

## *Did Jesus Quote Isaiah 29:13 against the Pharisees? An Unpopular Appraisal*

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*In contrast to the widely held view that the saying in Mark 7:5–7 is a Markan redaction, this article argues that the exchange between Jesus and the Pharisees is thoroughly at home in an inter-Jewish (non-Christian) polemic concerning the ideology of purity and thus may well be more historical, or earlier, than is often thought. More specifically, it is argued that the function of Isa 29:13 as a scriptural support for the denunciation of the “tradition of the elders” finds its closest parallel in the targumic interpretive tradition and not in the early church.*

*Key Words: Jesus, tradition of the elders, holiness, purity, targum, conflict, redaction, historicity*

The confrontation between Jesus and the Pharisees concerning purity laws in Mark 7:1–23 (Matt 15:1–20) has over the years proved to be a hotbed for scholarly debate on the complexities of historicity, tradition, and redaction.<sup>1</sup> This section of Mark is a pastiche of layers containing traditions that most likely go back to Jesus, such as v. 15 (“there is nothing outside the man which by going into him can defile him; but the things which come out of the man are what defile the man”), as well as traditions that probably have their origin in later Christian/Jewish controversy, such as v. 19b (“thus he declared all foods clean”). Most of the attention that this section has attracted concerning the historical Jesus has rightly focused on ritual hand washing and Corban. By contrast, historians have paid very little attention to Mark 7:5–7, where Jesus quotes Isa 29:13 as a condemnation of

1. The Gospels’ portrayals of Jesus’ conflicts with the Pharisees have received relatively little treatment in the last 25 years. In Marcus Borg’s assessment, this is understandable given the post-Holocaust tendency, whether intended or unintended, in modern scholarship to view the conflicts as tensions between Christian Jews and non-Christian Jews and not as a conflict extending back to Jesus. See M. J. Borg, *Conflict, Holiness, and Politics in the Teachings of Jesus* (2nd ed.; Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1998), 6–8. For a detailed survey of Mark 7:1–23 in the study of the Gospel of Mark and the historical Jesus, see J. Svartvik, *Mark and Mission: Mk 7:1–23 in Its Narrative and Historical Contexts* (ConBNT 32; Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 2000), 13–108.

the scribes' and Pharisees' appeal to the "tradition of the elders." For many historians, it is highly unlikely that Mark 7:5–7 represents an actual confrontation between Jesus and the Pharisees because, as it is customarily reiterated, this exchange contains all the hallmarks of Markan redaction, particularly Jesus' sweeping condemnation of the "tradition of the elders" and the accompanying quotation from Isa 29:13, which closely resembles the LXX.<sup>2</sup> On the surface, Jesus' response does seem to have a nonhistorical quality because it easily corresponds to Christian/Jewish disputes about purity. And confessedly, this is the position that, until recently, I have found convincing.

In this article, which is in keeping with Gerd Theissen and Dagmar Winter's evaluation of authenticity criteria and their endorsement of a reworked criterion of historical coherence (*plausibilitätskriterium*),<sup>3</sup> I argue that the exchange between Jesus and the Pharisees in Mark 7:5–7 is thoroughly at home in an inter-Jewish (non-Christian) polemic concerning the ideology of purity and thus may well preserve an authentic interaction. More specifically, I argue that the function of Isa 29:13 as a scriptural support for the denunciation of the "tradition of the elders" finds its closest parallel in the targumic interpretive tradition and not in the early church. My aim is not to demonstrate but simply to raise the plausibility of authenticity in contrast to mainstream thinking that advocates that neither Jesus' denunciation of the Pharisees' "tradition of the elders" nor the function of Isa 29:13, as it appears in Mark, coheres with traditions found in early Judaism.

#### CHALLENGES TO THE "TRADITION OF THE ELDERS" IN EARLY JEWISH POLEMIC

##### *Jesus and the Pharisees: Rival Purity Programs of Renewal*

Over the last 20 years, one of the leading proponents of the view that the question posed by the scribes and the Pharisees in v. 5 ("why do your disciples not follow the tradition of the elders, but instead eat a meal with unclean hands?") is a construct of the early church has been E. P. Sanders. According to Sanders, the interaction is highly doubtful because the issues surrounding purity (hand washing and food regulations) would have been more prevalent in churches dominated by Gentiles, as Galatians and Romans suggest, as opposed to pre-Christian Judaism. In summary, Sanders sweepingly claims that "all the scenes of debate between Jesus and the Pharisees have more than a slight air of artificiality."<sup>4</sup> Elaborating further on the issue of certain Pharisaic traditions, such as Sabbath, food, and pu-

2. For example, it has received a black rating in R. W. Funk et al., *The Five Gospels: The Search for the Authentic Words of Jesus* (New York: Macmillan, 1993), 67.

3. G. Theissen and D. Winter, *Die Kriterienfrage in der Jesusforschung: Vom Differenzkriterium zum Plausibilitätskriterium* (NTOA; Freiburg: Universitäts Verlag, 1997), 176–83.

4. E. P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 265.

rity laws, Sanders sees much more compatibility between the Pharisees and Jesus than do the Evangelists. The problem with this claim, as Borg and others have pointed out, is that there is strong attestation of a conflict of this sort in the early layers of the tradition, namely Mark, Q, and the *Gospel of Thomas*. What is more, the conflict is found in multiple forms of the tradition, such as pronouncement stories, parables, and short indictment sayings. In addition, the Pharisees are not indiscriminately stereotyped as Jesus' enemies in the earliest traditions. Rather, their conflicts with Jesus are directed at rituals, such as meal practices, purity, and Sabbath.<sup>5</sup> Sanders also finds the setting of Mark 7:1–13 extraordinary because the scribes and Pharisees would not have made a special journey from Jerusalem to Galilee for the purpose of inspecting the disciples' hands.<sup>6</sup> This "geographical" objection, which surprisingly emerges all too often, is irrelevant because it does not nullify the central historical question. One can simply grant Sanders' objection and postulate that the same kind of debate between Jesus and the Pharisees could have occurred in Judea.

