5. The Relevance of Extracanonical Jewish Texts to New Testament Study

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Jesus was a Galilean Jew whose ministry took place almost entirely within Jewish Palestine. The earliest Christian churches were composed of Palestinian Jews (including some Jews from the diaspora who were resident in Jerusalem). When Christianity spread outside Palestine, it was among Jewish communities in the diaspora that it first made converts. Even when large numbers of Gentile converts entered the church in the course of the NT period, the leadership of the churches still remained largely in the hands of Jewish Christians. Most of the writers of the NT were Jews. The Hebrew Bible in Greek translation became the Bible of Gentile Christians, and although they read it from the perspective of their faith in Jesus, they also read it within the Jewish traditions of interpretation that they learned from Jewish Christians. Furthermore, even Jewish religious literature that they did not regard as canonical Scripture must have been read and valued by Gentile Christians. It is very striking that apart from the Hebrew Bible itself, the Dead Sea Scrolls, and a few other Jewish documents that have been recovered by archaeologists in recent times almost all of the Jewish literature that has survived from the period before 200 CE was preserved, not by Jews, who ceased to use it, but by Christians. Even Jewish works that were not written until the Christian church was already well established and most of the NT writings had already been written, such as the apocalypses of Ezra (4 Ezra = 2 Esdras) and Baruch (2 Apocalypse of Baruch and 3 Apocalypse of Baruch), were appropriated by Christians.

All this clearly suggests not only that first-century Judaism was the principal religious context of Christian origins, but also that the character

of early Christianity was decisively determined by these origins, so much so that, in terms of the history of religions, the Christianity of the NT period must be seen, not as something quite different from Judaism, but as a distinctive form of Judaism. The fact that by the end of the first century the majority of Christians were probably Gentiles who had not adopted the full observance of the law of Moses does not contradict this description, though it is one of several reasons why Christianity was coming to be seen by most non-Christian Jews as something other than a legitimate form of Judaism. Yet even this "parting of the ways" between Christianity and Judaism was essentially a dispute between divergent interpretations of a common religious heritage.

None of this is meant to deny that both Jews and Christians were strongly influenced by the culture of the Greco-Roman world. Both Jews and Christians shared, in many respects, a common cultural world with their pagan neighbors. It would be a serious mistake to isolate the Jewish context of early Christianity from the wider Greco-Roman context. Nevertheless, Jews of this period had a strong sense of their religious distinctiveness and of the necessity to preserve it, and Christians, by worshiping the God of Israel, retained the core of this distinctiveness while relaxing its strict connection with observance of the law of Moses. In recent decades of NT study older theories that attributed a determinative influence on early Christianity to non-Jewish religious cults or ideas such as the mystery cults or pre-Christian Gnosticism have largely lost credibility (though very recently the parallels between the Gospel traditions and Cynicism, which was not a religious cult, but a school of Greco-Roman philosophy, have attracted fresh attention). The thoroughly Jewish character of the NT literature has been constantly demonstrated by the intensive study of this literature in relation to relevant Jewish literature.

Moreover, such study has taken place in a period in which the study of early Judaism and its literature has itself blossomed. New discoveries, especially the Dead Sea Scrolls; serious study of works that have long been known but largely neglected, such as many of the so-called Pseudepigrapha; properly critical work on the extent to which traditions of the NT period may be preserved in the Targums (Aramaic translation-interpretations of texts from the Hebrew Bible) and the rabbinic literature; and major works of historical analysis and synthesis, such as Martin Hengel's influential work on the hellenization of Palestinian Jewish culture,[1] have transformed the

1. Martin Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism* (ET London: SCM/Philadelphia: Fortress,

study of early Judaism. The resources now available to the NT student for understanding the Jewish context of early Christianity are abundant. There are introductory textbooks and major reference works. Editions, translations, commentaries, and studies of texts make them available and more accurately usable than ever before.

At the same time, there is much to be done. Important texts still await editing. Some have still been very little studied. Major issues of interpretation are highly debated. Students of the NT who take the Jewish context of early Christianity seriously cannot expect to find simply uncontroversial facts and agreed conclusions. They will encounter major debates between the leading scholars, such as that over the character of Pharisaism in the first century. They will have to learn that, as in the study of the NT, the textbooks sometimes make unqualified assertions, for example about the date of a work, which in fact rest on the slenderest of evidence and are highly debatable. They will find themselves trying to understand puzzling texts without the kind of help that is readily available in the commentaries for interpreting difficult NT texts. They will have to realize the uncertainties involved in relying, for example, on an English translation of a badly transmitted Old Slavonic version of a no longer extant Greek text that might have been translated from a Semitic original.

This may make the use of noncanonical Jewish literature in NT study seem a dauntingly difficult task. It is! The study of early Judaism is a complex and constantly developing field of study, in reality composed of a variety of highly technical and specialized disciplines. Advanced students who wish to make original contributions to this aspect of NT study will have to gain some understanding of the skills and tools of these disciplines, even if only to understand the way they are deployed by the scholars they read. In fact, many NT researchers who have turned to Jewish texts to compare them with the NT have found themselves involved in major projects of interpretation of the Jewish texts for their own sake. Some firsthand work of this kind on Jewish material should now be virtually a prerequisite for competent historical research in NT studies. But students who are only beginning NT study or who have no expectation of doing original work in the field should not be deterred from reading Jewish texts of the period along with the excellent introductory literature now available. They cannot

1974); *idem, Jews, Greeks and Barbarians* (ET London: SCM/Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980); *idem, The "Hellenization" of Judaea in the First Century after Christ* (ET London: SCM/Philadelphia: Trinity, 1989).

in any case avoid the extensive references to Jewish parallels and discussions of the Jewish context in virtually all literature about the NT. Even a small degree of firsthand acquaintance with the Jewish texts will make a considerable difference to students' appreciation of such references and discussions.

