

7

The Last Supper, the Temple Incident, and the “Spiritualization” of Sacrifice in the New Testament

In this chapter, we consider some of the attitudes expressed toward the temple in the New Testament. In particular, we will focus on two gospel narratives, both central to many contemporary understandings of the historical Jesus: the Last Supper, and the overturning of the tables in the temple. In recent years, a number of scholars have articulated interpretations of these New Testament traditions that set both *against* the Jewish temple.¹ The scholars whose work we will consider (and counter) here represent a broad spectrum of approaches and views. Some take these events as historical, while others either reject their historicity or are less interested in such matters.² A few scholars articulate harsh and offensive criticisms of the Jewish religion, while most carefully nuance their analyses to direct their criticisms against the inadequacy of sacrifice or improper priestly practices.³ But there are a sufficient number of common features that justify grouping these approaches together. In a nutshell, these theories seek to understand the narrative of the temple incident as evidence of Jesus' rejection of the Jerusalem temple, and the narrative of the Last Supper as Jesus' establishment of a more suitable replacement. In this perspective, the temple incident articulates an absolute rejection of an institution that was “utterly corrupt,”⁴ whether because it was overly exclusive,⁵ “economically exploitative,”⁶ or the “talismán of nationalist violence.”⁷ The eucharistic narrative then explains the origin of the newer and more effective “surrogate for sacrifice”⁸ that serves to “replace provisionally the temple cult which had become obsolete.”⁹

That these judgments are in line with later Christian views is quite apparent. Of course, the fact that these views complement

traditional supersessionist claims does not by itself demonstrate that these analyses are invalid; it just raises suspicions. As we proceed, however, we will see that the suspicions in this case are well founded. Each facet of these constructions is flawed. The highly condensed and complicated traditions concerning the temple incident are hardly unambiguous rejections of the temple. The Last Supper narratives are even more complicated, and even less rejectionist. Indeed, the understanding of these narratives as rejections of the temple is contradicted by a good deal of other evidence from the earliest strata of the New Testament.

In what follows, we will take each narrative on its own, but we will begin with the eucharist and then turn back to the temple incident. By doing so, we will avoid the temptation of interpreting the eucharist in light of the temple incident. Instead, we will interpret the temple incident in light of our understanding of the eucharist. In raising some challenges to those who interpret the eucharist in light of the temple incident—and both as rejections of the temple—the goals of this chapter are: (1) to contribute to the ongoing scholarly discussion of these traditions, and (2) to raise some questions regarding the ways in which these issues have been and continue to be approached in New Testament scholarship. These questions, as we will see, are directly related to the issues we have been paying attention to throughout this book: the selective determination of what is and isn't symbolic, and the troubling tendencies to assume the worst of the temple, presuming that all that is good (and symbolic) in ancient Judaism is to be found elsewhere.

The Last Supper: Spiritualization, Sacrifice, and Imitation

We turn now to the eucharistic traditions of the New Testament (Matt. 26: 26–29; Mark 14:22–25; Luke 22:15–20; 1 Cor. 11:23–26; cf. John 6:51–59).¹⁰ According to the Synoptic Gospels and Paul, Jesus is said to have gathered with his disciples, shortly before he was killed. At the meal, bread and wine were consumed, and Jesus in some fashion declared the bread to be his body, the wine his blood. In addition to the sources cited above, we have other early church accounts that may impact on the understanding of the eucharist (e.g., Acts 2:46–47 and *Didache* 9–10). In addition to the standard source-critical problems of determining which of these sources are to be preferred over others, there are some thorny textual problems, including particularly the Gospel of Luke.¹¹

We cannot construct a history of the textual tradition here. The goal here, rather, will be to situate the Last Supper narrative—in its various versions—in the context of ancient Jewish and early Christian attitudes toward the temple cult in Jerusalem. It is, of course, rather common for New Testament scholars to set the Last Supper in one Jewish context or another. While few scholars today would endorse without qualification Joachim Jeremias's identification of the Last Supper as a Passover Seder, practically all scholars currently

working on these materials consider the Seder ritual to be one of a small number of Jewish rites that are viewed as possible backgrounds for the Last Supper.¹² Other candidates typically considered include Jewish meal practices more generally, Qumranic meal practices in particular, and then variations on these themes such as prayers before meals or prayers after meals. For the most part, however, ancient Jewish sacrificial rituals tend to play a different role in the current discussion. Sacrifice is not one of those contexts within which Last Supper traditions are typically placed. Ancient Jewish sacrifice, rather, tends to be the context which Last Supper traditions are typically set *against*.¹³