More specifically, several scholars argue against the authenticity of v. 5 by focusing on the improbability of Jesus' ever challenging the spectrum of pharisaic tradition, as implied by the phrase "tradition of the elders."<sup>7</sup> R. P. Booth, who offers one of the most detailed defenses of this position, reconstructs the question in v. 5 into two separate questions that ask "why do your disciples (1) not live in accordance with the tradition of the elders, and (2) eat with unclean hands?" Booth argues that the second question alone constitutes the earliest form and that the first question should be regarded as a Markan redaction. It is unlikely, according to Booth, that the second question about hand washing would have been a fabrication by the church or Mark because "it can hardly have been the most conspicuous or contentious example of a legal system which covered comprehensively almost every aspect of Jewish daily life."<sup>8</sup> However, with respect to the first question, Booth claims that it is highly unlikely that Jesus would have ever challenged the spectrum of Pharisaic tradition by sweepingly denouncing the "tradition of the elders." The difficulty that this repeated claim faces is that it insufficiently considers Jesus' denunciation in the

5. Borg, *Conflict, Holiness, and Politics in the Teachings of Jesus*, 7.

6. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 265; idem, *Jewish Law from Jesus to the Mishnah* (London: SCM / Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1990), 90–91; P. Fredriksen, *Jesus of Nazareth: King of the Jews* (New York: Vintage, 1999), 105–8, 204. That the Pharisees were a later addition by the redactor is also claimed by E. J. Pyrke, *Redactional Style in the Marcan Gospel: A Study of Syntax and Vocabulary as Guides to Redaction in Mark* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 161; W. Grundmann, *Das Evangelium nach Marcus* (THKNT 2; Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1971), 46; R. P. Booth (*Jesus and the Laws of Purity: Tradition History and Legal History in Mark 7* (JSNTSup 13; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1986), 34; K. Berger, *Die Gesetzesauslegung Jesu. Ihr historischer Hintergrund im Judentum und im Alten Testament. Teil I: Markus und Parallelen* (WMANT 40; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1972), 461–62.

7. J. Lambrecht, "Jesus and the Law: An Investigation of Mark 7,1–23," *ETL* 53 (1977): 48; Booth, *Jesus and the Laws of Purity*, 64.

8. Booth, *Jesus and the Laws of Purity*, 65.

context of conflicts concerning the ideology of purity (that is, holiness) among rival Jewish groups. It is in light of this inter-Jewish ideological debate that Jesus' denunciations of the Pharisees' "tradition of the elders" can be supported as historically plausible.

Our understanding of "tradition of the elders" (τὴν παράδοσιν τῶν πρεσβυτέρων) has been significantly increased by the work of A. I. Baumgarten.<sup>9</sup> After surveying the material in which Pharisaic tradition is attacked by rival Jewish groups, Baumgarten concludes that "the use of *paradosis* across independent sources indicates that we are dealing with a technical term that refers to the regulations observed by the Pharisees but not written in the law of Moses."<sup>10</sup> Baumgarten suggests that by using τῶν πρεσβυτέρων to describe their tradition, the Pharisees claimed a certain prestige whereby their own traditions concerning largely matters of national and individual purity were aligned with the elders of antiquity in the biblical era, beginning with Moses.<sup>11</sup>

The Pharisees, who were largely a table fellowship group interested in extending priestly purity (that is, holiness) standards to the laity as a vision of national renewal, did not hold the reigns of political power, nor were they the dominant social force during the first third of the first century.<sup>12</sup> Most scholars have concluded that they were a relatively minor social group that tried to influence the people on a religious level and win their support and following.<sup>13</sup> M. Hengel and R. Deines broaden the significance of the Pharisees, arguing that even prior to 70 C.E. their missionary agenda for holiness should not be restricted to the temple or to Jerusalem. Rather, the Pharisees believed that all of Israel was entrusted to them by God (cf. *m. Kelim* 1:6–9). Like the Pharisees, Jesus was also a minor social force who sought to win a following that had national implications.<sup>14</sup> Both shared the same interests, postulating their respective vision of purity (that is, holiness) and equally sought to influence as many people as they could reach. In this capacity they would have been inevitable opponents whose views would have clashed indirectly among the people each sought to influence or direct when he came into contact with the other, especially during festivals and in synagogue-like settings.

In addition to Hengel and Deines's argument, one can adduce the thesis of Marcus Borg, who convincingly demonstrates in the second edition

9. A. I. Baumgarten, "The Pharisaic *Paradosis*," *HTR* 80 (1987): 63–77.

10. *Ibid.*, 66.

11. *Ibid.*, 74.

12. J. Neusner, *The Rabbinic Traditions about the Pharisees before 70* (3 vols.; Leiden: Brill, 1971); *idem*, *From Politics to Piety: The Emergence of Pharisaic Judaism* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1973).

13. A. J. Saldarini, *Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees in Palestinian Society: A Sociological Approach* (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1988), 293.

