

JOHN, JESUS AND THE ESSENES: TROUBLE AT THE TEMPLE

KENNETH A. MATHEWS
Criswell College, Dallas, TX 75201

The Jerusalem temple, which was the preeminent symbol of Israel's religious establishment, became a common target of criticism among religious reformers. From the days of Jeremiah until the temple's collapse at the hands of the Romans, both the orthodox reformer and the radical sectarian called for change in what they perceived as aberrant practices. It is not surprising that Jesus' hostile confrontation at the temple received special attention by the Gospel writers since it served to illustrate Jesus' opposition to the religious authorities of his day.

All four Evangelists record the "Temple Cleansing" and treat it as an important step in their respective arguments.¹ John's Gospel in particular is impressed with Jesus' action and selects it to introduce him to the public. The Synoptics, on the other hand, present the incident as Jesus' last public act which explains what provoked the Sanhedrin to plot Jesus' subsequent arrest.

From the remarkable desert discoveries of our century, scholars have been reminded that Jesus was not alone in criticizing the temple. The community of Qumran, populated by the sectarian Essenes, evidenced attitudes ranging from a serious reservation about temple piety to a stricter view tantamount to an abandonment of its precincts. During the period of Essene life at Qumran (ca. 150 B.C.-A.D. 68), there were others as well who denounced temple transgressions. What we learn from these voices of discontent enables us to better understand the ideological climate in which Jesus' action took place. It has been commonly thought that the Essenes rejected all temple sacrifice,

¹ The term "Cleansing" is unfortunate since it suggests actual purification rites; Temple "Clearing" is a better description of Jesus' action.

but we will show that this was not the case, neither is it true, as has been popularly believed, that the Temple Cleansing was motivated by temple theft. We will discover that Jesus' complaints corresponded in some ways to the concerns uttered by others, but that he had a very different response to temple misconduct. Jesus was not a mere mimic in a long line of religious extremists who became disenchanted with Jerusalem's "orthodoxy" and set out to found their own. The Gospels present him as an innovative thinker who inaugurated a revolutionary policy toward the temple. Our paper will first survey how other critics responded to the indiscretions of the temple, and then we will turn attention to the Gospel accounts, focusing on John's interpretation of Jesus' Temple Cleansing.

I. *The Temple's Critics*

Criticism of the temple had its precedent in the OT prophets who brought charges against the Jerusalem cult. Both Jesus in the Gospels and the sectarian Covenant Community in its writing, the Damascus Document (CD), appealed to the prophets to legitimize their opposition to temple practices.²

OT Prophets

The Synoptics (Mark 11:17 pars.) have a composite quotation from the prophets which was spoken by Jesus to explain his hostile action in the temple grounds: "'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations' (Isa 56:7), but you have made it a 'den of robbers'" (Jer 7:11). The original context of the Isaiah passage describes the eschatological age when people of all nations shall come to Jerusalem's temple ("holy mount") and worship the God of Israel.

² For the unfamiliar reader, the Damascus Document refers to a sectarian work first known from two medieval manuscripts discovered in the genizah of an old Cairo synagogue. It is named after "Damascus" which appears in the document as the site where the sect's members sought refuge. The manuscripts were published as the "Zadokite Fragments" in 1910 by S. Schechter and again by C. Rabin (*The Zadokite Fragments* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1954]). The name "Zadokite" was chosen since the document often refers to the members as the "sons of Zadok." A few fragments of the document were recovered from three caves at Qumran (dating ca. 100-50 B.C.) and were called the Damascus Document (Q[umran] D[ocument]). With the discovery of these Qumran fragments, the Cairo manuscripts of the Damascus Document were subsequently assigned the siglum CD. As a result of the Qumran finds, CD has received attention by Qumran specialists since it is now believed that it offers valuable testimony to the community which gave rise to the Qumran group of Essenes. The contents of CD are two parts: (1) an admonition concerning the community and (2) laws governing its life.

Coupled with this, Jesus quotes from Jeremiah's famous Temple Sermon which was a hallmark of his career. The Sermon is one of the OT's most caustic; he denounces the unholy practices of the wicked who think they have safe refuge within the temple walls ("den of robbers"). It forewarns that they shall reap the consequences of their sin like those at Shiloh (1 Sam 4:30). In John's Gospel, Jesus explains his action differently: "You shall not make my Father's house a house of trade" (2:16). The phrase "house of trade" is an allusion to Zechariah's concluding verse in which the idealized age is depicted as having "no trader in the house of the LORD of hosts" (14:21).³

When the Covenant Community repudiated temple sins, it remembered Malachi's exhortation concerning the abuse of the sacrificial system (CD 6:11-14/Mal 1:10):

None of those brought into the Covenant shall enter the Temple to light His altar in vain. They shall bar the door, forasmuch as God said, *Who among you will bar its door?* And, *You shall not light my altar in vain* (M.al. i, 10). They shall take care to act according to the exact interpretation of the Law during the age of wickedness.⁴

Perhaps Malachi's prophecy was influential in John's Gospel and colored his chronological presentation of Jesus' ministry.⁵ Chap 1 speaks of the Baptist's role, corresponding to Mal 3:1a: "I will send my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me." Chap 2 has Jesus in the temple which matches the last half of that prophetic verse: "The Lord whom you seek shall suddenly come to his temple" (Mal 3:1b).⁶

Although leveling sharp attacks, the OT prophets never advocated a total abandonment of the temple but called for a reformation of its

³ We have translated *kn'ny* (= "Canaanite" or "trader") as it is interpreted in the Gospels. In the Hebrew context, the prophecy creates a future temple which will transform all profane utensils into holy vessels. The second half of the verse is difficult since the Hebrew can be translated "Canaannite" or "trader." If taken as "Canaanite," then it depicts a temple which has no Gentile who might pollute the sacred place, but if "trader" was intended, the eschatological temple will have no need for commercial exchange and therefore no merchant.

⁴ G. Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls in English* (Baltimore: Penguin, 1962) 103.

⁵ The absence of Malachi in the Gospel accounts is strange since it is the logical passage we would expect the Evangelists to cite. Perhaps, its association with John the Baptist somehow precluded its use here. Cf. R. H. Hiers ("Purification of the Temple: Preparation for the Kingdom of God" JBL 90 [1971] 87-89) who shows that the Temple Cleansing nicely fits the messianic context of the prophecy (Mal 3:3); however, his conclusion that the Baptist and Jesus shared in the identity of "Elijah" is improbable.

⁶ R. E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John I-XII* (AB; 2 vols. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966) 1.18.

practices. The prophets, of course, were not satisfied with mere orthodoxy in ritual matters (cf. Isa 1:11-17; Jer 7:5; 31:33; Mic 6:6-8; Hos 6:6-7). For them, ritual could not be substituted for covenant obedience, and therefore they painted an ideal age when new hearts would please God in a holy way. This future era could not be complete without a reconstituted sanctuary, indicating Yahweh's presence once again among his people. Envisioned in this new temple were the newly-redeemed people of Israel and the many nations who came up to Jerusalem to worship God (e.g., Isa 2:2-4 w/ Mic 4:1-2; Isa 66:6; Zech 14:6).

Ezekiel's oracles in particular describe the ideal age around this temple motif. He measures the impending demise of the whole nation by the departure of the "glory of the LORD" from the temple (10:18-19; 11:23), permitting the defilement of its precincts (7:22). As a result, the restored Israel requires anew, sanctified temple (chaps 40-48) where the "glory" once again can be found (43:2); this new sanctuary and David's scion are the centerpiece of Israel's future (37:24-28).

By the imagery of a defiled and abandoned temple, the prophets condemned Israel and solicited repentance. The promise of a renewed temple was a promise of hope, because it meant the return of God's beneficent presence.

Other Dissident Voices

Criticism of temple practices by religious pietists continued through the Hasmonean era into the 1st century A.D. The Psalms of Solomon, set in the mid-1st century B.C., has been traditionally ascribed to Pharisaic sympathies (opposing the Sadducees).⁷ The composition reflects the kind of criticisms found among diverse groups at that time. The opening psalm (1:8) describes the wicked's sin: "they utterly polluted the holy things of the Lord" (APOT 2. 631). Specifically, the wicked are those who freely violate the temple's sanctity (8:11-13):

They plundered the sanctuary of God. . .
They trode the altar of the Lord, (coming straight) from all manner of uncleanness;
And with menstrual blood they defiled the sacrifices, as (though these were) common flesh (APOT 2.640).