1. Using the Literature

The general usefulness of the extracanonical Jewish literature for NT interpretation is obvious. Insofar as the context of Jesus, the early church, and the NT writings was Jewish, these writings provide us with most of what we know about that context (along with archaeological evidence and some references to Judaism and Jewish history in pagan literature). Of course, we must understand the historical context here in the most comprehensive sense. It involves not only the religious, but (insofar as the distinctions are valid in a religious culture) also the political, social, economic, and cultural life of the Jews in Palestine and in the western diaspora. To take a very simple example, if we did not have Josephus's indispensable political history of first-century Jewish Palestine, we would not know who the "king Herod" of Acts 12:1 was, we might well confuse him with the tetrarch Herod of Luke's Gospel, and we might then accuse Luke of inaccuracy in attributing to him authority in Jerusalem at this time.

However, since most of the surviving Jewish literature is religious in purpose and content, as is the NT, it will not be surprising if the religious dimension of life (including the religious dimension of political, social, economic, and cultural life) predominates in the value of the former to illuminate the context of the latter. To take a much less simple example, every serious student of the Gospels wants to know who the Pharisees were, since, although the NT offers some indications (e.g., Acts 26:5), for the most part it refers to them without explaining who they were. The Gospels are interested solely in the Pharisees' interaction with Jesus, and so, even if their account of the Pharisees were entirely accurate, it could still be very incomplete and onesided. But the Gospels could also be suspected of having polemically distorted their picture of the Pharisees or of having retrojected onto pre-70 CE Pharisaism concerns belonging to the late first century.

Unfortunately, the other main sources of information about the Pharisees — Josephus and rabbinic traditions about the Pharisees — are also problematic: Josephus because he had his own agenda that made him

very selective and (some would say) not wholly accurate in what he records about the Pharisees; the rabbinic evidence because the selection, preservation, and redaction of rabbinic traditions about the Pharisees was controlled by the concerns of the post-70 rabbinic movement. It is not surprising, therefore, that reconstructing the nature of Pharisaism in the NT period is a complex historical task with no fully agreed conclusions, but one of vital importance to NT scholarship.

One important methodological point for NT interpretation is that clearly it will not do for NT scholars simply to plunder the Jewish evidence to illustrate what the various NT texts say about the Pharisees. Of course, it is true that, for example, Matt 19:3 can be greatly illuminated by the rabbinic traditions about the debate between the schools of Hillel and Shammai over the grounds for divorce. But if we are to discuss the relationship of Jesus or the early Christians to the Pharisees in broader terms, we need as rounded and accurate an understanding of the Pharisees as a Jewish religious movement as we can gain. For this purpose, we cannot allow the NT material to control the agenda, but must study the Pharisees for their own sake with the full range of evidence available, problematic though it is. Having said that, of course, we should not forget that the NT is, among other things, itself evidence of early Judaism, including Pharisaism. If the Gospels are problematic as evidence for Pharisaism, so are the other sources.

What is true of the Pharisees is true of the whole subject. The NT student and scholar must use the Jewish literature in the first place to understand Judaism. Only someone who understands early Judaism for its own sake will be able to use Jewish texts appropriately and accurately in the interpretation of the NT. The famous warning issued by Samuel Sandmel against "parallelomania" in NT studies[2] has its most general application here. Someone who knows the Jewish literature only in the form of isolated texts selected for the sake of their apparent relationship to NT texts will not understand those texts in their own contexts (literary and otherwise) and so will not know whether they constitute real or only apparent parallels and, even supposing they are real parallels, will not be able to use them properly. A principle that NT students and even NT scholars rarely take to heart is that, for the sake of a balanced view of the relationship of Christianity to early Judaism, it is just as important to study Jewish texts that are least like anything in the NT as it is to study those with which the NT writings have most affinity.

2. Samuel Sandmel, "Parallelomania," *JBL* 81 (1962) 1-13.

Of course, it would be a mistake to wait until one has mastered the broad picture — whether of early Judaism or of early Christianity's relationship to Judaism — before studying the detailed ways in which Jewish texts can illuminate specific NT texts. In this as in most fields of study, one's understanding of the general will be enhanced by study of particulars, and the two will be constantly interrelating. What is important in the study of particular Jewish parallels to particular NT texts is never to forget that the former have a context that is essential to their meaning and relevance. This context will need to be explored in a variety of ways. The theme may need to be traced in other Jewish texts, or related to other themes. A particular word or expression or image may have to be traced in a variety of texts before the significance of its occurrence in one can be evaluated. It is usually also important to know as a whole the particular Jewish work that is being used. (Compared with modern books, all ancient Jewish works are short, most extremely short. It does not take long to read one through!) No NT student would quote a verse from a Pauline epistle, without further ado, as evidence of early Christianity in general, because Paul was a highly individual and creative thinker, and even what he shared with other Christians, which was certainly a great deal, would not have been shared equally with all Christians. But early Jewish writers were also individual and creative writers, and early Judaism was more diverse than early Christianity. Precisely in what sense a Jewish text constitutes evidence of the Jewish context of early Christianity needs to be more carefully considered than it often is.