14. M. Hengel and R. Deines, "E. P. Sanders' 'Common Judaism,' Jesus, and the Pharisees," *JTS* 46 (1995): 34–35, 47, 51. Hengel and Deines draw a line of continuity with regard to the Pharisees' influence among the masses from John Hyrcanus to the destruction of the Temple. Their case rests on *Ant.* 13.298.

of *Conflict, Holiness, and Politics in the Teachings of Jesus* that Jesus protested against and advocated an alternative to those who consciously or unconsciously profited from and legitimized a domination system that was rooted in an ideology of holiness/purity.<sup>15</sup> For Borg, the quotation of Isa 29:13 in Mark 7:6–7 even serves as an example of how Jesus challenged a purity system that did not transform the heart.<sup>16</sup> While Borg’s overall thesis is a valuable contribution, his assumption that the Pharisees shared the ideology of purity with the temple establishment requires further research in light of the conflicts between the Sadducees and Pharisees, as they are presented below, and in light of Josephus’s portrayal of the Pharisees as a group that was much appreciated by the common people (*J.W.* 2.166; *Ant.* 18.12–15). It is quite possible that both Jesus and the Pharisees shared ideological motives that had national implications while at the same time differing widely on what constituted purity.<sup>17</sup> More recently, Steven Bryan has argued along similar lines that the Pharisees’ renewal program, which emphasized the capacity of bodily purity, was subverted by Jesus’ program of renewal that centered on nonbodily purity, effected by forgiveness, love, and inclusion.<sup>18</sup> What sets Bryan’s approach apart is his clever attempt to view Jesus’ rival purity program within the context of Jewish eschatology, wherein the pursuits of purity by competing groups are wed with the hopes of Israel’s restoration and understanding of election.

#### *Early Jewish Opposition to the “Tradition of the Elders”*

There is substantial evidence to support the contention that the Pharisees were accustomed to the kind of challenge we find in Mark by rival Jewish groups—most notably by the Sadducees (especially the temple elite). Thus, Jesus should not be viewed as a lone critic. Nor should he be viewed as a critic of Judaism as a religion because a purity system, while a dominant cultural dynamic in the first century, does not exhaust the definition of Judaism.<sup>19</sup> Rather, like some of his contemporaries, he was a critic of one interpretation of Judaism. By contrast, if Jesus were the lone critic and there existed no record of opposition to Pharisaic tradition within Judaism, there would indeed be a high degree of suspicion about the historical reliability of this interaction, especially in a setting where the church was experiencing conflict with Jewish religious leadership.

Several examples of antagonism by the Sadducees toward Pharisaic tradition can be found in Josephus, Tannaitic writings, and the Dead Sea Scrolls. First, Josephus describes the Pharisees as observers and teachers of

15. Borg, *Conflict, Holiness, and Politics in the Teachings of Jesus*, 14–15.

16. *Ibid.*, 251.

17. *Ibid.*, 89.

18. S. M. Bryan, *Jesus and Israel’s Traditions of Judgment and Restoration* (SNTSMS 117; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 148–88.

19. Borg, *Conflict, Holiness, and Politics in the Teachings of Jesus*, 66–87.

traditions (παράδοσις) that are not recorded in the Torah.<sup>20</sup> Because these traditions were not recorded in the laws of Moses, they were rejected by the Sadducees, who were supposedly strict adherents only to the laws in the written text.<sup>21</sup> As a result of this tension, Josephus writes that “the two parties came to have controversies and serious differences” (*Ant.* 13.298). When Hyrcanus angrily rejected the Pharisees in favor of the Sadducees, he abrogated their traditions and punished those who continued to adhere to them. It is fair to speculate that Josephus’s Hyrcanus intends the entire package of traditions. After the Pharisees regained their place of prominence under Alexandra in 78 B.C.E., a very favorable outlook toward their traditions ensued. Because Alexandra was intensely religious and sought the perspective of the Pharisees on important legal and political issues, the group’s power and influence grew very rapidly.<sup>22</sup> Although Josephus does not provide much information on the content of these traditions, he clearly conveys their importance for Pharisaic identity.

Second, some early tannaitic rabbis also record Sadducean opposition to Pharisaic tradition. In the fifth chapter of *’Abot R. Nat. A*, an explicit attack on Pharisaic tradition is expressed in this saying: “The Sadducees say: it is a tradition [מסורה] of the house of the Pharisees that they deny themselves [the pleasures of] this world, but in the world to come they will have nothing.”<sup>23</sup> Though this objection by the Sadducees is not intended to be comprehensive, it does suggest that at least some aspect of the Pharisaic tradition was being challenged. J. Bowker cites a more general dispute over tradition, much like the one that is found in Josephus, from *Seper Yosippon*, which reads,

20. The adherence to tradition not found in the Torah was commonplace among religious groups in early Judaism. See J. Blenkinsopp, “Interpretation and the Tendency to Sectarianism: An Aspect of Second Temple History,” in *Jewish and Christian Self-Definition*, Volume 2: *Aspects of Judaism in the Greco-Roman Period* (ed. E. P. Sanders, A. I. Baumgarten, and A. Mendelson; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981), 1–26. On the specific relationship between the traditions of the Pharisees and the traditions of the Sadducees, two positions have been advocated. The first argues that the Sadducees denied the legal authority of all non-Torah traditions, as represented by J. Z. Lauterbach, *Rabbinic Essays* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College, 1951), 31–39; E. Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ (175 B.C.–A.D. 135)* (3 vols.; rev. G. Vermes, F. Millar, and M. Black; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1979), 2:407–12. The second position allows for some traditions to function authoritatively within Sadducean circles, as is held by E. E. Urbach, “The *Derasha* as a Basis for Halakah and the Problem of the *Soferim*,” *Tarbiz* 27 (1957–58): 180–81; J. M. Baumgarten, “The Unwritten Law in the Pre-Rabbinic Period,” *JSJ* 3 (1972): 20–21; A. I. Baumgarten, “The Pharisaic *Paradosis*,” 65.

