self—one's mind, body, soul, or connection to the world,”⁶⁷ while healing involves the restoration of wholeness of health, but can mean different things depending on the

⁶⁴ Marcus Jastrow, ספר מלים *Dictionary of the Targumim, Talmud Babli, Yerushalmi and Midrashic Literature* (New York: Judaica Press, 1996), 755, 892.

⁶⁵ BDB; Jastrow, ספר מלים, 973. In Job 1-2 and Zechariah 3:1-7 “ha Satan” appears as a member of the heavenly council, an adversarial accuser who is both distinct from God and working under him. In 1 Chron 21:1, “Satan” is used without the article, possibly indicating a proper name. Outside of Chronicles, Robert Charles Branden (*Satanic Conflict and the Plot of Matthew* SBL 89 [New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2006], 17) argues that “satan” is not used as a proper name until 168 BCE in *Jub.* 23:29. It also occurs in *Test. Moses* 10:1 (109-106 BCE).

⁶⁶ Hahn, *Sickness and Healing*, 1-2.

⁶⁷ Hahn, *Sickness and Healing*, 5.

context and expectations of a culture.⁶⁸ Both sickness and healing can have very different meanings depending on cultural context, but involves in some way the reversal of sickness, or the restoration of relationships and of peace.

In addition, however, anthropologists distinguish between the concepts of disease and illness. Disease refers to the physical experience, while illness refers to the way a society explains or ascribes meaning to this experience.

A key axiom in medical anthropology is the dichotomy between two aspects of sickness: disease and illness. Disease refers to a malfunctioning of biological and/or psychological processes, while the term illness refers to the psychosocial experience and meaning of perceived disease. Illness includes secondary personal and social responses to the primary malfunctioning disease in the individual's physiological or psychological status (or both). . . Viewed from this perspective, illness is the shaping of disease into behavior and experience. It is created by personal, social and cultural reactions to disease.⁶⁹

This distinction is important because in many of the gospel accounts of healing, it is the social nature, or social ramifications of the sickness that is of greatest concern.⁷⁰ Whereas in western society we tend to focus on the physical symptoms of illness, in many non-western or pre-modern societies, sickness is believed to be strongly connected to problems within human relationships or to cosmological forces and thus healing may be sought on this front.⁷¹ Thus, we will use the term “illness” in this study, rather than disease, to refer to the socially constructed nature of the sickness.

⁶⁸ Hahn, *Sickness and Healing*, 7, 14.

⁶⁹ Kleinman, *Patients and Healers*, 72; cf. discussion of cultural implications of understanding of particular symptoms in Michal Winkelman, *Culture and Health: Applying Medical Anthropology* (San Francisco: John Wiley and Sons, 2009), 36-81.

⁷⁰ It is important to note, however, that even in the western biomedical system, approximately 50-70 percent of illnesses and or pain symptoms reported to physicians cannot be clearly identified with any clinical disease. So, Arthur Kleinman, L. Eisenberg, and B. Good, “Culture, Illness and Care: Clinical Lessons from Anthropologic and Cross-Cultural Research,” *Annals of Internal Medicine* 88 (1978): 251-58, 251-2; See also discussion of these issues in Craffert, *Galilean Shaman*, 264-6

⁷¹ Hahn, *Sickness and Healing*, 19, 24.

The vulnerability people living during the late Second Temple period within Judaism felt to attack by spirits is suggested by the number of protective prayers and hymns⁷² and instructions for warding off evil spirits⁷³ found in these texts, as well as the number of times that the connection is made between evil spirits and sin or illness in Jewish texts.⁷⁴ In the *Psalms Scroll*, for instance, we find a prayer for protection from “a satan” or an “unclean spirit” which can cause both an “evil inclination” and illness:

אל חשלט בי שטן ורוח טמאה מכאוב ויצר רע אל ירעש עצמי

Do not rule over me a satan⁷⁵ or unclean spirit; do not let pain and an evil inclination take possession of my bones.⁷⁶

Similarly, in *Aramaic Levi* having a satan rule over one is linked to being led astray.⁷⁷ As we will see in our discussion of Jesus’ exorcisms in chapter 5, it is significant that in *Aramaic Levi*, “a satan” and an “unclean spirit” are equated.⁷⁸ In the NT gospels, the terms “evil spirit,” “demon,” and “unclean spirit” are also often used interchangeably.

⁷² According to Bilha Nitzan (“Hymns from Qumran-4Q510-4Q511,” in *The Dead Sea Scrolls: Forty Years of Research* (ed. Devorah Dimant and Uriel Rappaport; [New York: Brill, 1992], 53-63) the Songs of the Maskil (4Q510 and 4Q511) function as hymns which are recited for the purpose of protection against evil spirits.

⁷³ 11Q5 19.15-16; 4Q213; 4Q510; 4Q511; *1 En.* 40:7; *Jub.* 12:20.

⁷⁴ See e.g., *Jub.* 12:20; 4Q510 1; Josephus, *Ant.* 6.8; 8.25; *m. Hor.* 10a; *m. Yoma* 77b, 83b; *m. Ta’an* 20b; *m. Bek.* 7:5; *m. Git.* 67b; cf. *t. Bek.* 5:3. See also Hermann Lichtenberger, “Spirits and Demons in the Dead Sea Scrolls,” in *The Holy Spirit and Christian Origins. Essays in Honor of James D. G. Dunn* 9ed. Graham N. Stanton, Bruce W. Longenecker and Stephen . Barton; Grand Rapids, MI.: Eerdmans, 2004), 14-21, on the presence of this belief at Qumran. Lichtenberger also contends that dualism operated within Jewish monotheism.

⁷⁵ According to C. Breytenbach and P. L. Day (*Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, 1370-80), in most of the nine cases the term means ‘adversary’ or ‘accuser’. In the Jewish literature from the Second Temple Period, including the Dead Sea Scrolls, the meaning is similar. Although it is not certain whether the author intends by a ‘satan’ a type of being who takes an adversarial role, as in Job or a specific being named Satan, the lack of a definite article suggests the former. See Stuckenbruck, “Pleas for Deliverance,” 57-62. Cf. *Jub.* 12:20, which also contains a prayer for deliverance “from the hands of evil spirits which rule over the thought of the heart of man”.

⁷⁶ 11Q5 19.15-16; cf. *Aramaic Levi* (4Q213a); *Jub.* 1:19-20.

⁷⁷ 4Q213a, frag. 1, col. i, line 17.

⁷⁸ See also *Aramaic Levi* (4Q213a 1.1.17) where a plea for protection from “any satan” is found. See Stuckenbruck, “Pleas for Deliverance,” 58.

The connection between sin, evil spirits and illness is also found in the *Genesis Apocryphon* (2nd c. BCE), a retelling of Sarah’s abduction by Pharaoh in Genesis 12 and 20, which, to a greater degree than its Genesis predecessor, stresses the Pharaoh’s healing from a plague. While the nature of the plague is not specified, the source of it is clear: a spirit,⁷⁹ sent by God in response to the Pharaoh’s sin of taking Sarah, Abraham’s rightful wife. The sending of the spirit by God suggests that a monistic view of the universe still shapes the writer’s thinking to some degree.⁸⁰

A monistic understanding is also implied in the account of the evil spirit sent from Yahweh to torment Saul in 1 Sam 16:14 (רִיחַ רָעָה).⁸¹ Whereas in 1 Sam 16:23, Saul experienced relief (וַיִּרְחַץ) and would feel better (וַיִּטְוֶה) when David played the lyre, and the spirit would depart from him (וַיִּסְרֶה מֵעַלָּיו), in Josephus’ account, written several centuries later, the verb ἐκβάλλω is used, and David now drives out (ἐξέβαλεν) the evil spirit.⁸² This suggests a transition to a more dualistic understanding of spirits and a movement from the idea of spirit affliction to spirit possession.

⁷⁹ Several adjectives are used to describe the spirit, including ‘chastising’ (שׁוֹכֵחַ), v. 16, ‘evil’ (בְּאִישׁ), v. 17, and a spirit of ‘pestilence’ (אִשׁוּרָה), v. 26.

⁸⁰ A shift from monistic to dualistic thinking during the Second Temple period is suggested by a comparison of the MT and LXX versions of Isa 65:4. In the MT, the people are simply described as burning incense upon bricks, whereas in LXX they “burn incense on the tiles to demons which have not an existence”. The fact that the LXX version of Isaiah 65:4 differs so markedly from its MT equivalent provides further support for the argument that the demonic was becoming more integrated in Jewish thinking by the Hellenistic period when the LXX was written. See J. F. Craghan, “The Gerasene Demoniac, 530; cf. Eve, *Jewish Context*, 371-2.

⁸¹ In one version (1 Samuel 18:10 and 19:9), the spirit is associated with Saul’s raving, and in another with his attempt to stab David with a spear. See Fredrik Lindström (*God and the Origin of Evil: A Contextual Analysis of Alleged Monistic Evidence in the Old Testament* [Lund: CWK Gleerup, 1983], 80-82) who argues against a monistic interpretation of 1 Sam 16:14, suggesting the term רִיחַ refers to Saul’s mood or feeling instead.

⁸² In Josephus’ report of the same story he describes the afflicting beings as “disturbing” or “troubling demons” (τῶν δαιμονίων παραχθήν [Ant. 6.168]), and as an “evil spirit” (τοῦ πονηροῦ

It is important to note that in *Genesis Apocryphon* the spirit's behavior was only negative toward the Pharaoh and his household, indicating, as we have already suggested, a monistic understanding of the cosmos where God sends both good and evil. From Abraham's perspective, the spirit (which God sent on his behalf) prevented Pharaoh from having sexual intercourse with his wife and thus was benevolent, while from Pharaoh's perspective, it was harmful and so malevolent. Implicit in the text is the association of unethical or inappropriate behavior with spirit affliction in the form of physical affliction. In this case, taking the wife of another man, even if unwittingly, results in a plague coming on the entire household.

This connection between sin and spirit affliction in the form of illness as well as between forgiveness and healing is evident in the gospels as well, and as A. Dupont-Sommer has observed, the combination of healing and forgiveness by someone other than God may indicate that Jesus' healings and his role as healer/exorcist are more closely aligned with the Essene community than with the Pharisees.⁸³

The lack of either the language of possession or a direct encounter between Abraham and the invading spirit as one might expect with exorcism, as well as the inclusion of the entire household rather than Pharaoh alone, also indicate that spirit affliction and the removal of a malevolent spirit are intended rather than spirit possession and exorcism.⁸⁴

But now pray for me and for my household so that this *evil spirit* will be expelled from us. I prayed that [he might be] cured and laid my hands upon his head. The plague was

πνεύματος, *Ant.* 6.211). But see *Pseudo Philo (L.A.B.)* 60.1 (2nd c. BCE-1st c. CE), which like 1 Samuel, has the music calming Saul rather than David driving out the demons.

⁸³ Dupont-Sommer, "Exorcismes et guérisons," 260-61.

⁸⁴ So Stuckenbruck, "Pleas for Deliverance," 64-4.

removed from him; *the evil* [spirit] was expelled [from him] and he recovered.⁸⁵

As Eric Eve has pointed out, the spirit is not driven out of a possessed individual, but rather driven away from a sick person.⁸⁶ In addition, the Pharaoh asks for the spirit to be expelled from the household, rather than from him individually. On the other hand, there are subtle indications that this story also conveys an element of exorcism. The spirit is expelled (וַאֲחֵרָה־וַעֲרָה-v. 29) from him (Pharaoh). The root גַּעַר means to reproach or rebuke, and the Greek form of this term ἐπιτιμᾶω, as we will see, is found in the synoptic descriptions of Jesus' exorcisms as well.⁸⁷

As a result of Abraham's prayer and laying on of hands, both the plague and the evil spirit are removed and Pharaoh recovers his strength."⁸⁸ The removal of the plague afflicting Pharaoh and household and the evil spirit occur simultaneously. Interestingly, the Aramaic word סַמַּךְ (to lay hands upon)⁸⁹ appears to be equivalent to the Greek term ἐπιτίθημι which is used in the LXX as well as in the gospels to describe Jesus' laying on of hands in his healings (though he never uses his hands in exorcisms).⁹⁰

There are also clear differences between this account and exorcisms in the Gospels. Whereas prayer is part of the removal of the spirit in *Genesis Apocryphon*, there is no record that Jesus used prayer in his exorcisms. In addition, while in this text the spirit is sent from God, in the gospels, the spirits appear to act on their own initiative, or are

⁸⁵ 1QapGen 28-29.

⁸⁶ Eve, *Jewish Context*, 179.

⁸⁷ Jastrow, מַלְיָם, 261.

⁸⁸ 1Qap Gen 29-30.

⁸⁹ Jastrow, 1000-1001.

⁹⁰ David Flusser, ("Healing through the Laying- on of Hands in a Dead Sea Scroll," *IEJ* 7 [1957], 107-8) has argued that this is the only case of laying-on of hands for the purpose of healing found in Jewish literature and that it may provide an important link to Jesus' use of this technique in healing

assumed to have been sent by Satan or Beelzebul.⁹¹ Abraham’s removal of the spirit also differs from Jesus’ exorcisms in that Abraham prays for Pharaoh whereas Jesus speaks directly to the spirits and orders them out.

In terms of the removal of the spirit itself, there is some dispute about the way in which the Aramaic term גער—which probably lies behind the Greek verb ἐπιτιμάω found in the NT—should be translated. While David Aune argues that both rebuking and expelling are implied, H. C. Kee notes that other cases of גער found in Qumran texts suggest the sense of bringing an evil spirit under control rather than either rebuking it or exorcising it,⁹² and the fact that there is no indication in the story that the Pharaoh is actually possessed by a spirit would support this view.

The connection between sin and illness is also evident in *Prayer of Nabonidus*, a prayer for healing by Nabonidus, king of Babylon (556-539 BCE) from a seven year affliction, and the healing which occurs through the intervention of a Jewish גור.

Words of the pr[ayer] which Nabonidus, king of [the] la[nd of Baby]lon, the [great] king, prayed [when he was afflicted] by a malignant inflammation, by decree of the G[od Most Hi]gh, in Teiman. [I, Nabonidus,] was afflicted [by a malignant inflammation] for seven years, and was banished far [from men, until I prayed to the God Most High] and a diviner [גור] forgave my sin. He was a Je[w] from among the exiles who said to me: “Make a proclamation in writing, so that glory, exal[tation and hono]ur be given to the name of [the}G[od Most High]”. And I wrote as follows: “When] I was afflicted by a ma[lignant] inflammation [...] in Teiman, [by the decree of the God Most High,] [I] prayed for seven years [to all] the gods of silver and gold, [of bronze and iron,] of wood, of stone and of clay, because [I thoug]ht that t[hey were] gods [...]”⁹³

⁹¹ See e.g., Q 11:15, 18-19; but L (Luke) 13:10-17; Mark 3:22-23; cf. Eve, *Jewish Context*, 179-81.

⁹² Aune, “Magic in Early Christianity,” 1530; H. C. Kee, “The Terminology of Mark’s Exorcism Stories,” *NTS* 14 (1968): 232-46.

⁹³ 4QPrNab (4Q242). Translation from Florentino Garcia Martinez and Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar (eds.), *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition*. vol. 1 (Leiden: Brill, 1997).

Although spirit possession is a possibility in the text, it should not be assumed since it is never explicitly stated; we are told only that Nabonidus is ill with a malignant inflammation. Neither is it clear that an exorcism was performed, or an incantation or prayer recited by the Jewish intermediary. What is clear is that the king was ill, and that his sins were forgiven (either by God, or by a Jewish intermediary), and he was healed.

One of the problems with interpretation is the fragmentary nature of the text which makes it unclear exactly how Nabonidus is healed. The implication is that when the Jewish **גֹּזֵר** forgives his sins, the king is also healed in the process, but this is not certain. In addition, scholars are divided over whether the Aramaic phrase **וְחַטְאֵי שְׂבַק לֵיהּ** (“and he forgave my sin,”) points to God or to the **גֹּזֵר** as the one responsible for the healing.⁹⁴ However, regardless of whether one attributes the healing to God or to the Jewish diviner, the association between healing and the forgiveness of sin is evident.

Another issue concerns the way **גֹּזֵר** should be translated. Some scholars, including A. Dupont-Sommer and Geza Vermes favour “exorcist”.⁹⁵ However, there are problems with this translation. In Dan 2:27; 4:4 and 5:7, where **גֹּזֵר** is also found, the context suggests something closer to “diviner” rather than “exorcist”. The Aramaic root, **גֹּזֵר** means “to cut,”⁹⁶ and combines the sense of splitting (as of an animal) with the idea of “determining,”

⁹⁴ According to A. Dupont-Sommer (“Exorcismes et guérisons dans les écrits de Qoumrân,” in *Congress Volume Oxford* 1959 [VTSup, 7; 1960], 253-4), it is the ‘exorcist’ who heals the king. However, Grelot (*La Prière de Nabonide* [4Q or Nab] *RevQ* 9 [1978], 483-95) argues that it is God who heals the king and forgives his sin and the Jewish seer only explains what has happened.

⁹⁵ Dupont-Sommer (“Exorcismes et guérisons,” 256-7) argues contends that the meaning of **גֹּזֵר** changed over time from that of discernment to that of pronouncing a conjuration, and thus controlling spirits; Geza Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls in English* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1978), 229; and Florentino Garcia Martinez, *Qumran and Apocalyptic: Studies on the Aramaic Texts from Qumran* (Leiden: Brill, 1992), 186-7.

⁹⁶ Jastrow, 231.

suggesting a person who reads the entrails of animals after cutting them open.⁹⁷ As a result, I agree with Grelot, Eve, Sorensen and Twelftree that “exorcist” may not be the best translation of גֹּרֵר, and that “diviner” is a more suitable translation in this context. The result of our findings is that we cannot be sure that the account in the *Genesis Apocryphon* is an exorcism. However, the link between evil spirits and sinful behavior and between forgiveness and healing has been established.

There is one other text from Qumran which may provide evidence of spirit possession and exorcism. 4Q560, or *4QExorcism*, as it is now known, although fragmentary (it consists of a total of eight lines), contains several elements which suggest spirit possession and exorcism are present. These include, among other things, the presence of demons, the possibility of them entering into the body, and an adjuration spoken directly to the spirit.⁹⁸ Penney and Wise suggest that the first line, which Martinez and Tigchelaar have translated “and heart and” should read “Beel]zebub, you/to you”.⁹⁹ However, due to the damaged nature of the scroll, this reconstruction is far from certain. Because of the limited amount of text, there is little that can be gleaned from this account. That said, it likely represents a longer exorcism, since it appears to contain a direct encounter between exorcist and demon. Thus, it provides tentative evidence of both spirit possession and exorcism in a Jewish text from approximately the second century BCE. It also links sin and guilt with vulnerability to attack by an “evil visitor”.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ Grelot, “La Prière de Nabonide,” 489; Sorensen, *Possession and Exorcism*, 72-3; Twelftree, *Jesus the Exorcist*, 17-18; Eve, *The Jewish Context of Jesus' Miracles*, 186-7.

⁹⁸ So Penney and Wise, “By the Power of Beelzebub,” 628-9. There are also features that are missing, which might be expected.

⁹⁹ Penney and Wise, “By the Power of Beelzebub,” 332-3

¹⁰⁰ 4Q560 1.1-4.

To sum up, several Jewish texts from the two centuries before Jesus' lifetime have indicated a belief system that associates both illness and sin with evil spirits or spirit affliction. The *Genesis Apocryphon* and the *Prayer of Nabonidus* appear to reflect a period when a shift from monism to dualism was occurring within Judaism. As a result, while neither account can be strictly described as an exorcism, they do suggest that evil spirits were associated with affliction of individuals and households and those particular methods and particular persons could be effective in removing the spirits. These included the laying on of hands, prayer, and, in 1 Samuel, music. We shall now explore the relationship between a dualistic understanding of the spiritual universe, marginality and a belief in evil spirits in Jewish texts.

2.5 Dualism and Marginality in Jewish Texts

As we saw in section 2.2, the way a group feels about its position within the larger society plays an important role in determining the way it constructs boundaries in relation to it. The less secure a group feels, the more defined its boundaries will be, and the more the “other” will be viewed as dangerous. Evidence of this marginal and dualistic perspective can be seen in several Jewish texts from the Second Temple period. This is particularly the case in *Jubilees*, *1 Enoch* and a number of documents from Qumran.¹⁰¹

The Qumran materials in particular suggest that the community saw the larger Jewish community, and especially the Jewish leadership associated with the Temple, as polluted and corrupt in contrast to its own group, which it saw as the legitimate

¹⁰¹ See Hermann Lichtenberger, “Spirits and Demons in the Dead Sea Scrolls,” in *The Holy Spirit and Christian Origins: Essays in Honor of James D. G. Dunn* (ed. Graham N. Stanton, Bruce W. Longenecker and Stephen C. Barton; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 14-21.

representation of Israel. Thus, the community saw itself as the “we” and those outside the community as the “other”.¹⁰² In addition, contrasts are expressed between the sons of light and the sons of darkness, the dominion of God and the dominion of Belial,¹⁰³ the spirits of truth and spirits of deceit.

He [God] created man to rule the world and placed within him two spirits so that he would walk with them until the moment of his visitation: they are the spirits of truth and of deceit. From the spring of light stem the generations of truth and from the source of darkness the generations of deceit.¹⁰⁴

The ‘Sons of darkness’ are often associated with foreign peoples and apostate Jews.¹⁰⁵

In these (lies) the history of all men; in their (two) divisions all their armies have a share for their generations; in their paths they walk; every deed they do (falls) into their divisions, dependent of what might be the birthright of the man, great or small, for all eternal times. For God has sorted them into equal parts until the last time, and has put an everlasting loathing between their divisions. Deeds of injustice are an abhorrence to truth and the paths of truth are an abhorrence to injustice.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰² So, S. Talmon, *The World of Qumran from Within* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1989), 280; Archie T. Wright, “Prayer and Incantation in the Dead Sea Scrolls,” in *Studies in Jewish Prayer* JSSSup 17 (ed. Robert Hayward and Brad Embry; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 75-88 (87); “Maxine L. Grossman, “Cultivating Identity: Textual Virtuosity and ‘Insider’ Status,” in *Defining Identities: We, You, and the Other in the Dead Sea Scrolls* (eds. Florentino García Martínez and Mladen Popović; Leiden: Brill, 2008), 1-12.

¹⁰³ See, e.g., 1QS 3-4; 1QM. Belial is the name given in the Qumran material to the leader of the forces of darkness. See, e.g., *War Scroll* (1QM 1.4-5, 13.10-11, 16) and *The Thanksgiving Scroll* (1QH). While Belial is associated with wickedness and death, as well as with the worship of foreign gods (see Deut 13:14), in the Hebrew Bible, it is not yet associated with a particular personality or being. See discussion in S. D. Sperling (“Belial – בל״ל,” in *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible* (ed. Karel Van der Toorn, Bob Becking and Pieter W. van der Horst; Leiden: Brill, 1999), 322-27. In the Pseudepigraphic literature and in texts from Qumran, Belial (or Beliar) has more the sense of a proper name for the opponent of God. See also the *Martyrdom of Isaiah* 1:8-9; 4:1-5. Although only the first citation can be assigned a pre-Christian date, probably 2nd c. BCE, even if the material in chapter 4 is a later addition, it does link Satan and Beliar. “Satan” and “Belial” are also used interchangeably in *T. Naph.* 8:4 and *T. Asher* 1:9; 3:1.

¹⁰⁴ 1QS 3.17-19.

¹⁰⁵ See 1QS 1.16-2.8; 3.13-4.26; 1QM 1.1-7, 13-16; 13.9-18; 4Q 444; CD 2.14-4.15; 5.17-19. Cf. 4Q280; 4Q 287; 11QMelch; *T. Levi* 19:1; *T. Naph.* 2:6. For more on Qumran and dualism, see Martin Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism: Studies in their Encounter in Palestine during the Early Hellenistic Period*. trans. John Bowden (London: SCM Press, 1974), vol. 1, 218-20, 229-33; Gabriele Boccaccini, *Beyond the Essene Hypothesis: The Parting of the Ways between Qumran and Enochic Judaism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 60-65; George W. E. Nickelsburg, “Polarized Self-Identification in the Qumran Texts,” in *Defining Identities*, García Martínez and Popović, 23-31; As Carol Newsom (“Constructing ‘We, You, and the Others’ through Non-polemical Discourse,” in *Defining Identities*, García Martínez and Popović, 13-21) notes, although much of the dualistic perspective is expressed in polemic statements, it is also reflected in distinctive non-polemical patterns of writing, interpretations of traditional Jewish texts, and styles of speech, which convey a sense of belonging to a separate community.

¹⁰⁶ 1QS 4.15-17.

Many of the Pseudepigrapha also display both dualistic and marginal characteristics, whereby evil spirits are associated with the religious or political “other”.¹⁰⁷ *1 Enoch* and *Jubilees* are especially important in this light because of their dating and geography. Both texts are thought to originate in Palestine and have been dated to within two centuries of Jesus’ lifetime.¹⁰⁸ Thus, in terms of both dating and Jewish content they can provide information about the “intellectual currency”¹⁰⁹ of first-century Palestine. In addition, since *1 Enoch* was utilized by the authors of *Jubilees* and both *1 Enoch* and *Jubilees* were read at Qumran, we can assume they were known and valued by Jewish communities in the two centuries before the Common Era.¹¹⁰

Both *Jubilees* and *1 Enoch* assign the coming of evil into the world to the actions of the Watchers described in Genesis 6 as the giants or *Nephilim*.¹¹¹ Additionally, both texts assert that when the Watchers came down from their heavenly abode and mated with human women, the result was a giant race. While the giants were killed, their spirits lived on in the form of demons which brought suffering into the world.¹¹² Implicit in the divine

¹⁰⁷ *Jub.* 11:4-6; 15:31-4; 22:16-17.

¹⁰⁸ *Jubilees*, essentially a rewrite of the events described in Genesis and Exodus (see, e.g., 10:1), is dated to the mid-2nd century BCE and *1 Enoch* to 250-200 BCE. See also, O. S. Wintermute, “Jubilees: A New Translation and Introduction,” in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 2: 35-51; James C. VanderKam, *Textual and Historical Studies in the Book of Jubilees* (HSM, 14; Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1977), 283-85.

¹⁰⁹ This term is borrowed from Twelftree, *Jesus the Exorcist*, 15.

¹¹⁰ In fact, Wright (“Prayer and Incantation,” 75) suggests that the Watcher traditions found in *1 Enoch* 1-36 likely influenced the authors of some of the incantation texts at Qumran; cf. CD 16.2-4 which contains parts of Jubilees.

¹¹¹ *1 En.* 7:1-6; 15:7-12; *Jub.* 10:3-6; 12:20; cf. CD 2.17-19; and *T. Sol.* 5:3 which also connect the coming down of the Watchers as the origin of human problems. See Evans, *The Jewish Context*, 257-58.

¹¹² See esp. *1 En.* 15:1-11. As Cotter (*Miracles in Greco-Roman Antiquity*, 107) notes, these offspring, as described in Genesis, were not actually demons. However, the title “Sons of God” provided the opening needed to take the story one step further. References to the fall of the Watchers and their offspring, and their damaging influence on humanity, are also found in the *Damascus Document* (4Q266 (CD) 2.17-21) and in *Book of Giants* (4Q531, fragment 14) which states that the giants will not survive their present form as flesh and bones, suggesting the offspring were to exist only in the form of spirits. *Jubilees*

accusation against the Watchers is that in having intercourse with human women, they have crossed a forbidden spirit-flesh boundary, resulting in oppression, warfare and moral problems for human beings.¹¹³

The view that evil spirits resulted from the union of the Watchers and human women may also be alluded to in the following excerpt from the *Songs of the Sage* (4Q510 and 4Q511), where boundary crossing is said to bring disaster in the form of “bastard spirits”:

And I, a Sage, declare the splendour of his radiance in order to frighten and ter[rify] all the spirits of the ravaging angels and the *bastard spirits*, demons, Lilith, owls and [jackals...] those who strike unexpectedly to lead astray the spirit of knowledge to make their hearts forlorn. And you have been placed in the era of the rul[e of] wickedness and in the periods of humiliation of the sons of ligh[t], in the guilty periods of [those] defiled by iniquities; not for an everlasting destruction but rather for the era of the humiliation of sin.¹¹⁴

As Eve has suggested, the “bastard spirits” are presumably the offspring of the union of the fallen angels with the daughters of men.¹¹⁵ If so, this statement asserts that spiritual realities impact political events at the human level, since these spirits are said to be part of the “humiliation of the sons of light”.

(10:5, 9, 12; 11:5-6; 15:31) adds that the spirits resulting from the human-Watcher union attempted to lead the sons of Noah astray and bind them. As a result of Noah’s prayers, and under instructions from God, most of the demons are also bound, but one-tenth are left to roam the earth, and, under the command of Satan, they continue to wreak havoc. The *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* also contain numerous references to the evil brought about by the influence of spirits. These include Satan and Belial as well as “spirits of deceit” and “spirits of promiscuity” which are said to influence the evil intentions of human beings. These are contrasted with the spirits or angels of light who are aligned with God and the forces of good. The results of the Watchers coming down to earth are not entirely negative, however. Both *1 Enoch* and *Jubilees* depict the Watchers teaching women about medicine, incantations and the cutting of roots and plants, which ironically later prove to help Noah and his sons to get rid of evil spirits (see *1 En.* 7:1-6; *Jub.* 10:12-14); Josephus (*War* 2.136) also reports that the Essenes had a particular interest in ancient writings on the “welfare of the soul and body” and that they studied medicinal roots and the properties of stones.

¹¹³ *1 En.* 15:7-11.

¹¹⁴ Translation from García Martínez and Tigchelaar, *Dead Sea Scrolls*, II, 4Q510, frag. 1, lines 4-7.

¹¹⁵ The references to an era of wickedness and periods of humiliation of the sons of light, for example, could very well refer to political and social oppression on the ground. Eve, *Jewish Context*, 199.

The understanding that evil spirits resulted from the human-Watcher union may also be present in *Apocryphal Psalms* (11Q11), where instructions for protection (probably from Belial) are offered. If Martinez and Tigchelaar are correct, the lacuna in the statement, “Who are you? [] man and of the seed of the ho[ly ones],” should read [“oh offspring of”], rather than [“Be afraid of”]¹¹⁶

Invoke at any time. The heave[ns. When] he comes upon you in the nig[ht], you shall [s]ay to him: “Who are you? [oh offspring of] man and of the seed of the ho[ly ones]? Your face is a face of [delus]ion and your horns are horns of illu[si]on. You are darkness and not light, [injustice and not justice.[...]the chief of the army. YHWH [will bring] you [down] [to the] deepest [sheo]l, [he wil shut] the two bronze [ga]tes through [which n]o light [penetrates.]”¹¹⁷

There is also reason to suspect that the connection made in these texts between crossing boundaries and evil spirits may reflect actual boundary crossing on the ground, such as concerns about Jewish priests marrying foreign women during the early post-exilic period as expressed in Ezra and Nehemiah, and in the case of *Jubilees*, resistance to efforts by Antioches Epiphanes¹¹⁸ to Hellenize the area, as well as to his claims of divinity.¹¹⁹ In *Jubilees* this is made explicit through the connection of negative spiritual forces with gentiles as part of its larger purpose of defending Judaism against Hellenism and affirming the continuing validity of the law.¹²⁰ *Jubilees* 22:1-17, for instance, links “the nations” with what is unclean, with pollution, and with worshipping evil spirits.

¹¹⁶ García Martínez and Tigchelaar, *Dead Sea Scrolls*, II, 1203; cf. Wright, “Prayer and Incantation,” 79.

¹¹⁷ 11Q11 5.4-14.

¹¹⁸ Antiochus’ efforts to subdue Jerusalem occurred between 175 and 167 BCE, at which time the Maccabean Revolt broke out.

¹¹⁹ D. Suter, “Fallen Angel, Fallen Priest: The Problem of Family Purity in 1 Enoch 16,” *HUCA* 50 (1979), 115-35; Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar, *Prophets of Old and the Day of the End: Zechariah, the Book of the Watchers and Apocalyptic* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1996), 194-203.

¹²⁰ See *Jub.* 11:4-6, where unclean spirits are linked with foreigners and with the worship of idols, and *Jub.* 15:31-2, where God’s protective spirit is associated with Abraham, but spirits that lead astray are appointed for Ishmael and Esau.

The author's [*Jubilees*] polemic against mixing with Gentiles and insistence on maintaining ancestral customs, especially ritual ones, is perfectly understandable against the background of the attempted Hellenization of the Antiochan period. But it can also be understood, not simply as a desire to maintain racial and cultural identity in the face of a threat of assimilation, but as an attempt to maintain order in the face of the chaotic forces represented by the Gentiles. This is further suggested by the way in which the text tends to associate Gentiles with demonic forces.¹²¹

The connection between evil spirits and historical figures is also clearly evident in the *Ascension of Isaiah* (2nd-4th c. CE), where the Emperor Nero is represented as Beliar.¹²² Thus, it seems likely that the dualistic perspective seen in *Jubilees* and *1 Enoch*, as well as in several documents from Qumran, reflects their marginal position within the dominant Hellenistic culture, and in the case of Qumran, in relation to the central Jewish cult at Jerusalem. Their apocalyptic view of the world may also be related to their dualistic perspective, since one of the characteristics of apocalyptic thinking is a dualistic view of the universe, and since it tends to be associated with situations of extreme stress brought about by persecution and violence.¹²³

Even if for these people evil had an irreducibly spiritual dimension in which rebellious angelic powers were somehow responsible for disorders on earth, the primary empirical manifestation of that evil seems to have been in human misbehaviour such as the violence of pagan kings or the impurity of priestly marriage arrangements.¹²⁴

A dualistic perspective is also found in images linking the destruction of evil spirits with the coming of the reign of God throughout the Jewish literature of the Second Temple period.¹²⁵ Although it would not be accurate historically to assume a uniform Jewish

¹²¹ Eve, *Jewish Context*, 156.

¹²² *Ascen. Isa.* 4:2-14. In this text, Satan and Beliar are used interchangeably. Although this text postdates Jesus' lifetime, it indicates a continuing connection in both Jewish and Christian traditions between malevolent spirits and evil political leaders.

¹²³ Wright ("Prayer and Incantation," 86) argues that the incantation psalms of the DSS exhibit an apocalyptic world view that acknowledged evil spirits operating in the world.

¹²⁴ Eve, *Jewish Context*, 152.

¹²⁵ These images include general images of judgment (*1 En.* 1:4-9; 19:1; 55:3-4), Yahweh shutting the demons in by closing the gates of Sheol (11Q11 5.9-11), or by opening the foundations of the earth and burying the evil spirits with an earthquake (*1 En.* 1:7; 1QH 3.32-33; 4Q511 37, 42, 47), the binding and

expectation of a “national” or “political” messiah,¹²⁶ the destruction of evil at the cosmic level corresponds to the destruction of evil rulers on the earthly plane in several texts. In Daniel 10:13 and 21 (2nd c. BCE), for example, the angel Michael battles evil angelic princes associated with the rule of nations, and in the *Testament of Dan*, one is described who will arise from the tribes of Judah and Levi and make war against Beliar.¹²⁷ Finally, Satan and evil human kings are depicted in a parallel way in the judgment scene in *1 Enoch* 53-55.¹²⁸

As Robert Webb has noted, “a celestial battle between opposing angelic forces was thought to correspond to the terrestrial conflict experienced by God’s people.”¹²⁹ In many cases, these texts associate the appearance of a messianic figure with restoration of justice, especially for the marginalized. Thus, we can confidently assert that in some of the Jewish literature dated to the first and second centuries BCE, the defeat of evil in all its forms—including the defeat of evil spirits—and the restoration of justice to those on the margins, were connected with the coming of God’s reign or with the coming of the Messiah.

trampling of evil spirits underfoot (*1 En.* 10:4-5; *T. Sim.* 6.6; *T. Levi* 18.11ff), the apocalyptic armies of Melchizedek overcoming Beliar and his cohort of spirits, and freeing the people of God from his hand (11QMelch 2.7-13), Beliar being cast into the fire (*T. Jud.* 25:3), and the cleansing of the land of uncleanness (*Jub.* 50.5). I am aware that the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* are widely seen to be influenced by Christian theology. However, they are cited here, in addition to other Jewish texts, as general evidence of views about the coming of God’s rule during the first century CE and the effect this would have on evil spirits. Similarly, *T. Mos.* 10.1 (1st c. CE), which says: “And then His kingdom shall appear throughout all His creation, and then Satan shall be no more, And sorrow shall depart with him.”

¹²⁶ Horsley, *Bandits, Prophets, and Messiahs*, 90-1; Adela Yarboro Collins and John J. Collins. *King and Messiah as Son of God: Divine, Human, and Angelic Messianic Figures in Biblical and Related Literature* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), esp. 48-100.

¹²⁷ *T. Dan* 5:10-11.

¹²⁸ See Robert Charles Branden, *Satanic Conflict and the Plot of Matthew* Studies in Biblical Literature 89 (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2006), 23.

¹²⁹ Robert L. Webb (*John the Baptizer and Prophet: A Socio-Historical Study* [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991], 221-60, 239) also notes that in the Hebrew Bible, as well as in the Jewish literature of the Second Temple period, the role of judgment is given to several figures, including Yahweh himself, the angel Michael, supernatural figures such as Son of Man and Melchizedek, and human agents in the Davidic, Aaronic and Elijah traditions.

How much these ideas influenced Jesus and his contemporaries is difficult to say for certain. However, the fact that *1 Enoch* is quoted in Jude 14-15 and is alluded to in 1 Peter 3:19-20 and 2 Peter 2:2-5, suggests it was at least known by the Jewish community, including Christ-believers and therefore likely reflects the popular understanding of evil spirits present in the first century. In addition, this view also appears to be evident in Mary's song of praise found in Luke's infancy narrative, which reflects God's preference for the poor and where bringing down the wealthy and powerful suggests that political oppression was at the forefront of the thoughts of Jews living in Palestine, particularly the poor:

[52]He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; [53] he has filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away empty. [54] He has helped his servant Israel, in his remembrance of his mercy, according to the promise he made to our ancestors (Luke 1:52-54 [L]).

It is telling that Mary's song does not describe personal salvation from individual sin in relation to the promised son, but rather social and political deliverance from oppression on a national level.

In the texts we have discussed in this section, the spirits are never shown to actually possess people. Instead, they bring suffering in some form.¹³⁰ Thus, it should come as no surprise that exorcism involving a direct confrontation and expulsion of the possessing spirit is not one of the methods mentioned for defeating them. Instead, binding, expulsion from heaven, casting into an abyss and imprisonment appear to be the

¹³⁰ Eve (*Jewish Context*, 257-8) notes that the general picture in *1 Enoch* is that while demons are responsible for the problem of evil and human sin, they do not take possession of individuals. He defines possession as "a demon invading a human victim and taking over control" and exorcism as "a reversal of this form of possession."

preferred methods of defeating evil spirits.¹³¹ Although *Jubilees*, *1 Enoch*, and documents found at Qumran can provide very little evidence of exorcism prior to the first century CE, they do suggest a connection between political oppression on the ground and belief in malevolent spirits and spirit affliction. This situation can be assumed for the first-century Roman imperial context as well, where resistance to foreign power continued to be an issue for the Jewish people.¹³² Thus, Jewish texts of the Second Temple period display evidence of the view that political events were linked with cosmological events, and evil spirits played a role in shaping the socio-political landscape. We move now to evidence for exorcism and those who performed them.

2.6 Exorcism and Exorcists in the Ancient World

One of the earliest accounts of a possible exorcism in Jewish texts is found in the story of Tobit (2nd -3rd c. BCE).¹³³ In the story, Sarah is plagued by the demon Asmodeus,¹³⁴ who has killed each of her previous seven husbands on their wedding night before the marriages could be consummated. In response to Sarah's prayers, God sends the angel Raphael to help. Tobias has earlier been instructed by Raphael to remove the organs

¹³¹ See *1 En.* 10:4-5; 13.1; *Jub.* 10:5-8; *T. Levi* 18:11-12.

¹³² See, e.g., Warren Carter, *The Roman Empire and the New Testament* (Nashville, TN.: Abingdon Press, 2006); idem, *Matthew and Empire: Initial Explorations* (Harrisburg, PA.: Trinity Press International, 2001).

¹³³ Tobit combines information about repelling demons with advice on how to live out Torah obedience in the Diaspora setting during the Hellenistic period. Although the story is set in the Assyrian period, it was likely written much later. This later dating is based on several factors including confusion regarding historical and geographical data from the 7th century Assyrian period, the fact that the rebuilding of the Temple (515 BCE) is mentioned and that the book was not included in the Jewish canon. The latest possible date (ca. 175 CE) is based on the fact that there is no mention of the Maccabean Revolt, and that endogamous marriage, which is part of the story, had died off by the first century CE. A fragment of the story was found at Qumran (4Q197).

¹³⁴ See discussion of the linguistic and historical context of the demon 'Asmodeus' in M. Hutter, "Asmodeus Ἀσμοδαῖος" in *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, 2nd ed. (ed. Karel Van der Toorn, Bob Becking and Pieter W. van der Horst; Leiden: Brill, 1999), 197-200.

(gall, heart and liver) of a large fish. When Tobias and Sarah decide to marry, the heart and liver are burned and the smoke repels the demon and causes him to flee to the remotest parts of Egypt where he is pursued by Raphael and bound hand and foot.¹³⁵ Again we note the connection between demons and that which is foreign or “other”. In this case, the proper place for the demon is Egypt.¹³⁶

Although smoke is used to repel the demon initially, and binding to further disable it, there is no report of a direct address and no command given (at least none is recorded). This suggests either that treatments for exorcism evolved over time, with direct commands coming later, around the first century CE,¹³⁷ or that this was something other than an exorcism. The text nowhere explicitly states that Sarah was *possessed* by Asmodeus. However, the fact that the demon was thought to be controlling her is implied in the accusation of her maid: “You are the one who kills (strangles) your husbands!”¹³⁸ In addition, in this story, there is a somewhat direct encounter between the exorcists (Tobias and Raphael) and the demon, with specific rituals followed: the use of smoke from the burning of the heart and liver of a fish, and the binding of the demon.

¹³⁵ Tob 6:5-6; 8:2-3; cf. 4Q 197 4.1.13; *T. Sol.* 5:9 and *Num. Rab.* 19:8 (ca. 1100 CE), where fumigation is also used as a treatment for demons. Although *T. Sol.* is clearly post-Christian and *Numbers Rabbah* reflects a period much later than the first century CE, they do attest to an ongoing tradition of using smoke to remove demons within Judaism; see also n. 36.

¹³⁶ Both Mastema (*Jub.* 48:17) and Beliar (*T. Jos.* 20:2) are also associated with Egypt. Cf. Smith (“Towards Interpreting Demonic Powers in Hellenistic and Roman Antiquity,” 428-29) who has identified this removal of a demon to an appropriate location as a common means of dealing with demons in antiquity.

¹³⁷ So we see commands given to the demons to leave or to indicate they have left by Lucian’s Syrian exorcist (*Philops.* 16), by Apollonius (*Life* 4.20) and by Jesus (Mark 1:25; 5:8; 9:25). On the use of fumigation, Graham Twelftree (*In the Name of Jesus: Exorcism among Early Christians* [Grand Rapids, MI.: Baker, 2007], 37-8) notes that the fact that fumigation was later used for exorcism may indicate a development in treatment techniques over time.

¹³⁸ Tob 3:8.

Thus, there are two steps in the process of removing the threat of this demon, first smoke, then binding. Spoken words and incantations are not evident in the story. However, this does not mean they were not part of normal practice. They may be assumed. It is important to note that the demon is named. We have already noted in 2.2 that getting the name or purpose of a demon was often part of an exorcism in the ancient world. We will also see this in an exorcism rite from the Greek Magical Papyri and in the Gerasene Demoniac (Mark 5:1-20). *Testament of Solomon* also assigns names to various demons, and the name Beliar/Belial occurs often in the material from Qumran. However, these are not cases that can be clearly labeled exorcisms. Although no clear examples of exorcism are found in the writings found at Qumran, it is important to mention that both the *Psalms Scroll* (11Q5)¹³⁹ and the *Apocryphal Psalms* (11Q11)¹⁴⁰ refer to David's abilities to drive out demons, and the latter states that he invoked the tetragrammon against demons.¹⁴⁰

Josephus, a first-century Jewish historian,¹⁴¹ also reports an exorcism, this time performed not by an angel, but by Eleazar, a fellow Jew. Like the demon Asmodeus in Tobit, this demon is removed through the use of a particular technique. While the expulsion of Asmodeus involved the use of smoke and binding, Eleazar combines two other methods: the use of a root prescribed by Solomon with which he draws out the demon through the man's nose, and an incantation.¹⁴² The report that Eleazar both drew the demon out with a root/ring, and with an oath (ὄρκου) ordered the demon never to enter the man again, using

¹³⁹ 11Q5 27.2, 3, 4, 10.

¹⁴⁰ 11Q11 1.4, 6; 4.4.

¹⁴¹ Josephus' *Jewish Antiquities* was completed in the mid-90s CE.

¹⁴² Josephus, *Ant.* 8.47-49.

the name of Solomon, suggests that some Jews in the first century were using both physical objects and spoken incantations against possessing spirits.

I have seen a certain Eleazar, a countryman of mine, in the presence of Vespasian, his sons, tribunes and a number of other soldiers, free men possessed by demons [τῶν δαιμονίων λαμβανομένους], and this was the manner of the cure: he put to the nose of the possessed man [δαιμονιζομένου] a ring which had under its seal one of the roots¹⁴³ prescribed by Solomon,¹⁴⁴ and then, as the man smelled it, drew out the demon through his nostrils, and when the man at once fell down, adjured the demon never to come back into him, speaking Solomon's name and reciting the incantations which he had composed. Then, wishing to convince the bystanders and prove to them that he had this power, Eleazar placed a cup or foot-basin full of water a little way off and commanded the demon, as it went out of the man, to overturn it and make known to the spectators that he had left the man.¹⁴⁵

Since this is the only extant account of exorcism found in extra-canonical Jewish literature of the first century outside of the New Testament, it is highly significant for comparison with early Jesus traditions. In addition, the fact that neither the technique nor the exorcism elicits any particular commentary by Josephus probably means they were not considered unusual. Josephus' statement ("I have seen...Eleazar free men") implies that this exorcism was not a unique occurrence. Justin (ca. 100-165 CE) mentions that both

¹⁴³ Interestingly, the Tosefta and Jerusalem Talmud (*t. Shab.* 4:9; *y. Shab.* 6:2) allow the use of roots in an amulet provided they are not put into a ring or bracelet.

¹⁴⁴ The *Testament of Solomon* 1:6-7; 5:3 describes a magic seal ring, given to Solomon by the archangel Michael, that exhibited exceptional powers over demons. Throughout the text, Solomon uses the ring to subdue several demons, some of whom he enlists to help build the temple. The use of this text for reconstructing first-century beliefs about spirit possession and exorcism is somewhat problematic because of its probable post-Christian (2nd to 3rd century CE) date. There is ample evidence that it drew on the NT as well as on other first-century material. However, there are also elements within the text that may reflect beliefs pre-dating Jesus' lifetime. Solomon's power over demons is attested in numerous Jewish texts from the Second Temple period. Wisdom of Solomon 7:20 (1st century BCE, Alexandria) lists knowledge of the "powers of spirits" and of the attributes of plants and roots among the gifts given to Solomon by God. Solomon is also described as having the ability to overcome demons in the *Apocryphal Psalms* (11Q11 2.2). In a tradition which apparently developed later, Solomon is said to have used demons to help him to build the Jerusalem Temple (see, e.g., *T. Sol.* 1:6-7; 5:3; *PGM* IV 3040; *Qur'an* 2.96-102). See Twelftree, *Jesus the Exorcist*, 18-19, for more discussion of the *T. Sol.* in relation to exorcism. Craig Evans (*Jesus and his Contemporaries*, 307-8) argues that the Q saying "Something greater than Solomon is here" (Luke 11:31=Matt 12:42) may be related to Solomon's power over demons. If so, this would suggest that Jesus was seen by Matthew as having more power over demons than the fabled Solomon.

¹⁴⁵ Josephus, *Ant.* 8.45-48. Josephus also mentions a plant called *baaras* that grows near the Dead Sea, the root of which he claims can expel demons (*War* 7.178-185).

Jews and gentiles were known to use fumigations and incantations in exorcisms.¹⁴⁶

However, as we shall see, there is no evidence in the gospel traditions that Jesus made use of any aids in his exorcisms, either smoke, roots or magic rings.

One other comment on this account is necessary. Josephus' use of the verb λαμβάνω to describe the phenomenon of possession is matched by only one use in the synoptic gospels where Luke 9:39 describes the situation of the boy with the spirit, which he says seizes the boy (λαμβάνει αὐτόν). Esther Eshel has noted that the difference between the Greek λαμβάνω, which in this context means to take hold of, and the Aramaic term typically used in relation to the behavior of evil spirits, כחש (to torment/afflict), suggests a development over time from affliction to possession,¹⁴⁷ which we have already suggested was occurring during this period.

The fact that incantations for healing were part of the Jewish experience is also confirmed by rabbinic discussions of these questions and prohibitions against uttering incantations over the sick. For example, the Mishnah includes those who utter charms over a wound among those who have no share in the world to come,¹⁴⁸ and the Jerusalem Talmud prohibits the use of amulets made by an expert [one that has been used to bring healing at least three times].¹⁴⁹ Sometimes the prohibition was based on whose name was

¹⁴⁶ Justin, *Dial.* 85.3.

¹⁴⁷ Esther Eshel, "Jesus the Exorcist in Light of the Epigraphic Evidence," in Charlesworth, *Jesus and Archaeology*, 178-85.

¹⁴⁸ *m. Šanh.* 10:1.

¹⁴⁹ *y. Šot* 1.4; 16d; *y. Šabb.* 6.2; *y. Abod. Zar.* 2.2, 40d; *b. Ber* 5b, 34b; *b. Šabb.* 108b. The Babylonian Talmud also records a brief exorcism by R. Simeon (*b. Me'il* 17b). In the story, the demon, Ben Tamalion, has taken possession of the Emperor's daughter. R. Simeon orders the demon to leave the girl. "When R. Simeon arrived there, he called out: 'Ben Temalion, leave her. Ben Temalion, leave her,' and as soon as he proclaimed this he left her." This is one of only a few cases recorded in Jewish or Greco-Roman literature of a female being possessed by a spirit. The other cases include Sarah in Tobit, the

used in the incantation. In the Jerusalem Talmud, for example, R. Yehoshua b. Levi argues that it would have been better if his choking grandson had died than to have been healed using the name of Jesus.¹⁵⁰

There are also several accounts of exorcism in Greco-Roman texts, one described by Lucian of Samosata, and attributed to a Syrian exorcist, and two ascribed to Apollonius in the writings of Philostratus. We begin with Lucian's account, which comes from the mid-second century. Lucian (ca. 120-180 CE) records a conversation between one Tychiades and his friend Philocles in which Tychiades recounts a discussion he has overheard at a gathering, regarding supernatural phenomena. In this portion of the conversation, he describes the techniques of an unidentified Syrian exorcist:

For my part, I should like to ask you what you say to those who free possessed men from their terrors by exorcising the spirits so manifestly [ὅσοι τοὺς δαιμονῶντας ἀπαλλάττουσι τῶν δειμάτων]. I need not discuss this: everyone knows about the Syrian from Palestine, the adept in it, how many he takes in hand who fall down in the light of the moon and roll their eyes and fill their mouths with foam; nevertheless, he restores them to health and sends them away normal in mind, delivering them from their straits for a large fee. When he stands beside them as they lie there and asks: 'Whence came you into his body?' the patient himself is silent, but the spirit answers in Greek or in the language of whatever foreign country he comes from, telling how and whence he entered into the man; whereupon, by adjuring [ὄρκου] the spirit and if he does not obey, threatening him, he drives him out [ἐξεαύνει]. Indeed, I actually saw one coming out, black and smoky in colour.¹⁵¹

Several points are significant in this account. First, the symptoms of Lucian's demoniac are similar to those recorded in Mark's (and Luke's) version of the boy with the spirit (foaming at the mouth), and implied in Matthew's naming the boy as an epileptic

Syrophenician woman's daughter in Mark, and Mary Magdalene in L. See Mark 7:24-30 and L (Luke) 8:2.

¹⁵⁰ *y. Šabb.* 14.4; 14d. Although the Jerusalem and Babylonian Talmuds reflect a much later period than the NT gospels, and cannot therefore be used as evidence of the belief system in the first century, this evidence suggests that the use of incantations was common in the rabbinic tradition, and may indicate that these methods were in use earlier.

¹⁵¹ Lucian *Philops.* 16.

(Matt 17:15), which will be discussed under 4.2.3; in both cases the symptoms of spirit possession and epileptic seizure appear to be conflated.¹⁵² In addition, the exorcist asks the demon how it came into the body of the person. As we have seen, requesting information from a demon in order to gain control over it was a common practice in the ancient world. These questions are typically about origin, name, or the way in which the demon can be controlled.¹⁵³ We will see evidence of this in the Greek Magical Papyri, and we will also encounter it in the exorcism of the Gerasene Demoniac (Mark 5:1-20).¹⁵⁴ In this instance, once the exorcist has gotten information from the spirit, he is able to remove it, first by adjuring it to leave, and if necessary, by threatening it.

Evidence that spirit possession was a problem and that exorcism was used to treat it is also found in the Greek Magical Papyri (*PGM*), a collection of incantations, hymns and ritual material deriving from Greco-Roman Egypt and dated to between the second century BCE and the fifth century CE.¹⁵⁵ Several incantations for exorcism are found in the *PGM*, and I have included two below:

Excellent rite for driving out daimons: Formula to be spoken over his head: Place olive branches before him, and stand behind him and say: "Hail, God of Abraham; hail, God of Isaac; hail, God of Jacob; Jesus Chrestos, the Holy Spirit, the son of the Father, who is above the seven, / who is within the seven. Bring Iao Sabaoth; may your power issue forth from him, NN, until you drive away this unclean demon Satan, who is in him. I conjure you, demon, whoever you are, by this god, SABARBARBATHIŌTH SABARBARBATHIOUTH SABARBARBATHIŌNĒTH SABARBARBAPHAI. Come out, demon, whoever you are, and stay from him, NN, now, now; immediately, immediately. Come out, daimon, since I bind you with unbreakable adamantine fetters, and I deliver you into black chaos in perdition."¹⁵⁶

¹⁵² Mark 9:18 and parallels.

¹⁵³ See, e.g., asking about the type of demon: *PGM IV*. 3040-45; requesting the demon's name: Mark 5:9; *T. Sol.* 2:1-2; 5:6; 7:3-4; and asking how the demon can be thwarted: *T. Sol.* 5:9; 11:5-6.

¹⁵⁴ See *PGM IV*. 3035-3040; Mark 5:7.

¹⁵⁵ Hans Dieter Betz, (ed), *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation. Including the Demotic Spells* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), xli.

¹⁵⁶ *PGM IV*. 1230-45.

I conjure you by the god of the Hebrews, Jesus. I conjure you by the one who appeared to Osrael in a shining pillar and a cloud by day, who saved his people from the Pharaoh and brought upon Pharaoh the ten plagues because of his disobedience. I conjure you, every daimonic spirit, to tell whatever sort you may be, because I conjure you by the seal /which Solomon¹⁵⁷ placed on the tongue of Jeremiah and he told.¹⁵⁸

Since the perspective of the writers of the *PGM* is Hellenistic, the text can provide useful information about Greek folk religion,¹⁵⁹ but because it also represents a mixture of several religious, cultural and linguistic traditions, including Greek and Jewish, it can also tell us something about popular Jewish views on exorcism. For example, references throughout the texts to the god of the Hebrews, *Iao Sabaoth*,¹⁶⁰ the Exodus traditions, *Jesus Chrestos*, the effectiveness of Hebrew spells, and the use of Solomon's name, indicate that Jewish names and techniques were viewed as especially effective against demons by those who used and wrote down these incantations.¹⁶¹ In addition, the use of binding to remove the demon is found in other Jewish texts, and also in some of Jesus' exorcisms as we will see. The connection between the god of the Hebrews and Jesus is intriguing, and may suggest a Jewish Christ-believer as the author of the exorcism rite.

The introduction to the first text, "an excellent rite for driving out demons," provides evidence that people were performing exorcisms. In addition, the identification of Satan as an unclean demon is significant both from an anthropological perspective, since unclean is linked with "other," and also from a comparative perspective. Mark uses

¹⁵⁷ See note 144.

¹⁵⁸ *PGM* IV. 3020-3040; see also *PGM* IV. 3007-3029, which combines Jewish names and traditions with the use of Jesus' name.

¹⁵⁹ Betz, *The Greek Magical Papyri*, xlvi-xlvii.

¹⁶⁰ Sabaoth, as well as Adonai, Most High, and the Heavenly One, are all mentioned by Origen (*Cels.* 1.24) as well.

¹⁶¹ See, e.g., *PGM* IV.1235-40; 3020; 3030; 3050; 3085. This is also confirmed by Josephus' statement, "And this ability to cure [by exorcism] remains a very strong power among us [Jews] even to this day" (*Ant.* 8.45-46); cf. Betz, *The Greek Magical Papyri*, xlv.

the term “unclean spirit” frequently in his narrative.¹⁶² We will look more closely at this issue in chapters 4 and 5.

Although some of this material may post-date Jesus’ lifetime, and caution should therefore be used in attributing these ideas to first-century thought, it nevertheless represents traditions at the popular level and can therefore be useful in reconstructing ideas about demons and methods for expelling them in the Greco-Roman world during a period roughly contemporary with Jesus’ lifetime.¹⁶³

Justin Martyr, writing in the mid-second century, refers to the ability of Christ-believers to exorcise demons using Jesus’ name, and to Jesus’ crucifixion under Pontius Pilate.¹⁶⁴ Several references in Origen’s *Contra Celsum* (ca. 245 CE) paint a similar picture of beliefs about the use of powerful names and incantations in removing evil spirits. Although the text was written two centuries after Jesus’ death, it nevertheless provides some insight into the continuing significance and power of particular names for use in incantations against demons. I quote here part of a longer discussion of the significance of names:

then we would say that the name Sabaoth, and Adonai, and all the other names that have been handed down by the Hebrews with great reverence, are not concerned with ordinary created things, but with a certain mysterious divine science that is related to the Creator of the universe. It is for this reason that when these names are pronounced in a particular sequence which is natural to them, they can be employed for certain purposes; and so also with other names in use in Egyptian which invoke certain *daemons* who have power only to do certain particular things; and other names in Persian which invoke other powers, and so on with each nation. So also the names of the daemons upon earth, which have possession of different localities will

¹⁶² See Clinton Wahlen, *Jesus and the Impurity of Spirits in the Synoptic Gospels* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), who examines the issue of ‘unclean’ spirits in the gospels.

¹⁶³ As Pliny (*Nat.* 28.3.10) notes, although individuals among the wise reject this kind of belief in words and incantations, most people believe in the power of incantations.

¹⁶⁴ See Justin, *Dial.* 76.6; cf. 30.3; 85.2; Irenaeus, *Haer.* 2.32.4.

be found to be related to the languages used in each respective locality and nation.¹⁶⁵

It is noteworthy that Origen links particular incantations and names with power over particular demons and that these differences represent, in part, ethnic or cultural distinctions; i.e., Egyptian names invoke one type of demon, while Persian names invoke another. In relation to the use of Jesus' name, Origen says:

The name of our Jesus is also connected with the same philosophy of names; for it has already been clearly seen to have expelled countless *daemons* from souls and bodies, and to have had great effect on those people from whom they were expelled.¹⁶⁶

Having examined some of the reports of exorcism in Greco-Roman and Jewish texts, it is important to look now at the information we have about exorcists, beginning with a brief overview of the phenomena of wandering sages. Although only a few exorcists are mentioned in the ancient literature, wandering charismatic figures are described as early as the fourth century BCE in the writings of Plato, and are attested up to and beyond the first century in the area of Syria-Palestine.¹⁶⁷ The second century philosophers Diogenes Laertius and Lucian of Samosata describe several individuals in the cynic tradition who chastised people for their sins, gave away large sums of money, preached against the evils of wealth, and encouraged people not to marry or have children.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁵ Origen, *Cels.* 1.24; see also 1.25, 28, 71; 6.40, 8.37.

¹⁶⁶ Origen, *Cels.* 1.25.

¹⁶⁷ Plato, *Rep.* 364b-365a; Epictetus, *Diatr.* 3.22.45-9; Diogenes Laertius, *Lives* 6-10; Lucian, *The Passing of Peregrinus* 10-11. Graham Anderson (*Sage, Saint and Sophist: Holy Men and their Associates in the Early Roman Empire* [London: Routledge, 1994], 1-2) delineates the following characteristics of early Imperial holy men: they have access to some kind of supernatural information, they deliver their message in a prominent time and place, they evoke opposition (and perhaps later support), they attract the attention of the authorities, and they experience a spectacular death.

¹⁶⁸ Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* 6.98-95; 7.32. Three of these, Meleager, who lived and wrote in the Galilean area in the first half of the first century BCE, Menippus of Gadara (first half of the 1st century CE), and Peregrinus (100-165 CE), were from the Palestinian region. Another itinerant figure, Menedemus (3rd century BCE, Asia Minor), claimed to have come from Hades to take stock of sin and report back to the powers below. See also discussion in Twelftree, *Jesus the Exorcist*, 26-29.

However with the exception of the account just examined in Lucian, none of these figures is reported to have performed exorcisms. Canonical Acts (ca. 90 CE) reports that the sons of Sceva were both wandering priests and exorcists, and contains the only exorcism reported outside the gospels in the New Testament.¹⁶⁹ However, outside of the incident in Acts, the only other extant Jewish exorcism recorded in the first century is by Josephus' Eleazar.

It is necessary to mention two other figures in relation to charismatic healers and exorcists: Honi the Circle Drawer and Hanina ben Dosa. Honi (also known as Onias) lived in the first-century BCE, and is known from both Josephus and the rabbinic tradition. There are very few references to him, and although no exorcisms or healings are attributed to him, he was known as a rainmaker, and like Jesus, he experienced a political death.¹⁷⁰ According to Josephus, Honi was a righteous man who had once brought rain during a period of drought. During a struggle between Hyrcanus II and Aristobulus for control of Judea, supporters of Hyrcanus II asked Honi to curse his political rival Aristobulus.¹⁷¹ When he refused, he was stoned to death.¹⁷²

¹⁶⁹ Acts 19:13-19.

¹⁷⁰ The fact that Honi's grandsons were also known as rainmakers (*y. Ta'an* 64b; *b. Ta'an* 23a-b) lends historical credibility to reports about his rainmaking abilities. Sean Freyne ("The Charismatic," in *Ideal Figures in Ancient Judaism: Profiles and Paradigms* SBSCS 12 [ed. John J. Collins and George W. E. Nickelsburg; Chico, Ca: Scholars Press, 1980], 223-58, 257) suggests the scarcity of traditions about Honi may indicate that he was seen to pose a greater risk to the establishment than Hanina.

¹⁷¹ Since Hyrcanus II came to power in 63 BCE, we can assume a date close to this time for the events reported and Honi's death.

¹⁷² Josephus, *Ant.* 14.22. The Mishnah (ca. 200 CE) offers a more detailed and likely embellished account of rainmaking that may be linked to the event described in Josephus, but either deliberately omits or is not familiar with the political incident. According to this story (*m. Ta'an* 3:8), when Honi's first attempt is unsuccessful, he draws a circle and stands within it vowing to remain there until God brings rain for his people. The rain comes, but initially is too little, then too much. Finally, the right amount of rain falls until the people come to him and ask him to make it stop, which he does.

The similarities between Jesus and Hanina ben Dosa, a first-century Galilean from Arav,¹⁷³ are greater than between Honi and Jesus, especially in relation to healings and exorcisms. Hanina was known as a healer and miracle worker, and like Jesus, can be situated amongst the rural peasant population of Galilee, perhaps part of a Galilean tradition of prophetic charismatic figures such as Elijah and Elisha.¹⁷⁴ He is known in the rabbinic tradition as a man of deed **אִישׁ מַעֲשֵׂה**.¹⁷⁵ Amongst the miracles attributed to Hanina are immunity to poisonous snake (or lizard) bites,¹⁷⁶ foreknowledge of the outcome of illnesses, and healing at a distance,¹⁷⁷ as a result of which he also apparently developed the reputation of being a prophet.¹⁷⁸ However, no exorcisms are attributed to him.

One of the problems with comparing Jesus and Hanina is that most of the references to Hanina are very late and it is difficult to know how much they may have

¹⁷³ Arav is located about six miles north of Sepphoris and ten miles north of Nazareth.

¹⁷⁴ Vermes (*Jesus the Jew*, 77) notes that detachment from possessions was a trait of the Hasidic lifestyle as described in the Mishnah and Babylonian Talmud (*m. 'Abot* 5:10; *b. Ber.* 17b; *b. Ta'an* 24b-25a) and argues (58-72) for a “holy man” or *Hasid* tradition within charismatic Judaism, as a special northern or Galilean tradition stemming from the Elijah and Elisha traditions and including Honi, Hanina and Jesus; cf. Joseph Blenkinsopp, (“Miracles: Elisha and Hanina ben Dosa,” in *Miracles in Jewish and Christian Antiquity* [ed. John C. Cavadini; Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1999], 57-81) who notes that poverty was common among Galilean holy men; cf. Freyne, “The Charismatic,” 242-4.

¹⁷⁵ The Mishnah (*m. Sot.* 9:15) includes Hanina in a list of legendary rabbinic figures, each of whom is known for a particular ability.

¹⁷⁶ *t. Ber.* 2:20; 3:20; *y. Ber.* 9a, 9d, *b. Ber.* 33a.

¹⁷⁷ *t. Ber.* 3:20; *y. Ber.* 9a; *b. Ber.* 33a-34b; *b. B. Qam.* 50a; *b. Yebam.* 121b.

¹⁷⁸ The link between prophets and healing is made beginning with Moses, who builds a bronze serpent in Num 21:1-9 to heal those Israelites who had been bitten by poisonous snakes. Both Elijah (1 Kgs 17:17-22) and Elisha (2 Kgs 4:32-34; 2 Kgs 5:1-14) performed healings and resuscitations; Anitra Bingham Kolenkow (“Miracle and Prophecy in the Greco-Roman World and Early Christianity,” *ANRW* II.23.2, [Berlin: Walter De Gruyter, 1980], 1470-1506) notes that miracles in the Jewish world often served as confirmation of a prophetic call or mission (i.e. Moses and Aaron being able to do signs in Exod 7 and Elisha suggesting that his healing of Naaman the Syrian would confirm that “there is a prophet in Israel” (2 Kgs 5:8). In the Greco-Roman world as well, there was a strong connection between those who performed miracles and those who were able to foretell the future. A good example of this is the Asclepius shrines where healing often occurred through a vision or dream (see Emma J. and Ludwig Edelstein, *Asclepius: A Collection and Interpretation of the Testimonies* (New York: Arno Press, 1975), 229-37; Aristophanes, *Plutus*, 300-414, 633-747; Aristides, *Or.* 37.20; 42; 43.25; 47; 48; 49.

been altered over time and to fit particular rabbinic purposes.¹⁷⁹ The only reference in the Mishnah does not specify what deeds Hanina was known for. There are two references in the Tosefta (220-300 CE). However, only one refers to healing. The other refers to Hanina's immunity to snake/lizard bites. In addition, these traditions are of very little use in discussing exorcism since no exorcisms are attributed to Hanina. The Babylonian Talmud¹⁸⁰ records an encounter between Hanina and the demon Igrath (or Agrath), the daughter of Mahalath. According to the Talmud, Agrath is unable to subdue Hanina because of his great learning, and resulting standing in heaven.

