TEMPLE AUTHORITIES AND TITHE EVASION: THE LINGUISTIC BACKGROUND AND IMPACT OF THE PARABLE OF *THE VINEYARD, THE TENANTS AND THE SON*

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Introduction and Methodology

This paper illustrates a tri-lingual approach and a historical contextualization of the Parable of the Vineyard, Tenants and Son. This is an approach that recognizes that three languages, Hebrew, Greek, and Aramaic, were used by Jews in the first century for written documents and general compositions. Such an approach uncovers methodological shortcomings in some work on the Gospels, especially work that would encompass questions about Semitic language substrata to Gospel sources. The results of correcting the methodological approaches are provocative. The most far-reaching of these results concerns Luke. A proper and careful analysis of his style and choice of structures and vocabulary reinforces the claim that Luke had access to extensive written Greek source(s), at least one of which goes back to a literary Hebrew narrative. The same evidence also calls into question Luke's reliance on either Mark or Matthew. The picture of the parable in the pre-synoptic source shows that Jesus spoke the parable to a specific historical situation. That interaction fits very well with what we know about the temple leadership from other sources and fills an important piece in the political landscape of Jesus' ministry.

It appears that Jesus built a Hebrew parable with three main components: 1) the vineyard setting itself, which served as a framework and was a recognized motif with connections to Israel and the Temple; 2) a stinging criticism against the Temple authorities for violently evading tithes; and 3) a central prophetic character termed "the son", introduced through a scriptural wordplay that challenged the temple authorities' intentions.

The VTS (Vineyard, Tenants, and Son) is extant in triple tradition (Matt, Mark, and Luke) and the Gospel according to Thomas (GT).

In all versions it describes a man who planted or possessed a vineyard and leased it to tenant farmers, and it is followed by a quotation from Psalm 118:22. Exegetes have struggled through these passages with little consensus concerning their relationship or meaning. Our study clarifies the synoptic relationship by highlighting more and less Hebraic and Greek elements in each recension and examining their pedigree. By harnessing these linguistic data to the socio-historical context we arrive at a probable reading of the pre-Gospel parable.[1]

The presuppositions about a Gospel's priority, theological backgrounds and linguistic background affect the reading of a text and even the ability to recognize the linguistic data. Hence, we will not follow, *a priori*, the popular Marcan priority model of Synoptic relationships, but rather an approach which views each Gospel individually.[2] The cultural milieu is also of methodological importance to the story. The rabbinic sources for Jewish culture have often been undervalued or thought to be inapplicable. As in Greek classical studies, records from a later time must be weighed and evaluated. They cannot be ignored.[3]

Language Backgrounds

This study assumes that all three languages, Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek have potential relevancy for explaining the wordings of our gospel texts in general, and the parable of the VTS in particular. Such would seem axiomatic to many in light of the Dead Sea Scrolls, tannaitic rabbinic literature, and the Greek Gospels themselves.[4] How-

[1] Some of the research in this paper was discussed at seminars of the Jerusalem School for Synoptic Research (*www.js.org*). We gratefully acknowledge the interaction and encouragement and regret that it is not often possible to cite individual comments.

[2] For support of an open approach, see K. Snodgrass, *The Parable of the Wicked Tenants* (WUNT; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1983), 29.

[3] Aus calls for a balanced approach to this issue: "Many NT scholars unfortunately employ the dating problem [of rabbinic traditions] as a cheap pretext for not even considering rabbinic traditions, which they find hard to locate and read in the original Hebrew or Aramiac … The problem of dating remains, yet so does the relevance of particular rabbinic sources." R.D. AUS (1996), "The Parable of the Wicked Tenants (Mark 12:1–9), the Song of the Vineyard (Isa 5:1–7), The Song at the Sea (Exod 15:1–18), and The Martyrdom of Isaiah," in *The Wicked Tenants and Gethsemane: Isaiah in the Wicked Tenants' Vineyard, and Moses and the High Priest in Gethsemane: Judaic Traditions in Mark 12:1–9 and 14:32–42*:1–64 (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1996). See also, M. Lowe, "The Critical and Skeptical Methods in New Testament Research," *Gregorianum* 4 (2001): 693–721.

[4] Note Martin Hengel, "Es ist heute night mehr eindeutig gesichert, daß Jesus und die Urgemeinde nur Aramäisch gesprochen haben, s. H. Ott, Um die Muttersprache

ever, it is a mistake in methodology to ignore one or another of these three languages. An influential example of such flawed scholarship is the oft-cited article of H.F.D. Sparks written in 1943.[5] The studies of M.H. Segal, published already in 1908,[6] should have warned Sparks and others of assuming the irrelevancy of Hebrew. The finds of the Judean Desert have dramatically reasserted the possibility of Hebrew influences. Careful examination is called for, not *apriori*-ism.

Especially since E.P. Sanders wrote in 1969, scholars have been careful not to suggest naively that Semitisms demonstrate either antiquity, or literary priority or historicity.[7] But even Sanders agrees that Semitisms *are data that call for explanation*. In a brief appendix, Sanders argued that translation variants show that the synoptic histories—the sources and their transmission—are complicated:

> Yet the few apparent translation variants that we have noted are among our best evidence for Aramaic tradition of some extent at some period. They are also strong evidence that the later Evangelists had traditions parallel to and independent of their primacy sources. If this is so, it is an important conclusion for the history of the tradition and ultimately for research into the teaching of Jesus.[8]

Jesu, NovTest 9 (1967), 1–26. Gerade bei den Gleichnissen—und beim Vaterunser—wäre zu überlegen, ob für sie nicht wenigstens teilweise ein *hebräischer* Hintergrund in Frage käme, da auch die jüdischen Parallelen bis auf ganz wenige und relativ späte Ausnahmen *hebräisch* sind. [emphasis ours—RB/BK]." M. Hengel, "Das Gleichnis von den Weingartnen Mc 12:1–12 im Lichte der Zenonpapyri und der rabbinishen Gleichnisse," *ZNW* 59 (1968): 1–39 8, n. 36.

On why Aramaic narrative style cannot explain the Semitic coloring in potential sources to either Mark or Luke, see Critical Note (CN) 38 in the appendices. Cf., also, Randall Buth, "אדין/τότε An Anatomy of a Semitism in Jewish Greek," *Maarav* 5–6 (1990): 33–48.

[5] In the light of conclusions of this study, H.F.D. Sparks, "The Semitisms of St Luke's Gospel," *JTS* 44 (1943): 129–138, has been misleading. Sparks "proved" the artificiality of many or most of Luke's Semitisms on the grounds that Hebrew coloring cannot belong to a historical stratum or to a Semitic source. The error is not his alone, but he summarizes much early thinking and is frequently relied upon as a sound starting place for further work.

[6] M.H. Segal, "Mishnaic Hebrew and its Relation to Biblical Hebrew and to Aramaic," JQR 20:670–700.

[7] E.P. Sanders, *The Tendencies of the Synoptic Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 254–255. More recently Stanley Porter has argued that Aramaic/Semitic criteria are of dubious value for historical Jesus research. Stanley E. Porter, *The Criteria for Authenticity in Historical-Jesus Research: Previous discussion and New Proposals* (JSNT Supplement Series; Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000).

[8] Sanders, ibid., 289.

Semitisms are data that very much need to be explained. Such a process requires a careful and nuanced look at causes. One Gospel account must be analyzed vis-à-vis another Gospel account to detect the direction and flow of material. Semitisms do not appear out of thin air. They may enter a Greek textual tradition in many ways.

1. *Direct Semitic Translation*: direct translation from a Semitic document to a Greek document.[9]
2. *Incorporation of a Translated Text*: incorporation of a Greek source that is itself a translation from a Semitic document.[10]
3. *Greek and Semitic Oral Tradition*
   a. Greek oral tradition preserving a Semitism
   b. Semitic oral tradition incorporated into a Greek document
4. *Primary Language Intrusion*: a Semitic writer may insert a Semitically-styled Greek phrase into the Greek document because his first language is a Semitic language.[11]
5. *Local Dialect of Jewish Greek*: an author may use a local dialectic of Greek that has absorbed a Semitic structure, a so-called Jewish Greek.[12]

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[9] We do not think that any of our Greek gospels present this kind of Semitism.

[10] Incorporated and edited Greek texts that go back to a Semitic source are potentially the most important for synoptic and historical gospel studies.

[11] Such a Semitism can probably be observed in Matthew with his idiosyncratic narrative- τότε. Thus, Matthew's narrative- τότε represents his Aramaic-colored Greek style. It incidentally witnesses to standard Aramaic narrative style in the first-century, reinforcing what we know from Qumran, but the phenomenon does not mean that Matthew wrote in Aramaic or that his Greek sources go back to Aramaic. Cf. Critical Note 38 below.

