

1

Identifying the Problem

1.1 INTRODUCTION

What did it *really* mean to be Judean in the first century CE? Biblical scholarship may have a general idea of what Judean ethnic identity involved, but this chapter is dedicated to introduce a particular problem – Biblical scholarship generally, does not grasp or have a full appreciation of what informed the *entire process* of Judean ethnic identity formation in the first century, or at any period for that matter. A holistic picture, or at least some analytical framework and background to what ethnicity entails is lacking and this is a problem that needs to be addressed.

This problem is quite acute in scholarship on the historical Jesus. The reason for this is that in the so-called “Third Quest”, a lot of attention is drawn to Jesus’ “Jewishness”. Scholars do recognise today that Jesus was a “Jew”, or rather what we prefer to call him, a Judean, who must be understood within his Judean context. The problem is, however, what it meant to be a Judean is something vague. A sufficient interpretive apparatus of what it really meant to be Judean is not in place.

Bearing in mind the lack of this interpretive framework, a preliminary question therefore is: As scholars now see it, what kind of Judean was Jesus? A second but

related question is: As scholars now see it, what kind of Judean was Jesus relative to his co-ethnics? What continuities or discontinuities exist? How and why was Jesus similar or different? For our present purposes, we will concentrate on two reconstructions of the historical Jesus which are representative examples of a more “traditional” or “alternative” approach; first, John P Meier’s *A Marginal Jew. Rethinking the Historical Jesus*; and second, John D Crossan’s *The Historical Jesus. The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant*; although the latter does really fit in with the supposed character of the “Third Quest” bearing in mind that Crossan fully appreciates that Jesus was a Judean. But to clarify, we are not attempting a detailed study of Jesus’ ethnic identity ourselves. Our aim is to do an overview of Meier and Crossan’s reconstructions to find out what content, be it explicitly or implicitly, do they assign to Jesus’ ethnic identity? Based on their reconstructions, what kind of Judean was Jesus? Our eventual focus will be on Q, so later we will attempt to answer that question applicable to the Q people.

In analysing their reconstructions the deliberate choice has been made to be guided by the insights of cultural anthropology. *Ethnicity theory* has broadly recognised several cultural features that are important for ethnic identity. The cultural features include the following: 1) *name*, a corporate name that identifies the group; 2) *myths of common ancestry*, the group claims to be descendents of a particular person or group/family; 3) *shared “historical” memories*, the group points to common heroes and events of the past; 4) *land*, the group has actual or symbolic attachment to an ancestral land; 5) *language*, or local dialect; 6) *kinship*, members of the group belong to family units which in turn, demonstrate communal solidarity with the local community or tribe, and with the group as a national entity; 7) *customs* identifiable with that group; and 8) also its *religion*. To this may be added 9) *phenotypical features*, which points to genetic features (Duling 2003a:3-4; Esler 2003:43-44). With the exception of the latter feature, which does not come into play (as Judeans basically looked like everybody else in the Roman-Hellenistic world), those cultural features that are affected in the reconstructions of Meier and Crossan will be mentioned.

Admittedly, the above approach has its problems. The analysis to follow might include aspects of their work that was originally never intended to illuminate what kind of Judean Jesus was. But at the same time, by using the cultural features listed above it will expose the reality that often scholars write about Jesus without realising that they unconsciously say something about what kind of Judean Jesus

was. The same is true also of those things that scholars *do not say* or omit from their reconstructions of the historical Jesus. This negative feature of biblical scholarship will be fully exposed in chapter 2. Another problem is that by using the cultural features a guide, we are also slightly anticipating the form of our model that will be adapted from the work of Duling (2003a). But any investigation into the Judeanness of Jesus will have to see how these cultural features receive treatment in various reconstructions. So what will concern us here is what Meier and Crossan regards as authentic Jesus tradition, and how this tradition affects the cultural features already listed. In their view, what kind of Judean was Jesus? What content, be it explicitly or implicitly, do they assign to Jesus' Judean ethnic identity? This chapter is therefore also a useful way to introduce the various cultural features and biblical texts that impact the question of ethnic identity. We will first analyse the work of Meier.

1.2 JOHN P MEIER – JESUS A MARGINAL “JEW”

Meier interprets Jesus as an eschatological prophet continuing in the eschatological tradition of John the Baptist, but with a different emphasis. Where John announced imminent judgement, Jesus announced the imminent arrival of the “kingdom (= rule or reign) of God”. This entailed participation for all Israel – including sinners – and Jesus understood that God's reign was already partly present in his own ministry and miracle working. So in preparation for the kingdom proper, Jesus set out to restore the twelve tribes of Israel. Meier's work on the historical Jesus is not yet finished, since a fourth and presumably a final volume of his work is yet to come. This section therefore concentrates on the first three volumes on which our brief summary given above is also based. Our work will naturally focus only on that which clarifies Meier's view on Jesus and the question of his ethnic identity.

1.2.1 Jesus' Background – His Family and Upbringing

Initially, Meier draws attention to the names of Jesus and his family – here it specifically pertains to the cultural features of *myths of common ancestry*, *shared “historical” memories*, and to a lesser extent, *religion*. In the case of Jesus himself, our English form of Jesus' name is derived from the Hebrew name *Yesu* (Meier 1991:205-207). This is the shortened form of the more correct *Yesua*, which in turn was a shortened form of the name of the Biblical hero Joshua, in Hebrew *Yehosua*. The latter, in keeping with usual ancient Hebrew names, was a theophoric name that originally meant “Yahweh helps or “May Yahweh help”. The later popular etymology

had the name to mean “Yahweh saves” or “May Yahweh save” (cf Mt 1:21). Jesus’ name may signify something else within the context of first-century Galilee. When we come to the family of Jesus it is probably not by accident that like Jesus himself, his family members have names that hark back to the patriarchs, the exodus from Egypt, and entrance into the promised land. Jesus’ putative father was Joseph,¹ who had the name of one of the twelve sons of Jacob/Israel and who was the progenitor, through Ephraim and Manasseh, of two of the twelve tribes. His mother was Mary, in Hebrew Miriam, the name of Moses’ sister. His four brothers were named after the patriarchs who fathered the twelve sons/tribes of Israel (James = Jacob) and after three of the twelve sons (James = Joseph, Simon = Simeon, and Jude = Judah). Jesus also had at least two, but unnamed sisters.² For most of the Old Testament period Israelites were not named after the great patriarchs mentioned in Genesis and Exodus. A change seemingly occurred after the exile and accelerated around the time of the Maccabean revolt against the Seleucid king Antiochus IV Epiphanes (reigned 175-164/163 BCE) who attempted to Hellenise Judeans and suppress Judean religious and ethnic customs. It was especially Judeans in rural areas and small towns of Palestine that reacted towards the Seleucid persecution with escalating native-religious feeling. So it may be around this time that the custom of naming children after past heroes became increasingly common (Meier 1991:207). Meier then asserts:

The custom may have struck an especially responsive chord in Galilee, where Judaism for centuries had had to live side by side with strong pagan influence; it was only after the victories of the Maccabees that a vigorous [Judean] presence could again assert itself in “Galilee of the Gentiles.” Most likely,

¹ Of course, the question of Jesus’ *ancestry* through Joseph (according to Matthew and Luke the putative or legal father) may also come into play. Meier accepts attestation of Jesus’ Davidic descent as early and widespread in various strands of New Testament tradition and it should not be quickly dismissed as a *theologoumenon* (Meier 1991:216-219). Meier will discuss any possible claims of Davidic sonship/messiahship by Jesus himself only in his fourth volume. Therefore it need not concern us further here.

² For an investigation on the family of Jesus, see Bauckham (2000). James became the head of the Church in Jerusalem after Peter left (Ac 15:13; 21:18 with 12:17; cf 1 Cor 15:7; Gl 2:12). According to Julius Africanus, who lived in Emmaus in the early third century, the relatives of Jesus were missionaries (as suggested by Paul; 1 Cor 9:5) and known as the *desposunoi*, “those who belong to the master”. He notes they had a family genealogy and writes: “From the [Judean] villages of Nazareth and Kokhaba, they travelled around the rest of the land and interpreted the genealogy they had and from the Book of Days [i.e. Chronicles] as far as they could trace it” (cited in Eusebius, HE 1.7.14). What this probably means is that Jesus’ family travelled around Israel preaching the Gospel to their fellow Judeans, while using a family genealogy to defend the claim that Jesus was the messianic son of David. If this report is authentic, it indicates that besides Jerusalem, Nazareth and Kokhaba (in Galilee) were also significant centres for the early Messianists in Palestine.

therefore, the fact that all of Jesus' immediate family bear "patriarchal" and "matriarchal" names betoken the family's participation in this reawakening of [Judean] national and religious identity, an identity that looked to the idyllic past of the patriarchs for definition.

(Meier 1991:207-208)

Meier (1991:208) also states that it "may not be too farfetched to suggest that we hear an echo of this theme of national restoration [of Israel] years later when the adult Jesus chooses precisely twelve men to be his inner group of disciples. The number twelve was probably meant to conjure up the idea of the twelve patriarchs, the twelve tribes, and hence the restoration of all Israel by Joshua/Jesus of Nazareth". We will return to the issue of Jesus' restoration of Israel and the twelve disciples later.

The matter of Jesus' *language* is what Meier (1991:255-268) discusses next.³ Most researchers are today convinced that Aramaic was the normal everyday language spoken by the average first-century Judean in Israel. As a teacher who directed his message at ordinary Judean peasants, whose everyday language was Aramaic, he basically spoke to and taught his fellow Judeans in Aramaic. Some traces of it remain embedded in the text of the Greek Gospels (Mk 5:41; 7:34; 14:36; 15:34). The Aramaic that Jesus used has been identified as a Galilean version of western Aramaic, which was distinct in some ways from the Aramaic spoken in Judea. Apart from Aramaic, however, Jesus would also have known some Hebrew and Greek. Jesus' habit of preaching in the synagogues and debating with scribes and Pharisees on scriptural matters makes it likely that he some knowledge of Biblical Hebrew. Jesus would have learned Hebrew in the Nazareth synagogue or a nearby school. In addition, in his woodworking establishment, Meier speculates, Jesus may have had opportunities to also pick up enough Greek to strike bargains and write receipts. This must be seen in combination with regular pilgrimages by his family to Jerusalem, which was exposed to Hellenistic culture, where the young Jesus would have been exposed to Greek culture and language. So it might be that Jesus was able to speak enough Greek to speak directly with Pilate at his trial.⁴ But it is unlikely that Jesus

³ For a more detailed discussion of language in first century Palestine, see chapters 3 and 4. These chapters also involve an overview of other aspects that were important for Judean ethnic identity and so will not be treated at length here.

⁴ Cf Porter (1994:148-53), who refers to four passages where Jesus would have the highest likelihood of speaking in Greek (Mk 7:25-30; Jn 12:20-28; Mt 8:5-13 = Lk 7:2-10; Mk 15:2-5 =

attained “scribal literacy”, or enough command of and fluency in Greek to teach at length. So Meier is doubtful that any of Jesus teachings existed from the very beginning in Greek that needed no translation as it was collected in the Greek Gospels.

A related matter is literacy. Was Jesus literate?⁵ This matter may pertain to four cultural features, namely *shared “historical” memories, language, customs and religion*. Meier states that for “all the differences among various groups of [Judeans], the narratives, laws, and prophecies of their sacred texts gave them a corporate memory and a common ethos. The very identity and continued existence of the people Israel were tied to a corpus of written and regularly read works in a way that simply was not true of other peoples in the Mediterranean world of the 1st century”. Furthermore, to be able “to read and explain the Scriptures was a revered goal for religiously minded [Judeans]. Hence literacy held special importance for the [Judean] community” (Meier 1991:274, 275). It should not be taken to mean that all Judean men learned to read – women rarely had the opportunity. But in the case of Jesus himself, Meier suggests, it is reasonable to suppose that Jesus’ religious formation, either through his father or a more learned Judean at the synagogue, was immense and that it included instruction in reading Biblical Hebrew, including the ability to expound it – by implication, Jesus would also have had literacy in Aramaic (Meier 1991:276-278). Meier’s argument is based on characteristics of Jesus’ adult life. He became intensely focussed on the Judean religion, and according to the gospels he engaged in learned disputes over Scripture and halaka with students of the Law. He was accorded the respectful title of teacher (or rabbi), and the gospels present him as preaching and teaching in the synagogues, and “his teaching was strongly imbued with the outlook and language of the sacred texts of Israel” (Meier 1991:276). So according to Meier, it is probable that Jesus, based on the piety of his father and the possible existence of a local synagogue, received an “elementary” education learning the religious traditions and texts of Judeanism.⁶ He argues thus:

Mt 27:11-14 = Lk 23:2-5 = Jn 18:29-38). The overall evidence of inscriptions and papyri “have persuaded some scholars that bilingualism was widespread in [Judean] Palestine in the first century [CE], and that it is quite proper to ask whether Jesus and his immediate disciples could speak Greek” (Schürer et al 1979:79). Could Jesus speak Greek? Fitzmyer (1992) argues the answer is most certainly yes.

⁵ Generally, literacy (at various levels) is estimated at around 10 per cent for the ancient population, including Judeans. Millard (2003) has argued, however, that based on the archaeological evidence, although not everyone could read and write, these skills were widely practiced in the Palestine of Jesus’ day.

The circumstantial evidence from archaeology points to a Nazareth that was a thoroughly [Judean] settlement. Granted, then, that Nazareth was a village of close to 2,000 people, practically all of whom were [Judeans], the existence of a synagogue with some educational program for [Judean] boys is a likely hypothesis. Especially if Jesus' family shared the resurgence of religious and national sentiment among Galilean [Judean] peasants, this hypothesis of some formal education in the local synagogue is well grounded.

(Meier 1991:277)

Importantly, Meier also alludes to the type of Judeanism of the Galilean peasants. In what follows, the cultural features of *name, myths of common ancestry, shared "historical" memories, land, customs, and religion* are affected. According to Meier, it was a Judeanism that was fiercely loyal to basics like Mosaic Torah, circumcision, observance of Sabbath, observance of kosher food laws, main purity rules, and pilgrimages to the Jerusalem temple for the great feasts. It was conservative in nature that would not be attracted to what they considered the novelties of the Pharisees or the theoretical details debated by the elite (Meier 1991:277; 1994:1039; 2001:617). At the end of his second volume Meier also mentions that Galilean Judeans were surrounded "by a fair number of Gentiles and a fair amount of Hellenistic culture" present within Sepphoris and so "would cling tenaciously to the basics of their religion as 'boundary symbols' reinforcing their identity" (Meier 1994: 1039-1040). Meier also makes mention that their popular, mainstream Judeanism held to certain key beliefs that were articulated in a dramatic story of origins. For the Judeans, the story was the national myth of God and Israel:

[T]he one true God ... had chosen Israel as his special people, freed it from slavery by the exodus from Egypt, given it the covenant and the Torah at Mt. Sinai, and led it into the promised land of Palestine as its perpetual inheritance. [After Israel's unfaithfulness and exile] he had mercifully brought them back to their land and given them the hope of a full, glorious renewal at some future date.

