

# 1

## GALILEE AND THE HISTORICAL JESUS IN RECENT RESEARCH

*Roland Deines*

### **The Scholarly Legacy**

“You too were with Jesus the Galilean”—Peter is confronted with this allegation in the court of the palace of the high priest in Jerusalem, having secretly followed Jesus after he was arrested (Matt. 26:69). This little sentence not only reflects the prejudice of a city-dweller against someone from rural Galilee, with its steady stream of troublemakers beginning with the “chief robber” Ezekias (Hezekiah) in 47 BCE,<sup>1</sup> but also throws light on the shifting history of the

---

This article is an edited and abridged version of “Jesus the Galilean: Questioning the Function of Galilee in Recent Jesus Research,” in Roland Deines, *Acts of God in History: Studies Towards Recovering a Theological Historiography* (ed. Christoph Ochs and Peter Watts; WUNT 317; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 53–93; used with permission. The German original appeared as “Galiläa und Jesus: Anfragen zur Funktion der Herkunftsbezeichnung ‘Galiläa’ in der neueren Jesusforschung,” in *Jesus und die Archäologie Galiläas* (ed. Carsten Claussen and Jörg Frey; 2nd ed.; Biblisch-theologische Studien 87; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2009), 271–320.

1. Josephus, *J.W.* 1.204, par. *Ant.* 14.159 (cf. 14.167–74). On this Ezekias, who potentially had roots in Jewish nobility, and his role in the Galilean revolt against Herod, see Martin Hengel, *The Zealots: Investigations into the Jewish Freedom Movement in the Period from Herod I until 70 A.D.* (trans. David Smith; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1989), 313–17. See also Uriel Rappaport, “How Anti-Roman was the Galilee?” in *The Galilee in Late Antiquity* (ed. Lee I. Levine; New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1992), 95–101. Against reading the term *Galileans* as insurrectionists, see esp. Louis H. Feldman, “The Term ‘Galileans’ in Josephus,” *JQR* 72 (1981–82): 50–52; Seán Freyne, “The Galileans in the Light of Josephus’ *Life*,” *NTS* 26 (1980): 397–413 (reprinted in Freyne, *Galilee and Gospel: Collected Essays* [WUNT 125; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000], 27–44); Freyne, “Behind the Names: Galileans, Samaritans, *Judaioi*,” in *Galilee through the Centuries: Confluence of Cultures* (ed. Eric M. Meyers; Duke Judaic Studies Series 1; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1999), 39–55 (reprinted in Freyne, *Galilee and Gospel*, 113–31); Folker Siegert, Heinz Schreckenber, and Manuel Vogel, eds., *Flavius Josephus, Aus meinem Leben (Vita): Kritische Ausgabe, Übersetzung und Kommentar* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), 164–65, Appendix

reception of Jesus the Galilean from his ministry in the first century to the present. Probably no other element of Jesus' biography is used more excessively to explain his message, his demeanor, his impact, and his "success." There is an impressive list of books and articles that make direct or indirect reference to Jesus' Galilean origins even in their titles,<sup>2</sup> and there is hardly a book on Jesus that does not discuss Galilee at length. The present "Third Quest for the Historical Jesus" is to no small extent Galilee research: whoever wants to say something about the earthly Jesus does so with reference to Galilee. Accordingly, Galilee has become one of the most important keys for the understanding of Jesus of Nazareth in modern Jesus research, or as the late doyen of Galilee research Seán Freyne (1935–2013) remarked in one of his last comments on the topic: "More than once I have been tempted to make the fairly obvious comment that the search for the historical Galilee is about to replace the quest for the historical Jesus."<sup>3</sup>

---

4; for an overview, see Mark Rapinchuk, "The Galilee and Jesus in Recent Research," *Currents in Biblical Research* 2 (2004): 197–222, esp. 208–10.

2. This is only a phenomenon of the last few decades, however. If one looks through the bibliography of Albert Schweitzer's *Geschichte der Leben-Jesu-Forschung* (2nd ed.; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1913; Eng. trans.: *The Quest of the Historical Jesus: First Complete Edition* [ed. J. Bowden; London: SCM, 2000]), one will find a number of works that use Nazareth in their title, but as far as I can see there is not one that explicitly refers to Galilee in the title (the only exception is the subtitle in Albert Dulk, *Der Irrgang des Lebens Jesu*, vol. 1, *Die historischen Wurzeln und die galiläische Blüte* [1884]; see Schweitzer, *Geschichte*, 357 n. 2; *Quest*, 519 n. 28). Galilee is also largely irrelevant in the text itself, with the exception of the presentation of Ernest Renan's contribution (see Schweitzer, *Geschichte*; 181; *Quest*, 159; see also the long n. 1 on Mark 14:28 and 16:7 in *Geschichte*, 433–34; *Quest*, 525–26 n. 26). The same result emerges if one looks through Wolfgang Fenske, *Wie Jesus zum "Arier" wurde: Auswirkungen der Entjüdisierung Christi im 19. und zu Beginn des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2005), 265–88. Apparently, Walter Bauer (1877–1960) was the first who explicitly called Jesus a "Galilean" in the title of his work: "Jesus der Galiläer," in *Festgabe für Adolf Jülicher zum 70. Geburtstag, 26 Januar 1927* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1927), 16–27; now in Bauer, *Aufsätze und kleine Schriften* (ed. Georg Strecker; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1967), 91–108. Strecker writes in his introduction that this essay "represents the much noticed attempt to accentuate the syncretistic element of Jesus' Jewish context before the backdrop of the political and religious situation of Galilee" (p. v). Bauer was followed by Ernst Lohmeyer's study, *Galiläa und Jerusalem* (FRLANT n.F. 34; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1936), and Walter Grundmann's notorious *Jesus der Galiläer und das Judentum* in 1940 (Leipzig: G. Wigand; see n. 16 below). In the same year Rudolf Meyer published the much more objective *Der Prophet aus Galiläa: Studie zum Jesusbild der ersten drei Evangelien* (Leipzig: Lukenbein, 1940; repr., Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1970). But it was not before Gerd Theissen's best-seller, *Der Schatten des Galiläers: Historische Jesusforschung in erzählender Form* (Munich: Kaiser, 1986; numerous translations and reprints; Eng. trans.: *The Shadow of the Galilean: The Quest of the Historical Jesus in Narrative Form* [trans. John Bowden; London: SCM, 1987]) that a greater public turned its attention to Galilee, and it is since then that the number of "Galilean" Jesus books has increased. A recent German example is Jens Schröter, *Jesus von Nazareth: Jude aus Galiläa — Retter der Welt* (Biblische Gestalten 15; Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2006).

