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Elijah and Elisha Motifs in the Gospels

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Digest

Throughout the Gospels, one notes the recurrence of motifs reminiscent of the Elijah/Elisha cycle in the books of Kings, both in passages which mention Elijah or Elisha explicitly and in miracle stories which parallel or reflect Elianic motifs.

Does this signify that a group of early Christians may have identified Jesus with Elijah, and may have developed miracle traditions which would stress this identification? In order to establish the existence of such a group, form criticism would be required—for criticism of both the arrangement of miracle pericopes and of the pericopes themselves. Unfortunately, the weaknesses of form-criticism diminish its utility for this particular study.

In our effort to adequately understand the Gospels' use of Elijah, we must first examine that use in the context of the general New Testament practice of citing Tanakhic personages. We must also separate miracle pericopes which convey Elianic motifs from those Gospel passages which mention Elijah or Elisha specifically. Finally, we must analyse each Gospel's use of Elijah separately.

We will undertake in this thesis a detailed discussion of the various forces which prompted each Evangelist to use Elijah in the way he did. Chapter One furnishes an introduction to our study. Chapter Two introduces Elijah and Elisha <u>in situ</u>, as prophetic warriors in the period of the Omride dynasty. The Elijah/Elisha miracle cycles are a typological source from which the authors of individual Gospel miracle pericopes derived literary inspiration.

Chapter Three discusses the phenomenon of miracle in the ancient world, outlines the difficulties inherent in assigning the term "aretalogy"

to ancient miracle collections, and describes the New Testament practice of citing Tanakhic personages for a variety of theological ends.

Chapter Four begins our discussion of Elijah as he appears in the Gospels. Since Mark, as the earliest Gospel, represents the first known synthesis of Christian traditions, we examine those traditions in looking for clues to an "Elijah-Christology." At this juncture, we take up the question of the usefulness of form criticism to our inquiry, turning from a consideration of miracle collections to that of individual pericopes, from the question of "aretalogies" to the classical form-criticism of Bultmann and Dibelius. Having discussed the impossibility of proving the existence of an "Elijah-Christology", we will devote the latter half of Chapter Four to an exposition of how Mark uses Elijah for exegetical purposes and for establishing Jesus' identity vis à vis John the Baptist.

In Chapter Five, we contrast the uses which Matthew and Luke make of the Elijah symbol, and the bases for their usage; our exposition at this point consists solely of the examination of passages which mention Elijah specifically. Finally, we will deal briefly with Elijah as used by the Fourth Evangelist.

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Chapter One

Introduction

When I first began research for this thesis, I was intrigued by three areas of apparent parallel between the Elijah and Elisha who appear in I Kings and the Jesus who is portrayed by the Gospels. The most obvious of these parallels is that Elijah, Elisha, and Jesus all perform miracles. Elijah and Elisha are the only Scriptural figures to whom a series, or "cycle," of miracles is attributed. These miracles are in many ways imitated by Gospel accounts of Jesus' career as a wonder worker. Since Elijah, especially, is also mentioned explicitly in the Gospels, and since these references to him occur in key passages where Jesus' identity is under focus, I assumed that the miracle tales of Kings, as "repeated" in the Gospels, had a great deal to do with the evolution of New Testament soteriology and Christology.

Accordingly, I first proposed that this study would consist of a form-critical comparison of the miracle stories of Kings and the Gospels, and a redaction-critical study of the arrangement of the miracle stories in the Gospels. My aim was to determine if, in arranging the miracle stories of Jesus, the New Testament redactors may have meant to portray Jesus as continuing the wonder traditions in Kings. In other words, my original hypothesis was that, if a "cycle" of wonder stories could be isolated in the Gospels, and if this cycle resembled the Elijah/ Elisha wonder cycle, then Jesus may have been seen by those Christians who had arranged the miracle stories as a reincarnation of Elijah or Elisha. Church leaders who wished to emphasize that Jesus had gone beyond the Elijah role could have subordinated the miracle passages to those sections

in which Jesus denies that he is Elijah.

As my research progressed, however, it soon became clear that my original hypothesis could not be proven. The form-criticism which seemed at the outset so promising a tool was rendered virtually useless for the purposes of this study. The fluidity of motifs used in ancient miracle literature, and the duplication of phenomena among literatures whose dependence upon each other cannot always be established, made it impossible to determine the true "forms" of either Scriptural or New Testament miracle stories. That both Elijah and Jesus multiply loaves, for example, does not necessarily indicate a direct borrowing from one tradition by another.

Form-criticism is of doubtful use in furthering our understanding of the relationship among Elijah, Elisha, and Jesus, whether we are considering the form of an individual miracle pericope or the form of an arrangement of miracle pericopes. Neither the classical form-criticism of Bultmann, nor modern attempts to classify Gospel wonder accounts as "aretalogies", avail us in our task. Bultmann's "forms" have come under attack because they are rigid categories into which an extremely fluid genre is forced. To call Gospel miracle stories "aretalogies" is, as we shall see, problematic, since the term is of recent origin and is defined differently by different scholars.

Thus, it is impossible at this point to assign to parallels of motif between the Elijah and Elisha cycle and the Gospel miracle tales any ideological basis whatsoever. There may have been a group of early Christians who saw Jesus as Elijah; this group may have been responsible for the presence of Elianic motifs in the Gospels, but the existence of such a group cannot be scientifically established from our evidence.

We can trace a literary, typological link between certain miracle pericopes and the Elijah/Elisha cycle, but we cannot assert that this link is anything but a literary one. Only in Luke (which most clearly resembles what is usually described as an aretalogy) could we find a Jesus who continued the wonder traditions in Kings, for Luke, of all the Gospels, equates Jesus with Elijah. Luke, however, does not use miracle stories to establish this equation as much as he uses passages which explicitly mention Elijah; his reasons for establishing Jesus' Elijah-identity are political, not theological.

As it turns out, the miracle tales of the Gospels which convey Elianic motifs must be separated from passages where Elijah is mentioned explicitly. Rather than reinforce each other, the two types of passages really refer to two different "Elijah"s. The miracles of Kings, which are the only bloc of wonder stories in Scripture, would be a logical literary source for anyone writing about the doings of a Jewish wonder-worker of Jesus' time. In passages where Elijah is mentioned by name, he is not Elijah the wonder-worker as much as he is the Elijah predicted in Malachi 4:5, the representative of Biblical prophecy. It is an eschatological Elijah who appears in the key passages of the Gospels which shape the identity of Jesus. This eschatological Elijah is, at least in part, a creation of Christianity; nowhere in Scripture is it written that Elijah will be the forerunner of the Messiah, or that the Messiah must have a forerunner at all. Indeed, Jewish Scriptures offer us a variety of figures who will usher in the End Time--the Son of Man, the Davidic Messiah, and the Prophet like Moses of Deuteronomy 18:15. Early Christian exegesis created the concept of an Elijah-forerunner in response to Jewish contentions that the new age had not yet arrived and to

counteract competition from followers of John the Baptist.

The second apparent parallel between Elijah/Elisha and Jesus is that the relationship between Elijah and Elisha seems to resemble that of John the Baptist and Jesus. In Kings, Elijah is a solitary desert dweller, an uncompromising defender of the faith who lives in a world of drought, privation, and spiritual purity. He ordains Elisha just before his apotheosis; Elisha then leaves the desert solitudes for the cities, becoming involved in the realpolitik of the collapsing Omride dynasty and immersing himself in the affiars of the people and the בני הנביאים . In the New Testament, John the Baptist is the solitary desert dweller and defender of the faith. His garments even resemble those of Elijah. He baptizes Jesus just prior to his own death; Jesus then carries his ministry into the cities and towns, out among the people. The בני הנביאים could correspond to Jesus' disciples. Logic would seem to identify Jesus with Elisha—the prophet who is to go out among the people is in both cases ordained by a desert prophet who possesses divine authority. That the New Testament carries Jesus beyond the role of Elisha could be seen to be the result of later Church theology intruding upon an earlier text.

The foregoing is an alluring comparison, especially when seen in the light of the traditional Christian view of the relationship between Jesus and the Baptist, namely, that Jesus received spiritual training and Baptism from John before beginning his own ministry. The comparison, however, remains only alluring. The traditional picture of the Baptist comes from a harmonization of all four Gospels, and is therefore suspect as history. In fact, there is a compelling argument for the theory that Jesus and John the Baptist never met. The identification of Jesus

with Elisha remains a viable literary option, but it is an option that was never utilized by Christianity. Actually, the Evangelists were concerned over the proplem of the "priority" of John the Baptist, and did everything they could to subordinate John to Jesus. They would never dream of identifying Jesus with Elisha; they neutralize the significance of Jesus' baptism, presenting it (except in the case of Mark) as something to which the Baptist is only a material witness. That John would confer any authority on Jesus was, for the New Testament authors, inconceivable. Our typological comparison of Elijah/Elisha to John/Jesus may have occurred to the early Christians, but, if it did, it was most certainly buried by them.

The same could be said of Elijah's apotheosis and its relationship to the New Testament, the third apparent parallel. Elijah is carried alive into the heavens in a chariot of fire; since he never died, his return could safely be assumed in messianic speculation. One would think that Elijah's ascension would be the paradigm for Jesus' resurrection and expected return--the literary connection would be obvious. Originally, I had intended to explore the apotheoses of both Jesus and Elijah in depth; when seen in concert with the other supposed connections stated above, the shared motif of ascension would reinforce Jesus' role as heir to the prophetic traditions of Kings. The interest of the Gospel writers, however, was to portray Jesus' resurrection as a new event, as the beginning of a new age. While Elijah ascended into heaven alive (as had Enoch), Jesus died first and then was resurrected. It was Jesus' conquest of death, something Elijah had never achieved, which was to be the signal of humanity's salvation. Thus, if there had originally been strands of Christian tradition which, literarily or otherwise,

imitated Elijah's ascension, these strands were ommitted from or buried in the Gospel accounts. Even Luke's portrayal of the resurrection shies away from presenting a Jesus who goes to heaven in a chariot; Jesus was merely "carried up to heaven" (24:51), and no Elianic imagery enhances the text.

Since the three hypotheses with which I began my research were not borne out in further investigation, this study has taken on a somewhat different character than was originally intended. I have devoted ample space to arraying the evidence for a strong literary connection between Elijah motifs in Kings and Jesus' miracle tales, and to discussing why this literary connection cannot be used to prove the existence of any group which espoused an Elijah-Christology. In addition, however, I found that it is necessary to examine each Gospel's use of the Elijah-symbol (as opposed to Elianic motifs) separately, and to discuss in detail the various forces which caused each Gospel author to use Elijah in the way he did.

The Evangelists used Elijah, as it turns out, within a larger context of citing Tanakhic personages for apologetic, exegetical, or political reasons. Each Gospel writer used Elijah for his own purposes, often completely contrary to previous formulations. Mark, the earliest Gospel, is our first record of an Elijah who is to precede the Messiah; this exegetical formulation ingeniously deals with John the Baptist by giving him a place in the Christian soteriological framework as the beginning of the Kingdom. In addition, it counters Jewish claims that the age had not arrived; it had indeed arrived, for John, a relatively well-known figure, was actually Elijah. Matthew also identifies John with Elijah, but adds no significant references to him that are not already contained

in Mark. This is because Matthew's concerns are with the establishment of Church discipline; it is enough for him to restate Mark's claim that John is Elijah, and to add that the events of Jesus' life and the life of the Church after his death were all in fulfillment of the ancient prophecies which Elijah symbolized.

Luke, on the other hand, completely undoes the role of Elijah which had been established by the two earlier Gospels for John the Baptist. Continuity with Judaism, which was a legal entity in Roman eyes, was Luke's primary concern; this continuity could best be demonstrated by making Jesus the symbol of all that was best in Judaism, the culmination of the prophetic tradition, Elijah. Thus, Luke carefully reworked all the passages in the other two Synoptics which explicitly mentioned Elijah, and, if he could, made them apply to Jesus. He did this as part of his efforts to present an "orderly account" of Jesus' life, an account which he saw as vastly superior to that of Mark and Matthew.

The Fourth Evangelist breaks completely with all that came before; neither Jesus nor John the Baptist is Elijah. Instead, John's aim is to convey one powerful theological message—the Jesus who appeared on earth was only a temporary incarnation of a cosmic, eternal being, the Logos. Elijah, the Baptist, or any other history-bound figure is totally irrelevant to the Fourth Evangelist's "timeless" message; to say that the Baptist was Elijah was to force the Logos, the Christ, into a Jewish eschatological framework which the Christ completely transcended. Thus, John has the Baptist deny that which Jesus explicitly states in Mark, that John the Baptist is Elijah.

Although, as I just mentioned, the use of Elijah varies markedly from gospel to gospel, one thread unifies all four Evangelists'

treatment of the prophet. The Gospel authors seem to have been aware of Mark's conception of Elijah (the Elijah of Mal. 4:5) and of his identification of John the Baptist with Elijah. Since Elijah was seen by the Gospels as a marker for the beginning of the End Time, the way in which he appears in each gospel signifies its author's conception of the imminence of the Parousia. Thus, we have devoted part of Chapter Five to a discussion of the birth of the idea of the "Second Coming" and its evolution through the Four Gospels. For those who believed that Jesus would return speedily, as did Mark, it was logical to identify John the Baptist as Elijah. As time went on, as Jesus tarried in the heavens, later Gospel authors like Matthew had to qualify this early identification. By the time John was written, the only way in which Jesus' delay could be explained was by severing him from history altogether and making him eternal and preexistent. Since, in this context, it did not matter when Jesus returned, Elijah dropped out of the picture altogether.

Chapter Two

Elijah and Elisha in the Books of Kings

To understand the Gospels' use of Elijah and Elisha, we must first turn to the book of Kings in which they first appear. The book of Kings is the culmination of what we term the Deuteronomic History, that corpus of Scripture redacted by a Deuteronomic editor and extending from Deuteronomy through II Kings. Kings itself is a monumental and highly crafted piece of historical writing. Its underlying sources are of many different kinds and have been skilfully sewn together. The sources shed light on the reigns of particular kings; the editor, or Deuteronomist, then contributes his own touches and commentary to tie the whole together. As Von Rad[1] states, a "vigorous selectivity" is manifest throughout; the author gleans from the apparently huge selection of sources at his disposal only enough material to make his point, referring the reader, if interested, to the original sources: e.g., "now the rest of the acts of King so and so, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel?" The point that the Deuteronomist is trying to make is theological: the history and fate of Judah and Israel depend on the conduct of their kings in one or two critical areas—their preservation of the YHWH cult (often the YHWH cult in Jerusalem), and the rejection of the Canaanite cults of the "high places." The author downplays the myriad of social and political forces that influenced the different rulers in their actions in favor of a repetitive, highly moralistic, religious history.

Among the sources used in the historical mosaic of Kings is a group of stories known as the Elijah/Elisha cycle. The Elijah cycle is used

to highlight the decline and fall of the Omride dynasty, while the Elisha cycle deals with the rebellion of Jehu, the wars of Hazael and Ben Hadad II, and the early part of the reign of Joash. No other prophets in the book of Kings receive the same degree of attention as Elijah and Elisha. Accordingly, the question immediately arises: why are they so important to the Deuteronomist? To respond, we must examine the origin and nature of the Deuteronomic history as a whole.

Modern scholarship has held differing views as to the origin and nature of the Deuteronomic tradition. In 1805, W. M. L. De Wette first advanced systematically the thesis that the "Book of Laws" found by Josiah in II Kings 22-23 was the book of Deuteronomy.[2] As E. W. Nicholson indicates in his summary of scholarship on the subject, De Wette's views have survived critical attack,[3] and are today accepted by most scholars.[4]

This view of the origins of Deuteronomy is grounded in the fact that many of Josiah's enactments in response to the "Law Book" can only be understood in relation to Deuteronomy. However, as Nicholson points out, not all of this king's actions are to be explained as deriving from the demands of the law book; instead, there is evidence that certain political reforms were carried even before the law book was found in 621 BCE. Thus, Deuteronomy was not merely a blueprint for reformation that had been introduced by a Judean reform and revival party in the seventh century; indeed, the evidence as it stands seems to indicate a Northern origin for the Deuteronomic tradition.[5] Martin Noth has asserted that the Deuteronomic viewpoint and early traditions originated in the Israelite tribal confederation during the time of the Judges.[6] During that time, this confederation was a theocratic community called an amphictyony, united in covenant with YHWH and dedicated to a central sanctuary where covenant

festivals were held. The tribes, also united in a pact of mutual defense, would periodically venture forth in a "holy war", usually led by a charismatic leader (Judges 3:10, 14:6, etc.).

For most of the amphictyonic period, the central sanctuary of the tribal league was as Shiloh. After Shiloh fell in 1050, Beth El and Gilgal became important centers of covenantal authority, and were focal points of prophetic activity. Elijah and Elisha frequented both sites (IIK 2:1; 4:38).[7]

How long these centers adhered to covenantal traditions is unclear, but Amos (5:21-24) and Hosea (6:6) give us the impression that in their time the cults there were no longer transmitting the pure faith. Nicholson asserts that it was the prophetic guilds that kept the old traditions alive, often in the face of persecution by Northern royalty. The Deuteronomist takes a dim view of kingship—particularly in the North. This very likely reflects the numerous clashes between prophets and kings that occur throughout the Deuteronomic history; and, in the case of the Northern Kingdom, the very location of a capital elsewhere than Jerusalem constituted a blight on the king in question. Samuel derides Saul's violations of ancient traditions; Ahijah, a prophet, influenced the revolt against the house of David and helped set up Jeroboam as king. Baasha, who overthrew Jeroboam, was also raised to power by a prophet.[8] In this context, the activities of Elijah and Elisha represent the culmination of prophetic, anti-monarchical feeling—they predict the fall of the Omride dynasty and instigate the Jehu rebellion. In effect, Elijah and Elisha have declared a holy war on the Northern Monarchy and the corruption it represents.

The prophetic party, of whom Elijah and Elisha came to be symbolic,

was instrumental in the formation of what we now know as Deuteronomy. Nicholson has stated that, in his opinion, the "Deuteronomic circle", or prophetic party, fled to Jerusalem with its traditions in 721 BCE, after the Assyrian invasion, believing that Israel's future lay there. In Jerusalem, they attempted a revival in conjunction with Hezekiah, but this failed, and reaction set in under Manasseh. After this failure, they drew up their own plans for reform in the form of Deuteronomy, making certain concessions to Jerusalem traditions so that the book would be accepted. When Josiah attained power, the book was discovered and accepted by the authorities.[9] Nicholson goes on to claim that the acceptance of Deuteronomy spurred the prophetic circle to life again, beginning a process which culminated in the formation of the Deuteronomistic corpus of Joshua-Kings in the exilic period.[10] Here, the traditions concerning Elijah and Elisha that had been passed down from the earlier days of the prophetic guilds of the North were set into the larger matrix of Kings. Elijah and Elisha, for the final redactors of the Deuteronomistic history, are the prime exemplars of the charismatic warrior of YHWH, perpetually fighting the very royal corruption which the author/redactor sees as the reason for the downfall of both Israel and Judah.

From here we turn to the Elijah/Elisha stories themselves. The two prophets appear in Scripture as follows:

I Kings 17:1-16	Elijah's role in a drought, feeding a widow.
17:17-24	Elijah cures the widow's son of sickness.
18:17-44	Elijah and the 450 prophets of Baal; Elijah brings rain.
19:1-18	Elijah flees to Mt. Horeb.

I Kings	19:19-21	Elijah anoints Elisha.
	21:1-29	Naboth the Jezreelite.
II Kings	1:1-17	Prophecy concerning Ahaziah, Elijah brings fire down on the captains of 50.
	2:1-18	Elijah ascends to heaven, Elisha takes command.
	2:19-25	Elisha heals waters of Jericho, punishes children.
	3:12-20	Elisha brings water in Moabite war.
	4:1-7	Elisha multiplies oil for debtor woman.
	4:8-37	Elisha and the Shunamite woman.
	4:38-44	Elisha cures a pot of uncleanness, feeds a multitude.
	5:1-27	Elisha cures Naaman of leprosy, the affliction of Gehazi.
	6:1-7	Elisha rescues axe-head from the Jordan.
	6:8-23	Elisha blinds and captures Syrian army.
	7:1-20	Spoiling the camp of the Arameans.
	8:1-9:20	Prophecy concerning Ben Hadad and Hazael, Jehu is anointed King.
	13:14-20	Elisha dies; the healing power of his bones.

Within the Elijah/Elisha cycle, two basic types of stories can be found. In the first type, the prophet is portrayed as a prophet of the people, and the style of the writing is largely that of a historical novelette.[11] Included in this category are the stories of Naboth the Jezreelite, Elisha's bringing of water in the Moabite wars, and the entire section that deals with Elisha's role in the Jehu rebellion and with the rulers Ben Hadad and Hazael. These passages are concerned with prophecy and its fulfillment, the revelation of the Divine hand in political

affairs. Often, the prophet appears only briefly, in order to utter his prophecy, and then vanishes from the scene. Elijah is brought into the Naboth story, for example, only to prophesy concering the demise of Ahab, and the expression he uses ("him that dies of Ahab in the city the dogs shall eat," etc.) is also found elsewhere in Kings (I 14:11; 16:4). Elisha puts in a brief appearance in the account of the Jehu rebellion when he sends a servant to anoint Jehu, and Elijah's words concerning the house of Ahab surface again in the latter part of that chapter. Elijah and Elisha are portrayed in the same way that the other prophets in Kings are presented: as vehicles of Divine intent. Their personalities are unimportant to the narrative in these situations; rather, they are brought in where they are needed in the tale of the holy war against the enemy.

The second type of story found in the Elijah-Elisha cycle is the "wonder story", the short anecdote or legend in which the prophet performs a miracle either for an individual or a large group. Here, the curtain of chronicle and history parts, and we see Elijah and Elisha in a wide variety of situations that cross all social and political boundaries. Miracles and magical practices are described in considerable detail. Although Elijah appears as a solitary warrior of God, and Elisha's activities are carried out in the company of kings and princes, both share much in common in these tales, which has prompted some exegetes to claim that most of the tales are the work of one author.

While the Elijah and Elisha who are specifically mentioned in the Gospels are symbols of the ultimate fulfillment of Israel's history, and are shorn of miraculous garb, the Elijah and Elisha that perform miracles surface subliminally in the New Testament text. It appears that, while the

New Testament authors made use of Elijah's symbolic role in the Deuteronomic history as an element of Christian soteriology, they relied, consciously or unconsciously, on Elijah's miracle tales in their presentation of Jesus' miraculous activities. A detailed study of the miracle stories in Kings is necessary, therefore, to our understanding of the typologies and motifs that link the miracle stories of Elijah to Jesus (detailed notes on the text of the miracle stories appear in Appendix A).

Most commentators are in agreement that chapters 17 and 18 of I Kings form a unified whole, which seems to be a bloc of traditions dealing with Elijah's role in the great drought. Elijah is depicted as the one at whose word the drought came to be (17:1), as a helper of the poor, as a healer of the sick, as a champion of the YHWH cult, and, finally, as a bringer of the rain which ends the drought. We are exposed to different theological battlegrounds, and in each the power of God is shown to be far superior to the power of the baalim. This is the essential message of the drought story, which is reinforced by such declarations of belief as "now I know that you are a man of God, and that the word of the Lord in your mouth is truth" (17:24), and "the Lord he is God, the Lord he is God" (18:39).