⁷ However, the affinities of the composition with Qumran literature has led some to question that association. R. B. Wright, "Psalms of Solomon," *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (2 vols.; ed. J. H. Charlesworth; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983) 2.642.

The pseudepigraphal Testament of Levi comes from the 2nd century B.C.,⁸ and also speaks of polluted sacrifices (16:1). Like the Psalms of Solomon, ritual uncleanness is tied to the imagery of robbery: "The offerings of the Lord you shall rob. . . eating (them) contemptuously with harlots" (APOT 2.312). Another testimony to encroaching corruption is the Assumption of Moses; although the text dates to the 1st century A.D., it reflects the problems of the Hasmonean era. R. H. Charles has called its author the "Pharisaic Quietist."⁹ The defilement of sacrifices are likened to "whoring after strange gods" and the priests offend ..with the (very) gifts which they offer to the Lord. . ." (APOT 2.417-18).

These examples reflect what we find in Jewish literature of the Hasmonean and Herodian periods. There was a general unrest in Jerusalem about temple practices which led these same critics to anticipate anew, restored temple built by God and inaugurated at the coming of the Messiah. The purging of the corrupted temple was believed by the Jews necessary before the kingdom of God could be established.¹⁰ Since writings, such as the Psalms of Solomon, were authored by Jewish traditionalists,¹¹ we learn that stinging reprimands could be said by those who continued to offer sacrifices at the temple. We will discover that this was true of the Essenes as well. Also, it will become significant to recall that the offences cited by the Jews are ritual uncleanness, particularly sexual impurity, and are described as robbery. This is important in our evaluation of how the covenanters responded to the Jerusalem cult. Charges brought by the Covenant Community, as we will see next, are described similarly.

Covenant Community

We are giving special attention to the attitude of the Covenant Community toward the temple, because it is generally believed by Qumran specialists that the origins of the community can be traced to a struggle with temple authorities. Also, the Covenant Community was part of a wider movement, and therefore from it we can achieve

⁸ H. C. Kee, "Testaments of the Twelve Patriarches," *Pseudepigrapha*, 1.778-79. Fragments of the Testament have been recovered from Qumran (4QTLevi).

⁹ R. H. Charles, APOT 2.407. The authorship remains uncertain, however; see J. Priest, "Testament of Moses," *Pseudepigrapha* 2.921-22.

¹⁰ For a detailed discussion of the Jewish evidence of the period for the new, heavenly temple, see R. J. McKelvey, *The New Temple: The Church in the New Testament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969) 9-24.

¹¹ It is commonly held that the Psalms of Solomon were authored by the Pharisees; see G. B. Gray, APOT 2.630.

a broader perspective of how heterodox groups viewed temple sacrifice.

It has become more widely recognized that the evidence from Our ancient sources offers a mixed testimony about how the desert sectarians assessed and participated in the Jerusalem cult. As a result, when Qumran specialists have given priority to certain testimony, some conclusions about Essene practice have been skewed by their selectivity in evidence. The community known from CD and the Qumran branch of that sect were not monolithic, but reflect the natural accretions of differing theological and socio-historical opinions occurring over the more than 200 years of its life. In other words, we must be careful not to restrict the idea of "Essenism," since we know on the basis of CD that there was a preQumran history for the Essenes and also the Essenes lived in many sites other than Qumran.¹²

However, after 40 years of Qumran scholarship, there is a general consensus about the broad strokes of Qumran history.¹³ It is agreed that the Essenes existed at Qumran before the Teacher of Righteousness came to the site, although their origins are highly disputed. All concur that the figure known as the Teacher was once opposed by a chief antagonist, the Wicked Priest, who was a priest of Jerusalem and a member of the Hasmonean royal family.¹⁴ The Teacher lost

¹² Cf. Philo: "They live in villages and avoid the cities because of the iniquities which have become inveterate among city dwellers" (*Quod omnis* 9.12.76).

¹³ Researching the body of Qumran literature is notoriously difficult; it is widely distributed among numerous journals, monographs, and dissertations. For the non-specialist, a succinct statement of the major issues and the opinions of the leading Qumran specialists can be conveniently read in J. H. Charlesworth, "The Origin and Subsequent History of the Authors of the Dead Sea Scrolls: Four Transitional Phases Among the Qumran Essenes" *RevQ* 10 (1980) 213-33.

¹⁴ The reconstruction of the early years of Qumran intersects at this point. The Wicked Priest, whose career is outlined in the Habakkuk commentary (1QpHab 89ff.), has been variously identified, but we believe with the growing opinion that Jonathan was the Teacher's enemy. Among those who have argued for the identification of Jonathan are G. Vermes, J. T. Milik, G. Jeremias, H. Stegemann, and J. Murphy-O'Connor (see Charlesworth, "Origin," 219-20). Stegemann and Murphy-O'Connor have posited that the Teacher is the legitimate high priest who was prevented his rightful place by Jonathan. Stegemann has argued that the high priesthood must have been filled during the seven years after the death of Alkimos (*contra* Josephus [Ant. 20.237]) in order for the nation to celebrate the Day of Atonement (*Die Entstehung der Qumrangemeinde* [Bonn, 1971] 213-20). The identification of the Teacher with this unknown priest is dependent upon the reference to the Teacher as "the priest" (cf. *hakohen* in 1QHab 2:8; 4Qppsa 2:19; 3:15) but their suggestion has been disputed by Qumran scholars. For Murphy-O'Connor's historical reconstruction, see "Demetrius I and the Teacher of Righteousness: (I Macc, X, 25-45)," *RB* 83 (1976) 400-420; "The Essenes and Their History" *RB* 81 (1974) 215-44, esp. 229-32; and "The Essenes in Palestine" *BA* 40 (1977) 100-24.

some members of his following to a contemporary, rival leader called the Man of Lies, and at that time, or soon thereafter, the troubled Teacher led a splinter group to Qumran where he was enthusiastically received by the Essenes (ca. 150 B.C.).

Generally, it has been thought that the Essenes derived from the Jewish Hasidim in Palestine who were outraged by an encroaching Hellenism which reached its climax in the murder and usurpation of Onias III, the legitimate Zadokite high priest (172 B.C.). A withdrawal of some of these pietists into outlying villages followed the incident. The Maccabean revolt and the newly-formed Hasmonean regime was praised for its anti-Hellenistic policies, but the Hasidim were soon disappointed at the action of Jonathan Maccabaeus (160-43 B.C.) who seized the high priesthood in 152 B.C.

J. Murphy-O'Connor's thesis has departed from the majority opinion; rather than Palestine, he argues that Babylonia is the proper background for interpreting Qumran origins. This is important for us because the Babylonian setting according to Murphy-O'Connor helps explain the Essene rejection of temple sacrifices. He believes that the Essenes were part of a movement that returned from Babylon (ca. 165 B.C.) only to be appalled at the condition of the temple. The Essenes rejected the priesthood which had replaced the Zadokite line and refused participation in the temple because unlike Jerusalem the Essenes followed the solar calendar. For Murphy-O'Connor, before the arrival of the Teacher, the Essenes of Qumran had abandoned temple sacrifices.¹⁵ Some scholars have even argued that Qumran in response to the usurpation of the Zadokite line established a rival altar where animal sacrifices occurred, but the evidence they produce is unclear and has been explained on other grounds.¹⁶

¹⁵ Murphy-O'Connor, "Essenes and Their History," 221-28; "Palestine," 103-6. He ("The Literary Analysis of Damascus Document XIX, 33-XX, 34," *RB* 79 [1972] 559-00) has suggested that the covenanters "confession of sin" (CD 20:28-33; 1QS 1:24-26) was a formal repudiation of the temple: ..And after them, all those entering the Covenant shall confess and say: 'We have strayed! We have [disobeyed!] We and our fathers before us have sinned and done wickedly in walking [counter to the precepts] of truth and righteousness. ..' (cf. 1QS 1:24-26; Vermes, *Dead Sea Scrolls*, 73).