[12] This may lie behind some of the Semitisms in our gospels. For example, Mark's use of ἄρξασθαι + infinitive "to begin to" might reflect this. See extended discussion in Critical Note 4 below in this paper. Having said this, we are not claiming that any kind of standard Jewish dialect existed–merely that local deviances and Greek ideolects of individual authors must always be reckoned with.

An unacceptable variant of a "Judaic Greek" theory is that proposed by Fred Horton, "Reflections on the Semitisms of Luke-Acts," in *Perspectives on Luke-Acts* (ed. Charles H. Talbert; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1978), 1–23. "Greek-speaking Jews employed the standard Koine for purposes of ordinary discourse. Only in religious writings have we found an attempt to carry over the sense and feeling of the Hebrew language into Greek … On this theory the language of the Septuagint is not a wooden replication of Hebraic idioms in an impossible Greek but is representative of the language of the synagogue … [S]ynagogue Greek, not direct imitation of the Septuagint nor Hebrew sources, seems to me the best explanation of the Hebraisms of Luke-Acts … Talk about an oral synagogue Greek can, of course, only be theoretical since there is no way to verify or falsify our claims directly." (Horton, "Reflections," 18, 20, 23.) Such a theory does not do justice to the stylistic distinctions in the LXX, for example between 1 Maccabees

6. *Septuagintalizing Semitism*: an author might imitate a foreign-sounding style, a so-called Septuagintalizing Greek style, based on the assumption that a person would want to sound Biblical—like the Greek translation of the Bible.[13]
7. *Apparent Semitism*: when a monolingual Greek speaker says something that happens to be shared with either Hebrew or Aramaic.[14]
8. *Semitism of Frequency*: a structure that is within the bounds of acceptable Greek but that is not used according to natural frequencies becomes a Semitism. Any individual instance is not a Semitism. For example, καί beginning a paragraph is rare in normal Greek and may be a Semitism of frequency in our gospels. A Semitism of frequency might be attributed to any of the first six types of Semitism above.

The Jewish cultural background of the Gospels makes Semitisms expected phenomena. Snodgrass reevaluated Sanders' caution on Semitism-criteria and affirmed, "One should expect the occurrence of Semitisms."[15] Likewise, on the cultural side, David Stern concluded, "What our study of the New Testament parables in the light of the Rabbinic *meshalim* [parables-RB/BK] has shown is that the parable can be read intelligibly and fruitfully within their literary contexts, and that if read this way, the results are consistent with what we know about the form and function of the *mashal* from Rabbinic literature."[16] Shmuel Safrai pointed out that all story parables in the extant Jewish literature are

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(Hebraic and recognized as a translation) and 2Maccabees (an original Greek composition). More importantly, Horton's theory forgets that the only "evidence" for an oral, synagogal Greek is based on translation, namely the LXX. The LXX is not a free composition, it is a translation. If we want to remain in the world of historical probabilities, a hypothetical synagogal Greek is not the answer to gospel Semitisms or Luke's Semitisms. Horton's theory is more a curiousity of New Testament scholarship.

[13] A Septuagintalizing Greek is widely attributed to Luke. Our examination of the VTS parable will provide data against such an assumption. See "Exegetical Framework and Linguistic Integrity of the Parable" below, and *passim*.

[14] For example, a Greek dative of possession may look like a Semitic possessive structure with ל. Another kind of apparent Semitism is a false friend where a Greek and Hebrew idiom appears to be linked but have different meanings. Cf CN 33 in the appendix.

[15] Snodgrass, *The Parable of the Wicked Tenants*, 28.

[16] D. Stern, "Jesus' Parables from the Perspective of Rabbinic Literature: The Example of the Wicked Husbandmen," in *Parables and Story in Judaism and Christianity* (ed. C. Thoma and M. Wyschogrod; New York: Paulist Press, 1989), 42–80 at 73.

written in Hebrew.[17] Hence, it can be responsibly suggested that Jesus would have taught in Hebrew, at least when using parables.[18] The evidence in our vineyard parable will need careful examination to distinguish between Greek, Aramaic and Hebrew elements.

Correcting Methodological Shortcomings in Dealing with Luke's Style and the Semitisms in his Gospel

Many Semitisms, Hebraisms, and other Greek idioms and structures are more common to Luke's Gospel as compared with Mark's and Matthew's. Significant items have erroneously been attributed to Luke's personal style on the basis of frequency without carefully distinguishing the difference between Luke's sources and Luke's personal style. During the twentieth century, scholarship has been prone to view especially the Semitisms in Luke as coming from Luke himself rather than

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[17] Sh. Safrai, "Literary Languages in the Time of Jesus," *Jerusalem Perspective* 31 (March-April 1991), 5, 8. "Thousands of parables have been preserved in complete or fragmentary form, and are found in all types of literary compositions of the rabbinic period, both halachic and aggadic, early and late. All of the parables are in Hebrew.

Amoraic literature often contains stories in Aramaic, and a parable may be woven into the story; however the parable itself is always in Hebrew. There are instances of popular sayings in Aramaic, but every single parable is in Hebrew."

In a personal communication Safrai granted that on occasion a *matla* 'proverb' would appear in Aramaic but this was not a story *mashal* proper. This qualification is important to make, and should not serve as an excuse to jettison serious engagement with Hebrew parables or overshadow the essential point, that Hebrew was the language of ancient Sages' parable-telling. As examples, in the tannaitic *Mekhilta* there are about thirty parables, משלים, all in Hebrew. In the later *Genesis Rabbah* there are about 150 parables, all in Hebrew and 3 Aramaic proverbs. Stories about various persons or events are sometimes in Hebrew, sometimes in Aramaic. In the *Mekhilta* there are four Hebrew stories introduced with מעשה 'a story' and no Aramaic stories. In *Genesis Rabbah* there are 15 Hebrew stories introduced with מעשה, and 8 Aramaic stories introduced with עובדא (הוה). The stories and parables in the Mishnah are all in Hebrew.

[18] Cf. the comment by Hengel, in footnote 6 ("gerade bei den Gleichnissen …") where parables especially are mentioned as possibly coming from a Hebrew background. For more detailed discussions of spoken Hebrew in Jesus' time, see: H. Birkeland, *The Language of Jesus*. Vol. 1, *Avhandlinger utgitt av Det Norske Vitenskaps-Akademi i Oslo, II Hist.- Filos*. Oslo: Klasse, 1952; J.M. Grintz, "Hebrew as the Spoken and Written Language in the Last Days of the Second Temple," *JBL* 79 (1960): 32–47; A. Bendavid, *Lashon Mikra Ulshon Hachamim* (2 vol.; TelAviv: Dvir 1967), especially 95–106 and 153–165; [Hebrew]; Ch. Rabin, "Hebrew and Aramaic in the First Century," in *The Jewish People in the First Century* (CRINT; 2 vols.; ed. S. Safrai and M. Stern; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976), 2:1007–1039; S. Safrai, "Literary Languages in the Time of Jesus," 3–9; and, R. Buth, "Language Use in the First Century: Spoken Hebrew in a trilingual society in the time of Jesus," *JOTT* 5, no. 4 (1992): 298–312.

from sources. A purposeful, artificial Septuagintalizing style is regularly posited for Luke in the Gospel and the first part of Acts. This view suffers from two serious methodological shortcomings.

First, potential sourcisms and potential Lucanisms must be compared with what is here termed "Second Acts" (Acts 15:36–28:31, including the "we" passages). Hawkins contributed to a circular methodology by defining Lucanisms as words occurring at least four times in Luke's Gospel and at least twice as many times as the combined occurrences in Matthew and Mark.[19] Second Acts has the highest probability of showing Luke's normal style. There is a very low probability of Semitic sources to Second Acts and Second Acts is generally closer to stylistic norms of Hellenistic Greek narrative. Second Acts has the potential to show us what Luke might have written in the Gospel or first part of Acts if writing without outside influences.[20] This comparison must be controlled both statistically and notionally if we hope to filter out accidental patterns. Statistically, if a phrase occurs predominantly in the Gospel or in the first part of Acts it may be suspected of being from a source. However, notionally, a phrase needs to be compared with possible periphrastic equivalents that occur in Second Acts in order to show that the distribution is not simply an accident. For example, a higher frequency of "Pharisees" or "Jesus" in the gospel would not be significant unless it could be shown that Luke was using something else in Second Acts. If no alternative for the item can be found in Second Acts, then its frequency in Second Acts and the Gospel needs to be attributed to accident and context.