And do not go out alone at night, for it was taught: One should not go out alone at night, i.e., on the nights of neither Wednesday nor Sabbaths, because Igrath [or Agrath] the daughter of Mahalath,¹⁸¹ she and 190,000 destroying angels go forth, and each has permission to wreak destruction independently. Originally they were about all day. On one occasion she met R. Hanina b. Dosa [and] said to him, 'Had they not made an announcement concerning you in Heaven, 'Take heed of Hanina and his learning,' I would have put you in danger.' If I am of account in Heaven,' replied he, 'I order you never to pass through settled regions.' 'I beg you,' she pleaded, 'leave me a little room.' So he left her the nights of Sabbaths and the nights of Wednesdays.¹⁸²

Although it is important to acknowledge the difference in time between the writing of the

¹⁷⁹ See, e.g., Baruch M. Bokser, "Wonder-Working and the Rabbinic Tradition: The Case of Hanina ben Dosa," *JSJ* 16 (1985): 42-92; Crossan, *The Historical Jesus*, 148-58.

¹⁸⁰ Babylonian Talmud was compiled ca. 500-550 CE, but contains earlier traditions, although these are difficult to date.

¹⁸¹ The footnote to this name in the Babylonian Talmud states that Mahalath is the queen of the demons.

¹⁸² *b. Pes.* 112b. See also *b. Kidd.* 81a where Satan appears as a woman to R. Akiba and attempts to seduce him. Akiba is only saved because of his piety. Note that both of these passages along with one recorded by Philostratus describe evil spirits appearing to men in the guise of a woman; Philostratus (*Life* 4.25) also describes the case of a man named Menippus, a cynic philosopher being deluded by a female demon, who pretended to be in love with him, but was exposed by Apollonius; *T. Sol* (13:1, 5; 15:1) also describes two female demons, one with disheveled hair and one with two heads who confronts Solomon. This tells us that spirits often assumed an opposite gender to their host. It also suggests that female temptresses in the form of demons were apparently a commonly understood symbol of danger and temptation for men in the ANE.

synoptic gospels and the Babylonian Talmud, the story attests a continuing belief in the destructive power of demons and demonstrates that certain people were seen to have authority over these.¹⁸³ In addition, Hanina was a contemporary of Jesus and a Galilean. His ability to heal and his power over demons may indicate that other Jewish figures contemporary with Jesus were also known for these abilities. However, this is somewhat uncertain since the attestation is so late making it possible that the power over demons could have been attributed to Hanina only later.

The closest parallel to Jesus outside the Jewish tradition is Apollonius, a first-century itinerant sage, healer and exorcist from Tyana, a Greek city of Cappadocia,¹⁸⁴ who is reported to have performed both healings and exorcisms. Both Apollonius (ca.30-98 CE)¹⁸⁵ and his biographer, Philostratus (who wrote ca. 217 CE) were philosophers in the neo-Pythagorean tradition.¹⁸⁶ It is important to acknowledge that more than a century separates Philostratus' biography from Apollonius' lifetime, which means that caution is in order in regard to accuracy of sources.¹⁸⁷ The similarities between Jesus' healings and those of Apollonius have raised questions about whether Philostratus may have altered or enhanced the account of Apollonius either to make it more appealing or to bring it into

¹⁸³ The limiting of the activities of Agrath to Wednesday and Friday nights contains the same Aramaic root גער, as the noun form that is found in PrNab. See H. C. Kee, "The Terminology of Mark's Exorcism Stories," 239.

¹⁸⁴ Philostratus, *Life* 1.3-5, 19. See F. C. Conybeare, *Philostratus: Life of Apollonius of Tyana*, vols. 1, LCL, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1948), "Introduction," v-vi.

¹⁸⁵ Christopher P. Jones, "Introduction," in vol. 1 of *Life* LCL (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), 1-30.

¹⁸⁶ Philostratus was commissioned to write Apollonius' biography (ca. 217 CE) by Julia Domna, the wife of the Roman emperor at the time, Septimius Severus. Conybeare (*Philostratus: Life*, "Introduction," v-vi) notes that Philostratus (*Life* 1.4-5) drew on several sources in composing the biography, including Apollonius' own *Letters*, memoirs written by one of his disciples, a history of Apollonius' career written by Maximus, and a collection of treatises written by Apollonius, but no longer extant. See, also, *Life* 1.3, 1.4-5, 19.

¹⁸⁷ Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, 2: 579, 624.

line with traditions about Jesus that were circulating at the time.¹⁸⁸ However, there are enough differences between the stories of Jesus and Apollonius to suggest that they represent independent traditions. These include the report that Apollonius was an ascetic,¹⁸⁹ that he gave away a substantial inheritance,¹⁹⁰ and that he spent five years in silence.¹⁹¹

There are also a number of differences between the exorcisms and healings attributed to Apollonius and those reported in the gospels. These include the methods used by the two men, the particular circumstances of those who were healed, and the symptoms, as we will see shortly. It is likely then, that the similarities simply reflect a common phenomenon of itinerant sages, healers, and exorcists during the first-century in the eastern Mediterranean and that Jesus and Apollonius were both part of this broader tradition.¹⁹²

There are two clear cases of spirit possession associated with Apollonius, and two exorcisms. The first involves a sixteen year old boy whose mother approaches Apollonius during his travels in India. The woman reports that her son has become possessed by the spirit of a dead soldier which often drives the boy into desert places and tries to injure him. The mother is concerned for his safety, but has been threatened by the demon not to bring

¹⁸⁸ Specifically, there is some question about the originality of some of the healings and exorcisms described in *Life* because of their similarity to some of Jesus' healings and exorcisms. There are other parallels between Jesus and Apollonius as well, including miracles surrounding their births, and the tradition that he, like Jesus, ascended to heaven and appeared after his death to several people. Thus, the stories may have drawn on early traditions about Jesus as patterns for their own presentations of Apollonius' actions. See Conybeare, "Introduction," v-vi; ix-xi; Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, 2: 624.

¹⁸⁹ This included abstinence from wine and meat, wearing his hair long, and often going without shoes.

¹⁹⁰ Philostratus, *Life* 1.7-8, 13.

¹⁹¹ Philostratus, *Life* 1.14-15.

¹⁹² So Twelftree, *Jesus the Exorcist*, 26-9;

the boy for help or he would throw him off a cliff. Apollonius' treatment involves handing the woman a letter, addressed to the demon, which he states will prevent the demon from hurting the boy.¹⁹³ The content of the letter is not mentioned by Philostratus, but we can assume that it threatened the demon.

Apollonius' treatment is unusual, and there is no direct encounter between the demon and Apollonius, making it similar to the exorcism of the Syro-Phoenician woman's daughter (Mark 7:24-30) and the healing of the Centurion's servant/boy (Matt 8:5-13//Luke 7:1-10//John 4:46b-54) in that the healing/exorcism occurs through a surrogate. This is significant from a sociological perspective in that healings through surrogates (usually female relatives of the person who is ill) are found across cultures.¹⁹⁴ However, no other story, either Greek or Jewish, that I am aware of describes the removal of a demon by a letter.¹⁹⁵ Thus, it is doubtful that it was invented or copied from Christian sources.

The characteristics of the possessed boy correspond to those associated with spirit possession across cultures: a change in the voice, the eyes and the behavior. The description of the demon as the ghost of a fallen soldier reflects the widespread belief in the ancient world that the spirits of the dead could possess people.¹⁹⁶ The demon is also

¹⁹³ Philostratus, *Life* 4.38. Cotter, *Miracles in Greco-Roman Antiquity*, 84-85. The PGM IV. 3007 also includes instructions for writing an incantation on an amulet and hanging it around a patient's neck for protection from demons.

¹⁹⁴ In his study of Taiwanese indigenous healers, Kleinman (*Patients and Healers*, 226-7) noted, for example, that about a quarter of the cases of sickness brought to the healer were by surrogates, usually a female relative of the person who was ill. In these kinds of cases, the healer acknowledges both the sickness of the person who is not present and the concern of the surrogate and treats both.

¹⁹⁵ However, small folded incantations have been found which may suggest that phylacteries were carried around by itinerant exorcists See 4Q444. See discussion in Wahlen, *Jesus and the Impurity of Spirits*, 44-5.

¹⁹⁶ See note 54.

said to drive the boy into desert places. As we will see in chapter 5, this behaviour is characteristic of demons in the gospel accounts as well.

The second story of spirit possession recorded by Philostratus occurs when Apollonius is speaking in Athens and is interrupted by the shouting and laughter of a young man. Apollonius determines that the youth's behavior is caused by a demon.

When Apollonius looked at the spirit, it uttered sounds of fear and fury such as people being burned alive or tortured do, and it swore to keep away from the youth and not to enter into any human. But Apollonius spoke to it as an angry householder does to a slave who is wily, crafty, shameless, and so on, and told it to give a proof of its departure. It replied, "I will knock that statue over," indicating one of the statues around the Royal Columnade, where all this was taking place. When the statue first moved slightly, then fell, the outcry at this and the way people clapped in amazement were past description. The youth, as if waking up, rubbed his eyes, looked at the sun's beams, and won the respect of all the people gazing at him. From then on he no longer seemed dissolute, or had an unsteady gaze, but returned to his own nature no worse off than if he had taken a course of medicine. He got rid of his capes, cloaks and other fripperies, and fell in love with deprivation and the philosopher's cloak, and stripped down to Apollonius's style.¹⁹⁷

One clear difference between this exorcism and those attributed to Jesus in the synoptic gospels is that Apollonius does not actually order the demon out, as Jesus does in many of his exorcisms. Instead, the demon is frightened into leaving by Apollonius' gaze. While the request for proof by Apollonius (tipping over the statue) is somewhat similar to the request by the demons in Mark 5:12 to be sent into the pigs, it resembles even more closely the proof provided by Josephus' Eleazar who requests the demon to tip over a bowl of water to indicate he has left. Finally, the responses of the crowds are similar in both Jesus' and Apollonius' exorcisms; in both cases amazement. In fact, compared with the response of the crowd to Apollonius' exorcism, the response of the crowds in the gospels seems almost subdued. Another parallel is the similarity between the decision of the youth

¹⁹⁷ Philostratus, *Life* 4.20.

to take up the lifestyle of Apollonius (that of a wandering sage) and the request of the restored Gerasene demoniac to follow Jesus.¹⁹⁸ Having discussed the evidence for exorcism and exorcists in Jewish and Greco-Roman texts, we move to our final section which examines the connection between Jewish prophecy and spirit possession.

2.7 Jewish Prophets and Spirit Possession

An examination of the relationship between prophecy and spirit possession is also important for understanding Jesus' role as exorcist since he was identified by the synoptic writers and probably identified himself with the prophetic tradition,¹⁹⁹ and as we will see in chapter 4, some of Jesus' experiences parallel ecstatic experiences of Israelite prophets as well as those of shamans and visionaries across cultures.

Before we begin, it is important to note that most of the texts examined here are earlier than the 2nd century BCE. However, I use them to establish the link between prophecy and spirit possession more generally and because of the fact that Israel was also an agrarian society during the classical period of prophecy. Two aspects of prophecy are especially relevant for our study: its ecstatic nature, and the relationship between its emergence and the formation of Israel as an agrarian society. We begin with a discussion of the ecstatic nature of Israelite prophecy. It is important to distinguish between ecstatic and charismatic prophecy. While Weber was the first to identify charismatic prophecy with the Jewish prophetic movement, his intention was to distinguish between the roles of prophet and priest; that is between a call based on a recognized gift and a hereditary role

¹⁹⁸ Mark 5:18.

¹⁹⁹ See e.g., Mark 6:4-5, 14-16; Matt 11:7-14; 21:11; Luke 4:24; 7:24-30; 13:33; John 4:9.

associated with an institution.²⁰⁰ “Ecstatic”, in contrast, implies spirit possession or trance.

That spirit possession or trance occurred among prophetic groups and individuals in the Hebrew Bible is suggested by the frequency with which expressions such as, “the word which I saw,”²⁰¹ “the word which came/was to,”²⁰² “the spirit entered into me,”²⁰³ “the hand of the Lord fell upon me,”²⁰⁴ “the spirit lifted me up,”²⁰⁵ and “the heavens were opened and I saw visions of God,”²⁰⁶ occur within the narrative. Visions were common among the Hebrew prophets. While Isaiah’s famous temple vision is perhaps the best known of these,²⁰⁷ other prophets, especially Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Amos, were also recognized for their visions. Visions need not necessarily imply spirit possession. However, in several cases the same prophets who saw visions also appear to have experienced some kind of ecstatic trance. In the cases of Jeremiah and Amos, these included images of coming disaster, which were at times accompanied by physical and

²⁰⁰ Max Weber (*The Sociology of Religion* [Boston: Beacon Press, 1922], 46-9) distinguished prophets from other religious intermediaries arguing that while priests are selected on the basis of hereditary office, prophets are chosen because of particular gifts (including charisma, a personal call, and a religious message) which are recognized and supported by others in the society; cf. Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Sage, Priest, Prophet: Religious and Intellectual Leadership in Ancient Israel* (Louisville, KY.: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995), 116. But see Peter L. Berger (“Charisma and Religious Innovation: the Social Location of Israelite Prophecy,” *American Sociological Review* 28 [1963]: 940-50), who challenges somewhat Weber’s assumption that charisma and innovation must be linked with social marginality. He argues that it may also emerge out of established institutions at the center of society.

²⁰¹ Amos 1:1.

²⁰² Joel 1:1; Hos 1:1; Mic 1:1; Zeph 1:1.

²⁰³ Ezek 2:2; 3:24.

²⁰⁴ Ezek 8:1; 1:3; 3:13, 22, 33:22; 37:1; 40:1; Isa 8:11; 1 Kgs 18:46; 2 Kgs 3:15; Jer 15:17.

²⁰⁵ Ezek 8:3; 11:1, 24; 43:5. See Erica Bourguignon, “The Self, the Behavioral Environment, and the Theory of Spirit Possession,” *Context and Meaning in Cultural Anthropology* (ed. M. E. Spiro; New York: Free Press, 1965), 41; Robert R. Wilson, “Prophecy and Ecstasy: A Reexamination,” *JBL* 98 (1979), 321-37.”

²⁰⁶ Ezek 1:1.

²⁰⁷ Isa 6; cf. Mic 1:1; Amos 7:1-9; 8:1-6; 9:1-4; Jer 1:13-15.

psychological distress.²⁰⁸ Ezekiel’s chariot vision and vision of bones coming to life also utilize language associated with ecstatic trance and his spirit travels exhibit clear parallels to the soul journeys described by shamans across cultural traditions.²⁰⁹

While *nabi* (נְבִיא) is the most common designation in the Hebrew Bible for prophets, it probably reflects later attempts by editors to encompass all of the more specific terms for prophets under one descriptive term. Robert Wilson suggests that while the root נבא originally described ecstatic behavior, over time, it came to designate prophetic speech.²¹⁰ In addition, *nabi* is often associated with behavior that is trance-like, and at times is used to compare prophets to madmen or drunks.²¹¹

As Wilson has observed, the *nabi* word group is used to describe behaviour which is evaluated both positively and negatively by the narrator.²¹² For instance, while Saul’s trance in 1 Sam 10 is evaluated positively, when God later turns against him and he is overcome by an evil spirit (1Sam 18:10-11), the narrator continues to use a form of *nabi* to describe his behavior: נִתְנַבֵּא בְּתוֹךְ הַבַּיִת (“and he prophesied [raved] within his house”). This suggests that spirit possession or trance was indicated by the use of particular terminology, whatever its perceived source.

²⁰⁸ See especially Jeremiah’s visions in chapters 1-4; and Amos, chapters 7, 8, 9.

²⁰⁹ See e.g., Ezekiel’s visions in chapter 1; 2.1-3; 3.12-15; and 37. Two of Ezekiel’s visions are preceded by phrases suggesting trance or spirit possession: “the heavens were opened and I saw visions of God,” (1:1), and “The hand of the Lord came upon me and he brought me out by the spirit” (37:1); cf. Ezek 8:1-4.

²¹⁰ Wilson, “Prophecy and Ecstasy,” 336.

²¹¹ 1 Sam 18:10-11; 2 Kgs 9:11; Hos 9:7; Jer 23:9; 29:26.

²¹² See Wilson “Prophecy and Ecstasy,” 325-334.

Other terms used to describe prophets, such as *ro'eh* and *hozeh* (both mean “seer” or “visionary”) are also suggestive of trance or spirit possession.²¹³ Samuel, for instance, who is described as a *ro'eh* in 1 Sam 9:9-11, has pre-knowledge of Saul’s arrival and is able to tell him the location of his lost donkeys. Although pre-knowledge does not in itself necessarily imply trance or spirit possession, Samuel’s association with prophets who exhibit possession-like behavior suggests that he was a part of a prophetic group which did experience spirit possession. For instance, Saul’s meeting with a band of prophets who are in the midst of a prophetic frenzy provides evidence of this. As a result of the encounter Saul too becomes possessed by “the spirit of the Lord,” experiences prophetic frenzy and “is turned into a different person” (1 Sam 10:10).²¹⁴

As described in the Hebrew Bible, trance could be either voluntarily initiated—as it is in 2 Kgs 3:15-20, where Elisha asks for a musician to facilitate trance so that he can find water for the kings of Israel, Judah, and Edom during a trip through the wilderness of Edom—or involuntarily induced, as when Saul falls into trance in 1 Sam 10:10 when he encounters a band of prophets playing musical instruments, and again in 19:18-24, when he comes upon David and a group of prophets.²¹⁵ It is significant that in all of these cases music is the vehicle which facilitates the trance.²¹⁶ As we will see in chapter 4, it seems likely that Jesus too experienced involuntary trance or spirit possession at his call during

²¹³ Samuel is the only person in the Hebrew Bible referred to as a *ro'eh*, except those associated with Belaam. So, Blenkinsopp, *Sage, Priest, Prophet*, 119.

²¹⁴ 1 Sam 10:9-13. In 1 Sam 19:18-24 Saul experiences another trance which results in him lying naked and unable to move for a day and a half.

²¹⁵ Music, dancing and drumming play a role in facilitating trance across cultures. See Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion*, 34-37; Crapanzano, “Mohammed and Dawia,” 141-76; in *Case Studies*; Goodman, *Ecstasy, Ritual and Alternate Reality*, 37; Blenkinsopp, *Sage, Priest, Prophet*, 131.

²¹⁶ This process also apparently worked in reverse as well, since the music of David’s lyre causes the spirits that plagued Saul to depart (1 Sam 16:14-23).

his baptism and trials, and his ability to heal and exorcise demons was linked to this initial experience of spirit possession.

Several major anthropological studies have also demonstrated a correlation between spirit possession and complex agrarian societies,²¹⁷ and specifically between characteristics such as a hierarchical social structure that includes slavery, shortages of land, a shift from traditional agricultural communities and practices to paid employment, a breakdown in kin-based village systems and political occupation or oppression.²¹⁸

These conditions developed as Israel emerged as a state with its own political and religious infrastructure, during the period of the monarchy, which corresponds roughly with the appearance of prophecy in Israel—ca. 11th century BCE. Prophecy reached its peak during the eighth century BCE at the height of the political crises that were occurring as a result of Assyrian aggression which brought with it the continuous threat of war and

²¹⁷ In a study of 488 cultures, Bourguignon (*Possession*, 43-5) has shown a correlation between the increasing complexity of a society (including social stratification, slavery, and dependence on agriculture) and the presence of spirit possession or Possession Trance (PT); idem, "Introduction," 12-18; cf. Lenora Greenbaum, "Societal Correlates of Possession Trance in Sub-Saharan Africa," in *Religion, Altered States of Consciousness, and Social Change* (ed. Erika Bourguignon; Columbus, OH.: Ohio State University Press, 1973), 39-57; Winkelmann, "Magico-Religious Healers," 308-52. The following studies also link agrarian societies with Israelite prophecy: Weber, *The Sociology of Religion*, 46-55; Peter L. Berger, "Charisma and Religious Innovation: The Social Location of Israelite Prophecy," *American Sociological Review* 28 (1963): 940-50; Wilson, *Prophecy and Society*; Joseph Blenkinsopp, *A History of Prophecy in Israel* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1996), 5, 35-7.

²¹⁸ Bourguignon (*Possession*, 32) notes that contemporary Haiti is a hierarchical society characterized by "repressive poverty, the domination of the masses by a small, centralized power group, and frequent hunger and illness," where spirit possession provides an outlet; cf. Boddy, "Spirit Possession Revisited," 417; Mary Keller, *The Hammer and the Flute*, 2-3, 87, 106-121; Saunders, "Variants in Zar Experience," 177; Lambek, "From Disease to Discourse," 40; Levy, Mageo and Howard, "Gods, Spirits and History," 14-15, 21; Ward, "Possession and Exorcism," 125-44; Rothenberg, *Spirits of Palestine*, 30, 37, 72-3; Kessler, "Conflict and Sovereignty," 295-331.

invasion. This instability continued off and on until the fall of Jerusalem to the Babylonians in 587 BCE.²¹⁹

During the transition from a tribal-based society to a centrally run state, Israel developed more infrastructure, more social classes, and along with this, increasing social disparity. Samuel's warning about the consequences of having a king describe accurately the characteristics of agrarian societies, and suggests that there was a counter voice present within the tradition that acknowledged the dangers of this shift from a tribally-based society headed by local leaders to a hierarchical system headed by a monarch.

These will be the ways of the king who will reign over you: he will take your sons and appoint them to his chariots and to his horsemen, and to run before his chariots, and he will appoint for himself commanders of thousands and commanders of fifties and some to plow his ground and to reap his harvest and to make his implements of war and the equipment of his chariots. He will take your daughters to be perfumers and cooks and bakers. He will take the best of your fields and vineyards and olive orchards and give them to his courtiers. He will take one-tenth of your grain and of your vineyards and give it to his officers and his courtiers. He will take your male and female slaves, and the best of your cattle and donkeys and put them to his work. He will take one-tenth of your flocks, and you shall be his slaves. And in that day you will cry out because of your king, whom you have chosen for yourselves; but the Lord will not answer you in that day.²²⁰

Blenkinsopp argues that the pressures experienced during the Philistine expansion in the 11th century and the Assyrian campaign beginning in the 9th century were also particularly associated with the emergence of marginal prophetic groups, known as *bene-ha-nevi'im* (sons of the prophets),²²¹ such as Samuel's and Elijah's in Israel.²²² The role of

²¹⁹ So Blenkinsopp, *Sage, Priest, Prophet*, 133-6; Weber (*The Sociology of Religion*, 48-50) argues that these developments were also occurring in Persian and Hindu prophetic movements during the same period.

²²⁰ 1 Sam 8:11-18; cf. Isa 5:7; Jer 5:1; 7:11; Amos 2:7; 4:1; 5:11

²²¹ *Bene-ha-nevi'im* referred to prophetic guilds or bands of prophets, which operated in ancient Israel.

²²² Samuel, Elijah and Elisha, for example, were probably the leaders of prophetic groups (see 1 Sam 9:9; 1 Kgs 20:35; 2 Kgs 2:3, 5, 7, 15; 4:1, 38; 5:22; 5:1; 9:1; Amos 7:14). Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *A Hebrew Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962); cf. Blenkinsopp, *A History of Prophecy in Israel*, 26-30; idem, *Sage, Priest, Prophet*, 133-6.

these groups was often to critique the wealthy aristocracy and especially their exploitation of the poorer members of society who suffered under a hierarchical system.²²³

Protest on behalf of the poor and disadvantaged, those least equipped to survive the transition from a traditional way of life based on the kinship network to a state system, is one of the most powerful strands in prophetic preaching.²²⁴

Anthropological research indicates that ecstatic phenomena are often experienced among socially peripheral, dispossessed or deprived groups,²²⁵ and there are indications that the prophetic guilds led by Samuel, Elijah and Elisha were situated in the lower socio-economic stratum.²²⁶ They appear also to have functioned in part as social and political movements with the aim of commenting on and in some cases taking concrete action against social injustices and policies of the state and cult.²²⁷

The claims staked by the prophet, or on the prophet's behalf by others, would tend inevitably to set him (less commonly her) in opposition to dominant elites dedicated to preserving the status quo.²²⁸

We see this in particular with Elijah, Elisha and Jeremiah, whose political positions placed them in opposition to the dominant political views of the ruling elite. As a result of Elijah's stance against Ahab and Jeremiah's against Jehoiachim, their lives were threatened.²²⁹ In the case of Elisha, his political alignments resulted in him anointing Jehu and ordering him to eliminate the entire household and line of Ahab.²³⁰ The political

²²³ This kind of social critique is associated with several prophets including Elijah, Elisha, Isaiah and Amos. See, e.g., 1 Sam 8:11-18; 9:9; 1 Kgs 21; 2 Kgs 2:3, 5, 15; Isa 3:15-25; Amos 2: 6-8; 3:15; 4:1-3; 6:1-7; 9:8-10:4.

²²⁴ Blenkinsopp, *A History of Prophecy*, 5.

²²⁵ Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion*, 27-29; Blenkinsopp, *A History of Prophecy*, 37.

²²⁶ See 2 Kgs 4:1-7, 38-41.

²²⁷ This is particularly evident in the Elijah/Elisha traditions (1 Kgs 18-19; 2 Kgs 9:1-13), but this theme is found throughout the prophetic literature.

²²⁸ Blenkinsopp, *A History of Prophecy*, 35.

²²⁹ See esp. 1 Kgs 19-21; Jer 28; 36; 38.

²³⁰ See esp. 2 Kgs 9-10.

nature of prophecy, as well as the close ties between religion and politics, is also seen in 1 Kgs 22:10-12 where prophets in trance are prophesying political victory.

2.8 Conclusions

The main purpose of this chapter has been to establish the spiritual landscape in the Greco-Roman world and within Judaism in the three centuries leading up to the turn of the era, in order to better situate Jesus and his exorcisms. Our investigation has revealed that a belief in malevolent spirits, spirit affliction and spirit possession was present in both the Greco-Roman and Jewish contexts during the Second Temple period, and that, at least by the first century exorcisms were performed by some Greek and Jewish figures. It has also shown that a connection existed in this context between these beliefs at the cosmic level and the particular socio-economic and political circumstances on the ground. Although our study has yielded only a few first hand accounts of exorcism, the cases of Apollonius in the Greek tradition and Eleazar in the Jewish tradition indicate that exorcists were known and used varying techniques to expel malevolent spirits or demons. It has also become clear through our discussion of Jewish prophets that prophecy was closely tied to both ecstatic experiences of spirit possession and to the emergence of a highly stratified agrarian society in Israel.

Having established the context of beliefs and practices around spirit possession and exorcism in the ancient world, we move now to a discussion of the socio-political context in chapter 3. This will involve reconstructing Galilee in 30 CE. With the belief system and social context in place, we will then be ready to proceed to an evaluation of the evidence for spirit possession and exorcism in the synoptic gospels.

Chapter 3: The Socio-Political Context: Galilee in 30 CE

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, we will examine the socio-political and economic setting of first century Galilee in three stages. The first is an overview of the characteristics of agrarian societies more generally, and a corresponding assessment of the first-century Galilee. An analysis of the specific social conditions of Judea and Galilee under Roman rule during the reigns of Herod the Great and Herod Antipas will then be followed by a discussion of the various social resistance movements that were present in the area during this time.

Morten Hørning Jensen has identified four major issues that are associated with Galilee in relation to the historical Jesus. These include 1) the nature of the political situation, and particularly whether the population had revolutionary tendencies; 2) the origins of the Galileans, 3) the nature of the relationship between cities and villages, and 4) the cultural milieu. It is the first and last questions in particular, which will constitute our focus, with some discussion of the third. The last question in particular is the most intensely debated in the field of Jesus studies, particularly with regard to the level of Hellenization in the Jewish population.¹

Our investigation will assess these issues with the aim of situating Jesus and his exorcisms within both their immediate Jewish milieu and within the larger context of Roman imperial rule. We begin with a brief description of two models recently proposed for interpreting the social context of first-century Galilee. These encompass a view of the general state of the economy, the nature of urban-rural relations, and the impact of the

¹ Jensen, *Herod Antipas in Galilee*, 5-9.

larger socio-political context and economy on the poorest inhabitants of Galilee.² The first model, embraced by scholars such as Morten Hørning Jensen, Douglas Edwards, Mark Chancey, and the earlier work of Sean Freyne, posits a robust economy, general prosperity for the rural population, and a mutually beneficial or symbiotic relationship between cities and the surrounding rural areas.³

The second model, supported by Richard Horsley, William E. Arnal, John Dominic Crossan, Jonathan Reed, and the more recent work of Sean Freyne, argues that even if the broader economy was healthy, those at the lowest end of the social stratum did not generally benefit from the profits experienced by those in the highest social stratum because of the inherent structures present in agrarian societies. Similarly, the relationship between cities and the rural areas surrounding them was based on the exploitation of the resources of the rural poor by the urban elite, and was therefore parasitic, rather than symbiotic in nature.⁴

² See discussion of scholarly positions in Sean Freyne, “Archaeology and the Historical Jesus,” in *Jesus and Archaeology* (ed. James H. Charlesworth; Grand Rapids, MI.: Eerdmans, 2006), 70-72.

³ So Douglas Edwards, “The Socio-Economic and Cultural Ethos of Lower Galilee in the First Century: Implications for the Nascent Jesus Movement,” in *The Galilee in Late Antiquity* (ed. Lee I. Levine; New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1992), 53-73; Mark Chancey, *Greco-Roman Culture and the Galilee of Jesus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Jensen, *Herod Antipas in Galilee*, 9-34.

⁴ So Richard Horsley, *Bandits, Prophets, and Messiahs* (Minneapolis: Winston Press, 1985); idem, *Galilee: History, Politics, People* (Valley Forge, PA.: Trinity, 1995); idem, *Archaeology, History and Society*; William E. Arnal, *Jesus and the Village Scribes: Galilean Conflicts and the Setting of Q* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000); idem, “The Parable of the Tenants and the Class Consciousness of the Peasantry,” in *Text and Artifact in the Religions of Mediterranean Antiquity Studies in Christianity and Judaism 9* (ed. Stephen G. Wilson and Michel Desjardins; Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier Press, 2000), 135-57; Jonathan Reed, *Archaeology and the Galilean Jesus: A Re-examination of the Evidence* (Harrisburg: Trinity, 2000), 108-114; John D. Crossan and Jonathan L. Reed, *Excavating Jesus: Beneath the Stones, Behind the Texts* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2001); Freyne, “Archaeology and the Historical Jesus,” 64-83; John S. Kloppenborg, *The Tenants in the Vineyard: Ideology, Economics, and Agrarian Conflict in Jewish Palestine* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006).

Although neither view can provide a completely accurate picture of the socio-economic situation, the second model is to be preferred since it best fits the evidence of agrarian economies in general and the specific conditions of life in the eastern part of the Roman empire and in Galilee itself. While a symbiotic relationship may have characterized particular cases or relationships, in agrarian societies where social status is determined in large part by birth and prestige, and where the social structure itself determines the way resources are distributed, there can be no question of an equal relationship. In the ancient world, wealth generally benefited only a small percentage of the population as is well documented in both primary and secondary sources.

As Magnus Zetterholm notes, there are undoubtedly problems with reconstructing social reality from the ancient materials. These include the lack of sources or gaps in information and the way we value or interpret what evidence there is, as well as the fact that we do not know what assumptions are being made in the texts. And, although there are challenges inherent in utilizing sociological models, these are not unique to social scientific research, but are present in the use of every kind of information about the ancient world, including archaeological and textual.⁵ Thus, while Jensen argues that many sociological models are outdated and that it is debatable whether they should even be used, he relies for the most part on textual and archaeological data which is very limited, and in the case of written materials, clearly biased toward the upper stratum of society.⁶

⁵ Magnus Zetterholm, *The Formation of Christianity in Antioch: A Social-Scientific Approach to the Separation Between Judaism and Christianity* (London: Routledge, 2003), 9-11.

⁶ Jensen, *Herod Antipas*, esp. 30-34.

3.2 Galilee as an Agrarian Society

Galilee, like the other cultures surrounding the Mediterranean basin in the first century, was an advanced agrarian society. This means that agriculture formed the economic base of the society, and that the majority of the population lived and worked on the land, while an elite minority—usually living in the cities—controlled the land and received most of its profits.⁷ Because of the central importance of land, those who controlled it (the elite) retained political and economic control of a region.⁸ Roman sources of the period attest to the accuracy of this picture during the first century, and that a few men owned the majority of land throughout the Mediterranean region.⁹

There was no middle class in ancient Mediterranean culture. Instead, society was divided into an upper stratum¹⁰ (0.5-5%, living mostly in the cities), and a lower stratum (95% to 99.5 %, living mostly in the country and in poverty).¹¹ Life was difficult and

⁷ So Stegemann and Stegemann, *The Jesus Movement*, 7-14, 20-21, 34-65; Patrick Nolan and Gerhard Lenski, *Human Societies: An Introduction to Macrosociology* 11th ed. (Boulder/London: Paradigm Publishers, 2009), 148-75; Peter Garnsey and Richard Saller, *The Roman Empire: Economy, Society and Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 43, 197; Hanson and Oakman, *Palestine in the Time of Jesus*, 9-10 and 194.

⁸ See, Garnsey and Saller, *The Roman Empire*, 43, 197; Nolan and Lenski, *Human Societies*, 154, 161-4.

⁹ Pliny (*Nat.* 18.35) notes, for example, that one half of Africa was owned by six landlords, and condemns the large properties owned by the wealthy (*Nat.* 13.92); cf. Pliny *Nat.* 18.92; Cicero, *Verr.* 2.3.113; Seneca, *Ep.* 90.39; *Ben.* 7-10.

¹⁰ I am using Stegemann and Stegemann's (*The Jesus Movement*, 7, 12-17, 67-103) more neutral term 'strata' to refer to the socio-economic levels of society rather than the term 'class' which has associations with Marxist ideology. See also chart "overview of social stratification" p. 72 where one's place in the social stratum is determined by the way in which power, prestige and privilege work together; Cf. Bengt Holmberg, *Sociology and the New Testament* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 22;

¹¹ See Stegemann and Stegemann, *The Jesus Movement*, 67-76; Nolan and Lenski, *Human Societies*, 171; David Fiensy, *Social History of Palestine in the Herodian Period: The Land is Mine*. Studies in the Bible and Early Christianity 20 (Lewiston, N.Y.: Edwin Mellen Press, 1991), 167. The lower stratum can be further sub-divided into the relatively poor (πένητοι) and the absolute poor (πτώχοι), who were unable to provide the most basic necessities for themselves. Among the πτώχοι, Stegemann and Stegemann (*The Jesus Movement*, 92-4) include itinerant and local beggars (especially the disabled and chronically ill), day labourers, runaway slaves, poor peasants and tenants, as well as widows who were not able to remarry

short for most people in the ancient world¹² with high infant mortality rates, and life expectancy of just 45-50 years, but for those in the lowest stratum life was particularly harsh.¹³ Although it is relatively simple to identify the very wealthy and the absolute poor, there is no clear scholarly consensus on where specific occupations such as fishermen, artisans and free small farmers who owned their own land should be placed.¹⁴ In addition, in the ancient world poverty and wealth were not necessarily determined by one's status as free or slave. Many slaves, in fact, had higher status and more security than their free compatriots who were landless and poor.¹⁵

In ancient Mediterranean society, spheres of life were not clearly separated as they are in modern Western society. Religious aspects of life were, like economics, embedded in kinship and politics, meaning that one cannot speak of “religion” as a

or return to their natal home.

¹² Although the terms “ancient world” and “ancient economy” can include vast areas of Asia and extend back several thousand years, I use the two terms to refer to the area around the Mediterranean basin and to the period approximately 323 BCE to 70 CE, which corresponds roughly with the Greek and early Roman periods. See Moses Finley, *The Ancient Economy* 2nd ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 27-30.

¹³ So Garnsey and Saller, *The Roman Empire*, 138. Infant mortality rates of approximately 25% are factored into this figure; cf. Stegemann and Stegemann, *The Jesus Movement*, 11.

¹⁴ Cicero (*Off.* 1.150-151), writing ca. 46-43 BCE, lists fishing among those trades which were considered vulgar. Scholars are divided however about the status of fishermen in first-century Palestine. Stegemann and Stegemann (*The Jesus Movement*, 134-5) place fisherman at the bottom of the lowest stratum of ancient society, along with beggars, day labourers and widows and orphans. But Freyne (*Jesus a Jewish Galilean*, 51-3) argues that they were relatively well off, based on the fact that Mark 1:20 describes Zebedee (James and John's father) as having hired men in the boat with him, which indicates some degree of wealth; Holmberg (*Sociology and the New Testament*, 53) places the followers of Jesus in the middle stratum, along with artisans, tax collectors and fishermen.

¹⁵ So Stegemann and Stegemann, *The Jesus Movement*, 86-7; Fiensy (*Social History of Palestine*, 85, 100, 104) argues that free peasants who owned small amounts of land were hardly better off than tenant farmers and were at times forced to take on day labour to supplement their incomes. However, he also notes that those in Galilee were better off than those in Judea; Finley (*The Ancient Economy*, 62-8) suggests that the essential distinction in the ancient world was between those who needed to work and those who could live off of their accumulated income rather than between enslaved and free, since the status and conditions of both enslaved and free could vary considerably. Pliny (*Nat.* 33.135) refers to wealthy liberated slaves. Cf. Seán Freyne, “Galilean Questions to Crossan's Mediterranean Jesus,” in *Whose Historical Jesus?* (eds. William Arnal and Michel Desjardins; Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier Press, 1997), 63-91. Pliny (*Nat.* 33.135) refers to wealthy freed slaves.

separate entity, but rather of different facets of religious expression.¹⁶ As Josephus says, religion encompassed all of life for Jews.¹⁷ This was also true for the way that families or households functioned.¹⁸ As a result, one's honour and status and the honour and status of one's family and kinship system were intricately linked, and an individual's identity and purpose were subjugated to and embedded in that of the larger group, whether family or village.¹⁹ This means that Jesus, like his contemporaries, would probably not have entertained a sense of personal identity, which is a modern construct, but would have determined his identity from the perceptions of the public and his immediate circle of support.

¹⁶ So Stegemann and Stegemann, *The Jesus Movement*, 136-7; Jonathan Z. Smith, "Religion, Religions, Religious," 269-84, for further discussion of this issue. Philip F. Esler, "Palestinian Judaism in the First Century," in *Religious Diversity in the Graeco-Roman World. A Survey of Recent Scholarship* (ed. Dan Cohn-Sherbok and John M. Court; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 25-6. Esler argues that one way of distinguishing facets of religious expression would be with the terms 'political religion' (representing the elite) and 'domestic religion' (representing the non-elite); cf. Bruce J. Malina, "Social-Scientific Methods in Historical Jesus Research," in *The Social Setting of Jesus and the Gospels* (ed. Wolfgang Stegemann, Bruce J. Malina and Gerd Theissen; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002), 3-26, 5.

¹⁷ Josephus, *C. Ap.* 2.171.

¹⁸ See discussion in Garnsey and Saller, *The Roman Empire*, 127-8; As Halvor Moxnes, ("What is Family? Problems in Constructing Early Christian Families," in *Constructing Early Christian Families: Family as Social Reality and Metaphor* [ed. Halvor Moxnes; London: Routledge, 1997], 13-41 [9]) notes, kinship, family and household are social constructs. There is no equivalent Greek or Latin term for the modern English term 'family,' but the ancient understanding was broader than our own idea of family. For example, the Greek term *oikonomia* refers to household management, including both economic and social factors rather than relationships. The two Latin terms *familia* and *domus*, are somewhat closer to our modern understanding. However, there are clear differences. *Familia* could refer both to household possessions and to all persons living under the authority of the *paterfamilias* or to those related through the male line. *Domus* could include all those living in a household, including slaves, and could also refer to the broader descent group, including the female line. The concept of family was also rooted in a slave society.

¹⁹ Individual identity, as we find in the modern western world, was unknown in the ancient world. Instead, persons understood themselves in terms of their relationships and social position. See Horsley, *Galilee: History, Politics, People*, 196; Moxnes, "What is Family?" 16-20; Richard L. Rohrbaugh, "Ethnocentrism and Historical Questions about Jesus," in Stegemann, Malina and Theissen, 27-43; Esler, "Palestinian Judaism in the First Century," 25; Myers, *Binding the Strong Man*, 45-6; Malina, "Social-Scientific Methods in Historical Jesus Research," in Stegemann, Malina and Theissen, 3-26; but see F. Gerald Downing, "'Honor' among Exegetes," *CBQ* 61 (1999): 53-73; and Marianne Sawicki, *Crossing Galilee: Architectures of Contact in the Occupied Land of Jesus* (Harrisburg, Penn.: Trinity Press International, 2000), 5-6, 37, 67-8, 75-80 who caution against attributing the honour-shame system to the ancients.

The patron-client relationship was also central to the ancient socio-economic and political system, and was found at all levels of society.²⁰ Patrons, usually wealthy landowners, were in a position to offer benefits to clients under their immediate control, usually tenants, debtors or slaves. In return for acting as benefactor to these clients in the form of cancellation of debts or other kinds of gifts, the patron could expect to receive public honour and acknowledgement of his generosity, as well as loyalty and service.²¹

In agrarian societies, cities controlled the rural areas around them and provided for their needs through taxes and rents derived from the surrounding lands.²² As a result, although tremendous wealth was derived from agriculture, its production was subject to political and social control through a system of redistribution that concentrated the wealth of the society into the hands of a small number of elite and at the same time drained the human and material resources of those living in the countryside.²³ Galen (129-199 CE) states that those living in the cities generally got the best of the food, and if there was a shortage, those in the surrounding countryside were often forced to eat wild plants when their supplies ran out.

²⁰ For example, the Roman emperor's relationship to client kings such as Herod the Great was a patron-client relationship. In the same way, at a very different level of society, this model describes the relationship between a landowner and his tenants.

²¹ So Seneca, *Ben.* 7-10. Garnsey and Saller, *The Roman Empire*, 112, 148-50, 152-4; Stegemann and Stegemann, *The Jesus Movement*, 34-6; Hanson and Oakman, *Palestine in the Time of Jesus*, 64; Crossan, *The Historical Jesus*, 9-15; 43-77.

²² So Garnsey and Saller, *The Roman Empire*, 48-9, 97-99; Finley, *The Ancient Economy*, 125-6; Sawicki, *Crossing Galilee*, 115.

²³ Redistribution describes the movement of goods (whether produce or tax monies) from the countryside to central distribution centres, usually in the cities, with the purpose of reallocating them to the wealthy elite living in the cities. See Lenski, *Human Societies*, 154-5; Garnsey and Saller, *The Roman Empire*: 56-7; Stegemann and Stegemann, *The Jesus Movement*, 7, 35-36, 42-3; On urban-rural relationships in Galilee see Reed, *Archaeology and the Galilean Jesus*, 66-68; Santiago Guijarro, "The Family in First-Century Galilee," in *Constructing Early Christian Families: Family as Social Reality and Metaphor* (ed. Halvor Moxnes; London: Routledge, 1997), 42-66.

The city people who, as is customary, store up enough food in summer to last the whole year, take all the wheat from the fields together with the barley, beans and lentils, and leave for the country people nothing but the remaining pulses, although they themselves even take the greater part of that too, into the cities. The country people then, when they have used up their winter supplies, have only unhealthful nourishment through the entire summer. In that period these country people eat the shoots and suckers of unhealthful plants.²⁴

The urban elite were also often contemptuous of the masses, seeing them as “rustics”, who were unacquainted with the sophisticated culture of urban life and often literally spoke a different language.²⁵

Urban-rural relationships in Judea and Galilee were based on the same principles, even if the exploitation was mitigated somewhat by the smaller size of Galilean cities such as Tiberias and Sepphoris (appr. 8,000-12,000 inhabitants),²⁶ and their negative impact on the rural population was therefore less than that of larger cities such as Caesarea Maritima, Tyre or Scythopolis.²⁷ Even in Galilee, however, there are reasons for suspecting that the rebuilding of Sepphoris in 4 BCE by Antipas and his subsequent

²⁴ Galen (129-200 CE), *De probis praisque alimentorum succis* 7.749-50. Although, as Garnsey and Saller (*The Roman Empire*, 97) note, this quote describes a period of famine, and so should not be seen as describing normal conditions, it does show that in a crisis it was the poor who suffered the most.

²⁵ Garnsey and Saller, *The Roman Empire*, 119.

²⁶ It is not my intent to enter into the debate over whether Sepphoris and Tiberias qualify as πόλις during the early first century. As Sanders “Jesus’ Galilee,” 28-9) notes, Tiberias lacked many of the typical features of a πόλις, such as a theatre, amphitheatre, a hippodrome, and a gymnasium. Nevertheless, he observes that the best land in the area was likely given to Antipas’ officials. See also Reed, *Archaeology and the Galilean Jesus*, 77-80.

²⁷ See Chancey, *Greco-Roman Culture and the Galilee of Jesus*, 83-4; Reed (*Archaeology and the Galilean Jesus*, 77-80) argues that the impact of urbanization in an area can be assessed by measuring the population size and quality of public buildings and available arable land. Thus, if one compares the produce required by a city with the potential of the surrounding countryside to provide it, the strain upon the farming community can be determined. The problem is that we have no accurate figures for population of cities in Galilee; Finley (*The Ancient Economy*, 125-6) notes that the nature of the relationship between ancient cities and the surrounding countryside could vary from parasitic at one extreme to symbiotic at the other. However, many scholars argue that Galilean cities such as Sepphoris and Tiberias would have drained already limited resources from the surrounding rural areas. Cf. Milton Moreland, “The Galilean Response to Earliest Christianity: A Cross-Cultural Study of the Subsistence Ethic,” in *Religion and Society in Roman Palestine: Old Questions, New Approaches*. (ed. Douglas R. Edwards; New York: Routledge, 2004), 37-48, (40); S. Applebaum, “Economic Life in Palestine,” in *The Jewish People in the First Century* [ed. S. Safrai and M. Stern; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976], 631-700, 631) observes that the Jewish population of Palestine may have been less urbanized than populations of “other equally developed Roman provinces.”

building of a new capital in Tiberias in 19 CE²⁸ had a negative impact on those living in the surrounding areas, and reflected broader shifts that were occurring across the area from a traditional form of economics based in kinship to a redistributive economy.²⁹

The presence of two capital cities in the region would have required extensive infrastructure (roads and public buildings), as well as monies to support Antipas' large court,³⁰ and would necessarily have increased the already heavy tax burden on the surrounding population. In addition, the symbolic presence of two major administrative centres in Galilee was a constant reminder to those living on the margins, that they were being exploited by their rulers.³¹

The fact that social tension and financial burdens did affect populations around cities is evident from several incidents that occurred in both Judea and Galilee in the early part of the century. In one case, rebels burned down the palace in Tiberias during the Jewish revolt and attacked Sepphoris because of its pro-Roman stance and its wealth. In addition, the fact that the building that housed the debt records of the population of Jerusalem was the first place rebels burned in 66 CE is also suggestive of extreme

²⁸ See Josephus, *War* 2.168. For more information about Tiberias, see Hirschfield, "Tiberias," *Oxford Encyclopedia of Archaeology in the Near East* 5 vols. (ed. Eric Myers; New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 203-6.

²⁹ Freyne, "Urban-Rural Relations," 83-91; idem, "Archaeology and the Historical Jesus," 79.

³⁰ Nicolaus of Damascus (*FGH* 2A, 90F 136[8]), a writer, historian and philosopher who served as Herod the Great's ambassador to Rome and his biographer, estimates the number of Hellenes in Herod's court to have been 10,000 in 4 BCE at the time of Herod's death, and indicates that this was one of the reasons for the Jewish revolt. Cf. Freyne, *Jesus, A Jewish Galilean*, 46; Crossan, and Reed, *Excavating Jesus*, 5.

³¹ So Sean Freyne, "Jesus and the Urban Culture of Galilee," in *Texts and Contexts: Biblical Texts in their Textual and Situational Contexts Essays in Honor of Lars Hartman*. (Oslo: Scandinavian University Press, 1995), 597-622, 609; cf. Sawicki, (*Crossing Galilee*, 29-31, 93) who argues that Antipas built Tiberias to attract visitors to the western side of the lake from Eastern parts of the Empire and to "Italianize" the area just as Herod the Great had done in rebuilding the port at Caesarea;

financial burdens borne by the population.³² In the case of Tiberias, there was the added insult that Antipas brought in Greeks to populate the city, which was resented by the Jewish population who massacred them during the Jewish revolt.³³ Although the majority of inhabitants may well have been Jewish, this does not negate the fact that some gentiles were employed by Herod and lived in the city.

Obviously, the line between urban and rural, wealthy and poor, and gentile and Jew, cannot be clearly drawn, since these overlapped to a large degree on the ground.³⁴

The frontier of resistance is multidimensional and subtle. Models of binary opposition can be of only limited use for interpreting such a frontier. In contact situations, the borders run through every institution and location in the colonized land, and even through families and individuals. The village is no longer an indigenous enclave; but neither is the city a purely Roman intrusion. Rome and Israel saturate one another. The bodies of the indigenous people continually traverse every geographical demarcation, and their souls become borderlands.³⁵

And it must be acknowledged that in a context of foreign colonization, loyalties were often mixed. However, the fact that tensions did exist generally between the country people and the city dwellers in Galilee is hinted at in Josephus and also in the gospels, the latter of which never depict Jesus entering a major city, other than Jerusalem.³⁶ In addition, the Q saying about the reed blowing in the wind and those who live in palaces

³² On the burning of the palace in Tiberias see Josephus, *Life* 65-7. Archaeological remains indicate that a marble floor, which is very likely that of Antipas' palace, was covered in a layer of ash, which may confirm Josephus' report. On the burning of the building that housed the debt records in Jerusalem, see Josephus *War*, 2.426-27. On the attack on Sepphoris, see note 122.

³³ Josephus (*Life* 65) notes that there were animal representations on the walls of the palace, which would have been equally reprehensible for Jews, and that there were rumours that Tiberias was built over a cemetery, which was against Jewish law.

³⁴ See, e.g., Reed, *Archaeology*, 108-114; Sean Freyne, "Urban-Rural Relations in First-Century Galilee: Some Suggestions from the Literary Sources," in *The Galilee in Late Antiquity* (ed. Lee I. Levine; New York: The Jewish Theological Society of America, 1992), 75-91, esp. 80-81.

³⁵ Sawicki, *Crossing Galilee*, 101; Even if one disputes Sawicki's use of the term "colonized" as a descriptive for the Galilee of Jesus' time, as do Sanders and Chancey, cultural imperialism must have had a significant impact on the social and religious identity of those who lived under Roman rule, and in the case of the Jewish population, particularly so because of their religious sensitivities.

³⁶ See Mark 7:24, 31; 8:27; 5:1

may be a veiled critique of Herod Antipas, who in fact had reeds on his coins and who certainly lived in a palace and wore fine clothing. Although not outwardly hostile, the saying does suggest a clear distinction between the way the wealthy and the poor lived.³⁷

In the case of Sepphoris, the city was probably inhabited by a mostly Jewish population, as evidenced by the presence of both *miqvaoth* (ritual baths) and stone vessel fragments, as well as the absence of pork in the zooarchaeological profile during the first century.³⁸ This is further substantiated by Josephus, who states that the population tried to force a gentile to be circumcised before being allowed to enter the city.³⁹ However, the city maintained a pro-Roman stance during the revolt, and as a result of this position (and also because of the wealth that existed there) other Galileans tried to take it during the revolt.⁴⁰

Although evidence is sketchy, there are indications that social stratification was also present in the smaller towns of Galilee. For instance, at Yodefat, a frescoed house has been discovered in one neighbourhood while a pottery-making area has been found in another, suggesting social differentiation and stratification, which is evident to some

³⁷ Q 7:24-28. For discussion of the possible socio-political implications of the saying, see Gerd Theissen, *The Gospels in Context: Social and Political History in the Synoptic Tradition* (London: T & T Clark, 1992), 26-39; cf. Freyne, "Urban-Rural Relations," 84.

³⁸ See Reed, *Archaeology and the Galilean Jesus*, 79-80, 125-136; and Ronny Reich ("They are Ritual Baths," *BAR* 28 [2002]: 50-55) who, among others, argue that *miqvaoth* were present in Galilee and Judea during the first century. See also discussion of archaeological finds in Galilee, particularly as they relate to the historical Jesus in James H. Charlesworth, (ed.), *Jesus and Archaeology* (Grand Rapids, MI.: Eerdmans, 2006); Mordechai Aviam, "First Century Jewish Galilee: an Archaeological Perspective," in *Religion and Society in Roman Palestine* (ed. Douglas R. Edwards; New York: Routledge, 2004), 7-27; Freyne, "Archaeology and the Historical Jesus," 64-83; Crossan and Reed, *Excavating Jesus*; Sanders, "Jesus' Galilee," 3-41.

³⁹ Josephus, *Life*, 112ff.

⁴⁰ See Josephus *Life* 8, 30, 39, 104; Mason, *Flavius Josephus Commentary on Life*, vol. 9, note 185, p. 38. Jensen, *Herod Antipas*, 156-7.

degree at Cana and Gamla as well.⁴¹ Even if some prosperity existed in these towns, this does not prove that the majority of the population benefited from this prosperity.

Although some scholars argue that the archaeological data does not support the idea that exploitation and poverty were major problems during the first half of the first century for peasant farmers of Galilee, the evidence of social stratification in small towns points to just the opposite interpretation.

The economies of both Judea and Galilee were largely agricultural, and it is on the basis of how small farmers and trades people were affected that we must evaluate the impact of the economic system. As a result, while Josephus describes Galilee as a place with a dense population linked to a rich soil that allowed crops to thrive with minimal effort on the part of farmers, and the *Letter of Aristeas* (130-70 BCE) characterizes Judea as abounding in agricultural crops and livestock,⁴² the peasants who worked the land often did not share in the profits from their labours.⁴³ Instead, the income from crops such as olives, grains, fruits, vegetables, spices, dates, figs and balsam wood brought in a large

⁴¹ So Peter Richardson, “Khirbet Qana (and Other Villages) as a Context for Jesus,” in *Jesus and Archaeology* (ed. James H. Charlesworth; Grand Rapids, MI.: Eerdmans, 2006), 120-144 (143); Aviam, “First-Century Jewish Galilee,” 16-17.

⁴² Josephus, *War* 3.41-3; *Let. Aris.* 112; Josephus (*War* 1.138-40) describes the region of Jericho as particularly fertile where balsam and date palms were produced. Excavations on the grounds of the Scottish hospital at Nazareth suggest that it was a farming community in the Roman period and that the land was worked intensively with the main crops cultivated being cereals, such as wheat and maize, olives, figs and grapes. Aerial photography has revealed extensive terracing around Nazareth, and wine presses, stone walled terraces and circular stone towers discovered there provide confirmation of the walled vineyards described in the parables in Mark 6 and 12. See Freyne, *Jesus: A Jewish Galilean*, 37-48; idem, “Jesus and the Urban Culture of Galilee,” 602; See also, James H. Charlesworth, “Jesus Research and Archaeology: A New Perspective,” in *Jesus and Archaeology*. (ed. James H. Charlesworth. Grand Rapids, MI.: Eerdmans, 2006), 38.

⁴³ So Josephus, *War* 1.138-40. Garnsey and Saller, *The Roman Empire*, 51-2; S. Applebaum, “Economic Life in Palestine,” 619; Stegemann and Stegemann, *The Jesus Movement*, 104-5.

income for wealthy landowners living on large estates.⁴⁴ As Richard Horsley notes, “It is not clear what villagers received in ‘exchange’ for their economic produce taken as taxes, rents or religious dues.”⁴⁵

The first-century Galilean economy consisted of a combination of agriculture and small industries, such as olive oil production, sheep and goat herding, and pottery making.⁴⁶ There is also evidence of a thriving fishing industry around the Sea of Galilee.⁴⁷ The existence of salting operations may indicate that fish were exported from Galilee to other areas,⁴⁸ and Josephus mentions that some Jews living in Syria imported their oil from Galilee, suggesting that some level of trade and commerce existed.⁴⁹ The

⁴⁴ The Mishnah mentions several other crops that were grown along with the staples, wheat, corn, barley and rice: kidney beans, wild leeks, onions, peas, cucumbers, musk melon, lettuce, cauliflower and cabbage, as well as date palms and walnut trees (*m. Kil.* 1:2; 4:9; *m. Peah.* 3:1-3; 4:1-7; 5:1-6:5; 8:3).

⁴⁵ Horsley, *Galilee: History, Politics, People*, 9.

⁴⁶ Richardson, “Khirbet Qana,” 130-143; Freyne, “Jesus and the Urban Culture of Galilee,” 602. Evidence of pottery production has also been found at two other locations, one near Sepphoris at Shihim and the other at Kefar Hanania. These sites produced specific types of pottery and supplied materials for local use as well as for export to Caesarea Philippi and Ptolemais. Evidence of pre-70 glass blowing equipment and large olive presses along with some first-century houses have been discovered at Cana (Khirbet Qana). See discussion in Charlesworth, “Jesus Research and Archaeology,” 38-40; Moreland (“The Galilean Response to Earliest Christianity,” 41) notes that some people worked in the olive-oil pressing or wine industry or in trades such as weaving, pottery or glass manufacture to supplement their farming incomes.

⁴⁷ Although Mark and Matthew use “Sea of Galilee,” Luke and Josephus refer to it as the lake of Ganessaret; see Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke I-LX*, 697. Evidence of a fishing industry includes: 1) Surveys around the lake which show harbours, breakwaters and fish pools dating to the Roman period; 2) The Galilee boat, an 8-by-26 foot fishing boat that held up to thirteen people discovered in the Sea of Galilee in 1986 and dated to the first century CE; 3) A first-century house, discovered at Bethsaida, and presumably owned by fishermen, containing fishing nets, anchors, weights and fishhooks. Coins from 29 and 30 CE found in the house indicate that it was in use during Jesus’ lifetime. See Charlesworth, “Jesus Research and Archaeology,” 11-63, 41-2; Crossan and Reed, *Excavating Jesus*, 3; Rami Arav, “Bethsaida,” in Charlesworth (ed.), *Jesus and Archaeology*, 145-166; Freyne, *Jesus: A Jewish Galilean*, 51.

⁴⁸ Strabo (*Geogr.* 16.2) mentions salting fish at Tarichaea (Magdala), and Josephus (*War* 3.506-8) notes that the lake contained species of fish that were different from those found elsewhere supporting this possibility.

⁴⁹ See Josephus, *Life* 74-76; *Sifre Deut.* 355. One source of evidence supporting the increasing importance of currency in first-century Galilee is the abundance of Tyrian coins from this period discovered at various Galilean sites. The fact that these coins make up the largest percentage of all currency found indicates the importance of trade with Tyre for Galilee as well as the inferior status of both Tiberias and Sepphoris compared with Tyre in financial matters. See Edwards, “The Socio-economic and Cultural

poor farmer would, more than his wealthier counterpart, however, face the problem of the expense and risk of transporting a product due to tariffs collected at border points and entrances to cities. Although these expenses were born by all in business, they affected to a greater degree those operating on a smaller scale.⁵⁰

Galilean villagers were made up of a combination of those who were poor but still owned their own land (free peasants), and tenant farmers who worked land owned by others.⁵¹ The average rural peasant farming family in Galilee and Judea was likely made up of five or six people, living in a stone or mud-brick house,⁵² and cultivating 6-

Ethos,” 55-62; Sean Freyne, “Herodian Economics in Galilee: Searching for a Suitable Model,” in *Modelling Early Christianity: Social Scientific Studies of the New Testament in its Context* (ed. Philip F. Esler; London; Routledge, 1995), 23-46; Martin Goodman (*The Ruling Class of Judaea: The Origins of the Jewish Revolt Against Rome* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987], 53), notes that finds of small-denomination coins in homes in Jerusalem from the Herodian period and earlier suggest a thriving market economy. But Richardson, (“Khirbet Qana,” 128) argues against a clear shift to monetization during the first century CE since the coins found at Khirbet Qana are mostly Hasmonean and only a few Roman coins have been found.

⁵⁰ So Garnsey and Saller, *The Roman Empire*, 52; Finley, *The Ancient Economy*, 126; Stegemann and Stegemann, *The Jesus Movement*, 22-23; Applebaum, “Economic Life in Palestine,” 686; Hørning Jensen, *Herod Antipas*, 190-91. The fact that a different bronze currency operated in each of the tetrarchies of Herod’s sons after 4 BCE made commerce between the territories difficult. It also gave an advantage to those dealing in larger quantities of goods and currency (the wealthy), who could use the more universal gold and silver coins.

⁵¹ Fiensy, *The Social History of Palestine*, 21-73; Stegemann and Stegemann, *The Jesus Movement*, 110-13.

⁵² Guijarro (“The Family in First-Century Galilee,” 59-60) estimates that approximately 75% of families in rural Palestine in the first century lived in small one room houses made of sun-dried brick, covered with tree branches. Floors were often packed earth, and windows were small, partly due to the cost of filling the opening with either glass or translucent stone. Others, approximately 9%, lived in more comfortable courtyard houses, and the remaining 15-20%, consisting of the lowest social stratum and including beggars and the ill, were likely homeless. Both types of houses have been discovered in Palestine from the Herodian period. Fiensy (*Social History of Palestine*, 119-125) notes that surveys in Samaria indicate the average urban living quarters for a nuclear family of five would have been a room or house of between 4.48 x 3.36 meters and 4.48 x 5.6 meters, and argues that these figures can be applied to Galilee and Judea as well. The Mishnah (*m. B. Bat* 6:4) describes houses of similar size (3 x 4 metes to 5 x 5 meters); cf. Charlesworth, “Jesus Research and Archaeology,” 11-63; 40-41; S. Safrai, “Home and Family,” in *The Jewish People in the First Century*. 2 vols. (ed. S. Safrai and M. Stern; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974-76), 728-92 (734); Aviam, “First-Century Jewish Galilee,” 16-17.

16 acres,⁵³ which was barely enough to sustain a family this size. If a family had a particularly difficult year, and borrowed money to buy seed or to pay for other essentials, it could be challenging for them to get out of debt. If they experienced a second bad year, loans could be called in and they could lose their land and become tenants, or be sold into slavery, or both. In order to increase their own holdings, large landowners could legally seize property when debts were not paid, or simply encroach on neighbouring land illegally, both of which occurred in Palestine, as elsewhere in the Roman world.⁵⁴

The fact that tenant farmers were losing their land in Palestine because of defaulting on grain loans is confirmed by the Mishnah's double prohibition against landlords loaning grain to their tenants for food rather than for seed and taking advantage of their tenants.⁵⁵ If a contract found in the Tosefta is any indication of the norm, tenants paid approximately one half of the harvest to the land owner,⁵⁶ which left little extra, especially in a bad year.

Therefore, the indebtedness of small farmers and the expropriation of their land are the hallmarks of this Roman epoch. Hence, one can indeed speak of a regular process of pauperization. The decline of free small farmers to small leaseholders, then day laborers, and even beggars was nothing unusual. Thus, on the one hand, the number of those who worked the soil as small leaseholders or even day laborers, and no longer as owners, increased, while, on the other hand, property was increasingly concentrated in the hands of the few.⁵⁷

⁵³ See Fiensy, *The Social History of Palestine*, 92-5, for discussion and different estimates; cf. Shimon Applebaum, "Judaea as a Roman Province: The Countryside as a Political and Economic Factor," *ANRW* 2.8: 355-96, 355-96, 374-5.

⁵⁴ 2 *En.* 10:5; *Jub.* 9:14; *T. Jud.* 21:7; *T. Dan* 5:7; *T. Mos.* 7:6; Mark 12:40. Cf. discussion of tenancy in Fiensy, *The Social History of Palestine*, 79-85; cf. Goodman, *The Ruling Class of Judaea*, 56-7; Horsley, *Galilee: History, Politics, People*, 216.

⁵⁵ See *m. B. Mesi'a* 5:1-8. The extent to which peasants could become indebted is also attested in Pliny the Younger's letters (*Ep.* 9.37.2-3).

⁵⁶ *t. B. Mesi'a* 9:13.

⁵⁷ Stegemann and Stegemann, *The Jesus Movement*, 112; cf. Applebaum, "Judaea as a Roman Province," 392-4.

Finally, textual evidence suggests that the Sabbatical laws, established to protect both the land and those working it, were either never implemented or had ceased to function by the first century.⁵⁸ Among other things, these laws stated that every seventh year all debts were to be forgiven.⁵⁹ However, Jewish moneylenders sometimes reinterpreted this by using the *prosbul*, a public declaration before a court by a man seeking a loan, indicating that he would repay the loan even after the coming of a sabbatical year rendered the debt cancelled.⁶⁰

In addition, there is evidence that during the Hellenistic and Herodian periods a demographic shift occurred in Palestine away from isolated family-run farms to living quarters in villages that were part of a courtyard, from extended family units to single nuclear families, and from small, family-run farms to larger estates worked by tenants, often under absentee landlords.⁶¹ The result of all of these factors was that more and more families became landless. Where previously families had functioned as autonomous units of production, increasingly they were under the control of large

⁵⁸ Although Philo and Josephus and the rabbis refer to these laws (Philo, *Spec.* 2.111; *Virt.* 99; Josephus, *Ant.* 3.282; *y. Ketub.* 2.10; *y. Šebu.* 10.4; *b. 'Arak.* 32b-33a), there is no evidence that Hebrew slaves were ever released on the sabbatical year, with one exception, and, according to Fiensy (*Social History of Palestine*, 10-11), the release of debts was no longer in practice by the time of Hillel.

⁵⁹ The Jewish people held that the land belonged to Yahweh, as expressed through the concepts of Sabbatical rest for the land and Jubilee (Exod 21:2-6; 23:10-11; Lev 25:2-7; Deut 15:1-18). According to Leviticus 25, the land was to remain fallow every seventh year, all debts were to be forgiven, and Hebrew slaves were to be released. In addition, every 50th year, all land was to return to its original owners (see, Ruth 4:9; 2 Kgs 21:3; Jer 32:6-9; Is 61:1ff). What is less clear is whether these laws were ever put into practice.

⁶⁰ *m. Sheb.* 10:2-5. See also Goodman, *The Ruling Class of Judaea*, 58; Stegemann, *The Jesus Movement*, 112-13; Applebaum, "Judaea as a Roman Province," 370; Horsley, *Bandits, Prophets, and Messiahs*, 59-60.

⁶¹ See Stegemann and Stegemann, *The Jesus Movement*, 110-12; Safrai, "Home and Family," 732; Guijarro, "The Family in First-Century Galilee," 59; Fiensy, *Social History of Palestine*, 120-21, 126; Freyne, "Jesus and the Urban Culture of Galilee," 607; Goodman, *The Ruling Class of Judaea*, 68-9; Applebaum, "Judaea as a Roman Province," 361-4. Burial customs from the second century BCE on consist of single unit families. Evidence in the Mishnah (*m. B. Bat.* 1:1-6) assumes a multifamily courtyard as a place of residence in Palestine.

landowners, and were forced to work for others.⁶² These changes meant increased financial pressure on each nuclear unit because of lack of support from the larger family unit and the necessity of maintaining a separate household.

Other pressures on farmers included high taxes, the constant threat of crop failure due to inadequate rains, famine, war, and natural disasters.⁶³ Thus, even though peasants were resourceful in their use of land (i.e., planting a variety of crops to mitigate against crop failure), risk was always present.

