

Other Voices: Remembering the Marginalized Vegetarian in the Study of Christian Origins¹

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Reconciling the Weak and the Strong

The early Jesus movement included both vegetarian and non-vegetarian members. In Paul’s letter to the Romans, the apostle to the Gentiles reports that “some believe in eating anything, while the weak eat only *vegetables* (λάχανα).”² The “weak in faith,” however, were to be welcomed. Paul did not want to “offend” the “weak” who were abstaining from meat (κρέα) and wine,³ although he himself personally identified as one of the “strong.” Paul sought to reconcile the two factions, suggesting that “those who eat (meat) (ἐσθίω), eat in honor of the Lord . . . while those who abstain, abstain in honor of the Lord and give thanks to God.”⁴ For Paul, there was nothing inherently wrong with the consumption of meat. That is, Paul does not affirm “vegetarianism” as an ethical or eschatological ideal.

In Corinth, food (βρώμα) and meat (κρέα) were a source of stumbling.⁵ There is no compelling reason to suppose that the sociological circumstances or constituencies in Rome were the same in Corinth. Yet Paul is aware that some members of the Corinthian community are eating meat from “idolrous sacrifices” (εἰδωλοθύτων) while others are not.⁶ Since not everyone possesses the “knowledge” (γνώσις) that idols (pagan deities) do not really exist, and the consumption of such meat defiles those “weak” in conscience (8:7), Paul

¹ I would like to thank the two anonymous reviewers of *JJMJS* for their helpful comments and constructive criticism. I would also like to thank Anders Runesson for his editorial assistance.

² Rom 14:1–2.

³ Rom 14:21.

⁴ Rom 14:5–6.

⁵ 1 Cor 8:13.

⁶ 1 Cor 8:1.

suggests that offending the weak should be avoided. Yet Paul also suggests that the Corinthians can eat “everything” (πᾶν) sold in a “meat market” (μακέλλω) (10:25) and “everything” (πᾶν) that is served to them (10:27), but if they are informed that the meat comes from an (idolatrous) sacrifice, they should abstain, not because of their own “conscience,” but out of consideration for the other. Paul objects to the idea that his “liberty” should be restricted by another’s “conscience.”⁷

While Paul’s attempt to reconcile the “weak” and the “strong” in Rome and Corinth may or may not have succeeded, Paul did not regard what we would call “vegetarianism” as an ethical imperative. For Paul, the unity of the *ekklesia* “in Christ” superseded dietary convictions and/or restrictions. It is tempting to consider the possibility that this relativizing of dietary concerns subsequently came to inform the composition of Mark 7:19, where the author parenthetically clarifies that Jesus declared “all foods clean,” as well as the composition of Peter’s “vision” in Acts 10,⁸ and the Apostolic “decree” of Acts 15.

The history of scholarship on this divisive issue has long held that the “weak” in question were Jewish⁹ vegetarians (in Rome) who abstained from meat in order to avoid any possible contamination from impure meat,¹⁰

⁷ Dianne M. Bazell, “Strife among the Table-Fellows: Conflicting Attitudes of Early and Medieval Christians toward the Eating of Meat,” *JAAR* 65.1 (1997): 73–99 (75–76), identifies the “roots” of “a distinctively Christian ambivalence toward the practice of eating meat or refraining from doing so” in Paul’s letters which “minimized the significance that the conflicting dietary habits of Jews and gentiles appeared to hold.”

⁸ In Acts 10:1–15, Peter receives a vision from God effectively declaring all foods clean.

⁹ Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 831.

¹⁰ Origen, *Commentaria in epistolam beati Pauli ad Romanos* 9.35. On Paul’s rhetorical use of the terms, see Mark Reasoner, *The Strong and the Weak: Romans 14.1–15.13 in Context* (SNTS MS 103; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 6–16, 18–20. Reasoner suggests that the “strong” are “predominantly Gentiles, but included some Jews (15:1) who were not concerned about what they ate” (202). Richard Bauckham, *Living with Other Creatures: Green Exegesis and Theology* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2011), p. 102, suggests that some Jews may have become vegetarians simply because they were practicing “self-denial” or because meat was a “luxury.” Mark D. Nanos, *The Mystery of Romans: The Jewish Context of Paul’s Letter* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 85–165, sees the “weak” (in faith) as Jews who don’t believe in Jesus. Stanley K. Stowers, *A Rereading of Romans: Justice, Jews, and Gentiles* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 317, regards the “weak” as Gentile followers. For an earlier study, see M. Rauer, *Die “Schwachen” in Korinth und Rom nach den Paulusbriefen* (BibS[F] 21.2–3; Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1923).

particularly meat that had been sacrificed to idols in pagan marketplaces.¹¹ The reasoning is that Diasporic Jews had difficulties in maintaining *kashrut* among Gentiles. After all, the book of Daniel (c. 165 BCE) envisions the Babylonian-era prophet choosing a vegetarian diet of “seeds” (זרעים) instead of Gentile food in order to avoid violating the food laws.¹² Similarly, some Jewish followers of Jesus are thought to have adopted vegetarianism as a way of avoiding the consumption of Gentile meat and its potential impurities as well as a way of maintaining table fellowship with Gentiles.¹³ Since Claudius expelled (some) Jews from Rome c. 49 CE,¹⁴ and they were not allowed to return until the time of Nero (c. 54 CE), there is some question as to who Paul’s implied recipients might have been. Assuming, however, that there were both Jewish and Gentile followers of Jesus in Rome at the time of Paul’s writing, it has been suggested that (some of) the “weak” in question were Jewish followers motivated by (1) concern for the laws of *kashrut*; (2) attraction to Greco-Roman philosophical traditions of vegetarianism;¹⁵ and (3) inspired by the original antediluvian diet prescribed in Genesis 1 in conjunction with their heightened eschatological convictions.¹⁶ Since Romans is among Paul’s later writings, and reflects his attempt to reconcile Jewish and Gentile factions within the community before delivering the “collection” in Jerusalem, it is noteworthy that dietary issues

¹¹ 1 Cor 8; 10:19–33. Bauckham, *Living*, 102 (citing Dan 1:5–16; Tob 1:10–13; Jdt 10:5; 12:2).

¹² Dan 1:3–17. See also Jdt 12:17–19; Add. Esth. C. 14:17; Tobit 1:11; 1 Macc 1:65; 2 Macc 5:27; Josephus, *Vita* 14.

¹³ E. P. Sanders, “Jewish Association with Gentiles and Galatians 2:11–14,” in *The Conversation Continues: Studies in Paul and John in Honor of J. Louis Martyn*, eds. R. T. Fortna and B. R. Gaventa, (Nashville: Abingdon, 1990), pp. 170–188, here 177, suggests that early Jewish (Christian) vegetarianism began as an attempt to maintain table fellowship with Gentiles by eating either “their own food or only vegetables.” Ulrich Wilckens suggests that Jewish Christian vegetarianism in Romans was the result of purity concerns. See *Der Brief an die Römer* (EKK 6; 3 vols.; Neukirchen–Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1982), pp. 3:113–115.

¹⁴ Acts 18:2; Seutonius, *Divus Claudius* 25; Cassius Dio, *History* 60.6.6–7.

¹⁵ Reasoner, *The Strong and the Weak*, 103–136, outlines three philosophical “rationales” for vegetarianism current in first-century Rome: “(1) arguments based on the metaphysical order of nature . . . (2) arguments based on various forms of primitivism, that vegetarianism is the preferable diet; and (3) arguments based on the spiritual value of purity.”

¹⁶ Reasoner, *The Strong and the Weak*, pp. 102–131, 219. Reasoner suggests that the “weak” are (mostly) Jewish (Christian) vegetarians motivated by concern for the laws of *kashrut* and attracted by Greco-Roman philosophical traditions of vegetarianism.