¹⁶ Contra a rival altar, see J. Baumgarten; "The Essenes and the Temple: A Reappraisal" *Studies in Qumran Law* (Leiden: Brill, 1977) 59-62. In this article, he reverses his previous opinion that the Essenes at Qumran had abandoned temple sacrifices ("Sacrifices and Worship Among the Jewish Sectarians of the Dead Sea [Qumran] Scrolls" *HTR* 46 (1953) 141-59; reprinted in *Studies in Qumran Law* 39-56). For arguments for animal sacrifice at Qumran, see J. Strugnell, "Flavius Josephus and the Essenes: Antiquities XVIII, 18-22," *JBL* 77 (1958) 113-15; F. M. Cross, *The Ancient Library of Qumran and Modern Biblical Studies* (rev. ed.: Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980 [reprint]) 102.

However, there is evidence that the Covenant Community continued to practice animal sacrifice at the Jerusalem cult in spite of its reservations. We are convinced that it was not until the arrival of the deposed Teacher at Qumran that the Essenes may have ceased participation in the temple cult. This consideration is important for our study since we saw earlier that even the most devout pietists would criticize the sacrificial system and still participate in it. The question is to what degree the covenanters participated in the temple sacrifices. Once we have established that, we will be in a better position to see where Jesus' attitude coincided with other critics of the temple during his day.¹⁷

Damascus Document. CD 4:16-18 lists lust, wealth, and "defiling the temple" as the "three nets of Belial" that have entrapped Israel. This defilement of the temple is specified in CD 5:6-8 as worshippers who have slept with a menstruant or have an incestuous marriage. These three charges are the same three sins in Pss. Sol. 8:10-12 where "adultery," "plunder," and defiling the sacrifices with "menstrual blood" are named.¹⁸ CD's criticism continues in its introduction

¹⁷ As we review the evidence, the methodological problem is how much emphasis to place on the evidence of the *peshirim* and the testimony of Philo and Josephus versus the evidence of CD. Qumran specialists have traditionally ascribed more weight to the *peshirim*, and they have tended to harmonize the evidence of CD and the collateral witnesses of Philo and Josephus with them. The role of CD, however, in reconstructing preQumran history has become more influential as a result of the literary studies of Murphy-O'Connor and Stegemann. Still dissatisfied with their approaches, P. Davies (*The Damascus Covenant* [Sheffield: JSOT, 1982]) attempted to interpret CD autonomously from the Qumran setting. While Davies may have gone too far, his warning is justified: we cannot treat CD simply as another Qumran *peshir* since it has a history antedating its function in the Qumran community.

Davies concluded that the Covenant Community had its ideological roots in exilic literature and that the community had its origins outside Palestine. The community was well organized, operated on a solar calendar, and had no serious objections to temple sacrifice. At a later time, the Qumran group emerged from it and reshaped the basic document underlying the present CD recension. This has produced diverse opinions in CD where both a more relaxed and a more stringent attitude toward the temple can be discerned in the document. Whether or not Davies is correct that CD is a "Qumranic" recension, it becomes more apparent as we read the document that its authors presumed their members to be engaged in temple sacrifice although with certain restrictions. As stated earlier, Essenism must be defined to accommodate such diverse opinions; it was not uniform in ideology or practice. The future debate in Qumran studies will center on whether scholars will continue or not to give priority to the *peshirim* by subsuming all other evidence under the reconstruction derived primarily from them. For Murphy-O'Connor's literary studies, see "An Essene Missionary Document? CD II, 14- VI, I," *RB* 77 (1970) 201-29; "The Literary Analysis of Damascus Document VI, 2- VIII,3," *RB* 78 (1970) 210-32; "The Literary Analysis of Damascus Document XIX, 33-XX, 34," *RB* 79 (1972) 544-64.

¹⁸ Baumgarten, "Sacrifice and Worship," 41 n.41.

to the laws of the community (CD 6:11b-14) where it says that no covenant members "shall enter the Temple to light His altar in vain."¹⁹ The sectarians prohibited sexual activity even within the city, lest it "defile the city of the sanctuary" (CD 12:1-2).

These passages taken together make it apparent that the covenanters were troubled by the less-stringent attitude of ritual purity practiced by temple authorities. When it is remembered that the community's calendar differed from the Jerusalem cult (CD 6:18-19), some have assumed that the community could not have offered sacrifices in the temple at all.²⁰

However, there are evidences in CD that the covenanters continued their use of the temple precincts for sacrifice. The clearest indication of this is the laws contained in CD which assume the covenanters continued to sacrifice.²¹

But what of the difference in the calendaric calculations? This difference must not have been prohibitive; the Book of Jubilees, for instance, also follows a solar calendar and it has no rejection of temple sacrifices.

Furthermore, we saw that CD attributes the defilement of the temple to sexual uncleanness. We read earlier how other sources, such

¹⁹ This passage in its entirety was quoted earlier in this paper.

²⁰ J. T. Milik, *Ten Years of Discovery in the Wilderness of Judaea* (tr. J. Strugnell; London: SCM, 1959) III.

²¹ Among these are two of special interest: CD 11:17: "No man on the Sabbath shall offer anything on the altar except the Sabbath burnt-offering; for it is written thus: *Except your Sabbath offerings* (Lev. xxiii, 38)." CD 11:18: "No man shall send to the altar any burnt-offering, or cereal offering, or incense, or wood, by the hand of one smitten with any uncleanness, permitting him thus to defile the altar. For it is written, *The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination, but the prayer of the just is as an agreeable offering* (Prov. xv, 8)." (Vermes, *Dead Sea Scrolls*, 113). The first law permits the Sabbath offering but prohibits members from offering it with the daily sacrifice. Or, alternatively, the law may be concerned with festival days which fell on the Sabbath; in this case the Jerusalem cult would be offering in the eyes of the sectarians unauthorized sacrifices on the same day as those specially set aside as Sabbath offerings. According to the sectarians' calendar, this transgression could not occur, and therefore this law is designed to forewarn the covenanters not to compromise their Sabbath offerings when the Jerusalem cult was offering up festival sacrifices on the same day that Sabbath offerings were accepted (Baumgarten, "Reappraisal," 69-70). The second law permits animal sacrifice within certain bounds but adds that a spiritual sacrifice is preferred over an animal sacrifice if offered wrongly. This law in particular gives the authors of the covenant opportunity to appeal to the Proverbs text as reason to substitute the Jerusalem cult with their spiritual sacrifices, but no such exhortation exists (Davies, *Damascus*, 135). Murphy-O'Connor ("Essenes and Their History," 223) refuses to acknowledge the laws of CD as real indications of the community's involvement; he thinks they are only reflective of life among the Gentiles when the community was yet in the diaspora. However, we do not see how these laws could have force or meaning unless the community members were presently offering sacrifices in the temple.

as the Psalms of Solomon, pointed to this offense as defiling the offerings of the Lord, but there is no suggestion in these sources that the temple sacrifices should be interrupted. R. Marcus has shown that there are a number of ideological similarities between the Essenes and the apocalyptic Pharisees of this period as reflected by Enoch, the Testaments, and Jubilees.²² Thus, it seems difficult to see how a sexual offense, which must have been common to the temple's history, would have caused such drastic action stopping the covenanters from participating in temple sacrifice altogether. P. Davies sums up the matter this way: "In brief, the attitude of the community of CD to the Temple was cool, but neither indifferent nor hostile."²³

Peshirim. Among the commentaries at Qumran, three scrolls are particularly instructive concerning sacrifice. The Habakkuk commentary dates to the 1st century A.D. but is a witness to the earlier period of the sect's history when the Teacher struggled with the Jerusalem center. The commentary denounces the "Wicked Priest" who violated the priesthood (1QpHab 8:8-13) and "defiled the sanctuary of God" (12:9). This contempt for the priests (but not the temple *per se*) reflects the stricter view held by the sectarians at the time of the Teacher.

4QpNah is also significant for reconstructing Qumran attitudes. The *peshet* refers to an unidentified group known as the "house of Peleg" (4:1); the same expression appears in CD to name a group of defectors. In both passages the context is one of criticism, if not condemnation. CD describes the "house of Peleg" as those who at first had left Jerusalem "when Israel sinned and defiled the sanctuary," but later defected and rejoined the "way of the people in a few respects" (CD 20:21). This indicates that some in the community returned to more normal relations with the common people after the schism with Jerusalem.²⁴ Whether or not this included a participation in the Jerusalem cult is uncertain.