The lack of carefully using Second Acts as a control can be labeled one of the besetting sins of the field, from Hawkins and Dalman down to the present day. Several phrases that have been labeled "certain" Lucanisms fail the Second Acts test. See, for example, the discussion below in Critical Note 4 on ἄρξασθαι 'to begin' and also Critical Note 5 for ἐγένετο with a finite verb. These very common phrases have been wrongly attributed to Luke.[21]

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[19] J. Hawkins, *Horae Synopticae, Contributions to the Study of the Synoptic Problem* (2d. ed.; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1909; repr. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1968), 15–29.

[20] Especially noticeable is the good Hellenistic style of the speech in Acts 22. Luke specifically mentions the Hebraic character of the speech and it plays a role in the narrative. But it does not influence Luke to produce the kind of style that is seen in some of the other speeches in Acts or in the Gospels.

[21] On ἄρξασθαι, see F.J.G. Collison, *Linguistic Usages in the Gospel of Luke* (PhD Dis-

A second methodological framework re-evaluates the inconsistencies of the artificial Septuagintalism hypothesis. Researchers must remember that almost all Hebraisms will be able to be exemplified somewhere in the LXX. It is the relatively few non-LXX-isms, post-biblical Hebraisms, and also the unsuitability of some alleged LXX-isms that show that imitation of the LXX is *not* a probable explanation. Once the LXX is shown to be unable to explain some recurrent phenomena then it would be methodologically unsound to assume a LXX-ism just because something is in the LXX. To what may this be compared? Consider what a Greek translation of the *War Scroll* (1QM), *Hodayot* (1QH) or *Serekh ha-Yahad* (1QS) would look like. Most of the Hebraisms would be able to be compared to the LXX, but the relatively few non-LXX-isms would show that the better explanation of the phenomena is a background that may include Hebrew sources.[22]

Some of the alleged Septuagintal idioms and structures in Luke's Gospel are phrases that are stylized *against* Hebraic Greek. That is, the word order or syntax of the alleged Septuagintalism is distinctly Greek and contrary to patterns common in the Septuagint. Such allegations of Septuagintalizing produce a schizophrenic hypothesis. Some of the very places where Luke is allegedly going out of his way to imitate the LXX he simultaneously subverted the Septuagintal style. This incongruity of the artificial Septuagintalizing hypothesis has not received attention in the past and will be pointed out in notes on the vineyard passage.

Thomas and Coptic

Thomas poses a special problem since it is only extant in Coptic. The Coptic was translated from the Greek—a few fragments of which are

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sertation, Southern Methodist University, 1977), 39–40, 369. Also, J.A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke I–IX* (AB 28; Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1981), 116–117: "the source of such interference could be Luke's origin in Syrian Antioch … 'began to speak' (pleonastic)", and idem, *The Gospel According to Luke X–XXIV* (AB 28a; Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1985), 1282: "Luke likes to use forms of the vb. *archein*".

On καὶ ἐγένετο, see Hawkins, *Horae Synopticae*, 17. Also, Dalman's misleading analysis of καὶ ἐγένετο in Second Acts, discussed below: CN 5.

[22] This methodology may develop crosscurrents and be more difficult to control if the documents are two generations apart, i.e., if a Greek writer is using a Greek translation of a Hebrew document, Semitism type 2 above. This is what we see in Luke in this study.

extant.[23] And the Greek may have been translated from the Syriac Diatessaron.[24] David Flusser devalued Thomas for Synoptic studies since it is generally devoid of the contexts to the parables, something that Flusser considers necessary for proper interpretation.[25] According to Quispel, although Thomas is devoid of context, there is evidence of sources and features of a Jewish Christian gospel within Thomas.[26]

K. Snodgrass has summarized a number of opinions which find Thomas dependent upon the Synoptic Gospels.[27] James Charlesworth and Craig Evans have amassed arguments criticizing the alleged antiquity, independence, and superiority of the readings in Thomas.[28] More linguistic analysis needs to be done between the Coptic and Greek,[29] and Hebrew/Aramaic languages in relation to Thomas, although it seems that George Brooke's conclusion holds: "on balance, the form [of the VTS] in Thomas seems secondary."[30] We will compare Thomas as we discuss the details of the text below, and as a result, we concur with Brooke's judgment.

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[23] Oxyrhynchus Papyri 1, 644 and 655 contain sayings 26–30, 77, and 31–33, as well as 1–7 and 36–40.

[24] See N. Perrin, *Thomas and Tatian: The Relationship between the Gospel of Thomas and the Diatessaron* (Atlanta: SBL, 2002).

[25] D. Flusser, *Die rabbinischen Gleichnisse und der Gleichniserzahler Jesus* (Bern: Peter Lang, 1981), see 119–120, 137 and 195–198 for his methodology.

[26] "[Thomas] is a collection of sayings taken from the Gospel of the Hebrews and the Gospel according to the Egyptians. Those taken from the former source, the Jewish-Christian source, have some affinities with the fragments preserved of the Jewish Christian Gospels, with the pseudo-Clementine Homilies and Recognitions, with the Diatessaron of Tatian and with the Western text of the New Testament Gospels. This was because the Jewish Christian Gospel tradition had influenced the text of the Clementines, the Diatessaron and the Western text." G. Quispel, "The Gospel of Thomas Revisited," in *Colloque international sur les textes de Nag Hammadi, Quebec 1978* (ed. B. Barc; Quebec: Louvain, 1981), 219.

[27] For example, A. Linderman, "Zur Gleichnisinterpretation im Thomas-Evangelium," *ZNW* 71 (1980): 241–243, and Schrage, 140 in Snodgrass, *The Parable of the Wicked Tenants*, 52–54; now Snodgrass' "The Gospel of Thomas: A Secondary Gospel.," *Second Century* 7, no. 1 (1989/90): 19–38. Cf. Gundry, *Mark: A Commentary on His Apology for the Cross* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1993), 683.

[28] J.H. Charlesworth and C.A. Evans. "Jesus in the Agrapha and Apocryphal Gospels," in *Studying the Historical Jesus: Evaluations of the Current State of Research* (ed. B. Chilton and C.A. Evans; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994), 479–533, especially 496–503. See N. Perrin, above note 24.

[29] Cf. J. Hartenstein and U. Plisch, "Greek Retranslation of Thomas," in *Synopsis Quattuor Evangeliorum* (10th ed.; ed. Kurt Aland; Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1996), 519–546.

[30] Brooke, "4Q500 and the Use of Scripture in the Parable of the Vineyard," *DSD* 3 (1995), 280 n. 38.

A Coherent Sociological, Exegetical and Historical Context

Sociological Coherence of the VTS

Some have argued that the VTS is a bizarre, illogical or a Christologically-driven allegorization.[31] Klyne Snodgrass has gone a long way in pointing out the irrelevance and incorrectness of eight typical criticisms[32] and Craig Evans has continued such a corrective to these hypercriticisms.[33] Furthermore, David Stern has demonstrated the plausibility of the VTS through his work on the rabbinic parables in general and the VTS specifically.[34]

Martin Hengel argued for the realistic nature of the VTS mainly through use of the Zenon papyri. In all probability, Hengel suggested, the allegorical focus of the VTS based on the life and death of Jesus did *not* arise within the early church; rather, the core of the parable is an authentic dominical tradition which expresses judgment.[35]

Craig Evans reviewed agricultural lease agreements to clarify that γεωργοί can not only mean peasants but routinely refers to "commercial farmers and other persons of means and standing in soci-

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[31] Madeleine Boucher lucidly described what is at stake if the New Testament parables are understood as allegory; she placed the "mysterious parable" ideology found in Mark 4 back into Jewish categories and finds Mark's parabolic ideology not so mysterious after all; M. Boucher, *The Mysterious Parable: A Literary Study* (CBQMS 6; Washington D.C.: The Catholic Bible Association of America, 1977), cf. especially pages 56–63.

[32] Snodgrass, *The Parable of the Wicked Tenants*, 31–40. Snodgrass concludes, "Thus the claim that the Parable of the Wicked Tenants is an artificial story whose features are not in keeping with everyday life cannot be substantiated as long as one does not limit everyday life to our twentieth century experiences" (40).

[33] Evans, "God's Vineyard and Its Caretakers," in *Jesus and His Contemporaries* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995), 405–406; and idem, "Jesus' Parable of the Tenant Farmers in Light of Lease Agreements in Antiquity," *JSP* 14 (1996): 69, 72–75, 82–83. Evans' Markan argument works equally well for Matthew, Luke or Thomas: "There are also theological and apologetic considerations that support the authenticity of the parable in its Marcan form and context. If early Christians took such a free and skillful hand in allegorizing the Parable of the Vineyard Tenants, I wonder that no one took the opportunity to hit at the son's resurrection or return. We are in the final analysis, left with a dead son and a vineyard with new tenants" (1996: 73).

[34] Stern, *Parables in Midrash: Narrative and Exegesis in Rabbinic Literature* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1991), 188–205; and idem, "Jesus' Parables from the Perspective of Rabbinic Literature: The Example of the Wicked Husbandmen," 42–80.