(Meier 2001:617)

⁶ Cf Evans (2001:19): "Jesus' teaching in the synagogues is not easily explained if he were unable to read and had not undertaken study of Scripture".

It therefore becomes clear to us that based on Meier's reconstruction of Jesus' Galilean and family background, Jesus grew up in an environment that was conducive to fostering a strong Judean ethnic identity.⁷

Now we will shift our attention to the matter of *kinship*. Meier says that being the firstborn son, Jesus would have received special attention from Joseph, so that in addition to teaching him religious traditions, Joseph would also have taught Jesus his own trade. Meier interprets τέκτων (Mk 6:3; cf Mt 13:55) to mean "woodworker" (not "carpenter" as such), which in the context of the gospels would mean that Jesus had a fair amount of technical skill in constructing parts of houses (e g doors, door frames etc) and making furniture (e g beds, tables etc) (Meier 1991:276, 280-285, 317). As an aside, Meier also questions the idea that Jesus would have applied his trade in Sepphoris where he would have been exposed to urban culture in a strong Hellenistic city. His ministry, as pictured by the gospels, was restricted to traditional Judean villages and towns, and this "general picture of Jesus' activity in Galilee ... does not favour early and influential contact with Hellenistic centers like Sepphoris" (Meier 1991:284). So when it comes to the "interim" years of Jesus' life, he would have spent it almost entirely as a citizen of Nazareth in Galilee plying his father's trade as a woodworker.

When it comes to Jesus' relationship with his immediate family, Meier points to the fact that in the ancient world the individual was part of a larger social unit. "The extended family", Meier explains, together with the village or town "imposed identity and social function on the individual in exchange for the communal security and defence the individual received from the family. The break Jesus made with these ties to his extended family and village, after so many years of an uneventful life in their midst, and his concomitant attempt to define a new identity and social role for himself, no doubt left deep scars that can still be seen in the Gospel narratives [e g Mk 3:21, 31-35; 6:1-6; Jn 7:3-9]" (Meier 1991:317). Meier (1991:350) argues that Jesus' father probably died before he embarked on his public ministry, compared with his mother, brothers and sisters. It is these family members that survived, the evangelists tell us, who thought that Jesus was mad (Mk 3:21), or that his brothers did not believe in him (Jn 7:5), or was refused a request to see him (Mk 3:31-35).

⁷ Cf Evans (2001:21): "The context, family and formation of Jesus point in every way to an extensive exposure to a Torah-observant [Judean] way of life. Jesus was raised in a [Judean]

Another matter related to *kinship* is the demands made by Jesus to follow him.⁸ A Q tradition has a candidate disciple ask Jesus for permission to bury his father before devoting himself fully to follow him (Mt 8:21-22 // Lk 9:59-60; cf Lk 9:61-62). Jesus declines the request quite harshly and says: “Let the dead bury their dead”. “This demand”, Meier (2001:50, 68) explains, “to ignore a basic obligation of piety to a dead parent ... is shockingly discontinuous from the fundamental morality that both [Judeans] and [Messianists] held dear ... Jesus’ imperious command to follow posed a grave challenge to a traditional society where reverence for one’s parents ... was a sacred obligation enshrined in the Ten Commandments.” Further, following Jesus as a disciple entailed leaving behind home, parents, and livelihood, and doing so was not a temporary appointment (Meier 2001:54-55). This was an ethos quite contrary to that expected by Ben Sirach, who made a son’s obligations to father and mother paramount and recommended the enjoyment of one’s wealth (e.g. Sir 3:1-16; 7:27-28; 14:11-16; 31:8-11). But those called upon as disciples were to experience and proclaim the kingdom of God, risking danger and hostility, and to “turn back from that call – or, equivalently, to turn back from following Jesus – was to show oneself unfit for the kingdom” (Meier 2001:55).

As a result, one may face hostility from one’s own family. Meier explains the following within the context of the Mediterranean world:

What one trusts, relies upon, and contributes to willingly is one’s extended family, the primary safety net in peasant society. Ancient Mediterranean society was largely a society of “dyadic personality,” where one’s identity was formed and maintained in relation to other individuals in one’s social unit – the usual unit being the extended family. To bid farewell for an indefinite period to the bonds of emotional and financial support, to spurn the only “opinion group” whose opinion daily affected one’s life, to take the shameful path of deserting

Galilee that embraced the faith of the Fathers and the teaching of Scripture, a Galilee that resisted [non-Judean] influences, sometimes violently.”

⁸ Cf Duling (2001) who understands the recruitment style of Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels as akin to a “faction type of coalition” which is also an Ego-centred network, for which Duling also develops a model. The attractional leader or Ego personally recruits followers which form his “intimate network” (cf Mk 1:16-20; 3:13-14, 16-18; 6:7). Where the commitment must be total, recruitment will take place publicly and directly, aimed more likely at strangers or casual acquaintances. Then beyond that are the recruits of the “effective network” and “extended network”, or wider group of followers (cf Mk 3:7; 5:24; 8:34; 10:32, 52; 11:9; 14:51; 15:41). Commenting on Mk 4:10 Duling (2001:158) says that it “clearly mirrors the concentric circle model of Egocentered faction – Ego, intimate network, and effective network. The members of the intimate network are usually portrayed as leaving, or being requested to leave, their kin, friends, and worker groups. The resulting faction is a surrogate family, a fictive family.”

one's family and work in an honor-shame society – all this was no easy choice for the ordinary [Judean] peasant of Galilee.

(Meier 2001:67)

Indeed, Jesus spoke to his disciples about the domestic cost of following him. There dissolution of family ties will bring them rich reward (Mk 10:28-30 parr). A saying in Q illustrates the shocking price of following Jesus; you have to turn your back on your family and “hate” them (Mt 10:37 // Lk 14:26). Here “hate” refers to the “necessity of preferring Jesus unreservedly when one's family opposes the commitment of discipleship or makes rival claims on the would-be disciple” (Meier 2001:68). So Jesus' call to discipleship would occasion fierce family division, something that Jesus predicted (Mt 10:34-36 // Lk 12:51-53; Jn 7:5). In a sense, Jesus was simply asking them to replicate his own experience (Mk 3:20-35) (Meier 2001:69-71). Those who do the Father's will is Jesus' brother, sister, and mother (cf Lk 11:27-28), so a radical alternate kinship pattern, we may add, is emerging in Jesus' life and teaching. Of course, this included women followers who were not in name referred to as *disciples* (Meier 2001:73-80) and the stay-at-home *supporters* or *adherents* of Jesus (Meier 2001:80-82). But this radical ethos Jesus required of his disciples, unheard of in the Greco-Roman world, did not require stringent borders. Such borders were made clear at the common meals of religious and philosophical groups, such as the Pharisees and Essenes, which were closed to outsiders. In contrast Jesus' group (and his supporters) were radically open to outsiders in their table-fellowship. It was only the acceptance of Jesus and his message that defined the borders of the whole group of his disciples/adherents (Meier 2001:72-73).

Based on Meier's reconstruction, in terms of *kinship* we can see that Jesus' own life and demands on others who follow/support him was in strong discontinuity with Judeanism. It subverted Judean ethnic identity applicable to any period, since, for example, Jesus sets children against parents and visa versa, and does not allow a potential follower to bury his father. This went against the requirements of the Torah. It went against being a respectable Judean, or Jesus is radically redefining what Judean ethnicity requires.

1.2.2 Jesus and John the Baptist

Before Jesus set out on his public ministry, the enigmatic figure of John the Baptist comes into play. Firstly, there is the character of John's own ministry. John announces the coming wrath of God, and instructs his listeners to change their minds and hearts for the better (i.e. undergo heart-felt repentance or *μετάνοια*) and change their outward life accordingly (Mt 3:7-12; Lk 3:7-9, 15-18). The change to good deeds are the "fruit(s) worthy [i.e., corresponding to and manifesting prior] repentance" (Meier 1994:29). John is facing the difficult task of convincing this "brood of vipers" that mere physical descent from Abraham ("We have Abraham as our father" – Mt 3:9) will not serve as protection on the day of judgement. To claim physical descent from Abraham, Meier explains, "bespeaks a collective consciousness as the chosen people that was meant to instil trust in God's covenant-promises but which instead could breed smug complacency. It is to shatter that complacency that the Baptist shatters the significance of a biological link with Abraham. The omnipotent Creator can make children of Abraham out of the stones lying at the audience's feet just as easily as he can give the status to people ..." (Meier 1994:29). We will add, the status of being children of Abraham, God's chosen people, that is, being Judean by birth (an ethnic identity), becomes somewhat meaningless in view of the imminent judgement. Meier (1994:29) insists, however, that the threatening speeches of John and Jesus to Israel they do, like Amos and Jeremiah, as Israelite prophets working within and for Israel. Jesus was a committed Israelite "seeking to wake up his own people to what he discerns as imminent danger threatening the covenant community." But it is clear based on Meier's understanding that John is subverting, or in a radical way is redefining Judean ethnic identity. What we have here is the "abrogation of claims based on salvation history", but Meier says the threats of judgement is not "empty rhetoric", for John means "this abrogation to be taken seriously. As with Jesus, so with John, we have here a notable element of discontinuity with much of the [Judeanism] of John's own time" (Meier 1994:29). Meier sees the thrust of John's message (Mt 3:7-12; Lk 3:7-9) as the following:

[I]n the face of an imminent fiery judgement, in the face of God's holy wrath, blazing forth and threatening to consume his apparently holy but actually unholy people, even the ostensibly devout are in danger. There must be confession of sin, not only of one's own individual sins, but also of the corporate sins of the people of God who have gone astray and have therefore lost their assurance of salvation on the day of judgement. Hence not all

members of the empirical society called Israel will be part of the eschatological Israel saved by God. Only the swift decision to accept John's baptism and to combine it with a profound change of both inner attitude and external conduct can rescue the individual [Judean] from the fire soon to come.

(Meier 1994:30)

Meier further argues that John, in a situation of perceived crisis, claims direct intuitive knowledge of God's will and plans. This knowledge was not mediated through the normal channels of law, temple, priesthood, or scribal scholarship. Yet, John spoke of a shadowy "stronger one" who will accomplish the outpouring of God's spirit on the true Israel, something that the prophets had promised for the last days. Who this figure exactly was may have been unclear to John (Meier 1994:40).

But how did the "dissolution of those ties of salvation history and biological peoplehood [= ethnic identity] that gave Israel confidence" (Meier 1994:30) affect Jesus? Since John's message and baptism was highly subversive of Judean ethnic identity, Jesus' relationship to John is appropriate to the cultural features of *myths of common ancestry, shared "historical" memories, customs and religion*. Meier argues that around 28 CE, Jesus' coming to John for baptism says something particular about his religious state at that time. The baptism indicates that Jesus knew and agreed with John's eschatological message. To recapitulate very briefly, John's message was that Israel, nearing the end of its current history in view of imminent judgement, had apostatised, and the only way to escape God's wrath as sinful children of Abraham was to undergo a basic change of mind and heart accompanied by a change in one's way of living, which had to be sealed by a special, once-and-for-all ritual immersion (Meier 1994:109). Jesus own ministry may have been a way of making John's call to all Israel for a religious transformation more concrete. It is also implicit that Jesus accepted John as *a* or *the* eschatological prophet. In addition, "Jesus' acceptance of John's baptism means that Jesus saw himself very much as part of the people of Israel – which in John's vision of things means part of a sinful people threatened with divine destruction. Jesus accepted John's baptism of repentance as the divinely appointed means of passage from this sinful Israel to a group of Israelites promised salvation on the day of judgment" (Meier 1994:110). What we have here also is Jesus' feeling of communal solidarity or *kinship* with his fellow Judeans. For Meier, however, this has the following interesting corollary

relevant to us. Jesus accepted an unofficial, “charismatic” ritual – John’s ritual immersion – as necessary for salvation. This new rite, which John and Jesus centred their religious lives upon (at least in 28 CE), lacked the sanction of tradition and the temple authorities. The introduction of a new type of ritual “implicitly called into question the sufficiency of temple and synagogue worship [for our purposes read “the sufficiency of traditional Judean ethnic identity”] as then practiced” (Meier 1994:110) – although in his third volume, Meier says that there is no tradition that Jesus throughout his public ministry shunned the temple and refused to participate in its festivals. Jesus was basically in unison with “mainstream” Judeans who revered the Temple as the one sacred place chosen by God for lawful sacrifice (Meier 2001:499-500).⁹

Meier’s reconstruction leaves us with a real paradox. Jesus illustrates continuity with traditional Judean ethnic identity in that he sees himself as part of the people of Israel and joins them to undergo John’s baptism. Jesus along with other Judeans also revered the Temple as a divine institution. On the other hand, by accepting John’s eschatological message and undergoing his baptism, Jesus agrees that traditional ethnic status, being “children of Abraham”, will mean nothing at the judgement, and that John’s immersion is necessary *for all* Judeans for salvation. This contradicts the tradition of the Torah and Temple worship, which implies that ethnic status as required/maintained in both the Torah and Temple worship has become insufficient. Put in another way, the ethnic identity of the day was on the one hand revered, while on the other regarded as inadequate, subverted, or we can say radically redefined. Maintenance of covenant status, that is, maintenance of Judean ethnic status has moved beyond the received Torah and the Temple currently operating.

