

**AN EXAMINATION OF THE CONTRASTING  
INTERPRETATIONS OF THE CLEANSING OF THE  
TEMPLE IN (A) THE WRITINGS OF THE EARLY CHURCH  
FATHERS AND (B) MORE RECENT HISTORICAL-  
CRITICAL SCHOLARSHIP IN LIGHT OF FIRST-CENTURY  
MONETARY PRACTICE**

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## Summary Statement

The Cleaning of the Temple as described in Mark 11:15-19 has traditionally been interpreted as an event of great magnitude. “By the blows of one scourge”, Jerome (347-420) wrote, Jesus “was able ... to cast out so great a multitude”.<sup>1</sup> More recently the scale of Jesus’ actions has been questioned on historical grounds as has also the charge which Jesus made that the Temple had become a “den of robbers” (Mk 11:17). It will be proposed in this study that when Jesus’ actions are examined in light of first-century monetary practice, particularly noting the role of the money-changers in the Temple, there are justifiable reasons in accepting the historicity of this event as traditionally understood. The theft that Jesus was referring to was not so much from the pilgrim Jew by way of inflated animal prices or dishonest trade, as recent scholarship has pointed out, but rather from the Treasury into which the pilgrims deposited their offerings. The revenue that God was to receive there from the annual half-shekel tax payment (and from other mandatory and voluntary payments) was greatly, if not totally, depleted on account of the introduction of the money-changers’ services and the precise form of coinage they were offering in exchange. The nearly universal assumption that their services were necessary in the Holy Place will be challenged. It was, I will argue, these *novel monetary practices* that had been introduced in his “Father’s house” (Jn 2:16)/“My house” (Mk 11:17) which prompted Jesus’ actions.

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas Aquinas quoting Jerome: *Catena Aurea, Gospel of Matthew Ch: 21*

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## **Abbreviations**

ACCS	Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture
ANE	Ancient Near East
ANF	Ante-Nicene Fathers
CBQ	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
INR	<i>Israel Numismatic Research</i>
JBIB	<i>Journal of Biblical Integration in Business</i>
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JSOT	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
LXX	Septuagint (Greek transl. of the Old Testament)
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
NTS	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
PBC	Pontifical Biblical Commission
RB	<i>Revue Biblique</i>
SBLSP	<i>Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers</i>
SBLDS	<i>Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series</i>
SHERM	<i>Socio-Historical Examination of Religion and Ministry</i>
ZNW	<i>Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>

## **Biblical References**

All English biblical references are taken from the ‘Jerusalem Bible’ or the ‘Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition’.



## Chapter One

### Names and Dates of the Early Church Fathers and Manuscripts

Several of the Early Church Fathers (and Church documents)<sup>1</sup> will be cited in this thesis, among which are (in alphabetical order):

**Aphrahat** (c. 270–345). Author of the early fourth century from Persia, who composed a series of twenty-three expositions or homilies on points of Christian doctrine and practice

**Anti-Marcionite Gospel Prologues.** These *Prologues*, originally composed in Greek, appear in several dozen Latin Bible manuscripts. Only *Prologues* for Mark, Luke, and John are extant; the *Prologue* for Luke is also preserved in Greek. Scholars disagree as to their exact date, but many place them in the late second century.

**Ambrose of Milan** (c. 333–397). Bishop of Milan and teacher of Augustine

**Athanasius** (c. 293 –373). He is best remembered for his role in the conflict with Arius and Arianism. He is counted as one of the four Great Doctors in the Eastern Orthodox Christian tradition.

**Augustine of Hippo** (354–430). Bishop of Hippo and a voluminous writer on philosophical, exegetical, theological and ecclesiological topics.

**Basil of Cappadocia** (c. 330-379). Bishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia.

**Bede the Venerable** (c. 672/673–735). Benedictine monk. Considered one of the most learned men of his age, he is the author of *An Ecclesiastical History of the English People*.

**Clement of Alexandria** (c. 150–215). A highly educated Christian convert from paganism. Head of catechetical school in Alexandria and noted Christian apologist.

**Clement of Rome** (fl. c. 92–101). Pope whose *Epistle to the Corinthians* is one of the most important documents of sub-apostolic times.

**Constitutions of the Holy Apostles (or The Apostolic Constitutions):** Probably a late 4th century collection, in 8 books, of independent, though closely related, treatises on Early Christian discipline, worship, and doctrine, intended to serve as a manual of guidance for the clergy.

**Cyril of Alexandria** (375–444) Patriarch of Alexandria.

**Cyril of Jerusalem** (c. 315–386). Bishop of Jerusalem.

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<sup>1</sup> The time period in which the Church Fathers lived ranges from the 2<sup>nd</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup> centuries. Biographical details are largely taken from the *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture* by Thomas Oden, (Intervarsity Press: Downers Grove, U.S.A., 2005).

**Dionysius the Great** of Alexandria, Egypt was the fourteenth patriarch of the See of Saint Mark (247-264)

**Ephrem the Syrian** (b. c. 306). Syrian writer of commentaries and devotional hymns

**Eusebius of Caesarea** (c. 260/263–340). Bishop of Caesarea and first historian of the Christian church.

**Gregory the Great** (c. 540-604). Pope, commonly known as St Gregory the Great

**Gregory of Nyssa** (c. 335-395). Bishop of Nyssa, Cappadocia, from 372 to 376.

**Hippolytus** (170–235). He was primarily a commentator on Scripture (especially the Old Testament) employing typological exegesis. Disciple of Irenaeus.

**Ignatius of Antioch** (c. 35–107/112). Bishop of Antioch who wrote several letters to local churches while being taken from Antioch to Rome to be martyred.

**Irenaeus of Lyons** (c. 135-202). Bishop of Lyons who published the most famous and influential refutation of Gnostic thought.

**Jerome** (c. 347–420) Gifted exegete and exponent of a classical Latin style, now best known as the translator of the Latin Vulgate.

**John Cassian** (c. 360-465). Christian monk and theologian celebrated in both the Western and Eastern churches.

**John Chrysostom** (344/354–407). Bishop of Constantinople

**Justin Martyr** (c.100/110–165). Well known Palestinian philosopher who was converted to Christianity. He wrote several apologies against both pagans and Jews, combining Greek philosophy and Christian theology; he was eventually martyred.

**Methodius**: This Methodius is called “St. Methodius of Olympus”. He died a martyr, possibly in 311. His feast day is September 18th.

**Muratorian fragment** is a copy of perhaps the oldest known list of the books of the New Testament. The fragment is from a seventh-century Latin manuscript and is a translation from a Greek original written about 170

**Origen of Alexandria** (b. 185; fl. c. 200–254). Influential exegete and systematic theologian. His extensive works of exegesis focus on the spiritual meaning of the text.

**Papias** (b. 60 fl. 120) Bishop of Hierapolis. A disciple of the apostle who leaned on the bosom of Christ” and “Papias, an ancient man, who was a hearer of John and a friend of Polycarp”.

**Rufinus** (345-411) was a monk, historian, and theologian. He is best known as a translator of Greek patristic material into Latin — especially the works of Origen.

**Socrates of Constantinople** (b. c. 379) was a fifth century Church historian.

**Tertullian of Carthage** (c. 155/160–225/ 250). Carthaginian apologist and polemicist who laid the foundations of Christology and Trinitarian orthodoxy in the West, though he himself was later estranged from the Catholic tradition due to its laxity.

**Theophilus of Antioch** (late second century). Bishop of Antioch. Theophilus's apologetic literary heritage had influence on Irenaeus and possibly Tertullian.

**Vincent of Lérins** (died c. 445) was a Gallic author of early Christian writings.

### **Main Sources for References used:**

Aquinas, Thomas. *Catena Aurea in quatuor Evangelia*. Textum Taurini 1953 editum (Original Latin texts from the *Corpus Thomisticum Sancti Thomae de Aquino*) <https://www.corpusthomicum.org/cmt01.html>

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*The Edinburgh English edition of the 38-volume series of the Ante-Nicene Fathers, Nicene, Post-Nicene Fathers and other Ancient Writers*. Originally published by Charles Scribner's Sons, 1900 and reproduced on CD-ROM by Harmony Media Inc., 2000.

## Chapter One

### The Cleansing of the Temple in the History of Interpretation

#### (1) Introduction

In the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke), at the beginning of what is traditionally known as ‘Holy Week’, Jesus enters Jerusalem to great acclaim and immediately goes to the Temple. After entering, he “began to drive out those who sold and those who bought in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those who sold pigeons; and he would not allow anyone to carry anything through the temple. And he taught, and said to them, “Is it not written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations’? But you have made it a den of robbers.” (Mark 11:15-17). Following this (major) incident the “chief priests and scribes” (Mark 11:18) began to look for a way to kill him “because the people were carried away by his teaching.” He was not immediately arrested, however, and that night Jesus and his disciples left the city.

This dissertation argues that the Cleansing of the Temple event described by all four evangelists is grounded on an ancient event(s)<sup>1</sup> that can only be understood in the context of ancient monetary theory and practice and, in particular, ancient conceptions of ‘real’ and ‘token’ coinage. While most historical-critical readers of the Gospels agree that the ‘Temple incident’ eventually led to the death of Jesus and was therefore a critical event in his life and ministry, the actual size of Jesus’ actions is generally believed to have been on a smaller scale than that picture described in the Gospels. What the Gospels describe as having happened is contested on historical-critical grounds. In particular, recent scholarship has argued that the significance accorded to the event by the evangelists - namely, that the Temple has been made “into a den of robbers” (Mark 11:17) - is a later development in the thinking of the early Church. I will argue, instead, that this teaching is historical and is reflective of Jesus’ grave concern about the use of “token” (i.e. non-real) coinage in the Temple. Jesus, as a faithful Jew was seeking to

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<sup>1</sup> John also records a ‘Cleansing of the Temple’ event at the beginning of his Gospel in Jn 2:13-22. Although recent scholarship generally assumes a single event only, it seems the Early Church Fathers - with the exception of Origen - interpreted two distinct cleansing events to have taken place. Apart from the references in the writings of Augustine, John Chrysostom and Theophilus (see Appendix 1 to this chapter), it is significant to note that Thomas Aquinas in his *Catena Aurea* - having collated the Fathers’ writings in this respect (including those of Origen) – also acknowledged such a two-cleansing interpretation.

protect the sanctity of the Sanctuary of Jerusalem. The replacement of real precious-metal coins of value (i.e. gold and silver) with worthless copper or brass tokens in the Temple and the consequences such actions would have, not only for the Holy Place but also for society in general, was a serious ethical matter for consideration in the first century.

The economic and practical context of this passage will be discussed in the rest of the work. The main purpose of this introduction is to provide an overview of how ancient and modern schools of exegesis have greatly diverged in their interpretation of the ‘Cleansing of the Temple’ event. Interestingly, what I will propose in this thesis accords with early Christian commentary on this passage which recognised the actions of Jesus ‘negatively’, as a cleansing event. Although the Temple was a most holy place and the locus where God’s Presence dwelt, certain practices had been introduced into the Sanctuary of Jerusalem that were in need of cleansing.

I will begin, therefore, with a summary of early Christian commentary on the Cleansing of the Temple in Holy Week (Mark’s account of Jesus’ actions [Mk 11:15-19] being the most detailed among the Synoptics) before briefly reviewing recent historical-critical analyses of the text. For reasons of space these summaries serve as a general overview of ancient and modern exegetical methods and their respective conclusions about the account. Further details on the different interpretative methods used and conclusions reached can be found in Appendix 1.

## **(2) The Cleansing of the Temple in Early Christian Commentary**

From the 2<sup>nd</sup> to the 7<sup>th</sup> centuries the Early Church Fathers (hereafter, the ECF), including representatives of what is sometimes referred to as ‘the allegorical school of Alexandria’ (Origen and Cyril of Alexandria)<sup>2</sup>, read the Gospel accounts describing the actions of Jesus in

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<sup>2</sup> It has sometimes been assumed that with respect to the literal features of passages in the Gospels describing events in the life of Jesus (the Cleansing of the Temple being a notable example), representatives from the ‘school of Alexandria’ (Origen, Clement, Cyril, Dionysius, Didymus the Blind) did not show due regard for their historicity but waived the material sense of the passage in favour of other and distinct allegorical meanings. This depiction of the Alexandrine school, I propose, is not quite accurate. Although it has been popular to divide the Fathers of the 3<sup>rd</sup> -6<sup>th</sup> centuries according to two distinct schools: (a) the school of Alexandria known for its allegorical exegesis and (b) the school of Antioch for its more literal and historical appreciation of the text, (see, The Catholic University of America: *New Catholic Encyclopedia* McGraw Hill Book Co., 1967, 498-500) this neat classification is not as keenly promoted today (see, Darren M. Slade, “Patristic Exegesis: The Myth of the Alexandrine-Antiochene Schools of Interpretation”, *SHERM* 1/2 [2019], 155-176). Rather, scholars now propose that whereas the school of Alexandria might have been more inclined to search for allegorical shades of meaning in any given text and, the school of Antioch, its literal, both schools appreciated at all times the two

the Temple - traditionally called the “Cleansing of the Temple” - at face value according to what might be described as their ‘plain’ or ‘literal’ sense. Although they searched for added and deeper meanings (the spiritual sense), they did so assuming what the evangelists recorded actually took place. This literal-historical reading of the Cleansing of the Temple is what the Fathers believed the evangelists – inspired by the Holy Spirit – had intended to be understood by what they wrote in their Gospels. This literal interpretation would later be exemplified in the *Catena Aurea* of Thomas Aquinas (13<sup>th</sup> cent), a running commentary on the four Gospels based solely on the collated writings of the ECF (2<sup>nd</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> cent) of both East and West.<sup>3</sup> In the sections of this commentary relating to the Cleansing of the Temple, Aquinas, who had studied the Fathers in great depth, presents excerpts from their writings from which a literal reading of the Gospel texts is clearly seen. The ECF believed that the actions described by the four

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senses of scripture (i.e. the literal and the spiritual) and knew how integrally related they are to one another. The Fathers believed that the spiritual sense was built upon the literal and so both senses were valued. For example, in his commentary on the Cleansing of the Temple, Cyril of Alexandria interprets a spiritual meaning upon a literal-historical understanding of the text; what the evangelist describes as having happened (although not commented upon or emphasized) is simply assumed. The Temple - Cyril states -was cleansed and the former “shadow” (i.e. the ritual offering of “sacrifices according to the legal ritual”) was being drawn “to an end” to prepare for the new “worship in spirit and in truth”. Cyril writes: “There was in it a crowd of merchants and others guilty of the charge of the shameful love of money. I mean moneychangers or keepers of exchange tables, sellers of oxen, dealers of sheep, and sellers of turtledoves and pigeons. All these things were used for the sacrifices according to the legal ritual. The time had now come for the shadow to draw to an end and for the truth to shine forth. The truth is the lovely beauty of Christian conduct, the glories of the blameless life and the sweet rational flavor of worship in spirit and in truth. The Truth, Christ as One who with his Father was also honored in their temple, commanded that those things that were required by the law should be carried away, even the materials for sacrifices and burning of incense. He commanded that the temple clearly should be a house of prayer. His rebuking the dealers and driving them from the sacred courts when they were selling what was wanted for sacrifice means certainly this, as I suppose, and this alone.” (Commentary on Luke: Homily 132 in *Luke*, ed. Arthur A. Just Jr, gen ed. Thomas Oden, [Intervarsity Press: Downers Grove, IL., U.S.A.], 2010, 301). In defense of an *historical* interpretation of John’s account of Jesus’ actions and the number of pilgrims apparently affected – the “real history” described by the evangelist, Origen appeals “to the divine nature of Jesus” which changes “the soul and will of thousands of men”. Origen writes: “One refuge remains for the writer who wishes to defend these things and is minded to treat the occurrence as real history, namely, to appeal to the divine nature of Jesus, who was able to quench, when He desired to do so, the rising anger of His foes, by divine grace to get the better of myriads, and to scatter the devices of tumultuous men; “for the Lord scatters the counsels of the nations and brings to naught devices of the peoples, but the counsel of the Lord abides forever” (Ps. 33, 10). Thus the occurrence in our passage, if it really took place, was not second in point of the power it exhibits to any even of the most marvellous works Christ wrought, and claimed no less by its divine character the faith of the beholders. One may show it to be a greater work than that done at Cana of Galilee in the turning of water into wine; for in that case it was only soulless matter that was changed, but here it was the soul and will of thousands of men” (*Commentary on John* 10.17). For an examination of Origen’s commentary on the Cleansing of the Temple, see Appendix 1.

<sup>3</sup> In his *Catena Aurea* (lit. ‘Golden Chain’) St Thomas synthesized the writings of the Early Church Fathers into a single continuous commentary on each of the four Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. By so doing, Aquinas offered the reader easy access to what each of the Fathers wrote on the different events recorded in the Gospels, among which is the Cleansing of the Temple. Although – as is evident in Aquinas’s commentary - some of the Fathers (from what is sometimes called the ‘allegorical school of Alexandria’) searched for additional levels of meaning other than that found in the plain sense of the narrative account describing Jesus’ actions in the Temple, all were united in their understanding that this was an historical event of great magnitude.

evangelists refer to a catastrophic event(s)<sup>4</sup> of great magnitude, with multitudes of people (buyers and sellers) cast out of the Temple alongside the overturning of the money-changers tables; the Sanctuary of Jerusalem was completely cleansed. For Aquinas, this was not a small, or a symbolic event, as is often argued in more recent historical-critical scholarship, but something that happened on a grand scale.

Although, on the face of it, the ECF might appear to readers of the Gospels today as overly simplistic or naive in their literal-historical interpretation of the accounts<sup>5</sup>, I will later argue that when Jesus' actions in the Temple are examined in light of first-century monetary practice – noting in particular the form of coinage offered by the money-changers in the Temple - the ECF were correct in their literal appreciation of the Gospel texts. It is difficult for us as readers of the Gospels today who live in a monetary world quite different from that known not only by Jesus and his contemporaries in the first-century CE but also from that known by the ECF from the second to seventh centuries CE,<sup>6</sup> to understand and appreciate the reasons for Jesus' actions

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<sup>4</sup> Reading the four Gospels, the Fathers, in fact, concluded that there were two distinct times when Jesus cleansed the Temple, the first at the beginning of Jesus' Public Ministry and described in Jn 2:13-22 and the second at the end in Mk 11:15-19. It is interesting to note that, with respect to the question of one or two cleansings, Aquinas does not make reference to Origen's Commentary on John's Gospel (although Aquinas was acquainted with it) in which Origen proposes a single cleansing only. (Origen did not accept John's account as a distinct account from that reported by the Synoptics; contrary to what might be thought, Origen advocated such a single cleansing interpretation not because he disregarded the literal features of the texts but rather, ironically, from what might be described as 'an overly literal reading' of the accounts - for Origen's commentary on the Cleaning of the Temple in John's Gospel, see Appendix 1). Aquinas, apparently, had no difficulty in presenting in his *Catena Aurea* a literal two-cleansing interpretation of the Gospels as the representative position adopted by the ECF in general.

<sup>5</sup> One of the many questions which more recent scholarship has raised in connection with the literal features described in the Gospel accounts is simply, how could one man (i.e. Jesus) have been able to do what the Gospels describe, when it is known that the Levitical guards were stationed in the Temple (and Roman soldiers in the Fortress Antonio) to prevent any such disturbances taking place. In addition, and more significantly, scholars have asked: Would Jesus have been likely (as the Gospels describe) to disrupt the necessary operations of the money-changers in the Temple thereby bringing an end to the sacrificial rites in the Holy Place? See, E.P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (London: SCM Press), 1985, 63-65; Jacob Neusner ("Money-changers in the Temple: The Mishnah's Explanation") *NTS* 35, (1989) 87-89. That the money-changers were offering a *necessary* service in the Temple, as is quite often assumed in more recent scholarship, will later be challenged. (For further historical-critical examination of the Gospel accounts describing Jesus' actions in the Temple, see later in this chapter and Appendix 2).

<sup>6</sup> Although there are several differences between the monetary world in which we live today with that of Jesus and the ECF, one difference stands out for immediate attention and has, I will propose, considerable bearing on Jesus' actions in the Temple. That is, the commercial world of today - in which we buy and sell goods and services - is built upon the use of token money (in its many guises, legal tender paper notes, cheques, credit and debit cards, bitcoin), whereas that known in the lifetime of Jesus and the ECF was based upon the use of coins of real intrinsic value (predominantly gold and silver and, for that of minimal value, copper). This simple point noting the distinction between real and token money is important to keep before our minds today as we read the Gospel texts. The monetary background surrounding Jesus' actions in the Temple will be examined in chapter two and three of the thesis.

in the Temple - particularly his actions directed against the money-changers. Money in the time of Jesus was built upon the use of coins which possessed real intrinsic value (predominantly gold and silver coinage and, for that of minimal value, copper). This simple point noting the distinction between money of real intrinsic value in the time of Jesus and that of ‘token’ (or ‘fiat’) money used in our commercial world today has, I will argue, a vital bearing on Jesus’ actions in the Temple and is important for us today to keep before our minds if we are to appreciate the precise economic circumstances that Jesus was addressing in the Temple.

In this section of chapter one I will briefly summarize both what the ECF believed – on the basis of what the Gospel accounts describe – actually happened when Jesus cleansed the Temple and what the ECF understood as the probable reasons for Jesus’ actions in the Temple. This is not an easy task for so often in the writings of the Fathers the literal-historical sense of Scripture is inseparably interwoven with the spiritual significance they drew from the particular verse or passage they were studying.<sup>7</sup> In addition, the ECF did not always conduct a systematic exegesis of Scripture and so references to the Cleansing of the Temple are often difficult to find.<sup>8</sup> In spite of such obstacles to our investigation, certain notable points from the Fathers writings may nevertheless be observed. My survey of the ancient evidence (presented in-depth in Appendix 1) reveals five of note.

**First**, despite the prevalent leanings towards spiritual and allegorical modes of interpretation, the ECF interpreted the Gospels accounts of the Cleansing of the Temple in a literal-historical manner. Jerome considered this act as the “most wonderful” miracle “wrought by our Lord”. Even the third century theologian Origen, who is famed for his allegorical and symbolic forms

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<sup>7</sup> In addition to the ‘literal sense of Scripture’ (i.e. that sense *intended* by the human author with respect to any passage he had written, for eg. the Cleansing of the Temple – the subject matter of this thesis), there is what Tradition within the Catholic Church has identified as the ‘spiritual sense of Scripture’, a sense in addition to that found in the immediate sense of the words used but hidden from the inspired writer at the time of writing, a deeper sense known to God. (The Pontifical Biblical Commission [hereafter, the PBC]: *The Interpretation Of The Bible In The Church*, 1993, 81). This spiritual sense, which was greatly sought after by the ECF, is often referred to as the “fuller sense” or the “*sensus plenior*” of Scripture. (for further clarification of this sense of Scripture and how it was sought after by the Fathers, see Appendix 1).

<sup>8</sup> The 13<sup>th</sup> century Catena Aurea, however, of (St) Thomas Aquinas is most helpful in this regard as is also the more recent Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture completed by a representative team of scholars from the various denominations of the Christian Churches. In his Catena Aurea (lit. ‘Golden Chain’), Aquinas – as noted earlier - synthesized the writings of the Early Church Fathers into a single continuous commentary on each of the four Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. More recently, the Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture (edited by Thomas Oden, 2010), like Aquinas, assembled the commentaries of the Early Fathers alongside the texts of Scripture and, with the aid of computer technology, has offered the reader easy access to what each of the Fathers wrote on different books/passages within the Bible, including the four Gospels.



of interpretation, wrote that “One may show it [i.e. the Cleansing of the Temple] to be a greater work than that done at Cana of Galilee in the turning of water into wine; for in that case it was only soulless matter that was changed, but here it was the soul and will of thousands of men.”<sup>9</sup> The Fathers, in general, assumed that the actions recorded in the Gospels are historical with respect to all the details they present. The cleansing was, therefore, understood to be a *major disturbance* in which the *whole* of the Court of the Gentiles was cleared and not just a small part. The buyers and sellers, the money-changers and animals, were *all* driven out.<sup>10</sup>

**Second**, the ECF uniformly blame the religious authorities and the money-changers for the event. They propose that there was dishonest trading and monetary practice conducted within the Temple. They singled out the religious and priestly authorities for blame. Irenaeus wrote that Jesus reproved those who were putting “His house to improper use”. Jesus did not “bring any accusation against the house, nor did He blame the law”, but, rather, he was condemning the ‘unlawful’ use of the Temple (*Against Heresies* 4.2). Ambrose lays particular blame on the money-changers whom he calls the “slaves of money” (*Sermon against Auxentius on the giving up of the Basilicas* 21) further describing them as “those who seek *profit from the Lord’s money* and cannot distinguish between good and evil” (*Exposition of the Gospel of Luke* 9:17–18). Jerome notes that the “Priests” of the Temple appointed “collybistae” (Latin plural for the money-changers of the Temple) in order to circumvent the law regarding usury. The Latin term “collubistas” (a transliteration of the Greek κολλυβιστας), which Jerome apparently coined himself, describes a form or class of money-changer for which Jerome significantly notes “the Latin has no equivalent” (Thomas Aquinas quoting Jerome: *Catena Aurea, Matthew* Ch: 21). For Jerome, therefore, the money-changers’ services in the Temple had apparently no known parallel outside the Holy Place.<sup>11</sup> Whatever role they had, it was restricted to the Temple alone. He even intimates that the services provided by the “collybistae” in the Temple were recent or

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<sup>9</sup> Origen: *Commentary on John’s Gospel* 10.17 (for Origen’s commentary on the Cleansing of the Temple, see pages 36-62 of Appendix 1).

<sup>10</sup> Cyril of Alexandria: *Commentary on Luke: Homily 132*; Augustine: *Gospel according to John*, Tractate 10.4; Bede: *Exposition on the Gospel of St Mark*, 2.1; Thomas Aquinas quoting Jerome: *Catena Aurea, Gospel of Matthew* Ch. 21; Thomas Aquinas quoting Gregory the Great: *Catena Aurea, Gospel of Luke* Ch. 19; Tatian the Syrian: *Diatessaron* 32.

<sup>11</sup> Although there were Latin terms used to describe the everyday occupation of the money-changer in general for eg *nummularius* (which, interestingly in an excerpt cited in Appendix 1, Jerome actually contrasts with the ‘collybistae’ in the Temple), *argentarius* or *mensarius*, Jerome states that he did not know of any Latin term to describe the unique or particular functioning of the money-changers in the Temple of Jerusalem. Jerome appears to imply that the services of the money-changers in the Temple had no known parallel outside of the Holy Place. Rather, they provided a service that was restricted to the Temple alone.

novel. For, he writes, as the first *new* plan initiated in the Temple (i.e. the reselling of animals already deemed for sacrifice) was not working, a *more recent* or *novel* scheme (i.e. the appointment of money-changers) followed: “they bethought themselves of another scheme; instead of bankers [lat. nummulariis] they appointed collybistae, a word for which the Latin has no equivalent” (Jerome cited in Thomas Aquinas, *Catena Aurea, Matthew* Ch. 21). The “collybistae”, employed within the Temple, were, according to Jerome, offering a service that was apparently both *new* and *uniquely restricted to the Temple in Jerusalem*. Their introduction into the Holy Place was a significant development that introduced injustice.<sup>12</sup> Later, in chapters two and three of the thesis, this unjust role or service provided by the money-changers will be explored.

**Third**, the Gospel narratives record two different historical cleansings. The majority of the ECF, moreover, subscribed to the view that there were two temple cleansings.<sup>13</sup> The first happened at the beginning of Jesus’ ministry and is recorded in John’s Gospel 2:13-21; the second cleansing took place at the end and is recorded in the three Synoptic Gospels (Mt: 21:12-13; Mk: 11:15-18; Lk: 19:45-46). Augustine wrote: “This makes it evident that this act was performed by the Lord not on a single occasion, but twice over. Only in the first instance was it recorded by John, but in the last by the other three.” (*Harmony of the Gospels* 2.67). This two-cleansing interpretation, according to John Chrysostom, means that the accusation “becomes a heavier charge against the Jewish leadership; He did it not only once but a second time, and still they continued their buying and selling and called him an adversary of God.” (*The Gospel of Matthew: Homily* 67.1).

**Fourth**, and of great significance for my thesis, the coins used by money changers in the Temple were copper coins. On the basis of several of the ECF writings (Origen, Theophilus,

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<sup>12</sup> In an article entitled “The Historicity of the Gospel Account of the Cleansing of the Temple” (ZNW 55 [1964]: 42-58), Victor Eppstein similarly proposes a novel *business initiative* conducted in the Temple which he believes was the primary reason for Jesus’ actions in the Holy Place. Eppstein argues that such a business innovation was introduced in the final year of Jesus’ ministry when, according to rabbinical evidence, “forty years before the Destruction of the Temple [i.e. c. 30 A.D.], the Sanhedrin departed or was expelled from the chamber of Hewn Stone in the Temple to a place on the Mount of Olives called Hanuth” (p. 48). Although Eppstein does not make any reference to the appointment of a special class of money-changers in connection with this novel business initiative in the Temple, such an initiative may have sparked the departure of the Sanhedrin from the Temple. (For an examination of Eppstein’s article, see Appendix 2).

<sup>13</sup> Origen disagrees for reasons further explored in Appendix 1. He offers his reflections on the Cleansing of the Temple in Book 10 of his *Commentary on John’s Gospel* and in Book 16 of his *Commentary on Matthew’s Gospel*.

Ambrose, Augustine and Jerome) I will argue that the coins which the money-changers offered in exchange within the Temple were merely of token value. They were made of “copper” (or “brass”) and were only valid for use inside the Holy Place. These coins are variously described as “a particular sort of money for the word means a small brass coin”<sup>14</sup> or, simply as coins of “spurious” nature.<sup>15</sup> Origen is quite emphatic when he describes such coinage as “cheap worthless coinage” and “so little is it worth”, “small change” that was “worth nothing” and “was their own”. Origen wrote (emphasis added): “the changers of money sitting, he drives them out ....and pours out their stock of coin, as not deserving to be kept together, *so little is it worth* .....He poured out the money of the money-changers, *which was their own*..... For these are they who defile and turn into a den of robbers, that is, of themselves the heavenly house of the Father, the holy Jerusalem, the house of prayer; *having spurious money, and giving pence and small change, cheap worthless coinage, to all who come to them.* These are they who, contending with the souls, take from them what is most precious, robbing them of their better part *to return to them what is worth nothing.*” (*Commentary on the Gospel of John 10.16-18*.) Origen also accuses the money-changers of “*changing the valid and worthy money into smaller things that are cheap and of no account* in order that they might damage those for whom they change money, but they themselves put the money to use for what is not necessary.” (*Commentary on Matthew 16*).

The original Greek of Origen and early Latin translation here is even more emphatic, emphasising the extent to which the coins themselves were fraudulent and of no account: (a) “ἀργύριον ἔχοντες ἀδόκιμον”, literally “having silver not approved” or “which has not passed the test” (i.e. “having spurious money”), and the Latin “qui argentum habent adulteratum” literally “who have silver [which is] adulterated” (b) “διδόντες ὀβολούς καὶ κόλλυβα τοῖς προσιοῦσιν, εὐτελεῖ καὶ εὐκαταφρόνητα νομίσματα” and the Latin “dantes accedentibus obolos, et colluba, vilia et contemptibilia numismata”, which translates literally as “giving to those who come ‘obols’ [most probably referring to the Roman copper coins called ‘obols’]”<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Thomas Aquinas quoting Theophilus of Antioch: *Catena Aurea Gospel of Mark Ch. 11*.

<sup>15</sup> Origen: *Commentary on the Gospel of John 10.18*

<sup>16</sup> The Greek term ‘obol’ (ὀβολός) was often used in the early centuries C.E. in Egypt and throughout the Middle East (i.e. when Origen was writing) to signify the Roman bronze coin called an ‘as’ or ‘assarion’ (a bronze coin which in value was worth approximately a sixth of a denarius) or otherwise was used to express a coin of “negligible value” (see Kenneth W. Harl: *Coinage of the Roman Empire 300 B.C. to 700 A.D.*, (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1996) 115-116.

and ‘colluba’ [Latin transliteration of the plural Greek term κολλυβα, from which the singular is κολλυβος meaning small coin], vile and contemptible coins” (i.e. “[the money-changers] giving pence and small change, cheap worthless coinage or vile and contemptible coins, to all [i.e. the pilgrims] who come to them”) And, finally, (c) “ἵνα δῶσιν τὰ μηδενὸς ἄξια”, and the Latin “ut dent ea quae nullis sunt pretii” which literally translates as “so that they may give those things which are of no value” (i.e. “to return to them what is worth nothing”).

In the same way, Jerome’s Vulgate translation of the Bible is also noteworthy, particularly his translation of two Greek numismatic terms, κέρμα,<sup>17</sup> found in John 2:15 and, χαλκὸν, in Mark 12:41. These two verses of the Gospels, in which the numismatic terms are found, belong to two distinct passages in the Gospels describing different events in the life of Jesus in which the money-changers’ exchange in the Temple plays an important role. In both cases Jerome simply uses the term “aes”, which is the Latin for “copper” or “copper coinage”. Jerome’s translation amplifies the argument that the money-changers were merely offering “copper” or ‘token coinage’ in exchange in the Temple. Similar linguistic distinctions between different kinds of coins can be seen elsewhere in Jerome as well as in Augustine.<sup>18</sup>

**Fifth** and finally, there was a broad awareness of the important distinction between genuine and counterfeit coins. The first century bishop Ignatius of Antioch wrote in his *Letter to the Magnesians*, “For as there are two kinds of coins, the one of God, the other of the world, and each of these has its special character stamped upon it, so is it also here ... For I remark, that two different characters are found among men, *the one true coin, the other spurious*. The truly devout man is the right kind of coin, stamped by God Himself. The ungodly man, again, is *false coin, unlawful, spurious, counterfeit*, wrought not by God, but by the devil.” (emphasis added, *Ign. Magn.*15). Though Ignatius uses true and false coinage here as a point of comparison for human character, the fact that he grounds this simile in notions of real and false coins indicates a broader cultural distinction among Christians between the deceptive false

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<sup>17</sup> Greek Lexicons translate the Greek term ‘κέρμα’ as (1) small money, “nummulus minutus, ‘nummi minuti’, petite monnaie” (*Lexicon Graecum Novi Testamenti*, by Francisco Zorelli, Paris, P. Lethielleux, 1961) or (2) as “coin esp. of copper money, opp. silver (αργυριον)” (in Liddell and Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, Oxford, Clarendon Press Oxford, 1926). It is also important to add, as Abbott-Smith’s “Manual Greek Lexicon on the New Testament” indicates, that the Greek term ‘κέρμα’ has “no prior usage in the LXX or other Greek versions of the OT and Apocrypha nor is it found in Greek writings of the classical period.”

<sup>18</sup> Jerome: *Commentary on Matthew’s Gospel* (PL 026); Augustine: *Gospel according to John* Tractate 10.4,6; Latin text, *In Evangelium Ioannis* Tractate 10.4.6. For these and other references in the ECF writings, see Appendix 1.

character of counterfeit coins and the true nature of coins made of precious metals. The third century teacher and Christian philosopher Clement of Alexandria draws out the same distinction in his *Stromata*. He writes that, “For there is *genuine coin, and other that is spurious*; which no less deceives un-professionals, that it does not the money-changers [i.e. money-changers or bankers in general]; who know through having learned *how to separate and distinguish what has a false stamp from what is genuine*. So the money-changer only says to the unprofessional man that the *coin is counterfeit*. But the reason why, only the banker’s apprentice, and he that is trained to this department, learns.” (*Stromata* 2.4). Once again, the invocation of spurious and real coinage is metaphorical and forms part of a larger rhetorical program about true and false nature. But the fact that both Ignatius and Clement are able to draw on this distinction, as early as the first century and second centuries respectively, suggests that concerns about the nature of coinage were at the forefront of early Christian consciousness.

This interest in different kinds of qualities of money and money-changers is further demonstrated in the non-canoncial agraphon, “Be ye good Money-Changers”, a statement attributed to Jesus which is also found in many of the ECF writings.<sup>19</sup> Although the ECF used this refrain with allegorical intent,<sup>20</sup> I propose that when it was attributed to Jesus, it may also have had a literal meaning. The money-changers of the Temple were offering token coinage in exchange with the pilgrims who brought in coins that possessed real or intrinsic value. They

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<sup>19</sup> John Cassian: *First Conference of Abbot Moses* Ch.20; John Cassian: *Second Conference to Abbot Moses* Ch.9; Clement of Alexandria: *The Stromata* 2.4; Ignatius of Antioch: *The Epistle of Ignatius to the Magnesians* Ch.15; Clement of Rome: *Homilies* 2.51; Socrates: *The Ecclesiastical History* 3.16; Clement of Alexandria: *The Stromata: Book 7:15*; John Chrysostom: *Gospel of John*, Homily 77; Aphrahat the Persian Sage: *Select Demonstrations* 26; Ephrem the Syrian: *Nisibene Hymns* 56:1; Gregory of Nyssa: *Against Eunomius* 2; Ignatius of Antioch: *The Epistle of Ignatius to the Magnesians* Ch.5; John Chrysostom: *Homilies on First Timothy*, Homily 14; Methodius: *The Banquet of the Ten Virgins*, Discourse 2; Tertullian: *On Repentance* Ch:6; Clement of Alexandria: *The Stromata* 6.2; Irenaeus: *Against Heresies* 1; Vincent of Lerins: *Against the Profane Novelties of all Heresies* Ch:22; Athanasius: *On the Opinion of Dionysius*; Clement of Rome: *Homilies* 2:51; Dionysius the Great: *Extant Fragments* Part II; Clement of Alexandria: *Stromata* 1.28; Eusebius: *Church History* 7:7; Constitutions of the Holy Apostles: *Book II Of Bishops, Presbyters and Deacons*, Section 4. Referring to the widespread appreciation of this saying in the early centuries of Christianity, Curtis Hutt writes: “References to one form or another of this saying are contained in the works of several well-known early Christian authors including Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Jerome, Cyril of Jerusalem, Basil the Great, Cyril of Alexandria, Athanasius, Pseudo-Athanasius, John Chrysostom, Palladius, the Apostolic Constitutions, the Pseudo-Clementine Homilies, the Didascalia, John Cassian, Gregory Nazianus, Gregory the Great, Ambrose, Socrates Scholasticus, and John of Damascus.” ““Be Ye Approved Money Changers!” Re-examining the Social Contexts of the Saying and Its Interpretation.” *JBL* 131.3 (2012): 589-609.

<sup>20</sup> In the wide-ranging contexts in which this agraphon is used by the Fathers of both East and West, it is almost always deployed allegorically with respect to the skill of discernment as to (a) how a given scriptural text might be determined or (b) a teaching, or even leader might be authorized or approved. Just as a good money changer has the ability to test true coins from those which are counterfeit, so also should the disciple of Jesus possess such a skill of discernment.

were not “good [or approved] money-changers”. The disciples of Jesus were called to be different. The command of Jesus, “be ye good [or approved] money-changers” may in fact have been spoken and understood at face value; what Jesus was implicitly referring to in this agraphon was the activities of the money-changers in the Temple and the exchange coinage they were offering in the Holy Place.

A more detailed account of the relevant primary texts and their significance is provided in Appendix 1 of this dissertation but I want to draw out here two particular emphases in ancient commentary that have been overlooked in modern historical-critical study. First, the ECF worked within an ancient framework of thought, closer in time to Jesus than our own, in which coinage (money) in the time of Jesus always possessed real intrinsic value. Real coinage used in the time of Jesus also continued to be used in general society throughout the centuries of the ECF (2<sup>nd</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup>), even though the percentage of precious metal content contained within suffered from progressive bouts of devaluation as a consequence of the Roman policy of the debasement of its coinage<sup>21</sup>. Token money, the form of money that dominates our world today, was almost certainly unknown either in the time of Jesus (except, as I will propose in chapter two, in the Temple of Jerusalem) or in the historical period of the Fathers, and, if imposed upon anyone, would have amounted to a form of theft. This one point underlining the difference between true and false money (coinage), so well-known and appreciated in the ancient world and ECF, provides the historical context for the Temple event. Jesus’s charge against the moneylenders - “you have made it [i.e. my Father’s house] a den of robbers” (Mk 11:17) - refers to a subtle form of theft that had entered the Temple. Namely, the use of token or fraudulent coinage. This argument may not be immediately recognizable in today’s world, which is predominantly governed by the use of token money.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Debasement of coinage is the practice of reducing the precious metal content of coins in circulation (i.e. the reduction of the percentage of silver or gold in the coins) with the consequent reissuing of a greater number of coins of a cheaper alloy. This practice was often officially sanctioned by emperors in times of war to increase the supply of money with which to pay the growing level of expenses. See chapter two of the thesis.

<sup>22</sup> A more detailed examination of the principles governing ancient interpretive methods will be discussed in Appendix 1.

### (3) Recent Historical-Critical Approaches to the Cleansing Event

One general feature of modern exegesis - by way of contrast with that of the Early Church Fathers - is the practice in which the Gospels are questioned as to whether they are reliable with regard to 'historical' details recorded. What were once assumed to be trustworthy and reliable historical accounts, that is the four Gospels, are now critically examined with regard to the reliability and accuracy of the details recorded.<sup>23</sup> This is clearly evident in recent commentaries on the Cleansing of the Temple where there appears to have been, in general, a blanket reduction in the scale of magnitude of Jesus' actions, a reduction in what Jesus actually said and did in the Temple on that day (or days – if two cleansings are envisaged)<sup>24</sup>.

Although more recent scholarship maintains that the event is historical and may even have been instrumental in his subsequent arrest and crucifixion, the tone of their commentaries suggests an event of mediocre or limited size, far less by way of comparison with that picture described

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<sup>23</sup> In the Foreword to his trilogy of books on the life and ministry of Jesus entitled "Jesus of Nazareth", Pope Benedict cites several "inspiring" books on the life of Jesus which describe his life and ministry in accordance with what is found in the Gospels. Benedict writes: "When I was growing up – in the 1930's and 1940's there was a series of inspiring books about Jesus: Karl Adam, Romano Guardini, Franz Michel Willam, Giovanni Papini, and Henri Daniel-Rops,..... [who] based their portrayal of Jesus on the Gospels. They presented him as a man living on earth who, though fully human though he was, at the same time brought God to men, the God with whom as Son he was one. But the situation started to change in the 1950's. The gap between the 'historical Jesus' and the 'Christ of faith' grew wider and the two fell visibly apart. But what can faith in Jesus as the Christ possibly mean, in Jesus as the Son of the living God, if the *man* Jesus was so completely different from the picture that the Evangelists painted of him and that the Church, on the evidence of the Gospels, takes as the basis of her preaching?... All these attempts have produced a common result: the impression that we have very little certain knowledge of Jesus and that only at a later stage did faith in his divinity shape the image we have of him. This impression has by now penetrated deeply into the minds of the Christian people at large. This is a dramatic situation for faith, because its point of reference is being placed in doubt: Intimate friendship with Jesus, on which everything depends, is in danger of clutching at thin air." (*Jesus of Nazareth* [London, New York and Berlin: Bloomsbury], 2007-2011, Vol I, Foreword p's. i, ii).

<sup>24</sup> When all four accounts of the Cleansing of the Temple were read (Mt: 21:12-13, Mk: 11:15-18, Lk: 19:45-46, and Jn: 2:13-22), several scholars of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries proposed that there were two separate events, the first recorded in John's Gospel and the second recorded by the Synoptics. Some such examples of two separate events are found in: Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* (London: Longmans Green and Co., 1891), 5:2; Francis E. Gigot, *Outlines of New Testament History* (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1898), 186; Abbé Constant Fouard, *The Christ - The Son of God* (London and New York: Longmans and Green, 1908), 252; Charles J. Callan O.P., *The Four Gospels* (New York: Joseph F. Wagner Inc., 1917), 423; Madame Cecilia, *The Gospel according to St. John* (London: Burns Oates and Washbourne, London, 1923), 72; Madame Cecilia, *The Gospel according to St. Mark* (London: Burns Oates and Washbourne, 1924), 220; Jules Lebreton, *The Life And Teaching of Jesus Christ* (London: Burns Oates and Washbourne, 1934), p. 54 f.1; Pierre M. J. Lagrange, *The Gospel of Jesus Christ* (London: Burns Oates and Washbourne, 1947), 129; Thomas Nelson, *A Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture* (Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd, 1953), 888, 984; Henri Daniel-Rops, *Jesus and His Times* (Image Books: Doubleday and Co. Inc, 1954), 186,187,190; Archbishop Alan Goddier, *The Public Life of Our Lord Jesus Christ* (London: Burns Oats & Washbourne Ltd, 1958), 52. Such a two-cleansing interpretation is seldom proposed in more recent scholarship.

in the Gospels. Jesus' actions – with few exceptions<sup>25</sup> - were carried out with symbolic intent either (a) to point out abuses that had crept in to the Temple and seeking to correct and reform them (V. Eppstein; C. Evans; H. D. Betz; J. Murphy O'Connor)<sup>26</sup> or (b) to demonstrate prophetically that the Temple would be destroyed or was at an end in light of proposed new realities made present (E. P. Sanders; J. Neusner; N.T. Wright; T. Ehrman).<sup>27</sup> In an influential publication on this subject, Sanders writes, “[Jesus] did not wish to purify the temple, either of dishonest trading or trading in contrast to ‘pure’ worship.”<sup>28</sup> Rather, by his symbolic action and following “the model of some OT prophets”<sup>29</sup>, Jesus was simply indicating that the Temple in Jerusalem had reached the end of its covenantal life and [was] awaiting a new beginning.<sup>30</sup> “He

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<sup>25</sup> In the sample list of recent commentaries on the Cleansing of the Temple that will be examined in Appendix 2 it will be seen that very few scholars accept the (complete) literal-historical picture described in the Gospels, preferring rather to accept limited elements of Jesus' actions described in the various accounts. P. M. Casey's article entitled “Culture and Historicity: The Cleansing of the Temple,” *CBQ* 59 (1997): 306-332, is an exception to this rule in that the author seeks to justify the entire features recorded in Mark's account. This article, I propose, is closely aligned with that literal-historical interpretation traditionally accepted as witnessed in the writings of several of the early writers of the Church (see earlier in this chapter) and also by many commentators of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries – some of whom have been named in the previous footnote. In several respects also, Craig Evans' article entitled “Jesus' Action in the Temple: Cleansing or Portent of Destruction?,” *CBQ* 51 (1989), 237-270, might also be similarly categorised.

<sup>26</sup> Victor Eppstein, “The Historicity of the Gospel Account of the Cleansing of the Temple,” *ZNW* 55 (1964): 42-58; Evans, “Jesus' Action in the Temple: Cleansing or Portent of Destruction?,” 237-270; Hans Dieter Betz, “Jesus and the Purity of the Temple (Mark 11:15-18): A Comparative Religion Approach,” *JBL* 116:3 (1997): 455-472; Jerome Murphy O'Connor, “Jesus and the Money-Changers (Mark 11:15-17; John 2:13-17),” *RB* 107 (2000): 43-55.

<sup>27</sup> According to several scholars, Jesus' actions were symbolic actions signalling the end of the Temple. Varying shades of understanding are proposed: (i) “the end was at hand and that the temple would be destroyed so that the new and perfect temple might arise” (E. P. Sanders: *Jesus and Judaism*. London: SCM Press, 1985, 75) (ii) the sacrifices of the Temple were made redundant having been replaced by the Eucharist (Jacob Neusner: “Money-changers in the Temple: The Mishnah's Explanation,” *NTS* 35 [1989]: 287-290) (iii) the days of the Temple functioning as a “sign-post” were over as the “reality” to which the sacrifices pointed to (i.e. Jesus' self-offering) had arrived (N. T. Wright: “What is the significance of Jesus cleansing the temple?” Interview on *The John Ankerberg Show*, 2001, <https://churchleaders.com/pastors/videos-for-pastors/250330-n-t-wright-significance-jesus-cleansing-temple.html>) and (iv) the Temple, which had become “corrupt and powerful”, was subject to “Judgement” by the “Son of Man” (Bart D. Ehrman, *Jesus Interrupted* [New York: Harper Collins, 2010], 167).

<sup>28</sup> Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 74

<sup>29</sup> Craig Evans commenting on Sanders' line of reasoning for Jesus' actions in “Jesus' Action in the Temple: Cleansing or Portent of Destruction?,” *CBQ* 51(1989): 237-270, [249].

<sup>30</sup> Following in the footsteps of Sanders, N. T. Wright also proposes that Jesus' actions in the Temple were “not a protest against commercialization...it [i.e. the Temple] was not a bad thing that needed to be abolished”. Jesus' actions, according to Wright, were rather an indication that something new was at hand for the Temple in the person of Jesus, which newness necessitated its destruction. In an interview on the *The John Ankerberg Show*, the Anglican Bishop states: “When Jesus announced to a person on the street ‘Your sins are forgiven’, he was giving that person the kind of assurance of God's forgiveness which that person would normally have received from going to the Temple and offering sacrifice....this meant that Jesus was embodying a kind of radical alternative to the Temple....turning over the money-changers' tables stopped for a few hours or so the flow of sacrificial animals....it is not a protest against commercialization....it is not a protest of that sort, it's a



intended, rather, to indicate that the end was at hand and that the temple would be destroyed, so that the new and perfect temple might arise.”<sup>31</sup>

In the two scenarios described above, a table or two may have been turned over and something small was done by way of symbolic action. The Temple was momentarily disturbed before returning to its usual operations. Certain elements of the Gospel passages describing Jesus’ actions (in particular Mk 11:17)<sup>32</sup> are described by commentators as exaggerated, or, even as non-historical (Eppstein; Sanders; Evans; Neusner; Murphy-O’Connor; Ehrman).<sup>33</sup> Sanders is typical when he writes: “The action was not substantial enough even to interfere with the daily routine; for if it had been he would surely have been arrested on the spot”<sup>34</sup> or similarly Ehrman who states “It is difficult to believe that he [i.e. Jesus] shutdown the entire operation: the Temple precincts were approximately the size of twenty-five football fields, not a small contained space, and the Gospels do not portray this act as a miracle.”<sup>35</sup> Other scholars go further, proposing that the entire event as described in the Gospels has no historical basis whatever (Buchanan; Miller; Seeley).<sup>36</sup> Representative of this position, David Seeley writes, “Because certain problems arise in the process of placing the temple act in a historical context”,

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way of symbolically stopping the regular sacrificial offerings and what that says is this whole system is under judgement and one day before too long the system will stop completely because the Temple will be destroyed....the Temple was a signpost to God’s future and it was ripe for its destruction not because it was a bad thing that needed to be abolished but because it was a true signpost to the reality ...in Jesus’ day people were looking so hard at the Temple that they couldn’t see that he was offering the reality to which the Temple pointed and that’s what we then find at the Last Supper and on the Cross –Jesus doing the reality to which all along the Temple had been pointing.” (“What is the significance of Jesus cleansing the temple?” Interview on *The John Ankerberg Show*, 2001 [<https://churchleaders.com/pastors/videos-for-pastors/250330-n-t-wright-significance-jesus-cleansing-temple.html>])

<sup>31</sup> Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 74.

<sup>32</sup> That Jesus may have condemned the Temple authorities with the words described by the evangelist in Mk 11:17 (“And he [i.e. Jesus] taught them [i.e. the Temple authorities] and said, ‘Does not scripture say: *My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the peoples?* But you have turned it into a *robber’s den*’”) is frequently placed in doubt or even discredited in recent scholarship.

<sup>33</sup> Eppstein, “The Historicity of the Gospel Account of the Cleansing of the Temple,” 57; E. P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (London: SCM Press, 1985), 66; Evans, “Jesus’ Action in the Temple: Cleansing or Portent of Destruction?,” 267-268; Neusner, “Money-changers in the Temple: The Mishnah’s Explanation,” 287, 289; Murphy O’Connor, “Jesus and the Money-Changers (Mark 11:15-17; John 2:13-17),” 45; Ehrman: *Jesus Interrupted*, 167.

<sup>34</sup> Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 70

<sup>35</sup> Ehrman, *Jesus Interrupted*, 167.

<sup>36</sup> George W. Buchanan, “Symbolic Money-Changers in the Temple?,” *NTS* 37 (1991): 280-289; David Miller, “The (A)historicity of Jesus’ Temple Demonstration: A Test Case in Methodology,” *SBLSP* (Atlanta, Ga: Scholar’s Press, 1991), 235-252; David Seeley, “Jesus’ Temple Act,” *CBQ* 55.2 (1993): 263-283.

the possibility will be entertained that the act is simply a literary creation by Mark. This possibility will, in the end, be preferred as manifesting the fewest difficulties of interpretation.”<sup>37</sup>

There are four primary historical critical objections to the accuracy of this passage:

The **First** relates to the sheer size and extent of Jesus’ actions as depicted by the evangelists. Recent reconstructions of what took place generally contend that the size and extent of Jesus’ actions in the Temple was (far) less significant than that described in the Gospels.<sup>38</sup>

The **Second** centres on what some scholars suggest as the likely ‘on-the-spot apprehension’ of Jesus if the actions which the Gospels describe were, in fact, carried out.<sup>39</sup> Why was Jesus not immediately arrested? The difficulties these same scholars have with the apparent lack of a credible response as to why the Levitical and/or the Roman guards did not immediately intervene to curtail his actions, has led them to doubt the reliability of what is described and to propose no historical basis whatever for the Gospel accounts.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Seeley, “Jesus’ Temple Act,” 70.

<sup>38</sup> That the size and scale of Jesus’ actions – as depicted in more-recent scholarship – was considerably less than that picture presented in the Gospels, see the sample list of articles/commentaries that are examined later in Appendix 2. Commentators generally propose that Jesus’ actions were minimal in size but great in significance, or, as Ehrman describes, “symbolizing in a small way what was going to happen in a big way when the Son of Man arrived in judgement” (*Jesus Interrupted*, 167). Jesus’ actions were small in historical terms but large in symbolic meaning. As to the precise nature of the symbolism scholars propose for Jesus’ actions the most common suggestions as earlier seen are: (a) The need for a purification of the commercial practices in the Temple (b) The signalling of the end of the OT ritual sacrifices in the Holy Place and (c) A prophetic demonstration of the destruction of the Sanctuary itself. As such, Jesus may have turned over a table or two, or expelled one or two vendors from the Temple, but, on historical-critical grounds, little more was done than that. Some commentators further suggest - as earlier noted - that there is no historical foundation whatever to what is described in the Gospels but rather propose that the accounts were simply created by the evangelist with some pastoral or theological purpose in mind.

<sup>39</sup> The question is raised as to why Jesus was not immediately arrested or stopped from what would have been viewed as catastrophic actions in the Temple, with serious consequences for both the Jewish and Roman authorities. Would the Levitical guards on duty in the Holy Place and/or the Roman soldiers in the Fortress Antonia not have prevented such actions taking place? Several scholars examined in the sample overview in Appendix 2 make this very criticism (see the next footnote where excerpts from the writings of two scholars are noted).

<sup>40</sup> George Buchanan lists this among the main reasons for proposing that the event did not take place and that the various Gospel accounts describing Jesus’ actions (and primarily Mark 11: 15-19) are merely a literary creation by the evangelists. He writes: “It is not likely that the nation’s treasury and best fortress was left without military guard. Would military policemen, without reacting, allow a man or group of men to come into this strategic, defended area and start an upheaval which involved driving people out of the building and overturning the furniture?...With the long history of conflict associated with feasts at Jerusalem against which Rome was well prepared, how could Jesus have been allowed to have walked away unmolested after this

The **Third** is that – as several scholars have proposed (Eppstein, Sanders, Neusner, Seeley, Fredrickson)<sup>41</sup> - the services of the money-changers in the Temple were essential to the functioning of the Temple cult as a whole and as such would not have been disturbed by any faithful Jewish person at that time. The purpose of the money-changers, was to replace idolatrous or otherwise problematic coinage with a religiously acceptable replacement. Sanders argues that pilgrims who came to pay the half-shekel tax did so voluntarily and the money-changers provided a necessary service in this regard. They offered, he suggests, Tyrian coinage in exchange for the coins brought in by the pilgrims and charged a nominal fee for this service.<sup>42</sup> This reconstruction will later be challenged where I will suggest that: (a) Tyrian coins were not the coins which the money-changers offered in exchange in the Temple and (b) the services of the money-changers were not in fact necessary in the Holy Place.<sup>43</sup>

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turmoil had taken place? ...The account that now appears in the gospels, however, does not make sense in the Jerusalem situation during Jesus' ministry....The idea that Jesus' Cleansing of the temple was conjectured, rather than performed, is all the more probable...." ("Symbolic Money-Changers in the Temple," 281-83). David Seeley also doubts its historicity writing: "It is difficult to believe that so heavily guarded a place as the temple could have been assaulted in this way with no response....There is, of course, the possibility that Jesus actually assaulted the temple with a force sufficient to prevent armed response, at least immediately, but it really is impossible not to envision the Romans reacting violently to what would, in effect, be a virtual revolt and occupation of the most strategic area in Jerusalem...Because certain problems arise in the process of placing the temple act in a historical context, the possibility will be entertained that the act is simply a literary creation by Mark. This possibility will, in the end, be preferred as manifesting the fewest difficulties of interpretation...." ("Jesus' Temple Act," 271, 264).

<sup>41</sup> See Appendix 2.

<sup>42</sup> According to Sanders the money-changers offered Tyrian coinage in exchange for the coins brought in by the pilgrims and charged a nominal fee for this service. He writes: "But could the sacrifices continue without the changing of money and the selling of birds? It is hard to see how. The money changers were probably those who changed the money of pilgrims into the coinage acceptable by the temple in payment of the half-shekel tax levied on all Jews. The word 'levied' itself requires interpretation, for payment of the tax was voluntary, being enforced only by moral suasion. Yet we know that Jews from all parts of the Diaspora paid it out of loyalty to the Jerusalem temple. The desire of the authorities to receive the money in a standard coinage which did not have on it the image of an emperor or king is reasonable, and no one ever seems to have protested this. The money changers naturally charged a fee for changing money, but they can hardly have been expected to secure enough Tyrian coinage to meet the demands of worshippers and to supply their services for free." (*Jesus and Judaism*, 64).

<sup>43</sup> Scholars simply ask whether it would have been likely that Jesus would have turned over the money-changers tables, thereby bringing an end to the required daily sacrifices and ritual life of the Temple. This suggested criticism (i.e. the unlikely expulsion by Jesus of the *essential services of the money-changers* from the Temple) is most significant for this thesis and will be examined later where the assumption that the money-changers' services were essential will be challenged. I will later propose that such services were not in fact necessary but were merely novel innovations which the religious authorities had only recently introduced into the Temple during the lifetime of Jesus. Although, as will be seen in chapter three, the money-changers' services are mentioned in Mishna-Shekalim (they are mentioned twice in m.Shekalim 1:3) this is not necessarily an indication that (a) their services were essential or (b) that such services were present in the time of Jesus (it is generally assumed that m.Shekalim refers to practices conducted in the Temple from 41/42-70 CE). It will also be noted in chapter two that (a) the OT makes no reference whatever to the activities of money-changers in the Temple and (b) when monies of the Treasury were counted in the fifth and second centuries BCE (Ezra 2:68-69

**Fourth** and finally, many scholars suggest that the specific reference to robbers (ληστής) in the Temple in Mt 21:13; Mk 11:17; Lk 19:46 is historically improbable for 30 C.E.<sup>44</sup> Some scholars (Casey, Buchanan, Smith, Borg) have difficulty with identifying an appropriate *Sitz im Leben* for this term during the lifetime of Jesus.<sup>45</sup>

Several other examples of suggested historical inaccuracies might also be given, but these four are sufficient to make the point. This questioning of the historical reliability of the Gospel accounts on the Cleansing of the Temple is one of the primary features which separates some, if not most, of recent exegesis from that of writers in the early Church.

More detailed analysis of the methods and progression of academic historical-critical arguments regarding the historicity and meaning of the Cleansing event in the works of twelve reputable academic commentaries and articles is discussed in Appendix 2. For now, we will focus on Jesus' teachings about the Temple being made into a house of robbers in Mark 11:17 and parallels.

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and Nehemiah 7:70-72 and 1 Maccabees 10:40-42) foreign coins were listed among the treasures - apparently indicating the absence of money-changers throughout these times.

<sup>44</sup> The Greek term ληστών (Genitive plural of ληστής and the same term used in the LXX translation of the Hebrew קָרָיוּ in Jeremiah 7:11 which Jesus quoted in Mk 11:17) has a different meaning from the Greek term κλέπτης for "theft" (used 16 times in the NT). A robber (ληστής) uses planned or systematic (generally violent) force against an institution or person to take something, while a thief (κλέπτης, from κλέπτω, I steal) does not but steals in a disorganised way, at random or whenever an opportunity arises. When the money-changers' coinage is examined in chapter two of the thesis (I will argue that their coinage was a form of token coinage), I will propose that the Greek term ληστών has a credible setting in 30 C.E. and was used by Jesus to refer to the systematic theft of monies from the Treasury which followed as a consequence of the money-changers' coinage having been introduced into the Temple.

<sup>45</sup> Some historical-critical scholars find difficulty in reconstructing a situation in which 'brigands' or 'bandits', connoted by the term ληστών, were in the Temple in early first-century Judaism. The Greek term has, Casey writes: "according to some scholars a more likely later *Sitz im Leben* at a time when there were zealots in the Temple [68 – 70 AD]" ("Culture and Historicity: The Cleansing of the Temple," 318). See also: Buchanan, "Symbolic Money-Changers in the Temple?," 287; M.J. Borg, *Jesus: Uncovering the life, teachings, and relevance of a religious revolutionary*, (New York; Harper Collins, 2006), 235; Nicholas Perrin, *Jesus the Temple* (Grand Rapids MI, Baker Publishing Group, 2010), 82; Steve Smith: *The Fate of the Jerusalem Temple in Luke-Acts*, (London and New York; Bloomsbury T& T Clark, 2017), 76. In response to such criticism, I will later argue that when Jesus criticised the Temple personnel with the words "but you have made it a den of robbers", the theft he was referring to was not so much from the pilgrim Jew by way of inflated animal prices or unfair exchange but rather from the Treasury into which the pilgrims deposited their offerings.

#### (4) Mark 11:17

With the exception of a small handful of scholars, the majority of recent scholarship agrees that there is some small kernel of historical truth to the ‘Temple incident’. That said there is near-uniform agreement that Mark 11:17, Jesus’s statement that the Temple has been turned “into a den of robbers”, is a secondary accretion to the text. It is not uncommon to read in some more recent commentaries on the Cleansing of the Temple that the evangelist inserted this verse [Mark 11:17] of the account at a particular time in its transmission for a certain reason, or, the community added it at some other juncture for some other cause. Hamilton argues, for example, that this view is a later imposition by later editors reflecting the theological “bias” of a Hellenistic church in which Jesus was made appear to be “anti-Temple.” He writes “In the performance of its economic function it [i.e. the Temple in the time of Jesus] had not been a den of robbers.”<sup>46</sup>

Concerns about the historicity of this verse are worth taking seriously because, in the history of interpretation, the negative characterization of Jewish authorities as materialistic or self-serving has sometimes contributed to unwarranted misconceptions. Often in the past, in what might be described as ‘the traditional literal reading of the Gospel texts’, all too easy assumptions were made as to what took place in the Temple – assumptions which do not fit well with what is now known of Second-Temple Judaism in the time of Jesus. Recent historical-critical scholarship has, in fact, cast doubt on such a bleak depiction of Temple personnel.<sup>47</sup> Some scholars have suggested that the commercial activities in the Temple,

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<sup>46</sup> Neill Q. Hamilton, “Temple Cleansing and Temple Bank,” *JBL* 83 (1964): 365-372 [372]. Although Hamilton assumes the historicity of the event as recorded he, however, believes the saying “My house shall be a house of prayer but you have made it a den of robbers” is “suspiciously loaded with hellenistic bias” (p. 372). The first half of the saying is unlikely to have been spoken for he explains “the temple had not been mainly a house of prayer – this was the synagogue – but a place of sacrifice where God dwelt” (p. 372). The second half he also appears to deny for he adds: “In the performance of its economic function it [i.e. the Temple] had not been a den of robbers. Only those unacquainted with its benevolent and necessary economic function could have supposed so” (p. 372).

<sup>47</sup> Three typical caricatures have been addressed: (1) The commercialisation of the Temple (including the trading in animals and their proper inspection and the money-changers’ exchange), noisy and overbearing as it must have been in the Court of the Gentiles during festival times, was necessary for the ritual life and holiness of the Holy Place (2) Although occasional dishonest practice may have been carried on in the Temple by way of “extortionate trafficking” (Gigot *Outlines of New Testament History*, 109), “exploitation of the pilgrims” (A *Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture*, 923) or “the taking of undue advantage of the poor people who came to offer their sacrifices” (*The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*: Edersheim, 309), any suggestion that such dishonest commercial activity happened on a grand scale in early first-century Judaism appears to be unfounded (3) Suggestions that the money-changers were, in the main, motivated out of greed and were making large

including the services of the money-changers, were in fact necessary in order for the sacrificial cult to function (Eppstein, Sanders, Neusner, Seeley, Fredrickson, Smith).<sup>48</sup> In addition, they argue, there is “no evidence” that in the Temple in early first-century Judaism the traders and money-changers “were making an exorbitant profit on the sale of animals and on money-changing” and were passing on part of that money “to their corrupt bosses, the priests.”<sup>49</sup> The description of those there as “robbers,” therefore makes little historical sense.

A particular historical problem with the passage – scholars suggest – is the precise Greek term, ληστής, used to characterize the money changers and authorities. How is it possible to describe the money-changers and authorities as “robbers” (ληστών, gen. pl. of ληστής) in Mark 11:17? What was going on to support the notion that theft on such a grand (systematic and even violent) scale, prompted by the use of this term, was in fact being carried out? According to Casey, the use of ληστής has a more likely “later *Sitz im Leben* at a time when there were zealots in the Temple” during the Jewish-Roman war. Casey writes: “More trouble has been caused by ληστών, a standard word for ‘robbers’, ‘brigands’, ‘bandits’, which has led some scholars to propose a later *Sitz im Leben* at a time when there were zealots in the Temple [68 – 70 AD]”.<sup>50</sup> Similarly, George W. Buchanan postpones such malpractice as connoted by this term to the same time when he writes: “A more likely *sitz im leben* ... is the First Revolt of the Jews against Rome in A.D. 68-70. At that time the zealots unquestionably had control of the

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profits on their exchange finds little support in the Talmud and tends to have underestimated their obedience to the Law; in this regard the money-changers appear to have been unfairly caricatured.

<sup>48</sup> Eppstein: “The Historicity of the Gospel Account of the Cleansing of the Temple,” 43, 45, 46; Sanders: *Jesus and Judaism*, 63-65; Neusner: “Money-changers in the Temple: The Mishnah’s Explanation,” 87-89; Seeley: “Jesus’ Temple Act,” 264-265; Fredrickson: “Gospel Chronologies, the Scene in the Temple, and the Crucifixion of Jesus,” 246-282 in *Redefining First-Century Jewish and Christian Identities: Essays in Honour of Ed. P. Sanders*, ed. Fabian Udoh (South Bend, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008), 251. I will later propose that although Jesus approved of the sacrificial rites in the Temple and may also have approved of their legitimate accompanying commercial dealings, he was opposed to the operations of the money-changers whose services had only recently been introduced into the Holy Place.

<sup>49</sup> Seeley, “Jesus’ Temple Act,” 1991, 268.

<sup>50</sup> Casey defends the historicity of the verse whilst acknowledging difficulty in giving it a *literal Sitz im Leben*. He writes: “More trouble has been caused by ληστών, a standard word for ‘robbers’, ‘brigands’, ‘bandits’, which has led some scholars to propose a later *Sitz im Leben* at a time when there were zealots in the Temple [68 – 70 AD]”. Casey continues: “There is no need to suppose that the description must both be true and literally correct. ... It is sufficient that the traders and money changers were making a profit, that the most vigorous prophet of the day could accuse them in scriptural terms of combining trading in the temple with inadequate religious lives in which they were making lots of money from the observant poor, that the chief priests and scribes were stinking rich, and that the results of collecting excessive amounts of money were visible in the gold flashing all around” in “Culture and Historicity: the Cleansing of the Temple,” 318, 319.

temple”.<sup>51</sup> It is the anachronistic description of the temple authorities as robbers that has led scholars to conclude that this verse stems from a later period of interpretation.

This probing and questioning of Jesus’ actions has undoubtedly cast an air of scepticism on the reliability of the Gospel accounts. For if there were no justifiable reasons for Jesus’ actions, the reader might be tempted to wonder whether any such actions could then have taken place. Could the Gospel accounts be wrong? After all they depict not only an event of great magnitude, but one in which the practices in the Temple were severely criticised? Recent historical-criticism has undoubtedly called the accounts presented in the Gospels into question. What these interpretations have assumed, however, is that the statement about “theft” in Mark 11:17 refers to theft from pilgrim Jews by means of inflated animal prices or unfair exchange. What I will propose in the rest of this dissertation is that this is a reference not to theft from the pilgrims, but rather to theft from the Treasury into which the pilgrims deposited their offerings. The Treasury – the domain of God – was being stolen from. The revenue that God was receiving in the Treasury was greatly, if not totally, depleted. This theft was not sporadic or isolated, at the whim of a money-changer or trader, but was generally practiced as part of a widespread monetary innovation. It was systematic and organised. It was accomplished by the subtle manner in which the money-changer was introduced into the Temple and by the mechanics of the particular coinage that was offered in exchange there. The social and economic dynamics involved in the exchange of this coinage will be examined in the following chapters. What this means for our understanding of this passage, I will argue, is that the term *ληστών* (robbers) in Mk 11:17 has a precise literal-historical setting; it was ‘revolutionary’ and even ‘violent’ as it directly violated God’s intentions. The further implications of this theory for our understanding of the events described in the Gospels will be drawn out in chapter four.

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<sup>51</sup> George W. Buchanan in “Symbolic Money-Changers in the Temple?”, 287. Steve Smith also writes: “It could be argued that *ληστής* implies theft and dishonesty. But such an interpretation robs *ληστής* of much of its first-century linguistic emphasis where it usually had the meaning of brigand, bandit or even insurrectionist...” in *The Fate of the Jerusalem Temple in Luke-Acts*, (London and New York; Bloomsbury T& T Clark, 2017), 76. See in addition, M.J. Borg, *Jesus: Uncovering the life, teachings, and relevance of a religious revolutionary*, (New York; Harper Collins, 2006), 235; Nicholas Perrin, *Jesus the Temple* (Grand Rapids MI, Baker Publishing Group, 2010), 82.

## **Chapter Two**

### **The Cleansing of the Temple and the function of Money (Coinage) and its different Kinds in the time of Jesus**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter of my thesis will examine one of the most important aspects to the monetary background of the Temple in Jerusalem in first-century Judaism – that is, the role of precious metal coinage as a form of money in the time of Jesus. A thorough understanding of the different forms of coinage in circulation, the precious-metal content which gave them value and their precise function is, I argue, necessary if we are to appreciate the significance of Jesus' actions in the Temple. This chapter will therefore consider the role of money (coinage) in first-century Judaism and will look at five different denominations of coins that were known in Jesus' time: (a) Greek (b) Jewish-Hasmonean (c) Roman (d) Tyrian and (e) Temple coins. Significant or special features of these individual coin types will be noted particularly as they apply to the subject matter of this thesis. The role of Temple coins in the Holy Place will receive special attention.

Money as we know it today is quite different from that in use in first-century Judaism.<sup>1</sup> Many points may be made or instances given to show these differences but there is one in particular which should be emphasized as, I argue, it has a direct bearing on the words and actions of Jesus when he cleansed the Temple at the beginning of what Christians call "Holy Week". This is the fact that money today is merely token in nature whereas money used in the time of Jesus almost always had real intrinsic value.

If today we are buying a pair of shoes or a coat valued at 70 euros we might offer the shopkeeper two notes or pieces of paper, one marked 50 and the other 20 and the exchange is complete. The notes are of token value as their nature is that of mere paper. This same transaction would have taken place in Jerusalem in the time of Jesus with one fundamental difference; the coins used to pay the shopkeeper were valued because of the amount of silver (or with coins of greater value the gold, with less value the copper) that was contained within them. What would have

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<sup>1</sup> Ben Witherington III, *Jesus and Money* (Grand Rapids, Brazon Press, 2011), 43.



allowed this transaction to take place was the fact that one item of value, shoes or coat, was exchanged for another, gold, silver or copper in the form of a coin. Token money would have been completely unacceptable as it would have contained no real or intrinsic value and, if imposed upon any person, would have amounted to a form of theft.

This simple point noting the distinction between real and token coinage has, I propose, an important bearing on our interpretation of the Scripture passages describing the Cleansing of the Temple. For although the different forms of coinage in the time of Jesus possessed - as indicated above - real intrinsic value, there was, however, I will propose, one exception to this rule, one form of coinage in first-century Judaism that was merely token in value. This was the coinage offered in exchange by the money-changers in the Temple. I argue - as Origen and some of the Early Fathers have indicated (see chapter one) - that the Temple coinage contained nothing of precious metal content, such as was normal and intrinsic to all other coinage at that time. I will also argue that when Jesus cleansed the Temple and accused the religious authorities with these words, “but you have made it [“my house” i.e. the Temple] a den of robbers” (Mk: 11:17), the theft he was referring to was not so much from the pilgrim Jew by way of inflated animal prices or unfair exchange, but rather from the Treasury into which the pilgrims deposited their offerings. The Treasury – the domain of God – was being stolen from. The revenue that God was to receive there was greatly, if not totally, depleted. This theft was accomplished by the subtle manner in which the money-changers were introduced into the Temple and, in particular, through the precise form of coinage they were offering in exchange there. It was this coinage that was deposited in the Treasury. The coins of real value that pilgrims had brought into the Temple (most probably the Tyrian coinage stipulated in the Mishna or even Roman denarii or Greek staters – see later) remained behind on the money-changers’ tables. Resting on the money-changers’ tables and, therefore, not ‘corban’<sup>2</sup> or

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<sup>2</sup> *Easton’s Bible Dictionary* defines ‘Corban’ as “a Hebrew word adopted into the Greek of the New Testament and left untranslated. It occurs only once (Mark 7:11). It means a gift or offering consecrated to God”. (Matthew George Easton, [Thomas Nelson, 1896] [http://bible.christiansunite.com/Eastons\\_Bible\\_Dictionary/](http://bible.christiansunite.com/Eastons_Bible_Dictionary/)). The *Dictionary of the Bible* similarly writes that in ancient times the (Hebrew/Greek) term ‘Corban’ “signifies a gift or a consecration of an article to the deity.” The *Dictionary* continues: “In Judaism the word came to mean the temple treasury (Mt 27:6). The word as used in Mk 7:11, where it is interpreted as “gift,” suggests that it was employed as a formula of consecration of articles given to the temple....property consecrated to the temple could not be employed for profane uses.” (*Dictionary of the Bible*, John L. McKenzie. S.J. [New York; Touchstone, 1965], 148. Again, “Corban” is from “Hebr. קרבן, an offering, ..., a term which comprehends all kinds of sacrifices, the bloody as well as the bloodless,” in *The New Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon* (author John Thayer, London UK; Hendrickson, 1988), 355. Corban again is explained as: “A Hebrew term for a “gift” or “offering” consecrated to God....In the New Testament, the Aramaic term *Corban* was used to denote the

‘dedicated to God’, this money could be used at the discretion of the Temple authorities. This new practice introduced into the Temple would, I propose, have prevented any future plunder of the Treasury whilst offering vast sums of money for investment and other forms of spending which ordinarily would have accumulated and remained “static” in the Temple Treasury.<sup>3</sup>

## **Money (Coinage) in the time of Jesus**

### **A brief overview of the historical evolution of Money**

In order for readers of the 21<sup>st</sup> century to appreciate the ‘monetary world’ of first-century CE Judaism in which Jesus lived, a brief overview of the historical evolution of money from the time of Jesus up to today is first presented. This summary overview is important as there is a fundamental difference in the nature of money which was used in the time of Jesus with that which is employed today.

Following on from the simple exchange of goods and services by barter long ago, money developed as a medium of exchange in order to facilitate trade. The first stage in its development was the use of bullion money (ingots of gold and silver), which subsequently progressed to the minting of precious coins (i.e. gold, silver and copper coins) - the second stage - and the main form of money in the time of Jesus.<sup>4</sup> This second stage was eventually overtaken by the third with the official issue of debased coinage during the early centuries CE of the Roman Empire, when the percentage of the precious metal content of the coins (i.e. the percentage of silver or gold in the coin) was systematically reduced with the consequent

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Temple treasury (Matt 27:6, translated “treasury” in the RSV).” (*Catholic Bible Dictionary*, ed. Scott Hahn [New York: Doubleday, 2009] 160-161.

<sup>3</sup> Referring to the vast sums of money that must have accumulated in the Treasury in the time of Jesus and to the few recognizable outlets for such monies to be invested, Lester Grabbe writes: “The contributions from the Diaspora must have been enormous and may have found their way into the economy through the temple rebuilding programme. Unfortunately, much of it could not easily be invested. Land was limited, which closed one obvious source of investment. Much of the wealth went into static stocks of gold and silver (*War* 6.5.2 §282).” Lester L. Grabbe, *Judaism from Cyrus to Hadrian* (London, SCM Press, 1994), 416.

<sup>4</sup> The reason for the transition from “chattel money” to that of coinage is described by Alfred O Rahilly. He writes: “One form of chattel money was precious metals such as silver and gold. These precious metals had to be weighed on scales and tested for their quality or purity by skilled personnel before an exchange could take place.” O Rahilly goes on to state that this process was slow and tedious. Coinage was introduced to overcome this need. He writes, “The next stage was coinage (the second stage) which was the sub-division and guarantee as to weight, quality etc by some recognized public authority.... with the introduction of coinage, scales, measures and the testing of quality were no longer required, for the authoritative seal on the coin became the guarantee of its weight and quality.” Alfred O Rahilly, *Money* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed; Cork, Cork University Press, 1942), 3.

reissuing of coins with a cheaper alloy. The final and fourth stage brought this process of debasement to completion<sup>5</sup> by removing completely any intrinsic value that money may possess as a medium of exchange with the introduction of the various forms of token money ('fiat money') that we use today.<sup>6</sup> In summary therefore the four stages in the evolution of money are (1) bullion money (2) precious coins – in the time of Jesus (3) debased coinage and (4) token or fiat money which we use today. Although this overview seemingly reserves the use of token money as legal tender currency to our own times (in 1694, with the establishment of the Bank of England, 'fiat' or token money was officially sanctioned and later extended to become what we know today – see footnote 6), it had, in fact, an earlier precedent. This earlier official sanction, I will propose, was that endorsed by the Temple authorities in the time of Jesus when the money-changers offered token coinage in exchange in the Temple of Jerusalem.

### **Money (Coinage) in the time of Jesus**

During the lifetime of Jesus there were five principal forms of coinage in circulation throughout Jerusalem and the surrounding districts which are mentioned in the Gospels and which enjoyed

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<sup>5</sup> The gradual progression from the "decreases in the amount of [precious] metal" to the "debasement of the content of coins by governments" and its link with the modern phenomenon of "printing money" (i.e. token or 'fiat' money) is well noted by L. Schiffman, when he writes: "As is well-known, a number of problems contributed to decreases in the amount of metal in coins in pre-modern times. First was the natural wear and tear on metallic coins produced either from pure metals or from alloys that did not have the stability of modern coins. Second was the practice of coin clipping, in which small amounts of metal were taken off coins by those who sought to profit unscrupulously. Both of these factors led to coins "unofficially" being of lesser value than their designation. But this problem paled when compared to the debasement of the content of coins by governments in an effort to increase revenues—the ancient equivalent of what we call "printing money"." Lawrence H. Schiffman, "Talmudic Monetary Theory - Currency In Rabbinic Halakhah," in *The Oxford Handbook of Judaism and Economics* (ed. by Aaron Levine; Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2010), 620.

<sup>6</sup> During the middle-ages, the problems relating to the separation of 'good coinage' from 'bad coinage' continued, as a result of the practice of debasement of coinage. Efforts were made at various times by political leaders to stabilize the value of coins in circulation (see Charlemagne's attempt at stabilization in the 8<sup>th</sup> century and, also, similar monetary reforms by the Austrian Duke Rudolf IV in the 14<sup>th</sup> century). Such attempts, however, proved only temporarily successful with a return to the immoral practices of debasement and the use of token money under different codes of practice (the Chinese, for example, decreed the mandatory use of paper money in the Szechwan province, between 1050 and 1450 and, in 1661, the first banknotes in Sweden were introduced by Johan Palmstruch's 'Stockholm's Banco.' See, Vincent Lannoye, *The Green Market System - A Second Currency for a parallel Economy* (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform; 2015), 28. Later, in the seventeenth century with the establishment of the Bank of England in 1694 (the Bank of England was set up by an Act of Parliament in 1694 to help finance the war between England and France), token money in the form of paper credit was given legal recognition and began to be circulated. Although there was gold in reserve in the bank, the bank was given permission to issue new paper money without gold backing the new release of money. Thus began 'the fractional-gold reserve' system. In 1971, President Richard Nixon took the dollar (the world reserve currency) off the Gold Standard completely with the dollar no longer redeemable in gold. All money issued today is completely token in nature. For, a brief overview of key milestones in banking history see, Kurt Schuler "Key Dates in Financial History," (2011), [http://www.centerforfinancialstability.org/hfs/Key\\_dates.pdf](http://www.centerforfinancialstability.org/hfs/Key_dates.pdf).

varying degrees of significance and use in first-century Judaism. They are: (a) Greek coinage (b) Jewish coinage (as distinct from Temple coinage) minted intermittently from Hasmonean times to the Jewish-Roman War, i.e. from 138 BCE – 66 CE (c) Roman coinage (d) Tyrian coinage and (e) Temple coinage. A brief examination of each of these different forms of coinage will be examined in turn in so far as they have a bearing on the subject matter of this thesis. The first is Greek coinage.

### (1) Greek Coinage

Greek coins once dominated the whole region of the Middle East and Judah. In first-century Judaism they were probably of secondary importance and circulated in small quantities. One important point that must be emphasized in relation to coins minted during the Greek period (the Classical and Hellenistic period 480-31 BCE) is that the coins were seldom, if ever, debased<sup>7</sup> (or counterfeited<sup>8</sup>). The coins, therefore, retained their intrinsic value. The precious metal content contained within the coins was not replaced by a cheaper alloy. The city-state of Athens, the principal state in ancient Greece, not only refrained from tampering with the precious metal of their coinage but even refrained from altering the face of their coins, so as to maintain the demand for their currency both at home and abroad.<sup>9</sup> The importance of maintaining the integrity and honesty of its coins was such that magistrates or mint officials, in some Greek city-states, who presented coins to the public at defaced value, if found guilty of this practice of debasement, were liable to the death penalty.<sup>10</sup> The independence of each city-state protected the integrity of coins issued throughout the entire region, for coins in a neighbouring city state – if debased - would cease to be in demand with significant economic

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<sup>7</sup> Debasement describes the practice of reducing the percentage of precious metal content (silver or gold) in the coin and replacing it with a cheaper alloy. This practice ‘officially’ began in Roman times during the reign of Nero (see later). The main reason a government might debase its currency was the immediate financial gain a sovereign would acquire – particularly in times of war - by calling in all coinage in circulation, melting it down and re-issuing a greater supply of the same coins in circulation than had been known before. The resulting new issue of coins, however, were coins that possessed inferior precious metal content.

<sup>8</sup> The counterfeiting of ancient coins typically involved the practice of plating a base metal coin with silver or gold to make the coin look like its solid silver or gold counterpart.

<sup>9</sup> See, Darel Tai Engen, “Ancient Greenbacks: Athenians Owls, the Law of Nikophon, and the Greek Economy”, in *Historia* 54:4 (2005): 359-381.