[35] Hengel, "Das Gleichnis von den Weingartnen Mc 12:1–12 im Lichte der Zenonpapyri und der rabbinishen Gleichnisse," *ZNW* 59 (1968): 1–39.

ety."[36] Evans convincingly discounted the embellished "peasant farmer" image which some have propounded from γεωργός. The term should rather be seen as "tenant farmers," reflecting **אריסים**,[37] tenants who might actually acquire land following the death of the last heir.

Exegetical Framework and Linguistic Integrity of the Parable

The use of scriptural citation, juxtaposed with an allusive tale, was a common manner of building a parable in early Judaism. Craig Evans offered "additional support to answer critics who in more recent years accept the authenticity of Mark 12:1–9, but not the concluding quotation of Psalm 118:22–23, and who reject the autobiographical interpretation of the parable."[38] Evans highlighted the juridical nature of the VTS which brought self-judgment on the listeners.[39] We agree with Evans that the parable and the scripture were constructed as a unit and must be interpreted as a unit. The Hebrew wordplay "son-stone" **בֵּן/אֶבֶן** is too central and too tight to be an accident or to be a development of the Greek-speaking *ekklesia*. It is also a non-Septuagintal Hebraism.[40]

Like the Synoptic Gospels, Thomas contains the scripture *nimshal* from Psalm 118:22–23 which de Moor pointed out as "a circumstance which definitely complicates the issue" [of the scriptural quotation being secondary].[41] Long ago, Paul Fiebig noted that rabbinic parables commonly end with a scriptural citation[42] and more recently, George Brooke has criticized the corollary of rejecting a scriptural connection.[43]

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[36] Evans, "Jesus' Parable of the Tenant Farmers in Light of Lease Agreements in Antiquity," 65–83, see especially, 66.

[37] The word **אריס** is used in *Sifre* Deuteronomy, 312 (Finkelstein, 353) and is clarified by M. Ayali, *Poalim Veomanim* (Yad Letalmud: Jerusalem, 1987), 36–42—cited by Young, *Jesus and His Jewish Parables* (New York: Paulist Press, 1989), 298–299, 306 n3.

[38] Evans, "God's Vineyard and It Caretakers," 382.

[39] Ibid., 395–396.

[40] See CN 27.

[41] J.C. de Moor, "The Targumic Background of Mark 12:1–12: The Parable of the Wicked Tenants," *JSJ* 29 (1998): 63–80.

[42] P. Fiebig, *Die Gleichnisreden Jesu im Lichte der rabbinischen Gleichnisse des neutestamentlichen Zeitalters* (Tubingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1912), 78, 86, and 239.

[43] Brooke, "4Q500 and the Use of Scripture in the Parable of the Vineyard," 282–283: "Interpreters have been determined to anchor their reconstructed originals in the realities of daily life in first century Palestine rather than in the scriptural allusion which are clear in the extant narratives. Over against those assumptions … the parable of the

In an influential article for the VTS, Joseph Baumgarten found that 4Q500—understood as a blessing directed to God concerning "God's vineyard"—threw "light on the ancient exegesis of this prophetic metaphor [i.e., the vineyard]."[44] Baumgarten pointed out that the vineyard is linked to the temple in rabbinic exegetical traditions. 4Q500 has added an older dimension to the rabbinic material that significantly ties these exegetical traditions to the Second Temple period.[45] The ancient exegetical and midrashic link between vineyard and temple should not be missed in the VTS.

Brooke continued Baumgarten's study of the exegetical traditions surrounding Isaiah 5:1–7, offering additional texts to flesh out the exegetical role of the vineyard in antiquity.[46] Brooke's systematic textual study demonstrated more than any other study the commonality of the VTS's motifs within the vineyard exegetical tradition. Highlighting the motif of inheritance, Brooke brought 4QpPs^{a}, "they shall inherit the high mountain of Israel and shall delight in his holy mountain," to bear on Snodgrass' conclusion that election and inheritance dominate the VTS. Brooke clarified that the inheritance motif has less to do with the general Reign of God than it does with the cultic significance of the

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vineyard can be allowed to stand as an allegory in some form and its basis in scriptural allusion should not be sidestepped in the quest for some supposedly more original and more credible form of the parable."

[44] J.M. Baumgarten, "4Q500 and the Ancient Conception of the Lord's Vineyard," *JJS* 40 (1989): 1–6.

[45] Tosefta *Sukkah* 3.15, a tannaitic collection, reflects this exegetical tradition, **יקב חצב בו, זה מזבח, וגם יקב חצב בו זה השית** "And he built a tower in its midst, this refers to the *temple*; He dug a winepress in it, this refers to the *altar*; And he dug a winepress in it, this refers to the *channel* [for sacrificial blood]." See also *t. Me'il.* 1.16. The tradition was also included in targumic literature. Cf. **בניתי מקדשי ביניהון ואף מדבחי יהבית לכפרא על חטאיהו**. ("I built my temple among them and even provided my altar to atone for sins." Targum to Isaiah 5:2). Targumic texts are generally late, and post-tannaitic. However, they frequently preserve old exegetical tradition that may or may not be preserved in the midrashim. As such, they are a valuable, parallel resource. Cf. *b. Sukkah* 49a. These were all cited by Baumgarten, ibid., 2.

[46] Cf. also *1Enoch* 89.50, 56, and 66b–67 where the sanctuary is understood as a tower; the *Epistle of Barnabas* 16.1–2a, 4b–5; *m. Yoma* 5.6; and *m. Mid.* 3.3. Brooke cites Hebrews 13:6–16 and 1Peter 2:4–10 (recalling 1QS 8:4–8) to gather many similar images: spiritual house, people as priests, rejected stone. De Moor agrees with this direction, "No less than three words (fence, wine-sink, tower) are all taken as pointing to the temple. Therefore it is in line with the Targumic tradition that the synoptics situate the parable of the Wicked Tenants in the temple." (de Moor, "The Targumic Background of Mark 12:1–12," 70–71).

temple.[47] This linking of the VTS with the temple and de-linking with 'kingdom of heaven' is an important observation.[48]

Historical Context: Temple Leaders as Tithe Evaders and Robbers

All three Synoptic Gospels place the VTS in an antagonistic setting against the Temple leaders.[49] Luke 20:19 is exemplary, "the scribes and the chief priests tried to lay hands on him at that very hour, but they feared the people; for they perceived that he had told this parable against them."[50] The temple authorities are pictured as having read themselves into both the parable as the vineyard tenants, who lose out, and into the scripture as the "builders", who lose out. Not only are they accused of being greedy and corrupt tenants, but in the parable they are to be disenfranchised and, in the scriptural *nimshal*, the stone (son) wins.[51]

Sharp criticism of the overseers of the Temple worship can be found in sundry places. Both ancient Israelite and early Jewish tradition shared Jesus' critique of Temple authorities for exploitation. Isaiah

[47] Brooke, "4Q500 and the Use of Scripture in the Parable of the Vineyard," 285–286, and 292.

[48] We would add that the 'reign of God' motif is distinctly Pharisaic in its form מלכות שמיים. See *m. Berachot* 2.2–5. Jesus probably used such terminology, as Mark 10:15 and Luke 18:17 'to receive the kingdom' testify. The link of this phrase with Deuteronomy 6.4–9, and thus with the pericope at Luke 10:25–28 and 1QS 10.10–14 'to enter the covenant of God' probably provides the background to Jesus' unique collocation 'to enter the kingdom of Heaven'. See Randall Buth, "The Shma between Qumran, the Rabbis and Jesus: 'Entering the Kingdom of Heaven', Solving Some Riddles about the Shma" (paper presented at the annual meeting of SBL. Atlanta, Georgia, November, 2003). The phrases לקבל מלכות שמיים "to receive the kingdom of heaven" and לבוא במלכות שמיים "to enter the kingdom of heaven" present the gospel as a personal covenantal renewal. The VTS is not dealing with such terminology or concepts.

[49] Although it has been typical to emphasize the differences between the four VTS accounts, the similarities in context, structure, and meaning should not go unnoticed.

[50] Mark's "their" refers back to the chief priests, scribes and elders in 11:27. Thomas, by nature of its lack of context for every saying, removes the context of this parable as well, yet ironically gives a hint of the context with the Psalm 118:22 reference in 45:16b–19 (versified as logion 66). See Snodgrass' critique of contextual-free study of this parable by invoking Hengel, Robinson, Flusser and Manson (*The Parable of the Wicked Tenants*, 45 and f., especially n. 5).

[51] The identity of the son in the parable will be discussed in the linguistic comments. The audience might be able to make two applications: one, to John the Baptist, whom Herod already killed, and two, to Jesus himself whom the temple leaders were thinking of killing. In this latter case, Jesus would be challenging their plans to their face.