History, Symbol, and Metaphor

Although we have put aside the question of historicity,¹⁴ we can appropriately begin our analysis by considering one kind of argument that is frequently raised against the historicity of these traditions. This is the claim that the Last Supper traditions are too scandalous to be credible. This understanding has been championed in particular by the Jesus Seminar, which interprets the eucharistic traditions as if they were violations of Jewish purity codes: how could Jews drink blood?¹⁵ The Jesus Seminar rejects the historicity of these traditions, precisely because such a perspective is deemed too radical to be historical. In this approach, the essence of the “bread from heaven” discourse in John 6:35–59 is taken at face value and turned on its head. Where Jesus is said to have said “I am the bread come down from heaven” (6:41), Jesus' Jewish opponents are depicted as objecting, “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?” (6:52). If the Jews contemporary to Jesus could not believe or understand that a Jewish person would say—or even think of—something to the effect of “Eat my flesh” or “Drink my blood,” then it must in fact be impossible for Jesus to have equated his body with bread and his blood with wine.

In a similar vein, but among less skeptical scholars, it is not uncommon to find discussions of the *relative* dating of Last Supper traditions that give priority to whichever version of the saying can be inferred to be less offensive to Jewish ears. For example, some prefer the Pauline formulation “This is the new covenant in my blood” (1 Cor. 11:25; cf. Luke 22:20) over the Markan “This is my blood of the (new) covenant” (Mark 14:24; cf. Matt. 26:28) because the latter ostensibly draws greater attention to the scandal of drinking blood.¹⁶ The closer we come to an image of people drinking blood—so this argument goes—the further we must be from any authentic first-century Jewish context.

It is essential, however, to note two important facts regarding the sixth chapter of the Fourth Gospel. First, the passage with its depiction of the Jews as murmurers (John 6:41; cf. LXX to Exod. 16:2) is quite obviously polemical. Second, the text provides no reason to assume that concerns with purity per se are at work here. The thrust of the entire passage—in a fashion typical of the Fourth Gospel—is to present the Jews of Jesus' time as unduly incredulous.¹⁷

In addition to questioning how Jesus can give them his body to eat, they are also said to have wondered how Jesus—whose parents were known to all—could possibly have been sent from heaven (6:42). The Jews here are depicted as theologically challenged: they reject the practical possibilities both of Jesus' coming down from heaven and of his feeding people with his own flesh. The "scandal" (6:61) of the passage need not have anything to do with the blood taboo in particular.

One important starting point for any analysis of the Last Supper traditions must be the recognition that the eucharistic words ascribed to Jesus in Mark 14:22–25, 1 Corinthians 11:23–26—even John 6:35–59—are not nearly as unambiguous as Jesus' stock Jewish opponents in John 6 make them out to be. It is indeed nearly impossible to conceive of a plausible Jewish teacher of the first century c.e. who advocates the eating of human flesh, or the drinking of blood of any species. Yet, as has been often pointed out,¹⁸ neither human flesh nor blood of any species was consumed by Jesus, his followers, members of the early church, or even, for that matter, by Catholics after the fourth Lateran Council in 1215. Even when performed by Christians with a firm belief in the doctrine of transubstantiation, no violation of Jewish purity codes is taking place in any enactment of eucharistic traditions.

How then are we to understand the actions and words attributed to Jesus in the Last Supper traditions? Jesus' words can be best understood when we keep in mind much of what was said earlier (especially, in chapter 2) with regard to metaphor. I have argued that metaphor is often primary and fundamental, and it is at the very least expressive. Since biblical and ancient Jewish literature is chock full of metaphor, we cannot by any means accept the depiction of Jews in the sixth chapter of John's Gospel as accurate: ancient Jews were certainly capable of understanding metaphors (both old and new), and they were even adept at creating new ones themselves. We can certainly accept as reasonable the picture we get from all our sources that Jesus from time to time spoke in parables (i.e., metaphorically).¹⁹ Indeed, it is difficult to conceive of any understanding of Jesus' words at the Last Supper that does not grant on some level (stated or not) that Jesus' equation of wine with blood and bread with flesh is a metaphor of some sort.²⁰