<sup>10</sup> See: Gunnar Heinsohn and Otto Steiger, *Ownership Economics – On the foundations of interest, money, markets, business cycles and economic development* (trans. and ed. by Frank Decker; London: Routledge, 2016), 77; G. Macdonald, *The Evolution of Coinage* (Cambridge U.K., Cambridge University Press, 1916), 12; Robert Conn IV, *Prevalence and Profitability - The Counterfeit Coins of Archaic and Classical Greece*, (Unpublished PhD Dissertation; Florida State University, 2007), 1, 25.

consequences for that city-state.<sup>11</sup> This independence with respect to the issue of its own coinage continued for some city-states right up to the time of Roman rule, particularly in the East. Up to the time of Jesus, therefore, Greek coins were quite well known and are mentioned in different passages throughout the Gospels (for eg. the Greek didrachma in Mt 17:24, the Greek tetradrachma or stater in Mt 17:27; the Greek drachma in Lk 15:9). The debasement of coinage will be referred to later again in the section on Roman coinage, where it will be seen that this practice first became prevalent when it was officially authorized in the reign of Nero, in the year 64 CE, that is, *after the time* of Jesus. This is a significant point and will be developed later. Let us now examine the next form of coinage in our list, Jewish coinage (as distinct from Temple coinage) issued in Hasmonean times and later, which have a bearing on the subject matter of this thesis.

## **(2) Jewish-Hasmonean Coinage and later Issues (as distinct from Temple coinage)**

It was during the second century BCE that the Maccabees restored independence to Judah. Simon Maccabee succeeded in recapturing the Temple, which had been plundered and desecrated during the reign of the Syrian King Antiochus Epiphanes (169 BCE). Later, in the year 138 BCE, King Antiochus VII granted the Jews the privilege of coining their own money, a prerogative normally associated with an independent state. This right to mint their own coins is found in the First Book of Maccabees 15:5-6 where King Antiochus decreed: "I confirm in your favour [i.e. Simon Maccabee] all the remissions of tribute that my royal predecessors granted you, with any other concessions they granted you. I hereby authorize you to mint your own coinage as legal tender for your own country." Initially, scholars believed that this decree was acted upon immediately with Jewish coins, both bronze and silver, being issued. However, this opinion has more recently been rejected. For although bronze coins (an alloy consisting primarily of copper and approximately 12% of tin) were minted in this time no silver coins were minted throughout the entire Hasmonean period.<sup>12</sup> This is a significant point for our thesis and will be developed later.

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<sup>11</sup> The many different city-states in ancient Greece made it impossible for any official practices of debasement to take place. Coins issued with real intrinsic value in one city-state would always be in demand, leaving coins minted in another city-state - with inferior precious metal content - left 'on the shelf'.

<sup>12</sup> David Hendin writes: "Ironically, early writers on Jewish numismatics such as Madden.... and Reifenberg started us with a real "red herring". They attributed the first Jewish coins to Simon Maccabee, assuming he had struck both the thick silver shekels and the large bronzed coins of the First Revolt [later Hendin presents the

The minting of Jewish bronze coins multiplied during the tenure of John Hyrcanus (134-104 BCE) where various denominations have been found, the smallest being that of a ‘perutah’. These bronze coins often carried the Jewish inscription “Yehochanan the high priest [the ‘kohen gadol’ כהן גדול] and head of the council of the Jews” and, later the inscription “Yehonatan the King [hamelech המלך]” in the time of Alexander Jannaeus (103-76 BCE), They also did not depict offensive graven images but rather chose emblems such as anchors, a star, cornucopias, tripod tables and different plant species. During the short reign of the last Hasmonean ruler, Antigonus Mattathias (40–37 BCE), the coins depicted the holy vessels of the Temple of Jerusalem, such as the Table of Shewbread and the Seven-Branched Candelabrum. These coins, although copper (bronze) in nature were not, I propose, the copper coins that will later be seen as exchanged by the moneychangers within the Temple. For the copper (bronze) coins minted during the Hasmonean era were used in everyday commercial activity whereas, I will propose, the copper coins offered in exchange in the Temple were restricted to that within the Temple alone.

It is likely that the coins deposited in the Treasury by the “poor widow” in Mark’s Gospel (12:41-44) were the Jewish perutahs (or half-perutahs) of this time described above,<sup>13</sup> the

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“general consensus” theory as to the origin of the bronze coins that were minted during the Hasmonean era – the point of interest for our thesis, however, is that there were no silver coins issued in Hasmonean times - there were only bronze; the first Jewish silver coins were the coins of the Revolt in 66 CE].” Hendin continues: “Support was found for this theory [i.e. the false theory that both silver and bronze coins were minted] in the statement of Antiochus VII to Simon “I give thee leave also to coin money for thy country with thine own stamp...” (I Maccabees 15:6). This error of attribution was finally put to rest during the excavations in the 1950’s and 60’s at Jerusalem, Massada, and elsewhere, which made it clear that the coins previously attributed to Simon were definitely from the First Revolt (A.D. 66-70),” in “New Data Sheds Light on Hasmonean Coin Theories,” *Journal of Ancient Numismatics* 1:1 (April/May 2008). See also: David Hendin, “Current Viewpoints on Ancient Jewish Coinage: A Bibliographic Essay,” *Currents in Biblical Research* 11:2 (2013), 18; Alfred Edersheim: *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* (Volume I, 6<sup>th</sup> ed., London, Longmans and Green, 1891), p. 367, f. 4; Emil Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ Vol II* (rev. and ed. Geza Vermes, Fergus Millar and Matthew Black; London and New York, Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2014), 63.

<sup>13</sup> In a comment on the coins contributed to the Treasury by the Widow in his book on ancient Jewish coins, Edgar Rodgers writes: “With some degree of certainty it may be said that the popular coins for this purpose were the small copper of Alexander Jannaeus and his successors [i.e. the perutahs issued in Hasmonean times],” in *A Handy Guide to Jewish Coins* (London, Spink and Sons, 1914). In a footnote assuming the “Widow’s mite” as being that of the Jewish perutah, James Charlesworth writes: “The Widow’s mites (or Perutahs), two copper coins, are mentioned in Mk 12:42-43 and Lk 21:2-3” in *Jesus and Archaeology*. (Cambridge, UK, Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2006), 11. David Hendin, refines this reconstruction by stating that an even smaller piece, sometimes called a half-perutah, was issued by “Alexander Jannaeus (103-76 BCE) and Herod the Great (37-4 BCE)” and that this piece is the most likely candidate for the coins offered by the Widow. Hendin writes: “What were the smallest coins in circulation in Jerusalem at this time [i.e. the time of Jesus and the Widow]? The smallest coins were [the coins of] Alexander Jannaeus (103-76 BCE) and Herod the Great (37-4 BCE) [who] issued even smaller denominations [than that of the perutahs]. These coins were “half prutot” also known as

smallest coins in circulation.<sup>14</sup> This smallest coin according to the Jewish standard (i.e. the ‘Perutah’), it will later be noted, was half the value of the smallest Roman coin in circulation in the time of Jesus according to the Roman standard - the ‘Quadrans’. This comparison of valuation is noted in Mark’s Gospel where the evangelist writes that the poor widow “put in two copper coins [Gk *lepta duo*, i.e. two Jewish perutahs] which make a penny [lit. κοδραντης i.e. a Roman quadrans]” (Mk: 12:42). The significance of this phrase will be commented upon later in chapter four of the thesis.

When Herod I (Herod the Great 40/37 BCE to 4 BCE) was named King of the Jews by the Roman Senate, a fresh issue of coins began to be minted in Judea which are commonly known as ‘Herodian coins.’ A thorough analysis of these coins reveals among other things that Herod issued bronze coins only.<sup>15</sup> Why, it might be asked, did Herod (like his Hasmonean predecessors) not issue gold or silver coins? Two reasons are offered in response: (1) Whereas a concession might have been conceded a local ruler with respect to the minting of bronze coins, Rome reserved the right to mint its own gold and silver coins and (2) Herod, like his predecessors, would have needed deposits of gold and silver<sup>16</sup> from which coins with real intrinsic value could be produced. This second point is important. For, later, when examining the precise coinage offered by the money-changers in exchange in the Temple, it is all too often easily assumed that the money-changers offered silver coins in exchange when no silver deposits would have been available to the Temple authorities for such an issue. The first Jewish

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“leptons.” The “leptons” were the smallest of the small bronze coins.” in *Guide to Biblical Coins* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.; New York, Amphora; 2001), 287.

<sup>14</sup> Kenneth Jacob, noting how small in value the lepton was, adds that “two leptons ...together” were equal to the smallest coin in the Roman denomination - the Roman quadrans (the significance of this point will be referred to later in chapter four of the thesis). Jacob writes: “In the case of the “widow’s mite” – the lepton of Mark 12:42 and Luke 21:2 – it is reasonably certain that the coins would have been some of the Jewish bronze pieces struck by the High Priests before B.C. 37....The two leptons given by the widow being together equal to the quadrans, the smallest coin struck by the Romans,” in *Coins and Christianity* (London, Seaby’s Numismatic Publications, 1959), 18-19. Similarly, David Wenkel *Coins as Cultural Texts in the World of the New Testament* (London and New York; Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2017), 28.

<sup>15</sup> D. P. Ariel and J. P. Fontanille, *The Coins of Herod* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2012). David Jacobson writes: “Contrary to what one might have expected, the Judean monarch, Herod the Great (37-4BCE), famous as a prolific builder, did not mint any silver coins, but instead limited his production to very modest low value bronze denominations,” in “Herodian Bronze and Silver Coinage,” *Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins* 130: 2 (2014), pp 138-154, Abstract.

<sup>16</sup> Although King Herod received large revenue through the collection of taxes, he would not have had permission to melt down the Roman silver currency with which his subjects made payment of such tribute. In order to mint his own silver coins he would have needed (a) permission from Rome to mint his own particular coinage and (b) his own supply of precious metal deposits from which to mint his own coins.

silver coins minted were issued at the outbreak of the Jewish-Roman War in 66 CE with the Hebrew inscription “Shekel of Israel” and “Jerusalem the Holy”.<sup>17</sup> They were issued in the Temple area most probably by Temple authorities sympathetic to the zealot movement.<sup>18</sup> Recent archaeological excavations have confirmed that there was only a limited issue of such silver coinage declaring freedom from Rome, whereas – according to the same research – this restriction did not apply to the issue of bronze coins bearing the same inscriptions.<sup>19</sup> These bronze coins were issued copiously throughout the War. Whereas copper (and tin and lead)

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<sup>17</sup> The first Jewish silver coins were minted at the outbreak of the Jewish-Roman War in 66 CE with the Hebrew inscription “Shekel of Israel” and “Jerusalem the Holy”. Mel Wacks writes: “When the Jewish Revolt broke out in 66 CE, the revolutionaries quickly captured the holy city of Jerusalem, thus assuring them access to the great Temple for religious purposes and to its vast treasury as well. From the silver therein - presumably consisting of Tyrian coins paid in taxes over the years - they struck the most famous of all Jewish coins - in shekel and half shekel denominations. These handsome coins [i.e. the silver coins of the Revolt in 66-70 C.E.] are the first truly Jewish silver coins. They feature a chalice on one side with the year of the revolt above, surrounded by the ancient Hebrew inscription “Shekel of Israel”.” “[Coins of the] First Revolt 66-70 CE” in *The Handbook of Biblical Numismatics* (Israel Numismatic Service, 1976, 14). See also: Hendin, “Current Viewpoints on Ancient Jewish Coinage: A Bibliographic Essay,” 36; James McLaren and Martin Goodman, “The Importance of Perspective: The Jewish-Roman Conflict of 66–70 CE as a Revolution,” in *Revolt and Resistance in the Ancient Classical World and the Near East* (ed. John J. Collins; J.G. Manning: Leiden/Boston, Brill, 2016), 213. More recently Michaël Girardin has written: “The first remarkable point about the coins struck in Judea during the Jewish war concerns the metal that was used: they are silver coins. It must be noted that none of the Roman procurators seem to have struck silver coins in the province..... In fact, there is nothing to suggest that Judea practiced minting in precious metal prior to the uprising of 66 C.E. ....[Although] Antiochus VII granted to Simon Maccabee the privilege to strike his own money at his own die....the Hasmoneans do not appear to have struck silver coins. The coins of 66 C.E. might been the first minted in this precious metal in Judea, as copper-alloy was employed more often.” “The Propaganda of Jewish Rebels of 66-70 C.E. according to their Coins”. *Scripta Judaica Cracoviensia* 14, 2016, 23-40, p’s 24, 25.

<sup>18</sup> U. Rappaport: “Who Minted the Jewish War Coins?,” *INR* 2 (2007), 103-116. Robert Deutsch writes: “The consistency shown in these coins [i.e. the silver coins minted during the War] points to the fact that they were all minted by the same minting authority, and possibly produced by the same artisans.....the general view of researchers of the subject is that the central mint entrusted with producing the revolt coinage was located close to the source of the silver: the temple treasury in Jerusalem, and that the minting authority were temple officials, the priests led by the high priest.” “Coinage of the First Jewish Revolt against Rome, Iconography, Minting Authority, Metallurgy” in *The Jewish Revolt against Rome, Interdisciplinary Perspectives* (ed. Miladen Popavic; Leiden; Brill, 2012), 361-373,

<sup>19</sup> Robert Deutsch details the silver and bronze coins issued during the First Revolt against Rome which were discovered from the finds of various digs of archaeological excavations. A total of 93 sites were surveyed: 79 sites in Israel and 14 sites abroad. Of the 3492 coins recorded (excluding hoards) only 17 are made of silver and 3475 are made of bronze. Deutsch writes: “The study deals with the coins issued by the Jews during the first revolt against Rome....The coins were produced in silver and bronze. ...The bronze coins of the second and third years, which carry the slogan “Freedom of Zion,” are abundant and negligently manufactured. .... The silver coins.... of the Jewish revolt all belong to a single issue in which both the symbols and the inscriptions are identical. The bronze *prutot* which were minted in very large quantities, were also produced by the same mint..... In the “year four” bronze coins, however, a broad range of changes appear. These changes are so wide-ranging that they prompt the question as to whether a secondary mint existed alongside that of the temple.” “Coinage of the First Jewish Revolt against Rome, Iconography, Minting Authority, Metallurgy” in *The Jewish Revolt against Rome, Interdisciplinary Perspectives* (ed. Miladen Popavic; Leiden: Brill, 2012), 361,366. Presumably there were copper (and lead or tin) deposits locally available from which such large quantities of bronze coinage could continue to have been issued throughout the War. Among this supply of copper deposits, I argue, may have been the Temple coinage (the copper coins which I will later propose were exchanged by the money-changers in the Temple) that was melted down and re-issued.



deposits were presumably available with which to mint such bronze coins, the question arises as to where silver deposits were found from which to issue the silver coins in the early period of the War. Although scholars generally assume that such silver deposits were made available to the rebels/Temple authorities when they took control of the Temple and seized its funds at the beginning of the War<sup>20</sup>, it appears that no such funds then existed in the Holy Place after the Roman Prefect, Gessius Florus, had earlier plundered and emptied the Temple Treasury.<sup>21</sup> Rather, I propose for consideration that such silver deposits may have been made available as a consequence of the introduction of the money-changers' services in the Temple. Coins originally destined for the Treasury from pilgrims making the half-shekel payments were instead placed on the money-changers' tables<sup>22</sup> and later removed from the Temple. These coins, I suggest for consideration, may have provided the supply of silver deposits from which this fresh issue was made possible. They were most probably melted down and re-issued with new inscriptions and emblems at the outbreak of the War.

### (3) Roman Coinage

Roman coins comprised, it appears, along with Tyrian and Greek coins one of the main forms of coinage in circulation in Judah and the surrounding districts during the lifetime of Jesus.<sup>23</sup> The Roman Standard (table of weights, divisions and values of its coins) was different from

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<sup>20</sup> See earlier extract from *The Handbook of Biblical Numismatics* by Mel Wacks in footnote 17. Referencing Robert Deutsch, David Hendin writes: "The Jewish war silver coins were made from melted and further purified Tyre shekels that came from the Temple treasury," "Current Viewpoints on Ancient Jewish Coinage - A Bibliographic Essay," 36. More recently Michaël Girardin has written: "It is most likely the faction holding the temple during the uprising...inaugurated the silver Jerusalemite coinage in 66 C.E. Among the different factions disputing the leadership inside Jerusalem, the Zealot party is the most probable. Formed during the winter of 67-68 C.E., it was visibly organized around the priests who interrupted the twice-daily sacrifices in the name of the emperor." "The Propaganda of Jewish Rebels of 66-70 C.E. according to their Coins", *Scripta Judaica Cracoviensia* (2016), 29.

<sup>21</sup> One of the causes of the War was the plundering of the Temple Treasury by Gessius Florus in 66 C.E. It was only later that the rebels took control of the Temple. At this later time there were apparently no funds in the Treasury. From where then did the Temple authorities favourable to the rebels find silver from which to issue the coins of the Revolt? For the chronology of the War see Javier Lopez, *Josephus' Jewish War and the Cause of the Jewish Revolt – Re-Examining Inevitability* Unpublished Master's Thesis, (University of North Texas, 2013)

<sup>22</sup> Most probably the Tyrian coins stipulated in the Mishna or Greek and Roman silver coins of similar value (see later). The pilgrims would instead have deposited in the Treasury the coins they had received in exchange from the money-changers. These coins deposited in the Treasury, I will later propose in this chapter, were merely copper (token) coins.

<sup>23</sup> *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (Gen. ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley [Grand Rapids, W. B. Eerdmann, 1995]), 40; *Encyclopedia of the Historical Jesus*, (Craig Evans; New York, Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group, 2008), 120-121.

that of the Greek. However, it is not only the standard by which these two currencies are to be distinguished but, more importantly and with great discredit, the Romans were the first to (officially) debase their coinage in times of necessity. Debasement of coins involved the practice of removing the precious metal content of a coin (i.e. its silver or gold) and replacing it with a cheaper kind of alloy. Although, of course, individuals had earlier attempted this practice with varying degrees of success, it was not officially sanctioned by any legitimate authority until the late-middle period of the first-century CE, when, in 64 CE, the emperor Nero reduced the silver denarius both in size and in the percentage of its silver content,<sup>24</sup> apparently to defray the costs of the fire in Rome.<sup>25</sup>

During the early period of its history when the Roman state was a 'Republic' (509-27 BCE) there were very few mints in existence. Minting was done under careful scrutiny. All coins were minted by permission of the Senate. Coins were stamped with the letters "SC", which stand for *Senatus Consultum* – "by decree of the Senate". Later during the Empire (27 BCE – 476 CE), the emperor directly controlled the minting of silver and gold coins, leaving only the minting of bronze coins to the Senate. With the advent of the Roman imperial government, this protection with respect to maintaining the purity of coinage was lifted. The emperor became "the central authority that intended to regulate production [of coins] throughout the Roman Empire; such control would allow him to increase the supply of money for state payments without imposing new taxes or confiscating properties".<sup>26</sup> While some tampering in the fineness of the coinage may have occurred during the early days of the Empire<sup>27</sup> it was not until the reign of Nero when the practice of the debasement of (silver) coins was adopted as an official policy of the state.<sup>28</sup> It was apparently for this reason that Nero moved the mint

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<sup>24</sup> See footnote 28

<sup>25</sup> See, Jay Rogers: *In the Days of These Kings: The Book of Daniel in Preterist Perspective*, Clermont; Media House, International, 2017, 546

<sup>26</sup> Constantina Katsari, *The Roman Monetary System: The Eastern Provinces from the First to the Third Century AD* (Cambridge, U.K., Cambridge University Press, 2011), 101.

<sup>27</sup> Kenneth W. Harl, *Coinage of the Roman Empire. 300 B.C. to 700 A.D* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1996), 75.

<sup>28</sup> T. Louis Comparette describes how Nero not only reduced the weight and size of the silver denarius but, in addition, initiated the reduction of the percentage of its precious silver content. Comparette wrote: "In the reign of Nero the silver denarius which hitherto had been kept very nearly the original weight of 1/84 of a pound, or 3.90 grams, was reduced to 1/96 of a pound or 3.41 grams, and its value still further reduced by the intentional introduction of a base alloy of approximately 15% the total weight...Thus the generally accepted theory is that in order to refill the imperial treasury which Nero's follies and vices had depleted.....his government debased the

from Lugdunum to Rome so that his control over the minting of money would increase.<sup>29</sup> This practice continued throughout the early centuries of the first millennium. The emperors, for different reasons (primarily out of economic necessity in times of war)<sup>30</sup>, gathered together the coins in circulation, melted them down, mixed in quantities of base metals with the precious metals and re-issued a greater quantity of coins (with the same face value) than had hitherto been in circulation before. This act, although clearly recognised as deceitful, was permitted on the grounds of political expediency. With this added supply the emperor had increased the finances at his disposal and was thus able, for example, to pay during times of war the expenses pertaining to his army and supplies.<sup>31</sup> At the beginning of the Empire, the denarius was more than 97% pure silver and weighed approx 4.5 grams. Under various emperors the denarius (and later the ‘antoninianus’ or double-denarius) suffered progressive debasement until by the year 269 CE, in the reign of Emperor Claudius II, it weighed 2.60 grams and was only 1.7% pure<sup>32</sup>, losing almost every appearance of being silver.<sup>33</sup>

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silver coins by somewhat over 25% of their value, but still issued them at the same valuation as before, the fiscus realizing heavily on the transaction,” in “Debasement of the Silver Coinage under the Emperor Nero,” *The American Journal of Numismatics* 47 (1914), 2-4. Kenneth W. Harl writes: “Nero.... debased the denarius by more than 20 percent. Its weight was reduced by one-eighth, from 84 to 96 to the pound and its fineness was lowered from 98 to 93 percent.....Furthermore, many denarii were deliberately struck below standard so that the actual debasement probably ranged upward to 25% or more....The international reputation of Roman coins was tarnished.” *Coinage of the Roman Empire. 300 B.C. to 700 A.D.*, 91. The American Numismatic Society recounts how the process initiated by Nero developed over time so that the “denarii included less than 50% silver.... in the early 3rd century A.D”. The Society writes: “In A.D. 64, Nero initiated a monetary reform that would have lasting consequences by mixing the silver content of the denarii with up to 25% copper. After further debasements of the Imperial coinage, “silver” denarii included less than 50% silver by the time of Septimius Severus in the early 3rd century A.D.” (“Rome: A Thousand Years of Monetary History,” <http://numismatics.org/rome-a-thousand-years-of-monetary-history/>).

<sup>29</sup> A. Wassink, “Inflation and Financial Policy under the Roman Empire to the Price Edict of 301 A.D.,” *Historia* 4 (1991), 465-493.

<sup>30</sup> Several reasons might be given for the debasement of Roman coinage among which are: (a) the need for additional money in times of war (b) shortage of supply of precious metals and (c) overspending by the government.

<sup>31</sup> See, Katsari, *The Roman Monetary System*, 50. According to Katsari, during times of peace throughout Roman history (the Pax Romana) about 33% of the budget was spent on the army, whereas in times of war the percentage of the budget spent on the army increased to 50%.

<sup>32</sup> Harl, *Coinage of the Roman Empire, 300 B.C. to 700 AD*, 130. See the chart (page 130) showing the progressive debasement of the Antoninianus (a double denarius) during the years 215-274 CE to a weight of 2.6 grams and a fineness of 1.71%.

<sup>33</sup> By the 5th century, according to Joseph Jean Ajdler, the denarius “had a silver content of 0.02%,” He writes: “The debasement of the denarius and more generally of the Roman coinage started with Nero.... However, Nero had set a precedent. Between his being deposed in 68 C.E. and the sacking of Rome in the second half of the 5th century, a succession of emperors continued increasing the supply of money in the empire by debasing the denarius, which in the end only had a silver content of 0.02%,” in “Talmudic Metrology IV. Halakhic Currency,” *Journal of Torah and Scholarship* 22 (2009) 7-50, [5, 25]. See also Kevin Butcher, “Debasement and the Decline of Rome” in *Studies in Ancient Coinage in Honour of Andrew Burnett*, (eds. R. Bland and D

In addition to the budget constraints as a consequence of its many wars, the main fiscal problem the Roman government faced was its shortage in the supply of precious metals from which coins could be produced. This point should be emphasised, for although the quantity of money in circulation today can be increased with relative ease (though the monetary policy of Quantitative Easing), this could not have taken place in the Roman era during the time of Jesus without access to a supply of precious metal deposits. The question must then be posed as to where the Temple authorities, during this period of Roman rule, would have found a supply of precious metals from which to produce its own Temple currency? Are we to assume that the Temple authorities re-struck the precious (silver) coins that had already been deposited in the Treasury? Would this not have been illicit as offerings deposited in the Treasury were ‘corban’ or ‘dedicated to God? If there was no supply of precious metals from which to mint their own coins and coinage from the Treasury could not be re-struck, what then was the coinage offered by the money-changers in the Temple? What precise type of metal(s) was contained within the Temple coins? Did the coinage of the Temple possess real intrinsic value? Before addressing this question, let us examine another important form of coinage in circulation during the time of Jesus, coinage often assumed as that offered by the money-changers in the Temple - the Tyrian coins.

#### **(4) Tyrian Coins**

Tyrian coins once circulated extensively throughout the Middle East after Tyre was freed from Seleucid domination in 127/6 BCE. They were minted according to the Greek standard (i.e. table of weights, divisions and values of its coins) and maintained the purity of their silver content with a fineness typically of 92%. These coins were widely used in the regions of Phoenicia, Galilee, Judea and Syria until 19 BCE, when during the reign of the Roman emperor Augustus, the mint at Antioch began to strike its own Roman issue, the imperial denarius. With the rise of Roman monetary influence in the region at this time, Tyrian coinage fell into decline in commercial use. However, Tyrian coins continued to be in high demand in Jerusalem right

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Calomino; London, Spink and Sons, 2015), 181-205. In his article, Butcher makes reference to scholars who tabulate or graphically depict the progressive decline of the denarius, a decline he writes “sloping downwards, ever more rapidly, towards oblivion”. He writes: “There is certainly no avoiding the fact that a denarius of the early first century AD was made of pure silver, whereas a radiate or antoninianus of Claudius II (AD 268-270) is almost pure copper. The seemingly hard evidence can be tabulated (e.g. Harl 1996: 127; 130) or displayed in graph form, usually showing the silver content of the coinage through time sloping downwards, ever more rapidly, towards oblivion. (e.g. Casey 1980: 10; Duncan-Jones 1994: 226; Rathbone 1996: 327). I choose here an early example of the genre from Haines 1941 (Fig. 1),” 184-85. In his graph, Haines shows the “average percentage of silver in coins minted in A.D. 1 – A.D. 300” as falling from a value of 98% silver to that of 2%.

up until 66 CE. The percentage in purity of the coins compared favourably with that of other silver coins issued throughout the eastern provinces of the Roman Empire at this time (i.e. the Roman silver provincial tetradrachmas) which generally had a fineness of 80%.<sup>34</sup> After 66 CE, however, Tyrian coins fell completely into disuse.

The reason for including a section here on Tyrian coinage is that these coins are often presented in biblical commentaries/dictionaries as the coins offered in exchange by the moneychangers in the Temple for the coins brought in by the Jewish pilgrims.<sup>35</sup> Whereas scholars do not unequivocally state that the coins offered by the money-changers were Tyrian coins, the impression is often given that the two are synonymous, that they were one and the same. The main reason for this, it seems, is that Tyrian coins were stipulated in the Mishna<sup>36</sup> and Talmud<sup>37</sup> as the coins for payment of the half-shekel tax and, as this was the case, it is therefore assumed that these were the coins offered by the money-changers in the Temple. What is interesting to note, however, is that Tyrian coins bore the image of the Tyrian god Melqart (or Melkart, Olympian Herakles also known as ‘Baal Zebul’) on the obverse and the image of an eagle on the reverse side with the inscription “Tyre the holy and inviolable”. This would have made them (like that of other foreign coins) unacceptable for use in the Temple<sup>38</sup>, unless it is

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<sup>34</sup> Joseph Jean Ajdler writes: “From the reign of Augustus on, provincial Roman silver coinage was minted in Antioch and other coins were no longer needed. The imperial denarius had a much greater fineness, even greater than the Tyrian shekel, but the Romans did not introduce their own currency into the eastern provinces in general and into Palestine in particular, until the first century. Even then, the use of Roman coinage remained limited until the reign of Nero. Whereas the Tyrian shekels.... had the highest possible silver content and fineness (about 92%), the Roman silver provincial tetradrachmas were struck with silver that was only 80% pure. For this last reason, Tyre had no need to continue to mint currency. However despite these elements the minting of the Tyrian shekel went on and even when Tyre stopped minting the Tyrian shekels, it continued in Jerusalem.” (“Talmudic Metrology IV. Halakhic Currency,” *Journal of Torah and Scholarship*, 8).

<sup>35</sup> Francis J. Moloney, *The Gospel of John - Sacra Pagina Series*, (Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1998), 76; Jerome Murphy O’Connor, “Jesus and the Money-Changers (Mark 11:15-17; John 2:13-17),” *RB* 107 (2000), 46; John Donahue, John and William Harrington, *The Gospel of Mark (Sacra Pagina Series; Minnesota, Liturgical Press, 2002)*, 327; W. D. Davies, and Dale C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to Saint Matthew* (New York, T&T Clark, 2004), 3. 138; James H. Charlesworth, *Jesus and Archaeology* (Cambridge; W. B. Eerdmann, 2006), 549.

<sup>36</sup> With respect to the redemption of the first-born son, the Mishnah states: “The five selas due for the [Firstborn] son should be paid in Tyrian coinage.... Aught that is to be redeemed with silver or its value, save only the Shekel-dues” (m.Bekhoroth 8:7). On the basis of this directive or ‘halakah’, it is held that payment of the half-shekel tax was likewise required in the same coinage.

<sup>37</sup> The relevant line in the Talmud used by scholars in support of the payment of the half-shekel tax in Tyrian coinage is: *Silver, whenever mentioned in the Pentateuch, is Tyrian silver. What is Tyrian silver? It is a Jerusalemite.*” (T.Kettubot 13.20)

<sup>38</sup> The offensive (and even idolatrous) image on the coin is one of the main reasons proposed for Jesus’ actions in the Temple by both Peter Richardson and Jerome Murphy O’Connor in their respective articles, “Why turn

proposed that the purity of Tyrian silver outweighed the concern about ‘idolatrous’ images on the coins. I will suggest in this thesis that although Tyrian coins were the preferred coins for payment of the half-shekel Temple tax (and other mandatory payments and votive offerings and the purchase of sacrificial offerings in the Temple), *they were not the coins offered in exchange by the money-changers in the Temple*. The coins which were offered in exchange in the Temple will be examined in the following section.

What has interested scholars recently, as a result of archaeological finds and numismatic research, is that although Tyrian coinage ceased to be minted around Tyre and Phoenicia and neighbouring districts in the first century CE, it continued to be minted – as noted above - in Judea and Jerusalem right up to the year 66 CE when, suddenly they ceased to be issued any longer.<sup>39</sup> Yakov Meshorer believes that from the time of 19 BCE onwards, Tyrian shekels and half-shekels were struck in Jerusalem under the authority of Herod the Great and not at the mint in Tyre; the new monogram KAP (or KP, ‘Kratos Romaion’, Greek letters signifying ‘power of the Romans’) which appeared on the coins, the stylistic and technical differences with earlier issues from Tyre, and the fact that these later shekels ceased to be issued after the outbreak of the Jewish-Roman war in 66 CE are the main reasons he proposes in support of Jerusalem as the mint for the ‘Tyrian KP shekels’.<sup>40</sup> Ultimately Meshorer suggests that as Tyrian coinage was in popular demand in Jerusalem and Judea for the payment of the annual half-shekel tax (and other offerings), it continued to be issued in Jerusalem right up until the onset of the War in 66 CE, even though it had ceased to be issued elsewhere. With the destruction of the Temple and the consequent cessation of sacrifices in the Holy Place and the payment of the annual Temple tax, the demand for Tyrian coins ended. More recently this

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the tables? Jesus’ Protest in the Temple Precincts,” in *SBL 1992 Seminar Papers* (ed. E. H. Lovering; Atlanta: Scholar’s Press, 1992), 507-523 and, “Jesus and the Money-Changers (Mark 11:15-17; John 2:13-17),” *RB* 1, 42-55. Jesus, they propose, disapproved at such coinage being offered in exchange in the Temple.

<sup>39</sup> Yakov Meshorer, “One Hundred Ninety Years of Tyrian Coinage” in *Numismatics, Art History, Archaeology*, (1984), 171-180, writes that the Temple tax was paid up to the year 66 CE with Tyrian coinage only. This explains why Tyrian shekels were so popular around Jerusalem and continued to be minted long after Tyre had ceased to be an economic power. Meshorer contends that a mint was set up in Jerusalem to meet this demand for the Temple. However, to conclude that Tyrian coins were the coins offered by the moneychangers of the Temple in exchange for foreign ‘idolatrous’ coins may be an unnecessary inference from the sources he cites. The Temple tax was to be paid in Tyrian coinage, as these coins were consistently produced of good quality, whereas other coins minted in Jerusalem and elsewhere in the Eastern provinces during this era of the Roman Empire were not comparable in their percentage of silver content. The coins offered in exchange by the moneychangers of the Temple were, I will propose in the next section entitled “Jewish Temple Money – the Money-Changers Coinage”, distinct from those of Tyrian Coinage.

<sup>40</sup> Yakov Meshorer, *A Treasury of Jewish Coins* (Jerusalem and New York, Amphora Books, 2001), 73,77.

reconstruction offered by Meshorer has been challenged, whilst agreeing with Meshorer's claim that the primary demand for Tyrian coins at this time was by Jewish pilgrims making payment of the annual Temple tax.<sup>41</sup>

There may be a direct reference to this form of coinage in the Gospel of Matthew 17:24-27, when Peter was asked, "Does not your teacher pay the tax (lit. the *didrachma* τὰ δίδραχμα, the half-shekel)?" According to the account, the coin Jesus created in the fish's mouth, a Greek stater (Greek στατήρα Mt 17:27), may have been that of a Tyrian shekel which provided exactly the amount required for two adults (Jesus and Peter).<sup>42</sup>

In summary the following points with respect to Tyrian coinage are of interest to this study:

(1) The preferred method of payment of the Temple tax (and other Temple payments), according to the Mishna (and Talmud), was with Tyrian Shekels. The reason for this was because of the consistency in the purity of this particular coinage.

(2) Tyrian coins depicted the Tyrian god, Melqart (or Melkart), on the obverse and the image of an eagle on the reverse side with the inscription "Tyre the holy and inviolable". This would have made them unacceptable as the coin of choice for exchange in the Temple.

(3) Although Tyrian shekels were the coins with which Jewish pilgrims paid the Temple tax, they appear not to have been the coins offered in exchange by the moneychangers in the Temple.

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<sup>41</sup> Brooks Levy, "Later Tyrian Shekels. Dating the Crude Issues, Reading the Controls," in *XIII Congreso Internacional de Numismática* (Madrid, 2003) 1. 885-890 [889].

<sup>42</sup> *The Baker's Illustrated Bible Dictionary* writes: "In particular silver shekels from the Phoenician port cities of Tyre and Sidon enjoyed wide usage for a long time. Also called a "stater" the shekel or four-drachma coin recovered by Peter from the fish's mouth (Mt 17:27) may have been such a Tyrian coin." *The Baker's Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (ed. Tremper Longman III [Grand Rapids MI; Baker publishing, 2013] under "coins". See also Peter Lewis and Ron Bolden: *The Pocket Guide to St Paul – Coins encountered by the Apostle on his Travels* (Kent Town, Australia; Wakefield Press, 2002), 21; Akiva Cohen: *Matthew and the Mishnah* (Tübingen; Mohr Siebeck, 2016), 248; Elizabeth M. Mc Namer: *The Case for Bethsaida after Twenty Years of Digging* (Tyne, U.K.; Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2016), 69.

## (5) Jewish Temple money - The Money-Changers Coinage

### (i) Introduction

Jewish Temple money refers to that coinage offered in exchange by the moneychangers in the Jerusalem Temple for the foreign coins brought in by the Jewish pilgrims from outside.

The reason generally assumed for the introduction of the money-changers into the Temple was to prevent coins that were stamped with images (for e.g. the head of an emperor) or with inscriptions, which might be considered as offensive to God, from being deposited in the Treasury of the Temple<sup>43</sup> when pilgrims came to pay the annual half-shekel tax.<sup>44</sup> The money-changers and the Temple coins were therefore introduced to address this problem. This understanding has been a favoured position among scholars up to the present time. The pilgrims coming into the Temple to pay the half-shekel tax were required to exchange coins of general currency (typically bearing what might be termed 'idolatrous images') for the pure 'non-idolatrous' coins of the Temple. One coin of real intrinsic value was exchanged for another coin of real intrinsic value, the latter bearing no offensive image. I suggest that this depiction above is partially true, but it is, however, mistaken in one important feature. For, I will propose, the money-changers in the Temple did not offer coins of real intrinsic value. In fact, I will argue, the issue of graven or offensive images on the coins was not the main reason for the introduction of the money-changers' coinage. Rather the motivation for their introduction was the potential economic gain such coinage offered the Temple authorities.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> In this respect, Ian Cowie writes: "One complication was that Roman coins had on them a 'graven image' of the Caesar, who claimed to be a god. It was against the Ten Commandments to bring such coins into the temple to buy your lamb – hence the need for the money-changers who could provide coins with no offensive image." *Jesus' Healing Work And Ours* (Glasgow U.K: Wild Goose Publications, 2000), 174. See also Robert Welch, *Church Administration – Creating Efficiency for Church Administration* (Nashville, Tennessee: B&H Publishing Group, 2011), 156. It is often assumed by scholars that as Roman and Greek coins bore the head of Caesar or some other 'idolatrous image' on their coins they were not permitted for use as payment to the Treasury in the time of Jesus. Such coins, therefore, had to be exchanged for the non-idolatrous coins stamped with holy emblems which the money-changers provided. Although condemnation of 'foreign idolatrous coins' may have played a part in the introduction of the Temple coinage, I will propose here in this section of the thesis that this was not the main reason for which pilgrims were required to exchange the coins they brought in from outside with the coins offered by the money-changers in the Temple.

<sup>44</sup> The requirement levied on every male Jew above the age of twenty years regarding payment of the Temple half-shekel. (Exodus 30:15)

<sup>45</sup> There was, I suggest, a more beneficial and practical reason for the introduction of the money-changers in the Temple. The money normally deposited into the Treasury by pilgrims paying the half-shekel tax was, because of their introduction, left behind on the money-changers' tables while the coins the pilgrims received in exchange from the money-changers was deposited in the Treasury. This coinage received in exchange, I will suggest in



The matter of graven images may well only have been a convenient issue of contention used by the authorities in gaining approval for what was being introduced. But what was being introduced? What was the coinage the money-changers exchanged within the Temple and how might the Temple authorities have benefited from this new scheme? If the coinage was not that of real intrinsic value that bore appropriate images (i.e. silver coins which bore images acceptable within the Temple), what then was being introduced? Before going on to offer a response to these questions it might first be legitimately asked: “What arguments are there against the present favoured position that the money-changers offered coins of real intrinsic value in the Temple that bore appropriate images? Two points might immediately be made in response to this. The first is that there was, it seems, a considerable period of time in the history of Second Temple Judaism when foreign coins with graven images were in fact deposited in the Treasury; during this time the services of the money-changers were apparently not required.<sup>46</sup> The second is simply that it would not have made good economic sense for the money-changers to have exchanged coins of real intrinsic value with every pilgrim coming into the Temple to pay the half-shekel tax. Let us flesh out briefly both of these points in turn which will form the subject matter of the following two sub-sections.

**(ii) When were the Money-changers introduced into the Temple?**

**Was there a period of time in the Temple’s history when Coins with ‘idolatrous images’ were deposited in the Treasury?**

When precisely the services of the money-changers were first introduced into the Temple is not known. It is interesting to note that throughout the entire First (or Old) Testament there is no mention whatever of money-changers operating in the Temple. That there is no mention of their services is curious and, although an argument from silence, might indicate that the money-changers were not present in the Temple during this long period of its history. There is nevertheless reference to their services in the Mishna where a whole tractate deals with the half-shekel tax payment and the role the money-changers played in this regard.<sup>47</sup> It is likely,

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this section of the thesis, was merely that of token coinage. The coinage remaining behind on the money-changers’ tables, not being ‘corban’ or dedicated to God (as it was not deposited in the Treasury) could subsequently have been used at the discretion of the Temple authorities.

<sup>46</sup> See next sub-section entitled, “When were the Money-changers introduced into the Temple?”

<sup>47</sup> In relation to other mandatory payments to the Temple, however, there is no indication that these payments were made through the mediation of the money-changers – a point also of interest here. It will be seen later in the next chapter, when examining a tractate in the Mishna entitled “Shekalim”, that the money-changers’ tables

however, that the Mishna's account relates to services offered in the mid first-century CE<sup>48</sup> when Agrippa reigned in Jerusalem (41-44 CE) and, therefore, to a time (slightly) later than that of Jesus. Whereas it is certain that the money-changers operated in the Temple in the time of Jesus (because of their mention in the Gospels and the Mishna), it is not certain, however, as indicated above, if their services were known in the Temple prior to this time. It seems they could not have begun before Pompey took control of Jerusalem in 63 BCE for on several occasions before that time the funds of the Treasury contained foreign coins bearing images that later would be deemed as offensive to God.<sup>49</sup> Their services may in fact only have begun in the lifetime of Jesus.<sup>50</sup> The main point however to note here is that, for a considerable period

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were specifically set up first in the provinces and then in the Temple for a limited period of time when the half-shekel tax was to be paid. After the stipulated time for payment of the half-shekel was over, the tables were taken down. At other times during the year when other mandatory payments to the Temple were paid (such as the redemption of the first-born son, the redemption of a slave etc) these payments were, apparently, therefore paid without the services of the money-changers. That payments were permitted to be made to the Temple with coins other than those exchanged by the money-changers (Roman, Greek, Tyrian, many of which may have been engraved with 'inappropriate' images) is interesting and appears to indicate that the issue of graven images – although contentious - was not one of paramount importance.

<sup>48</sup> The officers named in m.Shekalim 5:1 (i.e. "Jonathan", "Ahijah", "Pethahiah", "Nehuniah" etc), according to an explanation in the Palestinian Gemara, were contemporaries of Agrippa. "All the officials mentioned in chapter 5 lived between the time of Agrippa I and the destruction of the Temple (41–70 C.E.)." (*Jewish Virtual Library Online Encyclopaedia* published by the American–Israeli Cooperative Enterprise, 1997, under "Shekalim").

<sup>49</sup> In the Books of Ezra 2:68-69 and Nehemiah 7:70-72, Persian gold (the 'gold darics') and silver coins which had 'idolatrour' images on them were deposited in the Treasury without, apparently, any need for these coins to have been exchanged for that of another in the Temple. Also in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE, as found written in 1 Maccabees 10:40-42, reference is made to large amounts of silver coinage ("fifteen thousand shekels of silver" and "five thousand shekels of silver" which Josephus identifies as 'drachmas' in his 'Antiquities' 13.2.3) being deposited by king Demetrius of Syria in the Temple Treasury. This Greek coinage would have been regarded as 'unclean' in the time of Jesus. As gold darics and silver drachmas were deposited in the Treasury, without the intervention of any intermediaries, this seems to imply that there were no moneychangers operating in the Temple at that time. The Mishna (see later in chapter three in a section entitled "Mishna-Shekalim and the Monetary Practices in the Temple in the first century CE" when commenting on Shekalim 2:4) also records various periods of time in the Temple's history when foreign coins were apparently deposited in the Treasury signalling the absence of money-changers in the Holy Place.

<sup>50</sup> Victor Eppstein, "The Historicity of the Gospel Account of the Cleansing of the Temple," *ZNW* 55, (1964), 42-58, makes reference to rabbinical texts which state that the Sanhedrin was expelled "forty years before the destruction of Jerusalem" ( i.e. 30 CE) from its normal meeting place in the Temple to a place on the Mount of Olives called Hanuth. Hanuth was a place where sacrificial animals were sold. Eppstein argues - as was earlier seen in chapter one - that Caiaphas, the high-priest, expelled the Sanhedrin from the Temple and immediately afterwards, "perhaps that very morning [i.e. when Jesus entered the Temple]", introduced the trade of animals in the Court of Gentiles. The purchase of sacrificial animals in the Temple could only be paid with money of the Temple (or with 'token seals' – see later in the next chapter in a section entitled "Mishna-Shekalim and the Monetary Practices in the Temple in the first century CE" under the heading "seals"). If the trade in animals in the Temple began in 30 CE, it may also have been at this time when the money-changers began offering their services in the Holy Place. Similarly, Witherington writes: "It appears to have been an innovation in Jesus' own era to have money changers and animal sales right in the temple precincts whereas previously they had been outside," *Jesus and Money*, 52. See also, Nick Page: *The Longest Week, The Wrong Messiah, Kingdom of Fools* (London, Hodder & Stoughton, 2018), 30.

of time in the Temple's history, coins bearing what might be termed 'offensive images' were deposited in the Treasury without the assumed 'necessary mediation' of the money-changers. It is unlikely, therefore, that the matter of images on the coins was the main reason for the introduction of the money-changers.

The second argument, I propose, against the popular reconstruction that the money-changers offered coins of real intrinsic value in the Temple (that bore inoffensive images) is simply that this would not have made good economic sense. Let us consider this objection briefly.

**(iii) It would not have made Good Economic Sense to exchange Coins of Real Value  
in the Temple**

In the time of Jesus the coins issued by the money-changers in the Temple were the coins with which Jewish pilgrims were required to make their payment of the annual Temple tax. (It is not certain whether other payments to the Temple were similarly paid).<sup>51</sup> The sums of money coming into the Temple from this source were extremely large.<sup>52</sup> From the contents of Mishna-Shekalim (see later in chapter three under a section entitled "Mishna-Shekalim and the Monetary Practices in the Temple in the first century CE"), it is clear that not every pilgrim who came to the Temple to pay the half-shekel tax made payment with coins. Several pilgrims, it appears, paid by offering a "pledge" of future payment (for the subject of "pledges", again see later in the same section of chapter three examining the contents of Mishna-Shekalim). If the money-changers were offering Temple coinage of real intrinsic value to every pilgrim who came for payment, they ran the risk of losing money in the case of those who might default on their pledge of future payment, on those who might renege on their debt. The impression given in Mishna-Shekalim is that the number of pilgrims who took advantage of this facility (i.e. of

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<sup>51</sup> Whether other payments within the Temple were also to be paid with Temple money is not certain – see footnote 47. The buying and selling of animals for sacrifice in the Court of the Gentiles does not appear to have involved the money-changers' coinage but was rather apparently made with the use of token seals which were bought within the Temple (for the use of token seals in the Temple, see later in the next chapter in a section entitled "Mishna-Shekalim and the Monetary Practices in the Temple in the first century CE" under the heading "seals"). Other mandatory payments (such as the redemption of the first-born, the redemption of a slave etc) and votive offerings to the Temple appear, as was indicated earlier in footnote 47, to have been paid directly to the Treasury without the mediation of the money-changers.

<sup>52</sup> See, Alfred Edersheim, *The Temple: Its Ministry and Services* (2<sup>nd</sup> rev. ed.; Massachusetts; Hendrickson Publishers, 1994), 46-49; Steve Mason, *Flavius Josephus Translation and Commentary* (Vol 1b Judean War II [Leiden Martinus; Nijhoff Publishers, 2008]), 24; Timothy Wardle, *The Jerusalem Temple and Early Christian Identity* (Tübingen, Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 26-27; Eyal Regev, *The Hasmoneans, Ideology, Archaeology, Identity* (Bristol, CT: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 2013), 75.

deferring payment with a pledge of future payment) was significant and so the risk of subsequent defaults would have been substantial. It would, therefore, not have made good economic sense if the Temple authorities introduced a scheme into the Temple whereby coins of real value (albeit with inoffensive images) were exchanged with every pilgrim who came to make payment of the half-shekel tax. In this event it is unlikely that such coins would ever have been introduced. Simply put, it would not have made good economic sense for coins of real intrinsic value to have been offered in exchange in the Temple.

If this was so, if coins of real value were not offered by the money-changers in the Temple, what then were the coins offered in exchange? In response to this question, I propose that the money-changers offered token coins in exchange, coins that were minted from copper (as opposed to silver) metal, and upon these coins they overlaid images and inscriptions appropriate for the Temple. In this way the Temple authorities would not only have circumvented the probable losses accruing in the case of those renegeing on their debt, as presented above, but would actually have secured a significant economic gain for the Temple. Before going on to consider the evidence for such a claim (i.e. the use of token money in the Temple), let us first examine how biblical scholars respond to this important question. What, according to various biblical commentaries/dictionaries, was the coinage that the money-changers offered in exchange in the Temple?

#### **(iv) The Money-Changers Coinage – Common Explanations**

What coins did the money-changers offer in exchange in the Temple? Various explanations are offered by biblical and numismatic scholars. Most biblical scholars respond to this question by simply stating that the moneychangers offered “local currency”, “Tyrian currency”, “Tyrian money”, “Hebrew coin”, “Temple shekel”, “Temple currency” or “Jewish or Tyrian coins” in exchange for “foreign coins... frequently stamped with idolatrous images and emblems”, without specifying precisely how and with what precious metals the coins were made. Some such explanations are found below.

**The New International Version Study Bible** writes: “Pilgrims needed their money changed into the local currency because the annual temple tax had to be paid in that currency. Also, the Mishnah (see note on Mt 15:2) required Tyrian currency for some offerings.” (*Mark* 11:15).

**New Bible Dictionary** (p.968) writes: “Birds and animals for sacrifice were sold there [i.e. the Court of the Gentiles] and foreign money could be changed into the only currency accepted in the temple, one without the hated figures of Roman emperors and heathen gods.”

**Zondervan NIV Bible Commentary** (Vol 2) writes: “The money changers converted the standard Greek and Roman currency into temple currency, in which the half-shekel temple tax had to be paid (cf. 17:24-27).” (*Matthew* 21:12).

**A Catholic Commentary On Holy Scripture** (p. 388) writes: “Since Tyrian coins only were acceptable for temple-offerings, Roman and Greek coins were exchanged at a fee by the money-changers who set up their tables in the court.”

**Madame Cecilia** writes: “As the Roman, Greek and other foreign coins were frequently stamped with idolatrous images and emblems, and were thus rendered ‘unclean’ and unfit for use in God’s service payments had to be made in a Hebrew coin called the Temple shekel which was not in general currency.” (*Catholic Scripture Manuals: St Mark*, 220)

**Raymond Brown** writes: “The money changers exchanged these coins [i.e. the foreign coins] for legal Tyrian coinage and made a small profit in the transaction.” (*The Gospel according to John* (i-xii), 115).

**John Donahue and William Harrington** write: “The moneychangers provided Jewish or Tyrian coins in exchange for Greek or Roman money. These coins could then be used for buying materials for sacrifices (animals, grain, wine, oil, etc.) and for paying Temple taxes and dues.” (*The Gospel of Mark: Sacra Pagina Series*, 327).

**Francis J. Moloney** writes: “They [i.e. the money-changers] were..... changing Roman money into Tyrian money so that people might pay the temple tax with coins not bearing effigies.” (*The Gospel of John: Sacra Pagina Series*, 76).

**The Jerome Biblical Commentary** (Vol II, p.429) writes: “The only money accepted at the Temple was the Tyrian half-shekel; Roman coinage could not be used; hence the moneychangers provided a necessary function.”

**The New Jerome Biblical Commentary** (p. 620) writes: “The moneychangers gave out Jewish or Tyrian coins in return for the pilgrim’s Greek or Roman money.”

**Vincent Taylor** writes. “These men sat at their tables or ‘banks’ for the purpose of changing the Greek or Roman money of the pilgrims into Jewish or Tyrian coinage in which alone the Temple dues could be paid.” (*The Gospel according to St. Mark*, on Mk 11:15-19).

**Bart Ehrman** writes: “Some kind of money had to be made available, and so there had to be a kind of currency exchange, where Roman coinage could be traded for Temple currency, which did not bear the image of Caesar.” (*Jesus Interrupted*, 166).

**Pope Benedict** writes: “To this extent the trading of the money-changers and cattle-merchants was legitimate according to the rules in force at that time; indeed it made sense to exchange the widely circulated Roman coins (considered idolatrous, since they bore the emperor’s image) for Temple currency in the spacious Court of the Gentiles and to sell animals for sacrifice in the same place.” (*Jesus of Nazareth*, Vol II, 12).

**Joel Marcus** writes: “The ‘sellers’ may include not only those providing doves for sacrifice but also money changers, who sell the Tyrian coinage acceptable at the Temple in exchange for the other currencies brought by pilgrims.” (*Mark 9-16, Anchor Bible Series*, 782).

**James H. Charlesworth** writes: “Money-changers were necessary to convert the common Roman currency into the silver Tyrian coinage, the only coinage acceptable for the Temple offering.” (*Jesus and Archaeology*, 549).

**W. D. Davies and Dale C. Jnr Allison** (p. 138) write: “Because temple dues were paid in Tyrian half-shekels and shekels, not Greek or Roman coinage (which had pagan mottoes), money-changers – presumably priests and Levites – were a necessity.” (*A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to Saint Matthew Vol III*, 138).

**(v) Temple coins were Copper Coins which could only be used within the Temple**

I propose in this study that the coins of the moneychangers in the Temple were not made of silver but were merely copper coins (Greek χαλκός, most probably bronze - an alloy of copper and tin), and, being restricted to use within the Temple, were a form of token coinage. The following points can be made in support of this understanding.

(1) The testimony of the Early Church Fathers suggests that token money or mere copper coinage (but not gold or silver) was offered in exchange by the money-changers in the Temple in the writings of Origen, Theophilus, Augustine, Jerome, Cyril of Alexandria and Ambrose, (see Appendix 1).

(2) There are important Greek terms found within the Gospels (Mk 12:41, Jn 2:15) which appear to indicate that the coinage offered by the money-changers was merely that of copper (or bronze). In addition, the particular Greek terms used by the evangelists for the money-changers in the Temple, κολλυβιστής and κερματιστής (Mt: 21:12; Mk: 11:15; Jn: 2:15), were unknown in the Greco-Roman world. These terms for the money-changers indicate a form of service that was apparently new and found only in the Temple in Jerusalem. These two points: (a) the Greek references in the Gospels to the coinage offered by the money-changers and (b) the Greek terms used by the evangelists for the money-changers in the Temple will be examined later in the next chapter of this thesis.

(3) Judah, being a small economic province subject to Roman rule, did not possess sufficient reserves of silver or gold with which to mint coins of real value. The coins deposited in the Treasury being 'corban' or 'dedicated to God' were designated for the particular purpose for which they were deposited and so, apparently, could not be used for exchange purposes in the Temple. Where then would the Temple authorities have found a sufficient supply of 'silver' deposits with which to mint such precious coins? In addition, Judah, being subject to Rome and not having independence, did not have the right to mint its own coins. The minting of coins was a prerogative only of free nations. Temple coinage, however, being of token value only, could not circulate outside the Temple and would therefore have been permitted under Roman legislation.

(4) The fourth point supporting the proposition that the Temple money was merely that of token coinage is simply that it would have made good economic sense in helping to secure the wealth of the Temple. With the introduction of token coinage any future plunder<sup>53</sup> by the enemy of the Temple would have been prevented, as the invaders would have found mainly an abundance of token coins in the Treasury as opposed to coins of real wealth. It may be for this reason that Gessius Florus (the Roman Governor at the beginning of the Jewish Roman War), when despoiling the Treasury in 66 CE found only seventeen talents of silver in the Treasury (Josephus Bk 2:14.6), a small sum in comparison with earlier plunders.<sup>54</sup> According to this reconstruction (i.e. that the money-changers offered token coins in exchange in the Temple), the coins of real wealth - not being deposited in the Treasury but remaining behind on the money-changers' tables - would later have to be removed from the Temple and hidden away for safe-keeping. If this reconstruction is in fact what took place, there may be some connection here with the Parable of the Talents (Mt 25:14-30) spoken by Jesus at the time of his cleansing actions and the man who "hid" his masters "money in the ground".<sup>55</sup> There may also be a connection with this proposed removal of precious monies from the Temple and the first-century CE practice of hiding large sums of monies as revealed in the Copper Scroll.<sup>56</sup> The

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<sup>53</sup> See Ekkehard and Wolfgang Stegemann, *The Jesus Movement – A Social History Of Its First Century* (Edinburgh: Augsburg Fortress: T&T Clark, 1999). In this study (pp 123-124) the authors list several occasions in which the Temple had been plundered and the Treasury stolen, the most prominent being in: (a) 586 BCE when the Temple was destroyed by the king of Babylon and Israel was sent into exile (b) 167 BCE 1'800 talents was stolen by Antiochus Euphianes "in addition to jewellery, gold, silver and other valuables" (c) in 54 BCE by Crassus who "took away all the gold in the temple of Jerusalem even the 2'000 talents that Pompey had not touched" (d) in 4 BCE when Sabinus was procurator of Judea and stole 400 talents and his soldiers even more (Josephus, *Jewish War*, 2:50) (e) "Pontius Pilate also took money from the 'qorban', that is, probably from the temple treasury designated for the services of sacrifices and charity, he did this probably to finance an aqueduct but perhaps also with the intention of enriching himself..." and (f) in 66 CE when the Roman procurator Gessius Florus stole 17 talents from the Temple treasury. (This relatively small sum of 17 talents that Gessius Florus stole by way of comparison with earlier raids on the Treasury will be noted in the following footnote and later again in this chapter).

<sup>54</sup> Having plundered the Temple, Gessius Florus defiantly marched through Jerusalem the following day in public demonstration before the inhabitants. That Florus was angered may be explained by the unexpectedly small amount (17 talents) that he found in the Treasury. He must have expected to find more. The Jewish civilians even mocked him by pretending to "beg copper coins for him after he took the money from the treasury". Lester Grabbe writes: "Florus then marched into Jerusalem with troops, refusing the greetings of the people, and set up a tribunal to punish those people who had mocked his administration (by pretending to beg copper coins for him after he took the money from the treasury)," *From Cyrus to Hadrian* (London, SCM Press, 1994), 446. The War had begun.

<sup>55</sup> See Arland J. Hultgren, *The Parables of Jesus – A Commentary* (Cambridge, U.K., W. B. Eerdmann, 2002), 411. For an examination of this parable and its proposed connection with Jesus' actions in the Temple, see later in chapter four of the thesis.

<sup>56</sup> The Copper Scroll is one of the Dead Sea Scrolls on which is inscribed a list of sixty-four places where various hoards of gold and silver are buried or hidden. The two most prominent theories concerning the Copper Scroll are: (1) The treasure of the scroll belongs to the First Temple, destroyed by King Nebuchadnezzar in 587



Copper Scroll lists a vast sum of wealth hidden in sixty-four hiding places around Jerusalem apparently prior to the destruction of the Temple in 70 C.E.<sup>57</sup> Scholars are generally convinced that the treasure inscribed on the Copper Scroll was real and that it was somehow connected with the Temple in Jerusalem.<sup>58</sup>

(5) A recent archaeological find (2011) may also support the claim that the coinage of the Temple was a form of token (copper) coinage. A rare clay seal was found in Jerusalem near the Temple Mount which seal appears to have been linked with religious rituals practiced at the Jewish Temple 2,000 years ago. The coin-sized seal is that of a token seal bearing two Aramaic words meaning "pure for God." This token seal has interested scholars (Dr Eli Shukron and Prof. Ronny Reich, Shlomo Naeh and Prof. George Athas, 2011) who believe that it has some connection with the purchase of ritual items and/or the money-changers' exchange in the Temple. If token seals were used to purchase ritual items in the Temple or were somehow connected with monetary transactions in the Holy Place, would it not be likely that such token forms also applied to the Temple coinage offered by the money-changers in exchange? Later, in the next chapter, when studying the tractate "Shekalim" in the Mishna which describes the use of (token) "seals" in the Temple, this subject will be further developed.

(6) The sixth and final point is simply made in response to an anticipated objection to this reconstruction of token coinage in the Temple. If token copper coins were issued in the Temple, why – it might be asked – is there no archaeological evidence that such an issue of coinage took place? That these coins once existed but are not extant today may be explained due to

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BCE. This theory, however, is unlikely given that the scroll is dated by most scholars somewhere between 25 CE and 100 CE and the treasures inscribed on it likely refer to the same time (2) The treasure is that of the Second Temple that was buried before the Jewish-Roman War of 66-70 CE. For further commentary on the Copper Scroll and its significance for the subject matter of this thesis, see chapter four.

<sup>57</sup> This pre-70 CE dating of the Copper Scroll (and the buried treasures inscribed on it) is proposed by Emile Puech who argues that as the Copper Scroll was found in Cave 3 behind 40 jars that were deposited in the cave before 68 CE, it could not therefore have been placed after the jars had been deposited; so, it is argued, the scroll (and its hidden contents) "predates 68 CE". See Emile Puech, "Some Results of the Restoration of the Copper Scroll by EDF Mecenat," in *The Dead Sea Scrolls Fifty Years after Their Discovery, Proceeding of the Jerusalem Congress*, (ed Lawrence H. Schiffman, Emanuel Tov & James C. VanderKam, Jerusalem Israel; Israel Exploration Society, 2000), 884-894.

<sup>58</sup> George Brooke and Philip Davies write: "Most of those present at the Symposium [an international symposium convened in Manchester on the Copper Scroll in 1996] were convinced that the treasures referred to in this text were real and the majority opinion was that in some way this wealth should be connected with the temple" (*Copper Scroll Studies*, New York; T&T Clarke International, 2004, 8).

their poor quality<sup>59</sup> and later contamination and, most probably, complete destruction by what metallurgists refer to as “bronze disease”<sup>60</sup>, a corrosive process occurring when chlorides come into contact with bronze or other copper-bearing alloys that were poorly minted. There may be a connection with this corrosion and the “corrosion” which James, the first bishop of Jerusalem, addressed in his Letter.<sup>61</sup> Alternatively, if copper (bronze) coins were issued in the Temple that were of relatively good quality, such coins may not be extant today having been melted down and re-issued<sup>62</sup> during the Jewish-Roman War of 66-70 CE by Jewish rebels who had seized control of the Temple. Copper (or bronze) coins of relatively good quality and bearing the Hebrew inscription *חרות ציון* (“the freedom of Zion”) were produced at this time signifying the freedom of Israel. Interestingly, in this connection, a hoard of bronze coins (apparently minted by rebels in the fourth year of the War) was recently discovered (2018) by archaeologists in a cave close to the Temple mount in excavations conducted in Jerusalem.<sup>63</sup> Earlier archaeological finds had already shown that such bronze coins were issued in abundance throughout the War, particularly in its second and third years.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> In the process of minting such coins, molten metal (most probable an alloy of copper and tin or leaded copper) would have been poured by the relevant Temple personnel into clay moulds with the resultant supply of low-grade coins.

<sup>60</sup> Referring to the contamination process in his article entitled “Bronze Disease”, Bruce Nessel writes: “The hydrochloric acid in turn attacks the uncorroded metal to form more cuprous chloride. The reactions continue until no metal remains. This chemical corrosion process is commonly referred to as “bronze disease”. Any conservation of chloride-contaminated cuprous objects requires that the chemical action of the chlorides be inhibited either by removing the cuprous chlorides or converting them to harmless cuprous oxide. If the chemical action of the chlorides is not inhibited, cuprous objects [bronze coins an example] will self-destruct over time,” in “Bronze Disease” ([http://forumancientcoins.com/Articles/Bronze\\_Disease.htm](http://forumancientcoins.com/Articles/Bronze_Disease.htm)).

<sup>61</sup> There may be a reference to such corrosion in the Letter of James who wrote “Your gold and silver are corroded. Their corrosion will testify against you and eat your flesh like fire. You have hoarded wealth in the last days” (Jm 5:3). Although gold and silver coins are not liable to corrode (unless they contain an alloy of copper), copper coins will. The point that James may be making here is that the token copper coins deposited in the Treasury (which were earlier exchanged for the gold and silver coins of the pilgrims) will corrode and “will testify against you” for “you have hoarded wealth in the last days” (i.e. the silver and gold coins which were not deposited in the Treasury but remained behind on the money-changers’ tables).

<sup>62</sup> The coins would simply have been melted down and re-struck with appropriate symbols and inscriptions.

<sup>63</sup> The bronze coins were discovered at the Ophel excavations in 2018, led by archaeologist Dr. Eliat Mazar. The coins were apparently hidden in the cave sometime during the siege of Jerusalem. The majority of the bronze coin hoard dates to the revolt’s final year, or Year Four (69-70 CE). They are decorated with Jewish symbols, including the four plant species associated with the holiday of Sukkot — palm, myrtle, citron and willow — and a chalice that may have been used by priests in the Temple. See, Amanda Laughead, “Ophel Excavations Uncover Jewish Revolt Coins in Rebel Hideout,” *Bible History Daily*, April 18 2018. <https://www.biblicalarchaeology.org/daily/news/ophel-excavations-jewish-revolt-coins/>

<sup>64</sup> See footnote 19.

In addition to these points indicating the use of copper coins for exchange in the Temple, there is, I propose, a direct reference to the use of such (token) copper coins which is found in Mark's Gospel. The relevant verse is that of Mark 12:41, which is the first verse in a passage often referred to as "the Widows Mites" (Mk 12:41-44). This verse of Scripture contains a Greek term, which along with other Greek terms used in the Gospels, is significant in relation to determining (a) the role of the money-changers in the Temple and (b) the precise form of coinage they offered in exchange there. These Greek terms will be examined next in chapter three of the thesis. Before doing so a brief summary of the main points from this chapter examining "The function of Money (Coinage) and its different Kinds in the time of Jesus" will be given.

**Summary of the main points of chapter two examining  
"The function of Money (Coinage) and its different Kinds in the time of Jesus"**

(1) Money, or more precisely coinage, in the time of Jesus always contained real intrinsic value, gold and silver (the predominant form of coinage), and copper for coins of minimal value. Its main function was to facilitate the exchange of goods and services by offering in exchange one item of value for another. The use of token coinage in general society as a form of payment for goods and services would have been viewed as a form of theft.

(2) Although the debasement of coinage (and counterfeiting of coins) was known to both the Greek Classical and Hellenistic periods of history, Greek coins minted throughout this time were seldom, if ever, officially debased. The competition among the various city-states protected the integrity of the coins.

(3) The debasement of coinage, sanctioned by legitimate authority, first took place in Roman times under the Roman emperor Nero in 64 CE – that is after the time of Jesus. This official policy, although checked occasionally, was carried on through the second and third centuries CE, until by the end of the third century the denarius was almost completely devoid of any silver content.

(4) The minting privileges granted the people of Judah (to Simon Maccabeus) by their Syrian overlords in 138 BCE and later in Hasmonean times, resulted in the issue of copper (bronze) coinage only, i.e. Jewish silver (or gold) coins were not issued in this period.

(5) Jewish silver coins were minted for the first time by the Jewish rebels who had seized the Temple at the beginning of the Jewish-Roman War. This issue of silver coins with the inscription “Shekel of Israel” and “Jerusalem the Holy” was a political statement of independence of Israel from Rome. Two points of interest for this thesis are noted in respect of this first silver issue: (1) In order for such coins to be issued the rebel authorities would have needed a supply of silver deposits from which such coins could be produced; where, it might be asked, did they receive a supply of silver deposits with which to mint these coins? (2) Recent archaeological excavations have confirmed that there was only a single issue of such silver coinage whereas – according to the same research – this restriction did not apply to the issue of bronze coins bearing the same inscriptions which continued to be produced throughout the War.

(6) Although it was stipulated in the Mishna and Talmud (Mishnah bekhoroth 8:7; Tosephta Kethuboth 13:20) that payment of the half-shekel Temple tax (and other mandatory payments and votive offerings and the purchase of sacrificial offerings) should be made with Tyrian coinage, I propose that Tyrian coins were not the coins offered in exchange by the money-changers in the Temple.

(7) The coins of the money-changers in the Temple were, I propose, made of copper (or more precisely bronze<sup>65</sup>); they were merely that of token value and were only valid for use within the Temple.

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<sup>65</sup> Bronze (or brass) is an alloy that consists primarily of copper with the addition of other ingredients. In most cases the ingredients added are typically tin, zinc and lead. Numismatists generally label all copper-alloy coins as “bronze”.

## Chapter Three

### Monetary Background - the Services of the Money-Changers in the Temple and the functioning of the Temple as a Bank

#### Introduction

Chapter two of the thesis examined the different forms of coinage in circulation in first-century Judaism, noting in particular the significance of the introduction of token (copper or brass) coins into the Temple at that time. This chapter will examine further aspects to the monetary background of the Temple in first-century Judaism which I also argue are of paramount significance if we are to appreciate the circumstances surrounding Jesus' actions in the Holy Place.

I will focus on three areas of study. They are:

**First** I will explore the significance of certain Greek monetary terms used in the Gospels as they relate to the services of the money-changers in the Temple and their exchange coinage. These Greek terms serve to clarify (a) the precise role of the money-changers in the Temple (especially noting in what way their services in the Holy Place were different from that of other money-changers operating in the everyday Greco-Roman world) and (b) the precise form of coinage they were offering in exchange in the Temple

**Second**, I will document and examine the contents of the rabbinic tractate of the Mishna Shekalim and its relevance for our understanding of the monetary practices concentrated in the Temple in the first century CE. Of special interest will be to discover what this tractate says (or does not say) concerning the role of the money-changers in the Temple and the form of coinage they offered in exchange for the coins brought in by pilgrims from outside. The use of token 'seals' within the Temple as a form of payment for the ritual sacrifices will also be noted as will the facility to postpone the half-shekel tax payments through a credit scheme of future "pledges" to pay.

**Third**, I will discuss the concept of the Temple as Bank as it was used during this period. I will investigate in particular the manner in which the Temple offered loans, remembering at that

time that all loans were made with coins of real value. It will be noted how - by way of comparison with commercial banks of today - banks of the ANE were severely restricted in their lending practices. Banks/temples of the ANE - when granting loans - offered money (coinage) of *real intrinsic value* whereas money offered by banks today is merely that of *token* value. From where, it will be considered, did the Temple secure the necessary supply of money (i.e. precious-metal coins) from which to offer as loans? These three foci of study form the three sections into which this chapter is divided. Let us now proceed to section one

## Section One

### The Significance of certain Greek Monetary Terms in the Gospels

#### (a) χαλκὸν in Mark 12:41 (emphasis added)

Mk: 12:41 “He [Jesus] sat down opposite the treasury, and watched the crowd putting money into the treasury. Many rich people put in large sums.”

The above verse of scripture is the opening line of a passage in Mark’s Gospel, which describes an event that happened after Jesus cleansed the Temple, an event which is often labelled as “the Widow’s Mites”. This Gospel passage has, I propose, considerable monetary significance and is linked with the actions Jesus undertook in the Temple on the day before (for time indicators, see Mk 11:12 and Mk 11:20). The event took place in the Treasury of the Temple as, we are told, Jesus was watching people “putting money [χαλκον] into the treasury”. The Greek word χαλκον (accusative of the masculine noun χαλκος) literally means ‘copper’ or ‘copper coinage’.<sup>1</sup> The R.S.V. English translation “money” could be somewhat misleading. Although it is true to say that χαλκον is “money”, it however refers only to copper coins or

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<sup>1</sup> “χαλκος” is defined as “copper, brass, bronze; copper coin, small change; gong (1 Cor 13:1)” in *The Greek New Testament Dictionary* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.; Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft and United Bible Societies, 1993). *A Grammatical Analysis of the Greek New Testament* comments on Mk 12:41, “χαλκος [means] copper, a copper (coin), money” (5<sup>th</sup> ed.; eds. Max Zerwich S.J., Mary Grosvenor; Rome, Pontificio Instituto Biblico, 1996) 149. *Hastings Dictionary of the New Testament* writes: “χαλκος (Mark 6:8; Mark 12:41). This word originally means brass, hence coins of brass (or copper), and, as copper money circulated largely among the common people, money in general,” in “Money” (ed. Frederick C. Grant and H. C. Rowley; Edinburgh, T & T Clark, 1963). Adela Yarbro Collins writes, “This term [χαλκος] refers to a metal of various types, such as copper, brass or bronze”. It can also refer to “copper coin, small change,” *Mark - A Commentary*, (Minneapolis U.S.A., Fortress Press, 2007), 589. See also Robert H. Stein, *Mark* (Grand Rapids; Baker Academic, 2008), 581; Adam Kubiś, “The Poor Widow’s Mites. A Contextual Reading of Mark 12:41-44,” *The Biblical Annals* 3 (2013) 339-381 [351].

copper money but does not include silver or gold pieces. Commenting on the precise nature of the ‘money’ which the pilgrim Jewish people were contributing to the Treasury, the New International Encyclopedia of Bible Words makes this important distinction when it notes that the coins were “copper or bronze money rather than silver” (p. 446). The reason, I propose, why “many rich people” had put in “cheap copper coins” - as the Encyclopaedia of Bible Words states - is that the coinage which they were putting into the Treasury was the coinage they had received by way of exchange from the money-changers in the Temple. This coinage was merely copper or token coinage. The silver coins that they had brought into the Temple as a contribution (the “πολλά” or “large sums” of the “πολλοὶ πλουσιοὶ”, of the “many rich people”) remained behind on the money-changers’ tables while the copper coinage received in exchange was deposited in the Treasury. It is interesting also to note, as was earlier seen in chapter one of the thesis, how Jerome’s Vulgate (Latin) translates the same verse of Scripture (i.e. Mark 12: 41) with due regard for this important monetary distinction. Instead of using the generic term ‘pecunia’ (money) or ‘argentum’ (lit. silver, denoting silver money commonly used), which he does elsewhere throughout the Gospels, Jerome does not do so here but prefers to specify the precise nature of the coinage which the rich people were putting in as that of ‘aes’ (literally ‘copper’ or ‘copper coins’). Jerome, as discussed earlier, translates Mark 12:41 as follows (emphasis added): “Et sedens Iesus contra gazofilacium aspiciebat quomodo turba iactaret aes in gazofilacium et multi divites iactabant multa”.

In addition to this reference in Mark’s Gospel pointing to the use of (token) copper money in exchange in the Temple, there is I propose another reference in the Gospel of John which appears as evidence for the same claim. Let us examine this reference found in John 2:15.

**(b) τὸ κερμα in John 2:15 (emphasis added)**

**Jn: 2:15** *And making a whip of cords, he drove them all, with the sheep and oxen, out of the temple; and he poured out **the coins** of the money-changers and overturned their tables.*

In his Gospel account of the Cleansing of the Temple, John does not specify what coins are intended when he mentions that Jesus poured out “the coins of the money-changers” but merely identifies them (as if in a derogatory manner) as “τὸ κερμα” (literally “the pieces”, i.e. coins). It could be argued that the Greek term refers to all forms and classes of coins on the money-changers’ tables, that is to the various coins that would have accumulated on the money-

changers' tables in addition to the coins that were offered in exchange. However, this is unlikely for several reasons, not least of which is that the more likely numismatic term for such a wider range of meaning in mind would simply have been the Greek term for "coins", νομισμα. Greek Lexicons translate the Greek term 'κερμα' as small money, "nummus minutus, 'nummi minuti', petite monnaie"<sup>2</sup> or as "coin esp. of copper money, opp. silver (ἀργύριον)"<sup>3</sup>. In preference to the Latin word for money, 'pecunia' (or 'argentum'), Jerome translates "το κερμα" in Jn 2:15 as "aes"<sup>4</sup> (copper coins), apparently signifying the particular exchange of the money-changers in the Temple. This translation "aes", made by Jerome accords with his translation of χαλκον in Mk: 12:41 above, doubling the claim that the money-changers in the Temple were offering token coinage in the form of copper pieces by way of exchange.

**(c) κολλυβιστης κερματιστης and τραπεζίτης**

**in Mt 21:12; Mt 25:27; Mk 11:15; Jn. 2:14-15 (emphasis added)**

**Mt. 21:12** *And Jesus entered the temple of God and drove out all who sold and bought in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the **money-changers** (Gk. **κολλυβιστῶν**, genitive plural of **κολλυβιστης**) and the seats of those who sold pigeons.*

**Mk. 11:15** *And they came to Jerusalem. And he entered the temple and began to drive out those who sold and those who bought in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the **money-changers** (Gk. **κολλυβιστῶν** genitive plural of **κολλυβιστης**) and the seats of those who sold pigeons.*

**Jn: 2:14-15** *In the temple he found those who were selling oxen and sheep and pigeons, and the **money-changers** (Gk. **κερματιστᾶς** accusative plural of **κερματιστής**) at their*

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<sup>2</sup> *Lexicon Graecum: Novi Testamenti*, by Francisco Zorelli, (Paris: P. Lethielleux, 1961) under "κερμα". A *Greek and English Lexicon to the New Testament* defines κερμα as: "A small piece, so called, because in the rude state of the ancient money, such were frequently *clipt off* to make *weight* ... in their dealings with each other" (7<sup>th</sup> edition, ed John Parkhurst [London, Whitefriars, 1817], 360; It is simply translated as "coin, small change" in *A Grammatical Analysis of the Greek New Testament*, 291 (under John 2:15); and as "small coin, small change, small wares" in Liddell and Scott's *Abridged Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1949), under "κερμα".

<sup>3</sup> "κερμα" in Liddell and Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford, Clarendon Press Oxford; 1926)

<sup>4</sup> Jn: 2:14-15 *Et invenit in templo vendentes boves et oves et columbas et nummularios sedentes et cum fecisset quasi flagellum de funiculis omnes eiecit de templo oves quoque et boves et nummulariorum effudit aes et mensas subvertit.*



*business. And making a whip of cords, he drove them all, with the sheep and oxen, out of the temple; and he poured out the coins of the money-changers (Gk. κολλυβιστῶν) and overturned their tables.*

*Mt. 25:27 Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers (Gk. τραπεζίταις dative plural of τραπεζίτης), and at my coming I should have received what was my own with interest*

As is evident from the different verses of the Gospels quoted above, there are three different Greek terms used for the operations of the money-changers (or bankers) in the New Testament: (1) κολλυβιστῶν (Mt. 21:12; Mk. 11:15; Jn. 2:15), (2) κερματιστάς (Jn. 2:14) and (3) τραπεζίταις (Mt. 25:27). Two of these Greek terms, κολλυβιστῶν and κερματιστάς, are employed by the evangelists to describe the activities of the money-changers in the Temple, while the third, τραπεζίταις, describes the general functioning<sup>5</sup> of the money-changers/bankers in everyday commercial life including the investment of money for interest (Mt. 25:27). According to Abbot and Smith's "Manual Greek Lexicon on the New Testament", the terms κολλυβιστῶν (κολλυβιστής) and κερματιστάς (κερματιστής) have "no prior usage in the LXX or other Greek versions of the OT and Apocrypha nor are they found in Greek writings of the classical period".<sup>6</sup> The third term τραπεζίταις (τραπεζίτης) was, however, commonly used and refers to the everyday activities of money-changers and bankers in Greek and Roman times. The restricted use of the two terms, κολλυβιστῶν and κερματιστάς, to the Gospels alone is interesting and appears to indicate that the money-changing activities represented by such terms were particular to New Testament times and describe the specific services of the money-changers in the Temple, activities that ended with the destruction of the Temple in 70 C.E. The etymology of the Greek terms is also significant and seems to indicate that the money-

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<sup>5</sup> The Greek word τραπεζίταις (coming from the Greek word τράπεζα, meaning table or bench, i.e. the money-changer's table or bench) indicates the table/bench on which the various services of money-changers and bankers (bankers were money-changers and vice versa) in Greek and Roman times were offered. These services included the following: (a) changing foreign coinage into the required coinage of the jurisdiction in question; for this service the money-changer charged a fee (b) providing smaller exchange for those who had brought with them (mainly on long journeys) coins of gold or precious value; for this also a fee was charged and (c) receiving deposits for safe-keeping and/or for investment and paying out and receiving interest at a fixed rate; this latter activity of the charging of interest to (or the receipt of interest from) fellow Jews was forbidden by Jewish law (Deuteronomy 23:20-21) but may have been practiced in Jesus' time as apparently indicated in his Parable of the Talents (Mt : 25:14-30) by the use of the term τραπεζίταις and the receipt of interest in Mt 25:27.

<sup>6</sup> George Abbot-Smith, *Manual Greek Lexicon on the New Testament* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.; New York, Scribner, 1957), xv.

changers of the Temple dealt with coins of minimal, if no, value.<sup>7</sup> It is further observed that although Matthew and Mark employ the novel term κολλυβιστῶν in their account of the Cleansing of the Temple, John adds in addition to κολλυβιστῶν the term κερματιστάς to his account, a term he may even have coined himself. The reason as to why John chose two different (novel) terms is not certain. Two possible explanations, however, are proposed (a) the two terms are used to emphasize the unique and novel role of the money-changers in the Temple for which there was, at that time, no Greek antecedent - no Greek term known to identify them (as distinct from the everyday money-changers offering services outside the Temple represented by the Greek term τροπεζίτης) and (2) the two terms reflect two different money-changing services in the Holy Place, the first represented by the Greek term κερματιστάς, a money-changer offering smaller change for those who brought larger coins (as suggested by the Greek verb κερματιζω, to “cut into pieces”) and the second represented by the Greek noun κολλυβιστής (related to the Greek word κολλυβος, ‘a small coin’, ‘nummus minutus’<sup>8</sup>) a money-changer offering token coinage - a small copper coin - in exchange for the Tyrian, Roman and Greek coinage (coins of genuine value, mainly silver coins) brought to the Temple by the many Jewish pilgrims.

Aside from this evidence from within the Gospels pointing to the (novel) use of token coinage for exchange in the Temple, let us examine some passages in m.Shekalim which I propose also provide grounds for arriving at the same conclusion. Before doing so, a brief summary of the main points from this section are made.

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<sup>7</sup> The Greek term κολλυβιστῶν is built upon the root word κολλυβος, a Greek term meaning “small coin” or “nummus minutus” (*Lexicon Graecum: Novi Testamenti*: Francisco Zorelli S.I., Parisiis VI, Sumptibus P. Lethielleux, 1961). Pollux and Suidas (early third century CE), authors of some of the earliest lexicographical works, interpret the “proper sense” of the term κολλυβος to “stand for a small [brass] coin” (Thomas Aquinas: *Commentary on the Four Gospels: Volume 1 St Matthew* [Oxford, J.G.F. and J. Rivington, 1841], p. 712 f. a.). John Donahue and Daniel Harrington write: “The Greek term *kollybistēs* (“money changers”) derives from *kollybos*, which was a small Greek coin that came to stand for the rate of exchange,” in *The Gospel of Mark*, 327. In his *Commentary on the Cleansing of the Temple in John’s Gospel*: Origen states that the money-changers were offering in exchange “κόλλυβα” (plural of κολλυβος) which Origen goes on to describe as “εὐτελῆ καὶ εὐκαταφρόνητα νομίσματα” – literally “vile and contemptible coins” and “τὰ μηδενὸς ἄξια” – literally “the coins which are of no value.” κερματιστής is built upon the term κερμα which, as seen above, refers to “small coin[s]” or “small change”. *A Greek and English Lexicon to the New Testament* defines κερματιστής as “a dealer in small money, a money-changer” (p. 360).

<sup>8</sup> *Lexicon Graecum: Novi Testamenti*: Francisco Zorelli S.I., Parisiis VI, Sumptibus P. Lethielleux. 1961.

## Summary of the main points of Section One

### “The Significance of certain Greek Monetary Terms in the Gospels”

(1) The Greek word χαλκον (accusative of the masculine noun χαλκος) used by the evangelist in Mk 12:41 - the opening verse of a passage entitled the Widow’s Mites - literally means ‘copper’ or ‘copper coinage’. Although it is true to say that χαλκον is “money” (as translated in the R.S.V.), it, however, refers only to copper coins or copper money but does not include silver or gold pieces. This copper coinage, apparently, is the money which “the crowd” were putting into the Treasury.