Indeed, Jesus most probably continued this redefinition of ethnic status if we are to take Meier’s reconstruction to its logical conclusion. Meier says Jesus was probably a disciple of John where after he continued the practice of *John’s* baptism in his own ministry, a baptism that Jesus thought was divinely inspired (Jn 3:22-30; cf 4:1-2; Mk 11:27-33) (Meier 1994:123, 163-167). Thus John’s message, life and baptism are to be seen as a vital and indispensable part of Jesus’ own ministry. Jesus also proclaims an eschatological message, similar to John’s, and “he symbolizes acceptance of his message by conferring on his disciples a ritual washing or baptism, he addresses his ministry to all Israel but undertakes no overt mission aimed directly

⁹ Cf Tomson (2001:40): “Jesus was a devout [Judean] who felt intimately attached to the

at Gentiles ...” (Meier 1994:124). So Jesus had a high regard for John the Baptist even though Jesus’ proclamation about the kingdom of God, the new “field of force”, had a member of the kingdom as “greater than he [i.e. John]” (Mt 11:7-11; Lk 7:24-28). Nevertheless, Jesus also grouped himself with John over and against their fellow Judeans who did not heed their message, here speaking of the parable of the children in the market place (Mt 11:16-19; Lk 7:31-35). The parable deals with “this generation”, a pejorative term Jesus uses for those Judeans who do not believe in him (cf Dt 32:5, 20; Ps 12:8; 78:8; Jr 7:29).¹⁰ Here “generation” reveals Jesus’ view of solidarity in sin, and that he is aiming his message at the whole Judean people. Meier claims that “we hear an echo of the program of the Baptist”, and the rhetorical questions at the beginning of the parable “introduce material that places John and Jesus side by side” (Meier 1994:145). The people rejected the ascetic prophet from the desert’s call to repentance who ate only locusts and wild honey (he “came neither eating nor drinking”) since he must be mad (“He has a demon”). Jesus did the exact opposite (he “came eating and drinking”) and issued a different call to repentance and extended table fellowship to religious outcasts of Judean society to offer a joyous way for people to enter the kingdom. Meier explains:

With a sudden burst of puritanism, this generation felt no hallowed prophet sent from God would adopt such a freewheeling, pleasure-seeking lifestyle, hobnobbing with religious lowlife and offering assurances of God’s forgiveness without demanding the proper process for reintegration into [Judean] religious society. How could this Jesus be a true prophet and reformer when he is a glutton and a drunkard, a close companion at meals with people who robbed their fellow [Judeans] (the toll collectors) or who sinned willfully and heinously, yet refused to repent (sinners). Thus, for opposite but equally convenient reasons, this generation ... rejects the call to repentance of both the excessively ascetic John and the excessively jolly Jesus. The result is spiritual paralysis and an apparent frustration of God’s saving plan to rescue his chosen people in this last hour of their history.

(Meier 1994:149)

The issue of Jesus’ relationship with sinners appears in other texts that Meier regards as possibly having historical basis (Mt 21:31-32; Lk 7:29-30; cf Lk 3:10-14).

Temple in Jerusalem as the place of God’s holy presence.”

¹⁰ For more on “this generation”, see chapter 5.

These are stray M and L traditions wherein it is said that some religiously and socially marginal tax collectors and prostitutes accepted John's message and baptism, while the Judean leaders rejected it. While sinful, therefore marginal Judeans came to the ascetic John for baptism, Jesus on the other hand undertook an itinerant ministry throughout Galilee, parts of Judea, as well as Perea and the Decapolis, and maybe areas to the north of Galilee going as far as Tyre and Sidon, not forgetting several journeys to Jerusalem. Jesus was consciously reaching out to all Israel in its last hour, moving away from John's stress on repentance in the face of imminent judgement, yet not entirely abandoning John's eschatological call, with emphasis now on the joy of salvation the repentant sinner could experience in the already present but yet to come kingdom of God (Meier 1994:167-170).

We will add that side by side, both John and Jesus were in the process of redefining Judean ethnic identity. Their call went to all Israel (no overt mission to Gentiles exist), but this new identity would include the repentant sinners, the marginal of Judean society, not those who would have regarded themselves as righteous Judeans and who by all accounts were properly living within the guidelines of the present ethnic-religious system. Jesus set himself with John over and against the "this generation" since Judean ethnicity as it was defined in the first century is to a degree abandoned by them. The tax-collectors and prostitutes came to John for baptism. Jesus alike enjoys table fellowship with sinners. So baptism, a disregard for purity and food laws, the idea of sinners regaining their ethnic status as righteous Judeans without following the normal processes required by the Torah (via the Temple), plus the exclusion of "this generation", all of this turned traditional Judean ethnic identity on its head.

Another text that Meier looks at merits discussion, as it pertains specifically to the cultural features of *shared "historical" memories, customs and religion*. Meier tentatively accepts Matthew 11:12-13 (= Lk 16:16) as authentic (or at least, Jesus' own viewpoint) when restored to what seems to be its earliest form. Meier's (1994:160) hypothetical reconstruction of this Q saying is as follows:¹¹

16a The law and the prophets [lasted?] until John;

16b From then on,
the kingdom of God suffers violence,
and the violent plunder it.

Meier's treatment of this passage is quite significant in view of our present purposes. He explains that all of Israel's history until the time of the Baptist is placed under the rubric of Israel's scriptures, explained as the law and the prophets. In that is God's instruction about the founding events of Israel's existence and the instruction about the proper response in worship and daily life. The prophets also entail a further impression upon the mind of duties under the covenant plus promises of punishment yet final restoration. "But in some sense", Meier (1994:160) says, "that holds true only 'up until John.' From the time of John onwards, a new state of affairs [i.e. the kingdom of God] has broken in on the scene". Meier clarifies his position by stating that "John was *pivotal* to the process by which the time of the law and the prophets came to an end and the time of the kingdom commenced" (Meier 1994:162-163 and see 403-404).

We can paraphrase Meier by saying that John was pivotal to the process by which traditional Judean ethnic identity came to an end. What has defined Judean ethnicity up until that moment has now, by being on its own, become irrelevant. Judean ethnic identity is now defined by the requirements of the kingdom. Many other gospel texts (Mt 11:2-19 par; Mt 12:28 // Lk 11:20 and Mk 3:24-27 par; Lk 17:20-21; Mk 1:15; Mt 13:16-17 // Lk 10:23-24; Mk 2:18-20) also speak of the kingdom as present (Meier 1994:398-506) and it was already suffering violent opposition (Mt 11:12-13 // Lk 16:16) (Meier 1994:403-404). The kingdom of God had taken on concrete, visible form in the words and deeds of Jesus. This is also true of the eschatological banquet. Jesus was questioned why his disciples did not fast (Mk 2:18-20), an honoured practice among devout Judeans and in the early church. Jesus, however, places a general prohibition on voluntary fasting as the "eschatological banquet of salvation, promised in the near future to many coming from east and west [i.e. Gentiles – Mt 8:11-12 // Lk 13:28-29], was in some way already available to those who shared Jesus' joy at mealtime ... [I]n some way the kingdom is already present ..." (Meier 1994:448).

¹¹ The IQP reconstructs the Q saying pretty much the same way (Robinson, Hoffmann &

1.2.3 Jesus and the Kingdom of God

The first passage concerning the question of Jesus and ethnicity that we will discuss – here again relevant to the cultural features of *customs* and *religion* – most likely comes from the Q source (Mt 8:11-12 // Lk 13:28-29). Meier (1994:314) reconstructs the primitive tradition behind the text as follows that he believes would have been close to Matthew's version:¹²

Many [or: they] from east and west shall come
and shall recline [at table]
with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob
in the kingdom of God.
But you shall be thrown out.
In that place there shall be weeping and grinding of teeth.

In the Old Testament and the pseudepigrapha numerous prophecies are made where Gentiles are involved in the drama of the end time. They will worship the one true God or come to Israel, specifically Jerusalem, when the end time arrives (cf Is 2:1-4; 25:6-8; 51:4-6; 59:19; Mi 4:1-4; Zch 14:16; MI 1:11; Tob 13:11; 14:6 on the Gentiles). But the way that the Gentiles are involved varies from writer to writer. It is either viewed in a positive way where the Gentiles are devout pilgrims, joining Israel in its worship of Yahweh. On the other hand, the Gentiles are viewed negatively where they are defeated and made to bow down before a victorious Israel. Meier (1994:314) argues that since "such ideas about the Gentiles were often connected with the hope that all Israel would be regathered to the Promised Land and Zion, and since Jesus seems to have shared this hope for a regathered or reconstituted Israel, there is nothing impossible or anachronistic about the historical Jesus speaking of the coming of the Gentiles in the context of the kingdom of God". Meier (1994:315) therefore thinks it is more likely that the "many" refer to Gentiles than to Diaspora Judeans,¹³ but in addition, he argues

this depiction of their [i.e. the Gentiles] coming to salvation *only* at the final banquet in the kingdom does not fit the situation of the early church, which

Kloppenborg 2002:141).

¹² Here Meier's reconstruction of the Q saying again accords pretty well with that of the IQP (Robinson et al 2002:133).

conducted a lively mission to the Gentiles in the decades after Jesus' crucifixion. On the other hand, a prophecy that the Gentiles would come to salvation *only* at the final banquet [not within ordinary human history] would fit the situation of the historical Jesus, who did not view either himself or his disciples as charged with the task of undertaking a mission to the Gentiles while this present world ran its course.

(Meier 1994:315)

Meier insists that Jesus understood his mission (and that of the *Twelve*) as only directed to his own people, namely, Israel.¹⁴ That is why the mission to Gentiles in this present world was such a strong departure for the early church and caused so much controversy in the first Messianist generation. "Neither the actions nor the words of the historical Jesus had given precise and detailed instructions for such an initiative" (Meier 1994:315). The words of Mt 8:11-12 // Lk 13:28-29 presuppose the opposite; the Gentiles will join the saved Israelites only at the final banquet in the kingdom, while some of his Judean contemporaries (i.e. the "you") will be "thrown out". But "the idea of the Gentiles streaming into the kingdom of God to be joined by the long-dead but now obviously living patriarchs of Israel surely brings us beyond any political kingdom of this present world, including a mere reconstitution of the kingdom of David on a grander scale" (Meier 1994:317; cf 2001:438-439).

¹³ For an alternative interpretation, see chapter 5.

¹⁴ The relevant texts here are Matthew 15:24 and 10:5-6. At first, Meier did not want to judge on their authenticity, although he stated that the two texts reflect accurately the entire picture of Jesus' mission derived from the Gospels. This is indirectly supported by the distinction Paul makes in Romans 15:8-9: "For I tell you that Christ has become a servant of the Jews on behalf of God's truth, to confirm the promises made to the patriarchs so that the Gentiles may glorify God for his mercy ...". Paul does not claim that Christ ever ministered directly to Gentiles, even though it would have aided his cause (cf Rm 1:6) (Meier 1994:374, 660). Later on, Meier judged Matthew 15:24 as being Matthew's own creative redaction and 10:5-6 to be the product of some first generation Messianists who opposed the proclamation of the Gospel to non-Judeans. Nevertheless, Meier (2001:543-544) still regarded Matthew 10:5-6 as reflecting accurately what happened during the public ministry of Jesus. Many scholars have accepted Matthew 10:5 as authentically representing Jesus' words or outlook (e.g. Enslin 1961:160; Harnack 1962:40; Jeremias 1971:14; Vermes 1973:49; 2000:140-43, 156-57). Otherwise there are various nuances in interpretation. The prohibition designates geographical boundaries (Jeremias 1967:20) which nevertheless is an extension of Jesus' own mission that was concentrated in Galilee. Alternatively, Jesus during his lifetime basically focused or limited both his own activity and that of his disciples to Israel (Hahn 1965:29, 544-55; Jeremias 1967:19, 25; Richardson 1969:66). There is also the position that the prohibition was part of a strategy to gather Israel so as to enable it to be a source of salvation to the Gentiles (Manson 1964:21; LaGrand 1995:138).

Based on Meier's reconstruction above, again we can say that there is both continuity and discontinuity between Jesus and Judean ethnic identity. Jesus shares a hope for a reconstituted Israel and aims his message at all Israel symbolised by the Twelve disciples. But when this kingdom arrives, some Judeans of his generation will be left out and Gentiles will join the patriarchs for the final banquet. This is not a future kingdom where Judean ethnicity will be celebrated via a political kingdom. In fact, the metaphor of a banquet where Gentiles *eat* with the patriarchs illustrates little sympathy for concerns of Judean exclusiveness, purity and food laws, or religious-political nationalism.

A related issue is Jesus' relationship with the Samaritans.¹⁵ As with the Gentiles, Meier (2001:549) argues the gospels agree that Jesus undertook no mission to the Samaritans. But both Luke (9:52-53; 10:30-37; 17:11-19) and John (4:4-42) indicate that Jesus had positive, but passing contact with Samaritans, and that Jesus differed from the typical negative view of Judeans in that he had a benign view of them. What is of interest to us is that Meier prefers to treat the Samaritans from a religious viewpoint, instead of an ethnic one. Meier (2001:541) states that both "Samaritanism and [Judeanism] were latter-day forms of the ancient religion of Israel" that "experienced various traumas, transformations, and developments under the assaults and influences of the Assyrian, Babylonian, Persian, and Hellenistic empires". This is despite the fact that he also makes reference to various Judean texts that more than suggests that the Judeans regarded the Samaritans as a different *ἔθνος* (2 Ki 17; Josephus, Ant 9.14.1-3 §277-291; Sir 50:25-26; 2 Mac 6:2; cf 5:23).

¹⁵ 2 Ki 17:24-41 relates that the Assyrians settled various peoples in Samaria among them those from Cuthah, which according to Josephus gave the inhabitants of Samaria their new name of Cuthites (Ant 9.288; 11.88). The sentiment towards Samaritans was one of hostility (Ec 50:25-26), to which the Samaritans responded in kind (cf Lk 9:52-3; Ant 18.29f.; 20.118ff.; War 2.12.3.232f.). The negative characterisations of the Samaritans by Judeans should not be taken at face value, however. They shared with Judeans monotheism, circumcision, Sabbath and festivals and the Torah, with the main difference being that their centre of worship was not in Jerusalem, but Mount Gerizim (Schürer et al 1979:17). It was their refusal to worship in Jerusalem that was a principal cause for Judean prejudice against them. In effect, Samaritans were potential Judeans. For an alternative understanding of the Judeans and Samaritans, Hjelm (2000:284) suggests that the Law of Moses that Ezra was supposed to have brought to Jerusalem could well refer to the Samaritan Pentateuch "that had been adopted in Jerusalem [e.g. it suppressed the Gerizim and Schechem traditions] to establish identity and legitimacy for the nationalistic movement of the Maccabees, as well as to legalize the policy of conquest". Thus Judeanism, which unsuccessfully attempted to incorporate the Samaritans, was established on borrowed traditions.