(re)surface here, as they did in Corinth, albeit presumably for different reasons. The Roman situation, however, which seems to involve Jewish abstinence from meat thought not to be “clean” (καθαρά) (14:20) or perhaps meat regarded as “common” (κοινὸν) (14:14), does not necessarily represent the dietary practices and motivations of Jesus’ *Judean* followers, many of whom, including James, Peter, and Matthew, were subsequently remembered as vegetarian in Jewish Christian tradition. In this article, I will suggest that Jewish followers of Jesus, in Rome, Judea, and elsewhere, adopted a vegetarian diet not simply because they sought to maintain a more rigorous practice of *kashrut*, to defy Roman luxuries through self-denial,¹⁷ to maintain table fellowship with Gentiles, or because they were attracted to Greco-Roman philosophy, but predominantly because they believed that Jesus was the messiah and/or inaugurated the messianic age and the kingdom of God,¹⁸ which was believed to herald a restoration of the divinely prescribed antediluvian diet.

The Eschatological Diet

Paul informed his communities that “the end of the ages” (τὰ τέλη τῶν αἰώνων) had arrived and suggested that their ethical, ritual, and social practices should reflect this temporal transition.¹⁹ It would seem, then, that we have different interpretations and conceptualizations of the ideal eschatological diet: “weak” and “strong” relationships to (sacrificial) “meat.” Yet whether or not the Jewish population of mid-first-century Rome was able to maintain a steady supply of *kosher* meat, there does not seem to have been any pervasive tradition of urban Diasporic Jewish vegetarianism in the historical record. It seems more likely, based on the sociological context implied in Paul’s letters, that table fellowship with Gentiles continued to be a concern for (at least some) Jewish followers of

¹⁷ Gary Steven Shogren, “Is the Kingdom of God about Eating and Drinking or Isn’t It? (Romans 14:7),” *NovT* 42.3 (2000), 238–56, 246: “We can rule out the eating of non-kosher food . . . it was not unkosher meat that was the problem in Rome; all meat was off the menu.” Shogren suggests that Jewish members of the community, like Daniel in the Babylonian court, abstained from meat as a form of symbolic resistance to Roman power and authority.

¹⁸ Shogren, “Kingdom of God,” 252–53, points out that Paul’s understanding of the *presence* of the βασιλεία in Rom 14:7 signifies that “the old food regulations are no longer valid.”

¹⁹ To be sure, 1 Cor 10:11 is not explicitly linked to dietary regulations, but subsequent passages (14–22) do refer to the “table of demons” in reference to food sacrificed to idols. Moreover, Paul’s warrant for inclusive table fellowship between Jewish and Gentile followers of Christ is also presumably linked to his eschatological views.

Jesus well beyond the so-called Antioch Incident. After all, if Jesus had really “declared all foods clean,” his first followers – including Peter, Paul, and James – don’t seem to have known anything about it. There would not have been an Incident at Antioch if there were no reasons for Jewish followers to abstain from Gentile meals.²⁰ Paul does not draw attention to the Genesis narrative which states that vegetarianism was the divine ideal of creation nor does he refer to the Isaianic narrative of eschatological vegetarianism (despite quoting Isaiah 11),²¹ foregoing both the *Urzeit* and the *Endzeit* of the biblical tradition. Apparently, the argument from creation did not serve Paul’s Gentile mission of relaxing the *kosher* food laws to facilitate table fellowship between Jews and Gentiles.

For a variety of reasons, the vegetarianism of the early Jesus movement, which seems to have continued well into late antiquity by “Jewish Christian” followers of Jesus, has been marginalized, both in the history of Christianity as well as in biblical scholarship. New Testament scholarship has given “virtually no attention” to Jesus’ relationship to animals.²² This curious silence can be explained, in part, simply by understanding that both Judaism and Christianity developed along different trajectories of thought, with Christians focusing on the efficacy of blood sacrifice in Jesus’ atoning death and Jews lamenting the destruction and loss of the sacrificial cult and looking forward to its eschatological restoration. In neither tradition do we even find remnants of the sectarian vegetarianism of late antiquity.

²⁰ The dietary habits of the historical Jesus represent a complex question, especially given the paucity of evidence. The Gospels do not depict Jesus eating meat or fish (with the sole exception of Luke 24:40–43, where the *risen* Jesus eats a piece of fish). Moreover, the Gospels seem to be intentionally ambivalent about the contents of his last meal in Jerusalem, which would presumably, although not necessarily, have included a Passover lamb. The Qumran community and the Essenes, presumably, would have celebrated Passover without a sacrificial lamb from the Temple in Jerusalem. The problem, of course, is that the Synoptic Gospels and the Gospel of John do not *agree* on whether the last meal was a Passover *seder*. Some scholars do not even regard the Last Supper as historical. See Dennis E. Smith, *From Symposium to Eucharist: The Banquet in the Early Christian World* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003); John W. Riggs, “The Sacred Food of Didache 9–10 and Second Century Ecclesiologies,” in *The Didache in Context: Essays on Its Text, History, and Transmission*, ed. C. N. Jefford (NovTSup 77; Leiden: Brill, 1995), 256–83.

²¹ Cf. Rom 15:9–12; Ps 18:49; Deut 32:43; Ps 117:1; Isa 11:10. Paul’s purpose in citing these passages is clearly to affirm the salvation of the Gentiles, but it is curious that he cites Isa 11:10, considering that Isa 11:6–7 foresees a period of eschatological vegetarianism.

²² Bauckham, *Living with Other Creatures*, 79.

Today the critical discussion of vegetarianism tends to be relegated to health concerns, environmentalism, animal rights activism, ecology, and *eco-kashrut*, and its biblical and early Jewish and Christian context(s) neglected, as are its early proponents. This article is thus an inquiry into a sociological distinction within the early Jesus movement, but also an attempt to shed light on the motivating factors and forces of an eschatological enactment that was subsequently marginalized and yet continues to pose provocative questions about Christian origins.

Vegetarianism in Antiquity

The Greco-Roman philosophical discourse on vegetarianism, the consumption of meat, and the practice of animal sacrifice represents a complex spectrum of diverse views on the value of making “offerings” in the ancient world.²³ Although animal sacrifice was ubiquitous, and sacrifice also included vegetable and agricultural products, the language of sacrifice could also be used metaphorically to conceptualize sacrifice as the internalized “offering” of the self. Once the self could be conceived as a sacred offering, animal sacrifice could be seen as no longer necessary or efficacious. Alternative forms of sacrifice could also lead to the rejection of and opposition to sacrifice, whether in terms of its system of reciprocity, its corruption or illegitimacy, its business administration conducted by priests and staff, and/or the kinds of items being sacrificed.

Criticism of *animal* sacrifice and meat-eating was relatively common among ancient Greek philosophers,²⁴ including Heraclitus, Empedocles,²⁵ Theophrastus,²⁶ Plutarch,²⁷ Plato,²⁸ Plotinus, Porphyry of Tyre,²⁹ Pythagoras,³⁰

²³ For an overview of contemporary research on sacrifice, see Daniel C. Ullucci, “Sacrifice in the Ancient Mediterranean: Recent and Current Research,” *CBR* 13.3 (2015): 388–439.

²⁴ Johannes Haussleiter, *Der Vegetarismus in der Antike* (RVV 24; Berlin: Alfred Töpelmann, 1935); Daniel A. Dombrowski, *The Philosophy of Vegetarianism* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1984); Rod Preece, *Sins of the Flesh: A History of Ethical Vegetarian Thought* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2008).

²⁵ Fr. 11 and 124 Inwood = DK 115 and 139.

²⁶ *On Piety*.

²⁷ *Precepts for Preserving Health* 131F–132A; *On the Eating of Flesh* 993C–994B; 995D–996A; 996E–997A.

²⁸ *Republic* 372a–d; *Laws* 781e–783b.

²⁹ *On Abstinence from Killing Animals* (Περὶ ἀποχῆς ἐμψύχων) (c. 270 CE); *On Abstinence from Killing Animals*, trans. G. Clark (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000).