As in most peasant societies, the living was barely subsistence for most. Households were economically marginal and susceptible to any disruption in the annual agricultural cycle. . . we have noted several sorts of disruptions that could have major effect on the economic and social viability of peasant families, from suddenly disruptive military expeditions through their territory to the steady escalation of economic pressure in the form of new demand from additional layers of rulers. Interestingly enough, it is precisely in times of such disruptions, for which we have evidence in Josephus that overt social conflict erupted in Galilee, whether escalating banditry, peasant strikes, or widespread peasant revolt.⁶⁴

The economic hardship and continued loss of land compelled many to earn their living as day labourers, tenant farmers, beggars or bandits.⁶⁵ For those seeking work, the

⁶² So Fiensy, *Social History of Palestine*, 5-6; Stegemann and Stegemann, *The Jesus Movement*, 111-13; Guijarro, "The Family in First-Century Galilee," 45, 59-60; Freyne, "Herodian Economics," 33; Horsley, *Bandits, Prophets, and Messiahs*, 53-60; Fiensy, *Social History of Palestine*, 5-6, 132.

⁶³ Palestine experienced three famines and seven earthquakes between 50 BCE and 50 CE. Famines occurred in 25/24 BCE (Josephus *Ant.* 15.299ff; 310; 20.51-52, 98-102), 29 CE and sometime during the reign of Claudius (41-54 CE), probably in 46/47 CE (see Acts 11.28). Earthquakes occurred in 31/30 (Josephus, *Ant.* 15.121) and 24 BCE, and in 19, 30, 33, 37, and 48 CE. See also Lester L. Grabbe, *Judaism from Cyrus to Hadrian* 2 vols. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991-1992), 1: 414; Lenski, *Human Societies*, 156-7; Guijarro, "The Family in First-Century Galilee," 45; Stegemann and Stegemann, *The Jesus Movement*, 51-2; Applebaum, "Economic Life in Palestine," 653-54; Reed, *Archaeology and the Galilean Jesus*, 86; Garnsey and Saller (*The Roman Empire*, 78-82) note that crop yields in the Mediterranean region can still vary immensely from three to nine fold.

⁶⁴ Horsley, *Galilee: History, Politics, People*, 201.

⁶⁵ These conditions are mentioned in the Mishnah. On tenant farmers, see *m. B. Mesi'a* 5:8; on day labourers, see *m. B. Mesi'a* 7:1, 7; on leasing land, see *m. B. Mesi'a* 9:1-10; *Pe'ah* 5.5. See also Goodman, *The Ruling Class of Judea*, 63; Stegemann and Stegemann, *The Jesus Movement*, 100, 108, 112; Applebaum, "Economic Life in Palestine," 637-8, 661; Fiensy, *The Social History of Palestine*, 88-90; Horsley, *Galilee: History, Politics, People*, 59, 219-20. Although day labourers were often landless, they could also include those who had some land but could not support their family with it and so hired themselves out for other jobs.

difficulty was complicated by the fact that many of the available jobs were seasonal, such as weeding, harvesting, threshing or picking fruit.⁶⁶ This, combined with regular Jewish festivals, likely meant that it would have been difficult to find continuous employment. If one managed to work 200 days per year at the rate of one denarius per day,⁶⁷ one might be able to provide bread for their family for the year.⁶⁸ Confirmation of this social situation is found in the number of Jesus' parables that refer to tenant farmers, day labourers, wealthy absentee landlords, shrewd stewards and extreme disparity between the wealthy and the poor.⁶⁹ Freyne posits that what we see reflected in the gospel parables is the tension that existed in the early first century between the traditional system of reciprocity⁷⁰ and the emerging market system.

Taxes in their many forms were also a particular problem for the poor. There were taxes on the soil, on produce (taxes on grain and fruit alone in the Herodian period were extremely high), and on persons (poll or head taxes levied on every male between 14 and

⁶⁶ Seasonal labourers are mentioned in the Mishnah and Tosefta; see *m. B. Mešiv'a* 6:1, *t. Ma'as.* 2:13, 15. See Applebaum, "Economic Life in Palestine," 657.

⁶⁷ Matt 20: 2, 9-10 indicates that a day's wage was one denarius; Stegemann and Stegemann (*The Jesus Movement*, 82-84) estimate the total cost of living for a family of six persons in rural Palestine to be approximately 250-300 denarii per year, based on an average wage of one denarius per day. See Finley, *Ancient Societies*, 73, 107; Fiensy, *Social History of Palestine*, 85.

⁶⁸ So Fiensy (*Social History of Palestine*, 88-91), who bases this on 400 grams of bread per person per day at a cost of 1/12 of a denarius.

⁶⁹ On day labourers: see Matt 20:1-15; on wealthy absentee landlords: see Mark 12:1-9; Matt 21:33-41//Luke 20:9-19; on social and economic disparity: see Matt 17:24-27; 18:23-34; 24: 47-51; Luke 4:18; 6:20; 7:22, 25; Luke 16:19-31; on debt: Luke 7:41-43; on dishonest managers: Luke 16:1-8. A number of scholars now see these parables as representing the social conditions of the poor peasantry in first-century Palestine rather than as allegories. So Applebaum, "Economic Life in Palestine," 659-60; idem, "Judaea as a Roman Province," 368; William Arnal, "The Parable of the Tenants and the Class Consciousness of the Peasantry," in *Text and Artifact in the Religions of Mediterranean Antiquity Studies in Christianity and Judaism* 9 (ed. Stephen G. Wilson and Michel Desjardins; Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier Press, 2000), 135-57; Kloppenborg, *The Tenants in the Vineyard*.

⁷⁰ Reciprocity is the exchange of gifts between individual persons, households or clans that was not oriented toward profit.

65 and every female 12 to 65).⁷¹ In addition, although taxes were high throughout the Roman Empire, the situation was worse for those living in the eastern regions, because those living in Rome received regular distributions brought in to the city from North Africa and Egypt to fend off starvation and revolt.⁷² This meant that taxes were higher in other areas of the empire to support the population of Rome, and starvation and suffering were more of a problem because the Roman rulers were not as concerned about revolt outside of Rome.⁷³ The Roman army also took a portion of tributes and requisitions from the locals.⁷⁴ If district centres were slow in raising taxes, the result could be slavery for the entire

⁷¹ Josephus (*Ant* 14. 203) states that the tax on produce sown amounted to one-quarter, plus tithes paid to the priests; the Tosefta (*t. B. Mesi'a* 9:13) reports that tenant farmers kept about one half of what they produced; Hanson and Oakman (*Palestine in the Time of Jesus*, 114) estimate a 25-33 percent tax on grain and 50 percent on fruit; Horsley (*Galilee: History, Politics, People*, 221) estimates taxes to have been from one quarter to one third; These figures fit Lenski's (*Human Societies*, 155) assessment that in agrarian societies the tax is set at around one-half of the value of the goods produced.

⁷² A portion of all taxes in the Roman Empire went to providing grain and infrastructure for the city of Rome, which was forced to import grain to feed its large population, and wished to avoid a revolt there. Since Italy was exempt from taxes on property or persons, there was an increased tax burden on the remainder of the empire. Garnsey and Saller (*The Roman Empire*, 9) note that grain distributions in Rome, as well as public works and entertainment, were financed by rents and taxes drawn from throughout the Roman Empire. Tacitus, who was part of the upper stratum of society, admits (*Ann.* 2.42) that the tax burden in Judea was especially high and, as a result, in 17 CE Tiberias was compelled to reduce taxes. Josephus (*Ant.* 15.303, 365; 16.64) states that Herod was forced at times to ease up on taxes as well, although in one case it was as a result of a recent period of drought and pestilence that had left the people with no crops. In both cases, he remitted only a portion (one third and one quarter respectively). For further discussion of the tax issue, see Fiensy, *The Social History of Palestine*, 100-105.

⁷³ So Stegemann and Stegemann, *The Jesus Movement*, 51-2.

⁷⁴ The Mishnah (*m. Demai* 3:1) lists billeted troops among those to whom *demai* (not certainly tithed) produce may be given; Luke 3:14 assumes that soldiers exploited people. Local residents were required to both house and feed Roman soldiers who passed through their area. During major campaigns or when the army was on the move, demands on the local food supplies were greater and local residents were expected to provide whatever was needed. Although no Roman soldiers were stationed in Galilee in the first part of the first century, soldiers did pass through Galilee on their travels and requisitioned what they needed; see Garnsey and Saller, *The Roman Empire*, 93; Finley, *The Ancient Economy*, 128; Fiensy, *Social History*, 98-104.

population.⁷⁵ Not paying taxes to one's overlord was considered an act of war against Rome.⁷⁶

These observations give historical context to John the Baptist's admonitions to both soldiers and tax collectors in Luke 3:12-14 not to extract money unlawfully from people and suggest that this was common practice among the two professions, and a sore point for the population. The fact that the occupation of tax collector is negatively assessed in the gospels as well as in extra-biblical sources attests to the resentment people felt towards the tax system, as well as toward those who were employed by the Roman government for extracting taxes.⁷⁷ In addition to Roman taxes, Judeans and Galileans also paid a temple tax of two denarii which supported the priesthood and cult personnel, and allowed for the purchase of materials for daily sacrifices.⁷⁸ After 70 CE this was replaced by the *fiscus Judaicus*, a Roman tax on Jewish males and females ages three to sixty-two.⁷⁹

The religious aristocracy living in Jerusalem (both priestly and non-priestly families) also benefited from their close connections with the foreign ruling elite, and collected taxes for the Romans, while at the same time attempting to maintain legitimacy in the eyes of the Jewish population.⁸⁰ This system is characteristic of agrarian societies,

⁷⁵ See Josephus, *Ant.* 14.271-75; *War* 1.219-22.

⁷⁶ Josephus, *War* 2.405-407.

⁷⁷ So Mark 2:13-17 and parallels; Matt 21: 28-32; Cicero *Off.* 1.150-51.

⁷⁸ See Josephus, *Ant.* 20.180-81; *t. Menahoth* 13:21. See also Stegemann and Stegemann, *The Jesus Movement*, 119-25; Applebaum, "Economic Life in Palestine," 691; idem, "Judaea as a Roman Province," 373-4; Stegemann and Stegemann, *The Jesus Movement*, 119-25; Hanson and Oakman, *Palestine in the Time of Jesus*, 116.

⁷⁹ See Josephus, *War* 7.218; Dio Cassius 65.7.2; Seutonius, *Dom.* 12.2

⁸⁰ The fact that some priests were wealthy is attested by Josephus (*Life* 63; *Ant.* 20. 205-207), who states that two of his priest colleagues got rich on tithes. He also indicates that the high priests abused their position of power by going directly to the threshing floors to collect their tithes (*Ant.* 20.180-181), and so depriving the Levites of their rightful provision. So also Freyne, "Jesus and the Urban Culture of Galilee," 611; Esler, "Palestinian Judaism in the First Century, 30-35; Stegemann and Stegemann, *The Jesus*

where, Lenski argues, typically a symbiotic relationship exists between the religious leaders and the governing rulers, with rulers granting land and tax exemptions to religious groups in return for support and legitimization of their rule.⁸¹

Our investigation has outlined the characteristics of agrarian societies, and has demonstrated that first-century Galilee shared these characteristics. In addition, we have argued that as a result of the societal structures, the majority of the population lived in conditions of economic difficulty and political strain. We now move to a discussion of the specific issues surrounding the reigns of Herod the Great and Herod Antipas, before examining social resistance movements in Galilee and Judea.

3.3 Galilee Under Roman Rule

3.3.1 Herod the Great

The character of first-century Galilee was determined not only by its status as an agrarian society, but also by Hellenistic culture and the political power and influence of the Roman Empire. Although we cannot here offer a detailed account of the history of the Jewish people and land during the Hellenistic period,⁸² a brief overview is necessary in order to establish the historical, political and religious context that set the stage for the events of the first century.

Movement, 99; Horsley, *Bandits, Prophets and Messiahs*, 54-7.

⁸¹ Lenski, *Human Societies*, 166.

⁸² For a more in-depth discussion of this period see Martin Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism: Studies in their Encounter in Palestine during the Early Hellenistic Period*. 2 vols. trans. John Bowden. (London: SCM Press, 1974); and Peter Schäfer, *The History of the Jews in the Greco-Roman World: The Jews of Palestine from Alexander the Great to the Arab Conquest* (London: Routledge, 2003).

Because of its strategic location on the main land route between Asia and Egypt, Palestine was particularly vulnerable to political conflicts over land and the instability caused by foreign armies passing through on their way to either Egypt in the South or Syria/Mesopotamia in the North. This was true from at least the 8th century BCE when the Assyrians conquered the area.⁸³ From the time that Alexander the Great conquered Palestine and the surrounding areas (332-331 BCE), the Jewish population experienced almost continuous instability in the form of occupation, war, religious conflict and oppression.⁸⁴

Even before the Maccabean Revolt began (167 BCE), a pattern of heavy taxation, confiscation of land and oppression of the populace had developed, resulting in continuous struggles in the region of Syria-Palestine. Although these struggles erupted only once in a full blown revolt under Antiochus IV, political and religious tensions were not limited to this period. It is true that during the Hasmonean period (164-63 BCE) there was a period of relative reprieve, in that taxes were lowered and land was redistributed to Jewish peasants, and alliances were made between the Romans and the Jews.⁸⁵

⁸³ See, e.g., Lester L. Grabbe, *Judaism from Cyrus to Hadrian*, vol. 2, (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 338; Douglas R. Edwards, “Constructing the World of Roman Palestine,” in *Religion and Society in Roman Palestine: Old Questions, New Approaches* (ed. Douglas R. Edwards; New York: Routledge, 2004), 1.

⁸⁴ During the period of Hasmonean rule (142-63 BCE), the population was freed from paying foreign tribute. However, even during this time taxes continued to be levied to support the large military operations of the Hasmonean army. See Horsley, *Galilee: History, Politics, People*, 6-7; Hanson and Oakman, *Palestine in the Time of Jesus*, 6-7.

⁸⁵ See Josephus, *Ant.* 14.200-216; 244-246; 1 Macc. So also Applebaum, “Judaea as a Roman Province, 355-96; Garnsey and Saller, *The Roman Empire*, 169-70. Initially, the Romans, who wanted to embarrass and weaken Syria, had agreed to forge a friendship with the Jews during the Hasmonean period. In return, the Jews had helped Caesar and Octavian in the civil wars. In exchange for this aid, Rome had given certain freedoms to the Jewish people, including the right to practice their religion, and Josephus (*Ant.* 14.196-210) indicates that Caesar placed restrictions on the collection of taxes in the province of Judea, and exempted Jewish regions from military conscription. But see Applebaum (“Economic Life in

However, even during this time there were regular power struggles and armed conflict over land, as well as taxes collected to support the Hasmonean army. When the Romans conquered the area in 63 BCE, they expropriated land, and there were ongoing skirmishes and hostilities occurred between rival factions competing for control of the area, which brought instability and conflict to the region.⁸⁶ Thus, it is important to remember that between the time of Jesus' grandparents and his own childhood (63 BCE and 4 BCE), several major episodes of violence and instability had occurred, and were undoubtedly remembered by those who had lived through them, and presumably recounted to their children and grandchildren. This must have contributed to resentment and feelings of hostility toward foreign rulers in the first century.⁸⁷

The Herodian period began with the installation of Herod the Great as client king of Judea, Galilee and Perea by the Roman Senate in 40 BCE.⁸⁸ Under Herod's rule land continued to be scarce in Palestine, and the situation of those already on the margins continued to deteriorate. Although more land was cultivated, it was increasingly owned by fewer people, who also retained the majority of its profits.⁸⁹ One of the reasons for this

Palestine, 661), who questions whether Josephus' comments are credible on the basis that Augustus would not have exempted Judea from tribute when Julius Caesar had imposed it.

⁸⁶ See, e.g., Josephus *War* 1.1-150; 2.204-11; *Ant.* 14.75ff.

⁸⁷ Goodman, *The Ruling Class of Judaea*, 10-11; Richard Horsley, "Jesus and Galilee; The Contingencies of a Renewal Movement," in *Galilee Through the Centuries: Confluence of Cultures* (ed. Eric M. Meyers; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1999), 57-74. In another incident, the Roman general Machaeras, who was irritated at rival Jewish leaders, slaughtered all the Jews he met on his retreat from Jerusalem to Emmaus (Josephus, *War* 1.317-19; *Ant.* 14.436).

⁸⁸ Herod actually took up his post in 37 BCE. His installation is referred to not only by Josephus (*Ant.* 14.381-389), but also by Strabo (*Geogr.* 16.765), and Tacitus (*Hist.* 5.9). According to Josephus (*Ant.* 15.343-345; *War* 1.393-400), Samaritis, Hulitis, Gaulantis, Batanea, Auranitis and Trachonitis were later added to his territory. Although the Herodian dynasty continued until the death of Agrippa II (Agrippa II died sometime during the reign of Domitian, probably in the year 93 or 94 CE), the focus here will be on the reigns of Herod the Great and Herod Antipas. Cf. Peter Richardson, *Herod: King of the Jews and Friend of the Romans* (Columbia, SC.: University of South Carolina Press, 1996), xvii.

⁸⁹ See note 9. Contemporary writers indicate that large tracts of land were owned by a few wealthy

was that Herod confiscated large tracts of land from peasants and gave it to his supporters and to army veterans,⁹⁰ which was then tilled by tenant farmers and day labourers, perhaps in some cases the very people from whom it had been confiscated.⁹¹ Though conditions in Palestine had never been ideal for the peasant farmer, their situation deteriorated even further under both Hellenistic and Herodian rule.⁹²

The Palestinian Jewish peasants then endured an economic system beginning with the Ptolemies that was harsher, more efficient, more burdensome, more exploitative than they had ever known. The Ptolemies combined the oriental concept of the divinely sanctioned power of the king with Greek competence in organization and ran their kingdom as if it were one large private estate or οἶκος. Under the Seleucids and the Herods this organized skimming-off-the-surplus remained intact. They and their aristocratic friends maintained lucrative large estates, levied heavy taxes, and could expropriate more land as they saw fit. According to the Great Tradition, all land in principle and the best land in fact belonged to the elites.⁹³

As a result of this power and resource imbalance, Palestinian society was characterized by periodic peasant uprisings,⁹⁴ which will be discussed under 3.4 below. Herod had an estate at Jericho and the fact that it was burned down by peasants at his death in 4 BCE and attempted again in 66 CE is evidence of the animosity felt by at least some Judeans towards those who owned and operated large plantations, and toward

men. Seneca, *Ep.* (90.39) mentions that the habit of the wealthy was to increase their own holdings by either buying out their neighbours or forcing them off their land illegally. According to Stegemann and Stegemann (*The Jesus Movement*, 111), the largest estate for which we have evidence in Palestine was Quawarant Beni-Hassan in the region of Shechem. It was probably more than 2500 acres and was first owned by the Hasmoneans and then the Herodians. Surveys of Palestine confirm that a considerable percentage of the arable land was apportioned into large estates. One of these estates, the date palm and balsam plantations at Jericho, had been in the hands of the ruling aristocracy from at least the time of the Persians.

⁹⁰ See Josephus, *Ant.* 17.304ff.

⁹¹ Stegemann and Stegemann, *The Jesus Movement*, 110.

⁹² See discussions in Applebaum, "Economic Life in Palestine," 653-56; idem, "Judaea as a Roman Province," 367, 392-4; Fiensy, *Social History of Palestine*, 25, 77-9; Stegemann and Stegemann, *The Jesus Movement*, 36, 43, 100, 105-8; 112, 134; Goodman, *The Ruling Class of Judaea*, 56-7; Horsley, *Galilee: History, Politics, People*, 216, 221; Moxnes, "What is Family?" 13-41.

⁹³ Fiensy, *Social History of Palestine*, 22-3.

⁹⁴ See Josephus, *War.* 2.4-13, 42-44, 56-65; *Ant.* 17.200-218, 254-55, 271-85; Philo, *Legat.* 32.225-245. See also Horsley, *Galilee: History, Politics, People*, 201.

Herod.⁹⁵ Increasingly, large segments of the peasant population were pushed off their land, which led to further instability, and in some cases, rebellion. Martin Goodman notes that the ever-widening gap between the rich and poor during the early part of the first century was the cause of much hostility, particularly as the Judean economy became integrated into the larger Mediterranean one.⁹⁶

This problem was exacerbated by Herod's lavish spending on grandiose projects, including several elaborate palaces and fortresses scattered throughout his territory,⁹⁷ the rebuilding of the town of Strato's Tower, which became Caesarea Maritima,⁹⁸ extensive renovations and additions to the Jerusalem Temple,⁹⁹ and the necessity of keeping up his court.¹⁰⁰ In fact, Applebaum argues that the only reason Judea was not in even worse financial shape was because of the continuous contributions coming in from Diaspora Jews to support the Jerusalem Temple and the economic spin off that this created.¹⁰¹

According to Josephus, Herod was also disliked intensely by many Jews and was seen as an arrogant and cruel tyrant¹⁰² who, as a result of his lavish spending outside his

⁹⁵ See Josephus, *War*. 2.40-56. Cf. Fiensy, *Social History of Palestine*, 27-8; M. Stern, "The Reign of Herod and the Herodian Dynasty," in Safrai and Stern, *The Jewish People in the First Century*, 216-307.

⁹⁶ Goodman, *The Ruling Class of Judaea*, 51; cf. Applebaum, "Judaea as a Roman Province," 368.

⁹⁷ Josephus, *Ant.* 15.317-319, 323-325; *War* 1.428.

⁹⁸ *Ant.* 15. 331-341. According to Josephus (*Ant.* 16.152-56) the Jews resented this, and many believed Herod had pillaged cities in Judea to finance the building of his foreign cities (*Ant.* 16.146-49). His gifts to Phoenician cities in particular were resented since they were partly financed by taxes on Galilean agricultural produce. The Jewish delegation to Rome at Herod's death complained that his economic policies had drained the country's resources (Josephus, *Ant.* 17.304-8).

⁹⁹ Josephus, *Ant.* 15.391-425; *War* 1.401. Charlesworth ("Jesus Research and Archaeology," 28) notes that a seam found in the eastern section of the Temple Mount provides evidence of the extent of these renovations and extensions to the temple.

¹⁰⁰ See Richardson, *Herod*, 179-82; Crossan and Reed, *Excavating Jesus*, 5; Stern, "The Reign of Herod," 1: 259; Berlin, "Romanization," 6.

¹⁰¹ Applebaum, "Economic Life in Palestine," 691.

¹⁰² Josephus, *Ant.* 16.1-5, 150-54; 17.304-9; *War* 2.84-86.

territories, was forced to treat his subjects badly.¹⁰³ Many believed Herod's actions had also contributed to a loss of piety among the Jewish people, and even led to the eventual fall of the temple.¹⁰⁴ These likely included building projects such as a theatre and amphitheatre in Jerusalem and the athletic contests he established there every fifth year, as well as the golden eagle he had erected on the Temple gate.¹⁰⁵ His execution of the remaining members of the Hasmonean family (the legitimate heirs to the priesthood), including his wife Mariamme (the last Hasmonean princess),¹⁰⁶ was also highly resented, particularly by the Galilean population, who had supported the Hasmonean family and were known to have especially disliked Herod.¹⁰⁷

At times Herod was also capable of behaving as a benevolent leader and patron. For example, he was very popular among the Syrians who lived along the border, after putting to death the notorious brigand chief, Hezekiah and some of his followers in his early years.¹⁰⁸ After severe droughts in 25/24 BCE that resulted in famine and illness throughout the region, Herod brought in grain from Egypt for the population. However, Josephus stresses that Herod's motivation for doing so was to win over the population,

¹⁰³ Josephus, *Ant.* 16.150-159.

¹⁰⁴ Josephus, *Ant.* 15.267-69, 366-67; 17.304-5.

¹⁰⁵ Josephus, *Ant.* 15.267-272; 16.138.

¹⁰⁶ Josephus, *Ant.* 15.229-231; *War* 1.443-444, 648-55. These executions were especially offensive to the Jewish populace who had forcefully resisted Herod's kingship in the first place, preferring instead Antigonos and the Hasmonean house.

¹⁰⁷ See Josephus, *War* 1.303, 307-13; *Ant.* 14.431-433. Evidence of this is the fact that Herod's supporters were drowned by Galileans in the Sea of Galilee (Josephus, *War.* 1.326). Mordechai Aviam, "First Century Jewish Galilee: an Archaeological Perspective," in *Religion and Society in Roman Palestine*. [ed. Douglas R. Edwards; New York: Routledge, 2004], 7-27, 15-21) argues that Herod's general disinterest in Galilee was probably a result of this history. Cf. Stern, "The Reign of Herod," 1: 272-75.

¹⁰⁸ So Josephus, *War* 1.204.

rather than compassion.¹⁰⁹ In two instances he remitted a portion of the taxes he had collected, but in one of the cases, Josephus states explicitly that it was for the purpose of avoiding a revolt.¹¹⁰ Presumably he brought a degree of economic prosperity to Judea and Galilee by putting people to work on his many building projects and opening up more land for cultivation.¹¹¹ However, it must be remembered that most, if not all, of the funds for these work projects came from taxes extracted from the population, which, as we have seen, were already higher than those in other regions.¹¹²

In sum, then, Herod's reign was characterized by both great accomplishments and high taxes and oppression.¹¹³ As Josephus observes, he kept his subjects submissive through a combination of fear and generous behaviour during crises.¹¹⁴ What must be remembered is that whatever his benevolent actions, his main objective was (and is for any leader in an agrarian context) to stay in power by whatever means necessary, and this Herod did.

At Herod's death in 4 BCE, his territory was divided between his three sons. Archelaus was given Judea, Antipas received Galilee and Perea, and Philip, Gaulanitis, Trachonitis, Batanaea and Aranitis, along with the area around Panias.¹¹⁵ Archelaus was

¹⁰⁹ Josephus, *Ant.* 15.299-316. On another occasion (38 BCE), Herod prevented soldiers from looting in Jerusalem by paying them off with his own money (*Ant.* 14.483-486).

¹¹⁰ So Josephus, *Ant.* 15.365; 16.64.

¹¹¹ So Richardson, *Herod*, 191-5; Grabbe, *Judaism from Cyrus to Hadrian*, v. 2, 365.

¹¹² Tacitus (*Ann.* 2.42) states that the tax burden in Judea was especially high.

¹¹³ As noted by Grabbe (*Judaism from Cyrus to Hadrian*, 363-65), it is difficult to assess how people actually felt about Herod, and virtually impossible to know how he compared in their minds to other rulers. The perspective we have on Herod's reign comes mostly from Josephus, who was upper class. His views do not necessarily represent those of the population in general.

¹¹⁴ Josephus, *Ant.* 15.326.

¹¹⁵ See Josephus, *War* 2.93-95; *Ant.* 17.188-189; Tacitus, *Hist.* 5.9. In contrast to Archelaus, Josephus describes Philip as having a "moderate and easy going disposition" in his governance, and Antipas as one who "loved quietness" (*Ant.* 18.106-8). He also indicates that Philip spent all of his time in his territory

deposed in 6 CE,¹¹⁶ after only ten years, and Judea was made a Roman province.¹¹⁷ Riots broke out on several occasions in response to Herod's reign and death. The first occurred in Trachonitis in 12 BCE while he was in Italy, as a result of rumours that he had died.¹¹⁸ The news of his death in 4 BCE also triggered mass riots and demonstrations in several locations. One of these occurred in Jerusalem as crowds gathered around his son Archelaus (who had been appointed Herod's main heir) to make demands, including a reduction in taxes, the release of those who had been imprisoned by Herod, and the deposition of the high priest, who had been appointed by Herod and was widely viewed as illegitimate.¹¹⁹ Although Archelaus initially attempted to appease the crowd, promising to treat the people better than his father had, when they became impatient and began to stone his soldiers, he sent the infantry and cavalry into the crowd, killing 3,000.¹²⁰

and gave immediate judgment wherever he travelled, bringing his throne along with him (Josephus, *Ant.* 18.245). This evidence confirms two characterizations found in Josephus: that Archelaus was viewed as cruel and that Antipas was seen to be less cruel than Archelaus, at least by the Jewish delegation that was sent to Rome, and as a result was preferred as a leader.

¹¹⁶ According to Josephus (*Ant.* 17.342-44) charges were brought against him before Caesar by the Jews and Samaritans of impiety and lawbreaking, making himself king, and his "cruel and tyrannical nature"; Nicolaus of Damascus (*FGH* 90, 136.8-11) also refers to Archelaus' deposition and exile, as does Strabo (*Geogr.* 16.2.46), a first century historian.

¹¹⁷ According to Sanders ("Jesus' Galilee," 7-8) Rome had two methods of governing non-Senatorial provinces, such as Judea: the use of a client king or ruler (i.e. Herod the Great, Antipas, Archelaus and Philip), or rule by a Roman governor supported by troops (as was the case in Judea after 6 CE when Archelaus was deposed). On the nature of the relationship and the benefits of a client king for Rome, see Grabbe, *Judaism from Cyrus to Hadrian*, 324; Goodman, *The Ruling Class of Judaea*, 36-7, and David Braund, *Rome and the Friendly King: The Character of the Client Kingship* (London & Canberra: Croom Helm, 1984), esp. 23-37. Essentially, their territory functioned as a buffer between Roman controlled regions and adjacent areas and provided a standing army that could be called up if problems arose. In addition, a client-ruled territory lowered the administrative costs for Rome by supplying defence of the borders and administration of the area. Thus, client rulers provided Rome with peace and a steady flow of tax revenue.

¹¹⁸ Josephus, *Ant.* 16.130, 271-273.

¹¹⁹ Josephus (*Ant.* 17.204-5; *War* 2.3-4, 6-13) reports that Herod had removed Jesus ben Phabes, and replaced him with Simon in order to legitimate his marriage to Simon's daughter.

¹²⁰ See Josephus, *Ant.* 17.213-218; *War* 2.6-13, 88-89, 111; Josephus (*War* 2.20, 31-33) reports that Herod had been aware of Archelaus' cruel nature and this was the reason he had never intended for him to rule. In an earlier will, Herod had appointed Antipas as heir (Josephus, *War* 2.20). However later in his

Another riot broke out in Jerusalem while Antipas and Archelaus were in Rome contesting Herod's will, which Varus, the governor of Syria, had to bring in three legions of soldiers from Syria to bring under control.¹²¹ The result of demonstrations in Galilee during the same period was that Sepphoris was burned down, its inhabitants sold into slavery and thousands of rebels crucified.¹²² These riots and demonstrations indicate unrest resulting from frustration and anger toward Herod and his policies among the population. The burning of Sepphoris, just four miles from Nazareth, must have had an impact on everyone living in close proximity. Even if the Roman army was not continually present in the area, it was quite clear to all what happened when one attempted to resist Rome.

3.3.2. Herod Antipas

There is much less information about the reign of Antipas than what we have for Herod the Great, making it more difficult to assess his impact on Galilee. Antipas' forty-three year rule (4 BCE-39 CE) spanned the terms of three Roman emperors, Augustus, Tiberius and Gaius (Caligula).¹²³ What we know of him comes mainly from the period of

life when he had become more and more paranoid and perhaps mentally ill, he had changed the will naming Archelaus as heir.

¹²¹ See, Strabo *Geog.* 1.2.46; Josephus *War* 2.39-41.

¹²² Josephus, *War* 2.68-75; *Ant* 17.285-95.

¹²³ During Augustus' reign (27 BCE -14 CE), the evidence is somewhat mixed. Although Augustus awarded Antipas the tetrarchies of Galilee and Perea, he denied to him the territory that had been ruled by Archelaus (Judea). This is somewhat surprising since Antipas apparently had the support of the Jewish community (both Josephus (*War* 2.22) and Nicolaus [*FGH* 90, 136.8-11] indicate that the Jewish delegation was not opposed to Antipas ruling as Herod's heir if they could not be ruled directly by Rome), and since there had been no major disruptions in his territory. Part of the reason that Antipas was not given Judea, according to Hørning Jensen (*Herod Antipas*, 223-4), may have been his less than enthusiastic interest in Roman civic religion, demonstrated by the fact that even though Antipas renamed Sepphoris, *Autocratis* (the Greek form of the Latin *Imperator*), he did not, it seems, install the cult of the emperor at

Tiberius' term as emperor (14-37 CE).¹²⁴ From Josephus we learn that there was a good relationship between the two, and that Tiberius took Antipas' side in two conflicts and asked him to mediate in negotiations on another occasion.¹²⁵ In gratitude, Antipas founded the city of Tiberias after him and issued coins in honour of the event with the title TIBERIAC.¹²⁶ Under Caligula (37-41 CE) Antipas lost his faithful patron and with him the friendly relationship he had enjoyed with Rome under Tiberius.¹²⁷

The synoptic gospels contain some information about Antipas. All three synoptic writers suggest that tension existed between Antipas and Jesus, although Matthew and Luke portray the threat in a more explicit way (see Matt 14:5; Luke 13:31) than does Mark. As we will see under 4.5.3, Luke 13:31-33 suggests that Antipas' concern about Jesus was partly related to his exorcisms and healings. Matthew's and Mark's portrayals indicate that Antipas both feared and respected John, and thought that Jesus was a

either Sepphoris or Tiberias or mint coins bearing the emperor's image. According to Jensen, the additional fact that he minted a very limited number of coins may indicate that he was not particularly influential in the larger political and economic scene. As a result, although Augustus had some confidence in Antipas, he nevertheless passed him over for promotion.

¹²⁴ During Augustus' term, Antipas renamed Sepphoris, *Autocratoris*, the Greek equivalent of the Latin *Imperator*, meaning ruler. See Josephus, *Ant.* 18.27. Cf. Chancey, *Greco-Roman Culture*, 83. No major upheavals are reported during the first third of the century, as confirmed by Tacitus' (*Hist.* 5.9) appraisal of the situation in Palestine after Archelaus was deposed: "In Tiberius' reign all was quiet." Cf. Strabo, *Georg.* 16.2.46. Uriel Rappaport, "How Anti-Roman was the Galilee?" in *The Galilee in Late Antiquity* (ed. Lee I. Levine; New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1992), 95-102, 98. For more on the reign of Tiberius, see Grabbe, *Judaism from Cyrus to Hadrian*, vol. 2, 421-22.

¹²⁵ The first was when Agrippa I accused Antipas before him (Josephus, *War* 2.178); the second was when Aretas attacked Antipas' eastern border after Antipas sent away his daughter (Josephus, *Ant.* 18.113-115). He also asked Antipas to mediate in peace negotiations with Parthia in 36-37 CE (Josephus, *Ant.* 18.96-105).

¹²⁶ However, while both Philip and Archelaus minted coins with images on them, Antipas refrained from doing so, minting instead coins displaying reeds, palm trees and dates. See Hørning Jensen, *Herod Antipas*, 199, 205, 224-25.

¹²⁷ According to Josephus, Agrippa I sent letters to Gaius accusing Herod of conspiring against him, citing Antipas' stockpile of equipment for 70,000 soldiers stored in his armories (*Ant.* 18.246-250). Gaius (Caligula) was partial to Agrippa I and believed his accusations. This, in addition to Antipas' ill-timed request for kingship, struck the fatal blow that resulted in Antipas being exiled and losing his wealth (*Ant.* 18.252-53).

reincarnation of John whom he had executed (Mark 6:10, Matt 14:2). Matthew connects Jesus' withdrawal into Galilee with John's execution (Matt 14:13).

However, it is Luke who mentions Antipas the most and it is only Luke who includes the tradition that Antipas was involved in the events that led to Jesus' execution (23:6-15). Even here, however, Luke's presentation of Antipas' role is somewhat ambiguous. It is far from clear that he meant to give Antipas an active role, and, in fact, he has Pilate state that Antipas did not find Jesus guilty of any crime (v. 12). Harold Hoehner, John Darr and Jensen see Antipas' general image in the synoptics (John does not mention Antipas) as that of an indecisive leader who, although at one point seeks to have Jesus killed, when he is faced with the opportunity, wavers.¹²⁸ This image fits Josephus' description of Antipas as indecisive when faced with Herodias' attempts to persuade him to ask Gaius for kingship (*Ant.* 18.245-246). In any case, all three synoptic gospels portray him as uncertain in the face of John and Jesus (Mark 6:20; Matt 14:9; Luke 9:7).

As Jensen, quoting from Halvor Moxnes, presents it, there are two possible ways of seeing Antipas' reign in relation to the socio-political context of Galilee. The first is to see his influence as generally positive, and his role as that of a buffer against direct Roman presence and exploitation, which allowed the economy to flourish and trade between village and city to thrive. The second option is to see him as a tyrant who extracted the maximum amount of tax to finance his building programs, resulting in

¹²⁸ Harold W. Hoehner, *Herod Antipas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 242-3; John A. Darr, *Herod the Fox: Audience Criticism and Lukan Characterization* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 198-201; Jensen, *Herod Antipas in Galilee*, 110-123.

increasing levels of tenancy and indebtedness.¹²⁹ Jensen, not surprisingly, chooses the first option, while Moxnes chooses the second.¹³⁰

As I said in the introduction to this chapter, the second choice is to be preferred based on the information we have. However, I reject either extreme, especially if it means assuming that Antipas created the situation of exploitation; it had probably existed for hundreds of years. Certainly exploitation was present, but it would be going too far to place the responsibility for it squarely on the shoulders of Antipas. Similarly, one cannot posit Antipas as the sole or even the main reason for the emergence of Jesus and his movement. However, one can suggest that the general social context (advanced agrarian society) provided one of the factors necessary for prophetic and messianic movements to emerge, including those of both John and Jesus, as well as for the presence of spirit possession.

In the same vein, as was noted in the discussion of urban-rural relations above, it is not possible to draw a clear line between evil and exploitation by those living in the cities and the exploited who lived in the countryside, and between those who were Hellenized and those who were not. It is not necessary for my argument to demonstrate that these distinctions were clearly drawn, only that the general pattern of an agrarian economy can be demonstrated for first-century Galilee.

These observations suggest, as Jensen has recently argued, that the overall impact of Antipas' reign on the population of Galilee may have been moderate.¹³¹ For Jensen, the

¹²⁹ Jensen, *Herod Antipas in Galilee*, 9.

¹³⁰ Halvor Moxnes, "The Construction of Galilee as a Place for the Historical Jesus," Part 2, *BTB* 31 (2001): 64-77.

¹³¹ Jensen *Herod Antipas*, 125, 229-40, 246-48.

evidence of this is first, that although Josephus portrays Antipas in a fairly negative way, he offers no examples of cruelty or tyranny as he does for Herod and Archelaus. Second, archaeological evidence provides no clear indication of political instability, economic problems, or a change in patterns of conformity or resistance to Herodian rule in Galilee during Antipas' reign. However, this last point has recently been challenged by Andrea Berlin.¹³² Third, Antipas sometimes supported the Jewish position. For example, when Pilate brought military shields into Jerusalem bearing images of the emperor, Antipas may have been one of the four sons of the king described by Philo who were part of the Jewish delegation that demanded their removal from the palace in Jerusalem.¹³³

On one level then, Jensen is correct. If there is no evidence of large scale social or political problems, Antipas' impact on Galilee may indeed have been moderate. However, this does not mean that all was well for the average peasant. Josephus and most other ancient historians write from the perspective of wealth. Their assessment will then be

¹³² Although Jensen argues that major changes affecting the material culture of Galilee occurred before (during the Hasmonean period) and after (during the middle-Roman period [70-135 CE]) rather than during the early first century, and that evidence from excavations at Yodefat, Cana, Capernaum and Gamla indicates prosperity in the small towns and villages rather than economic decline for the early-first-century, the work of Andrea Berlin has shown that significant changes in the use of pottery between the first century BCE and the first century CE in Galilee suggest a distinct change in material culture which she attributes to Jewish resistance to buying non-Jewish products. Specifically, Berlin ("Romanization and anti-Romanization in pre-Revolt Galilee," in *The First Jewish Revolt: Archaeology, History and Ideology* [ed. Andrea M. Berlin and J. Andrew Overman; New York: Routledge, 2002], 57-74; 63-65, 69-70) demonstrates that there was a shift from using red-slipped pottery imported from Tyre to locally made Jewish tableware, stone dishes and knife panned oil lamps. Berlin argues that these changes cannot be explained by supply problems and so must reflect changes in demand; namely, a deliberate decision by Jewish residents to boycott these non-Jewish products as a way of protesting Roman rule. See Berlin's article for a detailed discussion of her research comparing several towns in Galilee based on the make-up of their population, pagan, mixed or Jewish. For example, Tel Anaf and Caesarea Philippi, which her research indicates were pagan and mixed respectively, are very close geographically to Capernaum, Bethsaida and Gamla, which were Jewish, yet their use of red-slipped pottery differs markedly beginning early in the first century.

¹³³ See further discussion under Social Resistance in Galilee and Judea, p. 30. Josephus, *War* 2.169-74; Philo, *Legat.* 276-329.

based on whether stability is maintained, not whether poverty and oppression existed. Second, although Antipas seems to have avoided major conflicts with the population, since no significant upheavals are mentioned in the sources during his tenure, this does not necessarily mean peace and prosperity for the populace. The execution of John and the war with Aretas over Antipas' dismissal of Aretas' daughter are notable exceptions which challenge his portrayal of Antipas' reign as moderate and peaceful.¹³⁴

Of course from Rome's perspective, putting dissidents to death helped to keep an area stable. However, from the perspective of the populace, these kinds of actions only served to inflame resentments against their overlords. Finally, the fact that no archaeological evidence has yet been found to substantiate either political instability or economic problems does not mean they did not exist. Economic problems are not easily extracted from archaeological evidence, and the extant evidence does not represent the sum total of all evidence about social and economic life in Galilee. The basic structures of imperial Roman oppression based on exploitation and taxation remained firmly in place under Antipas.¹³⁵ In fact, they may have been even more of a problem.

The Roman takeover of Palestine did not change the basic political-economic structure, but it did multiply the levels of rulers that claimed revenues from the villagers' crops. The Romans' appointment of Herod as client-king combined with the Romans' and Herod's maintenance and even expansion of the priestly aristocracy in Jerusalem obviously increased the numbers of rulers to be supported by the produce of the subject peoples. The installation of Antipas over Galilee terminated the direct jurisdiction of the Jerusalem temple-state over Galilee, reducing its ability to demand revenues, but did not alter the basic political-economic system in Galilee. The revenues that the Romans assigned to Antipas from Galilee and Perea came from the agricultural produce of villages that were now under the watchful eye of a regime immediately on the scene.¹³⁶

¹³⁴ See Josephus, *Ant.* 18.5, 109-115.

¹³⁵ So Stegemann and Stegemann, *The Jesus Movement*, 113.

¹³⁶ Horsley, *Galilee: History, Politics, People*, 278-9.

This can be assumed whether or not specific incidents of upheaval are mentioned by first-century historians. What happened to those living at the lowest levels of society was hardly newsworthy for the elite men who wrote history, except where it caused major social disruption. So, while our examination of Antipas' reign has indicated that his impact as a leader may have been moderate in comparison to that of his father, Herod, we have also suggested that the basic structures of taxation and exploitation remained firmly in place under Antipas. In addition, one must remember that Jesus' talk about the kingdom, the crowds he gathered and the attention he drew at the temple, would have raised alarm bells for any client ruler of Rome.

3.4 Social Resistance in Galilee and Judea

One of the results of the social and economic conditions just discussed for Judea and Galilee was the presence of social resistance movements. Social banditry and other forms of resistance were common from at least the mid-first century BCE through the Jewish War. Although widespread revolts in Palestine were limited to 4 BCE and 66-67 CE, social unrest was probably continuous.¹³⁷ In his study of forms of peasant resistance, James C. Scott notes that the most common expressions of non-compliance for “relatively powerless groups” include “foot dragging, dissimulation, desertion, false compliance, pilfering, feigned ignorance, slander, arson, and sabotage.”¹³⁸

¹³⁷ So Horsley, *Galilee: History, Politics, People*, 258-9.

¹³⁸ James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven, CT.: Yale University Press, 1985), xvi.

Jewish forms of resistance may have included in addition the use of a language different from those in power (i.e., Hebrew or Aramaic), dressing differently, using Jewish ritual baths (*miqvaoth*),¹³⁹ and holding apocalyptic views of a coming transformation of the social order, evidence of which is found throughout Jewish texts of the Second Temple period. We can assume that these more moderate forms of resistance were present in first-century Palestine, along with other more extreme forms.¹⁴⁰

In several cases more active forms of non-violent protest were undertaken. Although several of them occurred outside of Galilee, they are significant because of the connection between Jews living in Galilee and those living in Judea, as well as because Jesus, although he was a Galilean, was executed in Jerusalem. Two of these incidents involved Pilate. In the first, which was already alluded to in our discussion of Antipas' reign, he had field emblems bearing the images of emperors brought into Jerusalem under cover of darkness, which set off a major protest. The Jews from Jerusalem followed Pilate back to Caesarea and urged him to remove the standards. When he refused, they sat in front of his house for five days. When Pilate surrounded them with soldiers who drew their swords, the Jews, according to Josephus, bared their necks, at which point Pilate relented.¹⁴¹ He also robbed the Temple treasury to fund the construction of an aqueduct. In response, the population formed a ring around his tribunal, and “besieged him with

¹³⁹ Berlin (“Romanization and Anti-Romanization,” 57-73, 66) notes that anthropologists have observed that people who live in culturally or ethnically mixed areas tend to adopt “identity signaling” characteristics, which are most often material rather than behavioural in nature.

¹⁴⁰ On the various forms social protest can take see Richardson and Edwards, “Jesus and Palestinian Social Protest,” 247-66; Richard Horsley, “Ancient Jewish Banditry and the Revolt Against Rome AD 66-70,” *CBQ* 43 (1981), 416; Sawicki, *Crossing Galilee*, 83, 100-1; Crossan and Reed, *Excavating Jesus*, 140-42.

¹⁴¹ Josephus, *War* 2.169-74; Philo (*Legat.* 276-329) also refers to this incident.

angry clamour.” Pilate, having foreseen this reaction, had set up soldiers disguised as civilians in the crowd, who at his signal bludgeoned many in the crowd to death.¹⁴²

Another incident occurred in 39 CE, when the Jews of Galilee learned of Gaius’ proposal to install a statue of himself in the Jerusalem Temple. In response to this news, many left their fields and came to Petronius, who was governor of Syria at the time, at Ptolemais and implored him not to follow through with Gaius’ instructions. When Petronius went to Tiberias to test the Jews’ feelings about the matter, he was greeted by tens of thousands who layed down and revealed their necks, preferring to die rather than see this action taken.¹⁴³ As a result of the actions of the Jewish population, Petronius relented, and was only spared severe punishment by the death of Gaius.

In 49 CE, in the midst of the siege of a village near Jerusalem, a Roman soldier found a copy of the Torah, which he tore up and threw into the fire. The Jews were so angry that Cumanus was forced to order the soldier’s execution in order to avoid all out rebellion.¹⁴⁴ Finally, certain individuals and groups such as the zealots and *sicarii* (“dagger men”) embraced more violent means of attempting to change the social order.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴² Josephus, *War* 2.175-77.

¹⁴³ Josephus, *Ant.* 18.261-274; cf. Philo, *Legat.* 249.

¹⁴⁴ Josephus, *War* 2.228-231.

¹⁴⁵ On the *sacarii*, see Josephus, *War* 2.254-257, 425. Their tactic was to slip unnoticed into a crowd, use their concealed daggers to assassinate their targets, and then slip away, with no one knowing who had committed the murder. It is important to recognize that the zealots emerged as an identifiable group only during the revolt. See Richard Horsley, “Ancient Jewish Banditry and the Revolt Against Rome, A.D. 66-70,” *CBQ* 43 (1981): 409-32.

3.4.1 Banditry

E. J. Hobsbawm notes that social banditry is a universal phenomenon associated with the rural peasantry and with societies in transition from kinship based systems to agrarian economies, and that it can escalate to epidemic proportions in response to crises such as famines, and pressures due to high taxation and inflation,¹⁴⁶ exactly the situation in first-century Galilee and Judea.¹⁴⁷

The descriptions are not of incidental bands of true “brigands” but of uprooted peasants who maintain connections with their neighbours and even their social superiors, a picture of social dislocation spawned by economic change and consequent hardship. Dispossessed landholders, concerned for survival, preyed on those who had more (perhaps who had taken the little they had). Some— maybe many – chose brigandage.¹⁴⁸

Banditry was one of many forms of resistance found in both Galilee and Judea. Josephus indicates that banditry was endemic in the Judean countryside from at least 4 BCE, and that it was a problem in Galilee from at least the beginning of Herod’s campaign in 39 BCE.¹⁴⁹ In fact, Josephus observes that there was a widespread “sickness” in Palestine during the first century which led the rich to oppress the poor and the poor to plunder the rich.¹⁵⁰ The continual risk of banditry is attested by Petronius’ (governor of Syria) concerns when the Jews staged a sit-in to protest Caligula’s proposed installation of his statue in the temple in 39 CE, that if their crops were not sown, the result would be banditry.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁶ E. J. Hobsbawm, *Bandits* (London: Trinity Press, 1969), 12-13, 18-19.

¹⁴⁷ So Stegemann, *The Jesus Movement*, 173; Horsley, *Bandits, Prophets, Messiahs*, 48-9; idem, *Galilee: History, Politics, People*, 258, 278-79.

¹⁴⁸ Richardson, *Herod*, 251.

¹⁴⁹ Josephus, *War* 1.303-16; *Ant.* 17.285-95; 20.124, 160.

¹⁵⁰ Josephus, *War* 7.260-61.

¹⁵¹ Josephus, *Ant.* 18.261-274; Philo’s version (*Legat.* 249) is slightly different. He states that the crops were ready to be harvested and that Petronius was afraid the Jews might set fire to the fields in their despair. Fear of social unrest however is common to both accounts.

The most well known social bandit in Galilee was Hezekiah, a brigand-chief, who raided along the Syrian border with northern Galilee in the first century BCE.¹⁵² His activities were closely tied to the reallocation of land and displacement of Galilean peasantry that occurred after Rome took over in 63 BCE.¹⁵³ When Herod managed to kill him in 39 BCE, while some were pleased, others among the Jews saw this as an injustice.¹⁵⁴ Hezekiah's son, Judas, led insurrections throughout Galilee after Herod's death in 4 BCE.¹⁵⁵ Josephus reports that there were also bandits (ληῖσται) living in caves near the Sea of Galilee, northwest of Tiberias, who were "over-running much of the countryside".¹⁵⁶ These too Herod killed. Another brigand chief, Eleazar operated for approximately twenty years before he was finally caught and crucified by the procurator Felix (52-60 CE).¹⁵⁷

While the previous figures were not specifically religious in their orientation as the prophetic movements we will examine below were, the line between the political, the economic and the religious was often blurred in the ancient world, as we have seen, and this was equally true for social resistance movements.¹⁵⁸ For example, while Hezekiah and his son Judas were described as bandits (ληῖσται) by Josephus, their activities were part of larger social, economic and political pressures operating in Galilee as a result of

¹⁵² Josephus, *War* 1.204-205; *Ant.* 14.159-74. Hezekiah was eventually caught and killed by Herod in 39 BCE.

¹⁵³ Horsley, *Bandits, Prophets, and Messiahs*, 73.

¹⁵⁴ The Syrians were apparently happy (*War* 1.204), but Josephus (*Ant.* 14.166) notes that some Jews saw this as an illegal act, suggesting that there was some sympathy for Hezekiah and his cause.

¹⁵⁵ Josephus, *Ant.* 17.271-272, 286-98; 20.102; *War* 2. 56, 66-79; Judas is also mentioned in Acts 5.37. Although it is somewhat unclear in Josephus' account Judas was likely one of those put down by Varus, who had to bring in two legions of 6,000 troops each, in addition to four regiments of cavalry (500 each) to suppress the rebellions (Josephus, *Ant.* 17.286).

¹⁵⁶ Josephus, *War* 1.307-13.

¹⁵⁷ So Josephus, *Ant.* 20. 160-161.

¹⁵⁸ See Stegemann and Stegemann, *The Jesus Movement*, 165-74.

instability caused by the Roman invasion in 63 BCE. That there is a connection between political instability and oppression on the one hand and the emergence of popular movements on the other is clear.

The frequency and spontaneity of these several instances of collective deviant behavior in first century Palestine reveal the presence of deep-seated tensions and strains in that society. The mundane goals of the Jewish religion (peace, prosperity, long life, fruitfulness of the womb and fields, health, etc.) were frustrated by both economic conditions and the religious establishment. Both Jesus' teaching and his wonderworking activities constituted alternate, though socially deviant, means of achieving acceptable goals; widespread experience of dissatisfaction and frustration virtually ensured his success.¹⁵⁹

To sum up, social resistance in the form of banditry was endemic to both Judea and Galilee, and was part of widespread frustration resulting from a combination of political oppression and social and economic instability and disparity. The fact that these movements were not explicitly religious in their tone does not lessen their importance for understanding the social climate of Galilee and Judea in the first half of the first century.

3.4.2 Prophetic and Messianic Movements

Social resistance also took the form of messianic or prophetic movements, whose aims ranged from violent overthrow of the Romans (i.e., the zealots and the sicarri)¹⁶⁰ to religious pilgrimages to sacred sites.¹⁶¹ Although there has been much scholarly discussion about how to identify these leaders and their movements (i.e., "sign prophets,"

¹⁵⁹ Aune, "Magic in Early Christianity," 1529.

¹⁶⁰ See note 146.

¹⁶¹ So Richard Horsley, "Popular Prophetic Movements at the Time of Jesus: Their Principle Features and Social Origins," *JSNT* 26 (1986): 3-27 (3).

“popular prophetic movements,” and “popular messianic movements,”)¹⁶² it is not my intention to enter into this debate here. For the purposes of this study what is important is that a variety of movements were operating in Palestine during the first half of the first century, and that they were connected to the political situation. However, for the sake of simplicity and clarity, I will assume Robert Webb’s terminology of “popular prophets” for the figures we will discuss below, including John the Baptist. By popular, we mean simply that the movements and their leaders emerge from the peasant population or common people. More specifically, Webb distinguishes between those figures who drew followers and led social movements (“leadership popular prophets”), and those who operated without a following, “solitary popular prophets”.¹⁶³

Richard Horsley argues that these movements have their origins in the tradition of popular kingship found in the biblical narrative, where the anointing of a king or prophet by the people was usually intended to establish political and military power against foreign domination.¹⁶⁴ One of the later expressions of this belief was the expectation that an anointed branch of David would rescue Israel from its domination by foreign rulers and would then take up his reign over all nations.¹⁶⁵ These traditions, when combined with the specific political situation under the Romans,¹⁶⁶ resulted in the hope among some

¹⁶² See esp. Horsley, “Popular Prophetic Movements,” 3-27; idem, *Bandits, Prophets and Messiahs*, 88-189; Robert Webb, *John the Baptizer and Prophet: A Socio-Historical Study*. JSNTSup (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991), 307-48.

¹⁶³ Webb, *John the Baptizer*, 333-39.

¹⁶⁴ Horsley, *Bandits, Prophets, and Messiahs*, 88-102; See, e.g., 1 Kgs 11:26-40; 12:16-20; 19:15-19; 2 Kgs 9:1-13; 23:30; Evans (*Jesus and His Contemporaries*, 56-7) notes that the hope that some kind of eschatological event would occur whereby Rome would be defeated and Israel would be restored drew on earlier canonical and extra-canonical traditions, such as that found in Num 24:17 (“A star [LXX: ἄστρον] will come forth out of Jacob, and a scepter shall rise out of Israel”).

¹⁶⁵ See e.g., 4Q174 (4QFlor) 1.10-13.

¹⁶⁶ Hengel, *The Charismatic Leader*, 20-21.

Jews that God would overthrow Rome and rule over Israel:¹⁶⁷ This expectation is evident in the passage below taken from Psalms of Solomon (ca. 50 BCE).

Behold, O Lord, and raise up unto them their king, the son of David, at the time in which Thou seest, O God, that he may reign over Israel Thy servant. And gird him with strength, that he may shatter unrighteous rulers, and that he may purge Jerusalem from nations that trample [her] down to destruction...He shall be a righteous king taught of God...He will rebuke rulers and remove sinners by the might of his word.¹⁶⁸

For the most part, our only sources of information for prophetic figures in Palestine are Josephus and the New Testament. We have already mentioned the possible problems with Josephus.¹⁶⁹ Suffice it to say that in this case, Josephus' obvious bias toward the upper class actually helps to strengthen the credibility of his reports about popular prophetic movements. We know, for instance, that he uses the terms "false prophet" (ψευδοπροφήτης) and "charlatan" or "magician" (γόης) in reference to several figures who were seen as prophets by the crowds, and that he generally regards prophetic figures outside the Jewish canon with suspicion. However, Webb notes that his use of the προφητ- word group nine times in reference to these figures indicates that he distinguished between them to some degree and that his descriptions of their activities may be trusted on the whole.¹⁷⁰

That he uses the specific προφητ- word group to identify persons against whom he was deeply antagonistic strongly suggests that he is doing so because either his sources recognize these persons as prophets, or they were widely acclaimed to be

¹⁶⁷ Although these kinds of expectations appear to have remained dormant throughout the Persian and Hellenistic periods, they were somewhat revived during the Hasmonean period. There is evidence to suggest, for example, that the community at Qumran may have held two types of messianic understandings, one of a high priestly Messiah, and one of a lay leader of the community (see, e.g., 1QSa 2.11-22; 1QM 5.1).

¹⁶⁸ *Pss. Sol.* 17.23-24, 35, 41. Similar expectations of a saviour-type figure and a lesser royal figure are found in *Jub.* 31.9-21) and *Test. Twelve Patriarchs* (see, e.g., *T. Reu.* 6:7-12; *T. Sim.* 7:1-2; *T. Levi* 8:11-1; *T. Iss.* 5:7).

¹⁶⁹ See note 62, ch. 1.

¹⁷⁰ Webb, *John the Baptizer*, 310-11.

such. Thus, Josephus' accounts of these prophets contain elements with which he disagrees, which suggests that, when their bias is taken into consideration, they may be taken as historically reliable.¹⁷¹

Let us look briefly now at some of the figures who operated in Palestine in the late first century BCE and early first century CE. Several of them claimed kingship after Herod's death (4 BCE), including Simon of Perea, Athronges the shepherd, Judas of Sepphoris and Judas of Gamala.¹⁷² Judas of Gamala, also known as Judas the Galilean, encouraged his fellow Jews to resist the census ordered by Quirinius in 6 CE after Archelaus was deposed, arguing as attested by Josephus, that it "carried with it a status amounting to downright slavery," and urged the nation to make a bid for independence.¹⁷³ He also led a group that attacked the royal palace in Sepphoris.¹⁷⁴

The activities of other prophets were more closely tied to Israel's exodus and conquest history. During the reign of Pontius Pilate (26-36 CE), for example, a Samaritan convinced a group of people to follow him up Mt. Gerizim, where he had promised to reveal the location of the Temple vessels that Moses had buried there (according to the Samaritan tradition this would usher in a new age). Some of his followers were armed, indicating that they saw fighting the Romans as part of their task in bringing about that new age. The procession was headed off by Pilate's troops before the group made it up the mountain, and the leaders were executed.¹⁷⁵ Some of Jesus' followers also saw armed

¹⁷¹ Webb, *John the Baptizer*, 311.

¹⁷² Tacitus (*Hist.* 5.9) also refers to Simon claiming kingship after Herod's death; Josephus, *War* 2.56-59, 60-65; *Ant.* 17. 271-272; 278-284; 18.4-5.

¹⁷³ Josephus, *Ant.* 18.4-5. Judas' sons Jacob and Simon were crucified (Josephus *Ant.* 20.102) under Tiberius Alexander (46-48 CE).

¹⁷⁴ See Josephus, *War.* 2.56; *Ant.* 17.271-72.

¹⁷⁵ Josephus, *Ant.* 18.85-87. A council of Samaritans later went to Vitellius, the governor of Syria, to complain that the group had not been acting as rebels against Rome, but as refugees from Pilate's persecution. As a result, Pilate was sent to Rome to give an account of his actions (Josephus, *Ant.* 18.88).

resistance as the path to bringing in God’s reign, suggesting that there may be commonalities between the movements.¹⁷⁶

Another popular prophet Theudas, was active during the administration of Fadus (44-46 CE). He is described by Josephus as an impostor (γόης) who, seeing himself as a prophet (προφήτης), convinced a group of devotees to follow him to the Jordan River, where he planned to part the water, allowing them to cross over easily.¹⁷⁷ Thus, he drew on Exodus/Conquest mythology. In response, the Romans dispatched the cavalry and many of his followers were killed and imprisoned while Theudas himself was beheaded and his head was displayed in Jerusalem.¹⁷⁸

Both Josephus and Acts mention an anonymous Egyptian (ca. 56 CE) who promised the masses that if they would follow him to the Mount of Olives, he would cause the walls of Jerusalem to fall down.¹⁷⁹ Several other prophets operating during Felix’s procuratorship (52-60 CE) led their followers into the desert under the impression that God would provide “signs of deliverance” (σημεῖα ἐλευθερίας).¹⁸⁰ The report that Felix interpreted them as “preliminary to insurrection,” and executed many of them indicates how seriously these pilgrimages were taken.

John’s baptism, symbolically situated at the Jordan River, almost certainly also

¹⁷⁶ Simon is referred to as ‘the zealot’ by Luke (6:15), and the fact that one of Jesus’ disciples either wanted to or did cut off the ear of the high priest’s servant (see Mark 14:47 and parallels) suggests that some of his followers had violence in mind as the path to leadership.

¹⁷⁷ Josephus, *Ant.* 20.97-98.

¹⁷⁸ Theudas is also mentioned in Acts 5.36 in the context of how to deal with Jesus’ followers, where Gamaliel states that he [Theudas] had a following of 400 and that he thought himself a prophet (προφήτης). Smith (*Jesus the Magician*, 20) argues that Luke places Jesus in the same social category as Theudas and Judas the Galilean—“a teacher and pretended miracle worker who might have messianic claims and whose followers might be involved in revolutionary activities”.

¹⁷⁹ Josephus, *War* 2.259-63; *Ant.* 20. 168-169. According to Acts 21:38, the Egyptian had a following of four thousand, and according to Josephus, thirty thousand.

¹⁸⁰ Josephus, *War* 2.258-60; *Ant.* 20. 167-68.

evoked Exodus/Conquest symbolism. The crowds he drew, and his arrest and execution by Herod Antipas, indicate that he too was viewed as a prophet by the masses and as a threat by the authorities.¹⁸¹ Although the gospels cite John's criticism of Antipas' marriage to Herodias as the reason for John's execution, Josephus attributes it to the crowds he drew and Antipas's fears that the events would raise a rebellion:

When others too joined the crowds about him [John], because they were aroused to the highest degree by his sermons, Herod became alarmed. Eloquence that had so great an effect on mankind might lead to some form of sedition, for it looked as if they would be guided by John in everything they did. Herod decided therefore that it would be much better to strike first and be rid of him before his work led to an uprising, than to wait for an upheaval, get involved in a difficult situation and see his mistake.¹⁸²

This has implications for Jesus as well. If Antipas had John executed because of fears of rebellion, one can imagine that anyone associated with this event would have also been suspect, particularly emerging leaders.¹⁸³ We know that Jesus was also viewed as a threat since, according to Luke, Antipas was keeping a close eye on him and in fact sought to kill him.¹⁸⁴ The fact that Jesus' crucifixion was also political confirms that his career began and ended with politically charged events.¹⁸⁵ Thus, there is a general coherence in the tradition that Jesus was associated, at least in the minds of the Jewish and Roman leadership, with politically charged events, was possibly dangerous, and as a result was being watched.

Finally, four years before the Jewish war, a solitary prophet named Joshua ben Hananiah, whom Josephus describes as a "rude peasant" (τῶν ιδιώτων ἀγροΐκος)

¹⁸¹ On John being viewed as a prophet, see: Mark 1:2-9; 6:14-16; Q 7.26-28; John 1.19-28; On John being seen as a threat to the authorities see: Josephus, *Ant.* 18.116-119; Matt 11:12-15; On the connection between the crowds viewing John as a prophet, and the authorities fear of the crowds, see Mark 11:27-33 and par.

¹⁸² Josephus, *Ant.* 18.118.

¹⁸³ Josephus, *Ant.* 18.118.

¹⁸⁴ Luke 13:31-2.

¹⁸⁵ Theissen, "The Political Dimension of Jesus' Activities," 230; Horsley, "Abandoning the Unhistorical Quest for an Apolitical Jesus," 293-4, 98.

appeared in Jerusalem during the festival of booths and began to utter woes against Jerusalem.¹⁸⁶ Ben Hananiah provoked both the Jewish and Roman authorities with his “ill-omened words,” and was eventually brought before the Roman governor on the assumption that he was “under some supernatural impulse” (δαιμονιώτερον τὸ κίνημα).¹⁸⁷ He was killed during the outbreak of the Jewish war by a stone hurled over the wall by the Romans.

Several points of significance are worth mentioning in relation to both banditry and prophetic and messianic movements in first-century Palestine. First, the leaders themselves were presumably of humble origin and drew support from the poorer elements of the population. The peasant base of these movements is clear from the terms Josephus uses to describe their followers—the crowd, and the majority of the crowd (τὸν ὄχλον, τὸν πλεῖστον ὄχλον)¹⁸⁸—as well as from the large numbers of people willing to follow these men into situations of uncertainty and risk. Eleazar, for example, was able to escape capture for twenty years.¹⁸⁹ This would not be possible without strong support from the population. Horsley has demonstrated that in terms of the origins of their followers, the content and direction of the prophet’s messages and actions, and the effects of their messages and actions, these were popular movements, made up of rural peasants.¹⁹⁰

The entire orientation of the strategy and ideology of these prophetic movements indicates that their primary goal was deliverance. The large response by the people to these prophets indicates the widespread sense of oppression and dissatisfaction among the peasantry, thus leading to felt needs for deliverance which these prophets were

¹⁸⁶ Josephus, *War* 6.300-303.

¹⁸⁷ Josephus, *War* 6.300-303.

¹⁸⁸ See Josephus, *Ant.* 20.97-98. In *War* 2.253, he states that Cumanas crucified an enormous number of both brigands and common people (δημοσῶν) whom he labels accomplices.

¹⁸⁹ Josephus, *Ant.* 20.160-61.

¹⁹⁰ Horsley, “Popular Prophetic Movements,” 12-14; cf. Stegemann and Stegemann, *The Jesus Movement*, 162-3, 170.

able to touch.¹⁹¹

Second, the actions of these leaders were seen by the authorities as politically provocative, as their swift and decisive responses indicate. In the context of Roman imperial rule, gathering in the wilderness at the Jordan River to see it part or at the Mount of Olives to watch the walls of Jerusalem fall were perceived as not merely religious, but also as highly charged and politically threatening events. Otherwise, one would have to ask why the Romans reacted with such force. The leaders of these movements were in fact acting out symbolic actions of the past in the Exodus/Conquest typology, such as the gathering of the Israelites in the wilderness, the crossing of the Jordan River by Joshua and the Israelites into the promised land of Canaan, and the crumbling of the walls of Jericho that was preceded by marching around the city seven times, events associated with the Israelites' defeat of their political enemies.¹⁹² This was not lost on the Roman authorities, who recognized these movements for what they were and quickly stamped them out.

Third, it is significant that none of these movements (with the exception of the solitary prophet Joshua ben Hananiah) are associated with the outbreak of the Jewish War (66-70 CE). This suggests that social disruption was not limited to this period, but was apparently endemic to the social and political context of Judea and Galilee. Although many of the movements are associated with Judea, several are linked with Galilee: the cave dwellers that Herod killed, Hezekiah, the brigand chief, Judas of Sepphoris, and

¹⁹¹ Webb, *John the Baptizer and Prophet*, 342.

