



<https://theses.gla.ac.uk/>

Theses Digitisation:

<https://www.gla.ac.uk/myglasgow/research/enlighten/theses/digitisation/>

This is a digitised version of the original print thesis.

Copyright and moral rights for this work are retained by the author

A copy can be downloaded for personal non-commercial research or study, without prior permission or charge

This work cannot be reproduced or quoted extensively from without first obtaining permission in writing from the author

The content must not be changed in any way or sold commercially in any format or medium without the formal permission of the author

When referring to this work, full bibliographic details including the author, title, awarding institution and date of the thesis must be given

Enlighten: Theses

<https://theses.gla.ac.uk/>
research-enlighten@glasgow.ac.uk

Jesus the Galilean Prophet and the Quest for the Prophetic Church

A thesis presented as the requirement for the degree of Master of Theology by research.

Student: Joseph Anthony Kavanagh

0402785

The University of Glasgow

1st January 2007

ProQuest Number: 10390688

All rights reserved

INFORMATION TO ALL USERS

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.



ProQuest 10390688

Published by ProQuest LLC (2017). Copyright of the Dissertation is held by the Author.

All rights reserved.

This work is protected against unauthorized copying under Title 17, United States Code
Microform Edition © ProQuest LLC.

ProQuest LLC.
789 East Eisenhower Parkway
P.O. Box 1346
Ann Arbor, MI 48106 – 1346

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my thanks to Mary my wife for all her practical help in setting down this thesis in print; Louise Lawrence for her wisdom and sense of humour which were most encouraging; and the Church of Scotland study leave scheme and the Hope Trust for their much appreciated financial assistance.

Abstract

This thesis seeks to examine the possibility of making connections between the prophetic ministry of Jesus and the prophetic ministry of today's Church. In Part One of my thesis this examination takes the form of an historical investigation of the life of Jesus the Galilean with all its various influences (political, social, religious, economic). After seeking to determine the background to the prophetic ministry of Jesus, I will then examine particular related themes by way of an exegesis of various Gospel texts. In Part Two of my thesis I will relate the fruit of this study to the on-going life of a Church of Scotland parish church. This is achieved through the delivery of a series of sermons based on the themes chosen. *Audios of these sermons are submitted on CD to accompany this thesis.* Reactions to these sermons were gathered by interviewing selected church members in the hope of trying to forge some connections between the context and message of Jesus the Prophet and the context and message of what I term 'the Prophetic Church' in the contemporary world.

Contents

Introduction

1 Statement of Intent.....	1
2 The Church's Jesus: too heavenly minded to be of any earthly use?	5

Part One: Jesus the Galilean Prophet

Chapter One: Imperial Galilee: the Land in which Jesus lived and moved and had his being..... 10

1: The historical roots of the Galilean.....	10
2: Everyday life in Galilee.....	14
3: The Urbanisation of rural Galilee	15
4: Galilee: an outpost of Greece?	17
5: Life under Herod Antipas, Rome's man!.....	22
6: Galilee: hot bed of revolution?.....	28
7: Religious responses to Roman rule.....	32
i: Pharisees	33
ii: Sadducees.....	34
iii: Essenes.....	36

Summary of Religious responses to Roman rule..... 37

Chapter Two: Prophecy..... 39

Prophecy: An Introduction	39
Jesus the Prophet	53

Chapter Three: Jesus the Prophet: selected Gospel evidence 68

Exegesis: Theme: Wealth and Poverty	69
Luke 6:20-26: Blessings and Woes	70
Luke 16:19-31: The parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus	73
Exegesis: Theme: Inclusiveness	76
Matthew 8:5-10: The healing of the Centurion's servant	77
Matthew 11:16-19: Jesus the friend of tax collectors and sinners	79
Matthew 19:12: The place of eunuchs in the Kingdom.....	80
Matthew 21:28-32: The parable of the two sons.....	81
Exegesis: Theme: Power and Politics	82

Matthew 5:38-42 With particular reference to v41: The Law of Retaliation.....	82
Matthew 11:7-9: Jesus words about John the Baptist.....	84
Mark 12:13-17: Payment of taxes to Caesar.....	85
Exegesis: Theme: Urbanisation.....	87
Matthew 11:28-30: Jesus call to the "Heavy Laden".....	88
Luke 19:41-44: Jesus weeps over Jerusalem.....	93
Mark 11:15-19; Matthew 21:12-17; Luke 19:45-48: The Cleansing of the Temple.....	95
Conclusion.....	99
Part Two: The Quest for the Prophetic Church – Four Galilean Earthed Sermons	
Chapter One: Sermon Preamble.....	101
A: Method.....	101
B: Who is the Congregation?.....	101
C: Why the Sermon?.....	102
Chapter Two: Sermon – Wealth and Poverty.....	104
i: Introduction.....	104
ii: Sermon.....	104
iii: Congregational Responses.....	108
Respondent A.....	108
Respondent B.....	109
Respondent C.....	110
Respondent D.....	111
iv: Response to Responses.....	112
Chapter Three: Sermon – Inclusiveness.....	114
i: Introduction.....	114
ii: Sermon.....	114
iii: Congregational Responses.....	119
Respondent A.....	119
Respondent B.....	120
Respondent C.....	121
Respondent D.....	122
iv: Response to Responses.....	123

Chapter Four: Sermon – Urbanisation.....	125
i: Introduction.....	125
ii: Sermon.....	125
iii: Congregational Responses.....	130
Respondent A.....	130
Respondent B.....	131
Respondent C.....	131
Respondent D.....	132
iv: Response to Responses.....	137
Chapter Five: Sermon – Power and Politics.....	139
i: Introduction.....	139
ii: Sermon.....	139
iii: Congregational Responses.....	142
Respondent A.....	142
Respondent B.....	143
Respondent C.....	144
Respondent D.....	145
iv: Response to Responses.....	146
Chapter Six: Congregational Responses to the Sermons.....	148
Concluding remarks on responses.....	148
Thesis Conclusion.....	150
Bibliography.....	155

Jesus the Galilean Prophet and the Quest for the Prophetic Church

Introduction

I Statement of Intent

In this thesis I will explore the relevance today to the local church of the Prophetic role ascribed to Jesus within the Gospels, and discussed by various Historical Jesus scholars.

I hope to attain an understanding of Jesus the Prophet in his own first century milieu, and to critically appraise ways in which that prophetic ministry might help to frame the mission of the church in the present day.

It is my belief that as Jesus ministered to the people of his own day, who obviously did not share the Post-Easter faith of the Church, so there must be a continuity of mission linking those acts to the acts of the Church of every age. This assumption is based on the belief that whatever the Resurrection means for faith, it does not set aside, it does not negate, the importance of Jesus' 'earthly' deeds and words, what he meant to and for the people with whose lives his own life was bound up.

What I am seeking to do is to reclaim, in a sense, the man Jesus, what he stood for as a human being with a sense of a divine calling in his own day for the Church of today. I do believe that the Historical Jesus, who himself lived by faith, has been somewhat eclipsed by becoming the object of faith for Christians. The amount of historical reference to Jesus is quite negligible in the New Testament writings other than the Gospels, indeed Jesus the Prophet is only referred to once outside of the Gospels and that is in Acts 3:22. As the Early Church reflected on the person and work of Jesus, it does appear that from an early period in its life the category of Prophet was disregarded as being central to the understanding of Jesus, though prophecy itself was still an important ministry within the Church [Ephesians 4 : 1 Corinthians 12]. In all probability how the Early Church understood the Resurrection

contributed to a developing of its Christology, and the apostle Paul's doctrinal input only added to "another worldly" view of Jesus. The early debates in the Church concerning Jesus, for example with the docetists and the ebionites, were to continue through the first five centuries which led to considerable christological development with the resulting creeds of Nicea and Chalcedon. Taken together, I would want to suggest that these "events" have contributed to an underplaying of the message of the historical ministry of Jesus to people in his own day which subsequently has limited the Church's understanding of its own mission.

From my own perspective I would wish to argue for a degree of continuity between the pre and post Easter Jesus. But I have to acknowledge that the emphasis on the Christ of Faith has not been helpful in allowing the historical Jesus to fully find his place within the everyday life of the Church. This is where I hope that my quest for the historical Jesus will be in some way different from a straightforward academic inquiry, in that it is my desire to enable the fruit of study to bring forth fruit in the actual life of a congregation.

There are several paths which I hope to follow throughout my study. The division of the Historical Jesus and the Christ of Faith is somewhat problematic as has been already stated. Therefore at the outset of my study I would want to acknowledge that I must be constantly aware of the tensions that this division creates. The big challenge will be how to take the model of Jesus the Prophet of the first century and make the link with the Prophetic role of the Church today. Historical study will only reveal Jesus in the context of a first century Palestinian Jew and this has the problem of locating him more and more in a context which becomes more and more different from the present one. How does one take the ministry and teaching of an itinerant preacher travelling around the northern fringes of Lake

Galilee and convert this into a pattern of ministry relevant to a 21st century metropolis.

Sources: In seeking to understand the historical Jesus an understanding of the historical context of his own day must be gained. If in some way our environment helps to shape the people we are and are becoming, then what was going on around Jesus cannot be ignored. A study of Jesus' own self understanding, if that is at all possible, cannot alone furnish a full appreciation of his ministry. And so I will turn to the works of Josephus, works which are seen as providing the main sources of historical background of the environment in which Jesus found himself. My reading of Josephus I hope to supplement with relevant historical studies which explore, for example, life in Galilee itself, and so my intention is to provide as detailed a historical background as is possible. As I turn to the sources I will do so aware that these are not completely objective. For any writer of whatever genre, thorough objectivity is unattainable, and of course Josephus' own pro-Roman bias, which affects his writings, is well known. The Gospels will provide much source material and again a critical use of the Evangelists' writings is necessary. Most certainly one must acknowledge that the Evangelists' weave their sources together for their own uses and therefore put their own imprint upon the finished product. This is not to single them out as unique as all historical sources contain a subjective element, I only wish to show I am aware that they do so. There is also the question of what kind of literature the Gospels are which in turn relates to the ways in which one can use the material they offer. So once again limitations are imposed by the writers, and the nature of the source material. And as I seek to interact with the sources there is my own subjectivity which is bound up with my quest. The danger for me, as for all students of the historical Jesus, is to create a Jesus who suits me, my purposes, who is, in fact, quite like me.

Linked also to source study, I will review the various models of prophecy which present themselves in the different sources. There was not just one kind of prophet in and around the time of Jesus. In his book *Jesus, Justice and the Reign of God* (2000) William Herzog speaks of Clerical Prophets, Sapiential Prophets, Sign Prophets and Popular Prophets. Among other scholars, categories and emphases vary; this is seen for example in Richard Horsley's analysis of prophets where he subdivides them into Oracular and Action prophets respectively. What areas or types of prophecy do these categories represent? Can the question, 'what is a prophet?', be answered in a straight forward way? Where would Jesus fit into these categories, if at all? Testing what we can ascertain about Jesus the Prophet against the different prophetic models will be an important aspect of this thesis. The objective of such an analysis will be to clarify for myself what kind of prophet Jesus is and then to take those findings and work with them in relation to his own context, testing my thesis against certain Gospel traditions. What I hope to arrive at is my working model of Jesus the Prophet, and this aided by a dialogue with the conclusions of scholars who themselves, in considering the nature of the Historical Jesus, have recognised a prophetic strand within his ministry. The differing emphases of these scholars, for example, the social, political or apocalyptic emphasis, will be considered and evaluated against my own conclusions.

The outcome of the examination of source and models, and the conclusions reached therein, will lead on to an exploration of the prophetic nature of the Church today in relation to Jesus the Prophet. Various possibilities will be considered as to how the Church might live prophetically particularly in relation to the Church being a prophetic symbol within the world. This is not purely a biblical studies exercise but one which also touches the day to day life of the Church in pastoral and missiological ways. I will explore these aspects of my studies by the selection of four themes of

Jesus' prophetic ministry which I will identify and work with in relation to Jesus' ministry. These themes will then be developed by preaching on them within the context of my congregation's Sunday worship services, and responses will be sought in order to gauge the impact of them.

2: The Church's Jesus: too heavenly minded to be of any earthly use?

William R Herzog II in his book: *Jesus, Justice and the Reign of God* (2000:35/6) writes of three gaps which we must recognise and address as we grapple with the question of the Historical Jesus. The first gap is that between our world and the world of Jesus. Jesus is a 1st Century Palestinian Jew, immersed in a culture which is so different from ours, immersed in a thought world whose ideas seem very strange to 21st century people. In any study of Jesus there has to be an attempt to understand his world, and also to distinguish our world from it so that we might be as objective as possible. The second gap Herzog identifies is that between the time of Jesus and the time of the Gospel writers. The great debate as to how this gap influences the Gospel material is itself ongoing; questions as to the authenticity of the Gospel material are numerous and views which are diametrically opposed are offered by various scholars. But irrespective of the conclusions as to authenticity which are reached, the gap and how the Jesus material was shaped in that time has to be recognised and addressed. The third gap is that relating to the different ways each part of the tradition represents Jesus and Jesus' own self-conception. No Gospel writer gives us the complete picture; each is being selective in their use of material, presenting the relevant Jesus for their particular communities. So there is the gap between the pictures of Jesus presented to us and the reality of the historical Jesus outside the text. These gaps present us with a challenge in trying to gain an understanding of what Jesus was all about, of how he viewed himself and his

ministry, but also harbours the added risk of making the historical Jesus seemingly irrelevant to the 'Jesus of the Church'.

The gaps presented by Herzog, sum up the challenge which is clearly seen in the on-going debate concerning the pre-Easter Jesus and post-Easter Christ of Faith (though in this thesis I would wish to refer to the pre and post Easter Jesus). This debate has often been regarded as a way of undermining the traditional Faith. The conclusions reached by many scholars from D F Strauss onwards have questioned the historical value of the Gospels. The Gospels are themselves seen as a product of post-Easter faith and so the faith passed on through them does not have the strongest historical basis. The picture most Church people have of Jesus is one which has been developed through the Easter Faith of the Church, which has in turn influenced, for example, the presentation of his birth. Through the Christological development of the New Testament and Early Church Creeds, we have been presented with a picture of the Son of God. In a sense this has taken Jesus out of his historical context and made him part of an eternal divinity, the object of worship, the timeless companion of every Christian believer. This appreciation of Jesus raises the question of just how relevant the pre-Easter Jesus is to the minds and lives of today's Christians. The question of the relevancy of Jesus' own context in relation to his perception of what he was doing for, and saying to, the people of his own time arises also. In my work as a Church of Scotland Parish Minister, I am in constant contact, in different circumstances, with ordinary Christians. For the vast majority of these good folk, as my later survey helps to illustrate, there is no real knowledge/interest in what life was like, on a daily basis, in first century Israel/Palestine. There is no attempt to take the Gospel material and marry it to a culture, to an historical person, who sought to bring a message which would impinge upon the lifestyle of a people in the actual time in which he lived. Yet this is

so important to gaining an understanding of the text. Exegesis is a valuable means through which the words of the past can become the living words for today.

The post-Easter Jesus and the subsequent development of the pre-eminence of the need to prepare for our own post-death existence drew the Church away from proclaiming the relevance of Jesus' own historical role and teaching; the ethics and ethos of this historical man became overshadowed by his death and resurrection, and the subsequent theology that arose from these events. It has well been said that the Medieval Christian's life was always lived in the context of what was to come after death and this emphasis certainly can be picked up again in the Reformers, and very clearly in the growth of the 19th century evangelical movement which still today is very influential. In the 20th century there was a divide in the Protestant Church between Social Gospel or Spiritual Gospel, public or private religion, a divide which still exists to some extent, though today there is a growing holistic approach to being Church, that is, that as the Good News is preached, human need in all its parts is addressed. Yet while acknowledging this change I would want to ask, especially in the context of the local congregation, how much of this is due to an understanding of the historical Jesus and its influence upon people's actions? Are the actions being undertaken by the Church, based on a desire to carry on the tradition laid down by Jesus the 1st century Palestinian Jew? Has the Church now got to the point of engaging with this life due to having re-engaged with the pre-Easter Jesus? And perhaps the question needs to be asked: might the Church discover other avenues of service if her understanding of the historical Jesus increased?

As a minister with a call to teach and preach, I myself have undergone a theological journey. At one time I would have been associated with a narrow evangelicalism with the result that the concentration of my preaching and teaching

would have been much more 'next-world' orientated, Christology and Eschatology would have filled the content of many a sermon. In those days I would have subscribed to the belief that Jesus could have repaired a coloured television! Nothing was beyond him because he was the eternal Son of God with all that that made possible. Looking back upon that time I believe that most of what I delivered to congregations would have been Pauline based, Jesus would have been presented as Lord and saviour, not prophet or political protestor. Due to study, experience and reflection, my theology broadened and I discovered that I was being drawn particularly to the Gospels and especially to the interplay between Jesus and the various outcasts of his day, as portrayed by the Evangelists. This influenced not only my theology but my approach to ministry as I engaged with people both from the pulpit and on a one to one basis. The humanity of Jesus became, and still remains, a tremendous focus for me, yet in saying that I still very much wish to speak of God's action in and through Jesus. But I became gripped by Jesus' humanity and the human situations with which he became involved. The relevancy of Jesus became more and more related to this life such that the application of his work, of his words, now required a much broader understanding. That conclusion I reached some years ago and the change, in my ministry, has reflected my greater appreciation of the historical Jesus, but mainly that picture of the historical Jesus which has been taken from the Gospels only. For the most part my historical Jesus was, prior to studying for this thesis, an uncritically viewed one, that is, one developed apart from the scholarly work of folks like Theissen, Sanders, Borg and Crossan to name but a few. What I mean by that is I accepted the picture of Jesus which was presented to me through my church experience which was both orthodox and evangelical. When undertaking my first degree I was still very much within the 'evangelical camp' and this made me wary of accepting a critical view of the Gospels. However, this thesis is partly being

undertaken to enable me to study the historical roots of Jesus' life, context, and culture in order, I hope, to gain fresh insight from a broad based study, into the importance of the pre Easter Jesus for faith, for Church and for life today. This relates to my intention to address the question of the gap between pre Easter Jesus and post Easter Jesus as it is expressed in the on going experience of congregational life. I hope that the thesis, in some way, will provide pointers to answering questions such as: what does the pre Easter Jesus have to say to us about life in this world itself? What particular emphases of the Pre-Easter Jesus became redundant with the rise of the post-Easter Jesus? What relevance does the pre-Easter Jesus have for the people in the pews? These questions, and more, I hope to address as I explore my thesis which will look at the relevance of the historical Jesus for today's congregation.

Part One: Jesus the Galilean Prophet

Chapter 1

Imperial Galilee: the land in which Jesus lived and moved and had his being.

My intention in this chapter is to set the broadest background possible in terms of seeking to understand the 'influences and powers' at work in Jesus' lifetime.

1 The historical roots of the Galileans

In considering the importance of Galilee in respect of providing a context for understanding the historical Jesus, the principal text I wish to use is: *Archaeology and the Galilean Jesus* [2002]. The author is Jonathan L Reed, Professor of New Testament and Christian Origins at the University of La Verne, California. Reed is also the Field Director of the Sepphoris Acropolis Excavations, He is therefore a man well acquainted with both a textual approach and an archaeological approach to the question of 'how do we understand the historical Jesus?' But in this particular book Reed is critical of purely text-centred approaches and states very clearly his belief in the necessity of understanding the cultural, economic, social, political and religious environment of Jesus if we are to truly understand his mission and ministry. Overall, I find Reed's book persuasive in both its premise and the conclusions it sets forth in respect of the broad background to the historical Jesus. I intend therefore to give a brief outline of the book, followed by an overview of the Galilee Jesus lived and ministered in.

Part One of Reed's book focuses on the archaeological links which point to a mutually shared history between Galileans and Judaeans. Reed looks at four major indicators of this relationship from archaeological digs, for example, the presence of stepped plastered pools (*miqva'oth*) in domestic sites and bone profiles that lack pork, and from these indicators he comes to his own answer concerning the identity of the Galileans. Reed also considers the development of Antipas' building projects

at Sepphoris and Tiberius and their influence upon the life of the Galilean peasant. Part Two turns the archaeological spotlight on two particular sites: Sepphoris, the largest city in Galilee, four miles or so from Nazareth, and Capernaum which according to the Gospels was Jesus' base from where he ministered. Again Reed is looking at the question of what knowledge can be provided for the understanding of Jesus. Part Three consists of excursions into the Q community, which Reed believes came from Galilee, and the relevance of the Jonah tradition is explored also; both Q and Jonah provide particular Galilean theological trends which Reed believes are influential in the Galilean approach to the centrality of Jerusalem and Temple. Part four concludes with a consideration of the necessity of understanding the specifically Galilean background for the exploration of the Gospels.

All in all, I find that Reed presents his arguments and more importantly the archaeological evidence in such a way as to emphasise how critical such background knowledge is for the understanding of Jesus. I now wish to work with Reed's book and other studies to present a picture of Galilee at the time of Jesus.

The question of "who were the Galileans?" is an important one which is greatly debated and which certainly has a particular relevance for the mission of Jesus. Broadly, there are three possible answers to the question and each has its own particular corollary in respect of the relationship between Galilee and Judaea. The first answer is quite straightforward: Galileans were Jews. A second possibility is that the Galileans were descendants of pagans who had converted to Judaism, and lastly, a third response to the question is that the Galileans' ancestry stretched all the way back to the people of the Northern Israelite Kingdom of the Hebrew Scriptures. Now, if we accept the first answer we can confidently speak of a strong bond between Galilee and Judaea, one which is cemented by a shared religion with the all important Temple at its heart. If though the second answer holds sway then the

possibility does arise that the Judaeans would always view Galileans as not being truly Jewish, but also from the Galilean perspective there would perhaps be an ambivalent attitude towards the importance of Jerusalem and the Temple. On the other hand, if there is a mixed racial and religious background to Galilee, a more open attitude to 'outsiders' might be forthcoming from Galileans. If the last answer is deemed to be the correct one, that is the one referring to Northern Israelite origins, most certainly there would be found in Galilee an independent streak marking it out clearly from Judaea. Sean Freyne states that Horsley for example, would go as far as to say that in the generations leading up to the time of Jesus, Galilee had its own customs, rituals and practice, which made it quite distinctive from Judaea (Freyne 2004:62).

There is good reason to view Galilee as seeing itself as inheriting, in some way, the traditions of the Northern Kingdom as seen for example in the figures of Elijah and Elisha and the respective traditions which were oft-times critical of Jerusalem. This critical standpoint would also have been encouraged by the geographical and spiritual distance from Jerusalem.

The importance of answering the question "who were the Galileans?" can be seen from the corollaries to each answer given. Jesus does not speak or work within a historical, religious, cultural or political vacuum. He himself is an inheritor of history and tradition, and dare I say it, genes. Who were his forebears? What did they pass onto him, for example, openness to the stranger or perhaps their own prejudices? In order to seek an answer to the question I now refer again to Reed's work.

Reed traces the archaeological history of Galilee from the Assyrian invasion in the 8th century BCE through to the Early Roman period which he dates as 63 BCE-135CE. The results of his studies have served to show that there is no direct continuity between the Northern Israelites and 1st century CE Galileans, nor is there any

evidence for a mass Gentile population inhabiting Galilee waiting to be converted. From the 8th century BCE Galilee found itself largely unpopulated until the Hasmonean period, 2nd to 1st centuries BCE. With the Hasmoncan conquest of Galilee there was a steady increase in the population of the region. The new inhabitants of Galilee are in fact Judaeans settlers, who take with them to their new homes their own religious culture, and from then on, into the early Roman period 63 BCE, the population of Galilee continues to grow.

In accepting Reed's conclusions about Galilee, we are enabled to speak more clearly to the question of the history of the Galileans themselves. Of the three possible answers to the question, we must settle on the identity of the Galileans as being Jewish, Reed writes, "...Galilee's population, which grew drastically in the Late Hellenistic (167-63 BCE)/ Early Roman Period (63 BCE-135 CE), adhered to or adopted patterns of behaviour in private space that is also found in Jerusalem and Judaea, so that in terms of ethnicity, the Galileans should be considered Jewish" (Reed 2002:53). If Reed's archaeological analysis be accepted then we are able to discount Horsley's view of a different cultural and religious background, and even if there were a few converts, reject the racial mix theory as well. In not accepting what we might call the extreme aspects of answers 2 and 3, we cannot ignore the truth that there was some sort of division, if that is not too strong a term, between Galilean Jews and Judaeans Jews. Galilee did tend to be ambivalent about Jerusalem, the Temple, the priestly aristocracy, temple dues and tithes. The answer as to what kind of Judaism was to be found in Galilee cannot fully be answered; Judaism itself had various groups with their own emphases, for example, the Pharisees and their purity laws, and the Essenes tendency to by-pass the cult in Jerusalem. What 'shape and form' Judaism took in Galilee would influence Jesus and though Jesus' life and ministry developed within a thoroughly Jewish religious milieu (seen for example in

his family's visit to Jerusalem for the Passover, Luke 2:41ff) acquiescence to all that came forth from Jerusalem was not part of the Galilean mind set.

2 Everyday life in Galilee

I now wish to move from my consideration of the historical roots of the Galileans to life in Galilee itself. The question before us is: What was life like for the people of Galilee in Jesus' day?

Galilee was a very fertile land. Josephus lists some of the produce of the land: walnuts, figs, olives, grapes, and he writes (the land) "nourishes different sorts of autumnal fruit beyond men's expectation!" (Josephus Wars: 517-519). The picture Josephus paints is one of a land whose climate made it ideally suitable for farming, and indeed agriculture was the main occupation of the Galileans. Galilean society consisted for the most part of a number of towns, villages and farms occupied in the main, by peasants. These peasant families had grown accustomed to having their own land which they tilled, and from which they harvested the food which would not only feed them but also be a means of providing them with other goods. The goal of each family was to be self-sufficient, fed through the produce they themselves grew, and they used any surplus to barter for other necessary goods, and, of course, to pay their taxes. Freyne tells us that from archaeological excavations it can be seen that Nazareth was a farming settlement in Roman times, and the evidence suggests that the land was worked intensively and so proved to be well able to provide more than a basic living. More than that, Freyne speaks of a "relatively comfortable lifestyle" (Freyne 2004:44) being enjoyed, though he does add that all sorts of factors could negatively influence the life farming families had, for example, everything from the weather to political demands. It was therefore an agrarian society into which Jesus was born. According to tradition he himself was a carpenter, a job which would have given him a good understanding of how life was

for farming families. But as Jesus grew up and lived out his life in such a society he saw and would have experienced the changes that were taking place with all the resulting effects on the life of the Galilean peasant. One area of change was in relation to population growth which led to some farming family members having to leave the small family farms which could no longer sustain them. Land could only be split into so many portions before it became time for some family members to seek a living elsewhere. But by far the greatest cause of change in Galilee was its development by the ruler Herod Antipas whose policy of urbanisation radically altered life and lifestyle.

3 The urbanisation of rural Galilee

Antipas was the ruler of Galilee from 4 BCE until 39 CE, a total of 43 years during which time he embarked upon major building projects. The city of Sepphoris, destroyed in 4 BCE by the Roman Legate Varus, was rebuilt, and Antipas also undertook to build a new city, Tiberius, in tribute to the Emperor. The impact upon the peasant population of Galilee cannot be underestimated. What had been the way of life for Galileans was not only threatened but in many respects transformed. Instead of the purpose of farming being subsistence, farms and their produce were now regarded by the powers that be, to be the means of sustaining the life and construction of Sepphoris and Tiberius respectively. The resources of the land were drawn heavily upon. These cities which housed the ruling elite and the wealthy made greater and greater demands upon those engaged in a simple agrarian lifestyle. The land had to be worked more and more; surpluses were reduced, and the barter economy became replaced by a market and money economy. As Reed informs us, "instead of farming for their own necessities and trading for a few items in which they were deficient, peasant families were now responsible for a higher demand for taxes to support a growing administrative apparatus" (Reed 2002:86).

The on-going practical repercussions of this urbanisation policy were that some farmers got into trouble paying taxes, or repaying loans to the elite, and therefore had to sell their land to settle their accounts. These farmers then became tenant farmers or had to leave farming altogether, and became tradesmen, at best, bandits at worst. And of course with the demise of the local farmer came the rise of the large estates; the shape of the land began to change and the relationship between land and people took on a new perspective. All in all, a new urban-rural dynamic became established the effects of which upon the Galilean peasants were daily felt. The peasants began to find themselves under greater strain and stress. The peasants constituted, as Borg points out, 9/10 of the population but shared only 1/3 of the annual production of wealth; whereas the elite 1/10 enjoyed 2/3 of what a rich Galilee provided (Borg 1989:11). It was to the former that Jesus' ministry was offered for he himself remained within village and town life, not once do the Gospels mention him as being in either Sepphoris or Tiberius. It appears that Jesus felt at home within Galilean peasant life.

The picture painted by Reed and for that matter by Freyne, of the upheavals in the peasant farmers' lives resulting from Antipas' policy of urbanisation is not accepted by all scholars. Sanders does not accept such a picture of Galilee. In relation to Antipas' rule Sanders writes: "the fact that the Jewish populace tolerated their ruler fairly well indicates two things. One was that he did not publicly flout the Jewish law (and two) that Antipas was not excessively oppressive and did not levy exorbitant (relatively speaking) taxes. Galileans in Jesus lifetime did not feel that the things most dear to them were seriously threatened: their religion, their national traditions and their livelihoods" (Sanders 1996:21). In some respects you get the impression that Sanders wishes to iron out the wrinkles of 1st century CE life in Israel/Palestine. This is seen, for example, in his attempt to portray a common Judaism in which Jesus

participates. In his desire to look for the things held in common, so to speak, he certainly understates the harsh economic realities which the peasants had to face. Freyne and Reed support their case well and the Gospels themselves certainly give the impression that Jesus ministered to a people who knew all too well, the effects of great need and debt. A consideration of the Beatitudes recognises both sides of the unequal economic divide; the call for trust in God in the face of need (Matthew 6:25-35) again a reflection of an everyday reality; and the use of the language of debt in the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6: 12); all these references and many more are bound up with what is known of life in Galilee under Antipas. [The question of whether or not Jesus actively addressed the political questions surrounding the situation of the peasants I will not address here, but rather at the point in this thesis when I consider the nature of Jesus' own prophetic ministry.] I cannot agree with Sanders' assessment; life for the Galilean peasant was influenced in respect of his livelihood and that for the worst, but was it influenced in respect of his religion or traditions as well? Not only was the urbanisation of Galilee affecting the lives of the Galileans but the effects of Hellenisation were also to be seen, but in what ways?