³⁰ Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of the Philosophers* 8.13; Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 15.75–142. Although see *Vit. Pyth.* 45; Diog. Laert., 8.20.

and Apollonius of Tyana.³¹ According to Porphyry, the first sacrifices were plants, wine, and honey. Animal sacrifice originated as a result of famine or warfare, as well as a human justification or rationalization of meat consumption (2.11.3). Porphyry advocated the pursuit of pure thoughts and “our own uplifting as a holy sacrifice to God” (τὴν αὐτῶν ἀναγωγὴν θυσίαν ἱερὰν προσάγειν τῷ θεῷ) (2.34). Animal sacrifices were “inappropriate to the transcendent philosophical life.”³² Philostratus refers to Pythagoras as one who “abstained from all food or sacrifices of things that contain a soul” (1.1.1). Pythagoras is reported to have appealed to a “golden age” when human beings ate only plants.³³ In *Fasti*, Ovid suggests that human beings originally sacrificed spelt, salt, and plants. Apollonius tells the priests of Olympia that “The gods do not need sacrifices (θυσιῶν οὐ δέονται).” Apollonius is portrayed as avoiding animal sacrifice, but making other kinds of offerings “of a bloodless and pure kind” (4.11.1, ἀναίμων τε καὶ καθαρῶν). A common feature of these philosophical critiques is not the rejection of the principle or practice of sacrifice, but a *preference* for non-animal sacrificial offerings.³⁴ That is, the practice of sacrifice is affirmed, but transformed, a transformation paralleled in certain schools in Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism.

A second feature is that the age of animal sacrifice is *contrasted* with a primordial era *before* the age of animal sacrifice.³⁵ There is a striking similarity here between the Greek philosophical tradition and the biblical tradition of Genesis 1. This philosophical discourse on vegetarianism parallels the biblical account of creation, where the original diet of humanity is vegetarian:

God said, “See, I have given you every plant
yielding seed (אֵת כָּל עֵשֶׂב זֶרַע זֶרַע)
that is upon the face
of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit
(וְאֵת כָּל הָעֵץ אֲשֶׁר בּוֹ פְרִי עֵץ זֶרַע);

³¹ See Robert J. Penella, ed., *The Letters of Apollonius of Tyana: A Critical Text with Prolegomena, Translation and Commentary* (Leiden: Brill, 1979), 46–47. See also Philostratus’ *Life of Apollonius of Tyana* 1.31.2–1.32.2; 3.41.1; 4.11.1; 5.25.1; 6.4.3; 6.11.3.

³² Aaron P. Johnson, *Religion and Identity in Porphyry of Tyre: The Limits of Hellenism in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 123.

³³ *Metamorphoses* 15.103–106. See also Hesiod, *Theogony; Works and Days*.

³⁴ Rives, “The Theology of Animal Sacrifice,” p. 192.

³⁵ Daniel C. Ullucci, “Before Animal Sacrifice: A Myth of Innocence,” *R & T* 15 (2008), 357–474.

you will have them for food/meat (לֹאֲכַלְהֶם) . . .
 And to every animal . . . I have given every green herb
 for food/meat (כָּל יֶרֶק עֵשֶׂב לֹאֲכַלְהֶם).³⁶

We should not dismiss the symbolic power of this Edenic ideal. The prophet Isaiah envisioned the messianic age as a time of cosmic dietary transformation — that is, universal vegetarianism — on earth. This prophetic tradition envisioned the ideal diet in the world to come as the *restoration* of the original creation, forming an *Urzeit/Endzeit* unit: “The wolf and the lamb will eat together; And the lion will eat straw like the ox . . . They will not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain.”³⁷ The prophet Hosea similarly envisions an idyllic covenantal restoration of Eden: “I will make for them [you] a covenant on that day with the wild animals, the birds of the air, and the creeping things of the ground; and I will abolish the bow, the sword, and war from the land.”³⁸

Genesis 1:29 indicates that God intended a vegetarian diet for humanity.³⁹ Moreover, the first ten generations of “Adam” continue to be vegetarian. It is only in Genesis 9:3 that *permission* is given to eat meat and it is only the legislation of the Torah at the time of Moses that finally legislates animal sacrifice.⁴⁰ No explicit reason is given for why the consumption of meat

³⁶ Gen 1:29–30.

³⁷ Isa 65:25; 11:2–9. On the literal interpretation of Isaiah’s prophecy, see Ravad (Rabbi Avraham ben David of Posquières, 1120–1197) in Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah, Melachim* 12:1; Abarbanel on Hoshea 2:18 and Isaiah 11:3; Radak, Mahari Kara, Metzudas David, and Malbim on Isaiah 11:3–9; R. Nosson Sternhartz, *Likkutei Halachos, Choshen Mishpat, Nezikin* 2:6.

³⁸ Hos. 2:18.

³⁹ Ryan Patrick McLaughlin, “A Meatless Dominion: Genesis 1 and the Ideal of Vegetarianism,” *BTB* 47.3 (2017), 144–54.

⁴⁰ Jonathan Klawans, *Purity, Sacrifice, and the Temple: Symbolism and Supersessionism in the Study of Ancient Judaism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 61, citing Gen 4:1–5, 8:20, and 9:1–3, argues that the idea that animal sacrifice was not “originally intended” by God is a “misconception” because animals were sacrificed by Abel and Noah. Animal sacrifice, however, like meat-eating, is *post-Edenic*. Michael E. Stone, *Ancient Judaism: New Visions and Views* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 35, 41, 46, 57, n. 98 (emphasis added), points out that animal sacrifice “is part of the world order established *after* the flood.” Gen 8:20 seems to presuppose the practice of “burnt offerings” and it is difficult to know how Noah was able to sacrifice the animals he had just saved from the Flood! According to Genesis, the first animal sacrifice seems to have

is now allowed.⁴¹ Rabbinical commentators suggest that the Torah uses concessionary language since this new development contradicted God's original intention.⁴² It has also been suggested that the Israelite sacrificial cult — an institution which undergirds the composition and performance of the Torah — developed from Mesopotamian traditions in which animal sacrifice served as a means of justifying meat consumption, which was generally reserved for elite members of society.⁴³ This is certainly the role that the Temple cult and its administration came to play in Judean society throughout the Second Temple period, when the Persian-backed priestly Temple-state system of Judea (*Yehud*) became a well-developed institution and economy enjoying widespread support from the Jewish polity with the relatively rare exceptions of those who refused to participate in its (allegedly) illegitimate administration. The *Yahad*, for example, developed an oppositional movement that withdrew from the Temple cult in Jerusalem.

The community that collected the Dead Sea Scrolls inherited traditions, like the Enochic *Animal Apocalypse*, that looked forward to the appearance of a new Temple and a new "Adam."⁴⁴ While the question of whether the Essenes, as described by Josephus, Philo, and Pliny, and/or the Qumran community participated in the Temple cult cannot be adequately addressed here,⁴⁵ the Qumran community seems to represent a movement that originally participated in the sacrificial cult yet subsequently withdrew because the Temple had been defiled. As a result, the movement developed substitutes for the Temple sacrifices while simultaneously hoping for the restoration of proper sacrifice in

been conducted by Abel (Gen 4:4). Earlier, the book of Genesis does not quite explain how God made Adam and Eve "coats of skin" (Gen 3:21).

⁴¹ Rabbi Isaak Hebenstreit, *Kivrot Hata'avah* ("The Graves of Lust") (Hebrew) (Rzeszow, Poland, 1929), 6, suggests that God did not want people to eat meat but after the Flood allowed it because all the plant life on earth had been destroyed. If this were true, however, surely vegetarianism could have been resumed after the plant life grew back!

⁴² Rabbi Elijah J. Schochet, *Animal Life in Jewish Tradition* (New York: K'tav, 1984), 300; Moses Cassuto, *From Adam to Noah* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1961–64): 58. On concessionary language, see Samuel H. Dresner, *The Jewish Dietary Laws, Their Meaning for Our Time* (New York: Burning Bush, 1959).

⁴³ Hallo, "The Origin of Israelite Sacrifice," 59–71.

⁴⁴ *An. Apoc.* 90.37–38; cf. 1QS 4.22–23, CD 3.20, and 1QH 4.15.