¹⁹² Stegemann and Stegemann, *The Jesus Movement*, 162-69; Webb, *John the Baptizer and Prophet*, 334-5; Myers, *Binding the Strong Man*, 1-2; Horsley, "Popular Prophetic Movements," 8-9. This is also paralleled by Jesus riding into Jerusalem at Passover and deliberately recalling Zech 9:9.

Judas the Galilean, and these are just the movements Josephus mentions. If we accept his assessment of the situation, both banditry and prophetic/messianic movements were widespread.

Beyond the evidence already discussed, Josephus makes a clear link between political crisis and the incidence of spirit possession. He describes the following occurrence during the siege of Jerusalem by Herod in 37 BCE:

Throughout the city the agitation of the Jewish populace showed itself in various forms. The feeble folk, congregating round the temple, indulged in transports of frenzy [or spirit possession] and fabricated oracular utterances to fit the crisis.¹⁹³

Τῶν δ' ἀνά τὴν πόλιν Ἰουδαίων τὸ πλῆθος ποικίλως ἐτετάρακτο καὶ γὰρ περὶ τὸν ναὸν ἀθροιζόμενον τὸ ἀσθενέστερον ἔδαμονία καὶ πολλὰ θειωδέστερον πρὸς τοὺς καιροὺς ἐλογοποίει.

This is the clearest statement we have in extra biblical texts of the period of the connection between political oppression and spirit possession within the context of Jewish Palestine. The fact that it comes from a source which, as far as we can tell, has no reason for inventing or stressing this connection, makes it extremely useful for our analysis of first-century Palestine.

Such an obvious expression of this link confirms our thesis that incidences of spirit possession are in fact a reflection of and a commentary on the particular social context—in this case oppression, war and social distress—which penetrated deeply into all aspects of people's lives, social, religious, economic and political. As Eve argues, the poverty of the Galilean peasant and the increasing socio-political pressures on the Jewish

¹⁹³ Josephus, *War* 1.347.

people during the late Hellenistic and early Roman period may be closely connected to the incidence of demon possession.¹⁹⁴

Josephus' statement confirms that the people taking refuge at the temple felt a sense of turmoil and that they expressed this agitation in various ways. His use of a form of the verb *ταράσσω* to describe the state of the people suggests a sense of feeling extremely agitated, unsettled and confused. If we assume that there were several possible responses to Roman oppression—non-violent protest, violence in the form of either armed rebellion or social banditry, and spirit possession—the political nature of spirit possession becomes clearer. Although violence is more immediately threatening to the authorities, groups organizing around experiences of spirit possession and participating in symbolic actions that recalled religio-political events from the past would have been viewed with equal concern since these movements could (from the Roman perspective) easily escalate into situations of chaos which would be difficult to contain.

3.5 Conclusions

This chapter has demonstrated that contrary to recent suggestions by Jensen and Chancey, Galilee in the first century was a typical agrarian society where the profits of production benefited the elite, and where conditions for the majority were exploitative. The combination of loss of land, loss of control over crops, a large tax burden and oppressive social conditions reduced many to tenant farming, day labour and banditry. Since neither written sources nor archaeology can provide a complete picture of life in Galilee, our study

¹⁹⁴ Eve, *The Jewish Context*, 370-1.

has used sociological analysis of the context as well to illuminate the evidence. It is also clear from even casual observations of political events in our own period in agrarian societies in the developing world, that a booming economy (Brazil, for instance, has a growing and prosperous economy, but has significant problems with economic and social disparity) does not equal prosperity for the lowest members of the social stratum.¹⁹⁵

In a situation where resources are controlled by a small group of wealthy elite, while the vast majority of citizens have little to no control over these resources, power is maintained through violence and the threat of violence. This is the only possible way of controlling large numbers of people and was as true in Roman controlled Galilee as it is today in rural northeastern Brazil. As a result, although we should not impose either western or Marxist understandings of oppression of the poor on first century Galilee, it is equally important not to discount the general pattern in these economies where the majority live at a subsistence level and a small group of elite own most of the land and retain most of the power. Equal opportunities do not apply to antiquity, even if the economy was basically prosperous.

¹⁹⁵ In northeastern Brazil, for example, where a few families control vast expanses of land, violence and brutality are still used to maintain power. As Nancy Scheper-Hughes (*Death Without Weeping: The Violence of Everyday Life in Brazil* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992], 222) says, “Northeast Brazil is still at a transitional stage of state formation that contains many traditional and semifeudal structures, including its legacy of local political bosses (*coroneis*) spawned by an agrarian latifundista landowning class of powerful plantation estate masters and their many dependents. To this day most sugar plantation estates are protected by privately owned police forces or at least by hired pistoleiros. The web of political loyalties among the intermarried big houses and leading families of the interior leads directly to the governor and to the state legislature, which is still controlled by a traditional agrarian oligarchy. Consequently, civil police, appointed by local politicians often collaborate with hired gunmen in the employ of the plantation estates owners and sometimes participate themselves in the operations of the ‘death squads,’ a widespread and pernicious form of police “moonlighting” in Brazil. See also, Brazil: *Authorized Violence in Rural Areas* (London: Amnesty International, 1988).

The existence of both social banditry and popular messianic and prophetic movements among the populace suggests that there was, in fact, widespread frustration and that there were few other venues for expressing it. The correlation between social and political stress on the one hand and spirit possession on the other has been established. Beyond this, we have clear evidence in Josephus that at least in one case, becoming possessed by spirits was a response to social instability during the first century BCE.

Having established both the religious belief system and the socio-political context, we now move to the main focus of our investigation, Jesus' exorcisms. We begin in chapter 4 with an evaluation of all indirect evidence. In chapter 5, we will examine the exorcisms themselves.

Chapter 4: Jesus the Exorcist: The Indirect Evidence

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter we will examine all material in the gospels that refers either to Jesus' exorcisms or indicates he was himself spirit possessed, but which does not involve first-hand descriptions of exorcism.¹ As will become evident, there is broad attestation for Jesus' role as exorcist, which includes the report that he was accused of being possessed by a demon, and the belief that unclean spirits could possess people. We begin with an assessment of the tradition that Jesus experienced a vision at the time of his baptism, and was then cast into the wilderness where he experienced a period of trials. This will be followed by an evaluation of the accusations made against Jesus in the Beelzebul Controversy which is found in both Mark and Q. We will assess Jesus' response to these accusations in the Finger/Spirit of God and Strong Man pericopes.

Once these two major blocks of material have been discussed, we will look at all other references to exorcism or evil spirits, according to which tradition they are found in, Mark, L, Q or M. This indirect evidence includes the report that Jesus was known to have cast out seven demons from Mary Magdalene, the parable of the Return of the Unclean Spirit, and the Sending Out of the Twelve.

¹ See Matt 4:23-25 and par. Mark 3:7-12; Luke 6:17-20: "Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and curing every disease and every sickness among the people. 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 (δαιμονιζομένους καὶ σεληνιαζομένους), and paralytics, and he cured them. And great crowds followed him from Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea, and from beyond the Jordan." cf. other summary statements Mark 1:32-34, 39; Luke 4:40-41. These summary statements are viewed by most scholars as redactional. In addition, they provide no new information about Jesus or exorcism. See Twelftree, *Jesus the Exorcist*, 128-9.

4.2 *Baptism and Trials*

We begin with the reports in the triple tradition of Jesus' call and identification as God's son at his baptism, and the reports in Mark and Q of his forty day period of trials in the wilderness. These two events provide information about the way in which Jesus was situated both within the Jewish prophetic and messianic tradition, and from an anthropological perspective, as a spirit-filled healer and exorcist in the shamanic tradition.

4.2.1 *Baptism*

[9] In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. [10] And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove into [my English translation of the Greek, εἰς] him. [11] And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the beloved; with you I am well pleased (Mark 1:9-11).

[. . . Jesus . . . baptized, heaven opened,]
 [And . . . the Spirit . . . upon him . . . Son . . .] (Q 3:21b-22 [Luke 3:21-22; Matt 3:16]).²

Before we can begin to examine the implications of Jesus' baptism for his exorcisms, we must deal with the issue of where the earliest material is found. The baptism is one of the disputed passages in Q. While both Mark and Matthew report that Jesus was baptized and that he experienced a vision as he emerged from the water, Luke does not actually state that Jesus was baptized. Instead, Jesus' vision is inserted into a general report that the people were baptized. This raises the question of whether the baptism occurred in Q at all.³

Robinson, Hoffmann, and Kloppenborg include the reconstructed passage above, but Harry Fleddermann contends that the verbal agreements between Matthew and Luke are not

² James M. Robinson, Paul Hoffman, and John S. Kloppenborg, (eds.). *The Critical Edition of Q* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000).

³ Robinson, Hoffman and Kloppenborg (*The Critical Edition of Q*) include it.

strong enough to include the baptism in Q.⁴ As is clear from the fragmentary nature of the text, even if the report of the baptism was found in Q, it was very brief. One of the problems, however, with excluding the baptism from Q is that there is otherwise no narrative transition between Jesus' pre-baptismal state and his sudden appearance in the desert facing his enemy. While his success in overcoming Satan may serve this purpose,⁵ this still does not solve the problem of why in Q Satan frames his first temptation with the clause, "If you are the Son of God," if this phrase had not already occurred in a baptismal account.⁶ However, because even the reconstructed version found in Q is so limited, we will assume in this analysis that the account of the baptism was found only in Mark. This means that the baptism only occurs in one source, and the criterion of multiple attestation does not apply.⁷

That said the baptism itself is seen by most scholars as one of the most solidly attested historical events in the Christian tradition.⁸ The report very likely reflects a historical event which was embarrassing to the early Christ-believing community. For one thing, Jesus' baptism by John required an explanation for why a man the church understood to be sinless was in need of baptism by one who preached repentance. Another problem may have been

⁴ Harry T. Fleddermann, *Q: A Reconstruction and Commentary* (Biblical Tools and Studies, Vol. 1; B. Doyle et al., Peeters: Bondgenootenlaan, 2005), 71-7.

⁵ So Ronald Piper, "Jesus and the Conflict of Powers in Q: Two Q Miracle Stories," in *The Sayings Source Q and the Historical Jesus* (ed. A. Lindemann; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2001), 317-48, 342-3.

⁶ On this basis Meier (*A Marginal Jew*, 2:103) argues that some form of the baptism account was found in Q.

⁷ As Meier (*A Marginal Jew*, 2: 102-103) points out, it is possible that baptism, an early Christian rite, was retrojected back into the tradition and associated with John; cf. Richard E. DeMaris ("The Baptism of Jesus: A Ritual Critical Approach," in Stegemann, Malina and Theissen; 137-57, 137-8) who argues that the vision has more claim to historicity than the baptism based on cross-cultural anthropological attestation of spontaneous induction of spirit possession which is often accompanied by visions.

⁸ As Webb (*John the Baptizer*, 163-4) states, John's baptism is attested in four sources (Mark, Q, Josephus and John), and it is one of the most solid aspects of the tradition we have.

the similarities of the event to other religious rites in the Greco-Roman world, as Smith argues:

Even without the ritual, the story of the coming of the spirit is surprising because the event it describes is just the sort of thing that was thought to happen to a magician. Essentially, it admits the charge that Jesus had a spirit and, as told by Mark, it takes for granted that the reader will know this is a good spirit, not a bad one [Matthew and Luke identify the spirit as ‘holy’].⁹

In addition, since there is no precedent in the Jewish tradition for God appearing in the form of a dove, the criterion of dissimilarity can be added to that of embarrassment in the baptism/vision narrative.¹⁰ While early Christian influence is a possibility, it seems unlikely that the early church would have invented a tradition that only created more problems for it. It is clear that there was embarrassment over the fact that John baptized Jesus since Matthew has John protest and Luke avoids the problem altogether by having John in prison before Jesus is baptized.¹¹ While the author of John does not record Jesus’ baptism, he must have had access to these traditions as well since he has John recognize Jesus from seeing the spirit in the form of a dove come to rest on him (ἐπ’ αὐτόν; John 1:32), adopting the same phrase used by both Luke and Matthew.¹² This suggests that he removed the descent of the dove from the baptismal event and appropriated it for his own purposes.¹³

Let us now examine some of the textual differences between Mark and Matthew and Luke. Mark’s depiction in particular corresponds closely to the experiences of exorcists and

⁹ Smith, *Jesus the Magician*, 96-7.

¹⁰ Davies, *Jesus the Healer*, 61; Smith, *Jesus the Magician*, 97.

¹¹ See n. 82, ch. 1 for detailed discussion of the way Jesus’ baptism is handled in the tradition.

¹² Although John avoids mentioning Jesus’ baptism, he does relate a conversation between the Pharisees and John in which they ask John why he is baptizing if he is not the Messiah, the prophet or Elijah (John 1:25). John also contains reports about Jesus and John both baptizing in the Jordan and concerns that Jesus was drawing larger crowds than John (John 3:22-6).

¹³ So, Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, 2: 104.

healers cross-culturally. However, if we look to the changes made by Matthew and Luke, we find significant changes which indicate a deliberate attempt to alter these similarities to ecstatic experience. In particular, the language of both writers is more subdued than Mark's. Although it is possible that this difference reflects material drawn from Q, it seems more likely that they both chose to alter Mark's account in similar ways.¹⁴

These differences begin with the softening of the expression used to describe the opening of the heavens. While Mark uses the verb *σχίζω* (to tear, split or divide), Matthew and Luke have lessened the harshness by using *ἠνεώχθησαν* and *ἀνεωχθῆναι* (the aorist passive indicative and aorist passive infinitive forms of the verb *ἀνοίγω*, “to open” respectively).¹⁵ The result is that the violent ripping of the heavens has become a simple and more passive “opening”. Similarly, while all three synoptic gospels record the descent of the dove in the third person (καὶ τὸ πνεῦμα ὡς περιστερὰν καταβαῖνον εἰς αὐτόν, Mark 1:10), only Mark and Luke retain the first person account of the voice speaking directly to Jesus: Σὺ εἶ ὁ υἱός μου (“You are my Son”).¹⁶

In contrast, Matthew has made the voice publicly announce Jesus' sonship (Οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ υἱός μου—“This is my Son”). Assuming Markan priority, Jesus' experience of the

¹⁴ See Meier (“How do We Decide?” 126) on the way Jesus' baptism by John has been softened in the tradition over time. However, Meier (*A Marginal Jew*, 2: 103-4) does raise the possibility that there was another tradition of the baptism in Q, which would provide a possible alternative explanation for some of these differences.

¹⁵ A similar phrase “tear open the heavens” (קרעת שמים) is found in Isa 63:19 in relation to God coming down to earth. Meier (*A Marginal Jew*, 2:103) notes that this agreement between Matthew and Luke could suggest they drew on Q for some of their information about the baptism.

¹⁶ Adela Yarbro Collins and John J. Collins (*King and Messiah as Son of God: Divine, Human, and Angelic Messianic Figures in Biblical and Related Literature* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008], 126-28) have observed that the phrase, “You are my son” is drawn from Psalm 2:7 and is meant to convey the idea that Jesus was understood to be established as the Messiah at his baptism. Mark adds the word “beloved,” and they argue that this addition was inspired by the expression of being chosen found in Isa 42:1 and perhaps also by Isa 41:8-9 and 44:2 where “chosen” and “beloved” are used synonymously.

heavens being ripped open and the spirit descending as a dove, was originally a private rather than a public experience, known only to him.¹⁷ Matthew's change may reflect his desire to assert that no spiritual experience can be understood from the perspective of the individual alone, especially if this individual is (or has become) a very public figure.

Another important difference concerns the use of a preposition. While Mark states that the dove/spirit descended into (εἰς) Jesus, both Matthew and Luke have replaced this with the preposition upon (ἐπι, Matt 3:16=Luke 3:22). Mark's phrase τὸ πνεῦμα ὡς περιστερὰν καταβαῖνον εἰς αὐτόν is strikingly similar to the Hebrew phrase in Ezekiel 2:2: **וַיָּבֹא בִּי רוּחַ** ("a spirit entered into me"); we have already shown that Ezekiel probably experienced both spirit possession and spirit travel.¹⁸ The change made by Matthew and Luke most likely reflects a desire to remove any hint of spirit possession and shift the focus to public identification signaled by the spirit/dove visibly resting on Jesus, and symbolizing in turn divine approval. Interestingly, this tendency has continued right up to the present in Jesus scholarship, where, as Davies says, the term "spirit possession" is "studiously avoided" and phrases such as "possessing the spirit," and "receiving the spirit" are used instead.¹⁹

However, the kinds of ecstatic and visionary experiences hinted at by Mark were part of the Jewish tradition and are also universally attested aspects of initiation into the spirit realm. The experience of another dimension, often described as the realm of the sacred, or

¹⁷ Borg ("The Spirit-Filled Experience of Jesus," 307) argues that just because we do not find other vision experiences reported in the gospels does not mean that they did not occur. If they were personal and private there would have been no reason for Jesus to report them unless they fit specifically into his teaching. The book of Acts reports many such visions, suggesting that the early church continued to experience this spirit-filled reality.

¹⁸ So De Maris, "The Baptism of Jesus," 148.

¹⁹ Davies, *Jesus the Healer*, 22.

the other world is recognized and acknowledged across cultures, as is the affirmation that the two realms—the sacred and the profane—intersect at certain points in the human experience. In addition, certain persons (shamans, prophets, mediums, and healers) are widely recognized for their ability to tap into and mediate this realm to others.²⁰ From an anthropological perspective, the Jewish temple itself can be understood as the *axis mundi*, the place where this world is connected to the world beyond.²¹ Jacob’s vision of a ladder (or stairs) with angels ascending and descending also expresses this connection with the spirit realm, and his exclamation, “This is none other than the house of God, and this is the *gate* of heaven,” confirms the other worldly nature of his encounter.²²

We have already shown in chapter 2 that many of the prophets in the Hebrew Bible are described as having ecstatic experiences. The picture presented of Jesus’ baptism in Mark echoes these experiences both generally and in some specific ways. For example, the language describing Jesus’ vision bears a striking resemblance to some of the call narratives and visions attributed to Hebrew prophets such as Ezekiel, Isaiah and Jeremiah, in which phrases such as “the heavens opened” (Ezek 1:1), and “I saw” or “I see” (Ezek 1:1; Jer 1:11; Is 6; *I En.* 86) and “the hand of the Lord fell on me” (1 Kgs 18.46; 2 Kgs 3.15; Jer 15.17) are common.²³ As we mentioned in chapter 2, these kinds of

²⁰ Borg, *Jesus, A New Vision*, 27.

²¹ See Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1959). *Axis mundi* is an anthropological term indicating the universal idea that there are certain locations which are sacred and which offer access to or an opening into another plain of reality. See also Rev 4:1: “After this I looked and there in heaven a door stood open,” which also suggests a temporary ability to enter into the other world.

²² Gen 28:17.

²³ As Borg (“The Spirit-Filled Experience of Jesus,” 308-9) notes, the phrase serves as a metaphor for an experience of seeing briefly into the other world. As we saw in chapter 2, prophetic ecstatic experiences were also associated with both Samuel and Saul (1 Sam 10:5-13; 19:18-24; 2 Kgs 3:15-20).

phrases also suggest a link with spirit possession. If Jesus' baptism, vision and trials are understood from this perspective, his call by God to a specific ministry of healing and exorcising demons and announcing the coming kingdom was triggered by an involuntary incident of spirit possession triggered by the experience of baptism.

That Jesus saw himself, or at least was seen by Mark as a prophet, and that this role was linked with his ability to heal and exorcise demons, is evident from the following account:

Then Jesus said to them, "Prophets are not without honor, except in their hometown, and among their own kin, and in their own house." And he could do no deed of power there, except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and cured them. And he was amazed at their unbelief (Mark 6:4-5).²⁴

Further confirmation of the link between prophetic identity and healing is found in the Gospel of Thomas: "A prophet is not acceptable in that prophet's own native town. A physician does not heal people who are acquainted with that physician" (*Gos. Thom* 31).

Although Matthew and Luke have softened Mark's "he could not" to "he did not," the fact that they have retained the story, despite its embarrassing implications, suggests an authentic tradition, since it is unlikely the early Christians would have invented a story that presents Jesus as unable to perform miracles when rejected.²⁵

²⁴ See also Luke 4:24; Matt 13:57 and Mark 2:17 where Jesus refers to himself as a physician and Luke 4:23 where he is reported to have said, "No doubt you will quote the proverb to me: "Physician, heal yourself," a phrase which is found in various forms in ancient literature. For instance, Euripides says, "A physician for others, but himself teeming with sores" (Euripides, *Frag.* 1086); and Genesis Rabbah states, "Physician, heal your own lameness" (*Gen. Rab.* 23 [15c]). Although Genesis Rabbah is a late text (425-450 CE), the presence of this saying in a 5th century text suggests that it was widely known and understood in antiquity.

²⁵ So Smith, *Jesus the Magician*, 15-16. In addition to this change, whereas Mark states that a prophet is not accepted by his family, his household, or his hometown, Matthew omits "among his own relatives" and Luke and John (7:44) retain only "hometown". Moxnes ("What is Family?" 27) argues that this statement places Jesus in the context of an honour shame culture in terms of his position within both his

Jesus' added identification with Elijah and Elisha in Luke 4:24-7, who themselves functioned as both prophets and healers, further strengthens the association between his role as prophet and that of healer. Significantly, both Elijah and Elisha were reported to have healed foreigners, as Jesus did (see Mark 7:24-30), and the Lukan redactor has Jesus deliberately emphasize this fact, which draws consternation from the crowd. Thus, Jesus' identification with the religious and cultural "other" is signaled by Luke and may be linked to other accusations against Jesus found in both the Beelzebul Controversy and in John's gospel. The similarity of some of Jesus' healings to those of Hanina ben Dosa,²⁶ who was also a Galilean miracle worker, may suggest a Galilean tradition of healers and social non-conformists.

As we have seen, spirit possession can be deliberately induced or may occur involuntarily. In the first case it may be initiated by particular rituals such as chanting, singing, dancing, drumming, clapping, formulaic prayers, and smelling particular fragrances such as incense.²⁷ It may be that something else occurred during John's baptisms which served to induce spirit possession, or that the ritual itself had this function. In that case, others may also have experienced visions and spirit possession upon being baptized. Alternatively, Jesus' experience may have been unique.

Michael Winkelman has compared the characteristics of healers and the societies they work in across forty seven cultures using seven variables: 1) selection procedures (illness, involuntary visions, spirit selection or possession, self-selection, vision quests

family and his ethnic group. "A prophet is not without honour, except in his own country (*patris*), and among his own kin (*syggeneis*) and in his own house (*oikos*)".

²⁶ See discussion under 2.5.

²⁷ See n. 211, ch. 2.

etc.), 2) types of altered states of consciousness practiced or experienced, 3) relationship to powers (such as possessing spirits or gods), 4) types of activities performed (i.e. healing, divination, propitiation, protection and malevolent acts), 5) techniques used (touch, spells, control of spirits, exorcism, etc), 6) socio-political evaluation by the culture (social and economic status, role specialization, practitioner group, psychological characteristics), and 7) level of political power.²⁸

Based on his study, as one moves from hunter gatherer societies to agrarian societies, the role of the healer gradually shifts from that of a shaman—at the hunting/gathering end of the spectrum, who experiences voluntary controlled trance and generally functions as the sole spiritual leader in his or her society, to that of healer and then *medium*—at the agricultural subsistence end of the spectrum. This role is characterized by involuntary trance and spirit possession, informal or charismatic leadership, and low to moderate social status and political power. The lack of political power reflects the fact that other higher status practitioners (often priests) may be present in the culture.

Based on Winkelman's criteria, I will suggest that Jesus, as well as many of the prophets described in the Hebrew Bible, functioned as *mediums* within their societies. Jesus lived and operated as a healer-exorcist within a context which socialized for compliance and suppressed dissident voices. First-century Palestine was a highly

²⁸ Winkelman, "Shamans and Other 'Magico-Religious' Healers," 311-12; 335.

stratified agrarian society with slavery, which was also experiencing foreign imperial rule at the time, as it had done for much of its history.²⁹

While typically after this kind of experience, a person will return to normal consciousness within a short time, certain individuals may undergo a more intense experience which sets them on a path of healing others.³⁰ Thus, one of the possible interpretations of Jesus' experience is that the baptism was a ritual event which triggered the vision of the heavens splitting open and the descent of the spirit/dove *into* him.³¹ This in turn, triggered the experience in the wilderness, to which we now turn.

4.2.2 Trials

The careers of many healers and exorcists across cultures begin with trance, spirit possession, or illness, which is followed by a period of trials. During this time, the initiate may learn to control his/her own spirits and once this has been achieved, he/she is then able to control the spirits of others. Thus, the healer's ability to exorcise spirits and to heal is directly linked with this initial experience of spirit possession and a period of suffering or the completion of trials.³² The close connection made in the gospels between Jesus' baptism, vision and trials in the wilderness suggests that his experience mirrors this universal pattern.

²⁹ The imperial political context of first-century Galilee will be addressed in more depth in chapter 5.

³⁰ See p. 41.

³¹ DeMaris ("The Baptism of Jesus," 137-57) argues that the vision has a stronger claim to historicity than the baptism itself, and suggests that the baptism could have been added later by the early Church as a way of making Jesus' experience of spirit possession more acceptable; i.e. transforming it from an experience that was seen in a negative light to a positive one in the eyes of either the Jewish tradition or of the early church (i.e. by associating it with baptism. In other words, for DeMaris it was the vision, rather than the baptism that was embarrassing for the early followers of Jesus. This is possible, but the multiple attestations to the fact that John was known as a baptizer render this somewhat unlikely.

³² R. Radcliffe-Brown, *The Adaman Islanders* (Cambridge: 1939), 139; Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion*, 59-

[12] The Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness (ἐκβάλλει εἰς τὴν ἔρημον). [13] He was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels [or messengers] waited on him (Mark 1:12-13).

[1] And Jesus was led [into] the wilderness by the Spirit [2] [to be] tempted by the devil and he ate nothing for forty days; .he became hungry.[3] And the devil told him: “If you are God’s son, order that these stones become loaves.” [4] And Jesus answered [him]: “It is written, ‘A person is not to live only from bread.’” [9] [The devil] took him along to Jerusalem and put him on the tip of the Temple and told him: “If you are God’s Son throw yourself down. [10] For it is written, ‘He will command his angels about you, [11] and on their hands they will bear you, so that you do not strike your foot against a stone.’” [12] And Jesus [in reply] told him: “It is written, ‘Do not put to the test the Lord your God.’” [5] And the devil took him along to a [very high] mountain, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and all their splendour, [6] and told him, “All these I will give you [7] if you bow down before me.” [8] And [in reply], Jesus told him: “It is written: ‘Bow down to the Lord your God and serve only him.’” [13] And the devil left him. (Q 4:1-13).

Before examining the trials themselves, I wish to point out an important difference between Mark and Q. Mark 1:12 states that the spirit immediately drove Jesus into the wilderness (Καὶ εὐθὺς τὸ πνεῦμα αὐτὸν ἐκβάλλει εἰς τὴν ἔρημον).³³ The verb ἐκβάλλω is often used to describe casting out demons in both Mark and Q. In this case, however, instead of ἐκβάλλω, Q contains the passive form of the verb, ἀνάγω (to lead), rendering the statement, “Then, Jesus was led into the wilderness by the spirit to be tested by the devil” (Q 4:1): Τότε ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἀνήχθη εἰς τὴν ἔρημον ὑπὸ τοῦ πνεύματος πειρασθῆναι ὑπὸ τοῦ διαβόλου (Luke qualifies spirit with “holy” and has Jesus led by the spirit within the wilderness (ἤγετο ἐν τῷ πνεύματι ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ, 4:1).

The result is that, just as Mark’s baptismal report appears to be more raw and unpolished and bears a close resemblance to descriptions of spirit possession across cultures, in this case too, Mark’s description of the spirit casting Jesus into the wilderness uses the

63; Bourguignon, *Possession*, 45; idem, “Suffering and Healing,” 563; Campbell, “The Road of Trials,” in *Hero with a Thousand Faces* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1973), 97-109. Stephen Larsen, *The Shaman’s Doorway*, (Barrytown, NY.: Station Hill Press, 1988), 61-6.

³³ As Smith (*Jesus the Magician*, 143) has observed, Mark’s version is likely historical since it did not serve the interests of the early church and since Luke and Matthew have softened it.

language of spirit possession, whereas Q's version is softer and contains no allusions to spirit possession. If Mark and Q knew the same traditions about Jesus' experience, it may be that the writer of Q was uncomfortable with language that implied involuntary spirit possession.³⁴

In contrast to the fragmentary report of Jesus' baptism and Mark's more complete version, in this case, Q's account of Jesus' time in the wilderness is much more detailed than that found in Mark. Specifically, while Mark mentions only that Jesus was tested by Satan over a forty day period, Q provides the details of the encounter between Jesus and Satan (Q uses "the Devil") which involve three major tests. As H. A. Kelly observes, Jesus is depicted through these trials as the just servant of God being tested and confirmed in his status as God's son.³⁵

The longer report found in Q may suggest Jewish or early Christian midrash on a tradition that Jesus had experienced a period of trials in the wilderness. As Kelly has observed, the longer versions of the temptation found in Matthew and Luke reflect a rabbinical style of dispute, which obscures the significance of the experience of physical and spiritual testing (*peirasmos*), and shifts the focus to Jesus' ability to successfully refute the devil's challenges using scriptural quotations.³⁶

There are also some significant differences between Matthew and Luke. For example, while both writers describe three tests, the temptation to turn stones into loaves of bread, the temptation to rule the world, and the temptation to throw oneself down from the temple, the

³⁴ So Dale Allison Jr., "Behind the Temptations of Jesus: Q 4:1-13 and Mark 1:12-13," in *Authenticating the Activities of Jesus* [ed. Bruce Chilton and Craig A. Evans; Brill: Boston, 2002] 195-213) argues that Q and Mark represent independent traditions.

³⁵ So H. A. Kelly, "The Devil in the Desert," *CBQ* 26 [1964] 190-220, 214-15.

³⁶ Kelly, "The Devil," 196-202.

second and third temptations occur in a different order in the two accounts. Matthew has the temple setting second, and the mountain third, while Luke has reversed the order.

A similar tripartite understanding of the testing of the Israelites is found in the *Damascus Document* from Qumran.³⁷ Whereas the Israelites failed their test in the wilderness, Jesus succeeded in resisting.³⁸ J. T. Milik sees a parallel between Jesus' trials—especially his words to Satan—and those spoken by God to the Israelites as reported in Deut 8:3: “He humbled you by letting you hunger, then by feeding you with manna, with which neither you nor your ancestors were acquainted, in order to make you understand that one does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord.”³⁹

The period of forty days is also significant within Judaism⁴⁰ and may allude to the forty days Moses spent on the mountain, the forty years the Israelites spent wandering in the desert, or to the forty days Elijah spent in the wilderness, or to all three.⁴¹ Milik has observed that the Essenes too understood themselves to be living out the forty year experience of the Israelites in the wilderness, and saw themselves as successful in meeting the trials which the earlier generation had failed to overcome.⁴²

The desert as a locale for testing is known in Jewish tradition to symbolize either a place of contact with the divine, as it does for Moses and Elijah, or a place where wild

³⁷ 4Q266 4.12-19.

³⁸ So Jacques Dupont, *Les tentations de Jésus au désert* (ed. A. Descamps and B. Rigaux; Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1968), 12-20; Allison, “Behind the Temptations,” 199.

³⁹ J. T. Milik, *Ten Years of Discovery in the Wilderness of Judaea*, trans. J. Strugnell (Stud. Bib. Theol. 25; London, 1959), 115.

⁴⁰ If we found the forty day period only in Matthew, we might suspect that he created it to make Jesus adhere more closely to Moses, as he likes to do, but the fact that it occurs in all three gospels makes this less likely.

⁴¹ See Deut 8:2; Exod 16:35; 24:18; 34:28.

⁴² 1 QS 8.15ff; 9.10ff; Milik, *Ten Years of Discovery*, 115-16.

animals and demons were thought to reside.⁴³ In Mark at least, it appears to represent both the presence of evil (symbolized by the wild animals) and the presence of the divine (represented by angels [i.e. messengers]).⁴⁴ Matthew mentions only the angels and Luke mentions neither animals nor angels. Jesus' experience of testing seems to resemble more closely that of Elijah (1 Kgs 19:8) than Moses (Exod 24:18), especially his being fed by the angels in the wilderness.⁴⁵ Jesus' encounter with Satan also corresponds to a similar report in the *Testament of Naphthali* where the connection is made between one's right standing before God and the ability to overcome evil in the form of demons and wild beasts:

If you achieve the good, my children, men and angels will bless you;
And God will be glorified through you among the gentiles. The devil will flee from you,
wild animals will be afraid of you, and the angels will stand by you
Just as anyone who rears a child well is held in good esteem,
so also there will be a virtuous recollection on the part of God for your good work.
The one who does not do the good, men and angels will curse. And God will be
dishonoured among the Gentiles because of him. The devil will inhabit him as his own
instrument. Every wild animal will dominate him, and the Lord will hate him.⁴⁶

⁴³ Isa 13:21; 34:14; *T. Iss* 7:7; *T. Naph* 8:4, 6; *T. Benj.* 3:5.

⁴⁴ See 1 Kgs 19:4-10, where Elijah is fed by angels while journeying in the wilderness; but see Tob 8:3, 4 where the demon Asmodeus flees to the remotest part of Egypt; *1 En.* 10:4-5. In Jubilees' (48:1-4) version of Moses' encounter with God in the desert of Midian (Ex 4:24), Moses is met by Mastema, who tries to kill him because he knows that he will go on to perform wonders.

⁴⁵ See Allison, "Behind the Temptations," 202. If Jesus was thought to have spent time in the wilderness it might explain why he was viewed by some as Elijah returned, and why both he and others identified John the Baptist (who also lived in the wilderness—see Mark 1:2-3) with Elijah (Mark 6:15; 9:9-13 and par.).

⁴⁶ *T. Naph.* 8:4-6. There remains some uncertainty about the exact mixture of Jewish and Christian influence in the *T. Twelve Patriarchs*. However, H. C. Kee ("Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs: A New Translation and Introduction," [Charlesworth, J. H. (ed.) *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha, Vol 1: Apocalyptic Literature and Testaments*. New York: Doubleday, 1983], 775-81), argues that the basic writings of the *T. 12 Patr* go back to the 1st and 2nd century BCE and were composed by a Hellenized Jew. In terms of location, the evidence points to either Palestine or Egypt. How much of this particular text is influenced by later Christian interpolations is difficult to say, but the fact that no mention is made of Jesus, along with the strong emphasis on ethics suggests a possible origin among Jewish Christ-believers, perhaps drawing on themes found in Mark. However, it is also possible that both Mark and *T. Naph.* reflect the prevailing first-century Jewish understanding of good and evil (symbolized in the angels and the devil) and its relationship to ethical behavior. In any case, the passage demonstrates a Jewish understanding of the "two ways" philosophy as described in the *Didache* 1: 403-43, (the dating of the *Didache* is still disputed, but may be tentatively dated to the late 1st c. CE. However, it may contain material from as early as the mid-1st century), as well as a clear connection between the flight of the devil and the mastery of wild beasts. Cf. *T. Iss.* 7:7 where Beliar is said to flee from one who

Similarly, a midrash on Genesis 15 (God’s covenant with Abraham) found in the *Apocalypse of Abraham* shows strong affinities to the Markan passage.⁴⁷ Chapters 12-13 describe the temptation of Abraham in the context of the ritual sacrifice of animals. Like Jesus, Abraham fasts forty days and nights and when he has ascended Mt. Horeb is tempted by the demon Azazel, who appears in the form of an unclean bird. Azazel attempts to lure Abraham away from his accompanying angel, Jaobel, and reminds him of the lack of food on the mountain. Like Jesus, Abraham resists Azazel’s temptation, and is rewarded by God’s favour.⁴⁸

The experience of trials in the wilderness also has parallels across cultures. Ceremonial initiations are common for healers and mediums in complex agricultural societies,⁴⁹ and facing a particular enemy is part of the experience of holy men in the transitional phase immediately before beginning their life of service to others.⁵⁰ In addition, a period of time spent in the wilderness can be understood as the second phase of a universal pattern of a rite of passage, as proposed by van Gennep: separation—transition or

keeps from sin.

⁴⁷ The *Apocalypse of Abraham* is dated to the late 1st century CE, but shows no signs of dependence on Mark. As Kelly (“The Devil in the Desert,” 190-220) notes, the *Apoc. Ab.* has brought together the traditions of the birds of prey that Abraham drove away in Gen 15 and the Azazel traditions in *1 En.* 10:8.

⁴⁸ *Apoc. Ab.* 14:1-14; cf. *Jub.* 10:8-11, where Abraham is tempted, this time by Mastema, to sacrifice Isaac.

⁴⁹ Winkelman, “Magico-Religious Healers,” 334.

⁵⁰ These kinds of stories are associated with religious leaders throughout history. For example, Buddha faces the evil demon /temptress Mara, who attempts to keep him from renouncing his life as a prince for the life of an ascetic. She tempts him again as he attempts to overcome his desire for food and other worldly possessions, and tries to prevent him from becoming a bodhisattva, one who sacrifices his own immediate salvation in order to help others attain enlightenment. See Hajime Nakamura, *Gotama Buddha. A Biography Based on the Most Reliable Texts* (Tokyo: Kose Publishing, 2000), 157; Henry Clarke Warren, *Buddhism in Translations* (New York: Atheneum, 1970), 63-4.

liminality—and re-incorporation.⁵¹ In the second phase, after separating from his or her community, an initiate often undergoes a period of testing, which may include fasting, and the appearance of malevolent or benevolent spiritual beings, often of an anthropomorphic nature. Having been transformed by overcoming these tests or difficulties, the individual returns to his community, where he takes up a new role, that of healer of others.⁵²

In addition, Winkelman notes that cross-culturally, role selection for *mediums* begins with spontaneous spirit possession, and with the assumption that they learn directly from the spirits.⁵³ The more detailed accounts found in Q may then serve the purpose of explaining why Jesus, having the power to command spirits, did not fly through the air or turn stones into bread as might be expected from someone with these powers.⁵⁴

Thus, Jesus' encounter with Satan can be understood from an anthropological perspective as a liminal stage between his call at his baptism (separation) and the beginning of his work as a healer (reincorporation). The early Christ-believing community knew and valued the tradition that Jesus faced a struggle of some kind against evil. Thus, the event may accurately reflect an early and authentic tradition that Jesus struggled against and overcame a spiritual enemy early in his public mission and that this struggle was central to the formation of his identity as a healer and exorcist.⁵⁵

⁵¹ Arnold van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage* (London: Routledge & Paul, 1960), 11-13, 108-9; Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (Chicago: Aldine, 1972), 94-6. Although Jesus is generally contrasted to John in terms of his lifestyle of eating and drinking freely, another stream of tradition may reflect an authentic tradition that he practiced fasting. Allison, "Behind the Temptations," 212-13.

⁵² Van Gennep, *Rites of Passage*, 108-9; Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion*, 59-62.

⁵³ Winkelman, "'Magico-Religious' Healers," 335.

⁵⁴ See Smith, *Jesus the Magician*, 97.

⁵⁵ See Allison, "Behind the Temptations," 205-7.

Taking into account what we know about the experiences of healers and exorcists across cultures, it is not surprising that a period of trials in the wilderness would be connected to the inauguration of Jesus' public activities. Seen in this light, his success in facing his opponent—symbolized by Satan and the wild beasts—would be understood as evidence that he displayed unusually strong powers over evil. There is also a dualistic element in the confrontation between Jesus and Satan, which reflects the conflict between the two cosmic powers of good and evil, and serves to set the stage for Jesus' ability to control evil spirits later.

Let us now bring the criteria of authenticity to bear on the historicity of the traditions of baptism and testing. We have already noted that Jesus' baptism by John is one of the most well-established events described in the early Christian tradition. As with other embarrassing events in Jesus' life—such as the fact that he did not fast and that he was perceived by some to be a drunk and a glutton who associated with tax collectors and prostitutes—there is a tendency in the tradition to blunt the similarities between Jesus' experience and that of spirit possession with its sometimes graphic and offensive nature. As a result, Mark's account is to be preferred. Mark's highly charged language of tearing (the heavens), the spirit entering into, rather than resting upon, and casting or driving Jesus into the wilderness enjoys a high degree of authenticity since its links with spirit possession are embarrassing to the tradition and also correspond with what healers and exorcists are known to experience across cultures.

The criterion of coherence establishes the authenticity of both the vision and testing, since they are linked by the writers to the baptism, which is already broadly accepted as part of the early tradition. Coherence can also be applied to the vision as a result of other

statements made by Jesus about Satan, such as “I saw Satan fall like lightning” (Luke 10:18) which indicate he experienced visions. In fact, Joel Marcus argues that the vision of Satan falling originally occurred during the baptism, along with the vision of the descent of the spirit/dove,⁵⁶ whereby Jesus would have seen in his vision both the fall of Satan and his emissaries and the coming of the Spirit of God, bringing with it forgiveness and the inauguration of God’s reign.

The fact that neither Matthew nor Mark suggest that Jesus defeated Satan in any final way is also surprising. This is particularly evident in Luke who notes at the end of the trials that when the devil had “finished every test, he departed from him [Jesus] until an opportune time” (Καὶ συντελέσας πάντα πειρασμὸν ὁ διάβολος ἀπέστη ἀπ’ αὐτοῦ ἄχρι καιροῦ).⁵⁷ This raises the issue of Jesus’ vulnerability to temptation. The idea that the Messiah would be tempted by Satan is not attested within the Jewish tradition,⁵⁸ making it unlikely that the early church would have invented an encounter between Satan and Jesus, where Jesus, whom it saw as the resurrected Messiah beyond the realm of temptation, is tested, but does not achieve final defeat of his enemy. As Fitzmyer has suggested, it is difficult to imagine the early community inventing such fantasies “out of whole cloth,” so why invent this particular event?⁵⁹ The significance of these observations is that the tradition of Jesus experiencing a period of trials through which his ability to heal and exorcise demons from people was developed is very likely early and authentic. There seems no good reason

⁵⁶ Joel Marcus, “Jesus’ Baptismal Vision,” *NTS* 41 (1995) 512-21.

⁵⁷ Luke 4:13. A lack of finality may also be suggested by Matthew’s judgment scene where those deemed unworthy are sent into the eternal fire prepared for *the devil and his angels*. In other words, from Matthew’s perspective, the punishment and final destruction of evil had not yet occurred.

⁵⁸ Miller, *Jesus at Thirty*, 56.

⁵⁹ Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke I-IX* (New York: Doubleday, 1981), 509.

for the early church to have invented it and it corresponds with what healers across cultures experience.

4.3 The Beelzebul Controversy: Accusations of Demon Possession and Madness

We have established that in the earliest reports Jesus was viewed as someone who had experienced involuntary spirit possession and a period of testing from which he emerged as a healer/exorcist. We now look to accusations that Jesus was possessed by a demon. The Beelzebul Controversy—both the accusations and Jesus’ response to them—provides another way of situating Jesus and his activities as exorcist. It is found in both Mark and Q. While the settings are slightly different, in both cases the accusations come in response to Jesus’ exorcisms.

There are actually three versions of the accusation (Mark 3:19b-22; Luke 11:14-19; Matt 12:22-27) in addition to one brief reference in M (Matt 10:25). The literary relationship between Mark, Luke and Matthew is complex in this case. However, the majority of scholars maintain that the two source hypothesis provides the best explanation for the overlapping material. The close agreements between Matthew and Luke against Mark are best explained if the story occurred in both Mark and Q, albeit in slightly different versions, and Matthew and Luke independently used both Mark and Q but drew more heavily on Q. Luke retains the version closest to Q, while Matthew has combined Mark and Q.⁶⁰

⁶⁰ So M. Eugene Boring, “The Synoptic Problem, ‘Minor’ Agreements, and the Beelzebul Pericope,” in *The Four Gospels 1992 Festschrift Frans Neirynck* (ed. F. Van Segbroeck et al; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1992), 587-19; C. E. Carlston, *The Parables of the Triple Tradition* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), 16-21, 66-69; John S. Kloppenborg, *Q Parallels: Synopsis, Critical Notes and*

In any case, most scholars see the accusation itself as historical, whether individual sayings such as the Finger of God or the Binding of the Strong Man were all originally linked or circulated independently, since the accusation is connected with the charge of demon possession (criterion of embarrassment).⁶¹ The historicity of the accusation is further attested in Matthew 10:25 which states, “If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of his household!” For those who see the setting of exorcism as original, there is also disagreement about whether Mark or Q’s brief exorcism provides the earliest form of the accusation.⁶² We shall take up this debate by examining first Mark and then Q.

Concordance (Sonoma, CA.: Polebridge, 1988); Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, 2:407-8; A minority of scholars maintain that Mark knew and used Q to construct his version of the controversy. See, e.g., Bultmann, *History*, 13-14; and H. T. Fleddermann, “Mark’s Use of Q: The Beelzebul Controversy and the Cross Saying,” in *Jesus, Mark and Q: The teaching of Jesus and its Earliest Records* JSNTS 214 [ed. Michael Labahn and Andreas Schmidt; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001], 17-33; Goodacre (*The Case Against Q*, 46-54) argues that the differences between Matthew and Luke can be explained on the basis that Luke drew on both Mark and Matthew as well as on oral traditions that were circulating at the time.

⁶¹ So Bultmann, *History*, 13-14; Jeremias, *New Testament Theology*, 91; Meyer, *The Aims of Jesus*, 156; Graham Twelftree, “ΕΙ ΔΕ. . . ΕΓΩ ΕΚΒΑΛΛΩ ΤΑ ΔΑΙΜΟΝΙΑ. . .” in *Gospel Perspectives: The Miracles of Jesus* vol. 6 (David Wenham and Craig Blomberg eds; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1986), 361-400; Kee (“The Terminology of Mark’s Exorcism Stories,” 245), and Piper, (“Jesus and the Conflict of Powers,” 331) see the sayings as linked at an early stage of the tradition; Dunn (*Jesus and the Spirit*, 44) sees the setting as originally that of exorcism; but Meier (*A Marginal Jew*, 2:407-9; 418-19) argues that neither the “your sons” saying or the “finger of God” saying were originally connected to the earlier part of the parable, but circulated independently; Guijarro (“The Politics of Exorcism,” 11); and Humphries (*Christian Origins*, 27) think that all of the sayings originally circulated independently and were later linked by the exorcism theme. Humphries (“The Kingdom of God in the Q Version,” 121-50) argues further that each of Jesus’ responses can be understood as parts of a *chreia*.

⁶² I agree with Sanders (*Jesus and Judaism*, 166) that Mark’s version is earlier. But see Twelftree (*Jesus the Exorcist*, 103-4); and Fleddermann (“Mark’s Use of Q,” 17-18) who argue that Mark has replaced the exorcism in Q with the reference to Jesus being out of his mind (v. 21).

4.3.1 *Beelzebul in Mark*

As reported in Mark, the Beelzebul Controversy is part of a story about Jesus at home, presumably in Capernaum.⁶³

[20] Then he went home, and the crowd came together again, so that they could not even eat. [21] When his family heard it, they went out to restrain [κρατῆσαι] him, for people were saying, “He has gone out of his mind” (ἐξέστη). [22] And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem said, “He has Beelzebul and by the ruler of demons he casts out demons” (Βεελζεβοὺλ ἔχει καὶ ὅτι ἐν τῷ ἄρχοντι τῶν δαιμονίων ἐκβάλλει τὰ δαιμόνια) (Mark 3:20-22).

Several issues emerge in this brief account. The first concerns Jesus’ behaviour. The text does not specify what it was that raised questions, only that the crowd was so thick that he and his disciples were prevented from eating, and that something about this event caused concern for those with him (οἱ παρ’ αὐτοῦ), probably his family,⁶⁴ who sought to restrain him. It is important to make explicit the presence of the crowd. We know from anthropological studies that both spirit possession and exorcism are social phenomena, meaning that they reflect and express particular aspects of a culture’s social reality. As a result, it is significant that in virtually all gospel accounts connected with exorcism, crowds are present.

The strained relationship that is implied in the account between Jesus and his family is also significant. I will not discuss this in any detail here. However, all major sources—Mark, Q, and John—retain the tradition that there was tension between Jesus and his family,

⁶³ Capernaum will be discussed in detail in 5.3.1.

⁶⁴ C. S. Mann, *Mark Anchor Bible* vol. 27 (New York: Doubleday, 1986), 252.

which may explain some of his radical statements about leaving father and mother and the formation of a group of itinerant followers that served as a kind of surrogate family.⁶⁵

One of the advantages of applying sociological and anthropological insights to pericopes that have traditionally been analyzed using theological approaches is that we can ask different questions. For example, James Dunn, taking a traditional approach to this passage, asks whether Jesus was actually mad, and concludes that he was not. Rather, he says, his “abnormality” was related quite simply to the later Christian dogma of Jesus’ divine nature.⁶⁶ Dunn then attempts to distinguish ecstatic from charismatic traits and argues that Jesus was a charismatic, but not an ecstatic.

He was charismatic in the sense that he manifested a power and authority which was not his own, which he had neither achieved nor conjured up, but which was given him by virtue of the Spirit/power of God upon him. The power did not possess him and control him so that he was its instrument willing or unwilling. But neither was he the author of it; nor was he able to dispose of it or ignore it at will. It was a compulsion which filled him, a power which he exercised in response to faith or which faith could draw through him from its source beyond him.⁶⁷

Unfortunately, this kind of distinction is not particularly helpful. Dunn argues both that Jesus was not possessed or controlled by this power and that he was unable to control it. He also attempts to show that while Jesus was a charismatic he was not ecstatic. This is a strange argument since the Greek word used by Mark (ἐξίστημι) means to be beside oneself and is the origin of the English word “ecstatic.”⁶⁸ What we have here is an obvious example

⁶⁵ See e.g., Mark 3:31ff; 6:1; Q 12:51-53 [Matt 10:34-39; Luke 12:51-53]; Q [Luke] 11:27-8; John 2:1-4; 7:1-5. Cf. J. D. Crossan, “Mark and the Relatives of Jesus,” *NovT* 15 (1973):81-113; Miller, *Jesus at Thirty*, 47-54. But see Fleddermann, (“Mark’s Use of Q,” 24), who argues that Mark’s connection of the Beelzebul controversy with Jesus’ family is not original.

⁶⁶ Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit*, 86-7.

⁶⁷ Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit*, 87-8.

⁶⁸ Several meanings are possible for this word. Although it can also have the meaning of “to change/displace,” in this case it implies that Jesus has “lost his senses”. Thus, I prefer the second meaning for

of discomfort with acknowledging that Jesus' behaviour could be viewed as ecstatic and was linked with spirit possession. This at least was the assumption of both his family and those who accused him of possession by a demon (his opponents).⁶⁹

Returning to our text, there are several elements in the passage which may help to answer the question of why Jesus' behaviour elicited this kind of response. First, his inability to eat, as well as that of his disciples (v. 20) suggests two possibilities. Either he could not physically move through the crowd to get food, or he was deliberately refraining from eating for some reason, perhaps in order to facilitate a trance state. Several spells recorded in the *PGM* require abstinence from food or a restricted diet in preparation for encounters with spiritual beings or visions.⁷⁰ The association between unusual eating habits and spirit possession is also suggested by the accusation made against John of having a demon because he was an ascetic.⁷¹ This second option would provide a more convincing explanation for Jesus' family's reaction.

Jesus' family's attempts to restrain (κρατῆσαι) him (v. 21) suggest a connection between the crowds, Jesus' failure to eat, and his behaviour on the one hand, and the assumption on the part of his family that he was out of his mind on the other. If Jesus was behaving normally, why would his family attempt to restrain him? This information raises

this context as does Frederik William Danker, (ed.) *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Early Christian Literature* 3rd (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).

⁶⁹ H. Wansborough, ("Mark 3.21–Was Jesus Out of His Mind?" *NTS* 18 [1972], 233-35), and D. Wenham, ("The Meaning of Mark 3.21," *NTS* 21 [1975]: 295-300) have suggested that ἐξέστη is used here to refer to the behaviour of the crowds rather than to Jesus himself. However, this raises the question of why those who were with him tried to seize him.

⁷⁰ See *PGM* I.55; IV.3080; VII.429-58. Dietmar Neufeld, ("Eating, Ecstasy, and Exorcism [Mark 3:21]," *BTB* 26 [1996]: 152-62) argues that in the ancient world a connection existed between abstinence from food and the experience of trance and spirit possession. He has also shown that throughout the Synoptic gospels, food is associated with controversy surrounding both Jesus and John the Baptist and their activities.

⁷¹ See Q 7:33-35 [Matt 11:18-19//Luke 7:33-34].

the possibility that Jesus was displaying erratic or unusual behaviour associated with trance or spirit possession, a possibility that is strengthened by Winkelman’s observation that all types of healers utilize trance induction techniques and that these would also affect their patients.⁷²

Thus, it may be that both Jesus and those he was attempting to exorcise demons from were experiencing spirit possession and that this is why a crowd had gathered. Comments made by onlookers that he had lost his mind (ἔλεγον γὰρ ὅτι ἐξέστη) confirm that his outward behaviour (and possibly that of others who were with him) was consistent with that of a madman.⁷³ As we saw in chapter 2, the ecstatic behaviour of several prophets in the Hebrew Bible was labelled as madness by onlookers as well.

The accusation of “the scribes”: “He has Beelzebul (Βεελζεβοὺλ ἔχει), and by the ruler of demons he casts out demons” (ἐν τῷ ἄρχοντι τῶν δαιμονίων ἐκβάλλει τὰ δαιμόνια) shifts the focus from concerns about Jesus’ behaviour exhibited by either his family or friends, to concern about the source of his power and to accusations of possession by an evil spirit. Why then did “the scribes”⁷⁴ accuse Jesus of casting out demons by Beelzebul, the chief of demons?

⁷² Winkelman, “‘Magico-Religious’ Healers,” 323; cf. Crossan, (*Jesus: A revolutionary Biography*, 92), who suggests the possibility that Jesus was healing and exorcising demons while in a state of trance; and Smith (*Jesus the Magician*, 32-3) who notes that the strangeness of the accusation and the clear associations with ecstatic behavior make authenticity likely.

⁷³ If Wilson (“Prophecy and Ecstasy,” 327) is correct in his argument that every society strictly controls the kind of public behaviour its members are allowed to display, and that loss of control is negatively suppressed, this may have been one of the reasons for the accusations against Jesus.

⁷⁴ Matthew, who is generally critical of the Pharisees (see esp. Matt 23), has them, rather than “the scribes” accuse Jesus and Luke has “some in the crowd.”

In order to answer this question, let us first look more closely at the meaning of “Beelzebul.” Linguistically, the term derives from the Canaanite God, “Baal” (בעל) and the Aramaic/Hebrew word זבל, meaning “prince.”⁷⁵ Since Baal was the Canaanite god who controlled the earth, and has the added meaning of Lord or master, the meaning of Beelzebul seems to be “Baal the Prince” or *Zubulu* (Lord of the Earth). The Hebrew/Aramaic root זבל means “to carry, or lift up,” and in the Hebrew Bible the passive form (זבול) is used to refer to the “exalted dwelling of God,” or Temple.⁷⁶ The Aramaic equivalent is found in texts from Qumran, where it seems to have a similar meaning: “a holy or heavenly dwelling.”⁷⁷ Beelzebul is also probably associated with Belial in some texts found at Qumran.⁷⁸ However, its use for the proper name of a demon is not found in Jewish texts before the first century.

In later texts, such as the *Testament of Solomon*, Beelzebul is described as the highest ranking angel who had subsequently fallen from grace.⁷⁹ Although the deity Beelzebul was probably familiar to Mediterranean Jews in the early first century, it is not clear that it was

⁷⁵ “Beel” is the Greek transliteration of the Hebrew “Baal”. See M. L. Humphries, (*Christian Origins and the Language of the Kingdom of God* [Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1999], 14-15) who notes that even though most manuscripts read *Beelzebul*, the Vulgate and Syrian texts use *Beelzebub*. Because of this some have suggested a link between the name *Beelzebul* and the Philistine deity *Baal zebub* (*Baal muian* –LXX, “lord of the flies”) and *Beelzebul*. However, he argues that it is more likely that *Beelzebub* is a pun on the original name *Baal zebul*.

⁷⁶ 1 Kgs 8.13; 2 Chr 6.2; Ps 49.15; Isa 63.15; Hab 3.11. F. Brown, S. R. Driver, C. A. Briggs, *The New Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon with an Appendix Containing the Biblical Aramaic* (Peabody, MA.: Hendrickson, 1979), 129; William L. Holladay, *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden: Brill, 1988); Cf. Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke X-XXIV* (Garden City, NY.: Doubleday, 1985), 920; Cf. Dwight D. Sheets, “Jesus as Demon-Possessed,” in *Who Do My Opponents Say that I Am? An Investigation of the Accusations against the Historical Jesus* (ed. Scot McKnight and Joseph B. Modica; New York: T & T Clark, 2008), 27-49, 39-42; E. C. B; MacLaurin, “Beelzebul,” *NovT* 20 (1978): 156-60.

⁷⁷ IQM 12.1, 2; IQS 10.3; IQH 3.34; 11.4. Cf. Jastrow, ספר מלים, 378; cf. discussion in Wahlen, *Jesus and the Impurity of Spirits*, 125-7.

⁷⁸ See, for example 4Q286 (4QBer^a) 7. 2.1-4.

⁷⁹ *Test. Sol.* 3. 6:2; cf. Origen, *Cels.* 8.25 (ca. 245 CE); Hippolytus, *Haer.* 6.34.1. Even in these texts Satan and Beelzebul are not equated.

linked with Satan in any text outside of the New Testament gospels. However, in both Mark and Q the title appears to function as an alternative way of referring to Satan, since the designation “ruler of demons” is added.⁸⁰ Michael L. Humphries argues that based on the northern Galilean milieu where Q probably originates, it is possible that the use of Beelzebul by both Mark and Q is linked with the local Syrian deity *zbl b 'l-u' ars*, in which case the accusation could be meant to imply that Jesus was somehow linked with foreign gods, which were understood by some within Judaism as demons.⁸¹

The double accusation and the concerns by his family that he was mad are not found in Q. As a result, although some scholars see the Q setting as original rather than Mark, I agree with Sanders and Twelftree that Mark’s version is more striking in terms of the clarity of the accusation and the depiction of Jesus behaving abnormally, which suggests authenticity.⁸² Beyond this, both Matthew and Luke have tried to soften Mark’s comments about Jesus and his family elsewhere in the tradition.⁸³ Finally, the connection between madness and demon possession is also made independently by the writer of the Gospel of

⁸⁰ Satan and Belial/Beliar also appear to be closely linked in the *Martyrdom of Isaiah* (1:8; 2:2-4). See Fitzmyer, *The Gospel according to Luke*, 2: 921; Crossan (*The Historical Jesus*, 318-19) and Sheets (“Jesus as Demon Possessed,” 38-9) suggest that “Beelzebul” may reflect folk tradition and “Satan” may have been the term recognized more broadly. Cf. Piper, “Jesus and the Conflict of Powers,” 333-5; Humphries, *Christian Origins*, 13-22.

⁸¹ So Humphries, *Christian Origins*, 16, 20-22; cf. Twelftree, *Jesus the Exorcist*, 105-6. Sheets, (“Jesus as Demon-Possessed,” 27-49) argues that the accusation of demon possession against Jesus suggests that his opponents saw him as an eschatological antagonist (an *Endtyrant*), and connected him to both Satan and to Antiochus Epiphanes because of their similar threats to the temple. See, for example, Ps 95:5; *Jub.* 22:1-17.

⁸² Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 166; Twelftree, *Jesus the Exorcist*, 100, 104.

⁸³ See, e.g., Mark 6:3 but Matt 13:55 and Luke 4:22. In Mark, Jesus is described as the son of Mary, while Matthew and Luke have changed this to the son of Joseph; In Mark 6:5, Jesus is unable to perform any “deeds of power” because of their lack of faith, but in Matthew 13: 58 this is changed to he “did not” shifting the focus from Jesus lack of power in the face of not being accepted to Jesus’ own decision not to do any miracles there.

John.⁸⁴ The authenticity of the accusation of possession by Beelzebul as well as the tradition that Jesus' family thought he was out of his mind are both highly credible because of their offensive nature, which would presumably have been an embarrassing element in the tradition. As Sanders has said, "Why answer a charge that was not levelled?"⁸⁵

In addition, while the statement is polemical and meant to discredit Jesus, it also tells us implicitly that he was casting out demons, which the initial part of the narrative does not make clear. What is disputed among those present, then, is not whether Jesus was casting out demons, but rather the source of his power for doing so. Anthropological studies have demonstrated that those who heal or cast out spirits are thought to do so because of their own possession by spirits, and in fact it is the experience of struggling with their own misfortune in the form of possession by evil spirits which is thought to give them the ability to cure others.⁸⁶ Thus, from the perspective of Mark's scribes, Jesus is able to cast out demons because he is himself possessed by a demon, and is utilizing its power.

Social science informs us that accusations function as negative labels which are used as "social weapons" to identify and control behaviour perceived to be deviant.⁸⁷ Thus, by

⁸⁴ John 10:19-21.

⁸⁵ Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 166; cf. Twelftree, *Jesus the Exorcist*, 104, 178.

⁸⁶ Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion*, 59-62; Bourguignon, *Possession*, 45. As Eve (*The Jewish Context*, 374-5) has observed, although it is difficult to extract enough information from the gospel portraits of healing and exorcism to know the circumstances of those Jesus healed, his exorcisms suggest that he functioned as a spirit-filled healer who could cast out demons by calling on a more powerful spiritual entity. If we add to this his vision of Satan falling, the picture is of some type of ecstatic experience connected to spirit possession.

⁸⁷ Pfohl (*Images of Deviance*, 37-9) notes that accusations of witchcraft or other kinds of deviancy are linked to major social disruptions and stresses. For example, in Puritan New England, the outbreak of demonic possession (labelled witchcraft) can be understood as both an expression of and a commentary on the social realities experienced by the community, including social and religious isolation from the broader more liberal movements sweeping Europe and colonial America. Similarly, most of the people accused were women, and the religious leadership was dominated by men. Thus, the accusations themselves can be understood as a way for church officials to divert attention from their own inadequacies in leadership, feelings of insecurity around

accusing Jesus of possession by the demon Beelzebul, which was perhaps also linked in the minds of some Galileans with the Syrian god *Zubul Ba'al*, the scribes, who are in positions of prominence within Jewish society, attempt to discredit him.

...all the evidence indicates that the more strongly-based and entrenched religious authority becomes, the more hostile it is towards haphazard inspiration... For the religious enthusiast, with his direct claim to divine knowledge, is always a threat to the established order.⁸⁸

The scribes, along with the Pharisees, were probably part of the retainer class,⁸⁹ and, according to Mark 2:6 and 9:14 many were associated with Jerusalem and with the high priests.

Assuming the scribes are historical elements in the story, it is not surprising that they would be opposed to someone from the lower stratum casting out demons and exhibiting power and influence over their own constituency. Certainly from Mark's perspective, it is the scribes, and their association with Jerusalem, who pose the greatest threat to Jesus and he links their opposition to Jesus' crucifixion.⁹⁰ The accusation then functions as an attempt to control and discredit Jesus.

The exorcisms of Jesus were a threat first to the governing elite of Galilee, and subsequently to the Judean elite. By interpreting the casting out of demons as a sign of the coming kingdom of God and by making his exorcisms part of his strategy for restoring Israelite integrity, Jesus threatened the stability of the social order.⁹¹

gender, and lack of control over nature; Santiago Guijarro, ("The Politics of Exorcism: Jesus' Reaction to Negative Labels in the Beelzebul Controversy," *BTB* 29 [2001]: 118-29), using the perspective developed by symbolic interactionists, describes these public accusations against Jesus as negative labels used to control behaviour that is viewed as threatening either to the society as a whole or to particular groups within it; cf. Bruce J. Malina and Jerome H. Neyrey, *Calling Jesus Names: The Social Value of Labels in Matthew* (Sonoma, CA.: Polebridge Press, 1988), 35-67; Susan Garrett, *The Demise of the Devil: Magic and the Demonic in Luke's Writings* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), 24.

⁸⁸ Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion*, 29.

⁸⁹ Anthony J. Saldarini, *Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees in Palestinian Society: A Sociological Approach* (Grand Rapids, MI.: Eerdmans, 1988), 241-76.

⁹⁰ Mark 11:18, 27-33; 14:1-2. See also Humphries, *Christian Origins*, 50.

⁹¹ Guijarro, "The Politics of Exorcism," in Stegemann, Malina and Theissen, 159-66, 166.

This could be partly a result of a fear that disturbances to the status quo might threaten the delicate position the Jewish leadership and population held under Roman imperial rule, a fear confirmed in John's gospel (especially in chapters 11-12), where Jesus' stirring up of the crowds is explicitly linked to his execution and to a fear of Roman reprisal.

In addition, we know from anthropological and sociological studies that spontaneous spirit possession is generally perceived as subversive by those in power—particularly in societies that socialize for conformity—and that those who exhibit behavior which is seen as out of control are typically discredited and restricted by the religious or political authorities, who see them as a threat.⁹² Conversely, spirit possession is typically accepted and embraced by those on the margins.⁹³

The claim that an opponent was possessed by demons or in some other way was closely related to the demonic world was easy to make and difficult to refute. As we have seen, it was often used in conjunction with allegations of sorcery and false prophecy. These three labels, which are so prominent in ancient polemic, have a specific social setting. They are used to marginalize and undermine the influence of individuals whose claims and behaviour are perceived to pose a threat to the stability of the dominant social order. In short, the polemic is a form of social control.⁹⁴

As Janice Boddy notes, “That spirit movements are often suppressed or subject to strict political controls should dispel any doubt that states perceive them as subversive.”⁹⁵ If spirit

⁹² See discussion under 2.2 on Douglas (*Natural Symbols*, 73-4, 77-9). Among other things, she has demonstrated a relationship between more rigidly structured societies, and a lack of acceptance of trance or dissociative states. The following studies link low social status and spirit possession and with accusations of deviance: Pfohl, *Images of Deviance*, 3-6; Wood Saunders, “Variants in Zar Experience, 177-91; Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion*, 23, 109; Bourguignon, *Possession*, 9, 54-5; Crapanzano, “Introduction,” 15; idem, “Mohammed and Dawia,” 144; Lambek, “From Disease to Discourse,” 36-61 (41); Boddy, “Spirit Possession Revisited,” 407, 415; Rothenberg, *Spirits of Palestine*, 39; Shaara, and Strathern, “Altered States of Consciousness,” 156; Zemplini, “From Symptom to Sacrifice,” 93; Morton, “*Dawit*,” 194; Obeyesekere, “Psycho cultural Exegesis,” 236-7, 261-76; Kessler, “Conflict and Sovereignty,” 299.

⁹³ Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion*, 27-9, 90-113; Bourguignon, *Possession*, 53; Boddy, “Spirit Possession Revisited,” 407-35.

⁹⁴ Graham N. Stanton, *Jesus and Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 139.