Chapter 19, the story of Elijah's journey to Horeb, gives a different perspective of Elijah. Oppenheimer[12] maintains that this chapter comes from a different source than that of chapters 17 and 18, while Gray[13] would unite the chapter with the previous section. Characteristic of this chapter are allusions to the wandering of Israel in the wilderness of Horeb, which could justify a connection with chapter 18 and its imitation of Ex. 24. The phrase, "and Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah

had done, and how he had slain all the prophets with the sword", also points to a link between the two chapters, although this could be a gloss by the compiler to tie the two stories together. The section in which Elijah is charged with anointing Elisha could very well be a later addition by Elijah's school, in order to legitimize the succession of Elisha.

Oppenheimer[14] and Gray[15] basically agree that the drought cycle and the story of Elijah's flight to Horeb originated among close admirers of the prophet. Gray maintains that Elijah stories received distinctive form before the disappearance of the Northern Kingdom, and that Elisha had a vital part in their transmission. He sees the "relevance of the ministry of Elijah to the historical situation" as evidence of a near-contemporary source who rested on the authority of Elisha. Thus, for Gray, the unity of the drought cycle, together with the flight to Horeb, could go back to the time of Elijah himself, although Elisha could have emended certain portions of what are now chapters 18 and 19 to enhance the dramatic effect and to establish a clear succession of prophecy.

It is a matter of dispute as to whether the traditions now embodied in II Kings 1 and 2 were written during Elijah's time or by Elisha's school. The special character of the apotheosis of Elijah would have been useful to the followers of either prophet. Oppenheimer[16] places chapter 1 among the stories of Elijah, while chapter 2 is an introduction to the Elisha saga, written by a student of Elisha. Burney[17] cites the use of the name אלה and the so-called "inferior literary merit" of the account of Elijah's apotheosis, and concludes that chapter 1 comes from a much later source than does IK 17-19. Chapter 2 would make a fitting ending to the Elijah series, as well as a good introduction to the Elisha

series. If, as Gray maintains, both sets of stories originated among the "sons of the prophets," this could account for the smooth transition from the Elijah to the Elisha cycle.

It is basically agreed that the Elisha sagas took shape in what is referred to as a group of the "sons of the prophets." Just who these sons of the prophets were is open to discussion. Gray sees them as a band of what he calls "dervishes,"[18] prophets who engaged in all kinds of magical practices and had a close contact with the people; Oppenheimer, on the other hand,[19] says that the בני הנביאים were an underground movement that organized in Beth El and Jericho as a reaction to foreign, pagan intrusion into the cultic life of Israel. I would think that בני הנביאים has probably meant different things at different times, and that what we are dealing with here may be a concept rather than a particular group. The fact that the sons of the prophets are never really given a life of their own, and are referred to in groups of fifty (while there is an attempt elsewhere to add to these rhetorical numbers—450 priests of Baal, forty-two children devoured by bears—to tinge the tales with verisimilitude) makes them hard to identify as an individual group. That the traditions of Elijah and Elisha would be preserved among their followers is highly likely, but we are still very much in the dark as to what those followers were like and what they did. It could be that בני הנביאים were the interests that lay behind Deuteronomy, the group whose figureheads Elijah and Elisha were. בני הנביאים possibly means, quite literally, sons of the prophets; in other words, "disciples of the prophets", since the text indicates to us the father-son relationship between prophet and disciple (see note to IIK 2:9, Appendix A).

It appears that, whereas the sons of the prophets were, in the case

of Elijah, dealing with already established traditions, concerning Elisha they were free to innovate and overlay anecdotes with new meanings.[20] This would explain the emphasis on the-miraculous-for-its-own-sake that permeates the Elisha series, while in the Elijah tales miracles, though important, are always subordinate to declarations of religious loyalty. The wonder stories in which Elisha appears among the sons of the prophets, according to Gray,[21] were written down sometime after the prophet's death in 790, when the popular image of him had reached legendary proportions, while the story of Naaman and the blinding of the Aramean army came from a different source. What links the Elisha tales together is the centrality of the miraculous nature of the prophet himself.

The freedom of Elisha's followers to overlay the legends of their master with details of their own contribution has resulted in a similarity of motifs and phrases between the wonder stories about Elijah and those about Elisha. Not only do we find both prophets doing the same kinds of things, but often the same language is used in two different accounts. Most obvious is the similarity between Elijah's role in the drought (IK 17) and the group of stories in IIK 4. Each unit begins with the prophet helping a starving widow by multiplying oil, and ends with a miraculous cure of the woman's son (in the case of Elijah) or the son of another woman (in the case of Elisha). Not only are the similarities between the two stories intriguing, but the differences are revealing: IK 17 offers a lightly-sketched, "shorthand" account of Elijah's rescue of the widow and the raising of her son, while, in IIK 4, Elisha's doings are more carefully described and the aggadic motifs are fleshed out with details. The author of IIK 4 also seems to have felt constrained by the form bequeathed to him by IK 17; it appears that he

has taken several anecdotes about Elisha and arranged them in a form that would parallel an earlier tradition about Elijah. For example, he begins IIK 4 with an account of the saving of a widow, as we similarly find in IK 17. But, after the widow has been saved, the author introduces the tale of the Shunamite woman, who utters almost the same espression of belief ("behold, now I perceive that this is a holy man of God. . .") as that issuing from the lips of the widow in IK 17. This Shunamite, after favoring the prophet, is granted a son (with allusions to Genesis—see notes in Appendix A); his son dies and is resurrected by Elisha, with considerable aggadic flourish. Accordingly, it seems that the author is filling in details that were left out of IK 17 more than he is describing what Elisha actually did. It is interesting that, while the widow in IK 17 ends that particular chapter with a declaration of belief in Elijah and in God, the Shunamite woman merely takes her son and leaves after he has been cured. This pattern is followed throughout: in the Elijah cycle, miracles are unexpected and are used in the story to induce belief, while miracles are expected of Elisha as a matter of course. Other parallels occur in the text—e.g., both Elijah and Elisha are pursued by an angry king and retaliate by magically overcoming his forces. A number of phrases and sentences occur in both sets of stories.[22]

Several theories attempt to explain the similarities and differences between the two saga cycles. Oppenheimer[23] cites Eissfeldt, who claims that these are two different arrangements of stories, which came from the experiences of two different authors who wanted to hang miracle stories on great personalities. Oppenheimer himself believs that we have here one genre of aggadah being written about two men at the same time.

The charismatic powers of the prophet, he says, were fertile ground for the formation of short, popular stories; the compiler took from the general pool and added several general sentences such as ויהי אחרי הדברים האלה . Gray[24] on the other hand, sees two independent traditions here. The Elijah traditions colored those of Elisha, which are dotted with Aramaisms which could indicate a source closer to political power than the author of the Elijah cycle. Thus, the Elisha author uses the Elijah traditions as a foundation to build stories with a larger political context. I would think that this larger context in the Elisha stories may have served the needs of a prophetic group headed by Elisha and which regarded a certain collection of Elijah stories as "Scripture." To cast its leader Elisha in the tradition of Elijah was to give the group the authority it needed to conduct its affairs in that "larger political context." Thus, I would infer that the author of the Elisha cycle took or developed legends about Elisha and arranged them to fit the form of the Elijah cycle; that the author felt constrained to include both a widow and the Shunamite woman in IIK 4 (so the story would end with the proper motif) indicates to me that he did not feel at liberty to alter the particulars of the Elisha traditions, such as names and places. He could only embellish them, and arrange them in an Elijah-like way. This was enough, however, when coupled with the tale of the transfer of power from Elijah to Elisha, to legitimize Elisha completely and establish him as direct heir to the "spirit and power of Elijah."

Thus, Elijah and Elisha represent the first case (ca. 760) in which the followers of a prophet, Elisha, conferred legitimacy on their master by having his exploits parallel what was then "Scriptural" (the Elijah

tales) and by having the ultimate spiritual authority of the times (Elijah) personally designate that prophet as his legitimate heir. Elijah, in turn, is very strongly linked to the old, amphictyonic desert traditions of Moses, both through textual similarities and parallels of motif (see Appendix B). By building on the Elijah cycle, the Elisha school grounds itself in the ancient desert traditions about Moses. In addition, the Elisha tales seem to compare the prophet with Joshua, the disciple charged with implementing his master's prophecies (see notes to IIK 2:8-14, Appendix A). The entire cycle of stories derives its legitimacy throught association with the Pentateuchal themes found in the Elijah narratives. The compiler of the Elijah/Elisha cycles, then, may have assembled the tales of Elijah and Elisha to represent the doings of a second Moses and Joshua.

Notes: Chapter Two

[1]Gerhard Von Rad, "The Deuteronomic Theology of History in I and II Kings," The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1966), 205.

[2]E. W. Nicholson, Deuteronomy and Tradition (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1967), 1.

[3]Ibid., 4-7.

[4]Ibid., 7.

[5]Ibid., 16. cf., also, F. R. McCurley, Jr., "The Home of Deuteronomy Revisited: A Methodological Analysis of the Northern Theory," in A Light Unto My Path: Old Testament Studies in Honor of Jacob M. Myers, H. N. Bream, R. D. Heim, and C. A. Moore, eds. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1974), 295-317.

[6]Ibid., 48. See also M. Noth, Das System der zwolf Stamme Israels, BWANT II (1953), 1-65; Uberlieberungsgeschichte des Pentateuch (Stuttgart, 1948), and The History of Israel (London, 1960). Not all scholars accept the theory of an amphictyony. See, e.g., H. M. Orlinsky, "The Tribal System of Israel and Related Groups in the Period of the Judges," Oriens Antiquus 1 (1962): 11-20.

[7]Ibid., 62.

[8]Ibid., 63.

[9]Ibid., 102.

[10]Ibid., 123.

[11]Benjamin Oppenheimer (Uffenheimer), Nevuah ha Kedumah be Yisrael (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1973), 189.

[12]Ibid., 190.

[13]John Gray, I and II Kings: A Commentary (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1963), 336.

[14]Oppenheimer, op. cit., 191.

[15]Gray, loc. cit.

[16]Oppenheimer, op. cit., 186.

[17]C. F. Burney, Notes on the Hebrew Text of the Book of Kings (Oxford: Clarendon, 1963), 214.

[18]Gray, op. cit., 416.

[19]Oppenheimer, op. cit., 219.

[20]Gray, loc. cit.

[21]Ibid.

[22]Burney, op. cit., 411.

[23]Oppenheimer, op. cit., 269.

[24]Gray, op. cit., 417.

Chapter Three

The Miracle Stories

A. Introductory Remarks

In investigating the occurrence of Elianic motifs in the Gospel miracle tales, our first step should be to identify the critical tools most helpful to us in our analysis. At first glance, a sound methodology would seem to necessitate the form-critical study of the miracle story as it appears in the Gospels, and the comparison of this form with that characteristic in Kings. Elijah and Elisha are the only Scriptural figures surrounded by a cluster of miracle tales that, as a macro-form, would resemble the New Testament miracles. Moses was regarded as the miraculous prophet par excellence;[1] and his death was interpreted by many as a type of apotheosis. However, it is Elijah and Elisha who, through their textual and symbolic connection with Mosaic and desert motifs (see appendices A and B), rendered the "Moses" figure into a form that was malleable, not frozen by traditional usage. They could, through Jewish typology, have suggested to the Jewish mind that Moses "reappears" in history. Their miracles are given literary flesh, and brought into the daily life of the people, as were the miracles of Jesus himself. Thus, Elijah and Elisha are logical models for any miracle-working Jewish charismatic figure that appeared in what we term the early part of the Common Era.

As we shall see, however, the form-critical study of Elijah-like miracle pericopes must be supplemented by an examination of how and why Scriptural imagery is used in the New Testament in general, and the redaction-critical study of how Elijah and Elisha figure in the

arrangement of the New Testament. The former topic will be dealt with in this chapter, the latter study will form the basis of this thesis, and will be explicated in Chapter Four.

B. Miracle in the Ancient World

First, let us turn to miracle itself as a phenomenon in the Bible. Scripture, with few exceptions, gives us a singular picture of the importance of miracle. According to J. P. Ross,[2] miracle to the ancient Hebrews was much different in concept than it is to us. The ancients of the Tanakh saw nature as being completely sustained by God's will. God's will was usually constant; thus, natural phenomena appeared more or less constantly. New circumstances, however, could demand new action from God. Mighty works, signs, and wonders were for the ancients part of the natural order of things, and all miracles were divine acts. A miracle worker appeared to "perform" a miracle only as a representative of God, the real power behind the miracle. Ross' statement is supported by I Kings 17:1 "As the Lord, the God of Israel, lives, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word." Here Elijah, who has just appeared in the narrative, declares that God's word is synonymous with his own, that the "word of the Lord in thy mouth is truth" (17:24).

In the Hellenistic world, on the other hand, the concept of what made a miracle miraculous was closer to our own. A miracle was an event which transcended or set aside the natural order of things, the kosmos.[3] A miracle worker was a mediator of cosmic forces, one whose personal power (either as a human or as a human endowed with divine power) was sufficient to alter this cosmic order.[4] Spiritual credibility

often depended on the miracles that a particular wonder-worker had performed. Considering the proliferation of cults and secret societies in the Hellenistic world, it is no wonder that we have evidence of many collections of miracle stories concerning the activities of gods. In addition, it seems that there were almost as many tales about the wonders performed by men:

> These men accomplished such (miraculous) acts by a variety of means. An eyewitness tells of seeing a man cured of a viper bite by a Babylonian who drew out the poison with a spell and cured the already mordant leg by touching it with a fragment of a virgin's tombstone. Apollonius of Tyana cured a boy bitten by a mad dog by forcing the dog to lick the wound and then cured the dog as well "after offering a prayer to the river" (on the other side of which the dog stood). He also cured a woman, who had undergone labor seven times, by having her husband walk around her bed holding a live hare, which was then to be released. An Egyptian brought a corpse temporarily back to life by placing herbs on its mouth and breast and praying to the sun. . . . Apollonius compelled a demon to leave a young man by ordering it to do so, and the demon knocked over a statue on the way out to prove it had gone. In one story the teller saw the demon emerging, "black and smoky in color," after narrating how a "Syrian from Palestine" commanded it to come out.[5]

As Achtemeier has noted, few of these accounts give any indication of when or why the miracles occur. The afflicted person is only cursorily described, and the final declaration of faith which often characterizes gospel miracle tales (and some of the Elijah/Elisha sagas as well) is generally not present.[6] Despite our knowledge about many ancient collections of miracle stories, disproportionally few of these are extant;[7] Morton Smith feels that this is because these stories originated in the lower classes of society which did not preserve their traditions in a lasting form.[8] In spite of this, Smith finds that holy men in the ancient world did manifest themselves in several different ways in miracle literature:

a) As heroes, whose status was gained through civic achievement

or through other valorous deeds;

b) as gods who had experiences like those of men (several historical figures were set up as deities in disguise);

c) as mythical demigods, children of mixed marriages between gods and humans;

d) as historical men who pretended to be gods;

e) as public benefactors who have been awarded cultic status;

f) as philosophical "heroes", those whose achievements deified them;

g) as figures central to the mystical and Mystery cults which promised eternal life.[9]

Smith goes on to emphasize that "nothing in this complex was stable." He cites the case of Asclepius, a figure who inherits from popular folklore a "prodigious death" and is provided by Epidaurus with a birth story. As different philosophical/religious trends develop, so does the image of Asclepius:

> When Epidaurus came under the protection of Delphi he [Asclepius] taught Delphic morality; when admitted to Athens he was associated with the Eleusinian mysteries and became an initiate. When the Stoic equation of the gods with the elements became fashionable he was equated with the air. When neo-Platonism prevailed, he became the soul of the universe, that which maintains the natural order, the equivalent, in this respect, of the _logos_. And when solar theology was in style, he was identified with the sun or with its outflowing power.[10]

It is clear that, whatever the ancient concept of divinity was, the divine was considered to be the territory of men. Very often, workers of miracles came to be known as _theioi andres_, "divine men." Anyone whose actions fell under the rubrics described above could qualify for divinity, but the performance of miracles was the _sine qua non_ for deification.[11]

It would seem logical, given the above, to set Jesus in the traditional role of the "Hellenistic wonder-worker." As Achtemeier has asserted,

Jesus was probably understood by most of his contemporaries as a wonder-working healer.[12] However, as he points out, there are few traces of magical practices in Jesus' activity, and the miracles themselves, as found in the Gospels, are subservient to other motifs. In addition, to declare that Jesus was the embodiment of the Hellenistic divine man is to ignore the Jewish traditional elements present in the Gospels; from what we know of these elements, as relfected in rabbinic miracle tales, miracles were demonstrations of the power of prayer to God.[13] Finally, would one assert that Jesus' followers saw him as a divine man, or that his compilers did, or was this part of the redactor's point of view? Any of these assertions would necessitate the demonstration that the form of the gospels parallels or duplicates the forms of pagan miracle collections, a demonstration which is the subject of much scholarly controversy.

C. Problems Inherent in Form-Criticism of Ancient Miracle Collections

When we consider the extreme fluidity of ancient miracle traditions and motifs demonstrated above, intelligent form-criticism becomes hopelessly mired. Investigation into the types of collections of miracle tales has led to little scholarly agreement. Only recently has a name been applies to this type of literature—aretalogy—and just what constitutes aretalogy reflects both the fluidity of the ancient sources and variations in contemporary scholarly opinion. The term itself, according to Morton Smith, is based on a series of guesses as to what the word aretalogus means in several ancient sources,[14] with the result that this person came to be defined as a "teller of miracle tales."[15] By another series of guesses, modern scholarship is in general agreement that aretalogia

were miracle stories and that their use was for praise of and propaganda for the doer of the miracles.[16]

According to Hadas and Smith,[17] the genre of aretalogy arose out of a "natural desire, shared by peoples of various levels of sophistication, to know the personalities responsible for significant cultural innovations." Plato's image of Socrates, Eusebius' Life of Constantine the Great, and the Gospel according to Luke are thus aretalogies. The "classic model" for the aretalogical tale was the Platonic Socrates: "Teachers and reformers whose personalities and programs were quite un-Socratic are represented as doing and suffering according to the pattern Plato sketched out for Socrates. In this sense the Platonic Socrates is the source for all subsequent aretalogies, pagan and Christian.[18]

H. C. Kee, on the other hand, posits a different schema for the development of aretalogy. Down to the first century B.C.E., he explains, the "divine man" of whom the aretalogies spoke was considered to be one of superior wisdom, especially favored by the gods or in communion with them. Sirach 44:1ff ("let us now praise famous men") would be a good example of this conception. It was not until the second and third centuries of the Common Era that the "divine man" concept was fused with the miracle-worker concept; thus, he says, although there are certain similarities between Jesus' miracle stories and the miracle stories of the Hellenistic world, the "overall framework of the New Testament and its aretalogies are distinct."[19]

A case could still be made, however, for the inclusion of Luke as a classic aretalogy as described by Hadas and Smith, in that it describes the birth of the "divine man", his sufferings, struggles, opponents, martyrdom, and apotheosis. To make this case, one would need to ascertain

exactly what the form of an aretalogy is, and, as Smith himself admits, the form in which divine-man legends appear is "ambiguous":

> Of some literary forms the definition is precise and completely formal: the limerick, the double ballade, and so on. Such forms may be used for any content—one could write a double ballade on the synoptic problem. But other literary forms have no precise formal definitions and are therefore determined largely by content; so, for example, the novel—a novel is a composition normally in prose and rather long (whatever that means) which must tell a story about people: no extended prose treatment of the synoptic problem would be a novel. The aretalogy belongs to this latter type of literary form. It has no precise formal definition but is determined by its content: it must have a hero whom it celebrates, by reporting one or more of his marvellous deeds.[20]

Thus, one could classify Luke and just about any adulatory biography, ancient or modern, as an aretalogy by the above definition, since the definition is based on content alone. Smith's application of his definition is inconsistent with what he later claims when he says that "here, 'form' is evidently being used in the Platonic sense of 'essential structure.'"[21] If we take the former definition alone, the Elijah/Elisha sagas are aretalogies, for they celebrate the marvellous deeds of a hero. If, however, an "essential structure" is inherent, and that structure is modelled on the Platonic Socrates, then the Elijah/Elisha tales must be isolated from the mainstream of aretalogical tradition. Smith asserts "(1) many accounts of ancient 'divine men' are variants of a recognizable aretalogical form; and (2) the Gospels are more similar to these accounts than to any other ancient non-Christian works that we know of."[22] Elijah and Elisha, because they lack birth stories and other necessary elements of a classic aretalogy, are therefore not presented by Kings in aretalogical form.

Kee[23] disagrees with the above in that he asserts that an aretalogy is <u>not</u> a fixed literary form, and that the term applies only to a

general category of celebrations of mighty acts. The scholarly debate on the nature of aretalogy is still going on; the range of opinions only intensifies our difficulties in using that model in comparison of Elijah/Elisha in Kings and the miracle stories of the Gospels.[24]

Our difficulties are further increased when we attempt to study the Sitz im Leben of both the prophetical tales in Kings and the miracle pericopes in the Gospels. A. Rofé, who has attempted a classification of the miracle stories in Kings, parallels Morton Smith in asserting that the prophetic tales can be classified only in terms of their content.[25] Yet the terms he uses to classify prophetic tales—legenda, literary elaborations of legenda, and vitae—are terms which originated in the thirteenth century in regard to the stories circulated by pious Christian groups around figures of saints, and, as Burk O. Long asserts, are not derived from the Bible Text itself.[26] Rofé, who seems to be developing his own system of aretalogical categories for Tanakhic miracle stories, as opposed to Smith, claims that it is difficult to ascertain the Sitz im Leben of prophetical tales in Kings other than to say that they originated among groups of prophetic followers; attempts to recover "stereotyped locutions" and to find evidence of separate prose styles for miracle tales are unsuccessful.[27] Long, on the other hand, counters Rofé, asserting that the Sitz im Leben of both prophetical and Hellenistic miracle stories is a shamanistic milieu. The shaman is a "technician of the divine", a "mouthpiece for the spirit world", and the head of the particular cult. Long brings in miracle tales from the Eskimos, India, and other cultures to demonstrate that miracle stories "of the wonderous deeds of older shamans flourish at a time when the present (cult) practices have become somewhat tawdry",

and that there is a mixture in the society of belief and disbelief.[28] Miracle stories reinforce the institution of the wonder worker and shaman in an age wherein the institution itself is deteriorating.[29]

While, in the Hellenistic world, Long's theses could be supported by inscriptions in the temple of Epidauros regarding the healing power of Asclepius[30] and from other sources, I feel that his opinions are too narrow. At this point, cases could be made from the sources for any assertion about miracle traditions. The variations in the nature of those sources, together with the problems of genre, form, and dependence that I have described above, preclude any over-arching conclusion as to the nature of the Sitz im Leben of miracle stories, or even as to the exact form of an "aretalogy." The forms in which miracle literature appears, and the motifs that make up these forms, probably reflect a common human symbolic dimension where they are similar, and the vast variety of human experience and longing where they are different.

Duplication of forms or phrasing between one period and the next period, i.e., between the period of Elijah and Elisha in Kings and the period of their typological rebirth in the New Testament, does not in itself have any necessary bearing on ideology. The New Testament environment was fluid enough, as has been demonstrated, that miracle stories about local charismatic leaders in Palestine could have adopted Elijah-like or Elisha-like motifs without adopting a symbolic ideology of Elijah per se. Elijah and Elisha were simply the most famous miracle workers of the Old Testament, and were available as models.