(2) In his account of the Cleansing of the Temple in the Gospel of John, the evangelist does not specify what the coins are when he mentions in Jn 2:15 that Jesus poured out “the coins of the money-changers”. He merely identifies them (as if in a derogatory manner) as “το κερμα” (literally “the pieces”, i.e. the coins). Greek Lexicons translate the Greek term ‘κερμα’ as small money, “nummulus minutus, ‘nummi minuti’, petite monnaie” or as “coin esp. of copper money, opp. silver (ἀργύριον).”

(3) The two Greek terms employed by the evangelists to describe the activities of the money-changers in the Temple have no prior usage in the LXX or other Greek versions of the OT and Apocrypha nor are they found in Greek writings of the classical period. The etymology of the Greek terms is also significant and appears to indicate that the money-changers of the Temple dealt with coins of minimal, if no, value.

## Section Two

### Mishna-Shekalim and the Monetary Practices in the Temple in the first century CE

Several scholars question whether the Mishna is a reliable source for historical and religious information on Jewish life in the early part of first-century Judaism (i.e. the time when Jesus cleansed the Temple) given the fact that the Mishna was composed somewhere late in the

second-century or early third-century CE.<sup>9</sup> Although such criticism is valid, the contents of m.Shekalim - dealing largely with the payment of the half-shekel tax which ceased with the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE – may be an exception to this note of caution. What is described in m.Shekalim may well reflect customs and practices that Jesus was aware of (i.e. as m.Shekalim could not describe practices that took place after 70 CE when the Temple no longer existed and the half-shekel payment no longer applied – it must therefore describe customs and practices of the Temple in first-century CE, at least from the middle of the century to the end of the War) and so it is worthy of examination, particularly for what it may reveal with respect to the role of the money-changers in the Temple and the precise form of coinage they were offering in exchange there.

“Shekalim” is one of the twelve tractates in the order of “Moed” in the Mishna. It deals with the mandatory payment of the annual half-shekel tax in the Temple (and other mandatory and voluntary payments to the Treasury) by every Jewish male from the age of twenty to fifty years, which payment applied not only to Jews living in the land of Israel but also to Jews of the Diaspora living outside the homeland. This annual payment brought in vast sums of money to the Temple both from Jews living at home and from the Diaspora.<sup>10</sup> Before going on to note some points of interest for this thesis from this tractate, a brief summary of its contents will first be outlined.

N.B. The English translation of m.Shekalim used is that undertaken by Dr. Joshua Kulp who authored a Translation and a Commentary in English on the entire Mishna (2001-2013) which is available on the internet through the Mishna Yomit programme (see, Mishna-Shekalim-Sefaria. [https://www.sefaria.org/Mishnah\\_Shekalim](https://www.sefaria.org/Mishnah_Shekalim)).

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<sup>9</sup> According to Jewish tradition, it is generally accepted that Judah the Prince (Judah ha-Nasi or Judah I) – a second century rabbi and influential Jewish leader - was the principal redactor and chief editor of the Mishna. He added, deleted and rewrote his source material before finally producing the Mishna as it is known today. Without texts from outside confirming what is written, the date and origin of most statements and laws – according to the Jewish Encyclopaedia – cannot be known for certain, see: “Mishna,” *The Jewish Encyclopedia: A Descriptive Record of History, Religion, Literature, and Customs of the Jewish People from the Earliest Times to the Present Day*, Vol. 8, [ed. Isidore Singer, California, Funk and Wagnalls, 1904], 612; A. Zvi Ehrman, *The Talmud with English Translation and Commentary Part 2*, [Jerusalem, El-‘Am, 1965], 344; Naomi Pasachoff, *Links in the Chain: Shapers of the Jewish Tradition*, [New York, Oxford University Press, 1997], 31.

<sup>10</sup> See, Louis H. Feldman, “Palestinian and Diaspora Judaism in the First Century,” in *Christianity and Rabbinic Judaism: A Parallel History of their Origins and Early Development* (ed. Hershel Shanks; London: SPCK, 1993), 1-40 [5]; Grabbe, *Judaism from Cyrus to Hadrian*, 414- 416; Stegemann, *The Jesus Movement*, 123-124; Helen K. Bond: *Caiaphas – Friend of Rome and Judge of Jesus?*, (Louisville; Westminster John Knox Press, 2004), 30.

## Mishna-Shekalim: Summary of Contents

M.Shekalim is divided into eight chapters which deal, as mentioned above, with revenue coming into the Temple from the half-shekel payment (and other payments made to the Temple). The sections relating to (a) the money-changers' "tables" (b) the "pledges"<sup>11</sup> made by pilgrims (c) the "surcharge"<sup>12</sup> or fee charged and (d) the "seals"<sup>13</sup> used in the Temple, are, I propose, significant for this thesis and will be examined separately. The money-changers' "tables" in (a) above and what is (or is not) reported in m.Shekalim will receive particular attention. The summary contents of the eight chapters are:

Chapters one to four deal directly with the "shekel" fund. *Chapter one* describes the date and manner of collection of the half-shekel tax (referred to in m.Shekalim as the "shekel"), the money-changers' tables and when they were set up in the provinces and in the Temple<sup>14</sup>, who was obligated to pay the half-shekel tax, payments that may be received from pilgrims despite the fact that they were exempt, the "pledges" made by those who could not pay the tax and the "surcharge" levied. *Chapter two* deals with the collection of the half-shekel from the provinces and its transport to the Temple, the regulation of stolen or lost monies both in the event of "the appropriation"<sup>15</sup> having - and not having - been made, what to do with the surplus monies donated to the shekel fund and to the funds for free-will and sin-offerings. *Chapters three and four* refers to the three times when "the appropriation" from the shekel fund were made and

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<sup>11</sup> The "pledges" (m.Shekalim 1:3,5) are pledges of future payment of the half-shekel made by pilgrims who did not pay it when it was due - with property, commodities or future produce from their harvests as security in the event of non-payment. For an examination on the subject of "pledges" in m.Shekalim, see later in the main text.

<sup>12</sup> The "surcharge" (lit. kolbon, קֶלְבֹן) was the fee paid to the money-changers for offering their services in the Temple. This subject of "surcharge" in m.Shekalim will be examined later in this chapter.

<sup>13</sup> The use of such (token) seals in the Temple is mentioned on numerous occasions in m.Shekalim 5:1-5. It will be proposed (see later in the main text) that these seals functioned as a form of 'token receipt' given to Jewish pilgrims by the "officer of the seals" in acknowledgement of payment for the particular sacrifice(s) the pilgrims intended to make. Having received the appropriate seal, the pilgrim would then present it to the relevant officer in charge of the sacrifices as evidence of his payment. For an examination of the subject of seals in m.Shekalim, see below in the main text.

<sup>14</sup> M.Shekalim 1:3 states that the money-changers' tables were set up "in the provinces" on the "fifteenth [of Adar]" and then ten days later "in the Temple" on "the twenty-fifth [of Adar]" when the half-shekel tax was to be paid. Afterwards the tables were taken down. At other times during the year when other mandatory payments to the Temple were paid (such as the redemption of the first-born son, the redemption of a slave etc) these payments were apparently made without the services of the money-changers.

<sup>15</sup> The "appropriation" from the shekel fund was that portion of the fund which was deemed necessary to offset the public sacrifices in the Temple for the forthcoming year. The term is used thirteen times in m.Shekalim.

accompanying directives, how the appropriation money was spent and what should be done with the surplus money left over from the fund, how possessions dedicated to the Temple should be administered.

Chapters five to eight deal with further related matters. *Chapter five* outlines the various officers and their particular responsibility in the Temple (they are listed by name from which scholars, in general, date the practices referred to in m.Shekalim to 41-70 CE), the number of treasurers and superintendents, the various “seals” used in the Temple and their sacrificial function, the two chambers for “secret” offerings. *Chapter six* describes the different “chests” into which monies were donated (there were thirteen in all), two of which were marked for shekel contributions and the other eleven were for payments made for sin and voluntary offerings. *Chapter seven* addresses certain questions such as how lost or misplaced money in the Temple should be used and similarly the use of offerings made by non-Jews in the Temple. *Chapter eight* deals with some issues relating to laws of purification in Jerusalem and the Temple and also to a variety of other questions which do not directly concern the half-shekel payment (except for the statement in m.Shekalim 8:8 that the law relating to the half-shekel payment became obsolete with the destruction of the Temple).

### **Mishna-Shekalim: Points of Interest for this Thesis**

Two points of interest for our thesis are noted from the contents of m.Shekalim:

- (1) The first and most important relates to what is (or is not) said in relation to the money-changers of the Temple and their coinage.
- (2) The second relates to what is written concerning ancillary services relating to (a) the “pledges” of future payment made by pilgrims (b) the “surcharge” levied by the money-changers and (c) the “seals” provided to the pilgrims for sacrifices offered in the Holy Place.

#### **(1) The Money-Changers of the Temple and their Coinage**

Although, as seen above, Shekalim covers a comprehensive range of issues associated with the half-shekel payment to the Temple, there is surprisingly little, if no, information on the money-changers themselves or on the precise form of coinage they were offering in exchange. The

money-changers are only mentioned twice (they, in fact, are not mentioned but there is simply a reference made to their “tables [being] made up”<sup>16</sup>), while the coinage they were offering in exchange receives no mention at all. Further, although m.Shekalim describes services which scholars believe took place between 41-70 CE<sup>17</sup>, there is no indication in the tractate as to when the money-changers’ services were first introduced into the Temple, whether they had only recently been introduced or whether they had a meaningful prior history. Although these limitations are recognised, certain practices and directives with respect to the services of the money-changers of the Temple are made in m.Shekalim which allow four points of note for the subject matter of this thesis to be made.

### (i) The Principal Duty of the Money-changers

According to the picture described in m.Shekalim, the principal duty of the money-changers of the Temple was simply – it appears - to provide the pilgrim Jewish person with exchange coinage that would allow him make his half-shekel tax payment. The particular coins that were used as the exchange coinage are not described. The tables, as mentioned earlier, were set up “in the provinces” on the “fifteenth [of Adar]” and then ten days later “in the Temple” on “the twenty-fifth [of Adar]”, when the half-shekel tax was to be paid. They remained in position for some period of time after which they were apparently taken down (if they were *set up in the Temple* they must, by inference, have been taken down). When other mandatory payments to the Temple (such as the redemption of the first-born son, the redemption of a slave etc) were paid outside of this time during the calendar year, these payments were therefore, it seems, made without the services of the money-changers. Although, as mentioned above, the coinage offered in exchange by the money-changers is not described in m.Shekalim, there are some indications from within the text which allow for various reconstructions to be made. These reconstructions are outlined in point (4) below. One of these reconstructions – that which I will

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<sup>16</sup> The term ‘money-changers’ is not mentioned throughout the eight chapters of m.Shekalim. Reference is made only to their “tables” – by which is meant ‘the tables of the money-changers’. M.Shekalim states: “On the fifteenth of the month [i.e. the month of Adar] thereof tables [i.e. of money-changers] were set up in the provinces. On the twenty-fifth [of Adar] they were set up in the Temple” (m.Shekalim 1:3).

<sup>17</sup> Dating the officials at the Temple, the *Encyclopedia.com* writes: “All the officials mentioned in chapter 5 [of m.Shekalim] lived between the time of Agrippa I and the destruction of the Temple (41–70 C.E.), and some of them are mentioned by name in Josephus, while three others are mentioned also in the Mishnah of *Middot* and *Tamid*, which were arranged at the end of the Temple era.” “Shekalim” in *Encyclopedia.com* (owned by Highbeam Research (Gale) and created by Infonautics, 1998)

propose as most likely – is that the money-changers offered token coinage in exchange in the Temple. Linked to this primary service of offering coinage in exchange, the money-changers had three ancillary duties which are described in m.Shekalim (a) to secure “pledges” (Shek 1:3,5) of payment from those unable to pay the half-shekel (b) to collect the “surcharge” (Shek 1:6,7) or small fee charged for services rendered and (c) their apparent link to the service of offering of “seals” (Shek. 5:1-5) in receipt of payment for sacrifices to be offered in the Temple – all of which duties will be examined later below.

**(ii) When were the money-changers services first introduced into the Temple?<sup>18</sup>**

According to what is found in m.Shekalim the money-changers services were not, it seems, always present in the Temple and may even have been introduced in the first-century CE. The names of the various officers mentioned in m.Shekalim 5:1 apparently date the practices contained within this tractate of the Mishna to the years 41-70 CE<sup>19</sup> - that is, to a period of time after Jesus cleansed the Temple. There is no evidence that the money-changers’ practices described in m.Shekalim were offered before 30 CE. In fact, because m.Shekalim 2:4 lists several foreign coins<sup>20</sup> which were used as payment for the Temple tax from the return from the Exile up to 70 CE, there appears to have been a considerable period of time in the history of the Second Temple when the services of the money-changers were not required<sup>21</sup>, unless it is proposed the money-changers in the Temple did not have Temple coinage to offer in exchange<sup>22</sup>. Among the list of coins mentioned for payment of the Temple tax in Shek. 2:4 are

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<sup>18</sup> This question was addressed earlier in chapter two under the section entitled “Jewish Temple Money – The Money-Changers Coinage”. Here it is addressed solely with reference to the contents of m.Shekalim. The same conclusion will be reached as was seen with the above, namely that the money-changers were most likely introduced into the Temple in the first-century CE and possibly even about the time when Jesus cleansed the Temple.

<sup>19</sup> See earlier footnote 17.

<sup>20</sup> M.Shekalim 2.4: “For when the Israelites came up out of the diaspora they used to pay the shekel in darics, then they paid the shekel in selas, then they paid it in tibs, and finally they wanted to pay it in dinars”

<sup>21</sup> As the primary duty of the money-changers was the exchange of Temple coins for the foreign coins brought in by pilgrims, it appears that the money-changers could not have been operating during this period when pilgrims were depositing foreign coins in the Treasury.

<sup>22</sup> For a consideration of the proposition that the money-changers did not offer a specific coin for exchange in the Temple, see point (iv: a) in the main text below.



“darics”<sup>23</sup>, the Persian coins, and “dinars”<sup>24</sup>, most probably a reference to the Roman denarius used extensively in the time of Jesus. That foreign coins were used for payment of the half-shekel for such an extended period of time may indicate that the money-changers’ services were quite new to the Temple in the time of Jesus.

### (iii) The unique role of the Money-Changers in the Temple

The fact that the money-changers’ services are not only mentioned in m.Shekalim but are mentioned as being moved from outside “in the provinces” into “the Temple” itself<sup>25</sup> appears to indicate something unique in their services, something quite distinct from that provided by other money-changers working outside in the everyday Roman-Greco commercial world of first-century Judaism. If the task of the money-changers in the Temple was simply to offer what was ordinarily offered by money-changers working outside, their services could have remained outside, but, for some particular reason designed for the Temple alone, their services were required inside. Their services were, it seems, peculiar to the Temple alone – otherwise there would be no need to emphasize their operations and their presence in the Temple.

There is a further hint at this unique role of the money-changers in the verse of m.Shekalim that immediately follows the report of their tables being “set up in the Temple” (Shek 1:3,b) which states: “When [the tables] were set up they [the money-changers] began to take pledges [from those who had not paid the half-shekel]” (Shek 1:3,c). Although the taking of pledges (for a brief commentary on the taking of pledges, see below) in lieu of the non-payment of the half-shekel tax was apparently unique to the Temple in Jerusalem and a service which distinguished the money-changers of the Temple from that of money-changers in general society, it was not this service, however, I propose, which distinguished them most clearly from their counterparts outside but rather the particular form of exchange coinage which they offered

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<sup>23</sup> The daric was a well-known Persian gold coin that circulated during the Achaemenid Persian Empire (550–330 BCE).

<sup>24</sup> ‘Dinar’ was a term used for a particular figure of weight in the Roman standard of weights long ago. It was from this term that the Roman coin, the denarius, derived its name. When the Mishna, however, was written in the late second-century/early third-century the denarius had by then been greatly debased and was no longer of a value commensurate with what it was in the first century CE and that required to make payment of the half-shekel. In order to clarify the value of the coins that pilgrims were paying to the Temple in Roman times up to 70 CE, m.Shekalim 2:4 does not mention that they paid with the ‘denarius’ (which was now in the 2<sup>nd</sup>/early 3<sup>rd</sup> cent. debased) but uses the term “dinars” instead.

<sup>25</sup> M.Shekalim 1:3, see footnote 14

to pilgrims in the Temple. What, if anything, does the Mishna have to say in connection with this coinage? This leads us to our final and most significant point – the money-changers' exchange coinage.

#### **(iv) The Money-Changers Exchange Coinage – Various Reconstructions**

Although, as mentioned earlier, m.Shekalim makes no direct reference to the coins the money-changers were offering in exchange in the Temple, certain references are made from within m.Shekalim (and from within another tractate of the Mishna entitled Bekhoroth) which offer three possible reconstructions. These three reconstructions are: (a) the money-changers had no specific coin to offer in exchange but exchanged every kind of coinage in circulation (b) the money-changers offered Tyrian coins in exchange and (c) the money-changers offered token coins in exchange. These three reconstructions will be considered below, the third of which I will propose as the most likely of the three.

##### **Reconstruction (a)**

**The Money-Changers had no specific coin to offer in exchange but exchanged every kind of Coinage in circulation.** The money-changers of the Temple did not offer any specific form of coinage in exchange but merely helped pilgrims to make the half-shekel payment with the particular coins they had brought to the Temple, be they Tyrian, Greek or Roman.<sup>26</sup> In this reconstruction there would have been no particular coinage that was required for payment of the half-shekel tax. The money-changers exchanged every form of coinage that was in circulation with one stipulation only - that is – the coinage should be of the required fineness stipulated for use in the Temple. If the half-shekel coin presented by the pilgrim was not of a fineness demanded 'according to the shekel of the Temple'<sup>27</sup>, the pilgrim would then be required to pay an additional amount to the money-changer (the kolbon or fee) to compensate for the loss of value to the Temple - hence the need for the money-changers presence. This scenario – although possible - is I propose unlikely for three reasons: (a) Why would there have

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<sup>26</sup> The money-changers might for example break down into smaller pieces gold or large silver coins brought in by the pilgrims – be they Tyrian, Greek or Roman - into the required half-shekel piece.

<sup>27</sup> Exodus 30:13 speaks of a shekel payment "according to the shekel of the sanctuary"; it reads: "This is what each one who is registered shall give: half a shekel according to the shekel of the sanctuary (the shekel is twenty gerahs), half a shekel as an offering to the Lord." Although scholars debate the value of a gerah, the half-shekel nevertheless had a definite value.

been a need for money-changers to offer services in the Temple when these same services (i.e. the simple exchange function suggested in this reconstruction) could have been provided for by money-changers working outside? (b) Coins with graven images – although possible for exchange outside - would not likely have been sanctioned for exchange inside the Temple and most significantly (c) What coins would the money-changers have offered those pilgrims who, as we have seen, had not paid for the half-shekel with money but rather with a “pledge” to pay at some future time? Would money (coins) of intrinsic value be given to a pilgrim with the possible risk of the non-payment of his pledge? How would the Temple have financed such a scheme especially if the practice of making pledges was widespread?

### **Reconstruction (b)**

**The Money-Changer offered Tyrian coins in exchange in the Temple.** The second scenario is that the money-changer offered Tyrian coins in exchange in the Temple. This understanding – as was previously seen in chapter two - is a favoured view among scholars today. Although, as stated earlier, there is nowhere stipulated in m.Shekalim that the pilgrim must pay the half-shekel tax with a specific kind of coin there is, however, stipulated in another tractate of the Mishna (i.e. Mishna-Bekhoroth), that the coinage for the payment of the redemption of the first-born son “should be paid in Tyrian coinage”<sup>28</sup> and, on the basis of this directive, it is likewise held that payment of the half-shekel tax was required in Tyrian coinage.<sup>29</sup> This understanding, I propose, is correct. Although Mishna-Bekhoroth does stipulate that payments in the Temple should have been paid in “Tyrian” coins, it does not however state that Tyrian coins were the coins offered by the money-changers. Rather it simply insists that payments

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<sup>28</sup> The tractate states: “The five selas of a first-born [are paid in] the standard of Tyrian maneh [coinage]. As regards the thirty shekels of a slave and likewise the fifty shekels of the rapist and seducer and the one hundred shekels for one who spreads an evil name in all these cases the payment is in the holy shekel, in the standard of Tyrian maneh [coinage].” (m.Bekhoroth 8:7). In addition, in a later authoritative commentary by rabbis on the Mishna, it is written: “Silver, whenever mentioned in the Pentateuch, is Tyrian silver. What is a Tyrian silver (coin)? It is a Jerusalemite.” (Tosephta Kethuboth 13:20).

<sup>29</sup> Richardson, “Why Turn the Tables? Jesus’ Protest in the Temple Precincts?” 507-523, - was the first to highlight the Mishna’s obligation to pay with Tyrian coinage in the Temple (m.Bekhoroth 8:7). Although the Mishnah only explicitly makes reference to the payment for the ‘redemption of the first-born’ (and the other listed payments) with Tyrian coinage, Richardson concluded from this statement that the “Shekel-dues” (i.e. the Temple tax) were so likewise to be paid. Jerome Murphy-O’Connor also adopted this line of reasoning in a later article where he goes on to explain that although Tyrian coinage bore the idolatrous image of Melkart on the obverse, and the inscription, “Tyre the holy and inviolable” on the reverse, it was still the preferred method of payment in the Temple. It was preferable to all other forms of coinage as it was: (a) not that representing an offensive “occupying power” (i.e. the Roman Empire) and (b) was consistently issued with a high level of “silver content” (Murphy-O’Connor: “Jesus and the Money-Changers - Mark 11:15-17 and John 2:13-17”, 46).

made by pilgrims in the Temple should be made with Tyrian coins. As was earlier seen in chapter two, Tyrian coins were highly valued on account of the purity and consistency of the precious metal content with which they were issued. Tyrian coins (92% fineness) possessed a greater percentage of silver content than that of their Roman and Greek counterparts and so would naturally have been sought after. This coinage then was the coinage which the pilgrim was expected to use for payment within the Temple in first-century Judaism. It was not however, I propose, the coinage offered in exchange by the money-changers. Three points are made in support of this: (a) given the matter of graven images on Tyrian coins it is unlikely that such coins would have been approved for official exchange in the Temple (b) the lack of silver deposits: the money-changers would not have possessed a sufficient supply of silver from which to mint such quantities of precious coins in exchange and (c) as several of the pilgrims – as seen above - did not pay the half-shekel tax with coinage but rather made a pledge to pay at some future date, the money-changers would run the risk of indebting the Temple in the event of non-payment of the pledge. For these and other reasons I propose that Tyrian coins were not the coins offered in exchange by the money-changers of the Temple.

### **Reconstruction (c)**

**The Money-Changers offered Token Coins in exchange in the Temple.** As the two reconstructions presented above are seen as unlikely based on what is found in m.Shekalim, (particularly that of coins of real intrinsic value being offered in exchange), the proposition must then be considered as to whether the money-changers offered their own token coins in exchange in the Temple. Apart from the evidence from outside the Mishna earlier considered in the thesis proposing this very case (i.e. that the money-changers were offering token coinage), this third reconstruction based on the contents of m.Shekalim is – I suggest - the most likely re-enactment given the absence of any other logical reconstruction. This is particularly so given, as was noted above, the loss that would accrue to the Temple if the money-changers offered in exchange coins of real value with pilgrims who had not paid the half-shekel tax but instead made a pledge to pay at some future date. The use of token money would have prevented this loss accruing to the Temple. In addition, as *token seals* in the shape of coins<sup>30</sup> were offered in exchange by the officers/money-changers in the Temple for the purchase of

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<sup>30</sup> The subject of token seals and their proposed link with the services of the money-changers will be considered in the next sub-section of the main text.

animals for sacrifice, would it not also be likely that *token coins* were similarly offered for the payment of the half-shekel tax? If token seals in the shape of coins were devised for the purchase of the Temple sacrifices would it not be reasonable to assume that token coins were likewise designed and introduced into the Temple for the payment of the Temple tax?

Although such a proposed reconstruction is both possible and credible, it is however made in silence, without any positive claim from within m.Shekalim itself that token coins were offered in exchange in the Temple. For m.Shekalim, as we have already seen, does not specify the coinage that was offered by the money-changers in exchange. Although this is true, there may in fact be a reference to the use of such token coinage in the Temple (to the use of coinage which contained no “silver” or which possessed no real intrinsic value) in another tractate of the Mishna, Mishna-Bekhoroth<sup>31</sup>. This brings us to a brief study outside of Mishna-Shekalim, to a study of a tiny excerpt from within Mishna-Bekhoroth.

#### **Reconstruction (c) continued - Mishna-Bekhoroth 8:7**

The relevant excerpt of m.Bekhoroth where, I propose, such token practice in the Temple is found is presented immediately below. It reads (emphasis added):

“The five selas of a first-born [are paid in] the standard of Tyrian maneh [coinage]. As regards the thirty shekels of a slave and likewise the fifty shekels of the rapist and seducer and the one hundred shekels for one who spreads an evil name in all these cases the payment is in the holy shekel, in the standard of Tyrian maneh [coinage]. *All of these are redeemed with money [lit. ִּוּוּוּ, silver, or silver money] or the equivalent of money [lit. ִּוּוּוּ, silver or silver money] with the exception of the shekel payments*” (Mishna-Yomit, Bekhoroth 8:7).<sup>32</sup>

From among the various payments made to the Treasury in the above excerpt, there was an “exception” granted to pilgrims who came to pay the half-shekel tax. They, I suggest from what is written in the passage, were allowed to make payment with coins which contained no

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<sup>31</sup> *Mishna-Bekhoroth* is a tractate dealing with the redemption of the first-born in the Order ‘Kodashim’ (i.e. ‘Holy Things’).

<sup>32</sup> Trans. Kulp.

“silver”, presumably, that is, with token coins. Let us flesh this out a little further. On the basis of what is recorded in m.Bekhoroth 8:7, what were pilgrims recommended to do?

In the above excerpt, pilgrims paying the “five selas” for the redemption of the first-born, or the “thirty shekels” for the slave, or the “fifty shekels” for the rapist, or the “hundred shekels” for the one who spreads an evil name, were obliged (or recommended) to pay with Tyrian coinage or the equivalent of silver coinage. The pilgrim ritually deposited the price of redemption (i.e. the Tyrian coins or their equivalent) in the Treasury and atonement was satisfied. All such mandatory payments were to be paid accordingly with “the exception” we are told of “the shekel [i.e. the half-shekel] payments”. What does this exception mean? Two scenarios are possible. The first is that proposed by the Mishna-Yomit Commentary when it states that the pilgrim, when paying the price of redemption for several specified mandatory payments was permitted to pay with coins or their equivalent in value, whereas in the case of payment of the Temple-tax the pilgrim was permitted to pay with coins only.<sup>33</sup> The exception here is interpreted to mean that those paying the half shekel tax were an exception to the general rule of paying either with coins or their equivalent. Those paying the half-shekel could pay with coins only. This reconstruction, I suggest, is unlikely given the fact that m.Shekalim contradicts this when it stipulates that, in addition to paying with coins, pilgrims could also pay the half-shekel tax “with the equivalent of money” by making “pledges” of payment. The second scenario, and one which I suggest is more likely, is simply this. The pilgrim – when paying the redemption price for the above specified payments, the redemption of the first-born, the slave, the rapist etc – paid directly into the Treasury the stipulated price with Tyrian coinage or their equivalent (i.e., the pilgrim deposited into the Treasury - without the mediation of the money-changers - the coins he brought into the Temple). The pilgrim, in the case of the Temple tax, did not pay directly into the Treasury but first was required to go to the money-changer and exchange the coins he brought into the Temple for payment, (the Tyrian coins or their equivalent) and then deposited into the Treasury the token coins he received by way of exchange. The exception here is interpreted to mean that those who paid the half shekel tax

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<sup>33</sup> Explaining the “exception” referred to in this excerpt of Mishna-Bekhoroth 8:7, *the Mishna Yomit Commentary* reasons that whereas the payments mentioned at the beginning of the paragraph could be made either in coins or with something the equivalent in value, the half-shekel payment must be paid in coins only. “The Commentary writes: In all cases where something needs to be redeemed, such as a first-born son or an item dedicated to the Temple, the redemption can be done either with money or with something of equivalent value. The redemption need not be done just with coins. The exception is the half shekel that is paid on a yearly basis to the Temple in Jerusalem. This half shekel must be paid in coinage.” (*Mishna Yomit: Commentary* Mishna-Bekhoroth 8:7)

were an exception to the general rule of paying with coins of real intrinsic value; they could pay with coins that were devoid of real value i.e. the token money of the money-changers. In this second scenario, the exception clause would have resulted in huge sums of money, that is – the coins of real value, remaining behind on the money-changers’ tables with the coins of token value being deposited in the Treasury. The main point however to be seen here is that m.Bekhorot 8:7 appears to indicate that the exception applying to those paying the half-shekel tax refers to that privilege allowing pilgrims paying the tax with coinage other than that which possessed real intrinsic (silver) value, i.e. paying with token coinage.

Before going on to examine the ancillary services referred to in m.Shekalim ((a) the “Pledges” (b) the “Surcharge” and (c) the “Seals”), a brief mention will be made here of the Chamber of Secret Gifts in the Treasury into which funds were donated in secret for the provision of charitable outreach. The payments by pilgrims into the Chamber of Secret Gifts, like that of the annual half-shekel tax, may also have been done through the mediation of the moneychangers.

### **Mishna-Shekalim: The Chamber of Secret Gifts in the Treasury**

The Chamber of Secret Gifts (or Secret Things) was one of two chambers attached to the Treasury that is mentioned in m.Shekalim 5:6. In it pilgrims donated monies and gifts for charitable purposes, which apparently indicates that the Temple in Jerusalem was engaged in charitable works.<sup>34</sup> The relevant section of m.Shekalim 5:6 reads:

“There were two chambers in the Temple, one the chamber of secret gifts and the other the chamber of the vessels. The chamber of secret gifts: sin-fearing persons used to put their gifts there in secret, and the poor who were descended of the virtuous were secretly supported from them.”<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> In this respect Gregg Gardner writes “Scholars who argue for the chamber of secrets as evidence for pre-70 C.E. organized charity take the historicity of these texts [i.e. Mishna-Sheqalim 5:6 and Tosefta-Sheqalim 2:16] at face value. They likewise tend to cite rabbinic texts as chronologically and geographically diverse as the Mishna... and the Babylonian Talmud..... side by side in an effort to reconstruct the social and religious life of Judea in the first century and earlier. These arguments, moreover, point to support for the pre-70 C.E. existence of the chamber of secrets as a locus of organized charity in passages from the New Testament and Apocrypha that mention the financial and commercial functions of the Jerusalem Temple” in *The Origins of Organized Charity in Rabbinic Judaism* (Cambridge and New York, Cambridge University Press, 2015), 17. See also Joachim Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus* (London: SPCK, 1969), 133.

<sup>35</sup> Trans. Kulp

Commenting on m.Shekalim 5:6, on the charitable nature of these secret monies/gifts donated, Mishna Yomit writes:

“The secret treasures referred to here may be similar to that which Josephus describes. What interests me, beyond the sheer parallel between the Mishnah and Josephus, is that the rabbis assume that some of these treasures must have gone to tzedakah [i.e. charity]. According to the rabbis, the Temple must have at least partially functioned as a repository where people could give money secretly. In the rabbinic mind, the Temple’s treasures could not just have been designated to make its leaders wealthier or to pay for more ornament decorations. The money must have gone to the poor as well.”<sup>36</sup>

This passage of the Mishna is amplified in the Tosefta (Tosefta Shekalim 2:16) which states that this charitable outreach in the Temple extended also to the towns. It reads:

“Just as there was a chamber of secrets in the Temple, so too was such a chamber in every town, so that the wellborn poor could be maintained from it in secret.”

As these payments made in the Chamber of Secret Gifts are coupled with the half-shekel payments in the m.Shekalim tractate, this appears to indicate that these charitable donations offered by pilgrims at Passover time (i.e. when the money-changers’ tables were set up in the Temple) may well have been made through the mediation of the money-changers. In other words, the monies donated by pilgrims for charitable purposes – like that of the half-shekel payments - did not it seems end up in the Treasury but remained on the money-changers’ tables. It may well be this removal of wealth from the Treasury that Jesus had in mind when, after the Cleansing of the Temple and just before a significant incident known as the Widow’s Mites (Mk 12: 41-44; Lk 21:1-4, see chapter four) whilst standing “opposite the treasury”, Jesus remarked negatively of “the scribes” that they are the “men who swallow the property of widows” (Mk 12:40). Apparently, one of the main recipients of funds donated to the Chamber of Secret Gifts were destitute widows whom the Temple had pledged to care for (2 Macc 3:10).<sup>37</sup> These funds would have been greatly depleted if pilgrims deposited into the Chamber what the money-changers had given them by way of exchange.

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<sup>36</sup> Trans. Kulp



## **(2) The Ancillary Services (a) the “Pledges” (b) the “Surcharge” and (c) the “Seals”**

### **(a) Pledges**

“Pledges” are described in m.Shekalim 1:3-5 as being taken from Jewish pilgrims who had not, or could not pay the half-shekel tax.<sup>38</sup> These “pledges” were most likely secured either in: (a) the form of some hold on existing property in lieu of non-payment of the tax or (b) the promise of payment from income derived from the harvest of future crops or produce. Whether this facility was applicable only to pilgrims making the half-shekel payment or was also extended to other mandatory payments to the Temple is not mentioned in m.Shekalim. The latter, I propose, is more probable. For although m.Shekalim 1:3 refers only to such pledges being granted in connection with payment of the half-shekel tax, it is likely that similar pledges were also made in connection with the purchase of sacrificial animals in the Temple. These animals were bought with “seals” (m.Shekalim 5 - see later in the sub-section entitled “the Seals”), which the pilgrims purchased from designated officers in the Temple.<sup>39</sup> As the seals purchased by the pilgrims - like the exchange coinage of the Temple - were merely token seals, the Temple would easily have been able to offer them to pilgrims who were not able to pay there and then but rather made a pledge of future payment. The issuing of such pledges in the Temple may also have been granted to pilgrims seeking finance or credit from the Temple for other reasons. The subject matter of loans being granted in the Temple will be examined in section three of this chapter under the heading “the Temple as Bank”.

M.Shekalim 1:3-5 refers to this deferred form of payment (i.e. the pledges to pay the half-shekel tax) from various classes of Jewish people, from “Levites and Israelites, converts and

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<sup>37</sup> 2 Maccabees 3:10 makes reference to “funds [being] set aside for widows and orphans” in the Temple which may well refer to the charitable funds donated to the Chamber of Secret Gifts by pilgrims for such destitute people.

<sup>38</sup> M.Shekalim 1;3,5 states: “On the fifteenth of [Adar] they would set up tables [of money changers] in the provinces. On the twenty-fifth they set them up in the Temple. When [the tables] were set up in the Temple, they began to exact pledges [from those who had not paid]. From whom did they exact pledges? From Levites and Israelites, converts and freed slaves, but not women or slaves or minors. Any minor on whose behalf his father has begun to pay the shekel, may not discontinue it again. But they did not exact pledges from the priests, because of the ways of peace..... Even though they said, “they don’t exact pledges from women, slaves or minors, [yet] if they paid the shekel it is accepted from them. If a non-Jew or a Samaritan paid the shekel they do not accept it from them...”

<sup>39</sup> Later, I will suggest that the officers in charge of the seals described in m.Shekalim 5 may also have functioned as the money-changers who presided over the collection of the half-shekel tax at Passover time.

freed slaves” but “not women or slaves or minors”. They also “did not exact pledges from the priests”. The picture given is that pilgrims who may have been stressed with other financial commitments (in particular, with the payment of taxes to Rome) were treated with a measure of leniency in the Temple with permission granted by the authorities to defer their payments to some future time. The impression given is that the take up of this facility was quite common.

On the basis of what is described in m.Shekalim, as was earlier seen, this credit facility (and the scale to which it was offered) appears to have been unique to the Temple in Jerusalem (i.e. it was not as prevalent – as will later be seen - in other temples of the Greco-Roman world). How, it might be asked, could the Temple have funded such a generous facility? Where could the authorities have availed of such a supply of money to lend out in credit? In response to these questions, I propose that the Temple could offer such an endless supply of credit as it was offering token money only and not coinage of real value. Normally when loans were given in the Greco-Roman world, the pilgrim would receive money in the form of coins of real value (i.e. in gold or silver). However in the Temple of Jerusalem, credit was made available to pilgrims in a new form, i.e. with token money. And for this form of money there was an endless supply. The pilgrim, on approaching the money-changer and making a pledge to pay at some future time, received in return (a) token coinage, if paying the half-shekel tax and (b) token seals, i.e. seals, as will later be seen, in the form of a coin, if purchasing an animal for sacrifice in the Temple.

There may be some notable points of contact between these pledges or ‘promises to pay’ in m.Shekalim and the question of debt and the poor economic circumstances of Jesus’ contemporaries which he addressed in the Gospels.<sup>40</sup>

### **(b) The Surcharge - Kolbon**

In m.Shekalim 1:6-7, nine references are made to the “surcharge” (lit. kolbon, קֶלְבֹּן) or fee which the money-changers charged for offering their services in the Temple. In m.Shekalim 1:7 the amount charged for the fee is described.<sup>41</sup> The reason for charging the fee, according to

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<sup>40</sup> Some examples of Jesus reference to debt and its serious consequences are found in Mt 6:12, 18:23-35; Lk 7:41-43, 16:1-15. Two of these, Mt 18:23-35 and Lk 16:1-15, are considered later in this chapter.

<sup>41</sup> M.Shekalim 1:7 states: “And how much is the kalbon? A silver ma'ah, the words of Rabbi Meir. But the sages say: half a ma'ah.” The precise sum is disputed, with “Rabbi Meir” (who lived in the time of the Mishna, i.e.

Rabbi Meir (Tosefta Shekalim 1:7), was not to act as an “exchange premium [for the money-changers] but [rather it] was [paid to compensate for] the difference between the value of the half-shekel coin [Tyrian coin 92% silver] and the theoretical value of the half-shekel of the Torah [100%] that was shown to Moses”.<sup>42</sup> Adjler agrees with Rabbi Meir that the payment was not a form of interest charged by the money-changers but refines the reason for charging the fee by suggesting that the Tyrian half-shekel (6.83 gr.), weighing less than half of a Tyrian shekel (14.17 gr.), “had proportionally less intrinsic value than the shekel [and the fee was therefore paid...] to compensate for the imbalance of the half-shekel”.<sup>43</sup> In either scenario, the practice of charging fees (which most probably generated large sums of money) could have been legally justified as it was not contrary to the law prohibiting usury (Deuteronomy 23:20-21). In addition, those who did not pay the half-shekel immediately but rather made a pledge of future payment were also apparently liable to such a fee. This accumulation of money would not have taken place were it not for the fact of the money-changers’ presence in the Temple. It was their presence that allowed such revenue to be generated, and, as was earlier seen, their presence was not always required but was introduced for a specific reason which, it has been proposed in this thesis, revolved around the use of token money for exchange in the Temple.

### (c) The Seals

In chapter five of m.Shekalim reference is made to the use of “seals” in the Temple. The officer in charge of the seals, “Yohanan, the son of Pinchas”, is named in m.Shekalim 5:1, with various important matters pertaining to the different kinds of seals and their purposes described in m.Shekalim 5:3-5.<sup>44</sup> Given the lengthy coverage they receive, such seals appear to have played an important role in the Temple. Recently, in November 2011, archaeologists discovered a coin-sized clay seal near the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, inscribed with Aramaic words, which

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second cent CE) stating the fee was a “ma’ah” (1/12 of a half-shekel) and “the sages [stating]...half a ma’ah” (1/24 of half-shekel). Whatever the precise figure it amounted to large sums paid.

<sup>42</sup> Joseph Jean Ajdler, “Talmudic Metrology IV. Halakhic Currency,” *Journal of Torah and Scholarship* 22 (2009) 7-50 [18].

<sup>43</sup> Ajdler, “Talmudic Metrology IV,” 19.

<sup>44</sup> According to m.Shekalim 5:3 “There were four seals in the Temple, and on them was inscribed [respectively]: ‘calf’, ‘ram’, ‘kid’, ‘sinner’. Ben Azzai says: there were five and on them was inscribed in Aramaic [respectively] ‘calf’, ‘ram’, ‘kid’, ‘poor sinner’, and ‘rich sinner’.” Apparently, the pilgrim bought the seals from the officer in charge, each of which seals served a different purpose. M.Shekalim 5:3 continues: “[The seal inscribed] ‘calf’ served for the libations of cattle, both large and small, male and female. [The seal inscribed] ‘kid’ served for the libations of flock animals, both large and small, male and female, with the exception of rams. [The one inscribed] ‘ram’ served for the libations of rams alone. [The one inscribed] ‘sinner’ served for the libations of the three animals [offered] by lepers.”

scholars believe was one such seal prescribed in m.Shekalim for use in the Temple. There is divided opinion, however, as to its precise function. Initially scholars believed that the Aramaic inscription on the seal read “pure to God” and that the seal, therefore, functioned as a kind of ‘sacred tag’ attached to some animal or item for use in the Temple, declaring it ritually pure.<sup>45</sup> More recently, however, the inscription has been read differently, so that the function of the seal is proposed to have provided the Jewish pilgrim with a form of ‘receipt’ as evidence that he had paid the price for the particular sacrifice he was to make in the Temple.<sup>46</sup> This second view, I propose, is more likely.<sup>47</sup> According to this understanding, a pilgrim coming to Jerusalem to offer sacrifice would first have gone to the “officer over the seals” (most likely one of the money-changers in the Temple<sup>48</sup>) to pay for the particular sacrifice he required. Having paid (with Tyrian or other coinage) or, having made a pledge to pay, the officer/money-changer would have handed him the appropriate seal in receipt of his payment. The pilgrim would then proceed to the officer in charge of the sacrificial offerings and present him with his token seal as evidence of payment.<sup>49</sup> The sacrifice would later then be offered.

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<sup>45</sup> Some scholars argue that the seal discovered (a coin-shaped seal) was probably placed on objects to certify their purity and, therefore, declare them fit for use in the Temple. Nir Hasson writes: “Excavators Prof. Ronny Reich of the University of Haifa and Dr. Eli Shukron of the Israel Antiquities Authority told a press conference last week that this was a seal used to mark objects used in the Temple as ritually pure, and that such a seal is mentioned in the Mishna.” “Scholars Offer New Explanation for Rare Temple Artifact Found in Jerusalem,” in *HaAretz*, Jan 4<sup>th</sup> 2012, <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/travel/1.5158678>.

<sup>46</sup> Shlomo Naeh, reading the Aramaic inscription with a different intent and meaning, proposed an alternative function for such seals in the Temple. According to Naeh, the seal was not used to mark Temple animals or objects as ritually pure - as proposed by Reich and Shukron (see previous footnote), but rather functioned as a token or receipt given to Jewish pilgrims who purchased their sacrificial offerings in the Temple court. In this way, according to Naeh, the authorities maintained an economic monopoly on the sale of animals and other items to be purchased for the cultic rites of the Temple. The pilgrim, apparently, gave money (or a “pledge” to pay at some time in the future) to a treasurer (who may also have functioned as a money-changer) who exchanged it for a seal or token inscribed with the type of sacrifice they had purchased. See, Nir Hasson, previous footnote. Professor George Athas has a similar view in which he states that the coin-seal functioned as proof (a receipt) of authentic monetary exchange in the Temple. See, “A Currency Exchange Token? A New Take on the Recently Discovered Ancient Seal from Jerusalem”, December 29<sup>th</sup>, 2011, <https://withmeagrepowers.wordpress.com/2011/12/29/a-currency-exchange-token/>

<sup>47</sup> The fact that the seal has no hole in it for a thread or other means to be attached to an object appears to indicate that it was not used as a ‘sacred tag’ declaring objects as ritually pure for use in the Temple. In addition, a priestly item in the Temple would most probably have been inscribed in Hebrew as opposed to Aramaic.

<sup>48</sup> Given the fact that the seals were in the form of a coin and there was an exchange of money involved it is more than likely that the “officer” in charge of the seals was one of the money-changers in the Temple.

<sup>49</sup> M.Shekalim 5:4, in fact, describes this procedure of the pilgrim first paying for the sacrifice (in this case a “drink offering”) with “Yohanan” the “officer of the seals” (who was also most likely one of the money-changers of the Temple) and then proceeding to “Ahijah”, the “officer over the drink offerings”.

The reason for introducing such token seals in the Temple may only be conjectured but they may well have been introduced so as to present the authorities with a hold on trade in the Sanctuary. By devising such a scheme, the authorities would have held a monopoly on the buying and selling of animals for sacrifice and would have located such trade in the Temple. In addition, the use of such seals would have made it feasible to carry out what Jerome referred to as a carefully planned scheme “for making a gain out of the people” whereby the authorities “ordered animals to be sold in the temple, in order that, when the people had bought and offered them afterwards, they might sell them again, and thus make great profits” (Thomas Aquinas quoting Jerome and Bede: *Catena Aurea*, John Ch: 2). The pilgrim having paid the treasurer with real money (or with a pledge to pay with real money) by paying for the animal with a token seal would, I propose, have made it possible for the animal to be re-sold to several bidders. A great deal of money (or pledges to pay with real money) would have accrued to the Temple by this scheme.

From this account concerning the use of token seals in m.Shekalim, an important point of consideration may, I propose, be made with respect to the form of coinage offered in exchange by the money-changers in the Temple. It is simply this: “As it is clear the Temple authorities authorized the use of *token* seals in exchange with pilgrims who came to offer animals in sacrifice in the Holy Place, would it not be likely that the same authorities would similarly have authorized the use of *token* coinage in exchange with pilgrims who came to pay the half-shekel tax?”

### **Summary of the main points of Section Two**

#### **“Mishna-Shekalim and the Monetary Practices in the Temple in the first century CE”**

(1) According to the picture described in m.Shekalim, the principal duty of the money-changers of the Temple was simply – it appears - to provide the pilgrim Jewish person with exchange coinage that would allow him make the half-shekel tax payment. The particular coins that were used as exchange coinage are not described.

(2) M.Shekalim 2:4 lists several foreign coins which were used as payment by pilgrims of the Temple tax from the return from the Exile up to 70 CE. As this is so there appears to have been a considerable period of time in the history of the Second Temple when the services of the

money-changers were not required. During this period there were, apparently, no money-changers in the Temple.

(3) Although m.Shekalim, as mentioned above, makes no direct reference to the coins the money-changers were offering in exchange in the Temple, certain inferences may be made from within m.Shekalim (and from within another passage of the Mishna, i.e. Mishna-Bekhoroth 8:7) that the money-changers offered token coins in exchange in the Temple. This *token* reconstruction fits better with what is described in m.Shekalim than two other reconstructions that were considered: (a) The Money-Changers had no specific coin to offer in exchange but exchanged all kinds of coinage in circulation provided the coinage was of the required fineness stipulated for use in the Temple and (b) the Money-Changers offered Tyrian coins in exchange in the Temple.

(4) Pledges are described in m.Shekalim 1:3-5 as being taken from Jewish pilgrims who had not, or could not, pay the half-shekel tax. How, it might be asked, could the Temple have funded such a generous facility? In response to this question, I have proposed in this thesis that the Temple could offer such an endless supply of credit simply because it was offering token money only and not coinage of real value. There may be some notable points of contact between the ‘pledges’ or ‘promises to pay’ in m.Shekalim and the question of debt and the poor economic circumstances of people in first-century Judaism so often addressed by Jesus in the Gospels.

(5) In m.Shekalim 1:6-7, several references are made to the “surcharge” (lit. kolbon, קֶלְבֹן or fees which the money-changers charged for their services in the Temple. The reason for charging the fee, according to Rabbi Meir (Tos. Shek. 1:7), was [paid to compensate for] the difference between the value of the half-shekel coin [Tyrian coin 92% silver] and the theoretical value of the half-shekel of the Torah [100%] that was shown to Moses”. The fees were not therefore – as is sometimes assumed - a form of interest (or exchange premium) charged by the money-changers but rather a payment charged to compensate the Temple for losses that would otherwise have accrued in the process of exchanging coins. The fees, therefore, may have been legally justified and were consequently unlikely to have been the focus of Jesus’ ire in the Temple.

(6) In chapter five of m.Shekalim reference is made to the use of “seals” in the Temple. There may be a connection between these seals and a coin-sized clay seal inscribed with Aramaic words recently discovered (November 2011) by archaeologists near the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. Naeh proposes that this token seal acted as a form of ‘receipt’ given to Jewish pilgrims who purchased their sacrificial offerings in the Temple. Such token seals would have presented the authorities with a monopoly hold on the sale of animals. As *token seals* were used in exchange with pilgrims who came to offer animals in sacrifice in the Temple, it might be wondered as to whether the authorities would not similarly have authorized the use of *token coinage* in exchange with pilgrims who came to pay the half-shekel tax?

### Section Three

#### The Temple as Bank

Several scholars have described the temples of the Ancient Near East (hereafter, ANE) functioning as “banks”. The Temple in Jerusalem is proposed to have functioned in like manner.<sup>50</sup> However, it may be more accurate to describe the function of such temples as that of safe-houses or “depositories” for money, as a “sacred space connected with the deity”<sup>51</sup> for those who wished to deposit precious commodities and coinage for safe-keeping. For although temples in the ANE did grant loans and in this way took on one of the main functions of that of banks as we know them today, they only lent out what was their own property and not that of others. They did not lend out the deposits lodged by private individuals (unless permission/authorization was given by the depositor), as they had no claim on such capital.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> That the Temple of Jerusalem functioned as a bank, see Neill Q Hamilton, “Temple Cleansing and Temple Bank,” *JBL* 83 (1964), 365-372; John W. Wright, “Guarding the Gates: 1 Chronicles 26:1-19 and the Roles of Gatekeepers in Chronicles,” *JSOT* 48 (1990), 68-81 [76]; Carol L. Meyers, “Temple, Jerusalem,” *Anchor Bible Dictionary* (ed. David Noel Freedman; New York, Doubleday, 1992), 6:350-369; Wardle, *The Jerusalem Temple and Early Christian Identity*, 26-27.

<sup>51</sup> See Marty Stevens, *Temple, Tithes and Taxes—The Temple and the Economic Life of Ancient Israel*, (Peabody, Massachusetts; Hendrickson Publishers, 2006), 137. See also Mason: *Flavius Josephus Translation and Commentary* (Vol 1b, Judean War II), 34.

<sup>52</sup> In ancient Roman banking, when depositors deposited monies in the bank, the *argentarius* generally paid no interest as the money was merely deposited for safe-keeping; the money was called *vacua pecunia*. However, when the money was deposited for interest, the *argentarius* could lend or invest the monies “in any lucrative manner” with the permission/authorization of the deposit holder. *A Dictionary of Greek and Roman Antiquities* writes: “Such money might be deposited by the owner merely to save himself the trouble of keeping it and making payments, and in this case it was called depositum; the argentarius then paid no interest, and the money was called vacua pecunia. ...Or the money was deposited on condition of the argentarius paying interest; in this case the money was called creditum, and the argentarius might of course employ the money himself in any lucrative manner ....The argentarius thus did almost the same sort of business as a modern banker.” A

By way of comparison, therefore, with banking practice of more recent times, the temples of the ANE were more restricted in the supply of money that could be lent out. Given this restriction, however, scholars believe that it is more than likely that the Temple in Jerusalem “lent [funds] in the same fashion as other banks”<sup>53</sup> but, unlike other banks, the Temple of Jerusalem did not – or at least was not supposed to - charge interest.<sup>54</sup> From where the Temple found funds to offer as loans may only be conjectured but it may well be that monies originally destined for the Treasury – ‘corban’ monies – may have been diverted from the Treasury and used for this purpose. (If - as was proposed earlier - the pilgrims half-shekel tax monies were not deposited in the Treasury but remained on the money-changers’ tables, such ‘non-corban’ monies could have been available as a source of credit). However, as mentioned above, without evidence for such a scheme this reconstruction is speculative.

In addition to this restriction outlined above on the availability of credit in temple/banks of ancient times, there was another and more important restriction which had an even greater impact on the supply of money that could be offered by way of loans. This restriction was simply caused by the fact that banks/temples of the ANE, when granting loans, offered money (coinage) of *real intrinsic value* whereas money offered by banks today – as seen in chapter two - is merely that of *token* value. In order to mint money in ancient times there was a need for the supply of precious metals (i.e. silver and gold) which was of restricted supply; token or “fiat money” – on the other hand - can be created immediately without the need of a precious

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*Dictionary of Greek and Roman Antiquities* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition, ed. William Smith [Boston; Little Brown and Co. 1870]), 131. See also, *Harpers Dictionary of Classical Antiquities* (ed. Harry Thurston Peck, [New York; Harper & Brothers, 1898] under “Trapezitae”; David Eugene Smith: *History of Mathematics Vol II*, 1925 Ginn and Co., 576.

<sup>53</sup> That the Temple engaged in lending activities is proposed by Neil Hamilton who writes: “Were the bank funds of the [Jerusalem] temple lent in the same fashion as other banks? It would be surprising if they were not since the temple bank was in the control of the high-priestly well-to-do aristocracy” in “Temple Cleansing and Temple Bank,” *JBL* 83: 4 (1964), 365-372 [369]. In addition, V. Tcherikover writes “The majority of the owners of the deposits [in the Jerusalem Temple] belonged to the same limited circle of Jerusalem aristocracy of which the governing priesthood were also members. If an owner of capital could place his means in the Temple treasury on deposit, why should he not also obtain from it sums of money in the form of loans?” in *Hellenistic Civilization and the Jews* (repr. Ed. by John J. Collins; Grand Rapids, Baker Publishing Group, 1999), 155. See also Stevens, *Temple, Tithes and Taxes*, 144. Although it is not certain as to where the Temple of Jerusalem may have possessed monies with which to make available as loans, such funds - as I proposed earlier - may have been made available as a consequence of the introduction of the money-changers and their token exchange into the Temple. If the half-shekel tax monies were not deposited in the Treasury but remained behind on the money-changers tables (as was earlier seen in chapter two), such ‘non-corban’ monies may later have been made available as a source of credit to those seeking loans. See later in the main text.

<sup>54</sup> The Law forbade a Jewish person charging interest on a loan with a fellow Israelite whilst allowing the charging of interest with “non-Israelite debtors”. See Stevens, *Temple, Tithes and Taxes*, 146-147.



metal supply and as such is limitless. (The distinction between coins of real value and token coins is difficult for readers of the modern world to grasp but, I propose, is vital if we are to fully appreciate the actions of Jesus in the Temple). Banks of the ANE offered loans from that which they had on deposit (real intrinsic money) whereas credit offered today is not taken from existing deposits but rather from a ‘new deposit’ which is immediately and artificially created in the system.<sup>55</sup> This new form of banking allows for a ninety percent increase of funds from which loans might be granted, a level of credit not hitherto possible to avail of in banks of the ANE.<sup>56</sup>

With respect to this second (and more important) restriction placed on temples/banks of the ANE there was however, I propose, one exception to this rule, one temple in the Greco-Roman world which was not restricted to offering credit in the form of coins of real intrinsic value - the Temple of Jerusalem at the time of Jesus. The granting of such ‘token-money’ loans, however, applied only to Jewish pilgrims who had to defray various expenses associated with the ritual life of the Temple – especially the payment of the half-shekel tax and the sacrifices in the Holy Place. Such credit of course would have had no purchasing power in everyday first-century commercial life; it was valid only within the Temple. Let us examine this proposed supply of credit further.

Throughout the Jewish liturgical year, sacrifices were continually offered by the priests in the Temple. In addition to the daily morning and evening sacrifices on behalf of Israel, other

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<sup>55</sup> In modern banking theory there is a fictional notion that money lent out by the bank is funded by that which has been placed on deposit in the bank. This is not quite true. For at no time in current banking practice will a depositor see his/her bank account reduced as a result of loans granted out by the bank. The accounts of existing deposit holders are left untouched. In effect every time a loan is granted *a new deposit holder* has been created in the banking system. The person who receives the loan opens a new account with the bank (or in another designated bank). The loan therefore is not funded by existing deposits but rather from the new account created. In short, every loan creates a new deposit. That deposits not only create loans but “loans also create deposits”, see, Anvan V. Thakor, “The Purpose of Banking” (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), 20. See, in addition, the next footnote.

<sup>56</sup> If a bank in ancient times held five thousand silver denarii on deposit and gave a loan of one thousand to person A, the total amount of silver denarii remaining on deposit would be four thousand denarii. From the reduced sum of four thousand, further loans could be granted but soon the availability of credit would run dry. By way of contrast, however, banks today do not lend out money from existing deposits; rather the bank issues the person seeking a loan with credit and opens a new account for him (a new deposit) from which he can draw down payments to the value of the loan he acquired. In this way the supply of credit is not restricted. The person for whom the loan has been granted becomes a new deposit holder in the bank. According to this mode of banking, therefore, loans are not taken from existing but rather from future deposits. For modern banking the maxim is therefore true that “every loan creates a new deposit”. Banks today calculate that they can safely lend out in this manner nine times more than they hold on deposit in the bank (the bank-liquidity ratio).

sacrifices were offered at the request of persons who wished to offer sacrifice in atonement for a particular sin committed or in thanksgiving for a favour granted. Pilgrims also thronged to the Temple in Jerusalem for the three feasts (Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles) and other major feasts during the calendar year where sacrifices were offered in abundance. The expenses incurred by Jewish pilgrims in the offering of such sacrifices were substantial. These expenses were added to those also imposed by the requirement to pay the half-shekel tax, the redemption of 'the first-born' and other mandatory payments to the Temple. (Coupled with these expenses owing to the Temple were those owing to Rome in the form of civil taxes, which, added together, must have placed a heavy burden on the people).<sup>57</sup> As was seen in our examination of m.Shekalim, pilgrims often met the half-shekel tax payment (and other mandatory payments) by making "pledges" (m.Shekalim 1) with the money-changers to pay the money owed at some future time. These pledges were secured by giving the creditor (the Temple) a hold on property or possessions owned by the debtor and/or by pledging the Temple with a share of his produce from future harvests. In all of this we see a creditor/debtor system in operation with loans granted and debts (bond instruments) accumulating. Given the prevalence of sacrifices offered and the central place the Temple held in the life and practice of first-century Judaism, the level of debt incurred was most probably substantial. There may be notable points of contact here with certain passages in the Gospels where Jesus addresses the question of debt and its ill effects<sup>58</sup> with the Temple as the primary locus for such credit facilities. In this connection two parables (parables were a favourite form of teaching for Jesus

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<sup>57</sup> The economic plight of Jewish people was noticeable in first-century Judaism with ever increasing demands placed on the inhabitants leading to a rise in indebtedness. In this respect Marius J. Nel writes "The Roman occupation of Judea and Galilee had led to the requirement of a biennial tribute of a quarter of all crops to Rome (Ant.15.202-203) and the detrimental interference in the local economy by representatives of the Empire (e.g., Pilate's appropriation of temple funds for funding an aqueduct, Ant. 18.3.2). The financial demands of Herod the Great's vast building programme and his ever-expanding court (in the period 30-4 B.C.E) combined with overpopulation and accelerated urbanisation, the mandatory temple tax required for the extensive Jewish temple cult, frequent crop failures and droughts - all of these also had a devastating impact on the local economy, leading to an increase in the overall indebtedness of the general population of Palestine during the first century," in "The Forgiveness of Debt in Matthew 6:12, 14-15," *Neotestamentica* 47:1 (2013), 87-106. This plight, Ben Witherington writes, made it difficult to meet tax obligations (*Jesus and Money*, 46, 49).

<sup>58</sup> Some examples of Jesus' reference to debt and its serious consequences are found in Mt 6:12, 18:23-35; Lk 7:41-43, 16:1-15. See also: Witherington, *Jesus and Money*, 48, 50; Douglas E. Oakman, *Jesus, Debt, and the Lord's Prayer: First-Century Debt and Jesus' Intentions* (Eugene OR, Cascade Books, 2014); Clive Beed and Cara Beed, Cara, "Jesus on Lending, Debt, and Interest," *JBIB* 17: 1(2014), 77-86.

and were not just simple stories<sup>59</sup>) immediately come to mind: (1) the Parable of the Rich Man and the Dishonest Steward (Lk: 16:1-13)<sup>60</sup> and (2) the Parable of the Two Debtors (Mt. 18:22-35).<sup>61</sup>

The issue of debt and its ill-effects is a prominent theme in the Gospels and should be further explored. However our main focus here is simply to note how the Temple in Jerusalem functioned as a bank and how, I propose, it offered a new and greater source of credit to pilgrims than had hitherto been available in temple-banks of the ANE before. Ordinarily, when a pilgrim entered a temple-bank in the ANE seeking a loan he would have been given coins of real value. In the Temple of Jerusalem however in the first-century CE, it appears, that the

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<sup>59</sup> During his public ministry, Jesus often spoke in parables, in what might be described as ‘sacred stories’ spoken in simple everyday terms which contain a deeper but hidden meaning. The reason for speaking in such ‘veiled-story’ terms has often been explained by the fact that people would readily understand teaching in common everyday terms. Although this is certainly true, the main reason, it appears, for speaking in such parabolic or veiled form was due to the contentious subject matter addressed by Jesus and to whom his message was subtly addressed. The contentious nature of the parables is well expressed by Joachim Jeremias as follows: “They [the parables of Jesus] were preponderantly concerned with a situation of conflict, they correct, reprove, attack. For the greater part, though not exclusively, the parables are weapons of warfare,” in *The Parables of Jesus* (New York, Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1963), 21.

<sup>60</sup> The loans that were granted in the Temple may have some connection with the “bond[s]” (pledges/bills) Jesus referred to in the ‘Parable of the unjust Steward’ (Lk: 16: 1-13). These bonds (promises to pay), I suggest, may have been the “pledges” (m.Shekalim 1:3,5) made by pilgrims to the Temple authorities (the unjust steward of the parable) which were to be repaid in kind with wheat and oil from future harvests as Jesus alluded to in the parable. That this parable has a Temple setting appears to be confirmed in what immediately follows in Luke’s Gospel with the “rich man” who was dressed “in purple” (the apparel of the high-priest of the Temple, Caiaphas) who had “five brothers” (the five sons of Annas, Caiaphas had married the daughter of Annas and so had five brothers, his five brothers-in-law). Other points of contact may also be seen in the ‘Parable of the two Debtors’ (Mt. 18:23-35, see next footnote), and the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew’s Gospel (“and forgive us our debts”, Mt. 6:12) which ends with a comparison between the wise or “sensible man” (i.e. the ‘wise man’ Solomon) who built his house (the Temple) on rock and the foolish man who built his house on sand, “and what a fall it had” (Mt. 7:24-27). One of the first acts the Jewish insurgents did at the beginning of the Jewish-Roman war (which culminated with the “fall” of the Temple) was the burning of the record of debts and the Office of Records in 66 CE (Wars 2.427). These debts may have originated from within the Temple. Jerome also apparently referred to these loans (bills or bonds) that were granted in the Temple when he wrote “they therefore appointed bankers who might lend to them under a bond”.

<sup>61</sup> Two debtors owed money, one “ten thousand talents” (18:25) and the other “five hundred denarii” (18:28). Both are substantial sums but the first is so large a sum that it is beyond that which could have been owed by any individual at that time. The question that remains is: What group or which institution had Jesus in mind here in this parable to which his condemnation was addressed “You wicked servant...I cancelled all that debt of yours when you appealed to me; were you not bound then to have pity on your fellow servant just as I had pity with you?” (Mt. 18:32-33) Might Jesus have had in mind as the principal debtor the Temple itself (in debt to God for what had been taken from the Temple Treasury) and the second one of its debtors (who was in debt to the Temple)? Having spoken this parable and “having finished what he wanted to say” (Mt 19:1), Jesus set out on his journey to Jerusalem.

person seeking a loan received from the money-changer either, token money<sup>62</sup>, or token seals<sup>63</sup>, in exchange for which the pilgrim gave a hold on some form of property property/possessions and/or made a pledge of payment from expected revenues from future produce. This new and abundant source of credit was made possible because of the money-changers' practices in the Temple and the offering of token money either in the form of token coins or token seals. Of course, as stated before, such credit facilities were only licit within the Temple. How much debt amassed as a consequence of these credit facilities being offered can only be imagined but it may well have been a very sizeable sum which placed heavy demands on the people.<sup>64</sup>

That the Temple functioned as a bank in first-century Judaism is generally accepted in scholarship of recent times. The simple point, however, which I propose here in this final section of chapter three of the thesis is that the Temple in Jerusalem – on account of the money-changers' practices in the Temple and the issue of token coinage and token seals – was able to offer substantially more credit facilities to its pilgrims than that of other temple-banks in the ANE at that time. This proposed enlarged credit facility may have begun – as was earlier seen – in the time of Jesus. The Temple of Jerusalem was not as restricted as that of the other Temple-banks which were confined to offering loans in the form of coins of real intrinsic value.

### **Summary of the main points of Section Three**

#### **“The Temple as Bank”**

(1) Although temples in the ANE did grant loans and in this way might be said to resemble banks as we know them today, they only lent out what was their own property and not that of others (unless permission/authorization was given). In this way they were restricted in what could be lent out.

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<sup>62</sup> Token money (coins), as I earlier proposed, was exchanged by the money-changers of the Temple with Jewish pilgrims who came to pay the half-shekel tax. If the pilgrim did not have money with him to make payment, he paid instead by making a pledge of some future payment. Having received the pledge, the money-changers would then have given him token coinage in exchange which the pilgrim would have deposited in the Treasury.

<sup>63</sup> Token seals, as we have earlier seen, were given by the money-changers of the Temple to Jewish pilgrims who came to offer sacrifice in the Temple. If the pilgrim did not have money with which to pay, he offered a pledge of future payment instead. The pilgrim would then present the seal to those officials in charge of the sacrifices as evidence of payment.

<sup>64</sup> There may be a connection between loans of this kind issued in the Temple and the record of debts that were later burned by rebels in 66 C.E. at the beginning of the Jewish-Roman War, revealing the anger of the people at the servitude to which they had been subjected.

(2) In addition to this restriction outlined above, there was another and more important restriction which had an even greater impact on the supply of money that could be offered by way of credit. This restriction was simply caused by the fact that temples of the ANE, when granting loans, offered money (coinage) of *real intrinsic value* whereas money offered by banks today – as seen at the beginning of chapter two - is merely that of *token value*.

(3) With respect to lending practices in temple-banks of the ANE there was, however, I propose, one exception to this rule in (2) above, one temple in the Greco-Roman world that was not restricted to offering coins of real intrinsic value - the Temple of Jerusalem at the time of Jesus. The granting of such ('non-intrinsic value') loans in the form of token coins (and token seals) applied only to Jewish pilgrims who came to defray various expenses associated with the ritual life and practices of the Temple – especially the payment of the half-shekel tax and the sacrifices in the Holy Place. Such credit had no purchasing power in everyday first-century commercial life; it was valid only within the Temple.

(4) In addition to loans in the form of token money (and token seals) being offered as outlined in (3) above, I also propose for consideration that the Temple of Jerusalem may have had another substantial source of real monies (i.e. coins of real intrinsic form) added to that outlined in (1) above from which loans may have been made available. Half-shekel tax monies of real intrinsic value destined for the Treasury – 'corban' monies – as we have seen consistently throughout the thesis may, on account of the money-changers services, have been diverted from the Treasury onto the money-changers tables. Such a large sum of monies (not being 'corban' or 'dedicated to God') could have been used as a source of credit for those seeking loans. Although such a reconstruction is probable, it does however - without corroborating evidence - remain inconclusive.

(5) There may be notable points of contact in this section of the thesis with certain passages in the Gospels where Jesus addresses the question of debt and its ill effects, with the Temple as the primary locus for such credit facilities.

## Chapter Four

### Interpreting the Cleansing of the Temple in Mark 11:15-19 in light of first-century Monetary Practice

#### Introduction

The previous chapter examined certain prominent features of the monetary background to the Temple in Jerusalem in first-century Judaism. Special emphasis was placed on the role of the money-changers and to the precise form of coinage they exchanged in the Temple. This chapter will study (1) the Cleansing of the Temple in Holy Week in light of this monetary background and (2) what, I will propose, are three related monetary events/discourses that immediately followed Jesus' actions in the Temple. These two areas of study will comprise the two sections into which chapter four is divided.

**Section one** will look at the account of Jesus' actions as described in the Gospel of Mark (Mk 11:15-19) when Jesus cleansed the Temple at the beginning of 'Holy Week'. This examination will follow the same format adopted in chapter one of the thesis, which examined recent historical-critical articles and commentaries on Jesus' actions in the Temple (see Appendix 2 where twelve reputable articles and commentaries are studied by way of a representative sample). Accordingly, it will begin by considering: (a) the extent to which Mark's account is historical under the heading "extent of historicity" (b) the reasons that motivated Jesus' actions in the Temple under the heading "reasons for Jesus' actions" and finally (c) I will offer some points of note from the Gospel account under the heading "points of note".

**Section two** will examine what I will propose are three related monetary events (one is a parable given by Jesus) that immediately followed Jesus' actions in the Temple. These three events/discourses are: (1) The Question of the payment of Tax to Caesar (Mt: 22:15-22; Mk: 12:13-17; Lk: 20:20-26) (2) The Widow's Two Mites, (Mk: 12:41-44; Lk: 21:1-4) and (3) The Parable of the Talents, (Mt: 25:14-30). Each of these events will be examined in turn for I will argue they have a vital *numismatic* or *monetary* connection with Jesus' actions in the Temple and serve to strengthen the particular interpretation proposed in this thesis.

## **Interpreting the Cleansing of the Temple in light of first-century Monetary Practice**

### **Section (1): The Cleansing of the Temple in Mark 11:15-19**

#### **(a) Extent of Historicity**

In keeping with the interpretation of selected early church theologians as presented in chapter one of the thesis, I propose that the Cleansing of the Temple described in Mark's Gospel was a catastrophic event of great magnitude. The actions of Jesus were a major disturbance in which the whole of the Court of the Gentiles was cleared and not just a small part; the buyers and sellers, the money-changers and the animals were all driven out of the Holy Place. Jesus' actions were on a dramatic scale and caused great concern for the religious and civil authorities. I will argue that there are good reasons to support the accusation made by Jesus against the practices adopted in the Temple described in Mk 11:17. One of the major problems posed by historical-critical scholarship in interpreting the Cleansing of the Temple in Mark in such a literal historical manner is that there appears to be no justifiable reason for Jesus' statement. The accusation that the Temple has been turned into a den of "robbers" (ληστών in Mk 11:17) is difficult to justify. How and where could theft on such a grand scale have been conducted? The money-changers' services and the business activity in the Court of the Gentiles were, according to several scholars (as was seen in chapter one of the thesis), necessary especially at Passover time. Scholars have, therefore, posed a legitimate question for those reading the account at face value: "What was the cause of Jesus' indignation as portrayed in the Gospels?" "What was happening in the Temple that demanded such a dramatic response on the part of Jesus?" A legitimate reason must be established for his actions. If not, the literal-historical interpretation of the Gospel account as outlined above may not appear as credible. This leads us to the second sub-heading, the proposed reasons for Jesus' actions in the Temple.

#### **(b) Reasons for Jesus' actions**

I argue that in addition to the spiritual reasons for his Cleansing of the Temple, the main motivation for Jesus' actions was the introduction of the money-changers into the Temple and the precise form of coinage they were offering in exchange there. Contrary to what is generally assumed, the money-changers had no positive role to play; their presence in the Temple – I

propose - was not necessary.<sup>1</sup> Their introduction into the Temple, in fact, may have been quite recent and may even have taken place at the beginning of Jesus' three years of Public Ministry. When Jesus stated: "Is it not written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations'? But you have made it a den of robbers" (Mk: 11:17), the theft he was primarily referring to was not so much from the pilgrim Jew by way of inflated animal prices or dishonest trade (as recent historical-critical scholarship has rightly pointed out)<sup>2</sup>, but, rather, from the Treasury into which the pilgrims deposited their offerings. The Treasury – the domain of God – was being stolen from. The revenue that God was to receive in the Temple (and those who might benefit from its charitable programme)<sup>3</sup> was greatly, if not totally, depleted. This theft, I propose, was accomplished by the subtle manner in which the money-changers were introduced into the Temple and, in particular, through the precise coinage they were offering in exchange there. This coinage was merely one of token value.<sup>4</sup> It contained nothing of precious metal content, such as was normal and intrinsic to all other coinage at that time.<sup>5</sup> When

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<sup>1</sup> As was seen in chapter one of the thesis, it is frequently proposed as a serious objection to the historicity of the Cleansing of the Temple that Jesus would not have cast out the money-changers from the Temple, for they - according to the same scholarship - provided a necessary service in the procurement of the required daily sacrifices and ritual life of the Temple. That the money-changers performed a necessary role in the Temple has been challenged in this thesis where, I propose, such an assumption is unsubstantiated. It is proposed in this study that Jesus, as a faithful Jew, was not opposed to the required sacrifices in the Temple but rather to the unlawful and dishonest activity of the money-changers whose services had *only recently* been introduced into the Temple. The nearly universal assumption that the services of the money-changers were necessary for the ritual life of the Temple (in order to change 'idolatrous coins' bearing offensive images for that of an acceptable kind) has been challenged, as has also been the assumption that the money-changers themselves were profiting from dishonest practice.

<sup>2</sup> See chapter one and accompanying Appendix 2 to the chapter.

<sup>3</sup> See the sub-section in chapter three of the thesis entitled the "Chamber of Secret Gifts" and the charitable outreach of the Temple.

<sup>4</sup> The 'nummularii', operating outside the Temple in the time of Jesus, could not have offered token coinage as such 'money' would simply not have had any purchasing power in everyday exchange. In order for an exchange to take place in everyday commercial life, coins with real intrinsic value (typically gold and silver, or, for items of minimal value, officially recognised copper coins) would have to be used. Simply put, the exchange of token money for something of value (for eg. animals, food, clothing etc) would have been tantamount to engaging in a form of theft. In order for an exchange to take place in the time of Jesus, one item of value (i.e. silver or gold in the form of coinage) was exchanged for another (an animal, shoes, clothing etc). There was, I propose, only one place where this principle did not apply and, for a restricted period of time only, (i.e. from the beginning of Jesus' Public Ministry up to the outbreak of the Jewish-Roman War, i.e. 27-66 C.E.) - the Temple of Jerusalem. During this time token money was used in the Temple.

<sup>5</sup> Coins, in Jesus' time (with the exception, I propose, of the Temple coinage), possessed real intrinsic value – gold or silver for coins of considerable value and copper for coinage of 'small change'. It was because of their intrinsic value that they could be used outside in exchange. Token coinage could not – and would not - be used in everyday circulation. This is somewhat difficult for us to conceptualise today, we who live in a world dominated by the use of token money. The practice of the 'debasement of coinage' – the removal of the precious metal content, either silver or gold, from a coin and its replacement with that of a cheaper alloy – was relatively unknown in early first-century Judaism. It was only later in the Roman era, when the Roman treasury was in



pilgrims, therefore, entered the Temple to pay the half-shekel tax, they were required first to go to the money-changers and exchange the coins they brought in (typically the Tyrian silver coins recommended in the Talmud or, maybe even, the Roman denarii or Greek staters) for the token coins the money-changers offered in exchange. It was these token coins which the pilgrims received that were deposited in the Treasury. The coins of real intrinsic value remained behind on the money-changers' tables. Resting on the money-changers' tables and not being deposited in the Treasury this coinage could be spent at the discretion of the Temple authorities for it was no longer strictly 'corban' or 'dedicated to God'. This practice, I suggest, was introduced into the Temple for what might be described as 'expedient' or 'opportune' reasons pertaining to (a) the security of the Temple Treasury so often plundered by foreign powers<sup>6</sup> (b) the making available of monies for those seeking loans<sup>7</sup> and (c) the opportunity it offered the Jewish authorities of securing funds to put to 'profane' use, particularly that of funding the first-century Judaic hope of achieving political independence from Rome.<sup>8</sup> It was therefore

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need of funds – particularly in times of war, that this practice was introduced in order to multiply the quantity of coinage (largely denarii) in circulation.

<sup>6</sup> As outlined earlier in (footnote 53 of) chapter two of the thesis, the Temple had been plundered on several occasions with large sums of money stolen from the Treasury.

<sup>7</sup> I proposed for consideration in chapter three that monies for such loans may have been provided from the coins of real intrinsic value paid by pilgrims for the payment of the annual Temple tax (and other mandatory payments) which – on account of the money-changers introduction - had been diverted from the Treasury of the Temple onto the money-changers' tables. See section three of chapter three under the heading "the Temple as Bank".

<sup>8</sup> As mentioned earlier in chapter two large deposits of money appear to have accumulated and remained "static" in the Temple Treasury. By introducing the money-changers and their coinage into the Temple this pile-up of static wealth would have been averted and such monies given an opportune outlet. Monies originally destined for the Treasury now rested on the money-changers' tables. Being no longer 'corban' or 'dedicated to God' such funds could be used at the discretion of the Temple authorities and put to 'profane' use. For eg, St Jerome noted how the Temple authorities "convert[ed] the money which was given for the use of the Temple to the purchase of a lie [i.e. it was given to the Roman soldiers to say that Jesus' body had been stolen], as before they had given thirty pieces of silver to the traitor Judas" (Thomas Aquinas quoting Jerome: *Catena Aurea: Gospel of Matthew Ch: 27*). Again, according to the *Encyclopedia of the Historical Jesus*, Pilate paid "for the building of an aqueduct for Jerusalem using money from the Temple treasury....Pilate presumably had the permission of Caiaphas and the Temple authorities as for the use of such funds" (by Craig Evans, New York; Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group, 2008, 458). Other examples could also be given. In this connection, I earlier proposed in chapter two another possible outlet for such Temple funds. Jewish silver coins minted at the beginning of the Jewish-Roman War in 66 CE and bearing the inscription "shekel of Israel" and "Jerusalem the Holy" may have been funded from silver deposits originally destined for the Temple Treasury. The issue of such coins was a declaration of political independence from Rome. But who or what was their minting authority? It was suggested as a likely consideration that the rebels (with the consent of the Temple authorities in support of their cause), not having silver deposits with which to mint coins, re-struck coins originally destined for the Temple-Treasury with this political objective in mind. In an "overview of the results of various investigations" conducted in his book *Jewish Coinage during the First Revolt against Rome, 66-73 CE* (Tel Aviv, Archaeological Center Publications, 2017) which was posted online by the author Robert Deutsch on 17<sup>th</sup> Jan 2018 (<https://coinsweekly.com/the-coinage-of-the-first-jewish-revolt-against-rome/>), the author proposes the "high priesthood or the Temple as an institution" as the most likely candidate for "the minting authority" of the coins. He writes: "In the beginning [i.e. of his research] the minting authority question has been addressed, since

supported, I propose, not only by the religious authorities of the Temple, but also by the great majority of Jesus' Jewish contemporaries living under the yoke of the Roman Empire.

In addition to this theft from the Treasury of the Temple that took place as a consequence of the introduction of the money-changers' services, the money-changers also apparently assisted in the offering of easy and readily available (token) credit to those who came: (a) to pay the half-shekel tax<sup>9</sup> and (b) to purchase sacrifices in the Temple<sup>10</sup>. Although Jesus may not have objected to the 'necessary trade' in animals for sacrifice that would have developed in or around the Holy Place, as E. P. Sanders, Jacob Neusner and other scholars have recently pointed out,<sup>11</sup> he, I propose, would not have condoned the growth in debt that arose in the Temple as a consequence of the easy availability of (token) credit made possible by the introduction of the money-changers' exchange<sup>12</sup> – a source of credit hitherto unknown in the Greco-Roman world.

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all the coins minted by the rebels during the revolt lack any name or institution responsible for the issue. A possible answer to the question is offered by examining the iconography and the slogans. The pattern depicted on the reverse of the silver coins, the shekels and the half-shekels, is a man-made staff, rather than a branch with three pomegranates, as generally accepted in the past. Such an artifact matches a sacred object, a staff used by the high-priests in the Temple, and explains its appearance on the silver coins. Therefore, the staff is likely to represent the minting authority, which is the high priesthood or the Temple as an institution."

<sup>9</sup> The "pledges" outlined in the Mishna (m.Shekalim 1:3,5), as was earlier seen in chapter three, were pledges of future payment of the half-shekel Temple-tax made by pilgrims who did not – or could not - pay the tax when it was due. 'Credit' was given to those unable to pay (i.e. they received from the money-changers the exchange coinage, Tosefta Shekalim 1:16; this coinage, I propose, was merely token coinage) and 'pledges' or 'promises to pay' received. These pledges were most likely secured either in (a) the form of some hold on existing property in lieu of non-payment of the tax or (b) the promise of payment from the harvest of crops of future produce.

<sup>10</sup> In m.Shekalim 5, as was earlier seen in chapter three, various officers are named who had charge of the token "seals" which pilgrims had to acquire before purchasing an animal for sacrifice in the Temple. These seals were purchased by pilgrims from the designated officers. Although not mentioned, it is likely that these officers who offered token seals for the purchase of animals also functioned as money-changers in the Temple when - at Passover time - they offered token coins in exchange with pilgrims who came to pay the half-shekel tax. As pilgrims were offered the facility of paying the Temple-tax by credit (by – as seen above - a "pledge" to pay), so, also, it is most likely pilgrims were offered the same credit facility for the purchase of animals for sacrifice.

<sup>11</sup> See various books and articles examined in chapter one of this thesis (and accompanying Appendix 2) among which are: E. P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, (Philadelphia, Fortress Press, 1985); Jacob Neusner, "Money-changers in the Temple: the Mishnah's Explanation," *NTS* 35 (1989), 287-290; David Seeley, "Jesus' Temple Act" *CBQ* 55.2 (1993), 263-283; Hans Dieter Betz, "Jesus and the Purity of the Temple (Mark 11:15-18) A Comparative Religion Approach," *JBL* 116.3 (1997), 455-472.

<sup>12</sup> Token coinage – as was earlier seen in chapter two - would have been easily made available, as it did not require the supply of the precious metals of silver and gold. As a consequence of this endless supply of credit, loans would readily have been made accessible to pilgrims. Of course, such (token) loans would only have been valid in the Temple.

This double condemnation of practices that had entered the Temple (a) the theft of the Temple tax (and other votive offerings) from the Treasury onto the money-changers' tables and (b) the increase in the levels of debt that had developed, were both made possible, I argue, as a result of the introduction of the money-changers' *token* money into the Temple.

### Points of Note

#### **1. The proposal that the money-changers of the Temple were offering token coinage best fits the known circumstances of first-century Judaism.**

In chapter two of the thesis particular attention was given to establishing the precise form of coinage offered by the money-changers in exchange in the Temple. There, I suggested, this coinage was merely that of copper (or more precisely bronze) money which functioned as a form of token coinage in the Temple. This reconstruction, I went on to propose in chapters two and three, is that which best fits the monetary world surrounding early to middle first-century Judaism (i.e. the time of Jesus), especially with respect to: (a) the different forms of coinage in use at that time both in the Temple and in general society (b) the Greek terms used in the Gospels for (i) the money-changers in the Temple and (ii) the precise form of coinage deposited in the Treasury by pilgrims when paying the half-shekel tax (c) the content of certain passages of Mishna-Shekalim and (d) the Temple's functioning as a Bank. Combining this monetary background with the writings of the Early Church Fathers, particularly those of Origen of Alexandria,<sup>13</sup> I propose that the use of token coinage in the Temple is an accurate and true description of the coins that were offered by the money-changers in exchange in the time of Jesus. All other reconstructions are fraught with problems, not least of which is the consideration as to where the Temple authorities would have found sufficient silver deposits from which to issue such a quantity of coins. All too easily - we might assume today - the Temple authorities were able to mint their own (silver) coins when no such supply of precious silver metal was available to them. This is somewhat difficult for readers of the 21<sup>st</sup> century to appreciate, we who live in a world dominated by the use of token money which supply can so easily be increased as witnessed in several countries adopting the monetary practice of

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<sup>13</sup> When commenting on the money-changers' coinage in his *Commentary on John's Gospel*, Origen of Alexandria effectively stated that such coinage was merely of token value. In his Commentary he wrote that the Temple coinage was "spurious money"...."small change"...."cheap worthless coinage"...."worth nothing"....and money "which was their own"? Origen's comments are important due (a) to their relatively early testimony (early 3<sup>rd</sup> cent) and (b) to his thorough and extensive rabbinical research.