Davies does not interpret the passage as a condemnation against defectors; rather, he concludes that those of the "house of Peleg" are pietists who at one time approvingly left Jerusalem and, though they returned in minor ways, the schismatic covenanters under the Teacher were considering accepting them into their newly-formed community on a case-by-case basis. This admission process occurs at the Teacher's founding of the "new covenant" community (CD 19:33-20:34) among

²² R. Marcus ("Pharisees, Essenes, and Gnostics," IBL 73 [1954J 158-59].

²³ Davies, *Damascus*, 140.

²⁴ Baumgarten, "Reappraisal," 72; Murphy-O'Connor disagrees that a defection within the Qumran community is meant; curiously, he thinks this passage refers to those who left Jerusalem for Qumran ("Palestine," 123).

the Qumran group which at this time separated itself from the mother community. It is at this point, too, that the Qumran Essenes may have segregated themselves from the temple grounds and ceased participating in the temple cult.²⁵

4QFlorilegium (1st century A.D.) is another important witness to the Essene view of the temple since it speaks explicitly of the eschatological temple anticipated by the Essenes. The first portion of the text is a midrash on Nathan's oracle concerning the building of the temple (2 Samuel 7); it interprets the "house" of 2 Samuel as the one Yahweh shall construct in the "last days" according to his promise (Exod 15:17). Key to understanding the midrash is the description of that eschatological temple: "And he [God] promised to build for himself a sanctuary of men, for there to be in it for him smoke offerings before him, works of thanksgiving" (AQFlor 6-7).

The expression "sanctuary of men" (*miqdas 'adam*) has been understood by Qumran specialists either as a literal temple or a spiritual community. According to this latter view, the scribe believed the Essene community itself was presently fulfilling the promise of an eschatological sanctuary. The primary argument rests with the context where the sanctuary's "smoking offerings" are described as spiritual "works of thanksgiving" (4QFlor 6-7). As a response to the defilement of the temple, the Essenes had reinterpreted the sacrificial system as spiritual offerings. This understanding of the midrash has been used to collaborate other evidence that the Essenes had always abandoned temple sacrifice.²⁶ Some have concluded that the Essenes and the early church held in common this modified eschatological position.²⁷

This identification of *miqdas* as the Essene community, however, can be challenged since nowhere else in the Qumran literature does *miqdas* mean anything other than the literal Jerusalem temple. Also, the sanctuary of 4QFlorilegium is oriented toward the future, and the pesher is contrasting the present defiled temple with the anticipated eschatological one.²⁸ The eschatological sanctuary then is best taken as a literal building.²⁹

²⁵ Davies, Damascus, 100-94.

²⁶ B. Gartner, *The Temple and the Community in Qumran and the New Testament* (Cambridge: University Press, 1965) 32-35; A. Dupont-Sommer, *The Essene Writings from Qumran* (Cleveland: Meridan, 1967) 93, n. 1; Murphy-O'Connor, "Damascus Document XIX, 33-XX, 34," 544-64, esp. 558 n. 47, 561; J. Baumgarten, "The Exclusion of *Netinim* and Proselytes in 4Q Florilegium," *Studies in Qumran Law*, 82-83.

²⁷ So Gartner, *Temple and the Community*, 32-35 and McKelvey, *Temple*, 46-53. But McKelvey does not interpret the temple of 4QFlorilegium as spiritual (p. 51).

²⁸ McKelvey, *Temple*, 51.

²⁹ Y. Yadin has shown from his study of the Temple Scroll (11QTemp 29:8-10) that the Essenes anticipated a physical, eschatological temple which is not different in

Such diversity points up that the interpretation of this *peshet* remains undecided among scholars. However, what is important for our study has been recognized by G. T. Brooke that the midrash never addresses the issue of burnt sacrifices either in Jerusalem or Qumran. He reasons that if the imagery of "smoke offerings" were to have meaning for the *peshet's* readers, then the Essenes must have continued to regard the temple highly. He concludes that the Essenes may have participated in the offerings and were not content to wait for a future day when proper offerings could be presented in the eschatological temple.³⁰

The *peshetim* then reflect a period when the Essenes at Qumran were very reluctant to participate in temple sacrifice; it remains uncertain that they refused completely to sacrifice at the cult as many have supposed.

Philo and Josephus. The testimony of Philo has been often cited to argue that the Essenes did not offer animal sacrifice. Philo remarks that "...they have shown themselves especially devout in the service of God, not by offering sacrifices of animals, but by resolving to sanctify their minds" (*Quod omnis* 9.12.75). The purpose of Philo's commentary is his commendation of the Essenes for their piety; in this discourse, Philo observes that their study of God is achieved

nature from the one to be built by Israel described in the Temple Scroll. Since Yadin is convinced that this eschatological temple is a physical one and not a spiritual entity, he renders *miqdas 'adam* as "sanctuary among men" ("A Midrash on 2 Sam vii and Ps i-ii (4Q F)orilegium)" *IEJ* 9 [1959] 96; *The Temple Scroll* [2 vols.; Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1983 (Eng)ish] 1.182-87). Yadin's rendering, however, is difficult; for this translation we would expect the Hebrew to read with the preposition *b^e*. A. J. McNicol ("The Eschatological Temple in the Qumran Peshet 4QFlorilegium 1:1-7," *OJRS* (= *JrelS*) 5 [1977] 133-41) agrees with Yadin's translation and argues that the only place where temple and community are equated is in IQS which is an early document of the sectarians at Qumran (pp. 133-34). D. Flusser ("Two Notes on the Midrash on 2 Sam vii" *IEJ* 9 [1959] 102, n. 11) argues for Yadin's translation but on a different basis. Critiques of Yadin's position are D. Schwartz, "The Three Temples of 4QFlorilegium" *RG* 37 [1979] 83-91, and G. J. Brooke, *Exegesis at Qumran: 4QFlorilegium in the Jewish Context* [JSOTS 29; Sheffield: JSOT, 1985] 178-79, esp. 187.

An alternative translation, "man-made," suggested by J. Allegro and Dupont-Sommer, is not possible since the text explicitly says this temple shall be built by God himself (Allegro, "Fragments of a Qumran Scroll of Eschatological Midrasim" *JBL* 77 [1958] 352; Dupont-Sommer, *Essene Writings*, 312).

Brooke, who has made the first full exegetical treatment of the *peshet*, has a third opinion in which he accommodates both the spiritual and physical interpretations. He thinks that the "sanctuary of men" was understood by the scribe to be the Essene community, but the community is only proleptic of a literal temple to come. Although the midrash applies a spiritual meaning to the Qumran sectarians, in his view this does not preclude a future, physical temple (*Exegesis at Qumran*, 178-93, esp. 187).

³⁰ Brooke, *Exegesis at Qumran*, 185.

"very industriously, taking for their trainers the laws of their fathers" (9.12.80). Since Philo began his discussion by giving the etymology of the sectarian name "Essene" as a derivative of "holiness," he is probably exaggerating Essene moral purity to make his point and to differentiate this group from traditional Jewish religion. Otherwise, it is difficult to square with how these who are so "devout in the service of God" could have refused to engage in the minimal requirements of Jewish piety. Philo is saying that, unlike other Jewish parties, the Essenes gave special attention to substitute sacrifices of piety. That the practice of spiritual sacrifices does not necessarily exclude animal ritual can be seen from Jewish sources where the two are linked (2 Enoch 45:13; Sir 35:1-3).

This accords well with Josephus' testimony who as a Pharisee would have taken note of Essene ritual practice:

They send votive offerings to the temple, but perform their sacrifices³¹ employing a different ritual of purification. For this reason they are barred from those precincts of the temple that are frequented by all the people and perform their rites by themselves (*Ant.* 18:1.5).