4 Galilee: an outpost of Greece?

In discussing the various viewpoints concerning the question, "Who were the Galileans?" we noted differing opinions; this is also the case when we address the question of the impact of Hellenisation [the influence of Greek culture] upon Galilee. Crossan sees Hellenism as being so influential so as to flavour Judaism *per se*. He refers to the Judaism of Jesus' time as Hellenistic Judaism though he does make a distinction within it. There is firstly, inclusive Hellenistic Judaism which seeks to blend its own Jewish traditions with Hellenistic ideology. Secondly, there is exclusive Hellenistic Judaism. Herein are to be found the conservatives; contact and collaboration with Hellenism are to be kept to a minimum. (Crossan 1992:418)

Crossan places Jesus within the inclusive branch of Hellenistic Judaism. For him Jesus is a 'peasant Jewish cynic' and this definition of Jesus results very much from Crossan's view that Hellenism was to be found throughout Galilee, in the towns and villages and not just in the cities. Of course 'peasant Jewish cynic' is a scholarly construction, not a reality, to illustrate both Jewish and some Hellenistic philosophical elements (cynic) within Jesus' broad message. Crossan works with a very broad brush when it comes to understanding the scope of Hellenistic influence. He has a Mediterranean wide perspective and he uses many and varied sources in reaching his conclusions. Witherington, who is certainly not in agreement with Crossan's analysis of the results of Hellenism either upon Galilee or Jesus, does however concede that the whole of Jewish culture had in some way been affected. Where the main difference between Witherington and Crossan lies is that Witherington talks of less and more Hellenized parts of Jewish society, he writes, "Hellenization had long since affected the whole culture, and we must speak in terms of less Hellenized and more Hellenized" (Witherington 1995:30). Nowhere really, for Witherington, accepted all the ramifications of Hellenism and in support of this he quotes Douglas R Edwards' words, "the Galilee, like the Greek East, did not accept Roman control unaltered; the people interpreted it through their own particular traditions, thus allowing themselves a modicum of control" (Witherington 1995:30). How much then of an influence did Hellenism have and who welcomed it into their daily living?

Hellenism had its greatest influence within urban life. It would be in cities such as Sepphoris and Tiberius that Hellenistic culture would be embraced most, though this rigid or sharp dichotomy between town and country is not accepted by everyone, for example Reed. But it would be true to say that a good deal of city life would be Greek orientated, the Greek language being spoken by many in the cities.

This was to be seen not as a betrayal of Jewish identity but rather a very pragmatic approach to having to live within Greek culture where for example trade could be carried out more efficiently if one were able to speak Greek. In rural areas the everyday language would be Aramaic but some scholars are open to the possibility that Jesus himself probably knew some Greek.

The influence of Hellenism within the cities might be seen to be all pervasive, one such pointer in support of that viewpoint being the fact that Jesus, in the Gospels, rarely visits cities. In all probability as a tradesman he would have been called upon to work in Sepphoris, the city a few miles from his home, but as a prophet he seems to have veered away from cities. This is not just in the case of Sepphoris and Tiberius, but when Jesus is in the region of Caesarea Philippi he only visits the towns and villages. Some have come to the conclusion that city life was so Hellenized that Jesus by-passed the cities. The question as to why Jesus did not visit cities is indeed an interesting one, one that has relevance for understanding the mission of Jesus. Various answers have been given ranging from political to religious reasons as underpinning Jesus' reluctance to be found in the cities. If we take Sepphoris as an example of city life, and of course it had great proximity to Jesus' home town and great importance in the life of Galilee, there are three possible reasons for Jesus' absence from it. Firstly Jesus did not visit Sepphoris because it was a pagan city. If Jesus' ministry is to the lost sheep of Israel then a pagan city is not where you would expect to find them. But though the ruling elite who embraced Hellenism were to be found there, by far the biggest majority of the city's population was Jewish. In archaeological excavations of Sepphoris which are relevant to Jesus' day, Reed points out that the only pagan elements to be found 'are a few small household items' (Reed 2002:135). Sepphoris was not a pagan city; yes perhaps it was eyed with suspicion by the rural Galilean peasants but within its walls there

were to be found many observant Jews, as Freyne informs us (Freyne 2004:144). A second reason for Jesus' avoidance of Sepphoris is that he feared the same fate as John the Baptist. Sepphoris was where Antipas was to be found and Jesus' opinion of Antipas is reported in the Gospel of Luke, chapter 13:32, where he refers to Antipas as 'that fox'. The context in which Jesus' words are set is one of being told that Antipas wants to kill him. There is obviously a tradition of uneasiness with regard to Jesus' relationship with Antipas, an air of mistrust, and the fact that Jesus chose Capernaum as his base, a town which was as far away as one could get from the seat of Antipas' power, perhaps tells us that Jesus exercised caution and did not seek to place himself where Antipas could easily lay hold of him. A third reason for Jesus' avoidance of Sepphoris relates to how Jesus viewed his ministry and to whom it should be offered. We might say that Jesus had a bias to the poor and that perhaps shaped by his own rural upbringing and by the obvious detrimental effects upon Galilean life of the increasing wealth of the elite. Sepphoris, as such, being the home of the elite, being the place where the rich were becoming richer, with all that that meant for the Galilean peasant, symbolised the undoing of God's purposes for his people. Of course the possibility does exist that the evangelists deliberately delete any reference to Jesus visiting Sepphoris for their own particular reasons but for all to do that independently is too much of a coincidence.

Jesus was no urbanite but that did not mean that he automatically judged city life to be pagan. He himself would have known that Sepphoris, for example, would have contained many devout Jews and so in not visiting the city he was not writing it off, so to speak, as being totally given over to Hellenism. I find the thought of Jesus avoiding Antipas to be one which is realistic, given Jesus' knowledge of John the Baptist's imprisonment and the ways of Antipas. Jesus could be thought of as acting wisely. According to the Gospel tradition [Matthew 10:16 cf Luke 10:3] he

encouraged the Twelve to be wise when sending them on mission: "Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves." In respect of Antipas Jesus may well have followed his own advice but that does not explain why, as it appears in the Gospels, Jesus did not visit any cities at all, except of course for Jerusalem. Unquestionably Jesus was more at home in rural Galilee and identified more with its people than the city dwellers and so for appreciable reasons Jesus would have ministered where he felt himself to be among his own. But I would also suggest that what was being experienced by the Galilean peasants drew Jesus to them, that he saw their plight which was caused by the transformation of their land and lives. Jesus' avoidance of the cities was, I believe, more to do with the needs of the ordinary Galilean with whom he felt a deep bond, and who he recognized to have become victims of the ruling elite.

The question of how influential Hellenism was in Galilee cannot be fully addressed in this thesis; suffice to say it must be recognised as being part of the culture of Jesus' day, though I believe not to the extent that it allowed a Mediterranean Jewish Cynic Jesus to emerge from Nazareth, a relatively small town in Galilee. (This description of Jesus is the one favoured by J D Crossan and is constructed in relation to certain wandering preachers of Jesus' day with whom Crossan sees great similarities to Jesus.) Reed says that there was a "complex interaction between Judaism and Hellenism" (Reed2002:111) and he argues that they should not be seen as solely antagonistic forces at work in the lives of the Galileans. Having recognised that there were Hellenistic influences to be found within Judaism and Jewish life I wish now to turn to the question of 'what kind of political power was being exercised in Galilee?'.

5 Life under Herod Antipas, Rome's man!

Palestine became part of the Roman Empire in 63 BCE and was initially placed under the rule of Hasmonean high priests. Eventually Rome entrusted the governance of it to Herod the Great after the Hasmonean civil wars of the 40s BCE. Herod ruled from 37-4 BCE and was a strong ruler who ensured that Rome was kept happy while he got on with establishing his way, though at times Rome was deferred to on matters of major importance. By all accounts Herod was greatly influenced by the Hellenistic spirit and undertook great building projects mainly to introduce more and more of Greek culture into Palestine, though he was also responsible for the rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem. To fund these projects he imposed a great burden of taxation upon the population. Herod's rule was somewhat oppressive. He was very aware of what was required to maintain his own power and did not hesitate to deal ruthlessly with those who threatened (or who he thought threatened) his position.

When Herod died in 4 BCE his territory was divided into three by the Romans, a sort of divide and rule policy being put in place by them. The three areas of Herod's territory were given to his sons: Archelaus, Philip and Antipas. Archelaus was installed as ruler of Judaea and Samaria; Philip of a territory in the north east of Palestine, mostly populated by non-Jews, and Antipas became the ruler of Galilee and Peraea. Both Philip (4 BCE – 34 CE) and Antipas (4 BCE – 39 CE) had long rules but Archelaus was deposed in 6 CE by the Romans who replaced him with direct rule from Rome in the form of Roman Prefects. Of Herod's three sons Philip is not really relevant to this thesis but Archelaus and Antipas most certainly are, Archelaus in respect of the failures of his rule, and Antipas for the apparent success of his.

When Archelaus' rule began in 4 BCE, he was petitioned by the people who sought a more benevolent rule from him. They hoped that he would reduce the

yearly tribute; that special Herodian taxes would be abolished and that political prisoners imprisoned by his father would be released (Horsley 1993:50). Their pleas fell on deaf ears and so the pleas became louder and louder, especially as the Passover pilgrims began to add their voices. Archelaus panicked. Believing in the possibility of imminent revolt, worried by the threat of Rome responding negatively to him, he gave orders for his troops to deal with the crowds. They in turn responded by killing many of the troops and the whole conflict escalated as Archelaus then sent in the full force of his might, and according to Josephus about 3000 Jews were slain (Josephus War: 2.11-13; Antiquities 17.215-218). All this resulted in a widespread revolt which involved the peasants not only of Judaea but also of Galilee. This eruption of violence, although centred in Jerusalem, spread out and touched Jews wherever they were to be found, Judaea, Galilee and Perea. A common cause was identified. The Jewish aspirations and identity had been attacked, as well as the people. In Jerusalem the Temple porticoes were set on fire by the Roman troops and the Temple treasury was ransacked and these acts obviously touched a raw nerve. At this time we see a slave in Perea named Simon crown himself King and gather a large force around him; in central Judaea, Romans were attacked by forces led by Athronges, and in Galilee, Judas, son of Hezekiah, from Gamala, captured Sepphoris (Borg 1998:56). Rebellion was to be found across Palestine.

What we see in 4 BCE during the rule of Archelaus, is one pointer to what was an unstable political situation which I want to suggest was an every day reality in the lives of the ordinary Jewish people, though at times the religious leaders' unhappiness with the political scene was made known also. An example of this would be some Pharisees' objection to paying taxes to the Romans who as the ruling foreign power were robbing God's people (Borg 1998:58). Before exploring this political instability further I would now like to consider Antipas' rule in Galilee.

Antipas was the client ruler in Galilee who for the most part was left to get on with overseeing 'Roman rule' on his own. There were no Roman legions based in Galilee, though a small number of soldiers were to be found in Caesarea, as Sanders points out, "the Roman presence itself was absent from Galilee" (Sanders1996:27). But this lack of physical soldiers did not detract from the overall threat, of which the Galilean peasants were aware, of Rome's willingness and ability to ruthlessly stamp out any rebellion. Freyne tells us that signs of Roman propaganda could be found throughout Galilee, signs which reminded people that they were indeed a subjugated people (Freyne 2004:133/134). Obvious pointers to Roman rule were the cities of Sepphoris and Tiberius, the renaming of Bethsaida as Julius, and temples being erected and dedicated to Roma and Augustus were to be found also. Taxes paid to Rome were also a very clear indication of the Roman presence. Antipas' rule has been reckoned to be a strong one, one which was good for Rome and not particularly unbearable for the Galileans. This view is put forward by, for example, Freyne and Sanders, due to the fact that Antipas reigned for 43 years. With regard to the Romans Antipas ensured that the tribute was being paid and civil unrest was discouraged; indeed Josephus has nothing to say about any actions on Antipas' part to quell civil unrest. And with regards to the Jewish people Antipas did not openly show contempt for their religion or lay a particularly heavy tax burden on the peasants according to Sanders. In many respects this summation of Antipas' rule is accurate. It was in Judaea that resistance developed and arose most of all, direct rule by Rome gave more encouragement to it, but again I believe that, as I have already highlighted, Antipas' rule *did* negatively affect the ordinary people of Galilee. Due to his urbanisation project he not only drew considerably upon the limited resources of the peasant population but he changed the way of life of the peasants.

For the Galilean peasants of Jesus' day taxes became very onerous. They did in fact have two sets of taxes to pay. There were the religious taxes, for example the tithe given to support the work of the priests, and the Temple Tax which amounted to a half-shekel, a day's wage for the worker. There were also the taxes paid to build and maintain the new urbanisation projects of Antipas, as previously mentioned in this paper. The growing demands of the Galilean central bureaucracy certainly took their toll. Lastly there was the tax paid to Rome itself, a tax used to sustain the Empire. The sum total of all these taxes has been reckoned to be between one third and one half of all that a Galilean peasant would either produce or earn (Reed 2002:86). Apart from the daily consequences of having to pay such high taxes there is also the effect such taxation would have upon the feelings of the Galileans towards the powers that be. It was bad enough being under foreign rule but to have to pay taxes which took their toll upon life was hard to bear. Such a tax system only added to the resentment the people felt and surely must have contributed to making life in Galilee more volatile by the day? Not so, says Sanders as I have already noted. According to Sanders during the period of late 20 to early 30 CE, Galilee was not ready to revolt, though he does say that the possibility of war did exist. For Sanders, Antipas was sensitive to Galilean feelings, and this to be seen in different ways. When minting his own coinage Antipas used only agricultural designs, thus avoiding religious confrontation; he did not publicly, at least, show himself antagonistic towards Jewish law and by and large did not impose exorbitant taxes upon the people (Sanders 1996:21/22). This said, Antipas did have John executed, a prophet who was popular among the people, which underlines the fact that Antipas' sensitivity to Galilean feelings only went so far.

Sanders seems to view Galilee in Antipas' time, and Antipas himself, in a different vein from Reed and Witherington. Witherington describes the background

to Jesus' ministry as being 'dangerous'; a time when "the principal means of governing Palestine seems to have been fear and brute force" (Witherington 1995:18). And as for the economic repercussions of the taxes required to support Antipas' building projects, I need only to refer to what has already been said by Reed and Freyne. Again I find Sanders' conclusions to be somewhat unrelated to the actual situation and two points in particular seem to me to call into question Sanders' summation of Antipas' reign. There is first of all the building of Tiberius, his new capital city on the shores of the Sea of Galilee around about the year 20CE. The site of such a city could be due to the fact that defensively it occupies a position protected by a rocky projection above the sea. This would support the view put forward by Theissen and Merz that the city was built to create for an insecure Antipas a population that was loyal to him (Theissen/Merz 1998:175). But the fact that he built the city on ground that included a former graveyard was an insensitive act displaying a single-minded approach to preserving Antipas' own well-being irrespective of the consequences. Such a city would be regarded as unclean by Jewish people and to be avoided, as it was by many devout Jews. What Josephus tells us about Antipas and Tiberius underlines the reaction of many to the city: "strangers came and inhabited this city; a great number of the inhabitants were Galileans also; and many were necessitated by Herod to come thither out of the country belonging to him and were by force compelled to be its inhabitants" (Josephus Antiquities: 18.2.3). Now all this takes place some 24 years into a 43 year reign; they are not the actions of someone desperately trying to cling onto the vestiges of power at the end but of someone who exerted strong control, who knew what was most important, his own power and position. The second point which serves to demonstrate this is Antipas' encounter with John the Baptist.

There are two sources which tell of Antipas deciding to have John executed: Josephus and the Synoptic Gospel tradition, Mark 6:14-39; Matthew 14:1-12 and Luke 9:7-9. Josephus tells us that Antipas had John put to death because it was politically expedient to do so: "Herod, who feared lest the great influence John had over the people might put it into his power and inclination to raise a rebellion, thought it best, by putting him to death, to prevent any mischief he might cause, and not bring himself into difficulties, by sparing a man who might make him repent of it when it should be too late" (Josephus Antiquities: 18.5.2). The Gospels, on the other hand, emphasize John's criticism of Antipas' marriage to Herodias as the initial reason for John's arrest which led on to his execution. However we reconcile these two accounts, what is very clear is that if Antipas felt threatened he took decisive action and obviously at this point, John the Baptist was perceived as the enemy. But it was not John alone who frightened Antipas, it was what he represented, a prophetic movement looking to the day when righteousness would reign. Sanders seeks to weave Josephus' account and the Gospels together, suggesting that John singled out Antipas' marriage as an example of why God's Kingdom needed to dawn, which in turn might have encouraged those who longed for that Kingdom to "lend God a hand and strike the first blow against immoral rulers" (Sanders 1996:92/93). So, an ever fearful Antipas who would do what was necessary to maintain his position, believing John to be highlighting his own personal circumstances which made him a prime target of those keen to see life changed, had John executed.

What I am suggesting is that Antipas' building of Tiberias and his killing of John the Baptist portray a King who would do whatever was necessary to maintain his position. I believe, to some extent, that Sanders' tendency to see Antipas' rule as enabling the Galileans to feel, as I have already referred to in Sanders' words that

their religion, their national traditions and their livelihoods were never seriously threatened, is somewhat misleading. I think Sanders understates the actual state of play, so to speak, in Galilee. Surely if Antipas believed that John the Baptist could lead an insurrection, it was because the people were ready to be led? In order to substantiate such a statement I now turn to the task of seeking an overview of the political situation in Galilee.

6 Galilee: hot bed of revolution?

Galilee under Antipas became more and more a land inhabited and divided by the very rich and the very poor. Commenting on the effect of the taxes imposed by the imperial system and Antipas' particular tax-programme, Horsley says, "most fundamental and significant for its impact in other ways was the economic pressure brought on the peasantry for taxes and tribute and participation in an increasingly monetarised economic life. Rising indebtedness of the peasants led to loss of their land that was the base of their economic subsistence and of their place in the traditional social structure" (Horsley 1993:11). With such an upheaval in the life of the peasants I find it difficult to concur with those who speak rightly of no revolts but who then infer that it was not "that bad" for the peasants. This experience of redrawing the boundaries of life must have created political tensions, or as I believe, added to what was already in existence due to the fact that the Jewish people were an oppressed people. Theissen has shown that tension and political instability, were not absent or almost absent from Galilee in comparison with Judaea. Theissen helpfully lists pointers which illustrate the reality of the instability in Galilee (Theissen/Merz 1998:174). He refers the reader to the war already spoken of in this chapter in the time of Archelaus, and highlights the actions of Judas which in turn led to the Syrian Legate Quintilus Varus destroying Sepphoris and selling its people into slavery. Is Judas simply manifesting the feelings and beliefs, and desires, of the

Galileans? Theissen refers to Antipas' and Philip's difficulty, highlighted by Strabo, in preserving their tetrarchies, when Archelaus was deposed in 6 CE, after a joint complaint by the Jews and the Samaritans to the Emperor. Was this difficulty due to the situation in Judaea being seen as some encouragement to the Galileans to flex their muscles? When Roman rule was made direct and a census was ordered for tax purposes, there was much disquiet among the Jews and a revolt was led by Judas the Galilean. Now although the unrest was centred in Judaea it does appear that much impetus to it was given by Galilee. Another factor which should be considered is Antipas' dealings with John the Baptist, referred to already in this chapter. I have already stated that Antipas felt John to be a threat; therefore Antipas obviously believed that revolution was a strong possibility. And moving to his new capital city, Tiberias, Antipas did so for security reasons, irrespective of any others. Theissen also brings our attention to Luke's Gospel chapter 13:1ff, where we read of Pilate putting to death Galilean pilgrims, which raises the question, why? Lastly, for Theissen, in the Jewish War of 66 – 70 Galileans were again to the fore in the person of John of Gischala and in the party of the Zealots. For Theissen all this evidence points to the fact that deep tensions were to be found in Galilean society which although not revealing themselves continually in acts of rebellion still were very present and created a potentially volatile situation.

The Roman occupation and the means whereby they subjugated the people, (direct rule in Judaea, client ruler in Galilee) meant that at every level of life the Jewish people would have thought of themselves as a people in exile, so to speak. Although Rome was to some extent happy to let the Jewish people hold their religious beliefs, get on with their religious practices, and to regulate the local social order, overall the political message was clear: Rome is Lord. This was unacceptable to Jewish people in terms of their beliefs, though the high priesthood and other

leaders worked within the system to preserve their own status and power. Jewish religion was all-embracing, it touched every aspect of life: social, political, economic and of course religious. The Jews would not accept any compromise, could not live truly happily under any foreign power, no matter how much autonomy they enjoyed. And the land itself was special, it was gifted to them by God and to have foreigners ruling over it was an affront. In stating how the people would have felt one has to acknowledge that in the time of Jesus Galilee was relatively peaceful, and in recognising that violence only flared up very rarely, one might ask the question were the Jews in both Galilee and Judaea really that unhappy? I believe in considering the impact of Roman rule one must remember that the Jewish people were a people with a history, and a life shaped by the Torah which encouraged them to believe they were the people of God. The ideal for them was theocracy, living not under foreign rule but under God's rule. There is a much larger framework to the life of 1st century Galilean Jews; there is a very long tradition and a great story, a metanarrative in which they themselves were participating. One need only refer to Deuteronomy 6: 20-25, to find the admonition to teach the children the stories of the people, particularly the Exodus story. Little wonder the Romans became anxious at Passover time when the celebration of being delivered from a foreign power was being held. The sense of that deliverance would not be one which gave a feel of telling an old old story but rather it would be a case of rehearsing the story anew. I want to suggest that for the Jew the past, the present and the future were all bound up so much more closely together than today's western mind experiences. The past was not past; it was still living on in the present and in a sense waited to be taken on into the future to its fulfilment. The Jewish people were a people of promise, of waiting and hoping, and all that bound up with their particular sense of identity and history. It is this feel for the spirit of the people that I believe Sanders has

not taken into consideration in his conclusions about life in Galilee. The Jews were not continually rebelling, but as Theissen has shown there were times when rebellions took place because underneath the peaceful exterior there was a longing to throw off Roman rule which could explode if given the right situation and provocation. These explosions were few and far between but they were still very much part of the Jewish experience, of the Jewish story, and would be gathered together as one in their psyche. I am convinced that Horsley's reminder that violence does not always mean the act of physical force is very appropriate here. Horsley writes, 'extensive and widespread violence is done to people largely in indirect ways, and "covertly" as well as overtly, in what has come to be called "institutional" or "structural" violence. War and other systematic corporate actions of killing and destruction are only the most obvious overt examples of institutionalised violence' (Horsley 1993:21). Irrespective of how many revolts, of how many obvious signs of Jewish discontent, the Jewish people lived under constant oppression. To live as a subjugated people was enough to ensure that the possibility of violence was always there and to maintain the tensions which were part and parcel of everyday life.

I have in this chapter attempted to reconstruct something of the Galilee in which Jesus lived and worked, and with which his ministry was greatly bound up. The picture I have painted, culturally, socially and politically, lends itself to understanding the disquiet of a people for whom their religion embraced every aspect of life. Little wonder then there were revolts and continual disquiet, and questions which reflected upon the 'whys?' and the 'hows?' of such a situation as the Jews found themselves in. But more than that there was the question of how to address the situation and Jesus had to answer that one for himself.

7 Religious responses to Roman rule

The aim of this section is to consider how Roman Rule was responded to by a people who believed that they were God's People, and that ultimately they had therefore only one King; Yahweh. With this central belief of Judaism, any earthly power would certainly feel threatened, they would be very wary of the potential for revolt. Israel's religion encouraged its people to long for the day when they would live in their own Land under the rule of God alone; a recipe for continual discontent as they lived under Roman subjugation.

In considering the religion of the Jews we refer to as Judaism we should recognise that there were different groupings within it, indeed it may be more accurate to speak of "Judaisms". There were certain foundational aspects to Judaism that were commonly shared, for example, Israel being recognised as God's covenant people and the centrality of the Torah and the Temple and beliefs concerning monotheism and the sacredness of the land. There were also however significant differences, and in responding to Roman Rule we see different approaches being made to this particular challenge. In order to look at these approaches I wish first of all to turn to the three main schools of thought [as Josephus refers to them: *hairesis*] within Judaism: Pharisees, Sadducees and the Essenes.

The development of these three groups can be traced back to the time of the Hasmonean High Priest Jonathan (160-143 BCE) and are mentioned as existing during this period by Josephus. In all probability they emerge in response to the problems posed to Judaism by the intensification of Hellenistic influence (Theissen/Merz 1998:128). The responses made illustrate how the groups saw themselves and how much they were willing to accommodate this foreign spirit.

Responses

1 Pharisees

When the Pharisees come to prominence Saldarini describes them as “an intellectual force in society with a particular way of interpreting the tradition” (Saldarini 2001:87). Their desire was to work within Judaism articulating the case for the Torah to be at the heart of the life of the people. The Pharisees are described by J Neusner as being in Hasmonean times a political party and in the first century CE as a movement of religious piety (Neusner cited in Theissen/Merz 1998:139). Neusner points to a shift of emphasis but the presence of Pharisees is well attested within the political life of Judaism and indeed some are to the fore in political protests which were made against actions committed by the prevailing Power. When the census was called in 6 CE for taxation purposes, the resulting revolt has as one of its leaders Saddok, a Pharisee. When Pilate’s troops sought to place their standards in the fortress Antiona next to the Temple, which was seen as a blasphemous act by the people, massive crowds of people intimated their willingness to die if that should happen, and among this group were Pharisees. The protests against Caligula’s decision to place a statue of himself in the Holy of Holies, would in all probability have included Pharisees, as would the protests against the soldier who in the time of Cumanus (48-52CE) destroyed a copy of the Torah. And from the Gospels, surely it is not too difficult to imagine that when Jesus was asked “is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar or not?” (Matthew22:17) there was to be found in that question issues with Rome that the Pharisees themselves had problems with, apart from anything else?

The Pharisees have gained the reputation of being a quietist group but I would suggest otherwise. They certainly had a vision for the people of God, for Israel, and it was one which was wholly inclusive of Israel’s life. They can be seen within the Sanhedrin, part of the Jewish leadership, and that not just to promote

religious interests. Indeed when one views the various activities that the Pharisees were involved in, and understand what their theological foundation was, you cannot narrowly define them as a pious religious group but you must recognise how their religious views would lead them into the political arena, which in the 1st century CE, was bound up with the religious world. When it is said of the Pharisees that they were a separatist group what one must recognise is that ultimately the separation that was envisaged was that of the whole people of Israel, a people which was entirely set apart for God, a Kingdom of priests, as Borg has said, 'as priests were, so all Israel should be' (Borg 1998:73). Seeking the Pharasaic way of life for all of Israel, the Pharisees were making a political statement as well as a religious one; their response was in respect of the unhealthy, polluting effects of outside rule and outside influences. The Pharisees pursued one aim and that was to conform the whole life of its people to the life encouraged by the Torah which revealed God's will for every aspect of everyday life.

Responses

2 Sadducees

The Sadducees consisted of priests and influential families of Judaea. This group had a more positive attitude to the Hellenization taking place within Judaism due in part to their socio-economic stratum. They were also the party of the Establishment which meant that political considerations carried a great deal of weight when the Sadducees were called upon to make their response to the ruling power. The Sadducees being the dominant ruling party within Judaism and having great social and political standing, showed by their actions that they were the party who favoured the status quo. Wary of not losing their influence, the Sadducees were also theologically conservative and this again proved to be an important factor in making their responses to the Roman authorities. Everything about the Sadducees

took them along the safe route, their emphasis on Tradition and Institution kept them playing the safe game. However Borg while reiterating this common view of the Sadducees finds evidence for the occasional anti-Roman activity being undertaken by some of their representatives. Borg comes to his conclusions due to what he finds in the relationship between Rome and the High Priesthood. It was the case that Rome held onto the garments of the High Priest which Borg sees as some sort of insurance policy against disloyalty. There was obviously some suspicion on the part of the Romans which can be detected from the number of High Priests to be found from 15 to 67 CE. During this period 17 High Priests were appointed, 15 of whom only served 22 years between them. The Romans were quite happy to confirm in long term positions of power those who were loyal, the fact that there were so many short term stays obviously reveals that the Romans felt that it was in their best interests to get rid of those who were no good for Rome. Borg's third strand of his argument is that after the War 66-70 the Romans chose not to appoint a new High Priest reflecting their reluctance to give the Jewish people a national figure around whom their enemies could rally (Borg 1998:62/63).

Borg makes a good case. I am particularly convinced by the great number of changes of personnel. When one remembers the long reigns of the client kings Antipas and Philip, and the time Pontius Pilate exercised as Procurator, then such a rapid change of High Priest gives every sense of Rome being worried and seeing possibilities which would disturb their intentions for Judaea. There is therefore some willingness to be seen in some Sadducees, to play a part in anti-Roman political activity, but for the most part, as seen in the years 15-67CE when 2 High Priests did serve for 30 years, there was no great desire to show such tendencies. Generally the Sadducees had no great plan to enthuse the people in such a way that would encourage nationalistic tendencies; they were the party of the Establishment.