Turning our attention back to the Gentiles, Meier also regards other eschatological traditions as having historical basis which are relevant to us. Meier (2001:442) argues that Jesus in various ways (the texts are discussed below) referred to the general resurrection of the dead. Besides the tradition of the many that will come from east and west that will eat with the patriarchs in the eschatological banquet (Mt 8:11-12 // Lk 13:28-29), is the tradition where Jesus declares woes on Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum (Mt 11:21-24 // Lk 10:13-15), even stating that the Gentiles of Tyre and Sidon will suffer a less grievous fate at the final judgement (Meier 2001:439-440). There is also another Q tradition where Jesus compares his unresponsive Judean contemporaries with responsive Gentiles (Mt 12:41-42 // Lk 11:31-32). Here, the Gentiles – the queen of Sheba and the Ninevites – will not merely fare better than Jesus' Judean contemporaries at the final judgement, in fact, they will witness against and condemn them (Meier 2001:440-441). We may add this eschatological reversal went entirely against the purpose of being God's chosen people, that is, having Judean ethnic identity. To balance this out, however, is Jesus' argument against the Sadducees over the resurrection (Mk 12:18-27). Jesus explains that the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob is a God of the living, that is why there will be a resurrection. Meier argues that Jesus believed "past generations would rise from the dead and that faithful Israelites would share in a new type of life similar to that of the angels", and further, the "God of creation and covenant, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, would fulfil his deepest commitment to the people of Israel ... even beyond death" (Meier 2001:443). So, it seems that for Meier the covenant status of the faithful of past generations is secure as far as Jesus is concerned. But the present unrepentant generation's covenant status, that is, their ethnic status as a chosen people, is very uncertain.

Be that as it may, we mentioned already that Meier sees that Jesus understood his mission as solely aimed at Israel and chose Twelve disciples to help him. Indeed, Jesus shared the hope of the regathering or reconstitution of the tribes of Israel in the end time. This is relevant to the cultural features of *name* (Israel), *myths of common ancestry*, *shared "historical" memories*, *land*, *kinship* and *religion*. Meier in particular draws attention to the Q tradition where Jesus promises his disciples that they will sit on twelve thrones judging¹⁶ the twelve tribes of Israel (Mt 19:28 // Lk 22:30). Meier argues this makes sense within the context of Jesus' eschatological proclamation. This proclamation was not addressed indiscriminately to the world but to Israel in its

¹⁶ For more on the disciples "judging" the twelve tribes of Israel, see chapter 5.

promised land. The Twelve reflected Jesus' own mission to Israel in the end time "whose very number symbolized, promised, and ... began the regathering of the twelve tribes", hence Jesus promised the Twelve that they "would share in the governance (or judgment?) of the reconstituted Israel" (Meier 2001:137). As a result Jesus did not address himself on equal terms to both Judean and Gentile, and personal encounters with Gentiles are rare. Jesus stands in continuity with mainstream Israelite tradition in that there can be no complete kingdom of God without a complete Israel (Meier 2001:152-153). Meier explains the significance of Mt 19:28 // Lk 22:30 in the following way:

"You [that is, you Twelve who symbolize and embody the eschatological Israel right now] will sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel [when the kingdom fully comes and the twelve tribes are restored]" ... The creation of the Twelve thus coheres perfectly with Jesus' eschatological, people-centered message and mission: God is coming in power to gather and rule over all Israel in the end time.

(Meier 2001:153-154)

Thus Jesus' concern for Israel is a clear indication of his communal solidarity with his co-ethnics, a special group that was established by God's covenant with an elect people, although it is a Judean ethnicity that will need redefinition under the circumstances of God's kingdom. But this redefinition for now has not the participation of Gentiles in view – this will only happen later when the kingdom has come in full. Later on, Gentiles will be present in the sacred land as well, and will also eat with them, a radical departure from the ethos of the day.

Another important feature for our consideration that Meier discusses was Jesus' unorthodox table-fellowship with toll collectors and sinners, a practice that was not continued by the early Messianist community. It along with other festive meals of Jesus "was meant to foreshadow the final eschatological banquet and to give a foretaste of that banquet even during his public ministry [cf Mt 8:11-12 // Lk 13:28-29; Mk 14:25 parr]" (Meier 1994:966). This behaviour was regarded as scandalous by some (Mk 2:15-17 parr; cf Lk 15:1-2; 19:1-10; Mt 11:18-19 // Lk 7:33-34). Now in terms of the "sinners", Meier (1994: 1036, 1037) explains why, since they were "non-observant [Judeans] who had broken with the covenant community of Israel and were considered equivalent to Gentiles" and it "is a very broad term that includes

anyone who was viewed by [Judean] society in general to be living a life antithetical to God's will as expressed in the Law. In particular, it may refer to those [Judeans] who had abandoned practice of the Law and lived like Gentiles". For our purposes we can simply say that Jesus sometimes behaved like a Gentile, disregarded purity and dietary laws when having table-fellowship with Judean sinners in order to redeem them, and so at times lived outside the bounds of what the Torah required. By the general standards of the day, this made Jesus very un-Judean.

1.2.4 Jesus' Miracles

At the end of Meier's treatment of Jesus and the kingdom of God, Meier gives a summary of his conclusions and understanding of Jesus thus far:

[Jesus is] a 1st-century [Judean] eschatological prophet who proclaims an imminent-future coming of God's kingdom, practices baptism as a ritual of preparation for that kingdom, teaches his disciples to pray to God as [*abba*] for the kingdom's arrival, prophesies the regathering of all Israel ... and the inclusion of the Gentiles when the kingdom comes – but who at the same time *makes the kingdom already present for at least some Israelites* by his exorcisms and miracles of healing. Hence in some sense he already mediates an experience of the joyful time of salvation, expressed also in his freewheeling table fellowship with toll collectors and sinners and his rejection of voluntary fasting for himself and his disciples. To all this must be added his – at times startling – interpretation of the Mosaic Law.¹⁷

(Meier 1994:454; emphasis added)

The above serves as a recap of Meier's position but the emphasised text also serves to draw attention to the following. Meier accepts at least one miracle tradition involving a Gentile as having historical basis, while another acceptable tradition might possibly have a Gentile involved (both are discussed below) – we may add that he regards the story of the Syrophoenician woman¹⁸ whose possessed daughter is

¹⁷ The question of the law Meier will only discuss at length in his fourth volume.

¹⁸ Jackson has suggested that Matthew specifically turns Mark's story of the Syrophoenician woman into a conversion formula for entrance into the Judean community. Matthew uses the Psalms, the story of the Moabite Ruth, and a formula for conversion based on the rabbi's interpretation of that story. It entails that a potential convert must go through a four-time request, three-time rejection, and finally a period of acceptance to become a member of the

cured (Mk 7:24-30; Mt 15:21-28) as a creation of first-generation Messianists therefore it merits no discussion (Meier 1994:659-661).¹⁹ But can we then say that *some* Gentiles (those who received healing and to a degree their families as well) already experienced the future but already present kingdom in some way? Meier does not really say anything to this effect and he merely states that the gospels agree that in a few exceptional cases “the future offer of salvation to the Gentiles is foreshadowed by the symbols of healing and exorcism” (Meier 1994:660). It is to two of those traditions we now will turn.

These miracles again are of relevance to the cultural features of *customs* and *religion* (since it points towards Gentiles participating in God’s kingdom and contact with Gentiles affect status of ritual purity), and the first miracle tradition we will discuss is the Gerasene Demoniac (Mk 5:1-20). Jesus was in the “region of the Gerasenes”, one of the mostly pagan cities of the Decapolis, Gerasa itself situated around 53 km (33 miles) southeast of the Sea of Galilee. Here Jesus exorcises a man from a demon (called “Legion”). Meier follows the work of Franz Annen, who suggested that a plausible life setting is first-generation Messianist Judeans who favoured a mission to Gentiles. They were involved in a controversy with conservative Messianists who opposed such a mission. Those who favoured the mission to Gentiles used the story of the Gerasene demoniac as an argument against their opponents, in that they are only continuing what Jesus began. This argument would only have been effective if both groups of Messianist Judeans knew and accepted the fact that Jesus did perform an exorcism in the region of Gerasa. Meier accepts this life setting as a possibility and he inclines towards the view that an exorcism performed by Jesus near Gerasa lies at the basis of the narrative (Meier 1994:653).

The second miracle we will look at is the story of the healing (at a distance) of the centurion/royal official’s servant (or boy) derived from Q (Mt 8:5-13 // Lk 7:1-10) and John (4:46-54 – the story of the royal official’s son in John is according to Meier held by most scholars as a variant of the Q tradition). Q presents the centurion as a Gentile,²⁰ while the story in John implicitly presents the royal official as a Judean, so

Judean community. So in the hands of Matthew, Jesus is not necessarily being rude to her, but he is testing her resolve to join the community of faith (Jackson 2002; 2003).

¹⁹ Meier’s discussion of other miracles regarding Gentiles/Samaritans or those miracles affecting issues of ritual purity or the forgiveness of sins we will not discuss either since it adds little to our understanding of Meier’s view of Jesus and the question of ethnicity.

the ethnic origin of the centurion/royal official is ambiguous. As a “centurion” he must not be understood as a member of the Roman army, since Galilee was not under direct control of a Roman prefect. Antipas maintained and controlled his own army that included both Judeans and Gentiles. Meier (1994:726) summarizes his view here simply as while Jesus was in or approaching Capernaum, an official or officer of Herod Antipas, “possibly a centurion stationed at Capernaum, asked Jesus for the cure of a ‘boy’ in his household – whether the ‘boy’ was a slave or a son is not clear. Jesus acceded to the request by healing the ‘boy’ at a distance”.

1.2.5 Jesus and other Judean Groups

How did Jesus relate to other Judean groups of his day? The first significant group Meier discusses is the Pharisees,²¹ and in what is to follow concerns the cultural features of *customs* and *religion*. Meier understands the Pharisees’ program as follows:

²⁰ See chapter 5 for a more detailed discussion on Q 7:1-10.

²¹ According to Sanders (1992:380-451) although some Pharisees had high social and economic status, most of them were laymen and had full time jobs that tied them down (e.g. shopkeeping and farming); so most were of modest means but with a regular income – they did not form an aristocratic group. He also argues against the common opinion that the Pharisees had control of Judeanism, for example, such as the synagogue institution. For most of their history they did desire power but did not have it, the exception being the time when Salome Alexandra ruled. Since they were well educated in the law, they had some time to study, being neither leisured nor destitute. A few priests and Levites were Pharisees. Many people respected their piety and learning, and scrupulous observance of the law (cf. War 1.108-109). During the revolt they attained to positions of leadership and thereafter they led the reconstruction of Judeanism. Generally the Pharisees broadly operated within the realm of covenantal nomism by sharing with common Judeanism a zeal for the law. They did not think of themselves as the only true Israel (or as the only ones within the covenant) and they were not a separatist group such as the Dead Sea Sect/Essenes. They did aspire to a level of purity above the ordinary (e.g. by attempting to avoid corpse and *midras* impurity), but below that of the priests. Here Sanders also rejects the idea that the Pharisees thought that they were always eating meals in priestly purity (cf. Neusner 1973). Dunn (1991:110-11) has argued, however, that table fellowship (along with hand-washing) was an important identity marker and boundary for Pharisees. Otherwise Sanders points out that they had some laws particular to themselves, such as hand-washing (but mainly to protect the priests’ food from impurity; cf. Dunn’s objection above), *erubin* (the construction of doorposts and lintels that “fused” several houses into one, so that dishes could be carried from one to the other on the Sabbath), and *demaï*-produce (a legal category invented for food that was acquired from others who may not have tithed it). According to Baumgarten, membership in sects was a minority activity and they were more likely to have come from the economic, social and educational elite who could afford the “luxury” to be heavily involved in spiritual affairs, seeing themselves as standing above society as a whole. “They were not an alienated and underemployed intelligentsia, searching for a place in society”, they were, however, “elitist” (Baumgarten 1997:51, see with 43-66). This according to him raises a question over the understanding of Pharisees in particular as a “retainer class” in service of the ruling groups (Saldarini 1988). We may add this also raises a question regarding the suggestion of Sanders that the Pharisees were generally of *modest* means with a regular income.

In the face of a perceived threat to the continued existence of [Judeans] as a distinct ethnic, cultural, and religious entity in the ancient Near East, the Pharisees emphasized the zealous and detailed study and practice of the Mosaic Law, the careful observance of legal obligations in concrete areas of life such as tithing, purity laws (especially concerning food, sexual activity, and the proper treatment of the dead), the keeping of Sabbath, marriage and divorce, and temple ritual ... [T]hey possessed a normative body of traditions [of the elders] which went beyond the written Mosaic Law but which was (or at least should be) incumbent on the whole people of Israel.

(Meier 2001:330)

Meier goes on to explain that these legal obligations “expressed concretely the response of Israel, God’s holy people, to the holy God who had given Israel the Law to mark it out from all the peoples of the earth” (Meier 2001:330). Fidelity to the law will ensure you will have a share in the world to come. The wicked and the apostates will have no share in the world to come. According to Meier, Jesus interacted more with the Pharisees than any other Judean party. He shared with them a consuming desire to bring all Israel to the complete doing of God’s will set out in the Law and the prophets. Jesus would also have shared with them the belief in God’s election of Israel, his gift of the Law and the requirement of wholehearted response to its demands, God’s faithful guidance of Israel through history to a future end that involved the restoration of Israel, a final judgement, resurrection and perhaps a shared belief in an eschatological figure as God’s agent in the end time (Meier 2001:338).

There would also have been inevitable disagreements. Relevant to us are issues of *halaka*, particularly the neglect or rejection of various familial and purity rules (such as Jesus refusing a potential follower the time to bury his father, and possibly a lack of concern regarding food laws) (Meier 2001:338). Unfortunately, Meier reserves a full discussion of Jesus’ attitude towards the law – that was a common concern of “mainstream” Judeanism – to his fourth volume. For the moment Meier argues that when Jesus “addressed such topics and especially when he proclaimed new, startling, and disturbing rules governing such topics, he was addressing and potentially upsetting the lives of all pious [Judeans], not just Pharisees” (Meier 2001:340) and that “Jesus’ stance vis-à-vis the Law poses a notable enigma” (Meier 2001:645). Nevertheless, Meier also maintains that as “a Palestinian [Judean] of the

1st century, Jesus takes the Mosaic Law for granted as the normative expression of God's will for Israelite conduct" (Meier 2001:525).

So compared with the Pharisees, Jesus stands both in continuity and discontinuity with Judean ethnic identity. Jesus shares with them the belief in the divine election of Israel, and God's guidance through history to its eschatological restoration (this also concerns Jesus' communal solidarity or *kinship* with Judeans and *shared "historical" memories*). Jesus shares with the Pharisees a desire to bring all Israel in obedience with God's will as revealed by the Torah and prophets and takes it as the normative expression of God's will – although we saw earlier that the law and prophets is for Jesus only relevant up until the time of John, to be replaced by the demands of the kingdom. Jesus also stands aloof from the Pharisees on matters of law, also "mainstream" Judeanism – Jesus makes new or disturbing rules, and shows neglect or rejection of various familial and purity regulations. It is difficult to reconcile this Jesus with the one that wants to bring all of Israel to obedience to the Torah.