The Essenes are known to have been very stringent in their laws of ritual purity, but at the temple precincts the rules of exclusion varied according to the season. Certain parties were prohibited at all times from the temple courts, but during festivals the authorities relaxed these rules so that pilgrims had access to the courts.³² This suggests that the Essenes also would have had access to the temple, but it was in fact this liberal attitude of the authorities which troubled the Essenes.³³ As Josephus remarks, the temple's relaxed observance of purity laws would have compromised their offerings. Therefore, the Essenes completed their meat offerings in a segregated area of the temple by themselves.

³¹ Our reading follows the Greek witnesses of Josephus; the Latin version reflects an added negative *oux* which changes the meaning of Josephus' passage altogether: "they send votive offerings to the temple, but do (not) offer sacrifices. . . ." See the textual discussion by L. H. Feldman, *Josephus: Jewish Antiquities, Books XVIII-XX* (Loeb Classical Library; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965) 16-17 n^a and Baumgarten, "Reappraisal," 57-58.

³² Baumgarten ("Reappraisal," 64) cites Josephus (*Ant.* 18.2.30) who described how the priests customarily opened the temple gates after midnight during Passover; only after some Samaritans had secretly entered the temple and scattered human bones did authorities take steps to begin restricted access.

³³ *Ibid.*, 64-67. Josephus states that Essenes appeared at the temple (*J. W.* 1.3.5; *Ant.* 15.10.5; 17.13.3) and also identifies a "Gate of the Essenes" in the city wall (*J. W.* 5.4.2).

Conclusion. The Covenant Community represented in CD was critical of the ritual appropriateness of temple sacrifices; however, this did not preclude them from participating whenever proper conditions were met. The tendency on the part of the Essenes at Qumran to substitute spiritual sacrifices also did not necessarily prevent them from offering temple sacrifices. Even if the evidence were conclusive that the Essenes had spiritualized the cult and understood themselves as the temple, they could not have been satisfied with this accommodation forever. Their writings show that they fully expected at the coming of the messiah anew, physical sanctuary to replace the defiled Second Temple.³⁴

When the Teacher ruled the Qumran group there was an intense period of skepticism toward temple authorities and practices as a result of the Wicked Priest. Perhaps, during this time the Essenes withdrew altogether from the temple. Later, as Josephus testifies, the Essenes again could be found engaged in restricted use of the sacrificial cult.

II. *Jesus' Criticism of the Temple*

The focal question for this section concerns the nature of Christ's response to temple practices. Did Jesus advocate reform as the Hasidim and covenanters or did he reject the temple completely and declare it void as did some of the Essenes at Qumran? And, what was Jesus' resolution to temple abuse?

Because all four Evangelists record the Temple Cleansing, we first will describe their testimony. More attention will be given to John's Gospel since it is the most extensive and also has an appended theological commentary.

John and the Synoptics

It is not within the scope of this paper to discuss satisfactorily the manifold problems of historical provenience and source dependence raised by the character of the Gospels. We will only touch upon these matters when they bear on our central questions. The parallel accounts are cited below for the convenience of the reader:

John 2:13-22

(13) The Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. (14) In the temple he found those who were selling oxen

³⁴ See later in our paper under "Jewish Expectations." McKelvey (*Temple*, 52-53) who agrees that the Essenes had spiritualized the cult (not unlike the church) also recognizes that the hope of a new, restored temple "was cherished just as ardently by these Jews [Essenes] as by others" (p. 53).

and sheep and pigeons, and the money-changers at their business. (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. (16) And he told those who sold the pigeons, "Take these things away; you shall not make my Father's house a house of trade." (17) His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for thy house will consume me." (18) The Jews then said to him, "What sign have you to show us for doing this?" (19) Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." (20) The Jews then said, "It has taken forty-three years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?" (21) But he spoke of the temple of his body. (22) When therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this; and they believed the scripture and the word which Jesus had spoken.

Mark 11:15-19

(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 and the seats of those who sold pigeons; (16) and he would not allow anyone to carry anything through the temple. (17) 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." (18) And the chief priests and the scribes heard it and sought a way to destroy him; for they feared him, because all the multitude was astonished at his teaching. (19) And when evening came they went out of the city.

Matt 21:12-13

(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 and the seats of those who sold pigeons. (13) He said to them, 'It is written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer'; but you make it a den of robbers.'

Luke 19:45-46

(45) And he entered the temple and began to drive out those who sold, (46) saying to them, "It is written, "My house shall be a house of prayer"; but you have made it a den of robbers."

Synoptics. The Synoptic accounts agree that the temple event transpired the last week of Jesus' ministry in Jerusalem and that it led to the arrest of Jesus by temple authorities. The accounts also concur that Jesus drove out those "who sold" animals in the temple courts. Matthew and Mark add that the money-changers and the "seats" of those selling pigeons were dispersed. The Synoptics attest that Jesus

justified his action by appealing to this composite OT saying: "'My house shall be called a house of prayer' (Isa 56:7), but you have made it a 'den of robbers'" (Jer 7:11). Finally, the Synoptics imply by the subsequent actions of the priests that the issue at hand was the unprecedented authority Jesus took upon himself in issuing his orders (Mark 11:18 pars.).

The Marcan account has three significant differences which distinguish its testimony as more helpful to our study. First, Mark interrupts the chronology of the Triumphal Entry and the Temple Cleansing by reporting Jesus' curse of the fig tree. Upon Jesus' entry into Jerusalem, he visits the temple where he surveys its activities (1:11) and then departs for Bethany at evening. On the next day as Jesus approaches the temple, he stops to curse the unfruitful tree. This arrangement of events effectively makes Jesus' actions in the temple calculated ones, and the narration uses the fig tree incident to introduce and interpret the Temple Cleansing. The analogy between tree and sanctuary is that although both are alive and thriving, they are not productive for their intended purposes and therefore must be destroyed.³⁵

Second, the Marcan version gives the fuller rendering of Isaiah: "'My house shall be a house of prayer *for all the nations*" (11:17). This last phrase better reflects the prophet's original context where all nations come to worship Yahweh in the ideal eschatological age. Mark's record appears more concerned about the universalistic nature of worship, whereas Matthew and Luke focus on the charge of legitimate versus profane worship.³⁶ The phrase is appropriate for the temple incident since the temple's commerce took place in the "Court of the Gentiles."³⁷ By omitting "all the nations," Matthew and Luke contrast more forcefully the "house" of prayer with the "den" of robbers;³⁸ by this contrast the two Evangelists describe what the sanctuary should be as opposed to what it has become.

Third, unique to Mark is the observation that Jesus refused anyone passage through the temple grounds who was carrying a vessel (11:16). This restriction has been likened to the Mishnah where the

³⁵ L. Williamson, Jr. *Mark* (Atlanta: Knox, 1983) 206-7.

³⁶ McKelvey, *Temple*, 62.

³⁷ We know that money-changers operated in the temple and also there is evidence of cattle sold on the temple grounds from rabbinic sources (J. Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1969 [English] 49). However, it has been assumed that the trade in Jesus' day occurred in the "Court of the Gentiles"; this assumption is reasonable since Jesus came into the city from the Mt. of Olives through the East Gate. This would have led him directly into the larger, outer court first (Hiers, "Purification," 84).

³⁸ E. Haenchen, *John I* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980) 187.

rabbis prohibited transporters using temple grounds as a thoroughfare across the city (m. Ber. 9:5).³⁹ This Marcan addition is significant for our study and affects our interpretation of Jesus' attitude toward the temple since it shows an explicit concern for ritual purity.

John's Gospel. The Fourth Gospel shares the main features of the Synoptic accounts but possesses differences that are essential for determining Jesus' response to temple abuse. First, the event occurs at the first Passover of Jesus' public ministry and not during the last week. Second, whereas the Synoptics tie the event to Jesus' death, the theological expansion of John (2:21-22) links the event to Jesus' resurrection as well.

Third, the composite quotation is absent; instead, Jesus' defense is an allusion to Zechariah: ". . . you shall not make my Father's house a house of trade" (2:16). The allusion enables a play on the word "house"⁴⁰ similar to the Synoptic effect of drawing attention to "house" by contrasting it with "den." Also, as the Isaiah passage provided an eschatological context in the Synoptics, the prophecy of Zechariah does the same and with more force: ". . . and a trader will not again be in the house of the LORD of hosts in that day."