As I will demonstrate in the next chapter, I feel there are some miracle pericopes in the Gospels that imitate or reflect Elianic motifs, or suplicate Elijah's actions. However, due to the difficulties outlined

above, to declare, on the basis of the aretalogical model of form-criticism, that these miracle pericopes therefore indicate authorship by an early group of Christians who identified Jesus with Elijah is highly problematic. It is hard to ascertain what Elijah meant to the Jewish "man in the street", and equally hard to imagine that the people who originated the miracle pericopes were concerned with the "inbreaking Kingdom of God", or other theological categories under which the miracles have been described. Form criticism alone is insufficient to our understanding of the role of Elijah and Elisha in the Gospels.

D. The New Testament Use of Biblical Personae

Our method of inquiry should instead reflect the fact that verses in the New Testament explicitly mentioning Elijah and Elisha have, for the most part, very little to do with miracle. Instead, we see Elijah and Elisha as Biblical personalities incorporated into the New Testament as part of a larger pattern of references to Biblical verses and themes.

The dependence of the New Testament upon Jewish Scriptures is almost self-evident; the text itself strives to give the reader this very impression. The reasons for this dependence are also obvious to any student of the Graeco-Roman world; one need only consult Philo and Josephus (in their efforts to convince Hellenistic society of the antiquity of Judaism) to see that antiquity itself was the sine qua non for the legitimacy of any social institution. Innovations in social structure or religion required a demonstration of continuity with the revered past, and the more ancient past the more revered. It is possible that the "discovery" of the "Law Book" which was found during the Josianic reform centuries before the Hellenistic era was also a symptom of this need to

ground change in antiquity, a need not restricted, therefore, to the Graeco-Roman milieu. In the case of the New Testament, Norman Cohen states: "By associating their writings with Scripture, the early Christians were carrying themselves back to the beginning of the universe."[31] The term "New Testament" in itself implies an "old" testament whose claims have been outmoded, superseded, or fulfilled the the "new."

The Gospel according to Matthew, at first glance, seems to be most concerned with the task of aligning Jesus' message along the mainstream of the Jewish tradition, in that it constantly refers us to Jewish Scripture. The author of the First Epistle of Peter likewise assumed that Scriptural passages were applicable to Jesus and the theology of the Church.[32] This applicability was never seriously challenged until Marcion tried to dissociate Christianity from the Jewish Bible, and his assumptions were deemed heretical by the Church.[33] The entire corpus of the New Testament is thoroughly flavored by references to Biblical personages, passages, and motifs; H. M. Shires has claimed that as many as 1604 New Testament passages refer directly to the Bible.[34] As Norman Cohen has shown in his comprehensive survey of Biblical personalities in the New Testament, many scholars are completely convinced of the extensive dependence of the New Testament on Scripture, despite the many errors and distortions in citation on the part of the Christian authors. Among these scholars are J. Jeremias, A. G. Hebert, E. D. Freed, and G. von Rad.[35]

Scholarly opinion as to the <u>nature</u> of this dependence has differed widely, however, In his survey, Cohen cites a wide range of opinion: R. Gundry attempts to reduce the number of instances in which the New Testament relies on Scripture by using an "argument from absence":

"had the tradition been erected upon the OT text, we would not have had the absence of elements in the OT text which were extremely suitable."[36] Arguments from silence have fared quite feebly in Biblical criticism; we must assume that Mr. Gundry's conclusions issue from some other area, quite probably theological. At the other end of the spectrum, A. T. Hanson argues that, not only is the New Testament dependent upon the "old" one, but Jesus Christ himself was present at many of the incidents in Jewish Scripture.[37] Some scholars, like C. H. Dodd, find reasons for the connection between the two "testaments" in the literary styles of the times; Dodd claims that "recent researches into the Qumran scrolls have shown that in the New Testament period the interweaving of scriptural phraseology and one's own words was a conscious literary method." H. M. Shires adds to this by stating that, since the "Old Testament" was the best known body of literature in existence for the New Testament writers, it was natural that the church would link its scriptures closely to it.[39] I myself wonder at these efforts to reduce the relationship between the two scriptures to an exclusively literary one, especially since the reasons for dependence seem so obvious. In addition to a system of law and tradition that extends back to the "beginning of the universe", the Jewish Scriptures contained prophecies about the end time and the nature of salvation which the Gospels labor to fulfill; clearly, one cannot honestly underestimate the central importance that the connection with the Bible held for the early Christian communities, an importance which has not been diminished to this day.

A major school within Christian analysis of the Jewish Bible concerns itself with the identification of "typologies" within the Bible. We have used the term "typology" in an informal sense; here, we refer to

a formal category of Christian exegesis. J. Danielou defines typologies as that imagery in the New Testament which evidences that "the realities of the Old Testament are figures of those of the New. .. . . This science of the similitudes between the two Testaments is called typology."[40] While identifying typologies is a valuable part of literary criticism, to call this field of endeavor a "science" is rather fanciful. When typologies are used as historical evidence, Biblical events are wrested, according to the theological disposition of the particular scholar, out of their own context and then "identified" as foreshadowings of events in the Gospels. Different "types" of Jesus appear throughout the Jewish Scriptures,[41] and these "types" are balanced by "anti-types" in the New Testament.[42] The context and importance of the Biblical events are subordinated to the events that they supposedly prefigure. For some scholars of typology, the numerous typological links between the "testaments" constitutes proof of a single divine purpose behind them, a divine purpose exemplified, both physically and symbolically, by the life of Jesus.[43] A. T. Hanson, mentioned previously, has carried this kind of theological manhandling of Scripture even farther in his refutation of typology. He maintains that the Bible is not filled with "types" of Christ, but that the New Testament authors actually believed that Christ himself was an actor in Biblical events. Jesus' presence is signalled in Jewish Scripture by certain key names for God, such as Kyrios; he speaks to Moses on Sinai, he speaks to the Jews through Isaiah.[44] This attitude toward Scripture, made possible early in Christianity by the type of Christology found in the Gospel according to John, cannot really be called New Testament criticism; rather, it is modern theological midrash. Such "scholarship", as well as the study

of typologies, avoids a fact central to the relationship between Scripture and the New Testament: connection with the former conferred authority on the latter. Scholars who must find all authority in Jesus reverse what happened in history—it is the divine Jesus, for them, who confers authority on the Jewish Scriptures. This type of theological bias renders suspect what many Christian scholars say about Elijah and Elisha, for the two prophets cease to have a life of their own outside Christ.

Jewish Scripture appears in the New Testament in a variety of forms. The most common of these forms is the direct citation of the Biblical passages; Shires points out that, of the 260 chapters of the New Testament, 229 contain at least two citations or references to Scripture.[45] As was mentioned, not all of these are accurate renderings of the Biblical text, and often it is difficult to tell whether the citation is a quotation or an allusion, another common form. In allusion, entire contexts, not passages, are exploited and expanded, often into "midrash" on individual themes.[46] Most scholars are in agreement that the New Testament usually avoids allegory; the figures and ideas in the Bible, for the Christians, had to have existed as concrete historical realities.[47] Instead, the New Testament actively employs Tanakhic personages as historical realities. Four hundred citations in the New Testament refer directly to people from the Bible, among them Elijah and Elisha.[50] As Cohen writes:

> The historical awareness and concern of New Testament writers for the fulfillment of Scriptural prophecy was also illustrated by the use of Biblical characters, some of whom made those very prophecies. Bringing those characters alive and having them appear with those of the New Testament maintained the important continuity and secured the connection between the two "testaments." By definition, any sequel to an original production must contain some of the cast of its predecessor.[51]

Biblical personages were "ready-made" examples of ideals that the Christians wished to promulgate, and many of them lent themselves to midrashic treatment. As Cohen comments: "It is easier to create tales about a person than a passage."[52] Biblical figures, as Cohen points out, are used for a variety of purposes, often depending on the Tendenz of the individual New Testament author.[53] In the next chapter, we will begin a detailed study of how Elijah and Elisha are used in the Gospels, of the Christian ideals they "represent", and of the molding of these ideals by the Gospel authors.

Notes: Chapter Three

[1]Paul J. Achtemeier, "Gospel Miracle Tradition and the Divine Man," Interpretation 26 (1972), 187.

[2]J. P. Ross, "Some Notes on Miracle in the Old Testament," Miracles, ed. C. F. D. Moule (London: A. R. Mowbray, 1965), 53.

[3]Ibid., 54.

[4]Achtemeier, op. cit., 181.

[5]Ibid., 180-181.

[6]Ibid., 184.

[7]Morton Smith, "Prolegomena to a Discussion of Aretalogies, Divine Men, the Gospels, and Jesus," JBL 90 (1971), 177.

[8]Ibid., 180

[9]Ibid., 181-184.

[10]Ibid., 184-185.

[11]Achtemeier, op. cit., 187.

[12]Ibid., 185.

[13]Ibid., 177.

[14]Smith, op. cit., 174-176. Smith cites Plutarch, De Defectu Oraculorum, 3 (410c); Diogenianus, Paroimiai V.15; in Leutch-Schneidewin, Corupus paroemiographorum graecorum, I.252; Sirach 36:13; Manetho, Apostelesmaticorum (ed. Koechly), 4:447; Artemidorus, Oniro-critica, 2.44, and other sources. For a more complete listing, see 177-178 above, note 27.

[15]Ibid., 175.

[16]Ibid., 176.

[17]Moses Hadas and Morton Smith, Heroes and Gods: Spiritual Biographies in Antiquity (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), 57.

[18]Ibid., 63.

[19]H. C. Kee, "Aretalogy," IDB Supp. Vol., 52.

[20]Smith, op. cit., 195.

[21]Ibid., 196.

[22]Ibid.

[23]Kee, loc. cit.

[24]For a detailed analysis and refutation of Smith's assertion that aretalogies are a fixed literary form, see: H. C. Kee, "Aretalogy and Gospel," JBL 92 (1972); also D. L. Tiede, "The Charismatic Figure as Miracle Worker," Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series I, 1972; and H. H. Koester, "One Jesus and Four Primitive Gospels," HTR 61 (1968): 203-249, for a discussion of aretalogy in general.

[25]A. J. Rofé, "Classification of the Prophetical Miracle Stories," JBL 90 (1970), 428.

[26]Burk O. Long, "Social Setting for the Prophetical Miracle Stories," Semeia 3 (1975), 48.

[27]Rofé, op. cit., 427.

[28]Long, op. cit., 50.

[29]Ibid., 56.

[30]David L. Dungan and David R. Cartlidge, Sourcebook of Texts for the Comparative Study of the Gospels, Society for Biblical Literature: Sources for Biblical Study I, Third Edition (Missoula, Montana: Society for Biblical Literature, 1973), 51-53.

[31]Norman M. Cohen, The Role of Tanakhic Personages in the New Testament (Cincinnati: HUC-JIR rabbinic thesis, 1977), 10.

[32]Ibid., 5, cites C. H. Dodd, The Old Testament in the New, Facet Books Biblical Series 3, J. Reumann, ed. (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971), 22.

[33]Cohen, op. cit., 3, cites H. C. Kee, F. W. Young, Karlfried Froehlich, Understanding the New Testament (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1965), 64.

[34]Ibid, cites H. M. Shires, Finding the Old Testament in the New (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1974), 72.

[35]Ibid. See: E. B. Freed, Old Testament Quotations in the Gospel of John (Leiden: Brill, 1954); A. G. Hebert, The Authority of the Old Testament (London: Faber and Faber, 1947); J. Jeremias, New Testament Theology: the Proclamation of Jesus (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1971); and G. von Rad, Old Testament Theology, Vol 2 (New York: Harper and Row, 1965).

[36]Ibid, cites R. Gundry, The Use of the Old Testament in St. Matthew's Gospel: With Special Reference to the Messianic Hope (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1967), 204.

[37]Ibid., 4, cites A. T. Hanson, Jesus Christ in the Old Testament (London: SCM Press, 1959), 111.

[38]Ibid, cites Dodd, OT/New, 4.

[39]Ibid., 5, cites Shires, op. cit., 51, 97,

[40]Ibid., 14, cites J. Danielou, From Shadows to Reality: Studies in the Biblical Typology of the Fathers (London: Burns and Oates, 1960), 12.

[41]Ibid., 7

[42]Ibid., 15.

[43]Ibid.

[44]Ibid., 16, cites Hanson, op. cit., 162.

[45]Ibid., 10, cites Shires, op. cit., 15.

[46]Ibid., 11, cites Gundry, op. cit., 206.

[47]Ibid., 13.

[48]Ibid., 130

[49]Ibid., 131.

[50]Ibid., 132.

[51]Ibid., 133.

Chapter Four

Elijah and Elisha in the Gospel According to Mark

A. Introductory Remarks

Modern scholarship almost universally recognizes Mark as the earliest of the four canonical gospels;[1] thus, it is the logical starting point for our inquiry. At one time, the Christian tradition held that Mark was an abridgement of Matthew, a view which originated with Augustine.[2] In Nineteenth-century New Testament scholarship, however, this theory eventually lost force in Protestant circles (around 1860) and in Catholicism itself (around 1900). Another theory, originated by Griesbach in his "Jena Programmes", claimed that Mark, summarized the other two synoptic gospels; although defended by de Wette in 1846, this view lost most of its following during the last half of the nineteenth century.[3] Today, we have no extant document that can be said to be a source of Mark.[4] As the earliest gospel, Mark is the first known attempt at a comprehensive synthesis of early Christian traditions.

Authorship of the gospel is traditionally attributed to John Mark, a companion of Paul and an associate of the apostles.[5] The approximate date of the gospel can be inferred from Mk 13:14, a passage which reflects the destruction of the Temple, which occurred in 70 C.E.[6] Spivey and Smith explain that, up until Mark, oral traditions about Jesus were authoritative, and these were constantly developing.[7] Many of these traditions came originally from Palestine, although several important factors dissuade us from assigning to Mark a Palestinian provanance.[8] In the mid-sixties, when Peter was martyred in Rome and the eyewitnesses of Jesus ministry had begun to disappear, the gospel of Mark arose to

preserve whatever traditions then existed.[9] The emphasis that the gospel places on suffering and the meaning of the cross probably reflects a need to explain and cope with the persecutions of the Roman Christians under Nero and his successors. In addition, Christianity needed to establish an identity for itself outside the Judaism which had given it birth.[10] From these tendencies, Spivey and Smith infer that Mark was probably written in Rome, a position taken by many scholars.[11]

The overarching impression that one gets from Mark's treatment of Elijah is that the prophet figures closely in Mark's efforts to establish Jesus' official identity. In Mk. 6:14-15, Elijah is suggested as one of several eschatological alternatives for Jesus' identity, and in 8:27-28 this theme is repeated in Peter's declaration of Jesus as the Christ. The Transfiguration (9:2-8) and the subsequent eschatological definition (9:9-13) heighten the reader's awareness of Jesus' identity as God's chosen son. Mark uses Elijah in a variety of ways: Elijah represents the "prophets" (as Moses represents the Torah) on the mountain; when Elijah and Moses disappear, this is a signal to the reader that the Torah and Prophets have been superseded by Jesus. Elijah's appearance and disappearance on the mountain also serve to separate him from Jesus: Jesus is neither Elijah reincarnate, nor his successor, nor the heir to his powers, but he is the son of God. To emphasize this separation, Mark brings Elijah into the picture again in the subsequent discussion, when Jesus declares that John the Baptist is Elijah.

Mark's use of E ijah, however, appears inconsistent. On the one hand, Mark explicitly states that Jesus is not Elijah (8:27ff); in each case where Elijah is offered as an "identity" for Jesus, this identity

is summarily rejected. Yet, when we look at other evidence in Mark, it appears that the author of the pericopes in question had Elijah's exploits in Kings in mind when he composed stories about Jesus (here we must distinguish between the author of a pericope and the author-redactor Mark). The most noticable link with the Elijah/Elisha cycles consists of the gospel miracle tales, in which Jesus often does the same kinds of things that Elijah did, and in the same way. The account of Jesus' temptation in the desert (1:12-12) is quite similar to the presentation in I Kings 19:8 and 17:6. In the only "Elisha" reference in Mark, the disciples (whom Mark frequently asperses), are compared obliquely to Elisha's unscrupulous servant, Gehazi (10:3; cf. IIK 4:27).

How can we reconcile these two seemingly opposite trends in Mark: the explicit identification of John the Baptist with Elijah and the implicit association of Jesus with Elijah? Several possibilities present themselves to us, including the following: First, the shift of identities could reveal the evolution of Jesus' own self-identity; i.e., Jesus thought of himself first as Elijah, then as Messiah. Another possibility is that, while Mark himself adopted an official interpretation of John the Baptist as being Elijah, he used traditions which saw <u>Jesus</u> as Elijah, reflecting a possible Elijah-Christology. Or Mark, for purely literary reasons, may have used pericopes that had been preserved or written in an Elijah-like form. In choosing the most plausible possibility, we must examine the prevailing theories concerning the passages in question.

B. The Evidence for an Elijah Christology

Two passages demonstrate an almost obvious similarity to the Elijah tales, Mk. 1:12-13 and 7:24ff. In Mk 1:12-13, it is Jesus who, like Elijah, is driven by the Spirit into the wilderness for forty days:

> The spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. And he was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts, and the angels ministered to him.

Both Jesus' wilderness temptation and Elijah's flight are typologically similar, and establish a link with Moses' ascent of Mt. Sinai. In addition, Elijah is ministered to by ravens in the desert (IK 17:6), while Jesus is ministered to by angels.

In 7:24-30, Jesus' geographical location and his healing of the daughter of a Syrophoenician woman is strikingly similar to IK 17:8-14.

> And from there he arose and went away to the region of Tyre and Sidon. And he entered a house, and would not have any one know it; yet he could not be hid. But immediately a woman, whose little daughter was possessed by an unclean spirit, came and fell down at his feet. Now the woman was a Syrophoenician by birth. And she begged him to cast the demon out of her daughter. And he said to her "Let the children first be fed, for it is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs." But she answered him, "Yes, Lord; yet even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs." And he said to her "For this saying you may go your way; the demon has left your daughter." And she went home, and found the child lying in bed, and the demon gone.

The connection between this passage and Kings is so strong that Luke can refer to the parallel homiletically without actually recounting it (4:25ff).

In the miracle stories, Jesus' connection with Elijah is rather consistent but not as clearly defined. Jesus never performs a miracle in Elijah's name, nor refers directly to Elijah as a model for his miraculous activity. However, a reader who had before him an isolated collection of these stories could get an overall impression that Jesus was or considered himself to be an Elijah-like figure. Norman Cohen

cites a group of "parallel miracles" in Mark and Kings:[12]

Mark		Kings
6:45-52	Water miracles	II Kings 2:8, 14
6:30-44/8:1-10	Feeding multitudes	II Kings 4:42-44; 4:1ff
1:10-45	Healing miracles	II Kings 5:1-14; 4:25-37
2:1-12		I Kings 17:17-24
10:46-52		II Kings 13:20-21

These parallels can be taken as cumulative evidence of an intentional link with Elijah, but only as cumulative evidence. That both Jesus and Elijah would perform water miracles, feeding miracles, and healing miracles is not in itself surprising, considering the enormous currency of these motifs in miracle-literature throughout the world. Two miracle-stories, however, stand out:

> (7:32-27) And they brought to him a man who was deaf and had an impediment in his speech, and they besought him to lay his hand upon him. And taking him aside from the multitude privately, he put his fingers into his ears, and he spat and touched his tongue; and looking up to heaven, he sighed, and said to him "Ephphatha," that is, "Be opened." And his ears were opened, his tongue was released, and he spoke plainly.
>
> (8:22-26) And they came to Beth Saida, and some people brought to him a blind man, and begged him to touch him. And he took the blind man by the hand, and led him out of the village; and when he had spit on his eyes and laid his hands upon him, he asked him, "Do you see anything?" And he looked up and said, "I see men; but they look like trees, walking." Then again he laid his hands upon his eyes; and he looked intently and was restored, and saw everything clearly.

Jesus usually heals by word alone (5:41, 1:25) or by his mere presence (4:25-34), but in the above episodes, his methods are described in detail. Jesus puts his fingers into the deaf man's ears, spits, utters a magical incantation, and touches his tongue; in I Kings 17:21, Elijah stretches himself upon the child three times, and utters a prayer.[13] The healing of the blind man is the only miracle in the Gospels in which a cure occurs in stages;[14] a literary tension is

established within the pericope by the description of the man's gradual return to sight. The same kind of tension is woven in IK 18:24ff, where Elijah sends his servant repeatedly to look for the rain which is to come. L. McGinley[15] and E. Trocmé[16] agree that, in both miracle tales, it is the concrete detail that attests to the reality of the miracle. Both stories could indicate that the author of the miracle tales consciously used stylistic techniques from the Elijah cycle, especially when we take into account Mark 8:1-10, the tale of the feeding of the four thousand. Apparently a doublet of 6:30-44,[17] the story in Mk. 8:4 paraphrases IIK 4:43; "How can one feed these men with bread here in the desert?" resembles "But his servant said, 'How am I to set this before a hundred men?'"

We must now ascertain just what can be proven from this body of evidence—the cumulative parallels of motif, the typological links in 1:10-12 and 10:13, and the three stories discussed above—regarding the relationship between the gospel of Mark and the use of the Elijah motif. Do these miracle stories, in concert with the typological references, reflect traditions from an early group of Jesus' followers who subscribed to an Elijah-Christology? If so, a) we would have to establish that Mark was largely a compiler of already existing traditions; b) we would have to isolate these traditions as being from a "pre-Markan" source; and c) we would have to present good evidence that the author of these pre-Markan sources used Elijah motifs precisely so as to establish an Elijah-identity for Jesus. The first assumption is quite likely true, since Mark, aside from his own creative activity, probably did function as a compiler.[18] Attempts to isolate pre-Markan sources, as we shall see, have met with varying degrees of success.

To my knowledge, there has never been an attempt to prove that these miracle pericopes, even if they are pre-Markan, reveal the existence of an Elijah-Jesus community. If we were to undertake such an attempt, we would have to become conversant with the scholarship on pre-Markan sources and build thereon. Therefore, a review of scholarly development in this area is in order.

C. Foundations for Inquiry into the Question of an Elijah-Christology

Research into the myriad components, or pericopes, of the New Testament has been greatly influenced by the work of Rudolf Bultmann and M. Dibelius, the exponents of the "classic" form-criticism of New Testament literature.[19] This is a different kind of form-criticism from the "aretalogical" form-criticism discussed in the prededing chapter. Aretalogical form-criticism analyses a work as a whole, a whole defined by its parts. Classic form-criticism, on the other hand, can be described as follows:

> . . . primitive literary expression makes use of more or less fixed literary forms. This "form" or "style" consists not merely in the choice of words and construction of sentences, but in the whole manner of presentation which constitutes a literary category, e.g., the dispute, the miracle story, the pointed saying, the discourse. It is produced by the definite needs and vital manifestations of the community, and steadily evolves, subject to definite internal laws that transcend the individual. Form-criticism endeavors by a study of these forms and their laws of development to establish the typical or primitive form of each category, e.g., the typical miracle story. These primitive forms are then used as norms to shed light on the growth of the Gospel tradition in general, and even to estimate the historical value of individual passages by detection of secondary modifications of the primitive form.[20]

These "primitive forms" include "I-sayings", scholastic dialogues, biographical apophthegms, <u>logia</u>, parables, and miracle stories.[21] To each can be assigned a specific <u>Sitz im Leben</u>[22] which reveals

something about the community from which it sprang as a result of "collective creation."[23]

Bultmann claims that the early community from which the miracle stories are derived was Hellenistic in origin.[24] Etienne Trocmé, who builds on Bultmann's work, sees them as reflecting very early Palestinian traditions. This dating and placing of the miracle pericopes results from Trocmé's desire to root the entire corpus of Markan tradition, and Mark himself, in Palestine; according to his theories, Mark was one of the "seven Grecians" mentioned in Acts 6:1-4.[25] This Grecian "Mark" used Palestinian stories that go back to the memory of eyewitnesses; the Sitz im Leben of the pericopes is the preaching activity of the community.[26]

Trocmé's work is intensive and detailed, and often offers keen insights into the text of Mark. It would seem that a case could be made for the existence of an early Elijah-Christology by building on his work: he postulates a Palestinian locale and milieu for Mark, and isolates, with Bultmann's help, pre-Markan sources. One would need only to undertake a painstaking textual analysis of the more promising pericopes listed to show that the "community need" expressed by the stories was to see Jesus as Elijah.