⁴⁵ See my discussion in Simon J. Joseph, *Jesus, the Essenes, and Christian Origins: New Light on Ancient Texts and Communities* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2018), 131–155.

the future.⁴⁶ Their hopes were not realized, of course, but their self-conceptualization as an alternative to the Temple cult facilitated the innovative creation of alternative “sacrificial” rituals including prayer, Torah study, sacred meals, and liturgical worship, leading to the conceptualization of their community as a Temple.

By the turn of the first century CE, the *Yahad* would not have participated in the Jerusalem Temple cult for over one hundred years. The *Rule of the Community* (1QS) affirms that prayer and “perfection of way” were now acceptable substitutes for animal sacrifice (9.1–5). Similarly, 4QFlorilegium 1–2 i 6–7 envisions a “Temple of Adam” in which the “smoke of incense” and the “works of thanksgiving” are sent up instead of sacrifices. The Temple of Adam may be an indirect allusion to a restored Eden.⁴⁷ 4QFlorilegium refers to a time when God “commanded that a Temple of Adam be built for himself, that there they may send up, like smoke of incense, the works of the Law” (4QFlor 1–2 i 6–7), alluding to the *Book of Jubilees*, which describes Eden as a Temple in which Adam serves as a priest offering incense (8:19).⁴⁸ Similarly, the Temple of Adam is envisioned as a sanctuary of “smoke offerings as works of thanksgiving” (4QFlor 1 i 21 2:6).

The *Yahad* lived with the eschatological tension(s) of their non-participation in the Temple cult, their anticipation of its future restoration (under their leadership), their self-conceptualization as a Temple without animal sacrifice, and the idea that the eschatological restoration of Eden could eliminate the need for animal sacrifices. There is no evidence to suggest that the Qumran community ever practiced vegetarianism, but their ritual and textual innovations show that willful withdrawal from animal sacrifice was not unheard of in first-century Judaism and could be linked to both ascetic ideals and visions of eschatological restoration. At the same time, we also hear from Philo that the Therapeutae abstained from meat and sacrifice.⁴⁹ Philo describes the Therapeutae as philosophical vegetarians, emphasizing their “table kept pure

⁴⁶ Klawans, *Purity, Sacrifice, and the Temple*, 163.

⁴⁷ George J. Brooke, “Miqdash Adam, Eden, and the Qumran Community,” in *Gemeinde ohne Tempel—Community without Temple: Zur Substituierung und Transformation des Jerusalemer Tempels und seines Kultes im Alten Testament, antiken Judentum und frühen Christentum*, ed. B. Ego, et al. (WUNT 118; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999), 297.

⁴⁸ James C. VanderKam, “Adam’s Incense Offering (Jubilees 3:27),” in *Meghillot: Studies in the Dead Sea Scrolls V–VI* (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 2007), 141–56.

⁴⁹ On vegetarianism, see Roger T. Beckwith, “The Vegetarianism of the Therapeutae, and the Motives for Vegetarianism in Early Jewish and Christian Circles,” *RevQ* 13 (1988): 407–410.

from the animal food” (τράπεζα καθαρὰ τῶν ἐναίμων),⁵⁰ and also seems to have idealized, if not preferred, bloodless sacrifices,⁵¹ envisioning sacrifice as meeting “a basic human desire, an aspiration to relationship with the Divine,”⁵² with the slaughtered animal representing symbolic aspects of the one sacrificing. These two examples of first-century Jewish practice — in Judea and Alexandria, respectively — simply illustrate a recognizable diversity of Jewish attitudes toward the sacrificial system, the philosophical life, and the eschatological ideal of a restored or renewed creation.

A Jewish Christian Discourse

The emergence of the early Palestinian Jesus movement within (pre-70 CE) early Judaism and its relationship to the Temple cult is a complex topic that continues to be debated, but in Paul’s letters we see the language of sacrifice being used in a variety of registers to refer not only to Jesus’ soteriological work but also to Paul’s own self-offering as a “libation” (Phil 2:14–18) and the identification of community members as “a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God” (Rom 12:1–2).⁵³ This transference of sacrificial language and discourse from cultic contexts of *actual* sacrifice to more symbolic or metaphorical contexts — in which Jesus’ death, Paul’s ministry, and community members’ lives are described in sacrificial terms — may have facilitated the relaxation of ethical and dietary concerns over the consumption of meat sacrificed to idols in Gentile communities. Gentile followers were not to *perform* such sacrifices, but Paul does not seem to perceive any problem in eating sacrificial meat as long as it does not offend other members. Consequently, some Gentile followers of Jesus seem to have rejected the practice of animal sacrifice while consuming meat sacrificed to idols. Paul’s opinion carried weight and authority for Gentile communities of Jesus followers uninclined to forego normative dietary practices or adopt Jewish food laws. It is not surprising, therefore, that early Gentile “Christian” identity did not mourn the loss of the Temple or prepare for its

⁵⁰ *Contempl.* 73–74.

⁵¹ Jutta Leonhardt, *Jewish Worship in Philo of Alexandria*, (TSAJ 84; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), 276. See *Spec. Laws* 1.275.

⁵² William K. Gilders, “Jewish Sacrifice: Its Nature and Function (According to Philo),” in *Ancient Mediterranean Sacrifice*, eds. J. W. Knust and Z. Várhelyi (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 97. See Philo, *Spec. Laws*, 1.66–67, 1.195.

⁵³ Stroumsa, *The End of Sacrifice*, 72, suggests that Christianity became a religion “centered on” and defined by sacrifice.

restoration, as rabbinical Jews were to do.⁵⁴ Yet if most Jews affirmed and commemorated the future restoration of Temple practices as envisioned in the *Mishnah*, that does *not* mean that *all* Jews did so.⁵⁵

The term *Jewish Christianity* refers to members of the Jesus movement who maintained and combined loyalty towards Jewish law with reverence for Jesus.⁵⁶ The term has come under fire as definitionally imprecise and reinscribing a discourse which attempted to expel Jewish influences from Christianity by constructing Judaism as separate and distinct from

⁵⁴ After the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE, Yohanan ben Zakkai asserted that “acts of loving-kindness” (גְּמִילוּת חַסְדִּים) were just as effective as sacrifices (*Avoth de-Rabbi Nathan*, version I, ch. 4). R. Eleazar said that charity was more important than sacrifice (*B. Sukkah* 49b). Alexander Guttman, “The End of the Jewish Sacrificial Cult,” *HUCA*, 38 (1969), p. 138, suggests that post-70 CE sacrifice may have been considered “optional” (*M. Eduyyoth* 8.6; *B. Megillah* 10a). The rabbis may not have explicitly prohibited offering sacrifices after the destruction of the Temple, but they presuppose the end of public sacrifice (*M. Sheqalim* 8.8; *M. Ta’anith* 4.6; *B. Rosh Ha-Shanah* 21b). *Pesachim* 109a suggests that since the destruction of the Temple, Jews are not *required* to eat meat: “It was taught, R’Yehuda b. Beteira says, ‘while the Temple is standing, there is no joy unless there is meat, as it says (Deut. 27), ‘And you shall sacrifice peace-offerings and eat them there, and you will be joyful before the Lord, your God.’ Now that the Temple is not standing, there is no joy without wine (שֵׂאִין בֵּית הַמִּקְדָּשׁ קִיִּים אֵין שְׂמַחָה אֱלֵא בֵּינָן) (וְעַכְשָׁיו).”

⁵⁵ Naftali S. Cohn, *The Memory of the Temple and the Making of the Rabbis* (Divinations: RLAR; Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013).