21. *Antiquities* 13.297. The interpretation of *Ant.* 13.297 has generated a twofold debate. Some scholars, such as E. Rivkin (*A Hidden Revolution* [Nashville: Abingdon, 1978], 41) and J. M. Baumgarten (“The Unwritten Law in the Pre-Rabbinic Period,” 12–14), argue that the Sadducees rejected the Pharisaic regulations because they were not written down. That is, they rejected the oral form of the regulations. In contrast to this view, others such as Neusner (*The Rabbinic Traditions about the Pharisees before 70*, 2:163) and S. Mason (*Flavius Josephus on the Pharisees: A Compositional-Critical Study* [Studia post-Biblica 39; Leiden: Brill, 1991], 242) argue that the rejection was content (not form) oriented. That is, the Sadducees objected to the Pharisaic traditions because they were not present in the written laws of Moses.

22. *Antiquities* 13.293–98. See also *J.W.* 1.110–12.

23. Translation is taken from A. I. Baumgarten, “The Pharisaic *Paradosis*,” 69.

The *prushim* [Pharisees] used to say: 'We keep the Torah which our fathers entrusted into our hands, interpreting (*mprshth*) it according to the Hakamim who interpreted (*prshu*) Torah traditionally (*lqblah*). The Sadducees used to say: 'We do not adhere or listen to every tradition (*mswreth*) and every interpretation (*peyrush*), but to the Torah of Moses alone.'<sup>24</sup>

A dispute about ritual purity between the Pharisees and the Sadducees is also recorded in *t. Hag.* 3.35. Although the dispute here is over the removal and immersion of the *Menorah* on a festival day—an act that the Sadducees abhorred—the passage is instructive about the kind of disagreement that continued to be recorded in the tannaitic period.<sup>25</sup>

A note of caution, however, is warranted here. An appeal to literature that post-dates the NT raises the problem regarding the legitimacy of the line of continuity between pre- and post-70 C.E. Pharisaic tradition. The transition from Pharisaic to rabbinic Judaism, according to Neusner, probably occurred in the period of the Yavneh academy (75–125 C.E.) when pre-70 Pharisaic traditions were scrupulously collected, preserved, and developed as a reaction to the destruction of the temple.<sup>26</sup> Neusner is generally opposed to a line of continuity spanning the entire first century C.E. He claims that "the theological side to Pharisaic Judaism before A.D. 70 . . . is not accessible, for the pre-70 beliefs, ideas, and values have been taken over and revised by the rabbinical masters after that time."<sup>27</sup> While Neusner's ongoing warnings to NT scholars about the uncritical use of rabbinic material are certainly appropriate, his dichotomy between pre-70 and post-70 ideas appear too sharp in the larger context of the development of religious tradition. Do we really know for sure that such a clear dichotomy occurred? And what of the post-70 Jewish traditions that corresponded to pre-70 Jewish traditions or some close forms of them?<sup>28</sup> In those cases a line of continuity seems plausible. An example of this kind of continuity is presented by L. H. Schiffman, who has compared the halakot attributed to the Pharisees in rabbinic texts with 4QMMT, which he regards as containing Sadducean opposition to a number of Pharisaic legal traditions. He thus concludes that the later rabbinic texts that describe pre-70 C.E. Pharisaic traditions and practices are fairly accurate.<sup>29</sup> I maintain that this kind of continuity is operative in inter-Jewish critique of Pharisaic tradition.

24. J. Bowker, *Jesus and the Pharisees* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), 168.

25. H. Maccoby, *Early Rabbinic Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 139–41.

26. Neusner, *From Politics to Piety*, 97–99.

27. J. Neusner, "Mr. Sanders's Pharisees and Mine," *BBR* 2 (1992): 148.

28. For additional criteria, see C. A. Evans, "Early Rabbinic Sources and Jesus Research," in *Society of Biblical Literature 1995 Seminar Papers* (SBLSP 34; ed. E. H. Lovering Jr.; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995), 55.

29. L. H. Schiffman, "New Light on the Pharisees: Insights from the Dead Sea Scrolls," *BRev* 8/3 (June 1992): 54. As part of a summary statement, Schiffman writes, "the broad outlines of the Pharisees that emerge from the Dead Sea Scrolls are much closer to those described in later rabbinic literature than many of us would have thought possible a few years ago. It is

Even if Schiffman's example is not granted, it is a monumental task to show that every possible correspondence between pre- and post-70 traditions is irrelevant.

Third, there is some evidence that the Qumran community, whose core value was likewise a quest for communal purity or holiness, also responded negatively to Pharisaic tradition. Baumgarten has pointed to 1QH 12:14–15 as one example of this antagonism. The text reads:

They seek Thee with a double heart  
and are not confirmed in Thy truth.  
A root bearing poisoned and bitter fruit  
is in their designs;  
they walk in stubbornness of heart  
and seek Thee among idols,  
and they set before them  
the stumbling-block of their sin.<sup>30</sup>

Baumgarten observes that the description of the party under attack by the psalmist in this context (1QH 12:7, 11) resembles the דורשי החלקות ("seekers of falsehood/smooth things"), which may be a derogatory appellation for the Pharisees, as is suggested from other Qumran texts along with CD.<sup>31</sup> According to Mansoor, the expression in line 14, וידרשונה בלב ולב ("they seek Thee with a double/divided heart") is a reference to hypocrisy and comparable to Ps 12:3–4,<sup>32</sup> where the psalmist laments that the once-faithful people are now characterized by "flattering lips" and a "double heart" because of their hypocrisy. The phrase שרירות לבם ("stubbornness of heart") in line 15 commonly appears in Qumran literature as a description of people who pursue their own inclinations rather than divine law.<sup>33</sup> The

now clear that we cannot look at rabbinic Judaism as a post-70 C.E. invention. . . . Rather, rabbinic Judaism must be seen as a continuation of the pre-destruction Pharisaic tradition."

30. Translation is taken from G. Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls in English* (3rd ed.; London: Penguin, 1987), 175.