3:12–15 held the Judaean leadership responsible for oppression and the wayward utilization of the vineyard.[52] The Targum to Isaiah 5:10, subsequent to a comparison of the vineyard to the temple, inserted a critique on tithing into the Isaianic denunciation:

> 10 For, because of *the sin that they did not give the tithes*, a farm of ten vineyard fields will produce one bath, and a field using a cor of seed will produce three seahs.[53]

The Qumran Yahad used the vineyard parable with a pesher exegesis against the people/leaders in Jerusalem. 4Q162 (4QpIsa-b) mentions the **עדת אנשי הלצון אשר בירושלים** "the congregation of the men of mockery in Jerusalem" in column 2.10. This follows an identification in 2.6–7: **אלה הם אנשי הלצון אשר בירושלים הם אשר מאסו את תורת יהוה** "These are the men of mockery who are in Jerusalem, those who rejected the law of the Lord." Unfortunately, column one is very fragmentary. It clearly quotes from the vineyard parable Isaiah 5:5–6, but only a small piece of interpretation remains: **פשר הדבר אשר עזבם** "the *pesher* of the word 'that he has left them.'" We do not learn many specifics of their prophetic exegesis of the vineyard parable but we do see that it was applied against people/leaders associated with Jerusalem. Isaiah 5 seems to have been a touchstone for opposition to Temple leadership practices.

An economic critique directed at later temple authorities comes from Baba ben Buta, a contemporary of Herod the Great, according to *b.*

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[52] Isaiah 3:12–15, "My people—children are their oppressors, and women rule over them. O my people, your leaders mislead you, and confuse the course of your paths. The LORD has taken his place to contend, he stands to judge his people. The LORD enters into judgment with the elders and princes of his people: 'It is you who have devoured the vineyard, the spoil of the poor is in your houses. What do you mean by crushing my people, by grinding the face of the poor?' says the Lord GOD of hosts."

[53] De Moor thinks that the "sin of not giving tithes" may be a targumic reference to the rabbinic tradition mentioned below concerning the family of Hanan (de Moor, "The Targumic Background of Mark 12:1–12," 71.) However, the targum looks like a typical midrashic expansion and not a historical reference. The number "ten" is explicit in the Hebrew text as an element of judgment. In the rabbinic world of **מדה כנגד מדה** 'measure for measure', what sin would bring a judgment based on "ten"? Tithes. While we view this targumic reference as general exegesis and not a historical allusion, we agree with de Moor's overall conclusion on the VTS: "early rabbinic tradition and the 'parable' with its immediate context in the gospel of Mark all point to some historical conflict over the tithes which the family of the chief priest Annas refused to pay for their shops in the temple." (de Moor, ibid., 80.) Additional criticisms of the priests in the Isaiah Targum occur at 22:15–19 and 28:1–29.

Baba Batra 3b–4a and Josephus (*Ant.* 15.260–262). Baba ben Buta is reported to have gone into the courtyard of the Temple and found it barren of sacrificial animals since the Temple authorities drove the animal price so high. He condemned those who desolated the house of God and bought 3000 animals for the people.[54] Jeremias commented on *b. Pesahim* 57a, "we learn that the influence of the new aristocracy depended on their power politics, exercised sometimes ruthlessly … sometimes by intrigue … and that by this means they were able to control the most important offices in the Temple as well as the taxes and money …".[55] It seems that the priestly economic oppression described in the Tosefta and the Targum to Isaiah and the priestly extortion reported by Baba ben Buta are complementary examples of why the temple authorities were often condemned.

In addition to these texts that criticize the temple authorities, de Moor has pointed out that there is an early tradition preserved in *Sifre*, a tannaitic commentary on Deuteronomy, which provides a plausible scenario for the parable of the vineyard and to the owner's demand of fruit from the vineyard:

אמרו חרבו חנויות בני חנן
שלש שנים קודם לארץ ישראל
שהיו מוציאים פירותיהם מידי מעשרות
שהיו דורשים לומר עשר תעשר ואכלת ולא מוכר[56]

> The Sages said: The (produce) stores for the children of Hanan [= Ananias-RB/BK] were destroyed three years before the rest of the Land of Israel because they failed to set aside tithes from their produce, for they interpreted *Thou shalt surely tithe … and thou shalt eat* as excluding the seller, and *The increase of thy seed* as excluding the buyer.[57]

Reuven Hammer commented, "These were stores set up by a wealthy priest to sell items used in sacrifices. They followed their own inter-

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[54] *Y. Betsa* 2.4, 61c. Compare with *m. Ker* 1.7 where R. Simeon b. Gamaliel I, a first generation Tanna, decries the price of a pigeon. (See Aus, "The Parable of the Wicked Tenants (Mark 12:1–9), the Song of the Vineyard (Isa 5:1–7), the Song of the Sea (Exod 15:1–18), and The Martyrdom of Isaiah," 15–16).

[55] J. Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1969), 196. See also *Antiquities* 20.174–181 and *b. Pesahim* 57a; *t. Menahot* 13.21.

[56] E. Finkelstein, *Sifre 'Al Sefer Devarim* 165. Parallels are found in at *y. Pe'ah* 1.6 (Talmud Yerushalmi [Jerusalem: Hebrew Language Academy, 2001], col 87, lines 16–19) and *b. B. Metzi'a* 88a–b.

[57] R. Hammer, *Sifre: A Tannaitic Commentary on the Book of Deuteronomy* (New Haven: Yale Univ Press, 1986), 152.

pretation and left the tithing to the farmers who raised the produce."[58] With this smooth exegesis of Deuteronomy 14:22, the priests were able to gain both from having land tithe-free as well as giving their customers, the buyers, the ease of not worrying about whether or not the produce had been tithed on.

Were the Levites and priests required to tithe? During the First Temple there were such priestly traditions among Israel's neighbors. The Russian Assyriologist Dandamaev (1965) examined more that 100 tithe documents from the Neo-Babylonian period. Following Dandamaev, Milgrom wrote:

> That even temple officials in Babylonia were obligated to tithe recalls the tithe law imposed on the Levites (Num 18:25–32) and suggests that a similar requirement originally obtained in Israel as well and that even priests, regardless of whether they officiated at sacrifices, were subject to the law of tithe then the exemption of Aaronid priests from the tithe would have to be attributed to a later stage or to a different school of thought.[59]

It now seems reasonably clear that priests and the Temple owned land in the late Second Temple period[60] and that some people (notably *Sifre* on Deuteronomy) believed priests should pay tithes like other land owners.

> … the original reason for tithing, as given in the Torah, was that the Levite for whom it was levied owned no land and was entirely dedicated to divine service (Num 18:21–24). In the Second Temple period, however,

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[58] Ibid., 434.

[59] J. Milgrom, *Leviticus 23–27* (AB3c; New York: Doubleday, 2001), 2429–2530.

[60] J. Blenkinsopp has recently shown that under Cyrus' reign, land was connected with the Temple which then could have been used individually. Blenkinsopp, "Did the Second Jerusalemite Temple Posses Land," *Transeuphrantène* 21 (2001): 61–68. Contra Gabba (and similarly others), "The Temple did not own land (tithes on the products of the soil substituted for land ownership) and it did not engage in banking of commercial activities, even though it acted as a depository for the mobile asserts of rich families" (Emilio Gabba, "The Finances of King Herod," in *Greece and Rome in Eretz Israel* [ed. A. Kasher, U. Rappaport and G. Fuks; Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben Zvi / Israel Exploration Society, 1990], 160–168, especially 167). We know Josephus, a priest, was a landowner (*Life* 76 §422, 425) and in *b. Sanhedrin* 26a three rabbis (who were on their way to intercalate the year) came upon a priest "plowing," and another "pruning his vineyard." In order provide a legitimate purpose for these priests to be tending their land they suggested that they were "imperial servant[s] (אגוסטאן) engaged in permissible labour." Cf. also Aus, "The Parable of the Wicked Tenants (Mark 12:1–9), the Song of the Vineyard (Isa 5:1–7), the Song of the Sea (Exod 15:1–18), and the Martyrdom of Isaiah," 13 for references related to land *donated* to the Temple.

> the distribution of land did not accord with biblical provision. Priests and Levites could be well-to-do landowners. Tithing then seemed pointless and many people felt that they were excused.[61]

The *Am' Ha-Aretz* may have felt excused, but on the other hand, some may have felt that *any* landowners, whether priests or not,[62] ought to be paying tithes. It seems that here *Sifre* on Deuteronomy 14:22 attests to the high priestly family of Hanan/Ananias' exegetical maneuvering which allowed them both to have land contracted out and yet not pay tithes upon this land themselves.