⁵⁶ Matt Jackson-McCabe, ed., *Jewish Christianity Reconsidered: Rethinking Ancient Groups and Texts* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007); Petri Luomanen, *Recovering Jewish Christian Sects and Gospels* (VCSup 110; Leiden: Brill, 2012); Edwin K. Broadhead, *Jewish Ways of Following Jesus: Redrawing the Religious Map of Antiquity* (WUNT 266; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010); James Carleton Paget, *Jews, Christians, and Jewish Christians in Antiquity* (WUNT 251; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010); Oskar Skarsaune and Reidar Hvalvik, eds., *Jewish Believers in Jesus: The Early Centuries* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2007); Simon C. Mimouni, *Le Judéo-christianisme ancien: Essais historiques* (Paris: Cerf, 1998); *Early Judaeo-Christianity: Historical Essays*, trans. R. Fréchet (ISACR 13; Leuven: Peeters, 2012); S. C. Mimouni and F. S. Jones, eds., *Le Judéo-Christianisme dans tous ses états: acts du colloque de Jérusalem 6–10 Juillet 1998* (Paris: Cerf, 2001); Jean Danielou, *The Theology of Jewish Christianity*, trans. J. A. Baker (London: Darton, Longman, and Todd, 1964); Georg Strecker, *Das Judentum in den Pseudoclementinen* (Berlin: Akademie, 1958); Hans-Joachim Schoeps, *Jewish Christianity: Factional Disputes in the Early Church*, trans. D. R. A. Hare (Fortress, 1969).

Christianity.⁵⁷ Indeed, the study of Jewish Christianity is a complex discourse incorporating ethnicity, ideology, practice,⁵⁸ geography, Christology,⁵⁹ and sociocultural recognition by other Jews,⁶⁰ a complex of different kinds of Jewish reverence for Jesus.⁶¹

Vegetarianism is a motif found in the Pseudo-Clementine literature, the *Gospel of the Ebionites*, Epiphanius' reports on the "Ebionites," Elchasaite traditions, Hegesippus's references to James, and the *Didascalia*.⁶² Jewish Christian vegetarianism is also part of a broader tradition opposing animal sacrifice,⁶³ a motif found in the *Book of Elchasai*, the *Gospel of the Ebionites* (*Pan.* 30.16.5), a reconstructed source underlying *Recognitions* 1.27-71,⁶⁴ composed

⁵⁷ Daniel Boyarin, "Rethinking Jewish Christianity: An Argument for Dismantling a Dubious Category (to which is Appended a Correction of my Border Lines)," *JQR*, 99.1 (2009): 7–36, 7, 23. Boyarin argues that there is "only one valuable distinction . . . between Christians who had come from the Jewish world . . . and those who came from the gentiles" (33).

⁵⁸ F. J. A. Hort, *Judaistic Christianity* (Cambridge University Press, 1894); Marcel Simon, *Verus Israel: Étude sur les relations entre Chrétiens et Juifs dans l'Empire Romain* (135–425) (Paris: Editions de Boccard, 1948).

⁵⁹ R. N. Longenecker, *The Christology of Early Jewish Christianity* (SBT 2/17; London: SCM, 1970).

⁶⁰ Alan F. Segal, "Jewish Christianity," in *Eusebius, Christianity, and Judaism*, H. W. Attridge and G. Hata, eds., (Leiden: Brill, 1992), 326–351, here 348.

⁶¹ On the different types of "Jewish Christianity," see Raymond E. Brown, "Not Jewish Christianity and Gentile Christianity but Types of Jewish/Gentile Christianity," *CBQ* 45 (1983): 74–79; A. F. J. Klijn, "The Study of Jewish Christianity," *NTS* 20 (1974): 419–31; R. A. Kraft, "In Search of 'Jewish Christianity' and its 'Theology': Problems of Definition and Methodology," *RSR* 60 (1972): 81–92; R. Longenecker, "Jews, Hebrews and Christians: Some Needed Distinctions," *NovT* 24 (1983): 194–208; Burton L. Visotzky, "Prolegomenon to the Study of Jewish-Christianities," *AJSR* 14 (1989): 47–70; B. J. Malina, "Jewish Christianity or Christian Judaism: Toward a Hypothetical Definition," in *JSJ* 7 (1976): 410–15; S. K. Riegel, "Jewish Christianity: Definitions and Terminology," *NTS* 24 (1978): 46–57; R. Murry, "Defining Judaeo-Christianity," *Heythrop* 15 (1974): 303–310; Joan E. Taylor, "The Phenomenon of Early Jewish Christianity: Reality or Scholarly Invention?," *VC* 44 (1990): 313–34.

⁶² F. Stanley Jones, "Jewish Christianity of the Pseudo-Clementines," in *A Companion to Second Century Christian "Heretics"*, A. Marjanen and P. Luomanen, eds., (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 322.

⁶³ Schoeps, *Theologie und Geschichte des Judenchristentums*, 241.

⁶⁴ Jones, *An Ancient Jewish Christian Source*; "An Ancient Jewish Christian Rejoinder to Luke's Acts of the Apostles: Pseudo-Clementine *Recognitions* 1.27–71," in *Semeia 80: The Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles in Intertextual Perspectives*, R. Stoops, ed., (Atlanta:

around 200 CE,⁶⁵ and the *Recognitions* and *Homilies*, representing two interpretive lenses through which Jewish Christians remembered Jesus.⁶⁶

The Pseudo-Clementines

The Pseudo-Clementine writings represent a literary puzzle with formidable problems.⁶⁷ A Jewish Christian source behind *Recognitions* 1.27–71 has been isolated by a number of scholars, pre-dating the *Homilies* by over a century.⁶⁸ The historical value of the Pseudo-Clementine literature, however, is a matter of debate. The general tendency today is to shy away from constructing models that apply a specific group-marker to the source, although some continue to identify *Rec* 1.27–71 as Ebionite.⁶⁹ Stanley Jones calls it an “Ancient Jewish Christian Source,” a work of apologetic historiography dependent on Luke-Acts as a rival

Scholars, 1990), 239–40. See also Boustani and Reed, “Blood and Atonement,” 340, n. 21; Schoeps, *Theologie*, 381–456; Strecker, *Das Judenchristentum*; Robert E. Van Voorst, *The Ascents of James: History and Theology of a Jewish-Christian Community* (SBLDS 112; Atlanta: Scholars, 1989); Martyn, “Clementine *Recognitions* 1.33–71,” 270, 291; Richard Bauckham, “The Origin of the Ebionites,” in *The Image of the Judaeo-Christians in Ancient Jewish and Christian Literature*, P. J. Tomson and D. Lambers-Petry, eds., (WUNT 158; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 165, 168.

⁶⁵ Graham Stanton, “Jewish Christian Elements in the Pseudo-Clementine Writings,” in *Jewish Believers in Jesus: The Early Centuries*, Oskar Skarsaune and Reidar Hvalvik, eds., (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2007), 324; Strecker, *Judenchristentum*, 253–54; Skarsaune, *Proof from Prophecy* (Leiden: Brill, 1987): 252–53.

⁶⁶ Skarsaune, *In the Shadow of the Temple* (Downer’s Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002): 156.

⁶⁷ Stanton, “Jewish Christian Elements,” 305.

⁶⁸ The original isolation of *Rec*. 1.27–71 as a distinct literary source was identified by Adolf Hilgenfeld in 1848. More recently, see Martyn, “Clementine *Recognitions* 1.33–71,” 265–95, esp. 270, 291; Arnold Stötzel, “Die Darstellung der ältesten Kirchengeschichte nach den Pseudo-Clementinen,” *VC* 36 (1982): 24–37, here 29.