Responses

3 Essenes

The Essenes, a priestly group, withdrew from the life of the people of Israel and formed their own community. They had come to believe that within Judaism it was now impossible to live a holy life. Therefore rather than work for reform from within they began a community life founded on a new covenant based on the Torah and the Prophets (Vermes/Goodman 1989:10) which revealed God's way for all Israel. Theirs' was to be a life lived on the basis of ritual purity, one which intensified the demands of the Torah, one lived under the leadership of the Teacher of Righteousness. Although associated with Qumran, the Essenes did live, according to Philo, in many towns in Judaea but avoided the cities due to the immoralities deemed to be going on within them. As the Essenes lived out their community life they were recognised by outsiders to be morally upright, denying themselves many of the normal pleasures of life. The Essenes kept away from Jerusalem believing the Temple to have been profaned and within their own communities offered their own sacrifices (Vermes/Goodman 1989:5). Their life apart from general everyday life is underlined by the fact that they do not appear at all in the Gospels and are not noted as having been involved in any major public events prior to the War in 66 CE. Is it the case then that the Essenes' response to Rome was merely to get on with their own life, to live in as solitary a way as they could? By and large that was the Essenes' response but it does appear from their literature that they were anti-Roman and hoped that Rome would be overthrown in a great battle in which they themselves would participate. The War did arrive in 66 CE and whether or not the Essenes recognised it to be the time of the great battle, the Romans did in fact turn upon them, destroying Qumran, torturing and killing many. The last historical reference of Josephus to the Essenes is one in which he notes their courage in face of all that was

inflicted upon them by the Romans. Irrespective of the Essene withdrawal from the main stage of Israel's life and their quest for a quite separate life, for some reason the Romans deemed them to be a threat. If at some point a political aspect to their community manifested itself in respect of Rome, then we cannot be precise about it. But the fact that the Romans response was so harsh surely tells us that Rome must have deemed the Essenes to be politically active and thus a threat.

Summary of religious responses to Roman rule.

In considering the Pharisees, Sadducees and Essenes various responses to Roman Rule, what is seen is that each party did have a place within its belief system or tradition, for actively opposing Rome. In the case of the Essenes it may have played the smallest of roles but all three parties, whose theologies were all based round the Torah, though they interpreted it differently, underline the point that you cannot live as the people of God and quietly accept foreign domination, rule by a pagan power. In the context of the times in which these parties existed, it cannot be over-stressed just how much religion and politics went hand-in-hand, with the result that, at times something, somewhere, has to give. And if this is so, and if the Sadducees, Pharisees and Essenes shaped Judaism at the time of Jesus (Theissen/Merz 1998:129; Charlesworth/Johns 1997:138) then it is not unreasonable to assume Jesus himself therefore may have an anti-Roman aspect to his ministry.

The exploration of the parties' responses leads me on to a consideration of how some individuals did respond to Roman rule, one which I will take up in the next chapter which considers the topic of Prophecy.

In this chapter I have sought to paint a broad picture of the Galilean context of Jesus' ministry. I have used various lenses through which to view the land with which Jesus' life was bound up. To understand Jesus' ministry, one must also understand something of the forces at work upon Jesus. Having presented the

political, economic, cultural, and religious factors at work in Galilee, I intend to use them as interpretative guidelines in seeking to evaluate the issues raised in the following chapters.

Chapter 2

Prophecy

Prophecy: An Introduction

In employing the term prophet to explore the ministry of Jesus in his own day, and ultimately to relate its relevance to Church life today, an understanding of the historical and contextual meaning and use of the term is required. The intention of this section is to produce such an understanding with which to consider Jesus the Prophet, and I shall do so by inquiring into the Old Testament background and consider how prophets were viewed in the 1st century C.E.

The Hebrew word most commonly used for prophet is *nabi*, a word which has an uncertain root meaning but has perhaps connotations of “bubble forth” or “utter”. Prophet is in fact an umbrella term which is used variably by commentators. There may well be strict definitions but we do find that meanings can alter in relation to the author’s understanding, such as we find in Josephus. This is why the use of the term prophet is variable. The word *nabi* is used more than 300 times in the Old Testament and is used to describe all kinds of prophets, both true and false (1 Kings 22), what might be termed primitive and sophisticated (1 Samuel 10 and see, for example, Isaiah), the visionary and the down to earth ethical (Ezekiel and Amos). The term *nabi* is given to many within the pages of the Old Testament and perhaps the uncertainty surrounding its meaning necessitates our understanding of the context in which it is used in relation to the prophet. If that be accepted then it does appear that generally speaking, prophets were men or women who were believed to be those who communicated a message from the deity to the people. That message they received through audition, vision or dream, and it was delivered to the people by way of speech or symbolic action. Some of the calls given to these prophets, as related in the Old Testament, for example, Moses, Exodus 3, Isaiah

chapter 6, Jeremiah 1 and Ezekiel 1: 1-3, 15 were very personal indeed, unsolicited and it has to be said in some cases unwanted (Moses and Jeremiah)! Irrespective of how these prophets embarked on their work as God's messengers it was their task to address individuals, communities, Israel itself and foreign nations, on behalf of Yahweh, at times when Yahweh's will was being disobeyed. They spoke 'thus saith the Lord' and pronounced on their hearers the consequences of disobedient actions.

From a general introduction to Old Testament prophets I wish now to dig a bit deeper to look at particularities in relation to prophetic development.

Reviewing the early history of Israel the foundational experience of the nation's life was the Exodus. Critical to the nation's birth, moving from slavery to the freedom of the Promised Land, created the metanarrative through which Israel would go on to interpret its life. The most important individual to be associated with this experience was Moses who was among other things, recognised to be a prophet. It was Joshua though who led Israel into the Promised Land, crossing the Jordan to do so, another important event. As Israel established itself within its new border, the earliest leaders were the Judges, one of whom Deborah, was recognised to be a prophetess (Judges 4:4). Judges were both messengers and leaders of the people, (Judges 3: 9-10; 3: 27-28). What we see combined in the Judges was a dual service of leader and messenger, a two-fold approach to the work of the prophet which became undermined with the rise of the monarchy (Horsley/Hanson 1985:136-138). Although Elijah and Elisha in 9th century retain this double aspect to their ministry, that is, that they are both messengers and leaders [1 Kings 17:1; 2 Kings 6:8-10,18] the prophets to come after them from the 8th century onwards were more concerned with the delivery of God's message. It is in the 8th century prophets that Von Rad sees a new emerging aspect to the prophets' ministry. Whereas the ministries of Elijah and Elisha are set in a more narrative context, now what is seen

are collections of the prophets' words (Von Rad 1965:33). But what still underpinned all these prophets' work was their deep sense of speaking on behalf of Yahweh. The prophets were truly conscious of uttering the oracles of God; their sense of self being negated as they spoke God's word to the people; the message rather than the messenger was given the greatest emphasis.

The 8th century prophets, Amos, Hosea, Isaiah and Micah are to be seen very much within the mould of oracular prophets and the message that they brought revealed a new insight. In times past the prophets' words were directed against Kings, groups of people, and individuals, but now these prophets would speak the message of Yahweh to the nation. However, a much greater difference was to be detected in what they said. Not only did they address the nation, they actually prophesied against the nation, telling Israel that Yahweh would judge and act against his own people as a whole, on account of their sins. This was new, and certainly not a message that the cultic aspect of Israel's life would ever lend itself to and so revolutionary was this message that Von Rad has said that "a totally new understanding of God, of Israel, and of the world, {was} cumulatively developed to a degree which went far beyond anything that had ever been in the past, by each of the prophets in turn" (Von Rad 1965:53).

This new understanding led them to call on their own people to repent in order to avoid the impending disaster though repentance might only be a means of preparing for what was to come. This message was also taken up by the prophets of the late 7th century and early 6th (Ezekiel and Jeremiah), but in their messages of doom were to be seen more promises of hope for the future.

Where did this new understanding of Israel's plight come from? Did the 8th century prophets receive some new kind of revelation? Both Von Rad and Horsley are in agreement that this new understanding was gained by the prophets revisiting

their roots and reworking their traditions. They returned to the Mosaic covenant and drew from it new insights about Yahweh and how he deals with this people. Horsley talks of a good deal of the prophets pronouncements being related to 'covenant lawsuits' in which Yahweh, as both prosecutor and judge, accuses and pronounces sentence on his people or their royal leaders, for breaking the covenant, for example, Hosea 4: 1-3; Micah 6: 1-5 (Horsley/Hanson 1985:141/142). There can also be seen judgments against Jerusalem, [Jeremiah chapter 7; 6: 1-8;] the Establishment, [Amos 7:11, 16-17, Isaiah 3: 14-15] no part of Israel's life is left untouched if it is seen to run contrary to Yahweh's desire for justice, mercy and humility to be found in his people, [Micah 6:8]. A new ethical emphasis is given to the life of Israel by what might be termed the classical prophets, and the writings of these prophets became part of Israel's tradition and continued to inform the consciousness of its people. The age of the Prophets came to its close, canonically speaking, with Malachi, but does that mean that no more prophets were to be found in Israel in the Second Temple period of Israel's history?

The following rabbinic text is quoted when the question of whether or not prophecy was believed to have come to an end in Israel, was raised: "From the death of Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi, the latter prophets, the Holy Spirit ceased from Israel", (Tosefta Gota 13:2). Josephus was certainly of the opinion that this was indeed the case. He believed that in his own day there was to be found no equivalent to Old Testament prophecy. In his writing, Apion 1:41, Josephus says, "from Artaxerxes (5th century BCE) to our own time the complete history has been written, but has not been deemed worthy of equal credit with the earlier records, because of the failure of the exact succession of the prophets." In these words he accords a particular status to the prophetic writings which were recognised in the canon of Scripture, but whether that can be taken to mean that a prophetic ministry

was ruled out, one which did not become enshrined in words, is questionable. Most certainly Josephus was very measured in his use of the word group "prophet" in speaking of non-canonical figures, but that can be understood for reasons other than those related to the canon. For example Josephus had a strong belief in the predictive element of prophecy. No matter the approach of Josephus to the question of whether there could be an Isaiah or Jeremiah in his own day, there was certainly a willingness on the part of many to believe in this possibility and this information ironically comes to us mainly from Josephus himself.

Prophetic characters can be classified in various ways, and using Josephus as the basic historical resource I wish now to look at prophetic typologies and that with the categorisations R L Webb provides in his study on John the Baptist (Webb 1991:chap.9). This is a socio-historical approach to understanding John, one which does not fit John into any particular category of prophet. This conclusion is reached due to the fact that John himself does not fit neatly into categories.

The first category is that of 'clerical prophet', one which relates to those prophets who were holders of a priestly office and the major example of such a prophet is John Hyrcanus. Josephus refers to Hyrcanus as a prophet and that in the true sense of the word (see War 1:68f/Anti: 299f) that is that Hyrcanus was not a false prophet. Clerical prophets were known to exercise their ministry through the interpretation of dreams, through being the hearers of heavenly voices and through making known the meaning of Scripture, and prediction was an outcrop of the various ways in which they ministered.

A second category is that of 'sapiential prophet', who exercised their ministry in relation to the role of wise person. Such prophets were found in different sectarian groups. There were Essene examples of sapiential prophets three of which are highlighted by Josephus - Judas, Menahem and Simon. In War1: 78-80 we read

that Judas predicts the murder of Antigonus by his brother Aristobulus I. In the time of Herod the Great, (Ant 15: 373-79), Menahem predicted that Herod, though a boy at the time, would go on to become King of the Jews. And lastly there is Simon, (Ant 17: 345-47), who interpreted the dream of Archelaus with a predictive prophecy. This ability to prophesy within Essenism is considered by Josephus to be bound up with the life which they lead, that is their understanding of scripture, their liturgical rites and their knowledge of the prophets, all of which, as Rebecca Gray says, 'enables them to learn the skill of prophecy' (Gray 1993:89). Therefore the predictive element in sapiential prophecy is not truly in the mould of the canonical prophecy for Josephus but is nonetheless a valid form of prophecy. There are also pharisaic sapiential prophets again related to us by Josephus. From the references in Josephus the predictive element of prophecy is again highlighted, first of all in the case of unknown Pharisees and then in relation to Samaias. Antiquities 17: 41-45 tells of an influential group of Pharisees in the court of Herod who predict the downfall of Herod's government and this word the prophets receive by means of visions. In the case of Samaias (Ant 14: 172-76) we see a prediction of the slaying of the Sanhedrin by Herod.

From the clerical and sapiential I turn now to the 'popular prophets', so-called because of their reception by the common people. Whether or not the view that prophecy in the classical sense had come to an end was held by Josephus and others, the people of the day were very open to the possibility of a prophetic leader, of one sort or another, arising. Indeed, among colonised peoples, it was very common to see varied responses to the alien power, for example charismatic, millenarian and prophetic movements. It could be argued that any act of opposition to the Romans we see in Judaea and Galilee could be deemed a religious act and that due to the blurring in those days of the distinction we make nowadays between

the sacred and the secular. So the Jewish revolt of 6CE, caused by the census for tax related purposes which was imposed by the foreign ruling power, could be understood as a religious act declaring that God alone was ruler and that He only was entitled to 'tithes and offerings'.

Prophetic opposition to the status quo was certainly in evidence as can be seen from Josephus, who tells us of a number of 'prophets' who appeared during the 1st century CE, though he himself would not ascribe to them the title of true prophet. Rather, Josephus refers to them as cheats (War 2.261) and deceivers (War 2.259) but the common people followed them in great numbers. Josephus believed that these popular prophets, with one or two exceptions, that is John the Baptist and Jesus ben Hananiah, were leading the people in ways which could only lead to their destruction, and bring great trouble to the whole people of Israel. Josephus believed that in God's providence Roman rule had its place and that God used the Romans for the good of Israel, therefore no one who presented such a threat to the stability of the nation could be deemed to be God's prophet. Certainly to someone like Josephus the popular prophets did pose a threat as they spoke of casting off the yoke of Roman rule. They encouraged crowds with the announcement of God's imminent intervention in the life of Israel and that to deliver them. These popular prophets are usually placed under two headings. Horsley, for example, categorises them as Action Prophets and Oracular Prophets, and though it is a very clear and understandable approach, it perhaps makes us think that word and action could not come together in the one Popular Prophet. I find Webb's categories more helpful: 'Leadership Popular Prophet' and 'Solitary Popular Prophet', and with these I prefer to work. This I do because such categories emphasise the relationship with the common people and, I believe, fit better the classical Old Testament model. Leadership prophets were leaders of movements, prophets who gathered, for the

most part, the common people from towns and the countryside. In his writings Josephus highlights a number of such men. During the time of Pilate (26-36 CE) there arose the Samaritan, [Ant. 18.85-87], who although not a Jew, still had a common heritage and the movement he led revealed common characteristics with other Jewish examples. The Samaritan enlivened the people's expectation of the dawning of a new age in which they would experience God's blessing. He urged the people to follow him to Mt Gerizim where the lost temple vessels, which Moses had buried there, would be presented to them. The important characteristics in the Samaritan example are large crowds, tradition being appealed to and the use of symbols, all of which point us to a common programme within popular leadership movements. Travelling in chronological order we come to Theudas [Ant 20. 97-98], who we find in the time of the procuratorship of Fadus, 44-46 CE. He urged a great crowd to follow him to the Jordan where the river would part and the people would undergo a new exodus of sorts. Here, as in the case of the Samaritan, the Roman authorities intervene violently suppressing these movements. During the time of the procuratorship of Felix, 52- 60 CE, a number of unnamed prophets are referred to by Josephus [War 2: 258-60]. The call from these prophets was to the people to go with them into the wilderness where great signs would be seen, and it was indeed the case that large numbers of people followed them. Around about the same time there was a leader known as the Egyptian whose focus was on Jerusalem as the centre of his prophecy. Josephus tells us that the Egyptian gathered 30,000 people (in all probability an exaggeration) on the Mount of Olives, [War 2:261-63; Ant 20: 169-72]. The intention was to attack Jerusalem and what would aid them in their battle was that the city walls would fall down, which of course is reminiscent of Jericho. However he was not successful, the Romans crushed the revolt but the Egyptian escaped. As we progress through the procuratorship of Felix and on into

the times of Festus 60-62CE, there is reference in Josephus [Ant 20: 188] to another unnamed prophet who seeks to draw people to the wilderness with promises of redemption through God doing wonderful miracles. And lastly in this section there is the unnamed prophet of 70 CE (War 6: 283-87) who encouraged people to come to the Temple during the siege of Jerusalem. 6000 men, women and children died when the Temple was set on fire by Roman soldiers. Was it the case that the prophet had promised divine protection for the people in their hour of great need? This then is a synopsis of leadership popular prophets and their responses to the "plight" of the people, as related to us by Josephus, prophets who all shared similar characteristics which I now turn to.

All these prophets did gather large followings; many people it seems were only too willing to respond to the prophet's message. As I have noted already, the vast majority of such followers came from the common people and that is of particular interest. If a shared characteristic of these movements is the promise of deliverance, as is suggested by Webb (1991:342) then what is it the people are seeking deliverance from? And if the response is from the common people, what particularly relevant deliverance is seen as being required? The lot of the common people must have been an unhappy one and this due to the difficulties incurred by the people at the lower end of society through the rule of Rome, the indifference of the majority of the Jewish ruling aristocracy, and the increasing poverty of the working people who were being over-taxed and exploited by their rulers and landowners.

Undoubtedly there was a correlation between the kind of life the common people were being forced to endure, and the fact that so many of them responded to the popular leadership prophets. Apart from the Samaritan, some of whose followers bore arms, it would appear that the movements were pacifist in

orientation. This in some way is understandable due to the fact that the power which lay behind the act of deliverance was not human but divine. Thus you have these acts taking place at symbolic sites, the Jordan, the Wilderness, and even the talk of the walls of Jerusalem falling down again relates to what God has done already in the life of his people. Not only did these leadership prophets look back into the history of Israel to provide paradigms for their present expectations, but as Gray points out what these prophets (she terms them sign prophets, another accepted way of categorising this group of popular prophets among scholars) could almost universally be described as eschatological prophets. By this Gray means in the broadest sense, "that they expected the End, or the inauguration of the eschatological age, or the coming of God's Kingdom (however it may be termed) when some dramatic event or series of events would result in the radical transformation of current conditions" (Gray 1993:141).

In considering now the solitary prophets, there are far fewer examples given to us by Josephus. Josephus does refer to various prophets [War 6: 286-288] who led the people astray in the times leading up to the destruction of Jerusalem. The main example of solitary prophet that Josephus gives us is that of Jesus ben Hananiah whom Josephus believes to be sent by God.

Josephus describes ben Hananiah (War 6: 300-309) as the final sign from God which the Jewish people refuse to listen to in the run up to the Jewish war. Ben Hananiah is 'unskilled' and an 'unlearned' peasant and he is to be found in Jerusalem in the time of Albinus' procuratorship, 62-64 CE. He appears at the Feast of Tabernacles crying out his message against the city and its people. This message he repeats for 7 years and 5 months, a message, a prophecy, of doom, and his proclamation is only ended during the siege of Jerusalem when he is struck by a Roman missile. In one way ben Hananiah's prophetic ministry echoed that of

Jeremiah in his preaching against Jerusalem, for example, Jeremiah 7: 34; and was confirmed in Josephus' eyes when the course of events proved that what he had prophesied had come true. In Horsley's terminology ben Hananiah was an oracular prophet, primarily the preacher of a message of repentance. He gathered no followers; he sought to lead no movements, it was the message that was all important, and in this respect he was very akin to John the Baptist. But the question could be asked of John, was he not a popular leadership prophet as many did go out into the wilderness to meet him?

Unlike the popular/sign prophets whom Josephus had no time for, John the Baptist found favour with him. That raises the question: Why? John's ministry was located just beyond the Jordan near Jericho. He is to be found in a place with great historical and religious meaning and such associations would not have been lost on John, the people, and the authorities. The Jordan was the place where the people entered into a new life: it was the river they crossed over into the Promised Land. What was John doing inviting the people to come to such a place? The wilderness also had strong religious connotations. Did it not speak of a time of transition? Was it not a pointer to that which was to come? So what was ahead and what was John encouraging the people to prepare for? Was John not in effect doing the very things that the sign prophets had done? There are indeed similarities but there is one very big difference: John did not promise a sign. John did not draw people out of the towns, villages and cities to await some fantastic act of God; rather he called them out and then sent them back into society to live a different kind of life. John called them to repentance (*metanoia*) to a change of mind and heart as a way of preparing for the dawning of the Kingdom of God. But does this mean that his message had no relevance to the peoples' socio-economic plight, to the political oppression which

the people were experiencing under Rome? In other words did John play the religio/political card?

Josephus speaks highly of John's message and views him as an example of an ethical preacher, one who encouraged his hearers to be good citizens. The terms Josephus uses to describe the content of John's message, that is, acting with justice and living piously before God, could be construed within the Jewish context in political ways. Webb speaks of such language having "social, communal, and even national overtones"(Webb 1991:356) which could all be taken up into a rallying cry for political freedom. Josephus presumably did not see John as an overly political preacher (for Josephus sought to produce an apologetic for the Jewish people in the eyes of Rome), Pilate certainly did not move against him but Herod Antipas did, the reasons for which I have discussed previously. Antipas deemed John to be a threat to the stability of Galilee and thus had him executed. How did John view himself? That is a very difficult question to answer. If John expected God to come and renew Israel then he would surely believe that Roman rule would then come to an end. It is hard to imagine that John was unaware of the political dimensions of his preaching and his ministry. Primarily it could be said that John was a preacher of righteousness and not rebellion, but in the Israel in which he lived where all of life was bound up with God's rule, the implications of such a message would not be lost upon him. He did not preach 'Romans out' but he knew that in one sense that was what he was saying.

John has particular relevance to Jesus being not only a contemporary but also a great influence upon him as it is very probable that Jesus was a disciple of John. John was to some extent an oracular prophet in that he preached the prophetic word (Matthew 3:1,2; 7-10) but alongside this there was the call to people to respond to God through him by being baptised by him. There is therefore an aspect

of action prophecy to be found within John's ministry though he never sought to lead large movements in the accepted sense of action prophecy as noted previously in this chapter. John did gather disciples but in what numbers and for what purposes we can only speculate. John the Baptist is very much the Jewish prophet but there are two aspects of his ministry which differentiate him from mainstream Judaism. Firstly, John called into question the place of cultic forgiveness; baptism rather is presented as a symbolic rite which reflects repentance on the part of those baptised, and it is through repentance that one is forgiven. Secondly, he does stand on the margins; he is to a great extent an outsider as exemplified in his dress and lifestyle (Matthew 3:4). If John the Baptist's prophetic role influenced Jesus then what might we deduce? Is Jesus concerned with the renewal of Israel? What is his relationship to the ruling class, as it does appear that John was deemed to be a threat? How did Jesus view the common people?

In returning to John, it is perhaps in him that we see that whether we work with the categories of Horsley, that is "Action" and "Oracular" prophet, or we work with Webb, "Leadership" and "Solitary" prophet, there will always be a difficulty in being very precise in placing 'prophets' in categories. Both leadership and solitary prophets shared similarities, for example, they were peasants themselves with no formal scribal training, their ministries were mostly received by peasants, and the promise of deliverance was a prominent factor in most. However there were some differences, the orientation of the solitary was Jerusalem centred and to a large extent they were tolerated (Webb 1991:342) ben Hananiah being a good case in point. What I believe needs to be remembered though, is that irrespective of similarities and the use of particular categories, each prophet was unique. That uniqueness was bestowed upon each one by situation, sense of calling, personality etc., influences which mould and shape us all as individuals.

I have suggested that the four types of prophecy offered by Webb are most helpful and instructive when trying to gain insight into, and understanding of, 1st century CE prophets. The clerical and sapiential prophets certainly seem to be bound up with particular groups, where prophetic ministry is to some extent learned. By this I mean that we are not looking at individual prophets per se, but rather seeing the particular outlooks of each of these groups being able to produce prophets from among them. The groups lend themselves to such a task, and Josephus does indeed give his support to such a prophetic role, though the differentiation he makes from this and classical prophecy is highlighted by his use of *mantis* (seer) terminology (Gray 1993:108). The Popular Prophets understood as Leadership and Solitary, though overwhelmingly maligned by Josephus, are to be seen more in the classical mould and that in two ways. The solitary prophets tend to be more akin to the Messenger prophets of the Old Testament; they reflect the tradition of the 8th to 6th centuries BCE prophets who spoke 'thus saith the Lord'. In Horsley's categorisation they would be Oracular prophets. The Leadership prophets, on the other hand, are recognised to stand more in the line of a Moses or a Joshua, leaders of movements of liberation (Wright 1996:154). What can be clearly seen in these movements is 'a clear pattern of symbolic correspondence between the great historical acts of redemption and the new eschatological acts anticipated by these prophetic movements' (Horsley/Hanson 1985:171). The Exodus, the entry into the Promised Land, the figures of Moses and Joshua, all prefigure what the leadership prophets promise their followers that God will do for them. These prophets sought their inspiration from particular certainties of the past in order to inspire the people of their present, to look to God to act on their behalf.

Teasing out the various categories of prophet is of course necessary in seeking to answer the question: What kind of prophet was Jesus? Does Jesus embrace all of

these categories, one way or another? Or is he more of one particular kind, for example, a popular leadership prophet? (Of course all typologies are subject to limitations and are in effect an analyst's construction serving to bring some aspects of prophetic identity into clearer relief at the expense of other aspects). Wright would see him more in the style of oracular prophet, giving priority to Jesus' teaching/preaching ministry. But we know that Jesus also gathered followers and he spoke of the destruction of the Temple (Mark 14: 57f, cf John 2: 78ff). However, Theissen makes an important point when he says that most prophetic messages were directed against the foreign ruling power, whereas John the Baptist, Jesus of Nazareth and Jesus ben Hananiah alone direct their messages against their own people (Theissen/Merz 1998:146). Jesus cannot be neatly categorised and the task for the next part of this thesis will be to tease out what sort of prophet I believe Jesus to be.

Jesus the Prophet

This thesis is based on the premise that Jesus the Prophet is the best identity descriptor to understand the ministry of Jesus in his own context of first century Palestine and as presented in the material given to us by the Gospel writers. Ben Witherington however cautions against using the prophetic model to gain a full appraisal of Jesus' ministry. For Witherington there are inconsistencies in the picture painted of Jesus the Prophet when compared with that of the traditional prophet, for example, Israel's prophets are not seen as exorcists nor is their teaching given under the form of wisdom speech (Witherington 1995:118). Witherington obviously recognises the place of exorcisms and wisdom teaching in Jesus' ministry, which deviate from the traditional prophetic style. The question Witherington does raise is whether or not the prophetic role of Jesus is the dominant activity he pursued, or is it the case that Jesus was "more than a prophet"? Is this a question I wish to address? I

believe that such a question primarily arises out of a post-Easter appreciation of Jesus. It is therefore theologically loaded and in a sense it is that kind of examination of Jesus that this thesis, being primarily a historical investigation, seeks to depart from. I do believe that Witherington is being over-cautious in his approach to the prophetic role of Jesus; the reasons for my opinion will become clear in the paper which follows.

As one reads the Gospels it is clear that the Gospel writers take for granted that Jesus was indeed a Prophet (even if they also claim more exalted identity descriptors for him - messiah, Emmanuel etc), for them the role fits well into their overall presentation of him. In both the Synoptics and the Fourth Gospel various references are made to Jesus as a prophet. From the Gospel accounts Jesus can be seen to be regarded as a prophet by the common people (Matthew 21:11; 14 and Mark 8:28) who speak of a common perception of Jesus. In Luke 7:39 a judgement is made about Jesus by a Pharisee when Jesus is anointed by a sinful woman. Jesus' reputation which comes under the spotlight relates to the prophetic ministry he exercises. In the Fourth Gospel, individuals proclaim Jesus to be a prophet, including the Samaritan woman (4:19), and the blind man (9:17). Both collective and individual expression is given in respect of believing Jesus to be a prophet and in Mark 6:4//Matthew 13:57 and Luke 4:24, Jesus is seen to claim that role for himself. The prophetic role is very much a given in the Gospels, and is part of Jesus' sense of calling, the question arises as to what *kind* of prophet Jesus was.

In any consideration of the prophetic role of Jesus, one must understand how Jesus viewed the Kingdom of God which he proclaimed was at hand (Mark 1:15). He was an eschatological prophet of the Kingdom of God, (which for the Jewish people was the great hope of a new liberated life transformed by God). Israel had always seen herself as living under the rule of YHWH whether or not it actually lived within

the covenantal laws. Israel was technically a theocracy but the fact that Israel had been conquered, for example by the Babylonians and now in the 1st century CE by the Romans, meant that it was a notional theocracy at times. The coming of the Kingdom of God would in effect bring the reign, the rule of God, to bear on every part of Israel's life. But not only that, life itself would be as it should be and Israel would have its own unique place among the nations (Wright 1999:202). Jesus in his prophetic ministry points to this kingdom now manifesting itself and he declares that people should prepare for its dawning. The question as to how this preparation was undertaken however also needs to be addressed. I raise this question due to the different understandings of what Jesus' prophetic ministry was asking of people. There is the view that primarily Jesus came to the people of Israel as a prophet proclaiming the need for God's people to renew their covenant with God. It was a call to repentance not first and foremost a call to political or social action and in so being was a reflection of John the Baptist's ministry. This approach to Jesus' prophetic ministry is encountered in the work of NT Wright, though he does also recognise that Jesus initiates a wider community than historically defined Israel (Wright 1999:201). Other scholars, for example Horsley, draw a more social slant on the prophetic work of Jesus, recognising it to be an encouragement to politically change the society of the day. In the previous section I have already highlighted various models of prophets which have been used to describe the type of prophetic ministry which Jesus exercised. In using them it must be understood that they are scholarly constructs, "hermeneutical tools," ways of highlighting prophetic characteristics which enable us to view aspects of Jesus' own ministry in a clearer light. They do not fully describe Jesus and one should not expect to fit Jesus exactly into one or any of the combined types. Some of these types which have been referred to already are clerical, sapiential, popular, leadership and solitary. My own

view of Jesus the prophet is that of a popular prophet who functioned both as an oracular prophet and as an action prophet. In seeking to present Jesus in this light I will begin by discussing the views of Wright and Horsley, as noted above, who both present Jesus the Prophet in their own ways.