A shocking testimony to priestly oppression comes from two passages in Josephus.

> Now the high priest Ananias[63] was advancing day by day in prestige and was being ever more lauded and honored by the citizens. For he was a "supplier" (πορι στικός)[64] of money. Indeed, every day he was treating the high priest [Jesus son of Damnaeus, *Ant.* 20.203] and Procurator Albinus to gifts. In addition, he had slaves, utterly depraved, who joined forces with the most insolent men. They would go to the threshing floors and take the tithes meant for the priests by force and beat any who resisted. The high priests were practicing the same things as their slaves and no one could restrain them. As a result of this, it happened that some of the priests who had formerly been fed from the tithes died for lack of food (*Ant.* 20.205–207, translation ours).

Not only was this high-priestly family not paying their tithes but they were redirecting any potential tithes for others into their own possession. Josephus does not limit this action to this particular family as is clear in a parallel statement.

> Such was the shamelessness and effrontery which possessed the high priests that they were so brazen as to send servants to the threshing floors

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[61] Safrai, "Religion in Everyday Life," in *The Jewish People in the First Century*, 2:824.

[62] Similar legal quandaries can be found in the Church many centuries later. Like the Temple priests above, "certain priestly offices in the Church claimed exclusion from the need to tithe from material received. Peter the Venerable in 1135/7 wrote to Innocent 2 about the need for certain priests to pay tithes even from goods they produced "lest you injure both yourselves and us" and warned that "such a scandal is brewing from this [matter] that it may begin in our time but will not be finished in our age."" Peter the Venerable, 1:33–35 in *Bibl. Clun.* 700–706; quoted in Giles Constable, *Monastic Tithes: From their Origins to the Twelfth Century* (Cambridge: CUP, 1964), 276–277; also 16 and 308.

[63] Cf. *Ant.* 20.103 and *War*, 2.441.

[64] A noun πορι στής, related to the adjective, is attested in Aristotle, *Rhetorica* 1405a26 as a title used by robbers of themselves: οἱ λησταὶ αὑτους πορι στὰς καλοῦσι νῦν. "the robbers call themselves 'providers'."

> to receive the tithes that were due to the priests, with the result that the poorer priests starved to death (*Ant.* 20.181).

A note to this passage by Louis Feldman adds further confirmation and broadens this statement:

> Cf. Bab. *Pesahim* 57a, which records that the servants of the high priests Hanin (= Ananus), Kathros (= Cantheras), and Ishmael 'beat the people with staves.' It was forbidden for a priest even to assist in the threshing floors, since such assistance might have been thought to induce the Israelite to give him the tithe (Bab. *Kiddushin* 6b).

It is likely that the insolence of the Ananias clan and the high priests had already gotten out of hand at least a generation earlier. The high priestly families had apparently become wealthy during the last centuries of the Second Temple and were remembered as "buying the high-priesthood" in the Palestinian Talmud (see below *y. Yoma* 1.1 *et al.*).[65] Stories about the corruption of the high priests in the Second Temple period appear in many contexts in rabbinic literature, for ex-

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[65] *Y. Yoma* 1.1 (*Talmud Yerushalmi* [Hebrew Language Academy, 2001]: col. 562, lines 10–28):

בראשון שהיו משמשין הוא ובנו ובן בנו שימשו בו שמונה עשר כהנים .
אבל בשיני על ידי שהיו נוטלין בדמים
ויש אומ׳ שהיו הורגין זה את זה בכשפים .
שימשו בו שמונים כהנים . . . .
ומהן שימשו שמעון הצדיק ארבעים ש .׳
אמ׳ ר׳ אחא כתוב [משלי י] ״יראת ה׳ תוסיף ימים״
אילו כהנים ששימשו בבית הראשון
״ושנות רשעים תקצורנה״ אילו ששימשו בבנין השיני
בשני מכירין אנו אותם שהיו יגיעין בתורה
וזהירין במצות ובמעשרות וכל ווסת טובה היתה בהן
אלא שהיו אוהבין את הממון ושונאין אלו לאלו שנאת חנם

During the first temple, where a man, his son and son's son would serve, [only] 18 [high]priests served, but during the second temple, because they bought [the priesthood] by money, and some say because they were killing each other by sorcery, there were 80 priests who served [i.e., many were removed prematurely by death or politics (RB/BK)] … And among them Shimon the Righteous served 40 years [thus, he was not removed early (RB/BK)]. Rabbi Aha said, "It is written, 'the fear of the Lord adds days'—these are the priests who served in the first temple, 'and the years of the wicked will be shortened'—those who served in the second temple." … In the second temple we recognize that they wearied themselves in *tora* studies and were careful with the commandments and tithes and every good behavior was found with them, but they were loving wealth and were hating each other for no reason.

ample: *y. Yoma* 1.1; *Sifre, Balak* (Horovitz, 173); *Leviticus Rabba* 21.9;[66] *Pesiqta de-Rav Kahana, Ahare Mot* (Buber, 159a).[67] These high priestly families were intent in amassing political power and wealth, though the specific charge of not paying tithes is only brought against the Ananias family.

The Palestinian Talmud passage mentions that the high priests were noted for general good works, including tithes, but ascribes greed and hatred as corrupting the high priests and bringing an end to the temple. We cannot ascribe much weight to details in this testimony because it is a sweeping generalization covering five centuries. However, it is a testimony to certain actions and characteristics that may be filled in by other sources, especially those relating to the end of the period and the destruction of the temple. More specifically, the Leviticus Rabba passage footnoted above specifies that the priests bought the highpriesthood.

From these rabbinic traditions, coupled with the testimony of Josephus, we may conclude that the high priesthood was a lucrative business, maybe the most lucrative in the Land, and that some of the families at the end of the Second Temple period were especially greedy and ruthless in running that business. The family of Ananias receives special mention in this regard in Josephus and *Sifre*. A characterization of these families as a *mafia* is not out of place here.

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[66] *Leviticus Rabbah* 21.9

ט . . . מקדש שני על שהיו נוטלין אותה בדמים
וי״א שהיו הורגין זה את זה בכשפים
שמשו שמונים כהנים . . . ומהן שמעון הצדיק ארבעים שנה
כיון שחזרו להיות משכירין אותו בדמים
היו שנותיהן מתקצרות
. . . ר׳ אחא הוי קרי עליהן
(משלי י) יראת ה׳ תוסיף ימים – אלו ששמשו במקדש ראשון
ושנות רשעים תקצרנה – אלו ששמשו בבית שני:

The second temple [was destroyed] because they bought it [the highpriesthood] by money [the highpriesthood is feminine in Hebrew כהונה and some say that they were killing each other by sorcery eighty priests served … (and among them was Shimon the Righteous, 40 years), because they repeatedly rented it for money their years were shortened. Rabbi Aha used to say about them, "'The fear of the Lord will add days'—those who served in the first temple 'and the years of the wicked will be shortened'—those who served in the second temple."

[67] For more sources see Aus, "The Parable of the Wicked Tenants (Mark 12:1–9), the Song of the Vineyard (Isa 5:1–7), the Song of the Sea (Exod 15:1–18), and the Martyrdom of Isaiah," 13 n. 60, and 63 n. 131.

A direct financial accusation in the VTS might be suggested in the light of the "temple-cleansing" incident mentioned shortly before the VTS.[68] Jesus was probably not objecting to the idea of bringing money for buying sacrificial animals since that is encouraged and commanded in Deuteronomy 14:25–26. The problem appears to be that robbers, a violent high-priestly mafia, were running the sacrificial market. He confronted the situation in the temple precincts,[69] driving away the sellers,[70] "saying to them, 'It is written, "My house shall be a house of prayer"; but you have made it a den of robbers.'"

All of this provides a probable historical context for Jesus' parable. Read against this background, the details of the parable take on a fuller significance. The lack of payment by the tenants should not be allegorized as referring to generic good works. "Fruit" was certainly a recognized metaphor for good works[71]. But in the light of recorded financial oppression and evasion of tithes, the description in the parable takes on a more direct reference.[72]

In this case, the owner's demand for "some of the fruit from the vineyard" becomes a motif that would include God's demand for "tithes from the Temple authorities." This motif for not paying tithes would be a tip of the iceberg, a metonymy for the larger issues of bribery and fraud that led to "legalized" violence and murder; thus, VTS makes quite good historical sense in its current location in the Synoptic Gospels.

More importantly, this reading of the parable materially adds to the sense of inevitable collision between Jesus and the temple authorities that we know would work itself out in the following days. The parable

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[68] B. Kvasnica, "New Testament Texts in Light of Contemporary Halachic Disputes: Two Test Cases in The Vineyard Tenants and Son and the Temple Demonstration," M.A. Thesis, Rothberg International School and the Department of Comparative Religion, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, February 2003. We follow his reading here.