3. Seán Freyne, "Galilean Studies: Old Issues and New Questions," in *Religion, Ethnicity, and Identity in Ancient Galilee: A Region in Transition* (ed. Jürgen Zangenberg, Harold W. Attridge, and Dale B. Martin; WUNT 210; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), 13–29, here 13. This excellent volume appeared only after the original chapter was submitted, and for the revision of this article I have added only a few remarks. In the last stages of the preparation of this volume came the sad news of Seán Freyne's death on August 5, 2013. He will be surely missed. On Galilee and Jesus in recent research, see further Halvor Moxnes, "The Construction of Galilee as a Place for the

This is not entirely new, however. The history of Jesus research shows that from time to time and in certain contexts the emphasis on Jesus' Galilean origins has played an important role.<sup>4</sup> Upon closer examination it can be seen that reference to Galilee nearly always serves either the inner-Jewish *qualification* of Jesus or his *distancing* from his Jewish context, whereby the transition from one position to the other is often rather fluid. The first of these phenomena are already encountered in the New Testament<sup>5</sup> and it appears again in the nineteenth century, especially in the beginnings of modern Jewish study of Jesus.<sup>6</sup> Here Jesus, as a Galilean, is neither a Jerusalemite nor a Judean, but rather is placed on the fringe of the religious and social Jewish centers (where "Jewish" indirectly stands for "Judean"). Heinrich Graetz, in his turn-of-the-century work, maintained that, since Jesus was a Galilean, it is "impossible that his knowledge of the law could match the [Jerusalem] standard," which then explains his conflicts with the Pharisees, being less about his messianic claims than about his ignorance of (and contempt for) halakhah. Nevertheless, Jesus' relative "success" among his Jewish contemporaries had to be explained, and the solution offered was that his "intensely sympathetic character" made up for his "deficiency in knowledge." With his enthusiastic and charismatic manner of preaching, he was able to impress the equally ill-educated, but all-the-more-spirited Galilean country folk and later also the gentiles, who were offered his message in Paul's altered form intended for pagans. He made little impression, however, on the real ("true") Judaism as taught by Hillel and Shammai.<sup>7</sup>

---

Historical Jesus," *BTB* 31 (2001): 26–37, 64–77; see also Moxnes, *Putting Jesus in His Place: A Radical Vision of Household and Kingdom* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2003), 19–20, 126–38, 142–57; Rapinchuk, "Galilee and Jesus"; Ben Witherington III, *The Jesus Quest: The Third Search for the Jew of Nazareth* (2nd ed.; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1997), 14–41. A good overview of recent Galilee research can be found in Seán Freyne, "Introduction: Galilean Studies: Problems and Prospects," in Freyne, *Galilee and Gospel*, 1–26, esp. 20–25 on "Galilee and the Jesus Movement"; and now also in Freyne, "Jesus of Galilee: Implications and Possibilities," *Early Christianity* 1 (2010): 372–405.

4. The following is a summary of a longer study, see Roland Deines, "Jesus der Galiläer: Traditionsgeschichte und Genese eines anti-semitischen Konstrukts bei Walter Grundmann," in *Walter Grundmann: Ein Neutestamentler im Dritten Reich* (ed. Roland Deines, Volker Leppin, and Karl-Wilhelm Niebuhr; Arbeiten zur Kirchen- und Theologiegeschichte 21; Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2007), 43–131; see also Volker Lubinetzki, *Von der Knechtsgestalt des Neuen Testaments: Beobachtungen zu seiner Verwendung und Auslegung in Deutschland vor dem sowie im Kontext des "Dritten Reiches"*, (Münster: Lit, 2000), 282–93 ("Jesus der Galiläer, der Nichtjude, der Arier"); Moxnes, "Construction," 27–36.

5. Mark 14:70 par. Matt. 26:69; Luke 23:6; Matt. 26:73 (and also *b. Erubin* 53b; *b. Megillah* 24b); Acts 2:7 (cf. 4:13); John 7:48–52; cf. Seán Freyne, *Galilee, Jesus, and the Gospels: Literary Approaches and Historical Investigations* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), 1.

6. Cf. Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* 108. Accordingly, even during Justin's time, people warned about the "godless and lawless cult," which "had been started by Jesus, a certain Galilean deceiver" (αἵρεσις τις ἄθενος καὶ ἐγγήγερται ἀπὸ Ἰησοῦ τινος Γαλιλαίου πλάνου).

7. Heinrich Graetz, *Geschichte der Juden von den ältesten Zeiten bis auf die Gegenwart: Aus den Quellen neu bearbeitet*, vol. 3, *Geschichte der Juden von dem Tode Juda Makkabi's bis zum Untergang des jüdischen Staates* (ed. and rev. Marcus Brann; 5th ed.; 2 vols.; Leipzig: Leiner, 1905–6; repr., Berlin: Arani, 1996), 1:276–82. On Paul, see *ibid.*, 2:408–25; the quotations are from 1:282. The pertinent passages in the English translation (based on an

Graetz (1817–1891), who was one of the first representatives of the academic study of Judaism<sup>8</sup> that also studied Jesus, represents fairly well the main thrust of the Jewish contributions to Jesus research in the nineteenth century and beyond, which was adopted in Christian scholarship as well.<sup>9</sup> As a Galilean, Jesus belonged to an uneducated, half-pagan fringe form of Judaism that was guided more by feeling (and therefore also by sentimentality and rash, volatile temperament) than intellect. It was this milieu in which Jesus grew up, and here (and only here!) was he successful, where people were foolish enough to follow him and to consider him to be special.<sup>10</sup> For Jerusalemites and Judeans, however, “humanity’s salvation came from Zion and Jerusalem, it had to come from Judean blood.”<sup>11</sup> With this sentence from Armand (Aaron) Kaminka (1866–1950) the academic study of Judaism reached its zenith in terms of distancing Jesus from Judaism: as a Galilean, Jesus belonged to a “mixed race,” which had the status of a foreign nation to Judea. And with this, although hidden behind a few circumlocutions, on account of his Galilean origins some scholars repudiated the claim that Jesus belonged among the Jewish people.<sup>12</sup>

About half a century later, this topic was resumed by some New Testament scholars,<sup>13</sup> who took it as their task to formulate a “*völkische*,” or “German” theology. Their ideologically

---

earlier edition), *History of the Jews: From the Earliest Times to the Present Day*, vol. 2, *From the Reign of Hyrcanus (135 B.C.E.) to the Completion of the Babylonian Talmud (500 C. E.)* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1893), can be found on pp. 146–65 (on Paul, see *ibid.*, 219–32). Here the passage in full relates: “The measure of his [= Jesus’] mental culture can only be surmised from that existing in his native province. Galilee, at a distant from the capital and the Temple, was far behind Judaea in mental attainments and knowledge of the Law. The lively interchange of religious thought, and the discussions upon the Law, which made its writings and teachings the common property of all who sought the Temple, were naturally wanting in Galilee.” In the preface to the English translation, which appeared in five volumes only, compared to the eleven of the original, Graetz describes it as “a condensed reproduction of the entire eleven volumes” (vol. 1, *From the Earliest Period to the Death of Simon the Maccabee [135 B.C.E.]*; Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1891), vi. Graetz and his contemporaries attributed the enthusiastic elements of Jesus’ ministry, among which they numbered his exorcisms and prophetic demeanor, to “Essene” influences. This was motivated by the desire to link Jesus to the charismatic-enthusiastic expressions of contemporary Judaism and to isolate him from the “ideal” Judean guise. Whether “Galilean” and “Essene” as simultaneous characterizations were actually historically possible or rather were mutually exclusive was not made a topic of inquiry. One has perhaps to imagine here a two-step process of influence: first Jesus’ childhood and youth in Galilee, then the discipleship to John the Baptist, who imparted these “Essene” ideas to Jesus. In this way Jesus was, as it were, influenced by two nonrepresentative fringe forms of Judaism.

8. That is, *Wissenschaft des Judentums*.

9. See Joseph Klausner, *Jesus of Nazareth: His Life, Times, and Teachings* (New York: Macmillan, 1925), 167–68, 171–73.

10. See Graetz, *History*, 2:152.

11. Armand (Aaron) Kaminka, *Studien zur Geschichte Galiläas* (Berlin: Engel, 1889), 59. In contrast, Samuel Klein notes that “Galilee . . . was never a foreign country to those who lived in Judea” (*Galiläa von der Makkabäerzeit bis 67* [Palästina-Studien 4; Vienna: Menorah, 1928], 18).

12. See Klausner, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 100, 233 (Klausner disagrees on the gentile nature of Galilee, especially with Kaminka; see 165 n. 89). For a detailed discussion, see Deines, “Jesus der Galiläer,” 58–71.