⁹⁵ Boddy, “Spirit Possession Revisited,” 420.

possession and exorcism function as forms of protest against a dominant society, accusations of demonic spirit possession or witchcraft and madness provide the response which comes in the form of counter attacks aimed at discrediting the leaders of those movements and maintaining the status quo.⁹⁶

As we saw in chapter 2, Erika Bourguignon's research indicates that the source of power attributed to an exorcist or healer is often closely linked with his or her social status, particularly in relation to the power structures of a society, and that within any particular culture, several models of spirit possession may be operating simultaneously (a positive assessment, a negative assessment, or a combination of the two).⁹⁷

Bourguignon's third model would explain the mixed reaction to Jesus and his unorthodox activities. It also supports Christian Strecker's argument that Jesus' exorcisms functioned as *transformances* (transformative performances), in which "the identity of possessed persons is constituted anew, their ranks and positions in the social arena revised, and the cosmic order reestablished."⁹⁸ The fact that a new identity was forged through the public performance of exorcism would then explain the negative reactions by some to Jesus' exorcisms.

The historical record attested in Mark, Q, and M, combined with the evidence from cross-cultural anthropological studies suggests that accusations against Jesus accusing him of demon possession reflect early and authentic traditions. In fact, as Mann notes, the charge

⁹⁶ Hollenbach, "Jesus, Demoniacs, and Public Authorities," 577.

⁹⁷ See discussion, section 2.2.

⁹⁸ Christian Strecker, "Jesus and the Demoniacs," in Stegemann, Malina, and Theissen, 117-33, 125.

that Jesus was “in league with demonic powers” is one of the most well established traditions we have about the historical Jesus.⁹⁹

New Testament epithets such as “sinner,” “unclean,” “demon-possessed” and “brood of vipers,” much like epithets in our society such as “whore,” “ex-con,” “Commie,” “quack,” “pervert” and the like, are not simply vaporous words. *They are social weapons*. In the hands of persons or powerful groups, they can inflict genuine injury, since they serve to define a person as out of social place, hence as permanently deviant.¹⁰⁰

In the official Judaism of first-century Palestine (i.e. the priest/temple cult), where a high value was placed on conformity, Jesus’ exorcisms were very likely seen as a threat.¹⁰¹ It is significant that John too was accused of demon possession by some of his contemporaries, even though his behavior and lifestyle were very different from that of Jesus.¹⁰² This indicates that both were targeted and labeled “demon-possessed” because their behavior failed to conform to social and religious expectations, and in the process challenged them.

It is important to acknowledge that this is not the only possible interpretation of the conflict between Jesus and “the scribes”. These struggles over how to interpret social and spiritual phenomena occur between the dominant elites and the marginalized in society, but also between those of similar socio-economic status, and are part of the process of the formation of group identity. As David Horrell says, struggles also occur “between groups that inhabit the same symbolic order but have opposing views as to how it should be shaped

⁹⁹ So Mann, *Mark*, 253.

¹⁰⁰ Malina and Neyrey, *Calling Jesus Names*, 37.

¹⁰¹ Webb (*John the Baptizer*, 203-5) contends that John’s baptism may also have served as a critique of the temple establishment because it provided an alternative to one of the functions of the temple, forgiveness, and so would have been seen as a threat. Beyond this, he suggests that those who were baptized by John would have accepted this view of baptism and would have understood their actions to be a form of protest against the temple establishment.

¹⁰² This is confirmed in the saying, “The Children in the Marketplace” (Matt 11:16-19/ Luke 7:31-4), which, viewed as highly authentic by most Jesus scholars, indicates that those who made the accusations were behaving like children who were frustrated with their playmates for not following the rules. See Wendy Cotter, “The Parable of the Children in the Market-Place, Q (Lk) 7:31-35; An Examination of the Parable’s Image and Significance,” *NovT* 29 (1987): 289-304.

and reproduced”.¹⁰³ This multifaceted aspect of the conflict over Jesus’ exorcisms also makes sense of the disparaging comments purportedly made about both John and Jesus by their contemporaries in the saying about the children in the marketplace.¹⁰⁴ In that case no mention is made of either the scribes or Pharisees. Instead Jesus refers to “this generation”. Thus, it seems that conflict over interpreting social actions could occur at different levels and between different social groupings.

In sum, if we combine the evidence from statements by Jesus’ family with those of “the scribes,” a picture emerges of unusual behavior, probably ecstatic spirit possession combined with the performance of exorcisms. The criterion of embarrassment can be applied here on two levels. First, accusations of madness by friends and family and of being possessed by a demon launched by the scribes are embarrassing to the tradition about Jesus, and it is unlikely that early Christian communities would have invented either.¹⁰⁵ Second, the accusation against Jesus clearly implies that he is using an evil source to empower his exorcisms, which is also embarrassing. While it is true that Mark has Jesus convincingly refute the charges against him, which could remove the element of embarrassment, Sanders is correct that there would be no reason for the refutation without the historical charge. It seems highly unlikely that the early Christians would have invented the charge in order to have Jesus refute it.

¹⁰³ Horrell, “Models and Methods,” 83-105 (98).

¹⁰⁴ See Q 7:31-35 (Matt 11:16-19; Luke 7:31-35).

¹⁰⁵ So Vermes, *Jesus the Jew*, 33-4; Meyer, *The Aims of Jesus*, 155; Twelftree, *Jesus the Exorcist*, 104-6; Guijarro, “The Politics of Exorcism,” 160-61; Crossan (*The Historical Jesus*, 318) has rated the Controversy as 1 / 2; that is, stage 1 of the tradition, and two independent attestations, Mark and Q.

4.3.2 *Beelzebul in Q*

The Beelzebul controversy is also reported in Q (11:14-15, 17-20), but in this case is introduced by a brief description of an exorcism of a demon that was mute. Although Capernaum is never mentioned, there are reasons for locating the controversy there. First, Mark's account implies it by saying that Jesus was "at home" (3:19) which all strands of the tradition indicate was Capernaum.¹⁰⁶ In addition, the scholarly consensus about the geographic origins of Q is that the northeastern region of Galilee provides a likely location for the community, based on its familiarity with the regions north and west of the Sea of Galilee, its orientation toward the northern cities of Tyre and Sidon, and its mention of the cities of Bethsaida and Chorazin (Q 10:13-15 [Matt 12:43-45; Luke 10:13-15]).¹⁰⁷

The accusation is essentially the same in Q as it is in Mark—that Jesus casts out demons by Beelzebul—although in Q it comes not from the scribes, but from "some of them" (Matthew has "the Pharisees"). Since Matthew displays a general bias against Pharisees, we can assume that either Luke's "some of them" or Mark's "the scribes" is more likely to be historical. We have already discussed the anthropological evidence that those who cast out demons are often labeled as deviant by those in power. The fact that these accusations are also found in Q provides further support for this historical reality on another front. The recent scholarly consensus is that the community behind Q was relatively poor,

¹⁰⁶ See discussion under the exorcism in the Capernaum synagogue, 4.2.1.

¹⁰⁷ See also Jonathan L. Reed, "The Social Map of Q," in *Conflict and Invention: Literary, Rhetorical and Social Studies on the Sayings Gospel Q* (ed. Risto Uro, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996), 143-99.

was part of the lower, but not the lowest socio-economic strata,¹⁰⁸ was perhaps made up of wandering preachers and healers,¹⁰⁹ experienced tensions with their families,¹¹⁰ and may have been persecuted.¹¹¹ If these assumptions are correct, then we have further evidence indicating that Jesus and many of his followers came from the marginal social classes of Galilean society, and that this was part of the reason they were targeted by the leadership.

There is some dispute over whether Matthew or Luke more accurately reflects Q, but Luke's version is likely original, since Matthew's added disability of blindness represents a favourite theme of his.¹¹² Matthew reports two versions of the exorcism and accusation (9:32-3; 12:22), and based on his preference for doublets, we may assume that one of them is a duplicate of the other. The question is which one is original. The exorcism in chapter 9 is probably a duplicate of the one found in Q and reproduced in chapter 12; however, the opposite is also a possibility, since the exorcism in chapter 9 does not include blindness.

[14] And he cast out a demon which made a person mute. And once the demon was cast out, the mute person spoke. And the crowds were amazed. [15] But some said: By Beelzebul, the ruler of demons, he casts out demons! [17] But knowing their thoughts, he said to them: Every kingdom divided against itself is left barren, and every household divided against

¹⁰⁸ Santiago Guijarro ("Domestic Space, Family Relationships, and the Social Location of the Q people," *JSNT* 27 [2004]:72-74) argues that based on an analysis of all Q texts that describe houses, the Q community was most closely associated with neither the highest nor lowest social strata, but with a moderate level of socio-economic status, and lived in courtyard houses. The references to a homeless way of life reflect Jesus' lifetime rather than the status of the Q community of the 50s CE. His analysis is based on references to material culture rather than to social relations. See Q 6:17, 20-22; 9:57-58; 12:4, 22-31 where poverty is evident.

¹⁰⁹ Q 10:2, 5-9, 16.

¹¹⁰ Q 12:53; 14:26.

¹¹¹ Q 6:27-28, 29-32.

¹¹² So William D. Davies and Dale C. Allison Jr., *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew*. ICC (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1988-1997), 2: 334; Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke X-XXIV*, 918; Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, 2: 656; Twelftree, *Jesus the Exorcist*, 101. However, Meier also thinks it is possible that the blindness is original based on the uniqueness of the attestation of a demoniac who is both blind and mute. Matthew also has two versions of Mark's story of the blind Bartimaeas (9:27-31; 20:29-34).

itself will not stand. [18] And if Satan is divided against himself, how will his kingdom stand? [19] And if I by Beelzebul cast out demons, your sons, by whom do they cast them out? This is why they will be your judges. [20] But if it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then there has come upon you God's reign. (Q [Luke] 11:14-15, 17-20; Matt 12:25-28)

Few details are provided about either the symptoms of the possessed man or the exorcism except that he is said to be mute (κωφόν),¹¹³ that once the demon was cast out, he was able to speak (and to see in Matthew), and that the crowds were amazed (Q 11:14 [Luke 11:14; Matt 12:22-3]).

As compared with Mark's account, Q is more restrained in its language. From the beginning of the story, both Matthew and Luke downplay the demonic aspects of the exorcism while still retaining the essence of what occurred. Matthew states that Jesus healed (ἐθεράπευσεν) the man. However, in Matthew's other version of the story, (9:32-34) he is more forthright, stating that "when the demon had been *cast out*, the dumb man spoke" (ἐκβληθέντος τοῦ δαιμονίου ἐλάλησεν ὁ κωφός). This version is actually much closer to Luke's and thus may reflect what was found in Q.¹¹⁴ Luke writes that "when the demon had gone out, the dumb man spoke." (ἐγένετο δὲ τοῦ δαιμονίου ἐξελθόντος ἐλάλησεν).

We will explore the issue of the relationship between Jesus' exorcisms and the kingdom of God below under "Kingdoms, Strong Men and Satan". Here we focus on Jesus' question, "If I cast out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your exorcists cast them out?" which provides us with another piece of historical information: that Jesus was not the only exorcist operating in Galilee, and more specifically that exorcists operated within one of the

¹¹³ Wahlen (*Jesus and the Impurity of Spirits*, 125) argues that this is probably not the phrase originally found in Q because it is so unusual. He thinks πνεῦμα κωφόν is more likely since adjectives are rarely used to modify δαιμόνιον in the NT.

¹¹⁴ So also Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 1-7: A Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 199.

groups in the audience, the scribal community (Mark), the Pharisaic movement (Matthew) or simply among those in the crowd who opposed him (Luke), or in all of these.¹¹⁵ It may also suggest that Jesus' exorcistic activities were seen as competition for other exorcists in the Jewish community.¹¹⁶

In order to get a fuller picture of the encounter between Jesus and his accusers, we now move to a discussion of his responses to the accusation described in the saying about binding the strong man and finger/spirit of God saying. This material tells us that Jesus responded to the accusations made against him by tying his exorcisms to the coming of God's kingdom and to a defeat of Satan.

4.3.3 Satan and Beelzebul: Binding the Strong Man

The description of binding the strong man before robbing his house is found in both Mark and Q (as well as in the Gospel of Thomas). However, since the reports in Mark and Q are virtually identical, we have chosen to discuss them under Q. Some have argued that the divided kingdom and strong man sayings do not belong together on the basis that the first speaks of Satan and the second of a strong man, and because the strong man saying is a hypothetical argument rather than a direct response to the Beelzebul accusation.¹¹⁷ However,

¹¹⁵ I agree with Sanders (*Jesus and Judaism*, 138-9) that we cannot assume that this material tells us that Jesus was unique in exorcising demons, or even that he used unique methods. Rather, as Sanders says, it is highly unlikely that Jesus was unique in his practices.

¹¹⁶ So Hollenbach, "Jesus, Demoniacs, and Public Authorities," 582-3.

¹¹⁷ So, Luz, *Matthew*, 2: 200; Joel Marcus, "The Beelzebul Controversy and the Eschatologies of Jesus," in *Authenticating the Activities of Jesus* (ed. Bruce Chilton and Craig A. Evans; Leiden: Brill, 2002), 247-77; Crossan (*The Historical Jesus*, 318) sees the Strong Man saying as a later addition to the pericope.

if, as we have indicated, Satan and Beelzebul are equated by Mark and Q there may be no reason to see the two pericopes as separate.¹¹⁸

[17] But knowing their thoughts, he said to them, “Every kingdom divided against itself is left barren, and every household divided against itself will not stand. [18] And if Satan is divided against himself, how will his kingdom stand (Q 11:17-18).

But no one can enter a strong man’s house and plunder his property without first tying up the strong man; then indeed the house can be plundered (Mark 3:27 NRSV).

[21] When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own palace, his goods are in peace; [22] but when one stronger than he assails him and overcomes him, he takes away his armour in which he trusted, and divides his spoil (Q 11:21-22).

No one can enter the house of the strong and wreck it without first tying that person’s hands. Thereafter, one can ransack the person’s house (GTh 35).

In any case, Jesus’ response to accusations of casting out demons by Beelzebul draws on three symbols, a kingdom, a household, and the rule of Satan, which are used to demonstrate that the accusation against him makes no sense. If in fact he were working with Satan to cast out demons under the control of Satan, he would be destroying his own kingdom. The only logical possibility is that through his exorcisms, he is working against Satan, not for him. In fact he is immobilizing Satan in order to take back from him those whom he has oppressed.¹¹⁹ Additionally, Jesus’ suggests that he is the thief who is plundering Satan’s household (Mark), but only because he has first successfully bound him. It would be ludicrous for a thief to plunder a house that has not first been secured by tying up the one who owns it (the strongman).

The implication of the double parable is that the exorcism of demons means that the kingdom or royal house of the prince of demons is being destroyed—certainly not by the prince himself, which would be absurd—but by the opposite royal power seizing control of human beings through a striking miracle.¹²⁰

¹¹⁸ See discussion, p. 122 and note 80.

¹¹⁹ So Twelftree, *In the Name of Jesus*, 94-5.

¹²⁰ Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, 2: 417.

Meier argues that Mark's version is earlier because of its brevity and lack of extensive details (i.e. "no one" [Mk] vs. "a stronger one," [Lk] and Luke's change of "house" to "palace" and his addition of "armour"), which add elaborate details not necessary for the meaning of the story.¹²¹ In addition, Jesus' use of "no one" in Mark is unusual, and different from the Christological titles given to him by the early church (discontinuity and embarrassment), and could therefore point to an early tradition where Jesus spoke about himself in this way (i.e., in an indirect or veiled manner), as he did when referring to himself as the "Son of Man."¹²² Since the GTh version is also simpler (like Mark and Matthew) and lacks elaborate modifiers, it is likely that Mark is closest to the earliest version (rather than Q [Luke]), and that it may have originally circulated as an oral tradition that was only later appended to the original narrative.¹²³ However, it may also be, as Meier contends, that the setting as we have it in Mark and Q is original, an exorcism by Jesus.¹²⁴ Since the statement uses figurative language, it is difficult to be certain, but there seems no particular reason for doubting that the original context was an exorcism or some other manifestation of control over evil spirits.

If the saying is linked with exorcism, it would cohere with the connection in some Jewish writings between binding and evil spirits. The image of binding demons is found, in Tobit 8:3 (ca. 3rd c. BCE) where the demon Asmodeus is bound by the angel Raphael. In

¹²¹ So Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, 2: 418-19; cf. Carlston, *Parables*, 68.

¹²² So Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, 2: 420. See e.g., Mark 2:10, 27-28; 8:31; 9:31; 10:33-34; Matt 16:13.

¹²³ This would hold true even if Goodacre (*The Case Against Q*) and others are correct in their position that Q does not exist, and the Beelzebul Controversy would then be found only in Mark. However, there are a number of scholars who argue that Mark and Q represent two independent accounts of the controversy. See e.g., Oakman, "Rulers' Houses, Thieves and Usurpers," 112-13; M. Humphries, "The Kingdom of God in the Q Version of the Beelzebul Controversy," *Forum* 9 (1993): 121-50; Guijarro, "The Politics of Exorcism," 119-21.

¹²⁴ Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, 2: 418-19.

Jubilees 10:3-8 (2nd c. BCE), Noah prays for God to bind and imprison the evil spirits generated from the mating of the Watchers with human women, and in *1 Enoch* 10:4 (2nd c. BCE), God instructs Raphael to bind Azazel, the leader of the fallen angels, hand and foot and cast him into the darkness. Finally, the *PGM* and several pseudepigraphal texts representing a period from the 2nd c. BCE to 3rd c. CE also describe the binding of demons and other disobedient figures, suggesting that this belief persisted over several centuries.¹²⁵

If the text is read as politically subversive, one could also argue that Jesus' was aligning himself with the robber in using "no one," in which case he would also be implicitly opposing the power structures, symbolized by Satan, and identifying himself with the those who oppose Satan's kingdom. As we saw in chapter 2, events occurring at the cosmic level were typically seen to be reflected in political events on the ground. In the case of this pericope, Dennis Oakman argues that a socio-political element is also suggested by Jesus' response:

The conflict surrounding Beelzebul, which immediately escalates into words about divided kingdoms and the plunder of the goods of the strong, underscores the political and economic dimension of demon possession. The "demons" that the "reign of God" is colliding with are not just "spooks" and psychoses. There is in view here economic disprivilege, malnutrition, endemic violence and the destruction of rural families.¹²⁶

In contrast, Twelftree does not see any political images in the pericope. Instead he argues that the saying about binding the strong man is a straight forward allusion to Isaiah 49:25, which contains promises of restoration from Babylonian captivity, and that Mark's hearers would have implicitly understood this on a personal rather than political level.

¹²⁵ See also *1 En* 10:4; 13:1; 18:16; 21:6; 69:27-28; 90:23; *Jub.* 48:15; *T. Levi* 18:12; *PGM* IV. 1244-5. Cf. *Isa* 24:21-22, where both the host of heaven and the kings of earth will be bound (רָסַד) in the pit.

¹²⁶ Oakman, "Rulers' Houses, Thieves, and Usurpers," 115.

Twelftree sees the statement as part of Mark's broader portrayal of Jesus' struggle against Satan which he contends is cosmic and spiritual rather than political.¹²⁷ However, as Horsley has correctly observed, one cannot divorce the spiritual from the political in Mark's gospel.¹²⁸

Twelftree's view is problematic on several levels. First, in his analysis he ignores the fact that the captivity and release of the Israelites from Babylon were as much political events as they were personal, cosmic or spiritual. As we have already demonstrated in chapter 2, in Jewish literature of the Second Temple period, a clear connection is evident between what malevolent (or benevolent) spirits were doing at the cosmic level and the unfolding of political events on the ground. We have also shown that the modern distinction between the political and the religious is anachronistic when applied to the ancient world. Two examples make this abundantly clear. The first is the fact that the palace where the king resided and the temple, the religious centre of Israel, were one complex in ancient Israel. The second is the clear political implications of the messages of many of the prophets and the consequences of this for the prophets themselves. Jeremiah, for example, took a clear political position on the necessary response to Babylonian aggression, and the result was imprisonment and threats to his life.

Second, while Twelftree critiques attempts to make political connections between exorcism and politics in the gospels, his own understanding of how Jesus' hearers would have interpreted this pericope requires a complete rejection of the socio-political dimensions

¹²⁷ Twelftree, *In the Name of Jesus*, 107-8.

¹²⁸ Horsley, *Hearing the Story*, 122-25.

of Jesus' exorcisms and message. The connection with Isaiah 49:24-25 is also somewhat weak since it is not at all clear that its referent, the Babylonian exile, an event that occurred over five centuries before, would have been more prominent in the minds of the first-century Galilean population than the more immediate situation of Roman rule occurring in their own time.

However, even if we acknowledge this connection, it is another thing to argue that what they heard would have been immediately translated into language of personal salvation from demons. This is an anachronistic assumption since we have no way of knowing whether this interpretive step actually occurred in people's minds. Certainly Jesus may have been alluding to both the Isaiah 49 passage and the events of the Babylonian exile. However, it must be assumed that if he did so, he also implicitly linked this event with the particular political and social powers at work in his own context.

Further confirmation that the spiritual is political is provided by the Q parable "The Kingdom of God Suffers Violence," which assumes that some type of violent force was opposing the kingdom of God, as Jesus understood it. This coheres with both the statement about binding the strong man and about Satan being divided against himself.

The law and the prophets were until John. From then on the kingdom of God is violated and the violent plunder it (Q 16:16 [Luke 16:16; Matt 11:12-14]).

It is clear from this statement that Q, as well as Matthew and Luke connect violence with the breaking in of the kingdom in the public activities of John and Jesus and assert that this manifestation has been especially troubled by violence.

Amid all the problems of interpretation that plague this saying, one point is fairly clear. The kingdom of God, understood in this saying as the palpable immanent manifestation of God's kingly rule in Israel's history, and more particularly in the ministry of Jesus, is

suffering violent opposition. While the source and nature of this opposition is not apparent in the logion, one presupposition of v. 16b is. The kingdom of God could not be suffering violent opposition as Jesus speaks if it had not taken on concrete, visible form in the words and deeds of Jesus. The very idea of the kingdom of God suffering from such violence is an astounding notion, foreign to the OT, the inter-testamental literature, and the rest of the NT. The idea implies that what is in essence transcendent, eternal, invisible, and almighty—God’s kingly rule—has somehow become immanent, temporal, visible, and vulnerable in Jesus’ ministry.¹²⁹

The connection between angelic and demonic powers, the kingdom of God, and exorcism reflects the apocalyptic and dualistic thinking that had developed in the two centuries leading up to Jesus’ lifetime. As Robert Charles Branden notes in relation to Matthew’s gospel, “there is an increasing fascination with the angelic realm, angels and demons, which is somehow an invisible hinge connecting heaven and earth. This angelic realm is posited to explain the effects on earth which are inscrutable but must have their cause located in heaven.”¹³⁰

4.3.4 *By the Finger of God*

Another part of Jesus’ response reported in Q addresses the Beelzebul accusation by linking the source of his own exorcisms to that of those who accuse him, and by tying them to the kingdom of God.

[19] And if I by Beelzebul cast out demons, by whom do your sons cast them out? This is why they will be your judges. [20] But if it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you (Q 11:19-20 [Luke 11:19-20; Matt 12:27-28]).

¹²⁹ Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, 2: 403.

¹³⁰ Branden, *Satanic Conflict*, 19.

Significantly, the phrase “the kingdom of God” (ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ),¹³¹ like the reports of Jesus’ exorcisms and healings, occurs numerous times in all strands (Mark, Q, M and L), and in multiple forms (parables, prayer, beatitudes, conditional statements and miracle stories) in the synoptic tradition.¹³² Its centrality is also confirmed by the criterion of dissimilarity, since it is not found at all in the Hebrew Bible,¹³³ occurs rarely in other literature of the period (Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha, Qumran writings, Philo, and Josephus), and is not often used by Paul. As a result, it would be difficult to attribute Jesus’ use of the phrase to early Christian theology or to a desire to make Jesus’ speech match that of the early Christ-believing community.¹³⁴ Thus, based on the criterion of dissimilarity, this phrase enjoys a high degree of historical authenticity. If we add to this the strong level of attestation that exorcism has in all strands and forms of the tradition, we can be confident that both were central aspects of his public activities and concern, and that there was some connection between them, whether one assumes the kingdom was thought to be already realized in Jesus’ public activities or not.¹³⁵

¹³¹ Scholars are somewhat divided over the way *Malkuth*/βασιλεία was understood in the first-century. I will not enter into this debate here. The following are a sampling of different perspectives on interpreting the kingdom: Meyer, *The Aims of Jesus*, 129-37; Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, 2: 237-506; Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 123-56; Crossan, *The Historical Jesus*, 227-92; Humphries, *Christian Origins and the Language of the Kingdom*, esp. 27-61; James Breech, *The Silence of Jesus: The Authentic Voice of the Historical Man*. Toronto: Doubleday, 1980), 32-42.

¹³² See Mark 1:15; L [Luke] 6:20; 10:9; 11:2; 16:16; Matt 4:17, 23; 5:3; 19; 9:35; Q 7:28 [Luke 7:28//Matt 11:11-12]// Luke 9:2//Matt 10:7; Q 11:20 [Luke 11:20//Matt 12:28]; Q 12:31 [Luke 12:31//Matt 6:33]; Q 13:18 [Luke 13:18-20//Matt 13:31-33]; Q 13:28-29 [Luke 13:28-29//Matt 8:11-12].

¹³³ However, there are references to God’s kingdom. See, e.g. Ps 103:19; 145:13.

¹³⁴ So Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, 2: 238-9.

¹³⁵ Sanders (*Jesus and Judaism*, 134-41; 158) however, cautions against too easily linking exorcism with the kingdom based solely on this logion and against attributing to Jesus a clearly present understanding of the kingdom or seeing exorcism as evidence of this presence.

Given the fact that the kingdom of God is a particularly important theme in Q,¹³⁶ it is somewhat surprising that there are so few references to exorcism in the Q material. Twelftree attributes this to a deliberate attempt to downplay exorcism in Q, rather than to an attempt to make the kingdom more important, and posits that this occurred for two reasons. The first was a caution on the part of the writer of Q in regard to the miraculous, which is exemplified in the temptations, where Jesus, when encouraged by Satan to assert his independence from God by performing a miracle on his own, refuses to do so. The second reason he asserts, is that the early Christ-believers may, like Jesus, have been accused of exorcising demons using evil powers, in which case, distancing both Jesus and his followers from exorcism would make sense.¹³⁷

Another issue concerns the use of the verb ἐκβάλλω, which occurs throughout Mark, Q, and L, suggesting that it was rooted in the earliest Greek traditions.¹³⁸ We saw, for instance, that it is used by Mark to describe the spirit's casting of Jesus into the wilderness, as well as in several of Jesus' exorcisms. However, it is worth pondering why ἐκβάλλω is preferred generally over ἐξορκίζω, which is typically used for exorcism in the ancient literature, and why Mark reserves the use of ὀρκίζω for the demon's speech and never has Jesus use it. However, Jesus does use ἐπιτιμάω which probably serves a similar purpose

¹³⁶ See, e.g., Q 6:20; 7:28; 9:2; 10:9; 11:2, 20; 12:31; 13:18, 20, 28, 29; 16:16.

¹³⁷ Twelftree, *In the Name of Jesus*, 87-88; Craffert (*Galilean Shaman*, 334) argues that "kingdom of God," like the "Son of Man" sayings, was used by Jesus to refer to his experiences of ASCs or visions.

¹³⁸ Mark 1:34; 3:22, 23; 7:26; 9:18; Q [Luke 11:14, 15, 19, 20; Matt 12:24, 26, 27, 28; L (Luke) 8:2.

(rebuking or putting under oath. It may be, as Twelftree suggests, that ἐκβάλλω is connected with the idea in the LXX of casting out one's enemy.¹³⁹

Although it is not certain whether Luke's "finger" or Matthew's "spirit" is original to Q, I prefer "finger" for several reasons. First, the term δάκτυλος (finger) is not used by Luke anywhere else. In fact, since he generally shows a preference for the term "spirit" it is strange that he would choose finger over spirit if he had found spirit already in Q.¹⁴⁰ Since it occurs nowhere else in the New Testament, and cannot therefore reasonably be attributed to later Christian writers.¹⁴¹ Second, "finger" has antecedents in Jewish literature where God's activities and power are associated with his finger or hand. For example, in Exodus 8:15, Pharaoh's magicians admit their inability to duplicate Moses and Aaron's miracles and state, "This is the finger of God." In Exodus 31:19, it is the "finger of God" that writes on the tablets of stone, and in the Qumran *War Scroll* God is described as "raising his hand" against Satan.¹⁴²

The reference in Exodus 8, but especially in the *War Scroll* contains an implicit link between God's finger or hand and either exorcism or some kind of miraculous activity. The finger metaphor may then be connected to the idea of miraculous powers since it has this meaning in two separate accounts (Exodus and the *War Scroll*).¹⁴³ If this is indeed an

¹³⁹ Twelftree, *In the Name of Jesus*, 93-4; See, e.g., Exod 23:30; Deut 33:27-28.

¹⁴⁰ So Christian Grappe ("Jésus exorciste à la lumière des pratiques et des attentes de son temps," *RB* 110 [2003]: 178-96) sees Luke's version as more primitive; Meier (*A Marginal Jew*, 410), Luke uses 'spirit' 36 times in his gospel and 70 times in Acts. Cf. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke*, 2: 918. But see Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit*, 45-6; Twelftree *Jesus the Exorcist*, 108; idem, *In the Name of Jesus*, 89-91; and Eve *Jewish Context*, 332, who think Matthew's 'spirit' is original.

¹⁴¹ Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, 2: 415-16.

¹⁴² IQM 18.1-15.

¹⁴³ Grappe, "Jésus exorciste," 179.

authentic saying of Jesus, his association with the finger of God may also suggest that he aligned himself with Moses and Aaron—seen in the Jewish tradition as genuine messengers of God.

In addition, Jesus' use of the term is distinctive. As Meier has pointed out the combination of “finger of God” used as a symbol of the kingdom coming, and the connection of both with exorcisms is unique in Jewish literature.¹⁴⁴ This need not disqualify “finger,” however. Matthew has more reason to add “spirit” since it is more common and because he has theological reasons for doing so. For example, he has added a statement about blaspheming against the spirit at the end of the Beelzebul Controversy (Matt 12:31-2), which is not found in Q. However, it is also possible, as Twelftree has argued that Matthew's “spirit” is original, since there appears to be no good explanation for why Matthew would have exchanged “spirit” for “finger,” especially since an allusion to Exodus 8:19 would have provided him with an additional reference to portray Jesus as the new Moses.¹⁴⁵

Regardless of whether finger or spirit is original, there is general agreement that the saying itself is authentic because of its offensiveness (criterion of embarrassment—i.e. the implication that Jesus was accused of casting out demons by Beelzebul), and because of the implication that Jesus' opponents also performed exorcisms. As Ben Meyer has said, “The historicity of these words is guaranteed by a convergence of indices: the sheer offensiveness of the charge of sorcery; the risk of relativizing the exorcisms of Jesus by reference to those

¹⁴⁴ Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, 2: 416.

¹⁴⁵ Twelftree, *In the Name of Jesus*, 89-90.

of others; the precise, though implicit, allusion to a scriptural text.”¹⁴⁶ In addition, the criterion of coherence can be applied, because the statement implicitly links the casting out of demons with the kingdom of God, which is a central theme of Jesus’ message in all strands of the tradition. Finally, the early church did not associate salvation with exorcisms (the criterion of dissimilarity).¹⁴⁷

The occurrence of the emphatic “I” (ἔγω ἐκβάλλω) in this statement may also reflect a desire on the part of the writer of Q to shift the emphasis from the significance of God’s finger/spirit to the fact that it operated through Jesus. Thus, “If it is *I* who casts out demons”¹⁴⁸ may suggest an attempt by either Jesus or early transmitters of the tradition to stress his particular authority over demons or his special connection to God and his kingdom. Since this is only one of two cases where Q uses the emphatic I, we should assume its use here is significant.¹⁴⁹

One should be cautious about the certainty of attributing specific words and phrases to Jesus since, as Sanders notes, these traditions passed through several hands and were also presumably translated from Aramaic.¹⁵⁰ Certainly, we must be careful not to assume too much from one statement. However, there is also no good reason for doubting the connection.

¹⁴⁶ Meyer, *The Aims of Jesus*, 155; Meier (*A Marginal Jew*, 2: 410) thinks the saying originally circulated independently of the Beelzebul accusation on the basis that Jesus would not have granted to his adversaries that their exorcisms too were evidence of the coming of God’s kingdom.

¹⁴⁷ See Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, 2: 410-12; Twelftree, *Jesus the Exorcist*, 103-4, 110; Guijarro, “The Politics of Exorcism,” 118-29.

¹⁴⁸ Twelftree, “ΕΙ ΔΕ . . ΕΓΩ ΕΚΒΑΛΛΩ ΤΑ ΔΑΙΜΟΝΙΑ,” 389; idem, *In the Name of Jesus*, 92-3.

¹⁴⁹ See Twelftree, *In the Name of Jesus*, 93. The other case is its use by the Centurion (Q 7:8).

¹⁵⁰ Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 137-40.

It seems reasonable to posit, therefore, that the statement provides us with clear information about Jesus' exorcisms and their relationship to the kingdom of God. As Twelftree says, "They do not illustrate, extend, or even confirm Jesus' preaching. In the casting out of demons, the mission of Jesus itself is taking place, being actualized or fulfilled. In short, in themselves the exorcisms of Jesus are the kingdom of God in operation."¹⁵¹

Let us now look more closely at the meaning of ἔφθασεν ("has come upon"). Although the verb φθάνω can express a range of meanings, its most common meaning in the NT seems to be "to come," "to arrive," or "to attain to," and in this case, because it occurs in the aorist tense, the phrase ἔφθασεν ἐφ' ὑμᾶς probably means "has come upon you" or "has reached you."¹⁵² In other words, it implies that the kingdom has already arrived, not that it is yet to come. On the other hand, as Meier points out, in Mark 1:15 and Luke 10:9, which also describe the coming of the kingdom, the verb ἐγγίζω, which has the meaning "to draw near" or "to approach," occurs in the perfect tense, indicating a past action which continues into the future. Thus, he argues that in Mark 1:15/Lk 10:9 the phrase should read "the kingdom of God *has drawn near*," rather than "*has arrived*."¹⁵³

Both terms are probably a translation הנהג meaning "to come/arrive".¹⁵⁴ Sanders and Meier have both cautioned that since Jesus spoke Aramaic, and there is no exact equivalent

¹⁵¹ Twelftree, *Jesus the Exorcist*, 170.

¹⁵² So Twelftree, *In the Name of Jesus*, 92; Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon*. See also 1Thess 2:16; 2 Cor 10:14 where a present meaning is implied.

¹⁵³ Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, 2: 432-4.

¹⁵⁴ Twelftree, "ΕΙ ΔΕ. . . ΕΓΩ ΕΚΒΑΛΛΩ ΤΑ ΔΑΙΜΟΝΙΑ," 389; Strecker, "Jesus and the Demoniacs," 127.

of either φθάνω or ἐγγίζω in Aramaic, we cannot be certain about their meaning.¹⁵⁵

Although there is no clear resolution to this question, the saying does, in my view, tell us something important; namely that Jesus linked his exorcisms in some fundamental way with the coming of God’s reign, whether dawning, fully present, or only symbolically present, and I lean towards the more immediate sense. That is, I suspect that Jesus meant to clearly link his exorcisms with the arrival of God’s kingdom. Or, to say it another way: Jesus saw his exorcisms as evidence that God’s reign had broken through in his exorcisms, even if incompletely.

4.3.5 *Sin against the Spirit*

The final piece of the controversy is Jesus’ warning that sin against the spirit will not be forgiven. In Mark (3:28-30) it includes the added information that some had accused Jesus of having an unclean spirit, and in Luke (12:10) it is attached to a persecution logion. In Matthew, as in Mark it comes at the end of the Beelzebul Controversy (12:31). There are problems with all of the contexts. As Luz notes, in Mark it seems out of place since there has been no prior mention of the spirit, and in Luke the use of “spirit” seems forced, since the focus is on the Son of Man.¹⁵⁶ However, whether or not the saying was originally linked with the Beelzebul controversy, there seems no good reason for doubting its authenticity. It makes sense in the context of the accusation that he cast out demons using an evil spirit rather than the spirit of God, even if it does

¹⁵⁵ Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 140; Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, 2:432-4.

¹⁵⁶ Ulrich Luz, *Matthew: A Commentary* Vol. 2, 8-20 (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 201.

not provide additional information about the exorcisms themselves, except perhaps to confirm Mark's version of the Beelzebul Controversy; that is that Jesus was thought by some to be both possessed and mad. It is also significant that according to Mark, Jesus is responding to the accusation that he had an "unclean spirit" (v. 30). It would appear that the accusation of possession by Beelzebul and by an unclean spirit are connected, at least in Mark. Before moving to other evidence on exorcism, it is important to look briefly at the evidence in the Gospel of John.

4.3.6 Accusations in the Gospel of John

Although the Gospel of John does not report exorcisms, it does include accusations of madness and demon possession, which appear to be from a different tradition than either Q or Mark. John records three separate accusations levelled against Jesus. The first case ("You have a demon!" δαιμόνιον ἔχεις, 7:20) occurs when Jesus is teaching at the Temple during the Festival of Booths, and is part of the crowd's response to him when he asks why they want to kill him. The second two accusations, "Are we not right in saying you are a Samaritan and have a demon?" (8:48), and "Now we know that you have a demon" (Nūn ἐγνώκαμεν ὅτι δαιμόνιον ἔχεις. 8:52) are part of an extended theological discussion in which Jesus both accuses his Jerusalemite audience of being illegitimate children of Abraham and claims that those who listen to him will not taste death. Note that that the accusation of demon possession and of being a Samaritan are linked in 8:48. We have seen already that demons are often identified with foreign and/or marginal groups, particularly

groups with whom there is tension. This statement thus may provide further historical confirmation of the connection between marginality in the sense of foreignness and spirit possession. In other words, there seems no reason to doubt the historicity of the accusation, even if the context itself is not historical.

The third accusation occurs in response to Jesus' assertion that as the good shepherd he lays down his life for his sheep, but also has the power to take it up again.

[19] Again the Jews were divided because of these words. [20] Many of them were saying "He has a demon and is out of his mind (δαιμόνιον ἔχει καὶ μάλινεται) Why listen to him?" [21] Others were saying, "These are not the words of one who has a demon. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?"(John 10:19-21)

This connection between spirit possession and madness (δαιμόνιον ἔχει καὶ μάλινεται) is similar to what we saw in Mark 3:21. John's use of μάλινωμα ("to rave like a madman")¹⁵⁷ rather than ἐξέστη may suggest a separate strand of tradition from Mark and Q. In addition, in this report we have two responses to Jesus, one positive and the other negative, which is suggestive of Bourguignon's third type of society, as does the evidence in the Beelzebul Controversy.

In any case, it is significant that John retains the accusations of madness, even though he does not include exorcism. Twelftree argues that John probably also knew these traditions, but suppressed them because they did not serve his theological purpose in citing miracles generally, which was to convince the reader to believe that Jesus was the son of God (John 20:30-1). In addition, he may have seen exorcism as "common," and may therefore have been cautious about using these traditions lest they detract from his larger

¹⁵⁷ See note Max Zerwick S.J. and Mary Grosvenor, *Grammatical Analysis of the Greek New Testament*, 5th ed. (Rome: Pontifical Institute, 1996), 317.

purpose or diminish Jesus' image. Third, since the synoptic gospels associate the kingdom of God closely with exorcism, and John does not emphasize this aspect of Jesus' ministry, he may have found it difficult to exclude one (assuming he knew both traditions) without excluding the other. Finally, in the Synoptic gospels, the defeat of Satan is linked to exorcisms, whereas in John it is associated with the cross.¹⁵⁸ Whatever the reasons, John's retention of accusations of madness provides another attestation for the accusations described in the Beelzebul Controversy.

4.3.7 Conclusions

The majority of scholars consider the Beelzebul controversy and the texts appended to it as reported in Mark and Q to belong to the core of the historical traditions about Jesus based on several of the criteria of authenticity, including embarrassment, multiple attestation, and coherence with other material in the synoptic and Johannine texts. Thus, the fact that Jesus was known as an exorcist and that he was accused of demon possession himself enjoy a high degree of historical probability in the tradition. In addition, the connection between exorcism and accusations of demon possession has been confirmed across cultures as a way for those in power to discredit their opponents.

What our analysis to this point suggests is that Jesus functioned as a spirit-filled exorcist who cast out demons and that this evoked different kinds of responses, both positive and negative. What we can learn about those Jesus exorcised spirits from in these accounts is less certain. However, as we saw in chapter 3, the information we have about both the

¹⁵⁸ Twelftree, *Jesus the Exorcist*, 141-2. See, e.g., John 14:30; 16:11.

leaders and followers of prophetic movements in first-century Palestine suggests that they came from the lower social strata. Thus, although not certain, it is likely that some of the followers of Jesus who sought healing and exorcism, also came from the lower socio-economic strata. This does not exclude the possibility that some of others may have also been well off, since some of the women who followed Jesus supported him financially. We now move to an investigation of all other evidence for exorcism in the synoptic tradition. We begin with Mark.

4.4 Other Evidence in Mark

With the exception of the material we have already discussed and exorcisms themselves, which we shall discuss in chapter 5, other than the general summary statements about Jesus' activities as healer and exorcist,¹⁵⁹ there are just two traditions in the Markan material that refer to exorcism: The Strange Exorcist (Mark 9:38-41), and the Sending Out of the Twelve (Mark 6:7-13). If it can be shown that any material in these passages is authentic, it potentially tells us that Jesus was not the only exorcist operating in Galilee, but that others also practiced exorcism, and that some did so in Jesus' name.

4.4.1 The Strange Exorcist

[38] John said to him, "Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in your name (ἐν τῷ ὀνόματί σου), and we tried to stop him, because he was not following us. [39] But Jesus said, "Do not stop him; for no one who does a deed of power in my name will be able soon afterward to speak evil of me. Whoever is not against us is for us" (Mark 9:38-39).

Although this pericope, also found in an abbreviated version in Luke (9:49-50), has

¹⁵⁹ See p. 148.

often been assigned to the early church¹⁶⁰ based on the assumption that it was attempting to read its own practices back into Jesus' lifetime, there are reasons for suspecting that it may belong to an earlier level of tradition. First, it provides further confirmation that exorcism was occurring, not only within Jesus' immediate circle, but outside this group as well.¹⁶¹ Second, the lack of Christological titles ("Teacher" rather than "Lord") may indicate that the tradition derives from stage 1, since the early church often added titles such as "Lord," or "Christ".

Although Bultmann has argued that the passage seems to refer to the apostles rather than to Jesus, Luke's changes of both tense and person could indicate that it is he who altered an earlier tradition to make it fit the context of the early church. Twelfree has pointed out, for instance, that in Mark Jesus states that if the other exorcist is not against *us*, he is with *us* (ἡμῶν), and Luke changes the pronoun to the plural form of *you* (ὁμῶν), perhaps attempting to make the phrase more relevant for a group of early Christ-believers. He also changes the phrase "he was not following us" (past tense) to "he does not follow *with us*," altering the tense and adding the preposition "with" (μετὰ).¹⁶²

In addition, Mark's use of the verb ἀκολουθέω may indicate an early tradition since, according to Kittel, this word alone is used with specific reference to the idea of people following Jesus and no other term such as "disciple" or "follower" ever came into use

¹⁶⁰ Bultmann, *History*, 24-5; Twelfree (*In the Name of Jesus*, 125-27) argues that the passage reflects the experiences of early Christ-believers, based on its location between two other texts which deal with early church issues. As such, he sees the unknown exorcist as a member of another Christ-believing community or someone who was on their way to becoming a Christ believer.

¹⁶¹ Mark 3:15; 6:7, 13. Cf. Aune ("Magic in Early Christianity," 1545) who sees the tradition that Jesus' name was used to perform exorcisms by other exorcists during Jesus' lifetime as historically reliable.

¹⁶² Twelfree, ΕΙ ΔΕ. . . ΕΓΩ ΕΚΒΑΛΛΩ," 366-7.

because of the desire to retain the active sense of the word.¹⁶³ If this tradition is early, it tells us that there were other exorcists who used Jesus' name, but were not connected with him or his disciples. If it is a creation of the early church, it may indicate that there were questions about the legitimacy of people outside the community appropriating the name of Jesus for use in exorcism. In either case, the presence of exorcism is confirmed.

4.4.2 Authority over Unclean Spirits: (Mark 6:7-13//Matt10:1, 5-15// Luke 9:1-6 and Q 10:4-9 [Matt 10:7-8, 10b-13//Luke 10:5-9])

[7] He called the twelve and began to send them out two by two and gave them authority over the unclean spirits (ἐξουσίαν τῶν πνευμάτων τῶν ἀκαθάρτων) [8] He ordered them to take nothing for their journey except a staff; no bread, no bag, no money in their belts; [9] but to wear sandals and not to put on two tunics. [10] And he said to them, "Wherever you enter a house, stay there until you leave the place. [11] If any place will not welcome you and they refuse to hear you, as you leave, shake off the dust that is on your feet for a testimony against them [12] So they went out and proclaimed that all should repent. [13] They cast out many demons (δαιμόνια πολλά ἐξέβαλλον), and anointed with oil many who were sick and cured [ἐθεράπευσον] them. (Mark 6:7-13).

Carry no purse, nor knapsack, nor sandals, nor stick, and greet no one on the road. Into whatever house you enter, [first] say: Peace [to this house]! And if a son of peace be there, let your peace come upon him; but if not, [let] your peace [return upon] you. And cure [θεραπεύετε] the sick there and say [to them]: The kingdom of God has reached unto you. But into whatever town you enter and they do not take you in, on going out [from that town], shake off the dust from your feet (Q 10:4-9)

When you go into any land and walk about in the districts, if they receive you, eat what they will set before you, and heal the sick among them (GTh 14.2)

In this tradition, found in both Mark and Q, along with a condensed version in the Gospel of Thomas, the first issue to be addressed is whether the memory that Jesus sent the twelve on a mission belongs to the earliest stage of the tradition, or whether instead it was practiced by the early Christ-believing community and has been retrojected back into Jesus'

¹⁶³ Gerhard Kittel (ed.), *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* vol. 1 (ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley; Grand Rapids, MI.: Eerdmans, 1964), 214.

lifetime by Mark. It is possible that both are true. That is, Jesus did send his closest followers on an itinerant mission and this was the reason that the tradition continued among the earliest Christ-believing communities. If there was a historical sending of the twelve, did their mission involve casting out demons or unclean spirits, or does this too reflect the experiences of the early Church? Although some have argued for the latter on the basis that the missionary charge may originate with the post-Easter community, there are several indications that Jesus did, in fact, send out some of his followers on a mission of some kind.

First, a brief reference to itinerancy also occurs in the Gospel of Thomas 14.2 (see above). And, although the version found in GTh is significantly shorter than what is found in Mark and Q, it appears to represent a memory that some of Jesus' closest followers went out on a peripatetic mission in which healing and exorcism were central foci and in which the expectation was that they would be provided for by the local residents of the area.¹⁶⁴ The instructions for itinerant apostles appear also to represent a similar context to those found in chapters 11-13 of the Didache, which is dated to approximately 100 CE, but which may reflect earlier Christ-believing traditions.¹⁶⁵

In addition, several aspects of the pericope seem to reflect a Palestinian milieu. These include the instruction not to take along extra belongings (no purse, bag, sandals), to

¹⁶⁴ Crossan (*The Historical Jesus*, 334-5) argues that these were not likely the twelve or even the 70. Rather, he proposes that they were possibly followers who had themselves been healed from diseases, and were then sent out to heal others. He also contends, based on another Pauline text (1 Cor 9.5) which refers to being accompanied by a "sister wife" (ἀδελφὴν γυναῖκα), that the specification "two by two" may refer to a male/female team which enabled female missionaries to travel around Galilee safely.

¹⁶⁵ Bart D. Ehrman (ed.), (*The Apostolic Fathers*, vol. 1 LOEB [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003], 405-15) argues that the "Church Order" (chs. 7-15), of which these instructions are a part, presupposes an early period in the development of the church before formal hierarchies were established, and may also originate in Syria.

pronounce peace on the house or withhold it, depending on the response of its occupants, as well as its personification in Q 10:5-6 (a “son of peace,” υἱὸς εἰρήνης), and the instructions to shake the dust off their feet found in both Mark (6:11) and Q (10:6).¹⁶⁶ The lack of Christological titles in Jesus’ instructions to the disciples to proclaim “repentance” (Mark 6:12)/ “the kingdom of God” (Q:10:9), rather than “Christ” or “Jesus,” may indicate historicity.¹⁶⁷

Although only Mark (and parallels in Matt 10:1 and Luke 9:1) includes exorcism in the sending of the twelve, the return of the seventy (-two) in Luke 10:17 [L] (which will be discussed under Special L), also assumes that exorcism was part of the mission, and both Mark and Q associate an early peripatetic mission with healing and with a particular message (in Mark it is a call to repentance and in Q it is a proclamation of the kingdom). Mark also lists authority to cast out demons among the reasons why Jesus initially chose the twelve (3:13-15). Finally, Q links the kingdom of God (kingdom of heaven in Matthew) with the casting out of demons elsewhere.¹⁶⁸

In summary, although the evidence suggests that there may be a historical core to this memory, even if this story was found to be a creation of the early church and Jesus did not send the twelve or the seventy out on a peripatetic mission, there is still something historical

¹⁶⁶ So Crossan, *The Historical Jesus*, 334-5; P. M. Casey, *Aramaic Sources of Mark's Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 195.

¹⁶⁷ So Twelftree, *In the Name of Jesus*, 49-50; idem, *Jesus the Exorcist*, 124; cf. Crossan (*The Historical Jesus*, 334-5), who argues that Q is earlier than Mark, that Luke retains the version closest to what was found in Q, and that Mark has probably copied Luke and Matthew has conflated Q and Mark. One could just as easily argue that Mark retains the earliest version of the tradition, since he not only has no Christological language, but also contains virtually the same information related to the *Sitz im Leben* of the early Palestinian church as Q. However, for our purposes these discussions are not essential.

¹⁶⁸ Q 11:13-14, 17-20.

to be gleaned from the tradition. If the story was created later and attributed to Jesus' lifetime, it is nevertheless significant that Mark includes exorcism among the instructions to those sent out. This means, at the very least, that whether or not this particular incident can be dated to Jesus' lifetime, exorcism was seen by the redactors of the gospels as linked to Jesus and an important part of the tradition.

4.5 Evidence in Special L

There are several reports in L that provide information about exorcism. These include the report of the return of the seventy from their peripatetic mission, the report that Mary Magdalene was possessed by seven demons, Jesus' response to the warning by friendly Pharisees that Herod Antipas wanted to kill him, and two healing accounts which display some elements of exorcism: the healing of Peter's mother-in-law and the healing of the crippled woman in the synagogue. The first tradition, like the report of the sending of the twelve in Mark, suggests that Jesus' disciples functioned as exorcists. The report about Mary Magdalene potentially tells us that one of Jesus' closest followers experienced spirit possession and was healed by Jesus. The last two reports provide a more general confirmation of the worldview present in the gospels that associated particular illnesses with evil spirits.

In comparison to Mark, Luke tends to downplay somewhat the significance of exorcism in the early part of his gospel, but then adds exorcistic elements to pericopes which were not there in Mark. Examples of this include his recasting of the healing of Peter's mother-in-law as an exorcism, and perhaps (if it was not already found in Q) adding evil

spirits to the list of diseases that Jesus healed in response to John’s question.¹⁶⁹ His story of the healing of the woman with the spirit of infirmity includes spiritual affliction by Satan as the cause. He also blurs the lines between exorcism and healing in his general introduction of Jesus’ ministry and in Acts 5:16.¹⁷⁰ However, he does add significant information about exorcism that is not found in either Mark or Matthew. For instance, only Luke [L] includes Jesus’ vision of Satan falling from heaven.

4.5.1 *The Return of the Seventy and the Fall of Satan*

[17] The seventy returned with joy, saying, “Lord, *in your name even the demons submit to us!*” [18] He said to them, “I watched Satan fall from heaven like a flash of lightning. [19] See, I have given you authority to tread on snakes and scorpions and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing will hurt you. [20] Nevertheless, do not rejoice at this, that *the spirits submit to you*, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven (Luke [L] 10:17-20)

Jesus’ statement “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven” (Ἐθεώρουσ τὸν Σατανᾶν ὡς ἀστραπήν ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ πεσόντα)—Luke 10:18, suggests a vision connected to spirit possession in which Jesus witnesses the fall from power of Satan. The use of the imperfect tense of the verb θεωρέω (to watch) implies some duration rather than a fixed and fleeting moment.¹⁷¹ In terms of the phrase “like lightning,” Twelftree argues that several other uses of lightning in the NT convey the idea of brightness and stunningness rather than speed or duration, and that this is the intended meaning here. If so, Jesus likely believed that his own and his disciples’ exorcisms were tied to this fall.¹⁷² While this is possible, it is not certain because this is the only case where Jesus speaks about lightning,

¹⁶⁹ See Luke 7:20. Matt 11:5 does not mention evil spirits.

¹⁷⁰ See Twelftree, *In the Name of Jesus*, 132-33.

¹⁷¹ Kelly (“The Devil in the Desert,” 206) notes that earlier Jewish literature also displays evidence of a gradual fall of Satan, reflected in a denigration of the character from the accuser portrayed in Job to the enemy of human beings that we see in the gospels. Obviously this kind of fall is moral rather than physical.

¹⁷² Twelftree, *In the Name of Jesus*, 140; Matt 24:27// Luke 17.24; Rev 4:5; 8:5; 11.19; 16.18.

with the exception of the “son of man” reference. Comparison is therefore difficult. What seems more certain is the connection in the ancient world between stars and demonic beings, and the idea that demons were fallen angels, since this is evident in several Jewish texts of the period.¹⁷³ *Testament of Solomon*, for instance, demonstrates that the idea of demons falling was part of Judaism, but it does not make clear what the results of these falls were thought to be for human beings.

I asked him, “Tell me, then, how you, being demons, are able to ascend into heaven.” He replied, “Whatever things are accomplished in heaven (are accomplished) in the same way also on earth; for the principalities and authorities and powers above fly around and are considered worthy of entering heaven. But we who are demons are exhausted from not having a way station from which to ascend or on which to rest; so we fall down like leaves from the trees and the men who are watching think that stars are falling from heaven. That is not true, King; rather, we fall because of our weakness and, since there is nothing on which to hold, we are dropped like flashes of lightning to the earth.”¹⁷⁴

It is possible that Jesus was aware of such traditions, though we cannot be sure. If Luke 10:18 is original and belongs with v. 19-20, as Samuel Vollenweider argues, then the fall of Satan should be understood as part of the reason for the disciples’ success in exorcising demons.¹⁷⁵ Although this seems the most natural interpretation of the vision, another possibility, seen in some Jewish texts from the Second Temple period, is that the fall of demons was thought to cause problems for human beings.¹⁷⁶ However, a more positive interpretation seems to fit the statement and the implied connection between the fall of Satan on the one hand, and Jesus and his disciples’ ability to cast out demons and the presence or

¹⁷³ See *Asc. Isa.* (2nd c. BCE-1st c. CE) 4:1-6; 7:9-12; *L.A.E.* (1st c. CE) 12-16; Philo *Giants* 6; *Test Sol.* 20:11-16; Eph 2:2; Rev 12:9-10.

¹⁷⁴ *Test. Sol.* 20:15-17.

¹⁷⁵ Samuel Vollenweider, “Ich sah den Satan wie einen Blitz vom Himmel fallen (Lk 10:18),” *ZNW* 79 (1988), 187-203.

¹⁷⁶ See e.g., *1 En* 86:1-6; 90:21; *L.A.E.* 12:1-2. Cf. Allison, “Behind the Temptations of Jesus,” 195-213.

the imminent coming of the kingdom on the other.¹⁷⁷

4.5.2 *Mary Magdalene and her Seven Demons*

[1] Soon afterwards he went on through cities and villages, proclaiming and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God. [2] The twelve were with him, as well as some women who had been cured of evil spirits (πνευμάτων πονηρῶν) and infirmities [3] Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, and Joanna, the wife of Herod's steward Chuza, and Susanna, and many others, who provided for them out of their resources (Luke [L] 8:1-3).

Now after he rose early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, from whom he had cast out seven demons. [Longer ending of Mark 16:9]

[40] There were also women looking on from a distance; among them were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the younger and Joses, and Salome. [41] These used to follow him and provided for him when he was in Galilee; and there were many other women who had come up with him to Jerusalem (Mark 15:40-41).

Both Mark and Special L indicate that several women were among Jesus' close followers and that they provided for him out of their own funds (Mark adds that it was during his time in Galilee). Both Mark and Special L report that Mary Magdalene, one of the women included in Luke's list, had previously been possessed by seven demons (ἀφ' ἧς δαιμόνια ἑπτὰ ἐξεληλύθει), and L states that she was one of several women who had been healed (τεθεραπευμένοι).¹⁷⁸ I will discuss the issue of healing in chapter 5. The longer ending of Mark also contains a brief report of the casting out of seven spirits (παρ' ἧς ἐκβεβλήκει ἑπτὰ δαιμόνια) from Mary, which is probably dependent on Luke.

¹⁷⁷ Hengel, *The Charismatic Leader*, 65; Twelftree, *Jesus the Exorcist*, 125-6.

¹⁷⁸ Luke's use of vocabulary (The women were healed [τεθεραπευμένοι] of evil spirits and infirmities) indicates just how closely linked evil spirits and illness were in his mind, and his use of both δαιμόνια (demons) and πνευμάτων πονηρῶν (evil spirits) suggests that they could be used interchangeably to describe the same phenomenon.

Mark contains another reference to the women who followed and provided for Jesus. It is possible that the two traditions (Mark and L) originate with a single source. However, the fact that Mark's language is different from Luke's suggests the possibility of two traditions, perhaps one of them oral.¹⁷⁹ Thus, while the passage as we find it may be a Lukan composition, based on phrasing and vocabulary,¹⁸⁰ the information about the women and about Mary in particular, should probably be seen as coming from an early source or tradition for several reasons.

First, the lists in Mark and Luke are slightly different, which suggests that the two writers had access to different traditions about which women were viewed as most important in Jesus' movement, or which were present at the cross.¹⁸¹ Mary is listed first in both Mark's and Luke's descriptions of the women above, indicating her importance. In addition, all of the gospels, except Luke, specifically mention that Mary, and other women who followed and supported Jesus, were present at the crucifixion,¹⁸² and all four gospels place Mary first at the empty tomb, before the male disciples.¹⁸³ Since neither Luke nor Matthew has significantly altered the tradition they found in Mark, they must have seen her central position in the tradition as important enough to retain, despite her status as a woman and her

¹⁷⁹ See Fitzmyer, *The Gospel according to Luke I-IX*, 695; but see Meier, (*A Marginal Jew*, 2. 658, 674, note 61) who argues that Mark is dependent on Luke.

¹⁸⁰ Fitzmyer (*The Gospel according to Luke I-IX*, 695) argues that "out of whom seven demons had come" (Mark 16:9) may reflect a pre-Markan tradition; cf. Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, 2: 657-58.

¹⁸¹ Mark 15:40-41 lists the following women: Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the younger and Joses, and Salome, and the list in L includes Joanna and Susanna, but leaves out Mary the mother of James and Joses, and Salome. Luke 23:49 does not include names. So Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke I-IX*, 696.

¹⁸² Matt 27:55-56; Mark 15:40-41; Luke 23:27; John 19:25-26. Interestingly, Mary Magdalene is the only one who appears in all four lists. The other women are different in each account. Luke (23:27 and 23:55) mention only "women" who were beating their breasts, and "the women who had come with him from Galilee" respectively.

¹⁸³ Matt 28:1; Mark 15:40-41, 47; 16:9; Luke 24:1-11; John 20:1-2.

history of demon possession. This is important because it would be surprising for the early Christ-believing community to place women at the crucifixion and at the resurrection if they had not been there since Women were not seen as credible witnesses in the ancient world.

The report that Mary and other women were among Jesus' closest followers suggests they may have also been marginal figures in some way, since women in the ancient world generally did not travel with men unless they were married to them.¹⁸⁴ In fact in the upper classes, women were typically relegated to private space while men retained control over public space. In addition, the fact that these women were able to travel with Jesus and his disciples suggests that there was something unusual about them. Why, if they were married for instance, were they not at home? If they were not married, why not? This does not necessarily mean they were poor. In fact, since they were able to support Jesus, some of them were clearly fairly well off. Joanna is described as the wife of Herod's steward, Chuza, so we can assume that she at least had some resources. However, the unusual nature of women travelling with a group of men suggests that these women had been marginalized or rejected in some way, although we cannot say how or why.¹⁸⁵

In addition, if we can assume that one of the reasons for people's loyalty to Jesus was that he had healed them or exorcised demons from them, then an exorcism by Jesus would explain Mary's devotion to Jesus, both in terms of financial support and in following him to the cross and the tomb. Thus, the criterion of coherence applies here in that exorcism would

¹⁸⁴ See, e.g., Acts 18:2-3 where Aquilla and Priscilla travel together as a husband-wife team.

¹⁸⁵ Nichter ("Idioms of Distress," 396) has observed, for example, that in contemporary South India, among women in particular, certain states or stages of life may make one particularly vulnerable to spirit possession. These include: mature but not married, newly married, married but childless, or widowed.

explain the tradition that Mary was one of Jesus' followers. If in addition, as Davies and Neyrey argue, some of the cases of spirit possession were related to intra-familial conflict, then following Jesus and becoming part of his entourage may have also provided an alternate family for those who were unable to remain in their own families.¹⁸⁶ This latter possibility would also explain many of Jesus' statements that encourage leaving father and mother, as well as his seeming preference for followers over family, and the strained relations between Jesus and his family.¹⁸⁷ Finally, Luke's "some women" assumes that it was not only Mary but others who were healed, from both evil spirits and other illnesses. Finally, in the ancient world, the number seven and possession by seven spirits appears to have symbolized a particularly severe case of possession.¹⁸⁸

Two other points are important in relation to the tradition about Mary. First, if we combine the information gleaned from Mark, Q, L and John, we learn that as many as seven women (Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of Jesus, Mary the mother of James and Joseph [or Joses], the mother of the sons of Zebedee, Mary the wife of Clopas, Joanna, and Salome)

¹⁸⁶ Davies, *Jesus the Healer*, 107-12; Neyrey, "Loss of Wealth, Loss of Family," 139-58.

¹⁸⁷ See, e.g., Mark 3:32-35//Matt 12:46-50//Luke 8:19-21; Mark 10:28-31//Luke 18:28-30// Matt 19:27-29//GTh 55, 101; Q 9:59-62 [Luke 9:57-60//Matt 8:19-22; Q ?[Luke] 11:27-28//GTh 79; Mark 13:12; Q 12:49-53 [Luke 12:49-53//Matt 10:34-35] //GTh 10, 16. Cf. Jerome H. Neyrey ("Loss of Wealth, Loss of Family and Loss of Honour: The Cultural Context of the Original Makarisms in Q," in *Modeling Early Christianity: Social-scientific Studies of the New Testament in its Context* (ed. Philip F. Esler; London: Routledge, 1995, 139-158), who argues that the beatitudes in Q were originally addressed to those who had been forced to leave their families because of loss of honour, and had become poor as a result. Neyrey also argues that there is a historical link between the Makarisms and sayings about worrying and the disinherited that followed Jesus.

¹⁸⁸ See Tob 3:7-8, where the demon Asmodeus has killed Sarah's previous seven husbands; *T. Reub.* 2:1-3:8 mentions seven spirits of the senses and seven corresponding spirits of error. Van der Loos (*The Miracles of Jesus*, 410-11) argues that this idea can be traced to the Babylonian period. Large numbers of demons are assumed to be part of the human experience in some rabbinic material as well. See, e.g., *b. Git.* 68a; *b. Ber.* 6a; *Midr. Pss.* 17/8 on Ps 17:8; *Deut Rab.* Debarim 17.

were closely associated with Jesus.¹⁸⁹ In addition, several had been healed by Jesus of either malevolent spirit possession or other illnesses, and provided for him out of their own funds. Finally, that the relationship between Jesus and these women was close is confirmed by the presence of some of the women at the crucifixion and some coming to the tomb with spices to anoint him.

From an anthropological perspective, spirit possession is much more common in women cross-culturally than in men.¹⁹⁰ Thus, there seems no reason on anthropological grounds to doubt the historicity of the tradition that Mary (and perhaps others as well), who is a prominent figure in the gospel accounts, was known to have been possessed by seven spirits and that Jesus was thought to have removed them from her.

Finally, as we have noted in regard to the accusations against Jesus and the crowds that gathered, healing and exorcism in the gospels are depicted as both social and political events. These women had very likely previously been marginalized because of their illnesses or spirit possession, if not for other reasons as well. Their restoration to health and wholeness implied a change to their social status. By taking the women into his group, Jesus provided an alternative community for them.

In other words, their spirit possession was an affliction that signified a challenge to the established social order. As we have previously noted when referring to social

¹⁸⁹ Mark 15:40-41; Luke 8:1-3; Matt 27:55-6; John 19:25.

¹⁹⁰ One of Rothenberg's (*Spirits of Palestine*, 30, 37, 72-3) sources estimates that among his clientele, 60-70% of those possessed are women. Similarly, Kessler ("Conflict and Sovereignty in Kelantanese Malay Spirit Seances," in Crapanzano, 302-3), notes that 80% of the patients of Kelantanese healers were women; Lambek ("From Disease to Discourse,"⁴⁰) estimates that five times as many women as men are possessed by spirits in Mayotte culture. Cf. Obeyesekere, "Psycho cultural Exegesis," 240-50; Clive S. Kessler, "Conflict and Sovereignty in Kelantanese Malay Spirit Seances," in Crapanzano, 295-331; Levy, Mageo and Howard, "Gods, Spirits and History," 14-15, 21; Ward, "Possession and Exorcism," 125-44; Bourguignon, "Suffering and Healing," 557; Boddy, "Spirit Possession Revisited," 417; Saunders, "Variants in Zar Experience," 177; Keller, *The Hammer and the Flute*, 2-3, 87, 106-121.

anthropology, such a challenge would have been more or less conscious for those afflicted. Therefore, when Jesus healed these women by driving the evil spirits from them and admitted them to his entourage, he was likewise saying something about the boundaries and the definitions of his society and the criteria that governed it.¹⁹¹

If we may assume that Jesus was attempting to create an alternative community in which social outcasts were accepted, this would correspond to Mary Douglas' suggestion that marginal communities may exist outside the centrally-accepted cultural and religious establishment where alternative responses to boundaries and to acceptable behavior are practiced.

4.5.3 *Antipas "the Fox"*

Special L also contains a tradition that appears nowhere else in the gospels and which may provide further evidence of the link between exorcism and politics. From a literary and theological perspective, this passage is found at the centre of the Lukan travel narrative. It is intended to anticipate Jesus' intention to journey to Jerusalem, and underscores the inevitability of his suffering and death.¹⁹²

[31] And at that very hour, some Pharisees came and said to him, "Get away from here, for Herod wants to kill you." [32] He said to them, "Go and say to that fox for me, 'Listen, I am casting out demons and performing cures [ἐκβάλλω δαιμόνια καὶ ἰάσεις ἀποτελῶ] today, and tomorrow, and on the third day I finish my work. [33] Yet today, tomorrow and the next day I must be on my way, because it is impossible for a prophet to be killed outside of Jerusalem'" (Luke [L] 13:31-33).

While the Pharisees' warning to Jesus (v. 31) may well reflect an authentic historical event from the earliest period (stage 1) of the tradition, it is more difficult to say whether vv.

¹⁹¹ Carmen Bernabé Ubieta, "Mary Magdalene and the Seven Demons in Social-Scientific Perspective," in *Transformative Encounters: Jesus & Women Re-viewed* (ed. Ingrid Rosa Kitzberger; Leiden: Brill, 2000), 203-23.

¹⁹² Darr, *Herod the Fox*, 174-5.