With regard to Jesus' actions, the interpretive framework to keep in mind is that of the symbolic act. It is indeed rather common for scholars to contextualize the Last Supper within the tradition of the symbolic actions of Israel's prophets.²¹ Of course, such symbolic acts are, practically by definition, provocative ones (as seen in chapter 3). When we keep in mind the long tradition of provocative prophetic symbolic actions, Jesus' behavior at the Last Supper—even when coupled with his surprising metaphors—comes off as rather tame. Certainly these two well-documented phenomena—metaphor and symbolic action—provide sufficient cultural context to allow for one to situate the words and actions attributed to Jesus in Last Supper traditions within a plausible first-century Jewish context.

But these considerations are still insufficient for full understanding of the Last Supper traditions. In fact, the danger here lies precisely in the fact that

symbolic acts were often provocative ones. This has encouraged scholars to take Jesus' metaphorical words and symbolic actions as an expression of his alleged rejection of the temple cult. Nonetheless, there is a troubling double standard in many of these treatments, for they operate on the assumption that the balance of symbol and metaphor in ancient Judaism is tipped in Jesus' favor. When compared to the Last Supper, sacrifice always comes up short, whether it is deemed to be corrupt, flawed, outmoded, or spiritually inadequate.

In order to evaluate more carefully the language attributed to Jesus in the eucharistic traditions, we have to keep in mind not only the symbolic acts of Israel's prophets but also the symbolic actions of Israel's priests: animal sacrifice. In recognizing the symbolic dimensions of ancient Jewish sacrifice, a good deal of progress has been made of late, in part by some of the scholars who interpret the eucharist as a rejection of the cult.²² But there are two inherent problems with any interpretation of the eucharistic traditions that attempts to ascribe to them an articulation of a cultic critique; each of these will be explored in what follows. The first problem is a historical one: Jesus' followers did not separate themselves from the temple and its sacrificial worship. The second problem is a methodological one: there is good reason to question some of the assumptions with which early Christian sacrificial metaphors are typically interpreted.

The Last Supper and the Temple in the Early Church

One good place to begin an evaluation of early Christian approaches to the temple and the eucharist is with Acts' account of the apostles' activity in Jerusalem (Acts 2:46–47; cf. 3:1, 5:42): "(46) Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, (47) praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved." This description of the disciples' daily gathering to break bread and praise God is often understood as evidence of early Christian eucharistic practice,²³ but it must be admitted that we are not told explicitly that these communal meals were eucharistic in nature. The passage clearly has idyllic aspects to it as well. We must surely doubt that the coterie of Jesus' early followers had the goodwill "of all the people" (2:47). What is striking here is the fact that the early disciples are remembered as having visited the temple repeatedly, not so long after Jesus' death. And it's certainly not as if Luke-Acts is thoroughly enamored of the temple: Stephen's antitemple polemic (7:1–53) is one of the sharpest in the entire New Testament, with its assertion that God resides *only* in heaven, and not in any earthly sanctuary constructed by people (7:48–50). Setting aside the question of historicity, the passage quoted above tells us quite clearly that Luke did not interpret the Last Supper event as an unambiguously antitemple action: if he had, then he would have depicted the disciples as abandoning the temple immediately thereafter.²⁴ But the question is, can we trust what Acts says of the early apostles—did they also refrain from interpreting the Last Supper event as an antitemple action?

The testimony of Acts 2:46–47 can be confirmed in a number of ways. First, it cannot be questioned that the early Christian community *chose* to be headquartered in Jerusalem. This is claimed explicitly by Acts and confirmed by Paul in Galatians (1:18, 2:1), and virtually every Church historian follows suit. As Paula Fredriksen has emphasized, depicting the apostles as remaining in Jerusalem is a curious choice indeed if a radically antitemple program was part of the picture from the earliest stage.²⁵ Another argument against an antisacrificial reading of the early eucharistic traditions is the fact that in the explicitly antitemple passages of the New Testament, reference to the eucharist is notable by its absence. This is true of Stephen's speech in Acts, and it is equally true of Hebrews. If the Last Supper really had been an unambiguously antitemple act, why not bring it up in such contexts?