This cannot be done, however, because Trocmé's thesis is marred by two important weaknesses. First, Trocmé accepts uncritically Bultmann's (and Dibelius') rigid scheme for categorizing the "forms" of the New Testament literature. Laurance McGinley has pointed out several holes in Bultmann's methodology, which dilute its usefulness to our inquiry. First, Bultmann's concept of "community creation" is unconvincing; "the common force is stimulating and not creative,

expansive and not determinative. . . . the choice of definite means to a definite end is always personal work."[27] Bultmann's attempt to establish a "typical form" is also derided by McGinley as arbitrary; in fact, he asserts, we have no right at all to decide which is a "pure" form.[28] Excluded from Bultmann's forms is any mention of biographical intent, and McGinley views this ommission as "ridiculous."[29] In addition, the "laws of development" by which forms supposedly evolve do not square with the facts of gospel development; while Bultmann's forms take about one hundred years to evolve, the gospel traditions were formed in far less time.[30] Finally, McGinley argues, Bultmann can assert only that primitive forms are "more or less" fixed; this "renders rigid classification and its concomitant conclusions unattainable."[31]

The second major weakness in Trocmé's theory lies in the way he demonstrates his assumption of the Palestinian origin of Bultmann's types, and a Palestinian provenance of Mark itself. Trocmé summons as evidence his dating of the different "forms" as they are manifest in Mark. That stories could have originated in Palestine may be granted merely by probability, especially if we can uncover Aramaisms beneath the text.[32] When Trocmé asserts, however, that the <u>entire</u> gospel was assembled and redacted in Palestine, he oversteps the evidence. More significant is the fact that Trocmé's method for dating the pericopes and the gospel is faulty. He begins by evaluating "controversy dialogues"—they resemble Rabbinic literature, he says, and accordingly must be Palestinian.[33] Biographical apophthegms resemble midrashim about the lives of rabbis; therefore they also are Palestinian. By the time Trocmé discusses the "I-sayings" and parables, he merely asserts that they are Palestinian as if this were a foregone conclusion.

It is clear that he has based his entire assertion of Palestinian provenance for Mark solely on a few verses in Acts (6:1-4), and upon supposed parallels with Rabbinic literature. He thus assumes that the Judaism of Jesus' time was that of the Talmud and Midrash, a common error in New Testament scholarship. When Trocmé can cite broad "parallels" between miracle stories and rabbinic tales, his methodology enables him to set his evidence into a framework of classifications like Bultmann's. Though, as we have mentioned, Aramaisms could point to a Palestinian origin for some pericopes, we cannot grasp the nature, Sitz im Leben, or author of these pericopes with the same sureness that Bultmann could. The two major weaknesses in Trocmé's theory make it impossible to build upon his scholarship in searching for an Elijah-Christology.

It should be mentioned that other attempts have been made to isolate pre-Markan miracle traditions, in my opinion with little success. Paul Achtemeier[34] claims to have isolated two cycles of miracle stories, or catenae, which he sees as part of a liturgy which celebrated "an epiphanic Eucharist based on bread broken with the Theios Aner."[35] Each of the two catenae ends with a feeding miracle--a "feeding of the multitudes"--that is similar to descriptions of early celebration of the Eucharist. Since Mark's emphasis on the centrality of the cross precludes this Eucharistic Christology, the pre-Markan liturgy was broken up and set into a matrix which emphasizes the resurrection.[36] The most likely candidates for the composition of this liturgy were the Corinthians (II Cor. 3:7-18, 11:22). Achtemeier presents to us an alluring conclusion based on a juxtaposition of verses and sources that may or may not have had anything to do with each other. His theory fits into

what we know about the eventual evolution of Christian dogma and the centrality of the resurrection, but he does not prove that the verses were originally arranged this way. His assertion that these catenae originated with the Corinthians is based on extremely circumstantial evidence.

We return again to the question of what can be proven from the evidence of Mark's "contradictory" use of Elijah. Does this array of verses, taken in toto, prove an early "Elijah Christology"? The answer must be in the negative. As I mentioned before, I am not aware of any study which has attempted to make such a comparison, or of any parallel studies which both support such a theory and also withstand scholarly critique. Classical form-criticism of Markan traditions has often superimposed an arbitrary and rigid scheme of evolution upon a group of sources that, if anything, reflect the considerable fluidity of religious imagery in the Jewish-Hellenistic world. It is impossible to prove, at this point, whether the use of a particular image or figure in the passage in question indicates a certain literary style on the part of either the author of the pericope or the redactor, or whether it indicates the existence of a group of early Christians who had adopted a formal Elijah-Christology.

What, then, do we make of Mark 1:12ff and 10:13? Jesus is driven into the desert to be tempted by Satan in 1:12, and this account, as already noted, bears a striking resemblance to Elijah's wilderness sojourn (IK.19:8; 17:6). Jesus' disciples are linked with Gehazi in 10:13. Here, a literary explanation seems most sensible—Mark has either written or redacted traditions which used Elianic motifs, but not to reflect any particular idology other than the power and glory of

Jesus. Elijah stands in Moses' footsteps (as portrayed by Kings); a writer could make Jesus resemble Elijah (even unintentionally) merely by using Mosaic wilderness motifs, the number forty, and the concept of having angels provide food in the desert, all of which are found in Exodus. What is more likely is that Jesus partakes, in these passages, of Elijah's literary typology. We discussed and criticized typology in the previous chapter; as an exegetical process, it is fraught with danger if used as a basis for reconstructing history. However, as a purely literary concept, typology makes sense: Christian tradition claims that Jesus did certain things; these things resemble acts performed by a major Biblical figure, so the author, while incorporating the written tradition, adopts the style of the Biblical figure in his description of Jesus' activities.

This process need not be linked to any Christology whatsoever. In fact, there is evidence that Elijah's appearances in the New Testament were not the result of an Elijah-Christology. In Luke 4:24, Jesus, to emphasize the need for Christianity to spread to the gentiles, cites Elijah's miracle for the widow of Zarepath as an example. Had Mark 7:24ff represented anything other than a literary connection with Elijah, had there in fact been a group who subscribed to an Elijah Christology, Luke would not have made this parallel in his homily.

The literary explanation for Jesus' links with Elijah applies when we speak of both the author-redactor Mark and the originators of any written traditions that Mark may have used. Paul Achtemeier's exposition of two strands of miracle stories may be accurate, but their arrangement might be due only to the redactor's literary preferences. Mark might have loved symmetry, and arranged the miracles accordingly.[37] Or, the

catenae may have their own origin and literary existence, an origin which the paucity of the sources (despite Achtemeier's linking of the catenae with the Corinthians) renders unknown. At present, the only safe assertion that can be made concerning the Elijah "influences" in Mark's miracle tales and in 1:1-12, 10:13 is that the prophet has a discernible literary connection with the text.

D. Elijah, John the Baptist, and the Identity of Jesus: Textual Evidence

One cannot prove, as we have seen, that Elijah is a marker for passages relating to the beliefs of any Christian sect. Instead, I believe that Elijah is used as a literary and exegetical tool in Mark's effort to define Jesus' identity vis à vis John the Baptist, and effort which had profound implications for the entire concept of Christian salvation history in the first century C.E.

As part of the process of formulating a salvation history, Elijah is made to participate in events which convey the theme of the "Messianic Secret." Who, asks Mark, is this wonder-worker who tries to hide his miracles (1:33-34; 3:12; 5:43; 7:36) and his true identity (8:27-30; 9:9)? Elijah appears as a possible answer in 6:15, and again in 8:27. The "real" answer comes at the geographical center of the gospel: Peter's declaration in 8:28 that Jesus is <u>not</u> Elijah, but the Christ. Peter is upheld in his declaration at the transfiguration by none other than God (9:7). To reinforce this identity, both Moses and Elijah vanish at the end of the transfiguration, showing that Jesus as a power has eclipsed both of them, and declaring that the "good news" that Jesus represents supersedes the Torah and the Prophets (as symbolized by Moses and Elijah)—the two major divisions of Jewish Scriptures

current in Mark's day.

Mark is almost as intent on telling us that John the Baptist is Elijah as he is on telling us that Jesus is not. In 1:2-3, Mark conflates Malachi 3:1, Exodus 23:20, and Isaiah 40:3[38] to give us a picture of a solitary messenger crying in the wilderness, preparing the way of the Lord. The text hints at the coming of an Elijah. Who is this "Elijah"? Mark answers in the very next verse: "John the Baptizer appeared in the wilderness." Lest there be any confusion as to who John is, Mark has him appear in 1:6 dressed like Elijah, and has Jesus declare in 9:13 that John is Elijah.

It is clear that the Elijah figure is used dramatically by Mark to separate John and Jesus within his eschatological framework, but when we seek to establish why he must do so, we are plunged into two additional problems: 1) Who was John the Baptist, and why mention him at all in a gospel which emphasizes the primacy of Jesus? 2) Why is Elijah, specifically, used to separate John and Jesus? In the following pages, we will review recent scholarship on both these questions.

E. Who Was John the Baptist?

John the Baptist, like Elijah, has no life of his own within the New Testament. In every place that John appears, the Evangelists attributes to him whatever words are needed to set the stage for Jesus' activity. Mark brings in John the Baptist to baptize Jesus; the conflation in 1:2-3 gives John the authority to do this as "Elijah." We do not hear of John again until 6:17-29, when an account of his death (which resembles Esther 1:9-11; 5:6) is inserted into the text to explain why some people thought that Jesus was John raised from the dead. Aside

from 2:18-19, where Jesus engages in a homiletical dispute with John's followers, this is the extent of Mark's treatment of John.

Matthew and Luke do not add appreciably to our knowledge of the Baptist. Matthew is bothered by the Markan rendition—why must Jesus, since he is pure, be baptized in the first place? Accordingly, he portrays Jesus as answering: "Let it be so now; for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (3:15). Luke supplies us with a fanciful birth story which resembles the birth of Samuel, but the story serves only to further subordinate John to Jesus. It is impossible to tell whether John's teachings in 3:7-14 are really his own. The Gospel According to John completes this process of subordination; John's only function is to witness to "the light" (1:8). Each of the three later gospels tries to deal with the embarrassing fact that John baptized Jesus in Mark: Matthew inserts "I need to be baptized by you and do you come to me?" (13:15). Luke separates Jesus' baptism from John himself—we hear that John has gone to prison, and <u>then</u>: "now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heaven was opened. . ."[39] In other words, Luke tries to bypass the matter by relegating it to a dependent clause. John has the Baptist himself explain what happened on that day:

> I did not know him; but for this I am baptizing with water, that he might be revealed to Israel. . . . I saw the Spirit descend as a dove from heaven, and remained on him. I myself did not know him, but he who sent me to baptize with water said to me "He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit" (1:31-33).

The progressive subordination of John to Jesus in the three later gospels (to the point that, in John, the Baptist <u>denies</u> that he is Elijah!) does not completely conceal the fact that Mark appears to consider Jesus' baptism as the <u>natural prelude</u> to his missionary

activity, and makes no effort to tone down John's role in the baptism at all. This would seem to indicate that, historically, John the Baptist enjoyed genuinely tremendous independent stature. Hints in the gospels such as in Mark 2:18-19 and Luke 3:15 show that the Baptist had many followers. We hear of these followers in Asia Minor in Acts 18:24-19:7, followers who had never even heard of Jesus' baptism; their very appearance in Acts is instructive since Luke, so consistently irenic in Tendenz, minimizes the consequence of any factional movements and probably often altogether omits any mention of some of them. John even appears in the Antiquities of Josephus as an eminent, righteous figure who had been executed by Herod (Antipas) for sedition. It should be noted that nowhere in Josephus' account do we hear of what the Gospels describe as John's chief message—the news of the "Coming One."

From the sources mentioned above, Christian tradition has fashioned the following composite picture of John the Baptist:

> Jesus had been started or led to start on his career as God's prophet, proclaiming the speedy advent of the coming cataclysmic change, which he styled the Kingdom of God, and which was to be God's final and long-delayed fulfillment of his ancient promise, when he saw his chosen people ready for their unique destiny, by the wilderness preacher of righteousness, John the Baptist. This latter had recognized Jesus as his own greater successor whose advent it was his principal function to proclaim. Jesus had been, even if in a way that was unique, one of those baptized by John; had probably been for a time one of John's followers, if not an actual disciple; had at any rate apparently not begun his own independent career as a prophet until John's arrest and death. In a word, here was the answer to the persistent, though often toned-down query, "What led the carpenter in Nazareth to lay aside his tools and family responsibilities and to appear as a prophet, apparently the particular prophet long foretold by Moses? It was the ministry of John the Baptist, cut short in untimely wise by his murder at the hands of Herod Antipas.[40]

As Enslin comments, this view has survived probably more by means of constant repetition than through a real scrutiny of the sources.[41]

New Testament scholarship, on the other hand, has taken several

approaches to the problem of John the Baptist. The most prominent approach has applied to John the Baptist methods used in the search for the "historical Jesus." Although, as Walter Wink points out, the individual units of the Gospel tradition yielded virtually no information about Jesus that was not colored by the faith of the early church[42] (and therefore adjudged unreliable as a historical source), the apparently trustworthy citation in Josephus prompted scholars to see everything about John as predominantly historical:

> The very success of the John-quest led to its fixation on the level of historicity. Every monograph on John which thus far appeared [Wink writes in 1968] has dealt with him from the point of view of historical biography. Scholars have consistently regarded the early church's <u>theological</u> preoccupation with John as simply so much pious legend, as mythological or devotional husk to be stripped off in the search for the bare kernels of historical fact.[43]

These "lives" of John have all had to harmonize material that is quite contradictory: Matthew and Mark regard John as Elijah, while Luke and the Fourth Gospel do not; the Synoptics bring John and Jesus into contact only at the time of baptism, while the Fourth Gospel indicates a period of contact; the Synoptics begin Jesus' ministry after John's arrest, while this is specifically denied in the Fourth Gospel.[44]

This type of harmonization is best epitomized by the work of Carl Kraeling.[45] In his "life of John", he turns to all kinds of sources and disciplines to fill in the enormous gaps in our knowledge of John. He turns psychologist: "What," he asks, "caused John's alienation from society?" To answer, he turns to the <u>Lucan</u> infancy narrative (!): the importance of the priest in that story, coupled with the fact that John does <u>not</u>, as was Jewish custom, associate the national deliverer with the Davidic line, shows that John was of "priestly descent," and Kraeling associates John's family with the "landed, rural priesthood."[44]

John would normally have become a priest, and entered into the life of the Jerusalem priesthood, but—

> As one brought up in a modest environment, he may well have been quite unable to cope with life on the complicated and magnificent scale in which it was lived by the more secularized priestly officialdom of Jerusalem. For the urbanized officials of the priesthood he may have been just another rustic come to claim his share of the perquisites, and, for such of their sons as were his fellows in candidacy for ordination, someone to be brushed aside in their own progress toward a brilliant career. If John brought with him such ideals of the sanctity and significance of the priesthood as come to expression in the Infancy Narrative and are focused there in the venerable figure of his own father, he may have been led to regard what he saw going on at Jerusalem as a desecration of a high calling. . . .[47]

This extraordinary use of texts and conjectures continues throughout Kraeling's work; it is no surprise, then, that his description of the relationship between John and Jesus emerges as a restatement of what the Gospels would have us believe. Regarding the formation of gospel traditions about John, he writes:

> Early Christians knew of the personal contact between Jesus and John and of the words that Jesus had spoken about John according him a high place in the divine order of salvation. This information they transmitted gladly not only because of the prominence of John in their day and generation but also because of the conviction that Jesus and John really belonged together.[48]

And as regards what can be seen as solidly historical among these traditions, Kraeling falls back upon the episode of Jesus' baptism (as recounted by all three Synoptics) as the sole example: ". . . only one who had himself accepted baptism at the hands of John could have spoken of the Baptist as Jesus did, and no one of Jesus' followers, disturbed as they were by the conflict between their faith and that of John's adherents, would have invented an episode that seemed to subordinate their master to John."[49]

Basically, Kraeling's methodology involves the acceptance of the text, exactly as it stands, as historical fact. He then spins a story

based on his own exegetical principles over the spaces where the text is silent. In other words, Kraeling has constructed an elaborate biographical midrash; in the place of traditional exegetical principles, he uses modern ones like psychology and anthropology. Thus, John's hairy mantle and leather girdle were not worn by him in imitation of Elijah, but because such clothing is an "elementary requirement for a wilderness sojourn."[50] If so, why would a laconic gospel like Mark bother to mention John's dress? That an author could have written the verse with the intent to portray John as Elijah does not occur to Kraeling.

I have dwelt at some length on Kraeling's views not because they are either sound or contribute to our understanding of John or Elijah but because Kraeling's work is often cited as one of the three leading monographs on John the Baptist.[51] The complete absence of a redaction-critical approach renders Kraeling's book of questionable use, especially when we consider the fact that, of all the passages Kraeling uses to build his detailed "life of John", only one is, by his admission, historically reliable. Thus, his "life of John" is built on air.

One would rightly think that the biographical approach would long ago have been abandoned, but the quest for the historical John still continues. One reason for the continuance of the biographical approach was the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls at Qumran. New Testament researchers eagerly greeted discoveries of "parallels" between the life of the Qumran community and early Christianity; the Scrolls seemed to validate the existence of the Jesus-type in first century Judaism, and to cement even further the evidence supporting the historicity of John. The "parallels" between the Baptist and the Qumran community include

a similar interpretation of Isaiah 40:3, asceticism, an identical geographical environment, and the rite of baptism.[52] The first reaction to these parallels among New Testament scholars was to declare that John was an Essene (assuming, of course, that it was the Essenes who inhabited Qumran). Among these was Jean Steinmann, whose study of John finds clues to the Baptist's behavior and life in almost every sector of the Qumran literature. John's baptism "obviously" recalls the Essene baptism. His diet of wild honey and locusts can be explained by a Damascus Document passage on the perparation of locusts (XII, 14,15), and his abstention from wine also follows Essene practice.[53] While he admits that this evidence alone cannot prove John's Essene connection, Steinmann restates Kraeling's question:

> . . . how could this son of a priest have had the idea of abandoning the priesthood to go and live in the desert? A prophet does not rise up without education or preparation. Where could John have drawn his interpretation of Isaiah in terms of the end of the age, or the idea of the baptismal rite and the principal features of his teaching, so different from that of the synagogue? Only a prolonged contact with the Essenes can partially illuminate this long period of his life, regarding which Josephus and the synoptic tradition are completely silent.[54]

Steinmann explains John's solitude by stating that he must have dropped out of the Essene community at Qumran, drawn by his sense of calling to prophesy in the desert.[55]

Not all views on the relationship between John and Qumran have been this extreme. Luckily, there has been a trend toward moderation in regard to "parallels" in general, especially as they apply to John, Jesus, and Qumran. A shared interpretation of Isaiah 40:3, according to John Pryke, does not necessarily show that John was an Essene; he notes that the desert was a meeting ground for messianic pretenders.[56] Pryke goes on to point out several important differences between John

and the Qumran community that had been overlooked in the initial rush to find archaeological "proof" for John's historicity; among these differences is the fact that John's public activity was contrary to the strict withdrawal of the Qumran community, and the "baptism" of the two groups (we can speak of John as represenging a group) was used for different purposes.[57] Pryke sees John as standing in the main stream of Judaism; thus, "his connection with the sectarians during his ministry is impossible, and the rite he administered is quite different in character from theirs."[58]

Studies in the relationship between John and Qumran have been clouded by the fact that work on the Biblical portions of the Dead Sea Scrolls has been, as Orlinsky has pointed out, quite faulty. A chief cause of this has been the reliance by modern scholars on Kittel's apparatus in the Biblia Hebraica, which, in its citations of LXX manuscripts, has been proven almost worthless.[59] Another factor has been the tendency of modern Biblical scholarship to attach itself eagerly to the most recent archaeological finds, and use them as "proof" for particular theories. Orlinsky assesses this trend:

> Another aspect of biblical research that the fruits of archaeology have unfortunately helped to bring to the fore is the current vogue to equate "parallelism" with "proof", to substitute the citation of parallels for reasoned argument. . . . When the cuneiform texts of the second and first millennia B.C. were uncovered earlier in the twentieth century, what was more natural than for scholars to jump on the Hittite and other bandwagons and find parallels in the most unlikely as well as likely places? One may readily recall the Pan-Babylonian-Hittite school, and the obsession of Hugo Winckler; or the tracing back of almost every detail in the Pentateuchal laws associated with Moses to the laws of Hammurabi.[60]

In the case of John the Baptist, the geographical proximity between Qumran and the Jordan would make parallels between the two more likely to be meaningful. But suppose there are ten or twelve reclusive

"communities" still buried in the Jordan Valley, each with its own interpretation of Scripture? John may have resembled one of them even more than the Essenes; he may even have been a member of one of these groups. The point is that we have no way of knowing whether John was an Essene or not, nor can any extrapolation from the existing evidence prove methodologically sound. We can safely assume that the sources indicate the existence of a religious leader, probably possessing a vivid eschatological vision, who had a tremendous independent stature in the ancient world. Beyond this, our sources are either silent or have been Christianized.

F. John the Baptist in the Gospel According to Mark

Given John's fame and influence, we must now ask what he is doing in a gospel dominated by Jesus. Answers to this question have almost invariably been dominated by a Christological approach; scholars trace John's role in the evolving self-identity of Jesus himself, or in the Gospels' development of Jesus' Christology. Two examples of this approach follow.

R. A. Hammer sets out primarily to define Elijah's role in the Jesus-John relationship. He explains the "discernible shift or progression in Jesus' nature between the gospels"[61] as a portrayal of Jesus' expanding conception of himself. After pointing out the numerous (literary) parallels between Jesus and Elijah in the Gospels,[62] he concludes that Jesus was aware of the stories of Elijah in Kings and consciously modelled his behavior on them. Thus, reasons Hammer, Jesus probably thought of himself as Elijah.[63] As his self-awareness increased, however, and Jesus' messianic role became more dominant,

the Elijah role was no longer sufficient to describe Jesus' activity; therefore, Jesus declared John the Baptist to be Elijah.[64]

A slightly more sophisticated view is presented by J. A. T. Robinson.[65] John the Baptist, he asserts, did not see himself as Elijah (Jn. 1:21). Jesus, however, did (Mark 9:13).[66] There is no pre-Christian evidence that John was considered a forerunner of Christianity;[67] the first clear reference to Elijah as a forerunner occurs in Justin Martyr.[68] In reality, a number of figures populated the ancient eschatological vision; the Elijah figure, the "Son of Man" figure, the "Prophet", and the "Christ" are treated as parallel and alternative hopes by the Gospels (Mk. 6:15; 8:28; John 1:20).[69] Jesus entered this blizzard of hopes by accepting, through his contact with John the Baptist, the "Malachi" role that John had prepared for him (as stated in Mark 1:20). During his early ministry, his outlook was the same as that of John; the placing of the episode of the cleansing of the Temple indicates that Jesus deliberately started out in fulfillment of Malachi's program of reform.[70] After John is killed, however, Jesus begins to grow "beyond" the Malachi role of Elijah; in Luke 9:51-56, he refuses to call down fire on the Samaritans, a rejection of the Elianic practice and an assumption of a higher identity.[71] This transformation is completed when Jesus declares that John is Elijah, for, in doing this, he has declared himself to be the "Coming One."