It is extremely probable that all the NT writers read some extracanonical Jewish literature and that some of them were very familiar with some of that literature. (In addition, many of them would have known Jewish oral traditions, such as the legal traditions of the Pharisees and the exegetical traditions of the synagogues.) However, it is seldom possible to prove that a particular NT writer knew a particular Jewish writing that we know. We know that the letter of Jude explicitly quotes (in v. 14) part of the collection of Enoch literature that we know as *1 Enoch* and makes several allusions to other parts of the Enoch literature. But this is very unusual. In most cases we cannot treat the Jewish literature as sources the NT writers used, but must see them as evidence of the ideas and terminology with which NT writers were familiar. And at this point we must raise two problems.

One problem is the kind of Judaism of which a particular Jewish writing is evidence. In the unusual case of the Dead Sea Scrolls, we know at least that these writings all belonged to the library of the Qumran community. Some of the literature was written within the community and is unlikely

to have been known outside the community, except by other Essenes, but clearly the community also read extracanonical religious literature that was not peculiarly its own and had wide or limited circulation among other Jews. These categories cannot always be easily distinguished. In the case of most other prerabbinic Jewish literature we do not know who wrote it or read it. For a text to be relevant to NT interpretation, we need to be able to suppose (from various kinds of evidence, including the NT) either that Christianity was influenced by (or, in relevant cases, opposed) the particular kind of Judaism represented by the text, or that in relevant respects what the text says was not peculiar to the group that produced and read it, or that the writing in question was not restricted to a particular Jewish group but circulated widely. Such judgments cannot be made in isolation from current discussion of the extent of variety in early Judaism. The current trend to emphasize diversity to such an extent as to speak of "Judaisms" in the plural[3] has rightly been challenged by E. P. Sanders's claim that it makes sense to speak of a "common Judaism" that most Jews shared and in which even those Jews who belonged to the parties, such as the Pharisees, participated.[4] Much of the literature that has survived may well have circulated quite widely and may well have been read by Jews who differed from each other on some issues. Even literature that belonged rather exclusively to particular groups, such as the Qumran community's own writings, shared many themes, traditions, and concerns with wider Jewish circles. This makes virtually all the literature of the period potentially relevant to NT interpretation, but it does not enable us to shirk the difficult questions about the extent to which a particular text in any particular case is representative or idiosyncratic.

But this reference to "literature of the period" raises the second problem, that of the date of the literature. In the past, many scholars made rather indiscriminate use of evidence from the rabbinic literature (all of which was written a century or more after the NT) as evidence for pre-70 CE Judaism. In this they were influenced by a misleading historical model, according to which Pharisaism was "normative Judaism" and later rabbinic

3. E.g., Jacob Neusner, William Scott Green, and Ernest S. Frerichs, eds., *Judaisms and Their Messiahs at the Turn of the Christian Era* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1987); Gabriele Boccaccini, *Middle Judaism: Jewish Thought 300 B.C.E. to 200 C.E.* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991).

4. E. P. Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief 63 BCE–66 CE* (London: SCM/Philadelphia: Trinity, 1992). On this issue see also Richard Bauckham, "The Parting of the Ways: What Happened and Why," *ST* 47 (1993) 135-39.

Judaism essentially a continuation of Pharisaism. This model, along with the uncritical acceptance of all ascriptions of traditions to early rabbis in the literature, is no longer credible. In reaction, some NT scholars are reluctant to admit the relevance of any Jewish literature that cannot be shown to have been written before the NT.

But this seeming methodological stringency is a spurious kind of purism. Judaism changed after 70 CE, but not in such a way as to destroy all continuity with its past. Many of the Targums, though of uncertain date, can be shown to preserve exegetical traditions from the NT period. Their evidence must be used with care, but it is not unusable. Similarly, many of the so-called OT Pseudepigrapha are of very uncertain date — and not a few included in the now standard collection edited by James H. Charlesworth[5] are much later than the NT and even of Christian origin — but that they preserve early Jewish traditions can often be argued. They cannot be used in the same way as those that are certainly pre-Christian in date, but they are not unusable. Sometimes a striking parallel between the NT and a later Jewish work can itself show (since the influence of Jesus or Christian literature on the Jewish work is not, in such cases, usually plausible) that the Jewish work here preserves an old tradition. The use of Jewish sources later than the NT for NT interpretation requires careful and informed historical judgment by a scholar well acquainted with the literature, but it cannot be ruled out.

