THE TEMPLE IN MARK.
A CASE STUDY ABOUT THE EARLY CHRISTIAN ATTITUDE TOWARD THE TEMPLE

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INTRODUCTION

The Temple was undoubtedly the central religious institution in Second Temple Judaism. The sacrificial cult together with the Temple itself were one of the two pillars of ancient Judaism (the other was the Torah).1 Did the early Christians of the first century C.E. have a religious commitment to the Jerusalem Temple, either in the practical or symbolic sense? Most scholars have answered negatively, concluding that since Jesus became the central (and perhaps the sole) means of atonement and salvation for Christians, the Temple cult became religiously insignificant and the Church took its place.2 Many have attributed severance from the Temple or even rejection of it to the historical Jesus.3

Interpreters of Mark have tended to presume (without demonstrating it) a completely negative approach toward the Temple in Mark. Thus, for example, D. Juel concluded that Mark introduced Jesus as

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a New Temple ("not made with hands") which substituted the old one. W. H. Kelber regarded the Temple as "stands condemned of corruption by trade and politics," and stressed Jesus’ "disqualification" of it, since "the Kingdom has been dissociated from the Jerusalem Temple." R. G. Hamerton-Kelly concluded that for Mark "Jesus challenges the authority of the order of sacred violence represented by the Temple, and Mark narrates the challenge in terms of the conflict between Jesus and the religious, legal, and political representatives of sacred authority." and that "the sacrificial system is to be replaced by faith and prayer." According to F. J. Moloney, Mark’s Jesus “brings to an end the commercial and cultic activities of the Temple...he replaces Israel’s cult with a new approach to God...” H. C. Waetjen regarded Jesus’ "cleansing" of the Temple as "abolition of the temple institution itself," and named the section discussing it "negation of the temple institution." Nonetheless, the place of the Temple as a religious institution as well as a symbol of worship in the New Testament, and specifically in Mark, has not been thoroughly discussed.

This article attempts to reexamine the attitude toward the Temple and the role of the Temple in Mark’s discourse. Through his description of what Jesus said and did concerning the Temple, Mark reveals his own views and those presumably shared by his readers. Being the earliest gospel, Mark includes some of the early traditions about Jesus; hence the following discussion also concerns the historical Jesus, with all the necessary methodological constraints entailed by deducing evidence about Jesus from Mark.

Mark’s approach to the Temple and the priestly cult will be analyzed according to four different categories: (1) Involvement: when Jesus and his disciples attend the Temple or the Temple Mount, as when taking part in the pilgrimage. (2) Analogy: using Temple or sacrificial imagery to portray concepts not related to the Temple service,