31. A. I. Baumgarten, "The Pharisaic *Paradosis*," 71; idem, "The Name of the Pharisees," *JBL* 102 (1983): 421–22. In the latter article, Baumgarten suggests that the derogatory name was partly a result of the hermeneutical competition between the two groups. Both groups claimed to have accurate interpretations of the Torah. Closer parallels of the phrase appear in 1QH 2:15, 32. See M. Mansoor, *The Thanksgiving Hymns* (STDJ 3; Leiden: Brill, 1961), 106 n. 16, 110 n. 6. Mansoor describes the appellation דורשי חלקות in 2:15 as a reference to the Pharisees. Y. Yadin ("Peshet Nahum [4QpNahum] Reconsidered," *IEJ* 21 [1971]: 2) applies the same phrase in 4QpNah 2:2 also to the Pharisees. He argues that if the peshet is here concerned with the encounter between Demetrius III and Alexander Janneus, then דורשי חלקות should be identified with the party that invited Demetrius (cf. *J.W.* 1.92–97). See also D. Flusser, "Pharisäer, Sadduzäer und Essener im Pescher Nahum," in *Qumran* (ed. K. E. Grözinger et al.; Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1981), 121–66; H. Stegemann, "The Qumran Essenes," in *The Madrid Qumran Congress: Proceedings of the International Congress on the Dead Sea Scrolls, Madrid, 18–21 March 1991* (STDJ 11; ed. J. Trebolle Barrera and L. V. Montaner; 2 vols.; Leiden: Brill, 1992), 1:159.

32. Mansoor, *The Thanksgiving Hymns*, 125 n. 7.

33. A. I. Baumgarten, "The Pharisaic *Paradosis*," 71.

context of this passage concerns the hypocrisy of people who have turned from true revelation (that is, Torah) to their own teaching, which is considered idolatry by the psalmist.<sup>34</sup> Aside from the obvious rebuke of the opponents' teachings, there is an interesting metaphorical affinity here with Jesus' denunciation of the Pharisees in Mark 7:6–7. As in the Isaiah citation, 1QH 12 draws a contrast between the negative action of the lips (line 16) and the positive action of the heart (lines 21, 24).

L. H. Schiffman has pointed to several passages in CD that supposedly condemn Pharisaic teachings on a variety of theological and halakic issues. Although CD specifically condemns the “builders of the wall” for their proliferation of falsehood (e.g., CD 4:19–20; 8:12–13, 18), their identity is comparable to a similar designation in *m. 'Abot* 1:1, where the men of the Great Synagogue are referred to as those who “make a fence around the Law.” This “fence around the law” is a rabbinic maxim referring to the creation of laws, or regulations, that are specifically intended to make certain that the laws of Torah are not transgressed.<sup>35</sup> Schiffman maintains that the key to identifying the opponents in CD as Pharisees is found in the similarity of the traditions in later tannaitic sources.<sup>36</sup> In other words, because the series of laws under condemnation in CD can easily be compared with the laws espoused by the heirs of the Pharisees in *m. 'Abot* 1:1, a strong line of continuity can be drawn.

In addition, 4QMMT contains 22 laws that the author claims were responsible for a schism that led to the establishment of the Qumran community at the beginning of the Hasmonean takeover.<sup>37</sup> Some scholars suggest that 4QMMT espouses the views of Sadducees who separated themselves from the temple establishment as a reaction to certain unacceptable Pharisaic traditions that dominated religious practice in Jerusalem,<sup>38</sup> while other scholars favor an Essene composition.<sup>39</sup> If 4QMMT is anti-Pharisaic, as Schiffman and others convincingly argue, then the challenge posed by Jesus to the Pharisees' tradition in Mark 7:6–8 fits in a convention of opposition with at least some aspects of Pharisaism in Palestine and is not necessarily a creation of the early church.

If Jesus' sweeping objection to the Pharisees' “tradition of the elders” is at home within inter-Jewish polemic, would Isa 29:13 have been applied in the same context as a proof text against these popular teachers and their

34. S. Holm-Nielsen, *Hodayot: Psalms from Qumran* (ATDan 2; Aarhus: Universitetsforlaget, 1960), 79.

35. Schiffman, “New Light on the Pharisees,” 32.

36. *Ibid.*, 32.

37. *Ibid.*, 54.

38. L. H. Schiffman, “The New Halakic Letter (4QMMT) and the Origins of the Dead Sea Sect,” *BA* 53 (1990): 68–69; Y. Sussmann, “The History of Halakha and the Dead Sea Scrolls: Preliminary Observations on *Miqsat Ma'ase ha-Torah* (4QMMT),” *Tarbiz* 59 (1989–90): 11–76 [Hebrew]. Sussmann's article is translated by L. Moscovitz in E. Qimron and J. Strugnell, *Qumran Cave 4.V: Miqsat Ma'ase Ha-Torah* (DJD 10; Oxford: Clarendon, 1994), 179–200.

39. For example, Stegemann, “The Qumran Essenes,” 135.

teachings? In the following section, I argue that there is enough precedent to warrant an affirmative response.