Sometimes parallels are instructive irrespective of date. This is sometimes the case, for example, in one of the most important areas of relationship between NT writings and Jewish literature: exegesis of the Jewish Scriptures. Evidence from early writings, especially the Qumran *pesharim* (commentaries on Scripture), shows that, despite some important differences, many of the techniques of exegesis known from rabbinic midrash (scriptural interpretation) and the Targums were already in use in the NT period. A later Jewish writing may therefore be able to illuminate the way in which a Jewish exegete is likely to have read a particular OT text, even if we cannot be confident that it preserves an ancient piece of exegesis. But this, too, is a field where it is important to go beyond parallels to an understanding of how Jewish exegetes worked and thought. Sometimes NT

5. James H. Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 2 vols. (London: Darton, Longman and Todd/Garden City: Doubleday, 1983, 1985). For discussion of some of the problems created by the scope of this collection, see Richard Bauckham, "The Apocalypses in the New Pseudepigrapha," *JSNT* 26 (1986) 97-117.

writers and the Christian exegetical traditions they used followed Jewish traditions of exegesis of particular texts, as we can demonstrate from parallels, but sometimes their exegesis was original. In the latter cases, however, they were still engaged in a Jewish kind of exegesis, with Jewish exegetical presuppositions and methods. In these cases, it is not particular parallels, but real understanding, gained from study of Jewish exegesis, of how Jewish exegesis was done, that will enable us to understand the NT texts in their Jewish context.

3. An Example: James 4:13–5:6

How the letter of James is related to Jewish religious traditions is an important issue in determining the character of this NT writing. Some scholars have stressed its affinities with and indebtedness to wisdom traditions and have therefore seen James as a Christian wisdom writing. Others have pointed out its resemblance to prophetic-apocalyptic material (especially in 5:1-8). Interpretation of the law of Moses also has a significant place in the letter (especially in 2:8-13). Study of Jas 4:13–5:6 in the light of Jewish literary parallels will enable us to see how these three elements coexist and cohere within the letter.

This passage is in two sections, introduced by the two parallel addresses in 4:13 and 5:1, denouncing in turn two different categories of wealthy people: merchants (4:13-17) and landowners (5:1-6). These two categories are not only distinct, they are also condemned in quite different terms. The merchants are denounced for their arrogant self-confidence, treating their lives as though they were entirely within their own control, without reference to God. The landowners are denounced for their oppression of the poor, at whose expense they have accumulated wealth and lived in luxury. The most obvious affinities of the first section are with wisdom literature, while the second section resembles prophetic-apocalyptic traditions. This is in keeping with their respective themes. Like the rich fool in Jesus' parable (Luke 12:16-20), which also has affinities with the wisdom literature, the merchants are fools to think that they can make plans for themselves without reference to God's will. They lack the religious wisdom to take into account even the obvious fact that they cannot tell what will happen tomorrow. The landowners, on the other hand, are threatened with the eschatological judgment, when justice will at last be done for the righteous whom they have defrauded and murdered.

Confirming the wisdom character of the first section is the fact that Prov 27:1 ("Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring")[6] certainly lies in the background to it. Another wisdom theme is the transience of life, to which v. 14b calls attention. By contrast with 1:10-11, which uses a similar image, the point in 4:14 does not seem to be that the life of the wicked will be cut short by God's judgment, whether at death or at the end time, but rather that all human life is transient. The general thought is therefore not unlike Ben Sira's reflection that, when the rich man ". . . says, 'I have found rest, and now I will feast on my goods,' he does not know how long it will be until he leaves them to others and dies" (Sir 11:19).

The image that James uses — mist or (more probably) smoke that appears for only a little while before vanishing completely — is one of a traditional set of images of transience that were frequently used in Jewish literature (biblical and post-biblical) both for the transience of human life in general and for the short life left to the wicked, who will soon perish under God's judgment. (It is important in a case like this to take note of the full range of parallel material rather than focusing prematurely on one or two texts, preempting the decision as to which are most relevant to the interpretation of James.) The most popular such image of transience was that of grass or flowers withering, which James uses in 1:10-11. This image is used of the transience of mortal life (Job 14:1; Pss 90:5-6; 103:15-16; Isa 40:6-8) and of the fate of the wicked (Job 15:30; Ps 37:20; 1QM 15:11; 4Q185 1; *2 Apoc. Bar.* 82:7). But the image of smoke that soon vanishes is also found frequently and is used of the transience of mortal life (4 Ezra 4:24; an apocryphal quotation in 1 Clem 17:6)[7] and of the fate of the wicked (Pss 37:20; 68:2; Hos 13:3; Wis 5:14; 1QM 15:10; 4 Ezra 7:61; *2 Apoc. Bar.* 82:6).[8] However, the distinction between the transience of all human life and the judgment coming to the wicked is not as clear as might at first appear, especially in the later texts.[9] In 4 Ezra 4:24, Ezra, who is preoccupied

6. Cf. Pseudo-Phocylides 116-17: "Nobody knows what will be after tomorrow or after an hour. Death is heedless of mortals, and the future is uncertain." But the best manuscripts of Pseudo-Phocylides lack these lines.

7. "I am as smoke from a pot": the speaker is Moses, and the source probably a lost Jewish work.

8. For other images of transience, see, e.g., 1 Chr 29:15; Pss 37:6; 109:23; 144:4; Eccl 6:12; Hos 13:3; Sir 14:17-19; 4 Ezra 4:24; 13:20; *2 Apoc. Bar.* 14:10; 82:8-9.