The second group we will discuss is the Essenes of Qumran.²² In particular it will again affect the cultural features of *customs* and *religion*. Meier maintains that Jesus believed in the general resurrection of the dead at the end time (Mk 12:18-27). Yet, unlike Qumran, Jesus included some Gentiles in the eschatological banquet with the risen patriarchs, while some Israelites will be excluded (Mt 8:11-12). In Qumran's view, however, all Gentiles and all Israelites outside the Essene community will perish (Meier 2001:494). We can say that the Qumranites were doing a serious redefinition of Judean ethnic status of their own.

²² The general consensus is that the Qumran community was part of the Essene movement or a stricter group within it. The group formed under the leadership of a "Teacher of Righteousness", identified as a Zadokite priest, although according to Josephus and Philo the Essenes lived in isolated communities all over Palestine. The archrival of the teacher was the "Wicked Priest", generally identified as Jonathan Maccabees, who attained the high priesthood from the Seleucid Alexander Balas. This suggests that the Essenes were a break-away group in opposition to the Temple operation run by the Hasmoneans in Jerusalem. Membership within the group required a two or three year probationary period, where after the initiate's possessions were permanently absorbed into the common fund (1QS 6.13-23), swore an oath of loyalty and was allowed to participate in the community meal. Some peculiar features of the group included their strictness in purity (4Q512; 4Q381 46 5-6) that was accompanied by a strict hierarchy, observation of the solar calendar (as opposed to the standard lunar calendar), their apparent teaching on hatred of outsiders (1QS 1.4, 10), their asceticism and celibacy (although some resident outside of Qumran did get married), and they adhered to deterministic view of the world (1QS 3.15-16) (see Charlesworth 1992:xxxix-xxxvii, 1-74; Campbell 1996:57-104; Vermes 1998:26-90).

Jesus also differed from the Qumranites' view of the Temple. In all the gospels Jesus is represented as going to the Temple, teaching there and eating the Passover lamb that was slain in the Temple. There is no tradition that Jesus throughout his public ministry shunned the Temple and refused to participate in its festivals. Here Jesus was in unison with "mainstream" Judeans since he revered the Temple as the one sacred place chosen by God for lawful sacrifice and he followed the festal calendar observed by the Temple's priests (Meier 2001:499-500, 529). This attitude of Jesus, is also supported by other sayings of Jesus that took the Temple and its ritual for granted and as obligatory (Mk 1:44; Mt 23:23 // Lk 11:42; Mt 5:23-24; 23:16-21; Lk 18:9-14; Jn 4:22, 18:20). Although all these sayings may not be authentic, there is enough evidence that Jesus accepted the Temple in his own day. This is unlike the Qumranites who thought that the Temple in Jerusalem was defiled and who looked forward to its restoration (Meier 2001:499-500). But Meier emphasises that Jesus accepted the Temple, which was ordained by God in the Torah, "*as part of the present order of things*" that "will soon come to an end" (Meier 2001:500, 501; emphasis original). At the coming of God's kingdom, the current Temple will be done away with based on Jesus' prophetic action in the Temple and sayings about its destruction (Mk 11:15-17; 14:58; Mt 23:37-38 // Lk 13:34-35; Lk 19:41-44; Jn 2:13-17, 19). We must also remember that John's baptism, something that Jesus continued with in his own ministry, was regarded as necessary for salvation. It implicitly called into question the sufficiency of Temple worship as then practiced. Whether Jesus expected a better or new Temple to replace it is unclear, but there are different versions of a saying that indicate some sort of new Temple would be built (Mk 14:58; Jn 2:19) (Meier 2001:501).

Also relevant to our concerns is the matter of ritual purity. Because of the Qumranites' eschatological radicalism, they were extremely vigorous in matters of ritual purity and observance of the Sabbath, which is "glaringly different from Jesus' relative laxity on the same issues" (Meier 2001:502). For example, they underwent frequent lustrations, adhered to dietary laws that went beyond the requirements of the Torah so that their communal meals were subject to strict control (Meier 2001:525, 528). Indeed, in the eyes of most Judeans they displayed an extreme observance of the Law. In matters of *halaka*, Jesus was not interested in development of details. Jesus was far from being obsessed with purity rules in that he easily dines with sinners and toll collectors (Mk 2:13-17, Lk 19:1-10; Mt 11:19 // Lk 7:34), physically touches lepers (Mk 1:40-45; Lk 17:11-19; Mt 11:5 par), and shows no concern over purity issues that would have arisen due to the unchaperoned

women that accompanied him during his ministry (Lk 8:1-3). As the eschatological prophet sent to gather all Israel in the end time, he actively sought out the religiously and socially marginalized and in dramatic fashion celebrated their inclusion in the end-time Israel by enjoying table fellowship with them. Jesus also had a lenient view regarding the Sabbath rest (Mt 12:11 // Lk 14:5) that was in contradiction with the Essene's strict requirements (Meier 2001:524-529).

In addition, Qumran promoted hatred for those outside the community, based on their worldview that was strongly dualistic. The outsiders were the "sons of darkness", consisting of both Gentiles and those Judeans who did not accept the views and practices of the Qumranites, the "sons of light". In contrast, Jesus' worldview did not develop into an extreme exclusionary view where all Gentiles and all Judeans outside his group were automatically heading towards eternal destruction. Jesus reached out to all Israel and envisaged that many Gentiles would take part in the eschatological banquet (Meier 2001:529). Further, Jesus in his teaching, parables and praxis stressed the message of love, compassion and mercy, including the love of enemies and persecutors.²³ "This inclusive thrust of Jesus ... stands in stark contrast to the exclusive sectarianism of Qumran, which saw itself alone as the true Israel" (Meier 2001:530).²⁴

In comparison with the Qumranites, we see again elements of continuity and discontinuity in Meier's understanding of Jesus. The Essenes of Qumran were the pinnacle expression of Judean exclusivity and suspicion of others, even avoiding the Temple. Jesus, however, shared with "mainstream" Judeanism a high regard for the Temple and followed its festivals. But he also regarded the Temple as part of the present order of things. Jesus' prophetic actions and sayings about the Temple's destruction clearly went against the structure of Judean ethnic identity in his day – even more so if he did not say anything about the temple being rebuilt. Again in matters of *halaka*, such as ritual purity and Sabbath observance, Jesus was very relaxed, but even ordinary Judeans would have regarded the Qumranites' observance as extreme. Nevertheless, Jesus was inclusive, and wanted to gather all Israel in preparation for the end, and said some Gentiles will also participate in the

²³ Meier refers to the following texts: Mk 2:1-12, 13-17; 11:25; 12:28-34; Mt 5:21-26, 38-48; 6:12, 14-15; 18:10-14, 15, 21-35; Lk 7:36-50; 9:51-55; 10:25-37; 15:1-32; 19:9-14; 19:1-10; cf Jn 8:1-11.

²⁴ For the issue of Jesus' "inclusivity" as opposed to his apparent "egalitarianism", see pp. 48-51 below.

eschatological banquet. He even had table-fellowship with religiously and socially marginalized Judeans. This went against the general tendencies of the day where Judean ethnic identity was pre-occupied with exclusiveness, purity and food laws and which was taken to the extreme by the sectarianism of Qumran who “hated” their enemies. Jesus’ inclusiveness placed emphasis on love (even of enemies and persecutors), compassion and mercy.

Overall, Meier intimates that it is hardly surprising that Jesus showed less concern for detailed rules of purity and Sabbath observance. Circumstances did not really allow for Galileans to be engaged with Jerusalem based scholasticism and politics developed in the *halaka* of the rival Pharisees, Sadducees (and Essenes). “The Nazareth apple had not fallen far from the Galilean tree” (Meier 2001:618).

1.2.6 Summary: John P Meier – Jesus a Marginal “Jew”

In Meier’s reconstruction of the historical Jesus, we consistently find a pattern of continuity and discontinuity with traditional Judeanism. We will first have a look at what is continuous between Jesus and Judean ethnicity. If we look at the names of Jesus and his family, they are all derived from the time of the patriarchs, the Exodus and entrance into the Promised Land. This suggests that Jesus’ family participated in the reawakening of Judean national and religious feeling in Galilee. Jesus would have spoken Aramaic, as most Judeans of Palestine would have, but would also have learned Hebrew and acquired some literacy from Joseph or someone in the local synagogue. Jesus would have been able to read the Hebrew Scriptures and expound it. But Jesus would also have acquired limited skill in Greek, but many Judeans, both of Palestine and the Diaspora, would have known Greek. Jesus’ Galilean background was generally conservative in nature, and surrounded by Gentiles, Galileans clinged to the basics of their religion and culture to reinforce their identity (Torah, circumcision, Sabbath observance, purity and food laws and pilgrimage to the Temple). Jesus would have received special attention from his putative father Joseph, and in addition to seeing to Jesus’ religious education, would also have taught him his own trade as a woodworker.

The adult Jesus went to John the Baptist and received his once-off ritual immersion in water, something he saw as divinely inspired. This implies that Jesus accepted John’s eschatological message and saw himself as part of sinful Israel. Both Jesus and John the Baptist worked as prophets within and for Israel. Jesus chose a circle

of Twelve intimate disciples, something that symbolised Jesus' hope for a regathered and reconstituted Israel. Jesus saw his mission as only directed at Israel, and had but passing contact with Gentiles and Samaritans. For Jesus, there can be no kingdom of God without a complete Israel. God will also honour his commitment to Israel and the covenant since the patriarchs and faithful Israelites will through the resurrection share in a life similar to the angels.

Jesus shared with the Pharisees a consuming desire to bring all Judeans to a faithful obedience of the Torah. Jesus takes the Mosaic Law for granted as the normative expression of God's will. Jesus also shared with them (by implication Judeans in general) a belief in Israel's divine election, and God's faithful guidance in history to its eschatological restoration. Along with mainstream Judeanism Jesus also revered the Temple as the one holy place chosen by God for lawful sacrifice, and followed its annual festivals – but the Temple is according to Jesus, part of the present order of things.

This brings us to those aspects where Jesus stood in discontinuity with traditional Judeanism. When Jesus went on his itinerant mission, Jesus broke away from his family. Jesus also made stringent demands on his followers – obligations to home and parents, the social unit that formed and maintained your identity, they must be willing to leave behind. It is those who do the Father's will who are Jesus' family; his brother, sister and mother. By accepting John's message and Baptism, Jesus accepts that physical descent from Abraham – even for the devout – will mean nothing at the coming judgement. It is only by a confession of sin, baptism, and a profound change of heart and conduct that one will be saved. This salvation is available outside the normal channels of Judeanism, which brings into question its sufficiency, as well as the sufficiency of ethnic status as it operated then. Covenant status and divine election has moved beyond traditional Judean ethnic identity.

In his own ministry, Jesus continued with John's baptism. He also grouped himself along with John over and against their Judean contemporaries, and condemns them for not heeding their message. The law and the prophets functioned up until John, but from then onwards it was the kingdom that had broken onto the scene. What has usually defined Judean ethnicity has now on its own become irrelevant, and is appropriated towards the demands of the kingdom. When the kingdom of God will fully come, Gentiles will also sit and eat with the patriarchs at the eschatological banquet, while some of Jesus' contemporaries will be thrown out. Gentiles will

therefore be present within the Israelite ancestral land. This also illustrates that the kingdom will go beyond a political kingdom reserved for Judeans. At the judgement, the Queen of Sheba and the Ninevites will witness against and condemn that generation. But this future kingdom is in a sense already present through Jesus' healings and table fellowship. Jesus does not fast, and enjoys having table fellowship with Israelites, including tax collectors and sinners, to enact participation in God's salvation for all Israelites. The sinners especially qualified to be regarded as being outside that privileged realm of Judean identity, and here Jesus shows little regard for purity and food laws. Jesus has a very inclusive approach and is not interested to set up boundaries between his own group and other Judeans. Combined with Jesus' shocking behaviour around the meal table, Jesus ignored rules concerning the family, and sometimes gave new and startling laws. In some exceptional cases, Jesus also performed miracles for Gentiles, pointing to the future offer of salvation for them. And lastly, Jesus acted and said something about the Temple's that implied its destruction – it is not clear whether Jesus thought it would be rebuilt in some way.

Does the above analysis qualify Jesus as a "marginal Judean"? And how can the eschatological prophet of Israel, the fulfilment of all Israel's hopes and expectations be "marginal" to begin with? This constitutes a profound paradox. But overall, the element of discontinuity, pervasive in Meier's reconstruction of the historical Jesus, needs a more comprehensive explanation than him merely being "marginal". This aspect of Meier's reconstruction will be returned to after a proposed analytical framework or model has been put into place (see chapter 2).

1.3 JOHN D CROSSAN – JESUS A MEDITERRANEAN "JEWISH" PEASANT

Crossan's approach to the historical Jesus is heavily influenced by the social sciences or the insights of cultural anthropology. Crossan puts Jesus and first century Palestine into the larger context of the "Brokered (Roman) Empire", which entailed the normal features of honour and shame, patronage and clientage. Jesus himself broke away from John the Baptist's eschatological message and announced the brokerless kingdom of God available to all in the present. Indeed, for Crossan, the heart of the Jesus movement was a shared egalitarianism of spiritual and material resources. But based on Crossan's reconstruction, how did Jesus relate to first-century Judean ethnicity?

1.3.1 Jesus, Nazareth and Sepphoris

The first matter that we will make mention of is Crossan's treatment of Nazareth. In what is to follow concerns the cultural feature of *customs* and general cultural identity. Archaeological investigations have uncovered tombs, the vast majority of which are chambers with a number of shafts cut horizontally into the walls in order that the body could be placed inside head first. The burial shafts or niches were called *loculi* graves in Latin and *kokim* graves in Hebrew. These kind of burial chambers are important since they virtually became the standard type of Judean tomb from about 200 BCE. A conclusion Crossan (1991:16) draws from this is that "Nazareth was a very [Judean] village in the Roman era." Other archaeological findings also suggest that the principle activity of villagers was agriculture. Crossan argues, however, that three qualifications must be added to the picture of Nazareth as a Judean agricultural hamlet in the early Roman period.

First, there is the consideration of regional topography. The differences between Upper and Lower Galilee must be taken into account and the location of Nazareth in the southern most part of Lower Galilee. Compared to Upper Galilee, where the Meiron range reaches a height of almost four thousand feet, the four ranges of Lower Galilee reach heights of over one thousand feet. Lower Galilee would not have been as isolated as Upper Galilee. A rural agricultural Judeanism would have been more characteristic of those living in the north, while some negative comments of later rabbis and clichés in the New Testament might suggest an accommodation to Hellenism in Lower Galilee. Nevertheless, Nazareth itself was located at an elevation of over one thousand feet on the southernmost hill of Galilee that "isolated the village off the beaten track" (Crossan 1991:17).