32 and 33 were originally linked with it.¹⁹³ If the warning and response were linked by the Lukan redactor then at the very least we have a possible connection between Jesus' public exorcisms and political danger in the mind of the Lukan redactor whose depiction assumes that reports about Jesus' exorcisms and healings had reached Herod Antipas and were creating a dangerous situation for him.¹⁹⁴ If however the connection between the warning and Jesus' response are pre-Lukan, then it is likely that exorcisms and healings did play a role in Antipas' desire to have Jesus executed. Paul Hollenbach argues that the connection goes back to Jesus.¹⁹⁵

In any case, Jesus' response to the Pharisees—and indirectly to Antipas—implicitly connects his eventual fate in Jerusalem, his role as prophet, and his healings and exorcisms. The connection between healing and controversy is also found in Jesus' response to his hometown crowd gathered at the synagogue and where Jesus' role as prophet is linked with that of physician or healer, and where Jesus' inability to do any deed of power in Nazareth with his lack of acceptance there (Mark 6:4-5 and par.).

The Pharisees, like the scribes, were part of the retainer group, which included educators, religious functionaries, entertainers and skilled artisans. The retainer class fell just below the governing class and immediately above the merchant class in the ancient world.¹⁹⁶ In addition, Anthony Saldarini argues that the Pharisees were a literate, organized and political interest group within Palestinian Judaism, but did not necessarily have a lot of

¹⁹³ Fitzmyer, (*The Gospel According to Luke*, 2: 1028-31) argues that v. 32 is original and v. 33 was added later, perhaps as a result of the phrase, "today, tomorrow," contained in both, and also because the statement in v. 33 fits so well Luke's portrayal of Jesus as moving resolutely toward Jerusalem.

¹⁹⁴ Cf. Mark 3:14-15; 6:14-16.

¹⁹⁵ Hollenbach, "Jesus, Demoniacs, and Public Authorities," 569.

¹⁹⁶ Saldarini, *Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees*, 4-5, 37-40.

power.¹⁹⁷ In Mark the Pharisees and the scribes are the two main opponents of Jesus in Galilee, and in every case, they are in conflict with Jesus.¹⁹⁸ However, this does not necessarily mean that all Pharisees opposed Jesus or his message or activities. It is now widely accepted that the tensions described in the gospels between Jesus and some Pharisees reflect heated debates between groups whose views were similar and that even Matthew's harsh treatment of the Pharisees (esp. ch. 23) likely reflects tensions within his own Jewish Christ-believing community, rather than polemic against outsiders.

Although the writer of Luke generally portrays the Pharisees as wealthy and often in conflict with Jesus, he also has them interact more closely and more often with Jesus than the other gospel writers, especially Matthew. In addition, the Pharisees are the only group mentioned in Acts that became followers of Jesus (Acts 15:5) and were sympathetic to him (Acts 5:34-39; 23:6-9). Saldarini argues that Luke's view of the Pharisees is complex, being neither completely hostile nor totally friendly.¹⁹⁹ Thus, there is no reason to doubt that there were Pharisees in Galilee who were friendly toward Jesus, and who would not wish to see him executed.²⁰⁰

Luke's characterization of Antipas as a fox is difficult to interpret. Although it is not clear how foxes would have been understood in the Palestinian context, Harold Hoehner contends that in the literature of the ancient world foxes are most often depicted as inferior

¹⁹⁷ Saldarini, *Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees*, 79, 120-22.

¹⁹⁸ Saldarini, *Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees*, 146-7.

¹⁹⁹ Saldarini, *Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees*, 177-9. For instance, Saldarini notes that while Mark and Matthew have the Pharisees challenge Jesus' plucking of grain on the Sabbath, Luke has only *some* of them doing this (6:2), and he also has Jesus dine with Pharisees three times (17:36; 11:37; 14:1).

²⁰⁰ While Darr (*Herod the Fox*, 175-6) suggests Luke's Pharisees were deliberately attempting to lure Jesus out of Galilee to Jerusalem, this seems forced. Saldarini (*Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees*, 177) argues that this should be understood as a genuine warning.

and crafty. As a result, he argues Luke's intention is most likely to portray Antipas as someone who is lacking in real power, but uses deceit to achieve his goals.²⁰¹ In contrast, Darr sees this passage in the context of Jesus' statement about wanting to protect the children of Jerusalem (13:34), which he contends conjures images of predatory foxes and their vulnerable prey. He thus concludes that Luke is depicting Jesus as comparing himself to a hen facing a deadly fox.²⁰² Whichever interpretation is chosen, the portrayal of Antipas is a negative one. The question is whether Jesus' depiction implies wariness of a dangerous predator, or whether his comments reflect an attempt to disparage Antipas for his weakness and cowardliness.

Our discussion of this last passage in L has raised some intriguing possibilities with regard to the connection between Jesus and the Pharisees and between Jesus and Herod Antipas. It seems likely that the warning by the Pharisees attests to a friendly relationship between them and suggests that Antipas was seen by both the Pharisees and Jesus as a very real threat and that Jesus' healings and exorcisms were one of the reason for Antipas' concern about him and desire to have him executed.

²⁰¹ See discussion in Hoehner, *Herod Antipas*, 343-7. In early Greek writings the fox is often contrasted to the lion, and is thus depicted as weak or as crafty, getting what he does by stealth. The idea of craftiness is also present during New Testament times, and the view that foxes were inferior is predominant in Jewish literature. But see Darr (*Herod the Fox*, 181-2) who argues that another trait, destructiveness, fits the Lukan presentation of Antipas, based on the fact that Antipas is never portrayed as weak in Luke's gospel, but rather as a destroyer since he has John executed and exhibits no remorse for this action in the narrative.

²⁰² Darr, *Herod the Fox*, 183.

4.5.4 Jesus Rebukes a Fever

The last two passages in Special L are both healings, which contain elements that suggest a connection between evil spirits and illness, although neither is technically an exorcism.

[38] Now Simon's mother-in-law was suffering from a high fever (πυρετῶ μεγάλῳ), and they asked him about her. [39] Then he stood over her and rebuked the fever (ἐπετίμησεν τῷ πυρετῷ), and it left her. Immediately she got up and began to serve them (Luke 4:38-39).

The healing of Peter's mother-in-law is the only case of fever reported in any of the NT gospels.²⁰³ Luke's version of the story is derived from Mark 1:30-31, which is also taken up by Matthew (8:14-15), although neither Mark nor Matthew gives any indication that this is anything other than a straightforward healing. In fact, both report simply that the fever left (ἀφῆκεν) her after Jesus took hold of her hand (Mark—ἤγειρεν αὐτὴν κρατήσας τῆς χειρὸς; Matt—καὶ ἥψατο²⁰⁴ τῆς χειρὸς αὐτῆς), suggesting that touch rather than a spoken command brought healing. However, in Luke's version, the healing has taken on elements of an exorcism with Jesus standing over the woman and rebuking

²⁰³ In terms of the nature of the illness, the only specific symptom described is fever. As a result, Peter's mother-in-law could have had any number of diseases for which fever is a primary symptom. It seems likely, however, that it was malaria, since it was prevalent in the Jordan River valley and around the Sea of Galilee, where Capernaum is located until the last century when the swampy areas were drained and agricultural development occurred. See Hippocrates, (*Epidemics* 1:24) who describes the different forms of the illness. See also J. Keir Howard, *Disease and Healing in the New Testament: an Analysis and Interpretation* (Lanham, MD.: University Press of America, 2001), 64-5.

²⁰⁴ The middle voice of ἥπτω implies close contact with the purpose of conveying a blessing through touch.

(ejpetivmhsen) the fever. This is not surprising since fever was commonly thought to have a demonic origin in the ancient world.²⁰⁵

This means that we are left with two possibilities for explaining the exorcistic elements in Luke’s version. Either Luke combined two stories—Mark’s healing and another story in his own source (L), or this is a reworking of Mark’s story. I have chosen to list it under L because although the textual differences between Mark/Matthew and Luke are few, the result of the change is significant. Thus, whether Luke had access to another story that contained an exorcism or simply altered Mark’s, he has subtly connected this illness with exorcism by using the language of rebuke.

Interestingly, one of the differences often observed between the exorcisms and healings in the synoptic gospels is that while Jesus uses touch to heal, he is never reported to have touched demon-possessed persons. Instead, he uses verbal commands to oust the demons.²⁰⁶ The reason for this is not clear, but may reflect a cultural taboo against getting too close to those possessed by evil spirits. In any case, Luke’s use of ἐπιτιμάω in an account which Matthew and Mark report as a simple healing may suggest that he is drawing on another aspect of Jewish or Hellenistic tradition.²⁰⁷

Luke’s account of the healing of Peter’s mother-in-law thus provides evidence that for him, some cases of illness were thought to be associated with evil spirits and that these spirits could be addressed directly as a means of healing the condition. The fact that

²⁰⁵ The *PGM* 88.1-19 contains a spell for rebuking a fever and the connection between fever and evil spirits is also found in 4Q560 and *T. Sol* 7:6-7. See also *PGM* IV.745, 1229, 2735 where the healer is said to speak “over the head” of the afflicted person.

²⁰⁶ See Mark 1:25; 5:8; 9:42 and par. See also discussion p. 60.

²⁰⁷ See Kee (“The Terminology of Mark’s Exorcism Stories,” 243), who suggests that Luke may preserve another source or tradition of Jesus’ healings, where ἐπιτιμάω is used.

one of the synoptic writers has made this connection in this story while the other two have not suggests that when and whether this assessment was made could be a matter of interpretation in the first century.

4.5.5 A Woman Crippled by a Spirit

[10] 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 and said to her, “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 [ἔδησεν] 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 he was doing (Luke [L] 13:10-17).

Although this account, like the previous one is not technically an exorcism, since there is no confrontation or conversation reported between Jesus and a demon, it too clearly reflects a first-century Palestinian cosmology that attributed physical affliction to spiritual influences. This is evident from the phrase used to describe the woman’s condition (γυνή πνεῦμα ἔχουσα ἀσθενεία—a woman having a “spirit of weakness” or infirmity), from Jesus’ response: “Woman you are free from your infirmity” (Γύναϊ ἀπολέλυσαι τῆς ἀσθενείας σου),²⁰⁸ and from his statement that she had been bound by Satan (ἦν ἔδησεν ὁ σατανᾶς) for eighteen years. The verb δέω (to bind) is probably used here in a metaphorical sense, since in the ancient world this was one way of

²⁰⁸ In fact, Fitzmyer (*The Gospel according to Luke X-XXIV*, 2:1012) argues that this expression is likely an Aramaism, reflecting the term כִּנְיָהּ (GenAp 20.16, 26).

describing a crippling infirmity.²⁰⁹ Thus, this healing combines elements of both exorcism (the attribution of the condition to Satan) and healing (the laying on of hands).

As we saw in chapter 2, illnesses in the ancient world were often attributed to sin, and viewed as either a punishment from God or affliction by evil spirits. In the first case, forgiveness was required, in the second, healing or exorcism might be the preferred method of dealing with the condition.

The problems were thought to arise either from divine or demonic interference, not from psychological factors. Those problems that were thought to arise from God were explained to be the result of the sin of the individual, more precisely, God's punishment of the sin of individuals. The resolution of a problem understood to be the result of sin would be alleviated on the occasion of the forgiveness of sin by God. Problems that were thought to arise from the presence of demons would be resolved when the demons were overpowered by a more powerful supernatural force, the power of God.²¹⁰

The incident of the crippled woman being freed by Jesus reflects the latter view; the woman's disease is assumed to be caused not by her own sin, but by a malevolent spiritual force. At the same time, this healing as well as many of Jesus' other healings and exorcisms displays evidence that the relationship between Jesus and those he sought to heal was an important aspect of a positive outcome. Sometimes this involved forgiveness of sin, but at other times it seemed to come about as a result of Jesus' compassion. The importance of the relationship between healer and patient has been attested across cultures.²¹¹

²⁰⁹ So Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke X-XXIV*, 1013-14.

²¹⁰ Davies, *Jesus the Healer*, 73-4.

²¹¹ The importance of the relationship between patient and healer (particularly warmth and empathy) and faith in the healer's abilities and treatments, has been widely acknowledged as contributing to the healing process. Kleinman (*Patients and Healers*, 82, 220, 226-27, 240) argues that the healing process may be as much about restoring relationships and providing a sense of meaning for the symptoms or problems within the social context as it is about alleviating the physical symptoms in the affected individual. His study of Taiwanese shamans has demonstrated that healers appear often to be highly adjusted social individuals, who are keenly aware of and sensitive to the problems of others and tend to be remarkable individuals with strong personalities and good coping skills. In addition, they are recognized by both their clients and peers as effective communicators and competent managers of crises. Cf. David E.

Like several of the exorcisms we will discuss in chapter 5, the healing of the woman with the infirmity occurs in a public place—the synagogue—on the Sabbath. The synagogue leader’s attempt to discredit Jesus’ actions (in this case, based on Sabbath restriction) is a theme we have already identified in the Beelzebul Controversy. From an anthropological perspective, two aspects of the story are significant. First, the presence of a crowd both confirms the healing and demonstrates the communal nature of the event. Second, Jesus’ conflict with the synagogue leader is similar to that which is reported in the Beelzebul Controversy. By freeing this woman from her burden, Jesus challenges the prevailing social and religious assumptions of the synagogue leader (*archisynagōgos*) that healing must not occur on Sabbath days. In this case, what the synagogue leader may have feared was an implied messianic claim, which was evident in the healing.

It is possible that the leader of the synagogue also felt his authority was being challenged by Jesus healing the woman on the Sabbath, and in response, he attempted to neutralize the effect of Jesus on the crowd by discrediting him on this basis.²¹² However, the woman, who had perhaps previously experienced marginalization on both a social and

Moerman, “Anthropology of Symbolic Healing,” *Curr. Anth* 20 (1979): 59-66; Kinsley, *Health, Healing, and Religion*, 159-60; Ward, “Possession and Exorcism,” 135-37; Rothenberg, *Spirits of Palestine*, 39-40; cf. Peter Morley, “Culture and the Cognitive World of Traditional Medical Beliefs: Some Preliminary Considerations,” in *Culture and Curing: Anthropological Perspectives on Traditional Medical Beliefs and Practices* (ed. Peter Morley and Roy Wallis; London: Peter Owen, 1978), 1-18; Sullivan, “Healing,” 229.

²¹² Donald D. Binder, (*Into the Temple Courts: The Place of the Synagogues in the Second Temple Period* [Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 1999], 348-52) argues that while scholars have tended to see the primary role of the *archisynagōgos* as that of leadership of the worship services prior to 70 CE, he thinks rather that the ruler of the synagogue functioned as a political and religious leader of the congregation and perhaps also a financial benefactor or patron. See also Lee I. Levine (*The Ancient Synagogue: The First Thousand Years*, 2nd ed. [New Haven, CT.: Yale University Press, 2005], 412-28) who contends that although the role of the synagogue leader could vary considerably depending on the location, the most historically sound view, based on an assessment of all evidence is that the *archisynagōgos* had several roles, including financial benefactor, religious leader, and political and administrative responsibilities.

religious level, can now be reintegrated into the life of the community which is an event worthy of celebration.²¹³ Finally, like the healing of Peter's mother-in-law, The Lukan writer has incorporated aspects of both a healing and an understanding of the world that saw evil spirits as sometimes responsible for illnesses and infirmities. We now move to an examination of evidence for exorcism in Q.

4.6 Evidence in Q

Other than the accusation and response that make up the Beelzebul Controversy, there is little evidence of exorcism in Q. This is somewhat surprising if, as some argue, Q was written as early as 50-60 CE, just 20-30 years after Jesus' death,²¹⁴ and if exorcisms belong to the earliest traditions about Jesus. While the Q community may have been familiar with a larger miracle tradition than the limited number of healings and exorcisms or references to exorcism would suggest, other than the brief exorcism which introduces the Beelzebul Controversy, there is only one clear reference to exorcism in Q, the parable of the return of the unclean spirit.

The task of healing the sick given to the disciples, which in Mark includes exorcism, in Q (10:9) only mentions healings. The woes directed against Galilean cities provides the limited information that Jesus was known to have done some deeds of power in Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum (Q 10:13-15). However, since it does not mention

²¹³ So Hisako Kinukawa, "The Miracle Story of the Bent-Over Woman (Luke 13:10-17): An Interaction-centered Interpretation," in *Transformative Encounters. Jesus & Women Re-viewed* (Ingrid Rosa Kitzberger (ed.); Leiden: Brill, 2000), 292-314.

²¹⁴ See discussion of various views on this in John S. Kloppenborg Verbin, *Excavating Q: the History and Sayings Gospel* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 80-87.

exorcism specifically, we can only use this information to confirm that Jesus worked in these areas and that he may have performed exorcisms there, although this is not certain. We begin with another reference to exorcism in Q which needs to be addressed, Jesus' response to John's question.

4.6.1 *Jesus' Reply to John*

The reference to exorcism in Jesus' response to John (Q 7:18-19, 22-23 [Luke 7:18-19, 22-23; Matt 11:2-6]) is not found in Matthew, and many scholars see "In that hour, he cured many of diseases and plagues and evil spirits, and on many who were blind he bestowed sight" (v. 21) as a Lukan insertion.²¹⁵

[18] And John [hearing about these things] sending through his disciples, said to him, "Are you the one who is to come, or are we to expect someone else?" [19] And in reply, he said to them: "Go report to John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight and the lame walk around, the skin-diseased are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them. And blessed is whoever is not offended by me" (Q 7:18-19; 22-23).

It is possible that Matthew has deleted the line, since, as we have seen, he regularly abbreviates or omits exorcisms. Alternatively, Luke may have added the element of exorcism. It is difficult to find determinative evidence either way. However, Robinson, Hoffman and Kloppenborg do not include this line in Q (see above). Since it is possible that Luke did insert this element, and since the passage tells us little about exorcism in any case, we will not deal specifically with this text. Without the exorcism the response remains one of images of God's reign when a messianic figure would free prisoners, preach good news to

²¹⁵ So, H. T. Fleddermann, *Q: A Reconstruction and Commentary*, 356.

the poor, heal, revive the dead, right wrongs, protect the poor and restore physical health to the weak and infirm.²¹⁶

It may also provide information about the differences between the nature of John's activities and those of Jesus. John Hollenbach argues that it was exorcisms and healings that formed the most clearly distinctive difference between Jesus and John and led to questions from John about Jesus' identity.²¹⁷ John's uncertainty about Jesus' identity may be historical based on the criterion of embarrassment since it is difficult to imagine the early church placing doubt on John's lips. In addition, the vagueness of Jesus' response and the comment, "and blessed is anyone who takes no offence at me," suggests that Jesus thought John might take offence at the particular turn his ministry had taken. Rather than continue John's fiery preaching, Jesus' ministry had become one of healing and restoration. Thus, while both John's question and Jesus' reply may well reflect a stage 1 tradition, exorcism was probably not found in the Q version of the saying.²¹⁸ As a result, we are left with one pericope to evaluate, The Return of the Unclean Spirit.

²¹⁶ Twelftree, ("ΕΙ ΔΕ . . . ΕΓΩ ΕΚΒΑΛΛΩ," 388) argues that in this statement by Jesus, healings are not the focus but rather the preaching of the good news to the poor, the climax of the assertion; Joachim Jeremias, (*New Testament Theology Part 1: The Proclamation of Jesus* [London: SCM Press, 1971], 104) observed that the images spoken of here (light for the blind, hearing for the deaf, shouting for joy by the dumb) are age old symbols in the East for the time of salvation, when sorrow will come to an end, and that Jesus' response represents an eschatological cry of joy. Luke reports a similar allusion to Isaiah 61:1-2 and 58:6 when he has Jesus read from the scroll of Isaiah (Luke 4:18-19), and say to his fellow Nazarenes, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." (v. 21). This connection between healing and restoration and the coming of God's reign is found not only in Isaiah (26:19; 35:5-6; 61:1-2), but also in the Qumran document, *The Messianic Apocalypse* (4Q521, 2. 5-8, 11-13).

²¹⁷ Paul Hollenbach, "The Conversion of Jesus: From Jesus the Baptizer to Jesus the Healer," *ANRW* 25.1, 196-219.

²¹⁸ See Luz, *Matthew: A Commentary*, 2: 132-3; Meier, *a Marginal Jew*, 2: 400-403; Walter Wink, "Jesus' Reply to John," *Forum* 5 (1989): 126-27.

4.6.2 *The Return of the Unclean Spirit*

[24] When the *unclean spirit* has gone out of a person, it wanders through waterless regions looking for a resting place, but not finding any, it says, “I will return to my house from which I came.” [25] When it comes, it finds it swept and put in order. [26] Then it goes and brings seven other spirits more evil than itself and they enter and live there; and the last state of that person is worse than the first (Q 11:24-26 [Luke 11:24-26; Matt 12:43-45]). Mark does not include this saying. It is found in Q, and reported *verbatim* in Matthew

and Luke, with the exception of the phrase, “So shall it be also with this evil generation” (Matt 12:45), which is almost certainly a Matthean addition.²¹⁹ In both Matthew and Luke the parable comes on the heels of conflicts between Jesus and the Jewish leadership, and immediately before statements that discount the value of family,²²⁰ perhaps indicating a desire on the part of both redactors to provide a veiled critique of Jesus’ audience in response to the accusation that he was mad or possessed by Beelzebul. Alternatively, it may originally have circulated independently of the Beelzebul material.

The idea that a house could represent a person is rooted in ancient the Palestinian cultural context where the house was understood as a dwelling place for demons and could also be used as a metaphor for a person in cases of spirit possession.²²¹ There may then be a connection between this statement and the parable about Satan’s kingdom divided, and the Binding of the Strong Man, especially since Luke places this statement immediately after the Beelzebul controversy. In other words, it is very likely that in describing rulers, property and

²¹⁹ Luz, *Matthew: A Commentary*, 2:222-3.

²²⁰ In Luke it follows the Beelzebul controversy (11:14-23), and is followed by Jesus’ statement that hearing and obeying the word of God supersedes the bond with one’s mother (11:27-28). In Matthew, it follows the saying about the judgment of this generation by the queen of the South (12:38-42), and is followed by Jesus’ claim that his disciples, rather than his mother and brothers, are his true family (12:46-50).

²²¹ Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke X-XXIV*, 925; and Horsley (*Hearing the Whole Story*, 139) note that a house was a commonly understood metaphor for ruling family or dynasty within Judaism, as in 2 Sam 7. Cf. Joachim Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus* (London: SCM Press, 1958), 138; P. Joüon, *L’Evangile de Notre Seigneur Jesu- Christ* (1930), 83.

houses, Jesus is actually referring to people, who are being controlled by spirits, and that tying up the strong man refers to binding or immobilizing the spiritual forces that oppressed people. Joel Marcus argues that the saying may also indicate that Jesus recognized the impermanent nature of his exorcisms and the continued vulnerability of those he had exorcised demons from to further attack.²²²

Let us look more closely now at the term *unclean spirit* (πνεῦμα ἀκάθαρτον). This term is found in Mark's version of Jesus sending out the twelve, and as we shall see, it is used regularly, especially by Mark, but also by Luke and Matthew, to describe the entities which are thought to have taken possession of persons in the gospel accounts.²²³ A fuller discussion of unclean spirits will be taken up in chapter 5. I wish to note here, however, that as we showed in chapter 2, first-century Palestinian society was a purity society which understood itself as operating within a larger cultural context that was impure. Given this context, it is not surprising that the spirits which were thought to possess people were often described as unclean, and may suggest a Palestinian background for the term. From an anthropological perspective, the religious distinction of clean/unclean is mirrored in the spiritual and physical maladies of those whom Jesus heals. For instance, the lepers and the woman with the flow of blood were both ostracized from society because of their ailments,²²⁴ and as we shall see in chapter 5, unclean spirits were also associated with particular illnesses such as deafness and muteness, as well as with spirit possession, in the

²²² Marcus, "The Beelzebul Controversy," 247-77.

²²³ See Mark 1:23; 5:2; 7:25; 9:25; Matt 10:1; Luke 4:36; 8:29; 9:25

²²⁴ Wahlen (*Jesus and the Impure Spirits*, 130) argues that leprosy blood flow, and deafness and muteness may have excluded sufferers from meaningful participation in the cult, and that Jesus' healings would have had messianic significance.

gospels. Declaring a person clean who had previously been in the social category of unclean enabled that person to participate fully in the life of the community.

Another point of significance in this Q parable is the reference to waterless regions. It is not clear whether it is water or a desert that the spirit seeks; only that he seeks rest, and not finding it returns to his original house/host. There are problems with determining the significance of the water versus the desert in the exorcism of the Gerasene Demoniac as well, as we shall see. However, it seems likely that spirits were thought to reside in desert locations, and may have been thought to be afraid of water.²²⁵

The comment that the spirit finds its original abode in perfect order and brings with it seven other spirits more evil than itself to take up residence, is more difficult to interpret. It does, however, raise several questions. First: What is the symbolic connection between a clean and orderly house (i.e. person) and the return of an evil spirit? Second: Why, upon its return, does the spirit bring with it other spirits more evil than itself? Finally: What is the significance of the number seven? We saw already in our discussion of the possession of Mary Magdalene that possession by seven spirits may signal a particularly severe case. Seven may thus be an indicator of both the severity of particular cases of possession and difficulty of treating them.²²⁶

In terms of the connection between clean houses and people who are vulnerable to spirit possession, I have not come across any good explanation for this, but it seems to me that if the story is metaphorical, the idea of being put in order may simply be a way of stating

²²⁵ Fitzmyer, *the Gospel According to Luke*, 2: 925. See e.g., Lev 16:10; Isa 34: 13-14; Bar 4:35; Jub 48:1-4; Rev 18:2. We mentioned this briefly under Jesus' Trials, and will discuss it again in more depth under the Gerasene Demoniac.

²²⁶ See note 188.

the belief that human beings were continually vulnerable to demonic attack. There is no indication in the parable that blame is being assigned to the host, and there is no internal evidence that this parable is meant to be a comment on the results of lack of faith in Jesus. Rather it seems quite simply to be an observation about the nature and behavior of unclean spirits rather than about the character of affected persons or their theological response to Jesus.

That the spirit, rather than the character of the possessed individual, is the intended subject of the story is, according to John Killgallen, indicated by two grammatical points. First, the “unclean spirit” is the subject of four of the six actions in the story and is therefore likely to be the intended main character. Second, eight of the ten main verbs in the story are in the present tense, which suggests that the story is about the nature of spirits generally.²²⁷

As we have seen, the evidence for exorcism in Q is limited. It consists of a possible, but unlikely, reference to exorcism among a list of other healings in a response by Jesus to John (Q 7:18-21) and the information about unclean spirits and possession that can be gleaned from the saying The Return of the Unclean Spirit. This includes the possibility that unclean spirits were thought to dwell in the desert or wilderness, that they were thought to return to people they had previously possessed for no clear or predictable reason, and finally that the number of seven when associated with possessing spirits may indicate severity.

²²⁷ So John J. Kilgallen, “The Return of the Unclean Spirit (Luke 11:24-26),” *BTB* 74 (1993): 45-59.

4.7 Evidence in Special M

The evidence in Special M is more limited even than it is in Q. As we will see in chapter 5, Matthew, even more than Luke, downplays violent or disturbing aspects reported in Mark's exorcisms.²²⁸ The result is that he has significantly abbreviated the stories of the boy with the spirit and the possessed man of Gerasa. Although this is typical of Matthean redaction techniques more generally, there may be other reasons for his omissions. Both Matthew and Luke have omitted, for example, the healing of the deaf mute in Mark 7:31-37, which has Jesus spitting on the man's tongue and putting his fingers into his ears, suggesting that both writers wished to avoid the risk of having Jesus' actions resemble too closely those of a magician.

Matthew has also avoided entirely the exorcism in the Capernaum synagogue which has shifted the importance of exorcism in Jesus' ministry from its central position in Mark (1:21-29), where the exorcism in the Capernaum synagogue is Jesus' first public activity. Matthew's first exorcism (that of the Gadarene Demoniac) does not appear in his narrative until 8:28-34, and as we have noted is substantially shorter than either Mark's or Luke's version.

The only exorcism that can possibly be attributed to the Matthean redactor is the brief episode that occurs at the beginning of the Beelzebul Controversy (12:22); although another exorcism occurs in 9:32-3, as we saw when we discussed this material, Matthew has very likely used the same exorcism story twice. The only possible indirect reference to exorcism in M is in Matthew 10:25: "If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much

²²⁸ Garrett, *The Demise of the Devil*, 26; Twelftree, *In the Name of Jesus*, 159-60.

more will they malign members of his household.” If this saying could be shown to be independent of the Beelzebul Controversy, it might indicate that the accusation occurred on more than one occasion, and thus would provide further confirmation that the accusation against Jesus was embedded in the earliest Jesus tradition. However this is not certain.

Thus, we are left with very little in special M that contributes to our historical portrait of Jesus as an exorcist with the exception of a possible third source of the Beelzebul accusation (Matt 10:25). Matthew’s tendency to either omit or shorten the exorcisms he finds in Mark tells us either that he was not particularly interested in them or that he had a definite reason for limiting their influence; possibly a level of discomfort with they way they might negatively affect Jesus’ image as a Jewish wisdom teacher.

4.8 Conclusions

Our analysis of all indirect references to exorcism in the earliest sources has provided us with a general picture of Jesus as exorcist. This chapter has shown first that the baptism as reported in Mark (and parallels in Matthew and Luke) and the trials reported in both Mark and Q indicate that Jesus was thought to have had an initiatory experience that included a vision at the time of his baptism by John, which was followed by a period of trials in the wilderness. As reported in both Mark and Q, the testing involved an encounter with Satan, and in Q Jesus is faced with and overcomes three tests of his character. The reports of a vision of the heavens opening and the period of trials in the wilderness correspond to the initiatory experiences of Jewish prophets, as well as to those of healers and exorcists across

cultures, and suggest that Jesus was understood by his followers to have been a spirit-filled exorcist.

The Beelzebul Controversy (Mark/Q), which has been accepted by the majority of scholars as representing a historical accusation against Jesus, provides confirmation that Jesus was accused by his opponents of casting out demons by Beelzebul, and that he was thought to be out of his mind by his family (Mark). The link between demon possession and madness is also attested independently in John. Thus, the earliest traditions confirm that Jesus was remembered as a spirit-filled exorcist who displayed ecstatic behavior which brought accusations of demon possession and raised concerns that he was mad.

Jesus' response, "If I by Beelzebul cast out demons, by whom do your sons cast them out?" (v. 19) along with the saying about the strange exorcist provide the added information that other exorcists were operating in Galilee during Jesus' lifetime and also suggest that Jesus may have had competition in his role as exorcist. The second part of Jesus' response in the Beelzebul saying, "But, if I cast out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you" (v.20), connects Jesus' exorcisms with his use of the phrase "kingdom of God," which has been widely accepted as among the historical certainties about Jesus.²²⁹ The Markan and Q tradition that Jesus sent the twelve on a peripatetic mission that included exorcism along with L's report of the return of the seventy may provide evidence that both Jesus and his disciples functioned as exorcists. However, these reports may also reflect early Christian practices which were retrojected back onto these episodes.

²²⁹ Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 139-40.

The changes to the healing/exorcism of Peter's mother-in-law and the pericope of the woman with the spirit of infirmity found only in L provide very little information about Jesus as an exorcist, but do confirm the connection in the first-century Palestinian context between evil spirits and some illnesses. The report in L that Mary Magdalene was thought to have been possessed by seven demons also very likely belong to a historical core of tradition based on both the criteria of embarrassment and anthropological analysis.

Jesus' response to the Pharisees who warn him that Herod Antipas is seeking his life may tell us that the writer of Luke understood Jesus' exorcisms and healings to have played a significant role in his execution, and also suggests that there were Pharisees who were friendly toward Jesus and who wished to protect him, however much they may have sparred with him. Finally, the Q saying about the return of the unclean spirit indicates that possession by either one or several spirits was known in the Palestinian context, that spirits were thought to be associated with the wilderness or desert, and probably that people were thought to be continually vulnerable to demonic attack.

Special M does not provide us with any historical information except possible confirmation of the Beelzebul accusation. It also tells us implicitly that the redactor of Matthew was somewhat uncomfortable with the traditions of exorcism. We shall now examine the exorcisms themselves, which will provide more details both about the social context of the exorcisms as well as Jesus' techniques as exorcist and about the circumstances of those he encountered. This will help to fill in our tentative portrait of Jesus the exorcist.

Chapter 5: Jesus the Exorcist: The Direct Evidence

5.1 Introduction

Having examined the evidence pointing to Jesus' role as exorcist in chapter 4, we now focus on the exorcisms themselves. All four of the exorcisms found in the gospel tradition are attested in Mark, but only two of the four are found in the triple tradition. Matthew has omitted the exorcism in the synagogue and Luke has excluded the exorcism of the Syro-phoenician woman's daughter. As a result, this chapter draws heavily on evidence in Mark, but will also examine differences that emerge in both Matthew and Luke. Mark's portrayal of both healings and exorcisms in general displays a down-to-earth quality, which suggests that the stories have been less developed theologically than those of either Matthew or Luke.¹

Our approach will encompass two foci. First, from a textual perspective, our interest will be in understanding the reasons for changes made by Matthew and Luke. This means that it will be important to be clear about the ways the two later writers have redacted the material they found in Mark in order to both establish the earliest strata of material and understand why particular changes were made. The criteria of authenticity will be applied as appropriate to gauge the probable historicity of particular elements in the tradition. In addition, sociological and anthropological insights will be used to provide further information about the social context and implications of these events. We will then be able to combine the evidence from chapter 4 with the portrait we construct from an analysis of the exorcisms themselves.

¹ So Howard, *Disease and Healing*, 55-6.

5.2 Evil Spirits, Illness and Sin in the Synoptic Gospels

We have seen already that evil spirits were thought to affect persons in the ancient world in two particular ways, afflicting them either with illness or causing them to sin, or possessing them. Erika Bourguignon has identified two types of beliefs that are associated with a belief in the spirit world. In the first, an illness or other affliction is attributed to a spirit. This she identifies as “possession belief” (PB). In the second, “possession trance” (PT), spirits are believed to take possession of an individual.²

We saw in the previous chapter that in two cases the writer of Luke attributes physical conditions to evil spirits (a fever and a crippling condition), and across cultures illnesses such as deafness, muteness, blindness, and paralysis are associated with spirit affliction or possession.³ The second type of belief is evident in the New Testament depictions of demonic spirit possession, but it is important to remember that both are connected to a particular understanding of the cosmos.

Two conditions as understood from a western perspective correspond to those which are implicitly linked in the gospels with spiritual forces. The first, known as conversion disorder, is a condition in which guilt not consciously acknowledged is converted into a physical condition, typically blindness, paralysis, weakness, loss of voice, or dermatitis.⁴ Onset is usually in early adulthood, and is frequently precipitated by

² Bourguignon, *Possession*, 46.

³ Bourguignon, *Possession*, 7, 45; Crapanzano, “Introduction,” 14; Obeyesekere, “Psychocultural Exegesis,” 235-293; Wood Saunders, “Variants in Zar Experience,” 179; Zemplini, “From Symptom to Sacrifice,” 87-140, esp. 112-114, 123-5; Crapanzano, “Mohammed and Dawia,” 141-176, 144; Rothenberg, *Spirits of Palestine*, 34, 36-38, 44-46, 65-7.

⁴ American Psychiatric Association, *Diagnostic and Statistic Manual of Mental Disorders, DSM-IV* (Washington D.C.: American Psychiatric Association, 1994), 452. Although we will not discuss Jesus’ healing of lepers in this study, recently scholars have determined that what we understand as leprosy today

extreme stress, such as warfare or the loss of a significant other.⁵ The second, somatization disorder, is a related condition involving physical problems for which no medical explanation can be found.⁶ Typical manifestations include deafness, muteness, blindness, paralysis, and excessive menstrual bleeding.⁷ In both conversion disorder and somatization disorder, there is a strong link between social or psychological issues and physical illness.

This connection between either sin or personal conflicts and physical symptoms or pain has been observed across cultures,⁸ and is also found in the gospels. In several of the healings reported, illness is clearly associated with sin, and healing occurs as a result of forgiveness. These include the man Jesus healed at the pool of Bethsatha (presumably a paralytic) whom Jesus later warns to stop sinning lest something worse happen to him (John 5:14), the blind man in John 9, whose condition is assumed by Jesus' disciples to be the result of sin, and the healing of the paralytic in Mark 2, to whom Jesus offers first forgiveness, and then physical healing. This suggests that in some cases at least, social restoration in the form of forgiveness was seen as necessary for physical healing. It also

is actually Hansen's disease and that the skin diseases reported both in the Hebrew Bible and in the NT are more likely some type of rash, probably psoriasis, eczema, or fungal infections. See E.V. Hulse, "The Nature of Biblical 'Leprosy' and the Use of Alternative Medical Terms in Modern Translations of the Bible," *PEQ* 107 (1975): 87-105; Webb, "Jesus Heals a Leper," 177-202.

⁵ *DSM-IV*, 257.

⁶ The *DSM-IV*, (445) uses the term "somatoform disorders". The symptoms listed in the gospels that Jesus is said to have healed fit both of these disorders. See Mark 8:22-27 (blindness); Mark 7:31-37 (deafness); Luke 11:14; Matt 9:32-34; 12:22-23a (muteness); John 5:1-9 (either paralysis or lameness).

⁷ *DSM IV*, 450-51.

⁸ Colleen Ward ("The Cross-Cultural Study of Altered States of Consciousness and Mental Health," in *Altered States of Consciousness and Mental Health: A Cross-Cultural Perspective*. [ed. Colleen A. Ward; Newbury Park, Ca.: Sage Publications, 1989], 15-35) notes the universal connection of sin to illness and confession of sin to healing; Rothenberg, (*Spirits of Palestine*, 39) notes that among contemporary Muslims in Israel, maintaining a pious lifestyle is often one of the most important steps in the treatment process. The formerly possessed person is encouraged to pray regularly, avoid television and music and, if female, to cover her head. Failure to follow this regime may put the person at risk of repossession.

implies that Jesus had enough personal and spiritual power to be able to both reassure and heal, and that this was recognized by those he encountered.⁹

Beyond this, in ancient societies, sickness and spirit possession were believed to be strongly connected to problems within human relationships or to cosmological forces, as we have already seen in chapter 2.¹⁰ We can assume then that there is a symbolic aspect to Jesus exorcisms as well, which is connected to both the social and the political.¹¹ Arthur Kleinman suggests that in all cultures medicine and healing are part of a “system of symbolic meanings anchored in particular arrangements of social institutions and patterns of interpersonal interactions.”¹²

As Ched Myers notes, this does not imply in any way that these events did not occur historically, or that they were limited to the metaphorical level. Rather, “symbolic action” means “action whose fundamental significance, indeed *power*, lies relative to the symbolic order in which they occurred.”¹³ Thus, Myers argues that like the symbolism of Martin Luther nailing his theses to the door of the cathedral in Wittenberg and the actions of civil rights activists in the 1960s in the United States, Jesus’ actions were more than

⁹ Mark 2:1-12. See also discussion n. 211, ch. 4. Cross-cultural studies have shown that the relationship between the healer and the patient is crucial to a positive outcome for an illness. Colleen Ward (“Possession and Exorcism,” 135-7) has identified six factors which play a role in the effectiveness of healing, including exorcism. These include (1) the act of seeking help itself and having the illness named (i.e. the therapeutic process), (2) the dynamics of the healer-patient relationship (the warmer the relationship, the better the results), (3) the placebo effect (the phenomenon that occurs when a medical practitioner prescribes a regime or substance that he/she believes has no medicinal effect, but the patient’s health improves nonetheless), (4) personality traits, (5) type of disorders (psychosomatic and neurotic disorders respond better than psychosis, for example), and (6) spontaneous remission of symptoms by reliving an emotional experience as a means of solving a psychological problem. See also Kleinman, *Patients and Healers*, 228, 241; Moerman, “Anthropology of Symbolic Healing,” 59-66; Kinsley, *Health, Healing and Religion*, 159-60.

¹⁰ See 2.3.

¹¹ So David E. Moerman, “Anthropology of Symbolic Healing,” 61.

¹² Kleinman, *Patients and Healers*, 24.

¹³ Myers, *Binding the Strong Man*, 146.

simply healings or exorcisms. They contained within them a larger meaning of confronting the powers of oppression expressed physically in spirit possession and illness, as well as the political powers that were intrinsically linked to them. “In sum, Jesus’ symbolic acts were powerful not because they challenged the laws of nature, but because they challenged the very structures of social existence.”¹⁴

It is important to stress, however, that the political context cannot fully explain spirit possession and that its meaning and purpose must not to be reduced to that of an attempt to change the status of those who experience it. While negotiation between spirits and those in control of society may bring about changes on either an individual or societal level, at other times spirit possession may simply express resistance or open up discussion about difficult issues.¹⁵ Spirit possession is an idiom, which, when it exists within a society, can act as a form of discourse that allows the one possessed to speak to political issues just as they might speak to other issues.¹⁶ First and foremost, spirit possession is a social phenomenon or form of discourse, which expresses a culture’s most basic values.

¹⁴ Myers, *Binding the Strong Man*, 147-8.

¹⁵ Although Lewis (*Ecstatic Religion*, 63-77) has argued that possession functions as a strategy for enhancing status among marginalized persons in a society, this assumption has been challenged recently by a number of scholars as not reflecting the nuances and complexities of the social relationships and political contexts in which people live. As a result, although most scholars acknowledge a relationship between spirit possession and the power structures of a society, many would argue that possession does not always bring about a change in social status or circumstances. In fact, at times it can function as a force that resists change or as a mediator of change. In some cases, higher social status may even mean less freedom of movement and control over one’s life. Nonetheless, possession, at least in certain cases, does appear to provide an alternative means of social advancement in situations of low social status and mobility in particular. For example, Bourguignon (*Possession*, 36, 59-60) notes that for Voodoo adherents in Haiti, membership in a spirit possession cult, and especially positions of leadership, can offer relative power, prestige and a source of income in a post-colonial situation with few other opportunities for upward mobility among the poor. Cf. Frederick M. Smith, “The Current State of Possession Studies as a Cross-Disciplinary Project,” *RSR* 27, 4 (2001): 203-212; Saunders, “Variants in Zar Experience,” 183-9; Rothenberg, *Spirits of Palestine*, 7-8, 128-30; Keller, *The Hammer and the Flute*, 28-30, 52-55, 59; Bourguignon, “Introduction,” in *Religion, Altered States of Consciousness and Social Change*, 4; Levy, Howard and Mageo, “Introduction,” 1-10; Lambek, “From Disease to Discourse,” 50-51.

¹⁶ So Lambek, “From Disease to Discourse,” 57.

Nevertheless, the link between cosmological forces and illness or spirit possession and between these forces and the understanding of political events was an important aspect of first-century culture. These observations are important to keep in mind as we examine the four exorcisms recorded by Mark which have as their unspoken background the assumption that spiritual forces, often described as unclean spirits, can possess human beings.

5.3 The Exorcisms: Jesus and the Unclean Spirits

Three phrases are generally used in the four strands of tradition that refer to exorcism (Mark, Q, L and M) to describe possessing entities: “unclean spirit” (πνεῦμα ἀκάθαρτον), “demon” (δαίμονιον), and “evil demon” (δαίμονιον πονήρον). While Mark shows a preference for “unclean spirit,” using it in every account of exorcism, in Q both “unclean spirit” and “demon” are utilized, and Matthew and Luke make use of both terms, but show a preference for “demon”.¹⁷ Although Mark makes use of both “unclean spirit” and “demon,” it is not entirely clear what distinction, if any, he is making. Luke’s use of both πνεῦμα ἀκάθαρτον and δαίμονιον suggests that he is using the two terms interchangeably. Acts also reports that “unclean spirits” came out of people.¹⁸ Based on

¹⁷ Mark uses “unclean spirit” three times in the exorcism of the demoniac in the synagogue, three times in the Gerasene Demoniac, and once each in the healing of the Syro-Phoenician woman’s daughter and the Boy with the Spirit. In Q, there are only seven references to possessing entities. These include two in the pericope of the return of the unclean spirit (Q 11:24-26), where both “unclean spirit” and “evil spirit” are used, and five references to “demon(s)” in the Beelzebul Controversy (Q 11:14-20). Matthew and Luke use “unclean spirit” and “demon” interchangeably, but Matthew especially prefers demon. See, e.g., Matt 8:26, 31, 33, where “demon” and “demoniac” are used and 17:14-21, where “demon” occurs. In Luke 4:33, 35, 36, we find “spirit of an unclean demon,” “demon,” and “unclean spirit,” and in Luke’s version of the Gerasene demoniac both “unclean spirit” and “demon” are used throughout the text (8:27, 29, 30, 36).

¹⁸ See Acts 5:16; 8:6-7.

this pattern of usage, Clayton Wahlen argues that the term predates Mark and is connected to Palestinian Jewish usage, and suggests that limitation of the use of the term to Jerusalem and Samaria in Acts makes this even more likely.¹⁹

Its conspicuous presence in a part of the Jesus tradition which is both distinctive and widely regarded as authentic suggests that the earliest Palestinian community and perhaps Jesus himself were very concerned with the notions and purity and impurity in connection with demon possession, so much so that expelling these spirits is remembered as a significant part of his work.²⁰

The term “unclean spirit” also corresponds to Mary Douglas’ analysis of Jewish understandings of purity and danger and the way these are connected to bodily boundaries and to a culture’s understanding of itself in relation to outsiders.²¹ Spirits which are unclean are associated with that which is outside of these boundaries, and thus represent danger. When they penetrate into a person, they have crossed a boundary, thus rendering the affected individual impure or dangerous.

5.3.1 A Demoniac in a Synagogue (Mark 1:21-28 //Luke 4:31-37)

[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, and not as the scribes. [23] Just then there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit (ἐν πνεύματι ἀκαθάρτῳ);²² [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? A new teaching—with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him.” [28] At once his fame began to spread throughout the surrounding region of Galilee (Mark 1:21-28).

¹⁹ Wahlen, *Jesus and the Impurity of Spirits*, 167.

²⁰ Wahlen, *Jesus and the Impurity of Spirits*, 174; Wahlen also notes (52) that in the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, which is roughly contemporary with the New Testament Gospels, “unclean spirits” serve the same purpose as demons and evil spirits, and that like Mark, the compilers of the Testaments preferred the term “unclean spirit” to “demon,” which is only used once in *T. Jud.* 23:1. For examples of the use of “unclean spirit” see *T. Sim.* 3:5; 4:9; 6:6; *T. Levi* 5:6; 18:12; *T. Jud.* 16:1; *T. Ash.* 1:9; 6:5.

²¹ Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, vii.

²² Luke’s version (4:33) reads, “a man who had the spirit of an unclean demon” (ἄνθρωπος ἔχων πνεῦμα δαιμονίου ἀκαθάρτου).

Textual and Historical Issues

The exorcism in the synagogue at Capernaum is the first public action of Jesus recorded by Mark, and the first healing of any kind to appear in both Mark and Luke (Matthew omits it entirely). Mark's decision to locate the exorcism so early in his account, at the beginning of Jesus' public activity, indicates the level of importance he assigns to it within Jesus' larger mission. John Meier, who suggests that the story should be seen as reflecting the kinds of things Jesus did rather than as a historical account, nevertheless accepts that it may tell us that Jesus performed exorcisms in Capernaum.²³

The connection to Capernaum also lends credibility to the exorcism, since both the synoptic gospels and John indicate that Capernaum served as Jesus' home base.²⁴ In addition, Jesus' harsh criticism of Capernaum, along with Bethsaida and Chorazin (Q 10:13-15) for not responding appropriately to miracles performed there, provides further support for the historical claim that it was a central locus of his public activity.

Capernaum is close to the lake and to the border between Galilee and Pannias, where Bethsaida Julias was located, which, according to John's gospel was the hometown of Philip, Andrew and Peter.²⁵ Thus, it seems likely that at the very least, Mark's account

²³ Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, 2: 649. But Smith (*Jesus the Magician*, 106-7) argues that the cures described by Mark as part of the beginning of Jesus' mission show no indication of being deliberately ordered in any particular pattern and bear strong similarities to magic, which Smith suggests actually raises their claim to historicity, rather than discrediting them

²⁴ Both Mark (2:1) and Matthew (4:13) describe Capernaum as Jesus' home; Matthew says explicitly that when Jesus heard about John's arrest, he withdrew to Galilee, left Nazareth, and made his home in Capernaum (4:12-17). Q (Matt 8:5-13/ Luke 7:1-10) locates the healing of the Centurion's servant in Capernaum. John independently depicts Capernaum as Jesus' home base in Galilee (2:12; 6:59), and also places Jesus at Capernaum when he gives his discourse on the bread of life (6:59). Meier (*A Marginal Jew*, 2: 649) notes the significance of John also portraying Jesus as active in Capernaum, since his presentation of Jesus' ministry otherwise places more emphasis on Jerusalem and Judea. Thus, the fact that Jesus was active in Capernaum is supported by multiple attestation of both sources and forms.

²⁵ John 1:44.

represents an exorcism that occurred in the synagogue at Capernaum sometime during Jesus' historical mission.

The location of the exorcism in a synagogue is also significant. All of the gospels refer to Jesus' activities in Galilean synagogues, and, with the exception of John, report that healings or exorcisms occurred there. In addition, all of the towns Jesus is reported to have spent time in had synagogues.²⁶ According to Lee Levine, the significance of these synagogue healings and exorcisms was that they took place on the Sabbath, which meant that they drew criticism from Jesus' opponents, especially the Jewish leadership.²⁷ Thus, the public setting in a synagogue fits the general picture of the criticisms aimed at Jesus by some of the Jewish leadership in the context of communal worship. That this exorcism is reported to be associated with Jesus' teaching and that it occurs in the presence of a Jewish hometown crowd is also noteworthy.

Turning now to the story itself, the following may be noted. First, since the exorcism is not found in Q, differences between Mark and Luke can be assumed to reflect changes

²⁶ Some have questioned the historical value of these references on the basis of two issues: First, if the gospels were written in a Diaspora setting as some propose, the writers may have projected the presence of synagogues back into early first-century Galilee. Second, their own theological agendas may have shaped their inclusion of synagogues in their narratives. Thus, H. C. Kee, "The Transformation of the Synagogue after 70 C.E: Its Import for Early Christianity," *NTS* 36 [1990]: 1-24; and Richard Horsley, "Synagogues in Galilee and the Gospels," in *Evolution of the Synagogue: Problems and Progress* [ed. Howard Clark Kee and Lynn H. Cohick; Harrisburg: Trinity Press, 1999], 46-69) argue that the synagogue referred not to a physical building but to a gathering of people. However, Levine (*The Ancient Synagogue*, 47-8) notes that extra-biblical evidence of synagogues in Judea and Galilee corroborates the New Testament evidence, making it unlikely that all four of the gospel writers would refer to Jesus' activities in synagogues if this institution was not part of early first-century Galilee. Finally, Anders Runesson (Architecture, Conflict, and Identity Formation: Jews and Christians in Capernaum from the First to the Sixth Century," in *Religion, Ethnicity and Identity in Ancient Galilee* [ed. Jürgen Zangenberg, Harold W. Attridge and Dale B. Martin; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007], 231-27) argues that the most convincing interpretation of the archaeological, art historical and textual evidence suggests that the black basalt stone building discovered underneath later synagogue buildings (probably 3rd and 5th century) most likely dates to the first century; cf. Anders Runesson, Donald D. Binder and Birger Olsson, *The Ancient Synagogue from its Origins to 200 C. E.* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), esp. 25-32, which should settle this problem completely.

²⁷ Levine, *The Ancient Synagogue*, 47.

made by Luke, based on Markan priority. The phrase “and immediately” (καὶ εὐθύς) which is used to begin the story (v. 20) and again at v. 23, is likely a Markan addition to an earlier account, since he uses it throughout his gospel to link incidents and stories.²⁸ Similarly, the last two verses (vv. 27-28) describing the astonishment of the crowd could also be Markan additions to an earlier account. However the amazement of the crowd is not consistently used by either Mark or the other synoptic writers, so it may be historical.²⁹ Other than these two elements, the remainder of the story is probably pre-Markan.

According to Mark, after arriving in Capernaum,³⁰ Jesus and his disciples entered the synagogue and Jesus began to teach. While he was speaking, a man with an unclean spirit (ἐν πνεύματι ἀκαθάρτῳ) began to cry out. As we have indicated above, the predominance of “unclean spirit” in Mark suggests an early pre-Markan tradition, and the cases where “demon” occurs probably reflect Markan redaction.³¹ Thus, there are reasons for suspecting that Mark’s designation of “unclean” for possessing spirits reflects an indigenous way of describing these entities within the Jewish Palestinian milieu, and that the Greek terminology of δαιμόνιον was only beginning to penetrate Jewish Palestine,

²⁸ See, e.g., Mark 1:12; 6:45; 7:25; 14:43; 15:1; but 2:1-3:6 and 4:35-5:43.

²⁹ As Twelftree (*Jesus the Exorcist*, 58-9) notes, the amazement of the crowd is present in some healings, but not in others. Mark appears to add them to some of the exorcism stories (1:27; 5:14, 15, and possibly 17), but omits them from others (7:30; 9:28).

³⁰ In Luke’s version of the story, Jesus ‘descends into’ Capernaum, which is more accurate geographically. The lake area around the Sea of Galilee is at a lower elevation than the western, more mountainous regions of Galilee. Luke also describes Capernaum as a “polis of Galilee”, meaning that he saw it as larger than a village. Although the gospel writers use the term *polis* to describe Capernaum, it is unlikely that in the first century the town could have been a *polis* in the technical sense, which normally implied public buildings, fountains, and other symbols of Greco-Roman civilization. Archaeological evidence suggests that Capernaum was a relatively small town, and Reed (*Archaeology and the Galilean Jesus*, 148-69) estimates the population to have been between 600 and 1500 in the first century.

³¹ Wahlen, *Jesus and the Impurity of Spirits*, 88, 92-3. See e.g., Mark 1:32-34, 39; 3:11.

since both Luke and Matthew, who write later, prefer this term.³² If, as Roger David Aus argues, the phrase ἄνθρωπος ἐν πνεύματι ἀκαθάρτῳ is Semitic in origin, this too would support an early Palestinian tradition.³³

It is not clear why Luke has changed Mark’s designation to “spirit of an unclean demon” (πνεῦμα δαιμονίου ἀκαθάρτου, v. 33), but it may reflect a more cosmopolitan perspective drawing on the Greek view of δαιμόνια as neutral beings which could take on either good or evil characteristics. His modification of “demon” with “unclean,” however, is unusual, and is the only case in the gospels. Fitzmyer notes that the more typical Palestinian expression would have been either “evil spirit” (πνεῦμα πονηρόν), “unclean spirit” (πνεῦμα ἀκάθαρτον), or another expression using “spirit” and an adjective.³⁴

If we may conclude that the story describes—albeit in modified form—a historical event, what can we say about either the portrayal of the man or the social context? Drawing on our discussions on marginality and its connection to dualistic views of the spiritual universe in chapter 2, it seems likely that both the man and the spirit are being deliberately portrayed as marginal. That is, the designation “unclean” is implicitly linked in the narrative with both the fear of loss of control exhibited by spirit possession, and

³² In the four main exorcisms we examine here, Mark uses the term unclean spirit(s) eight times and demon only three times. In contrast, in the same four accounts, Luke uses demon(s) seven times, and unclean spirit(s) only three times, and Matthew uses demons (twice), demoniac (twice), and “possessed by a demon” (once). In the summary statements, the use of “demon/demon possessed” is more common (used by all three writers). Only Matthew uses “spirits,” without a qualifier, and then only once, to sum up Jesus’ activities.

³³ Roger David Aus, *My Name is ‘Legion’: Palestinian Judaic Samson Traditions in Mark 5:1-20* Studies in Judaism. (Dallas: University Press of America, 1999), 86; see *BDB* 89, III.1.

³⁴ Fitzmyer (*The Gospel According to Luke I-IX*, 544); Fitzmyer also notes that the Aramaic equivalents from the GenAp 20.1-17 are “evil spirit” (רוח באִשָּׁא), “spirit of affliction” or “chastising spirit” (רוח מכרשׁ), and “spirit of purulence” (רוח שחלניא).

with operating outside of the accepted Jewish Galilean boundaries. Although this fear of loss of control may be universal to some degree, Mary Douglas has argued that it is particularly linked with cultures high in both group and grid, and is found in association with other characteristics such as a clearly defined social structure, a dualistic belief system, and socialization for conformity.³⁵

Returning to the story, the exchange between Jesus and the demoniac begins when the possessed man cries out (ἀνέκραξεν [Luke adds “in a loud voice”]), “What do you have to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth?” (Τί ἡμῖν καὶ σοί, Ἰησοῦ Ναζαρηνέ;). Let us first deal with the fact that the demon is said to cry out. The verb ἀνακράζω expresses a sense of extreme agitation or fear,³⁶ and is the same word used to describe the response of the disciples in Mark 6:49 when they think they have seen a ghost on the Sea of Galilee. The demon encountered by Apollonius in Athens, mentioned in chapter 2, is also described as “crying out with sounds of fury and terror” (ὀργίλος φωνὰς ἠφίει),³⁷ suggesting that this was a typical way in which demons were thought to respond to powerful exorcists in the ancient world. Luke’s addition of “in a loud voice” may indicate that he wants to emphasize the effect of Jesus’ power on the demon. Since Luke intensifies Mark’s descriptions in two other cases, it is possible that this represents a theological interest of his.³⁸

³⁵ See section 2.2.

³⁶ Danker, (ed.) *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 66.

³⁷ Philostratus, *Life* 4.20.

³⁸ Mark 5:17-18, but Luke 8:28; Mark 1:34, but Luke 4:41.

In contrast, Matthew generally either omits these kinds of statements altogether, or downplays them where he finds them.³⁹ While it is plausible that Mark’s and Luke’s inclusion of such strong responses by the demons reflects an attempt to make Jesus seem more powerful, it is just as plausible that these kinds of responses occurred in the earliest pre-Markan accounts of exorcism, and represent culturally accepted understandings of demonic behavior at the time. In any case, there is no reason to assume that the early church would have introduced the element of the consternation of the demons.⁴⁰

The first part of the statement (τί ἡμῖν καὶ σοί, Ἰησοῦ Ναζαρηνέ;) is probably intended to function as a defensive strategy on the part of the demon. Although in classical Greek the phrase meant “What have we in common?” here it probably reflects the Hebrew-Aramaic phrase מָה־לִּי וְלָךְ (lit. “What to me and to you?”) and means “Why are you bothering me?” This appears to be the intended meaning where the phrase occurs in the LXX,⁴¹ and in the two other examples in the gospel tradition where it is found. In Mark 5:7, the same statement with a slight variation is attributed to the Gerasene

³⁹ Mark 5:7, but Matt 8:29; Matthew also omits both of Mark’s descriptions of the spirit convulsing the boy in 9:20, 26, and omits large portions of the exorcism of the Gerasene Demoniac which describe the behaviour of the possessed man.

⁴⁰ So, Twelftree, *Jesus the Exorcist*, 60-61.

⁴¹ It is found in Judges on the lips of Jephthah as part of a message sent to the king of Ammon, where he says, “τί ἔμοι καὶ σοί, that you come to me to fight against my land?” (Jdg 11.12), and in 2 Sam 16:10, it forms part of David’s response to Abishai’s request to put Shimei to death. Similarly, when the son of the widow who has been providing food for Elijah becomes ill, she says to Elijah, τί ἔμοι καὶ σοί (‘What have you against me’), O man of God? Have you come to me to bring my sin to remembrance and to cause the death of my son?” (1 Kgs 17:18). Finally, in 2 Kgs 3:13 Elisha responds with the same question when asked by king Jehoram of Israel (whom he did not like) to discern God’s direction. These examples suggest that the statement was used as a defense mechanism, and also possibly as a way of distancing oneself from another. The widow in 1 Kgs, for example, may have feared that Elijah had cursed her family in some way, and so tried to ward him off with the phrase. Philo (*Deus* 138) interprets the phrase in 1 Kings (τί ἔμοι καὶ σοί) as intending to ward off evil. See also 2 Sam 19:22; 2 Chr 35:21; *Acts Thom.* 5; See discussion in A. H. Maynard, (“TI EMOI KAI SOI,” *NTS* 31 [1985], 582-6; Twelftree, *Jesus the Exorcist*,” 63-4; But see Pierre Guillemette, (“Mc 1, 24 est-il une formule de défense magique?” *ScEs* 30 [1978] 81-96) who argues that the phrase as used in 1 Kgs 17:18, Philo, *Deus* 138 and Mark 1:24 does not function as a magical defense formula.

Demoniac, and in John 2:4 Jesus uses it to respond to his mother (τί ἔμοι καὶ σοί, γύναι;) at the wedding in Cana, when she tells him that the wine has run out. In both cases the meaning of defense seems to be intended.⁴²

The use of the phrase by the possessed man likely reflects his multiple identity. While in the first part of the sentence, τί ἡμῖν καὶ σοί, the first-person plural form ἡμῖν (“us”) is used, in the second half the first-person singular οἶδά (“I know”) occurs, rendering the sentence, “What do you want with *us*, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy *us*? I know who you are.” Several possibilities may be suggested for this change. Bruce Chilton proposes that the plural may have been added by Mark as part of his general tendency to refer to demons or unclean spirits in the plural.⁴³ If the change is a Markan alteration this is possible. However, if so, it is strange that Luke has not altered this discrepancy in any way. Alternatively, the account may actually reflect the social and historical reality of the first-century world where demons were thought to speak both in the plural and in the singular.

Another possibility is that the part of the phrase spoken in the plural may be intended to reflect the voice of the possessing spirit, and the part spoken in the singular the voice of the host. Paul Hollenbach has argued that this plural/singular speech by the demoniac suggests the idea of the radically divided self, which he argues is one of the

⁴² Although it is not clear why Jesus responds in this way when told that the wine has run out, it may simply be that he does not wish to become involved and draw attention to himself. Maynard (“ΤΙ ΕΜΟΙ ΚΑΙ ΣΟΙ,” 582-6) posits that the author of John’s Gospel used the phrase (2:4) to convey the idea of the ‘higher nature of Jesus,’ but rather than have the recognition come from demons (there are no exorcisms in John, and it is Jesus in John’s gospel who reveals his divine nature), he has it come from Jesus. In this way he is also able to incorporate the tradition (Mark 3:20-21, 31-35) that there was tension between Jesus and his family, and at the same time portray his view that Jesus was aware of his higher nature.

⁴³ Chilton, “An Exorcism of History,” 222.

criteria used for identifying demoniacs in first-century Palestine.⁴⁴ Of course, this is difficult to prove. However, Luke’s failure to change Mark’s version suggests that there was some reason in his mind for retaining the variance in number, and this variance may thus reflect in some way the first-century Mediterranean social context.

The spirit’s identification of Jesus is also significant. The “I know” formula is used in other ancient texts, such as the *PGM*, for subduing evil spirits,⁴⁵ and we have seen already that in the ancient world knowledge of a demon’s name or other aspects of its identity was thought to give the exorcist an advantage.⁴⁶ However, in this case, the roles are actually reversed. It is the demon who attempts to ward off Jesus by revealing knowledge of his name and relationship to God, rather than the other way around.⁴⁷ He does this in two ways, first by using Jesus’ name and second by identifying his status, i.e. “the holy one of God.” From our discussion in chapter 2, we recall that the three most common elements identified in exorcisms in the Greco-Roman world: 1) a confrontation between the demon and exorcist in which the exorcist forces the possessing spirit to reveal something about itself; 2) a command to come out; and 3) proof that the spirit has left.⁴⁸ It is clear that in this exorcism, the demon has assumed the first of these roles in naming and identifying Jesus and Jesus has assumed the second. In this particular exorcism, we see no clear demonstration of the spirits exit except the crowd’s amazement.

⁴⁴ Hollenbach, “Jesus, Demoniacs, and Public Authorities,” 570; cf. Aus, *My Name is ‘Legion,’* 13-14.

⁴⁵ *PGM* VIII. 6. In *PGM* VIII. 13, the demon claims to know Hermes: “I know you Hermes, who you are and whence you come and which is your city.”

⁴⁶ Lucian, *Philops.* 16; 11Q11.5; *T. Sol.* 1:6-7; 5:3; *PGM* IV. 1017-19; 3030-40.

⁴⁷ See Bultmann, *History*, 209; Chilton, “An Exorcism of History,” 227-28.

⁴⁸ See 2.2.

The phrase ὁ ἅγιος τοῦ θεοῦ (“The Holy One of God”), like “Jesus of Nazareth,” is uncommon in the New Testament.⁴⁹ The words “I know who you are, the holy one of God” (οἶδά σε τίς εἶ, ὁ ἅγιος τοῦ θεοῦ) could be a Markan creation related to his messianic secret theme. However, as Bultmann has noted, even if this was Mark’s understanding of both the demon’s words and Jesus’ command Φιμώθητι (“Be silenced/muzzled”), they should still be seen primarily as a protective device intended to ward Jesus off, rather than as a messianic confession.⁵⁰ Thus, both the reversal of roles and the use of the phrase “the holy one of God” are unusual and suggest an early tradition in which Christological titles for Jesus had not yet developed and in which Jesus was involved in an atypical dialogue with a possessing spirit.

The spirit’s identification of Jesus by the title Ἰησοῦ Ναζαρηνέ is also unusual. First, the name “Jesus” without the added designation of “Lord” or “Christ” is not typically used by the early church. This could mean that it had little theological significance for them.⁵¹ The title Ἰησοῦ Ναζαρηνέ / Ναζαρθῖος, is found only in direct discourse in Mark and “Nazareth in Galilee” is generally only used as a geographical designation.⁵² Thus, there is no reason to suspect that either Mark or the early church would have introduced it. As Chilton observes, the theological interests of the early Christ-believers cannot completely account for the story.⁵³ The tendency of the early Church would have been to add theological titles that reflect a higher Christology, rather

⁴⁹ It is only found in John 6:69; Acts 3:14; 4:27, 30; 1 John 2:20; Rev 3:7.

⁵⁰ Bultmann, *History*, 209.

⁵¹ So, Chilton, “An Exorcism of History,” 225-226; Twelftree, *Jesus the Exorcist*, 65-6; but see Meier (*A Marginal Jew*, 2: 649), who argues that “Jesus” is a Christological title and expresses Mark’s theology.

⁵² Matt 2:23; 21:11; Luke (Acts 10:38); John 1:45. See Twelftree, *Jesus the Exorcist*, 65-6.

⁵³ Chilton, “An Exorcism of History,” 229.

than remove them. Twelftree also argues that the name “Jesus” would have been less theologically powerful than “Son of God” or “Jesus, the Christ” for casting out demons, making it less likely to have been introduced by the early church.⁵⁴

On the other hand, evidence in the *PGM* suggests that the name “Jesus” was later used in incantations against demons.⁵⁵ We also see that in Acts, the sons of Sceva attempt (albeit unsuccessfully) to use the name “Jesus” rather than “Christ” to cast out demons,⁵⁶ and Origen also refers to the use of the name of Jesus to cast out demons.⁵⁷ Thus, although “Jesus of Nazareth” was perhaps not theologically significant in other ways for the early church, it may have been significant for use as a tool against demons. And although the name was probably not introduced by Mark, it may have been recognized as powerful against demons early on. However, in this case, as we have already said, it is the demon, not the exorcist who makes use of the name in an attempt to ward off Jesus.