Both Hammer and Robinson begin their theses under the assumption that everything the New Testament says about John and Jesus really happened. It is obvious that these are works of faith, of a modern Christian kerygma, even more than they are works of scholarship. Since the Gospels are true, they must be harmonized, and therefore a place must

be found in Jesus' day for issues, raised by the text, which were really a preoccupation of the later church. Hammer's view that Jesus consciously imitated Elijah is unprovable; Robinson's use of Luke to clarify points in Mark and John is a classic case of mixing apples and oranges: the distinctive historical context behind each separate gospel is shattered and a composite theological biography is erected from the shards. Robinson does not prove that Jesus had assigned roles to himself according to Jewish Scripture; since the number of reliable Dominical verses is very small, any change in "identity" must be attributed to the later church.

Thus far, in our exploration of scholarly opinion toward John the Baptist and Jesus, we have noted tendencies in New Testament scholarship that parallel somewhat the methodological errors characteristic of Jewish scholarship on the Tannaitic period,[72] errors such as composite reconstruction of figures and ideas from widely divergent sources and "parallels", theological invasions into the interpretation of sources and the masking of what is essentially modern midrash in the guise of "scientific analysis" of the text. These New Testament scholars delve deeply into the workings of the New Testament, and, consciously or unconsciously, retrace the paths through which the redactor arranged the material. Mere description of these inner workings and paths is passed off as scientific evaluation of the texts; often this descriptive evidence is cited as "proof" of the historicity of what the redactor wanted us to believe in the first place. As we have seen, the result is often a triumphant re-statement of the traditional view of the material, as if someone had torn down a house, examined each stud, and then declared that "hidden" evidence had been discovered that the

builder's original intention was to create a house. This approach to the New Testament gives us a good idea of how the modern Kerygma revitalizes itself by taking reinforcement from disciplines like psychology, anthropology, and archaeology, but John the Baptist himself remains out of focus.

One scholar, however, has avoided the aforementioned difficulties. Morton Enslin[73] sees the increasing reduction of John by the Gospels from an independent prophet into Jesus' conscious forerunner, the absence in Josephus of any mention of a "Successor", and the frequent mentions throughout the Gospels of John's disciples, as evidence that John and Jesus did not know each other:

> The twelve men, instructed by Apollos and who "knew only the baptism of John," and who had never heard of the Holy Spirit, provide but another warning that the modern guess—despite its wide acceptance it is still but a guess—that Jesus was started on his prophetic career by John, was probably for a time his disciple, repeating his message, not only is far less certain than its wide acceptance and repetition would suggest, but would warrant a more sympathetic consideration of its exact opposite, viz., that their paths did not cross, but that the stories as we have them are of later Christian construction, reflecting the early attempt to incorporate John into the Christian picture.[74]

Enslin notes that the Gospels are silent about baptism. If Jesus had been John's disciple, why, in Jn. 4:2, does Jesus ignore baptism? The answer, according to Enslin, is that, by the time the Gospels were written, baptism had become a universal practice.[75] John's presentation in the New Testament was meant to neutralize the rivalry between the followers of John and those of Jesus, a rivalry that had been sustained for some time. In addition, the New Testament authors in general undercut, through their use of John the Baptist, an embarrassing Jewish claim that the earliest kerygma was false. Christians declared that "God is here, the Kingdom is at hand." Jews disputed Christian

teachings by citing verses from Scripture: had not Malachi written "Behold, I send a messenger to prepare the way before me, and the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple. . . . Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes." Since, the Jews reasoned, Elijah had not appeared, Christian claims must be faulty. One senses a rebuttal to this argument in Mk. 9:11-13:

> And they asked him, "Why do the scribes say that first Elijah must come?" And he said to them, "Elijah does come first to restore all things; and how is it written of the son of man, that he should suffer many things and be treated with contempt? But I tell you that Elijah has come, and they did to him whatever they pleased, as it is written of him."

Here, Mark rebuts Jewish objections by declaring that the Elijah who was to signal the New Age had indeed come in the person of John the Baptist.[76]

Enslin's explanation of the relationship between John and Jesus could, I feel, have some relationship to the theme of the "Messianic Secret" that so permeates Mark's gospel. Mark had to proclaim a gospel of Jesus in a world in which, as the evidence has shown, John was more famous. He could not avoid John's independent stature, but was forced to carve a place for him in Christian theology. What was John's role? That of forerunner to the Christ. Why had many people heard of the forerunner, but not of the Christ? The answer is that the Christ actively concealed his activities; he constantly enjoined his disciples and those whom he had healed to tell no one. Jesus was a <u>hidden</u> messiah: this was why nobody had heard of him.

John's stature was such that, as Walter Wink has shown, all the Gospels make John the turning point of salvation history;[77] the "gospel of Jesus Christ" (Mk. 1:1) begins with him. But the new age only

begins with John; Christianity has given him a permanent place in its soteriological framework (it had to, for John's status and righteousness could not be ignored), but this role is one that is eternally subservient to Jesus. Thus, the Gospels answered Jewish criticism ingeniously with the equation of John to Elijah, and this equation preserved Jesus' supremacy as well.

Let us now review this process as it appears in Mark. Let us also assume that a typical reader has heard of John, but not Jesus. Mk. 1: 2-8 opens "the gospel of Jesus Christ" with a description of a messenger who is to come, who will fulfill the conflated prophecies of Isaiah 40:3 and Malachi 3:1. A reader, opening Mark for the first time, would expect that these verses refer to Jesus who has just been mentioned in 1:1. However, John appears instead; he is the voice in the wilderness in 1:4. Thus, John's followers are given an immediate explanation for his fame and greatness—he came in fulfillment of Scripture. The reader is reminded that this is the gospel of Jesus, however, in 1:9: John's teachings have been eclipsed by his proclamation of a "coming one." Jesus appears, and what follows is the real "gospel", the explanation of how Jesus has gone far beyond the "messenger" role of John. John baptized him; he was one of John's followers, but he was really the hidden Messiah. Nothing in 1:10-11 indicates that John or anyone but Jesus saw the heavens opened and the Spirit descending; this could have been a personal revelation to Jesus. It is a revelation which drives Jesus into the wilderness—as we have mentioned, this need not be in imitation of Elijah, but reflects the general fund of Mosaic tradition.

John does not appear again until 6:17ff. Here, the gospel goes into

a long parenthetical explanation of why it is that some thought Jesus was John raised from the dead. This account in many ways resembles Esther; Enslin sees parallels here with a story chronicled by Dio Cassius of the beheading in 75 of Heras.[78] More important is the typological parallel between Jezebel/Elijah and Herodias/John, which heightens the hitherto implied identification of John with Elijah. At the Transfiguration, Elijah appears with Moses; their presence as representatives of the Torah and Prophets, along with the "heavenly voice", validates Peter's confession of Jesus' messiahship in 8:29. Most crucial is the formulation of salvation-history that immediately follows, in 9:11-13. Walter Wink notes that the placing of this account immediately after the transfiguration would give the reader the impression that this identification of John with Elijah was "received" on the mountain.[79] If Wink's hypothesis is true, this has enormous implications for the followers of John; Mark is telling them that the true identity of their leader was not revealed until after his death, thus casting into doubt any claims that the Baptist made for himself.

G. Elijah in the Christian Eschatological Framework

Why does Mark use Elijah, as opposed to some other figure, to fix John the Baptist in his soteriological framweork? The explanation that springs immediately to mind is that Mark used a figure who had traditionally never died, and whose return was widely expected in Jewish circles; Mark 1:2-8, 6:15ff., and 8:27 reflect an undercurrent of Jewish longing for a "coming one." Since this longing for a coming one arose as a result of Scriptural passages predicting his arrival, Mark assembled the passages that were relevant and made them apply

to John. Thus, Mark had no influence on the fitness of the Elijah figure for Christian use, but merely united already existing traditions with a figure who would fit in with them—John the Baptist.

But is this really the case? Just as there is no pre-Christian evidence that John was regarded as a forerunner of Christianity,[80] there is no evidence of a pre-Christian conflation like that of 1:2-3 in regard to Elijah. The argument of the "scribes" that Elijah must come first is not that the Messiah needs a forerunner, but that the Messianic age has its prophet. In Malachi, Elijah is to usher in the age of the "great and terrible day of the Lord"—nothing is said of a successor, nor, for that matter, of a Messiah. We should also mention the fact that Jesus' allusion to a "suffering Elijah" in 9:13 has no basis in Scripture.

To answer this question, we must turn to some of the work that has been done on the nature of the "coming one" in Jewish eschatology, such as Howard Teeple's The Mosaic Eschatological Prophet. A survey of this work will point out to us some of the difficulties inherent in discerning, in a particular text, what reflects a popular belief as opposed to what is a literary creation of the author with a life of its own.

Teeple defines the "Mosaic eschatological prophet" as follows:

> An eschatological prophet is a prophet coming in the messianic era; when only one such prophet is anticipated he is referred to in this study as "the eschatological prophet." He may be the chief new figure in establishing the new era, in which case he is the Prophet-Messiah in effect if not in name; he may be merely an assistant to or forerunner of the Messiah; a third possibility is that the eschatological Prophet may accompany the Messiah when he comes. The Mosaic type is the eschatological Prophet who will be either Moses himself returned to earth (Moses redividus) or the Prophet like Moses on the basis of an interpretation of Deuteronomy 18:15ff.[81]

In ancient times, according to Teeple, several eschatological concepts were current. Among them was the concept of the "eternal Torah" as expressed by Amos 8:11-12 and the Qumranite interpretation of Isaiah 40:3.[82]

As opposed to this, other verses of Scripture, along with certain interpretations of rabbinic literature, could be construed as indicating that the messianic age would bring an abrogation of the Torah and a new Law.[83] Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Micah used the Exodus as a prototype for the future era of redemption; Moses, as the leader of the Exodus, was thus the prototype for the future messianic leader.[84]

Teeple cites many texts to demonstrate the exaltation of Moses in the ancient and Hellenistic world, an exaltation which he claims was augmented by the rise of the belief that he had ascended to heaven like Elijah and Enoch.[85]

Teeple then turns to the New Testament to document his claim that there was a widespread "Jewish Belief" that Moses would return in the Messianic age.[86] The cause for this belief was the "widespread opinion that Mosiac times would return; the return of Mosaic conditions logically required the return either of Moses or of a prophet like him." But, says Teeple, there was a more direct cause of this belief:

> Our earliest sources which mention Moses' return (Revelations 11 and Mark 9) do so in combination with the return of Elijah. . . . It should also be observed that in both these sources Elijah is mentioned first. The Biblical story of Elijah's ascension resulted in the belief that Elijah would return as the messianic Prophet and Messiah; this, in turn, led to the belief that others, especially those translated to heaven, would also return. Among the prophets so honored, it was natural, almost inevitable, that Moses, the greatest of them all, whould be included. . . the cause or source of the expectation of Moses' return was not Deut. 18:15, but the influence of the Elijah traditions, supplemented by the general longing for the return of Mosaic times.[87]

The return of Moses must, Teeple says, be differentiated from the return of the "prophet like Moses" in Deuteronomy 18:15, which was a parallel expectation,[88] and also the "suffering servant" of Isaiah 53:12.[89] Belief in Moses' return, according to Teeple, was not as widespread as the belief in Elijah's return, the reason being that the Synoptic Gospels emphasize

Elijah much more often.[90]

I have, of course, omitted the vast tracts of detailed evidence that Teeple draws upon to document his claims. The above exposition, I think, should illustrate a basic methodological error which Teeple, and many other scholars of this period, commit. In deducing the real nature of Jewish eschatological longing, Teeple uses 1) Biblical citations; 2) apocryphal literature; 3) rabbinic literature; and 4) gospel literature. These sources are arranged into what is a very tempting scenario: Biblical quotations indicate the existence of varying types of eschatological prophet in the collective consciousness of Israel. The momentum of these types carries them into the early Christian era, where the Gospels and rabbinic parallels show that Biblical eschatological verses had become the basis for widespread belief. New Testament scholars logically conclude that in Jesus' time there was widespread expectation for a prophet like Jesus, or John the Baptist, to appear. Scripture, the Gospels, and rabbinic literature are used in concert to demonstrate the "fullness of time" in Jesus' day. Elijah, according to this scenario, was expected to appear at the beginning of the new age; thus, Mark uses him to show that that age had begun—with John.

The problem with the above scenario is that it is based on the assumption, mentioned previously, that the Judaism of Jesus' day was the Judaism of the Talmud and Midrash. Teeple creates "types" of eschatological prophet based on verses from all parts of the Bible, arranges them against rabbinic exegesis of these verses and the Gospels to "prove" the expectation of these types in the early first century. This method is highly artificial; if there was (as Teeple asserts) widespread belief in Judaism of Moses' eventual return, why are Mark 9 and Revelations 11

"our earliest sources which mention Moses' return"? Possibly this is because the close of Deuteronomy, which states that there never was another prophet like Moses, implies that the Torah is eternal; it is only when Christianity must originate a new Law that a new Moses must return. Between the Bible, which "originated" the types of eschatological prophet, and the rabbinic passages that supposedly support these types, lie hundreds of years. Much more important is the fact that Christian and rabbinic literatures share an important foundation: the need to survive in the face of overwhelming loss—a shared loss and a shared experience which forced them to confront each other. In the case of Christianity, this loss was the crucifixion of Jesus; in the case of Judaism, it was the fall of the Temple.

Jesus' death led his followers, in their despair, to search Scripture for explanations as to why the Lord's anointed (or whomever Jesus' disciples took him to be), should perish before his mission was complete. Rome still occupied Judea; the Temple still stood. The end times had not arrived. There was nothing in the disciples' experience to tell them that the world had changed after Jesus died. Evidence of Christian reaction toward this situation can be found in the Epistle to the Hebrews; it can be inferred from the text that early Christians saw the martyred Jesus as both the perfect High Priest and the perfect sacrificial offering, thereby obviating the need for the Temple long before it fell. Consider also the imagery of the curtain which ripped in two the moment Jesus expired in Mk. 15, symbolizing the cessation of the Holy of Holies as the chamber for effecting atonement for the Jewish people. It is clear from these sources that one of Christianity's initial responses to Jesus' death was to declare that the crucifixion had not ended Jesus'

role as a religious leader, but had actually fulfilled the Scriptures themselves.

Judaism's loss was to come with the fall of the Temple in 70 C.E. Earlier, Jews could counter Christian claims that the Messiah had come and redeemed the world with his death by pointing to the Temple and the other institutions of Jewish life, which still, if only outwardly, flourished. The High Priest was still alive; atonement could still be made. With the fall of the Temple, however, the Jewish-Christian battle over the Scriptures came to a head. Both faiths had a stake in their validity; both Christianity and Judaism would have been interested in reinterpreting the Bible to fit the desperate situation which each faced: Judaism to justify its own existence, and Christianity to claim its own roots in antiquity by keeping the Scriptures alive. Exegesis for both groups became a matter of survival; the manipulation of words and phrases to fit the present became an all-consuming necessity. Mark, in our opinion, is the oldest extant formal and exegetical attempt to define the life and role of Jesus; it represents Christianity's grappling with Jesus' death, the fall of the Temple, and persecution under Nero, factors which, which taken collectively, would have seemed to invalidate both Christian beliefs and Jewish Scriptures. Mark's approach is to say "behold, the Scriptures <u>have</u> been fulfilled; Jesus' <u>death</u> fulfilled them forty years ago, and the sufferings around us are the convulsions of the end time. John the Baptist was Elijah, and Jesus was the Messiah, formerly, this was hidden from you, but believe it now."

New Testament scholarship must, for theological reasons, retroject the rabbinic tradition of the Talmud and Midrash back into Jesus' time (so that he can preach against the Pharisees). This allows scholars like

Teeple to use the rabbinic tradition (and he goes all the way to the thirteenth century!) to posit Jewish expectation which, if they existed earlier, did not necessarily have the same forms. The vast majority of rabbinic passages that are cited to paint a picture of Jewish belief in Jesus' time actually come from periods when Judaism was competing with Christianity for the inheritance of the Bible. Thus: rabbinic passages that are cited to show that Christian ideas of salvation came from mainstream Judaism actually reflect only rabbinic attempts to seize and neutralize Christian ideas.

As to what Jesus, John the Baptist, or any other sectarians thought of themselves in the early first century, rabbinic "parallels" offer no clue. The following passage by Teeple unintentionally illustrates this:

> From the death of Herod the Great to the fall of Jerusalem, a period of seventy-five years, eighteen separate individuals are named by Josephus as starting rebellions in Palestine, and still others are referred to by him. Two of these were Theudas and an Egyptian Jew, and significantly, both called themselves "prophets." Jeremias believes that these two men as well as other similar leaders of the day viewed themselves as the Mosaic eschatological Prophet because they desired to lead the people into the desert, or wilderness, even as Moses had done in his day.[91]

If Jeremias is correct, these facts only prove the obvious: the view of the Messianic age was strongly influenced by accounts of the Exodus. We know nothing of the Scriptural passages each of these prophets may have used; we cannot say that one saw himself as the prophet of Deuteronomy 18:15, and that another saw himself as the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53, and that another claimed to be the Elijah of Malachi. This may very well have been the case, but it is a case that cannot be proven from rabbinic parallels to Christian literature. Both literatures reflect a simultaneous and vigorous debate with each other, not necessarily conditions that existed before that debate took place. Parallels between

Jewish and Christian sources can tell us nothing concerning what kind of Elijah John the Baptist really was, or what John thought about himself. The correlating of different kinds of eschatological messiah with Scriptural verses really avails nothing.

If we view Teeple's evidence and some of his assertions in a literary sense, however, the relationships between John, Jesus, and Elijah begin to fall into place.[92] Rather than being a vehicle for conveying existing beliefs, we should see Mark as an attempt to shape belief. This shaping was, I believe, reflected in the heightening of exegetical activity in the period immediately following the fall of the Temple. The numerous types of prophet that supposedly existed as representations of Scriptural verses should instead be seen as literary creations of a gospel-writer holding out hope to a decimated people.

This hope would inevitably collide with the competing ideas of a Judaism which sought to develop a (new) Oral Law. As Enslin has pointed out, the "scribes and Pharisees" could have countered Christian claims that the Kingdom had arrived with Malachi 4:5—Elijah had not come, therefore Christian claims were false. Mark's response is in keeping with his theme of secrecy; in 9:11-13 Jesus delivers the "revelation" that Elijah had really come, and that Elijah was John the Baptist. Here, I believe, we see one of the first formal Christian codifications of salvation-history; there had been no need for history at all as long as the Kingdom was imminent, but now that Scripture itself had increasingly become threatened, a way had to be found to: a) explain the present situation of decimation; and b) retain the validity of the Jewish Scriptures. Mark was the first formal attack in a "war of exegesis" that began soon after the crucifixion and was finally crystallized in Justin

Martyr's Dialogue with Trypho.

In summary, Elijah was used by Christian exegetes to deal with competing claims on two fronts. First, Christians had for years been dealing with followers of John the Baptist, a very influential contemporary of Jesus. We know little of what he taught; if the New Testament sources are accurate, he was possessed of a vision of the immediacy of the end time. Second, the fall of the Temple intensified the decades-old struggle between Judaism and Christianity over rights of inheritance of the Jewish Scriptures; each group, through exegesis, attempted to prove the validity for itself of the promise of Abraham. Christianity accomplished this by claiming that Abraham's promise had been fulfilled by Jesus; Judaism by demonstrating that an Oral Law had been given to Moses on Mt. Sinai, an oral law that transcended the destruction of institutions founded according to the written Law. As part of this struggle, it became necessary for Christianity to write a salvation-history based not upon accounts of Jesus' mighty acts, crucifixion, and passion alone, but upon the Jewish Scriptures. The reason for this is that the Jewish Scriptures themselves contained passages that would contradict Christian claims, among them Malachi 4:5. Malachi 4:5 had for years been used by the Jews as a counter-claim to Christian proclamation of the New Age; it was now taken in by Mark and made, in defense, part of Christian soteriology. Elijah had come--he was John the Baptist. To show this, Mark engaged in another bit of exegesis--he conflated Malachi 3:1 and Isaiah 40:3 to show that Jewish Scriptures had predicted a figure like John the Baptist, a figure who preached repentance and lived in the desert.

In doing this, Mark solidified forever the concept that the Messiah

must have a forerunner. He also condemned John the Baptist to eternal subservience to Jesus in the Christian soteriological framework. John became the beginning, but only the beginning, of the gospel of Jesus; his appearance heralded the start of the Kingdom and the imminent parousia. Since the fall of the Temple could undoubtedly have been seen by the Christians as another symptom of the end time, Mark's gospel would not have to face the problem of the delayed parousia which we will review in our chapter on Matthew, Luke, and John. Rather, its emphasis on salvation through suffering confirmed for Christians that their persecutions were also part of the end time. Followers of John the Baptist, who had evidently thought that John was the Christ, were offered the "revelation" that John was Elijah, the "turning point" of the Kingdom, but was not the Christ. Elijah was used, exegetically, to validate Christian claims that the New Age was at hand; it was Mark who, through the Baptist, made Elijah a permanent and fixed component of Christian salvation history.

Notes: Chapter Four

[1]R. A. Spivey and D. Moody Smith, Jr., Anatomy of the New Testament (New York: Macmillan, 1974), 80.

[2]Etienne Trocmé, The Formation of the Gospel According to Mark (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1974), 8.

[3]Ibid., 10. Trocmé: Griesbach's hypothesis was first formulated in the "Jena Programmes" entitled: Commentatio qua Marci evangelion totum Matthaei et Lucae comenatriis decerptum esse monstratur. One of Griesbach's most celebrated defenders was W. M. L. de Wette; see Kürze Erklärung der Evangelion des Lukas und Markus (Kurzegassestes exegitetiches Handbuch zum N.T.), 3rd edition (Leipzig, 1846).

[4]Ibid., 11.

[5]Spivey/Smith, op. cit., 79.

[6]Ibid., 83.

[7]Ibid., 79.

[8]Michael J. Cook, Mark's Treatment of the Jewish Leaders, Vol. LI of Supplements to Novum Testamentum (Leiden: Brill, 1978), 12-14.

[9]Samuel Sandmel, A Jewish Understanding of the New Testament (New York: KTAV, 1956), 137. Also, Spivey/Smith, loc. cit.

[10]F. C. Grant, "The Gospel According to St. Mark: Introduction and Exegesis," The Interpreter's Bible (New York: Abingdon, 1951), 630.

[11]Spivey/Smith, loc. cit. See also Cook, op. cit., end of chapter 1.

[12]Norman Cohen, The Role of Tanakhic Personages in the New Testament (Cincinnati: HUC-JIR rabbinic thesis, 1977), 89.

[13]A strange "parallel" to this miracle occurs in Tacitus, Histories 4:81. Vespasian is visiting Alexandria when a blind man of the city throws himself at the Emperor's feet, praying that the emperor himself would stoop to spit on his cheeks and eyeballs. See D. Dungan and D. Cartlidge, Sourcebook of Texts for the Comparative Study of the Gospels (Missoula, Montana: Society of Biblical Literature, 1973), 57. F. C. Grant (IB, 757-758) notes that spittle was an ancient medicament, especially for the eyes. Jesus also uses folk remedies in 6:13.

