“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, but also throws light on the shifting history of the Galilean identity.
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, 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.”


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 Entjudaisierung 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 Galilei” (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 erzählerischer 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. 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 and it appears again in the nineteenth century, especially in the beginnings of modern Jewish study of Jesus. 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 Shamai.”

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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” (ἀληθεύεις τις ἄθενος καὶ ἐγήγερται ἀπὸ Ἰησοῦ τινος Γαλιλαίου πλάνου).

Graetz (1817–1891), who was one of the first representatives of the academic study of Judaism\(^8\) 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.\(^9\) 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.\(^10\) For Jerusalemites and Judeans, however, “humanity’s salvation came from Zion and Jerusalem, it had to come from Judean blood.”\(^11\) 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.\(^12\)

About half a century later, this topic was resumed by some New Testament scholars,\(^13\) 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*.


\(^12\) See Klausner, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 100, 233 (Klausner disagrees on the gentle 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,14 which had the task of making the German church “judenfrei” (that is, free of Jews).15 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).16

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.17 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.18

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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.


which—despite all the unanswered questions of Q studies—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, 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 Spruchsamlungen,” 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.


Bornkamm, 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. 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, 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. 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. 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.


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.26

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?27 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.”28 Some twenty years later, John Dominic Crossan came


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 Chancy, “The Epigraphic Habit of Hellenistic and Roman Galilee,” in Zangenberg et al., Religion, Ethnicity, and Identity in Ancient Galilee, 83–99.

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.”

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, 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.


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 "Galiléan" 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).32

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'!"33 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.34

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32. Vermes, Jesus the Jew, 48-57.
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.35

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 rationalism36 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),37 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.38 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.39


36. This is also true for the early portrait of Yohanan 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 Zakkaei, 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 Zakkaei, Ca. 1–80 C.E. (1970), 57 (on Yohanan 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 zeitsgeschichtliche und theologische Untersuchung (Biblishe 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.


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.40

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,41 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).42 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

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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).43

Mack follows this claim by repeating information that has been around at 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).44

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).45 He mentions Gadara (“just across the Jordan, a day’s walk from Nazareth”) and Scythopolis with their educational and cultural infrastructure (“theaters, sporting arenas [gymnasium], and schools”), and also, of course, Sepphoris (“an hour’s walk from Nazareth”) as an example of a “thoroughly hellenized city” (p. 58).46 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.  
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).  
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.47

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) religiosity48—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.49 More problematic, however, as many critics of the “Cynic
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.\(^{50}\) 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).\(^{51}\) 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\(^1\) is also compatible with the Cynic tone of the preaching.\(^{52}\)

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.

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\(^{52}\) 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\(^1\) 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.53

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.54 As a result of his archaeological research from the beginning of the 1970s in Upper Galilee,55 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.