⁶⁹ See especially Bauckham, “The Origin of the Ebionites,” 163. Carleton Paget, “The Ebionites in Recent Research,” in *Jews, Christians, and Jewish Christians in Antiquity*, 338–39. Joseph A. Fitzmyer, “The Qumran Scrolls, the Ebionites and their Literature,” *TS* 16 (1955): 351, notes that it is “quite generally held” that the Pseudo-Clementine literature is “Ebionite in origin.” For positive assessments of Epiphanius’ association of the Pseudo-Clementines and the Ebionites, see also J. Magnin, “Notes sur l’Ébionisme,” *Proche-Orient Chrétien*, 23 (1973), 233–65; Martyn, “Clementine *Recognitions* 1.33–71,” 265–295.

account of Christian origins.⁷⁰ Jones dates the source underlying *Rec.* 1.27–71 to c. 200 CE,⁷¹ but cautions against the uncritical use of the term “Ebionite.”⁷²

The Pseudo-Clementine texts, as we have them, are fourth-century compositions.⁷³ This does not mean that earlier “sources” need to be denied,⁷⁴ but the distinctive literary-rhetorical goals of the fourth-century author/redactor do need to be recognized. *Recognitions* 1, for example, portrays Jesus as the “True Prophet” predicted by Moses, where baptism and food regulation are emphasized,⁷⁵ and which presupposes a combined Jewish *and* Gentile mission, with James and Peter as the leaders of the community, and Paul criticized as “the enemy.” Peter is identified with the Jews.⁷⁶ Hebrew is the original language of humanity.⁷⁷ The blame for killing Jesus is attributed to a number of Jews, but not to “the Jews” as a whole.⁷⁸ The essential difference between (Torah-observant) Jewish believers and non-believers is belief in Jesus’ *messianic* identity.⁷⁹ These appear to be very good reasons to think that this Pseudo-Clementine material or tradition represents an early *Jewish* group of Jesus-followers.⁸⁰

⁷⁰ Jones, “An Ancient Jewish Christian Rejoinder,” 239–40.

⁷¹ Jones, *An Ancient Jewish Christian Source*, 164–66. Martyn, “Clementine *Recognitions*,” 265–95, 274, affirms Strecker’s dating of *Rec.* 1.33–71 to “the mid–point of the second century.”

⁷² See F. Stanley Jones, “The Genesis of Pseudo–Clementine Christianity,” in *Pseudoclementina Elchasaiticaque inter Judaeochristiana: Collected Studies* (OL 203; Leuven: Peeters, 2012), 204–206.

⁷³ Nicole Kelley, *Knowledge and Religious Authority in the Pseudo-Clementines: Situating the Recognition in Fourth-Century Syria* (WUNT II.213; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 1–26; “Problems of Knowledge and Authority in the Pseudo–Clementine Romance of *Recognitions*,” *J ECS* 13.3 (2005): 315–48; D. Coté, *Le thème de l’opposition entre Pierre et Simon dans les Pseudo-Clémentines* (Paris: Institut d’Études Augustiniennes, 2001); William Robins, “Romance and Renunciation at the Turn of the Fifth Century,” *J ECS* 8 (2000): 531–37; Frédéric Amsler, “Les Reconnaissances du Pseudo-Clément comme catéchèse romaneque,” in *La Bible en récits: L’exégèse biblique à l’heure du lecteur*, D. Marguerat, ed., (Geneva: Labor et Fides, 2003), 443.

⁷⁴ Kelley, *Knowledge and Religious Authority*, 179.

⁷⁵ *Rec.* 4.36.4.

⁷⁶ *Rec.* 1.32.1.

⁷⁷ *Rec.* 1.30.5.

⁷⁸ *Rec.* 1.41.2.

⁷⁹ *Rec.* 1.43.2; 1.50.5; 1.44.2; 1.60; 1.62.4.

⁸⁰ For the Jewish profile of the Pseudo-Clementines, see Daniel Boyarin, “Justin Martyr Invents Judaism,” *CH*, 70 (2001), 459; Annette Yoshiko Reed, “‘Jewish Christianity’ as Counter–history?: The Apostolic Past in Eusebius’ Ecclesiastical History and the Pseudo-

The *Homilies* and the *Recognitions* share a number of elements in common, but represent two distinctive approaches to animal sacrifice. In the *Homilies*, the motif is linked to the Enochic motif of the fallen angels: blood sacrifice is demonic, a form of pagan worship; God neither commanded nor required them. For the Homilist, the true law was given by God *at the time of creation*.⁸¹ The Mosaic sacrificial legislation is a punishment for disobedience as well as a way to protect Israel from pagan idolatry.⁸² In the *Recognitions*, sacrifice is linked to pagan idolatry, but animal sacrifice was allowed by Moses as a *temporary* concession in order to prevent Israel from further idolatry. Although the Pseudo-Clementine discourse is far more about opposition to animal sacrifice than promoting vegetarianism per se, in neither case do these texts represent the death of Jesus as an atoning sacrifice that replaces animal sacrifice.⁸³

The Gospel of the Ebionites

Like *Rec.* 1.27–71, the *Gospel of the Ebionites*,⁸⁴ usually dated to the middle of the second century,⁸⁵ also seems to be the work of Jewish followers of Jesus. There

Clementine Homilies,” in *Antiquity in Antiquity: Jewish and Christian Pasts in the Greco-Roman World*, G. Gardner and K. Osterloh, eds., (TSAJ 123; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 204–13.

⁸¹ *Hom.* 8.10.

⁸² The Homilist further associates sacrifice and sacrificial meat-eating with the “table of demons” (1 Cor 8:1–13; 10:28–29; Acts 15:29; 21:25; Porphyry, *On Abstinence* 2.36–37, 42–43, 49). According to the Homilist, sacrifice was a divine punishment for disobedience and the Torah’s prescriptions of animal sacrifice are understood as “false pericopes” (*Hom.* 3.45.2).

⁸³ Bart D. Ehrman, *The New Testament: A Historical Introduction to the Early Christian Writings* (fifth edn.; Oxford University Press, 2012), 3, suggests that Jewish Christians/Ebionites believed that Jesus “fulfilled his divine commission by dying as a willing sacrifice on the cross for the sins of the world, a sacrifice that put an end to all sacrifices.”

⁸⁴ The title is a modern scholarly invention derived from Epiphanius’ claim that Ebionites used a “forged and mutilated” (νενοθευμένῳ καὶ ἠκρωτηριασμένῳ) version of Matthew. See Koch, “A Critical Investigation of Epiphanius’ Knowledge of the Ebionites,” 316–58; Finley, “The Ebionites and ‘Jewish Christianity’”; Mimouni, *Le judéo-christianisme ancien*, 258–72; Schoeps, *Theologie und Geschichte*; Bauckham, “The Origin of the Ebionites,” 172.

⁸⁵ Bauckham, “The Origin of the Ebionites,” 163: there is “good reason to think that this Gospel of the Ebionites was used by the Ebionites of whom Irenaeus knew.”

are seven fragmentary passages contained in Epiphanius' *Panarion*.⁸⁶ The seventh represents its most distinctive and controversial feature: Jesus' rejection of animal sacrifice: "I have come to abolish sacrifices, and if you do not cease from sacrificing, the wrath will not cease from you."⁸⁷ This passage seems to be an allusion to Matthew 5:17–18 ("I have not come to abolish the Law").⁸⁸ Here Jesus is "condemning sacrifices as no longer valid or as never having been valid."⁸⁹ The *Gospel of the Ebionites* also characterizes Jesus as *refusing* to eat meat:⁹⁰ "I did *not* earnestly desire to eat meat this Passover with you."⁹¹

Various Jewish Christian texts and traditions portray Peter, Matthew, John the Baptist, and James as vegetarians. According to Epiphanius, the Ebionites held that Peter's diet consisted of "bread alone, with olives and rarely vegetables."⁹² According to Clement of Alexandria, Jesus' disciple Matthew was also a vegetarian:⁹³ "Matthew the apostle used to take seeds, and nuts, and vegetables, *without animal flesh*."⁹⁴ The *Gospel of the Ebionites* also identifies John the Baptist as a vegetarian.⁹⁵ Whereas the Gospels of Mark and Matthew both describe John as eating "locusts" (ἀκρίδες),⁹⁶ the *Gospel of the Ebionites* refers to John's diet as "wild honey" which tasted like "manna, like cakes (ὡς

⁸⁶ *Pan.* 30.13.1–8; 30.14.5; 30.16.4–5; 30.22.4.