9. It is worth noting that the Targum to Isa 40:6-8 interprets this passage as referring to the judgment of the wicked.

with the sinfulness even of the righteous, closely connects this with the transience of life ("we pass from the world like locusts, and our life is like a mist, and we are not worthy to obtain mercy").

What becomes clear in some texts (*2 Apoc. Bar* 14:10-14; Wis 5:7-16) is that the expectation of reward and punishment after death made a considerable difference to the significance of such traditional images of transience. The transience of this mortal life, though true of the righteous as well as the wicked, is of real consequence only for the wicked, who have set all their hopes on the worldly goods they enjoy in this life and face only judgment after death, while for the righteous, who expect eternal life and reward in the next life, it is insignificant. Ezra therefore discovers (4 Ezra 7:61) that the image of the mist that vanishes is properly applied only to the wicked, who will be consumed by the fire of judgment.

Especially interesting for our purposes is Wis 5:7-16, where the wicked discover at the last judgment that their arrogance and wealth (5:8) have done them no good, because all such things have proved as transient as their own lives (5:9-14), while the righteous whom they have oppressed receive eternal life and glory (5:15-16). This passage helps us to see that the point in Jas 4:13-16 is not only that the merchants do not reckon with the transience of life, but that their plans are preoccupied with obtaining wealth that they will only be able to enjoy for the uncertain length of their transient life.

The later Jewish literature enables us to see therefore that, while the primary force of the image in Jas 4:14b is to highlight the transience of mortal life, it carries the overtone of judgment for those who set their hopes on this mortal life. The meaning is therefore much closer than it first appears to that of the parallel image in 1:10-11, where it is only the life of the rich that is depicted as transient. It is also closer than it first appears to the corresponding feature of the denunciation of the landowners in 5:1-6, where eschatological judgment is very clearly in view.

It is also noteworthy that these traditional images of transience were never confined to wisdom literature, but already occur in the OT prophets (Isa 40:6-8; Hos 13:3). In later Jewish literature they are found in apocalyptic and related literature (1QM 15:10-11; *2 Apoc. Bar.* 14:10-11; 82:6-9; 4 Ezra 7:61) and in wisdom literature (4Q185; Wis 5:9-14; cf. Sir 14:17-19). Especially when wisdom literature takes on the notion of eschatological judgment, as in Wisdom 5, and wisdom motifs appear in apocalyptic, as in *2 Apoc. Bar.* 14:8-9, it is clear that in the Jewish literature of NT times wisdom and apocalyptic are by no means completely distinct traditions.

Although there is truth in the observation that Jas 4:13-16 is related to the wisdom tradition and 5:1-6 to the prophetic-apocalyptic tradition, this distinction does not mean that there is any incongruity in their juxtaposition.

The second section (5:1-6) uses the style of prophetic oracles of judgment (compare 5:1 especially with Isa 13:6).[10] In 5:5 ("you have fattened your hearts for the day of slaughter")[11] there is a specific allusion to a prophetic text, Jer 12:3, where the prophet, having complained of the prosperity of the wicked, prays:

> Pull them out like sheep for the slaughter,
> and set them apart for the day of slaughter.

There is an allusion to this same text in 1QH 15:17:

> But the wicked you created
> for [the time] of your [wrath].
> You set them apart from the womb
> for the day of slaughter.

The Qumran psalmist shares James's interpretation of the Jeremiah text as referring to the eschatological day of God's judgment on the wicked. But in other respects the two authors have been attracted to the text for quite different reasons. The context in 1QH is a strongly predestinarian passage that contrasts the righteous, created by God for eternal salvation, with the wicked, created by God for eternal judgment. The righteous are the members of the community; the wicked are the rest of humanity. The author has seen predestinarian significance in the words of Jer 12:3, "set them apart (הַקְדִּשֵׁם, *haqdišēm)* for the day of slaughter." This predestinarian exegesis of the text is not James's interest. He has been attracted to the metaphor that Jeremiah uses: animals selected from the flock for slaughter. Since he applies it specifically to the rich, he is able to make a highly effective extension of the metaphor. By their luxurious living the rich have fattened themselves as domestic animals are fattened in readiness for slaughter.

This contrast between 1QH and James illustrates how relatively unhelpful it is when commentators merely give references to extracanonical

10. Cf. also Isa 14:31; 23:1, 6, 14; Jer 48:20; Mic 2:4.

11. Since "the day of slaughter" is certainly the eschatological day of judgment, ἐν must be used with the sense of εἰς.

Jewish literature as texts to be compared with a NT text. It is important to study both texts before establishing precisely where the point of comparison lies. In this case, that both texts allude to Jer 12:3 with reference to the eschatological judgment of the wicked is probably not coincidental: It shows that current Jewish exegesis interpreted this verse of Jeremiah eschatologically. But it is unlikely that "the day of slaughter" had become simply a stock phrase for the day of judgment, used independently of its source in Jer 12:3, since both 1QH and James make use of further, though different, features of Jer 12:3. Both authors are exegetes, making their own use of the verse within a common exegetical tradition of referring this verse to the eschatological judgment.