A third realm of evidence contradicting the antitemple reading of the eucharist can be found in the assorted (and often overlooked) sayings attributed to Jesus that assume his followers worship in the temple, and will continue to do so.²⁶ Such sayings come from various strands of the gospel traditions. For instance, Matthew 8:4, Mark 1:44, and Luke 5:14 depict Jesus commanding the cured leper to show himself to the priest, and offer the sacrifice commanded in the law. In Matthew 5:23–24, Jesus instructs his followers to reconcile themselves, and *then bring their offerings to the altar*. Perhaps most important, in Matthew 23:21 (cf. Matt. 5:34–35) Jesus is said to have said: “whoever swears by the sanctuary swears by it *and the one who dwells within it*.” The italicized phrase confirms that for Matthew at least the temple remains (at least for now) the location of God's earthly presence.²⁷ Finally, returning to the complex of passages at the center of our concern, surely it is significant that Jesus' disciples are said to have visited the temple to prepare for and participate in the Passover *following* the temple incident and immediately before the Last Supper (Matt. 26:17–20; Mark 14:12–17; Luke 22:7–14). If these traditions were unambiguously antitemple, why would the disciples have visited the sanctuary, presumably with their master's blessing?

A fourth confirmation of the impression conveyed by Acts 2 is to be found in *Didache* 9–10.²⁸ Assuming these two chapters to be relatively early,²⁹ what we find discussed here could be the sort of ritual practiced by the early apostles, *even after a visit to the temple*. The ritual context is that of a meal: bread is broken, and prayers of thanksgiving are recited—prayers that strikingly resemble Jewish after-meal prayers.³⁰ The liturgies of *Didache* 9–10 recall the figure of Jesus and express eschatological hopes. Importantly, nothing explicitly antitemple is articulated. *Didache* 9–10 fits perfectly with the picture related in Acts 2: the earliest Christians did not view the eucharist as an inherently antitemple ritual.

A fifth confirmation of the general tenor of Acts 2 can be found in Paul's letters, undeniably the oldest Christian documents we have. A number of scholars—including Robert J. Daly, W. D. Davies, Bertil Gärtner, Michael Newton, and, more recently, Paula Fredriksen—have surveyed the key passages, and the consensus is that Paul did not articulate an outright rejection of the temple.³¹ To the contrary, the temple remained an important institution

in Paul's thought and life. Indeed, even Paul's discussion of the eucharist speaks positively of the temple (1 Cor. 10:14–21):

(14) Therefore, my dear friends, flee from the worship of idols. (15) I speak as to sensible people; judge for yourselves what I say. (16) The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a sharing (κοινωνία) in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a sharing in the body of Christ? (17) Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread. (18) Consider the people of Israel³² (βλέπετε τὸν Ἰσραὴλ κατὰ σάρκα); are not those who eat the sacrifices partners in the altar (κοινωνοὶ τοῦ θυσιαστηρίου)? (19) What do I imply then? That food sacrificed to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything? (20) No, I imply that what pagans sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons and not to God. I do not want you to be partners with demons. (21) You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons.

One of the striking aspects of this passage is the fact that Paul draws an analogy between eucharist and sacrifice. But the analogy is not drawn to make the eucharist out to be a better alternative or even a replacement for Israel's service in the sanctuary. To the contrary, the point of the passage is to underscore the seriousness, legitimacy, and efficacy of Israel's sacrificial service, and to present the eucharist as similarly serious, legitimate and efficacious. It is true that Paul refers in verse 10:18 to Israel *according to the flesh*. But regardless of how we are to understand (or translate) this phrase, it ought to be rather clear that Paul is *not* drawing a black-and-white contrast between Israel's service of the flesh and Christians' service of the spirit. To the contrary, the thrust of Paul's treatment of the eucharist in 1 Corinthians is to claim that Christian worship—like its analogue in Jerusalem—is not disembodied or abstract but physical, tangible, and even threatened by defilement and profanation (see 1 Cor. 11:27–31; cf. 2 Cor. 7:1).³³