13. Unmentioned here is the long list of more or less intelligent philosophers, writers, “prophets,” and anti-Semites who sought to distance Jesus from Judaism on account of his Galilean origins. But it needs to be pointed out here that the judgment of the large majority of theologians and representatives of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums*

driven and firmer conclusions resulted in, first, the claim that Jesus most likely had non-Jewish origins and, second, the founding of the Institute for the Study of the Jewish Influence on German Church Life,<sup>14</sup> which had the task of making the German church “judenfrei” (that is, free of Jews).<sup>15</sup> Probably the most influential book among the publications of this institute was Walter Grundmann’s *Jesus der Galiläer und das Judentum* (Jesus the Galilean and Judaism).<sup>16</sup>

Given this background, an inquiry into the function of “Galilee” as Jesus’ place of origin in more recent Jesus research, in which critical inquests have repeatedly been reminded of Grundmann is warranted.<sup>17</sup> Related to this focus on Jesus’ Galilean context is the parallel development that placed special emphasis on a Galilean origin of the sayings source Q,<sup>18</sup>

---

was much more level-headed than that of their more journalistic competitors who were, to some extent, rather successful with their, at times, ludicrous theories. In this respect, little seems to have changed. Wolfgang Fenske (“Arier”) offers an initial overview of these kinds of aberrations and delusions. Unfortunately, the book lacks a subject index, so it is difficult to find the many passages on Galilee; see, for example, 15, 17, 21, 40, 59–60, 69–70. Yet Fenske and many others miss the importance of the Galilee argumentation in Jewish studies of Jesus in distancing Jesus from the Jewish mainstream of his time.

14. Institut zur Erforschung des jüdischen Einflusses auf das deutsche kirchliche Leben.

15. On the history of this institute, which was based in Eisenach, see Peter von der Osten-Sacken, ed., *Das missbrauchte Evangelium: Studien zu Theologie und Praxis der Thüringer Deutschen Christen* (Studien zu Kirche und Israel 20; Berlin: Institut Kirche und Judentum, 2002); see also Otto Merk, “Viele waren Neutestamentler: Zur Lage neutestamentlicher Wissenschaft 1933–1945 und ihrem zeitlichen Umfeld,” *TLZ* 130 (2005): 106–18; Susannah Heschel, *The Aryan Jesus: Christian Theologians and the Bible in Nazi Germany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008); and also the essay collection on Walter Grundmann mentioned in n. 5 (with detailed literature).

16. The monograph appeared as part of the *Veröffentlichung des Institut zur Erforschung des jüdischen Einflusses auf das deutsche kirchliche Leben* (Leipzig: G. Wigand, 1940). A second revised edition was printed by the same publisher in 1941, bringing the total to five thousand copies.

17. William E. Arnal, *The Symbolic Jesus: Historical Scholarship, Judaism and the Construction of Contemporary Identity* (London: Equinox, 2005), 16–29; Seán Freyne, “Galilean Questions to Crossan’s Mediterranean Jesus,” in *Whose Historical Jesus?* (ed. William E. Arnal and Michel Desjardins; Studies in Christianity and Judaism 7; Waterloo, Ont.: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1997), 63–91, here 91 (reprinted in *Galilee and Gospel*, 208–29); the last page of the original essay that refers to Grundmann is missing in the reprint; Peter M. Head, “The Nazi Quest for an Aryan Jesus,” *JSHJ* 2 (2004): 55–89, esp. 60–61; John Kloppenborg Verbin, *Excavating Q: The History and Setting of the Sayings Gospel* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 434–35; Moxnes, “Construction,” 33–34, 68; Birger A. Pearson, “The Gospel according to the Jesus Seminar,” *Religion* 25 (1995): 317–38, here 338.

18. Based on Luke 10:13–15 par. Matt. 11:20–24 it is often assumed that Q, or its postulated earliest stratum, has its origins in Galilee (see the list in Paul Hoffmann and Christoph Heil, eds., *Die Spruchquelle Q* [Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2002], 22 n. 45; Birger A. Pearson, “A Q Community in Galilee?” *NTS* 50 [2004]: 475–94, esp. 489–90; Nicholas H. Taylor, “Q and Galilee?” *Neotestamentica* 37 [2003]: 283–311, esp. 284; see also William E. Arnal, *Jesus and the Village Scribes: Galilean Conflicts and the Setting of Q* [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001], 159–64). However, these woes over the two Galilean cities only demonstrate a certain geographic focus of Jesus’ ministry. This can rightly be contrasted with Luke 13:34–35 par. Matt. 23:37–39 (cf. Mark 11:9–10) and argued that Q could have its origins in Jerusalem. See Hoffmann and Heil, *Spruchquelle Q*, 22 n. 46; Pearson, “Q Community,” 492–93; Marco Frenschkowski, “Galiläa oder Jerusalem? Die topographischen und politischen Hintergründe der Logienquelle,” in *The Sayings Source Q and the Historical Jesus* (ed. Andreas Lindemann; BETL 158; Leuven: Peeters, 2001), 535–59; see also Frenschkowski, “Welche biographischen Kenntnisse von

which—despite all the unanswered questions of Q studies<sup>19</sup>—is doubtless one of the most important sources when it comes to reconstructing the life of the historical Jesus. The aim of the following deliberations is surely not to question the overall importance and usefulness of Galilee studies for historical Jesus research, but only to point out the related pitfalls and perhaps also their limitations with regard to understanding Jesus.

### Recent Galilee Research as the Basis for the Quest of the Historical Jesus

The starting point of recent Galilee research, which was spearheaded by the late Seán Freyne's first monograph on the history of Galilee,<sup>20</sup> is diametrically opposed to the process of alienation of Jesus from Judaism mentioned above. Instead it can be understood as a catalyst for the present ("third") quest for the historical Jesus. Such Galilee research, kick-started by Freyne in the literary realm and archaeologically by Eric Meyers, played a significant role by placing the *Jew* Jesus from Galilee in the spotlight. Whereas the hallmark of the "second" phase of Jesus research (or the "New Quest"), which is generally connected to Ernst Käsemann and Günther

---

Jesus setzt die Logienquelle voraus? Beobachtungen zur Gattung von Q im Kontext antiker Spruchsammlungen," in *From Quest to Q: Festschrift James M. Robinson* (ed. Jón Ma. Asgeirsson, Kristin De Troyer, and Marvin W. Meyer; BETL 146; Leuven: Peeters, 2000), 3–42. The emphasis on the Galilean origins of Q is—disregarding some exceptions—a relatively new phenomenon. For the most part, it was thought that Q originated in Palestine (or southern Syria), although without any specifics. John S. Kloppenborg did not discuss the origin or the relationship to Galilee in his first monograph on Q in 1987 at all (*The Formation of Q: Trajectories in Ancient Wisdom Collections* [Studies in Antiquity and Christianity; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987]). In *Excavating Q*, published in 2000, the Galilean origins, however, have become foundational for his influential understanding of Q; see pp. 170–75, 214–61 ("Reading Q in the Galilee"). Kloppenborg especially relies here on Jonathan L. Reed, "The Social Map of Q," in *Conflict and Invention: Literary, Rhetorical, and Social Studies on the Sayings Gospel Q* (ed. John S. Kloppenborg; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1995), 17–36, reworked in Reed, *Archaeology and the Galilean Jesus: A Re-examination of the Evidence* (Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 2000), 170–96.

19. For an overview of the current state of research, see Maurice Casey, *An Aramaic Approach to Q: Sources for the Gospels of Matthew and Luke* (SNTSMS 122; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 1–50; and Peter M. Head and P. J. Williams, "Q Review," *TynBul* 34 (2003): 119–44.