‘Quantitative Easing’. We live in a world devoid of money (coins) of real intrinsic value. Money in the time of Jesus was based upon coins of real value; the use of token money in everyday exchange was unknown at that time. In order to mint coins the rulers of different lands needed a plentiful supply of precious metals. As mentioned above, it is difficult for us to grasp this fundamental point in the economy of first-century Judaism, but it is something we must do if we are to appreciate the very conditions that Jesus addressed when he entered his “father’s house”.

**2. The reservations posed by historical critical scholars with respect to what they propose was ‘the essential role’ of the money-changers are addressed.**

In light of this monetary background, I would argue that the reservations posed by recent scholarship with respect to the Gospels depiction of Jesus’ actions in the Temple may be credibly addressed. In particular, one of the problems often posed by scholars rejecting the traditional explanations for Jesus’ actions must be singled out for attention. That is, what is suggested as, the *necessary* operations of the money-changers in the Temple. Scholars – as was seen in chapter one - ask the question: “Would Jesus have been likely to stop the exchange operations of the money-changers, thereby bringing an end to the sacrifices and other ritual practices necessary for the spiritual life of the Temple?” It is frequently proposed that “knowing how essential their services were, Jesus would not have cast out the money-changers from the Temple”. In response, I propose that Jesus, as a faithful Jew, was not opposed to the required sacrifices in the Temple but rather to the unlawful and dishonest activities of the money-changers whose services had *only recently* been introduced into the Temple. The nearly universal assumption that the services of the money-changers were necessary for the ritual life of the Temple (in order to change ‘idolatrous coins’ bearing offensive images for that of an acceptable kind) is challenged, as is also the unwarranted assumption that the money-changers *themselves* were profiting from dishonest practice.

**3. Common ‘problematic questions’ with respect to a literal reading of the Gospel account of Mark may be answered.**

Certain questions typically posed by scholars make the literal features described by Mark difficult to reconcile with the known history of the time and have even prompted some scholars

to adopt a non-historical interpretation of his account.<sup>14</sup> Some such historical-critical questions – as were seen in chapter one - are: How could one person have accomplished such a large scale ‘cleansing’ as presented in the Gospel texts? Could Jesus have cleared the whole of the Court of the Gentiles – removing from within *all* the moneychangers and *all* the buyers and sellers and their animals? Where were the Levitical guards of the Temple and the Roman soldiers of the Fortress Antonio and why was Jesus simply not stopped? For example, as was earlier seen, Wesley Buchanan wonders “how such an event as this could have happened in the temple area in exactly the way in which it has been reported [i.e. in Mark’s Gospel]” (p. 281). He continues: “It is not likely that the nation’s treasury and best fortress was left without military guard. Would military policemen, without reacting, allow a man or a group of men to come into this strategic, defended area and start an upheaval which involved driving people out of the building and overturning the furniture? With the long history of conflict associated with feasts at Jerusalem against which Rome was well prepared, how could Jesus have been allowed to have walked away unmolested after this turmoil had taken place (Mark 11. 19)?”<sup>15</sup>

As discussed in chapter one, Jerome (and several of the Early Church Fathers) – reading the Gospel accounts in a literal-historical manner - described the Cleansing of the Temple as Jesus’ “most wonderful.... miracle” by which so “great a multitude” was cast out. However, the above questions often raised in more recent historical-critical scholarship make such a literal reading seem unrealistic given the historical reconstruction such scholars propose. Why would Jesus have undertaken such drastic actions and why was he not stopped? In light of the monetary

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<sup>14</sup> See some such questions posed leading to a non-historical interpretation of Mark’s account were examined in chapter one of the thesis by (a) George W. Buchanan, “Symbolic Money-Changers in the Temple?,” *NTS* 37 (1991), 280-289 and (b) David Seeley, “Jesus’ Temple Act,” *CBQ* 55.2 (1993), 263-283. Seeley writes: Because certain problems arise in the process of placing the temple act in a historical context, the possibility will be entertained that this act is simply a literary creation by Mark. This possibility will, in the end, be preferred as manifesting the fewest difficulties of interpretation.” (263-264). Burton L. Mack also suggests that Mark’s account is a-historical. He writes: “The temple act cannot be historical. If one deletes from the story those themes essential to the Markan plots, there is nothing left over for historical reminiscence. The anti-temple theme is clearly Markan and the reasons for it can be clearly explained. The lack of any evidence for an anti-temple attitude in the Jesus and Christ traditions prior to Mark fits with the incredible lack of incidence in the story itself. Nothing happens. Even the chief priests overhear his ‘instruction’ and do nothing. The conclusion must be that the temple act is a Markan fabrication.” *A Myth of Innocence: Mark and Christian Origins* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1991), 292. Noting critics of Mark’s account who question whether the “Temple incident.... happened at all”, Paula Fredriksen writes: “In research on the historical Jesus, however, no single consensus interpretation ever commands 100 percent of the scholarly opinion. . . . Other critics, rightly observing the crucial role played by the Temple incident in Mark’s rendition of Jesus’ story — without it, Mark would have difficulty bringing Jesus to the attention of the priests — question whether it ever happened at all. Actual history rarely obliges narrative plotting so exactly: Perhaps the whole scene is Mark’s invention.” *Jesus of Nazareth King of the Jews* (New York: Vintage, 2000), 210

<sup>15</sup> George W. Buchanan, “Symbolic Money-Changers in the Temple?,” *NTS* 37 (1991), 281-282

background presented in chapters two and three of the thesis (particularly noting the use of token money in the Temple), I propose such objections may be credibly addressed and allow the reader have confidence in the literal features described in the Gospels. There was a justifiable reason for the actions undertaken by Jesus, actions which were on a grand-scale. Theft had been introduced into the Temple (theft from the Treasury) which was clearly recognized and understood by Jesus' contemporaries. Although there may have been public support for the introduction of the money-changers in the Temple and expedient reasons offered for the token coinage used in exchange,<sup>16</sup> this theft could not have been allowed to continue.

#### **4. The Greek term ληστης in Mk 11:17 is justified.**

Historical-critical scholars have justifiably asked the question: If Jesus was accusing the traders and money-changers of *theft* in the Temple, would the evangelist's reference in Mk 11:17 - based on Jesus' citation of Jeremiah 7:11 - to ληστης (a Gk term used for 'brigand', 'bandit' or 'those engaged in theft of a serious nature') rather than κλέπτης ('thief') have been understood? What was taking place in the Temple that would have justified the use of such a term? It has, as was earlier seen according to such scholarship, a more likely later *Sitz im Leben* in 66-70 C.E. when the zealots seized controlled the Temple.<sup>17</sup> It is therefore suggested as unlikely that Jesus uttered the words attributed to him in Mk 11:17. In response to such criticism, I propose that when Jesus criticised the Temple personnel with the words "but you have made it a den of robbers (ληστων)," the theft he was referring to was not so much from the pilgrim Jew by way of inflated animal prices or unfair exchange but rather from the Treasury into which the pilgrims deposited their offerings. The Treasury - the domain of God - was being stolen from. This theft was not sporadic or isolated at the whim of a money-changer or trader but was organised, systematic, on a grand-scale and authorised by the religious authorities. It was accomplished - as has repeatedly been seen - by the subtle manner in which

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<sup>16</sup> See earlier when outlining the "reasons" for Jesus' actions in the Temple at the beginning of this chapter. This practice, I suggested, may have been introduced into the Temple for justifiable reasons pertaining to (a) the security of the Temple Treasury so often plundered by foreign powers (b) the possibility of acquiring funds for the provision of loans and (c) the opportunity it offered the Jewish authorities of securing funds to put to 'profane' use, particularly that of funding the first-century Judaic hope of achieving political independence from Rome.

<sup>17</sup> See for example: George W. Buchanan, "Symbolic Money-Changers in the Temple?," *NTS* 37 (1991), 280-289 [287], and P. M. Casey, "Culture and Historicity: the Cleansing of the Temple," *CBQ* 59 (1997), 306-332 [318].

the money-changers were introduced into the Temple and the particular coinage they were offering to pilgrims by way of exchange. In this sense, I propose, the term ληστῶν has a precise and accurate literal-historical setting.

### **5. Easy availability of Credit.**

In addition to this theft from the Treasury of the Temple that had entered the Sanctuary, the introduction of the money-changers' token exchange also offered – as was earlier seen in chapter three - easy and readily available credit to those who came: (i) to pay their half-shekel payment (ii) to offer sacrifice in the Temple and also (iii) to those seeking loans. Although Jesus would not have objected to the payment of the annual half-shekel tax and/or the 'necessary trade' in animals for sacrifice that would have developed in or around the Temple, as E. P. Sanders, Jacob Neusner and other scholars have pointed out, he, I propose, would not have condoned the explosion of trade that had developed in the Temple because of this easy availability of credit – a source of credit hitherto unknown in the Greco-Roman world. Coupled with the theft of real intrinsic monies from the Treasury following the introduction of the money-changers' token coinage, the serious consequences arising from this easy availability of credit in the Temple (particularly the [postponed] problems for Jewish people – especially those who were poor - associated with debt repayments) were legitimate reasons for the actions undertaken by Jesus in the Temple.

### **6. Isaiah 56:7 and Jeremiah 7:11: ““Is it not written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations'? But you have made it a den of robbers”.” (Mk 11:17)**

Having undertaken his actions in the Temple, Jesus recalls two prophetic statements made by the prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah which, combining together, he sees fulfilled in the very conditions he addresses in the Temple. ““Is it not written”, Jesus says, “My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations? But you have made it a den of robbers”.” (Mk 11:17)

The first of these prophecies is the 'universalist vision' that Isaiah sees for the Temple (Isa 56:7, “for my house will be a house of prayer for all the peoples”), where all the nations are envisioned by Isaiah as welcomed into the house of God to worship the Lord. The actions that Jesus undertook in the Temple took place in the busy and overcrowded Court of the Gentiles,

the very place where the nations were to be made welcome. The “universalist vision” that Isaiah prophesied is that also which Jesus advocates for the Temple. This, however, was not being sought after by the Temple authorities.<sup>18</sup> The Temple was not tending towards being “inclusive” but rather was becoming a house that pointed towards a “separatist understanding of Israel’s future identity”.<sup>19</sup>

The second prophecy that Jesus recalls is that of Jeremiah which warns how God is “not blind” (Jer 7:11) when his house, even though it is “the sanctuary of Yahweh” (Jer 7:4), has become a “den of robbers” (Jer 7:11). The presumptuous combination of worship and theft will be humbled. According to Mark 11:17, the very conditions which Jeremiah addressed are, apparently, being repeated in Jesus own time. These conditions – as in the days of Jeremiah - would eventually lead to the Temple’s destruction. Pope Benedict writes: “In the combination of worship and trade, which Jesus denounces, he evidently sees the situation of Jeremiah’s time repeating itself .... But neither Jeremiah nor Jesus is responsible for destroying the Temple: both, through their passion indicate who and what it is that truly destroys the Temple.”<sup>20</sup>

## 7. The Greek term ἐκβάλλειν in Mk 11:15.

The choice of the term “ἐκβάλλειν” (ἐκβάλλω) by the evangelist may be deliberate. It may indicate that by his actions of casting out novel economic practices that had entered the Temple,

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<sup>18</sup> Writing of this “universalist vision” which Jesus has for the Temple, Pope Benedict writes: “The first is the universalist vision of the Prophet Isaiah (56:7) of a future in which all peoples come together in the house of God to worship the Lord as the one God. In the layout of the Temple, the vast Court of the Gentiles in which this whole episode takes place is the open space to which the whole world is invited, in order to pray there to the one God. Jesus’ action underlies this profound openness of expectation which animated Israel’s faith. Even if Jesus consciously limits his own ministry to Israel, he still embodies the universalist tendency to open Israel in such a way that all can recognise in its God the one God common to the whole world,” *Jesus of Nazareth* (London, New York and Berlin; Bloomsbury, 2011, vol 2, 17).

<sup>19</sup> This “separatist understanding of Israel’s future identity” promoted at that time in certain Jewish quarters and its intense opposition to that vision inspired by Jesus, is described in one recent book where the authors write: “In addition to his active table fellowship, Jesus preached his inclusive Gospel in synagogues and in the temple of Jerusalem. He took his agenda for transformation into the very places where the renewal movement of some religious leaders attempted to gain a following for a separatist understanding of Israel’s future identity..... The authors of Matthew, Mark, and Luke all included Jesus quoting from the prophet Isaiah (Isa 56:7) in their retelling. Only Mark included the entire quote. Jesus declared, ‘My house shall be a house of prayer for all the nations?’” (Mk 11;17). The author of Mark understood that the last four words of that quote from Isaiah – “for all the nations” – summed up what caused the religious leaders to fear Jesus and look for a way to kill him (Mk 11:18).” (Curtiss Paul DeYoung, Michael O. Emerson, George Yancey, Karen Chai Kim: *United by Faith – the Multi-racial Congregation as an Answer to the Problem of Race*, Oxford and New York; Oxford University Press, 2003, 19).

<sup>20</sup> Pope Benedict, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 2.20



Jesus was at the same time expelling or *exorcising* the Temple of evil spirits which had taken residence within.<sup>21</sup> The same Greek term is often used throughout Mark's Gospel for casting out evil spirits. There may be a connection here with an earlier parable given by Jesus in Mt 12:43-45. Addressing "the scribes and Pharisees" (Mt 12:38), Jesus spoke of "an unclean spirit" returning to "the house" from which it came but finding it "swept and put in order" (Mt 12: 44, possibly a reference to an earlier cleansing of the Temple), returns with "seven other spirits" and "set up house there" (Mt 12:45). Jesus finishes the parable stating: "So it will be also with this evil generation" (Mt 12:45).

## **Interpreting the Cleansing of the Temple in in Mark 11:15-19 in light of first-century Monetary Practice**

### **Section (2): The Contextual Significance of Events and Dialogues that follow Jesus' actions in the Temple**

Several events and discourses follow on from Jesus' actions in the Temple, which, I propose, are not only chronologically but are also *monetarily* related to the cleansing event. Three *monetary* passages are singled out for special attention as I will argue they have a vital *numismatic* or *monetary* connection with Jesus' actions and strengthen the particular interpretation suggested in this thesis. They are: (1) The Question of the payment of Tax to Caesar (Mt: 22:15-22; Mk: 12:13-17; Lk: 20:20-26) (2) The Widow's Two Mites (Mk: 12:41-44; Lk: 21:1-4) and (3) The Parable of the Talents<sup>22</sup> (Mt: 25:14-30). Of these three events, the event known as the Widow's Mites will receive special attention, for, I will propose, there may be direct evidence in the account described by Mark for the exchange of token coinage by the

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<sup>21</sup> Of the sixteen times Mark uses the Greek verb ἐκβάλλω, ten describe the casting out of demons (1:34, 1:39, 3:15, 3:22, 3:23, 6:13, 7:26, 9:18, 9:28, 9:38). Linking the exorcism that Jesus refers to in the 'Parable of the Return of the Evil Spirit to the House' with the Temple in Jerusalem, N. T. Wright writes: "But - this is the force of the strange saying - the problem is that Israel has attempted to get rid of the demon before and has not succeeded. It is difficult to be sure what is specifically referred to here but the thrust of the comment should not be in doubt. The mention of 'the house' may well be a clue that Jesus had in mind once more Israel's central institution and symbol, the Temple. There would then be a link to another cryptic saying: 'Your house is left to you desolate'. The previous 'exorcism' of Israel presumably refers to one or other of the reform or revolutionary movements..." in *Jesus and the Victory of God - Christian Origins and the Question of God* (London; SPCK, 1996, vol 2, 456).

<sup>22</sup> Luke has a similar parable in his Gospel (often called the 'Parable of the Pounds', Lk: 19:12-27). I propose that these two parables were spoken on two different occasions, the first (that recorded in Luke) before, and the second (that recorded in Matthew) after, the Cleansing of the Temple. Both, however, appear to relate to the same monetary theme.

money-changers in the Temple. As the monetary link between these three events and the Cleansing of the Temple has not – it seems - been investigated at any great length in commentaries/articles on Jesus' actions in the Temple to date, there will, therefore, be little or no opportunity for making references to this subject. What will follow therefore will be a simple presentation of the monetary link I propose between the Cleansing of the Temple and the three events that appear in the Gospel narrative during Holy Week, all of which took place in close proximity with Jesus' actions in the Holy Place.<sup>23</sup>

### **Three Related Monetary Passages during Holy Week**

#### **(1) Question of the Payment of Tax to Caesar**

##### **Mk 12:13-17<sup>24</sup>**

Following the chronology presented in Mark's Gospel (Mk 11:20, 12:13) this event took place on the day after Jesus cleansed the Temple. A trap is carefully laid against Jesus by the Pharisees and the Herodians.<sup>25</sup> In addition to the political implications facing Jesus in this event,<sup>26</sup> I also suggest that there are important *monetary* implications which tie the sub-currents

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<sup>23</sup> Following the traditional chronology adopted by Augustine and assuming the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem on a Sunday, the chronological time-line of these three events at the beginning of Holy Week is as follows: **Sunday**: Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem; **Monday**: Cleansing of the Temple **Tuesday**: Question of the Payment of Tax to Caesar; The Widow's Mites; The Parable of the Talents. Augustine, in his *Harmony of the Gospels* 2.67-80, collated the various events and discourses in the four Gospels recounting the life and ministry of Jesus, reconciled any apparently discrepant details and finished by outlining what he considered to be the true order of events.

<sup>24</sup> "Next day they sent to him some Pharisees and some Herodians to catch him out in what he had said. These came and said to him, 'Master, we know you are an honest man, that you are not afraid of anyone, because a man's rank means nothing to you, and that you teach the way of God in all honesty. Is it permissible to pay taxes to Caesar or not? Should we pay, yes or no? Seeing through their hypocrisy he said to them, 'Why do you set this trap for me? Hand me a denarius and let me see it.' They handed him one and he said, 'Whose head is this? Whose name?' 'Caesar's' they told him. Jesus said to them, 'Give back to Caesar what belongs to Caesar – and to God what belongs to God.' This reply took them completely by surprise." (Mk 12:13-17).

<sup>25</sup> N. H. Taylor, notes how in "the Second Gospel" this was not the first trap that was set against Jesus by the Pharisees and Herodians, for, earlier in his Gospel, Mark notes how they (i.e. the Pharisees and Herodians) similarly conspired "as to how they might destroy him" (Mk 3:6). N. H. Taylor, "Herodians and Pharisees: The Historical and Political Context of Mark 3:6; 8:15; 12:13-17," *Neotestamentica* 34:2 (2000), 300.

<sup>26</sup> Some of the Early Church Fathers, expressed the political dilemma facing Jesus in the following terms: The Pharisees were not in favour of paying tribute to Caesar, whereas, the Herodians approved the legislation. The question, therefore, "has a precipice on both sides" (Theophilus). If Jesus answers 'yes' to the question of the payment of tribute to Caesar he will have the Pharisees and Jewish people to fear; if he answers 'no', the Herodians will report him to the Roman authorities on charges of political insurrection. (Thomas Aquinas quoting Jerome, Bede, Theophilus and John Chrysostom *Catena Aurea: Gospel of Matthew: 22:15-22 and the Gospel of Mark 12:13-17*). More recently, John Paul Heil reconstructs the "treacherous dilemma" facing Jesus. He writes: "Presenting Jesus with an embarrassing and treacherous dilemma, similar to the one with which he previously denigrated the authority of the chief priests, scribes and elders (Mk 11:27-33), the Pharisees and Herodians spring their trap by asking "whether it is lawful", that is, God's will or the "way of God", to pay the "census tax", the Roman tax assessed on the basis of the census of people and property and especially hated by

of this dialogue with what happened in the Temple on the previous day. When Jesus answered the religious authorities, “Give back to Caesar what belongs to Caesar – and to God what belongs to God” (Mk 12:17), there is an *economic* dimension to his reply which is directly related to what was happening in the Holy Place.<sup>27</sup> The question that was brought to Jesus is whether it is lawful to pay taxes to Caesar or not. This, I argue, is an abbreviated form of the question which if presented in its completed form might read as follows: “If you are condemning the manner in which *we pay the half-shekel tax in the Temple* (as witnessed by your actions in the Temple) should we then pay taxes to Caesar or not?” The tension surrounding this question is palpable.<sup>28</sup> In Jesus’ reply there is an accusation (albeit veiled in careful terms) directed against those bringing the politically-charged question concerning the payment of tribute to Caesar *that God was not receiving due tribute in the Treasury*. Jesus answers that just as Caesar should receive the tribute laid down in law by their Roman overseers, so also God should receive the half-shekel tax donated by Jewish pilgrims to the Temple Treasury. “Give back to Caesar what belongs to Caesar – *and to God what belongs to God*” (Mk 12:17). As Caesar is paid with coins of real value so also should it be for God. The revenue which the Treasury received was greatly depleted as a consequence of the introduction of the money-changers (and their coinage) into the Temple. The coins with real value remained behind on their tables. The coins of token value were deposited in the Treasury. There may

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the Jews, to “Caesar”, the Roman emperor, or not..... The suspense of the dilemma is whether Jesus will teach payment of the tax and thus open himself up to a charge by his fellow Jews of thus respecting the human status of the Roman emperor over the “way of God” or whether he will teach non-payment of the tax, upholding God’s authority but risking the dangerous consequences of refusing to respect the political authority of the Roman emperor and government (Mk 12:14).” *The Gospel of Mark as a Model for Action* (Eugene OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2001), 239.

<sup>27</sup> The Early Church Fathers (Theophilus, Pseudo-Jerome, Augustine and Tertullian) interpreted the statement of Jesus “Give back to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s” in a spiritual manner. They focused on the image imprinted on the coin and, by implication, God’s image ‘stamped’ on the believer. For as Caesar’s image is engraved on the coin so also is the “light of [God’s] countenance” on the believer (Pseudo-Jerome); God’s image is stamped on “His own” (Theophilus). See, Theophilus and Pseudo-Jerome: Thomas Aquinas citing Theophilus and Pseudo-Jerome in his *Catena Aurea: Gospel of Mark 12:13-17*; Augustine: *Sermons on the New Testament: Sermon 43 and Tractate on John 40:9*; Tertullian: *Apology 30*

<sup>28</sup> The same tension, I propose, may also evidenced in a “meeting” urgently convened by the “chief priests and Pharisees” after the raising of Lazarus from the dead. This meeting is recorded in Jn 11:45-54 just prior to Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem where the evangelist notes that “many of the Jews who ....had seen what he had done had come to believe in him” (Jn 11:45). During the meeting the fears raised concerning the effect of Jesus’ teaching were encapsulated in the following terms: “If we let him go on like this way everybody will believe in him, and the Romans will come and destroy the Holy Place and our nation” (Jn 11:46). This reaction and response to Jesus’ teaching is striking and somewhat difficult to understand. It appears disproportionate. Why, it might be asked, would the Romans come and destroy the Temple and the nation as a consequence of Jesus’ teaching? It may well be that the practices in the Temple – which Jesus was addressing and bringing to light - were a threat to Rome. The monies belonging to the Treasury of the Temple were now - on account of the money-changers’ activities - at the disposal of the Temple authorities. Such a diversion of funds from the Treasury should not be brought to the attention of the Roman authorities.

well also be a further hint of this theft from God in the two Greek verbs found in the Gospels, for the Pharisees and Herodians ask Jesus: “Is it permissible to pay (δοῦναι) taxes to Caesar, or not”, but Jesus replies “give back (ἀπόδοτε) therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and [ἀπόδοτε] to God the things that are God's”. The Greek verb ἀποδίδωμι has the force of not just paying tribute but of ‘returning something to its rightful owner’ or ‘giving back something that should not be in another person’s possession’.<sup>29</sup> This theft from the Treasury, I propose, is what Jesus was subtly referring to in his reply to their question.

## **Related Monetary Passages during Holy Week**

### **(2) The Widow’s Mites**

#### **Mk 12:41-44**

“And he sat down opposite the treasury, and he watched the multitude putting money into the treasury. Many rich people put in large sums. And a poor widow came and put in two copper coins, which make a penny. And he called his disciples to him and said to them, “This poor widow has contributed more than all those who are contributing to the treasury. For they all have contributed out of their abundance; but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, her whole living.” (Mark 12:41-44)

Again, following the chronology in Mark’s Gospel, this event – traditionally called “the Widow’s Mites” - took place on the day after Jesus cleansed the Temple. If Jesus was responsible for such a momentous course of actions on the day before, the fact that he is once again in the Temple (in the Court of Women, where the Treasury was located) gives added importance to this event. Certain details are recorded in Mark’s account, which are of considerable significance for this thesis. In particular, I will propose, when Jesus remarked that the poor widow “put in more than all those who contributed to the Treasury”, Jesus words – in addition to their spiritual significance<sup>30</sup> - are *literally* true. Her offering, her two small coins

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<sup>29</sup> See, F. F. Bruce, “Render Unto Caesar,” in *Jesus and the Politics of His Day*, (ed. Ernst Bammel and C. F. D. Moule; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 257.

<sup>30</sup> The poor widow is rightly seen as winning the approval of Jesus for giving more from the intentions of her heart than that of the others. Spiritually she gave more. She gave all she had, “her whole living”, even though in nominal terms it may have been small. The “rich people”, on the other hand, who put in “large sums”, might not have felt as much in terms of giving from the heart. However, in addition to this spiritual interpretation, the words of Jesus should also, I propose, be understood literally, for the poor widow *did in fact contribute more*

(in chapter two, it was mentioned as most likely that she put in two small Jewish perutahs) outweighed the contribution of all the others *in real value or objective worth*. All the others had put into the Treasury what the money-changers had given by way of exchange (i.e. token money) but the poor widow, having by-passed the money-changers, put in two small coins that were in use in every-day commercial exchange. That she did not put in what the money-changers offered by way of exchange in the Temple, I propose, is evidenced in three points of note found in Mark's account of her actions. Each of these points will be examined in turn. They are found in three distinct verses of the passage: (1) Mk 12:41, which tells how Jesus "watched the multitude putting" in "χαλκὸν" into "the treasury" (2) Mk 12:42, where the evangelist notes that the poor widow put in "two lepta" (ἔβαλεν λεπτὰ δύο) which he significantly adds were the equivalent of a "[Roman] Quadrans" (κοδράντης) and (3) Mk 12:44 in which the evangelist uses a curious phrase "ἐκ τοῦ περισσεύοντος" which can be translated in two ways, one of which I propose indicates that the widow by-passed the money-changers. Before each of these three points will be examined in turn, it is significant to note that in the two Gospels where the Widow's Mites is found<sup>31</sup> it is immediately followed by Jesus' Olivet discourse, in which Jesus makes the prophecy concerning the subsequent destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem. She apparently stands as a signal hope before the approaching doom.

### **(1) Mk 12:41 Jesus "watched the multitude putting" putting in "χαλκὸν" into "the treasury"**

"And he sat down opposite the treasury, and he watched the multitude putting money (χαλκὸν) into the treasury. Many rich people put in large sums."

It may be inferred from Mk 12:41 above that the Widow's offering was different from that of all the other pilgrims contributing to the Treasury. "The multitude" put in "χαλκὸν", which - as was seen in chapter three of the thesis - was copper or brass money.<sup>32</sup> This "money" which

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than all the others who put in large sums. In real terms her contribution outweighed that of the others. In order to explain this subtle irony it is necessary to consider what precisely the Jewish pilgrims were putting into the Treasury, *after* they had exchanged their currency with that of the moneychangers in the Temple.

<sup>31</sup> Mark 12:41-44 and Luke 21:1-4

<sup>32</sup> The Greek word "χαλκὸν", translated "money" in the RSV translation above, is literally 'copper' or 'copper money'. This restricted sense (i.e. copper money as distinct from other money forms - silver or gold) appears to be the intended sense of Mark, who, along with the other evangelists, ordinarily uses the term 'αργυριον' (lit. 'silver' but 'money in general') when general currency or general coinage is intended. This 'copper money'

they were putting into the Treasury was that which they had received from the moneychangers by way of exchange - the proposed copper or token coinage of the Temple. In the next verse we are told, “And many rich people put in a great deal”. The “great deal” which they contributed (the silver or gold coins they exchanged with the money-changers in the Temple) remained behind on the moneychangers’ tables. The widow, Mark specifically makes known in the next verse put in “two lepta”, which, although copper money (the two Jewish perutahs mentioned above), was unlike that of the Temple coinage for her coinage could be used outside the Holy Place in everyday circulation. They put in the Temple coinage, she does not. Not putting in the coinage of the Temple, she, it appears, by-passed the money-changers.

**(2) Mk 12:42: The poor widow put in two ‘lepta’ which the evangelist significantly adds were the equivalent of a ‘Roman Quadrans’**

The Widow’s Mites, as mentioned earlier, is recorded in two of the four Gospels, Mark 12:41-44 and Luke 21:1-4. Both evangelists record that the widow gave “two lepta” (λεπτὰ δύο) but only Mark adds something significant when he clarifies that these two lepta were the “the equivalent of the Roman Quadrans [κοδρόντης]”. (The RSV English translation is anachronistic where it reads that she “put in two copper coins, which makes a penny”). The Roman Quadrans – as was seen in chapter two - was the coin of lowest value according to the Roman table of values. As the Temple coinage was most likely scaled or measured according to the Roman Standard of coinage and because the Quadrans was the smallest coin in the Roman denomination, the widow, it appears, could not have exchanged her coins with the money-changers employed there. For, we are told, she deposited her *two* coins - which equalled that of the Quadrans, the smallest coin - into the Treasury. The poor widow evidently by-passed the money-changers, she did not exchange her coins with them. Although she could have exchanged her two small coins and receive the smallest coin by way of exchange, she did not do so. Who the poor widow was and why she apparently chose this course of action is not mentioned, but, it is interesting to note how Jesus (and Mark) knew the precise offering which she made. This might prompt the conclusion that she was known to Jesus and his disciples.

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which the rich pilgrims were depositing into the Treasury was the coinage which the money-changers in the Temple had earlier offered them by way of exchange. As mentioned before, Jerome translated this Greek term χαλκὸν, literally, as “*aes*”, in his Vulgate translation.

### (3) Mk 12:44: The translation of the Greek phrase “ἐκ τοῦ περισσεύοντος αὐτοῖς”

The third point, I propose, signalling the claim that the poor widow by-passed the money-changers is found in the Greek phrase “ἐκ τοῦ περισσεύοντος αὐτοῖς” in verse 44 of the passage. This phrase is translated into English in the RSV Bible as “out of their abundance” and similarly in other English translations.<sup>33</sup> However there is another possible translation of the Greek, which may directly tie this event with the money-changer’s exchange and with Jesus’ actions in the Temple. This, I propose, is made clear upon an examination of the Greek term “περισσεύοντος” used in the phrase.

The Meaning of περισσεύοντος.

The Greek word περισσεύοντος is a derivative of the verb περισσεύω. The verb περισσεύω, when used intransitively is translated according to various shades of meaning such as to: “be left over, be more than enough, abound, increase, overflow, exceed”;<sup>34</sup> when used in the transitive sense it means to: “cause to increase or abound, provide in abundance.”<sup>35</sup> περισσεύω (and its derivatives), in either the transitive or intransitive sense, always implies the sense of ‘being over and above that which is required or needed for use’. περισσεύοντος is a participle (a verbal adjective); it is present in tense, active in voice, singular in number, genitive in case and refers to a masculine or neuter noun. The phrase “out of their abundance”, as found in many English bibles, has been translated in the intransitive sense and might literally be translated as “out of that [i.e. the wealth] which is abounding to them.” However, there is another translation that is transitive in meaning, one which may translate better the intended sense of the evangelist. Before presenting this transitive translation there is one other

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<sup>33</sup> American Standard Version “of their superfluity”; King James Bible and Revised Standard Version “of their abundance”; The New International Version: the Holy Bible “out of their wealth”; Jerusalem Bible “out of the money they had over”; New American Standard Bible “out of their surplus”.

<sup>34</sup> *The Greek New Testament Dictionary* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.; ed. by B. Aland, K. Aland, M. Black, J. Karavidopoulos, C. M. Martini, B. M. Metzger, A Wikgren; Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft United Bible Societies, 1993), 141,

<sup>35</sup> *The Greek New Testament: Dictionary* (United Bible Societies, 1993), 141. For example, commenting on the use of the Greek verb περισσεύω in the transitive sense in 2 Cor 4:5, *A Grammatical Analysis of the Greek New Testament* writes: “περισσεύω aor. Subj. – εὐώ *abound, overflow*; in late Gk occasionally transitive *cause to abound*. This proposition allows of various translations: that grace, diffused among the many, may cause thanksgiving to overflow to the glory...;” or “that grace may increase and, by thanksgiving of the many, overflow to the glory...,” *A Grammatical Analysis of the Greek New Testament*. (5<sup>th</sup> ed.; Rome: Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1996), 542.

grammatical detail in the phrase that must be considered. This matter concerns the noun which *περισσεύοντος* refers to. Does the noun refer to a person, (place) or thing?"

The noun, which the participle *περισσεύοντος* refers to, is not specified in the sentence but is simply assumed. It is represented by the definite article *τοῦ*. In the RSV translation "out of their abundance" above, the noun represented by the word *τοῦ* is a thing, not a person. The literal translation might read as "out of" or "from the thing (i.e. the wealth or money) abounding to them." The sense of the participle is intransitive. This intransitive translation – as noted above - is the translation preferred in most English bibles. Although this translation is possible, it must be wondered why the evangelist would not simply have used the Greek noun, *περίσσευμα*, (lit. abundance) if this intransitive sense was his intention.

On the other hand, the participle may be read in the transitive sense (i.e. to cause to increase or abound, to make abundant or plentiful). In this scenario the noun which the participle qualifies may either be a person or a thing. If the latter, the phrase would accordingly read "from the thing (i.e. the token money) that is made plentiful to them"; if the former the phrase would read "from the person (i.e. the money-changer) making abundant (or making plentiful) to them." Both of these transitive readings above change the meaning of the passage considerably. The focus is placed on the money-changers in the Temple. The widow does not avail of their services; she does not use the coinage they were offering by way of exchange. All the others put into the Treasury that which was made plentiful to them – the token coinage of the money-changer - she, on the other hand, put in her two (small) "lepta".

Both the transitive and intransitive translations are possible. The translation according to the transitive sense, however, better explains how Jesus could easily distinguish the poor widow's offering from that of everyone else. As, it is proposed, she bypassed the moneychangers and went directly to the Treasury to deposit what she was giving, her offering would clearly have been recognized as being of a different kind and offered in a different manner from that of every other pilgrim. They all put in the token money of the money-changers, coins that could only be used in the Temple. She, on the other hand, offered coins of real value, however small, coins that could be used in exchange outside the Temple.



## Three Related Monetary Passages during Holy Week

### (3) The Parable of the Talents

**Mt 25:14-30**

Following the chronology in Matthew's Gospel (Mt 21:17-18) and assuming the Cleansing of the Temple took place on Monday, the Parable of the Talents (Mt 25:14-30) was taught by Jesus on Tuesday of Holy Week. According to Matthew's Gospel it follows Jesus' prophesy of the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple and the signs associated with the "coming of the Son of Man" (Mt 24:27). I propose that there may be an important connection between this parable and Jesus' actions in the Temple not only because of their close chronological link but also because they are both connected with the same theme – the correct use of money. And so, although there is a spiritual lesson to be found in the parable, its primary and initial lesson is connected with "the right use of monies".<sup>36</sup> In particular, I propose, there may be a connection between the reference made by Jesus in the parable to the servant who "hid his master's money [i.e. the monies of the Treasury]... in the ground" and the first-century Judaic practice of hiding large sums of money (gold and silver) in discreet places as revealed in the Copper Scroll. Although it is not certain whether the treasures of the Copper Scroll have any connection with Temple monies<sup>37</sup>, it may well have been the practice of removing monies from the Temple and

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<sup>36</sup> David Parton writes: "The question of the right use of monies has many answers.... The Christian Parable of the Talents suggests that a proper use of assets is not to bury them in the ground but to use them for growth...." *The Right Use of Money* (Bristol; Policy Press, 2004) 104. Although the parable literally addresses the issue of the correct use of money (as evidenced by the different actions of the three servants in the parable), scholars generally apply the parable allegorically with respect to the correct use of the "resources" and "gifts" that God has given us. Such allegorical interpretation is described by C. Blomberg who writes: "(1) Like the master, God entrusts all people with a portion of his resources, expecting them to act as good stewards of it. (2) Like the two good servants, God's people will be commended and rewarded when they have faithfully discharged that commission. (3) Like the wicked servant, those who fail to use the gifts God has given them for his service will be punished by separation from God and all things good," in *Interpreting the Parables* (2nd ed.; Downers Grove IL: IVP Academic, 2012), 271. R. T. France similarly writes "the parable thus teaches that each disciple has God-given gifts and opportunities to be of service to their Lord" in *The Gospel of Matthew* (NICNT; Grand Rapids MI: W. B. Eerdmann, 2007), 952.

<sup>37</sup> There are four prominent theories with respect to the question as to who owned the treasures inscribed on the Copper Scroll. They are that the treasures belong to: (a) the Essenes (b) the Treasury of the First Temple (i.e. prior to the Exile) (c) the Treasury of the Second Temple (i.e. from the period after the Exile up to 70 CE) and (d) the Treasures are fictional, i.e. they never existed. The most popular theory of the four, on palaeographical grounds, is that they belong to the Second Temple in Jerusalem (see dating of the Copper Scroll by F. M. Cross in George Brooke and Philip R. Davies, *Copper Scroll Studies*, New York, T&T Clarke International, 2004, 87, 312-313 and Emile Puech, *The Copper Scroll Revisited*, Leiden, Brill, 2015, 20).

subsequently hiding them in safe places outside that Jesus was in fact remonstrating against in the parable.<sup>38</sup>

### Some Details of the Parable

**(1) Comparison with the Parable of the Pounds:** The Parable of the Talents in Matthew's Gospel is sometimes equated by biblical scholars with the Parable of the Pounds in Luke's Gospel (Lk 19: 11-27).<sup>39</sup> However, it may be that the two parables should not be identified as one and the same but should be seen as two distinct parables that were spoken by Jesus on two different occasions.<sup>40</sup> If Jesus in fact addressed the same theme twice it most certainly emphasizes its importance.

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<sup>38</sup> As noted in Appendix 2 of the thesis, when Mark refers to Jesus' prohibition of carrying vessels through the Temple ("And he would not allow anyone to carry *anything* [lit. vessel, Gk. σκευος] through the temple", Mk 11:16), the vessels may in fact refer to money containers or vessels which were used in removing monies from the Temple. These monies may subsequently have been buried outside the Temple in safe hiding places. Viewing the vessels as probable money containers for "taking money out of the court of the women", P.M. Casey writes: "More directly, it would stop merchants and money changers from having any sort of container for carrying money, without which they could not do business. Even more dramatically, it would prevent priests from having containers for taking money out of the court of the women, where the trumpets for the shekel offerings were placed [i.e. the Treasury]. If they could not be taken out in quantity, the chief priests would no longer want them taken in, so that Tyrian shekels bearing the image of Melkart would no longer be taken into God's house" ("Culture and Historicity: The Cleansing of the Temple," *CBQ* 59 [1997]: 306-332, 311).

<sup>39</sup> Timothy Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke* (Sacra Pagina Series, Collegeville Minnesota, Liturgical Press, 1991), 292.

<sup>40</sup> Although the structure of both parables are similar, there are so many details that differ which make it difficult for them to be reconciled. The differences are: (1) when the parable was spoken (2) the person administering the money (3) the sums of money involved (4) the number of men to whom the money was given (5) the rewards given to those who had been faithful (6) the manner in which the money was hidden by the condemned person. Referring to several scholars (Craig L. Blomberg, Simon J. Kistemaker, Leon Morris, Frank Stagg), who propose this two-distinct parable theory, Terry Barnes writes "Luke records a similar story to Matthew's parable of the talents in Luke 19:11-28. However, there are profound differences between these two parables. In Matthew's parable, a large amount of money was given to three servants. In Luke's account, the amount was quite small and distributed to ten. In Luke the same amount was given to each servant, while in Matthew the amounts varied according to the ability of the servants. Luke adds the idea of a nobleman going to a distant country to be appointed king and then returning, an idea completely absent from Matthew's account. In fact, Matthew focuses more on the world of commerce instead of the world of kings and kingdoms. In Luke's account, Jesus was drawing near to Jerusalem before his triumphal entry. In Matthew's account, Jesus was on the Mount of Olives after his triumphal entry. Luke's parable has a different setting, vastly differing details, and was told to a different audience. The obvious conclusion is that Jesus told these two stories on two different occasions [Kistemaker]. Morris is correct in his conclusion that the differences between the two parables are "formidable." Stagg notes that the differences are "striking." Blomberg also concludes that the Luke account is a separate story. Clearly these two parables are two distinct, separate stories with two differing intentions." Terry Barnes, *Matthew's Parable of the Talents: A Story of Faith* (Unpublished Master's Thesis, Calvary Theological Seminary, 2006), 23. Asking the question in his in-depth study of both parables: "Is the parable of the talents and the parable of the mina as recorded in Luke 19:12-27 telling the same story", C. Paul Willis gives his verdict "Therefore we have to conclude that they are separate and distinct stories" (*The Prestige - The Stories Jesus Told*, Bloomington; WestBow Press, 2013, 52).

**(2) Talent, a Greek term denoting a very large sum of money:** The Greek term *τάλαντων* (“talent”) employed in this parable refers to a large sum of money. Originally the term was a figure of weight which later was used to describe a very big sum of money.<sup>41</sup> According to the ‘table of weights and (monetary) values’ found in several bibles or bible dictionaries, *τάλαντων* (Eng. “talent”) is the largest denomination found.<sup>42</sup> The term is also found in another parable in Matthew’s Gospel, often entitled “the Parable of the Two Debtors”, where the first debtor owes “ten thousand talents” (lit. myriads ... *μυρίων τάλαντων*, Mt 18:24) to the “king” - an enormous sum of money.<sup>43</sup> Who Jesus had in mind when mentioning this first debtor, is not certain, but – I suggest – as the Temple in Jerusalem was one, if not the only, institution which had a hold on such a vast sum of money, and because it fitted the theme of forgiveness which Jesus was then addressing, the Temple may have been the primary target which Jesus had in mind.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> *The Greek New Testament Dictionary* defines *τάλαντων* as “Greek coin with value of 5,000-6,000 denarii”. Really, however, it is not a coin but rather refers to a figure of weight. The words, ‘talent’, ‘mina’, shekel, ‘drachma’, ‘gerah’, ‘obol’ ‘lepton’, are terms that originally described a figure of weight which later became synonymous with a particular coin. Two of the above terms, talent (St. Mt 25:15) and mina (St. Lk 19: 13) refer to such a large amount of money that they do not refer to any particular coin but rather to a sum of money. A table of ‘weights’, giving some of the relative values of money in Jesus’ time, is written below. The talent is valued at 3’000 shekels, a very large sum of money.

Weights and Values (from the Appendix to *The New Jerusalem Bible*)

	<u>Ratio</u>	<u>Pounds (lbs), Ounces (ozs)</u>
Talent	3000	75 lbs
Mina	50	1. 25 lbs
Shekel	1	0.lbs 39 ozs
Half-Shekel	1/2	0.lbs 19 ozs
Gerah	1/20	0. lbs 02 ozs

<sup>42</sup> See: *The New Jerusalem Bible* (New York, Doubleday, 1999), 2076; *Dictionary of the Bible* (New York: Touchstone, 1965), 583, 926; James Dixon Douglas, *The New International Bible Dictionary*, (ed Merrill Tenney and James Douglas; Grand Rapids, MI, Zondervan Publishing House, 1987), 1063.

<sup>43</sup> The Greek term *μύριοι* is translated “group of ten thousand, myriad, countless thousands” by *The Greek New Testament Dictionary* (4<sup>th</sup> ed., edited by B. Aland K. Aland, M. Black, J. Karavidopoulos, C. M. Martini, B. M. Metzger, A Wikgren), Stuttgart, Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft United Bible Societies, 1993).

<sup>44</sup> It may well be that this first debtor which Jesus had in mind was the Temple administration itself, which owed the “king” what it had stolen from the Treasury (an enormous sum of money, “ten thousand talents”). The second debtor who owed a hundred denarii may refer to one of those who borrowed money from the Temple, which functioned as a bank. The overwhelming size of the debt would, I propose, have caused Jesus’ listeners to think of the Temple Treasury as the most likely candidate - as debtor - for such a sum. In relation to the magnitude of the debt intended here, Joachim Jeremias writes: “The sum exceeds any actual situation; it can only be explained if we realize that both *μύρια* and *τάλαντα* are the highest magnitudes in use (10,000 is the highest number used in reckoning, and the talent is the largest currency unit in the whole of the Near East). The magnitude of a debt beyond conception was intended to heighten the impression made upon the audience by its contrast with the trifling debt of 100 denarii (v. 28),” in Jeremias, Joachim, *The Parables of Jesus*, 210–11).

**(3) The “man going on a journey” and returning later:** Gregory the Great (c. 540-604), Cyril (375–444) and Eusebius (c. 260–340) interpreted the “man going on a journey” (Mt 25:14; Lk 19:12), as Jesus who “ascended into heaven”.<sup>45</sup> The words “after a long time the master of those servants came” (Mt 25:19) were interpreted by Jerome (c. 347–420) and Gregory respectively as the “second coming” of Jesus when we shall be “judged by the Author of the world”<sup>46</sup>. Although the return of “the master....after a long time” in the parable refers to the Second Coming of Jesus at the end of time, as the Early Fathers interpreted above, it also, I propose, refers to the coming of “the Son of Man” (Mt 24:30) forty years later by way of covenantal judgement on the Temple and the city of Jerusalem itself in the events of the Jewish Roman War of 66 – 70 C.E., which Jesus had just earlier prophesied in the Olivet Discourse (Mt: 24:1-51).<sup>47</sup> After Jesus would be appointed king by his Father in heaven, he would return later to his ‘city’ and his ‘house’ in covenantal judgement – his defining presence, his surprise return visit, his ‘parousia’.

**(4) Stages in the history of the Second Temple:** The Parable of the Talents mentions three servants each of which, I propose for consideration, may be representative of three important milestones in the history of the Second Temple. The first servant received five talents, the second two and the third one (Mt 25:14). The servant who received five may refer to that time *five centuries earlier* (from when Jesus spoke the parable) when the Temple was rebuilt after the Exile. During this time the money-changers were not in the Temple (see chapter two of the thesis under a heading entitled: “When were the money-changers’ services first introduced into the Temple?”) and monies were deposited directly into the Treasury and used productively.

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Robert Gundry also notes the magnitude intended: The hugeness of the debt—tens of thousands of talents, which because of the indefinite plural of the highest number used in reckoning cannot be calculated and therefore means ‘zillions’—goes far beyond the amounts of taxes collected from Roman provinces (see Josephus Ant. 17.11.4 §§317–20 for amounts of 600 talents collected from Judea, Idumea, and Samaria and of 200 talents from Galilee and Perea in 4 B.C.) Robert H. Gundry, *Matthew - A Commentary on His Literary and Theological Art* (Grand Rapids MI, Wm. B. Eerdmann, 1982), 373. Again R. T. France writes, “While a hundred denarii is a plausible amount for one man to owe another, ten thousand talents is far beyond what any individual, still less a slave, might owe even to a king” in *The Gospel of Matthew* (NICNT; Grand Rapids MI, Wm. B. Eerdmann; 2007), 704.

<sup>45</sup> Gregory: Thomas Aquinas quoting Gregory: *Catena Aurea: Gospel of Matthew 25*; Cyril of Alexandria and Eusebius: Thomas Aquinas quoting Cyril and Eusebius: *Catena Aurea: Gospel of Luke 19:11-27*; Cyril of Alexandria: *Fragment 28.3*

<sup>46</sup> Jerome and Gregory: Thomas Aquinas quoting Jerome and Gregory: *Catena Aurea: Gospel of Matthew 25*

<sup>47</sup> This more imminent expectation of the ‘coming’ of Jesus (i.e. compared with that of his Second Coming) was apparently referred to by Jesus himself in the Olivet Discourse when he added “this generation will not pass away till all these things take place” (Mt 24:34).

The second servant who received two talents may refer to that historical time *two centuries earlier* when the Temple was re-dedicated, having earlier been plundered by the Seleucid King, Antiochus IV Epihanes. During this period the monies were likewise deposited directly into the Treasury and used productively. The person who received the one talent may be representative of the Temple during that period of its history sometimes referred to as ‘the Third Temple’ (beginning within *a century earlier* in 19 BCE with the rebuilding of the Temple by Herod the Great, a rebuilding programme which was still ongoing in the time of Jesus). His digging the talent in the ground, I propose, may be a coded reference to what was taking place in the Temple during this period when the money-changers were introduced into the Temple. The funds donated by the pilgrims at this time remained behind on the money-changers’ tables and may subsequently have been taken out of the Temple where they were buried and hidden. The Treasury was greatly depleted with little or no funds available to be used productively; the monies were not put to use but remained sterile in the ground bearing no fruit.

**(5) The Man with the one Talent who buried his money:** The criticism by Jesus of the man who had received the “one talent... and dug in the ground and hid his master's money” (Mt 25:18), I propose, may be a coded reference to what was taking place in the Temple in the time of Jesus. This “wicked and slothful servant” who hid the talent in the ground may be a subtle reference to practices taking place in the Temple with – as was proposed earlier - monies being removed from the money-changers’ tables and buried outside. This theft from the Temple Treasury – as has been repeatedly proposed throughout this thesis - was accomplished by the introduction of the money-changers’ services in the Temple. The practice of hiding large sums of monies in designated hiding places around Jerusalem – as was seen earlier - was not unknown in first-century Judaism. It is the subject matter of the Copper Scroll and although scholars have not linked the treasures on the Scroll with monies removed from the Temple, some nevertheless propose a link between the Copper Scroll and the treasures of the Temple whilst engaging in much “curiosity and speculation” as to “who could have possessed such a fortune” as inscribed on the Scroll.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> In respect of the “curiosity and speculation” aroused by the Scroll, Geza Vermes writes: “The Copper Scroll (3Q15) which has stimulated much curiosity and speculation, was found by archaeologists in Cave 3 during the excavation of 1952.....Who could have possessed such a fortune...According to Allegro (believing the treasure belonged to the Temple), the zealots were responsible for the concealment of the gold and silver and for the writing of the scroll. ...In favour of the Temple treasure hypothesis (another hypothesis was that the treasure belonged to the community of the Essenes), it is nevertheless possible to envisage that the Jerusalem sanctuary possessed such riches as these.....it is still hard to accept that the Essenes, a relatively small community, should have amassed such disproportionate wealth.” (Geza Vermes: “The Copper Scroll” in *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English* (revised edition), London, Penguin Books, 2004).

**(6) Depositing money in the bank with interest:** The words which the master spoke to the servant who had received the one talent, “You wicked and slothful servant! You knew that I reap where I have not sowed, and gather where I have not winnowed? Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and at my coming I should have received what was my own with interest,” are, I suggest, paradoxical. On the face of what appears to be approval for such behaviour (i.e. depositing the money with the bankers and receiving interest), the opposite intention appears to be implied. Jesus, I propose, seems to be condemning such behaviour with the sentiments: “If you knew that your master reaped where he had not sown and gathered what he had not scattered, then *why did you not do likewise*, by depositing my money with the bankers and at my coming I should have received what was my own with interest.” The charging of interest on a loan – i.e. ‘reaping what not sown’ or ‘gathering what was not scattered’ - is condemned.<sup>49</sup> This negative appraisal of such action (i.e. of gaining interest by depositing money in the bank) was intended by Jesus. The bankers mentioned here are most likely a reference to bankers outside the Temple, as the charging of interest on loans was forbidden, at least amongst fellow Israelites. It may also, however, refer to the Jerusalem Temple which - as was earlier seen – had begun to function as a bank. Like other temples in the ANE it offered loans to people and although the charging of interest was forbidden received compensation in other ways.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Having researched several scholarly works on both the Parable of the Talents (Mt 25) and the Parable of the Pounds (Lk 19) and adding their own comments, Clive and Cara Beed propose that Jesus does not approve of the charging of interest on loans. Summing up their position they write “On the basis of these comments, it does not seem possible to conclude that the Parables of the Talents, and of the Pounds, have Jesus approving the payment of interest,” “Jesus on Lending, Debt, and Interest,” *JBIB* 17: 1 (2014) 81.

<sup>50</sup> As was earlier seen in chapter three in the section on “The Temple as Bank”, when pilgrims were granted loan facilities from the Temple they often made a pledge of repayment in the form of a hold on property/possessions or made a pledge of payment from expected revenues from future produce from their farms.

## Conclusion

The Gospel accounts describing the Cleansing of the Temple describe a catastrophic event of great magnitude. It is interesting that - with the exception of Origen – most of the early interpreters of the Gospels understood that two distinct cleansing events took place.<sup>1</sup> This literal understanding adopted by the Fathers flowed naturally as a consequence of certain principles that guided their interpretation of the Gospels. In addition, these figures lived in a world in which the monetary system was based upon coins of real intrinsic value. Token money would have been unacceptable in their time in everyday exchange. It may be for this reason that Origen could so emphatically have described the money-changers' coinage in the Temple as "spurious money"...."small change"...."cheap worthless coinage"...."worth nothing"...and money "which was their own" (*Commentary on the Gospel of John*, 10).

By contrast, recent historical-critical scholarship has tended to downplay the extent to which the Gospel accounts describing the Cleansing of the Temple should be read at face value. This less literal (and sometimes a-historical) approach, as was seen, follows as a consequence of certain historical-critical principles which have guided their interpretation of the Gospel passages. Jesus, it is generally assumed, performed some symbolic action in the Temple, a smaller act than that which is literally described. The Gospel passages describe features that, according to studies on the historical Jesus and Second Temple Judaism, are presumed unlikely to have taken place. In particular, in more recent scholarship, it is frequently proposed as a serious objection to the historicity of this event(s) that Jesus would not have cast out the money-changers from the Temple, thereby bringing an end to the required daily sacrifices and ritual life of the Holy Place.

In response to this objection, I propose that Jesus, as a faithful Jew, was not opposed to the required sacrifices in the Temple but, rather, to the unlawful and dishonest activity of the money-changers whose services had only recently been introduced into the Temple. The nearly universal assumption that the services of the money-changers were necessary for the ritual life of the Temple (in order to change 'idolatrous coins' bearing offensive images for

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<sup>1</sup> The first at the beginning of Jesus' Public Ministry and described in Jn 2:13-22 and the second at the end in Mk 11:15-19. It seems that the Early Fathers in general - with the exception of Origen - understood two distinct cleansing events to have taken place. Apart from the references shown from their writings in Appendix 1 to this two-cleansing understanding, it is significant to note that Thomas Aquinas - having collated the Fathers' writings in this respect (including those of Origen) – also acknowledged such a two-cleansing interpretation.

that of an acceptable kind) is challenged, as is also the assumption that the money-changers themselves were profiting from dishonest practice. I argue that when Jesus stated, “Is it not written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations’? But you have made it a den of robbers” (Mk: 11: 17), the theft he was primarily referring to was not so much from any blatant form of dishonest commercial activity conducted in the Court of the Gentiles, as recent scholarship has pointed out, but rather from the Treasury into which the pilgrims deposited their offerings. The Treasury – in God’s House – was being stolen from. The revenue that God was to receive in his Temple (particularly from the half-shekel payments and other payments to the Treasury) was greatly, if not totally, depleted. This theft, I propose, was accomplished by the subtle manner in which the money-changer was introduced into the Temple and, in particular, through the precise coinage he was offering in exchange there. This coinage was merely one of token value. It contained nothing of precious metal content, such as was normal and intrinsic to all other coinage at that time. It was this coinage that was deposited in the Treasury. The coins of real value that the pilgrims had brought into the Temple (most probably the Tyrian coinage stipulated in the Talmud, or, even Roman denarii or Greek stater) remained behind on the money-changers’ tables. Resting on the money-changers’ tables and not being deposited in the Treasury this coinage could be spent at the discretion of the Temple authorities for it was no longer strictly ‘corban’ or dedicated to God.

In addition to this theft from the Treasury that had entered the Temple, the introduction of the money-changers’ token exchange also offered easy and readily available credit to those who came to sacrifice in the Temple. Although Jesus may not have objected to the ‘necessary trade’ in animals for sacrifice that would have developed in or around the Temple, as E. P. Sanders, Jacob Neusner and other scholars have recently pointed out, he, I propose, would not have condoned the easy availability of credit that had recently developed in the Temple as a result of the introduction of the money-changers’ exchange – a source of credit hitherto unknown in the Greco-Roman world.

This double condemnation of practices that had entered the Temple (a) the theft of the Temple tax (and other offerings) from the Treasury on to the money-changers’ tables and (b) the easy access to credit that had developed in the Temple were both made possible, I propose, as a result of the introduction of the money-changers’ *token* money into the Temple. This theft which had been introduced into the Temple - that is the offering of token coinage for coins of real intrinsic value – and the impact such actions had on the life of first-century



CE Judaism may not be fully appreciated by readers today who live in a world largely governed by the same token monetary practice. It is only when we free our minds of modern forms of token money and banking practice and enter into the precise monetary circumstances of Jesus' time that the significance of the Cleansing of the Temple may be fully appreciated. Ultimately I propose that in light of a study of the monetary background surrounding first-century Judaism (with particular emphasis on the role of the moneychangers in the Temple) and in conjunction with early interpretation of Jesus' actions in the writings of some of the Early Church Fathers, this event had great consequences not only for Jesus' own life and the subsequent events that transpired in Holy Week but also for the life of Jesus' followers, the early Church and for Christianity today.

## Appendix 1:

### The Exegetical Principles of the ECF with a Focus on the Interpretation of the Cleansing of the Temple Event(s)

Before examining the ECF commentaries on the Cleansing of the Temple, five principles (some of which are assumptions they made concerning the Gospels) which guided the Fathers in their interpretation will first be presented. They are:

#### (1) Authorship: The Gospels are Apostolic and based on the evidence of Eye-Witnesses

From the writings of the ECF, it is clear that they believed (a) the apostles Matthew<sup>1</sup> and John<sup>2</sup> wrote the Gospels attributed to their name (b) Mark's Gospel was firmly based upon the preaching of the apostle Peter<sup>3</sup> and (c) the evangelist Luke, a companion of Paul, based his Gospel on reliable

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<sup>1</sup> Papias: *Fragments from the exposition of the Oracles of the Lord* Par. VI; Irenaeus: *Against Heresies* 3.1.1; Origen in Eusebius: *Church History* 3.2.4; Jerome: *Lives of Illustrious Men* Ch. III; Cyril of Jerusalem: *Catechetical Lectures* 14.15; Eusebius: *Church History* 3.24; 5.10. The PBC wrote: "Having regard to the universal and unwavering agreement of the Church ever since the first centuries, an agreement clearly attested by the express witness of the Fathers, by the titles of the Gospel manuscripts, the most ancient versions of the sacred books and the lists handed on by the holy Fathers, by ecclesiastical writers, by Popes and Councils, and finally by the liturgical use of the Church in the East and in the West, may and should it be affirmed as certain that Matthew, the Apostle of Christ, was in fact the author of the Gospel current under his name? Answer: In the affirmative." *Concerning the Authorship of the Gospel according to Matthew*, 1911. See also, *A Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture* (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1953), 851; Navarre University (Faculty of Theology): *The Gospels and Acts* (Dublin, Four Courts Press, 2002), 41-43; *Catholic Bible Dictionary*, (ed. Scott Hahn, New York, Doubleday, 2009), 590.

<sup>2</sup> Irenaeus: *Against Heresies* 3.1.1; Tertullian: *The Five Books against Marcion* Book 4.2; Clement of Alexandria in Eusebius: *Church History* 6.14; Origen in Eusebius: *Church History* 6.25; John Chrysostom: *Homilies on the Gospel of Matthew* 1.4; Eusebius: *Church History* 3:24. The PBC wrote: "Does the constant, universal, and solemn tradition of the Church dating back to the second century and witnessed to principally: (a) by the holy Fathers, by ecclesiastical writers, and even by heretics, whose testimonies and allusions must have been derived from the disciples or first successors of the Apostles and so be linked with the very origin of the book; (b) by the name of the author of the Fourth Gospel having been at all times and places in the canon and lists of the sacred books; (c) by the most ancient manuscripts of those books and the various versions; (d) by public liturgical use in the whole world from the very beginnings of the Church; prove that John the Apostle and no other is to be acknowledged as the author of the fourth Gospel, and that by an historical argument so firmly established (without reference to theological considerations) that the reasons adduced by critics to the contrary in no way weaken this tradition? Answer: In the affirmative." PBC: *Concerning the Author and Historical Truth of the Fourth Gospel*, 1907; See also, *A Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture*, 972; Navarre University: *The Gospels and Acts*, 519-521; *Catholic Bible Dictionary*, 459-460.

testimony having derived his information as he wrote himself from those who had been “from the beginning companions and eye-witnesses of the Word” (Luke: 1:2).<sup>4</sup> The Gospels were therefore, according to the ECF, apostolic and based on eye-witness testimony. What significance does this hold for our studies on the Gospel accounts of the Cleansing of the Temple? As the Gospels, according to the ECF, claim for their authority the personal stamp of the apostles and are based on eye-witness testimony, they are unlikely to have been changed or adapted during the period of Oral Tradition<sup>5</sup>, as is suggested in more recent scholarship (see Appendix 2 of the thesis). They, therefore, may be trusted as historically reliable in what they record.

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<sup>3</sup> Papias in Eusebius: *Church History* 3.39; Irenaeus: *Against Heresies*: 3.1.1; Justin Martyr: *Dialogue with Trypho* 61; Clement of Alexandria in Eusebius: *Church History* 6.14; Origen: in Eusebius *Church History* 6:25. See also, PBC: *Concerning the Authors, Dates, and Historical Truth of the Gospels according to Mark and Luke*, 1912; *A Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture*, 906; Navarre University: *The Gospels and Acts*, 516-518; *Catholic Bible Dictionary*, 573-574.

<sup>4</sup> See Luke: 1:1-4. That, according to the ECF, Luke’s Gospel is based on reliable (apostolic) testimony, see: Thomas Aquinas citing Eusebius, John Chrysostom, Ambrose, and Cyril: *Catena Aurea on Luke*: 1:1-4; Jerome: *Prefaces: Matthew’s Gospel. A Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture* writes: “His [i.e. Luke’s] opportunities of consulting those who had come into contact with Jesus may be gathered from a consideration of Luke’s own history. He spent long periods in Palestine, Antioch and Rome. It will be observed that when St. Paul mentions him, Mark is always in his company (Col. 4:10,14; Phm 24; 2 Tim 4:11). Luke mentions others who could have furnished him with information: Joanna, wife of Chusa, Herod’s steward, Susanna and ‘many other (women) who ministered unto (Jesus) of their substance’ (Lk: 8:3). With regard to the Infancy Narratives, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the repeated remark of Lk: 2:19 and Lk: 2:51 is intended to indicate that the Mother of Jesus herself is the direct or the indirect source of his information.” (p. 936). See also PBC: *Concerning the Authors, Dates, and Historical Truth of the Gospels according to Mark and Luke*, 1912; Navarre University: *The Gospels and Acts*, 330; *Catholic Bible Dictionary*, 557.

<sup>5</sup> The term ‘Oral Tradition’ refers to that entire period of time when the good news of the ‘gospel’ circulated in its pre-canonical form (mainly in oral form but, also, most probably, containing a written component in addition) throughout the early Church before it was finally written by the different evangelists as four ‘Gospels’. Technically the term ‘oral’ should exclude any *written* units of tradition which might have circulated in the various communities before the canonical Gospels were finally composed. Scholars more recently have proposed (see Appendix 2) how between the life and ministry of Jesus and the time of writing of the canonical Gospels the truth of the ‘gospel’ in its original setting was changed to meet new life settings. During this time, it is proposed, the real historical Jesus – what Jesus actually said and did – was moulded and changed according to different pastoral and theological needs that arose in the early Church. Wilfrid J. Harrington writes: “We must go beyond the evangelists because, though they have given us a fourfold account of the Good News, they themselves are not the authors of the Good News; they have put the story of our Lord in writing, but that story existed long before they wrote. Between Christ and the evangelists come the apostles, the Church. Thus we get back, ultimately, to the early Church for it was the Church represented by the apostles, that drew up the original gospel which was afterwards handed on to us, according to the viewpoint of each, by the four evangelists.” (*Explaining the Gospels*, New York, Paulist Press, 1963, 13)

## (2) Which was the first Gospel written? Matthew was the first to write his Gospel ‘in the language of the Hebrews’

According to several of the ECF, Matthew was the first to write his Gospel ‘in the language of the Hebrews’<sup>6</sup> The canonical Gospel we have today is in Greek but, according to the Fathers’ writings, Matthew’s Gospel existed in this Hebraic form<sup>7</sup> at an earlier stage – maybe even as early as 40-50 CE.<sup>8</sup> The Pontifical Biblical Commission upheld the ancient tradition in this regard. This

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<sup>6</sup> Irenæus: *Against Heresies* 3.1.2; Origen in Eusebius: *Church History* 6.25.3-4; Eusebius: *Church History* Book 3.24.6; Jerome *Gospel of Matthew: Preface*; John Chrysostom: *Commentary on Matthew’s Gospel* Homily IV, Matt 1:17. See also: *A Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture*, 852; Navarre University: *The Gospels and Acts*, 43; *Catholic Bible Dictionary*, 590-591. With respect to the order most commonly found in the manuscript tradition, Charles J. Callan O.P. writes: “In the MSS. we find the Gospels arranged in a great variety of ways: (a) Matthew, Mark, Luke and John – which was the order most frequently found in antiquity and is found in nearly all the Greek MSS., from the most ancient to the most recent; (b)...(c) ...[the author continues to list other arrangements sometimes found]...As said above the order which appears in our Bibles [i.e. (a) above] is the most ancient and has on its side the weight of authority. It was based on the chronological order in which, according to tradition, the sacred records appeared. The various other arrangements are probably to be explained by subsequent collections of the Gospels made in different Churches where it was customary to use them separately in public reading.” *The Four Gospels* (New York, Joseph F. Wagner Inc., 1917), xxi-xxii. This chronological order of the (Synoptic) Gospels with Matthew being the first, based on the “very ancient and constant testimony of tradition”, was similarly attested by the PBC (1911). The PBC wrote: “Should the verdict of tradition be considered to give adequate support to the statement that Matthew wrote before the other Evangelists and wrote the first Gospel in the native language then used by the Jews of Palestine for whom the work was intended? Answer: In the affirmative to both parts. The Commission went on to state that “the Greek Gospel [i.e. Matthew’s canonical Gospel] is identical in substance with the Gospel written by that Apostle in his native tongue”. (Replies of the Pontifical Biblical Commission: *Concerning the Authorship, the Date and the Historical Truth of the Gospel according to Matthew*, June 1911). That Mark followed Matthew and not vice versa, Jerome wrote the “The second is Mark” (*Gospel of Matthew: Prologue*), and John Chrysostom also stated that “Mark came after him [i.e. Matthew]” (*Commentary on Matthew’s Gospel: Homily IV*). Early evidence that Luke was the third Gospel written is found in the Muratorian Canon (*Muratorian Fragment* 2<sup>nd</sup> century) and the late 2<sup>nd</sup> century Anti-Marcionite Prologues (see Frank Sadowski S.S.P., “Anti-Marcionite Prologues to the Gospels” in *The Church Fathers and the Bible*, 1987, 23). See also, *Catholic Bible Dictionary*, 879-883; Phil Fernandes: “Redating the Gospels” in pp 466-489 *Vital Issues in the Inerrancy Debate* (gen. ed. F. David Farnell, Oregon, Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2015), 478.

<sup>7</sup> It is not certain whether ‘the language of the Hebrews’ was Aramaic, which was certainly spoken in Judea at the time, or actually meant what modern Semitic scholars call Hebrew, which appears to have survived as a living language until the second century CE. Not only is there a case for proposing an Hebraic origin of Matthew but also, as some more recent studies suggest, for Mark. In 1963, Jean Carmignac attempted to translate the Greek Mark into Hebrew and, instead of finding difficulties, found that in many instances the translation proved quite easy. His study concluded that Greek Mark seemed to point to an Aramaic or Hebrew original. (See, Jean Carmignac: *The Birth of the Synoptics* [Michael J. Wrenn, trans.; Chicago, Franciscan Herald Press, 1987]). Similarly, Claude Tresmontant proposed Hebrew originals (for all four Gospels) in his book *The Hebrew Christ: Language in the Age of the Apostles* (Chicago; Franciscan Herald Press), 1989.

<sup>8</sup> The date for this earlier ‘gospel’ is not explicitly stated by the Fathers and may thus only be conjectured. Charles J. Callan, however, cites John Chrysostom, Eusebius, Jerome “and others” in determining a “year 41 or 42” date (*The Four Gospels*, 1). *A Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture* also suggests an “A.D. 40-50” date for this earlier “Aramaic Matthew” when it writes: “That Matthew was the first of the four to write his Gospel is the firm persuasion of antiquity. This puts the Aramaic Matthew before A.D. 62 (the date of Luke). External evidence does not allow of any further precision: the testimony of Eusebius (*Church History*: 3: 24) is too vague and that of

affirmation of an earlier ‘gospel’ of Matthew in the language of the Hebrews by the ECF - substantially the same as that of the canonical Greek - has four important consequences for our study on the Cleansing of the Temple in this thesis: (a) The priority more recently given to Mark’s Gospel, on the grounds that it is thought to have been the first Gospel written, may need to be revised or at least seen as linked with an earlier form in Aramaic<sup>9</sup> (b) Certain Greek terms used in Mark’s Gospel account on the Cleansing of the Temple may become clearer in light of their Aramaic source<sup>10</sup> (c) An earlier Gospel of Matthew written as early as 40-50 CE would strengthen the conviction of many scholars today in recovering ‘the historical Jesus’<sup>11</sup> and (d) Mark’s

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Irenaeus (*Adv. Haer.* 3:1:1) too uncertain of interpretation to admit of a conclusion. The Greek Matthew was probably written several years before 70 C.E., [in another section of this same dictionary, the reasons for this proposed pre-70 C.E. dating of Gk. Mt. are explained]. If therefore we allow twenty years or so for the development of our Gk Mt from its Aramaic original, A.D. 40-50 would be an appropriate date for the latter.” (p. 852). See also, Phil Fernandes: “Redating the Gospels” in which Fernandes lists scholars who propose a similar 40-50’s dating on the basis of the evidence of the ECF writings. Fernandes writes: “For the above reasons John Wenham dates Matthew’s Gospel to about AD 40, while Henry Thiessen dates it to about AD 45 and 50.....John Wenham reports that a sixth-century Alexandrian author named Cosmos dated Matthew’s Gospel as early as AD 33, while the late third-century historian Eusebius dated Matthew’s Gospel to the third year of Caligula’s reign – approximately AD 41” in “Redating the Gospels,” in *Vital Issues in the Inerrancy Debate*, 478.

<sup>9</sup> If Matthew was the first to write his Gospel, the priority more recently given to Mark’s Gospel (on the grounds that it is thought to have been the first Gospel written) may need to be revised, or, at least Mark’s Gospel must be seen as linked with an earlier form in Aramaic. For an earlier Aramaic Matthew or Aramaic source for Mark *A Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture* writes that there is “a return to Augustine’s view that Mk is, in effect, an abridgement of Gk Mt. The Gk Mt served as Mk’s chief source in the sense that Peter, when preaching in Rome, had the Gk Mt before him, and adapted it in his own way to his hearers’ needs.” (p. 854). See also, Pierre Benoit: *L’Evangile selon Saint Matthieu* Paris, Cerf., 1950 (Benoit proposes that ‘Q’ in the two source theory is actually the original Aramaic Gospel of Matthew); P. M. Casey: (a) “Culture and Historicity: the Cleansing of the Temple” *CBQ* (1997) 59, 306-332 and (b) “Aramaic Sources of Mark’s Gospel” *Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series* (Book 102), (gen. ed. Richard Bauckham, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998); Matthew Black: *An Aramaic Approach to the Gospels and Acts*, Massachusetts, Hendrickson Publishers, 1998.

<sup>10</sup> If Mark was reliant on an earlier form in Aramaic, some of the Greek terms used in his Gospel might therefore receive greater clarity when re-translated back into their original source. For example, as noted by P.M. Casey in his article, “Culture and Historicity: the Cleansing of the Temple” *CBQ* (1997) 52, pp 306-332, 311, when the Greek term σκευος (which Mark used for “vessel” in Mk 11:16) is seen in light of its proposed Aramaic original, כֶּסֶף, it helps to clarify more precisely what Jesus was preventing from being carried through the Temple. Casey states that as neither the Greek nor the Aramaic terms refer to a ‘sacred vessel’, the term that Jesus used most probably referred to ‘vessels’ in general. One such vessel, which Casey suggests as likely, was a money container for removing monies from the Temple. I argue in chapter four that Jesus sought to prevent the half-shekel tax monies (which were accumulating on the money-changers tables on account of the introduction of the money-changers into the Temple) from being removed and taken outside the Temple in such money containers.

<sup>11</sup> If Matthew wrote an earlier draft of his Gospel, possibly as early as 41 or 42 C.E., and this ‘gospel’ was substantially the same as the later canonical Greek Gospel of Matthew, then the period of time usually assigned to the Oral Tradition (the Oral Tradition may have included a ‘written component’ in addition to the strictly oral) would have to be considerably reduced (leaving less opportunity for the more recently proposed editorial alterations and/or additions) and would strengthen the conviction of many scholars today in recovering ‘the historical Jesus’. (The terms ‘the historical Jesus’ or ‘the Jesus of history’ are terms used by scholars today who, applying the

proposed reliance on Matthew (an earlier Aramaic Matthew) might also explain why the account of the Cleansing of the Temple is longer and more detailed in Mark than that of Matthew, which the reader could expect from a later Gospel.<sup>12</sup>

### (3) The Pre-70 C.E. Dating of the Synoptic Gospels

Although the Early Church Fathers did not specify the exact date when each of the four Gospels were written<sup>13</sup>, it may be reasonably inferred from their writings that they believed all two Synoptic Gospels were written before 70 C.E. This inference is largely deduced from (a) their understanding of the Olivet Discourse<sup>14</sup> (a somewhat dissimilar understanding from that of more recent historical-

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historical-critical method to the four Gospels, seek to distinguish – as they propose – the real person who existed in history from the ‘Christ of faith’ found in the Gospels; see Appendix 2 of the thesis).

<sup>12</sup> One of the main reasons given in support of the proposition that Mark’s was the first Gospel to be written is that his work is shorter than that of the other Synoptic Gospels and it is considered more likely that the shortest Gospel (i.e. Mark’s) would have preceded the others so closely related to it. It is interesting to note, however, that this ‘shorter-longer’ principle does not apply to the Cleansing of the Temple (and also to many other passages in Mark common to the Synoptic Gospels) which is considerably longer and more detailed in Mark’s account than that found in the other Synoptics.

<sup>13</sup> There is no clear reference in the writings of the Early Fathers as to the exact date when the four Gospels were written; the precise time when they were composed is not mentioned. That they did not consider it relevant to record the date of composition (which was probably well known) is interesting in itself and may indicate an appreciation among the Fathers that all four Gospels originate primarily with *Jesus himself*, with the events of his life, his teaching, his death, resurrection and ascension into heaven which, as a ‘*gospel*’, he handed on to his apostles. This ‘*gospel*’ of Jesus would only later receive canonical form as the *Four Gospels*, when, finally, they came to be written. The date then of the Gospel is that of Jesus himself. The four canonical Gospels therefore, although written at various later times and each with a particular purpose in mind, all, in fact, re-present and reflect this earlier ‘*gospel*’. Making the same point in terms of more recent biblical scholarship, it might simply be stated that the ‘Jesus of history’ is the ‘Christ of faith’. As such, it may be assumed that the Fathers held all four Gospels with parity of esteem when searching for the ‘historical Jesus’, for although some of the Gospels were written later than the others and with varying degrees of theological purpose in mind, the Fathers believed they all originated with *Christ* and Christ, according to the Fathers, is the ‘historical Jesus’ of the Gospels.

<sup>14</sup> In their writings on the Olivet Discourse (Mt 24: 1-44; Mk 13:1-37; Lk 21:5-36), the Early Fathers do not presume that the Synoptic evangelists had, at the time of writing, any knowledge of the events Jesus was referring to that would subsequently take place in Jerusalem and the Temple between 66-70 C.E. All that Jesus prophesied, the Early Fathers assumed, was yet to happen. The silence of the Synoptic evangelists with regard to any *confirmation* of the fulfilment of Jesus’ prophecy concerning the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem and the Holy City itself is a feature of the Gospels which the Early Fathers must naturally have assumed as owing to their pre 66 – 70 C.E. composition. John Chrysostom, makes this very point when he wrote that John alone among the four evangelists (who wrote his Gospel after the events of 66-70 C.E.), did not include the Olivet Discourse so that he might “not seem to be writing a history after the event” and then Chrysostom adds “but they [the Synoptic evangelists], who died before the taking, and had seen none of these things, they write it, in order that every way the power of the prediction should clearly shine forth”. Chrysostom wrote (emphasis added): “But He [Jesus] spoke it [the destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem] not openly, lest He should startle them [the apostles] before the time.

critical scholarship)<sup>15</sup> and (b) their likely mid 60's CE dating of Luke's second work, the Acts of the Apostles.<sup>16</sup> The most-probable pre-70 C.E. dating of the Synoptic Gospels by the ECF has one significant consequence for this thesis. It might prompt a revision of the extent of influence which scholars suggest (a) the community ('form criticism') and/or (b) different/final redactor(s) ('redaction criticism') were able to exert on the final shape or form of the Gospel (see Appendix 2 of this thesis). In particular, the passages recorded in the Synoptic Gospels describing the

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Wherefore neither at the beginning did He of Himself fall into discourse touching these things; but having first lamented over the city, He constrained them to show Him the stones, and question Him, in order that as it were in answering them their question, He might declare to them beforehand all the things to come. But mark thou, I pray thee, the dispensation of the Spirit, that John wrote none of these things, lest he should seem to write from the very history of the things done (for indeed he lived a long time after the taking of the city), but they, who died before the taking, and had seen none of these things, they write it, in order that every way the power of the prediction should clearly shine forth" (*Commentary on Matthew's Gospel: Homily 49*). That the Gospels nowhere refer to the destruction of the Temple and the City as a "past fact" is a significant factor in the redating of the Gospels by John A.T. Robinson from a post to a pre-70 CE composition. He writes "One of the oddest facts about the New Testament is that what on any showing would appear to be the single most datable and climactic event of the period - the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70, and with it the collapse of institutional Judaism based on the temple - is never once mentioned as a past fact." *Redating the New Testament* (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1976), 13.

<sup>15</sup> More recently scholars have tended to view the statements attributed to Jesus in the Olivet Discourse concerning the future destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple as a 'creative account' made either by the community or by the evangelists themselves, *in light of the known events of the Jewish-Roman War which had already taken place by the time the Gospels were written*. (The Gospels are thus assumed to be written after 70 CE). According to such an understanding, the account of the Olivet Discourse found in the Gospels did not originate with Jesus himself (or if it did, it was greatly embellished to include what was known to have happened), but rather sprung from within the community to which the evangelist belonged *after the events themselves had taken place* and was written for pastoral or theological reasons. It is therefore proposed that such writing is a special form of literary genre often labelled as 'prophecy after the event' ('vaticinium ex eventu').

<sup>16</sup> As the ECF believed the Acts of the Apostles (a) was written by Luke (the *Muratorian Canon*; Irenaeus: *Adv. Haer.*, 3.14.1, Clement of Alexandria: *Stromata* 5.12; Origen *Contra Celsum* 6.11; Eusebius: *History of the Church* 3.4. (b) followed the "earlier work" of Luke – i.e. his Gospel (Acts 1:1; Augustine *The Harmony of the Gospels* 4.8) which is generally placed third in the order of the Gospels in the Canon and (c) was written in the mid 60's CE before the martyrdom of Peter and Paul (i.e. Acts ends while Peter and Paul were still alive), the Fathers must therefore have concluded that the two Synoptic Gospels were written before 70 C.E. That Acts was written while the "apostles themselves were still alive" is explicitly stated by Augustine who wrote: "But he [Luke] has also undertaken a record of what was done subsequently by the hands of the apostles; and relating as many of those events as he believed to be needful and helpful to the edification of the faith of readers or hearers, he has given us a narrative so faithful, that his is the only book that has been reckoned worthy of acceptance in the Church as a history of the Acts of the Apostles; while all these other writers who attempted, although deficient in the trustworthiness which was the first requisite, to compose an account of the doings and sayings of the apostles, have met with rejection. And, further, Mark and Luke certainly wrote at a time when it was quite possible to put them to the test not only by the Church of Christ, but also by the apostles themselves who were still alive in the flesh" (*The Harmony of the Gospels*: 4). Eusebius also wrote: "In his second epistle to Timothy, moreover, he [Paul] indicates that Luke was with him when he wrote, but at his first defence not even he. Whence it is probable that Luke wrote the Acts of the Apostles at that time, continuing his history down to the period when he was with Paul. But these things have been adduced by us to show that Paul's martyrdom did not take place at the time of that Roman sojourn which Luke records" (*Church History*: 2.22).

Cleansing of the Temple (and those elements of the Olivet Discourse relating to the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple) could not – according to the Fathers - have been so influenced by the catastrophic events that happened at this time. The reasons for this are many but the main one emphasised here is simply that the events of 70 C.E. could not have influenced the Synoptic accounts as, according to the Fathers, the accounts themselves were written beforehand.

#### **(4) The Doctrine of Biblical Inerrancy and the Extent to which it Applies**

This fourth principle influencing the manner in which the ECF read the Gospels is probably the most significant from among the five that are examined.<sup>17</sup> It is examined further on pages 63-69 of this Appendix. A brief summary outline of this section of the Appendix is given below.

With respect to the doctrine of the inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture, the question is asked, “To what *extent* did the ECF regard the Scriptures (and in our case the accounts of the Cleansing of the Temple in the Gospels) as inerrant?” In response, I propose, on the basis of their writings, that the Fathers believed in the *complete* inerrancy of Scripture and would not, as a consequence, have entertained any proposal which might have led to a more *restrictive* view. Every detail, they believed, is inspired and therefore without error. This restriction applies to every detail the evangelist *intended* to be read as true. Although the Fathers sought spiritual meanings from the Gospel passages describing the Cleansing of the Temple, the evangelists first and foremost – the Fathers believed (including Origen and the School of Alexandria) - *intended* their accounts to be read in a literal-historical manner. They were written primarily as a simple narrative description of what took place. And what the evangelists recorded as taking place was, according to the Fathers, without error in all its details.

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<sup>17</sup> Biblical inerrancy is the fruit of the doctrine of biblical inspiration. As the bible is inspired, and has for its main author the Holy Spirit, it follows - as a consequence for the ECF - that everything written and intended by the inspired author is without error. (See pages 63-69 of this Appendix).