Fourth, unlike the Synoptics, the narrative (2:17) adds a post-resurrection comment by the disciples where they cite Ps 69:9.⁴¹ This reminiscence is included to further justify Jesus' actions; as the Psalmist's righteousness led to persecution, Jesus' passion for the temple--not his opposition to it--meant his death. At the same time, John adapts the Hebrew by translating it with a future tense (*kataphagetai*) to create a prophecy of Jesus' death; this prepares the reader for the discourse on the resurrection which follows (vv 18-22). Finally, we discover that 2:18-22 has no parallel in the Synoptics. These verses explicitly address the question of authority while the Synoptics only imply it.⁴² The "sign" (2:28) requested by the Jews to

³⁹ For other opinions, see C. K. Barrett, "The House of Prayer and the Den of Thieves," *Jesus und Paulus* (eds. E. E. Ellis and E. Grasser; Gottingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1975) 14-15. This "vessel" has been taken as a merchant's item and therefore would fit the context of commercialization. However, the text does not describe what kind of vessel it was. While the precise nuance of Jesus' prohibition may be debated, it is clear that Jesus expressed here a concern for temple sanctity.

⁴⁰ Since *emporion* means "house of trade," the inclusion of *oikon* is intentionally redundant to create the play on words (C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John* [London: SPCK, 1955] 165).

⁴¹ C. H. Dodd (*The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* [Cambridge: University Press, 1953] 301) explains that Psalm 69 was an oft-quoted Psalm of the primitive church applied to Christ's death.

⁴² In Mark the explicit question of authority occurs later in the chapter: "By what authority do you these things?" (11:28); "these things" (*tauta*) refers to Jesus' eruption at the temple.

authenticate Jesus' actions is not answered by him unless he intended it to be his comment on raising up the temple, by which he meant his death and resurrection (2:21).⁴³ This retort, "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up," became the grounds of accusation at his trial (although garbled by mistaken witnesses [Matt 26:60-61; Mark 14:57-59]) and also mockery at his crucifixion (Matt 27:30, 40; Mark 15:29).⁴⁴

Typical of John's manner, he exploits the Jews' gross misunderstanding of Jesus' words and resolves their bewilderment by explaining Jesus' deeper meaning.⁴⁵ For John, Jesus' statement is a reference to his own "body"; the Resurrected Christ is the "temple".⁴⁶ It was only after the resurrection that the disciples could so interpret Jesus' words (2:22). In contrast to the unbelieving "Jews," the combination of the prophecy of Psalm 69, Jesus' reply, and the reality of his resurrection convinced them that he was the Christ.⁴⁷

John's Gospel and its plot. In the four Gospels, the main scheme is the same: the action, the justification of Jesus' own words, the question of authority implied or discussed, and the context of a Passover setting. These features and various details in vocabulary that John shares with the Synoptics have strongly suggested that one event is in view.⁴⁸ However, there are sufficient differences to cause some to opt for two Cleansings.⁴⁹

⁴³ Elsewhere, we know that "three days" is a sign of Jesus' resurrection (Matt 12:38-40; Luke 11:29-30). G. R. Beasley-Murray (*John* [Waco: Word, 1987] 40-41) compares Jesus' answer to a *masal* ("riddle") that is also parabolic. For "three days" as a sign, see Dodd, *Fourth Gospel*, 302; contra this interpretation, see R. Bultmann, *The Gospel of John* (tr. G. R. Beasley-Murray et al.; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1971) 126 n. 1.

⁴⁴ The saying also was used at Stephen's trial (Acts 6:14).

⁴⁵ R. A. Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel. A Study in Literary Design* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983) 155. D. A. Carson ("Understanding Misunderstandings in the Fourth Gospel," *TynBul* 83 [1982] 80, 90) observes that the Jews did not so much misunderstand as they did not understand. This was true of the disciples who did not understand until after the resurrection.

⁴⁶ Cf. Matt 21:6, "But I say unto you, that in this place is one greater than the temple."

⁴⁷ See B. Lindars, *The Gospel of John* (NCB; London: Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 1972) 144.

⁴⁸ So Haenchen, *John*, 186. Brown (*John*, 1.118) posits that Jesus' early visit gave a prophetic warning and the actual intervention occurred at the last Passover. If Brown is correct, we must conclude that John has telescoped the two visits for theological purposes.

⁴⁹ For a defense of this position, see L. Morris, *The Gospel According to John* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971) 100-92, and D. A. Carson, "Matthew," *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984) 441.

John introduces events in chaps 1 and 2 by specific chronological notices: "the next day" (1:35), "the day following" (1:43) and the "third day" (2:1), but this tight chronology is abandoned with the introduction of the temple scene (2:13). Since John gives priority to thematic development over chronology in the writing of the "Book of Signs," it has been argued that John places the Temple Cleansing after the Cana miracle to advance his thesis.⁵⁰ Of course, the same literary effect occurs if in fact there were two events. It is the substance of his thesis that concerns us here.

John's Gospel is intent on contrasting the Jews, who represent those in disbelief, with the disciples who had accepted the Risen Christ. This contrast is shown by the conflict the Jews had with Jesus throughout his ministry. Jerusalem provides the ideal setting where this conflict can be seen at its clearest; by Jesus' early presence in the temple, the narrative can establish the plot of conflict at the beginning.⁵¹ Also, the temple incident continues the idea of succession established in John 1 where John the Baptist's disciples switch allegiance to Jesus and where Jesus provides new wine at Cana's wedding feast. This idea of the old order supplanted by the new reappears in the account of Jesus and the Samaritan woman where we learn that the place of worship is no longer relevant (4:23-24).

Reform or Destruction

However, the Synoptics, particularly when compared to John, portray Jesus as an outraged reformer who, like the OT prophets, did not object to the temple as an institution and did not reject it outright. He showed a concern for the detail of ritual purity (Mark 11:16), and even in John's account, he is said to have a "zeal" (2:17) for the temple which can be taken as a positive sign toward the cult.⁵² It is concluded by some that Jesus' displeasure was not against sacrifice but against those who profaned the sanctity of the site where the animals were sold.⁵³ B. Lindars has suggested that Jesus attacked the presuppositions

⁵⁰ Morris (Ibid., 189-00) states that if one event is adopted, then a theological/literary reason is the proper explanation (as opposed to charging John with a disregard of the facts [see P. 189 n. 47]).

⁵¹ Culpepper (*Anatomy*, 90, 97) discusses this relationship between the event and the Gospel's plot. Cf. also F. F. Bruce, *The Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983) 77; Dodd, *Fourth Gospel*, 300. Haenchen (*John*, 182) points out that the Passover settings in John are occasions for Jesus to speak about himself. As a result, the Temple Cleansing occurs at the first Passover in John since Jesus' protest against the Jews' kind of worship could not wait until the end.

⁵² Beasley-Murray, *John*, 39.

⁵³ Morris (*John*, 195) is representative of this position.

upon which the purification laws were founded, but did not reject the institution of sacrifice; he argues that this distinction is consistent with Jesus' attitude toward purity rites (cf. Mark 7:1-23).⁵⁴

John, as we have seen, interprets Jesus' action as calling for a disjuncture between the old and new orders of worship. John's Gospel comes to this conclusion based on the explicit warning by Jesus, "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up" (v 19).⁵⁵ Because the Jews were so tied to the old order of thinking, they mistakenly took Jesus' reference to the temple as the physical structure and therefore missed the whole point of his action and explanation. This interaction highlights the antipathy between Jesus' conception of worship and that of the Jewish authorities. The eventual abolition of the temple is the only fair conclusion the reader can draw from John's spiritual interpretation.⁵⁶

Since the Gospels present two interpretations of the temple incident, it is not surprising that commentators integrate both. At one place L. Morris can speak of Jesus not condemning the whole sacrificial system, but only the chosen location of the market, and at another place in his commentary he concludes that the deeper meaning of Jesus' words (2:19) has to do with the "ultimate abolition of the temple and of the temple sacrifices."⁵⁷ R. J. McKelvey can insist that Jesus broke from the old order, but mitigates this when he says that Jesus did not object to the temple per se but only the "institution symbolized by the temple."⁵⁸

The reason for this two-fold depiction is that the temple incident functions at two levels in the Gospels. First, the Temple Cleansing, as told by the Synoptics, is the Messiah coming to his temple to inaugurate the eschatological kingdom. In this ideological context, Jesus' action is a messianic claim. Certainly, the authorities understood Jesus'

⁵⁴ Lindars, *John*, 137.