This passage is not unique in the Pauline corpus, at least not in terms of its evaluation of Jewish sacrificial worship. Throughout his letters, Paul draws a number of comparisons between Jewish sacrificial worship and the practices of the early Gentile Christians in his milieu. Famously, Paul compares the community of believers to the temple in Jerusalem (1 Cor. 3:16–17, 6:19; 2 Cor. 6:16).³⁴ He also makes a habit of using sacrificial terminology when speaking of the work of early Christian apostles, including himself (Rom. 1:9; Phil. 2:17).³⁵ Paul also compares converts to the first fruits (ἀπαρχή) offered to the temple (Rom. 16:5; 1 Cor. 16:15) and the monetary contributions of Christian communities to the sacred contributions that Jews devoted to the temple (Rom. 15:25–32; 2 Cor. 9:13–14; Phil. 4:18). And as we have seen, Paul compares Christian worship to sacrificial service (Rom. 12:1; 1 Cor. 10–11).³⁶ In each of these passages, Paul employs cultic language—speaking of the temple, of sacrifices, of sacred fragrances and libations—in the service of describing the

significance of his own experience and work as an apostle. In each of these passages, the comparison drawn between one kind of service and another is both positive and constructive. Even Romans 12:1, with its reference to “your rational service” (τὴν λογικὴν λατρείαν ὑμῶν; too frequently translated as “your *spiritual* worship”), needs to be read in this light.

Indeed, when we look a little deeper into Paul’s descriptions of sacrificial worship, we find that Paul affirms many of the fundamental theological tenets upon which ancient Jewish sacrificial worship is based. Paul speaks of God’s presence in the sanctuary (1 Cor. 3:16; 2 Cor. 6:16; cf. Rom. 9:4). He asserts that sacrifice is a mode of achieving close interaction between the worshiper and God (1 Cor. 9:13, 10:18). Paul also speaks of the pleasing aroma sacrifice sent up to God (2 Cor. 2:15; Phil. 4:18). All of these are widely attested biblical and ancient Jewish understandings of what sacrifice achieved. In his letters, Paul affirms and even praises these notions, all without articulating any explicit critique of the cult, or even alluding to any such critique ostensibly offered by Jesus.

Yet all too often, Paul’s discussions of Jewish sacrificial worship are understood as examples of the so-called spiritualization of sacrifice.³⁷ Granted, the term is often presented in quotation marks, and frequently accompanied by an apology (usually an affirmation that “spiritualization” can be found within Judaism as well as without).³⁸ So while it is precarious to generalize the disparate ways the term is used by New Testament scholars, virtually every use of the referent articulates a critique of sacrifice, practically by definition.³⁹ It is indeed a useful exercise to catalogue Paul’s sacrificial metaphors alongside Philo’s allegories, and other metaphorical applications of sacrificial terminology—including those attributed to Jesus. Yet it is another exercise altogether—and indeed, a flawed exercise—to group sacrificial metaphors along with cultic critiques, leaving temple ritual alone as the only thing that is *not* a “spiritual” sacrifice.⁴⁰ As I have been arguing all along, it is high time to abandon the term “spiritual sacrifice” altogether, at least as a scholarly category. Instead, perhaps, we should speak more neutrally of metaphorical use of sacrificial language—a phenomenon that we can see in Paul, Philo, the rabbis, and even the Last Supper traditions. Then we also need to acknowledge that sacrifice itself is meaningful and symbolic, which is precisely the reason why sacrificial terms are used metaphorically. Finally, we need to treat metaphorical use of sacrificial terminology sympathetically, recognizing that these metaphors frequently help us understand and appreciate the various ways in which sacrifice was understood.

To turn sacrificial metaphors into “spiritualizations” of sacrifice is to misread them. These metaphors are, rather, *borrowings from* sacrifice. Sacrificial metaphors operate on the assumption of the efficacy and meaning of sacrificial rituals, and hope to appropriate some of that meaning and apply it to something else. Thus, Paul’s metaphors can be compared to the efforts exerted by various groups of ancient Jews to infuse aspects of daily life with some of the holiness that pertained more directly to the temple. As we discussed in chapters 5 and 6, the application of temple purity rules to practices

concerning food and prayer can be understood as an active effort to draw on and to channel some of the temple’s sanctity toward these other practices. These efforts, I argued, can accurately be understood as “sacrificializations” of modes of worship that do not explicitly involve the performance sacrifice, all in order to make a rather straightforward statement: “this too is divine service.” Paul’s sacrificial metaphors can and should be understood accordingly.