[69] See Safrai in *Jerusalem Perspective* 46/47 for the position that this referred to the surrounding streets outside and below the temple mount.

[70] Luke and John only mention the sellers, not the buyers, Luke 19:45–46, John 2:14–15. The sellers were the robbers, not the pilgrims who were getting ready for ritual immersion (baptism) before going up through the Hulda gate.

[71] Amos 6:12; Philo, *Cherubim* 84k; Luke 3:8 (John the Baptist); Matthew 21:43 (this parable); James 3:17; Galatians 5:22 (Paul); and John 15:5,8.

[72] de Moor, "The Targumic Background of Mark 12:1–12: The Parable of the Wicked Tenants," 63–80, agrees that the historical setting relates to "the tithes which the family of the chief priest Annas refused to pay for their shops in the temple" (de Moor, 80).

and the previous incident in the temple become a double-witnessed prophetic challenge that effectively raises the tension between Jesus and the temple authorities beyond a breaking point where the prophet declares that the temple-tenants will lose.[73]

VTS Textual Discussions, a survey of the Critical Notes in the Appendix

The discussions of details in the VTS can be lengthy and they are not all of equal salience, so a brief overview is provided here as an index, leaving the details in critical notes (CN) in appendices.

A correct appraisal of Luke's mixed styles and the efficacy of linguistic criteria in evaluating the relationships between synoptic writers is one of the most critical needs for the next generation of researchers. Critical Note 5 on ἐγένετο + time phrase + finite verb is one of the most far-reaching of the notes. The linguistic evidence against the "imitation of the LXX" theory and in favor of a Hebraized source used by Luke is strong and watertight for those who accept that Acts 16–28 was written by the same author as the Gospel of Luke. The Critical Note 4 on ἄρξασθαι + infinitive shows how making a comparison with Second Acts can break an otherwise closed circle of argumentation. It shows that Mark, not Luke, was following an unexpected agenda of deleting ἄρξασθαι only to replace ἄρξασθαι elsewhere. Non-Septuagintal Hebraisms are discussed in critical note 26 (τὸ γεγραμμένον), CN 27 (**אבן/בן**), and CN 12 (ἵνα + future). The non-Septuagintal Hebraisms address a peculiar problem of Luke-Acts criticism where Semitisms and Hebraisms are routinely referred to Luke's personal style and intentions by commentators. While numerically rare, and predictably so, the non-Septuagintalisms directly challenge the "stylistic imitation" theories.[74]

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[73] Cf. Evans, *Mark 8:27–16:20* (WBC 34b; Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2001), 239–240: "For in plotting Jesus' destruction, they [ruling priests—RB/BK] unwittingly live up to their characterization in the parable as murderers … His [Jesus'—RB/BK] threatening allusion to Jer 7:11 was a warning, motivated by hopes of national and religious restoration. If the tenant farmers continue their unjust ways, they face destruction."

[74] For examples of some other non-LXX-Hebraisms, see Buth, "Hebrew Poetic Tenses and the Magnificat," *JSNT* 21 (1984): 67–83, reprinted in *New Testament Text and Language* (ed. S.E. Porter and C.A. Evans; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 240–255 (cf. notes a, e, g, h); and idem, "Luke 19:31–34, Mishnaic Hebrew and Bible Translation: Is KURIOI TOU POLOU Singular?," *JBL* 104:680–685. These may be added to the appendices CN 4, 5, 26, 27 and 12, and "put well in one's ears," as I

Throughout most of the notes there are examples of more Semitic structures and more Grecian structures in our pericope. Individually, they are a datum for discussion at any one verse. Collectively, they produce a weighty argument about styles, sources, and direction of Synoptic influences. The conclusion of the study on the VTS is that theories advocating "Lucan stylistic imitation of the LXX" are mispredictive. A lengthy pre-Synoptic narrative source lies behind Luke and probably Mark. Such a perspective affects the way that Luke can be used for accessing the first century situation and the pre-Synoptic sources to Jesus.

The methodology of the study can distinguish true Lucanisms. Critical note 5 on ἐγένετο illustrates an important Lucanism in the structure "ἐγένετο + time phrase + infinitive as main event." This structure shows up 6 times in the Gospel of Luke and 16 in Acts, 9 of which are in Acts 16–28. Another Lucanism is identified in CN 10 "long time." Critical note 33 shows how a Lucanism "to put hands on" can be distinguished from a sourcism, despite its similarity to a known Hebraism.

Other items of methodological importance are the critical notes that point out Luke's propensity to use distinctly Greek structures even when preserving Hebraisms. This phenomenon is labeled a "schizophrenic style" in order to highlight that it undermines the theory that Luke imitated the LXX. This is discussed in CN 3 (word order in the setting), CN 13 (non-chronological sequence in a Hebraic verse), CN 15 (split word order in a Hebraism), and CN 37 (Greek style in conjunctions).

Added to these are questions of stylistic profiles. True markers of individual style are rare and critical note 38 demonstrates their general relevance. A Lucanism from Acts is restricted in his Gospel and absent in Mark and Matthew. A Marcanism shows up in Matthew but is absent from Luke. Finally, a Mattheanism is absent from Mark and Luke.

Interpretational and historical issues are particularly affected by CN 3 (the setting), CN 8 (the vineyard motif), CN 11 ("some of the fruit"), CN 23 (the place of killing), CN 24 (the identity of the son), CN 31 (the identity of the nation). Despite their importance they have not received more space in the critical notes because of the need to reestablish and to correct the linguistic data and assumptions of much

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borrow from another non-LXX Hebraism at Luke 9:44. Our longer list, sprinkled over the Gospel, needs separate discussion and must be reserved for a lengthier treatment.

previous scholarship. The amount of energy necessary to control the details of the critical notes will be repaid to the researcher by providing a new avenue to rediscover the real Luke and to rediscover some of the complexity of synoptic relationships.

Conclusions

Conclusions—Historical Setting and Impact

Standing on the shoulders of Baumgarten, Brooke, Evans, Flusser, Hengel, Lindsey, de Moor, Snodgrass, and Stern, we have further contextualized the VTS by clarifying the exegetical tradition and the historical situation. The violent hoarding of tithes associated with the high priestly family of Ananias and the corruption surrounding the temple is a background to the parable. Jesus' confrontational challenge went so far as to expose their desire to permanently get rid of him.

Once the parable is read as a whole, including the accusation of a conspiracy to murder with the son/stone thread, then the setting of the parable in the last week is historically reasonable. The VTS provides a glimpse into the chain of events leading to the arrest and trial of Jesus. If the entry into Jerusalem can be thought to have raised political tensions to a critical point, this parable would suggest that the events following the temple incident were on a course to tragedy. Both the temple authorities and Jesus were aware of the outcome and neither side was blinking.

Conclusions—Literary Shapes and Development

The Song of the Vineyard in Isaiah 5 and its midrashic retellings are foundational as a springboard for interpreting the VTS. 4Q500 helps solidify the exegetical connections between vineyard and temple and to place these connections in the Second Temple period.

One surprising result of the linguistic side of this study concerns the Gospel setting of the parable. It is axiomatic in Gospel research that settings and transitions of pericopai are areas of necessary literary reworking. By careful analysis of words like ἄρξασθαι 'to begin' (along with a minor agreement), καὶ ἐγένετο 'and it happened,' and καὶ ἐζήτησαν … 'and they attempted,' and καὶ ἐφοβήθησαν 'and they feared,' it now appears that Luke is based on non-synoptic sources at these points of

the vineyard parable. While the axiom remains true, these results show the importance of individually weighing each case. The Lucan context for the VTS was pre-Lucan, pre-Marcan.

Luke's concise allusion to Isaiah 5 should be seen as part of a typical Jewish style and as part of a larger Synoptic phenomenon. We suggest that Mark and Matthew expanded the scriptural quotations for their audience.

We found that the idioms surrounding the partial share of fruit point to the historical application of the parable and reflect the Hebrew source of the parable. Luke was the most Hebraic of the three Synoptists in this verse and the next. Προσέθετο … πέμψαι "added to send" suggests a Hebraic Greek source in Luke 20:11 and 20:12 that reflects וַיּוֹסֶף לִשְׁלוֹחַ.

Literarily, the four sendings reflected in Luke (three servant sendings and then the son) are probably part of the most original form of the parable. The sendings show literary Hebraisms (cf. the idiom "added" + infinitive for "to do again"), they provide a natural crescendo, they fit a rabbinic four-fold parable, they fit the scriptural *nimshal*, and they are lacking the allegorical and secondary pluralizations of Mark and Matthew.