Wright does see a strong connection between John the Baptist and Jesus. This leads to John's prophetic model being formative for the prophetic role undertaken by Jesus. But not only is Jesus influenced by John but also by the classical prophetic tradition which Jesus recognises John to stand in (Matthew 11: 7-13). This tradition was primarily concerned with calling Israel back to its covenantal roots, to faithfulness in its covenantal obligation, to renew its commitment to God's laws and purposes. Wright sees Jesus' prophetic role evolving out of this tradition though expanding its remit. Wright in recognising Jesus' call to the people of Israel to repent in preparation for the coming Kingdom and God's imminent intervention redefines the expected outcome of such an event by reinterpreting the understanding of eschatology. The eschatological outcome of the impending descent of the Kingdom of God was not to bring the physical world to an end (what may be called the traditional 'apocalyptic' view) but to create a new beginning in the life of the people of Israel. In Wright's own words Jesus offered Israel "the long awaited renewal and restoration, but on new terms and with new goals" (Wright 1999:173).

The focus of Wright is on Israel renewed, though in unexpected ways, for example in the broadening of the understanding of who belonged to Israel. Undoubtedly Wright would recognise the social and political implications of such an event but these are not what his Jesus is primarily concerned with. How Jesus develops his prophetic ministry is for the most part along the lines of the Oracular Prophet, which is the main strand of classical prophecy. Jesus spoke his message

and parables were used to encourage new thinking in respect of fulfilment. Perhaps this is where the relevance of "He who has ears, let him hear" (Matthew 13:9) comes into play. As in the classical tradition oracles of judgement are spoken by Jesus against the abuses of the Temple and of the privileged relationships which Israel had with God (Matthew 21:13; Luke 18:9-14). The question concerning the authenticity of Jesus' pronouncements of judgement has been raised among scholars and Sanders for one, does believe that these oracles are a creation of the Early Church. In contrast Wright believes that the content of oracular prophecy has a strong judgment theme to be found within it and therefore have some claim to plausible authenticity and I would concur with Wright's conclusion.

Wright sets Jesus very much within a traditional Jewish context, a fact which strengthens the persuasion of his thesis. In marked contrast to Wright, Crossan, a leading member of the Jesus seminar, posits a non-eschatological identity for his Jesus. Crossan's Jesus is a 'Mediterranean Jewish Cynic Peasant', who fits most neatly into the mould of a sapiential prophet, who by his teachings encouraged people to reflect on their own individual lives and never sought to address the life of Israel as a whole. Sapiential prophets however were part of the intellectual elite of society (who at times left their "roots") and nowhere in the Gospel traditions is Jesus portrayed in such a way. On the other hand Wright's Jesus is a commoner among commoners, a man of the people, who sits very well in that particular world. It is though in respect of Jesus' teaching role that criticism has been raised concerning Wright's Jesus the Prophet. Herzog comments that Jesus the Prophet is basically Jesus the Teacher, the Rabbi, and the question is, can this fully describe Jesus' ministry? (Herzog 2000:66) This question is raised because if it is solely as a teacher that Jesus is viewed can he form enough of a 'political' threat to have ended up on a cross? As a teacher can Jesus fully engage with the people in all their need? In Wright's defence, he himself

would also see Jesus as a Leadership Prophet which to some extent is akin to the Action Prophet. Even within the oracular tradition there is a strand of symbolic action to be detected in, for example, Isaiah and Jeremiah. In Isaiah chapter 20 the prophet walks naked for three years as a sign of judgement against Egypt and Ethiopia and in Jeremiah 27 the prophet dons a yoke as a symbol of impending domination by Nebuchadnezzar. When we consider the mainstream action prophets of the 1st century, for example the Samaritan and Theudas, we do recognise that theirs is a much more forceful approach in that they seek to lead their people to some kind of great event which God will bring about. Deadlines are announced by them for God's deliverance which is a somewhat more specific prophetic approach than is found in classical tradition. Nonetheless, in considering Jesus as a leadership prophet, Wright does complement Jesus' words with actions which make him more than a teacher.

Primarily the two events which place Jesus within the action prophet sphere are Jesus' entry into Jerusalem and the cleansing of the Temple. But in his role as a leadership prophet Jesus also mirrored the action prophets by gathering around him a group of followers, a group of twelve followers in particular, but others also, both men and women from the margins of society. Jesus did not initiate any movement as such in the ways in which the popular prophets of the first century CE did. There is no clear indication of Jesus being willing to lead those who followed him to any geographical location to await God's act of deliverance. It might be the case though that the action undertaken by Jesus in the Temple might be seen as a use by him of a symbolic space. Is this the place of God's intervention for Jesus? I believe that though the Temple is of great symbolic importance, there is no comparable clarity of proclamation with respect to the specificity of the sign/action prophets. No doubt large crowds were attracted to him and one wonders what their expectations of him were. Did they look to him for some kind of political leadership? This is perhaps

where I wonder if Wright fully places Jesus within that context where religious actions impinged upon every other aspect of life? According to Luke 3 the prophetic ministry of John the Baptist encompassed everyday life. Matters such as tax-collecting and military service were all brought within a right response to the impending arrival of the Kingdom of God. John's responses to those who questioned him show that there were social and political implications bound up with his prophetic message. Surely it is not too much of a leap to accept that Jesus being a disciple of John would have realised the full implications of John's message? And if that is the case, would not a similar outlook have been presented within the message of Jesus? I wonder if Wright presumes that such was the prophetic ministry that Jesus exercised, that contained within it was a political and social message which need not be expressed explicitly? And because of this, does Wright therefore not make much of this aspect of the impact of Jesus' ministry? Wright must recognise that it would be very difficult to be a leader within Jesus' society and not bring some kind of influence upon the whole of life; that there would be all kinds of repercussions from a message which spoke of a new empire (kingdom)! I believe Wright wishes to see Jesus primarily as being bound up with inaugurating a renewal movement which would change the heart of Israel and enable it to become the people God wanted it to be. Jesus like the prophets of old comes "to Israel with a word from her covenant God, warning of the imminent and fearful consequences of the direction she was travelling, urging and summoning her to a new and different way" (Wright 1999:163). This would entail, as expressed above, a redefinition of Israel, a new approach to its religious life. Wright wishes to preserve the religious understanding of Jesus' ministry which for some limits the prophetic role of Jesus, one such scholar being Richard Horsley to whom I now turn.

Horsley believes the Kingdom of God, as understood within the biblical tradition, embraces the whole of life. There is no specifically religious context to its relevance; the Kingdom of God is concerned with matters religious, social and political. Jesus as a prophet of the Kingdom therefore addresses life in all these ways; his concern is not only for religious renewal but also for the renewal of society. Horsley's Jesus is a prophet of social change the consequence of which is that Jesus is crucified. Change is a vital ingredient of Jesus' message and such change is related to the view that with the arrival of the Kingdom of God comes an end to the old order. Such a message that Jesus preached threatened the status quo and irrespective of the apologetic attempts by the Gospel writers to show that Jesus was innocent of the charges laid against him at his trial, Horsley is of the opinion that Jesus was rightly perceived as a revolutionary (Horsley 1993:162-164). How Jesus takes that revolution forward is within local village life where he sides with the poor against the ruling elites. In doing so the Kingdom of God is made known by Jesus' teaching and actions (his oracular and action prophetic dimensions) and the outcome is ultimately the renewal of Israel. Horsley and I both see Jesus in this respect that of being both an oracular and action prophet, but although using the same typology our conclusions are somewhat different as I will seek to now demonstrate.

Horsley firmly located Jesus' ministry within the people of Israel and sees him as especially supportive of the poor and marginalized. Jesus identifies with the poor and supports social protest and this ministry within Israel Horsley believes to be supported by Jesus' presence in Galilee. Support also comes from Jesus link to John the Baptist and the Baptist's message, and the symbolism in the choosing of the Twelve which points to a renewed Israel. The focus very much then for Horsley is on Israel, and where we find evidence for the work of the Kingdom of God as seen in

and through Jesus, is in local village life which is transformed as the poor find their place, their needs and aspirations being met. The exploitative powers that be must be challenged and this Jesus sets about doing by reorganising village life on an egalitarian basis and by rejecting the institutions which not only gave the present society its structure but which made the lot of the peasants a very hard one. The new community which was to evolve in response to the coming of God's Kingdom, was to be non-hierarchical and most importantly non-exploitative. The people of the community were to enjoy mutual support and to live together as one. The obvious corollary of this is that there is no place for leaders, the leaders who enjoyed the privileges of leadership within the Religious and Cultic spheres of Jewish life in Jesus' day. In Horsley's view their very purpose came under threat and even the necessity of the Temple itself was called into question by Jesus' words and actions.

Horsley regards the reference in Mark 13:2 where Jesus is said to prophecy the destruction of the Temple, as leading on to the possibility that this renewed community is concerned to bring about and embody the house in which God dwells (Horsley 1993:296). If that be so Jesus would indeed be recognised as one who threatened the very stability, tradition and religion of Israel as the Temple was so integral to Israel's way of life. This would also mean that those who truly believed that the Temple was a religious necessity, and those whose influence, power and financial clout were bound up with the Temple, would indeed have felt very threatened and view Jesus as one who should be silenced. Horsley obviously expands much more on this particular theory in relation to Jesus' prophetic judgments on the Temple but having given a flavour of his argument suffice it to say that it is not difficult to understand why Jesus meets his public and shameful death on a roman execution tool.

Horsley has Jesus agitating for social change and stirring up the peasantry against the ruling institutions of his society. This is the means of bringing about a renewed community but in order to do so, who Jesus was willing to welcome into that community had to be tightly defined. For example, those who were seen not to be on the side of the poor would not be counted in, rather they would be counted out, people such as tax-collectors. But for Horsley to tightly define the community which found its life reflected and supported in the prophetic words and actions of Jesus, is to fly in the face of a good deal of Gospel tradition which speaks of Jesus welcoming all sorts, tax-collectors, prostitutes and sinners, people who did not conform to the basic outlook and lifestyle of the Galilean peasantry. This I believe to be a real challenge to Horsley's view as to how Jesus lived out his prophetic role but it is indeed a challenge which Horsley seeks to address. The way in which Horsley seeks to answer the question posed by the inclusive Gospel tradition is by re-interpreting the understanding of tax-collectors, prostitutes and sinners.

Tax-collectors, for Horsley, were not, as is believed by the general accepted scholarly wisdom, people who were regarded as traitors by the common people nor seen as so sinful as to be excluded from the community. In effect tax-collectors have been downgraded to toll-collectors by Horsley. But having reinterpreted the meaning of tax-collector Horsley then goes on to question whether or not Jesus actually associated with them at all, a view he regards as based on thin and problematic evidence (Horsley 1993:213). When the Gospels portray Jesus as speaking of himself as being a friend of tax-collectors (Matthew 11:18-19; Luke 7:33-34), Horsley replies that the words spoken by Jesus refer to accusations made by his opponents. The corollary of this is that they need not be accepted as accurately reflecting the actions of Jesus. Again in relation to the 'Sinners' with whom Jesus frequented, Horsley questions whether or not, as commonly understood, these

people were part of Jesus' community. He does not accept that sinners in the sense of 'despised outcasts' or 'the wicked' were in any way recognised as a major group among Jesus followers. Also, as for the reference to prostitutes in Matthew 21:31 which speaks of them entering the Kingdom of God before the chief priests and elders, Horsley believes this to be simply a means of challenging them to consider the reality of their own need to repent, which they were blind to. There is no statement in Matthew 21:31 which declares that prostitutes will enter the Kingdom of God at all!

Horsley has to unpack the received wisdom in respect of Jesus welcoming more than just the oppressed poor into his renewed community, in order to uphold his view that Jesus was very much focused on the peasantry. In doing so he takes a widely differing view of Jesus from that, not only of many scholars, but also from the Gospel tradition itself. I find it hard to accept Horsley's interpretation, as my own inclination is to view Jesus as making God "more accessible" to all, and his prophetic actions in associating with the traditional, "tax-collectors, sinners and prostitutes" demonstrate very clearly what he was saying. In fact Horsley's whole social analysis of Jesus' day has been challenged by Ben Witherington as being coloured too much by today's western society (Witherington 1995:150). Transferring the social class system we know to 1st century Palestine cannot be done as there were no social classes in that time says Witherington. Horsley, it seems, has overstepped the mark, and with regard to Jesus' social action, has inferred a great deal from his own pre-suppositions. I also have a question concerning Jesus' relation to the Temple in Horsley's view. Horsley's Jesus rejects the religious institutions which include the Temple, which I would query. In Matthew 8:1-4 Jesus is seen to heal a leper. The outcome of this healing is that Jesus instructs the healed man to 'go show yourself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded' (Matthew 8:4). As reported in

the Gospel this is not the action of one who rejects the Temple. There is also the question of why Jesus' followers, post-Pentecost, continue to visit the Temple (Acts 2:46) if Jesus had been such a strong opponent of its place within his renewed community? I feel Horsley stretches his evidence too thinly and dislocates Jesus too much from what might be considered his own religious tradition. When one examines the Gospels there is to be seen a Jesus who is not so much a revolutionary but someone who seeks to take the Jewish people not only back to their covenantal obligations but who at the same time intensifies the meaning of the Torah as seen in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:17-48). There is a deepening of Israel's faith encouraged by Jesus which leads me now to set him within my own view of his prophetic role.

What effect was the coming of the Kingdom of God to have on the people of Israel? This is an important question as the Kingdom of God is central to Jesus' ministry. In what sense does the Kingdom of God bring change? Is it a bringing to an end of the demonic and political powers which dominate society as Horsley believes (Horsley 1985:213), or is it primarily to do with renewing the covenant between God and his people which would lead on to wider implications for life as Wright infers (Wright 1999:170)? The question could be asked are these two views of the Kingdom of God mutually exclusive and incompatible? I believe that Jesus' prophetic ministry embraces life and that in relation to every aspect of the life lived by the people of his day. As I have already highlighted in this thesis, there was no sacred/secular divide in Jesus' day. All prophets in some way or other challenged the political status quo and Jesus would have been no different. Therefore the answer to the question 'is the Kingdom of God a political entity?' is yes! And the answer to the question 'is the Kingdom of God concerned with the inner workings of a person's heart?' is yes!

Jesus as Prophet is, I believe, to be seen as one who stood very much within the classical tradition; he could be deemed a restoration prophet. In that sense he follows Isaiah, Micah and the other great prophets of the Hebrew Scriptures, and of course John the Baptist, who called an erring people back into the ways of God. For Jesus the Kingdom of God was primarily a theological construct, but that did not negate the great social and political implications of the prophets' message, for that message was about the reign of God in the whole life of his people. The challenge Jesus gave, in believing that the Kingdom was present and that he himself was its agent was to make a personal response to God which would lead to a changed lifestyle, one which revealed that such a person was participating in the kingdom. Therefore the Kingdom of God is to be thought of more as changing people's lives, drawing them into a new community but not creating some kind of State. The community which is formed in responding to his prophetic message is one which stood in stark contrast to the dominant religious, social, and political "bodies" of his day. This is seen in his actions through which he reveals the life of the community seen for example in his sharing of meals with sinners wherein he reveals the surprising social implications of that response. Jesus would not, I believe, have seen himself as what we might call in our day a social reformer, and sometimes this transference of categories and understanding from our own experience is unhelpful. Jesus was a preacher of the Kingdom, that Kingdom which would bring a new world to birth. This is the heart of his message, it is the offer of salvation to all who will respond, and salvation is inclusive. (This point is highlighted by Theissen in Theissen/Merz 1998:270-272) Those who are included are Gentiles, (Matthew 8:10f) the socially impoverished (Luke 6:20-23); those with physical defects, for example, cunuchs (Matthew 19:12); and those deemed to be unrighteous morally (Matthew 21:28-32) (though Horsley refutes this interpretation). Theissen's view reflects that of

Wright which sees Jesus as creating a new community, a more extensive community than would have been envisaged within the popular view of the day concerning membership of God's people.

In considering what actual prophetic model to attach to Jesus I would want to place him very much within his own religious milieu and view him not as a revolutionary or as Crossan primarily believes him to be, a sapiential prophet. There are elements within Jesus' ministry which could be classed as sapiential in that Jesus' teaching contains "wisdom sayings" but to make this the thrust of his ministry is to over-emphasise its contribution and under-play its eschatological elements. I also believe that accepting Crossan's sapiential typology of Jesus the prophet creates too much of a discontinuity between Jesus and his tradition and the Church. I do not see Jesus as a clerical prophet either as these prophets were associated with holding a priestly office. As stated previously I would wish to see Jesus very much as a 'popular prophet', that is, one whose ministry was composed of word and action, a ministry set primarily within the lives of the common people. As an oracular prophet he brings a message to God's people. He proclaims that God's Kingdom is upon them. His message is indeed a forceful one, again in the style of the classical prophets. People need to take to heart what God is doing and prepare themselves for it and that preparation is to be one of personal repentance. This personal element has implications for how individuals then live in the midst of their neighbours (Matthew 5:21-26; 38-48). As Jesus preaches, in his own actions his message takes form. Unlike other action prophets Jesus did not associate the coming Kingdom with spectacular signs. He did not promise to lead the crowds to places where they would witness the mighty power of God. And though he did not pose outwardly any great challenge or threat to the Roman rulers, his ministry, because of the times in which he lived, did in effect challenge the powers of the day and was perceived

by them as dangerous. In his inclusive actions, his healings, the exorcisms that he performed Jesus fleshed out his teaching, though in the 'Entry to Jerusalem' and his actions in the Temple he moves in some way towards a more powerful and challenging demonstration of his Kingdom message.

Jesus the Prophet was a man of words and deeds. Convinced of his role as God's servant he preached for the renewal of Israel's faith, and for a life which revealed that Israel understood what God demanded. And in his own dealings with others he himself made known the life and the power of the Kingdom of God.

In this chapter on prophecy I have sought to introduce the concept of prophecy as it was understood in the time of Jesus. I have set out various prophetic typologies and have described some of the prophetic reaction to the circumstances which Israel found themselves in. I have figured Jesus into this prophetic context by way of analysing the prophetic models used by Wright and Horsley and begun to establish my own understanding of Jesus the Prophet. This I have concluded with some comments on the Kingdom of God in relation to Jesus. What I now wish to examine is Jesus' prophetic ministry in relation to four particular topics: wealth and poverty, inclusiveness, urbanisation, and power and politics, topics which explicitly arise out of the matters discussed in the chapter on Galilee and this chapter on prophecy. The examination will constitute exegesis of selected relevant parts of the Gospel tradition.

Chapter 3

Jesus the Prophet: Selected Gospel Evidence

In this chapter I will seek to look at Gospel texts which I believe are pertinent to the prophetic ministry of Jesus. The thrust of this work will be exegetical and the themes under scrutiny will be: Wealth and Poverty; Inclusiveness; Urbanisation; and Power and Politics. Each theme offers a particular insight into the Popular Prophet role that Jesus adopted for his ministry, one in which, through word and deed, he sought to call Israel back to Yahweh. The themes together relate to Jesus' overall message concerning the presence of the Kingdom of God in the midst of the people and its coming fulfilment. This was the heart of Jesus' ministry. It was a proclamation of the Kingdom of God, a Kingdom which most certainly touched life at its very heart, and indeed transformed life, but in what way is a question which scholars answer differently as seen for example in N T Wright and R Horsley. In looking at the various passages under study I would wish to consider the following: in what way does the Kingdom of God impact upon the themes under discussion? What aspect of the prophetic role Jesus adopted is being demonstrated? What aspects of the social or political order are being addressed?

In choosing the passages for exegesis I do so in relation to the themes referred to but in working with them I do so from my own perspective on their historical authentication. Whilst acknowledging that the evangelists have moulded and shaped some of the Jesus material, for example, Matthew's use of Jesus' teaching on relationships being set within a church discipline context (Matt 18: 15-18), I would wish to maintain that for the most part the gospel narratives I have selected do reflect in some form the words and actions of Jesus. From an academic perspective, Theissen's criterion of 'plausibility' is of positive value when working with the Gospel texts. Theissen writes that the "Jesus traditions have a historically plausible influence

when they can be explained as the influence of the life of Jesus partly because independent sources correspond, and partly because elements in these sources go against the tendency. Coherence and opposition to the tendency are complimentary criteria for the plausibility of historical influence." (Theissen/Merz 1998:116) This criterion appears to me to be of good sound common sense and one which encourages a more positive attitude to the texts in relation to moving from the historical to the contemporary relevance of Jesus' prophetic role. This also relates more helpfully to the project 'behind' this thesis, that is, to build bridges between Jesus' prophetic ministry and that of the contemporary church which is the community of faith which views scripture as sacred, and in the Church of Scotland, to be the 'supreme rule of life and faith.'

Exegesis: Theme: Wealth and Poverty

Luke the Evangelist records the tradition of Jesus being the one anointed "to preach good news to the poor" (4:18). Indeed, of all the evangelists Luke has gathered together the largest amount of Jesus' teaching on poverty and wealth, which does appear to be a major aspect of Jesus' teaching ministry. In what way can it be said that Jesus the Prophet brought "good news" to the poor? Whereas some leadership prophets encouraged movements, that is, sought to create stirrings among the people, at times leading them to particular places to await God's almighty deliverance (see previous chapters) what was Jesus' plan of action?

As an introduction to the texts which I have chosen I wish to offer a very brief review of the economic situation in Galilee.

In the Galilee in which he lived, and that among the common people for the most part, Jesus would have recognised how the economical development affected their everyday life. It was a time when the rich were becoming richer and the poor poorer, the gap between the two ever widening. The poor, *ptochoi*, as spoken of in

the Gospels, are not only those who are comparatively less well off or those of low income, but rather are the destitute, those who must pray for the basics of life (Matt5:11). What was it that impoverished so many Galileans? Undoubtedly the heavy tax burden imposed by Rome, Herod Antipas, and of course the Jerusalem religious authorities, contributed a great deal to the situation. Such were the demands made upon the people that debts were increasing, land was being lost due to debt, and ways of life, for example farming, had to be left behind in order to find any work which would provide an income. Added to this, or in fact working alongside this, was the movement in Galilee from a reciprocally based agrarian lifestyle to a more monetary based economy. This in effect changed life considerably for the ordinary Galilean family.

The texts I have chosen for reflection in this section are:

1: Luke 6:20-26 – The Lucan Beatitudes and Woes

2: Luke 16: 19-31 – The Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus.

These texts enable understanding of Jesus' prophetic approach to a needy people, and how it was that the God he made known would help them in their plight. Within these texts we are also enabled to see how Jesus viewed the dangers of wealth.

Exegesis of Luke 6: 20-26: Blessings and Woes

The text is taken from Luke's Sermon on the Plain, his equivalent to Matthew's Sermon on the Mount. In all probability the material used by the evangelists comes from Q. Matthew in his 'sermon' uses much more of the Q material in a concentrated way whereas Luke distributes it in various places out with the 'Sermon' as such. So it is that Matthew's sermon is three times longer than Luke's.

The sermon begins at verse 20 with a blessing on the poor, 'Blessed are you poor'. The question of who Jesus is addressing is important as the beginning of the

verse tells us that 'he lifted up his eyes on his disciples' and said these words. Are the poor, the poor disciples of Jesus, perhaps those who have become poor because they have left all to follow him? A wider context for the sermon is set in 6:17 where disciples and 'people' form part of the same crowd. I believe that Jesus' words were spoken to all who were part of the larger crowd though his words were only for those 'who had ears to hear', so to speak. I do not agree with John Nolland (Nolland 1989:281/282) who states that Jesus addresses himself to the 'great crowd of disciples' while the "great multitude of the people" overhear (a reference to Luke 7:1 which states 'after he had ended all his sayings in the hearing of the people.....'). Why I take the view of an all-inclusive preaching is because of the difference in Luke's beatitude from Matthew. Matthew has 'poor in spirit' (Matt 5:3) whereas Luke simply has the poor. Matthew spiritualises the poor (which is not universally accepted) Luke does not. The clue to who the poor are for Luke is seen in V21 with references to hunger and weeping and in the antithetical reference to the rich in V24 who are the materially rich. The poor are the literally poor who have a hard life because of the economic conditions under which they live. This view is supported by Luke's overall concern for the poor which is to be seen throughout his Gospel, in fact to call Luke the Gospel for the poor would be no understatement. I would contend then that Jesus speaks to the poor common people and calls them 'blessed'. The word blessed, *makarioi*, represents an Aramaic expression which denotes: "how fortunate are those..." though here there is no glorifying of poverty, for in Luke's ideal Christian community as seen in Acts (2:43-47; 4:34) we see that no one is in need. Craig E Evans raises interesting questions when he asks: 'Why are the poor, the hungry, the weeping, and the persecuted blessed? Is it because by their poverty, their situation, they reveal that they are not caught up in a corrupt, exploitative system? Was wealth accrual in Jesus' day, in Jesus' sight, only at the expense of others?' (C E Evans

1990:107) Most certainly what was taking place in Galilee, the great movement from an agrarian lifestyle to life largely centred around the growing cities, was taking its toll and it happily continued with no thought for the consequences for the common people. The four beatitudes vs20-22 all have their antithetical counterparts in the woes pronounced at vs 24-26. These woes upon the rich, those who are full, those who laugh, and the false speakers (a different kind of group, this woe being out of step, in a way, with the others), all paint a picture of a group, a 'class', which seemed to be living a very good life with no concern for others. The question has been asked of the authenticity of the woes. Are they a Lukan construction? There are no woes in Matthew but there is a reference in James 5:1 to them: 'come now, you rich, weep and howl for the miseries that are coming upon you.' There is the possibility that Luke drew on another source for this material and in terms of Jesus' concern for the poor, his willingness to speak out against hypocrisy, the woes are not inconsistent with Jesus' teaching/preaching style.

Luke 6: 20-26 presents us, overall, with the teaching of Jesus on the reversal of fortunes which the kingdom of God brings about. Joel B Green writes, 'Luke portrays Jesus as redefining, both now and for the eschatological future, the way the world works; he is replacing common representations of the world with a new one' (Green 1997:264). Jesus' prophetic call is to a belief in a God who is making, and who will make, a new world possible. The present reality for the poor is that they can share in the life now; their 'blessing' is for the present. Is that because not being snared by wealth, which makes people self-centred and self-sufficient, they can respond, unencumbered to God, and find their security in Him? Or is it because Jesus already offers, makes possible, a new community to which they can belong, one in which they find acceptance and value? For those who hunger and weep (vs21) their consolation is future orientated; it is a future reversal which is to be anticipated by

them. The old order is on the way out and therefore those who measure their success by wealth and riches (VS 24, 25) should take heed of what is to take place. Their concern with worldly values betrays their non-participation in the Kingdom of God in the present and asks the question of what happens to them when the kingdom is fully recognised?

Exegesis of Luke 16: 19-31: The Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus

The parable is unique to Luke and fits in well with his overall concern for the poor, the proper use of wealth and possessions and picks up on the reversal theme clearly stated in chapter 6:20-26. In the Gospel setting the parable's context is found in relation to 16:14 where the Pharisees are stated to be 'lovers of money'. The day to day context would be the city, a conclusion reached on the basis that this is where the wealthy elite lived. A much broader cultural context is found in the parallels which are to be found of this 'reversal themed' story in Egyptian and Jewish sources.

The story of the fortunes of the rich man and poor man being reversed was a well known folk-tale. In the Egyptian version two characters are involved: Si Osiris, son of Osiris, and his father. Both witness the funerals of a rich man and poor man with all the respective differences; the funeral of the rich man giving the impression that he is on his way to a wonderful new life, whereas the opposite is true for the poor man. The father wishes to follow the rich man but Si Osiris conducts him on a tour of Amnte, the place of the dead, which reveals that the rich man is in torment and the poor man is now dressed in the rich man's finery (C F Evans 1990:612). The reason for the reversal is that the poor man's good deeds outweighed his bad, whereas the rich man's did not. Therefore we are working with a debit/credit theology which is different from the Gospel reversal theme, a theme that opens the door to the possibility that God has a special bias to the poor and a big problem with the rich!

The parable begins with reference to the rich man (V19). The picture painted is one of extreme opulence. He is clothed with the finest clothes coloured by a Tyrian purple dye which speaks of utter luxury and every day was a feast day, not just special occasions. He lives like a King and so the possible reference is to Herod Antipas. Lazarus is introduced at verse 20; he is a poor man (*ptochos*), who suffers from sores, which according to Deuteronomy 28:27 are curses which come upon those who are disobedient. Lazarus is at the Gate, an important aspect of this story as the Gate was where agreements were made and justice dispensed. The Gate belongs to the rich man so it would be expected that a poor man would be well looked after by the just actions of the rich (Deut 15:7-11). Lazarus had hoped to feed from the scraps of the rich man's table (V21) but the implication in the parable is that he gets nothing; only the dogs pay him any attention by licking his sores. Death comes upon both Lazarus and the rich man (V22) but only the rich man is buried. Burial was important for Jews, everything had to be done properly, and this happens to the rich man, Lazarus on the other hand receives the final disgrace (Green 1997:607). After both men died however the great reversal of fortunes takes place and Vs 22-24 speak of the contrasting life that both have in the hereafter. Lazarus is in the "bosom of Abraham". Lazarus' place is the place of honour, the rich man finds himself in torment in Hades. It appears that the rich man has learned nothing as he requests that Lazarus provides him with a service, that is, brings him water. This reveals that the rich man must have known Lazarus 'on earth', that he knew that he was the man who sat at his gate begging. It appears that the ways of the rich are carried on into the afterlife, humility is lost on them, and the only compassion the rich man shows is in his request for Lazarus to go to his brothers to convince them to change their ways, vs 27, 28. It is the rich looking after the rich for presumably his brothers are also rich, so perhaps being rich puts you in eternal danger? Both

requests are refused, that is the request for water (V25/26) and for Lazarus to visit (V29-31). The reason for the first denial is, V26, that no one can cross between Abraham's bosom and Hades; it is a fixed state of affairs based on the just deserts of all concerned (Luke 6:20,24). The second denial is due to the necessary knowledge of what they must do already being contained in Moses and the prophets.