Returning to 1 Corinthians 10:14–22, one striking aspect of the passage remains to be noted: the contrast that is drawn between proper worship on the one hand and idolatry on the other. This contrast—which is drawn elsewhere (1 Cor. 8:4–6, 13; 2 Cor. 6:16)—is instructive, and it allows us to juxtapose the picture of early Christian worship in a Pauline, Diaspora community with Acts’ picture of the apostles’ worship in Jerusalem. In Acts 2, we are presented with a picture of early Christians performing both eucharistic and Jewish sacrificial rituals. In 1 Corinthians 10, we are presented with a different picture: that of Gentile Christians in Corinth who do not have the option of performing sacrificial rites and eucharistic rites. Jewish sacrificial devotion outside of Jerusalem is out of the question. Other local forms of sacrificial devotion are equally out of the question, because they are idolatrous. And what is Paul’s message? That early Christians must choose one or the other: it’s either idolatry or the worship of God, either sacrifice or eucharist.

When we try to picture the social reality motivating Paul’s statements here, I think we can begin to understand better the origin of the antisacrificial perspectives offered in the New Testament. Paul himself did not articulate a broadly antisacrificial perspective. In his view, the Jewish cult is proper and effective, though it pertains primarily to the people of Israel (cf. Rom. 9:4). The sacrificing he does reject as ineffective—and worse—is idolatry. But to a Gentile in the Diaspora, rejecting all sacrifice but the Jerusalem cult is little different from rejecting all sacrifice whatsoever. The origin of the idea that the eucharist is a replacement for sacrifice is likely to be found in this kind of social reality, among those who—unlike the disciples in Jerusalem—actually had to choose between two distinct options: eucharist or sacrifice.⁴¹

The Last Supper as Sacrificial Metaphor

We can now offer a brief analysis of the Last Supper traditions (Matt. 26:26–29; Mark 14:22–25; Luke 22:17–20; and 1 Cor. 11:23–26). The goal in this short survey is simply to present some reflections that, it is to be hoped, avoid the historical and interpretive errors that I have traced above. I will not assume that sacrificial language in these traditions must be—by virtue of some alleged violation of Jewish purity codes—inauthentic. Nor will I assume that sacrificial language in these traditions ought to be read as spiritualizations of or critiques of the temple cult. We cannot, of course, survey the texts in great detail, nor can we attempt here to determine which elements can reliably be attributed to the historical Jesus.⁴² We will first simply catalogue the aspects of these traditions that are frequently understood in relation to Israel’s sacrificial ritual. Second, I will suggest some ways of reaching a balanced understanding of these traditions.

The following aspects of the Last Supper traditions are frequently understood as sacrificial on some level. First, references to flesh and blood (which appear in all of the eucharistic traditions) have certain sacrificial connotations, though the implications may not be exclusively sacrificial.⁴³ Second, the symbolic value of Jesus' act of giving (bread or wine; present in all the narrative traditions) may well draw meaning from the presence of the notion of giving in sacrificial traditions.⁴⁴ Third, the expressions "for you" (Luke 22:19, 20; 1 Cor. 11:24) and "for many" (Matt. 26:28, Mark 14:24) may well have expiatory implications.⁴⁵ Fourth, the immediate juxtaposition of blood with covenant alludes rather clearly to the sacrificial covenant ceremony of Exodus 24 (Matt. 26:28; Mark 14:24; Luke 22:20; and 1 Cor. 11:25).⁴⁶ Fifth, the Paschal context of the gospel traditions has clear sacrificial implications.⁴⁷ Finally, the command to do the act as a remembrance has possible sacrificial overtones as well (Luke 22:19, 1 Cor. 11:24; cf. Lev. 2:2 [MT and LXX]).⁴⁸