THE FUNCTION OF ISAIAH 29:13  
IN EARLY JEWISH AND CHRISTIAN POLEMIC

Because Mark's quotation of Isa 29:13 is closest in form to the LXX, its origin is often attributed to the early church.<sup>40</sup> Barnabas Lindars, who is still frequently cited on this issue, admits that the discussion in Mark 7 is rooted in some kind of indictment against the scribes and Pharisees by Jesus, but the citation as it stands is a Markan redaction intended to bolster the position of Mark's community in response to Jewish opposition.<sup>41</sup> Booth argues that, when compared with other versions, the final clause of the LXX version of Isa 29:13 (διδάσκοντες ἐντάλματα ἀνθρώπων καὶ διδασκαλίᾳς) best supports the denunciation of people who teach the "commandments of men" and thus best suits the polemic against the "tradition of the elders" as it is presented in Mark. He claims that the participial clause in the MT and the targum do not convey the same effect because the condemnation in these versions does not focus on the teachers and their teachings of the "commandments of men." As a result, concludes Booth, "if Jesus did not quote 29.13 in the LXX or Mark's version, he did not utter the quotation in support of an argument against the tradition of the elders."<sup>42</sup>

While Booth is correct in saying that the quotation as it stands is in form closest to the LXX and in function fits the polemic against the Jewish religious teachers and their teachings, he overstates his case by claiming that it is only the LXX version that is consistent with Mark. Assuming that the Greek text or its Vorlage were only accessed by the early church (which of course requires verification), are there other exegetical traditions (not texts) with which Jesus may have been familiar that at the same time would fit in the polemical framework that Mark sets forth? Contrary to Booth and others, I contend that the targum version of Isa 29:13 and the little-mentioned allusion to Isa 29:13 in *Pss. Sol.* 4:1 are prime candidates. I begin with the latter.

40. For example, A. Suhl, *Die Funktion der alttestamentlichen Zitate und Anspielung in Markusevangelium* (Gütersloh: Mohn, 1965), 80–81; J. D. Crossan, *Four Other Gospels* (Minneapolis: Winston, 1985), 83–85; R. A. Guelich, *Mark 1–8:26* (WBC 34A; Dallas: Word, 1989), 361–62; Berger, *Die Gesetzesauslegung Jesu*, 485–86; Lambrecht, "Jesus and the Law: An Investigation of Mk 7, 1–23," 51–55.

41. B. Lindars, *New Testament Apologetic: The Doctrinal Significance of the Old Testament Quotations* (London: SCM, 1961), 165. Lindars (pp. 159, 166) further argues that Isa 29:13 was used in the same polemical manner as Isa 6:9–10 in Mark 4:12, namely, to explain why certain Jews do not believe the church's teaching about Jesus. This position, however, has been challenged by Bruce Chilton, who argues for its authenticity on the basis of a dictional coherence between *Tg. Isa.* 6:9–10 and Mark 4:12, namely, the phrase "and it be forgiven them," which does not appear in other versions. See B. D. Chilton, *A Galilean Rabbi and His Bible: Jesus' Use of the Interpreted Scripture of His Time* (GNS 8; Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1984), 90–97.

42. Booth, *Jesus and the Laws of Purity*, 91–92. See also K. Stendahl, *The School of St. Matthew and its Use of the Old Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1968), 58.

*The Function of Isaiah 29:13 in Psalms of Solomon 4*

In *Pss. Sol.* 4, the psalmist fiercely rebukes the hypocrisy of the political and religious leaders in first-century B.C.E. Palestine who sit in places of prestige while committing contemptible acts and deceitfully teaching the law (4:3–8). The point of the psalm is to convey that true piety is not measured by external religious practices. *Psalms of Solomon* 4:1 reads,

Why are you sitting in the council of the devout (ἐν συνεδρίῳ ὁσίων),  
 you profaner?  
 And your heart is far from the Lord,  
 provoking the God of Israel by lawbreaking;  
 excessive in words, excessive in appearance above everyone,  
 he who is harsh in words in condemning sinners at judgment.

Whether the “council of the devout” in this passage refers to a court of justice<sup>43</sup> or to the governing body of the Sanhedrin (συνέδριον);<sup>44</sup> it can in more general terms be regarded an important legal/religious body in Jerusalem that functioned as an extension of the high priest. The συνέδριον may not have been a regular political council, and assertions regarding its exact function are fraught with inconsistencies when early Christian accounts are compared with rabbinic accounts, but there seems to have been no other surviving institution in the first century with comparable links to Jewish traditions that exercised the same potential authority to control the populace.<sup>45</sup>

The function and tone of the allusion to Isa 29:13 in *Pss. Sol.* 4 as a rebuke of the hypocrisy of religious leadership resembles, and even surpasses in severity, Jesus’ condemnation of the scribes and Pharisees in Mark 7. Although the recipients of the condemnation in *Psalms of Solomon* 4 are different and their offenses are more numerous, the function of Isa 29:13 as a rebuke of lawgivers and teachers is here closer in principle to Jesus’ rebuke of the Pharisees as religious leaders in Mark 7:5–8 than to the LXX or the MT, which—as is discussed below—focus the rebuke elsewhere.

*The Function of Isaiah 29:13 in the Targum*

*Targum Isaiah* 29:13, contrary to Booth and others, not only shares a minor dictional coherence with Mark (as opposed to the LXX) in the omission of a conjunction (“and”) in the final clause but more importantly retains a closer thematic coherence than does the LXX (or the MT).<sup>46</sup> Simply put, the

43. Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ*, 2:204 n. 12.

44. R. B. Wright, “Psalms of Solomon: A New Translation and Introduction,” in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (2 vols.; ed. J. H. Charlesworth; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1985), 2:410 n. 4c.

45. M. Goodman, *The Ruling Class of Judea: The Origins of the Jewish Revolt against Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 112–15.

46. Aside from targumic dictional coherence with Mark 1:11; 4:12; 9:48, Chilton (*A Galilean Rabbi and His Bible*, 111–116) has argued for a thematic coherence between the *Isaiah Targum* and Mark 12:1–12.

Markan context in which Isa 29:13 appears has more affinity to the context of the targum than to the LXX or the MT.