The parable is attributed to Jesus and fits in very well with his general teaching on rich and poor and his approach to the place of the 'outsider', the 'unclean' within God's Israel. The use of a well known folk tale is not problematic as Jesus himself was a story-teller, someone who saw the value of stories which people could relate to. In terms of the presentation by Luke only V31 appears to be a Christian reflection made possible through the resurrection of Jesus. In the parable Jesus addresses a commonly held theology that health and wealth were evidence of God's blessing, while those who experienced sickness and poverty were very much under God's curse (C A Evans 1960:248). Again, as in the parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15: 11-24) there is an unexpected twist as the opposite of what is anticipated happens. It transpires that in some sense the rich man has forfeited his place in Israel, the appeal to 'Father Abraham', one based on kinship, means nothing. Now what has cost him his place in the family? One answer would be that very simply he has not fulfilled his Torah obligations to the poor. If that be the case then we are dealing with a debit/credit salvation system. However, how do you apply that to the one who gains salvation, Lazarus? There are no good deeds spoken of in relation to him in the parable. How much should we press this? Well, in the context of reversal themes, the first shall be last and the last first (Luke 13:30; Mark 10:31; Matt 19:30) the blessings and woes of the parable fits very well (Luke 6:20, 24). It does not say that Lazarus did good deeds but only that he had suffered evil things; and of the rich man it does not say that he had not helped the poor but had his turn of good things.

The parable delivers a warning to the rich about where the love of money (16:14) leads to, and like many of Jesus' parables it is left to the hearer to make his or her own response.

In the selected passages in respect of Jesus' attitude to wealth and poverty what is seen is that Jesus to a large extent takes his lead from the Hebrew prophets, for example Isaiah and Micah. The responsibility that the wealthy have towards the poor is one bound up with covenant living. But an extra emphasis is given by Jesus in that an anticipated future reversal takes the ministry to the poor onto a new theological plane.

Exegesis : Theme: Inclusiveness

My intention in this section is to view Jesus' attitude in relation to who belonged to Israel. Israel was defined as the people of God, and what revealed that relationship was the life Israel lived. That life was to be holy, holiness reflecting the very life of God in whom there was found nothing impure. This holiness as seen in Israel would in fact be a sign of their separateness from all other peoples evidenced by the Hebrew verb root *qadash*, which means "to set apart," being the same verb root as "to be holy." Distinctiveness was important and how to maintain that distinctiveness was effected by following the *Torah* and by participating in the sacrificial cult of the Temple (as laid down in the *Torah*). The Holiness Code is to be found in Leviticus chapters 17-26, and relates to both lifestyle and Temple duties. Overall, Law and Temple gave cohesiveness to the life of Israel, underpinned its society, and of course created occasional reform movements as the ideals they set before the people were seldom realised. One such movement was led by the Pharisees whose name in Hebrew, *perushim*, means "separated ones." They sought the extension of the Temple cult, seeking to make priests of the people in their everyday lives and in order to do so developed their own interpretations of the *Torah*

to clarify what holiness meant. But did they ask too much of the people? And was their way of defining and refining Israel acceptable to Jesus? Marcus Borg questions if it was. If the quest for holiness was seen by the Pharisees as the *imitatio dei*, Borg suggests for Jesus it was compassion that reflected the nature of God (Borg 1998:137). Crossan has a broader view of Israel as seen in Jesus' actions and teaching. Crossan speaks of a "kingdom of beggars", a "kingdom of undesirables" and a "kingdom of nobodies" in respect of the population of the kingdom (Crossan 1992:266-268). My hope is that through the theme of inclusiveness the question of who belonged to Israel can be explored.

The passages I have chosen are the following:

- (1) Matthew 8: 5 – 10; the healing of the centurion's servant
- (2) Matthew 11: 16 – 19 – Jesus the friend of tax collectors and sinners
- (3) Matthew 19: 12 – the place of eunuchs in the Kingdom
- (4) Matthew 21: 22 – 32 – the parable of the two sons

The main reason behind my choice is that they give a very broad picture of Jesus' involvement with those considered to be "beyond the pale." The texts I have chosen are in fact to be found in Theissen and Merz under two sub-headings: 'Salvation for the Gentiles outside Israel' and 'Salvation for outcast groups within Israel' (Theissen/Merz 1998:270/271). These references are most certainly helpful to the theme under discussion, inclusiveness.

Exegesis of Matthew 8: 5–10: The Healing of the Centurion's Servant.

The context is Capernaum, the town which was the base from which Jesus ministered. Capernaum being a garrison town and an important customs post would naturally have a military presence. It is the Centurion who is associated with this presence who approaches Jesus and although nothing is said of him Schweizer thinks that he might possibly have been a Syrian gentile in the service of Rome

{Schweizer 1975:213}. He seeks Jesus' help for his ill servant (v6). This perhaps tells us that he is a more caring master than most and his response to Jesus' willingness to come to his home seen in v8, recognises not only the importance of Jesus but the practice of the day whereby a Jew would not enter a gentile house due to the fact that it would render him unclean. The fact that Jesus is willing to go to his home tells us of his willingness to break down such barriers. Verses 8 and 9 reveal a faith present in the Centurion which Jesus not only warms to but which he openly commends. This faith relates to recognition of the authority of Jesus which in its own way reveals an understanding of the identity of Jesus as being God's agent. Such a faith causes Jesus to contrast the Centurion's response with what he has found elsewhere (vs10-12), and the words of Jesus speak of Gentile inclusion in the Kingdom of God due to the fact that it is faith alone which brings one into it. Again I turn to Schweizer who commenting on verse 11 and its reference to a great feast says, "the text speaks of participation in the heavenly banquet (mentioned only in the Old Testament in Isaiah 25:6) because it is no longer thinking in terms of an earthly Kingdom. What is new and unprecedented, although hinted at by such prophetic sayings as Micah 3:12; Amos 3: 2: 9:7, is the notion that this will not take place for the glory of Israel but that Israel is threatened with exclusion from the Kingdom of God" {Schweizer 1975:215}.

Jesus by his response declares that belonging to the Kingdom of God is open to all and not only those who simply are born into one particular ethnic group. But more than that, the Centurion is in fact a representative of an oppressive power, one who certainly saw his allegiance as being to Rome, then Herod Antipas, and finally the elite. Somehow one does not think that the common people were seen by 'Roman' Centurions as people to whom they were to be responsible. In a sense the Centurion is symbolic of Israel's great enemy yet a place is to be found at the

banquet for him, and so the story of the healing anticipates a much more gracious Kingdom and as Warren Carter further adds 'the establishment of God's reign over all, including disease and Rome' (Carter 2000:204).

Exegesis of Matthew 11: 16 – 19: Jesus the Friend of Tax Collectors and Sinners

The context of this passage is Jesus speaking to the crowds about John the Baptist. He both speaks highly of John and questions the responses of the people to him (vs 7–15).

Vs 16–19 see Jesus turning a contrasting spotlight on both John and his own ministry. These verses have been challenged due to the reference to the Son of Man. It is a debatable point among scholars as to whether or not Jesus would have referred to himself as the Son of Man. However, the content of Jesus' preaching is most certainly reflective of his general approach. The complaint that Jesus has against "this generation", v 16, *genea*, a pejorative term, is that they cannot be pleased. "This generation" is a reference to Jesus' and John's opponents who, irrespective of the differing approach found in both Jesus and John, found fault with both of them. John, associated with the 'funeral game' played by the children (v 17), was met with claims he had a demon (v 18); whereas Jesus, who played the 'wedding game' (v 17) was accused of being a drunkard and glutton, a friend of tax-collectors and sinners. The accusation against Jesus refers to his open and free and easy approach to table-fellowship. As Warren Carter points out, 'in the ancient world, meal customs reflected and reinforced hierarchical order, social relations, and status, through invitations, different qualities and quantities of food, types of tableware, and eating utensils, and seating order' (Carter 2000:204). In Matthew 11:19 Jesus is being accused of breaking such conventions by being non-discriminatory, in fact by eating and drinking with the marginalised, those who would not have found a place at any good self-respecting Jew's table.

Here from the lips of Jesus' opponents is reference to Jesus breaking down the religious/theological barriers. No-one is excluded from God's grace and indeed it creates through God's prophet, Jesus, an alternative community to that which was normative for his own day.

Exegesis of Matthew 19: 12: The Place of Eunuchs in the Kingdom.

The context is Jesus' teaching on marriage, (ch 19: 3 –12). In response to Jesus' words concerning adultery being the only reason for divorce, (v9), some of his disciples conclude that it would be much better to remain single, (v10). In response Jesus opens up the possibility that the single state might indeed be a calling from God, and in so doing he uses what would have been the most surprising term, eunuch (v12). There is the possibility that the background to such thinking was Essene Judaism which both John the Baptist and Jesus may have come into contact with. Within this strand of Judaism celibacy seems to have been seen as acceptable. But it is the use of the term 'eunuch' which must have made people ask if they were really hearing Jesus right. Eunuchs were excluded from the people of God as was laid down in Deuteronomy 23:1. Within homes there was no place for them as everything about them, their inability to father children, the sexually ambivalent state they found themselves in, the "incompleteness" of their bodies, all disqualified them from participation in normal life; they were most certainly outsiders. Yet here is Jesus using such a term to speak of service for God (the eunuch would not in fact serve as a priest, Leviticus 21: 20) and to hold before his disciples the possibility that it might be God's will to call to his service persons unfit for marriage which was contrary to the Law of Moses (Schweizer 1975:383).

Again Jesus is breaking taboos, both social and religious. He is calling his followers to broaden their views of who is acceptable to God and of who finds a place in the new community of Israel which Jesus himself is establishing.

Exegesis of Matthew 21: 28 – 32: The Parable of the Two Sons.

The context is one of rejection, Jesus speaking of the rejection of his ministry by those who might have been expected to have welcomed him. The 'man' (v 21) is God, the first son, v 28, is a collective reference to the tax-collectors and harlots of verse 31, and the second son; in verse 30 is probably a reference to the religious elite. The first son initially refuses to work for the man but has a change of heart and does so (v29). The second son initially says yes but does not. The contrast being set before us is that of those who refuse to obey the Law of Moses but accept what the message of Jesus offers; and those who live by the Law but reject Jesus. Who really is fulfilling God's will? According to Jesus it is the marginal who really witness to the Kingdom of God, whereas those who believed themselves to be at the centre of God's Kingdom showed by their rejection of Jesus that they were not.

To have declared such a message would have had his opponents shake their heads in disbelief. What Jesus was saying made no religious sense. It went against the clearly held belief of the day that Israel was well defined and that by reference to the law it could be ascertained who found favour with God, and most certainly tax-collectors and harlots did not.

This section on inclusiveness reveals that Jesus taught, and by his actions made known, that the Kingdom of God was all-embracing. Like the classical prophets his pronouncements were calls to a people who sometimes put more faith in their bloodline than they did in Yahweh and as such his words would be seen as words of Judgement. In the same way there was an element of surprise to his prophetic preaching in that he spoke of those who found a place in God's Israel as including the 'outsiders' of the day. Jesus spoke of God's grace reaching further than the bounds of Israel itself. This 'oracular activity' set side by side with his prophetic actions, that is his meals with and embracing of the outsiders, must also have

surprised those who believed themselves to be beyond the reach of God's love. Jesus stretched the minds of all to breaking point. Religiously he was redefining the boundaries which enclosed some while excluding others from the Kingdom of God, an action which had social and political implications.

Exegesis: Theme: Power and Politics

In this section I will seek to ascertain Jesus' relationship to the political situation which the Jewish people found themselves in, that is, living under imperial domination. Was Jesus encouraging revolution or did he encourage acquiescence in respect of Roman rule? How did he differ from other prophets who faced the same scenario? The texts I have chosen for exegesis are:

(1) Matthew 5:38-42, with particular reference to v41- The Law of Retaliation

(2) Matthew 11: 7-9 – Jesus' words about John the Baptist.

(3) Mark 12: 13-17 – Payment of Taxes to Caesar.

These texts give us an insight into Jesus' response to the question of how the people of God, Israel, should live under the rule of a foreign power.

Exegesis of Matthew 5: 38-42 with particular reference to v41: The Law of Retaliation.

The context is Jesus' teaching on retaliation. Verse 38 is a restatement of the Lex Talionis which can be found in Exodus 21:24-25, Leviticus 24:20 and Deuteronomy 19:21. The law can also be found in Hammurabi's Law Code. Lex Talionis was a law which sought to make possible proportionate vengeance in days when disproportionate vengeance held sway. It was restrictive rather than permissive and in its Old Testament form was set alongside the law of love for neighbour, was only allowed to function through judges, and was negotiable in the sense of monetary damages being an accepted penalty payment. Lex Talionis was a civil, progressive step, for its own time.

In verse 39 Jesus speaks of non-resistance to evil. Is this pacifism that Jesus encourages? No. The question here is of how one responds to evil not of not responding at all. Jesus is seeking to highlight that his view differs from Lex Talionis. The striking of the cheek was an insulting gesture to which one is to respond in such a way so as not to meet violence with violence and insult in the same manner. There is a cycle here which Jesus wants to break. One is to resist, but not violently, and to do so in such a way as to retain one's humanity and dignity. The challenge is not to descend into the same depths as those who use violence but to rise above such actions.

Verse 41 in particular addresses very clearly one aspect of life living under Roman rule. The force being spoken of is one well used by Roman soldiers, perhaps on a daily basis, when labour was required. The verb 'forces', *angareuo*, is of Persian origin, and it describes the commandeering, for public use, of people and property. It speaks of the government, or the army, having the right to make demands on people's time and property as we see in Josephus (Ant 13:52) where the verb is used for the mandatory carrying of military stores. In Matthew 27:32 we read of Simon of Cyrene being compelled to carry the cross of Jesus. Simon had no option, this was part of life. The going of one mile may well be what was laid down in the law and for this distance, within the text; we are probably thinking of a soldier's pack as having to be carried. When speaking on this matter, a well hated Roman practice, Jesus does not say refuse; rather he encourages his hearers to go two miles. What does this say about Jesus' reaction to Rome? Is Jesus accepting the right of requisitioning? Is he telling people to agree to Roman rule?

Jesus' view of requisitioning is not one which either affirms it or rejects it. Jesus, rather, is encouraging his listeners not to react in such a way that imitates the

ways of the oppressors. It is about 'not playing the game on Rome's terms' (Carter 2000:153).

Those who heard his words were to maintain resistance by not allowing Rome to rule their hearts, not to exercise control over their wills, and so in a sense the hearers were seizing the initiative and showing the power which is at the heart of the Kingdom of God. The revolution is inward not outward, and this reveals that the prophetic ministry of Jesus did not seek to encourage people to take up arms but to seek freedom from subjugation within.

Exegesis of Matthew 11: 7-9: Jesus' Words about John the Baptist.

The context of the verses in question is Jesus' teaching on John the Baptist. He does this by asking questions of the crowd.

Verse 7 speaks of the crowds going out into the wilderness, thus the place of John's ministry is highlighted. Reference to the reed is symbolic (cf 1Kings 14:15). Schweizer, Hill and Mounce relate the reed to John the Baptist. It is a way of describing what he is not. He is not the preacher whose message changes from day to day. The inference is that John most certainly knew what he was about, his ministry being very solid and sure. Verse 8 with its reference to 'soft raiment' (RSV) in its own way speaks of John's conscious decision to follow a definite path of taking a particular stance for God over against the fashion followers found in palaces.

Whereas Schweizer, Hill and Mounce speak of the symbolic purpose of the reed, in turning to the meaning of the 'soft raiment' they begin to move in the direction of Carter who would seek to develop the political nuances of both reed and clothing. Carter points to the fact that the reed was the symbol found on the coins Herod Antipas issued to commemorate the founding of Tiberius. From Matthew 14:1-11 we know that Antipas had John beheaded, the reasons for which have already been referred to in this thesis. Carter raises an interesting possibility that Jesus' words refer

to John's anti-Antipas preaching. Carter asks, "did they go out to see Herod 'blown about', attacked by John's critique of urban power, wealth, and alliance with Rome?" (Carter 2000:251).

With regard to 'soft raiment', (vs 8) Jesus is boldly declaring that the prophet of God does not dress himself in such a way, in fact his own dress is in a way a critique of the elite. If what Carter proposes is possible it certainly speaks of Jesus being politically aware and that he accepted John's prophetic ministry as validly calling into question the political and social situations of the day. Did Jesus therefore share this outlook to the extent that it formed part of his own prophetic ministry? There is no evidence that he took it as far as John's, but due to the fact that Jesus made his base at

Capernaum, as far away as possible from Antipas, perhaps it is the case that he saw his own prophetic ministry having political implications.

Exegesis of Mark 12: 13-17: Payment of Taxes to Caesar.

The context of this passage is a series of controversies concerning authority. The possibility exists that it is a story transferred from the Galilean ministry of Jesus to this particular point in order to stand alongside the other controversies. This possibility arises due to the involvement of the Herodian party but as Luke 23:7 tells us that Antipas was to be found in Jerusalem at Passover it may well be that the historical context of the final week of Jesus' life may be correct.

The protagonists are Pharisees and Herodians (vs 13) an unlikely couple due to the fact of their own differing views on the matter asked of Jesus. In verse 14 flattery abounds in the preamble to the question which is: 'is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar or not?' It is a case of entrapment of which John Howard Yoder says that, 'the trap question about the denarius is the most openly political' (Yoder 1972:44). The question of tax here refers to the Roman Poll Tax, imposed in 6CE, which was a

matter of great resentment to the Jews. Such a tax spoke of subjugation, a constant reminder of the rule of Rome, and because of the coinage used to pay it was seen by some as an idolatrous tax. This view was probably held by the Pharisees and so the question they posed would have been answered 'no' by them, whereas the Herodians had no problem with such payment. In posing such a question to Jesus both parties hoped that he would either offend the people with a yes or become charged with sedition by the Romans if he answered no.

In verse 15 Jesus requests a coin which would be a denarius with the inflammatory image and inscription. The inscription read, 'Tiberius Caesar, son of the divine Augustus, the high priest', which would be blasphemy to a Jew. Jesus gives his answer which has been termed 'ambiguous', (C A Evans 2001:246) 'enigmatic', (Mann 1986:468) and 'principled' (Schweizer 1971:244) - that is, the property which belongs to another should be returned. Most certainly Jesus' answer has been understood in different ways and led to much discussion about the relationship between 'church and state'. My own view leads me to the conclusion that Jesus could countenance the payment of tax without it being understood as wholly subscribing to the lordship of Rome. Perhaps one who knew of a history of subjugation in respect of the history of Israel, within which at the same time Yahweh's sovereignty was revealed time and again, could take such a view. In his reply there is a call to be loyal to God but that did not necessitate violent revolution or the holding back of taxes; in some sense you could still be faithful to Yahweh while giving Caesar what belonged to him.

In 6CE Judas of Galilee led a revolt against the payment of taxes to Rome. From Josephus (Antiquities 18.1.1) we discover that the census, taken for tax purposes by Quirinus the Governor, was held by Judas as being the equivalent of enslavement. The memory of such an approach by Judas would still have been fresh

to those who waited for Jesus to answer the question. In confounding his critics Jesus did not create a clear opening to be seen as a Roman collaborator, but most certainly his attitude to the civil authorities was different from that of Judas. Again we see that Jesus' prophetic ministry is not one which seeks open conflict with the political overlords; there is more to Jesus' revolution than merely denouncing the powers that be and urging action. Yet as Yoder points out the question about taxes could only have arisen if Jesus was known to have a political dimension to his ministry (Yoder 1972:44).

Yes, the critics question posed a dual threat, that is either being rejected by the people or crucified by the Romans and I believe that the most probable emphasis of the question lay in respect of an expected 'no' answer. Was it taken for granted that every prophet was political and so an enemy of Rome? If so the question arises as to how political was Jesus? As previously stated Jesus was politically aware, he knew that his ministry had political implications but these were not first and foremost related to the thrust of a ministry encouraging revolt but to the understanding that, as has been emphasised already, religion and life were a unity.

Exegesis: Theme: Urbanisation

I hope, through the chosen texts, to gain some understanding of the relationship between countryside and city and how that impacted on Jesus' ministry. The passages chosen present an opportunity to gain an insight into Jesus' relationship to both countryside and city and what they may or may not have represented. They are as follows:

{1} Matthew 11: 28-30 –Jesus' call to the "Heavy Laden".

{2} Luke 19: 41-44 – Jesus weeps over Jerusalem

{3} Mark 11:15-19; Matt 21:12-17; Luke 19:45-48 cf John 2:13-22

–The Cleansing of the Temple

The Gospels have Jesus visit Jerusalem perhaps only once. He is no preacher to the city people but rather his ministry is lived out among the common people of the land. As mentioned already in this thesis, Sepphoris was a very short distance from Nazareth, yet there is no reference in the Gospels to Jesus visiting it at all. Were cities viewed with suspicion? Did what was taking place in cities impact negatively upon the common people? Was there a particular theology of the city that made Jesus ignore all cities but one? To these questions I turn in my close readings of the selected texts.

Exegesis of Matthew 11:28-30: Jesus' Call to the "Heavy Laden"

I begin with a passage which is set firmly in the countryside. Jesus was very much at home among the common people, and village life was important to him. In speaking of the realisation of the Kingdom of God, Theissen writes that "the Kingdom of God is not an empire, but a village. The most natural explanation for this may be Jesus' origin in Galilee. He drew his imagery from a world which lay on the periphery, far removed from the centres of power, education and religion" (Theissen/Merz 1998:256). I believe that it was in village life where relationships were so important, where a common life was shared, where "power" was exercised for the benefit of the community (instead of the powerful in urban settings) that Jesus saw the best reflection of the Kingdom of God's egalitarian society.

The passage under scrutiny is peculiar to Matthew within the New Testament Gospels though it is to be found in the Gospel of Thomas 90. There is a question mark over whether or not these are the words of Jesus. The words cited by the evangelist are reminiscent of Jesus ben Sira, the author of the book of Ecclesiasticus (Vermes 2004:330) who writes of divine wisdom inviting people to come to her and find rest in accepting her yoke. The passage referred to by scholars is Ecclesiasticus 51: 23-27 with its reference to wisdom being understood as a reference to the Law.

Hill and Schweizer accordingly concluded that those being addressed by these words, are people weighed down by Jewish legalism (Hill 1972:207).

Certainly the background is to be found in Judaism with its reference to the Law but I would want to expand the "size of the yoke" to incorporate all the burdens of the people of the countryside. The words' relationship to Ecclesiasticus does not preclude their use by Jesus for they most certainly reflect a concern he had for those who lived under the oppressive forces of the day. As has been already noted in this thesis, there was tremendous upheaval in Galilee due to the refocusing of life from the local community based on an agrarian lifestyle, to an urban centred life. This was due in great part to Antipas' great building projects, Sepphoris and Tiberius, which in some sense drew the life out of the country people, imposing new market economies, new values and unneeded stresses (Reed 2002:96). It was to this situation that the words of Matthew 11: 28-30 are addressed, to the whole of life which was so burdensome to the common people.

The passage begins with an appeal by Jesus, "come to me." This is an appeal very much related to the previous verses which speak of Jesus as the Revealer of God. In view of what is to be said the appeal is to find in Jesus the saving presence of God. Jesus' words, in the context of his Galilean ministry, could be seen to be addressed to the crowds who were "harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd" (Matt 9:36). These are those "who labour and are heavy laden" (V28). Carter sees these people as those affected by what is taking place on a daily basis in Galilee which he bases on Sirach 40:1 where "heavy laden" refers to the "heavy yoke" of daily life. Looking to the LXX for further clarification on the terms used, he discovers the term wearied/labour to refer to beatings, the physical effects of work, heat or battle, the conditions of those afflicted by masters (Carter 2000:259). The yoke then for Carter is all embracing, with particular reference to the harsh economic

realities and unjust political oversight imposed by Roman control, Herod Antipas being Rome's man. The yoke is shorthand for taxes and tolls, and the subsequent debts incurred, and all in the cause of maintaining the elite both politically and religiously.

Undoubtedly Carter has rightly expanded the context of the passage, for the social, political and religious elites parasitically lived off the common people. Power was being exerted over them which made all of life a great challenge, and not just the living up to the demands of the Law as defined by the religious leaders. To such people Jesus offered "rest" (V28) or literally refreshment (Hill 1972:208). Rest is promised by God to Moses (Ex 33: 14) and Wisdom is associated with such a promise also (Eccl 51:27) and here in verse 28 the promise related to the presence of God also. It is by living in God's Kingdom that his people find their rest, a Kingdom present in Jesus but which is fully to come. In these words of promise there is perhaps also the veiled promise that all the dominating, life sapping forces, which includes Rome, will come to an end when God fulfils his purposes through Jesus. The people, in the meantime, are to take the yoke of Jesus (v29) which means a casting off of the yoke which they presently bear. This cannot refer to the Torah, for the Torah is God's gift and in the Sermon on the Mount (chapters 5-7) we do not see Jesus setting the Law aside but only intensifying its demands in order to establish a greater life of righteousness. The call to take his yoke is one of seeing how in his words and actions God's salvation, what he bestows in and through the Torah, truly is. The invitation (V29) to learn from him the ways of gentleness and lowliness have echoes of the Servant motif as found in Isaiah 42: 2f; 53:1ff and Zechariah 9:9 and are in stark contrast to the ways of the ruling elite. The promise of rest is given again in verse 29, which is found in living faithfully with God, and in contrast to the present

situation what Jesus calls people to is not as burdensome, Verse 30 again posits a contrast between life under God and life under 'earthly' power.

In considering the theme of urbanisation I have looked at the effects of such a movement upon the people of the countryside. The 'powers' which dominate the life of such people are in effect urban powers; they are the elite both politically and religiously. Freyne points out that the Temple aristocracy, and all associated with them, "had allied themselves with the imperial overlords and their value system" (Freyne 2004:151). This only reinforced the ambivalence which existed in the relationship between Galilee and Jerusalem, due to the country people feeling that they were being increasingly exploited by those at the centre. In some sense that which was at the heart of Israel, Yahweh and the religion which flowed from belief in him, should have sustained and comforted the Israelite people who lived under Rome, but the leadership did not give that impression at all. I now wish to turn from the countryside to the city to consider why 'city life' was viewed with great suspicion by those who lived in the 'countryside', and what was happening, which only reinforced feelings of antagonism towards Jerusalem. In concentrating on the city I wish to ask the question: was it an automatic assumption that the city was seen to be the antithesis of the countryside?

A common view of city life is that all human life could be experienced within its walls, that is, that the city is representative of humankind. In terms of a biblical perspective, city life could be set against rural life in respect of the life which is based on individual fulfilment or a sharing of life on a communal basis. There is also in some cities a representation of the city as opposed to God, as seen in Sodom, Tyre, and Babylon. Within this thought is the view that sees humankind making their own way, in a way seeking to be God, as seen for example in the story of the Tower of Babel (Genesis 11:1-9). Babel is the city organised against God. The view of the city

being anti-God is further developed in the call of Abraham to go out from the city (Gen 12) and to entrust himself to God's plan; his security is not to be found in the strength of a city but in the faithfulness of God. The one great exception to this belief that city life is *per se* anti-God is found in Jerusalem.

Jerusalem is very important to the religion of both the Old and New Testament. From its earliest days when first established as the capital of Israel by King David (2 Samuel 5: 6-10), it became particularly associated with divine Kingship, (Ps 78:68; Ps 132: 13-18) and the sitting of the Temple there by Solomon (2 Chron 3:1-17) only served to underline this. With the building of the Temple Yahweh was seen to dwell in the city in a way in which he was to be found nowhere else on earth. Therefore the city was transformed, so to speak, for ultimately the city of Jerusalem was connected to God and so became a unique place. Unfortunately this privileged position became taken for granted, and the life to be found in the city ran counter to that required by Yahweh, which brought the denunciations of the prophets (Micah 3:11-12; Jer13:9-14). Jerusalem has reverted to type, biblically speaking, it is as cities were and are when it should have been different, and this resulted in its destruction in 586BCE which symbolised Yahweh's rejection of Israel. The problem that led to the city's destruction and the consequent exile lay in the lifestyle the city dwellers had adopted, not in the nature of city itself. There is no thought in 586BCE that the people of Israel are rejected because they happen to make much of a city, rather is it that they have broken their covenant with Yahweh, living contrary to the demands of the Law. Therefore, when new hopes and dreams set in, in relation to the future, Jerusalem is not rejected but is at the heart of what is to take place (Zech 2:4,5). It will be an even greater city than the one rebuilt in Nehemiah's time and will be inclusive of all nations (Micah 4:2, Isa 2:3).

The story of the city is one of pregnant potential in the Hebrew Scriptures. It can be a very strong focal point for rebellion against God or it can function as the place where all that can be under God is found and enjoyed, a central place of blessing for the people. It is not superior or inferior to the countryside but can be offered as a gathering place which exemplifies what it is to live in fellowship with God, as God's people. Its identity, positively or negatively, is very much to do with the spiritual state of its inhabitants.

Jesus takes himself to Jerusalem. Working from the basis of an experience of life which promoted kinship values of caring and sharing (which were covenantal values) he goes to the city where if the covenant was being lived out there should have been no difference, for in reality countryside and city dwellers were all sharers in the one covenant with God. What Jesus did find though was that the people were being exploited by a system which was far more concerned about vested interests than the promotion of Israel's true religious values.

Exegesis of Luke 19: 41-44: Jesus Weeps over Jerusalem.