As many before us have rightly stressed, the *nimshal* proof-text from Psalm 118:22 is integral to the telling of the VTS. The wordplays surrounding בֵּן and אֶבֶן are too central and extensive to be ignored. The extension of the wordplay with the "builders" **בונים**, seen also in the DSS, was supportive of the application of both the scripture and the parable against the temple authorities.

Luke's scripture quotations are based on a source that is independent of Mark or Matthew. This results from recognizing the non-Septuagintal Hebraism τὸ γεγραμμένον הַכָּתוּב "the scripture".

The criterion of brevity regarding scriptural citation supports our view that "marvelous in our eyes" is an expansion in Mark and Matthew and a motive is suggested that it might be a veiled hint at the resurrection in Mark. Jesus' confrontation in the temple would probably have been limited to Luke's short text.

We may characterize the four versions of the parable of the Vineyard, the Tenants, and the Son:

Luke preserves the greatest number of original elements. This is true both in literary structure and in linguistic clues that remain from an original Hebrew parable. Luke has preserved the historical setting of Jesus' teaching in the Temple area, the confrontation with the tem-

ple authorities, and the parable reflects a prophetic allusion to fraud, violence and the robbing of tithes by the high priestly families. The 'son'/'stone' motif remains the centerpiece of the parable.

Mark has followed this same picture in most respects, but he has dramatized the telling of the parable in a few points. Most notably, Mark has reinforced the connection to Isaiah 5 with a long extension based on the Septuagint. He has heightened the allegorical reference to a history of prophets and martyrs by adding a fourth sending, a group of servants before a final fifth sending, the son. Mark has multiplied killings before the killing of the son. Finally, Mark has bloodied the temple and made the work of the tenants (high-priestly families) unclean by having the killing of the son take place within the vineyard. To this he has added the line about the Lord's work being "marvelous, miraculous."

Matthew has also preserved the overall framework and background to the parable as seen in Luke and Mark but has collapsed the sending of individual servants into more allegorical groups of servants. Matthew has also potentially broadened the application of the VTS beyond the temple authorities by adding "the Pharisees" to his group of hearers. Matthew's saying about a people who have the appropriate fruit appears to refer to the Jewish messianic movement to which he belongs. Furthermore, Matthew seems to have expanded his sources with the saying "taking away the kingdom of God". We interpret Matthew's "nation" to be an intra-Jewish polemic coming from a sectarian use of עם common to the period.

Finally, Thomas is seen as an a-historical, semi-gnostic rewriting of the parable. We agree with those who have previously argued its secondary nature.

Conclusions—Methodology

Methodologically, we have tried to show the important role that the languages of the period can play in carefully reading and comparing our different versions. For New Testament studies, it is imperative that Hebrew be restored to an active diagnostic role. Much that has been done in the name of Aramaic needs to be re-evaluated. Grecisms, Semitisms and Hebraisms all have an important role to play in sifting through the wording of each gospel writer. This is especially important in testing hypotheses of direct dependence. Any proposal that would have an editor take standard Greek and turn it into marginal Greek

is intrinsically suspicious and must assume the burden of proof.[75] Likewise, when comparing two sets of a Greek paraphrase, it is important to recognize which paraphrase may be more or less congruent with potential Semitic expressions. For example, it may be significant if Matthew has a Greek word "to have" versus "being" clauses in the parallels, or if one writer has two items fronted before a verb when the others only have one (Mark 12:1 versus Luke 20:9).

A crucial key to correct methodology for language and style is to compare the language in Luke's Gospel with Acts 16–28. This is the only sure way to avoid the circularity present when Lucan style is defined by frequencies and relationships to the other Synoptic writers. The judicious use of this key must be joined with the language criteria mentioned above. This has led to recognizing several unique features in the VTS as coming from a source rather than from Luke. Some of these probable sourcisms include the setting with ἐγένετο, and the phrases ἤρξατο, λέγειν παραβολήν, ἀπὸ τοῦ καρποῦ, καρποῦ [sg.], ἵνα δώσουσιν [non-LXX Hebraism?], προσέθετο πέμψαι, κύριος τοῦ ἀμπελῶνος, τί ποιήσω, ἀγαπητός, τὸ γεγραμμένον [non-LXX Hebraism], ἐζήτησαν, ἐν αὐτῇ τῇ ὥρᾳ, and the wordplay υἱός/λίθος בן/אבן [non-LXX Hebraism]. Only 7 out of these 14 are shared with Mark, and they are usually more Grecian in Mark.

Another thread in the tapestry comes from those examples where Luke's own hand becomes clear. These move in the direction of normal Hellenistic Greek. For example, χρόνους ἱκανούς, οὖν, ἵνα (20:14), frequent insertions of δέ, non-sequential participles (δείραντες 20:10), split word orders (20:10, 20:11, 20:12), and the dative before the infinitive (20.9). Under a microscope, the overall effect of these probable Lucanisms with the above sourcisms is to produce a bumpy, schizophrenic style for Luke. Luke's text reads well enough for his audience. The unevenness comes to light as a result of careful investigations that try to explain Luke's choices in wording. The resulting analysis is that

[75] We are not claiming that this is impossible, just that it needs proof. Certainly there are clear examples of artificial styles used for literary purposes in the Hellenistic age. For example, Lucian (or another late Hellenistic writer) did a masterful work on "The Syrian Goddess" by putting everything into an Ionic dialect worthy of Herodotus. (Francis G. Allison, "Pseudo-Ionism in the Second Century AD," *American Journal of Philology* 7, No. 2, [1886] 203–217.) In the gospels, Buth ("Edayin—tote, Anatomy of a Semitism in Jewish Greek" *Maarav* 5–6 [1990], 33–48) has argued that a marginal Greek results from Matthew and his Aramaizing "tote" style. However, there is nothing about Matthew's style that suggests that his style is an act intended to give an impression of a style other than his own. That is how the writer of Matthew wrote Greek.

Luke was not trying to imitate a Septuagintal style, he was preserving, smoothing out, and retelling a story that was based on a Greek source that went back to a written Hebrew source.

Finally, as a methodological caveat, let it be clearly stated that a tri-lingual linguistic methodology allows us to investigate multiple versions and the language of each text by itself and against any of the others.[76]

Conclusions—Synoptic Relationships

As for synoptic relationships themselves, this study demonstrates that Luke was working from a Hebraized source, or sources, and that this source was not the Mark that we know, or even very close to it. The Lucan source would be sufficient to explain the results in Luke without any contact with Mark. In any case, Luke followed a source that was more Semitic than Mark and with a more original literary structure.[77] The same conclusion holds for the Luke-Matthew relationship. We have concentrated on the Marcan question because of its popularity in New Testament scholarship and much of what was said about Mark-Luke applies to Matthew-Luke. Both at the level of many individual phrases and at the level of the literary structure of the parable it is clear that Luke was using a more original and more Semitic source than either our Matthew or Mark.

Can this be turned around? For example, is it possible to say that Mark was using Luke? From this study, a few hints in Mark where he retains potential Hebraisms not found in Luke (12:3 λαβόντες; 12:7 καί + future = ἵνα + subj.; 12:8 λαβόντες; καί as the common conjunction) point in the direction of a source that Mark and Luke shared. Because of the small number and the possibility that these Hebraisms are part of Mark's own Greek style, we cannot make a definite conclusion about whether Mark was using Luke or using Luke's main source. This study of the VTS hints at a shared source and calls for more thorough studies along these lines.

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[76] We endorse Young's statement: "If one searches for the Semitic background of the parable it becomes clear that each one of the three evangelists preserves better texts at some points by comparison to their parallels and that at other points their narrative betrays signs of stylizing;" Young, *Jesus and His Jewish Parables*, 285.

[77] While suggestive that Luke did not see Mark's VTS, this study cannot prove that Luke did not see Mark. Nor can we prove that Mark did or did not see Luke. A longer monograph will be required for the questions. In any case, the questions arise from a tight, tri-lingual methodology.

Summary

In this study, we have found that the historical setting of the Vineyard, the Tenants and the Son Parable was a climatic confrontation between Jesus and the temple authorities. It is probable that this altercation was related to high priestly tithing abuses and corruption. The study has illustrated a linguistic methodology that leads to a new paradigm for Luke's redactional style: Luke did not imitate the Septuagint; he very conservatively worked with Hebraized sources, putting them into a reasonably well flowing Hellenistic Greek. (The Greek structures and Hebraic remnants that Luke preserved from his sources produced a hybrid texture.) Fortunately for Synoptic and Gospel studies, Luke retained enough of his sources for one to trace vocabulary items and phrases as well as the shape of larger literary pieces. In the VTS Luke has given us a very good look at one of Jesus' parables. During Jesus' last week, against the background of corruption, potentially murderous tithing-practices and conspiracy, Jesus uttered a parable that exposed and challenged the temple authorities with their own deeds and plans.