⁵⁵ The imperative is taken as conditional: "if this temple is destroyed. . ." (Robertson, 948; BDF 387, n. 2; cf. also Dodd, *Fourth Gospel*, 302 n. 1). The succession of "temples" is made possible because of the Jews themselves who by destroying the body of Jesus doomed the temple they had sought to defend (P. D. Duke, *Irony in the Fourth Gospel* [Atlanta: Knox, 1985] 87). Therefore, in John the responsibility of destruction is placed upon the Jews, but in the Synoptic accounts Jesus is responsible for the threat of temple destruction. Mark 14:58: "I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands." Matthew's account admits only to the possibility: "I am able to destroy. . ." (26:61).

⁵⁶ Cf. Haenchen, *John*, 187-89.

⁵⁷ Morris, *John*, 203; cf. also p. 195. This can be explained as the result of the biblical context where his disparate statements are found. In the first case, Morris is commenting on the Synoptic passages and in the latter statement he is commenting on John.

⁵⁸ McKelvey, *Temple*, 71; cf. also p. 67.

actions this way, because they challenged his authority as a result of this messianic claim. The parallel recorded in the Fourth Gospel (2:13-17) is consistent with this Synoptic depiction of Jesus as a messianic rebuilders. Jesus' warning of destruction in v 19, when interpreted in this light, completes the messianic role anticipated by the Jews. The messianic age included the building of a new, heavenly temple lowered to the earth by God.

At the second level, however, the appended commentary by John (vv 18-22) gives the temple incident a post-resurrection interpretation which takes the action and saying of Jesus as a prophecy of his death and resurrection. As the new temple his "body" has become the only meeting place with God; this is clearly a Christian understanding of the nature of mediation (Heb 10:10). Thus, in a post-resurrection context, Jesus' action takes on a different shape.

We should not take this to mean that the Gospels are in conflict.⁵⁹ The Cleansing in John only states explicitly what the Synoptics have implied in their telling of the event. As we noted of Mark, the cursing of the fig tree casts the shadow of rejection on the temple scene; Matthew accomplishes the same result by placing the curse of the fig tree after Jesus' first day in the temple (Matt 21:18-20). Luke chooses the parable of the wicked husbandman to condemn temple authorities (20:9-18).⁶⁰

When we read the Cleansing accounts with these two aspects in mind, there is no inconsistency between Jesus as Messiah of the new kingdom and Jesus as the Resurrected Lord of the new order of worship. One leads to the other.

Eschatological Temple

Jewish Expectations. The evidence from Jewish apocryphal and pseudepigraphal writings of the Hasmonean period and the later rabbinic works show the Jewish expectation of a new temple which is made by God and brought to the earth. Attendant to this is the belief that at the coming of the messianic figure he would establish the eschatological temple, secure the city, and draw all nations to worship at Jerusalem.⁶¹ These expectations have their inception in the OT vision of the eschaton, yet, as we saw earlier, it was disappointment in

⁵⁹ Brown (*John*, 1.122) argues a two-fold meaning in John on the basis of his literary studies; he observes that the purification scene (vv 13-17) may have been independent from the rebuilding (vv 18-22). He admits that the sources are in any case consistent since the purification is the first step toward the messianic rebuilding.

⁶⁰ Luke's account is so terse that it is not clear how Luke interpreted the temple incident (I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978] 721).

⁶¹ McKelvey, *Temple*, 25-41.

the temple during the Hasmonean era that fueled this recurring theme of a new temple among the Hasidim.

The sectarians at Qumran shared with these Jerusalem pietists both their outrage at the temple and their expectation of an idealized sanctuary. From the Essene writings 4QFlorilegium and the Temple Scroll we know they anticipated a future temple. This temple may be the same one described in an Aramaic manuscript (5Q15) coming from the Herodian period. It describes the city of the New Jerusalem which possesses a temple based on Ezekiel's design.⁶²

It is apparent that both the Hasidim and the sectarians saw a final solution to their problems in such an apocalyptic sanctuary. The difference lies in the Essenes' more critical attitude toward the present temple and their insistence that only they as the "true Israel" could receive it. Thus, through rites of purification and an ascetic life the covenanters prepared themselves for its coming.

Jesus and the Eschatological Temple. The temple incident showed that Jesus was sympathetic to the concerns of these pietists. Before the First Jewish War (67 A.D.), another Jesus (ben Ananias) pronounced woes of doom upon Jerusalem's temple, and so great was the stirring that city officials attempted to silence him (J. W. 6.5.3). This reflects the atmosphere of impending calamity felt during the time of the Lord, so he seized the temple setting as an occasion to declare that the awaited period of restoration had arrived.

Jesus laid claim to the role of messianic Lord over the sanctuary by exposing the present failure of temple authorities and by demonstrating his control over temple proceedings. First, he exposed the present faults of the temple in three ways. (1) He pointed out an example of ritual uncleanness at the temple which showed Jesus' displeasure at the compromise of the sacred grounds (Mark 11:16). We cannot know if Jesus' action is exactly paralleled by the concerns of the later rabbis who objected to using the grounds for purposes other than worship (*m. Ber* 9.5). At least we can conclude that Jesus sees the ritual sanctity of the place somehow jeopardized by the presence of profane vessels. Since the Essenes were known for their strict standards of Purification, no doubt they would have happily greeted Jesus' reform.

(2) Jesus' composite quotation in the Synoptics revealed the Jews' misuse of the temple sanctuary. In the imagery of the prophets, Jesus challenged those who had changed the purpose of the temple.⁶³

⁶² For the text, see M. Baillet, J. T. Milik, and R. deVaux, *Les 'Petites Grottes' de Qumran* (DJD 3; Oxford: Clarendon, 1962) 184-93.

⁶³ Haenchen (*John*, 186-89) concludes that the original Jeremiah and Isaiah contexts were not appropriate for the temple situation. This is an example, he contends, of

Rather than a house of prayer, it had become a ritual haven for the wicked; as in Jeremiah's day, Jesus charged those in the temple with substituting ritual piety for righteous obedience.

The Gospels are not explicit as to why Jesus disrupted the temple's market. It has been assumed that he was angry at the commercialization because of wide-spread graft, but this is hard to demonstrate. On the contrary, N. Q. Hamilton has shown that the temple treasury under the high-priestly aristocracy was utilized for beneficent purposes.⁶⁴ Money-changers as well as the selling of animals met the needs of worshippers, and the absence of money-changers in fact would have jeopardized the sanctity of the temple since they were necessary to exchange Roman coin for the biblical shekel (cf. Exod 30:13-16). Although the priestly house of Ananias prospered,⁶⁵ there is reason to believe that Caiaphas' strict controls over the bazaar would not have left him open to the charges of robbery. The Roman procurators oversaw the temple treasury,⁶⁶ and it seems improbable that unrestrained avarice could have gone unchecked.

Jesus is not scoffing at the merchandizing but at the promotion of ritual for its own sake. It may be that Jesus was drawing from a common catalogue of accusations; from Jewish writings and the sectarian CD there is listed a three-fold criticism of lust, wealth, and defilement. It was the specific image of plunder that Jesus used to issue a general attack against what the temple had come to mean to the people and authorities who were satisfied with rite and not righteousness. In this way Jer 1:11 was perfect for Jesus' point, because it also provided him this image of robbery.⁶⁷

(3) To show Jerusalem's failure, Jesus appealed to the apocalypticism of Isaiah's new temple which Mark tells us is "for all the

the Christian community not paying attention to the OT context and choosing passages here and there to suit their situations. Haenchen under-estimates the appropriateness of Jesus' quotation. It is true that the Isaiah passage does not specifically condemn sacrifice but the passage establishes the eschatological setting Jesus desired; it is against this idealized vision that the present temple can be seen to fall short. The Jeremiah passage is used to charge his audience with the same sins as the prophet's era when the temple had become the people's false hope for survival.

⁶⁴ N. Q. Hamilton, "Temple Cleansing and Temple Bank," *JBL* 83 (1964) 368. It seems unlikely that if such social causes were supported by the treasury that they would warrant so strong a condemnation as "den of robbers."