This passage is found only in Luke's Gospel. Questions are raised about its authenticity due to the fact that the prophecy of verses 42-44 is so precisely fulfilled by the Roman destruction of Jerusalem. It certainly is possible that what we have is a reworked oracle of Jesus which did predict the destruction of the city but which has been fine-tuned in the course of the historical fulfilment. The fact that Jesus could predict the destruction of Jerusalem should not surprise us as the prophets of the Hebrew Scriptures spoke in the same way prior to the destruction of Jerusalem first time around (Isaiah 29:3; Jeremiah 6:6; Ezekiel 4:1-3). What we have in Jesus' words are understandable threats of a repeated experience, as much that was wrong in former days was itself being repeated (see Jesus son of Ananias as a comparable prophet in respect of Jerusalem's destruction).

The Lucan context is one of the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem and the subsequent rejection of him by the Pharisees in 19:39, 'And some of the Pharisees in the multitude said to him, "Teacher rebuke your disciples." The prophetic lament in verses 42-44, is directed against the city and one which comes from a heart heavy with sorrow. Jesus weeps over Jerusalem and as C F Evans reminds us, "the Greek expression *klaiein* with the preposition *epi* and the accusative is a forceful one"(C F Evans 1990:683). There is a hint of irony in Jesus' words concerning his bringing of peace which is rejected (V42) as the popular view of the meaning of Jerusalem was the city of peace based on the root connection of *salem* (Gen 14:18) and *salom*. In the style of the Hebrew Prophets Jesus indicts the great city for a failure to recognise the time of its "visitation". The Greek word used for "visitation" is *episcope* which speaks of Yahweh's guardianship of Israel in LXX. The "visitation" being spoken of is a divine one but it is mediated through the presence of Jesus. In the use of the word *kairos* for time, again we are being told of a decisive moment in the life of the great city. The visitation by God can be either redemptive (see Luke 1:68, 7:11-17) or an act of judgement, the outcome depending on the response of the people. Jesus anticipates rejection which then leads on to the prophetic threat (v42), the language being reminiscent of Amos (4:2) and Hosea (9:7). In the use of the prophetic model, as related in this passage, we see a very distinct connection being made. It is one between Jerusalem's history wherein due to its failures to keep the covenant it was destroyed and the people exiled; and the failure of it to recognise God's offer of peace, that is salvation, wholeness, in Jesus. The destruction of both Jerusalems is bound up with their rejection of God's gift of peace which bestows a life in which justice is experienced in all of its "social, material and spiritual realities" (Green 1997:690).

The city is not condemned for being a city but for what is taking place within its walls. But even more so is it a case of being condemned for what is happening within the corrupt Temple system. Jerusalem is not just a city, it is symbolic of the covenant between Yahweh and Israel and therefore should be welcoming Yahweh's prophets. But it does not. Why? It is due to the vested interests of the Temple leadership. This closes them to the Kingdom of God wherein a life of caring and sharing, of community values, of inclusiveness is to be experienced. This was not promoted by the priestly hierarchy and in effect the leadership was working against Yahweh. The only communal aspect that the people of Jerusalem would experience would be their too close physical proximity to the Temple establishment when Yahweh acted against them!

Exegesis of Mark 11:15-19; Matt 21:12-17; Luke 19:45-48 cf John 2:13-22: The Cleansing of the Temple.

The text, Mark 11: 15-17 is the cleansing of the Temple story, a story told by all the evangelists. In the Synoptic Gospels it is set in the context of Jesus' visit to Jerusalem shortly after his triumphal entry on a donkey, whereas in John it is placed at the beginning of Jesus' ministry. In terms of the historicity of the event scholars such as Sanders, Theissen and Crossan are accepting of it, though interpretations differ. The Temple was the centre of cultic life; it was where the Jewish leadership, which functioned under Rome and on behalf of Rome, were to be found. Presumably it is the court of the Gentiles (V15), which Jesus enters, which is the outer court of the Temple where everyone could find a place. Does Jesus know what he is to find? Does he know exactly what he is going to do before he gets there? The possibility is a strong one on the basis that there is evidence of Jesus being critical towards the Temple establishment. C A Evans highlights this and refers us to the teaching of Jesus found in the synoptic tradition which points to this. There is the

parable of the Wicked Vineyard Tenants (Mark 12: 1-9) which threatens the Sadducean party with the loss of their power. The parable of the Faithless Servant who abuses his position and takes advantage of those he is to look after (Matt 24: 45-51; Luke 12: 42-46), may well paint a picture which describes how the peasants viewed the ruling aristocracy. Jesus' reaction to the half-shekel Temple tax (Matt 17: 24, 27) may have been raising questions as to its necessity. And finally, Jesus' supposed commendation of the poor widow putting her last into the Temple's coffers (Mk12:41-44), may well have been a lament and thus a criticism of the unjust economic practice of the Temple authorities (C A Evans 2001:168). I suggest that Jesus knew what he was to encounter, and although some of the references cited above relate to post-cleansing of the Temple, they highlight an attitude which Jesus gained through a previous visit to Jerusalem, or through the stories heard from pilgrims returning to the countryside from Jerusalem.

Returning to the text, we are told that those who sold and bought, and those who exchanged money, were dealt with by Jesus (v15). Animals being bought and sold in relation to the sacrificial system were a necessity and this was acknowledged in the Law but whether they could be bought and sold in the Temple courts was not specified. The task of the money-changers was to exchange Greek and Roman coins for the Temple currency in order for them to pay the Temple tax of half-a-shekel. What Jesus has come face to face with is the sacrificial economy and no doubt he believes it to be corrupt. In all probability traders were making excess profits from the peasants by charging unfair prices, and all this sanctioned by the Temple aristocracy who were themselves gaining from it. It does appear that for the poor peasants whose lives were being made miserable by Roman taxes and, in the Galilean context, by Antipas' urbanization policy, there was to be no relief, not even from their own religious hierarchy. Jesus reaction is to drive out (V15) all abusers of God's place and

God's people. The verb 'drive out' is to be found in relation to Hezekiah's temple reform, (2 Chron 29:5), but interestingly the same verb is often used to describe the work of exorcism. Of the 18 times exorcism is referred to in Matthew, 12 of those references use the same verb as used here, *ekballein* (see for example Matt 7:22, 9:33, 34; 12:24; 17:19). The work of Jesus here is being seen as an exorcism, he comes as the purifier of a desecrated Temple. This thought is further enhanced by the words attributed to him which are quotations from Isaiah 56:7 and Jeremiah 7:11.

As Mark tells us, Jesus said "Is it not written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations? But you have made it a den of robbers' (v.17). Matthew and Luke exclude 'for all the nations'. The vision Jesus has of the Temple is grounded in the Prophets of the Hebrew Scriptures. It is the vision, particularly seen by Isaiah of all people, those who observed the covenant, foreigners and eunuchs, coming together for worship. It is an inclusive vision, a communal experience, one which the people of the countryside had enjoyed and which was breaking down under Antipas. Instead the place in the Temple where all can gather has been turned into a money-making machine where social injustice against the poor is an everyday occurrence. The Jeremiah reference speaks of the Temple becoming a 'den of robbers', a reference to "the caves to which people of violence retreated in order to escape justice" (Green 1997:693). The Jeremiah passage condemned those who had desecrated the first temple with their idolatry and crimes and those who were dealing injustice in Jesus' day. Jesus saw in the same light. They were users of the Temple who profited by it and believed that they would remain in situ, protected by the sanctuary provided to their position by the Temple.

Jesus speaks here as a prophet of old. He attacks the abuse of power and privilege which results in the further impoverishment of the poor. He is, in effect,

proclaiming God's judgement on the cult of Israel, not because he did not believe in it, not because he believed that it had had its day, but because of the corrupt and immoral practices to be found within it, as did Isaiah (Ch1: 10-23) and Malachi (Ch3: 8-10). Jesus' prophetic stance most likely was contained within a small part of the large Temple courts but it did impact upon many drawing the attention of the ruling priests. What Jesus was not doing was automatically reacting to city or Temple as if in themselves they were anti-Yahweh, but as seen time and again in the Gospels it is about concern for covenant faithfulness.

City and countryside were not in opposition to each other. A godly life was possible in both. What was important to Jesus was covenant faithfulness which opened the door to that particular kind of life in which people flourished, in which people experienced the life of the Kingdom. The forces which robbed people of life were to be found in Roman rule, mediated through Herod Antipas in Galilee. As expressed already, Antipas' programme of urbanization turned life upside down and militated against a common life, a life with people at its heart instead of profit. What was to be expected in Jerusalem as people participated in the religious life of Israel was that matters would be different, but they were not. The people of God were still being exploited, material matters were much more important than a shared experience of God's blessing, and that even possibly with the outsider. With the mantle of Prophet Jesus speaks out a word of hope to the people of the land (Matt 11:28-30) and a word of judgement against the Temple authorities, and a sad word of condemnation against Jerusalem which participates in the fate of the Temple. Both outside the city and within, Jesus proclaims a message of salvation and seeks to draw together the new community of Israel centred in and around him as God's agent of salvation.

Conclusion

The task I set myself in this chapter was to return to the primary texts and seek to consider Jesus' prophetic outlook in relation to four topics. These were: Wealth and Poverty; Inclusiveness; Power and Politics and Urbanisation. The prophetic model of Popular Prophet, a model which views Jesus as a prophet of word and action among the common people is, I believe, borne out through the exegesis of the passages under study. Under 'Wealth and Poverty' Jesus is clearly seen as one who sided with the poor, who challenged the way life was and who spoke of a Kingdom in which the theme of reversal was a major part. The theme of 'Inclusiveness' reveals not only Jesus' words but his actions redefining the concept of who belonged to the people of God. In considering 'Power and Politics' the political dimension of Jesus is revealed. Prophetic action on Jesus part is not to lead to open revolution or to lead people to the place of deliverance; rather freedom is experienced through participation in the life of the Kingdom which is a matter of obedience to and trust in God. That said, Jesus did acknowledge the implications of living under Rome and would have been aware of the possibilities which could arise through preaching another Kingdom. Lastly, the theme of 'Urbanisation' points us to Jesus' great unhappiness about social injustice which the common people experienced at the hands of both political and religious authorities. The prophet brings a word of comfort to those exploited and a word of warning to those in power, that is, the religious hierarchy.

What I believe these four themes reveal in common is Jesus the Prophet's desire to offer an alternative to the status quo. Jesus says and does that which is unexpected; he challenges what he perceives to be in conflict with the values and life of the Kingdom of God. With eschatology informing his preaching and actions, in anticipation of that which is to come, Jesus holds forth an alternative way of living

to those he encounters, one to be laid hold of in the present. And it is with this in mind that I wish to consider such a prophetic outlook in relation to a church congregation.

Part Two: The Quest for the Historical Church

Four Galilean Earthed Sermons

Chapter I: Sermon Preamble

A: Method

This thesis seeks to answer a very practical question: What does the Galilean prophet Jesus have to say to the church today? The cultural gap from then to now is great, the experience of living under Rome, belief in how the world 'works,' highlights this but does not undermine the point of the thesis. Rather than look for like for like, it's best to seek resonance between Jesus' day and ours, echoes which continue to forge a link between the past and the present. My studies in relation to Galilee have enabled me to identify four themes which I believe can offer some fruitful connections between Jesus' day and the present. In looking at these four issues in particular: Wealth and Poverty; Inclusiveness; Urbanisation and Power and Politics, I believe that unearthing the reasons behind Jesus' teaching on these subjects one does discover possibilities of building bridges. So it was in taking these four themes to my congregation by way of the sermon, that I sought not only to teach Christian truth but also to ascertain if ideas concerning the historical Jesus would be received as pertinent to the life of our church.

B: Who is the Congregation?

Mearns Parish Kirk is a congregation of almost 900 members, situated in a very affluent suburb of Glasgow called Newton Mearns. Newton Mearns has a well established reputation as being very 'posh' and is caricatured by the oft quoted line: "a crèche in Newton Mearns is when two cars collide"! Presumptions are indeed made when you tell people you live in Newton Mearns but in the eight years I have been a Minister in the Mearns, I have discovered many ordinary folk and the same problems behind the 'doors' as you would find elsewhere. My congregation are by and large middle-class, and would be recognised as being a parish church with an

orthodox theology and middle of the road congregational life. In my time I have sought to make our life together less formal, one centred upon relationships, our relationship with God and with each other. By and large this approach has been welcomed. Our financial givings are certainly well above the average Church of Scotland congregation but as a proportion of our joint income we might well find that we are not as good as some believe. Generally the Church responds well to appeals for needy causes but I wonder how much theology underpins such responses? Indeed, often I ask the question: to what extent does Christian belief inform our actions? For example, in responding to the needs of the poor do we do so because we believe there is a Gospel imperative to do so, do we feel the pain of the poor, or is it done in some way which implies some kind of patronising outlook? Certainly one thought behind the use of the sermon to bring the four themes under study, was to lay a theological foundation which would challenge the congregation's thinking in respect of why we do what we do.

C: Why the Sermon?

In deciding to raise the particular issues pertinent to my thesis, I chose the vehicle of preaching. I perhaps could have taken some ideas to one of the established groups, for example mission, or gathered together a new group to work with the issues raised but I chose the sermon for good reasons. My greatest contact with the congregation is on a Sunday with the opportunity of sharing with two hundred and fifty people. I believed that such was the value of my studies that I should introduce my ideas to as many folk as possible; hence Sunday morning worship seemed the most suitable arena. In relation to the purpose of this thesis maximum impact had to be made in order to touch the biggest part of church life. In our Presbyterian tradition the sermon is very important as both introduction to, and a means of, growing in the faith. I did not expect 'Damascus Road' conversions in

respect of the four issues but what I did want to do was to include them in the ongoing important programme of weekly preaching which sows seeds and waters them. But most certainly there is the understanding in our tradition of making a response to the sermon, seen in our church in that immediately after the preaching there is a hymn and then the benediction. Such an end to the worship service underlines the importance of hearing and doing, of word and action, which fits in very neatly with Jesus' model of prophecy outlined in previous chapters. His prophetic ministry was one of word and action; both aspects of prophecy are held together in what he says and does.

It was most certainly a challenge to take the fruit of historical study and sermonise it, to marry biblical study with on going pastoral and missiological aspects of our church life, but I do believe, on the basis of various comments received, that it worked well.

Due to the relationship between my thesis and the four sermons which were preached, I decided to seek some form of feedback from my congregation. This would be over and above the normal means of hearing people's immediate responses as they left church. In order to obtain responses I gave out 4 copies of each sermon and asked the question: "what impact, if any, did the sermon have on you?" The survey was by no means done in any scientific way. It was a case of "first come first served", a random approach. Nonetheless it was a diverse group who laid hands upon the sermon material and thus a good representative response was received.

Chapter 2

Sermon: Wealth and Poverty

i: Introduction

What a sermon to preach in Newton Mearns, some might even say courageous (as one person did on leaving church)! As described already my congregation is wealthy, and, it has to be said, very conservative in approach to financial matters. To raise issues which would perhaps encourage a new and radical approach to wealth would be too much for some. The difficulty for me as the Minister would be one of offending, perhaps being seen to be damning people who I had to minister to in an on-going situation. My view of pastoral ministry is that it is primarily relational and through the building of strong relationships a more effective pastoral ministry can be offered. And in its own way preaching also is part of that relationship building process whereby through positive, affirming, yet nonetheless challenging sermons, lives are brought together in the fellowship of the church. So though I did believe that what Jesus taught on wealth and poverty was important the way I had to share that teaching had to be 'congregational sensitive' and this approach can be seen in the written word but also heard in the accompanying CD.

ii: Sermon: Wealth and Poverty. Texts: Luke 6:20-26; 16:19-31.

A Joseph Rowntree Foundation survey discovered that 95% of people questioned, found it offensive to be asked about how they spent their money, and, whether the choices they made could be improved upon! So I reckon, on the basis of such a finding, that I'm going to offend some people this morning, but then, in order to be faithful to the message of Jesus, Christians must not avoid speaking about money.

What we do with our wealth is a question all followers of Jesus must consider – yet it is one of the most difficult areas to explore because people are so sensitive, so protective of their money, their wealth. Well did Martin Luther say, 'every person needs two conversions, one of the heart and one of the wallet'. Jesus had no problem speaking of this matter, in

fact he spoke a lot about it, and from his teaching we read two passages this morning, both found in the Gospel of Luke at chapters 6:20-26 and 16:19-31.

One might ask: why did Jesus preach so much about wealth and its related issues? Surely it wasn't just a hobby horse which some preachers have, a favourite moan or groan for Jesus. No, rather were there solid reasons as to why he continually spoke about wealth.

Let me take you back to the Galilee of Jesus' day. – Society was divided, with extremes of wealth and poverty – and the gap between rich and poor was ever widening. The poor were not just comparatively less better off but they were so badly off that they had to pray for their daily bread! The reason for such poverty was the heavy tax burden imposed by secular and religious authorities – debts increased, land had to be sold, ways of life were changing for the ordinary man and woman, and that change also related to the great building of cities in Galilee which drew the resources from the people of the land to the wealthy elite in the cities. And Jesus saw the effects of all of this upon the ordinary folk of whom he himself was one, and among whom he lived and worked. And standing within the great prophetic tradition of the likes of Isaiah and Micah, Jesus spoke out against the great inequity in society; he spoke up for the poor and he challenged the rich.

"Blessed are you poor – blessed are you that hunger now – blessed are you that weep:" To those suffering under the great economic burdens imposed upon them, Jesus declares a blessing – he says how fortunate you are. Now, I wonder why does he say that for it seems so strange to our ears. Is it that the poor can respond to God more openly, more decisively than the rich? When you have nothing you tend to see spiritual truths, the reality of God, more clearly. Or are the poor blessed because right where they are they can become part of a new community which Jesus himself is creating, one in which they find themselves accepted and valued, not as fodder for any system political or religious? Certainly we see today that the Church grows fantastically well where we find some of the poorest people on earth, whereas in affluent Europe the Church is in great decline.

But if Jesus had good news for the poor, he had bad news for the rich, no blessing

here at all, only woes! The time will come says Jesus when the tables will be turned, when the rich, those who are full now, those who laugh, will know a different life. Perhaps we see here, and in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, a group of people who were living a very good life, enjoying all the material benefits of the day, but who did not even think about those in poverty! Certainly the rich man fits that description very well – he lives the luxurious lifestyle, every day is a feast day – and Lazarus, poor, ill, unable to look after himself, is ignored by him. The only ones who pay Lazarus any attention are the dogs, and that to lick his sores! Once again, the time comes, when the situation is reversed: the poor man is blessed, the rich man is cursed!

When you consider the background to Jesus' teaching on wealth you do wonder whether it was the case that the rich, the wealthy, grew fat on the backs of the poor, that wealth was amassed only at the expense of others. Most certainly there is something in that – the changes taking place in Galilee, the tax burden imposed on the common people; all this had a tremendous effect on them. But there was also a belief at that time in what has been called limited good – a belief which stated that the good things of this world, which made life liveable for all, were in limited supply. So, if someone gains more, then losses are incurred by others. So Jesus is not only speaking up for the poor, but he is speaking out against those who had a far bigger share of the cake than they should have.

Not for a minute was Jesus preaching that poverty was a virtue. In his mind was the belief that all should share in God's good gifts, no one should be in need – but what he did was speak of the dangers of wealth. Wealth encourages people to love money more than their fellow human beings – it seems the more you have, the more you want; the harder it is for you to part with it. And in order to accrue more wealth some people are more than happy to impoverish others. And here we live, 2000 years later, and though we are quite removed from the culture of Jesus we see that some things never change!

Jesus, to the people of his own day, was a prophet – he recognised the signs of the times – he knew the will of God and that people were not embracing it. He believed in a

Kingdom which clashes so often with the values of this world – and we his followers are called to live and act prophetically, to embrace Kingdom values and, recognising the signs of our times, to develop a lifestyle, as individual Christians, and collectively as the community of faith which is counter-cultural.

How might that be seen in relation to wealth and poverty and Jesus words this morning? This belief in limited good, though sounding ancient and primitive, has something about it which we must listen to. Today's thinking is all about unlimited good, unlimited resources which offer an ever-rising standard of living to everyone – but we are discovering that this is not always the case. Some resources are limited and what is needed is a willingness to take only a fair share so that what is there can be enjoyed by all. Perhaps for example we all need to think about the energy we are using! Is it the case, which I sometimes sense in the Mearns, that because we can afford it, we use as much energy as we like?

And what about our attitude to the poor of our world! The poor in Jesus' day had their lives made more difficult by the powerful, the wealthy, the elite – have we in the west not become such a group? We over-consume in all sorts of ways, not just energy. We are unable to enjoy what we have but keep on wanting more. We don't know when enough is enough, and it is interesting that this week at the Assembly one speaker said we need today a theology of enough. And to feed our greed we draw from the resources of the poorest countries, and that for as cheap a price as possible. Fairtrade is only a very, very small part of the trade economy. We are prospering at the expense of many in this world; we are the powerful, the wealthy, the elite – and we must take a look at how our living impacts upon the poor.

And if we were to spend less on ourselves then that would allow us to release more money for the poor – what the rich man in the story should have done, but didn't. He was very similar to the chap visited by one of our Christian Aid Collectors. There he was standing outside his £350,000 house, with his £40,000 car parked in the driveway, when

the collector called and said, "I left an envelope for you the other day and I am here to collect it." "Don't know where it is", came the reply. "I've got one I can give you now" said the collector. "No, it's alright" said the man with the very expensive house and car – one story from the Mearns, there are others. How unlike the couple of whom I read, both good earners but who live simply. At the end of the financial year they see what they have earned, what they have spent and give the surplus away – in one year £30,000. And that is a challenge which churches have taken on – to give away what they spend on themselves or to give away a proportion of their income to the poor. And it is a challenge to individual Christians also – not to bless the poor by telling them they have a place in the Kingdom of God, but to bless them by sharing some of what we have – by digging deep into our own wealth and enabling others to have their needs met – always remembering that with Jesus it is not a case of how much we give that matters, but how much we have left.

To have a heart for the poor is a Gospel imperative – what you do with your wealth, what we do with our wealth as a church is a very important question that has to be answered.

Jesus said, blessed are the poor. The wealthy too can be blessed, but only when they learn to bless others! Amen.

iii: Congregational Responses: Wealth and Poverty

Respondent A

A is a woman in the 40-50 age range. She is a primary school teacher in whose class I find myself from time to time due to being a school chaplain.

A is down to earth, married with a family, is very keen on her work with children and is a committed member of our church. I reckon A to have a good solid everyday faith.

A's Comments

The paragraph about energy made me think about our school and how we are trying to encourage our children to save energy, for example, by switching off

lights, turning off computers, recycling paper and plastic bottles. We do tend to just put everything in the bin and allow someone else to save our environment.

The part where you mentioned about the poorest countries producing goods cheaply made me think about a holiday I had in Turkey. We were taken to a carpet factory and shown around the workshops where young girls (teenagers) sat and worked on the carpets for hours at a time with only a 10 minute break every 2-3 hours. They were fed and paid very little just to produce carpets cheaply for tourists like us!

I was shocked when you told us about the man with the expensive house and all the trappings of the 'mega rich' replying "no, it's alright". This year, I don't know why, when the Christian Aid envelope came through my door I did put in a little more than usual. If everybody, as you say, put in a little more it would make a substantial amount.

Yes we all could do better. We all can give more in our contributions to the Church. I will certainly rethink my giving to the Church for this coming year.

Respondent B

B is a widow in her 70s. She seeks to enjoy life as much as she can and that life has, for the most part, excluded financial worries. I suspect that B has lived quite an affluent life, her late husband being in a well paid profession, the fruit of which enabled an 'extra home' to be based in Spain.

B has what I would say is 'a good heart' and a faith which has been renewed since her husband's death a few years ago which led to her joining our church. Her comments were written on the text, the context of which I will try to reflect.

Sermon: "Christians must not avoid speaking about money"

Comment: 'But as a Christian you should not to be boastful about it or feel superior and assume that because of money you are better than others'.

Sermon: "Church grows fantastically well where we find some of the poorest people on earth, whereas in affluent Europe the Church is in great decline"

Comment: Because wealth appears to create selfishness, the me, me, me, mentality, but when one is poor the love of God gives hope and that is what keeps them going.

Sermon: "Jesus is not only speaking up for the poor, but he is speaking out against those who had a far bigger share of the cake than they should have"

Comment: The power of money to buy what they want, and never mind if someone else does without, not only breeds selfishness but worst of all power.

Sermon: "Is it the case that....because we can afford it we use as much energy as we like?"

Comment: How true of America which seems to me to be the biggest offender. How can we get individuals to save energy when a supposed world leading country does not abide by the rules?

Sermon: Reference is to the man with the £350000 house and the £40000 car.

Comment: Could it be that the man with the £350000 house was up to his eyes in debt and could not afford to give to the poor? It is just another case of keeping up with the Jones'. Money is a necessary evil but once it becomes the be all and end all of your life then you are in trouble. I think I must have communist tendencies because I wonder if we all did as the other couple and worked out what we really needed, and gave the surplus away to a world organisation to spread it out to the poorer countries, would this not help all? Of course, who could we trust to do this?? The Church? I would hope so!!

Respondent C

C is a man in his late sixties/early seventies. He is married with a grown up

family and young grandchildren. He worked within a very large engineering company in which he was a manager of the computer department. He drifted away from church but has in recent months started to come to Mearns Kirk.

C's Comments

The sermons in this group had an effect on me. They showed Jesus in a more human light, as someone who understood the problems of the people that he lived and worked with, and who was not afraid to speak out in defence of their rights and condemn those who had only thought for themselves.

We live in a world where everything is getting bigger, faster but not always better for the poor who do not seem to have a voice. So what can we do about it? Perhaps each person could do a little more, give a little more. Could we start this in our church?

Perhaps you will think of a way to help us become more aware of our responsibilities in our own area, and towards world poverty. One small step might be for us to use Fairtrade goods within our groups in the church, tea, coffee etc. It would be a small thing but a token of our awareness of huge profits being made by large firms.

Respondent D

D is in her seventies but displays the spirit of someone quite younger. She is a widow and has no "money worries" and I believe that kind of life was enjoyed also when her husband was alive. She regularly attends church and would have a long "kirk pedigree" which I hasten to add is no criticism of her.

D's comments were written into the text against those points which particularly struck her.

Sermon: (in Jesus day) "wealth was amassed only at the expense of others."

Comment: Agreed, but hard personal effort helps.

Sermon: "And in order to accrue more wealth some people are more than happy to impoverish others."

Comment: Perhaps a little sweeping.

Sermon: "we need today a theology of enough."

Comment: Full agreement here. Having enough creates contentment, or it should.

Sermon: Reference to the man with the £350000 house and the £40000 car.

Comment: In old Humbie Road (where the houses are very expensive) collecting for Barnardo's I have had 50p from one wealthy man and £10 from another wealthy man???

Concluding comment: In no way did this sermon cause offence, and it is certainly food for thought.

iv: Response to Responses: Wealth and Poverty

In one or two instances the responses were predictable and have a middle class value tone about them. Concerns are expressed by B and D but very much from their side of the divide. One wonders if in considering the issues of wealth and poverty they have really tried to place themselves in the position of the poor. This understanding of such a point of view is underlined by the thought that maybe the man with the £350,000 house and £40,000 car might be up to his eyes in debt that he was unable to give to the poor. However with B particularly, thought is given to the global context, (see the reference to America's energy policy) and a hope expressed, in some way, that a body could redistribute the material excess to the world's poor. But mistrust is revealed about who could do this and the Church is seen as the one possibility.

Respondents A and C seek to engage with the sermon in a way which for them stirs imagination and heart. A thinks back to a previous visit to Turkey and C

recognises how Jesus engages with people from their side of the divide. There is not so much theorising but rather an attempt is made to identify with those whose needs are great. C's suggestion about Fairtrade has been and is being acted upon in our church and his comments reflect the fact that he is a relative newcomer to Mearns Kirk.

I believe the prophetic response by our Church has to be one that not only identifies the great inequality in the world but also seeks to identify with the poor. To some extent, B and D represent those who will indeed give but only in a comfortable way, whereas A and C would perhaps be willing to 'hurt' a little in seeking to help the poor. How to construct a Church life wherein we recognise a shared life with the Poor and demonstrate a willingness to make their need ours is a great challenge especially to a church as affluent as ours. If that could indeed be achieved and recognised within our own community the prophetic ministry of Jesus would be there to be seen by all.

Chapter3

Sermon: Inclusiveness

i: Introduction

The day chosen to preach this sermon lent itself to the theme of inclusiveness, it was Pentecost and also the celebration of Holy Communion. These two feasts speak of barriers being torn down, of God bringing all kinds of people together. It did appear also to be relevant to what was going on in our community with regard to the Islamic community's desire to find land on which to build a mosque. The topic of inclusiveness is one that the Church has faced from its beginning, and still has a great deal of difficulty with. The Church preaches a Gospel that speaks of a relationship with God solely on the basis of grace. Paul Tillich has spoken of the doctrine of justification as, accepting that you are accepted by God, yet how often the Church has made people feel that God cannot or will not accept them just as they are. The topic of inclusiveness must be broached time and again within the life of the Church, those who say they follow Jesus must hear what the prophet is saying today.

ii: Sermon: Inclusiveness. Texts: Acts 2:1-12; Matthew 8:5-10

My face didn't fit – words spoken time and again – words which we well know the meaning of, perhaps through personal experience. And it hurts when you are made to feel unwanted – when you are somehow made to feel that you've been judged and declared not to have come up to the mark – when you have been made to feel a lesser human being because some group or other has rejected you.

And in different ways we all give that impression to people, because we all have assumptions about what fits, and what doesn't; we all have prejudices; we are all good at stereotyping people, and let none of us deny that. David Lacy, last years Moderator, at this years Assembly speaking on HIV/Aids, said that he had discovered that he did judge some of its victims, those who he thought only had themselves to blame for becoming infected. As soon as we meet people we begin the process of categorising: "This is Joe" –

and what do you think: he's white, he's very young and handsome – he's bright and lively! Already people are making judgements – seeing me in bits – making up their mind about what's good or bad – what they like or don't like. Judith brought a friend home – “Dad this is Scott” – “Hi Scott how are you doing?” – and we continued to have a great old chat – Scott's gay. I knew that before I met him, but thankfully I don't relate to people on the basis of their sexuality – Scott is Scott not Scott the gay – how would you have responded?