[14]C. F. D. Moulé, The Gospel According to Mark (Cambridge: University Press, 1965), 62-3.

[15]L. J. McGinley, Form-Criticism of the Synoptic Healing Narratives (Woodstock, Marylan: Woodstock College Press, 1944), 49.

[16]Trocmé, op. cit., 199.

[17]As F. C. Grant notes (IB 758), the "parallelism has not yet been explained." There have, however, been several attempts. See. A. Richardson, "Feeding the Five Thousand: Mark 6:34-44," Interpretation 9 (1955): 144-147. who says that Mark deliberatly recorded both feeding miracles to develop his theme of opening the eyes of the disciples. He notes that both feeding miracles conclude a sequence that begins with a feeding miracle. Between the two feeding stories Mark places the story of the Syrophoenician woman, to emphasize the importance of the mission to the gentiles. Trocmé (op. cit., 180-181) claims that Mark deliberately wrote the second account modelled on the first; the substitution of seven baskets for twelve shows that Mark was pleading for equal rights for the "seven" of Acts 6:1-4.

[18]Trocmé, op. cit., 31.

[19]Ibid., 31. Trocmé cites the classic publications in N.T. form-criticism: M. Dibelius, Die Formeschichte des Evangeliums (Tübingen, 1919); L. K. Schmidt, Der Rahmen der Geschichte Jesu (Berlin, 1919; 2nd ed., 1931; 3rd ed., 1957; 4th ed., 1958); M. Albertz, Die Synoptischen Streitgespräche: ein Beitrag zur Formsgeschichte des Urchristentums (Berlin, 1921); see also, especially, R. Bultmann, Die Geschichte der synoptischen Tradition (Göttingen, 1921).

[20]McGinley, op. cit., 11-12.

[21]Trocmé, op. cit., 34-39.

[22]McGinley, op. cit., 18.

[23]Ibid., 5.

[24]Trocmé, op. cit., 49.

[25]Ibid., 242.

[26]Ibid., 44.

[27]McGinley, op. cit., 6.

[28]Ibid., 12.

[29]Ibid., 21.

[30]Ibid., 24.

[31]Ibid., 14. Although we can accept McGinley's criticism of Bultmann and Dibelius, his alternatives are rather conventional: he claims that form-criticism is misleading because the Gospels portary events as they actually happened. He argues that a community of eyewitnesses would not have spontaneously produced the individual "forms" but would have contributed to a unified and complete gospel. The "original text" of

the stories would not have produced faith; rather, "only the living Jesus produced faith."

[32]See Cook, op. cit., 10.

[33]Trocmé, op. cit., 35.

[34]"Toward the Isolation of Pre-Markan Miracle Catenae," JBL 89 (1970): 265-291; "The Origin and Function of the Pre-Markan Miracle Catenae," JBL 91 (1972): 198-221. The two parallel catenae consist of the following: A) 4:35-41; 5:25-34; 5:21-23, 35-43; 6:34-44, 53. B) 6:45-51; 8:22-26; 7:24b-30; 7:32-37; 8:1-10.

[35]Achtemeier, "The Origin and the Function. . .," 198.

[36]Ibid., 206.

[37]For a discussion of Achtemeier's groupings in relation to the concept of Theios Aner, see H. C. Kee, Aretalogies, Hellenistic "Lives," and the Sources of Mark. (Berkeley, California: Protocol of the Twelfth Colloquy of the Center for Hermeneutical Studies, 1975).

[38]F. C. Grant (IB, 648) claims that the author in Mk 1:1-3 is not borrowing an apt poetical description from the "Old Testament," but is pointing out an exact fulfillment of prophecy. Verse 2b reflects the "early Christian view" that John was the forerunner of Christ. Moule (op. cit., 9) says that the fact that both verses 2 and 3 are ascribed to Isaiah may mean that they occurred side by side under a single heading in some collection of prophecies. I believe that the author of Mark does not actually tell us her that John is Elijah because he prefers to present this identification as "revelation" in 9:11-13.

[39]The rite of baptism itself has come under much scrutiny by scholars. Primary sources, however, are meager as to the nature of John's baptism; see Carl H. Kraeling, John the Baptist (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951), who cites H. G. Marsh, The Origin and Significance of New Testament Baptism (1941). Often, parallels with rabbinic proselyte baptism are cited as explanation for John's baptism or in contrast to it: see S. Zeitlin, "The Halaka in the Gospels," HUCA I (1924) 217-225; idem, "A Note on Baptism for Proselytes," JBL 52 (1933): 319-321; J. Starr, "The Unjewish Character of the Markan Account of John the Baptist," JBL 51 (1932): 59-65; L. Finkelstein, "The Institution of Baptism for Proselytes," JBL 52 (1933): 57-70; H. H. Rowley, "Jewish Proselyte Baptism," HUCA 15 (1940): 165-179.

[40]Morton Enslin, "John and Jesus," Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentische Wissenschaft 66 (1975), 1. Enslin cites among the modern studies on John the Baptist: J. A. T. Robinson, three essays reprinted in Twelve New Testament Studies (1962); W. R. Farmer, "John the Baptist," IDB 2 (1962); Roland Schütz, Johannes der Täufer (1967); and John Reumann, "The Quest for the Historical Baptist," in Understanding the Sacred Text, ed. Reumann (1972).

[41]Ibid.

[42]The early classic survey of the scholarly inquiry into the life of Jesus was by Albert Schweitzer, The Quest of the Historical Jesus (New York: Macmillan, 1968); see Index of Authors and Works, 405ff. More recent surveys, including some critical of Schweitzer, are: H. Anderson, ed., Jesus (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1967); J. W. Bowman, Which Jesus? (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1970); J. H. Hayes, Son of God to Superstar: Twentieth Century Interpretations of Jesus (Nashville: Abingdon, 1976); H. K. McArthur, ed., In Search of the Historical Jesus (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969); Hugh Anderson, Jesus and Christian Origins: A Commentary on Modern Viewpoints (New York: Oxford, 1964); R. H. Fuller, The New Testament in Current Study (New York: Scribner's, 1962).

[43]Walter Wink, John the Baptist in the Gospel Tradition (Cambridge: University Press, 1968), x.

[44]Charles Scobie, John the Baptist (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951), 15.

[45]Karl Kraeling, John the Baptist (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951).

[46]Ibid., 21

[47]Ibid., 26

[48]Ibid., 124.

[49]Ibid., 131.

[50]Ibid., 14.

[51]Wink, op. cit., ix. The other two prominent monographs are: Maurice Goguél, Au Seuil de le'èvangile Jean Baptiste (1928); and Ernst Lohmeyer's Das Urchristemtum I. Johannes der Taüfer (1928).

[52]John Pryke, "John the Baptist and the Qumran Community," Revue de Qumran 4 (1964): 483-497.

[53]Jean Steinmann, Saint John the Baptist and the Desert Tradition (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1958), 59.

[54]Ibid., 60.

[55]Ibid., 61.

[56]Pryke, op. cit., 486. Among these desert-oriented Messianic pretenders were "Theudas" and the "Egyptian" mentioned in Acts and Josephus.

[57]Ibid., 496. Pryke notes that "John's Baptismal rite was initiation into a remnant of the cleansed Israelites. The Qumran community was a rival claimant to that title. But the internal evidence and the archaeological remains suggest that their washings were part of a whole life of

purity which was withdrawn and privately celebrated apart from the nation, which they regarded as unclean and damned. Their initiation was not through immersion, but began with a solemn oath privately and irrevocably undertaken within the community. John the Baptist, unlike them, went out of his way to warn all the Israelites of their impending danger in the coming doom." Pryke also comments that "the prophetic witness of John was to all Israel: fearless, uncompromising, and possibly more nationalistic and military in character than the gospels seem to suggest. The Qumran sect were in schism and harly representative of Israel in spite of their claim."

[58]Pryke, loc. cit. Ascertaining what exactly was the "mainstream" of Judaism before 70 is highly problematic. Christian scholarship tends to retroject rabbinic notions and formulations into Jesus' day; it should be noted that, with the Temple standing and the priesthood in power, the popular conception of what was "mainstream" was most likely quite different.

[59]Harry Orlinsky, "Whither Biblical Research?" JBL 90 (1971), 6.

[60]Ibid., 58. Another manifestation of this tendency has been the connection of John the Baptist with the Mandaeah sect in Iran. Two exponents of the "Mandaeah connection" are R. Reitzenstein, in Die Vorgeschichte der christlichen Taüfe (1929), and J. Thomas, Le Mouvement Baptiste en Palestine et Syrie (1935). For a thorough review of their work see Kraeling, op. cit., 106-109.

[61]R. A. Hammer, "Elijah and Jesus, a Quest for Identity," Judaism 20 (1970): 209-215.

[62]Ibid., 208-210.

[63]Ibid., 212.

[64]Ibid., 214

[65]J. A. T. Robinson, "Elijah, John, and Jesus: an Essay in Detection," New Testament Studies 5 (1958): 260-278.

[66]Ibid., 266.

[67]Ibid., 267.

[68]Ibid., 269.

[70]Ibid., 272.

[71]Ibid., 273.

[72]See J. Neusner, "The History of Earlier Rabbinic Judaism: Some New Approaches," History of Religions 16 (1977): 216-236.

[73]Enslin, op. cit.

[74]Ibid., 7.

[75]Ibid., 8.

[76]Ibid., 11. Cook (op. cit., 49, 68-69) sees this passage (9:11-12a, 13ab) as part of a pre-Markan "scribe" collection, a collection which was formed under different circumstances than those passages which mention Pharisees. He writes: "Passages incorporated from the pre-Markan scribe collection. . . reflect a later concern by the church to gather material on Jesus' relations with this group who, for all intents and purposes, may have been equivalent to Pharisees but under an earlier name. Noteworthy in these passages is the absence of any dissension over the validity of the Law; in one pericope there is even agreement on the subject of important commandments. Dissension over the Law arose only after Paul's teachings became influential. Still, the issues under discussion here—resurrection, Elijah's coming, the ancestry of the Messiah, etc—while reflecting some of the earliest concerns of the (Palestinian?) church in disputation with Jewish critics—post-date Jesus' ministry as well as the formulations of some of the earliest Palestinian traditions.

[77]Wink, op. cit., 111.

[78]Enslin, op. cit., 13.

[79]Ibid., 15.

[80]Robinson, op. cit., 269.

[81]Howard Teeple, The Mosaic Eschatological Prophet, JBL Monograph Series X (Philadelphia: Society of Biblical Literature, 1957), 1.

[82]Ibid., 14.

[83]Ibid., 23.

[84]Ibid., 29.

[85]Ibid., 31ff.

[86]Ibid., 43.

[87]Ibid., 48.

[88]Ibid., 49.

[89]Ibid., 63.

[90]Ibid., 47.

[91]Ibid., 3.

[92]Ibid., 65.

Chapter Five

Elijah in the Gospels According to Matthew, Luke, and John

A. Introductory Remarks

One would think that, once Mark had established Elijah/John the Baptist as the precursor of Jesus, the momentum of this formulation would lead to its further embellishment by the developing Christian tradition. More ways would be found to strengthen and embellish John's Elijah role. Miracle traditions concerning the Baptist (and there is no reason to doubt that there were such) could easily have been invested with an Elianic character. As Jesus' theological identity grew, as his church's constituency flourished beyond the borders of Judaism, increasing numbers of interpreters could claim that, as Elijah, John would essentially "close out" Juadism and leave the way for Jesus to assume an entirely new role for the new age.

In reality, however, this did not happen. As an exegetical statement, Mark's identification of John with Elijah survives only through Matthew. While Matthew preserves John's Elijah role, he does little, if anything, to strengthen it, and this is especially surprising when we consider Matthew's tendency to ground seemingly everything possible in the Christian tradition in Jewish prophecy. Luke and John, meanwhile, actually deny, implicitly and explicitly, the Elijah-ship of John the Baptist. We suspect that the use of the Elijah symbol was linked closely with each gospel's needs, needs which, in the case of Matthew and Luke, differed sharply. Only with John do we find primarily theological reasons for the use of Elijah.

In this chapter, we will explore the contrasting backgrounds of

Matthew and Luke, comparing those parallel passages which highlight their differing treatments of Elijah. Then we will examine John, who negates Elijah completely in his assertion that a temporal, "Jewish" Elijah can have no relationship with an eternal Christ.

B. The Gospel According to Matthew

Of all the gospels, Matthew was the most extensively used by the Church Fathers.[1] Spivey and Smith comment that it was probably a "churchly gospel written to give direction to the community as it faced problems of organization, separation from Judaism, and disappointed eschatological hopes."[2] In Mark, the emphasis is on the Passion and the triumphal declaration that the Kingdom of God was at hand; essentially, Mark is a call to readiness. Matthew, facing a retrenching Judaism whose survival was not foreseen by Christianity, and the realization that the world order had not yet been overturned, gave structure and a temporal dimension to Mark's call to readiness. Sherman Johnson describes the times and circumstances in which Matthew was written:

> . . . after the Neronian persecution and the destruction of the temple, Christians settled down to an easier and more peaceful life; a second generation grew up without the fervor of their fathers; a few became relatively prosperous; and because the earlier missionaries had died, it was easy for false prophets like Menander and El Kesi to deceive the people.
>
> . . . The Gospel belongs to a time when the church is being consolidated as a separate organization and has developed its own worship, theology, ethics, procedure, and leadership in the face of internal laxity and dissension and external competition and persecution.[3]

Matthew addresses the problems of his church by showing that Jesus was the Messiah of "Old Testament" prophecy,[4] and therefore the proclaimer of the highest morality and most perfect Law. This highest morality, the ethics of the new age, was to guide the faithful in the interim

between Jesus' resurrection and reappearance on earth.

It is not entirely clear when Matthew's new and perfect "Law" appeared, although, as Johnson states, the situation it is meant to ameliorate also gave rise to I Clement, Hermas, the Ignatian letters, the Pastoral epistles, and the Gospel of John.[5] Since Matthew uses about ninety per-cent of Mark, enough time had to elapse after 70 C.E. to allow Mark to have become authoritative.[6] The conflict of the Corinthians around 95 epitomized the internal crises experienced by Christianity; Johnson surmises, therefore, that Matthew was composed as late as 100 C. E. The earliest Church Father to mention Matthew was Ignatius (110-115).[7] Though its author was probably anonymous,[8] Matthew became prominent in the second-century church almost certainly, as Johnson notes, because "it had been the first of all the Gospels to be accepted by some great center of Christendom," probably Antioch.[9]

Although it had been preceded by Mark, Matthew was far more effective as an instrument for the unification of the early church. Mark contained very little of Jesus' teaching,[10] and left the way open for widely divergent interpretations of Jesus' message. Matthew's emphasis is precisely upon Jesus' teachings; while it addressed potent issues that arose, as Johnson points out, after 70: the authority of Jewish Scripture, the reconciliation of penitent sinners, and the interpretation of Jesus as the Christ.[11] The entire mass of Matthew's gospel is given authority through connection to the institution of apostolicism; while Paul, Barnabas, and others were called apostles, Matthew claims to trace this institution (10:2, 40) back to the original "twelve."[12] Thus, the early church developed, in Matthew, the first outlines of a "New Testament" which could be cited and used in controversies among Christian factions.

Some controversies may have arisen directly from errors and loopholes in the text of Mark itself. Matthew deftly clears these up: Jesus' baptism is not a baptism of personal repentance (which would imply sin on Jesus' part); instead, Jesus was baptized to "fulfill all righteousness." This "righteousness" is the substance of the Kingdom itself.[13] Mark 10:18, which reads "Why do you call me good?" is changed by Matthew (19:17) to "Why do you ask me about what is good?"[14] Matthew takes pains to explain that Jesus' body was not stolen, a possible Jewish objection which Mark had not anticipated. The role of John the Baptist is given a special Matthean character: Spivey and Smith note that the preaching of John the Baptist and Jesus are identical; John's teaching is prophecy, and Jesus' coming is the fulfillment of that prophecy. No polemic is directed against the Baptist himself,[16] probably because by 100 C.E. John's followers were not as important a problem to the church as was the maintenance of church discipline.

More significant than correction of Mark's inadequacies is the nature of the new Law which Matthew promulgates, the Laws which will apply during the interim between Jesus' coming, miracles, death, and the final parousia. The new Law is part and parcel of the messianic kingdom, and is presented in five blocs of teaching which correspond to a "new" five books of Moses:[17]

3:1-7:29	Discipleship
8:1-11:1	Concerning Apostleship
11:2-13:53	Hiding of the Revelation
13:15-19:1a	Church Administration
19:1b-26:2	Concerning the Judgement

By presenting Jesus as the New Lawgiver, Matthew deals with the problem of libertinism and antinomianism within the church.[18] The End was not something to be awaited breathlessly, in a vacuum of

disciplined action, but had actually begun with Jesus' miracles, symbols of the "inbreaking kingdom of heaven."[19] The Kingdom of Heaven was not an event as much as it was a period not yet finished; by carefully showing that Jesus' life paralleled and fulfilled Scriptural prophecies, Matthew says implicitly that the cataclysm of "The End" was actually a long process, with certains of orderly continuity. While the church is to be powered by a controlled apocalyptic fire found in Matthew's reassurances that Jesus will eventually come (24:37, 51; 25:1-12, 13),[20] Matthew emphasizes again and again the need for proper Christian discipline in this world. The gospel is best summarized in 26:56, when Jesus says: "But all this has taken place that the Scriptures of the prophets may be fulfilled." "All this" includes not only Jesus' death, the initial event of disconfirmation of belief, but also the present delay in the parousia which troubled Matthew's time. In short, not only Jesus' life, but the life of his church was foretold by the prophets. The church oversees the orderly evolution of the parousia. John the Baptist is still seen as the beginning of the period of the kingdom,[21] he is still identified with Elijah (17:13), but a qualifier is added in 11:14: "If you are willing to accept it, he is Elijah who is to come." This phrase indicates that the earliest Christian eschatological hopes were already being stretched out of shape by history.

C. The Gospel According to Luke

While Matthew was designed to meet the internal needs of a growing church, Luke was more concerned with Christianity's relationship with the world at large. As Drury comments: "Here, for the first time, is a Christian narrative book which can hold its own in the civilised

world at large to which it belongs."[22] Though Luke relies somewhat on Matthew and Mark, he expresses dissatisfaction with their presentation of Christianity in the first four verses of his gospel: ". . . it seemed fitting for me as well, having investigated everything carefully from the beginning, to write it out for you in consecutive order." Luke implies that the previous gospels have not been written in an order or form that would be palatable to an educated pagan world. In their place, Luke composed one of the earliest apologies for the Christian religion.[23] Sandmel adds that:

> Luke is not trying to write just another Gospel, but rather the Gospel. This effort leads him into editorial changes of quantity and significance; indeed, the important aspect of Luke's Gospel lies rather in how he presents his material than in what he presents. . . . It seems to me that in the case of Matthew, Luke's dissatisfaction extends to the point of rejecting Matthew's basic contention that Jesus was the giver of a new law. He scatters Matthew's assembled discourses. Luke will insist that Jesus is not the creator of something which is new, but that he represents the continuation, at its highest point, of that which is old.[24]

Why would Luke bother to reject a gospel, such as Matthew, which would have been so important to the maintenance of church discipline? The answer lies in the legal relationships that existed between Rome and the Jews; we should here take some time to describe those relationships.

Despite the problems which Judea had with a succession of incompetent procurators, Judaism and the Jews had since the days of Julius and Augustus Caesar enjoyed special legal and religious privileges. Friendly overtures and treaties between Judea and Rome are recorded in II Maccabees, where the Jews were reportedly recognized as a nation and as friends of the Roman Republic.[25] Judea's civil rights and privileges stayed largely intact even after 70 C.E.; strategic necessity demanded that Rome try, if at all possible, to satisfy the Jews, since an enormous and powerful contingent of Jews lived in Babylon, threatening

to join Parthia against Rome, should Jewish sensitivities not be respected. Indeed, Jewish privileges were never systematically abridged until Constantine.[26]

That there was intense friction between Judea and Rome despite the special privileges granted to the Jews is a fact of history. The Jewish God was revolutionary and threatening; Rome understood the word "god" to mean any divine being,[27] and could not understand how such a being could inspire the Jews to such lengths of religious observance and Messianic fervor, a fervor which provided the spark for countless terrorist acts and several major uprisings. Even more threatening was the fact that this revolutionary God attracted proselytes; even while Rome dominated the physical world, she was threatened by the fact that Judaism and its offspring seemed to hold increasing sway over the spiritual world. This conquered people exhibited a strange vitality after the Destruction in 70—there is evidence of vigorous proselytism in the Tannaitic literature. Indeed, Vespasian, after his conquest of Judea, avoided the name "Judaicus" because it connoted conversion to Judaism.[28] Romans who converted to Judaism were accused of undermining the state religion and family life.[29]

In this context, it is crucial to our understanding of Luke to note that, in the first fifty years or so of Christianity, Rome did not distinguish between Christians and Jews. Jewish status as a <u>natio</u>, or nation, had been the basis of Jewish privilege in the Roman Empire,[30] and now <u>both</u> Christians and Jews were extending the boundaries of that nation through conversion. Christianity, especially, had converted multitudes of pagans. Rome built her system of provincial government on the efficient management of small, well-defined social and political

units; Christian proselytism, by leaping the boundaries of these social units and creating close-knit groups of people not identifiable ethnically or geographically (Galatians 3:28), tore at the internal structure of the Roman system. It was in Luke's interest, accordingly, to portray Christianity as the logical, pure continuation of a Judaism which already had legal rights. In doing this, Luke faced a double task: he had to present a radical change in the Jewish eschatological picture, a change fought by the surviving Jewish establishment, as coming from the mainstream of Judaism itself. Christianity did not possess a "new law" (which would have removed the new religion from the protection afforded to Judaism as a religio licita), but was instead the "true Judaism." "Jewish" Judaism had failed to recognize the true nature of Jesus; only the willful perversity of the Jews had driven Paul and Barnabas to embark on a mission to the heathen.[31]

Luke's apology for Christianity is very carefully constructed. He stresses that Jesus' kingship was non-political,[32] and that Christianity was not a subversive sect of Judaism.[33] Nor was Christianity anti-Roman: even in Mark there attempts to allay fears concerning the attitude of Jesus to the state; in Matthew, Pilate's proposal to release Jesus instead of the criminal Barabbas was rejected by the Jews, who cried "His blood be on us and upon our children!" In Luke:

> The incident of the denarius becomes a deliberate demonstration of Jesus' political loyalty. Pilate asserted on no less than three different occasions that he had not been able to find any basis for a criminal charge against Jesus. Herod Antipas had also examined him but had found no grounds for legal action. It was the Jewish retinue of Herod, not the Roman soldiers, that mocked Jesus. Pilate proposed only to scourge and then release him, but he was intimidated into giving sentence by the clamorous insistence of the Jews. The Roman centurion at the Cross confessed, not that Jesus was the Son of God (as in Mark), but that "certainly this man was innocent."[34]

In Acts, tha author of Luke shows that the church, as far as Rome is concerned, is a benign entity:[35] the crossing of social boundaries through conversion is the result of the fact that Christianity is really a world religion that recognized no racial limitations.[36] At all times, stability is emphasized—a bond between Luke and the Pastoral Epistles has long been recognized in which

> . . . kings and all who are in high positions are to be the subject of supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings, which include all humanity because the peaceful order which kings make is an integral condition of the realisation of God's desire that all men should be saved (I Timothy 2:1-4). Likewise in Luke-Acts judicial decision made by rulers enable the spread of Christianity.[37]

A view has even been advanced that Luke was intended as a document meant to aid an actual plea in a Roman court.[38]

In presenting Christianity as the true offspring of Judaism, Luke shares Matthew's tendency to ground the Christian movement in Jewish prophecy. He gives the nature of this prophecy a different cast, however: it was foreseen that Israel would reject her true heir; and this rejection is put into terms that the cultured pagan world would understand:

> Almost in the manner of Greek tragic drama we find a chorus of wailing women: "Great numbers of people followed, many women among them, who mourned an lamented over him" (23:27); "the crowd who had assembled for the spectacle, when the saw what had happened, went home beating their breasts" (23:48). It is Luke alone who points out, of the Son of Man, that "first he must endure much suffering and be repudiated by this generation" (17:25) and at several points in the Gospel draws attention to Jesus as "the man of sorrows, acquainted with grief."[39]

By stating that Israel's rejection of her Messiah was predetermined, Luke brings Jesus' death into the pagan world under the rubric of "fate"; he ingeniously justifies any "new" ideas which Jesus brought into the world while maintaining the continuity with Jewish antiquity which Christian survival required.