20. Seán Freyne *Galilee from Alexander the Great to Hadrian, 323 B.C.E. to 135 C.E.: A Study of Second Temple Judaism* (University of Notre Dame Center for the Study of Judaism and Christianity in Antiquity 5; Wilmington, Del.: Michael Glazier; Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1980; repr., Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998). Freyne stayed true to this subject in the following works (in selection): *Galilee, Jesus, and the Gospels*; *Galilee and Gospel*; *Jesus, a Jewish Galilean: A New Reading of the Jesus-Story* (London: T&T Clark, 2004), and also in his presidential address during the Studiorum Novi Testamenti Societas in 2006 in Aberdeen: "Galilee as Laboratory: Experiments for New Testament Historians and Theologians," *NTS* 53 (2007): 147–64. See also his essay "Die soziale Welt Galiläas aus der Sicht des Josephus," in *Jesus und die Archäologie Galiläas* (ed. Carsten Claussen and Jörg Frey; Biblisch-theologische Studien 87; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2008).

Bornkamm,<sup>21</sup> was the criterion of dissimilarity, according to which authentic Jesus material was only that which was different from contemporary Judaism (and from the nascent church), the representatives of the “Third Quest,” in almost opposite fashion, favor the plausibility and similarity criterion.<sup>22</sup> This means that those things that associated Jesus with contemporary Judaism were now deemed most likely to be authentic. But here it had to be asked: With what form, variant, or stream of Judaism? This question became particularly important because, parallel to the “Third Quest,” the situation of the study of Second Temple period Judaism had also changed, and dramatically at that, when compared to the state of research during the “Second Quest” (also called the “New Quest”). At that time Jesus was seen to be facing a mostly Pharisaic-rabbinic-influenced “nomistic” Judaism,<sup>23</sup> whereas now plurality of form and content is emphasized, together with geographic diversity, not only between the land of Israel and the Diaspora but also within the Jewish motherland itself. In terms of geography, Galilean Judaism is now differentiated from Judean and Samaritan Judaism, and in addition to these regional differences (which are further defined internally, for example, with Upper and Lower Galilee as culturally different regions), there are also sociological (for example, the difference between urban and rural, and foreign dominated and indigenous populations) and cultural variations (for example, level of hellenization, education, religious links). This change in Jewish studies forces one to define carefully any placement of Jesus on this by now rather intricate map of the Jewish world.<sup>24</sup> In this context, Jesus’ Galilean origin seems to provide a solid point of contact for the necessary precise classification. The statement “Jesus was a Galilean who preached and healed” belongs, according to E. P. Sanders, to the eight facts and activities known about Jesus that can claim the highest level of historical authenticity.<sup>25</sup> Even for the members of the Jesus

---

21. The time between the end of the “First Quest” and the start of the “New Quest” is strongly influenced by Rudolf Bultmann’s existentialist interpretation, which had no interest in the historical Jesus. For this reason, this time is often described as the “no quest” phase. But Bultmann’s influence also shaped the “New Quest” of his students, so that at times the whole of the “Second” or “New Quest” is improperly used as a label for the whole phase of Jesus research influenced by Bultmann. The terminology was shaped by James M. Robinson, *A New Quest for the Historical Jesus* (SBT 25; Naperville, Ill.: Allenson, 1959), who called attention to this new trend in Jesus research in the circle of Bultmann’s students. For a short overview, see James Carleton Paget, “Quests for Historical Jesus,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Jesus* (ed. Markus Bockmuehl; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 138–55.

22. See James D. G. Dunn, *Jesus Remembered* (Christianity in the Making 1; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 73–92; Gerd Theissen and Dagmar Winter, *The Quest for the Plausible Jesus: Question of Criteria* (trans. M. Eugene Boring; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002).

23. See E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977).

24. See Kloppenborg Verbin, *Excavating Q*, 437: It is not enough to say that Jesus was a Jew, but one needs to further define “what kind of Judaism Jesus (or Q) represents,” similarly also p. 434. On this task, see also Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 255–311.

25. E. P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 11. Galilee does not, however, play a special role in this book (it is not even mentioned in the index), since, for Sanders, “first-century Judaism,” that is, “Palestinian Judaism” constitutes the primary context for understanding (p. 17). Only in later studies does

Seminar, better known for their generous verdicts against the historicity of most of what the canonical Gospels reveal about Jesus' words and deeds, it belongs to our certain knowledge about Jesus that he was "an itinerant teacher in Galilee," and also, somewhat surprisingly, that he preached in the synagogues of Galilee.<sup>26</sup>

But what is known about Galilee in the time of Jesus? One look at the prevailing literature shows that behind this simple question is not just one but a whole plethora of questions: What do we know about the history of settlement and population of Galilee? Was there a specific Galilean Judaism? Or even several? How far is the piety in the villages of Galilee different from that of the two cities Sepphoris and Tiberias? What differences are there between Jewish life in Upper and Lower Galilee? What is Galilee's relationship to Judea, and to the temple? Were there Pharisees in Galilee? What status did the priests have there? How did the administration of the villages work?<sup>27</sup> And finally—how does Jesus fit into this? What molded and formed him as a Galilean? The range of answers given to these questions is vast and can only be illustrated here with a few representative examples.

The Jewish historian Geza Vermes was one of the first to respond to the "Second Quest" with a book entitled *Jesus the Jew*. In it he describes Jesus as "very much at home" in the company of the Hasidim, since "the unsophisticated religious ambiance of Galilee was apt to produce holy men of the Hasidic type."<sup>28</sup> Some twenty years later, John Dominic Crossan came

---

he explicitly refer to the Galilee debate. See Sanders, "Jesus' Galilee," in *Fair Play: Diversity and Conflicts in Early Christianity. Essays in Honour of Heikki Räisänen* (ed. Ismo Dunderberg, Christopher M. Tuckett, and Kari Syreeni; NovTSup 103; Leiden: Brill, 2002), 3–42; Sanders, "Jesus in Galilee," in *Jesus: A Colloquium in the Holy Land with James D. G. Dunn, Daniel J. Harrington, Elizabeth A. Johnson, John P. Meier, and E. P. Sanders* (ed. Doris Donnelly; New York: Continuum, 2001), 5–26. See also Moxnes, "Construction," 34–36. On Galilee as a "certain" aspect of Jesus' biography, see Craig A. Evans, "Authenticating the Activities of Jesus," in *Authenticating the Activities of Jesus* (ed. Bruce Chilton and Craig A. Evans; NTTS 28.2; Leiden: Brill, 1999; repr., 2002), 3–29, esp. 3–4, 9–10, 26–27; Peter Richardson, *Building Jewish in the Roman East* (Waco, Tex.: Baylor University Press, 2004), 96–99.

26. Robert W. Funk and the Jesus Seminar, eds., *The Acts of Jesus: What Did Jesus Really Do? The Search for Authentic Deeds of Jesus* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1998), 566. Against the argument that Jesus preached in Galilean synagogues, see esp. Richard A. Horsley, *Archaeology, History and Society in Galilee: The Social Context of Jesus and the Rabbis* (Valley Forge, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 1996), 131–53. In his view, the New Testament refers to "assemblies of the local communities" and not to respective buildings. Against this skeptical minimalist understanding, see, among others, Sanders, "Jesus in Galilee," 18; James F. Strange, "Archaeology and Ancient Synagogues up to About 200 C.E.," in *The Ancient Synagogue from Its Origins until 200 C.E.*: (ed. Birger Olsson and Magnus Zetterholm; ConBNT 39; Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 2003), 37–62; and further Lee I. Levine, "The First Century Synagogue: Critical Reassessments and Assessments of the Critical," in *Religion and Society in Roman Palestine: Old Questions, New Approaches* (ed. Douglas R. Edwards; New York: Routledge, 2004), 70–102.