## (5) The Harmonisation of the Gospels

The fifth principle guiding the Fathers in their interpretation concerns the question of harmonisation, the practice of reading the four Gospels together. The question is asked: “In their search for historical details on any given event/situation in the life of Jesus (the Cleansing of the Temple being a prominent point in case) how many Gospels did the Fathers study, one or all?” In response, it may be said the Fathers studied all four Gospels in order to gather together the facts provided by the four evangelists for a more complete picture and reconstruction.<sup>18</sup> Not only were the two Synoptic Gospels read for what might be found but also the Gospel of John. In fact, the Fathers believed that one of the main reasons for John writing his Gospel was “to complete or rather *supplement* what the Synoptics had recorded”<sup>19</sup>. This harmonious practice is prevalent in their writings, where, on the same page, information is gathered from the different Gospel accounts recording a particular event/situation in the life of Jesus. This principle of harmonisation is particularly apt for the Cleansing of the Temple, which is recorded by all the four evangelists. The *apparent divergences or discrepancies* of passages, they believed, could be resolved for “though the Bible may seem to have contrary statements, both are true”.<sup>20</sup> This conclusion, as has already been noted, follows as a consequence of the extent to which the Fathers believed the inerrancy of Scripture to apply. A more complete picture of any given event in the life and ministry of Jesus would then emerge than that arising from a restricted study to a single Gospel only, a practice sometimes adopted in biblical scholarship today.

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<sup>18</sup> Origen’s writings, I argue, do not constitute an exception to this rule – see pages 36-62 of this Appendix. Tatian’s *Diatesseron* (2<sup>nd</sup> cent.) and Augustine’s *Harmony of the Gospels*, are most notable in this regard.

<sup>19</sup> “Several Fathers are of the opinion that St John wrote to complete or rather supplement what the Synoptics had recorded – (notably SS Clement of Alexandria, Ephrem, Jerome and the historian Eusebius).” Madame Cecilia: *The Gospel According To St John* (London, Burns, Oates & Washbourne, 1924), 14. Jerome wrote: “But there is said to be yet another reason for this work [i.e. the Gospel of John], in that when he had read Matthew, Mark, and Luke, he approved indeed the substance of the history and declared that the things they said were true, but that they had given the history of only one year, the one, that is, which follows the imprisonment of John and in which he was put to death. So passing by this year the events of which had been set forth by these, he related the events of the earlier period before John was shut up in prison, so that it might be manifest to those who should diligently read the volumes of the four Evangelists. This also takes away the discrepancy which there seems to be between John and the others” (*Lives of Illustrious Men* 9). See also Eusebius (*Church History* 3.24).

<sup>20</sup> Augustine: *Letter* 82

Having outlined these five principles which guided the ECF in their interpretation of the Gospels, let us now proceed with an examination of five notable points of observation in respect of their commentaries on the Cleansing of the Temple.

## **Five Points of Observation in the Early Church Fathers writings on the Cleansing of the Temple**

### **(a) The Fathers read the Gospel Accounts of the Cleansing of the Temple in a Literal-Historical manner**

#### **1. Summary**

The Cleansing of the Temple was considered by the Early Church Fathers as a momentous historical event. Jerome considered this act as the “most wonderful” miracle “wrought by our Lord”. The Fathers, in general, assumed that the events recorded in the Gospels are historical with regard to all the details they present. The cleansing was, therefore, understood to be a *major disturbance* in which the *whole* of the Court of the Gentiles was cleared and not just a small part. The buyers and sellers, the money-changers and the animals were *all* driven out.<sup>21</sup>

#### **2. Notable Examples**

(a) Augustine: Commenting on John’s account of the Cleansing of the Temple, Augustine wrote (emphasis added): “And He found in the temple those that sold oxen, and sheep, and doves, and the changers of money sitting: and when He had made, as it were, a scourge of small cords, *He drove them all out of the temple; the oxen likewise, and the sheep; and poured out the changers’ money [Latin, et nummulariorum effudit aes], and overthrew the tables; and said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; and make not my Father’s house a house of merchandise.’*”

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<sup>21</sup> Several references from the Fathers writings may be given in support of this literal (historical) reading among which are: Cyril of Alexandria: *Commentary on Luke: Homily 132*; Augustine: *Gospel according to John*, Tractate 10.4; Bede: *Exposition on the Gospel of St Mark*, 2.1; Thomas Aquinas quoting Jerome: *Catena Aurea, Gospel of Matthew* Ch. 21; Thomas Aquinas quoting Gregory the Great: *Catena Aurea, Gospel of Luke* Ch. 19; Tatian the Syrian: *Diatessaron* 32.

The Lord cast out of it [the Temple] all that sought their own, all who had come to market.... It was not a great sin, then, if they sold in the temple that which was bought for the purpose of offering in the temple: and yet He cast them out thence.... He nevertheless drove those men out and suffered not the house of prayer to be made a house of merchandise” (*Gospel according to John*: Tractate 10:4). The significance of the monetary term “aes” in the Latin phrase above “et nummulariorum effudit aes” (a literal translation of the Greek in Jn 2:15) will be commented upon in section (d) entitled, “The Coins that the Money-changers exchanged within the Temple were Copper or ‘Token’ coins”.

In another excerpt from his writings, Augustine, assuming the historicity of the details recorded, compares the cleansing action of Jesus with that of driving out demons. Augustine wrote (emphasis added): “In another place, when I said the following about our Lord Jesus Christ, ‘He did nothing by force but everything by persuasion and admonition,’ I forgot that *he threw out the sellers and buyers from the temple by flogging them*. What does this matter to us? How is it important if *he also cast out demons from people against their will*, not by persuasive words but by force of his power?” (*Retractions* 12.6). Later, in chapter four, I will show that the Greek term, εκβαλλω, used for expelling the buyers and sellers from the Temple (Jn: 2:15; Mk: 11:15) is the same term used in the Gospels for casting out demons (Mt: 7:22, 8:16, 9:33; Mk:1:34, 3:15, 3:23; Lk: 11;18, 13:32; Jn: 12:31), most probably indicating a form of exorcism conducted by Jesus in the Temple.

(b) Jerome, upon a literal reading of the Gospel, regards the actions of Jesus in the Temple as his “most wonderful.... miracle”, for how else could “one man....by the blows of one scourge.... cast out so great a multitude”. Jerome wrote: “Among all the miracles wrought by our Lord, this seems to me the most wonderful, that one man, and He at that time was weak to such a degree that He was afterwards crucified, and while the Scribes and Pharisees were exasperated against Him seeing their gains thus cut off, was able by the blows of one scourge to cast out so great a multitude.” (Thomas Aquinas quoting Jerome: *Catena Aurea, Gospel of Matthew* Ch: 21).

(c) Origen considers - as a likely reconstruction for what took place - that Jesus [changed] “the soul and will of thousands of men”. He writes: “One refuge remains for the writer who wishes to defend these things and is minded to treat the occurrence as real history, namely, to appeal to the

divine nature of Jesus, who was able to quench, when He desired to do so, the rising anger of His foes, by divine grace to get the better of myriads, and to scatter the devices of tumultuous men; .....One may show it to be a greater work than that done at Cana of Galilee in the turning of water into wine; for in that case it was only soulless matter that was changed, but here it was the soul and will of thousands of men.” (*Commentary on John: Book 10:17*).

## **(b) The Gospels record Two Different Cleansings of the Temple**

### **1. Summary**

Some of the Fathers testify that the Gospels record two different cleansings of the Temple (it may in fact be assumed, on account of the literal-historical manner in which they read the Gospels, that this was the position adopted by many - if not all – of the Fathers, with the exception of Origen whose reasons for doubting the chronological account in John’s Gospel will be examined briefly below). The first happened at the beginning of Jesus’ ministry and is recorded in John’s Gospel 2:13-21; the second cleansing took place at the end and is recorded in the two Synoptic Gospels (Mt: 21:12-13; Mk: 11:15-18; Lk: 19:45-46).

### **2. Notable References**

(a) Augustine wrote (emphasis added): “This account of the many sellers who were cast out of the temple was reported by all the Evangelists, including John, but in his case he introduces it in a completely different order.... John proceeds to tell us that he went up to Jerusalem at the season of the Jews’ Passover, and when he had made a scourge of small cords drove out of the temple those who were selling in it. *This makes it evident that this act was performed by the Lord not on a single occasion, but twice over. Only in the first instance was it recorded by John, but in the last by the other two.*” (*Harmony of the Gospels* 2.67).

(b) John Chrysostom wrote (emphasis added): “John’s Gospel also reported this, but at the beginning of his narrative. But now in Matthew we are coming to the end of the narrative. Thus it is probable that *this was done twice and on different occasions*. That there was a first Cleansing of the Temple and then a second is evident from many evidences. In John’s Gospel he came at the

time of the Passover. Here it was before Passover. In John the Jews said, ‘What miraculous sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?’ In Matthew they hold their peace, though reproved, because he was not marveled at among all the population. *If this happened on two different occasions, this becomes a heavier charge against the Jewish leadership.* He did it not only once but a second time, and still they continued their buying and selling and called him an adversary of God. They should have learned *from the first cleansing* to honor his Father and his own power. They could see his works agreeing with his words, and they could behold his miracles. They could hear the prophet pointing to him. They could see the children attesting him in a manner beyond their age. But all this did not persuade them. Instead, ‘they were indignant’. So he brings in Isaiah as their accuser when he says, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer’.” (*The Gospel of Matthew: Homily 67.1*)

(c) Theophilus of Antioch: “*The same thing our Lord did also at the beginning of His preaching, as John relates; and now He did it a second time, because the crime of the Jews was much increased by their not having been chastened by the former warning. . . . . Which also turns to the greater condemnation of the Jews, because though the Lord did this so many times, nevertheless they did not correct their conduct.*” Augustine: “It is manifest that the Lord did this thing *not once but twice*; the first time is told by John, this second occasion by the other two”. John Chrysostom: “Which aggravates the fault of the Jews, who after He had done *the same thing twice*, yet persisted in their hardness.” (Thomas Aquinas, emphasis added, quoting Theophilus of Antioch, Augustine and John Chrysostom: *Catena Aurea, Gospel of Matthew Ch: 21 and the Gospel of Mark Ch: 11*).

### **3. Origen, a single Cleansing only**

For a more complete consideration of Origen’s commentary on the Cleansing of the Temple, see pages 36-62 of this Appendix.

Origen makes his reflections on the Cleansing of the Temple in Book 10 of his *Commentary on John’s Gospel* and in Book 16 of his *Commentary on Matthew’s Gospel*.

By way of contrast with the Early Fathers cited above, Origen believed in a single cleansing event only. He rejected the notion that another and earlier event (i.e. the event described in John's Gospel at the beginning of Jesus' ministry) actually took place. The reason for Origen's denial was not that he rejected the literal sense of Scripture (and the historicity of the Gospels<sup>22</sup>) but rather, ironically, due to his overly literal appreciation of the texts. For Origen had difficulties (difficulties not experienced by other ECF) reconciling what he considered to be discrepancies in the chronology/order of events when the four Gospels are read together. In particular, Origen experienced great difficulty<sup>23</sup> reconciling the chronology of John's Gospel, where the Wedding Feast of Cana took place according to Origen "six days" after the baptism of Jesus, with that of "the forty days of the temptation" of Jesus described in the Synoptics.<sup>24</sup> As the Wedding Feast of Cana was immediately followed by the Cleansing of the Temple, Origen believed that such an order of events - leaving no time for the forty days - could not be explained "in the outward and material letter" but only "anagogically" or "by mystical interpretation" (Origen: *Commentary on John* 10:2). The other Fathers, aware of the same chronological features in the Gospels, had no such difficulty.

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<sup>22</sup> Origen's intense devotion to Christ, argues Henri de Lubac in his well-known treatise on Origen in 1950, made him seek a spiritual meaning in all of Scripture. But, according to de Lubac, he always admitted the historical character of the texts (see, Henri de Lubac *History and Spirit: The Understanding of Scripture According to Origen*, 2007). "Origen believed much more in the historicity of scriptural passages than the most conservative of contemporary exegetes: cf. his defence of Noah's ark against the objections of the Marcionate Apelles...,(*Encyclopedia of the Early Church: Institutum Patristicum Augustinianum Volume II* [Cambridge: James Clarke and Co, 1992], 621). See pages 36-62 of this Appendix.

<sup>23</sup> Origen wrote (emphasis added): "*If the discrepancy between the Gospels is not solved, we must give up our trust in the Gospels, as being true and written by a divine spirit, or as records worthy of credence, for both these characters are held to belong to these works,*" (*Commentary on John's Gospel*: 10:2).

<sup>24</sup> Origen wrote: "Those who accept the four Gospels, and who do not consider that their apparent discrepancy is to be solved anagogically (by mystical interpretation), will have to clear up the difficulty, raised above, about the forty days of the temptation, a period for which no room can be found in any way in John's narrative; and they will also have to tell us when it was that the Lord came to Capernaum. If it was after the six days of the period of His baptism, the sixth being that of the marriage at Cana of Galilee, then it is clear that the temptation never took place, and that He never was at Nazara, and that John was not yet delivered up. Now, after Capernaum, where He abode not many days, the Passover of the Jews was at hand, and He went up to Jerusalem, where He cast the sheep and oxen out of the temple, and poured out the small change of the bankers." (*Commentary on John* 10.2).

### (c) The Religious Authorities and the Money-Changers were to blame

The Early Church Fathers believed that there was dishonest trading and monetary practice conducted within the Temple; they singled out the religious and priestly authorities for blame. The priests, according to Jerome and Bede, resold animals which had already been deemed for sacrifice. Jerome notes that the “Priests” of the Temple appointed “collybistae” (Latin plural for the money-changers of the Temple) in order to circumvent the law regarding usury. The Latin term “collubistas” (a transliteration of the Greek κολλυβιστας), which Jerome apparently coined himself, describes a form or class of money-changer for which he writes “the Latin has no equivalent”. The money-changers receive special admonition from the Fathers for their part in seeking “to make profit from the Lord’s money”.

#### 2. Some important Excerpts

Ambrose lays particular blame on the money-changers whom he calls the “slaves of money”.

He wrote (emphasis added): “Invited, then, by these praises, Christ enters His temple, and takes His scourge *and drives the money-changers out of the temple*. For He does not allow *the slaves of money* to be in His temple...” (*Selected Letters: Sermon against Auxentius on the giving up of the Basilicas* 21).

In a second excerpt Ambrose wrote (emphasis added): “And he was casting out those selling and buying in the Temple and overturned the tables of the money-changers, and the seats of the sellers of doves. He taught in general that worldly transactions must be absent from the temple, *but he drove out the moneychangers in particular*. Who are the moneychangers, if not those who seek *profit from the Lord’s money* and cannot distinguish between good and evil? (*Exposition of the Gospel of Luke* 9:17–18).

Both Jerome and Bede make reference to an immoral scheme concerning the re-selling of animals already set aside for sacrifice. The religious authorities would receive considerable funds through this scheme of ‘second payment’. Jerome wrote: “And he cast out all them that sold and bought....innumerable victims were sacrificed, especially on festival days, bulls, rams, goats; the

poor offering young pigeons and turtle-doves, that they might not omit all sacrifice. But it would happen that those who came from a distance would have no victim. *The Priests therefore contrived a plan for making a gain out of the people, selling to such as had no victim the animals which they had need of for sacrifice, and themselves receiving them back again as soon as they were sold.* Bede wrote (emphasis added): “Those however, who came from a distance, being unable to bring with them the animals required for sacrifice, brought the money instead. For their convenience the Scribes and Pharisees ordered animals to be sold in the temple, in order that, when the people had bought and offered them afterwards, *they might sell them again, and thus make great profits.*” (Thomas Aquinas quoting Jerome and Bede: *Catena Aurea, Gospel of John Ch: 2*).

Cyril of Alexandria wrote (emphasis added): “There was in it a crowd of merchants and others *guilty of the charge of the shameful love of money. I mean moneychangers or keepers of exchange tables, sellers of oxen, dealers of sheep, and sellers of turtledoves and pigeons....* (*Commentary on Luke: Homily 132*).

Irenaeus wrote that Jesus reproved those who were putting “His house to improper use”. Jesus did not “bring any accusation against the house, nor did He blame the law”, but, rather, he was condemning the ‘unlawful’ use of the Temple. Irenaeus wrote (emphasis added): “For He who uttered them was Truth, and did truly vindicate His own house, *by driving out of it the changers of money, who were buying and selling,* saying unto them: “It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves.” And what reason had He for thus doing and saying, and vindicating His house..... He did so that He might point out the transgressors of His Father's law; *for neither did He bring any accusation against the house, nor did He blame the law,* which He had come to fulfil; but *He reproved those who were putting His house to an improper use,* and those who were transgressing the law.” (*Against Heresies 4.2*).

Jerome noted that “money which was given for the use of the Temple” was used by the religious authorities, not only to pay Judas the “thirty pieces of silver”, but, also to pay the Roman soldiers so that they might say that Jesus’ body was stolen by his disciples. Jerome wrote (emphasis added) “Thus the Chief Priests, who ought to have been by this turned to penitence, and to seek Jesus risen, persevere in their wickedness, and *convert the money which was given for the use of the*



*Temple to the purchase of a lie* [i.e. given to the Roman soldiers to say his body had been stolen], *as before they had given thirty pieces of silver to the traitor Judas. . . . .* All who abuse to other purposes the money of the Temple, and the contributions for the use of the Church, purchasing with them their own pleasure, are like the Scribes and Priests who bought this lie, and the blood of the Saviour.” (Thomas Aquinas quoting Jerome: *Catena Aurea, Gospel of Matthew Ch: 27*).

### **3. “Collybistae” (the Money-Changers of the Temple) and the significance of the Jerome’s phrase “the Latin has no equivalent”**

Jerome, significantly, wrote that he was not aware (at the time of writing) of any Latin term to translate the Greek word, κολλυβιστης,<sup>25</sup> the word employed by the evangelists in the Gospels for the *money-changers in the Temple*. Jerome simply transliterated the Greek term into Latin<sup>26</sup> i.e. collybistae. Although there were Latin terms used to describe the everyday occupation of the money-changer in general (*nummularius*, which - interestingly - in the excerpt below Jerome contrasts with the ‘collybistae’ in the Temple, *argentarius* or *mensarius*), Jerome states that he did not know of any Latin term to describe the unique or particular functioning of the money-changers in the Temple of Jerusalem. Jerome appears to imply that the services of the money-changers in the Temple had no known parallel outside of the Holy Place. He even, in the excerpt cited below, intimates that the services provided by the “collybistae” in the Temple were recent or novel. For, he seems to indicate, as the first *new* plan (i.e. the reselling of animals) was not working, a *more recent* or *novel* scheme (i.e. the appointment of money-changers) followed. The “collybistae”, employed within the Temple, were, apparently according to Jerome, offering a service that was both *new* and *uniquely restricted to the Temple in Jerusalem*. Their introduction into the Holy Place was a significant development in the unjust scheme initiated.<sup>27</sup> The nearly universal

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<sup>25</sup> The Greek term κολλυβιστης itself may not have been well-known in the first-century Roman-Greco world. According to a *Manual Greek Lexicon on the New Testament*, (3<sup>rd</sup> ed. George Abbot-Smith; New York; Scribner, 1957) the term has “no prior usage in the LXX or other Greek versions of the OT and Apocrypha nor is it found in Greek writings of the classical period.”

<sup>26</sup> In his Vulgate translation of the Gospels, however, Jerome did not transliterate the Greek κολλυβιστης but used the Latin term, *nummularius*, instead.

<sup>27</sup> In an article entitled “The Historicity of the Gospel Account of the Cleansing of the Temple” (*ZNW* 55 [1964]: 42-58), Victor Eppstein similarly proposes a novel *business initiative* conducted in the Temple which he believes was the primary reason for Jesus’ actions in the Holy Place. Eppstein argues that such a business innovation was introduced in the final year of Jesus’ ministry when, according to rabbinical evidence, “forty years before the

assumption that the money-changers were *always* at work in the Temple and that they had a necessary role to offer (often presented in terms of offering ‘holy coins’ in exchange for ‘unholy’ or ‘idolatrous’ coinage with offensive images) appears to have no foundation in the writings of Jerome and, not only in his writings, but also in the writings of the Early Fathers in general who are silent in this respect.<sup>28</sup> This point assumed by Jerome (i.e. the recent introduction of the money-changers into the Temple) is significant and may answer several legitimate questions that have been raised more recently in historical-critical scholarship (see Appendix 2) as to the reasons for Jesus’ actions in the Temple. The “collybistae” were therefore what might be termed ‘a specialised or unique classification of money-changers/bankers’ (Latin *nummularius*, Greek *τραπεζίτης*) operating in the first century Roman-Greco world. The particular services offered by the money-

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Destruction of the Temple [i.e. c. 30 A.D.], the Sanhedrin departed or was expelled from the chamber of Hewn Stone in the Temple to a place on the Mount of Olives called Hanuth” (p. 48). Although Eppstein does not make any reference to the appointment of a special class of money-changers in connection with this novel business initiative in the Temple, such an initiative may have sparked the departure of the Sanhedrin from the Temple.

<sup>28</sup> It is significant that the Early Church Fathers made no reference as to any positive reason for which the money-changers were introduced into the Temple. The money-changers services were, it seems, not associated with any necessary or holy function. In particular, the ECF are silent in relation to what more recent biblical scholarship has generally assumed to have been their role in the Holy Place. This role, scholars suggest, was to help pilgrims fulfil the requirements of the Law concerning the prohibition of false or idolatrous images coming before God in the Temple (see Ex: 20: 3-5; Deut. 5: 7-9) and to offer, therefore, in exchange pure coinage for that which was proposed to be unclean or idolatrous. This suggested reason is not found in the Fathers’ writings. There is no doubt that the Temple authorities may have seized upon such an opportunistic reading of the Law to justify the introduction of the money-changers into the Holy Place, but it is far from clear that such monetary services were necessary or required by the Law. Jerome, as was seen, seems to hint that such services were only recently introduced into the Temple in the time of Jesus and were, therefore, neither necessary nor operational prior to this time. He states that the money-changers (“collybistae”) were introduced into the Holy Place to help carry out a fraudulent but obligatory scheme which the priests had apparently introduced at a time contemporaneous with the ministry of Jesus. If such is the case it must be wondered why such services were required, when, apparently, they had not been required prior to this time in first-century Judaism. The nearly universal assumption today that the money-changers’ services were necessary in order to prevent ‘unholy’ coinage from entering the Temple appears to have no foundation in the writings of the Fathers. In addition, nowhere in the OT is there found any evidence of money-changers in the Sanctuary providing such a service. In fact, when the wealth of the Treasury is - for one reason or another - described in the OT, foreign coins are often found numbered, many of which would have contained ‘offensive images’ (see Ezra 2:68-69; Nehemiah 7:70-72; 1 Maccabees 10:40-42) implying the absence of money-changers in the Temple at that time. Such silence in the OT concerning the money-changers is curious and may suggest that their services were not required for a considerable period of time in the Temple’s history but were only introduced later, quite possibly during the life and ministry of Jesus himself. Although the Talmud (see the tractate entitled ‘Shekalim’ in the Mishna, compiled 2<sup>nd</sup> cent. C.E.), when outlining the practices to be observed with respect to the annual payment of the half-shekel Temple tax in the Holy Place, makes reference to the money-changers services in the Temple (and outer districts), it is not certain what precise period of time this refers to. Most probably it refers to the middle half of first-century Judaism (and possibly even from the time of Jesus up to 70 C.E.), as all the officials mentioned in chapter 5 of the tractate lived between the time of Agrippa I and the destruction of the Temple (i.e. from 41–70 C.E.). See chapters two and three where this monetary background and especially the role of the money-changers in the Temple is examined in more detail.

changers in the Temple will be considered in chapters two and three of this thesis, where I will suggest that - in addition to the unethical activity of giving out loans in the Temple and the exaction of “collyba” described by Jerome in the excerpt below - the money-changers had another and more significant means of acquiring *unjust wealth*. This opportunity, I will argue, was made possible by the particular form of coinage they were offering in exchange there. According to the writings of Origen and several of the ECF, this coinage was not made of silver but rather of copper (or brass) and was therefore of token value only.

Jerome wrote: But this fraudulent practice was often defeated by the poverty of the visitors, who lacking means had neither victims, nor whence to purchase them. *They therefore appointed bankers who might lend to them under a bond.* But because the Law forbade usury, and money lent without interest was profitless, besides sometimes a loss of the principal, *they bethought themselves of another scheme; instead of bankers they appointed collybistae, a word for which the Latin has no equivalent* [Latin, “ut pro nummulariis collibystas facerent, cuius verbi proprietatem Latina lingua non exprimit”]. Although they would not accept a usurious gain, because this was forbidden in the law, nevertheless in place of this they accepted sweetmeats and other trifling presents they called 'collyba,' such, for example, as parched pulse, raisins, and apples of divers sorts. ...This kind of traffic, or cheating rather, the Lord seeing in His Father's house, and moved thereat with spiritual zeal, cast out of the Temple this great multitude of men.” (Thomas Aquinas quoting Jerome: *Catena Aurea, Matthew Ch: 21*).

#### **(d) The Coins that the Money-Changers exchanged within the Temple were Copper or ‘Token’ Coins**

##### **1. Summary**

This fourth point is of considerable significance for this thesis. It will offer testimony from the writings of Origen, Theophilus, Ambrose, Augustine and Jerome to show that the coins which the money-changers offered in exchange within the Temple were merely of token value; they were made of “copper” (or “brass”). These coins are variously described as “a particular sort of money for the word means a small brass coin”, or, simply, as “small coins” or as coins of “spurious” nature. The writings of Origen and Jerome will receive special attention in this regard. Origen is

quite emphatic when he describes such coinage as “cheap worthless coinage” and “so little are they worth”, “small change” that was “worth nothing” and “was their own”. Origen also accuses the money-changers of “changing the valid and worthy money into smaller things that are cheap and of no account”. Jerome’s Vulgate translation of the Bible is also informative, particularly for his translation of two Greek numismatic terms, κέρμα, found in John 2:15 and, χαλκὸν, in Mark 12:41. These two verses of the Gospels, in which the numismatic terms are found, belong to two distinct passages in the Gospels describing different events in the life of Jesus in which the money-changers’ exchange in the Temple plays an important role. In both cases Jerome simply uses the term “aes”, which is the Latin for “copper” or “copper coinage”. Jerome’s translation, I suggest, corroborates the testimony of the Fathers that the money-changers were merely offering “copper” or ‘token coinage’ in exchange in the Temple.

## 2. The Writings of Origen

### (i) How reliable are Origen’s writings with respect to first- century Judaism?

Apart from his contact with ‘early Church tradition’<sup>29</sup>, Origen had a thorough knowledge of the writings of the prominent rabbi and leading contributor to the Mishna, Akiva (50-135 CE) and was, therefore, well in touch with the historical circumstances of the Temple in first- century Judaism and so any comments he made with reference to the money-changers’ coinage are most likely reliable.

### (ii) The money-changers coinage in the writings of Origen

In his commentary on the Cleansing of the Temple in chapter two of John’s Gospel and chapter twenty-one of Matthew’s Gospel,<sup>30</sup> Origen (early third century C.E.) made several important

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<sup>29</sup> Origen studied under Hippolytus of Rome, who in turn knew Ireneaus who knew Polycarp, the disciple of the apostle John.

<sup>30</sup> Origen wrote a *Commentary on the Gospel of John* and a *Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*. Of the original thirty-two books in the *Commentary on John*, only nine have been preserved: Books 1, 2, 6, 10, 13, 20, 28, 32 and a fragment of 19. Book 10 includes the Cleansing of the Temple. Of the original twenty-five books in Origen’s *Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*, only eight have survived in the original Greek (Books 10-17). Book 16 includes the Cleansing of the Temple. Eusebius tells us in his *Ecclesiastical History* VI.36 that Origen’s *Commentary on Matthew* was written around the same time as his treatise *Against Celsus* (i.e. 246-248 CE), in the

references which appear to indicate the precise coinage which the money-changers were offering in the Holy Place. Such references are among the strongest source of evidence from the writings of the Early Church Fathers pointing to the fact that the money-changers' coinage was *merely that of base (copper) metal and of, therefore, possessing token value only*. Two excerpts from Origen's *Commentary on John's Gospel* and one from his *Commentary on Matthew's Gospel* will be given as evidence for this claim. The English translation of Origen's *Commentary*<sup>31</sup> will be aided, where necessary, by a more precise study of the Greek (and Latin) texts. The Greek and Latin texts for his *Commentary on John's Gospel* and the Greek text for his *Commentary on Matthew's Gospel* are taken from J. P. Migne's *Opera Omnia Origenis* 1857. Migne's *Commentary on John* by Origen presents in parallel columns both the original Greek of Origen and the Latin translation of this original text, the latter being likely to indicate how Origen's Greek was understood at an early date (Jerome and Rufinus, late 4<sup>th</sup> century, translated many of Origen's works among which may have been his *Commentary on John*). The English translation of Origen's *Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew* 16 is that undertaken by Justin M Gohl (2017) and made available on [https://www.academia.edu/35210397/Origens\\_Commentary\\_on\\_Matthew\\_Book\\_16](https://www.academia.edu/35210397/Origens_Commentary_on_Matthew_Book_16).

### **Origen Excerpt (1)** **Commentary on John's Gospel**

Origen wrote: (emphasis added): "And Jesus went up to Jerusalem. And He found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves and the changers of money sitting; and He made a scourge of cords, and cast out of the temple the sheep and the oxen, *and poured out the small coin of the money-changers*, and overturned their tables, and to those who sold the doves He said, Take these things hence; make not My Father's house a house of merchandise. Then His disciples remembered

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latter part of his life when he was residing in Caesarea Maritima. His *Commentary on John*, according to Eusebius, was begun in Alexandria before he left for Caesarea (where the first five books were already completed) and was most probably completed before he began his *Commentary on Matthew*.

<sup>31</sup> *Origen's Commentary on the Gospel of John: Ante Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 9 (translated by Allan Menzies, Buffalo, NY; Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1896) revised and edited for New Advent by Kevin Knight. The English translation of Origen's *Commentary on John* by Allan Menzies in 1896 (ANF Menzies 9) itself was a re-edited version of the same *Commentary* as published in the Edinburgh edition of the 38-volume series of the Ante-Nicene Fathers, Nicene, Post-Nicene Fathers and other ancient writers (1867).

that it was written, The zeal of thy house shall eat me up.” (*Commentary on the Gospel of John*: 10.15)

Origen recognised that the Greek phrase “το κερμα των κολλυβιστων” used by the evangelist in Jn: 2:15, translated in English above as “the small coin of the money-changers” refers to coins of little (or small) value. This English translation “small” above, I propose, is correct. The Greek term ‘κερμα’, according to various Greek-English Lexicons, is a specific numismatic term which served to indicate ‘small copper change’ or ‘copper coinage’ (but not silver).<sup>32</sup> By his reference to “the small coin” (Origen actually uses the plural form τὰ κέρματα, “καὶ τῶν κολλυβιστῶν ἐξέχεε τὰ κέρματα”, i.e. the small coins), Origen appears to be indicating the base (or small) nature of the metal value inherent in the coins that the money-changer was offering.<sup>33</sup> When translating Origen’s Greek into Latin, the translator correctly used the Latin term *aes* (i.e. copper, “et mensariorum **aera** [effudit]”) and not the term more commonly used for money, *argentum* (i.e. silver, or money), so as to designate the precise nature of the money-changers coinage.<sup>34</sup>

### **Origen Excerpt (2)** **Commentary on John’s Gospel**

Origen wrote: (emphasis added): “When, therefore, the Saviour finds in the temple, the house of His Father, those who are selling oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting, he drives them out, using the scourge of small cords which He has made, along with the sheep and oxen of their trade, and pours out their stock of coin, as not deserving to be kept together, *so little is it worth* (Gk δεικνὺς αὐτῶν τὸ ἄχρηστον, Lat. *ipsarum inutilitatem ostendens*) ..... And did not

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<sup>32</sup> Greek Lexicons translate the Greek term ‘κερμα’ as (1) small money, “nummus minutus, ‘nummi minuti’, petite monnaie” (*Lexicon Graecum Novi Testamenti*, by Francisco Zorelli, Paris, P. Lethielleux, 1961) or (2) as “coin esp. of copper money, opp. silver (αργυριον)” (in Liddell and Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, Oxford, Clarendon Press Oxford, 1926). It is also important to add, as Abbott-Smith’s “Manual Greek Lexicon on the New Testament” notes, that the Greek term ‘κερμα’ has “no prior usage in the LXX or other Greek versions of the OT and Apocrypha nor is it found in Greek writings of the classical period.”

<sup>33</sup> Origen uses the same term, τὰ κέρματα, later again in Book ten when he once more refers to Jesus overturning of the money-changers tables “and poured out the money-changers’ money” (Book 10.30).

<sup>34</sup> The Greek phrase used by Origen is “καὶ τῶν κολλυβιστῶν ἐξέχεε τὰ κέρματα” was translated into Latin “et mensariorum aera effudit”.

Jesus do an unwarrantable thing when He poured out the money of the money-changers, *which was their own* (Gk τα ἴδια αὐτῶν, Lat. suas ipsorum pecunias), and overthrew their tables?” (Origen: *Commentary on the Gospel of John* 10.16)

In the excerpt above, Origen states that the coins of the money-changers were “their own” (“τα ἴδια αὐτῶν”) <sup>35</sup>, as if to indicate that the coins were their own private or select issue (i.e. coins specific to the Temple). He also describes the “money of the money-changers” which was offered in exchange in the Temple as, “so little is it worth”. The Greek (and Latin) is more emphatic in this derogatory description where it written: (a) Greek: καὶ ἐκχεῖ ὡς μὴ ἄξια τοῦ συνέχεσθαι τὰ κέρματα, δεικνὺς αὐτῶν τὸ ἄχρηστον, “[Jesus] pours out the coins as unworthy to be kept together, showing their uselessness” and (b) Latin ...tanquam indignas quae simul tenerentur et ipsarum inutilitatem ostendens, .... “as it were unworthy to be kept together and showing their uselessness”.

### **Origen Excerpt (3)** **Commentary on John’s Gospel**

Origen wrote (emphasis added): “For these are they who defile and turn into a den of robbers, that is, of themselves the heavenly house of the Father, the holy Jerusalem, the house of prayer; *having spurious money, and giving pence and small change, cheap worthless coinage, to all who come to them.* These are they who, contending with the souls, take from them what is most precious, robbing them of their better part *to return to them what is worth nothing.*” (*Commentary on the Gospel of John* 10.18).

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<sup>35</sup> There is one interesting variant reading found in the same excerpt in Documenta Catholica Omnia: Migne: Patrologia Graeca, (Cooperatorum Veritatis Societas, 2006). Instead of the words “τα ἴδια αὐτῶν” as found in the 1857 edition, the more recent edition simply has in its place the single word “ιδόντων”. The text reads “τῶν τε τραπεζιτῶν μὴ ὕβρεως \* \* \* [indicating some words missing] κατηγορῆσαι τοῦ Ἰησοῦ ἐκχεόμενα **ιδόντων** τὰ χρήματα καὶ ἀνατρεπομένας τὰς τραπέζας” which when translated reads “was it not arrogant of the moneychangers to accuse Jesus, when they saw the money poured out, and the tables overthrown...?” This later edition, although not admitting that the coins were proper to the money-changers of the Temple, does, nevertheless, focus on the fact that it was when they saw the money poured out (i.e. their own money) it caused their indignation. As the Latin counterpart in Migne’s 1857 edition, however, has in its place “propter suas ipsorum” for the very same phrase, it is likely that this earlier edition is more accurate in this regard. Alternatively, it is possible that both readings are correct (i.e. τα ἴδια αὐτῶν and ιδόντων) and that their combined evidence should be read, that is: “τῶν τε τραπεζιτῶν μὴ ὕβρεως κατηγορῆσαι τοῦ Ἰησοῦ ἐκχεόμενα τα ἴδια αὐτῶν ιδόντων τὰ χρήματα καὶ ἀνατρεπομένας τὰς τραπέζας” which when translated might read: “was it not arrogant of the moneychangers to accuse Jesus seeing their own money poured out and their tables overturned”.

In this excerpt, Origen makes further derogatory reference to this coinage as being “spurious” and “worth nothing”, eventually describing it as “cheap worthless coinage”. Let us look at some of the phrases/sentences from this excerpt in the Greek and Latin texts.

**Greek and Latin texts (J. P. Migne): Origen’s Commentary on the Gospel of John: Book  
10:18**

....ἀργύριον ἔχοντες ἀδόκιμον καὶ διδόντες ὀβολοὺς καὶ κόλλυβα τοῖς προσιοῦσιν, εὐτελεῖ καὶ εὐκαταφρόνητα νομίσματα.....ἵνα δῶσιν τὰ μηδενὸς ἄξια.” (Origen: *Commentary on the Gospel of John* 10.18)

.....qui argentum habent adulteratum, dantes accedentibus obolos, et colluba, vilia et contemptibilia numismata.....ut dent ea quae nullis sunt pretii.” (Origen: *Commentary on the Gospel of John* 10.18)

The Greek and Latin texts above are even more emphatic than the English translation in their negative and disparaging description of the coinage offered by the money-changers in the Temple. In particular, certain phrases should be noted:

(a) “ἀργύριον ἔχοντες ἀδόκιμον”, literally “having silver not approved” or “which has not passed the test” (i.e. “having spurious money”), and the Latin “qui argentum habent adulteratum” literally “who have silver [which is] adulterated”

(b) “διδόντες ὀβολοὺς καὶ κόλλυβα τοῖς προσιοῦσιν, εὐτελεῖ καὶ εὐκαταφρόνητα νομίσματα” and the Latin “dantes accedentibus obolos, et colluba, vilia et contemptibilia numismata”, which translates literally as “giving to those who come ‘obols’ [most probably referring to the Roman copper coins called ‘obols’]<sup>36</sup> and ‘colluba’ [Latin transliteration of the plural Greek term κολλυβα,

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<sup>36</sup> The Greek term ‘obol’ (ὀβολός) was often used in the early centuries C.E. in Egypt and throughout the Middle East (i.e. when Origen was writing) to signify the Roman bronze coin called an ‘as’ or ‘assarion’ (a bronze coin which in value was worth approximately a sixth of a denarius) or otherwise was used to express a coin of “negligible value” (see Kenneth W. Harl: *Coinage of the Roman Empire 300 B.C. to 700 A.D.*, (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1996) 115-116



from which the singular is κολλυβος meaning small coin], vile and contemptible coins” (i.e. “[the money-changers] giving pence and small change, cheap worthless coinage or vile and contemptible coins, to all [i.e. the pilgrims] who come to them”)

(c) “ἵνα δῶσιν τὰ μηδενὸς ἄξια”, and the Latin “ut dent ea quae nullis sunt pretii” which literally translates as “so that they may give those things which are of no value” (i.e. “to return to them what is worth nothing”).

#### **Origen: Reference (4)**

In G. W. Lampe’s *A Patristic Greek Lexicon* under the Greek word ‘νομισμα’, a reference is made to Origen’s citation of Ephesians 6:12 (in *Commentary on John* 10:18) in which Origen compares the “spurious money” exchanged by the “money-changers in the Temple” with the “spiritual hosts of wickedness” which Paul refers to in his Letter. Ephesians 6:12 writes: “For we are not contending against flesh and blood, but against the powers, against the rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.” According to the Lexicon, Origen compares those referred to in the phrase “the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places” (πνευματικά της πονηρίας εν τοις επουρανιους) with the “money-changers in the Temple, those who defile the heavenly sanctuary by giving spurious money”. *A Patristic Greek Lexicon* G. W. Lampe (Oxford Clarendon Press 1961, p. 919 under ‘νομισμα’) Origen writes: “And perhaps the Jerusalem above to which the Lord is to ascend ....is that city which before He ascended to it contained the so-called Ephesians 6:12 spiritual hosts of wickedness in heavenly places, .....For these are they who defile and turn into a den of robbers, that is, of themselves the heavenly house of the Father... having spurious money and giving .....cheap worthless coinage, to all who come to them.” (*Commentary on John* 10:18)

#### **Origen Reference (5)**

##### **Excerpt from Commentary on Matthew 16**

In his *Commentary on Matthew* (written towards the end of Origen’s life), Origen repeated the same disparaging depiction of the money-changers activities in the Temple which he had earlier described in his *Commentary on John*. The money-changers, according to Origen, exchanged “valid and worthy [silver] money” into “smaller things that are cheap and of no account”. Origen

wrote (emphasis added): “But would that when [Jesus] enters into the temple of the Father, the Church, the house of prayer, he might cast down the tables of the moneychangers and those with foul covetousness and lovers of money, and *those changing the valid and worthy money into smaller things that are cheap and of no account* (καὶ εἰς πολλὰ εὐτελεῖ καὶ οὐδενὸς λόγου ἄξια κατακερματίζόντων τὰ δόκιμα ἀργύρια)<sup>37</sup>, in order that they might damage those for whom they change money, but they themselves put the money to use for what is not necessary” (*Commentary on Matthew* 16). The final line of Origen’s disparaging depiction above is particularly poignant where he appears to indicate that the actions of the money-changers are deliberate (see the use of the aorist subjunctive for the two verbs below, βλάψωσι and χρήσονται, governed by the marker “ἵνα”). The money-changes, according to Origen, were *intentionally* (ἵνα + subj., “so that”) taking the money from the pilgrims and using it for that which “is not necessary” (or “proper”). The Greek phrase “ἵνα βλάψωσι μὲν ἐκείνους οἷς κολλυβίζουσιν, αὐτοὶ δὲ μὴ εἰς δέον χρήσονται τῷ ἀργυρίῳ” used by Origen literally translates as (emphasis added) “*so that* they might harm those for whom they change money, and *so that* they themselves do not use the money for what is necessary/proper.” Origen, apparently, did not go on to describe the improper use for which the Temple monies were subsequently applied.

#### **4. The Writings of Theophilus, Ambrose, Augustine, Jerome and Bede**

##### **Theophilus of Antioch**

The writings of Theophilus (late second century C.E.), from which the reference is made below, are not extant (the only remaining one being his *Apology to Autolycus*). There is a passing reference to what he wrote in Thomas Aquinas’s *Catena Aurea*. Although the reference is quite brief, it is very significant in what it describes given its early date. Theophilus identified the coinage of the money-changers as that of a “small brass coin” (see below).

In another extract from the writings of Theophilus, which Aquinas also presents, the same numismatic term ‘aes’ (aeris, gen. sing.) is used by Theophilus when describing the money-changers’ exchange (Theophilus of course wrote in Greek, “aes” is the Latin translation made). It

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<sup>37</sup> Lit. “and of-those, into many worthless and of-none-account-worthy [coins], changing the proven silvers”.

is interesting to note, however, how Theophilus distinguishes this money (aes), which is “poured out” by Jesus, with the “denarii” (Roman silver coins - what the pilgrims had exchanged with the money-changers) deposited in vessels on the money-changers’ tables. These tables holding the money-changers’ coinage are overthrown. The English translation below is not as emphatic as the original Latin.

“Nor did He cast out only those who bought and sold, but their goods also: The sheep, and the oxen. *He poured out the changers' money*, and overthrew the tables [i.e. the tables of the money changers], which were coffer of pence [lit. “which were vessels of denarii”, see Latin text below].” (Thomas Aquinas quoting Theophilus: *Catena Aurea: Gospel of John: Ch 2*, emphasis added)

“Neque solum eos eiecit qui vendebant et emebant, sed etiam res eorum; unde subditur oves quoque et boves et *nummulariorum effudit aes*, et mensas evertit, scilicet nummularias, quae erant quasi *vasa denariorum*. (*Corpus Thomisticum Sancti Thomae de Aquino: Catena Aurea in quatuor Evangelia, In Caput 2*, Textum Taurini 1953, emphasis added)

It should be noted that although Theophilus identified the money-changers’ coinage as copper coinage, this does not necessarily imply that he linked this token exchange (i.e. the money-changers’ token or copper coinage exchanged for the pilgrim’s coins of real value) with the theft that Jesus referred to in the Temple when Jesus declared “You have made it [i.e. my Father’s house] a den of robbers” (Mark 11:17) or even that he noticed anything significant by such dubious exchange. All that may be inferred is that Theophilus (and Thomas Aquinas himself) was aware of this monetary practice in the Temple. Several of the Early Fathers (Ambrose, Augustine, Jerome and Bede) made the same observation in their writings, some of which are provided below. Although the Fathers were aware of such numismatic practice in the Temple, they did not – it appears - emphasise the immorality associated with this scheme and the influence such derogatory practice may have had on Jesus’ actions in the Holy Place.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> By the time many of the ECF wrote two important things had happened, which, I suggest, would have given the Fathers less reason to emphasize such unethical monetary practice in the Temple. They are (a) the Temple in Jerusalem had been destroyed (and as a consequence the operations of the money-changers in the Holy Place had

## **Ambrose, Augustine, Jerome and Bede**

In his Latin text below, Ambrose (like Theophilus earlier), consistently uses the term “pecunia” (or “argentum”, lit. silver money, but not ‘aes’, lit. copper money) when referring to the everyday ‘money’ or coinage brought into the Temple by the various pilgrims from outside. These terms “pecunia” and “argentum”, I propose, are accurate for they refer to the different forms of money (Greek, Roman, Tyrian coinage) in circulation at that time, coinage exchanged with the money-changer in the Holy Place which *possessed real intrinsic value*. If these *monies* were used by the various pilgrims who came to the Temple for the payment of the annual Temple tax and/or the votive offerings made, they were destined for the Temple Treasury and therefore “the Lord’s money”. (The term ‘pecunia’ may also have been used as an umbrella term to include, in addition, the token coinage of the money-changers that was used in exchange and which lay on their tables). It is interesting to note, however, how Ambrose uses the specific term “aes” (copper-coinage) and not that of *pecunia*, *argentum* or *nummi* (Latin for coins) when referring to the coins that Jesus “poured out” (“the copper is poured out - aes effunditur”), apparently indicating the precise nature of the exchange coins offered by the money-changers in the Temple. It is as if to say, the coins offered by the money-changers in exchange in the Temple (“the coins *of* the money-changers” Jn: 2:15) were that of copper or ‘aes’ alone, whereas the coins *on* the money-changers’ tables included also that which the pilgrim Jew had brought into the Temple from outside, predominantly that of the silver Tyrian staters, silver Roman denarii or other foreign silver (or even gold) forms of coinage. The consistency with which these terms, ‘aes’ and ‘pecunia’ (or ‘argentum’), are used with such respective meaning, is not only found in the writings of Ambrose and Theophilus but is also a feature of the writings of other Latin Church Fathers, among whom are Augustine, Jerome and Bede (see below). In addition, and of more striking significance, the early biblical translation – the *Vulgate* of Jerome - also translated these Greek monetary terms according to this same numismatic understanding. Let us look at these references in turn.

Ambrose writes (emphasis added): “Who are the moneychangers, if not those who seek profit from the Lord’s *money* (Lat. “*pecunia*”) and cannot distinguish between good and evil? Holy

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ceased) and (b) the debasement of coinage, relatively unknown prior to the time of the emperor Nero (c. 60 C.E.), had become commonplace throughout the Roman Empire.

Scripture is the Lord's *money* (Lat. "*pecunia*"); for when he was about to go away he both distributed the denarii to the servants and divided the talents (Mt: 25:14). But you, as a good money-changer, lay up in store God's eloquent words, pure words, *silver* (Lat. "*argentum*") tested in the fire.....also the vendors of sheep and oxen, I think they are those who by the labour of others or by simplicity as filthy auctioneers snare certain trade: or although the sheep and oxen are cast out, the doves are ordered to be carried away, the Jewish people are seen to be excluded; .....*The copper* (Lat. "*aes*") is poured out, so that favour may be obtained: the table of the money-changers is overturned, so that the Lord's [table] may be substituted: the altar is cast down so that high altars may be erected." (*Exposition of the Gospel of Luke: 9:17-18*)

As mentioned above, the consistency with which these terms, 'aes' and 'pecunia' (or 'argentum'), are used with such respective meaning, is not only found in the writings of Ambrose and Theophilus but is also a feature of the writings of other Latin Church Fathers, among whom are Augustine, Jerome and Bede.

### **Augustine**

Augustine, in a commentary on the Cleansing of the Temple in his *Gospel according to John*, similarly referred to 'aes' (copper coinage) as the money-changer's coinage but used the term 'pecunia' in the same section of this commentary when referring to money in general currency. It should be noted that this is the only reference Augustine made to the term 'aes' (copper coinage) in this entire work (i.e. his *Gospel according to John*), whereas, he made numerous other references to the term pecunia (or argentum) when alluding to 'money' in general. (See, *Gospel according to John* Tractate 10.4,6; Latin text, *In Evangelium Ioannis* Tractate 10.4,6)

### **Jerome**

When Jerome commented on the money which was lent out by the money-changers of the Temple in his *Commentary on Matthew's Gospel*, he did not use the Latin term "aes" which he used for the money-changers' exchange in the Temple, but he rather employed the Latin term "pecunia" instead. For what was lent was coinage of real intrinsic value (most probably silver coinage). In addition, in the same *Commentary*, when commenting on the money that Jesus remarked should

have been deposited with the ‘bankers’ (nummularii) in the Parable of the Talents (Matthew Ch: 25), Jerome again used the term “pecunia” (or “argentum” which literally translates as “silver” but generally signified money used in everyday circulation) but not the term “aes”. (See Jerome: *Commentary on Matthew’s Gospel* (PL 026). In his *Vulgate* translation (see next sub-section below), however, and this is very significant, Jerome translated the Greek monetary terms found in John 2:15 and Mk: 12:41 (both of which terms indicate the particular form of coinage exchanged by the money-changers in the Temple) as “aes”.

### **Jerome used the term ‘aes’ in his Vulgate translation of the Gospels**

It is significant to note the Latin term used by Jerome in his *Vulgate* when translating the two Greek numismatic terms, τὸ κέρμα and χαλκὸν in John 2:15 and Mark 12:41 respectively, which Greek terms indicate the precise form of coinage that the money-changers of the Temple were offering by way of exchange. Jerome wrote that the money-changers were exchanging “aes”, that is a form of copper or token coinage. These two Gospel passages (see below) make reference to the coinage of the money-changers in the Temple, John directly and Mark indirectly. The first Gospel passage is John’s account of the Cleansing of the Temple.

#### **John: 2: 14-16, Greek** (emphasis added)

καὶ εὗρεν ἐν τῷ ἱερῷ τοὺς πωλοῦντας βόας καὶ πρόβατα καὶ περιστερὰς καὶ τοὺς κερματιστὰς καθημένους, καὶ ποιήσας φραγέλλιον ἐκ σχοινίων πάντα ἐξέβαλεν ἐκ τοῦ ἱεροῦ, τὰ τε πρόβατα καὶ τοὺς βόας, καὶ τῶν κολλυβιστῶν ἐξέχεεν **τὸ κέρμα** καὶ τὰς τραπέζας ἀνέτρεψεν, καὶ τοῖς τὰς περιστερὰς πωλοῦσιν εἶπεν, ἄρατε ταῦτα ἐντεῦθεν, μὴ ποιεῖτε τὸν οἶκον τοῦ πατρὸς μου οἶκον ἐμπορίου.

#### **John: 2: 14-16, Latin** (emphasis added)

*Et invenit in templo vendentes boves et oves et columbas et nummularios sedentes, et cum fecisset quasi flagellum de funiculis omnes eiecit de templo oves quoque, et boves et nummulariorum effudit **aes** et mensas subvertit et his qui columbas vendebant dixit “auferte ista hinc nolite facere domum Patris mei domum negotiationis”*

**John: 2: 14-16, English** (emphasis added)

*In the temple he found those who were selling oxen and sheep and pigeons, and the money-changers at their business. And making a whip of cords, he drove them all, with the sheep and oxen, out of the temple; and he poured out the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables. And he told those who sold the pigeons, "Take these things away; you shall not make my Father's house a house of trade."*

In his translation of the Greek phrase “καὶ τῶν κολλυβιστῶν ἐξέχεεν τὸ κέρμα” (“and he poured out the coins of the money-changers”) in John 2:15, Jerome could have used the literal equivalent *nummus* (or the plural *nummi*), but apparently preferred the term *aes* instead. His choice of this term seems to be deliberate, as if to indicate the unique form of coinage proper to the Temple. In the entire Vulgate translation of the Gospels there are only two other instances where the same term *aes* is used, Mark 6:8, 12:41. Both these instances (the latter will be examined below) refer specifically to small change or copper coinage. The terms ordinarily preferred by Jerome in the Vulgate for translating the various Greek passages where ‘money’ is mentioned are *pecunia* (money) and *argentum* (silver), or sometimes the coin (invariably made of silver) is actually identified. These latter terms (in particular, the term *argentum*) could not, I argue, have been used by Jerome for the coinage offered in exchange by the money-changers of the Temple for such terms signify coinage of real intrinsic value, whereas the coinage offered by the money-changers of the Temple was merely that of copper or of token worth. Let us look at the second Gospel passage, commonly referred to as “the Widow’s Mites”, in which there is an implicit indication of the precise form of coinage that the money-changers were offering in exchange in the Temple and which Jerome translated as “aes”. The opening verse of the passage is as follows.

**Mark: 12:41** (Greek, emphasis added)

*καθίσας κατέναντι τοῦ γαζοφυλακίου ἐθεώρει πῶς ὁ ὄχλος βάλλει γαλκὸν εἰς τὸ γαζοφυλάκιον· καὶ πολλοὶ πλούσιοι ἔβαλλον πολλὰ·*

**Mark: 12:41** (Latin, emphasis added)

*Et sedens Iesus contra gazofilacium aspiciebat quomodo turba iactaret aes in gazofilacium et multi divites iactabant multa.*

**Mark: 12:41** (English, emphasis added)

*And he sat down opposite the treasury, and watched the multitude putting money into the treasury.* In his translation of Mk 12:41 (καθίσας κατέναντι τοῦ γαζοφυλακίου ἐθεώρει πῶς ὁ ὄχλος βάλλει χαλκὸν εἰς τὸ γαζοφυλάκιον, the opening sentence of the passage Mk 12:41-44, emphasis added), Jerome translated the Greek term, “χαλκὸν”, literally as “aes”. He could have used the Latin term “pecunia” or “nummi” (but not “argentum” i.e. silver coinage) instead but, I suggest, this would have been misleading as the coins that the Jewish pilgrim people were depositing into the Treasury were that *which they had received from the money-changer by way of exchange*. Jerome, although he does not explicitly state this, was most probably aware of such exchange in the Temple. This coinage was merely “aes”, i.e. coinage made of copper or token coinage. The coins of real intrinsic value (most probably the Tyrian silver coins stipulated in the Talmud or Roman denarii or Greek staters) remained behind on the money-changers tables. The English translation “money” does not, I suggest, make clear this important distinction.

**(e) The Fathers were aware of ‘Genuine and Counterfeit Coins’ and, in addition, of the command attributed to Jesus, “Be ye Good Money-changers”**

## **1. Introduction**

In this final section, two important subjects are simply noted which the ECF made considerable reference to and, which I propose, have considerable bearing on their understanding of Jesus’ actions in the Holy Place. The two subjects relate to: (a) the discernment of true or genuine coins from those which are false or counterfeit and (b) one of the most popular sayings attributed to Jesus outside of those contained in the canonical Gospels (the ‘agrapha’), “be ye good money-changers”. The excerpts that will be cited in relation to the above are not taken from commentaries



the Early Fathers made on the Cleansing of the Temple but, rather, from commentaries made on a wide range of issues. The first of the two subjects – the discernment of true or genuine coins from those which are false or counterfeit – and the numerous references made to the same, highlights how keenly aware the Fathers were with respect to coins which are “true and false”, “silver and leaden” and “genuine and spurious”. The significance of such references may be lost to us today who live in a world dominated by the use of token money.<sup>39</sup> We have little, if no, appreciation of money which contains real intrinsic value such as the gold and silver coins (and to a lesser extent the copper coins) which were commonplace in the early centuries Christianity in which the Fathers lived. ‘Good or genuine money’ was clearly distinguished by the Fathers from that money which was ‘bad or false’. What would have been unacceptable and immoral practice in Jesus’ day and clearly understood as such (i.e. the use of token money in general currency), may not be so readily recognised by readers today who live in a world largely governed by the use of token money. The second subject – the popular ‘agraphon’ of Jesus “be ye good [or approved] money-changers” – is also popularly found in the ECF writings.<sup>40</sup> Although the Fathers used this refrain with allegorical intent,<sup>41</sup> I propose that when it was spoken by Jesus, it may also have had a literal meaning. The money-changers of the Temple were, token coinage in exchange with the pilgrims who brought in coins that possessed real or intrinsic value. They were not ‘good [or approved] money-changers’. The disciples of Jesus were called to be different. The command of Jesus, “be ye good [or approved] money-changers” may in fact have been ordered at face value; what Jesus was implicitly

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<sup>39</sup> Such a litany of references is an important reminder for readers of the Gospels today of the origin and evolution of money as it developed throughout its distinct stages of history (see chapter two of the thesis) from that of (1) coins containing precious metal content in first-century Judaism (and earlier) progressing to (2) debased coinage (i.e. precious metal coinage that was progressively debased throughout the early and middle centuries of Christianity in the Roman Empire) leading ultimately to (3) that of token money used in our commercial world today which officially became recognised from the late 17<sup>th</sup> century onwards.

<sup>40</sup> Curtis Hutt writes: “References to one form or another of this saying are contained in the works of several well-known early Christian authors including Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Jerome, Cyril of Jerusalem, Basil the Great, Cyril of Alexandria, Athanasius, Pseudo-Athanasius, John Chrysostom, Palladius, the Apostolic Constitutions, the Pseudo-Clementine Homilies, the Didascalia, John Cassian, Gregory Nazianus, Gregory the Great, Ambrose, Socrates Scholasticus, and John of Damascus.” ““Be Ye Approved Money Changers!” Re-examining the Social Contexts of the Saying and Its Interpretation.” *JBL* Vol. 131, 3 (2012), pp 589-609

<sup>41</sup> In the wide-ranging contexts in which this agraphon is used by the Fathers of both East and West, it is almost always deployed allegorically with respect to the skill of discernment as to (a) how a given scriptural text might be determined or (b) a teaching, or even leader might be authorized or approved. Just as the good money changer has the ability to test true coins from those which are counterfeit, so also should the disciple of Jesus possess such a skill of discernment.

referring to in this agraphon was the activities of the money-changers in the Temple and the exchange coinage they were offering in the Holy Place.

## 2. References

John Cassian: *First Conference of Abbot Moses* Ch.20; John Cassian: *Second Conference to Abbot Moses* Ch.9; Clement of Alexandria: *The Stromata* 2.4; Ignatius of Antioch: *The Epistle of Ignatius to the Magnesians* Ch.15; Clement of Rome: *Homilies* 2.51; Socrates: *The Ecclesiastical History* 3.16; Clement of Alexandria: *The Stromata: Book 7:15*; John Chrysostom: *Gospel of John*, Homily 77; Aphrahat the Persian Sage: *Select Demonstrations* 26; Ephrem the Syrian: *Nisibene Hymns* 56:1; Gregory of Nyssa: *Against Eunomius* 2; Ignatius of Antioch: *The Epistle of Ignatius to the Magnesians* Ch.5; John Chrysostom: *Homilies on First Timothy*, Homily 14; Methodius: *The Banquet of the Ten Virgins*, Discourse 2; Tertullian: *On Repentance* Ch:6; Clement of Alexandria: *The Stromata* 6.2; Irenaeus: *Against Heresies* 1; Vincent of Lerins: *Against the Profane Novelties of all Heresies* Ch:22; Athanasius: *On the Opinion of Dionysius*; Clement of Rome: *Homilies* 2:51; Dionysius the Great: *Extant Fragments* Part II; Clement of Alexandria: *Stromata* 1.28; Eusebius: *Church History* 7:7; Constitutions of the Holy Apostles: *Book II Of Bishops, Presbyters and Deacons*, Section 4.

## 3. True and False Coinage - Examples

### John Cassian

In his *First Conference of Abbot Moses*, John Cassian outlines (see below, emphasis added) certain deceitful practices during his time (4<sup>th</sup> century) such as that of (a) “*a common brass denarius, if by being coloured with bright gold it is made like some coin of great value*” and (b) the deception and theft associated with “*men deceived by false money made of copper*” (*First Conference of Abbot Moses* Ch.20). This latter form of deceit probably refers to the debasement of Roman coins (particularly the denarius) practiced during this period of Roman history. Later, in the same *First Conference*, John Cassian, outlines certain criteria by which money-changers might be able to detect that which is – according to numismatic standards - pure from those “*forged and counterfeit coins*”. They should discern “*whether it [a coin] be of true or of painted gold*” and should be able

to detect “*coins that are too light and are false and weigh too little*”. (*First Conference of Abbot Moses Ch.22*). In another ‘conference’, John Cassian distinguishes “spurious” from “genuine...discretion” with reference to what he states is the known “gospel parable” concerning “good money changers” (*Second Conference to Abbot Moses Ch.9*). Whether, according to John Cassian, the “gospel parable” originates with Jesus, or, simply arose in the early Church on the basis of hearing the Gospels, is not known.

### **Clement of Alexandria**

Clement of Alexandria writes (emphasis added): “For there is *genuine coin, and other that is spurious*; which no less deceives un-professionals, that it does not the money-changers [i.e money-changers or bankers in general]; who know through having learned *how to separate and distinguish what has a false stamp from what is genuine*. So the money-changer only says to the unprofessional man that the *coin is counterfeit*. But the reason why, only the banker's apprentice, and he that is trained to this department, learns.” (*The Stromata 2.4*).

### **Ignatius of Antioch**

Ignatius of Antioch wrote (emphasis added): “For as there *are two kinds of coins*, the one of God, the other of the world, and each of these has its special character stamped upon it, so is it also here....For I remark, that two different characters are found among men, *the one true coin, the other spurious*. The truly devout man is the right kind of coin, stamped by God Himself. The ungodly man, again, *is false coin, unlawful, spurious, counterfeit*, wrought not by God, but by the devil.” (*The Epistle of Ignatius to the Magnesians: Ch 15*).

## **4. “Be ye good Money-Changers” - Examples**

Clement of Rome (first century CE) applied the command of Jesus “be ye good money-changers” with allegorical intent. He wrote (emphasis added) : “Then Peter said: ‘If, therefore, some of the Scriptures are true and some false, with good reason said our Master, *'be ye good money-changers,'* inasmuch as in the Scriptures there are some true sayings and some spurious. And to those who err by reason of the false scriptures He fitly showed the cause of their error, saying, 'Ye do therefore

err, not knowing the true things of the Scriptures; for this reason ye are ignorant also of the power of God” (*Homilies 2.51*).

John Cassian immediately after alerting his listeners to the deception associated with “*men deceived by false money made of copper*”, reminded his same listeners of the command of Jesus to “*become good money-changers*” (*First Conference of Abbot Moses, Ch 20*).

Socrates wrote (emphasis added): “*Moreover, both Christ and his Apostle enjoin us 'to become discriminating money-changers,'* so that we might 'prove all things, and hold fast that which is good', directing us also to 'beware lest anyone should spoil us through philosophy and vain deceit” (*The Ecclesiastical History 3.16*).

## Origen: The Cleansing of the Temple and the Literal Sense of Scripture

Origen is considered to be one of the pioneers of “the allegorical method” in the history of biblical interpretation.<sup>42</sup> That the search for an allegorical or spiritual meaning is predominant in his writings is unquestionably true<sup>43</sup>, but, if the corollary of this were to imply that he disregarded the ‘literal sense of Scripture’, an inaccurate evaluation would, I propose, be made with respect to his work<sup>44</sup>. However, this overly allegorical depiction of Origen’s exegesis is sometimes made today

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<sup>42</sup> Summarizing the main developments in the early centuries of biblical exegesis, the *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, notes the rise of “the allegorical method that was to characterize the exegetical school of Alexandria”. The *Encyclopedia* writes: “The first biblical scholar to study critically the LXX was Origen (c. 185-254)....he [Origen] commented on Matthew, Luke and John and the Pauline Epistles....applying Plato’s threefold distinction of body, soul, and spirit to the senses of Scripture. Origen taught that Holy Scripture contained (1) a corporeal or historical sense, which seems to be simply the ordinary proper literal and historical sense that the Biblical text directly conveys (2) the psychic or moral sense, generally ignored by Origen in practice, which seems to be concerned with moral correction and is often indistinguishable from (3) the spiritual sense, which embraces all other senses that can be derived from the Biblical text.... At times his allegory is exaggerated but he made a permanent contribution to... the allegorical method that was to characterize the exegetical school of Alexandria....[the encyclopaedia goes on to look at some other Fathers from this school who followed this allegorical approach, including Eusebius and Didymus the Blind whom the encyclopaedia notes in their writings also included an appreciation of the literal sense].....The exegetical principles [of the school of Antioch] were directly opposed to its rival, Alexandria. Antioch insisted upon expounding the literal and historical meaning of the text.... The allegorical method of Alexandria found little welcome at Antioch....Diodore of Tarsus (c. 330-392), the teacher of St. John Chrysostom and Theodore of Mopsuestia and one of the most illustrious of the Antiochians wrote many exegetical works on the books of the OT and the NT. His exegesis is strictly literal, though he accepts the typical when it is well founded upon the literal and historical sense.....St John Chrysostom never formulated any rules of interpretation, but he accepted the literal sense, both proper and improper (i.e. allegorical) and the typical. He was concerned what he could draw from the sacred text for the good of souls [the moral sense].” (*New Catholic Encyclopedia*: [The Catholic University of America, New York, McGraw Hill Book Co., 1967], 498, 499, 500).

<sup>43</sup> According to Allan Menzies, Origen regarded the spiritual or allegorical as the “highest sense” of Scripture. Although this is most certainly true, Menzies goes on to state that Origen also knew of a “bodily (somatic) or the obvious matter-of-fact sense”. Allan Menzies writes: “Origen believed, however, that there was very much in Scripture that lay beyond the capacity of the ordinary mind, and that the highest way of treating Scripture was not that of practical application, but that of searching after its hidden sense. .... ‘As man’ he there [in his *De Principiis*] says, consists of ‘body, soul and spirit, so in the same way does Scripture, which has been arranged to be given by God for the salvation of man. ‘Scripture, therefore, has three senses, the bodily (somatic) or the obvious matter-of-fact sense, the psychical or moral sense, which serves for edification of the pious, and, highest of all, the spiritual sense. For this latter sense of Scripture Origen has many names - as many as forty have been counted [among which is the allegorical] - he calls it the heavenly sense, the intellectual, the anagogical, the mystic, the hidden.” Allan Menzies: Introduction to *Origen’s Commentary on the Gospel of John* from *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 9 (Buffalo, N.Y., Christian Literature, 1896)

<sup>44</sup> The *New Catholic Encyclopedia* writes (emphasis added): “Method of Exegesis: Origen’s literary, critical, grammatical and historical explanations of scriptural passages are innumerable... *the literal sense of a text is the basis for his spiritual interpretation; he believed in the historicity of a pericope even when he gave it an allegorical interpretation.....*” *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 654. As a point of note of Origen’s face-value interpretation of the Gospels, Origen had himself castrated taking the words of Jesus (“there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven” (Mt: 19:12)) literally, and not figuratively. Such an extreme and literalistic application of Jesus’ words would hardly follow if Origen interpreted only an

by biblical scholars of patristic exegesis<sup>45</sup>. They base their case on certain statements they find in Origen's writings that appear to give this impression, in particular that found in his *De Principiis* of Scripture. There, he writes:

“The careful reader, however, will be in doubt as to certain points, being unable to show without long investigation whether this history so deemed literally occurred or not, and whether the literal meaning of this law is to be observed or not. And therefore the exact reader must, in obedience to the Saviour's injunction to ‘search the Scriptures carefully’, ascertain in how far the literal meaning is true, and in how far impossible; and so far as he can, trace out, by means of similar statements, the meaning everywhere scattered through Scripture of that which cannot be understood in a literal signification.” *De Principiis*: 4.1

Origen also states in the same tract:

“Now the reason of the erroneous apprehension of all these points on the part of those whom we have mentioned above, is none other than this, that holy Scripture is not understood by them according to its spiritual, but according to its literal meaning.” *De Principiis* 4:1

The problem for readers today, it seems, revolves around Origen's *misleading* use of the term ‘literal’ (see above) by which he means the literal-historical or *literalist* sense only and not the

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allegorical meaning. Eusebius writes (emphasis added): “At this time while Origen was conducting catechetical instruction at Alexandria, a deed was done by him which evidenced an immature and youthful mind, but at the same time gave the highest proof of faith and continence. For he took the words, ‘There are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake,’ in too literal and extreme a sense. And in order to fulfil the Saviour's word, and at the same time to take away from the unbelievers all opportunity for scandal - for although young, he met for the study of divine things with women as well as men - he carried out in action the word of the Saviour.” *Church History* 6.8

<sup>45</sup> In this respect Timothy Johnson and William Kurz S.J. write: “A popular impression of Origen is that he championed allegory and despised the literal sense of the text, once more because of a deeply ingrained Platonic outlook. The famous statement connecting a threefold reading of Scripture to a Platonic anthropology can certainly give that impression: ‘For just as man consists in body, soul, and spirit, so in the same way does the Scripture, which has been prepared by God to be given for man's salvation’ (*Princ. 1:8*).” Timothy Johnson and William Kurz S.J.: *The Future of Catholic Biblical Scholarship* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 71. Again, Julio Trebolle Barrera describes Origen as preferring the spiritual to the literal. He writes: “Origen rejected the literal meaning of the Old Testament on the principle of rationality. The literal meaning is the one seized by more simple believers who are incapable of appreciating the meaning of metaphors, symbols and allegories, believing instead in the raw realism of the more improbable biblical stories. For Origen, not all Scripture passages have a literal meaning; however, they all have a spiritual meaning, the only one which allows the mystery contained in Scripture to be perceived.” Julio Trebolle Barrera: *The Jewish Bible and the Christian Bible* (Leiden and Boston: Brill Academic, 1998), 528.

wider meaning we now use for the same term in the phrase, the ‘literal sense of Scripture’. For example in John’s Gospel when Jesus is referred to as the ‘Word’ or as a ‘Light’ to enlighten all men, or the ‘Lamb of God’, Origen clearly saw that these were metaphors which the evangelist used as a means of describing who Jesus was and is (particularly in light of the OT) and what effect his coming has on our lives. That these terms were not to be taken *literally*, as Origen stated, is not an indication, as has been noted by Henri de Lubac (and other patristic scholars)<sup>46</sup>, that he rejected the literal-historical meaning of Scripture but rather an indication that he did not accept as literal-historical those terms or phrases in Scripture which the author had not intended to be so understood. Many examples from the writings of Origen could be given to illustrate this. In his *Commentary on the Gospel of John*, for example, Origen states that the reference to “Christ” as the “light of men” should be understood in a figurative manner.<sup>47</sup> He writes that this reference

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<sup>46</sup> Commenting on de Lubac’s defence of Origen, *A Catholic Commentary of Holy Scripture* writes: “Indeed in 1943 there appeared an able defence of Origen’s exegetical views by H. de Lubac in which he attempts to show that the great Alexandrian has been misunderstood (*hom. sur la Genese*). Origen’s intense devotion to Christ, argues de Lubac, made him seek a spiritual and evangelical meaning in all Scripture. But he always admitted the historical character. If he said that there are some purely spiritual episodes from which one cannot derive any literal sense, he probably meant only that one should take the passage as figurative or metaphorical. He confused the spiritual with the figurative. Or again when Origen said that certain Bible episodes were not histories, what he meant was – they really happened, but if they had *only* their literal historical meaning there would be no sufficient reason for their happening at all, and we should be obliged to say they never really happened. Such are in brief the general lines of de Lubac’s vindication.” *A Catholic Commentary of Holy Scripture* (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1953), 55. Other patristic scholars examining Origen have also been drawn to a similar conclusion. For example the *Encyclopedia of the Early Church* writes (emphasis added): “He [Origen] always explains the literal meaning accurately, helped by philology and by all the disciplines of his time and using his knowledge of Hebrew customs and exegesis, which he gained by cultivating relationships with Rabbis. Many have been scandalized by the statement in *De Principiis* IV: 2:5 that some texts have no valid literal sense. *But for Origen the literal sense means the material meaning of the letter, not, as for us, the meaning which the sacred author wished to express*; consequently, when the Bible speaks in figurative language, which it does frequently, it has no valid literal meaning in Origen’s sense. .... Origen believed much more in the historicity of scriptural passages than the most conservative of contemporary exegetes: cf. his defence of Noah’s ark against the objections of the Marcionite Apelles, who rightly said that the dimensions given would not allow room for so many animals (*Hom. Gen II: 2; C. Cel. IV: 31*).” *Encyclopedia of the Early Church: Institutum Patristicum Augustinianum Volume II* (Cambridge: James Clarke and Co, 1992), 620-621

<sup>47</sup> Origen wrote: “In the opening of the Gospel now before us He [Christ] is the light of men: ‘That which was made’, it says, ‘was life in Him, and the life was the light of men; and the light shines in darkness, and the darkness did not overtake it.’ A little further on, in the same passage, He is called the true light: ‘The true light, which lightens every man, was coming into the world.’ ... Now the sensible light of the world is the sun, and after it comes very worthily the moon, and the same title may be applied to the stars; but those lights of the world are said in Moses to have come into existence on the fourth day, and as they shed light on the things on the earth, they are not the true light. But the Saviour shines on creatures which have intellect and sovereign reason, that their minds may behold their proper objects of vision, and so he is the light of the intellectual world, that is to say, of reasonable souls. .... But the Saviour, being the light of the world, illuminates not bodies, but by His incorporeal power the incorporeal intellect, to the end that each of us, enlightened as by the sun, may be able to discern the rest of the things of the mind. .... If it admits of being taken in a metaphorical sense we ought not to take it literally. When we apply the mystical and allegorical method to the expression ‘light of the world’ and the many analogous terms

should not be understood ‘*literally*’ (by which he meant in a literal-historical manner) but rather ‘*metaphorically*’, which, as stated earlier, would later be included (in addition to the ‘literal-historical’) within the ‘literal sense of Scripture’ – the *intended sense* of the inspired author.

### **Some definition of terms used in biblical scholarship today contrasted with the usage of such terms by the Early Fathers**

Having noted the confusion that arises concerning the meaning of certain terms used by the Early Fathers, some of the more recurring among these will now be briefly examined. Before examining these, however, it must be stated that the particular terminology employed by the Fathers is not of primary importance but rather *the meaning they intended to convey by the choice of words they used*. Certain terms were used by the Fathers, which often convey a different meaning than that indicated by the use of the same terms today. This has led to some confusion and, I argue, unfair criticism, particularly with respect to Origen’s writings and his appreciation for the ‘literal truth’ of the Scriptures.

**(a) Literal:** This term is often used by the Early Fathers to indicate the meaning directly contained in the words (i.e. their literal-historical or literal-material meaning). For example when Jesus said, “I am the vine”, “I am the gate of the sheepfold” or “You are the salt of the earth”, the Fathers wrote that these statements were not to be understood *literally*, by which they meant in a *literalist* or *literal-material* manner, as this would imply that Jesus was a physical gate and his disciples were real salt. The term ‘literal’ then, when used by the Fathers, means - more often than not (depending on the context) - the ‘literal-historical’. This term should not, therefore, be confused (as sometimes appears to happen) with the wider meaning attributed to the same term when used later in the specific phrase ‘literal sense of Scripture’ (see next heading) where the same word is also found.

**(b) The ‘Literal Sense of Scripture’:** The ‘literal sense of Scripture’ is the first or immediate sense of any given passage examined in the Bible. It is a phrase coined later in the early Middle-

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mentioned above [‘Word’, ‘life’, ‘lamb of God’ terms for Christ in John’s Gospel Ch:1] we should surely do so with this expression also.” *Commentary on the Gospel of John* 1



Ages for that specific category within the ‘Quadrige’<sup>48</sup> identifying the sense or meaning of a phrase, sentence and/or passage of Scripture which was *intended by the inspired author*. It includes the full range of his intended meanings, both the literal-historical and the figurative or metaphorical. The Fathers in early patristic times did not use this precise expression but were nevertheless aware of its meaning. In the example given above (‘I am the gate’ and ‘You are the salt of the earth’) the Early Fathers knew that John the evangelist *intended* that these expressions of Jesus were to be understood metaphorically or figuratively. The meaning then conveyed by the metaphor or figure is the ‘literal sense of Scripture’, for, at the time of writing, the evangelist was aware that this was its intended meaning.

**(c) Spiritual, Allegorical, or Figurative:** The Early Fathers often used the terms “spiritual”, “allegorical”, or “figurative”, in their writings, indicating an extended or added meaning they found in a passage of Scripture, other than that of the obvious literal-historical. When these terms were used by the Fathers it must be discovered whether they were referring to: (a) extended or added meanings which the inspired author intended and, therefore, what belongs to the ‘literal sense of Scripture’ (as found in the above examples when the evangelists recount Jesus’ figurative sayings ‘I am the gate’ and ‘You are the salt of the earth’) (b) extended or added meanings which - at the time of writing - the inspired author was not conscious or aware of, added meanings – which although hidden at the time – were intended by the Holy Spirit to be discovered at some future providential time and would be included in what later would be defined as the ‘spiritual sense of Scripture’<sup>49</sup> or (c) extended or added meanings which the Fathers proposed from the text under study, figurative meanings which might be described as speculative, loose and disconnected from the literal sense, “spiritual” with a small ‘s’ but which meaning does not strictly flow from the Holy Spirit.

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<sup>48</sup> The ‘Quadrige’ or ‘the fourfold sense of Scripture’ (with the ‘literal sense’ as the basis for the three ‘spiritual senses’ – the ‘allegorical’, the ‘moral’ and the ‘anagogical’) was refined more clearly in the early Middle Ages. “The fully developed fourfold [sense] did not appear in the earliest patristic writers... As a developed scheme the quadrige first appeared in the *Conlationes* of John Cassian in the fifth century, from which it was transmitted to medieval students of Scripture...” (*Ancient Faith for the Church’s Future* [ed. Mark Husbands and Jeffrey P. Greenman, Downers Grove Illinois, IVP Academic, 2008], 113). Within the Quadrige, the ‘literal sense of Scripture’ described the first and immediate sense – the *intended* sense of the human author. (See, *Ancient Faith for the Church’s Future* 110-126; R. C. Sproul, *Knowing Scripture* [Downers Grove Illinois, IVP Academic, 2009], 60-62; Alister E. Mc Grath, *Christian Theology - An Introduction* [5<sup>th</sup> ed. London; Wiley-Blackwell, 2011], 132-133)

<sup>49</sup> See next paragraph.

**(d) The ‘Spiritual Sense of Scripture’:** The precise phrase or definition ‘the spiritual Sense of Scripture’ (like the literal sense above) was not used by the Early Fathers. However, they were aware of its meaning as they recognised that all Scripture is inspired. Inspiration, as has been stated above, covers the full range of meaning intended by the Holy Spirit, both the intended sense of the human author (the ‘literal Sense of Scripture’) and, in addition, a hidden or deeper sense in the mind of the Holy Spirit, unknown to the human author at the time of writing but which would be discovered at some later time. This ‘spiritual sense of Scripture’ – as mentioned earlier - was later developed and refined within the ‘Quadrige’<sup>50</sup> to have three distinct components (a) the allegorical (b) the tropological (or moral) and (c) the anagogical.<sup>51</sup> The ‘spiritual sense of Scripture’, although distinct from the ‘literal sense of Scripture’, is not disconnected from it but rather is built upon it. For the literal sense acts as its necessary foundation. This additional hidden meaning, the ‘spiritual sense of Scripture’, as mentioned above, was always believed in and sought after by the Fathers.

### **Origen on the Cleansing of the Temple in Book 10 of his *Commentary on John’s Gospel***

#### **1. Origen’s important reference to the “spurious money” or the “cheap worthless coinage” of the money-changer**

Although Origen is often criticised for his overly-allegorical interpretation of the Scriptures at the expense of the literal sense, it is ironic that one of the most significant pieces of *historical* information concerning the activities of the money-changers in the Temple should be found in his writings. In his *Commentary on the Cleansing of the Temple* in chapter two of *John’s Gospel*, Origen made several important references – as was seen earlier in this Appendix (see section entitled “The Coins that the Money-changers exchanged within the Temple were Copper or ‘Token’ coins”) – which apparently indicate the precise nature of the coinage which the money-changers were offering in exchange in the Holy Place. Such references are among the strongest sources of evidence from the writings of the Early Church Fathers to suggest that the coinage

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<sup>50</sup> See footnote 48

<sup>51</sup> Alister E. Mc Grath writes: “The origins of this method lie specifically in the distinction between the literal and spiritual senses. In addition to the literal sense, three nonliteral [spiritual] senses could be distinguished: the allegorical, defining what Christians are to believe: the tropological or moral, defining what Christians are to do: the anagogical, defining what Christians were to hope for.” *Christian Theology - An Introduction*, 132.

offered by the money-changers in the Temple was merely that of base metal (copper) and, therefore, of possessing token value only. As these references have already been examined, they will not be repeated here. The significance of such monetary references by Origen for the relevant Gospel events in our thesis will be examined in chapter four.

## 2. A Single Event Only

Origen makes thorough and detailed reflections on the Cleansing of the Temple in Book 10 of his *Commentary on the Gospel of John*.

By way of contrast with some of the Early Fathers cited earlier in this Appendix (Augustine, John Chrysostom and Theophilus), Origen believed in a single cleansing event only. He rejected the notion that another and earlier event, distinct from that reported by the Synoptic evangelists,<sup>52</sup> was described in John's Gospel (2:13-22). The reason for his denial of such an earlier cleansing at the beginning of Jesus' ministry was due to difficulties Origen experienced in reconciling what he proposed in his *Commentary on John's Gospel* were several apparent discrepancies in the chronology of events that are supposed to have happened at this time when the four Gospels are read together. The events making up this chronology are: (1) The Baptism of Jesus (2) The temptations of Jesus in the desert (3) Jesus goes to Galilee – to Nazareth and Capernaum (4) The Wedding Feast of Cana (5) The Cleansing of the Temple (6) John the Baptist baptising and (7) John the Baptist's arrest. In particular, Origen emphasised two chronological discrepancies, both of which he believed made an earlier cleansing impossible to situate. These are presented in his *Commentary on John's Gospel* (Book 10.2-4). The first disparity revolves around the Wedding Feast of Cana, which, Origen maintained, following his reading of the chronology presented in the Gospel of John, took place on the seventh day<sup>53</sup> from Jesus' baptism in the river Jordan. As the

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<sup>52</sup> Mt: 21:12-13, Mk: 11:15-18 and Lk: 19:45-46.

<sup>53</sup> In the beginning of the Gospel of John - in his 'opening week' - there are certain time indicators given, which Origen assumed began with the baptism of Jesus in the Jordan (that 'the week' begins with Jesus' baptism is not however mentioned in the text) and culminated with the Wedding Feast of Cana. In chapter one of his Gospel, the evangelist leads three times with the phrase, "On the next day...." (Jn: 1: 29, 35 and 43) before ending the opening week in Jn 2:1 with the words "On the third day there was a marriage at Cana in Galilee....". If the Wedding Feast of Cana took place on the seventh day from the baptism of Jesus this would, according to Origen, leave no time for other events to have taken place which the Synoptic Gospels record, particularly the forty days of temptation in the desert. Two things might be said in relation to this difficulty raised by Origen:

Wedding Feast of Cana immediately precedes the Cleansing of the Temple in John's Gospel, Origen believed that such an order of events would have left no time for the forty days - reported by the three Synoptic Gospels (Mt 4:1-11; Mk 1:12-13; Lk 4:1-13) that Jesus spent in the Judean Desert after his baptism. Secondly, Origen suggested that it would not be possible to reconcile the resultant discrepancies between the Synoptic accounts of Jesus going to Galilee *after* John the Baptist had been arrested (and after a suggested first Cleansing of the Temple) with that of John's account of Jesus' going to Galilee *before* the Cleansing of the Temple with John the Baptist still baptising and not having been arrested. These suggested discrepancies (Origen – as has been noted - may have been mistaken in his reading of John's chronology), made it impossible for Origen to consider an earlier cleansing at the beginning of Jesus' ministry. They led him to seek an alternative explanation other than that which is found "in the outward and material letter" (Book 10.2). Origen ultimately proposed that these apparent discrepancies could only be resolved "anagogically", or, by a "mystical" interpretation. This was the only way, he proposed, that our faith in the Gospels "as being true and written by a divine spirit, or as records worthy of credence" (Book 10.2), could be upheld. In the end, Origen reasoned that the evangelists "proposed to speak the truth where it was possible both materially and spiritually, and where this was not possible it was their intention to prefer the spiritual to the material" (Book 10.4).