As is the case in much early Christian literature, establishing the author and date of Luke is problematic. Spivey and Smith claim that the earliest traditions about Luke come from the Muratorian Canon, which mentions that Luke and Acts were written by the same person. No direct claim is made, however, about who this person is.[40] The "anti-Marcionite" prologue to Luke, which can be dated between 160 and 180,[41] describes the author as "Luke, a Syrian from Antioch," a doctor by profession, a friend and associate of Paul, who lived unmarried until the age of 84 in Boeotia, a city in central Greece.[42] While, as Leany says, "nothing in our review of the evidence makes it impossible to identify the Luke of the tradition with Luke, Paul's companion,[43] nothing in our data proves conclusively that Luke <u>was</u> Paul's companion. Such an identification would serve to strengthen the apostolic authority of the gospel, but, at present, it is quite impossible to establish the authorship of Luke. Spivey and Smith comment that the author of Luke/Acts was probably a gentile Christian who spoke Greek, that "one can only guess" as to where the gospel was written. The only internal evidence that Luke offers us as to its date is that it must have been written after 70;[44] if, as Sandmel states, Luke used Matthew,[45] and, if elements of Luke reflect dependence on Josephus' <u>Antiquities</u>, it is conceivable that Luke could have been written sometime after 93.

Luke's theology fits in with his need to appeal to Roman sensibilities. Drury writes that:

> Luke's Jewish historical faith determines his theology of Christ, notoriously lower than some. It is in fact as high as a traditional historical monotheism will allow and no higher. John gets higher by cutting loose from hsitory in order to philosophise about it rather than stick exclusively to telling it. And when he does tell it, it is arctypically eternal. . . . Luke's Jesus is the epitome and compendium of the men who God raised up: he is Son of God like the

> kings, wise men and Joseph in Joseph and Asenath, he is Son of David born in David's city, teacher, and most striking of all, a prophet in the mould of Elijah, which role Luke deliberately takes from John (leaving him, like Elisha, "the spirit and power of Elijah") and gives to Jesus.[46]

Jesus, not John the Baptist, is the "last of the prophets of Israel";[47] as such, he is a known quantity, a predictable figure, to the Romans. A new "Elijah" was threatening enough to the Romans; had Jesus gone beyond Elijah, his role would have been, in Roman eyes, eternally seditious. Instead, Jesus represents the culmination of all that is best in Judaism; since Judaism as politically constituted in Judea had shown itself "unworthy" to house and approve the latest, "purest" evolution of itself, the apostles had been forced to take Jesus/Elijah's message to the gentile world.[48]

D. Comparison of Matthew and Luke in Their Treatment of Elijah

The following parallel passages, in which Elijah plays a central part, illustrate the sharp contrasts between the two gospels which we have already discussed: Matthew, whose John the Baptist is the last of the old prophets of Israel (Elijah), makes Jesus the giver of the new "Law"; while Luke, who must present to the Romans a Jesus who is representative of the "true Judaism," gives Jesus the role of Elijah. As we will see, the passages also deal with other concerns that were central to the life of the early church.

Mt. 3:1-6	Luke 3:1-6
In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah when he said,	In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philop tetrarch of the region of Iturea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene,

"The voice of one crying
in the wilderness:
Prepare the way of the
Lord,
make his paths straight."

Now John wore a garment of camel's hair, and a leather girdle around his waist; and his food was locusts and wild honey. Then went out all Judea and all the region about the Jordan, and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.

in the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John the son of Zechariah in the wilderness; and he went into all the region about the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet,

"The voice of one crying in the wilderness; prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.
Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low,
and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth;
and all flesh shall see the salvation of God."

Although both Matthew and Luke follow Mark's lead in making use of Isaiah 40:3, Matthew's account seems to be based more closely on Mark.[49] Luke's elaborate dating ("In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar. . . .) resembles the opening lines of prophetic works like Hosea, Haggai, and Zechariah; as Tinsley notes, this would impress upon the reader the importance of the renewal of prophecy.[50] John the Baptist is the last of the prophets before the Messiah, but he is not Elijah; instead, he goes forth (Luke 1:17) in "the spirit and power of Elijah."[51] Thus, Luke omits the garment of camel's hair and leather girdle which both Mark and Matthew use to link John with the Elijah figure. He also omits Mark's use of Malachi 3:1 (behold, I send my messenger before thy face), and addis Isaiah 40:4-5; this more extensive use of Isaiah, with special emphasis on the words "every" and "all" indicates the universal mission of Christianity.[52] Judaism's penultimate prophet, John, therefore predicts the spread of Christianity

to gentile lands as being part of the natural evolution of Judaism.

Luke's stripping away of John's identity as the Elijah is further emphasized when, in the following passages, Herod thinks that Jesus is a risen John the Baptist:

Mt. 14:1-2

> At that time Herod the tetrarch heard about the fame of Jesus; and he said to his servants, "This is John the Baptist, he has been raised from the dead; that is why these powers are at work in him."

Luke 9:7-9

> Now Herod the tetrarch heard of all that was done, and he was perplexed, because it was said by some that John had been raised from the dead, by some that Elijah had appeared, and by others that one of the old prophets had risen. Herod said, "John I beheaded; but who is this about whom I hear such things?" And he sought to see him.

Matthew follows Mark's account (6:14-16; 17-29) with some abridgement: in Mark 6:15, some people think that Jesus is Elijah, a speculation which Matthew omits because he has already decided that John is Elijah. Both Matthew and Mark go into a lengthy, parenthetical account of how it was that John came to be killed in the first place, an account which, as we noted in the last chapter, resembles somewhat the story of Esther. Luke, on the other hand, restores Mk. 1:15; those who thought that Elijah had appeared were indeed correct. Herod omits the possibility that Jesus is John <u>revividus</u> himself. Luke leaves out the story of John's execution completely , because this story establishes a literary typology in which Elijah/Jezebel corresponds to John/ Herodias. He is not, as Tinsley notes, interested in the death of John as a prefiguration of Jesus' crucifixion as were Mark and Matthew;[53] instead, John is put aside so that the reader's attention is focused upon "Elijah" himself.

Elijah appears again dramatically in the story of the Transfiguration (Mk. 9:2-8; Matthew 17:1-8; Luke 9:28-36). There is little variation between the three versions of the Transfiguration: Moses and Elijah

represent the Law and the Prophets, and their disappearance at the end of the account indicates that Jesus has superseded both Jewish institutions. Elijah's ascent to heaven is clearly described by II Kings (which led, naturally, to expectations of his return); Argyle, however, cites the Assumption of Moses to "prove" that Jewish tradition claimed that Moses had never died.[54] There is little, in actuality, to commend this position, since the Torah itself reads "And Moses died. . ." (Deut. 34:5). Moses and Elijah are, in the Transfiguration, symbols only.

What is more important to our discussion are the eschatological definitions which follow the Transfiguration and are therefore presented by Mark and Matthew as "revelation" received on the mountain. These definitions (MK. 9:9-13; Mt. 17:9-13) must be examined jointly with Mt. 11:12ff and Luke 16:16f.

Mark 9:9-13

> And as they were coming down the mountain, he charged them to tell no one what they had seen until the Son of Man should have risen from the dead. So they kept the matter to themselves, questioning what the rising from the dead meant. And they asked him, "Why do the scribes say that first Elijah must come?" And he said to them, "Elijah does come first to restore all things; and how is it written of the Son of Man, that he should suffer many things and be treated with contempt? But I tell you that Elijah has come, and they did to him whatever they pleased, as it is written of him.

Mt. 17:9-13

> And as they were coming down the mountain, Jesus commanded them, "Tell no one the vision, until the Son of Man is raised from the dead." And the disciples asked him, "Then why do the scribes say that first Elijah must come?" He replied, "Elijah does come, and he is to restore all things; but I tell you that Elijah has already come, and they did to him whatever they pleased. So also the Son of Man will suffer at their hands." Then the disciples understood that he was speaking to them of John the Baptist.

Matthew 11:12ff occurs as part of a speech about John the Baptist given by Jesus to the "crowds," while Luke 16:16 is part of a discussion about the laws concerning divorce:

Mt. 11:12-15

From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom has suffered violence and men of violence take it by force. For all the prophets and the Law prophesied until John; and if you are willing to accept it, he is Elijah who is to come. He who has ears to hear, let him hear.

Luke 16:16

The Law and the prophets were until John; since then the good news of the kingdom of God is preached, and every one enters it violently.

The pattern which we have been describing, in which Mark and Matthew identify John the Baptist with Elijah while Luke identifies Jesus with Elijah, is demonstrated in the above four passages. Matthew 17:9-13 clears up some textual difficulties in Mark's parallel narrative; he separates the Son of Man from Elijah, so that we are not presented with the problem of a suffering Elijah. As Argyle notes, Elijah came in Matthew as John the Baptist in order to set all aright, and was prevented from doing so by the failure of men to recognize him.[55] It is the Son of Man who must suffer "at their hands," a figure completely separate from Elijah. Matthew erases all doubt concerning who Elijah is by adding: "Then the disciples understood that he was speaking to them of John the Baptist." Luke omits this eschatological discussion completely, since it is his contention that Jesus is Elijah. If he included the question "why do the scribes say that first Elijah must come?" he would have weakened his own argument.

Interpretation of what is meant by Mt. 11:12-15 and Luke 16:16 has varied considerably. In both passages, John the Baptist marks the

opening of the "kingdom,"[56] but it is unclear just what "men of violence take it by force" and "everyone enters it violently" refer to. Leany offers an alternate translation: "everyone oppresses it."[57] Sherman Johnson theorizes that these "oppressors" might be a) earthly rulers of demonic power; b) zealots who were trying to bring in God's kingdom by force; or c) men of spiritual force who must strain to the utmost to enter a kingdom now exercising its spiritual force.[58] S. MacLean Gilmour renders Luke 16:16 as meaning "already men will make any sacrifice to enter it." My own opinion is that the passages refer to the violence and persecution that Christians had to undergo in their pursuit of salvation; John's execution was the first martyrdom for the kingdom, and was not to be the last.

The placement ot the two passage (Mr. 11:12-15 and Luke 16:16) is significant: both Matthew and Luke contain Jesus' discourse to the crowd about John the Baptist: "What did you go out into the wilderness to behold? A reed shaken by the wind?" In Matthew, 11:12-15 occur as a logical part of the discussion. Luke, however, appears to have both known Matthew's wording and to have changed it deliberately, omitting, as would be expected, all mention of Elijah. It seems that even altering the wording of the passage is insufficient, however, for Luke rips the passage from where it logically should occur (between 7:29 and 7:30) and places it in chapter 16 as the beginning of a discussion about divorce. Although Leany reasons that 16:16 might be a veiled reference to 16:13 ("You cannot serve God and mammon") and the support of Herod Antipas by the Pharisees,[59] the passage still seems quite out of place where it now stands.

An interesting question arises concerning Matthew's formulation

(11:14): "and if you are willing to accept it, he is Elijah who is to come. He who has ears to hear, let him hear." Matthew, in 17:13, equates John the Baptist unequivocally with Elijah, yet here he needs to add a qualifying clause which indicates some doubt on his part. The commentators I have consulted are silent as to what Matthew means here. "If you are willing to accept it" could mean "If you are willing to accept it (this new kingdom), then John is the Elijah who is to come (to inaugurate this kingdom)." But the phrase "he who has ears, let him hear" to me implies that the kingdom is taking on a different character than was previously expected. In this passage, Matthew deals obliquely, I feel, with a topic that is the subject of many parables in all three Synoptics: the delay in the Parousia. If John was to be Elijah, he was to assume a role as the bringer of the end of time; in reality, however, time and its persecutions had persisted not only beyond John's death but beyond Jesus' as well. All three Synoptics make an attempt at resolving this difficulty by making John the Baptist the turning point of their eschatology, and having Jesus declare that the kingdon has already come. As C. H. Dodd points out, however:

> This declaration that the Kingdom of God has already come necessarily dislocates the whole eschatological scheme in which its expected coming closes the long vista of the future. The eschaton has moved from the future to the present, from the sphere of expectation into that of realized experience. It is therefore unsafe to assume that the content of the idea, "The Kingdom of God," as Jesus meant it, may be filled in from the speculations of apocalyptic writers. They were referring to something in the future, which could be conceived only in terms of fantasy. He was speaking of that which, in one aspect at least, was an object of experience.[60]

Matthew, as we have pointed out, deals with the problem of the delay in the Parousia by making the events and institutions of the interim

between Jesus' death and the end of history (what Oscar Cullman calls "the present but invisible lordship of the kyrios"[61]) subject to ancient Jewish prophecies. But he is faced with the fact that history still exists, and still must be annihilated: does this mean that Elijah must come again, to bring in the true end of time? Will Jesus return again? The phrase "second coming" as it relates to Jesus does not occur until Justin Martyr,[62] but Jesus' return is implied in parables that punctuate the Synoptics. Chief among the parables concerning a "second advent" are those of the "Ten Talents" (Mt. 25:14-30; Luke 19:12-27), of the "Faithful and Wise Servant" (Mt. 24:45-51; Luke 12:42-46), and of the "Waiting Servants" (Mk. 13:33-37; Luke 12:35-38). Common themes of these parables are those of watchfulness and appropriate conduct, for "the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect" (Mt. 24:44). Jesus is seen as a master who has gone away, leaving his servants in charge of the household (the church) and who may come at any time to evaluate the conduct of his servants in his absence. In contrasting Mark 13:33-37 and Luke 12:35-38 in their treatment of the parable of the Waiting Servants, we see how the delay in the second advent affected Christian teaching: Mark chides the disciples to "keep awake, for you do not know when the master of the house is coming, late in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or at dawn," expecting that the Parousia will be imminent. Luke, on the other hand, adds "even if he comes in the second or even in the third watch, and finds them so, blessed are they," which Dodd sees as a clue to Christians that the second advent may be far off indeed.[63]

There are passages in all three Synoptics, however, which seem to indicate that the Kingdom which Jesus brought forth would be fulfilled

soon in the future:

> Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away till all these things take place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away. (Mt. 24:34-36; Mk. 13:30-32; Luke 21:32)

We must also consider Mark 9:1 ("There are some of those who are standing here who shall not taste of death until they see the kingdom of God after it has come with power") and Mark 14:62, both of which seem to teach that the kingdom is something that <u>will</u> come.[64] The discrepancy between these passages and the parables leads Dodd to write:

> We seem to be confronted with two diverse strains in the teaching of Jesus, one of which appears to contemplate the indefinite continuance of human life under historical conditions, while the other appears to suggest a speedy end to these conditions. A drastic criticism might eliminate one strain or the other, but both are deeply embedded in the earliest form of the tradition known to us. It would be better to admit that we do not possess the key to their reconciliation than to do such violence to our documents.[65]

Dodd's dilemma stems from his need to ground both strains in the "earliest traditions" and from his methodology in doing so;[66] if all gospel parables are Dominical, if one must construct a unified "New Testament" position on the coming of the Parousia out of teachings from all three Synoptics, the problems are indeed enormous. Nor will attempts, like that of Oscar Cullmann, to explain the need for Christ's return in terms of Johannine theology avail us:

> And so, according to the New Testament, all things are involved in the process of salvation of which Christ is the centre and the promoter. The creation, redemption, and also the expectation of the final consummation, depend on the death of Christ. This fulfillment will be nothing less than the creation of a new heaven and a new earth (II Pet. 3:13).
>
> This is why Christ will return to earth. The decisive event, like the first decisive event which took place under Pontius Pilate, will take place on earth, because matter itself has to be re-created. It is true that the New Testament tells us nothing about this return, but speaks of an arrival of Christ who comes, and not of Christ who returns. Only in the farewell discourses of St. John's Gospel do we find the assertion: he will come again.[67]

It makes much more sense to see the concept of a second advent as arising out of a long process in which the Christian community slowly translates early expressions of the imminence of the End Time into the immanence of the Kyrios. In other words, Mark assumes that the end is to come soon, very soon, and structures his gospel accordingly. Matthew and Luke represent a further stage of development: Jesus continues to live and direct the orderly evolution of the Parousia through his church, which mediates his presence on earth. Tension exists throughout Matthew and Luke between earlier traditions in which Jesus "had referred to his resurrection/second advent as one single event" and the reality of a delayed Parousia; I believe that the early church addressed this tension through its parables comparing the faithful to stewards of the Master's house. They surround passages like "This generation shall not pass away. . ." with parables of watchfulness. One can, I feel, see the concerns of the early church reflected in Matthew 20:1-16: workers who labored for only one hour in the vineyard (=kingdom) are paid as much as those who labored all day. While Dodd, who must see this parable as coming directly from Jesus, says that the passage teaches divine generosity toward publicans and sinners,[69] I would see in it a directive to Christians of long standing to be kind to those who had just joined the church—all partake equally of the end time that had not ended.

In this context, Matthew 11:14-15 ("and if you are willing to accept it, he is Elijah who is to come. He who has ears to hear, let him hear") reflects the same tension that underlies the parables of the kingdom. Bound by earlier traditions which equate John with Elijah, Matthew faces a reality quite different from the one Elijah was supposed to inaugurate.

Therefore, he qualifies Jesus' identification of John with Elijah by implying that John is a special kind of Elijah; indeed, to know what kind of Elijah John is requires a special kind of gnosis: "He who has ears to hear, let him hear." Luke is even more ingenious in 16:16; he avoids the problem of contradiction between kingdom and reality by stating that since John the Baptist the "good news of the kingdom of God is preached." "Good news" can be preached indefinitely; it is not a new law that has to apply to a structured interim period. The End Time which Elijah would bring has yet to come; it will be brought about when Elijah, or Jesus, returns.

E. Elijah in the Gospel According to John

As in the case of Matthew and Luke, we cannot be certain why John wrote, or for whom, yet our problems with John are even more complex.[71] Though his style reveals some reliance on the Synoptics,[72] John departs from the Synoptic tradition in several areas: He departs from the Synoptics in structuring Jesus' itinerary, having Jesus make several visits to Judea and Jerusalem. Chronology is altered in several respects: the cleansing of the Temple comes at the beginning of Jesus' ministry (not at the end), and the last Passover comes one day later, beginning Friday evening rather than Thursday evening; moreover, Jesus' stay in Jerusalem before his death lasts about 175 days rather than merely one week. Aspects central to the Synoptics—Jesus' baptism, the Temptation, the Transfiguration, the Lord's Supper, and the agony in the Garden—are left out of John, even as the Fourth Evangelist introduces new material. Miracles are not "mighty works" as in the Synoptics, but are "signs" which are followed by explications of their spiritual meaning.

Instead of parables or sayings, Jesus gives long discourses on such themes as life, light, and truth.[73] Though John has been used since the days of Irenaeus, there are indications that at first it did not meet ready acceptance by all of Christianity.[74]

Authorship of the gospel cannot, from our point of view, be established. Traditionally, its author was John, the son of Zebedee, one of the Twelve; this tradition is consistent through Irenaeus, the "prologues," Clement, Tertullian, and the Muratorian canon. Ignatius and Justin are silent concerning John.[75] A. M. Hunter cites 1:14, 19:35, 21:24, passages written in the first person, as evidence that the gospel was written by an eyewitness—the "beloved disciple" of 19:26.[76] J. C. Fenton refutes this position: the first-person plural in 1:14 could refer to Christians as a whole; the witness of 19:35 did not necessarily write the gospel; and evidence that the "beloved disciple" of chapter 21 authored the gospel "in the end consists of one verse in a chapter which for various reasons is thought by some scholars not to be a part of the original book."[77] Fenton offers the alternative that the "beloved disciple" could be an ideal character modelled on John, the son of Zebedee.[78]

Essentially, John is a gospel with one message: the eternal Logos of God became, during a phase of its existence, the historical Jesus.[79] Sandmel states that:

> The Fourth Gospel comes from the circles which objected to the excessive humanity portrayed in the Synoptic Gospels. John does not go so far as the docetics, who denied totally the humanity of Jesus, but he turns away also from the Synoptists' concentration on humanly attainable talent, such as skill in parables and epigrams, which seemed irrelevant to the essential divinity of the spirit made into man. . . . The Jesus of the Fourth Gospel is less a person who did and said certain things and more an embodied entity which spoke like an oracle.[80]

In John, the Christ always was; Jesus, the historical figure, was but a temporary manifestation of the Christ. John's gospel is an elaborate "witness document" to the incarnation of that Christ: incidents serve mostly as preludes to discourses centered around the person of the Christ.[81] Throughout the gospel, one repeatedly encounters the theme of confessing and denying Christ (9:22; 12:42; 13:38; 18:25-27)[82] as John deals with the "issues of the day"—opposition of hostile groups, primarily: the "Jews" (the people as a whole as opposed to the individual leadership groups found in the Synoptics) and the gnostics, particularly the docetists.[83] In terms of gnosticism and docetism, especially, John's tactic is to seize and neutralize the language and the tendency of both groups and make them apply to Jesus.

In the glare of John's singularly emphasized message about the Christ, John the Baptist is completely subordinated and becomes merely the first of the many witnesses to "the light." John deals with the Baptist, and the attendant Elijah concept, in the first chapter of the gospel (1:7,8,21,23,29). In 1:8, the gospel states explicitly that John was <u>not</u> "the light," possibly a polemic against a still extant Baptist sect (which advanced John as the Christ),[84] but more probably an attempt at safeguarding the uniqueness of Jesus. The problem of John's priority to Jesus is resolved by 1:15: "John bore witness of Him, and cried out, saying, "This was he of whom I said, 'he who comes after me has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me.'"

Starting with 1:19, the Fourth Gospel details the witness of John the Baptist. It seems to begin the story of John <u>again</u>, cf., Mk. 1:2-8. As Wink comments, John's presence in the prologue to the gospel (1:1-18) is astonishing; "Nothing which the Evangelist says about John here

could not have waited until 1:19ff."[85] Indeed, some phrases in the prologue and in the section on John's witness are duplicatory.[86] In 1:19-51, the story of John's witness formally begins, with the Fourth Evangelist interpreting John completely from the point of view of his relationship to Jesus as a witness:

> Every other role is sheared away. When the Jewish leaders inquire if perhaps he is the Christ, he demurs; in consternation they suggest lower titles: Elijah, prophet. But the Baptist will have no title; he will be only the "voice" of Isa. 40:3. Not only does he reject the role of Christ, but he gives by way of denial a "negative confession" that Jesus is the Christ; this is the point of "he confessed, he did not deny, but confessed."[87]

Throughout this section, the monochromatic Baptist bears witness again and again: he explains the phenomenon of Jesus' baptism (1:33), and uses his own witness to call disciples (1:35-42).