27. The best and most comprehensive treatments of these issues are, in my opinion, the two books by Mark A. Chancey, which also offer some excellent insights into the hidden agendas within the history of Galilee research: *The Myth of a Gentile Galilee* (SNTSMS 118; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); and *Greco-Roman Culture and the Galilee of Jesus* (SNTSMS 134; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005). See also Chancey, "The Epigraphic Habit of Hellenistic and Roman Galilee," in Zangenberg et al., *Religion, Ethnicity, and Identity in Ancient Galilee*, 83–99.

28. Geza Vermes, *Jesus the Jew: A Historian's Reading of the Gospels* (London: Collins, 1973), 79–80.

up with the claim that Jesus' Galilean origins allow us to see him as "a peasant Jewish cynic," since his "village was close enough to a Greco-Roman city like Sepphoris." For Jesus, "sight and knowledge of Cynicism are neither inexplicable nor unlikely" even though he avoided the marketplaces of the cities (the primary focus of the Greco-Roman Cynics) and only sought out "the farms and villages of Lower Galilee" in order to preach his message of the kingdom as "the combination of free healing and common eating."<sup>29</sup>

Vermes and Crossan, who in some sense represent the contradictory positions discussed above, nevertheless agree on this one point: they both presume a certain image of Galilee—or reconstruct such—in which they place Jesus and from which they understand his activities. Vermes, in addition to this, emphasizes that the "small group of devotees" who followed Jesus on his journeys consisted of "simple Galilean folk." It was "among the Galilean crowd [that] Jesus was a great success," whereas his popularity in Judea and Jerusalem "did not match that which he enjoyed in his own country" (pp. 30–31). For Vermes, due to its history Galilee represents a "territory *sui generis*" (p. 43) that was integrated into the Hasmonean realm only in the first century BCE and thus had a population with "an overwhelming Jewishness" (p. 44). Vermes only rarely discusses the makeup of this population, but he seemingly assumes that it was predominantly Jewish settlers who, perhaps together with the evacuees mentioned in 1 Macc. 5:14–23, recolonized Galilee in the first century BCE. He also mentions in this context the violent pressure directed against non-Jewish inhabitants of Galilee and their forced circumcision (Josephus, *Ant.* 12.257–58, 318–19), without clarifying his position on how these actions might have affected people. Although, according to this reconstruction of the historical process, Galilee has to be considered a region settled by Judeans from the first century BCE onwards,<sup>30</sup> they very quickly developed a special "Galilean self-awareness" (p. 45). This was represented particularly (but not solely) by the "rebels," which made Galilee, according to Vermes, into "the most troublesome of all Jewish districts" (p. 46) from the middle of the first century BCE. With passages from Josephus and rabbinic literature (see pp. 52–57), he subsequently demonstrates the contentious and aggressive character of this special Galilean nationalism in the north.<sup>31</sup>

---

29. John Dominic Crossan, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (San Francisco: Harper, 1991), 421–22. Despite all the differences, Vermes's influence on Crossan is not insignificant; see *ibid.*, 489, index, s.v. Vermes.

30. Pivotal here is the study by Zvi Gal, *Lower Galilee during the Iron Age* (trans. Marcia Reines Josephy; American Schools of Oriental Research Dissertation Series 8; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1992); see also Mordechai Aviam, "The Hasmonean Dynasty's Activities in the Galilee," in Aviam, *Jews, Pagans and Christians in the Galilee: 25 Years of Archaeological Excavations and Surveys, Hellenistic to Byzantine Periods* (Land of Galilee 1; Rochester, N.Y.: University of Rochester Press, 2004), 41–50 (Hebrew, 1995). On this Judean settlement during the Hasmonean period (which also compels a re-evaluation of the compulsory circumcision mentioned in Josephus *Ant.* 13.318–19, which is based on a second- or even third-hand record only), see Reed, *Archaeology and the Galilean Jesus*, 28–43; Chancey, *Myth of a Gentile Galilee*, 30–47; Chancey, *Greco-Roman Culture*, 26–42; Pearson, "Q Community," 491.

31. Vermes, *Jesus the Jew*, 30–46.

The suggested genesis of the particular profile of Jewish Galilee, however, does not fully support the distinctive character of Galilee in comparison to Judea; at least, it does not explain its development. It would seem that it is rather the “preconception” of a special culture in Galilee that affects this depiction, motivated not least by the need for this special culture to explain Jesus’ activities. Jesus and the Gospels have to be situated among “the specifically Galilean type,” because only among such people could Jesus be understood. Jesus, as a “*campagnard*,” felt at home with “the simple people of rural Galilee,” and he also shared their “Galilean chauvinism” against non-Jews. But in Jerusalem Jesus “must have felt quite alien” (p. 48), and, in turn, as a “Galilean” he would have been seen as a “political suspect” by the establishment of the capital city: “Moreover, if present-day estimates of Jewish historians concerning Galilean lack of education and unorthodoxy are accepted, his same Galilean descent made him a religious suspect also” (p. 57).<sup>32</sup>

The supposed absence of the Pharisees, or Pharisaic influence, in Galilee serves as an explanation for the “lack of education” there. In later publications Vermes appeals to the famous *dictum* of Yohanan ben Zakkai, who is said to have lived eighteen years in Arav, close to Sepphoris: “O Galilee, Galilee, you hate the Torah! Your end will be by ‘oppressors!’”<sup>33</sup> Pharisaic or (proto-)rabbinic influence in Galilee is regularly disputed by those who hold the assumption of a specific Galilean culture different from that of Judea, and this argument is used whenever such a difference is needed for the explanation of other issues such as, in our case, the specific form of Jesus’ Jewishness as Galilean.<sup>34</sup> To summarize Vermes’s notion of the

---

32. Vermes, *Jesus the Jew*, 48-57.

33. See *y. Shabbat* 16.8/3 (15d). On this passage as an argument against Pharisaic-(rabbinic) influence and presence in Galilee, see, among others, Klausner, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 173; Seán Freyne, “The Charismatic,” in *Ideal Figures in Ancient Judaism: Profiles and Paradigms* (ed. John J. Collins and George W. E. Nickelsburg; Septuagint and Cognate Studies 12; Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1980), 223–58 (under the title: “Hanina Ben Dosa: A Galilean Charismatic,” also in Freyne, *Galilee and Gospel*, 132–59, here 153); in later publications Freyne modified his position, which had heavily relied on Vermes, see Freyne, *Galilee, Jesus, and the Gospels*, 202, 217; and n. 38 below. For critiques to such a reading of Yohanan’s *dictum*, see Shmuel Safrai, “The Jewish Cultural Nature of Galilee in the First Century,” in *The New Testament and Christian–Jewish Dialogue: Studies in Honor of David Flusser* (ed. Malcolm F. Lowe; *Immanuel* 24/25; Jerusalem: Ecumenical Theological Research Fraternity in Israel, 1990), 147–86; on this see already Klein, *Galiläa*, 21; Eric M. Meyers, “The Cultural Setting of Galilee: The Case of Regionalism and Early Judaism,” *ANRW* 2.19.1 (1979): 686–702, here 691, 698.