At first sight, such a tradition may be a little surprising, since Jer 12:3 is not a prophecy but Jeremiah's prayer for the judgment of the wicked. However, there are features of the text that would have made it attractive to Jewish apocalyptic eschatology. The phrase "the day of slaughter" would naturally be associated with other phrases using "day" that were taken to refer to the day of judgment (e.g., "the day of the Lord"). "Slaughter" (הֲרֵגָה, *hᵃrēgâ*), a rare noun (with only five occurrences in the OT), is used twice elsewhere in Jeremiah (7:32; 19:6) in prophecies that the valley of the son of Hinnom will be renamed "the valley of slaughter." This is the valley that gave its name to Gehenna, because these prophecies were interpreted as referring to the eschatological judgment of the wicked. The common Jewish exegetical practice, known as גְּזֵרָה שָׁוָה (*gᵉzērâ šāwâ*, "equivalent regulation"), of associating, for purposes of interpretation, scriptural passages that use the same words or phrases, would easily lead to an association of Jer 12:3 with Jer 7:32 and 19:6. James himself probably made this association, since Jer 7:33 and 19:7 both state that the wicked who are slaughtered in "the valley of slaughter" are to become food for the birds and animals. Interpreting Jer 12:3 in connection with these texts, he depicts the rich as fattening themselves in order to provide the food for this gruesome eschatological feast (cf. Ezek 39:17-20; Rev 19:17-18). The connection would be all the more appropriate since, according to Ezek 39:17, the feast is a sacrificial feast, and when Jer 12:3 asks God to "set apart" the wicked for the day of slaughter, it uses a verb that indicates that they are to be devoted, like sacrificial animals, to sacrificial use. This conclusion that behind Jas 5:5b lies an exegesis of Jer 12:3 in connection with Jer 7:32; 19:6; Ezek 39:17 is only partly based on comparison with 1QH 15:17, but it is made very plausible by our general knowledge of methods of Jewish exegesis in this period.

Somewhat closer than 1QH 15:17 to James's use of Jer 12:3 is *1 Enoch* 94:9, if we could be sure that it alludes to Jer 12:3. The rich, it says,

> are ready for the day of the outpouring of blood
> and for the day of darkness and for the day of judgment.[12]

Unfortunately, since neither the original Aramaic nor the Greek translation of this verse is extant, we rely on the Ethiopic version alone. The phrase "the day of the outpouring of blood"[13] may allude to "the day of slaughter" in Jer 12:3, but we cannot be sure. However, there are much broader resemblances between Jas 5:1-6 and chs. 94–99 of the so-called Epistle of Enoch (*1 Enoch* 91-108). These chapters address alternately the wicked, who are portrayed especially as wealthy and as oppressors of the righteous (94:8–95:2; 96:4-8), and the persecuted righteous (95:3; 96:1-3; 97:1), just as James addresses first the rich oppressors (5:1-6) and then their victims (5:7-11), who are said to be righteous (5:6, cf. v. 16). Both Enoch and James address prophetic oracles of denunciation and judgment to the rich, though the literary form differs (Enoch uses "woe" oracles). In Enoch this direct address to the wicked is a rhetorical device that does not indicate that they are expected to be among the readers (cf. *1 Enoch* 92:1). We should almost certainly assume that the same is true in James. In Enoch, the rich are condemned for exploiting the poor (96:5) and for accumulating wealth that will not last (94:7-8; 97:8-10; 98:2-3). They will "groan and weep" (96:2). Their ill-gotten wealth will be "a testimony against you" or "a reminder against you for evil" (96:4, 7; 97:7; cf. Jas 5:3). The parallels cannot prove that James was inspired by these chapters of *1 Enoch*, though this is certainly quite possible. But they go considerably beyond what would result from common dependence on OT prophecy.[14] They must show that James writes in a continuing tradition of prophetic denunciation of the rich.

Finally we must consider Jas 5:4. Throughout his letter James is expounding the implications of the law of the love of one's neighbor (Lev 19:18b; Jas 2:8) by alluding to the more detailed commandments in its

12. The translation is from Michael A. Knibb, *The Ethiopic Book of Enoch*, vol. 2 (Oxford: Clarendon, 1978) 227.

13. Cf. other phrases used in these chapters of *1 Enoch* for the coming day of judgment on the wicked: 96:8; 97:1; 98:10; 99:4, 6; 102:5.

14. They are also more extensive than the resemblances between Jas 5:1-6 and the woes in Luke 6:24-25.

context in Lev 19:11-18.[15] In 5:4 he alludes to Lev 19:13 ("you shall not keep for yourself the wages of a laborer until morning") as well as to the fuller law on the same subject in Deut 24:14-15, and to Isa 5:9 (LXX). But this is another case where James's allusion to an OT text is illuminated by allusions to the same text in other Jewish literature. References to the law in Lev 19:13 and Deut 24:14-15 are surprisingly frequent (Mal 3:5; Sir 34:27; Tob 4:14; *T. Job* 12:4; Pseudo-Phocylides 19; *b. Baba Meṣi'a* 111a; cf. Job 31:39; Jer 22:13). The reason it was taken so seriously is made apparent in Sir 34:25-27:

> The bread of the needy is the life of the poor;
> whoever deprives them of it is a murderer.
> To take away a neighbor's living is to commit murder;
> to deprive an employee of wages is to shed blood.