⁸⁷ ἤλθον καταλύσαι τὰς θυσίας, καὶ ἐὰν μὴ παύσησθε τοῦ θύειν οὐ παύσεται ἀφ' ὑμῶν ἡ ὀργή. *Pan.* 30.16.4–5, in *Ancoratus und Panarion*, Karl Holl, ed., 3 vols., (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, [1915] 1933).

⁸⁸ Edwards, "The Gospel of the Ebionites and the Gospel of Luke," 579.

⁸⁹ Loader, *Jesus' Attitude towards the Law*, 507, 516.

⁹⁰ *Pan.* 30. See also 30.18.9.

⁹¹ μὴ ἐπιθυμία ἐπεθύμησα κρέας τοῦτο τὸ Πάσχα φαγεῖν μεθ' ὑμῶν. *Pan.* 30.22.4. The *Gospel of the Ebionites* inserts the word 'not' (μὴ) before "this Passover," suggesting literary dependency on Luke 22:15.

⁹² See *Rec.* 7.6.4; *Hom.* 12.6.4. See also *Hom.* 8.15.2–16.2; *Rec.* 1.30.1. See also *Pan.* 30.15.

⁹³ Clement of Alexandria, *The Instructor (Paedagogus)* 2.1.16.1.

⁹⁴ Ματθαῖος . . . ὁ ἀπόστολος σπερμάτων καὶ ἀκροδρύμων καὶ λαχάνων ἄνευ κρεῶν μετελάμβανεν.

⁹⁵ On John's diet, see James A. Kelhoffer, *The Diet of John the Baptist: 'Locusts and Wild Honey' in Synoptic and Patristic Interpretation* (WUNT 176; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005). For a popular-level, but Schoeps-based study on vegetarianism in the life of Jesus and Jewish Christianity, see Keith Akers, *The Lost Religion of Jesus: Simple Living and Nonviolence in Early Christianity* (New York: Lantern, 2000). On the diet of John the Baptist, see also James Tabor, "Did John the Baptist Eat Bugs, Beans, or Pancakes?," *Taborblog*, December 20, 2015, <https://jamestabor.com/did-john-the-baptist-eat-bugs-beans-or-pancakes/> [accessed May 28, 2018].

⁹⁶ Mark 1:6; Matt 3:4.

ἔγκρις) in olive oil,” changing the Synoptic ἀκρίς to ἐγκρίς, and thus associating John’s diet with the “manna” in the Exodus narratives: “its taste like a cake in honey” (ὡς ἐγκρίς ἐν μέλιτι), “like the taste of a cake from olive oil” (ὡσεὶ γεῦμα ἐγκρίς ἐξ ἔλαιου).⁹⁷ According to Eusebius, Hegesippus’ *Hypomnemata* (*Memoirs*) referred to Jesus’ brother James as a vegetarian: “He was holy from his mother’s womb, and he drank neither wine nor strong drink, *nor did he eat animal flesh*.”⁹⁸

Why did (various) “Jewish Christian” followers of Jesus think that Jesus (probably), John the Baptist, Peter, Matthew, and James were all vegetarian? And exactly *how far* back do these “Jewish Christian” traditions go? As we will see, these two complex questions are interrelated. Let us consider the former first.

As in Paul’s early *ekklēsia*, some scholars suggest that these Jewish Christian traditions represent “ascetic impulses” and “a strongly Hellenized (Pythagorean) mentality.”⁹⁹ Others suggest that Jewish Christian vegetarianism was a “safety measure in a pagan environment,”¹⁰⁰ or an “intensification of purity regulations.”¹⁰¹ Jörg Frey, for example, notes that the *Gospel of the Ebionites* reflects a strict *halakhic* practice (“eine rigide halachische Praxis”) and suggests that this apparently “complete renunciation of meat” (“völligen Fleischverzicht”) can be explained as a Jewish Christian adaptation to a non-Jewish environment.¹⁰² Yet if Diasporic Jewish Christians commonly adopted vegetarianism because they were more *halakhically* minded than other Jews or because they were more conscientious about their Gentile habits, we would expect to see ancient Jewish vegetarianism far more widespread in the historical record, but we do not.

⁹⁷ Exod 16:31; Num 11:8 LXX.

⁹⁸ οὗτος δὲ ἐκ κοιλίας μητρὸς αὐτοῦ ἅγιος ἦν, οἶνον καὶ σίκερα οὐκ ἔπιεν οὐδὲ ἐμψυχον ἔφαγεν. Eusebius, *Eccl. History* 2.23.5, citing Hegesippus’ *Hypomnemata* (c. 180 CE).

⁹⁹ Jones, “Jewish Christianity of the Pseudo-Clementines,” 322.

¹⁰⁰ John T. Townsend, “The Date of Luke-Acts,” in *Luke-Acts: New Perspectives from the Society of Biblical Literature*, C. H. Talbert, ed., (New York: Crossroad, 1984), 51–52, suggests that Jewish Christian vegetarianism stems from their difficulty in obtaining kosher meat.

¹⁰¹ Gregory, “Jewish-Christian Gospels,” 65. After 70 CE, some Jews may have renounced meat-eating in commemoration of the destruction of the Temple.

¹⁰² Jörg Frey, ‘Die Fragmente des Ebionäerevangeliums,’ in *Antike christliche Apokryphen in deutscher Übersetzung 1: Evangelien und Verwandtes 1*, C. Marksches and J. Schröter, eds., (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012), 615–616.

First-century Judaism certainly had ascetical elements.¹⁰³ An “established tradition of asceticism” was already in place by the time Jesus was born.¹⁰⁴ There is also good reason to think that Nazirite vows were relatively common in the first century.¹⁰⁵ As we have seen, Philo’s Therapeutae abstained from meat and wine.¹⁰⁶ It is possible, then, to see Jesus’ promise not to drink wine again until the coming of the kingdom as a kind of Nazirite vow.¹⁰⁷ There is no question that the Synoptic Gospels envision the consummation of the kingdom of God in terms of an eschatological banquet.¹⁰⁸ But while Ebionite traditions may leave open the possibility of drinking wine again in the coming kingdom, they do *not* presume the resumption of meat consumption.¹⁰⁹ Moreover, Epiphanius claims their gospel quotes Jesus as saying that he does *not* desire “to eat *meat* (χρέας)” on “this Passover” (Πάσχα).¹¹⁰ The author of this gospel was no doubt aware that the Passover meal consisted of lamb, but Jesus’ reluctance to eating meat is not linked to a temporary vow or the idea that he would resume eating meat once the kingdom arrived (cf. Luke 22:16).¹¹¹ Ascetic elements are indeed present in the early Jesus movement, but their motivations seem to be linked to eschatological ideals, ideals that also affected other areas of religious practice and interpretation, one of which may well have been the eschatological restoration of the Edenic diet, prophetically foretold as the “messianic age” in the book of Isaiah.

As for the origins and history of early Jewish Christian vegetarianism, the dating of Jewish Christian texts and traditions is fraught with assumptions

¹⁰³ Steven Fraade, “Ascetical Aspects of Ancient Judaism,” in *Jewish Spirituality: From the Bible through the Middle Ages* (New York: Crossroad, 1986), 253–88.

¹⁰⁴ Steven Fraade, “The Nazirite in Ancient Judaism,” in *Ascetic Behavior in Greco-Roman Antiquity* (SAC; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 213–23.

¹⁰⁵ See Simon J. Joseph, “The Ascetic Jesus,” *JSHJ* 8 (2010), 146–181, esp. 158–159, 176–177.

¹⁰⁶ *On the Contemplative Life* 2, 73–74.

¹⁰⁷ M. Wojciechowski, “Le naziréat et la Passion (Mc 14, 25a; 15:23),” *Bib* 65 (1984): 94–96.

¹⁰⁸ Luke 22:14–18, Matt 26:29, Mark 14:22, and Matt 8:11; Luke 13:28–29.

¹⁰⁹ The Ebionite Eucharist seems to have consisted of only water and bread (Irenaeus, *Haer.* 5.1.3; Epiphanius, *Pan.* 30.16.1).

¹¹⁰ *Pan.* 30.22.4.