34. On the oft-debated problem of the Pharisees in Galilee, or the Pharisaic influence in Galilee, see Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 306–8; Freyne, *Galilee, Jesus, and the Gospels*, 202–10; Freyne, *Jesus, a Jewish Galilean*, 83; Horsley, *Archaeology, History and Society*, 151–52; Horsley, “The Pharisees and Jesus in Galilee and Q,” in *When Judaism and Christianity Began: Essays in Memory of Anthony J. Saldarini* (ed. Alan J. Avery-Peck, Daniel Harrington, and Jacob Neusner; 2 vols.; JSJSup 85; Leiden: Brill, 2004), 1:117–45 (for Horsley, the Pharisaic influence is a result of the Judean imperialism he presupposes); Dieter Lührmann, “Die Pharisäer und Schriftgelehrten im Markusevangelium,” *ZNW* 78 (1987): 169–85; Burton L. Mack, *The Lost Gospel: The Book of Q and Christian Origins* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1993), 60; Robert L. Mowery, “Pharisees and Scribes, Galilee and Jerusalem,” *ZNW* 80 (1989): 266–68 (adding to Lührmann); Rapinchuk, “Galilee and Jesus,” 214–16; Anthony J. Saldarini, *Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees in Palestinian Society: A Sociological Approach* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988; repr., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001, with a foreword by James C. VanderKam), 291–97.

Judean perspective on a Galilean in the first century: a Galilean would have been characterized as having a politically suspect background, a lack of education, the temperament of a farmer, and a deficiency in orthodoxy. And when such a person also behaved in the provocative way that Jesus did, then, for Vermes, it is at least comprehensible why he was surrendered to the Roman authorities.<sup>35</sup>

It is clear that Vermes's portrayal of Galilee, which was published in 1973, remained deeply rooted in the scientific tradition of the nineteenth century. Parallels to Renan, Graetz, Abraham Geiger, and others are not difficult to discern, the only difference being that in place of the "Essene" influence Vermes sets "charismatic Judaism" (see pp. 58–82). The argument itself remains similar, as he also combines charismatic pietism with Galilean emotionalism against Judean-rabbinic rationalism<sup>36</sup> and understands Jesus exclusively as a healer and an exorcist in the context of the former. This then lays the foundation for an all-too-simple dichotomy between Galilee and Judea. Yet Jesus also experienced rejection in Galilee, to the point that he was threatened with death (Mark 3:6; Luke 4:28f),<sup>37</sup> and he encountered friendship and acceptance in Judea (Lazarus, Mary, Martha, Nicodemus, Joseph of Arimathea, Cleopas and the other Emmaus disciple, the family of John Mark—all people who appear to be Judean).

Crossan invokes Vermes extensively and explicitly for the depiction of his radically different Jesus, whom he places among the socially exploited peasant class struggling for survival.<sup>38</sup> For, like Vermes, he assumes that Jesus' subversive practice of magic (since it was free) and his offer of a temple-tax-free relation to God exerted such a competitive pressure on "the religious monopoly of the priests" that they tried to get rid of this business spoiler as quickly as possible. "The authorities are trapped in their own theology" (p. 324), he claims, and behind this stands, just as with Vermes, a fundamental difference between Jesus and Jerusalem, between the itinerant Galilean and the locally fixed temple service. According to Crossan, Jesus' relation to the temple and the tradition it stood for was at best ambivalent, but probably completely indifferent. As a Cynic, he stood outside of any such fixed institutions and their hierarchies.<sup>39</sup>

35. Vermes, *Jesus the Jew*, 34–36. On his view of Jesus' trial, see Vermes, *The Passion* (London: Penguin, 2005).

36. This is also true for the early portrait of Yoḥanan ben Zakkai by Jacob Neusner, in which the "spontaneous religion of Galilee, which looked for daily miracles, signs, and wonders" is put in contrast with the more sober and rational halakhic practice in Jerusalem, see *A Life of Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai, Ca. 1–80 C.E.* (StPB 6; Leiden: Brill, 1962), 32; see also the 2nd rev. ed. under the title *A Life of Yohanan Ben Zakkai, Ca. 1–80 C.E.* (1970), 57 (on Yoḥanan in Galilee, see 47–58).

37. Vermes, in fact, takes note of this in another place; see *Jesus the Jew*, 33–34. For a similar schematic differentiation between Galilee and Jerusalem, see Willibald Bösen, *Galiläa als Lebensraum und Wirkungsfeld Jesus: Eine zeitgeschichtliche und theologische Untersuchung* (Biblische Sachbuch; Freiburg: Herder, 1985), 262–74. In some sense, one could say that this division is a continuation of the antagonism between Paul and the Jerusalemite Judaizers postulated by Ferdinand Christian Baur, in which Galilee now takes the role of Paul's Hellenism with its associated "openness" with regard to the Torah and the non-Jewish world.

38. Crossan, *Historical Jesus*, 138–49. Yet, for Crossan, Galilee has no special significance; cf. Freyne, "Galilean Questions," 65–70 (= *Galilee and Gospel*, 213–16).

39. Crossan, *Historical Jesus*, 324–60, esp. 324, 355, 360.

Burton Mack goes even further in his book on Q, published in 1993, in that he rejects a constitutive connection between the historical Jesus and the traditional Jewish identity markers that have been observed since the Hasmonean period (the Torah, Jerusalem, and the temple). Based on the work of John Kloppenborg's redaction history of Q, which assumes the existence of a first stratum consisting mainly of wisdom sayings upon which was only later superimposed a "biblical" layer (subduing the original sayings to a "Deuteronomistic understanding"), Mack reconstructed the historical Jesus and his first followers exclusively on the basis of this assumed oldest layer. His goal was nothing less than the restatement of the origins of Christianity:

If the shift from wisdom to apocalyptic could be explained, it would have tremendous consequences for the quest of the historical Jesus and a revision of Christian origins. As for Jesus, it would mean that he had probably been more the sage, less the prophet. And as for Christian origins, it would mean that something other than an apocalyptic message and motivation may have impelled the new movement and defined its fundamental attraction.<sup>40</sup>

Mack's quest for "Christian origins" brings him to the social and cultural context of the original "people of Q" (p. 38), who were not yet "Christians" but representatives of a Galilean Jesus movement. On account of the discovery of this historical situation,<sup>41</sup> it is now not only necessary, according to Mack, to bid the traditional image of Jesus farewell, which sees him as messiah or at least an inner-Jewish prophet or reformer, but also the "image of Judaism in Palestine, based on the Christian gospel" (p. 49). Therefore, in order to substantiate the new understanding of the historical Jesus based on Q, it is also necessary to reconceptualize what we know about Galilee if we leave aside the "christianized" Gospels' portrait. To do this, Mack requires "some basic, up-to-date information about the social and cultural climate of first-century Galilee" (p. 49), which he then purports to lay out in the next chapter "Galilee Before the War" (pp. 51–68).<sup>42</sup> His introductory sentence already makes clear that he is mostly interested in seeing Galilee as a world that is separate from Judea (and its form of Judaism): "In the world of the Christian imagination Galilee belonged to Palestine, the religion of Palestine was

---

40. Mack, *Lost Gospel*, 37–38. On Mack's assumed development of Q, which also implies a geographic migration of Q from Galilee via North Palestine, South and North Syria to Asia Minor; see the diagram on p. 259. This is based on Kloppenborg, *Formation of Q*; cf. Kloppenborg Verbin, *Excavating Q*, 87–111.

41. See the defense of Mack's position by William Arnal, "A Manufactured Controversy: Why the 'Jewish Jesus' Is a Red Herring," in Arnal, *Symbolic Jesus*, 20–38, esp. 24–25. According to this apology, it is the inescapability of the historical facts, namely, the oldest Jesus tradition and thus what is most authentic in what we can know about Jesus, that we *cannot* relate him to "Israel's epic tradition" (cf. similarly, Kloppenborg Verbin, *Excavating Q*, 188–89, likewise defending Mack). By necessity this then leads Mack and Kloppenborg to devise a complete reappraisal of early Christianity and its pre-history.