The day laborer, who neither owned nor rented land, but worked on the estates of others and was paid his wages at the end of each day's work, was, of all peasant workers, in the most vulnerable position. His employment could be terminated at a few hours' notice. He had no security. He might often be unemployed. His wages were too small to make saving any money possible. He lived from hand to mouth. He could well need his day's wages to feed himself and his family that very day. Withholding his wages even until the morning was a serious matter. An employer who delayed paying his employees might without hyperbole be accused of murder. This may partly explain James's accusation of murder in 5:6, though (especially in view of "condemned") the reference may also be to misuse of the courts in order to deprive smallholders of their land and to absorb their farms into the big estates.

It is worth noting that allusions to the duty not to withhold the wages of the day laborer are found in both prophetic (Mal 3:5) and wisdom (Sir 34:27; Pseudo-Phocylides 19) contexts. Both prophetic and wisdom literature, of course, were concerned with moral instruction, and in the late biblical and post-biblical periods the teaching of the law of Moses was readily drawn on for this purpose in both contexts. Once again, we see that there is nothing incongruous in the conjunction of prophetic-apocalyptic,

15. See Luke T. Johnson, "The Use of Leviticus 19 in the Letter of James," *JBL* 101 (1982) 391-401. For a passage of Jewish ethical paraenesis that is extensively based on Leviticus 19 see Pseudo-Phocylides 9-21.

wisdom, and halakhic material in James. In various ways this conjunction was quite typical of contemporary Jewish literature that shared James's concern with practical religion.

4. Suggestions for Further Reading

This bibliography does not attempt to provide guidance on the study of the Jewish literature as such, but is confined to studies relating the Jewish literature and the NT. Two general books survey the relevant Jewish literature and offer guidance on its use in NT interpretation: Martin McNamara, *Palestinian Judaism and the New Testament,* GNS 4 (Wilmington: Glazier, 1983); and Craig A. Evans, *Noncanonical Writings and New Testament Interpretation* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1992). Evans, who also includes extracanonical Christian and Gnostic literature, provides much more bibliographical guidance; both offer many examples of the relevance of each category of literature to NT study. For excellent introductions and commentary on relevant Jewish writings (except Targums), students should consult *Cambridge Commentaries on Writings of the Jewish and Christian World 200 BC to AD 200* (4 vols., Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1985-89).

Fuller treatments of the relevance of particular bodies of Jewish literature to NT study are also available, though there is more systematic help in some areas than in others. The Targums are well served in this respect by Martin McNamara, *Targum and Testament* (Shannon: Irish University/Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972); *idem, The New Testament and the Palestinian Targum to the Pentateuch,* AnBib 27 (2d ed., Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1978). Access to studies relevant to particular NT passages may be had through Peter Nickels, *Targum and Testament: A Bibliography together with a New Testament Index* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1967); and J. Terence Forestell, *Targumic Traditions and the New Testament: An Annotated Bibliography with a New Testament Index,* SBLAS 4 (Chico: Scholars, 1979). In this regard see also Bruce D. Chilton, *A Galilean Rabbi and His Bible* (London: SPCK/Wilmington: Glazier, 1984); Isabel Ann Massey, *Interpreting the Sermon on the Mount in the Light of Jewish Tradition as Evidenced in the Palestinian Targums of the Pentateuch* (Lewiston/Queenston/Lampeter: Edwin Mellen, 1991). *The Aramaic Bible* (Collegeville: Liturgical, 1987-) will make the targumic literature available in English translation, with many volumes now available.

Perhaps the most accessible entry into the Dead Sea Scrolls is Geza Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls in English* (4th ed., London/New York: Penguin 1995). More complete is *The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated: Qumran Texts in English,* by Florentino García Martínez (Leiden: Brill, 1994).

Among many studies relating the Dead Sea Scrolls to Jesus and early Christianity, see Herbert Braun, *Qumran und das Neuen Testament* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1966); William S. LaSor, *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972); James H. Charlesworth, ed., *John and Qumran* (London: Chapman/New York: Crossroad, 1972); Jerome Murphy-O'Connor and James H. Charlesworth, eds., *Paul and the Dead Sea Scrolls* (New York: Crossroad, 1990); James H. Charlesworth, ed., *Jesus and the Dead Sea Scrolls* (New York: Doubleday, 1992).

For Josephus, Steve Mason, *Josephus and the New Testament* (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson, 1992), is a very useful introduction, though it leaves important aspects of Josephus's many-sided value for NT studies untouched. See also Louis H. Feldman and Gohe Hata, eds., *Josephus, Judaism, and Christianity* (Detroit: Wayne State University, 1987); Gregory Sterling, *Historiography and Self-Definition: Josephos, Luke-Acts and Apologetic Historiography* (Leiden: Brill, 1992); and for exhaustive bibliography, Louis H. Feldman, *Josephus and Modern Scholarship (1937-1980)* (Berlin/New York: de Gruyter, 1984). The standard translation in English is provided in 10 vols. in the LCL; the older edition by Whiston, though often reprinted, is undependable and should be avoided.

The LCL is also the place to turn for the works of Philo in English (10 vols.). New Testament studies notable for their use of Philo's works include Peter Borgen, *Bread from Heaven: An Exegetical Study of the Concept of Manna in the Gospel of John and the Writings of Philo* (2d ed., Leiden: Brill, 1981); Wayne A. Meeks, *The Prophet-King: Moses Traditions and the Johannine Christology* (Leiden: Brill, 1967); Ronald Williamson, *Philo and the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Leiden: Brill, 1970).