> . . . these "calling stories" can be seen to serve polemical-apologetical interests, if we may assume that the response of the first disciples is intended as an example to other Baptists to do likewise. For the evangelist has summoned as corroborating witness to the testimony of John several leading pillars of the church, some of whom at least were John's former disciples.[88]

After 1:51, the Baptist disappears until 3:22-4:3 when his baptism is compared with that of Jesus. His last words in the gospel are "He must increase, but I must decrease" (3:30), and his death is not even mentioned.[89]

It is obvious that a John the Baptist who was Elijah the prophet would nave no place in the Fourth Gospel. If there is, in John, an attempt to silence followers of the Baptist, then establishing his Elijah-ship would be counter-productive. In 10:40-42 we read: "John did no sign, but everything that John said about this man was true"; this means that the Baptist is not to be associated with Elijah-type miracles. John himself explicitly denies that he is Elijah in 1:21:

the Christ has no forerunner. As Walter Wink states:

> For him [The Fourth Evangelist] the idea of a forerunner is anathema; notice how carefully he has already applied the antidote to it in 1:1, 15. John is not the forerunner, for the Logos is already protos (1:15, 30) and can have no forerunner. Since John is merely "the voice," a witness to Jesus Christ, he no longer conforms to any known figure within the framework of Jewish expectation.[90]

In fact, the prophet Elijah himself has no home within the entire gospel. Jesus cannot be a new Elijah, since he existed from the beginning. Judaism, the culmination of which Elijah represented, has been denigrated in John to a dead symbol of unbelief; thus, in John, the Elijah figure has been emptied of meaning in the face of the all-transcendent Logos.

Notes: Chapter Five

[1]A. W. Argyle, The Gospel According to Matthew (Cambridge: University Press, 1963), 1.

[2]Spivey and Smith, op. cit., 117.

[3]Sherman E. Johnson, "The Gospel According to St. Matthew: Introduction and Exegesis," The Interpreter's Bible (New York: Abingdon, 1951), VII:241.

[4]Spivey and Smith, op. cit., 117.

[5]Johnson, op. cit., 241.

[6]Argyle, op. cit., 17.

[7]Spivey and Smith, op. cit., 116.

[8]Ibid., 115.

[9]Johnson, op. cit., 231.

[10]Ibid., 243.

[11]Ibid.

[12]Ibid.

[13]Argyle, op. cit., 5.

[14]Spivey and Smith, op. cit., 124.

[15]Ibid.

[16]Ibid.

[17]Argyle, op. cit., 145.

[18]Sandmel, op. cit., 145.

[19]Ibid., 154.

[20]Johnson, op. cit., 241.

[21]Spivey and Smith, op. cit., 124.

[22]John Drury, Tradition and Design in Luke's Gospel (Atlanta: John Knox, 1977), 36.

[23]E. J. Tinsley, The Gospel According to Luke (Cambridge: University Press, 1965), 11.

[24]Sandmel, op. cit., 170.

[25]Theodor Mommsen, The Provinces of the Roman Empire (Chicago: Ares, 1974), II:145. Mommsen details some of the privileges which the Jews obtained from the Caesars: "The Jewish kingdom obtained the best possible position which could be granted to a client-state, complete freedom from dues to the Romans and from military occupation and levy, whereas certainly the duties and the expense of frontier defense were to be undertaken by the native government. The town of Joppa, and thereby the connection with the sea, were given back, the independence of internal adminstration as well as the free exercise of religion were guaranteed; the reestablishment, hitherto refused, of the fortification of Jerusalem which had been destroyed by Pompeius was allowed" (176). Even with the transformation of Judea into a second-rank Roman province in 6 C.E., Jewish religious institutions were left intact. Within the empire, Jews enjoyed the status of peregrini, that is, they could live within the polis and yet still follow the Torah. Jews were also exempt from military service and tax collection.

[26]Ibid.

[27]Frederic Huidekoper, Judaism at Rome (New York: James Miller, 1876), 4.

[28]Ibid., 273.

[29]J. N. Sevenster, The Roots of Pagan Anti-Semitism in the Ancient World (Leiden: Brill, 1975), 196.

[30]Simeon L. Guterman, Religious Toleration and Persecution in Ancient Rome (London: Aiglon, 1951), 103.

[31]Sandmel, op. cit., 171.

[32]Tinsley, op. cit., 14.

[33]S. MacLean Gilmour, "The Gospel According to St. Luke: Introduction and Exegesis," The Interpreter's Bible (New York: Abingdon, 1951), VIII:5.

[34]Ibid., 6.

[35]Ibid.

[36]Ibid., 7.

[37]Drury, op. cit., 18.

[38]A. R. C. Leany , A Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Luke (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1966), 5.

[39]Tinsley, op. cit., 11.

[40]Spivey and Smith, op. cit., 150.

[41]Leany, op. cit., 1.

[42]Tinsley, op. cit., 2.

[43]Leany, op. cit., 4.

[44]Spivey and Smith, op. cit., 151.

[45]Sandmel, op. cit., 170.

[46]Drury, op. cit., 9.

[47]Tinsley, op. cit., 17.

[48]Other interests characterize the narrative of Luke: he gives prominence to the work of the Spirit, particularly in the two introductory chapters. Prayer life is also a focal point, as is the role of women in the gospel tradition. The birth and infancy narratives testify to an interest on Luke's part in presenting the story of Jesus as an organized, "Hellenistic" biography. Resurrection appearances are totally absent from Mark; Luke supplies these, and even carries the resurrection appearances over into the Acts volume. Other interests: sympathy for the poor and the proper stewardship of wealth. See Gilmour, op. cit., 7-9.

[49]H. A. Guy, The Gospel of Matthew (London: Macmillan, 1971), 39.

[50]Tinsley, op. cit., 53.

[51]Leany (op. cit., 41, 80) sees this phrase as an exception to Luke's pattern of not associating John with Elijah. The words "spirit and power," however, are meant as qualifiers: John is still not, according to Luke, Elijah himself. That role is reserved for Jesus. It is possible that here, in the opening of his gospel, Luke is dealing with the fact that previous writers have unequivocally equated John with Elijah; here, he "corrects" them by saying that John went forth in "Elijah's spirit."

[52]Tinsley, op. cit., 44.

[53]Ibid., 98.

[54]Argyle, op. cit., 132.

[55]Ibid., 133.

[56]C. H. Dodd, The Parables of the Kingdom (London: Nisbet, 1936), 48.

[57]Leany, op. cit., 223.

[58]Johnson, op. cit., 383.

[59]Leany, op. cit. 224.

[60]Dodd, op. cit., 50.

[61]Oscar Cullmann, "The Return of Christ," The Early Church (London: SCM Press, 1956), 155.

[62]H. K. MacArthur, "Parousia," Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible (Nashville: Abingdon, 1963), 659.

[63]Dodd, op. cit., 162.

[64]Ibid., 54.

[65]Ibid., 104.

[66]Modern scholarship is deeply indebted to Dodd for his work in Christian eschatological parables. We cannot, however, always accept the conclusions that he derives from his evidence. Dodd uses the "Q" symbol to denote that "stratum of the First and Third Gospels in which they agree together but do not seem to depend on Mark as a source" (39). Thus, "Q" is a stratum rather than a written text as a whole. Mark and "Q" are, for Dodd, the primary sources: "I do not think criticism has yet provided us with any bettern organon for approximating to the original tradition of the words and works of Jesus than is supplied by a careful study and comparison of these two." Essentially, Dodd wishes to posit most of the parables as Dominical, which leads to some interesting conclusions. For example, on page 57, he writes: ". . . we find that in all four of the main sources, or strands of tradition, which criticism recognizes, there are forecasts of persecution for the followers of Jesus, both direct and allusive. Such forecasts are indeed so emphatic and so characteristic of the whole temper and tone of the teaching that it seems impossible to attribute them all to the later reflections of the persecuted church." Such emphasis could come from shared experience throughout the sources, and does not mean that the traditions were necessarily early. Dodd's statement is especially questionable since, as he later writes (59): "Strangely enough, the Jewish authorities seem to have been content with the death of the leader, and to have left his followers alone." When applied to the parables, Dodd's methodology falters somewhat; in the parable of the Faithful and Unfaithful Servants (Mt. 24:51; Luke 12:42-26), Dodd sees the unfaithful servant who says in his heart "my master is delaying his arrival" and begins to beat his fellow slaves as Jesus' way of describing the Jews (!), since, if the parables are Dominical, "what would such a picture be expected to suggest to hearers of Jesus who knew nothing of a long delay in the second advent?" We would see in this parable a chastisement of arrogant or heretical church members. The evidence that church concerns did play a large role in the eschatological parables is quite strong, however, which leads Dodd to preserve his argument for dominicity by writing (174): "It seems possible, therefore, to give to all these 'eschatological' parables an application within the context of the ministry of Jesus. They were intended to enforce his appeal to men to recognize that the Kingdom of God was present in all its momentous consequences, and that by their conduct in the presence of this tremendous crisis they would judge themselves as faithful or unfaithful, wise or foolish. When the crisis had passed, they were adapted by the Church to enforce its appeal to men to prepare for the second and final world-crisis which it believed to be approaching."

[67]Cullmann, op. cit., 147.

[68]Dodd, op. cit., 101.

[69]Ibid., 122.

[70]Argyle, op. cit., 124.

[71]Cf. J. C. Fenton, The Gospel According to John (Oxford: Clarendon, 1970), 25.

[72]Wilbert F. Howard, "The Gospel According to John: Introduction and Exegesis," The Interpreter's Bible (New York: Abingdon, 1951), VIII:440.

[73]A. M. Hunter, The Gospel According to John (Cambridge: University Press, 1965), 3-4.

[74]Fenton, op. cit., 25.

[75]Howard, op. cit., 440.

[76]Hunter, op. cit., 12-13.

[77]Fenton, op. cit., 10-11.

[78]Ibid., 12.

[79]Sandmel, op. cit., 268.

[80]Ibid., 267-268.

[81]Ibid., 274.

[82]Walter Wink, op. cit., 89.

[83]Howard, op. cit., 437.

[84]Wink, op. cit., 88.

[85]Ibid., 87.

[86]Ibid. The two duplicatory sections run as follows:

1:7 He came for testimony	1:19 and this is the testimony
1:15 This was he of whom I said, "He who comes after me ranks before me."	1:30 This is he of whom I said, "After me comes a man who ranks before me, for he was before me."
	1:27 he who comes before me.

[87]Ibid., 89.

[88]Ibid., 82.

[89]Ibid., 95.

[90]Ibid., 90.

Chapter Six: Conclusions

As alluring as it would be to posit a group of subscribers to an "Elijah Christology" who were responsible for the existence of Elianic motifs and references in the Gospels, we have found that there is no way that we can do so scientifically. Neither form nor redaction criticism can avail us, since the medium of the miracle tale is so fluid that it is impossible to establish literary dependence. Where motifs are "duplicated" in ancient miracle collections, such duplication does not necessarily dignify conscious borrowing from one tradition to the other. That ideological motives could be deduced from such duplications when they do occur is out of the question.

This is not to say that a group which saw Jesus as heir to the miracle traditions of the Books of Kings never existed. If such a group had existed, redaction criticism would have been helpful in analysing how the Gospel redactors altered and diluted their traditions to accommodate or shape the evolving Christology; in other words, redaction criticism could have helped us explain why Jesus performs Elianic miracles, yet is made to deny that he is Elijah. Since we cannot establish the existence of such a group, redaction-criticism remains of limited use—the Gospel authors may have edited out literary parallels in the texts.

Some scholars, as we have seen, have adopted the theory of Jesus' evolving self-identity, claiming that Jesus first saw himself as Elijah, but grew to take on for himself the role of Christ and deny the Elijah role. Others have attempted to explain the discrepancy between Jesus' implied and expressed roles in other ways, sometimes, as in the case of P. Achtemeier, using redaction-criticism to propose that "collections,

or catenae, of these Elianic miracle stories existed which were later dismembered by the Gospel redactors. In the long run, however, the only statement that we can make with any confidence about the phenomenon of Elianic motifs in the Gospel miracle stories is that it demonstrates that typological parallels between Jesus and Elijah were part of the literary arsenal of the Gospel authors.

If we are to move from literary analysis to history, if we are to understand what the Elijah-figure meant to the gospel authors in terms of their struggle to preserve Christianity in the face of crisis, we must examine the passages in the Gospels where Elijah is mentioned explicitly. We have found that, in the course of a few decades, the Elijah symbol travelled a full circuit. In Jewish tradition, Elijah was to bring in the "Great and Terrible Day of the Lord" (Mal 4:5). Elijah was one of several such figures who were also named by Scripture to fill this role; parallel eschatological hopes included the "Prophet like Moses" (Deut. 18:15), the "Son of Man," the "Suffering Servant," and the Messiah, son of David.

Each Evangelist used Elijah in response to the particular crisis Christianity faced at the time his gospel was written. Mark adopted the Elijah of Malachi 4:5, but he altered the role of that Elijah to make the prophet the forerunner of the Messiah, a concept not found in Judaism. He did this for two reasons, one of which was to aid in early Christian debate with Judaism. At the time Mark was written, Christianity and Judaism were engaged in a war over the inheritance of Jewish Scriptural promises. Jews had challenged Christian preaching that the End had come by turning to Malachi 4:5; since Elijah had not returned, the new age could not possibly have arrived. Mark responded

by conflating Isa. 40:3 and Mal. 4:5 and making these verses correspond to John the Baptist, a relatively well-known figure. John the Baptist was Elijah; therefore the new age had arrived.

Mark's second reason for making Elijah the forerunner of the Messiah was that this formulation would make John the Baptist the forerunner of Jesus. John's priority and independent reputation had long been a problem for early Christianity; Mark's exegetical formulation acknowledged the reality of John's accomplishments by giving him a place in Christian salvation-history, but it preserved Jesus' superiority by making John his forerunner.

Matthew preserved Mark's identification of John with Elijah, but did little to strengthen it. In fact, the verse, "if you are willing to accept it, he is Elijah who is to come, he who has ears, let him hear," indicates that the delay in the Parousia was raising questions in Matthew's mind about what kind of Elijah John the Baptist had been. Matthew's world showed none of the signs of the End Time, at least not outwardly; thus, Matthew was concerned with maintaining church discipline in the face of the delayed fulfillment of Christian hopes.

Luke, on the other hand, responded to a different crisis—the fact that Christianity as a separate entity was illegal in Roman eyes, and needed respectability (=antiquity) to grow as a religion. Therefore, Luke equated Jesus with Elijah, so that Christianity could be seen as the logical fulfillment of Judaism, and so that the new movement could inherit Judaism's legal status.

John, the Fourth Evangelist, dealt with the theological crises of his day by making Jesus a cosmic Logos who existed before the world began. John the Baptist was never "prior" to Jesus, he was merely the first

witness to "the Light." Elijah, as a history-bound figure, was totally irrelevant to the Fourth Evangelist's Christology.

Given the highly specialized uses to which each Gospel writer subjected the Elijah-symbol, it is no surprise that we have encountered difficulties in utilizing the methodology of several scholars whose approach involves harmonizing Gospel accounts to produce a composite "history." Some scholars treat the New Testament as a whole, and assume that everything that occurs in the Gospels really happened. They then attempt to reconcile conflicting gospel testimony through speculation and exegesis, weaving elaborate narrative theories over the thin network of sources. In other words, these scholars are producing works of religious faith, creating modern exegetical midrash of the highest order. I use the term "midrash" not in a perjorative sense; rather, we should see such scholarship as a way in which modern people can enrich their faith and rejuvenate the modern Kerygma. In each case where harmonization is used, however, we find that personal faith has caused the individual scholar to cross the boundary between literary analysis and historical analysis, to use literary evidence for historical purposes. This is a boundary which ought not to be crossed in scholarly research.

Our study of the evolution of the Elijah-symbol has revealed the extreme rapidity with which symbols can be activated and changed to fit crisis situations. Because symbols can be so flexible, it is extremely risky to attempt to fit them into any temporally rigid set of evolutionary "laws" as did Bultmann. Instead, it appears that Elijah was a weapon used on both sides of a rigorous debate between two religions that faced overwhelming loss. Peoples or cultures in crisis often suddenly become extremely competent innovators; this competency

often flows from the very depths which are the origin of religious symbolism. As a symbol of the End Time, of the ultimate fulfillment, the Elijah-symbol was at the center of both Christianity's and Judaism's efforts to re-define their conceptions of the ultimate salvation of humanity, at a time when salvation, for both, seemed distant.

Appendix A

Notes on the Text of Kings

I Kings 17:1-7

v. 6. עֹרְבִים "Ravens." These are among the forbidden foods of Lev. 11:15. In Genesis 8:7, Noah sends a raven to search for land, but otherwise, ravens are not mentioned in prophetic literature. Gray[1] maintains that the text should read עַרְבִים "Arabs" because of the resulting congruity with the following episode of charity to a Phoenician woman. Oppenheimer[2] maintains that this hints at a current motif of popular aggadah concerning the docility of animals, cf. Jonah 1:2; IK 13. Ravens, however, were considered the abandoned of the animal world, as in Ps. 147:9, Proverbs 30:17, Job 38:41. Cf. Mark 1:12-14.

v. 8. צָרְפַת "Sarepath." Burney: This is a large village near the sea eight miles below Sidon. It is significant that Elijah crosses into Phoenician territory to perform this miracle, since, as Gray points out, Elijah may already have clashed with Ahab, as 18:10 suggests.[3] Luke refers to this incident in 4:25ff.

v. 19. Elijah takes the son up to the upper story of the house. In the tale of the Shunamite woman, Elisha does the same. See notes to IIK 4:21.

v. 24. עתה זה ידעתי וגו "Now I know that you are a man of God." Similar phraseology can be found in Gen. 22:12, Ex. 18:11, Jud. 17:13.

I Kings 18:18-46

v. 31. ויקח אליהו שתים עשרה וגו "Twelve stones." This is probably a reference to Ex. 24:4, in which Moses does the same. Phraseology here resembles Ex. 24 in many ways, especially in the use of the word ויקח, which is mentioned several times there. Echoes of the symbolism of the twelve tribes abound in the New Testament.

v. 41. Here Ahab is dealt with as an individual. It appears that he was with Elijah in Jezreel at the time this was said, which could indicate that this tale is separate from the rest of chapter 18. The author could have inserted this tale as a logical end to the "drought" cycle of stories which began in IK 17.

v. 42ff. Note the emphasis on the method the miracle worker uses here and in 18:32-35. Method is also important in IK 17:19-22. In the New Testament, emphasis on method is one of the signs of typological borrowings from the Elijah/Elisha miracle cycles.

IK 19:1-18

v. 4. ושאל את נפשו Similar to Jonah 4:8.

vv. 3-15. There are many similarities here to the account of Moses at Horeb. The 40 day fast (v. 8) is paralleled by Ex. 34:28. The theophany is related to Ex. 33:18. The use of the word in relation to the presence of God (v. 11) is related to Ex. 34:6. The name Horeb is found in Ex. 3:1, 17:6, and 33:6.

v. 9. אף המערה This alludes to Ex. 33:22.

v. 12. קול דממה ודקה "A still, small voice." Here the text seizes and neutralizes motifs common to all gods. In Scripture, earthquake, fire, and storm are found in Ps. 18:12, Judges 5:4-5, Hab. 3:3. Elijah's wrapping his face in his mantle could refer to Ex. 33:21.

v. 19. In casting his mantle over Elisha, Elijah claims him as his son.[4] This would be consistent with the legal context of IIK 2:9. Gray[5] maintains that this act is contactual magic: the mantle, since it had intimate contact with a person's body, was endowed with his powers. Contactual magic occurs in connection with Jesus' clothing in Mark 5:25-34, Mt. 9:18-22, and Luke 8:43-48.

IIK 1:13 Oppenheimer[6] finds a link between this passage and I Samuel 19:20-24, when Saul sends messengers to take David.

IIK 2:2ff. "Remain here." Elisha is asked to stay behind twice, but the third time, Elijah assents. This number pattern resembles somewhat the previous episode of the captains of fifty.

v. 8, 14. Elijah divides the waters of the Jordan while going east, while Elisha divides the waters while going west. This roughly parallels Moses at the Reed Sea (Ex. 14:15-30) and Joshua at the Jordan near Jericho (Joshua 3:9-17).

v. 11. "Double portion of thy spirit." According to Gray,[7] Elisha is not here seeking to excel his master, but receives the double portion entitled by the eldest son under the Law (Deut. 21:77). This would be consistent with Bronner's[8] interpretation to IK 19:19, where the casting of the mantle is seen as an adoption procedure. A Double portion here signifies true succession.

vv. 15-18. The sons of the prophets look for Elijah for three days in a company of fifty. This juxtaposition of three and fifty is common in the Elijah/Elisha cycle. There are parallels here with traditions surrounding Moses' grave. See Acts of Pilate XV.

IIK 4:1-37 The unfailing vessel was a common motif in this type of literature. Here, the motif is more elaborate than in IK 17. In the New Testament, this motif occurs in Mark 8:1-10 , Mt. 15:32-29.

v. 10. Evidently, having the prophet in one's home was considered lucky. His staying in the upper story of the house could have been a result of his being ritually sacrosanct, which make it unsafe for him to enter a common home.

v. 21. Mother puts son in the chamber and then closes the door. Gray says that this preserves the nefesh, or soul, of the victim. The use of עד ties this in with the story of the debtor woman in 4:4.

v. 27. Gehazi tries to reject the Shunamite woman. This could have some relation to I Sam 1:10, especially in the use of the word מרה. See Mark 10:13.

Footnotes to Appendix A

[1]John Gray, I and II Kings, a Commentary (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1963), 339.

[2]Benjamin Oppenheimer, Nevuah ha Kedumah be Yisrael (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1973), 230.

[3]Gray, op. cit., 336.

[4]Leah Bronner, The Stories of Elijah and Elisha, (Leiden: Brill, 1968), 27.

[5]Gray, op. cit., 368.

[6]Oppenheimer, op. cit., 191.

[7]Gray, op. cit.,

[8]Bronner, op. cit., 54.

Appendix B

This is a partial list of phrases and words which link Elijah and Elisha to Pentateuchal traditions.

IK 17:6	לחם ובשר	Ex. 16:4, 8, 13. God provides for Israel in the Wilderness.
18:30	ויגשו כל העם אליו	Possible reference to Ex. 24:2. ויגש used often in both texts.
18:31	ויקח שתים עשרה אבנים	Ex. 24:4. ויקח also used several times.
18:39	יי הוא האלהים	Deut. 4:35, 39; 7:9.

19:8ff. Elijah flees to Horeb via Beer Sheva:

a. flight to desert	Gen 16:7; 21:15.
b. 40 day fast	Ex. 34:28
c. אל המערה	Ex. 33:22
d. theophany	Ex. 33:18
e. use of עבר	Ex. 34:6
f. חרב	Ex. 3:1, 17:6, 33:6.

IIK 2:9	Double portion of spirit.	Deut. 21:17.
2:1-14	Divides waters.	Ex. 14:15-30, Joshua 3:9-17. Moses crosses going east, as does Elijah. Joshua crosses going west, as does Elisha. The use in Kings of ראה is mirrored in Ex. 2:11-12. (Oppenheimer).
4:16	כעת חיה	Gen. 18:10, 14.
5:19	בברת	Gen. 35:16, 48:7
6:18	סנורים	Gen. 19:11

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