The second qualification that Crossan employs is political geography. A major city contains within its region various smaller cities that in turn serves a region with towns, each of which is surrounded by villages. The key factors that determine this settlement pattern are commerce and administrative functions. Crossan explains this hierarchy of settlement in Lower Galilee "was represented by Bethshan/Scythopolis as its *major city*, Sepphoris and Tiberias as its *smaller cities*, Capernaum and Magdala/Tarichaeae as its *towns*. Nazareth, clearly a *village*, is closest, not to one of those towns, but, at three or four miles distance, to Sepphoris, a smaller city" (Crossan 1991:17; emphasis original). The main west-east road through Galilee ran from Ptolemais on the Mediterranean coast through Sepphoris and Tiberias.

Ptolemais itself was on the Via Maris, “that most ancient Palestinian highway of international commerce and conquest that opened Sepphoris and its environs to cosmopolitan influence” (Crossan 1991:18). Sepphoris was also the end point for the north-south road from Jerusalem, meaning that two roads carrying different types of influence converged there. Nazareth may have been off the beaten track but it was not far off a fairly well beaten track. So Nazareth must be understood in terms of its “relationship to an urban provincial capital” that amongst other things contained courts, a fortress, a theatre, a palace, a colonnaded street atop the acropolis, a royal bank and a population of around 30 000 (Crossan 1991:18-19).

Third, there is possibly the most important qualification, which comes from comparative demography. There was an unusually large number of urban and larger village centres in lower Galilee that made it one of the most densely populated regions of the Roman Empire. One is never more than a day’s walk from anywhere in lower Galilee and hence any village could not escape the effects and ramifications of urbanization. Life in lower Galilee was as urbanized as any other part of the Roman Empire, but geographical proximity and demographic density also entailed cultural continuity. Any hostilities that existed between Sepphoris and Tiberias on the one hand, and rural areas on the other, were based on political disputes and not on a cultural split. A cultural continuum existed from city to country.

Based on the three considerations mentioned above Crossan concludes that the peasants of Nazareth “lived in the shadow of a major administrative city, in the middle of a densely populated urban network, and in continuity with its hellenized cultural traditions” (Crossan 1991:19).²⁵ One cannot think of Jesus as a Galilean peasant as isolated, a “good old country boy”, since the lives of Galileans were influenced by the all-pervasive presence of the Roman city. The significance of this Crossan does not develop here but it must be seen in connection with his argument that Jesus must be seen within the context of inclusive Hellenistic Judeanism, a matter we will address later.

1.3.2 Jesus and the Brokerless Kingdom

Now we shift our attention at first to Jesus’ relationship with John the Baptist. Crossan accepts Jesus’ baptism by John as one of the surest things we can know

²⁵ For our understanding of Galilee, see chapter 4.

about both of them. Jesus, in submitting himself to John's baptism, initially accepted his apocalyptic expectation but thereafter changed his view of John's mission and message. From originally accepting John's message to await the coming of God as a repentant sinner, Jesus developed his own distinctive message and movement: it was now a question of being in the kingdom (Crossan 1991:232-238). To be more exact, it was a "brokerless kingdom" available in the present. The kingdom of God must be understood as people living under divine rule. It refers to a way of life or mode of being, not a nation or empire (human power) dependent on place (Crossan 1991:266). Of course, this affects the cultural features of *land*, *customs* and *religion*. How did this "landless" brokerless kingdom give expression to itself? Through magic and open commensality. And it is to these aspects of Crossan's reconstruction that we will turn next.

1.3.3 Jesus the Magician

Following the lead of Geza Vermes, Crossan places Jesus within the tradition of miracle working stemming from Elijah and Elisha, who apart from Jesus, was also given contemporary expression in the figures of Honi and Hanina. In contrast with Vermes, however, Crossan argues that "the title *hasid* is not appropriate, since ultra-strict observance of the law does not seem at all part of the constitutive identity of these wonder workers" and Crossan (1991:157) does not restrict the later development of the tradition to a northern (Galilean) provenance. Further, we are dealing "with a type of wonder worker who operates with certain and secure divine authority not mediated through or dependent on the normal forms, rituals, and institutions through which that divine power usually operates" and the dichotomy is that of "magician as personal and individual power against priest or rabbi as communal and ritual power" (Crossan 1991:157). To be more specific, before the temple's destruction, "it was magician against Temple" and "magicians implicitly challenge the *legitimacy* of spiritual power" (Crossan 1991:157, 158; emphasis original). Hence, Crossan specifically deals with Jesus' miracles/magic as religious banditry. Crossan (1991:305) proposes that "magic is to religion as banditry is to politics" and "magic is unofficial and unapproved religion". Here we will deal with three miracles that Crossan regards as historical and which more directly pertains to

the issue of Judean ethnicity.²⁶ Specifically, it affects the cultural features of *customs* and *religion*.

The first tradition we will discuss is Jesus' curing of a leper (EgerGos 2b [35-47]; Mk 1:40-45 parr; Lk 17:11-19). The leper petitions Jesus, if the latter so wishes, to make him clean ("if you will"), and Jesus' response is "I will". Here Jesus' authority is set on par or even above that of the Temple, since Jesus can not only cure, but declare somebody cured ("clean") as well. But there is also the injunction to submit to the legal purity regulations of the Temple (Lv 12-14). Jesus both is and is not an obedient observer of levitical purity regulations. Crossan (1991:322) argues that a common source behind the tradition "already reversed and rectified the image of Jesus as an alternative to or negation of Mosaic purity regulations by that terminally appended injunction to legal fidelity". The Egerton Gospel intensified the vision of Jesus as a law observant teacher. Mark, on the other hand, intensifies the thrust of the *original* story. He has a leper as deeply reverential to Jesus, "has Jesus actually touch the leper, and qualifies the fulfilment of the purity regulations with the confrontation challenge 'as a witness to (against) them,' namely the priests ... For Mark, then, Jesus is precisely *not* a law-observant [Judean]" (Crossan 1991:323; emphasis original). Crossan accepts the possibility that the "touch" of the leper was a traditional part of the story; hence Jesus would have showed little respect or concern for purity regulations.

The other two traditions also deal with Jesus subverting the Temple monopoly. First, Jesus cures a paralytic and also declares his sins as forgiven. Besides the differences in place and detail, Crossan sees that behind John 5:1-9 and Mark 2:1-12 parr is a single traditional event. Here the conjunction between sickness and sin involves a terrible irony, especially in first-century Palestine. Excessive taxation, Crossan explains,

could leave poor people physically malnourished or hysterically disabled. But since the religiopolitical ascendancy could not blame excessive taxation, it blamed sick people themselves by claiming that their sins had led to their illnesses. And the cure for sinful sickness was, ultimately, in the Temple. And

²⁶ The miracles that according to the Gospels Jesus performed for Gentiles at a distance (Lk 7:1-2 // Mt 8:5-10, 13; cf Jn 4:46-53 and Mk 7:24-30; Mt 15:21-23, 25-28) Crossan regards as "programmatic defenses of the later Gentile mission, as Jesus' proleptic initiation of that process ... Early [Messianist] communities symbolically retrojected their own activities back into the life of Jesus" (Crossan 1991:328).

that meant more fees, in a perfect circle of victimization. When, therefore, John the Baptist with a magical rite or Jesus with a magical touch cured people of their sickness, they implicitly declared their sins forgiven or nonexistent. They challenged not the medical monopoly of the doctors but the religious monopoly of the priests. All of this was religiopolitically subversive.

(Crossan 1991:324)

The same is basically true of the third tradition where Jesus cures a blind man (Jn 9:1-7; Mk 8:22-26). Here Jesus as the Sent One uses spittle, and he sends the blind man to Siloam (meaning “Sent”) to consummate the cure. For Crossan (1991:326), “a physical event for one man becomes a spiritual process for the world.”

But for our purposes, the religious authority of the Temple is undermined and concerns over ritual purity are ignored. Jesus touches the leper, declares him as “clean”, and through healing he implicitly declares all the beneficiaries’ sins as forgiven. Jesus engages in religious banditry, in opposition to the priests as representatives of communal and ritual power. He subverts traditional Judean ethnic identity in more than one respect. Jesus’ authority is set on an equal or even higher level than that of the Temple, a source of victimisation, and he serves as an alternative or negation of Mosaic purity regulations, and therefore, aspects of the Torah itself. Jesus the wonderworker like Elijah and Elisha, Honi and Hanina, was not interested to observe the law strictly.

1.3.4 Jesus and Open Commensality

Another expression of the brokerless kingdom was the nature of Jesus’ table fellowship. This affects the cultural features of communal solidarity or *kinship*, *customs* and *religion*. Based on various traditions (Mk 2:18-20; Lk 7:31-35 // Mt 11:16-19; Lk 11:14-15, 17-18 // Mt 12:22-26; Mt 9:32-34; Mk 3:22-26), Crossan (1991:260) takes it to mean that John the Baptist lived an apocalyptic asceticism and that Jesus did the opposite. Jesus was accused of gluttony and drunkenness and of keeping bad company. But what exactly did Jesus do? Crossan finds an answer in the Parable of the Feast (GThom 64:1-2; Lk 14:15-24 // Mt 22:1-13). The various evangelists interpreted and applied the parable to their own situations but behind them all is a common structural plot. The parable concerns a person who gives an unannounced feast, sending friends to invite friends, who did not accept the invitation

and who were then replaced by anyone off the streets. This “anyone” is very important to Crossan since it

negates the very social function of table, namely, to establish a social ranking by what one eats, how one eats, and with whom one eats. It is the random and open commensality of the parable’s meal that is the most startling element. One could, in such a situation, have classes, sexes, ranks, and grades all mixed up together. The social challenge of such egalitarian commensality is the radical threat of the parable’s vision ... And the almost predictable counteraccusation to such open commensality is immediate: Jesus is a glutton, a drunkard, and a friend of tax collectors and sinners. He makes, in other words, no appropriate distinctions and discriminations.

(Crossan 1991:262)

By making no appropriate distinctions and discriminations with whom he eats, we can say that Jesus was being very un-Judean compared with the average demands of contemporary Judeanism. Similar accusations against Jesus are found elsewhere (POxy 1224 1224, 2.5.1, lines 1-5; Mk 2:13-17 parr; GEbion 1c; Lk 15:1-2). Crossan clusters seven other traditions around the ideal of open or egalitarian commensality, four of which we will discuss. First, there are two traditions that negate any value to food taboos or table rituals (GThom 14:3; Mk 7:14-15; Mt 15:10-11; Ac 10:14; 11:8 and GThom 89; Lk 11:39-41 // Mt 23:25-26). Together they also insist that the inside and what comes from the inside out are more important than the outside and what comes from the outside in. Jesus was not aiming here exclusively at the developed table rituals of the Pharisees though. Crossan (1991:262) explains that an “open table and an open menu offend alike against any cultural situation in which distinctions among foods and guests mirror social distinctions, discriminations, and hierarchies”. But Jesus’ viewpoint did offend the Pharisees. Jesus’ accusations against the Pharisees in two traditions (GThom 39:1 & POxy 655. 39:1; GThom 102; Lk 11:52 // Mt 23:13 and Lk 11:43 // Mt 23:6-7; Mk 12:38-40 parr) when seen in conjunction highlights the parallelism between food regulations and social hierarchy (Crossan 1991:262-263). So was Jesus for or against the ritual laws of Judeanism? Crossan (1991:263) explains:

His position must have been, as it were, unclear. I propose ... that he did not care enough about such ritual laws either to attack or to acknowledge them. He ignored them, but that, of course, was to subvert them at a most

fundamental level. Later, however, some followers could say that, since he did not attack them, he must have accepted them. Others, contrariwise, could say that, since he did not follow them, he must have been against them. Open commensality profoundly negates distinctions and hierarchies between female and male, poor and rich, Gentile and [Judean].

For our present purposes, if Jesus subverted ritual laws at their most fundamental level, then likewise did he subvert Judean ethnic identity at its most fundamental level. What Crossan also implies is that open commensality profoundly negates distinctions and hierarchies between the ritually pure and unclean, between those who observe food laws and those who do not (sinners and Gentiles). Ritual purity and food laws were primary ethnic identity markers for the cultural situation of Judeans of the first century, including those that lived in Galilee. The average Judean keeping to the basic food and purity laws would not eat with sinners, much less with Gentiles – both were “impure”. Here, at times, Jesus ignored the dietary and purity laws and pretty much behaved like a sinner or Gentile, in other words, as one who was outside the realm of the covenant, outside the realm of common Judean ethnicity.

But there was more to Jesus’ association with undesirables. Jesus announced a kingdom for those who are like children. A “kingdom of children is a kingdom of nobodies” (Crossan 1991:269). Crossan finds corroboration for this picture in Jesus’ following saying: “Blessed are you poor (πτωχοὶ) for yours is the kingdom of God” (Lk 6:20 // Mt 5:3; GThom 54; cf Ja 2:5). Crossan (1991:272) brings attention to the fact that the Greek term πτωχός is a word that suggests “one who crouches”, and so a “begger”.²⁷ The πτωχός was somebody that lost his/her family and social ties. He/she was a wanderer, a foreigner to others, somebody who could not tap for any length of time the resources of a group to which he/she could contribute very little or anything at all. Based on the stratification of agrarian societies “Jesus spoke of a Kingdom not of Peasant or Artisan classes but of the Unclean, Degraded, and Expendable classes”, put in another way, a “Kingdom of the Destitute” (Crossan 1991:273). Jesus likened this Kingdom to the spread of weeds (mustard and dandelion) as seen from the angle of the landless poor, a Kingdom of undesirables. But the

²⁷ Cf Stegemann & Stegemann (1999:199-203), who regards πένητες as denoting the relatively poor and πτωχοὶ as the absolutely poor. For the time of their nomadic existence, Jesus and his disciples (some of whom were fishermen) belonged to the latter – although, under normal circumstances, the τέκτων Jesus and his initial disciples as ἀλιεῖς could also have been very poor. For the dynamics of the fishing industry in Galilee, see Hanson (1999).

Kingdom of God needs the recognition of the Kingdom as present. “For Jesus”, Crossan (1991:283) maintains, “a Kingdom of beggars and weeds is a Kingdom of here and now”.