Today we celebrate Pentecost, that mysterious occurrence which in effect gave birth to the Church! The Spirit of God came upon the friends of Jesus and whatever it was that happened, people outside the immediate circle of the disciples became drawn in! The outburst of Pentecostal Praise was heard by the multitude – the multitude coming from many lands, but they all heard the song, if you like, in their own language.

Some would suggest that here we have a reversal of the Tower of Babel. Taking you back to your Sunday School days possibly this morning, the story of building the tower high up into the heavens. Why was it built? So that human beings might become like God. Humanity had one language but due to the attempt to become like God by building a tower up into the heavens, God confused their language such that they could no longer understand each other. The peoples were scattered abroad throughout all the earth, and now at Pentecost there is a reversal – the peoples are being brought together again and that by a work of God – God signals his intention to make all people one people – God reveals that his loving purposes involve everyone.

One message of Pentecost is that God is a God who includes rather than excludes; that God wishes to shun no one – that everyone's face can fit when we think of who can live in the Kingdom of God. And this message really only makes plain what Jesus was doing in his earthly ministry as he lived and taught in Galilee.

Jesus was a Jew and Jewishness was tightly defined – and if Jewishness was tightly defined so then was the notion of who belonged to God, for the Jews saw themselves as God's people. What defined the people of Israel was adherence to the Torah, especially the

Holiness Code found in Leviticus – and the observance of temple duties. In essence it was a lifestyle which separated Israel from all others and only if you lived a certain way, obeyed the rules, followed the code, were you deemed to belong to God – that's what the Pharisees taught and they tried to draw things so tightly that at times they would exclude those of natural Jewish birth. This is why some of them murmured, as did others, about the kind of people Jesus shared his time with, had meals with, spoke of as belonging to the people of God.

Jesus was a prophet in his own time. To his own people he was a prophet. Prophets break the mould, prophets challenge the "its aye been", and prophets go against the grain. And if ever Jesus did this in respect of anything it was his practice of inclusiveness, which he reinforced time and again by word and by deed.

Our reading from Matthew's Gospel focuses on an encounter between Jesus and a Gentile, but mark no ordinary Gentile, a Roman Centurion, no less, the enemy! The enemy seeks help and Jesus is glad to help, showing a willingness to go to his home. Already the barriers are being broken: the enemy's needs are being embraced – and the fact that Jesus will happily visit his home flies in the face of Jewish belief which forbade a Jew entering a Gentile house as it would make him unclean. But there is more to come. The subsequent response by the Centurion to Jesus is taken by Jesus to be a demonstration of faith, of real faith, of living faith – a faith so clear and strong that he had yet to find its like among his own. For Jesus to acknowledge this, and so to place the enemy within the Kingdom of God, was quite brave for it challenges and repudiates the narrow vision which so many had about who belonged – who belonged to God. And when you turn elsewhere in the Gospel stories it's the same old story – Jesus stretching peoples minds, encouraging them to think more broadly, to lay hold of an inclusive vision...but what Jesus did was not always welcomed,

He was criticised – called a glutton and drunkard (an exaggeration by his enemies I'm sure) – a friend of tax-collectors and sinners. One of his biggest faults in the eyes of the

pious was that he would eat with anyone. Now meals were important in Jesus' day – they reinforced social relations – status – the hierarchical order within society. Everything about the meal spoke of who was present: the qualities and quantities of food, tableware and utensils, and of course seating order. A bit like – if the Queen came for dinner at your house you would give her chicken breast on a silver plate; the MP chicken legs on a fine porcelain plate and the Minister the Parsons nose on a Tupperware dish! Of course in Jesus' time if you were a rabbi you didn't go to certain homes or parties. Fine upstanding religious leaders shouldn't have been seen with certain people having a meal but Jesus didn't stand on tradition. He broke such conventions. He was completely non-discriminatory and people didn't like that. But, as he did what he did, in a sense he was creating another community, bringing together a new people, opening the doors of the Kingdom of God to all who would enter.

Jesus sets the Church's agenda – what we see in him we do – where he goes we are to follow – and most certainly we are to take on the prophetic mantle and show the world another way of living – part of which is to build an inclusive community. For us here it is to ensure that Mearns Kirk is there for everyone. But we are also to take that belief out into the wider community and sow seeds of inclusion. So, for example, the desire by the Islamic community to have a mosque should be encouraged. We have 6 churches and 2 synagogues in the Mearns and I for one would want the Moslem community to have their own place for worship. There may be a question that has to be tackled, but certainly objections to the Mosque should not be made on the basis of, for example, any anti-Islamic feeling. And lifting our gaze beyond the Mearns as we react to asylum seekers who have come to Scotland – people fleeing persecution due to their religion or politics – people coming here, to us, in the hope of finding a better and safer life, let us welcome them with open hearts. There are those of us who would deem them to be economic migrants or spongers. We would tar them all with the same brush. We would exclude them, not having a clue about them and in doing so we only create tensions, divisions, increased pain for

those whose needs are great. Marcus Borg said that whereas it was Holiness for the Pharisees that singled you out as belonging to God for Jesus it was compassion.

And coming back into the Church, our church, how inclusive are we? Does everyone feel that this is their Church? From the oldest to the youngest do we let everyone know that they belong? Are we truly welcoming, or stand-offish. Does everyone get spoken with? Do people find a community, a family here and not just a bunch of individuals attending to their own private religious needs? Are we willing to be Jesus' Israel which one scholar describes as a Kingdom of beggars – a Kingdom of undesirables – a Kingdom of nobodies, in other words, a Kingdom for all?

How fitting it is that our reflections on inclusiveness this morning are set in the context of our Communion Service. For sitting round this table doesn't say that we are it – that we are the elite. When we recognise who we are, the backgrounds we have come from, and if we really, really knew each other behind the masks, then we would recognise too just how compassionate, how gracious God is. We would recognise that he gathers a disparate people together and makes us his people, and that by grace. And recognising that we are here with all our aches and pains, and all our confusions, and all our doubts, and perhaps great faith; recognising that we are here with all that's going on in our hearts and minds that doesn't fit together and God still says "come"; recognising that, what we can say to others is this: "if God invites us, He invites you; If God welcomes us, He welcomes you; if God loves us, He loves you." And we proclaim that because we know that there is nothing special about us that says we have a right to be here.

Thankfully this is the table of our Lord and not of the Church – for the Church has excluded people, left, right and centre, and caused them to feel unwanted-- that their faces did not fit – that God was not interested in them – that God certainly did not love them. But at the table of our Lord all are welcome, all find a place, all are offered the bread of life and the New Wine of the Kingdom. Amen.

iii: Congregational Responses: Inclusiveness

Respondent A

A is a 60 year old woman, married with a grown up family. By profession she is a senior social worker. Her church background is mixed and her early church life was spent within a very evangelical ethos. For some years now she has been part of the Church of Scotland and is an elder. She is very committed to her faith and the work of the Church.

A's Comments

The first paragraph of the sermon immediately grabbed my attention. My brother in South Africa has recently been excluded from contacting the members of his previous church. I have been angry because he has been hurt by it and so 'rejection' has been very much in my mind. The sermon helped me deal with some of this anger.

Having been trained in social work where positive values and attitudes are considered to be the most important attributes a worker should have, I was reminded that these values and attitudes are borne out of the Christian faith, that they are what Jesus practiced and taught. I consider myself to be a person with high values but hearing the challenges in the sermon reminded me that I still have sinful moments. The references to the building of a mosque in Newton Mearns must have challenged many. It was a brave challenge to make and was probably uncomfortable for some but we should expect our minister to challenge and lead us.

The references to the culture of the time were clear and presented in a way that was easy to understand. They confirmed that with Jesus no-one will be excluded.

The last two paragraphs brought the sermon to a conclusion and sent a clear message of God's desire for all to reach out to him but within the sermon an important aspect is missing. To be told God loves you is not enough. I would have

liked to have heard it said that yes, God loves and invites us into a deeper relationship but we must respond to that invitation. The words 'ask for forgiveness and receive salvation' are missing from sermons preached by many people today. Genuinely accepting God's grace always results in changes in our hearts and actions.

For me the sermon added details of the Jewish culture that I had not known. It was comforting and dispelled some of my anger. It challenged me again to be careful how I view and treat people. Most of all it reminded me that in order for me to love another person, I first must know God's love.

Respondent B

This was a collective response from the B family. Dad is retired, not only from work but from the eldership. He is faithfully present most Sundays at worship with his wife. Mum will be in her 60s and she worked as a nurse. She is very caring and is part of our pastoral care team. Sometimes present with them is their daughter who now lives in another town. Their daughter had a Church of Scotland upbringing but is now in the Baptist Church. She was married but is now separated, is a single mum and works as a physiotherapist with children who have complex disabilities and in which context the word inclusion is widely used.

The B family digested the sermon round the dinner table and these are the comments which were offered by them but penned by the daughter:

Words from the children's song 'How wonderful to be a part of God's amazing plan' keep coming to mind – that we are all part of the creation and we all have purpose as part of that. It may be that our purpose is to care or it may be that our purpose is to be cared for.

My parents had just returned from visiting relatives in Canada, one of whom is gay and mum had been very aware of the difficulties he has faced in society – he has

also turned away from his church, so mum felt that the sermon raised a topic which should be discussed and often isn't in church.

There are times in everyone's life when they may feel excluded and this is part of life but as Christians trying to follow Jesus' example we need to be alongside people so that he or she feels welcome. An example of this is when I first became a single parent – it took sometime for me to feel that I was accepted and it was one of my colleagues who invited me to her church and helped me to understand that however bad I felt that my vows had been broken God forgave me and loved me.

She came alongside me at a time when I felt excluded; the sermon made me thankful for her and led me to pray that sometime I could do the same for someone else.

True inclusion acknowledges and values the differences that people bring and Jesus did this all the time. He didn't try to tell the Centurion to change his way of life. This must impact on our lives daily. It is definitely something I can take to help with my own day to day life.

The sermon made us think about the preparations we make to welcome people to our homes or our church – how sensitive we can be to the other persons needs.

All in all we felt that the sermon really did make us think a bit more about how we included people in light of the way that Jesus welcomed people and questioned the 'status quo' in His life.

Respondent C

Due to the way in which the sermons were distributed no names were noted but the hope on my part was that a name would be written on the responses. Alas not all did! I do not know who C is but I could think of a good number of people

across the broad spectrum of church folk who could have given the following response.

C's Comments

The sermon made me stand back and think about my attitude to others; if I am being too judgemental and if so why? What can I do to challenge this?

Jesus went out of his way to befriend everyone, even those out with the so called normal circle, without judging them or worrying about what others thought. We should try harder to follow his example and when necessary stand up and be counted.

Respondent D

D is in his 40s, a professional, married with a family. D is very much part of the life of the Church and will play his part in whatever way if asked. He was chair of a school board and was very involved in this.

D's Comments

I had a mixed reaction to the sermon on inclusiveness. Firstly, I felt the start of the sermon was relevant as we all tend to make snap judgements on people. I can remember that gay people used to be subject to so called gay jokes in the media which were most abusive by their nature. Those who were gay tended to keep it quiet for fear of people's reactions, whereas I now have gay friends and colleagues and their sexuality is irrelevant as indeed it should be.

The message of reaching out to other faiths is extremely valid particularly in today's environment and the example given of the Roman Centurion with Jesus made the point really well.

Where I felt a level of discomfort was in one part of the sermon. While I am all in favour of reaching out to other faiths I have an issue with Islam. Unlike any other faith, Islamic countries in many cases have persecuted Christians and are still doing so. Obvious examples:

It is illegal to take a bible into Saudi Arabia (a supposedly progressive Islamic nation)

I read of someone in Afghanistan (post Taliban) who was sentenced to death for converting to Christianity from Islam. While the sentence was commuted this is surely unacceptable in the modern age.

Under the Taliban in Afghanistan members of other faiths were forced to wear coloured patches on their clothing which has worrying comparisons with the way the Nazis treated the Jews. There are followers of Islam in this country who still support the aims of the Taliban.

I feel that if we are to reach out to Islam it must be in a spirit of equality and mutual respect. There must be no doubt that as we regard followers of Islam as equal in our country we should be making it clear that we expect the same consideration and respect for Christians in predominantly Islamic countries.

As I said there is a need for Christians not only to reach out to other faiths but also to stand up for our own faith and I honestly felt that this should have been covered in the sermon.

iv: Response to Responses: Inclusiveness

The sermon obviously hit home at a very personal level. It evoked memories and experiences that embraced theology, personal outlook, and perhaps even prejudice. Differences appeared in that inclusiveness was welcomed but in a conditional and unconditional way. One respondent speaks of God's yes to us but we must make our response to secure our place; while another respondent speaks of our yes to Islam but only if it in turn says yes to us. A completely different approach is taken by respondent B who recognises that inclusiveness is unconditional. This highlights the challenge most congregations face, that is, that each is made up of people who have all sorts of issues which have a theological or experiential base.

This in turn creates tensions in relation to any prophetic stance the Church would seek to make. How can we be prophetic when we ourselves have yet to discover the reality of what Jesus is saying and doing? The risk that Jesus took in embracing the Centurion as a person of faith does not seem to be one some of our congregation are willing to take themselves. There has to be, for them, some degree of conditionality involved in our relationships with others. In respect of how Islam reacts to other faiths, respondent D does not seem to have grasped the golden rule that we are 'to do unto others as we would have them do unto us.' The positive, pro-active ethic, which in itself is witness to the Gospel of grace, is to be set aside, more than that turned on its head. And though I agree on the need for each person to make their own response to God, one has then to be careful about not predetermining what that response consists of. If one does then it gives every appearance of conditionality which is reflected in the feeling that many have about church: 'if you are not like us, you cannot join.'

This is such a challenging concept, that is, inclusiveness. Yet, in the light of experience, one can recognise how much people need to find that place where they are welcomed and loved irrespective of who they are, their social status, sexual orientation etc. The question of how radical the Church can be is ever before us.

Chapter 4

Sermon: Urbanisation

i: Introduction

Newton Mearns was in times past a village. Mearns Parish Kirk building was at one time surrounded by fields, indeed something of the old glebe remains around the church building and the manse. A good deal of the parish consisted of farms, some of which are still there but a good number have disappeared having been bought up by building companies. Some of the fields have been built on, while others remain rented out to farmers, waiting for the day when planning permission will be granted. Newton Mearns has expanded greatly but with the building of many expensive houses, the community experience of Mearns people has greatly diminished. This has been acknowledged by the local council in the past couple of years as they have now initiated a community week whereby they are seeking to re-establish a sense of community within Mearns. Most certainly it is the case, as I have discovered often, that people do not know their neighbours. It is the case that there has been a growing sense of loneliness and isolation for some people, and that what seems to be most important about Mearns is the sense of wealth it conveys rather than the life which is shared by its people.

i: Sermon: Urbanisation. Texts: Matthew 11:28-30; Mark 11:15-19

I guess much of what I am is down to upbringing. Although I have grown up, been and being educated, ordained as a Minister and all the rest, what's underneath is still Joe: Joe who grew up in the Kavanagh family in Johnstone. I am that person who was formed of old, and though having added considerably to my experience of life, I am still Joe, in some ways the same yesterday, today and forever. And much of what I bring to my present life, to my ministry, to my approach to life itself, stems from what I experienced growing up. Jesus grew up in Nazareth, a town, a village, with all the traits of village life.

Nazareth was in Lower Galilee and during Jesus early years it experienced great upheaval and change, and much of what Jesus saw influenced who he became, the

message he spoke and the ministry he offered. In other words what Jesus did in his ministry was not done in a vacuum. He didn't just have a couple of good ideas that he threw about. Something was happening in his life, in the lives of people he loved, in the life of the people that made him respond in the ways he did.

So what was happening when Jesus were a lad? Well, life for the people was very simple – they lived on the land and off the land. They grew what they needed for their families and a bit extra in order to exchange for other goods. It was very much an agricultural community based lifestyle. Then came Antipas, Ruler, as Rome's man, of Galilee, and he began his great building projects. The old city of Sepphoris, about 3 miles from Nazareth, he began to rebuild, and he would build the city of Tiberias as well. Now in order to undertake his projects funds needed to be raised, resources had to be found, and so Antipas turned to the common people of the land. By way of taxation and the transferring of ownership of lands to the elite, Antipas embarked on his great city building projects. Wealth moved to the city – therefore there was less for the people of the land. New market economies developed, the simple lifestyle was being left behind – people became poorer, and as they lost their lands because of debts, families were unable to support each other in the ways that they had. Having no land they lost power and were pushed to the periphery of society. The city and the powers that dwelt therein cast a long shadow over the lives of the rural communities.

Big changes indeed! Where people worked their wee bits of land, where the village was an extended family, where local leadership by the landowners, the local landowners, was exercised for the good of all the people, all this was disappearing, as power and land were put in the hands of the wealthy elite: 1% of the population. Everything began to flow towards the city. The city became all important. Its needs took preference over any other. And in Jesus' time of ministry the impoverishment of the common people continued such that he has to declare: "Come to me all you who are heavy laden and I will give you rest"!

Jesus saw people as harassed and helpless like sheep without a shepherd. Worn down by the powers on high, exploited for the benefit of the few, weighed down by taxes and tolls and debts incurred to maintain political and the religious elite, Jesus offered to these people hope, a new way, a different kind of life. It was one based on his own approach to life, one truly God centred, one of gentleness and lowliness that would enable them to be part of the Kingdom of God.

In a way their religion should have offered them some consolation in respect of having to contend with all the demands of their overlords, but it didn't. Even in the Temple the poor, the common people, were being exploited. The Holy Place of God had become a money making machine – excess profits were being made from the sale of sacrificial animals and this sanctioned by the Temple aristocracy who took their cut. It seems that wherever the poor turned, they were being treated as fodder for the system. And Jesus, as did the prophets of old, Isaiah and Jeremiah who himself spoke of the Temple in his day as a den of robbers; Jesus attacked (very forcefully) the abuses going on in God's house.

What is happening in Galilee, which is reflected in the Temple, is not just something that's all about the poor – what in fact we are seeing is a way of life being lost. Community life is disintegrating – God's way for life set down in His Covenant with the people is being rejected – even in the place where those covenant values of caring and sharing ought to have been seen most: the Temple.

And Jesus' response to all this? It is to offer a vision of a new kingdom where love for God and for people is central – he creates a new community where people live with and for each other – he talks of a new approach to wealth which enables people to become more important than profit. As I've said before: Jesus vision of the Kingdom of God is not of an empire, but a vision of a village.

Stories abound about old Mearns: once a village but now no longer – once a community but now no longer – once a place where people knew each other but now a

place where some don't know who stays next door. In a way Mearns has been caught up in the great Urban project – drawn into what some might see as Greater Glasgow, as Mearns has become urbanised it has lost a great deal of what made life good for its people.

In the Bible we see at times a contrast between city life and rural life – city life is based on individual fulfilment, rural life is a shared experience. The city is seen as the place where people are working their own agenda, it can become a very strong focal point for rebellion against God, and the city is that place where power is exercised for the few and not all. And interestingly, when Abraham begins his great journey of faith he is called to go from the city in order to discover the faithfulness of God – his security is no longer to be found in the strength of the city. Yet in these same Scriptures there is one exception: Jerusalem, wherein God's presence was believed to dwell in the Temple. That should have encouraged the city dwellers to live aright; the power of God should have been embraced in order to transform city life. But Jerusalem more often than not reverts to type, as Jesus discovered when he went there, and ultimately on one of his visits to the city, he is arrested and crucified.

The forces of city life are very often seen as those which gather themselves against God – they can be so depersonalising though some might see it as rich and full. In our day city life is seen as life in the fast lane, life where everything is happening, life where the powerful live and play but it's not truly that attractive.

Jesus was most comfortable out in the country, mixing with ordinary folk; being part of life where people mattered – where kinship could be enjoyed – where number 1 was not all important – where life was not anonymous – where power was exercised as service of the people and not for building empires. And in some sense when we begin to dig deep, and see where Jesus is coming from, what he is doing, what he is offering to the people, it certainly challenges our concept of mission that we have in the Church.

If we were to take on board some of these things this morning that we have been thinking about in terms of Jesus own ministry, what we would see, first of all, is that green

issues are very important. We would see that we, as a church, ought to in these days in which we live, encourage a greater respect for the land. When the wee farmers were working the land there was a recognised relationship, a respect by the farmer for the land. When the wee farmers were thrown off the land by those who owned the large commercial estates, the land was worked intensely; the land was no longer seen as sacred. Jesus saw what was happening and spoke out against this, and where we are in many respects these days requires that the Church, recognising the relationship between humanity and the earth, recognising the earth's sacredness, the Church needs to proclaim how necessary it is to treat the earth aright.

Also, if we see in Jesus day how power had gone from the ordinary people to the elite, if we recognise how the exercise of power went from benefiting all to benefiting the few, then as a Church we must speak up on behalf of the marginalised, those who have no say. We must speak up for those for whom there is no interest in political circles because they don't matter, they don't count, because they are not important enough. There is a duty to remind those who have power that they do so as a trust from God and from the people. Lords, MPs, MSPs, councillors, whoever, are there to serve the people, not a philosophy, not some grand project, not to serve a party. And though they have to make difficult decisions which the common people cannot be party to, still they must listen to the voices of the people, and feel for the needs of the people with their hearts. So then, hopefully, they would ensure that they do not become remote from those who place them in power.

And again thinking of what was happening, the disintegration of community life, as a Church we would as part of our mission take very seriously the important task of creating community. When individualism is so prevalent, and I would say so overrated, we must reveal in our life together what God wants which is to gather a people who will really love each other, who will live a shared life, who will know each other, and that on more than nodding terms. Many of the problems our society faces is due to the disintegration of

community, and churches, prophetically, should be challenging that disintegration not by word but by offering pockets of community wherever the Church finds herself.

Jesus looked at what was going on – he grew up in the midst of great change and said, "No, this is not what God wants" – He saw the very negative effects on people's lives and the life of the people. May we have eyes to see the challenges which confront our own society today – the ears to hear what Jesus says about them – and the heart to make a difference. Amen.

iii: Congregational Responses: Urbanisation

Respondent A:

A is a 3rd year university student moving on into her final year Sociology honours. She has grown up in a Christian/church environment and has joined the church 'officially'. She is very aware of what goes on in society, and is very inclusive in her view of who can belong, and recognises the forces which shape peoples' lives.

A's Comments

Important to remember and understand that we are who we are due to the experiences that we have growing up. It is not money or lifestyle which makes us who we are but experiences through our family, friends and church.

By remembering that Jesus is also to some extent a product of his experiences, it allows me to connect with him on a human level. You feel you can carry on his work of compassion and love because when you understand him as a man his compassion and love for others is overwhelming. The sermon explained the urbanisation taking place at the time in which Jesus grew up, and by comparing it to what society is like now, it shows us that the same problems and issues are to be faced today.

It becomes apparent that by acting upon Jesus' teaching and example, the Church can become the catalyst to bring the Community together.

Respondent B:

Unfortunately, as in one other case, no name was attached to this response.

Reading the response I find echoes of what a number of people have said.

B's Comments

The main impact on listening to the sermon in church was being asked to consider Jesus as a lad being influenced by everyday things all around him...just as any other boy or girl living in the village.

I had not previously been aware of giving much thought to his life between the 'Nativity' and the start of his ministry....so had not really given any consideration to his formative years as he grew up on the land.

The impact of the growth of the 'city', and to some extent the misuse of power by the Temple aristocracy/the church, made me think about what can be influenced or changed for the better.

The 'city' seems to grow ever more powerful and less caring of the needs of the less powerful.

On reading the sermon at home I was drawn more to consider the section on the disintegration of community life and how the church or the individual can do anything against the seemingly relentless move away from the 'village' in which you described Jesus growing up and in which he formed his views.

Respondent C:

Respondent C is in his late 30s, married with a family. He is part of the professional class. His life is built around his family and his work, and his feet are set quite solidly on the ground. In the past 9 months he has become active again in church, joining our own congregation in that time. He is a very genuine person and recognises the need to contribute as a member to the life of the church. The impression I get is that he could not be a 'pew-filler', his faith is obviously important to him.

C's Comments

Overall, I think the sermon helps to highlight the similarities that Jesus faced during his lifetime and the challenges and issues that we face today.

The sermon highlighted to me just how ordinary Jesus was – although the greatest person ever to have lived and one who changed the world for ever – a bit of a contradiction – but hopefully you understand where I am coming from – somebody who related to the ordinary people but was very special.

The sermon helped me think about what had shaped me as I grew up – the influences and what they mean to me today – my values and outlook.

I was encouraged to not underestimate the impact of things that are going on around you.

Jesus was an ordinary person like you and me – somebody you could relate to. Things are remarkably similar today to what they were in Jesus' time.

More to life than money. Jesus offers an alternative that is truly fulfilling.

Church life is a shared experience – it is about the community and building a faith for today and tomorrow – how do we rise to this challenge?

Green issues and other environmental issues – what is the role of the Church in helping to address these?

How can the Church bridge the gap for those who don't have a voice? How can we use cities to benefit individuals through the Church? Cities are an important part of modern day society.

There is a need to create a Church community regardless of location – create that rural community in a city centre. The differences between city life and rural life are there – but I think that some of the challenges and issues are similar.

Respondent D

D is not a church member but has been coming along to our church for the past 3 or so months with his wife. Both have an evangelical background but

'drifted'. They appear to be quite comfortable with us. He is obviously a deep thinker, I would presume well read, and would be a part of the professional class.

D's Comments

As regards the sermon on Urbanisation, you started by talking about Jesus. You made the point that though he lived in a different era, much of what concerned him is equally problematic today and his response is therefore as relevant now as it was then. What concerned him was the centralisation of power and influence and the development of a culture in which profit and self-interest took precedence over the common good. That resulted in communities being fragmented, community spirit being dissipated and people who lacked power and influence being marginalised and disregarded, except as a source of revenue. You explained his response which was to present an alternative vision of life based not on power and influence but on love for God and people. That should be our vision as Christians. In particular we should demonstrate that love by sharing our lives with others and by building and maintaining strong communities in which the focus is on the common good rather than individual fulfilment and no one is excluded or marginalised.

This struck me as a challenging message given that we are in a highly competitive age with an ethos of working most hours that God sends with the specific purpose of individual fulfilment and advancement through competitive advantage over others. There is much pressure to succeed and much encouragement to adopt the "dog eat dog" approach glamorized by Sir Alan Sugar on the recent television series "The Apprentice". Christians cannot simply, like Quakers, drop out of this culture and must live and prosper within it. On the other hand there can be few of us who cannot temper what we do to bring it more into line with our beliefs. It is about knowing, supporting and respecting others and

demonstrating, albeit inevitably in our own imperfect way, practical love and concern for our fellow human beings.

It does not take much by way of further reflection to realise that loving and demonstrating love for our neighbour is a common thread which runs through most religions. And it is obviously not just the preserve of the churches. It is widely recognised by believers and non-believers alike as a good thing. Helping the less fortunate is an aspect of common human decency. Few are not concerned, at least intermittently, about those afflicted by poverty, illness, bereavement, disability, natural disaster, terrorist atrocities and the like. The huge amount of charitable giving and voluntary work by vast swathes of the public is ample evidence of that. People generally are basically decent and do good because they just know they should. And apart from this basic motivation, there are sound reasons for doing good. There is the personal satisfaction in doing something worthwhile and much happiness to be derived from creating happiness in others. There is the perception of others to be considered. Few of us are completely insensitive to how others regard us and though ratcheting up our personal ratings is perhaps not the most praiseworthy of motives, the end result remains worthwhile. Then there is the faint trace in the sand after we are gone, which all of us contemplate from time to time. Accounts in obituary columns about great personal success are all very well but nothing creates the same warmth of feeling as an account of genuine practical concern for others. There can be few of us who would not rather leave the world a better place.

That raises the question as to the church's role in all of this. If everyone but the churches was being carried along by waves of urbanisation and the like and the churches were alone in trying to stem the flow, their reason for being would be obvious. But that is clearly not the case. People, as mentioned above, will do good without them. Do we therefore need them? There was a letter on this precise point

in *The Times* of 7 July 2006. The writer, commenting on recent hand-wringing over Catholic Church attendance figures and deep schisms in the Church of England, referred to national statistics indicating that of 42 million Christians in the UK only some 2 million (4.7 per cent) were churchgoing Catholic or Church of England. Thereafter, on the basis that this represented the major part of Christian church attendance, he commented

“95 per cent of UK Christians are thus completely unaffected by such navel-gazing. To them, Christ’s message is simple: love one another. They feel no need to attend church — and no need to debate the theological arguments as to the relevance of the Bible. If I may speak for them - and no one else does - they see the churches as a side-show, full of pomp and self-importance but ultimately irrelevant. Of course they do a great deal of good — in much the same way as the Women’s Institute is a praiseworthy organisation. But the “voiceless 95 per cent” can only look on in pity and some bemusement as these extreme fringes of Christianity continue to tear themselves to pieces.”

It has to be accepted that the letter writer is right in saying that Christ’s message is love one another. And it is right, as you pointed out in your sermon, that Christians should continually seek to demonstrate that love in what they do. Where however he is wrong is in stating that this is Christ’s “simple” message in the sense that everything can be summed up in this one simple, attractive phrase. And he is unfortunately not alone in making that mistake. Even some churches appear to subscribe to the same idea. They rightly urge people to love one another but gloss over references to God or mention God only in a very nebulous way, as if the story of God, like so many Bible stories, is mere allegory, not literal truth. Christians down through the centuries may well have believed and passed on to us, sometimes at huge personal cost, a great legacy of faith but they were obviously unenlightened

and, basically, wrong and we can now safely modernise our faith by jettisoning those faintly embarrassing and outdated bits about God. Loving one another is much safer ground and it is there they take their stand. And in so doing they flag up the very issue raised by the letter writer as to why we shouldn't just stay at home or join the Women's Institute.