The following parallels with Mark 7:5–7 are noteworthy. (1) The targum focuses its rebuke on the royal and priestly figures who rely on Roman authority for their power. Chilton suggests that the setting reflects the Roman appointment of Herodian or prefectorial rulers and their collaboration with high priests prior to the outbreak of revolt in 66 C.E.<sup>47</sup> The “woes” of the meturgeman that begin in ch. 28 and follow in 29 are laments directed at the apostasy of Israel’s leadership (e.g., 28:14); but unlike in the LXX, their corruption is associated with the temple service (e.g., 28:1, 4, 13; 29:1 [“the altar”]).<sup>48</sup> Moreover, unlike the LXX, the meturgeman rebukes the scribes for their lack of judgment and for metaphorical drunkenness (28:5–13). As the rebuke progresses, the drunkenness is described as a divinely ordained deception and obduracy cast upon the leadership that includes scribes and the teachers of the law (29:9–12). *Targum Isaiah* 29:10 is particularly instructive in identifying the obdurate as not only “the people” but, even more so, those who are charged to teach the law to the people (the lemma is italicized): “For the LORD *cast among* you a spirit of *deception*, and has *hidden himself from* you, the prophets, *the scribes and the teachers who were teaching you the teaching of the law* he has *hidden*.”<sup>49</sup> The LXX likewise focuses its prophetic rebuke on “the people” who, because of their disobedience, will experience obduracy; but instead of including the “teachers” and “teachings of the law,” it includes the cessation of visions among “their prophets” and “their rulers” (29:10). The targum is closer to Mark in condemning specifically the teachers of the law and their teachings.

(2) In the *Isaiah Targum*, “law” is a central theological concept that is frequently introduced where there is no parallel in the Greek or Hebrew versions. The meturgeman understands the gift of the law as a means by which Israel can be in a state of relationship to its God.<sup>50</sup> In light of this theme, the point of the rebuke in chs. 28 and 29 is that, since the house of Israel has turned its face from the law and followed its own desires (28:9, 10, 13, 25), God warns that he will remove the teaching of the law from the

47. B. D. Chilton, *The Isaiah Targum* (ArBib 11; Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1987), 55.

48. B. D. Chilton, *The Glory of Israel: The Theology and Provenience of the Isaiah Targum* (JSOTSup 23; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1983), 15. On the corruption of the temple establishment during Jesus’ lifetime, see C. A. Evans, “Jesus’ Action in the Temple and Evidence of Corruption in the First-Century Temple,” in *SBL 1989 Seminar Papers* (SBLSP 28; ed. D. J. Lull; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989), 522–39; idem, “Jesus’ Action in the Temple: Cleansing or Portent of Destruction?” *CBQ* 51 (1989): 237–70; B. D. Chilton, *The Temple of Jesus: His Sacrificial Program within a Cultural History of Sacrifice* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992), 91–111.

49. Translation is taken from Chilton, *The Isaiah Targum*, 58.

50. Chilton, *The Glory of Israel*, 13. The central aspect of law that must be kept in the foreground is the *Shema*’ (Deut 6:4–6), which stresses the love of God. Jesus’ use of this passage in Mark 12:28–34 is reflected in tannaitic sources (e.g., *Sipre Deut.* 32 [on 6:5]).

people (29:10–12).<sup>51</sup> The point is: contact is severed when the teaching of the law is distorted. In *Tg. Isa.* 29:21, unlike in other versions, the warning is directed against the individuals (and their “sayings”) who condemn the “innocent” for their attempt to reprove them with “words of the law.” The text reads (with the lemma italicized): “who by *their sayings* make the sons of men sinners and seek the stumbling of him who reproves them in the judgment house with words of the law, and with deceit turn aside the judgment of the innocent.”<sup>52</sup> More than the other versions, the meturgeman’s dichotomy between the guilty party and its sayings of condemnation on the one hand and the “innocent” party who appeals to the “words of the law” on the other is much closer to the exchange between Jesus and the Pharisees in Mark 7:5–7.

(3) There is an emphasis in *Tg. Isa.* 29:10 on “teaching” that resembles the emphatic use of διδασκαλίας in Mark 7:7. Furthermore, the meturgeman’s addition of “who teach” at the end of 29:13 brings the targum more in line with Mark and the LXX than with the MT. Booth contends that the LXX and Mark condemn the “commandments of men,” as opposed to the targum, which condemns the people’s fear of God. While Booth is correct in noticing that the “fear of God” is emphasized, the “fear” cannot be isolated from the meturgeman’s condemnation of the teachings of the “scribes and teachers.” It may well be, as Booth claims, that the LXX and Mark (where the vanity of the honor is *identified* as the teachings of men) differ from the targum (where the fear of the Lord is *compared* with the teachings of men). However, because the grammatical construction is not altogether certain, caution should be exercised in stating that the vanity is *identified* as the teachings of men. The nominative participle (διδάσκοντες) is certainly adverbial, modifying σέβονται, but it is not clear exactly how the verb is being modified.

In sum, although the Isaiah citation is dictionally closest to the Greek text, its function best coheres with the exegetical tradition in the targum. Because it is likely that the Hellenistic church, which used the LXX, was less (if at all) familiar with the Aramaic exegetical traditions that were eventually recorded in the targum, it is conceivable that the function of the Isaiah quotation as it is expressed in Mark reflects an inter-Jewish conflict about the validity of certain religious teaching groups and their teachings.

### *The Function of Isaiah 29:13 in Egerton Papyrus 2: Multiple Attestation?*

Another line of argument that can be used to strengthen the plausibility of Jesus’ quoting Isa 29:13 against the Pharisees is to apply the “multiple attestation” criterion of the Jesus Seminar, which regards the *Egerton Papyrus*,

51. Some midrashim likewise apply the judgments surrounding Isa 29:13 to the “elders appointed over the community” (*Num. Rab.* 14:4), as well as to the “righteous” (*Lam. Rab.* 1.9 §37).