The next words of the demon, “Have you come to destroy us?” (ἦλθεσ ἀπολέσαι ἡμᾶς;), like the crying out, indicate fear. While it is possible that they reflect a Markan theology that wished to point the reader toward a time in the future when all evil spirits would be destroyed for good,⁵⁸ this seems unlikely, since the only other clear indication of this belief in the gospels is Jesus’ vision of Satan falling which is found in L (Luke

⁵⁴ So Twelftree, *Jesus the Exorcist*, 62-5.

⁵⁵ See, e.g., *PGM* IV. 1230-1235; 3007-3029.

⁵⁶ Acts 19:14.

⁵⁷ See, e.g., Origen, *Cels.* 1.6, 25.

⁵⁸ So Kee (“The Terminology of Mark’s Exorcism Stories,” 243) and Richard Horsley (*Hearing the Whole Story: The Politics of Plot in Mark’s Gospel*, [Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001], 138), for example, argue that the use of the plural by the spirit suggests not only an immediate struggle with Jesus, but a struggle at the cosmic level in which the demonic powers will eventually be defeated.

10:18), and as Twelftree argues, ἀπόλλυμι is not a word that Mark shows interest in otherwise.⁵⁹

The verbal resistance offered by the demon, in addition to the struggle that occurs as he exits the man, could also suggest historical authenticity since neither Mark nor the early Church would likely have invented an encounter where Jesus' authority was so clearly challenged.⁶⁰ Thus, while the demon's knowledge of Jesus' identity fits Mark's theological program of the messianic secret, it need not automatically be linked with Mark's purposes. Instead, it may reflect first-century social reality.

Let us move now to Jesus' response, the rebuke of the unclean spirit. We have already seen that the Greek term ἐπιτιμάω is used in the LXX as a translation of the Semitic term גער. In the Hebrew Bible, גער seems to convey the sense of conquering or subjugating, rather than simply rebuking,⁶¹ and in the case of the *War Scroll* from Qumran, it is used to describe the driving out of evil spirits.⁶² It is also the word used by Abraham to bring the spirit afflicting Pharaoh under control in the *Genesis Apocryphon*.⁶³ Jesus uses the combination of ἐπιτιμάω and ἐξέρχομαι here and in the exorcism of the boy with the spirit (9:25), but in that case Jesus also uses an emphatic I expression, ἐγὼ

⁵⁹ Twelftree, *Jesus the Exorcist*, 66.

⁶⁰ Chilton, "An Exorcism of History," 226. But see Meier (*A Marginal Jew*, 2; 649-50), who argues that the crying out of Jesus' identity by the demon reflects Markan theology and so is likely not historical.

⁶¹ So Horsley, *Hearing the Whole Story*, 137-38; See e. g., Ps 9:6; 68:31; 78:6; 80:16; Zech 3:2.

⁶² "You have chased away from us (גערתה ממנו) his spirits of destruction." See 1QM 14.10.

⁶³ There גער makes up part of the Pharaoh's request to Abraham to pray for him and his household that the evil spirit might be 'banished' (ותתגער). See also 1QapGen 20.28-29; and 1QM 14.10; 1QH 4.6.

ἐπιτάσσω (I command you), while in his general descriptions of exorcism Mark tends to use ἐκβάλλω.⁶⁴

Instead of a simple casting out, then, Mark's text reveals three aspects to the command, although they are integrated. Jesus rebukes (ἐπετίμησεν) the demon, and the specific form the rebuke takes is the order to be silent (Φιμώθητι), and to come out of the man (ἔξελαθε ἀπ' αὐτοῦ). While the demon has referred to itself in both the plural and singular, Jesus' commands are in the second person singular: Φιμώθητι καὶ ἔξελαθε ἐξ αὐτοῦ ("Be muzzled and come out of him!"). Unlike many of the incantations described in the *PGM*, which contain numerous magical words often connected with Jewish traditions and names for God, the words ascribed to Jesus are simple and do not appear to use incantational language.⁶⁵ However, the presence of Φιμώθητι ("Be Muzzled/ Bound!"), which corresponds to the Aramaic term ܦܦܦ, may in fact suggest incantational language.

In extra-biblical texts, ܦܦܦ/ φιμώ is associated with "incantational restriction" and implies the idea of binding, muzzling, immobilizing, or rendering someone unable to function.⁶⁶ The use of this word rather than σιωπάω, which conveys simple silence,⁶⁷ may indicate an intention on the part of either Mark or an earlier source to convey more than a request for silence. The demon's response supports this possibility since he is

⁶⁴ Horsley, *Hearing the Whole Story*, 137; See e.g., 1:34; 39; 3:15, 22; 6:13; 9:18.

⁶⁵ *PGM* IV.3013ff. See 2.5.

⁶⁶ See J. H. Moulton and G. Milligan, (eds.) *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament Illustrated from the Papyri and Other Non-Literary Sources*. 1930. Cf. Lucian, *Peregrinus* 15; Magical Papyri Oslo 1.161f; Repr. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982); Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke I-IX*, 546; Twelftree, *Jesus the Exorcist*, 69.

⁶⁷ In Mark 10:48, when people tell the blind man who is shouting at Jesus to "be quiet," for example, σιωπάω is used.

presumably expressing consternation at being immobilized.⁶⁸ If Jesus' intent was simply to silence the demon, this would not in itself render him unable to operate. On the other hand, the term may well imply both muzzling and immobilizing. In that case, the command would function both to render the demon unable to continue its spoken attempts to ward Jesus off, and to continue controlling the man.

Finally, when the demon leaves the man, this is described as violent. Mark states that the unclean spirit convulsed the possessed man (σπαράξαν αὐτόν), and crying out with a loud voice, came out of him (v. 26). The fact that the verb σπαράσσω, which implies violent struggle,⁶⁹ is also found in the account of the boy with the unclean spirit, where the boy is so forcefully convulsed by the spirit that the crowd assumes he is dead (Mark 9:26), suggests a similar level of power in this account. Luke (4:35) has softened the impact by changing the verb to ρίπτω⁷⁰ (“to throw down”), which means that he was probably uncomfortable with the violent and graphic description he found in Mark. Luke's additional comment that the man was not harmed (v. 35) suggests that he was trying to limit the impact of the violent description.

Mark's less refined and more graphic description of the demon's behavior would have perhaps been embarrassing to early Christ-believing communities because of possible associations with magic or with non-Christ-believing exorcists and also because of the portrayal of Jesus as not completely in control of evil spirits. As Chilton has observed, the resistance shown by the demon, its attempt to gain control over Jesus by

⁶⁸ Twelftree, “ΕΙ ΔΕ . . . ΕΓΩ ΕΚΒΑΛΛΩ,” 378.

⁶⁹ UNB defines σπαράσσω as “to throw into convulsions,” and Danker (*A Greek-English Lexicon*) notes that it is associated with the shaking and rough handling of someone possessed by an unclean spirit.

⁷⁰ UNB defines ρίπτω as “to throw / let down”.

using his name, and its final desperate exit by throwing down the demoniac, are in tension with Mark's general tendency to portray Jesus as an exorcist with complete control over the demons and suggest an early tradition which was gradually taken over by Mark's larger theme of the spirits' knowledge and confirmation of Jesus' identity.⁷¹ In addition, the violence can be understood as both proof that the demon had left and a last ditch effort to cause harm.⁷² There are reasons then for suspecting that Mark did not invent either the conversation, which shows the demon attempting to overpower Jesus, or the struggle, which emphasizes the demon's power.

In the end, Jesus is reported to have successfully removed the demon, and the crowd expresses amazement at his ability to "command the unclean spirits," (v. 27), just as they did at his teaching (v. 22). Although amazement by the crowd is a common motif in the synoptic gospels, it is not used in every healing or exorcism and its placement here does not itself mean the response is not historical.⁷³ We have also seen this response in Greco-Roman exorcisms, and in fact, compared with them, the Gospel writers' portrayal of the crowd's response is fairly subdued.⁷⁴

The exorcism itself contains the following elements: 1) the recognition by the demon of the exorcist and his power, which in this case is signaled by the spirit's naming of Jesus and his position in relation to God; 2) a struggle for control (this is clear from the spirit's attempts to ward Jesus off with defensive formulas); 3) a command by the exorcist

⁷¹ Chilton, "An Exorcism of History," 228-30; cf. Twelftree, *Jesus the Exorcist*, 70-1.

⁷² So Bonner, "The Technique of Exorcism," 49.

⁷³ See for example 7:30 and 9:28, where we might expect amazement, but do not find it. See Chilton, "An Exorcism of History," 230-33 on the issues around identifying historical material.

⁷⁴ See for example Philostratus, *Life* 4.20 where Philostratus reports that the clapping and amazement of the crowd at the exit of the demon was "beyond description".

for the demon to be silent and to leave, 4) the exit of the demon; and 5) the demonstration of the cure signaled by the amazement of the crowd. Some of these characteristics have already been noted in chapter 2, and in the introduction to this chapter, and are commonly found in exorcisms and incantations against demons in the ancient Mediterranean world.

To sum up, there are no strong textual or historical reasons for rejecting the exorcism in the Capernaum synagogue as unhistorical, at least in relation to the earliest traditions that circulated about Jesus. The account does not seem to serve any clear theological purpose—except perhaps Mark’s desire to portray the demons as aware of Jesus’ identity and status. The language used to describe both the words and actions of the unclean spirit suggest that Jesus’ authority was challenged in the encounter and that the unclean spirit left only after a violent and highly charged encounter with Jesus.

Anthropological/Sociological Analysis

From the perspective of anthropology, the encounter between Jesus and the possessing spirit can be understood in several ways. First, the negotiation between exorcist and spirit is found in other cultural traditions as well. Rothenberg notes for instance that among contemporary Muslims living in Israel-Palestine, the Sheikh (religious leader) must enter into negotiations with the spirit (*jinn*) and eventually either force it to convert to Islam, kill it or expel it.⁷⁵ Second, the encounter and the exorcism can be understood as part of a symbolic struggle between the forces of good and evil as constructed by first-century Jewish Palestinian culture. Jesus’ claims to mediate spiritual

⁷⁵ Rothenberg, *Spirits of Palestine*, 38-9; cf. Obeyesekere, “Psychocultural Exegesis,” 285-90.

power to effect the removal of unwanted spirits from individuals fits the characteristics of *mediums* as described cross-culturally.⁷⁶ It also displays evidence of the social role that exorcisms played. Christian Strecker argues that Jesus' exorcisms were fundamentally performances which incorporated both social and cosmological aspects of reality.

If this is accurate, then the exorcisms of Jesus witness to a direct clash between the divine and the demonic—embodied in Jesus and the possessed person, and quite real in the sense of the above mentioned *effet de real* (i.e. possession creates a demonic reality by putting the possession idiom of a society into effect). This collision results in diverse transformations, notably in the order of the self, the social order, and the cosmic order. Alterations in all three orders are closely connected to and mutually affect each other.⁷⁷

If we may assume that the possessed man was part of the Jewish community at Capernaum, and was experiencing some difficulties socially, the role of the spirit would be to express these difficulties, and Jesus' role would be to transform the experience of the man into a socially acceptable one. What happens to the man comments on and contributes to the construction of reality of the entire community.⁷⁸ If the demoniac, through the invading spirit, was expressing something that he could not under normal circumstances do, this would explain the importance of the exorcism occurring in a public arena, the synagogue. In this way, the man's experience is not limited to his own life. The social transformation of the man encompasses the entire community. The reintegration of the possessed individual into the community is then witnessed by everyone. The person with the spirit is changed in the process, but so are others who participate through their presence.

⁷⁶ See pp. 156-8.

⁷⁷ Strecker, "Jesus and the Demoniacs," 117-33, 126.

⁷⁸ As Lambek ("From Disease to Discourse," 53-4) observes, "Frequently, possession is a kind of serious parody of orthodox religion, social convention or the accepted language of power relations. Possession may even be self-parodic."

Yet, what causes the disappearance of the demonic identity? It is due first to the demonic self being destroyed performatively in the direct encounter with Jesus, thanks to the higher divine order embodied in him as medium. That means that, in the exorcistic performance, possessed persons are publicly and somehow empirically integrated into the change of the cosmic order that Jesus proclaims. The proclamation of the coming kingdom of God that presumably aims at a transformation of being is, so to speak, physically realized in the possessed person. The outcome is a *transformance*, a tangible change of reality that can be grasped by others.⁷⁹

This means that in the case of the exorcism in the Capernaum synagogue, social reality is expressed and reflected in both the possession of the man by an unclean spirit and the public event of his exorcism. Through the encounter between Jesus and the man, both healing and change occur, but only after a struggle, and only as a part of the larger social context, the Jewish community of Capernaum, to which the man belongs. Once the man's status has changed, the community must also change in response.

This will not have been popular with everyone since the act of exorcism itself draws attention to issues raised by those who are possessed by spirits. As a result of a public exorcism, the problems can no longer be ignored, particularly if the transformation is striking. This could help to explain the two kinds of responses to Jesus; amazement and devotion on the one hand and opposition and accusations of demon possession on the other. The response of the crowd (both their amazement and the fact that Jesus' fame began to spread) provides confirmation of the man's healing. Opposition comes from those who do not want social change to occur, generally the social elite.

⁷⁹ Strecker, "Jesus and the Demoniacs," 127.

5.3.2 A Demoniac in Gerasa: (Mark 5:1-20// Matt 8:28-34//Luke 8:26-39)

We now move to the second major exorcism of Jesus, that of the Gerasene Demoniac, which is attested in the triple tradition.

[1] They came to the other side of the sea to the country of the Gerasenes. [2] And when he had stepped out of the boat, immediately a man out of the tombs with an unclean spirit met him. [3] He lived among the tombs; and no one could restrain him any more, even with a chain; [4] for he had often been restrained with shackles and chains, but the chains he wrenched apart, and the shackles he broke in pieces; and no one had the strength to subdue him. [5] Night and day among the tombs and on the mountains he was always howling and bruising himself with stones. [6] When he saw Jesus from a distance, he ran and bowed down before him; [7] and he shouted at the top of his voice, "What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I adjure you by God, do not torment me." [8] For he had said to him, "Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!" [9] Then Jesus asked him, "What is your name?" He replied, "My name is Legion; for we are many." [10] He begged him earnestly not to send them out of the country. [11] Now there on the hillside a great herd of swine was feeding; [12] and the unclean spirits begged him, "Send us to the swine. Let us enter them." [13] So he gave them permission. And the unclean spirits came out, and entered the swine; and the herd, numbering about two thousand, rushed down the steep bank and were drowned in the sea. [14] The swineherds ran off and told it in the city and in the country. Then people came to see what it was that had happened. [15] They came to Jesus and saw the demoniac sitting there, clothed and in his right mind, the very man who had had the legion; and they were afraid. [16] Those who had seen what had happened to the demoniac and to the swine reported it. [17] Then they began to beg Jesus to leave from their neighborhood. [18] As he was getting into the boat, the man who had been possessed by demons begged him that he might be with him. [19] But Jesus refused, and said to him, "Go to your friends and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and what mercy he has shown you." [20] And he went away and began to proclaim in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him; and everyone was amazed (Mark 5:1-20).

Historical-Textual Analysis

Let us begin with the origin of the story. This exorcism, like the other three major reports, is found in Mark but not in Q. However, in this case both Matthew and Luke have retained the account. Assuming Markan priority, it is there that we must look for the original form of the story, and to differences in Matthew and Luke as deliberate changes to this.

Most contemporary Jesus scholars agree that at least the first part of the story could reflect a historical event—an exorcism—that occurred somewhere in the Decapolis region.⁸⁰ All three synoptic accounts indicate that the exorcism occurred on the eastern side of the lake (Sea of Galilee) and that Jesus left and returned from there by boat. The strangeness of the location (the combination of “Gerasenes” and “the Decapolis”) in itself suggests historicity.⁸¹ This is the only exorcism, and the only miracle story of any kind, located in the Decapolis.⁸² In addition, Gerd Theissen thinks a historical exorcism by Jesus in this region is plausible because the political situation when Jesus was active around Galilee’s borders (ca. 30 CE) was more stable than it was when Mark was writing (66-70 CE),⁸³ a point which supports an exorcism during Jesus’ lifetime in the geographic region of western Decapolis.

All of these factors make a historical event at the root of this tradition likely, and it is difficult to imagine any particular reason for Mark or anyone else to invent an exorcism in this location when it was outside Jewish territory. Although it is possible, as Luz has noted that because the Decapolis was seen as part of the “ideal land of Israel,” Mark or an earlier source may have wished to place an exorcism there.⁸⁴

⁸⁰ So Jostein Ådna, “The Encounter of Jesus with the Gerasene Demoniac,” in *Authenticating the Activities of Jesus* (eds. B. D. Chilton and C. A. Evans. NTTS, 28.2; Leiden: Brill, 1998), 279-301, 300; Twelftree, *Jesus the Exorcist*, 74-6; Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, 2: 650-3; 662.

⁸¹ Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, 2:653.

⁸² Meier (*A Marginal Jew*, 2:651) thinks a historical exorcism in the region of the Gerasenes may lie behind the story based on the fact that this is the only example we have of a healing or exorcism of Jesus that is linked to a city in the Decapolis. The Decapolis is also mentioned in Mark 7:31, immediately after the story of the Syro-Phoenician Woman’s Daughter. Mark states that Jesus traveled from the region of Tyre and Sidon and went through the Decapolis on his way back to the Sea of Galilee.

⁸³ Tacitus, *Hist.* 5.9; Theissen (*The Gospels in Context*, 119-20).

⁸⁴ See Ulrich Luz, *Matthew: A Commentary 1, 1-7* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 4: 25 on the concept of the “ideal Israel”.

Determining the specific setting within the Decapolis is more problematic, however. While Mark locates the exorcism at Gerasa, Matthew has placed it at Gadara, and some later manuscripts have Gergasa.⁸⁵ The manuscript evidence suggests that “region of the Gerasenes” is the earliest attestation, rather than Matthew’s “region of the Gadarenes,” and this is also supported by the majority of scholars.⁸⁶ However, the problem with the location of Gerasa is its obvious distance of 33 miles from the Sea of Galilee, making it difficult to reconcile Mark’s location with pigs drowning in the lake.

As a result, some have proposed removing the episode of the pigs from the original exorcism, which resolves the problem of the water.⁸⁷ If the pig incident was added later, the location of Gerasa would only have become a problem at that time, which would explain why Matthew felt it necessary to make the change to Gadara. Thus, the most plausible explanation is that Matthew recognized the distance of Gerasa from the lake and substituted “Gadarenes,” which is only 5-6 miles from the Sea of Galilee.⁸⁸

Another possible resolution to the problem of the location of Gerasa has been proposed by Roger David Aus, who asserts that Gerasa may be a transliteration of Kursi, a fishing village located on the eastern shore of the lake, directly across from Capernaum,

⁸⁵ “Gergasenes” was a later correction, perhaps by Origen. See Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (London: United Bible Society, 1971), 84

⁸⁶ See John F. Craghan, C.S.S.R., “The Gerasene Demoniac,” *CBQ* 30 (1968), 522-36; 524; Metzger, *A Textual Commentary*, 84; Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke I-IX*, 736; Meier *A Marginal Jew*, 2:651; Howard, *Disease and Healing*, 85; Ádna, “The Encounter of Jesus,” 279-301; Aus, *My Name is “Legion,”* 70-71. But see Twelftree, (*Jesus the Exorcist*, 72-87), who argues that “Gadarene” is original.

⁸⁷ So Ádna, “The Encounter of Jesus,” 294-8; Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, 2: 651.

⁸⁸ Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke I-IX*, 736-7; cf. Meier (*A Marginal Jew*, 2: 651), who notes that if Mark’s ‘Gerasenes’ is original, it becomes much easier to explain why Luke and Matthew felt the need to change it to ‘Gadarenes’ and ‘Gergasenes.’ Theissen (*The Gospels in Context*, 109) observes that although Mark makes an error in locating Gerasa near the Sea of Galilee, the socio-political context of tensions between Jews and gentiles in the area fit.

and that this could be the original setting of the exorcism.⁸⁹ Aus bases this on several factors, the most interesting of which is a common tendency to change a כ to a ג in Galilean Aramaic. Thus, an original כְּרִסִּי (Kursi) could have been pronounced as גְּרִסִּי (Garse). As a result, Aus proposes that the original oral Semitic form of “the region of the Gerasenes” may have been בְּעֶרְעָא דְגְּרִסִּי, which corresponds to “the region of כְּרִסִּי”. Aus’ hypothesis would provide a resolution of the most important problem with regard to the location of the exorcism, which alleviates the need to remove the pigs and water.

The problem with detaching the incident of the pigs from the rest of the story, however, is that it becomes difficult to know where to separate the two parts, since so many of the elements are linked. As Gregory Wiebe asserts, there is continuity in the story between the conversation between Jesus and the demoniac, the behavior of the demoniac and the behavior of the pigs. The story becomes unintelligible without all of the elements.⁹⁰ Thus, he argues that the story should be seen as basically intact, since there is no good reason, other than the geography, for separating it, and if Aus is correct, this may not be a problem.⁹¹

The other problem with assuming two separate accounts is that it raises the question of why the crowd asks Jesus to leave. This does not occur in any other exorcism story in the Gospels, and it is difficult to explain without the story of the drowning of the

⁸⁹ Aus, *My Name is Legion*, 73-82.

⁹⁰ Gregory Wiebe, “The Demonic Phenomena in Mark’s ‘Legion’: Evaluating Post-colonial Understandings of Demon Possession,” in *Exegesis in the Making: The Theoretical Location and Contribution of Postcolonial New Testament Studies: A Reader* (ed. Anna Runesson; Biblical Interpretation Series [Leiden: Brill, forthcoming], 19-21). I am grateful to Greg Wiebe and Anna Runesson for allowing me to read this article before publication.

⁹¹ So Twelftree, *Jesus the Exorcist*, 77-78; cf. Bultmann, *History*, 210, who argues that the story is intact in its present form.

pigs.⁹² If the transfer of the demons to the pigs and their running into the lake were part of the earliest oral version of the story, it could indicate that Jesus was understood by the community as an extremely powerful exorcist, and the request to leave would make some sense as a response of fear. One might also imagine that the loss of a herd of swine would not be viewed particularly well by the community, making anger another plausible reason for the request.

It may be, as Meier argues, that the story reflects a historical event to which over a period of decades more elements were gradually added. If an exorcism did occur, he suggests that it originated at Gerasa.⁹³ It is nearly impossible to resolve the question of whether the exorcism was originally linked with the lake and the herd of pigs. Thus, based on manuscript evidence and Markan priority, I assume for this study that either Gerasa or Kursi is the original location for the exorcism.

Even if the pigs were not originally attached to the exorcism, we should not assume that they do not represent socio-historical evidence. If the pigs are secondary, their presence may still reflect historical and social realities that existed in the area during the first century in Palestine. For example, both Greek and Jewish texts reflect the belief that evil could be transferred from person to person or from persons to objects.⁹⁴ In this case, then, entering the water could have been seen as evidence of a simple transference

⁹² So Twelftree, *Jesus the Exorcist*, 77-8; and Howard (*Disease and Healing*, 85), who see the pig episode as original.

⁹³ Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, 2:653; cf. Craghan ("The Gerasene Demoniac," 524) who suggests that the story originated as an exorcism at the lake, which the early Christians altered to make into a story of universal salvation, and that Mark then made the possessed man into an apostle for the non-Jews living in the Decapolis.

⁹⁴ Plato, *Resp.* 398a; Pliny, *Nat.* 28.86; P.Oslo 1:256-65; In the *Test. Sol.* 22 the wind demon Ehippas is trapped in a leather flask using the seal of Solomon.

of the spirits from one locale to another (i.e., from the man to the pigs, and then into the water), rather than destruction of the spirits. As Luke presents it the spirits prefer entering the pigs rather than the alternative, the abyss (8:31),⁹⁵ and his use of the singular “it drowned” suggests that he at least thought the herd had drowned rather than the demons.⁹⁶

It is also possible that spirits were thought to be afraid of water in the first-century Mediterranean context as is suggested by the large number of textual references to demons in desert locations (we will discuss this issue shortly), and that water may have been seen as dangerous for demons.⁹⁷ If this interpretation is correct, the descent of the pigs into the lake might suggest either destruction of the spirits, or, at the very least, a disempowering of them. The transference and drowning may also function as a demonstration of the cure as it does in Josephus’ account of the exorcism performed by Eleazar, in which the demon tips over a bowl of water to confirm its exit from the possessed man, or in Apollonius’ exorcism of a boy in Athens, where the demon knocks

⁹⁵ Twelftree, “ΕΙ ΔΕ . . . ΕΓΩ ΕΚΒΑΛΛΩ,” 382.

⁹⁶ So Twelftree, *Jesus the Exorcist*, 74-5; Ådna, “The Encounter of Jesus with the Gerasene Demoniac,” 291-93, 300. There may also have been a connection in the ancient world between pigs/pork and the demonic since the *PGM* (IV. 3080-85) contains an adjuration to exorcists not to eat pork as a way of making the demons subject to them.

⁹⁷ Warren Carter (*Matthew and the Margins: A Socio-Political and Religious Reading* [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000], 213) notes that the water may have been understood as a place to contain demons until the judgment rather than a place of destruction. See e.g., *T. Sol.* 5:11; 11:6. A large number of incantation bowls (72 in Jewish Aramaic, 33 in Mandaic, and 21 in Syriac) used to ward off evil spirits, reverse binding spells and protect houses have been found in Mesopotamia buried under corners of houses. It appears that some of these may have been filled with water and used as demon traps. See Gager, *Curse Tablets and Binding Spells*, 226-8; but see O. Böcher, *Christus Exorcista* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1972), 20-32; and H. van der Loos, *The Miracles of Jesus*, (Leiden: Brill, 1965), 390 who argue that water was seen as the place where demons dwelt in the ancient world.

over a statue as he leaves.⁹⁸ The alternatives suggested here would all have potentially made sense to a first-century audience.

Socio-Political Analysis

We move now to a discussion of the name by which the possessing spirit(s) refers to itself, “Legion”. The term “legion” is of Latin origin, but became a Hebrew and Aramaic loanword in Palestine from at least the time of Pompey in 63 BCE,⁹⁹ so it could have been in use in Galilee and the Decapolis in the early first century. A Syriac incantation bowl has also been discovered with an inscription stating that it protects “from all legions,” indicating that the term “legion” could be used to describe a particular type of demon.¹⁰⁰

The association of the “legion” of spirits with Roman soldiers is another disputed issue among scholars. As E. P. Sanders has pointed out, no Roman soldiers were stationed in Galilee in the 20s and 30s when Jesus was active, and Galilee was therefore not “occupied,”¹⁰¹ since the nearest troops were the four legions stationed in Syria.¹⁰²

⁹⁸ Josephus, *Ant.* 8.48; Philostratus, *Life* 4.20. Bonner (“The Technique of Exorcism,” 49) sees the pigs drowning as evidence of the cure. *Test. Sol.* 11 also describes a lion-shaped demon who is thwarted by Emmanouel (presumably a reference to Jesus). The demon reports that Emmanouel has bound the demons and will torture them by driving them over a cliff into the water. However, since *Test. Sol.* was written after the first century and was influenced by the NT, this cannot be used as a source to reconstruct first-century thought.

⁹⁹ A Roman legion of troops comprised approximately 6,000 men. See Josephus, *Ant.* 14.66.

¹⁰⁰ See J. A. Montgomery, *Aramaic Incantation Texts from Nippur* (Philadelphia: University Museum, 1913) 37.6-7. The date of this bowl is uncertain, but Montgomery thinks the most likely date to be between the 500 and 600 CE. cf. Diodius Siculus 26.5; P. Oxy 1666.5ff. Cf. Twelftree, *Jesus the Exorcist*, 85. *Test. Sol.* 11 mentions a lion-shaped demon that has legions of demons under him. However, this may reflect later Christian interpolation.

¹⁰¹ E. P. Sanders, “Jesus’ Galilee,” in *Fair Play. Diversity and Conflicts in Early Christianity: Essays in honour of Heikki Räisänen* (ed. Ismo Dunderborg, Christopher Tuckett and Kari Syreeni; Köln: Brill, 2002), 3-41; cf.

¹⁰² See Tacitus, *Ann.* 4.5; Josephus, *War* 2.40, 66; *Ant.* 17.286. See also Sanders, “Jesus’ Galilee,” 3-41; Chancey, *Greco-Roman Culture*, 48-50. Up until 66 CE, the military presence in Judea was limited to three to six auxiliary units made up of local militia from Sebaste and Caesarea; after that the closest troops

However, this does not completely resolve the problem of the use of the word “legion” here. The story is set in the Decapolis, not in Galilee. And, while the 10th legion, *Legio Decima Fretensis*, which bore the standard of the boar, was indeed stationed in Syria from 6 CE on, it also protected the cities on the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee.¹⁰³ Beyond this, there were ongoing tensions between Jews and non-Jews living in the area during the early years of the first century. Josephus describes massacres and the burning and pillaging of villages by both Jews and non-Jews throughout the region, including Gerasa and Gadara, and if the Roman army was protecting the non-Jewish population we can imagine the sentiments of Jews living there.¹⁰⁴

These kinds of tensions between the gentile inhabitants of the Decapolis and the Jews furnish the perspective for Mk 5:1ff.: a Jewish exorcist comes into the neighbouring district. There he meets a possessed man ruled by a legion of unclean spirits and living in unclean places: in the tombs. Probably he represents the Gentiles as such, since the unclean spirits enter the swine, which Jews regarded as disgusting. A herd of swine was unimaginable except in a gentile region. At the same time, the religious contrast between Jews and Gentiles symbolizes the political aspect of the conflict: the demon reveals itself as “legion.” It represents a whole army. Its most urgent petition is to be allowed to remain in the land—exactly what the Roman occupying force wanted. It is driven into the sea, perhaps because that was supposed to be the entrance to the

were the four legions in Syria that were called on if there were problems. Cf. Zev Safrai, “The Roman Army in the Galilee,” in *The Galilee in Late Antiquity* (ed. Lee I. Levine; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), 104-114. However, we don’t know how many Romans or other non-Jews lived in Galilee in the 20s and 30s. Nicolaus of Damascus (*FGH* 2A, 90F 136[8]), a historian, writer and philosopher, and a member of Herod’s court, estimates the number of Hellenes in Herod’s court to have been 10,000 in 4 BCE, at the time of Herod’s death, and he states that this was one of the reasons for the Jewish revolt. This suggests, although does not prove, that there were probably large numbers of Greeks in Antipas’ court as well. M. Stern, (“The Reign of Herod and the Herodian Dynasty,” 1: 256) posits that although some of those with Greek names may have been Jewish, there were “many” Greeks at Herod’s court.

¹⁰³ See Josephus, *Ant.* 14.74-76; 20.2; *War* 2.39-41; cf. Strabo *Geog.* 1.2.46. See Theissen, *The Gospels in Context*, 110 for discussion of the historical evidence on this question.

¹⁰⁴ According to Josephus (*War* 1.155-56; *Ant.* 14.74-6), when Pompey established Roman control in the area and ‘liberated’ the Hellenistic cities east of the Jordan from Jewish rule in 63 BCE, thousands of people were massacred. The ten cities, among which were Gadara and Gerasa, then became known as the Decapolis, the Greek term for ‘ten cities’. Tensions and violent clashes occurred between the Jewish and Gentile inhabitants of both Syria and the Decapolis during the first century and continued until the outbreak of the Jewish War (see, e.g., Josephus, *Ant.* 20.2; *War* 2.458-59; 4.486-89; *Life* 341-43). In addition, the Decapolis encompassed an area that the Jews had traditionally viewed as belonging to them. See discussion of the ideal Israel in Luz, *Matthew*, 1:4:25; Wahlen, *Jesus and the Impurity of Spirits*, n. 140, p. 96.

underworld, but certainly also because the desire to chase a whole legion into the sea could be expressed in this guise.¹⁰⁵

In fact, Théodore Reinach argued early in the 20th century that the redactor of Mark must have had a particular reason for using this term beyond the multitude of spirits involved, and that an affinity between the demon legion and the herd of swine is assumed in the story.¹⁰⁶ Archaeological evidence indicates that the sign of the boar, the emblem of the 10th legion (Fretensis), was engraved on bricks and helmets and made into statues in the shape of a boar,¹⁰⁷ which from a Jewish perspective was offensive.¹⁰⁸ The vocabulary used in the story also exhibits military characteristics. Richard Horsley argues, for example, that the term “herd” (ἀγέλη, v. 11) is typically associated with a troop of military recruits rather than with pigs, that “dismissed” (ἐπετρέψεν, v. 13) is often used as a military command, and that “charged” (ῥομήσεν, v. 13) is suggestive of troops rushing into battle.¹⁰⁹ If there is a connection between the possessing legion and the Roman army, it could explain why Matthew, who wrote after the Jewish War, during a period when the situation would have been tenuous for Jews, including Christ-believing Jews, has omitted the term entirely.¹¹⁰

With some of the historical and textual issues around the name “Legion” clarified, the possibility that the term reflected actual political tensions resulting from Roman

¹⁰⁵ Theissen, *The Gospels in Context*, 110.

¹⁰⁶ Théodore Reinach, “Mon nom est Légion,” *REJ* 47 (1903): 172-8.

¹⁰⁷ See Reinach, “Mon nom est Légion,” 172-8; cf. Gerd Theissen, *The Gospels in Context*, 110; Aus, *My Name is Legion*, 18.

¹⁰⁸ Both the pig and the boar were considered unclean (טמא) animals in the Jewish tradition (Lev 11:7-8; Deut 14:8) and could also stand for a destructive force (Ps 80:14 [Eng. 13]). The Mishnah (*m. Hull* 9:2) states that the skin of both domestic and wild pigs was unclean, and the Tosefta (*t. Hull*. 8:16) states that there were no legions in which there were not human scalps.

¹⁰⁹ Horsley, *Hearing the Whole Story*, 141.

¹¹⁰ So Luz, *Matthew: A Commentary*, 2: 24.

presence in the region of the Decapolis is increased. There is at least no clear historical evidence that would disqualify a link between the presence in the area of troops and demon possession.¹¹¹ Whether the pig incident is original to the exorcism story or a later addition coming from the period of the Jewish Revolt, the presence of Roman troops is not a problem historically.¹¹² As Warren Carter says, the “destruction of the pigs is not only an economic loss, but suggests a coded depiction of Rome’s demise.”¹¹³ Similarly, Crossan argues that even if the story does not represent Jesus’ lifetime—and he does not think it does—it does “characterize Roman imperialism as demonic possession,” and he notes the tendency of Roman imperial rule to produce both a divided self and a divided nature of the people.¹¹⁴ Richard Horsley argues much the same, noting that the possession of the Gerasene Demoniac was part of a larger community response to the presence of the Roman military:

On the one hand, convinced that their oppression was part of a larger world-historical struggle and that God was ultimately in control, it enabled them to avoid suicidal rebellion against the Romans and to persist in their traditional way of life. On the other hand, it diverted attention from the concrete political-economic realities of Roman imperial rule and channeled resistance into a battle against the “unclean spirits” that were taken as responsible for their worst troubles—a diversionary solution that proved very “functional” for the imperial order.¹¹⁵

Warren Carter has observed, in addition, that the pigs end up in the same place as Pharaoh’s armies (Exod 14:23-15:5),¹¹⁶ which, if the symbolism was recognized, would further support a political interpretation of the drowning pigs with the legion of spirits.

¹¹¹ Wiebe, “The Demonic Phenomena in Mark’s ‘Legion,’” 14.

¹¹² Josephus, *War* 3.233, 289, 458, 485.

¹¹³ Carter, *Matthew and the Margins*, 213.

¹¹⁴ J. D. Crossan, *Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1989), 90-1.

¹¹⁵ Horsley, *Hearing the Whole Story*, 145-6.

¹¹⁶ Carter, *Matthew and the Margins*, 213.

Anthropological Analysis

In a context of political oppression, one of the roles of spirit possession may be to comment on the ambiguous nature of the relationship between those living under foreign rule and their rulers in a way that an individual would not be able to do in his or her own voice. This ambiguity is especially evident where those who are occupied must work for their occupiers and must therefore live out a moral dilemma,¹¹⁷ in which case the spirits themselves often display a clear sense of maintaining boundaries between religions or ethnic groups, stressing the dangers of becoming involved with foreigners, especially those who oppress or occupy their host's nation.¹¹⁸

In this context possession functions as an “idiom of distress”¹¹⁹ which alerts the community to problems and allows for negotiation between the spirit and powers and structures within the society, including tradition, patriarchy and imperial rule. For example, Mary Keller argues that for women from traditional village systems in Malaysia who have experienced spirit possession on the factory floors of multinational companies, possession can be understood as a form of negotiation between the spirits (who represent

¹¹⁷ Rothenberg (*Spirits of Palestine*, 20-24, 33 57-61, 90-91, 94-6, 101) argues that in contemporary Israel, this is evident in the relationship between Palestinian workers and their Israeli employers where Palestinian men are often employed by Israeli companies, sometimes in constructing settlements for them, and so are living out a moral dilemma. On the one hand, they must work to support their families. On the other hand, in doing so they are at the same time supporting the very system that oppresses them. As a result, stories of spirit possession reported by Palestinian men often comment on the dangers experienced in their everyday contacts with foreigners, and Israelis in particular. One way this is expressed is the possession of Palestinian male prisoners by Jewish *jinnia* (female *jinn*). Cf. Levy, Mageo and Howard, “Gods, Spirits, and History,” 16; Boddy, “Spirit Possession Revisited,” 414-16, 419; Bourguignon, *Possession*, 54.

¹¹⁸ Rothenberg, *Spirits of Palestine*, 47-48; 90-2; 113-14; Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion*, 27, 30, 78, 91, 98, 104; Boddy, “Spirit Possession Revisited,” 407, 417.

¹¹⁹ An idiom of distress is a symbol or expression of pain. See, e.g., Bourguignon, “Suffering and Healing,” 557; Rothenberg, *Spirits of Palestine*, 44-6, 70; Kessler, “Conflict and Sovereignty,” 302-6; Bourguignon, *Possession*, 62; Lambek, “From Disease to Discourse,” 45.

a more traditional form of life) and the forces of capitalism (represented by the presence of the multinational companies).¹²⁰

At times this negotiation may bring about changes on either an individual or societal level. At other times, it may simply express resistance or open up discussion about difficult issues.¹²¹ Thus, spirit possession draws on shared beliefs within the community in order to comment on situations of great importance to it which would be difficult to articulate under other circumstances.¹²²

Assuming Jews would have associated oppressive Roman rule enforced by troops bearing the symbol of the boar with pigs which were viewed as unclean, the element of the pigs drowning in the sea would then represent the desire by the locals to see the Roman legions destroyed, whether or not a herd of pigs was actually destroyed historically. Jews then, would presumably have viewed the destruction of the pigs in the story positively. However, for those who kept the pigs, this act would have been viewed very differently, at the very least from an economic perspective. Finally, as we have already indicated, from a sociological and anthropological perspective, possession by large numbers of spirits in the ancient world was often thought to indicate the severity of the condition.¹²³ Possession by the “Legion” may then have been intended to alert the hearer/reader that the man’s case was especially difficult, and Jesus’ cure was therefore all the more impressive.

¹²⁰ Keller, *The Hammer and the Flute*, 106, 119-20.

¹²¹ See note 15, this chapter.

¹²² As Bourguignon, (*Possession*, 10) stresses, “Possession, as we have insisted, is a belief, a cultural belief, a *shared* and *not idiosyncratic* [my italics] belief. Insofar as the behaviour involves acting out a personality which is believed in, concerning which there are shared expectations, and to that extent surely ‘possession states’ cannot exist in societies where such beliefs are absent.”

¹²³ See Luke 8:2; Q 11:24-26.

It is possible, of course, that Mark's use of the "Legion" does not refer to the Roman army at all, and is simply intended to describe the large number of demons. Since the term also had this meaning in some other texts, we cannot exclude this possibility.¹²⁴ However, as Wiebe argues, the demons, the possession and the exorcism only make sense within an entire belief system that includes the possibility of possession and also takes into account the political realities of the time.¹²⁵

If the story is read within the context of Roman imperial rule, recognizing that for first-century Jews the political situation was seen to be partly determined by evil forces at the cosmological level, and that these two realities were deeply interconnected, then Twelftree's interpretive alternatives—either Jesus was in conflict with Satan or with the Romans—become untenable.¹²⁶ In fact the two aspects of the story, the spiritual and political must be kept in tension for a full understanding of both the possession and the exorcism. As we demonstrated in chapter 2, in the religious and cultural context of the time, political reality was often seen to reflect spiritual reality. What we have shown here is that the possibility of a political connection cannot be ruled out on the basis that Roman soldiers were not in the area.

¹²⁴ The term "legion" was at times used interchangeably with "myriad" or "thousand" to indicate large numbers of something. See, e.g., Ps. 91:7; Plautus, *Cas.* 50; Pliny, *Nat.* 33.26; Matt (26:53) refers to a "legion of angels". Interestingly however, although Aus (*My Name is Legion*, 13-15) argues for this interpretation of legion, many of his examples come from very late rabbinic texts. For example, Midrash Tehillin (750-800 CE), which comments on Psalm 17:8 uses legions (לגיונות) in connection with a king going forth on a journey, and Genesis Rabbah 20/6 on Gen 3:16, also very late (425-450 CE), uses the term in relation to a large number of olives (לגיון). While interesting, these texts are too late to be of much use for reconstructing first-century usage.

¹²⁵ Wiebe, "The Demonic Phenomena in Mark's 'Legion,'" 6.

¹²⁶ Twelftree, *In the Name of Jesus*, 109-110.

Textual Analysis

Let us now look more closely at the textual issues involved in the story. While Luke retains the core of Mark's version with some additions, Matthew has abbreviated it considerably (by more than 50 percent), and has made numerous changes as well. The most obvious are his doubling of Mark's one demoniac to two and his removal of all references to "legion." His omissions and abridgments of other exorcisms in the Markan tradition suggest that he was uncomfortable with, and, as a result, avoided as much as possible the use of this material.¹²⁷ He has omitted entirely the exorcism in the Capernaum synagogue, and has abridged considerably both this story and that of the boy with the spirit (Mark 9:14-27). Since Matthew has clearly shortened the text for his own narrative-strategical reasons, and has retained very little of the account as found in Mark, we will focus much of our attention on Mark and Luke, where several differences are evident.

The man with an "unclean spirit" (v. 2),¹²⁸ has been living among the graves or tombs¹²⁹ and exhibits extra-human strength. As such, a first-century Palestinian audience

¹²⁷ So Luz, *Matthew: A Commentary*, 2:24-5. However, it must be acknowledged that Matthew also abbreviates other stories down to their essentials, and has shortened the story immediately following this one as well (see, e.g., Mark 6:21-43 and Matt 9:18-26. Interestingly, however, this story is also a healing, although of a very different type.

¹²⁸ Luke has changed this to "a man who had demons" (v. 27). Mark initially uses "unclean spirit," but later in the narrative he refers to "the demoniac" (v. 15) and to "the one who had been possessed" (v. 18), Luke is consistent in using "demon"/ "demoniac" throughout.

¹²⁹ Aus (*My Name is Legion*, 22-4) notes that in Palestine, these tombs consisted either of natural caves or those made by hewing out large stones, and that this description of the man's dwelling alludes to Samson's time spent living in a cave (Jdg 15:8b). For Aus, the story draws on several other Samsonite motifs, including uncleanness, phenomenal strength, shouting loudly and running to meet (Jdg 15:14), swearing not to torment or injure someone, the request for a name, the name Legion, Swine and Swineherds, panicking and rushing down a slope and survival of only one who proclaims the miracle. While it is possible that these themes inform the story, the connection is somewhat tenuous.

would have likely recognized him as either mad or demon possessed or both.¹³⁰ The idea that tombs were associated with a state of ritual uncleanness is found both in the Hebrew Bible and in first-century Palestinian Judaism, and is evident from other statements in the gospels.¹³¹ Thus the combination of his possession by an unclean spirit and his abode in the cave tombs means that he cannot be civilized. The geographic location of the exorcism on the eastern side of the lake in the Decapolis, also suggests marginality in relation to Jewish society, since the Decapolis was made up of a mixture of Jewish and non-Jewish settlements, and ethnic tensions were present.¹³² Beyond this, the Decapolis was geographically, religiously and culturally marginal from the perspective of the centre of Judaism, Jerusalem.

Numerous anthropological studies of spirit possession have observed a correlation between marginal ethnic, religious, or gender status and spirit possession.¹³³ It is important to stress that this marginality precedes the possession itself and appears to be related to the fact that those on the margins of society are in a better position to comment on, question, challenge, or otherwise engage with the issues of the dominant culture than those more centrally situated. Spirit possession can offer an alternative voice to these people, allowing them to express dissent or critique, while still maintaining their position within the society.

¹³⁰ Aus (*My Name is 'Legion'*, 3-4) argues that the traits described in vv. 2-5 fit exactly those describing a madman (שוטה) in the Mishnah (ca. 200 CE—*m. Ter.* 1:1) and Tosefta (230-300CE—*t. Ter.* 1:3) [*He who goes out alone at night, and who lodges/stays over night in a cemetery, tearing his clothing, and who destroys what people give him.*], and that those who saw the man, as well as readers and hearers of the story, would have immediately recognized him as a madman (שוטה).

¹³¹ Num 19:11, 14, 16; Ezek 39; 11-15; 11 Q Temple 48.11-13; 49.5-21; 40.3-8; Matt 23:27.

¹³² See note 103.

¹³³ Kessler, "Conflict and Sovereignty," 295-331; Robert Levy, Jeanette Mageo and Alan Howard, "Gods, Spirits and History," in *Spirits in Culture, History and Mind* (ed. Jeanette M. Mageo and Alan Howard; New York: Routledge, 1996), 11-27; Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion*, 27, 30, 78, 91, 98, 104.

In the voice of her possessing spirit the possessed person has power to reveal socially suppressed material, and is a source of gnosis—revealed knowledge immediately recognizable to everyone as being intuitively true, but coming from beyond the overtly tolerable, discussible, and often thinkable knowledge of family or culture. Possession therefore, is a means by which new, and usually unwelcome, information threatens to enter cultural systems. Spirits in general are associated with hidden meanings because they represent suppressed modes of knowing.¹³⁴

The spirit often possesses a gender, religion, profession and caste which mirror those of its human host.¹³⁵ As Lewis notes, spirits afflicting peripheral persons are typically peripheral in two ways: 1) they do not play a role in maintaining dominant social values, and 2) they are believed to originate outside the societies of those they possess.¹³⁶ In modern Israel, among Palestinian Muslims living under Israeli occupation, for instance, if the religion of the *jinn* (the Arabic term for spirit) is Christian or Jewish, the Sheikh (Muslim holy man) may try to force it to convert to Islam during treatment.¹³⁷

Many villagers believe each *jinn* has a religion, most commonly Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and idol-worship (or fire worship). The Jewish and idolatrous *jinn* are generally believed to be the worst kind of *jinn*, while the religious Muslim *jinn* are the least troublesome for human beings.¹³⁸

Given the centuries of conflict between Jews and Muslims, but especially in the context of the current occupation of Palestinian lands by Jews, it is not surprising that the Jewish *jinn* are seen as the most dangerous. In the first-century Jewish Galilean context, we have already seen that Jesus was likely accused of possession by a foreign deity.

¹³⁴ Levy, Mageo and Howard, “Gods, Spirits and History,” 18-19.

¹³⁵ In the case of gender, the spirit typically will be of the opposite gender to that of their host; see, e.g., T. K. Oesterreich, *Possession: Demoniacal & Other Among Primitive Races, in Antiquity, the Middle Ages, and Modern Times* (New York: University Books, 1966), 20; Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion*, 52-5; Bourguignon, *Possession*, 40; Crapanzano, “Introduction,” 14; Rothenberg, *Spirits of Palestine*, 47-8, 104. Morton, “Dawit,” 193-5; Zemplini, “From Symptom to Sacrifice,” 93.

¹³⁶ Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion*, 27.

¹³⁷ Rothenberg, *Spirits of Palestine*, 35, 38-39, 46.

¹³⁸ Rothenberg, *Spirits of Palestine*, 36.

Coming back to our text, Luke's statement that the demon often drove (ἤλαύνετο)¹³⁹ the man into the desert (εἰς τὰς ἐρήμους), v. 8:29 coheres with other evidence in the synoptic tradition. Both Q and Mark place Jesus' encounter with Satan in the desert or wilderness, and as we saw in the discussion of Jesus' trials, the theme of meeting evil in the wilderness was common in Jewish tradition.¹⁴⁰ In addition, as we saw in chapter 4, the saying about the return of the unclean spirit (Q 11:24-26) describes the spirit wandering through waterless regions (ἀνύδρων τόπων) before returning to its host. Philostratus also refers to demons driving people into desert places, providing further attestation that demons were associated with the wilderness in the ancient Mediterranean world, and that they were viewed as marginal entities.¹⁴¹

Another difference between Mark and Luke is in the man's initial response to Jesus. While both writers indicate that he cried out, Mark uses a term to describe his falling down in front of Jesus (προσεκύνησεν) which may imply worship, whereas Luke's account has him simply fall down in front of Jesus (προσέπεσεν).¹⁴² In this case, it may be that Luke's version preserves an earlier and more authentic tradition since Mark's theological language implies a higher Christology. Alternatively, the worship terminology may reflect Mark's broader concerns related to the messianic secret. If so, it

¹³⁹ This is the same verb used by Lucian (*Philops.* 16) to describe the Syrian exorcist. According to Danker (*A Greek-English Lexicon*), ἔλαύνω suggests a slightly less aggressive form of driving; i.e. 'to urge' or 'propel' than ἐκβάλλω, which implies the idea of force, and so, in this case, of expelling or driving out by force.

¹⁴⁰ See pp. 161-3.

¹⁴¹ Philostratus, *Life.* 4.8; cf. *Test. Sol.* 4:4-6; 22. See discussion p. 263.

¹⁴² See other cases where those seeking help from Jesus are said to fall down: Mark 3:11 is a general statement about the behaviour of the unclean spirits; in 5:33, the woman with the flow of blood falls down and touches the hem of Jesus garment, and in 7:25, the Syro-Phoenician woman falls down at Jesus' feet and begs him to heal her daughter. In this case, (i.e. the Gerasene Demoniac) the idea of worship was probably introduced by either Mark or his predecessors (Twelftree, "ΕΙ ΔΕ. . . ΕΓΩ ΕΚΒΑΛΛΩ," 371).

would have been important for him to stress the demons' recognition of Jesus' status, and one way to do that is to have the man assume a posture of worship. Luke then altered Mark's version to tone down the language. Since he has done this in other places in the story, this is certainly plausible.

The most likely solution however, is that the second and third options both play a role. That is, Mark played up the worship aspect by changing what was initially a simple overpowering for his own purposes, and Luke, perhaps recognizing this, modified the vocabulary either to bring it more into line with demonic behaviour, or to make it more acceptable to his readers, or both. Either way, the falling down by the demons is significant, and probably suggests that it was understood to be overcome by Jesus' power. Since this behavior also occurs in Mark's general summaries of Jesus' healings and exorcisms (3:7-12), in the synagogue exorcism (1:22), and in the exorcism of the boy with a spirit (9:20) it seems likely that Jesus was understood by Mark to have power which was thought to "knock a demon off its feet" so to speak.

Since there are no cases that I am aware of in ancient literature where a demon worships the exorcist, it is likely that Mark has added the element of worship. In contrast, we do have evidence of demons being overpowered in some way by exorcists, and of exorcists being overpowered by demons. For example, after the exorcist Eleazar draws the demon out through the nose of the possessed man, the man falls down (Josephus, *Ant.* 8.45-47). In one of the exorcisms attributed to Apollonius, his look alone causes the demon to scream as one who is being tortured (*Life*, 4.20). We also see this process

reversed in Acts 19:16, where the evil spirit overpowers (κατακυριεύσας) the sons of Sceva when they attempt to exorcise it.

In terms of the crying out of the demoniac (ἀνακράζω, v. 7), as we saw in our discussion of the crying out of the man in the synagogue, there is no particular reason to suggest that either the word or the general portrayal of demons being filled with fear or consternation is a creation of Mark since both the verb and the behavior are known outside the Christian tradition.¹⁴³ In fact, Mark's more graphic portrayal of the demoniac suggests authenticity, since this behavior would have created more problems for the early church than more subdued actions. As Twelfree notes, the fact that Matthew does not remove this element even though he has abbreviated much of the dialogue also suggests the historicity of the demon's response.¹⁴⁴

We have already seen the use of plural and singular language used by the demon within the same conversation in the synagogue exorcism (1:24). Here too, when speaking with Jesus, the spirit first uses the singular in the defensive statement, but when asked its name, it answers in the plural, "Legion, for we are many."¹⁴⁵ Luke, probably recognizing the confusion this created, has changed his initial description to the plural "demons" (v. 27) to make it fit with the plural "legion." Thus, the spirit's address to Jesus, τί ἐμοὶ καὶ σοί; ("What do you have against me?") seems to function as a defence mechanism as does τί ἡμῖν καὶ σοί in 1:24, but is probably not dependent on it, since the plural

¹⁴³ See discussion p. 245.

¹⁴⁴ So Twelfree, "ΕΙ ΔΕ. . . ΕΓΩ ΕΚΒΑΛΛΩ," 371-2; Matthew has not altered this aspect in the account of the boy with the spirit either (see Mark 9.20//Matt 17.17-18).

¹⁴⁵ Luke has altered this to a second person descriptive, "for many demons had entered him" (v. 30).

pronoun ἡμῖν is used by the demoniac in the synagogue, whereas the singular ἐμοὶ is used by the Gerasene demoniac.¹⁴⁶ Since the Gerasene man is clearly possessed by multiple demons, it would be unusual for Mark to insert the singular ἐμοὶ.

The appearance of plural and singular identities in both encounters suggests that this was a known feature of spirit possession for the first-century Mediterranean audience. Matthew's transformation of the one demoniac into two may be his way of dealing with the confusion, but also likely reflects his preference for twos.¹⁴⁷

The second part of the address, Ἰησοῦ υἱὲ τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ὑψίστου (“Jesus, son of the Most High God”) will be examined in two parts. We have already noted in the synagogue exorcism that the name Ἰησοῦς probably had no broader theological significance in the early church except as a powerful name for removing demons. The title “Son of God,” is used in various ways in the canonical and non-canonical literature, so it is difficult to be certain how it is being used here. In the Hebrew Bible the people of Israel are at times referred to as God's children or sons (i.e., Exod 4:22-3). The designation son(s) is also used to refer to members of a prophetic guild (i.e., “sons of the prophet”)¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁶ Twelftree, *Jesus the Exorcist*, 81.

¹⁴⁷ Matthew has also transformed Mark's blind Bartimaeus into two blind men (Matt 9:27) and has created two healing stories out of Q's single healing of the mute-demoniac (Matt 9:32-34; 12.22-23a) In both the story of the two blind men and the Gerasene Demoniac, Robert H. Gundry (*Matthew: A Commentary on his Handbook for a Mixed Church Under Persecution* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994], 157-8) argues that Matthew has created the doubles as a way of compensating for omitting similar material elsewhere. This would mean that Matthew made Mark's one demoniac two to compensate for omitting the exorcism in the synagogue. Gundry adds that Matthew may also want to give more credibility to stories by having more than one witness.

¹⁴⁸ See 1 Sam 9:9; 1 Kgs 20:35; 2 Kgs 2:3, 5, 7, 15; 4.1, 38; 5.22; 5.1; 9.1; Amos 7.14.

In the Hebrew Bible, the phrase “Son of God” was sometimes used as a title for a king (2 Sam 7:12-14) or, as in Job 1-2 and Daniel 3:25, to designate members of the heavenly court. In Wisdom of Solomon being a “child of God” reflects a relationship of intimacy.¹⁴⁹ This is also its meaning in the rabbinic writings.¹⁵⁰ Significantly, Hanina ben Dosa is described in the rabbinic tradition as having a special filial relationship to God which is even recognized by the demons.¹⁵¹ In both Ben Sira and the Wisdom of Solomon, sonship is associated with ethical behavior, especially toward the vulnerable in society.¹⁵²

While Martin Hengel argues correctly that the Hebrew/Aramaic term “Son of God” (בן/בר אלהים) need not by itself convey messianic identity,¹⁵³ Adela Yarbro Collins and John Collins have observed that the evidence in the gospels suggests that Jesus was identified as a divine messiah, and that “Son of God” and “Messiah” were viewed as equivalent.¹⁵⁴ However, because “Son” is linked in this case with “Most High God” other interpretive possibilities present themselves.

¹⁴⁹ “Be like a father to orphans, and instead of a husband to their mother, then God will call you his son, will have mercy on you and save you from the grave” (Sir 4:10); Wis 2:13, 16-18. See also Prov 8:30-31.

¹⁵⁰ The rabbis often used the language of sonship in relating stories of the sages and their connection with God. See for example, *m. Ber.* 5:1; *m. Ta’an* 3:8; *b. Ber.* 17b; *b. Hul.* 86a; *b. Ta’an.* 23b, 24b; *b. Hag.* 15b. Although the Babylonian Talmud was written several centuries after the Gospels, these passages demonstrate that the language of sonship was not unique to Jesus within the Jewish tradition. Cf. Vermes, *Jesus the Jew*, 205-10; Twelftree, *Jesus the Exorcist*, 149-50;

¹⁵¹ *b. Ta’an* 24b; cf. *b. Ber.* 17b; *b. Hull* 86a. Although these texts are very late, they may reflect historical tradition deriving from the first-century when Hanina lived.

¹⁵² Wis 2:13, 16-18; cf. “Be like a father to orphans, and instead of a husband to their mother, then God will call you his son, will have mercy on you and save you from the grave.” (Sir 4:10).

¹⁵³ Martin Hengel, *Son of God: The Origins of Christology and the History of Jewish-Hellenistic Religion* (London: SCM, 1976).

¹⁵⁴ Collins and Collins, *King and Messiah as Son of God*, 129-32. See for example, during the interrogation of Jesus by the high priest in Mark 14:53-65 where Jesus is asked whether he is “the messiah, the son of the Blessed?” (v. 62). cf. Smith, *Jesus the Magician*, 99-101 and Collins and Collins, *Son of God*, 129-32, who argue that the term can imply divine status rather than simply “belonging to a god.”

The title “Most High God,” it is found in the *Prayer of Nabonidus*, and in Ben Sira,¹⁵⁵ and a form of it also occurs in the *PGM*.¹⁵⁶ It also occurs in Luke 1:36 in the description of Mary’s impregnation by God: “The power of the Most High will overshadow you.” In Acts 16:17 the phrase occurs on the lips of the servant girl who describes Paul as a “servant of the Most High God.” Here too the title seems to designate a special relationship with God that endows Paul with power over spirits.¹⁵⁷ It may also be part of the possessing spirit’s attempt to defend itself against Paul by identifying him.

Other than the case in Acts, this occurrence in Mark 5:7 and its parallel in Luke 8:28, are the only examples of the phrase in the New Testament. Aus contends that Mark’s use of the phrase here is meant to recall Psalm 91, which is linked in the Jewish tradition with both madness and demon possession.¹⁵⁸ According to Irina Levinskaya, the epigraphic evidence points to a predominantly Jewish rather than gentile origin for the title, and she argues that its use by non-Jews was limited to Judaizing Gentiles (God-fearers),¹⁵⁹ which may suggest that Mark’s possessed man was either being portrayed as a Jew or a proselyte.

Our brief discussion of this issue has not brought complete clarity on the question of whether the identification of Jesus by the unclean spirit implies recognition of messianic status or whether Mark’s own messianic theology is reflected in the words.

¹⁵⁵ Sir 24:2, 3, 23.

¹⁵⁶ 4Q242.2, 3, 5; *PGM* V.46.

¹⁵⁷ While this ascription has often been assumed to be non-Jewish, Irina Levinskaya, (*The Book of Acts in its Diaspora Setting*, vol. 5 of *The Book of Acts in its First-Century Setting* [Grand Rapids, MI.: Eerdmans, 1996], 98-100) argues that this is unlikely because of its predominantly Jewish associations in both textual and epigraphic references. See discussion below.

¹⁵⁸ Aus, *My Name is Legion*, 9-10.

¹⁵⁹ Levinskaya (*The Book of Acts in its Diaspora Setting*, 83-103) argues that the evidence for Jewish use of the term is overwhelming and includes epigraphic inscriptions as well as over one hundred and ten occurrences in the Septuagint.

Although being “the son of the Most High” need not necessarily imply messianic status, it does indicate a strong connection with the divine, and probably also power over spirits. In any case, since the title is uncommon in the NT tradition, and there is no reason for the early Church to have added it, its occurrence in Mark is likely part of the earliest strand of Jesus tradition.¹⁶⁰

The plea for leniency by the demon: ὀρκίζω¹⁶¹ σε τὸν θεόν, μὴ με βασανίσῃς (“I adjure you by God, do not torment me”), and particularly the term ὀρκίζω σε (“I adjure you”) in v. 7, has parallels in both Jewish and Greco-Roman texts. It occurs in *I Enoch* 12-14, where the demon Azazel asks Enoch to plead the case of the demons before God, and in *Jubilees* 10:4-5 where Mastema asks that not all of the demons be bound. A similar phrase is attributed to the high priest in Matthew 26:63: ἐξορκίζω σε κατὰ τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ζῶντος (“I bind you by the living God”), when he asks Jesus to tell him whether or not he is the son of God. The phrase, “I adjure you by God,” also occurs several times in incantations in the *PGM* where it is used to call upon the “God of the Hebrews” to bind or immobilize a demon.¹⁶²

This formula then was known and used in the ancient world to ward off attack by spiritual entities. However, typically it is the exorcist not the spirit who utters the words as we have seen in chapter 2, and is evident from two excerpts in the *PGM* (“I adjure you

¹⁶⁰ So Twelftree, *Jesus the Exorcist*, 81-2. Cf. Aus (*My Name is Legion*, 9-10) who thinks that the demon’s use of the address “son of the Most High God” derives from the same term in Psalm 91:1, 9 (9-10).

¹⁶¹ According to Danker (ed). (*Greek-English Lexicon*), the term ὀρκίζω means “to give a command to someone under oath, adjure, or implore.”

¹⁶² *PGM* IV. 3019-3085.

by the God of the Hebrews...”¹⁶³ and “I adjure you by God, the light bringer”¹⁶⁴). We have no evidence that Jesus ever used the “I adjure you” formula, although in several reports he is said to rebuke (ἐπιτιμᾶω) the demon. However, the demons he encounters often use some form of defensive formula against Jesus. We now have two examples of this in Mark’s presentation of Jesus’ exorcisms (Mark 1:24 and 5:7) where the roles of exorcist (Jesus) and demon are reversed and the defensive and binding formulas appear on the lips of the demon.

Whether this kind of behavior was known in the ancient world (i.e., where possessing spirits attempted to disarm their exorcists by reversing the normal roles) is not certain, although I have not come across it anywhere else. However, the fact that Matthew (8:29) omits the statement entirely and Luke (8:28) softens it to δέομαι¹⁶⁵ σου (“I beg of you”), suggests they may have been uncomfortable with the idea that the demon was trying to bind Jesus, which fits the criterion of embarrassment. That is, the stories incorporated by Mark reflected an authentic, but somewhat embarrassing, aspect of the tradition about Jesus. Recognizing this, Matthew and Luke have retained the core of the tradition, that Jesus was known as a powerful exorcist, but attempted to soften the edges by downplaying the more violent and disturbing aspects of it.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶³ PGM IV. 3020-3085.

¹⁶⁴ PGM IV. 3046.

¹⁶⁵ In this passage, Danker (*A Greek-English Lexicon*) gives δέομαι more the sense of asking politely; i.e. “please allow me,” or “I beg of you”.

¹⁶⁶ Fitzmyer, (*The Gospel According to Luke I-IX*, 738) suggests that perhaps Luke thought it inappropriate for a demon to “adjure” someone “by God”; cf. Twelftree, *Jesus the Exorcist*, 82.

Matthew's addition of "before the time?" to the last part of the statement, "Do not torment me," (μή με βασανίσῃς)¹⁶⁷ is very likely an expression of his desire to make the defeat of this group of demons have broader theological significance for Jesus' ministry by suggesting that he would ultimately defeat all demonic powers. Without the change made by Matthew, there is no reason for this interpretation which is completely absent from both Mark and Luke. The lack of an eschatological focus in the earliest form of the exorcism and Luke's failure to add it, suggests that Mark's statement reflects an early tradition.

In addition, the description of the attempt by the demon(s) to ward Jesus off indicates that Mark wants to depict recognition on the part of the spirits that they had been overpowered by a more powerful spiritual opponent, and responded appropriately by asking for leniency. This interpretation of the interchange between Jesus and the "Legion" may be confirmed by another textual issue. The fact that v. 8 ("For he had said to him, 'Come out unclean spirit from the man!'"), appears after v. 7 ("What do you have against me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I adjure you by God, do not torment me") could reflect an attempt to show overlapping dialogue; i.e. that Jesus had earlier ordered the demons out, and they had simultaneously attempted to ward him off. Following this first attempt, Jesus tried another tactic, asking the demon's name (v. 9).¹⁶⁸ As we have already seen, in the ancient world knowing a demon's name was thought to help one to gain control over it.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁷ In this context, Danker (*A Greek-English Lexicon*) assigns to the meaning of βασανίζω the particular sense of physical torment or distress.

¹⁶⁸ So Twelftree, *Jesus the Exorcist*, 83-4; Howard, *Disease and Healing*, 87.

¹⁶⁹ On the importance and special power of names see Jdg 13:6; *L.A.B.* 42:10; *T. Sol.* 2:1; 3:6; 4:3-

If this assessment is correct, it would mean that Jesus was not always immediately successful in removing demons, which, based on the criterion of embarrassment, provides further evidence of authenticity. The early church would not likely have invented a story where Jesus has difficulty subduing a demon(s). Matthew's complete omission of Jesus' words ("Come out from the man you unclean spirit") also makes this likely, since it indicates that he was uncomfortable both with the demon's attempts to ward off Jesus and with the implied failure of Jesus to remove the spirit on his first attempt.¹⁷⁰

The combination of Luke's statement that the demon often drove the man out into the wilderness and the demon's request in Mark not to be sent "out of the region" (ἐξω τῆς χώρας) may reveal another significant aspect of the way spirit possession was understood in the first-century Palestinian context. They suggest a preference for a particular area, perhaps a deserted area of the wilderness (the region of the Gerasenes or of Kursi in the Decapolis), and a desire to remain there.¹⁷¹ Luke's change to "the abyss" (ἄβυσσος) as the place the demons wish to avoid, is probably a theological allusion to the Jewish idea that demons would be thrown into the abyss at the judgment.¹⁷²

4; 5:1; PGM IV. 1017-1019; 3037-3039ff; V.47-303; XIII. 244ff; Twelftree, *Jesus the Exorcist*, 83-4; Aus, *My Name is 'Legion,'* 37-39; Howard, *Disease and Healing*, 87. That Jesus was not always initially successful in his attempts to either heal or exorcise demons is suggested in Mark 8:22-6 as well, where Jesus attempts to heal a blind man and must repeat his actions before the man's eyesight is completely restored.

¹⁷⁰ So Wahlen, *Jesus and the Impurity of Spirits*, 122.

¹⁷¹ Fitzmyer (*The Gospel According to Luke I-IX*, 739), argues that Mark's version ('out of the region') is original.

That demons were associated with particular areas is also suggested by Tobit 8:3, where the demon flees to "the remotest parts of Egypt."

¹⁷² The LXX uses this term to translate the Hebrew תהום which referred to the cosmic watery deep under the earth. In extra-biblical texts it refers to some kind of hole under the earth used for the punishment of demons. See *1En* 10:4-5; 54:3-5; 56:1-4; 4Q 521.7. In 4Q511 and 11Q11 4.7-9 the demons are sent to the great abyss for punishment; cf. Rom 10.17; Rev. 9:1-2, 11; 11:7; 17:8; 20:1, 3.