¹¹¹ See further Simon J. Joseph, “‘I Have Come to Abolish Sacrifices’ (Epiphanius, *Pan.* 30.16.5): Re-examining a Jewish Christian Text and Tradition,” *NTS* 63 (2017): 92–110, esp. 103.

about their “late” and secondary status.¹¹² Still, we must differentiate between *early* Jewish Christianity, a category which properly includes Jesus’ family (the δεσπόσυνοι),¹¹³ the Twelve, Peter, James, Jude, and Matthew, and *later* Jewish Christianity, an equally complex spectrum of ethnically Jewish groups identified as Nazoreans, Ebionites, and Elchasaites by the early Church Fathers.¹¹⁴ A common argument in contemporary scholarship is the suggestion that these latter Jewish Christian traditions reflect second-century apologetics in light of the destruction of the Temple,¹¹⁵ with such beliefs developing “*in reaction* to the destruction of the temple and the end of the temple cult in 70 CE.”¹¹⁶ Yet the assumption that Jewish Christians only adopted *vegetarian* practices in light of the Temple’s destruction is demonstrably false, as Paul’s correspondence shows.

It is certainly possible, in principle, to distinguish the Jewish Christian rejection of animal sacrifice from Jewish Christian vegetarianism (given that Paul documents an apparent example of the latter, but not the former), but the earliest evidence of an anti-sacrificial Jewish Christian tradition dates to c. 116–117 CE,¹¹⁷ and is associated with the Jewish sect of Elchasaites who practiced circumcision, celebrated the Sabbath,¹¹⁸ revered Jerusalem, criticized animal sacrifice,¹¹⁹ and *discouraged meat-eating*.¹²⁰ Moreover, the second-century

¹¹² Adam H. Becker and Annette Yoshiko Reed, eds., *The Ways that Never Parted: Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (TSAJ 95; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003).

¹¹³ Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* 1.7.14; 3.11–12, 19–20; 32.5–6; 4.22.4. See Richard Bauckham, *Jude and the Relatives of Jesus in the Early Church* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1990).

¹¹⁴ Jones, *An Ancient Jewish Christian Source*, 164, n. 21. See also Munck, “Primitive Jewish Christianity and Later Jewish Christianity: Continuation or Rupture?,” 77–93.

¹¹⁵ Reed, “Jewish Christianity,” 211.

¹¹⁶ Bauckham, *Living*, 100 (emphases added).

¹¹⁷ J. Irmscher, “The Book of Elchasai,” in *New Testament Apocrypha II: Writings Relating to the Apostles, Apocalypses and Related Subjects*, W. Schneemelcher, ed., trans. R. McL. Wilson (Louisville; John Knox Press, 1992), 685–90; Gerard P. Luttikhuisen, *The Revelation of Elchasai: Investigations into the Evidence for a Mesopotamian Jewish Apocalypse of the Second Century and its Reception by Judeo-Christian Propagandists* (TSAJ 8; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1985); A. F. J. Klijn and G. J. Reinink, “Elchasai and Mani,” *VC*, 28 (1974), 277–89.

¹¹⁸ On circumcision, see Hippolytus, *Ref.* 9.14.1; Pseudo-Clementine *Adjuration* 1.1; *Pan.* 19.5.1; 30.17.5. On the Sabbath, see Hippolytus, *Ref.* 19.16.3.

¹¹⁹ *Pan.* 19.3.5–7.

¹²⁰ *Pan.* 19.3.6; 53.1.4. Fitzmyer, “The Qumran Scrolls,” 335–372, notes that according to Epiphanius, Cerinthus and the Elchasaites directly influenced the Ebionites.

author of *Rec.* 1.27–71 represents himself as an heir of the Jerusalem community,¹²¹ stating that animal sacrifice was allowed by Moses as a *temporary* concession in order to prevent Israel from further idolatry, but when Jesus came, sacrifice was replaced by baptism.¹²² Consequently, the destruction of the Temple is linked to Israel’s failure to heed Jesus’ warning and instruction that “animal sacrifice was never intended by God,”¹²³ but was the result of Israel being influenced by pagan rites, a temporary concession to Israel’s weakness.¹²⁴ The sustained scriptural and philosophical arguments employed in defending these non-normative positions suggest that Jewish Christian vegetarianism was remembered as an early practice that obviously needed scriptural justification. The Ebionite rewriting of the Synoptic Gospels was one such strategy. Another was engaging the Greco-Roman philosophical tradition. In neither case, however, do we see Jewish Christians lamenting the destruction of the Temple, preparing for its restoration, or lamenting their inability to locate *kosher* meat markets in a predominantly pagan environment. Nor do we find them affirming the identification of Jesus as a blood sacrifice. Considering the relatively close relationship between the rejection of animal sacrifice and the affirmation of vegetarianism in Jewish Christian traditions (of Jesus, John, James, Peter, and Matthew), it is tempting to draw the conclusion that vegetarianism represents a continuum of Jewish Christian identity from the mid-first century through the fourth century of the common era.

Conclusion

The early Jesus movement, comprised of both Jews and Gentiles, included both Jewish vegetarians and Gentile non-vegetarians. Presumably, there were also Jewish non-vegetarians and Gentile vegetarians. Yet insofar as Jewish Christian texts represent multiple vegetarian traditions, it seems safe to surmise that vegetarianism was a relatively common feature of these communities, a network of ethnically Jewish followers of Jesus who regarded him as *messianic*, that is, as “anointed” in some special sense. Since Paul’s letters attest to vegetarianism already being practiced in the Corinthian and Roman *ekklēsiai*, and indicate that this was a point of some contention, it is tempting to draw broad conclusions about continuity between early and later “Jewish Christianity.” I will resist that temptation, but there is good reason to think that Jewish Christian vegetarianism may have had less to do with maintaining the laws of *kashrut* in

¹²¹ Jones, “The Genesis of Pseudo-Clementine Christianity,” 204–206.

¹²² *Rec.* 1.37.

¹²³ *Rec.* 1.54.

¹²⁴ *Rec.* 1.36.

foreign lands, lamenting the loss of the Temple, or practicing asceticism, and more to do with efforts to realize and enact their eschatological convictions, one of which was the restoration of the antediluvian diet prescribed by God in Genesis 1, and to develop such early eschatological convictions in a progressively more philosophical direction.¹²⁵ I would further suggest that this is what we would expect of a *Jewish* community convinced that the messianic age had begun or was soon to arrive.

The marginalization of Jewish Christianity was a complex historical process. The destruction of the Temple, the dissolution and disappearance of the Jerusalem *ekklēsia*, the sudden influx of Gentile members and social networks who followed Paul's teachings rather than James's, the identification of vegetarians as "weak," Mark's parenthetical reference to Jesus declaring "all foods clean," the author of Acts' account of Peter's vision, and the increasingly hostile heresiological opposition to Jewish Christian texts, traditions, individuals, and communities made it virtually impossible to maintain undistorted memories of the past. Rabbinical Judaism and Orthodox Christianity developed in opposition and contradistinction to Jewish Christianity, purposefully forgetting the Jewish Christian traditions that once bound brothers together in common bond to Jesus.

The study of Christian origins, insofar as it is a discourse of analysis, reconstruction, and restoration, remembers these marginalized voices of the past, not in order to construct a modern hybrid of messianic Judaism, nor simply as an antiquarian novelty nostalgically lamenting a romanticized past, but rather as testimonial witnesses which provide nourishing food for thought, especially for those who call themselves "Christian" because they believe that Jesus embodied and inaugurated the messianic age heralded and predicted by the prophets.¹²⁶

¹²⁵ Reasoner, *The Strong and the Weak*, 102–131, 219. Despite the fact that the rhetorical focus of the Pseudo-Clementine literature is on animal sacrifice rather than vegetarianism per se, its philosophical dependence on the creation narrative in Genesis supports this contention.

¹²⁶ Bauckham, *Living*, 103 n. 63, affirms Jesus' kingdom-message as the "renewal of creation" and that human beings will be vegetarian "*in the messianic age.*"