52. Translation is taken from Chilton, *The Isaiah Targum*, 58.

in which a quotation from Isa 29:13 also appears, as an independent source. The Seminar is clear in setting forth its rules of attestation:

- Sayings or parables that are attested in two or more independent sources are older than the sources in which they are embedded.
- Sayings or parables that are attested in two different contexts probably circulated independently at an earlier time.
- The same or similar content attested in two or more different forms has had a life of its own and therefore may stem from old tradition.<sup>53</sup>

According to the Seminar, these rules make it objectively possible to isolate sayings material that predates the Gospels. An example of an application of these rules is found in the evaluation of Mark 12:17 (“Pay the emperor what belongs to the emperor, and God what belongs to God”), which the Seminar designates a red saying (that is, as authentic) because it appears in at least two or more independent sources, specifically Mark, *Egerton Papyrus 2*, and *Gos. Thom.* 100:1–4.<sup>54</sup> This example is instructive because it is one of a few times when Mark and *Egerton Papyrus 2* are presented together as evidence for authenticity.

The saying in Mark 7:6–7 is designated black, meaning that the Seminar regards it a saying that probably does not go back to Jesus. This evaluation is surprising to say the least given that the same saying appears in *Egerton Papyrus 2*. Moreover, it appears in a different context and in a slightly different form. *Egerton Papyrus 2*:54–59 according to Bell and Skeat’s reconstruction reads:<sup>55</sup>

Καλῶς Ἡσαΐας περὶ ὑμῶν ἐμπροφήτευσεν εἰπών· ὁ λαὸς οὗτος τοῖς χεῖλεσιν αὐτῶν τιμῶσιν με ἢ δὲ καρδία αὐτῶν πόρρω ἀπέχει ἀπ’ ἐμοῦ μάτην με σέβονται ἐντάλματα . . .

Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying, “This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. In vain do they worship me, [teaching as their doctrines the] precepts [of men].”

In comparison, Mark 7:6–7 reads:

καλῶς ἐπροφήτευσεν Ἡσαΐας περὶ ὑμῶν τῶν ὑποκριτῶν, ὡς γέγραπται [ὅτι] οὗτος ὁ λαὸς τοῖς χεῖλεσίν με τιμᾷ, ἢ δὲ καρδία αὐτῶν πόρρω ἀπέχει ἀπ’ ἐμοῦ· μάτην δὲ σέβονται με διδάσκοντες διδασκαλίας ἐντάλματα ἀνθρώπων.

Well did Isaiah prophesy about you hypocrites, as it is written, “This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; but in vain they worship me, teaching (as) teachings the commandments of men.”

53. Funk et al., *The Five Gospels*, 26.

54. *Ibid.*, 102.

55. H. I. Bell and T. C. Skeat, *Fragments of an Unknown Gospel and Other Early Christian Papyri* (London: British Museum, 1935), 26.

Although the fragment suffers from several lacunae, the reconstruction indicates that the texts are considerably different in form. Unlike Mark, the papyrus appears to follow the LXX verbatim. With regard to their function, in Mark the quotation is directed against the hypocrisy of the Pharisees, but in the *Egerton Papyrus* it is directed against an unknown group of people who want to trap Jesus by asking whether it is lawful to render unto kings the things that pertain to their rule.

Unfortunately, the analysis of Mark 7:6–7 in *The Five Gospels* does not include the *Egerton Papyrus*, nor does it offer an explanation for its omission. In all likelihood, it is excluded because it is a quotation.<sup>56</sup> If this is the case, it raises all sorts of possible underlying assumptions that require discussion, most notably the applicability of the criterion of multiple attestation and the recollection of Scripture among messianic and oracular prophets in early Judaism.

Finally, the Gospel of John can also be included in the mix because it too is regarded an independent source by the Seminar, albeit a derivative of the Signs gospel. C. K. Barrett, in his discussion of the influence of the Scripture in John, notices that, although Isa 29:13 is not quoted explicitly, it is alluded to on several occasions when the Evangelist seeks to express a vivid and dramatic sense of irony (3:1–21; 5:31–47; 7:19–24; 8:39–44; 18:28).<sup>57</sup> Without advancing Barrett's observations any further due to their enormity, I merely draw attention to them as a further consideration in this discussion.

## CONCLUSION

So, would Jesus have quoted Isa 29:13 against the Pharisees and their propagation of the "tradition of the elders" as it is recorded in Mark? It is entirely plausible. First, when the exchange in Mark 7:5–7 between Jesus and the Pharisees is compared with other inter-Jewish conflicts (including anti-Pharisaic polemic) on matters of purity, there is little reason to postulate that it can only be an early Christian redaction. Several scholars in recent years have convincingly argued that the subversion of existing purity practices and their reformulation were pivotal to Jesus' program, whether it was for the purpose of social reform as in the case of Borg or for eschatological restoration as in the case of Bryan. Jesus' critique as Mark presents it is clearly within these bounds. To argue otherwise demands much more evidence than has been presented to date.

And second, a comparison between the use of Isa 29:13 in Mark and its use in early Jewish and Christian writings points to authenticity instead of the reverse. Despite the quotation's dictional similarity to the LXX, which is most likely an early Christian redaction, its function in Mark as

56. Funk et al., *The Five Gospels*, 67–68.

57. C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel according to St. John* (2nd ed.; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978), 29–30.

a critique of religious teachers and their teachings of holiness is more in line with the function of Isa 29:13 in *Pss. Sol.* 4 and the targum than with its function in the LXX. Assuming early Christians would have gravitated much more to the LXX than to the Aramaic tradition in their reflections on Jesus, Mark 7:5–7 may well represent an authentic conflict between Jesus and the Pharisees concerning their differing programs of holiness, even though it may not have taken place in Galilee. The case for authenticity can be further strengthened if *Egerton Papyrus 2*, where Jesus quotes Isa 29:13 in a different context, is regarded as an independent source.