Once the man is healed, Mark describes him as sitting clothed (ἱματισμένον) and in his right mind (σωφρονοῦντα), v. 15, a form of proof of the demon's departure. The removal of the unclean spirit involves the transformation of an identity, in this case from one who has lived outside of society (in the tombs) to one who is now in his right mind and can be reintegrated into his community. Although the crowd in this case arrives after the exorcism, they serve nevertheless to confirm the man's restoration to health by witnessing his changed behaviour and dress, which demonstrate that a healing has occurred. This is important because he must be accepted and reintegrated into this community as a person who no longer bears the identity of one possessed by a spirit.

The man's marginal status may well have existed prior to his status as spirit possessed. We know from anthropological studies that possession can express distress over difficult issues within the family or village or the larger context. If this was the case, the man's possession may reflect and address both his own concerns and those of the larger community, the possession serving as the vehicle for this expression.¹⁷³ As Michael Lambek says "Possession thus adds a critical dimension to the construction and conduct of social relations and provides both an idiom and a channel with which to speak about and to manage identity, personhood, conflict and uncertainty."¹⁷⁴

The last statement, "And he went away and began to proclaim in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him," (vv. 17-18) if historical, may reflect a tradition that

¹⁷³ Bourguignon ("Introduction," *Religion, Altered States of Consciousness and Social Change*, 29-32) distinguishes between two types of social change; micro change and macro change. The first results in modifications to the situation of the possessed individual and the second to the larger society or its structures; cf. Crapanzano, "Introduction," 28-33; Kessler, "Conflict and Sovereignty," 295; Keller, *The Hammer and the Flute*, 78, 87, 119-20.

¹⁷⁴ Lambek, "From Disease to Discourse," 45.

Jesus extended his ministry into the Decapolis region.¹⁷⁵ However, most scholars would not see this statement as historical, and it is probable that Mark has at the very least reworked a shorter ending.¹⁷⁶

Our findings in this section indicate first, that although there is some dispute about the historicity of the episode of the drowning pigs, the exorcism itself displays evidence of being rooted in a historical event during Jesus' lifetime in the Decapolis region. With regard to the name "Legion," we have shown that the demons in the story could reflect social reality for Jews who lived in the Decapolis and would have been familiar with the tenth legion that was stationed in Syria and protected the cities in the area. Thus, a socio-political and historical interpretation of the possession of the man by a group of unclean spirits named legion is plausible.

We have also shown that Jesus' encounter with the unclean spirits in both stories reflects exorcisms more generally in ancient Jewish and Greco-Roman literature. These include a command to come out, a struggle, and the amazement of the crowd. However, there are distinctive elements in both exorcisms as well. In both cases, the roles of exorcist and demon are reversed during part of the encounter, and the unclean spirit attempts to disarm Jesus by demonstrating knowledge of him. It does this by identifying Jesus in some way, as "the Holy One of God," and Jesus, "the Son of Most High God" respectively. Both spirits use a defensive phrase known from the Septuagint (τί ἐμοὶ καὶ σοί), and the spirit Legion also attempts to bind Jesus, using the incantational term, ὀρκίζω. Thus, both stories imply that a struggle occurred between Jesus and the invading

¹⁷⁵ Theissen, *The Gospels in Context*, 110.

¹⁷⁶ So Twelftree, *Jesus the Exorcist*, 79-80; Freyne, "Galilean Questions," 76-7.

spirit, and suggest that Jesus may not have always been immediately successful in his attempts to exorcise unclean spirits.

This is surely significant and suggests that Jesus was challenged in his role as exorcist by the spirits he attempted to remove. Thus, it may be that the spirit(s) Jesus learned to control early on during his trials were only the beginning of a path that included continued challenges by the spirits he encountered. That Jesus was not always successful in either his healings or exorcisms is also suggested by the healing of the blind man in Mark 8:22-26, which occurs in two stages. The fact that Matthew and Luke omit this healing story confirms this hypothesis.

We have suggested here that the exorcisms themselves are rooted in actual historical events during Jesus' lifetime, in the Capernaum synagogue and in the western Decapolis respectively. The exorcism at the Capernaum synagogue is associated with a place which all of the gospels indicate was Jesus' home base. For several reasons which we have shown, the exorcism at Gerasa probably also reflects an exorcism during Jesus' lifetime of a man living in the Decapolis.

Finally, these exorcisms also display aspects of marginality. Both areas were frontier regions at the boundaries of Jewish Galilean society; in the case of the Gerasene Demoniac, a gentile area, where some Jews lived and where ethnic tensions were present. In the case of the man in the synagogue in Capernaum, we noted that the town was located on the lake, which formed the boundary between Galilee and the Decapolis. It thus provided for Jesus a home base which enabled him to move quickly across the lake into a different political region if necessary. The Gerasene demoniac himself is a

marginalized person, living on the borders of civilized society, in the graveyard. While we do not have proof in the story that the man had been marginalized previous to becoming possessed, this can be posited based on the results of anthropological studies.¹⁷⁷ Thus, he was not only marginalized after the possession, but it seems likely that his marginal position in society led to his experience of possession. From a Jewish perspective, the pigs too were viewed as unclean animals which were not kept or eaten.

5.3.3 *A Boy with a Spirit of Muteness and Deafness (Mark 9:14-27//Matt 17:14-21//Luke 9:37-43)*

The exorcisms of the boy with the spirit in Mark 9 and of the daughter of the Syro-Phoenician woman (Mark 7:24-30) contain some different elements from the previous two exorcisms. They both involve a surrogate who intervenes with Jesus on behalf of the possessed individual, and they both involve children rather than adults. This last point is particularly significant because spirit possession is not generally associated with children. The presence of a clear illness in this case (probably epilepsy) and the possibility that there was an illness in the other suggest that these exorcisms provide evidence of the association of unclean or evil spirits in the culture with particular illnesses rather than the link between spirit possession and social marginality. It is also important to note that this is one of the times in the gospels when the distinction between illness and spirit possession is blurred, and where exorcism brings relief from physical symptoms.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁷ See pp. 44-6, 267-9.

¹⁷⁸ In the other exorcisms and in general summaries of Jesus' public activities, healings and exorcism are distinguished. See Mark 1:32, 34// Matt 8:16-17// Luke 4:40-41; Mark 3:10-11// Matt 4:24; 12:15-16// Luke 6:17-19; Mark 6:13// Matt 10:1// Luke 9:1-2; Q 7:21; Luke [L] 13:32; cf. Acts 5:16; 8:7;

[14] When they came to the disciples they saw a great crowd around them and some scribes arguing with them. [15] When the whole crowd saw him, they were immediately overcome with awe, and they ran forward to greet him. [16] He asked them, “What are you arguing about with them?” [17] Someone from the crowd answered him, “Teacher, I brought you my son; he has a spirit that makes him unable to speak (ἔχοντα πνεῦμα ἄλαλον); [18] and wherever it seizes him, it dashes him down; and he foams and grinds his teeth and becomes rigid; and I asked your disciples to cast it out, but they could not do so.” [19] He answered them, “You faithless generation; how much longer must I be among you? How much longer must I put up with you? Bring him to me.” [20] And they brought the boy to him. When the spirit saw him, immediately it convulsed the boy, and he fell to the ground and rolled about, foaming at the mouth. [21] Jesus asked the father, “How long has this been happening to him?” And he said, “From childhood. [22] It has often cast him into the fire and into the water, to destroy him; but if you are able to do anything, have pity on us and help us.” [23] Jesus said to him, “If you are able!—All things can be done for the one who believes.” [24] Immediately the father of the child cried out, “I believe; help my unbelief!” [25] When Jesus saw a crowd come running together, he rebuked the unclean spirit (ἐπετίμησεν τῷ πνεύματι τῷ ἀκαθάρτῳ), saying to it, “You spirit that keeps this boy from speaking and hearing, I command you, come out of him, and never enter him again.” [26] After crying out and convulsing him terribly (κράξας καὶ πολλὰ σπαράξας), it came out and the boy was like a corpse; so that most of them said, “He is dead.” [27] But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he was able to stand (Mark 9:14-27).

Other than the brief example in Q 11:14 (Luke 11:14; Matt 12:22) which is connected to the Beelzebul Controversy, this is the only case of deafness/muteness being linked with spirit possession in the synoptic gospels.¹⁷⁹ Like the exorcism of the Gerasene Demoniac, the story of the boy with a spirit is attested in the triple tradition and Markan priority provides our point of departure. Thus, changes made by Matthew and Luke will

10:38 where this distinction is also made. See discussion in Twelftree, “ΕΙ ΔΕ. . . ΕΚΒΑΛΛΩ ΤΑ ΔΑΙΜΟΝΙΑ,” 364; idem, *Jesus the Exorcist*, 55.

Craffert, *The Life of a Galilean Shaman*, 299.

¹⁷⁹ Matthew has two versions of the story, one in chapter 9 and the other in Chapter 12. Both include an exorcism and an accusation by the Pharisees. Whereas the demoniac in chapter 12 exhibits symptoms of both muteness and blindness, in chapter 9, the person is only mute. The account found in Chapter 9 has against its historicity the fact that it makes up the ninth miracle of a collection of nine in the larger block of material (8:1-9:34). There are indications that Matthew had exhausted his stock of miracles, and probably created this account to fill out his three groups of three miracles, for a total of nine. On the other hand, the version in chapter 12 includes blindness, which, along with doubles, is a Matthean theme; i.e., Mark’s blind Bartimaeus becomes two blind men, and the Gerasene Demoniac becomes two demoniacs. See Bultmann, (*History*, 226) who argues that Matt 9:32-4 is secondary; Meier (*A Marginal Jew*, 2: 656-7) while noting that the unusual combination of blindness and muteness lends historical credibility to this version of the healing/exorcism, nevertheless agrees that the version in Q 11:14 [L 11:14] is probably original.

be illuminating for understanding how they received and interpreted the story. As he did with the exorcism of the Gerasene Demoniac, Matthew has abbreviated extensively, removing approximately two thirds of the Markan text. In particular he has omitted most of the details of the boy's condition and Jesus' words to the unclean spirit.

Mark's account begins with the fact that a crowd has gathered, which both Matthew and Luke have retained. In Mark there is a dispute going on between "some of the scribes" and people in the crowd. Although not explicitly stated, the argument was presumably about how best to deal with the boy's condition, i.e., the best method of exorcism. This may imply that others were also attempting to remove the unclean spirit. We know there were other Jewish exorcists operating in Galilee based on Jesus' statement in Q 11:19, "And if by Beelzebul I cast out demons, your sons, by whom do they cast them out?" (see above section 3.3.4) and The Strange Exorcist (see section 3.4.1).

When Jesus asks what they are arguing about he is told by the boy's father that his son has a dumb spirit (πνεῦμα ἄλαλον).¹⁸⁰ Matthew and Luke omit the boy's deafness and dumbness altogether, which in Mark is caused by the spirit, but Luke does retain the link between the spirit and the boy's foaming at the mouth. While Matthew (17:15) does not mention the symptoms, he states that the boy was σεληνιάζεται,¹⁸¹ literally

¹⁸⁰ See John M. Hull (*Hellenistic Magic and the Synoptic Tradition* [Naperville, IL.: SCM Press, 1974], 80-81) who argues that although not described as an exorcism, the healing of a deaf and dumb man in Mark 7:32 should also be read as one because of Jesus putting his fingers in the man's ears and spitting on the man's tongue.

¹⁸¹ From the Greek σελήνη, meaning "moon". According to Danker (*A Greek-English Lexicon*, 919), in the ancient world the symptoms of epilepsy were attributed to transcendent powers of the moon which were thought to trigger epileptic seizures. Luz (*Matthew*, 2: 407-8) notes that these symptoms could also be connected to the moon goddess Selene, and in some circles were seen as possession by a divine

“moonstruck,” a common way of referring to these kind of symptoms in the Greco-Roman world, which were thought to be caused by too much exposure to moonlight.¹⁸²

Some of the boy’s symptoms do indeed fit those typically associated with epilepsy (foaming at the mouth and thrashing around—Mark and Luke). Mark adds that the boy grinds his teeth and becomes rigid. The combination of symptoms described by Mark would suggest epileptic seizure. Epilepsy is also intimated by the father’s statement in Mark that his son has been like this since childhood and has had many accidents.

This is one of the few cases in the gospels where the condition described so clearly fits a clinical illness as recognized by western medicine. Although we should be cautious about assuming a direct one to one correlation between our western understanding of epilepsy and the condition of the boy, in this case this is perhaps a reasonable assumption.¹⁸³ The fact that Matthew alone has made this connection explicit may be a result of his location or cosmopolitan perspective. Similarly, Mark’s failure to do so may reflect his reception of an early exorcism story rooted in local Palestinian tradition, where epilepsy was not recognized as a disease distinct from spirit possession. It is important to note here that in this case I am not arguing for a connection between the boy’s condition and marginality. Since he has had the condition from childhood, and

power or by demons. See e.g., *Test. Sol.* 10.35; Plutarch, *Quae. Conv.* 658E-F; Lucian, *Tox*, 24; *Philops* 16; *Vet. Val.* 113.10. In *b. Git.* 70a, these symptoms are also connected with the demonic. Cf. Loos, *The Miracles of Jesus*, 403; Wahlen, *Jesus and the Impurity of Spirits*, 132-3.

¹⁸² The association of epileptic symptoms with too much exposure to light is also present in Jewish tradition. For example, *b. Pes.* 112b warns against standing in front of a lamp lest one becomes an epileptic and against having sexual intercourse in front of a lamp lest one have epileptic children.

¹⁸³ I acknowledge the danger of this assumption in general. Lambek (“From Disease to Discourse,” 42-3), for instance, has noted that in his observations of Mayotte culture, foaming at the mouth occurred only during culturally appropriate rituals, and that epilepsy was an incorrect diagnosis of the symptoms. However, in the case of Mark’s possessed boy, epilepsy is strongly suggested by the fact that, according to his father, the symptoms had been occurring since childhood.

since Mark links his deafness and muteness with an unclean spirit, what we have is a clear example of the first-century Palestinian worldview which linked particular kinds of illness or disability with evil spirits.

The father's request for Jesus to try to do something is in Mark addressed to "Jesus the Teacher" (Διδάσκαλε), rather than "Jesus the Lord". Matthew has altered this to Κύριε ("Sir"/"Lord"). Thus, in the earliest form of the narrative, we find no titles related to Jesus' ability to cast out demons. The man then tells Jesus that he had asked his disciples to cast out (ἐκβάλλωσιν), the spirit but they did not have the strength (οὐκ ἴσχυσαν).¹⁸⁴ Matthew and Luke have avoided Mark's ἴσχυσαν, replacing it with ἠδυνήθησαν. While δύναμαι can also indicate power, its emphasis lies more on ability, whereas ἰσχύω is more strongly associated with the idea of power or strength, and in many of its occurrences in the synoptic gospels has the added sense of the power to prevail over or withstand something.¹⁸⁵ This means that in the earliest version of the story, the disciples are depicted as not having the power/strength to remove the spirit, perhaps because mute demons were seen to be particularly difficult to exorcise and required extraordinary strength to master.¹⁸⁶

Thus, it appears that both Matthew and Luke have attempted to downplay the associations with power over demons and stress instead the disciples' lack of ability. Luke has retained Mark's "to cast out" (ἐκβάλλωσιν), but Matthew has replaced the entire

¹⁸⁴ Matt (17:16) has "heal".

¹⁸⁵ See Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 261-2, 484. See, e.g., Mark 5:4//Matt 8:28; Mark 14:37//Matt 26:40; Luke 6:48; 8:43; cf. Acts 19:20, where the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed (ἴσχυεν).

¹⁸⁶ This is the case in *PGM IV*. 3037-3044; See discussion in Twelftree, *In the Name of Jesus*, 120-25, on other possible reasons for the disciples' difficulty in removing the demon.

statement with οὐκ ἠδυνήθησαν αὐτὸν θεραπεῦσαι (“They were not able to heal him”), and has Jesus later tell the disciples that they were unable to cast out the spirit because of their lack of faith (v. 20). This is consistent with Matthew’s omission of Mark’s comment that the spirit violently convulses the boy, for which he substitutes the more subdued “he suffers terribly, and he often falls into the fire and into the water” (17:15). Thus, Matthew in particular was probably uncomfortable with the violence of the demon and the lack of power over demons exhibited by the disciples.

The violent treatment of the boy by the spirit in v. 20 and v. 26 is also present in the two other exorcisms recorded by Mark (The man in the synagogue and the Gerasene Demoniac). In all three cases, Matthew and Luke have downplayed the violence. We saw this already in the first two exorcisms, and it is true here as well. Matthew (17:18) has eliminated completely any reference to the demon’s behaviour and focussed instead on the boy’s suffering, and Luke has removed the second reference to convulsing (Mark 9:26). Based on the criterion of embarrassment, this discomfort on the part of Matthew and Luke with traditions they found in Mark suggests two things: 1) that they were hesitant to remove the exorcisms completely because they were embedded in early traditions about Jesus, and 2) that they felt the need to weaken Mark’s language in order to reduce the image of violence or vulgarity in the behaviour of the demoniacs, perhaps out of fear that it might lead to accusations that Jesus was operating as a magician.

Now let us look at Jesus’ address to the demon. According to Mark, Jesus rebuked (ἐπετίμησεν) the unclean spirit and commanded it to come out (v. 25). Matthew avoids “unclean spirit” altogether, replacing it with τὸ δαιμόνιον and σεληνιάζεται

(moonstruck). Mark uses only the terms “spirit” and “unclean spirit” throughout his account to refer to the possessing entity. Luke initially uses “spirit,” (v. 39) but then switches to “demon” (v. 42) when he describes the cause of the boy’s convulsions. Up to this point in Matthew there has been no mention of a possessing spirit at all. However, he now has Jesus rebuke the demon and it comes out (ἐπετίμησεν αὐτῷ ὁ Ἰησοῦς καὶ ἐξῆλθεν ἀπ’ αὐτοῦ τὸ δαιμόνιον). Matthew’s apparent conflation of demon possession and epilepsy here is especially significant since he distinguishes between demoniacs (δαιμονιζομένους) and epileptics (σεληνιαζομένους) in his introduction of Jesus’ activities (see 4.1).

The “I command you” (ἐγὼ ἐπιτάσσω σοι) phrase is known from incantations in the Greek Magical Papyri.¹⁸⁷ Similarly, the command “come out of him and never enter him again” (ἐξελθε ἐξ αὐτοῦ καὶ μηκέτι εἰσέλθῃς εἰς αὐτόν), has parallels in the ancient world. It is almost identical to the words of Eleazar to the demon (μηκέτ’ εἰς αὐτόν ἐπανήξειν), and by the demon to Apollonius, who swears that he will keep away from the youth and never enter any human again (μηδενὶ ἀνθρώπων ἐμπεσεῖσθαι).¹⁸⁸ The idea that demons could return even after being exorcised is also assumed in a prescription found in the *PGM* for an amulet that prevents demons from returning,¹⁸⁹ and is reflected in Q’s saying about the return of the unclean spirit, which we have already discussed in chapter 4. Thus, there is no reason to assume that the command to come out and never return comes from Mark, since they are both well known phrases in the ancient

¹⁸⁷ *PGM* VII.331; XIII.171.

¹⁸⁸ Josephus, *Ant.* 8.46-49; Philostratus, *Life* 4.20.

¹⁸⁹ *PGM* IV.1254.

world, although he would likely have known of these kinds of commands as well and could have added it.

As we saw in chapter 2 when discussing the evil spirit that afflicted Pharaoh (GenAp), the Aramaic ܠܘܠܐ probably lies behind ἐπιτιμάω, and its meaning there seems to be limited to bringing the evil spirit under control.¹⁹⁰ What is different here is that Jesus words to the unclean spirit are recorded: “You spirit that keeps from speaking and hearing (τὸ ἄλαλον καὶ κωφὸν πνεῦμα), I command you (ἐγὼ ἐπιτάσσω)¹⁹¹ come out from him and never enter him again!” (ἔξελθε ἐξ αὐτοῦ καὶ μηκέτι εἰσέλθῃς εἰς αὐτόν, v. 25).

It is noteworthy that initially the boy’s father describes the spirit as mute (πνεῦμα ἄλαλον), but when Jesus addresses the spirit he includes deafness: τὸ ἄλαλον καὶ κωφὸν πνεῦμα. This may simply reflect the fact that deafness and muteness were often linked in people’s minds, and that deafness was assumed by the father but not mentioned. This link between a spirit and deafness and muteness may reflect a first-century Palestinian view that unclean spirits were responsible for certain kinds of illness; in this case deafness and muteness, but perhaps also symptoms that in the modern western world are associated with epileptic seizure, such as foaming at the mouth and convulsion. Interestingly, while in the synagogue exorcism, Jesus commands silence, in this case he rebukes a spirit which inhibits speech, causing deafness and muteness.

¹⁹⁰ There are additional links between the use of ἐπιτιμάω in the LXX and in the Assumption of Moses and its use in the NT. One of these is in Jude 9, where the archangel Michael “contends with the devil” saying to him, “The Lord rebuke you” (ἐπιτιμήσαι σοι κύριος). This statement appears to allude to a similar phrase in Zech 3.2 where Yahweh rebukes (גנע) Satan. As Kee notes (“The Terminology of Mark’s Exorcism Stories, 238-9), in both contexts the rebuke reflects a struggle for control between God and an adversary.

¹⁹¹ To command with authority, according to Danker, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 383.

It is also evident from this account that there was not always a clear distinction in the first-century between an exorcism and a healing, since both Luke (ἰόσατο, 9:42) and Matthew (ἐθεραπεύθη, 17:18) report that as a result of the removal of the spirit the boy was healed. Although Mark's report does not explicitly make this connection, it is implied in the information that after the unclean spirit went out, the boy was able to stand. The story concludes with the disciples questioning Jesus about why they were unable to cast the spirit out. While Mark has Jesus emphasize the difficulty of the boy's case, stating that this type [of demon] can only be driven out by prayer, Matthew stresses their lack of faith. Luke has avoided both a critique of the disciples' faith and the idea that the case was particularly difficult and has ended the story instead with the astonishment of the crowd.

Several features of the account suggest an authentic core to the story, with the possible exception of the last section (vv. 28-9) which very likely represents Mark's editorial comments.¹⁹² These include the appeal by the boy's father, the unique (in the gospels) combination of epileptic and deaf/mute symptoms, and the lack of Christological titles. As Meier states, these features may point to “a special and memorable encounter between Jesus and the father of an epileptic child during Jesus' public ministry”.¹⁹³

I would, however, go further and include the violent struggle of the spirit, which Matthew and Luke avoid. The fact that they have retained the exorcism, but have edited out graphic and violent language in several cases, also suggests a core tradition that they

¹⁹² So Bultmann, *History*, 211; Twelftree, *Jesus the Exorcist*, 97.

¹⁹³ Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, 2: 655.

were somewhat uncomfortable with but that they could not dispense of because it was part of the early Jesus material.

5.3.4 A Syro-Phoenician Woman's Daughter: Mark 7:24-30//Matt 15:21-28:

We now move to an analysis of the final exorcism in the tradition, that of a Syro-Phoenician Woman's daughter, which is found in both Mark and Matthew. It does not occur in Q, and Luke has not included it for reasons that are unclear, especially since he of all the Gospel writers generally shows a preference for the marginalized and for women. In any case, we look to Mark for the original story, and to Matthew for changes to the original account.

[24] From there he set out and went away to the region of Tyre. He entered a house, and did not want any one to know he was there. Yet he could not escape notice, [25] but a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit (εἶχεν πνεῦμα ἀκάθαρτον) immediately heard about him, and she came and bowed down at his feet. [26] Now the woman was a Gentile of Syrophenician origin. She begged him to cast the demon out of her daughter. [27] He said to her, "Let the children first be fed, for it is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs." [28] But she answered him, "Sir, even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs." [29] Then he said to her, "For saying that, you may go—the demon has left your daughter." So she went home, found the child lying on the bed, and the demon gone (Mark 7:24-30).

One of the problems with this story for our study is that it is the only case of exorcism recorded in the gospels in which Jesus does not actually confront the demon, or even the possessed girl directly. Instead, her mother intervenes on her behalf. However, because both spirit possession and exorcism are assumed in the account, it is important to examine the text.¹⁹⁴ There is a similar case of healing at a distance recorded in Q 7:1-10

¹⁹⁴ Meier (*A Marginal Jew*, 2: 651, 659-61) notes that from a form-critical perspective, the story is actually a healing at a distance, rather than an exorcism and so has more in common with the healing of the centurion's servant (Q 7:1, 3, 6b-10 [Lk 7:1-10/Matt 8:5-13) and the healing of the royal official's son (John 4:46-54).

(Luke 7:1-10/Matt 8:5-13), in the form of the healing of the Centurion's servant, but it does not involve either spirit possession or exorcism, at least not in an obvious way.¹⁹⁵

The inclusion of this exorcism and that of the Gerasene Demoniac, as well as their location within the Markan narrative may be intended to emphasize the vulnerability of both Jews and gentiles to spirit possession. Wahlen notes, for example, that the two exorcisms of gentiles (the Syro-Phoenician Woman's Daughter, and the Gerasene Demoniac) frame the discussion of ritual purity in 7:1-23, and are framed by two exorcisms in Jewish territory (the exorcism at Capernaum, 1:21-28 and that of the boy with the spirit, 9:14-29).¹⁹⁶

The story has traditionally been interpreted theologically.¹⁹⁷ Some have seen it as a creation of the early Christian community for the purpose of legitimating the Gentile mission, or as a demonstration of faith.¹⁹⁸ Others have read it as an allegory demonstrating salvation history,¹⁹⁹ with the Canaanite woman standing in for her child, the gentiles, whom Jesus refers to as dogs. The children would then represent Israel, and the bread, the message of Jesus. Finally, some feminist scholars have seen the woman's

¹⁹⁵ But see Piper ("Jesus and the Conflict of Powers," 322-28), who argues that several elements in the healing of the Centurion's boy are suggestive of exorcism. These include the assumed hierarchy of authority, symbolized by military images and represented by the centurion, and the fact that Jesus commands the illness and it responds, in the way a demon might. Thus, just as the centurion commands soldiers, Jesus commands spirits. A healing at a distance attributed to Hanina ben Dosa is also found in the Babylonian Talmud (*b. Ber.* 34b).

¹⁹⁶ Wahlen, *Jesus and the Impurity of Spirits*, 101.

¹⁹⁷ Theissen (*The Gospels in Context*, 62-5) describes the three most common approaches to this text as biographical—tracing it to a particular mood of Jesus, symbolic—as a test of faith, and salvation historical—the idea that the story was meant to provide an opening of the Christian message to non-Jews.

¹⁹⁸ Luther (2.510=Sermon on Fasting, 1525) is particularly known for the faith interpretation. So also T. A. Burkill, "Historical Development of the Story of the Syro-Phoenician Woman," *NovT* 9 (1967): 161-77; Glenna Jackson, 'Have Mercy on Me.' *The Story of the Canaanite Woman in Matthew 15:21-28*. JSNTSup 228 (London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 33; Sharon Ringe, "The Gentile Woman's Story," in Letty M. Russell (ed.), *Feminist Interpretation of the Bible* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1985), 65-72; Meier, *A Marginal Jew* 2: 660.

¹⁹⁹ Hilary and Jerome are the most well-known representatives of this method.

words as a reflection of an early Christian controversy around gender and ethnicity, whereby the story functioned to legitimate female leadership within the church.²⁰⁰

However, analysis of the social and political context of the early first century, particularly the relationship between Galilee and Tyre, offers more fruitful possibilities from a historical perspective. Even Meier, who argues that the text is probably not historical, concedes that there are some peculiarities in the story that might suggest historicity.²⁰¹ These include the presence of a Syrophoenician woman in the region (which he assumes was northern Galilee), a woman interceding for a demonic daughter,²⁰² which is found nowhere else in the Gospel tradition, and the harsh way in which Jesus addresses the woman.

Socio-Political and Historical Issues

Let us begin with an examination of some of the social and historical conditions that offer support for the authenticity of Mark's account of this story and then move to textual analysis. Mark describes the location of the encounter as "the region of Tyre" (ὄρια Τύρου, v. 24).²⁰³ Like "region of the Gerasenes," this designation fits the historical context. Earlier in his gospel, Mark mentions people from this area as part of the crowd

²⁰⁰ See, e.g., Elaine Wainwright, "A Voice from the Margin: Reading Matthew 15:21-28 in an Australian Feminist Key," in *Reading From this Place Vol. 2. Social Location and Biblical Interpretation in Global Perspective* (ed. Fernando F. Segovia and Mary Ann Tolbert; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 132-53, 145. Although many feminists have flagged the issues of patriarchy and gender in this text, Amy-Jill Levine ("Matthew's Advice to a Divided Readership," in David E. Aune [ed.], *The Gospel of Matthew in Current Study* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001], 22-41 [30-31]) notes that there is no evidence that either Mark or Matthew raise the issue of her marital status or her behavior as being unusual.

²⁰¹ Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, 2: 660.

²⁰² See p. 82-3 on the question of surrogates interceding on behalf of others.

²⁰³ Matthew has "the district of Tyre and Sidon" (μέρη Τύρου καὶ Σιδῶνος)

that followed Jesus at the Sea of Galilee, and it was a common way of referring to the area surrounding a city in the ancient world.²⁰⁴ Josephus, for example, refers to this region specifically as Τυρίων χώρα, and mentions villages that belonged to Tyre.²⁰⁵ Although it is not certain that Jesus would have travelled into Syria, there would seem to be no particular reason for Mark to invent the fact that people from this region were drawn to Jesus or to create an excursion by Jesus into this area, except to have Jesus reclaim this area for the Jews. Luz, for instance, argues that Jesus did spend time in this area which was, from the Jewish perspective, part of the traditional holy land.²⁰⁶

In fact, close social and economic ties existed between upper Galilee and Tyre in the first century, and the northern part of Galilee in particular was oriented more toward Syria and the Phoenician cities in the North than toward lower Galilee in the South.²⁰⁷ Tyre was a wealthy city because of its metal and dye industries, but was dependent on the interior for its agricultural products because of its coastal location,²⁰⁸ a situation which continued well into the first century.²⁰⁹ Archaeological and textual evidence confirms both the city's wealth and its regional dominance in financial matters.²¹⁰ One of the

²⁰⁴ Mark 3:8 describes people from περὶ Τύρον καὶ Σιδοῶνα.

²⁰⁵ Josephus, *War* 2.459, 588; 3.38; 4.105.

²⁰⁶ See Luz, *Matthew* 2: 338-9.

²⁰⁷ So Theissen, *The Gospels in Context*, 60-80.

²⁰⁸ See 1 Kgs 5:7-12, which describes the trade arrangements made between Solomon and Hiram of Tyre. Hiram provided cedar and Cyprus for Solomon and in exchange Solomon provided wheat and oil for Hiram. This is confirmed by Josephus who adds that this arrangement was necessary because of Tyre's location on an island (*Ant.* 8.54, 141). Pliny (*Nat.* 5.17.76) notes that while Tyre was once an island, separated by 700 yards from the mainland, Alexander joined it to the mainland. Later rabbinic accounts (*y. Demai* 1.3; *p. Abod. Zar.* 4.39d) also confirm grain exports from Galilee to Tyre.

²⁰⁹ Both Acts 12:20 and Josephus (*Ant.* 14.190-216) indicate that the people of Tyre and Sidon were dependent on Galilee for food.

²¹⁰ Among the evidence is the presence of Tyrian coins in Galilee and evidence that Galilean pottery, wine, grain and oil were exported from Galilee into Syria (Josephus, *Life* 74-76); See Hanson, *Tyrian Influence*, 53; Richardson, "Khirbet Qana," 120-144; Freyne, "Herodian Economics," 40; idem, "Jesus and the Urban Culture of Galilee," 602; Goodman, *The Ruling Class of Judaea*, 53.

clearest indications of this is that the monies kept in the Temple treasury were in Tyrian currency, which was seen to be one of the most stable in the region.²¹¹

Since Tyre was wealthy and could afford to buy its produce from Galilee, one can assume that the Tyrians bought large amounts of grain from Galilean farmers. As we will see from our discussion in chapter 3, there are important reasons for arguing that the farmers themselves probably did not receive fair compensation for what they grew.

In addition, there were tensions between Tyre and Galilee as a result of Tyre's history of attempting to expand its geographical territory to the south into Galilee, which was made possible by the fact that there was no clear physical boundary between the two.²¹² Josephus states that the Tyrians were bitter enemies of the Jews,²¹³ and that there was a history of ethnic tensions between Jews and non-Jews in Tyre from as early as the mid-first century BCE, when the Tyrians seized Jewish property (which had to be restored by Mark Anthony), and enslaved Tyrian Jews.²¹⁴ Anti-Jewish sentiment was expressed by the Tyrians to Vespasian when he arrived in the East in 66 CE,²¹⁵ and during the Jewish war these tensions exploded into the slaughter and imprisonment of Jewish citizens.²¹⁶

There is evidence that those in the Hellenistic cities generally disliked the Jews, and that the Jews of Galilee also felt animosity toward their Tyrian neighbours.²¹⁷ The report that Jesus, and presumably other Jews, perceived Tyre negatively is also suggested

²¹¹ See note 49, ch. 3.

²¹² So Freyne, *Geography, Politics and Economics*, 40; Theissen, *The Gospels in Context*, 75-6.

²¹³ Josephus, *C. Ap.* 1.70.

²¹⁴ Josephus, *Ant.* 14.313-21.

²¹⁵ Josephus, *Life* 407.

²¹⁶ Josephus, *War* 2.478.

²¹⁷ See e.g., Josephus, *War* 2.457-458, 478, 502.

by Jesus' use of Tyre and Sidon as the foils against which Chorizan and Bethsaida were negatively assessed.²¹⁸ Finally, the borderland between Galilee and Ptolemais was known to harbour Jewish resistance movements which were troublesome to the Syrians living nearby.²¹⁹ Not surprisingly, tensions between Galileans and those living in the regions around Tyre contributed to prejudice on both sides, and this was most certainly reflected in Jesus' response to the woman.²²⁰

In terms of dating and historicity of the account, several points need to be examined. First, Acts 21:3-6 tells us that there was a community of Christ-believers in Tyre, probably by the 50s or 60s. Thus, if Mark's account was written or influenced by the early church in Syria, it would presumably have placed Jesus in the city, rather than in the country.²²¹ Mark's depiction of Jesus moving freely between Galilee and the Decapolis and north into Syria, also fits the historical situation of 30 CE²²² better than 66-70 when the Gospel was probably compiled, since at that time instability brought about by the war would have made travel in the region more difficult. As we saw in chapter 3, during Tiberius' reign (14-37 CE) the area experienced relative peace.

²¹⁸ Q 10:13-15 [Matt 11:21-4//Luke 10:13-15].

²¹⁹ Josephus, *Ant.* 17.288-9; *Life* 104-5.

²²⁰ So Theissen, *The Gospels in Context*, 66-80.

²²¹ So Theissen, *The Gospels in Context*, 67. However, the gospels never mention Jesus in association with any of the larger urban centres such as Sepphoris or Tiberias. This is particularly true for Matthew who characterizes cities as places which display an unwillingness to repent, while rural areas show more openness to the message of Jesus. See e.g., Matt 11:21. See also Amy-Jill Levine, *The Social and Ethnic Dimensions of Matthean Social History Studies in the Bible and Early Christianity* 14 (Lewiston, NY.: Edwin Mellen Press, 1988), 134-5, 155-7. Thus, Mark's placement of Jesus in the region of Tyre rather than Tyre itself could reflect a desire on the part of the gospel writers to avoid associating Jesus with cities. It may also however reflect historical reality.

²²² Mark 2:13-15 and par. which mention the tax collection booth at Capernaum. See also Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, 2: 651-2; Sean Freyne, "Galilean Questions to Crossan's Mediterranean Jesus," in *Whose Historical Jesus? Studies in Christianity and Judaism* 7 (eds. William E. Arnal and Michel Desjardins; Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier Press, 1997), 3-91; 76-77.

In addition, as we have already noted, all four gospels suggest that Capernaum was Jesus' base of operations for his ministry,²²³ and Philip and Nathaniel were reportedly from Bethsaida, a city just across the border in Philip's territory, northeast of the Sea of Galilee.²²⁴ Jesus' condemnation of the cities of Bethsaida and Chorizan because of their rejection of his ministry provides further attestation that he spent time in border regions,²²⁵ which placed him close to both the Decapolis and Syria and makes excursions across these borders plausible. Crossing borders, both socially and geographically is also part of the broader tradition about Jesus. Therefore, taking his exorcisms and healings to border regions and farther fits the criterion of coherence.²²⁶ We may posit therefore that the core of the story, an exorcism of a Syrophenician girl, occurred in the region of Tyre during Jesus' lifetime.

This study of the cultural context reveals that the story is probably Palestinian in origin. It presupposes an original narrator and audience who are acquainted with the social situation in the border regions of Tyre and Galilee. As a result, it now appears more difficult to trace the origins of the story exclusively to early Christian debates about the legitimacy of the gentile mission—debates we read about in Jerusalem, Caesarea, and Antioch. Something more concrete is at stake. In principle we cannot exclude the possibility that the story has a historical core: an encounter between Jesus and a Hellenized Syrophenician woman. If the considerations developed here are correct, the miracle would not consist in healing someone far away, but in the overcoming of an equally divisive distance, that between nations and cultures, in which the divisive prejudices are not simply malicious gossip, but have a real basis in the social, economic, and political relationships between two neighboring peoples.²²⁷

The question of Jesus' geographical trajectory at the end of the story is somewhat problematic, however. Mark states that Jesus left the area of Tyre and came to the Sea of Galilee through the middle of the district of the Decapolis, a circuitous route to say the

²²³ See note 24.

²²⁴ John 12:20

²²⁵ Q 10:13-15 [Luke/Matt 11:14-20-21].

²²⁶ Theissen, *The Gospels in Context*, 111-12.

²²⁷ Theissen, *The Gospels in Context*, 79.

least. This description raises legitimate questions about the historicity of the story, or at least the transition between the stories. There are several possible solutions. First, the entire episode, including the travel itinerary, could be a Markan insertion, included for the purpose of portraying Jesus as one who reaches out to non-Jewish people. It is also possible that only the travel itinerary was added later to link the two stories. Another possibility is that the travel details were already in the tradition received by the Markan redactor, and he, writing from thirty five to forty years after Jesus' death from another location (i.e. Rome), confused some of the details of Palestinian geography. However, given the accuracy of Mark on many other geographical points, this seems unlikely.

An alternative solution is that a memory (the explanation having been forgotten) existed in the tradition that Jesus had on this occasion or others taken this circuitous route through the Decapolis when travelling from northern Galilee or the region of Tyre to his home in Capernaum, perhaps to avoid the authorities. Given the political danger from Antipas, this is not an unreasonable assumption.

Textual Evidence

Let us now examine the textual evidence in the story. If we compare Mark's version with Matthew's, we find that there are some significant differences. First, while Mark has Jesus in a house, in Matthew, the encounter occurs in open country. There are two possible reasons for this difference. Mark may reflect the historical reality that Jesus was trying to avoid being found, either because he was afraid of the authorities or because of fatigue.

However, it is more likely that the house and Jesus' desire to conceal himself is Markan,²²⁸ and that Matthew's version reflects a memory (perhaps an oral tradition) that Jesus often operated in the open country, which is compatible with other healings and exorcisms in the tradition.²²⁹ This is one of the cases where Matthew may actually retain an earlier and more authentic tradition than Mark, even though Mark's gospel is earlier.

Another difference is that Matthew has expanded the exchange between Jesus and the woman, the only healing story where Matthew has expanded rather than condensed Mark's words. The most significant additions are Jesus' initial refusal to answer the woman, the disciples' request for Jesus to send the woman away, and a statement by Jesus that he has been sent only to the house of Israel. These of course are partly a reflection of Matthean theology. He has generally avoided having Jesus interact with non-Jews, and demonstrates a desire to limit his mission to Israel.²³⁰ These comments may also reflect an attempt by Matthew to emphasize Jesus' initial hesitancy to help a gentile in order to highlight his acceptance, which Matthew attributes to the woman's faith and uses to point to the later inclusion of the gentiles in the Jesus movement.²³¹ The woman's use of "Son of David," in Matthew, which is also found in his story of the two blind men (17:15), reflects Matthew's desire to emphasize a messianic claim.²³²

²²⁸ So Wrede, *Messianic Secret*, 36; Twelftree, *Jesus the Exorcist*, 89.

²²⁹ Many of Jesus' other exorcisms and healings occur in open places, and often drew crowds, which at times threatened to crush Jesus. See, e.g., Mark 2:1-2; 3:7-12, 20; Matt 4:23-25; Luke 6:17-20.

²³⁰ See, e.g., 10:5-6.

²³¹ So Luz, *Matthew*, 2: 337.

²³² See discussion in Wahlen, *Jesus and the Impurity of Spirits*, 130-31, who notes that κύριος and υἱὸς Δαυίδ are often used by Matthew in parallel passages. The reference to the Son of David may also suggest a connection with either David's ability to calm the spirits that tormented Saul (1 Samuel 16:14; 18:10 and 19:9; cf. Josephus *War* 2.168, 211; *Ant.* 6.168) or a connection with Solomon, who, as we have already seen, was known to be especially knowledgeable about demons. See, e.g., Love, "Jesus, Healer of the Canaanite Woman's Daughter," 11-17.

In addition, while Mark describes the woman as a Greek, a Syrophenician by birth (Ἑλληνίς, Συροφαινίκισσα τῷ γένει), Matthew has altered this to make her a Canaanite.²³³ Matthew's use of "Canaanite" probably reflects his interest in depicting gentiles as subservient to Jews by evoking the political and religious distance between the early Israelites and their Canaanite neighbours, and may thus indicate a desire to portray the woman in a negative light. Although some of Matthew's references to gentiles are positive, and as a result some have argued that he may actually be attempting to amend the more negative perceptions of the Canaanite people by depicting a gentile woman as a model of faith, Sim rejects this, noting that the general portrayal of the woman in Matthew is strikingly more negative than in Mark.²³⁴

In any case, Mark's designation of "Greek" and "Syrophenician" makes more sense from a historical point of view, since combining cultural and geographic origins in a designation is found in both Philo and Josephus, as well as elsewhere in the New Testament, and was a common way of describing people's ethnicity and origins in the Greco-Roman world.²³⁵ Based on the double designation of Greek and Syrophenician,

²³³ Although neither Mark nor Matthew names the woman, the Pseudo-Clementine Homilies (13.7.3-4) assign the name 'Justa' to her.

²³⁴ So David Sim (*The Gospel of Matthew and Christian Judaism: The History and Social Setting of the Matthean Community* [SNTW; ed. John Barclay, Joel Marcus, and John Richards. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998], 222-4), who argues that Matthew's view of gentiles is generally negative and that the change from Mark's Syro-Phoenician to Canaanite is a clear demonstration of this view. The view that the Canaanites were enemies of Israel, especially because of their worship of foreign gods, in addition to occurring throughout the Deuteronomistic History, is also found in Isa 23. Levine (*Social and Ethnic Dimensions*, 139) argues that the change to "Canaanite" demonstrates Matthew's temporal subordination of the gentiles to the Jews. But see Jackson ('*Have Mercy on Me*,' 28-9) who argues that a positive view of gentiles is evident in Matthew, including the four gentile women mentioned in his genealogy in ch. 1 (Tamar, Rahab, Ruth and Bethsheba), and John's warning that God is not dependant on the children of Abraham (3:9).

²³⁵ See, for example, Josephus, *Life* 427 where Josephus' third wife is described as being from Crete, but of Jewish origin, and *C. Ap.* 1.179-80, where he describes a Hellenized Jew who is a Greek. Cf. Acts 4:36; 18:2.

we may surmise that the woman was a Hellenized person with Syrian origins and thus probably from the upper stratum of society, since hellenization was most prominent among this group. Upper-stratum status is also suggested by Mark's use of κλίνη (bed) rather than κράβατος (a mat made of straw and associated with the poor) for the girl's bed.²³⁶ Syrian origins might also explain how the woman was able to communicate with Jesus since Palestinian Aramaic (and probably even more so Galilean Aramaic) and Phoenician were closely related.²³⁷

In terms of the girl's condition and the encounter between Jesus and the woman, several observations can be made. First, this is the only case in the gospels, other than that of Mary Magdalene, where a female is described as possessed by a demon, and the only case of a child being possessed except that of the boy with the spirit. This is significant because spirit possession among children across cultures is unusual. Of course, we do not know the girl's age or any other details about her situation. However, spirit possession is more common among women cross culturally than among men, and it is typically connected with issues such as arranged marriage, patriarchy and fertility.²³⁸ Since

²³⁶ So Theissen (*The Gospels in Context*, 71-2), who notes that where Mark does use κλίνη (4:21 and 7:4) he does so for practical reasons; in the first case because it would be impossible to clean under a mat, and in the second because it is easier to wash a bed than a straw mat. See Mark 2:4, 9, 12; 6:55; John 5:8ff where κράβατος is used.

²³⁷ As Theissen (*The Gospels in Context*, 71-2) notes, there is textual evidence that the Tyrian population was bilingual in the first century (Josephus *Ant.* 8.144; *C. Ap.* 179-180), and the Phoenician language, according to Josephus (*C. Ap.* 1.173) was very similar to Aramaic.

²³⁸ See, e.g., Rothenberg, *Spirits of Palestine*, 93- 6; Bourguignon, "Introduction," 12-18; Bourguignon, *Possession*, 48; Shaara, and Strathern, "Altered States of Consciousness," 145-60; Mark Nichter, "Idioms of Distress: Alternatives in the Expression of Psychosocial Distress: A Case Study from South India," *Culture, Medicine, and Psychiatry* 5 (1981): 379-408; Lenora Greenbaum, "Societal Correlates of Possession Trance in Sub-Saharan Africa," in *Religion, Altered States of Consciousness, and Social Change* (Columbus, OH.: Ohio State University Press, 1973), 39-57; cf. Obeyesekere, "Psychocultural Exegesis," 243-45, whose study of spirit possession in Sri Lanka posits a connection

according to Danker, θυγάτριον (“little girl,” v. 25) is a term of endearment and can also be used to refer to a girl of marriageable age,²³⁹ it is possible that the girl was actually a young woman of 13-15 years, making women’s issues around marriage a possible reason for the spirit possession.

According to Mark the girl is possessed by an unclean spirit (πνεῦμα ἀκάθαρτον), while in Matthew she is badly possessed by a demon (κακῶς δαιμονίζεται). It is not completely clear why this change was made, but it may simply be that Matthew preferred the demonic language, or that he saw “unclean spirit” as colloquial. As we have already seen, Mark’s use of unclean spirit may reflect a rural Palestinian perspective. Matthew’s change to demon and increased urgency also makes Jesus’ initial refusal to acknowledge the woman even more striking.

The exchange between the woman and Jesus begins when she falls (προσέπεσεν) at his feet (Mark). Matthew has the woman kneel (προσεκύνει, lit, “she prostrated herself”)²⁴⁰ before him. Matthew’s change may reflect his desire to emphasize the woman’s inferior position or to stress a posture of prayer or supplication. Matthew includes the additional information that the disciples ask Jesus to send the woman away because she was calling out (κράζει) after them, whereas in Mark there is no mention of the disciples at all. This, along with Jesus’ declaration that he has only come to the lost

between rigid socialization, particularly of girls, and the widespread existence of hysteria, anorexia and hypochondriacal tendencies and the somatization of conflicts.

²³⁹ Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 461.

²⁴⁰ Danker (*Greek-English Lexicon*) notes that this term refers to the custom of prostrating oneself before persons and kissing their feet or the hem of their garment, or the ground.

sheep of the house of Israel, suggests Matthean theological shaping intended to emphasize the primary place of the Jews in salvation.

The offensive nature of Jesus' response ("Let the children first be fed, for it is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs." [Mark 7:27]) has been the source of endless debate and confusion among scholars who have tried every possible means of rendering the statement less offensive than it appears on a first reading.²⁴¹ However, the sheer offensiveness of these words supports their authenticity since, as Sharon Ringe has noted, it is difficult to imagine the church wanting to portray Jesus as one who first insults someone and then is corrected for this hostile saying.²⁴² Matthew adds insult to injury by removing Mark's "Let the children be fed first" and thus the provisional nature of Mark's Jesus' statement. As David Sim has observed, while Mark's chronological statement leaves room for the gentiles, Matthew's does not. In fact, Sim argues that the very point of the healing of the gentile woman is that it was unusual and that Jesus did, on occasion, show compassion to gentiles, but only when they exhibited great faith.²⁴³

While giving table scraps to household dogs is assumed in Greek literature,²⁴⁴ and this might diminish slightly the impact of Jesus' words, it is difficult to know how dogs were viewed within Jesus' immediate Jewish Palestine context. Jesus' comment may

²⁴¹ These attempts include the idea that Jesus is simply expressing his priority for the Jewish nation, the idea that the term for dogs, *κυνάρια* should be rendered 'puppies' making it less offensive, and understanding the 'bread' as metaphorical. However, in the ancient world dogs were generally viewed with contempt. This is evident both in the Hebrew Bible (Isa 56:10-11; Ps 58:7-9), which represents an earlier period, and in the literature of the first-century. See e.g., Philo, *Dec.* 23; 115. Thus, even if *κυνάρια* is read as 'puppies,' this does not necessarily remove the offensive nature of the comment.

²⁴² Sharon Ringe, "The Gentile Woman's Story," 68.

²⁴³ Sim, *The Gospel of Matthew and Christian Judaism*, 224.

²⁴⁴ See, e.g., Aristotle *Gen. an.* 2.6=744b; Apuleius *Metam.* 7.14; Philostratus *Life* 1.19.

simply affirm his own sense of priority; first the children (Jews) should be fed, and then the dogs (gentiles) receive what is leftover.²⁴⁵ If we assume that the words (or at least the sentiment expressed by them) reflect an early tradition, how do we account for them? As we have already seen, there were clear social, political and economic tensions between the Tyrians and the Galileans in the first century, especially around access to food.

If these tensions, rather than purely theological motives, were behind Jesus' response, it would mean that Jesus was initially expressing a prejudice toward the woman and refusing to heal her daughter because of the fact that bread (here symbolizing food in general) was literally being taken from Galilee (which was mostly Jewish) and put into the mouths of the inhabitants of Tyre. His obvious prejudice toward the Tyrians may work together here in a double entendre; i.e., Jesus is both referring to physical bread and to the house of Israel generally, including Judea (Bethlehem literally means "house of bread").²⁴⁶ If, in addition, the woman belonged to the upper stratum of society, Jesus' insult would be even more stinging, since he, who was not a member of the upper stratum, would be insulting a person who was by calling her a dog. It is important to note that the reversal is not intra-Jewish, but between Jews and gentiles.

The denotive kernel of this saying only maintains that just as one prefers children to dogs, so his first concern is for the Jews. But surrounding the denotative kernel is an associative field conditioned by the historical situation. It is evoked by the choice of image: when people mentioned food in the border regions of Tyre and Galilee, and also spoke of children (=Jews) and dogs (=Gentiles), they simultaneously addressed the general economic situation, determined by a clear hierarchy that was just as clearly reversed by Jesus' words.²⁴⁷

²⁴⁵ So Luz, *Matthew*, 2: 340-41.

²⁴⁶ This understanding of the bread also fits into Matthew's metaphorical use of bread in this section (13:53-16:12).

²⁴⁷ Theissen, *The Gospels in Context*, 75.

Surprisingly, the woman acknowledges the validity of Jesus' comment, and provides a witty response, noting that even the dogs are allowed to glean the crumbs that fall from the table.

If this story is based in a historical incident, Jesus' initial rejection of the woman's request may also reflect a conservative stance on his part in relation to boundary issues with gentiles, which begins to change because of the woman's persistence and wit.²⁴⁸ Thus, Jesus' response to the woman in Mark ("because of this word go your way" [διὰ τοῦτου τὸν λόγον ὑπάγε]), makes more sense than Matthew's "O woman, great is your faith!" which makes the daughter's restoration to health dependent on the woman's faith. In contrast, Mark's Jesus acknowledges the woman's ability to turn the conversation and his own prejudicial response on its head. Her answer demonstrates both humour and steely determination. While she accepts Jesus' categories and her inferior status to both Jesus and by implication to the Jews, she nevertheless persists in her request for healing. As a result of her response, Jesus tells her that her daughter has been healed and the demon is gone.

In summary, the exorcism of the Syro-Phoenician woman's daughter as recorded by Mark, suggests that questions of ethnicity, borders, economics and food play a role in Jesus' initial refusal to heal the woman's daughter. When the woman accepts Jewish superiority and does so with humour and wit, Jesus relents. Thus, if there is a historical core to this exorcism it would also provide further confirmation that Jesus operated at the margins of Jewish society, both geographically and socially. Although some have argued

²⁴⁸ William Loader, "Challenged at the Boundaries: Conservative Jesus in Mark's Tradition," *JSNT* 63 (1996), 45-61.

against the historicity of this account based on the unlikelihood that Jesus would have visited Tyre and Sidon, from a sociological and anthropological perspective, this makes perfect sense. Thus, Jesus' foray across the border into Syria is not necessarily out of character, and an exorcism in the region of Tyre is historically plausible.

5.4 Conclusions

In this chapter we have suggested that two overlapping understandings of spirits are reflected in the New Testament gospels, as in the ancient world generally. The first is the belief that illnesses could be caused by evil spirits. This view is especially evident in the exorcism of the boy with a spirit, who is described as possessed by a spirit of muteness and deafness, but may also be present in the exorcism of the Syro-Phoenician woman's daughter. Second, evil or unclean spirits were thought to have possessed certain individuals, and this possession was partly a reflection of the socio-political context of oppression.

Our examination of the four exorcisms found in Mark has shown that embedded in these accounts are traditions that contain common elements. These include 1) a confrontation between Jesus and the unclean spirit, which includes a violent struggle (with the exception of the exorcism of the Syro-Phoenician woman's daughter) that is unlikely to have been invented by the early church; 2) a tendency in both Matthew and Luke to downplay the violent and graphic elements of the exorcisms in Mark, suggesting discomfort with the rawness of the events, but a desire to remain faithful to the received tradition; 3) incantational language that reflects what is found in other ancient Jewish and

Greek texts. The most significant discovery we made in this vein was that in two exorcisms ascribed to Jesus, the roles of the exorcist and spirit have been reversed, with the spirit attempting to ward off Jesus by exhibiting knowledge of him.

4) In all four exorcisms, a case can be made for marginality in some form or another. Capernaum, Jesus' home base, and the location of the first exorcism, was on the geographic margins of Galilee. Although Capernaum was not a large or important city, it could nevertheless have proved strategic for Jesus if he wanted to unite Israel by reincorporating traditionally Jewish areas. The exorcism of the Gerasene Demoniac occurs across the lake in the Decapolis, which is geographically marginal from the perspective of Galilee. Social marginality is also evident in the report that the demoniac lived among the tombs and was possessed by a large number of spirits. A political element, which is reflected in the name given to the spirits, "Legion," is also likely.

In the case of the boy with the spirit, we can assume marginalization because of his unpredictable behavior (i.e. falling into the fire, foaming at the mouth and thrashing around). Finally, both the Syrophenician woman and her daughter are non-Jews from an area known for tensions with Jews and with the population of Galilee. In our final chapter, we will bring together all strands of evidence to form a portrait of the historical Jesus as exorcist. These strands include evidence from the Jewish prophetic tradition, of beliefs about evil spirits in the ancient world, the socio-political context and comparative anthropological evidence about spirit possession and exorcism.

6. Conclusion: Reconstructing Jesus, the Galilean Exorcist

We began our investigation with two overarching questions: First, what did incidents of spirit possession and Jesus' exorcisms as reported in the synoptic gospels mean within the specific socio-political and religious context of first-century Galilee and Judea? Second, what can a better understanding of Jesus' role as exorcist contribute to our understanding of the historical figure of Jesus? We begin with the first question.

Our study has demonstrated that spirit possession and exorcism are universal phenomena which are particularly linked with agrarian societies and with a belief in malevolent spirits that have the capacity to possess or afflict persons. Chapter 2 demonstrated the way in which both Jewish and Greco-Roman belief systems included the understanding that spiritual forces were involved in affliction and later in possession, as well as in the unfolding of political events.

Chapter 3 showed that Galilee was an agrarian society which was also experiencing foreign rule and widespread poverty and unrest. As a result, we have shown that these two aspects of the first-century context—the spiritual and the political—deeply shaped the understanding of both political events and illnesses and spirit possession. Since by necessity Jesus was a product of both his spiritual heritage and milieu and of his socio-political context, he too must have shared these views of the way the world functioned. Thus, it is within this cultural framework that we can best understand Jesus' exorcisms.

In our examination of the evidence related to Jesus himself, our discussion in chapter 4 demonstrated that Jesus was known in the earliest traditions as a spirit-filled

exorcist. This was evident in two major ways. First, his baptism and vision at the beginning of his public mission bore striking similarities to the experiences of prophets reported in the Hebrew Bible and to shaman-healers across cultures. Second, Mark's account of Jesus being cast by his possessing spirit into the wilderness and the details of his trials in Q correspond closely with the experiences of healers and exorcists across cultures, and specifically with those of mediums. Thus, the portrait of Jesus that was sketched using textual and anthropological evidence indicates that Jesus role as healer and exorcist were aspects of the larger role of medium in the context of first-century agrarian Galilee.

Mediums are part of the lower to middle social stratum, exhibit informal leadership and experience involuntary spirit possession, at least initially. These figures typically also begin their careers with spontaneous spirit possession which is initially uncontrolled. After successfully facing a period of trials, this initially involuntary experience develops into the ability to heal and exorcise spirits from others. In addition, it seems very likely that Jesus saw himself and was seen by others as standing within the Jewish prophetic tradition, and that his prophetic role and his role as exorcist/healer were connected.

We also demonstrated in chapter 4 that in both Mark and Q, Jesus was accused of being possessed by the demon Beelzebul and in Mark and John of being mad. The term Beelzebul appears also to have been connected with foreign gods, and when applied to Jesus, was meant to discredit him as an exorcist. The application of anthropological analysis to this material revealed that accusations against healers are a common and

universal way of discrediting an opponent who threatens the status quo. At the same time, the response from the crowds appears to have been generally positive, confirming what anthropological studies of deviance and spirit possession have shown, that responses to healers and exorcists depend on the social position of both the observer and the exorcist/healer in relation to the larger social group and on whether the possession is viewed as beneficial to the community.

When we examined the exorcisms themselves we discovered several significant issues. First, the term “unclean spirit,” which is found both in the extra-canonical Jewish literature of the Second Temple period and in the earliest stratum of gospel material, likely reflects early Jesus traditions rooted in Palestinian understandings of the nature of possessing spirits. This is particularly significant for understanding Jesus’ exorcisms, since the designations “clean” and “unclean,” are linked with Jewish concerns about maintaining clear purity boundaries.¹

From an anthropological perspective, first-century Jewish Palestine was a purity society that defined itself in terms of physical, religious and social boundaries, expressed through dietary restrictions, Sabbath observance and monotheism.² This way of life was also related to orientation to the Jerusalem temple with its “holy of holies” at the centre of purity or holiness with purity gradually decreasing as one moved away from the Temple to the borders of Israel. Purity was achieved partly through maintaining Torah obedience in such a way as to remain “distinct” or separate as a people from other peoples.³ In the

¹ See discussion in 2.2.

² Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, 124.

³ See Borg, *Jesus in Contemporary Scholarship*, 107-9.

Jewish literature, for example, gentiles are at times depicted as unclean and as dangerous, and evil or unclean spirits are associated with that which was marginal or “other.” The unclean spirits that took possession of Galilean persons may then have functioned simultaneously as idioms of distress which both expressed their marginal status within Judaism and acknowledged that their socio-religious world had been compromised by what was seen as “unclean.”

All four exorcisms found in Mark show evidence of being rooted in historical events, even if parts have been modified or contain later Christian interpretation, and we saw that a socio-historical and political analysis of all evidence provided a cogent and plausible basis for understanding the impact of Jesus public activity as exorcist. In addition, all four exorcisms reflect in some way marginality, which as we have shown is linked with a dualistic understanding of the universe.

In the case of the exorcism in the Capernaum synagogue, marginality may be as simple as the location itself, near the eastern border of Galilee. In the case of the Gerasene Demoniac, marginality is reflected in the location of the Decapolis, which was outside of Jewish territory, but part of what Jews saw as legitimately belonging to them, and an area of conflict between Jews and non-Jews. Finally, the exorcism at a distance of the Syro-Phoenician woman’s daughter reflects cultural and geographic marginality in relation to Jewish Galilee. This is present both in the foreign status of the woman and her daughter and in the location (in Syria) of the exorcism.

In addition, from a sociological perspective, Jesus was similar to his contemporaries, both of the prophetic-messianic type and of the banditry type. This does

not mean that his activities were identical, but that his place within the social structure was very similar to theirs. His activities may have challenged the authorities in a slightly less overt way. However, his baptism by John, and perhaps discipleship with him, suggest that although the two men were different in certain respects, they both led movements which were perceived to be a threat, and were consequently brutally suppressed, like those of their contemporaries. As a result, we can say that although Jesus' tools may have been different from some of his contemporaries, the meaning of his activities may have been very similar; to address through his healings and exorcisms the plight of the poor rural Galilean and to enable them to both express their frustration with aspects of the socio-political and religious situation and to be healed in the process.

Thus, I am proposing that Jesus was deeply connected with what was marginal in his own society (Galilee), and that this interaction with those who were possessed by unclean spirits was controversial. Jesus' exorcisms of unclean spirits brought out into the open the issues raised through possession by unclean spirits, and this was one of the reasons he was targeted by the Jewish and Roman leadership.

The specific interactions Jesus had with the unclean spirits are also significant for understanding the historical man. With the exception of the exorcism of the Syro-phoenician woman's daughter, which contains no direct encounter between Jesus and the possessing spirit, all exorcisms indicate that a struggle occurred between Jesus and spirits he attempted to exorcise. This suggests that in the earliest traditions and in the initial period of his public activity, he was not always successful in his first attempts to cast out unclean spirits and intimates a historical Jesus who, like healers and exorcists across

cultures, struggled initially with his abilities and was vigorously challenged by the spirits he encountered. This hypothesis is further suggested by the reports in two of the exorcisms (at Capernaum and at Gerasa) that the unclean spirits tried to ward Jesus off by displaying their knowledge of his identity and by using incantational language, which is typically used by an exorcist rather than the spirits to remove demons.

The presence of a crowd at every exorcism is also significant and confirms the social component of the exorcisms. The exorcisms of possessed persons in the community functioned as the transformation of the identity of the possessed individual, which also affected the community. In addition, the crowds provide important evidence for the link between Jesus' exorcisms and his eventual arrest and execution.

Our thesis—that Jesus' role as a Jewish Galilean exorcist was deeply rooted in the socio-political and cultural context of his time and region, and that demonic spirit possession and his exorcisms were not only personal or psychological in nature, but social and political—has been demonstrated. By applying the results of contemporary anthropological studies of spirit possession and sociological and archaeological studies to the New Testament gospel depictions of Jesus' role as exorcist, we have shown that the religious, social and political were deeply interconnected in first-century Galilee. We have demonstrated further that many of those who experienced spirit possession were reflecting on and contributing to a broader discourse on the problematic nature of living under foreign rule and the effects of this on all levels of life, including societal, village, family and individual.

These insights offer significant contributions to the field of historical Jesus studies. First, this study is one of only a handful (and these are very recent) that examines Jesus' role as exorcist not only from a textual approach, but also from a socio-political and anthropological one. By drawing on evidence in Mark, Q, L, M and John, we have established the historical authenticity of the exorcism material and the tradition that Jesus was known as an exorcist. We have also linked the reality reflected in the textual tradition with the most well established information currently available on the socio-political context of early first century Galilee and with observations and studies made by anthropologists of the phenomenon of spirit possession across cultures.

The result is a portrait of Jesus based on both early textual traditions and on comparative social scientific analysis, which indicates that across cultures, spirit possession is associated with hierarchical agrarian societies and that those who function as healers/exorcists or mediums within these contexts are often seen to be subversive. Jesus' exorcisms then were very likely perceived to be politically dangerous and threatening to the ruling elite, whether Jewish or Roman.

While one must be cautious about retrojecting modern assumptions back into the first century, Josephus' affirmation that the common people had taken refuge at the Temple during the struggle between Antigonus and Hyrcanus in 37 BCE and expressed their stress by becoming possessed by spirits, challenges this objection by providing contemporary evidence for this connection between social and political stress and the incidence of spirit possession.⁴

⁴ Josephus, *War* 1.347.

To return to the questions we began with then: What was the meaning of spirit possession in those Jesus encountered, and of Jesus' exorcisms in the particular socio-political context of Roman Palestine? What can we now say about Jesus as exorcist and the impact he and his exorcisms had? First, we can say with confidence that Jesus, like his contemporaries, was a product of his first-century Jewish Galilean context. This means that we cannot attempt to divorce Jesus from the belief system of his world as though he, knowing better, simply healed and cast out demons because this reflected the beliefs of those amongst whom he lived.

Understood from a sociological perspective, Jesus, like his contemporaries, believed that the spiritual universe was made up of both good and evil forces, and that these forces could bring about illnesses such as muteness, deafness, blindness, paralysis or crippling diseases, but could also possess people, speaking through them to express issues of concern.

But Jesus and his contemporaries believed more than this. They believed that events occurring in the spiritual universe could impact social and political events on the ground and that the two realms of reality were intimately connected. This is evident from numerous anthropological studies and from a contemporary of Jesus, Josephus, who also links political crisis with spirit possession.

The possession of the Gerasene Demoniac by unclean spirits may also be connected to the presence of the tenth Roman Legion in the area. The Beelzebul Controversy provides additional confirmation that Jesus' exorcisms brought criticism from the Jewish leadership. The possible linking of Beelzebul with the idea of foreign

gods makes the accusation more than just a label of deviance; it connects Jesus' activities with what is foreign and with what is therefore evil.

We are suggesting in this study that Jesus' role as exorcist, and the incidents of spirit possession he encountered, were deeply embedded in the socio-political and religious environment in which he moved, and reflected and contributed to an ongoing discourse amongst the Jewish rural population of Galilee. This discourse encompassed all areas of life, but was particularly focussed on the confluence of the spiritual forces in the universe which were seen as contributing to socio-political reality on earth.

In addition, Jesus' activities as healer and exorcist drew large crowds which witnessed the transformation of individuals who had been possessed by malevolent spirits. Since these spirits functioned as "idioms of distress" which alerted the larger community to a problem, and since Jesus' casting out the unclean spirits drew further attention to the problem, some among the leadership would have seen them as a threat to the status quo.

Thus, Jesus' exorcisms were perceived by the crowds and by the authorities as politically charged and potentially dangerous. These crowds in turn raised the visibility of Jesus and his followers, which meant that the authorities became aware of what he was doing and sought to eliminate him as a threat. The case for the connection between Jesus' exorcisms and the political threat against him is made implicit both in the Beelzebul Controversy and in this passage found in Luke, on whose words I rest my case:

At that time some Pharisees came and said to him, "Get away from here, for Herod wants to kill you." He said to them, "Go and tell that fox for me, 'Listen, I am casting out demons and performing cures today and tomorrow and on the third day I finish my work. Yet, today, tomorrow and the next day I must be on my way, because it is impossible for a prophet to be killed outside of Jerusalem'" (Luke 13:31-33).

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