It is nearly impossible for all of these aspects of the tradition to be authentic. Indeed, there are competing sacrificial ideologies at work in these traditions. For example, expiation and Passover are two distinct concerns, although they are from time to time jumbled together in the literature.⁴⁹ Importantly, all of these ideas can be found in the tradition recorded in 1 Corinthians 11, with the exception of a clear allusion to Passover (though Paul does speak of Jesus as a Paschal lamb in 1 Cor. 5:7). Without attempting to argue that the Pauline text is the most authentic record of this tradition, I think we ought to take seriously 1 Corinthians 11:23–26 as a likely source of information regarding the earliest understandings of Last Supper. Moreover, 1 Corinthians 11:23–26 provides the proper control for a more balanced evaluation of the significance of the sacrificial language attributed to Jesus in the Last Supper traditions. If we take 1 Corinthians 11 as evidence that Jesus spoke in sacrificial metaphors, then we ought not to push the sacrificial language attributed by Paul to Jesus in this passage any further than Paul himself has pushed it in the context of 1 Corinthians 10–11. If Paul understood this sacrificial language to mean that Jesus came to the point where he rejected the temple outright, then why can Paul still speak of the temple so positively? Surely there had been no major reform of temple practices since Jesus' death. The same sort of priesthood was in charge; the power of the Pharisees was probably pretty much the same. If we are to accept from Paul that Jesus' eucharistic words had sacrificial overtones, we must equally accept from Paul that those overtones need not be understood as an outright rejection of the Jerusalem temple. To the contrary, we are to understand Jesus' sacrificial metaphors as we understand Paul's: not as a spiritualization of, or a critique of, the cult but as an appropriation of, a borrowing from, the cult. "This too is divine service" is what, and all, Jesus may have meant.

The Temple Incident: Rejection, Prophecy, Reform

In this section, we will turn to the gospel traditions concerning Jesus' demonstration in the temple. As we will see, it is assumed in the scholarship on

these passages, with some frequency, that the Jerusalem temple was in fact a corrupt institution, serviced by greedy priests or thieving money changers—and that Jesus therefore had much to be angry about when he visited. Of course, not all accept this view, by any means. A number of scholars insist that whatever commerce Jesus did see in the temple must have been a practical necessity, and therefore right and proper. To be sure, a variety of other approaches have also been considered. After surveying a number of understandings of the temple incident, I will suggest a new way of understanding Jesus' attitude toward the temple.

I will not claim to solve the question of what Jesus did or what he meant by it. But I do hope to shed new light on the subject by presenting an explanation that has not yet been considered. Moreover, I hope to illustrate some problems inherent in much of the scholarship on the temple incident. On the one hand, we will find that there is often much less evidence that Jesus articulated strong antitemple polemics than is supposed. On the other hand, we will also see that there is some reason to suppose that Jesus criticized an aspect of temple practice. But it is better to see Jesus as furthering and nuancing certain prophetic arguments of old rather than endorsing the kind of approach taken by the Qumran sectarians, even perhaps in his own day. The challenge here is to identify the social and moral issues involved without falling into the trap of accepting ancient criticisms of the temple as a modern scholarly understanding of it. As I argued with regard to the prophetic traditions (chapter 3), I will try to demonstrate here too that conflicts between disparate parties—priests and prophets in any age—can only be fully understood when the different positions' motivations are evaluated and appreciated. By doing so, we can avoid the problematic but still frequent tendency to place Jesus *against* ancient Judaism instead of *within* ancient Jewish disputes on matters cultic and moral.

The Gospel Accounts of Jesus in the Temple

The gospel accounts of the temple incident differ more widely than the accounts concerning the Last Supper (Matt. 21:12–13; Mark 11:15–17; Luke 19:45–46; John 2:14–17). The description in Luke is the briefest: Jesus comes to the temple, he expels the traders, and he recites a statement incorporating two distinct prophetic verses: "it is written, 'My house shall be a house of prayer' (Isa. 56:7) but you have made it a 'den of robbers' (Jer. 7:11)." In Matthew we are told that Jesus also overturned the tables of the money changers and those who sold pigeons. The Markan version is even longer: in addition to expelling the traders and overturning the tables of the money changers and the pigeon sellers, we are told that Jesus "would not allow anyone to carry anything through the temple" (11:16). It is also suggested that Jesus quoted more of Isaiah 56:7, referring to the temple as a place of prayer "for all the nations" (11:17). The account in John includes most of what we find in Matthew, though it also refers to "sellers of oxen" (2:14) and describes the whip of cords used by Jesus against the merchants (2:15). Jesus' statement