42. However, in his selected bibliography (*Lost Gospel*, 263–67), he does not cite a single recent study on the history of Galilee and its archaeology, which, in the light of the announcement of "up-to-date information," is rather telling. On Mack's outdated image of Galilee, see Moxnes, "Construction," 68–69.

Judaism, so everyone in Galilee must have been Jewish. Since this picture is wrong, and since Q can make no sense as long as it prevails, the reader needs to have a truer picture in mind” (p. 51).<sup>43</sup>

Mack follows this claim by repeating information that has been around at the least since Walter Bauer’s famous Galilee essay (see n. 3 above), and which was also thoroughly maltreated by Grundmann: “a land of mixed peoples” (p. 53; cf. 56), crisscrossed by international highways (see p. 55), and in close proximity to various realms of diverse ethnic makeup. Galilee itself has no central core, no capital, it is “a no-man’s-land reserved for initial skirmishers in larger undertakings. It was a kind of beachhead where the surge of political crosscurrents constantly kept the people on their toes” (p. 53). Therefore, “loyalty to the kings and their gods” is not part of the Galilean virtues (ibid.). Since the time of Alexander the Great, Galilee was surrounded by Greek cities with all the characteristics of Hellenistic urban life, but “Samaritans and Galileans did not resist. They did not generate a revolution like that of the Maccabees in Judea” (p. 54). The resistance against foreign Hellenistic cultural influences was, according to Mack, limited to Judea (ibid.). Galilee was “annexed” by the Hasmonean kingdom around 100 BCE, but their rule was only exercised there from 100 to 63 BCE (p. 55). Pompeius took over, which meant for Galilee “another superimposition of military, political, economic, social, and cultural presence with which Galileans had to contend” (p. 55).<sup>44</sup>

In this context, Mack poses the question of whether the Galileans can be described as a separate ethnic group, akin to “Jews (from Judea, the land of Judah, with its temple in Jerusalem), Idumeans, Samaritans, Phoenicians, and Syrians” (p. 56). He answers this in the negative on account of the history of Galilee with its many invasions, claiming that it rather has to be understood as the home of a multiethnic mix of peoples (ibid.). Mack further emphasizes the Hellenistic influence on Galilee, which for him is downplayed by many scholars “in the interest of buttressing the picture of Jesus appearing in the midst of a thoroughly Jewish culture” (p. 57).<sup>45</sup> He mentions Gadara (“just across the Jordan, a day’s walk from Nazareth”) and Scythopolis with their educational and cultural infrastructure (“theaters, sporting arenas [*gymnasia*], and schools”), and also, of course, Sepphoris (“an hour’s walk from Nazareth”) as an example of a “thoroughly hellenized city” (p. 58).<sup>46</sup> All of this is not entirely wrong, though it is a rather one-sided portrayal. It turns out to be more problematic, however, when hellenization is used

---

43. Mack, *Lost Gospel*, 38–51.

44. Mack, *Lost Gospel*, 53–55.

45. Likewise Kloppenborg Verbin, *Excavating Q*, 437. This position is supported by J. Andrew Overman (“Recent Advances in the Archaeology of the Galilee in the Roman Period,” *Currents in Research Biblical Studies* 1 [1993]: 35–57), who interprets the archaeological data quite tendentiously in that “the presence and influence of so-called pagan culture is now widely recognized as a result of excavations in the Galilee” (p. 45). An adequate image of Jesus cannot be reached if “the cultural, religious and socioeconomic issues and development that were part of the larger Greek East” are not sufficiently consulted (p. 47). Thus, in his view, archaeology demonstrates the “cultural and religious plurality” in Galilee, which has the consequence that the “distinction between Jews, non-Jews or gentiles and so-called pagans” is not viable anymore (p. 49).

46. Mack, *Lost Gospel*, 56–58.

as the opposite of “Jewish culture,” as is the case in Mack’s work. By way of a long sequence of rhetorical questions addressing speculative social changes in the wake of the process of hellenization of the East, he seems to reveal, finally, what lies at the heart of his agenda:

What if we let Galilee have its place in the Greco-Roman world? What if the people of Galilee were not isolated from the cultural mix that stimulated thought and produced social experimentation in response to the times? What if Galileans were fully aware of the cultural and intellectual forces surging through the Levant? What if we acknowledged that the compact and convoluted history of foreign conquests in Galilee had created disaffection for many Galileans, and a predisposition for social and cultural critique? . . . What if we thought that Galileans were capable of entertaining novel notions of social identity? What then? Why then we would be ready for the story of the people of Q.<sup>47</sup>

The Jesus movement that is discerned as standing at the beginning of the redaction history of Q turns out to be a society-critical avant-garde that seeks to find a new identity outside of *ethnos* and traditional (that is, Jewish) religiosity<sup>48</sup>—which ultimately sounds more reminiscent of elitist postmodern and post-Christian circles in California than of Galilee in the first century.

Related to this Q hypothesis is the position—which is both older and worthy of discussion—that the life of Jesus that burst the cultural norms of society and the radical discipleship ethos practiced by his followers, can be understood along the lines of itinerant Cynic philosophers and their critique of society.<sup>49</sup> More problematic, however, as many critics of the “Cynic

---

47. Mack, *Lost Gospel*, 68. Despite the rhetorical-suggestive weight of these “what-if” questions, the real scholarly results (at the end of the chapter) are rather thin. Most of them have to be clearly answered in the negative, since any references in the available sources that might give rise to an affirmative answer are wanting. But, in fact, they need not even be answered in the negative, since these questions are simply not conformable to the subject matter. On the assumed specific Galilean-Hellenistic ethos in opposition to a “specifically Jewish sectarian milieu,” see also Mack, *A Myth of Innocence: Mark and Christian Origins* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), 73. For a similar Q-utopia, see Arnal, *Jesus and the Village Scribes*, 193–202 (“The Social Project of the Q Tradents”).

48. See Mack, *Lost Gospel*, 213–14: Behind the original Q movement stood the idea that “a mixed group of people could represent the best of the heritage of several ethnically exclusive cultural traditions and claim to be a new kind of community.” See also the last chapter, “The Consequences” (pp. 245–58), which strikingly demonstrates that Mack’s analysis of Q is concerned with rooting his “social vision” of a “multicultural world” (whose enemy is imperialist America in collusion with traditional Christianity) in the message of Jesus, which for this reason has to be purged from all disruptive elements.

49. See, among others, Gerd Theissen, “Wanderradikalismus,” *ZTK* 70 (1973): 245–71, esp. 255–56 (reprinted in Theissen, *Studien zur Soziologie des Urchristentum* [3rd ed.; WUNT 19; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1989], 79–105, esp. 89–90). Theissen emphasizes, however, that the analogy between Cynicism and the Jesus movement is based on “structural similarities” and not on “historical links.” Freyne also has made mention of this similarity in an early work, see *Galilee, Jesus, and the Gospels*, 241, 249; since then he has clearly distanced himself from this position. See Freyne, *Galilee and Gospel*, 343, index, s.v. Cynics.