The letter writer is wrong in suggesting that loving your neighbour is all there is to it because there is an even more fundamental message as far as the church is concerned and that is that we should love God. A difficult concept to understand perhaps as this love is so different from the more familiar forms of love such as the love for a spouse, partner or child, the love we send in Christmas cards or the love of ice cream. The principal source of enlightenment on this is obviously the Bible but it appears to be love in the sense of devotion which is sufficiently strong as to cause us to have a continuing spiritual relationship with God. It is this love of God which is the fundamental aspect of the Christian way of life and which provides the unique reason for the church's existence, that being to provide a spiritual focal point enabling people to come together and share in the joy of praising and worshipping our God. Some may try to denigrate this experience as a "spiritual fix" but if our faith is important to us it is surely right that we should not let it dissipate through lack of attention. Rather should we continually nourish and strengthen it so that it remains a constant driving force in our lives, continually motivating us to live in a way which is as close as possible to the way in which Christ would have us live. And the joy, hope, inspiration and blessing we derive from worshipping together as a church should make it clear that we are not interchangeable with the Women's Institute. Though the experience of being with them is no doubt highly pleasurable, there is nothing that can compare with belonging to the church.

In that sense your sermon struck a chord with me in that right at the start you focused on Jesus as a real person who was subject, as we are, to the influences of everyday life. That for me emphasised the reality of the Christian message and it was the basis for everything else you said. You subsequently made the precise point which was apparently missed by the letter writer in that you said that Jesus' vision was of a new kingdom "where love for God and for people is central". There were two, not just one, central elements. It was the combination of these two elements, rather than just the one, which would enable the realization of that vision. It was a message which sought to renew and refresh our faith as a church by causing us to think about Jesus not in a remote, nebulous and irrelevant way but in a real, living and practical sense and it challenged us to follow his example.

Your sermon did therefore have a significant impact on me at the time. Reflecting on it further in this way has really emphasised its message and has been very worthwhile

iv: Response to Responses: Urbanisation

This sermon, in one way, talked about everyday life, in its context how that life was being affected by the process of urbanisation. It offered a glimpse into Jesus own life among his people, and how he did not minister in a vacuum. The life that he shared, what was going on around him, what he experienced, in a whole host of ways influenced what he said and did, an important realisation, and one which I believe has been grasped by the respondents. The question of relevancy has been identified and how through that, in some sense, the question of how we can be church in relevant ways today is being asked. But the content of Jesus relevant ministry has also been acknowledged: the importance of community, the value of people, addressing the issues of power, respect for the land, and the place of God within all this; all these areas have been identified. Connections have also been

made, bridges built between the past and the present, the relevancy of Jesus ministry for today has been established in the minds of each respondent. Respondent D in particular has raised the issue of the place of the Church in the grand work of loving your neighbour, and has highlighted a criticism of the Church, quoting from an article in the Times. I do agree with Respondent D that the Church is not just concerned with loving the neighbour but also with loving God, and I would add that, theologically speaking, it is this loving of God (and being loved by God) that enables one to love not just the loveable but also the enemy.

Of all the responses, I do feel that the opportunity to put meat on the prophetic bones of the Church has been offered most in respect of urbanisation. Living counter culturally can be clearly set out for the Church on the basis of this prophetic aspect of Jesus ministry. In the society in which we live, to create a community wherein power makes possible a better life for all, where responsibilities for others are accepted, and where the earth as gift is acknowledged, would enable the church to be taken seriously and for its faith to be visibly seen. Indeed in a city context the retention of 'village' values would serve to remind those caught up in the individuality and anonymity of 'city life', that alternatives are possible. It is city life which will continue to grow, and on the basis that cities use (misuse?) a disproportionate percentage of the world's resources, within the city the Church can show the way ahead in respect of stewarding well what God has given in Creation.

Chapter 5

Sermon: Power and Politics

i: Introduction

Like most congregations the majority of our members see no correlation between what they believe and how they vote. Politics and Religion do not go hand in hand. We are a fair-trade church and finding a suitable place for our fair-trade goods resulted in the decision to place them in our vestibule. This was not well received by all and Jesus casting out the money-changers and sellers of sacrificial animals was quoted in support of not having goods for sale within the church building. This view not only evidenced a misunderstanding of the text but also displayed a very clear line of division in respect of religion and politics, of how faith and life were to be lived out in the world. The basic understanding that Jesus saw no sacred and secular division but viewed life in its entirety through his faith needed to be grasped. This not only related to the issue of fair-trade but to how we heard what various political views were saying about life itself and the relationship of those views to the Kingdom of God.

ii: Sermon: Power and Politics. Texts: Isaiah 44:24-45:6; Mark 12:13-17

Faith is all about me and God, God and me. That appears to be the view that has been so prevalent down through the ages and to some extent still is. It's a spiritual thing – it's about personal belief – it's about making sure me and God are on the best of terms...just in case. Faith has to do with religion, with the sacred, most certainly it has nothing to do with life, and God forbid that it should have anything to do with politics.

In our Gospel reading this morning Jesus is confronted with a political question – a question about taxes. The tax is the Roman Poll Tax which was imposed in 6AD, a tax greatly resented by the Jews. To pay such a tax was a constant reminder that Rome ruled OK – a constant reminder that you were a subjugated people – a constant reminder that you were not enjoying the freedom that your religious beliefs spoke about. And to add insult to injury the tax had to be paid with the denarius which had an inflammatory image and inscription: "Tiberius Caesar, son of the divine Augustus, the high priest" – a blasphemy to the Jew. And Jesus was put on the spot: "should we pay this tax or not" he was asked? What would he do? His own life depended on the answer he would give! Would he be like

Judas of Galilee who in 6AD led a revolt against the payment of taxes to Rome? Was he expected to say no because he was a prophet, and prophets were political people who certainly were not in the pay of Rome? Or would he say something that would make him seem to be a Roman collaborator? What a dilemma for Jesus! "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." This was Jesus reply and with these words he amazed those who would have him hang himself.

In his reply Jesus is placing Caesar under the overarching rule of God. Jesus recognized that down through the centuries Israel though under the rule of others, for it was a subjugated people very often in its history, was ultimately under God's control. That was seen in our reading from Isaiah where Cyrus, a pagan ruler, is recognised to be God's instrument, God's servant, God's way of leading and guiding His people. So though there are many powers at work in this world all, even those opposed to God, are being used by Him for His purposes. This is the biblical view of the sovereignty of God, a view which does not count God out of the various political processes of the countries of the world.

But going back to our Gospel text, we cannot get away from the fact that Jesus as a prophet had a political dimension to his ministry. Jesus didn't preach revolution against Rome but in a way he sort of did. He wasn't a Che Guevara; rather he was a Ghandi like or Martin Luther King like revolutionary. What I mean by this is that he didn't call people to arms but to a new way of life. He preached about the Kingdom of God, [which wasn't too clever when Rome was all powerful] and he spoke out on matters of justice. Indeed one writer has said 'justice was at the centre of Jesus spirituality'. And when you start speaking of other Kingdoms, and when you start to decry injustice, then you are perceived as a political person, more than that, a political threat – and such folk under Rome end up crucified.

We have a great tendency to divide sacred and secular, we put our politics and religion in separate boxes – we fail to recognise how one should impact upon the other and at times we strive to ensure that they never come together – in Jesus' day there was no

such divide. Life in Jesus' time was embraced as a whole, one's religious view related to all of life and Jesus recognised the political implications of what he was saying and doing. Maybe that is why he based himself at Capernaum as far away as possible from Herod Antipas, Rome's ruler of Galilee – the man who had John the Baptist beheaded and that probably due to John being perceived as a political threat. Did Jesus' ministry have political overtones as well? Certainly it seems so.

The mind set is so different today from Jesus' time. As I said we see the political sphere of life and the religious sphere of life as being completely separate but really we ought to bring them together. If we are not willing to let our faith influence our politics then in a sense we are saying that Faith is irrelevant to a big part of life. We are saying that Faith has nothing to say about many important issues in life and that God is not concerned about what goes on in the whole of life. But God is concerned about what kind of world people live in, what kind of society people create – and so must we be as Christians. And where power is wielded to change the world for good, to make society work for the benefit of all, is in the political arena.

You will have seen the intimation this morning about the meeting with our own Moderator and Cardinal Keith O'Brien who will both be speaking against renewing Trident. Indeed before Alan became Moderator, when he was but a humble Minister, he was arrested at Faslane while protesting against nuclear arms. Alan's faith influences his actions – and the Church of Scotland's Assembly has voted against nuclear arms and that based on belief, on theology, on its understanding of the will of God. When it comes to issues of peace, matters of justice, concern for the world's poorest, then the Church cannot be silent and we as individual Christians must play our part too. And we can do that by taking seriously the responsibility we have to influence policy, to become the conscience of the Government, to take opportunities to write letters, sign petitions, join groups and of course use our votes.

It is a great shame that in our time less and less people are using their vote. I heard recently that more young folk voted in Pop Idol than did in the last election. Too many of us, even those who are older, wonder if there is any point to voting, mistrust and cynicism concerning politicians abound. I read somewhere recently that when the disenfranchised like the suffragettes fought for the vote, it was not just the vote they wanted but they wanted the right to be involved, the right to have a voice. To live in a democratic country means surely to actively participate in the democratic process. It is not just a case of having the vote; it is all about using the vote. It is to contribute to that form of government which is for the people by the people which we do in a very important way by voting. But when we cast our vote as Christians we do so on the basis of our faith! I'm not suggesting for one moment that we have a Christian political party, for Christians are spread throughout all political parties, what I am saying though is that our political views must be informed by our faith. For Faith is about life – it is about lifestyle – and so with integrity, with thoughtfulness, with a desire to see this community, our society, the world, conform more and more to the will of God – we cast our votes.

Jesus was not political in the sense of what we think as political but undoubtedly his manifesto, his Gospel message, confronted the political realities of his day and challenged them. Then life was life – no divisions, no separation between saying prayers to God and speaking out against what was happening in society. And the Church in our day must follow that prophetic approach of Jesus for all of us are affected by political decisions and so we must play our part. As someone once said, "politics is too serious a matter to be left to the politicians"! Amen.

iii: Congregational Responses: Power and Politics

Respondent A

A is a young recently graduated doctor, about to begin her hospital training. She has been part of our church family for about 20 months or so, and though not having made a commitment in terms of membership, she has got quite involved with our young folk, helping out in different ways. A is very caring, happy among

people, bright, and for whom the life of faith is becoming more important. Her family are not 'Church' but although wealthy are 'ordinary' people who have made good through business.

A's Comments

The reading from Mark was very interesting. It clearly means to me that money is not important but that God is important. It does not matter who you are, what you do or how much you earn, we are all equal in the eyes of God.

I feel that the sermon clearly illustrates the importance of bringing your faith into making decisions not only political but also on general lifestyle matters. From the reply of Jesus you get a clear appreciation of his unique position as the messenger of God and spiritual leader at the time of the Roman Empire. It saddens me that people still vote for parties they always have and don't consider what is going on in the world and more importantly their faith. Faith also, I think, comprises ethics; the concept of doing good and spirituality.

It is clear that Jesus was a very eloquent speaker and chose his words very carefully. To me this conjures an image of many people listening to his every word. This shows how important a leader Jesus was and is.

Respondent B

B; is an early retired Head Teacher. He has a long church experience and has been an elder for many years. He is thoughtful and reflective, very wise in matters requiring tact and diplomacy. He is solid in his faith and does not give the impression that material matters are that important to him. He also has a very good sense of fun!

B's Comments

I found this to be an interesting and thought provoking sermon as it posed an essential challenge for the Christian, v12 squaring faith with politics.

The layman's interpretation of "Render unto Caesar that which is Caesar's and unto God that which is God's" might have encouraged him to divorce the one from

the other, and not to try to measure how the one impacted upon the other. The sermon however disabused one from pursuing this approach and forced one to examine the extent and manner in which one's faith should govern one's political outlook and stance. This is surely the nub of Christian teaching – interpreting how the Christian should put his faith into practice in the 'real' world.

I accept that the Christian should play a proper part in the life of society in which he lives but I am not sure that the ballot box always offers the right opportunities. For example, both main parties initially supported the war in Iraq and both are in favour of Britain retaining an independent nuclear capability. I know that some minor parties may offer alternative policies but voting for them in our political system is a futile exercise. Refusing to vote can be a viable alternative as it is one of the few methods we have for expressing our dissatisfaction.

Respondent C

C is a very youthful male of 60, married with a family. A successful business man, he is still plying his trade. He is involved in the life of our church as an elder, and as a youth worker. He is very aware of the spiritual dimension which pervades all of life and he comes across as a great lover of life itself.

C's Comments

Your sermon on the apparent division of faith and politics made me aware of how little we know of the influences of God and church upon our politicians. They are very adept at not giving direct answers but I wonder if Tony Blair prayed for guidance prior to following 'GW' into invading Iraq.

You mentioned the importance of Justice to Jesus, and I wonder where the justice is today in spending billions of pounds on nuclear weapons when millions are starving throughout the world. Our politicians are the first on television with promises of aid, basking in the limelight but how often do we hear that years later the promises go unfulfilled.

Apathy to politics, apathy to religion, is a sad indictment on today's society and perhaps it is time for more political content in sermons together with the invitation to local and national politicians to come to our church and share their views on religion and politics.

Respondent D

D is in her early fifties, married with a family. She has a denominationally mixed background and prefers a traditional approach to worship. D has been in our church for about a year and gives a strong impression of being very thoughtful about her faith, and very caring about people.

D's Comments

This made me consider for the first time the connection between my faith and religious beliefs and how that could in turn reflect the way that I vote for specific issues or for any individual. In the past I have perhaps not listened to my conscience seriously enough when casting votes.

I would certainly agree that most people would not see politics and religion as being connected.

This sermon did make me think seriously about the way in which to reach a decision when faced with political issues and I hope I can put this into practice when next in this kind of situation.

"Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's". On the subject of this particular quote I personally felt this to be one which will stick in my mind for applying to a multitude of everyday problems and decisions and not just with regard to political issues.

I am sure I am not alone in finding it difficult to know when to hand something over to God or to pursue it through a person or authority. Sometimes it feels right to hand it to God and sometimes it just feels like perhaps an easier way out. These words made me realise that there are numerous occasions where we

must 'think for ourselves' and perhaps even allow someone with greater knowledge and expertise to intervene. We can call on our religious beliefs and faith to make this decision and then hand the outcome over to God.

The sermon did alter my perception of Jesus in that it made him seem more human – he too realised that not everything could be handed over to God.

iv: Response to Responses: Power and Politics

The subject matter is always difficult to deal with in Church as you can be accused of trying to influence peoples' voting patterns. However no respondent gave that impression but all grasped the real point of the sermon that faith and politics go hand in hand. This was most encouraging, although one did say, understandably, that it might be difficult finding someone to vote for. What is clear is that the green light was given to bring political matters within the life, work and witness of the Church. The recognition that important differences are made to life through political engagement, and not just by 'prayer', asks of the Church the question of how that might be undertaken. Of course, it is partly done by Christians becoming actively involved in politics, local and national, and that within all political parties. The danger is though that you end up towing the party line and your faith is reserved for Sundays! And the question of agreement on political issues is a large one indeed. Politicians of all parties claim to be Christian and their opinions differ on many matters, for example, on the question of renewing Trident. Yet if we believe that the prophetic Jesus radically challenges life; if we believe God is concerned with all of life; what is it that is particularly unique about the Church's contribution to the political world? How does the Church become politically prophetic?

The respondents' answer is in part to continually bring faith to the ballot box. That for me means a discernment of the relationship between the values of the Kingdom of God and what any political party preaches. But that is a very individual

matter, how can the Church collectively agitate politically? In some sense Respondent C gives us a possibility by underlining the concept of justice. Biblical justice embraces peace, compassion, life as it ought to be. It sets people at the heart of God's concern, as shown by Jesus, and it is where people are being relegated in favour of 'isms', 'ologies' and political idealism, then collectively the church can and should speak with one voice.

I certainly do feel that the breadth of our congregational life can be extended on the basis of the responses made. The awareness displayed of being aware of the truth that there is no religious and political divide for the person of faith, is something which can be built upon.

Chapter 6

Congregational Responses to the Sermons

Concluding remarks on responses

In Jesus' day and for Jesus himself, everything had a religious element to it. This is not so true in the western industrialised world which often ideologically segments religion and politics. All Jesus' words and actions are underpinned by a theological conviction that God had created all of life, and so all of life had to be approached from a faith perspective. Today the sacred and secular divide is all too evident. Faith applies to the 'religious bits', whereas we interact with other parts of life on a completely different basis. Another great difference for the church of the present is that it sits very close to the establishment; it is no longer, in some ways, the outsider but is part of the fabric of society itself. As such it sits quite comfortably and this can lead to it conforming to society's norms. As an 'insider' it is always difficult to criticise the status quo, and perhaps particularly difficult to get 'over excited' to the point of openly challenging what is taking place.

The Church does not live under the imperial domination of Rome, but it certainly does live in an era in which certain cultural, even neo-colonial, trends are apparent and this prompts another question: what then should the Church 'prophesy' against in our day? How do we identify the unhealthy powers at work in our lifetime and how then do we 'prophesy' against them? The Kingdom of God which Jesus preached about and began to realize in and through his ministry, clashed with Rome, as it did with the 'religious power' of his time. This was because of the radical nature of his message: has the Church still this radical edge to it? The powers at work in peoples' lives in our time can be easily identified: secularism; consumerism; globalisation; capitalism; materialism; individualism; post-modernism; most of which conflate one with the other. It does appear that in some respects many who make up the Church have "sold out to the spirit of the age" having great

difficulty in differentiating the values of such 'powers' and those of the Kingdom of God. Indeed with regard to globalisation, individualism and consumerism, such concepts would be wholeheartedly embraced. What a challenge then for the Church! How does it take up the Prophetic mantle of Jesus in the 21st century? But it is a challenge that needs to be met in order to be faithful to the prophetic ministry of Jesus.

It is truly the case that this particular aspect of Jesus' life ought to be given more emphasis. At the beginning of this thesis I did raise the point that the post-Easter Jesus has become the dominant way of thinking about Jesus and relating to him. That approach has caused us to neglect certain aspects of Jesus ministry. Not only is it the case that, for example, the creeds pay minimum attention to his actual life, but much of the "Church clutter" has the same effect. By "Church clutter" I think of things such as some forms of liturgy; power structures; mind-sets; doctrinal conformity; the over-emphasis on holiness being about personal purity, and the under-emphasis on holiness as being related to the service of God in the world. In all these ways and more we lessen the impact of the real human Jesus who lived with a faith, and offered a God-centred ministry which met people where they were in a relevant way.

The four sermons preached certainly proved to be useful ways for me to bring this human Jesus to my congregation. The feedback by way of the written responses, and the usual word here and there, was very positive. It gave me the impression that a veil of sorts had been lifted in respect of Jesus. Connections had been made and possibilities established for building on Jesus' prophetic ministry which would enable us as a church to live more prophetically.

Thesis Conclusion

The catalyst for this thesis was the suspicion that something of Jesus' ministry was missing from the Church's ministry. Such an idea arose through the course of a ministry within two Church of Scotland congregations and continuous reflection on church life, theology, the Gospels and human experience. I began to research the prophetic ministry of Jesus in his social context in order to see if my thinking was indeed correct and if so, to come to an understanding of what the church, in its local manifestation, might do.

In the Introduction to this thesis, I set out my intentions and the methods by which I would undertake my investigations. I have noted the need to gain a historical understanding of the 'powers' at work in the Galilee of Jesus' time. To explore the Galilee of 2000 years ago I have used the evidence of Josephus, the Gospels and relevant historical studies offered by contemporary scholarship. As I researched prophecy in relation to Jesus I investigated various scholarly models of the phenomenon. The on-going work of the thesis explored the relevancy of Jesus the Prophet to the Church of this time which was reflected on by means of actual sermons preached on the theme and various congregational responses.

In the introduction, I highlighted the difficulties which arise in respect of the Christ of faith/ Jesus of history divide. This on-going divide has, I suggested, created a Jesus who cannot truly identify with us due to him being absorbed into the 'divine'. This, as I see it, undermines the historical relevancy of his own human ministry and robs the church today of an important aspect of Jesus' contribution to the life of faith in the present. This present day experience I have referred to through describing my own theological journey and ministry which have both been influenced by the humanity of Jesus. In concluding the introduction I sought to ask how through a

discovery of the pre-Easter Jesus, faith and church life might be challenged and changed, which led me onto an investigation of Imperial Galilee.

In Part One of this thesis my intention was to give as complete a picture of first century CE Galilee. I did this by considering the background to the people of Galilee, what life was like in the everyday experience of its people and the impact of Herod Antipas' urbanisation programme upon what was an agrarian lifestyle with strong community values. My next port of call was to discuss the nature of the influence of Hellenism upon life in Galilee, raising the question of possible contrasts between city and village life in respect of how pervasive it might have been. This in turn raised the issue of Jesus' view of city life and his own preference for ministering in rural areas. Herod Antipas was very open to Hellenistic influences and being Rome's ruler in Galilee. I then looked at how his rule impinged upon the Galileans. In doing this and acknowledging the negative effects which Antipas had, it seemed appropriate to look at how the people reacted to his rule which of course was deeply bound up with Roman rule. My overall conclusion, concerning life in Galilee, was that life for the Galileans was far removed from what they would have viewed as 'just', reflecting what their Jewish religion led them to believe was right and true. There was continual disquiet and a constant questioning of how to respond to such oppression. I sought to explore some diverse responses through the main religious parties of the day: Pharisees, Sadducees and Essenes. Such a review led me to suggest that on the basis of their belief systems each had, some element of anti-Roman bias, which was very much an outcome of a faith which did not separate the sacred and secular domains.

Chapter 2 of Part One concerned prophecy and began with defining the term and looking at its development within the Old Testament. The understanding of prophecy in New Testament times was also considered and various prophetic

models were singled out. This study enabled me to look at individual prophetic responses to Roman rule under the category of 'popular prophets'. Within these responses I was able to show that there was openness within the people to pledge their all to a new Moses or Joshua in the hope that they would be delivered from pagan rule. In my construction of a prophetic understanding of Jesus I began with the prophetic ministry of John the Baptist, a 'popular prophet' who Jesus probably historically followed prior to embarking on his own mission. In doing so certain connections were made but differences were also noted which highlighted how difficult it is to fully categorise the prophets of Jesus' time. The study of prophecy and prophets was obviously a very necessary precursor to the study of Jesus the Prophet. With the help of the opposing views of Wright and Horsley, and by engaging critically with them, my intention was to clear the ground for constructing my own view of what kind of prophet Jesus was.

Chapter 3 was based around a consideration of four themes: wealth and poverty, inclusiveness, urbanisation, and power and politics. These themes all arose in the course of looking at the social and political context of Galilee under Imperial rule. The method of examination was exegesis of relevant texts with the hope of shedding light on the particular prophetic role Jesus had. Each theme was introduced, put under exegetical examination and points of relevance noted, all of which contributed to a more composite picture of Jesus the Prophet. Due to the fact that this thesis was never intended to be a solely dispassionate academic exercise, the themes which had arisen in the course of understanding Galilee and which then had been put under the exegetical microscope, I took and 'sermonised' in an attempt to marry the fruits of scholarship to the life of a contemporary congregation.

Part Two of the thesis then detailed those sermons, provided some background to the congregation and recorded and analysed a number of congregational responses to the sermons.

Overall the thesis has opened up something of a new understanding of the Gospels and most certainly created a fresh reading of the words of Jesus. I am now more convinced that the Church has to return to the Gospels and reflect on what Jesus is saying and doing within his own context rather than spiritualising that ministry. Jesus as an eschatological prophet quite unlike those others of his time, for example, Theudas who urged his followers to go to the Jordan to witness a great divine manifestation, spoke of a Kingdom of the here and now, a this-worldly orientated eschatology. It would come in all its fullness through some work of God but it was a present reality which made possible transformation in the world where people lived. To some extent this sense of the Kingdom has been negated in congregational life and needs to be renewed. I believe also that Jesus' view of the wholeness of life, where there is no divide between the sacred and the secular, also requires a greater appreciation in the Church of our time which can so easily divide these spheres. The message is very clear: we must take our faith to reshape the world in which we live and not just use it to reconstruct churches to our way of thinking. This observation obviously applies to the life of a local congregation and of course to my own church in the Mearns. From the responses to the sermons it was most encouraging to find that the 'real-life' behind the Gospels, that which provided the social ecology of the ministry of Jesus, could indeed be identified with. The great divide has been crossed such that possibilities have arisen in respect of how we see what Jesus was doing and connect it to our church life today. The person of Jesus himself has become more of a reality also. While not taking away from the Church's higher Christological understanding of him, what has emerged is a fresh view of the

humanity of Jesus and of his real concerns for peoples' everyday lives. Surely this is an encouragement for the church, locally and globally to get involved in the very areas of life which seem to dehumanise, create division and cause inequality. The 'whole mission' of Jesus needs to become the 'whole mission' of the Church. Certainly ideas have arisen as to how that might be done in our Newton Mearns context, for example, fair-trade and creating village life in the city. More importantly I do feel that the exploration of Jesus' prophetic ministry has given my congregation permission to explore how we in turn can become a prophetic church addressing in a prophetic way other issues than those needs of our world which have been preached on. It is this acknowledgement and acceptance of the relevance for us of the ministry of the Prophet from Galilee that opens the door for Newton Mearns and other churches throughout the world to be prophetic stimulants of change in their own local environments and collectively embody God's kingdom on earth.

Bibliography

- Albright, W. F. and Mann, C. S., *Matthew: The Anchor Bible* (Doubleday, 1971)
- Borg, M., *Conflict Holiness and Politics in the Teaching of Jesus* (Trinity Press, 1998)
- Caird, G. B., *Saint Luke* (Pelican, 1963)
- Carter, W., *Matthew and the Margins: A Socio-Political and Religious Reading* (Sheffield Academic Press 2000)
- Clarke, F. K. T., *Unpublished Ph.d. Thesis Entitled 'God's Concern for the Poor in the New Testament'* (University of Exeter, 2000)
- Creed, J. M., *The Gospel According To St. Luke* (McMillan, 1950)
- Crossan, J. D., *The Historical Jesus* (Harper Collins, 1992)
- Eds: Ryken, L., Wilhoit, T., Longman, T., *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* (IVP, 1998)
- Evans, C. A., *Luke* (Hendrickson, 1960)
- Evans, C. A. *Mark 8: 27 – 16:20; Vol 34B Word Biblical Commentary* (Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2001)
- Evans, C. E. *Luke NIBC* (Hendrickson Publishers, 1990)
- Evans, C. F., *Saint Luke* (SCM, 1990)
- Freyne, Sean, *Jesus a Jewish Galilean* (T & T Clark, 2004)
- Gray, R., *Prophetic Figures in Late Second Temple Jewish Palestine – The Evidence from Josephus* (OUP, 1993)
- Green, J. B., *The Gospel of Luke* (Eerdmans, 1997)
- Guelich, R. A., *Mark 1-8:26 Volume 34A Word Biblical Commentaries* (Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2000)
- Harrington, D. J., *The Gospel of Matthew* (Liturgical Press, 1991)
- Herzog II, W. R., *Jesus, Justice, and the Reign of God—A Ministry of Liberation* (Westminster John Knox Press, 2000)
- Herzog, W. R., *Parables as Subversive Speech: Jesus as Pedagogue of the Oppressed* (Westminster John Knox Press, 1994)
- Hill, D., *The Gospel of Matthew – New Century Bible* (Maryhall, Morgan & Scott, 1972)
- Horsley, R. A. & Hanson, J. S., *Bandits, Prophets and Messiahs* (Winston Press, 1985)

- Josephus, *The Antiquities of the Jews*, 18: 2.3 in *Josephus the Complete Works* (Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1998)
- Josephus, *The Wars of the Jews*: 3: 517-519 in *Josephus the Complete Works* (Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1998)
- Josephus, *War* 2: 11-13, *Antiquities* 17: 215-218 (Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1998)
- Mann, C. S., *Mark: The Anchor Bible* (Doubleday, 1986)
- Manson, W., *The Gospel of Luke* (Hodder & Stoughton, 1942)
- Meier, J. P., *Matthew* (Veritas Publications, 1984)
- Mounce, R. H., *Matthew* (Hendrickson, 1995)
- Neusner, J., as found in Theissen, G. and Merz, A., *The Historical Jesus* opus cit – p139
- Nolland, J., *Luke 1-9:20 Vol 35A* (Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1989)
- Reed, J., *Archaeology and the Galilean Jesus* (Trinity Press International, 2002)
- Saldarini, A. J., *Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees in Palestinian Society* (Eerdmans, 2001)
- Sanders, E. P., *This Historical Figure of Jesus* (Allen Lane, The Penguin Press, 1996)
- Schweizer, E., *The Good News According to Matthew* (SPCK, 1975)
- Schweizer, E., *The Good News According to Mark* (SPCK, 1971)
- Sievers, J., *Article – Who were the Pharisees? In Hillel and Jesus: Comparative Studies of Two Major Religious Leaders* (Eds J H Charlesworth and L L Johns, Fortress Press, 1997)
- Taylor, J. L., *The Immerser: John the Baptist within Second Temple Judaism* (Eerdmans, 1997)
- Theissen, G. and Merz, A., *The Historical Jesus* (SCM, 1998)
- Vermes, G. and Goodman, M. D., *The Essenes: According to the Classical Sources* (JSOT Press, 1989)
- Vermes, G., *The Authentic Gospel of Jesus* (Penguin, 2004)
- Von Rad, G., *Old Testament Theology Vol. 2* (Oliver & Boyd, 1965)
- Webb, R. L., *John the Baptizer and Prophet: A Socio-Historical Study* (Sheffield Academic Press, 1991)
- Witherington III, B., *The Jesus Quest* (Paternoster, 1995)
- Wright, N. T., *Jesus and the Victory of God* (SPCK, 1996)
- Yoder, J. H., *The Politics of Jesus* (Eerdmans, 1972)