Origen wrote (emphasis added): "*If the discrepancy between the Gospels is not solved, we must give up our trust in the Gospels, as being true and written by a divine spirit, or as records worthy of credence, for both these characters are held to belong to these works. Those who accept the four Gospels, and who do not consider that their apparent discrepancy is to be solved anagogically (by mystical interpretation), will have to clear up the difficulty, raised above, about the forty days of*

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(1) The days that the evangelist wrote may not have been intended to be read with literal-historical intent (as mentioned earlier, the literal sense of Scripture is that sense *intended* by the author). Many scholars propose that John may have constructed the opening week of his Gospel as a mirror reflection of the opening week of Genesis so that with the revealing of the Son of God, the world was experiencing a new 'beginning' and a new 'creation', (see, Thomas L. Brodie, *The Gospel According to John* [New York, Oxford University Press, 1993] 129-132; John Macnamara, *Through the Rearview Mirror* [Cambridge Massachusetts, Mit Press, 1999] 53-54; Robert P. Vande Kappelle, *Truth Revealed: The Message of the Gospel of John Then and Now*, [Eugene Oregon, Wipf and Stock, 2014], 35-41; Cynthia A. Jarvis and E. Elizabeth Johnson, *Feasting of the Gospels, John Vol 1*, [Westminster, John Knox Press, 2015], 2-7. E. Ray Clendenen, *Jesus's Opening Week: A Deep Exegesis of John 1:1-2:11*, [Eugene Oregon, Wipf and Stock, 2019]. If this were John's intention, then such a discrepancy would not apply. (2) In addition to the intended parallel with the Genesis account which the evangelist may have deliberated designed, a literal-chronological order may also be true for the seven days in the beginning of John's Gospel. Origen may have been mistaken – as indicated above - in assuming that the first day of 'the week' necessarily begins with the baptism of Jesus in the river Jordan. The Gospel, in fact, does not specify what happened on the 'first day'.

*the temptation*, a period for which no room can be found in any way in John's narrative; and they will also have to tell us when it was that the *Lord came to Capernaum*. *If it was after the six days of the period of His baptism, the sixth being that of the marriage at Cana of Galilee, then it is clear that the temptation never took place, and that He never was at Nazara, and that John was not yet delivered up. Now, after Capernaum, where He abode not many days, the Passover of the Jews was at hand, and He went up to Jerusalem, where He cast the sheep and oxen out of the temple, and poured out the small change of the bankers.* In Jerusalem, too, it appears that Nicodemus, the ruler and Pharisee, first came to Him by night, and heard what we may read in the Gospel. 'After these things, Jesus came, and His disciples, into the land of Judaea, and there He tarried with them and baptized, *at the same time at which John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there were many waters there, and they came and were baptized; for John was not yet cast into prison*'. On this occasion, too, there was a questioning on the part of John's disciples with the Jews about purification, and they came to John, saying of the Saviour. 'Behold, He baptizeth, and all come to Him.' They had heard words from the Baptist, the exact tenor of which it is better to take from Scripture itself. Now, if we ask when Christ was first in Capernaum, our respondents, if they follow the words of Matthew, and of the other two, will say, *After the temptation, when, 'leaving Nazareth, He came and dwelt in Capernaum by the sea.'* *But how can they show both the statements to be true, that of Matthew and Mark, that it was because He heard that John was delivered up that He departed into Galilee, and that of John, found there, after a number of other transactions, subsequent to His stay at Capernaum, after His going to Jerusalem, and His journey from there to Judaea, that John was not yet cast into prison, but was baptizing in Aenon near Salim?* There are many other points on which the careful student of the Gospels will find that their narratives do not agree; and these we shall place before the reader, according to our power, as they occur. *The student, staggered at the consideration of these things, will either renounce the attempt to find all the Gospels true, and not venturing to conclude that all our information about our Lord is untrustworthy, will choose at random one of them to be his guide; or he will accept the four, and will consider that their truth is not to be sought for in the outward and material letter.* I do not condemn them if they [i.e. the evangelists] even sometimes *dealt freely with things which to the eye of history happened differently, and changed them so as to subserve the mystical aims they had in view; so as to speak of a thing which happened in a certain place, as if it had happened in another, or of what took place at a certain time, as if it had taken place at another time, and to*

*introduce into what was spoken in a certain way some changes of their own. They proposed to speak the truth where it was possible both materially and spiritually, and where this was not possible it was their intention to prefer the spiritual to the material. The spiritual truth was often preserved, as one might say, in the material falsehood ...” (Commentary on John’s Gospel 10.2-4)*

As a result of such proposed discrepancies, Origen – as has been seen - could not accept as chronologically reliable the earlier Cleansing of the Temple that John presents in his Gospel. Origen, therefore, accepted the Synoptic chronology alone and assigned such cleansing actions by Jesus that John records to the beginning of Holy Week.<sup>54</sup> I suggest, however, that such an overly strict or rigid response by Origen to the proposed chronological anomalies above, was not, in fact, necessary and that a probable resolution may be offered which accords with the literal-historical features in the Gospels<sup>55</sup>. If such is the case then the two-cleansing interpretation of Augustine, John Chrysostom and Theophilus (see earlier in this Appendix) deserves respectful consideration.

On the basis of Origen’s assumption that the four evangelists were recording one and the same Cleansing of the Sanctuary, he also went on to propose that the record of the Triumphal Entry and the Cleansing of the Temple, as reported in the Gospels, cannot be read in a literal-historical manner without experiencing certain difficulties. In particular he states that the two events in John’s Gospel are separated in terms of their chronological placement, whereas in the Synoptics they are linked together. This proposed discrepancy arose, as was mentioned above, as a result of Origen’s earlier supposition that the Cleansing of the Temple happened only once. Origen wrote (emphasis added):

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<sup>54</sup> See also Origen’s *Commentary on Matthew* Book 16

<sup>55</sup> However, as alluded to in footnote 52, there may be a resolution to the problems that Origen poses. For example, with regard to the first proposed discrepancy, it is suggested that the seven days up to the wedding feast of Cana in John’s Gospel need not necessarily be counted from the baptism of Jesus in the Jordan but may owe their origin elsewhere (the Gospel, in fact, does not count the days from when Jesus was baptised but rather from when John was baptising in the Jordan and when - possibly sometime later upon seeing Jesus coming to him again - he declared to his disciples, “Behold the Lamb of God”). This proposed chronological reconstruction would answer Origen’s objections and allow time for the forty days which the Synoptics state that Jesus spent in the desert and also for the period of time that John’s Gospel records for Jesus having been in Galilee. In addition, it may also be possible to reconcile the second discrepancy that Origen suggests above, if two (or even multiple) visits to Galilee took place, the earlier visit taking place before the Cleansing and recorded by John and the later visit after the cleansing and reported by the Synoptics.

*“I have written out long sections from the Gospels, but I have thought it necessary to do so, in order to exhibit the discrepancy at this part of our Gospel. Three of the Gospels place these incidents [the Triumphal Entry and the Cleansing of the Temple], which we supposed to be the same as those narrated by John, in connection with one visit of the Lord to Jerusalem. While John, on the other hand, places them in connection with two visits which are widely separated from each other and between which were various journeys of the Lord to other places. I conceive it to be impossible for those who admit nothing more than the history in their interpretation to show that these discrepant statements are in harmony with each other. If any one considers that we have not given a sound exposition, let him write a reasoned rejoinder to this declaration of ours.”*<sup>56</sup>

From the above commentaries Origen made on John’s Gospel, it may in summary be stated that Origen believed: (1) there was only one Cleansing of the Temple (2) the Synoptic linking of the Triumphal Entry in Holy Week and Cleansing is correct and (3) John removed the Cleansing event from its proper chronological place and inserted it at the beginning of his Gospel.

In addition to the chronological discrepancies that Origen proposed above, he also suggested that there are some discrepancies *within* the various accounts of the Cleansing of the Temple. These proposed discrepancies will now be examined, for they also influenced Origen with regard to the extent of history he believed could be gleaned from the Gospel texts. Before outlining these, it should be noted that as Origen posited a single event only, he, therefore, compared the accounts of the four Gospels, looking for similarities and dissimilarities, *assuming they were describing the same event*. If, however, the four Gospels were not recording the same event but were in fact recording two different cleansings, as proposed by Augustine, John Chrysostom and Theophilus, several of the apparent discrepancies proposed by Origen could then quite easily have been addressed.

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<sup>56</sup> *Commentary on John’s Gospel* 10.16

### **3. Comparison of the four Gospel accounts of the Cleansing of the Temple and certain proposed discrepancies that Origen proposed would arise if they are read in a literal-historical manner**

In sections 15, 16, and 17 of Book 10 of his *Commentary on the Gospel of John*, Origen presents John's account of the Cleansing of the Temple and compares it with the Synoptic accounts. In section 15 he examines the four accounts so as to consider what each evangelist had to say, and finishes by stating "I conceive it to be impossible for those who admit nothing more than the history in their interpretation to show that these discrepant statements are in harmony with each other".<sup>57</sup>

In section 17 of Book 10, Origen outlines in detail the discrepancies that he proposes arise when the Cleansing of the Temple (and certain accompanying events, noting in particular Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem) is read in a literal-historical manner. Among the discrepancies Origen proposes for the Cleaning of the Temple are: "the Gospel of John [has] 'He casts out those who bought', but Matthew says that 'He cast out those who sold and those who bought in the temple'." (Book 10:17) Again, Matthew has Jesus "cast out" but Mark has "He began to cast out" (Book 10:17). In addition and with greater significance, Origen suggests a discrepancy in the remarks Jesus made concerning the Temple for in John, Jesus said, "You have made it a place of merchandise" but in Matthew, Mark and Luke his words are "You have made it a den of robbers" (Book 10:17).

With regard to the various accounts describing the Cleansing of the Temple, therefore, Origen simply concluded that, as there are apparent discrepancies described, and, as the evangelists cannot have been mistaken in what they wrote, the evangelists must have written their accounts with an alternative meaning in mind other than that of a literal-historical rendering. Where discrepancies could not be resolved, Origen proposed the literal-historical must be waived in favour of a mystical or anagogical interpretation. Where no such discrepancy exists both levels of meaning are to be found. Later under a heading entitled, "Origen's Mystical or Anagogical Interpretation of the

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<sup>57</sup> *Commentary on John's Gospel*:10.15



Cleansing of the Temple”, Origen’s mystical interpretation, offering a resolution to the above highlighted discrepancies, will be presented.

**4. Certain elements of the Gospel accounts, if read in a literal-historical manner, could also be shown *on historical grounds* to be unreliable; they therefore were intended to be understood allegorically**

Because of the discrepancies that Origen believed accompanied a literal-historical rendering of the texts, he, as was noted above, suggested that the accounts should be read mystically or anagogically. Convinced that this was the only way in which such discrepancies could be resolved he sought, therefore, a figurative or allegorical meaning from the texts. In his over-zealous effort, at times, for defending the inerrancy of Scripture, which prompted a movement away from the literal-historical in favour of an allegorical interpretation, Origen even went a step further. In his *Commentary on John’s Gospel*, he proposed that certain elements of the Gospel accounts, if read in a literal-historical manner, could also be shown *on historical grounds* to be unreliable.<sup>58</sup> By showing their historical unreliability, Origen, contrary to what might be thought, was seeking to safeguard their inerrancy. He contended that certain historical details described in the Gospel accounts, could be proven to be unreliable on the grounds of failing to correspond with the security present in the Temple and, in addition, with the religious culture and practice of the times. In particular Origen questioned: (a) Would Jesus have been able to achieve such a monumental eviction in view of the fact that he would probably have been restrained; could the “One held in but slight esteem” have carried out such *disproportionate* actions and would those who had been

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<sup>58</sup> Origen wrote (emphasis added): “And they that received a blow from the scourge of small cords at the hands of *One held in but slight esteem, were driven out of the temple, would not have attacked Him and raised a cry and avenged themselves with their own hand, especially when there was such a multitude present who might all feel themselves insulted by Jesus in the same way?* To think, moreover, of the *Son of God* taking the small cords in His hands and plaiting a scourge out of them for this driving out from the temple, *does it not bespeak audacity and temerity and even some measure of lawlessness?* ..... In the Gospel of John He casts out those who bought, but Matthew says that He cast out those who sold and those who bought in the temple. And the buyers would naturally be more numerous than the sellers..... *The words addressed to them, too, are harsher in the other Evangelists than in John. For John says that Jesus said to them, "Make not My Father's house a house of merchandise," while in the others they are rebuked for making the house of prayer a den of robbers.* Now the house of His Father did not admit of being turned into a den of robbers, though by the acts of sinful men it was brought to be a house of merchandise. It was not only the house of prayer, but in fact the house of God, and by force of human neglect it harboured robbers, and was turned not only into their house but their den--a thing which no skill, either of architecture or of reason, could make it.” *Commentary on John’s Gospel* 10.16,17.

disciplined not have “attacked Him and raised a cry and avenged themselves”? (*Commentary on John’s Gospel* 10.16, emphasis added) (b) Would the “Son of God” have behaved in the Holy Place with such “audacity and temerity and even some measure of lawlessness” (*Commentary on John’s Gospel* 10.16) (c) Would it have been likely for Jesus to refer to the Temple as a “den of robbers” as “the house of His Father did not admit of being turned into a den of robbers, though by the acts of sinful men it was brought to be a house of merchandise” (*Commentary on John’s Gospel* 10.17). Origen believed that it was unlikely that Jesus could have made the latter remark concerning the Holy Place, for the Temple, although being a “house of merchandise”, would not, according to Origen, have admitted “robbers” into its service. He gives no reason for such a claim. He appears to have assumed that the Judaic external obedience to the Law and the general concern for the holiness of the Temple would have made such an accusation impossible. Although Origen was open to such historical-critical views and appears to have leaned in favour of them, he was not, however, insistent on such interpretation. For alongside the very same excerpts, Origen admits that it may have been “by divine power that He subjected them”. In other words Origen was open to a literal-historical reading of the extraordinary features in the texts by appealing to “the divine nature of Jesus, who was able to quench, when He desired to do so, the rising anger of His foes [and] by divine grace to get the better of myriads, and to scatter the devices of tumultuous men” (*Commentary on John’s Gospel* 10.17)<sup>59</sup>.

Adopting such criticism it might be suggested that Origen conducted his exegesis in a manner little different from that of a section of recent historical-critical scholarship. He, it might be said, placed greater authority and merit on historical data gained from outside than from what is found in the Gospel texts themselves. This point will be considered later when comparing Origen’s writing with more recent historical-critical scholarship where I will propose that this is not the case. His

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<sup>59</sup> Origen wrote (emphasis added): “We have to consider if the casting out of buyers and sellers in the temple was not out of keeping with the reputation of one who was thought to be the Son of a carpenter, *unless, as we said before, it was by a divine power that He subjected them* [Origen wrote earlier ‘One refuge remains for the writer who wishes to defend these things and is minded to treat the occurrence as real history, namely, to appeal to *the divine nature of Jesus, who was able to quench, when He desired to do so, the rising anger of His foes, by divine grace to get the better of myriads, and to scatter the devices of tumultuous men*’]. *Commentary on John’s Gospel* 10.17.

reason for presenting such criticism was, ironically, not to deny but rather to safeguard the inerrancy Scripture in its entirety.<sup>60</sup>

### 5. The extent of the historical features accepted by Origen

Although Origen proposed that certain aspects of the Gospel accounts of the Cleansing of the Temple should be read allegorically, he did, nevertheless, interpret many of the features as possessing historical reliability. He states for example that Jesus literally evicted those who bought and sold in the Temple and also overturned the money-changers' tables. How many is not certain, but on account of the criticism above suggesting (a) such unlikely behaviour by the Son of God and (b) the improbable restraint from within the Temple, it seems likely that Origen believed the Cleaning of the Temple to have been on a smaller scale than that assumed by the Fathers in general. Although the extent of Jesus' actions in the Temple may be disputed, there can be no doubt that in Origen's mind the event has a historical foundation. This historical foundation serves to indicate "a deeper truth", which according to Origen is the real significance of the event. Such "deeper truth", centred on the Temple and the end of "material sacrifices"<sup>61</sup>, is also curiously proposed in more recent scholarship (for example, see the commentaries made by E. P. Sanders and Jacob Neusner in Appendix 2) as the real meaning of Jesus' actions.

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<sup>60</sup> Origen appears to have reasoned that if it can be shown that the features described in the Gospels cannot have been historical, the reader must assume that the evangelists intended a meaning other than the literal-historical. The texts are not in error. Rather, according to Origen, the reader should read these passages allegorically and not with literal-historical intent. Although his intention was to safeguard the doctrine of inerrancy, the lengths to which Origen went in order to defend the truth of the Scriptures may have been unnecessary. The discrepancies he cited I argue may be resolved, particularly when the Fathers' understanding of two different cleansing events having taken place are accepted.

<sup>61</sup> Origen wrote (emphasis added): "When, therefore, the Saviour finds in the temple, the house of His Father, those who are selling oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting, He drives them out, using the scourge of small cords which He has made, along with the sheep and oxen of their trade, and pours out their stock of coin, as not deserving to be kept together, so little is it worth. He also overturns the tables in the souls of such as love money, saying even to those who sell doves, 'Take these things hence,' that they may no longer traffic in the house of God. But I believe that in these words *He indicated also a deeper truth*, and that we may regard these occurrences as a symbol of the fact that the service of that temple was not any longer to be carried on by the priests in the way of material sacrifices, and that the time was coming when the law could no longer be observed." *Commentary on John's Gospel* 10.16

Although the extent of historicity was disputed by Origen, he was, however, open to the possibility that this was a catastrophic event of great magnitude. If, as Origen stated, history was in fact envisioned by the evangelists, then this “work” of Christ was not “second” to that of Cana (as given in John’s Gospel) but actually surpassed it for “the power it exhibits” and the “faith it claimed from its beholders”. Origen certainly considered the possibility of a monumental act of eviction having been accomplished. He wrote (emphasis added): “Thus the occurrence in our passage, if it really took place, *was not second in point of the power it exhibits* to any even of the most marvellous works Christ wrought, and *claimed no less by its divine character the faith of the beholders*. One may show it to be a greater work than that done at Cana of Galilee in the turning of water into wine; for in that case it was only soulless matter that was changed, *but here it was the soul and will of thousands of men.*”<sup>62</sup>

In his Commentary on the Cleansing of the Temple in John’s Gospel in the *Catena Aurea*, Thomas Aquinas cites several of the Early Fathers all of whom assume, as a basis for the deeper spiritual meaning they found, a literal-historical interpretation of John’s Gospel account. Among the list of names he includes is that of Origen. It is of interest to note that Aquinas does not hint at any of the concerns that Origen made concerning proposed discrepancies in the four Gospel accounts. Aquinas merely assumes, on the basis of all that Origen had written (and he may have had access to more manuscripts than are extant today<sup>63</sup>), that Origen stood united with the Early Fathers with regard to the literal-historical interpretation of the Gospel accounts describing Jesus’ actions in the Temple. In his Commentary on the Cleansing of the Temple in John’s Gospel, Aquinas quotes from Origen’s writings accordingly: “Origen: Should it appear something out of the order of things, that the Son of God should make a scourge of small cords, to drive them out of the temple? We have one answer in which some take refuge, that is, the divine power of Jesus, Who, when He pleased, could extinguish the wrath of His enemies however innumerable, and quiet the tumult of their minds. .... This act indeed exhibits no less power, than His more positive miracles; nay rather, more than the miracle by which water was converted into wine: in that there the subject-matter

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<sup>62</sup> Origen: *Commentary on John’s Gospel* 10.17

<sup>63</sup> Origen is not only cited by Thomas Aquinas in his study on the Gospel of John in the *Catena Aurea* but is also in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. It may well be that Aquinas had access to a wider source of Origen’s writings on the Gospels to draw from in this regard than those which have survived to modern times.

was inanimate, here, the minds of so many thousands of men are overcome..... John says here that He drove out the sellers from the temple; Matthew, the sellers and buyers. The number of buyers was much greater than of the sellers: and therefore to drive them out was beyond the power of the carpenter's Son, as He was supposed to be, had He not by His divine power put all things under Him, as it is said."<sup>64</sup>

## **6. Summary points of note concerning the extent of historical features of the Cleansing of the Temple accepted by Origen**

In summary thus far it has been seen that Origen (on the basis of what he wrote in his *Commentary on John's Gospel*) disputed the literal-historical features of the Gospel accounts of the Cleansing of the Temple in three areas. He believed that:

- (a) John and the Synoptics recorded one and the same event. The Synoptic chronology appears to be true
- (b) Jesus probably referred to the Temple as being a "place of merchandise" but not a "den of robbers"
- (c) As Origen believed such behaviour would not have been expected from the Son of God and, as Jesus would also probably have been restrained, it may be assumed that Origen held that Jesus evicted only a *small* number of those who bought and sold in the Temple and overturned a *few* of the money-changers' tables, pouring out their coins. However, that Origen held such a reduced scale is not certain. Origen, in fact, wrote of the possibility of an act of catastrophic magnitude where "the minds of so many thousands of men are overcome".

Although Origen seemed less concerned with the literal-historical features (but sought, as was alluded to earlier, a "deeper truth" than that found in "the outward and material letter") recorded

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<sup>64</sup> Thomas Aquinas: *Catena Aurea: Gospel of John: Ch 2*

by the evangelists in relation to the Cleansing of the Temple, it is ironical to note that among all the Fathers he is emphatic with regard to one historical feature that has, I propose, great significance for an understanding of the reasons for Jesus' actions in the Holy Place. This feature, which Origen described several times in his *Commentary on John's Gospel*, was examined in chapter one of the thesis and earlier in this Appendix<sup>65</sup> and relates to the coinage offered in exchange by the money-changers of the Temple. Origen's description of such coinage might in summary be re-stated here as, "the small coin of the changers", coinage "which was [merely] their own", or which he simply described as "spurious money", "cheap worthless coinage" and which was "worth nothing". This coinage, I will later propose in chapter two, was merely that of copper or token value. Although Origen made reference to the worthless value of this coinage on a number of occasions, he did not however, it appears<sup>66</sup>, develop the significance such coinage had on the interpretation of these texts. The coinage of the money-changer – as stated above - will be examined later in chapter two where I will suggest that the exchange of such token coinage by the money-changers of the Temple for coins of real intrinsic wealth was among the main reasons for Jesus' actions in the Holy Place. It was, in addition, the primary reason why Jesus referred to the Temple as being a "den of robbers" (Mk 11:17). Although Origen (and the Fathers in general) did not, it appears, develop the significance of this "spurious" and "worthless" money and/or suggest it as an explanation for Jesus' actions he, and the Fathers in general, were well aware of the unethical nature of 'token' or 'counterfeit' monetary practice.<sup>67</sup> In addition, during the time in which many of the Fathers wrote two important things had happened, which, I propose, would have given them less reason to emphasize the immorality associated with such actions in the Holy Place. They are (a) the Temple in Jerusalem had been destroyed (and as a consequence the operations of the money-changers in the Holy Place had ceased) and (b) the debasement of coinage and the offering of token coinage, relatively unknown prior to the time of the emperor Nero (c. 60 C.E.), had become commonplace throughout the Roman Empire.

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<sup>65</sup> See the section entitled, "The Coins that the Money-Changers exchanged within the Temple were Copper or Token Coins".

<sup>66</sup> As many of Origen's writings are lost or were simply destroyed, it is not known what he wrote when commenting on the Cleansing of the Temple in his other lost works.

<sup>67</sup> See the section of this Appendix entitled "The Fathers were aware of 'genuine and counterfeit coins' and, in addition, of the command attributed to Jesus 'be ye good money-changers'."

## 7. Origen's Mystical or Anagogical Interpretation of the Cleansing of the Temple

Origen, as mentioned earlier, resolved the apparent discrepancies of the Gospel accounts by suggesting that the “things described and the discrepancies found in them can be satisfactorily solved by the anagogic method”, by a mystical interpretation revealing a “deeper truth”. He believed that the evangelists “dealt freely” at times with the historical content of certain events in the life of Jesus so as to emphasize the “spiritual” meaning that these events pointed to. The material meaning was subservient to the spiritual; it was made to serve this higher calling. The intention then of the evangelists, according to Origen, was not primarily to present the historical “truth” of the Gospels, but rather to give the spiritual meaning and significance which flows from the events that were assumed to have taken place. This mystical or anagogical interpretation is given in his *Commentary on John's Gospel*.<sup>68</sup> To what extent the evangelists were conscious - at

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<sup>68</sup> Origen wrote: “It should be carefully considered whether it is possible that the changes of the things described and the discrepancies found in them can be satisfactorily solved by the anagogic method. Each of the Evangelists ascribes to the Word different modes of action, which produce in souls of different tempers not the same effects but yet similar ones. ...But I believe that in these words He indicated also [i.e. in addition to the fact that the evangelist knew this event to be historical] a deeper truth, and that we may regard these occurrences as a symbol of the fact that the service of that temple was not any longer to be carried on by the priests in the way of material sacrifices, and that the time was coming when the law could no longer be observed, however much the Jews according to the flesh desired it. For when Jesus casts out the oxen and sheep, and orders the doves to be taken away, it was because oxen and sheep and doves were not much longer to be sacrificed there in accordance with Jewish practices. And possibly the coins which bore the stamp of material things and not being of God were poured out by way of type; because the law which appears so venerable, with its letter that kills, was, now that Jesus had come and had used His scourge to the people, to be dissolved and poured out, the sacred office (episcopate) being transferred to those from the Gentiles who believed, and the kingdom of God being taken away from the Jews and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits of it. ....the natural temple is the soul skilled in reason, which, because of its inborn reason, is higher than the body; to which Jesus ascends to Jerusalem from Capernaum, the lower-lying place of less dignity, and in which, before Jesus' discipline is applied to it, are found tendencies which are earthly and senseless and dangerous, and things which have the name but not the reality of beauty, and which are driven away by Jesus with His word plaited out of doctrines of demonstration and of rebuke, to the end that His Father's house may no longer be a house of merchandize but may receive, for its own salvation and that of others, that service of God which is performed in accordance with heavenly and spiritual laws. ... Christ is zealous principally for that house of God which is in each of us; He does not wish that it should be a house of merchandise, nor that the house of prayer should be a den of robbers; for He is the Son of a jealous God. We ought to give a liberal interpretation to such utterances of Scripture; they speak of human things, but in the way of metaphor, to show that God desires that nothing foreign should be mixed up with His will in the soul of all men, indeed, but principally of those who are minded to accept the message of our most divine faith. ....For in some of those who have the temple in themselves He casts out all that sell and buy in the temple; but in others who do not quite obey the word of God, He only makes a beginning of casting out the sellers and buyers. There is a third class also besides these, in which He began to cast out the sellers only, and not also the buyers. With John, on the contrary, they are all cast out by the scourge woven of small cords, along with the sheep and the oxen..... The ox is symbolic of earthly things, for he is a husbandman. The sheep, of senseless and brutal things, because it is more servile than most of the creatures without reason. Of empty and unstable thoughts, the dove. Of things that are thought good but are not, the small change.” *Commentary on John's Gospel* 10.16

the time of writing - of the fullness of this “deeper truth” is not clear from his writings but it is manifest (see below) that Origen believed the evangelists were at least aware of some of its teaching.<sup>69</sup> The degree to which the evangelists consciously wrote according to this “anagogical” or “mystical” sense would later be defined – as earlier seen - as the ‘literal sense of Scripture’, that sense intended by the evangelists. What remained hidden to them (within the complete range of this “deeper truth”), would later be included under what would become known as the ‘spiritual sense of Scripture’.<sup>70</sup> Some aspects of this deeper truth are outlined by Origen in his *Commentary on John’s Gospel* (see footnote 68). He explains that Jesus’ actions symbolised that “the service of the temple was no longer to be carried on by the priests in the way of material sacrifices”, and “the sacred office (episcopate) was being transferred to those from the Gentiles who believed”. The animals and coins that were the object of Jesus’ discipline also pointed to the “letter that kills” and to the “kingdom of God [that] was being taken away from the Jews and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits of it”. Jesus, by “ascending” to Jerusalem, raised to a new height those who may wish to come from Capernaum, the “lower-lying place of less dignity” where life is “senseless and earthly” and has not the “reality of beauty”. The Temple was also, according to Origen, an allegory for each individual soul which must be attentive to make sure that “nothing foreign [merchandise or theft] should be mixed up with His will”. The apparent discrepancies in the Gospel accounts that Origen suggests between, casting out all the buyers and sellers (Matthew), making a beginning to cast out all that bought and sold (Mark), the sellers only (Luke) and driving out with a scourge all who were in the Holy Place with sheep and oxen as well (John) are explained

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<sup>69</sup> According to Origen, the evangelists, when not writing according to a corporeal sense, were writing according to a deeper “anagogical” or “mystical” meaning. Those mystical aspects, which the evangelists were conscious of and intended to communicate by the particular manner in which they wrote were – as was seen earlier - what would later be defined in the Church as the ‘literal sense (i.e. the intended sense) of Scripture’; those which were hidden to them but which might be discovered later are what would later be defined as the ‘spiritual sense of Scripture’. If Origen was correct in his mystical interpretation only of certain aspects of the texts (i.e. aspects which do not have also a literal-historical sense), the extent to which the evangelists were conscious of what he proposed is then the literal sense of the Gospel accounts. It is impossible to hold that the evangelists, when not writing according to a corporeal intent, were not conscious of aspects of this deeper meaning for otherwise it would have to be said that they were writing in a vacuum, with no conscious or intended meaning in mind. It is impossible that there would be no ‘literal sense of Scripture’.

<sup>70</sup> It is not clear whether Origen believed what he proposed as the “deeper truth” of the various elements within the Gospel accounts was actually in the mind of the evangelist at the time of writing (and therefore the literal sense of the passage) or whether it was unknown to the evangelists at the time of writing but only discovered later (and therefore the spiritual sense of the passage). Whether Origen considered it possible for the evangelist to have had both meanings in mind at the time of writing (and therefore both would be included in the literal sense of the passage) is also not certain.



as the state of different classes of people in the Temple. The ox expelled is symbolic of “earthly things”, the “sheep of senseless and brutal things, the dove of empty and unstable thoughts”, the coins of the money-changers “*of things that are thought good but are not*” (emphasis added).

**Origen and Augustine: Two Fathers united in their belief in biblical inerrancy, yet different in their response to the ‘*apparent* discrepancies’ in the Gospel accounts of the Cleansing of the Temple**

Augustine strongly defended the doctrine of biblical inerrancy. (For further examination of the ECF appreciation for the inerrancy of Scripture and the implications for their reading of the Gospel accounts describing Jesus’ actions in the Temple, see pages 63-69 of this Appendix). There could be no error in Scripture, not even in the smallest details recorded (Augustine wrote that “none of their authors has committed any error in writing”)<sup>71</sup>. In making this statement Augustine was aware of what might appear to be discrepancies in the Gospels, particularly when comparing parallel accounts of events in the life of Jesus recorded by all four evangelists. Although there may be no sure explanation today as to why one evangelist recorded details in a certain manner and order and a second evangelist in another, Augustine was not disturbed by such *minor* differences in presentation. He held firm in the belief of their reconciliation. Augustine might simply have said that, as the evangelists are no longer with us to explain these *apparently discrepant* areas, a credible explanation nevertheless exists; our duty is to search out the reasons for which the evangelists wrote as they did and to show the actual harmony that exists when reading their accounts together.

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<sup>71</sup> Augustine wrote (emphasis added): “To those books which are already styled canonical, I have learned to pay such reverence and honour as most firmly to believe that none of their authors has committed any error in writing. *If I come upon anything in the Scripture which seems contrary to the truth, I do not hesitate to suppose that either the manuscript is faulty [or it is no more than a faulty reading of the manuscript], or the translator has not caught the meaning of what was said, or I have not succeeded in understanding the passage.*” (Letter 82, a letter written to Jerome). In addition, Augustine defends the “truth of the Gospel” even when the evangelists do not follow “the very same plan, or use the very same words, while describing, nevertheless, the self-same fact” Augustine wrote: “Thus, too, in what more pertinently concerns the matter in hand, it is sufficiently obvious that, since the truth of the Gospel, conveyed in that word of God which abides eternal and unchangeable above all that is created, but which at the same time has been disseminated throughout the world by the instrumentality of temporal symbols, and by the tongues of men, has possessed itself of the most exalted height of authority, *we ought not to suppose that any one of the writers is giving an unreliable account, if, when several persons are recalling some matter either heard or seen by them, they fail to follow the very same plan, or to use the very same words, while describing, nevertheless, the self-same fact.*” (*On the Harmony of the Gospels: 2.12-16*)

In the end, according to Augustine, everything the evangelists wrote can be harmonised for their accounts are guaranteed by the Holy Spirit to be free from all error.

For example, Augustine notes that even though Matthew wrote that the Cleansing of the Temple happened on the day Jesus entered Jerusalem (Palm Sunday) and Mark on the following morning (Holy Monday), it did not in any way alter his belief that both accounts were without error. Both are literally correct. Matthew, according to Augustine, is chronologically correct whereas Mark simply writes of this event in connection with the fig-tree having withered to its roots.<sup>72</sup> Augustine wrote (emphasis added):

“Mark also records this occurrence [i.e. the fig tree] in due succession. He does not, however, follow the same order [i.e. as that of Matthew] in his narrative. For first of all, the fact which is related by Matthew, namely, that Jesus went into the temple, and cast out those who sold and bought there, is not mentioned at that point by Mark. On the other hand, Mark tells us that He looked round about upon all things, and, when the eventide was now come, went out into Bethany with the twelve. Next he informs us that on another day, when they were coming from Bethany, He was hungry, and cursed the fig-tree, as Matthew also intimates. Then the said Mark subjoins the statement that He came into Jerusalem, and that, on going into the temple, He cast out those who sold and bought there, *as if that incident took place not on the first day specified, but on a different day*. But inasmuch as Matthew puts the connection in these terms, ‘And He left them, and went out of the city into Bethany,’ and tells us that it was when returning in the morning into the city that He cursed the tree, *it is more reasonable to suppose that he, rather than Mark, has preserved the strict order of time so far as regards the incident of the expulsion of the sellers and buyers from the temple*. For when he uses the phrase, ‘And He left them, and went out,’ who can be understood by those parties whom He is thus said to have left, but those with whom He was previously speaking, namely, the persons who were so sore displeased

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<sup>72</sup> Augustine’s attempt at seeking a reconciliation here, however, may not have been necessary as, I propose that, Matthew and Mark may *both be chronologically* correct. A possible re-construction may be offered which is as follows: Jesus went into the Temple immediately after his triumphal entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday and began cleansing the Temple but as it was late and the major operations had shut down, he left as Mark records for Bethany. The following morning he returned to accomplish what could not have been done the evening before. There are therefore two stages to this second cleansing, the first the evening before and the second more dramatic stage on the following morning.

because the children cried out, "Hosanna to the Son of David"? It follows, then, that Mark has omitted what took place on the first day, when He went into the temple; and in mentioning that He found nothing on the fig-tree but leaves, he has introduced what He called to mind only there, but what really occurred on the second day, as both evangelists testify..... For in connection with the second day, the said Mark has recorded the incident of the casting of the sellers out of the temple, which he had omitted to notice as belonging to the first day.”<sup>73</sup>

In writing his Gospel in such manner, Mark, according to Augustine, was not intending to present a different chronological order from that of Matthew, but, rather, was emphasising the relationship that the Cleansing of the Temple has with the withered fig-tree. In other words, Mark was not making a statement concerning chronology but was stressing what he believed was the true meaning of this event. According to Augustine, Mark was not in error for his *intention* was to link this event with another, rather than present an exact chronology (I argue, as was earlier seen, that there is no need to seek a reconciliation of the two accounts in this manner for Matthew and Mark are *both* chronologically correct<sup>74</sup>). Mark may even have been aware at the time of writing that the Cleansing had actually taken place on the day before but continued to write as he did. It might then be asked as to why Augustine did not apply this same ‘thematic’ explanation to John’s account of the Cleansing of the Temple at the beginning of Jesus’ ministry. In other words, why did Augustine not accept that John (as he held Mark had done) removed the Cleansing of the Temple from its true chronological place and situated it, for theological reasons, at the beginning of his Gospel? It seems that for Augustine such a replacement would have carried this principle too far and would have altered the historical outline of Jesus’ life to such an extent that the meaning and purpose of his life and ministry would have been completely changed. In the first case (i.e. that of Mark’s linking the Cleansing with the fig-tree on the ‘following day’), the non-preoccupation with precise chronology<sup>75</sup> appears to have been, for Augustine, entirely understandable. Matthew and Mark present their accounts with different purposes in mind which in no way affects the historical setting

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<sup>73</sup> Augustine: *The Harmony of the Gospels* 2.68

<sup>74</sup> See footnote 71.

<sup>75</sup> Such a minor detail as to the exact hour (late on ‘Sunday’ as in Matthew or early on ‘Monday’ as in Mark) when Jesus cleansed the Temple during this - his final and triumphant - visit to Jerusalem was not, it appears according to Augustine, of primary importance for the evangelists.

of this important event at the close of Jesus' ministry. In the second case (i.e. that of suggesting that John relocated the one and same Cleansing of the Temple to the beginning of Jesus' ministry) the resultant *discrepancy* would, it seems, have been of a more serious nature.

Origen, I propose, could not have accepted such a 'carefree' or 'casual' explanation. He viewed the details more strictly. If there were apparent discrepancies when comparing the different accounts, the literal-historical letter must be waived in favour of a mystical sense. As this was for Origen the only possible explanation other than that of suggesting the Scriptures were in error, he leaned on it with all his might. In reviewing both Origen and Augustine's commentaries in respect of their efforts at reconciling such apparently discrepant features in the Gospels, one point should be noted - upon which they both fervently agreed - and that is their belief in the complete inerrancy of the Scriptures. Augustine believed they could be easily resolved without impinging on the literal-historical truth, Origen believed they could not and so had recourse to an allegorical interpretation. Their responses may have differed but not their belief in the literal truth intended in what the human authors (in this case the evangelists), safeguarded by the Holy Spirit, wrote.

### **Summary overview of Origen's exegesis on the Cleansing of the Temple in light of more recent Historical-Critical scholarship**

With regard to the Cleansing of the Temple and whether there were one or two events, Origen believed the former. The reason for positing a single event arose, as was earlier seen, because of his difficulty in resolving certain proposed chronological discrepancies which he suggested exist when combining an earlier Cleansing of the Temple with several other events that the Gospels record as also having taken place at the beginning of Jesus' ministry. Owing to his difficulty resolving these apparent discrepancies, Origen denied the chronology of the Cleansing of the Temple in the Gospel of John and accepted the later chronology of the Synoptics during Holy Week. He suggested that John separated the Cleansing of the Temple (Jn: 2:14-22) from the Triumphal Entry of Jesus into Jerusalem (Jn: 12:12-18) while noting that in the other Gospels these two events were 'correctly' linked together. In addition to the chronological discrepancies which Origen suggested made it impossible to posit an earlier Cleansing of the Temple in John's Gospel, he also suggested other discrepancies when comparing the four Gospel accounts recording Jesus'

actions in the Holy Place, discrepancies *within* the accounts themselves (again it should be emphasised that as Origen assumed a single event only, such proposed discrepancies between John and the Synoptics would necessarily follow, as John, in such an instance, would have been assumed to be describing one and the same event). These discrepant features in the “material letter”, according to Origen, meant that the Gospel accounts (at least with regard to certain features) were not to be read in a literal-historical or corporeal manner but should rather be searched for their deeper meaning. In addition to these discrepant features which he believed existed within the texts prompting a mystical reading of the four accounts, Origen also suggested *historical grounds* which further prompted him to see how various aspects of the different accounts were not intended by the evangelists to be read according to the material letter but, rather, according to their allegorical sense.

This primary search for the allegorical significance of the passages in question and the apparent disregard for the material letter has sometimes prompted the conclusion that Origen (and the school of Alexandria)<sup>76</sup> would have been open to the more recent historical-critical hypothesis that the evangelist (or the community) possessed a creative role with regard to the final shape and content of the Gospels we now possess. This contention is unquestionably true. However, I propose, Origen would not have considered it possible for the community (see the section on ‘form criticism’ in Appendix 2) or the evangelist (see the section on ‘redaction criticism’, Appendix 2) to so order or write the Gospel that the reader *would accept as historical that which the evangelist knew to be contrary to the known facts*, especially something of an important nature. In other

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<sup>76</sup> Origen was brought up in a school of interpretation which valued greatly the allegorical meaning of Scripture (see footnote 2 of chapter one). This school, however, never denied “the ground truth of history”, as the biblical commentary *A Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture* (p.6) writes (emphasis added): “Gradually, in the hands of several scholars and particularly in the hands of Philo (A.D. 42), a system of allegorical interpretation was elaborated which was almost entirely psychological, ethical, metaphysical and un-messianic. The allegorism of Philo was inherited by the School of Alexandria, but the Messianic typology which was the theological core of Christian interpretation of the OT held its place. The Christian allegorism, which was often pushed to excess by Origen and others, was rooted in the true principle that the Bible has a deeper meaning than the mere letter can reveal. The historical truth which the words yield, though not denied, was much neglected by Philo, but Christian exegesis, admitting the principle of typology, could never depart so far **from the ground truth of history**.....In one of the Alexandrian Fathers we find the following sober and ‘modern’ statement: ‘Here (Heb 1:4) it is necessary (as indeed it is right and necessary in all Divine Scripture) to note the time at which the apostle wrote, and the person about whom, and the point under consideration, lest the reader should from ignorance miss any of these or any like particular and thus be wide of the sense’ (Athanasius, *Conta Arianos* 1,54).”

words, according to Origen (and all the Fathers), it was not possible that the evangelists (or the community) would have *intentionally* altered, or, added to, the known historical facts of an event in the life of Jesus (the Cleansing of the Temple being one such example) so as to present as historically true something they knew to be false (or vice versa). In this respect, I propose, Origen and the Fathers differ from a section of more recent scholarship, which believes that in the final draft of the inspired text there may be included by the evangelists inaccurate or untrue historical features pertaining to this and other events in the life of Jesus. In the particular example of the Cleansing of the Temple and its chronological relationship with the Triumphal Entry cited above, Origen himself was aware that the Synoptic chronology linking these two events together was true, while that of John's, he believed, was not *intended* to be read as such. In addition, the apparently discrepant features in the four accounts of the Cleansing of the Temple were, he proposed, not *intended* by the evangelists to be read with corporeal intent but rather according to a mystical meaning. There was, therefore, according to Origen, no error with regard to the 'historical' features the Gospels present, as such features were not so intended to be read.

### **Some Comments and Points of Note for this Thesis**

- (a) It is proposed that Origen held the teaching of biblical inerrancy with such esteem that he could not imagine that there could even be the slightest 'discrepancy' in the Gospels. This applied not only to the Gospel accounts describing the Cleansing of the Temple but also to all other passages recording events in the life of Jesus, especially those reported by more than one evangelist. This overly strict or cautious approach drove him to search continually for an allegorical meaning to elements of passages when, it is suggested and following the example of Augustine, such an approach was not necessary.
  
- (b) Origen, as was mentioned above, made many significant references to the 'worthless' nature of the money-changers' coinage. Among the Early Church Fathers, his testimony is most emphatic in this regard. Origen believed that the money-changers were guilty of exchanging (emphasis added) "*spurious money, and giving pence and small change, cheap worthless coinage, to all who [came] to them*". He added (emphasis added): "They take from them what is most precious, robbing them of their better part to return to them *what is worth nothing*". He

further wrote “And did not Jesus do an unwarrantable thing when He poured out the money of the money-changers, *which was their own*, and overthrew their tables?” Although Origen did not go on to comment at any great length concerning the negative implications of this “spurious coinage” in the Temple or emphatically cite it among the reasons for Jesus’ actions, it may reasonably be assumed that having stressed its worthless value in so many instances he would certainly have been open to such a charge.

- (c) Extent of history: Origen believed that there was a single cleansing event only. Although he was open to a monumental or catastrophic event as having taken place (which Thomas Aquinas cited in his *Catena Aurea*) he may have given greater credence to an act of symbolic significance as having taken place.
- (d) The reasons for Jesus’ actions were to indicate that the OT rites had come to an end (“the service of that temple was not any longer to be carried on by the priests in the way of material sacrifices, and that the time was coming when the law could no longer be observed”) and that the Temple (Jesus’ raised body and the Church to which we belong<sup>77</sup>) should no longer be associated with merchandise or commercial activities (particularly the immoral activities of the money-changers, see (b) above).
- (e) I propose that the discrepancies Origen suggested concerning (a) the correct chronology, John or the Synoptics and (b) certain features commonly reported by the four evangelists may be resolved by (1) accepting the understanding posited by Augustine, John Chrysostom and Theophilus (and probably the Fathers in general) that Jesus in fact cleansed the Temple on two occasions<sup>78</sup> and (2) that the apparent discrepancies between the passages recorded are of a minor nature and may easily be resolved.

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<sup>77</sup> Origen wrote that the Temple is both the risen body of Jesus and the Church built with living stones. “The Saviour joins on to His statement about the temple a statement which is really one with the former, about His own body, and to the question, What sign doest Thou, seeing that Thou doest such things? He answers, ‘Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.’ ....Now, both of these two things, the temple and the body of Jesus, appear to me, in one interpretation at least, to be types of the Church, and to signify that it is built of living stones, a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, built on the foundation of the Apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus being the head corner-stone; and it is, therefore, called a temple.” (*Commentary on John’s Gospel* 10: 20)

## The Early Church Fathers and the Inerrancy of Scripture

The ‘inerrancy’ of Scripture – as a dogma of faith - is believed by Christians of all denominations and follows as a necessary consequence that the Scriptures are inspired. Although the terms are not synonymous<sup>79</sup>, inerrancy is implied in the charism of inspiration, for as the books of Sacred Scripture are written by the Holy Spirit, they are therefore guaranteed as being free from any error. Inerrancy is the fruit of inspiration and exists because of the gift of inspiration. The teaching of inerrancy adds nothing to the text but rather guarantees that because the Scriptures are inspired and are of divine origin they are as a consequence protected from ever being in error. In this sense inerrancy might be considered as a negative charism (it merely protects from error) whilst inspiration, on the other hand, is positive and life giving. In short, it might be said, that inerrancy flows from the truth that Scripture is inspired, and, because it is inspired, it guarantees or protects what is written from being in error. This was the understanding of the Early Church Fathers who, following the example of Philo and Jewish tradition, were convinced of the complete inerrancy of the Scriptures<sup>80</sup>. According to *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary* this teaching is, according

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<sup>78</sup> See earlier in this Appendix under a heading entitled “The Gospels record Two Different Cleansings of the Temple” where statements to this effect are cited from Augustine, John Chrysostom and Thomas Aquinas’s *Catena Aurea* quoting, in addition, Theophilus of Antioch.

<sup>79</sup> Inspiration is wider in significance and in consequence for the reading of Scripture, than its companion term inerrancy. For not only does inspiration *negatively* guarantee the inerrancy of the texts but it also *positively* graces the texts. By this is meant that every idea and subject that the human author has written, he was ‘inspired’ to write, so that working in union with the Holy Spirit and in the Holy Spirit the Scriptures were finally written. The finished product is the work of grace. What is written is *positive* – it points to ‘good news’ and leads towards salvation. However, it is also true to say that, being inerrant, all that is therein contained is *negatively* guaranteed as free from all error. One noted biblical dictionary comments thus (emphasis added) on this positive aspect of grace working in the Scriptures: “The Church according to the Vatican Council [the first Vatican Council] does not count books canonical because they were written naturally and were later approved by her, or *because they contain revelation without error, but because they were inspired in the first instance and have God for their Author* and as such were committed to the Church....They [theologians] distinguish between inspiration and the mere ‘assistencia’ or assistance of the Holy Ghost, *the latter conveying a merely negative, the former a positive idea. ...Inspiration implies, over and above this protection, a special impulse of the Holy Ghost to write, and to write on particular subjects.*” (W. Addis and T. Arnold *A Catholic Dictionary*, London Virtue and Co., 1917, 460).

<sup>80</sup> *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary* writes: “Thus early Christianity shared with Jewish tradition [earlier this same dictionary referred to (a) Philo’s opinion that ‘all things in the sacred books are oracles delivered through Moses’ and (b) the reference in the Babylonian Talmud to the Torah being ‘divinely revealed’] the notion that the (Jewish) Scriptures were inspired, as attested by the virtual interchangeability of ‘it is written’ (Acts 13:33) and ‘he’ [=God] says’ (Acts 13: 34,35).” (p. 1026)



to the Fathers, taken as “almost self-evident” in the New Testament<sup>81</sup>. The ECF were well aware that scriptural inerrancy is implied in the Gospels (in the Gospels, of course, Jesus was referring to the OT Scriptures) in statements such as, “For truly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the law until all is accomplished” (Matthew 5:18, this verse is quite emphatic as (a) the “iota” is the Hebrew letter *yod*, the smallest letter in the Hebrew alphabet, which in size, shape and writing position – above the line – is similar to our English apostrophe and (b) the “dot”, or “tittle” in the King James Version, is a tiny mark - very similar to our ‘cross’ on the English letter ‘t’ – that distinguishes certain Hebrew letters from similar ones, as our ‘cross’ shows that a ‘t’ is not an ‘l’)<sup>82</sup>; “O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! ‘Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?’ And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself” (Luke 24:25-27)<sup>83</sup>; “These are my words which I spoke to you, while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and the psalms must be fulfilled” (Luke 24:44)<sup>84</sup>; “Scripture cannot be broken” (John 10:35) and in those passages which are introduced by the authoritative phrases, “It is written” (Matthew 4:4), and “All this took place to fulfil what the Lord had spoken by the prophet” (Matthew 1:22)<sup>85</sup> and other fulfilments of Old Testament prophecies explicitly recorded in the Gospels.

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<sup>81</sup> “The witness of the NT was such that the early Fathers took the inspiration of the Scriptures as almost self-evident, echoing traditional language in their descriptions.” *Ibid.*, p. 1026

<sup>82</sup> Citing this very passage of Scripture, Chromatius and Jerome knew “from Christ’s teaching how true and divine” was the OT Law (the OT Scriptures). Chromatius: *Tractate on Matthew’s Gospel* 1.3-4; Jerome: *Commentary on Matthew* 1.5.18.

<sup>83</sup> References to John Chrysostom’s belief in the “predestined purpose” (and therefore inerrant purpose) of the OT Scriptures and to Bede’s reverence to “how these Scriptures relate to Christ” are found in Thomas Aquinas’s *Catena Aurea* Commentary on this passage of Luke’s Gospel (Lk: 24:25-27).

<sup>84</sup> Commenting on these words of Jesus in Luke’s Gospel, Cyril of Alexandria wrote that Jesus opened “the eyes of their hearts for them to understand the ancient prophecies”; Bede wrote that Jesus “fulfilled the mysteries which Moses, the prophets and the psalms proclaimed” (Thomas Aquinas quoting Cyril of Alexandria and Bede: *Catena Aurea, Luke’s Gospel* Ch 24).

<sup>85</sup> John Chrysostom states that OT prophecies (in this case in Matthew’s Gospel, that of Isaiah) are “wafted from above”. *The Gospel of Matthew: Homily* 5.2

In addition to the attention the Fathers drew to these verses within the New Testament indicating the divine origin and, therefore, the inerrancy of the Scriptures (then, as mentioned above, the OT Scriptures), there are other important references which the Fathers made to this doctrine (i.e. the divine origin and inerrancy of Scripture) that are found interspersed throughout their writings. The words of Scripture are the “words of God” (Tertullian<sup>86</sup>) or the “Scripture of the Holy Spirit” (Gregory of Nyssa<sup>87</sup>). The “Divine Scriptures were spoken by the Holy Spirit” (Eusebius<sup>88</sup>) and are described as “perfect since they were spoken by the Word of God and His Spirit” (Irenaeus<sup>89</sup>). God is ultimately described as having “condescended” his “eternal wisdom” by “adapting His language with thoughtful concern for our weak human nature” (*Dei Verbum* quoting John Chrysostom<sup>90</sup>). Although many of these references to scriptural inerrancy in the Fathers’ writings apply to the inspired OT, they also apply – as *A Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture* writes - to those “apostolic writings which they regarded as authoritative” and to the “unique place” which “the Gospels and the writings of the Apostles” held in the very early Church. The *Commentary* continues: “these memoirs” bore “witness to a Christian collection of writings that had taken its place alongside that of the OT”.<sup>91</sup> Later again the same *Commentary* points to further passages from the Early Fathers writings expressing their reverence and awe for the writings of Paul and the works of the evangelists who “neither lied nor made any mistake”; the Fathers held such readings were “free from error”.<sup>92</sup> In addition, the *New Jerome Biblical Commentary* cites Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and Gregory of Nazianzus (and Irenaeus)<sup>93</sup> as early patristic testimony to

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<sup>86</sup> Tertullian: *Apology* Ch: 31

<sup>87</sup> Gregory of Nyssa: *Contra Eunomius* Book VII

<sup>88</sup> Eusebius: *Church History*: Book V: 28

<sup>89</sup> Irenaeus: *Against Heresies*: Book II: 28

<sup>90</sup> *Dei Verbum* cites John Chrysostom when describing the “condescension” of divine wisdom “that we may learn the gentle kindness of God, which words cannot express, and how far He has gone in adapting His language with thoughtful concern for our weak human nature” (*Dei Verbum*, Vatican Council II: Document on Divine Revelation, 1965, § 13).

<sup>91</sup> *A Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture*, 19

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 50

<sup>93</sup> The *New Jerome Biblical Commentary* cites these Fathers where they write that the “sacred writings” (*hieragrammata*) were the work of “divine authors” (*theion graphon*) (Clement of Alexandria); the “sacred books” (*hierai biblioi*) were derived “from inspiration” (Origen); they were spoken by the mouth of the Lord, the Holy Spirit, who

the belief in the divine origin and inerrancy, not only of the OT “Jewish writings”, but, also of the “authoritative Christian writings that would eventually be incorporated into the canon”.<sup>94</sup> Although the Canon of the New Testament was not, at the time when these Fathers were writing, ‘explicitly recognized or formally defined’, such apostolic readings that circulated throughout the early Church were nevertheless accorded the same awe and reverence that was shown the OT readings. Scholars in fact argue that at this early time in the Church these authoritative writings “although not yet a ‘canon’, implicitly contained the idea of a canon”<sup>95</sup>. The Fathers believed in the one and same ‘divine source’ for both. Although all of Scripture was believed by the ECF to have this divine source and therefore to be ‘free from error’, it will nevertheless be asked, to what extent did the Fathers believe ‘scriptural inerrancy’ to apply?

### **Extent of Inerrancy**

In their writings, as attested above, the Fathers display such reverence and awe for the Scriptures as being the work of God that there could never be even the slightest suggestion of the Bible being in error (both in the OT and the NT – even though, as mentioned above, the NT writings were as yet not formally recognised during the lifetime of several of the Fathers). In fact, many of the Fathers, following the example of Philo and the Jewish rabbis, understood the Scriptures: (a) as having been ‘dictated’<sup>96</sup> to the human authors or (b) as having been the result of an ‘ecstatic

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“uttered them” (Clement of Alexandria); the “Scriptures [OT and NT] are perfect” (Ireneaus) and that we should “pay attention even to the smallest scriptural texts as they are attributable to the exact care of the Spirit” (Gregory of Nazianzus), (p. 1026).

<sup>94</sup> *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary* p. 1026

<sup>95</sup> Everett Ferguson writes of this “acknowledgement of the scripture principle” in the “authoritative Christian writings” of the early Church. “Although”, he goes on to say, such a collection of writings were “not yet a ‘canon’, [they] implicitly contained the idea of a canon.” “Factors leading to the Selection and Closure of the New Testament Canon: A Survey of some recent studies,” in *The Canon Debate* (ed. Lee Martin Mc Donald and James A. Sanders, Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing Group, 2002), 298.

<sup>96</sup>The *Dictionary of the Bible* states: “The Fathers of the Church from the beginning accept the belief in the divine origin and authority of the Bible. Many use the word ‘dictate’ to explain inspiration; the word is borrowed from Judaism, and many of the Fathers accepted the idea also”. John Mc Kenzie S.J., *Dictionary of the Bible* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1968), 390. “That the Scriptures were ‘dictated’ (lat. Vb. *Dictare*) is found in such Western Fathers as Augustine (e.g., *En in Ps.* 62:1) and Jerome (Paul’s Rom was dictated by the Holy Spirit; *Epist.* 120:10)” *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, 1027

phenomenon<sup>97</sup>, so much so that error - in any shape or form - could never be contemplated. As they believed all of Scripture to be inspired, as being truly the work of God, the extent to which inerrancy applied to the Scriptures was therefore, according to the Fathers, without limit. There could be no mistake or error, not only with respect to spiritual matters but also with regard to that content “which seems contrary to the truth” or where “the Bible may seem to have contrary statements”.<sup>98</sup> Many statements in the Fathers writings corroborate this, among the best known are probably those of Augustine and Jerome.<sup>99</sup> Later, this teaching of the Fathers (particularly that found in the commentaries of Augustine and Jerome<sup>100</sup>) would be reflected in authoritative

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<sup>97</sup> “Some earlier Fathers considered it the result of an ecstatic phenomenon. Theophilus compared the prophets with the sibyls, for they ‘were possessed by a holy Spirit [*pneumatophoroi pneumatos hagiou*] and became prophets [*kai prophetai genomenoi*] and were inspired and instructed by God himself [*hyp’ autou tou theou empneusthentes kai sophisthentes*]’ (*Ad Autolyicum* 2:9). Justin Martyr (*ca.* 100-165) wrote ‘When you listen to the prophecies, spoken as in the person [of someone], do not think that they were spoken by the inspired prophets of their own accord, but by the Word of God who prompts them’. (*Apol.* 1:36)” [others among the Fathers are also cited]. *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary* p. 1026

<sup>98</sup> The extent to which the Early Fathers’ understood the doctrine of biblical inerrancy to apply is reflected in Augustine’s well-known letter (letter 82), in which he states that he has come to the belief that “none of their authors has committed any error in writing”. He then goes on to offer a threefold explanation for any suggested discrepancy in Scripture. Augustine wrote: “To those books which are already styled canonical, I have learned to pay such reverence and honour as most firmly to believe that none of their authors has committed any error in writing. If I come upon anything in the Scripture which seems contrary to the truth, I do not hesitate to suppose that either the manuscript is faulty [or it is no more than a faulty reading of the manuscript], or the translator has not caught the meaning of what was said, or I have not succeeded in understanding the passage”. *Letter 82* (a letter written to Jerome). Jerome, also, was aware of the difficulties at times posed by the biblical texts but he held vigorously to their inerrancy, “though the Bible may seem to have contrary statements, both are true” (*Jerome: Letters: 36:11:2*). To accuse the inspired authors of any error was according to Jerome to “smack of the wicked Celsus, Porphyry, and Julian.” (*Jerome: Letters: 57.9:1*). Two notable examples are given as an illustration of the Early Fathers’ application of this principle. (1) Augustine states that Matthew was not ‘in error’ when he attributed the prophecy concerning the betrayal of Jesus for thirty pieces of silver to Jeremiah and not to Zechariah, (Thomas Aquinas quoting Augustine: *Catena Aurea Matthew’s Gospel* 27) (2) The second illustration is found in the Fathers’ reconciliation of the Gospel accounts concerning Jesus’ Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem (which accounts are sometimes seen as recording discrepant details), Thomas Aquinas quoting Augustine, Jerome, Remigius and John Chrysostom: *Catena Aurea Matthew’s Gospel* 21: 1-11

<sup>99</sup> See previous footnote.

<sup>100</sup> *A Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture*, citing Augustine and Jerome, presents this “unbroken and ancient faith” in the Church’s belief in biblical inerrancy as follows: “**St Augustine’s** principle, which has guided many western exegetes for many centuries was thus expressed: ‘If I come upon anything in the Scripture which seems contrary to the truth, I shall not hesitate to consider that it is no more than a faulty reading of the manuscript, or a failure of the translator to hit off what his text declared, or I have not succeeded in understanding the passage’. This principle [biblical inerrancy] is quoted by Leo XIII (1893) for the Church has ever upheld the patristic tradition of biblical inerrancy. Benedict XV in 1920 summed up the tradition thus: The teaching of St Jerome is strikingly confirmed by what our predecessor Leo XIII declared to be the unbroken and ancient faith of the Church about the absolute immunity of the Scriptures from error of every kind. ‘It makes no difference at all that the Holy Ghost should have taken men to be as it were his tools in writing, as if forsooth [i.e. indeed] the men who were inspired, but not the divine author, might let fall some error. Not so, for he himself so stirred and roused them by his

documents of the Catholic Church. Pope Benedict XV referred to it as “the ancient and constant faith of the Church”<sup>101</sup>. This ancient teaching of the Church that Scripture in “all its parts” is inspired and therefore inerrant, firmly stated in the First Vatican Council (1870)<sup>102</sup>, re-echoed in subsequent documents of the Church<sup>103</sup> was again reiterated at the Second Vatican Council<sup>104</sup> where, in *Dei Verbum* - for the sake of clarification - reference to Paul’s emphatic teaching that “all Scripture is inspired by God...” (2 Tim 3:16-17) was made. Although these authoritative statements were made primarily to safeguard the inspiration of all parts of the OT (and particularly the Book of Genesis<sup>105</sup>), which had been the subject of critical examination in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early

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supernatural power to write, and was so present to them in their writing that they conceived correctly, and were minded to write faithfully, and expressed fittingly with unfailing truth, all those things and those only which he bade them to write.’” (p. 50)

<sup>101</sup> The “ancient and constant” teaching of biblical inerrancy in the Church as defended in Benedict XV’s encyclical *Pascendi Dominici Gregis* (1907) is described in *The Jerome Biblical Commentary* p. 512

<sup>102</sup> See next footnote.

<sup>103</sup> “Vatican I repeated the teaching of Trent and explicitly stated that the books of Scripture ‘with all their parts’ are divinely inspired; its use of ‘parts’ was the same as that of Trent. The extension of inspiration to the entire contents of Scripture was established by *Providentissimus Deus* [1893], in which Leo XIII insisted that it was erroneous to restrict inspiration to parts of Scripture, or to matters of faith and morals, only. The same doctrine is found in Benedict XV [*Pascendi Dominici Gregis* 1907] and in Pius XII [*Divino Afflante Spiritu* 1943].” *The Jerome Biblical Commentary* p.511. Referring to the development of papal teaching on biblical inerrancy from Pope Leo XIII (*Providentissimus Deus*) to Pius XII (*Divino Afflante Spiritu* and *Humani Generis*) the *Catholic Bible Dictionary* defends this teaching on the complete inerrancy of Scripture in face of the “emerging crisis” presented by more extreme elements of historical criticism which had suggested that there were ‘real’ and not ‘apparent’ discrepancies in Scripture (see Scott Hahn: *Catholic Bible Dictionary*, pp 387-388).

<sup>104</sup> The teaching of ‘unlimited inerrancy’ is again promulgated in the Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation (*Dei Verbum*) of the Second Vatican Council, 1965. *Dei Verbum* states: “Holy Mother Church relying on the belief of the apostles, holds that the books of both the OT and the NT in their entirety, with all their parts, are sacred and canonical §because, having been written under the influence of the Holy Spirit (cf. John 20:31; 2 Tim 3:16; 2 Pet 1:19-21; 3: 15-16), they have God as their author and have been handed on as such to the Church herself..... Therefore, since everything asserted by the inspired authors or sacred writers should be regarded as asserted by the Holy Spirit, it follows that we must acknowledge the Books of Scripture as teaching firmly, faithfully and without error the truth God wished to be recorded in the sacred writings for the sake of our salvation” (DV §11). That some scholars have proposed, based on the phrase “for the sake of our salvation” in *Dei Verbum* above, that the Council was introducing a movement away from the doctrinal tradition of unlimited inerrancy and offering a more restrictive approach, is addressed in *The Catholic Bible Dictionary*, where, according to the same *Dictionary*, this is a misreading of *Dei Verbum* (see, *The Catholic Bible Dictionary*, 388-389).

<sup>105</sup> Among the books of the OT referred to, the Book of Genesis – and in particular the first three chapters – received special attention (see, the Pontifical Biblical Commission: *Concerning the Historical Character of the First Three Chapters of Genesis*, 1909). Taking this as an example, the manner in which the PBC responded to difficult but legitimate questions may be clearly seen. The principle the Commission adopted, enlightened and guided by the writings of the Early Church Fathers, might be stated as follows: “Whatever Scripture *intends* as being understood in a literal-historical manner - even if it stretches beyond what might be verified or comprehended - should be

20<sup>th</sup> centuries, they also have particular relevance for the NT which has also been the subject of the same criticism<sup>106</sup>. This constant faith in the Church's teaching on biblical inerrancy in "all its parts" was summarised in *Divino Afflante Spiritu* by the comparison it made between the Incarnate "Word of God" on one hand and the written "words of God" on the other. The pontifical document wrote: "For just as the substantial Word of God became like to men in all things, 'without sin', so the words of God, expressed in human language, became in all things like to human speech, except error."<sup>107</sup>

It is in light of this awe and reverence for the inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture, therefore, that the ECF commentaries on the various accounts of the Cleansing of the Temple (and related events) in the Gospels should be appreciated. For - in the minds of the Fathers - such accounts were guaranteed by the Holy Spirit from ever being in error. The accounts, although penned by the evangelists, were - they believed - primarily written by the Holy Spirit.

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accepted as so; in addition that which was written with figurative or allegorical intent should likewise be so understood".

<sup>106</sup> See, for example, the authoritative response the Pontifical Biblical Commission (1912) made to questions raised as to whether readers can rely on the historical truth described in the Gospels of Mark and Luke. Noting the "entire belief that the Church has always placed in them [i.e. to the Gospels of Mark and Luke and to historical truth contained within]" the PBC responded "in the affirmative". (*Concerning the Authors, Dates, and Historical Truth of the Gospels according to Mark and Luke*, 1912).

<sup>107</sup> Pope Pius XII: *Divino Afflante Spiritu* (1943) § 41

## Appendix 2

### Detailed Examination of Various Historical-Critical Perspectives on the Cleansing of the Temple

Twelve articles/commentaries extending over the past fifty or sixty years will be presented. Before presenting this research, however, the basic principles and tenets of the historical-critical method which have guided such scholarship will first be briefly examined. For, I propose, without such an examination the tone and character of recent commentaries on the Cleansing of the Temple may not be adequately appreciated.

#### The Rise of the Historical Critical Method and the Cleansing of the Temple

Against the background of the Rationalist Philosophy and Enlightenment of the 18<sup>th</sup> century a fresh impetus and intensity arose in biblical studies which continued to the present day. At that time, it was increasingly emphasized that the Scriptures, although inspired, were also the work of human authors. This latter side of Scripture became more and more the subject of critical studies using new and varied scientific disciplines in their analysis like those used in studying other ancient literature, particularly the Greek and Roman classics. This scientific approach to the Scriptures proceeded along three separate, though interrelated, lines of enquiry. They are: (1) textual criticism<sup>1</sup>, or ‘lower criticism’, and, what is significant for this thesis, (2) literary criticism<sup>2</sup> and

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<sup>1</sup> Textual Criticism of Sacred Scripture involves the systematic analysis of the various extant manuscript copies in order to establish – as reliably as may be possible - the original text, the precise original words the author wrote. Although some minor variants exist in the relevant scriptural passages under review in this study on the Cleansing of the Temple, they are, I suggest, of insignificant consequence.

<sup>2</sup> Literary Criticism involves the study of the literary content of Sacred Scripture. As a result of studies in this area, scholars have not only investigated the morphology, syntax and other grammatical features of the scriptural texts (as had always been done) but have also extended their literary research in their quest for identifying: (a) separate and distinct literary units (‘pericopes’) which scholars suggest first existed as building blocks towards the production of the final written Gospels, (b) the sources from which these stories (these story-units) were taken (Source Criticism), including also the wider question of the ‘Synoptic problem’ (i.e. which of the three Gospels Mt, Mk and Lk was used as a source for the others) (c) the literary genres (Literary Forms) characterising each of these literary units, giving particular consideration to the liturgical and cultural setting from which such units were proposed to have arisen, and, not only this, but also to investigate how these literary forms changed or developed during the intervening time from their inception until they were finally written (i.e. ‘Form Criticism’) (d) the author, whether the author is the evangelist to whom the Gospel is traditionally ascribed or whether the Gospel derives, in whole or

(3) historical criticism<sup>3</sup>. The last two of these disciplines were often combined together and applied scientifically to the Scriptures in what is commonly known as ‘higher criticism’<sup>4</sup> of the Bible or more technically as the ‘historical-critical method’.

### **The ‘Quest for the historical Jesus’**

With the emergence of higher critical study of the New Testament, many scholars went on to argue that the Gospel texts do not necessarily present the ‘historical Jesus’ (the ‘Jesus of history’ or the ‘real Jesus’) but rather what was now called the ‘Christ of faith’. Scholars began to increasingly emphasise the different stages in the life cycle of the ‘gospel’ that existed between the life of Jesus and the final writing of the canonical Gospels (commonly known as the ‘Oral Tradition’ in the early Church) in which the ‘gospel’ (with a small ‘g’) - the good news of the life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus, was transmitted. A growing number of scholars went on to suggest that during this period of time the Gospel texts were clothed in the christological dogmas of the early Christian church and, it was suggested, that only when this clothing was removed could the real or historical Jesus be truly identified. Thus began the ‘Quest for the historical Jesus’. This historical-critical Quest began in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and continued unabated to the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It then experienced a lull for a period of time as a result of the ‘form criticism’ of

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in part, from other writers of the same or later period and the extent to which this person (the final author or redactor) influenced the content and form in which the Gospel now appears (‘Redaction Criticism’). Wilfred Harrington O.P. describes the work of literary criticism in the following way: “Once the text has been established (textual criticism), its meaning must be studied and determined. This is the work of literary criticism which examines first of all the language and composition of the text, then investigates the literary character of a book and establishes its literary form and finally decides whether a book is authentic or whether it has been retouched” in *Record of Revelation: The Bible* (Chicago: The Priory Press, 1965), 101.

<sup>3</sup> Historical criticism involves the scientific evaluation of the books of the Bible as *historical* documents. This study has proceeded along two complementary lines of enquiry, the first external and the second internal. In the former, developments in the various sciences and disciplines *external* to the text (e.g., history - particularly Jewish history, geography, archaeology etc) providing a greater knowledge of the religious, political, economic social and cultural background of Judah/Galilee and the Jewish people at the time of Jesus, have been applied to the Gospels with the explicit purpose of discerning what is historical and what is not. In the latter, historical critics have borrowed *internally* from the results of literary criticism (see above).

<sup>4</sup> ‘Higher Criticism’ is so called because it was built upon the foundation of ‘Lower Criticism’. Once the text was determined (‘Lower Criticism’) it was then made subject to both literary and historical criticism (i.e. ‘Higher Criticism’), the main constitutive elements of the ‘historical-critical method’.



Rudolf Bultmann, which cast doubt on the validity of this exercise. It later regained momentum to continue what is known today as the ‘Third Quest for the historical Jesus.’<sup>5</sup>

This historical-critical interpretation of the Gospels which has marked biblical scholarship up to our own times, has, I argue, greatly influenced recent commentaries on the Cleansing of the Temple, particularly with respect to the historicity or otherwise which scholars propose may be read in the Gospel accounts. Although it would not be possible to research the complete impact such developments have had on recent commentaries on Jesus’ actions in the Temple, three components of this ‘higher criticism’ will be examined briefly which, I propose, have had considerable influence on recent interpretation of the Gospels texts particularly with regard to the determination of what is historical and what is not. They are: (a) Studies on Second-Temple Judaism (b) Source Criticism and (c) Form and Redaction Criticism.

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<sup>5</sup> (a) The ‘First Quest’ or ‘Old Quest’, as it is now more commonly called, was the first serious questioning of the historical reliability of the Gospel portrayal of Jesus. This questioning began with the writings of Hermann Reimarus in 1778 and continued for a period of time before gaining greater recognition with Albert Schweitzer and the publishing of his book, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* in 1906. The ‘First Quest’, which had relied heavily upon the Gospel of Mark as a source document, was later somewhat undermined because of (a) William Wrede’s critical analysis of Mark’s historicity in *The Messianic Secret* (1901) and (b) the rise in influence of Rudolf Bultmann’s ‘form criticism’ and the intense scepticism that arose with regard to the possibility of discovering the ‘historical Jesus’. Bultmann argued that the Gospels primarily conveyed the *meaning* of Jesus’ gospel proclamation in the form of a “mythical” first-century worldview which must be stripped of such mythical forms (“demythologised”) in order to hear Jesus’ real message. (b) The ‘Second Quest’ or ‘New Quest’ was kick-started by a German professor Ernst Käsemann, in his lecture in 1953 “The Problem of the Historical Jesus.” Although Käsemann believed it would not be possible to write a modern-styled biography of the life of Jesus, he did however, propose that there was a “continuity” between the ‘Jesus of history’ and the ‘Christ of faith’ and that it was possible to catch glimpses of the historical Jesus in the Gospels. He introduced the criterion of “dissimilarity” as a technique for isolating that which was historically true in the life and teachings of Jesus in the Gospels from that which were proposed to be later accretions to the texts. Among the list of names Stephen T. Davis cites as representative of this particular school are: “Ernest Kasemann, Gunther Bornhamm, James M. Robinson, Edward Schillebeeckx; the contemporary continuers of the tradition of the *New Quest* are such figures as Marcus Borg, John Dominic Crossan, Burton Mack and the members of the Jesus Seminar” in “Why the Historical Jesus Matters” in *Theology News and Notes* 46: 2 (1999), 4. (c) The ‘Third Quest’ followed on from the Second and is still ongoing today. It largely rejected the historical scepticism of the New Quest. It took very seriously the ‘Jewishness’ of Jesus which scholars proposed had not been done adequately before. Central to their studies is the knowledge gained from first-century historical documents from the Ancient Near East (particularly the writings of Josephus, Rabbinical writings and the Dead Sea Scrolls) and also that offered from developments in the natural sciences and in archaeology. Included in this school are scholars such as: Martin Hengel, John Meier, E. P. Sanders, Ben Witherington and N. T. Wright. By way of contrast with the earlier ‘New Quest’, according to Stephen T. Davis, scholars belonging to this movement “emphasize the Jewishness of Jesus, and consider him an apocalyptic prophet who announced the coming of the Kingdom of God; these scholars have no united theological agenda – they include Catholic and Protestants, liberals and evangelicals - but they all emphasize the importance of the death of Jesus; they ask: ‘What was it about Jesus that caused him to be crucified?’” in “Why the Historical Jesus Matters” *Theology News and Notes*, 5.

**(a) Studies on Second-Temple Judaism:**

**The reliability and accuracy of historical details in the Gospel texts in light of recent studies on Second-Temple Judaism.**

As a consequence of developments in the natural sciences, archaeology and the discovery of documents from the ancient Near East (especially the Dead Sea Scrolls), greater attention has been focused on the historical reliability of the Gospel texts. Such developments have played a critical role in attempting to reconstruct the Jewish background to the ‘historical Jesus’. In some more recent scholarship, however, this reconstruction of first-century Jewish life has been applied in such fashion as to supersede in historical value that which the Gospels themselves present. The Gospels tend to be seen – at least in some areas – as historically unreliable in their depiction of what Jesus said and did when compared with what is now known of the cultural and religious world of first-century Judaism. In this respect the passages of the Gospels depicting the Cleansing of the Temple are a notable example, where, from the representative sample of articles/commentaries that will later be examined in this chapter, four common discrepant tendencies are noted. They are:

(a) The first (and by far the most common) discrepancy relates to *the sheer size and extent* of Jesus’ actions as depicted by the evangelists. Recent reconstructions of what took place generally contend that the size and extent of Jesus’ actions in the Temple was (far) less than that described in the Gospels.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> That the size and scale of Jesus’ actions – as depicted in more-recent scholarship – was considerably less than that picture presented in the Gospels, see the sample list of articles/commentaries that are examined later in this Appendix. Commentators generally propose that Jesus’ actions were minimal in size but great in significance, or, as Ehrman describes, “symbolizing in a small way what was going to happen in a big way when the Son of Man arrived in judgement” (*Jesus Interrupted*, 167). Jesus’ actions were small in historical terms but large in symbolic meaning. As to the precise nature of the symbolism scholars propose for Jesus’ actions the most common suggestions as earlier seen in chapter one are: (a) The need for a purification of the commercial practices in the Temple (b) The signaling of the end of the OT ritual sacrifices in the Holy Place and (c) A prophetic demonstration of the destruction of the Sanctuary itself. As such, Jesus may have turned over a table or two, or expelled one or two vendors from the Temple, but, on historical-critical grounds, little more was done than that. Some commentators further suggest - as also earlier noted in chapter one - that there is no historical foundation whatever to what is described in the Gospels but rather propose that the accounts were simply created by the evangelist with some pastoral or theological purpose in mind.

(b) The second centers on what some scholars suggest as *the unlikely impunity* that would have been shown Jesus if the actions which the Gospels depict were, in fact, carried out.<sup>7</sup> The difficulties arising from the non-arrest of Jesus and the apparent lack of a credible response to his non-apprehension has led some scholars (Buchanan; Seeley) to propose no historical basis whatever in the Gospel accounts.<sup>8</sup>

(c) The third refers to – as was earlier mentioned in chapter one - what are proposed to have been *the essential services of the money-changers in the Temple*, (Eppstein, Sanders, Neusner, Seeley, Fredrickson) which services scholars suggest would not have been disturbed by any faithful Jewish person living in Jerusalem at that time.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> The question is raised as to why Jesus was not immediately arrested or stopped from what would have been viewed as catastrophic actions in the Temple, with serious consequences for both the Jewish and Roman authorities. Would the Levitical guards on duty in the Holy Place and/or the Roman soldiers in the Fortress Antonio not have prevented such actions taking place? Several scholars that will be examined in the sample overview make this very criticism (see the next footnote where excerpts from the writings of two scholars are noted).

<sup>8</sup> George Buchanan lists this among the main reasons for proposing that the event did not take place and that the various Gospel accounts (and primarily Mark 11: 15-19) are merely a literary creation by the evangelists. He writes: “It is not likely that the nation’s treasury and best fortress was left without military guard. Would military policemen, without reacting, allow a man or group of men to come into this strategic, defended area and start an upheaval which involved driving people out of the building and overturning the furniture?...With the long history of conflict associated with feasts at Jerusalem against which Rome was well prepared, how could Jesus have been allowed to have walked away unmolested after this turmoil had taken place? ...The account that now appears in the gospels, however, does not make sense in the Jerusalem situation during Jesus’ ministry....The idea that Jesus’ Cleansing of the temple was conjectured, rather than performed, is all the more probable....” (“Symbolic Money-Changers in the Temple,” 281-83). David Seeley also doubts its historicity writing: “It is difficult to believe that so heavily guarded a place as the temple could have been assaulted in this way with no response....There is, of course, the possibility that Jesus actually assaulted the temple with a force sufficient to prevent armed response, at least immediately, but it really is impossible not to envision the Romans reacting violently to what would, in effect, be a virtual revolt and occupation of the most strategic area in Jerusalem...Because certain problems arise in the process of placing the temple act in a historical context, the possibility will be entertained that the act is simply a literary creation by Mark. This possibility will, in the end, be preferred as manifesting the fewest difficulties of interpretation....” (“Jesus’ Temple Act,” 271, 264).

<sup>9</sup> Scholars simply ask whether it would have been likely that Jesus would have turned over the money-changers tables, thereby bringing an end to the required daily sacrifices and ritual life of the Temple. This suggested criticism (i.e. the unlikely expulsion by Jesus of the *essential services of the money-changers* from the Temple) is most significant for this thesis and will be examined later in chapters two and three where the assumption that the money-changers’ services were essential will be challenged. I will later propose that such services were not in fact necessary but were merely novel innovations which the religious authorities had only recently introduced into the Temple during the life-time of Jesus for economic reasons. Although, as will be seen in chapter three, the money-changers’ services are mentioned in Mishna-Shekalim (they are mentioned twice in m.Shekalim 1:3) this is not necessarily an indication that (a) their services were essential or (b) that such services were present in the time of Jesus (it is generally assumed that m.Shekalim refers to practices conducted in the Temple from 41/42-70 CE). It will also be noted in chapter two that (a) the OT makes no reference whatever to the activities of money-changers in the Temple and (b) when monies in the Treasury were counted in the fifth and second centuries BCE (Ezra 2:68-69

(d) The fourth concerns what some scholars suggest as the unlikely reference having been made by Jesus in the Gospels (Mt 21:13; Mk 11:17; Lk 19:46) to “robbers” (Gk ληστών, or *brigands*) being in the Temple in 30 C.E.<sup>10</sup> Scholars (Casey, Buchanan, Smith, Borg) have difficulty with finding for this term an appropriate *Sitz im Leben* during the lifetime of Jesus.<sup>11</sup>

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and Nehemiah 7:70-72 and 1 Maccabees 10:40-42) foreign coins were listed among the treasures - apparently indicating the absence of money-changers throughout these times.

<sup>10</sup> The Greek term ληστών (Genitive plural of ληστής and the same term used in the LXX translation of the Hebrew פֶּרִיץ in Jeremiah 7:11 which Jesus quoted in Mk 11:17) has a different meaning from the Greek term κλέπτης for “theft” (used 16 times in the NT). A robber (ληστής) uses planned or systematic (generally violent) force against an institution or person to take something, while a thief (κλέπτης, from κλέπτω, I steal) does not but steals in a disorganised way, at random or whenever an opportunity arises. When the money-changers’ coinage is examined in chapter two of the thesis (I will argue that their coinage was a form of token coinage), I propose that the Greek term ληστών has a credible setting in 30 C.E. and was used by Jesus to refer to the systematic theft of monies from the Treasury which followed as a consequence of the money-changers’ coinage having been introduced into the Temple.

