1. Introduction

The “partings of the ways”\textsuperscript{1} between Christianity and Judaism is a facet of Christian origins that continues to fascinate scholars. A constellation of questions calls for resolution, such as why the ways parted in the first place, what facilitated or accelerated the separation, and when was the parting finally complete? In the course of answering these questions a concerted amount of attention has been paid to Paul and the gospel communities and their contribution to the eventual split. However, one particular aspect of the debate remains particularly contentious, viz., the role and the significance of the historical Jesus for the parting of the ways.

In the past there have been a number of attempts to postulate Jesus as causing (though perhaps not intending) the eventual division between Judaism and Christianity. Julius Wellhausen wrote: “The parting occurred first through the crucifixion, and for practical purposes first through Paul. But it lay in the consequences of Jesus’ own teaching and his own behaviour.”\textsuperscript{2} Given that Wellhausen was part of nineteenth-century German scholarship that was hardly amicable towards the Jews, his perspective is not surprising. On a different tack, however, a number of Jewish scholars think that the parting did in some way originate with Jesus.

Joseph Klausner maintained that there is something at the root of Jesus’ ministry that led to the split despite the fact that Jesus’ teaching

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\textsuperscript{2} Julius Wellhausen, \textit{Einleitung in die drei ersten Evangelien} (Berlin: Reimer Verlag, 1905), 114: “Der Schnitt erfolgte erst durch die Kreuzigung, und praktisch erst durch Paulus. Er lag aber in der Consequenz von Jesu eigener Lehre und seinem eigen Verhalten.”
is thoroughly indebted to Judaism. Klausner censures late nineteenth-century Christian scholarship for seeing Jesus as opposing Judaism rather than regarding Jesus as one Pharisee who opposed other Pharisees.3 For Klausner, Christianity is a hybrid of Judaism and Hellenistic philosophy that stands at some distance from Jesus the Jew.4 In the mind of interpreters: “Jesus was not a Christian,’ but he became a Christian.”5 Unsurprisingly Klausner maintains that “Jesus was a Jew and a Jew he remained till his last breath,” but he also adds that: “Ex nihilo nihil fit: had not Jesus’ teaching contained a kernel of opposition to Judaism, Paul could never in the name of Jesus have set aside the ceremonial laws, and broken through the barriers of national Judaism.”6

Similarly, Jacob Neusner contends that Jesus instituted a movement and a ritual that could not conceivably remain within the orbit of Judaism. In Neusner’s understanding, Jesus’ act of overturning the moneychangers’ table (which Israelites paid to participate in the upkeep of the daily offering) was a rejection of the most important rite of the Israelite cult, the daily whole-offering, and was a statement that the means of atonement was null and void. Jesus wanted to replace the table of the moneychangers with the table of Eucharist which would offer atonement and expiation.7 Jesus’ demonstration in the Temple and his institution of a quasi-cultic meal set Jesus and his followers on a trajectory away from Judaism. The result is that the holy place has shifted from the Temple to Jesus and his followers as the locus of the divine presence.8 This can be coupled with Jesus’ teaching where he announces in his own name what the Torah says in God’s name. Jesus effectively sets himself up as an authority equal to or above Torah.9 It

4 Ibid., 363.
5 Ibid., 413; cf. Wellhausen, Einleitung, 113: “Jesus war kein Christ, sondern Jude. Er verkündete keinen neuen Glauben, sondern er lehrte den Willen Gottes tun.”
6 Klausner, Jesus, 368–369. Similarly, another Jewish scholar Richard L. Rubenstein wrote (My Brother Paul [New York: Harper & Row, 1972], 121): “In reality it was not Paul but Jesus who instituted the irreparable breach with established Judaism.”
9 Neusner, A Rabbi Talks with Jesus, 30–31.