⁶⁵ Josephus calls him the "great procurer of money" (*Ant.* 20.205); Jeremias (*Jerusalem*, 49) concludes that the high-priestly family was characterized by "avarice."

⁶⁶ The Roman procurators were greedy and more concerned about their tax revenue and share of the profits, and therefore would have watched for Temple deception. See Hamilton, "Temple Cleansing," 369-70.

⁶⁷ C. Roth ("The Cleansing of the Temple and Zechariah XIV 21," *NovT* [1960], 176-77) answers the problem of the Jeremiah quotation by defining *laston* as "rebels"; thus, the "den of rebels" is Jesus' rebuke against those who advocated nationalism.

nations." The temple's market although expediting ritual had actually thwarted the higher purpose of the temple. The mishnah tells of four markets on the Mt. of Olives which served the needs of worshippers but also during the time of Caiaphas trade was established in the temple courts.⁶⁸ This trade in the Gentile Court would have reflected the exclusivism the priests promoted in Jesus' day; as long as such trade flourished, the Gentiles no longer had room in the temple. The convenience of sacrifice had meant the loss of religion.

Second, in addition to pointing out Jerusalem's failure, the Temple Cleansing was a demonstration of Jesus' messianic rule. In expressing his authority by deed and saying, Jesus declared the inauguration of the eschatological age. The reaction of the priests and scribes show that they understood Jesus' action as a direct challenge to their position. He demonstrated his rule in three ways. (1) Jesus showed his dominion over the laws of sanctification when he prevented the transport of vessels through temple grounds (Mark 11:16). This must be construed as an usurpation of priestly privilege. Also, this verse contributes to the OT picture of the messianic age painted by the activities of Jesus in the Gospels. The prophets required a purging of the sanctuary to prepare for the eschatological blessing;⁶⁹ this gesture by Jesus would have met that expectation.⁷⁰ (2) By driving out the animals, Jesus was countermanding the current policies of the high-priestly office. If V. Eppstein's proposal is correct that Caiaphas had only recently established the bazaar, Jesus' action could have been understood by the house of Ananias as an attack on the high priesthood; this would explain the urgency that the priests felt to rid themselves of Jesus. (3) The allusion to Zechariah, "you shall not make my Father's house a house of trade," drew attention to his

Barrett ("House of Prayer," 16) agrees that the temple had become a stronghold for nationalism and that this was Jesus' criticism of the people. The difficulty with this interpretation is two-fold: (1) *laston* commonly means robbery and (2) the idea of exclusivism is at best only secondary to the Jeremiah context (cf. Marshall, *Luke*, 720).

⁶⁸ Jeremias, *Jerusalem*, 48-48. V. Eppstein ("The Historicity of the Gospel Account of the Cleansing of the Temple," *ZNW* 55 [1964] 42-58) proposes that vendors were installed by Caiaphas only at A.D. 30 after he had expelled the Sanhedrin for the temple; because they set up commerce at the Mt. of Olives, Caiaphas responded for punitive reasons to compete by establishing the temple bazaar.

⁶⁹ Hiers, "Purification of the Temple," 89.

⁷⁰ This interpretation has been taken further by C. Roth, "The Cleansing of the Temple," 177. Jesus alluded to Zech 14:21b, but the first half of the same verse says in the last days all domestic utensils shall be declared holy and therefore appropriated for use in sacred meals. Thus, Jesus' action was an appropriation of those vessels that entered the sacred grounds and thereby he effectively called for the new age. This interpretation is doubtful since we wonder why this portion of the verse was not also quoted (cf. Barrett, "House of Prayer," 20).

messianic position.⁷¹ The original eschatological context of the prophecy and Jesus' use of "My Father's house" rather than the common OT expression "house of God" reinforced the claims of Jesus. The expulsion of the beasts and the absence of any trader were signs of the eschatological order; the idealized temple had no sacrificial system and thus no need for commercial exchange.

Jesus as the New Temple

We have seen that Jesus inaugurated the eschatological temple, but we have not yet answered the question of the nature of that new temple. As we have already implied, the expulsion of the beasts symbolized the new order of worship whose temple will have no sacrificial rite. If we do not understand the expulsion as a symbolic act, we have no reason for it since the animals were necessary and were not in themselves an abuse of the temple's sanctity. Their removal was meant to symbolize the end of mediation toward God by sacrifice; the Mosaic system was not condemned but rather it was displaced as a result of its being superseded by the presence of Jesus.

The eschatological temple, then, was reinterpreted by Jesus metaphorically (John 2:21). As R. Bultmann observes, the old eschatology of the idealized temple had been given new meaning.⁷² Jesus linked the destruction of the present temple with his own resurrection (2:19); the word "raise" (*egeiron*) often refers to the resurrection in John.⁷³ From a post-resurrection perspective, John brings out the fuller implications of Jesus' words; the death and resurrection of Jesus' body is the means by which the old has been replaced by the new.⁷⁴ This new mediation is the ultimate resolution Jesus had for temple abuses.

The Covenant Community continued to use the temple cult with reservations due to ritual differences required by the covenanters, but they awaited a replacement temple to satisfy their final purification requirements. The temple they conceived of was a physical entity whose sacrificial system met the specific rites of purification and calendaric table they believed God had revealed to them. Both the Hasidim and the sectarians desired a temple made by God and

⁷¹ Zechariah was an abundant source for the Gospels as they constructed the prophecy's depiction of the coming messianic king (e.g., cf. Triumphal Entry and Zech 9:9). See Roth, "Cleansing of the Temple," 174-75.

⁷² R. Bultmann, *John*, 128.

⁷³ Cf. John 5:21; 12:1, 9, 17; 21:4 (but see 5:8; 7:52; 11:29 et al.). C. H. Dodd (*Historical Tradition in the Fourth Gospel* [Cambridge: University Press, 1963] 90 n. 2) shows *egeiron* is used for erecting a building, but *egeiron* is contrasted here with *oikodomeo* (v 20). Contrast also Mark 14:58 and Matt 26:61 where the witnesses use *oikodomeo*.

⁷⁴ The theme of replacement is typical Johannine theology (Brown, *John*, CXLIII).

established by the Messiah where they might worship God in holiness. The new temple, in other words, was an extension of the old. It simply met a higher standard of ritual purity because of God's presence.

Jesus and the early church (Acts 2:46) also continued their relationship with the Jerusalem sanctuary as an indication of continuity between Israel and the Church, but their hopes were not in the old system as represented in the Second Temple. The old was abrogated and the declaration of John is that mediation is achieved now through Jesus' death and resurrection. The essential difference between the Jewish apocalyptists and Jesus was their conception of worship as evidenced by different expectations of the new temple: he is the new temple "made without hands."⁷⁵ Only this new spiritual vehicle could provide the ultimate spiritual meeting ground for God and his people. The question of reform for an impure Jerusalem or an adulterated Gerizim was made moot by the coming of Jesus.⁷⁶ The "worship of God in spirit" was now possible because of the Resurrected Lord (John 4:23-24).

There is no indication of this thought in the Jewish literature of the day. Jesus' actions were not seeking reforms in the same sense the sectarians would have wanted. By his coming the kind of reforms the OT prophets had called for were not necessary. No longer could the mire of human sin jeopardize the sanctity of God's meeting place with redeemed Israel.

⁷⁵ Mark 14:58 distinguishes between the literal Second Temple and the spiritual temple: "this temple made with hands" versus "another [temple] made without hands." John reads "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it (*auton* == "same") up"; in other words, Jesus could be understood to have had the physical temple in mind. The appended commentary in John, however, makes it clear that the Evangelist interpreted it as spiritual. Matthew's testimony (26:61) is uncertain as a result of textual problems (Dodd, *Tradition*, 00).

⁷⁶ See Dodd (*Fourth Gospel*, 314) who indicates that the main point of John 4 is that the old form of worship was flesh and Jesus has introduced worship in spirit.

This material is cited with gracious permission from:

The Criswell College;
4010 Gaston Ave.
Dallas, TX 75246
www.criswell.edu

Please report any errors to Ted Hildebrandt at: thildebrandt@gordon.edu