Jesus” have repeatedly pointed out, is that the attempt to draw Cynic analogies to Jesus is often used to loosen the basic rooting of Jesus in Judaism.<sup>50</sup> Although the proponents of a “Cynic Jesus” never claimed that Jesus was not a Jew, his Judaism is nevertheless not central for the understanding of Jesus (to be read in the sense of both Jesus’ own thinking and of our understanding of him).<sup>51</sup> Jesus’ kingdom message, which has been preserved undiluted only in the oldest layer of Q, is not related to “any particular tradition or religious thinking” (p. 128), and neither can his “God” be equated with a particular ethnic or cultural tradition. This, according to Mack, could only come about in Galilee:

The God in question is not identified in terms of any ethnic or cultural tradition. This fits nicely with Galilean provenance, and since the metaphors of God’s rule are largely taken from the realm of nature the conception of God in Q<sup>1</sup> is also compatible with the Cynic tone of the preaching.<sup>52</sup>

What we have in the end is an intersection of several research traditions in the debate about the use of the Galilean origins of Jesus. In the study of Q influenced by Mack and Kloppenborg and their students, Galilee becomes the prerequisite for an original Jesus movement

---

50. For an overview of the debate over the Cynic Jesus, see: F. Gerald Downing, *Christ and the Cynics: Jesus and Other Radical Preachers in the First-Century Tradition* (JSOT Manuals 4; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1988); Downing, *Cynics and Christian Origins* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1992); Downing, “Deeper Reflections on the Jewish Cynic Jesus,” *JBL* 117 (1998): 97–104; John S. Kloppenborg Verbin, “A Dog among the Pigeons: The ‘Cynic Hypothesis’ as a Theological Problem,” in *From Quest to Q: Festschrift James M. Robinson* (ed. Jón Ma. Asgeirsson, Kristen De Troyer, and Marvin W. Meyer; BETL 146; Leuven: Peeters, 1999), 73–117; Burton L. Mack, “Q and a Cynic-Like Jesus,” in Arnal and Desjardins, *Whose Historical Jesus?*, 25–36; Mack, “The Case for a Cynic-Like Jesus,” in Mack, *The Christian Myth: Origins, Logic, and Legacy* (New York: Continuum, 2001), 41–58; David Seeley, “Jesus and the Cynics Revisited,” *JBL* 116 (1997): 704–12; Leif E. Vaage, *Galilean Upstarts: Jesus’ First Followers according to Q* (Valley Forge, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 1994). For a critique, see Hans Dieter Betz, “Jesus and the Cynics: Survey and Analysis of a Hypothesis,” *JR* 74 (1994): 453–75; Paul R. Eddy, “Jesus as Diogenes? Reflections on the Cynic Jesus Thesis,” *JBL* 115 (1996): 449–69; John W. Marshall, “The Gospel of Thomas and the Cynic Jesus,” in Arnal and Desjardins, *Whose Historical Jesus?*, 37–60; Arnal, *Jesus and the Village Scribes*, 52–64. It is important to point out that the relationship between what is Jewish and what is Cynic is seen quite differently from author to author. Cf., for example, Freyne, “Galilean Questions,” 71–74 (= *Galilee and Gospels*, 218–21) with Downing’s position.

51. See Arnal, *Symbolic Jesus*, 20–38, 80–82; Arnal, “The Cipher ‘Judaism’ in Contemporary Historical Jesus Scholarship,” in *Apocalypticism, Anti-Semitism and the Historical Jesus* (ed. John S. Kloppenborg and John W. Marshall; JSNTSup 275; London: Continuum, 2005), 24–54; and the review by Maurice Casey, *JTS* 57 (2006): 655–60.

52. Mack, *Lost Gospel*, 127. In order to arrive at the desired results, he accommodates not only the Q tradition to postmodern beliefs but also Cynicism itself: “The use of the term kingdom of God in Q<sup>1</sup> matches its use in the traditions of popular philosophy, especially in the Cynic tradition of performing social diagnostics in public by means of countercultural behavior. The aphoristic imperatives recommended a stance toward life in the world that could become the basis for an alternative community ethos and ethic among those willing to consider an alternative social vision” (pp. 126–27).

in analogy to a Cynic social critique. In support of this, arguments relating to the strong hellenization, urbanization, and multiethnicity of Galilee are frequently rehearsed. By contrast, the elements that point to inner-Jewish links and Jewish patterns of behavior are either completely ignored (Mack) or significantly reduced in their validity for coming to an understanding of Galilean identity.<sup>53</sup>

### Archaeology and the Jewish Galilee

The shift in the perception of Galilee away from a rural, secluded landscape toward a more urban “cosmopolitan” region mentioned above is due to an extensive archaeological exploration of Galilee and the likewise extensive reception of the results of this in historical and exegetical literature. Galilee research is, as such, a successful example of a fruitful and stimulating cooperation between archaeology and text-based scholarship. Without diminishing any contributions made by other scholars, Eric Meyers and Seán Freyne are particularly deserving of praise in this regard.

At the beginning of the rediscovery and reassessment of Galilee stands Meyers’s epoch-making essay on Galilean regionalism.<sup>54</sup> As a result of his archaeological research from the beginning of the 1970s in Upper Galilee,<sup>55</sup> Meyers came to realize that Upper Galilee (the

---

53. Kloppenborg Verbin, *Excavating Q*, 223–34 (“The Galilee, the Temple, and the Torah”). In his view the adoption of Judean traditions was mostly for economic reasons, since trade with Judea was possible only with products that were kosher and properly tithed. Cf. this with the view of Andrea M. Berlin, “Jewish Life before the Revolt: The Archaeological Evidence,” *JSJ* 36 (2005): 417–70; she describes the archaeological finds for Judea and Galilee as relatively consistent, giving shape to what she calls “household-Judaism,” present from the first century BCE onwards at the latest. Beyond Berlin, I would argue that economic factors alone cannot sufficiently explain such a sweeping process of change that reaches as far as household ceramics, which is why I suggested the Pharisees as the most likely group behind this change in the material culture; see Roland Deines, “Non-literary Sources for the Interpretation of the New Testament: Methodological Considerations and Case Studies Related to the Corpus Judaeo-Hellenisticum,” in *Neues Testament und hellenistisch-jüdische Alltagskultur: Wechselseitige Wahrnehmungen. III. Internationales Symposium zum Corpus Judaeo-Hellenisticum Novi Testamenti 21.–24. Mai 2009, Leipzig* (ed. Roland Deines, Jens Herzer, and Karl-Wilhelm Niebuhr; WUNT 274; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2011), 25–66, esp. 31–38.

54. Eric M. Meyers, “Galilean Regionalism as a Factor in Historical Reconstruction,” *BASOR* 221 (1976): 93–101. For an expanded version, see Meyers, “Cultural Setting.” On Meyers’s significance for the field of Galilee studies, see Moxnes, “Construction,” 69–70.

55. Eric M. Meyers, James F. Strange, and Dennis E. Groh, “The Meiron Excavation Project: Archaeological Survey in Galilee and Golan, 1976,” *BASOR* 230 (1978): 1–24; Eric M. Meyers, A. Thomas Kraabel, and James F. Strange, *Ancient Synagogue Excavations at Khirbet Shema’, Upper Galilee, Israel 1970–1972* (AASOR 42; Durham, N.C.: Published for the American Schools of Oriental Research by Duke University Press, 1976); Eric M. Meyers, James F. Strange, and Carol L. Meyers, *Excavations at Ancient Meiron, Upper Galilee, Israel 1971–72, 1974–75, 1977* (Meiron Excavation Project 3; Cambridge, Mass.: American Schools of Oriental Research, 1981); Eric M. Meyers, James F. Strange, and Carol L. Meyers, “Preliminary Report on the 1980 Excavations at en-Nabratein, Israel,” *BASOR* 244 (1981): 1–25; Eric M. Meyers, James F. Strange, and Carol L. Meyers, “Second Preliminary Report on the 1981 Excavations at en-Nabratein, Israel,” *BASOR* 246 (1982): 35–54; Eric M. Meyers and James