1.3.5 Magic and Meal Coming Together

One of the most crucial aspects in Crossan’s (1991:332-348) reconstruction is Jesus’ mission charge to his disciples. He finds in three texts what he understands to be the place where one can see the heart of the Jesus movement (GThom 14:2; Luke 10:(1), 4-11 = Mt 10:7, 10b, 12-14; Mk 6:7-13 = Mt 10:1, 8-10a, 11 = Lk 9:1-6): this entails mission, dress, place, commensality, healing, the Kingdom, and lastly itinerancy. It involves Jesus’ instruction to his followers/disciples. They must go to people and share healing and the Kingdom in exchange for a meal. It entails the “conjunction of magic and meal, miracle and table, compassion and commensality” (Crossan 1991:332).

Of concern to us here, is Jesus’ instruction to them on how they should be dressed. This is relevant to the cultural feature of *customs*, but its aim affects *religion* as well. Crossan focuses on four items that is present in more than two independent sources: money/purse, sandals, bag, and bread. These items the disciples are not to take with them on their journey, although Mark allows the sandals which Crossan regards as a development in the tradition. In terms of these items Crossan (1991:338) says one immediately “notices a very striking anomaly precisely against the general background of Greco-Roman Cynicism”.²⁸ The recognisable dress of the counter-cultural Cynics included a cloak, wallet/bag (*pera*) and a staff, and their life typically included barefoot itinerancy (Crossan 1991:81). The *pera*’s function was especially to denote their self-sufficiency. But Crossan finds in Jesus’ instructions the opposite; the disciples must carry no bag, no bread, that is, no food for their journey. Crossan (1991:339) proposes the bag’s prohibition “goes back to Jesus and that it must be explained in terms of the functional symbolism of the social movement he was establishing”. The reason why there is no bag is because the missionaries were not to be self-sufficient. Crossan explains the missionaries will “share a miracle and a Kingdom” to “receive in return a table and a house.” It is here, that Crossan (1991:341) suggests, where one can find “the heart of the original Jesus movement, a shared egalitarianism of spiritual and material resources ... it concerns the longest

²⁸ For an alternative understanding of the disciples’ dress, see chapter 5.

journey in the Greco-Roman world, maybe in any world, the step across the threshold of a peasant stranger's home". The point of the exercise was commensality, not alms wages, charges or fees.

For Jesus ... commensality was not just a strategy for supporting the mission ... Commensality was, rather, a strategy for building or rebuilding peasant community on radically different principles from those of honor and shame, patronage and clientage. It was based on egalitarian sharing of spiritual and material power at the most grass-roots level. For this reason, dress and equipment appearance was just as important as house and table response.

(Crossan 1991:344)

Now what exactly are the implications for Jesus' ethnicity? We might say that combining "magic and meal", to enact the unbrokered Kingdom, to use Crossan's own words, would have a double impact on the subversion of the Temple authority, and on purity and food regulations, thus, on aspects of the Torah itself. Combined with the peculiar dress code (for example, does Crossan have itinerant Jesus and his disciples walking around barefoot? – and if so, what does it mean?), Judean ethnic identity as defined and lived out in the first century stood under fierce attack. What we have here is a basic disregard for what covenant membership normally required. Both the "brokered" Judean Temple State and the social and religious discrimination Jesus opposes was part of mainstream Judeanism and generally sanctioned by the Torah. The Judean ethnicity Jesus now envisages – a community of equals – has no need of hierarchy or discrimination of any sort. Jesus and his disciples are permanent and wilful "apostates" in this regard, since Crossan (1991:349) presumes "that dress and itinerancy, miracle and table, healing and commensality, characterised Jesus as much as his missionaries and that they characterised them not just once but all the time. 'Mission' is thus much more than a single one-time sending of some set group". But it must be mentioned that Crossan places these counter-cultural features of Jesus' "mission" within a context of peasant society just as much over and against the ethos of the Greco-Roman world as he does his Judean social world.

As already suggested, this radical "mission" of Jesus happened to bring him into conflict with the Temple as institution. John the Baptist also offered an alternative to the Temple but from another fixed location, from desert and Jordan rather from Zion

and Jerusalem. Crossan (1991:346) sees in the itinerancy of Jesus' movement a radical nature because it is a symbolic representation of unbrokered egalitarianism. Jesus was

atopic, moving from place to place, he coming to the people rather than they to him. This is an even more radical challenge to the localized univocity of Jerusalem's Temple, and its itinerancy mirrored and symbolized the egalitarian challenge of its protagonist. No matter, therefore, what Jesus thought, said, or did about the Temple, he was its functional opponent, alternative, and substitute: his relationship with it does not depend, at its deepest level, on this or that saying, this or that action.

(Crossan 1991:355)

For Crossan, however, Jesus did symbolically enact and say something about the Temple's destruction (GThom 71; Mk 14:55-59 par; Mk 15:29-32 parr; Ac 6:11-14; Jn 2:18-22). Crossan (1991:359) proposes that the earliest recoverable stratum involved an action that symbolically destroyed the Temple (Mk 11:15-16; Jn 2:14-16), accompanied by a saying announcing what was happening, "I will destroy this house utterly beyond repair" (GThom 71). Crossan proposes that poor Galilean peasants did not go up and down regularly to the Temple feasts. Crossan (1991:360) thinks

it quite possible that Jesus went up to Jerusalem only once and that the spiritual and economic egalitarianism he preached in Galilee exploded in indignation at the Temple as the seat and symbol of all that was nonegalitarian, patronal, and even oppressive on both the religious and the political level. His symbolic destruction simply actualized what he had already said in his teachings, effected in his healings, and realized in his mission of open commensality.

Crossan explains in conclusion that the symbolic destruction was but the logical extension of the miracle and table conjunction, of open healing and open eating.

Naturally, this conjunction of open healing and open eating, that culminates in opposition to the Temple, places Jesus and his followers in discontinuity with common Judeanism of their day. They become like Mediterranean peasant philosophers, who, within the context of Judeanism, offer healing and forgiveness, acting as substitutes or opponents of the Temple, indeed, as opponents of a

patronal, brokered, hierarchical and exclusive Judeanism. Indeed, be it by accident or design, the borders are shifted whereby “sinners” and Gentiles can be included within the fellowship. Jesus also symbolically destroys the Temple with no vision to rebuild it. Jesus and his disciples give no credence to dietary and purity laws, honour and shame, and offer healing and the kingdom in exchange for a meal, an extension of their open commensality. Overall they are ignoring certain requirements of the Torah and what Judean ethnicity of the day required. Jesus and his followers are redefining Judean ethnic identity based on a spiritual, social and economic egalitarianism, that could potentially even include the traditional “outsiders”.

1.3.6 Jesus and the Patriarchal Family

So how does radical egalitarianism affect the family? Of course, this concerns the cultural feature of *kinship*. Crossan initially refers to two traditions to answer this question (GThom 79:1-2; Lk 11:27-28; Jn 13:17; Ja 1:25 and GThom 99; Mk 3:19-21, 31-35 parr; 2 Clem 9:11; GEbion 5). It is not the womb who carried Jesus who is blessed, but those who do the will of God. Jesus further declares that it is his followers who are his real family (1991:299). Crossan also alludes to the tradition that Jesus said he was to bring not peace, but a sword (GThom 16; Lk 12:51-53 // Mt 10:34-36). Jesus was to bring division within families. But Crossan (1991:300) argues the point of this tradition is not about those who believe in Jesus and those who do not. “It is, just as in Micah 7:6, the normalcy of familial hierarchy that is under attack.” The strife is between generations and in both directions. “Jesus will tear the hierarchical or patriarchal family in two along the axis of domination and subordination”²⁹ and “even more significant, is that the division imagined cuts across

²⁹ Crossan (1991:262-63) understands egalitarianism as the elimination of all social distinctions (or ranking/class), discriminations and hierarchies. Here it is applied to the family. Borg understands Jesus along similar lines. One aspect of Borg’s (1994:151) understanding of the historical Jesus is that he was a teacher of an “alternative wisdom”. One area of that alternative wisdom undermined the conventional wisdom of the patriarchal family. Indeed, Jesus’ anti-family sayings illustrate that Jesus was no champion of (patriarchal) family values. Borg (1994:107) maintains the “invitation was to break with the patriarchal family – an oppressive hierarchical structure mirroring the society as a whole”. Elliott has responded to such arguments, in particular against Crossan, that such an egalitarian reading of Jesus towards the family (and egalitarianism in general) is an idealist fallacy. It is an interpretation that appears more eisegesis than exegesis, an anachronistic reading of modern notions into the biblical texts (something which Crossan pre-emptively denied, as he claims egalitarianism was deeply rooted in peasant society). Jesus’ invitation to abandon family, property, possessions, occupations, and protection, Elliott maintains, says nothing about the family as an institution in itself. It is simply the re-ordering of conventional priorities. “In these sayings Jesus issues no condemnation of the family as such. He only declares the biological family to be of secondary significance or indifference in light of the imminent commencement of God’s reign” (Elliott 2002:78-79). Jesus did not require the elimination of loyalty to one’s family

sex and gender”. The same point is made in the tradition about hating one’s family (GThom 55:1-2; 101; Lk 14:25-26 // Mt 10:37). Thus by being against the patriarchal family Jesus’ egalitarian vision extends to the family as well.

In Jesus’ teaching against divorce (1 Cor 7:10-11; Lk 16:18 // Mt 5:31-32; Mk 10:10-12 par; Herm Man 4.1:6, 10) sharp focus is brought to the honour of a wife. In Judean law at the time of Jesus, a wife was not allowed to initiate divorce proceedings, but more to the point, Jesus says against the norm that a man *can* commit adultery against the wife. The honour of the wife is to be as much protected as that of the husband. So it was not merely a teaching against divorce but an attack on androcentric honour. Its negative effects went far beyond divorce for it was the basis of the dehumanisation of women, children, and non-dominant males. For Crossan (1991:302), “Jesus sets parents against children and wife against husband, sets, in other words, the Kingdom against the Mediterranean. But not just against the Mediterranean alone”.

The breakdown of the patriarchal family also comes into play when Crossan’s treats Jesus’ relationship with his own hometown (Nazareth) and his family, especially his brothers (GThom 31 & POxy 1.31; Mk 6:1-6 par.; Lk 4:16-24; Jn 4:44). A prophet does not get honour from his own hometown and relatives. But Crossan does not

altogether. Jesus and his disciples were offered hospitality by supporters located in stable, conventional households. “Many, if not most, did not renounce their homes, property, and possessions, but rather put them at the disposal of those on the move” (Elliott 2002:79). Jesus had a positive conception of the family as an institution, gave positive attention to it, and he used it as a model to define life under God’s reign (cf Guijarro 2004:118) and overall, differences of age, gender, class and ethnicity remained as demarcations of identity and status and Jesus “urged conduct that would relativise but not eliminate such disparities” (Elliott 2002:85-86). The hallmark of the reign of God, the heavenly patriarch, was a “radical inclusivity” that “relativized all conventional lines of discrimination and exclusion”, not a “radical egalitarianism” where the family and its structure of authority disappears (Elliott 2002:87). Jesus’ formation of a surrogate family had a profound impact since it was the same model of communal life that was adopted by his followers after his death (Elliott 2003; cf Guijarro 2004:120). So the essential difference between Crossan and Elliott is as follows: Crossan sees Jesus as eliminating authority and hierarchy, while for Elliott, these typical features remained – otherwise, their assessments have a lot in common actually; Jesus worked against social discrimination of various kinds. Guijarro brings another angle to the reason why Jesus broke ties with the family. Jesus and his disciples broke their family ties not to criticize patriarchal structures but to assume the lifestyle conditions of the peasantry, particularly landless peasantry. By becoming wandering beggars themselves, Guijarro (2004:117) suggests, they, as coming from a more upper class, would have seemed more credible to peasants that lived in a similar situation in society where poverty meant the lack of family support. Guijarro (2004:116) also argues that the “success that Jesus’ preaching had among peasant masses that followed him would be very difficult to explain if he had a clearly anti-familial attitude. The family was not only the basis of Israelite society, but also the main source of identity among individuals, so that an attack on the family would be interpreted as an attack on traditional societal values and on the Israelite religion.”

see the tension as about belief in Jesus; it is about brokerage. Here we simply have Jesus' own experience of what he said about bringing division in families. Crossan (1991:347) argues that if Jesus "was a well-known magician, healer, or miracle worker, first, his immediate family, and, next, his village, would expect to benefit from and partake in the handling of that fame and those gifts. Any Mediterranean peasant would expect an expanding ripple of patronage-clientage to go out from Jesus ... in turning his back on Nazareth and on his family [Jesus repudiated] such brokerage ...".

For our purposes, Crossan's interpretation allows for Jesus to be seen as again subverting or redefining Judean ethnic identity. For example, obligations to parents was a divine command. Kinship patterns, here the patriarchal family, crucial to social and ethnic identity, stands to be obliterated. If we understand Crossan correctly, a brokerless kingdom involves not a brokered ethnic family, but a brokerless spiritual family where all are regarded as equals.

1.3.7 Jesus and Inclusive Judeanism

Crossan (1991:417-418) insists that Jesus must be understood within his contemporary "Judaism", or rather, contemporary Judeanism. But as far as he is concerned, there was in the time of Jesus only one sort of Judeanism, namely Hellenistic Judeanism.³⁰ It was a Judeanism that responded to Greco-Roman culture. Crossan further distinguishes between *exclusive* and *inclusive* Judeanism, or between exclusive and inclusive reactions to Hellenism. By inclusive Judeanism Crossan understands a Judeanism "seeking to adapt its ancestral customs as liberally as possible with maximal association, combination, or collaboration with Hellenism on the ideological level" but he also admits that inclusivity "at its extreme, can mean abdication, betrayal, and disintegration" (Crossan 1991:418). Crossan also brings attention to the writings of Judeans and Gentiles and what they had to say about one another – it was not always nice reading, in both directions, but at times it was positive. It is on the latter that Crossan focuses on, specifically on two ideological issues, the understanding of God and the question of morality. We will only discuss the Judean writings that Crossan refers to.

³⁰ For our overview of the influence and conflict with Hellenism, see chapter 3.

Crossan explains that in the Letter of Aristeas (latter second-century BCE), it is explained that Judeans and pagans worship the same God, although under different names. And an unknown Judean, writing probably in Alexandria somewhere between 30 BCE and 40 CE, writes about adultery, homosexuality and infanticide. The Sentences of Pseudo-Phocylides speaks against those three issues, but for Crossan the Sentences are based on a more inclusive vision of Judeanism and paganism. Why? It presumes a superior ethic not only from exclusively Judean revelation but from natural law commonly available to all (Crossan 1991:419-420). Now Crossan proceeds by asking the following three intriguing questions:

First, left to itself, what would have happened to the dialectic of exclusive and inclusive [Judeanism]? Second, left to itself, would [Judeanism] have been willing to compromise on, say, circumcision, in order to increase missionary possibilities among Greco-Roman pagans? Or, again, if paganism conceded on divinity and morality, could [Judeanism] have conceded on intereating and intermarrying? Third, left to itself, could [Judeanism] have converted the Roman Empire? ... Moot questions because, of course, the process was not left to itself. Within sixty-five years, first in 70-73, next in 113-115, and finally in 132-135 C.E., [Judeanism] in, respectively, Palestine, Egypt and its environs, and Palestine again, rose against Rome.