For the Pseudepigrapha, James H. Charlesworth has edited *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha,* 2 vols. (Garden City: Doubleday, 1983, 1985), though he includes material that falls outside the usual boundaries for studying the NT in the context of contemporary Jewish literature. Also available in English is *The Apocryphal Old Testament,* edited by H. F. D. Sparks (Oxford: Clarendon, 1984). Charlesworth has also written *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha and the New Testament,* SNTSMS 54 (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1985), though its treatment of the Pseudepigrapha's

relevance to the NT is quite limited. But Charlesworth's invaluable bibliography, *The Pseudepigrapha and Modern Research with a Supplement,* SBLSCS 7S (Chico: Scholars, 1981), provides a list of items that focus especially on the relationship of pseudepigraphal texts to the NT (pp. 45-46, 253). Most of the introductions to the texts in Charlesworth's *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha,* 1983/1985) include a section on "relation to canonical books," though the usefulness of these sections varies greatly. Several articles in James H. Charlesworth and Craig A. Evans, eds., *The Pseudepigrapha and Early Biblical Interpretation,* JSPSS 14 (Sheffield: JSOT, 1993), explore the relationship between the Pseudepigrapha and the NT.

The great work of Hermann Strack and Paul Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch,* 4 vols. (Munich: Beck, 1922-28; in fact it was almost entirely Billerbeck's work), though much criticized for encouraging misuse of rabbinic parallels, remains an invaluable resource for tracking down relevant material in the rabbinic literature. For access to the rabbinic literature in English translation, the student may refer to the following volumes. For the Mishnah: *The Mishnah: Translated from the Hebrew, with Introduction and Brief Explanatory Notes,* by Herbert Danby (London: Oxford University, 1933), and *The Mishnah: A New Translation,* by Jacob Neusner (New Haven: Yale University, 1988). Neusner has also provided editions of *The Talmud of Babylonia* (Atlanta: Scholars, 1984-93); *The Talmud of the Land of Israel* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1982-91); and Midrash Rabbah (Atlanta: Scholars, 1985-91). These may be consulted alongside the older editions: *The Babylonian Talmud,* ed. Isidore Epstein (London: Soncino, 1935-59), and *The Midrash Rabbah,* ed. Harry Freedman (London: Soncino, 1939). H. L. Strack and G. Stemberger have written an *Introduction to the Talmud and Mishnah* (rev. ed., Edinburgh: Clark, 1991), which may be consulted for information on other translations. Also worthy of note is Neusner's *The Rabbinic Traditions about the Pharisees before 70* (3 vols., Leiden: Brill, 1971), which collects in translation every rabbinic passage attributing traditions to Pharisees before the fall of Jerusalem in 70 C.E.

Claude G. Montefiore, *Rabbinic Literature and Gospel Teachings* (London: Macmillan, 1930), and Samuel T. Lachs, *A Rabbinic Commentary on the New Testament: The Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke* (Hoboken: Ktav, 1987), provide much more limited material. The appendix in Gustav Dalman, *Jesus-Jeshua* (London: SPCK, 1989), provides the material for comparing Jesus' aphorisms with those in rabbinic literature, while Harvey K. McArthur and Robert M. Johnston, *They Also Taught in Parables*

(Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), contains a large collection of rabbinic parables in translation and is a good introduction to comparing them with Jesus' parables. W. D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism* (4th ed., London: SPCK/Philadelphia: Fortress, first published in 1948) remains of basic importance.

For relating traditional Jewish liturgical texts to the NT, an excellent place to start is Jakob J. Petuchowski and Michael Brocke, *The Lord's Prayer and Jewish Liturgy* (London: Burns and Oates, 1978), which includes translations of the texts and a bibliographical essay.

6. *The Relevance of Greco-Roman Literature and Culture to New Testament Study*

LOVEDAY C. A. ALEXANDER

1. Why Study Greco-Roman Literature and Culture?

As I travel to work in Sheffield, my train passes through a dramatic landscape of limestone peaks and dales. Isolated farms and stone-built villages nestle on the hillsides. Beneath them, invisible to the casual passer-by, is a honeycomb network of limestone caverns and underground rivers. These are dangerous hills for the unwary rambler: A hollow in the ground may lead to a hundred-foot drop into an abandoned mineshaft or a natural "swallet-hole" where a mountain-top stream vanishes underground to reappear in the cave system hundreds of feet below.

In many ways England's limestone Peak District makes a good analogy for the relationship between NT studies and the study of the Greco-Roman world. Because most NT commentaries begin with a brief survey of the "historical background" to the text, many readers imagine that "background" is something simple and uncomplicated that can be treated quickly before getting on with the real business of exegesis. It is not. Like the underground cave system beneath those homely Derbyshire farmhouses, it is complex and fascinating and has a life of its own. It may even be dangerous: Certainly one needs the services of expert guides if one is to explore it safely and with profit.

First, as readers of the NT we need to remind ourselves that *"Bible history" is part of "real history."* Dorothy Sayers records a moment of astonishment in discovering that Bible characters could have an existence in another cultural world. Cyrus, first encountered in *Tales from Herodotus,*