<sup>11</sup> Some historical-critical scholars find difficulty in reconstructing a situation in which ‘brigands’ or ‘bandits’, connoted by the term ληστών, were in the Temple in early first-century Judaism. The Greek term has, according to Casey, a more likely “later *Sitz im Leben* at a time when there were zealots in the Temple” during the Jewish-Roman war. Casey (who himself defends the historicity of the statement but finds difficulty giving it a *literal Sitz im Leben*) writes: “More trouble has been caused by ληστών, a standard word for ‘robbers’, ‘brigands’, ‘bandits’, which has led some scholars to propose a later *Sitz im Leben* at a time when there were zealots in the Temple [68 – 70 AD] There is no need to suppose that the description must both be true and literally correct...It is sufficient that the traders and money changers were making a profit, that the most vigorous prophet of the day could accuse them in scriptural terms of combining trading in the temple with inadequate religious lives in which they were making lots of money from the observant poor, that the chief priests and scribes were stinking rich, and that the results of collecting excessive amounts of money were visible in the gold flashing all around” in “Culture and Historicity: the Cleansing of the Temple,” 318, 319. Responding to the same question, George W. Buchanan writes: “When was the temple a cave of brigands or a zealot stronghold [since Buchanan notes the term in Mark 11:17 connotes a brigand who takes by force]? ....the period of Jesus’ ministry must be left as a possible candidate for the *Sitz im Leben* of Mark 11:17, even though there is no direct evidence that the zealots controlled the temple during Jesus’ ministry. A more likely possibility, however, is the First Revolt of the Jews against Rome in A.D. 68-70. At that time the zealots unquestionably had control of the temple,” in “Symbolic Money-Changers in the Temple?”, 287. Steve Smith also writes: “It could be argued that ληστής implies theft and dishonesty. But such an interpretation robs ληστής of much of its first-century linguistic emphasis where it usually had the meaning of brigand, bandit or even insurrectionist...” in *The Fate of the Jerusalem Temple in Luke-Acts*, (London and New York; Bloomsbury T& T Clark, 2017), 76. See in addition, M.J. Borg, *Jesus: Uncovering the life, teachings, and relevance of a religious revolutionary*, (New York; Harper Collins, 2006), 235; Nicholas Perrin, *Jesus the Temple* (Grand Rapids MI, Baker Publishing Group, 2010), 82. In response to such criticism, I propose that when Jesus criticised the Temple personnel with the words “but you have made it a den of robbers”, the theft he was referring to was not so much from the pilgrim Jew by way of inflated animal prices or unfair exchange but rather from the Treasury into which the pilgrims deposited their offerings. The Treasury – the domain of God – was being stolen from. The revenue that God was receiving in the Treasury was greatly, if not totally, depleted. This theft was not sporadic or isolated, at the whim of a money-changer or trader, but was *ritually* authorised (i.e. under the guise of holiness) by the religious authorities. It was systematic, organised and on a grand scale. It was accomplished by the subtle manner in which the money-changer was introduced into the Temple, through the mechanism of the particular coinage he was offering in exchange there. (This exchange coinage will be examined in chapter two of the thesis). In this sense, I argue, the term ληστών has a precise literal-historical setting; it was ‘revolutionary’ and even ‘violent’ as it directly violated God’s intentions.

Several other examples of suggested historical inaccuracies might also be given, but these four are sufficient to make the point. This questioning of the historical reliability of the Gospel accounts on the Cleansing of the Temple is one of the primary features which separates some, if not most, of recent exegesis from that of writers in the early Church.

### **(b) Source Criticism: The Wider versus the Narrower Context**

Accepting the Two-Source Theory (and/or B. H. Streeter's extended sources theory)<sup>12</sup> in response to the Synoptic Problem, many scholars today - if not the majority<sup>13</sup> - propose that Mark's Gospel was written first and that it served as the primary source (together with that of Q) for the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. According to this theory the other Gospels (i.e. Matthew and Luke) are necessarily later and therefore probably less reliable. As Mark's Gospel is supposed to have been written in the mid to late 60's CE or even after 70 CE,<sup>14</sup> the composition of the other Synoptic Gospels is pushed back until after the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE.<sup>15</sup> Proponents of this view give a rough estimate of an 80-85 CE dating for the Gospels of Matthew and Luke.<sup>16</sup> On the basis of this dating, several scholars propose that Jesus' prophecy in Matthew and Luke concerning the Temple and events of 66-70 CE were not "actual prophecies delivered almost forty years before the event" but "were written up after the fact by later Christians reflecting on their own experiences

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<sup>12</sup> See discussion in Collins, *Mark*, 95.

<sup>13</sup> Collins writes: "Although the two-source theory (that the authors of Matthew and Luke used Mark and Q as their main sources) cannot explain all the similarities and differences among the Synoptic Gospels, it is widely accepted today because it provides a more adequate explanation of more of the data than any other hypothesis," in *Mark*, 95.

<sup>14</sup> Collins, *Mark*, 11-14. Collins, herself, believes the Gospel was written before 70 CE, "in 66 CE or more likely after 68 or 69 when Simon...," *Mark*, 14.

<sup>15</sup> Pitrie writes: "For many scholars, the Two-Source Theory plays a key role in the dating of the Synoptic Gospels to the late first century because if the Gospel of Mark was written around the time of the destruction of the Temple in AD 70, and if the Gospels of Matthew and Luke used Mark as a source, then that means that Matthew and Luke were written sometime after AD 70. By allowing ten to twenty years for the Gospel of Mark to circulate throughout the Roman Empire and find its way into the hands of the other two evangelists, proponents of this view arrive at the 'rough estimate' of AD 80-85 for the Gospels of Matthew and Luke," *The Case for Jesus: The Biblical and Historical Evidence for Christ*, 95. Pitrie himself, however, it should be noted, dates the Synoptic Gospels before 70 CE.

<sup>16</sup> Ehrman writes: "The Gospels were written .... Mark, possibly around 70 CE, Matthew and Luke, around 80-85; John around 90-95," *Jesus Interrupted*, 287n5.

of the current events revolving around the destruction of the Temple in the year AD 70.”<sup>17</sup> Other events described in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke are similarly rejected on historical grounds. The overly rigid application at times of the Two-Source Theory in recent biblical scholarship on events in the life and ministry of Jesus (the Cleansing of the Temple being a notable example) has led to an emphasis on the study of Mark alone among the Synoptics, with John’s Gospel hardly featuring at all (Matson).<sup>18</sup> This new approach is a break from the “harmonizing” approach of tradition. Scholars have tended to separate or wrench the Cleansing of the Temple from that wider context discovered from a reading of all four Gospels in which his actions might more completely be examined. This reductionist approach (i.e. confining a study of the Cleansing of the Temple to the context of Mark’s Gospel alone) has tended to isolate and disconnect Jesus’ actions from other significant events/dialogues in his ministry which may well be related to what took place. Some examples of such proposed related passages to the Cleansing of the Temple from a wider reading of the Gospels (i.e. in addition to that of Mark) are briefly mentioned here.

(1) The reference to “forty-six years” to build the Temple in the Cleansing of the Temple recorded in John’s Gospel.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Pitrie: *The Case for Jesus: The Biblical and Historical Evidence for Christ*, 90.

<sup>18</sup> Mark A. Matson, “Current Approaches to the Priority of John,” *Stone-Campbell Journal* 7 (2004) 73-100 John’s Gospel, although generally acknowledged as an independent source, has not in past decades been valued for chronological and/or historical details, on account of its theological character and of being composed later. However, this characterization of John’s Gospel is being revised. In this respect Pope Benedict writes:” While the majority of exegetes assumed until recently that John’s chronology is “theological” and not historically exact, today it is becoming clearer that there are good reasons to consider John’s account chronologically accurate as well – here [i.e. the Cleansing of the Temple in chapter two of John], as elsewhere, he shows himself to be very well informed concerning times, places, and sequences of events, notwithstanding the profoundly theological character of the material,” (*Jesus of Nazareth*, 2.18).

<sup>19</sup> The reference to building the Temple in “forty-six” years in John’s account of the Cleansing of the Temple (“The Jews replied ‘It has taken forty-six years to build this sanctuary: are you going to raise it up in three days?’” Jn: 2:20) may indicate another cleansing event at the beginning of Jesus’ ministry in 27/28 CE. Dating the event recorded in John’s Gospel, the *Jerome Biblical Commentary* writes: “According to Josephus (*Ant.* 15:11:1\*380) the Temple of Herod was begun in his 18<sup>th</sup> year (19/20 BC). Hence John would have dated this episode *ca.* AD 27/28” (*The Jerome Biblical Commentary*, eds. Brown, Raymond E, S.S.; Fitzmyer, Joseph S.J.; Murphy, Roland E, O. Carm, [London; Geoffrey Chapman, 1970], 429). More recent historical-critical scholarship however, in general, rejects this chronological reading, preferring to see some symbolic meaning in the reference to forty-six years. See for example Francis Moloney, *Johannine Studies 1975-2017* (Tübingen; Mohr Siebeck, 2017), 370n53. If, as is proposed in this study, the reference does indicate a 27/28 CE dating and Jesus cleansed the Temple both at the beginning and the end of his ministry, his actions assume a wider significance and are situated in a wider context. That wider context, I propose, is the whole of Jesus’ ministry.

(2) The condemnation uttered by Jesus of turning his Father's House into a "house of trade" (Jn: 2:16) is raised to that of turning it into a "den of robbers" (Mk: 11:17).<sup>20</sup>

(3) Jesus' references to (a) the "wise man" who built his house "upon the rock" (Mt: 7:24) and the (b) "stupid man who built his house on sand" (Mt: 7:24) at the close of the Sermon on the Mount may, I propose, be connected with the Temple and practices that had been introduced into it which Jesus saw would ultimately bring about its "fall".<sup>21</sup>

(4) The return of the "unclean spirit" to the "house" with "seven other spirits" (Mt 12:43-45, also Lk 11:24-26), may, I propose, be a reference by Jesus to the rise of unethical practices being conducted in the Temple.<sup>22</sup>

(5) The Parable of the Dishonest Steward (Lk 16: 1-13): The dishonest steward in the parable of Jesus who called "his masters debtors one by one" may be, I propose, a veiled reference to debts

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<sup>20</sup> If Jesus did in fact cleanse the Temple on two distinct occasions, the words of rebuke spoken by him may indicate an increase in the level of unethical activities conducted in the Temple from that at the beginning of Jesus' ministry of being a "house of trade" (and recorded by John) to that of being a "den of robbers" (and recorded by the Synoptics) at the end. This increased level of rebuke may be connected with an increased role which the money-changers were allowed to practice within the Temple. In chapters two and three, I will propose that Temple monies derived from the half-shekel payment were diverted from the Treasury on to the money-changers' tables and subsequently removed from the Temple and hidden. This 'theft' from the Temple Treasury may have been initiated by the authorities only at the end of Jesus' ministry. That Jesus pronounced "a heavier charge against the Jewish leadership" at the second cleansing was, in fact, proposed by John Chrysostom in *The Gospel of Matthew: Homily 67:1*. A restricted examination of Mark's Gospel alone would not allow for any such immoral development.

<sup>21</sup> The reference to the "wise man who built his house upon the rock" (Mt: 7:24) and the "stupid man who built his house on sand" (Mt: 7:27) was made by Jesus at the end of his Sermon on the Mount. The "house upon the rock" appears to be a prophetic reference to the Temple ("the house") built by the wise or "sensible man", Solomon, on the rock of Moriah where Abraham was once about to offer his son Isaac. This house, according to Jesus, was destined to fall ("and what a fall it had", Mt 7:27). This fall would later take place in the events of 66-70 C.E., when the Temple was completely torn down. One of the first things the rebels did at the start of the War was to burn the record of debts, which debts were apparently owed by pilgrims to the Temple (for an examination of how the Temple functioned as a bank and may have issued loans, see chapter three). To have concluded the Sermon of the Mount with this warning appears to indicate how significant the practices conducted in the Temple were for Jesus and how prominent (even if in veiled form) they may have resonated in his teaching.

<sup>22</sup> The reference by Jesus, in the parable in Mt 12:43-45 (also Lk 11:24-26) to "an unclean spirit" who returns to the "house" from which he came, but finding it "unoccupied, swept and tidied" (i.e. cleansed), returns with "seven other spirits" may well be, I propose, a subtle reference to practices which had been expelled by Jesus at the first Cleansing of the Temple that were not only re-instated by the Temple authorities but were upgraded to a new level (returns with "seven other spirits") so that "the man ends up by being worse than he was before".

that were owed to the Temple of Jerusalem (the “rich man”, Lk 16:1) which the Temple authorities (the “steward”, Lk 1,2,3,8)) sought to collect.<sup>23</sup>

(6) The Parable of the Pounds (Lk: 19:11-28) and the Parable of the Talents (Mt. 25:14-30), may be, I propose, coded references to the practices of stealing monies from the Treasury in the time of Jesus and later hiding them in safe places outside.<sup>24</sup>

(7) The “house” and the “householder” addressed so often by Jesus throughout his ministry.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> That this parable has Temple overtones appears to be confirmed by what immediately follows in Luke’s Gospel (i.e. the ‘parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus’, Lk: 16:19-31), with the high-priest Caiaphas alluded to in the “rich man” dressed in “purple” who has “five brothers” (the five sons of Annas, Caiaphas was the son-in-law of Annas). See Kurt Hedstrom: *A Chance Encounter with the Law* (Oklahoma: Tate Publishing & Enterprises, 2011), 487. This parable is further examined in chapter three of the thesis.

<sup>24</sup> The parable of the Pounds was taught by Jesus before he entered Jerusalem for the final time. In chapter four of the thesis I will propose that (a) The “nobleman [who] went into a far country to receive kingly power and return” (Lk 19:12) is a reference to Jesus’ ascension into heaven where he is crowned as king and to his imminent return in covenantal judgement on the Temple and the city of Jerusalem. (b) The “wicked servant” (Lk 19:22) who was condemned for hiding his master’s money in a napkin may be a reference to money which had been taken from the Treasury of the Temple and subsequently removed and hidden outside the Holy Place. Jesus, I argue, repeats this teaching again in a similar coded parable, the parable of the Talents (Mt. 25:14-30), which he delivered after cleansing the Temple in Holy Week. In this similar parable, the “wicked and slothful servant” (Mt: 25:26) did not trade with the money (the talent) given him but rather “hid ...[the] talent in the ground” (Mt: 25:25). The parable of the Talents will be examined in chapters two and four of the thesis. If Mark’s Gospel is given priority when studying the Cleansing of the Temple, these two parables - the parable of the Pounds (Lk: 19: 11-27) and the parable of the Talents (Mt: 25: 14-30) - which may have an important link with Jesus’ actions in the Temple but which are not recorded by Mark may be overlooked and disconnected from the same.

<sup>25</sup> Throughout his ministry Jesus often makes reference to a “house” and/or to a “householder”, in the parables he taught (Mt 7:24, 27; 12:25, 29; 12 44, 45; 13:52; 24:43; Lk 11:25, 26; 14:21; 15:8; 15:25; 16:27). In several of such parables, I argue, Jesus is addressing the Temple and what is taking place there. He speaks in veiled terms on account of the serious nature of his subject. A prominent theme in these parables is the issue of theft or burglary from the “house” (the Temple) which in Mark is curiously mentioned in connection with “Satan cast[ing] out Satan” (Mk 3:23). The precise nature of this robbery or theft from the Temple will be examined in chapters two, three and four of the thesis. For example, Jesus addresses his listeners: (1) “Or again, how can anyone make his way into a strong man’s house and burgle his property unless he has tied up the strong man first? Only then can he burgle his property” (Mt 12:29) and (2) “You may be quite sure of this if the householder had known at what time of the night the burglar would come, he would have stayed awake and would not have allowed anyone to break through the wall of his house” (Mt 24:43-44).



**(c) Form and Redaction Criticism: Are the Gospel accounts accurate reflections of what actually took place in the life and ministry of Jesus or reflections of the communities'/evangelists' theological and/or pastoral concerns?**

The third component of the historical-critical method which has had considerable influence on recent exegesis of the Gospel passages describing the Cleansing of the Temple are those components of literary criticism known as 'form criticism'<sup>26</sup> and 'redaction criticism'<sup>27</sup>. Whereas 'form criticism' studies the communities proposed role in the development of the Gospel passages, redaction criticism examines the proposed creative role the evangelist (or redactor(s)) exercised in the same. These two components of literary criticism (and how they have influenced more recent exegesis on the Cleansing of the Temple) will not be examined in any great detail in this thesis other than to mention one point of note when compared with the approach to biblical exegesis in the early Church.

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<sup>26</sup> The aim of 'form criticism', as seen earlier, is to investigate and analyse the origin and history of the Gospels (particularly that of Mark which is proposed to be the earliest); it seeks to examine how they appeared in their earlier historical form as 'gospels' circulating in their various communities before they finally came to be written in their final canonical form as Gospels. At this earlier stage, scholars have suggested, subsections of each Gospel existed and circulated as separate units (pericopes) within the community. There they were shaped by the literary and pre-literary conventions of the time and, also, by the particular life situation (*Sitz im Leben*) of the community. These 'pericopes' existed in either written or oral form or even as a combination of both. Finally, it was proposed, these separate units were eventually compiled together to form the Gospels we have today (this latter stage is more the subject of 'redaction criticism', that stage coloured and orchestrated by the evangelist). Form criticism, therefore, proceeded along two distinct yet inter-related levels, literary and historical. Essentially therefore 'form criticism' works backwards from what are proposed to be recognisable literary forms within the Gospels in an effort to discover their original and pristine state prior to their growth and development during the period of Oral Tradition. Daniel J. Harrington describes this double component as follows: "Its literary task is to identify and understand the conventions by which the story of Jesus and the story of the early church were communicated. Its historical task is to get behind the large literary sources that might be identified (Mark, Q) as the earliest and to describe what was happening as the pre-literary traditions were handed on from person to person and community to community. The German term *Formgeschichte*, which means 'form history', expresses more effectively the literary and historical sides of this operation than the usual English term 'form criticism' does." (*Interpreting the New Testament*, Dublin; Veritas Publications, 1979, 71).

<sup>27</sup> Whereas 'form criticism' studies the communities proposed role in the development of pre-literary units within the Gospels, redaction criticism – as seen earlier - examines the proposed creative role the evangelist/redactor exercised in collecting and editing these units before arranging them together as a Gospel according to a coherent pastoral and theological whole. The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* defines 'Redaction Criticism of the New Testament' as follows: "Redaction Criticism. ... [of] the New Testament examines the way the various pieces of the tradition have been assembled into the final literary composition by an author or editor. The arrangement and modification of these pieces, according to this method's proponents, can reveal something of the author's intention and the means by which he hoped to achieve them." (*Encyclopaedia Britannica Online* under topic "Redaction Criticism", Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc, 2011, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/redaction-criticism>).

According to writers in the early Church, the disciples of Jesus and, ultimately, the evangelists, would not have *added, altered or misrepresented* data on the historical life of Jesus during the period of the Oral Tradition, but were diligent in presenting faithfully and accurately, albeit prompted by their life experience, the actions and words of Jesus as they were remembered with the promised assistance of the Holy Spirit. Passages of an extraordinary size or nature<sup>28</sup> (the Cleansing of the Temple being one such example) recorded by the evangelists were accepted as having happened, for, according to writers, this literal-historical sense was the *intended* sense of the inspired author.<sup>29</sup> This approach was clearly seen in chapter one of the thesis in the commentaries of several of the early Fathers on the Cleansing of the Temple. Although added or deeper levels of meaning were sometimes sought after and given more prominence in their writings, the literal features intended by the evangelists were always assumed. As such, any suggestion that the early community or the evangelist himself created or altered the historical features of the event and/or discourse remembered and deliberately misrepresented them according to a different sense would not have been countenanced in the early Church. For, if the event had never happened, the evangelists would have had no reason for reporting it. It is reported because it is historical and, although the event points to spiritual truths or lessons beyond the literal sense, it was firmly believed that such lessons spring from their historical foundation.

In the sample list of articles/commentaries on the Cleansing of the Temple that will be examined in this Appendix to chapter one, the creative role which the community/evangelist played is given careful and necessary consideration with, however, at times I argue, excessive significance afforded such a role(s). Some critical studies give the impression that the Gospel descriptions of the Cleansing of the Temple (in all its multi-faceted details) are more the product of such creative impulses of the community/evangelists who were writing with some theological or pastoral purpose in mind rather than that of being narrative accounts describing something important that had actually happened.

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<sup>28</sup> The term “extraordinary” is used here to denote events in the life of Jesus which are not supernatural or miraculous but which do possess some magnificent, unusual or extreme features. The Cleansing of the Temple, it will be proposed, is an example of the latter.

<sup>29</sup> That the Cleansing of the Temple was, according to patristic writings of the early Church, *intended* by the evangelists to be read in a ‘literal-historical’ manner, see the section in Appendix 1 entitled “The Fathers read the Gospel Accounts of the Cleansing of the Temple in a Literal-Historical manner”.

## Twelve Articles and Commentaries on the Cleansing of the Temple

In what follows, I will present twelve academic perspectives that were written within the past sixty years as a representative sample of more recent scholarship on the Cleansing of the Temple. These twelve articles/commentaries will be examined separately and in chronological order. They will first be studied according to two important criteria. These two criteria are:

(a) The **Extent of Historicity** in the Gospel accounts: This first criterion will study the extent to which *the authors in the representative list believe the Gospel accounts describing Jesus' actions in the Temple to be historical and*

(b) The **Reasons** proposed for Jesus' actions: The second criterion will examine *the reasons proposed by the various authors for Jesus' actions in the Temple* (if the Gospel accounts are proposed to be a-historical and in such scholarship there are no reasons to be examined – this subsection will then investigate *the proposed reasons for which the accounts were written*).

After these two subjects have been presented (i.e. the extent of historicity and the reasons), some important points arising from each of the twelve studies will be singled out for attention under a heading entitled '**Points of Note**'. Whereas – it will be seen - some points of note are peculiar to the different authors, there are others which are repeated and figure prominently among the twelve contributors.

### (1) Victor Eppstein: "The Historicity of the Gospel Account of the Cleansing of the Temple" (1964)<sup>30</sup>

(a) **Extent of Historicity**: Eppstein believes that this was a major incident of a violent nature in the Temple Court. Although he argues that Mark includes "a superficial tendential redaction" (Eppstein believes that either Mark or "an editor" combined the "two incidents" of the Triumphal entry and the Cleansing of the Temple together which he proposes were originally separated, p.

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<sup>30</sup> Victor Eppstein, "The Historicity of the Gospel Account of the Cleansing of the Temple," ZNW 55 (1964): 42-58.

44) he nevertheless holds “that it is not improbable that in this pericope we have an episode in the life of Jesus for which considerable historicity may justly be claimed.”<sup>31</sup> He adds: “There is the strong probability that this pericope embodies an historical tradition concerning an important episode in the life of Jesus...his [i.e. Jesus’] altercation and violent intervention in the Temple court cannot be considered a mere coincidence [i.e. with the “violent conflict” between the “Temple hierarchy and the Great Sanhedrin” at that precise time]” (p. 58). Eppstein proposes that the vendors of doves and other sacrificial objects were driven out and their benches overturned. He, significantly however, does not accept as historical the turning over of the money-changers tables but, according to the author, “this detail was probably introduced into the tradition by someone who probably did not understand the circumstances and consequently misinterpreted the incident” (p. 57).

**(b) Reasons:** Eppstein cites rabbinical evidence suggesting that “forty years before the Destruction of the Temple (i.e. 30 C.E.), the Sanhedrin departed or was expelled from the chamber of Hewn Stone in the Temple to a place on the Mount of Olives called Hanuth” (p. 48). He proposes that this move was not made voluntarily but happened as a result of a conflict that developed between the Sadducees - the Temple authorities, and the Pharisees whom Eppstein suggests largely controlled the Sanhedrin. This site on the Mount of Olives, which was “not subject to the government of the priesthood”, was “near the Altar” and, Eppstein notes, it was from here “in the place called Hanuth” that vendors “sold sacred offerings for the Altar” (p. 55). Eppstein suggests that the Sanhedrin (and not the Temple authorities) must therefore have controlled its market operations. The author then concludes that by way of “punitive competition” (p. 55), the High Priest and the Sadducean authorities introduced similar commercial activities into the Temple Court at that very time (and probably that same morning). “The stalls of those who trafficked in sacrificial objects must have been only recently opened, perhaps that very morning” (p. 57). Jesus was opposed to this novel innovation and desecration of the Temple; hence his actions.

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<sup>31</sup> Eppstein, “The Historicity of the Gospel Account,” 44.

## Points of Note

**1. The role of the money-changers.** Eppstein suggests that the money-changers' role was essential to the rites of the Temple at Passover time; as the surcharge that was paid was necessary and was "not [exact] for profit" (p.43) it is inconceivable that Jesus would have expelled them from the Temple. They "had not set up shop in the Temple for the pursuit of private business" (p 43).

**2. The departure of the Sanhedrin from the Temple forty years before its destruction.** Eppstein, as earlier mentioned, cites evidence from the Mishna and from the Jerusalem and Babylonian Talmud that the Sanhedrin "was expelled" (or less likely "departed", p. 48) from the Temple "forty years before the Destruction of the Temple (i.e. 30 C.E.)" (p. 48) and took up residence in the nearest possible location, in a place called Hanuth on the Mount of Olives. Whatever the cause for the Sanhedrin's departure, Eppstein has drawn attention to the fact that something significant – and most likely novel – took place in the Temple in the year 30 C.E., at the very time when Jesus was ministering in the Temple.

**3. The new commercial activity in the Temple.** According to Eppstein the commercial activity in the Temple was something entirely new; it had no prior history. In support of this viewpoint William Lane writes: "Although it is commonly assumed that the commercial use of the Court of the Gentiles was a practice of long standing, there is actually no evidence that traffic in ritually pure items took place in the Temple prior to 30 AD. Victor Eppstein has argued that the sale of animals in the Temple forecourt was an innovation of recent date, introduced by Caiaphas, who wished to set up a market which would be in punitive competition with the traditional markets on the Mount of Olives...." (*The Gospel of Mark*, Grand Rapids; W. B. Eerdman, 1974, 403).

## (2) Neill Q Hamilton: “Temple Cleansing and Temple Bank” (1964)<sup>32</sup>

**(a) Extent of Historicity:** This was a major disturbance. Jesus cast out the merchants and money-changers but soon afterwards the Temple returned to its normal operations. Hamilton writes: “Jesus put out merchants who sold and bought (11:15). This would apply to the business colony at the temple.....He overturned the tables of the money-changers.....here it is the banking operations that Jesus suspends.” (p. 370). Hamilton continues: “Jesus by this act suspended the whole economic function of the temple.....Soon he left the temple, and presumably [afterwards] operations returned to normal” (p. 371). Although Hamilton assumes the historicity of the event as recorded he, however, believes the saying “My house shall be a house of prayer but you have made it a den of robbers” is “suspiciously loaded with hellenistic bias” (p. 372). The first half of the saying is unlikely to have been spoken for he explains “the temple had not been mainly a house of prayer – this was the synagogue – but a place of sacrifice where God dwelt” (p. 372). The second half he also appears to deny for he adds: “In the performance of its economic function it [i.e. the Temple] had not been a den of robbers. Only those unacquainted with its benevolent and necessary economic function could have supposed so” (p. 372).

**(b) Reasons:** By his actions in the Temple Jesus was revealing himself as King, as the domain and affairs of the Temple – which also functioned as a bank - was the prerogative of a royal personage. “Jesus performed some act which seemed to Jewish and Roman authorities an exercise of kingly prerogative” (p. 365). The motivation for Jesus’ action was linked to the “main theme of his teaching – the nearness of the kingdom”. Jesus, he suggests, performed this action in view of “the approaching kingdom”, which “suspended all competitive concern for the economic things of a world soon to be renewed or replaced” (p. 372). The author does not believe that anything specifically dishonest was being conducted within the Temple. There was no cleansing as such. The “gospel editors” have “given it [i.e. Jesus’ actions in the Temple] an editorial setting which makes it seem as though Jesus had been antitemple. This could not have been the case....” (p. 242) Hamilton suggests that Jesus was not against what was taking place in the Temple per se but was merely acting out a premonition of a new world to come.

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<sup>32</sup> Neill Q. Hamilton, “Temple Cleansing and Temple Bank,” *JBL* 83 (1964): 365-372

## Points of Note

**1. The Temple as Bank.** Hamilton proposes that it is only when the Temple is understood as a bank - the domain of a king - and appreciated in light of its economic significance, that Jesus' *royal* claims may be fully appreciated. The actions of Jesus in the Temple were an indirect claim of kingly prerogative which Hamilton believes to be the real reason for Jesus' subsequent death.

**2. Was the Temple a “den of robbers”?** The reason for Jesus' actions, Hamilton believes, was not that as portrayed in Mark 11:17 (“you have made it a den of robbers”), but rather the one imposed by later editors reflecting the theology of the Hellenistic church in which Jesus was made appear to be “anti-Temple”. Hamilton writes: “In the performance of its economic function it [i.e. the Temple in the time of Jesus] had not been a den of robbers” (p. 242).

### (3) E. P. Sanders and (4) Craig Evans

The next two articles are of considerable importance in this examination of recent commentaries on the Cleansing of the Temple as they are representative of ‘the middle ground of historical-critical scholarship’ on the study of this event(s) in Jesus' life. They are: (a) E. P. Sanders' study on the Cleansing of the Temple in a chapter of his book *Jesus and Judaism* and (b) Craig Evans' article in the *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* (1989) entitled “Jesus' action in the Temple: Cleansing or Portent of Destruction?.” In summary, we will see that both authors understand Jesus' action(s) in the Temple to have been somewhat small in extent but great in symbolic significance. They differ, however, with regard to the exact meaning of this symbolism; Sanders sees Jesus' action as a portent of the future destruction of the Temple, Evans a sign expressing the need for its cleansing.

### (3) E. P. Sanders: *Jesus and Judaism* (1985)<sup>33</sup>

**(a) Extent of Historicity:** Sanders contends that the “action” of Jesus was a symbolic action, small

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<sup>33</sup> E. P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (London: SCM Press, 1985), 61-76.

in size but monumental in significance, pointing to the destruction of the Temple and “the arrival of the eschaton and... probably also... a new temple given by God from heaven.”<sup>34</sup> He writes: “The action was not substantial enough even to interfere with the daily routine; for if it had been he would surely have been arrested on the spot” (p. 70). As such, Jesus may have turned over a table or two, or expelled one or two vendors from the Holy Place but, on historical-critical grounds, little more could have been done than that. He rejects as historical what is reported in verse 16 (“and he [i.e. Jesus] would not allow anyone to carry anything through the temple” Mk 11:16).<sup>35</sup> In addition, Sanders contends that Jesus could not have spoken the words attributed to him in 11:17 (“Is it not written, ‘My house is to be a house of prayer for all the nations’? But you have turned it into a den of robbers”).

**(b) Reasons:** Jesus, according to Sanders, did not *cleanse the Temple*, as is traditionally held. The temple was not in need of *moral purification*. It was not criticised by Jesus for dishonesty, theft or avarice. “He did not wish to purify the temple, either of dishonest trading or trading in contrast to ‘pure’ worship.”<sup>36</sup> Rather, by his symbolic action and following “the model of some OT prophets”<sup>37</sup>, Jesus was simply indicating that the Temple in Jerusalem had reached the end of its covenantal life and [was] awaiting a new beginning.<sup>38</sup> “He intended, rather, to indicate that the end

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<sup>34</sup> Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 74

<sup>35</sup> Sanders mentions this later in his book where, on p. 264 n. 1, he writes that this part of verse 16 is “probably a later addition” and therefore “plays no role in our analysis”. Later, in chapter four of the thesis, I will suggest that these vessels or containers may have been used to carry out the money which lay on the money-changers’ tables, money which pilgrims had earlier exchanged with them. This money belonged to the Temple Treasury. It was these containers which Jesus sought to prevent from being removed from the Temple

<sup>36</sup> Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 74

<sup>37</sup> Craig Evans commenting on Sanders’ line of reasoning for Jesus’ actions in “Jesus’ Action in the Temple: Cleansing or Portent of Destruction?,” *CBQ* 51(1989): 237-270, [249].

<sup>38</sup> Following somewhat in the footsteps of Sanders, N. T. Wright also proposes that Jesus’ actions in the Temple were “not a protest against commercialization...it [i.e. the Temple] was not a bad thing that needed to be abolished”. Jesus’ actions, according to Wright, were rather an indication that something new was at hand for the Temple in the person of Jesus, which newness necessitated its destruction. In an interview on the *The John Ankerberg Show*, the Anglican Bishop states: “When Jesus announced to a person on the street ‘Your sins are forgiven’, he was giving that person the kind of assurance of God’s forgiveness which that person would normally have received from going to the Temple and offering sacrifice....this meant that Jesus was embodying a kind of radical alternative to the Temple....turning over the money-changers’ tables stopped for a few hours or so the flow of sacrificial animals....it is not a protest against commercialization....it is not a protest of that sort, it’s a way of symbolically stopping the regular sacrificial offerings and what that says is this whole system is under judgement and one day before too long the system will stop completely because the Temple will be destroyed....the Temple was a signpost to God’s future



was at hand and that the temple would be destroyed, so that the new and perfect temple might arise.”<sup>39</sup>

### **Summary Overview of the chapter in *Jesus and Judaism* entitled “Jesus and the Temple”**

Sanders devotes an entire chapter in his book to a study of “Jesus and the Temple”. He divides the chapter into two parts: the first half studies the ‘Cleansing of the Temple’ (including a survey of prominent understandings of the Gospel accounts concluding with his own interpretation of Jesus’ actions), the second examines “Jesus’ sayings about the destruction of the temple”. Sanders proposes the “saying [part 2] and deed [part 1]... correspond.”<sup>40</sup>

#### **(1) The first half – Jesus’ action in the Temple**

In the first half, Sanders surveys the range of views of several scholars (Edersheim, Abrahams, Roloff, Jeremias, Aulén, Trocmé), who uphold (albeit with somewhat varying views) the traditional viewpoint that Jesus – by his actions - was cleansing of the Temple.<sup>41</sup> Sanders rejects this understanding on account of the necessary requirement for sacrifice and the need for an accompanying “supply of sacrificial animals” in the Temple.<sup>42</sup>

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and it was right for its destruction not because it was a bad thing that needed to be abolished but because it was a true signpost to the reality ...in Jesus’ day people were looking so hard at the Temple that they couldn’t see that he was offering the reality to which the Temple pointed and that’s what we then find at the Last Supper and on the Cross –Jesus doing the reality to which all along the Temple had been pointing.” (“What is the significance of Jesus cleansing the temple?” Interview on *The John Ankerberg Show*, 2001 [<https://churchleaders.com/pastors/videos-for-pastors/250330-n-t-wright-significance-jesus-cleansing-temple.html>])

<sup>39</sup> Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 74.

<sup>40</sup> Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 73.

<sup>41</sup> These scholars, Sanders comments, “intended to distinguish the temple ordained by God – which Jesus did not attack – from the Jewish abuse of the divine institution – which Jesus did attack” (p. 63). He continues: “The older understanding of the event, and the one which still predominates [when he was writing in 1985], is that it was just what the title of the pericope in modern synopses says: the cleansing of the temple. This implies a prior profanation or contamination, and the profanation has been readily found in the conducting of trade in or around the temple precincts,” *Jesus and Judaism*, 61.

<sup>42</sup> Sanders writes: “Those who write about Jesus’ desire to return the temple to its ‘original’, ‘true’ purpose, the pure worship of God, seem to forget that the principal function of any temple is to serve as a place of sacrifice, and that sacrifices require the supply of suitable animals. This had always been true of the temple of Jerusalem. ....In the view of Jesus and his contemporaries, the requirement to sacrifice must always have involved the supply of

Having eliminated this first and most common ‘cleansing interpretation’, Sanders goes on to consider other possible targets of reform – all of which he similarly rejects. Was it for example the priesthood that Jesus accused, or a particular group or party associated with the Temple, or again was it the place (i.e. the Court of the Gentiles where the gentiles were to be welcomed) where the commercial activity was happening that Jesus was concerned about?<sup>43</sup> Sanders rejects all of these “prevalent views.”<sup>44</sup> Having thus eliminated all such prominent cleansing reconstructions for Jesus’ actions in the Temple, Sanders presents his own viewpoint as to the reason for what took place. He concludes that Jesus’ “action” was not targeting any abuse or need for reform in the Temple but was simply a “symbolic demonstration” pointing to the temple’s “destruction which, in turn, looks towards and restoration.”<sup>45</sup> This particular interpretation he believes is strengthened when the account of his actions in the Temple is combined with “the sayings [in the Gospels and

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sacrificial animals, their inspection, and the changing of money. Thus one may wonder what scholars have in mind who talk about Jesus’ desire to stop this ‘particular use’ of the temple,” *Jesus and Judaism*, 63-64.

The commercial activity was necessary for the sacrifices to continue. The latter depended upon the former. Jesus, he suggests, as a faithful Jew recognizing the “principal function” of the sacrificial cult simply would not have disturbed this *necessary* market activity.

<sup>43</sup> Sanders asks: “Was there anything at all about the temple which could give rise to attacks on ‘present practice’ as distinct from the temple service itself (i.e. between “practice and ideal,” 65)? He considers the priesthood and whether a possible charge could have been made against (a) “the suitability of the priests for their office”, as hinted in “Malachi 3” (p. 65) and (b) “to their [the priests like the earlier Hasmoneans] combining the offices of priest and king and against their usurping the high priesthood” (*Jesus and Judaism*, 65). Apart from Mark 11:17, Sanders suggests, such malevolent priestly charges are missing from the Gospels. In addition he contends that this verse in Mark is unreliable stating that it is “quite correctly rejected by most scholars as an addition,” 66. Sanders also rejects the notion that Jesus was targeting his action in the Temple at a particular party or “group”, that is at the “Sadducean priesthood” (as opposed to the Pharisees or some other party). He writes: “This distinction, which is often made quite sharply, is quite misleading... there is no indication that Jesus’ action was directed only against some particular service... we must note that it [i.e. Jesus actions] would not have been offensive to only one group,” 69. Sanders finally considers the proposition that the place where the commercial trade was being conducted was the reason for Jesus’ ‘cleansing action’. He notes the references made by various scholars (W. D. Davies and C. H. Dodd) to “the court of the Gentiles” as what Jesus had in mind by his action, “since [these scholars believe] this was the area that was cleansed, Jesus must have been concerned with the right of, and the hopes of Judaism for, the Gentiles as with the Temple itself,” 68. Sanders rejects this interpretation also, writing that “Jesus does not seem to have made a definite gesture in favour of including Gentiles in the kingdom, although he may well have envisioned their inclusion at the eschaton...he [was] not...directly concerned with the Gentiles. In light of this the place of trade, and consequently of Jesus’ action, should be seen as coincidental and not determinative for the meaning of the event,” *Jesus and Judaism*, 68.

<sup>44</sup> By way of summary and repeating his rejection of them, Sanders writes: “Thus far we have seen reason to doubt many of the prevalent views about the event in the temple: that the action was that of a religious reformer, bent on ‘purifying’ current practice; that the locale, the court of the Gentiles, indicates that the action primarily had to do with opening the worship of the temple to non-Jews; that the action was, and was perceived to be, primarily against the temple officers and the Sadducean party,” *Jesus and Judaism*, 69.

<sup>45</sup> Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 69-71.

Acts] about the destruction of the temple.”<sup>46</sup> “Both [deed and sayings] point towards the destruction of the present order and the appearance of the new.”<sup>47</sup>

## 2. The second half - the sayings concerning the destruction of the Temple

Sanders presents four “sayings” traditions (he cites as independent traditions (a) Mk 13.1f. and parr, (b) Mt 26.60f., Mk14:57f, Mt 27.40 (c) Mt 27. 40, Mk 15:29, Acts 6:12-14 and (d) Jn 2:18-22) concerning the destruction of the Temple in the second half of the chapter entitled “Jesus and the Temple”. These four sayings he attributes to Jesus.<sup>48</sup> On the basis of these sayings, Sanders suggests that Jesus was predicting and/or threatening the destruction of the Temple.<sup>49</sup> Combining all four sayings together, Sanders states that there is uncertainty as to whether Jesus simply ‘predicted’ or actually ‘threatened’ the destruction of the temple.<sup>50</sup> Both “forms” of the saying (i.e.

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<sup>46</sup> Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 71.

<sup>47</sup> Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 73.

<sup>48</sup> Two of these four, Mt 26.60f., Mk14:57f, Mt27.40 and Mt 27. 40, Mk 15:29, Acts 6:12-14, however, as the scriptural passages indicate, did not in fact originate from Jesus but were made by “false witnesses” or witnesses at the cross. They were, it appears, an attempt to misrepresent what Jesus actually said about the Temple. In the fourth of the “sayings” that Sanders lists, Jesus, I propose, did not say ‘I will destroy’ the Temple but rather his words (Jn 2:18 “Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up”) conveyed the sense ‘*if you destroy*’ this Temple I will rebuild it. It was not Jesus who would destroy the Temple but rather the activities conducted within that would ultimately lead to its destruction. In this respect, I propose, two initial acts of the rebels at the beginning of the Jewish-Roman War in 66-70 CE War leading to the destruction of the Temple (i) the burning of the record of debts and (ii) the minting of their own silver coins as a declaration of independence from Rome, may have a connection with economic practices Jesus was addressing in the Temple. (For further consideration, see chapters two and three of the thesis).

<sup>49</sup> The first of these four sayings, Sanders writes, is a “simple prediction” of the Temple’s destruction, while the second, third and fourth sayings, he suggests, contain a “threat” of destruction (as to whether the Gospels describe Jesus *as threatening the destruction of the Temple*, see previous footnote). Sanders writes: “The first form in which the reader of the Gospels meets a saying about the destruction of the temple is in the form of a simple *prediction*, with no implication of a threat.... ‘You see these great buildings. Not one stone will be left upon another; all will be thrown down’ (Mark 13. 1).... Other traditions contain the charge that he *threatened* the temple. One of these is the trial scene. ‘And some stood up and bore false witness against him saying, We heard him say, I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and in three days I will build another, not made with hands.’ (Mark 14.57f.)... In the crucifixion scene both Matthew (27. 40) and Mark (15.29) ...depict the crowd as calling Jesus ‘the one who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days’.... According to Acts 6.14, the charge against Stephen was that he said ...that ‘this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place’ (the temple).... Finally we should quote John 2:18-22.... the statement in John 2.19 shows how deeply embedded in the tradition was the threat of destroying and the promise of rebuilding the temple” *Jesus and Judaism*, 71-73.

<sup>50</sup> Sanders writes: “We seem to be in touch with a firm historical tradition, but there is still uncertainty about precisely what it is. Did Jesus *predict* the destruction of the temple (Mark 13.1f. and parr.) or *threaten* it (Mark 14.58 and elsewhere)? Did he mention destruction and rebuilding or only the former?” *Jesus and Judaism*, 73.

prediction and threat of destruction) fit the reconstruction he will finally propose which is the destruction of the existing order and the arrival of a new. Sanders concludes by stating that as “Jesus publicly predicted or threatened the destruction of the temple...he probably also expected a new temple to be given by God from heaven, and that he made a demonstration which prophetically symbolized the coming event.”<sup>51</sup>

In summary, therefore, according to Sanders, the intention of Jesus by his action in the Temple was to inaugurate the eschatological era. This necessarily involved the destruction of the Temple. His action had nothing to do with a ‘cleansing activity’, as if he was upset with everyday practices conducted in the Temple. It was neither targeted against “the Sadducees for profiting” nor was it aimed at “purifying the temple of externalism.”<sup>52</sup> Rather it was merely a symbolic action pointing to the destruction of the Temple and the beginning of the Messianic era. The “deed” (i.e. Jesus’ action) and “saying” (with both forms of meaning), Sanders believes, corroborate this viewpoint.

### Points of Note

**1. The Money-Changers activities were necessary in the Temple.** Sanders correctly emphasizes how important the sacrificial shedding of blood and the Temple cult were in the religious practice and life of first-century Judaism.<sup>53</sup> However, Sanders’ contention that the money-changers services were also necessary in the Temple and were, consequently, free from the ire of Jesus’ actions will later be challenged.

**2. Tyrian Coinage.** Sanders states that pilgrims who came to pay the half-shekel tax did so voluntarily and the money-changers provided a necessary service in this regard. They offered, he

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<sup>51</sup> Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 75.

<sup>52</sup> Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 70.

<sup>53</sup> Sanders writes: “Everyone agreed that sacrifices were integral to the function of the temple They were essential to the religion of Judaism...” (*Jesus and Judaism*, 64). Jesus, with Mary and Joseph, offered animal sacrifice (Lk 2:22-28, 39-40). Although “the Gospels say nothing of any sacrifice offered by Jesus [himself]” (Yves Congar, *Jesus and the Temple* [London; Burns and Oates, 1962], 116), Jesus approved of the payment of the half-shekel tax (Mt 17: 24-27) from which funds the morning and evening sacrifices were offered. He also instructed the cleansed leper to go to the priest and make the prescribed offering as evidence of his healing (Mk 1:40-45). Jesus approved of the sacrificial rites. The presence of sacrificial animals and the trade associated with their commercial exchange in and around the Temple may, therefore, not have been the target of Jesus’ opposition.

suggests, Tyrian coinage in exchange for the coins brought in by the pilgrims and charged a nominal fee for this service.<sup>54</sup>

**3. Some details recorded are, Sanders proposes, not historical.** Several details of the account (e.g. Mk 11:16 -17) are rejected as historical by Sanders on the grounds that they do not fit his reconstruction of historical events. The difficulties which he suggests they pose may be credibly addressed. I propose that the “containers” (or “vessels”) that were prohibited from being carried “through the Temple” in Mk 11:16 and the term “robbers” used by Jesus in Mk 11:17 have a pertinent historical setting when we reconsider the activities of the money-changers in the Holy Place and the form of coinage they were offering in exchange within.

**(4) Craig Evans: “Jesus’ Action in the Temple: Cleansing or Portent of Destruction?”  
(1989)<sup>55</sup>**

This article was written in direct response to the influential position adopted by E. P. Sanders in *Jesus and Judaism* above.

**(a) Extent of Historicity:** By the tone of his article, Evans - it would seem - agrees with Sanders’ understanding that “Jesus’ action in the Temple” was merely that of symbolic nature<sup>56</sup>. Something small in size was done<sup>57</sup> but something great was signified. Like Sanders, Evans stresses “the

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<sup>54</sup> According to Sanders the money-changers offered Tyrian coinage in exchange for the coins brought in by the pilgrims and charged a nominal fee for this service. He writes: “But could the sacrifices continue without the changing of money and the selling of birds? It is hard to see how. The money changers were probably those who changed the money of pilgrims into the coinage acceptable by the temple in payment of the half-shekel tax levied on all Jews. The word ‘levied’ itself requires interpretation, for payment of the tax was voluntary, being enforced only by moral suasion. Yet we know that Jews from all parts of the Diaspora paid it out of loyalty to the Jerusalem temple. The desire of the authorities to receive the money in a standard coinage which did not have on it the image of an emperor or king is reasonable, and no one ever seems to have protested this. The money changers naturally charged a fee for changing money, but they can hardly have been expected to secure enough Tyrian coinage to meet the demands of worshippers and to supply their services for free.” (*Jesus and Judaism*, 64).

<sup>55</sup> Evans, “Jesus’ Action in the Temple: Cleansing or Portent of Destruction?,” *CBQ* 51 (1989): 237-270.

<sup>56</sup> Evans apparently agrees with Sanders understanding that Jesus’ action in the Temple was of symbolic nature (see next footnote). They differ, as has already been mentioned however, as to what this action or gesture was meant to symbolise; Sanders suggests a portent of destruction, Evans a cleansing.

<sup>57</sup> Evans makes no distinct reference as to the extent of Jesus’ actions. He, however, constantly refers to the term “action” (i.e. Jesus’ action in the Temple) as if something small in size was done. On page 243 he outlines the principles he uses in general for the determination of what is historical and what is not. He writes: “Like Sanders, I am relatively optimistic about recovering a reasonable portrait of the historical Jesus. Those items that I deem as

necessity and legitimacy of the sacrificial system in the Temple (including the “changing of money” by the money-changers) which he concludes “Jesus in all likelihood would not have attacked.”<sup>58</sup> As such Jesus’ actions must necessarily have been limited in size. Did Jesus overturn a table or two or did he expel a couple of vendors with some of the animals for sacrifice? Certainly the whole Court of the Gentiles was not halted in its operations. Although assuming the historicity of the event described in the Gospels (with it appears some questioning of the account in the Gospel of John which he believes like “most scholars.... carries little weight in attempting to establish what Jesus really intended”<sup>59</sup>) he does nevertheless question certain aspects of the texts. Evans, for example, has some difficulty with “the appropriateness of Jesus calling the temple area a ‘den of robbers’ (Jer 7:11) [in Mk 11:17], since the word for robber (ληστής) connotes a brigand who takes by force, not a swindler.”<sup>60</sup> Evans goes on to state that this “allusion to Jeremiah in Mk 11:17 [“You have turned it [i.e. the Temple] into a den of robbers” Mk 11:17] need not necessarily derive from Jesus”. Evans, like Sanders, is open to the claim that Jesus may have threatened to destroy the Temple, even though there is no reliable evidence for this in the Gospels.<sup>61</sup>

**(b) Reasons:** Disagreeing with Sanders’ interpretation that the action of Jesus was a “portent of the Temple’s future destruction,” Evans argues in favour of the traditional interpretation that Jesus was seeking to cleanse the Temple of the unethical practices which had entered within. The sacrificial system and the money-changers’ activities per se – Evans believes (following Sanders)

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having a reasonable claim to authenticity are not easily explained as creations of the early church and cohere with what is established by other commonly accepted criteria (e.g., multiple attestation, Semitic language, and Palestinian environment).”

<sup>58</sup> Evans, “Jesus’ Action in the Temple,” 252-57.

<sup>59</sup> Evans, “Jesus’ Action in the Temple,” 242

<sup>60</sup> Evans, “Jesus’ Action in the Temple,” 267.

<sup>61</sup> Evans writes (emphasis added): “Even if we were inclined to conclude that *the threat to destroy the temple* [he earlier cited Mk: 14:58, where Jesus is accused by “false witnesses” of threatening the temple] *was actually uttered by Jesus at the moment of his action in the temple* (which would account for the charge brought forward at the trial), that would still not rule out the idea of a cleansing. Indeed, the spoken threat of destruction could have been provoked by some form of corruption that Jesus saw taking place in the temple,” 249. There is, I suggest, no evidence in the Gospels that Jesus threatened to destroy the Temple. When Jesus referred to the destruction of the Temple in Jn 2:19 (or when he prophesied its future destruction, Mt 24:1-2; Mk 13:1-2; Lk 21:5-6) the inference made was that the Temple authorities – if they continued with their actions – would destroy the Temple. The other references Evans refers to where Jesus is accused of threatening the Temple with destruction (Mk14:57; Mk 15:29; Acts 6:12-14) were - as Scripture records - brought forward by “false witnesses” and by “passers-by”.

- were not the target of Jesus' actions. Evans adds, however, that "Sanders has too hastily dismissed the possibility of abuse in the system".<sup>62</sup> Jesus' action was, Evans continues, a protest against "the greed and corruption" of the priests and high priestly families (especially that of Annas).<sup>63</sup> This view, he states, is supported by the harsh criticism of the priestly families in first-century Judaism found in (a) rabbinic sources, (b) the writings of Josephus and (c) the community of Qumran (the Essenes). From these, Evans proposes, there is abundant evidence "that the priesthood was corrupt and in need of replacement and that the temple was defiled and in need of purification."<sup>64</sup> In addition, Evans cites as worthy of consideration the particular reconstruction offered by Eppstein that "the High Priest may have recently authorized the selling of sacrificial birds and animals in the temple precincts for the first time, possibly as a result of a quarrel with the Sanhedrin and its business allies."<sup>65</sup>

### Points of Note

**1. Fresh re-appraisal of first-century Judaism.** Evans acknowledges that: "One of the great strengths of Sanders book is his fresh assessment of first-century Palestinian Judaism in which he exposes the caricatures of Judaism often held by Christian scholars. His relentless criticism of unwarranted assumptions and unfounded interpretations is to be fully appreciated."<sup>66</sup> If, however, Jesus was critical of the priesthood and Temple authorities as Evans suggests (see points 5 and 6 below) and this re-appraisal and "fresh assessment" made by Sanders is - as Evans notes - true, what then was the main focus of Jesus' criticism of the Temple?<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Evans, "Jesus' Action in the Temple," 257

<sup>63</sup> Evans, "Jesus' Action in the Temple," 257-258.

<sup>64</sup> Evans, "Jesus' Action in the Temple," 258.

<sup>65</sup> Evans, "Jesus' Action in the Temple," 265.

<sup>66</sup> Evans, "Jesus' Action in the Temple," 257.

<sup>67</sup> Why were the Temple authorities the target of the ire of Jesus? If the sacrificial rites of the Temple were necessary and the supply of sacrificial animals had to be located near the Holy Place, the buying and selling in the Court of the Gentiles must therefore have been accepted by Jesus for this purpose. Are we to assume that the authorities in the Temple were cheating their fellow pilgrims in the buying and selling of animals when such would have been completely forbidden by the Law? Why did Jesus act in the manner that he did? In response, I will argue that Jesus' criticism was not so much directed against the Temple authorities for overseeing the purchase and sale of sacrificial

**2. The Gospel was not re-interpreted during the period of its transmission from oral to written form.** Evans rejects Sanders view that during the period of Oral Tradition the account of Jesus' actions in the Temple had somehow been re-interpreted.<sup>68</sup>

**3. Several other Events and Dialogues related to Jesus' actions in the Temple.** Evans significantly notes the relationship of several other events reported in the Mark's Gospel with Jesus' action in the Temple (Mk 11:12-14, 20-21; 12:1-12; 13:1-2; 14:58; 15:29-30; 15:38).<sup>69</sup>

**4. Both a cleansing and a portent of its future destruction.** Although Evans is clearly right to insist on the face-value interpretation of the Cleansing of the Temple precisely as a *cleansing*, Sanders (whom he is responding to) may also be correct in seeing Jesus' actions as a portent of future destruction. However, it is not, I propose, Jesus who was threatening its destruction, but, rather, the then current practices which Jesus was opposed to.<sup>70</sup>

**5. Gospel Passages critical of the Priesthood.** Evans enumerates several passages in which Jesus is found to be critical of the priesthood. He does this to demonstrate a scriptural justification for

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animals in the Court of the Gentiles, but rather for the introduction of the money-changers and their coinage into the Temple and the consequences such novel actions had for the Temple Treasury.

<sup>68</sup> Evans rejects Sanders view that "the gospel tradition reinterpreted Jesus' action in the temple as some sort of act of cleansing...in order to de-emphasize Jesus' militant behaviour, which had come to be an embarrassment," 238. Evans goes on to add: "It seems to me that the tendency of the tradition would be exactly the opposite of what Sanders has proposed. Had Jesus' action indeed been designed to signify the temple's impending doom, we should expect that the evangelist Mark, if no one else, would have interpreted his actions as portending exactly that meaning," 239.

<sup>69</sup> Although Evans confines his examination of the relationship of other events with Jesus' actions in the Temple to Mark's Gospel alone, he does nevertheless allow for a study that would widen the scope of their significance. The ramifications of Jesus' actions carried on throughout the remainder of the Week leading up to his arrest and subsequent crucifixion. The events/dialogues which Evans examines are: (1) The Barren Fig Tree (Mk 11:12-14, 20-21) (2) The Parable of the Tenants in the Vineyard (Mk 12:1-12) (3) The prophesy of the impending destruction of the Temple and references made to the same (Mk13:1-2; 14:58; 15: 29-30) (4) the Veil of the Temple torn in two (Mk 15:38). These events, according to Evans, reveal the critical state of the Temple - as Jesus saw it - at that time. Earlier in this Appendix, I proposed further events/dialogues from the other three Gospels (i.e. in addition to Mark) in so far as they also are related to Jesus' actions in the Temple.

<sup>70</sup> I propose that by cleansing the Temple, Jesus was at the same time also seeking to prevent its future destruction which would become inevitable if the current practices were allowed to continue. I suggest, therefore, that in Mark's account of the Cleansing of the Temple (11:15-19), there is to be found *both* (a) a cleansing act and (b) a hidden warning that the Temple would be destroyed ("a portent of destruction") if the then current practices introduced by the religious authorities were not removed. In this sense there is no dichotomy between what Sanders proposes (Jesus' action as a portent of destruction) and the traditional cleansing interpretation that Evans upholds.



Jesus' *cleansing* action. Evans (quite rightly, I propose) criticises Sanders' for his restricted view of authentic sayings of in this regard. Although himself disputing the authenticity of some of the "sayings and actions of Jesus"<sup>71</sup>, Evans outlines several passages in pages 243-246 which show a genuine criticism of the priesthood.<sup>72</sup>

**6. The Priesthood in light of extra-biblical sources.** Evans goes on to assess the state of the priesthood in the first century CE in light of several extra-biblical sources: (a) rabbinic writings (the Talmud, Tosefta and Targums) (b) the works of Josephus and Tacitus and (c) certain Qumran writings. Noting "the difficulties that attend attempts to date the tradition [of the rabbinic sources] and to determine its historical reliability," Evans nevertheless concludes that this cumulative evidence corroborates the scriptural depiction he proposes, i.e. that members of the priesthood were using the Temple for unethical purposes.<sup>73</sup> "Annas" and "Caiaphas" and Annas' "five sons" in particular receive a negative appraisal; the Essenes (with whom John the Baptist and even Jesus himself may have had links) had separated their community from the "temple establishment."<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Evans writes: "This study is not the place for a full-blown discussion of the criteria for determining authentic sayings and actions of Jesus, but a brief word of clarification is in order... Those items that I deem as having a reasonable claim to authenticity are not easily explained as creations of the early church and cohere with what is established by other commonly accepted criteria (e.g., multiple attestation, Semitic language, and Palestinian environment).....[Earlier in his article Evans wrote] For most scholars [with whom the author agrees], of course, the tradition of this Gospel [the Gospel of John] carries little weight in attempting to establish what Jesus really intended." (p's 242, 243)

<sup>72</sup> The passages he examines are as follows: (1) Mark 11:27-33 (the Question they put to Jesus, "By what authority are you doing these things?"), (2) Mark 12:1-12 (The Parable of the Wicked Vineyard Tenants), (3) Mark 12:41-44 (the Widow's Mites), (4) Mark 14:43-50 (the Arrest and the Injured Ear), (5) Matthew 3:7b and Luke 3:7b-9 (the Preaching of John the Baptist), (6) Mark 10:33 and parallels (the Passion Predictions "in which the chief priests are identified as among Jesus' antagonists"), and (7) Mark 11:16 (the Prohibition on Carrying Vessels through the Temple). One notable absentee from this litany of criticism that Evans provides is the series of woes (seven are enumerated) which are reported in Matthew's Gospel (23:13-39) of the "scribes and Pharisees", which woes followed immediately after Jesus cleansed the Temple.

<sup>73</sup> Evans writes: "Taken together, the above evidence clearly demonstrates that various groups, such as some tannaitic and early amoraic rabbis, the zealots, Qumran sectarians, and Josephus viewed various priests, High Priests, or priestly families as wealthy, corrupt, often greedy, and sometimes violent.....the evidence of corruption in the high priesthood is sufficiently attested in diverse sources and is at times corroborated, at least in part, so that we cannot escape the conclusion that the high priesthood of Jesus' time was in all likelihood corrupt (or at least was assumed to be so) and that Jesus' action in the temple is direct evidence of this," 263.

<sup>74</sup> Evans supports this negative appraisal of the Temple establishment and priesthood by noting: (1) the "vast wealth of gold which covered the Temple both internally and externally" in the Temple (Evans p. 259 citing Josephus, *Jewish War* 5.5.6 §222-224) (2) the negative description of Annas and "five of the sons of Annas, along with Caiaphas his son-in-law and a grandson [who] served terms as High Priests" (p. 259) found in these extra-biblical writings which Evans believes "comports well with the general picture we see in the Gospels" (p. 260) (3) "The

**7. Evans sees merit in Eppstein’s thesis that the reason for Jesus’ actions is related to novel practices introduced into the Temple “forty years before the destruction of the temple”.**

Evans responds positively to Eppstein’s thesis that Jesus’ actions in the Temple were made in response to the commercial business which had only just been introduced into the Temple at that very time.<sup>75</sup> This reconstruction is, according to Evans, “not without merit”<sup>76</sup> and the novel introduction of this business may account for Jesus’ actions in the Temple. However, Evans adds, “as ingenious as Eppstein’s proposal is, “two [distinct] problems” arise and failure at either point greatly weakens the argument.”<sup>77</sup> Evans finally writes that “we cannot conclude that it [i.e. Eppstein’s proposal] has resolved the problem decisively”.<sup>78</sup>

**8. The “problematic” reference to “den of robbers” (Mk 11:17).** There is, according to Evans, “one aspect of the temple cleansing narrative that is especially problematic” which “Sanders, as

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community of Qumran, and likely the Essenes in general, despised the temple establishment ....Since the possibility that John the Baptist had had some connection with this sectarian group cannot be ruled out and since Jesus in all likelihood had been one of John’s followers for a time, it is entirely possible, if not probable, that Jesus regarded the temple establishment with some critical, or ‘prophetic’ misgivings” (260-261) (4) Josephus’ unfavourable description of the high priesthood prior to the Roman Jewish War where “Josephus reports that when the rebel forces gained control of Jerusalem, they burned the house of Ananias the High Priest (*J.W.* 2.17.6 §426). Later, Josephus tells us that when Menahem the zealot entered Jerusalem as a ‘veritable king’ (2.17.8 §434), he and his followers shortly thereafter killed the High Priest (2.17.9 §441),” 262.

<sup>75</sup> Evans writes: “Eppstein has tried to show that Jesus’ action in the temple was truly a protest against a new practice sponsored by the High Priest. Eppstein has suggested that it was under the administration of Caiaphas, motivated by political and financial considerations, that the business of selling sacrificial objects was brought into the temple for the first time. The evidence, which is uniform and fairly widespread, could suggest that this activity commenced when the Sanhedrin was put out of the temple precincts in 30 C.E. If this rabbinic tradition can be accepted, then Jesus’ action may very well have been motivated out of indignation over this new activity, especially if he had been aware of the motivation underlying it,” 265. The proposed link between (a) something new having been introduced into the Temple (b) the rabbinic evidence for the Sanhedrin having departed (or having been expelled) from the Temple precincts and (c) Jesus’ actions, is, Evans believes, an interesting line of enquiry.

<sup>76</sup> Evans, “Jesus’ Actions in the Temple,” 267.

<sup>77</sup> Evans, “Jesus’ Actions in the Temple,” 266. These two problems that Evans suggests are: (a) The time reference to “forty years before the destruction of the temple” 266, that is the time when the Sanhedrin was supposed to have been expelled from the Temple, may not meant to be taken literally and (b) “Eppstein fails to establish a clear connection between the expulsion [i.e. the Sanhedrin’s expulsion] and the inauguration of the selling of the sacrificial animals within the temple precincts. Arguing from silence, he simply states that prior to the administration of Caiaphas, “there is no evidence that this traffic took place in the temple”,” 267. Evans continues “although Eppstein’s proposal is not without merit, we cannot conclude that it has resolved the problem decisively”, 267.

<sup>78</sup> Evans, “Jesus’ Actions in the Temple,” 267

well as other scholars, has raised.”<sup>79</sup> This revolves around “the question about the appropriateness of Jesus calling the temple area a ‘den of robbers’ (Jer: 7:11), since the word for robber (ληστής) connotes a brigand who takes by force, not a swindler.”<sup>80</sup> Although Evans agrees with Sanders in this respect, he does not see this as an obstacle to the cleansing interpretation.

**9. The traditional Cleansing Interpretation has a more Plausible Reconstruction than that Reconstruction proposed by Sanders.** Evans concludes his article by simply stating that the traditional cleansing interpretation has a more plausible reconstruction than that recently proposed by Sanders. It is the “oldest extant interpretation of Jesus’ action”. It also makes sense historically and fits in well with “what we know of Jesus and with the background against which we must interpret him”.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Evans, “Jesus’ Actions in the Temple,” 267.

<sup>80</sup> Evans, “Jesus’ Actions in the Temple,” 267. Evans continues: “In my estimation, this is the best point that Sanders has raised in questioning the authenticity of the Markan narrative. However, in light of the evidence.... that indicates the chief priests on occasion sent servants to ‘take by force’ more than their fair share of the tithes and offerings, Jesus’ citation [i.e. his citation of Jer 7:11] may not be so inappropriate at all,” 268. Although, I suggest, Evans may be right in making reference to such unjust actions by the chief priests above, this negative caricature of the Temple authorities may be overstated. Such incidents appear to have been isolated. That Jesus condemned the authorities for making the Temple a “den of robbers” may not therefore be focused on such activities as Evans cites above but rather, I propose, to the ‘systematic and egregious theft’ (ληστής) from the Treasury that followed as a consequence of the introduction of the money-changers and their coinage into the Temple. This theft from the Treasury will be examined in chapter four of the thesis.

<sup>81</sup> Evans writes: “I am persuaded that the cleansing idea is too firmly entrenched in the tradition to be easily set aside. Since the cleansing idea, if properly understood (i.e. not as an attack against the sacrificial system itself) coheres well with what we know of Jesus and with the background against which we must interpret him, it is appropriate that we let it stand. Moreover, the cleansing idea does not oppose the main point for which Sanders has argued. Criticism of temple business activities, coupled with a warning (or threat) of destruction, coheres well with the prophetic scriptures, with Jesus’ own prediction of the temple’s destruction (Mark 13:1-2) and with the charge brought against him at the trial (Mark 14:58).... Although it has much to commend it, not the least of which is the logic and clarity of its argumentation, Sanders’ interpretation of Jesus’ action in the temple is not convincing. Therefore, I conclude that there is no compelling reason to abandon the oldest extant interpretation of Jesus’ action (i.e. Mark 11:15-17 in favour of the hypothesis that Sanders has recently advanced,” 269.

## **Summary point of note for this thesis arising from both the commentaries E.P. Sanders and Craig Evans**

The historical-critical middle ground interpretation, represented by these two scholars, may be summarised as follows: Jesus performed some symbolic action in the Temple, the meaning of which is categorized as either (a) Jesus cleansed the Temple of certain kinds of abuse which had entered the Holy Place (Evans) or (b) Jesus performed some prophetic demonstration indicating that the messianic time – the eschaton - had arrived, the old Temple was to be destroyed and replaced by the new (Sanders). The notion that an event of great magnitude may have taken place (as the Gospels apparently describe) is not countenanced.

### **Brief Reflection**

As was seen above, Evans - agreeing with Sanders - sounds a note of caution against an overly confident negative view of the Temple and its practices in first-century Judaism. The picture painted of flagrant theft and abuse within the Temple, the sale of sacrificial animals and doves at inflated prices and the gross profiteering of the money-changers, so often alleged in 19th and 20th century books on the life of Jesus (see chapter one, footnote 47), no longer appears credible in light of recent studies on Second Temple Judaism. Although, occasionally, individuals may have profited in this manner, it was not commonplace. This more moderate understanding of what took place, however, leaves a problem for historical critics. For at face value the Gospel accounts depict Jesus as clearing the Temple of *all* forms of trading within, while at the same time putting an end to the money-changers' services. The Gospels, far from describing a moderate course of actions, depict a catastrophic event. If Jesus was not addressing a flagrant form of theft through inflated prices and the like, as often assumed in 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> commentaries, what then was the nature of the theft that he was addressing when he spoke, "You have made it [the Temple] a den of robbers" (Mk 11:17)? In order to respond to this question, it is first necessary to examine the money-changers role in the Temple and the precise coinage which they were offering in exchange. This numismatic background will be examined in chapters two and three of the thesis.

**(5) Jacob Neusner: “Money-changers in the Temple: The Mishnah’s Explanation” (1989)<sup>82</sup>**

**(a) Extent of Historicity:** Jacob Neusner agrees with E. P. Sanders’ symbolic interpretation of Jesus’ action within the Temple. Although he does not offer a precise historical reconstruction, he appears to concur with Sanders as to the extent of Jesus’ ‘action’. Neusner’s reconstruction may, therefore, be summarised as follows (a) Jesus performed some prophetic demonstration which was small in size but great in significance (b) Jesus did not, however, do what Mark 11:16 or Mark 11:17 report as these verses point to a cleansing interpretation, which neither Neusner nor Sanders accept.

**(b) Reasons:** As the service of the money-changers was, according to Neusner, an essential operation in the Holy Place, the overturning of their tables and expulsion from the Temple cannot be interpreted as a cleansing action with a view to purifying the existing practice of the Temple. Rather, it was simply done as a symbolic action pointing to the end of the old order. In this he agrees with Sanders. But whereas Sanders applies ‘the end of the old order’, to *the Temple*, Neuner confines the prophetic meaning of the action, to *the sacrifices* in the Temple. Jesus, by this action, was, according to Neusner, instructing his disciples by a prophetic demonstration that the animal sacrifices were at an end and that they would to be replaced shortly afterwards with “the rite of the Eucharist [at the Last Supper], table for table, whole offering for whole offering”.<sup>83</sup>

### **Points of Note**

**1. The Assumption that the Money-Changers’ services were necessary in the Temple.** According to Neusner, the money-changers’ services were an “essential” function within the Temple in first century Judaism. The “action of overturning the tables of the money-changers” would, he proposes, have been “incomprehensible and unintelligible” to the Jewish bystander who witnessed the event.<sup>84</sup> In chapters two and three of the thesis I will propose that, although the rite

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<sup>82</sup> Jacob Neusner: “Money-changers in the Temple: The Mishnah’s Explanation,” *NTS* 35, (1989), 287-290.

<sup>83</sup> Neusner: “Money-changers in the Temple,” 290

of atonement was “an essential rite for all Israel”, the money-changers’ services were not. The sacrificial rites and the half-shekel payment in lieu of them could have been, and were, in fact, made for several centuries without their presence. The introduction of the money-changers into the Holy Place, I will argue, was a recent innovation in the Temple and their introduction had purposes other than the sacrificial rites of the Holy Place in mind.

**2. References from Mishna-Shekalim.** Central to Neusner’s thesis are references made from a tractate in the Mishna entitled “Shekalim”, which deals with the payment of the annual half-shekel tax in the Temple.<sup>85</sup> It is largely from the contents of this tractate (particularly with respect to what it states with respect to the money-changers activities in the Temple) that he offers his reconstruction for what took place and the reasons for Jesus’ action. Similarly, this tractate of the Mishna will be examined later in chapter three as I propose it has significant points of contact with the subject matter of this thesis.<sup>86</sup>

**3. The overturning of the Money-Changers tables and the table of the Eucharist.** By overturning the money-changers tables, Jesus, according to Neusner, was preventing the means by which the half-shekel tax might be paid and therefore signalling an end to “the daily whole offering

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<sup>84</sup> Neusner writes: “Recent debates on Jesus and Judaism focus on Jesus and the Temple, with special attention to Mark 11:15-19 and parallels, where Jesus overturns the tables of the money-changers and drives the money-changers out of the Temple [here, in a footnote, he refers to Sanders]. In this connection it is correctly alleged that the money changers performed an essential service: .....And, for that reason, I see no grounds for doubting that people generally grasped the reason for the presence of the money-changers, who, as it is clear, simply facilitated an essential rite of all Israel..... And to the accomplishment of that holy purpose [the daily whole-offerings], the money-changers, as a matter of fact, were simply essential ... Anyone who understood that conception of the daily whole-offering will have found incomprehensible and unintelligible an action of overturning the tables of the money-changers.” 287-289.

<sup>85</sup> The references from m.Shekalim - as is clear in pages 287-288 of his article - are presented by Neusner for two reasons: (1) They “tell us why the money-changers were in the Temple”, which, according to Neusner, was primarily to “serve to change diverse coins into the shekel required for the Temple tax”, 287 (in chapter two of the thesis the precise form of coinage that the money-changers were offering in exchange in the Temple will be examined) and (2) They also show the link between the payment of the half-shekel and the daily offerings in the Temple for, Neusner writes, “that tax paid, by all eligible Israelites, serves through the coming year to provide the public daily whole offerings, in the name of the community”, 288.

<sup>86</sup> In chapter three of the thesis this tractate will be examined in so far as it has bearing for this thesis. In particular m.Shekalim will be studied for information as to when the money-changers may have been introduced into the Temple and as to whether or not their services were required in the payment of the half-shekel tax. There, I will propose that the services of the money-changers: (a) had no certain history prior to the time of Jesus and may, in fact, only have been introduced into the Temple in first-century Judaism and (b) were not – as indicated earlier - essential for the payment of the annual half-shekel tax.

[which] effected atonement and brought about expiation for sin.”<sup>87</sup> Jesus was prophetically demonstrating that the sacrifices of the Temple were at an end. His actions were not primarily, therefore according to Neusner, a prophetic statement concerning *the Temple* (as suggested by Sanders) but rather one concerning the *sacrificial rites of atonement* in the Temple. The sacrifices in the Temple were at an end. Although Jesus’ actions *negatively* signalled an end to the sacrificial cult of the Temple they also, Neusner writes *positively* signalled the start of a new rite of atonement, “the Eucharist, table for table, whole offering for whole offering”.<sup>88</sup> These are remarkable statements coming from a Jewish perspective, and, in certain respects, represent that of the Catholic and Orthodox Church understanding.

**(6) George W. Buchanan: “Symbolic Money-Changers in the Temple?” (1991)<sup>89</sup>**

**(a) Extent of Historicity:** George W. Buchanan expresses surprise that E. P. Sanders regards “Mark 11:15-19 and its parallels” as “the most trustworthy report of any of Jesus’ teachings and actions” and, similarly, that Jacob Neusner “presumed its historical validity.”<sup>90</sup> Rejecting the proposition that Jesus conducted such actions in the Temple, Buchanan offers two possible alternative reconstructions. The first of these, which he assigns less merit, is that Jesus and a band of his followers led a violent revolt in the Temple, overcame the military guard and, therefore, caused a major disturbance. If this is the case, “the incident may have been more violent than has been reported” in the Gospel. The second more likely explanation “is that Jesus never cleansed the temple at all” and that the Gospel ‘pericope’ (Mark 11:15-19) is a later composite unit in the form

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<sup>87</sup> Neusner, “Money-changers in the Temple,” 289.

<sup>88</sup> Neusner writes: “For the overturning of the moneychangers’ tables represents an act of the rejection of the most important rite of the Israelite cult, the daily whole-offering, which now is null. Then what was to take the place of the daily whole-offering? It was to be the rite of the Eucharist: table for table, whole offering for whole offering. It therefore seems to me that the correct context in which to read the over-turning of the moneychangers’ tables is not the destruction of the Temple in general, but the institution of the sacrifice of the Eucharist, in particular. That, at any rate, is how, as an outsider to scholarship in this field, I should suggest we read the statement [of overturning the tables]. The negative is that the atonement for sin achieved by the daily whole-offering is null, and the positive, that atonement for sin is achieved by the Eucharist: one table overturned, another table set up in place, and both for the same purpose of atonement and expiation of sin” (p. 290)

<sup>89</sup> George W. Buchanan: “Symbolic Money-Changers in the Temple?” *NTS* 37, (1991), 280-289.

<sup>90</sup> Buchanan, “Symbolic Money-Changers,” 280.

of midrash.<sup>91</sup> According to this interpretation, the event described in Mark “might never have happened” but simply reflects a tradition which was “created by the later church.”<sup>92</sup>

**(b) Reasons:** As mentioned above Buchanan proposes two alternative reconstructions to those proposed by Sanders and Neusner. The first of these suggests that Jesus may have led a violent political revolt designed to expel the Roman military presence from the Temple area which Buchanan assigns less merit. The second is a midrashic composition written at a time when the zealots had occupied the Temple during the period of the First Revolt of the Jews against Rome and reflects the desire of the early Church to have them expelled.

### Points of Note

**1. Sanders’ (and Neusner’s) “bedrock position” and “bold claims”.** Buchanan’s article entitled, “Symbolic Money-Changers in the Temple?” might be classified as representing a more extreme school of approach with regard to the extent of historicity found in the Gospel texts. The article’s expressed intention is to question the “unassailable facts of Sanders’ [and “J. Neusner” which he also names alongside Sanders on page 280] bedrock position and the indisputability of his claim to the historicity of the gospel report as it exists” which Buchanan writes “are bold claims” that “prompt a further analysis of the relevant passage” [i.e. Mark 11:15-19].<sup>93</sup>

**2. Mark’s Account – A Composite Unit?** Buchanan begins his study by critically examining the composition of the five verses in the text itself (i.e. Mark 11:15-19). He suggests that the passage is a composite unit made up of several different parts reflecting different times and circumstances, each of which may be discerned by careful literary analysis. Verses 16-19 of the passage, Buchanan proposes, are literary creations; verse 15 he concludes, in addition, is historically unreliable.<sup>94</sup> This diachronic dissection of the passage (which, I suggest, is highly speculative)

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<sup>91</sup> Buchanan, “Symbolic Money-Changers,” 281, 283, 286-289.

<sup>92</sup> Buchanan, “Money-changers in the Temple,” 289

<sup>93</sup> Buchanan, “Symbolic Money-Changers,” 284, 280.

<sup>94</sup> Having presented his proposed historical development of “The Unit” at the beginning of his article (see p. 281), Buchanan concludes his article with a summary presentation of the “composite unit”, suggesting verses 16-19 of the



opens up the possibility of investigating the two alternative reconstructions which Buchanan will later propose (see point 4 below).

**3. How – historically speaking – “could such an event as this have happened...in the way it has been reported”?** Having presented this proposed historical development and literary analysis of the passage, which already leans towards a-historicity, Buchanan goes on to suggest some historical-critical grounds for calling into question “how such an event as this could have happened in the temple area in exactly the way in which it has been reported.”<sup>95</sup> The impunity shown to Jesus, he believes, cannot be justified. In response, however, as I earlier suggested, this impunity may be explained when the money-changers’ services are later examined in chapters two and three of the thesis. Jesus, I propose, was not arrested for it was clearly understood and known that what he was addressing in the Temple (in particular the money-changers’ activities) needed to be addressed.

**4. Buchanan’s two hypothetical Reconstructions.** Buchanan outlines two alternative explanations for Mark’s account of Jesus’ actions to those proposed by both Sanders and Neusner. The first explanation is that the incident may have been much more violent than has been reported, which would explain why he was not arrested and “walked away safely”; the narrative was revised

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passage are literary creations. He also analyses verse 15 and concludes that it is, in addition, historically unreliable. He writes: “The relevant paragraph ....contains five verses: (1) Verse 16 is a separate halachic sentence; (2) verse 17 is a midrash that probably reflects an origin after 68 AD (3) verses 18-19 contain typical Markan editorial and summary passages that are unnecessary to the content of the paragraph. Only verse 15 reports the cleansing of the temple to which, with its synoptic parallels both Sanders and Neusner appeal as being the most likely historical report in the message of the entire gospels. Since this sentence has been put together with another verse that is probably post A.D. 68 in composition, the editing, at least, and possibly the composition of the individual fragments of this pericope, would have been done after the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. There are many questions raised about this as a historical symbolic event [as suggested by Sanders and Neusner].” (*Symbolic Money-Changers in the Temple?* p. 289)

<sup>95</sup> Buchanan, “Symbolic Money-Changers,” 281. Buchanan proposes that it is difficult to reconstruct an historical representation of this event as described in the Gospel “involving a man [Jesus] or group of men” coming into “this strategic and defended area”, continuing “to start an upheaval” (281) and then “have been allowed to walk away unmolested after this turmoil had taken place” (282). Buchanan adds: “The temple was also the national treasury and the nation’s best fortress.....It is not likely that the nation’s treasury and best fortress was left without military guard. Would military policemen, without reacting, allow a man or group of men to come to this strategic, defended area and start an upheaval which involved driving people out of the building and overturning the furniture?.....With the long history of conflict associated with feasts at Jerusalem against which Rome was well prepared, how could Jesus have been allowed to have walked away unmolested after this turmoil had taken place (Mark 11:19)?” (282).

by “the church... so that the Romans would not think of Jesus or his followers as insurrectionists.”<sup>96</sup> This first reconstruction would necessarily see the passage (finally) written after 70 C.E. (the author, in fact, suggests a revision of the text as late as “A.D. 132-135”, p. 282). The second, which Buchanan holds “is all the more probable” is that “Jesus never cleansed the temple at all” but that the passage in Mark’s Gospel is that of “a midrashic composition” created by the “later church” (after 70 C.E.) and fulfilling OT messianic expectations. The author leans in favour of this second proposal.<sup>97</sup> Both reconstructions, however interesting, are – I suggest - quite speculative and far removed from a simple or plain reading of the text.

##### **5. Further historical-critical arguments by Buchanan which challenge the particular reconstructions offered by (a) Sanders and (b) Neusner.**

(a) Buchanan criticises Sanders by simply stating that the proposed meaning of Jesus’ symbolic action which he (i.e. Sanders) offered would not have been understood by Jesus’ contemporaries.<sup>98</sup>

(b) Following this, Buchanan criticises Neusner by stating that if Jesus meant this message for his disciples only (as Neusner proposes) then the “public spectacle” in the Temple would have been unnecessary.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Buchanan, “Symbolic Money-Changers,” 282.

<sup>97</sup> Buchanan, “Symbolic Money-Changers,” 283. Buchanan writes: “The second possibility is that Jesus never cleansed the temple at all. Jews of the New Testament expected the Messiah to perform heroic deeds that earlier leaders had done – deeds like those of Moses, Joshua, or David. Hezekiah (2 Kings 18:1-6; 2 Chron 29:3-19) and Judas the Maccabee had each cleansed the temple (Josephus: Ant. 12:316-322) and Judas both became types for the Messiah...The idea that Jesus’ cleansing of the temple was conjectured, rather than performed, is all the more probable since this narrative also shows that Jesus fulfilled the prophecy of Zechariah 14:21, ‘And there shall no longer be a trader in the house of the Lord of armies on that day’...If Jesus never cleansed the temple at all but instead this event had been attributed to him from the necessity of the doctrines and messianic expectations, it is easy to understand why there are differences between the Johannine and the Synoptic accounts of this supposed event....The amount of fulfilled prophecy and messianic expectations met by this paragraph [the Cleansing of the Temple in the Gospel of Mark] suggests a midrashic composition.” (283, 284, 290).

<sup>98</sup> Buchanan writes: “If any symbolism was intended, how could anyone know what it was? Creating a disturbance in the national treasury and fortress does not provide an unequivocal prophetic symbolic message such as wearing a yoke of slavery (Jer: 27: 2-13; 28: 10-16), for example. When Hebrew Scripture prophets acted symbolically, they also spoke so that no one had any question about the message they intended to illustrate. There is no message in Mark 11: 17 to suggest that Jesus wanted his hearers to understand that the temple would be destroyed ... (285).

(c) With regard to the statement made by Jesus concerning the destruction of the Temple in John's Gospel account of the Cleansing of the Temple<sup>100</sup>, Buchanan offers a significant comment. He observes that Jesus is not reported as either having *threatened* to destroy, or, as having *indicated* that the Temple would be destroyed (as proposed by Sanders). This is an important point of observation which the author makes. Jesus – in John's Gospel account - never threatened to destroy the Temple. Rather, Buchanan states the evangelist reports what Jesus said “he would do *if* it were destroyed” by his adversaries.<sup>101</sup>

(d) Finally, Buchanan criticises both Sanders and Neusner together by stating that neither Scripture nor extra biblical literature refer to the Messiah as destroying the Holy Place. Rather, they indicate that the Messiah would “cleanse the defiled temple”.<sup>102</sup>

**6. Note made of the Greek term, ληστης, in Mark 11:17.** Buchanan notes the specific term, ληστης, used in Mk 11:17 for “robbers” and how it should be distinguished from the Greek term for thief, κλέπτης.<sup>103</sup> When the monetary background to first-century Judaism is examined in chapters two and three of the thesis, I propose that the Greek term “ληστων” (gen. pl.) in Mark

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<sup>99</sup> Buchanan writes: “If, however, Jesus had wanted only the disciples to understand this message it would not have been necessary to have made a public spectacle of the instruction. Jesus could have told the disciples privately without posing a threat to himself from the Romans,” 285.

<sup>100</sup> “Jesus answered them, ‘Destroy this Temple and in three days I will raise it up’.” (Jn 2:19)

<sup>101</sup> Buchanan, “Symbolic Money-Changers,” 285.

<sup>102</sup> Buchanan, in fact, cites C. Evans' article (“Jesus' Action in the Temple: Cleansing or Portent of Destruction?”) as demonstrating that “if Jesus had acted in a symbolic way he would have intended a symbolism different from any suggested by Sanders or Neusner” (p. 286).

<sup>103</sup> Buchanan writes: “The significance of the fact that the Greek word for ‘brigand’ here is not κλέπτης, a thief, but ληστης, a highway robber or brigand, has been known for more than thirty years. This was precisely the term used by Josephus to describe the insurrectionists that fought against Rome in the war of A.D. 66-70.... When was the temple a cave of brigands or a zealot stronghold [since Buchanan infers that the term ληστης in Mk 11;17 connotes a brigand who takes by force]? Barabbas was described as one who participated in an insurrection (Mark 15:7). .... the period of Jesus' ministry must be left as a possible candidate for the Sitz im Leben of Mark 11:17, even though there is no direct evidence that the zealots controlled the temple during Jesus' ministry. A more likely possibility, however, is the First Revolt of the Jews against Rome in A.D. 68-70. At that time the zealots unquestionably had control of the temple.” (p. 288).