(Crossan 1991:420)

The effects of these were of course the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem and Judea was proscribed to Judeans, and eventually, rabbinical Judeanism/Judaism emerged along with the ascendancy of exclusive over inclusive Judeanism/Judaism.

Now of relevance to us is that Crossan regards the questions he posed as important, since he interprets Jesus “against the background of inclusive rather than exclusive [Judeanism]”, “a peasant, oral and popular praxis of what might be termed ... a [Judean] Cynicism” (Crossan 1991:421). Crossan (1991:421) continues by saying it “involved practice and not just theory, life-style and not just mind-set in opposition to the cultural heart of Mediterranean civilization, a way of looking and dressing, of eating, living, and relating that announced its contempt for honor and shame, for patronage and clientage. They were hippies in a world of Augustan yuppies. Jesus and his followers ... fit very well against *that* background” (emphasis original). Jesus was also closest to a magician type figure, and in consequence, Crossan argues we

are forced to bring together two disparate elements: healer and Cynic, magic and meal.

The historical Jesus was, then, a *peasant [Judean] Cynic*. His peasant village was close enough to a Greco-Roman city like Sepphoris that sight and knowledge of Cynicism are neither inexplicable nor unlikely ... His strategy, implicitly for himself and explicitly for his followers, was the combination of free healing and common eating, a religious and economic egalitarianism that negated alike and at once the hierarchical and patronal normalcies of [Judean] religion and Roman power ... He was neither broker nor mediator ... Miracle and parable, healing and eating were calculated to force individuals into unmediated physical and spiritual contact with God and unmediated physical and spiritual contact with one another. He announced, in other words, the brokerless kingdom of God.

(Crossan 1991:421-422; emphasis original)

Crossan (1991:422) also argues that “Jesus, as a peasant [Judean] Cynic, was already moving, but on a popular level, within the ambience of inclusive [Judeanism’s] synthesis of [Judean] and Gentile tradition.” Without a doubt this reconstruction of Jesus estranges him from first-century Judean ethnic identity in a dramatic way. Although Judeanism was influenced by Hellenism, it was very much geared at achieving the opposite than a synthesis of Judean and Gentile tradition. But Crossan’s understanding of the situation of Nazareth allows for an opposite conclusion. It was in proximity to a Greco-Roman city like Sepphoris, thereby locating Jesus within the ambience of inclusive Judeanism. Jesus was ideologically an inclusive Judean, a product of cultural continuity between rural and urban areas of Lower Galilee, itself part of the larger sea of Hellenism and the Roman Empire that gave opportunity for a synthesis between Judean and Gentile Hellenistic tradition.

1.3.8 Summary: John D Crossan – Jesus A Mediterranean “Jewish” Peasant

Crossan’s reconstruction has very little that connects Jesus with traditional Judean ethnicity in the first century. (Of course, Crossan’s historical Jesus would stand in continuity with his notion of inclusive Hellenistic Judeanism.) Jesus appears more as a peasant Mediterranean philosopher than a peasant Judean prophet or sage, and his Judean background is stretched very thin over the ethos of the Roman-Hellenistic empire. Where continuity exists is Jesus’ faith in God, but not the God peculiar to

Israel as such, since Greeks and Romans can also know God albeit under different names. Nazareth was also a Judean village, but it must be seen as in cultural continuity with Sepphoris and its Hellenised traditions. In addition, Jesus illustrates a strong community solidarity with socially marginalized Judeans, but one gets the impression this is ideologically not reserved for Judeans alone. There is an openness that could potentially even include the “sinners” and the Gentiles.

Besides the above, after Jesus was baptised by John, Jesus broke away from his eschatological message and concerned himself with the brokerless kingdom of God that is available in the present. It involves those people who place themselves under divine rule – it is not dependent on a nation or place. Jesus challenged the legitimacy of the Temple’s spiritual (and communal and ritual) power and engages in religious banditry. Through Jesus’ healings/magic, he is placed on par or even above the authority of the Temple, and he implicitly forgives the beneficiaries their sins. He touches lepers and makes them “clean”, and so serves as an alternative or negation of the Mosaic purity regulations. In fact, he ignores purity rules. In open commensality, Jesus shows he has no interest in making appropriate distinctions and discriminations. He negates the value of food taboos and table rituals. Judeans of different classes and sexes are free to eat together, their ritual status being irrelevant.

When magic and meal come together, the “mission” of Jesus (and his followers) to enact the brokerless kingdom requires a peculiar dress code, in some ways similar (yet different) to Greco-Roman Cynicism. Jesus and his followers are (barefoot?) itinerants as opposed to the localised Temple. Jesus serves as the Temple’s functional opponents and its substitute – by implication, also to the Torah in some respects. When Jesus was in Jerusalem he symbolically destroyed it and said he would destroy it beyond repair. Jesus was also against the brokered and patriarchal family. He brought division between the generations, and set a wife against her husband – similar tension Jesus experienced with his own family. Jesus sets up an alternative kinship pattern based on egalitarian principles. Lastly, Jesus moved within the ambience of inclusive Hellenistic Judeanism’s synthesis of Judean and Gentile tradition. Inclusive Judeanism recognised that it had common ground with some Gentile traditions, such as the understanding of God and questions of morality. Overall, Jesus a peasant Judean Cynic, who sets the kingdom – a religious and economic egalitarianism not dependent on place or nation – in opposition to the Mediterranean and Judean ethos of honour and shame, patronage and clientage.

So if Jesus was a peasant Judean Cynic, a counter-cultural figure, what does that mean for Jesus' ethnic identity? Crossan by no means denies that Jesus was a Judean, yet his reconstruction with a very strong element of discontinuity with traditional Judeanism, does have some strong implications for Jesus' Judean identity. This we will investigate in further detail in chapter 2. A counter-cultural and Hellenised figure such as Jesus, in opposition to a hierarchical and brokered Judeanism as he was, needs to be analysed in terms of an overall interpretive framework, or a guideline that more or less gives guidelines for a common Judeanism.

1.4 IDENTIFYING THE PROBLEM

The problems identified above with Meier and Crossan's reconstructions exist generally in the so-called "Third Quest". As already mentioned, it is supposed that one of the characteristic traits of the "Third Quest" is to place emphasis on the "Jewishness", or rather Judeanness of Jesus. It also generally wants to place Jesus *within* Judeanism and to view him as properly integrated into the Judeanism of his day. Thus the "Third Quest" emphasizes the *continuity* between Jesus and his environment and assumes him to be an integral part of it (Du Toit 2001:100-109; Harrington 1987). Holmén (2001:150) explains that the "Third Quest" is distinguished from earlier phases of Jesus research "by viewing Jesus as profoundly [Judean], properly integrated into the [Judeanism] of his time". But he also notes that on closer examination, such a view "reveals that there are some intricate difficulties involved here". He is especially referring to the view that has developed over the past few decades that there was no orthodox Judeanism in Jesus' day. Judeanism was formative, or dynamic, and there was an almost unlimited diversity and variety, or that pluralism was commonplace. Holmén (2001:152-153) has noted the paradox: "We can actually determine what is 'profoundly [Judean]' only if we use some kind of 'normative [Judeanism]' as a yardstick". He further argues the "*crucial problem of the 'Third Quest' seems to be that it is not the least clear what ['Judeanness'] means. Indeed, judged on the basis of different scholarly pictures of Jesus it can mean almost anything*" (Holmén 2001:154; emphasis added). So to talk about Jesus' Judeanness has become widespread, but it is something quite void of real meaning. It is "not much more than a slogan which leaves the impression of representing something good and enlightened but under the veil of which many things can happen" (Holmén 2001:157). Harrington (1987:8) has also argued that our increased understanding of Judeanism's diversity "has made it even more difficult to be sure

precisely what kind of [Judean] Jesus was and against which historical background we should try to understand him.”

Holmén (2001:158-159) suggests that it is possible to focus the analysis of the data on different elements, namely, on “what is common and what unites, and what is different and what separates.” By utilising these two features, *“we arrive at different definitions of [Judeanism] not to be seen as mutually exclusive but as complementary and purpose-orientated”* (emphasis original). Holmén then draws attention to the strategies of “nominalism” and “essentialism”. Nominalism accounts for the differences on Judeanism. Essentialism looks at common characteristics of Judeanism, such as core belief and foundational metaphor, monotheism, covenant and ethnic exclusivism, and so on. Holmén (2001:160) suggests that for Jesus-of-history research, “essentialism” is the appropriate strategy, although he does not find the term all that satisfying. He refers to scholars who in their own way have attempted to set some guidelines for something like basic or common Judeanism; i e Dunn (the “four pillars” – see next chapter), Sanders (“covenantal nomism” – see next chapter) and Wright (“mainline”, explained through the study of worldview, beliefs and hope). Holmén goes on to explain:

The guidelines for basic or common [Judeanism] would not question the diversity of first-century [Judeanism], neither would they question Jesus’ [Judeanness]. But the guidelines would enable us meaningfully to evaluate just how he was [Judean] by justifying the positing of pictures of Jesus varying from the commonly [Judean] to the marginally [Judean]. We could again assess whether Jesus was, for example, profoundly [Judean] or a ‘different kind of [Judean]’.

(Holmén 2001:161)

Following Holmén’s lead we will have a look at Dunn and Sanders’ attempts at establishing guidelines for a “common Judaism”, or rather, “common Judeanism”, and eventually we will integrate their work into our own proposed model, drawing inspiration from Duling’s (2005) Socio-Cultural Model of Ethnicity. Duling’s generic model, amongst other things, lists the cultural features to look out for when analysing the ethnic identity of a particular group of people (i e *name, myths of common ancestry, shared “historical” memories, phenotypical features, land, language, kin, customs and religion*).

There are scholars who are of the opinion that we cannot even speak of a “common Judaism/Judeanism”. We should rather speak of “Judaisms”/Judeanisms. For example, Chilton & Neusner (1995) argues that there was no single orthopraxy or law that governed life of all “Jews”. The work such as produced by Dunn and Sanders is also criticised in that it focuses only on a small selection of theological elements that are claimed to be constitutive of “Jewish” identity. Our argument for a “common Judeanism” is developed in the next chapter, but for now it can be asked is the absolute insistence on “Judaisms”/Judeanisms not taking the ancient data to an unnecessary extreme?³¹ It is agreed that the approaches of Dunn and Sanders are limited, something which they themselves admit (see next chapter), but it is our argument that their aim is warranted and their different approaches which concentrate on a few “theological” issues and on what is common and what unite are a step in the right direction. Ethnicity theory informs us that religion is one cultural feature that contributes towards ethnic identity. In addition, in pre-modern eras a distinctive religion or vision of a world religion proved to be a very strong force in the persistence of ethnic identity (Smith 1994:716). The notions of Israel's God (monotheism), his election of Israel and gift of the Law, adherence to the Temple and the requirement to obey so as to maintain covenant status, elements variously emphasised by Dunn and Sanders respectively, most certainly qualify as a distinctive religion or vision of a religion. These elements were widely shared and Judeans for the greater part had far more in common than what divided them (cf Stegemann & Stegemann 1999:149-50).

³¹ We can elaborate on this by making the following contrast. One can speak of “Judaisms/Judeanisms” as you can speak of “Christianities”. Perhaps it is possible then to speak of a “common Christianity”, as Christians share many common beliefs and practices. By contrast, however, first century “Judaism”/Judeanism was something that present day Christianity is not – it was an *ethnic identity*, a unique cultural entity in addition to being a religious identity. And what Chilton and Neusner write of a particular “Judaism” can equally apply to “Judaism”/Judeanism as an ethnic identity. They speak of three necessary components of a religious system, e.g. of a specific “Judaism”: 1) way of life; 2) world-view; and 3) a theory of the social entity. So when it comes to “a Judaism”, “a Judaic theory of the social order will always call its social entity ‘Israel,’ invariably will appeal to the Torah, and inevitably will link the main propositions of the theory to the Torah, whether through explicit, verbal exegesis, or through gestures or actions or rites that mirror or mimic those of the Torah, or through other media of cultural continuity ... The way of life of a Judaism finds its critical task in mediating between a way of living deemed natural and broadly accepted [!] and the special traits of the distinct social entity, that is, in defining ‘we’ as against ‘they’” (Chilton & Neusner 1995:42-43). But we must ask why this cannot be applied to all or most “Jews”/Judeans as a distinct social entity, whose participants in most respects had “a way of living deemed natural and broadly accepted” and a common worldview derived from the Torah, and who would call their social entity Israel. Ethnicity theory (see below) in this regard also speaks of a “we” *aggregative* self-definition (and a “we-they” *oppositional* self-definition).

The above suggests that if we approach first century Judaism, or as we prefer to call it, first century *Judeanism* as an *ethnic identity*, not merely as a loose collectivity of differing religious persuasions, the potential does exist that we can speak of a “common Judaism/Judeanism”. In this respect the more “theological” even if limited approach of Dunn and Sanders give us a good starting point. This does not eliminate the reality of diversity within “Judaism”/Judeanism. Even so, the overwhelming majority of “Jews”/Judeans (being peasant farmers living in villages and towns) were not members of any religious sect and would have adhered to the basics of “Jewish”/Judean religion and culture common to all. But be they priests, Pharisees, Essenes, Sadducees, or peasant farmers, their wives and children included, they all would have been recognised – both from without and within – as “Jews”/Judeans, whether they had marginal status or not. We are speaking here of a collectivity of people who expressed their identity through a widely shared religion, but in addition to this, also a shared ancestry and history, customs, kinship, and attachment to the ancestral land of Israel.

Our focus will therefore now shift to develop a socio-cultural model of Judean ethnicity where the above mentioned elements will feature prominently. We propose that by developing a model, it can shed some light on what “common Judeanism” actually constituted. This is also essential to our thesis since it is our aim to analyse the Judean ethnicity of Jesus’ early followers as presupposed by the source Q. How did being a follower of Jesus affect your Judean ethnic identity? And how did they compare to the “common” or “essentialist” ethnic identity of the greater mass of Judeans of their day? We can also gain better insight into what kind of Judean Jesus was himself. As Holmén points out, there is not really a clear idea of what being “Jewish”/Judean meant in the first century, and it is on this important issue that we will focus our energy in the next chapter.