11:17 has a more credible “Sitz im Leben” than that suggested by Buchanan when “in A.D. 68-70 the insurrectionists... brigands... zealots ....had control of the temple”.<sup>104</sup>

**7. Conclusion.** Instead of some *symbolic action* having been performed in the Temple, as suggested by Sanders and Neusner, Buchanan argues that it may be more likely that there were *symbolic money-changers* in the Temple. The incident in Mark 11:15-19 recording Jesus expelling the money-changers (and those buying and selling within the Temple) from the Temple may never actually have happened but was merely a literary creation by the later church. This proposition prompted the title of the author’s article in the form of a question, “Symbolic Money-Changers in the Temple?”

**(7) David Seeley: “Jesus’ Temple Act” (1993)<sup>105</sup>**

**(a) Extent of Historicity:** “Because”, as David Seeley writes, “certain problems arise in the process of placing the temple act in a historical context”, the hypothesis “that the act is simply a literary creation by Mark...[is] preferred as manifesting the fewest difficulties of interpretation.” Hence, Seeley believes there is no historical basis to the event as recorded in the Gospel of Mark. In his article he examines “three fundamental options for conceptualizing the temple act as an historical event”<sup>106</sup> – three options which have earlier been considered in this overview study of recent scholarship in Appendix 2. They are, as he writes: “(a) that the act symbolized the destruction and restoration of the temple, and would have been understandable in its context” (here he mentions E. P. Sanders as “the most prominent representative”, 264) (b) that the act symbolized merely the destruction of the temple, and would have been understandable in its context (here he singles out Jacob Neusner who has “argued this position”, 265) (c) that the act symbolized the cleansing of the temple and would have been understandable in its context” (the main representative mentioned here is Craig Evans, 265-271). He examines each of these options in turn and, in light of their respective reconstructions, asks “whether the temple act makes sense as a

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<sup>104</sup> See previous footnote.

<sup>105</sup> David Seeley, “Jesus’ Temple Act,” *CBQ* 55.2 (1993): 263-283.

<sup>106</sup> Seeley, “Jesus’ Temple Act,” 264.

historical event?” All three options are rejected by the author. Of the three, Seeley gives greatest attention to option (c), that position represented by Craig Evans.

**(b) Reasons:** Having exhausted the three main positions proposed above and not finding them convincing, Seeley writes: “If we cannot reasonably place a reported event in its alleged surrounding circumstances, should we not seriously doubt that it occurred?...Our only recourse seems to be agreement with Buchanan, who says that the account [i.e. “the temple” “act in Mark 11:15-19 [and] more or less paralleled in John 2:13-22”, 263] which ‘now appears in the gospels....does not make sense in the Jerusalem situation during Jesus’ ministry’.”<sup>107</sup> The Gospel account was not, according to Seeley, an historical record but a literary creation of the evangelist who wrote at a signal time in history. “The occasion for conceiving it was the destruction of the temple in 70 C.E.... the date consensually assigned to Mark”.<sup>108</sup> The account “is carefully woven into the last chapters of Mark” who ‘composes’ the event to signify “not just the rejection of the Jewish leadership.....[but] the end of the temple operations.”<sup>109</sup> Seeley goes on the state: “the end of the temple services constitutes a powerful motif running through the last chapters of Mark. It is almost as though the last movements of Mark’s story had been charted in terms of the temple’s projected demise.”<sup>110</sup> He adds: “Christian readers would have smiled” at the prophecy of the destruction of the Temple at the trial of Jesus, even if voiced by “false and scurrilous witnesses”, believing that “Jesus’ resurrection did indeed signal the obsolescence of the second temple and the inauguration of the new one.”<sup>111</sup> Seeley summarizes the literary purposes of the Second Gospel” writing: “Mark pondered the meaning of the temple’s destruction and concluded that it was a punishment for Jewish rejection of Jesus. In writing his gospel, he would then have to show a decisive incompatibility between two ways of relating to God, one centred on the temple, the other centred on Jesus.”<sup>112</sup> Mark, Seeley suggests, overcomes the problem of a Messiah appearing to be

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<sup>107</sup> Seeley, “Jesus’ Temple Act,” 270-71.

<sup>108</sup> Seeley, “Jesus’ Temple Act,” 273.

<sup>109</sup> Seeley, “Jesus’ Temple Act,” 273, 274.

<sup>110</sup> Seeley, “Jesus’ Temple Act,” 274.

<sup>111</sup> Seeley, “Jesus’ Temple Act,” 274, 275.

<sup>112</sup> Seeley, “Jesus’ Temple Act,” 276.

anti-Temple by “insinuate[ing] smoothly and relatively unobtrusively the notion that Jesus’ coming [to the Temple in Holy Week] means the temple’s end.”<sup>113</sup> The evangelist accomplishes this, he suggests, by (a) the respectful manner in which Jesus is depicted in relation to the Temple and (b) the tactful presentation of Jesus’ “temple act” in such manner as it is made to appear “both as a cleansing and as a symbol of the end of the temple service.”<sup>114</sup>

### Points of Note

**1. No room for the traditional understanding of an historical act of great magnitude:** It is interesting to note that in the survey of scholars which Seeley presents in category (c) (i.e. that Jesus’ actions “symbolized the cleansing of the temple”, 264) – what might be termed as closest to the traditional position - there is no room whatever for that commonplace understanding which interprets the Gospel accounts as an *historical act of great magnitude*. This is probably an indication that in recent historical-critical scholarship such a view is no longer regarded as credible. Seeley does however, as stated above, present Craig Evans’ proposition that ‘Jesus’ action symbolized the cleansing of the Temple’.

**2. Seeley rejects the argument of Craig Evans:** Rejecting Evans’ reconstruction, Seeley states (1) his NT and extra-biblical anti-priesthood references are not convincing (2) “Jesus’ temple act is not clearly directed against the priesthood” and (3) there is little evidence of “financial abuse” in the Temple.<sup>115</sup> In short, Seeley finds little evidence for dishonest or corrupt practices that needed to be corrected in the Temple. In agreement with Seeley, I propose that the inaccurate and unfair caricature often depicted of those associated with the Temple in the time of Jesus should be

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<sup>113</sup> Seeley, “Jesus’ Temple Act,” 279.

<sup>114</sup> Seeley, “Jesus’ Temple Act,” 279

<sup>115</sup> Seeley, “Jesus’ Temple Act,” 266. Seeley argues on three counts against Evans’ reconstruction: First, the NT passages used by Evans to show that Jesus was critical of the priesthood are “weak” (p. 266) and the anti-priesthood references quoted from Rabbinic writings and from Josephus suffer from their “lateness” (p. 266). Secondly, Seeley states that Evans’ references from “the Hebrew Bible and intertestamental literature” are critical only of the priesthood, whereas, “Jesus’ temple act is not clearly directed against the priesthood” (p. 266). Thirdly, Seeley writes: “though Evans does not actually say so, one assumes that he thinks the traders were making an exorbitant profit on the sale of animals and on money-changing, and then passing on at least part of that money to their corrupt bosses, the priests” (p. 268). Seeley goes on to refute Evans in this regard by stating that “there is no other ancient testimony [i.e. no other in addition to Mark 11:17] to this particular financial abuse” (p. 268).

corrected. Suggestions that the Temple authorities were engaged in dishonest commercial practices finds little support in the Talmud or extra-biblical writings and tends to have underestimated their obedience to the Law. Such incidents as are cited by Evans appear to have been isolated. However, although such a re-appraisal as painted by Seeley is necessary, the place of the money-changers in the overall scheme of the Temple needs to be further examined. Later, in chapters two and three of the thesis, I will challenge the assumption that their services were necessary in the Temple. It was such services, I propose, that Jesus was intent on correcting.

**3. Seeley finds the reference to the Temple as “den of robbers” puzzling:** Seeley writes: “This too is puzzling, for.... the word for ‘robbers’ more precisely designates brigands, highwaymen, or even insurrectionists. Why would Jesus compare the traders to highwaymen? Would they not be more likely characterized as cheats and pilferers?”<sup>116</sup> I will later propose in chapter four of the thesis that the reference made by Jesus to “robbers” was not primarily directed at the “traders” but rather at the money-changers (and to the Temple authorities who authorized their activities) in the Temple; the traders however may have been complicit in what was taking place.

**4. The context of Mark 11:15-19 is the events surrounding “the destruction of the temple in 70 C.E.”** Having proposed the literary priority of Mark, Seeley then goes on to consider the probable setting and reasons for Mark’s composition. These, he suggests, spring from the events surrounding the destruction of the temple in 70 C.E. The fig tree episodes and the Parable of the Wicked Tenants, Seeley further suggests, were deliberately placed in connection with the account of the Cleansing in order to show the “rejection of Jewish leadership” and “the end of the temple service itself.”<sup>117</sup> The context, he believes, was artificially created by the evangelist to reflect - for

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<sup>116</sup> Seeley, “Jesus’ Temple Act,” 269.

<sup>117</sup> Seeley, “Jesus’ Temple Act,” 273. Seeley proposes (based on Donald Juel’s understanding in “Messiah and Temple”, *SBLDS*, Vol 31, 1977, 131) that the placement of the Cleansing of the Temple “between the two parts of Jesus’ encounter with the fig tree” and also of its location in close “proximity....[to] the parable of the Wicked Tenants” was done so deliberately in order to show “the rejection of the official representatives of Israel, the leaders of the temple establishment” (Seeley p. 273 - quoting Juel p. 131). Seeley adds that the compositional unit in Mark served a “didactic function” which revealed “not just the rejection of Jewish leadership but the symbolization of the end of the temple service itself”. The Cleansing of the Temple, as Seeley writes, is better understood in the wider contextual background in which it is found. Its message is completed when seen in its overall context. Whereas this is true, I propose that this primary context is that of the life and ministry of Jesus and not of the events surrounding “the destruction of the temple in 70 C.E

certain didactic purposes – the later *Sitz im Leben*. I will argue in chapter four of the thesis that such was not the case and that the true *Sitz im Leben* is that of the life and ministry of Jesus himself.

**5. John’s account is an elaboration of Mark.** Is John’s account that of an independent witness or merely an elaboration of Mark? Seeley concludes the latter where he writes: “John 2:13-22 seems to be later than Mark 11:15-19. In fact, everything in the former can readily be seen as an elaboration of the Marcan version...”<sup>118</sup> Scholars, generally, on the contrary believe that John is an independent witness.<sup>119</sup> It is interesting to note, however – as Seeley suggests, that John was aware of what Mark had written. This view also was expressed by several of the Early Fathers (notably Clement of Alexandria, Ephrem, Jerome and the historian Eusebius, see Appendix 1) who believed that John wrote his Gospel in order to supplement or complete what the Synoptics had omitted.

**(8) P. M. Casey: Culture and Historicity: The Cleansing  
of the Temple (1997)<sup>120</sup>**

**(a) Extent of Historicity:** Among the articles/commentaries chosen as a representative sample of more recent exegesis on the Cleansing of the Temple, this article written by Philip Maurice Casey represents most closely the interpretation offered by the Early Church Fathers. The Gospels, he believes, describe a major disturbance in the Temple that arose as a consequence of the high level of commercialization in God’s House which Jesus had wished to end. The Court of the Gentiles

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<sup>118</sup> Seeley, “Jesus’ Temple Act,” 273. Seeley adds “For instance, John 2:14-15 looks like a reiteration of Mark 11:15 with some expansion and novelistic touches added. Mark 11:17 vaguely reminds one of Zech 14:21 whereas John 2:16 refers to it plainly....Verse 18 recalls Mark 11:28 and v 19 recalls Mark 14:58. John 2:17 contains the typical Johannine motif of remembrance and John 2:20-22 exhibits the customary Johannine mistaking of figurative speech for literal speech. In short, one could conclude with reason that John 2:13-22 is the response of the Fourth Evangelist and (or) the Johannine tradition to Mark 11:15-19, and, indeed, that it is informed by a reading of the entire last section of Mark” (pp 272-273).”

<sup>119</sup> C. H. Dodd *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge; Cambridge University Press, 1953), 300-303; 450-451; Raymond Brown, *The Gospel according to John* (New York; Doubleday, 1966) 118-120; Scott M. Lewis: *The Gospel according to John and the Johannine Letters* (Collegeville Minnesota; Liturgical Press, 2005), 9. New Collegeville Bible Commentary: New Testament (ed Daniel Durken [Collegeville, Minnesota; Liturgical Press, 2009]), 317; Brian Philip Dunn: A. J. Appasamy and his Reading of Rāmānuja (Oxford; Oxford University Press, 2016), 247-248.

<sup>120</sup> P. M. Casey, “Culture and Historicity: the Cleansing of the Temple”, *CBQ* 59 (1997): 306-332.



was full of trading that was preventing Gentiles and ‘overflow Jewish pilgrims’, at Passover time, from entering for prayer. Casey writes that the Cleansing of the Temple (he argues that there was only one and that this happened at the end of Jesus’ ministry<sup>121</sup>), was an event of great magnitude which involved “prohibiting the carrying of vessels through the house of God and the throwing out of merchants and money changers.”<sup>122</sup> He also believes that verse 17 is authentic and that Jesus, therefore, spoke the words which Mark records (based on the prophecy of Isaiah and Jeremiah), “Is it not written, ‘My house shall be a house of prayer for all the nations’? But you have made it a den of robbers” (Mk: 11:17).

**(b) Reasons:** Casey begins his outline of the reasons for Jesus’ actions writing: “The buying, selling, and changing of money was done in what we often call the court of the Gentiles, the outermost court which ‘everyone, even foreigners, were allowed to enter’ (Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* par 103). ....Jesus clearly objected to the temple’s being used for these purposes.”<sup>123</sup> He continues to explain that adhering to the writings of the prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah concerning the purpose and holiness of the Temple, Jesus sought to extend the sacredness of the “inner sanctuary .... to the whole temple area... prayer, not trade, must be what the court of the Gentiles was for.”<sup>124</sup> Mark 11:16 (the prohibition of carrying vessels through the Temple) makes sense in this cultural context. Jesus wished to prevent the commercialization of the Temple and the exploitation of poor people by the merchants and money changers in the outer parts of the Temple. Jesus, Casey suggests, had especially in mind (a) the excess Jewish pilgrims for major feasts such as Passover and also (b) Gentiles of whom Isaiah, speaking for Yahweh, prophesied, “I will bring to my holy mountain, and I will make them joyful in my house of prayer” (Isa 56:7). In addition to the commercialisation conducted in the Temple, Casey questions whether the Law stipulated that the Temple Tax should be paid annually. Addressing such malevolent practices in the Temple, Casey argues that Jesus’

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<sup>121</sup> Casey writes that Jesus actions took place “sometime before the feast of Passover and Unleavened Bread, we should not make Mark’s evidence more precise than this” (p. 308). In relation to John’s account he writes: “I do not propose to discuss in detail the Johannine account of the cleansing of the temple. I think it is entirely secondary, but the matter is complex and must be argued out elsewhere” (p. 324).

<sup>122</sup> Casey, “Culture and Historicity,” 331.

<sup>123</sup> Casey, “Culture and Historicity,” 309

<sup>124</sup> Casey, “Culture and Historicity,” 310-12.

actions were a serious threat to the authority and riches of the chief priests and scribes. “The whole affair was an intra-Jewish conflict in which a major prophet expounded the word of God (Isaiah 56:6-7 and Jeremiah 7:11) to regularize the running of the house of God for the whole people of God, particularly poor Jews, including even Gentiles who came to worship.”<sup>125</sup>

### Points of Note

**1. Response to E.P. Sanders and David Seeley:** In defending the traditional interpretation of the Cleansing of the Temple as an historic event, Casey begins by noting the difficulties posed by both Sanders and Seeley. In particular, he addresses Sanders’ removal of “Jesus’ reasons for his action (Mark 11:17) as redactional” (p. 306) and also Sanders dismissal of the “halakic judgement” of Jesus in Mk 11:16 as a case of a secondary editorial addition. He also notes Seeley’s description of the passage as an example of literary fiction. Casey proposes to respond to such historical-criticism by offering “a reconstruction of the Aramaic source of Mark 11:15-18a [so as to dismiss the notion that anything in Mark’s account “has been secondarily added” (p. 306)], and to defend its historicity by locating it in its original cultural setting.”<sup>126</sup>

**2. Mark’s Aramaic Source:** Casey offers a reconstruction of an original Aramaic account of Jesus’ action which he proposes as having existed behind the canonical Greek text in Mark’s Gospel. The purpose of this reconstruction is to discover, what the author proposes to be, the primary source of Mark’s account and consequently to distinguish the ‘true or original gospel’ from anything that might have been secondarily added. Inferring that the translator of the Aramaic into Greek worked literally, the apparently crude features of the canonical text are, he argues, understandable. The Greek text, he concludes, is not that of “crude or Semitic Greek” but rather the work of a literal translator who makes no “mistakes”. As these ‘literal translation features’ mark the entire account, there are, he suggests, no secondary additions in Mark’s account.<sup>127</sup> This

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<sup>125</sup> Casey, “Culture and Historicity,” 316.

<sup>126</sup> Casey, “Culture and Historicity,” 307.

<sup>127</sup> Casey writes: “The reconstruction [i.e the proposed reconstruction of the Aramaic source] should enable us, however, to see more clearly the original *Sitz im Leben* of this piece. In particular, we should note that the opening of v 17 is merely a conventional piece of Semitic narrative, not an indication something has been secondarily added.

proposed reconstruction of the Aramaic source behind Mark may be similar to the Aramaic ‘gospel’ of Matthew which several of the Early Fathers (Papias, Irenaeus, Origen, Eusebius, Jerome, John Chrysostom) referred to as the ‘first gospel’ (with a small ‘g’) which served the Jewish Christian communities in the early Church (see Appendix 1).

**3. Cultural Setting:** Having offered his proposed reconstruction of the Aramaic source behind the Greek text, and, having determined that this earlier source was not secondarily added to, Casey then seeks to locate Mark’s account in its original cultural setting. He does this so as to test whether it fits in well with the known history and culture of the time. The account, according to Casey, passes this criterion – it has an excellent *Sitz im Leben*. The cultural reasons he sees for which Jesus cleansed the Temple are as follows:

(a) The area in the Temple reserved for the Gentiles - the Court of the Gentiles – had been taken over with trading and money-changing activities. The Gentiles and ‘excess Jewish pilgrims’ (at crowded times during Passover and major feasts) were thus prevented from entering God’s ‘house of prayer’. He states that the commercialization conducted within the Court of the Gentiles was of concern for Jesus, who wished to extend the sacredness of the inner courts of the Temple to the outer courts.<sup>128</sup>

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We should also be encouraged to look for the original setting of v 16, which has puzzled everyone. It is significant, moreover, that one can produce a piece of idiomatic Aramaic which can be translated so straightforwardly to produce Mark’s Greek text...I have inferred that the translator worked literally for the most part, put the historic present *ερχονται* for the narrative participle *יָרָא*, removed one *ו* + indicative by using the participle *εισελθων*, and moved one main verb, *κατεστρεψεν* for *אפכ*, to the end of the sentence. This accords with the translation techniques known from his cultural environment and from elsewhere in the Synoptic Gospels,” 307-309.

<sup>128</sup> Casey writes: “The buying, selling, and changing of money was done in what we often call the court of the Gentiles, the outermost court which ‘everyone, even foreigners, were allowed to enter’ (Josephus Ag. Ap. par 103). It is culturally obvious that the inner courts would not be used for this purpose, and Jesus’ citation of Isa. 56:7 makes sense only if this is taken for granted. Money had to be changed for payment of the temple tax and for the purchase of sacrifices and perhaps of other things. Jesus clearly objected to the temple’s being used for these purposes .... Jesus’ prohibition of carrying through is entirely coherent with his removal of traders, in that it defends the sacred space of the house of God. Most people believed that God really dwelt in his temple. ... At the time of Jesus, everyone knew that the only part of the temple foreigners were allowed in was the court of the Gentiles; hence, if they are to be joyful ‘in my house of prayer’ - and this is to be a ‘house of prayer for all peoples’ ...the practical effect of clearing out traders and money changers would be to permit the throngs of Jewish people present for Passover to pray anywhere in the temple area. There was not room for all of them in the inner courts,” 309-312.

(b) The trading and exchange activities carried on in the Temple were dishonest. Casey notes the severity of the Aramaic equivalent of the Greek term in Mk 11:17 (ληστής) which, he suggests, Jesus used as a descriptive account of the practices conducted in the Herodian Temple.<sup>129</sup> He states that the religious authorities were amassing great wealth and were “taking money from the poor [and] doing so in accordance with the law” (p. 313). Specific areas of concern that he mentions relate to: (a) The payment of the Temple Tax (b) The wealth of the Temple (c) The insistence on payments made with Tyrian coinage and (d) The ‘vessels’ or ‘containers’ of Mk 11:16. Let us look at each of these in turn as they are of particular interest for the subject matter of this thesis.

(i) The payment of the annual Temple Tax: Casey refers to the level of money generated by the collection of the Temple Tax. He questions the validity of such an *annual* payment.<sup>130</sup> Although, I propose, Jesus was concerned at the manner in which the half-shekel tax was paid in the Temple, he did not object to its annual payment (see Mt 17:24-27). Jesus, I will argue in chapter four of the thesis, objected – not to its annual payment – but rather to the coins which the money-changers were offering in exchange to pilgrims who came to the Temple to pay the Temple tax.

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<sup>129</sup> Casey writes: “The context of this second passage [i.e. Jeremiah 7] is one of vigorous criticism of Jews who worship in the temple but commit various sins, including theft, idolatry and murder. . . . He [Jeremiah] labels it [the Temple] מערת פריעים ‘a robber’s cave’ (Jer 7:11). . . . It is unfortunate that we cannot be sure of the precise word which he [Jesus] used for the biblical פריעים. All the texts of our period in which bandits are discussed are extant in Greek, and in due course ληστής became a loanword in Jewish Aramaic and in Syriac. There are not many such loanwords in the Aramaic of our period, however, so it is not probable that Jesus said לסתין. The term אנוסין [which Casey suggests in his reconstruction] is perfectly possible, and no significant difference is made if he said גזלן. Like the original Hebrew, the whole expression is a highly picturesque application of Scripture to the royal portico [in Herod’s reconstruction of the Temple]. It means a cave used by brigands, by leaders of armed gangs who committed armed theft and murder.” (pp. 312-313). Later, citing G. W. Buchanan’s article “Brigands in the Temple”, Casey alludes to the problems encountered with situating the term ‘ληστῶν’ (Mk 11:17) in 30 C.E., which Casey states “has led some scholars to propose a “later *Sitz im Leben* at a time when there were zealots in the temple” (p. 318). Casey responds by stating that the term פריעים for “robbers or more literally violent people is already there in the text of Jeremiah 7:11” (p. 318), the text Jesus actually quoted. In addition he states “there is no need to suppose that the description must both be literally understood and correct, any more than to suppose that the high priest literally worshipped Baal (cf Jer 7:9), or that Herod Antipas had four legs and barked (cf Luke 13:31-32)” (p. 319), in order to prove its historicity. I propose that the difficulty surrounding the use of the term ληστής – as suggested earlier – may be explained when the money-changers’ coinage is examined in chapter two of the thesis.

<sup>130</sup> Casey writes: “We must also infer that the merchants and money changers were taking money from the poor, doing so in accordance with the Law. Poor people had to pay the temple tax, just like rich people, and money changers always sell for more than its face value, to make a profit. Rich priests, however, did not pay the temple tax, and a number of judgements by scribes would increase the money which people had to pay, poor people included. The most dramatic decision was that the temple tax should be paid every year rather than once in a lifetime. This is not an inevitable interpretation of Exod 30:11-16 with Neh 10:32, and it is contradicted by 4Q159, which surely preserves the older halakah. It gave the temple far more money than it might be thought to need, and at half a shekel per person it was a burden only to the poor,” “Culture and Historicity,” 313-314.

(ii) The wealth of the Temple: Casey refers to Josephus's account of "the massive wealth of the temple and of the chief priests" (p. 314). In addition, he notes how "shortly before the Roman war" (66-70 C.E.), Josephus makes reference to the "forcible extraction of tithes" by priests who took lots [of such tithes].<sup>131</sup> Casey's reference to the enormous sums of money confiscated by Crassus, the Roman Proconsul of Syria, from the Jerusalem Temple in 54 B.C.E., compares significantly, I propose, with the much smaller amount of 17 talents plundered by the Roman Procurator Gessius Florus in 66 C.E.<sup>132</sup> This action of Florus provoked great tensions in Jerusalem at the beginning of the Jewish-Roman War.<sup>133</sup> The question, I propose, that remains however is: Where were the other treasures (i.e. those which must have existed in addition to the 17 talents) of the Temple kept at this time? I will suggest in chapter four of the thesis that these monies may have been removed from the Temple and hidden outside.

(iii) The insistence on payments made with Tyrian coinage: Twice, in his article, Casey makes significant reference to the use of Tyrian coins in the Temple bearing the image of Melkart.<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> Casey writes: "There is also important background evidence which shows the massive wealth of the temple, and of the chief priests, who could legally extract tithes from the poor. Josephus (*J.W.* 5.5.3-7 §201-36) notes the plates of gold which covered parts of the temple, and its other magnificent adornments. He relates an occasion when Crassus took 2'000 talents from it and was prepared to strip it of all its gold worth 8'000 talents (*Ant.* 14.7.1 §105). Some of the high priests were also rich.....[he writes of Caiaphas' - high-priest during Jesus' interrogation before the Sanhedrin - "massive personal influence with the Roman Governor" (p.315)]......Among the families condemned is that of Annas....[where in a passage from the Talmud it states] 'For they are chief priests, and their sons treasurers, and their sons-in-laws supervisors, and their servants come and beat us [different families in Jerusalem] with staves' (*t. Menah.* 13:21)......Shortly before the Roman war, Josephus (*Ant* 20:8:8) recorded the forcible extraction of tithes, and he presented himself as virtuous for not taking tithes to which he was due (*Life* 15: 80), while his fellow priests took lots (*Life* 12:63)," 314-315.

<sup>132</sup> It also compares significantly with the much larger sum of 400 talents and more stolen from the Temple by Sabinus, commander of the Roman legion in Jerusalem, and his troops, in 4 B.C. (Josephus, *Antiquities* 18:3:2)

<sup>133</sup> In a section of his book *Judaism from Cyrus to Hadrian* entitled "Initial events", Lester Grabbe outlines some of the causes leading to this war. After the violent outbreak in "Caesarea in 66 C.E.", Grabbe goes on to state: "After this set of events, the people of Jerusalem were further provoked when Florus took seventeen talents from the temple treasury. ....Florus tried to take possession of the Antonia with his men, the alleged reason that he wanted to seize the treasury, but he was prevented from doing so.....no reason except greed is given for his seizing the seventeen talents from the temple treasury, but a little later it is stated that Jerusalem and its adjacent countryside alone were forty talents in arrears in tribute." (*Judaism from Cyrus to Hadrian* [London: SCM Press Ltd, 1994], 446-447).

<sup>134</sup> Casey writes: "Even more dramatically, it [i.e. Mk 11:16] would prevent priests from having containers for taking money out of the court of the women, where the trumpets for the skel offerings were placed [i.e. the Treasury]. If they could not be taken out in quantity, the chief priests would no longer want them taken in, so that Tyrian shekels bearing the image of Melkart would no longer be taken into God's house" (p.311). Again, he adds: "Finally, Tyrian shekels were used because of their relative purity, so that images of Melkart were brought into the house of God for financial gain" (p. 315).

Melkart was one of the chief deities of the Phoenicians and the stamping of such an ‘idolatrous’ image on Tyrian coins would, he believes, have caused offence in the Temple. Tyrian coinage possessed consistent levels of purity in precious metal content and was therefore recommended for payment in the Temple.<sup>135</sup> Whereas Tyrian coinage was, as Casey alludes to, the coinage with which the pilgrims were recommended to pay the Temple tax, Tyrian coinage was *not* - I will propose in chapter two of the thesis - the coinage which the money changers offered by way of exchange in the Temple (as is sometimes assumed in recent commentaries). This distinction is significant and will be examined later in chapter two.

(iv) The ‘vessels’ or ‘containers’ of Mk 11:16: The prohibition by Jesus of carrying “containers” or “vessels” through the Holy Place is described in Mark 11:16.<sup>136</sup> Casey proposes such a prohibition would have had considerable monetary implications for the priests and the money-changers of the Temple. He examines the Greek term (σκευος) and its Aramaic equivalent ܩܪܘܢܐ, in order to understand what precisely Jesus was preventing from being carried through the Temple. He states that, as neither the Greek nor the Aramaic terms refer to a ‘*sacred* vessel’, the term that Jesus used probably referred to ‘vessels in general’, such as the containers for birds bought for sacrifice in the Temple or vessels for carrying joints of meat to the priests after they had been

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<sup>135</sup> Casey believes that the purity of Tyrian coins over that of other silver coins in circulation, and, the subsequent profits made by the insistence of their use in the Temple, outweighed the fact that such coins possessed idolatrous images. Whereas Roman coins were systematically debased from the time of Nero onwards (c. 60 C.E.) and the proportionate measure of their purity against that of Tyrian coins was accordingly reduced, there was, nevertheless, I propose relative uniformity in the silver content of all authorised or legitimate silver coins circulating around Judaea in 30 C.E. Thus the motivation for acquiring one form of silver coinage over another may not have been as acute when Jesus cleansed the Temple in 30 CE as it was later. It is true, however, that Tyrian coins were stipulated in the Mishna as the preferred method of payment of the Temple Tax (what period of time this relates to is debated – see chapter three of the thesis) and that these coins maintained their purity at all times during their history in circulation right up to their demise, which numismatists have dated in 66 C.E. (see Yakov Meshorer, “One hundred and ninety years of Tyrian Shekels” (pages 171-180 in *Numismatics, Art History, Archaeology, Studies in Honor of Leo Mildenburg*, edited by Arthur Houghton, [Wetteren: Cultura Press, 1984]). The different coins in circulation in first-century Judaism will be examined later in chapter two. In particular, the range of opinion held today by scholars as to the precise manner in which Tyrian coins were used in the Temple will be examined. On the one hand and correctly, I propose, is the hypothesis offered by Casey above and others (see the following article in this Appendix by Jerome Murphy-O’Connor, “Jesus and the Money Changers: Mark 11:15-17; John 2:13-17”, *RB* 107 [2000]: 43-55) which suggests that Tyrian coins were brought by the Jewish pilgrim into the Temple for payment of the Temple Tax and other payments. On the other hand, and incorrectly I also propose, is the suggestion that Tyrian coins were in fact the coins offered by the money-changers in the Temple in exchange for other (‘idolatrous’ or non-acceptable) coins then in circulation.

<sup>136</sup> “And he would not allow anyone to carry *anything* [lit. vessel, Gk. σκευος] through the temple”, Mk 11:16, italics added

sacrificed. In addition, Casey suggests another possible function for these vessels, one which is of considerable interest for this thesis. That is that the term σκευος refers to containers used for “taking money out of the court of the women” (where the Treasury was located) in the Temple.<sup>137</sup> Casey, I argue, is right in suggesting that the vessels which Jesus had prohibited from being carried “through the temple” are linked to the “money taken from the court of women”. However, rather than monies removed from the Treasury in the Court of Women [which was *corban* or ‘dedicated to God’ and could, therefore, only be removed at approved times by priests], I will later suggest that the containers in Mk 11:16 were those used to remove the coinage which lay on the money-changers’ tables after being deposited there by pilgrims who had earlier come to receive Temple coinage in exchange.<sup>138</sup>

**(4) Some Recent Scholarship.** In the second section of his article, Casey turns to the efforts of many recent scholars to show that some, or all, of Mark’s account is derived redaction or from the early church. Casey refutes any such de-historicization of Mark’s account. It is not my purpose here to offer a detailed survey of his argument, but some points of note are worth mentioning.

(i) Casey refutes the suggestion of both D. Nineham and R. Bultmann that Mark 11:17 is secondary or a separate unit which they propose on the basis that the verse begins with the typically Marcan introduction’ (“And he was teaching and he said”).<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> Casey writes: “More directly, it would stop merchants and money changers from having any sort of container for carrying money, without which they could not do business. Even more dramatically, it would prevent priests from having containers for taking money out of the court of the women, where the trumpets for the shekel offerings were placed [i.e. the Treasury]. If they could not be taken out in quantity, the chief priests would no longer want them taken in, so that Tyrian shekels bearing the image of Melkart would no longer be taken into God’s house” (p. 311).

<sup>138</sup> This coinage would have been deposited in the Treasury had there been no requirement for the Jewish pilgrim to first exchange his money with the coinage offered in exchange by the money-changers in the Temple. It is this money on the money-changers’ tables which I will propose in chapter four of the thesis that Jesus wished to prevent from being removed from the Temple.

<sup>139</sup> D. Nineham, *The Gospel of Saint Mark* (Pelican New Testament Commentaries), London; Penguin, 1963, 304. Nineham writes that the introductory phrase in Mk 11:17 (“And he was teaching and he said”) is an indication that the verse is “cut off from the action by an introductory formula, as though it were a separate unit”. R. Bultmann, *The history of the Synoptic Tradition* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Oxford: Blackwell, 1968), 36. Casey regards such scholarship as an “error of method” (p. 316), that can be dispelled by (a) showing that Mark translated from an Aramaic original that reads quite easily and (b) the exact or “precise expression”, ‘και εδιδασκεν και ελεγεν’, is not found elsewhere in Mark.

(ii) Casey also refutes the suggestion by A. Harvey and E. P. Sanders that the phrase “house of prayer for all nations” in Mark 11:17 “could hardly be extracted from the Hebrew version which Jesus would have used”.<sup>140</sup>

(iii) Citing G. W. Buchanan’s work, Casey responds to the proposed problems encountered with situating the term ‘ληστῶν’ (Mk 11:17) in 30 C.E., which Casey states “has led some scholars to propose a “later *Sitz im Leben*” dating, when the zealots occupied the Temple in Jerusalem.<sup>141</sup>

(iv) Borg’s<sup>142</sup> contention that “controlling such an area would have required a para-military or mob action....using force” and that “the non-intervention of the Roman troops and the temple police is incomprehensible” is also addressed by Casey.<sup>143</sup>

(v) Casey responds to Sanders’ denial of Mk 11:16. Reconstructing a proposed Aramaic original underlying the Greek text, Casey states that Mark 11:16 is historically reliable.<sup>144</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> A. Harvey, *Jesus and the Constraints of History* (London; Duckworth, 1982), 132; E. P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 66. Casey suggests the very opposite stating that the Hebrew text, and its LXX-Septuagint translation, “which Mark follows....so literal and accurate it is” (p. 318), is a perfect translation. Casey also rejects the suggestion that the phrase “for all the nations” is a gloss as proposed by R. H. Hiers. On p. 318, Casey writes: “Hiers [R. H. Hiers, “Purification of the Temple: Preparation for the Kingdom of God”, *JBL* 90 (1971) 87-89] suggested that the phrase ‘for all the nations’ [Mk 11:17] is a gloss on the ground that Luke would be unlikely to omit it, but the manuscript tradition is too strong for us to suppose a gloss unsupported by any manuscript authority.”

<sup>141</sup> Casey responds by stating that the term פריעים for “robbers or more literally violent people is already there in the text of Jeremiah 7:11” (p. 318), the text Jesus actually quoted. As such – as was seen earlier - he states that it should not be doubted. Casey also surveys other remote historical occurrences of ‘brigandage’ so as to justify Jesus’ use of the term but finds nothing immediately pertaining to the life of the Temple circa 30 C.E. This problem appears to indicate that Casey himself has difficulty in relation to the use of this term ληστῶν, פריעים, as a reference for what was taking place in the Temple at that time. However, he emphatically defends the notion that Jesus used this term.

<sup>142</sup> M. J. Borg, *Conflict, Holiness and Politics in the Teachings of Jesus*, Studies in the Bible and Early Christianity 5 (New York; Mellen Press, 1984), 171-173.

<sup>143</sup> Referencing many OT texts and the fervour their proclamation generated among the people (he cites the Maccabees who “died rather than fight on the Sabbath”), Casey believes that Borg “underestimates the role of the sacred texts....and the corporate experience of the power of the preached word....which must have included the Books of Isaiah and Jeremiah” (p. 320). In addition, Casey states that “the temple police arrested Jesus (Mark 14:43-45) and the Roman governor condemned him to death. Borg, he suggests, “has confused non-intervention with delay. Delay was very sensible.” (p. 320).

<sup>144</sup> Casey writes: “Sanders does not discuss the possibility of an original report in Aramaic” (p. 321). In light of his proposed Aramaic reconstruction for the use the term σκαυος (‘vessels’ or ‘containers’ - especially their monetary function, see above in the main text,), Casey goes on to state that “this makes it all the clearer the Jewish halakic judgement that vessels were not to be carried through or across the sacred space [of the Temple]”. Casey explains: “His [i.e. Mark’s] report simply assumes what first-century Jews knew: that it was a long way through or across the



(vi) Jacob Neusner's suggestion that "Jesus was replacing the temple worship with the Eucharist" (p. 322), is also rejected by Casey. He writes: "Jesus expounded no antisacrificial theology, and he led no such campaign. On the contrary, his next important action was that of celebrating his final Passover with his disciples (Mark 14: 12-26)" (p 322).

(vii) Casey also makes reference to the rejection "of Mark's placement of the cleansing of the temple" at the end of Jesus' ministry by J.A.T. Robinson<sup>145</sup> and "a whole stream of scholars" who believe that "the Johannine placement at the beginning of the ministry might be right".<sup>146</sup> Casey, believing in a single event only, locates Jesus' actions in the Temple at the end.

**(5) Fiction: David Seeley:** In the third section of his article, Casey examines David Seeley's, argument that the account is fictional. Casey criticizes Seeley's article in several areas. Briefly, some of these are:

(i) Seeley, according to Casey, does not consider "whether Mark may have had an Aramaic source" and therefore "does not probe deeply enough into what an Aramaic-speaking Jewish person may have meant by any given sentence."<sup>147</sup>

(ii) According to Casey, Seeley does not examine Mark 11:16 sufficiently and assumes a narrower priestly usage of the term 'vessels'<sup>148</sup> than the more general usage proposed by Casey (see earlier).

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temple, that items such as pigeons could be taken in vessels to places such as the edge of the court of the priests, and that money changers and merchants had to carry money in something" (p 321).

<sup>145</sup> J. A. T. Robinson: *The Priority of John* (London: SCM 1985, 128).

<sup>146</sup> Casey, "Culture and Historicity," 324. These scholars, according to Casey, suggest that the "Synoptic writers were committed to the view that Jesus visited Jerusalem only once" and therefore assumed that the event must have happened at that visit. In response Casey writes: "This presupposition should not be accepted because none of the Synoptic writers says that Jesus visited Jerusalem only once. The Synoptic writers relate only one visit for two reasons. First, Mark had a positive and correct tradition that the cleansing of the temple led directly to Jesus' death. Second, the Synoptic writers did not have a proper outline of Jesus' ministry, so they arranged his teaching partly by theme" (p. 324).

<sup>147</sup> Casey, "Culture and Historicity," 325.

<sup>148</sup> Casey writes that according to Seeley Mk 11: 16 means "that priests could not carry vessels through the temple... Our source does not mention priests [ i.e. priests only in connection with the vessels] as it surely would if it meant what Seeley says" (p. 325).

He therefore fails, according to Casey, to consider a wider notion of prohibition in the Temple which Casey suggests was intended by Jesus.

(iii) Seeley's dismissal of the historicity of the Cleansing of the Temple is, according to Casey, "mostly an attack on Evans rather than that of the Marcan narrative."<sup>149</sup> This "enables Seeley to reduce Jesus' criticism to 'corruption in the priesthood' a charge significantly different from that in Mark and one which Seeley proceeds to dismiss."<sup>150</sup> Casey, nevertheless, goes on to tackle Seeley's suggestion that Jesus was not critical of the priesthood.<sup>151</sup>

(iv) Casey defends the historicity of Mk 11:27-33 which necessarily in turn, he proposes, assumes the historicity of Jesus' actions in the Temple.<sup>152</sup>

(v) Casey finally goes on to dismiss the second section of Seeley's article which proposes that the temple act is more easily understood as a Marcan composition. Casey writes: "In favor of this argument, he [i.e. Seeley] argues that the theme of the temple is woven through the last chapters of Mark and that it shows many signs of artifice. This argument excludes *by method* even the possibility that there was a real event which was later written up with secondary material. That

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<sup>149</sup> Casey, "Culture and Historicity," 325.

<sup>150</sup> Casey, "Culture and Historicity," 325.

<sup>151</sup> In his commentary on Mark 11:27-33, Casey states that although Jesus was respectful of the priesthood as an institution (which Seeley used as an argument to show that Jesus was not in opposition to the priestly hierarchy of the Temple), he was, nevertheless, critical of their practice. "Jesus had just expounded judgements contrary to their decisions, citing as his evidence the word of God in Scripture [Isaiah and Jeremiah], and, worse he was enforcing his views; this was a direct challenge to the authority of the priesthood in charge of the temple" (p. 326). Similarly, Casey rejects Seeley's dismissal of "Mark 12:1-12 [which "is also vigorously critical of Jewish leaders"] as late" (p. 327). Casey argues otherwise and continues "it has an excellent *Sitz im Leben* at this point in his ministry, and the early church had no reason to make up anything so indirect" (p. 327). Lastly Casey cites "early" evidence of "cultural hostility to the priesthood" (which Seeley stated was lacking) from the Damascus Document (CD) which states: "They shall take care to separate from the sons of the pit and to keep aloof from the unclean riches of wickedness acquired by vow...or from the treasure of the sanctuary" (p. 328) and also "later evidence" in "the case of woes against the high priestly families" which Casey states "have an excellent *Sitz im Leben* before the destruction of the temple but none at all after" (p. 328).

<sup>152</sup> Casey defends the historicity of Mk 11:27-33. The mention of John the Baptist by Jesus, he writes, "has an excellent *Sitz im Leben* in history and none at all in the early church, whose believers would not have made his [i.e. Jesus'] authority seem to be no greater than that of John the Baptist" (p. 327). The historicity of the latter [i.e. Mk 11:27-33], according to Casey, confirms the historicity of the former [i.e. Mk 11: 15-19]. Casey states: "The incident [Mark 11:27-33] is unintelligible without the historicity of the cleansing of the temple, and this forms another decisive argument for the historical basis of that incident" (p. 327).

method is contrary to the nature of historical research into a culture in which the rewriting of history was normal.”<sup>153</sup>

**(9) Jerome Murphy-O'Connor: “Jesus and the Money Changers: (Mark 11:15-17; John 2:13-17)” (2002)<sup>154</sup>**

**(a) Extent of Historicity:** In his article entitled “Jesus and the Money Changers”, Jerome Murphy-O'Connor defends an historical Cleansing of the Temple, which he believes happened at the *beginning* of Jesus' ministry when Jesus joined the revolutionary programme inspired by John the Baptist. Certain elements of the Gospel accounts, he proposes however, may not be historical.<sup>155</sup> Jesus most probably performed some limited *action* (the author consistently uses the term ‘action’) in the Temple. He writes: “Jesus overturned one or two tables and tried to herd out some of those buying and selling. There was no big fuss and it was all over very quickly” (p. 45). “In the last analysis”, he continues, “the implausible elements [he earlier referred to several implausible elements suggested by various scholars, including those proposed by E. P. Sanders and Jacob Neusner] that have been set aside, are the exaggerations common to such stories and do not constitute a serious objection to their basic historicity” (p. 45). “The temple sayings”, he believes,

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<sup>153</sup> Casey, “Culture and Historicity,” 329. Casey continues: “For Seeley’s approach it is a real problem [i.e. proving that Mark’s account shows signs of artifice and is therefore not historical] that Mark does not take up the cleansing of the temple with the rest of his artifices. It is taken up otherwise only in bits.... So Seeley’s conclusions require a very weak criterion for detecting authorial intent..... Seeley’s work...is an offshoot of the work of B. L. Mack [*A Myth of Innocence: Mark and Christian Origins* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988)] ...Mack’s book is a remarkable one. In it he argues that Mark’s Gospel is a work of fiction....Mack and Miller [Robert J. Miller “The (A)Historicity of Jesus’ Temple Demonstration: A Test Case in Methodology”, *SBLSP*, 1991] make... [a] point of method which we should note: ‘If a scene is composed entirely of themes and narrative designs essential to the gospel’s plot, the deed in that scene should be considered unhistorical. Since this excludes *by method* any possibility that a gospel writer could found his plot on correct information about an important sequence of events, it should not be accepted as a principle for serious historical research.....More decisively, they comment [i.e. Miller and Mack] that “if one deletes from the story those themes essential to the Markan plots, there is nothing left for historical reminiscence.” (pp 329-331)

<sup>154</sup> Jerome Murphy O’Connor, “Jesus and the Money-Changers (Mark 11:15-17; John 2:13-17),” *RB* 107 (2000): 43-55

<sup>155</sup> Murphy O’Connor writes: “Even those who defend the historicity of the incident in the temple find the existing versions implausible. If the money changers can be plausibly located in the Royal Portico along the south wall of the temple, the animals for sale were (if anywhere) at the north end of Herod’s vast enclosure. How could Jesus get away with creating a disturbance in two different parts of the temple? How could one man drive out the many hundreds that the Royal portico could accommodate? How could one man herd frightened animals? If money was at stake why did the temple police not react immediately? Why did the garrison of Antonio do nothing when the disturbance occurred right beneath them?,” 44.

“if authentic, were spoken much later [during his ministry] when Jesus’ perception of his role in the execution of the plan of salvation had altered” (p. 42).

**(b) Reasons:** Jesus, during his very early ministry, was part of John the Baptist’s reform movement. Both were outraged with two practical aspects concerning the payment of the Temple Tax: (a) the demand that it should be paid with Tyrian coinage which bore an idolatrous image and (b) the imposition of an annual payment contrary to the Law of Moses.<sup>156</sup> It was at this early stage of his ministry when Jesus cleansed the Temple “at a stage in Jesus’ life when his vision of his destiny was still conditioned by John the Baptist.”<sup>157</sup> Murphy-O’Connor continues: “In the course of his ministry, however, Jesus’ understanding of how God would act in history changed....Jesus is no longer the critical prophet of doom whom John had formed Given such an evolution in Jesus’ thinking.... it is difficult to conceive him being concerned about the infractions of the law involved in the payment of the temple tax....His action in the Jerusalem Temple belonged to a past in which he was a different person.”<sup>158</sup> For this reason, Murphy O’Connor proposes, John’s chronology is historically reliable and there was no ‘cleansing event’ at the end of Jesus’ ministry.

### Points of Note

**(1) Recent Mainstream Scholarship.** At the beginning of his article Murphy-O’Connor presents a brief overview statement of “recent discussion” on the Cleansing of the Temple. He states that this event in Jesus’ life in seen in either one of two ways: (1) Jesus’ “action” in the Temple was undertaken to “symbolize the cleansing [Evans] or the destruction of the temple [Sanders]” (p. 43),

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<sup>156</sup> The cause of their disquiet against the Temple, Murphy-O’Connor suggests, revolved around two malpractices concerning the payment of the Temple Tax that both John and Jesus considered to offend against the strict demands of the Law. These offences were (a) the demand that the Temple Tax must be paid in *Tyrian* coinage which bore an idolatrous image (and therefore infringed against the second commandment of the Law) and (b) the imposition of an *annual* payment of the Temple Tax (which Murphy-O’Connor proposes was not demanded by the Torah). The author anchors his article on these two offences suggesting that in them there is justification for the historicity of this event. Murphy-O’Connor summarily writes: “Jesus’ action against the money changers was inspired by John the Baptist’s program of urgent, radical religious reform, because the frequency and coinage of the temple tax gave great offense to some observant Jews,” 42.

<sup>157</sup> Murphy-O’Connor, “Jesus and the Money-Changers” 53.

<sup>158</sup> Murphy-O’Connor, “Jesus and the Money-Changers” 54.

and (2) If, on the other hand, the event as recorded in the Gospels is not regarded as historical, it is simply viewed as “the creation of a gospel writer.”<sup>159</sup> It is interesting to note that in this summary review there is no room for the more traditional interpretation of an event of catastrophic size having taken place (and also the two-cleansing reading of the Gospels accounts) whereby the entire Court of the Gentiles was cleared as a result of Jesus’ actions and words.

**(2) The Chronology of John’s Gospel and the Cleansing of the Temple.** Following, the chronology of John’s Gospel, Murphy-O’Connor situates the Cleansing of the Temple at the beginning of Jesus’ ministry when Jesus was part of John the Baptist’s reform movement and almost appeared to be – as Murphy-O’Connor writes - subordinate to John who was the leader. He further argues that “Jesus and those who had been directed to him by the Baptist (John 1:29-45)” led the second prong of John the Baptist’s campaign in “Judea, while John and others of his disciples headed north into Samaria.”<sup>160</sup> It was during this phase of his ministry that Jesus cleansed the Temple. Although this reconstruction is, I propose, speculative, it nevertheless gives credence to the chronology of John which has generally been overlooked in recent scholarship.

**(3) Neusner and Seeley and the Temple Tax.** Murphy-O’Connor makes reference to the “implausibility of Jesus’ act” as interpreted by Jacob Neusner and David Seeley on account of what they propose were the necessary services of the money-changers. Although, as Murphy-O’Connor himself believes, the payment of the Temple tax was both legitimate and necessary, he,

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<sup>159</sup> Murphy-O’Connor writes: “Two (double) questions have dominated the discussion of Jesus’ action in the temple against the money changers (Mark 11:15-17; John 2:13-17). Did Jesus by this action intend to symbolize the cleansing or the destruction of the temple? [In a footnote here he references E. P. Sanders and Craig Evans] However, it would be pointless to talk about Jesus’ intention if nothing actually happened. Thus we are necessarily led to the second question: was Jesus’ action historical or the creation of a gospel writer? Only if Jesus did something in the temple precincts can we raise the meaning he attached to the act. Otherwise we are forced to remain on the redactional level of the evangelist. Given the elementary character of these remarks, it is astounding to note how many of those who treat the meaning of this pericope merely assume the historicity of the event and make no effort to justify it.” (pp 42-43)

<sup>160</sup> Murphy-O’Connor writes: “According to the Fourth Gospel, ‘Jesus and his disciples came into the territory of Judea, and there he stayed with them, and he was baptizing. John also was baptizing at Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there and people came and were baptized’. For John had not yet been put into prison (John 3:22-24).’ Were anyone other than Jesus involved, the natural interpretation of this text would be that John and a subordinate inaugurated a two-pronged campaign on the west bank of the Jordan. John, as the leader, took the more difficult task of preaching among the Samaritans, whereas his subordinate was allotted the easier task of preaching to Jews, among the ground prepared by John himself.” (p. 50)

however, goes on to add that this does not negate the possibility that Jesus was opposed to “the means, the way in which the tax was collected.”<sup>161</sup> This is an important distinction.

**(4) Tyrian coinage and the Temple.** Murphy-O’Connor references Peter Richardson’s observation concerning an obligation stipulated in the *Mishnah*<sup>162</sup> that the payment for the redemption of ‘the first-born son’ should be made with Tyrian coinage.<sup>163</sup> Richardson concludes from this statement and what follows in the same tractate in the Mishna that the “Shekel-dues” (the annual half-shekel Temple tax) were similarly to be paid with Tyrian coinage. The passage from the Mishna (*m. Bekhoroth* 8:7) where this stipulation is found will be examined in chapter three of the thesis where I will propose that although Tyrian coins were the coins recommended for the payment of the Temple Tax (and other payments in the Temple) they were not the coins (as Murphy-O’Connor apparently assumes)<sup>164</sup> offered in exchange by the money-changers in the Temple.

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<sup>161</sup> Murphy-O’Connor, “Jesus and the Money-Changers,” 46. He writes: “Neusner and Seeley have confused means with ends. They attribute to Jesus’ act an import that there is no reason to think it had. It is perfectly feasible to argue that Jesus was not opposed to the temple tax as such, and therefore did not intend the consequences drawn by Neusner if the tax were no longer paid. What Jesus objected to was the means, the way in which the tax was collected. This was something that all could understand, even if they did not sympathise with his reaction.” (p. 46)

<sup>162</sup> The Mishnah (*m. Bekhoroth* 8:7) states: “The five *selas* due for the [Firstborn] son should be paid in Tyrian coinage....All ought to be redeemed with silver or its value, save only the Shekel-dues”.

<sup>163</sup> Peter Richardson: “Why Turn the Tables? Jesus’ Protest in the Temple Precincts?” *SBLSP* 31 (1992): 507-523. Murphy-O’Connor writes: “Peter Richardson was the first to highlight the problems inherent in this simple statement [i.e. *m. Bekhoroth* 8:7] that the temple tax had to be paid in the silver shekels of Tyre. At this stage Jews were permitted to mint only bronze and copper coins. Instead of changing the law, the temple authorities opted to look elsewhere for a coinage that would enable worshippers to obey the current law by paying in silver. The Jewish authorities could have decided for Roman coins minted at Antioch, and later in the coastal cities of Caesarea, Gaza and Ascalon, but these were the coins of an occupying power and they were used to pay Roman taxes. It would be symbolically inappropriate to use such coinage in the temple, and in particular to pay for the national sacrifice. Moreover, if the Jews did opt for the coins of a particular Roman mint, the Romans could easily make difficulties for the temple, by restricting the amount of coinage available at any given moment. Tyre, on the contrary, was an autonomous mint, whose authority to strike silver coins antedated the presence of Rome in the east. There were other advantages. Its coins had a higher silver content (90%) than those of other mints (average 80%), and careful quality control ensured a consistent standard.” (pp 46-47)

<sup>164</sup> Murphy-O’Connor, “Jesus and the Money-Changers,” writes: “Far from being the transfer of ‘secular coins’ bearing royal images into aniconic ‘holy coins’, as commentators regularly assume [here he cites in a footnote, E.P. Sanders, Marcus Borg, Emil Schürer], the service provided by the money changers in the temple was to make available to pious Jews, who had no other choice, coins bearing the image of a false god [apparently a reference to the image of Melkart on Tyian coins],” 47.

**(5) Peter Richardson’s two concerns.** Murphy-O’Connor, based on Peter Richardson’s article, makes references to two concerns which he proposes faced pilgrims with respect to the payment of the Temple Tax: (a) the payment was to be made with Tyrian coins which bore an idolatrous image and (b) the payment was annual. Although Murphy-O’Connor proposes that Jesus was not against the payment of the Temple Tax as such, he did (at least at the beginning of his ministry) object to the manner and frequency with which it was to be paid.<sup>165</sup> I will later propose in chapter two of this thesis that although Tyrian coinage was the preferred method of payment of the Temple Tax, as Murphy-O’Connor suggests, the image of Melkart and the inscription on it - offensive as they may have been - and its annual payment, were not the cause of Jesus’ outrage. Jesus’ actions in the Temple, I will argue, were not directed against the coinage which the pilgrims brought into the Temple for payment of the Temple tax (which the *Mishnah* - as we have seen – recommended to be made with Tyrian coinage) but, rather, against the coinage offered in exchange by the money-changers in the Temple.

**(10) John Donahue and William Harrington: *The Gospel of Mark* (2002)<sup>166</sup>**

**Extent of History:** John Donahue and Daniel Harrington argue that Jesus’ actions in the Temple and that of his triumphal entry into Jerusalem, were two prophetic actions undertaken by Jesus early in Holy Week. Elaborating on this the authors add: “The “cleansing” of the Temple (11:15-19) is generally regarded as reflecting a prophetic demonstration undertaken by Jesus” which

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<sup>165</sup> Murphy O’Connor writes: “From these two hints [he refers to (a) the outrage provoked in Jerusalem in 4 BCE when Herod the Great erected an offensive image over the gate of the Temple and (b) the importance associated with the inscription and symbols of the Jewish coins minted by the rebels in 66 CE], which bracket the period with which we are concerned, we are entitled to infer a certain level of resistance to the use of the shekel of Tyre to pay for the national atoning sacrifice [which earlier, on p. 47, he wrote “carried the head of the god Melkart (or Hercules) on the obverse and a Tyrian (Ptolemaic) eagle on the reverse with the inscription ‘Tyre the holy and inviolable’”] .....The second problem raised by Richardson concerns the frequency of the payment of the temple tax. At the time of Jesus it was widely accepted that all male Jews over twenty even in the Diaspora, paid a half-shekel tax to the Temple every year. This custom reached back into the early post-exilic period.....In the passage of the Torah dealing with the problem (Exod 30:11-16), nothing is said about a yearly payment. On the contrary, one has the impression of a single payment on a person’s registration..... When viewed against this groundswell of opposition to the coinage and the frequency of the temple tax, the action of Jesus in overturning the tables of the money changers makes perfect sense.....From this perspective Jesus’ action in the temple can be read as an explosion of outrage at the Jewish authorities’ invitation of a foreign god [Melkart on the Tyrian coins] and an alien custom [the payment of an annual tax] into the holiest place in Judaism. (pp 48-50)

<sup>166</sup> John Donahue and William Harrington: *The Gospel of Mark*: Sacra Pagina Series, Minnesota; Liturgical Press, 2002.

follows “in the tradition of the enacted parables of the OT prophets (especially Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Hosea).”<sup>167</sup> Something small was done (the authors generally use the phrase “symbolic action” or “Temple action” but something great was signified.

**Reasons:** The reason for Jesus’ “action”, Donahue and Harrington argue, is somewhat “obscure” in that “while the Temple action does help to explain ...why Jesus was arrested and executed, Jesus’ own intentions in performing this symbolic action (and even Mark’s reading of it) remain obscure and open to many interpretations.”. They continue, “the least that can be said is that Jesus’ Temple action was a protest against the excessive commercialization and secularization of the Temple complex.”<sup>168</sup> Based on Mark 11:15-16, the authors contend that Jesus was protesting against the unjust commercialization of that part of the Temple where “non-Jews” were to be welcomed.<sup>169</sup> Although recognizing that “in the Court of the Gentiles commercial activity was both permissible and necessary if sacrifices were to be offered” (p. 327), they nevertheless propose: “The use of Isa 56:7 and Jeremiah 7:11 as a commentary on Jesus’ actions in Mark 11:15-16 indicates that at least part of Jesus’ problem with the Jerusalem Temple was its commercialisation and the dishonest practices associated with it.”<sup>170</sup> The services associated with the commercial trade “should have been done outside the Temple complex itself and so [those buying and selling would have] better preserved the sacred character of the Temple precincts.”<sup>171</sup> The authors acknowledge “that many scholars are not satisfied with such a modest interpretation, and some object to the episode’s traditional title as the “cleansing of the Temple”, since they think far more was at stake.”<sup>172</sup> They go on to list some of these more radical positions: “Jesus’ Temple action was a political revolutionary action, an attack on the holiness of the Temple, an attack on the

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<sup>167</sup> Donahue and Harrington, *The Gospel of Mark*, 331.

<sup>168</sup> Donahue and Harrington, *The Gospel of Mark*, 332.

<sup>169</sup> They write: “The phrase “all the nations” [Mk 11:17] recalls the vision of Isa 2:2-4 (see also Isa 66) according to which Jerusalem and its Temple will be the place of worship and instruction for all the nations of the world: “Many peoples shall come and say, ‘Come let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths’” (Isa 2:3). It is this vision of a purified and renewed Temple that will welcome non-Jews that Jesus evokes in the Temple incident” (p. 328).

<sup>170</sup> Donahue and Harrington, *The Gospel of Mark*, 328.

<sup>171</sup> Donahue and Harrington, *The Gospel of Mark*, 332.

<sup>172</sup> Donahue and Harrington, *The Gospel of Mark*, 332.



Jewish sacrificial system, a symbol of the imminent building of God’s eschatological temple to replace the Second Temple, or a demonstration of Jesus’ sovereignty over the Jerusalem Temple.”<sup>173</sup> Rejecting such “sweeping conclusions drawn from the episode,” they reiterate that their “more modest and less ambitious interpretation may be preferable.”<sup>174</sup>

### Points of Note

**1. Only one Cleansing.** In keeping with all the scholars examined in this representative overview, Donahue and Harrington apparently believe that there was only one Cleansing event.<sup>175</sup>

**2. The tables of the Money-Changers (“*kollybistēs*”), Mk 11:15.** Some interesting comments are made by the authors in relation to (a) the etymology of the term used by Mark for the money-changers of the Temple, “*kollybistēs*” and (b) the precise form of coinage they were offering in exchange. The authors write: “The Greek term *kollybistēs* (“money changers”) derives from *kollybos*, which was a small Greek coin that came to stand for the rate of exchange. The money changers provided Jewish or Tyrian coins in exchange for Greek and Roman money. The coins could then be used for buying materials for sacrifices (animals, grain, wine, oil, etc) and for paying Temple taxes and dues (see Exod 30:11-16).”<sup>176</sup> The etymology of the term *kollybistēs* and the precise form of coins offered in exchange in the Temple will be examined in chapter three.

**3. The “vessel” (“*skeuos*”) in the Temple, (Mk 11: 16).** Interestingly, the authors write that the word “vessel” (*skeuos*) could refer to the money bags of the buyers and sellers.

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<sup>173</sup> Donahue and Harrington, *The Gospel of Mark*, 332.

<sup>174</sup> Donahue and Harrington, *The Gospel of Mark*, 332.

<sup>175</sup> They write: “John places the “cleansing” of the Temple at the beginning of Jesus’ public ministry (see John 2:13-22). Of course, John’s Gospel features several visits to Jerusalem by Jesus over a three-year span. Mark (followed by Matthew and Luke) narrates only one visit to Jerusalem, which leads immediately to Jesus’ arrest and execution,” *The Gospel of Mark*, 327.

<sup>176</sup> Donahue and Harrington, *The Gospel of Mark*, 327

**4. The association of the term “robbers” (“*lēstēs*”) with the “chief priests and scribes”, Mk 11:17.** Having directly linked the “commercialization and the dishonest practices” conducted in the Temple with the “den of robbers” charge made by Jesus in Mk 11:17, the authors continue: “The term *lēstēs*” (“bandit”) will appear in the Passion narrative in the contexts of Jesus’ arrest (“as against a bandit,” 14:18) and his crucifixion (“they crucified two bandits” 15:27). The target of this accusation (“you have made it...[a den of robbers]”) seems to be the chief priests and scribes.”<sup>177</sup> This connection of the term *lēstēs* by Donahue and Harrington with the Temple/priestly authorities (“the chief priests and scribes”), I propose, is correct. In chapter four the term will be further examined where I will argue that it has a primary connection with the money-changers of the Temple and the precise form of coinage which they were offering in exchange.

**(11) Adela Yarbro Collins: *Mark - A Commentary***

**(2007)<sup>178</sup>**

**Extent of Historicity:** Adela Yarbro Collins, in her commentary on Mark defends elements of Mark’s account of the Cleansing of the Temple as historical. Other elements she believes are secondarily added. She proposes that verses 15-17 “constitute a mixed *chreia*, a brief narrative that has a dual focus on an action [i.e. verses 15-16] and words [verse 17] of the protagonist.”<sup>179</sup> Whereas verses 15-16, according to Collins appear to be historical, verse 17 “probably does not go back to the historical Jesus”. She writes: “As argued ...above [she earlier presented arguments against the historicity of verse 17], verse 17 probably does not go back to the historical Jesus. The arguments that have been put forward against the historicity of v’s 15-16, however, are not persuasive. Verse 16 is based on very old tradition and may go back to the historical Jesus. The saying [i.e. verse 17] clearly concerns the holiness of the temple mount and possibly ritual purity, a theme of little interest to Mark.... The concern for holiness or ritual purity expressed in Mark’s version account, the oldest of the four versions; the rather opaque character of the actions of Jesus

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<sup>177</sup> Donahue and Harrington, *The Gospel of Mark*, 328.

<sup>178</sup> Adela Yarbro Collins: *Mark - A Commentary*, Hermeneia Commentary Series (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 522-537.

<sup>179</sup> Collins, *Mark*, 526.

and their significance; and the likelihood that there were two independent accounts of the incident (Mark's and John's) support the conclusion that the accounts are based on an event in the life of the historical Jesus."<sup>180</sup>

**Reasons:** Having surveyed a range of divergent views expressed by scholars (who believe the event was historical),<sup>181</sup> Collins outlines her own argument on the significance of the event. She proposes that: "It is more likely that Jesus' actions were aimed at the results of Herod's remodelling of the temple, which involved moving the sessions of the council (Sanhedrin) from "the Chamber of Hewn Stones" in the temple court to the Royal Portico bordering the outer courtyard. More pertinently, the remodelling encouraged the vendors of doves to move from shops outside the temple mount to another part of the same portico. It appears that Herod's remodelling program increased the degree to which the outer court served as a profane civic center. He greatly enlarged the area of the temple mount. Thus, the ambiguous character of the outer court was increased ...The outer court was to be sacred space devoted to prayer and teaching, not civic space open to the general public and devoted to profane activities. Those who needed or wished to sacrifice doves could purchase them outside the temple mount."<sup>182</sup>

### Points of Note

**1. How could Jesus have accomplished the actions described in Verses 15-16?:** Assuming the historicity of the event, Collins explores some solutions to the problem so often posed in historical-critical scholarship<sup>183</sup> as to how Jesus could have done what Mark 11:15-16 describes "without

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<sup>180</sup> Collins, *Mark*, 527.

<sup>181</sup> Collins writes: "Those who agree that the account is based on a historical event do not agree about its original significance. Some have argued that it was the activity of trade itself that needed to be "cleansed." Others have concluded that Jesus had a political purpose in carrying out these actions. Sanders has argued that the overturning of tables was symbolic of the destruction of the temple. Others have proposed that Jesus' motivation was primarily economic, that Jesus was protesting the exploitation of the poor by the temple authorities," 527.

<sup>182</sup> Collins, *Mark*, 527-8.

<sup>183</sup> Collins writes: "The question has been raised how Jesus could have accomplished the actions described in vv. 15-16 without evoking the immediate intervention of the Romans or the temple police. Wellhausen and Grundmann concluded that the account is based on a historical event and that the authorities did not intervene because of the large numbers of Jesus' followers and the intensity of their commitment to Jesus.... E. P. Sanders accepted the

evoking the immediate intervention of the Romans or the temple police” (p. 327). She offers two possible explanations: (a) the authorities may not have wished to arrest him publicly or simply that (b) the pre-passion narrative of Mark may be unreliable.<sup>184</sup> In chapter four of the thesis I will argue that there is a credible explanation as to why Jesus was not immediately arrested as the Gospel account portrays. What Jesus was protesting against was clearly wrong and would readily have been seen as such by his Jewish contemporaries. The money-changers and their coinage should not have been introduced into the Temple. Although there may have been expedient economic and political reasons for the introduction of such novel practices in the Temple, these practices were nevertheless dishonest and were preventing monies from being deposited in the Treasury.

**2. The Coins of the Money-Changers were Tyrian coins which had “offensive” images on them.** Collins considers the significance of Tyrian coins with respect to the payment of the Temple tax. She notes, as several scholars do, how these coins bore an “offensive” image and suggests this as a primary factor in Jesus’ “action”.<sup>185</sup>

Two points can be made in relation to this:

(a) Tyrian coins and the Temple Tax. Although it is true – as Collins writes - that in the time of Jesus the Temple Tax was to be paid with Tyrian coinage, I will later propose – as earlier mentioned

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historicity of the event but solved this problem by arguing that “the action was not substantial enough even to interfere with the daily routine; for if it had been he would surely have been arrested on the spot.” (527).

<sup>184</sup> Collins writes: “It must be admitted that we do not know the details of Jesus’ last days in Jerusalem. It may be that Mark’s portrayal of the authorities’ wish to arrest Jesus “by deceit” (ἐν δόλῳ) in 14:1, rather than publicly, is accurate. It is also conceivable that Mark and the pre-Markan passion narrative are unreliable in portraying Jesus’ arrest as taking place several days [i.e. and not immediately] after his actions in the temple” (527).

<sup>185</sup> Collins writes: “According to Mark, Matthew, and John, Jesus ... overturned the tables of the money-changers (Mark 11:15; Matt 21:12; John 2:15). This action may be a protest against the type of coins that had to be used to pay the temple tax of half a shekel. The bronze coins that were minted in Jerusalem conformed scrupulously to the current interpretation of the commandment against images by avoiding the representation of any animate being (Exod 20:4; Deut 5:8). The temple tax, however, had to be paid in Tyrian silver coins. These bore the head of the town god Melqart (identified with Heracles) on the front and an eagle standing on the prow of a ship on the back. If Jesus was concerned about the holiness and purity of the temple, he may have found these images, especially that of a foreign deity, offensive. The use of such coins in the temple of the God of Israel dishonoured the God to whom the temple was dedicated” (p. 528). Later she adds: “The protest against the coins may represent something more fundamental than simply moving the moneychangers away from the temple mount. It may call for the use of aniconic coins instead” (p. 529).

- that Tyrian coins were not the coins offered in exchange by the money-changers of the Temple. (As the Temple tax had to be paid with Tyrian coinage, it has often been assumed that it was therefore the coinage offered in exchange in the Temple; this, I will argue in chapter two, was not the case).

(b) Offensive image on Tyrian Coins. I will also suggest in chapter two that the “offensive” image on the Tyrian coins (the image of the goddess “Melqart”) was not a prominent factor in triggering the actions of Jesus in the Temple.

**3. The Two Visits in Mark.** Collins notes that there are two visits described in Mark’s Gospel the first indicated in Mk 11:11 and the second in Mk 11:15. She writes: “The next clause [in Mk 11:15], “And he went into the temple precinct”... indicates that on this second occasion, Jesus goes immediately to the temple, just as he did in v. 11. On the first visit to the temple, however, Jesus simply “looked around at everything” (v. 11). Here he drives out those who were selling and those who were buying in the temple precinct”, (529). Collins, I propose, is quite correct in noting the two visits by Jesus to the Temple in Mark (she, however, explains the visits as a combination of two distinct “tradition[s] of the account”, rather than as two separate historical visits)<sup>186</sup>. The two distinct visits by Jesus to the Temple may have taken place, I propose, with the first on the day of his triumphal entry into Jerusalem when Jesus did not find what he was looking for “as it was now late” (Mk. 11:11) and the Temple was most probably closed for business and the second, when he did, on the following morning.

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<sup>186</sup> Collins, *Mark*, 529. The two visits, she proposes, reflect two distinct traditions, one earlier the second later. She writes: “The opening sentence of this unit [i.e. Mk 11:15a], “And they went into Jerusalem,” takes up the thread of the larger narrative. Jesus’ first entry into the city was narrated in v. 11. On that occasion, it was late, so he and the Twelve left soon thereafter and went to Bethany where they were staying. Verse 12 narrates the beginning of their walk from Bethany to Jerusalem. The encounter with the fig tree occurs on this walk. The first sentence of v. 15 signals the conclusion of their walk into the city. The next clause, “And he went into the temple precinct” (καὶ εἰσελθὼν εἰς τὸ ἱερόν), indicates that on this second occasion, Jesus goes immediately to the temple, just as he did in v. 11. On the first visit to the temple, however, Jesus simply “looked around at everything” (v. 11). Here he drives out those who were selling and those who were buying in the temple precinct. It is noteworthy that this general statement precedes more specific descriptions of Jesus’ actions in the rest of v. 15 and in v. 16. It may be that the specific statements belong to an earlier stage of the history of the tradition of this account. The general statement near the beginning of v. 15 seems to have the purpose of linking Jesus’ actions with Zech 14:21 [which Collins proposes are linked with a later tradition as reflected in Jn 2:16 of John’s account of the Cleansing].” (p. 529-530).

**4. Verse 16 “and he would not allow any-one to carry anything [lit. vessel, Gk. σκευος] through the temple”.** Collins makes reference to the vessels/containers which Jesus forbade being carried through the Temple. What were these vessels? She answers: “The basic meaning of the term *skeu'o*” is “vessel or implement of any kind” ..... Since the context here is the temple mount, the [Greek] term [used by the evangelist] should be seen in relation to “the holy vessels of the service” ...the vessels and utensils used by the priests in association with the sacrificial cult.”<sup>187</sup> That the Greek term should be seen in relation to “the holy vessels” used in the Temple is, I propose, the correct understanding of the use of this term in Mk 11:16. (One such Temple vessel [or container] was the money containers used by the priests when removing monies from the Temple.) Collins goes on to explain that, out of respect for the holiness of the Holy Place, Jesus sought to prevent “profane container[s]” from being carried through the Temple precincts *from outside*.<sup>188</sup> Although this may have been the case, would it not be more likely that Jesus was seeking to prevent the holy vessels *from inside* being taken out from the Temple? Given the monetary context of the passage, was Jesus seeking to prevent the monies on the money-changers’ tables in containers or vessels (the monies which the pilgrims had exchanged with the money-changers) from being removed outside the Temple?

**5. Verse 17 is not historical.** Collins sees verse 17 as a later adaption by the evangelist (for pastoral reasons) of an “earlier interpretation of Jesus’ actions with this saying”. It was not a statement made by Jesus when addressing the Temple authorities after he had cleansed the Temple but, rather, a statement made by Mark to “relate the account to his own time”.<sup>189</sup>

**6. Verse 17, “the leaders of the people [and] especially the chief priests” have frustrated “the divine plan”.** The combination of statements from the two prophets, according to Collins, means

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<sup>187</sup> Collins, *Mark*, 530.

<sup>188</sup> Collins writes: “The point seems to be that Jesus taught that it was improper to carry an ordinary, that is, a profane container or implement from outside the temple mount, through the temple area and out again” (530).

<sup>189</sup> Collins writes: “The style of this verse [i.e. v. 17] is Markan in its use of direct discourse preceded by qualifying verbs, “he taught and said” (ἔδιδασκεν καὶ ἔλεγεν), and in the antithetical parallelism created by the combination of the citation from Isa 56:7 and the allusion to Jer 7:11.63. It may be that Mark replaced an earlier interpretation of Jesus’ actions with this saying in order to relate the account to his own time” (p. 530).

that “the leaders of the people [and] especially the chief priests” have frustrated “the divine plan” for the Temple.<sup>190</sup>

**7. The robbery or brigandage has a later ‘situation in life’:** Collins responds to the question of robbery and brigandage in the Temple. She proposes that although the reference to making the Temple in the time of Jeremiah “a den of robbers (Jeremiah 11a)....is clearly metaphorical .....the connotations of robbery and brigandage [in the time of Mark] have a more direct force.”<sup>191</sup> She lists examples of such “in the late 50s and early 60s” which she believes is the contextual background to this reference in Mark 11:17 to the Temple being “a den of robbers”.<sup>192</sup> I will argue that the reference to the Temple becoming “a den of robbers” refers primarily to something that Jesus addressed in his own time. Although there are clear examples “of robbery and brigandage” that took place in the 50’ and 60’s to which Jesus’ words and actions may have a secondary application these were not the first or immediate circumstances that were being addressed. The question then that remains, what was Jesus referring to that would justify the Greek term ληστης (“ληστων” genitive plural for “robbers” or ‘bandits’ or ‘brigands’) in Mk 11:17 being used? What was happening in the Temple in 30 C.E. that was not theft of a petty and opportunistic kind, but rather that which was organized, even violent, and on a grand scale? This question will be explored in chapters two, three and four.

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<sup>190</sup> Collins, *Mark*, 531.

<sup>191</sup> Collins writes: “The “robbers’ cave” or “bandits’ den” [of Jer 7:11] is clearly metaphorical. The sins of the addressees are not defined primarily as robbery or brigandage. Rather, it is the incongruity of their behaviour with their expectation of security in the holy place that gives rise to the metaphor. The incongruity in Mark, however, lies in the contrast between the intended purpose of the temple and its current state. This reformulation gives the connotations of robbery and brigandage a more direct force” (p. 531).

<sup>192</sup> She writes: “In the late 50s and early 60s of the first century CE, four highpriestly families engaged in factional maneuvering that led to corruption and violence. Josephus says that the slaves of the high priest Ananias would take tithes from the ordinary priests by force, with the result that some priests starved to death (*Ant.* 20.9.2 §§205–7). Ananias and others like him could well be called “robbers.” Furthermore, according to Josephus, the peasant-brigands called “Zealots” “converted the temple of God into their fortress and refuge from any outbreak of popular violence, and made the Holy Place the headquarters of their tyranny” (*Bell.* 4.3.7 §151). This event could very well have inspired the allusion to Jeremiah’s “den of robbers” (p. 531).

(12) Bart Ehrman: *Jesus Interrupted* (2010)<sup>193</sup>

**Extent of Historicity:** Bart Ehrman believes the two Gospel passages describing Jesus' actions in the Temple (i.e. Mark 11:15-18 and John 2:13-22) record an historical event. Because "Mark's account is earlier", this event (there is only a single event) "is more plausibly situated towards the end of Jesus' life."<sup>194</sup> Although the event described is, he proposes, historical, it is "difficult to know just how thorough he [i.e. Jesus] was in this "cleansing of the temple".<sup>195</sup> Ehrman continues, "It is difficult to believe that he [i.e. Jesus] shutdown the entire operation [as the Gospels appear to describe]: the Temple precincts were approximately the size of twenty-five football fields, not a small contained space, and the Gospels do not portray this act as a miracle."<sup>196</sup> The size and extent, therefore, of Jesus' actions must necessarily have been smaller than described. In addition, he adds, "if he had created such an enormous scene, it is almost impossible to explain why he wasn't arrested on the spot but only a week later" (p.167). Ehrman concludes by saying that "it looks as if our early sources have exaggerated some of its details" (p.167). "My hunch", he writes, "was that the episode in the Temple was small and insignificant at the time but that word eventually got around about what Jesus had done and the leaders decided to keep an eye on him" (p.168).

**Reasons:** Ehrman suggests that the traditional cleansing interpretation is at least possible. "Was Jesus simply put off by the idea that some people were profiting from the worship of God?" He responds by saying "It is at least possible", for "that's how the Gospel writers themselves interpret the event."<sup>197</sup> In addition to the corruption in the Temple which provoked Jesus' response, Ehrman proposes that "something else was going on"; he agrees with other more recent historical-critical scholarship which proposes that Jesus' actions were a symbolic act prophetically depicting the

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<sup>193</sup> Bart D. Ehrman: *Jesus Interrupted* (New York: Harper Collins), 2010.

<sup>194</sup> Ehrman, *Jesus Interrupted*, 166.

<sup>195</sup> Ehrman, *Jesus Interrupted*, 166-67.

<sup>196</sup> Ehrman, *Jesus Interrupted*, 167.

<sup>197</sup> Ehrman, *Jesus Interrupted*, 167.



judgment of God that would later befall the Jewish leaders themselves in charge of the Temple when the Temple would be destroyed.<sup>198</sup>

### Points of Note

(1) **Cleansing v Prophetic demonstration.** Ehrman suggests the motive for Jesus' actions in the Temple may have been inspired by the corruption taking place within (i.e. the cleaning motive), which corruption Jesus demonstrated by his actions would ultimately lead to the Temple's destruction (i.e. the prophetic demonstration).<sup>199</sup> In other words, according to Ehrman, it is not a question as to whether Jesus' actions symbolised one or the other of (a) the traditional 'cleansing' or (b) the more recent 'prophetic demonstration of destruction' as recent scholarship had debated, but of both. These motives need not necessarily be set in opposition to one another. In other words, Ehrman expresses a view in which both understandings of Jesus' actions may be true. As the Temple was now being governed by God's enemies and had become corrupt, "judgement was soon to arrive [and] the Temple would be destroyed."<sup>200</sup> Jesus' actions demonstrated both.

(2) **The Non-Idolatrous Coins of the Money-Changers.** Ehrman believes that the reason for the introduction of the money-changers and their coinage into Temple was so that "some kind of money [would] be made available" in order that pilgrims would not have to deal with idolatrous Roman coins.<sup>201</sup> It may be for this reason of 'graven images on coins' that Ehrman does not include

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<sup>198</sup> Ehrman writes: "But modern interpreters have suggested that something else was going on as well....Jesus thought that at the judgement that was soon to arrive, the Temple would be destroyed. Why, then, did he overturn the tables and cause a ruckus? It is now a standard opinion among critical scholars that Jesus was performing a symbolic act – a kind of enacted parable if you will. By overthrowing tables, Jesus was symbolizing in a small way what was going to happen in a big way when the Son of Man arrived in judgement. God's enemies would be destroyed and ... among God's enemies were the Jewish leaders themselves in charge of the Temple," 167-168.

<sup>199</sup> Although Ehrman (like Sanders) proposes that Jesus' action was a symbolic act pointing to the fact that the life of the Temple had come to an end, the reason he proposes for its demise was not simply that it had run its course but that the Temple was subject to "Judgement" by the "Son of Man" who "thought that among God's enemies were the Jewish leaders themselves in charge of the Temple" (Ehrman, p. 168).

<sup>200</sup> Ehrman, *Jesus Interrupted*, 167.

<sup>201</sup> He writes: "Roman coins were stamped with an image of the emperor, who in parts of the empire was thought to be a divine being. For Jews there was only one God, and so they were not inclined to bring the image of Caesar into the holy Temple. ....the law proscribed the use of graven images.....Some kind of money had to be made available, and so there had to be a kind of currency exchange, where Roman coinage could be traded for Temple currency, which did not bear the image of Caesar" (p. 166).

the possibility of Tyrian coins as being the coins offered in exchange in the Temple.<sup>202</sup> Later, in chapter two, I propose that although the Temple coinage – as Ehrman suggests - did not contain images offensive to God, the question of graven images was not the main reason for the introduction of the money-changers' coinage. Rather the motivation for their introduction was the potential economic gain such coinage offered the Temple authorities.<sup>203</sup> The matter of graven images may well only have been a convenient issue of contention at the time used by the authorities in gaining approval for what was being introduced.

**(3) The Money-Changers Coinage and the purchase of animals in the Temple.** Ehrman suggests that the animals for sacrifice in the Temple were purchased with the money-changers' coinage.<sup>204</sup> Although, as will be seen in chapter three of the thesis, animals for sacrifice were bought on the Temple site according to a particular method of payment devised by the Temple authorities<sup>205</sup>, the coins of the money-changers were it seems not used in this exchange. The money-changers' coinage was used when the pilgrim came to pay the half-shekel tax and apparently only for this purpose. Their tables were set up for a limited period of time, as stipulated in Mishna-Shekalim and were, apparently, later taken down.<sup>206</sup> When other payments to the Temple (such as the purchase of sacrificial animals, the redemption of the first-born son etc) were

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<sup>202</sup> Tyrian coins, as noted earlier in this Appendix in the articles written by Maurice Casey and Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, contained idolatrous graven images on their coins.

<sup>203</sup> See chapters two and three of the thesis.

<sup>204</sup> He writes: "Of course, people coming from long distances would not be able to bring animals with them, these had to be purchased on site. But they could not be purchased with normal Roman currency: Roman coins were stamped with an image of the emperor... Some other kind of money had to be made available and so there had to be a kind of currency exchange, where Roman coinage could be traded for Temple currency which did not bear the image of Caesar. The Temple currency could then be used to purchase the necessary animals" (p.166).

<sup>205</sup> According to what is written in Mishna-Shekalim the animals for sacrifice were apparently bought with 'token seals'. For an examination of these seals and their apparent function in the Temple, see chapter three of the thesis under a section entitled, "Mishna-Shekalim and what it teaches concerning monetary practices in the Temple in the first century CE".

<sup>206</sup> M.Shekalim states: "On the fifteenth of the month [i.e. the month of Adar] thereof tables [of money-changers] were set up in the provinces [for those who could not travel to the Temple to pay the half-shekel tax]. On the twenty-fifth [of Adar] they were set up in the Temple" (m.Shekalim 1:3). If the tables had to be set up at a particular time this would necessarily imply that prior to that time they were taken down.

made outside of this time during the calendar year, these payments were necessarily, therefore, made without the services of the money-changers.

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